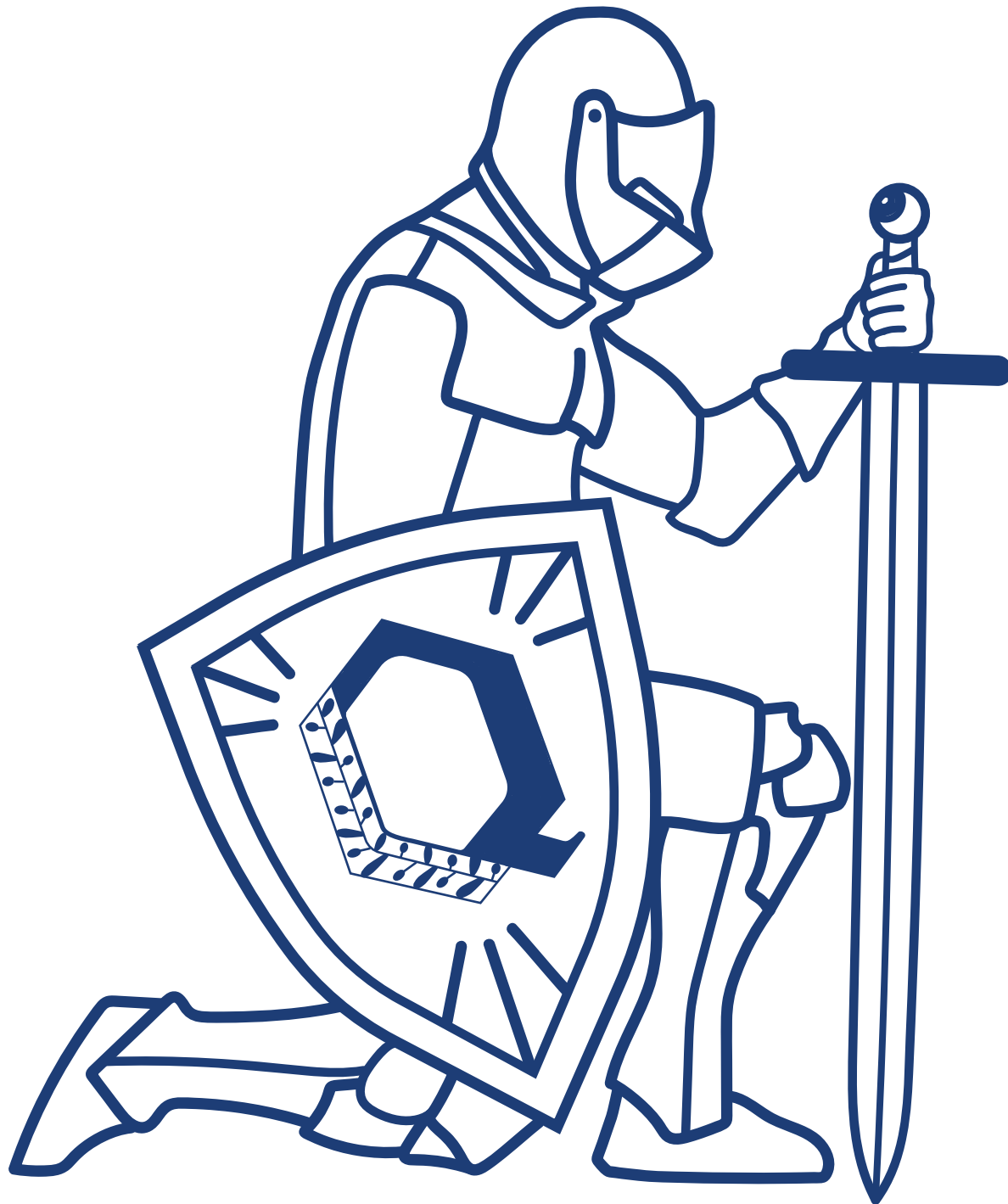


Defending Freedom:

Political | Economic | Religious



Volume VI No. I

Quaestus Fall 2024



The editors and publication advisors of Quaestus would like to thank Acton Institute for sponsoring the Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit and this issue of Quaestus.

Economics, Politics, and Philosophy

ON THE BLUFF

Speaker Series - Spring 2025



Senator Phil Gramm

January 23 | 6 PM | Concordia Center for Environmental Stewardship

Phil Gramm taught economics at Texas A&M for 12 years, served in the United States House for 6 years, and in the US Senate for 12 years. He is author of the budget-cutting Gramm-Latta Act (1981), which set the path of Reagan administration budget policy, and the Gramm- Rudman-Hollings Act (1985), which placed binding restrictions on Federal spending. Since retiring from Congress, Gramm has written widely on budget, tax, growth, and related income distribution issues.



Nobel Prize Winner's Lunch

January 29 | 12 PM | Robert W. Plaster Center Collaboratorium

A lunchtime event featuring Concordia professors presenting the winner's in their fields for CUW faculty, staff, students, and interested community members.



Mollie Hemmingway

March 19 | 6 PM | Concordia Center for Environmental Stewardship

As a Senior Journalism Fellow at Hillsdale College, Mollie Hemingway teaches journalism and helps students and alumni with professional development. She helped launch and is a senior editor of the online magazine. The Federalist, which has become one of the most influential voices in politics with millions of readers. A Fox News contributor, she is a regular member of the Fox News All-Stars panel on "Special Report with Bret Baier" and a regular guest on MediaBuzz hosted by Howard Kurtz.



Rob Chatfield

April 3 | 6 PM | Robert W. Plaster Center Collaboratorium

Robert Chatfield serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of Free To Choose Network (FTCN), a global media organization, replacing Bob Chitester, Founder and Chairman of the Board, who stepped aside as President and CEO in July 2017. Chatfield is the executive producer for *A More or Less Perfect Union* and *Sweden: Lessons for America?*. Chatfield oversees all departments of the 24-person organization, and will be growing the divisions while keeping the vision and mission of the 501(c)(3) in focus.

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Our Mission

Quaestus is a student-led journal presenting ideas about Liberty, Faith, and Economics from a Christian perspective in order to promote human flourishing.

Our Vision

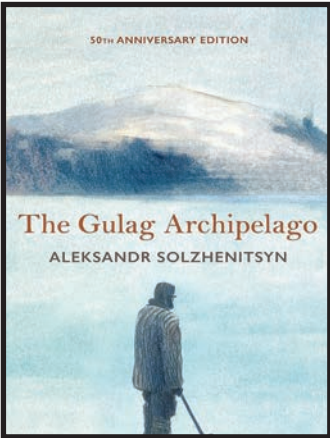
We aim to inspire the next generation of Christian thought leaders by addressing global issues with sound moral and economic principles.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:36

The Gulag Archipelago by Aleksander Solzhenitsyn

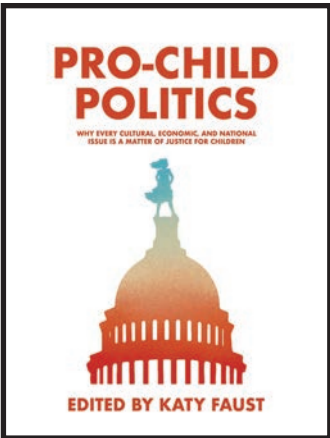
This book recounts the horrific stories of the Soviet Union’s internment system. If you have a chance to read any book over your Christmas break, read this one. At risk of life and limb, Solzhenitsyn gathered together the accounts of fellow citizens who were also brutalized under the crushing weight of the USSR’s authoritarian regime and recorded them alongside his own commentary to weave a frightening tale of woe. Indeed, *The Gulag Archipelago* warns us of the inexhaustible evils that spring from the communist system, shown to its fullest extent and execution in the gulag program. I highly recommend Solzhenitsyn’s work as a cautionary tale to us all. As we consider together the true value of our economic, political, and religious freedom here in the United States, it would behoove us to consider a real example of what happens when each is torn away from a people in the name of “progress,” “utopia,” or “the greater good.”



Pro-Child Politics: Why Every Cultural, Economic, and National Issue is a Matter of Justice for Children

Edited by Katy Faust

Katy Faust’s latest work, *Pro-Child Politics: Why Every Cultural, Economic, and National Issue is a Matter of Justice for Children*, is a comprehensive and timely exploration of the societal and governmental levels where child protection is crucial. In the introduction, Katy poses a thought-provoking question, ‘What if we put our children first?’. She invited topical policy experts to each author a chapter on 19 different cultural, economic, and national issues that impact children’s welfare. The chapters on cultural issues are life, masculinity, femininity, family, race, gender ideology, and pornography. The economic chapters include the economy, taxes, debt, energy, ESG, and DEI. Finally, the national chapters are religious liberty, education, digital technology, the environment, foreign policy, policing, and border security and immigration. Each chapter breaks down complex issues into bite-sized pieces, making the topics tangible and actionable for the reader.



Editorial Board



**Co-Editor in Chief
& Publication Editor**
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Class of 2025
Lutheran Secondary
Education Broadfield
Social Studies



Co-Editor in Chief
Ella Mudge
Class of Fall 2025
Nursing & Art



Research Editor
Jonathon Weir
Class of 2027
Management &
Finance



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Temish Christiansen
Class of 2025
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Computer Sciences



Senior Editor
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Master of Divinity at
Concordia Seminary
St. Louis



**Business &
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Class of 2024
Marketing, MBA in
Business Scholars
Program

So... What is Quaestus?

A Letter from the Editors

This periodical features transcriptions from the 2024 Liberty, Faith, and Economics (LFE) Summit at Concordia University Wisconsin. Hosted by the Concordia Free Enterprise Center in collaboration with the Acton Institute—a prominent American think tank dedicated to exploring the intersection of religion and liberty—this annual event has attracted numerous distinguished speakers. The keynote address this year was delivered by Rick Graber, with the summit focusing on the theme Supporting Freedom and Liberty: Economic, Political, and Religious Perspectives. A second periodical, slated for publication in the spring, will include articles written by students and Quaestus staff that delve into related topics.

Quaestus: A Platform for Dialogue and Discovery

Quaestus (pronounced Kway-stus) is a student-led initiative aimed at fostering meaningful conversations on critical issues. Comprising an editorial board of undergraduate and graduate students under the guidance of Dr. Scott Niederjohn, we strive to engage the campus community in thoughtful discourse. Each fall, we organize a writing contest inspired by the content of the LFE Summit. Winners, as well as other promising writers, are invited to join the editorial board, where they hone their skills in writing, editing, and publishing.

Our Dual Mission

1. Publishing Insightful Periodicals

Quaestus produces two journals annually—one in the fall and another in the spring. The fall edition showcases transcriptions from the Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit, while the spring publication features articles authored by students and editors. Any Concordia student can submit articles which are carefully reviewed and selected by the editorial board. This structure encourages students to draw inspiration from the fall themes—centered on free speech, economics, and politics—and contribute their perspectives in the spring edition.

2. Hosting Engaging Forums

Beyond publishing, Quaestus organizes forums to encourage thoughtful dialogue on complex and often contentious topics. These forums typically feature one or more expert speakers, ideally representing diverse viewpoints. Through these events, we aim to demonstrate the value of constructive and respectful debate. Students are always invited to engage directly with the speakers during Q&A sessions. Previous forums have addressed issues such as racial relations, Roe v. Wade, educational reform, climate change, and transgender ideology.

A Platform for Growth and Impact

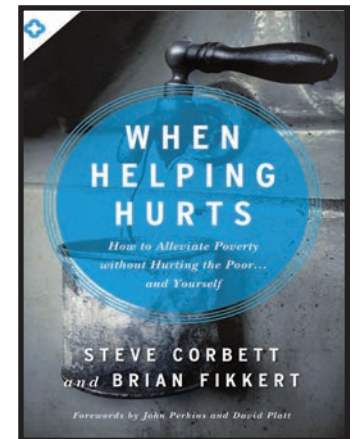
For our editorial board members, Quaestus offers invaluable opportunities to refine their skills in writing, editing, and publication. Members also benefit from networking with leading experts in various fields and participating in national and international conferences. At its core, Quaestus—a Latin term meaning “profit”—symbolizes the intellectual and personal growth gained through rigorous thinking and open dialogue. As you explore the articles within this journal, we hope you are inspired to question the world around you, engage in meaningful conversations about truth, and perhaps even contribute your own voice to our future publications. Your insights are invaluable, and we would be delighted to read and share your perspectives.

Alyssa Giese & Ella Mudge,
Co - Editors in Chief

Michelle Gain

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

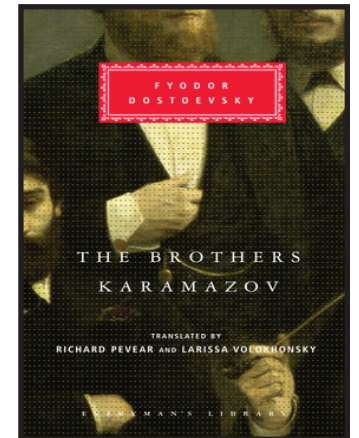
If you are passionate about making a difference in the world through a Christian perspective *When Helping Hurts* is a great read. This book is thought-provoking and challenges well-meaning individuals, churches, and organizations to rethink how they approach poverty alleviation. Corbett and Fikkert contest the well-meaning but often harmful traditional aid methods, offering a biblically grounded and practical framework for empowering people experiencing poverty without fostering dependency. Each chapter starts and ends with questions and scenarios allowing reflection. *When Helping Hurts* encourages people to approach missions and charity with humility. It recognizes that poverty alleviation is not just about material solutions but also partnering with God’s redemptive work to restore community dignity and hope.



James Schultz

The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky

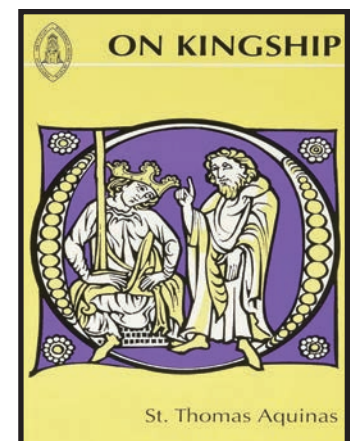
The Brothers Karamazov portrays an unsettling family rivalry turned murder mystery, a courtroom drama set in a snapshot of Russian life during both its cultural Golden Age and tragic turning point. Dostoevsky masterfully balances humor and philosophical exploration that constantly leaves the reader wanting more. The heart of the novel is the struggle between doubt and faith represented by the cold, godless Ivan and the loving, faithful Alyosha. The novel is easy to read because of its gripping story, but it is challenging to one’s philosophy and outlook. It is without a doubt; however, a worthy experience.



Temish Christiansen

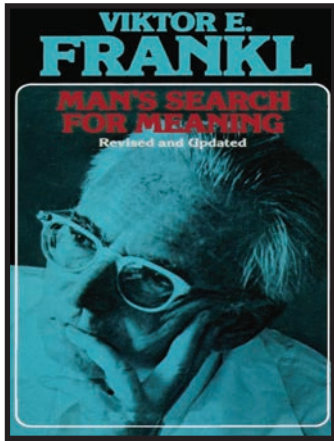
On Kingship by Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas’s *On Kingship* is a fascinating little book on what is expected of a leader, and how that leader ought to order society. While it was written for a monarch and in promotion of monarchy, it holds significant value for members of a democratic republic like our own. Rather than policy or political structures, Aquinas emphasizes virtue, unity, the dangers of tyranny and evil government, and how one’s life ought to be ordered towards eternal happiness in heaven. In a world rife with division and fighting about how to run society, taking a step back to consider what is really important is refreshing and offers clarity. *On Kingship* is a short, easy read (or listen!) which offers insight into how and why governments are formed, what societies gather around, and how virtuous men and women can live happy lives on this side of eternity.



Man’s Search for Meaning by Victor Frankl

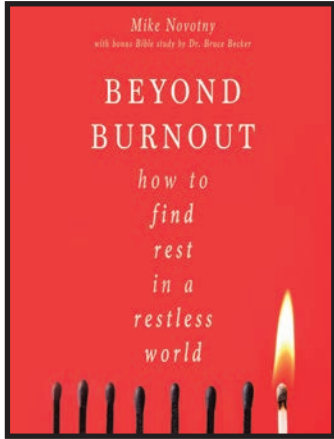
Man’s Search for Meaning is a profound and transformative book that offers readers deep insights into the resilience of the human spirit. Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist, chronicles his experiences in Nazi concentration camps while intertwining them with his psychological theory of logotherapy. He demonstrates how finding purpose, even in the darkest and most harrowing circumstances, can give life meaning and help individuals endure suffering. The book encourages readers to reflect on their own lives, emphasizing the importance of responsibility, hope, and the pursuit of meaning over materialism. Its timeless message resonates with anyone seeking clarity, inspiration, or guidance in navigating life’s challenges, making it a must-read for personal growth and self-discovery.



Jonathon Weir

Beyond Burnout by Mike Novotny

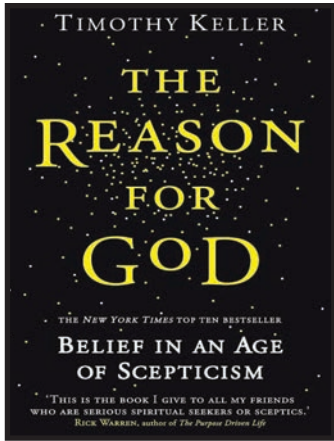
Do you find yourself feeling drained from your busy schedule? Does it feel like your physical, emotional, or spiritual state is exhausted? *Beyond Burnout* by Mike Novotny is the book for you. This quick read covers how to find rest in our restless society from a Christian perspective by going into depth on how to implement proper physical, emotional, and spiritual rest into your daily lives. In addition to expanding on how to implement the three categories, Mike talks about the common refutes of each category and combats each one. Rest assured, Mike wrote this book with scripture in mind and with wisdom coming from 17 years of pastoral experience in a WELS Lutheran Church.



Elleanor Mroczenski

The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism by Timothy Keller

In *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, renowned Presbyterian pastor Timothy Keller provides a well-rounded and relevant case for Christianity. Keller methodically addresses common questions and concerns with Christianity, ranging from how God allows for suffering, to the historical role of the church in injustices, to the relationship between science and religion. After dispelling these doubts, Keller makes a case for faith pulling from the likes of C.S. Lewis’ Mere Christianity. In a manner compelling for both the skeptic and believer, Keller provides a reasoned yet empathetic dialogue of faith. *The Reason for God* is a thought-provoking read for those with modern concerns about Christianity and those seeking to bolster their apologetic repertoire.



**The Slaughter of Innocents:
The Victims of Socialism**

Transcribed by James Schultz



The following is adapted from a talk issued by George Herbison at Concordia Wisconsin for the 2024 Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit.

George P. Herbison is a writer, speaker, political activist, and retired chief financial officer. In 2016, at the request of a YAF student leader, Mr. Herbison created and delivered a lecture titled “The Victims of Socialism” at the University of California, Riverside. Since then, he has delivered this lecture at over twenty college campuses and at several student conferences put on by the Young America’s Foundation in Santa Barbara, CA and Reston, VA. A native of Michigan, Mr. Herbison received a BA from Kenyon College, where he majored in physics. He continued his education at the University of Michigan, where he received an MBA (emphasis in finance and accounting).

The rise of socialism as a perceived viable ideology in the United States should be a grave concern to all Americans, but sadly it is not. Conservatives have explained philosophical problems with socialism but have done a poor job of explaining its sordid history, upon which their concern is based

Before examining socialism’s dark impact on three nations of the 20th century, we must first examine what socialism is and is not. Students have often told me that socialism is simply fire departments, schools, and freeways. I will demonstrate that socialism is not any of these things, nor is it sharing and compassion, nor is it a benign and watered-down form of communism. Socialism is about raw, unadulterated repression and power.

Now let me show you why. I will start the discussion with a brief recap of the basic tenets of socialism. In Marxist theory, socialism is a transitional phase between the overthrow of

capitalism, which is free markets and individual rights, and the realization of communism, which is a class-free state and utopia. Socialism, as the ideological agent of this transition, relies on a totalitarian, authoritative state to actualize forced economic equality, the elimination of private property, total state control of the means of production, the de-emphasis of the family unit, and the abolishment of religion. Individual, economic, and other freedoms are severely curtailed and overridden by the power of the state. The terms socialism and communism are often used interchangeably.

Early in the 20th century, Marxist ideologues began their crusade to impose communism on the world. To do so, they took over countries and imposed the meat grinder ideology of socialism on them to forcibly wring out class differences in their quest for the utopian ideal of communism. This brutal totalitarian campaign resulted in the deaths of millions of people. These are the victims of socialism. And now I’m going to tell you their tragic story.

The scale of suffering is monumental. Alan Charles Kors in his brilliant essay on socialism “Can there be an ‘after Socialism?’” wrote: “We are surrounded by slain innocence and the scale is wholly new. This is not the thousands killed during the Inquisition. It is not the thousands of American lynchings. This is not even the six million dead from nazi extermination. The best scholarship yields numbers that the mind can only try to comprehend. Scores and scores of millions of bodies.”

Soviet socialism based on the collectivist philosophies espoused by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engles took hold in Russia after the October Revolution in 1917. Led by Vladimir Lenin, a

vicious and ruthless ideologue, the victorious Bolsheviks set forth to fundamentally change Russia based on Marx’s utopian vision of society. Lenin and his fellow socialists nationalized industries and confiscated private land and other property from their owners. religion was officially eliminated from Russian society as Russians were forced at gunpoint to worship the power of the state. To firmly establish his new ideology, Lenin resorted to a campaign of mass murder of his political opponents. In a purge now referred to as the Red Terror it is estimated that upward of 1.5 million people were murdered in this brutal campaign.

As vicious as Lenin was, his successor Secretary General Joseph Stalin was even worse. In 1929 Stalin ordered the forced removal of minor landowners and better-off peasants (the kulaks) from their farms while simultaneously ordering the collectivization of soviet agriculture. Millions of kulaks were executed or shipped off to re-education camps in the Arctic simply because they owned property. Stalin’s socialist government confiscated all private farms and livestock. Surviving peasants were forced to work on collective farms under strict government control. Soviet collectivization and Dekulakization resulted in the deaths of millions. The toll was particularly harsh in Ukraine where 5-10 million Ukrainians died at the hands of Stalin’s reforms and the secret police sent to enforce them.

According to declassified Soviet archives between 1937 and 1938 alone the Soviet secret police detained over 1.5 million people; of whom almost 700 000 were shot. Western scholars estimate that the actual number murdered was nearly twice the recorded number. Stalin also presided over the vast expansion of the Soviet Gulag system, the infamous forced labor and re-education camps run by the socialist regime. The Gulag system had a total inmate population of about one hundred thousand in the late 1920s when it underwent an enormous expansion coinciding with Stalin’s collectivization of agriculture. By 1936 the Gulags held roughly five million prisoners, a number that was probably equaled or exceeded every subsequent year until Stalin died in 1953. Political prisoners

consisted of rich or resistant peasants arrested during collectivization, purged communist party members, military officers suspected of saboteurs and traitors, and dissident intellectuals.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, perhaps the Gulag’s most famous inmate, claimed that between 1928 and 1953 some 40 to 50 million people served long sentences in the “Gulag Archipelago” as he termed it. Figures supposedly compiled by the Gulag administration itself and released by Soviet historians in 1989 revealed that a total of 10 million people were sent to the camps from 1934 to 1947. Gulag prisoners faced the threat of starvation or execution if they refused to work. Given all available statistics, deaths attributed to Gulag camps ran well into the millions. Conservatively, Soviet socialism is responsible for the deaths of at least 20 million people overall.

As bad as the Russian people suffered under Lenin and Stalin, the Chinese people’s descent into the hell of socialism was far worse. Mao Zedong was the greatest mass murderer of the 20th century. In 1949 as Chairman of the communist party of China, Mao proclaimed the foundation of the People’s Republic of China and set forth to impose his version of Marxism on the Chinese people; the results were catastrophic. Mao employed a familiar playbook in imposing socialism in China. The Great Leap Forward launched by Mao in 1957 brought with it the forced collectivization of China’s agricultural sector in an attempt to accelerate the growth of the country’s industrial sector. Not surprisingly, the expropriation of private farms and with it the elimination of economic incentives to produce food led to famine and mass starvation. It is estimated that deaths from hunger alone reach more than 50 percent in some Chinese villages and ultimately 30 million to 40 million Chinese peasants perished, roughly the entire current population of California.

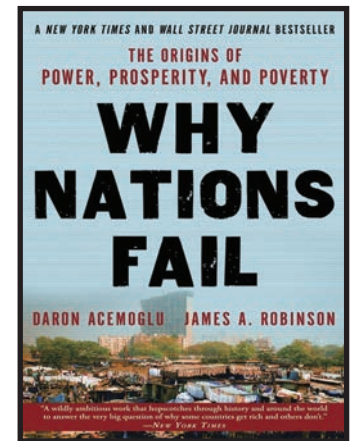
In 1968, the year before the United States first put a man on the moon, a young Chinese Red Guard who was being pursued in the countryside by the authorities took refuge in a village in Anhui where he heard many stories about the Great Leap Forward. He later wrote: “We walked

Quaestus Book Recommendations

Dr. Scott Niederjohn

Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson.

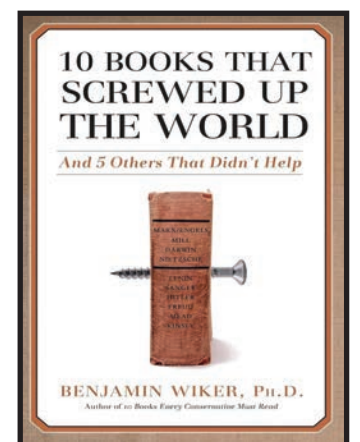
Why are some countries rich and others poor? This question has fascinated economists since the disciplines founding by Adam Smith in 1776. Nogales, AZ is relatively affluent yet, only three miles away (and across an international border), Nogales in the Mexican state of Sonora is desperately poor. The same discrepancy is found between North and South Korea. Clearly, explanations such as culture, geography, or access to nature resources can’t explain these differences. This year’s Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences was awarded to economists whose work shows how institutions form and affect differences in prosperity. Two of these winners, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson of MIT, summarize much of their academic research on the subject in this non-technical and fascinating read. Acemoglu and Robinson explain why those of us in North America should be delighted that the English explorers didn’t find the gold and silver they were looking for—leading to the construction of inclusive political and economic institutions. Alternatively, the Spanish explorers in South America did find these precious metals and the societies in that region continue to pay the price for the extraction-based institutions that developed to exploit the resources.



Alyssa Giese

10 Books that Screwed Up the World: And 5 Others That Didn’t Help by Benjamin Wiker

Dr. Benjamin Wiker examines the changes wrought on Western culture and philosophy by certain influential but insidiously destructive books in his own fascinating book, 10 Books That Screwed Up The World (and Five Others That Didn’t Help). Rather than arguing for these books to be banned, Wiker instead urges his audience to read them, familiarize themselves with the ideas that the authors propagate, and be ready to respond. “Seize each one by its malignant heart and expose it to the light of day,” he encourages his readers. (page 3). Some of the more prominent works of writing to be included in his list are The Manifesto of the Communist Party (Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels), The Descent of Man (Charles Darwin), Beyond Good and Evil (Friedrich Nietzsche), Mein Kampf (Adolf Hitler), and Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (Alfred Kinsey). Wiker argues that the reason that these books were so dangerous is that the ideas contained within them led people to take horrific actions with disastrous results. Wiker claims that the philosophies that influenced the writing of these books have been popularized in our society today, creating a creeping problem that will lead to destruction if left unchecked. For the discerning reader, Wiker’s work is an excellent companion in exploring the slow decay of Christian values within the Western tradition.



our many, many serious challenges, we are still an exceptional country. Every day, thousands of people are fleeing their countries to come here. Why? Freedom, opportunity, a chance at a better life. They share the dream of my Czech driver, Karl, who lived through communism and, for a good part of his life, had never experienced liberty. Freedom and America’s foundational principles are on trial. They’re never guaranteed. But we will prevail, so long as we fight for our beliefs and fully engage in those little platoons of civil society.



(Photographer Samuel Boehlke)

Student Response:

Magdalene Lane: “I think he has some very good points about the free education ideas that he put forward. I definitely think public schools are kind of corrupting our children, and it’s very important that we have choice... This is something that has come up very recently. Where do we send our kids to school? And I really think it’s important to build those communities in the schools. There has to be some sense of holism in all these things. The home, the state, and the church are all really connected in this world, and I think that’s important to take into account.”



along beside the village the rays of the sun shone on the jade green weeds that had sprung up between the earth walls accentuating the contrast with the rice fields all around and adding to the desolation of the landscape. Before my eyes among the weeds rose up one of the scenes I had been told about. One of the banquets in which the families swapped children in order to eat them I could see the worried faces of the families as they chewed the flesh of other people’s children. The children who were chasing butterflies in a nearby field seemed to be the reincarnation of the children devoured by their parents. I felt sorry for the children, but not as sorry as I felt for their parents. What had made them swallow that human flesh?...In that moment I understood what a butcher he had been, the man whose like humanity has not seen in several centuries. In China, not in several thousand years: Mao Zedong.”

Perhaps no other country suffered more at the hands of its socialist masters than Cambodia. Pol Pot’s murderous Khmer Rouge seized control of Cambodia in 1975, and they then set about to impose socialism on the Cambodian people. The country suffered horribly under socialist oppression until Pol Pot was ousted in 1979. Highly xenophobic, Pol Pot set about to completely isolate the country from outside influences and to establish a collectivist radically agrarian society. To accomplish this the regime closed all the country’s schools, hospitals, banks, and factories. Religion was outlawed and all private property was confiscated. Most citizens in urban areas were forcibly relocated from their homes to work in the collective farms. The Khmer Rouge told these residents they would be moved only a short distance from home and that they would return after only a few days. People who refused to evacuate were killed on the spot and their homes burned to the ground. The evacuees were instead sent on long marches to the collectives during which tens of thousands of children, the elderly, and the sick died.

This led to a horrific famine. Although deaths from starvation were widespread, acts such as picking wild fruit or berries were seen as private enterprise by the Khmer Rouge and were punishable by death. Commercial fishing was

banned resulting in a loss of a primary food source for millions of Cambodians, 80 percent of whom relied on fish as their only source of animal protein. Books were burned and most of the country’s teachers, merchants, and intellectual elite were murdered as they were viewed as potential enemies of the state. One need only be seen wearing eyeglasses to be branded as an intellectual and shot. All religion was banned and anyone seen taking part in religious activities or services was summarily executed. Thousands of Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians were murdered simply for exercising their religious beliefs.

Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge brigades took power in Cambodia to create an agrarian communist utopia. Inevitably and tragically the experiment ended just like every other experiment in socialism: a dreadful, deadly disaster. The Black Book of Communism estimates that Cambodian socialism led to the deaths of two million people or roughly 25 percent of the country’s population.

Today we have witnessed the horror, destruction, and death implemented by these three regimes. Sadly, many more experiments with this grotesque ideology dot the historical timeline of the 20th century, each without fail resulting in the same hideous result. There is one additional facet of this human tragedy that cannot go unmentioned. One that is difficult to see or to quantify. This is the realization and recognition of the personal fear horror, agony, and pain experienced by each of the millions of human souls vaporized by this ghastly ideology in the 20th century.

Fortunately, there were leaders in the West who recognized the moral rot underpinning socialism and who fought back. President Ronald Reagan, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II each understood the monstrous nature of socialism. They worked together in the 1980s to undermine and defeat the Soviet Union’s evil empire without firing a shot. In November 1989 the Berlin Wall came down and in 1991 the Soviet Union dissolved. The free world rejoiced as nearly a billion people were freed from the shackles imposed by socialism.

Sadly, roughly 1.5 billion people in the

world still live under oppressive socialist regimes in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, and Venezuela. Contrary to common sense, Marxist professors and ideologues laud the supposed positive benefits of socialism and falsely attribute socialism to the free-market welfare states of Scandinavia. Americans should not look to these academics for guidance, but instead, we should look to the survivors of socialism: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the survivors in Cambodia and China, and the millions who have fled and continue to flee communist Cuba and Venezuela. Only they can truly speak for the 94 million human souls sacrificed on the bloody godless altar of socialism in the 20th century.

To the young people in the audience, I have words of advice to push back against progressive indoctrination in schools and popular culture so that our country might avoid the scourge of socialism. When your professor tells you that the United States is a racist, oppressive nation ask him to explain why it is. Then, the caravans of migrants from Central America always make the long trek north to racist, oppressive America instead of making the comparatively short march southeast to socialist utopian Venezuela. When you hear a student claim that capitalism breeds unhealthy levels of economic inequality mention that this freedom-fueled inequality is a far more righteous outcome than the lethal equality suffered by almost 100 million people under socialism in the 20th century, and while those atrocities were taking place capitalist countries were achieving the greatest standard of living in the history of the world. When a professor tells you that socialism is simply fire departments, post offices, and libraries, ask her how it is then that the implementation of these things could have possibly led to the deaths of almost 100 million people. When you hear someone extolling the virtues of Cuba’s health care system, remind them that no one in history has tried to sit on an inner tube and float from Key West to Havana while hundreds have perished attempting to float in the opposite direction to freedom. When a classmate tells you that the rich don’t pay their fair share of taxes, point out to them that the top three percent of taxpayers in the

United States pay over 50 percent of the nation’s income tax bill. When you are told that socialism is a great idea in theory, respond that no, socialism is a terrible idea in theory. A horrible concept made much, much worse when implemented. Above all, remember this as you enter the fray: as a conservative, you are on the right side of history and the moral side of righteousness, and the facts will always bear this out.

Ronald Reagan warned against the authoritarian forces intent on subverting American freedoms when he addressed the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce in March 1961. He said:“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream it must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the united states where men were free.” Reagan’s words are as accurate today as they were 50 years ago as the storm clouds of socialism and its inherent authoritarianism currently gather over our great country. In his famous speech in support of Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential candidacy Reagan said this: “We’ll preserve for our children this: the last best hope of man on earth or will sentence them to take the last step into a thousand years of darkness.” We must stand full square against the socialist forces that are intent on eroding the freedoms we have enjoyed for almost 250 years. To fail in this quest will indeed sentence our exceptional country to the same darkness that befell those enslaved by their socialist masters over the past 100 years.

Student Response:

Ellen Egger: “I didn’t realize that so many people died from socialism...the death toll even overshadowed the Holocaust. It [the presentation] was mind-blowing.”



(Photographer Samuel Boehlke)

that’s been all-consuming for so many people. But I would also encourage you... to consider investing more of your time and contributions in community organizations rather than politics. This is coming from someone that was deeply engaged in politics in the state for a long time. Politicians come and go. Yes, elections matter. They matter a lot. Yet the real change, the real impact, comes from outside politics. It comes from people who lead organizations like Running Rebels, Community Warehouse, Greater Galilee, and Hmong American Peace Academy.

Now, if you are inclined to be active in politics, consider your common council or county board. We need to get good people involved at the local level. Despite the importance of local government, far too many races across the United States go uncontested. In fact, a Bradley grantee called Ballotpedia conducted an analysis of more than 10,000 local elections in 2023 and found that more than 60% of local seats were uncontested. If you or someone you know is hesitant to participate on a school board, in local governments, or in a civic group, now’s the time to do it. Think of the difference my dad made during his time as councilman in Lakewood. To this day, the

community still benefits from an initiative that passed on his watch.

If you do nothing else, do this: engage in your community; attend church services; volunteer at a local food pantry; check on your neighbors; attend city council meetings; help your mom; have a nonpolitical conversation with someone with whom you disagree; start a family, one of the greatest joys in life; say yes to the softball team, the neighborhood block party, an invitation to a barbecue; put down the phone. Your life will be so much more satisfying.

Every Friday, I have breakfast with a group of guys I’ve known since the beginning of my career, conversations are really fun and uplifting, and I still make time to see a former colleague from my old law firm. Sometimes we head over to Red Arrow Park downtown, during the lunch hour, to lace up our skates and catch up around the rink. It’s not quite Winterhurst, but pretty close.

It might seem hard to think that these small gestures will make a difference, but if millions of people do it, we will begin to address many of society’s ills, one conversation, one helpful action at a time.

Finally, I’ll leave you on this note. Despite

complex, interdisciplinary organization serving thousands of kids in our community. All of that organic growth happened for one reason: Victor and Dawn Burnett’s dedication to saving the lives of troubled kids in Milwaukee.

Another good example, another great organization, is called Community Warehouse. It was started 20 years ago to provide central city residents [with] opportunities to purchase donated construction materials at a fraction of their retail cost. When they began, they hired employees that most companies would never consider, most had criminal backgrounds or checkered employment histories. The goal was to give them an opportunity to hone their work skills and experience and to give them a chance to build a better life. Before long, training men and women re-entering society from jail or from prison moved to the forefront of their mission. Each month, a cohort of 10 to 15 individuals takes a very short walk down 17 stairs to the basement of the Community Warehouse building on Milwaukee’s North side. There, they take a week of classes where they learn everything from how to apply for a job to how to improve relations with their parole officer. They start to think about goals and how to achieve them. Most significantly, they meet mentors and form an authentic network of support that will last them for a lifetime. At a recent ceremony for those who had completed the program, a participant, well into his 60s, said, “After spending most of my life in and out of prison, I feel hope for the first time.”

We have witnessed through decades of grant making that, even in the most desolate neighborhoods, you can find traces of community. Milwaukee’s 53206 ZIP code is often portrayed as completely hopeless. It has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country. It’s the poorest ZIP code in the city, with high rates of unemployment and crime. Yet you’ll see another side of 53206 when you step into the Greater Galilee Community Center on Teutonia Avenue. The Center’s a gathering place for young and old. They host dinners [and] daytime activities to encourage seniors to socialize. It’s home to Above the Clouds, another Bradley grantee, which teaches ballet to kids and adults who would not otherwise have access to dance classes. As the outreach arm

of Greater Galilee Missionary Baptist Church, it’s a bedrock of safety and spirituality. And they’ve now embarked on a great new initiative through a partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin to offer comprehensive health screenings and wellness programs.

Just six miles away from Greater Galilee, another grantee organization, the Hmong American Peace Academy, helps a completely different part of our community find and fulfill its calling. Inside their newly expanded school is a bustling hub of culture and community. It’s fantastic. The school’s founder and CEO, Chris Her-Xiong, came to America as a young girl without knowing a word of English. Her family was among the many Hmong refugee families who fled Southeast Asia, fearing retaliation for their solidarity with the United States during the Vietnam War. She has made it her life’s mission to instill cultural appreciation and values, such as hard work and self-sufficiency, into the more than 2,000 Hmong American scholars who attend the school.

These are just a few examples of the many grassroots groups that are doing incredibly effective work in Milwaukee. They’re led by unsung heroes who take a bottom-up approach to solving problems. They are meeting people where they are, whether that’s providing a commercial kitchen space for budding restaurateurs on the city’s North side or offering a home for men seeking to turn their lives around on the city’s South side.

I’m convinced that if we fully arm these little platoons of civil society, we can solve so many of the problems facing our community and our country, but it all starts with each of us doing our part, especially the young people in the room this evening. We need civic entrepreneurs, donors, and volunteers. We need more of ourselves than government. We need to be working hand-in-hand with religious institutions, for their moral guidance is unparalleled. We need to make sure we understand where our contributions are going, whether it’s \$1 or \$1 million. The organizations that are most effective rarely have fancy reports or power points. In fact, I hope they don’t. Their time is better spent invested in making people better.

Now, this is an election year, and it’s one

Religious Freedom in a Polarized America

Transcribed by Michelle Gain

The following is adapted from a talk issued by Mark Rienzi at Concordia Wisconsin for the 2024 Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit.

Mr. Mark Rienzi joined the Becket Law team in 2011 and has served as President since 2018. He is also a Professor of Law at the Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, where he is co-director of the Center for Religious Liberty, and has served as a Visiting Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. He teaches constitutional law, religious liberty, and evidence, and has been voted Teacher of the Year three times by the Law School’s Student Bar Association. With the team at Becket, Mark has litigated and won an uninterrupted string of important First Amendment cases at the U.S. Supreme Court including Little Sisters of the Poor (2013 and 2020), Hobby Lobby (2014), Wheaton College (2014), and many others. Mark’s scholarship on constitutional issues has appeared in a variety of prestigious journals including the Harvard Law Review, Stanford Law Review (online), and Notre Dame Law Review. He has been quoted on religious liberty issues in a variety of prestigious outlets, including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, NPR, and he has been featured on the Kelly File, Fox News Sunday, Your World with Neil Cavuto, Geraldo at Large, CNN Tonight, CNN Live, Andrea Mitchell Reports, and Wall Street Journal Live. Prior to joining Becket, Mark served as counsel for WilmerHale LLP and a law clerk to the Hon. Stephen F. Williams of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. He earned his J.D. from Harvard Law School and B.A. from Princeton University, both with honors.

[...] I’m delighted to talk to you today about the role of our constitutional protection for



religious liberty in a polarized country. [...] At times we can think about our Constitution as if it’s all about unity. It’s the Constitution of the United States. It says one of the goals is to form a more perfect union. But the truth is, our Constitution actually does its best and most important work as the Constitution for a divided people. It’s a document that governs a bunch of people who don’t necessarily agree on everything, and who actually have disagreements about some big, important issues.

To state, what is I’m sure obvious to all of you, we’re living in very divided times. Sometimes it seems like the only thing anybody can agree on is that we all disagree about everything. We’ve got deep disagreements. For several years, they seem like not just disagreements, but kind of a disagreement bordering on vindictiveness, bordering on hatred for anybody who happens to disagree with you. As we muddle through this time when our country is so deeply divided and polarized, it’s fair to wonder how and where does religious liberty fit in? How does religious diversity fit in? Let me start by throwing out three different possible answers to that.

One is that maybe religious liberty, and diversity, is part of the problem. We already have enough to disagree on. Maybe we shouldn’t give religious liberty and religion any special protection. [...] A medium position would be religion is kind of neutral. We tolerate religious liberty because it’s in the Constitution, but it’s neither good nor bad. It’s just there. Or the third possibility, maybe religious liberty is actually an important part of the solution. Maybe, particularly when we’re so divided, religious liberty has important things to teach us. It can help us remain free and strong and held together as a country. Maybe religious liberty is exactly what we need right now in

these very divided times.

As you can guess from the introduction and from the title, I chose door number three. I am a firm believer that religious liberty is super important, particularly at a time when we don't all agree on things. I think it's something that people who care about the country, who care about our society and about civility, ought to pay attention to and support, especially in times that seem divided and broken.

When I'm teaching Law students about the Constitution, I often like to start with a few words about the Declaration of Independence. The declaration announces that God created all of us equal, that God gives all of us inalienable rights, that people formed their governments in order to protect those rights, and that people have the ability to structure their government in the way that they think is most likely to protect those rights. [...] They [rights] are not a gift from the government or something you have. Of course, that declaration didn't make us a country. We became a country when enough people decided that the ideas in the declaration and embodied by the young country were worth fighting and dying for. When Lincoln was later fighting to hold the country together, he would often cite back to the Declaration's embrace of human rights and human dignity for all as an important support for the union. He talked about how the declaration's embrace of human rights and human dignity for all was "a rebuke and a stumbling block to tyranny and oppression." He said that's because the declaration stated those abstract truths that were applicable to all men and at all times. And that idea of liberty - that idea of human dignity - predates the declaration and the Constitution.

In 1688, the Quakers wrote America's first anti-slavery petition. They did that in expressly religious terms, and they did that based on their understanding of how God calls us to treat our brother and sister. [...] The Quakers were only here to write that petition and lead the abolition movement over the century and a half later [...] because of religious liberty. The Quakers were only around to fight for the slaves and the fight for the end of slavery. This is because earlier generations of Americans, after some pretty bad perse-

cution, had eventually decided, "You know what? We should let them stay. We should let the Quakers stay."

That's one of the things about religious liberty. Often we can't see far enough into the future to know who's going to benefit and how we're going to benefit by not chasing some particular religious minority out of the country. And of course, many of the early colonists came to America as people who are fleeing religious persecution. That was common in Europe at the time. Many different groups came to America fleeing persecution and bloodshed in Europe. Sometimes it's easy in 2024 to look back and look at the differences among those people and say, well, come on. They were all basically white Christians. [...] They were a bunch of people who had deep differences about things that really, really mattered.

Some of those colonists did a really good job when they arrived at respecting religious liberty and respecting religious differences, like William Penn in Pennsylvania. Some of them did a really rotten job of respecting religious differences when they got here, like the Puritans who persecuted the Quakers and others. Some of them weren't very good. Some of them as soon as they got their religious freedom by showing up, [...] then turned around and to deny that to the next guy in the door. From the start, America is this land where people have real religious differences, and they need to figure out, and work through overtime, how are we going to live together in peace with people with whom we have disagreements, and not just disagreements about small, minor things that don't matter much, but disagreements over the most important things we can think of? The things that motivated us to sail across an ocean and escape some other government. Those kinds of disagreements. And they had to figure out, what's the formula for living together in peace and governing together in peace with people with whom I disagree about these big, important things? The short answer is religious liberty. Religious liberty is the original American contribution, the original American formula, for living together in peace despite these deep disagreements. And the truth is, our disagreements with one another might be different today, but the problem remains

country's largest foundations—such as Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie—our giving has always reflected our founders' philosophies and values, and that's not going to change. While we wish we had more insights into the brothers' core beliefs, we know that they'd be very proud that their legacy of civic giving continues to this day. A very recent example is our gift towards the renovation of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's new home on Wisconsin Avenue, the Bradley Symphony Center. I hope you've had a chance to visit there. When combined with the contribution of the Uihlein family, the gift totalled \$52 million. If you're not aware, David Uihlein and his sister Lynde are Harry and Peg's grandchildren, so the tradition continues. We know that the Bradley family's and the foundation's rich tradition of giving to civil society has made an impact; there's no question. Yet we're also clear-eyed that today's problems are vastly different, and in many ways far more daunting, than half a century or longer ago, when the Bradleys were building their business and leading this community. I alluded to many of the problems earlier, such as societal disintegration. Those forces are not abating. So how do we revive civil society, especially for people who need it most?

At Bradley, we often stress the importance of taking the long view of efforts to restore our culture and its institutions. Having worked in the political, corporate and now philanthropic world, I couldn't agree more with this philosophy. Take, for instance, education freedom, school choice. The Bradley Foundation provided funding for the research that advanced the idea of parental choice, helped launch the first ever choice experiment in the United States, and supported efforts to fight back against legal and regulatory barriers all along the way. All that took place right here in Wisconsin, and mostly right here in Milwaukee.

More than 30 years later, we are now seeing the fruits of that sustained support, and the story is far from over. About half of Milwaukee students now attend charter schools or private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, and we're starting to see signs in some schools that the academic achievement gap is narrowing, that students who attend choice

schools are less likely to be incarcerated and more likely to lead productive lives. That parental choice is now an established part of Wisconsin's education landscape.

Nationwide, there's been tremendous momentum for education freedom. 33 states now have some form of educational choice, and 11 states have universal or near universal education choice programs. This was unthinkable, even five years ago. That's tremendous progress. We should celebrate and build upon it. Education freedom has received lots of attention, and that's in part why it has succeeded.

But what about those issues or groups so integral to civil society that often go unnoticed? The foundation goes to great lengths to ensure that the groups we support are having an impact. We don't necessarily seek out the biggest or most well-known groups or those that are beholden to models or measurement. Our objective is to identify organizations that are animated by passionate and driven leaders, leaders who feel compelled to solve the massive challenges that face our community.

Now, many of these leaders may not share Bradley's ideological perspective, they probably don't, but they do share our commitment to individual and societal flourishing. They understand the problems and solutions better than anyone because they've experienced them firsthand. We often say we fund chefs, not restaurants, and that's so true.

A great example of an organization that fits this description is a group called Running Rebels. Maybe you've heard of them. The [Bradley] Foundation has supported them for more than two decades. When our team first encountered Running Rebels, one man, a man named Victor Barnett, had organized a basketball program to keep juveniles out of the justice system. He needed to raise some money because the team he was coaching had made it to the playoffs but couldn't afford uniforms or transportation. Bradley made a very modest investment in getting those kids to the tournament, and the rest is history. It was clear that Victor, and later his wife Dawn, had dedicated their lives to solving tough problems. And in the years since, they built Running Rebels into a

to offer proposals that will incentivize having children.

In an age where everyone is digitally connected, the sad reality is we've never been more disconnected. That's disheartening. That's dangerous. People are more inclined to turn to a screen than a community group, a spouse, or houses of worship. It's no wonder, then, that politics has become the new religion. Political affiliations are influencing every aspect of American life, from jobs to purchases to relationships. As a result, people are less likely to engage in meaningful relationships with those whose views they don't share. It's troubling to witness citizens taking less interest in local governments and civil society. These are the very characteristics that have made us uniquely American, as Tocqueville observed.

This is also something that struck me while serving as ambassador and later having the opportunity to work in many other countries all over the world. Donating time, talent, and treasure simply is not a natural or expected part of other cultures, even in the Western world, and data bears this out. According to recent statistics, the U.S. was consistently ranked as the most generous country in the world between 2009 and 2018. In 2022, it was the third most generous country. While philanthropy took a downturn last year, new reports indicate that it will grow over the next two years, and I hope that's the case. The strong state of philanthropy should give us hope that it's possible to restore civil society, especially for people who need it most. We just need to better understand how to give up ourselves in ways that will be most effective.

Now the namesakes of the foundation I lead, Lynde and Harry Bradley, believed that citizens working together were fundamental to the American experiment. Lynde and Harry were ardent supporters of the free enterprise system, not only because it generates economic prosperity, but because it enables philanthropy. Philanthropy, done well, can fuel the institutions of civil society that are most able to guide behaviors and transform lives. The brothers put their beliefs into practice, cultivating and nurturing a vibrant and thriving community at the Allen-Bradley

company. You probably all know the Alan Bradley Company with the big clock on the way to the airport. This was the company that they built from scratch during the 20th century. Employees had their own bowling, basketball, baseball and tennis teams. The company rooftop included badminton courts, a small boxing ring, and even an area for golfers to fine tune their swings. To this day, I'm not sure if there was a net up there or if people were firing golf balls onto Greenfield Avenue. I think we'll never know. By the 1950s, the company hosted extravagant Christmas parties for the 7,000 children of Allen-Bradley employees.

The Bradleys valued arts and culture, so naturally, they formed the Allen-Bradley Orchestra and Chorus. Employees played concerts at lunch, in the community, and even went on the road, performing 12 tours that covered nearly every major city in the United States and Canada. One employee even left his job in the cabinet shop to become what we think is the only full time paid musical director in American industry. You'd be really hard pressed to find similar examples of such a thriving sense of community within corporate America today.

The Bradley's commitment to civil society extended well beyond Allen-Bradley to the greater Milwaukee area. They loved Milwaukee. Among the city's leading philanthropists, they gave generously to education, to the arts, health care, and youth programs. Local historian John Gerda once said that the Bradley's were to Milwaukee, what the Rockefellers were to New York City. That's not really a stretch. The generosity of the Bradley family has contributed enormously to our quality of life in Milwaukee. Some of the Bradley family's giving to local institutions, past and present, probably has influenced your own life. The Brewer's ballpark, the Pettit Center, the Bradley Center, the Great Circus Parade, and an entire wing of the Milwaukee Art Museum is all funded by the Bradley's. Describing her husband, Harry's wife, Peg, once said, "I realized that his love was Milwaukee and Allen-Bradley. That's all he cared about. It was just centered right there, with all the people he cared so much about."

At the Bradley Foundation, we take donor intent very, very seriously. Unlike many of the

the same.

The problem that religious liberty was designed to solve at the outset is still the problem today. How do we live in peace when we have big disagreements, when we disagree about a lot of things? And of course, Americans today disagree about all sorts of big, important things, right? [...] We disagree about a lot of big important questions. And those disagreements can lead to hurtful discussions and hurtful actions. It is painful. It hurts if somebody thinks you are less important, less valuable, because of something about you, whether it's your sexual preferences, your religious choices, your vaccination status, whatever it is, those disagreements can be really hurtful.

[...] You can imagine setting up a world without all that disagreement, without all that pluralism in which we just look to the government to give us the one right answer to all the big questions. And if you had that world, one thing you could say for it is, well, at least we don't have all that disagreement. At least we don't have all those hurt feelings. But I don't think any of us really want to live in that world, right? I don't think any of us really wants the idea of the government picking all the right answers to all the big questions in life. And the truth is that disagreements about those kinds of big questions, including but certainly not only big questions about religion and God and so forth, those kinds of disagreements are just the natural consequence of freedom. Free people allowed to think for themselves about important questions will come up with different answers to the important question. That's basically the definition of freedom. If you're free and I'm free to think about important things, we're also free to come out with different answers. And religious liberty is and has been a central part of how we live together in peace, despite the fact that all that freedom causes us to disagree with one another about important things.

Now, of course, the country has often failed to live up to the ideals of religious liberty. And you can name the group, and they have surely been the victims of religious persecution in one way or another in this country. Native Americans,

Jews, Muslims and Sikhs (particularly post 9/11), Atheists, and Catholics. We had orders for the extermination of Mormons in this country, the bombings of black churches, Jehovah's witnesses beaten and tarred and having their churches burned because they wouldn't pledge allegiance. There is a long list, right? [...] But over time our country has actually gotten religious liberty mostly right. We've not been great at times, but, over time, the arc has been positive. We've done a better and better and better job over time respecting and protecting religious differences in this country.

That doesn't mean that religion and religious claims always win. They don't and they shouldn't. If my religious belief is that I want to sacrifice my children to Molech, or I want to drive the wrong way on the highway when I get out of this talk, I lose and I should lose. Religious liberty is not that the religious guy always wins, or every religious claim always wins. But what it does mean is that, generally speaking, the government needs a very strong reason to for someone to violate his or her religious beliefs. Religious liberty, at its core, is that most of the time, the right answer to your neighbor having a different religious belief is that the government should let them go ahead and live their lives according to that different religious belief.

And most of the time, the answer is live and let live. It should be rare when in a peaceful, democratic society we say, nope, we need to force that person to violate his or her religion. That principle has largely been vindicated by our Supreme Court decisions. [...]

My firm, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, has been involved in many of those over the past dozen years. And I'll tell you, those aren't just cases where they're kind of narrow skin of your teeth five-four decisions. [...] My firm has won Supreme Court cases for Catholics, Evangelicals, Lutherans, Jews, Buddhists, and Muslims. Many of those wins involve broad supermajorities and several were 9-0 decisions where the entire court agreed. What I'd like to do is just tell you about two of them on hot button culture war issues, tell you a little bit about the case and how it turned out, and then talk a little

bit about why I think religious liberty, done right, is so important for the country, particularly right now.

The first one I want to tell you about is the Little Sisters of the Poor. The Little Sisters of the Poor are an order of Catholic nuns. They devote their lives to caring for the elderly poor. They run homes where they take in old, poor people who have no place else to go. [...] They open their homes, and they love these people, and they see Jesus Christ in these people, and they treat them like family, and they take care of them till they got until they die. That's what the Little Sisters of the Poor do. It is preposterous, therefore, that I'm about to tell you about the big fight that involves the Little Sisters of the Poor and contraception. But here goes.

If you remember back in 2010, Congress passed a law called the Affordable Care Act. It was at the time, and in and out, it's been called Obamacare. [...] But it's a big law that that makes a lot of changes to the health care system. One of the things it did is it gave to an agency, Health and Human Services, the ability to say that certain products should be included in your health plans as preventative services. Now, at the time, contraception was not listed as preventative services, right. Preventative services were things like a mammogram to make sure you don't get breast cancer or something like that. But the federal government decided that under this part of the law, they were going to make employers buy contraception and sterilization and drugs that cause early abortions for their employees. Most employers have no problem with that. [...] A very small minority said, as a religious matter, I can't buy somebody contraception or sterilization or abortion pills. And that was the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The federal government gave out lots of exceptions. Those of you who are old enough to remember it, the big thing that President Obama kept saying is, if you like your health care plan, you can keep your health plan. [...] That was written into the law as grandfathering. Well, it turned out like 100 million people were on grandfathered plan, and the government was totally fine with those grandfathered plans not

having to cover contraception because there was a political deal made that you get to keep your plan. But they wouldn't make an exception for the Little Sisters of the Poor to not cover contraception.

So, there were all these different exemptions built into the law, these places where the government was totally fine saying not every employer has to buy it, but they were going to make the Catholic nuns do it. They were going to make the nuns do it, or they were going to fine them \$70 million. So, the Little Sisters of the Poor - an order of nuns who've taken a vow of poverty and order of nuns who care for old, poor people who no one will care for, and who literally go around begging for money all the time to support the elderly, poor people in their homes - were told you have to buy contraception for your employees, and if you don't: \$70 million in fines. Let me just say from the outset that is an utterly stupid fight, right? The United States government can put a man on the moon. We can hit somebody with a drone from miles away. We can put mail in a little box outside each of your houses every day of your life. The idea that the government can't get people contraception if it wants to is a stupid idea. Of course they can, right? They actually don't need the help of nuns.

If you imagine people sitting around the room saying, all right, we've got to get contraception to everyone, who should we call? And somebody saying, "Call the nuns, get the nuns!" I mean, it's really idiotic, right? It's crazy to think that the United States government needs the help of the Little Sisters of the Poor to get this money, but they said they did. They [the Little Sisters of the Poor] fought in court. And honestly, it's too long a story, but the Little Sisters are still fighting versions of this in court. Here's the short of it. In the end, over the dozen or so years we've been litigating the case, religious liberty at every turn has protected the Little Sisters. Religious liberty has said that the Little Sisters don't have to comply with this. They've never had to pay a penny of fines. They've never had to violate their religion. Let me just say, that is a very good thing, right? It would be a really bad thing if we said, "Nope, let's shut down those nursing homes." Who do you think is going to step in and care

one knows what an individual needs more than a mother, a teacher, a pastor, a teammate, or a friend. America's rich tradition of cultivating a strong civil society is part of what makes it exceptional. A country founded upon liberty meant that citizens need to rely on each other rather than a central government

In early 19th century America, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that this is one of the nation's most extraordinary features. He said, "Americans of all ages, conditions, and all dispositions constantly [unite together. To hold faiths,]... found seminaries, build inns, construct churches, distribute books, dispatch missionaries to the Antipodes... They establish hospitals, prisons, schools by the same method." Finally, if they wish to highlight a truth or develop an opinion by the encouragement of a great example, they form an association.

No one was better at building associations at the time than Benjamin Franklin. He played a founding role in the American Philosophical Society, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Hospital, and Philadelphia's first fire department and homeowners insurance company. He also played a major role in promoting Freemasonry in Philadelphia, and later in life, became president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. His dedication to the creation of associations became an inspiration and a guide for others to do the same, and today in America, there's an association for just about everything, every sport, every profession, every interest imaginable. There's the Potato Association of America, a Barbershop Harmony Society, an Association of Professional Pet Sitters, and importantly for Wisconsin, the American Cheese Society. There's even an association to support professional associations. Lots of associations.

Other effective frameworks for problem solving are townships and local governments. This too is part of the American tradition noted by Tocqueville, who said, "with much care and skill, power has been broken into fragments in the American township, so that the maximum possible number of people have some concern with public affairs." He was skeptical that a national

government could solve problems because it was too far removed from the people. In his view, actions by a central authority would be heavy handed—a rather prescient observation. Instead, townships and voluntary associations were by far the most effective mechanisms for problem solving because solutions were derived by citizens who trusted each other and invested in the outcome. Tocqueville was right to be skeptical, yet many are rightfully concerned that the institutions of civil society are under duress today.

Conservative sociologist, Robert Nisbet, forewarned of this problem all the way back in the 1950s in his seminal book, *The Quest for Community*. He was one of the first to make the case that families, neighborhoods, churches, schools, the vital organs of civil society, are essential to human flourishing. And it concerned him that Americans were not engaging enough in community. He forewarned that the rise of the state would lead to the erosion of those important sources of community. Nisbet worried that the result would be anger, isolation, and resentment. As such, the human desire for belonging would lead more people to look to government to solve problems. Half century after the publication of Nisbet's book, his cautionary word proved to be true. Americans were indeed turning inward and becoming more fragmented. As I mentioned earlier, social isolation has taken root.

Just to make the point, here are a few more examples that underscore the magnitude of the problem. Two decades ago, an average of 42% of U.S. adults attended religious services every week or nearly every week. A decade ago, that figure fell to 38%, and currently, it's at 30%. The decline is largely driven by the increase in the percentage of Americans with no religious affiliation, which has now jumped to 27%. Community groups, such as Rotary Clubs, have seen their numbers dwindle, and the impact of local chambers of commerce continues to fade. There's been a steep decline in marriage and birth rates. Since 1970, the marriage rate has plunged more than 60%, to the point where only about one in two adults are currently married. Birth rate, too, is at an alarming level. In 2023, it dropped to a record low of 1.62 births per woman, prompting federal lawmakers

Student Assessment, U.S. students ranked 28th out of 37 countries in math in 2022. No wonder, then, that many have questioned the effectiveness of the Department of Education, and some have proposed reining it in. Some have proposed even abolishing it. I'd be in favor of abolishing; although, I think that's very difficult to do in today's world.

I guess the most recent and glaring example of government failure was the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Government officials issued draconian orders, such as social distancing, mask mandates, lockdowns, that were not based on evidence. Scientists who offered alternative guidelines that called for reasonable measures, such as protecting the most vulnerable while allowing healthy individuals to carry on with life as normal, were silenced. They were pilloried, people like Stanford medical professor, economist, and Bradley Prize recipient Jay Bhattacharya. Yet we have since learned that these authoritarian measures did far more harm than good. Many are still experiencing the lingering impacts of COVID-19 policy, such as dramatic learning loss, a decline in mental health, and reduced purchasing power due to government induced inflation.

When I consider the impact of autocratic rule and how it suffocates human flourishing, I often think back to my time in Prague, serving as United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic. The experience there really crystallized for me what freedom means in ways that I just hadn't appreciated. During my family's time there, I probably had more conversations with my driver, Karl Sedlocke, than anyone else. I'd see Karl in the morning on the way to work. I'd see Karl on the way home after a day at work. We'd often drive around the country. There were a lot of just one-on-one hours with Karl, and we often talked about his life, in what was then Czechoslovakia, before the fall of communism.

Karl, who's a very humble, uncomplicated man, often spoke about listening to Radio Free Europe on a transistor radio under the covers of his bed as a child and young adult. That radio was his only link to what he thought could be a better way of life. He believed that a free and open society would be a better society for himself and for his family. Ultimately, after the fall of the Soviet Union

and the liberation of Czechoslovakia, it's why he applied to work for the United States Embassy and stayed there for more than 20 years, driving U.S. ambassadors. It's also why the Independence Day celebration, held annually at the ambassador's residence, remains one of the most popular and sought after invitations in Prague. To the Czech people, America still symbolizes liberty, which for so long was just an unattainable dream. It made me realize the universal appeal of freedom, even more so for those who never experienced it. You see, freedom taps into the natural human desire to explore our potential and shape our lives. Government does the opposite, for when government enters, it clings to those it intends to help, denying them freedom by narrowing their agency until they can no longer recognize who they are without it.

Janice Rogers Brown is a former federal judge whose work I admire and follow. She, too, is a Bradley Prize recipient. See a pattern here? Judge said the following: "Where government moves, in community retreats, civil society disintegrates and our ability to control our own destiny atrophies. The result is families under siege, war in the streets, unapologetic expropriation of property, the precipitous decline of the rule of law, the rapid rise of corruption, the loss of civility, and the triumph of deceit." We don't need to look too far to find evidence for her words. One only need drive a few miles from here to see what happens when government moves in.

So that raises the question: if the central authority, like the federal government, can't fix the magnitude of our problems, what can? Anything? Let's go back to my story about Winterhurst. As I said it, it was so much more than a skating rink. It was a hub of community where families and neighbors came together. It was where you learned if someone's grandmother was ill. It was where you heard that a neighbor had fallen on hard times. It was where a community could learn how to spring into action when someone needed help. This example is exactly what philosopher Edmund Burke referred to as the "little platoons" of civil society that are fundamental to human flourishing—families, churches, schools, neighborhoods, voluntary associations. For no

for those people? And why does a fight over sex and contraception have to shut down that nursing home? Who does that serve, right? Why should the people who work there be told you can't have a job anymore? Your job's done. We shut them down. As if the employees would be like, "Oh, thank you. I had a job without contraception, but now I have no job. Thank you." It's crazy.

So, there you have religious liberty, I would say, getting us out of a dumb fight, right? It was a fight that was largely picked for political reasons. There are many stories I can tell you about this case. [...] Somebody decided before the 2012 election that it would be really good to get the young, single female vote out if we picked a big fight over contraception, and that's the genesis of the contraceptive mandate. It's not that contraceptives are hard to get. They're not. They're actually widely available. The Little Sisters have been winning this case for a dozen years. You know how many times Little Sisters employees have come forward to say, "I can't get contraception because the nuns won't buy it?" Zero.

There's a version of this case that was for Hobby Lobby, who I also represented. [...] Hobby Lobby has something like 35,000 employees. You know how many Hobby Lobby employees came forward and said, "I can't get what I need because Hobby Lobby won't buy it for me?" Zero. The feds provide it. The states provide it. Lots of places provide it for free. You just don't need to force people to violate their religion.

So, religious liberty gave us a world in which we can both have the Little Sisters of the Poor caring for the elderly, poor, that's undisputedly a good thing, and if people want to have contraception. Guess what? It's widely available, you can get that too, right? Religious liberty gives us a world in which we can have both.

Let me tell you about another one called *Fulton vs. Philadelphia*. So, this is a case about Catholic social services, Catholic Charities, in Philadelphia. For years, actually long before the government got into the game, Catholic Charities in Philadelphia was providing foster care for kids

in need. Right? Kids whose parents went to jail, kids whose parents couldn't take care of them. The Catholic Church was involved in that long before the government was. [...]

In 2018, the city of Philadelphia decided to pick a fight with Catholic Charities over whether or not they would place children within families of same sex couples. [...] The Catholic Church said no. If somebody comes in and they are either a same sex couple, that's what got a lot of attention, or an unmarried opposite sex couple, that got no attention. [...] If they are either a same sex couple or an unmarried opposite sex couple, if anyone comes in the door with that, we [the Catholic Church] would just say, "You know what? We're not really the right people to do your home study because we've got religious beliefs about sex and marriage. And we think the best place for a child is with a married mother and father. If you want to do it, we're not going to stand in your way. Here's the list of 30 other agencies that do it."

So, the Catholics didn't say they would tear up the application and block somebody. They just said they'd say, "[...] We're not the right people to do your home study." And actually, here's one thing that should make you feel good about the world. In all of documented history that anybody could find, guess how many gay couples had gone to the Catholic Church in Philadelphia and said, "Will you please come into my home and evaluate my family life?" Right. Exactly. [...] Zero. None. It actually never happened. [...]

The gay couples in Philadelphia apparently knew, because it ain't a surprise, that the Catholic Church has religious beliefs about sex and marriage. They don't want the Catholic Church to come into their homes and do a home study and give their opinion about their family life. They knew what their opinion about their family life was. So, it was actually a conflict that never happened. But Philadelphia, after a reporter called Catholic Charities and said, "Well, what would you do if?" The Catholic Charities said, "Well, if it happens, we just refer them to somebody else." The city immediately moved to shut them down. [...] This is in the middle of a foster care crisis in Philadelphia. They don't have enough places to

put the kids. That’s unfortunately true in a lot of places. [...]

Catholic Charities had 100-something families who had been approved through Catholic Charities and were working as available foster homes. The city of Philadelphia said [that] Catholic Charities can’t do foster care anymore, and neither can any of the families that have been certified by Catholic Charities. So, they kicked the families out because they had worked with Catholic Charities, including two of my clients, Sharon L. Fulton, who had fostered like 40 something kids over the years, and an elderly woman, Cecilia Paul, who had a career as a neonatal nurse. So, what she specialized in actually was taking the babies who were born addicted to drugs, and she knew how to care for them because she’d been a neonatal nurse for a long time. She’d fostered more than 100 kids, she had been a previous foster parent of the year, according to Philadelphia. [...] So, she led the last few years of her life not being able to serve in the way she felt God called her to serve, and not helping those kids who needed that help because Philadelphia picked the fight. [...] For a decade and a half before the Fulton case, this had actually happened in lots of different places where the government of a city or state said to the church, “You can only do foster care if you will place children in same sex homes, if you place children and unmarried opposite sex homes.” [...]

In most of those places –in all those places until Philadelphia, actually– the Catholic Church’s response was just to back down. They wouldn’t yield and violate their religion. What they would do is say, “Okay, if those are the terms, I guess I’m out of foster care. [...]” They would stop because [...] the government said, “If you’re going to do it, you got to do it on my terms.” The bishops in several other places said, “I’m just not going to do it.” That meant that, in a lot of places, there were fewer homes and fewer people to take care of poor kids in need. That’s a bad thing.

In Philadelphia, in 2018, Archbishop Chaput said, “I’m not going down without a fight. [...] Maybe they’re going to kick me out [or] I’m going to be shut down, but I would rather have a

fight first and be sure that I took every shot I could to keep the program open, so we can keep serving those kids.” Thankfully, Archbishop Chaput hired us at Becket. We went right into trial court, and we lost. Then we went right to the Court of Appeals, and we lost again. Then we went to the Supreme Court and then we won nine-nothing. [...] At the Supreme Court, the justices –all nine of them– eventually agreed that it’s totally fine for the Catholic Church to have its religious beliefs about sex and marriage.

We actually can live in a world that has both gay foster parents and a Catholic church that says, “You know what? I can’t help with that one.” Just like in the Little Sisters case, we can have a world where contraception is widely available, but there are some nuns who say, “Yeah, but I can’t be part of that.” You can. It’s a big country, right? We can actually have both of those things. It’s not that big a deal to live and let live with your neighbor and say it’s okay for my neighbor to have a different set of religious beliefs. Philadelphia didn’t think so. They fought it and then they lost nine-nothing.

Note the stakes of both of those two cases. In both cases, you have [...] sex related cases [and a] sex obsessed, culture war obsessed government that wants to make a big deal out of something [by] saying, “I’m willing to fight that fight and I’m willing to fight it at the cost of shutting down social services for poor people in need. I’m willing to do it at the cost of forcing people to violate their religious beliefs.” [...] I think decent people should all look at that and say, “We should do better than that.” [...]

So, religious liberty helps us build a better, richer, freer society that can do more good and care for more people. It also prompts the government and the public to learn how to live with and get along with people with divergent views, even on really important issues. It’s a way to live with our diversity rather than using the government to stamp it out.

You can only have a job. You can only participate in this program. You can only run a school if you sign up for this set of beliefs. [...] That’s an anti-liberty, anti-freedom, anti-human

as family, have been steadily deteriorating, leaving a wake of societal disintegration.

In recent years, America has experienced historic levels of abuse and dependency, abysmal academic performance, and a surge in crime. Now again, “what does any of this have to do with freedom?” you might be asking yourselves. Well, the answer is everything. As America’s problems have grown, so too has government. All too often, the solution to a societal challenge is to address it by throwing more funding, more programs, more bureaucracy at it. Rarely, if ever, has that worked, and far more often, it has made the problem worse.

Few do a better job of making the case against government solutions to societal issues than Wall Street Journal columnists and author Jason Riley. Jason, by the way, is a recipient of a Bradley Prize, which our foundation awards each year to three outstanding individuals who have advanced the principles of American exceptionalism. In the pages of the Wall Street Journal and other publications, Jason has persuasively made the case that government programs have been destructive to progress among black Americans. He points out that between 1940 and 1960, blacks migrated from poor rural areas to more prosperous areas in the South and in the North. During that same time, the number of black families living in poverty declined by 40 percentage points. Further, the per capita income of blacks skyrocketed by 300% during the first half century of their freedom. No welfare program, no affirmative action program, has come close to matching that rate of advancement.

But then came the Great Society programs of the 1960s, which vastly expanded government’s role in welfare, education, and much more. Jason writes the following: “What we experienced in the wake of the Great Society interventions was slower progress or outright retrogression. Black labor force participation rates fell, black unemployment rates rose, and the black nuclear family disintegrated. In 1960, fewer than 25% of black children were being raised by a single mother. Within four decades, it was more than half.” The disintegration of the black nuclear family, he argues, has been devastating. According to a 2023 report by the Institute for Family Studies,

the presence of a married father has a substantial influence in a child’s life, especially among boys. With the active presence of a dad in the home, school suspensions and crime go down while high school graduation rates and behavior improve. Young men who grew up in an intact family with their married father are almost twice as likely to graduate from college as they are to land in prison.

Columnist Glenn Loury has also done significant work that highlights the failure of government programs to improve social outcomes. Glenn, too, is a Bradley Prize recipient. In a recent interview, Glenn said, “The government cannot make families stay together. The government cannot raise children. It can’t influence a culture that may encourage behaviors that are counterproductive. It can’t break down old habits.”

An education intervention by the federal government has failed generations of kids. Take Head Start, another product of the Great Society. It started out as a summer program for disadvantaged preschool children and has evolved into a bureaucratic behemoth that funds intervention in early learning, health, and family well-being. While the services funded by Head Start are without a doubt well-intended, studies show the program has had little to no impact on parenting practices or the cognitive, behavioral, or health outcome of its participants. In fact, one study shows that Head Start has actually had harmful effects on behavior and peer relations, and that’s despite the \$240 billion that has been spent on it . In Milwaukee alone, Head Start operated in 37 schools, using \$14 million in federal aid during the last school year alone.

Consider also the federal regulations, mandates, and money that’s been spent on K-12 education versus the actual results. When state and local revenues are factored in, taxpayers spend some \$800 billion annually on education. Now that’s the equivalent of funding the construction of more than 1,500 Fiserv Forums every year, so that’s a lot. Despite this level of spending, the achievement gap between students at the highest and lowest ends of the economic scale has stayed the same for half a century. Reading and math scores, on average, are near historic lows. According to the Program for International

constituents elected him to two more terms, and he was elevated to serve as city council president. On his watch, the council move forward with a major civic initiative, a major project, that would become integral to Lakewood to this day. You see, in the heart of Lakewood, there's a place called Winterhurst. It was built in 1931, and at 30,000 square feet, it amazingly was the largest outdoor ice skating rink in the world at the time. Residents of all generations would lace up their skates and glide around the rink on a brisk day or chilly winter evening. Among friends and family, we'd laugh and race around under stars and snowflakes. Even on Christmas night, that's what you did; you'd go to Winterhurst. But there was one problem. It could only be used about three months a year. Residents really yearned for a sense of community that Winterhurst brought out all year long, not just in the winter.

While my dad was on the council, the mayor put forth a proposal to convert the rink into a year-round indoor facility, and with his support and that of his fellow council members, it passed. Soon Winterhurst was soon converted into a new structure that included dual rinks, separate temperature controls, and sound systems for each rink. It was a great success, becoming the home for local hockey and figure skating teams, skaters ranging in skill from casual to the professional. In fact, Winterhurst has drawn Olympic hopefuls from around the country to train with a hometown coach who is herself a former Olympian. Even I had some professional experience there. In high school and on college breaks, I was a guard at Winterhurst, one of my first ever jobs. It was really the only time in my life when I got to blow a whistle on someone for misbehaving. If only I could have done that throughout my career, particularly managing a law firm. Next year marks the 50th anniversary of Winterhurst. For generations, it has been so much more than just a skating rink. It's been a vibrant hub of activity where neighbors and families bond, young people learn the value of sportsmanship, and a whole town basks in the glow of community.

Now, you're probably wondering at this point why I'm telling you this story about an ice rink at a conference about freedom. Well, here's

why: America is facing a societal crisis, some elements of which we've never experienced before. I don't need to tell the young people here this evening that, willingly or not, you've become part of a vast social experiment. You're the first generation to be raised with smartphones, social media, and every desire seemingly met with a swipe or a tap of the fingertips. Yet the most critical of human needs is not being met, far from it.

We're just now starting to see the far-reaching consequences of a society that's connected by technology but disconnected from reality and each other. "Devastating" is one way to describe that. What might you guess is the second leading cause of death among kids ages 10 to 14? According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the answer, sadly, is suicide, and reports show that the problem is not going away. Between 2007 and 2021, suicide rates among 10- to 24-year-olds rose 62%, and they are at their highest rate overall since 1941. Looking specifically at Wisconsin, a recently released youth risk behavior study found that nearly 60% of our state's children and teens feel anxious, depressed, and even suicidal.

Former editor of the campus newspaper at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, told CNBC the following after her recent graduation. She said one of the biggest parts of my senior year was covering student deaths. People feel hopeless. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has put a label on this phenomenon. He calls it the "anxious generation." As he describes in his new book, there's been a great rewiring of childhood, which is causing loneliness, social comparison, addiction, and shorter and shorter attention spans. Young people today are less likely than ever before to take time to wander, explore, and meet their friends at places like Winterhurst.

While there's been a dramatic rise in isolation among youth, they're not the only generation to feel this way. The problem cuts across all backgrounds, hitting people affluent and poor, urban and rural, young and old, all ethnicities. Technology alone isn't to blame. There was that pandemic, an escalating drug crisis, and for decades now, reliable sources of stability, such

dignity way to think about it. Religious liberty gets us out of that box and gets us to a place where we can live together despite our disagreements.

Okay. [...] Let me just summarize briefly for you why I think this commitment to religious liberty and learning to live in peace despite our deep disagreements about important issues [is necessary]. These are not unimportant things. [...] We have deep, real disagreements about them. Learning to live with those disagreements is actually crucial to the future of our country and can help hold it together. One, is [...] that I think this is the way our Supreme Court sees it. I don't just mean one side of the Supreme Court, the whole Supreme Court, I think, actually gets this. I think that's the reason why religious liberty has been winning over and over again at the court, and not just from the conservatives or the Christians or whoever.

There was a really interesting opinion in a case called *Hosanna Tabor* that we handled a dozen years ago. It was about whether a school had freedom to choose who was going to be the fourth-grade teacher in a religious school. [...] It was a unanimous decision; everybody agreed the school had the freedom. There was a concurring opinion by two justices who don't often see together: Justice Sam Alito and Justice Elena Kagan [...] In it, they said something really important. [...] Alito and Kagan actually pointed out in this 2012 opinion, where they said religious organizations, religious civil society, is often an important buffer between the individual and the power of the state. It's important to leave autonomy and freedom for those groups in between. [...] Things get very bad when people's loyalty is channeled just to the state with nothing in between. Alito and Kagan recognized that in this opinion. [...]

There have been several recent opinions on hot button issues: *Obergefell*, the marriage case; *Bostock*, the case extending Title VII protections to [...] LGBT groups; *Fulton*, the adoption case I mentioned before. In all of those cases, broad cross sections of the court say things like religious liberty is at the heart of our pluralistic society. They repeatedly talk about how religious liberty is foundational and fundamental to our ability to

get along with one another and live in peace, even when we disagree about important issues. And I don't think it's a coincidence [...] that they're [the justices] doing that at a time when we're really polarized. [...] I think they're trying to chart the path and trying to tell us [...] we're going to live together in peace, in a pluralistic place where we've got different ideas about important stuff. So, I think it's important to note that the Supreme Court is looking at religious liberty as a way to lead us in these [...] sometimes vitriolic times.

Let me give you a little bit of the end of the stories of those two cases and tell you how religious liberty litigation can also get us to social peace. [In] the *Fulton* case, [...] there was actually a way after the nine-nothing win that Philadelphia could have changed one line in the contract and kicked the Catholics right out again. Justice Alito, in his opinion, actually noted [...] that he was worried that the opinion could just be a wisp, that it would almost be like it was written in disappearing ink, because Philadelphia could make a move to just change something in the contract and jump right back into the fight. And on remand, no one knew until we got there. [...] I'm delighted to report that Philadelphia, on remand, just let the Catholics back in. [...] The Catholic Church is now placing foster kids in foster homes and working, and it's fine. And gays can foster in Philadelphia, Catholics can foster in Philadelphia. [...]

The ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] was part of that case, and the ACLU could have fought it, too; but the ACLU just walked off the field and yielded. They also decided this is not a fight to have. We actually had other litigation in parallel cases in Michigan and in South Carolina and in those places too, parties just yielded. [...] We're not used to thinking these big culture war fights can end [...] with someone walking off the field. [...] That's exactly what happens in the foster care fight. You win big enough with a clear enough message, embracing religious liberty from all the justices, and the fight can actually stop. [...]

Little Sisters of the Poor, at the federal government level at least, I think that one's actually going to stop, too. [...] The Biden administration, in the end, proposed a rule that

had a religious exemption for people like the Little Sisters of the Poor. [...] A dozen years after the fight started, right? Back in 2010, I was saying, [...] the federal government has lots of ways to get contraceptive contraceptives to people without nuns. [...] So, the truth is that [inaudible] I think, is going to end with the government acknowledging we can have diversity here. We can have people with different ideas. And if we want to get contraception to people, we can get it to people. We don't need the Catholic nuns to do it.

To take another one –this is not my case, but it's a case I pay attention to though– you know, the cake baker case in Colorado? The guy, Jack Phillips, doesn't want to bake the cake for the same sex wedding. People keep going after the guy, [and] what happens every single time a version of that fight goes to the Supreme Court? The cake baker wins, or the website designer wins. When you have the fight that is, you know, [where] somebody says, “Hey, I don't believe in same sex marriage. I can't be part of that. I can't sing the song at the wedding. I can't make the cake. I can't do the website.” [...] Someone brings them to court and tries to make them. Then we go to the Supreme Court. What happens in the end every time? The court says you can't make the guy do that, you can't force him to do that, [and] it's a free country. Like they're allowed to say, no, I don't want to do that. If you want a restaurant, you didn't want to host the Trump for president party, right? Of course, you have a right to say I don't want to host that. I don't want to be a part of that. Every one of these cases, the religious person keeps winning. [...]

So, religious liberty litigation can actually, over time, bring us the social peace. [...] And I think the truth is, most Americans have moved on. The gays in Philadelphia were not fighting against the Catholic Church over foster care. It was fine. They got along. It was okay. It was only the government that had sort of political points in this court that wanted to.

Third point about why religious liberty is so important [...] I'm quoting Rabbi Jonathan Sachs from the UK, “The Tree of Liberty has religious roots. Don't think you can sever the

roots and keep the tree.” Rabbi Sachs said that in New York shortly before he died in 2012 or 13. [inaudible] The Tree of Liberty has religious roots. The modern human rights enterprise, the modern conception of individual rights, is actually based on religious ideas about who the other guy is. Who's the other person? Do I owe that person anything? Is it just might makes right, or do I owe something to somebody who I disagree with? Well, the idea that people have fundamental human rights –that everyone's got them, that you need to respect them even if you have power– that's fundamentally a religious idea. It's not that you must be religious to embrace the idea. People can be atheist and embrace the idea. But the idea has religious roots, so if you say, we're going to drive out religion, [...] that basic idea that's at the core of the Quaker petition, that's at the core of the Declaration of Independence, and it's at the core of Lincoln's defense of the country, [...] is in jeopardy, right? Actually, the entire international human rights apparatus is built on this idea of fundamental human dignity for everybody [...] is fundamentally a religious idea. If God didn't make them, if there's no God, if there's no religious background for that, then it's pretty hard to come up with what is the lasting justification for it that people will stick to even when they've got power to crush the other guy. That does not seem to work out so well. And protecting religious liberty, therefore, is an important way of protecting the heart of the idea that [...] the person who has an idea that you think is evil, awful, and wrong, is still a human being, still has basic human rights, still deserves your respect, [and] still should be treated decently. Religion and religious liberty give us those things, and if you take them away, I think you send us to a bad place.

Lastly, let me just make a point about groupthink and kind of something that I observed about the modern world. [...] It's hard to be different these days. Our phones and our computers and society are constantly giving us messages telling us what to think. [...] That's ubiquitous. That's all over the place. There is a homogenizing effect to life in modern society. Religion actually gives people a set of values and gives people a way to stand outside of

Can Principled Philanthropy Protect Freedom?

Transcribed by Eleanor Mroczenski

The following is adapted from a talk issued by Richard Graber at Concordia Wisconsin for the 2024 Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit.

Richard W. Graber was named President and Chief Executive Officer of The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation in July 2016. He has served on the Foundation's Board of Directors since 2014. Prior to joining the Foundation, Rick served as the Senior Vice President for Global Government Relations for Honeywell International from 2012 until 2016. In that role, he was responsible for leading Honeywell's worldwide government relations initiatives. Rick joined Honeywell in 2010 as Vice President of Government Relations for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He served as the United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic from 2006 to 2009, where he actively engaged the Czech government and private sector on a number of issues, including President Bush's proposed missile defense system, transparency, corruption and judicial reform. Rick managed a 280-person embassy and was responsible for effectively maintaining and strengthening the historic relations between the two countries. Prior to his time in Prague, Rick practiced law in the international, corporate and government relations practices at the Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren law firm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was the President and Chief Executive Officer of the firm from 2004 to 2006 and Chief Operating Officer from 2002 to 2004. Rick serves on the Board of Directors of The Philanthropy Roundtable, The Kern Family Foundation, and Curt Joa, Inc. He earned a J.D. from Boston University Law School and graduated magna cum laude with an A.B. from Duke University.



I'm here to tell you, tonight, that while freedom is precarious and fragile, all of us, in our own way, can defend it. In fact, we must defend it vigorously and vigilantly, so that liberty may continue to unlock the potential in each life upon which it is bestowed.

Let me begin tonight by telling you a brief story that captures the essence of my comments this evening. I grew up in a town called Lakewood. It's a suburb of Cleveland, situated just West of the city, on the Southern shore of Lake Erie. It's similar in many ways to Wauwatosa or the North Shore suburbs along Lake Michigan here in Milwaukee. Lakewood was and is a densely populated place. In fact, there were 1,000 students in my high school class. When I was ten, the mayor of Lakewood and some city council members persuaded my dad to run for city council against an entrenched but rather ornery incumbent. His name was Art Caney. Dad's campaign for the Ward 2 seat really became a family affair. We had our work cut out for us to raise my dad's name recognition and his platform. My parents, sister, and I worked really hard. I remember after dinner going out door-to-door, passing out yard signs and literature. It was fun. But when Election Day came there was a real nervous excitement in our house. Then I remember being at Lakewood's Republican headquarters on election night antsy for some results. After several tense hours, the moment came when a couple of the veteran council members who were watching the votes come in turned to my dad and said, “Dick, you've done it. You got it.” And it was really an exhilarating moment for an impressionable ten-year-old boy at that time.

My dad was good at his job, earning the trust of citizens and fellow council members. His

original question, we’re still thinking about it. And these guys are thought to have made a lot of contributions to actually answering it.

Student Response:

Rachel Seierstad: “I thought it was really interesting. I liked how they made it interactive. At the beginning they asked us what we thought made a country wealthy, but then they went on to pretty much disprove all of that. I thought that was really interesting and I appreciated all the data and statistics that they used. I think that made their talk really engaging and informative and trustworthy. I really appreciated that. I guess I am grateful that I live in a country with relatively good economic freedom. And I think I’m pretty privileged to have been born here. So I think even with all the faults the United States has, it’s still pretty good on economic freedom. So I feel like I have a pretty good chance of a good future compared to other countries.”



what is the current crush and push of society, and whatever the phone tells you [what] you’re supposed to think –whatever social media tells you. Religion often helps people just stand up and say, “I disagree. That’s wrong. I’ve got I’ve got a different set of ideas and values.” [...] Religion is often the thing that compels somebody to stand up and disagree. If you have a religious set of beliefs, you often don’t feel free to just modify, mold, [or] tweak your beliefs because that’s what’s popular right now. A lot of times, religious people are the ones who are most resistant to doing that. I think [...] it’s good to have that mix of ideas and to have some people who can’t just go along to get along [and] can’t just be molded by whatever the latest trend is in thinking.

Let me give you one example. We’ve got a case called Mahmoud. We represent some Muslim parents in Maryland. They’re litigating over the public school system in Montgomery County, Maryland, that is insisting on a pride curriculum for the pre-K students. These are the three- and four-year-olds. What they’re saying is that they insist on telling the three- and four-year-olds, talk[ing] to them about gender ideology, teaching them about pride parades, telling them that when you were born, the doctor only guest at whether you were a boy or a girl, but you know best and you should go think about it.

That’s what they’re telling the three- and four-year- olds in Montgomery County, Maryland. They have religious opt outs. You’re allowed to say, “You know what? For religious reasons, I want my kid to step out of that class.” They allow it for everything in the curriculum except the pride curriculum for the three- and four-year-olds. You can opt for high schooler or out of sex ed, but you can’t opt for three- and four-year-old out of being told that the doctor just guessed whether he was a boy or a girl. [...] Who are the people who are [...] standing up in big crowds outside of the school board? It’s religious people. In this case, it’s primarily Muslims and recent immigrant Ethiopian Orthodox Christians who are saying, “Hey, that’s my child. I have a right to at least know when you’re going to tell my kid that. And I have a right to pull my three-year-old out when you’re going to. Send them to the library.”

[...] I firmly believe that atheist parents, parents who object for other reasons, have every bit as much of a right to say I don’t want my kid in that room as the religious parents. The religious argument is actually stronger in the law, and the religious people are actually more likely to stand up and have to fight. [...] I predict, in the end, we will win that fight. And when we win it, we’re going to win it not just for the religious parents, but it’s going to be a win for the non-religious parents, too. That’s often the way religious liberty works.

[...] Religious liberty often protects not just the religious people. Again, the foundation for our human rights apparatus is really fundamentally religious, but, when you fight back on religious grounds, often you end up protecting everybody else, too. We’ve seen this in [...] [college] campus anti-Semitism, [and] campus protests this past spring. [...] We had a case against UCLA for assisting this protest and actually excluding Jews from parts of the center of their campus. And UCLA, not the kids, –the actual administration– actually set up the barricades and stationed security guards to send the Jewish kids away rather than letting them pass through. Terrible stuff. We brought a religious liberty claim there on behalf of three religious Jews, and we got a federal judge this summer to say that the behavior of UCLA was abhorrent and unimaginably bad. [...] That win didn’t just protect the religious Jews. It protected all the Jews.

We saw the same thing in Covid. If you’re paying attention to lawsuits, [...] what eventually broke the lockdown mandates? It was the religion case at the Supreme Court. We represented Agudath Israel, a Jewish synagogue. There was a parallel case for the Diocese of Brooklyn, where Governor Cuomo had rules like, if you’re on the trading floor, you can have as many people as you want up to some big number. But if you’re in a church, you can’t have more than 10 or 20 people. No matter how big it is. In DC, we had a version of this case. I teach at a Catholic university [and] there’s a basilica on the campus, and I think you can fit the Statue of Liberty in the basilica twice. [...] They just had these fixed limits for religion, so you could only get, I think, 25 or 50 people

in there. We did the math. If you had 50 people in that facility, each one would have a basketball court full of air to breathe. [...] If it was an exercise facility, if it was a gym, you could have had 750 people in. [...] That makes no sense.

Those lawsuits are what actually broke all of the stupid lockdown orders in Covid in late 2020 and early 2021. [...] They [the governments] just didn't think religion was important enough. But we won for the religious groups against the lockdown orders, the court said to the governments, "Show me the proof that it's more dangerous to go to church than to play blackjack." [...] You could go to blackjack tables for a lot longer than you can go to church. When the court demanded the proof in the religious liberty cases, without fail, the same thing happened. [...] Governments just backed away. [...] When the law made them prove why they were doing it. [...] The government would come in and say, "Okay, let me show you the proof of why religion is dangerous." They actually just said, "Okay, I give up," and so the religious liberty claim went first. It won, but it ended up freeing everybody.

I think if you are serious about liberty, you have to be serious about religious liberty. Not everybody's got to be religious, [...] but you don't have to be. If you're serious about liberty, you have to be serious about protecting religious liberty, even for people who disagree with you. [...] Any government that can stop you from worshipping God the way you want, that can force you to do things that you think are deeply wrong—that God commands you not to do—is not a just or a good government. Protecting religious liberty is part of what keeps this country good and strong and welcoming to people who are different from one another.

Student Response:

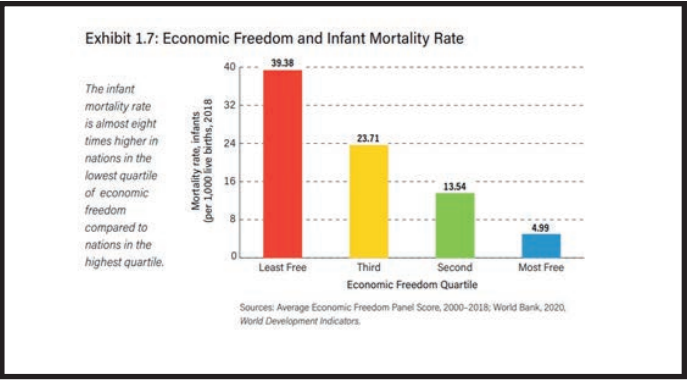
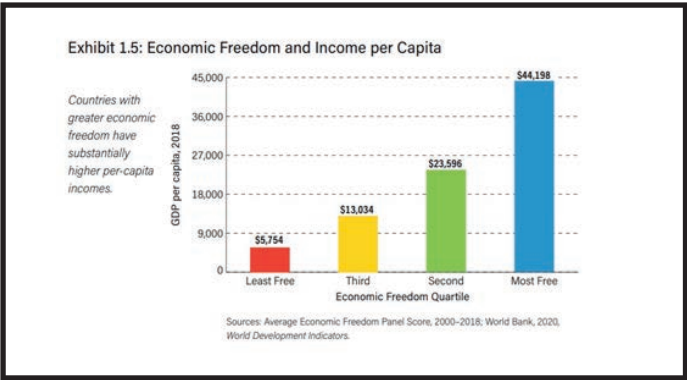
Michael Schweitzer: "I don't think you can have a truly free society unless you have religious liberty of some kind. [...] We couldn't hold Easter [during the COVID lockdown], and I remember Pastor Gilbert, my home pastor, being very angry about that. [...] There was a lot of disagreement specifically when it came to rendering what to Caesar is Caesar's, like, at what point do you say no more."



get the economic freedom stuff right. Look at the countries countries on the right over here. Anybody want to travel to the Congo with me for a study abroad experience? Or maybe Zimbabwe or Sudan? Probably not, right? Kind of dangerous places to go, many of them, right? And very poor.

So what the Fraser Institute does is rank countries of the world one through 165 and say which ones do well in these institutions and which ones do poorly. By the way, this is Venezuela, it is their lowest ranked country. Wouldn't you think somebody might fall below them that we investigated earlier? Cuba, and then who else? What about North Korea? Why aren't they on the list? Does anybody believe Kim Jong-Un's data that he would produce to the World Bank about what they're doing there? Of course not. So this needs to be come from real data, right? You need to be able to trust the data coming from the country.

So when Fraser does this, they put countries into quartiles, so 25%. The least free country in the world produced an average income of about \$5,700 per person. Just look at that. And the most free produced more than \$44,000. It seems like economic freedom works, right? Isn't that pretty obvious, the graph? I mean, it's clearly going left to right and up. What about life expectancy? People live on average at 65 in the unfree countries and over 80 in the most free countries. Or how about infant mortality? Remember, that's the measure of how many babies don't survive six months. So 40 of a thousand don't survive six months on average in the least free countries, and it's more like five in the most free, right? That's sort of an amazing statistic, but it does suggest that property rights, rule of law, free trade, all those things really matter.



And by the way, everybody thought it was about natural resources when we started, right? Everybody was thinking natural resources makes a lot of sense. What if it was about natural resources? Then what do you say to Singapore? Can you just develop natural resources? Can they just come out of nowhere? No, I don't know how they got there. God, nature, something, right? They are there somehow. God isn't stuffing more in the ground though, I don't think. But what about my list? The list that Mark and I showed you here, where do these things come from? Property rights, rule of law, regulations, sound money. Who creates those? Humans do that, right? We get to choose those, don't we? Those are the things that we get to control. So it seems like every country could replicate this if they wanted to, right? I think it's a hopeful story really. Think about Singapore. They have no natural resources and they're really, really rich.

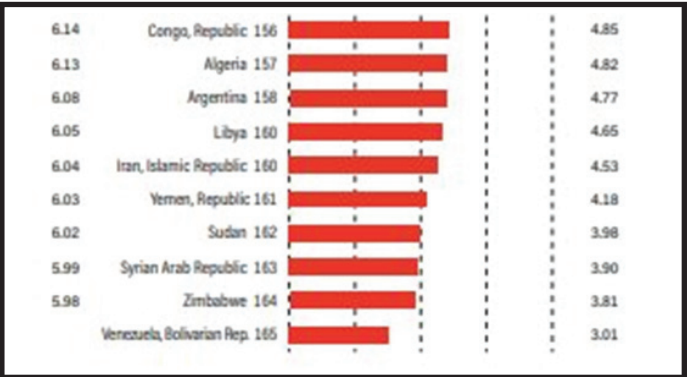
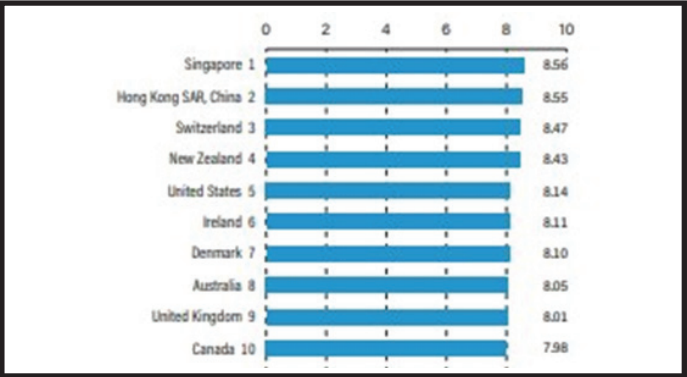
Interestingly, this year's Nobel prize in economics went to a couple of guys who thought about the same exact question. What makes countries rich and poor? They use, we use North and South Korea. They used Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Mexico, which are very different places with the same culture, the same location, the only difference being property rights, rule of law, right, in Mexico versus United States. One is a prosperous place; one is dirt poor. So, they really thought a lot about that. So they are being celebrated for, and I'll talk about them, we'll do our Nobel Prize event in the spring, and we'll talk a little bit more about what they did, but they really, it was the exact same question. They've helped us understand differences in prosperity between countries. Adam Smith's

political ads, I’d like to make some comments at some point of what we’re seeing on the news all the time, but Smith kind of set the stage. Smith was an extreme anti-monopoly person and he a big believer in trade. And he just gets it down to this nugget. “It is the maximum of every prudent master of a family, never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy.” Just common sense. “The tailor does not attempt to make his own shoes, but buys them from the shoemaker. The shoemaker does not attempt to make his own clothes, but he employs a tailor.” And do we need to make wine in Scotland? I don’t think so. I think we should buy the wine in France and then we should ship it to Scotland. I think that’d be much better. That’s reserved for David Ricardo, who points out to us the difference between comparative advantage and absolute advantage, which some of our candidates would brush up on.

The real natural resource out there, the ultimate resource is the power of people. It’s a really kind of a sad story with Mr. Thomas Malthus. He saw population expanding and he had the graphs. He shows corn production is flat. There’s no way; starvation is our future. And he’d even argued not to take care of the poor because we’re just prolonging all of our problems. “The power of population is so superior over the power of the earth to produce a subsistence for man that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race.” This guy’s a minister. So a very sad story, but we’d like you to meet Julian Simon who had a completely different story. He’s an economist at the University of Maryland, passed away a few years ago. “The ultimate resource is people.” This is back to Smith. You just get the conditions right, and the people will then figure out what to do. “The ultimate resource is people – especially skilled, spirited, and hopeful young people endowed with liberty – who will extort their wills and imaginations for their own benefit, and inevitably benefit all the rest of us.” That’s almost a substatement of Smith’s Invisible Hand. So there it is. Create the environment for this sort of thing. Just look at where things are with artificial intelligence, all this amazing stuff that’s going on right now. We’re talking about

big innovations in energy. Where does that come from? Whose plan was that? This stuff just tends to emerge from the creativity of people.

So these six principles that we’ve been talking about here: political stability, secure property rights, limited government involvement in economy, reasonable regulation, sound money, legal systems based on the rule of law, and freedom to trade, that together we call economic freedom.



Economic Freedom

So, who are the most economically free countries in the world and who are the least economically free countries in the world? We’re going to close with some data.

SN: There’s a group that Mark and I both work with actually in Vancouver, Canada, called the Fraser Institute. On the left, you’ll see a list of countries that do really well on this stuff. They have good institutions: free trade, rule of law, property rights, that kind of thing. Look at that list. Those seem like places maybe you’d like to go or you’ve been, just look at the ones, read the list over there on the left. Singapore, Hong Kong, Switzerland, New Zealand, the U.S., Ireland, Denmark, the UK, Canada, reasonable countries, right? Places you might want to visit? Those are the ones that

Mystery Nations: Why Are Some Nations Rich and Others Poor?

Transcribed by Temish Christiansen



The following is adapted from a talk issued by Mark Schug and Scott Niederjohn at Concordia Wisconsin for the 2024 Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit.

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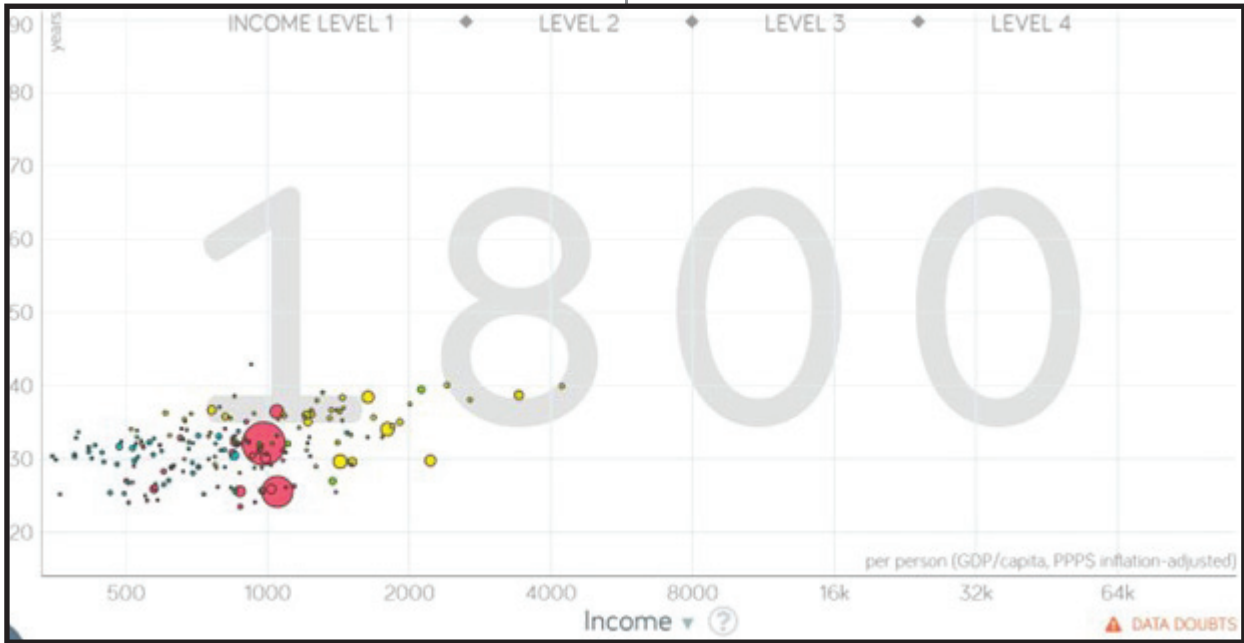
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Advice for Educators (Springer).

Dr. Scott Niederjohn: So let’s think about economic freedom and economics. The first economist was Adam Smith, right? And the name of his book was An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations. So he’s interested in what makes countries rich and poor. That was a question he wanted to answer. What makes countries rich and poor? I would actually love a few examples from the crowd here. So what do the rich countries have that the poor ones don’t? Why of things are they rich? Let’s get a little short list going that will keep in mind. Natural resources? What kind? Oil, you want oil on the ground, like maybe coal or minerals or things you can mine, diamonds? Would you want timber? Maybe you want farmland and things like that? So natural resources. Clean water. These sound right. Could the kind of government matter in terms of prosperity and what would be a good government to have for prosperity? What else? What other kinds of stuff would you want; natural resources, government, what else would matter? Maybe geography matters. Are you near a port, an ocean? Do you have a river? That’s that certainly makes a lot of sense to me. Anything else you might think thinking about? Maybe you’re wealthy because you extracted from others; you steal stuff. The Spanish module model, right? So colonialism and extracting things is a possibility. Tough neighbors. Yeah, so like peace might be helpful, right? And not being at war all the time might be nice. Culture, possibly; maybe some societies are prone to effort, hard work, creating prosperity. Okay, that’s probably good. We’ll check those a little bit later, I think. But natural resources, I heard culture, I heard geography, we’ll revisit those as we get going. Before we get there, I want to show you something.

When economists say wealthy, they mean a high gross domestic product per person, GDP per capita. What’s GDP? Dr. Mobley, we better get this right. What’s GDP in your class? Who’s taking Macro Economics? What is GDP generally? Gross domestic product, like production of goods and services. That’s what it is: how much a country produces per year. That’s the base of your income, right? Because the only way to make any income is to produce some kind of goods and services. If you divide that per person, you get a standard of living. Okay, that’s our general level of prosperity.

are the best off and people are living to 40 and living on four grand a year. Adjusted for inflation and also adjusted using this thing economists call purchasing power parity. They set prices, a constant across the world, using American prices. So it’s not because of low prices and it’s not because of inflation. Life was like that, short and poor. And if my axis went back to the time of Christ, the Bible, no difference, right? People generally live short lives in miserable poverty. That was life until relatively recently. Who do you think are the best off of these



Now, what you’re looking at up here is every country in the world in 1800 and their bubbles. So the bigger the bubble is, the bigger the population. And the color tells you the continent they reside in. There are like hundreds of things I could have plotted on this website. This is called Gapminder. I plotted life expectancy versus income per person. Can anybody see what life expectancy looked like in 1800? Like what would be a good life expectancy in 1800? See those numbers? That’s 40. So most countries on average will live to less than 40 in 1800. Because there’s no old people around? How do you get an average of 40? What was happening? Disease, dying early, children dying, war, right. And then can anybody read the numbers in the bottom? What was like a high income per person along there? This is 2,000, this is 4,000. So these countries

two? Who might these countries be? They’re yellow, so they’re in Europe. Who was doing well in 1800? United Kingdom, that’s one of them. People live to 39 on average and \$3,400 a year. Air conditioning, disease, infections. I went to the dentist yesterday, I can’t imagine what dental work was like in 1800. And then this is the Dutch. Those two big balls must be, if they’re in Asia, China and India. I’m gonna push play and we’re gonna watch the world update between then and now. And things thankfully get better. Dr. Mark Schug: And our question is, why did this happen? The thing you’re about to see, it’s gonna go by real fast. We’re gonna look at the 1918 Spanish flu. You’ll see a lot. And keep an eye on China, once Mao comes into power. We’re at 1850. A few people are moving around. Now we’re really in the industrial revolution here.

terrifically stolen.” I mean, how they ever are pulling this off with that disgraceful election is amazing. This is at the height of the hyperinflation in Venezuela. And what you’re looking at are empty stores. This is a line outside a grocery store. Look at this. These are empty refrigerators: “nothing” is what people have in their fridge. And this is about what they have in Cuba right now too, by the way. And some people would step out of line and just get put a, their number on the hand so they could sit down for a little while. And then when their number comes up, but they, this is how people were living under the hyperinflation in Venezuela today. And so, we need reasonable regulation. What does that mean?

Reasonable Regulations

Where are Indians poor? Indians as in people that live in India. Where are Indians poor – In India, everywhere else they go, they’re wealthy. So you’ve got this grinding poverty. No, it’s gotten better in India. India had the most unfortunate circumstance of becoming free from the United Kingdom in 1947, and then the hot button at that time was that socialism was the thing to have. And so they have a gigantic bureaucracy and gigantic regulation and gigantic ownership of the private sector, of what normally is the private sector. When Indians come to places like the United States, they’re on the top list of Unicorns. They come and they establish great businesses. A Unicorn is a billion dollar company. And they’re the top of the list. That’s a private company, not a publicly held company worth a billion dollars. With 66 companies, Indians topped the chart of nations of origin.

How long does it take to open a business? There’s a very famous John Stossel video where John tries to open a business in Hong Kong, and he gets his business open in half a day. He just gets a tax form and he sets up and he’s selling ABC stuff as he used to be with ABC news. So it took just less than a couple of days in the United States. It’s a little better. It’s not better, but it isn’t too bad. It’s around six, seven days, maybe about five days to get started. In India, about 20 days, that’s way better than it used to be. It used to be many, many more, more like a year to get

started in India. It takes over 220 days to start a business in Venezuela. In other words, would you ever start a business in Venezuela? Of course not. The government just won’t permit it. Try to start a business in Cuba. They absolutely won’t permit it. There’s a couple little restaurants in Havana that are private, but they’re always under threat. And now with the crisis on the energy grid, everything is just shut down in Cuba. The Cuban story doesn’t get told the way it should. They are very hardcore regime with almost no role for the private sector whatsoever.

Sound Money

We need sound money. So what some of you were looking at with Venezuela had to do with their hyperinflation. If you get 10 million in banknotes, in Swiss francs you can carry it in one case. If you do it in bolivars, it takes 14 trucks to carry it. When I was in Zimbabwe where they told me they were rich. Why did they say they were rich? Because they’ve got oil, because they’ve got gold and diamonds. So the people who are chasing me down the street while I’m trying to buy a couple of bills from them, just desperate poverty everywhere, are telling me that they’re rich. I’m gonna pass these around, Scott’s got some better ones than I do. Scott’s got a hundred trillion dollars. So you need some kind of a central bank. Maybe you need a gold standard. You need something to try and keep the currency under control to have to keep inflation under control. So that’s the next one.



Freedom to Trade

Once again, Adam Smith. We could have a lot to say about trade. For some of those

Political Stability, Property Rights, and Rule of Law

Does anybody want to start a business in Nigeria? What I created a map of there is numbers of kidnappings in the different areas. Will Amazon move to Nigeria and get their employees to move to Nigeria? Of course not. So you need some kind of normal political stability. You can't be in a civil war and it can't be a situation where you don't even feel secure in your own property, your own life.

Secure property rights. This is I think really hard for American kids because you're used to it, right? You own things, you can sell things, they're yours. Is it like that everywhere in the world? People feel secure in their property? Do they trust the government everywhere in the world? The police? Absolutely not. We did this program where we had a grant to go to Malawi, Africa and build an aquaponics farm. So it's a farm like we have over in CCES, actually. We could grow vegetables in the rafts, but you grow tilapia fish to fertilize the vegetables. That's the way an aquaponics farm works. So we are there with some students and with other professors to make this thing happen on some land in Malawi. And Malawi has lots of times when the power goes out completely. The Chinese built them a lot of hydroelectric power, yet they have a dry season. So it's not super helpful when the rivers are dry. So we then were able to get Kohler to dedicate or to donate a generator. So that's the story here. And I went home, I'd been home like two weeks and I got a call. And what do you suppose I heard on my phone call about my project here? "Generator stolen." And I'm an American naive guy. So what did I say? "Did you Call the police?" And they just laughed on the phone. "Yeah, right." They're part of it. They were paid off and they split the money. That's what happened. The US embassy had no interest in helping with this because they're not gonna get involved in like a local political issue. I would say property rights are not secure if you can't even have a generator without it being stolen, you can't even push the police to help you get it back.

MS: And this guy doesn't even own this

property, right?

SN: Yeah, that's funny. When we were going out to the property, we were with a gentleman who was an alum from our program. And he got a grant to do this program. And I asked him, "oh, you own this land, Patrick, is this your land?"

"Of course I own it, Scott." he said.

"You've got a title, a deed." He said, "Oh, no, no, no. I have a handshake deal with the local village elder." That's ownership in Africa. Does your bank take handshake deals with local elders for like a loan? Of course not. So he couldn't like do a real project with a loan from a bank. He had to use philanthropy, right? There was no way for him to ever get anything going. He didn't really own anything. He had no capital or collateral. And then you know, DeSoto who was a famous economist in Peru writes about that. And he basically says what the poor need in Africa or South America isn't more aid, it's private property rights. Because they'll figure stuff out. They'll become entrepreneurs. Why are businesses so small in South America? Because nobody owns anything. You're going to own a house. American entrepreneurs start by getting loans from their house, right? To start a business. If you don't own your house, you just squat, then you have no capital, right? And DeSoto says, give them capital, give them the opportunity to expand. It's not about aid, it's about property rights.

Limited Government Involvement in the Economy

MS: Okay. So these are the characteristics that we're measuring. Now this is the stuff that we're doing to explain why some nations are rich and some nations are poor. So you need some kind of political stability. You need secure private property rights, and then you need a limited role of government in the economy. As we're gonna do Smith again: "little else is requisite to carry a state from the highest degree of opulence, from the lowest barbarism than peace, easy taxes and tolerable administration of justice" as Scott said. The rest all comes about naturally. So you need a limited role of government. This is not this divide between liberals and conservatives. It's like: "welcome to Venezuela where elections are

Coming up to Spanish Flu. See that? Spanish Flu, right there. World War II is coming. Great Depression, now World War II. Now we're after the war. And look at where China goes.

SN: So first of all, I'm just amazed that this gentleman collected data on every country in the world for all these things since 1800, right? It's sort of an amazing data set that he's put together, but things have changed a bit. Now, fortunately we live in this upper quadrant, rich and healthy, people live. There's the United States here. People that lived about 80 and I think per capita income in the US today is more like \$80,000 a year. So way better. But then again, take a look here. Some are left behind. What continent do they all appear to be in? Africa. And so believe it or not, and this is hard for American students to believe, but today, today in Somalia, people live an average of 58 years. And look at that number at the bottom. They live on an average of \$630 a year. That would be the average income in Somalia adjusted for inflation. That's not American poverty – that's a whole different thing. Outdoor sewers, grinding poverty, right? Corrugated roofs. That's not the kind of poverty we have. Poverty issues here, but they're different than that. Right? That's a whole different thing. So the question in this presentation really is why, why did the countries over here forge ahead? What did they do right? What was different for them? That's the question. So let's talk about that

Wealth and Natural Resources.

MS: All right, so we're going to do a little activity that I'd like to walk you through. I'm going to show you some countries and with very, very limited data – that's part of the game. I'd like you to try to tell me whether they might be rich or poor or somewhere in between.

So here's Country A. Country A is about three-tenths the size of the United States. United States is a relatively big country, so is a relatively big country. Population of 43 million spread out over this pretty large land area. Lots of great natural resources, really fertile plains, zinc, lead, all that stuff, some petroleum, but really they've got great land, okay? So Country A, in your mind, is this a rich country or a poor country?

Here's Country B, about twice the size of California. California I think he has around 30 million people. This has 31 million people. Great natural resources, oil, natural gas, iron ore, gold, all kinds of stuff. Hydro power, diamonds, good agricultural land. Is this country going to be rich or poor?

Country C: this is a tiny little place. If you've been to Washington, D.C., you know you can walk the whole area. Well, this is 3.5 times bigger than Washington, D.C. So this is a tiny place crammed with 6 million people. And when you look it up in Wikipedia, it has zero natural resources, nothing. Are they rich? Are they poor?

Country D is twice the size of California. It has a large population of 186 million people. Vast resources. I mean, we got a lot of oil here. Lots of oil, tin, iron ore, lots of stuff, but we really have got we've got a lot of oil.

Country E – trick question. It's larger than the United States. There's only a couple of contenders for this. It has a kind of a small population of 35 million, but it's got huge, gigantic natural resources. It's got oil, it's got iron, it's got copper, it's got gold, it's got everything.

Okay, so those are my countries. So, A: is this country, three tenths of size United States, population of 43 million, great natural resources, fertile plains especially, is this going to be a rich country or poor country? This is the participation part now. So what do you say? How many people say rich? Okay, how many people say poor? How many say middle income? Well, you got a lot of people saying rich. Country B, about the size of California, 31 million great natural resources, especially oil, oil and gold and hydropower, all that stuff. Rich or poor? How many say rich? Lots say rich, anybody say poor? A couple. Doesn't look like it though. Okay. Country C, basket case, tiny, tiny place. No natural resources. Rich or poor? How many say rich? Couple tricksters out here. Anybody say poor? Yeah, I think so too. Country D, size of California, large population, 186 million, but man, have they got oil. Are they going to be rich or poor? How many say rich? Most people up with rich. And finally, Country E, is this going to be rich or poor? Lots of natural

resources here. Fairly small population. How many say rich? How many say poor? Most say poor.

Now we're going to find out who they are. So anybody guess who Country A is? It is Argentina. The fertile plains is what really kind of gives it away. Large population, 43 million relative to the size, it's actually kind of thin. Per capita income is \$23,000. So we don't know what that really means yet. So how does this compare worldwide? Let that \$23,000 roll around, that use that as a kind of a reference point. And life expectancy, 76 years, fairly high literacy rate. Infant mortality: 10 deaths out of a thousand births, so it's 10/1000. We'll find out if that's high or low.

Country B. It's Venezuela. The oil, right? 30 million population, but look what's happening with the per capita GDP. Look at this: in 2014, it was \$18,000, just a little shy of Argentina. Look over here. Now it's \$3,000. This has become an absolute basket case. 71 years life expectancy. They say the literacy rate is 96%, but look in their infant mortality rate is right up there at 12.5/1000. So Venezuela at one time was a kind of a wealthy country. Now it has become an extremely poor country. We'll talk more about Venezuela as we go.

Country C. Who's this? Who said Hong Kong? Hong Kong is the one we used to use, but now we use Singapore. And so, Singapore, 5 million, just about 6 million people. Look at the per capita GDP: \$102,000. This is a rock in the Pacific ocean. They have no, underline, no natural resources. And yet they're rich, extremely rich. So how on earth can that have happened? Live to be 84, 96% literacy rate and look at infant mortality, it is the lowest I think that we're going to see, 2.4/1000. So here you've got a place with no natural resources and is extremely wealthy.

And what about this place, Country D? Vast amounts of oil, with this large population. Any guesses? Who said Nigeria? Nigeria it is. And per capita GDP is \$5,000 with all that oil. See, there are 10 people that benefit from the oils. And then there's everybody else. Life expectancy, 54 years.

SN: Look at infant mortality though,

just think what that means. Look at that. 71 of a thousand is 7% of babies. You'd have a baby, you'd be terrified.

MS: Who's this, Country E? Canada, that is correct. So, now, this is Canada, 35 million people per capita income is probably a little higher than that, \$51,000. Good life expectancy, good literacy rate, good infant mortality. So we have a country with no natural resources that's very rich. And here we have a country with natural resources that's very rich.

And here's the United States. Per capita GDP is around \$70,000. We put that up just to kind of round out the conversation here. So the United States should be another case where a country has good natural resources and is also rich. So we have countries that have no natural resources that are poor. We have countries that have natural resources that are rich. I'm tending to think it's not natural resources. I think it's something else, and the natural resource thing becomes a distraction. And it concentrates the attention of the government on some resource that they think is gonna make them rich. And it makes 20 or 30 people in the country rich.



All right, so Scott, I've always wanted to take this trip with you.

SN: Yeah, right. This is a map of Asia, right? You can see that. Oh yeah, Mark, I think it'd be fun to get a cruise. We could go from Tokyo and then maybe see the coast of China, Taiwan,

to the Korean sea, and then come back to Tokyo. That would be a nice cruise. Any problem with my cruise though? Oh, shoot. This isn't an ocean, is it? There's Kim Jong-Un's house right there. So this is satellite image at night. The southern part, that's a country, South Korea, right? They've got a per capita income, much like France, Italy, something like that. What is North Korea? I'm not even sure if the CIA knows what it's like there, but probably, like Haiti, among the poorest places in the world. Is there any way that natural resources explains that? It's the same spot on the earth, right? Could it be geography? Hard to imagine. Culture. They're actually all Koreans, right? They were all same country until after World War II. So none of those are very satisfying answers, actually.

So this is just some information that came from the Economist magazine. People escape, no one goes into North Korea. They only try to get out. And when they get out, there's a university in Seoul that measures them. And their conclusion today is that the average North Korean is about three inches shorter than the average South Korean. How would that happen? Malnutrition. A natural reaction in the body is to be smaller if you're not gonna eat very much, right? That's good for survival. That's actually a picture of an American soldier on the left, a South Korean soldier on the right, and a North Korean soldier in the middle. So they're literally getting smaller, and the Chinese make their military uniforms, and we have data that shows they've been ordering smaller sizes over time, because the people are literally getting smaller.



And if that isn't bad enough, look at the differences in life expectancy. It's a little hard for you to read. In South Korea, people lived at well over 80 on average. It's in the mid-60s in North Korea. And that's just tragic really, if you think about it, the same people, same culture, same history, you live in the eighties, you meet your grandkids, see them grow up, live near sixties, you don't, right? That's like the stark reality of a short lifespan, which is what you get there. Some of you were there at this exact event two years ago where we had our keynote speaker Yeonmi Park come. She is a North Korean defector. So she escaped North Korea and she eventually got into South Korea. But first into China, and – it's difficult to even talk about this – really, being sold into sex slavery is how she got out originally. But then she escaped through Mongolia's desert and into South Korea. And then the liberating part of the story is she then goes to Columbia University in the United States and changes her life. So we had her on, you can look how tiny she is though, right with us up there, absolutely tiny. Talked about eating bugs and things like that. So, but it couldn't be natural resources, right? It couldn't be their culture. It wasn't a matter of being hardworking, right? Just let her out of there. She's hardworking. It was just hard to do anything in there.

Adam Smith on What Matters for Economic Success

So Adam Smith, the first economist famously said "little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice: all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things." So wealthy to poor. All you really need to be wealthy is peace – so general peace in your neighborhood, easy taxes – a reasonable level of government, and tolerable justice – I would call that rule of law. Everything else comes naturally. Humans will figure everything else out. We're smart. If we give us a little liberty, we'll figure some things out. So put a little stability.