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April 25, 2020: The Disenchantment of the Virus

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4/25/2020—I wrote a column about this—see below, but it is worth remembering what we are not seeing in this time of shutdown. There never was a national effort, or even much effort in houses of worship that I know about, to ask God to spare us or humanity from the natural calamity of the virus. People used to ask God to end droughts all the time. Why don't we do that? In one sense, this is sophisticated theology. God has his own plans. If God sent the virus, why ask him to rescind it? But, really, isn't this an indication that God, even if people say they believe in Him, has no impact in the world? People know that God cannot intervene in the natural affairs of the world. How many steps then to saying God is irrelevant? You never have to become an atheist. But you are certainly not a traditional believer in any monotheist tradition—as C.S. Lewis said, Christianity is one big miracle. There is another indication of the death of God—there never was a national day of fasting and introspection and repentance for the sin that brought on this terrible calamity. That failure has an environmental side—maybe humans really did bring on this virus in some sense. Maybe the Earth is responding to global warming. But the plagues of Egypt were brought on disobedience to God. That is something a traditional believer would have at least considered. Max Weber was right. We live in a disenchanted world. God is Dead.