

# SALVO

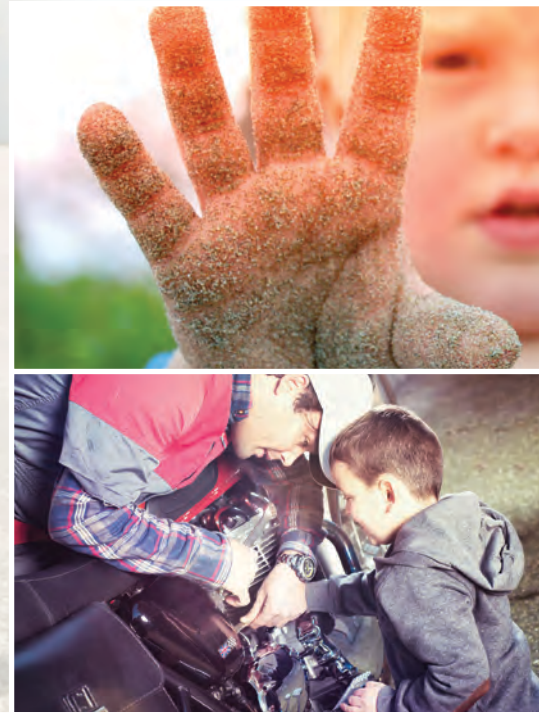
Issue 43 Winter 2017

Poison Control

5 Ways to Shield Our Sons from the Anti-Culture—

## A BOY'S LIFE

And Set Them Towards Healthy Manhood  
by Anthony Esolen



**Our Fight Against Unhealthy Sex Ed for Our Son (p.20) • The Cardillos**

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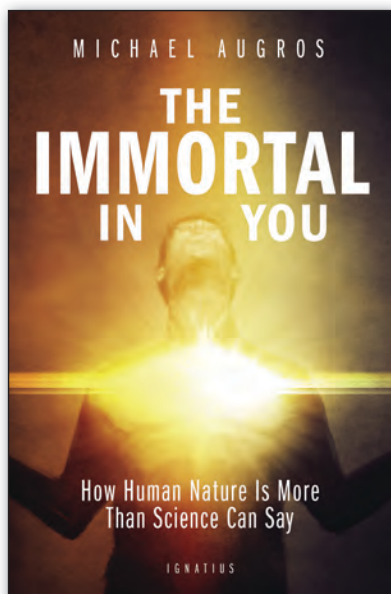
**How Robert Oscar Lopez Survived His Childhood (p. 56) • Terrell Clemmons**



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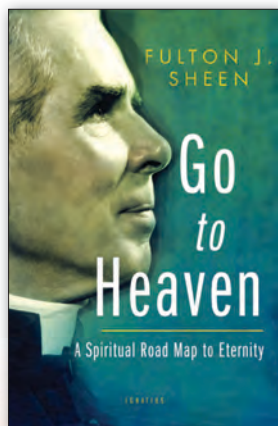
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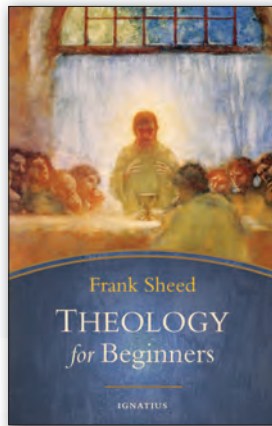
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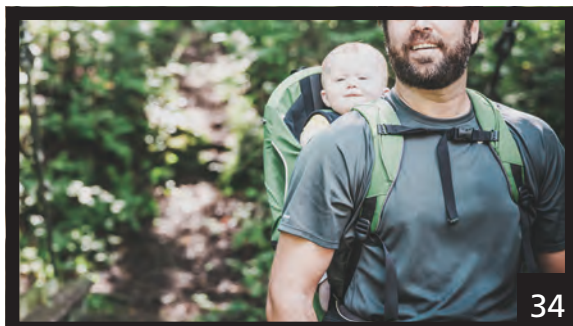
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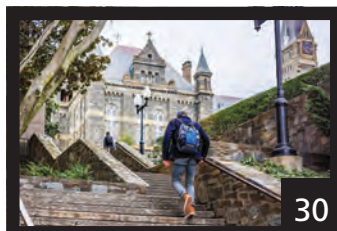
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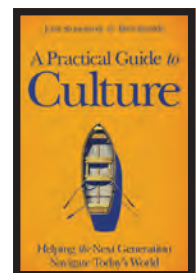
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## salvo n. (säl'vō)

1. A mental reservation
2. An expedient for protecting one's reputation
3. A forceful verbal or written assault
4. A group of shots fired simultaneously for effect

A publication of The Fellowship of St. James ([www.fsj.org](http://www.fsj.org)), *Salvo* is dedicated to debunking the cultural myths that have undercut human dignity, all but destroyed the notions of virtue and morality, and slowly eroded our appetite for transcendence. It also seeks to promote the Christian worldview. The opinions expressed by individual contributors are not necessarily those of the editors or publisher.

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## Winter 2017

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# Wreckers in the Dark

## Social Ills & Opposition to Safe Harbor Lights

by James M. Kushiner

In 2000 Bella Bathurst won a Somerset Maugham Award for her unusual book, *The Lighthouse Stevensons: The Extraordinary Story of the Building of the Scottish Lighthouses by the Ancestors of Robert Louis Stevenson*.

Lighthouses saved tens of thousands of lives during a time when sea transport was key to the economy of the British Empire. According to the *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles*, there are at least 33,000 known wrecks around the British coastline. In the late 1700s a campaign was launched to build lighthouses along the coast of England to guide ships away from treacherous waters.

In researching her book, Bathurst discovered something so surprising that it inspired further research and a subsequent book, *The Wreckers: A Story of Killing Seas and Plundered Shipwrecks, from the 18th Century to the Present Day* (2005). She learned that many coast dwellers in England, especially wreckers—as those who made off with shipwrecked goods were called—vigorously opposed the lighthouses and sometimes even resorted to sabotage. This was because they “had a vested interest in ensuring that ships continued being destroyed. Many coastal villages staked their livelihoods on the exotic plunder to be found in dead and dying ships; the wrecker saw their looting as a perk of nautical life and bitterly resented any attempts to interfere. . . . [W]reckers were furious at the prospect of a safer sea.”

Wreckers sometimes refused to aid a floundering ship and even



went so far as to place false lights to guide ships *into* danger. Sometimes they killed wreck survivors.

Moderns will shake their heads at the wreckers’ violence and opposition to the increased safety brought by lighthouses. Yet many people today oppose measures to make life’s seas safer for children because they benefit from child endangerment. Consider how many occupations are tied to the shipwreck of the modern family: no-fault divorce and child custody lawyers; mental health counselors; “comprehensive” sex education instructors; drug, alcohol, and sex addiction professionals—not to mention all the jobs related to the high crime and incarceration rates among men raised without fathers—and so on.

Is there an effective way to address such social ills? In an op-ed

appearing in *The (Philadelphia) Inquirer* last August, law professors Amy Wax and Larry Alexander suggest that “the causes of these phenomena are multiple and complex, but implicated in these and other maladies is the breakdown of the country’s bourgeois culture. That culture laid out the script we all were supposed to follow: Get married before you have children and strive to stay married for their sake. Get the education you need for gainful employment, work hard, and avoid idleness. . . . Be neighborly, civic-minded, and charitable. Avoid coarse language in public. Be respectful of authority. Eschew substance abuse and crime. These basic cultural precepts reigned from the 1940s to the mid-1960s. They could be followed by people of all backgrounds and abilities.”<sup>1</sup>

The benefits of such behavior are manifold: “Among those who currently follow the old precepts, regardless of their level of education or affluence, the homicide rate is tiny, opioid addiction is rare, and poverty rates are low. Those who [decide to re-embrace and] live by the simple rules that most people used to accept may not end up rich or hold elite jobs, but their lives will go far better than they do now. All schools and neighborhoods would be much safer and more pleasant.”

Now, you would think Wax and Alexander would be applauded for shining a clear light on our social maladies, but many have viciously denounced them. Their critics are furious at the prospect of making the seas safer for young people and prefer the perilous status quo. As before, the wreckers need to be opposed, and more lighthouses need to be built. *Salvo* strives to shine a light in dark places. ☺

### Note

1. [philly.com/philly/opinion/commentary/paying-the-price-for-breakdown-of-the-countrys-bourgeois-culture-20170809.html](http://philly.com/philly/opinion/commentary/paying-the-price-for-breakdown-of-the-countrys-bourgeois-culture-20170809.html).

## A Tale of Two Hurricanes

**P**lanned Parenthood responded to Hurricane Harvey in the same exploitative way it has responded to other natural disasters: by soliciting donations to fund free abortions. In 2005, when Abby Johnson was the director of a Houston Planned Parenthood, she did the same thing in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. But this year, as a pro-life activist, Johnson and her organization, And Then There Were None, responded

to Hurricane Harvey in a completely different way: by collecting items for pregnant women affected by the hurricane. As of mid-September, her group had amassed nearly \$20,000 worth of donated items, including 22,968 diapers, 38,409 wipes, 1,444 pounds of baby food, and 1,170 bottles of baby formula, not to mention hundreds of bassinets, bouncers, swings, and car seats, and over a thousand teethingers, toys, cups, and

feeders. The Houston Pregnancy Help Center joined the effort by becoming a distribution center, where displaced pregnant women and their families could get the items they needed at no cost. At least 150 families were directly helped through this effort.

Helping women get free abortions after Hurricane Katrina “was only adding to the heartbreak,” Abby said. “Now is our time to do something different, something truly helpful.” •

(Source: [lifesitenews.com/news/former-abortion-workers-amass-donations-for-pregnant-moms-hurricane-victims](http://lifesitenews.com/news/former-abortion-workers-amass-donations-for-pregnant-moms-hurricane-victims))



## Higher Ed in Lower Esteem

**A** survey released in July by the Pew Research Center shows that only 36 percent of Republicans think that institutions of higher education have a positive effect on the nation, while 58 percent think they have a negative effect. Those numbers were almost reversed a mere two years ago, when 54 percent of Republicans said higher education had beneficial effects and 37 percent said it had harmful ones. Of the five major institutions measured

by Pew—churches, banks and financial institutions, labor unions, the national news media, and institutions of higher education—only the media were viewed more negatively by Republicans than academia. Among those surveyed who also self-identified as conservative, only 29 percent had a positive view of the effects of higher education, while 65 percent had a negative one.

“Higher education has been progressively radicalizing for a long time, but recent events have brought

the extent of it into high relief,” said David M. Whalen, provost of Hillsdale College, a school with a conservative reputation. “It’s virtually beyond parody. Campus violence, suppression of speech and intellectual inquiry, and the rather haughty presumption of moral superiority undercut confidence that much of real value is going on there.” Whalen said he has noticed an uptick in the number of parents who send their children to Hillsdale to avoid colleges where conservative thought is met with ridicule, suppression, and violence. •

(Source: [washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jul/12/conservative-suppression-on-campus-turns-parents-a](http://washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jul/12/conservative-suppression-on-campus-turns-parents-a))



## PP Workshops Fall Short

**I**n August and September, Planned Parenthood set up training workshops in four cities—Charlotte, North Carolina; Phoenix, Arizona; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and Seattle, Washington—with the goal of training 1,000 volunteer activists to go into the 600 communities where it has facilities and talk up all the benefits the organization supposedly provides. Planned

Parenthood announced that it would train 250 volunteers at each location, but reports indicate that it drew fewer than 150 people to the Phoenix sessions, and that it failed to fill all the seats in the other cities as well.

For an organization that claims to have gained one million new supporters since the election of President Trump, not being able to draw a mere 250 to a

training session had to be a serious disappointment. For pro-lifers, even though there’s no denying that Planned Parenthood remains a formidable foe—and one that Congress just can’t seem to muster the will to defund—it is heartening to learn that, when it comes to getting people to actually put in some time and energy for its cause, Planned Parenthood does not have the degree of public support it claims to have. •

(Source: [stopp.org/article.php?id=15195](http://stopp.org/article.php?id=15195))



## Abortuary Surrenders

An abortion center in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, closed in September after being cited for numerous violations of health and safety requirements. The Pennsylvania Department of Health issued a 44-page deficiency report on Hillcrest Women's Center in March 2017, and when a follow-up inspection in June failed to show corrections, the department ordered the facility to suspend operations until it came up to code. Rather than do so, the center apparently chose to surrender its

license and close permanently.

Among the many violations listed in the deficiency report were the use of long-expired medicines and supplies, lax record-keeping, failure to meet staffing requirements, improper procedures regarding the use of anesthesia, inadequate monitoring of recovering patients, and failure to conduct legally required background checks on employees working with minors. The center also kept prescription drugs "in a manner that was accessible by unauthorized

staff and the patients."

Cheryl Sullenger of Operation Rescue said that ever since the notorious Kermit Gosnell case arose, abortuaries in Pennsylvania have been inspected more routinely. "It is gratifying to know that the enforcement process worked in the case of Hillcrest Women's Center," she said. "But the reality is that there was nothing out of the ordinary about the violations found at Hillcrest." The persistence of horrific conditions and practices at abortion facilities across America "illustrates the desperate need for greater enforcement," she added. •



(Source: [lifesitenews.com/news/horrific-practices-persist-abortion-facility-forced-to-close-after-44-pages](http://lifesitenews.com/news/horrific-practices-persist-abortion-facility-forced-to-close-after-44-pages))



## Parents Win Pronoun Showdown

At the start of the school year, Chloe Bressack, a 5th-grade teacher at Canopy Oaks Elementary School in Tallahassee, Florida, sent a letter to the parents of her students saying: "One thing you should know about me is that I use gender neutral terms. My prefix is Mx. (pronounced Mix). Additionally, my pronouns are 'they, them, their' instead of 'he, his, she, hers.' I know it takes some practice

for it to feel natural, but in my experience, students catch on pretty quickly."

Most parents, however, didn't want their children to be required to "catch on" to the use of incorrect and made-up pronouns in the service of gender ideology. Their phone calls and emails poured into the school office, where Principal Paul Lambert initially defended Bressack—ironically, by *not* using her preferred pronouns: "We support her

preference in how she's addressed, we certainly do," he said. "I think a lot of times it might be decided that there is an agenda there, because of her preference—I can tell you her only agenda is teaching math and science at the greatest level she can."

But parents persisted in voicing their objections, and in late September, it was announced that Ms. Bressack would be transferred to an adult basic education program, "effective immediately." •

(Sources: [frc.org/get.cfm?i=WA17J03&f=WU17J01](http://frc.org/get.cfm?i=WA17J03&f=WU17J01); [sacbee.com/news/nation-world/national/article174882166.html](http://sacbee.com/news/nation-world/national/article174882166.html))

## Transgenderism for Tots

Over 500 parents and activists attended a special meeting of the school board of Rocklin Academy, a California charter school, on September 18, to sound off on whether transgenderism was an “age appropriate” topic for kindergartners. Although the parents who stood at the microphone and answered that question with a resounding “no” outnumbered supports 3 to 1, in the end,

the board refused to let parents opt their children out of lessons on transgenderism.

Rocklin Academy parents had urged the adoption of a policy that (1) would require that parents be notified and allowed to opt their children out of any classes on gender identity, and (2) would ensure that their children’s right not to have to be in a “state of undress” in the same room as someone of the

opposite biological sex. But the board rejected this proposal, making only the meaningless concession that teachers would “endeavor” to notify parents when controversial topics were taught. In the face of the board’s intransigence, many parents decided to remove their children from the school. By late September, 73 children from 41 families had left. But the school has over 1,000 kids on its waiting list, so it isn’t clear how much the departures will affect it. •



(Source: [californiafamily.org/2017/charter-school-tells-parents-they-cant-opt-kindergartners-out-of-transgenderism-lessons](http://californiafamily.org/2017/charter-school-tells-parents-they-cant-opt-kindergartners-out-of-transgenderism-lessons))

## More STDs All the Time

Sexually transmitted diseases rose to an all-time high in the U.S. in 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in September. More than two million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were reported nationwide that year, “the highest number ever,” according to the CDC’s annual report. Most of the new cases (1.6 million) were of chlamydia, which affects both sexes. But men who

have sex with men (MSM) led in some statistics for gonorrhea and syphilis. For instance, MSM made up a majority of the syphilis cases, which increased overall by nearly 18 percent, and it was found that half of the MSM diagnosed with syphilis were also living with HIV.

Particularly distressing is the rate of increase in congenital syphilis cases—28 percent, which translates to more than 600 cases—among newborns. These led to “more than 40

deaths and severe health complications among newborns,” the CDC report said.

All three STDs can be cured with antibiotics, but if they remain undiagnosed and untreated, they can result in infertility, ectopic pregnancy, infant stillbirth, and increased risk for HIV. CDC spokesman Jonathan Mermin noted that “STDs are a persistent enemy, growing in number, and outpacing our ability to respond.” •

(Sources: [lifesitenews.com/news/sex-diseases-surge-to-record-high-in-u.s](http://lifesitenews.com/news/sex-diseases-surge-to-record-high-in-u.s); [cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p0926-std-prevention.html](http://cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p0926-std-prevention.html))



## Transgenderism & Self-Harm

According to a report issued by the pro-LGBT group Stonewall Scotland, 96 percent of the country’s transgender youth engage in self-harming behavior, including cutting themselves, and 40 percent have attempted suicide. “School Report Scotland,” which surveyed “the experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Scotland’s schools in 2017,” also found “incredibly high levels” of

mental health problems among transgenders.

Stonewall Scotland claims that bullying and social rejection are the cause of transgender self-harm and suicide and that having more “LGBT-inclusive” sex education programs in schools could curb these “alarming” trends. But former transgender Walt Heyer said this argument is “false and misleading.” “People who are emotionally, socially and psychologically mentally fit

do not attempt suicide,” he went on, so the reason 40 percent of transgender persons attempt it is “because they have serious mental disorders.” Moreover, these disorders remain “untreated before, during and after ‘changing’ genders, so the social and emotional disorders remain untreated also.” Heyer cited a major study showing that “at least 62.7 percent of individuals who identify as transgender are in a fact suffering psychiatric mental disorders.” •

(Source: [lifesitenews.com/news/96-of-transgender-youth-engage-in-self-harm-study](http://lifesitenews.com/news/96-of-transgender-youth-engage-in-self-harm-study))



## Trans Fertility: Freeze & Destroy

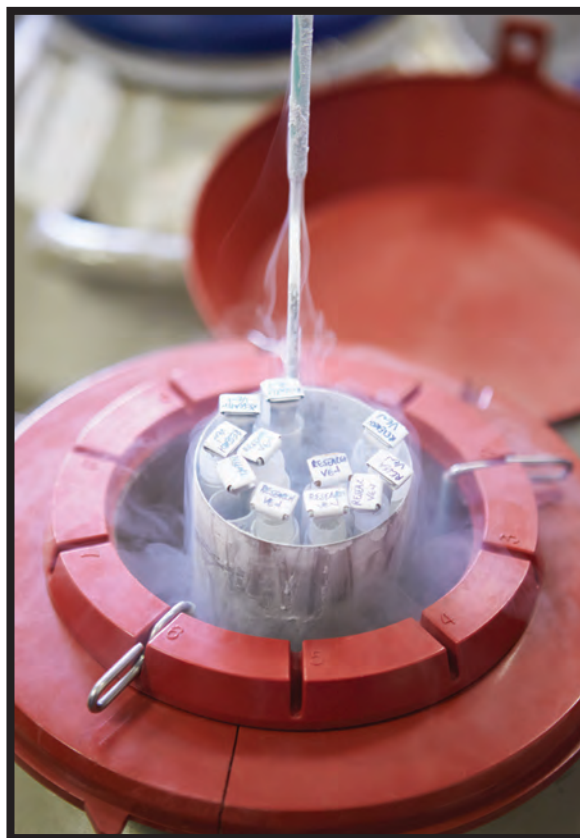
The U.K. *Daily Mail* reported in October that Britain's National Health Service (NHS) is paying for gender-confused boys as young as 12 to freeze their sperm so that after they "transition" to having no male genitals, they can still become biological fathers. It is also paying for gender-confused girls as young as 16 to freeze their eggs so that if they later undergo a hysterectomy as part of a "transition" sur-

gery, they could still become biological mothers. NHS clinics are freezing these gametes at a cost to taxpayers of \$530 (£400) for sperm and \$5,300 (£4,000) for eggs, with storage costs adding another \$400 (£300) annually to the taxpayers' bill. Once the sperm and eggs are securely frozen, the children begin taking puberty-blocking hormones to destroy their fertility.

Gary Butler, who runs a clinic for gender

dysphoric minors in London, defended the practice of freezing these teens' gametes at taxpayers' expense by declaring that "transgender people are not making a lifestyle choice," and then contradictorily adding, "They are following their biological and psychological make-up about their identity." He said that dozens of "trans girls" who attend his clinic are freezing their sperm. Earlier in the year, the *Daily Mail* noted that some 800 children and teens in Britain are receiving puberty blockers. •

(Source: [dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4937288/NHS-saves-sperm-transgender-teenagers.html](http://dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4937288/NHS-saves-sperm-transgender-teenagers.html))



## Sex-Change Retro a No-No

After initially awarding a professor a grant to study "de-transitioning" individuals—people who underwent gender reassignment surgery but then regretted it and want to change back to their biological sex—Bath Spa University in England revoked the funding after surprising early results from the study were deemed "politically incorrect."

In 2014, James Caspian, a psychotherapist who specializes in working with transgender individuals, had a

conversation with Doro-slav Djordjevic, a leading genital reconstructive surgeon, in which Djordjevic mentioned that the number of people who were coming to him to be changed back to their biological sex was on the rise. His patients, who come from all over the world, he said, experience depression, and sometimes have suicidal thoughts. "It can be a real disaster to hear these stories," he said.

This sparked Professor Caspian to launch a study on the extent of sex-change regret. Bath Spa University at

first agreed to fund his work, but later decided it was too risky to back "a potentially politically incorrect piece of research." Officials feared that criticism of the likely unpopular results, especially if posted on social media, would reflect back on the university and "be detrimental" to its reputation. So rather than risk the harm the posting of "unpleasant material" might do, they withdrew the funding. Apparently, political correctness matters more than helping people avoid making a tragic life-altering decision. •

(Source: [townhall.com/tipsheet/timothymeads/2017/10/01/british-professor-shows-sex-change-regret-is-rising-university-takes-away-his-funding-n2389308](http://townhall.com/tipsheet/timothymeads/2017/10/01/british-professor-shows-sex-change-regret-is-rising-university-takes-away-his-funding-n2389308))







## Sex Trafficking Exposed at UN

"Decriminalization of prostitution is the most monstrous, preposterous, counterproductive act we could possibly conceive," a prostitution survivor declared at a UN meeting on human trafficking on September 28. Rachel Moran, a victim of prostitution from age 14 until she was 22, condemned Amnesty International's support for "sex-work" and "pro-decriminalization" of prostitution during an event hosted by the 23 countries making up the Group of Friends United Against Trafficking and the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam). Moderated by former Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, this was the second human trafficking event they hosted in six months, reflecting the urgency of the issue and their frustration over the lack of progress. Panel chair Dr. Susan Yoshihara warned attendees that some of the material to be presented was deeply disturbing but necessary to see to understand the truth.

The event focused on child sex-trafficking, with discussions of such issues as the buying and selling of children on the Internet, child sexual abuse, and child pornography. There was also a presentation on the health consequences to victims of trafficking, which include suicidal thoughts and attempts, multiple abortions, and substance abuse.

The night before the meeting, two movies were screened: *I Am Jane Doe* highlighted the ongoing battle of American mothers against Backpage.com, a website where children are sold for sex and abuse. Congresswomen Ann Wagner has sponsored a bill to amend the 1996 U.S. law that gives blanket immunity to websites that sell children. The second film, *Liberated*, presented a shocking report on American teenagers' addiction to porn and sex. Its director, Benjamin Nolot, earlier released a documentary titled *Nefarious*, which was shot on locales in more than 19 countries to show that, all around the world, buying a child to rape is "as easy as ordering a pizza." In presenting *Liberated* he said, "We are fighting for the soul of a generation."

(Source: [https://c-fam.org/friday\\_fax/un-event-names-shames-purveyors-child-rape-trafficking](https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/un-event-names-shames-purveyors-child-rape-trafficking))

## Hate Trafficking at SPLC

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) likes to boast about its mission to "destroy" organizations it labels as hate groups—which include mainstream conservative and Judeo-Christian organizations. Its "hate list" has been treated as a valid resource by mainstream media outlets and even by branches of government, including the FBI and the Department of Defense (DOD), with the result that legitimate groups like the Alliance Defending Freedom have been branded as public menaces comparable to racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Last October 12 a *Newsweek* story carried the headline, "Donald Trump to Speak at Hate Group's Annual Event, a First for a President," the "hate group" in question being the Family Research Council, organizer of the Value Voters Summit. At least two near-fatal attacks have been perpetrated by men who admitted being influenced by the SPLC's hate list in choosing their targets.

Gradually, however, questions and doubts are being raised about the SPLC's own credibility. Last February, the FBI said it had removed data obtained from the SPLC from its hate crimes resources page, and in September, the DOD announced that it had removed all references to the SPLC in its training materials. And last summer, when it was revealed that the SPLC had moved tens of millions of its \$320 million endowment fund into offshore accounts, numerous eyebrows were raised.

Back in 2012, Terrell Clemmons exposed the duplicity and avarice of the SPLC in *Salvo* 23. But there have been numerous developments in the story since then, and now there is a website where people can go to keep up with them. SPLC Exposed ([splcexposed.com](http://splcexposed.com)) compiles both written and video stories and commentaries about the organization that seems to be more hate-mongering than hate-destroying. It's well worth a visit.

(Sources: [frc.org/get.cfm?i=WA17J18&f=WU17J06](http://frc.org/get.cfm?i=WA17J18&f=WU17J06); [newsweek.com/donald-trump-speak-anti-lgbt-hate-groups-annual-event-first-president-683927](http://newsweek.com/donald-trump-speak-anti-lgbt-hate-groups-annual-event-first-president-683927); [splcexposed.com](http://splcexposed.com))







## The Racism of Dr. Seuss

For National Read a Book Day last September 6th, First Lady Melania Trump sent a set of Dr. Seuss books to one school in each of the 50 states. But Liz Phipps Soeiro, the librarian at Cambridgeport Elementary in Massachusetts, said her school would not be accepting the gift because "Dr. Seuss's illustrations are steeped in racist propaganda, caricatures, and harmful stereotypes. Open one of his books . . . and you'll see the racist mockery in his art." Ms. Soeiro also said she was sending Mrs. Trump "a list of ten books . . . that I hope will offer you a window into the lives of the many children affected by the policies of your husband's administration."

Apparently Ms. Soeiro is unaware of the previous administration's attitude toward Dr. Seuss. In one available video, Mrs. Obama prefaces a reading of a Dr. Seuss book to children with the comment, "We love Dr. Seuss in our house." In another, President Obama tells a group of young adults, "Pretty much all you need to know is in Dr. Seuss."

(Source: [hotair.com/archives/2017/09/28/librarian-rejects-first-ladys-gift-dr-seuss-books-calling-racist-propaganda](http://hotair.com/archives/2017/09/28/librarian-rejects-first-ladys-gift-dr-seuss-books-calling-racist-propaganda))

## The Racism of Hard Work

Angela Putman, a professor at Pennsylvania State University–Brandywine, asserted in an academic paper published on September 28 that the notion, "If I work hard, I can be successful," is merely a product of white ideology. She laments that such "whiteness ideologies may be reproduced through a general acceptance and unchallenging of norms, as well as through everyday discourse from a wide variety of racial positionalities" (whatever they are), but also thinks that educators can help rectify matters by teaching students how to "resist perpetuating and reifying whiteness through their own discourse and interactions." Professor Putman, by the way, is white.

(Source: [townhall.com/tipsheet/timothymeade/2017/09/30/higher-academia-meritocratic-society-is-a-product-of-white-ideology-n2388692](http://townhall.com/tipsheet/timothymeade/2017/09/30/higher-academia-meritocratic-society-is-a-product-of-white-ideology-n2388692))



## Black Students Want Fewer Africans

After a black student at Cornell University accused a white fraternity member of assaulting him, the campus group Black Students United (BSU) gave university president Martha Pollack a list of twelve demands. Among calls for the fraternity to be shut down and for mandatory courses to be instituted on "issues of identity," including race, there was also a demand that Cornell Admissions "come up with a plan to actively increase the presence of underrepresented Black students on this campus." Such "underrepresented" students do not comprise blacks in general, however, but only those "who have several generations (more than two) in this country." Other blacks, particularly "international or first-generation African or Caribbean students," are "disproportionately represented" at Cornell, said BSU, and the university must work to rectify this imbalance.

(Source: <http://dailycaller.com/2017/09/28/black-student-group-complains-ivy-league-school-is-letting-in-too-many-african-students>)

## Only Bad Parents Own Guns

Shortly after the mass shooting in Las Vegas, David Frum of *The Atlantic* made a guest appearance on MSNBC's *The Last Word*. After telling host Lawrence O'Donnell that "there is something very wrong with the American gun culture" and that this needed to change before "technical fixes" to guns laws could accomplish anything, Frum suggested that the best way to reduce Americans' support for gun rights would be to drill into their heads the idea that gun ownership "is just dangerous to themselves, to their children; you're not a good parent if you have a gun in the house; you're not protecting your family; you're a bad parent if you have a gun in the house."

(Source: [townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2017/10/08/atlantic-editor-youre-a-bad-parent-if-you-own-a-gun-n2392118](http://townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2017/10/08/atlantic-editor-youre-a-bad-parent-if-you-own-a-gun-n2392118))





# Porn Planet

## The Statistics Are Out of This World

by Heather Zeiger

Let's imagine that an alien is visiting earth incognito to study human behavior before sending ambassadors to make the first formal contact with us. One of the first things he notices is that the Internet is an important part of human existence, being used for a wide variety of purposes, including obtaining news and information. But the alien also finds that 35 percent of all downloads are of something called pornography.<sup>1</sup>

The alien decides to look at some data from the most popular porn website to better understand humans' interactions with pornography. This website, he discovers, receives 64 million visitors each day, the equivalent of 729 visitors every second. During the earth year of 2016, humans watched 92 billion videos from this site, an average of 12.5 videos per person on earth. This adds up to 4.6 billion hours of pornography watched in a single year, the equivalent of 524,641 earth years, or more than 5,000 centuries' worth of pornographic footage.<sup>2</sup>

The vast majority of the footage shows male aggression toward females in the forms of physical violence and abusive language. Women in their twenties often portray teenage girls in these films, and, sadly, actual children are often featured in porn videos.

When the alien submits his report to his supervisors, what else will it say about humans and pornography?

### Economics:<sup>3</sup>

- Globally, pornography is estimated to be a \$97 billion/year industry.

- The U.S. accounts for \$12 billion of that total.
- Child pornography is a \$3 billion/year industry.

### Prevalence (U.S.):<sup>4</sup>

- *Men:* 81 percent of teenaged and young adult men have looked at porn, and 67 percent do so monthly. 65 percent of men over 25 have looked for porn, and 47 percent seek it out monthly.
- *Women:* 56 percent of women under age 25 have looked for porn, with 33 percent doing so monthly. 27 percent of women over age 25 have looked for porn, 12 percent monthly.
- *Internet exposure:* 71 percent of young adults say they come across porn on the Internet at least once a month, even if they are not looking for it, and almost 50 percent say this happens weekly.
- *Messages:* 62 percent of teens and young adults have received a sexually explicit image, and 41 percent of this age group have sent one.

### Moral Views (U.S.):

- *Overall:* According to a 2017 Gallup poll, 36 percent of people find pornography morally acceptable.<sup>5</sup>
- *Among the young:* According to a Barna study, among teens and young adults, only 32 percent say viewing porn is usually or always wrong.<sup>6</sup>
- *Men versus women:* A 2015 Gallup poll found that 43 percent of men thought viewing pornography was morally acceptable, but only 25 percent of women thought so.<sup>7</sup>

### Violence & Escalation:

- *Child porn:* According to the FBI, one website on the Tor server (used for anonymity) had 1.3 million images depicting children





subjected to violent sexual abuse. Another child porn site was found to have 200,000 registered users. This site was accessed 100,000 times during one 12-day period.<sup>8</sup>

- **Abuse of women:** In a 2010 study of 50 popular pornography videos, it was discovered that 88 percent of the scenes contained physical violence and 49 percent contained verbal aggression. 95 percent of the victims (mainly women) appeared to have either a neutral or a positive response to the abuse.<sup>9</sup>

- **Personal application:** 36 percent of young adults watch pornography for tips on things to try in their own sexual relationships.<sup>10</sup>

- **Escalation to more extreme material:** In one study, 49 percent of men who used pornography regularly reported looking at material that they previously either had no interest in or had found disgusting.<sup>11</sup>

## Sexual Dysfunction:

Prior to 2006, erectile dysfunction in men under age 40 was rare. However, several studies show that since 2006, when pornography became widely available online, erectile dysfunction has increased significantly, including in men as young as 18. Such studies indicate

that addiction to Internet pornography has the same neurological indicators as drug addiction and that this is probably not unrelated to the fact that pornography addiction strongly correlates with sexual dysfunction.<sup>12</sup> On the positive side, it was found that individuals who stopped using pornography as part of their treatment for pornography addiction often found that their sexual dysfunction went away as well.

A survey was conducted in 2014 at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, primarily among military personnel, to study the incidence of pornography-induced sexual dysfunction among people aged 20 to 40.<sup>13</sup> Based on responses from 314 men and 48 women, the study found:

### —Men:

- 81 percent viewed pornography at least some of the time.
- 27 percent experienced sexual dysfunction,<sup>14</sup> of whom:
  - 22 percent of men who preferred intercourse to pornography had some sexual dysfunction.

—31 percent of men who used pornography with intercourse reported dysfunction.

**... This adds up to 4.6 billion hours of pornography watched in a single year, more than 5,000 centuries' worth of pornographic footage.**

—79 percent of men who preferred masturbation with pornography reported having sexual dysfunction.

### —Women:

- 38 percent viewed pornography at least some of the time.
- 52 percent experienced sexual dysfunction,<sup>15</sup> although no significant correlation was found between their dysfunction and pornography use.

## Pervasive & Devastating

In short, our hypothetical alien would find that pornography is pervasive in our culture, and that, even though some say that involvement with it is a personal choice, it has devastating consequences for society. ☹

### Notes

1. "18 Shocking Stats About the Porn Industry and its Underage Consumers" (Sept. 5, 2017): <http://fightthenewdrug.org/10-porn-stats-that-will-blow-your-mind>.

2. Sage Lazzaro, "9 Crazy Stats That Prove We Watched a Whole Lot of Porn in 2016," *The Observer* (Jan. 6, 2017): <http://observer.com/2017/01/pornhub-stats-data-2016>. For a family-friendly reference that does not consider pornography normal or excusable, see Tim Challies, "10 Ugly Numbers Describing Pornography Use in 2017" (Apr. 11, 2017): [challies.com/articles/10-ugly-and-updated-numbers-about-pornography-use](http://challies.com/articles/10-ugly-and-updated-numbers-about-pornography-use).

3. "18 Shocking Stats," note 1.

4. "The Porn Phenomenon," The Barna Group (Feb. 5, 2016): [barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon](http://barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon).

5. "Americans Hold Record Liberal Views on Most Moral Issues," Gallup News (May 11, 2017): [gallup.com/poll/210542/americans-hold-record-liberal-views-moral-issues.aspx](http://gallup.com/poll/210542/americans-hold-record-liberal-views-moral-issues.aspx).

6. "The Porn Phenomenon," note 4.

7. "Men, Women Differ on Morals of Sex, Relationships," Gallup News (June 19, 2015): [gallup.com/poll/183719/men-women-differ-morals-sex-relationships.aspx](http://gallup.com/poll/183719/men-women-differ-morals-sex-relationships.aspx).

8. "The Scourge of Child Pornography," FBI News (Apr. 25, 2017): [fbi.gov/news/stories/the-scourge-of-child-pornography](http://fbi.gov/news/stories/the-scourge-of-child-pornography).

9. "How Consuming Porn Can Lead to Violence" (Aug. 23, 2017): <http://fightthenewdrug.org/how-consuming-porn>

can-lead-to-violence. The abstract to the original study can be found at [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20980228](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20980228).

10. Challies, "10 Ugly Numbers," note 2.

11. Brian Y. Park et al., "Is Internet Pornography Causing Sexual Dysfunctions? A Review with Critical Reports," *Behavioral Science* (Aug. 5, 2016): [mdpi.com/2076-328X/6/3/17/htm](http://mdpi.com/2076-328X/6/3/17/htm).

12. Ibid.

13. Neil Osterweil, "Porn use linked to erectile dysfunction," *Medscape* (May 14, 2017): <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/879982>.

14. As defined by a score of 25 or less on the International Index of Erectile Function.

15. As defined by a score of 26.55 or less on the Female Sexual Function Index.

Let's imagine:

If aliens came to earth to study how humans use their internet,

they would find that . . .

**35%**

of all downloads are of pornography

One of the most popular pornographic websites has

**64 million** visitors each day

the equivalent of **729 visitors** every second

That's the equivalent of **524,641 earth years**

of pornographic footage watched in a single year!

In 2016, humans watched

**92 billion**

videos from this site,

an average of **12.5 videos** per person on earth

This adds up to **4.6** billion hours of pornography watched in a single year.







# Physicist Limited

## Neil deGrasse Tyson & the Conflation of Physics & Pretentious Philosophy

by Terrell Clemmons

### Background:

A star-gazer by age nine, Neil deGrasse Tyson graduated from the Bronx High School of Science, then went on to earn a B.A. in physics from Harvard and a Ph.D. in astrophysics from Columbia University. He has since received twenty honorary doctorates and more commendations than a one-page article can list, including *People* magazine's "Sexiest Astrophysicist Alive."

He's hosted PBS's *NOVA ScienceNOW*, the science-comedy hybrid *StarTalk*, and the 2014 remake of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos: A SpaceTime Odyssey*, to name a few, and has so far written eleven books. Since 1995, he has served as director of the Hayden Planetarium at the Museum of Natural History in New York City.

### Reason for Surveillance:

Tyson is an excellent communicator, blending astrophysics and science history with cool graphics and folksy lingo. When he sticks to science, he's delightfully informative and really good at making the complex understandable. The problems come in when he laces science with bad philosophy and spins out righteous indignation over those "others"—meaning the unenlightened who hold other viewpoints, scientific, philosophical, or political.

Tyson rightly encourages intellectual humility. Here are a



few things he admits that he and science are ignorant on:

- We don't know how the universe came into existence.
- We have no idea what happened before the beginning.
- We don't know what happened just after the beginning.
- We don't know how life got started.
- Most of the universe is made of stuff about which we are clueless (e.g., dark matter and dark energy).
- After the laws of physics, everything else is opinion.

"Ignorance," he writes in his most recent book, *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry*, "is the natural state of mind for a research scientist." This is all well and good and consistent with epistemic humility.

But at the same time, he's waging a war on "ignorance," by which he basically means non-materialism in science. At a 2006 symposium called "Beyond Belief: Science, Reason, Religion & Survival," Tyson waxed apoplectic over data showing that 15 percent of America's elite scientists profess

belief in a personal God. This is a deep challenge, he stresses to his colleagues. The question they should be asking is, "How come this number isn't zero? . . . They should be the subject of everybody's investigation. [This matter of scientists believing in God] is something that we can't just sweep under the rug."

### Most Egregious Dishonesty:

Tyson has also constructed an inaccurate and dishonest case against ID. He rightly notes that some of the greatest minds in science believed in God. But he wrongly claims that their religion closed the doors to scientific discovery. (His 2014 *Cosmos* series—watched by millions of viewers—was roundly criticized for rewriting history in order to promote the warfare myth—the idea that religion has opposed science.) By this route he imperiously asserts, "Science is a philosophy of discovery. Intelligent Design is a philosophy of ignorance."

Even granting that Tyson is using the word "ignorant" in two different contexts, it is clear that he aims to label ID as science-stopping ignorance. I see two possible routes he could have taken to draw his conclusion: Either (1) he has not familiarized himself with ID by seeking to understand the scientific arguments its theorists present, or (2) he understands ID and knowingly misrepresents it. The former is delinquent scientifically; the latter is delinquent morally. Neither reflects well on Tyson or bodes well for his followers.

I don't necessarily agree that after physics, everything else is opinion. But either way, Tyson would do well to study some good philosophy. And to learn the difference between physics, facts, and his own pretentious opinions. ☺



# Revolution 101

## How the “New Civics” Is Fomenting Civil Unrest

by Terrell Clemmons

Imagine you have a daughter who’s a bright, big-hearted high-school senior. Your straight-A idealist has been diligent about submitting her college applications, and she can’t wait to immerse herself in service-learning and civic engagement in pursuit of a degree in Nonprofit Management. You peruse the school’s website and see that service-learning is a new, community-engagement pedagogy, integrating “meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” Projects are often collaborations between faculty and community partners, such as public agencies or non-governmental organizations. Applying course content to community-based activities, service-learning projects give students experiential opportunities in “real world contexts.”

That all sounds good, you think. Sure, reality will probably chip away some of your daughter’s youthful idealism, but hey, in an era of protests and campus anarchy, what’s not to like about community service and civic responsibility?

Unfortunately, there may be a lot not to like about it. And once her coursework gets underway, you’ll probably need some help making sense of what is going on with it.

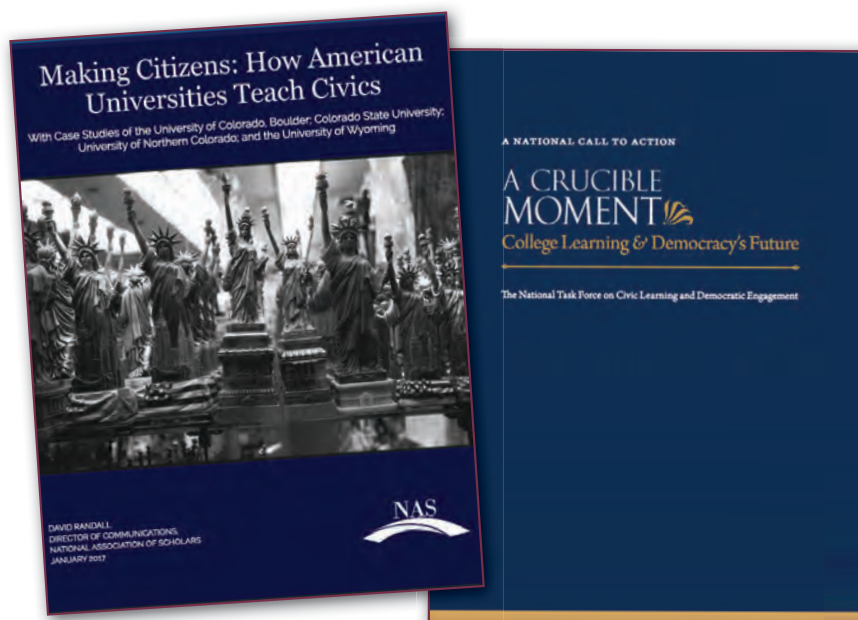
### Classical Civics: What It Was

First, some background. Civics education traces back to the Greeks, with the ideal of the *civitas*, the city. Notre Dame Constitutional Studies professor Patrick Deneen says that a *civitas* was “a particular

place with a particular history and particular polity.” Civics education, then, was “education in citizenship.”

It has traditionally had three components: (1) education in the history of the place and its people, including the civilization from which it arose; (2) education in the political structures—the role of the citizen, the rules (laws) citizens live by, and how they’re collectively agreed to; and (3) education in virtue, in the understanding that virtue is required of citizens, since governance of *oneself* and one’s passions is a necessary prerequisite for participation in collective self-governance. The goal was to teach people how to be free *citizens* rather than *subjects*, and how citizens could *preserve* political self-governance without usurping the rightful liberties of others.





During America's first century, civics wasn't an academic subject *per se*, but rather was blended in with and covered throughout education in general. Many reading assignments, for example, consisted

**The NAS's recommendations are severe. The New Civics must be "removed root and branch from higher education." Because it is ideologically bound, whole cloth, to radical-left politics, it "cannot be reformed; it can only be dismantled." The report gives specific steps to take toward that end, but it also forewarns that enormous reservoirs of bureaucratic power sit ready to defend it. This will be a long and difficult extrication.**

of historical documents and letters related to America's background, founding, and structure.

### **The "New Civics"**

Unfortunately, the "New Civics," of which service-learning and civic engagement are capstone concepts, is a whole different animal. To break it all down, the National Association of Scholars (NAS), a network of scholars committed to academic freedom and excellence in higher education, has produced a comprehensive report on it. Published in early 2017, *Making Citizens: How American Universities Teach Civics* is available in book form and can be downloaded for free at [www.nas.org](http://www.nas.org). It spells out exactly what the New Civics is, traces where it came from, demonstrates to what extent it has already taken hold, and draws out

the goals toward which it is moving. The whole package, including appendices and four case studies, clocks in at nearly 500 pages, but the report itself (less than 200 pages) is clear, digestible, and concise without forgoing specifics.

• **What it is:** The New Civics presents itself as a pedagogy of volunteerism and good works, many of which are noble, altruistic endeavors in themselves. But with political activism at the center of everything students are encouraged (if not expected) to do, the New Civics shamelessly remakes civics in the image of progressive, leftist politics. Students basically get trained to think of good citizenship as progressive activism. This takes place in the classroom, in student life and extra-curricular activities, and then beyond campus in a plethora of off-site projects where service-learning effectively becomes vocational training in progressive activism. And for much of this "volunteering," the student receives college credit.

• **Where it came from:** Beginning in the late 1800s, all of education, including civics, evolved under the influence of John Dewey, to whom education was not a means of imparting truth to the next generation but rather was an instrument to be used for social change. After decades of this preparatory softening, the New Civics sprouted in the hotbed of 1960s' rebellion. Then, in 1985, after many of the 1960s' rabble-rousers had settled into cushy positions in universities, Campus Compact was founded to foster student volunteerism and community service. However well-intended it may have been, Campus Compact quickly became a channel for funneling money into activism under the benign labels of service-learning and civic engagement.

In 2012, the New Civics took a quantum leap forward with the

publication of *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future*, a 136-page "National Call to Action" from the Association of American Colleges & Universities. *Making Citizens* refers to and discusses *A Crucible Moment* at length, but here it suffices to say that this call to action's goals for "college learning" and "democracy's future" are virtually indistinguishable from the left's political agenda.

**"Street politics" has more in common with a banana republic than with classical civics. Academia has been grossly politicized for decades, but it's bordering on political incest when public funds are channeled through public universities into direct funding of political agitation for college credit.**

- **Its reach:** According to the NAS report, the New Civics has metastasized, not just throughout academia but also into a whole network of community organizations and nonprofits that, with help from the U.S. Department of Education, fund, regulate, and administer New Civics programs. The report documents a veritable orchard of bad fruit, but there's no need to list any here. You already know many things are amiss in academia, and anyone can see the irrational protests and campus chaos. What we are seeing is the New Civics coming to fruition.

- **Where it's headed:** A *Crucible Moment* outlines immediate plans to make New Civics classes mandatory throughout the country, to make every class "civic," and to require every teacher to be "civically engaged," which includes factoring "civic-

mindedness" into tenure decisions. "In short," reports the NAS, "they want to take over the entire university. After that, the New Civics advocates want to take over the private sector and the government as well."

### Revolution by a Thousand Protests

Don't laugh that off. They've already taken over a lot of the university, and that's not all. New Civics is cropping up in high schools too, and its advocates are laying the groundwork to go global. Note that New Civics is not an *addition* to the Old but rather a *replacement* for it, using existing

funding, channels of dissemination, and terminology. You could call it a wholesale imposture. Hijacked labels include "community service," "community studies,"

"student engagement," "student leadership," "social responsibility," "global learning," "global civics," among others, including the shameless "get out the vote" initiatives and, of course, the all-encompassing phrase "social justice." After a while, the terms start to run together like so much bureaucratese out of *Atlas Shrugged* or *1984*.

It would be one thing if the *ideas* underlying the New Civics and these service-learning projects were openly articulated, debated, and evaluated in the classroom, but generally they are not. Rather, the divide-and-conquer grievances of white privilege, sexism, income inequality, lack of access to quality health care, and the like, along with looming natural catastrophes produced by climate change and environmental degradation, just *are* the urgencies of the day. And the boilerplate, ill-defined anodynes we hear *ad nauseum*—equality, inclusion, diversity, sustainability, and the like—these just *are* the self-evident remedies. And if you don't see it that way, well, your consciousness just hasn't been raised to their level. *You are* the problem.



Students protest the College Republicans student group in Minneapolis, Minnesota



New Civics “civic engagement” basically reduces to a protest for every occasion. “The point of the New Civics,” writes David Randall, chief author of the NAS report, is “to create a cadre of permanent protestors, and justify their agitation as ‘civic.’”

But this “street politics” has more in common with a banana republic than with classical civics. Academia has been grossly politicized for decades, but it’s bordering on political incest when public funds are channeled through public universities into direct funding of political agitation for college credit. It’s not insignificant that *A Crucible Moment* was paid for, “at least in part,” according to the document itself, with federal funds. It’s as if the drivers of the New Civics no longer know the difference between education, civics, and progressive politics.

## Recommendations

The NAS’s recommendations are severe. The New Civics must be “removed root and branch from higher education.” Because it is ideologically bound, whole cloth, to radical-left politics, it “cannot be reformed; it can only be dismantled.” The report gives specific steps to take toward that end, but it also forewarns that enormous reservoirs of bureaucratic power sit ready to defend it. This will be a long and difficult extrication.

Meanwhile, everyday citizens who don’t want to see the next generation reduced to subjects should bone up on and support traditional civics. The website of Hillsdale College in Michigan is a great go-to place for online courses. In addition, people should watch their local universities closely, and call them to account whenever they see political acts being incited under the guise of education. Parents and alumni



Artist's rendering of the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution

should pay attention to their children’s schools and their alma maters and stop all donations to institutions where politics are confused with academics. Tell the universities why you’re doing this, and educate anyone and everyone on this matter where you can.

## Revolutions, Rational & Irrational

It is unfortunate that the American and French Revolutions are commonly viewed as analogous, because the two movements were based on and carried out according to completely different philosophical foundations. The founders of America drew from Enlightenment ideals without rejecting the basic tenets of the biblical worldview: there is a God; people are fallen; and attempts should be made to resolve disputes with reasoned arguments before resorting to violence. They wrote deeply philosophical treatises delineating their particular grievances against the mother country in the hope of reaching a peaceful and mutually satisfying resolution. When war broke out, it was because King George III rebuffed their appeals and became the aggressor.

The French Revolution was a whole different animal. It, too, drew from Enlightenment ideals but summarily dispensed with God as the foundation of reason itself. No treatises or carefully argued bills of particulars were presented on July 14, 1789, when a mob of angry Parisians stormed the Bastille, the event which set off a decade of violence, bloodshed, and social dissolution ending in the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte. Bizarrely, all of it took place under the banner of “*Liberté! Égalité! Fraternité!*”—“Liberty! Equality! Brotherhood!” Notably, the French themselves downplay this unsavory aspect of their own history by commemorating July 14 as French National Day, rather than Bastille Day, as it’s referred to outside of France.

Semantics aside, inciting the passions of young idealists for political purposes is nothing new. The Nazis exploited their young people with the Hitler Youth, and Mao Tse-tung with his Red Guard. The difference between these movements and the New Civics is only one of degree, not of kind. Political protest for college credit is a civics revolution America can do without. ☺



## Peter & Theresa Cardillo

### Concerned Parents Fight Against Unhealthy Sexual Advice for Pre-Teens

*For its initiative and courage, Salvo is pleased to commend the following letter, written by the concerned father of a 7th-grader to his fellow parents of students in the local middle school.*

#### Dear Parents of Middle School Students:

There is a magazine in the school media center entitled *Sex, etc.* In September, I went to the public school board meeting to request that this publication be removed from the center, thinking its presence was a slip-up that had somehow escaped notice. I read aloud some of the content you'll find below, and was told that it would take 30 days to review the challenged material, and that after a committee was formed to discuss it, a recommendation would be made to the school board, and a decision would follow. I also asked to know who ordered the magazine, and who approved it. To date I have not been given any answers.

My wife and I consider this publication totally unsuitable for middle-school students. Our son is 12 years old with his innocence intact (not an easy thing these days), and we resent the exposure he has been given to this magazine, in which teens 18 and older (called "sexperts") answer the questions of younger teens—a seriously flawed approach for obvious reasons. If the school feels it necessary to keep material on hand to help answer sensitive sexual questions from 12- and 13-year-olds, why not provide a magazine where careful answers are provided by mature adults? Would any of you parents send your pre-teen sons and daughters to 18- or 19-year-old college students for answers to their questions about sex?

The copy of *Sex, etc.* which I showed to Superintendent Maryann Banks and the Board

of Education has the look of a comic book. Several copies are scattered throughout the media center, along with other back issues of *Sex, etc.* Here is a sampling of the content:

In the Q&A section, one girl writes: "*I usually feel insecure about how long it takes me to reach orgasm and I don't know how to communicate it to my boyfriend.*" Another 16-year-old asks: "*Is the hookup culture acceptable? I feel like everyone views it as a taboo, and I've never minded it.*" To this question an 18-year-old staff writer replies that there is "*absolutely nothing wrong*" with

"hooking up" as long as you and your partner "know what you're getting into." Our impressionable son can read this, along with discussions about penis sizes, breast sizes, and even references to anal sex. One young boy, upset about his penis size, tells of his embarrassment when, while having sex with his girlfriend, she asked him if he was "in yet," and he was "all the way in." Another young girl was worried about the small size of her breasts until she realized how "properly they fit into the hand."

Your 7th-grader can read an article entitled "Being Transgender Is Perfectly Normal." There is also

an article about gender expectations, such as that boys are the only ones who really want sex, or that some girls think they're expected to "gas and moan" during sex.

Several pages feature contraceptive "superheroes" like "Captain Condom," "Super Patch," and 10 or

12 others, who show how your young child can have sex while avoiding pregnancy. "Captain Condom" stands out as best, because not only will he prevent pregnancy, but he can also stop sexually





transmitted diseases.

Once upon a time, school libraries displayed biographies, literary classics, reference materials, adventure stories, and a world atlas to inspire the imagination. Now the imagination of these young children is directed differently.

My wife and I have taught our children that sex is sacred, an amazing gift from God the Creator, designed for enjoyment in the context of marriage and family. Here at school our parental approach is being blatantly contradicted.

As superintendent, Dr. Banks had the authority to *immediately* remove this exceptionally inappropriate material, but she did not.

**The CDC—hardly a religious organization—has studies on teen sexuality that are consistently ignored by public-school sex educators. Why not present some of its more troubling findings to students? Why no balance?**

Nor has she answered my question about who used our public dollars to purchase this explicit periodical, and who approved it. There could be a legal issue here, one I intend to explore, namely, “contributing to the corruption of a minor.”

My wife and I are not ignorant of the culture, with its push towards gender fluidity, same-sex marriage, and promiscuity. It's hard to keep up with the changing landscape, as there's always something new on the horizon. But one thing everyone (including the law) still agrees on is the need to protect the innocence of young children. And it's we parents, not the school district, who are

responsible for the moral formation of our children.

My wife and I are certainly not on board with current cultural trends and agendas. Nor should public education embrace a particular agenda, as it has done by providing this magazine, for *Sex, etc.* is anything but neutral on sexual ethics.

The school's health education approach is a related concern, because students in our district are not being given the full picture.

They are not being shown statistics that challenge the kind of sexual promiscuity many of these teenagers are dangerously involved in. *Scientific studies*—not just religious convictions—consistently point to serious problems associated with early sexual experimentation. These problems include trauma, long-term psychological issues, post-abortion syndrome, and increased risk for suicide (especially among girls). The CDC—hardly a religious organization—has studies on teen sexuality that are consis-



tently ignored by public-school sex educators. Why not present some of its more troubling findings to students? Why no balance? Why the eagerness to present only one side? There's nothing wrong with a healthy scare when it is based on facts.

Because our teens lack needed information, they do not have the ability to properly assess risk. When Student Based Youth Services come into the health education classroom to give presentations on contraception and abortion, there is a heavy bias at work. Since core curriculum standards require it, a passing reference is made to abstinence as the only sure way to prevent sexual disease, but the *sum total* of the presentation encourages kids to embrace early sexual activity.

College campuses have been dealing with the fallout for years. Not long ago, *Time* magazine featured a cover story on “The New Crisis in Higher Education.” What is the “new crisis”? It's the casual hook-up culture, which has created an epidemic that keeps administrators scrambling. Our own middle school curriculum and others around the country, which fail to present abstinence as a serious option, are to blame.

—Peter and Theresa Cardillo

**Postscript:** Yesterday, October 20, my wife and I received a letter from Maryann Banks detailing the outcome of the committee's discussion, along with its recommendation. The committee, which was put together by a middle school vice principal, has recommended that the material, which it deems entirely in keeping with curriculum standards and goals, should continue to be made available in the middle school media center. Dr. Banks also chose to tell us that the decision of the committee was unanimous, and further, that the content in the magazine *Sex, etc.* is actually suitable for 6th-graders as well.

# Hearts at Rest

## Untangling Attractions, Addictions & Other Restless Loves

**As homosexuality was becoming more the rage** in the 1980s, New Zealand journalist Briar Whitehead didn't know what to think about it all. As a Christian, she was even more confused because, if God said homosexuality was wrong, why didn't he just answer the prayers of homosexuals and change them when they asked? Nothing about it made sense to her, and no one in the church seemed to have any answers either.

Then she began to meet some gays and lesbians and attend group meetings where people with unwanted same-sex attraction shared their stories. She found herself identifying with them—their loneliness, the struggles of their teen years, and their sense of abandonment by God. “I knew, only too well,” she wrote, “the desperate craving for that indefinable but imperative ‘something’ that drives the homosexual person into a same-sex relationship to try to meet it.”

Like them, she too had desperately sought love in relationship after relationship.

I responded only to a certain “type” and never others. And once I had found him, I hung on for dear life. . . . Each relationship seemed more intense than the last and in each case the size of my world would shrink down to the size of the person I could not do without.

Although she hadn't been drawn into lesbianism to fill this craving, it became obvious that the dynamics that shaped the homosexual were similar to those that had shaped her. She was “no different in essence.”

## Addictions & Other Misdirected Thirsts

Slowly she realized that she had made God over in the image of her father. And slowly, she began to gain insight into her own pain. This total and exclusive

“I knew, only too well,” she wrote, “the desperate craving for that indefinable but imperative ‘something’ that drives the homosexual person into a same-sex relationship to try to meet it.”





focus on finding that *one* who would love her and to whom she would be special was inordinate, driven not by any healthy love, but by a deep craving for the male love and attention she hadn't received growing up. It took a long time, but at length God healed her of this emotional desperation. "I shed buckets of tears," she wrote. "God baptized me with love."

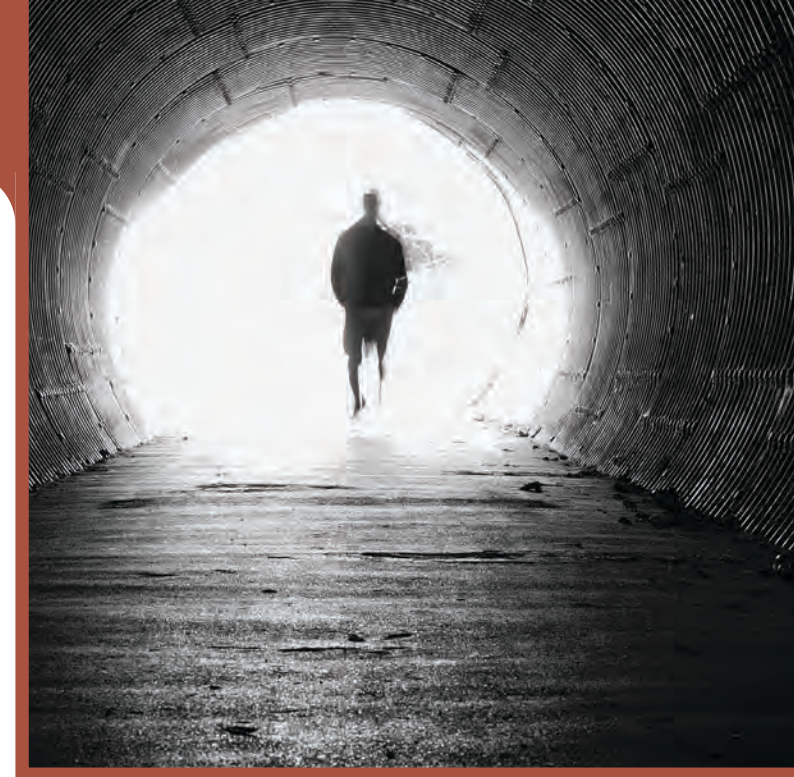
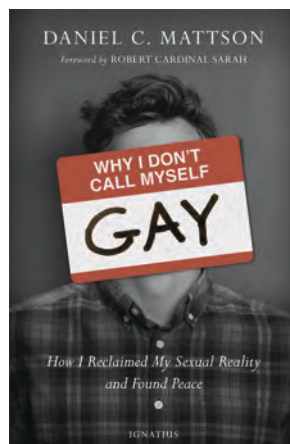
As she stabilized and began looking at others from a healthier place, she saw that the influences that had shaped both her *and* the homosexual were not all that different from those driving people caught in other compulsive behaviors—women and food, men and porn, people in manipulative and possessive relationships—both in the church and out. "All caught somewhere on the continuum of unmet need, trying to meet their needs their own way."

To all of them—relationship addicts, both homosexual and heterosexual, and those struggling with other deep-seated compulsions (there is little difference, she says)—she dedicated *Craving for Love: Relationship Addiction, Homosexuality, and the God Who Heals*, first published in 1993 and revised and updated in 2015.

"Homosexuality is not sexual in origin," she writes in the introduction. It usually starts out as a simple reaching for something that is missing in the life of a child. We are born into this world as "little love sponges," made for perfect, pure, unselfish love. But of course, not even the best of parents are capable of pure, perfect love. Only God is. So although we were made for it, we don't get it, and this is where our troubles begin. We go looking for substitutes to fill our growing, thirsty sponge. And flesh-and-blood people, being visible and more tangible than God, make easy God substitutes.

## The Cannibal Compulsion & Other Misdirected Hungers

Daniel Mattson *did* have same-sex attraction, going back almost as long as he can remember. Awkward and somewhat gender non-conforming, he became addicted to porn first and then to relationships. The relationships didn't necessarily have to be sexual, but from as early as first grade, he was drawn to the masculine strength he saw in other boys.



Both Mattson and Whitehead use a disturbing metaphor to describe a common aspect of the homosexual relationship. Mattson traces the metaphor to Leanne Payne, who wrote of the "cannibal compulsion." "I see this 'cannibal compulsion' very clearly in my own life," he writes in *Why I Don't Call Myself Gay: How I Reclaimed My Sexual Reality and Found Peace*. "Every man who has ever been attractive to me has features or traits about him that I wish were mine."

In the same way that Mattson sought to "acquire" masculinity from other men, lesbians commonly attach themselves to women possessing traits they most want for themselves but feel they lack. "They puppy-dog one another," says Barbara, a former lesbian who went on to counsel lesbians in a live-in recovery house. "You won't see one without the other." And usually the attributes they seek are related to how they feel about their mothers.

Among women especially, sexual expression is not necessarily a component of these relationships. Whitehead writes of women serving in Christian ministry, often upright in behavior but entangled in relationships riddled with suffocating emotional dependencies. Jody worked overseas as a missionary, but kept "falling in love" with her girlfriends in ways that were intense, clinging, and obsessive. Although she never acted out sexually, it wasn't until she sought counseling and began attending ex-gay group sessions that she began to pry the lid off her chronic dependencies and move toward emotional health.

Mattson writes of a non-sexual relationship with Jake that started out fine, but quickly turned obsessive. He knew something was amiss when he found himself fixating on this *one* friendship and how it would satisfy all his longings. The emotions of it weren't all that different, he realized, from what drove him into porn.

Mattson, Whitehead, and Payne all write of the cannibal compulsion as an aspect of the homosexual relationship. But it can apply to any unhealthy relational dependency. In any relationship, when one party is attempting to acquire for himself desired features of the other person, or is attempting to cram the other into his own emotional vacuum, it is not a relationship of love, but rather is a devouring, "me first" affair—a kind of relational consumption. And when the needs run deep, as they usually do, the center cannot hold under the weight of unmet needs, because the other party is likely treating the relationship the same way.

## The One Who Is Enough

Mattson wrote *Why I Don't Call Myself Gay* to help young men who want to serve and know God but

don't know what to do with their same-sex attraction. Whitehead wrote *Craving for Love* to help people resolve the issues underlying homosexuality and other addictions. And although the two authors represent different sexes, generations, and continents, they

converge on the same answer, each echoing the ancient sigh of St. Augustine, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

Finding that rest and finding contentment in it has not been easy for either of them. For Mattson, same-sex attraction has meant suffering, especially in the form of a loneliness so acute he at times feels it as physical

pain. But Christianity has taught him to embrace the ache of unmet desires. They are signposts, he says, reminding us that our ultimate happiness lies not in this world but in the next, and so he chooses to draw from the well of Christ and embrace the pain as an opportunity through which to love and care for others.

"There is only one Healer who can love us with the love of a Father, a Mother, a Brother, a best friend and an ardent lover," writes Whitehead. "He would die for us—and did. His is the love we are really longing for when we reach towards our substitutes." He is the *one* we cannot do without. ☉

**Christianity has taught him to embrace the ache of unmet desires. They are signposts, he says, reminding us that our ultimate happiness lies not in this world but in the next.**



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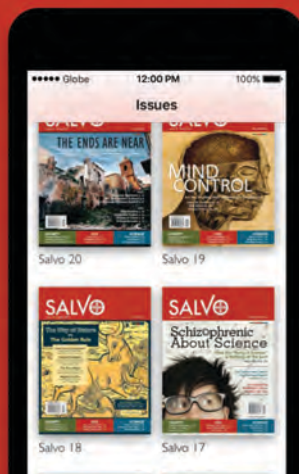
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# Research Recant

## Don't Believe Everything You Read— Even in Science Journals

**This is a cautionary tale** on accepting announcements of scientific breakthroughs at face value. In late 2016, “fertility provocateur” Dr. John Zhang announced the first birth of a three-parent child, through a technique he called mitochondrial replacement therapy (MRT), one of three IVF techniques used to combine material from the eggs of two women and the sperm of one man.<sup>1</sup> The goal of such therapy is to avoid transmitting disease to a child through mitochondrial DNA, which is contained in the cellular material outside the nucleus of a woman’s egg. This international experiment involved Jordanian parents, an American team, and a clinic in Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

Initial reactions focused on the success of the technique: the boy was born without the lethal disease. Some news reports acknowledged that the technique was controversial, and legal only in the UK. A few months later, a girl was born in Ukraine using a variation of the technique,<sup>3</sup> this time involving embryo destruction. Again, the press reported the successful birth while noting that, despite the controversy over three-parent embryos, no laws had been violated.

Several months after the news accounts appeared, *Reproductive BioMedicine Online* published Zhang’s academic paper, accompanied by an editorial explaining the journal’s decision to publish it despite

the study’s “weaknesses and limitations” and despite remaining “uncertainties concerning methodologies and results.”<sup>4</sup> Three months later, a group of researchers associated with the Center for Human Reproduction (CHR) in New York did something quite uncharacteristic: in the pages of *Reproductive BioMedicine Online* itself, they lambasted the journal for publishing the study.<sup>5</sup> A few

weeks later, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) directed Zhang to stop marketing his procedure.

## Questioning the “Breakthrough”

The CHR group pointed out that to call the three-parent baby an “achievement” was “a perfect lesson in how responsible research should not be performed.”<sup>6</sup> Among other problems, the group noted that: informed consent was inadequate to the circumstances;

the success and safety of the experiment were overstated; federal policy was breached; and institutional ethical approval was lacking, a fault that was not only unethical but that should have prevented publication of the study.

Although the authors also expressed concern that “opponents of reproductive research” would use Zhang’s “irresponsible” approach to generate prohibition of all reproductive research, it is to their credit that they publicly aired their disquiet. Their punch list of the problems with the experiment illustrates how easy it is to overlook and excuse questionable conduct when the ultimate goal is tantalizing, amazing, or desirable. It also challenges the typical response to sensational news: to skim the research papers, cherry-pick highlights, and share the news via social media without doing the hard work of understanding the science, investigating the claims made, and critiquing the methodology. Among the matters often glossed over are:

- *Terminology.* What do the phrases used to describe or denote the procedures actually mean? “Mitochondrial replacement therapy,” the term preferred by researchers, sounds innocuous, even beneficial. “Three-parent baby” raises public concerns. Yet both terms refer to the same reproductive techniques. Similarly, “somatic cell nuclear transfer” often replaces “cloning,” which has more negative connotations.

- *Informed consent.* Human subjects are protected by federal guidelines that require fully informed consent. The human subject (or his or her parent) must understand the short- and long-term risks of the experiment, the discomforts it will entail, the possibility of unforeseeable negative consequences ensuing, the proposed benefits of the treatment, its safety, its efficacy or likelihood of success, possible alternative treatments, and the extent of confidentiality that will be granted. All this information must be communicated in understandable language, not in jargon or legalese.

When a child is involved, the medical researchers’ responsibility is even greater. In the case of the Jordanian baby, his parents withdrew their consent for

follow-up monitoring and genetic testing, which suggests that their initial consent was not fully informed. They may not have been made aware of genetic drift, where mutations in mitochondrial DNA can accumulate over the years, a development they might well have wanted to know about. The outcomes of the three-parent experiment are uncertain at best. “It

will take years, maybe decades, to determine whether the treatment in this case was successful or not,” the CHR group wrote.<sup>7</sup>

The egg donor would also have needed to give informed consent, a detail missing from the report. Was she told about the intended experimentation with her eggs? Or did she think she was participating in a traditional egg retrieval?

- *Ethics approval and legal compliance.* Initial stories reported that the procedure was carried out in Mexico, where it is not explicitly prohibited. But the CHR group pointed out that the actual IVF mitochondrial replacement took place in New York City, in violation of FDA rules. The embryo was then frozen and shipped to Mexico for transfer to the woman’s womb, with the couple later returning to New York for the birth. This convoluted arrangement was an obvious effort to skirt relevant laws. The Mexico IVF clinic allegedly gave ethics approval. Interestingly, virtually no IVF clinic in the U.S. has an institutional review board (IRB) for this purpose. Nor could a Mexican IRB approve the mitochondrial replacement procedure that took place in New York.

FDA guidelines prohibit any genetic experimentation on eggs or sperm that results in live birth. The purposes of Zhang’s startup company, Darwin Life, would violate this policy.

- *Bait and switch?* Although mitochondrial replacement has been hyped as a way to prevent the birth of a child with a serious or lethal disease, Zhang switched course immediately after the birth of the Jordanian baby. Darwin Life was formed to use the three-parent technique to rejuvenate the eggs of older women, by combining them with enucleated eggs from younger women.<sup>8</sup> Zhang promises even more: genetic editing to select hair or eye color, or increase the child’s IQ. “Everything we do is a step

**The stakes extend beyond the potential harm done to research participants. Transgressing ethical standards designed to protect both the patient and the public jeopardizes respect for scientists and support for research.**



toward designer babies,” he said. “With nuclear transfer and gene editing together, you can really do anything you want.”<sup>9</sup>

## Another Misleading Study?

The three-parent baby is not the only scenario where a glowing announcement has proven premature. In July 2017, Shoukhrat Mitalipov announced that his team had successfully edited genes in about 150 human embryos (later destroyed), to eliminate a heart condition that is fatal in a small number of otherwise healthy carriers. It now appears that the “genetic scissors” may not have snipped out the faulty paternal DNA and replaced it with healthy maternal DNA, as originally described.<sup>10</sup> Although what actually happened is still uncertain, one scientist hypothesized that instead of being edited, the embryos did their own “self repair.”<sup>11</sup>

In addition, it is possible that larger segments of DNA—not just the faulty DNA—were deleted from the embryos. This means that other DNA portions may have suffered serious genetic damage. In another example of sloppiness in terminology, the phrase “gene editing” suggests a degree of precision that does not exist. “Genetic modification” better conveys the murkiness of research in this area.

## Contagious Behavior?

Hubristic medical research is not exclusive to assisted reproduction. The pressure to achieve scientific breakthroughs is widespread. Not surprisingly, hype



and sloppy methods infect many scientific studies, and some end up being retracted due to misconduct or outright fraud.<sup>12</sup> Questionable research results can trap people in the web of inflated expectations.

The stakes extend beyond the potential harm done to research participants. Transgressing ethical standards designed to protect both the patient and the public jeopardizes respect for scientists and support for research.

The lesson to be learned: Do not accept news reports of “breakthroughs” at face value. Rely on credible experts who soberly assess the data. Better yet, learn to read skeptically and investigate prudently. ☉

### Notes

1. Emily Mullin, “The Fertility Doctor Trying to Commercialize Three-Parent Babies,” *MIT Technology Review* (June 13, 2017): [technologyreview.com/s/608033/the-fertility-doctor-trying-to-commercialize-three-parent-babies](https://technologyreview.com/s/608033/the-fertility-doctor-trying-to-commercialize-three-parent-babies).
2. The nucleus was removed from the presumably healthy egg of a donor, and replaced with the nucleus from the mitochondrial disease-carrying egg of the Jordanian mother, then fertilized with the father’s sperm.
3. Jason Dailey, “Second ‘Three-Parent’ Baby Born. This Time, It’s a Girl,” *Smithsonian.com* (Jan. 19, 2017): [smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/three-parent-technique-used-in-fertile-couple-first-time-180961870](https://smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/three-parent-technique-used-in-fertile-couple-first-time-180961870). The technique used in the Mexico case is called spindle transfer.

- In Ukraine, a technique called pronuclear transfer was used, where the nucleus is removed after fertilization.
4. Mina Alikani et al., “First Birth Following Spindle Transfer for Mitochondrial Replacement Therapy: Hope and Trepidation,” *Reproductive BioMedicine Online* (April 2017): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbmo.2017.02.004>.
5. Norbert Gleicher et al., “First Birth Following Spindle Transfer,” *Reproductive BioMedicine Online* (July 14, 2017): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.rbmo.2017.07.006>.
6. Ibid.
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8. Mullin, “The Fertility Doctor,” note 1.
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10. Michael Reilly, “Human Embryo Editing Study Shows We Still Have a Lot to

- Learn About CRISPR,” *MIT Technology Review* (Sept. 1, 2017): [technologyreview.com/the-download/608791/human-embryo-editing-study-shows-we-still-have-a-lot-to-learn-about-crispr](https://technologyreview.com/the-download/608791/human-embryo-editing-study-shows-we-still-have-a-lot-to-learn-about-crispr).
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12. See, for example, *RetractionWatch.com*. One report listed fraud as the primary reason for retractions, accounting for 43 percent of them. See “Study: Scientific Fraud on the Rise,” *cbsnews.com* (Oct. 1, 2012): [cbsnews.com/news/study-scientific-research-fraud-on-the-rise](https://cbsnews.com/news/study-scientific-research-fraud-on-the-rise).



# Boys Don't Bleed

## Male Periods? How to Stay Sane in a Mad World

**Menstruation, it seems, isn't just for women these days.**

That's the message that "transgender artist" Cass Clemmer is trying to get across<sup>1</sup> in a recent Facebook post, in which "they" (that's the pronoun that Clemmer prefers) share a photo of "themselves" freebleeding, accompanied by a poem. In the photo, Clemmer, who identifies as a "transgender, non-binary person," is sitting on a park bench, staring mournfully into a camera. Her hair is cropped, and she is wearing masculine clothes. She holds a sign that reads, "Periods Are Not Just For Women, #BleedingWhileTrans."

Clemmer's post has been celebrated by the media. The London *Evening Standard* called her statement "powerful." The *Independent* labeled it "bold." *People* magazine declared, "Transgender activist freebleeds to show men can menstruate too,"

and the *Huffington Post* announced, "Powerful photo shows that women aren't the only one who get periods."

The world has clearly gone mad.

## Three Sane Reactions

There are three ways that any rational human being would have responded to this, even ten years ago.

The first reaction—*It's wrong*. Men don't menstruate. Sorry. It's biologically impossible, because men don't have uteruses. And if you want to get personal, it's actually rather offensive to women to try to take away the uniqueness of their specific reproductive processes and claim them for

both sexes. That's a point that more than one strident feminist has actually made, and validly so.

The second reaction—*It's perturbing*. Clemmer's own words should make us feel great pity for her. "Getting your period while not identifying as a



woman can feel like a monthly battle both with your own body and with a world that continuously tells you that your identity isn't real," Clemmer says. She tells of the intense hatred she felt and still feels for a body that regularly betrays her by clearly marking her as female to the world.

Usually, when a woman confesses that she hates her body, that she finds herself at war with her own physical being, we hasten to reassure her that all bodies are beautiful. No, you don't need to lose weight! You are gorgeous just the way you are! And yet, if a woman calling herself transgender tells us she is at war with her body, and if she in fact mutilates her body in the name of presenting herself as someone she is not, far from reassuring her about her femaleness, we applaud her "boldness" in undermining it.

In reality, those who identify as transgender have a severe mental disorder, which needs treatment by people willing to call it what it is. (One study, cited by Lawrence

Mayer and Paul McHugh in their vast review of the literature surrounding sexuality and gender, found that, "compared to controls, sex-reassigned individuals were about 5 times more likely to attempt suicide and about 19 times more likely to die by suicide."<sup>2</sup>) Women like Clemmer deserve our compassion, and they need help, not affirmation of their disorder.

The third reaction—*It's gross*. Women do have periods, yes. And you know what? They're a little unpleasant, aesthetically and physically. They're a necessary part of being female, and they indicate a good thing—that your reproductive system is working—but menstruation is something we used to have the respect for ourselves to veil, because, you know, certain things used to be considered private. But these days, it has become acceptable for women (as well as for men who make the bizarre claim that they are women) to post pictures of themselves bleeding on social media, in order to make some kind of weird political statement about feminism, the patriarchy, oppression—whatever it may be. There was a time, not that long ago, when biological functions were

taken simply for what they were—signs of our bodies' proper, natural functioning. They weren't used as political statements. Alas, those days appear to be gone.

## Countering the Madness

Apparently Clemmer isn't the only one addressing this issue, by the way. There's actually a line of period-friendly boxer shorts. But it's high time for all of us to feel free to call a spade a spade—or a woman a

woman, or a horrible violation and mutilation of the human body a horrible violation and mutilation of the human body. It is a grave irony that in this day and age, when we worship the human body—when we shout "body positivity" from the rooftops and scream down those guilty of "body shaming"—we yet see fit to mutilate our bodies by denying their purpose and trying to make them conform to what our twisted mental states tell us they should be. Moreover, we do ourselves a disservice

in making our bodies' functions public, instead of keeping private things private and keeping our bodies modestly covered, as befits them as vessels of the Holy Spirit.

We can begin to counter the madness by refusing to use the terms the mainstream media are trying to foist on us. We can use the proper pronouns, and we can staunchly continue to insist on the biological reality that women, and only women, are the ones who have periods.

Period. ☺

**We shout "body positivity" from the rooftops and scream down those guilty of "body shaming"—yet we see fit to mutilate our bodies by denying their purpose and trying to make them conform to what our twisted mental states tell us they should be.**

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### Notes

1. [independent.co.uk/life-style/transgender-cass-clemmer-periods-women-photo-poem-menstruation-gender-non-binary-a7855521.html](http://independent.co.uk/life-style/transgender-cass-clemmer-periods-women-photo-poem-menstruation-gender-non-binary-a7855521.html).
2. See Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, "Executive Summary," *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences*, appearing in the fall 2016 issue of *The New Atlantis*. For the individual study here quoted, see Cecilia Dhejne et al., "Long-term follow-up of transsexual persons undergoing sex reassignment surgery: cohort study in Sweden," *PLOS ONE* (2011): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0016885>.



# Quo Vadis, U?

## When Christian Universities Lose Faith

by Daniel Adler

**J**ust what is a **Christian university?** The question is as complex as it is pressing, in no small part because of the increased secularization of higher education. As historians James Turner and Jon Roberts argue in *The Sacred and the Secular University* (Princeton University Press, 2000), Protestant universities founded on religious principles in the early days of America had, by the late twentieth century, largely abandoned these convictions. This change occurred in the span of about 200 years, a relatively short window of time. Institutions once dedicated to the faith now serve as contemporary temples of secularism.

One would hope that Catholic universities would have a different story. After all, Catholicism has one of the most vital and identifiable intellectual traditions in human history. Any cracks in the edifice could potentially have an impact around the globe. Unfortunately, in my experience, some Catholic universities are likewise on uncertain ground. Take, for example, a recent exchange between a faculty member and the president of his university. (I will refer to this president as “John Williams” and to the school as “St. Barth’s University.”) A staff member at St. Barth’s emailed me the text of the exchange. Although this particular instance is anecdotal, I would argue that the underlying problem plagues many Catholic universities.

The forum was a Q&A in which faculty members asked questions, and President Williams offered answers. The faculty member’s original question, although long, is quite poignant:

*As a professor who teaches a required course, I regularly interact with a representative cross-section of our student body. It has become apparent to me over the past decade*





that many of our students know very little about Catholic theology, the Bible, or Christianity (more generally). You would be surprised, I think, at the level of ignorance about these matters among our students, including our upperclassmen. While I am not Catholic, I do think a Catholic university has a moral obligation to at least educate its students about basic Catholic teachings—and not just its social

teachings, but its theological teachings as well. Of course, students should be presented with these views in a way that is sensitive and leaves them free to form their own opinions.

I raise this concern not because I am particularly interested in making our students Catholic or anything of the sort. I'm interested in St. Barth's maintaining its basic integrity—we say we are a Catholic institution, but many of our students graduate after four (or five) years still largely ignorant about basic Catholic theology. If a Catholic university doesn't bother to teach students its own tradition, then we had better stop selling ourselves as "Catholic" in a robust sense of that word. We can be whatever we want; but we can't make "Catholic education" just whatever we want. So here's my question: "Should we require students to take a basic course in Catholic (or Christian) theology?" If the answer is "no," then here's a follow up question: "What are the objective boundaries that constitute a Catholic education? Or do we just get to make up whatever suits us and then label that a 'Catholic education'?"

## Answer 1: Anything Goes

The question is spirited, if not aggressive. A relaxed tone would probably have been more helpful to foster dialogue, but nonetheless the question is worth asking. President Williams seemed to agree. He regards himself as a committed Catholic and so took the question seriously. His three-part answer begins with an acknowledgement that the inquiry "raises many issues, including how does one define a Catholic university, and what are its essential characteristics and boundaries." He suggests starting with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II's extended reflection on the purpose and mission of a Catholic university. Then he gives his own take on *Ex Corde* as well as "any" study of Catholic higher education. His answer:

What emerges from any study of Catholic higher education is the recognition that Catholic universities are a diverse group both in their governance structures and institutional missions and philosophies.

From his perspective, no matter what the study, Catholic univer-

sities are “a diverse group” with their own “institutional missions and philosophies.” Apparently, each school has its own mission and philosophy; each university decides its own identity. The heart of a Catholic university is whatever each individual school chooses. In other words, there are *no* essential characteristics and objective boundaries of a Catholic university. Anything goes.

One might wonder if theology should have something to do with the essence of a Catholic university. Doesn't it matter what members of a Catholic university believe any more? But that, too, is precluded. In the very next sentence, President Williams continues:

Now let me focus on the central question posed today. Should St. Barth's require all students to take a basic course in Catholic (or Christian) theology? My first observation is that there is no unified “Christian” theology. Indeed, the differences that exist have resulted in wars, schisms, and other major disagreements that continue to be argued today.

Let's consider what's being said: there is no unified Christian theology. In one sense, the president is quite correct that there are significant doctrinal differences among Christian denominations and these differences have at times led to wars, schisms, and the like. But still, no unified Christian theology at all? That means, apparently, that Christians don't agree on anything distinct to their worldview. What about the divinity of Christ? If that's not essential to Christianity, it's difficult to say what is. How about the basic content of the gospel? Is that optional, too? Apparently, statements like the Apostle's Creed—which are expressly designed to articulate essential Christian beliefs—are mere suggestions. According to President Williams, a “Christian” would not even need to believe that a man named Jesus of Nazareth existed in the first century. “No unified Christian theology” implies that *no* beliefs are essential and that nothing is out of bounds. In the end, atheists can be as “Christian” as Evangelicals.

In the spirit of his initial remarks, perhaps he believes that Christian theology, like Catholic higher education, is marked by “diversity” so that each believer, church, or denomination can do right in its own eyes.

## Answer 2: Optics Matter Most

While President Williams isn't concerned with theological depth, he is concerned with the school's superficial appearance. In the next sentence, he writes:

My second observation is that about half of our students are not Catholic, and a required course could be perceived as proselytization, something which St. Barth's has historically avoided. Our first extant catalog “welcomed non-Catholics” and promised, “It would not attempt to proselytize them.”

So the idea is that St. Barth's must diligently avoid even a *possible perception*: a required course “could be perceived” in a negative light. Never mind whether that perception is accurate. What really matters is the school's image. This image just happens to conform to what secular thinkers find pleasing.

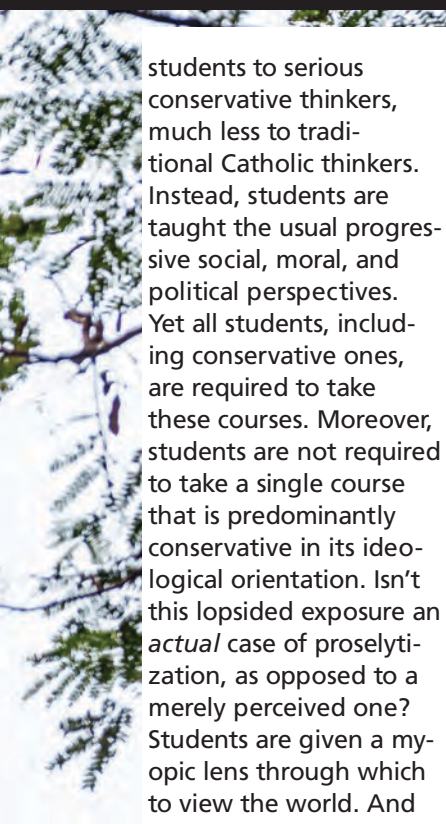
But the faculty member who raised the original question suggested that students should be presented with Catholic (or Christian) theology “in a way that is sensitive and leaves them free to form their own opinions.” There's clearly no proselytiza-

tion intended here, just basic religious literacy. Surely, students will be served if they have some idea about the beliefs of a billion Catholics around the globe. After all, familiarity with prominent views is a basic goal of a liberal arts education. But President Williams ignores all of this and instead is concerned with the optics of it all.

Of course, in this exchange there's no hint of the possibility that Catholics (or Christians generally) ought to try to convert non-believers. If St. Barth's is to avoid the perception of proselytization, then it would be inappropriate, apparently, for its administrators and faculty to be enthusiastic enough about Catholicism (or Christianity) to commend it to others. The good news of the gospel is entirely optional. It's just another entrée in the buffet at Café Postmodern: serve yourself whatever looks good and move on. For President Williams, it's all a matter of preference—and perception.

At a deeper level, I wonder about a lurking double standard at St. Barth's. I have talked to enough faculty members, administrators, and students at the school over the last ten years to know that many of St. Barth's required courses include an uncritical liberal slant. These courses do not consistently and fair-mindedly expose





students to serious conservative thinkers, much less to traditional Catholic thinkers. Instead, students are taught the usual progressive social, moral, and political perspectives. Yet all students, including conservative ones, are required to take these courses. Moreover, students are not required to take a single course that is predominantly conservative in its ideological orientation. Isn't this lopsided exposure an *actual* case of proselytization, as opposed to a merely perceived one? Students are given a myopic lens through which to view the world. And professors unashamedly promote this perspective as the way, the truth, and the life.

Just to be clear, I think that all students at schools like St. Barth's—including conservative ones—should be required to take at least one course that teaches a progressivist view. But I also think that all students, including liberal ones, ought to be required to take at least one course that teaches a conservative view, including a traditional Catholic one. At a Catholic liberal arts university, one would hope for a bit of ideological balance as a bare-bones minimum. Instead, St. Barth's is clearly involved in its own kind of proselytization. Why isn't President Williams worried about that?

The answer, of course, is that proselytization into the "correct" worldview is regarded by President Williams as entirely acceptable. For him, when St. Barth's students are trained to think exclusively like liberals, they are being educated, not proselytized. The dreaded p-word only surfaces when an optional perspective threatens to become required. Catholic theology falls into the "optional" category; progressive ideology does not.

### Answer 3: It's an Elective

Having distanced the school (and himself) from any hint of proselytization of the wrong kind, President Williams ends his remarks with a final thought:

*That said, I do believe that a Catholic university should offer to all students an opportunity to study Catholic theology. If they wish, students at St. Barth's can minor or major in Catholic Studies.*

Besides the gospel of progressivism, it turns out that there is another objective element that helps mark the essence of a Catholic university: "all students" have "an opportunity to study Catholic theology"—that is, "if they wish" to do so. Evidently, two thousand years of reflection on Scripture, the church fathers, creeds, and tradition—distilled into Catholic theology—are entirely elective. If a student wants it, fine. But if not, that's fine too.

This is another way of saying that, while President Williams won't require exposure to Catholic (or Christian) theology, he magnanimously won't prohibit it. So for him a Catholic university can hold its head high

*when it does not forbid the study of its own tradition.* That standard is so low it's pathetic.

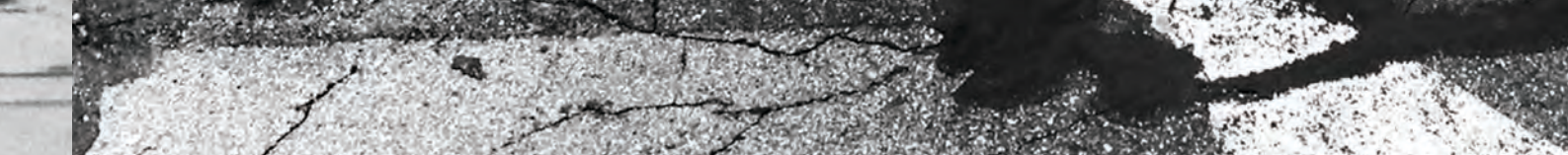
These same double standards are apparent in the school's curriculum. St. Barth's offers an optional course called "Perspectives on Atheism." The course has a favorable take on non-belief. This is no surprise: it is taught by a committed atheist. Any student who wishes can take this class. St. Barth's does not prohibit this course. Indeed, any student can currently obtain a bachelor's (or master's) degree at this school all the while focusing on secular perspectives and avoiding religious ones. So, I wonder if President Williams's final remark applies here: if St. Barth's need only offer optional Catholic studies in order to be a bona-fide Catholic school, then, by the same standard, why not consider St. Barth's a secular school? After all, it offers to all students the option of immersion in secular thinking with only slight nods, if one chooses, towards religious views.

In the end, is St. Barth's meaningfully Catholic, or is it just a secular knock-off coated with a religious patina? Over the years, the students and faculty I have talked to at St. Barth's have had a genuinely difficult time answering this question. And that is exactly the problem. ☹









# A Boy's Life

## 5 Recommendations for Shielding Our Sons from the Anti-Culture—**And Setting Them Towards Manhood** *by Anthony Esolen*

I've sometimes issued a challenge to ordinary men who have sons, and to young men who are honest and not wholly corrupted, and who I can imagine as having a son someday:

**"Suppose I could show you something to do, something natural and straightforward, which would, barring something bizarre like a rape, ensure that your son would grow up healthy and normal, comfortable with his masculine nature and with the company of other men, attracted to women and attractive to them in turn, so that he would eventually take a woman in marriage and have a family of his own.** Look me in the eye and tell me that you would not do this thing! Of course you'd do it, regardless of your politics. You'd do it in a heartbeat, nor would you second-guess yourself, because in your heart you know that that's what any ordinary father wants for his son."

Now and then a young single man, typically dismissive of the moral law as regards sex and not eager to marry, will call me hateful just for suggesting that there is such a shield. Even he will not address the challenge. Too bad. My responsibility in this battle is to stand up for those who have no advocate, to help

them when nobody else will. Those are boys, especially boys whose parents have fraught their passage to manhood with the ballast of their own sins of commission and neglect.

But it occurs to me now that I should describe this shield, not only for fathers who care for their sons, but for others—mothers, siblings, friends, teachers, ministers, grandparents, and coaches—who may be in a position to supply some of what an absent or cold or abusive father has failed to give them. I am prompted by a horrible story of a boy whose father abandoned him when he was small, and who now, growing up with a doting mother, has decided that he "really" is a girl, and is going to get a surgeon to mutilate him irreversibly.

Who is so dense as not to see that this confused lad has been made so, by the wickedness and the folly of his parents, and by a sick anti-culture that will admire him if he does what is sick, but will continue to ignore him if he manages to steer himself, with shrouds and tackle torn, into some middling harbor of a half-emasculated manhood? Our sickness may be virulent, but the phenomenon is not new. There have always been women who see to it that their sons will never leave them for another girl.

### *Five Recommendations*

That's a subject for another time. Here, dear readers, are my recommendations; and how sick are we, that I should have to spell them out? Not one of them is unusual. I am like someone advising people to drink clean water and eat good food.

## 1. Fathers: Treat your son like a man, the man you want him to be.

I don't mean that you should forget that he's a boy, and I certainly don't recommend that you become a taskmaster.

But bring him to work with you, and introduce him to your fellows. If possible, give him odd jobs to do for you, and praise him when he does them well. Let him overhear serious conversations. Have the

termites turned that joist into sawdust, or can it be saved? If we pour the cement here, is the ground firm enough to hold it? Should we take out a loan and move the business to a property of our own, or should we continue to lease these crammed quarters?

Never underestimate the power of a father's praise, especially when the boy hears it spoken to another

man, not as an idle boast, which boys can see through, but as plain fact. Never underestimate the power of a father's welcoming his boy into the circle of men, which is most powerful when it happens as a matter of course. It means, "You are one of us now."

I'm reminded of a story by Nova Scotia's favorite son, Alistair MacLeod. It involves a put-upon husband, his ambitious city wife, and their only child, a ten-year-old boy. The family goes to Cape Breton to visit the father's kin, who are coal miners, and for several blessed weeks the boy is out from under the supervision of teachers, counselors, and his mother. He wanders the bluffs. He goes fishing. He leaves in the morning every day and doesn't come back till nightfall, exhausted, growing in his bones and in his spirit. The grandfather takes to the child, and when it comes time for the family to return to Toronto, father and son go to say goodbye to him down in the mine. Grandfather and a couple of the boy's uncles come out to meet them. They haven't yet showered, and they are covered, head to toe, with honest sweat and the sharp-smelling grime of coal.



All at once the grandfather, in a gesture both loving and fierce, presses the boy to his chest, making him also filthy—too filthy to travel. So the boy has to go with him and the uncles to the showers to get clean. The gesture means: You are like us. We are together. We are one.

## 2. Do not despise the body.

That brings me to the second point. Express your love for your son in more than words. Express it in physical action, especially the rough play that his developing body craves by nature, for the building of muscles and the stretching and hardening of bones. Again, don't be a clod about it. If your son is constitutionally delicate, temper your enthusiasm. Never take his lack of interest in sports to be a deficiency. Plenty of boys have no desire to knock a ball around a field, but will roam the woods instead, or work on their backs under the chassis of a car, or draw maps of imaginary countries, and provide them with an invented language, such as Tolkien did for Middle-Earth.

That said, help your son grow accustomed to his body and to its being like every other boy's body. His comfort with it should be a matter of course. I've seen an ad in a family magazine from around 1950 that illustrates the plain normality that you want for him. The ad is for a shower stem with three heads sprouting from the top, so that three boys can take a shower together at once. That's what three boys are doing, seen from the chest up, in the drawing that accompanies the ad—laughing, not self-conscious, and not aware of anything out of the ordinary.

Three's a team, a platoon. The freedom you want him to feel is not bound up with anything deeply *personal*, anything peculiar to him as an individual. It's the freedom and the relaxation of a group of boys and men being themselves and taking one another for granted. You don't want him to have to think twice about it.

But by all means give him memories of masculine affection, memories that dwell in the mind and body both. Let me cite a poetic reflection on the verse, "Well done, good and faithful servant":





**Do these things.** And if you are ever tempted to doubt your wisdom in this matter, remember your allies: nature; every culture known to man; the great poets and novelists; and the Word of God.

To be a son plastered with mud and sweat  
From battling at the plow in a bad field,  
Prying up rocks and hacking roots to get  
The bent blade free, and leaning, lunging,  
steeled  
More than the tool itself, flicking a goad  
To urge some great ox trembling with each  
move,  
Furrowing a not-quite-straight but visible  
road,  
Yearning, and trusting in your father's love,  
Who with a rough approval wipes your  
face—  
What joy to hear his praise, and know his  
grace!

### 3. Orient him both apart from and toward the girls.

Everyone until our own addled time has known that boys naturally need some time away from mama, sisters, and girls, to establish their independent identities as masculine. *Then* they can meet the opposite sex in a complementary way, as the girls meet them, each sex offering to the other what they cannot well bring to existence on their own. Boys who are friends with one another lean against the side of a truck, facing the same direction, taking on the world. The boy who likes a girl looks *toward* her, precisely because he and she are *not the same*.

Mama's boys make terrible husbands. There's an episode of *The Twilight*

Zone that dramatizes the trouble. Alex Walker has finally married the woman who has waited for him

for ten years. What was there to wait for? The death of Alex's mother, a doting and domineering woman, who raised him by herself after her husband abandoned them. As the episode opens, Walker and his bride, Virginia, return after their wedding to the homestead, so he can pack up a few belongings and settle things with a realtor before leaving for good. Virginia had gotten him to agree to sell the house, but once he's there he lapses back into reminiscences—he looks at toys and memorabilia in the attic; the radio mysteriously comes on, playing "The Lady in Red," Mother's favorite song; a plate of brownies appears on the living room table. The deceased mother's formidable pull is growing.

When Alex reverses himself and sends the realtor away, Virginia bursts out in an indignant plea for sanity. "You promised me!" she cries, and then says what she thinks and what she has obviously never uttered before: that his mother did not really love him, because otherwise she would not have wanted to keep him to herself as a little boy, but would have allowed him to grow up and be a real man.

"Go away," says the twelve-year-old Alex to Virginia in the final scene, as he enters his bedroom with his mother. "We don't need you anymore."

Rarities aside, a woman cannot make a boy into a man. The boy's body will surpass hers in strength sometime between the ages of eleven and fourteen. He will experience physical sensations that she has no notion of; he has a longing for male camaraderie that she can in the best of circumstances only learn about by generous observation (and these are *not* the best of circumstances); his feelings are chaotic and run from little-boy dependency to a lust for fighting. For his direction, he needs somebody who has gone through all that, and who can make him neither a milksop nor a bully, but a man whom other men respect and whom women admire and trust and like.



Find ways, then, to make him distinct from the girls, not because girls are to be despised, but because they are to be loved *as men love women*. Dress him as you dress, and let that be sometimes in ways that mark him as male, *for* the female. In healthy times, that would include dressing in formal attire for dances, where boys and girls learn what they are by observing and imitating what their mothers and fathers are doing. Revel in the sheer fun of the sexes.

#### 4. Keep the poison away.

You wouldn't let your son play in a cesspool. Then why let the Internet stream into his bedroom?

There is nothing on the Internet that your son absolutely needs; nothing. If he has private access to the Internet, he will use it to gaze at porn. No arguments here. Not all his hours of religious instruction, not all the exhortations of his mother and father, will suffice. He will use it to gaze at porn, and you will be fortunate if by the age of twelve he is not addicted to it, and has not had things burned indelibly into his imagination whose obscenity makes *Playboy* look like a Victorian tea-party.

This has nothing to do with trust. Your son is a child. He will no more have the strength to resist the allure than he would have the strength to push an automobile uphill. Keep the poison away. No private computer, and no hand-held devices that serve the same purposes. He will learn more from one hour outdoors, or one hour with power tools in your workshop, than from twenty on the Internet.

Then there are people who think that poison is food and drink. Avoid them, too. Again I must be blunt. There is almost nothing good to be said for our public schools, and for the private schools that follow their lead. If your son goes to school, he will be battered, day after day, with messages from people whose imaginations are corrupted, who think that what you are trying to do with your boy is at best stupidly old-fashioned, and at worst wicked.

Give Satan a child's imagination and he'll gladly concede all the rest. Give the direction of your son's imaginative life to teachers who are on board with all things Sodom, and most of your work will be undone in a year. You must take care to place before him imaginative and healthy portrayals of the passage from boyhood to manhood: Kipling's *Captains Courageous*, *Kim*, *The Jungle Book*; Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*; Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*; such classic films as *How Green Was My Valley*, *Shane*, *The Yearling*, *Rio Grande*, *Friendly Persuasion*, *Sergeant York*, *The Cowboys*.

#### 5. Pray beside him, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

If your church uses hymnals that excise the masculinity of words and pronouns referring to God or Christ, don't bother speaking to the pastor about it. Don't waste your time. Get another church.

Let your son learn that we human fathers are so not in a primary but in a secondary sense. God simply *is Father*, from whom all fatherhood derives; we are fathers because God has created us to share in his fatherhood. We do not call God "Father" metaphorically. The name opens out to us a view of his essence; we are by comparison the mere images and analogues.

Pray as men pray. Observe the solemn, quasi-liturgical behavior of the men who patrol the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. There is nothing frilly or sentimental or cute about it; nothing slack, informal, or indifferent. I'm not recommending anything so stern or so inflexible—certainly not a wearisome precision, not for family prayer, and not for bending your knee beside your son. But I do recommend solemnity, a prelude to joy.

Let him know that Jesus was a man, not a hermaphrodite. He was a carpenter; and I've been told that the Greek word suggests a man hired for large building projects—a construction worker. Give a young man twenty years of that work and he will have arms like clubs, tendons like cords, and a back and shoulders studded with muscles. That's in accord with what we see of Jesus in the Gospels: a man of great stamina and strength, who enjoyed arduous journeys on foot, and who sought out the solitudes of mountains and shores. He was a man whom some men feared and other men admired and loved; he was gentle and chivalrous with women, never harsh with them, even when he was telling them what they found uncomfortable to hear.

### *Acquit Yourself Like a Man*

Do these things. And if you are ever tempted to doubt your wisdom in this matter, remember your allies: nature; every culture known to man; the great poets and novelists; and the Word of God. Acquit yourself like a man, and let your son see it. He will bless you for it when he comes to manhood, and honor you as long as he lives. ☉



# Does your son act too much like a little boy?

☒ Is he fidgety and rambunctious?

☒ Does he have trouble listening or have a puerile sense of humor?

☒ Is he easily distracted?

☒ Does he have a propensity to get dirty?

☒ Does he enjoy playing with violent toys?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then it might be time to medicate your son. Even if he doesn’t have ADD or ADHD, you’ll most certainly agree that he’s annoying.

Well, now you can curb the boyish tendencies in your son and make him almost comatose in the process. E-MASQL8 Plus has been clinically proven to remove in boys all signs of unwanted boyishness. You’ll never have to deal with snips, snails, or puppy-dog tails again.

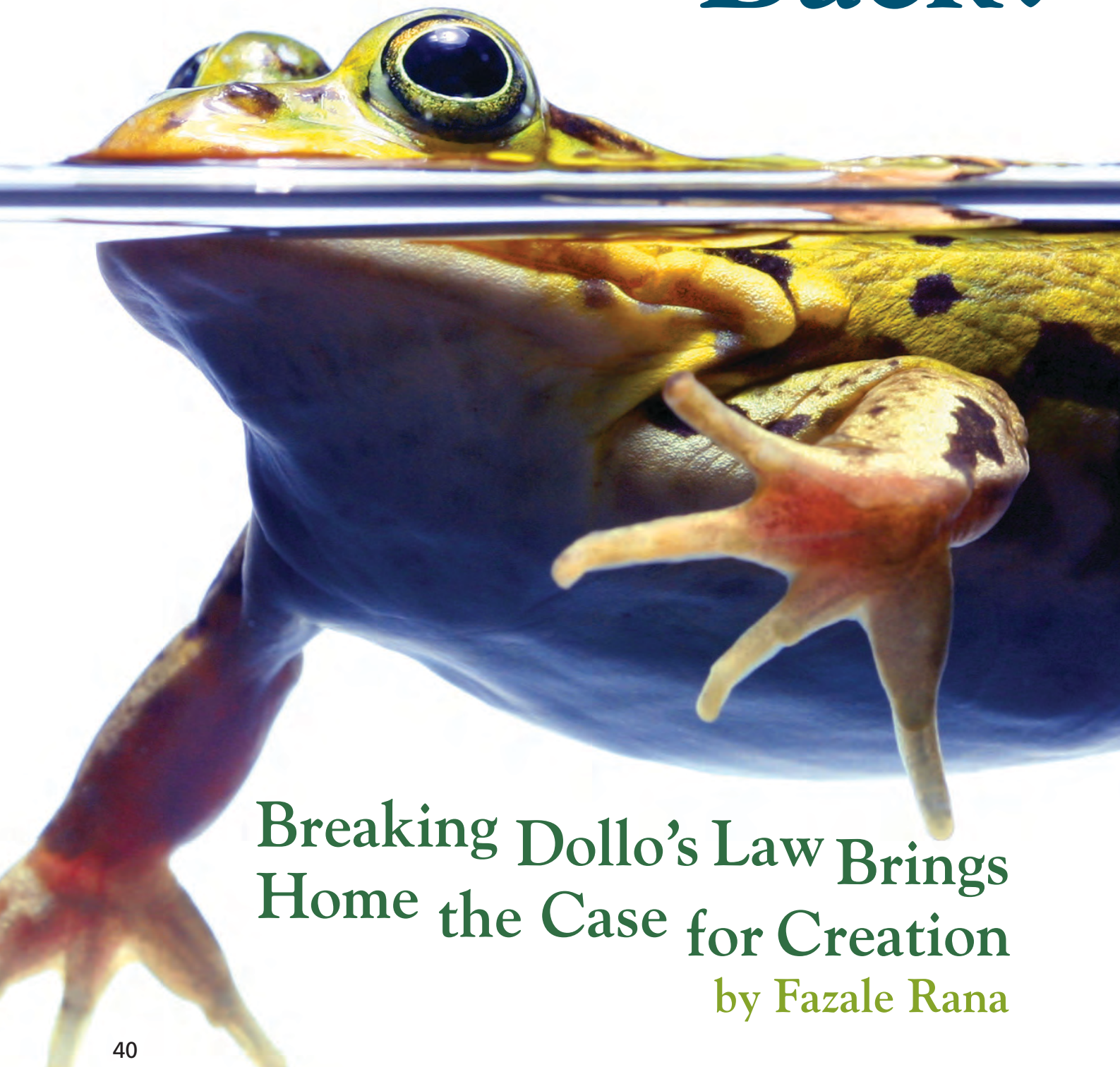


## E-MASQL8 Plus

*A Cure for the Common Boy*



# No Going Back?



Breaking Dollo's Law Brings  
Home the Case for Creation  
by Fazale Rana





**P**ublished posthumously, Thomas Wolfe's 1940 novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*—considered by many to be his most significant work—explores how brutally unfair the passage of time can be. In the finale, George Webber, the story's protagonist, concedes that "You can't go back home" to family, childhood, familiar places, dreams, and old ways of life.

In other words, there's an irreversible quality to life. Call it the arrow of time.



Like Wolfe, most evolutionary biologists believe there is an irreversibility to life's history and the evolutionary process. In fact, this idea is codified in Dollo's Law, which states that an organism cannot return, even partially, to a previous evolutionary stage occupied by one of its ancestors. Yet several recent studies have

uncovered what appear to be violations of Dollo's Law. These violations call into question the sufficiency of the evolutionary paradigm to fully account for the history of life. On the other hand, the return to "ancestral states" does find an explanation in an intelligent design/creation model approach to life's history. ➡



## Dollo's Law

French paleontologist Louis Dollo formulated the law that bears his name in 1893, before the advent of modern-day genetics. He based it on patterns he unearthed from the fossil record. Today, his idea finds undergirding in the contemporary understanding of genetics and developmental biology.

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins explains the modern-day concept of Dollo's Law this way:

Dollo's Law is really just a statement about the statistical improbability of following exactly the same evolutionary trajectory twice . . . in either direction. A single mutational step can easily be reversed. But for larger numbers of mutational steps . . . [the] mathematical space of all possible trajectories is so vast that the chance of two trajectories ever arriving at the same point becomes vanishingly small.<sup>1</sup>

If a biological trait is lost during the evolutionary process, then the genes and developmental pathways responsible for that feature will eventually degrade, because they are no longer under selective pressure. In 1994, using mathematical modeling, researchers from Indiana University determined that once a biological trait is lost, there is a reasonable possibility that the corresponding genes could be "reactivated" within a timescale of five hundred thousand to six million years. But once a time span of ten million years has elapsed, unexpressed genes and dormant developmental pathways become permanently lost.<sup>2</sup>

In 2000, a scientific team from the University of Oregon offered a complementary perspective on the timescale for evolutionary reversals when they calculated how long it takes for a duplicated gene to lose function.<sup>3</sup> According to the evolutionary paradigm, once a gene becomes duplicated, it is no longer under the influence of natural selection. That is, it undergoes "neutral evolution," and eventually becomes silenced as mutations accrue. As it turns out, the half-life for this process is approximately four million years. To put it another way, 16 to 24 million years after the duplication event, the duplicated gene will have completely lost its function. Presumably, this same result applies to dormant, unexpressed genes that have been rendered unnecessary because the trait they specify has been lost.

Both scenarios assume neutral evolution and the accumulation of mutations in a linearly temporal manner. But what if the loss of gene function is advantageous? Collaborative work by researchers from

Harvard University and NYU in 2007 demonstrated that loss of gene function can take place over a time span of about one million years if natural selection influences gene loss.<sup>4</sup> This research team studied the loss of eyes in the Mexican tetra, a cave fish. Because they live in a dark, subterranean environment, having eyes serves no benefit to these creatures. In fact, the research team discovered, eye reduction actually offers an *advantage* to these fish, because there is a high metabolic cost associated with maintaining eyes. For the Mexican tetra, eye loss reduces this metabolic cost, and that reduction, in turn, accelerates the loss of gene function through the operation of natural selection.

Based on these three studies, it is reasonable to conclude that once a trait has been lost, the time limit for evolutionary reversal is on the order of about 20 million years. In any case, the very nature of evolutionary mechanisms and the constraints of genetic mutations make it extremely improbable that evolutionary processes would allow an organism to revert to an ancestral state or to recover a lost biological trait. You can't go home again.

## Violations of Dollo's Law

Yet despite this expectation, researchers have, over the course of the last several years, uncovered several instances in which Dollo's Law has been violated. A brief description of a handful of these occurrences follows.







- **The re-evolution of mandibular teeth in the frog genus *Gastrotheca***

**T**his group is the only one that includes living frogs with true teeth on the lower jaw. According to the evolutionary framework, mandibular teeth were present in ancient frogs and then lost in the ancestor of all living frogs. It also appears that, before they reappeared in *Gastrotheca*, such teeth had been absent in frogs for 225 million years, far longer than “permissible” under Dollo’s Law.<sup>5</sup>

- **The re-evolution of oviparity in sand boas**

**F**rom an evolutionary perspective, it appears that, among reptiles, live-birth (viviparity) reproductive behaviors evolved from original egg-laying (oviparity) behaviors. Among snakes, for instance, it is estimated that this evolutionary transition has occurred in at least thirty cases. There are 41 species of boa alone, in both the Old and New Worlds, that once laid eggs but now give live birth to their offspring. Yet two recently described sand boas, the Arabian sand boa (*Eryx jayakari*) and the Saharan sand boa (*Eryx mueleri*) have reverted back to laying eggs. Phylogenetic analysis of these boas carried out by researchers from Yale University indicates that the egg-laying in these two species re-evolved 60 million years after the initial transition to viviparity took place.<sup>6</sup>

- **The re-evolution of rotating sex combs in *Drosophila***

**S**ex combs are modified bristles unique to male fruit flies, used for courtship and mating. There

are two kinds: transverse sex combs and rotating sex combs, the latter resulting when several rows of bristles undergo a rotation of ninety degrees. In the *ananassae* fruit fly group, most of the twenty or so species have simple transverse sex combs, with *Drosophila bipectinata* and *Drosophila parabiopectinata* being the two exceptions. These fruit fly species possess rotating sex combs. But what is most interesting about them is that phylogenetic analysis, conducted by investigators from the University of California, Davis, indicates that the rotating sex combs in these two species re-evolved, 12 million years after being lost.<sup>7</sup>

- **The re-evolution of sexuality in mites belonging to the taxa *Crotoniidae***

**M**ites exhibit a wide range of reproductive modes, including parthenogenesis. In fact, this means of reproduction is prominent in the group Oribatida, clustering into two subgroups that display parthenogenesis almost exclusively. However, residing within one of these clusters is the taxa *Crotoniidae*, which displays sexual reproduction. Based on an evolutionary analysis, a team of German researchers concluded that this group re-evolved the capacity for sexual reproduction.<sup>8</sup>

- **The re-evolution of shell coiling in limpets**

**A**ccording to the evolutionary perspective, the coiled shell in gastropod lineages has been lost numerous times, producing a limpet shape consisting of a cap-shaped shell and a large foot. Evolutionary biologists have long thought that the loss of the coiled shell represented an evolutionary dead end. However, researchers from Venezuela have shown that coiled shell morphology re-evolved at least one time, in calyptraeids, 20 to 100 million years after its loss.<sup>9</sup>

This list gives just a few recently discovered examples of Dollo’s Law violations. Surveying the scientific literature, evolutionary biologist John J. Wiens identified an additional eight violations, and, in each of these cases, he determined that the lost trait reappeared after at least 20 million years had passed, and in some instances after 120 million years had elapsed.<sup>10</sup>

## **Violations & the Theory of Evolution**

Given that the evolutionary paradigm predicts that re-evolution of traits should not occur after the trait has been lost for 20 million years, the numerous discoveries of Dollo’s Law violations present a prob-



lem. At least they provide a basis for skepticism about the capacity of the evolutionary paradigm to fully account for life's history. And the problem is likely worse than it appears: Wiens points out that these violations may be more widespread than imagined, but difficult to detect for methodological reasons.<sup>11</sup>

Evolutionary biologists have responded to this challenge by offering two ways of accounting for Dollo's Law violations.<sup>12</sup>

(1) The first is to question the validity of the evolutionary analysis that exposes them. That is, some scientists claim that the recently identified Dollo's Law violations are artifacts of the evolutionary analysis, and not real.

This work-around, however, is unconvincing. The evolutionary biologists who discovered the various violations were aware of this complication and took painstaking efforts to ensure the validity of the evolutionary analysis they performed.

(2) The second response is to argue that some genes and developmental modules serve more than one function. According to this scenario, even though the trait specified by a gene or a developmental module may be lost, the gene or module itself could remain intact because it serves other roles. This retention makes it possible for traits to re-evolve even after a hundred million years.

Although this proposal is reasonable, it still must be viewed as speculative. Evolutionary biologists have yet to apply the same mathematical rigor to this explanation as they have to estimating the timescale for loss of function in dormant genes. These calculations are critical, given the extensive timescales involved in some of the Dollo's Law violations.

Also, considering the nature of evolutionary processes, this response neglects the fact that, after a trait is lost, genes and developmental pathways will continue to evolve under the auspices of natural selection. Free from the constraints of the lost function, the genes and developmental modules will experience new evolutionary possibilities that were previously unavailable to them. The more functional roles a gene or module assumes, the less will be its capacity to evolve. Hence, shedding one of its roles increases the likelihood that the gene or module will become modified, as the evolutionary process will now have new space available to explore.

It is reasonable to think that natural selection could modify the gene or developmental module to such an extent that the lost trait would be just as unlikely to re-evolve under this scenario as it would be if gene loss had been a consequence of neutral evolution. In fact, the study of eye loss in the Mexican tetra suggests that the modification of these genes

and modules could occur at a faster rate under natural selection than under neutral evolution.

## Violations & the Case for Creation

While Dollo's Law violations are problematic for the evolutionary paradigm, they fit right in with a creation model/intelligent design perspective. The re-evolution—or perhaps, more appropriately, the reappearance—of a biological trait long after its initial disappearance makes sense from the latter standpoint, because such a reappearance can be understood as the work of a Creator. It is not unusual for engineers to reuse or revisit a previously used design feature in a new prototype. Irreversibility may be inherent to the evolutionary process, but designers are not constrained in that way and can freely return to old designs whenever they find them useful.

Dollo's Law violations are at home in a creation model, highlighting the value of this model in understanding life's history. ☉

### Notes

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# Optimal Optics

## Evolutionists Don't Know a Good Eye When They See One

**Some people argue** that the human eye is flawed, proving that it was not intelligently designed but evolved through unguided processes.

Both vertebrates (animals with backbones, including humans) and cephalopods (mollusks with tentacles growing from their heads, such as squids and octopuses) have camera eyes, which are roughly spherical organs with lenses that focus images on light-sensitive retinas. In vertebrate eyes, the light-sensing cells (**c and f in the drawing on page 46**) point towards the back of the retina, and the nerve cells that transmit signals to the brain (**b in the drawing**) are between the light-sensing cells and the incoming light. By contrast, in cephalopod eyes, the light-sensing cells point toward the incoming light and the nerve cells are at the back.

## Litany of Disparagement

In 1986, Richard Dawkins published *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*. In it, Dawkins used the vertebrate eye as evidence against design:

Any engineer would naturally assume that the photocells would point towards the light, with

their wires leading backwards towards the brain. He would laugh at any suggestion that the photocells might point away from the light, with their wires departing on the side nearest the light. Yet this is exactly what happens in all vertebrate retinas. Each photocell is, in effect, wired in backwards, with its wire sticking out on the side nearest the light. The wire has to travel over the surface of the retina, to a point where it dives through a hole in the retina (the so-called "blind spot") to join the optic nerve.

Vertebrate eyes work reasonably well, Dawkins conceded, but "it is the principle of the thing that would offend any tidy-minded engineer!"<sup>1</sup>

Six years later, evolutionary biologist George Williams wrote, "There would be no blind spot if the vertebrate eye were really intelligently designed. In fact it is stupidly designed," while "the retina of a squid is right side up."<sup>2</sup>

In 1994, biology professor Kenneth R. Miller argued similarly that the human eye—"that supposed paragon of intelligent design"—is badly designed. "Quite naturally," he wrote,

you (and any other designer) would choose the orientation that produces the highest degree of visual quality. No one, for example, would suggest that the neural wiring connections should be placed on the side that faces the light, rather than on the side away from it. Incredibly, this is exactly how the human retina is constructed.

By contrast, a cephalopod retina is "wired right-side-out."<sup>3</sup>

In 2005, Douglas Futuyma published a textbook about evolution claiming that "no intelligent engineer

would be expected to design" the "functionally non-sensical arrangement" of cells in the human retina.<sup>4</sup> That same year, geneticist Jerry Coyne wrote that the human eye is "certainly not the sort of eye an engineer would create from scratch." Instead, "the whole system is like a car in which all the wires to the dashboard hang inside the driver's compartment instead of being tucked safely out of sight." Like Dawkins, Williams, Miller, and Futuyma, Coyne attributed this arrangement to unguided evolution, which "yields fitter types that often have flaws. These flaws violate reasonable principles of intelligent design."<sup>5</sup>

A 2014 biology textbook by Kenneth Mason, Jonathan Losos, and Susan Singer informs students that "an excellent example of imperfect design is the eye of vertebrate animals, in which the photoreceptors face backward, toward the wall of the eye." By contrast, the eyes of cephalopods "are more optimally designed."<sup>6</sup>

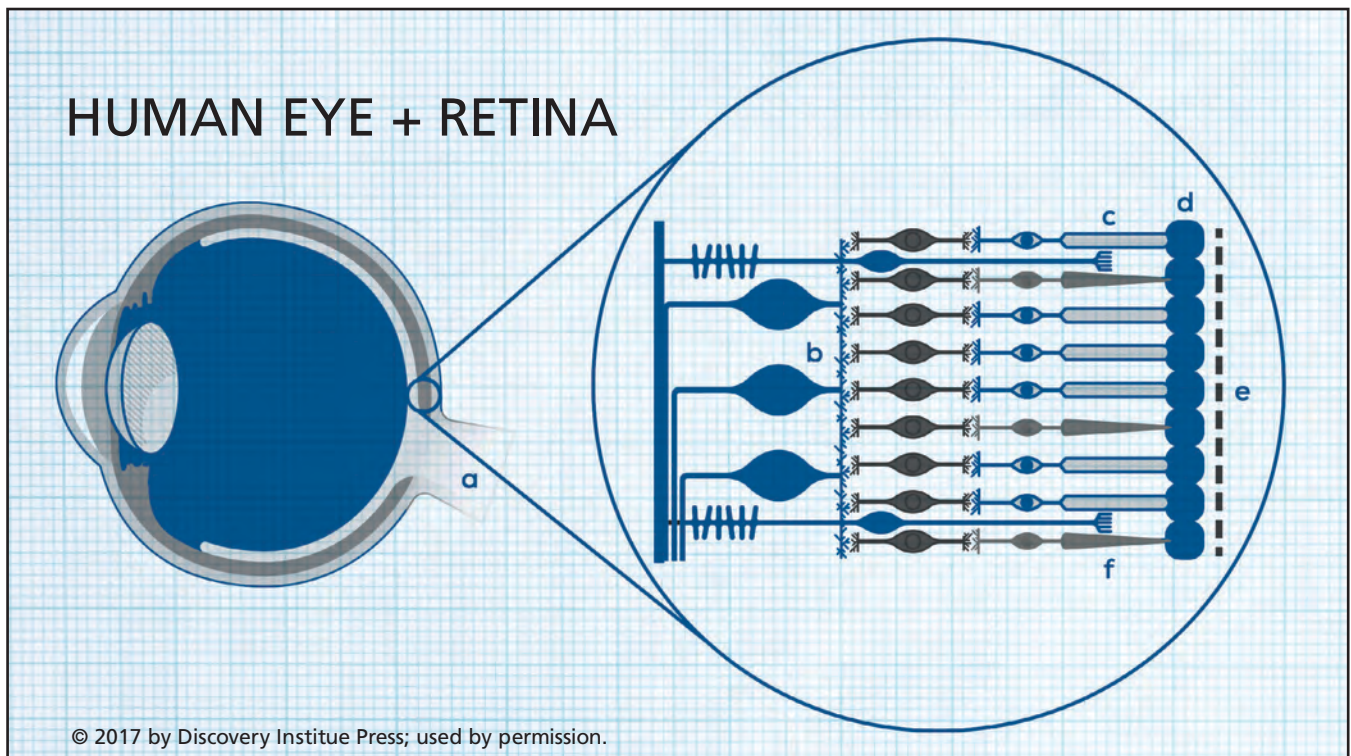
Molecular biologist Nathan Lents wrote in 2015, "The photoreceptor cells of the retina appear to be placed backward, with the wiring facing the light and the photoreceptor facing inward. . . . This is not an optimal design for obvious reasons. The photons of light must travel around the bulk of the photoreceptor cell in order to hit the receiver tucked in the back. It's as if you were speaking into the wrong end of a microphone." According to Lents,

there are no working hypotheses about why the vertebrate retina is wired in backwards. It seems to have been a random development that then "stuck" because a correction of that magnitude would be very difficult to pull off with random mutations. . . . During the evolution of the cephalopod eye, the retina took shape in a more logical way, with the photoreceptors facing outward toward the light. Vertebrates were not so lucky.<sup>7</sup>

So from the perspective of evolutionary theory, the human eye is evidence for unguided evolution and against intelligent design. But is the human eye *really* evidence against design?

## Actually a Superior Design

The light-sensing cells in a vertebrate retina require lots of nutrients and vast amounts of energy. In mammals, they have the highest metabolic rate of any tissue in the body.<sup>8</sup> About three-quarters of the blood supply to the eye flows through a dense network of capillaries called **the "choriocapillaris," which is situated behind the retina (e in the drawing)**.<sup>9</sup> Oxygen and nutrients are transported





from the choriocapillaris to the light-sensing cells by an intermediate layer of cells called **the “retinal pigment epithelium” or RPE (d in the drawing)**.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to transporting oxygen and nutrients to the light-sensing cells, the RPE performs two other essential functions. First, the dark pigment in it absorbs scattered light, improving the optical quality of the eye. Second, it removes toxic chemicals that are generated in the process of detecting light. The light-sensing cells contain stacks of discs, and in 1967 Richard Young showed experimentally that a photoreceptor cell continually renews itself by shedding discs at the end closest to the RPE and replacing them with newly synthesized discs at the other end.<sup>11</sup> The RPE then engulfs the shed discs and neutralizes the toxins.<sup>12</sup>

Blood is almost opaque, and the RPE absorbs light. If the light-sensing cells were to face the incoming light, the blood-filled choriocapillaris and the RPE would have to be in front of the retina, where they would block most or all of the light. By contrast, **nerve cells (b in the drawing)** are comparatively transparent, and they block very little of the incoming light. Because of the high metabolic requirements of the light-sensing cells and their need to regenerate themselves, the inverted retina is actually much better than the “tidy-minded” design imagined by evolutionary biologists.

**The blind spot (a in the drawing)** is not a serious problem, because the blind spot produced by the left eye is not in the same place as the one produced by the right eye. This means that, in humans with two good eyes, the field of vision of one eye covers for the blind spot of the other eye, and vice versa.

What about the claim that cephalopod eyes are better than vertebrate eyes? In 1984, a team of Italian biologists pointed out that cephalopod eyes are physiologically inferior to vertebrate eyes. In vertebrate eyes, the initial processing of visual images occurs in the retina, by nerve cells right next to the photoreceptor cells. In cephalopod eyes, nerve impulses from the photoreceptor cells must travel all the way to the brain to be processed. So a cephalopod eye “is just a ‘passive’ retina which is able to transmit only information, dot by dot, coded in a far less sophisticated fashion than in vertebrates.” The result is slower processing and fuzzier signals.<sup>13</sup>

## Evolutionists’ Blind Spot

All of the research cited above about the choriocapillaris and the RPE, which demonstrates the superiority of vertebrate eyes over cephalopod eyes, was published *before* Dawkins published *The Blind Watchmaker*. But Dawkins and the other critics of intelligent design didn’t bother to check the scientific literature. They simply *assumed* that evolution is true and that they knew how an eye *should* be designed. Then they concluded that the human eye is badly designed, claimed it as evidence for evolution, and ignored the contrary evidence.

Good empirical science searches for explanations that fit the evidence. But another kind of “science” is committed to telling materialistic stories about unguided evolution, even when those stories don’t fit the evidence. The stories are empirically dead, but they keep coming anyway, like zombies. You can find more such stories in my recently published book *Zombie Science*.<sup>14</sup> ☉

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# Up for Grabs

## In Science, When "Anything Goes," Everything Goes

**Family values activist Austin Ruse's new book, *Fake Science: Exposing the Left's Skewed Statistics, Fuzzy Facts, and Dodgy Data* (Regnery, 2017),** offers a look at a world growing increasingly hostile to evidence-based reasoning. We have not discovered better reasoning methods; rather, many people seem to have decided that reasoning is not relevant to our life together, and perhaps not relevant to the life of the mind generally.

Ruse begins his book with a note about polls. Opinion pollsters claim that their work is a scientific enterprise. But in a recent unintended test of that claim, pollsters not only failed to call the Clinton versus Trump contest correctly, but their failure was largely due to a degree of bias that suggests discom-

ality, does biology prevail? Or is culture or personal preference the main factor?

Many gay rights activists claim that homosexuality is biologically determined. As Ruse documents, that claim is doubtful if broadly applied, in part because homosexual practices can often depend on culture, as in the case of prison culture<sup>2</sup> or the "dancing boys" of Afghanistan,<sup>3</sup> and are not a demonstration of fixed necessity or even preference. Female attraction to other women can coincide with marriage to a man and having children by him. Worldwide for millennia, many (if not most) people had their life mates chosen for them by others, in part for the purpose of producing heirs. Consummated romantic love of any type was more often legend than life.

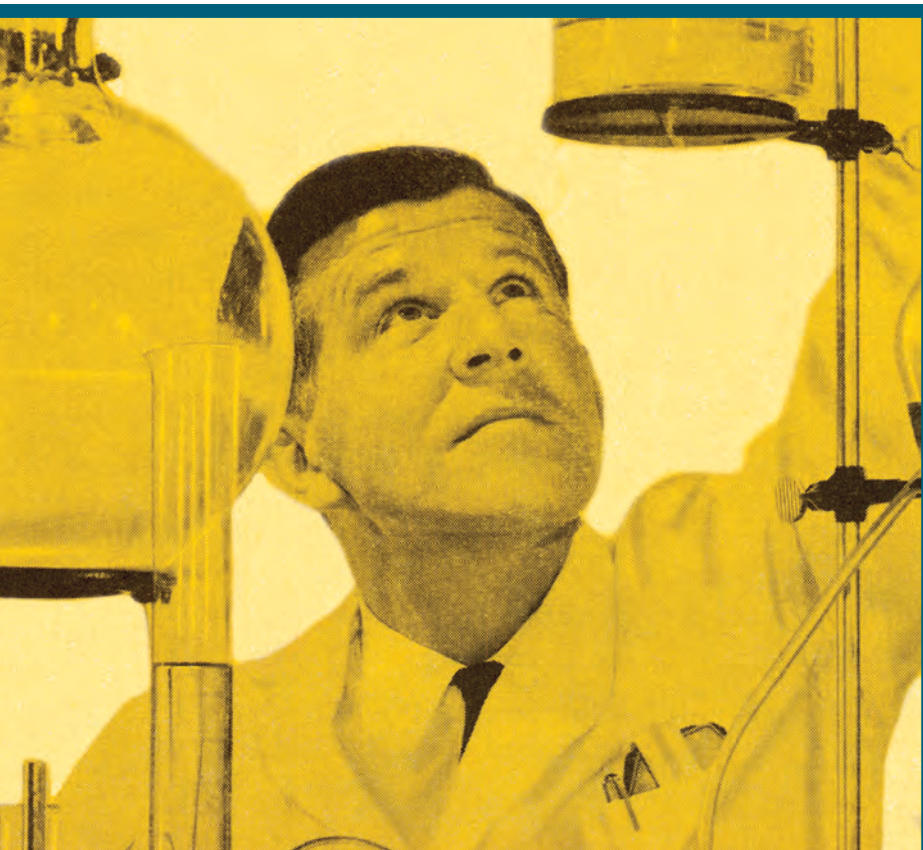
But the activists face a bigger evidence problem. What does it mean to say that a non-physical trait is biologically determined and therefore "not a choice"? As noted at *Slate*:

In 2014, researchers confirmed the association between same-sex orientation in men and a specific

fort with the methods of science. For example, some changed their predictions at the last minute because they simply could not believe the results of their own research.<sup>1</sup> But a scientist should be prepared to risk a wrong prediction. Much science can be learned from researching and correcting bad data or wrong predictions; little can be learned from fudging the data or changing the predictions.

## A Conveniently Loose Relationship

The sexuality lobbies on which Ruse focuses offer a tangle of conflicting, sometimes incoherent claims appealing to science. For example, with respect to sexu-





chromosomal region. This is similar to findings originally published in the 1990s, which, at that time, gave rise to the idea that a “gay gene” must exist. But this argument has never been substantiated, despite the fact that studies have shown that homosexuality is a heritable trait.<sup>4</sup>

A controversial new thesis suggests that epigenetics plays a role.<sup>5</sup> The thesis is controversial mainly because the birth control pill is the cited factor, which considerably diminishes the likelihood that the evidence will ever get a fair hearing. That underscores the bigger evidence problem: Science isn’t about “What if?”; it is about “How, exactly?” Absent step-by-step documentation of a cascade of biochemical events, claims made for scientific evidence one way or the other are nothing more than social power plays.

For instance, as Ruse chronicles, gay activists have claimed that evidence from genetics justifies their



demand for a ban on therapy to change unwanted homosexual attractions.<sup>6</sup> But leaving aside the tenuousness of their scientific claims, one must ask, Why is the client—in only this one type of case—not entitled to seek therapy for his own purposes? Would the same activists also ban therapy to increase such attractions? What about the bisexual man who would genuinely

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that they won’t often be confronted with evidence that requires them to adopt a coherent position.

Transgender lobbyists, taking the opposite tack, claim that a person can belong to the other “gender” irrespective of obvious, genetically driven sexual characteristics, due to a concept of gender that *could exist only in that individual’s mind*. The lobby’s

stance seems all the odder when we consider that most neuroscientists hold that the mind does not even exist apart from the biological, sex-specific brain. But the majority view in neuroscience is seldom raised as an objection to transgender claims.

## The Shift to Postmodern Science

But we can, perhaps, identify a pattern underlying the apparent conflict: if our brains are shaped for evolutionary fitness, not for truth,<sup>7</sup> then we thrive

by adapting to the environment—or adapting the environment to us. If gay activists find their environment uncomfortable because there are non-activists in it who seek to change their orientation, then banning change-directed therapy might seem necessary. What if justice includes the activists’ right to an environment in which they can thrive as an identity group? Or what if transgender activists’ rights include exemption from routine challenges posed to a non-materialist view of the mind? That would be one of the perks of maintaining a comparatively loose relationship with science.

These social brush fires are outcrops of the fact that even high science is becoming postmodern.<sup>8</sup> Many associate this shift with Berkeley philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994), who sometimes said that what is termed “science” in one culture is called “voodoo” in another, and that, in science, explicitly, “anything goes”:

To those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to please their lower instincts—their craving for intellectual

security in the form of clarity, precision, "objectivity," [or] "truth"—it will become clear that there is only *one* principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in *all* stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes*.<sup>9</sup>

Science writer John Horgan asks us to consider whether Feyerabend, in saying this, was really so "anti-science" after all.<sup>10</sup> The best answer is probably that science itself has changed. Feyerabend was a mortal foe of modern science, but he was a pioneer of postmodern science.

Ruse reflects on the role played by popular science celebrities in spreading the postmodern approach: "Science is an inflated medium of exchange these days . . . but its value has been eroded by the charlatans making obviously partisan and sometimes wild and contradictory 'scientific' claims" (p. 218). Pop science celebrities have been around for as long as any of us can remember. But Ruse chronicles a subtle shift. Both Stephen Hawking<sup>11</sup> and Neil deGrasse Tyson<sup>12</sup> have made clear that philosophy is either "dead" or "a useless enterprise," something one certainly did not hear from past icons like Albert Einstein.

A variety of thinkers who would otherwise disagree on many things are also starting to use the term "postmodern" to describe the new trend in science. Multiverse skeptic Peter Woit, author of *Not Even Wrong* (2006), speaks of the "post-modern way of doing science," which he considers "deeply problematic,"<sup>13</sup> and conservative science

journalist Hank Campbell, author with Alex Berzow of *Science Left Behind* (2012), describes the multiverse proclaimed in Tyson's *Cosmos* as "just postmodernism with some math."<sup>14</sup> But one gets the sense that no one is sure what to do about the disturbing trend.

## The Flash of Switchblades

Marcel Kuntz, of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in France, asks, "If all truths are equal, who cares what science has to say?"<sup>15</sup> Actually, a great many identity groups and lobbies care very much what postmodern science has to say. For one thing, it can be politicized so as to leave activists with little fear of being confronted with contradictory evidence they must accept.

And not only politicized but also, increasingly, weaponized. Ruse reminds us that science icon Bill Nye (a mechanical engineer turned science presenter) feels free to suggest that "it might be appropriate to throw 'climate deniers' in jail" (p. 220).<sup>16</sup>

Yes, in a postmodern world of apparently limitless tolerance, we suddenly encounter the flash of switchblades: a man can't decide to doubt Al Gore on climate change any more than he can decide he just doesn't want to live a gay lifestyle. The difference between this postmodern crackdown on heresy and traditional crackdowns is subtle but critical: nowadays, the heretic's offense is not against truth (which, if it existed, would be a tool of injustice) but rather against a narrative needed by powerful identity groups. And *their* voodoo is science. ☉

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Agender  
Androgyne  
Androgynous  
Bigender  
Cis  
Cisgender  
Cis Female  
Cis Male  
Cis Man  
Cis Woman  
Cisgender Female  
Cisgender Male  
Cisgender Man  
Cisgender Woman

**Female to Male**

FTM

Gender Fluid

**Gender Nonconforming**

Gender Questioning

Gender Variant

Genderqueer

**Intersex**

Male to Female

MTF

Neither

Neutrois

Non-binary

**Other**

Pangender

Trans

**Trans\***

Trans Female

Trans\* Female

Trans Male

Trans\* Male

Trans Man

Trans\* Man

Trans Person

Trans\* Person

Trans Woman

Trans\* Woman

Transfeminine

Transgender

**Transgender Female**

Transgender Male

Transgender Man

Transgender Person

Transgender Woman

Transmasculine

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**Transsexual Female**

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Transsexual Man

Transsexual Person

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# Family Downed Under

## Government Solutions Do Not Address the Fundamental Needs of the People

### Is this the most hellish town on earth?

Above, a cloudless cobalt sky. Beneath, red dirt. To the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west, undulating, scrubby, featureless, and iron-rich land. Summer temperatures can reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 C). During a late nineteenth-century gold rush, it was the biggest settlement between Perth, 1,600 kilometers south, and Darwin, 2,600 kilometers northwest. Nowadays Roebourne, Western Australia, is the child abuse capital of the nation.

According to a searing report in *The Australian* newspaper, Roebourne is “a festering mess of inter-generational child sexual abuse where kids are more likely to be raped than almost anywhere else on earth.”<sup>1</sup>

More than half of the 1,400 or so people in Roebourne and its surrounding communities are Aboriginal. About 80 percent of the inhabitants are on welfare. Recently retired West Australian Police Commissioner Karl O’Callaghan said that the rate of alleged child sex offending in Roebourne is “staggering” and that the community is in an “almost unrecoverable crisis.”

The problem is so widespread that locals believe that child sex abuse is just “normal.” Not long ago, police charged 36 local men with more than 300 offences, past and present, against 184 children—in a town whose school has only 200 enrolled students. But the government

knows that the cancer of abuse has sunk so deeply into the community that removing the pedophiles will not bring an end to the problem.

The grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and even great-great-grandmothers have been left with the job of keeping many of the children out of harm’s way.<sup>2</sup> Many kids are too frightened to stay with their alcoholic or drug-addled parents. “They walk around and look for safety, somewhere safe to go, especially at night,” says one of the community’s elders. “You can’t go to a place that is crowded with alcohol. Parents are not doing what they’re supposed to be doing.”

## Facilitating Dysfunction

How can such a dysfunctional community recover? There has been no lack of government support. In 2014, a total of 63 governmental and non-governmental providers delivered more than 200 services,

at a cost of \$58,719.00 (Australian) per year for each resident. Yet despite all that effort by well-intentioned bureaucrats, Roebourne is still being described as “the town of the damned.”

Insofar as there is a strategy for recovery, it seems to be this: Give 11-year-old girls contraceptive implants, arrest the sex-abusers, restrict sales of alcohol, and make welfare payments largely cashless. The de-

spairing police commissioner has even suggested that some of the Aboriginal communities should be closed, forcing residents to move to the larger town, where

**“Sit-down money”—as it is called in Australia—robs adults, men especially, of their sense of self-worth. “Unless our passive welfare dependency is soon addressed, it will inevitably cause the disintegration of our communities and the annihilation of our culture.”**



they can get more help.

"If we facilitate the existence of communities beset by substance abuse, family violence and child abuse hundreds of kilometers from support or intervention services, then we must accept the loss of yet another generation of Aboriginal children," O'Callaghan wrote a couple of years ago.<sup>3</sup>

Year after year, decade after decade, Australian governments, state and federal, have poured billions of dollars into communities like Roebourne. And many of them are still hellish. No place on earth confirms the wisdom of Ronald Reagan's quip better than this isolated town: "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: 'I'm from the government, and I'm here to help.'"

## Two Great Flaws

There seem to be two fundamental flaws in the current policy.

First, there is the assumption that steady, demanding, honest work is not fundamental to human dignity and that welfare is an adequate substitute for a job.

But this is almost criminally wrong. "Sit-down money"—as it is called in Australia—robs adults, men especially, of their sense of self-worth. "Unless our passive welfare dependency is soon addressed, it will inevitably cause the disintegration of our communities and the annihilation of our culture," warns Noel Pearson, a prominent Aboriginal leader in the Cape York Peninsula, on the other side of the continent.

Second, there is the assumption that the family unit doesn't need to be protected. This assumption is, for lack of better words, simply wicked. Article 16 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." But Australian society (like most of the West) is skeptical of this great truth. Divorce and co-habitation are common and unremarkable.

Noel Pearson suggests that these two errors are intertwined. Passive welfare has destroyed both the will to work and family cohesion:

We have allowed Aboriginal policy to forget that our parents, grandparents and great-



Former Roebourne Shire Offices

grandparents struggled mightily to preserve our families and communities—our society, our laws and values—against great and constant attack, and we survived. Whatever our material deprivations, whatever our poverty, we had a strong if bruised society. . . . [But] we are socially poorer today despite vastly improved material circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

White Australia can survive a certain amount of family dysfunction. The children of its fractured families suffer, but they still go to school, eat regular meals, and have shoes on their feet.

But what makes white Australia sneeze is deadly for indigenous Australia—just as in the nineteenth century, when white colonists were able to shrug off smallpox infections while countless thousands of Aboriginals were killed by the disease. Unless governments do whatever it takes to encourage indigenous communities to rebuild their families, they will continue to sink ever further into Roebourne's quicksand of substance abuse and sex abuse. ☹

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# The Real Jesus?

## Reading the Gospels Without Prejudice Isn't So Easy

**A discussion going back centuries** concerns the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Does the text of the Bible, taken by itself, teach the same thing as the tradition which has interpreted it? Or has tradition supplemented or even distorted the teaching of the text? And what would Christianity look like if it were based on "the text alone"?

In two powerful old books, literary giants George Bernard Shaw and Gilbert Keith Chesterton took up this question. Shaw's discussion is found in the Preface to his play *Androcles and the Lion* (1912); Chesterton's appears in *The Everlasting Man* (1925).

Early in the Preface (in the section "The Gospels without Prejudice") Shaw writes:

When I was young it was impossible to read [the Gospels] without fantastic confusion of thought. . . . When you heard the gospel stories read in church, or learnt them from painters and poets, you came out with an impression of their contents that would have astonished a Chinaman who had read the story without prepossession.

Shaw's "Chinaman" has never read Augustine, seen Christian art, or heard Christian hymns, and thus reads the Gospels "without prepossession," deriving their meaning from the text alone. No European Christian historical clutter obscures his view. He reads with fresh eyes and thus "without prejudice." If we want to know what the Gospels teach about "the history and views and character of Christ," we have to approach them with the Chinaman's cultural detachment.

Chesterton proposes something similar. In his second chapter ("The Riddles of the Gospel"), speaking of the problem posed by centuries of tradition, he writes: "There is a psychological difficulty in seeing

those well-known words simply as they stand and without going beyond what they intrinsically stand for." To see the Gospels afresh, we must make an effort to read them as if we were "an imaginary heathen . . . staring at [them] for the first time."

With this fundamental agreement over approach, we might think that Shaw and Chesterton would end up with similar interpretations of Jesus, but in fact their readings are far apart.

## An Anti-establishment Figure

Shaw's analysis does not, in fact, stick to the mere words of the

Gospel, but imports extra-textual notions. In order to read the Gospels accurately, he says, we must first learn "the history of religion." Thus, in the section "The Religion of the Minority—Salvationism" he explains the origin of the idea of Atonement in terms of current theories on the origin of sacrifice, and in the section "John Barleycorn" he explains the origin of the Eucharist in pagan myths about eating the body of a god to gain eternal life. So Shaw does not read the Gospels "without prepossession"; he reads them with the mind of an educated European of the early 1900s—something his hypothetical Chinaman would never do.

Yet Shaw does sometimes set aside his modern filter and read the Gospel stories as they stand, and his purely textual conclusions are interesting. He finds Jesus to be a remarkably tolerant and inclusive person, defying the conventions of respectable society by fraternizing with the poor, the outcast, women, and tax collectors. Jesus criticizes wealth and rank and is abrasive to religious leaders. From such facts Shaw builds up a picture of Jesus as an anti-establishment figure, an early socialist, feminist, and egalitarian who anticipated the most progressive modern thought (especially Shaw's own thought). Whereas the historical Christian tradition tamed the teaching of Jesus to incorporate it into a conservative social order based on wealth and power, the Gospels, if read "without prejudice," undermine that old marriage of Church and State to open up a new vision of human freedom and equality.



## The Most Merciful Face

Chesterton's use of the Gospels is quite different. He sees a difference between the bare text and the later tradition, but does not use that difference to undermine tradition. Rather, he uses it to invert the view of Jesus and the Church popular among modern intellectuals. He writes:

We have all heard people say a hundred times over . . . that the Jesus of the New Testament is indeed a most merciful . . . lover of humanity, but that the Church has hidden this human character in repellent dogmas and stiffened it with ecclesiastical terrors till it has taken on an inhuman character.

This view, Chesterton retorts, is "very nearly the reverse of the truth":

[The Church's portrait of Jesus] is very much more specially and exclusively merciful than any impression that could be formed by a man merely reading the New Testament for the first time. A man simply taking the words of the story as they stand would form quite another impression . . . certainly not merely an impression of mildness.

Chesterton highlights some of Jesus' "outbreaks of wrath," including his turning on Peter "as if he were the devil" and his sinking of Bethsaida "lower in the pit than Sodom." He goes on, however, to point out that such episodes are rarely part of the Church's presentation of Jesus, and then to justify that choice:

The figure in the Gospels . . . utter[s] in words of almost heart-breaking beauty his pity for our broken hearts. . . . they are almost the only kind of words that the Church in its popular imagery ever represents him as uttering. That . . . imagery is inspired by a perfectly sound popular instinct. The mass of the poor are broken, and the mass of the people are poor, and for the mass of mankind the main thing is to carry the conviction of the incredible compassion of God.

What would be the result, Chesterton speculates, if Church imagery matched the Gospel presentation of Jesus?



Jesus cleans house (Mark 11:15–19)

[T]here is something appalling, something that makes the blood run cold, in the idea of having a statue of Christ in wrath. There is something insupportable even to the imagination in the idea of turning the corner of a street or coming out into the spaces of a marketplace, to meet the petrifying petrification of that figure as it turned upon a generation of vipers, or that face as it looked at the face of a hypocrite. The Church can reasonably be justified therefore if she turns the most merciful face or aspect towards men.

## A Temporary Concession

Chesterton's remarks are fair, but still leave us wondering what to do with the harsh Jesus of the text. Chesterton never tells us. Shaw, on the other hand, does tell us: the harsh side of Jesus is required to found the radical new social order; one does not overthrow wealthy and powerful hypocrites with gentle manners. Chesterton's discussion of "Jesus from the text alone" seems to end with a question, whereas Shaw's account closes with an answer.

So did Shaw understand Jesus better than Chesterton? No, because Chesterton was not trying to offer a full account of Jesus. His sharp distinction of text from tradition, unlike Shaw's, was only a temporary concession, to expose the error of the liberal anti-clericals, who misused the distinction and thus misunderstood both Jesus and the Church. Had Chesterton's book been aimed directly at Shaw's Preface, he would have offered a fuller reading of the Gospels, and surely would have answered Shaw by relating the Jesus of the Gospels coherently to the Jesus of the Church. ☉



## Arts, Letters & a Warrior's Pen

### The Double Deliverance of Robert Oscar Lopez

by Terrell Clemmons

When Robert Oscar (Bobby) Lopez was born, his parents were in the process of splitting up. While his father moved on to other wives and lovers, his mother entered into a relationship with another divorcée. His mother was a diehard radical and wholly devoted liberation-theology Catholic, and although Bobby felt perennially awkward as a Latino being raised in a lesbian home, he grew up wanting to serve God and live a holy life.

He entered Yale in 1988 and immediately set off everyone's "gaydar," partly because his primary role models had been women and partly because he'd discovered gay sex as a young teen. He had to leave for a time when his mother fell ill and died, and rather than choose a side in

a will dispute between his father and his mother's partner, he drifted into New York City's gay underworld.

#### Life Interrupted

It was a dirty, sad, and tragic world in which to live. But despite all the setbacks and

dysfunctional surroundings, he managed to graduate from Yale with a B.A. in political science and land a promising position at MTV Network in New York City. From there, he proceeded to climb the ranks, and his life was moving along quite well until a cancer diagnosis at age 27 sent things into a screeching swerve.

All of a sudden, he wasn't in control of everything. Worse, he was alone. None of his gay friends came to visit him in the hospital. None of his MTV friends came either. He thought about calling his mother's partner but, for some reason, called his father instead.

And his father came. *Here I am facing possible death*, he realized, *and the person I most want to have with me is my dad*. Even though they'd had almost no relationship up until this point, Bobby decided right then that he wanted to know what it was like to grow up with a father. *Who cares if it's strange that I'm 27 and moving in with my dad?* he thought. *We can just think of this as a do-over*. He transferred his treatment to Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York, and moved in with his father.

#### Life Reset

His grandmother also lived in the home, and one day he happened upon her photo albums. He'd known that his father was of Filipino descent, but here were pictures of real people—*families*—from 1920s and 1930s Philippines: women in beautiful gowns; men marking special occasions, such as a youth being inducted into manhood; and ceremonies and traditions spanning multiple generations. These people represented his ancestry! Here was a significant branch of his heritage, but he had been completely severed from it.

He looked through the photo albums transfixed. *If I can rees-*





establish my relationship with my father, then why can't I become a part of all this too? he thought. Who cares about being gay? That life will never give me the fullness of life that I could get through a relationship with the opposite sex.

Soon after this encounter with his history, he met a woman, and they became friends. One thing led to another one evening, and before he knew it, he'd lost his virginity to a woman. An earthquake went off in his being. It was as if the heavens opened up as he realized, *This is what we were designed for! Sex wasn't all the same. Sex with a woman was totally different!*

For one thing, he found himself emotionally invested in a relationship in a way he'd never been invested before. It was scary, not only because she was so different from him, but also because he'd grown up without any examples

**He had thus far overcome the ravages of AIDS, homophobia, racism, class snobbery, bullying, and many other adversities, but "none of these difficulties," he wrote, "was quite like what happened with GLAAD."**

of men and women loving one another. He *really* wanted to have this woman in his life, so he went back to church and talked to a priest. Oddly, the priest expressed no concerns about the gay sex of his past, but he did advise Bobby to get married if he was going to continue having sex with this woman.

And so, just like that, they got married. The couple stayed in Buf-



falo for several years, and here their first child was born and Lopez earned his M.A. in Classics and Ph.D. in English and began teaching.

### Life Reoriented

Until his late twenties, Lopez hadn't devoted a lot of thought to his religion. He just *was* Catholic. But during these years, he had a couple of intense experiences that redirected the course of his life. First, in 2001, God told him, among other things, to continue studying Greek, which he did, although he didn't understand why. Later, in 2008, God came to him again, and here is how he describes what he heard God saying: "Look, I delivered you out of that horrible life in the 1990s. And your silence about what the gay world was, and what it was like to grow up that way, is not fair to Christ. Since Christ brought you out of that, you owe it to him to be a witness. You have to testify to the glory of God and to what he did for you. You can't hide your light under a bushel." He took these words to heart.

During this season, he also



Robert Oscar Lopez is the target of the Human Rights Campaign's 'The Export of Hate.'

reexamined the version of Christianity he'd been raised with. In the environment of his upbringing, politics and religion had been wholly fused together. This is the way it is in liberation theology, which interprets Scripture according to a Marxist bent. But as he read the Bible for himself, he saw that the Christ of Scripture was nothing like the Marxist revolutionary of liberation theology.

Also, he found himself drawn to the Baptist message of being born again. He'd never been an atheist, but he knew he'd harbored smug and self-serving attitudes, which in some ways, he thought, could be worse than being an atheist. And so in 2008, he was baptized in a Chinese Baptist church. To this day, he openly identifies himself as "born again."

### Under Duress

In 2008, the Lopez family moved to Los Angeles, where the now-Dr. Lopez had been offered a professorship in the English department at Cal State University, Northridge (CSUN). Despite his already shrewd understanding of how degenerate people could actually *be*, he arrived on campus still naively

believing that academic freedom was real, that professors could pursue truth without censorship, and that CSUN would protect the free exchange of ideas.

It was an election year, though, and right away he found that speaking favorably about a conservative candidate could get you removed from faculty groups and compared to Hitler, if not worse. Best to refrain from any speech or activity, on the job or off, that hinted, be it ever so slightly, at dissent from leftist politics. It might become grounds for complaint and possible sanction. So for four years he kept a low profile and trusted no one.

### Life Reclaimed

Then in 2012, he published "Growing Up with Two Moms," a candid essay about the difficulties of growing up in a same-sex household. He didn't argue anything about gay marriage or even gay adoption, but simply explained how his formative years had been hard. Until this point, it had been

commonly assumed that the interests of gay parents and their children were inextricably linked. Whatever benefitted gay adults was automatically assumed to benefit their children. No serious consideration had been given to the possibility that the interests of children might actually be *different from* the interests of the gay adults who wanted and loved them. "Growing Up with Two Moms" said, well maybe they were.

This was no mere novelty added to the discussion. It was a condemnable transgression of national proportions, and the rage and targeted fury from the misnamed Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and the equally misnamed Human Rights Campaign (HRC) commenced that very afternoon. He had thus far overcome the ravages of AIDS, homophobia, racism, class snobbery, bullying, and many other adversities, but "none of these difficulties," he wrote, "was quite like what happened with GLAAD."

At that point, the on-campus harassment shifted into overdrive. One attack followed another in concerted attempts to intimidate or silence him. There were anonymous threats. There was vandalism. Everyone in the department betrayed him: "Every single one—either by actively lying to my face and then putting things in my file that then came back to haunt me, or just by telling me to my face that they were on my side and then essentially siding with everyone else." Perjury, forgery, slander, bald-faced lies, veiled threats suggesting that he might as well be dead—ethical lines he thought no self-respecting professional would actually cross were indeed crossed, and with reckless abandon. But all of these attempts to silence him failed. (One of the traits he had learned from his radical lesbian mother was dogged persistence in the face of opposition.)

In 2016, he left CSUN, leaving on the table his hard-earned tenure and everything that went with it. "I could not have my rela-

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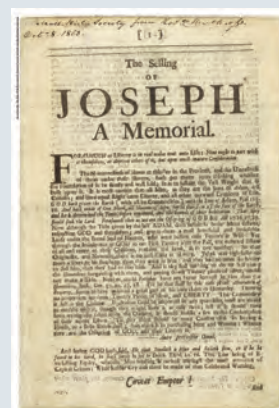
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# Speaking of the Children by Terrell Clemmons

**B**obby Lopez generally doesn't comment on what consenting gay adults may or may not do among themselves, but he has been very vocal about what they may or may not do regarding *other people's children*. He would have traded all the comforts of affluence and a Yale education for a shack and a trade school if he could have grown up with his mother and father and seen them love one another. And so, for the sake of children, he takes strong positions on gay adoption and same-sex parenting.

Lopez teaches Samuel Sewall's *The Selling of Joseph* to his college students. Published in 1700, it was the first fully abolitionist text written in English. "It was not racism or hard labor that the abolitionists found abhorrent," Lopez says; "it was the violation of natural bonds to family and ethnic origins." Lopez's 2015 book, *Jephthah's Daughters: Innocent Casualties in the War for Family "Equality,"* co-edited with Rivka Edelman, devotes a full chapter to the parallels between same-sex parenting and early American slavery. Consider the following:



- **Violation of birth-rights:** A child is born of a woman who conceived the child with the help of a man, the child's father. These are the bare-essential endowments of a child at birth, and the bonds are inalienable. The child does not belong to the parents as much as the *parents belong to the child*. Strip the child from one of them at birth, and you have deprived the child of his birthright.

- **Deception:** You can call two men a girl's two dads, but you haven't changed reality. You've contrived a pseudo-truth. She has one father and one mother *somewhere*.

- **Abuse:** Many a slavery apologist and slave-owner claimed that they loved black people more than the abolitionists did and that their slaves loved them back. Today we see conspicuous declarations of

love between gay parents and their children, but stop and think about what may be going on here. Such expressions cannot be trusted because in both cases one party is subject to the other and could suffer repercussions for expressing his or her true emotions. Expectations of "love" in such arbitrary arrangements make the relationships inherently abusive.

- **Human commodification:** When you add assisted reproductive technologies to the mix, you complete the wholesale reduction of children into products, contracted for and acquired by purchaser-owners in what amount to commercial transactions. Carry out these practices on a massive scale, and you destroy the basis of a nation.

Gay adults can love and serve children through other means, Lopez says, but they cannot own a child as if they are bound to him by natural birthright. For his advocacy, he has become a lightning rod for every charge in the arsenal of the "ligbitists" (his term), even though nothing about him is "anti-gay." To this day he identifies himself as bisexual, so as not to disown his young adult life.

"To the biblically trained minds of eighteenth and nineteenth century abolitionists," he writes, "slavery was not evil because it was physically difficult or racist. Slavery was evil because buying and selling people was evil." To the biblically trained minds of the twenty-first century, stripping children of their natural right to their parents is no less evil today than it was then. •

relationship with Jesus Christ and this job simultaneously," he wrote in a column called "Abandoning Tenure to Save My Soul." "The choice was not that difficult." He characterizes the move as something like an escape from prison or from one of the former Communist states. "If I stayed there," he said, "I would have to live in a state of perpetual psychological warfare."

He covers the events leading up to his departure in his 2017 book, *Wackos, Thugs & Perverts: Clintonian Decadence in Aca-*

*demia*. The title, he says, fairly well encapsulates the systemic problems in leftist academia.

## Flourishing

Today, Dr. Lopez teaches at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, where he found space to decompress and is now happy and flourishing. He enjoys teaching, but even more than that, he enjoys life with his wife and children.

At some point, what he really wants to do is "put on my cre-

ative cap." Years of secular liberal education have convinced him that it's important to contend for Christian values in popular culture and through the arts and letters. "I think we need novels and plays," he says, and he would like to write them.

Lopez is a thorough thinker and a colorful, no-nonsense writer. Be on the lookout for the fruit of his mind and pen. If there is to be a renaissance in Western literature, I predict Robert Oscar Lopez will have a hand in it. ☉



# Feeding the Hungry

## Norman Borlaug's Green Revolution

by James Wanliss

It is arguable that Norman Borlaug saved over a billion people. He is one of just a handful of people to have won the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal. He was also awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honor.

Borlaug was born in Iowa on March 25, 1914. The child of a farmer, he received a Ph.D. in plant pathology and genetics in 1942 from the University of Minnesota and then set to work to develop genetically modified, high-yield rice and corn. His work ignited the "Green Revolution," leading to the development of hybrid grains capable of handling varying climates and prevailing diseases, all while increasing crop yields by more than 700 percent compared to yields from earlier techniques. In addition, his agricultural know-how prevented massive global deforestation, as people needed less land for growing food crops.

One might be pardoned for imagining that environmentalists would be grateful. But Borlaug faced nothing but insults and criticisms for his efforts. A 2014 story in *Forbes* is illustrative: "When Borlaug attempted to extend The Green Revolution to Africa in the 1980s, environmental lobbyists unified to stop him. Arguing that Borlaug's farming methods would despoil the continent's environ-

ment, they successfully persuaded the World Bank and the Ford Foundation to pull back almost all of their funding for Borlaug's efforts. Even the Rockefeller Foundation, which had originally funded Borlaug's wheat research in Mexico, withdrew monetary support."

Paul Ehrlich showed the underbelly of the green movement when he wrote in 1970 in *The Population Bomb*: "A cancer is an uncontrolled multiplication of cells; the population explosion is an uncontrolled multiplication of people. We must shift our efforts from treatment of the symptoms to the cutting out of the cancer." Ehrlich and John Holdren—President Obama's science "czar"—wrote in favor of forced abortions to rein in those who "overproduce" children.

In an interview with *The Atlantic* almost two decades ago, Borlaug said, "Some of the environmental lobbyists of the Western nations are the salt of the earth, but many of them are elitists. They've never experienced the physical sensation of hunger. They

do their lobbying from comfortable office suites in Washington or Brussels. If they lived just one month amid the misery of the developing world, as I have for 50 years, they'd be crying out for tractors and fertilizer and irrigation canals and be outraged that fashionable elitists back home were trying to deny them these things."

Elsewhere he wrote, "I now say that the world has the technology—either available or well advanced in the research pipeline—to feed on a sustainable basis a population of 10 billion people. The more pertinent question today is whether farmers and ranchers will be permitted to use this new technology. While the affluent nations can certainly afford to adopt ultra low-risk positions, and pay more for food produced by the so-called 'organic' methods, the one billion chronically undernourished people of the low income, food-deficit nations cannot."

He also said, "If the naysayers do manage to stop agricultural biotechnology, they might actually precipitate the famines and the crisis of global biodiversity they have been predicting for nearly 40 years."

Norman Borlaug died in 2009, but his legacy lives on. While environmentalists seek to cut populations by draconian means, Borlaug fed the hungry. His life should be remembered and celebrated—which is why the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation schedules its annual Day of Prayer for the Environment and the Poor on his birthday, March 25. Like Borlaug, we should not just *think about* loving our neighbors but *allow them* access to technology that will keep them alive. ☺

—This piece is adapted from a March 24, 2016 article in the online magazine *The Stream* ([stream.org/remembring-norman-borlaug-saved-millions-of-people](http://stream.org/remembring-norman-borlaug-saved-millions-of-people)).



# Watch & Rescue Ops

## A Review of *A Practical Guide to Culture: Helping the Next Generation Navigate Today's World*

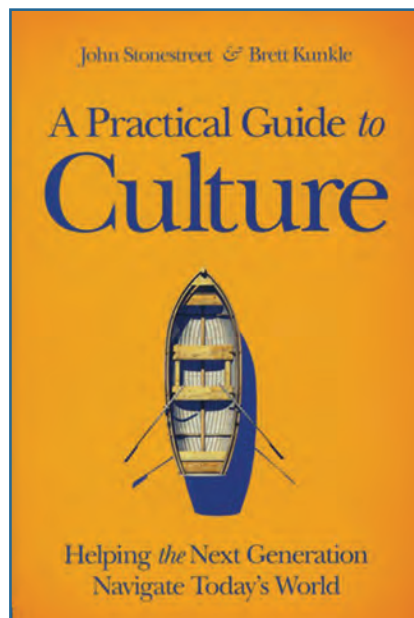
by John Stonestreet & Brett Kunkle

by Terrell Clemmons

John Stonestreet and Brett Kunkle have spent their entire adult careers helping young people understand the world they're living in and engage with it in light of the biblical worldview. It's a challenge, they say, that is getting harder and harder for young people to live out. So now they've put their combined wisdom into *A Practical Guide to Culture: Helping the Next Generation Navigate Today's World*, the goal of which is to help the rest of us help young people live *well* in our cultural moment.

In Part One, they discuss what culture *is* and why it matters. "Culture is for humans what water is for the fish," they write, except that, "unlike the fish, we make our own environments." There's a symbiosis to the way culture works. We *create* culture by what we choose to do in the world, and then culture in turn shapes *us* as it affects our perceptions of reality. It presents some things to us as normal, for example, and it censures other things. Cultures have "atmospheres" and moral codes, written and unwritten.

In keeping with the metaphor of the culture as our "ocean," Part Two looks at some powerful, though subtle, undercurrents that may go unnoticed if we don't pay conscious attention to them: the ramifications of living in an information age, the vital matter of identity and how it's formed, the socio-relational impact of living in a techno-culture where so many interactions are mediated



through screens and machines, and the exorbitant costs of protracted adolescence on a massive scale. ("If Christian kids can just *grow up*," they write, "they'll be way ahead of many of their peers.")

Each of the eight chapters in

Part Three deals with a specific flashpoint subject: pornography, the hookup culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, affluence and consumerism, addiction, entertainment, and racial tension. The authors pinpoint the widely accepted cultural lie(s) associated with each of these issues, compare them with biblical truth, and then offer practical ways to engage with each one from a true understanding of reality and biblical hope.

Culture has a powerful effect, but it's not everything. With Parts One and Two addressing the "bigger picture" subjects, and Three and Four zeroing in on specifics, this is indeed a very *practical* resource for parents, youth leaders—indeed *anyone* who understands the times and cares about the generations to come. In a delightful affront to postmodernism, these authors place *culture* in the context of the *gospel*, rather than trying to fit the gospel into the context of culture. Because, "well, that's where it belongs."

Exactly.

C. S. Lewis said that the most dangerous ideas in a society are not the ones that are being *argued*, but the ones that are *assumed*. In many ways, a society's culture is the sum total of those ideas that are *assumed*. To the extent that those ideas are true and good, the society will be healthy and function well. But to the extent that those ideas are false, it will be dysfunctional and ill.

Friends, we're pretty sick, and if you'll forgive the mixed metaphor, unless we diagnose the illnesses accurately and get the prescriptions right, people are going to drown. This *Practical Guide to Culture* will not only give you a framework for keeping your own head above water, but will also enable you to navigate the currents and breakers as difference-making lifeguards and rescue agents. ☺

**How Would Jesus Blog? Answering Online Adversaries Jesus' Way**

by Tom Gilson

If you've ever engaged in an effort to reason with anti-Christian antagonists to the point of exasperation, not just online but in any venue, this little 71-page e-book is for you. Reasoner extraordinaire Tom Gilson draws principles from Jesus' handling of antagonists and shows how you, too, can turn an antagonistic attack on its head, *not* in spite or anger, but in actual Christian love.

**The Nature of Environmental Stewardship**

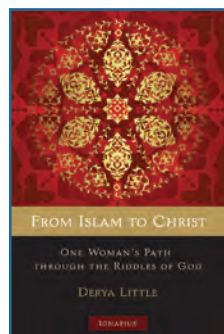
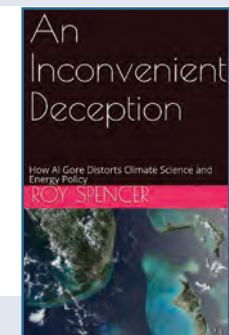
by Johnny Wei-Bing Lin

Environmental and biblical subjects have this in common: they can appear deceptively simple until you try to put them into practice. To clear the waters, Lin, a scientist, Christian, and exceptionally clear thinker, has painstakingly parsed out a taxonomy of the relevant worldview and philosophical categories of thought. This may not be an easy read, but it's an invaluable aid for facilitating productive discussions on environmental stewardship.

**An Inconvenient Deception: How Al Gore Distorts Climate Science and Energy Policy**

by Roy W. Spencer

Speaking of environmental stewardship, former NASA scientist Roy Spencer has been a voice of both science and reason in the "climate wars" since the 1980s. This little 84-page gem of clarity breaks down Al Gore's newest catastrophist film, *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*, showing how (1) disasters Gore blames on climate change are the result of nature, and (2) the solutions he pushes are costly and would exacerbate global poverty.

**Islam to Christ: One Woman's Path Through the Riddles of God**

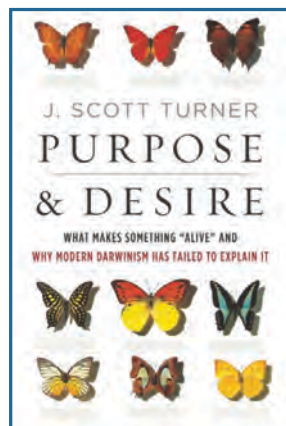
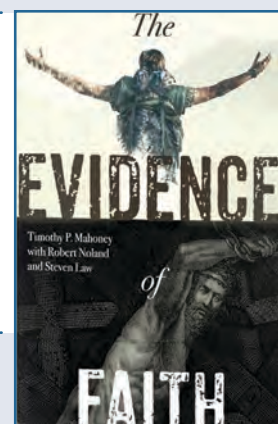
by Derya Little

Born and raised Muslim in secular Islamic Turkey, Little declared herself atheist in her mid-teens, but at length converted to Christ while in grad school. Sensitive church partisans may be put off by three chapters devoted to Catholic apologetics, but don't let that deter you; this memoir provides invaluable insight into both the Muslim world and the inner experience of an unbeliever confronted with authentic, intelligent Christians.

**The Evidence of Faith**

by Timothy P. Mahoney with Robert Noland and Steven Law

After spending twelve years researching the historical evidence for the Exodus, a series of events mainstream scholars dismiss as legend, Tim Mahoney, founder of Thinking Man Media, produced *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus*. This book personalizes and builds on his findings, drawing connections between faith, reason, and evidence and offering formidable challenges to those who dismiss the Bible as fable or fantasy.

**Purpose & Desire: What Makes Something "Alive" and Why Modern Darwinism Has Failed to Explain It**

by J. Scott Turner

A leading biologist asks, "Do we have a coherent theory of evolution?" and argues that the answer might actually be "no." There are too many things about living organisms that Darwinism cannot explain, he says—e.g., intentionality, purpose, and design—and he challenges his biologist colleagues to reexamine "how we scientists think about life, its existence, its origins, and its evolution."





### Children for Sale: The Fight to End Human Trafficking

Producer and host Jada Pinkett Smith talks with sex trafficking survivors and their rescuers as part of a comprehensive look at sex trafficking in Atlanta. The first line of defense for children will always be parents and strong families, but this film, part of the CNN Freedom Project: Ending Modern-Day Slavery, also draws out warning signs and preventive measures everyone should be aware of.

### Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America

For years, black musician Daryl Davis has sought out members of the KKK and asked, "How can you hate me when you don't even know me?" As a result, friendships have formed and many have left the KKK. Davis is a fascinating character. He draws out both the good and the not-so-good in others and gives everyone something to think about and (hopefully) an example to follow.



### Because of Gracia

A new student arrives at East Glenn High School, disrupting a cascade of status quos and preconceived notions about Christians. This is a well-made, realistic feature film about the manifold effects of one authentic Christian life. Delightfully uncontrived and non-cheesy, although it's about teens, *Because of Gracia* has something beautiful for everyone.

### Exit: The Appeal of Suicide

Suicide is rampant, and devastating for those left behind. Ray Comfort, the gutsy but unassailably kind man-on-the-street, talks to people about their depression and offers them the hope of the gospel as real hope and light in their existential darkness. If you've never had suicidal thoughts yourself, chances are you know someone who has. Watch *Exit*, and be prepared to help struggling family members and friends.

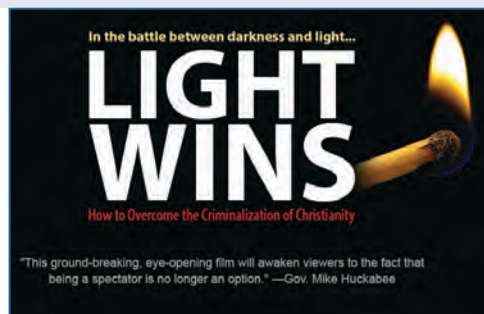


### Faithkeepers: Be Your Brother's Keeper

The status of Christians and other non-Muslim minorities in the Middle East is the worst it's been in centuries. Hundreds of thousands have fled their homes, leaving everything behind. *Faithkeepers* examines the organized genocide taking place before our eyes, with a special emphasis on the tenacious faith of those who willingly choose mistreatment over renouncing their Christian faith.

### Light Wins: How to Overcome the Criminalization of Christianity

The battle for freedom in America is being fought, and most Christians aren't even on the field. Janet Porter of Faith2Action takes a comprehensive look at the gay agenda's assault on freedom and says that, for Christians, silence is no longer an option. She concludes with the encouraging reminder that, in the battle between darkness and light, *light wins*.





# The Doubter's Doubt

## Holding On to Faith in No God Can Be Hard

by Eric Metaxas & G. Shane Morris

One of the most persistent challenges of the Christian life is doubt. The most faithful and spiritually mature believers experience it, especially in the midst of trials, temptations, or hard questions.

Every one of us occasionally wonders whether God is really there, whether Christ really rose from the dead, or whether we really are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That's natural.

None other than John the Baptist, alone in Herod's prison, sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus responded, "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."

But Christians aren't the only ones who suffer from doubt. It turns out that unbelievers, atheists, and agnostics all experience nagging uncertainties as well.

A recent poll from Newman University and YouGov found that one in five British atheists and over a third of Canadian atheists agreed with the statement, "Evolutionary processes cannot explain the existence of human consciousness."

Of the non-religious—those who aren't explicitly atheists but don't identify with any faith—34 percent in Britain and 37 percent in Canada agreed that evolution cannot explain the mind.

Twelve percent of British atheists and an astonishing 31 percent of Canadian atheists even agreed with the statement, "Animals

evolve over time but evolutionary science cannot explain the origins of human beings."

Remember that atheists traditionally hold a naturalistic worldview. They believe that, as the late Carl Sagan put it, "the cosmos is all that is, all that was, and all that ever will be." In other words, matter and energy are ultimate reality.

These respondents are also living in some of the world's most secular societies. The famed "new atheists," like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, have hailed from the U.K., where polls now show a majority of citizens identify as non-religious.

Yet nearly a third of them suffer from a persistent sense that unguided natural processes alone cannot explain the miracle of human beings, who are profoundly different from everything else in creation.

In his book, *The Reason for God*, Tim Keller invites skeptics to explore these suspicions. These folks, he writes, should "doubt their doubts," reexamining their objections to Christianity and looking for the hidden beliefs underneath each.

For example, those who reject belief in spirits, angels, and God should ask themselves: If only matter exists, where does morality come from? Or what about our



sense of self? If the mind is merely the byproduct of chemical reactions inside our skulls, how can it be trusted to accurately understand the natural world?

These kinds of doubts, argues Keller, can undermine doubt itself, and lead skeptics to a new open-mindedness about God and the claims of Christianity.

As C. S. Lewis might say, atheists really can't be too careful. He argues in *Mere Christianity* that it's normal for believers to sense that the Christian faith looks "very improbable." But these moods aren't unique to believers. "When I was an atheist," he confesses, "I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable."

That's why Lewis defined faith as "the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods." It's also why Christians shouldn't be afraid of reason or evidence. We should engage our doubts with confidence that our worldview—unlike the secular one—has the resources to explain both the natural and the supernatural aspects of the human experience.

In both cases, doubt—counter-intuitively—can lead to faith. ☉

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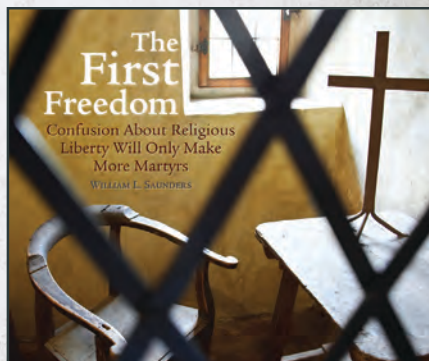
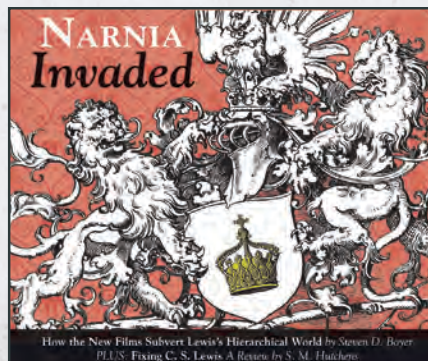
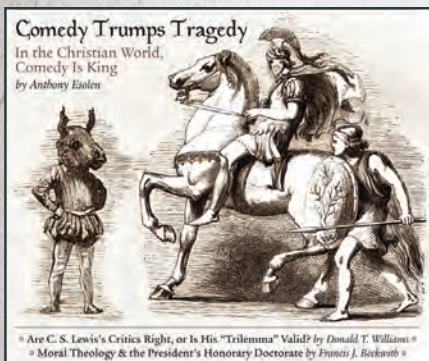
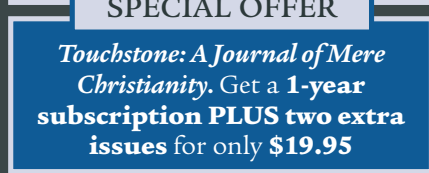
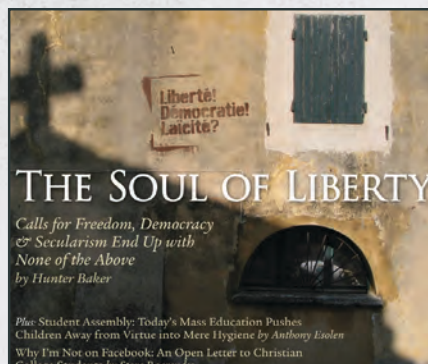
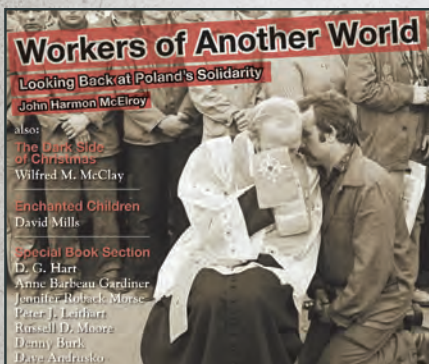
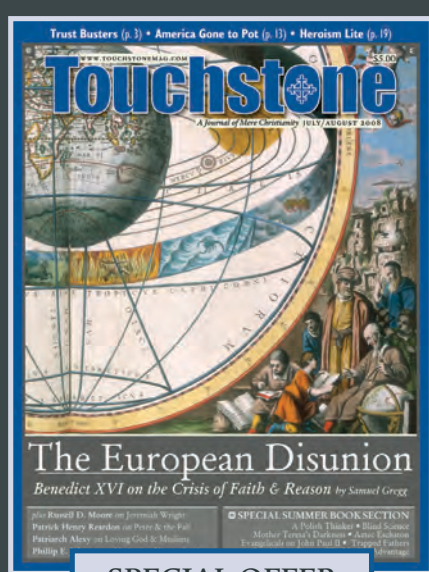
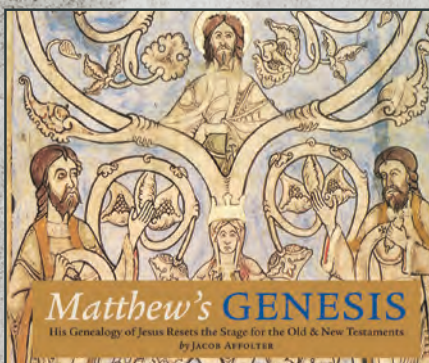
# Mere Christianity

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