

SALVO

Issue 55 Winter 2020

DESPAIR NOT

ON THE STREET

Revolution, Inc.

Angry Isms & Destructive Theories Combine to Divide the Country
by **Laurie Higgins**

Two-Fisted Provocateurs

Antifa's Violence May Be Coming to a Street Near You
by **Dave Olsson**

CLOSE TO HOME

Do Not Hinder Them

Children Are Intuitive Theists
by **Neil English**

Why Can't Winston Count?

Because Socially Constructed Math Is Simply Illogical
by **Denyse O'Leary**

THE WIDE WORLD

The Milky Way Diet

Our Galaxy's Just-Right Consumption Habits
by **Hugh Ross**

A Piece of Work

Intelligent Design & the Restoration of Story
by **Jonathan Witt**

The Epic Struggle Is Real

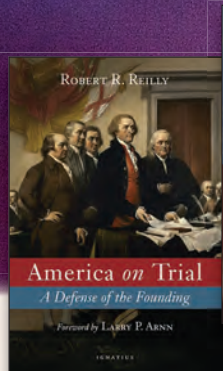
5 Greco-Roman Myths That Christians Can Learn From
by **Louis Markos**

PLUS

Peter Biles, Terrell Clemmons, Anthony Esolen, Nicole M. King, James M. Kushiner, John D. Martin, Emily Morales, Elizabeth Nussen, Heather Zeiger



INSPIRING NEW WORKS



AMERICA ON TRIAL

Robert Reilly

The Founding of America is on trial. Critics say it was a poison pill with a time-release formula and that its principles are responsible for the country's moral disintegration. In this well-researched book, Reilly strives to prove this thesis is false by tracing the lineage of the ideas that made the USA, and its ordered liberty, possible. He argues that the bedrock of America's founding are the beliefs in the Judaic oneness of God; the Greek rational order of the world based upon the Reason behind it; and the Christian arrival of that Reason (Logos) incarnate in Christ.

AOTH . . . Sewn Hardcover, \$27.95



THE POLITICS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

James V. Schall, S.J.

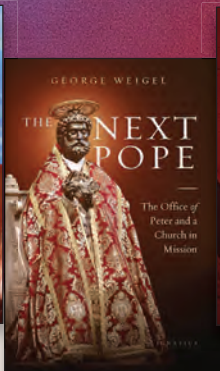
An invaluable contribution to the understanding of classical, medieval, and modern political philosophy while explaining the profound problem with modernity which Schall shows to be a perversion of Christianity by trying to achieve man's salvation in this world. It does this by politicizing everything which results in the absolute state. The best defense against this tyranny is "the adequate description of the highest things, of what is beyond politics." Both reason and revelation are needed for this work, and they are eloquently set forth in this book. PHHP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$19.95

THE NEXT POPE

George Weigel

The Catholic Church is on the verge of a transition of great consequence. Drawing on his personal discussions with John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, and his decades of experience with Catholics from every continent, Weigel examines the major challenges confronting the Church that the next pontificate must address as the Church enters new, uncharted territory. To what is the Holy Spirit calling this Church-in-transition? What are the qualities needed in the man who will lead the Church from the Chair of St. Peter?

NPH . . . Sewn Hardcover, \$19.95

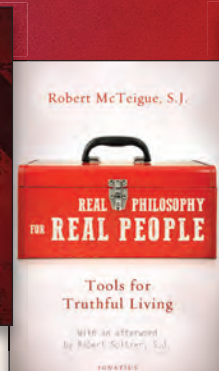


CONTINENTAL ACHIEVEMENT

Kevin Starr

The sequel to *Continental Ambitions*, Starr's magisterial work on Catholics who explored, evangelized, and settled North America. This work focuses on the participation of Catholics, alongside their Protestant and Jewish fellow citizens, in the Revolutionary War and the creation and development of the Republic. With the same panoramic view and cinematic style, Starr documents how the American Revolution allowed Roman Catholics of the English colonies to earn a new and better place for themselves in the emergent Republic.

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Every corner of our lives brings us face to face with competing philosophies and world views claiming to tell us definitively what it means to be human. How can we know which one is right? McTeigue gives a fun, humorous and invigorating crash course in practical logic, metaphysics, anthropology, and ethics, equipping readers with a tool kit for breaking down and evaluating the thought systems that swirl around us and even within us.

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CHRIST VS. SATAN IN OUR DAILY LIVES

Robert Spitzer, S.J.

With his focus on the human heart, Fr. Spitzer tackles the topic of recognizing and overcoming spiritual evil. His goal is our moral and spiritual transformation, which leads to true peace and genuine happiness. He shows how to experience God's peace even during suffering and persecution. He examines the basics of the spiritual life and Christian mysticism, including the contemplative dimension. He explains the purgative, illuminative, and unitive aspects of spirituality, as well as the Lord's consolation and the passive Dark Night of the Spirit.

CVSP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$19.95



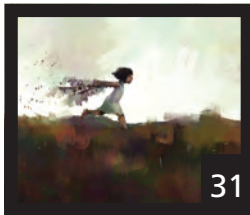
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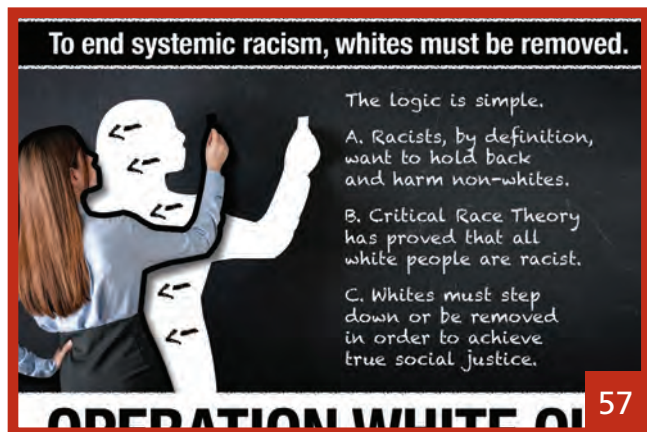
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salvo n. (säl'vō)

1. A group of shots fired simultaneously for effect
2. A forceful verbal or written assault

A publication of The Fellowship of St. James (www.fsj.org), *Salvo* is dedicated to debunking the cultural myths that have undercut human dignity, redefined virtue and morality, and steadily 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 2020

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Systemically Subversive

Children Fundamentally Transformed by Public Education

by James M. Kushiner

Distressed by various crises in 2020, many people are deeply anxious about the future. They worry about their country's future and are anxious about the kind of world their children or grandchildren will inherit.

Anxiety about the future is intensely personal when it involves one's own family. That is only natural. Throughout history, most of the blood, sweat, and tears men and women have shed has been for the sake of their children and for their future.

As children, we receive our very lives, names, language, vocabulary, ideas, stories, morals, and religion from our parents. A marriage establishes a new household in which, ideally, souls are nurtured and educated. Education begins in the home, but in modern times it has been increasingly put into the hands of public schools. Weary working parents are often relieved to have someone else watch and teach their offspring.

Until not so long ago, parents felt they could depend on the teachers in public schools and colleges to educate their children in the values, views, and history they shared. But now things are quite different, and many parents have been slow to realize how subversive many of their children's teachers truly are. Their confidence in public education is no longer warranted.

This betrayal has not occurred suddenly, but has developed over time. As it becomes increasingly obvious, more parents are deciding to homeschool their children rather than subject them to a toxic public education in their cities and states.



Forms of Betrayal

In this issue, Neil English (p. 31) insists that "children are intuitive theists" who must be indoctrinated to reject belief in a Creator and a purposeful Creation. Public education undermines natural theism.

Consider also the violent protests we've seen this past summer (see *Surveillance* on p. 10). Many young people support the Marxist-inspired organization called Black Lives Matter (see "Revolution, Inc.," p. 26). This is, sadly, the fruit of decades of indoctrination in leftist ideology and secular humanism, which have become standard fare in public education.

Recently, a vice-presidential candidate said during a nationally televised debate that America is "systemically racist." Young children are now being taught this as well, along with the tenets of "crit-

ical race theory," which holds that white people are *inherently* racist, simply by being born "white."

If all white people are inherently racist, then shouldn't every single white newscaster, columnist, politician, lawmaker, and judge who seeks "social justice" resign his or her position? Logically, yes, but of course that's not going to happen. White leftists merely use this theory to level the charge of racism as needed *against others* to further their own agenda and ambitions.

Race isn't the only issue in which such nonsense is evident. A presidential candidate recently affirmed the "rights" of 8-year-olds to declare themselves "transgender." Our young are being indoctrinated in gender theory, LGBT ideas, and the rest of the sham artifice of moral relativism.

Imagine a young girl growing up "liberated" to hate her nation, her family, her body, and her God. *That's freedom?* An old saying goes, "Those whom the gods would destroy, they first make insane." But our radical elites don't even believe in any god who judges mankind.

A Vain Thing

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who suffered imprisonment and exile for exposing the crimes of the Soviet Union, explained the dark brutality that enslaved Russia for 70 years by quoting a peasant: it all happened "because we've forgotten God."

While Western governments have not suppressed religion as much as Marxist governments have, they have banished God from the public education of our young people. In pretending that the world stands apart from God, they imagine a vain thing.

Salvo continues to educate readers about a purposeful Creation. Make sure your students are properly educated by reading *Salvo*. ☺

Leftbook

The concern over big-tech censorship on the part of media giants like Google and Facebook has intensified since the recent appointment of a Facebook “oversight board,” Judicial Watch reports. The members of the board, which oversees Facebook posts and decides which are to be blocked, are overwhelmingly left-leaning, and many have heavily donated to Democratic candidates such as Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

One notable board member is András Sajó, who was involved in a case at the European Court of Human Rights that sought to obtain a ruling against the display of crucifixes in public schools. Sajó is strongly connected with George Soros and has a history of pushing far-left agendas. According to Judicial Watch, “at least 10 other members of the Facebook oversight

board are connected to leftist groups tied to Soros that have benefitted from his generous donations,” and are known to be ardent backers of progressive agendas. Some have repeatedly slandered President Trump on social media and have displayed open hostility toward those with opposing views.

There are a few conservatives on the board, but they are greatly outnumbered by leftists. The problem, therefore, is not that there are leftists on Facebook’s oversight board, but that the overwhelming disparity



between conservatives and leftists gives the latter a free hand to restrict the dissemination of viewpoints and opinions outside leftist ideology. •

—Source: Judicial Watch (May 29, 2020): judicialwatch.org/corruption-chronicles/most-of-facebook-censorship-board-has-ties-to-leftwing-billionaire-george-soros



Classic Acts

In these politically divided times, it is rare to see a fresh effort to foster reconciliation and collaboration across differences. One such effort is being made by Onalee McGraw, whose website, *Classic Films and Our Common World*, seeks to “Explor[e] Essential Truths About Our Human Nature Through Classic Films.” “Our mission,” she writes in a July 27, 2020 blog, “is to encourage teenagers, college students and young adults, as well as parents, grandparents and educators, to utilize the great art of classic film to understand the human condition we share.”

Instead of focusing on the differences that divide us, McGraw looks at our common humanity, the aspects of our identities that we all share. She discusses the 2000 film *Remember the Titans* to illustrate her point. This movie depicts the relationship between two football coaches, one black and one white, and shows how their collaboration helped heal an entire high-school community and beyond. “There are three reasons why watching and discussing films like *Remember the Titans* can help us rebuild social, cultural and moral capital in our fragmented communities,” McGraw writes. “We can: 1. Rediscover our common humanity. 2. Recover

cultural memories of higher goods we can share together. 3. Prioritize civic friendship over group identity politics.” There is a vital place for telling and discussing stories of friendship and community across differences, and it is encouraging to see a resource doing just that. •

—Source: <https://dronaleemcgraw.wixsite.com/classicfilms/post/taking-the-higher-road-to-civic-friendship-with-classic-films-in-a-broken-world>

The Light Continent

Although church attendance and religious activities are declining in the West, statistics indicate that Christianity is growing exponentially in other places. According to Philip Jenkins, writing at The Gospel Coalition website, African Christianity in particular has a bright future. Studies consistently show that religious belief is correlated with high fertility rates, while societies with a fertility rate below 2.1 (replacement level) become more secularized. Europe began showing decline in fertility first, with a corresponding increase in secularism, but the United States is quickly following in its footsteps, with a current rate of 1.7.

African countries, however, are trending in the other direction. Referring to a study published in the *Lancet*, Jenkins writes:

Already by 2050, a list of the 20 countries with the world's largest populations will include at least six black African nations: Nigeria, the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. . . . Taken together, those countries alone will have more than 1.1 billion citizens.

Christianity is expected to increase as well, to the extent that, by 2050, Africa could be the global hub of the faith, surpassing one billion believers. So while Christian influence may continue to decline in the West, there's solid evidence, says Jenkins,

that, "as the century proceeds, Christianity will become ever more markedly a religion of Africa and the African diaspora." •

—Source: TGC (Aug. 7, 2020): thegospelcoalition.org/article/future-christianity-african

Black Lashes

According to many leftists, 2020 has been a "year of reckoning" for racism, with those who fail to affirm the prevalence of systemic racism, white privilege, and so on being targeted for cancellation by their morally stringent peers. Apart from the very real harm done to innocent people through this ideological campaign, the intense scrutiny has abounded in irony. A recent BuzzFeed exposé of racism at Planned Parenthood presents a pointed example. According to the report:

26 employees at Planned Parenthood affiliates and the national office of NARAL, as well as 16 employees of other reproductive rights organizations, told BuzzFeed

News that people of color, especially Black people, were often stuck in lower-paying administrative roles, causing high turnover rates among staff of color and preventing nonwhite employees from rising to positions of power within the organizations.

In other words, underneath the "appearance of diversity," Planned Parenthood and its cohorts actually maintain a toxic work environment for the few non-white employees they hire. Such is the great racial injustice that BuzzFeed has exposed—not the fact that Planned Parenthood targets black babies for abortion, purposefully locating its clinics in poor black neighborhoods and performing a disproportionately high number of abortions on black women. BuzzFeed (and the disgruntled minority

employees it quotes) gets worked up about microaggressions, tokenism, and racism in "reproductive rights" workplaces, but never notices the blatant, genocidal racism in their actual "work." Or as one commenter put it: "So black people finally opened their eyes to the fact an organization that was put in place specifically to eradicate them doesn't like them very much? Gasp!" •

—Source: BuzzFeed News (Aug. 21, 2020): buzzfeednews.com/article/emaconnor/employees-calling-out-reproductive-rights-groups



Mulan Ruse

The Disney film *Mulan* debuted in September with much ballyhoo. This live-action remake is based more on the original legend of Mulan than was the 1998 Disney cartoon, but it still contains its fair share of the mythical and fantastic. However, the new film has garnered criticism because, in its end credits, it thanks several cities in China for their help and cooperation in the making of the film. One of these cities, Turpan, in Xinjiang province, is reportedly home to 14 concentration camps where Uyghur Muslims are being held. According to the *Stream*, “at least 1.8 million people have been imprisoned in Xinjiang. Many are subjected to forced labor, forced abortions, and worse.” Because this anti-Uyghur persecution is widely known, it is highly unlikely that Disney was unaware of it while making *Mulan*. Nineteen members of Congress have sent a letter to Disney saying they find its cooperation with Chinese officials “profoundly disturbing.”



The release of *Mulan* also coincided with the Trump administration’s decision to ban the import of Chinese goods that have been produced through forced labor. “This is an important step to keep [such goods]

out of American markets,” stated Nury Turkel of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. “Thanks to the U.S. leadership, Chinese companies now know that they cannot profit off the slavery of Uyghur Muslims.” •

—Source: *The Stream* (Sept. 17, 2020): <https://stream.org/china-expert-disney-mulan-compromise>

Prostituting the UN

The UN’s recent appointment of South African doctor Tlaleng Mofokeng as its “top expert on health and human rights” bodes ill for women and children because

Mofokeng is a former abortionist who advocates for the legalization of teen prostitution. In 2019 she wrote, “I believe sex work and sex workers’ rights are women’s rights, health rights, labor

rights, and the litmus test for intersectional feminism.” She has no problem with “the idea of purchasing intimacy” and claims that “paying for [sex] services can be affirming for many people who need human connection, friendship, and emotional support.”

Mofokeng’s stance has outraged organizations working for the abolition of the sex trade. Far from affirming women, sex trafficking and underage prostitution account for countless atrocities committed against women and girls. To advocate for teen prostitution is to support the abuse of vulnerable individuals across the world. “Sex buyers do not view the women they purchase as individuals worthy of respect, but instead as subhuman objects to use,” says Haley McNamara of the International Centre on Sexual Exploitation. Instead of empowering women, decriminalization would lead to further abuse and exploitation. As Helen Taylor of Exodus Cry commented, “The United Nations ought to be the last place to advocate for human-traffickers.” •



—Source: LifeSite News (Sept. 4, 2020): lifesitenews.com/news/advocate-for-legalized-teen-prostitution-takes-influential-un-post

Sorely Seduced

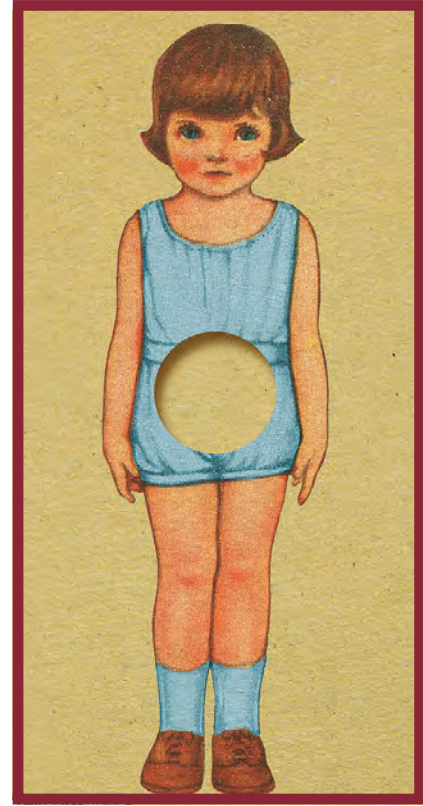
Abigail Shrier, author of *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters*, appeared on the Joe Rogan podcast in July to discuss her book. Shrier does not oppose any adult's decision to "transition" to the opposite sex, but she is disturbed by the "trans" trend among teenage girls because she sees hormone treatments, chest binders, and the like as a false solution for other, underlying problems, such as peer pressure, generalized anxiety disorder, and depression, which then go unaddressed.

"Gender dysphoria used to afflict 0.01 percent of the population," she told Rogan, "but today we already know that two percent of high school students are identifying as transgender . . . you're talking about 1.1 million teenage high school kids in America." If these figures reflect the number of teens who genuinely suffer from gender dysphoria, we would see similar rates in older demographics,

but we don't. It was precisely the fact that this trend exists only among teenage girls that led Shrier to look more deeply into the issue. Her conclusion, based on her research, is that gender transition, far from being a genuine solution for vulnerable girls, is a manufactured solution advocated by activists who are clearly denying the facts.

At one point in the discussion, Rogan likened medical practitioners who perform "transition" surgeries to car mechanics. "The problem is, we're not cars," Shrier responded. "It's all connected. Unfortunately, the mental health deteriorates."

Since the interview, both Rogan and Shrier have received intense backlash and hatred from trans activists and their sympathizers. But unlike many activists, Shrier really cares for girls affected by gender dysphoria and other mental health issues, and wants to help them find a genuine solution to their problems. •



—Sources: <https://dangerousintersection.org/2020/07/16/joe-rogan-discusses-transgendering-of-young-girls>; [youtube.com/watch?time_continue=844&v=CtftWcgXjdg&feature=emb_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=844&v=CtftWcgXjdg&feature=emb_title)



Hide & Speak

In August, Princeton University professor Robert P. George posted a Tweet asking his anonymous followers to identify themselves privately. He was surprised at the response he

got. Said George, "I was deluged with messages explaining that anonymity is necessary because they have (some) conservative beliefs and fear being fired if their employers knew."

George himself is conservative and has written prolifically on crucial issues in the culture wars. Now he muses on whether conservatives in academia can even hint at their beliefs without being ousted. "Is this country we now live in," he wonders, "one in which many people feel they must hide their beliefs in order to keep their jobs or maintain their careers?" The university should be a place where people of various backgrounds can thoughtfully exchange different sets of ideas and charitably "agree to disagree" when conflict arises. Yet, while racial diversity is a top priority for many high-profile schools, a Harvard newspaper survey revealed that ideological diversity is all but absent: just over one percent of Harvard's faculty identify themselves as conservative. Students who are not exposed to ideological diversity will naturally tend to align with the prevailing consensus—and fail to be intellectually challenged. •

—Sources: [washingtonexaminer.com/news/harvard-newspaper-survey-finds-1-of-faculty-members-identify-as-conservative](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/harvard-newspaper-survey-finds-1-of-faculty-members-identify-as-conservative); [washingtonexaminer.com/news/conservative-academics-deluged-professor-with-anonymous-messages-saying-they-fear-retribution-for-beliefs](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/conservative-academics-deluged-professor-with-anonymous-messages-saying-they-fear-retribution-for-beliefs)

Two-Fisted Provocateurs

Antifa's Violence May Be Coming to a Street Near You

by Dave Olsson



Background:

Shortly after Donald J. Trump became president in 2017, the term "Antifa" entered the United States' consciousness and lexicon. While most of us have heard of Antifa, many of us don't understand what it is, where it came from, or why it's here.

The word "Antifa" is short for "anti-fascist" or "anti-fascism." Fascism is "a political philosophy, movement, or regime . . . that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition."¹ The word "fascism" comes from the Latin *fascis*, which means "bundles." In ancient Rome, fasces of sticks or rods bound together with an ax became the symbol of a magistrate's power and authority, and Benito Mussolini, the founder of Italian fascism, adopted this emblem when he became dictator of Italy in 1925.

Antifa then sprang up as a far-left, militant reaction to Mussolini, and later, to Germany's Adolph Hitler. The *Antifaschistische Aktion* was the paramilitary arm of the German Communist Party, which opposed Hitler's National Socialist Party, i.e., the Nazis.

Following World War II and the defeat of the Axis powers, fascist governments collapsed across Europe, but ideologically related

movements lived on. It wasn't until the 1980s, however, that militant anti-fascism re-emerged. It came to the U.S. in the late 1980s and 1990s, using the original abbreviated name of Antifa, and over time evolved into its modern incarnation.

Ideologically, today's Antifa defines itself as allowing "no platform for fascism," meaning that it aims to keep its opponents from having a public voice. So it shows up at public rallies, college campus lectures, and similar gatherings to confront and squelch the fascism it purports to find there. Populated by a variety of revolutionaries (e.g., Marxists, anarchists, and social democrats) who "don't feel constrained by conventional norms,"² Antifa embraces direct action, using violent tactics to force change, rather than working peacefully for policy reform.

Antifa is not, however, a national organization with a recognized formal leadership (unlike Black Lives Matter, for instance). This has led some politicians and

opinion leaders, seizing FBI Director Christopher Wray's statement that Antifa is "not a group or an organization," but "a movement or an ideology,"³ to minimize it as no more than an "idea." But Wray also said that the FBI has observed Antifa individuals "coalescing regionally into what you might describe as small groups, or nodes," which the agency has been "actively investigating."⁴

So Antifa is an ideology, yes, but an ideology *expressing itself*

through a loose affiliation of individuals and groups that engage in "militant street activism."⁵ And although there is no national structure, that doesn't mean there isn't any organization. Indeed, it has not gone unnoticed that "in city after

city, the tactics, banners, clothing, weaponry, etc. [of Antifa activists] have been virtually identical." Moreover, the "lasers, explosives, military helmets, protective gloves, body armor, and other deadly weaponry" used by "local protesters" don't pop up out of nowhere. "Someone selects them,

When Joe Biden claimed during his first debate with President Trump that "Antifa is an idea, not an organization," the president responded: "When a bat hits you over the head, that's not an idea. Antifa is bad. Antifa is a dangerous, radical group." He's right.

orders them, pays for them, and delivers them.”⁶

Journalist Andy Ngo, himself a victim of Antifa violence, is aware of several Antifa groups, among them: Rose City Antifa (Portland, Oregon); Antifa Seven Hills (Richmond, Virginia); Antifa Sacramento (California); Atlanta (Georgia) Antifascists; and the Youth Liberation Front (mainly on the West Coast, but also with chapters in the Midwest and the Carolinas). “There are many, many antifa groups,” Ngo writes. “And they are violent.”⁷ They also often network together at the regional or national level, and use social media to coordinate their actions. That’s why we hear individuals describe themselves as members of Antifa.

Reason for Surveillance:

Antifa’s purported objective is to prevent the spread of fascism, as reflected in racist groups like the KKK, neo-Nazis, and white supremacists. But its concept of racism seems to have evolved to include “institutional” or “systemic” racism and “white privilege.” Antifa has often made common cause with Black Lives Matter, Inc., as indicated by how often “BLM” is spray-painted on monuments, buildings, barricades, and vehicles during protests and riots in which Antifa participates. Will Antifa’s definition of “fascist” expand to include all white people as intrinsically racist?

This isn’t a far-fetched concern. According to Scott Crow, a former Antifa organizer, liberals are starting to adopt Antifa’s radical ideals. “They would never have looked at (those ideals) before,” he said, “because they saw us as the enemy as much as the right-wingers [did].”⁸ If Antifa’s ideals go mainstream, white people, as well as Christians and conservatives of all colors, will increasingly become targets.

In fact, that has already hap-



Rose City Antifa activists with modified anarchist red and black flag and transgender pride flag at a protest against Patriot Prayer in 2017

pened. In February 2017, Antifa members set fires, threw rocks at police, and vandalized businesses in the course of protesting the appearance of Milo Yiannopoulos at the University of California–Berkeley.⁹ Numerous policemen and civilians have suffered violence at their hands.

Most Recent Offense:

In August 2020, Aaron “Jay” Danielson, a member of the conservative group Patriot Prayer, was shot to death on a street in Portland, Oregon, following a series of confrontations between participants in a pro-President Trump caravan and counter-protesters along the route.¹⁰ The shooting was caught on video, and the apparent shooter, Michael Reinoehl, later seemed to admit killing Danielson, allegedly in defense of “a friend of mine of color.”¹¹ Earlier, Reinoehl had written a social media post proclaiming, “I am 100% ANTIFA all the way! I am willing to fight for my brothers and sisters! . . . Today’s protesters and Antifa are my brothers in arms.”¹² Reinoehl was killed a few days later as investigators tried to arrest him near Olympia, Washington.

When Joe Biden claimed during his first debate with President Trump that “Antifa is an idea, not an organization,” the president

responded: “When a bat hits you over the head, that’s not an idea. Antifa is bad. Antifa is a dangerous, radical group.”¹³ He’s right—it is a group. Rhetorical subterfuge must not be allowed to confuse us about who Antifa are or what they want. ☹

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The First Responders

Today's Hospitals Are the Fruit of Ancient Christianity

by Nicole M. King

Many American churches have been criticized for their response to Covid-19. In Kentucky, for example, state troopers visited the parking lot of a church on Easter Sunday and placed notices on vehicle windshields saying that anyone who attended Easter services (against the rule of Gov. Andy Beshear) would have to self-quarantine for 14 days.¹ And the *New York Times* reported somewhat cheerfully on the Covid-19 death of a pastor who had continued to hold in-person worship services at his church.² States' lists of "essential services" that were permitted to stay open generally included liquor stores, marijuana dispensaries, and bicycle shops, while excluding churches and synagogues. The attitude reflected in these policies seems to be that Christianity is a problem in a time of illness, instead of a force for good.

But these same governing authorities might be surprised if they took the time to read some histories of modern medicine. In many ways, Christians have been at the forefront of caring for the ill. The Christian Medical Fellowship catalogues an impressive number of medical pioneers who also happened to be believers. Among them are Louis Pasteur, one of the fathers of germ theory and also of vaccination, and Joseph Lister, who applied his knowledge of germs and infections to surgical practice.³ But one of Christianity's greatest and most significant contributions to modern medicine is the development of hospitals.

Hospitals Rise with Christianity

There are only limited accounts of anything like a modern-day hospital existing before the rise

of Christianity. For instance, there is evidence that physicians in the royal courts of Assyria and Babylonia may have cared for ill court singers in what might be described as "elementary hospitals." Similarly, in ancient Greece, nobles could visit the Asclepeia, complexes that grew up around temples to Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, and there be put into a period of sleep, and have their dreams analyzed afterward. But both of these early precursors were only for wealthy or noble-blooded persons.⁴

"While institutions providing

some form of medical treatment existed in ancient Greece and Rome," one article summarizes, "neither of these cultures organized community care for the sick, poor, and needy. A radical change occurred in late Antiquity, with the rise of Christianity, which embraced charity as one of its basic doctrines."⁵ When Christianity became officially tolerated in the Roman Empire around A.D. 313, Christians began to establish places to care for the aged, the ill, the mentally disabled, and the poor.

The earliest hospitals, called *xenodochia*, were originally places for pilgrims or ecclesiastical messengers to stop and spend a night, but they eventually evolved into homes for the poor, the ill, and the physically or mentally disabled.⁶ These *xenodochia* were the predecessors of the modern hospital. So important were they that when the emperor Julian the Apostate (361–363) tried to revive a pagan culture, he found it necessary to emulate the Christians, and wrote to his high priest, "In every city establish

xenodochia in order that strangers may profit by our benevolence."⁷

The Role of the Monasteries

Monasteries played a crucial role in the further development of formal places of caretaking. Particularly as the Roman Empire disintegrated, whole communities

began to look to the monasteries as stable institutions where one might receive both spiritual and physical help. At first, monastery infirmaries were largely devoted to the care of sick monks, but in time they began also to house



civilian patients, with wealthy Christian benefactors contributing to their care and local physicians lending aid.

By the middle of the sixth century hospitals had been established in both the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire, many of them supported by various monarchs.⁸ Charlemagne even issued a decree that every cathedral built in his empire should have a school, a monastery, and a hospital adjoining it, underscoring the Christian duty to care for the weak, the ill, and the otherwise ignored or disregarded segments of society.

Perhaps one of the greatest moments for monasticism, as well as for its role in the development of hospitals, was the founding by St. Benedict of Nursia of his monastery and hospital at Montecassino, Italy, in 529. Care of the sick and poor is emphasized throughout the *Rule of St. Benedict*, but perhaps most significantly in Chapter 36, where St. Benedict writes:

Before all things and above all things, care is to be had of the sick, that they may be so served as if they were in very deed Christ, because He Himself said: "I have been sick and ye have visited Me" and "What ye have done to one from among these My little ones, ye have done to Me." . . . [T]hey must be patiently borne with, because from such is acquired more abundant merit. Therefore let the abbot take very great care that they suffer no neglect.

The *Rule* further specifies that the sick should be housed in separate cells with an appointed caretaker, receive regular bathing, and even be allowed meat to promote their strength and recovery. St.



Benedict concludes, "Let the abbot take the greatest care that the sick be not neglected by the cellarers and the servitors." When the *Rule* became widespread as a guide for how monasteries should be run, so too did its specific admonitions regarding care of the ill.

Still Providing Care

Over the centuries, wealthy benefactors in large urban centers began to found hospitals. The Church and its monasteries were still highly involved, but the civil authorities also recognized the benefit of having formal hospitals. And so Christian dominance of the medical world began to give way. Yet even today, many hospitals still bear the names of saints, and many are still affiliated with a church body—a lasting testament to the continued influence of the Church in healthcare well into the 21st century.

Hospitals are but one example of the continued influence that Christianity has had upon healthcare. Christian institutions and churches also maintain clinics for the disadvantaged, pregnancy care centers for women who might otherwise seek abortion, and even healthcare sharing cooperatives (like Samaritan Ministries or MediShare) wherein Christians can literally help their brethren in need by sharing healthcare costs.

In all of these things, Chris-

tianity has historically demonstrated its commitment to caring for both body and soul. As Christ admonished his disciples, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me" (Matt. 25:35–36a). During the Covid pandemic, many churches live-streamed their services, or offered communion in small groups, or held outdoor services, or did any number of other things to maintain the physical health of their members while also caring for their spiritual wellbeing. They are continuing the long, rich history of the Christian contribution to healthcare, and to hospitals in particular. ☺

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Department of Parts

Governments Deceptively Promote Euthanasia to Seize Your Organs

by John D. Martin

Although science fiction generally has a spotty record on predicting the future, there is one field of technology where its predictions have been regularly turning into real-world headlines—particularly at the horror end of the spectrum. That is the technology of organ transplantation.

Joseph Murray performed the first successful liver transplant in Boston in 1954, and Christiaan Barnard the first successful heart transplant in Cape Town in 1967. Science fiction writers quickly speculated on the next likely developments. Larry Niven suggested that this new medical capability, if expanded, would either create a tool for horrifying oppression by a ruling class (*A Gift from Earth*, 1968) or result in a booming underground market for organs obtained by murdering the “donors” (*The Defenseless Dead*, 1973).

This theme has also been explored in numerous films. *Coma*

(1978), *The Island* (2005), *Never Let Me Go* (2010, based on Kazuo Ishiguro’s 2005 novel), and other movies present a horrifying vision of the future, in which humans are harvested for their organs. Unfortunately, such stories are looking increasingly less like fiction and more like reality every day.

The Path to Horror

China provides the most extensive example. It is well-documented that the harvesting of organs from political prisoners, Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetans, Uyghurs,

house-church Christians, and others has gone on in that country for years. The totalitarian rulers of the People’s Republic continue to deny that fact, but the testimony of eyewitnesses and investigations by independent groups such as the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China prove otherwise.

But Communist regimes aren’t the only ones committing such atrocities. If current trends in the West continue, a disguised version of “harvesting” people for replacement parts will be tomorrow’s reality.

We might wonder how that could happen in liberal democracies, but an honest look at the broadening practice and increasing acceptance of euthanasia might wake us up. There are now movements afoot in the medical world to tamper with euthanasia consent procedures and methods in order to accommodate the demand for organs. Wesley J. Smith explains how this is made palatable:

How do you convince society to embrace euthanasia as a means of attaining utilitarian benefit—while also convincing yourselves that your culture remains both moral and compassionate? Once you get past the squeamishness of allowing doctors to kill patients, it isn’t that difficult: First, legalize euthanasia of the seriously ill and disabled. Once the community becomes comfortable with doctors committing homicide as a means of eliminating suffering, you next allow those who want to be killed to donate their organs. Next, ensure that the potential of euthanasia to add to the organ supply becomes well known, justifying it as you go along

with soothing words of respecting autonomy and preventing suffering.¹

In other words, medical ethicists who are already comfortable with euthanasia and who subscribe to a utilitarian philosophy can tie euthanasia to organ donation and “sell” that idea to the public by making deceptively attractive appeals to compassion.

Smith’s article was written in response to a chilling development in Canada. In June 2019, a “Guidance” issued by the Canadian Medical Association explicitly linked euthanasia and organ donation for the first time. As Smith reports:

The Guidance urges that the decision to be euthanized—called by the euphemistic acronym MAID (medical aid in dying) be made first—and apart—from the request to donate organs. The idea is to ensure that the ability to donate organs doesn’t become the tipping point inducing the decision to die.²

A person’s dignity cannot be expunged by the state. Thankfully, the proposal was defeated, keeping Germany, at least for now, away from the horrifying state of embracing medical technology shorn of ethical constraints.

Linking organ donation to euthanasia is meant to shift the perception of euthanasia in a positive direction, warns Alex Schadenberg, executive director of the Canada-based Euthanasia Prevention Coalition. Prospective euthanasia patients can be told that “people who are sick can get better because you had your life ended.”³ Who could object to giving someone the opportunity to offer “the gift of life”?

That the “gift” might be obtained by euthanizing persons who were manipulated into giving consent, or who gave no consent at all, or whose natural deaths were not imminent must be left unmentioned. An ethical and legal regime is being created that, although cloaked in the language of compassion and human dignity, turns every medically helpless person into a potential victim of *Coma*-style clinical predation.

The Netherlands’ Regime

Once established, this regime must be maintained. In 2019, the Dutch press gave significant coverage to two cases of potential violations of the Netherlands’ 2002 law on euthanasia. The first was the case of a mentally ill man who had difficulty finding a hospital willing to combine euthanasia with organ donation. This case was investigated,



not to establish whether an ethical breach had occurred by facilitating the killing and organ harvesting of a mentally ill person, but to determine whether or not those acts had been adequately facilitated by the hospital.

The second case concerned an elderly dementia patient who initially consented to euthanasia but later appeared to change her mind. The doctor euthanized her anyway. The words used by the Procurator General of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands to advise the judges in this case are revealing: “If a physician reaches the conclusion that this [prolonging life] is senseless and places an undue burden on the patient, this professional medical judgment must in principle be respected by judges.”⁴ In other words, the court was not concerned about the rights of a patient who might have withdrawn consent, but about ensuring that consent to euthanasia, once given, not be revocable, once a doctor—and only a doctor—has deemed a patient’s suffering a “hopeless and undue burden.”

Euthanasia supporters in the Netherlands have been so successful in making the practice acceptable that they are now concerned that the waiting period is unacceptably long for those who

have “come into consideration for euthanasia” for psychiatric reasons. Why? Because fewer and fewer psychiatrists are willing to recommend euthanasia for their patients.

If this didn’t irritate euthanasia proponents enough, the Public Prosecutor is becoming increasingly involved in euthanasia cases, as mandated by the country’s Prosecutor General since 2017. The goal of the mandate is to ensure that grey areas in the existing law do not lead to abuses. An editorial in the Dutch newspaper *Het Reformatorisch Dagblad* argued that the laws governing the practice of euthanasia in the Netherlands “provide insufficient safeguards” and that “the Netherlands’ handling of the issue conflicts with the so-called BUPO-treaty, which obligates states to protect their citizens.”⁵ Yet even this minor attempt to bring a greater degree of legal oversight to the practice has been enough to unsettle and even outrage some euthanasia supporters.

Linking euthanasia with organ donation is motivating medical professionals to ignore the requirement of a thorough review of patient consent before euthanasia is performed. Euthanasia proponents, even in the Netherlands, find themselves fighting to keep ethical objections from finding expression in law.

Germany’s Escape

In Germany, the entire population recently escaped becoming involuntary organ donors by default. Under a proposed law, all the citizens of the country would automatically be considered organ donors upon death unless they specifically objected to the harvesting of their organs. The bill also stipulated that, in cases where doubt exists about the “putative will of the potential donor,” family members or the spouse of the

potential donor will be asked to consult with physicians about what should be done.

These provisions might sound reasonable and ethical, but they would motivate doctors, nurses, medical administrators, and perhaps even family members to rush to have a person in a long-term coma pronounced legally brain dead so his or her organs could be declared eligible for “harvesting.” Should there be any profit in harvesting the patient’s organs, there would be added motivation to declare him dead, especially since the action could easily be cloaked in the guise of beneficence: here is a way to provide organs to suffering, waiting patients. The continued, downward tendency to reassess the threshold criteria for certifying medical death would receive another push.

The most chilling aspect of the proposed German law was that even the representatives of the Christian Democratic Union, a generally conservative political party, favored it; they had no problem with the idea of turning their fellow citizens into property of the state if they became medically helpless. This attempt to permanently and deeply compromise individual human dignity and self-determination prompted the editors of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* to publish a defense of human liberty, declaring, “Man belongs to himself, not the state.” The editorial is worth quoting:

There are people who arrive at their “no” to organ donation with difficulty. . . . They doubt that they really will not feel anything once they have been declared brain dead. . . . It is an act of violence to subject people to pressure, to expose them to the mental pictures of the extractions and amputations that would be performed on

their artificially respiration but dying bodies.⁶

Moreover, the bill’s “opt-out solution” contradicts the principal clause of the German Constitution: that the dignity of man is inviolable. This principle applies to the dying as much as to the healthy. A person’s dignity cannot be expunged by the state. Thankfully, the proposal was defeated, keeping Germany, at least for now, away from the horrifying state of embracing medical technology shorn of ethical constraints.

From Fiction to Non-Fiction?

Whether imposed by a totalitarian dictatorship or by a political and medical establishment cloaking a materialistic and utilitarian view of human worth in the guise of “compassion” and “mercy,” linking organ donation to end-of-life procedures assails human dignity by denying the value of those who suffer from chronic illnesses or debilitating injuries.

At this time, the linkage of organ donation to euthanasia is facing legal challenges in the Netherlands and has suffered a major legislative blow in Germany. But the legal situation in Canada has raised a new threat to patients who are chronically ill or under palliative care in that country, and those states in the U.S. that have already legalized euthanasia in some form could well follow Canada’s lead. Absent concerted political opposition, more and more places in the West almost certainly will, sooner or later, turn yesterday’s horror fiction into today’s gruesome reality. ©

Notes:

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October 5, 2020—Washington, D.C.

EUGENICIDE

China's Brutal Treatment & Suppression of Uyghur Muslims

A Uyghur woman sits in a crowded clinic in Xinjiang, China, with several other women. Some of the women are crying, but none of them say anything because of the surveillance cameras. She is several months pregnant and is here to undergo an abortion. It isn't an issue of not wanting the baby. Here, women like her are required to abort their child if they already have two and can't pay the hefty fine for having more or if they have a second child within three years of the first. The woman will likely be fitted with an IUD after the procedure, even though she doesn't want one. Or she will be surgically sterilized.¹

In Xinjiang (officially Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), a province in northwest China, the Uyghur people live in a virtual panopticon where digital surveillance and police monitoring track everyone within the region. Uyghurs and other minority groups, including Kazakh and Kyrgyz people, endure greater scrutiny from police surveillance than do Han Chinese, the majority ethnic group in China.

Uyghurs (also spelled Uighurs) are one of China's 55 recognized minority groups, and they live predominantly in Xinjiang. They are ethnically Turkish, and most are practicing Muslims. In the last ten years, the Chinese government has grown increasingly oppressive toward the Uyghur people. Uyghurs have been arrested and sent to "vocational training schools," really internment camps, for exhibiting any

kind of religious activity, including owning a Quran, wearing a beard, or praying. Some have been sent to these "schools" for having apps on their phones that the Chinese government does not allow. The majority of women in such "schools" were sent there for having too many children.

HOW THE UYGHURS BECAME A TARGET OF THE CCP

China's contentious relationship with Islam dates back hundreds of years. The Xinjiang province was a disputed area until Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty conquered the region in 1759. Originally comprising two distinct provinces, in 1884 the region was unified and re-named Xinjiang, meaning "new frontier." According to China historian Jonathan D. Spence, Qianlong saw himself as a ruler of a multi-cultural Asian empire. The largely Muslim population in Xinjiang was allowed to keep their Muslim customs, and when Qianlong took a concubine from the region, she was allowed to continue practicing her religious faith while in his courts.²

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which took power in 1949, has sought a unified Chinese identity that includes loyalty to the state. Today stability and prosperity are important priorities to the Chinese people. This is best understood in light of China's military defeats to Japan and Britain in the early twentieth century, and the Great Leap Forward of 1958–1962, an ill-conceived industrialization plan carried out by the CCP under Mao Zedong, which resulted in the deaths of millions of people from starvation.³

On July 5, 2009, riots broke out in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, when Uyghur Muslim extremists clashed with Han Chinese. Many people saw the unrest as an affront to national stability, but in reality, racial tensions had been building for some time. When the CCP took power in 1949, only 6.7 percent of the population of Xinjiang was Han. But the

Communist government incentivized Han to move to Xinjiang, so that now almost half of the population is Han, and the other half is Uyghur or descended from other Central Asian peoples.⁴

As the Han population grew, so did government favoritism toward them. Uyghurs were denied jobs in favor of Han; land was taken from them; and their religious liberties were restricted.⁵ The 2009 riots, which began as peaceful protests, were sparked by a video showing Han workers killing Uyghur workers at a factory in the Guangdong province in southeastern China. The Han workers had accused the Uyghurs of sexually assaulting two Han women who also worked in the factory, and the killings were to exact revenge. Later investigations, however, did not find any evidence of sexual assault.⁶

Other smaller uprisings occurred in Xinjiang, and hostility between the Han and Uyghur people continued. In response, the Chinese government sent thousands of troops to Urumqi, the capital city. The troops used extreme measures, including deadly force, against Uyghurs. The government also enforced an unprecedented internet blackout of the province, making it difficult for anyone outside the area to get accurate information about what was going on there. The government also implemented a pervasive digital surveillance operation targeting Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

In 2014 President Xi Jinping visited the province for the first time, and in response, attacks occurred at public transportation sites. While there, Xi gave several closed-door speeches to the governing officials, the contents of which were only recently revealed. Papers leaked to several media outlets, including the *New York Times*, show that the Chinese government was very intentional in its plans to bring Uyghurs under control through force, detention, indoctrination, and coercive cultural assimilation.

In 2016, Xi assigned Chen Quanguo as Communist party secretary of Xinjiang. He had previously overseen the “stabilization” of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and was tasked with applying similarly harsh tactics to stabilize Xinjiang. Once Chen

took power in 2016, digital surveillance, police enforcement, and mass detentions ramped up to a scale not seen anywhere else in the country.

THE UYGHUR PAPERS

Over 400 pages of government documents were leaked to the *New York Times* outlining the Chinese Communist party’s tactics for controlling minority groups in Xinjiang. The documents include plans for the construction of “vocational training schools” and for the mass internment of Uyghurs and others based on vague and sometimes innocuous criteria. Satellite data and testimonials alike show that these “vocational training schools” are really internment camps. Reports indicate that more than a million Uyghurs have been detained in them.

According to the leaked papers and testimonials, the inmates live in squalid conditions, suffer physical abuse, are brainwashed with Communist party propaganda, and are subjected to forced labor. Past detainees endured months or even years of “indoctrination and

interrogation aimed at transforming them into secular and loyal supporters of the party.”⁷

Chinese officials say the so-called vocational training schools “use mild methods to fight Islamic extremism,” and are similar to the counter-terrorism measures America took after 9/11. In reality, children have been taken from their parents to orphanages where they are educated in Mandarin and Communist party rhetoric. Those who are allowed to leave after being “re-educated” must sign a non-disclosure document. They are usually tracked using GPS, and their texts and phone calls are monitored. If they tell anyone about their experience in the detention camps, other members of their families may be in danger of being detained.

A recent *BuzzFeed News* investigation looked at satellite imagery showing the construction of large internment camp complexes that look like permanent structures rather than the temporary, make-shift structures that the CCP had used as so-called training schools. Satellite images from Baidu, China’s

According to the leaked papers and testimonials, the inmates live in squalid conditions, suffer physical abuse, are brainwashed with Communist party propaganda, and are subjected to forced labor.

Google counterpart, were compared with images from external satellite providers. The Baidu images had squares of land blacked out. Those blacked-out areas were shown by outside images to contain internment camps, complete with police observation towers. The *BuzzFeed* report found more than 260 structures built since 2017. Ninety-two were confirmed internment camps. One hundred seventy-six were discovered by satellite images alone.⁸

STERILIZATIONS, FORCED ABORTIONS & LOW BIRTH RATES

Although the Chinese government has been reprimanded by several countries, including the United States, for its treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, the CCP has not relented in its persecution. Several women who had been detained but still managed to communicate with the outside world report that female Uyghur detainees—most of whom are sent to the detention camps for violating the birth laws, are forced to undergo sterilization, IUD insertion, and/or abortion procedures. But, according to reports, if a Han woman in Xinjiang violates the law by having too many children or children too close together, she is not subjected to the same punishments.⁹

Authorities are particularly strict on people living in rural parts of Xinjiang because they believe that Islamic extremists come from large, rural, religious families. The Associated Press reported that scholars working with the Chinese government said that a key obstacle to population control is the religious Uyghurs' belief that "the fetus is a gift from God."¹⁰

The numbers verify ex-detainees' testimonials. Documents show that in 2016 the government in Xinjiang spent millions of dollars on surgical procedures for birth control and cash incentives for sterilizations:

While sterilization rates plunged in the rest of the country, they surged seven-fold in Xinjiang from 2016 to 2018, to more than 60,000 procedures. The Uighur-majority city of Hotan budgeted for 14,872 sterilizations in 2019—over 34% of all married women of childbearing age.¹¹

Because IUD insertion is a medical procedure, the government has records of how many IUDs were inserted in women in Xinjiang. In 2014, there were just over 200,000 IUDs inserted, but that number increased to 330,000 in 2018. This increase does not match the trends in the rest of China, which has



Mother & Daughter—Kashgar, Xinjiang, China

seen a decrease in use since the one-child policy was relaxed.¹²

Unsurprisingly, birthrates in the parts of Xinjiang where the population is predominantly Uyghur have also decreased dramatically. The Associated Press investigation showed that births in Hotan and Kashgar decreased by 60 percent from 2015 to 2018. The overall birthrate in Xinjiang has declined as well: last year, it decreased by 24 percent, while in the rest of China it decreased by only 4.2 percent.

The statistics, satellite imagery, and testimonials converge to paint a bleak picture of what is happening to China's minority population in Xinjiang. And the Uyghurs are not the only ones to face oppression from the government—other targeted groups include Tibetans, Mongolians, Hongkongers, Falun Gong practitioners, and Christians. ☹

Notes

1. This story is based on testimonials shared in the Associated Press's investigation, "China Cuts Uighur Births with IUDs, Abortion, Sterilization" (June, 29, 2020): <https://apnews.com/269b3de1af34e17c1941a514f78d764c>.
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PREGNANT PAUSES

The Media's Strange Antipathy to New Fertility Apps

Ever since 1960, when the FDA approved Enovid as the first hormonal contraceptive pill, the market for contraceptives has boomed. In 2018, the global market for hormonal contraceptives alone (setting aside condoms, spermicides, devices, etc.) was valued at a staggering \$15.6 billion.¹

But there is a new player on the family-planning stage: fertility-tracking apps and technology. In many ways, such apps are a new take on the age-old concept of fertility awareness. They rely on the simple physiological fact that a typical woman is only fertile for approximately six days out of every month. If she can accurately identify those six days, she can avoid conception by abstaining from sexual activity or taking other precautions on those days.

But the age-old method has an age-old problem: identifying that “fertile window” isn’t easy. It takes bodily awareness, patience, and discipline, traits of which people in modern American culture are particularly devoid.

Nevertheless, women now have the option of procuring a fertility-tracking app. A woman may opt for using such an app over taking the more conventional hormonal contraceptive route for a number of reasons. She may want more understanding of her body—how her hormones shift over the days and weeks, and how those shifts may affect her mood and energy levels. Or she may be concerned about the effects of taking vast amounts of hormones over several decades of her life.

Hormonal contraceptives have long been known to bring with them a host of unwelcome side effects and risks—mood swings, nausea, cramping, breast tenderness, blood clots, migraines, deep vein thrombosis, strokes, and even increased rates of breast cancer and cervical cancer.² They have also been linked to increased rates of depression and anxiety, which should come as no surprise, seeing as they operate



by altering women’s natural hormonal balances—a process that changes their very brain structures.³

MEDIA HOSTILITY

So the news of a more natural approach to understanding fertility or preparing for a family should be welcome, shouldn’t it? In this Whole-Foods-shopping, toxin-reducing, organic-farm-promoting age, natural is best, right?

Wrong—at least as far as the media are concerned. Instead of welcoming this new technology, a number of media outlets have expressed downright hostility. “Fertility apps can be ‘misleading’ for women, review finds,” reads one CNN headline.⁴ “Fertility-tracking apps: Popular, hyped—and often inaccurate,” *Politico* says.⁵

And indeed, there is room for improvement in the sector as a whole. Some of the apps don’t seem to ask for enough information to yield reliable predictions. But others, like Natural Cycles, have been FDA-approved as a contraceptive, and claim to offer 93-percent effectiveness with typical use and 98 percent with perfect use. If correct, these are effectiveness rates in line with conventional hormonal contraceptives.

But instead of trying to point out which apps work and which ones need improvements, the media pounce upon a couple of poor examples as proof that the whole product line is hopelessly flawed. If the media took the same approach with hormonal contraception, there would be no shortage of cautionary stories and warnings. Countless pills, devices, patches, etc. have been pulled from the market over the years, on account of side effects ranging from ineffectiveness, to perforated uterus or intestines, to

permanent infertility, to stroke, and even to death. Any kind of medical technology takes time to perfect. New technologies require particular care, and need extra research and testing.

UPHOLDING WOMEN'S DIGNITY

In the case of fertility apps, one might suppose that the surge in such app downloads, as well as market-growth predictions, might indicate to the media and others paying attention that women are pretty dissatisfied with being put on the Pill at age 13 and told that the unpleasant side effects are just part and parcel of being female. The risk of having a baby outweighs any other risks, or so the storyline goes.

When a new technology emerges, one with the promise to countervail a hormonal regime that leaves women feeling literally sick, those who truly uphold women's rights and women's dignity should pay attention. Maybe it's not perfect. Surely it would, just like the more established methods, benefit from more rigorous testing and controls. But the fact that such technologies are growing by leaps and bounds signals that women want something better, something more in keeping with their God-given dignity as human beings, and something that also happens to be more in accord with traditional Christian moral teaching on fertility than what hormonal contraception has to offer.

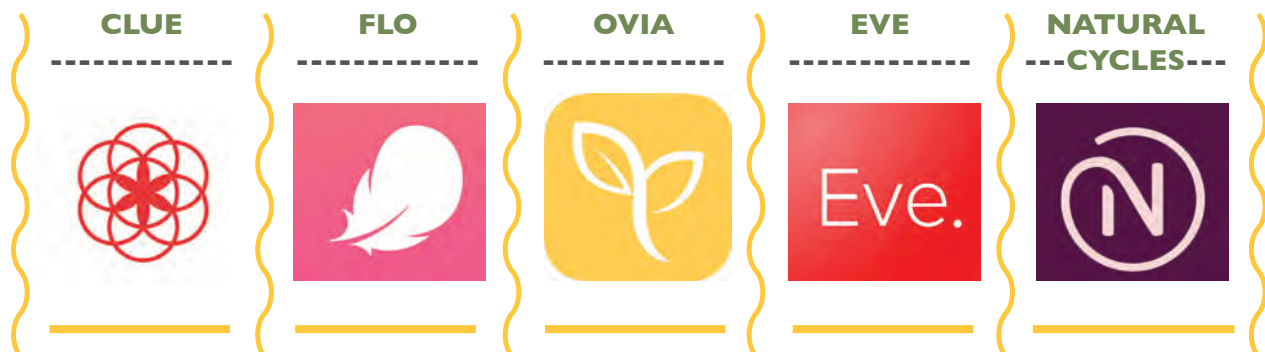
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Let's pay attention to what women really want, and do our best to improve technologies that have the possibility of dramatically improving women's lives. ☺

Notes

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Five of the Most Popular Fertility Apps



The Epic Struggle Is Real

Five Greco-Roman Myths That Christians Can Learn From

by Louis Markos

As an English professor whose spiritual growth has often been challenged and enhanced more by Greek mythology than by Christian devotionals, I am pleased that a growing number of Christians, especially among my fellow Evangelicals, are realizing that it is not a bad thing for Christians, whether old or young, to read and enjoy Greco-Roman myths. I am doubly pleased that many among that number are accepting something even more shocking: that Christians can actually learn from pagan mythology good and true things that possess real and eternal value. I would like to illustrate that claim by looking briefly at five myths that fall into three categories.



1 Pandora
Pandora by Walter Crane

—Why Are Things the Way They Are?

The annals of Greek mythology have preserved for us two tales that complement rather than repeat one another. They are both well known and have entered our language with such force that they have become a part of cultural literacy in the Western world. The first is the story of the first woman, **PANDORA**. After showering on her all the gifts of beauty, grace, and skill (Pandora means “all gifts” in Greek), the gods placed in her hands a small box which she was warned never to open. At first, she heeded the gods, but after some time passed, her curiosity got the better of her,

and she cracked open the lid to peer inside. Immediately, the top sprang open, and all the evils of the world—sin, war, disease, famine—flew into the air and distributed themselves across the face of the earth.

Pandora quickly shut the lid, but it was too late. The damage had been done and could not be reversed. She almost gave up in despair, when she heard a small voice at the bottom of the box call out to her to be released. That voice belonged to hope, and with it there came a faint promise that the evils she had released would not consume the human race.



The second tale concerns Pandora's brother-in-law, **PROMETHEUS**. Though a god himself, Prometheus felt great pity and sympathy for mankind, who had been kept in groveling fear by Zeus. In order to help man grow to his full potential,

Prometheus stole from Zeus the secret of fire and gifted it to man. In retaliation, Zeus had Prometheus chained to a rock high in the Caucasus Mountains. Every morning, a ravenous eagle came and tore out his liver. Every night, the liver grew back, only to be devoured again when morning returned. Eventually, Zeus and Prometheus

were reconciled, but Prometheus suffered greatly for his theft of the fire of the gods.

Taken together, these two timeless tales point to the biblical story of the Fall. Eve, like Pandora, was the first woman created by God. She was perfect in all ways, but she fell prey to the temptation presented by the serpent and disobeyed the one divine command that had been placed upon her. On account of that act of disobedience, sin was ushered into the world—though, with that sin, came a promise of hope. Even as God cursed Adam and Eve, he promised (Genesis 3:15) that one day the seed of Eve (Christ) would crush the seed of the serpent (Satan).



2 Prometheus
Prometheus Bound by Rubens

This mixture of sin and hope, of the plucking of forbidden fruit and the promise of restoration is also found in the Prometheus myth. This time, however, Prometheus takes on the roles of both Adam and Christ. He is like the first Adam, for he ushers forbidden knowledge (fire) into the world; he is like the Second Adam (Christ), for he suffers on behalf of man—a suffering that leads in the end to divine reconciliation.

Although we only need to know the story from Genesis 3 to understand the nature of the Fall, a knowledge of the myths of Pandora and Prometheus can help us understand, and even experience, some of the strange paradoxes that lie at the core of our fallen world and our fallen selves. It will help us to ask questions we might not have asked before: When is curiosity a good thing and when is it a bad thing? How does the

bad kind of curiosity reveal a lack of trust in God? In gifting man with fire, did Prometheus play the role of a hero or of a villain, a savior or a rebel? Is knowledge an absolute good, or can too much knowledge be a bad thing? Why would God create us with a desire to know, and then punish us for plucking the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil?

The ancient Greeks who fashioned the myths of Pandora and Prometheus lacked access to the special revelation contained in Genesis and the Gospels, but they were aware that they were living in a world that was broken in some way and that they themselves were also broken. They also knew intuitively that there was a link between that brokenness and a fatal decision predicated on disobedience and a bad form of curiosity.



3 Daedalus & Icarus

The Fall of Icarus by Jacob Peter Gowry

—How Then Should We Live?

Mythology, then, sheds some light on why we live in a broken world, and why pain and suffering are rife. But those are not the only lessons it can teach the discerning Christian. The ancient tales of gods and heroes also offer sound advice on how best to live in such a world. Long before Aristotle defined virtue as the mean between the extremes, the myth-makers of the Mediterranean world had embedded that concept in their timeless tales.

Think of the tragic, cautionary myth of **DAEDALUS AND ICARUS**. Imprisoned in the labyrinth that he himself had constructed for the tyrannical King Minos of Crete, Daedalus knew that the only way he and his son Icarus could escape was to take to the air on wings. He thus used his legendary ingenuity to construct two pairs of wings that would allow them both to fly to freedom. But he warned his son that in his flight over the ocean, he must neither fly too low, lest the moisture make the feathers of the wings too heavy and drag him down, nor fly too high, lest the sun melt the wax that held the feathers together.

Alas, the impulsive young

Icarus did not heed his father's sound advice. As he soared higher and higher toward the inviting sky, the heat of the sun softened the wax, and the feathers, one by one, floated away on the air. Icarus, helpless to stop the process his folly had set in motion, could only cry out in terror as he plummeted downward to his death.

Icarus is not the only impulsive young man to appear in the myths of ancient Greece. **PHAETHON**, when he learned that he was the son of **HELIOS**, the god of the sun, asked his father to give him whatever gift he asked for. Helios agreed, only to have Phaethon request that he be allowed to drive his father's chariot of the sun. Unable to dissuade his son from this plan, Helios could only give him advice on how to handle the fiery horses that pulled the chariot. But the advice proved vain, for Phaethon lacked the strength and skill to keep the horses unified and on course. In the end, Zeus was forced to kill Phaethon with a lightning bolt to prevent the madly veering chariot from scorching the heavens and earth.

According to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, the fear of the Lord is the

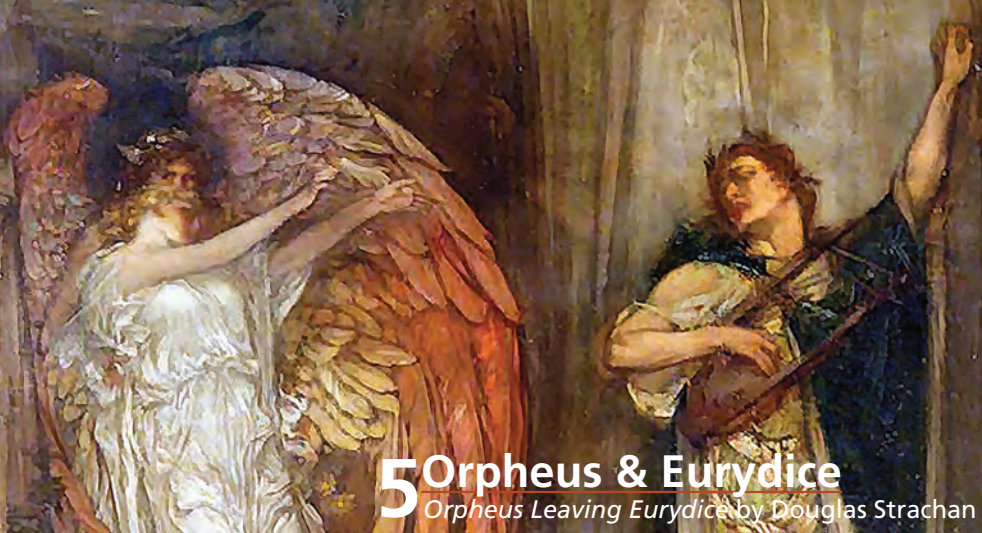
beginning of wisdom (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). When we lose that fear, we fall off course as quickly and tragically as the impulsive Icarus and Phaethon did. A Christian who might struggle to understand what it means to lose the fear of the Lord will likely not find it hard to understand the exact nature of the error that Icarus and Phaethon made by not paying heed to the protective wisdom of their fathers.

These twin myths can help teach Christians a truth that is too often missed by those who are perhaps overly familiar with the Bible: namely, that God the Father lays down rules for us, not to restrict us from enjoying our lives, but to guard us from self-destructive behavior. When we stray too far from the middle course that God has established for us, when we forget that there is a proper time for everything under the sun (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8), we inevitably hurt ourselves and those around us.

4 Helios & Phaethon

The Fall of Phaethon by Gustave Moreau





5 Orpheus & Eurydice

Orpheus Leaving Eurydice by Douglas Strachan

—What Story Are We a Part Of?

Although the Bible is the only book that Christians need to find salvation in Christ and live a virtuous Christian life, interaction with the myths of ancient Greece can offer helpful insights into the nature of our world and the kinds of consequences that follow in the wake of bad choices and actions. Such an interaction can also help us grapple with the nature of the story that we are a part of. The Bible lays out the parameters of that story—that grand narrative of creation, fall, redemption, restoration, and glorification—but myths read with a discerning mind and spirit can flesh out that story.

Consider the beloved tale of **ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE**, one that has inspired poets, artists, and composers for thousands of years. It all started so well. Orpheus, the king of Thrace and the greatest musician of his age, fell in love with, and won the heart of, the fair Eurydice. But before their

honeymoon had ended, a snake bit Eurydice in the ankle, and her soul was taken down to Hades. Orpheus wandered the earth in search of the hidden doorway to the underworld. When he found it, he bravely descended the stairs and came before Hades himself and his dread queen.

When Hades refused to release Eurydice from his realm of the dead, Orpheus played on his lyre and sang so sweetly that iron tears fell from the pitiless eyes of Hades. He granted Orpheus the boon he requested but warned him that he must not look back at Eurydice until she had left his dark domain and returned to the sunlit world. All went well until they approached the final flight of stairs, when Orpheus was seized with fear that Hades had tricked him. To calm his fears, he turned his head backwards to make sure Eurydice was behind him. The moment he did so, a great wind rushed down the stairway and blew Eurydice back into the darkness below.

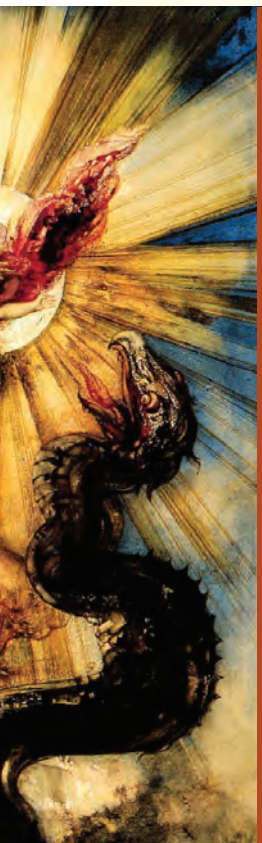
The story, or, better, the pilgrimage, of the Christian compels him to move ever forward, leaving behind his former life of sin and fixing his eyes on the risen Christ. So did Paul conceive of his own Christian walk: "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made

it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13–14). We must not, like Lot's wife (Luke 17:32), look back on the world of depravity from which we have been rescued. Let us not grow weary in our race or allow fear or regret to tempt us to cast a backward glance at our unregenerate life.

The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice puts flesh on the admonitions of Paul to press forward and of Jesus to flee without looking back. It allows Christians who read the Bible too casually and passively to experience the consequences of taking our eyes off of the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

And it does one other thing. Inasmuch as we identify with Orpheus, we will be called and admonished to press forward in our pilgrimage. If, however, we read the myth a second time and identify with Eurydice, we will realize that *our* Orpheus has both the power and the purity to harrow hell and rescue us fully from its dark lord. The music he plays saves and restores completely, calling back life out of death.

That is the story of which we are a part. We are the bride of a bridegroom-king who will not fail or leave us to molder in the grave. It is the Bible, not the myth, that assures us of that promise, but the myth, read rightly, can help render that assurance dramatically concrete and vividly real. ☉



Revolution, Inc.

Angry Isms & Destructive Theories Combine to Divide the Country by Laurie Higgins

There is nothing new under the sun, and that holds true for Black Lives Matter (BLM), the anarchical organization hell-

bent on cultural revolution, which means deracinating those institutions necessary for human flourishing.

Marxism, feminism, and paganism were chewed up, swallowed, and vomited out as the bolus BLM.

Knowing that a divided house cannot stand and longing for the collapse of the house, BLM uses race to divide and destroy. Saturated with Critical Theory, which emerged from the dessicated carcasses of failed Marxist projects and flourishes in academia, BLM exploits identity politics—not to unify and free the oppressed—but to acquire power.



Mark T. Mitchell, dean of academic affairs at Patrick Henry College and author of *Power and Purity: The Unholy Marriage That Spawned America's Social Justice Warriors* (Gateway, 2020), makes clear what so many Americans intuit about the BLM-spawned riots:

Is race really the central issue in what has been happening? . . . Most Americans are far less concerned about race than they are about providing for their families and living at peace with their neighbors. Something other than racism is driving these protests.



Mitchell goes on to diagnose the problem obscured by "mostly peaceful" BLM rioters chanting "Burn it down":

[S]elf-righteous grievance professionals . . . who despise America . . . are using race as a weapon in a war to transform the United States, and they are willing to engage in intimidation, violence, and property destruction to achieve their ends. . . .

In attacking private property, the revolutionaries are striking at one of the bedrock institutions of a free society.

The American republic was designed for a propertied citizenry; the ownership of property cultivates the independence necessary for self-government. . . . No one understood this better than Karl Marx, who claimed that Communism could be summed up in a single sentence: "abolition of private property."

Spinning Factless Narratives

Signaling its feminist bona fides, BLM's "HERSTORY" page identifies the group as beginning in 2013, when "three radical Black organizers—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi"—started it as a response "to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman."

George Zimmerman—a Hispanic, i.e., "person of color," who killed Martin in self-defense—was acquitted of all charges. BLM's mischaracterization of Martin's death as a murder points to the organization's strategic and tactical exploitation of the deaths of blacks for their revolutionary goals. Whenever a black person is killed by a law enforcement officer, BLM—the organizational equivalent of Al Sharpton—descends on the community in which the homicide occurred to take control of



the narrative before the facts can be known, and it then uses the false narrative to foment racial division.

This is the same tactic homosexual activists used after Matthew Shepard was killed in Laramie, Wyoming in 1998. Before Shepard could be buried, homosexual activists descended on Laramie and constructed a false narrative according to which homophobic bigots murdered Shepard in cold blood. When homosexual journalist Stephen Jimenez finally exposed the truth¹ that Shepard was killed by an acquaintance in a meth rage, the false narrative had gone around the world twice. Even today, most people believe Shepard was murdered because of homophobia.²

So, in 2014, when the 17-year-old thief Michael Brown was shot by a police officer defending himself against an attack by Brown, BLM descended on Ferguson, Missouri, like a volt of vultures to create a factless narrative that would impel a riot, after which the wake of vultures would feast and grow.

Then came Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Jacob Blake—all blacks whose deaths were proclaimed “murders” before any investigation had begun. The actual circumstances were dramatically different from the BLM-constructed myths.

Marxist Devotees

BLM’s co-founders, Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, all espouse the destructive dogma of Marxist-born Critical Theory, radical feminism, and paganism. Patrisse Cullors is a “queer polyamorous practitioner of Ifà, a religious tradition from Nigeria,”³ and a “trained Marxist”⁴ who is “married” to another queer BLM activist who goes by the name of Janaya Future Khan.⁵

In a melodramatic speech⁶ delivered at the 2020 Democratic National Convention, Cullors urged the

Now with an army of propagandized hooligans burning and looting, we are beginning to see the Marxist antipathy for private property emerge. When asked about criticism from black activists about the violence committed by BLM, Tometi—like all faithful Marxists—dismissed property destruction.

Democratic National Committee to support: the “Breathe Act,”⁷ which calls for defunding the police; the closure of all federal prisons and immigration detention centers; the elimination of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, life sentences, and electronic monitoring; and the “decriminalization and expungement of all drug offenses.” She calls these measures necessary for the “true American Revolution.”

In addition to her decade-long Marxist training under domestic terrorist Eric Mann, Cullors has been “inspired” by Assata Shakur,⁸ also known as Joanne Chesimard, a former member of the Black Liberation Army who has been on the FBI’s Most Wanted Terrorists list since her escape from prison where she was serving a life sentence for murder.

Like Cullors, Alicia Garza is a Marxist and a lesbian who is “married” to “Malachi” Garza, a woman who pretends to be a man. Two years ago, Garza founded another organization called Black Futures Lab, which is “fiscally sponsored” by the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), a “pro-People’s Republic of China organization” founded in 1972.⁹

Mike Gonzalez, a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation’s Allison Center for Foreign Policy, explains the reason for the CPA’s investment in Garza’s Black Futures Lab: “It is clear . . . why the CPA would sponsor a new enterprise by Garza: They espouse the same desire for world communism.”

While Opal Tometi was not identified as a “trained Marxist” by Cullors, the *Panama Perspective* identifies her as a fawning devotee of Marxists, citing her description of the 2015 election of Venezuelan dictator Nicholas Maduro as evidence:

“In these last 17 years, we have witnessed the Bolivarian Revolution champion participatory democracy and construct



a fair, transparent election system recognized as among the best in the world,” wrote Tometi about one of the world’s most corrupt voting systems in history.¹⁰

Tometi, the daughter of illegal immigrants from Nigeria, holds radical leftist views on lawbreaking, recasting illegal immigration as “the criminalization of migration.” In a 2015 interview in Berlin,¹¹ she made the outlandish claim that “every 28 hours a black person who is unarmed is murdered in the United States by a police officer or by a vigilante or a security guard. And that’s happening many times with impunity. We see this as a pandemic.”

Tometi reveals that the radical BLM goal of “reimagining” or defunding the police, which shocked many Americans during the summer of 2020, has been in the works for at least five years. She declared that “this campaign is explicitly about reducing the number of police in New York City” to better ensure “safety,” and—in Tometi’s view—“safety . . . looks like not being harassed if you jump the turnstile because you can’t afford to pay for your train ticket.”

In other words, safety means breaking laws with impunity.

Scrubbed but Still Held

Between early June and late August 2020, polls showed a precipitous drop in public support for BLM.¹² Then, on about September 18, BLM scrubbed its website of its “What We Believe” page. Thanks to the website Wayback Machine,¹³ however, concerned citizens can see for themselves the radical worldview of BLM, including its embrace of pagan sexuality:

We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead.

We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans-antagonistic violence. . . .

We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and “villages” that collectively care for one another. . . .

We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking. . . .

The rejection of “heteronormative thinking” and affirmation of both homosexuality and cross-sex



impersonation reflect the unbiblical spiritualism of BLM.

Hebah Farrag, contributing writer for The Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, describes the spiritual dimensions of BLM in an article titled, “The Fight for Black Lives is a Spiritual Movement”:

The movement infuses a syncretic blend of African and indigenous cultures’ spiritual practices and beliefs, embracing ancestor worship; Ifà-based ritual such as chanting, dancing, and summoning deities; and healing practices such as acupuncture, reiki, therapeutic massage, and plant medicine in much of its work, including protest. That work, though, often remains invisible.¹⁴

Ifà is essentially a pagan system of spiritual beliefs, and from paganism comes all manner of sexual perversion.

Different Obsessions, Same Paradigm

The now-deleted beliefs of BLM point to the Marxist training and ideological commitments of Cullors and Garza. Murray Bessette, writing at The Claremont Institute’s *American Mind*, connects the gone-but-not-forgotten beliefs of BLM to those of Marx and Engels:

Marx and Engels’s call to abolish the family in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is clearly an antecedent to BLM’s commitment “to disrupting the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and ‘villages’ that collectively care for one another, and especially ‘our’ children to

the degree that mothers, parents and children are comfortable.”¹⁵

As further confirmation of BLM’s Marxist commitments, the *Panama Perspective* exposes the group’s perfervid and ironic devotion to Marxist oppressors:

[W]hile Black Lives Matter claim to oppose police abuse and racism around the world, the organization is simultaneously a great supporter of some of the world’s most brutal and repressive dictators. In particular, the founders of BLM have been staunch supporters and allies of the sanguinary Venezuela dictator Nicolas Maduro and of the Castro regime in Cuba.¹⁶

Following Marx and Engels, intellectuals in academia began supplanting Marx’s class obsession with obsessions on race, sex, homosexuality, and, more recently, cross-sex impersonation while retaining Marx’s oppressor/oppressed paradigm—a paradigm that is at the wildly thumping heart of BLM.

Antipathy for Private Property

Now with an army of propagandized hooligans burning and looting, we are beginning to see the Marxist antipathy for private property emerge. When asked about criticism from black activists about the violence committed by BLM, Tometi—like all faithful Marxists—dismissed property destruction:

I think that conversation is complicated, and . . . I just don’t equate the loss of life and the loss of property. I can’t even hold those two in the same regard, and I think for far too long we have seen that happen. We have had these conversations where we are conflating very different realities and operating from different value systems. . . . that’s how I view it, and a lot of my colleagues and peers as well as mentors have similar views. We are really focussed on how to get our demands out and stay focussed on the main thing, which is people, and we want to value our love of people over property.¹⁷

Tometi was not asked if the loss of life and the loss of property were equivalent. Her evasive answer and false suggestion that the love of people and the love of property are mutually exclusive point to a Marxist disregard for private property.

Mitchell argues in his new book that,

Today’s social justice warriors of the radical left embody a toxic combination of the Nietzschean will to power and Puritan moralism, secularized but no less rigorous than its earlier religious instantiation. . . . For Nietzsche, life is nothing but the will to power: the attempt to assert oneself against others who are motivated by the same headlong drive. The Puritan is motivated by a quest for moral and political purity.

Sounds a lot like the sanctimonious mayhemaniacs storming America’s ramparts, demanding that *al fresco* diners raise their fists in a coerced demonstration of “support” for their cause.

On a Precipice

America teeters precariously on a precipice, over the edge of which lies the socialist utopia for which aging Marxists have longed. The division in America is now so great that a civil war looms possible. A few more “struggle sessions” in which colorless persons are hounded into self-flagellation over their white skin just might push us over the precipice.

Private property—gone. Speech rights—gone. True marriage—gone. Nuclear families—gone. Theologically orthodox Christianity—gone. Well, maybe not gone but definitely under siege. ☹

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Do Not Hinder Them

Children Are Intuitive Theists *by Neil English*

If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)

A child with large, light-colored wings is running across a dark, textured landscape. The child is wearing a light-colored dress and is captured in mid-stride, with their wings spread wide. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with rolling hills and a bright, glowing light source on the horizon, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. The overall color palette is muted, with earthy tones and soft pastels.

The immortal words of Jesus Christ attest to his great love and care for children. He warned us about the grave dangers of indoctrinating young minds to the ways of the world. Yet, our educational institutions, from kindergarten all the way through university, place maximum emphasis on teaching children that all of the grandeur of the natural world can be explained by known natural laws, and they actively discourage children from entertaining thought processes that appeal to the supernatural or the divine.

But this pedagogy flies in the face of recent research conducted by psychologists that reveals something altogether different: young children, irrespective of whether they are brought up in a religious or a secular home, are strongly disposed to think that many natural phenomena have been intentionally created by non-human agents or a deity of sorts, and, furthermore, children ascribe purpose to natural objects. Sadly, by the time they reach adolescence, much of this *design intuition* has been suppressed by educational and/or cultural conditioning as they fully engage with our secular societies, teachers, and even parental influences.¹

Beginning in the late 1920s, the Swiss child psychologist Jean Piaget came to some very surprising conclusions about young minds. He showed that, contrary to popular belief, children are not merely less sophisticated thinkers than adults; they are capable of thinking in radically different ways. In particular, Piaget described children as “artificialists,” who draw upon their subjective, intentional experience to conclude that all things were created by people or other intelligent agents for a purpose.² As such, he concluded, children are broadly inclined to view natural phenomena, whether

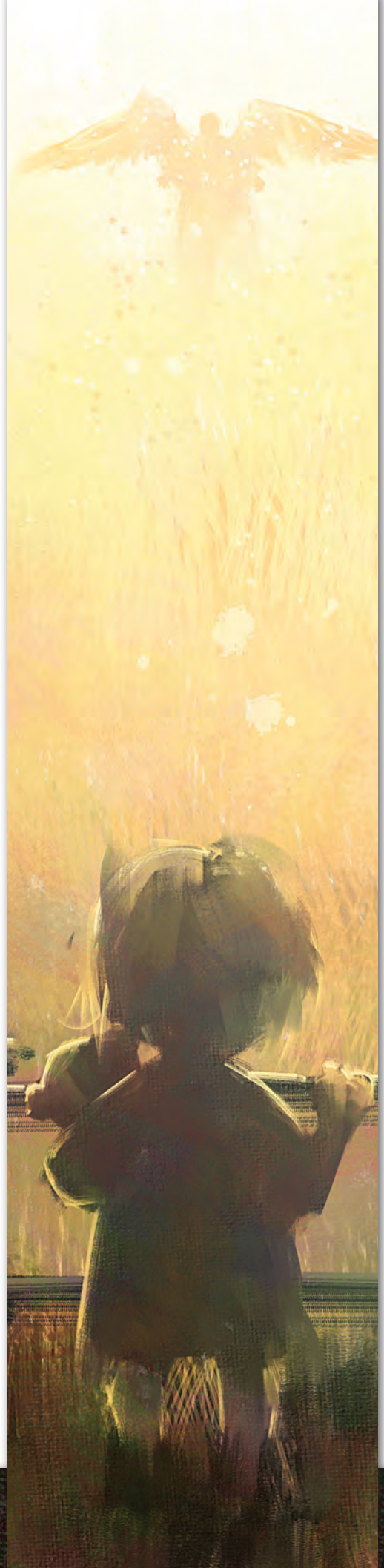
Back in 2004, University of Boston child psychologist Deborah Kelemen provided strong evidence that young children (4–7 years of age) are “intuitive theists” who are “disposed to view natural phenomena as resulting from non-human design.”

living or inanimate, in teleological terms. For example, clouds are for “raining,” and lions are for “keeping in a zoo.”

Furthermore, when Piaget asked children how natural objects originated, they frequently identified “God” as the cause. And not only that, they perceived this God as anthropomorphic, having an overarching authority of its own, like some kind of “super parent.” They could even formulate a mental representation of such an agent despite its intangibility to the senses.³

Intuitive Theists

Piaget’s assertion that young children are incapable of distinguishing between human and non-human causes proved controversial though, and subsequent studies have shown that he was wrong on some of these issues. Young children can, in fact, identify some natural causes. Yet he was correct in saying that children start out with the intuition that the natural world was made for a purpose. Back in 2004, University of Boston child psychologist Deborah Kelemen provided strong evidence that young children (4–7 years of age) are “intuitive theists” who are “disposed to view natural phenomena as resulting from non-human design.”⁴



Kathleen Corriveau, also based at Boston University, conducted a study of 66 kindergarten children from religious and non-religious backgrounds.⁵ In her study, the children were presented with three different kinds of narratives: religious, historical, and fantastical. Across the board, children thought the historical narratives were true. Perhaps unsurprisingly, children brought up in religious homes were more likely to accept the religious narratives as true than their counterparts raised in secular homes.

The most striking difference Corriveau found came with regard to the fantastical narrative, which 87 percent of the secular kids rejected as false, but which only 40 percent of the religious kids rejected.⁶ This led Corriveau to the conclusion that “religious children have a broader conception of what can actually happen.” What is more, she added, “exposure to religious ideas has a powerful impact on children’s differentiation between reality and fiction.”

What I found most striking was how these child psychologists reacted to their own findings. For example, Kelemen suggested putting an “interventive” learning program in a storybook format (where have we heard that before?) to “help” children develop greater “scientific literacy” at an early age.⁷ For Kelemen, the correct way to think is to uncritically believe in unguided evolution, so she has a negative view of the encouragement of religious streams of thought in children; in fact, she regards it as a form of indoctrination.

What if the indoctrination implied by Kelemen involves teaching children not to believe in God? What if there are tangible benefits not only to nurturing but to further developing the “intuitive theist” within every child?



Born Believers

Building on these findings of the University of Boston psychologists, Justin L. Barrett, based at the Centre for Anthropology and Mind at the University of Oxford, concluded in his book *Born Believers* (Atria Books, 2012) that “children tend to believe that the world has order and purpose and that there is a supernatural element to the origin of this order.”⁸ Indeed, Barrett added that “a child’s playing field is tilted towards religious beliefs.”

He then raises a very provocative question—what if the indoctrination implied by Kelemen involves teaching children *not* to believe in God? What if there are tangible benefits not only to nurturing but to further developing the “intuitive theist” within every child? Barrett suggests that religious thinking enriches the imagination and is absolutely vital for contemplating reality itself. After all, even the most ardent materialist would be hard-pushed to deny that every now and then, the unusual or even the “fantastical” can and does happen. There are, for instance, examples of peer-reviewed, clinically documented medical miracles that defy any rational explanation.⁹

Roger Trigg, a collaborator with Barrett at the University of Oxford’s Ian Ramsey Centre, added these comments to Barrett’s findings:

This project suggests that religion is not just something for a peculiar few to do on Sundays instead of playing golf. We have gathered a body of evidence that suggests that religion is a common fact of human nature across different societies. This suggests that attempts to suppress religion are likely to be short-lived, as human thought seems to be rooted to religious concepts such as the existence of supernatural agents or gods, and the possibility of an afterlife or pre-life.¹⁰

Clash of Worldviews

These psychologists’ findings are at direct odds with sentiments popularly expressed by atheists. For example, Richard Dawkins, who has taken a hard-line stance against raising children with religion, asserts that we should be instilling in children a healthy degree of skepticism, teaching them that “it’s too statistically

improbable for a prince to turn into a frog.” The irony has not gone unnoticed by me, given the stupendous odds against life emerging from lifeless molecules and evolving into higher organisms. Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the three-dimensional structure of the DNA double helix, has also waded into the same argument, reminding biologists that they “must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.”¹¹

Molecular biologist Douglas Axe at Biola University, in his excellent book, *Undeniable: How Biology Confirms Our Intuition That Life Is Designed*, wholeheartedly agrees that children are born believers in a designing intelligence at the heart of living systems, but he goes further, writing:

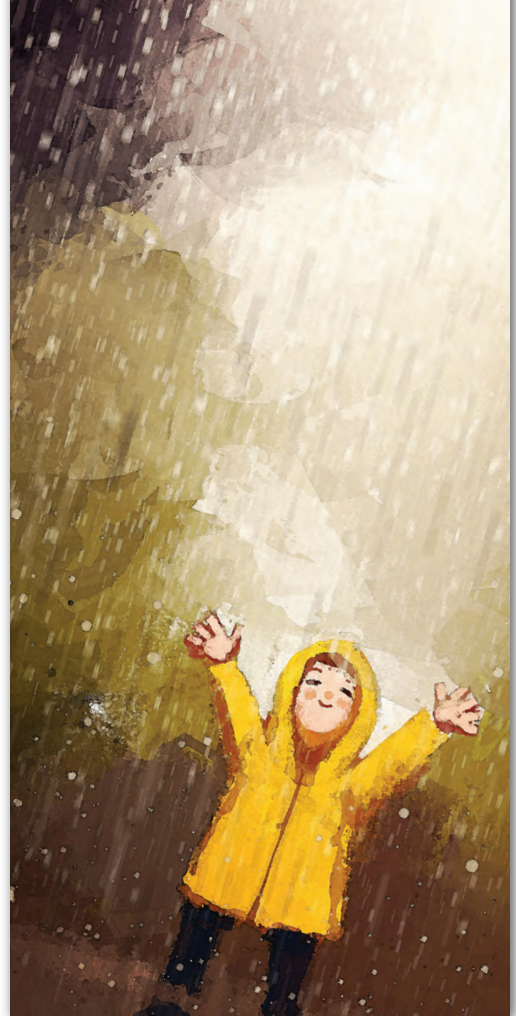
The children whose simple view of life has proved superior to the view endorsed by the Royal Society and the National Academy also have a simple view of consciousness. Their view begins to take shape in infancy, with games like peekaboo where small hands over small eyes form a screen that momentarily isolates the inside world from the outside world. . . . Through countless learning moments like this, children build a connection between their inside world and the outside world, a connection far more profound than anything technology has given us.¹²

For Axe, the overwhelming richness displayed to us by the outside world is complemented by an equally rich inner experience, “almost as if the two were made to go together.”¹³ So what materialists like Dawkins and Crick are actually saying is that we should completely ignore what is, in reality, intuitively obvious. Axe continues:

In our childhood, if not since, our design intuition assured us that life could only be the handiwork of God, or someone like him. As universal as this intuition is, though, it is almost universally opposed by the technical experts on life. None of us have been able to erase the intuition but many of us struggle to defend it against this professional opposition – or even to know whether it ought to be defended.¹⁴

What does all this smack of? We are, in effect, being asked not to believe our lying eyes. At least that’s the way Frank Turek, a leading Christian apologist, sees it. In his book *Stealing from God: Why Atheists Need God to Make Their Case*, Turek brings his readers’ attention to the mind-boggling complexity of living cells, replete as they are with molecular machines far in advance of anything humans can currently build. He writes, “Our brains are the instruments through which we have thoughts, but the thoughts themselves are immaterial products of your immaterial mind. And it is our minds that make us rational, conscious agents, with the ability to make choices.”¹⁵

So what does all this mean? According to Turek, “it means that you shouldn’t abandon your common sense intuitions for the nonsense ideology of materialism.”¹⁶



Scientific Language to the Rescue

But Turek also alerts us to another aspect of the design intuition that even secular scientists, unconsciously or not, engage in. And it pertains to the language used to describe the incredible molecular machines operating at the nanoscale in living systems. These are such engineering marvels “that biologists can’t help but describe their parts with engineering names. There are molecular motors, switches, shuttles, tweezers, propellers, stators, bushings, rotors, driveshafts, etc. And together they operate with unrivalled precision and efficiency.”¹⁷

What Turek is driving at here is that regardless of whether the scientists accept or reject the reality of design in nature, they are compelled to describe natural objects in terms of designed objects. This important point went largely unnoticed until relatively recently, but some materialist scientists have begun to sound

alarm bells. Professor Randolph M. Nesse of the Center for Evolution and Medicine at Arizona State University had this to say regarding the state of emotions research:

[P]rogress in emotions research has been slowed by tacit creationism. By tacit creationism I mean viewing organisms as if they are products of design, without attributing the design to a deity. Few scientists attribute the characteristics of organisms to a supernatural power, but many nonetheless view organisms as if they were designed machines.¹⁸

Nesse urges his readers to be more careful to couch emotions research findings in the language of Darwinian materialism, but he seems unaware that this approach is now being ditched by leading life scientists because it simply doesn't work and has had its day in the sun.¹⁹ More and more, Nesse's arguments seem counterintuitive at worst and self-defeating at best. After all, if the language of design best describes the workings of the human mind—or any other living system for that matter—and if they're perfectly intelligible when couched in those terms, it seems downright silly to take conscious steps to change it!

Worse still for Nesse, by describing living systems in terms of designed artifacts, scientists have opened up a brave new world of biological research called biomimetics, which, as its name implies, seeks to model new engineering structures by mimicking the genius designs at the heart of living things. What's more, this new science has already achieved spectacular success. For example, by studying the antics of swarming honeybees, engineers have arrived at novel solutions to designing telecommunications networks; and in studying the complex aerodynamic motions of dragonflies, they have produced remarkable refinements in drone design.

In a fascinating article for the Blyth Institute, Annie Crawford argues that since teleological language is so deeply embedded in centuries of biological research, it simply cannot be relinquished without partial or complete loss of intelligibility

to the audience to which it is presented. Crawford goes further still: "It is disingenuous," she writes, "to continue pretending that teleology is or can be divorced from biology. Indeed, it is the teleological character of life which makes it a unique phenomenon requiring a unique discipline of study distinct from physics or chemistry."²⁰

In summary, the design intuition appears to be hardwired into the human psyche, and while it is actively being suppressed in our secular educational systems from kindergarten to university, it cannot be entirely eradicated. St. Paul expressed these conclusions with astonishing accuracy in his Letter to the Romans: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (1:20).

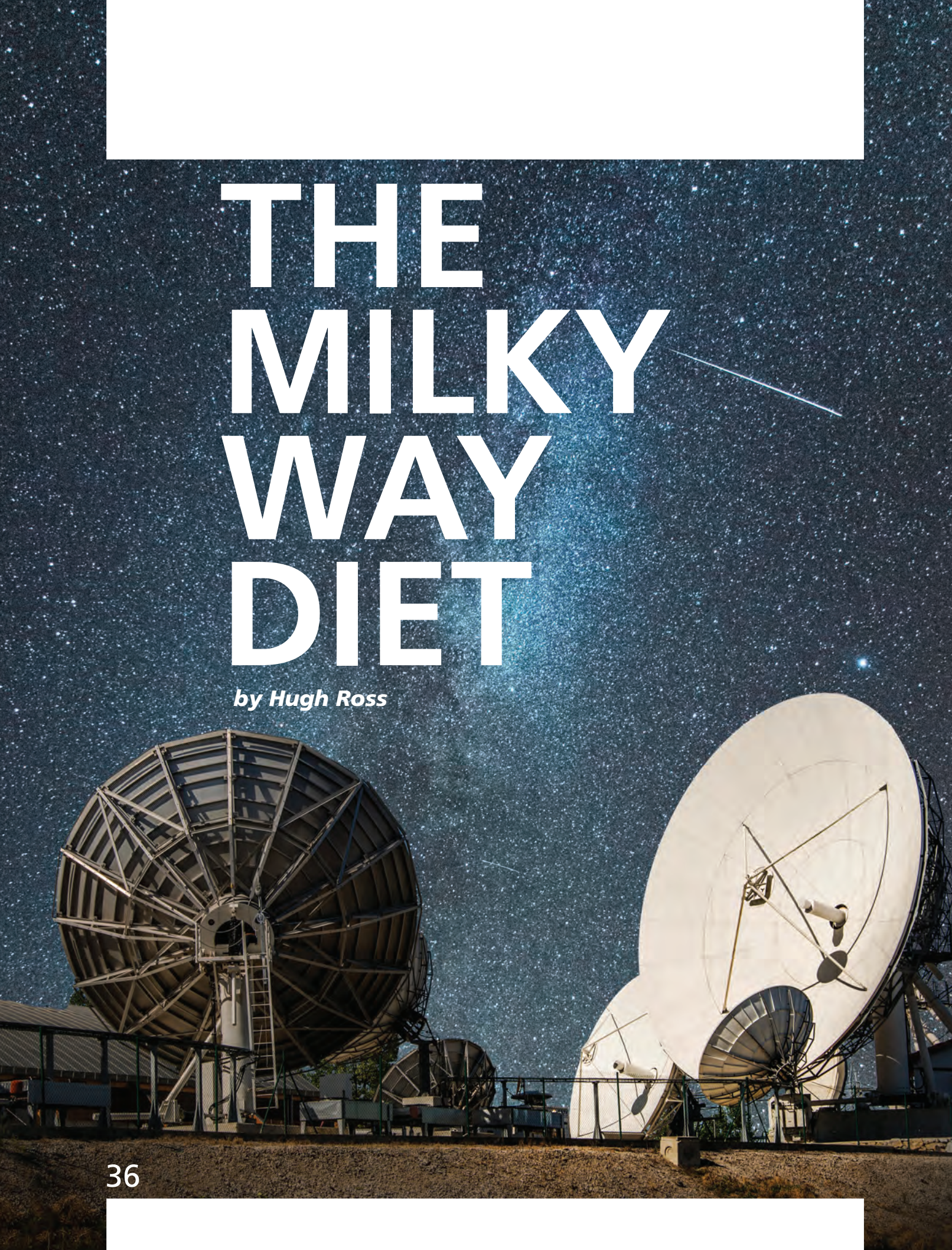
What is more, human language reinforces this intuition, irrespective of whether someone believes in creation or not. The more we learn about the world around us, the more it screams of design. And far from being a hindrance, the design intuition has yielded spectacular successes in cutting-edge scientific and engineering research.

So if it ain't broke, why even try to fix it? ☺

The design intuition appears to be hardwired into the human psyche, and while it is actively being suppressed in our secular educational systems from kindergarten to university, it cannot be entirely eradicated.

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THE MILKY WAY DIET

by Hugh Ross

Our Galaxy's Just-Right Consumption Habits



I'm not a fan of candy bars, but I do know that Milky Way bars (created 102 years ago by Frank Mars) were made to be eaten. By contrast, our Milky Way Galaxy, formed about 12 billion years ago, was made to *eat*. In at least one sense, the familiar adage, "You are what you eat," applies to both people and galaxies. The various star populations within a galaxy tell astronomers what a galaxy's "diet" and "eating habits" have been throughout its multi-billion-year history. This information about the when, what, and how much our Milky Way Galaxy has consumed since its formation holds enormous significance for you and me. Our existence—or

the possibility of it—depends to a large extent on our galaxy's "consumption" history over the billions of years since it first formed.

For one thing, a galaxy's "eating" history in its journey through space and time largely determines its shape and structure. In the case of the Milky Way, its consumption of stars, gas, and dust has led to the development of a stable spiral structure, the *only* structure appropriate for life, especially advanced life. Here's why: only in a spiral galaxy are the stars sufficiently far apart for a long enough time to allow for orbital stability within any planetary system

it may contain and to protect such a system from exposure to deadly radiation.

Researchers have known for decades that spiral galaxies are relatively rare. Elliptical and irregular galaxies make up 94 percent of our universe's present-day galaxies. Thus, the pool of galactic candidates for life amounts to no more than 6 percent on the basis of shape and structure alone. Even this number may seem sizable on a cosmic scale, but only *if* these galaxies resemble the Milky Way in many or most other ways, including those characteristics affected by their consumption pattern. But they do not.

The Milky Way Galaxy (Artist's Rendering)



The Milky Way has maintained optimal eating habits to allow for our existence. It began with two large gulps of stellar and gaseous material. Since then, it has taken in sufficient streams of gas and an appropriate quantity of low-mass dwarf galaxies at a steady enough rate to sustain its spiral structure.



Four Exceptional Features

Exceptional features like the following four come into focus by comparison and contrast of the Milky Way with typical galaxies of a similar overall mass, such as our sister galaxy, Andromeda.

1. The ratio of the Milky Way's stellar mass (stars, planets, asteroids, comets) to its total mass is lower by half than that of Andromeda and other local spiral galaxies of its size.¹

2. The angular momentum of the Milky Way's disk (a product of the disk radius and the disk rotational velocity) is only about 40 percent that of the Andromeda and other local spiral galaxies of similar mass.²

3. The Milky Way has a much smaller disk radius. Again, it amounts to roughly half that of Andromeda and other local spirals.³

4. The Milky Way differs most dramatically from other spiral galaxies of similar mass in the uniqueness of its halo. Unlike these other galaxies, the Milky Way possesses two clearly distinct halos, an inner and an outer, and the stars in both not only differ from each other but also from what's typical in the halos of other spiral galaxies.

Stars in the Milky Way's outer halo (between 17,000 and 100,000 light-years from the galactic center) have three times fewer heavy elements (elements heavier than helium) than do the stars in the halos of other spiral galaxies and even than the stars in its own inner halo.⁴ The stars with more heavy elements formed more recently and would have been gathered from other galaxies.

All four of these features combine to indicate that during the past 10 billion years, our galaxy has avoided major, yet generally typical, merger events with other large galaxies, mergers that would be devastating to the possibility of life.



A Closer Inside Look

Given that the elemental composition of the Milky Way's outer-halo stars matches the elemental composition of its thick-disk stars,⁵ astronomers conclude that the stars are similar in age. This similarity implies that the stellar halo and the thick disk formed from the same event and that it occurred early in the Milky Way's history.

Data from the APO-GEE and Gaia DR2 stellar surveys reveal that the Milky Way experienced an unusually intense accretion event (a big gulp) more than 10 billion years ago.⁶ An in-depth analysis of these surveys shows that from 11 to 10 billion years ago, the Milky Way consumed either a medium-sized galaxy or a high-mass dwarf galaxy called the

Gaia-Enceladus-Sausage (GES).⁷ This accretion event explains the observed properties of the Milky Way's stellar halo.⁸

A team of astronomers led by G. C. Myeong (University of Cambridge) found evidence for a second ancient accretion event (another gulp).⁹ Their findings show that just before the Milky Way accreted GES, it gobbled up a smaller galaxy they named the Sequoia Galaxy.

Through these ancient accretion events, the Milky Way Galaxy gained sufficient mass to maintain its structure despite gravitational interactions with other nearby galaxies later on. In fact, if its mass were any smaller now, gravitational interaction with the Large Magellanic Cloud, a nearby high-mass

Over the past 11 billion to 10 billion years, the Milky Way has merely nibbled, rather than gorged, ingesting no galaxies more massive than about 0.1 percent of its own total mass.



dwarf galaxy, would have so warped its spiral arm configuration as to make the Milky Way an unfit habitat for advanced life.¹⁰

Stars in the outer halo of the Milky Way are much more uniform in their elemental abundance than is typical, regardless of their distance from the galactic center.¹¹ In the Andromeda Galaxy halo, for example, the stellar abundance of elements heavier than helium declines by eight times between 30,000 and 330,000 light-years' distance from the galactic center.¹²

Another striking difference shows up in the Milky Way's outer halo. By contrast with other local spiral galaxies, the number of stars per unit of volume drops off sharply beyond 90,000 light-years from the galactic core,¹³ and even more sharply beyond 160,000 light-years out.¹⁴

Knowing that stars in the outskirts of a galaxy are especially sensitive to the effects of galaxy mergers and that the outer regions of the halo are thus "particularly information-rich" with respect to past mergers,¹⁵ astronomers can say with certainty that the Milky Way Galaxy has been dynamically undisturbed

by merger events for a very long time.

A Just-Right Galactic Diet

In other words, the Milky Way has maintained optimal eating habits to allow for our existence. It began with two large gulps of stellar and gaseous material. Since then, it has taken in sufficient streams of gas and an appropriate quantity of

low-mass dwarf galaxies at a steady enough rate to sustain its spiral structure.

In other words, over the past 11 billion to 10 billion years, the Milky Way has merely nibbled, rather than gorged, ingesting no galaxies more massive than about 0.1 percent of its own total mass.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the observed features of halo stars in other spiral galaxies of approximately the same

mass as the Milky Way show that they have experienced several major mergers during the same time period.¹⁷

This unique history explains, in large part, why today the Milky Way has spiral arms of rare and beautiful symmetry. It also explains why the Milky Way is a large spiral galaxy like no other we've yet discovered, a spiral galaxy uniquely fit to host advanced life. ☉

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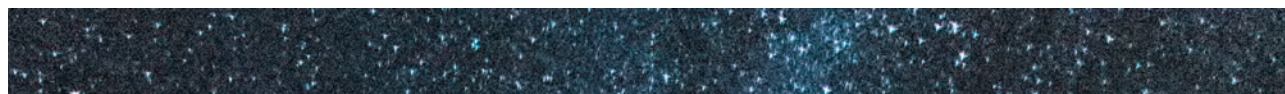
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A PIECE OF WORK

Intelligent Design & the Restoration of Story

In the previous issue of *Salvo*, I explored how Darwinian materialism has degraded the arts—the narrative arts in particular. But there is hope.

Modern science has uncovered breathtaking evidence of design in nature—in the exquisite nano-technology of even the tiniest single-celled organisms, in the delicate fine-tuning of the cosmos (without which organic life would be impossible), and at countless points in between. Celebrating this growing evidence of intelligent design (ID) can help rescue the arts from the nihilism and ugliness they have descended into in many quarters.

ID does so in part by reopening the door into theism, to belief in a transcendent maker of heaven and earth. If you recognize, for instance, that the eye was fashioned by a master designer rather than by blind evolution, you're likely to be more open to theism. And that openness has some distinct advantages vis-à-vis the arts:

First, under theism, art isn't a postmodern babel of competing interpretations without foundation. Theism makes it easier to see reality, and art, as an ordered, meaningful landscape that we have some chance of understanding.

Second, under theism, author and audience are free to explore narrative struggles between moral darkness and light as something more than empty moral posturing. The way is cleared to rightly regard great literature and film as an

authentic wrestling with real and universal moral principles.

And third, with ID restoring the possibility of the transcendent and the divine, the sublime in literature, film, and the other arts can once again be regarded as more than a mere biochemical trick of evolutionary biology.

With that as background, let's look at some examples of narrative art that recognize that life is a work of intelligent design, rather than merely a byproduct of mindless natural forces.

A MEDITATION ON SHADOW & LIGHT

We'll start with William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and his play *Hamlet*. Early in the drama, Prince Hamlet is dismayed that after his father, King Hamlet of Denmark, died, his mother rushed off to marry the late king's brother, Claudius, an ignoble drunkard unworthy of Prince Hamlet's mother or the crown.

Not long after this, what appears to be the ghost of King Hamlet appears to his son and says that Claudius poisoned him so as to seize his throne and his wife. Prince Hamlet is enraged, of course, but he can't move on his Uncle Claudius until he can corroborate the ghost's story. After all, for all Hamlet

knows, the spirit is really a demon come to trick him into killing a man falsely accused.

So Prince Hamlet looks for a way to confirm the ghost's claim, and, in the meantime, struggles with profound depression bordering on madness. In one of his famous speeches, he speaks to two of his friends from university who have just arrived for a visit. They notice his dark mood and ask him about it. Hamlet's reply beautifully conveys the old truth that our lives are marked by both shadow and light, by depravity and decay but also by nobility and the sublime:

I have of late, but
wherefore I know not,
lost all my mirth,
forgone all
custom of exercises,
and, indeed, it
goes so heavily
with my disposition that
this goodly frame, the
Earth, seems to me a sterile
promontory; this most
excellent canopy, the air, look you,
this brave o'erhanging
firmament, this majestical roof, fretted
with golden fire—why, it
appeareth nothing to me
but a foul and pestilent
congregation of vapors.

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in
reason, how infinite in faculties,
in form and moving
how express and admirable;
in action how like
an angel, in apprehension
how like a god: the
beauty of the world, the paragon
of animals—and
yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

The world is wondrous; the world is fallen. Man is sublime; man is a sweaty animal, doomed to die and turn to dust in the ground. The whole play, at one level, is a meditation on this theme of light and shadow, of what mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) called *grandeur* and *misère*, of the high and the low in life.

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wants to keep shut.



Hamlet

We see it in the plot and action of the play, where the lowest deeds bump up against some of the noblest. We see it in Hamlet's meditations on life. We see it in the way the tragical and the comical are mixed, sometimes in the same scene, and in a way that strengthens rather than weakens them. (The gravedigger/funeral scene is an outstanding example.)

OPENING A DOOR

In mingling the tragic and comic thus, Shakespeare was working out of a Judeo-Christian aesthetic tradition manifest in the great Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. There, the most sublime architectural features exist side by side with comically grotesque gargoyles. This aesthetic tradition seeks to encompass, understand, and, where possible, redeem all of creation because it was created by a most good and gracious God, who promises to make all things new, and who was even willing to become flesh and have himself nailed to an ignoble Roman cross in order to accomplish that goal.

This vision of the world also inspired Europe's scientific revolution. Under Christendom, the grubby physical realm isn't viewed as inherently evil or

ignoble, as it was by many of the ancient Greek thinkers, and so physical experimentation was encouraged.

There are other interesting conjunctions between the aesthetic tradition of Shakespeare and the medieval outlook that helped birth the scientific revolution. Here, suffice to say that the rich aesthetic and moral vision we find in Shakespeare is only possible where good and evil, nobility and treachery, the sublime and the sordid, are recognized as real, and where life is understood as far more than matter in motion.

To be clear, intelligent design doesn't get you to theism, much less to the great Gothic cathedrals or to Shakespeare. ID doesn't tell us who the designer was. It just identifies certain things in nature as intelligently designed. But it does open a door that Darwinian materialism wants to keep shut. And through that open doorway we can reach something like the aesthetic and moral landscape that Shakespeare and the makers of those great cathedrals inhabited.

DOSTOEVSKY AGAINST NIHILISM

Shakespeare, though, lived long before Charles Darwin (1809–1882). How might an author who rejects materialism respond to a cultural landscape ravaged by Darwinism and its fellow travelers—Hegelianism, hyper-rationalism, logical positivism, Marxism, nihilism?



Crime & Punishment (Film—1935)

We have an answer in the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881). Shortly after Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* first appeared, and when various strands of nihilistic radicalism were threading their way through Europe, Dostoevsky published one of his masterpieces, *Crime and Punishment*. In the novel, the young man at the center of the story decides he should rob and murder an old woman to escape poverty, free himself from the moral order, and set himself on the path to greatness—a Nietzschean superman in the making.

The novel is, among other things, a critique of lawless nihilism. But rather than deploy two-dimensional villains to discredit nihilism, Dostoevsky creates richly complex characters to explore what is attractive about it, even as he depicts a protagonist all but destroyed by its intoxicating ideas. The novel also explores how a contrasting set of ideas and examples—Christian theism—have the power to redeem.

The work is an excellent model for any aspiring novelist who wants to take on those pernicious ideas that laid the philosophical foundations for Darwinism and that Darwinism reinforced.

AMBUSHED BY WELLS

Jump forward another century, and we have a short story by the Pulitzer-Prize winning American author John Updike (1932–2009) that confronts materialistic thinking and answers it with an explicit design argument.

The story, "Pigeon Feathers," is about a boy in a small town who has begun to grow conscious of his own mortality, and who wrestles with doubts about life after death and his Christian faith.

The boy, David, likes to read and has consumed everything from the humorous stories of P. G. Wodehouse to *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells, with its foreboding depiction of a dying universe far in the future. In the barn on his family's property, David comes across more books. One of them is another work by H. G. Wells, a history of the world. The boy flips to the part about Jesus. There Wells provides a completely naturalistic reading of the life of Jesus, no miracles allowed. No resurrection.

David feels ambushed by Wells's flippant dismissal of Jesus as a mere man. The narrator tells us that he soon

lost his appetite for reading. He was afraid of being ambushed again. In mystery novels people died like dolls being discarded; in science fiction enormities of space and time conspired to crush the humans; and even

in P. G. Wodehouse he felt a hollowness, a turning away from reality that was implicitly bitter, and became explicit in the comic figures of futile clergymen. All gaiety seemed minced out on the skin of a void.

The boy talks with his church's pastor about death and the afterlife. The young pastor tells him that Abraham Lincoln lives on after his death only in the good deeds he did.

David finds no consolation in this. If you're dead as a stone, what good does it do you for people to fondly remember you? The boy doesn't want to die and have the lights just go out—whoosh—nothingness. He wants to live.

He asks his mom about it, sure that she will be horrified by the pastor's betrayal of Christianity. But no. She defends the pastor and tries to pacify her son. She says it's greedy to desire eternal life after death; just enjoy each day you have.

David isn't sure what to believe. Maybe the pastor and his mom are right. He realizes that just because he wants to live eternally doesn't make it so. Maybe it's true that when you die, that's the end.

A DESIGN ARGUMENT & MORE

He goes back to the barn. One of his chores is to kill the pigeons that roost there. He shoots six of them, and the story ends with a description of him going outside to bury them:

He had never seen a bird this close before. The feathers were more wonderful than dog's hair, for each filament was shaped within the shape of the feather, and the feathers in turn were trimmed to fit a pattern that flowed without error across the bird's body. He lost himself in the geometrical tides as the feathers now broadened and stiffened to make an edge for flight, now softened and constricted to cup warmth around the mute flesh. And across the surface of the infinitely adjusted yet somehow

We can infer a
designing intelligence
behind the astonishing
artistry of the pigeons'
feathers; and from this
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about the designer:
here is an artist
who cares deeply
about his creation.

effortless mechanics of the feathers played idle designs of color, no two alike, designs executed, it seemed in the controlled creature, with a joy that hung level in the air above and behind him. Yet these birds bred in the millions and were exterminated as pests.

Into the fragrant open earth he dropped one broadly banded in slate shades of blue, and on top of it another, mottled all over in rhythms of lilac and gray. The next was almost wholly white, but for a salmon glaze at its throat. As he fitted the last two, still pliant, on the top, and stood up, crusty coverings were lifted from him, and with a feminine, slipping sensation along his nerves that seemed to give the air hands, he was robed in this certainty: that the God who had lavished such craft upon these worthless birds would not destroy His whole creation by refusing to let David live forever.

Updike gives us a design argument here, and more. We can infer a designing intelligence behind the astonishing artistry of the pigeons' feathers; and from this we can infer something about the designer: here is an artist who cares deeply about his creation.

In this story Updike has offered not only evidence of a caring Creator, but also a model of excellence—the model *par excellence*—for the human artist to emulate. ☉



WHY CAN'T WINSTON COUNT?

Because Socially Constructed Math Is Simply Illogical

A dear friend is a math teacher who has a hard time understanding the new intersectional war on math, based on critical theory. Trying to explain it is frustrating. Like most opponents, she attempts logical refutations. But logic is the prime target in the war. A bit of recent history might help.

One of the earlier proposals was to abolish algebra at community colleges. By 2017, a growing number of educators wanted to dump it. NPR summarized the argument of Eloy Ortiz Oakley, chancellor of the California community college system, this way:

Algebra is one of the biggest hurdles to getting a high school or college degree—particularly for students of color and first-generation undergrads. It is also the single most failed course in community colleges across the country. So if you're not a STEM major (science, technology, engineering, math), why even study algebra?¹

A MOVEMENT AGAINST TRUTHS

It has become clear that a much more ambitious project is now in hand: to replace math with social justice math, including, perhaps, a name change. Educator Rochelle Gutierrez, whose specialty is "equity issues in mathematics education," was to give a keynote presentation, "Mathematx: Towards a Way of Being," at a Mathematics Education and Society Conference in India in early 2019. "Drawing upon Indigenous worldviews to reconceptualize what mathematics is and how it is practiced," she stated in the abstract of her talk, "I argue for a movement against objects, truths, and knowledge towards a way of being in the world that is guided by first principles—mathematx."²

By 2019, the movement was gaining strength. A preview of the new Seattle math curriculum gives some sense of it. British commentator Douglas Murray noted:

Just one of the sub-questions that students will be invited to consider here is "How can we use math to measure the impact of activism?" Because, of course, what matters most in this world is engaging in impactful activism. Elsewhere students will be invited to consider the following question, "Can you suggest resolutions to oppressive mathematical practices?"³

My math teacher friend would say, "It's not clear that Seattle students will be competent enough in math to reflect on its practices." No, but why assume that competence in math is the goal?

ATTACKING THE BEDROCK

One target has been the equal sign, =, once considered the bedrock of mathematics. As one tech writer explains,

It seems to make an entirely fundamental and uncontroversial statement: These things are exactly the same. But there is a growing



community of mathematicians who regard the equal sign as math's original error. They see it as a veneer that hides important complexities in the way quantities are related—complexities that could unlock solutions to an enormous number of problems. They want to reformulate mathematics in the looser language of equivalence.⁴

For many, perhaps, it's a welcome deliverance from equations that don't equate. The new element is that mathematicians are getting behind this trend. That's doubtless for a variety of reasons, one of which must be, in these days, the risk of Cancellation.

They have reason to fear, given that the war has now spread to $2 + 2 = 4$. In July of this year, teacher and Ph.D. student Brittany Marshall gained a good deal of attention on Twitter for proclaiming, "Nope the idea of $2 + 2$ equaling 4 is cultural and because of western imperialism/colonization, we think of it as the only way of knowing." Paula Bolyard responded to one of Marshall's supporters, "The iPhone you typed those tweets on is based on the binary system—ones and zeroes, not fives and four thousands."⁵ True, but such facts have come to be seen as instruments of oppression. Bringing them up is hostility.

Author and scholar Nancy Pearcey notes that math is by no means exclusively Western:

We all use Arabic numerals, and in my college math class, we learned that the concept of zero as a place holder came from India; that the Babylonians gave us the 360-degree circle and the 60-minute hour; that the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Chinese all had a rough idea of the value of pi.⁶

Again, true, but hardly relevant in the Year Zero, when Western thinkers are denounced because they support objectivity and logical thinking, whatever its origin.

ACADEMICS GET COMFORTABLE

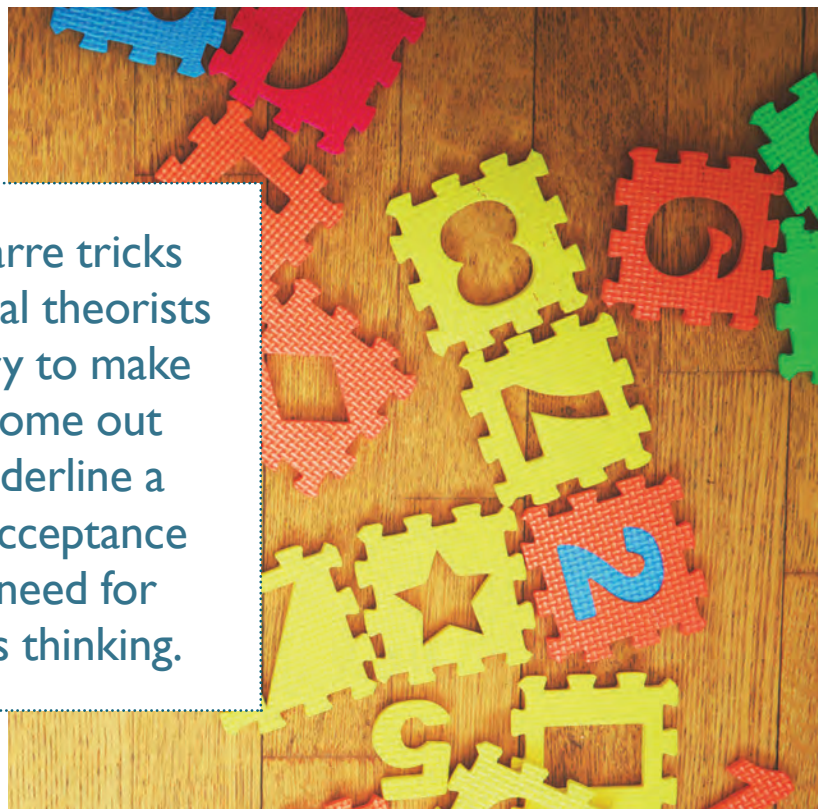
Just to show how deep the rejection goes, one of the drivers in the war on $2 + 2 = 4$ was the use of that concept by an *opponent* to explain the worldview

The bizarre tricks
that critical theorists
use to try to make
 $2 + 2$ come out
to 5 underline a
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rigorous thinking.

of the new critical theorists. Social scientist James Lindsay quoted George Orwell's 1984: "Freedom is the freedom to say that $2 + 2 = 4$. If that is granted, all else follows." He then found that many academics, including some mathematicians, are quite comfortable with the idea that $2 + 2$ might equal 5. He later wrote,

I have to confess responsibility for this bizarre moment, which in some sense might be one of the greater achievements of my life thus far. There's an excellent case to be made that I have led a significant number of professionals who definitely should know otherwise—as effectively every six-year-old in a community with a school does—to dig deeply into tortured defenses of the proposition that two and two do not make four.⁷

There is a history here. Lindsay, with Helen Pluckrose, was one of Peter Boghossian's embattled Sokal hoaxers. They wrote clearly ridiculous papers that were accepted in social science journals. He and Pluckrose have now written a book, *Cynical Theories* (Pitchstone, 2020), addressing the underlying belief system of the war on math: "Knowledge is a social construct; science and reason are tools of oppression; all human interactions are sites of oppressive power play; and language is dangerous." The bizarre tricks



that critical theorists use to try to make $2 + 2$ come out to 5 underline a lack of acceptance of the need for rigorous thinking.⁸

Thus, when Brooklyn College Professor of Math Education Laurie Rubel announced in early August that $2 + 2 = 4$ “reeks of white supremacist patriarchy,”⁹ she was speaking for surprising numbers of academics and teachers. Many rightly ask, what about the disadvantaged children who depend on public schools to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills? Well, there are two ways of looking at that. One would be to emphasize the skills; the other would be to undermine their value across society. Critical theory is firmly decided on the latter.

REDUCED TO PREJUDICE

Is there a way of critiquing this mass flight from fact? In the current environment, that's harder than some might think. For example, in an excerpt from *Cynical Theories*, Pluckrose and Lindsay note that the new progressive theory explains too much: “It reduces everything to one single variable, one single topic of conversation, one single focus and interpretation: prejudice, as understood under the power dynamics asserted by Theory.”

But why should that be seen as a problem when it is precisely the intention? They then argue, “The entire backbone of the theory is affirming the consequent. True logical statement: if there's prejudice, then there's disparity. Logical fallacy: there's disparity, so there's prejudice.” But with the abolition of logic, logical fallacies are no longer a problem. People who don't accept fallacies, however, are a problem.¹⁰

Douglas Murray sums up the current situation:

When do you come to realise that a movement has made a clean sweep through the culture? It isn't the moment when the disciplines that you know succumb to it. It isn't when the ideas that you are familiar with suffer from the contamination. Rather it is when subjects you took to be serious, solid and immune from such things end up spouting exactly the same degraded mantras as everyone else.¹¹

WINSTONS IN DANGER

Part of the problem may be that the very nature of mathematics is problematic in a naturalist (nature is all there is) environment. Philosopher Edward Feser puts it this way:

Mathematics appears to describe a realm of entities with quasi-divine attributes. The series of natural numbers is infinite. That one and one equal two, and two and two equal four could not have been otherwise. Such mathematical truths never begin being true or cease being true; they hold eternally and immutably. The lines, planes, and figures studied by the geometer have a kind of perfection that the objects of our experience lack.¹²

That realm—recognized across the world—is increasingly seen as a problem at universities today. One commentator quoted G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936):

We shall soon be in a world in which a man may be howled down for saying that two and two make four, in which people will persecute the heresy of calling a triangle a three-sided figure, and hang a man for maddening a mob with the news that grass is green.¹³

Orwell's hapless central character in *1984*, the one who insisted that $2 + 2 = 4$, was named Winston. If universities come to be dominated by critical theorists in all disciplines, they will not be slow to deal with the Winstons who show any attachment to fundamental facts, let alone eternal truths. ☉

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Battleground (1949)



REAL MEN AT WAR

William Wellman's Battleground

Whenever I say that the last century has been impoverished in the arts, the first objection I meet is that I've fallen for an illusion. The argument is thus: Most of the art in any period is trash. We sift through it, so that what is great endures, and we forget the rest. The art of our time is no different. We just haven't yet done the sifting.

My first reply is to deny the premise. Most of the art in any period *is not trash*. Most of it, like the handicrafts in any healthy culture, ranges from the workmanlike to the superb, before you get to the masterpieces.

But my second reply is to note the *disappearance of whole genres of art*. It is not that current poets

write poor epics, odes, narratives, hymns, and dramatic monologues.

They do not write them at all. The art has shriveled up. Even the new art that the twentieth century brought to us, the cinema, has dwindled. Many *types* of movies cannot now be made.

Part of this is attributable to the demise of the studio system, which gave people the chance to tell stories that were not going to be lavish and glittering with stars, but rather were understated and human. But part of it is that no one *would* tell those stories now. No one has the touch or the taste for it, the warm desire to portray human beings as they are.

ORDINARY ENLISTED MEN

That is the genius of William Wellman's 1949 film *Battleground*, which describes the fortunes of a platoon of men in the 101st Airborne, as they endure a bitter winter in the region of Bastogne, Belgium, caught by the last desperate Nazi thrust in World War II. The movie is not candy. We don't have a lineup of he-men with dash and daring, stealing the show from the war, as in the edge-of-the-seat thriller, *The Great Escape* (1963). We don't get the archetypal warrior and general, as in *Patton* (1970). We don't have dubious battles on the high seas, as in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949).

Instead we get the ordinary enlisted man: no

one higher than a sergeant plays any important role in the film. What moves that man? What does he talk about? What does he think about? What does he long for? Who are his friends? What does it really mean for him to fight? Why is he there at all, in Luxembourg or Belgium (he isn't sure), short on ammunition, short on rations, out of gasoline for the tanks; digging a foxhole with his small collapsible spade, caught in a wintry fog and not knowing whether the Germans are behind him or before him or all around?

Private Holley (Van Johnson, perfect for the role) is a big cheerful fellow who thinks of having a good time with a Belgian girl in Bastogne (Darlene Darcel), and frying in his helmet the eggs he stole from her chicken coop. But we see his gradual change, from rascal to quiet hero, as he learns self-denial, without words, from the deaths of a couple of his friends.

Private Layton (Marshall Thompson, later known as the African doctor in the television series *Daktari*) is a fresh-faced boy newly assigned to the platoon, who at first has no friends and cannot even find a spare cot to sleep on, but the war slowly and surely binds him to the other men.

Private Jarvess (John Hodiak) is the real thinker among them, sour, morose, somewhat cynical, but brave and loyal; he is the only one who can speak French and a little bit of German. He gets newspapers from his hometown of Sedalia, Missouri. It seems his wife knows more about what the Germans and the Americans are doing around Bastogne than he does.

THE BIGGEST CLUB IN THE ARMY

All through the film, we see moments of revelation, of moral change, without fireworks. Take the boy Layton. In his first real action, he sees Holley break from their holes in the snow drifts to cut behind German attackers and take them out. He follows. "I'm with you, Holley," he says.

Why did he go?

"I thought he was running away," he says later on to the hard-bitten Jarvess. "That's why I went after him."

"How do you know what Holley was thinking?"

says Jarvess. "How do you know if he was thinking at all? Things just happen, then afterwards you try to figure out why you acted the way you did."

Layton drops his eyes. "I know why I ran. I was scared to death."

"You just joined the biggest club in the army," says Jarvess. "Everybody belongs."

That's no anti-war sentiment; just the plain truth. And Layton grows into something like courage, as he grows into friendships that his world back home cannot imagine.

LIKE FALLING ASLEEP

Holley himself, who for the first part of the film plays the buffoon, is thrust into a position of responsibility when his sergeant is carried off the field. Except for that, he would not have made that dangerous

run—and except for the death of a friend, a good-natured Spanish American (Ricardo Montalban).

Roderigues, from Los Angeles, had never walked in snow before and could hardly contain his boyish glee. We see him posing as a big-league pitcher, hurling snowballs at another fellow batting at them with a tree limb. But bombs burst upon them from the air, and the men have to scurry. Roderigues, wounded, crawls under an abandoned tank, covering up the space with snow. Many hours later, Holley returns to the tank, which has somehow survived the bombing without a scratch. They dig away the snow frantically, and come upon the man's hand, lifeless, and then his face.

"They say it's like falling asleep," says one of the soldiers, as Holley looks on. No more words need be said.

SHREDDERED BOOTS & FORTITUDE

With a single deliberate move of the camera, Wellman says more than other directors say with a

A long time ago,
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Friendship is the key.

hundred gunshots and a thousand words. The chief of the company, Sergeant Kinnie (James Whitmore), a constant chewer of tobacco, is a stoical sort, resigned to the hardship, good-humored and weary. He stumps along on half-dead feet in shredded and flopping boots. When a chaplain (Leon Ames) comes by to lead the men in prayer and to encourage them by declaring that what they are doing is necessary to free millions of people from the slavery that the Nazis would impose, we see the boots of that man of God, and they, too, are in shreds. Those shreds say, "Men, I am one of you."

It would be easy to give in. A German officer tries to lure the men into surrender, saying that it is their only chance to save their lives, not to mention the civilians remaining in Bastogne whom they have met—who will not survive the next aerial assault.

Kinnie thinks for a moment or two. The German may be right, and not bluffing. Then his eyes harden. "Nuts," he says, and spits out a gob of tobacco. When he and his men are hemmed in, and they must fight to the death with bayonets at the ready, he falls upon one of the enemy, flat on the snow. We do not see the gore. We see the bayonet-thrust from above, and Kinnie's face as he pauses again—and spits.

FRIENDSHIP THE KEY

A long time ago, I taught alongside a man who told me that despite all the horror, he never felt so alive again as he felt when he was an American soldier fighting on German territory. It cannot have been mere neural excitation. Friendship is the key. In the final scene, while the more celebrated airmen ride by in jeeps and tanks, Sergeant Kinnie, who has received his new orders, is left alone on the other side of the road, he and his stumps for feet. He tells the men to get up again, and has them turn away from Bastogne, back to the misery.

"Oh, no," says Holley.



"About face!" then cries the sergeant, with a very slight gleam in his eye. They are being relieved after all.

It brings Holley back to his old good cheer. They march.

"Hey, Kinnie," he hollers. "What ever happened to Jody?"

Kinnie seems not to hear, yelling at them for being slow. "What do you want, these guys to think you're a bunch of WACS?" They pick up their feet and march, as Kinnie sings out and they give the refrain.

"Your baby was lonely, as lonely as could be!"

"Till Jody provided company!"

"Ain't it great to have a pal—"

"Who works so hard to keep up morale!"

"Sound off!"

"One, two."

"Sound off!"

"Three, four."

"Cadence count!"

"One, two, three, four, one, two—three, four!"

UNDERRATED DIRECTOR

If you want a movie about ordinary men, real men and not peacock-actors, doing what ordinary men were called to do, *Battleground* is it. Nor should you overlook other films by the underrated William Wellman: *Goodbye, My Lady*, for instance, one of the finest boy-to-man movies Hollywood ever made. ☺



Slightly Offspring

When Puppies & Plants Replace Children

by Elizabeth Nussen

I've watched with mild embarrassment and frustration as many of my generational compeers delay—or even eschew—parenthood and substitute dogs to fill the role of children. As eggs drift and die like uncourted Austenian spinsters, as sperm dart aimlessly to and fro, ready soldiers never called to arms, it seems that AKC-registered canines are the only ones of God's good creatures taking seriously his commandment to be fruitful and multiply.

Or, to be more accurate, their breeders are the ones pursuing the procreation, collecting deposits on puppies not yet conceived and laughing all the way to the bank. A family member recently paid her way onto an eight-month waiting list for a dog, and an hour or two of internet recon will yield the news that nearly all breeders have been wiped clean of available puppies through the end of 2020.

It takes almost as long to adopt a dog as it does to adopt a child. This is, sadly, appropriate, since the dog, once obtained, is

treated like a child. The first indication of this is the wording itself: "adopt." No one *buys* a dog anymore, which would imply that the dog is a commodity and not a new member of the family. Owners refer to themselves as "dog parents" and to their pets as "fur babies." They send out puppy-adoption announcements. Sometimes they have "gender reveals."

Once they obtain the dog, they take family portraits together with it, and if a cohabiting couple that owns a dog decides to get married, they include the

dog in the wedding ceremony. They update friends and family on social media about their dog's progress through developmental milestones, and they throw birthday parties for their pet—or at minimum snap a photo of the dog eating a treat with a party hat strapped to its head.

When, if ever, the couple copulates productively, they announce that the dog is going to be a big brother or sister, a sibling of the expected infant. And, as the pregnant woman grows round, she frets over how the dog (*the dog!*) will handle the big adjustments to come, and the husband pats her hand and assures her all will be well.

Fussing Over Houseplants

To an extent, I get it. I love dogs, and I have serious reservations about those who do not. And for those who have never had the truly awesome experience of holding your own infant in your arms, of looking into his eyes and seeing yourself, your spouse, a stranger, and God all swirling together in the depths of his pupils and the vibrancy of his irises, I can understand how you might think that parenthood is comparable to taking the dog for a hike and remembering to bring the collapsible water bowl in case it gets thirsty. So I am only mildly embarrassed over all of this "fur baby" nonsense.

I am, however, mortified to have discovered that a similar substitution is taking place with houseplants. That fauna could replace offspring is an understandable if misguided notion; that flora could do it baffles the mind and offends the heart.

And yet I now come across articles like "5 Psychological Benefits of Having Houseplants," published on Bustle.com on July 26, 2018, in which author Emma McGowan describes giving her large monstera plant a shower, talking to it,

and wondering over the plant's growth. She writes:

For me, the main psychological benefit of having plants is having something to care for. I like keeping an eye on their new growth; turning them so they face the sun; making sure they get enough (and not too much) water. I like fussing over them and looking at them and knowing that my love and care keeps them healthy and strong.

The article also quotes "plant stylist" Hilton Carter. He says:

For me, what I love about having plants are [*sic*] how much life they can bring into your home. They create so much warmth and euphoria, it makes you never want to leave. I also love watching them grow and change overtime [*sic*]. Seeing a plant you've

successfully kept alive grow from a young plant to full grown adulthood is exciting.

In particular, McGowan's phrase "fussing over them" caught my attention, bringing to mind images of a mother tucking a stray hair into her daughter's braid or straightening her son's tie.

Fighting for Space

I had stumbled across McGowan's article while on a hunt to find out if the twenty or so houseplants I keep had any proven psychological or emotional benefits for our young children. As my plant collection has grown, I find myself hunting for reasons to justify the space they take up in our modest home. But because my husband and I want more children, more *human* life in our house, the fact is, if eventually the plants will need to find another home, they will.

But that is not the mindset of many in my generation. No, if children get to come into the



picture at all, they must squeeze in at the last moment, fighting for standing space next to education, careers, pets, and—God help us—houseplants.

I am ashamed to belong to a generation that can be so easily satisfied, happily delaying parenthood, and settling instead for propagating by cuttings and substituting foliage for flesh.

One can only hope this is as bad as it gets, but I fear pet rocks may be making a resurgence soon. ☹

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Troubled Girls

A review of Abigail Shrier's *Irreversible Damage*

by Nicole M. King

Surely Americans today would be accepting of a teenage girl who preferred baseball to shopping, pants to dresses, or short hair to long, curled locks. Alas, says Abigail Shrier, author of *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* (Regnery, 2020), not so. Instead, girls who don't feel "girly" enough are in distress, and turning to online forums to diagnose what's wrong with them. Their diagnosis should scare everybody.

Shrier begins her book by highlighting the sheer magnitude of the crisis. Teens today report greater loneliness than any generation on record, suffer higher rates of mental-health and mood disorders, and also tend to be in therapy more. In short, "adolescent girls today are in a lot of pain," writes Shrier.

This pain is exacerbated—nay, largely caused—by their smart phones. Adolescence is rough, but if a girl faces it head-on, she will emerge a mature, adult woman, ready to face the world. But when girls have to compete in a 24/7 popularity contest, and experience the typical cruelty of adolescence on a ten-fold scale, they fold.

And when their parents have been rushing to get them anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication ever since they lost a kitten in childhood (this is a real example from the book), girls come to believe that every twinge of discomfort, social or physical, demands a pharmaceutical or therapeutic intervention. The solution for many of these girls who feel uncomfortable in their bodies is to label themselves "transgender."

Historically, "gender dysphoria" has affected only 0.01 percent of the population, mostly male. In

the past decade, however, that has shifted. A "transgender epidemic" has exploded, almost exclusively among teenage girls—the same population that in past decades submitted to anorexia, bulimia, or other self-harm.

What Shrier discusses is so-called Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria, a term coined in 2018 by Lisa Littman to describe a group of teenagers (largely female) who have shown no prior sign of gender dysphoria but do have a history of mental health issues, who have peer groups in which one or more friends identify as "trans," and who experience a large uptick in social media consumption, and then suddenly announce a new "transgender" identity. But after "coming out" as trans, the majority of these teens actually get worse, not better.

The medical establishment is complicit in the mania, being all too happy to hand out hormone

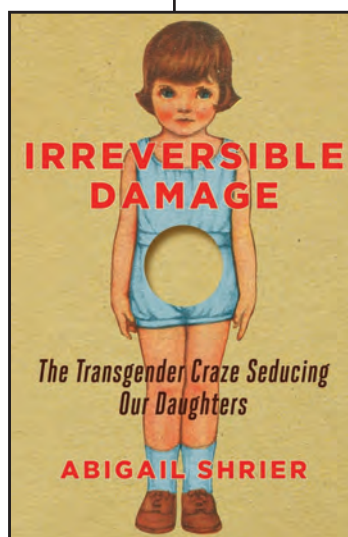
blockers and testosterone, or even to perform mutilating surgery—all without so much as a therapist's note. Not that a therapist's note would matter much; the current in-vogue technique is "affirmative therapy," or blindly upholding the disturbed girl's new identity.

In the closing chapter, Shrier highlights how parents can truly help their daughters, by, among other things, refusing to buy their teens a smart phone and by remembering who is in authority. But Shrier's best advice—and perhaps some of the best writing on the topic of modern womanhood—is her admonition to "stop pathologizing girlhood." Being a woman is a wonderful thing, and part of embracing womanhood is enjoying the differences in biology and preferences. Men tend to do

better in STEM; women prefer literature. So the culture insists that instead of elevating literature, every last girl must learn how to code. "But behind this insistence," Shrier argues, "lies the idea that women's preferences are inferior." Similarly, she insists that women must stop allowing the culture

to denigrate motherhood.

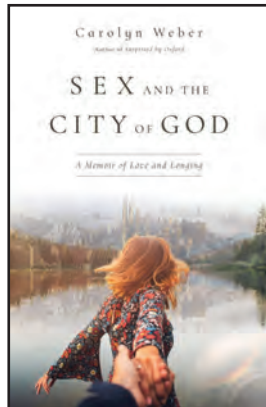
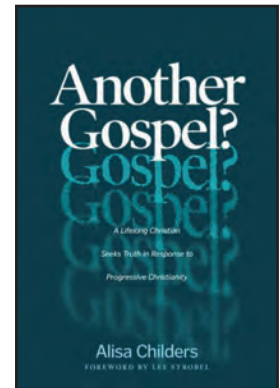
In short, teen girls need parents who will protect them, but also a culture that will learn to embrace the true, biologically rooted differences between the sexes instead of waving them away while hypocritically demanding that women conform to men's realities. And girls who like baseball and short hair need to be allowed to do so without being made to feel that those preferences make them any less feminine. ☺



Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity

by Alisa Childers

Alisa Childers fully trusted the Bible as the inspired Word of God until a progressive pastor challenged her to explain *why*. Here she recounts her ensuing quest for truth. In doing so, she unmaskes the whole progressive Christianity package as a shameless counterfeit that has recast biblical concepts according to a more ego-stroking narrative and rendered a quasi-political Jesus whose death was about speaking truth to power, rather than atoning for human sin.



Sex and the City of God: A Memoir of Love and Longing

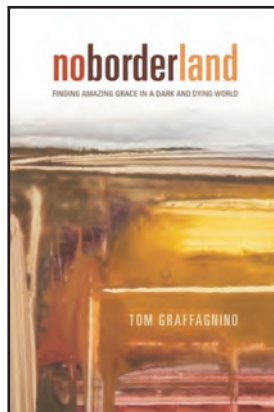
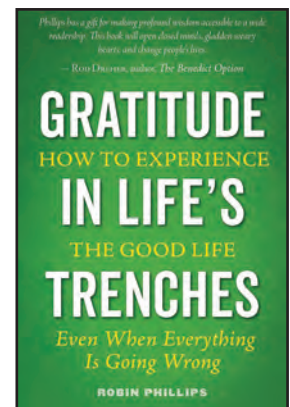
by Carolyn Weber

Carolyn Weber entered college as an angry feminist from a broken home. After meeting Jesus at Oxford, she still didn't care to marry until, eventually, love won out. In this lyrical memoir, penned some twenty years of marriage and four children later, she reflects on the meaning of life, love, and other beautiful (though complicated) mysteries that beset searching souls in a culture offering everything but God to satisfy the heart's desires.

Gratitude in Life's Trenches: How to Experience the Good Life Even When Everything Is Going Wrong

by Robin Phillips

When Robin Phillips's carefully laid plans for life began to unravel, he turned to some of the saints of Christianity past, where he found a richer, deeper theology of suffering and of what constitutes the "good life." Here he combines ancient wisdom with current psychological research and suggested practical disciplines to assemble a helpful guide to more meaningful, joyful living. Questions for reflection also make this an excellent resource for group study.



No Border Land: Finding Amazing Grace in a Dark and Dying World

by Tom Graffagnino

Graffagnino has a unique gift for taking a light touch to a heavy subject without trivializing it. Chapters such as "Ode to Mr. Nye Guy," "Therapeutic Puppy Dogma," and "Multiverses to the Rescue" skewer the pompous and vacuous with Dr. Seuss-like finesse, while "He's Philosophy's Conundrum" and "Only Jesus Knew the Score" point the humble and thirsty to the water of life. Consider putting this one on your Christmas gift-giving list.

Too Good to Be False: How Jesus' Incomparable Character Reveals His Reality

by Tom Gilson

In this startlingly delightful read, Gilson makes a case for the deity of Jesus based on his unmatched *character*. No one else in human history talked or conducted himself like Jesus of Nazareth: right actions, right affections, perfect brilliance; possessing superhuman powers yet never once using them for selfish ends—*who would've made these things up?* Gilson also addresses, and handily dispenses with, common skeptics' challenges to round out an easy-to-read, hard-to-refute case for the truth of Christianity.





Athlete A

In 2016, *Indianapolis Star* investigative reporters broke a story about USA Gymnastics (USAG) covering up for coaches accused of sexually abusing gymnasts. Rachael Denhollander then came forward with charges of abuse by star USAG team doctor Larry Nassar, and the trickle of accusations soon turned into a flood. *Athlete A* takes a hard look at USAG institutional indifference to the well-being of its “stars” and should serve as a true-crime cautionary tale for parents of gifted children of all stripes.

Miss Virginia

Based on the story of Virginia Walden Ford, a black single mother in Washington, D.C., whose teenage son was languishing in a failing school, this feature film details her tireless efforts in the early 2000s to

secure vouchers and school choice for D.C. youth. Without getting partisan, the narrative shows how corrupt politicians and (*again!*) institutional indifference can harm children, but also how one persistent and righteously motivated adult can generate positive change.



Divided Hearts of America

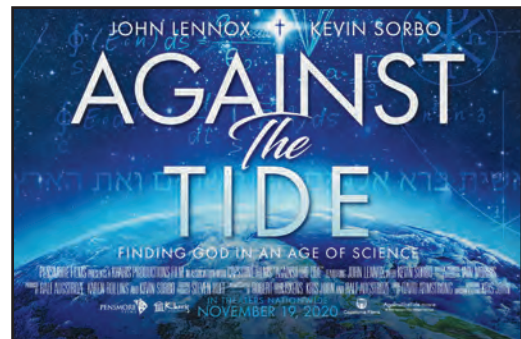
Through more than thirty interviews with figures spanning the ideological spectrum, retired NFL tight end Benjamin Watson looks at abortion in America—its history, laws, and legal philosophy. He raises questions about abortion as an instrument of institutionalized racism and where we may be headed as a nation, given growing state-by-state Balkanization. It's an outstanding exposition, especially when he presses abortion supporters to articulate their radical positions.



Against the Tide: Finding God in an Age of Science

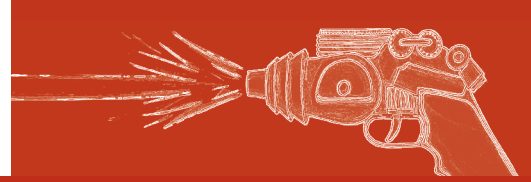
Actor Kevin Sorbo became fascinated with Oxford mathematician John Lennox after learning that the plot of *God's Not Dead*, the 2014 film in which he starred, turned on a Lennox quote. So he sought out Lennox to mine his brain. Beginning at Oxford and wrapping up in Israel, the two explore formative seasons in Lennox's life, his

atheistic opponents' pseudo-scientific (but vacuous) rhetoric, and Lennox's full-orbed evidential and rational case for Christianity. Do not miss this film. Better yet, buy it and host a screening.



Healing from Hate: Battle for the Soul of a Nation

The nonprofit Life After Hate was founded in 2011 by six former neo-Nazi white supremacists who wanted to help others leave hate groups. In this powerful though flawed documentary, we meet several of them and see them in action. It is powerfully enlightening when the men talk about the formative dynamics that led them to do evil and the redemptive practices that fostered recovery. It comes up short, unfortunately, where it turns to politics as both the cause and solution to evil.



A “Coconut” Tale

Since When Is a Success Story a “White” Thing?

by Emily Morales

When my husband Blas and I started dating in high school, I remember telling a Hispanic friend of my new-found affection for my then-boyfriend, about whom he opined, “He’s a coconut.” Upon my asking for clarification as to this never-heard-before term, the friend quipped, “You know; brown on the outside, but white on the inside.” I drew Blas’s ire when I recounted the conversation to him.

My husband was the oldest son of a hard-working migrant worker. Having grown up in poverty and having worked the fields as young as eight, Blas decided by the time he reached junior high school that he would strive for economic success, which meant very hard work, and ultimately, a college education. Driven by ambition, he folded papers at 5:00 a.m. most mornings for a paper route at the age of eleven, stocked grocery shelves at thirteen, flipped burgers at fifteen, and continued being employed through high school while maintaining good grades, playing sports, and participating in the marching band. While in college, he often held several jobs simultaneously, then graduated with honors, and eventually earned an MBA. Blas is an American success story.

Considering Blas’s ambition and the simultaneous embrace of his Hispanic culture, I found it curious that my high-school friend

would indict him as a “coconut.” After our marriage, I discussed with a Hispanic family member the plans I had for our young sons’ education. To my surprise the family member asked, “Are you going to raise them white, or will they even know they have a Mexican heritage?” I asked, “What comprises a Mexican heritage, exactly?” Silently I wondered, “Why is planning for my sons’ success, which would include college, necessarily a white thing?” Many people’s opinion of how to be a successful minority is that one must “sell out” his own culture and embrace “whiteness” in whatever form that might take.

Sadly, in the era of raging multiculturalism, pejorative labels like “coconut” are not limited to Hispanic communities but find a very comfortable home among black Americans as well. Countless times we have witnessed remarkable black men and women being branded as “Uncle Toms” or

“Oreos” rather than celebrated. What is there not to appreciate about such exemplars, who, having pulled themselves up from the dregs of poverty through dogged determination and brilliance, went on to achieve objective greatness? But instead, people such as Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, economist Thomas Sowell, neurosurgeon Ben Carson, and businessman Herman Cain are branded as “sell-outs” to the dominant “white” culture. Attorney and documentary filmmaker Larry Elder addresses the impact of these poisonous designations and the dogma driving them in his recently released movie *Uncle Tom*.

The pressure on minorities to embrace elements of their culture that are not conducive to economic or familial success is exacerbated by these pejoratives. Because the religion of multiculturalism preaches that all cultures are equally valid, these harmful elements are consequently sacrosanct against any efforts to change them. Thomas Sowell, in his book *Intellectuals and Society* (2010), tells us that these dogmas “simply complete the sealing off of a vision from facts—and sealing off many people in lagging groups from the advances available from other cultures around them, leaving nothing but an agenda of resentment-building. . . .”

Objectively, not all cultures are equal in their ability to foster familial or economic success. In the United States, economic success is formulaic: acquire a skill set through training, work experience, or a valued college education, save, and invest. This formula is not a “white” cultural construct, but rather an American one, and one that should be embraced by all who seek economic freedom. ☉

—This article has been adapted from a Salvo blog (salvomag.com/posts) posted on July 8, 2020.

To end systemic racism, whites must be removed.



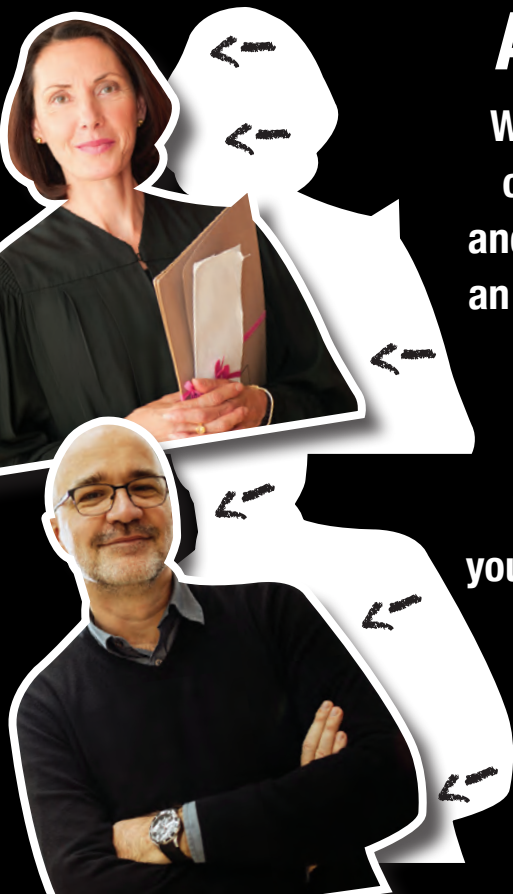
The logic is simple.

A. Racists, by definition, want to hold back and harm non-whites.

B. Critical Race Theory has proved that all white people are racist.

C. Whites must step down or be removed in order to achieve true social justice.

OPERATION WHITE OUT



ATTENTION WHITES

White teachers, actors, newscasters, columnists, politicians, lawmakers, and judges who seek social justice and an end to our nation's systemic racism: We've heard you loud and clear.

You're the problem

Therefore you need to resign from your privileged positions of influence—or you will be forcibly removed.

This has been a message from:
CPFPOC
COLORLESS PEOPLE FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR



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