

SCIENCE | SEX | SOCIETY

SALVO

Issue 72 Spring 2025 — Your Quarterly Reality Check

VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE

THE BRAIN BINARY

*Are male and female brains really that different?
Does it matter? Why should anybody care?*

BY LEONARD SAX

PLUS:

Remembering "Transgender Patient Zero" BY BRUCE WOODALL

Abortion After Roe by Bryan Just

Where Are All the Aliens? by John D. Martin

Can Cultural Christianity Save Christian Culture? by Denyse O'Leary

Guarding Childhood Through Digital Resistance by Joshua Pauling

Songs & Sexual Asymmetry by Bobby Neal Winters

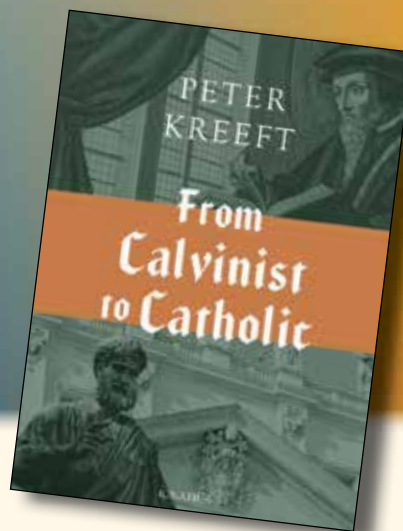
Terrell Clemmons, Annie Crawford, Anthony Esolen, Keith Hess, Nicole M. King,

Drew S. C. Mery, Emily Morales, Bob Perry, Rick Reed,

Hugh Ross, Richard W. Stevens, Jonathan Witt



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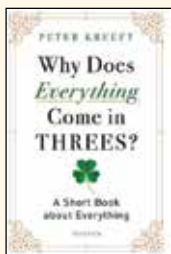
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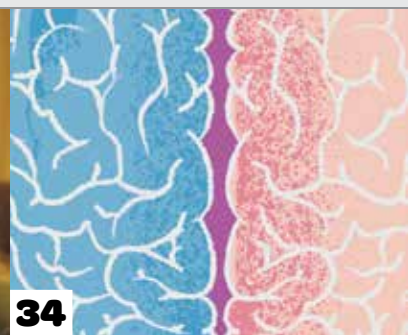
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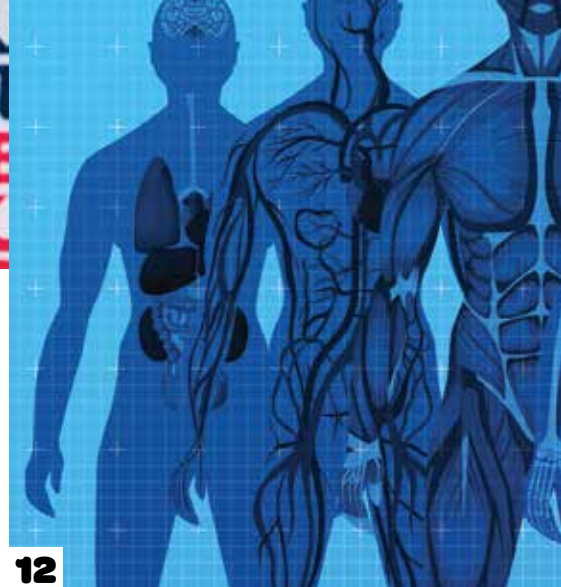
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salvo n. (säl'vō)

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

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An essay on Intelligent Design from *Salvo* #47 in feature
by Hugh Ross

**Hazy Early Earth Affirms the Bible's
Account of Creation**



Life Rafts

Lifesaving Truth Can Come in Small Packages

by Terrell Clemmons

Last November, a group of Yale undergrads published an op-ed provocatively titled, “We’re Jealous of Our Conservative Peers.” Compared to the supermajority of campus support for Harris-Walz (82 percent of students, 98 percent of faculty), they noted that “conservatives are confined to a glum minority. We hear often about how they have it tough, facing ostracization, mockery, and pressure to conform.”

And yet, “we envy them.” They explained:

While liberal students are cushioned by a sense of majority, conservatives must grapple constantly with difficult questions. They are forced to interrogate their own beliefs in ways their liberal peers need not. It’s challenging, but it cultivates resilience, critical reflection, and the capacity to engage in community despite serious disagreement.

While liberal students can get away with parroting mindless mantras,

Our conservative peers are not afforded the same argumentative safety net.... they must frame their contentions precisely and gracefully. This pressure to defend unpopular ideas is a catalyst for intellectual growth.

I found these thoughts intriguing for two reasons. First, the authors express respect for their minority peers, commending their courage and intellectual rigor. And second, their commendations capture well what *Salvo* aims to equip readers to do—grapple with difficult questions, interrogate truth claims, and defend unpopular ideas.

Reason

We humans are both rational and social creatures. Our minds are equipped to seek truth but our relational needs fuel desires to belong. Mark Perez, coauthor of *Clear Thinking in a Messy World*, describes what he calls “a system of domination” that emerges when individuals holding a minority view concede to the group rather than contend for their position. This is what produces groupthink, and we are all susceptible to it.

The antidote to groupthink has two components. The first is *clear thinking* grounded in

accurate information. In this issue we bring you two feature articles arguing against what may be the most irrational wave of groupthink ever to sweep Western civilization: transgenerism. In “Transgender Patient Zero” (p. 28), Bruce Woodall tells the story of a medical experiment gone terribly awry. The harm inflicted on the patients is egregious in itself, but the fact that this cautionary tale is not taught to present-day medical students constitutes academic dereliction of duty. And in “The Brain Binary” (p. 34), Leonard Sax lays out the results of AI analyses showing innate differences in male and female brains—differences that are detectable even in utero.

Courage

The second component is *courage*. Until about five minutes ago, historically speaking, everyone knew that human beings came in two varieties, male and female. Most still know that, but too few are taking a stand athwart the sexual revolutionaries. We bring you someone who *is*. Seth Gruber (p. 58) explains how sexual revolutionaries have instituted practices that trace back to ancient idol worship and child sacrifice, and like the prophets of old, he calls on the people of God to take up courage and stop conforming to the culture.

Living It Out

I received a letter recently from a *Salvo* subscriber expressing gratitude for our “economy of words that still contain a world of insight. Each article,” he wrote, “is a bit like an inflatable raft. Small package ... until you pull the cord.”

What an apropos analogy! Inflatable rafts save lives. So do clear thinking and courage. We hope you find in the following pages clear-thinking truth for the cultural nonconformist. And may the courage with which you live it out inspire respect among our liberal peers. ☺

Natural Marriage for the Win

O*bergefell v. Hodges*, decided by a slim 5–4 majority in 2015, mandated recognition of same-sex marriage in all 50 states, effectively nullifying legitimately passed state laws and constitutional amendments. In its wake, MassResistance drafted text for state legislatures to use in calling for marriage law to be returned to the states. In January, the first such resolution was introduced in Idaho by State Representative Heather Scott. Opponents reacted with the predictable vitriol and emotion-laden appeals, but the resolution frames the issue as a matter of law, stating, “Since court rulings are not laws and only legislatures elected by the people may pass laws, *Obergefell* is an illegitimate overreach.” Scott, too, sees it that way: “If we

start down this road where the federal government or the judiciary decides that they’re going to create rights for us, then they can take rights away.” MassResistance expects similar resolutions to be filed in eight more states and reports that legislators in another 12 are considering it.

Resolutions are not law, but they do communicate resolve and prompt further discussion on important legal matters. *Roe v. Wade* held sway for nearly 50 years, but Ryan Burge reports that only seven years after *Obergefell*, the dramatic surge of support for same-sex marriage “came to a screeching halt [and] hit a brick wall at about 65%” in 2021–2022. Few matters are more important to the stability of a nation than its marriages. These trends bring opportunities for people of conscience to make the case for

natural marriage as the optimal model for the well-being of children. Regardless of how the legal maneuverings proceed, shoring up natural marriage can only benefit children and could even help stabilize the nation. •



Sources: <https://www.massresistance.org/docs/gen5/25a/ID-Rep-files-Obergefell-resolution/index.html>; <https://www.graphs-aboutreligion.com/p/a-significant-number-of-christians>

Just Saying No

In 2020, Oregon became the first state in the U.S. to legalize psilocybin for “therapeutic” use, but since the measure legalizing the substance allowed cities and counties to opt

out, laws across the state varied by municipality. Only two years later, a majority of counties and more than 100 cities voted to ban it, either temporarily or permanently. After another two years, 12 of those, including some coastal towns and Portland suburbs, voted to permanently

prohibit its use. Oregon is not the only deep-blue, liberal state in which voters rejected legitimizing psychedelics. In 2024, Massachusetts voters rejected a ballot issue to legalize growing and using plant-based psychedelics, including psilocybin, mescaline, dimethyltryptamine (DMT), and ibogaine.

In related post-election news, Elton John, certainly not one to be dismissed as a conservative killjoy, called the legalization of marijuana in America and Canada “one of the greatest mistakes of all time.” The widely beloved musician didn’t mince words. “It leads to other drugs. And when you’re stoned—and I’ve been stoned—you don’t think normally.... You make terrible decisions on drugs ... I maintain that it’s addictive.” He got clean in 1990 and has been sober ever since. •



Sources: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/us/oregon-cities-move-to-ban-psychedelic-mushroom-compound-4-years-after-legalization-5764448>; <https://apnews.com/article/massachusetts-ballot-issues-election-vote-a847f1d83a4d7962b6c1c6815a50e2f3>; <https://nypost.com/2024/12/13/entertainment/elton-john-calls-marijuana-legalization-one-of-the-greatest-mistakes-of-all-time-after-addiction-struggles/>

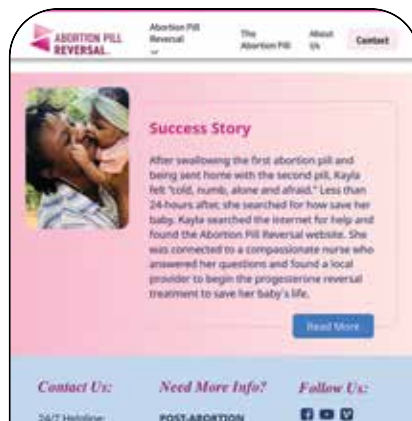
Abortion U-Turns Allowed

Chemical abortion involves two pills: mifepristone blocks progesterone (without progesterone to sustain the pregnancy, the child soon dies), and misoprostol, taken one to two days later, causes uterine contractions to expel the deceased child. Abortion Pill Reversal (APR) involves progesterone supplementation to counteract the effect of mifepristone when a mother changes her mind after having taken the first pill but

not the second. A peer-reviewed study published in 2018

found that APR showed a 64–68 percent success rate in saving the unborn child when taken within 72 hours with no increased risk of birth defects in the surviving children. Despite lawsuits and massive obfuscation and misinformation campaigns, mothers do change their minds, and more than 6,000 children are alive today because of APR. The Abortion Pill Rescue Network (AbortionPillReversal.com) operates a 24/7 referral hotline for

mothers seeking a second chance to choose life for their child. •



Sources: <https://lozierinstitute.org/abortion-pill-reversal-a-record-of-safety-and-efficacy/>; <https://pregnancyhelpnews.com/abortion-pill-reversal-has-now-saved-more-than-6-000-lives-despite-pro-abortion-pushback>

The Identity Project

Beginning in 1979, Pope John Paul II delivered a series of sermons, which Catholic author Christopher West subsequently systematized under the rubric "Theology of the Body." The central theme is that our physical bodies are not incidental accessories to do with as we will but are inextricably central to our human existence.

Now the Colson Center has launched an online platform to

make these theologically rich teachings accessible in bite-sized nuggets. The Identity Project (IdentityProject.tv) offers more than 200 videos on identity, sexuality, marriage, parenting, pornography, what it means to be created male and female, and more. Some explain a theological tenet, such as "The Body Is Destined for Glory." Others address falsehoods our culture has

accepted, for example, the lie that "Sex, Marriage, and Babies are Separable." Many simply equip viewers with information, such as "How Public Schools Have Spread Gender Ideology." And still others address thorny questions confronting us, like "Should We Practice 'Pronoun Hospitality'?" Most are under 15 minutes, and thanks to the generosity of a donor, all are available for free. •



Source: <https://breakpoint.org/45-years-of-theology-of-the-body/>

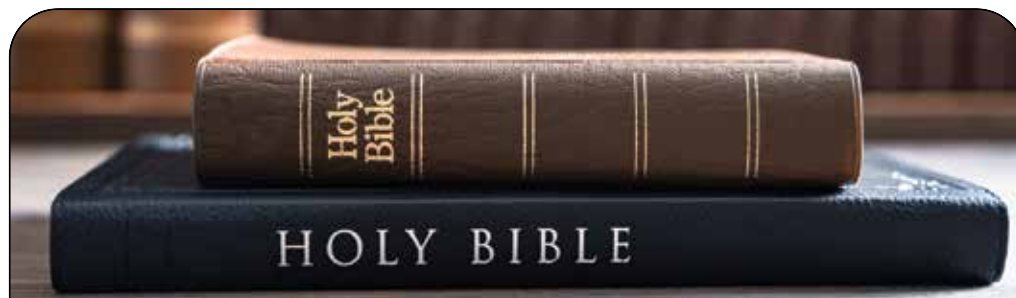
Stacks of Bibles

In 2024, Pew Research found that nearly three in ten Americans described themselves as atheist,

agnostic, or "nothing in particular." Also in 2024, Fortune.com and the *Wall Street Journal* reported a sharp rise in Bibles purchased, including "a surge of interest from Generation Z and younger Americans." The *WSJ*

attributed the 22 percent rise in 2024 sales to conflicts abroad and uncertainty over the election. "Booksellers say the demand is coming both from spiritually curious people and people who already own one or

more and are looking to expand their collection," reports *Yahoo Finance*, adding that "sales are on the rise not only at Christian stores, but at mainstream retailers, including Amazon." •



Sources: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/bible-sales-soar-anxieties-spike-162544117.html>; <https://www.wsj.com/business/media/sales-of-bibles-are-booming-fueled-by-first-time-buyers-and-new-versions-d402460e>

Exclusion Zones

U.K. laws are increasingly criminalizing pro-life expression. In 2022, Birmingham, England, authorities banned “any act of approval or disapproval or attempted acts of approval or disapproval, with respect to issues related to abortion services, by any means” within a designated censorship zone. Here are a few subsequent incidents. In 2023, police instructed a man silently praying outside a clinic to “Kindly move elsewhere outside the exclusion zone where you’ve got your human rights.” Future infractions, he was warned, would result in a fine. An onlooker recording the exchange was similarly warned. A priest was charged with two counts of silent prayer and accused of “protesting and engaging in an act that

is intimidating to service users.” One man was even asked, “What is the nature of your prayer?” Others have been charged for breaching a censorship zone, for holding a “Here to talk, if you want” sign, or for having an “Unborn Lives Matter” bumper sticker on a car.

In 2024, the U.K.’s “Safe Access” law went further by criminalizing any act within 200 meters of a clinic that could “influence” another’s decision to access, provide, or facilitate an abortion. Ten days after it went into effect, some Scotland residents received a “Dear Resident” letter informing them

that “activities in a private place (such as a house) within the area could be an offence if they can be seen or heard within the Zone and are done intentionally or recklessly.” The letter included instructions for “report[ing] a group or an individual that you think is breaking the law,” thus hinting at snitch provisions to come if Brits don’t put a check on the totalitarian creep. •



Sources: <https://www.thefp.com/p/abortion-buffer-zones-united-kingdom-free-speech-arrested-for-praying-in-her-head>; <https://catholicherald.co.uk/west-midlands-policewoman-demands-to-know-if-catholic-laywoman-is-praying-for-the-unborn-in-third-thoughtcrime-probe/>

Queer Review

What has homosexuality to do with climate science? In a hilarious essay, Steven Tucker skewers purported think tanks and activist groups knitting together the two left-leaning bailiwicks with global communism.

For example, in “Queering Climate Justice,” the International Institute for Environment and Development asserts that the root causes of climate injustice are “structural power imbalances caused by colonialism and capitalism” and proposes queer thinking as a fresh approach to “climate justice.” Meanwhile, Friends of the Earth author Lewis

Carr writes that “we truly need a queer environmental movement” because queers know how to influence change and queer thinking challenges environmental injustice. And the Queering Climate Club asks, “What if climate action was rooted in queer action?” and offers itself as “a sandbox to collectively imagine” how to dismantle capitalism and patriarchy for the planet.

Yes, sandbox thinking is an apt description for all this drivel. “In a rational world,” writes Tucker, “we would seek to put the claim that queerness can solve climate-change through a process of peer-review, not queer-review, but when it comes to the topic of homosexuality, the entire West is increasingly becoming no longer rational but outright deranged.” •



Sources: https://www.mercatornet.com/can_going_gay_really_help_solve_climate_change; <https://www.iied.org/queering-climate-justice-what-climate-justice-can-learn-queer-groups>; <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/system-change/six-reasons-why-im-calling-queer-climate-movement>; <https://www.queeringclimate.club/about-3>

Your DNA on Drugs

A 2024 study published in *Molecular Psychiatry* suggests that using high-potency cannabis affects DNA methylation in a sequence of genes associated with mitochondrial (metabolic) and immune function. Methylation does

not alter the DNA itself but does “turn on or off” the expression of select genes. The authors also suggested that recent studies exploring methylation changes involved in lifetime cannabis use have revealed “alterations in genes involved in brain development, synaptic function, and mood disorders.” •



Sources: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/health/study-identifies-link-between-high-potency-cannabis-use-and-dna-changes-psychosis-5749169>; <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41380-024-02689-0>

Minding Children's Minds

“Mindfulness” encompasses a variety of yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises often put forth as relaxation techniques. It is in vogue across the U.S., but recent studies suggest there are adverse effects not receiving due attention. The two most common are anxiety and depression, but researchers also identified anomalies associated with psychosis, agitation, delusion,

dissociation, depersonalization, and fear/terror. In a 2022 study of 953 people, more than 10 percent reported effects having “a significant negative impact on their everyday life” for at least a month. In some cases the effects led to long-lasting symptoms. Most concerning, given

that the CDC has endorsed these practices in schools, are the findings of a study of 8,000 children, which found that “mindfulness failed to improve the mental wellbeing of children compared to a control group, and may even have had detrimental effects on those who were at risk of mental health problems.” •



Sources: <https://www.gpb.org/news/2024/08/05/more-us-schools-are-taking-breaks-for-meditation-teachers-say-it-helps-students>; <https://www.sciencealert.com/meditation-and-mindfulness-have-a-dark-side-we-dont-talk-about>

Aborting Alone

As U.K. lawmakers regulate speech about abortion, U.S. bureaucracies are *deregulating* abortion by implementing changes that both expand access

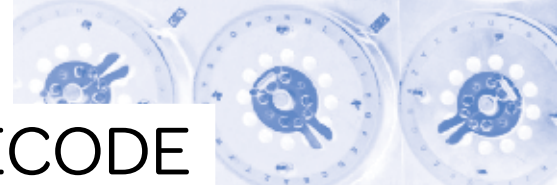
and reduce healthcare-professional involvement. The FDA has removed several abortion pill regulations and now allows the pills to be delivered by mail. Further, while it has approved them for use up to 10 weeks gestation, a 2024 Operation Rescue survey indicates that some online suppliers dispense them as late as 13 weeks. Worse, when there is no clinician involvement, gestation determination reduces to guesswork, and there is little to dissuade use of the pills at any point in pregnancy, placing women at risk of complications such as

incomplete abortion, hemorrhage, and sepsis, all of which can be fatal. In some states, laws have been loosened to the extent that a surgical abortion does not even require a doctor.

“It’s really a brave new world when you get away from the original talking point which is, ‘I want this to be between a woman and her doctor,’” said Shawn Carney, president of 40 Days for Life. “The abortionist isn’t her doctor. It’s usually not even an OB-GYN, and now it’s getting more rare than ever to actually see a doctor for an abortion.” And we are to believe these developments serve women’s health. •



Sources: <https://www.dailysignal.com/2024/11/21/pro-life-leader-three-ways-democrats-are-turning-abortion-sacrament/>; https://www.operationrescue.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024-Survey-Report_FINAL_Online-Version.pdf



UNESCO November, 2023

War over Peace

by Rick Reed

PEACE: freedom from civil or inner disturbance

Latin's *pax*, meaning "tranquility or absence of war" gave *peace* to the English language. In the 11th century, *pais* (Old French) meant "peace, reconciliation, silence, permission." In Anglo-French, *pes* identified both "an agreement" and "the absence of war." In hypothetical prehistoric Proto-Indo-European, the base **pag-* meant "to fasten," suggesting connection to a pact as something to which previously warring parties attached some token signifying an agreement to cease hostilities—perhaps something like the seals attached to royal treaties ending a war.

Around the turn of the 11th century, a spiritual sense was added to the political meaning, as in "peace of the heart, soul, or conscience." John Milton uses that sense in his verse drama *Samson Agonistes* (1671), which depicts the rash biblical figure facing his end and finding "internal peace." Despite foolishly revealing the secret of his hair, Samson comes to see his situation as part of God's plan and resolves himself to his condition, achieving peace of mind, if not peace with his enemies, the Philistines.

Political Peace

Article 1 of the United Nations Charter (1945) states the signatories' desire to "maintain international peace and security." The UN has sought to achieve this goal on more than 70 missions

executed since 1948, all carried out to preserve political peace. In 1945, the UN chartered the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Its purpose is "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture." On the surface, these words also seem to indicate an intention to encourage political peace. However, UNESCO now seems to be setting the stage for an Orwellian change.

In 2024, UNESCO published a resolution entitled "Peace Education in the 21st Century," which defines peace as "not just the absence of war and direct violence ('negative peace') but also as involving resolution of "the underlying causes of conflict that can lead to violence and war

('positive peace')." UNESCO goes on to define what it calls "un-conventional" threats to peace. These include "climate change, large scale human migration, social injustice, the scarcity of resources (food, water, biodiversity, oil, gas, etc.) and pandemics."¹ UNESCO's new mission apparently seeks to lessen violence, injustice, and inequality by embracing the driving ideologies of the Left.

Political Indoctrination

This mission is to be accomplished by "peace education." Its curriculum teaches students to see climate change "on a par with nuclear proliferation," and its "peace" necessitates "factors that make society less violent, unjust, and unequal." Violence, too, undergoes a redefinition to include "hidden" and "indirect forms" implicit in "norms, customs, and laws."

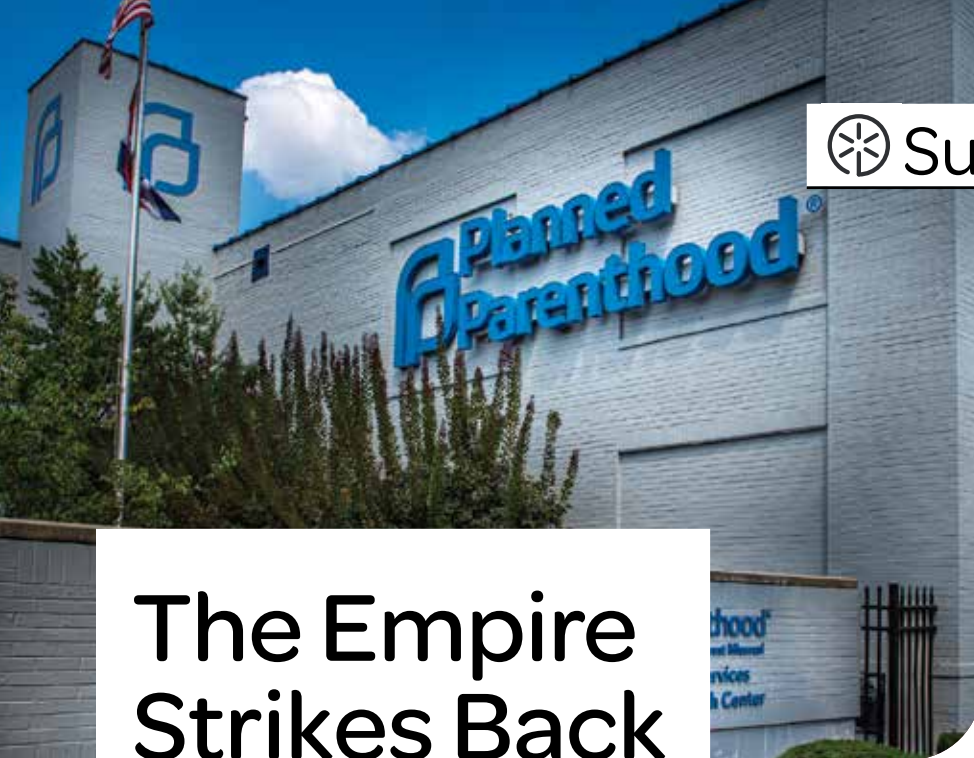
UNESCO's goal, then, is to engineer "global equity ... as a condition for peace"²—an aim as ambitious as that of George Orwell's world government in 1984.

UNESCO's scheme presumes the efficacy of global elites to preserve political peace by reshaping the world. Individual rights play no role, and spiritual peace, such as that found by Samson through confession and repentance, is not a part of it. As in 1984, UNESCO seeks to control the world by first controlling words.

Peace treaties are agreements between parties seeking to live in harmony rather than conflict, and true peace is a spiritual virtue nurtured by freedom, not by indoctrination. Throughout history, the moral structure of most states has been that of their dominant religion. Under the guise of seeking peace, UNESCO seeks to impose its own secular moral structure on sovereign nations. This is not a recipe for peace but for conflict. ☹

Notes

1. Lisa Logan, "UN Redefines 'Peace' To Revolutionize Classrooms With More Critical Theory," *The Federalist* (Nov. 20, 2024).
2. Ibid.



The Empire Strikes Back

Planned Parenthood Levels Up Its Sexualization of Children

by Emily Morales

Founded by Margaret Sanger in 1921 as the American Birth Control League, Planned Parenthood is the largest provider of abortions in the U.S. Despite the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the nonprofit plows on undaunted, operating nearly 600 “health centers” across the U.S. and reporting more than nine million “services” rendered in its 2024 annual report. For pregnant “persons” living in states with abortion restrictions, it aims to “welcome patients from down the street [and] from two, or three, or five states over” in order to “educate,” “hold hands,” and “find the referrals, the resources, the energy, the extra minute a patient needs.”

Reason for Surveillance

Planned Parenthood is also the nation’s largest provider of sex education, reporting that it reaches 1.2 million people a year through education and outreach. It helps teachers level up their classroom experiences with such resources as digital games, quizzes, interactive worksheets, and short (around seven-minute) videos on “How Do You Know if Someone Wants to Have Sex with You?,” “How to Talk About Having Safer Sex,” and “How to Tell Someone You Have an STD.” One seven-page lesson

plan on “consent” includes a series of borderline pornographic videos (featuring same-sex and opposite-sex couples) and concludes with role-playing exercises for students to practice.

The “Sex Ed To-Go for Teachers” platform offers what it calls “bite-sized professional development courses” in English and Spanish, all of which are “completely free for teachers and students.” While ostensibly “for teachers,” any user providing an email address can enroll in courses with longer videos (20–45 minutes) which will educate

them on such subjects as “How to Use a Condom,” “How Abortion Works,” or “Connect & Respect: Relationship Skills for Tweens.” The narrative in all courses affirms abortion as a “safe” medical procedure and a pregnant “person’s” right, which should be unequivocally destigmatized.

Most Recent Offense

The course “Barriers to Abortion Care” (22 lessons plus a 30-minute video) intends to expand abortion “care” by circumventing barriers that are (1) legal, (2) logistic, and (3) personal. Where there are *legal* restrictions, minors are taught how to file for a judicial bypass, i.e., how to circumvent parental involvement laws, thereby placing autonomy in the hands of the minor. Where there are *logistical* barriers—travel, locating providers—users can access an interactive map that will steer them away from life-affirming pregnancy resource centers and into the waiting stirrups of an abortion provider. Finally, for those needing to overcome *personal* barriers, such as pesky stigmas held by family, culture, or religious affiliation, they are treated to videos and articles from previously pregnant persons, jubilant over their decision to abort (e.g., “Shout Your Abortion”).

Many of these educational initiatives, though ostensibly directed at “teachers,” are clearly aimed at minors. Through well-funded, slick instructional design, they not only promote heterosexual sex without consequences but also affirm a wide array of gender identities and sexually deviant behaviors. Not long ago, responsible parents and caregivers were cautious about allowing other adults to discuss sex with their children. But today, Planned Parenthood’s sex education goes far beyond straightforward, academic discussions of sex and brazenly introduces “comprehensive,” hypersexualized content to children. ☹



Marvel of Marvels

Your Body Is a Walking System of Systems

by Richard W. Stevens

What would it take to build a human body? That's the question addressed in *Your Designed Body* by Steve Laufmann (a systems engineer) and Howard Glicksman (a physician), wherein they present human physiology as seen through an engineer's eyes. *Your Designed Body (YDB)* summarizes for everyday readers the eleven major systems of the body, revealing how each one interacts with and depends upon the others and thus squarely challenging the notion that such complex physiology could arise by unguided processes.

The overarching takeaway point is this: the human body is a *system of systems*. The book describes each subsystem and includes additional chapters on the senses of sight and hearing, with not-too-technical explanations carefully crafted for the everyday reader. Human physiology is amazing in itself, but the extraordinary contribution of this book is its explanation of the *engineering* procedures needed to design, assemble, and integrate not only the individual subsystems but the whole body *as a system*.

Familiar Engineering Features

The authors explain how the individual cells and organs carry out their operations by comparing

them to man-made systems that are familiar to us. The body operates subsystems for the harvesting, transportation, and delivery of raw materials, which often must be coordinated using sophisticated supply chain management techniques. And manufacturing subsystems build products from specific materials according to precise structure, shape, and size specifications, with each having the required rigidity, range of motion, and strength for its intended purpose. Meanwhile, all the subsystems must together respond to changing factors and conditions, which requires continuous signaling and control mechanisms communicating among them.

Further, the individual subsystems, as well as the whole body,

must defend themselves against injury, invaders, and environmental toxins while also maintaining systems that clean and repair or replace elements as needed and dispose of waste products. Integrated within all these features are subsystems to coordinate and control each system's chemistry and energy. Ultimately, as the conscious mind thinks, computes, and makes decisions about human actions to be taken or avoided, the subconscious brain orchestrates the operations of all these systemic activities in real time. The mind and brain must interconnect with all subsystems such that each affects the other, much like the way we would design and build a sophisticated, computer-driven robot.

Design Considerations

YDB tracks the engineering view of the body and asks two key questions of every feature: (1) How does it work? and (2) What would it take to design and build it?

Assuming we could figure out how the system with its subsystems would work, we would need to design each specialized module, organize the modules physically and functionally, integrate each module into its larger subsystem, and coordinate all the operations using communication signals and feedback loops. Once that massive task is understood and mapped out, the implementation steps must follow, meaning all the components must be fabricated, assembled properly, and put into operation.

Such big, efficient words describe what would need to happen but obscure what engineers would actually have to *do*. One passage in *YDB*, for example, identifies some of the engineering feats needed to give life to cells:

To be alive, each cell must perform thousands of complicated tasks, with both functional and process coherence. [These include]:

containment, special-purpose gates, chemical sensing and controls (for many different chemicals), supply chain and transport, energy production and use, materials production, and information and information processing.

"Designing solutions to problems like this is hard," the authors lament, "especially given two additional requirements."

The first, orchestration, means the cell has to get all the right things done in the right order at the right times. The activities of millions of parts must be coordinated. To this end, the cell actively sequences activities, signals various parts about what to do, starts and stops various machinery, and monitors progress.... The second requirement is reproduction. As if being alive weren't difficult enough, some of the body's cells must be able to generate new cells. This imposes a daunting set of additional design problems. Each new cell needs a high-fidelity copy of the parent cell's internal information, all the molecular machines needed for life, and a copy of the cell's structure, including the organelles and microtubules. And it needs to know which internal operating system it should use. Once these are all in place, the cell walls must constrict to complete the enclosure for the new cell, without allowing the internals to spill out.

YDB not only overviews the engineering for any given cell, it also shows how the design of organs and subsystems must be specified and implemented through all the major body systems.

Cascading Design Challenges

Non-engineers may not realize that engineering problems are not of the "one and done" kind. As you proceed with design and implementation, there inevitably appears a *cascade of problems* to solve. The book describes a few examples. One is getting oxygen (O_2) to every cell so they all can stay alive and do their work. The body cannot store O_2 , but each of the body's 30 trillion cells continuously needs O_2 now. Here are the major tasks required to solve that problem:

1. The lung system must be triggered to breathe and take in air.
2. Blood must deliver the O_2 .
3. The heart must pump the blood.
4. Vessels must carry the blood.
5. Hemoglobin in the blood must carry the O_2 (water won't work).
6. Iron, which is toxic to the body, is required to build hemoglobin.
7. Systems (including intestines and liver) must regulate iron intake and storage.
8. Systems (including bone marrow and kidneys) must ensure enough red blood cells.
9. All systems must react dynamically to ever-changing demands for O_2 .
10. All cells must maintain continuous waste removal.

These challenges present enormous problems to be solved, even for whole teams of brilliant engineers. Yet the O_2 delivery problem must be *fully and nearly perfectly solved, with the solution in operation*, before any of the body's

subsystems can work—including all the components and subsystems needed to obtain and deliver the O_2 in the first place.

Accidental Engineering: A Contradiction in Terms

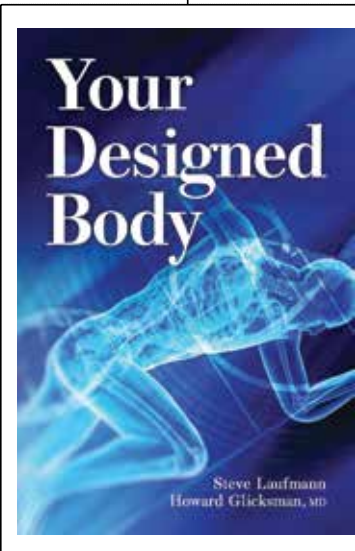
Concerning theories that living beings came to exist by unguided natural forces acting upon matter,

YDB's engineering-focused analysis shows such origins of biological systems to be beyond implausible:

As all working engineers know, it's hard to build a coherent interdependent system that actually functions.

Designing, building, and fine tuning such a system takes a combination of creative problem-solving and plain old hard work. For such a system to work, many parts need to come together at the same time. These parts must be specialized, organized to fit and work together, and the whole must be operated in strictly orchestrated processes. There's a reason companies employ thousands of engineers to make complicated products like Atlas 5 rockets or iPhones. Products of this kind never just "emerge" from the properties of physics and chemistry.

So can materialist origin theories explain how unguided processes could engineer self-replicating systems and their interdependent subsystems? As Laufmann and Glicksman show, they cannot. ☉



It Is Not Written

What About the Bible's Silence on Aliens?

by Keith Hess

Do aliens exist? And if they do, would this undermine the credibility of the Bible?

For some, the possible existence of extraterrestrial life raises theological questions: Why is the Bible silent on the subject? Are aliens capable of relationship with God? Are they fallen? If so, did Christ die for them? If Christ's death on our planet does not apply to them, does God have a plan of salvation specific to them? While these are all interesting questions, I will focus on the first.

The Silent Scriptures

Some suppose that the Bible's silence on the issue is problematic. Unbelievers might suppose that if aliens do exist and the Bible doesn't talk about them, this would somehow invalidate the Scriptures. Believers might suppose that since the Bible doesn't talk about aliens, they don't exist. Both viewpoints are problematic in that they place a burden on the Bible that it doesn't place on itself: that of being exhaustive. Assuming that the Bible's silence on aliens means they don't exist is an *appeal*

to ignorance. This fallacy occurs when someone concludes either that a statement is true if it hasn't been shown to be false, or false if it hasn't been shown to be true.

Sometimes it's not a fallacy to draw a conclusion based on an absence of evidence, such as when it is rational to expect evidence for something, but the evidence isn't there. Suppose your roommate asks you to get the milk out of the fridge. You open the fridge and take a good look around, but you see no milk. In this case, you have good reason to conclude that

the milk isn't there. After all, if it were there, you would see it. But there are many cases when it's not rational to expect that you would see evidence for something if it exists. In committing an appeal to ignorance, a person makes the mistake of assuming that an absence of evidence equals evidence of absence.

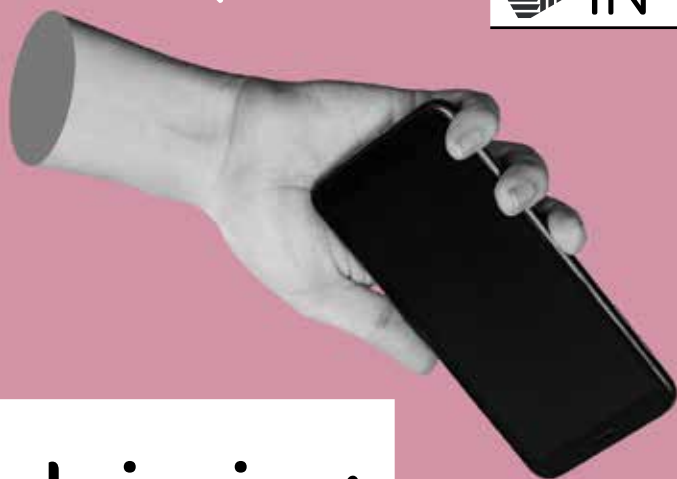
The Sufficient Scriptures

While the Bible presents itself to us as a sufficient guide and authority for our lives, it does not address every issue. How many species of shark are there? Will Russia prevail in its war with Ukraine? Where is the remote? Are there other inhabited planets? Is there a multiverse? And there are some things that the Bible *cannot* reveal, such as the aspects of God that are beyond human ken.

The Bible was written for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind. God has revealed to us what he chose to reveal for his own purposes, including his purposes for us. What God does in other regions of the universe, or even outside of the universe, is not our prerogative to know. In fact, the Bible says as much. In the throes of his suffering, Job demands an audience with God so he can argue his case with him. When God shows up, things don't go as Job envisioned. Instead, God enumerates a vast number of things, some of which are unknown to us, some of which are unknowable to us.

The Providential Creator

But in a way, the Bible does reveal something about aliens, if in fact any exist. We are told that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—the whole cosmos. And aliens, if they exist, are part of the cosmos—created by God, part of his plan, and under his care. That is something we can know. And apparently, in the providence of God, it is enough for us to know—at least for now. ☉



Reclaiming the Real

Guarding Childhood Through Digital Resistance

by Joshua Pauling

A tide may be turning when it comes to smartphones in schools. Across the country, school districts introducing phone-free or phone-minimal policies are already seeing kids come alive again.¹ And now, several states have instituted similar statewide policies, though actual implementation and enforcement vary widely.² These positive strides are due at least in part to the work of Jonathan Haidt, who has been studying this issue closely for several years, alongside folks like Jean Twenge (author of several books, including *iGen* and *Generation Me*).

In *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, Haidt, a social psychologist, author, and professor, compiles his findings and makes a humble yet compelling case that the digital device, specifically the smartphone, has caused significant changes in what constitutes childhood. Haidt does not say that screen-based, internet-connected devices are the only factor. But he does argue that the evidence shows more than mere correlation when we consider factors like loneliness, anxiety, mental

illness, academic decline, lack of meaningful social relationships, and many more.

For those of you who have had a hunch about these issues or have worried about them on the level of gut instinct or intuition, Haidt articulates clearly what you struggled to put your finger on—and he comes with data in tow, which means his suggestions for action come with more heft. He puts words to what many parents, teachers, and others have sensed but have been unable to articulate, or articulate persuasively enough to call others to

action. He does both. For Haidt, it is about much more than schools and phones; it is about reclaiming childhood.

The Great Rewiring

In analyzing the research, Haidt concludes that something definitive has changed in the way child development now unfolds. He coined the term “the Great Rewiring” to refer to this shift from “play-based childhood” to “phone-based childhood.” He argues that this “profound transformation of human consciousness and relationships...occurred, for American teens, between 2010 and 2015,” when smartphones became their ubiquitous possessions. I would have to agree. I was a high school teacher in the public school system on both sides of that fateful transition, and the smartphone drastically changed the nature of the classroom and the challenges students and teachers faced.³

Haidt argues that the shift to a phone-based childhood is so significant because in a play-based childhood there is a sequential introduction of age-appropriate experiences via real time-and-space interactions with peers and adults. However, in a phone-based childhood, we see something very different:

Children are plunged into a whirlpool of adult content and experiences that arrive in no particular order. Identity, selfhood, emotions, and relationships will all be different if they develop online rather than in real life. What gets rewarded or punished, how deep friendships become, and above all what is *desirable*—all of these will be determined by the thousands of posts, comments, and ratings that the child sees each week.

As the number of children with screens and smartphones

increased, so did their hours of daily screen time, to the point where today, many teens almost constantly interact with a screen of some sort at astounding levels of 16 hours per day—that's 112 hours per week. Haidt explains that "This kind of continuous use, often involving two or three screens at a time, was simply not possible before kids carried touch screens in their pockets. It has enormous implications for cognition, addiction, and the wearing smooth of paths in the brain, especially during the sensitive period of puberty."

Haidt goes on to document how these changes affect boys and girls differently. For boys, the digital world has been a gateway to pornography and gaming, which he points out are both environments of artificial risk and conquest. These digital worlds simulate what young men crave but don't provide the real-world benefits, which leads to the downward cycle so common for boys today. For girls, the digital habitat has been oriented more around social comparison and appearance. And, like boys, they have a real human need and desire that needs to be met, but the internet provides an alluring placebo that turns out to be toxic, leading to the common challenges girls are facing today. Haidt summarizes,

Boys and girls have taken different paths through the Great Rewiring, yet somehow, they have ended up in the same pit, where many are drowning in anomie and despair. It is very difficult to construct a meaningful life on one's own, drifting through multiple disembodied networks.

The Digital vs. Real World

A highlight of Haidt's book is his framework for what really constitutes the core differences between

"real life" and "virtual life" and why they make such an impact on human flourishing. To recognize that something significant changes for humans when we take our lives online and live through a backlit slab of glass is not old-fashioned. Such a recognition is entirely reasonable, truthful, and supported by the evidence. Haidt's following four points of comparison capture precisely why humans struggle online and show how that's not what we're designed for:

When I talk about the "real world," I am referring to relationships and social interactions characterized by four features that have been typical for millions of years:

1. They are *embodied*, meaning that we use our bodies to communicate, we are conscious of the bodies of others, and we respond to the bodies of others both consciously and unconsciously.
2. They are *synchronous*, which means they are happening at the same time, with subtle cues about timing and turn taking.
3. They involve primarily *one-to-one or one-to-several communication*, with only one interaction happening at a given moment.
4. They take place within communities that have a *high bar for entry and exit*, so people are strongly motivated to invest in relationships and repair rifts when they happen.

These are the normative ways in which humans are designed to build relationships and in which they are most likely to flourish. Haidt argues that the digital habitat works in the exact opposite direction:



In contrast, when I talk about the "virtual world," I am referring to relationships and interactions characterized by four features that have been typical for just a few decades:

1. They are *disembodied*, meaning that no body is needed, just language. Partners could be (and already are) artificial intelligences (AIs).
2. They are heavily *asynchronous*, happening via text-based posts and comments. (A video call is different; it is synchronous.)
3. They involve a substantial number of *one-to-many communications*, broadcasting to a potentially vast audience. Multiple interactions can be happening in parallel.
4. They take place within communities that have a *low bar for entry and exit*, so people can block others or just quit when they are not pleased. Communities tend to be short-lived, and relationships are often disposable.

What We Can Do

These insights typify those found throughout the book as Haidt provides the language, research, and framework for us to understand



better what is happening, to talk more effectively about it with others, and perhaps most importantly, to actually do something about it. Haidt offers numerous worthwhile ideas and solutions that are not just a list of bullet points hastily thrown together but are research-based action points for reform:

1. No smartphones before high school.
2. No social media before age 16.
3. Maintain phone-free schools.
4. Return to far more unsupervised play and childhood independence.

He has more to say specifically regarding these four action items, including advice for parents, homes, schools, and even government policy. And in this regard, he also makes an important point: what we are facing is in large part a collective-action problem. It is hard for one person or family to be the “weird one” who says “no” to their kids about phones or social media or makes digital-minimalist decisions for themselves. And furthermore, even if that family stays committed to their principles, they don’t see the full benefit from it because others are still living in a phone-based world. Haidt puts it this way:

This is the great irony of social media: the more you immerse yourself in it, the more lonely and depressed

you become. This is true both at the individual and at the collective level. When teens as a whole cut back on hanging out and doing things together in the real world, their culture changed. Their communion needs were left unsatisfied—even for those few teens who were not on social media.

Only a Beginning

Perhaps we are nearing an inflection point when it comes to smartphones and childhood. For that we should all take note and be thankful. But we should leverage this moment to take up a deeper evaluation, one towards which Haidt’s work points. We should employ the same type of thinking he displays

as we consider the broader effects of our technological environment on both children and adults. Thanks to his work, many are waking up to how digitally mediated living impacts all of us—in our habits and lifestyles and in how we think about ourselves, our work, one another, and our world. Let’s join this discussion and bring to bear the power and beauty of the Christian story to fill in gaps Haidt has left as yet unfilled. ☺

Notes

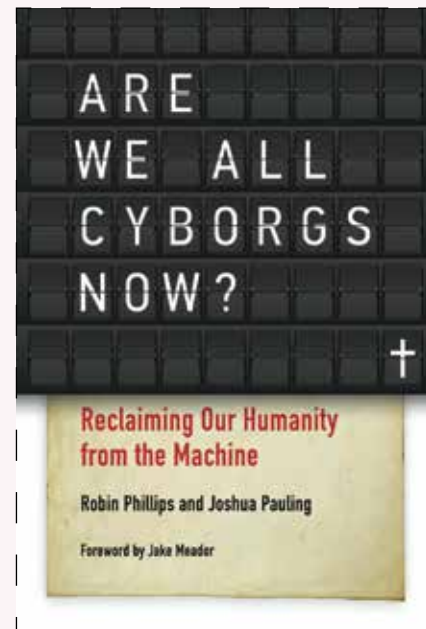
1. Peter Stiepleman, “A Mindshift Over Cell-phones in Schools,” *School Administrator Magazine* (Jun. 1, 2024).
2. Natasha Singer, “Why Schools Are Racing to Ban Student Phones,” *The New York Times* (Aug. 11, 2024).
3. Several years ago, I decided to collect student cellphones before it became trendy. It was the best classroom-management decision I ever made.

GOING DEEPER

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION BY JOSHUA PAULING

Haidt’s work opens a door to numerous areas for further exploration. In our book *Are We All Cyborgs Now? Reclaiming Our Humanity from the Machine*, Robin Phillips and I tackle many of them: If we are taking the step to ban cell-phones in schools, what about technologically mediated classrooms with laptops or iPads for every student? What about habits and practices in our personal lives, homes, or churches? What about the growing role of AI and AR/VR (augmented reality/virtual reality)?

Haidt also bumps up against questions of spirituality. While he sees a societal value in religion, his psychological and evolutionary framework leaves much to be desired. Robin and I dive into these issues headfirst and offer a way forward with a philosophy of technology anchored in Christian metaphysics, the sacramental life of the Church, and the rich tradition of liberal learning. And we ground much of the discussion in what is perhaps the defining issue of our day: questions of what it means to be human. •



Broken Homes, Unbroken Silence

Social Outcries Following Shootings Miss the Mark

by Nicole M. King

On the morning of December 16, 2024, 15-year-old Natalie Rupnow opened fire at Abundant Life Christian School, a small K–12 school in Madison, Wisconsin. In the space of a few minutes, she killed a student and a teacher and wounded many others before apparently turning the gun on herself. Two guns were recovered, and at the time of this writing, police are not releasing information as to where or how she obtained them. Of note is the fact that she is female. In a 20-year review of active shootings, the FBI identified 333 incidents and 345 shooters. Of these, only 13 were women.¹

Boilerplate Reactions

In the immediate aftermath, the media focused on the usual suspects when it comes to school shootings. Before the shooter's social media accounts were taken down, some commentators noticed she seemed to be fascinated with other shooters. In a recent photo, she wears a shirt bearing the name of the German rock band KMFDM, whose song lyrics Columbine shooter Eric Harris posted on a website before his own shooting spree. A photo on her father's social media shows a picture of a girl—presumably Natalie—at a shooting range.

Finally, there were the usual calls to “end gun violence.” At a vigil in Madison, one father of two told reporters, “It’s an epidemic, and I’m not a big believer in the thoughts and prayers crap—I don’t think it works.... We need action, legislation and laws to make sure that guns don’t get into the hands of people who don’t have them.” Similarly, Nicole Hockley, who co-founded the nonprofit Sandy Hook Promise after her child died in the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting, told the media, “We must work together to protect our families and communities from gun violence.”²

An Overlooked Factor

The focus on guns has some shortcomings, however. Generally, when activists call for an end to gun



violence, what they are asking for is legislation making it more difficult for Americans to purchase firearms. But the fact is, there are already a great

many “common-sense” restrictions on purchasing firearms. State laws vary, but federal law requires that potential buyers in all 50 states, whether buying at a store or gun show, pass a background check through a system operated by the FBI.

There are important discussions to be had about legislation, but there is one crucial detail of shooters’ lives that the media tend to ignore, and this particular shooting is a clear instantiation of it. Court records show that Natalie’s parents had married and divorced each other twice and shared a complicated custody arrangement. *NBC News* reports that Rupnow “endured what appeared to be a tumultuous home life marked by divorces, custody battles and a series of court-mandated mediation sessions to resolve disputes over her care, according to court documents.”³

Natalie came from a broken, unstable home.

In far more cases than not, those who commit atrocities like school shootings are the children of divorced, separated, or never-married parents. But you have to veritably scour the internet to discover this information.

Do you remember Adam Lanza, who massacred 26 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012? His parents had separated in 2002, when Lanza was still in elementary school, and finally divorced in 2009. Or Dylann Roof, who killed nine people in an African American church in Charleston in 2015? He was



Mourners at a Sandy Hook vigil

born to divorced parents, who had gotten together again long enough to conceive a child before breaking it off again. Then there was Salvador Ramos, who killed 19 students and two teachers at Robb Elementary in Uvalde, Texas, in 2022. He was living with his maternal grandparents at the time of the shooting—his father had never been in the picture, and his mother was “going through bad times,” according to a neighbor.⁴

A Clear Pattern

These are not cherry-picked instances. In a 2013 article for the Institute for Family Studies, Brad Wilcox writes,

From shootings at MIT (i.e., the Tsarnaev brothers) to the University of Central Florida to the Ronald E. McNair Discovery Learning Academy in Decatur, Ga., nearly every shooting over the last year in Wikipedia’s “list of U.S. school attacks” involved a young man whose parents divorced or never married in the first place.⁵

Wilcox goes on to cite his own research, which “suggests that boys living in single mother homes are almost twice as likely to end up delinquent compared to boys who enjoy good relationships with their father.” His is not the only research demonstrating such findings. A 2010 study by researchers at Towson University in Maryland tracking children from first grade through middle school found that, for the boys in the study, “high levels of neighborhood violence and percentages of single males and female-headed households are related to an increase

in aggressive behavior.” For girls, the correlation is even more pronounced.⁶

More recently, a 2018 study found that “separation from a parent during childhood is strongly associated with elevated risk for later violent criminality,”⁷ and a 2022 literature review found that “growing up in a single-parent family and adolescent involvement in crime are related since a large majority of the studies shows a positive relation between single-parent families and the level of crime.”⁸

These are only a handful—there are many more such studies. So why don’t we hear about these connections?

Decades of Decisions

Because if the media were to acknowledge that children growing up in broken homes tend to become more violent, it would require them to admit that they—and the pseudo-sociology they reported on—were wrong. Politicians would have to admit that they erred when they allowed no-fault divorce to wreck the fabric of American home life. Psychologists would have to admit that they were wrong when they insisted that kids would surely do better growing up in the more “peaceful” environments of their divorced parents’ separate homes. And many parents themselves would have to admit that they may have caused harm when they allowed “irreconcilable differences” to split their children’s lives in two.

But the media are erring now in sweeping under the rug the bloody carnage that has resulted from these decisions, instead of calling a spade a spade and acknowledging the dire results of decades of misdeeds. Let’s not allow political correctness to stop our ears and keep us from taking a good, hard look at factors that could be influencing the vulnerable and hurting among us to turn to evil. ☹

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Abortion After *Roe*

Surveying America's Post-Dobbs Landscape

by Bryan Just

For nearly 50 years, *Roe v. Wade* was the single most important factor influencing abortion legislation in the U.S. Then, in June 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe* with *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. Despite widespread misinformation, which began circulating before *Dobbs* (and still has not let up), the ruling did nothing to outlaw or curtail abortion. Rather, it ended its status as a court-constructed "right" and returned to the individual states the legislative authority to make their own decisions about how to regulate it. As a result, talking about abortion law has become more complicated, as each state has its own evolving regulations.

The repeal of *Roe* led to a great deal of consternation among pro-choice activists, who lamented anticipated difficulties obtaining an abortion and the loss of "reproductive freedoms." Some claimed the government would punish women who sought an abortion; others said that investigators would use technology, such as period-tracking apps, to investigate and prosecute them. Nearly three years post-*Dobbs*, outlandish predictions such as these have not come to pass. It is true that many states now limit or prohibit abortion where they once could not, but the abortion industry is still thriving, and in some ways it has even grown.

Abortion by the Data

Many people fail to recognize how widespread abortion is in post-*Dobbs* America. According to the Guttmacher Institute, as of January 2025, in 12 states abortion is "completely banned with very limited exceptions," and in four states, it is "banned at 6 weeks and later." At the other end of the spectrum, 19 states allow abortion up to viability, generally recognized at 24–26 weeks, and nine states, along with Washington, D.C., allow it through all 40 weeks of pregnancy.¹



Guttmacher estimates that more than a million abortions took place in the U.S. in 2023, an increase of 11 percent since 2020.² This number only includes those abortions overseen by a clinician; it does not take into account what are now being called "self-managed" abortions, such as when someone orders abortion pills from an out-of-state or overseas pharmacy and takes them at home apart from any medical oversight. Thus, the actual number is undoubtedly higher. For comparison, there were approximately 3.6 million live births in 2023.³

The number of abortion clinics in the U.S. has declined slightly, from 807 in 2020 to 765 in 2023. However, this reflects the fact that clinics have closed in 14 states where abortion is largely banned. In the remaining 36 states, there has actually been a three percent increase. Even with this increase, though, brick-and-mortar clinics are not where the majority of abortions are taking place—in 2023, 63 percent of the reported abortions were performed via clinician-provided abortion pills.⁴

Chemical Abortion, Telehealth & Shield Laws

The expansion of chemical abortion is one of the primary factors driving the increase.⁵ Mifepristone was approved by the FDA in 2000 and is typically used in conjunction with misoprostol. The widespread availability of these drugs has contributed to the uptick in abortion nationwide. It has also greatly complicated attempts to understand the full number of abortions in the U.S., since only abortions that take place in a clinic or under a clinician's supervision are tracked. Some estimate that tens of thousands of untracked, self-induced abortions are taking place in states where abortion is ostensibly banned.⁶

In 2021, the FDA removed the requirement that a woman attend an in-person appointment before



receiving abortion-causing drugs, meaning that the pills can now be obtained not just from abortion

protect abortionists from any judgments or penalties originating from another state. So, for example, if an abortionist who practices in a state with liberal abortion laws did a remote telehealth consult and prescribed abortion pills to a woman in a state where that was illegal (and where the physician was not licensed to practice), the abortionist would be shielded from legal consequences.

Despite panicked predictions that women seeking abortions would be criminalized, this has never happened, and in fact is not likely to ever happen under current law. The Charlotte Lozier Institute analyzed abortion statutes and found that even pro-life laws exempt women from prosecution in 27 states: "Most state laws regulating or prohibiting abortion contain *explicit* carve outs exempting women from criminal or civil liability, others exempt women *implicitly* by specifically targeting physicians or others who perform abortions rather than the women who undergo them."⁸

It is also important to note that, even in states with a total ban, abortions are still permitted when the life of the mother is at risk.⁹ Some supposed horror stories have made the news about how a woman was denied a "medically necessary" abortion, but closer examination usually reveals that either (1) an

abortion was *not* in fact medically necessary, or (2) the case involved accusations of providers denying services due to a fear of prosecution.

Still a Critical Issue

Though the U.S. is now a few years past *Dobbs*, abortion continues to be an issue of hot interest and debate in all 50 states. While it is good that states have more freedom to regulate it, this has not substantially reduced the number of abortions taking place; those wishing to end their pregnancies are still finding ways to do so—and those wishing to help them do so are as well. ☺

Nearly three years post-*Dobbs*, the outlandish predictions have not come to pass. It is true that many states now limit or prohibit abortion where they once could not, but the abortion industry is still thriving, and in some ways it has even grown.

clinics but also from online pharmacies. Beyond the potential health risks this poses for women, some have pointed out that this also makes it far easier for human traffickers and abusive partners to force abortions on women and girls who do not want them.

Prescribing abortion pills is illegal in states with a total ban, but many providers are now protected by shield laws. Following *Dobbs*, many pro-abortion states passed laws shielding abortionists from "criminal, civil, or professional consequences" that might have otherwise resulted from facilitating an abortion.⁷ While the exact laws differ, they generally

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Once Upon a Nightmare

The Disturbingly Prophetic Prescience of Four 20th Century Novels

by Rick Reed

In 1516, Sir Thomas More published *Utopia*, a satire of an “ideal” society. The term, coined from Greek, means “no place.” In contrast to such “ideal” societies, dystopian novels first appeared in the early 20th century. In general, these arise from an author’s imaginative response to the question, “If this goes on, what will happen?” Four such novels have answered in various ways.

The Novels

G. K. Chesterton’s *The Flying Inn* (1914) asks, “What if the erosion of traditional English society continues?” In answer, the novel offers a satirical look at those traditions through the machinations of a megalomaniacal member of the House of Lords influenced by the Islamic “Prophet of the Moon.” The story involves government-imposed changes in beliefs and traditions, starting with the prohibition of alcohol on all but the upper class. At the same time, it builds to a surreptitious Turkish attempt to conquer Britain.

Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) asks, “What if consumerism and technology continue to dominate human existence?” In answer, Huxley constructs a world where technology directs natural human reproduction and imposes both physical and psychological conditioning, starting with the embryo, to maximize a sedate, hollow “happiness.”

In *1984* (1949), George Orwell asks, “What if authoritarian government continues to limit individual freedom?” He answers by presenting a totalitarian nightmare wherein universal surveillance eliminates privacy, constant warfare maintains a status quo, and the state daily—sometimes hourly—alters historical records. Even thought is criminalized as suspicion and fear overwhelm human relationships.

Ray Bradbury, in *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) considers, “What if techno-authoritarian control advances?”

In response, he unfolds a world where books are forbidden and vapid entertainment pacifies a nearly mindless citizenry. Firemen burn books, and television replaces the family.

Though unique in many ways, these novels share remarkably similar themes that explore the corruption of the three central ideals of Western thought: the good, the true, and the beautiful.

The Good

Each offers a different take on “the good,” as conceived by the powerful. In *The Flying Inn*, Lord Ivywood, under the influence of a pompous Turk who holds a bizarre theory of England’s having been originally shaped by Islam, aspires to reshape Britain according to his own conception of “the good.” Ivywood goes on not only to impose Prohibition but to Islamize Britain. To achieve “the good,” the past must be revised.

In *Brave New World*, a similar substitution takes place. The world state dates its history from the year Ford manufactured the first Model T. “A.F.” (“after Ford”) follows dates, and the top churches in London, showing the overthrow of Christianity as a long-established “fact.” The new “good” is imposed by biotechnologists in service to consumerism.

In *1984*, churches have either been converted to secular uses or reduced to bombed-out ruins. The antagonist, O’Brien, tells the imprisoned and tortured



protagonist, Winston Smith, "God is power." The Creator of "the good" is overthrown as the Party has crushed all dissent. For O'Brien, the only "good" is power arbitrated by the state.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, the "good" is also the province of the state. The screens in all but a few homes purvey vapid entertainment. (The protagonist's wife refers to them as her family.) Yet, one of the books that he surreptitiously rescues from the flames is a Bible, which he reads but cannot quite understand. Still, he wants to assure copies are made. Prevented from achieving that goal, he memorizes Ecclesiastes and Revelation, sensing in Scripture a "good" greater than the superficiality of his world.

The True

Each also considers truth, not as an objective reality, but as an imposed construct. Lord Ivywood declares his version of the truth when asked if he thinks he made the world: "The world was made badly ... and *I will make it over again.*" For him "truth" is power, that of the state.

In *Brave New World*, "truth" has been inculcated during the application of hypnopedia (the repetition of maxims while children sleep). A chief lesson is "Everyone belongs to everyone else"—the key teaching of a world founded on sexual debauchery and enforced consumerism. The only character seeing any higher truth is John the Savage, whose education comes almost solely from reading Shakespeare. He rejects the numbing conformity of thought and asks the World Controller why the Bard's work is prohibited. The Controller's answer is simple: "Because it's old.... We haven't any use for old things here." Objective truth is inconvenient and beyond the understanding of a thoroughly conditioned population.

In *1984*, truth is malleable. It is the creation of the state. Winston Smith works in the Ministry of Truth, where he alters records of the past when they no longer match the contentions of the Party. The state's three "truths" are: "Ignorance is strength," "War is peace," and "Freedom is slavery." With a false sense of privacy, he addresses his journal "to

a time when thought is free ... a time when truth exists and what is done cannot be undone." In the end, he is tortured to the point that any doubt about state-imposed "truth" is obliterated by a bullet.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, a former English professor explains the relationship between truth and books:

"The good writers touch life often. The mediocre ones run a quick hand over her. The bad ones rape her and leave her for the flies." Of televised entertainment, he says, "It is an environment as real as the world. It becomes and is the truth." Spurred by his own rejection of the state's truth, the protagonist Montag travels into the countryside and encounters men who have memorized now-destroyed books in the hope of giving them back to the world when it is ready for the truths they contain.

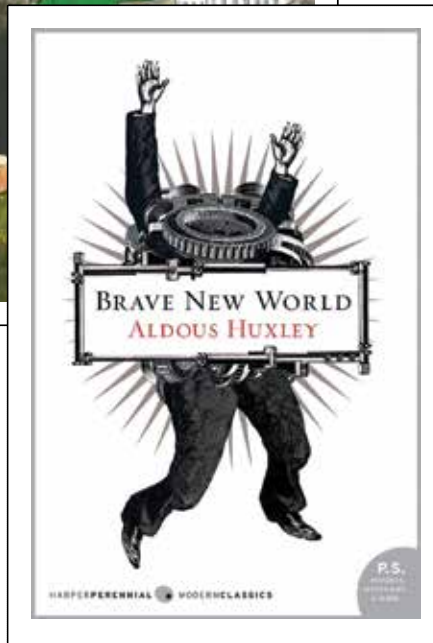
The Beautiful

Each novel also considers a twisting of the nature of beauty. Chesterton says of his antagonist, Lord Ivywood, "he could make anything he had to mention blossom into verbal beauty; yet his face remained dead while his lips were alive." The beauty Ivywood espouses is more emotional than objective, "a poetry that never touched earth; the poetry of Shelley rather than Shakespeare." In contrast, Dorian Wimpole, speaking for the traditional Western

concept of objective beauty, perceives "the Image of God" in the natural beauty that surrounds him.

The World Controller in *Brave New World* tells John the Savage that the world civilization dismisses Shakespeare because "Beauty's attractive, and we don't want people to be attracted to old things. We want them to like the new ones." In another conversation, he explains, "Our Ford himself did a great deal to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness.... Universal happiness keeps the wheels steadily turning; truth and beauty can't." Hollow happiness has supplanted the joy of objective beauty.

The gray world of *1984* takes a more extreme stance. Winston Smith can barely recall childhood memories. He connects beauty to surviving artifacts from the past: the creamy pages of a blank book or a



glass paperweight with coral suspended within. Still, the thought haunts him that, "Anything old, and for that matter anything beautiful, was always vaguely suspect." O'Brien, the voice of the Party, declares that the new order is ushering in a world with "no distinction between beauty and ugliness." One of the creators of Newspeak celebrates "the beauty of the destruction of words." Annihilation has replaced beauty in a world of total government control.

Fahrenheit 451 presents a neatly clipped suburban neighborhood marred by fires set by firemen to burn homes sheltering books. Yet fireman Montag finds an inexplicable beauty in a young girl who makes no effort to conform to the empty world around her. The fire chief somehow knows Montag has saved books from the flames, and, confronting him, burns a book, page by page, calling the blackening of each page "beautiful." Later, he says that the "real beauty [of fire] is that it destroys responsibility and consequences." The firemen burn whatever problem "gets too burdensome." Beauty must make way for an imposed order that erodes humanity.

Prophetic Foresight

These authors have foreseen much about our present world. In the U.K. today, conversions to Islam have doubled over the past decade, and British-Pakistani grooming gangs pose a threat, one protected by political correctness. *The Flying Inn* now seems less far-fetched. And throughout the West, activists celebrating perversions promote contempt for millennia-old sexual mores. The claims of sexual revolutionaries increasingly approach the *Brave New World* dictum that "Everyone belongs to everyone else." Meanwhile, the widespread abandonment of history and culture promoted in academia echoes the governments in *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451*. We can see in the arrests of individuals praying silently near U.K. abortion facilities Orwell's Thought Police and in today's omnipresent screens Bradbury's disruption of friendships and family relations.

Power vs. the Good, True & Beautiful

Dystopian novels can be remarkably prophetic. All these authors reflected on the world around them to answer, "What if this continues?" One theme consistently emerges: power.

Each author presents a world in which government power coerces citizens to conform to a radical revision of human nature. Chesterton envisions a single powerful member of the House of Lords gradually introducing legislation to Islamize the U.K. and to prepare for an Islamic military invasion. Huxley sees powerful industrial leaders and scientists working together

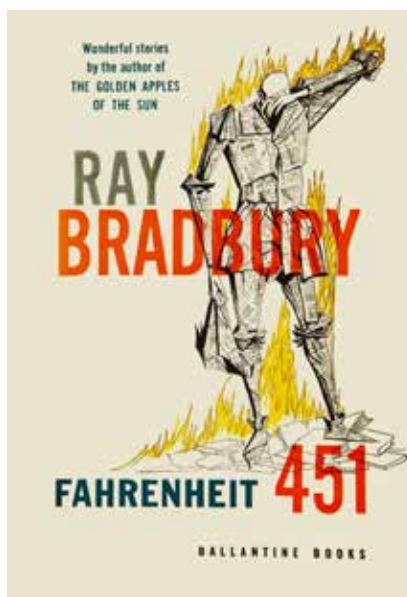
to create a hedonistic population of consumers while instituting castes of artificially conceived and subconsciously controlled people. Orwell creates a government that has expanded to control every aspect of a person's life, the control made possible by the elimination of privacy through constant surveillance.

These abuses of power grow out of the hubris of those who create the dystopias. In defiance of objective truth, goodness, and beauty, they attempt to redefine reality according to their own vain imaginings. Like these fictional tyrants, today's academics have rewritten

traditions for decades and inculcated instead their denials of reality in Marxist terms.

Christian teachings hold that God has written the truth on our hearts and that truth reveals objective reality. In turn, an appreciation and acceptance of objective reality created Western civilization and gave birth to profound philosophy, great art, and aspiration to true goodness.

Today, dystopias arise from a desire to overthrow the heritage of the past and to substitute emotion for reason. For those to whom power is the supreme good, the end justifies the means. As Chesterton's Dalroy observes, "Our rulers have come to count on the bare bodily cowardice of a mass of Englishmen"—or that of all Westerners outside the halls of power. We who love truth, goodness, and beauty must summon our courage and resist, or we will find ourselves living our own nightmare. ☉



NOT IN OUR STARS

Where Are All the Aliens?

BY JOHN D. MARTIN

Last year, there was considerable excitement among astronomy and space exploration enthusiasts, especially those who adhere to worldview commitments limited to time, chance, and chemical ingredients as the only sources for a tenable explanation of the origin and existence of life. The hubbub arose when NASA announced the discovery of a “potentially habitable ‘super-Earth’” that is a mere 137 light years distant from us. As is the custom in science reporting about such discoveries, the “potentially habitable” assertion breaks down as soon as one reads into the details about the discovery. The planet, TOI-715b, orbits an M-dwarf class star, meaning that it cannot be at all habitable, given the properties of that class of star.¹

Nevertheless, the discovery of TOI-715b was but one source of high excitement and extravagant expectations in astronomy and (possibly) astrobiology in recent months. Back in September 2023, NASA reported that the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) had detected indications of biologically relevant molecules in the atmosphere of planet K2-18b, a sub-Neptune (smaller than Neptune) planet orbiting in the habitable zone of a cool dwarf star 120 light years distant from Earth.² The possible discovery of dimethyl sulfide (DMS) in the planet’s atmosphere, along with CO₂ and methane, was thought to be cause for special excitement, as it is generally believed that this molecule only arises from biological processes. That would indeed be exciting news in the hunt for extraterrestrial life if it panned out, and, in fairness, the NASA press release was more sober than some reports in the press, stating:

The inference of DMS is less robust and requires further validation. “Upcoming Webb observations should be able to confirm if DMS is indeed present in the atmosphere of K2-18b at significant levels,” explained [Cambridge University Astronomer Nikku] Madhusudhan.

THE DRAKE EQUATION—

Estimates the number of active, communicative, extraterrestrial civilizations likely to exist in the Milky Way galaxy.

THE FERMI PARADOX—

Asks, “Why, if there is a high probability that extraterrestrial life exists, do we not see evidence of it?”

Madhusudhan's caution later proved wise. A subsequent investigation of JWST's observations has shown that the most advanced space telescope yet built by man most likely did not detect any DMS in the atmosphere of K2-18b.³ There's another factor that speaks against the possibility of K2-18b's harboring life of any kind: the type of star it orbits is not at all hospitable to life. It, too, is an M-dwarf star, a red dwarf, the most common type of star in the observable universe. The habitable zone of these relatively cool, low-luminosity stars lies so close to the host star that any planet orbiting one of them would be tidally locked, thus foreclosing any possibility that it could support life for long. This same set of conditions applies to TOI-715b and every other planet of any size and atmospheric composition orbiting a red dwarf star. So much for any of these planets being "in the habitable zone" of its parent star, however broadly that term is defined.

THE DRAKE EQUATION

What this means is that, viewed soberly, the new discovery is merely another data point supporting physicist Bijan Nemati's call for a revision of the Drake Equation in light of improvements in our state of knowledge regarding the search for life beyond Earth. The Drake Equation was proposed in 1961 as a formula for estimating the number of detectable alien civilizations in the Milky Way galaxy. To understand why the formula needs to be revised, let us recall that the general form of the equation is:

$$N = R_* \times f_p \times n_e \times f_l \times f_i \times f_c \times L$$

N = the number of extraterrestrial civilizations with which communication might be possible

R_{*} = the average rate of star formation per year

f_p = the fraction of those stars with planets

n_e = the fraction of those planets that are habitable, i.e., capable of supporting life

f_l = the fraction of habitable planets on which life develops

f_i = the fraction of those planets with intelligent life capable of developing civilization

f_c = the fraction of those civilizations that develop technology sufficient to send radio signals into space

L = the length of time over which the civilization transmits signals

The equation has multiple terms for which the value is based on pure speculation. With recent discoveries in astronomy, however, the state of knowledge has changed. A little.

In the 30 years since the discovery of the first exoplanet, 51 Pegasi b, the number of known worlds orbiting stars distant from our sun has grown to, as of December 2024, a total of 7,367. The total number of stars with planets orbiting them is 5,056, with 1,024 of those stars hosting multi-planet systems similar to our own solar system.⁴ This might be hard for those born after 1995 to believe, but this recent history of observational discovery of planets beyond our solar system was of momentous importance to those seeking validation of the then-utterly speculative idea that our solar system represented just "average planets around an average star"—nothing remarkable, cosmically speaking. There was, for a time, furor around discoveries of planets falling into the "gas giant" class, those planets equal to or larger in size and mass than Jupiter (many of them being so-called "hot Jupiters," which orbit close-in to their parent stars), but it has long since died down, since this class of planets seems to be quite common in the observed population of exoplanets.

In fact, the two most common types of exoplanets catalogued by astronomers have turned out to be gas giants and Neptune-like worlds, with these two categories making up easily two thirds of the exoplanets discovered to date. Neither of these types of planets is what one might by any stretch of the imagination call hospitable to life, and that presents real difficulties for those still searching for Earth 2.0. Enrico Fermi's famous question, "Where is everybody?", first posed in

1950 based on speculations that Earth-like planets with technologically advanced civilizations would prove to be typical across the universe, now seems to be based on a false premise in light of our improved, enriched body of data. Earth appears to be a rarity, perhaps even unique among the planets thus far discovered.

MORE CONFIRMATION OF THE RARE EARTH HYPOTHESIS

The good news for people concerned with data and facts is that we now have data indicating that the value for f_p (the fraction of stars with planets) is perhaps as high as .5, while n_e (the fraction of planets capable of supporting a biosphere of any kind), using the most optimistic estimate, is .000137. Using round numbers, that translates into exactly one out of

FOR THOSE SEARCHING FOR SIGNS OF LIFE BEYOND OUR SOLAR SYSTEM, THESE NUMBERS PROVIDE A MASSIVE IMPROVEMENT, BUT THEY YIELD LESS-THAN-OPTIMISTIC RESULTS FOR THOSE LOOKING TO THE STARS FOR SIGNS THAT TIME, CHANCE, AND CHEMICAL INGREDIENTS INEVITABLY YIELD LIFE.

approximately 7,300 known planets being capable of supporting life.

And you're living on it. That may not seem like much of an improvement, but, compared to "we have not the slightest idea," the new observations do provide some numbers more solid than sheer speculation—not the kind of numbers that people seeking out "strange new worlds, new life, and new civilizations" might want to see, but defensible numbers for at least two of the values.

The *Star Trek* reference is used here advisedly, in light of the long-lasting influence that that once-humble, rerun-driven franchise has had on the popular imagination. Of course, it's not the only sci-fi game in town that accepts extraterrestrial life as a given, but it is one of the best-known ones fueling the speculations inherent in the press coverage of exoplanets. The drive to find habitable planets beyond our solar system is as much an indulgence of fancy as it is an exercise in intellectual curiosity. Yes, exoplanets exist. What was science fiction in the pages of magazines and novels only a few decades ago has been confirmed as fact. What the cold, hard data about these planets tell us, though, is that these staggeringly distant worlds are unlikely to be in any degree hospitable to life of any kind. And that staggering distance? It means any communication with any intelligent life would be extremely impractical, if not impossible.

For those searching for signs of life beyond our solar system, these numbers provide a massive improvement, but they yield less-than-optimistic results for those looking to the stars for signs that time, chance, and chemical ingredients inevitably yield life. Fed into the key components of the Drake Equation, the data indicate that Earth is certainly rare and just possibly unique as an oasis for life in a vast cosmic desert. This also makes the most-likely explanation for the infamous Fermi Paradox the simplest one: We hear nothing from biological life beyond Earth because there is nothing to hear.

Worldview Implications

Of the press coverage of these discoveries in the atmosphere of K2-18b, the clearest statement of popular thinking about possible implications of the discovery of life beyond Earth came in an account given in *The Free Press*:

Alexei Filippenko, a UC Berkeley astronomer, told me in an email: "If there *is* life on K2-18b, it would demonstrate that life on Earth is not unique—a very important discovery." He added: "Perhaps it would change the religious outlooks of some people, but not others. It depends on whether one subscribes to the belief that God made Earth unique in terms of life."⁵

Discovery of life beyond Earth might change religious outlooks, but why would it? God created life in staggering variety here. Why would he not create life in equally staggering variety elsewhere, if he so chose?

Theists, especially we of the Judeo-Christian variety, have better warrant for expecting to find extraterrestrial life than do adherents to philosophical materialism, whose best explanation amounts to "derp, derp, just happened—we won the cosmic lottery." The search for knowledge is itself worthwhile, but on purely materialistic premises, faith that the search will be rewarded with a positive result is just scientifically baptized superstition. ☺

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Transgender Patient Zero♀

Remembering David Reimer & the Dark History of “Gender-Affirming Care”

by Bruce Woodall

In 1980, a 14-year-old boy was oddly invited to select for himself the third and final name by which he would be known. He chose a most fitting name, “David”—the giant slayer, an icon of youthful, masculine courage.

THE EXPERIMENT BEGINS

I learned of David Reimer, or of his medical mythology, during my first year of medical school in 1986 when a psychiatrist lecturing on “Psychosocial Dimensions of Health Care” gave our class an optimistic spin on the macabre case of identical twin boys born in 1965. The boys were anonymous, yet they were also famously serving as a case study in gender-identity development. In 1966 one of the twins, Bruce, had lost his penis to an injury resulting from a botched circumcision procedure, and Bruce’s horrified young parents found themselves under the “care” of Dr. John Money, an arrogant and charismatic Johns Hopkins University sexologist.





FEATURE

In the 1960s, John Money reigned as the foremost authority on the management of hermaphroditism, or intersex anomalies, the rare category (fewer than 2 in 10,000 births) of developmental or metabolic anomalies resulting in infants born with ambiguous sexual differentiation. Dr. Money was devoted to the convictions that humans are born as psychosexual blank slates, that gender is a social construct wherein nurture can override nature, and that in the early postnatal stage, gender identity is malleable.

Beginning in 1955, Money advocated for early surgical intervention—choosing a gender for the infant on the postulate that any infant could become either gender. This usually translated into surgical feminization to be followed later with estrogen supplementation, even if the patient had an XY male genome. Money believed early gender identity would be indeterminate and fluid, even in a subject who was genetically and developmentally normal at birth, a proposition that had never been tested before the 1960s. For Dr. Money, Bruce—an injured but otherwise normal study subject under the age of two with a genetically identical control in his twin brother Brian—was a gift. Together, he believed, the boys would prove the primacy of psychosocial conditioning as the determining factor in gender identity.

Bruce's parents, convinced Dr. Money could grant their injured child a near-normal life as a female, consented to his being castrated at age 22 months and undergoing a vulvoplasty, the surgical construction of rudimentary female-like genitalia from scrotal tissue. Bruce was renamed Brenda, and his parents, as instructed, set about raising him as a daughter while Brian was treated as a son.

BRUCE-BRENDA

But Brenda Reimer never accepted his designation as female. As the twins grew, Money saw them annually, amicably reassuring their parents that all was well with both their son and their adorable little

girl. Yet despite the gaslighting, family, teachers, physicians, and psychologists who saw the pair regularly could not deny the truth before their eyes. Brenda came to understand what the grown-ups desperately expected of him, and he could deliver a performance of girlish social graces and behaviors to ease their anxiety; but when his guard was down, or when he was simply worn out from pretending, he was observed to be a naturally scrappy and aggressive boy, prone to fist fights and fascinated with traditional boy things, such as dump trucks, forts, and go-carts.

Despite surgical emasculation prior to his second birthday, he instinctively urinated standing and had a characteristically male canter that, along with a coarse voice, earned him the cruel moniker "Cavewoman" from his junior-high classmates. Aware that the experiment was not going as planned, or as reported, the adults closest to the twins' daily lives nonetheless chose to stay the course, given Dr. Money's towering reputation and an implicit belief that the experiment had likely progressed too far to be turned back.



His parents, convinced Dr. Money could grant their injured child a near-normal life as a female, consented to his being castrated at age 22 months and undergoing a vulvoplasty, the surgical construction of rudimentary female-like genitalia from scrotal tissue. Bruce was renamed Brenda, and his parents, as instructed, set about raising him as a daughter.

As Brenda approached puberty, Money prescribed estrogen tablets to induce breast development, then badgered Brenda to consent to further pelvic surgery to lower his urethra into a more feminine position and plastic surgery to construct a vagina-like canal. The surgery was to be performed by Dr. Howard Jones, the same surgeon who had castrated baby boy Bruce a decade earlier.

Like a surly trail boss directing his cowboys to bring in a wayward maverick, Money mustered every resource he could to corral Brenda into the operating room. But submitting again to the scalpel was a hill Brenda was, quite literally, willing to die on. At age fourteen, and after two years on estrogen, he ceased playing the charade. Though still identified as Brian's odd sister Brenda, he stopped wearing dresses, primping his hair, and hiding his depressed alienation. He eventually stopped attending school. In his bones he knew he was not female, even if he did not understand how he knew.

"NO!"

In early 1980, alarmed by Brenda's intractable depression, his hometown psychiatrist, Dr. Keith Sigmundson, sensed it was time to defy Dr. Money. The experiment was an unequivocal failure, and an innocent young life was at stake. Among the boy's medical and psychiatric team, Sigmundson was hardly alone.

Dr. Jeremy Winter was a pediatric endocrinologist who had been enlisted to manage Brenda's estrogen therapy. One afternoon in Winter's office an attempted breast exam ended in a tense standoff, with Brenda refusing to cooperate.

"Do you want to be a girl or not?" Winter asked. It was a tiresome, now infuriating, question adults had been subtly asking Brenda for as long as he could remember.

Like a smooth verbal river stone hurled from a sling, Brenda belted "No!"

"Okay, you can get dressed and go home."

This time the weary warrior was heard. The boy had prevailed against the near-invincible giant Goliath. Shortly thereafter his father Ron broke the news to him over ice cream. He sat through the incredible story—his life's story told from birth forward—in stony silence as the ice cream melted. His first response was a question: "What was my name?"

His first emotion was intense relief, and he decided at once to embrace his male identity. Yet shedding the physical and psychological sequelae of castration and the moulage from fourteen years of forced incarnation as a female did not come easy.

Adolescence can be tumultuous under the best of circumstances. In a bid to protect his privacy and dignity, David continued school at home as he and Brian devised a ruse whereby Brenda, having disappeared for several months, was reported to have moved away to live with a boyfriend before dying in a plane crash. David's estrogen supplements were replaced with testosterone, and after a double mastectomy he reappeared as a long-lost cousin from another town coming to live with the Reimer family.

Not surprisingly David's remaining teenage years, shadowed by continued secrecy, fabrications, and medical complications, were marred by a struggle with awkwardness, anger, shame, and bouts of suicidal depression. Yet, despite the intense burdens, he pressed on. At age 18 he acquired settlement funds from the original injury, bought a stylish van, and before his twentieth birthday enjoyed a vacation to Hawaii

with two of his best friends. He eventually underwent a successful phalloplasty, met a single mother with three children, married in 1990, entered the work force, and found pride and purpose in the responsibilities of being a husband and father.

DOCTOR UNDETERRED

While David was struggling through a uniquely difficult childhood and adolescence, John Money was touting Brenda as the poster girl for his pet gender theory. Beginning in 1972, cheery reports of the twins' progress became a staple of Money's lectures, writings, and reputation. His theory of gender neutrality—that early childhood social learning overrides biological imperatives in the shaping of human sexual identity—seemed, at least to him, confirmed and triumphant.

In 1986, during our impressionable freshman year in medical school, my classmates and I heard how the "Oops Baby" disliked being dirty and loved playing with dolls and wearing frilly dresses, i.e., that "she" was a normal girl. We were treated to an animated short film which drove home the point that it is overwhelming familial and social messaging that teaches girls to exhibit feminine behaviors and tastes while boys are programmed in another direction. We were thus taught that gender identity was environmentally and culturally determined; the transmission of gender roles was viewed as a bad, or at least suspect, enterprise, even in conservative 1980s Texas.

In lending medical credence to the thesis that any gender gap is purely a result of cultural conditioning, Money's message perfectly complemented the feminist ideology of the time. Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Money's gender-plasticity



Like other sexual revolutionaries of his time, Dr. Money viewed traditional morality as a harmful vestige of a puritanical, religiously oppressed past. Prudery, such as an aversion to pederasty, was to him a regrettable neurosis of Western society, the root of much unhappiness, and a tradition in need of eradication. Such were the biases of the man who directed an unprecedented psychosexual-engineering experiment on the hapless infant son of two desperate working-class parents.

FEATURE

convictions carried the day—and the decades ahead. By 1975 *The New York Times* dubbed John Money “agent provocateur of the sexual revolution,” and as the Reimer twins progressed through their singular childhood, early sex reassignment became the standard of care.

Long before the Reimer twins began their medical tragedy, however, there were dissenting voices among those seeking the best understanding and care of intersex disorders. Among them was Dr. Milton Diamond, a professor of anatomy and reproductive biology whose own work with intersex persons and research with animal models offered compelling support for the role of the sexual genome and prenatal and early-life hormones in neuronal development, gender differentiation, and development of sex-specific behaviors.

John Money, however, had no tolerance for opposition, even when congenially and professionally offered. His rebuttals to dissenting voices such as Dr. Diamond’s went beyond sneering and ridicule to threats, profane outbursts, and even the throwing of punches. From his storied position in one of the world’s premier medical institutions as director of the Psychohormonal Research Unit and co-founder of the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic, and with the adulation of the popular media of his day, Dr. Money successfully brushed aside those skeptical of his assertions on the development of gender identity.

TRUTH OUTS

Though late in coming, a dogged pursuit of the truth by Dr. Diamond, in cooperation with psychiatrist Keith Sigmundson, resulted in the March 1997 publication of an article in the *Archives of Adolescent and Pediatric Medicine*. It revealed that the famous “Oops Baby” case, like so many modernist tales, was a lie.¹ Later that year, *Rolling Stone* reporter

John Colapinto published “The True Story of John/Joan,” an award-winning article on the case introducing the tragic story to the world at large.² While the Reimer family’s location and identities remained protected, the conversation about sex-reassignment practices in children finally broke out for honest debate.

But when co-opted into the service of propaganda, useful icons die hard. Ernst Haeckel’s fictitious 1868 embryology drawings, for example, remained in freshman biology textbooks as evidence supporting Darwinian evolution even decades after it was well-known among biologists that the drawings were frauds. As I sat among classmates at the UT Medical School in San Antonio in 1986, the Reimer twins were

20 years old, and the lid had long been blown off. Yet four years later, during my residency, I asked a visiting psychiatrist if he had heard an update on the experiment. In a muted response I was told that there were unofficial reports that “she had some adjustment difficulties as a teenager.” More than five years would pass before I learned more. A

full 15 years passed after David Reimer came out to live as a male before the world would hear an honest professional reckoning.

Yet during those years, John Money continued to tout the experiment as an unqualified success. Thousands of children worldwide born with intersex conditions, and a few suffering genital injuries similar to David's, underwent early-life, sex reassignment surgery without their consent—a practice driven by his powerful influence and justified by the “success” of his one famous, yet fraudulent, case.

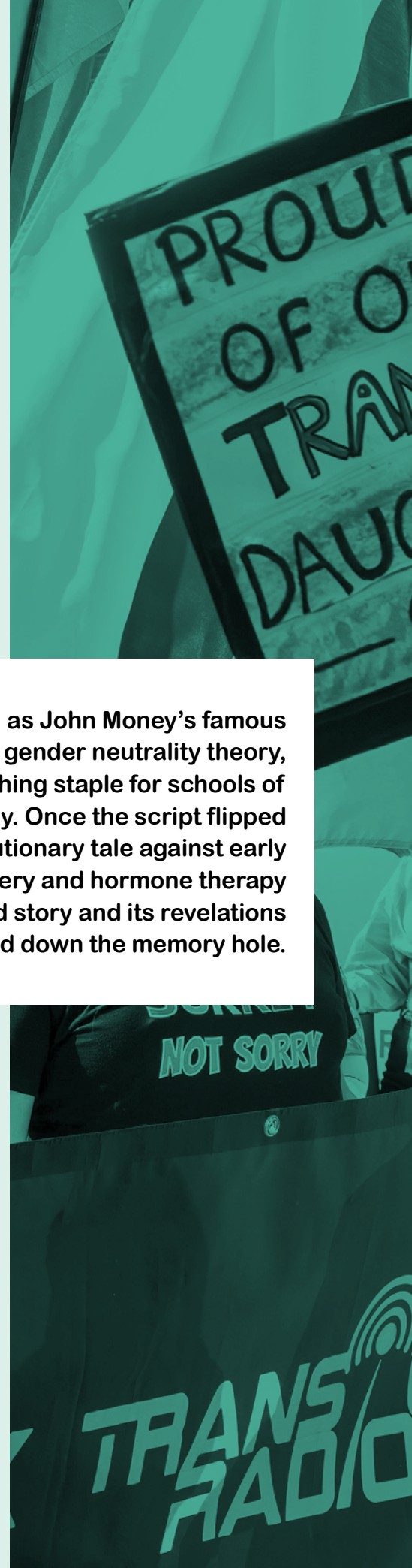
In the pantheon of 20th-century sexual revolutionaries, John Money's influence stands with that of Sigmund Freud, Margaret Sanger, Margaret Mead, Alfred Kinsey, and Hugh Hefner. His legacy, like theirs, includes a personal crusade to de-stigmatize all forms of sexual expression, which he referred to as “paraphilias,” a word coined to replace the judgmental implication of words like “perversion.” Money championed acceptance of fetishism, incest, open marriages, bestiality, transvestitism, and pedophilia. Like other sexual revolutionaries of his time, he viewed traditional morality as a harmful vestige of a puritanical, religiously oppressed past. Prudery, such as an aversion to pederasty, was to him a regrettable neurosis of Western society, the root of much unhappiness, and a tradition in need of eradication. Such were the biases of the man who directed an unprecedented psychosexual-engineering experiment on the hapless infant son of two desperate working-class parents.

Both twins described their early experiences of self-awareness as being permeated by a sense that there was something peculiar and curious about the two of them, that there was a secret involving them to which they were not privy, and that they were watched by adults with a disquieting intensity that made them feel like specimens under a microscope. Both hated their annual encounters with Dr. Money, and Brenda honed skills of evasive resistance and placation to get through his intrusive interviews. Money deployed dubious tactics to coax Brenda along the path of feminine identity, including exposure to pornography and sexual role-playing with Brian. The terrible stress made the family miserable, and the Reimer parents battled depression, alcohol abuse, and contemplations of divorce.

A turning point for David came after the 1997 exposé interviews with Dr. Diamond, Dr. Sigmundson, and John Colapinto. It wasn't until age 32 that he learned how for three decades John Money had misrepresented him and his family's personal catastrophe to support an unproven pet ideology. By hailing the experiment as a clinical triumph, Money had influenced near-universal acceptance of sex-reassignment practices in children. David, in his own words, was “appalled, disgusted, and angry” and motivated to go public.

Neither of the Reimer twins recovered from their tortured childhood. As an adult, Brian struggled with mental illness and died of an overdose in 2002. In deep grief over the loss of his twin brother, David experienced financial and marital stress, and in 2004 he took his own life at age 38. John Money survived until 2006. He never recanted, never apologized.

It appears that so long as John Money's famous twins supported his gender neutrality theory, it stood as a teaching staple for schools of medicine and psychology. Once the script flipped and it became a cautionary tale against early sex-reassignment surgery and hormone therapy for children, the sordid story and its revelations were hastily pushed down the memory hole.



MORAL IMPERATIVES VS. MEDICAL DOUBLESPEAK

Legitimate science progresses through a healthy argument-counter argument give-and-take that usually leads down an interesting and winding journey of discovery. This tradition defines the core purpose of peer-reviewed journals in science and medicine. Alleged discoveries, hypotheses, and assertions are presented to the professional fraternity, critiqued, challenged, honed, and then accepted at some level or discarded. Most confident scientists value the integrity of the process and welcome the creative tension that comes with open discussion, recognizing refined truth to be the reward in view.

If David Reimer and three decades of intersex-surgery victims teach us anything, it is that male genomes build male brains while female genomes build female brains, and, contra Freud, what develops in the loins is far less determinative of one's identity than what forms in the cranium. At least four decades of data attest that children are not capable of giving informed consent to radical medical and surgical therapies. In intersex conundrums and anatomical injuries alike, hubris and the scalpel must be held in check until the patients themselves are mature enough to lead the decision-making team.

As progressive transgender activism today gives the practice of child sex-reassignment a renaissance, David Reimer, by ideological necessity, must be forgotten. I currently serve as faculty with a family medicine residency program where I daily interact with recent graduates of several medical schools. None of the young doctors-in-training have heard of the "Oops Baby" or David

Reimer's case, nor had an acquaintance who graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 2013 with a master's degree in "Women's Sexuality and Gender Studies." It appears that so long as John Money's famous twins supported his gender neutrality theory, it stood as a teaching staple for schools of medicine and psychology. Once the script flipped and it became a cautionary tale against early sex-reassignment surgery and hormone therapy for children, the sordid story and its revelations were hastily pushed down the memory hole.

To be fair, as a science, medical progress requires a degree of trial and error.

It is understandable that clinicians in the 1960s investigated surgery and hormonal therapies as a potential solution to the complex difficulties of intersex disorders. But before sufficient time had passed, or a respectable body of data had been assimilated, David Reimer became "patient zero" for surgical, hormonal, and social sex-reassignment experimentation. And more than 50 years on, the outcome of the Reimer experiment, the distress of more than a generation of intersex patients, and the research of biologists like Milton Diamond offer sufficient data to give anyone with a modicum of objectivity a hard pause.

While the sequelae of the transgender project currently underway will not be realized for decades, the legacy of the John Money era is evidence enough to demand open professional and public debate, hard challenges to current practices, and legal accountability where justified. The aggressive and radical treatments that went so awry for David and others are currently being foisted upon prepubescent children, not as remediation for injury or developmental anomalies, but merely as treatment for anxiety, for doubts, or for entertaining fashionable groupthink about their biological sex. A boy walking out of his mother's closet grinning while wearing her red high-heeled shoes, or a girl with a tomboy personality, or a group of adolescent girlfriends dabbling in transgender thinking now risk ensnarement into an activist agenda of tampering that includes early puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and body-part amputations. In such a milieu the term "Gender Affirming Care" is not merely a euphemism; it is a jarring example of doublespeak.

Had he survived, David Reimer would be 60 years old this year. His earnest, engaging eyes and baritone voice still speak a desperate call for patience, humility, and caution. ☹



David Reimer in 2000

Notes

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2. John Colapinto, "The True Story of John / Joan," *Rolling Stone* (Dec. 11, 1997).

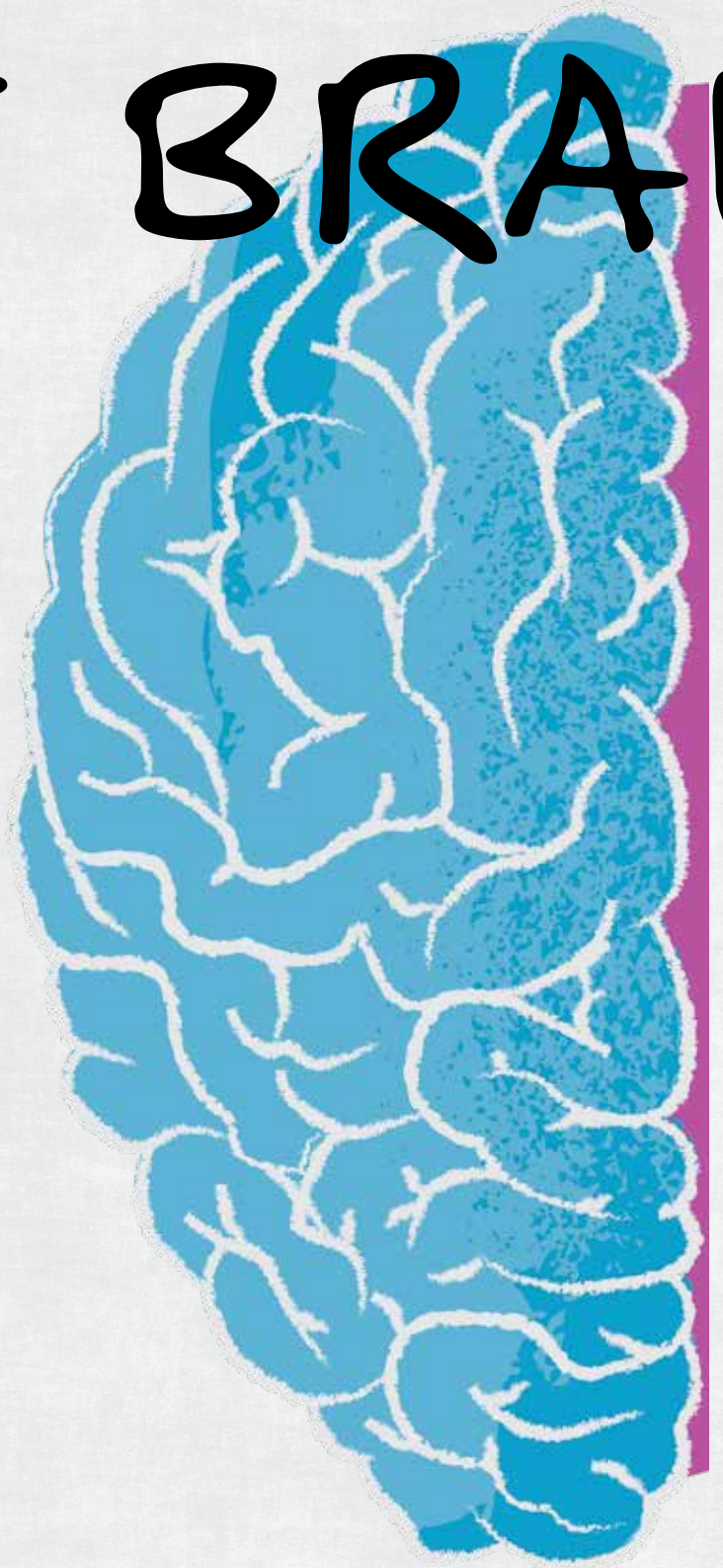
THE BRAIN

HOW REAL ARE MALE & FEMALE?

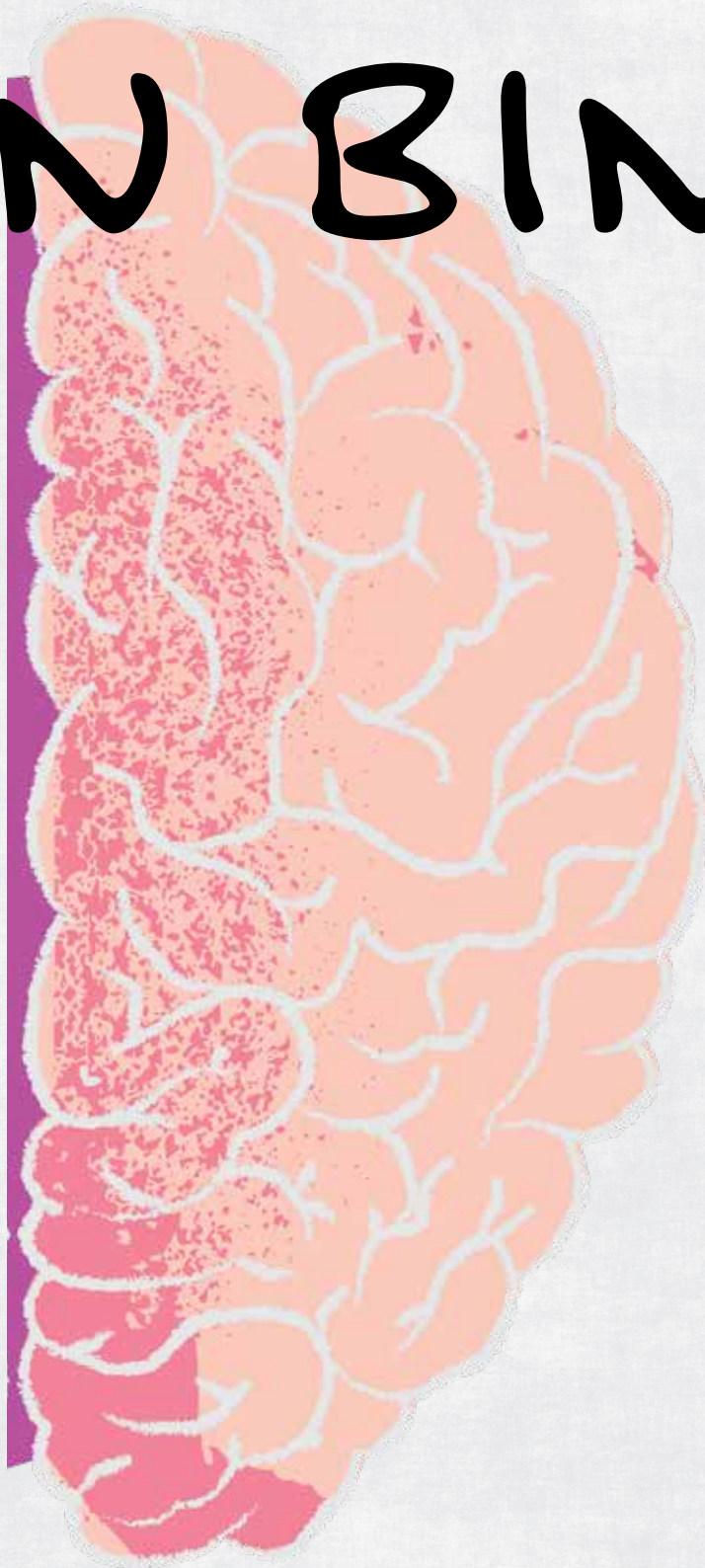
by Leonard Sax

Are male brains really that different from female brains? Does it matter? Why should anybody care?

In 1873, Dr. Edward Clarke, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, published a book titled *Sex in Education: or, A Fair Chance for the Girls*. Dr. Clarke proclaimed that if a girl spent too much time studying or playing competitive sports, she would divert blood away from her uterus, rendering the unfortunate girl "irritable and infertile." When Dr. Clarke wrote that he wanted girls to have "a fair chance," he meant a fair chance to become a mother and a housewife. Dr. Clarke's book became a bestseller and inspired state legislatures to enact official bans on girls in competitive sports, some of which remained in place for decades. More than 50 years later, in 1925, the National Association of Secondary School Principals voted 72 to 7 to ban extramural sports for girls.



NON BINARY



Twenty-seven years after Dr. Clarke published his bestseller, German neurologist Paul Julius Möbius published a scholarly monograph titled *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes*, "Regarding the physiological weak-mindedness of women." Möbius noted that women have brains which are significantly smaller than the brains of men, even after adjusting for differences in height. He concluded that women are "physiologically weak-minded." In making that claim, Möbius was continuing a tradition in Western thought which we can trace back to Aristotle, namely, that women and men are different—and that men are better.

"The Idea of Gender?"

Twentieth-century feminism was an attempt to push back against Dr. Clarke, Dr. Möbius, Aristotle, and all the other misogynists who insisted that there are hardwired differences between men and women and that those differences mean that men are better and women are disqualified. Second-wave feminists of the 20th century, such as Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, and Shulamith Firestone, sought to deconstruct the systemic and legal barriers which blocked women from equality. But those women did not challenge the gender binary, the division of the human race into male and female.

That changed with Judith Butler. Butler, a professor of comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley, took a sledgehammer to the gender binary. In 1990, Butler wrote in her book *Gender Trouble* that "because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all." For this insight, she was rewarded with an avalanche of scholarly honors and prizes, including the Mellon Prize, which earned Professor Butler a \$1.5 million cash award. (By comparison, the Nobel Prize gets you less than \$1.1 million.)

Butler's claim that gender is a social construct, not a biological fact, has become widely accepted at leading universities worldwide in the decades since

the publication of *Gender Trouble*. A few years back, Cordelia Fine, professor of history and philosophy at the University of Melbourne, published a book titled *Testosterone Rex: Unmaking the Myths of Our Gendered Minds* (2017). Following Butler, Fine asserted that any claims that women and men differ significantly in brain or behavior are simply lies perpetuated by the heteronormative patriarchy. Fine's book promptly received the Royal Society's prestigious prize for best science book of the year.

Demonstrated Differences

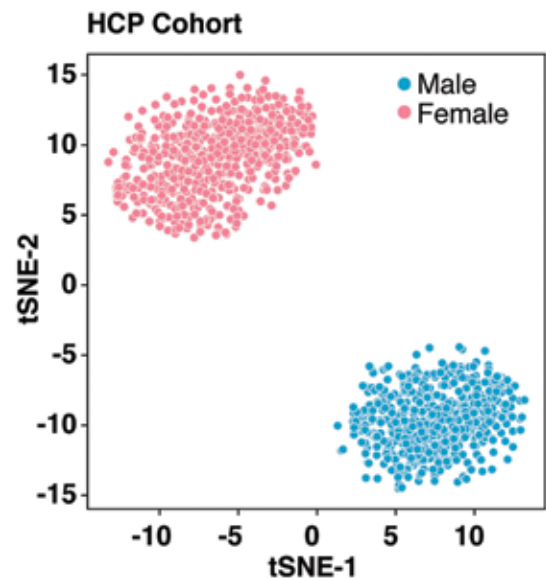
The worldview promulgated by Butler, Fine, and their followers now constrains what neuroscientists are allowed to say. A professor of neurophysiology at Lund University in Sweden told undergraduates that the categories of female and male are, to some degree, biological realities rather than social constructs and that some differences in behavior between women and men might, therefore—maybe, just maybe—have a biological basis. He was promptly denounced by students who claimed that his remarks were “anti-feminist.” The dean of the medical school duly launched an investigation.¹

The arguments of men from Aristotle to Möbius have made many modern researchers understandably leery of arguments regarding female/male differences in the brain. And researchers have long since established that there are, in fact, no differences in average intelligence between men and women. But investigators have consistently found that women are more likely than men to suffer from anxiety and depression.² Conversely, men are more likely than women to be diagnosed with autism,³ attention-deficit disorder,⁴ and schizophrenia.⁵ Are these male/female differences merely social constructs? Or might these robust differences in psychopathology reflect at least in part some underlying differences in neuroanatomy or neural connectivity?

A recent review of MRI studies of female and male brains concluded that “MRI-based studies exploring differences between male and female brains revealed mostly inconsistent and inconclusive findings.”⁶ Others have argued that while there might be differences, on average, between male and female brains, the differences lie on a continuum with lots of overlap.⁷

But researchers at Stanford Medical School recently used deep learning artificial intelligence methods to examine brain activity in roughly 1,500 young adults 20–35 years of age.⁸ Neuroscientists have known for many years that every human brain is characterized by a “fingerprint” of brain activity at rest, unique to that individual.⁹ The Stanford neuroscientists used artificial intelligence techniques to determine the fingerprint of every one of those young adults and then compared females with males. Did females differ from males? Was there overlap?

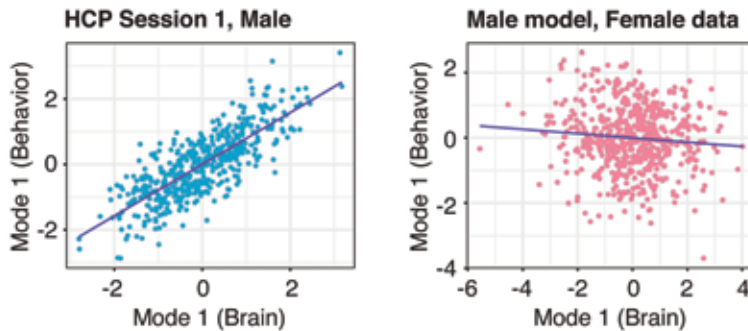
The results were astonishing:



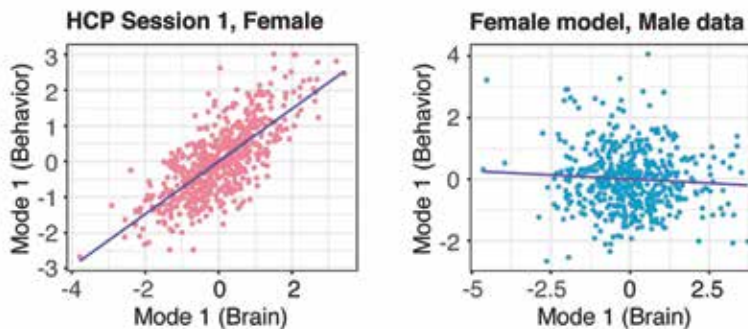
As you can see, there wasn't a continuum: the female fingerprints of brain activity were quite different from the male fingerprints of brain activity, with no overlap. These findings strongly suggest that what's going on in a woman's brain at rest is significantly different from what's going on in a man's brain at rest. And the variation among the women, as well as among the men, was smaller than the difference between the sexes.

Just as remarkably, the Stanford team used artificial intelligence methods to map fMRI (functional MRI) patterns of connectivity onto cognitive functions such as intelligence. They found particular patterns of anatomy and connectivity within male

brains which accurately predicted cognitive functions such as intelligence among the men. But that male model had *no* predictive power for cognitive functions in women, as shown below.



Conversely, they found patterns of anatomy and connectivity within female brains which accurately predicted cognitive functions such as intelligence among women. But that female model had no predictive power for cognitive functions in men, as shown:



These findings strongly suggest that whatever determines intelligence in the brains of men is completely different from the determinants of intelligence in women. And whatever determines intelligence in women is completely different from the determinants of intelligence in men.

The researchers are well aware of the implications of their findings. They know all about the previous studies suggesting small effect sizes, lots of overlap, and a continuum of male/female difference. They conclude that the failure of previous work to demonstrate the effects they found is due to the "weaker algorithms" employed in earlier research. They conclude: "Our results provide the most compelling and generalizable evidence to date, refuting this continuum hypothesis and firmly demonstrating sex differences in the functional organization of the human brain."

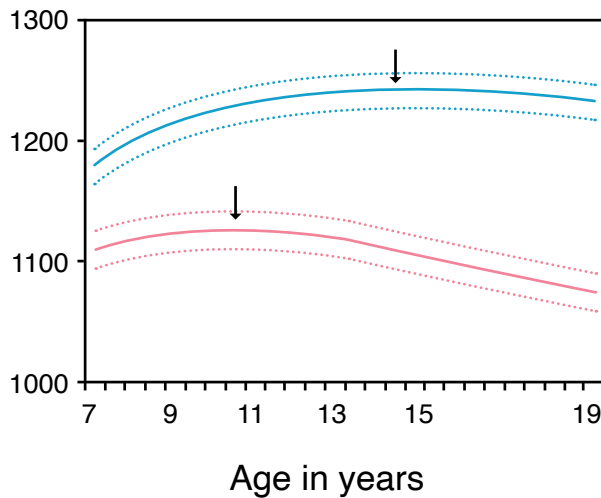
There has been very little coverage of this report in the mainstream media. You will find no mention of it in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, or National Public Radio. But the study has not gone unnoticed. Followers of Judith Butler are aware of the study and have responded. Gina Rippon, a Butler disciple, noted that all the study participants were ages 20–35 years old.¹⁰ "Just knowing that the brains come from young female adults as opposed to young male adults will never give us the full picture of where any differences came from," she objected. "It is perfectly plausible that there may be sex-related differences in how brains are shaped by social experiences," she countered—perhaps something like 20–35 years' exposure to heteronormative Western patriarchy (all subjects were from the United States or Western Europe). Are the differences hardwired, or socially constructed? Nature or nurture? If gender is just a performance, then 20 years of performing may have changed the brains to produce the differences found by the Stanford researchers. Maybe.

Differences in Utero

But Rippon herself shows no awareness of other studies showing that these sex differences are actually present prior to birth. For example, a team of American researchers used high-resolution MRI scanners to examine the brains of babies still in their mothers' wombs, in the third trimester of pregnancy.¹¹ They found dramatic differences in the connections within the brains of boys compared with those of girls, anticipating the differences found in the Stanford study.

Likewise, researchers at the National Institutes of Health have tracked a large cohort of children, with each child coming in year after year to have his or her brain scanned.¹² Girls' brains are smaller than boys' brains, at every age, and girls mature faster than boys do. Girls reach the inflection point—indicated by the arrow, roughly the halfway point in brain development—around 11 years of age (see graph on next page). Boys don't reach the inflection point until around 15 years of age. Girls reach full maturity in brain development by roughly 22 years of age. Boys don't reach full maturity until about 30 years of age.

Total brain volume (cc) for males and females



Vive La Différence

As it turns out, that old German neurologist Dr. Möbius was not wrong on the data. Women do have smaller brains than men. But when he concluded that women were therefore weak-minded, he was assuming that women's brains and men's brains operate in the same way. They do not. When a woman and a man are both doing the same math problem, for example, they are using very different brain regions: men's brains are more compartmentalized; women use more areas of the brain for the same task.¹³ Women's brains are smaller but develop faster and function more globally. Men's brains are somewhat larger but apparently are more pigeon-holed.

Differences do not imply an order of rank.

Apples and oranges are different. That doesn't mean apples are better than oranges. Ovaries and testicles are different. That doesn't mean ovaries are better than testicles, or vice versa.

The gender binary is not an arbitrary social construct. It is a biological reality, manifest in the organization of the human brain prior to birth. Men and women are different. That doesn't mean men are better or that women are better. It does mean, or should mean, that we need to work harder to understand the differences. A better understanding of the differences might improve our ability to prevent and treat those conditions that are gender-weighted, such as autism and psychotic disorders among men, and anxiety and depression among women.

Genesis 1:27 reads, "In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." It doesn't say "Black and white he created him." It doesn't say "Asian and Hispanic he created him." Black, white, Asian, and Hispanic are, for the most part, man-made. But male and female are of God.®

Notes

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4. Arnett et al., "Sex Differences in ADHD Symptom Severity," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 56 (2015), 632–639.
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NATURALLY OPTIMIZED

Why We Can Be Grateful for "Natural Disasters"

by Hugh Ross



With all the suffering, devastation, and death caused by hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, droughts, wildfires, and other natural disasters, many people question a Creator's existence, and especially his power and goodness. After all, they argue, God *could* have created a realm for us that's free from such nightmares. He could have created a universe with different laws of gravity, thermodynamics, and electromagnetism, and with different nuclear forces and physical laws.

Different Physics to Come

According to the Bible, a disaster-free, wholly good, perfectly wondrous creation is exactly what God has planned for humanity's future. The apostle John writes in Revelation 21 that in the new creation, death, mourning, and pain will have no part—which implies nothing will decay or wear out. Thermodynamics will no longer be in effect. He adds that light will no longer come from astronomical objects like the Sun and other stars. Instead, God's glory will illuminate everything. Therefore, light in the new creation will not be electromagnetic radiation. John's depiction of a cubical or pyramidal structure of enormous size implies the absence of gravitational forces. How can we infer this? Gravity would force any body of comparable size into a spherical shape.

In this new creation, no need exists for thermodynamics, electromagnetism, or gravity because the risk that anyone living there will exercise free will for any purpose other than good is now gone. In other words, the possibility of anyone's choosing to sin or do wrong will have been eliminated.

But what about now?

One of the ways God is working today to bring about an end to sin and evil is by allowing humans to experience thermodynamics, electromagnetism, and gravity. These laws of physics serve as a deterrent from, and limitation on, the damage caused by sin. They guarantee that as we humans commit evil, extra pain, work, and time will be needed to repair the damage. The more sin humans commit, the more pain, work, and time is required for repair and prevention.

God designed humans with an aversion to extra pain, work, and wasted time. This aversion is strong enough that parents, teachers, and governing authorities use it in their efforts to discipline children, students, and adults for their other-than-good attitudes and actions.

At the same time, the laws of physics serve to help expose our inability to be and do good perfectly and consistently. All who long for goodness come to recognize their lack of it. Those who seek to find it come to realize that the Creator, the source of all love and goodness, would not have left them without hope. Jesus of Nazareth, the only perfectly good human, identifies himself as “the way, the truth, and the life” on our behalf.

Remarkably, the laws of physics that both train us and restrain us must be exactly as they are to make possible our deliverance from the consequences of our incapacity for goodness. Jesus took on himself all the consequences of our lack of goodness. He suffered and died in our place. However, he didn’t stay dead. He arose, bodily, from the grave. As Jesus explained to his disciples before his execution, “In this world you will have tribulation [thermodynamics, electromagnetism, gravity, and ongoing exposure to sin and evil], but take heart; I have overcome the world [with all its physical limitations]” (John 16:33, ESV).

Optimized Physics, Optimized Earth

In this world, the laws of physics and countless physical characteristics of Earth serve to ensure that hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, ice ages, floods, droughts, diseases, parasites, wildfires, etc. are set at the optimal frequency and intensity to benefit humanity’s

well-being while minimizing the devastation caused by such things. For example, too few hurricanes, or hurricanes of lesser intensity, would reduce the input of sea salt aerosols and bacterial and viral particles into the atmosphere. A reduction would lead to decreased rainfall over landmasses and would thereby limit food production.

Hurricanes and, to a lesser degree, tornadoes function as global thermostats. Hurricanes prevent tropical and subtropical ocean temperatures from rising to levels deadly to fish and other ocean animals and plants. Hurricanes and tornadoes lower dangerously high temperatures on landmasses. Hurricanes deliver chlorophyll to continental shelf ecosystems.

Plate tectonic activity, which produces earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and geysers, plays a crucial role in building islands and continents. Without strong, continual plate tectonic activity, all Earth’s landmasses would eventually erode into Earth’s oceans. Instead, Earth’s plate tectonic activity remains at a fine-tuned level that compensates for Earth’s erosion. Thus, the percentage of Earth’s surface covered by

The Bible reveals a Creator who is all-powerful, all-loving, and all-knowing. He sees everything that occurs. Yet it seems as if he stands by while hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of people suffer or die from the effects of a natural event. This is one of the most familiar and painful challenges raised by those who doubt or disbelieve in God.

landmasses is steadily maintained at an optimal level for both terrestrial and marine life.

Volcanic eruptions can be catastrophic to people and animals living nearby. Nevertheless, many people choose to live near volcanoes because volcanically enriched soils produce nutrient-rich bumper crops. Likewise, geysers can cause serious injury and even death. However, geyser basins also are valuable assets. They help heat homes, buildings, and farms and produce low-cost electricity. Iceland, for example, fulfills nearly all its space-heating needs and draws 26 percent of its electricity from geothermal power plants.

Earth's plate tectonic activity drives the silicate-carbonate cycle, whereby silicates in Earth's landmasses plus carbon dioxide in Earth's atmosphere are converted into carbonates and sand. This cycle transforms an economically low-value material, silicates, into industrially high-value carbonates and sand.

An invaluable byproduct of the silicate-carbonate cycle is the ongoing removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Because carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, its removal via the

silicate-carbonate cycle helps keep Earth's surface cool. Over the past 3.8 billion years, this ongoing cooling process has perfectly compensated for the Sun's increasing brightness. Thanks to just-right levels of plate tectonic activity throughout Earth's history, the warming of Earth's surface due to the Sun's gradually increasing brightness has been balanced by the cooling of Earth's surface due to carbon dioxide removal from the atmosphere.

Earth's steady, strong plate tectonic activity has maintained several other life-essential cycles. Carbon, water, and oxygen are continually cycled through Earth's atmosphere, crust, asthenosphere, and mantle. Three past tectonic events in Earth's history dramatically accelerated Earth's deep oxygen cycle. These events raised the oxygen content in Earth's atmosphere from less than 0.001 percent to its present 21 percent.

For the past 200 million years, plate tectonic activity has kept Earth's atmospheric oxygen level at a steady 21 percent. Birds and mammals thrive at this level. This quantity of atmospheric oxygen also makes wildfires possible, and soil studies reveal how crucial wildfires are for civilization.

Forest fires regularly remove dead vegetation on forest floors—vegetation that inhibits tree, shrub, and grass growth. Burning off this organic litter gives seeds and seedlings access to minerals in the soil. This burnoff also stimulates nitrogen-fixing microbes, thereby enriching soils with essential nutrients for growing food. Wildfires also deposit charcoal into Earth's soils. This charcoal injects other important nutrients and conditions the soil for superior water retention. Apart from human intervention, the natural wildfire rate is optimal for sustaining large, diverse ecosystems serving complex microbes, plants, and animals.

In Earth's current ice age cycle, 90,000-year cold periods, or *glacials*, are interspersed with 10,000-year warm periods, or *interglacials*. During the transition from glacials to interglacials, nutrient-rich dust is blown off Earth's high plateaus onto Earth's great agricultural plains,

and melting ice left over from the previous glacial period waters these plains. Thanks to this process, humans can grow sufficient food for 8 billion people and all their animals. The interglacial in which we currently live follows the most severe ice age in the entire ice age cycle. As a result, fjords have been cut along high-latitude landmasses, providing humanity with well-protected, deep-water harbors that facilitate global trade.

Every presumed “natural evil,” when properly understood in the context of the present physical laws and space-time dimensions, is a natural phenomenon that has been exquisitely fine-tuned by our Creator for the benefit of Earth’s animals, ecosystems, humans, and civilization. Earth’s “natural evils,” properly understood, are exquisitely designed natural blessings.

Building Our Homes on Rock

The fact that so-called natural disasters have been shown to benefit Earth’s ecosystems and human civilization doesn’t mean we can dismiss the risks and dangers of such events. Nor can we ignore the ways humans have amplified the risks. For example, Native Americans, before the arrival of Europeans, avoided settling along the east coast of what is now Florida because of hurricane risk. Today, many people, including many senior citizens, live in mobile homes on those beaches. Nature’s outbursts would not be so catastrophic if we were to avoid building “houses on the sand” (Matt. 7:26–27).

The Bible reveals a Creator who is all-powerful, all-loving, and all-knowing. He sees everything that occurs. Yet it seems as if he stands by while hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of people suffer or die from the effects of a natural event. This is one of the most familiar

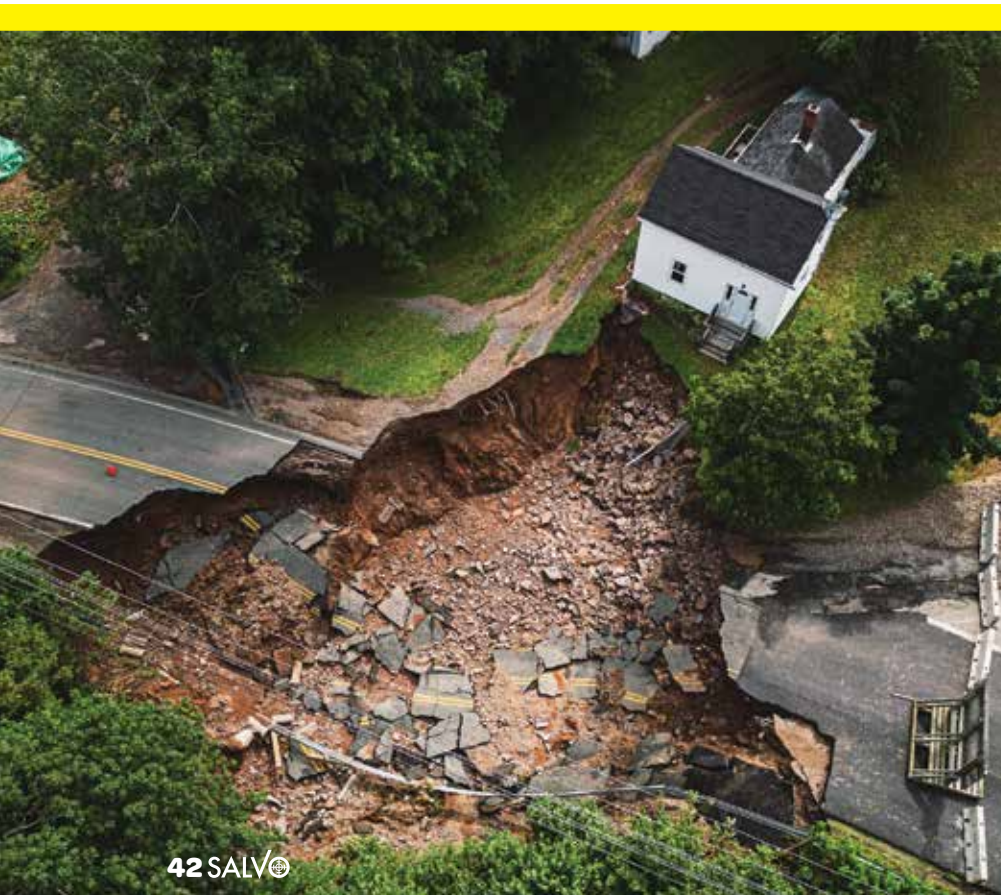
and painful challenges raised by those who doubt or disbelieve in God. It must be addressed, but with compassion for those who grieve. No one but the author of life knows the optimal time for any human life to begin and end. We have his promise to know and act on what’s ultimately best for each person—from his *eternal* perspective.

We must face the fact that no human being is perfectly innocent. All have resisted God’s authority in one way or another, whether visibly (to us) or not. Everyone falls short of God’s moral perfection. So a person may be innocent of a certain offense, especially of one related to the natural disaster in question, but no one is innocent in an absolute sense. No one has the moral standing to convict God of injustice.

To assume that God stands idly by when natural disasters occur is to ignore significant facts. Consider how many people survive nature’s “outbursts,” often against all reasonable odds. We cannot determine how catastrophic any event “might have been” apart from God’s restraining hand. We all know of miraculous survival stories, people rescued from what seemed certain death. Again, the God of the Bible knows and acts according to a view of reality humans do not possess.

If God were to intervene in an overriding way in all natural disasters, he would abrogate the benefits, including the disciplinary and protective effects, of the physical laws he established. None of us would gain the eternal blessing of redemption, the gift of eternal life with our Creator.

With no possibility of sin or evil in the new creation, the current laws of physics will no longer have a purpose. Therefore, there will be no natural “disasters” there—no more decay or darkness, sadness or death, only life as yet unimaginably glorious. ☉



Darwin's Orphan Nemesis

An Army of Orphan Genes Plagues Evolutionary Theory

by Jonathan Witt

In recent years a great host of orphans has descended on the camp of the Darwinists—not a human army but an army of genetic code known colloquially as *orphan genes*, or more technically as *taxonomically restricted genes* (TRGs).¹ Evolutionary theory led evolutionists to expect such genes to be rare. As it turns out, they aren't.

Genes are strings of DNA, many of which code for different kinds of proteins. Proteins come in thousands of different shapes and sizes and comprise a diverse kit of micro-miniature machines and other tools essential for life. DNA is “written” using a four-character alphabet (analogous to the way English text is written using a 26-letter alphabet). Some genes, if written out in the four chemical “letters” of DNA—adenine (A), thymine (T), cytosine (C), and guanine (G)—would be only a sentence long. Most genes would be at least a paragraph long. Many others would be chapter length. A few genes would dwarf *War and Peace*.

Orphan Genes

An orphan gene is a gene whose DNA sequence is so bracingly different from any other known gene in any other plant, animal, or microbe that evolutionists label it an orphan. That's because evolutionists typically use genetic similarity between genes as a marker of relatedness between the organisms possessing the genes. Find two genes with highly similar DNA sequences, and perhaps one gene evolved from the other, with the very few differences put down to random genetic mutations in the DNA during reproduction somewhere in the chain of generations. But

an orphan gene doesn't resemble any known gene in any other species or group. It's as if the gene, like the biblical Melchizedek, had appeared on the scene “without father or mother or genealogy.”²

To the evolutionists, that can't be right! According to modern Darwinism, all life evolved through a series of small genetic mutations from a universal common ancestor, spreading and diversifying like the branches of a great tree. As biologist Ann Gauger explains, “The working assumption had been that, given common descent and the fact that most housekeeping genes are shared among living things, and the assumption hitherto that evolution occurs by incremental small changes, orphan genes (protein-coding sequences without known protein-coding antecedents) should be rare if not non-existent.”³

When molecular biologists began sequencing the DNA of various species, and these unexpected orphan genes started popping up, evolutionists didn't panic, however. Philosopher of biology Paul Nelson tells of a lecture he gave at Dartmouth in 2005 on the challenge orphan genes pose for Darwinism. Someone in the audience objected that only 122 bacterial species had been sequenced; surely biologists would find the families of these



taxonomically restricted genes once additional sequencing had been completed. But that's not how things played out.

As Nelson pointed out recently, fully eighteen years after his Dartmouth talk, a Polish research team surveyed the genomes of more than 80,000 bacterial species and some 250 million bacterial proteins. They uncovered 10.7 million taxonomically restricted proteins.⁴ And the numbers keep growing.

The same thing is happening with the genes of plants and animals. It's a California Gold Rush, and the orphan genes are the gold. The action is so lively that a prominent science journal, *PLOS One*, recently published a peer-reviewed paper reporting on "ORFanID: A Web-Based Search Engine for the Discovery and Identification of Orphan and Taxonomically Restricted Genes."⁵ The term "ID" in the search engine name refers to the engine's ability to help investigators identify previously undiscovered orphan genes. But, as it so happens, the engine's development was funded by a grant from Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, the leading institutional hub for work on the theory of intelligent design (ID), where I serve as a senior fellow.

It Gets Worse

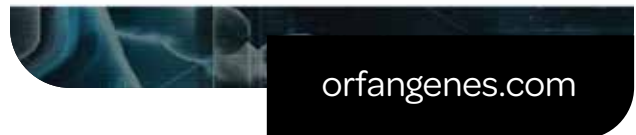
In an earlier *Salvo* piece, I noted that this orphan-gene gold rush clashes with Darwinian expectations but fits neatly with the intelligent design perspective. As I explained, if an organism has a feature shared with another species, then we might expect the designer of life to repurpose an already-existing stretch of DNA for programming that feature; but if the feature is unique to the species or lineage, then we tend to expect the designer to have written new DNA code for the new feature (like software engineers do), resulting in a lot of unique code across the biosphere, much as we're finding. My earlier description is true in broad outline, but it actually understates the problem for the Darwinists.

Researchers are discovering that oftentimes even a shared feature across a group of "sister" species is programmed in each species by its own unique orphan genes. Nelson offers a for-instance. "In many species of mollusks, the way that they construct their mantle and their shell ... is mediated by species-specific proteins—[and] of course, species-specific genes coding for those proteins—which one would not expect on the view that all mollusks share a common ancestor."⁶



ORFanID

ID is a web-based software engine that identifies ORFan genes from the genomes of a species or from a given list of DNA sequences. The scope of the search for orphan genes can be selected on the basis of the taxonomy level of interest. Detectable homologous sequences are found in the NCBI databases. From these findings the ORFanID engine identifies and classifies the genes. Results may be viewed and analyzed graphically for the purpose of scientific inquiry.



Undaunted

Undeterred by this burgeoning host of orphan genes, evolutionists have grown increasingly creative in explaining away this onslaught of uncooperative evidence.

One such explanation is to say that these orphans will turn out to be functionless junk. But no, more and more it's turning out that orphan genes do important work for the organisms.

Okay, then maybe the pattern is due to what is known as horizontal gene transfer, or perhaps to

Because for them evolution *must* be true (and intelligent design rejected), and because it now appears that evolutionary theory absolutely requires easy-peasy de novo gene evolution to account for all these orphan genes, therefore such presto-chango evolution must be the case.

gene loss. "The hypothesis was that what appeared to be unique was so because it was the result of some rare transfer between species, and we hadn't identified the source," writes Gauger. "Or what once was widespread had been lost over evolutionary time." But no, she adds, such explanations have not been borne out by subsequent investigation.

Okay, then perhaps the orphans are related to other genes, but their DNA sequences diverged so dramatically as to be unrecognizable. On this view, Gauger explains, "only their protein structures might reveal relatedness," but "this also has not been borne out by studies that have determined structures of orphan proteins."⁷

So how do evolutionists rescue their theory? Some have taken to claiming that, as it so happens, it's actually really easy to get brand-new genes from random (non-coding) DNA and the like.⁸ Sure, this flies in the face of decades of evolutionary thinking based on probability calculations in population genetics. But because for them evolution *must* be true (and intelligent design rejected), and because it now appears that evolutionary theory absolutely requires easy-peasy de novo gene evolution to account for all these orphan genes, therefore such presto-chango evolution must be the case.

"Their method of determining how orphan genes originated is simple," writes biochemist Emily Reeves:

Here it is: they counted them. Since they exist, it must have been a cinch for evolution to create them.... From the junkpile of non-coding DNA, strands with "potential" to be functional exist, waiting for their moment in the light. Once they show some function, natural selection is fully capable of amplifying them

into genes from scratch.... Evolution *is* a fact, remember? It's the Darwin skeptics' fault if they can't see the logic.⁹

Defying the Evidence

This solution from the Darwinian faithful doesn't just defy the hard-won findings of population genetics. It also butts up against research by Douglas Axe and others showing that, if anything, it's far more difficult to evolve new proteins (and by extension, the new genes that code for them) than previously assumed.¹⁰

The results of such research, conducted at laboratories in Cambridge, England, and elsewhere, should not come as a surprise. Our uniform and repeated experience tells us that generating significant amounts of novel, functional information doesn't happen by chance. It requires a mind. Our uniform experience tells us this, and probability calculations applied to everything from English text and software code to DNA confirm it.

What of this army of orphan genes, growing year by year? The Darwinists are partially right. There is a sense in which none of these orphan genes are true orphans. They each have a father. A maker. As do we all. ☺

Notes

1. While there is overlap with the two terms, "orphan gene" typically refers to a gene that occurs in only one species, whereas "taxonomically restricted gene" may refer to that or to a gene restricted to, say, the various species of a single genus or clade.
2. See Genesis 14:18–20.
3. Ann Gauger, "Orphan Genes: A Guide for the Perplexed," *Evolution News & Science Today* (Jul. 30, 2013).
4. Andrzej Zielezinski, Wojciech Dobrychlop, and Wojciech M Karłowski, "TRGdb: A Universal Resource for the Exploration of Taxonomically Restricted Genes in Bacteria," *Database* (2023).
5. Richard S. Gunasekera et al., *PLOS One*, "ORFanID: A Web-Based Search Engine for the Discovery and Identification of Orphan and Taxonomically Restricted Genes" (Oct. 25, 2023).
6. "Paul Nelson on Orphan Genes and Evolution," *ID the Future* podcast, Ep. 996 (Mar. 15, 2017), 05:44 ff.
7. Ann Gauger, "About Orphan Genes—What's the Big Problem for Evolution?" *Evolution News & Science Today* (Nov. 6, 2018).
8. Diethard Tautz and Tomislav Domazet-Lošo, "The Evolutionary Origin of Orphan Genes," *Nature Reviews Genetics*, vol. 12 (2011), 692–702; "Genes from Scratch: Far More Common and Important than We Thought," *Science News* (Feb. 18, 2020).
9. Emily Reeves, "Researchers: It Exists; Therefore, It Evolved," *Evolution News & Science Today* (Mar. 11, 2020).
10. John F. Reidhaar-Olson and Robert T. Sauer, "Functionally Acceptable Substitutions in Two Alpha-Helical Regions of Lambda Repressor," *Proteins: Structure, Function, and Genetics*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1990), 306–316; Douglas D. Axe, "Estimating the Prevalence of Protein Sequences Adopting Functional Enzyme Folds," *Journal of Molecular Biology*, vol. 341 (2004), 1295–1315. For further discussion and additional peer-reviewed research supporting Axe's findings, see Stephen C. Meyer, *Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe*, pp. 319–325 and the accompanying endnotes.



Faith Ineffectual

Can Cultural Christianity Save Christian Culture?

by Denyse O'Leary

Two very well-known figures, Elon Musk and Richard Dawkins, recently announced that they are “cultural Christians.” Is this a passing fad, or does it reflect a heartfelt wish to preserve something that is at risk in our culture?

A bit of background: Musk told Jordan Peterson that he is a cultural Christian in an interview broadcast on X last July.¹ Musk said he read widely in religious and philosophical texts in his youth but found no enduring answers. At last, guided by Douglas Adams's *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, he decided that he adheres to the “religion of curiosity.” Later he added, “So I'm actually a big believer in the principles of Christianity. I think they're very good.”

He summed up, “I would say I'm probably a cultural Christian.” He went on to say that Christian values “are going to lead to a better society, I think, a society that we would prefer [to live in].” But elsewhere he has said that he believes in “the God of Spinoza,” essentially the deistic god of the philosophers.²

And what of Dawkins, author of, among other anti-theistic writings, *The God Delusion* (2006)? It sounds even more improbable that he would say, “I call myself a cultural Christian.” He did not use to say that, or certainly not very loudly anyway. But now he does.

Some of his qualifiers are helpful. He does not believe “a word of the Christian faith,” but he prefers Christianity to rising Islam, and he likes its cultural outcome: “I feel that we are a Christian country in that sense.”³

What about “Pragmatic Christianity”?

Less improbably, Canadian psychologist and author Jordan Peterson has been orbiting Christianity for years but has never said that he is a confessing Christian. He calls himself a “pragmatic Christian.” Significantly, his latest book is *We Who Wrestle*



with God: Perceptions of the Divine (Portfolio 2024). Attempting to assess his position, the staff at *FaithIt* conclude,

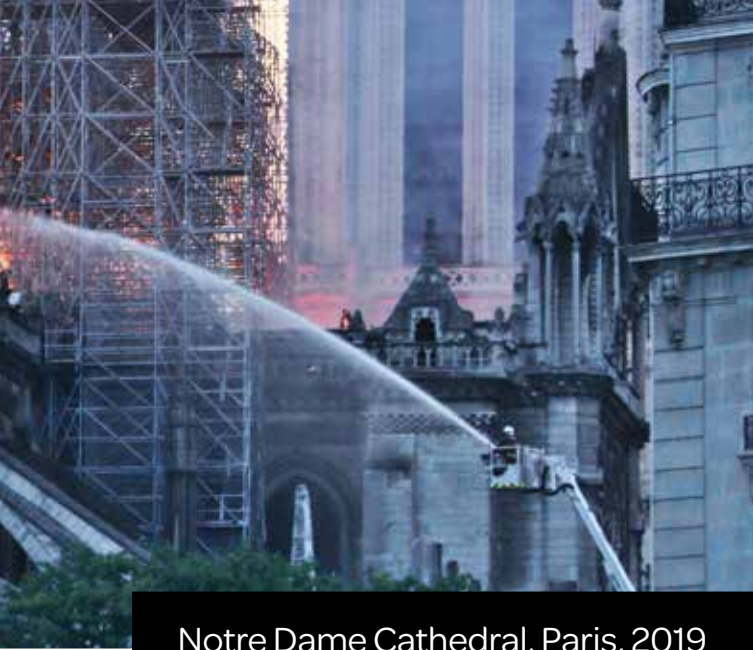
Peterson's views on God, prayer, and morality reflect a commitment to grappling with life's deepest questions in a manner that is intellectually rigorous, personally transformative, and fundamentally oriented towards the pursuit of truth. This exploration of Peterson's beliefs reveals a thinker who navigates the complexities of faith with a blend of reverence, skepticism, and a ceaseless quest for understanding.⁴

Recently, Peterson debated cultural Christianity with Dawkins. Dawkins made clear that he did not “value Christianity as a truth system at all.” But he appreciated the fact that Christians do not throw gays off buildings or practice clitoridectomy. Peterson took issue with his approach but could not articulate a clear position himself.⁵

But Is It Enough?

Last summer at *New Statesman*, Madeleine Davies took a look at the rise of cultural Christianity. Her article focuses on the decline of churchgoing and creedal belief in Britain but asks broader questions as well:

A question that animates [historian Tom] Holland is whether Christian morality can survive the loss of belief in the biblical story—the “supernatural framework” that some cultural Christians abjure—underpinning it. What does the future hold for those, such as Elon Musk, who believe in “the principles of Christianity”? Can we, as Tolstoy did in *The Gospel in Brief*, remove the miracles while finding in its Scriptures guidance on how to live?⁶



Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, 2019

Despite the hopeful tone of Davies's article, the answer to her question is "probably not." One gets a sense of *why* from the historic ceremony for the

Belief is the engine of civilization. A Scripture verse puts it like this: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). People cannot reconnect with a view on life that they don't believe.

reopening of Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral, which was ravaged by fire during Holy Week in 2019 and reopened on December 7 last year. Commentator Mark Steyn writes,

There was, I thought, a palpable absence of the divine. As you may recall, "terrorism" was ruled out even as the building was still burning—and yet no plausible alternative source of the fire has been offered in the years since while the deliberate targeting of other churches has continued uninterrupted day after day after day.⁷

He muses, "The builders who raised up those stones through great vaulted spaces soaring to heaven were primitive, ill-educated men who nevertheless had a sense of something beyond themselves and the present tense." Yes, *that's* what's gone.

The French government has yet to admit to any curiosity about a possible motivation behind the fire,

even though 2,000 churches had been vandalized in the previous two years,⁸ and that trend has continued. The government seems to want to preserve the building it owns but discard the civilization that motivated it.

Belief Matters

Belief is the engine of civilization. A Scripture verse puts it like this: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). People cannot reconnect with a view on life that they don't believe, simply to save the things that only such a view can create and maintain. This is not even an explicitly religious issue. For example, neither the Greeks nor the Romans could, in the end, save their republics once most people ceased to believe in the values that had created them.

Notre Dame was created by people who, with all their faults, really believed in Christianity—so much so that only the distant descendants of those who started the project would see its completion nearly two centuries later.

People today who really believe that the universe came to exist by accident, that we are merely the third chimpanzee, and that he who dies with the most toys wins cannot create Notre Dame or anything similar. Such a culture may be able to preserve it for a time—but it could not imagine, let alone build, something similar. Instead, new "cultural heights" become cultural depths: *Mona Lisa* is succeeded not by "high-tech *Mona Lisa*" but by *Piss Christ* (a plastic crucifix in a jar of urine, infamously displayed in 1987 as an object of art).

What Musk, Dawkins, and Peterson all want is the *outcome* of Christian practice without the *input* of Christian belief. But that works out no better for the works of the Spirit than for any other works. Those who do not believe the Creed cannot really preserve, let alone add to, the civilization it created. ☺

Notes

1. Dale Chamberlain, "Elon Musk Says He Identifies as a 'Cultural Christian' but Follows 'The Religion of Curiosity' in Interview With Jordan Peterson," *ChurchLeaders* (Jul. 23, 2024); "Dr. Peterson x Elon Musk," *X* (Jul. 22, 2024).
2. Dale Chamberlain, "'Sure. I'll Be Saved. Why Not?': Elon Musk Discusses His Work, Life, and Faith With the Babylon Bee," *ChurchLeaders* (Jan. 5, 2022).
3. Walter Sánchez Silva, "Famous Atheist Richard Dawkins Says He Considers Himself a 'Cultural Christian,'" *Catholic News Agency*, ACI Prensa Staff (Apr. 3, 2024).
4. Staff, "Is Jordan Peterson a Christian? Exploring the Depths of His Belief," *Faithlt* (Apr. 11, 2024).
5. "Richard Dawkins and Jordan Peterson Debate 'Cultural Christianity,'" *Jordan B. Peterson Podcast*, Ep. 491 (Oct. 25, 2024).
6. Madeleine Davies, "The Rise of Cultural Christianity," *New Statesman* (Aug. 21, 2024).
7. Mark Steyn, "Fire and Faith," *Steyn Online* (Dec. 8, 2024).
8. *Ibid.*

Revisiting Normal

Car 54: When Laughter Was (Mostly) Innocent

by Anthony Esolen

I have often said that when I was a boy in the 1960s, it seemed that the world was beginning to shake under our feet. There were the political assassinations, the music growing angry and sometimes lewd, hard drugs seeping into our backwater town, the war in Vietnam, enemies in Russia and China committed to destroying us, the Catholic Church in upheaval, and the first divorce ever on either side of my very large family.

The Era of the Zany

You might think that humor in such a time would grow sour and bitter, but for the first six or seven years of that decade, it was not so. Instead, we enjoyed a brief flourishing of the *zany*—the crazy, the



half-mad, a world of happy, imaginative absurdity. What would you get if Frankenstein and Mrs. Frankenstein and her father Count Dracula were the heads of a normal American family, such as the Cleavers were in Mayfield? You got then *The Munsters*. What would you get if a hillbilly from

Tennessee struck it rich by accidentally discovering an oil field and went with his kinfolk and all his money, most of which he has no use for, to star-studded California? You got then *The Beverly Hillbillies*. What would you get if a smart guy from outer space, with retractable antennae, landed on earth and couldn't get back again, but instead had to live for a while with a mild-mannered young fellow who had to keep your secret, calling you Uncle Martin? You got then *My Favorite Martian*.

These shows were everywhere, and they were by no means all of a piece. The best for gags was the spoof on spy shows and the Cold War, *Get Smart*. "Missed it by *that much*," says Maxwell Smart, Agent 86, when the malefactor leaves the courtroom by leaping from the third-story window to an open truck with cushions waiting below. The best for the reversal of madness and sanity was *Green Acres*, set in some neverland called Hooterville, where a pig watches television, the county agent can't speak a single sentence that makes any sense, you've got to climb a telephone pole to take calls, and the supposedly sane man, Oliver Wendell Douglas, successful New York lawyer turned very bad farmer, is the one person who never knows what the heck is going on. *The Addams Family*, *Petticoat Junction*, *F Troop*, *Gilligan's Island*—such sprees of nuttiness were everywhere, alongside more traditional situation comedies, among them the flawless *Dick Van Dyke Show*.

The Beverly Hillbillies (1962)





Car 54: Where Are You? (1961)

Unjaded Comedy

But for my money, for sheer brilliance, quick pace, perfect and really quite human characterization, and plots with many a twist and turn so that the best joke is sometimes what you get at the very last moment and as a complete surprise, *Car 54, Where Are You?* bears away the bell. The jaunty song, sung by a quartet of male voices, is as good an introduction as any:

*There's a holdup in the Bronx,
Brooklyn's broken out in fights,
There's a traffic jam in Harlem
that's backed up to Jackson
Heights,
There's a scout troop short a
child,
Khrushchev's due at Idlewild—
Car 54, where are you?*

That's it. New York City, muscular and energetic and still a city made up of distinct neighborhoods,

villages you may call them, with most of life carried on in the streets, with kids swarming everywhere, grocers with their produce out front, hawkers of this and that, policemen walking the beat or sometimes riding a horse and chatting with the tailor and the butcher and the shoeshine boy; a human life, and nobody knew at the time that its days were numbered.

The premise of *Car 54* is deceptively simple. You put two cops in one car, and you make them the best of friends, though they are utterly unlike, and, what's more, they aren't really good at what they do, at least not on paper, but somehow, they always bumble into scrapes and out of them again, and the bad guys get caught.

One of them, the younger, is very tall, very shy, college-educated, a bit of a reader and an aficionado of classical music. That's Francis Muldoon (Fred Gwynne, who would soon be the blundering flat-headed patriarch Herman in *The Munsters*). The other is short, squat, bullet-headed, and bug-eyed, not the brightest bulb in the marquee, but full of energy, wild imagination, and bad ideas. That's Gunther

You may ask, "Why should we bother with a television show?" If you do not watch any television, I have no quarrel with that. But you may want to show your children, through all the zaniness of this excellent comedy, what things were once taken for granted as normal.

Toody (Joe E. Ross). Toody gets Muldoon in trouble, time and again, but they still are fast friends. Set up against them both is the long-suffering chief of their precinct, Captain Block (Paul Reed), who would love to be rid of them, though there's not a drop of malice in all three of those guys put together. And we've got Gunther's wife Lucille (Beatrice Pons), who also has a lot to put up with from her nut of a husband, though the show will often enough give us situations in which the Captain's the one who has blundered, or Lucille blames Gunther for something he didn't do, and so forth. Add in Al Lewis (Grandpa in *The Munsters*) as another policeman, Leo Schnauser, who has brains enough but gets tangled up in the messes caused by Toody and Muldoon, and you are off to the races.

Gilligan's Island (1964)



In *Car 54*, even the bad guys are not all that bad, and human beings are basically good, though their grasp on sanity is never firm. You laugh at their follies, but never at them for the fools they are—you like them too much for that. They are what you yourself would be, if your world were tilted just a little bit in the direction of the imaginative and crazy. The writing—with Nat Hiken in the lead, he who was the brains behind *Sergeant Bilko* (otherwise known as *The Phil Silvers Show*)—depends almost wholly upon character and plot, not upon one-liners and what we now call snark. There is nothing jaded about *Car 54*. Because Hiken was a genius at plot, you never really know how a thing is going to turn out, and what's more, you can never be sure that you're not about to get your expectations flipped upside down. Yet it all will come together perfectly, inevitably; and you'll say, "It couldn't have happened any better way, but I had no idea it would be this!"

There's not a single clunker in the bunch, but of course we have our favorite episodes. There's "Quiet, We're Thinking!", in which a small Boy Scout, Toody's nephew Marvin, ends up solving an intractable chain of robberies at a warehouse and catching the hoodlums, all while helping *another* uncle and his business partner expand their works, *and* leading his troop in the big annual jamboree in Central Park. There's "Boom, Boom, Boom," in which all 163 precincts compete in barbershop quartets, singing the same song, "By the Light of the Silvery Moon," always preceded by a series of "booms" on different notes, and poor Jan Murray, overworked and on the edge of a nervous collapse,

has to be one of the judges, and, well, the booms get into his fingers and eyelids and lip muscles and head. There's "No More Pickpockets," set outside of Yankee Stadium and the first game of the World Series, with Wally Cox playing a master pickpocket, and Benny, who always wanted to be a cop, so Toody lets him loose to round up all the pickpockets—with uproarious results, since it's not only wallets that Benny can pinch, but police badges too. These are just from the first season; there are 60 episodes in all.

It's winsome, the combination of intelligence in construction, a real roundedness of character in the principals, wildness that is often slapstick, no contempt, no one to be despised, and a lot of foolery.

A Fair Piece of Earth

You may ask, "Why should we bother with a television show?" If you do not watch any television, I have no quarrel with that. But you may want to show your children, through all the zaniness of this excellent comedy, what things were once taken for granted as *normal*. People walked the city streets without fear. Children could roam freely. Married people did not divorce. Boys and girls were boys and girls. The lewd and the garish were not constantly and everywhere on display. Cops were not armed to the teeth. Men took on their right duty as protectors. You liked your city and loved your country.

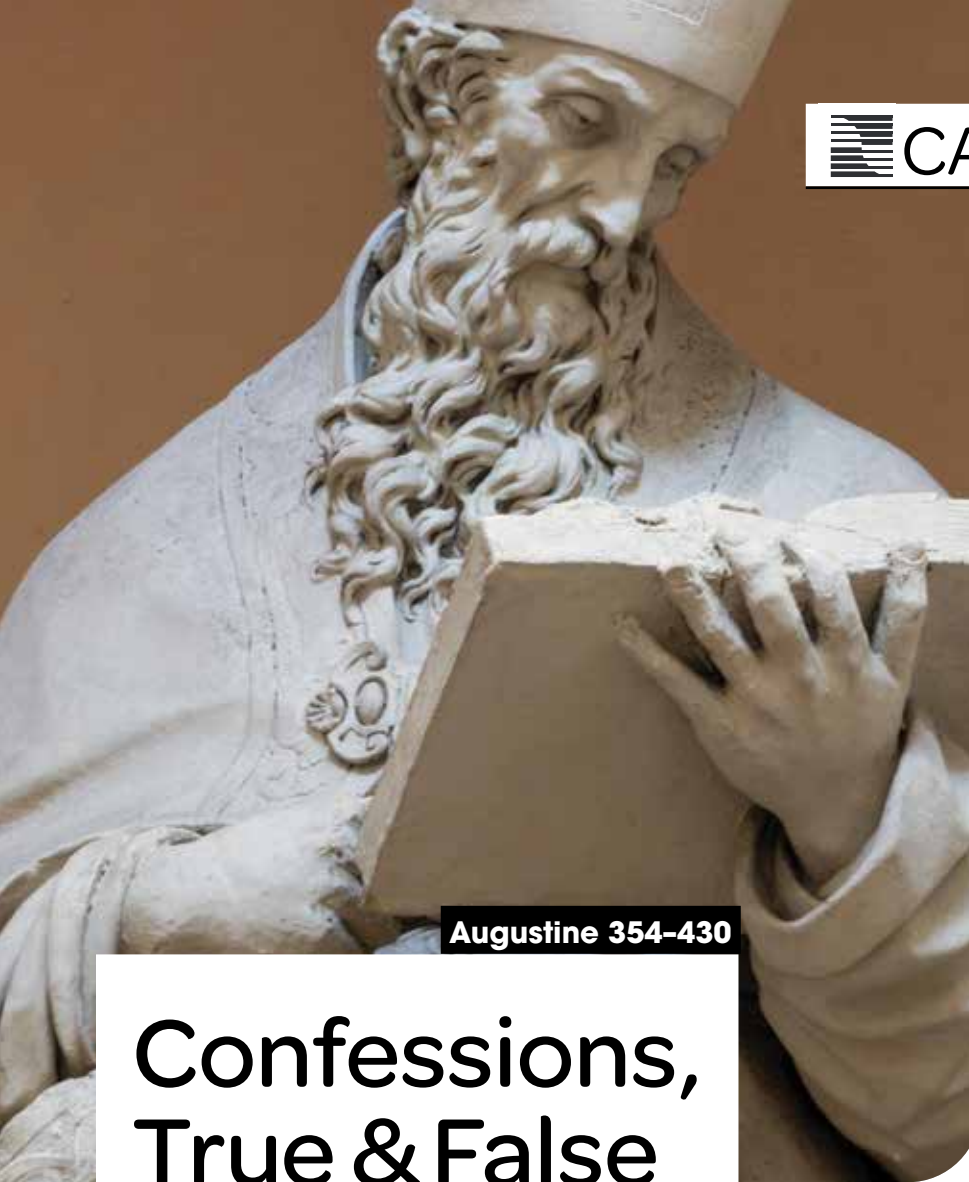
It's not the kingdom of God on earth, but it never pretended to be. It was just a pretty fair piece of earth. These days, we all need to be reminded that such things did exist. ☺



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Augustine 354–430

Confessions, True & False

Augustine & Rousseau: Opposite Orientations Toward God, Man & Society

by Drew S. C. Mery

Saint Augustine (354–430), recognized in 1298 by the Roman Catholic Church as a Doctor of the Church, served as bishop of Hippo in North Africa from 396–430. His theological and philosophical writings have influenced Christian thought from the medieval period to this day, and he is considered a stalwart of theological orthodoxy within many Christian traditions. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was a Genevan-born *philosophe*. The philosophes were 18th-century French social critics who challenged Church authority and promoted secularism. Rousseau is probably best known for his 1762 book *The Social Contract*, and his ideas were influential in bringing about the French Revolution.

Both men wrote books titled *Confessions*, but despite the identical titles, and despite Augustine's clear influence on Rousseau, Rousseau took a radically different perspective from Augustine. Temporally speaking, these authors are far removed from each other, but their distance is more salient in terms of their philosophical and theological perspectives; in these, they are worlds apart. The natures of their confessions—*what* they confess and *to whom*—reveal fundamentally different perspectives on man, God, and society. Their philosophies aren't simply things of the past, because they continue to influence the ways in which we think and act today. The question I will consider is this: Is our society more reflective of Augustine's *Confessions* or of Rousseau's?

Confession to Whom?

Both men begin with the recipients of their confessions. Augustine opens with praise to God and then states the famous line, "You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." Augustine addresses his confessions to God, the one by whom and for whom man is made. This is the whole theme of his *Confessions*, establishing the principle that one does not truly know oneself until he knows God. Augustine also remarks that God has "given mankind the capacity to understand oneself by analogy with others," thereby recognizing a shared humanity. Knowledge of self is understood in relation to God and fellow man. Augustine sees himself as a man among men, alike in nature and necessarily dependent upon God, thus laying a foundation for the deeply *theological* and *anthropological* nature of his *Confessions*. The intimacy with which Augustine speaks to God is at once casual, as if he were still walking in the cool of the garden with his Creator and Friend; yet

the very act of confession betrays his awareness that, despite being tempered by grace, the Fall into sin is a sore reality.

By contrast, Rousseau begins his *Confessions* by saying, "I want to show my fellow-men a man in all the truth of nature; and this man is to be myself." In "the truth of nature," Rousseau wants his readers to see him apart from the artificiality of social convention; he wants to be assessed in his experiences and feelings, apart from preconceived notions derived from society's strictures. He continues, "Myself alone. I feel my heart and I know men. I am not made like any that I have seen; I venture to believe that I was not made like any that exist." Rousseau views himself as unique among men, and he brings his confessions before his fellow men, placing an emphasis on the sentiments of his own heart and thereby anticipating the deeply psychological and sociological nature of his *Confessions*. Lacking the intimacy with God so prevalent in Augustine, Rousseau addresses a mass of people who likely know of him not by acquaintance but "by description," to borrow a phrase from Bertrand Russell. For Rousseau, then, one's certitude of knowledge is subjective, rooted in experience, especially inward experience.

Confession of What?

Augustine's confessions are deeply religious. The two central threads are *confession of sin* (wrong actions and wrong belief) and *confession of faith* (praise of God and theological articulation of who God is and what he has done). Throughout, he confesses his dependency on God: "Accordingly, my God, I would have no being, I would not have any existence, unless you were in me." He confesses his sins against God, even from youth: "Lord my God, I sinned by not doing as I was told by my parents and teachers." All is laid bare before the God who sees all.

While Rousseau's confessions include a sense of wrongdoing or vice, he largely excuses his misdeeds. For instance, he speaks of his "childish faults" of foolish talk, greed, and lying, even of urinating in a kettle that belonged to an old lady, the memory of which "still makes me laugh." He excuses this latter event by mentioning the grumpiness of the lady, as if she deserved it. According to Rousseau, these are all "childhood misdemeanors."

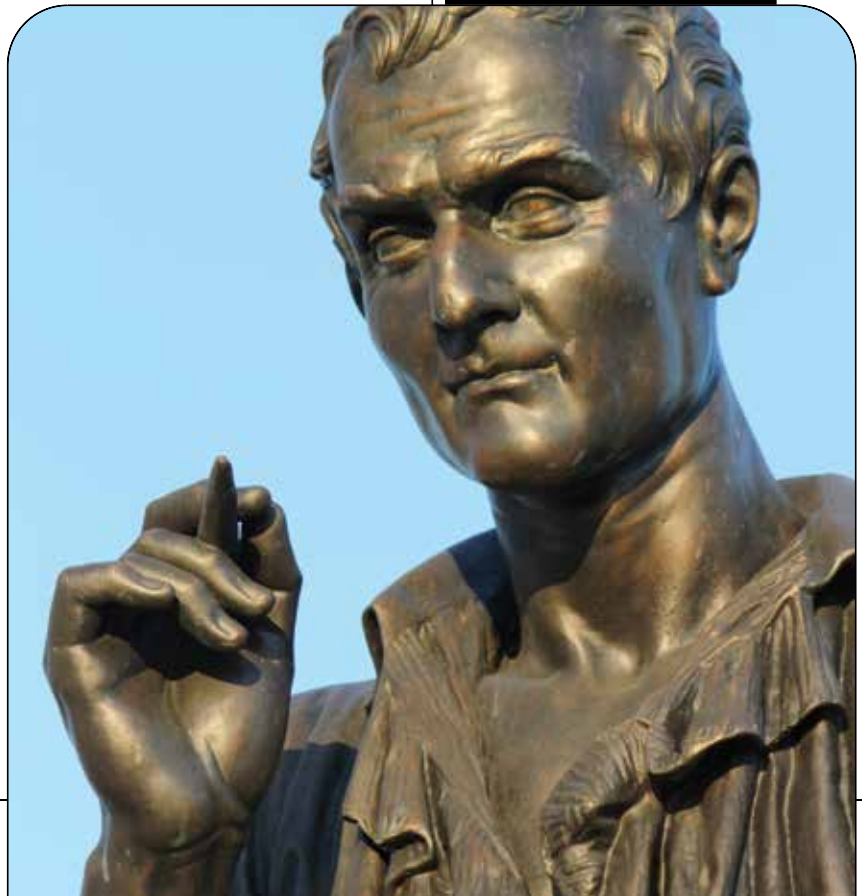
Whereas Augustine takes full blame for the sins he has committed, Rousseau emphasizes wrongs done *to him*, along with the *environment* in which he was placed, as the reasons for his wrongdoing. This is evident in Rousseau's confession of stealing asparagus. He did it at the behest of a superior coworker, M. Verrat, who pressured him by flattery. Rousseau concludes, "So it is among every condition of men: the guilty and powerful save themselves at the expense of the innocent and weak," with Rousseau being the innocent and

weak in this case. As he sees it, his motivation was good—a desire to help M. Verrat—and therefore he is innocent of the theft. He employs the same rationalization in his accounts of stealing apples and his master's tools. Regarding the latter, he notes, "These thefts were, when it came down to it, quite innocent, since everything I acquired through them was used in his service." Perhaps you're picking up on this theme that the end justifies the means.

Man, God & Society

In *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Carl Trueman writes that Rousseau's assessment of his thefts is important for understanding his view of man's inherent nature. For Rousseau, corruption is "something that is created and fostered by social conditions and not something to be considered innate." This is because Rousseau believes man to be basically good, with corruptions arising from the outside pressures of society; man must therefore free himself from

Rousseau 1712–1778



society's strictures, lest he remain a slave to them. Trueman, in noting similarities between Rousseau's theft of asparagus and Augustine's famous account of his theft of pears, draws out the contrasting perspectives of the two men's self-assessments: "For Augustine, the moral flaw is ultimately intrinsic to him.... For Rousseau, by way of contrast, his natural humanity is fundamentally sound, and the sinful act comes from social pressures and conditioning." If only Rousseau didn't have these strictures placed upon him, then he would have no desire to steal, for he would never be in need and he would only engage in good acts. According to Rousseau, then, man does not steal because of a sin nature; he steals because of a need created by laws, customs, and peer pressure (or in Augustine's case, peer pressure).

This view has further implications for man's relationship to God. Rousseau's recollections amount to a self-justification before both man and God on account of his "sincerity." Rousseau can know himself as God knows him, so he thinks, and he can therefore serve as judge of his own goodness. It is sincerity that matters—a view not uncommon in our own day. Indeed, Rousseau concludes his *Confessions* with the statement that a person who thinks of him as dishonorable, without having read his writings, "ought to be choked." Again, this has to do with his notion that certitude of knowledge is subjective and inwardly experiential, and no one knows his own experiences better than he does. He expects his readers to locate the blame for his wrongdoing squarely in the laps of others, an inclination which traces all the way back to Adam and Eve pointing fingers in the Garden.

Augustine likewise brings to memory his past corruptions, but with a significant difference: not as a means of arguing for his basic goodness, but in order that he may

love God all the more, for God has shown grace to him by loving him despite his sins. Augustine writes: "I intend to remind myself of my past foulnesses and carnal corruptions, not because I love them but so that I may love you, my God. It is from love of your love that I make the act of recollection." For Augustine, the more he recalls his sinfulness, the more he is driven to praise. Where Rousseau seeks the love or approval of his fellow man, Augustine wants simply to rest in the love of God, the reality of which comes alive to him through genuine confession of sin and of faith.

Generally speaking, Augustine views himself as a man among men (anthropology) and one who is dependent upon God (theology). Rousseau views himself as a man who is unique among men because he knows himself (psychology), and one who is critical of the strictures of society (sociology), desiring to be free from them and to live in the so-called truth of nature. Further, for Augustine, knowledge rests upon the objective reality of the one true God and a shared humanity, whereas for Rousseau, it arises from the inward experience of the self. These are striking contrasts that are immediately apparent in the two men's writings, and they are emblematic of the staggering shift from classical and medieval thought to modern thought, of which these men are largely representatives.

A Saintlier Guide

Which of these "worlds" best describes current prevailing social thought and practices? Do prominent voices desire to rest in and give glory to God, or to justify themselves before a watching

Whereas Augustine takes full blame for the sins he has committed, Rousseau emphasizes wrongs done *to him*, along with the *environment* in which he was placed, as the reasons for his wrongdoing.

world? Do people tend to think of themselves as sinners in need of forgiveness, or as basically good souls who are simply misunderstood or deprived of the right chances? Do we recall past faults to give thanks to God for his mercy and grace, or to pass judgment on others? To reflect on these questions is to probe our own hearts and lay bare our spiritual condition, both individually and collectively.

Clearly, we live in a society largely influenced by Rousseau, or at least one that is Rousseauian in spirit—a secular society critical of our institutions, and especially the institution of the Church, which is increasingly seen as a prudish stricture on a "free" society. Understanding these different perspectives helps us to better assess the underlying issues of our time—namely, a loss of the biblical sense of humanity and dependence upon God. Augustine is a saintly guide who can help lead us out of this miry pit. Take up and read! ☉

A Trip to the Edge

From Psychedelic Wanderlust to Obedience to Christ

by Annie Crawford

Like many in Gen X, I grew up with divorced parents, a dysfunctional family, and the fracturing of community life as our individualist, techno-industrial culture turned digital. Many of us in the “Grunge Era” coped with our pain, isolation, and disillusionment by cynically disengaging and turning to self-reliance.

A Lone Brain on a Stick

As someone with an intellectual bent, I sought to secure personal stability through academic achievement and to escape the emotional volatility of my social world by spending hours alone in nature. My mind and I alone would build a nice, peaceful world for ourselves far away

from narcissistic Boomers and the greedy excesses of the consumerist machine.

I tried my best to live as a purely thinking, contemplative creature—someone who didn’t have emotional or relational needs. It didn’t matter if I ate lunch alone; I should be reading for class anyway. It didn’t matter if no one invited me to the weekend

party; I’d rather be riding my horse or walking beneath the canopy of nighttime stars.

I grew up in a nominally Christian home, and my devout grandma made sure I knew Scripture well. I genuinely enjoyed attending the Anglican church where I was baptized, but I never knew how to emotionally integrate the faith into my relational life. What did Jesus have to do with my detachment issues and fear of female friendships? I had no idea.

Just before high school graduation, I met Mark. He was dynamic and fun, full of enthusiasm and gifted in friendship—everything I was not, and we spent the summer exploring the Pacific Northwest. I had never had so much fun. Still, I planned to make my way in the world as an independent academic, so I left for Wheaton College and resumed living as a brain on a stick.

Predictably, once I was away from the familiarity of home, the lie soon broke; I was desperately lonely and sad, a huge tangle of confusion and despair that could no longer go untended.

Meanwhile, Mark delved into the Oregon drug scene. I spent hours on the phone hearing about his amazing trips, all the spiritual truth he was discovering, and all the euphoria he felt communing with transcendent being. Meanwhile, I ate, slept, and worked all day every day to achieve a 4.0 in my double major of philosophy and literature while pretending not to need friends. At some point I realized, *I cannot do this anymore. I need to feel alive again.*

The World Unmade

Over Christmas break, I let Mark convince me to try shrooms. He seemed alive and joyful; I was dying and miserable. What if these drugs aren’t really so evil as the bureaucratic, imperial stiff and



self-righteous, misogynistic hypocrites make them out to be? God has given us bread to satisfy our physical hunger; why couldn't he have given us psychedelics to satisfy our spiritual longings as well?

My first trip completely unmade my world. It was like someone had ripped bandages off my eyes and I saw reality for the first time, or like I was a deaf infant who finally heard his mother's voice. All the protective walls I had carefully built around my heart were torn wide open and reality poured in.

Everything seemed wondrously alive, the whole world radiant with life, stretched tall with joy, pulsating with wonder. As Ashley Lande describes in her book *The Thing That Would Make Everything Okay Forever: Transcendence, Psychedelics, and Jesus Christ*, "It was transcendence. Unfathomable heights. The sun itself." Like her, I too was "forever changed in a searing flash of white-hot atomic cataclysm, lobotomized by the searing revelation of the enormity of everything, sent scuttling backward on hands and feet as matter consumed and rebirthed itself in terrifying perpetuity."

I spent the next year living a double life: my dutiful, ambitious self plowed through academic work during the semester, and my secret, mystical self tripped through fairyland with Mark whenever I could. I traversed galaxies with Radiohead on their OK Computer tour, wandered through the Redwoods wearing elfin robes and talking to the Ents, and backpacked across Mt. Rainier weeping at the alpine meadows as my heart nearly exploded from the drug-induced climb.

Each good trip seemed to bring euphoric epiphanies—except I could never really remember what they were in the sober daylight. Apart from a potent experience of spiritual reality that confirmed to me its undeniable

existence, I never learned any genuine insights into that spiritual reality.

The Illusion of Meaning

Drug-induced states give one the sensation of meaning and profundity without the reality. Any rock or tree can seem like the very heart of being and the embodiment of divine mystery, yet hierarchy and differentiation are actually essential for genuine meaning. If everything is equally significant, then nothing is really significant. The world is indeed filled with the glory and presence of God, but not in equal measure. In truth, the sacredness of all things varies by degree, and genuine experiences of profundity emerge from that realization of hierarchical relevance.

There is a reason psychedelic culture is always connected to pantheistic mysticism, relativism, and dogma-free spirituality. The chemicals blow open your neurology and obliterate the psychological boundaries between the self and the world around you. It is a simulation of pantheistic oneness with all things. Yet the reality that the drugs portray is amorphous and fluid; in the psychedelic world there are no stable truths or reliable boundaries that can ground identities.

Trippers are like the man who told C. S. Lewis, "I know there's a God. I've felt Him: out alone in the desert at night: the tremendous mystery." Psychedelics were for me both an awakening and a

marooning. The drugs forced me to feel again; but mere chemical stimulation cannot show you *what* it is you are seeing and feeling. A flood of serotonin alone cannot offer you any wisdom, improve

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your discipline, or give you genuine virtue. Simply knowing that a spiritual world exists does not offer much help in knowing how to build a life there. As usual, Lewis describes it best:

What happened to that man in the desert may have been real, and was certainly exciting, but nothing comes of it. It leads nowhere. There is nothing to do about it. In fact, that is just why a vague religion—all about feeling God in nature, and so on—is so attractive. It is all thrills and no work: like watching the waves from the beach. But you will not get to Newfoundland by studying

the Atlantic that way, and you will not get eternal life by simply feeling the presence of God in flowers or music.

Those years I lived in the psychedelic subculture did nothing to make me a better person. I had traded depression for neurosis. I no longer slogged through the bog of drudgery; I ran down the streets like loose electricity. In fact, I dropped out of college and spent a semester working at Olive Garden until I finally pulled myself together enough to transfer to the Honors College at University of Oregon, where I could better integrate my double life of academic ambition and psychedelic ecstasy.

Darkness Calling

But now that we lived in the same town, I broke up with Mark because we fought all the time. His life was going nowhere and my terror of poverty prevented me from fully embracing the slacker lifestyle. I intended to graduate and go *somewhere*. I'd figure out *where* later.

Unfortunately, it was only after I gave up my academic opportunities at Wheaton that things turned dark, and the Pied Piper came to collect his due.

During that time in Eugene my psychedelic visions began to turn dark. At first, I simply felt the presence of shadows on the edge of my consciousness. Then one night my roommates brought over a new guy to trip with us. I can't remember if we were doing shrooms or LSD that night, but I do remember that the world took on a kind of cavernous darkness where the only glittering radiance I saw was the thin, cold shimmering of the stars stretched high above and far out of reach.

The horror of the moment so cauterized my memory that I am left only with the searing imprint of a single image. I think we were

standing outside on the front porch, and this man, this traveling trickster, whoever he was, changed his face into the horned image of a devil. I tried to shake my head and clear my vision. He laughed. I remember trying to say something but feeling only that this devil played with me like a toy, like Voltaire sparring with some mid-wit librarian.

I went inside and told my friend he had to drive me to Mark's house—*now*. That one-mile drive took at least eight hours. I pressed my foot down on the floorboard thinking I could make the crawling car move faster, but the more I willed for us to be there, the slower we seemed to move, the more the sludge of the world seemed to thicken and resist our progress.

I barged into Mark's room, woke him up, and insisted he keep me company until I could wash the devil from my mind. I stared at his clock, which read 4:05 for at least another 10 hours, willing the trip to end with as much futility as I had willed the car to move.

The following spring, I was wandering around Eugene's famous Oregon County Fair high on shrooms when I heard the World

Soul demand I give him everything—that I finally release my ego completely. I was Brahman and Brahman was me. It was time to let go of illusion, let all the boundaries fall, and release my mind to it once and for all.

The droning didgeridoos pulled at my mind like so many liquid hands; I panicked and ran to the bus line, clutching at my own face to make sure it was still there. I repeated "I am not Brahman" like a lunatic all the way home and somehow ended up back in my room where I spent hours, days, years rocking back and forth in my bed until at last the drugs released their grip and let me be.

My mind!? Not my mind. That was the part of me I depended on and identified with; my ability to think, to see, to know was all I had. I was done with these demons for good. I would not trade sanity for the elusive hope of pseudo-bliss.

True Wonder

I needed out. To clear my head. To find some kind of starting point from which I could rebuild my sanity, some light on the horizon by which to orient my life on these endless seas of shifting thought





and gnawing desire. I was a chaos, and before I ran out of scholarship money, I needed to figure out a principle of order and a destination for which I could aim.

I decided to go to the one place I knew I could find something genuinely, wholesomely good: the mountains. I borrowed my friend's German shepherd as company and security, hopped in my car, and drove straight to Denali, Alaska. I made the 2,620-mile trip alone in four days, sleeping in my car as needed and smoking cigarettes to keep myself awake as I alternately played Tom Petty and Sarah McLachlan down the gravel highways of northern British Columbia and the lonely Yukon.

I parked my car inside Denali State Park, grabbed the dog, and started walking. I didn't know where I was really going or how far I was going to go. I just needed to bore myself as deeply into the peace of the wild things as I could.

While traversing a scree slope, I slipped and nearly tumbled over an edge that would've taken me at least 1000 feet down hard, shifting rock. Frightened, I sat down and cried. I couldn't do this anymore, this breathing in and out, this attempt to keep going somewhere despite the deadness and fear that ruled my heart. I was a little surprised that I didn't just black out and somehow disappear right then and there. I so sincerely felt that I was the one in control of my life, it seemed that if I were to give up control, my life would simply cease to be.

Instead I heard the quiet breathing of Dakota as he patiently waited for me and licked his paw. I heard a voice say, "I am the one who sustains you. You have tried independence. Come and try obedience."

I knew who was talking to me. I knew his name. Often the words from the Anglican liturgy of my childhood had come to mind during those years.

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and
invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus
Christ, the Only Begotten
Son of God, born of the
Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from
Light, true God from true
God, begotten, not made ...

They echoed through my imagination like a song from beyond the walls of the world. The transcendence I had experienced through psychedelics animated and electrified my perception of this world, but ironically, the drugs moved me further away from the glimpses I could see of another world.

I got back in my car, drove home, and tried obedience. I started reading my Bible, I stopped dating someone just because he would give me attention, and I stopped doing drugs. I took a break from University of Oregon and spent a year at Ecola Bible College learning to integrate my faith into my emotional and relational life through the fellowship and care of God's good people he had gathered there.

And I never looked back.

The past 25 years have brought epiphanies and adventures trod on the heights of meaning. My world has been crammed with a wonder free from the shadows of compromise and the predation of demons, for "In him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

Everything truly good and beautiful and profound that I've

gathered from this world has come not from the shifting sands of stimulated perception, but from Scripture, liturgy, Plato, Homer, Dante, C. S. Lewis, Wordsworth, my husband, my children, the trees, the mountains, the ocean, even the roses in my garden. By the grace of God, these real things have provided me with the genuine, durable insights out of which I have built a life on the solid rock of the *Logos*.

The key to meaning and happiness is obedience, not *pharmak-eia* and not technique. We do

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not storm the heights of heaven to bring down the secrets of life. Christ offers them freely to us in bread and wine, if only we will obey him and submit to the patterns and structures of life that he has woven into the fabric of his world.

I was looking for the new drug or trick that would give me happiness without submission, for ways to conform reality to my will rather than conforming my will to reality. But I discovered that true joy comes from being integrated into the Divine Love that moves the spheres, for "In him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4). ☺

Resistance is Mandatory

A Conversation with Seth Gruber

by Bob Perry

Seth Gruber likes to say he's been in the pro-life movement since before he was born. The son of a pregnancy-care center worker, Seth made a name for himself both in high school and at Westmont University, where he refused to cower in the face of resistance to his public defense of the pro-life view. Nothing has changed since then. The stakes have just gotten higher. His documentary, *The 1916 Project*, and the book on which it is based are eye-opening exposés of the roots and goals of Margaret Sanger's diabolical worldview and the consequences it has spawned in our day.

Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, the battle over abortion has only intensified. Why do you think that is?

Anyone who thought that the battle was going to be over when *Roe* got overturned doesn't know much about abortion or our

constitutional republic. *Roe v. Wade* was a federal decision that hamstrung the states and obliterated any semblance of federalism through judicial fiat. Since then, we've seen exactly how bloodthirsty Americans have become. In the first year following the overturning of *Roe*, one million babies were aborted. It was the highest

number reported in over 10 years. Of course, it was actually much higher than that because states are not required to report their abortion data.

Add to that that the abortion pill accounted for 63 percent of the babies killed in 2023. It means that about 630,000 babies were flushed down the toilets of the American sewage system. Many of these abortion pills are being shipped in from India and overseas. So it becomes impossible to get accurate numbers on how many abortions actually take place. If the Guttmacher Institute admitted that over a million babies were killed in 2023, you know it's a heck of a lot more than that.

We have a culture of death. This fight has only gotten a lot hotter and bloodier because we're dealing with first principles. As I contend in *The 1916 Project*, we're dealing with the very issues that began the cultural rot in America. If you don't get the right to life right, you won't get any other rights. There's a reason our Founders created an order of rights. We've taken these rights and liberties for granted for far too long in America.

I refer to abortion as "the sacrament of Satan." And I say that because the language of the "my body, my choice" crowd mocks the words our Savior used at the Last Supper. "This is my body," he said, "I break it for you. Take it in remembrance of me." Abortion advocates say, "This is my body. I break the baby for me." Abortion is fundamentally demonic. Satan has always been behind the killing of babies. If he can't kill God, he'll kill babies because he knows it wounds the heart of the Father and causes chaos on the Earth. The reaction of our cultural and political betters to the overturning of *Roe* tells you everything you need to know about our current cultural moment. They burned down over 100 pro-life ministries and pregnancy resource centers

in the two months following the ruling. Those who speak at school board meetings are labeled domestic terrorists while the *actual* pro-abortion domestic terrorists threatening *actual* physical violence against pro-life Americans do so with impunity.

The church has been silent on this. What do you think it's going to take to change that? Or do you think we're going to start shrinking what the church actually is?

The problem in the American church is we have a lot of pastors who want to avoid overt criticism from their flock. They speak just enough truth to fly under the radar of being labeled a coward, but never enough to be a threat to the culture of death. We have a lot of Christian music artists, influencers, authors, pastors, and podcasters like this. They're not about the legacy of historic Christian resistance in antiquity. They're about the spirit of Lot—keeping their

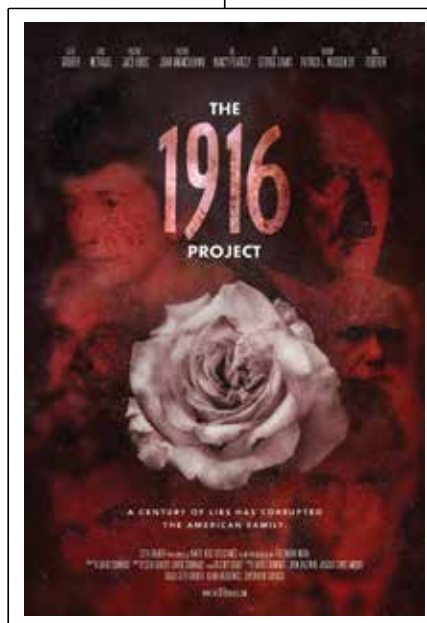
place of influence in Sodom so that they can be invited to all the nice parties. There's a reason why Russell Moore is on MSNBC's phone-a-Christian speed-dial and Voddie Baucham is not. There's a reason why David French has a weekly op-ed in *The New York Times* and Eric Metaxas does not. There's a reason why Rick Warren is invited to Davos at the World Economic Forum every year and Pastor Jack Hibbs is not. The latter can't be bought.

What we're doing with *The 1916 Project* is exposing the deeds of darkness and rebuilding Christian resistance in America before it's too late. The longer we tolerate the killing of babies, the quicker we'll come to learn that these people will do a lot more than just kill babies. Those who murder the unborn cannot be trusted to govern the born; those who murder the unborn will one day murder us too. Planned Parenthood is not just the largest abortion provider in the world; they're

also the second-largest provider of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for America's gender-confused youth.

Do you think that's a coincidence? No, it's not. They are animated by an ideology. And ideology is a hell of a drug as it turns out. It will take you farther than you wanted to go and make you pay more than you wanted to pay. They won't define marriage; therefore, they won't protect it. They won't

define the unborn; therefore, they won't protect them. They won't define a woman; therefore, they won't protect her. Pay attention.



What do you consider to be the most eye-opening aspect of the film?

The biggest gasp moment that I've heard is when people learn about Hugh Hefner's connection to Planned Parenthood and the sexual revolution. The role of the sexual revolutionaries in the broader culture of death and in the abortion industry was quite shocking for people to learn. This is [the Old Testament book of] Judges, chapter six, all over again. But you can't understand Baal without understanding the Asherah poles. Child sacrifice is always the conclusion of sexual liberation. Those two sins have been linked since time immemorial.

It's not a coincidence that in Judges 6, God tells Gideon to stop being a coward—to walk out of his little mountain cave or wine

They are animated by an ideology. And ideology is a hell of a drug as it turns out. It will take you farther than you wanted to go and make you pay more than you wanted to pay. They won't define marriage; therefore, they won't protect it. They won't define the unborn; therefore, they won't protect them. Pay attention.

press in the foothills back down into the valley and tear down the Baal statues, chop up the Asherah poles, put them in a pile, and light it on fire. Notice, he doesn't tell them to fix their political issues. When his people have been given over to be ruled by pagan hordes and are having orgies with the temple prostitutes and passing the children through the fire, the Lord tells them to stop the weird sex cults and tear down the baby sacrifice stuff. Deal with that, then we'll talk. That's because judgment begins in the House of the Lord. You can't fix it out there until you fix what's inside the walls of the church.

In the film, we teach people the role of Hugh Hefner and Alfred Kinsey and that this child sacrifice and hypersexualized culture was birthed by the sexual revolution seekers. Planned Parenthood is not merely the largest abortion provider in the world. They're also the largest provider of the pornographic comprehensive sexuality education in America's public schools. It was all based on Alfred Kinsey's "science," while Kinsey's "science" was based on interviewing pedophiles and rapists serving lifetime prison sentences. He made their sexual data sound like the normal sexual behavior of the normal American married male. It was all fraudulent, but it was used to put the sexual revolution on steroids. Today, we can't understand child sacrifice without understanding these Asherah poles—the places where the gender cult and the sexualization of our children began.

The White Rose Resistance did over 800 screenings of *The 1916 Project* in American churches beginning in June 2024. We want to create bold intellectual thought leadership in the post-Roe v. Wade world. We are also organizing with "The Last Stand" conference (TheLastStand.com), June 21, in southern California. The focus of that conference will be to worship,



pray, repent, and mobilize the church to take back June for life. It will feature Pastor Jack Hibbs, Danny Gokey, Nicole C. Mullen, Skillet, Pastor Gary Hamrick, Pastor Allen Jackson, Charlie Kirk, Steve Deace, Riley Gaines, Allie Beth Stuckey, and Eric Metaxas.

You've recreated the White Rose Resistance based on the model of Hans and Sophie Scholl in Nazi Germany. What is the mission of the White Rose Resistance, and what do you see as its end game?

The mission is to educate, equip, and mobilize the church to end abortion. We educate the public, discredit the opposition, and inspire a movement. We're the fastest-growing pro-life organization in America. There's an awakening happening. There's an

itching—a stirring in the American church. We're not where we need to be, but I've never seen this level of excitement, engagement, and awakening happening in the church.

Like the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, people are starting to know what time it is. They knew what Israel ought to do and took their responsibility and duty to act. The legacy of the church is the legacy of Christian resistance, and one of those stories of Christian resistance is a bunch of kids in their twenties in Munich, Germany, in 1942–43. They were distributing anti-Nazi leaflets all around Germany, trying to awaken Christians and people of normal common sense to what was happening. They called themselves the White Rose Resistance. All those kids were beheaded. Hans Scholl and his sister Sophie were killed on February 22, 1943.

The endgame is to put ourselves out of a job. We have too many 501(c)3 organizations doing good work. But they're doing the good work the local church *used to do*. I know it sounds weird to say we have too many non-profits in America while I'm the CEO of one. But that's because we're dealing with issues that the local church used to deal with.

I am effective to the point that the White Rose Resistance is no longer needed to awaken people to end abortion because believers in their local churches are simply being Christians—when Christians are being Christians at the local level and they see this evil pushed out into the light and say, "I don't think so"; when they get involved and pass laws to protect children; when they show up and push back to establish righteousness; when they push back against evil, and they force the darkness to go away. Every generation of Christians is going to have to do that with the evils of their day. Ending child killing in our day is actually Christianity 101. ☺



How We Got to Nowhere

A Review of Stumbling Toward Utopia: How the 1960s Turned into a National Nightmare & How We Can Revive the American Dream, by Timothy S. Goeglein

by Joshua Pauling

It seems that more and more people are waking up to the reality that “we’re not in Kansas anymore.” On issues ranging from morality and civility to family and politics, the ground seems to have shifted beneath our feet over the past several decades. The shift may have been gradual for a while—until all of a sudden it wasn’t. The long march through the institutions—the phrase is taken from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s strategy for inducing political change in the West—is now manifesting in ways that only five years ago would have been unthinkable. All of this has left many of us asking how we got here and what we can do about it.

Tim Goeglein sets out to answer these questions in *Stumbling Toward Utopia*. The book is filled with facts and figures that document the significant changes we’ve seen on moral questions, family formation, educational outcomes, and more. The compilation of data and research is helpfully relayed through a clear narrative telling the story of key players and events in what the author calls “a failed experiment.” As he puts it, “the latest attempt to create utopia has failed: the 1960s.”

A Disastrous Decade

Goeglein makes a case that the ‘60s were a clear turning point in American life. That decade, he writes, “may have come and gone in the annals of history, but its legacy continues to this day—and in fact, much of what we are experiencing now can be traced back to its poisonous roots.” There are two introductory chapters. The first is written using the format of letters from a pen pal from the past, which is an effective technique to show vividly the cultural



changes experienced by an average American. The second lays out how some of the foundations for 1960s ideologies can be found in the Progressive era of the early 1900s. Each of the remaining chapters tells the story of

a different facet of life that has been, and continues to be, impacted by the shockwaves of the ‘60s.

With statistics and stories in tow, he looks at religion, family, morality, education, entertainment, government spending, and civil society. The book concludes with a note of hope in the form of a call for personal action: devoting oneself to family and local community, reclaiming an education rooted in virtue and truth, and rediscovering America’s founding principles. For those wanting to dig deeper, the book includes all sorts of footnotes to additional books and resources that can be tracked down for additional studies.

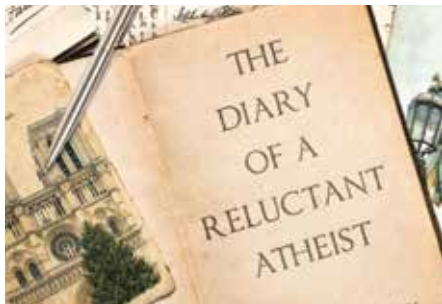
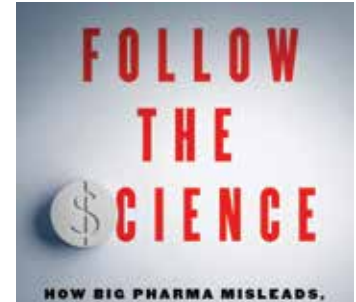
Charting History to Chart Recovery

While much more could be said on each of the topics he tackles, Goeglein provides a helpful overall narrative of not just *what* was happening but *why* it was happening. This is one of the best qualities of the book: its compact summary, in one manageable and accessible resource, of all these cultural changes and how they’ve unfolded. For Goeglein, knowing this type of history is essential if we are going to avoid repeating its mistakes. It is necessary reconnaissance for charting a successful recovery plan. ☺

Follow the Science: How Big Pharma Misleads, Obscures & Prevails by Sharyl Attkisson

A veteran D.C. investigative journalist turns her skeptical eye toward the cozy relations among pharmaceutical firms, legacy media, and a plethora of government and medical bureaucracies. Doctored science, jerry-rigged studies,

suppressed vaccine-injury data, and revolving doors between industry, lobbyists, and regulators do not serve Americans' health and wellbeing. But knowledge can. This book is chock-full of information for the discerning healthcare-services consumer.



The Diary of a Reluctant Atheist by David R. Bock

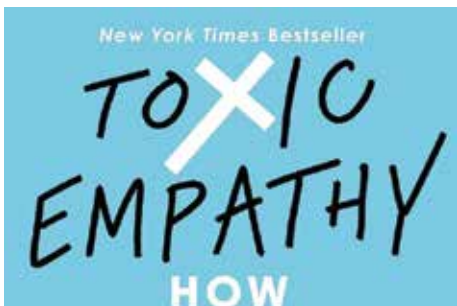
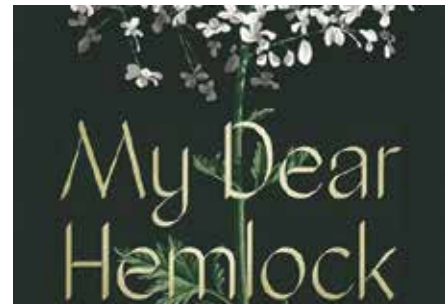
Raised in Christian Science and Mormon settings, David Bock rejected faith in high school and hoped through studying philosophy to become influential in articulating a new cultural worldview to replace the prevailing Christian narrative.

The journey was circuitous and adventurous, but it didn't work out the way he'd planned. This spiritual memoir is intellectually sound and emotionally honest, offering edifying food for thought for believers and skeptics alike.

My Dear Hemlock by Tilly Dillehay

In C. S. Lewis's brilliant classic, *The Screwtape Letters*, senior demon Screwtape instructs his underling in the fine points of tempting a male human Patient. In *My Dear Hemlock*, Madame Hoaxrot similarly counsels an underling in the art of corrupting

a female Patient. Her letters addressing sex and relationships through young adulthood, marriage, mothering, and the later years of suffering, illness, and death make for an insightful read for all women and those who love them.



Toxic Empathy: How Progressives Exploit Christian Compassion by Allie Beth Stuckey

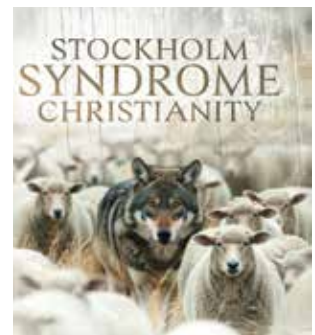
Empathy for those who suffer is a good character trait, but in some circles, "empathy" is supplanting—if not replacing—moral reasoning. Here, Allie Beth Stuckey, host of the popular *Relatable* podcast, presses past

superficial, feelings-based talking points on several hot-button issues to equip readers with commonsense, biblical truth and shows how biblical love based in truth results in the best outcomes for all.

Stockholm Syndrome Christianity: Why America's Christian Leaders Are Failing—and What We Can Do About It by John G. West

"Stockholm Syndrome" refers to the psychological dynamic wherein hostages become enamored with their captors. "Most Christians in America grow up in cultural captivity," says West. All Christians are susceptible to identifying more with our anti-Christian culture than with biblically

faithful Christianity, but it is especially harmful when those in positions of leadership fall prey to it. West examines several instances of this dynamic in our institutions and encourages Christians to faithful wisdom and action for the strengthening of the church and for the benefit of all.



UNCLE TOM II

AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY



Uncle Tom II: An American Odyssey

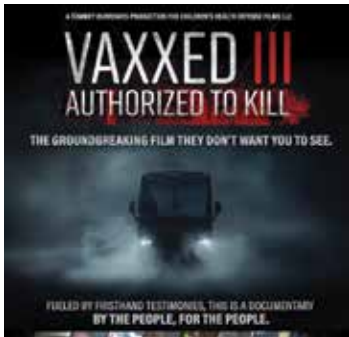
In *Uncle Tom: An Oral History of the American Black Conservative* (2020), Chad Jackson recounts his journey of learning an inspiring post-slavery, black-history story far different from the victimhood-based narrative he was taught in school. In this follow-up, he chronicles the

machinations by which American blacks fell prey to (or cooperated with) Marxist organizers in agitating for policies that would replace capitalism with socialism and replace reliance on God and family with reliance on government. Both offer edifying history for people of all colors.

One Life

In 1938, Hitler's Germany invaded the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia. Tens of thousands, many of whom were Jewish, fled toward unoccupied Prague. This feature film dramatizes the efforts of Nicholas "Nicky" Winton, a young London stockbroker

who spearheaded efforts to evacuate children. The project included recruiting sponsors, finding foster homes, paying fees, and securing for the children safe passage to London. His efforts saved 669 from near-certain death until the Nazis put an end to the operation in 1939.



Vaxxed III: Authorized to Kill

Vaxxed: From Cover-Up to Catastrophe (2016) explored questions about the CDC mishandling data related to the MMR vaccine. *Vaxxed II: The People's Truth* (2019) followed up with a cross-country bus tour honoring the names of people killed or injured in connection with a vaccine. This 2024

film examines hospital protocols and practices related to Covid-19. Consistent with the series' boots-on-the-ground style, filmmakers traveled the states and interviewed more than 1,300 people, plus medical, scientific, and legal professionals to bring to light unreported stories. Available at ChildrensHealthDefense.org.

Identity Crisis

According to CDC data, one in four high schoolers identifies as LGBTQ. That's up from one in 10 in 2011. This *DailyWire+* documentary examines consequential harms of transgenderism through the eyes of de-transitioners and parents living in states that prioritize the ideology

over parental rights. It also takes a hard (and graphic; viewer discretion advised) look at what medical "transition" does to once-healthy bodies. The driving message is that adults must take a stand to protect vulnerable children from these evils being inflicted by predatory professionals and their influencers.



State Organs

Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa) is a Chinese practice that emphasizes truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. In the late 1990s, the Chinese government began persecuting and imprisoning practitioners. This film raises difficult questions related

to disappearances and the concurrent sharp rise in organ transplants (kidneys, livers, corneas, and more) taking place in Chinese hospitals. While troubling to watch, it is crucial that the world press Chinese officials to address the questions it raises.



Harmonic Convergences

A Reflection on Songs & Sexual Asymmetry

by Bobby Neal Winters

I've been listening to music in my garage again. A song that I've heard before caught my attention in a new way. "Save Me" by Jelly Roll is a duet, which he sings with Lainey Wilson of "Wildflowers and Wild Horses" fame.

In country music, the duet often explores relationships between men and women. While I can't say it grows out of the tradition of the Old Testament Song of Songs, which is written as a poetic dialogue, it is in harmony with that tradition. The male and female voices each explore their own side of the same situation.

Man & Woman

The relationship between man and woman is a paradox. It is symmetric and asymmetric at the same time. There are two sides: male and female. They are on the one hand seeking the same thing but on the other seeking something different. When their shared purpose is fully achieved, the human race continues for one more round. However, once that new life is begun, there are asymmetrical consequences. The woman

bears immediate consequences, and the man must be convinced to share the burden.

One song demonstrating this paradox is "Wait in the Truck," sung by Hardy, also with Lainey Wilson. This song explores dark, dark corners of male-female dynamics. In its harsh, earthy art, it opens questions about abuse, violence, and the male protective instinct that might be uncomfortable to talk about openly. But we need to ask them, at least to ourselves.

In the history of country music, there have been pairs of singers who were prolific in their production of duets. I say "pairs" instead of couples, because I don't think they were all romantically involved. Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty; Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers; Johnny Cash and June Carter; George Jones and Tammy Wynette.



PARTING SHOT

The songs they produced together range from the happy little throwaway, "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man," by Loretta and Conway, to the tragic, "Golden Ring," by George and Tammy.

Two Voices, One Song

Having the advantage of this history to build on, it seems to me the duets of late have become more artful and nuanced in the exploration of relationships. "I Remember Everything," with Zach Bryan and Kacey Musgraves, is subtle. The language is quite poetic, but the interpretation by the singers is masterful. The song could be sung by one person, but the sharing of verses among the two brings new meaning as each offers different nuances to the exact same lines.

Of all these songs, "Save Me" brings a sacred perfection to this genre. Jelly Roll begins,

Somebody save me, me from myself;
I've spent so long living in hell.

He's not a knight in shining armor rushing to save her. He is calling out for help, for salvation.

Lainey's verse begins,

What if the night sky
was missin' the moon?
There were no shootin' stars
to use wishin' on you?

This seems different. In her interpretation, we hear her as a separate person—the more stable of the couple. But as the chorus comes, we see she is broken herself. They are two people whose broken edges mesh with each other's.

"Save Me" could be sung as a solo with a single voice. The words would not need to be changed, but oh, so much would be lost.

Herein lies a perfect metaphor for marriage. I can't explain what I mean by that. You either understand it or you don't. ☺

Is this for real?! No way! It's gotta be . . .

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