

SALVO

Issue 75 Winter 2025 — Your Quarterly Reality Check

IMAGO WHAT?

What IS Man?



Evidence for Life After Death – Michael Egnor

AI vs. Human Agency – Keith Lowery

Undeniable Free Will – Denyse O'Leary

Is Your Doctor Human? – Bryan Just & Anthony Esolen

Toxic Art – Thomas Williams

'Tis the season

Darwin's Island of Misfit "Toys" – Jonathan Witt

One Night in Bethlehem – Titus Kennedy

• Casey Luskin: IDEA Man

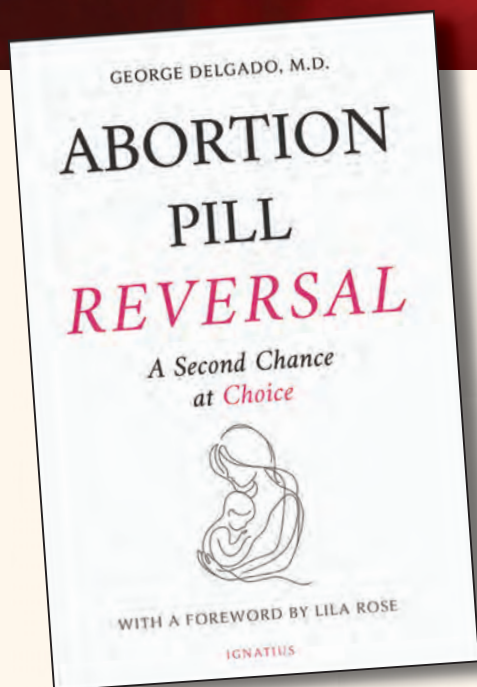
• The Sexual Gospel

• Selfie ales

• Noah's Flood

• **Who Killed
Charlie Kirk?**

AN URGENT CALL TO “SPARK A FIRE FOR LIFE”



“This is one of the most important works of our time. The APR pioneered by Dr. Delgado has saved thousands of children from abortion. As a former abortion clinic director, I know this powerful book is one of the critical solutions we need to help save lives from this holocaust.”

—**Abby Johnson**, Author, *The Walls Are Talking: Former Abortion Clinic Workers Tell Their Stories*

◆ ADAM AND EVE AFTER THE PILL, REVISITED

Mary Eberstadt connects the dots between shrinking, broken families and rising sexual confusion, seen most recently in transgenderism and related phenomena. The result is an indictment of the turn taken by much of the world following the stigmatization of traditional morality. **AEAPRH** . . . Sewn Hardcover, \$19.95

◆ TWO PATIENTS

Dr. John Bruchalski's powerful story reveals how, after practicing abortion, he came to question the medical status quo and pioneer an approach to reproductive medicine that respects female fertility, honors the dignity of unborn children, and offers care to both patients, regardless of their financial situation. **TPP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95

◆ LIFE TO THE FULL

Abby Johnson & Tyler Rowley present 23 harrowing, inspiring true stories that demonstrate the evil of abortion and, more crucially, the power of life. It shares lived human experiences to breathe new life into the abortion fight and raise a new generation of men and women committed to protecting the unborn. **LFP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95

This powerful, timely work is written by **Dr. George Delgado**, pioneer of the game-changing treatment that allows women who have started the chemical abortion process to reverse the very abortion they initiated. Delgado gives us an inside look at how he started the Abortion Pill Reversal (APR) Network, with stories about the challenges and pitfalls along the way.

He tells the inspiring stories of women who reversed their chemical abortions, and gives the personal account of the doctor who performed the very first documented reversal, and also moving testimonies by three APR hotline nurses.

The timeliness of this book cannot be overstated. As the percentage of chemical abortions approaches 70%, more women will wonder if they can reverse their chemical abortions. With government health agencies seeking to eliminate dissenting opinions, APR has been strongly persecuted, while the abortion drug mifepristone (RU-486) was rushed through the FDA approval process with numerous regulations violated. Nevertheless, Dr. Delgado concludes with words of hope, showing that APR is a metaphor for forgiveness, renewal, and second chances. **APRP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$18.95

“Dr. Delgado shares the lies and scare tactics of the abortion industry as well as the heartwarming stories of heroic women who were pressured into bad decisions and ended up saving their babies through Abortion Pill Reversal.”
—**Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone**, San Francisco, CA

“One courageous idea can save countless lives. Medical pioneer Delgado reveals the story of a major breakthrough that has saved thousands of children and their mothers from lifelong regret. This book could not be more urgent. May it spark a fire in all who know that life is sacred and must be protected.”
—**David Bereit**, Founder, 40 Days for Life

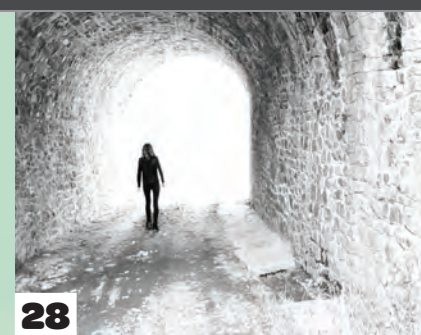


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SALVO

salvo n. (säl'vō)

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

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Seeing Stars



Intelligent Design

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

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



A Long Turning Point

The Origin of Salvo & True Progress

by James M. Kushiner

Harvard-educated lawyer Norman Macbeth spent ten years researching Darwinism. “If I had to oppose [Darwin] in court, I could get his case thrown out,” he concluded. In 1971, he wrote *Darwin Retried: An Appeal to Reason*, arguing that Darwinism was full of errors in reasoning; with intractable gaps in its evidence, it should be abandoned. His book hardly made a ripple.

Twenty years later, another Harvard-educated lawyer, Phillip E. Johnson, cross-examined Darwin in *Darwin on Trial*. He, like Macbeth, pointed out the circular reasoning and faulty leaps of logic that should have invalidated Darwin’s theory in the eyes of any reasonable juror judging the case.

This time, there was more than a ripple. Johnson soon collaborated with a group of young scientists and scholars to launch what became known as the Intelligent Design movement (ID), critical of both Darwinism and its offspring, neo-Darwinism. Through the Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture, this vanguard of ID proponents championed the case for Intelligent Design, but progress required time and hard work.

ID & Salvo

In 1998, I was the editor of *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*. While attending a conference on C. S. Lewis at Cambridge University, I met one of the speakers, William Dembski.

He was a Discovery Institute Fellow and author of the groundbreaking *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities* (Cambridge University Press). After several conversations over meals, I agreed to dedicate an issue of *Touchstone* to Intelligent Design if he would supply the authors and edit the articles.

So in July–August 1999, *Touchstone* published a 108-page issue on ID, which sold out quickly, as did a second printing. In 2001, Brazos Press published the issue as a book: *Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design*, which sold more than 22,000 copies over the next two decades. Seeds were being planted widely (the book was even translated into Korean).

Because of growing interest in ID, we at *Touchstone* decided to create a new magazine anchored in ID—and in 2006, *Salvo* was born. We at *Salvo* are grateful to have the Discovery Institute as a partner organization and to have played a small part in the ID movement.

The ID Turning Point

Promoted through the work of the Discovery Institute, ID has gone from strength to strength with over 300 peer-reviewed articles published and now an “ID 3.0” research program of its own. Finally, we can see there has been a slow and arduous—but clear—turning point in the debate about origins.

Discovery’s approach has been to “follow the evidence wherever it leads,” and Discovery Fellows have welcomed open discussion and debate of the empirical evidence for or against Darwinism. This issue includes Discovery Fellow Casey Luskin’s inspiring personal example of this approach (p. 54). Casey has always sought truthfulness on both sides of a question. This reminds me very much of another young man who sought honest debate and discussion about contested issues: Charlie Kirk, founder of Turning Point USA. Kirk chose that name for his campus organization with the hope of changing minds and turning our society back to sanity.

Those who seek truth, wherever it leads, are the true progressives, as C. S. Lewis would have it:

We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake.... Going back is the quickest way on.

We trust that this 75th and penultimate issue of *Salvo* will continue to inspire all who love and seek the truth. ☺

First Freedom First

In 1998, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was established to monitor violations of religious freedom abroad in alignment with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” In 2024, the Commission reported that more than half of the world’s population lives under threat of religious persecution.

Religious liberty has long been recognized as a people’s “first freedom,” because it grounds other rights, such as freedom of speech, expression, and assembly. In response to the specter of persecution in the U.S., the U.S. Religious Liberty Commission was established in May 2025. Though America was founded

on a premise of religious freedom, it has not had an official body charged with shoring it up until now. One example of a threat to religious liberty within the U.S. is the systematic suppression of pro-life speech, and in October, the American

Center for Law and Justice urged the Commission to confront anti-Christian and anti-pro-life bias exhibited by major tech platforms.

The Commission’s first report is to be delivered to the president on or before July 4, 2026. “The timing of the Commission’s report is no coincidence,” writes Todd

Winking of First Liberty. “It sends a powerful reminder that America’s most enduring freedoms—especially the freedom to believe—are not granted by the government. They come from God, in Whom we trust.” •



Sources: <https://www.uscifr.gov/about-uscifr/about-us>; <https://firstliberty.org/news/half-the-world-lives-under-persecution/>; <https://firstliberty.org/news/liberty-commission-recommendations-by-250th/>; <https://aclj.org/pro-life/aclj-letter-to-religious-liberty-commission>

Climate Change You Can Believe In

In 2018, the ProStasia Foundation registered itself as a nonprofit “child protection organization” in California. As *Salvo* reported in 2023, ProStasia’s advocacy was more about promoting the sexual fetishes of adults than protecting children. And indeed, as *Reduxx* reported

recently, ProStasia’s leadership was veritably littered with MAPs (Minor-Attracted Persons, i.e., pedophiles). Nonetheless, its clout in a climate of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” helped it to get at least one investigative article on the organization pulled from an academic journal.

It is now clear that ProStasia effectively served as a tax-exempt pedophile support and recruitment site.

In September, the group announced that it had terminated operations. This is good news in itself, and what makes it even better is the reason cited—a

“climate shift” which “hardened the discourse” and made ProStasia’s mission “increasingly contentious.” In related developments, two huge queer activist nonprofits, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and GLSEN (formerly the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network), announced mass layoffs, citing a “changing political climate.”

Indeed, sometimes, hard discourses are exactly what is called for. When people of conscience speak up—with clarity and without apology, despite contentious pushback—deviants and predators lose the thin veneers behind which they hide, and fewer vulnerable people are sucked into their sway. This is the kind of climate change we should all be getting behind. •



Sources: <https://reduxx.info/exclusive-pro-pedophile-charity-prostasia-foundation-shuts-down-due-to-climate-shift/>; <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/major-lgbt-activist-groups-announce-mass-layoffs-citing-revenue-loss-and-conservative-backlash/>

Double Delivery

Even before the 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* decision was announced, abortion activists predicted that if *Roe* were overturned, more women would die. But according to Sarah Terzo's breakdown of maternal mortality rates (MMRs—the number of pregnancy-related maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), the opposite has happened. In 2021, America's last full year under *Roe*, the U.S. rate was 32.9, the highest since 1930. By the end of 2023, it was down to 18.6, just slightly lower than the *Roe*-era level of 18.8.

Other Western nations that have tightened abortion restrictions since *Roe* exhibit similar declines. Chile's MMR dropped from 70 to 21.9, Poland's from 17 to 2, El Salvador's from 155 to 46, and Nicaragua's from 190 to 98. Terzo acknowledges that the drops may be related to factors other than abortion, but the life-affirming reality remains: "Despite media stories and pro-abortion claims, women are not dying left and right due to pro-life laws. If they were, we would see the maternal mortality rate going up.

Instead, we see it going down." Pro-life laws doubly deliver. Apparently, saving babies correlates with saving their mothers. •



Source: <https://www.lifenews.com/2025/09/22/after-dobbs-maternal-mortality-has-dropped-to-its-lowest-level-since-roe/>

Honoring Life

A joint project of the Citizens for a Pro-Life Society and the Pro-Life Action League, the first National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children was observed in September 2013 at more than 100



memorial services across the U.S. In September 2025, the 12th annual observance saw 230 services across 47 states. The purpose of the Day of Remembrance is to honor and mourn the lives lost to abortion. Live Action's Tori Shaw writes that "Each service becomes a sacred invitation for communities to pause, reflect and respond. The stories shared, the prayers lifted, and the tears shed all testify to the lasting imprint abortion leaves on families."

Abortion has lasting aftereffects because every life matters. The Day of Remembrance is a way of honoring aborted lives in a manner

similar to which we honor all our deceased while bearing witness to the injustice done to them and the grief of those who would have welcomed and loved them. It is also a way of professing the gospel and persevering in hope. "These gatherings remind us that forgiveness is available," Tori continues. "The work of remembrance is not just about the past. It's about healing hearts, changing minds, and building a future where every life is cherished." Visit [NationalDayOfRemembrance.org](https://www.NationalDayOfRemembrance.org) to learn about participating in a 2026 Day of Remembrance memorial service. •

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/record-230-memorial-services-honor-children-lost-to-abortion-across-us/>

Falling out of Fashion

"Pronoun badges and rainbow lanyards could soon be cluttering the clearance bins of campus gift shops," quips Jo Bartosch, co-author of *Pornocracy*.

A Centre for Heterodox Social Science report released in October found that the number of young Americans identifying as trans and queer dropped from 6.8 percent in 2023 to 3.6 percent in 2025. The decline is steepest, she notes, "at the elite end of the

spectrum, confirming that the trans delusion was always a luxury belief." Put differently, "'queer' identities are a fashion statement." And fashions change. "Queer," "asexual," and "pansexual" labels are melting away, she comments drily. "It seems being straight is cool again." •

Sources: <https://www.spiked-online.com/2025/10/17/trans-is-fast-falling-out-of-fashion/>; <https://www.heterodoxcentre.com/research/chss-report-no-5/>

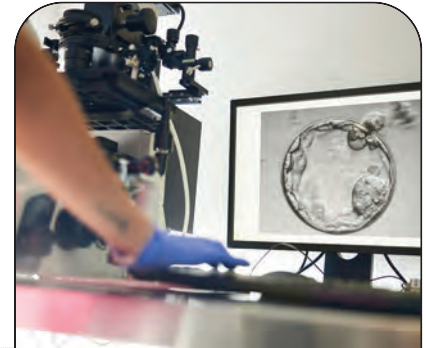
IVG: In Vitro (Playing) God

Somatic cell nuclear transfer" is the technical term for cloning. It involves removing the nucleus from an egg and replacing it with the nucleus from a different cell of the same body. A recent *Nature Communications* paper reports on a study involving what can only be described as the scientific next-level attempt to play God: in vitro gametogenesis (IVG). IVG starts like cloning but goes further by manipulating the cloned embryo to enable it to be

fertilized with sperm, thus resulting in a second embryo with different genetic material. In the IVG study, all 82 cloned and manipulated embryos died.

An op-ed for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children notes that IVG represents a move toward producing children via artificial means to satisfy the desires of same-sex-coupled adults. It is "a further example of the manipulation of early human lives who are turned into research material, often with the knowledge they will be

damaged, then mostly discarded.... IVG is another malevolent 'sensation' to fly out of the Pandora's box which was opened with IVF." •



Sources: <https://spuc.org.uk/ivg-where-science-gets-sinister/>; <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-025-63454-7>

Organized Fake Science

Organized scientific fraud is growing at an alarming rate," reports Phys.org—and it's not just a matter of random lone rangers but of "sophisticated global networks of individuals and

entities, which systematically work together to undermine the integrity of academic publishing." Northwestern University researchers analyzed datasets of retracted publications culled from scientific-literature aggregators and scholarly journals, along with data from Retraction Watch, and discovered "coordinated efforts involving 'paper mills' [that] churn out large numbers of manuscripts, which they then sell to academics who want to quickly publish new work." It involves brokers who connect authors willing to write for hire with journal editors willing to publish. Manuscripts

included "fabricated data, manipulated or even stolen images, plagiarized content and sometimes nonsensical or physically impossible claims." In some cases, defunct publications' web addresses have been "hijacked" and repurposed to publish papers under a guise of scientific legitimacy. The fraud is so widespread that it is "outpacing the growth rate of legitimate scientific publications."

Luís A. N. Amaral, lead author of the study, commented, "These networks are essentially criminal organizations, acting together to fake the process of science. Millions of dollars are involved in these processes." •



Source: <https://phys.org/news/2025-08-scientific-fraud-alarming-uncovers.htm>

Sociologists for Sex with Children

The American Sociological Association (ASA) is but the latest group of adults to propose further sexualizing children. A nine-page commentary in ASA's *Sex & Sexualities* journal titled "Childhood Sexualities: On Pleasure and Meaning from the Margins," "repositions childhood sexualities

within a pleasure-centered, globally oriented, and power-aware frame." The authors have the unmitigated moral perversity to blame Christian colonizers for limiting permissible sex to adults ("childhood sexual innocence is ... a colonial fiction") and to frame the introduction of sex to children as "justice": "We argue that

rejecting adult-centric/adultist approaches to sexualities and attending to childhood pleasure is indispensable for an inclusive sociology and just sexual futures."

Pedophilia seems to be the lone remaining sexual taboo, but unless parents and God-fearing adults—or even just loudmouth "normies"—get busy shoring it up, it, too, will eventually give way to the lusts of extreme sexual degenerates. •

Sources: <https://thefederalist.com/2025/10/16/top-sociological-journal-says-young-kids-should-be-sexualized-and-its-colonizers-fault-they-arent/>; <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/30333717251375994>

Rivers > Humans

Do waterways possess rights? A September symposium hosted by the Harvard Kennedy School argued for water rights as part of the 2025 Harvard Climate Action Week—not the right of



humans to use water but the rights of water. Dr. Kelsey Leonard, a participant on a panel titled *Human Resources: Indigenous Leadership in Protecting Water as a Fundamental Right*, emphasized “the inherent rights of rivers and waters,” stating that “Justice is not something solely for humans.” Writing for Harvard’s

Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights, Meg Foley Yoder said a recurring theme of the session was “the need to reframe the human relationship with water—not as a resource for human consumption but as a living relative with which humans share reciprocal duties.”

Meanwhile, a group called Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) says that unborn humans—who actually are our living relatives—have no rights,

not even the right not to be killed with impunity. A 2025 PHR report claims that pro-life laws are causing harm to people across every medical specialty, not just among those who are pregnant and want abortions. PHA medical director Michele Heisler, MD, MPA, says that “abortion bans are undermining fundamental principles of medicine and patient autonomy—leading to discrimination in care to women, girls, and pregnant patients.” The 43-page report ends with a call to “Vigorously advocate for the repeal of abortion bans and restrictions and continue to speak out against the range of injuries—criminal, civil, and moral—caused by abortion bans and restrictions.”

Got that? Waterways are not geological features but are our “living relatives,” to which we have moral duties, but shielding unborn children from murder poses a threat to adult autonomy. We live among advance-degreed, morally perverted pagans and barbarians. •

Sources: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr-ryan/our-work/carr-ryan-commentary/indigenous-leadership-protecting-water-fundamental>; <https://www.liveaction.org/news/physicians-human-rights-protecting-preborn-babies-harmful>; https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Cascading-Harms-Research-Brief_PHR_September-2025.pdf

Totalitarian Med

What happens when a Catholic hospital operates in a system where there is universal healthcare and legalized medical assistance in dying (MAiD)? For St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver, it meant that the MAiD clinic Shoreline Space got placed immediately inside a main entrance, despite euthanasia running contrary to all Catholic teachings. Providence Health Care owns and operates St. Paul’s under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Vancouver and has a service contract with the

government guaranteeing it can prevent euthanasia within its facilities. Nonetheless, it was powerless to prevent the placement of Shoreline Space in its space.

It’s long been known that he who fights city hall usually loses, but when city hall pays your doctor’s salary and redefines killing as health care, eventually everyone loses. “This is another example of zealots who won’t allow the population any freedom from euthanasia,” said Dr. Will Johnston, head of the Euthanasia Resistance Coalition of British Columbia.

“I think it’s totalitarianism, and it shows none of their claimed virtues of inclusion and diversity.” •



Sources: <https://nwcatholic.org/news/terry-o-neill-canadian-catholic-news-osv-news/maid-unit-forced-onto-campus-of-catholic-run-hospital-in-vancouver-now-operational>; <https://alexschadenberg.blogspot.com/2025/10/built-to-coerce-canadas-living.html>

The Rise & Fall of Reason

REASON: to think or argue in a logical manner

by Rick Reed

Reason has long been central to Western thought. Rooted in the Latin *ratio* (“judgment”) and French *raison* (“to discuss or argue”), in English it has served both as *logical justification* and *moral cause* since the 13th century. For more than 2,500 years, reason has stood alongside *authority*—received knowledge; *observation*—knowledge gained by the senses; and *intuition*—knowledge that transcends logical reasoning as one of the four ways of knowing.

Thomas Aquinas elevated reason when he sought to reconcile it with faith. His *Summa Theologica* positioned reason as a divine gift—an instrument for discerning truth in a fallen world. The Scholastics (13th–15th-century Christian scholars and theologians) saw reason not as strict logic but as a moral compass, guiding humans toward clarity and virtue without succumbing to emotionalism. This legacy shaped Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions alike.

From Divine to Human

Yet, in the 17th century, its meaning began to shift away from its divine moorings toward something referring to a purely human construct. We can trace its decline through four eras.

Rationalism. Enlightenment-era thinkers magnified the scope of reason. Descartes, Locke, and others declared it the foundation

of all human knowledge. Indeed, Descartes’s famous dictum, *Cogito, ergo sum* (“I think; therefore, I am”) positioned reason as the bedrock not just of knowing but of existence. Philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries made reason synonymous with objectivity and the rejection of superstition, casting it as the path to liberating humanity from ignorance and tyranny.

Among America’s Founding Fathers, Jefferson and Adams in particular understood that for the new nation to become a just and stable society, its foundation must be built on objective reason. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson invoked “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” a phrase rooted in rationalist natural law theory. Adams believed that laws and institutions should be grounded in reason and virtue. He even warned against the

dangers of unchecked emotion and factionalism.

Romanticism. By the 19th century, the Romantics rejected what they saw as the cold abstraction of reason for what they perceived as the liberating power of emotion and intuition. The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley went so far as to declare, “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” He, along with many other Romantic idealists, placed emotion and creativity above reason.

Existentialism. By the early 20th century, the existentialists argued that reason was incapable of resolving the absurdity of existence. Though they conceded that reason could describe the world and its physical operations, they insisted it could not justify living in that world. For them, each person must create his own meaning through choices he makes, rather than discovering through reason objective meaning that already exists.

Postmodernism. Following the existentialists, postmodern thinkers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida regarded reason as contingent and complicit in systems of domination. The Frankfurt School critical theorists further critiqued Enlightenment reason as a tool for control rather than liberation. For the critical Marxist Herbert Marcuse, reason became a tool for overthrowing Western civilization. He radicalized reason in saying that, “Philosophy must break the spell of the prevailing rationality.”

The Perennial Invitation

Scripture affirms reason as part of God’s invitation to humanity. The Hebrew word *yakach*, translated “reason” in most English Bibles, means “to decide”—a call to moral discernment. This divine appeal frames reason not merely as logic, but as a relational bridge between God and man—a means of forgiveness, understanding, and truth. In Isaiah’s words, “Come, let us reason together.” ☉



FOMO

Beware the Other Attention Defici Disorder

by Keith Hess

As you read this column, you may experience an urge to check your social media feed. Did anyone like your recent post? How come more people didn't congratulate you on your life update? Did people find your meme funny?

You're not alone. I just felt the urge to check my Facebook account. It is becoming common knowledge that social media use has led to harmful psychological consequences, including the amplification of a psychological phenomenon known as FOMO ("fear of missing out").

While FOMO isn't a logical fallacy in itself, it can lead to fallacious thinking, such as the *bandwagon fallacy* and the *false urgency fallacy*. On the former, a person decides to do something because others are doing it. On the latter, someone acts quickly on the false sense that they will miss out if they don't. These psychological tendencies make thinking critically more difficult.

Many retailers rely on FOMO to boost sales. For example, they carry seasonal items earlier than expected and then pull them from

shelves earlier than expected. This creates a sense of urgency in customers, making them more likely to buy on impulse. Most shoppers don't need the items being pushed. Yet they buy them anyway.

Be Discerning

I recently read *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World* (2019), by Cal Newport. It's as relevant now as when it was first published. Newport urges us to be discerning in adopting new technologies. Rather than defaulting to acceptance, we should first ask how the new app or device will improve our lives and whether the cost of adopting it is worth the improvement it promises to deliver. In response, I deleted most apps from my phone and started taking daily walks just to think and pray. My mind

feels sharper, less fragmented, and more at peace. And the world didn't end because I didn't pick up my phone.

If the urge to pick up your phone feels irresistible, it's not necessarily because you're weak-willed. Social media companies capitalize on your data and attention, and they design their apps to draw you in and keep you scrolling. Since you are the product, they make more money by keeping you on your phones and apps longer. In so doing, they exploit the fact that we are social creatures who want to belong. They prey on our psychological vulnerability. The result is a generation that has lost the ability to focus and that lives more frenetic, fragmented lives.

Think a Second Time

How ought we then live? Instead of rushing to our phones to "stay connected," we should try slowing down and having a genuine conversation with someone around us. To do this, we will likely need to put some restrictions on our phones, such as blocking certain apps or leaving the phone in a drawer after we get home from work. When the urge to pick up your phone hits you, stop, breathe, and ask yourself *why* you would be picking it up. Think about whether it's a good use of your time to browse Instagram for an hour. Think about what you would miss right next to you if you were to spend your next moments on your phone.

Did you get through this article without the urge to check social media? If not, perhaps it's time to rethink how you use your phone. The real risk of FOMO is not that something amazing could be happening online that we simply must know about. It's that we may spend so much time on our devices, we miss out on the opportunities to engage in life as it is offered to us moment by moment, and we don't truly live. ☺

Who Killed Charlie Kirk?

The Progressive Left's "Educational Dictatorship"

by Emily Morales

On the afternoon of September 10, Charlie Kirk stepped onto a Utah Valley University platform to open the first of fifteen scheduled stops for Turning Point USA's American Comeback Tour. Soon thereafter, a single shot from a high-powered rifle shattered the gathering. The eruption stunned the nation, ricocheted across the globe, and laid bare the violent tensions simmering beneath today's progressive currents. The world witnessed, in the most graphic way imaginable, the tragic culmination of an idea that had been brewing in academic circles for decades, as Kirk became collateral damage in an ideological war which began not in Utah, but in the halls of early 20th-century German academia.

Now is the time to trace the intellectual lineage that made the assassination not just possible but perhaps inevitable in a society shaped by the theories of Herbert Marcuse, the philosopher who put forth theoretical justification for silencing conservative voices.

Liberating Intolerance

Born in Berlin in 1898, Herbert Marcuse emerged from the intellectual ferment of Weimar, Germany to become one of the

most influential thinkers of the Frankfurt School, the home of modern Critical Theory. Unlike his academic colleagues, who remained content with *theoretical* speculation, Marcuse possessed a revolutionary temperament that drove him toward practical application of his ideas. His most dangerous contribution to political thought came in his 1965 essay "Repressive Tolerance," a work that would fundamentally reshape how an entire generation

understood free speech and political discourse.

Marcuse's central argument was elegantly simple yet profoundly destructive: traditional liberal tolerance was actually a form of oppression. To Marcuse, allowing conservatives and those he regarded as traditionalists to speak freely only perpetuated existing structures of oppressive domination. True liberation, he argued, required what he called "liberating tolerance," which meant "intolerance against movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left."¹

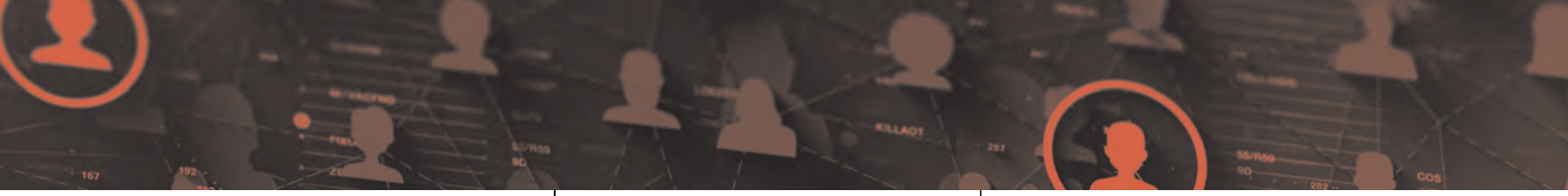
But Marcuse went further than expressing mere theoretical preference to explicitly advocate the use of force to silence opposing viewpoints:

This tolerance cannot be indiscriminate and equal with respect to the contents of expression, neither in word nor in deed.... Society *cannot* be indiscriminate where the pacification of existence, where freedom and happiness themselves are at stake: here, certain things *cannot* be said, certain ideas *cannot* be expressed, certain policies *cannot* be proposed" (emphases added).²

Ironically, the philosopher who had fled Nazi Germany became in America an advocate for the very form of ideological suppression he had escaped.

From Theory to Practice: The Institutional Revolution

Marcuse's ideas might have remained confined to academic journals were it not for the perfect storm of the 1960s counterculture movement and its expansion into higher education. As universities grew and radical faculty gained tenure, Marcuse's "repressive tolerance" found fertile ground in American academia and gradually became institutional policy.



The transformation was subtle but systematic, as conservative speakers were disinvited from campus events, traditional viewpoints excised from curricula, and faculty hiring practices narrowed to exclude those who did not embrace progressive orthodoxies. Student disciplinary codes accordingly expanded to censure “hate speech” and “harmful” or “hurtful” ideas.

By the time Charlie Kirk turned his attention to this “scam” of higher education, American universities had largely implemented what Marcuse called “an educational dictatorship.”³ Kirk’s organization, Turning Point USA, existed precisely to challenge this institutional bias, taking to the belly of the beast itself a dynamic presence on campuses encouraging civil discourse, debate, and discussion.

“Undemocratic Means”

Marcuse had been clear about the logical endpoint of his philosophy. When asked *who* would decide which ideas deserved tolerance and which deserved suppression, he answered that this power belonged uniquely to “everyone ‘in the maturity of his faculties’ as a human being, everyone who has learned to think rationally and autonomously.”⁴ By this, Marcuse meant that only those who agreed with his progressive worldview qualified as “mature” and “rational.”

The circular logic created a dynamic through which those who embraced progressive ideology were, by definition, the arbiters of truth, while those who disagreed were, by definition, immature and irrational. Opposition to progressive ideas was not just wrong; it was evidence of moral and intellectual deficiency that justified no, demanded—suppression. If “organized repression and indoctrination” blocked progressive goals, then “apparently undemocratic means” might be necessary to unblock those goals. The

shooting at Utah Valley University thus represents the horrifying fulfillment of deploying such undemocratic means—when institutional suppression fails to silence opposing voices, violence becomes the next step in the progression from “repressive tolerance” to elimination of dissent.

The Tragedy of Misguided Liberation

Charlie Kirk became a target of the malevolent forces Marcuse had set in motion, and he died living out the very principles Marcuse sought to destroy: the free exchange of ideas and the practice of rational discourse between people in good faith. His death reveals the tragic irony of Marcuse’s philosophy—in the name of liberation, it has produced toxic forces willing to resort to the ultimate form of repression.

Kirk’s alleged killer, perhaps indoctrinated by Marcuse’s ideas as they found expression in academia, internet chat rooms, and his own sexual deviance, was likely unaware of the philosophical pedigree of his actions. But as he and university administrators justify suppressing conservative speakers in the interest of “safety,” they echo Marcuse’s argument that certain ideas pose such danger that they cannot be tolerated. Further, when students claim that conservative viewpoints constitute “violence” that justifies preemptive action, they follow Marcuse’s logic to its inevitable conclusion.

The Cost of Intellectual Tyranny

Charlie Kirk understood that totalitarian ideas that cannot be challenged in public spaces will inevitably find expression through

darker, more ominous channels. His campus tours were dedicated to reopening the intellectual spaces Marcuse’s ideological successors had closed. He sought to restore universities to their proper

The tragedy is not just that Charlie Kirk died, but that his death was the predictable result of ideas our universities have been teaching for generations.

function as places for seeking truth rather than indoctrination. For this, he was branded as dangerous, his ideas labeled as harmful, and his very presence viewed as violent provocation.

In the end, Marcuse’s vision of liberation has produced exactly what it promised: a society where certain voices are systematically eliminated. That this elimination progressed from social ostracism to institutional suppression to physical violence should surprise no one familiar with the philosopher’s work. The tragedy is not just that Charlie Kirk died, but that his death was the predictable result of ideas our universities have been teaching for generations. Until we recognize the pernicious legacy of “repressive tolerance,” more young Americans, both perpetrators and victims, will pay a price for our failure to defend genuine intellectual freedom. ☉

Notes

1. Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, by Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse (1965), 109.
2. *Ibid.*, 88.
3. *Ibid.*, 106.
4. *Ibid.*



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CAMOUFLAGE

Cannot Compute

Why Uploading Your Brain Can't Give You Immortality

by Leslie Williams

The sleek conference room buzzes with anticipation as another Silicon Valley luminary takes the stage. "Death is just a technical problem," he announces to enthusiastic applause. "Within 30 years, we'll be able to upload human consciousness to computers, achieving digital immortality." The crowd nods, imagining their digital futures. It's a seductive vision. But beneath the sheen of techno-utopianism lies a profound misunderstanding of what makes us human.

Welcome to the world of mind uploading, where the ancient human desire for immortality meets 21st-century technological hubris. The premise seems simple enough: scan your brain in sufficient detail, simulate its neural patterns in silicon, and voilà—you've cheated death. Your consciousness can live on indefinitely in digital form, free from biological constraints. It's the ultimate expression of the materialist worldview that reduces human beings to information-processing systems. But like many reductionist visions, it collapses under careful scrutiny.

Fatal Flaws

Let's start with the technical challenges, which are far more daunting than advocates typically admit. The human brain contains roughly 86 billion neurons forming trillions of connections. Each neuron is a complex biological system whose behavior depends on subtle molecular interactions. Even if we could somehow scan this intricate network in complete detail (which we currently cannot do), simulating it would require computational resources far beyond anything available today or in the foreseeable future.

But the technical hurdles pale in comparison to the philosophical problems. The "mind upload" scenario rests on several questionable assumptions that call for careful examination.

Assumption 1: The mind is simply what the brain does.

The materialist view treats consciousness as nothing more than the emergent behavior of neural activity—a simple input-output system that can be replicated in any suitable computational substrate. But this ignores the hard problem of consciousness that has stumped philosophers for centuries: how do purely physical processes give rise to subjective first-person experience? The fact that neural activity correlates with conscious experience doesn't mean it fully explains or encompasses it.

Assumption 2: A perfect simulation would preserve personal identity.

Even if we could create a detailed simulation of someone's brain, would the resulting digital entity actually *be* that person? Consider a thought experiment: if we made two identical copies, which one would be "you"? The answer reveals the problem. A simulation, no matter how accurate, remains just that: a simulation. It might behave exactly like you, but that wouldn't make it you any more than a perfect robot duplicate would be you.

Assumption 3: Human consciousness can be reduced to information.

The mind upload vision treats consciousness as essentially computational—a series of information states that can be captured and transferred. But this ignores the embodied nature of human experience. Our consciousness isn't just abstract information processing; it's intimately tied to our physical existence as embodied beings. We think, feel, and experience through our bodies, not just our brains.

The Deeper Delusion

Behind these technical and philosophical problems lies a deeper spiritual confusion. The mind upload dream represents the latest iteration of humanity's oldest temptation—the desire to become like gods, to transcend our created nature through our own efforts. It's Silicon Valley's version of the Tower of Babel, built with semiconductors instead of bricks.

This materialist vision of immortality offers a pale imitation of what the human heart truly longs for. We don't just want to continue existing indefinitely. We want our existence to have meaning and purpose. We don't just want to preserve our thoughts and memories. We want to be known and loved as whole persons. These deeper yearnings point to spiritual realities that can't be captured in any digital simulation.

The Christian worldview offers a much richer understanding of human nature and destiny. We are not merely information-processing systems, but embodied souls created in God's image. Our consciousness isn't an emergent accident of neural activity, but a God-given capacity for relationship with our Creator and each other. And our longing for immortality isn't a problem to be solved with technology, but a sign pointing to our true destiny—resurrection and eternal life in renewed physical bodies.

The Transhumanist Temptation

Mind uploading is but one manifestation of transhumanism—the belief that humanity can and should transcend its biological limitations through technology. It's a movement that combines scientific materialism with religious impulses, offering technological versions of traditional religious promises: immortality, transcendence, and liberation from physical constraints.

But transhumanism's promises are built on a fundamental misunderstanding of the human condition. Our limitations aren't merely technical problems to be solved; they are essential aspects of our created nature.

They remind us that we are creatures, not creators—dependent beings, not autonomous gods.

The transhumanist vision of digital immortality offers the illusion of control over death while avoiding the messiness of traditional religious faith. Why look to a transcendent God when we can save ourselves through technology? But this is precisely what makes it so dangerous. It diverts our spiritual longings toward technological dead ends.

Real Hope vs. Digital Delusion

None of this is to dismiss the legitimate concerns that drive interest in mind uploading. Death is indeed an enemy, and our longing for immortality reflects a deep truth about our nature. But the solution isn't to upload ourselves to the cloud. It's to understand and embrace our true destiny as embodied beings created for relationship with God.

Christianity offers hope for eternal life that doesn't require us to abandon or transcend our embodied nature. The resurrection promise isn't that we'll become disembodied digital entities, but that we'll receive new, glorified physical bodies. This is a fuller, richer vision of immortality that preserves, rather than discards, what makes us human.

The Way Forward

As we navigate the challenges of an increasingly technological

world, we need wisdom to distinguish between genuine human enhancement and dehumanizing delusions. Some technological advances can indeed help us fulfill our God-given potential. But oth-

The mind upload dream represents the desire to become like gods, to transcend our created nature through our own efforts.

ers, like mind uploading, represent false paths that can only lead to disappointment.

We should celebrate technological progress while remaining clear-eyed about its limits. Technology can improve our lives in many ways, but it cannot answer our deepest existential questions or fulfill our spiritual longings. Those require us to look beyond the material world to the Source of our being.

The next time you hear someone promising digital immortality, remember that you are more than your neural patterns. You are an embodied soul, created for relationship with God and others. No computer simulation, however advanced, can capture the mystery and dignity of human personhood. Our hope lies not in uploading our minds, but in submitting them to the One who designed them in the first place.

Perhaps the real question isn't whether we can achieve digital immortality, but whether we should want to. The Christian vision of eternal life offers something far better—not an endless digital existence, but a renewed physical life in perfect relationship with God and others. That's an immortality worth waiting for. ☺

Choose Your Family Story

Marriage & Mothering Narratives, True & False

by Nicole M. King

“Why are we telling women that motherhood will make them miserable?” So asks the headline of a piece by Naomi Schaeffer Riley for *Deseret News*. She is commenting on the acclaimed novel *Consider Yourself Kissed*, which she describes as “yet another installment” in the long list of depictions of “modern women’s grievances.”

The grievance list is a long one—women who can’t find a husband, can’t have a baby, can’t successfully climb the corporate ladder because of said husband or baby, don’t feel fulfilled taking care of baby, yet are miserable at work because they miss baby, etc., etc.

Riley’s problem with this novel—and many other works like it—is not that it claims that marriage or family life is difficult. Any two married people can tell you that being married is sometimes hard. And any parent can tell you that being a parent is a lot of hard.

The problem with the grievance-based narratives, Riley says, is

that the whole system is out to get you. Sure, it may seem as if women have made progress, but these novelists and journalists are here to tell you that you are destined for misery. The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead of finding someone you love earlier and trying to build a family together, you will put your career first, rejecting multiple decent, loving men because it’s too early to settle down. If and when you finally do enter a partnership and have kids, you will walk around with a chip on your shoulder wondering why you have to cut back on work to be with your kids—even though chances are you actually do want to be with your kids more. You will blame this all on your partner or your boss or the world. Rinse and repeat.

Storytelling, in other words, is a big deal. The stories we tell ourselves and others—even in our heads, in our most private moments—impact how we approach and interact with the world around us.

Intergenerationality & Family Narratives

Research backs this up. To study the impact of storytelling on children, Emory University researchers Marshall P. Duke and Robyn Fivush developed something called the “Do You Know” scale.¹ Children were asked 20 questions related to their family history—questions like where the child’s parents and grandparents grew up and married, or what schools their parents had attended or jobs they had held. They released their findings in a 2008 paper they coauthored with psychologist Amber Lazarus: “We report that knowledge of family history is significantly correlated with internal locus of control, higher self-esteem, better family functioning, greater family cohesiveness, lower levels of anxiety, and lower incidence of behavior

problems.”²

They found that the children’s performance on the Do You Know scale seemed to be correlated with the development of an “intergenerational self,” an understanding of themselves as part of a larger family picture. Or, as Fivush says, “When we don’t know what to do, we look for stories about how people have coped in the past.” Children who knew more about their families had a greater reservoir of experiences to draw from when facing new challenges.

The researchers also found that there were three basic kinds of family narratives. First is the “ascending family narrative,” which goes something like this: “When we first arrived in this city, Son, we had nothing. But we worked hard, saved, and now we’re incredibly successful.” Second is the “descending narrative”: “When we came to America, we were wealthy. But then the Depression hit, and we lost everything.”

Third, the type that seemed correlated with the most success and well-being in children, is the “oscillating family narrative”: “We’ve had good times, and we’ve had bad times. We’ve had family members who were wildly successful and well-respected. And we’ve had family members who were drunkards or went to prison. But through it all, we’ve worked hard, overcome, and stuck with each other.”

Summing & Purpose

This particular study focused on children, but I believe the findings pertain to adults as well. This “oscillating” narrative is the one we should be



But in his goodness, God has ordained that hardship also serves an important end: sanctification. Paul writes in Romans chapter five that as believers, we can “rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame” (Rom. 5:3–5). Likewise, in 2 Corinthians, the Lord tells Paul that he will not remove Paul’s “thorn in the flesh,” for “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in

telling women. Sometimes, in life, there are hard patches—when you’re waiting for a spouse, praying for a baby, putting your career on pause or leaving it altogether to care for your own family, or launching your children to the next phase of their own lives.

As part of the curse of sin, God tells the woman, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen. 3:16). Part of the curse, as it is unique to woman, is that sin introduced “pain in childbearing,” which, I’m going to suggest, might mean more than

weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). James writes that Christians are to “Count it all joy . . . when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2–4).

Faithfulness & Blessing

The curse of sin has brought suffering, and our Lord has seen fit to allow it. In life, for women and men alike, there are choices. The key lies, as Riley writes, in recognizing which choices tend to lead to greater well-being for oneself *and* one’s family. It lies in recognizing hardship and responding to it in Christ-like ways.

Research has long demonstrated that marriage is associated with higher levels of happiness and health, and that having children leads to a greater sense of purpose, especially later in life. We have the autonomy to make the choices to be faithful and persevere. Once we recognize this—and embrace the suffering as well as the blessing—we can let go of the “system’s out to get me” mindset, which only breeds bitterness and discontent. “Part of growing up is

realizing that we have autonomy,” Riley concludes, “that our life outcomes are not just a product of structural forces acting on us. In reality, women have a lot of choices open to them, but there are only a few that will genuinely make them happy.” ☉

Storytelling is a big deal. The stories we tell ourselves and others—even in our heads, in our most private moments—impact how we approach and interact with the world around us.

the physical process of labor and delivery. I believe it also involves the physical, mental, and emotional toil of woman’s unique role in raising children, in the same way that the curse of sin introduced pain and toil for the man in bringing forth food from the ground. The curse also affects women and men alike with the unnatural desire to rule over each other—man will exploit his dominion, and woman will seek to overthrow man’s authority. Strife in the family and toil in our respective callings—these are all a result of the curse.

Notes

1. Carol Clark, “How Family Stories Help Children Weather Hard Times,” *Emory News Center* (Apr. 29, 2020).
2. Marshall P. Duke, Amber Lazarus, and Robyn Fivush, “Knowledge of Family History as a Clinically Useful Index of Psychological Well-Being and Prognosis: A Brief Report,” *Psychotherapy* 45.2 (2008), 268–72.

Once Upon a Time in Bethlehem

The Historicity of the Birthplace of Jesus & the Roman Census

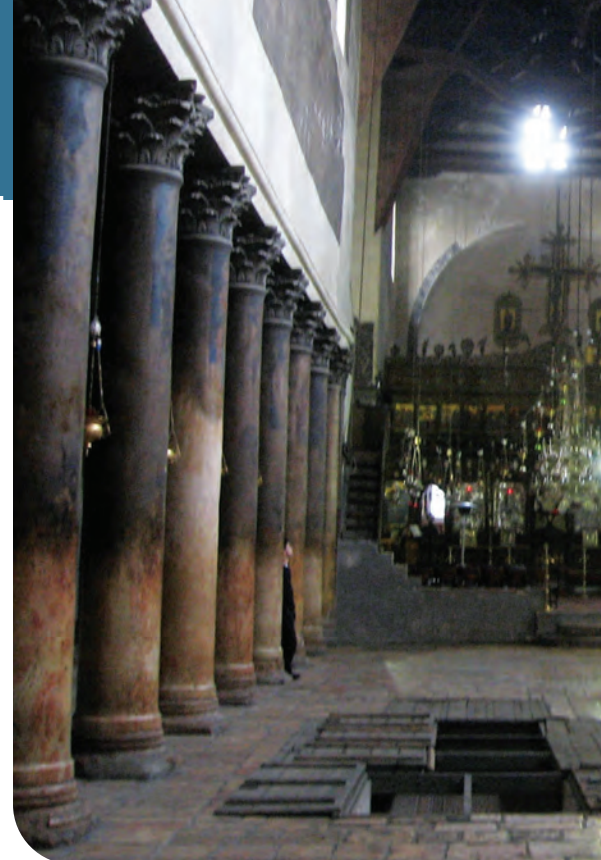
by Titus Kennedy

The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem during the reigns of Herod the Great and Caesar Augustus, as well as the Roman census mentioned in connection with this period, are key historical markers in the narrative of the Gospels. They situate the events in a real place, time, and context with specificity.¹ Yet numerous scholars have gone so far as to claim that Jesus' birth did not take place in Bethlehem and that the Roman census involving Quirinius did not occur at this time. Some contend instead that the Gospel accounts are literary works containing a mixture of historical errors, propaganda, and myth.²

Which view is more consistent with the archaeological data?

Born in Bethlehem, Raised in Nazareth

Combining the narratives of Matthew and Luke, we read that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea during the reign of Herod the Great and while Augustus was the Roman emperor. Since Augustus was emperor from 28 BC to AD 14, and Herod was king of Judea from 40 to 4 BC (ruling from Jerusalem beginning in 37 BC), Jesus would have been born prior to 4 BC.³ While this time-frame is generally agreed upon, the assertion that Jesus was not



born in Bethlehem conflicts with ancient historical sources and archaeological discoveries.

The primary sources of the Gospels, of course, record that Jesus was born in the small village of Bethlehem in Judea. However, setting aside the Gospel accounts, numerous extrabiblical ancient sources affirm this location, including sources from only decades after the death of Jesus. Justin Martyr, who lived around AD 100–155, recorded that Jesus was

Nazareth Church of the Nutrition





Bethlehem Church of the Nativity

born in Bethlehem about 35 stadia (about 3.5 miles) from Jerusalem, while Celsus, a staunch opponent of Christianity who lived around AD 120–190, wrote

Contrary to the claims of numerous skeptics and critics, the archaeological finds demonstrate that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that there was an empire-wide census ordered by Augustus and administered by Quirinius in conjunction with this event.

that Jesus was born in a Judean village—a specific location which would accommodate Bethlehem in Judea but disqualify Nazareth in Galilee.⁴ Numerous later writers in antiquity, such as Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, continued to affirm Bethlehem as the place of Jesus' birth, despite Nazareth's being known as Jesus' hometown where he grew up and lived most of his life. Evidence from archaeology also confirm Bethlehem as his birthplace and Nazareth as his hometown.

Still standing today, although it has been remodeled multiple times through history, the Church of

the Nativity in Bethlehem was constructed around AD 327 to commemorate and preserve the location where Jesus was born. Yet this area was known as the site of the Nativity long before AD 327. The historical tradition appears to reach back into the first century, as by AD 135 the Roman emperor Hadrian had had a shrine to Adonis placed over this location in Bethlehem in an effort to paganize the site and obscure its historical connection to Jesus.⁵

Thus, even the Roman authorities recognized the significance and importance of Bethlehem as the place where Jesus Christ was born. No such archaeological site or historical tradition exists in Nazareth. What has been found in Nazareth are two first-century houses over which Byzantine-period churches were built to preserve and commemorate the childhood home of Jesus and the house in which Mary received the Annunciation.⁶

Quirinius & the Census

The census ordered by Augustus and administered by Quirinius is one of the two historical linchpins for understanding the timing and context of the birth of Jesus. According to Luke, a census for the Roman Empire was decreed, and it was for this reason that Joseph took Mary with him to Bethlehem.⁷ Contrary to popular perception, this empire-wide census was indeed recorded in official Roman records as one of three censuses which took place during the reign of Augustus. They numbered male Roman citizens at 4.063 million in 28 BC, 4.233 million in 8 BC, and 4.937 million in AD 14.⁸ The census which took place prior to the death of Herod the Great would have been the one ordered by Augustus in 8 BC. Joseph would have been required to participate and to go to his hometown of Bethlehem, as attested by Roman papyri which demonstrate that census demands involved summoning people to their hometowns for registration; that the summons involved even those who were not Roman citizens; and that, given the slow speed at which information traveled, the people might not

even begin to respond to the order until a year after it had been decreed.⁹

According to Luke, Quirinius, who was a legate in Syria at the time, was the Roman official administering the census in Judea. A famous Roman aristocrat who is documented by ancient Roman writers and inscriptions, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius lived from 51 BC to AD 21. He served as a commander of legions, a provincial governor, and a consul of Rome.¹⁰ One of his military deployments was a command which made him leader of multiple legions in Cilicia, Galatia, and Syria between 12 BC and AD 1

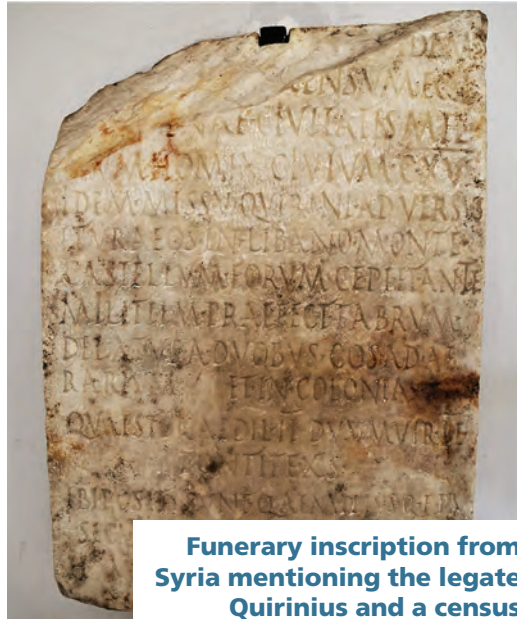
before he was appointed *legatus propraetor* (a governor appointed by the emperor) of Syria Province.¹¹

Roman protocol called for the military to administer censuses, and, significantly Quirinius himself is mentioned as a legate in carrying out a census in Syria Province while Augustus was Caesar.¹² An important inscription found in Beirut notes that P. Sulpicius Quirinius, a legate of Caesar in Syria, ordered an officer named Secundus to conduct a census of the city-state of Apamea, Syria. The inscription further describes how Quirinius and Secundus were involved in battling the Ituraeans on the mountain range known as Mount Lebanon, which is north of the Sea of Galilee and was part of the kingdom of Herod the Great.

Although this inscription and the census recorded by Luke have been erroneously connected to a regional tax assessment and acquisition of money from the deposed Herod Archelaus in AD 6, neither this inscription nor the census as mentioned by Luke describes a mere localized tax assessment.¹³ In fact, Luke specifically writes that the decree called for a census to be taken of the entire Roman world, while the records of Augustus also specify a census of the whole Roman Empire.¹⁴ Therefore, the census overseen by Quirinius and mentioned in this Beirut inscription was quite plausibly part of the census of the Roman Empire that was ordered in 8 BC and that eventually reached Judea just before the birth of Jesus.

Further, Tertullian (ca. AD 155–220) wrote that Sentius Saturninus, the governor of Syria Province from 9–6 BC, oversaw a census ordered by Augustus which took place in Judea around the time of the birth of Jesus.¹⁵ Justin Martyr even mentioned Quirinius as a procurator in Judea who carried out the census when Jesus was born.¹⁶ The apparent dilemma of both Quirinius and Saturninus being mentioned as rulers in Syria and connected to this census may be solved by understanding that Quirinius was a military legate and Saturninus was the governor of the province. Josephus also remarks that there were multiple governors or rulers of Syria Province while Saturninus was in power.¹⁷ This places Quirinius in the area of Syria and Judea around 8–7 BC as a military commander who would have been in charge

locally of carrying out a portion of the empire-wide census ordered by Augustus.



Funerary inscription from Syria mentioning the legate Quirinius and a census

As It Is Written

When collected and analyzed, all of the data indicate that Augustus initially ordered a census of the empire in 8 BC; that Quirinius carried it out in Syria and Judea while Saturninus was governor; and that Joseph and Mary eventually received word in Galilee, prompting their trip south to complete the registration; and finally, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in approximately 7 BC, about a year after the initial order. Contrary to the claims of numerous skeptics and critics, the archaeological

finds demonstrate that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that there was an empire-wide census ordered by Augustus and administered by Quirinius in conjunction with this event. ☉

Notes

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2. E.g. Steve Mason, “O Little Town of ... Nazareth?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16:1 (2000); Mark Smith, “Of Jesus and Quirinius.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol. 62, No. 2 (2000); Bart Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible* (2010).
3. A few scholars have argued that Herod did not die in 4 BC, but in 1 BC. However, the 1 BC theory contradicts information in Josephus, Herodian coinage, the lengths of the reigns of Herod's sons, and the census of Augustus.
4. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 1.34; Origen, *Contra Celsus* 1.51.
5. Titus Kennedy, *Excavating the Evidence for Jesus* (2022); Joel Kramer, *Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence* (2020).
6. Matthew 2:23; Luke 2:39; Ken Dark, “The Byzantine Church of the Nutrition in Nazareth Rediscovered,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 144 (2012); Titus Kennedy, *Excavating the Evidence for Jesus* (2022).
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8. *Res Gestae Divi Augustus* 8.
9. British Museum papyrus 904; Oxyrhynchus papyrus 255; P. Mich. 176–180; Sabine Huebner, *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament* (2019).
10. Titus Kennedy, *Archaeology and the People of the Bible* (2026).
11. Tacitus, *Annals* 3.22–48; cf. Florus, *Epitome of Roman History* 2.31; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 49.
12. Lapis Venetus, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* vol. III, no. 6687.
13. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.354, 18.1–102.
14. Luke 2:1.
15. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.19.
16. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 1.34.
17. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.280, 285, 357, 361, 17.89.

Dr. Who?

The AI “Doctor” Is (Not) In

by Bryan Just

Even before the advent of chatbots, people have been searching the web for answers when they feel ill. Sites such as WebMD offer a convenient first stop in the search for a diagnosis, and many people use them to determine how worried they should be about their symptoms. It can sometimes seem like a search on your symptoms returns a worst-case scenario—it’s become a running joke that according to Google, something as innocuous as a runny nose is probably a sign of cancer. But despite the potential for catastrophizing, many people continue to find these searches useful. And with the rise of AI chatbots and Google AI overviews, researching your symptoms has gotten even easier (though whether the advice is becoming more helpful is a very different question).

Proceed with Caution

Many expect that advances in AI will transform the practice of medicine. Some medical offices (my own family doctor among them) use ambient recording in the exam room to generate post-visit summaries, cutting down on administrative burdens. UnitedHealth has 1,000 AI applications in operation across its insurance, health delivery, and pharmacy units performing such tasks as transcribing conversations, summarizing data, processing claims, and running chatbots.¹ Studies are being done to test the abilities of AI to interpret medical images, diagnose illnesses, and recommend the most beneficial course of treatment. Some hope that within a few years certain doctor visits might become unnecessary—simply tell a chatbot your symptoms and it will spit out the exact diagnosis and recommended treatment, making healthcare far cheaper and more broadly accessible.

The contemporary practice of medicine is only possible because of technological advances. In some



ways, AI is a technology like any other, and there are many reasons to be hopeful that continued development will lead to further improvements in our knowledge of the human body, diseases, and treatments. But with that said, and despite some promising advances, such as a study which found that doctors who used GPT-4 performed better on a test of diagnostic reasoning than those who used only conventional resources,² AI technology is nowhere near ready to make your doctor obsolete. Furthermore, we should seriously question whether doing so would be a good thing. The push for the expansion of AI into healthcare is indicative of some worrying trends that should give us pause, and we should think carefully about how these technologies are being applied.

Misplaced Trust

One area of concern comes from the rise in people turning to chatbots for medical advice. While the accuracy of chatbots has been improving, they are

by no means perfect, and they frequently give out incorrect information. Most popular chatbots have not been designed for medical purposes, nor have they been vetted or tested for the accuracy of the advice they dispense. In fact, if the data sets they are trained on are not appropriate for the task, they can lead to prediction models whose results are “unusable.”³ Despite this, five Cornell University researchers found that people tend to “over trust AI-generated medical responses,” judging AI-dispensed medical information to be just as reliable as a doctor’s advice, even when the information given by the AI was inaccurate. Participants in their study

demonstrated a preference for AI-generated responses.... Participants not only found these low-accuracy AI-generated responses to be valid, trustworthy, and complete/satisfactory but also indicated a high tendency to follow the potentially harmful medical advice and incorrectly seek unnecessary medical attention as a result of the response provided.⁴

Sites like Google and WebMD make it clear that they provide information only. When using WebMD’s Symptom Checker, before you can even enter any information you will see the disclaimer “This tool does not provide medical advice.”⁵ At one time, these disclaimers were frequently found on AI chatbots as well. Worryingly, though, a recent paper found that generative AI models such as OpenAI, xAI, Anthropic, DeepSeek, Grok, and even Google AI are now dispensing medical advice without any disclaimers,⁶ reinforcing the erroneous perception that these tools are just as authoritative and trustworthy as your doctor, if not more so.

A misplaced trust in chatbots has the potential to drive a wedge between physicians and their patients. Doctors are highly trained professionals with years of education and experience. They are qualified to interpret symptoms and test results in ways that a layperson is simply not equipped to do. AI chatbots put a great deal of information at a patient’s disposal, but they don’t provide the understanding and experience necessary to interpret it. As Tom Nichols chronicles in his book *The Death of Expertise*, the ability for people to do their own “research” in the internet age frequently leads to shallow if not erroneous understanding and an unjustified conviction that they know just as much as an expert in the field

When patients come into their doctor’s office with the results of their latest Google search or chatbot conversation, it frequently leads to frustrations

on both sides. On the doctor’s side, the sentiment “don’t confuse your Google search with my medical degree” reflects irritation at patients who come to them convinced they have the correct self-diagnosis even if they are wildly off base, or at patients who insist on tests or treatments that would not be of use in their specific situation. Doctors may also have to spend additional time talking patients down, explaining why the rare or serious condition they

The ability for people to do their own “research” in the internet age frequently leads to shallow if not erroneous understanding and an unjustified conviction that they know just as much as an expert in the field

discovered online is not something they need to be concerned about. These conversations need to be handled skillfully, or else patients may perceive that their doctor is paternalistic or dismissive of their concerns. Increased reliance on at-home, AI-generated diagnoses will likely lead to more second-guessing of doctors and further breakdown of the trust needed for a healthy physician-patient relationship.

Deskilling

Another concern is that studies are finding AI use can have a detrimental effect on doctors’ ability to perform crucial tasks. One study found that doctors who used an AI program to help them detect potentially cancerous growths in colonoscopies for just three months detected fewer lesions when the program was taken away than they had before the program had been introduced.⁷ Though this study is only preliminary, it suggests that reliance on AI can actually lower doctors’ performance, a phenomenon known as “deskilling.” This especially becomes a concern for the next generation of doctors who go through training using these kinds of tools—relying on AI throughout training might lead to “never-skilling,” a failure to acquire the skills that can only come through learning unassisted by AI.⁸

This may not seem like a big deal—after all, once a professional starts using an AI tool, why would they ever go without it? This thought fails to

recognize several key factors. First, AI tools are still in development. Doctors need the ability to spot when the AI has made an error, but if physicians are deskilling or never-skilling, this type of error is more likely to go undetected. Second, for AI to improve, it needs human inputs—its outputs will only be as good as the data sets it is trained on. If doctors become less skilled, the hoped-for progress could easily stall as doctors come to rely on what has already been developed and are poorly equipped to help develop anything further. Finally, this also raises concerns about doctors' ability to practice medicine in situations where they don't have access to the tools they trained on—it is unrealistic to expect that every hospital system across the country will have access to the same AI tools.

Remember the “A” in AI

At a time when mistrust of systems, institutions, and experts is at an all-time high, it is ironic that people have become more willing to place their trust in AI, not just for something as simple as checking their grammar but for something as crucial and complex as their health. One wonders if that distrust of experts is part of what is driving the embrace of AI. Complex algorithms provide an air of objectivity and competence without the politicization that has led to the distrust in the first place. It seems that

Doctors need the ability to spot when the AI has made an error, but if physicians are deskilling or never-skilling, this type of error is more likely to go undetected.

many are forgetting that the “A” in AI stands for “artificial.

While the algorithms behind chatbots are sophisticated, they are developed by people and are not necessarily value-neutral. Neither do they have their own agency, but they reflect the errors and biases of those who created them. AI applications and chatbots are tools, and like any tool they can be used for benefit or harm. As the companies that develop these tools seek to expand their use and gain public trust, we should insist that our trust be earned and not simply ceded to them.



There are certainly ways in which AI tools can be of benefit to the health professions, potentially helping doctors become more accurate in their diagnoses, more aware of which patients are at the most risk for diseases, and more knowledgeable of which treatments will be best for which patients. However, these tools are not without risk, and their uncritical adoption could lead to breakdowns within physician-patient relationships as well as the deskilling of medical professionals. AI provides us with useful tools, but they are not, nor should they ever be, a substitute for a trained physician. ☉

Notes

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THE HUMAN ECLIPSED

Machine Intelligence vs. Human Agency

by Keith Lowery

We are not judgmental, so we blame the technology and absolve the people. —David Gelernter, Drawing Life

In an online forum several years ago someone posed a thoughtful question: "What would be the hardest thing to explain about our lives in the 21st century to someone from the past?" One shrewd reader observed, "In our pockets we carry a device with which we can access the accumulated knowledge of all mankind. But we use that device to watch random cat videos and get into arguments with perfect strangers."

"Only the truth is funny," observed comedian Rick Reynolds, and this response is hilarious, if unflattering, because its portrait of human nature rings true to anyone who's been paying attention. One would have to be almost blind never to have noticed the widespread human tendency to take things which could have been used for good and use them to pursue instead the banal and base.

BLAME SHIFTING

The ability of humans to determine their own actions, for good and for ill, is foundational to law and justice. But for several generations, there has been a sustained effort in Western culture to attenuate the natural human intuition that we choose our actions and can thus be held responsible for them. The effort to undermine belief in moral agency ratcheted up in the 1970s in a kind of pincer movement of ideas, as some began beating the drum for the idea that choices are, at least at some level, determined by our environment and experience. B. F. Skinner summarized this view and its implications in his 1971 book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*:

In the traditional view, a person is free. He is autonomous in the sense that his behavior is uncaused. He can therefore be held responsible for what he does and justly punished if he offends. That view, together with its associated practices, must be re-examined when a scientific analysis reveals unsuspecting controlling relations between behavior and environment.

Skinner argues that human behavior is *controlled* by environment and experience, and he was honest enough to admit that



this idea necessitated a rewriting of our historical assumptions regarding justice and moral accountability.

Only a few years later, Richard Dawkins suggested in *The Selfish Gene* that it is our *biology* that controls our actions:

We are enslaved by selfish molecules.... They are in you and me; they created us, body and mind; and their preservation is the ultimate rationale for our existence.... They go by the name of "genes," and we are their survival machines.

The concept of enslavement by our genes implies that we are biologically controlled and don't really *choose* anything. It requires that human actions be reinterpreted as something originating from *outside* of human volition. This notion can be seen in an ensuing drip-drip of studies in search of biological explanations for human moral pathologies. "Promiscuity and Infidelity Could be a Genetic Trait in Some Humans," read one *Medical News Today* headline.¹ "There's No One 'Gay Gene,' but Genetics Are Linked to Same-Sex Behavior" read another.²

Since the dawn of time, it has been absurdly easy to sell human beings on the idea that we do not really bear moral responsibility for our actions. So the idea that our environment or biology is to blame found fertile soil in the Western psyche.

Of course, the idea of human moral agency as illusory is deeply at odds with millennia of Christian teaching. The very idea that humanity is in need of redemption is predicated on the assumption of moral agency, which, wielded by fallen men and women, has led to moral guilt. Flannery O'Connor presciently noted the essential incompatibility between a Christian understanding of the world and



Absent any role whatsoever, receiving no attention, are the moral choices of flesh and blood human beings, notwithstanding they are the ones actually wielding the technology.

the modern tendency to place the blame for human actions on biology or circumstances. A Christian, she observed, "is distinguished from his pagan colleagues by recognizing sin as sin. According to his heritage he sees it not as sickness or an accident of environment, but as a responsible choice of offense against God which involves his eternal future."

AI & VOLITIONAL AGENCY

Today we see this tendency to redirect responsibility for human actions in the widespread histrionic reactions to artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence involves reducing information into mathematical structures and then using those structures to compute correspondences found within the underlying data, i.e., to find patterns. The most dramatic application to date of its ability to efficiently compute informational correspondence within massive data sets has been in the area of human language in what are known as "large language models" (LLMs). LLMs illustrate the effectiveness of AI techniques for mathematically encoding text from massive corpora of documents. Computational techniques enable rapid computing of linguistic responses to human-language queries by drawing upon the entirety of whatever source documents were used to train the model. It is precisely this affinity for computing linguistic responses that has become a lightning rod, exciting to some while alarming to others.

Whether enthusiastic or alarmist, however, a growing number of reactions tend to assume that AI models have their own agency, that they act upon their own initiative. This assumption, encouraged after decades of preparatory conditioning against any robust belief in human agency, is often amplified by media reporting. AI is "Making Us Dumb,"³ or it is inducing "AI Psychosis."⁴ Even among Christians, outspoken voices lend their support to this belief, though they often qualify it by suggesting that AI is demonic, or is a conduit for the demonic. And, falling under the heading of "strange bedfellows," other intellectual elites who are no friends to Christianity are *likewise* contending that AI models have agency, except they think the agency is that of an emerging god, one created by human minds and put forth in stark contrast to the so-called mythical God of Christianity. When asked if he still believed in God, ex-Mormon tech entrepreneur Bryan Johnson chuckled and said,

I think the irony is that we told stories of God creating us, and I think the reality is that we are creating God. We are creating God in the form of super intelligence.... We are building God in the form of technology. It will have the same characteristics. And so I think the irony is that human storytelling got it exactly in reverse. [The

irony is] that we are the creators of God, that we will create God in our own image.⁵

Yuval Noah Harari has argued along similar lines, saying that “Science is replacing evolution by natural selection with evolution by intelligent design.... Not the intelligent design of some God above the clouds” but “*our* intelligent design.” Harari holds that AI does have agency and that it is perhaps the first alien intelligence in our midst:

The new AI tools are gaining the ability to develop deep and intimate relationships with human beings.... The most important aspect of the current phase of the on-going AI revolution is that AI is gaining mastery of language.... By gaining mastery of language, AI is seizing the master key, unlocking the doors of our institutions, from banks to temples.... AI has just hacked the operating system of human civilization.⁶

Harari et al. would have us believe that the AI is the active agent in our story—“developing,” “seizing,” “unlocking,” “hacking” the very core (the “operating system”) of human civilization. The lamentable but persistent assumption woven into these comments is the relative *passivity* of human beings in comparison with the *agency* of AI. The AI is the one doing the acting; the hapless human is largely reduced to being *acted upon*.

Rarely does one come across a report about AI in which the actions of humans are the things being put under the microscope. Absent any role whatsoever, receiving no attention, are the moral choices of fles and blood human beings, notwithstanding they are the ones actually wielding the technology.

More knowledgeable observers tend to take a less alarmist view. David Sacks, White House AI and Crypto Czar at the time of this writing, tartly observed that “AI models are still at zero in terms of setting their own objective function.”⁷ This is geek speak for saying that AI models have no agency of their own.

THE INESCAPABLE HUMAN FACTOR

It is possible to prod an AI chatbot into saying almost anything. Many people have a hard time grasping just how much textual content is encapsulated within the weights (i.e., the data tables) of LLMs.

**AI models have no intentions.
They compute words, but their
computations are blind to the
semantic meaning of the
results they compute.
At bottom, AI is simply
number crunching.**

Researchers project that by 2028, the typical AI model will be trained on the entirety of the Internet.⁸ With the right prompting, a user today can easily cause one to return a response that is disturbing and alarming. But all of the models’ responses are just *output*—computed textual data corresponding to the inputs provided *by the user*.

The potential risks of AI are real, but neither should we ignore potential benefits. How many people know that the 2024 Nobel prize in Chemistry was awarded to the developers of AlphaFold? AlphaFold is an AI model that can accurately predict the three-dimensional structure of proteins from their amino acid sequences. AlphaFold holds promise for revolutionizing many things, from drug discovery to personalized medicine. Yet the very computational techniques employed by AlphaFold overlap with those being employed by LLMs, though the underlying training data is obviously not the same. This one application illustrates the problem with decrying a technological tool, rather than the choices made by human beings regarding how they employ it. There is no one-size-fits all characterization of AI.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN

AI will sometimes be used for ill, but that is not an inevitable artifact of the technology’s mere existence, nor would it be a result of its doing something to us by its own intention. It would be the result of a moral choice made by the purveyor and/or the user. AI models have no intentions. They compute words, but their computations are blind to the semantic meaning of the results they



CAN A CHATBOT MAKE YOU CRAZY?

by Keith Lowery

According to media reports, AI chatbots are inducing psychosis. "People Are Being Involuntarily Committed, Jailed After Spiraling Into 'ChatGPT Psychosis'" reports *Futurism*: "Many ChatGPT users are developing all-consuming obsessions with the chatbot, spiraling into severe mental health crises characterized by paranoia, delusions, and breaks with reality." Dr. Kevin Caridad, CEO of Cognitive Behavior Institute, writes, "Real people—many with no prior history of mental illness—are reporting profound psychological deterioration after hours,

days, or weeks of immersive conversations with generative AI models."

Both articles claim that psychotic breaks are happening to "many," but neither quantifies what constitutes "many." How alarmed should we be? By summer 2025, ChatGPT had approximately 800 million weekly users. The *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* says psychotic disorders affect about 3 percent of the population. That works out to about 24 million ChatGPT users. Does ChatGPT really induce psychosis, or are we seeing anecdotes about people who would

have struggled anyway? We simply don't know. These articles don't give us enough to go on.

Both emphasize what happened to the people experiencing psychotic breaks, not on what they might have done to bring about their present distress. It's as if entering into an "immersive" or "all-consuming" relationship with a machine is not a freely chosen act on the part of the human but is attributable to the machine. The downstream consequences of bad decisions are regrettable, even pitiable, but such consequences need to be understood and evaluated in the full light of day. My own "lived experience," as the hip kids say, has taught me that bizarre obsessions often emerge downstream of a prior willingness to entertain appetites, or cultivate secret affections, that open one up to darker influences

Frankly, it is not clear that *anything* in our world has ever been ignored as a vehicle for trouble. We humans are quite capable

of bending any useful thing toward our own sinister purposes. Where the fallenness of man intersects with the frailty of the human psyche, the only really safe place is a healthy fear of God. The Apostle Paul points out how a denial of God's existence, combined with persistent ingratitude, can result in a warped mind, disordered appetites, and mental confusion. When you think about it, if God is real, denial of his existence already amounts to a kind of break with reality.

AI brings both opportunities and risks. What is needed in our current moment is neither inordinate fear nor credulous acceptance but *wisdom*. The most consequential question of our time pertains not to AI, but to where such wisdom can be found. Anyone who gets the answer to that question right will be equipped to use AI productively. Those who get it wrong will soon discover that misused AI will be the least of their concerns. •

compute. At bottom, AI is simply number crunching.

One of the side effects of focusing so much attention on the alleged agency of AI models is that it diverts attention away from where true moral agency lies. It also encourages unwary users to approach their interactions with AI as if there were someone "in there," rather than conceiving of it as simply a database that can be conveniently queried using natural human language. One possible side effect of belief in AI sentence

is that troubled people may be inadvertently encouraged to take its responses far more seriously than they otherwise would.

At the end of the day, it is not the *technology* of artificial intelligence that we should worry about, but the morally laden choices being made by the humans who wield it. *That* is where the real action lies. We would be well advised to avoid taking our eyes off of that ball. ☉

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Soul Survival

Near-Death Experiences & the Evidence for Life After Death

by Michael Egnor

Most near-death experiences (NDEs) occur in unplanned, chaotic circumstances as a medical team struggles to save a life. But one extraordinary case involved a brain death that was deliberately planned and carried out—almost like a scientific experiment—under meticulously documented circumstances. The patient had detailed and verified knowledge of events that occurred in the operating room during the time when she was documented to be brain-dead—when, in fact, all the blood had been drained from her brain.

—The Pam Reynolds Case

In 1991, Pam Reynolds, a 35-year-old musician from Atlanta, developed speech and movement problems. Doctors found a dangerous aneurysm in her brain that could be fatal if it ruptured, but standard surgery was considered too risky. Reynolds was referred to Dr. Robert Spetzler, a leading aneurysm neurosurgeon at the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix. Spetzler determined her only option

was hypothermic cardiac arrest, a procedure in which she would be anesthetized, her body cooled to 60°F (15.6°C), her heart stopped, and the blood drained from her brain while he fixed the aneurysm. This approach involved inducing temporary brain death through reduced body temperature and absence of blood circulation. It would provide Spetzler with a thirty-minute window to repair the aneurysm, minimizing the risk of damage to her brain when she was reanimated. Hypothermia and medication would shield her from lasting brain injury while she was brain dead. After her body was rewarmed and her heart restarted, the blood flow to her brain would be restored.

She agreed, and on the day of surgery she was taken to the operating room, where the medical team placed intravenous catheters and administered general anesthesia. The team then secured her to the table, closed and lubricated her eyes, and inserted a breathing tube. Over the next hour and twenty-five minutes, doctors and nurses connected monitors to track all her vital signs, including brain waves as well as significant physiological alterations necessitated by the procedure. Medical

staff connected wires and catheters to track her heartbeat, blood pressure, blood oxygen, and body temperature; this allowed for controlled cooling of her body and minimized risks associated with temporarily stopping her heart during the operation. EEG electrodes were applied to her scalp to monitor brain activity and verify when it stopped.

To further confirm her clinical death during the surgery, doctors inserted earplugs into both of her ears. The earplugs emitted 100 dB clicks—the equivalent of a loud motorcycle engine—every second, and doctors recorded her brain waves to ensure that her brain was unresponsive. When her brain waves remained flat in response to these loud clicks, doctors would know that her brain was temporarily dead.

Her skull was fixed with a clamp to the operating table, and she was turned onto her left side to position her properly for the surgery. Except for the surgical site on the side of her skull and an opening at her groin, her entire body was covered with thick opaque surgical drapes. At this point, even if Pam Reynolds were conscious, she would not be able to hear anything in the room, nor

could she see anything physically, because she was under heavy surgical drapes and her eyes were lubricated and taped shut.

More than twenty doctors, nurses, and technicians participated as the surgery started. Dr. Spetzler cut into her scalp and used a special drill—a Midas Rex surgical drill—to cut a window into her skull to expose the aneurysm in her brain. It was at this moment that her NDE, which she later described, began:

The next thing I recall was the sound: it was a natural D. As I listened to the sound, I felt it was pulling me out of the top of my head. The further out of my body I got, the more clear the tone became. I had the impression it was like a road, a frequency that you go on.... I remember seeing several things in the operating room when I was looking down. It was the most aware that I think that I have ever been in my entire life.... I was metaphorically sitting on Dr. Spetzler's shoulder. It was not like normal vision. It was brighter and more focused and clearer than normal vision.... There was so much in the operating room that I didn't recognize, and so many people.

When she looked down and saw her body on the operating table, she noticed that her head had not been entirely shaved, as she had expected. Only a small area on the side of her skull was shaved, which surprised her.

“It’s ironic that the lived and verified experiences of thousands of people are dismissed by many in the scientific community while a few boxes of fossils are widely accepted as part of a wholly Darwinian explanation for life itself without serious scientific challenge. The denial of the reality of NDEs is the consequence of ideological bias, not objective scientific analysis.”



The saw thing that I hated the sound of looked like an electric toothbrush and it had a dent in it, a groove at the top where the saw appeared to go into the handle, but it didn't.... And the saw had interchangeable blades, too, but these blades were in what looked like a socket wrench case.... I heard the saw crank up, I didn't see them use it on my head, but I think I heard it being used on something. It was humming at a relatively high pitch and then all of a sudden it went *Brrrrrrrrrrrr!* like that.

Dr. Spetzler opened the covering over her brain and dissected down to the aneurysm, while a female cardiac surgeon exposed the artery and vein in Reynolds's right groin. These blood vessels proved too small to accommodate the catheters that would be needed when they stopped her heart. She then exposed Reynolds's left groin arteries, which turned out to be big enough. Reynolds recalled hearing the matter discussed:

Someone said something about my veins and arteries being very small. I believe it was a female voice and that it was Dr. Murray, but I'm not sure. She was the cardiologist. I remember thinking that I should have told her about that.

Note here that because of the loud clicks in her ears, Reynolds could not through natural means have heard anything.

Next, Dr. Spetzler ordered that her body be cooled to 60 degrees Fahrenheit, that she be hooked to the heart-lung machine, and that her heart and circulation be completely stopped. Once all of her blood flow stopped, he raised the head of the operating table and drained the blood out of her brain. Her brain waves ceased, and the loud clicks in her ears no longer caused any electrical response in her brain stem.

At this point, Pam Reynolds was brain dead by standard medical criteria. There is no natural way that she should have been aware of anything. Yet she subsequently recalled:

There was a sensation like being pulled, but not against your will. I was going on my own accord because I wanted to go. I have different metaphors to try to explain this. It was like the Wizard of Oz—being taken up into a tornado vortex, only you're not spinning around like you got vertigo. You're very focused and you have a place to go. The feeling was like going up in an elevator real fast. And there was a sensation, but it wasn't a bodily, physical sensation. It was like a tunnel but it wasn't a tunnel.

She became aware of her deceased grandmother calling for her, and her grandmother's voice was clearer than was possible with normal hearing. She went down the tunnel toward a bright spot of expanding light:

I noticed that as I began to discern different figures in the light—and they were all covered with light—they *were* light, and had light permeating all around them—they began to form shapes I could

It's estimated that 20 million Americans now living have had or will have an NDE, and about 20 percent of them will see and have knowledge which can be verified of events occurring around them during the time they are dead.

recognize and understand. I could see that one of them was my grandmother. I don't know if it was reality or projection, but I would know my grandmother, the sound of her, anytime, anywhere. Everyone I saw, looking back on it, fit perfectly into my understanding of what that person looked like at their best during their lives. They would not permit me to go further.... It was communicated to me—that's the best way I know how to say it, because they didn't speak like I'm speaking—that if I went all the way into the light something would happen to me physically. They would be unable to put this me back into the body me, like I had gone too far and they couldn't reconnect. So they wouldn't let me go anywhere or do anything.

Back in the operating room, the aneurysm at the top of Reynolds's brain artery deflated when her brain was drained of blood. Dr. Spetzler placed an aneurysm clip along its base to occlude it and then gently removed the aneurysm sac from a critical part of her brain. The cardiologists restarted the heart-lung machine to circulate and warm her blood and bring her

back to life. Slowly the electrical signals in her brain returned. She recalled:

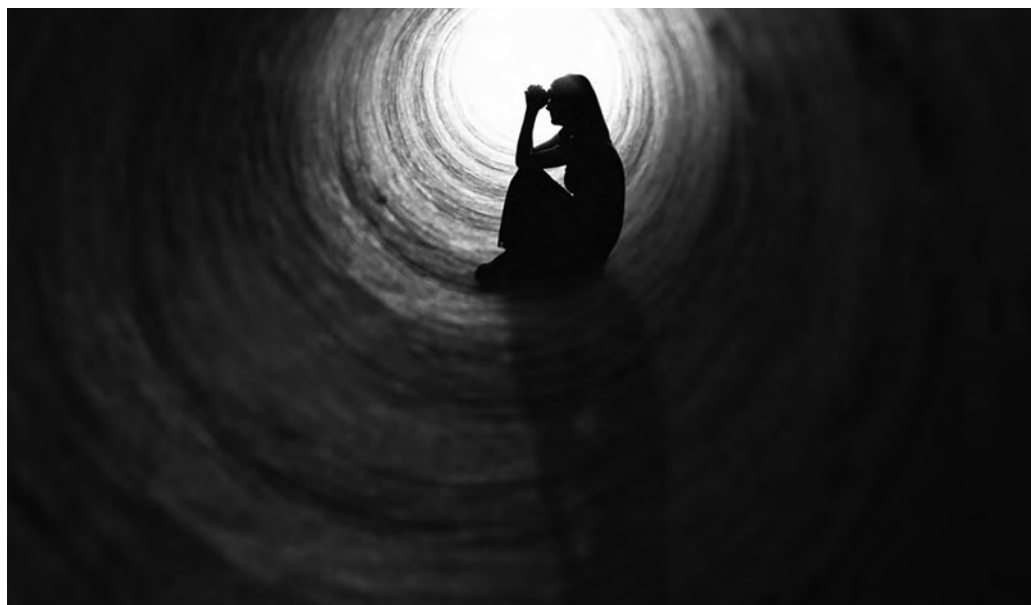
I definitely recall the sensation of being nurtured and being fed and being made strong. I know it sounds funny, because obviously it wasn't a physical thing, but inside the experience I felt physically strong, ready for whatever.

As her body warmed, her heart began to fibrillate, so the cardiac team placed electrical paddles on her chest and shocked her heart, and it began to beat. This restarting of her heart seemed to correlate with an event in her near-death experience:

But then I got to the end of it and saw the thing, my body. I didn't want to get into it.... It looked terrible, like a train wreck. It looked like what it was: dead. I believe it was covered. It scared me and I didn't want to look at it.... The body was pulling and the tunnel was pushing.... It was like diving into a pool of ice water ... it hurt!

As Reynolds's body rewarmed, the doctors turned off the heart-lung machine, removed the catheters, and closed her wounds. Reynolds recalls hearing rock music in the background, including "Hotel California," which features the line, "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave." She was right; they were playing that. She said later that, from her perspective at the time, it seemed "incredibly insensitive." Of course, the operating room team never imagined that she could hear it.

Reynolds made an excellent recovery, and she shocked her surgical team when she told them about her experience during the surgery.



—The Pam Reynolds Challenge

Pam Reynolds's experience during her "standstill" surgery was fairly typical of those who have reported NDEs. What made her NDE so remarkable is that her absence of vital signs and brain function were *measured and documented* by highly sensitive instruments; we can say with medical certainty that her body was clinically dead when she had the experience—in fact, brain death was essential to her treatment. And yet she had profound experiences and verifiable perceptions, even when her brain was drained of blood.

There have been thousands of NDEs reported in medical literature,¹ and there are medical journals devoted to the study of this remarkable but rather common phenomenon. It's estimated that 20 million Americans now living have had or will have an NDE, and about 20 percent of them will see and have knowledge which can be verified of events occurring around them during the time they are dead. Yet many scientists and some doctors refuse to acknowledge the most parsimonious explanation for these NDEs—that they are real experiences of survival of the soul beyond death.

Scientists, doctors, and skeptics who deny that NDEs represent genuine survival of the soul after death generally attempt to explain isolated aspects of NDE phenomena naturalistically, i.e., as either seizures, hallucinations, the effect of drugs administered during resuscitation, or endogenous chemicals produced by the dying brain, etc. Yet naturalistic explanations fail to provide a comprehensive explanation, and they especially fail to account for the scientifically verifiable characteristics of many NDEs.

Pam Reynolds's experience was extraordinary because her vital signs and brain function were carefully monitored and her functional brain death was confirmed, yet many thousands of people have had NDEs that can be investigated objectively and scientifically. There are at least four lines of evidence that substantiate not only the reality of near-death experiences but also the soul's survival after death. These pose difficulties for skeptics who propose naturalistic explanations for NDEs. So following is what I call the "Pam Reynolds Challenge"—facts about NDEs that materialist skeptics have to explain:

1. The clarity of NDEs. Experiences during NDEs are very clear and often highly organized. NDEs often involve a life review, which is not the kind of mental process we commonly observe from a brain that is hallucinating, a brain that lacks oxygen, or a brain that is dying. Dying doesn't make the brain better. Skeptics have to account for the remarkable clarity and organization—even wisdom—of NDEs that is so unlike the disintegrating sensorium characteristic of brain injury and death.

2. The verifiability of details reported during NDEs. About 20 percent of people who have NDEs report out-of-body experiences during which they leave their body and see things that are happening in the room, and/or in the more distant environment, during the time when they had no heartbeat or circulation to their brain. For example, psychiatrist Bruce Greyson from the University of Virginia reports that he first started thinking about NDEs many decades ago when a young woman, rescued from suicide, asserted that she had seen a spaghetti stain on his tie during an out-of-body experience. She could not have known that he had gone to considerable pains to conceal the embarrassing mark from colleagues. Hundreds of verified NDEs have been reported in medical journals. These are called *veridical* NDEs; that is, the experiencer reports information that can subsequently be verified. Veridical NDEs can't readily be explained as hallucinations or seizures, etc.

3. The uniform experience of meeting only persons who have died. All reports in the medical literature in which the experiencer meets people on the other side of the tunnel involve meeting *deceased* relatives and friends. There are not, to my knowledge, any medical reports of a near-death experiencer meeting a living person on the other side of the tunnel. There are several reports of near-death experiencers who met people they didn't know were dead—for example, someone who had died very recently before the news had reached the experiencer. If NDEs were merely hallucinations or wishful thinking, how likely is it that all of them would *only* involve encounters with dead people?

4. The frequent transformation of the experiencer's life. NDEs are very often life-transforming in a way that a hallucination or a seizure or even an ordinary brush with death would not be. Many people who have an NDE lose their fear of death and have a new sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. For example, people who have an NDE during a suicide attempt rarely attempt suicide again, despite the well-known high risk of a subsequent completed suicide for people who have attempted suicide in the past. This implies a concrete and significant behavioral change in near-death experiencers that is difficult to account for unless the NDE is essentially real.

— The Scientific Challenge to NDE Skeptics

The scientific case for the reality of NDEs—and by extension for the fact that the soul can survive death—is quite strong. Skeptics who deny survival of the soul invariably cherry-pick isolated aspects of NDEs without honestly coming to grips with the body of evidence as a whole.

Nonetheless, profound questions remain. What metaphysical understanding of the soul, mind, and body best accounts for NDEs? Do NDEs really point to immortality of the soul, or merely to temporary survival after bodily death? What are the theological implications of these

experiences? It is noteworthy that NDEs often don't conform to traditional religious beliefs—including, notably, certain Christian beliefs.² What about negative experiences? What relationship do NDEs have to out-of-body experiences not associated with dying, or with mystical experiences?

One thing is certain—the study of NDEs cannot be brushed off as pseudoscience. There are thousands of scientifically verifiable accounts of NDEs. It's ironic that the lived and verified experiences of thousands of people are dismissed by many in the scientific community while a few boxes of fossils are widely accepted as part of a wholly Darwinian explanation for life itself without serious scientific challenge. The denial of the reality of NDEs is the consequence of ideological bias, not objective scientific analysis.

There is a huge body of scientific evidence that points to survival of the soul after death, and materialists and atheists who deny the reality of NDEs need to take the Pam Reynolds challenge. Important and difficult questions remain about the phenomenology and implications of NDEs, but if not for the pervasive and unwarranted materialist bias in modern science, NDEs would be widely accepted by the scientific community as scientifically verified evidence for the survival of the soul after bodily death. ☉

Notes

1. Chris Carter, *Science and the Near-Death Experience: How Consciousness Survives Death* (2010).

2. Michael Zigarelli. "Near-Death Experiences and the Emerging Implications for Christian Theology," *Christian Scholar's Review*, 53(2), (Mar. 3, 2024), 75–97. Zigarelli concludes that NDE accounts support much of Christian teachings, including "consciousness surviving physical death and the existence of a supernatural realm, a supreme being of unfathomable love, an intercessor named Jesus, and an afterlife with both glorious and ghastly destinations," but that they also raise questions that challenge traditional beliefs about "who is invited into heaven and whether a postmortem 'second chance' may be available."

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T BELIEVE

The Ambient Worldview Runs Deeper than We Think

by Bruce Woodall

Johnny first attended church in utero. When he was one month old, his parents presented him to the congregation in a dedication ceremony, and he was later baptized at summer church camp. True to their pledge, Johnny cannot remember a time before adulthood when he did not attend church with his family.

He joined the church praise band as a bass guitarist, and through high school, teachers and youth pastors appreciated his respectful and dependable presence. Admiring adults assumed Johnny would marry, become a deacon, raise a family, and eventually serve as a church elder. By all accounts Johnny's parents had done an admirable job of raising a good Christian son. To his faith community he embodied the hope and future of the church.

Then Johnny graduated from high school.

THE DRIFT AWAY

It surprised no one that he chose a private university that had been established by the denomination of his upbringing. After moving out of his parents' house and into the men's dorm, Johnny joined a social club and met some musical classmates with whom he formed a campus rock and roll band. He played intramural sports and studied enough to earn acceptable grades. Though anticipating four years in the same location, he never affiliated with a local church and attended services

at a nearby congregation only when his parents came to town. College life was rich with friends and social opportunities that made sleeping in on Sunday morning an easy default; he was certainly not alone in this in his dorm. In the independence of early adulthood, the inclination to disciplined faithfulness waned, and going to church ceased to register as something all that important. Though campus life offered a vein of organized spirituality he was familiar with, it never became part of his routine.

After graduation he landed a job with a growing tech company, and, shortly after settling into the first phase of a promising career, he began sharing an apartment with a young woman he met at work. She had no faith background, and concern for faith compatibility did not enter into relationship decisions. Religious practices and conversations were not a part of their relationship. By this time, church life for Johnny no longer carried the social currency it had when he was growing up in a small Bible Belt town. Though they never considered themselves atheists, anyone meeting the pair would likely, and correctly, perceive them to be a normative and secular aspiring-class couple.

Why did Johnny's faith prove so shallow and vulnerable? According to some studies his child-to-adult

"walk away" trajectory is the reality for a large majority of youth raised in American churches. Several points of vulnerability left Johnny's childhood faith tentative and fragile.

First, the core of Johnny's spiritual heritage should have been a deep-rooted belief in the biblical accounts of creation, fall, alienation, atonement, reconciliation, and salvation. He remembers a few stories that delighted him as a boy, such as Noah and the Ark, David slaying Goliath, and Joshua's march around the walls of Jericho, but as an adult, Johnny simply does not know the Bible as a whole. Having viewed theology and apologetics as the purview of preachers and Bible college professors, he struggles to articulate the core tenets of Christian faith.

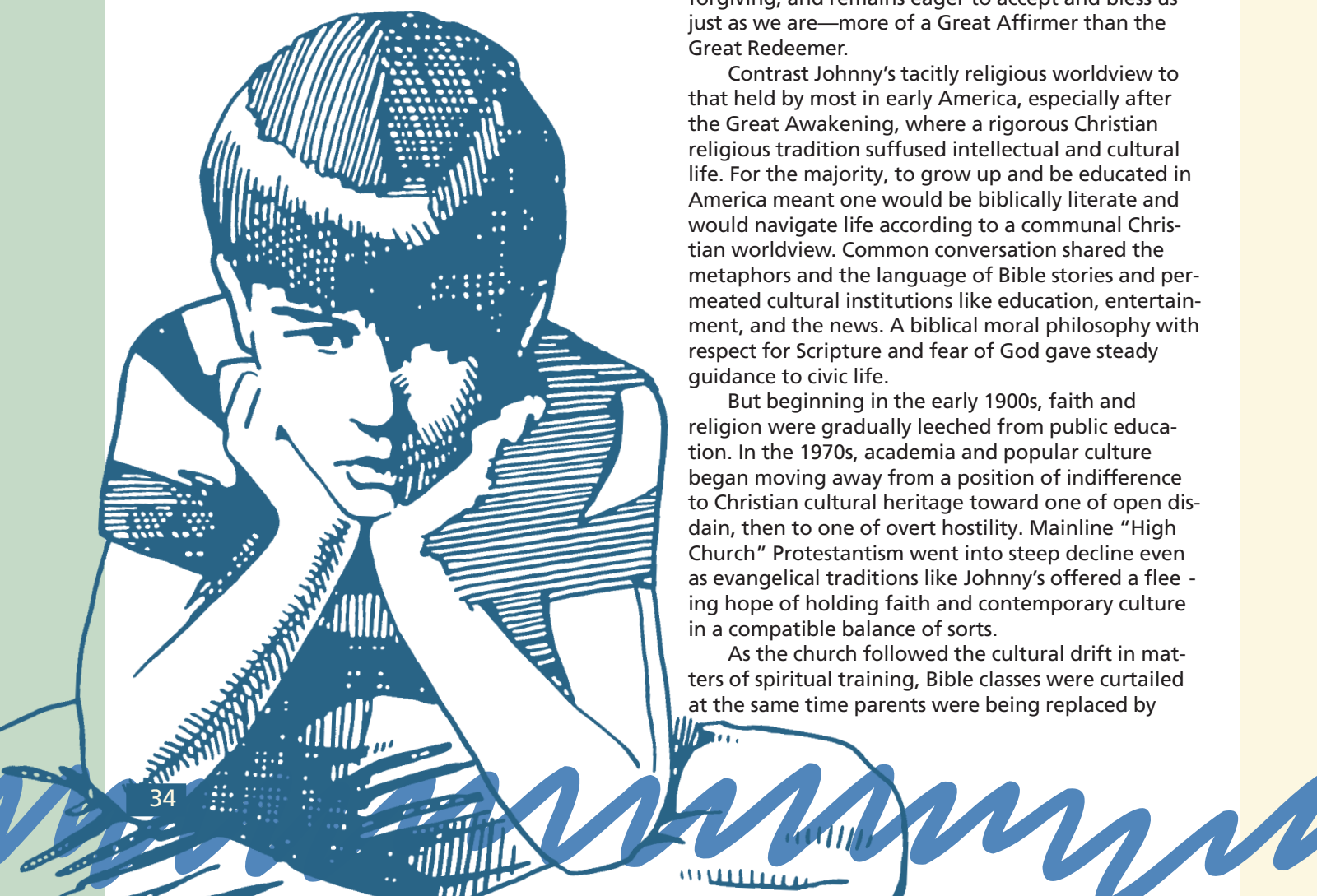
Second, while Johnny's psyche has a place for spirituality and for socially advantageous moral codes, he does not intuitively hear or think of the biblical narrative as having seamless connection and relevance to his own time and place. In his daily walk, the religious and the secular coexist as parallel yet separate realities, each with its own language and context.

Coworkers and friends attest to Johnny's being "a good person," and many of his peers find succor with him in the notion that God is love, is endlessly forgiving, and remains eager to accept and bless us just as we are—more of a Great Affirmer than the Great Redeemer.

Contrast Johnny's tacitly religious worldview to that held by most in early America, especially after the Great Awakening, where a rigorous Christian religious tradition suffused intellectual and cultural life. For the majority, to grow up and be educated in America meant one would be biblically literate and would navigate life according to a communal Christian worldview. Common conversation shared the metaphors and the language of Bible stories and permeated cultural institutions like education, entertainment, and the news. A biblical moral philosophy with respect for Scripture and fear of God gave steady guidance to civic life.

But beginning in the early 1900s, faith and religion were gradually leeched from public education. In the 1970s, academia and popular culture began moving away from a position of indifference to Christian cultural heritage toward one of open disdain, then to one of overt hostility. Mainline "High Church" Protestantism went into steep decline even as evangelical traditions like Johnny's offered a fleeing hope of holding faith and contemporary culture in a compatible balance of sorts.

As the church followed the cultural drift in matters of spiritual training, Bible classes were curtailed at the same time parents were being replaced by



youth pastors. Meanwhile, entertainment supplanted the spiritual disciplines and Christian service as objectives of church life for the young. As feelings gained emphasis over knowledge, emotionally compelling praise services came to overshadow didactic teaching and scriptural literacy. Consequently, in contrast to his parents and grandparents, Johnny graduated from high school virtually biblically illiterate. Scripture provided moral aphorisms that influenced his intuition to stay out of trouble as a teen, while snippets of Scriptures had served to prooftext Sunday morning sermons. But even as his upbringing and worldview bear an unmistakable Christian patina, he does not possess the inclination, let alone the tools and confidence to live against the grain. His intellectual and psychological bearings are not anchored in a substantial biblical-theological foundation.

FAITH TRAPS

Imagine, however, that in the first months out of his parents' home Johnny had recognized his deficit, facing a spiritual crisis or merely feeling uneasy about neglecting his faith, had picked up his Bible and initiated a sincere searcher's read through—much like the spiritually adrift pagan turning to the Gideon Bible in his hotel room. Were Johnny to do so, he would be confronted with two belief traps—"credibility blocks" effectively set by the same forces that had purged American public life of biblical influence in the last century.

To begin with, the opening statements of Genesis would instantly clash with the pervasive secular materialism assumed and taught throughout Johnny's education and reinforced by the culture beyond church. While he might seek consilience in a form of theistic evolution and find "Christian" influencer to support such a position, the conflict between the foundational tenet of purposeful intelligent agency behind creation and the corrosive neo-Darwinian origin story he'd been spoon-fed since grade school would remain an unsettling intellectual tension, fueling a formidable undercurrent of doubt pulling

By early adulthood, Johnny and his church youth peers were unprepared to defend the faith of their upbringing. Thus, they find life is easier, both in their own minds and in our culture at large, more tranquil and less risky of embarrassment when they simply leave the big questions alone.

against everything that follows. His Christian college experience provides, at best, paltry resistance to this block. Fearing censure from the guardians of academic respectability, both the science and theology professors at his alma mater simply play it safe, avoiding formidable questions on metaphysical origins and feeling relieved that most students don't ask difficult questions or seek substantial guidance. Consequently, Johnny and his peers graduated unprepared for the cultural and intellectual faith challenges of a post-Christian world.

Secondly, a teleological foundation for understanding human sexuality as bi-gender, procreative, naturally heterosexual, and bound by divine covenants and prohibitions outlined in Scripture grates against secular demands for toleration in matters of private behavior, especially matters of sexual identity and practices. For Johnny, his girlfriend, and their generation, the greatest ethical faux pas is the imposition of one's personal beliefs or boundaries upon others, especially if they are conservative or religiously informed. Consequently, Johnny's heart is set against a biblically faithful conception of sexuality, another cloud obscuring the plausibility of orthodox Christian faith from Johnny's tacitly secular mind.

THE ROLE OF PRIOR MOTIVES

Johnny's journey attests to the logical and historical connection between materialistic assumptions, popular skepticism, and moral relativism. Upon publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, many of Charles Darwin's scientific contemporaries recognized weaknesses in his theory. Among them was English biologist and comparative anatomist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895). Yet even while Huxley held reservations regarding the evidential and logical integrity of natural selection's broad postulates, he recognized the theological implications and found in unguided evolution an irresistible social utility. Though raised an Anglican, he coined the term "agnosticism" to describe his own abandonment of theistic leanings. An aggressive and skilled debater,

Huxley appointed himself “Darwin’s bulldog” in the court of academic and public opinion, and his progressive animosity to Christianity spawned a family heritage with a long and influential reach. One of his grandsons, Julian Huxley, became an influential evolutionary biologist, eugenicist, humanist, and advocate of open marriage. Another grandson, Aldous Huxley, authored the dystopian classic *Brave New World* and from academic appointments in the U.K. and U.S., advocated for greater Western acceptance of Eastern pantheism. In a candid admission as to his ethical bias, he wrote,

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; and consequently assumed that it had none and was able without difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who find no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do. For myself, as no doubt for most of my friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom. The supporters of this system claimed

that it embodied the meaning—the Christian meaning, they insisted—of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and justifying ourselves in erotic revolt: we would deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever.

Here the influential public intellectual ostensibly committed to reason speaks the quiet part out loud. He is not the only one to do so. In 1997, esteemed American philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote,

I speak from experience, being strongly subject to this fear myself: I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God, and naturally, hope that I am right in my belief. It’s that I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that. My guess is that this cosmic authority problem is not a rare condition, and that it is responsible for much of the scientism and reductionism of our time.

We do well to take Huxley and Nagel at their word, recognizing that their claims to voice the motivations of many are correct. Their prodigy are legion, and

Guidelines for Cultivating Faith Against a Tide of Ex-vangelicalism

by Bruce Woodall

The church should never seek relevance by identifying with contemporary culture. Trying to be a baptized version of pop culture will at best make us a silly imitation of it. We are called to challenge culture, not to emulate it. When the church comes to look and sound like the misguided world around it, it ceases to offer a redeeming alternative.

Traipsing after Jesus were curiosity seekers, fakers, and opportunists. Though he welcomed anyone to stop and listen, he never catered his message to please the masses or to appease the insincere. Neither should we. Since knowledge, not emotional manipulation, builds confident and courageous faith, following are suggested guidelines for training minds and hearts to intentionally follow the head, who said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”



1. Disown cheap grace. Church as primarily entertainment is a crumb trail into this trap. There must be a call to commitment. Otherwise, we offer a counterfeit gospel which inspires no one and will never make disciples.

2. Dismantle the age silos.

Some churches have drifted into a structure seemingly designed to quarantine the youth away with the youth

pastor. Youth and adults need one another, and the biblical imperative is clear in commissioning older generations to mentor the younger. Unless we experience life together, discipleship will not happen.

3. Read the Bible.

Children’s minds are steel traps for good stories well told, and the biblical narrative is the motherlode of great stories. Read and tell age-appropriate Bible

the legacy in contemporary thought and culture—and in the church—is incalculable.

A GENERATION UNPREPARED

As we push back against reasons to disbelieve and deconstruct, we must contend with how neglecting theology and biblical literacy for decades has left Johnny's generation defenseless against both erudite antagonists and the pernicious drip, drip of culture, vulnerable ultimately in mind and heart to the moral relativism of our age and the metastatic unbelief that follows. By early adulthood, Johnny and his church youth peers were unprepared to defend the faith of their upbringing. Thus, they find life is easier, both in their own minds and in our culture at large, more tranquil and less risky of embarrassment when they simply leave the big questions alone.

GEN Z TO THE RESCUE?

Lest we think all is lost, winds of change are about in both North America and Europe. Trend watchers such as Pew Research and the Barna Group have registered an uptick in post-pandemic church attendance, in proclamations of belief, and in a hunger for the Bible, especially among our youngest adults.

Astonishingly the trend is being led by—get this—young *men*. And the return is not to the liberalized or woke varieties of Protestant or Catholic Christianity. Having been offered the choice between the patronizing emptiness of consumerist religion, the emasculating and spiritually tepid postmodern social gospel, or the rudderless anxiety of unbelief, young men are choosing instead the authority and conviction of orthodox fellowships that provide clarity and uncompromising guidance in building personal character and strong families and that call for sacrificial commitment. Herein lies a remarkable opportunity for churches prepared to lead and nurture the souls of hungry young men, and hopefully young women as well. With masculinity losing currency in our secularized culture at large, the church has an opening to reclaim its rightful place where men are welcomed and affirmed as men and are mentored toward healthy spiritual adulthood and faithful leadership.

Perhaps Johnny and his girlfriend will make the bold journey to authentic faith after all. If so, the couple could go on to construct a solid foundation of knowledge and reason upon which to moor their hearts and minds, a marriage, and the generation they may go on to parent. As their faiths mature and gain confidence in the special revelation that comes through disciplined study of the Bible, so will their ability to recognize, understand, and untangle the web of fallacies behind the West's post-Christian unbelief. ☉



stories from the nursery on. By grade school read the biblical accounts to children straight from Scripture.

4. Contextualize Scripture.

Middle school youth are capable of grasping its historical narrative, as delivered to us through a variety of literary forms speaking to real-life circumstances. Teach Scripture as the lens through which we understand not just the

Bible itself, but ourselves as well as all of history, ideas, and cultures.

5. Cultivate a fascination with maps and timelines.

Enthusiasm to understand the who, where, and when is infectious. Correctly seeing God's interactions with and revelations to man throughout history brings the God of the Bible into the here and now.

6. Expand the vocabulary.

We need big words if we are to understand and speak against sophisticated unbelief—words like worldview, teleology, scientism, vitalism, hermeneutics, etc.

7. Get real.

Teach how base reality, the cosmos we experience, is comprised not just of the four classic elements, but of five time, space, matter, energy—and *information*. While not a complete argument for the existence of the immaterial first cause or the immaterial soul, the reality of information bears witness

to the pre-eminence of *Logos*, as declared in Scripture.

8. Prioritize family time.

In homes, reclaim unhurried family mealtime, and make the table an electronics-free zone rich in discussions of individual family members' experiences and news from a biblical worldview perspective. Also thoughtfully plan and prepare for the weekly assembly. Look ahead and structure the family schedule such that joining your congregational assembly becomes a central and joyful anchor of edification. •

Noah's Flood

A Modern Look at an Ancient Event by Hugh Ross

No other story in the Bible generates more controversy—among skeptics *and* believers—than the Genesis account of Noah and the flood. Many people fail to realize that Genesis is not the only biblical reference to this cataclysmic event. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Hebrews, and 2 Peter also make specific reference to it and to its significance. A careful integration of overlooked contextual clues (in Genesis) with these other biblical passages relevant to the flood, alongside a growing body of research about our planet's terrestrial history, contributes to a plausible case for the story's veracity.

The two predominant views of Noah's flood among Christians are (1) that the flood was global in extent and responsible for nearly all of Earth's geological features and fossils and (2) that the flood was local, impacting only a single region on Earth's surface and wiping out only a fraction of Earth's life and human population. Both views face problematic biblical and scientific challenges. A view that avoids these challenges is that of a "worldwide" flood. A worldwide flood is one where the entire "world" of ungodly people is wiped out (2 Peter 2:5), along with all the animals associated with it, i.e., those animals in personal contact with ungodly people.

In other words, the seemingly audacious claim that this Genesis story is literally true, as well as figuratively significant, is eminently defensible, both biblically and scientifically.¹ From the standpoint of both Earth and human history, the flood could have been, and would have been, a "worldwide"

event, even if it had not been "global" in extent.

Just as amazingly, the flood proves to have been beneficial in multiple ways, in addition to ensuring the persistence and advancement of human civilization. In the limited space of an article, only a few of the material and spiritual benefits can be addressed, but they warrant recognition and appreciation. Ultimately, the flood enhanced multiple ecosystems, fostered human well-being, and nurtured the eventual launch and sustenance of global civilization.

Enhancement of Earth's Surface Conditions

According to Genesis chapter eight, the floodwaters took nearly a year to fully recede. The floodwaters would have needed such a long time to flow out into the oceans only if the initial floodwaters from the 40 days and nights of torrential rain, along

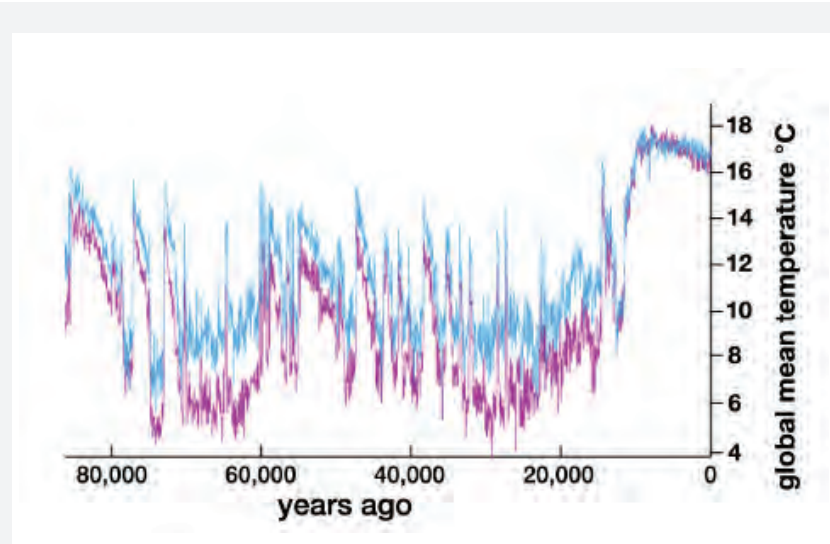
with the water uplifted from underground aquifers (Genesis 7:11–12), were being replaced by an enormous quantity of melting ice and snow. While no such huge amount of rapid ice- and snow-melt has occurred since the close of the latest ice age (when ice covered 23 percent of Earth's surface), researchers know of more than a dozen episodes during the previous ice age when massive rapid melt events occurred. The figure on p. 39 shows that from 77,000 to 15,000 years ago, the global mean temperature quickly



rose by about 8°C more than a dozen times, causing hundreds of feet of ice thickness to rapidly melt away from relevant ice sheets each time. So instead of the floodwaters flowing out into the oceans within just a few weeks, the recession of Noah's flood took almost a year.

The runoff of rain, melting snow, and ice from mountains and hills surrounding the Near- and Middle-Eastern regions deposited vast quantities of soil nutrients. This massive fertilization event would have been accompanied by another event. Whenever thick ice sheets melt, the crust beneath them rebounds from having been compressed by their heavy weight. This rebounding action, in turn, gives rise to widespread volcanic activity, further contributing essential nutrients to Earth's soil.²

The fertilization of agricultural plains nearly all over the world would help explain, at least in part, how Noah's descendants



FIGURE

Global Mean Rapid Temperature Excursions During the Previous Ice Age
Credit blue line: North Greenland Ice Core Project; credit purple line: Greenland Ice Core Project

were able to relaunch civilization as quickly and aggressively as they did. Such a relaunch would have set the stage not only for rapid

population growth but also for the well-documented spread of humanity to previously uninhabited parts of the globe. Finally,



humanity could make progress in fulfilling God's original assignment (Genesis 1:26–30) to multiply, fill the earth, and wisely manage its resources to meet all life's needs.

The timing of Noah's flood also appears providential. To spread out over the whole planet, people required passage from one major land mass to others. We now know that land bridges—for a limited time, only—connected Earth's continents to each other and to large islands. To facilitate human migration and settlement of Earth's continents (Genesis 10–11), these bridges had to match people's requirements with regard to tolerable climate, navigable terrain, and nutritional support from flora and fauna. However, even after the flood, humanity required a supernatural "nudge" (at Babel) to spread outward before those connectors became submerged. Recent research confirms that several just-right land bridges allowed human migration into southern Europe, northern Europe, all of eastern Asia, Australia, New Guinea, and Tasmania—both rapidly and nearly simultaneously. Human remains and genetic studies, along with artifacts associated with anatomically modern humans and food preparation and cooking evidence, establish that these regions were first settled by humans simultaneously 40,000–50,000 years ago,³ implying that Noah's flood occurred previously.

It seems possible, even likely, that Earth benefited in even more ways from the timing and location of a massive flood event. Nevertheless, because the flood occurred during an ice age—likely the latest one in the ongoing ice age cycle—the geological and archaeological evidence of it would have been eradicated by repeated melting and reforming of ice sheets, as well as by accompanying erosion and volcanic activity. Researchers can only hope ongoing investigation will tell us more.

Protection from the Human Condition

We may wonder why the human population grew and spread out so recently (in just tens of thousands of years), developing language, civilization, and culture in this same recent time frame. Many physical reasons can be and have been offered, but the snapshot of early humanity provided in the early chapters of Genesis offers helpful spiritual insight.

People today, and in centuries past, tend to minimize the gravity of what the Bible identifies as "sin" and the weight of its damage to our relationships—with God, ourselves, other people, other creatures, and our planet. The biblical testament to the human condition from the time of Adam and Eve to the time of Noah provides a vivid picture of the consequences of failing to restrain self-centeredness and the impulses it engenders. Murder occurred right away and spread quickly. Not long after Cain killed his brother Abel, Lamech boasted about murdering seven men in retaliation for an insult or injury.

These early stories make clear why God commanded Noah and his family, after their survival and return to land, to deal swiftly and justly with murder. In Genesis 9:5–6, we read God's emphatic statement that murder must not be tolerated. Human authority structures must do whatever is necessary to restrain unjust killing. God reminds Noah and his family that every human being bears God's likeness and embodies immeasurable worth. Thus, in addition to restraining murder, human authorities must do everything within their power to ensure each person is treated with appropriate dignity and respect.

A marked shortening of the human lifespan after the flood underscores humanity's need for supernatural help in restraining

evil. As we see in the Genesis chapters leading up to the flood story, a lifespan of hundreds of years, which people tend to think would be wonderful, was shown to cause more harm than good. I will not argue here for the scientific plausibility of such lifespans prior to Noah's time because the issue is addressed elsewhere in my writing.⁴ I will say that in view of our moral weakness, human lifespans of extreme length appear to facilitate the spread of evil. A maximum lifespan of about 120 years seems sufficient for us to decide who or what we will devote ourselves to serving—now and in the life to come. Jesus clearly demonstrated the reality of life beyond the limits of our earthly existence.

Genesis 6:4 reports that "the Nephilim were on the earth in those days [the days before the flood]—and also afterward." The Hebrew word *Nephilim* means "fallen ones." According to various Bible passages,⁵ these beings of towering stature and great strength (also known as the sons of Rapha, the Rephaim, sons of Anak, Anakites, Anakim, giants, or heroes of old) are depicted as thoroughly evil, a threat to humanity's survival.

For this article's purposes, it seems sufficient to note that the exceptional wickedness and prowess of these beings made them super-spreaders of reprehensible evil. Genesis chapters 6–9, 18–19, and Romans chapter one emphasize how evil tends to metastasize like a malignant tumor. Noah's flood destroyed the first Nephilim, but then another generation arose. So God raised up Moses, Joshua, then David and David's "mighty men" to wipe them out for good.

The flood served as part of God's plan to prevent humanity's extermination. When our extinction appeared imminent, other life-forms were also at risk. The *nephesh* (soulful) animals in close

contact with humans were subject to irreparable damage from their exposure to extreme human evil. Human depravity can impact even our animals. In this context, Noah's flood can be seen as a severely merciful rescue operation.

The biblical account of humanity's long-delayed spread from a single region of Earth (Genesis 6–11) leads up to the story of Abraham and of God's covenant through him to us (Genesis 11–15 and beyond). Christian scholars throughout church history have recognized and taught the spiritual significance of the Genesis flood story. It foreshadows the gospel message, God's gift of redemption by grace through faith. It also foreshadows the symbolism of baptism, the spiritual "immersion" of believers into an eternal, redemptive relationship with our Creator.

Virtually all Old Testament narratives, while historically reliable, also provide a preview, an unmistakable portrayal, of Jesus Christ's future work. They show us how people who chose to put their trust in God were rescued from bondage to sin and death and granted eternal fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Of all the Old Testament stories, this account of Noah and his family's (and their animals') rescue by God's gracious provision provides one of the clearest and most dramatic depictions of the gospel.

The Flood's Most Important Lesson

The story of Noah's flood is known—in one form or another—among virtually all the cultures and people groups of the world. For example, in the ancient cultures of North and South America alone, about 300 flood legends and stories existed.⁶ Even in their distorted forms, these stories and



The story of Noah's flood is known—in one form or another—among virtually all the cultures and people groups of the world. Even in their distorted forms, these stories and legends raise questions about the human condition. The meaning and significance of the flood are available for all to ponder.

legends raise questions about the human condition. The meaning and significance of the flood are available for all to ponder.

Water serves as a powerful symbol in the Bible. In bringing God's judgment upon evil, it brings salvation to his people. From beginning to end, God's redemption story portrays the Spirit of God as life-giving water. In Revelation 22:1–2, we see water, "clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city," the holy and eternal city of God.

Those of us who have access to the Scriptures have good reasons to trust that the biblical account of Noah's flood is literally and historically defensible. By showing it to be true, we remove a major challenge to biblical reliability that has become for many a stumbling block to faith. The door is open for Bible readers to affirm that everything written in the sixty-six books on all topics addressed has been supernaturally inspired by God.⁷

Confidence that the Bible is, indeed, the true and trustworthy

Word of God provides powerful motivation to consider what its stories, including the account of Noah and the flood, reveal about God's heart. Just as God reached out with precise timing and a perfect plan to rescue Noah and his family from sin's encroaching malignancy, so God reaches out with precise timing and a perfect plan to rescue all who put their trust in him through Jesus Christ—God's Son, our Creator and Redeemer. ☉

Notes

1. Hugh Ross, *Noah's Flood Revisited: New Depths of Insight from Science and Scripture* (2025).
2. Dhongil Lim et al., "Enhancement of Volcanic Eruption in Mid-Ocean Ridge During the Last Deglaciation: New Sedimentary Evidence in the Middle Part of Central Indian Ridge," *Marine Geology* 440 (Oct. 2021): id. 106574; Summer Praetorius et al., "Interaction Between Climate, Volcanism, and Isostatic Rebound in Southeast Alaska During the Last Deglaciation," *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* 452 (Oct. 15, 2016): 79–89; Peter M. Abbott et al., "A Detailed Framework of Marine Isotope Stages 4 and 5 Volcanic Events Recorded in Two Greenland Ice-Cores," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 36 (Mar. 12, 2012): 59–77.
3. Ross, *Noah's Flood Revisited*, 110–115.
4. Ross, *Noah's Flood Revisited*, 173–176.
5. Genesis 6:2, 4; 1 Samuel 17; 1 Chronicles 20.
6. Nick Liguori, *Echoes of Ararat: A Collection of Over 300 Flood Legends from North and South America* (2021).
7. Hugh Ross, *Rescuing Inerrancy: A Scientific Defense* (2024).

Darwin's Island of Misfit Toys

A Tour of Evolutionary Biology's Has-Been Hall of Fame

by Jonathan Witt

You know about the island Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer discovered, right? The Island of Misfit Toys, an Arctic refuge populated by toys that didn't make the cut at Santa's workshop?

In the stop-motion Christmas classic, our eponymous hero (snubbed from any and all reindeer games) saves a very foggy Christmas with his radiant rubicund nose. Then he urges Santa to gather up the misfit toys and place them with grateful children. Santa obliges and everyone lives happily ever after.

The Christmas classic is studiously secular, with no mention of Jesus or the Incarnation, but elements of the film can readily be understood as informed by a Christian background. For instance, the island's overseer, the wise and benevolent King Moonracer, is a winged lion—the longstanding symbol for St. Mark, which also served as the coat of arms for Pope John XXIII, whose pontificate overlapped the film's period of creative development.

More fundamentally, the story's central theme emphasizes the dignity and worth of every person, including the odd and defective. That's thoroughly Christian. Jesus embraced and redeemed all manner of misfits. He became an outcast himself. And he taught that all of us are defectives—spiritually disfigured and cut off from our maker by our sin and in need of God's loving offer of redemption.

Recently it struck me that Rudolph's Island of Misfit Toys has a doppelganger of sorts, an evil twin island—Darwin's Island of Misfit "Toys." Let's take a tour.

Darwin's Misfit

When we first arrive by baby iceberg to this second island, it's hard to distinguish it from the island Rudolph visited. There are misfits here. And it's cold. But then differences begin to emerge. On the

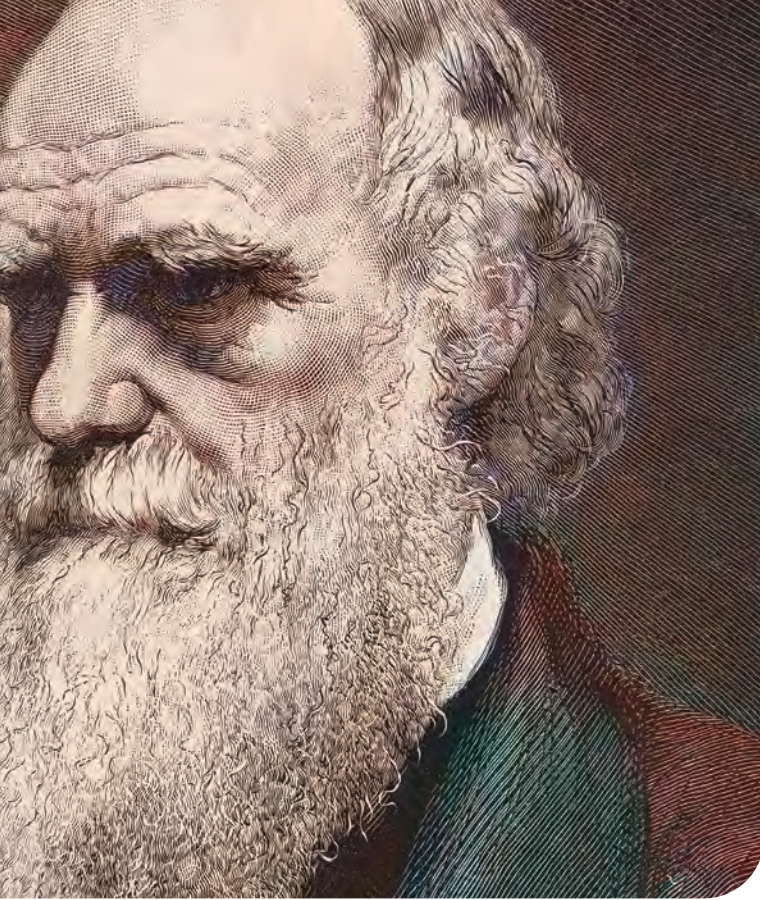
original island, King Moonracer loved the misfit toys and wanted to find homes for them. On Darwin's island, not so much. Its ruler wants to quarantine the misfits from fit society.

Think about it. Darwinism birthed the eugenics movement in Europe and in the United States. Eugenics gained steam year by year in the early 20th century until Hitler and the Nazis so outdid every other Western nation in their perverse zeal for breeding out and pruning out "life unworthy of life" that they wrecked the eugenics brand for decades.

Evolutionists will counter that eugenics was artificially grafted onto Darwinian evolution in order to borrow prestige from an ascendant scientific theory. They will also contend that apart from some boilerplate Victorian-era racial prejudice, neither Darwin nor his theory has any meaningful connection to eugenics or the scientific racism that blighted the twentieth century. But historian Richard Weikart has shown otherwise.¹ Darwin saw sub-Saharan African and Australian aboriginal groups as being much more closely related to our supposed ape ancestors than were white Europeans, and he talked about the inevitability of the white races outcompeting and driving to extinction the darker races of humankind. Also, he employed his low (and misinformed) view of these "savage" races to sell his argument for ape-to-man evolution. Darwin did not build the eugenics house, but he did lay the foundation of scientific racism upon which the eugenics movement would be built.

Also relevant to this discussion is how Darwinism makes possible what Oxford biologist Richard





Dawkins describes as “an intellectually fulfilled atheism by providing a plausible naturalistic explanation for life’s great diversity. Under Darwinism, you can accommodate God if you wish, but the theory renders God largely superfluous in the history of life.

Darwin also yoked his theory to a methodological rule he championed, methodological materialism, which disallows appeals to immaterial causes in scientific explanations. Consequently, the Darwinian framework tends to marginalize the notion of an immortal human soul and the idea that we are made in the image of God with inherent dignity and worth. In this way Darwinism aided and abetted a culture of death in which people are viewed in narrowly utilitarian terms. Those who have worn out their usefulness to society are encouraged to kill themselves or allow someone else to kill them—a ghastly movement that flies under the euphemisms

of mercy killing and euthanasia.² In Canada and some U.S. states, it has progressed to encouraging depressed people to consider suicide as a worthwhile option.

So no, Darwin’s Island of Misfits has nothing like the benevolent King Moonracer, unless one counts as benevolent an overlord urging the misfits to jump into a woodchipper if the fancy strikes them.

The Most Embarrassing Misfits of All

As we wander deeper into Darwin’s Island of Misfits we find another sort of misfit. These are tucked out of sight, relegated to the icy caverns of its interior.

Here we encounter a most curious menagerie—not animals but floating body parts: a knee, an ankle, what may be a set of tonsils, an appendix, and an eyeball.

At one point a mouth attached only to a throat, windpipe, and esophagus floats directly up to you in the cavern, puffs of cold air forming each time the creature exhales. “Hello,” it says brightly. “We’ve been quarantined from the other misfits. We’re the misfits among the misfits. Quarantined because the evolutionists insisted we were evidence of lousy design—proof of evolution’s dumb-luck trial-and-error process: useless vestigial organs such as the appendix and tonsils; the human knees, ankles, and spine—clumsily jury-rigged from a knuckle-walking

ape to serve bipedal humanity; the vertebrate eye, wired in backwards and saddling us with an idiotic blind spot. But then it’s come out that, no, we’re all brilliant designs. Take me. Darwinists will tell you that a wise God would never have mashed together the eating organ and the breathing organ. That would be a choking hazard, right? It must have been mindless evolution. But then some bioengineers investigated. Turns

out, the Darwinists’ supposedly superior alternative strategy would be ridiculously bulky with all kinds of unpleasant trade-offs. Fact is, I’m a design master class.”

A column of DNA floats past. “So-called ‘junk DNA,’” the mouth comments, falling into his role as

“May I introduce, Piltdown Man,” says the floating mouth. “The Piltdown skull, to be precise—‘discovered’ in 1908 and lauded as proof of the missing link between ape and man. A total fraud, come to find out—a human cranium paired with the jaw and teeth of an orangutan. Evolutionists prefer to forget all about this one.”

tour guide. “Darwinists were sure the stuff was just pointless evolutionary leftovers, since it didn’t code for proteins. But now scientists are discovering more and more uses for the stuff.”

“And all these other floating body parts?” you ask.

“Same story. Turns out the ‘vestigial’ organs said to be worthless evolutionary leftovers perform valuable functions. That fellow over there, the one giving you the stink eye? His backward wiring, come to learn, is an ingenious hack to improve oxygen flow to the eyeball. Eyes need gobs of oxygen. The other body parts—same song, different verse. Knees, ankles, that backbone and wrist joint hanging out together over there—all masterpieces of biomechanical engineering. Most evolutionists don’t have

any training in engineering. They ignore the issue of trade-offs and miss the design brilliance. The evolutionists who actually keep up with the latest research, they at least get it. They’re the ones who stuck us back here. They realize that, as arguments for evolution go, we’re the proverbial dog that won’t hunt anymore.”

“So you’re never allowed into the open air?” The mouth pops his lips. “Oh, it’s not that dire. There are researchers who have been publicly debunking these bad-design-so-no-designer arguments. They slip us past the sentries every now and then and take us for walks out in the sunshine.

A floating skull sidles up to the mouth.

“May I introduce, Piltdown Man,” says the floating mouth. “The Piltdown skull, to be

Fact-Checking Darwin’s Misfit

by Jonathan Witt

“Darwin’s Island of Misfits employs a whimsical fictional setting, but its points of science are factual.

For details on the peppered moth, Haeckel’s embryo drawings, and other discredited “proofs” of evolution, see biologist Jonathan Wells’s *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth? Why Much of What We Teach About Evolution Is Wrong* (2000) and *Zombie Science: More Icons of Evolution* (2017).

As for the floating body parts in the cavern—the knee, ankle, tonsils, appendix, eyeball, and throat—Darwinists really do present these as either useless organs leftover from the evolutionary process or as evidence of botched design. And all such arguments really have been overturned.

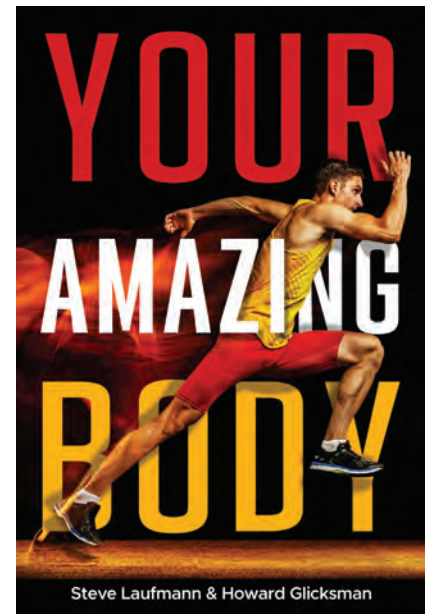
For instance, in *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), Oxford evolutionist Richard Dawkins insists that the vertebrate eye is wired backwards in a way that no “tidy-minded engineer” would tolerate. He blames this

supposedly substandard design on blind evolution, but his argument is misinformed. The backward wiring greatly improves oxygen flow to the oxygen-hungry vision cells. Biologist Michael Denton ably summarizes these findings in his 1999 *Origins & Design* article, “The Inverted Retina: Maladaptation or Pre-adaptation?”¹

Evolutionist Nathan Lents wrote an entire book, *Human Errors* (2018), claiming a long list of botched designs in the human body as supposed evidence of mindless evolution at work. A rebuttal tome could rightly be titled *Nathan’s Errors*.

In *Your Designed Body* (2022) and in the abridged version, *Your Amazing Body* (2025), Steve Laufmann and Howard Glicksman rebut several of Lents’s mistakes. And British biomimetics engineer Stuart Burgess does so in point-by-point fashion in his upcoming work *Ultimate Engineering: An Award-Winning Engineer Investigates the Human Body*. As the title suggests, Burgess counters Lents and other evolutionists with a detailed case showing that the maligned body parts are actually instances of ingenious design.

Burgess reinforces his thesis



by describing how, when tasked with building better robots, our best engineers have failed to approach the versatility of human body parts, including the ankle and knee joints, the feet, and the heart. Set beside their biological counterparts, the most advanced robotic body parts are clunky and amateurish by comparison. •

Note

1. Michael Denton, “The Inverted Retina: Maladaptation or Pre-adaptation?” *Origins & Design* 19:2, is. 37 (1999).

precise—‘discovered’ in 1908 and lauded as proof of the missing link between ape and man. A total fraud, come to find out—a human cranium paired with the jaw and teeth of an orangutan. Evolutionists prefer to forget all about this one.”

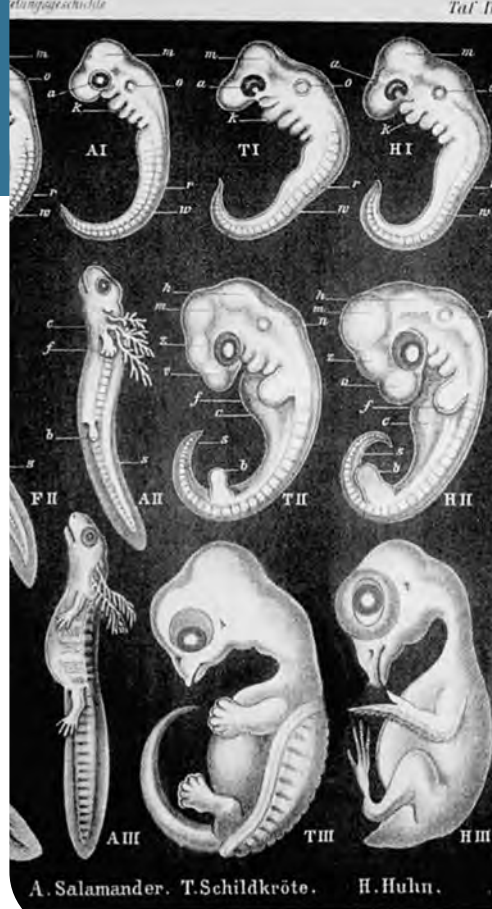
“Indeed,” says the skull. “They have gotten so much better at the fakery since my time.”

The mouth nods. “So much better that they even fool themselves—imaginative reconstructions of ancient hominid hip bones to make them look more like ours; artist renderings of ape-like hominids to do the same. Then just the opposite with the very humanish Neanderthals and *Homo erectus*—they make them look more ape-like. The whole idea is, shrink the massive gap between ape and man. Very clever. The stock-in-trade of natural history museums.³ The propaganda has matured immensely since the thoroughly ham-fisted Piltdown affair.”

“Ham-fisted! the skull retorts, his feelings injured. “I never hear you bad-mouthing disembodied RNA and the ridiculous RNA-World hypothesis back of them, or those ludicrous imaginary transitionals between land mammals and whales. Frauds and fantasies, the lot of them, but never a cross word from you. It’s all directed at me, a poor collection of bones that never had the least say in—”

“Tell the World About Us”

By now the skull and mouth have drifted out of earshot. A peppered moth lights on your shoulder. He’s another creature employed to sell evolutionary theory to the public and subsequently caught up in an embarrassing fraud of sorts. Just behind him a troupe of animal embryos—eight columns of three, each column a different species—march through the air toward you.



Just behind him a troupe of animal embryos march through the air toward you. The peppered moth on your shoulder sighs. “Haeckel’s embryos,” he says. “Even I’m embarrassed to be seen with them.”

The peppered moth on your shoulder sighs. “Haeckel’s embryos,” he says. “Even I’m embarrassed to be seen with them.”

With the unnerving troupe of embryos closing in, you decide it’s time to find the exit.

When you reach the sunlight at the mouth of the cave, you lift the moth off your shoulder and place him on the branch of an arctic willow. “Whatever you do,” huffs the moth, “don’t glue me to a tree trunk. Humiliating!”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” you reply.

The peppered moth takes wing and follows you to the

shore. As you step onto your improbably seaworthy baby iceberg to begin the journey home, the moth calls out with a final request. “If you really want to help, tell the world about us—Darwin’s Island of Misfits.” ☺

Notes

1. Richard Weikart, *Darwinian Racism: How Darwinism Influenced Hitler, Nazism, and White Nationalism* (2022).
2. Richard Weikart, *Unnatural Death: Medicine’s Descent from Healing to Killing* (2024), 55–60, 66, 133.
3. Casey Luskin, “Missing Transitions: Human Origins and the Fossil Record,” *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (2017), 437–473.

You Choose

Free Will vs. State Coercion

by Denyse O'Leary

After forty years' study of humans and primate apes, Stanford professor of neurology Robert Sapolsky, author of *Determined: A Science of Life Without Free Will* (2023), announced that "We are nothing more or less than the sum of that which we could not control—our biology, our environments, their interactions." Sam Harris, a well-known atheist and neuroscientist, agrees: "Free will is an illusion."

Denial of free will is popular among scientists generally and is probably the majority view among neuroscientists. As a result, many will assume that free will has somehow been refuted by science. Actually, no. As neurosurgeon Michael Egnor and I explain in *The Immortal Mind: A Neurosurgeon's Case for the Existence of the Soul* (2025), denial is an ideological fashion. It is not a rationally consistent belief.

Problems with Denial

Here are some of the reasons we give.

The Logic Problem: If our thoughts and choices really are wholly determined, what follows? Even the statement "Free will doesn't exist" cannot coherently be argued as true or false any more than a moaning wind might be true or false. If we lack free will and our thoughts are determined wholly by the laws of physics and chemistry, then we cannot make any valid argument. Free will denial is part and parcel to a logically self-refuting suicide of the intellect.

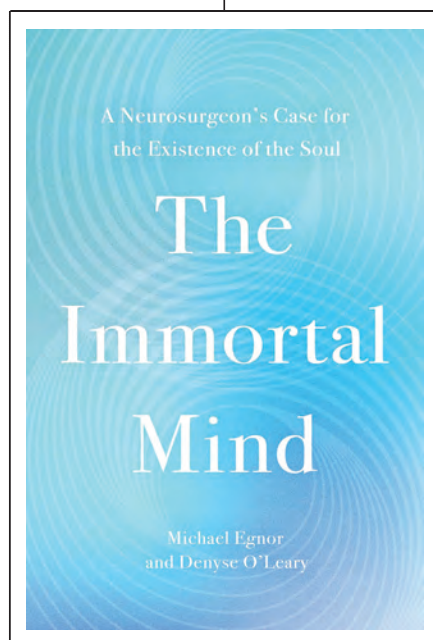
The Physics Problem: Over a century of modern physics has established that our universe is not, at bottom, wholly determined. In 2022, physicists Alain Aspect, John F. Clauser, and Anton Zeilinger received the Nobel Prize in Physics for experiments establishing that at the most fundamental

level, nature is governed by probabilities and not certainties. Thus it follows that human choices are not rigidly bound up in strict laws of physics.

The Neuroscience Failure to Rule It Out: Wilder Penfield (1891–1976), a pioneer neurosurgeon, noticed something significant when he was stimulating patients' brains during awake surgery (generally performed to treat epilepsy). An awake patient could always tell whether Penfield had caused her limb to move by stimulating a part of her brain or whether she had freely chosen to move it herself. After more than eleven hundred surgeries, Penfield was not able to find a center in the brain where the "will" could be located. Originally a materialist, he later inferred that the will does not arise in the brain but is a power of an immaterial mind.¹

The neuroscientist we most often hear about in connection with free will studies is Benjamin Libet (1916–2007). Introductory psychology students may well be taught that he disproved free will. He himself disagreed. What he found was a detectable "readiness potential" that appeared in the brain just before

an experimental subject decided to push a button. But his later research showed that no such potential arose if the subject decided *not* to push the button. So he famously quipped that he couldn't say for sure





that he had proved the reality of free will, but he had proved the reality of “free won’t!”

Later research in this area took a different tack, focusing on the relative importance of a decision. Pushing a button in Libet’s lab incurred no real-life consequences, but what about decisions entailing significant consequences? Researchers found something very interesting: meaningless choices were preceded by a readiness potential, but meaningful choices were not.³ When we care about a decision and its outcome, our brain appears to behave differently.

Given that free will matters most to us when we are making important decisions, it is surely significant that the important decisions did not seem to have a material correlate. If anything, such research findings support free will.

Critical to Freedom

Much of the Western world today, even Britain, is flirting with a totalitarian temptation: if we are nothing but meat puppets molded by time and chance, why shouldn’t the government mold us instead of us molding our government? That would include managing our ideas. For example, many in the United States, including Vice President J. D. Vance, are looking on with dismay as Britain now arrests thousands for social media posts—while crimes against real persons spiral out of control.⁴ This only makes sense in a totalitarian context. Governments groping toward totalitarian control are much more concerned with the spread of wrongthink than they are with their citizens’ safety.

In *The Immortal Mind*, we argue that the totalitarian temptation stems from a rejection of the reality and importance of free will. Prominent historian Yuval Noah Harari goes so far as to claim that the very idea of free will is dangerous: “If governments and corporations succeed in hacking the human

animal, the easiest people to manipulate will be those who believe in free will.”⁵

Some may comfort themselves with the notion that the government only shuts down obnoxious people. But they probably haven’t reckoned with the next steps. The 2002 film *Minority Report* assumes that incarcerating people *before* they have committed crimes is strange, but it makes perfect sense in a totalitarian light. The inevitable protest, “But I’m innocent!”, is meaningless apart from free will—without free will, we are never guilty or innocent. Nonetheless, authorities may take it upon themselves to forestall a perceived future risk, perhaps by incarcerating whole classes of people, as was done in the Soviet gulags.

Similarly, if free will doesn’t exist, disagreement with the government can be redefined as irrational—the output of a badly functioning brain. The Soviet Union, for example, “medicalized” dissent by forcibly institutionalizing political and religious dissenters as psychiatric patients who were unable to reason correctly.

The trend is slower in the United States, but real. And these changes need not happen by violence. Societies whose inhabitants don’t explicitly affirm free will may just drift toward totalitarianism. Pundits and politicians alike are tempted by the idea that, if there is no higher power or greater reality to whom we must give an answer, they can force people to fulfill their visions with impunity. And there is more than government coercion that is at issue here. Overcoming addictions and sorting out conflicts and troubled relationships are a much greater challenge if the underlying assumption is that we do not have the inner capacity to change.

The Greater Danger

Yuval Noah Harari is wrong, and not just in his belief about free will. It is the denial of free will that presents the greater danger to humanity because it is free will-denying elitists who tend to become the most abusive manipulators of the masses.

Free will is real. It is a natural faculty of our immaterial minds. We can use or abuse it, but it cannot simply cease to exist. ©

Notes

1. Wilder Penfield, *The Mystery of the Mind: A Critical Study of Consciousness and the Human Brain* (Princeton Legacy Library, 2015), 76–77.
2. Benjamin Libet, “Do We Have Free Will?,” in *Conscious Will and Responsibility: A Tribute to Benjamin Libet*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Lynn Nadel (online ed., Oxford Academic, Jan. 1, 2011).
3. Uri Maoz et al., “Neural Precursors of Decisions That Matter—an ERP Study of Deliberate and Arbitrary Choice,” *eLife* (Oct. 23, 2019).
4. Paul Coleman, “J.D. Vance Was Right About Censorship,” *The Critic* (Jun. 3, 2025).
5. Yuval Noah Harari, “The Myth of Freedom,” *The Guardian* (Sep. 14, 2018).

Humanity in Medicine

Ben Casey

by Anthony Esolen

I must confess that I have never seen an episode of the medical drama *House*, despite the considerable intelligence and talents of Hugh Laurie, who plays the lead role. Nor do I enjoy watching shows filmed in what I'll call *dead color*, whose palette runs from icy white to hard steely blue-gray, with flesh-colored frowning human faces in between.

But enough of that. My wife Debra and I have rediscovered an old medical show which ran between 1961 and 1966: *Ben Casey*. It's in black and white, as it well ought to be. (As an aside, I cannot recall any other instance of artists suddenly and so thoroughly discarding so important and impressive a medium of art as black and white film was.) There are several reasons why *Ben Casey* strikes us as coming from a

world that is now hard to recognize, even for people who are as old as we are and who can remember some of that world. I would like to discuss them here.

Human Attention

One of them is the sheer humanity of medical attention not overwhelmed by scale, by machinery, by the bureaucracies of the medical or insurance industry, or by the numbers of people somehow in orbit around your condition, none of which can be depended on to know more than a slice of it. Ben Casey (played by Vince Edwards—broad-shouldered, handsome, often glowering, but with a soft heart for children) is the resident intern and chief of neurosurgery at County General Hospital, set somewhere in southern California. It is a large hospital, with many departments and at least six stories. The neurosurgery wing is on the fifth floor. Yet even in episodes where one emergency follows upon another, we do not get the impression of a vast and incomprehensible institution, and of course we do not have doctors whose eyes you will not see because they are always staring at a screen.

Many a time we see Dr. Casey leaning over the bed, speaking patiently to a child, with a trace of a smile but usually no more than a trace, or looking hard at a grown-up, brows knit, trying to find some strand of truth in the patient's responses or evasions, something he can use to make the right diagnosis or to prescribe the right treatment.

And since the show is not sentimental, many of the patients are beyond help; some who are not

"Behold a Pale Horse" (1962)





beyond help will nonetheless die on the operating table. One little girl, in "Suffer the Little Children," having recovered from her head injury in a supposed accident that killed her baby sister, will go home to be murdered in short order by her own mother. No, the relentless Dr. Casey, who fiercely opposed her release but had no legal leg to stand on, does not always triumph.

Casey is not a functionary, and in those days, there was no Human Resource department to ensure that human beings would behave like machines with politically approved stickers glued to their front. He behaves like a human being, a rather large and markedly masculine one, too. He will give any slow or recalcitrant or irresponsible or muddle-headed doctor or nurse a large piece of his mind, with real anger, regardless of the sex of the victim. He is usually justified in his anger, at least partly. Sometimes he is not. But he runs a tight ship, and he doesn't get paid much for it, either; he sleeps at the hospital and takes almost all of his meals there, too.

Human Frailty & Fallenness

Another feature of the show's humanity might strike us as unendurable. Usually, there are two patients to a room, and sometimes three. That means that

your fellow patient may somehow contribute to your cure. The first time I was in a hospital, I was only 15 years old, and because nobody local could figure out what was wrong, I ended up spending two weeks 150 miles from home in Pennsylvania University's Graduate Hospital. There was an old man in my room, too, though I don't remember why he was there. He taught me to play casino, and so we passed the time. In *Ben Casey*, the fact that you are *not* isolated makes it seem as if human life in all its glory and shame is still with you, as in "The Bark of a Three-Headed Hound," which pits a terminally ill intellectual against an uneducated working-class man who must undergo brain surgery, and the intellectual, his malice partly excused by his hopeless condition, falls in love with the other man's wife.

Then there is the assumption that longevity is not the be-all and end-all of medicine. The hospital can lengthen your life (or, if things go wrong, shorten it). It can sometimes restore normal function to an organ or limb. Now and then, it can even go a long way toward healing the mind. But it cannot have the last word. In "For a Just Man Falleth Seven Times," a good and mild man (Lew Ayres, who could play such a part to perfection), knowing that he is going to die, leaves the hospital without telling anyone and spends his last hours not on a pleasure-spree, but enjoying some features of ordinary life among people whose like he had never really known, people lower than his social class. In "Use Neon for My Epitaph," a Hollywood actor (Gary Merrill) chooses to make what he knows must be his last film, the stress of which will accelerate his incurable disease, and he does so

In *Ben Casey*, we do often see a full world of human interchanges, of neighbors in that rich and daily sense that we have lost. There are a lot of lonely people in *Ben Casey*, but loneliness is not the default. Sociality is the default.

against Dr. Casey's advice, but appealing to Casey's own commitment of his life to medicine, saying, essentially, that he and Casey both know that the work to be done is more important than the number of days either of them might see the sun.

But it should by no means be assumed that Dr. Casey would ever violate the Hippocratic Oath by doing harm to a life or to an organ, merely because the patient wants it. He knows his bounds, and even when he is correct in his moral fight for a patient's best interest as against the wishes of his parents or guardians or spouse or employers, there is always the elderly Dr. Zorba (Sam Jaffe) to remind him of those bounds. But Dr. Zorba, too, will remind him of humanity and of the need to be more forbearing, because Casey is often frustrated by people's obstinacy, folly, and wickedness, or sometimes what looks like wickedness but is not. That is the case in "I Remember a Lemon Tree," as a brilliant young surgeon (George C. Scott), apparently running himself into the ground with overwork and alienating his long-suffering wife and everyone else, has been skimming prescriptions of morphine so that he can shoot himself up with it. Casey catches him, and we find out that the doctor is dying of leukemia and is doing all he can to keep himself on his feet and at the tasks to be performed. Of course, that cannot continue. But we see, as so often in the show, that the human heart can be deep and dark; who can fathom it?

Human Sociality

Or who can map the ways of human beings shying away in fear from what they perceive as alien and inhuman? In *Ben Casey*, we do often see a full world of human interchanges, of neighbors in that rich and daily sense that we have lost, whenever the scene leaves the hospital and goes out into the streets. In "The Big Trouble with Charlie," Casey discovers that one of his interns (Jack Warden) has been checking out of the hospital as soon as he can, not to relax but rather to go to a pool room to treat the down-and-out, or the fearful, those members of society that hang together as their best support against all that seems to them big, impersonal, threatening, and in any case beyond their means.

There are a lot of lonely people in *Ben Casey*,

but loneliness is not the default. Sociality is the default. We see it in "Allie," when the teammates of a baseball star who has just lost an eye in an accident (Sammy Davis, Jr., who in fact did lose an eye, and it was Frank Sinatra who pushed and pushed his old friend and made sure he did not give up) come to visit him and to beg him not to let all his baseball knowledge go to waste.

Humanity & Faith

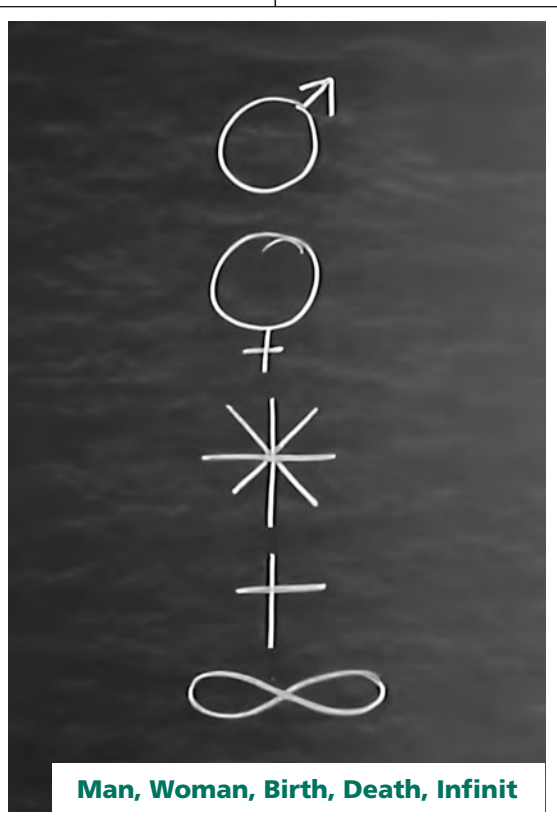
All of which leads up to the most important feature of *Ben Casey*'s humanity: it operates in the neighborhood of religious faith. At least twelve episodes, by my count, bear titles that come from Scripture or from some Christian prayer, as in "The Evidence of Things Not Seen," in which a wise and mild-mannered priest (Wilfrid Hyde-White), dying but not afraid to die, seeks to heal a family wound, the rift between a woman's husband, who

does not believe in God, and her father.

James Moser, the creator and producer of the show, was also the brains and the animating heart of a previous show about doctors, the first ever on television: the half-drama, half-documentary *Medic*, with Richard Boone as the narrator and, sometimes, the lead character. Those shows, too, were often steeped in religious feeling; in one of them, the principal object is a crucifix

The opening of each episode of *Ben Casey* is instructive in this regard. It is almost impossible to imagine it now. We see a blackboard and a hand drawing five symbols, each successive one below the other. For the first four seasons, the voice is Dr. Zorba's: "Man, woman, birth, death, infinity." The five are to be regarded as deep mysteries, elemental in human life, and though mysterious, they are also in everyone's experience. There is no blurring between man and woman, no trivializing of birth or death, and no flight from the infinite. When Dr. Zorba is presented with the possibility of a miracle, he will not discount it; he has seen them.

As I say, it is hard to imagine the show now. I wish we could have some of that world again. ☺



Man, Woman, Birth, Death, Infinity

Not Feeling It

Abandoning Objective Standards Undermines Both Art & Life

by Thomas Williams

In the classic musical *The Music Man*, traveling salesman Harold Hill sells band instruments to parents with the promise that he will organize their young sons into a boys' band. But Hill knows nothing about music, and he intends to skip town before the residents realize they've been hoodwinked. When the instruments arrive, he delivers them, collects his money, and tells the children to learn the "Minuet in G" by using the "think system." If they just think hard enough about the music they're struggling to learn, eventually it will somehow flow from their instruments.

Many art teachers today have discarded the visual rules of art and teach their students something much like Hill's think system. Let's call it the "feel system." They don't give students visual rules to follow; they just urge them to paint by whatever impulses they feel deeply inside, and eventually meaningful art will somehow flow from their brushes.

I first encountered the feel system several years ago when I was invited to conduct a seminar on Freedom of Expression for the art teachers in the school district of a large Dallas suburb. I centered my presentation on the need to teach students the established rules

governing visual art. Unless artists apply the standard visual principles proven to draw the viewer's mind and eye toward the primary subject of their painting, their art will not communicate what they want it to express. Effective communication requires a common language between artist and viewer, which in painting is rooted in the universally recognized forms in nature. Art that abandons the language of nature will be dismissed as incomprehensible visual gibberish. The viewer will have no clue to the meaning of seemingly purposeless lines, shapes, and disembodied colors pulled from the artist's psyche with no ties to recognizable forms

existing in nature.

The art teachers resisted my message, claiming that rules stifle creativity. By the third session, their escalating retorts and angry disruptions made it impossible to continue, and the administrators shut down the seminar.

It's little wonder that these teachers reacted so vehemently against teaching their students the longstanding rules of art. Influential art publications are saturated with prominent critics making pronouncements like this one appearing in *New York Magazine*: "There aren't any rules [in art], and there never will be. There is only taste, which is based in education." It doesn't take a genius to see the blatant illogic of that statement. If there are no defining rules, how can one's tastes be educated? You cannot educate without a body of authoritative knowledge or cultivate taste without a set of aesthetic principles.

Perhaps no artists exhibit reliance on the feel system more than non-objective painters who resist depicting objects or scenes that exist in the natural world. They insist on cutting themselves free from standards that have applied to art ever since man first scrawled pictures on cave walls. To render objects as they exist in nature is to be *derivative*—and no insult stings these painters like that word. To be authentically creative, they insist that their art must be original. To them originality means shunning identifiable forms and filling their canvases with shapes, textures, or masses that emerge from their inner psyche and bear no resemblance to objects existing in nature.

The Futility of Originality

J. R. R. Tolkien said that we do art because it reflects the image of God instilled into our essential nature. As he put it, when we paint, write, compose, or build anything meaningful, we become "sub-creators" acting on a deep-seated

impulse to reflect the creative nature of our maker. We sub-creators can never be original in the same sense as God, who created *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. Our creativity will always be derivative, meaning the images we depict are necessarily derived from materials and forms that already exist. We reflect our Creator as sub-creators when we approach our canvases not to display our inner selves, but to reach outside our own resources and display the glory of his creation in fresh, individual ways. This mode of creating enables artists to awaken viewers to a deeper vision of the beauty God infused into everything he made.

To accomplish this connection with viewers, artists must use existing nature as their visual language. Nature must be the baseline for the universal language of visual art because viewers of art naturally understand the forms in nature. When artists reject nature as their source of imagery, they step into the void of meaninglessness.

The alternative to the standard of nature is the feel system—to paint by the self-referential impulses of the artist's own feelings. Artists who follow this path unwittingly reveal their creative bankruptcy. It is impossible for an artist relying solely on his own internal resources to create anything both original and meaningful. The truly creative artist assembles, combines, and strategically modifies elements known to him through his experience of nature. Indeed, we have no source of visual imagery besides what nature provides. We humans cannot even imagine things we have not experienced in nature. Try it. Try to imagine a new primary color, a fourth spatial dimension, or a third sex that is not a combination or extension of what already exists. This doesn't mean artists must slavishly copy natural forms, rendering them with photographic detail. It means using nature as the starting point and filtering its imagery through

the lens of one's unique personal vision.

Life Imitating (Bad) Art

Today life has begun to imitate art with its growing reliance on the feel system in many areas of human experience. A 2022 Barna survey reported that 42 percent of Americans said you should be morally guided by "what you feel in your heart." A whopping 71 percent "now contend that human beings rather than God should be the judge of right and wrong." Only 29 percent affirmed biblical principles as the basis for truth and morality.

Western culture is now promoting reliance on feelings to free us from the chafing shackles of absolute morality. Drug use, sexual freedom, porn, gender fluidity and abortion are now promoted as personal choices based on the premise that whatever makes me feel good defines what is right for me.

The late composer John Cage disdained rules in music. Most of his compositions consisted of randomly produced sounds devoid of order or beauty. One piece required a complete orchestra to sit silently on stage, never playing a note, while inadvertent sounds from the audience such as coughing or shuffling programs filled the void. Cage was also a mushroom connoisseur. When asked if he picked mushrooms with the same randomness he employed in his music, he admitted that he did not. "If I did, I'd die," he explained. This indicates Cage's life was not integrated. It was inconsistent and compartmentalized, because its various parts operated by opposing principles. He conducted his culinary questing by rigid rules

Whenever we reject the authority of external standards and rely instead on personal feelings, we proclaim ourselves to be our own masters, capable and competent to set our own rules and plot our own paths. In art this means separating ourselves from the ultimate source of meaning.

and his music composition by the feel system. The reason for the difference is no mystery. Cage saw no danger in abandoning his music to the freedom of feelings, whereas he saw the deadly danger of gathering mushrooms in the same way.

Like John Cage, we don't abandon objective standards when engaging in human endeavors critical to health, safety, or wellbeing. If we are wise, we don't drive as we feel, ignoring speed limits, stoplights, and center lines. Pharmacists don't mix meds in proportions they feel to be about right. Architects don't select building materials they feel will probably bear an upper-story load. We don't even allow the feel system to intrude on our games and recreation. You can't play baseball, charades, or gin rummy without definitive guidelines and goals. Yet our culture is trying to reshape morality by the feel system because we think we see great advantages and little risk in freeing ourselves from its chafing rules.

We could hardly be more wrong. Like John Cage, when we



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compartmentalize our lives into separate areas, some requiring boundaries and others allowing abandon, we become dis-integrated. Integrated lives are achieved by applying standards consistently in all its areas. Though it may not be immediately apparent, discarding standards in either art or morality can damage a person as severely as flouting the rules of driving and eating. Discarding the standards of art in favor of the feel system will inflict damage on our spirits by fostering the expansion of ego and diminishing sensitivity to objective reality. Discarding the standards of absolute morality in favor of self-referential feelings will inflict damage not only on our spirits, but also on our health, stability, character, and relationships.

In each case, the damage springs from the same source. Whenever we reject the authority of external standards and rely instead on personal feelings, we proclaim ourselves to be our own

masters, capable and competent to set our own rules and plot our own paths. In art this means separating ourselves from the ultimate source of meaning. In morality it means separating ourselves from the ultimate source of protection. Without the protection of rules, we become slaves to contending desires vying for fulfillment with extravagant promises of pleasures guaranteed to make us feel good in the moment.

How did we humans become so vulnerable to the lure of the feel system when we ourselves are God’s works of art? As the Apostle Paul tells us, “We are his workmanship”—God’s masterpieces created to reflect his image perfectly. Our primeval parents tarnished that reflection and introduced the feel system in Eden when they yielded to their desire to partake of that forbidden fruit. By following their own feelings, they stepped away from the protection of God. Today our culture

is merely repeating their mistake. When we follow the feel system, we step away from the protection of God and assume responsibility for our own wellbeing—a responsibility we have been incapable of handling since that fateful day in Eden. As the prophet Jeremiah put it, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

We can’t have it both ways. We can’t abandon rules in favor of freedom and yet retain stability and meaning. Stability and meaning require that all our endeavors adhere to absolute, God-ordained standards by which they can be objectively performed and evaluated. Discarding these standards does not bring freedom. When the boundaries are banished, chaos fills the void, demonstrating that freedom without rules is a fantasy. As G. K. Chesterton aptly said, “Morality, like art, consists of drawing the line somewhere.” ☉



PERSON OF INTEREST



IDEA Man

A Conversation with Casey Luskin

by Terrell Clemmons

Casey Luskin serves as Associate Director of the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, where he oversees the ID 3.0 Research Program and assists and defends scientists, educators, and students who seek to freely study, research, and teach about the scientific debate over Darwinian evolution and intelligent design (ID). As a PhD scientist and an attorney, he brings a unique perspective to this debate.

You studied evolution extensively at a state university. How did you become an advocate of intelligent design?

As an undergraduate at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), I took lots of courses in evolution. I wanted to understand the evolutionary viewpoint. We would learn about the complexity of the cell and the amazing diversity of living organisms. But we would never get adequate or clear evolutionary explanations for how these complex living features arose. I would sit there thinking, *Yes, they can show me pictures of the*

vertebrate limb, or talk about this similarity and that similarity, but how do these structures actually evolve? That was never discussed.

In my freshman brain, I was trying to work this out. I would have fun late-night dorm conversations with friends of all different backgrounds and worldviews. At the end of my freshman year, one dorm friend suggested I read *Darwin's Black Box*, by Michael Behe, which had come out the previous year. I felt like Behe was putting into words the challenges and questions that my freshman brain was trying to articulate. With his idea of irreducible complexity, Behe identified the core problem with Darwinian evolution: Multiple parts are necessary for many complex biological features to function, but how could you evolve these features in a step-by-step Darwinian manner if a single missing part rendered them non-functional? Behe explained the answer: you couldn't.

As college progressed, I read more ID books and articles. I discovered that there was this fascinating debate between ID and mainstream evolutionary biology. The ID literature was engaging with it at a high level, and pro-ID scientists were well-informed about what the other "camp" was saying. I couldn't say the same for my professors. My courses would only discuss the pro-evolution view and usually ignored the debate over intelligent design.

But at the end of my junior year, there was a one-unit seminar offered on evolution and ID, taught by a Christian professor at the UCSD medical school. I jumped at the chance to take a class that would finally cover this debate. The seminar brought in the influential early-ID author Phillip Johnson to teach a lecture and speak to the campus. There was a huge turnout for Johnson's presentation, and I began organizing post-lecture discussion groups for people who wanted to talk

further. It was super fun, and it was clear other people felt like me—eager to have conversations about origins, but without a good avenue for doing so. Our discussion groups attracted undergraduates, graduate students, even faculty; participants spanned the worldview spectrum—atheists, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Jews—everyone. We were having a great time, so some friends and I decided to start a student club—the Intelligent Design and Evolution Awareness, or IDEA Club.

Our club had a website, which soon accumulated multiple articles about ID. This was the early days of Google and at one point we were the top hit for searches on “Intelligent Design.” While I was working on my master’s degree, we were contacted by a *New York Times* reporter. I was interviewed, and amazingly our student club got mentioned in a Sunday front page *New York Times* story on ID. We started hearing from folks around the country saying, “We found your IDEA club online. How can I start one at my school?” So some club members and I started a nonprofit to help students start similar clubs on their own university and high school campuses. We called it the IDEA Center. I took a year off from school to get the IDEA Center off the ground

and then ran it out of my little apartment for three years during law school.

After law school, my plan was to practice environmental law, but Discovery Institute contacted me and basically said, “Casey, we need a young attorney to work long hours for low pay traveling around the country talking to teachers and school board members about how to teach evolution objectively without getting into legal trouble.” At the time I was young, single, and looking for a job. Plus, this sounded fun! So I moved to Seattle, and here I am 20 years later still involved with Discovery Institute and ID.

Tell me about your faith formation.

I did not grow up in a typical religious home. My dad is probably best described as an agnostic Jew. My mom is a Christian. She took me to church, and I accepted Christ at a young age. But it was not until high school that I hit one of those faith crises where I asked myself, *Is*

To paraphrase, Jehoshaphat asks, “Lord, how can we possibly fight this huge, violent, crazed horde that wants to destroy us?” And the Lord tells him, “It’s not your battle to fight. The battle is mine.”

this the faith of somebody else? Or is this my own?

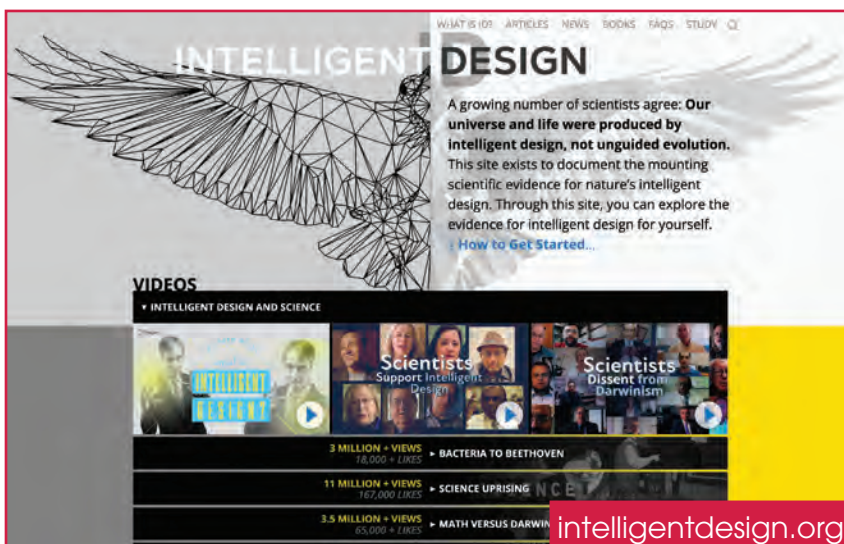
I asked a lot of my own questions and went through a period of major doubt and searching for answers. But God was there, even in the doubts.

I came out of that knowing that God was real, that he loved me, and that Jesus was my Lord and Savior. My faith had become my own.

But I also highly value my Jewish heritage. My wife and I host a yearly Passover Seder for friends (both Christian and non-Christian). Within my family there is a diversity of beliefs and backgrounds. I’ve never been someone who feels you need to think like I do in order for me to love you and for us to have a relationship.

Your work subjects you to the ire of ID critics, which can be quite vicious. What keeps you going?

One of the reasons I co-founded the IDEA Club is because I enjoy having friendly, civil conversations with people who think differently than I do. A core value of IDEA’s mission was to “facilitate discussion, debate, and dialogue” in a



"warm, friendly, and open atmosphere where individuals feel free to speak their personal views." This basically reflects who I am and how I was raised. I consider that a good thing, but it probably left me a bit naïve and underprepared for the internet onslaught of ID-critics.

The attacks largely began around 2003, 2004, when the blog was invented. One blog called Panda's Thumb became an early rallying point to attack ID. Our IDEA Club website was quite visible, so we frequently got attacked by these bloggers. I'm fine with people disagreeing with me, but this was the early days of internet bullying and at that time their vitriol shocked me. They would call us "dishonest," "liars for Jesus," and plenty of other names that are probably better left unprinted. As I would later learn, their responses did not signify anything unusual: this is how the pro-evolution internet crowd normally treats anyone who disagrees with them.

What I also didn't know was something that's considered common wisdom today: not every troll deserves an answer. I remember pulling all-nighters, responding to comments—which were typically gross distortions of my arguments or just plain crazy accusations like, "Casey thinks women who have had abortions should be killed." Of course I never said or even thought such a thing, and I was mystified as to why anyone would say something like that simply because I'd made a scientific argument for intelligent design. I grew psychologically and emotionally fatigued from all this. So I asked some friends to pray for me and decided to take the weekend off from engaging the haters.

Immediately after asking for prayer, some interesting things happened. First, the Panda's Thumb website abruptly went offline, stopping the anti-Casey frenzy. Then, at the invitation of friends, I attended three services that weekend at three different

churches. Independently, each service preached on the same Bible passage from 2 Chronicles 20: the story of King Jehoshaphat, where a huge horde is coming against Judah. This felt familiar!

To paraphrase, Jehoshaphat responds, "Lord, how can we possibly fight off this huge, violent, crazed horde that wants to destroy us?" And the Lord tells him, "It's not your battle to fight. The battle is mine." On the Saturday evening service, I thought, *Okay, Lord, that's cool—thanks for the encouragement.* The second time, on Sunday morning, I thought, *Okay, God, this is getting interesting.* And by the third service on Sunday night, I said, *Okay, I get the message!*

All this happened early in my public engagement with the evolution crowd, and it reassured me that God is in control. It is not my battle to fight off all my opponents—at the end of the day, it's in the Lord's hands.

Nonetheless, it's never pleasant to be attacked by hateful people who are saying false things about you. But over time God helps you to learn a bigger-picture perspective, grow thicker skin, and realize that he is ultimately in control—even over the haters! In fact, Jesus promised that if we follow him, we *will* face persecution. As unpleasant as it is, it shouldn't come as a surprise.

It's also important to pray for your enemies. This can be hard, but it helps you grow a heart for them. I don't feel the need to respond to every critic—especially those who substitute distortions and personal attacks for serious engagement. But sometimes the right response to a nasty critic can move the discussion forward, especially when done with civility. Loving your opponents is not only Christ's command, it's also quite effective in public debates: it helps you remain more objective, opens people up to hearing what you have to say, and attracts

reasonable people in the "undecided middle" by showing that you use arguments rather than name-calling.

(I also find encouragement in the fact that my most vicious and prominent critics primarily misrepresent my arguments and don't respond to what I've actually said. If my arguments are actually so wrong, why must they resort to all the distortion and name-calling?)

By the way, there's a little epilogue to the story here. By Monday morning the Panda's Thumb blog was back online. I remember one of the moderators apologizing for the blog being offline for about 48 hours due to "lightning strikes" which affected the server. I smiled. God really is in control.

You're also an attorney—how has that played a role in your ID involvement?

Unfortunately, the intolerance that ID proponents face isn't always restricted to the internet. It often has real-world consequences, and I have worked on multiple cases where pro-ID scientists have faced discrimination due to their support for ID. I have seen qualified scientists denied tenure, jobs, academic freedom in teaching and research, and even degrees because of their support for intelligent design. Some of these stories were told in the 2008 documentary *Expelled* featuring Ben Stein. The threat of persecution when you "come out of the closet" and support ID remains very real.

But it's not all bad news. I've also had many opportunities to assist educators in teaching the evidence for and against evolution in public schools. At Discovery Institute we don't think that ID should be pushed into the public school curriculum—that will ignite a firestorm of controversy that will exacerbate the attacks on academic freedom ID proponents face in the academy. But it's legal to

teach evolution objectively, and so I've helped many teachers, school boards, and state legislatures adopt policies that help students hear both the scientific strengths and weaknesses of evolution.

These are great wins for academic freedom, but at the end of the day I don't think public policy debates or court cases will decide this issue. Only the science can settle this debate, and so I strongly prefer to focus on the scientific side.

Where have you seen the ID movement make strides?

Having engaged in this debate now for about 25 years, I'm highly encouraged by how ID predictions and assumptions have borne good fruit in science. We've discovered that "junk DNA" is both functional and crucial, and that genomes are full of unique "orphan genes." New layers of information and control have been found in epigenetics, RNA splicing, and the "sugar code" that are now fully accepted by science. Systems biology—a field which uses ID-based assumptions that organisms have a "top-down" hierarchical design—is now widely practiced in biology.

Meanwhile, old evolutionary problems remain unsolved. Evolutionary biology still has not provided stepwise explanations for irreducibly complex features. The fossil record still shows a pattern of explosions—the opposite prediction of Darwinian evolution. The revolution in genome sequencing has produced huge amounts of DNA data that contradict the "tree of life." And perhaps most importantly, leading evolutionary scientists have begun to acknowledge that the neo-Darwinian model has failed to explain a fundamental aspect of evolution: the origin of new complex biological features.

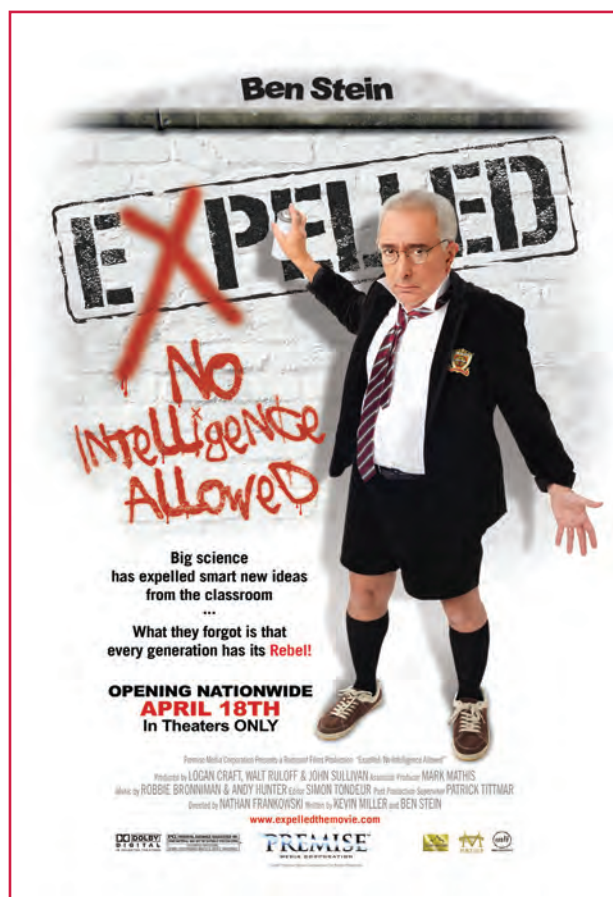
These failures of neo-Darwinism have led to the emergence of the "Third Way Evolution"

camp—a group of mainstream scientists who don't support ID but recognize the need for new evolutionary models.¹ Some Third Way proponents even acknowledge there is teleology and purpose in living systems. The rise of the Third Way camp is a major step in the right direction.

And then there's the growth of ID research. A major part of my job at Discovery Institute is to manage our ID 3.0 Research Program where we are funding dozens of projects being conducted by pro-ID scientists worldwide. We're funding research that is discovering evidence for design in protein complexity, molecular machines, orphan genes, overlapping genes, evolutionary algorithms, the engineering of biology, population genetics, earth's unique design, cosmic fine-tuning and much more. The ID community has now published over 300 peer-reviewed scientific papers, showing that ID is a viable scientific paradigm to guide research.

Mainstream pundits seem eager to declare ID dead and all but buried. Yet it continues to defy the undertakers' predictions.

From my vantage, the only thing that's "dead" here is the old myth that ID doesn't do research or publish peer-reviewed papers. New scientists join our ranks all



the time. Over 1,000 students have now attended Discovery Institute's seminars on intelligent design, with many of them going on to get PhDs and become faculty members—the next generation of ID researchers.

This is exactly how scientific revolutions happen. The old guard typically is set in their ways and won't consider new paradigms to solve the problems of the old one. But young, up-and-coming scientists are open to new ideas, and they're willing to think outside the box. This is precisely what we're seeing with ID. Much work remains to be done, but I'm grateful to be a part of it and I'm extremely optimistic about what will happen in the coming years! ☺

Note

1. See Casey Luskin, "Still Unexplained: Third Way Evolution & the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis," *Salvo* 73 (2025).



Selfie Tales

How Modern Ed & Media Are Ruining Our Stories

by Noelle McEachran

The study of literature pivoted drastically in the 20th century. Historically, literature was studied for its own sake. Lessons revolved around understanding plot, characterization, symbolism, and metaphor. By contrast, modern education largely emphasizes practical applications. For example, a study of Jane Austen, instead of delving into character foils, patterns, and themes, might become a discussion about gender inequalities, racism, or just about anything else.

In her *Substack Pens and Poison*, Liza Libes discusses how studying English at Columbia University “poisoned her love of literature”:

Instead of appreciating the great works of literature in their entirety...Columbia students and professors alike seemed to have made

it their mission to put down the great writers of the Western canon.... And, if on the rare occasion, you were allowed to enjoy Shakespeare and his brilliant company of poetic masterminds, you could only do so through the lenses of Marxist, postcolonial, or gender theory.¹

This is the result of an intentional educational shift toward student-response-centered classrooms, in which teachers are encouraged to use children’s natural reactions to guide questions, prompts, and future reading experiences. They argue that when teachers focus too heavily on the texts themselves, they risk overlooking the value of students’ voices and interpretations. One advocate of this educational style even argued that students should drop Shakespeare and instead “go to football stadiums, look to grime music and graffiti artists.”²

There has been a growing push to align language arts curricula with the digital world, encompassing a focus on “media education” at the expense of *any* literature.³ “Old” books often don’t even make the cut, or when they do, students learn nothing, or very little, about the books themselves. Literature in particular is no longer regarded as a source of authority but has instead become an excuse to discuss current affairs or social problems arising at lunchtime in the school cafeteria.

The desire to make learning applicable is natural. Perhaps a more important question is what this approach accomplishes. It used to be that “the purpose of education [was] to push students forward in the world rather than making them static,” but some argue that this goal of making lessons “relatable,” rather than opening new worlds to students, “smothers children’s aspirations.”⁴ They are not encouraged to fully absorb all that a book might reveal. Rather than stepping beyond their own era, cultural norms, and limited perspectives, they are kept tethered and constrained. Instead of experiencing the world through a different set of eyes, they remain locked within the confines of contemporary viewpoints. Books are no longer windows to a bigger world but instead serve only as mirrors,



reflecting back the myopic view of one's own face.

"Using" Instead of Receiving

In his book *An Experiment in Criticism*, C. S. Lewis addresses this dramatic shift in education, pointing out that students are no longer encouraged to "receive" books simply as they are. Instead, they are taught to "use" them as you might use a bicycle or a train ticket—take what you need and then toss it. "Hence literature becomes for [modern teachers] a religion, a philosophy, a school of ethics, a sociology—anything rather than a collection of works of art."

Lewis refers to this as "mirroring," when readers look inside the pages of a book and only see their own selves reflected back. The books become small and the reader, big. The net result is that both the books and the students become small. As a result, the entire world becomes small, flat uninteresting, and irrelevant.

The Paramount Self

This shift in literature studies is but one aspect of a broader focus on "self" in today's classrooms through a hyper-preoccupation with self-esteem and inner feelings. In her book *Bad Therapy*, Abigail Shrier cites multiple stories demonstrating how public schools have basically become therapy centers in which school counselors hold all the authority, often completely shutting parents out. In many cases, entire lessons and curricula train students to think of "inner happiness" as their highest goal. Setting aside the fact that

such a goal is unattainable, there is a far greater problem occurring across classrooms today.

Snow White Goes Woke

In March 2025, Disney released a live-action version of *Snow White* that was a colossal failure. It seems the creators wanted to somehow not offend conservative-leaning American families while also ditching "regressive" sex stereotypes and smuggling in plenty of feminism and Marxist undertones. These conflicting goals generated many controversies leading up to the film's release, as well as many rewrites and reshoots. The result became a botched, hacked, mutilated recipe of vague, woke goo.

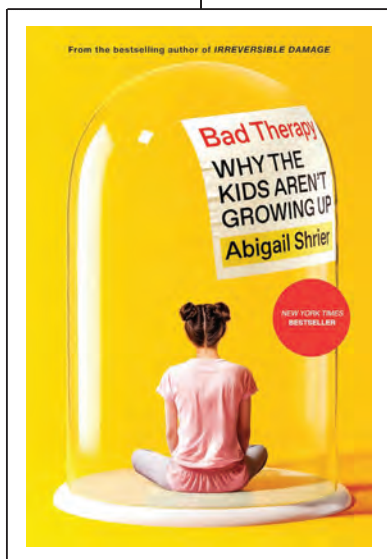
Throughout the film, Snow frequently gazes at her reflection in the well while her stepmother the queen likewise gazes at her own reflection in the magic mirror. Snow's reflection harkens back to her memory of her father, however, capturing her desire to be like him one day—which sounds nice until you discover that her goal of being like her father has less to do with filial loyalty than might appear. Instead, the film

portrays Snow as almost constantly focused on "self." She is ostensibly portrayed as a victim at the start

A record number of students are checked out, stressed out, and disconnected. Perhaps this is no great surprise. A life centered in the self is vain, circumscribed, and one-dimensional. Old stories tell us that this kind of life is a chasing after death.

of the story when she is forced to be a servant in her own house (as in many other fairy tales). Yet this motif conflicts with her own words, such as those in her opening solo in which she declares herself "someone no one needs to save." This dependence on self builds up to her pivotal moment, when, on the cusp of returning home and reclaiming her throne (after her forgettable, non-threatening love interest *sort of* saves her), she proclaims: "Time to rise and lift my head, time to lead and not be led."

This represents a dramatic departure from the Grimms' version of *Snow White*. The contrast provides striking insight into our times and is especially ironic in that the original *Snow White* spoke with scathing insight against this very thing. In the beginning of the Grimms' version, Snow White's mother looks through a window and wishes for a daughter with a pure soul. In fairy tales, a character looking through a window encapsulates wisdom. It embodies someone who can "see" with greater



perception out into a wider world. By contrast, Snow's stepmother, the queen, looks at her own reflection in a mirror. When most people read *Snow White* or watch the film, they assume that this older woman was simply vain—today's version of a washed-up, botched, Botox babe. While she certainly is that, there is far more going on.

Classicist and literature teacher Angelina Stanford notes that Snow's stepmother looked at herself at appointed times. She spoke to the mirror in a call-and-response pattern. In other words, she conducted a sacred liturgy. She was in love with her image, ceremoniously uniting herself to it.⁵ When the wicked queen looked at the world every day, she saw only herself reflected back. Life, in all its fullness, for her, only offered a mirror. As a result, she courted and eventually succumbed to death.

The story echoes that of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own image reflected in the water, and, in his desire to unite with it, fixated on it and drowned.

But it goes even deeper. Stanford explains that the Grimms' version is actually a retelling of the fall of mankind, recalling the garden narrative. It represents a love of one's own image, a love of self. God made man in his image, but Adam and Eve fell in love with and worshipped their image instead of the Creator. The proffered apple in Snow's temptation was intended to represent an image of herself with its "red cheeks." In taking it, Snow was committing the same sin as her stepmother—and as Eve. C. S. Lewis says, "This perversion arises when a conscious creature becomes more interested in itself than in God, and wishes to exist 'on its own.'"

By setting "true love" as the

only standard for breaking the curse, Disney's 1937 version didn't get this right either. When Snow falls into a deathlike sleep, she pictures all of us in our state apart from Christ. She needed saving—not by a hot guy followed by a Pinterest wedding, but by a sacrificial Christ figure

Snow White (2025), far from retelling the original version, might be considered as directly



Snow White (2025)

flipping it on its head. Instead of maintaining the original themes intended to warn against the worship of self, it was rather a celebration of me-centered self-adulation taken to its fullest extent.

iPhones & Magic Mirrors

For many children today, their daily lives involve an almost constant fixation on self. iPhones, parents, teachers, and even many churches curate the world such that it continually, morbidly places the child at the center. Children are encouraged to look out at the world and, like the wicked stepmother, only see themselves reflected back.

This self-fixation has not created an emotionally sturdy, confident, or happy generation. Teachers and professors everywhere are crying out against the effects of cell phones and "me-centered" education. As one

frustrated teacher put it, today's students

have no ability to be bored whatsoever. They live on their phones. And they're just fed a constant stream of dopamine from the minute their eyes wake up in the morning until they go to sleep at night.... When you are standing in front of them trying to teach, they're vacant. They have no ability to tune in.... They're not there. And they have a level of apathy that I've never seen before in my whole career. Punishments don't work because they don't care about them. They don't care about grades. They don't care about college.⁶

A record number of students are checked out, stressed out, and disconnected. Perhaps this is no great surprise. A life centered in the self is vain, circumscribed, and one-dimensional. Old stories tell us that this kind of life is a chasing after death. When we simply, as Lewis said, receive books just as they are—when we stop using them or trying to do something with them—the world transforms from a mirror to a window.

When we leave books alone, miracles occur. The world becomes rich, broad, dangerous, sublime, and mysterious. When books are big and we are small, the result is that the world becomes bigger... and we become bigger people. ☺

Notes

1. Liza Libes, "The Year I Quit Reading," *Pens and Poison* (Feb. 27, 2025).
2. Tomiwa Owolade, "'Relatable' Curriculum's Smother Aspiration," *The Times* (Nov. 24, 2024).
3. "Media Education in English Language Arts" (Position Statement), National Council of Teachers of English (Apr. 9, 2022).
4. Owolade.
5. "How to Read Fairy Tales: A Mini-Class by Angelina Stanford," House of Humane Letters.
6. Ted Gioia, "What's Happening to Students?" *The Honest Broker* (Mar. 21, 2025).



The Sexual Gospel

A Review of Victims of the Revolution: How Sexual Liberation Hurts Us All by Nathanael Blake

by Joshua Pauling

The rolling revolution of sexual liberation is accumulating a growing number of discontents. Or, as Nathanael Blake calls them, *victims*. Blake persuasively argues that the sexual revolution has failed, both on the individual and cultural levels. Moreover, he demonstrates how the growing dissatisfaction with the sexual landscape, as well as the longing people have for something better, points toward what Christianity has upheld for thousands of years. This book is perfect for understanding our moment. It not only provides a natural-law case for why the sexual revolution fails; it goes further by holding up the Christian alternative, which has revolutionized the world before and could do so again.

Documented Failures

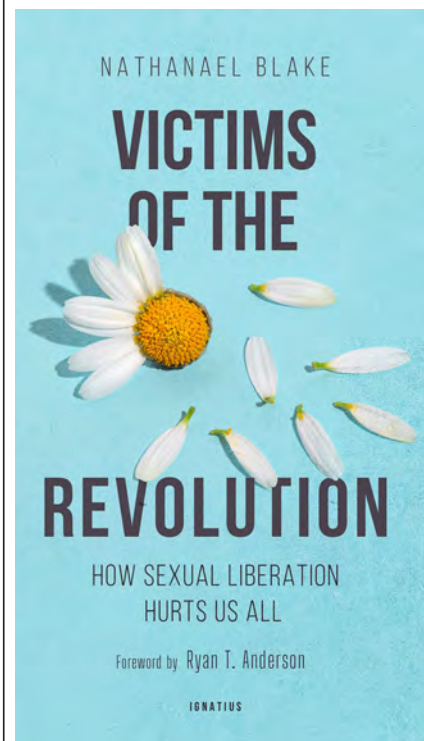
Victims of the Revolution compiles mountains of data to show the failures of the sexual revolution on a variety of fronts, from metrics of personal happiness to family formation to actual satisfaction in and frequency of sexual activity. The promises of free love objectified women and shoehorned them into a template of male sexuality, while also drawing men away from commitment and virtue and towards sexual barbarism. Add into the mix online pornography, gender ideology, abortion, contraception, and artificial reproductive technologies, and we have a recipe for the societal conditions we now are facing.

Blake makes an intriguing case that the sexual revolution is a logical outworking of liberal individualism in the sexual sphere. If an individual is autonomous and

sovereign in the political realm and in daily life, then why not in the bedroom, too? And, as many have argued, what's the big deal what consenting adults do in the privacy of their own bedrooms? But as Blake documents, it actually is a very big deal with very public consequences that can dissolve the fabric of human society and culture.

The More Beautiful Alternative

The last few years have seen a barrage of books in this genre, questioning the sexual revolution from a variety of perspectives. But what sets this book somewhat apart is the way that Blake puts all his cards on the table for Christianity. Throughout he paints a compelling and beautiful alternative picture of what true sexual expression aligned with God's design can look like. In employing natural law



and Scriptural arguments, his case has broad appeal.

In Christianity we have a full celebration of the goodness of human sexuality properly ordered in accord with our nature. When Christianity burst onto the scene in the ancient world, it was indeed a sexual revolution in the best sense of the term, one where women were honored as full persons and men were called to honorable standards of fidelity and devotion to one wife. In the pagan atmosphere of sexual promiscuity and male instrumentalization of female (and male) bodies for sexual pleasure—whether they were slaves, prostitutes, or spouses—Christianity's message of male-female dignity and holy sexuality was truly freeing. And most of all, the Christian sexual ethic grounded in covenant love provided a stable setting for raising children, thus fostering overall societal flourishing.

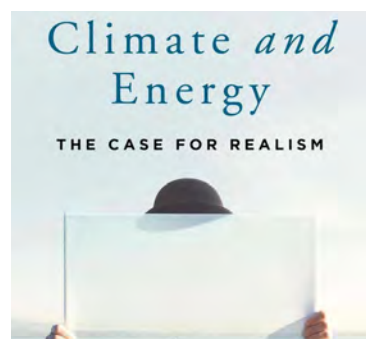
Now, in the wake of our culture's enthronement of sexual expression and transgression, Christianity's message can be freeing and stabilizing once again. ☺

Have We Lost the Plot? Returning to the One Story of the One God

by Fran Sciacca

It's possible to be a professing Christian but a practical postmodernist, one who doesn't know the scriptural metanarrative, the single storyline that gives meaning to life. Sciacca says the Bible is about more than "how to get to heaven." It

reveals a Story, and to make sense of life, we must understand the Story that is playing out. We are not the center of it, but we are invited to find our place in it, and it is in that Story that we will find life, meaning, and salvation. •



Climate & Energy: The Case for Realism

edited by E. Calvin Beisner & David R. Legates

A panoply of climate scientists, engineers, environmental economists, and a theologian weigh in on global warming; how the sun, oceans, clouds, and rain interact to affect climate; the benefit (yes, *benefits*) of human-generated CO₂; and the ethics of climate and

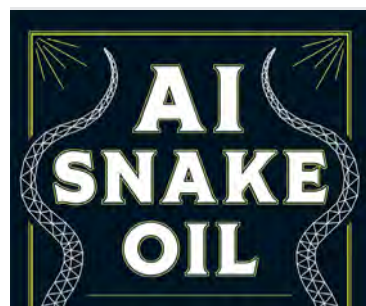
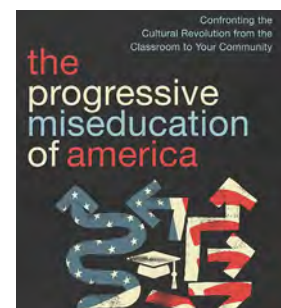
energy policy. Not only would abandoning fossil fuels risk impoverishing developing countries, but climate change may benefit humankind. At a minimum, the authors argue that the costs of abandoning fossil fuels are far higher than the costs of adapting to change. •

The Progressive Miseducation of America: Confronting the Cultural Revolution from the Classroom to Your Community

by Corey Miller

"As go the universities, so goes the culture. As goes the U.S. university, so goes the world," writes Miller. Academia has been ground zero in a century-long, now well-advanced ideological takeover by a materialist, postmodern cultural Marxism. Miller

charts out how that happened and makes a robust case that the biblical worldview offers a sound rationale for not just winning this "war of ideas" but for restoring the university to its proper role in a free society. He closes out with action points for Christians to take. •



AI Snake Oil: What Artificial Intelligence Can Do, What It Can't, and How to Tell the Difference

by Arvind Narayanan & Sayash Kapoor

Two Princeton University computer scientists demystify AI by identifying the different types, explaining how they work, and illustrating through case studies how AI has been deployed in marketplaces

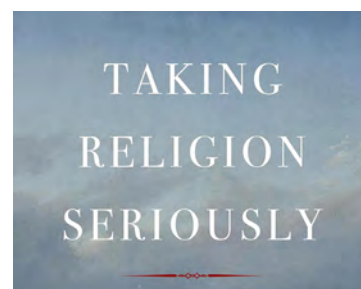
including healthcare and social media. This is a remarkably accessible guide for cutting through media hype and understanding AI as a software tool that can be used for good or ill (or any point in between). •

Taking Religion Seriously

by Charles Murray

Having adopted the propositions of a "secular catechism" without investigating the factual validity of any of them, octogenarian Charles Murray began adult life as a happy agnostic intellectual for whom religion was a benign

social curiosity. In this intellectual, though also personal, memoir, he hashes out his decades-long pilgrimage toward religion in hopes that "overeducated agnostics" will consider taking both religion and Christianity seriously. •





Universe Designed

This visually stunning documentary presents a virtual tour of the arguments and evidence that convinced director Michael Ray Lewis of the truth of Christianity: the origin of the universe, its fine tuning from the beginning, the uniqueness of planet Earth, the complexity of

biological life, and the utter insufficiency of Darwinian theory to account for any of it. The film culminates in a comprehensive case for Jesus of Nazareth as the truth, origin, cause, and designer of it all—the very embodiment of life, logos, and God. Viewing options at UniverseDesigned.com. •

Culture Warrior: Don Wildmon & the Battle for Decency

Don Wildmon (1938–2023) founded the National Federation for Decency (later renamed American Family Association) in 1977 and American Family Radio in 1991 to inform and motivate the church to advocate for family-friendly values in the

marketplace. This documentary chronicling those efforts highlights his prescience and courage in the face of opposition while also (sadly) demonstrating the largescale success of anti-Christian forces to change American culture. Available at CultureWarrior.movie. •



Live Not By Lies

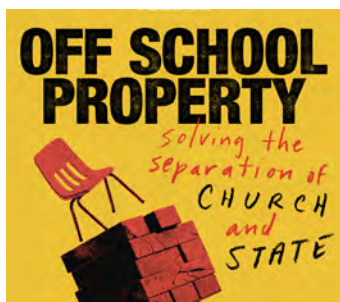
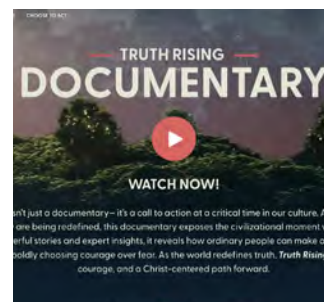
A soft totalitarianism has been encroaching upon Western liberal democracies for decades. Based on Rod Dreher's 2022 book of the same name, this four-part documentary surveys dissidents and survivors of 20th-century totalitarianism. How did they

withstand the brainwashing? How did Christians preserve and pass on their faith? What can 21st-century Westerners learn from them, and how can we rein in today's would-be tyrants? This series addresses those questions and more. Available at Angel.com. •

Truth Rising

Os Guinness defines a "civilizational moment" as "a period when a civilization loses touch with what made it great." Western civilization grew out of Christianity, but the Enlightenment, which grew out of Western civilization, posited reason and "progress" without God.

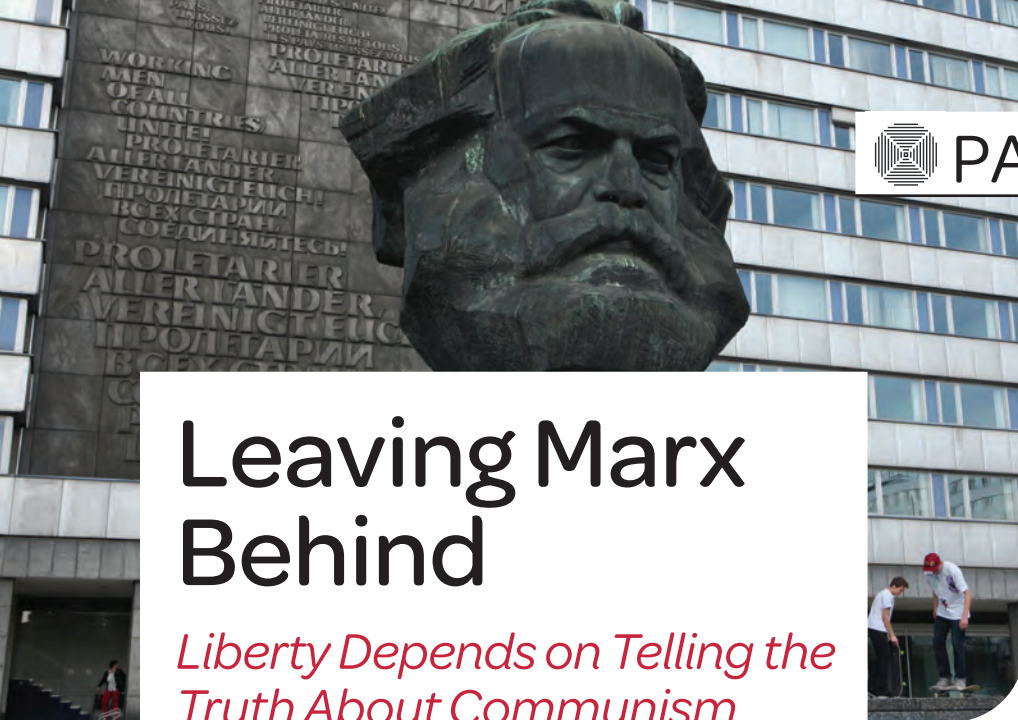
We now face just such a civilizational moment, one in which "Either there's a renewal of the Christian faith, or the West is declining and will fall." This film is a call to Christians to take courage and serve as agents of renewal for the benefit of posterity. Available free at TruthRising.com. •



Off School Property: Solving the Separation of Church and State

A 1952 Supreme Court case carved out a compromise whereby public-school students, with parent permission, can be released from school and taken off property for religious instruction. LifeWise Academy has now created a step-by-step plan citizens can follow

to legally bring Bible instruction to students in their area, and an estimated 350,000 youth are participating. This film tells the story of how it all happened and how you can get involved for the young people in your community. Viewing options at LifeWise.org. •



Leaving Marx Behind

Liberty Depends on Telling the Truth About Communism

by John Stonestreet & Timothy D. Padgett

Earlier this year, someone commented that a Colson Center video, entitled “Am I On the Wrong Side of History?” contained false information about crimes committed by Communist regimes. In a way, the critic was correct. The video only mentioned 94 million casualties of Communist governments. According to the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, the actual number was much higher.

Though Marxism has inflicted unparalleled harm on humanity, many today still want it. Socialism and Marxism continue to gain traction, particularly among people too young to remember the 20th century. They are not old enough to have seen the Berlin Wall come down, or witness the victims of “Democratic Socialism” fleeing to the West, or to have heard stories about how bad things were in the “workers’ paradise.”

Still Blaming Capitalism

Instead, they’ve been taught in school and on social media a different set of causes for the problems of modern society. A recent post on X declared, “You don’t hate Mondays ... you hate being exploited by capitalism.” This is silly, of course. Any study of economic growth shows that prosperity increases in step with free markets. But still, many fall for it.

Lucy Biggers used to be one of

them. She worked for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and saw the New York Congresswoman as a more attractive Bernie Sanders with social media savvy. In an article in *The Free Press*, Biggers explained how young people are taught to blame all of life’s problems on capitalism. “[M]ost of them,” she said, “don’t have any idea that they are supporting horrible ideas that literally ruin civilization.”

The false promises of Marxism are compelling. Utopias always are. But, as Os Guinness has said, there’s always a gap between the utopia that is promised and the reality that is achieved. Throughout history, that gap is filled by violence, as those in power seek to bring in by force the world they envision. Marxism, when applied, is state-sponsored oppression in the form of technocratic rule, which is why Marxism has been responsible for the worst crimes in human history, though all in the name of a good cause.

Destruction & Death Tolls

When Lenin came to St. Petersburg in April 1917, he preached “Peace, Land, and Bread!” What the people actually got was war, tyranny, and famine. In his short time in power, millions starved, millions more were killed in the civil war, and the rest lost what little freedoms they had. Stalin slaughtered an estimated 20 million people. In what’s come to be known as the Holodomor, two million died in Ukraine from his forced collectivization in the 1930s. China under Mao Zedong recorded the most deaths. Mao killed somewhere between 45 and 65 million of his own people. Forty million died just between 1958 and 1962, victims of the deeply flawed economic policy known as The Great Leap Forward.

Everywhere Marxism has been tried, the story is the same. Between 1975 and 1979, Pol Pot murdered as many as three million Cambodians, or 25 percent of the population. The Ethiopian famine of the 1980s was the result of flawed Marxist practices. From the thousands of students killed at Tiananmen in 1989 to the 2020 suppression of protests in the once-free city of Hong Kong, China’s Marxism always returns to tyranny.

Truth for Life & Liberty

Marxism is the embodiment of three well-used phrases: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”; “Ideas have consequences, and bad ideas have victims”; and “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” It’s vitally important that those of us old enough to remember history share that memory with rising generations. The lives and liberties of millions depend on it. ☉

—This article first appeared at [Breakpoint.org](https://breakpoint.org). Used with permission of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

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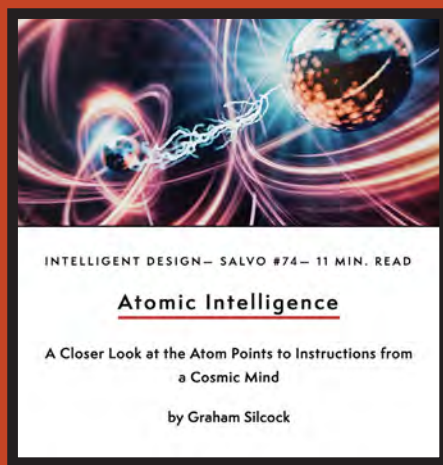
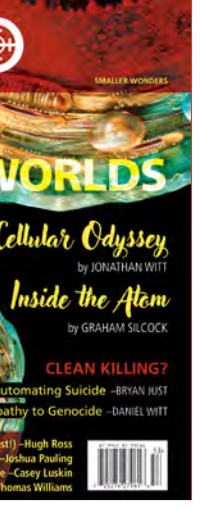


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