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SALVO

Issue 74 Fall 2025 — Your Quarterly Reality Check

SMALLER WONDERS

NANO-WORLDS

A Cellular Odyssey

by JONATHAN WITT

Inside the Atom

by GRAHAM SILCOCK

CLEAN KILLING?

Automating Suicide —BRYAN JUST

From Empathy to Genocide —DANIEL WITT

Interstellar Space Travel? (Not So Fast!) —Hugh Ross
Feminists for Sex Realism —Joshua Pauling
More Zombie Science —Casey Luskin
Word Fakes —Thomas Williams



GREAT BOOKS FOR GOOD MEN

Reflections on Literature and Manhood

Joseph Pearce presents brief but stirring reflections on how great literature—including even poetry—can help every Catholic man striving for virtue and holiness.

Drawing on luminaries such as **Homer, Dante, Chaucer, Tolkien, Chesterton, Newman, C. S. Lewis**, Pearce shows that literature, far from being a dead relic of the past, tackles crucial questions which are directly relevant to modern men. What does Shakespeare say about the dangers of lust? How does God pursue the sinner like a “Hound of Heaven”? What does it mean to be soldiers of Christ on active duty in the Church Militant? What sort of men do we want our sons to become? What does a great poet-saint teach us about the power of the sign of the cross to exorcise demons? How can we nurture a faith which is fearless?

In a culture that fosters toxic masculinity on the one hand and effeminacy on the other, the literary giants of the past offer an inspiring alternative vision of true manhood, one that Catholic men are called to embrace as they “work out their salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). **GBGMP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95**

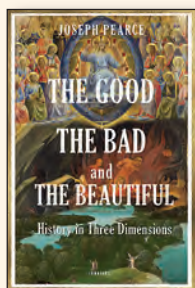
“This great book is long overdue. Pearce has dipped into the rich treasury of the very best of the Catholic literary tradition and has brought out some true gems that elevate and inspire masculine virtue.” —**Bishop James Conley**, Lincoln, NE

“Catholic men who truly desire to be Catholic men should make their way through Pearce’s masterfully curated collection of the best literature for men. You will learn that manliness has nothing to do with self-indulgence. Manliness is about total self-giving.”
— **Christopher Check**, President, Catholic Answers



“A refreshingly masculine perspective on some of the greatest literary works ever. No stone is left unturned: spiritual fatherhood, virtue, suffering, holiness, and relativism are treated with deftness and skill. Insightful and intelligent. A creative tour de force.” — **Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers**, Author, *Behold the Man: A Catholic Vision of Male Spirituality*

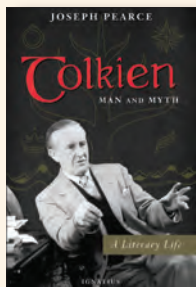
Also by Joseph Pearce



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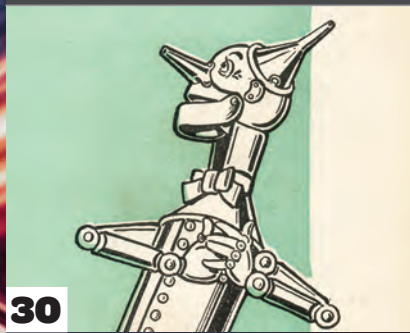
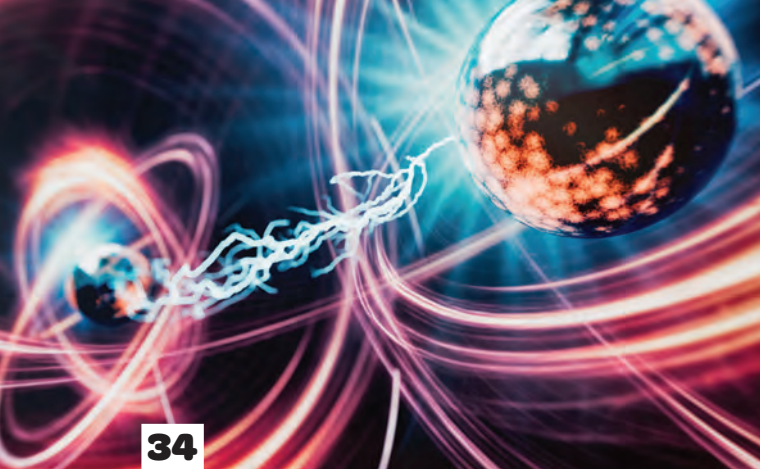


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salvo n. (săl'vō)

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

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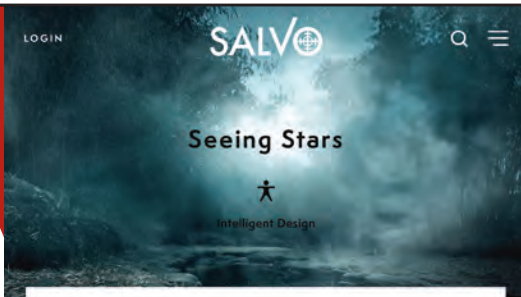
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Seeing Stars

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

When I first arrived in Pasadena for postdoctoral research at Caltech, the haze from Los Angeles smog was so thick that it was several weeks before I realized that a range of 5,000-10,000-foot-high mountains lay just three miles to the north. Now, thanks to air pollution abatement, I see those mountains clearly every day, and I even see a few hundred stars at



Blinded by "Science"

In Their Quest for a Techno-Future, Transhumanists Ignore the Wonders of the World Today

by Terrell Clemmons

In 2016, Scott Cohen co-founded CyborgNest "to contribute to the building of a positive path in the inevitable continuous merge with technology." Soon thereafter, he had the company's first product, NorthSense, surgically attached to his chest. Once calibrated, the device vibrates when he faces north.

Cohen sees the move as a step toward improving humanity by merging humans with machines. "It is hard to put into words only a few hours after attaching the NorthSense but the feeling I am left with is profound," he said at a launch event. "People assume cyborgs are less human but I wanted to be more human, to augment the senses I already had. And just as migrating birds and whales and sharks are attuned to magnetic north, I thought I'd start with acquiring that new sense for myself." His wife Susanna Cappellaro chronicles the experiment in her documentary, *My Husband, the Cyborg*.

Brittanica.com defines transhumanism as the "philosophical and scientific movement that advocates the use of current and emerging technologies ... to augment human capabilities and improve the human condition." For many, it serves as a religion. TranshumanistChurch.org

maintains a directory of transhumanist religious organizations. From a worldview perspective, it presupposes that the material world is all that exists. It sees human limitations as impediments to evolution and holds that "humans with augmented capabilities will evolve into an enhanced species that transcends humanity—the 'posthuman.'"

Transhumanist Blind Spots

Ironically, as Scott becomes more fixated on being attuned to his spatial environment, he becomes less attuned to his wife. She wants hugs from time to time, but he flinches because of pain at the site as his body rejects the titanium rods anchoring the device. She wants to discuss things other than his new directional sense—her feelings, for example, or how changes in him have affected their relationship. And what about the meaning of life? "There is no meaning of life," he cuts her off,

clearly oblivious to the way his quest has become a life mission. If relationships are part of what it means to be human, we might ask whether Scott's humanity is being diminished, rather than enhanced.

Another irony, given that transhumanism is all about science as the path to a techno-enhanced future, is that it ignores scientifically established design features embedded in the world we *currently inhabit*—including certain features of the very bodies it seeks to enhance.

In this issue, we bring you two articles that explore the realm of the very small. In "Fantastic Voyage" (p. 42), Jonathan Witt invites us to accompany three (fictional) lottery winners on a space flight to a distant planet. And Graham Silcock narrates a hypothetical construction of the atom (p. 34), including its constituent parts—all of which exhibit extremely intricate and improbable features from the very origin of their existence. Truly, we already live in an extraordinarily "hi-tech" world.

The Transhumanist Temptation

Yet, as Denyse O'Leary points out (p. 46), transhumanism is here, and for those ungrounded in a world beyond the material, the appeal is strong. Rather than invite Scott to rejoin her in the world they used to enjoy together, Susanna opted to get an enhancement of her own, a small magnet inserted in her ring finger, in hope that it would help her relate to her husband. The magnet worked (she could pick up a paper clip with one finger), but it didn't bring the marital connection she'd hoped for.

False religions make promises, but they never deliver. For the sake of preserving our collective humanity, we must be prepared to give good answers to the questions driving the transhumanist temptation. Read on and enjoy. ☺



INCOMING



Correction

I believe there's an error in the Siewerts' article (*Salvo* 73, Basic Training). It's my understanding that heliocentric views were not widely accepted until Kepler published the Rudolphine Tables in 1627. This is 84 years after Copernicus's death in 1543. The last paragraph of the article appears to refer to this, but says it was within eight (8) years after his death. I think it should be "over eighty years."

The tables Copernicus published as later volumes of *Revolutions* were not more accurate than the geocentric-based tables published by Ptolemy 1400 years earlier; it was Kepler's precise predictions that justified the heliocentric model.

—John Bloom, Professor of Physics, Biola University



Salvo welcomes letters in response to articles and blog posts or raising matters of interest to readers. Letters may be edited for space; please keep them under 200 words.

letters@salvomag.com

Perfect Springboards

We have a small young adult group that I started last month. Most of the members are in their late teens to early twenties. One is 14 years old, but we call him a young adult and include him, which pleases him greatly. Some are members of the parish; several are catechumens. *Salvo* articles are a perfect springboard for initiating discussions related to topical issues of the times. The short format of each article is perfect to set the stage for discussion. I think the graphic design is appealing to this age group as well.

I usually assign two or three articles for study before each session and find that this is more than enough material for several hours of discussion.



The teen/young adult population has been steeped in post-Christian relativism and nihilism and is very much at risk for being pulled away from the Church. We, the Church, need to really try to understand their philosophical and theological needs and address the many challenges that face them, providing them with the theological tools necessary to survive in a challenging environment.

I will say that we felt a bit overwhelmed with an entire issue on evolution and its associated worldview (*Salvo* 73, "Monkey Wrenched"). It was just too much of the same thing. This was a consensus view of the group. The previous issue was much more varied in content, and this played well with the group.

—Dr. Nektarios (Kent) Berquist

when astronomical tables were published and accepted by many of the scientists working in the field." We missed correcting this during our review of the proof copy. It should have been "... was mostly accepted within 84 years of his death when the Rudolphine astronomical tables were published..."

While Kepler (and others) made contributions to our understanding of celestial mechanics, most sources now refer to it as the Copernican model. There are many other historical details that could have been included, but some hard choices had to be made to meet the page limit requirement. The main point is that sometimes paradigm shifts occur in commonly accepted worldviews.

—Elizabeth Siewert



The Sunk Cost Fallacy

Progress Means Taking the Right Road, Whether It's Less Traveled or Not

by Keith Hess

On a date with my wife the other day, I ordered fried chicken at a local restaurant. I was in shock when the server brought my order. There before me was half of a fried chicken. I believe the description on the menu said this, but I don't think I realized just how much food that was. I decided to eat the entire plate of food, anyway. I figure if I'm paying for it, I'm eating it. Three-fourths of the way through, I regretted my decision. But I carried on. Big mistake. After the meal my wife wanted to go for a walk—in the heat. That was not fun.

A Sunk Cost Is a Lost Cost

When someone finishes a course of action because he started it, even if he knows finishing is a mistake, he commits the *sunk cost fallacy*. Rationally, the cost of the action that's unrecoverable should not factor in when deciding whether to finish the course.

Consider another example. John is an accountant for a big firm. When he started out, he enjoyed the job. But now he realizes that it's not for him. Rather, he wants to teach elementary school. What's keeping him from pursuing a career in education and

eventually quitting his job as an accountant? He thinks it would be a shame to change course after he's put so much time and energy into accounting. John is unwilling to make a change because of an investment he cannot get back.

Counting the True Cost

The sunk cost fallacy can occur in any aspect of our decision-making, even at the level of worldview change. A person who lives most of his life according to a certain worldview—say, atheism or Buddhism—who then becomes convinced the worldview is false

might feel reluctant to change because of how much of himself he's given to it. Even though I believe Christianity is true, this could happen to someone who identifies as a Christian but comes to believe Christianity is false.

I recognize that there are other factors that complicate worldview change and that count as genuine costs. For example, there is the pain of admitting you were wrong, the potential loss of relationships, and the perception of wasted years. And becoming a Christian comes with its own costs, such as giving up everything to follow Christ. Even still, some high-profile people have recently decided Christianity is worth it. In his book and podcast of the same name, *The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God*, Justin Brierley catalogues Christians who took this step. He is convinced that there is a turn towards Christianity among elites.

The Better Question

Such a change involves risk. But the important question is not, "What have I already lost?" but rather, "Where do I want to go?" C. S. Lewis writes:

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.

If one is convinced that the change is right and good, being unwilling to take the step because of irrecoverable costs is irrational. ☉

Family Still Wins

According to a 2025 Gallup survey, family still tops Americans' values. More than 2,000 adults were given a list of 23 values and asked to select all that were important to them. Family and freedom tied for first place, along with trustworthiness and respect, all of which were selected by 82 percent of respondents. The survey then asked them to identify their top three. Family ranked highest across every demographic subgroup—political affiliation

educational level, age, gender, marital status, and religious service attendance level, with one minor exception—those with a postgraduate degree ranked it second behind integrity. Even Nike gave a recent nod to family as a perennial winner. After PGA champion Scottie Scheffler told a reporter, "I'd much rather be a great father than ... a great golfer," Nike dropped an ad showing a picture of Scheffler with his infant son captioned, "You've already won." •



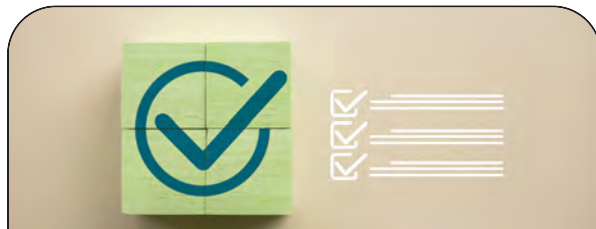
Sources: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/691964/family-top-value-americans.aspx>; <https://x.com/Nike/status/1946990379942727905>

Regnerus Vindicated

In 2012, Mark Regnerus published the "now-infamous" New Family Structures Study, which "found

that the children of... [LGBT] parents, compared to those raised in 'intact biological families' (IBFs), were worse off in many sociodevelopmental ways"—an unfavorable outcome he characterized as the "LGBT effect." Predictably, it was ruthlessly denounced, and Regnerus posted his entire dataset and invited critics to examine

it and overturn the findings. Cornell sociologists Cristobal Young and Erin Cumberworth recently examined Regnerus's findings, not to refute them, but as part of a larger statistical critique project and found that Regnerus's conclusions withstood all his critics. "Our surprise was discovering that in these data a negative effect is nonetheless still robust and that there are essentially no opposite-signed results [showing any benefit from having an LGBT parent]." •



Source: <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2025/07/98359/>

The Science Dilemma

Youth ministers Allan CP and Jeff Singer have teamed up to provide intelligent design-based resources for middle and high school students. The first series to drop, "Origin of Life," includes four 20-minute videos, a student workbook and leader guide, experience kit, coloring book for younger kids, and screen-based games to use with large groups or classes. The materials are designed to supplement standard science curricula by teaching about intelligent design in

an engaging way, incorporating entertaining man on the street-style interviews, animations, illustrations, and commentary from Discovery Institute scientists.



Early user feedback ranges from "engaging videos and fun crafts made it easy to talk through the differences between biblical creation and evolution, and why it matters" (Sam, a homeschool mom) to "This series of crazy-fun encounters with top scientists is hard to believe Rarely do you learn so much, so fast, so unforgettably" (Dr. Tom, a professor in Georgia) to "I thought it was going to be boring, but it was actually really cool. The videos made me think about things I never really thought about before" (Jaxon, a seventh-grade student in Florida). •

Source: <https://www.thesciencedilemma.com/>

Leaving Pride Behind

According to the 2010 British National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, 2.8 percent of the U.K. population has had same-sex partners in the past and continues to do so and to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.



The percentage that has had same-sex partners in the past but who do so no longer and subsequently describe themselves as heterosexual is higher, at 3.5 percent. In short, ex-gays outnumber gays in the U.K. In the U.S., the difference is more pronounced, with 5.9 percent ex-gay compared to 2.3 percent gay as of 2017. When Jennifer Roback Morse of the Ruth Institute saw these numbers, she set out to find out who these ex-gays are and what they're about. She discovered there were whole groups of them—an evangelical organization in California, an interfaith ministry in the Midwest, and

groups in the U.K., Australia, and Asia, as well as many individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds and stories.

In June 2025, she launched a video series featuring interviews with individuals for whom “leaving pride behind” is part of their story. “It’s not politically correct to talk about ex-LGBT people,” she said. “To the gay lobby, they don’t exist, or they’re just lying to themselves or were never really gay in the first place. But I have met many people who have journeyed away from an LGBT identity and are living happy, fulfilling lives with opposite-sex partners.” In a culture glutted with Pride, “ex-gay, fulfilled, and happy” is an unreported story worth telling. •

Sources: <https://39617564.hs-sites.com/en/fighting-to-leave-pride-behind>; <https://www.dailysignal.com/2024/05/28/new-day-visibility-counters-lgbtq-narrative-start-pride-month/>

Communism Studies: The Right Way

Texas students will soon begin learning long-overlooked facts about Communism. SB 24 2025 aims to provide students in grades 4–12 with “an age-appropriate understanding of communist regimes and ideologies.” Events covered include Soviet starvation of Ukrainian dissidents, Stalin’s purges, Mao’s Chinese revolution and Red Guard, Cambodia’s killing fields, and Communist takeovers and wars in Cuba and Latin America. Lessons will include testimonies of survivors of Communism and cover the

related matters of mass murder, land seizures, show trials, concentration camps, forced labor, common tactics by which Communism advances (public shaming, struggle sessions, censorship, forced conformity), and



the economic declines that inevitably follow wherever it is allowed to take hold.

Communism studies will also compare and contrast the mutually exclusive approaches to governance: totalitarian statism vs. America’s founding principles, collectivism vs. individual rights, and identity-group-based propaganda vs. individual responsibility. Eric Patterson, CEO of Victims of Communism, described it as a “turning point for education in Texas.” Future generations will “understand that while Communism promises ‘peace, land, and bread,’ it only brings oppression, fear, and death.” •

Source: <https://caldronpool.com/victims-of-communism-curriculum-mandated-in-texas-schools/>

Free Speech for Life

40 Days for Life, a Texas-based nonprofit that has been a tireless, peaceful advocate for the unborn (and their mothers) since 2004, will provide at no charge a speaker for any

pro-life event—rally, conference, march—anywhere in the world. Available speakers include former abortionist Dr. Haywood Robinson, former Planned Parenthood manager Ramona Trevino, attorney Matt Britton, and experienced 40 Days for Life campaign directors. The organization does suggest a donation to

help cover travel costs, and the offer excludes fundraising events, which are handled separately. •



Source: <https://www.40daysforlife.com/speakers>

Hospital Violence

Healthcare-related violence has been on the rise since the onset of the pandemic. Earlier this year, a man whose wife was terminally ill entered a Pennsylvania hospital and shot a doctor, a nurse, a custodian, and three police officers before he was killed by return fire. Factors suggested as motivations for assaults include unrealistic expectations, dissatisfaction with services, problems related to understaffing, and frustrations regarding insurance.

Merrill Matthews of the Institute for Policy Innovation says the increase in medical violence tracks with previous times of economic and societal stress. "It's likely that hospital shootings are taking the place of school shootings, since

schools have increasingly stepped-up security.... Hospitals became the next soft target." Chad Savage, MD, a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, adds that resentments can stem from the very structure of the system itself, as the doctor-patient relationship has been weakened by bureaucracy in the shift to a third-party payment model. "In the past, doctors worked directly for their patients. That model rewarded physicians who delivered the kind of care that patients valued." •



Source: <https://heartland.org/publications/violent-attacks-in-hospitals-clinics-on-rise/>

Here a Queer, There a Queer

As the normal public tires of Pride, ideologues wax ever more weird in reimagining a world according to queer-ness. Christopher Rufo reports that a Pride event at the Seattle Aquarium—temporarily renamed the "Aqueerium"—included a presentation on "queer ecology" titled "The Ocean is Queer." Jonathon Van

Maren meanwhile notes that theorists are divin-
ing LGBT orientations in historical figures ranging from Anne Frank to bisexual Saxons to gay Vikings to Pompeians doomed by Mt. Vesuvius. "Consider, for a moment, how obsessed with sexuality one must be to look at two people clutching each other in the moment of mutual death as a volcano wipes out their world and thinking: *Hmmmm. Bet*

they were gay!" writes Van Maren. Consider, indeed—and hide your children. •



Sources: <https://christopherrufo.com/p/the-ocean-is-queer/>; <https://thebridgehead.ca/2025/07/04/the-queering-of-history-from-anne-frank-to-pompeii/>

In the Water

With the abortion pill now accounting for two-thirds of all abortions, and



Planned Parenthood officially telling women to "sit on the toilet" after taking it, questions are being raised about contamination of the water supply. "The EPA admitted last September that up to 10% of contaminants may survive two stages of wastewater treatment," reported *The Washington Stand* in June 2025. "What happens when it gets recycled back into our drinking water? Does

that affect future fertility? Can that cause miscarriages?" These are good questions. An inquiring mind might also ask, "Where are the keepers of the Clean Water Act?" Wastewater treatment facilities have become "de facto medical waste facilities," comments John Stemberger, president of Liberty Counsel Action.

Indeed. *The Washington Stand* also reports that "sanitation officials have found fully formed fetuses inside wastewater facilities in South Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Mississippi." •

Source: <https://washingtonstand.com/news/abortion-pill-may-impact-us-fertility-through-drinking-water-25-congressmen-warn>

Mostly Peaceful Sacrific

When archaeologists found an altar in Guatemala that had been used to practice child sacrifice, *CBS News* quoted Mexican archaeologist Maria Belén Méndez, who was not involved in the discovery, as saying, “It was a practice; it’s not that they were violent, it was their way of

connecting with the celestial bodies.” Thankfully, the morally bankrupt comment was met with sound, if impolite, criticism. “Well, Maria Belen Mendez may not think murdering children for a religious ritual is violent, but I do because I’m not a <bleep>ing psycho. ‘Historical context’ can only stretch so far,” said one X user who calls himself “Salty.” •



Sources: <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/saraharnold/2025/04/14/cbs-news-take-on-child-sacrifice-alta-found-in-guatemala-n2655501>; <https://x.com/TwoRulesOfWar/status/1911772880762716163>

Voice Heists

The latest technique in cyber-crime involves voice cloning (or vishing, for “voice phishing”). Targets may receive an AI-generated call or voicemail, usually involving some kind of urgent situation. It may claim to be your bank, utility company, police, or a panicked relative. Calls often come during a holiday or

early in the morning, when people’s guards are down. “The hallmarks are a trusted name on caller ID, an emotional or financial threat, and a demand for immediate action—usually sharing credentials, reading back a code, or wiring money.”

As recently as 2020, voice-cloning software needed around 20 minutes of audio to mimic a voice. Now, a few seconds—a TikTok clip or wrong-number call—may be

enough. Scammers can “scoop up snippets posted online, feed them into a free cloning engine, and start dialing.” Clues to listen for include phrasing that sounds too perfect and a lack of spontaneity. Cybersecurity experts recommend hanging up and calling back in cases involving a business and having preplanned code words or approved phrases to use for verifying purported family members. •

Source: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/article/the-terrifying-way-scammers-clone-your-voice-to-defraud-your-family-5849310>

Safe & Effective?

Danco Laboratories markets mifepristone (brand name Mifeprex) as a “safe and effective option for ending early pregnancy [that] has been used by more than 5 million patients in the U.S.” The drug gained FDA approval in 2000,

and the current label identifies its rate of adverse reactions as “less than 0.5 percent.” Last April, the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC) published the results of a massive study which, in the words of EPPC president Ryan T. Anderson, “is the statistical equivalent of a category 5 hurricane hitting the prevailing narrative.”

EPPC analysts examined six years of insurance claims data from an all-payer insurance claims database. The claims represented 865,727 mifepristone prescriptions dispensed to 692,873 women from 2017–2023. According to insurance data, “10.93 percent of

women experience sepsis, infection, hemorrhaging, or another serious or life-threatening adverse event” following a mifepristone abortion. Worse, the authors note that since 2000, the FDA has twice—under Presidents Obama and Biden—lifted safeguards surrounding its use to the extent that all six safety regulations instituted in 2000 are no longer in effect. Worse still, since the Obama administration lifted the requirement that adverse events be reported, we can be fairly well sure the true rate is even higher.

Is mifepristone effective? Yes. Safe? Not on your life—or not on hers. This is a damning indictment on at least one (and probably more) of our healthcare regulatory agencies. •



Sources: <https://www.earlyoptionpill.com/>; <https://eppc.org/news/largest-ever-study-of-abortion-pill-reveals-shocking-number-of-adverse-events/>

Shilling for "Science"

Is Trust in State Science a Modern Creed for Christians?

by Emily Morales

Science is Good is a new initiative launched by the nonprofit BioLogos. BioLogos was founded in 2007 by Francis Collins, a medical doctor, former head of the Human Genome Project and longtime director until 2021 of the National Institutes of Health. Collins founded BioLogos following the success of his bestselling book, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (2006), in which he articulated his *theistic evolutionary* harmonization of science and Christian faith and proposed the term BioLogos as a name for it.

In "An Open Letter to People of Faith about Science," released in May 2025, BioLogos's newest campaign appeals to Christians everywhere to renew their trust in "science" and to affirm that "science is good":

This is our considered response to a cultural moment

marked by distrust of institutions, suspicion of expertise, and a sharp decline in public investment in scientific research. Federal cuts to life-saving programs and the vilification of scientists are not just political developments, but symptoms of a deeper crisis. As Christians, we cannot

be silent about this.

At BioLogos, we affirm that science is a God-given tool for understanding and stewarding God's world, and we believe that Christians should be among its strongest advocates. To help frame this call, we turn to Matthew 25. We do not take these parables as direct commentary on modern science, but they offer enduring insight about living faithfully in the world. In this spirit, we lift up and apply the Kingdom virtues found in Jesus' parables: wisdom, stewardship, and mercy. When we stand for science through them, we stand for the Kingdom of God.

Reason for Surveillance

Science is Good casts support of science as a Christian virtue, foregrounding science as a God-given tool for practicing wisdom, stewardship, and mercy. Pointing to the parable of the ten virgins, for example, where Jesus affirmed the five who were prepared as *wise*, the open letter comments, "It is wise to support [science], just as it is foolish to dismiss it. Wise support includes funding vaccine research [and] listening to climate experts."

In similar hermeneutical sleights of hand, the letter reinterprets other parables' spiritual themes as support for resisting perceived "anti-science" sentiment and advocating for federal funding of research—because "Faith compels us to love our neighbor [and] science gives us practical and effective ways to do so at scale." If that isn't persuasive enough, citing the parable of the sheep and the goats, the letter waxes coercive, adding, "Jesus suggests that the nations and their people will be judged based on how they treat the hungry, the sick, the stranger, and the prisoner."

Though Science is Good presents itself as a bridge between faith and science, the initiative

implies that Christians who express skepticism toward scientific claims are rejecting science itself, yet this is a false framing. For the most part, neither the Christians for whom this messaging is intended nor BioLogos's most ardent critics are opposed to science or the scientific method. They are opposed to scientism and the ideological misuse of science as an unquestionable authority.

By portraying skeptics as irrational or anti-science, Science is Good sets up a strawman argument, ignoring the real concerns many Christians and others have raised in recent years, especially those concerning abuses of "consensus" science as authoritative. These concerns include the "expert consensus" on sexually transitioning minors promoted by ostensibly scientific organizations like the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH); the ethical and safety concerns surrounding novel gene technologies developed and distributed at breakneck speed; and questions about the certainty or political use of claims related to climate change. Rather than engaging these issues with discernment, Science is Good calls for uncritical support of prevailing narratives.

In doing so, it aligns itself more with scientific groupthink than with scientific inquiry.

The Future Campaign

In the months ahead, BioLogos plans to expand its reach by partnering with other organizations and rolling out media and educational materials to promote the idea that *its version* of science is good. With strong financial backing and institutional support, we can expect this messaging to make its way into churches and Christian communities—presenting acceptance of mainstream scientific consensus as a mark of Christian maturity and virtue using such exhortations as, "Let us affirm science not out of political loyalty, but because it serves life, health, and justice."

Setting aside questions of "political loyalty," this appeal for

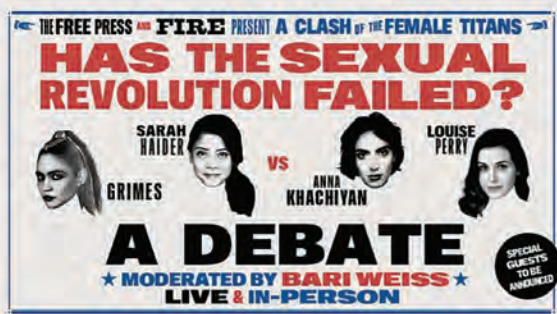
By portraying skeptics as irrational or anti-science, Science is Good sets up a strawman argument, ignoring the real concerns many Christians and others have raised in recent years, especially those concerning abuses of "consensus" science as authoritative. These concerns include the "expert consensus" on sexually transitioning minors.

Christians to affirm science is not religiously neutral. Historically, the kind of "consensus" BioLogos has endorsed has often undermined biblical authority, especially by reinterpreting the Genesis account through the framework of evolutionary biology. This shift has subtly but significantly undermined foundational Christian doctrines. Even apart from religious concerns, the campaign is not simply advocating for science. It is advocating for a specific ideological stance, one that dismisses sincere and well-founded concerns by criticizing them as expressions of ignorance or fear.

No one should accept this narrative uncritically. Science is not a God-given tool. It is man's ability to reason and think critically that is a gift from God. Christians especially should examine such claims with wisdom, humility, and biblical discernment. ☉



AL
ED?



UNDERCOVER

Sex Realism

Meet the Counterrevolutionary Feminists Challenging Old-School Women's Lib

by Joshua Pauling

Picture this: four women on a stage debating the merits of the Pill, porn, and the sexual revolution—one pop culture icon who goes by the name Grimes, one conservative journalist with a British accent (Louise Perry), and two podcast hosts with massive followings (Sarah Haider and Anna Khachiyan).¹ And they were all hosted by a no-nonsense lesbian, Bari Weiss, the former *New York Times* writer who went out on her own and started a rising, fair-minded news source called *The Free Press*. The title of the debate was, “Has the Sexual Revolution Failed?”

Can you believe this event actually happened? And not only that it happened, but that it was sold out, with thousands of young men and women of all lifestyles and convictions present and hundreds of thousands more having since watched it on YouTube? Admittedly, the format of the debate itself left something to be desired and by its very nature only skimmed the surface of the issues. But the very fact that this topic was openly broached in a respectful way between women with opposing views tells us something significant about shifts taking place in our culture.

This is just one example among countless others that reveals how

many of the sacred cows of progressivism are being challenged. Men and women from a variety of perspectives are starting to question the sexual revolution, and there is a growing undercurrent of resistance and counterrevolutionaries who are seeking a better way forward. Some are Christian; some are anything but. But they all are asking important questions as a new generation reevaluates the narratives they’ve been told and the lifestyles they’ve been sold.

A Wide Array of Voices Asking Big Questions

There has been a flurry of activity in the past few years on these topics, adding much to the larger

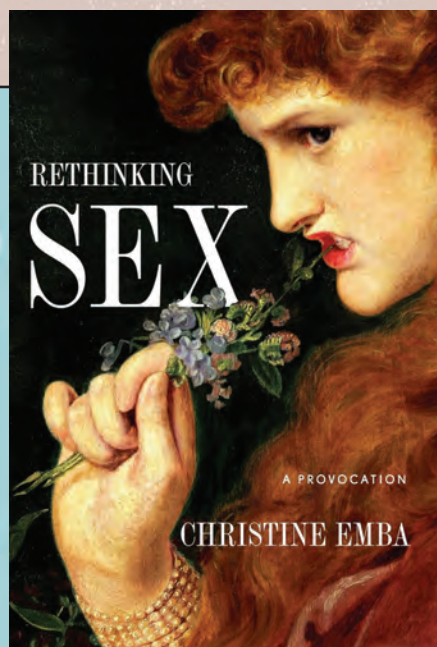
and longer conversation about the nature of men and women and their relationship to one another and to the wider world. Below are some highlights.

In March 2022, Christine Emba’s book *Rethinking Sex: A Provocation* was released. It ties together personal anecdotes, sociology, psychology, interviews with college students, and more to reveal the limits of the ethic of consent surrounding sex. Emba proposes that if consent is the only moral lodestar in our sexual ethics, we will be left feeling empty and isolated. There must be something more than simply consenting to putting this or that body part here or there. Sex is about much more than that.

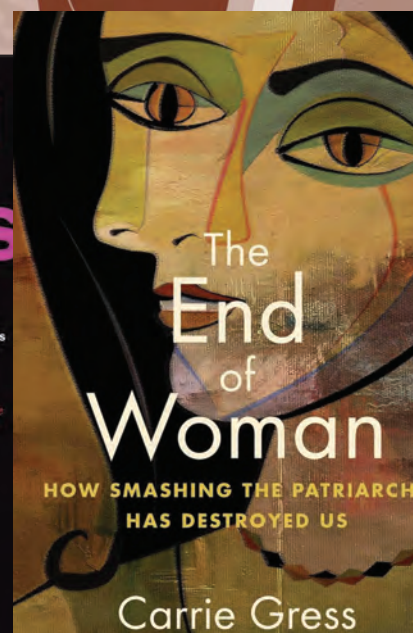
Next, in July 2022, came Abigail Favale’s *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory*, which is probably the most explicitly Christian and theological book on this short list. Favale attempts to ground the discussion in something much larger than contemporary society or current gender debates by going back to the beginning, to the very creation of man and woman. In doing so, she paints a compelling and beautiful picture of the centrality of the body to what it means to be male or female and how the differences between the sexes are not biological accidents but are deeply embedded in our experiences of reality. She also shows how such sexual difference is an icon of the relationship between God and man and Christ and his bride, the Church.

Just a month later, in August 2022, British author Louise Perry’s *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution* hit the shelves. Perry argues that the promises of the Sexual Revolution failed for women. If anything, it gave men more access to female bodies and sex without responsibility—and we’re all less happy because of it. She puts forward a more meaningful and empowering framework for a successful woman: that her life





FEMINISM AGAINST PROGRESS



would somehow follow the three-stage pattern of maiden, mother, matriarch.

In April 2023, another Brit added to the conversation. Mary Harrington released *Feminism Against Progress*, in which she coins some memorable terms like “meat-lego Gnosticism” (to refer to our culture’s view of the human body as being raw material for fashioning in accord with one’s personal desires) and “cyborg feminism” (to refer to modern feminism’s ignoring of the female body, which nearly requires women to self-sterilize technologically to be on “equal” terms with men in the workplace). Harrington especially puts her finger on how technological changes are making it easier to objectify women and view reproduction as a controllable laboratory process with parents as commercial consumers and babies as the products. One of the many things she calls for in response is a “re-wilding” of sex, by which she means that we reconnect the pleasures of sex with its inherent potency and life-creating possibilities and responsibilities (i.e., we should think twice about the Pill and other reproductive and contraceptive technologies).

In September 2024, *The End of Woman: How Smashing the*

Patriarchy Has Destroyed Us, by Carrie Gress (author of *Theology of Home*), was released. Gress advances the argument that the past few generations of radical feminism have continued to uphold the male as the ideal human mold into which women should fit, which ironically doesn’t end up working for anyone—male or female. And she offers a call to reclaim true womanhood and motherhood, with all its uniqueness and vulnerability, and with all its interdependent connections with men.

There is also a growing number of thinkers who are developing the idea of sex-realist feminism as a way forward. Such an approach foregrounds sexual differentiation and the uniqueness of male and female bodies in the human experience. The body is real and should not be overlooked in any theory. The website FairerDisputations.org is a good place to get a sense of the major thinkers and how their perspectives apply to contemporary issues and everyday life.

Reckoning with the Wonders of the Body

While there are many differences in the types of questions and answers offered in these sources, one thread that consistently emerges

is how the female body must not be ignored. Feminism’s prior waves attempted to eliminate the uniqueness of the female body, shoehorning women into the male template (think abortion, hormonal birth control, removing legal protections for women, treating men and women as interchangeable units, etc.).

But no more. We’ve let the effects pile high enough already. We must reckon with the body. And this reckoning with the givenness, potency, and unending mystery of both the male and female body has implications beyond just questions of feminism and the Sexual Revolution. It has impacts on what we think of the whole spectrum of LGBT issues, how we approach digital technologies like AI and transhumanism, marriage and family, the goodness of embodied work, and much more. And Christianity has the resources and traditions to offer the way forward. Many folks are beginning to wake up to the reality that what Christianity has been saying—and living (albeit with many failures)—all along is actually *true*. ☺

Note

1. Bari Weiss, “First Free Press Live Event: A Clash of the Female Titans,” *The Free Press* (Jul. 31, 2023). The full debate can be found on YouTube.

Verbal Guile

Beware the Deceptive Euphemisms that Hide Insidious Evils

by Thomas Williams

Benjamin Franklin defined a diplomat as someone who can tell you to go to hell in such a way that you look forward to the trip. While I would never recommend Mr. Franklin's suggested destination to anyone, diplomatically or otherwise, I get his point. With carefully chosen words and phrases, resistant minds can be opened to receive hard-to-sell concepts. Nathaniel Hawthorne agreed, saying, "How potent for good and evil [words] become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them."

Masking Evil

The adversaries of truth, who abound in our culture today, have mastered this subtle art of combining easy-to-swallow words to sweeten poisonous ideologies. They have become expert at releasing into our midst hideous evils masked in euphemisms—high-sounding phrases that make horrific acts seem palatable or even desirable. For example, on first hearing the phrase "death with dignity," one might think it promotes a fine thing—efforts to assure that a dying person is treated with the utmost care and

sensitivity. A well-meaning but uninitiated bystander would never suspect this innocent-sounding phrase to be a cover for the immoral and possibly illegal act of helping a person commit suicide.

The idea of "marriage equality" certainly sounds laudable, but it doesn't mean what you might think—that both partners in a marriage should be recognized as equals. It means redefining marriage so that men may marry men and women may marry women. "Gender-affirmation therapy," also called "gender-affirming care," hides the outrageous

practice of injecting hormones into normal—often prepubescent—bodies to alter sexual characteristics and then cutting away healthy sex organs to reshape them into grotesque parodies of the opposite sex. How many businessmen have been corrupted by accepting "soft commissions" instead of bribes? How many consciences have been quieted by watching pornography under the label "mature entertainment"?

A recent *Washington Post* article discussed a newer euphemism: "sex positivity." On hearing the term, one might think it's a fine thing that someone is promoting a more positive attitude toward sexuality than the one we inherited from overly prudish ancestors. But the term means nothing like that. It embodies the writer's claim that "all forms of sexual expression between consenting adults are permissible and should be destigmatized." It's a cover for no-holds-barred sexual anarchy.

Perhaps the most insidious euphemism of all is "pro-choice." On the surface, the term appears not only innocent but outright positive. What could be wrong with protecting the right of us humans to exercise our God-given free will? We see this reasonable-sounding term bandied about so much that it's all too easy to gloss over it without thinking about the appalling evil of the choice it promotes—the diabolical "freedom" to kill, at will, the most innocent and defenseless of human beings.

Grave Deceptions

Euphemisms have their place. They can spare feelings in the face of harsh or unpleasant facts. To be "between jobs" may preserve one's dignity a bit better than being "unemployed." To say, "she is unique" is kinder than saying, "she is weird." "He's frugal" is more diplomatic than "he's cheap." Even the Apostle Paul used "sleep" as a euphemism for death.

But the problem with many

euphemisms we encounter today is that their purpose is not to cushion our sensibilities but to deceive us. More to the point, they are designed to enable us to deceive ourselves by providing a verbal veneer of innocence to cover insidious or deadly practices.

It's not likely that anyone is fooled by the euphemisms covering these prevalent evils. Most of us have been sufficiently exposed to them to know what they really mean. The real danger is that these euphemisms can dull our sensitivity to the gravity of the terrible ideologies they cover. They give their proponents an illegitimate aura of respectability that tempts us to constrain our opposition to them. We must learn to counter rationally, firmly, and without hesitation when challenged with questions like, "How can you possibly oppose giving women the freedom to choose what happens to their own bodies?"

The Hard Rocks of Reality

We must be frank: killing a human either at the beginning or the end of life is a form of murder, even under the guise of "choice" or "death with dignity." Calling for "marriage equality" will not enable two bodies of the same sex to achieve the natural physical blending required to meet the true definition of marriage. Gender-affirmation therapy will not restore normal sexual function to a gender-dysphoric teen, but it may well permanently damage her healthy body.

The bottom-line truth we must keep before us is this: camouflaging evils with euphemisms does not alter the fact that endorsing evil means butting our heads against unalterable realities of creation. Euphemisms won't protect anyone's head or soul from the resulting damage. ☉

The adversaries of truth have mastered the subtle art of combining easy-to-swallow words to sweeten poisonous ideologies. They have become expert at releasing into our midst hideous evils masked in high-sounding phrases that make horrific acts seem palatable or even desirable.



DIFFICULT QUESTIONS THOUGHTFUL ANSWERS



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Purpose-Driven Dating

*For Marriage & Family,
Begin with the End in Mind*

by Nicole M. King

As I write, graduation season has just finished. Millions of 18-year-olds nationwide are preparing themselves for the rest of their adult lives and responding to people asking questions of, “What are you going to major in?” Or, “What job do you think you’d like?” Or even, “What part of the country do you hope to live in?”

Far fewer are those who ask, “And are you planning for a family one day?”

Asking that seems nosy somehow, or inappropriate, or embarrassing—akin to one’s mother-in-law hinting as to when she might expect a grandbaby. These are private matters, to be worked out in time. Leave the poor kid alone.

But ... might not a little forethought into marriage and family be a good thing?

Marriage-Mindedness in America

In a recent post for the Institute for Family Studies, Wendy Wang reports that of American adults ages 34 and younger, 93 percent are either married or open to marriage. Only seven percent are unmarried and want to stay that way.¹ Contrast those numbers to actual data regarding marriage: as of 2024, roughly 60 percent of American men and 70 percent of American women have ever been married.² The top reason American adults gave when asked why they were still single was “not money, jobs, or even readiness for commitment, but that ‘it is hard to find the right person to marry.’”³

And before you suggest Match.com or Tinder, slow down. Such apps aren’t doing the trick. *Deseret News* reports that for Gen Z, “dating app burnout” is a real thing, and these apps seem to be falling in popularity.⁴ More options don’t necessarily lead to greater likelihood of finding a match. Rather, they seem to encourage a consumerist approach to dating, increased feelings of rejection, and “choice paralysis”—the inability to make a decision because there are simply too many options.



I married at age 28, 12 years ago now, and I remember feeling almost panic-stricken before I met my husband. Multiple friends had married at the

(now) shockingly young age of 22, and I felt old and alone. Furthermore, for whatever cultural reason, I felt unable to voice my desire to marry. It was as if it were somehow inappropriate or pathetic for a woman to simply tell people, “Yes, I’d like to be married, sooner rather than later, and here is how I’m planning my life accordingly.”

Misguided Narratives

There is a lot wrong with the American narrative on marriage, and part of my hesitancy to simply embrace that desire, instead of feeling ashamed of it, can be traced to misguided thinking. To begin with, “soulmate” theory preaches that there is exactly one person “out there” for every other person. Your job, in dating, is to find that one person, and then things will go swimmingly.

There are a lot of things wrong with this theory, as Jason Carroll has pointed out. “Despite promising an easy path to lasting love, soulmate thinking ultimately makes the quest to ‘find the One’ a more elusive goal, not an easier one.” Too many things feel outside of one’s own control—both finding and then achieving relationship success with that person is something “fated,” rather than something that individuals have any agency over. Carroll writes,

At their core, soulmate beliefs provide a backwards depiction of the sequencing of healthy relationship development. They suggest that someone exists as your “one-and-only” before you have even met; therefore, relationship success is primarily about simply *finding*



that person. Soulmate thinking diverts attention away from the fundamental truth of loving and lasting marriage—that oneness is *made*, not found. Someone becomes “your One” because of your commitment, not before.⁵

And yet, Carroll writes, some 60 percent of Americans still believe in soulmate marriage.

The second thing wrong with our narrative on

Soulmate thinking diverts attention away from the fundamental truth of loving and lasting marriage—that oneness is *made*, not found.

marriage is that it has become a “capstone event”—marriage is something you do *after* you figure out who you are, gain an education, build a promising career, even buy a house. After all these things, suddenly, the soulmate should appear, when you are “ready.” Historically, of course, this is all backwards. Not that long ago, marriage in America was considered a “cornerstone event.” You married young, figured out who you were together, built your career(s) and family together, figured out the house thing together, and so on. You grew up together and learned the skills of planning, conflict resolution, relationship-building, mutual respect, etc., together. “Iron sharpens iron,” as Proverbs puts it.

Cornerstone vs. Capstone

We do young people a serious disservice by continuing these narratives. In an earlier issue of *Salvo*, Terrell Clemmons writes that she has “taken to injecting the marriage question” into her conversations with teenagers.⁶ And while it often takes them by surprise, they quickly warm up to the idea. They *want* to be married and have families. Many women, in fact, *want* to stay at home with their kids, when and if they have them. Aren’t there ways we can help them plan accordingly?

We can begin by simply asking a question, introducing the idea into young people’s minds. “Do you think you might get married someday?” If the answer is yes, how do they plan to meet a prospective mate? How might they prepare for the reality of marriage and parenthood? Is getting married young really that bad?

Our churches can help, too. In a recent Sunday morning service, our youth pastor prayed that those young people who desired to marry would find the right person. Even that simple prayer felt like a breath of fresh air—it is okay, even *good*, to acknowledge that desire and to encourage it. It is good for the church to help young people find a mate.

In her closing, Wendy Wang encourages young people to get out there, in real life:

Instead of delaying marriage, endlessly searching for that “perfect” person, and maximizing potential partners through dating apps, it is worth adopting a cornerstone marriage mindset, being cautious about the soulmate ideal, and giving real-life dating a chance.

At the next graduation party or family gathering you attend, you might provide some relief to a panic-stricken teenager by simply acknowledging that marriage and family are worthwhile goals. No one should be embarrassed about moving mountains to make them happen—or about simply planning for and actively seeking a spouse, rather than merely hoping one appears. ☺

Notes

1. Wendy Wang, “Why Americans Aren’t Getting Married and Having Kids—and How to Change That,” Institute for Family Studies (Jun. 18, 2025).
2. Lyman Stone, “1-In-3: A Record Share of Young Adults Will Never Marry,” Institute for Family Studies (Feb. 26, 2024).
3. Wang, “Why Americans Aren’t Getting Married.”
4. Natalie Issa, “Disillusioned With Dating Apps, Some Single People Are Turning to More Creative Dating Methods,” *Deseret News* (Sep. 4, 2024).
5. Jason S. Carroll, “Soulmate Marriage vs. ‘The Only-One’ Marriage: Knowing the Difference Matters,” Institute for Family Studies (Aug. 23, 2023).
6. Terrell Clemmons, “Choose Your Cornerstone: The Case for Early Marriage,” *Salvo* 33 (2015).

Out of Sodom

The Archaeology of Zoar & Lot's Cave

by Titus Kennedy

Sodom is one of the more famous cities from antiquity, but fewer people are aware of the nearby city called Zoar. Similarly, most people are familiar with Abraham, but his nephew Lot is less well known. While the location of Sodom and Gomorrah and the details of their fiery destruction continue to be researched and discussed, archaeological excavations have uncovered concrete and unambiguous discoveries related to the existence, location, and history of Zoar and the Cave of Lot, both of which appear in the Genesis narrative about Sodom and the cities of the plain.

Because Zoar was never completely lost to history, and because the cave to which Lot fled was memorialized in ancient times, archaeologists have been able to make astonishing discoveries about these two places. Not only have the projects revealed information about Zoar, and by extension the area of Sodom and Gomorrah, but the Cave of Lot has even been excavated.

Locating Zoar

Mention of Zoar goes far back into ancient times, where the city is connected with the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, and Abraham and Lot. According to Genesis, Zoar was also known as Bela, and it was listed as the smallest or least important of the five cities of the plain, which, in addition to Sodom and Gomorrah, included Admah and Zeboiim.¹ In the moments just prior to their destruction, Lot fled from Sodom to Zoar, which was the only city in the area that was spared.² Afraid to stay in Zoar, however, he subsequently walked up into

the mountains above the city and sought refuge in a cave.³

The Genesis narrative is the earliest confirmed reference to Zoar. The epigrapher for the Ebla expedition claims that Zoar, along with Sodom and Gomorrah, appears in tablets excavated in the Bronze Age ruins of Ebla, but the contents of those tablets have not yet been published.⁴ Regardless, Zoar was not destroyed, and it continued to be inhabited over the centuries. It was mentioned by Moses, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, and possibly also the author of the book of Kings.⁵ Isaiah



Entrance to Lot's Cave



Zoar on the Madaba map

and Jeremiah refer to Zoar in the context of Moab rather than Ammon, Israel, Judah, or Edom, indicating its placement around the southeastern side of the Dead Sea. Historical geographers in the 19th century had a rough idea of its location based on ancient written information, but its exact placement remained a mystery.⁶ More detailed infor-

Because Zoar was never completely lost to history, and because the cave to which Lot fled was memorialized in ancient times, archaeologists have been able to make astonishing discoveries about these two places.

mation from the Madaba Map, first made known to scholars in 1896, in addition to archaeological surveys and excavations, was necessary to locate the site.

According to a variety of sources from antiquity, Zoar persisted as a city through the times of the Nabateans, Romans, Byzantines, and into the early Islamic era. The most illustrative and geographically precise of these sources is the Madaba Map, which was created around AD 542 as part of a mosaic floor in the Church of Saint George, located in present-day Jordan. With its rediscovery in modern times came information key to locating Zoar, the Cave of Lot, and by extension the other cities of the plain. The map shows Zoar at the southeastern corner of the Dead Sea, confirming what many explorers had thought based on other ancient sources and old place names which gave useful but imprecise clues.

A chronicler from the fifth-sixth century had mentioned Zoar and its fort, and a sixth-century pilgrim who claimed to have visited Zoar noted that there were many hermits around. But neither gave detailed information about where this city was located.⁷ Slightly earlier, a fourth-century Roman source had also noted a Roman military encampment nearby.⁸ Subsequent archaeological excavations found this fort at the site of Umm at-Tawabin overlooking the area, and several Byzantine period tombstones from the area have been identified as belonging to military officers.⁹

Also around this time, a pilgrim named Egeria mentioned the bishopric of Zoar, further distinguishing the town as a center of Christianity with a bishop, and indeed a tombstone was found with a Greek inscription for Apsis the bishop from AD 369.¹⁰ Prior to this, Eusebius, who lived in the third-fourth century, had written about Zoar being located at the southeast side of the Dead Sea, as did Jerome just after AD 400.¹¹ Going back further still, Ptolemy, writing in the second century, described Zoar as belonging to the newly formed province of Arabia Petraea, indicating that the city must have been located on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.¹² The first second century Babatha Papyri also mention Zoar, but without giving any geographic details.¹³ One of the most useful ancient references comes from the first-century writings of Josephus, who recorded that the Dead Sea extended as far as Zoar of Arabia.¹⁴ This early source and its description indicate that Zoar was not located in Perea, but rather at the southern extremity of the Dead Sea.

With this compiled knowledge, archaeologists could begin to piece together a more precise location for Zoar, carry out surveys and excavations, and

► EXCAVATIONS by Titus Kennedy

begin uncovering the ancient city. One of the most significant explorations associated the ancient city with the area around the modern town of Safi, placing Byzantine period Zoar at the site of Khirbet Sheik 'Isa.¹⁵ Future research and excavations substantiated this hypothesis and expanded investigation into the Old Testament period Bronze Age town of Zoar.

However, before modern excavations of Zoar began in 1995, the related and nearby Cave of Lot was rediscovered and then excavated in 1988.

Lot's Cave

Located on the slope of the mountains just

northeast of Zoar, Lot's Cave had been visited by pilgrims in antiquity but abandoned and forgotten by the ninth century AD. Thanks to the Madaba Map, which marked its approximate location and showed its proximity to Zoar, the area was thoroughly explored, and an intriguing structure adjacent to the cave was found. When excavated, it was revealed to be an ancient Byzantine church, which had been constructed at the site to mark and commemorate the historic location. Three inscriptions referring to Lot were discovered in the ruins, thus solidifying the cave's association with Lot. When the cave itself was excavated, materials dating all the way back to the Early Bronze and Middle Bronze Ages were discovered, demonstrating that the cave had been in use prior to and into the time of Lot but then avoided or ignored until early Christians built a basilica there in honor of Lot.¹⁶ The location of this cave further established that the ancient town of Zoar should be in close proximity, in the area of Ghawr al-Safi

Excavations around the modern village of Sa began by exposing the Medieval period ruins of the site, at which time it was a center of the sugar industry. Underneath lay a flourishing city of the Byzantine period, complete with at least two impressive churches and a cemetery with hundreds of inscribed tombstones.¹⁷ With the Roman fort having been identified and excavated, the city recorded by numerous sources from the first to sixth centuries could at this point be definitively established as the ancient city of Zoar.

To date, architecture from Byzantine and Roman period Zoar has been excavated, and a few sherds from the time of Lot, Moses, and the prophets have also been found, as well as an adjacent Bronze Age cemetery. Recent surveys in the area indicate that

the ruins of the town to which Lot fled from Sodom may have been only footsteps away from the Byzantine city of Zoar.¹⁸ The remains of the city from the time of Abraham and Lot are still yet to be uncovered, but based on the survival of the city over the centuries and the evidence thus far discovered, Old Testament Zoar is



An annotated reproduction of the Madaba Map can be found on Wikimedia Commons

almost certainly there under the dirt.

Hopefully future archaeological investigation will reveal more about this extremely ancient place and solve some of the mysteries of Zoar and Lot once and for all. ☺

Notes

- Genesis 14:2–8.
- Genesis 19:20–25.
- Genesis 19:30.
- Complete translations of the discovered tablets from Ebla have not yet been published. Reports and discussion about the content of a few tablets have appeared in articles and books. Sodom (No. 6522; TM. 76. G. 524), Gomorrah (No. 1008; TM 75.G 1570 and No. 1671; TM 75.G 2233), Zoar (No. 1024; TM 75.G 1586). Cf. Pettinato, "Testi cuneiformi del 3. millennio in paleocananeo rinvenuti nella campagna di scavi (1974) a Tell Mardikh-Ebla." *Orientalia* 44 (1975); Millard, Alan. "Ebla and the Bible." *Bible Review* 8.2 (1992).
- Deuteronomy 34:3; Jeremiah 48:34; Isaiah 15:5; 2 Kings 8:21.
- Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, and in the Adjacent Regions* (1856).
- Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnica*.
- Notitia Dignitatum.
- Konstantinos Politis, *Ancient Landscapes of Zoara I* (2021); Alexandra Ariotti, "A survey of the Nabataean/Roman Site, Umm at-Tawabin, Ghor as-Safi, Jordan," *Palestinian Exploration Quarterly* 149:1 (2017).
- Egeria, *Itinerarium Egeriae*; Konstantinos Politis, *Ancient Landscapes of Zoara II* (2023).
- Eusebius of Caesarea, *Onomasticon*; Jerome, *Onomasticon*.
- Ptolemy, *Geography*.
- Babatha Papyri ca. AD 110–132 from the Cave of the Letters.
- Josephus, *Wars* 4.482; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.204, 14.18.
- William Albright, "The Archaeological Results of an Expedition to Moab and the Dead Sea," *BASOR* 14 (1924).
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Suicide by Default

Dr. Death's New Killing Device Is Even Worse than Its Predecessors

by Bryan Just

A “cyanide pill” has become a familiar trope in action and spy movies. Sometimes it’s an actual pill that must be swallowed; other movies make it an implant, usually embedded in a tooth, that must be crushed for the poison to be released. No matter the form, the purpose is the same: to trigger a quick death. In some stories the cyanide pill is provided for the hero to take as a last resort in the event of being captured. Other times it is taken by one of the bad guys to avoid being questioned. Some movies poke fun at the trope by having an incompetent baddie accidentally kill himself with it. Perhaps implanting a means by which you might accidentally kill yourself is not a good idea!

Autonomy by Kill Switch

One might think that this is something only found in the movies, or perhaps in the world of spies and special ops soldiers, but Dr. Philip Nitschke is working to make something like the cyanide pill widely available. Nitschke has developed numerous suicide devices, most famously the Sarco suicide pod. His current project is an implant, likely placed in the leg, that will contain a lethal dose of poison. Each day the implant will beep and/or vibrate and will need to be deactivated. If the person with the implant fails to deactivate it, the poison will be released.¹ The device is still in the planning and development phase—it has not yet been produced or used—but Nitschke says he is getting close to having a prototype ready for testing.²

Why would someone even consider implanting a device designed to kill him? Nitschke claims that this



Dr. Philip Nitschke

will help to solve the “dementia dilemma” related to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide (PAS). The dilemma lies in the fact that the law requires patient consent, but as dementia advances, there may come a point at which the patient cannot give meaningful consent. Nitschke explains:

When a person has dementia, they can nowadays quite legally in some places fill out a bit of paper 10 years ago, when they are of sound mind, saying “if I get like this, kill me.”

Now, 10 years later, a doctor can come along, read the bit of paper, and even though you don’t know which way is up or down, legally give you an injection and end your life. That makes a lot of people feel pretty uncomfortable, and certainly makes me feel uncomfortable.³

Nitschke’s discomfort has nothing to do with the fact that it is wrong to kill someone simply because their mental faculties have declined. Rather, he believes that suicide should not be medicalized at all

but should instead be a completely personal, autonomous decision.

The dementia dilemma was highlighted by a Dutch case from 2019. A woman who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease wrote a statement expressing her wish to be euthanized once her condition deteriorated, but at a time of her choosing. Her condition eventually declined to the point that she needed to enter a nursing home, where one of the doctors, Marinou Arends, asked her if she was ready to die. The woman repeatedly answered no, saying, "Not yet."

Despite receiving multiple refusals, Arends decided that the patient no longer understood what she was saying and proceeded to euthanize her anyway. Arends attempted to sedate her with a sleeping medication secretly added to her coffee, but the woman awoke and seemed to resist the lethal infusion; the woman's daughter and husband then held her down until the euthanasia was completed.⁴ Despite public outcry over the case, and despite the fact that the woman not only had not consented but seemed to actively resist being killed, Dutch courts acquitted Arends of any wrongdoing, ruling that she had acted in the interest of her patient and that "all requirements of the euthanasia legislation" had been fulfilled.⁵

The problem with cases like this, according to Nitschke, is that euthanasia and assisted suicide require a second party to help you end your life. His proposed "kill switch" removes this problem. Rather than placing the burden of killing a patient on the doctor, his device "puts the responsibility right back onto the person and allows them to get what they want, which is that they do not want to live on as some form of vegetable, with no one prepared to end their lives."⁶ As he sees it, if you hear a beeping/buzzing noise and can no longer remember that deactivating it is necessary to save your life, then your life is no longer worth living.

Practical Objections

Nitschke has long been on a mission to make suicide easy and painless, and his controversial suicide devices have earned him such monikers as, "Dr. Death," "the Elon Musk of assisted suicide," and "the Willy Wonka of death." No matter one's position on euthanasia and PAS, Nitschke's proposed death implant raises a host of concerns, even in places where these practices are already legal.

Some issues are merely practical. What happens if there is some kind of malfunction and the device goes off unintentionally? Who would be held liable for wrongful death? Other practical issues have to do

with how the device is deactivated. Since it is implanted, it likely will not have a direct off switch but will need some sort of app or remote control. What happens if the device stops receiving signals, or you lose your phone, or you're in an area where the two cannot communicate? Nitschke has proposed allowing the timer to go off for a day or even longer to prevent such accidents, but not every complication can be solved that quickly. Imagine the nightmare

To decide that certain illnesses and disabilities are so bad that they make life no longer worth living is to devalue the lives and experiences of those who currently live with these conditions.

scenario—needing to stop a device, which you yourself had willingly had implanted, from prematurely killing you, all the while hearing the constant beep in the background, knowing that if you fail to stop it the result will be your death.

Security is also a major issue. Anything that communicates wirelessly is subject to being hacked. What happens if a family member gets access and decides that it is time for someone in their care to die a little bit sooner? Ransomware attacks are already a problem; how much worse might one be when it is not your data but your life that is threatened? These scenarios may sound outlandish, but they are very real possibilities when someone is recommending implanting a poison-delivery system into the body.

Ethical Objections

Though Nitschke's proposed device is supposedly a way for people to bypass the medicalization of death and take their fate into their own hands, it is still open to many of the criticisms leveled at euthanasia and PAS. There is a reason disability advocacy groups oppose the legalization of these practices. To decide that certain illnesses and disabilities are so bad that they make life no longer worth living is to devalue the lives and experiences of those who currently live with these conditions. Many in the disability community already experience stigma from doctors and feel they have to defend their right to continue living.

Normalizing suicide as a means of escaping disability will only exacerbate these pressures.

Furthermore, it is well-documented that people without a disability are poor judges of the quality of life of the disabled. Studies have found that many who said they would rather die than live with certain conditions changed their mind when they themselves became disabled. People can change their minds. Nitschke does say that it should be possible to remove his device after it has been implanted, but this again raises the issue of competence. If the whole point of implanting a device is to ensure your prior wishes are fulfilled when you have lost decisional capacity, what happens if you are judged to be lacking in that capacity when you decide to have it removed? One thinks of the Dutch woman who requested euthanasia before her decline but then seemingly changed her mind, or at the very least never found her condition distressing enough that she actually wanted to end her life. Those suffering from dementia still possess worth and dignity, and we should neither normalize nor encourage suicide.

Finally, suicide contagion is a real phenomenon. News outlets are supposed to follow specific recommendations when reporting on suicides to avoid creating copycats. In areas where PAS has been legalized, the general rate of suicide has also increased. A society's attitude towards suicide matters, and when

Nitschke's device for enabling dementia patients to "control their own destiny" will very likely lead to an increase in suicide more generally.

people like Nitschke push to make it normalized many people see that as an invitation to end their own life. If produced and legalized, Nitschke's device for enabling dementia patients to "control their own destiny" will very likely lead to an increase in suicide more generally.

First Do No Harm

Nitschke is right about one thing—euthanasia and assisted suicide should not be medicalized. For the past 2,000 years the legacy of the Judeo-Christian Hippocratic tradition has been to heal, not to harm; participating in the killing of a patient is



Nitschke in 2008

incompatible with the practice of medicine. Where he goes wrong is concluding that death should therefore be a completely autonomous decision. We are not isolated, atomistic individuals, and our decisions affect those around us. Society cannot declare that certain people's lives are no longer worth living and not expect vulnerable people to apply that to themselves. Nitschke may claim to have good intentions, but it is hard to see how trying to convince people to implant a device designed to kill them is anything but a perverse devaluing of human life. ☹

—Suicidal thoughts or actions are signs of extreme distress and should not be ignored. If you or someone you know needs immediate help, call or text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

Notes

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2. Elena Salvoni, "The Kill Switch for Dementia Sufferers: Inventor Behind the Suicide Sarco Pod Reveals Plans for Implant That Will Automatically Kill Patients When Their Condition Worsens," *Daily Mail* (May 22, 2025).
3. Io Dodds, "Creator of 'Suicide Pod' Wants to Make Body Implant That Would Kill You If You Forget to Deactivate It," *The Independent* (Dec. 22, 2021).
4. "Dutch Doctor Who Euthanized Woman Without Final Consent Defends Decision," *Catholic News Agency* (Jun. 16, 2020).
5. "Dutch Euthanasia Case: Doctor Acted in Interest of Patient, Court Rules," *BBC* (Sep. 11, 2019).
6. Nitschke, quoted in Dodds, "Creator of 'Suicide Pod' Wants to Make Body Implant."

THE → "1 PERCENT" DECEPTION



Human & Chimp DNA Icon of Evolution Bites the Dust

by Casey Luskin

How many times have you heard the claim that the human and chimpanzee genomes are only "1 percent different"—and that this shows that humans and chimps share common ancestry? It's been cited so often that it has become what the late pro-ID biologist Jonathan Wells would call an "icon of evolution."

In April, a groundbreaking paper in *Nature* provided a definitive disproof of this statistic, though it obscured that fact with opaque language. The paper published complete sequences of ape genomes, including chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans.¹

You might be thinking, "Weren't these ape genomes sequenced long ago?" The answer is yes, but also *no*. Yes, genomes from these species had been sequenced in the past, but, as the paper explains, they were incomplete. "Owing to the repetitive nature of ape genomes, complete assemblies have not been achieved," said the technical paper. "Current references lack sequence resolution of some of the most dynamic genomic regions, including regions corresponding to lineage-specific gene families." In other words, the previous ape genome drafts "lack" many of the DNA sections which were unique to that species—i.e., the sections that made them different from humans. An explainer article in *Nature* thus notes that previous comparisons between human and ape genomes "only focused on relatively small differences" and "excluded" the sections that entail "large-scale structural differences."²

Moreover, most earlier versions of these ape genomes used the human genome as a template—effectively making apes appear more similar to humans than they really are. The technical paper puts it this way: "human reference biases were introduced" due to the "mapping of inferior assemblies to a higher quality human genome." Thus, one could expect that these newly complete ape genomes would reveal much greater differences compared to the human genome. And they did.



Summarizing the Results

Now, for the first time we can attempt a much more accurate assessment of the true degree of difference between the human and chimp genomes. The results are striking:

- Between 12.5 and 13.3 percent of the chimp and human genomes exhibit a “gap difference” where the two genomes are so different that they cannot even be aligned—i.e., there’s a “gap” in one genome compared to the other. This represents a minimum of 12.5–13.3 percent difference between the human and chimp genomes.
- There are also significant alignable sections of the two genomes that show “short nucleotide variations” (SNVs) which differ by about 1.5–1.6 percent.
- We can add up these two types of differences and calculate a 14.0–14.9 percent total genetic difference between human and chimp genomes. This is an order of magnitude greater than the oft-quoted “1 percent.”

We can do the same kind of calculations for all of the ape genomes sequenced by this new study and show their total genetic differences from humans:

- Sumatran Orangutan (*Pongo abelii*) vs. Human: ~19.0–20.1 percent different
- Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) vs. Human: ~19.8–29.3 percent different
- Bonobo (*Pan paniscus*) vs. Human: ~14.0–16.0 percent different
- Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) vs. Human: ~14.0–14.9 percent different

In fact, the higher numbers—for example, 14.9 percent total genetic difference in the case of chimps—are arguably the more relevant because they represent how dissimilar the whole human genome assembly is to the ape genomes. These represent a much greater degree of difference than the usually cited statistic that we are only 1 percent genetically distinct from chimpanzees!

Buried Bede

What you just read was a plain summary of the evidence. Human and chimp genomes exhibit about a 15 percent total difference. With other apes, the differences stretch up to 29.3 percent. That’s the punchline. But I had to really dig through the technical paper and its supplemental data and do my own calculations to arrive at those numbers. Although these calculations were fairly simple to do based upon the data presented in the paper, what’s strange is that as you read the technical paper, you find that

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a direct comparison between the human and ape genomes isn’t there.

These are huge findings for the wider culture about human uniqueness and the truth about our genetic similarities to apes—yet the technical *Nature* paper, as well as an explainer article in *Nature* that is supposed to help the non-expert understand the implications, fail to clearly bring out these points. The data points were buried in technical jargon deep in the supplemental data. The lack of clarity is simply astonishing. Why wouldn’t they clearly state these statistics for the public to understand?

Remembering the Icon

As Jonathan Wells taught, “icons of evolution” are widely promoted arguments for evolution that get recycled over and over again—but they aren’t true. How do we know the 1 percent statistic is such an icon? Science popularizer Bill Nye “The Science Guy” provided a great example when he wrote in his 2014 book *Undeniable*:

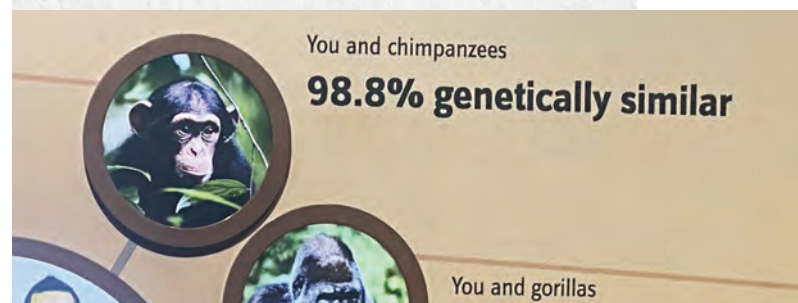
As our understanding of DNA has increased, we have come to understand that we share around 98.8 percent of our gene sequence with chimpanzees. This is striking evidence for chimps and chumps to have a common ancestor.

As of this writing, the website for the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History likewise states:

DNA is thus especially important in the study of evolution. The amount of difference in DNA is a test of the difference between one species and another—and thus how closely or distantly related they are.

While the genetic difference between individual humans today is minuscule—about 0.1%, on average—study of the same aspects of the chimpanzee genome indicates a difference of about 1.2%.³

Similar statements are found within the Smithsonian Museum itself—I took this photo there in 2023:



A caption below it declares that: "DNA evidence ... confirms ... that modern humans and chimpanzees diverged from a common ancestor..." As my colleague David Klinghoffer has shown, many sources have cited this statistic:

- *Nature*: "We share more than 98% of our DNA and almost all of our genes with our closest living relative, the chimpanzee."⁴
- *Scientific American*: "Most studies indicate that when genomic regions are compared between chimpanzees and humans, they share about 98.5 percent sequence identity."⁵
- American Museum of Natural History: "Humans and chimps share a surprising 98.8 percent of their DNA."⁶
- *Science*: "[H]umans share about 99% of our DNA with chimpanzees, making them our closest living relatives."⁷
- *National Geographic*: "Chimps, Humans 96 Percent the Same, Gene Study Finds."⁸

Many similar examples exist. A 2008 book from University of Chicago Press titled *99% Ape: How Evolution Adds Up* claims that across "the roughly 3 billion letters of the genetic code The difference is just 1.06%." This "1 percent" human-chimp genetic difference statistic has been widely promoted and is widely believed—it's undeniably an icon of evolution.

Critics Respond: "Nothing to See Here"

Given how much rhetoric the evolution camp has invested in this argument, we can expect that they won't give it up easily. And that's exactly what we've been seeing since this study came out.

The first response was to challenge the numbers. Some have questioned whether human and chimp DNA could not be aligned merely due to "technical failures." However, in the main *Nature* paper, a failure to align the DNA is equated with a "technical" problem, and the standard reason for such a "failure" is simply that the DNA is so different that it can't align. Thus, "technical failures" are *prima facie* evidence of real differences between the genomes.

The second response—which is far more common—seeks to dismiss these newly discovered genetic differences between humans and chimps as mere junk DNA. These critics don't dispute the basic evidence showing that humans and chimps are 15 percent genetically different. They just claim these differences are meaningless. Intriguingly, many of the folks making this argument have views that align closely with theistic evolution.

For example, Joshua Swamidass, a Christian biologist at Washington University in St. Louis and

defender of human-chimp common ancestry, argued that much of the human DNA that doesn't align with chimp DNA is "trivial" because it is "repetitive" and represents mere "cut-and-paste repetitions." Joel Duff, a Christian theistic evolutionist, YouTuber, and biology professor at the University of Akron, admits that human and chimp genomes might be 15 percent different. But he states that the non-alignable DNA largely "makes no difference" because repetitive DNA differences "don't even do anything" and therefore the 14.9 percent statistic is "a meaningless number." Another Christian biologist and evolution-supporter, Zachary Ardern, claims that "not all unaligned regions are real differences" and compares differing numbers of copies of DNA repeat sequences to a "typo" that is not relevant "in terms of functional information."

In other words, these critics assume that the repetitive DNA that's different between humans and chimps is junk—and that having one copy of a repeat is functionally no different from having two copies or three copies or four. Added copies are just the result of "cut-and-paste" and don't make any difference. And because they think it's junk, they would have us believe that we can dismiss much of the newly discovered genetic differences between humans and chimps as "meaningless." But the critics don't really know that this is true—they're just parroting the language of the highly dubious evolutionary junk DNA mindset (see articles in *Salvo* 31, 32, 33, and 34, where I wrote about "The Encode Embroilment"). And indeed, much science contradicts their claims.

A new paper in *Nucleic Acids Research*—published by some of the same researchers involved with sequencing these new complete ape genomes—shows that the critics' arguments are wrong. The researchers studied the precise repetitive DNA that is different between humans and chimps and found that it can perform a myriad of functions, including structural roles as "non-B" DNA,⁹ which is known to contain "important regulators of cellular processes" and to have "unequivocal importance for genome function."¹⁰

In short, differences in the number of copies of repeat sequences can affect the 3D shape of chromosomes, such as the size and shape of DNA loops, which can in turn influence transcription factor binding, gene expression, and other genome functions. So when critics dismiss repetitive DNA differences as junk, they're not just making an argument from ignorance. They're contradicting science that we know to be true.

A final response has been to try to distract from the evidence by changing the topic. Specifically critics have cited genetic differences within the human species, which can be up to 10 percent in some cases. This is an interesting question, but it's entirely

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irrelevant to the subject of genetic differences between humans and apes. For decades, prominent evolutionary voices have used the supposed “1 percent” genetic difference between humans and chimps as an argument for human-chimp common ancestry. We now know their numbers were wrong—by more than an order of magnitude. Discussing human-human intraspecific genetic differences is interesting, but it can’t rescue this icon of evolution.

“Zombie Science”

Jonathan Wells predicted these types of responses—he predicted that evolutionists would keep defending their icons even in the face of contrary evidence. He even quipped that these icons are like “zombies”—they don’t die easily but rather keep being repeated and defended, long after they have been refuted.

If that’s true, then don’t expect the 1 percent statistic to go away anytime soon. Nonetheless, the

old 1 percent human-chimp genetic difference myth is now the latest icon of evolution to be refuted. May it rest in peace. ☹

Notes

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2. Lukas Kuderna, “Complete Ape Genomes Offer a Close-Up View of Human Evolution,” *Nature*, 641: 313–314 (2025).
3. “What Does It Mean to be Human?” Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.
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5. “What Does the Fact that We Share 95 Percent of our Genes with the Chimpanzee Mean? And How Was This Number Derived?” *Scientific American* (Mar. 1, 2004).
6. “DNA: Comparing Humans and Chimps,” American Museum of Natural History, Hall of Human Origins.
7. Ann Gibbons, “Bonobos Join Chimps as Closest Human Relatives,” *Science* (Jun. 13, 2012).
8. Stefan Lovgren, “Chimps, Humans 96 Percent the Same, Gene Study Finds,” *National Geographic* (Aug. 31, 2005).
9. According to Google’s AI, non-B DNA “refers to any DNA structure that deviates from the standard double helix form. Non-B DNA structures are not just structural oddities; they play important roles in various cellular processes.”
10. Smeds et al., “Non-Canonical DNA in Human and Other Ape Telomere-to-Telomere Genomes,” *Nucleic Acids Research*, 53: gkaf298 (Apr. 14, 2025).

Stalled at the Smithsonian by Casey Luskin

An exhibit on human origins at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington, D.C., vastly overstates the genetic similarity between humans and apes and needs to be corrected. “There is only about a 1.2 percent genetic difference between modern humans and chimpanzees,” declares the NMNH’s Human Origins exhibit. It continues, claiming: “You and chimpanzees: 98.8% genetically similar.” On May 27, 2025, I contacted the Smithsonian urging them to correct the exhibit:



I’m writing to request corrections to statements at the Human Origins exhibit (“Exhibit”) at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History (“NMNH”) about the degree of genetic difference between humans and apes, which are no longer scientifically accurate.... [T]he Exhibit asserts the following statements as fact:

(1) Humans and chimpanzees are “98.8% genetically similar.”

(2) Humans and gorillas are “98.4% genetically similar.”

(3) Humans and orangutans are “96.9% genetically similar.”

According to data reported in a scientific paper, Yoo et al. (2025), recently published in *Nature*, these statistics are scientifically false.

My letter ended stating: **“I urge you to correct the Exhibit to reflect more current, accurate scientific data.”**

Soon thereafter I received a reply from Smithsonian’s Director of Public Affairs, Randall Kremer, as follows:

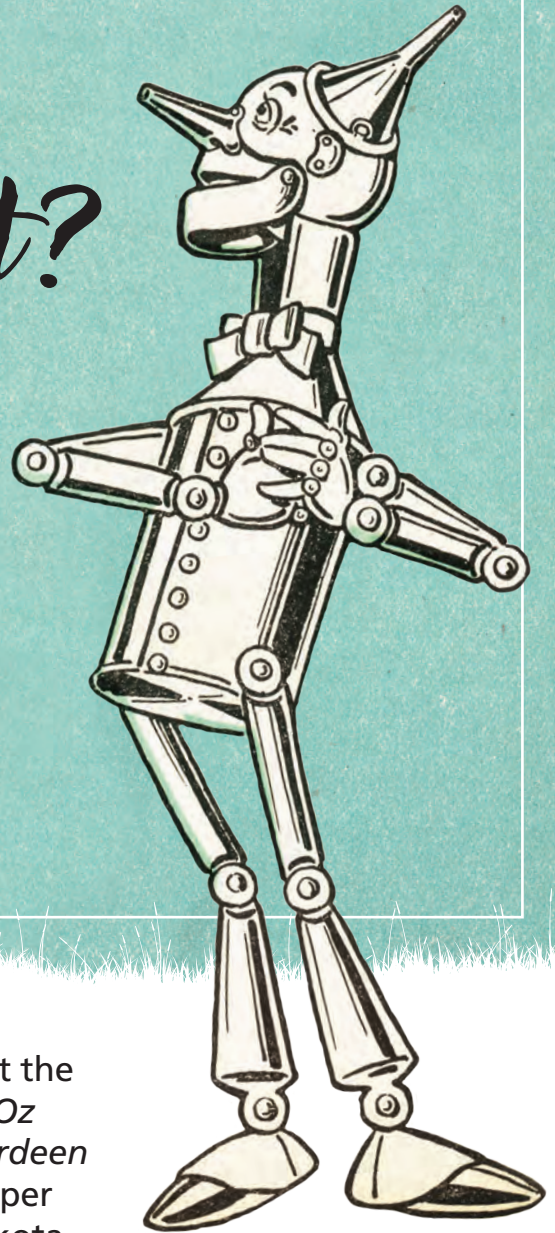
Understanding of evolutionary science continues to expand based on scientific discovery and advances in technology. The museum’s exhibit panel presents genetic similarity between humans and a variety of organisms across the diversity of life. Our review of the *Nature* paper will continue to factor such new discoveries into relevant updates to the hall.

In other words, we’ll see. In the meantime, I’m not getting my hopes up too much for a correction, and the public continues to be misinformed about the scientific evidence. •

Have a Heart?

How a Little Empathy Can Lead to Genocide

by Daniel Witt



In 1890, L. Frank Baum was not yet the famous author of *The Wizard of Oz* but merely the editor of *The Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, a small newspaper in the brand-new state of South Dakota.

Emotions were running high, thanks to fresh outbreaks of conflict with the Native American population. So that December, Baum wrote an editorial suggesting a simple solution: kill all Native Americans. "Why not annihilation?" he wrote:

Their glory has fled, their spirit broken, their manhood effaced; better that they die than live the miserable wretches that they are. History would forget these latter despicable beings, and speak, in later ages of the glory of these grand Kings of the forest and plain that [James Fenimore] Cooper loved to heroise. We cannot honestly regret their extermination, but we at least do justice to the manly characteristics possessed, according to their lights and education, by the early Redskins of America.¹

In an editorial a few weeks later, he doubled down, arguing that “[h]aving wronged them for centuries we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth.”²

These sentiments have baffled modern readers, because they go against Baum’s image as a kindly progressive (he advocated for women’s suffrage, for example) and beloved children’s author—how could the creator of Oz call for *genocide*? To make the matter even more perplexing, Baum seems to show sympathy for the Native Americans in the very same pieces that call for their annihilation!

I think the explanation for this apparent incongruity of character is fairly simple. But it’s hard to face, because it tells us something about human nature that we’d rather not admit: Baum harbored genocidal urges, not in spite of his capacity for empathy, but *because* of it.

Empathy is held in high esteem in our culture, sometimes to the point of fetishization. But recently, some psychologists have been warning of downsides of empathy. Ironically, empathy can reduce a person’s capacity or willingness to help the suffering, because empathetic emotions can be painful and difficult to bear.³ This has led to a move to distinguish between empathy and *compassion*. They are not the same thing, and empathy is useless if it does not translate into compassion.

Canadian professor Trisha Dowling summarizes the distinction well:

Empathy is a mental construct that allows us to resonate with others’ positive and negative feelings. We can feel happy at the joy of others and we can feel distress when we observe someone in physical or mental pain.... In contrast to empathy, compassion is characterized by feelings of warmth, concern, and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other’s wellbeing. Compassion goes beyond feeling *with* the other to feeling *for* the other.⁴

I would suggest that Baum’s genocidal editorializing is merely an extreme example of empathy that

failed to translate into compassion. He clearly feels empathy for the Native Americans. That empathy feeds his sense of guilt since he blames the situation on the white settlers. So perversely (yet quite naturally) he wants to end the pain and guilt caused by that empathy by removing the cause of it—by simply *getting rid of the Native Americans*.

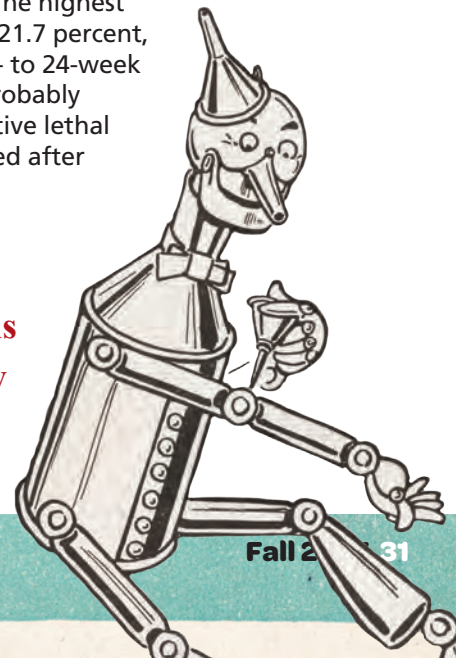


The Baums of the 21st Century

Is such a reaction shocking? Well, it’s more common than we might realize. The world is full of people like L. Frank Baum. They’re just harder to recognize because we are not looking from the safe vantage point of the future.

Take, as a case in point, a recent scientific study conducted in Quebec that looked at the “risk of live birth” in second-trimester elective abortions.⁵ Most people on the pro-choice side of the abortion argument prefer to ignore such cases, yet this study was not conducted for a pro-life group or according to a pro-life agenda. I’m grateful for the study because it sheds light on the reality of born-alive aborted infants. But, as we’ll see, it also reveals something disconcerting about the way empathy guides proponents of abortion.

The researchers found that 11.2 percent of 13,777 abortions committed in Quebec between 15- and 29-weeks gestation had resulted in a baby being born alive. The highest rate of live births, 21.7 percent, occurred in the 20- to 24-week window. (This is probably due to more effective lethal methods being used after 24 weeks.)



**How could the creator of Oz call for *genocide*?
To make the matter even more perplexing, Baum seems
to show sympathy for the Native Americans in the very
same pieces that call for their annihilation!**

It may be surprising to some people that there are still abortion survivors in the 21st century. But, somehow or other, technology or praxis has not yet advanced so far as to remove the possibility of a child surviving an abortion. Even stranger, the percentage of live births seems to have *gone up* over time: from 4.1 percent in 1989–2000, to 10.2 percent from 2000–2010, to a staggering 20.8 percent in 2011–2021. (The study doesn't say what the survival rate was for 20–24 weeks in the 2011–2021 period, but it must be higher than either the overall 2011–2021 or the overall 20- to 24-week rates, yielding a shockingly high percentage.)

This data was easy enough to find, because hospitals in Canada keep records of patients, and according to Canadian law, babies who are born alive are automatically patients. Therefore, the hospitals must provide a discharge notice for the baby as well as the mother. If the baby dies, the hospital must provide a death certificate

In other words, when an abortion “fails,” the “contents of the uterus” is miraculously transformed into a hospital patient! This may be the only situation where someone automatically becomes a doctor's patient the moment the doctor fails to kill her. Just think about it from the doctor's perspective: a few seconds ago, that patient was “the contents of the uterus,” a “clump of cells” ... and now you're writing a death certificate for her.

Of course, the fact that the doctor-patient relationship exists on paper doesn't mean it exists in real life. The study says that only 5.5 percent of the abortion survivors received palliative care and only 24.5 percent were admitted to the intensive care unit. Usually, only babies of 19 or more weeks gestational age received intensive or palliative care from the hospital (presumably because they look more humanlike after that age). The authors note:

Gestational age influenced the likelihood of receiving palliative care, with more care provided to infants born later in gestation. It may be that the benefits of palliative care are underrecognized among earlier abortions.

In other words, it may be that doctors don't realize that fetuses at earlier stages of development *can still feel pain* and thus don't bother to give them palliative care.

The authors of this study obviously feel some empathy towards fetuses younger than 19 weeks of development; otherwise, they wouldn't recommend palliative care for abortion survivors of that age. But what sort of action does that empathy lead to? Palliative care for a dying infant would be a good

thing, but that's not the main point of the article. The deeper solution proposed in the paper should make your skin crawl. Apparently, the best way to deal with the unfortunate realities of wounded and suffering 19-week-old babies is to *make sure that none of them survive the abortion in the first place*. The authors advise: “Feticidal injection is effective at preventing unintended live birth and should be considered for second-trimester abortions before 24 weeks.”

That's the ultimate agenda of the paper: keep abortion emotionally safe (for those of us who have already survived infancy) by ensuring that no survivors linger on to inflict emotional pain on empathetic observers.

Push It Out of Sight

Ensuring a clean kill isn't the only way people try to erase the horror of abortion. That kind of “solution” fits the general pattern of dealing with the...*unpleasantness* of the procedure. A similar method is to restrict abortion to the least-empathy-inducing age group.

Unlike the U.S. federal government, many European countries restrict abortion after a certain number of weeks, most commonly 12. (This information is startling to most Americans. After the first Trump administration released a statement noting that only seven countries worldwide permitted elective abortion after 20 weeks, the fact-checkers at the *Washington Post* actually admitted that they were surprised to find that this was true.⁶) Yet, counter-intuitively, abortion is also not (generally speaking) as controversial in Europe as it is in America. That's probably *because* of the restrictions, not in spite of them.⁷ It is impossible to look at an aborted third-trimester fetus and not see a human baby. It is somewhat easier to look at an aborted first-trimester baby and dismiss it as non-human, simply because its body is not quite as “human-shaped” yet. By restricting the crimes against humanity in Europe to those humans most easily dehumanized, the shame is assuaged, and the crime can go on. Sweden restricts abortion after 18 weeks, yet only four percent of its population think abortion should be illegal in most cases.⁸

That means that if the pro-life movement in the U.S. wins something like a 12-week ban, this will save lives, but it will also almost certainly make abortion harder to abolish entirely. The more half-victories the pro-life movement wins, the harder the ultimate victory becomes, because the most undeniably evil cases are removed from the picture. The final result

Until America is populated by a people who know that the true purpose of empathy is compassion, there will be no end to the age-old phenomenon of people treating other people like a problem to be cleared away.

in America may simply be a sanitized evil, committed without any shame, and therefore unassailable—which is what we already see in European societies.

The Solution: Compassion

Of course, the tactic of ignoring the marginal cases and attempting absolute bans on abortion isn't likely to work either. The reason it won't work is that America is (more or less) ruled by popular governance, and only about 36 percent of Americans think abortion should be illegal in most cases.⁹

The only lasting solution, as far-fetched as it might seem, is to start from the beginning—from the worldview. Until America is populated by a people who know that the true purpose of empathy is compassion, there will be no end to the age-old phenomenon of people treating other people like a problem to be cleared away.

This will not be easy. Psychologists have noted another downside of empathy: it has a strong in-group bias. Baum felt sorry for the Native Americans, certainly, but he seemed to feel more for his own people—otherwise, it's inconceivable that genocide could have seemed like the best solution to him. Likewise, the pro-choice position survives on a very selective empathy: lots of empathy for women who suffer from having to carry a child to term (in itself, a good thing), but very little empathy for the children being carried. This double standard is easy to achieve, psychologically, because of the in-group bias: none of us are fetuses, none of us remember being fetuses, none of us have to worry that we might one day become fetuses, and none of us have friends who are currently fetuses. The unborn are the ultimate out-group.

There might be only one way to break people out of this in-group bias. Just as Native Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries were the ones best equipped to arouse compassion for Native



Americans, today it's abortion survivors who are best equipped to arouse compassion for abortion victims: heroes like Melissa Ohden, who founded the Abortion Survivors Network; like Pastor Marvin Hightower, who survived two abortions and made it to adulthood;¹⁰ and like Carrie, who has publicly forgiven her mother for leaving her deformed and partially paralyzed from a failed abortion.¹¹ And there are many more.

But they can't do it alone any more than victims of any other historical atrocities have been able to speak for themselves alone. They need the rest of us to magnify their voices.

We may not have the opportunity forever. Technology moves forward. If the sanitizers of evil have their way, this may be the last generation where surviving an abortion is possible. Then the horror of abortion will be safely out of sight, forever. We can't let that happen. The survivors must be given a voice while there are still survivors to speak. ☉

Notes

1. *The Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer* (Dec. 20, 1890), as quoted in Nancy Tystad Koupal, "On The Road to Oz: L. Frank Baum as Western Editor," *South Dakota State Historical Society* (2000) and A. Waller Hastings, "L. Frank Baum's Editorials on the Sioux Nation."
2. *The Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer* (Jan. 3, 1891), as quoted in Koupal and Hastings.
3. "The Surprising Dark Side of Empathy," BBC (Mar. 25, 2022).
4. Trisha Dowling, "Compassion Does Not Fatigue!" *The Canadian Veterinary Journal* (Jul. 2018).
5. Nathalie Auger et al., "Second-Trimester Abortion and Risk of Live Birth," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (Jun. 2024).
6. Michelle Ye Hee Lee, "Is the United States One of Seven Countries that 'Allow Elective Abortions After 20 Weeks of Pregnancy?'" *The Washington Post* (Oct. 9, 2017).
7. "The War That Never Ends," *The Economist* (Jan. 18, 2003).
8. "Support for legal abortion is widespread in many places, especially in Europe," Pew Research Center (May 15, 2024).
9. "Broad Public Support for Legal Abortion Persists 2 Years After Dobbs," Pew Research Center (May 13, 2024).
10. "I Survived Two Abortions," *Focus on the Family* (Jan. 7, 2021).
11. "An Abortion Survivor's Story (Living with Facial Paralysis and Other Conditions)," (Feb. 14, 2019).

Atomic Intelligence

A Closer Look at the Atom Points to Instructions from a Cosmic Mind

by Graham Silcock

The Antikythera mechanism, a complex piece of equipment discovered in a 2,100-year-old Mediterranean shipwreck, has been the subject of a great deal of scientific inquiry. What is of relevance to us here is that it is evidently designed.

It's like that with atoms. These days, the internet provides us with excellent and detailed scientific information. Any non-scientist who is well-read and who looks into the subject can see evidence of design in atoms.

So let's look into it. Imagine that, after proper instruction, we are invited to participate in the creation of atoms. We will end up creating a universe.



PARTICLE PAIRS. First, we'll create a superabundant expansion of energy. Then we'll transmute some energy into productive entities which we'll call quantum fields, and we'll instruct the fields to emanate unending streams of particle pairs. We'll make the particle pairs self-destruct after a brief moment of existence so that we don't get overwhelmed with hordes of unschooled particles. During one of their brief appearances, we'll remove a particle from some of those particle pairs. The other particle in each pair escapes destruction.



PROTONS. We'll take some of those escaped particles and designate them as "down quarks," others we'll call "up quarks," and still others we'll call "gluons." (These are just names; they don't necessarily mean

anything.) We'll combine each down quark with two up quarks and use the gluon confining force to hold the quarks together. The result is a composite particle. We'll call it a "proton."



ELECTRONS. Our protons are as idle as elephants at a water hole on a hot day. We must get them moving, which we'll do by arranging for the quantum fields to provide us with particles we'll call "electrons." The idea is that the electrons will keep station on the protons and will move about in energetic clouds, taking the protons with them.



ELECTRIC CHARGE. Gravity is too weak to keep the electrons in attendance on the protons, so we'll create a more powerful

force, an “electromagnetic” force, and we’ll endow each particle with an electric charge. We’ll give each of the two up quarks two-thirds of a positive charge. That adds up to one and one-third ($+1 + 1/3$) per proton. Down quarks will each have one-third of a negative charge ($-1/3$). The combined result is that protons will have a net positive charge of $+1$. We will give electrons an exactly equal negative charge of -1 , which will keep them on standby with the protons—well, much of the time. Why all these one-third and two-thirds fractions? Because later on we are going to arrange things the other way around.



MASS. Our newly created protons and electrons are lighter than pollen floating in the breeze. We need our universe to have substance, so we’ll endow the particles with mass. We’ll commission a tailor-made quantum field. Scientists call it the “Higgs field.” It will give protons and electrons a basic amount of mass. After that, we’ll supercharge the elements inside the protons with energy, making them engage in a tumultuous dance which adds even more mass to the protons. We’ll make the protons 1,836 times more massive than the electrons. That number has a purpose. It helps stabilize our universe.



PHOTONS. The electrons need an energy boost to keep them on the move, so we’ll arrange for a quantum field to emanate some energy particles. We’ll call them “photons.” Photons are “inclusive.” They don’t bump into each other. They happily pass through each other and are quite unselfish about occupying the same space.



EXCLUSION. Electrons and quarks are also inclined at the outset to be inclusive, like photons. Nothing would stop them from passing through each other or from occupying the same space. If we leave things that way, the universe would be nothing more than an interesting light show. So what we will do is reconfigure electrons and quarks to endow them with the attribute of “exclusion.” You and I are made of electrons and quarky

An atom is a proclamation of design, an artificial construct, an unnatural and complex combination of unrelated forces, emanations, and processes, assembled with predictive, purposeful foresight and problem-solving ingenuity.

protons, and that’s why we can touch each other and bump into each other. On the other hand, we can’t walk through each other or occupy the same space. We are “exclusive” that way.



ORBITALS. But there’s another situation. If electrons in an atom are permitted to behave naturally, their attractive electric charge would make them cluster right up against the protons. Atoms would have no bulk and would just mill around and bump into each other at random, like sand grains in a desert sandstorm. So what we’ll do is arrange for paths called “orbitals” on which electrons are strictly required to travel. We’ll stack the orbitals up at ascending and ever greater distances from the protons in each atom, in groups which scientists call “shells.” Then we’ll require that no more than two electrons can occupy each orbital. No clustering. Electron outriders will provide atoms with bulk, and they can be organized. We will organize them.



NUMBERS. We should have mentioned that we propagated these particles to be greater in number than all the grains of sand on all our seashores and that we arranged for protons and electrons to be equal to each other in number, which means that, taken as a whole, matter is electrically neutral and gravity predominates, which is a good thing. Gravity behaves, while electricity does alarming things, like showing up as ball lightning.

The downside to all of this, so far, is that we have a universe of gas. Our atoms, which have only one proton each, comprise mostly an insubstantial vapor called hydrogen. We need to turn hydrogen into heavy construction material so that we can make planets and people.



MAKING HEAVY ATOMS.

To make construction material we'll turn lightweight hydrogen atoms (1 proton) into heavy atoms like oxygen (8 protons), or copper (29 protons), and so on. We'll get there by making use of the furnaces of stars and their cataclysmic disintegration. The energy and pressure they provide can be used to introduce more protons into the structure of atoms. However, on its own, that mechanism won't work because protons refuse to stay close to each other. The positive electric charge we gave them pushes them away from each other, and the protons gleefully escape from their atomic bondage, leaving us back where we started, with a universe of gas.

To prevent protons from escaping we could increase the strength of the gluon confining force that helps keep protons together. But if we did that, all the hydrogen atoms in the universe would promptly fuse into heavier atoms and we wouldn't have the benefit of the sun shining on us, which it does by slowly changing hydrogen into helium. Better not go that way.

Alternatively, we could reduce the strength of the positive electric force that pushes protons away from each other. But then we would interfere with the same electric force that keeps protons and electrons attracted to each other. If that goes wrong, we are in trouble.



NEUTRONS. The solution is to make proton-like particles with no electric charge. We'll take two down quarks, each with one-third of a negative charge ($-2/3$) and combine them with one up quark, which has two-thirds of a positive charge ($+2/3$). The charges cancel out. We now have chargeless compound particles called "neutrons," which are very like protons except that they don't mind being close together. Being made of quarks, they are exclusive but being electrically neutral, they are sociable.

There is method in this madness. We can now add extra protons to atoms to increase their mass, and we will hold back the pesky protons from escaping by adding sociable neutrons. It's like adding busloads of well-behaved accountants to a soccer crowd which could otherwise begin to riot, as soccer crowds sometimes do. Things calm down. The good news is that this unnatural arrangement actually works. We can now make heavy atoms.

The materialistic approach is to overlook evidence of design while suggesting a landscape of innumerable, imaginary, and undetectable universes which perpetually and prolifically emerge from eternal laws of nature by way of quantum fluctuations



TEMPERATURE CONTROL. We mustn't forget to make sure that the energy we created at the beginning keeps on expanding the particle universe, because otherwise luminous stars will superheat everything, making life impossible. An expanding universe alleviates the heat problem.



STRUCTURE. There's another situation. Atoms which have received additional positive protons will naturally be inclined to take on board negative electrons until the protons and electrons are equal in number. After that, the atoms will be electrically neutral and will meander around with no particular purpose, like a herd of contentedly browsing elephants. If we leave things that way, the universe will have no structure. But we need structure, and, more than that, complex structure. We need solids, liquids, and gases.

To introduce structure, we'll teach atoms to do the eightsome reel. They will dance around, linking up with each other, sharing and exchanging electrons so as to make up combinations of atoms with eight-fold outer electron shells. There can be other numbers but eight will be the favorite.

Here is an example: a calcium atom spins off the two electrons in its outer shell. The next lower shell (which has now become the outer shell) has eight electrons. Success! A carbon atom joins in the dance. It has four electrons in its outer shell (4). It links up with three oxygen atoms, which each have six electrons in their outer shells (18). Then the two electrons from the calcium atom join in (2) and that all adds up to 24 electrons. That's three times eight. Triple success! The end result is a combination of a calcium atom, a carbon atom and three oxygen atoms. Scientists call it calcium-carbonate; we call it chalk.



MATTER. Scientists refer to this combining process as bonding, or overlap. Bonded atoms provide us with matter. They give us the things that make our material world, like gas

(carbon dioxide) and water (dihydrogen monoxide) and salt (sodium chloride) and earth (silicon dioxide). We now have the building blocks for a universe.

Examining the Atom

People on social media often use words like “astounding” and “sensational.” Atoms deserve such adjectives. An atom is a proclamation of design, an artificial construct, an unnatural and complex combination of unrelated forces, emanations, and processes, assembled with predictive, purposeful foresight and problem-solving ingenuity.

According to Darwinian natural selection, a newly acquired physical attribute which affects a living creature may be passed on to successive generations, eventually being passed on to a whole population. It is different with atoms. Creation and change tend to happen by way of momentary cosmic convulsions which affect all particles. That leads to an interesting insight: the universe appears to have been designed *before* it came into being.

Unlike with Darwinian natural selection, there are no benefits at intermediate stages. Quarks without gluons, or without mass, have no use. It's only at the end of the chain of creation events, when matter emerges, that we begin to see what design is all about.

When electrons occupy the orbitals of atoms closest to the protons, what they are doing is dropping into the lowest available energy levels. Isn't that a natural mechanism? No, that's like billiard balls dropping into billiard table pockets. Billiard table pockets are purposefully designed; so are atomic orbitals.

Examining Our Narrative

We cannot be accused of artificially imposing design on our narrative. Design is embedded in the makeup of atoms, just as it is in the car parked outside my front door.

Is our narrative accurate? Not all scientists agree that quantum fields are transmuted energy. Actually, no one knows what quantum fields are.

Is our narrative too brief? What about spin, wave-particle duality, quantum chromodynamics,

the weak nuclear force, and virtual particles? Those features have their place, but this isn't a physics textbook, and after 40 pages our conclusions would be the same: atoms are designed.

We could have presented things in other ways. We could have talked about electron orbitals in terms of wave function probabilities. But the big picture would be the same. The big picture opens us up to design.

Science or Materialism?

Science is supposed to follow the evidence wherever it leads. Our design narrative is scientific

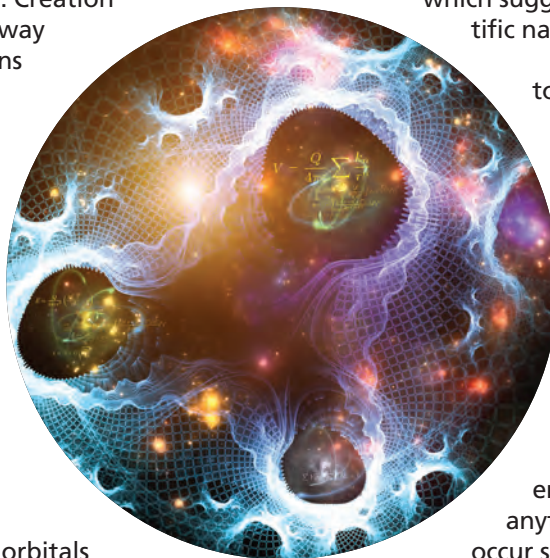
Materialism is a philosophical construct imposed on science that prohibits the design inference. Our design narrative is in breach of this prohibition, which suggests why there is no such scientific narrative.

The materialistic approach is to overlook evidence of design while suggesting a landscape of innumerable, imaginary, and undetectable universes which perpetually and prolifically emerge from eternal laws of nature by way of quantum fluctuations. A mathematical innovation called string theory permits the belief that each imaginary universe is different from all the others in endless variety. The idea is that anything *can*, and everything *does*, occur somewhere or other within this vast array, including the existence of our universe.

We are expected to have faith that science will at some future date replace these conceptual images with facts. But there is no prospect that this goal will be achieved.

Even then, myriad universes wouldn't produce atoms. How could they? In fact, it's the other way around. There were atoms before there were stars and galaxies. And there are other difficulties. For example, there is no natural process that would create electron orbitals. Orbitals are not created things; they are a set of instructions. In fact, all of the attributes that we observe in atoms have the appearance of a set of instructions from a cosmic mind.

Our scientific exploration of atoms leads to design and that leads to a Designer. And that, of course, leads to another story. ☺



INTER- STELLAR SPACE TRAVEL?

Well, Not So Fast! ◀◀◀

by Hugh Ross

Nearly everyone on Earth today has watched one or more episodes of *Star Trek*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Babylon 5*, *Stargate*, *Farscape*, and, of course, the *Star Wars* movies and television series. Billions of dollars of public and private money are spent each year on the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI), spurred on by historians and archaeologists who claim intelligent beings from a planet “far, far away” must have assisted ancient peoples in their remarkable construction projects and astronomical endeavors.

Many people dream about interstellar space travel and ETI visitors. However, we must ask ourselves just how practical it would be for any human-like being to travel from one planetary system to another. What kind of spaceship would be needed? How much time would it take, and how much would the journey cost? Would the conditions of space and the laws of physics even allow for interstellar travel?

Distance Challenge

The nearest planet outside our solar system, Proxima Centauri b, resides 4.25 light-years, or 40 trillion kilometers (25 trillion miles), from Earth. To imagine this great distance, consider scaling Earth’s 12,750-kilometer (7,920-mile) diameter down to the size of a mustard seed, one to two millimeters (1/32 to 3/32 inch) in diameter. On this size scale, the distance from Earth to Proxima Centauri b would be the distance from Los Angeles, California, to Providence, Rhode Island.

Of course, intelligent physical life could not survive on Proxima Centauri b. Nor could it survive on any other relatively “nearby” planet. Even the most optimistic SETI astronomers acknowledge that only by traveling 200 light-years or more from Earth would we find another planet or moon on which intelligent physical life could conceivably survive.

In reality, of the nearly 7,500 planets outside the solar system astronomers have detected, none possess the characteristics intelligent physical life requires.¹ Earth is the only known planet that resides within all fourteen of the identified planetary habitability zones, all of which are required for life to exist on the planet.² (No other planet yet discovered resides in more than three of these essential-to-life zones.) Venus ranks as the most Earth-like planet yet discovered.³ The Sun is still the only known star with all the characteristics needed to host a planet where intelligent physical life could exist.⁴

Artist’s depiction of the planet orbiting Proxima Centauri

Time & Speed Limits

If we were to travel 200 light-years on the fastest spacecraft ever launched by the world's space agencies, the one-way trip would take 5.27 million years. "Are we there yet?" would take on new meaning! At one percent the velocity (speed) of light, the trip would be 20,000 years long. At 10 percent of light's velocity, it would take 2,000 years.

Astronomers are exploring the possibility of sending spacecraft to Proxima Centauri b to study its physical and chemical conditions. Planning efforts have revealed both speed and size limitations on interstellar space travel, primarily due to particulates.

Interstellar space is not entirely empty. It is filled with particles, dust, pebbles, rocks, and radiation. This space debris poses a dire risk to space travel. The faster a spaceship moves through space, the greater the damage it suffers from collisions with space debris. This damage rises with the square of the spaceship's velocity. Thus, a spaceship traveling at 10 percent of light's velocity would suffer a hundred times the damage of a spaceship traveling at one percent of light's velocity. In other words, a spaceship can travel only as fast as avoidance of catastrophic damage allows.

Size Challenge

Given the presence of space debris, the larger a spaceship's cross section (diameter), the more damage it will suffer. The number of impacts rises with the square of the spaceship's cross section. So a spaceship with a cross section of 100 meters (328 feet) will be struck by 100 times as many impacts as a spaceship only 10 meters (33 feet) in diameter.

Astronomers have calculated that any hope of acquiring useful information about Proxima Centauri b via spacecraft sent there from Earth requires the spacecraft to be no more than 10 centimeters in diameter and to travel no faster than 20 percent of the velocity of light.

In fact, such a trip would require spacecraft, plural. If a thousand spacecraft, each a mere 10 centimeters across (about four inches), were sent to Proxima Centauri b at 10 percent the velocity of light, astronomers estimate that at least half would be destroyed on the way. All would be damaged, but among the remaining half, some would be damaged in different ways. These differences might be sufficient to allow for the gathering of *some* useful information about conditions there. However, this research would require extreme patience—a 43-year wait for the spacecraft to arrive at Proxima Centauri b and another 43-year wait for transmitted information to return. Astronomers wonder how many funding agencies would be willing to wait 86 years for a potential return on their investment.

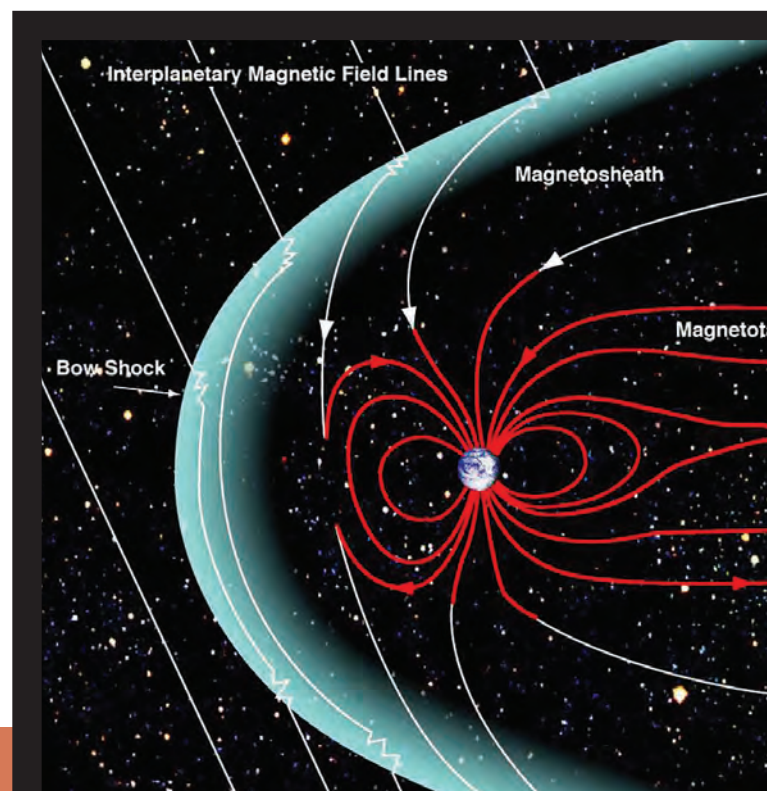
Astronomers *could* send spacecraft to Proxima Centauri b at 20 percent the velocity of light. At this speed, the wait time to receive information would be cut in half. However, this extra speed would mean sending at least 4,000 10-centimeter-diameter spacecraft, or 1,000 five-centimeter-diameter spacecraft. (Spacecraft as small as five centimeters across, though, are not realistic. They would lack the technology and transmitting power to send useful information back to Earth.)

Who Would "We" Be?

A spacecraft 10 centimeters across might be large enough to house a tiny ant or termite, but it would be far too small to provide the food, water, and oxygen such a creature would need for a space trip of 40+ years. A far bigger problem is presented by the deadly radiation environment of interstellar space.

About 99 percent of galactic cosmic radiation is comprised of atomic nuclei (atoms stripped of their electrons), and about one percent is solitary electrons. Of the atomic nuclei, 90 percent are hydrogen (single protons), nine percent are helium, and one percent are nuclei heavier than helium. The most abundant heavier-than-helium nuclei (in order of abundance) are oxygen, carbon, neon, iron, nitrogen, silicon, magnesium, and sulfur. Note that the heavier the nucleus, the greater damage it can inflict.

Earth's magnetosphere (see figure) shields life on Earth from deadly cosmic radiation. Outside the magnetosphere, however, life is fully exposed. Serious exposure to heavy ion galactic cosmic radiation occurs in regions beyond the outer red lines emanating from Earth.



During a brief three-year trip outside Earth's magnetosphere, every third cell in an organism's body would be struck by a nucleus heavier than neon, and every sixteenth cell, struck at least twice.⁵ This would be the outcome *if* the organism were protected by an aluminum radiation shield at least two centimeters thick, plus a layer of water 30 centimeters thick. Such a shield is far beyond what can be accommodated in a 10-centimeter-wide spacecraft.

The bottom line is clear. Even the most radiation-tolerant bacteria would not survive a trip across interstellar space in a spaceship less than two meters in diameter.⁶ The "we" is not a living being.

Help from ETI?

Scholars who suggest that ancient peoples received help in their construction projects and scientific endeavors from intelligent beings beyond the solar system appear to underestimate the scientific knowledge and technological capability of people living thousands of years ago. Ancient peoples living all over the world were at least as fascinated by the heavens and as eager to learn about the size, structure, and mechanics of heavenly bodies as people today.

Ancient peoples lacked optical telescopes, but in their determination to measure the positions and movements of heavenly bodies, ancient astronomers assembled huge stone observatories. They placed giant stones to serve as sighting aids (like gunsights) to assist them in making precise measurements. What's more, archaeologists have determined that ancient people had developed the technology and the means to quarry these heavy stones, transport them over distances of a few hundred kilometers, and position them accurately to accomplish their research.

The best-known example of a stone observatory is Stonehenge in England's Salisbury Plain. However, remains of thousands more of these observatories can be found throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and North and South America, where the stone circle portions varied in dimensions from 10 meters to 330 meters across.⁷ Ancient people needed no ETI help to build these research facilities, among many other structures.

"Yes" to Exploring Interstellar Space

The fact that living organisms cannot safely traverse interstellar space does not imply that humans cannot study bodies beyond our solar system or that we're prevented from "boldly going where no man has gone before." Regardless of our *personal* travel limitations, our technology can go. Devices such as the James Webb and Hubble Space Telescopes have already revealed amazing and previously unknown features of the universe and Earth. These features enable us not only to live and thrive but also to explore the full extent and history of our cosmos and its two trillion galaxies. These discoveries on every size scale, from the cosmic web down to the interiors of the Sun, Earth, and Moon, yield evidence of exquisite design and a Designer's intent to provide a home for billions of intelligent physical beings.⁸ ☉

Notes

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Fantastic Voyage

A Scientific Odyssey

by Jonathan Witt

Did mind make matter, or matter mind? Are the things of nature the product of mindless forces alone, or did creative reason play a role? Theologians have grappled with the question but so have philosophers and scientists stretching from ancient Athens to modern Nobel Prize winners.

In 1859, Charles Darwin introduced his theory of evolution to argue that blind nature had produced all the species of plants and animals around us. The new theory convinced a lot of people that evidence of a Creator could not be found in nature, and indeed, should not be sought. If there are things in nature that remain mysterious, the thinking went, scientists will figure them out in time. To attribute their origin to God was simply to give up on science.

Today, Darwinists level the same charge against the contemporary theory of intelligent design (ID). They insist that ID is just an argument from ignorance—plugging God into the gaps of our current scientific understanding. Darwinists have made many thoughtful arguments over the years, but this isn't one of them. The theory of intelligent design holds that many things in nature carry a clear signature of design. The theory isn't based on what scientists *don't* know about nature, but on what they *do* know. It's built on a host of scientific discoveries. To demonstrate, let's take a journey.

Miracle of Rare Device

You're a computer geek living thirty years in the future, and you just won a lottery for a space flight to a distant planet, as yet unnamed. The rendezvous is SpaceX in south Texas. After a thorough physical, you enter the raindrop-shaped vessel along with the captain, pilot, and two other lottery winners. You're strapped into a cockpit with a panoramic window and hooked to various wires, patches, and tubes. The lottery winner to your left is a burly submarine engineer with short-cropped salt-and-pepper hair. The lottery winner to your right is a gangly blonde in her early thirties, a Caltech physicist.

The hatch is shut. The countdown begins. At seven you hear a low groaning. At three it drops an octave, the lights flicker, and your teeth vibrate

inside your gums. At zero the cabin falls silent, a stab of pain runs the length of your body, and you fall into darkness.

When you wake, eyes blurry, head aching, you rub your eyes and see that the ship is already approaching a moon marked by a pattern of blobs haphazardly swinging this way and that over the surface. *How long were you asleep?*

As your ship draws closer, you realize the moon isn't like any moon you've ever heard about. Your hands are clenched on the armrests. You try to relax. Farther and farther the ship descends. It's clear now that this strange moon is closer and smaller than you supposed, maybe only a dozen miles away and as many across.

If it's just a big asteroid, it's a strange one—almost perfectly round.

Suddenly you realize, it's not a moon. It's a giant machine, one far bigger than any manmade object you've ever encountered.

You're close enough now to make out millions of portholes on its surface, portholes opening and shutting as millions of ships enter and exit.

You expect your ship to move into orbit around the space station, but now you realize that one hole—barely larger than the ship—lies directly ahead and the pilot is making straight for it.

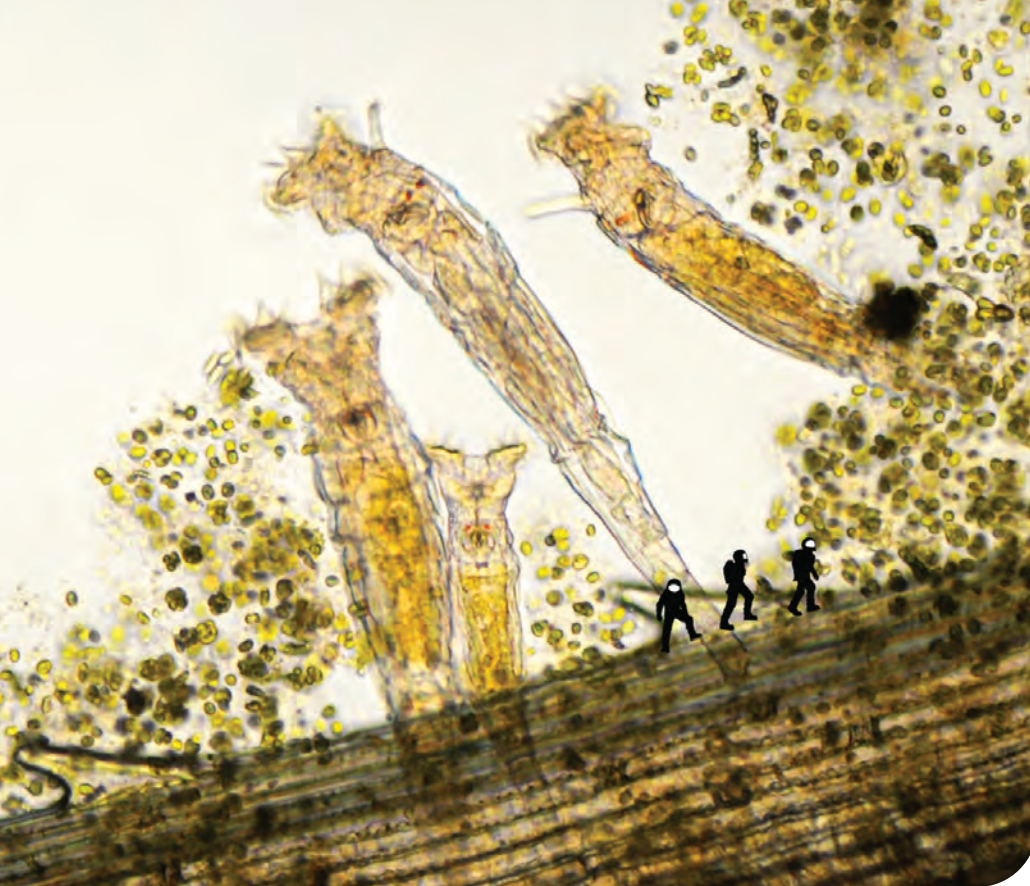
You find yourself holding your breath and counting down from ten, wondering if these are the final seconds of your life.

The engineer beside you crosses himself and murmurs, "What ... is it?"

"Byzantium," the captain whispers mysteriously.

In the next moment you're through the portal and onto the other side.





does something no human factory is anywhere close to doing—it builds copies of itself.”

What was the pilot suggesting—that the space station was built by aliens?

He continues. “Don’t get me wrong. As extraordinary as this factory is, it isn’t perfect. Occasionally when it builds a copy of itself, there’s a minor difference, a copying error. But as the French say, *viva la différence*. Those tiny differences made all of this possible. You see, occasionally, one of those copying errors was actually an improvement. The improvement was preserved, and over time a series of these tiny improvements led to

In modern parlance, the ancient capital city of Byzantium, with its intricate and devious political environment, has come to serve as a metaphor for all things labyrinthine and, well, Byzantine. Immediately you understand why the captain would refer to your destination by the name of that ancient city. Within is a realm of unparalleled sophistication, a labyrinth of intricate corridors and conduits networking off in every direction, some stretching off to processing units and assembly stations, others to what the captain explains is an enormous computer, as yet far out of sight, at the center of the space station.

On and on you fly. When the central processing unit at last rounds into view, it looks like a space station itself, about a half a mile across and shaped like a geodesic dome. The pilot threads the ship through a tiny portal. Inside, in every direction you look, are mile on mile of twisting ladders.

“They’re for storing data,” the captain explains. “They’re part of the hard drive, more or less.”

“I had no idea we were this advanced!” the lottery winner to your left says. “How did we manage it? Is this all SpaceX’s doing?”

“Us?” the pilot says. “Don’t be silly. This factory

the extraordinary factory before us. Initially the factory was quite crude, but over time—”

The physicist interrupts. “Wait, how crude could it have been if it could build copies of itself? We’ve never managed to build a factory that could build a factory that could build a factory that could build a—”

“What are you suggesting?” the pilot snaps. “Are you some sort of religious freak?”

The physicist blinks, disoriented by the seemingly random charge. “No, I—.” She tries again. “I just mean that the engineers who built this must

have been brilliant. It’s phenomenal!”

The pilot shakes his head paternalistically. “I think it’s time we cleared up the confusion. Time to let you in on the secret.”

Here the captain nods. “Everything was on a need-to-know basis. You three were chosen, each for a particular expertise—an engineer, a physicist, a software architect. The entire project is hush-hush.”

As you listen, you realize that the long twisting ladders outside the big viewing window seem to have grown larger. The ship has drawn up beside one, and the twisting ladder strikes you as oddly familiar. Suddenly it hits you, but the engineer beside

In every direction you look you discover some new miracle of rare device, nanotechnology far beyond anything humans have yet achieved.

you blurts it out first. "A DNA model—the size of a building!"

He tries to leap from his seat to point, but he's caught by the intricate restraint system. "Look! The ladder rails are the double helical structure, and rungs across the middle are the nitrogenous bases. It's all coming back to me."

The pilot nods. "Adenine, thymine, guanine, and cytosine."

The captain chimes in. "The genetic code's four-character alphabet—A, T, G, and C for short."

"This is where genetic defects come from," the pilot adds. "Cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia. If there's a genetic defect, eventually you'll find a glitch in a strand of DNA for the guilty party."

The architecture is breathtakingly elegant, but you notice that the sequence of letters on any given rail follow one another in a seemingly random sequence.

The engineer interrupts your train of thought. "If this models DNA, what's all this other ... the space station, I mean?"

"The larger sphere is the cell as a whole," the pilot says. "The smaller inner sphere is the nucleus."

"Where," the captain adds, "the biological information is processed and shipped out as code for helping build the various protein machines."

You wonder, does this really model a one-celled organism? Could a tiny cell really be this sophisticated? And could even Elon Musk, with all the money in the world, build something this advanced?

The engineer beside you breaks in with another question. "Why was I brought in? My engineering work looks like Tinkertoys beside this stuff."

The captain drops the other shoe. "Humans didn't build this. And no, an extra-terrestrial race didn't build it either."

"Nobody built it," the pilot interjects.

The captain seems to bite his tongue here, and then he continues. "You know how physicists have been trying to unite Einstein's theory of relativity with quantum physics? A few years back, a pair of government physicists succeeded."

"*The theory of everything*," the pilot intones.

"So-called," the captain continues. "This discovery has allowed us to make a series of major technological breakthroughs. The whole endeavor is classified, but as we push forward, we have to bring more and more talent in. The three of you have been recruited into the project."

At last the captain cuts to the chase. "The so-called 'theory of everything' has taught us how to miniaturize things," he says. "When you woke from the initial shock, the miniaturization process was underway. That vague blob you saw when you first awoke? That's a cell, looking about as big as cells looked in the best microscopes of the 19th century. You were 700 times smaller than normal, meaning the cell looked 700 times bigger. Then, as we drew closer to the cell, we continued to shrink down and down until we were a billion times smaller. This allowed us to enter the cell and now the cell nucleus. In the 19th century, the cell was a black box, a mystery. Most scientists pictured it as simple, like a little sack of goo. As you can see, they missed the mark by just a bit."

As the ship weaves its way through the nucleus over the next few hours, you witness a stunning array of raw materials and finished products shuttling along microtubule tracks to and from the many assembly plants in the outer regions of the larger and encompassing cell factory. The machines all around the ship are incalculably numerous and fantastically various. There are molecular machines to haul cargo along molecular tracks. There are molecular cables, molecular ropes, molecular pulleys. Light-powered

machines that harness light particles and store them in molecular batteries. Machines to flip cellular switches, machines to send electrical current through nerves, machines to build other machines (and themselves), machines to swim, machines to copy, machines to untangle and splice, machines to ingest and digest. In every direction you look you discover some new miracle of rare device, nanotechnology far

"You're saying random errors sifted by natural selection wrote all this software code, all this hardware? Built a system light years more sophisticated than our best robots and our best computer programs? . . . Are we sure this guy should be steering?"





beyond anything humans have yet achieved.

The engineer finds his voice. "How does the cell know how to build all these machines, fuel them, orchestrate them?"

"Part of the answer: It uses the same thing a robot uses," the captain says. "Digital information. Some of that information is stored on these winding ladders all around us, on the DNA. The DNA is like a software program. Its four-character alphabet combines in various ways to form a twenty-character alphabet of amino acids. Each amino-acid 'character' is three DNA letters long. That twenty-character alphabet is then used to write the long protein sentences, the molecular machines, you see working all around us."

The physicist leans forward excitedly. "I get it now!" she exclaims. "I couldn't figure out why the As, Ts, Cs, and Gs were strung along the double helices in a random order. But it isn't random. They're coding information, genetic information. Novels and computer programs and instruction manuals—things like that don't use recurring patterns of letters. They couldn't convey their information that way. It would be like trying to write a friend where B always had to follow A, and the Cs had to come in threes. If every letter you set down was governed by a rule like 'repeat the letter and then skip ahead two letters in the alphabet,' you'd never get anything meaningful written."

The captain nods. "If you're going to code information, you can't be shackled at every step by predetermined laws. That doesn't mean you can set down the letters at random. Imagine randomly shuffling the code in a software program. You'd crash it. Same

thing happens when you start randomly shuffling around the letters down here. The letters appear in a very specific sequence for a reason. That's the sequence that works for that particular biological machine."

"But random changes do occur in the order of the letters," the pilot protests, "and they're not always lethal. Sometimes they're helpful. That's evolution."

The physicist gives the pilot a look. "You're saying random errors sifted by natural selection wrote all this software code, all this hardware? Built a system light years more sophisticated than our best robots and our best computer programs?"

The pilot nods.

The submarine engineer shakes his head and looks to you. "Are we sure this guy should be steering?"

A Miniature World

Of course, the captain, pilot, and voyage are make-believe, but the debate is real. The intricate world of the cell described in this story is also real. It is the discovery of this miniature world of rare device, not ignorance, that drives the contemporary theory of intelligent design. ©

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Designing Dystopia

The Transhumanist Temptation to Play God

by Denyse O'Leary

A recent book from Sophia Institute Press provides a handy primer for a rapidly growing and ominous mindset of our era, transhumanism. In *The Transhumanist Temptation: How Technology and Ideology Are Reshaping Humanity—And How to Resist*, a thoughtful young writer named Grayson Quay looks at how the idea of transcending our humanity originated and how it impacts our social and political life today.

The term *transhumanism* was popularized by British scientist Julian Huxley (1887–1975), a grandson of T. H. Huxley (also known as “Darwin’s bulldog”). In a 1957 essay, he expressed a thought that many intellectuals shared—that we humans have somehow found ourselves in charge of evolution.

Their mid-20th-century aspirations combined with the then-popular existentialist mindset, which held that a human being is “the being that define itself” (à la Sartre), to foster an intellectual climate in which, as Quay puts it, “the individual’s freedom to craft his or her own identity becomes sacrosanct. Inhibiting that freedom becomes blasphemy.”

“It’s unlikely that any of these thinkers envisioned virtual immortals, cyborg supersoldiers, or vat-grown designer babies,” he observes, “but they all played a role in demolishing the barriers that made such innovations morally unthinkable.” Huxley, Sartre, and the existentialists are now long forgotten in popular culture, but those barriers are still demolished.

For example, our bodies have become regarded as fully modular and interchangeable. Women are described by medical professionals as “vagina owners” rather than women, or “chestfeeders” rather than breastfeeders. Transgenderism, Quay reminds us, is an early stage of transhumanism.

Stranger Things Will Follow

As Quay observes, “In the transhuman future, your body is not an integral part of your identity. It’s a thing, or rather a collection of things, all of which have specs and price tags.” And it is scheduled for planned obsolescence: you morph into a bionic entity, integrating artificial intelligence and replacing

parts as you go along.

Quay urges us to look beyond headline grabbers to see that, in the big picture, our society has been headed

this way for a long time. Transhumanism just takes popular ideologies about the autonomous self to their logical conclusion. He places the ultimate origin in the Garden of Eden, where the serpent tempted Eve with, “Ye shall be as gods.”

He is not saying that we will all willingly become transhumanists. Rather, in a society built around transhumanist aspirations,

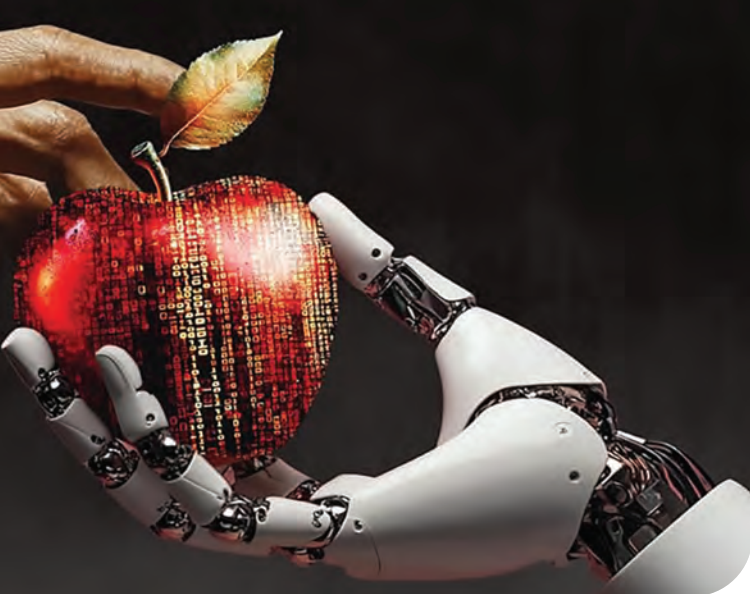
If you want to be “normal,” you’ll have to become transhuman.... It may be that no one will force you to grow your baby in a pod or get augmented reality visual implants. But you won’t be the one controlling those technologies, either, and the ways in which they’re reshaping you and the people around you might not become obvious until it’s too late.

Transhumanism has begun to invade the church. Yes, there is a Christian Transhumanist Association, but one needn’t bother to join. In 2023, the Anglican Church of Canada adopted a rite for blessing gender transitions. Among mainstream Protestant groups, we can expect every similar development to be handled the same way, providing proof that that church “is no longer operating from Christian premises but merely applying Christian language to the transhumanism that permeates our culture.”

Urgent but Gloomy

Quay sees no hope of transhumanism just fading away; it is embedded in our culture:

There’s no saving the American left from its total bondage to transhumanism. The



Democratic Party's alliances with feminism (largely reduced to birth control and abortion), the LGBT movement (swallowed up entirely by transgenderism), and an elite class that prides itself on its decadent late-liberal values have made sure of that. But although the right has a better chance at winning some partial and temporary victories for humanity, certain movements within it simply offer transhumanism in a different guise.

Is he being too harsh? It's worth reflecting that top female Democrats like Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris would not likely oppose—on their own—something so deeply wrong as double

mastectomies for minor girls on the grounds that the girls were “born in the wrong body.” That’s how far transhumanism has penetrated already.

The shocking part of Quay’s book—the reason friends recommended that I read and review it—is the question he asks: Will most Christians even *want* to oppose transhumanism?

Transgenderism follows the same transhumanist logic as birth control, abortion, and surrogacy: horror and resentment toward a healthy bodily function plus insistence on one’s inalienable right to control, halt, or out-source that process. As with birth control, the point is not happiness. It’s autonomy.

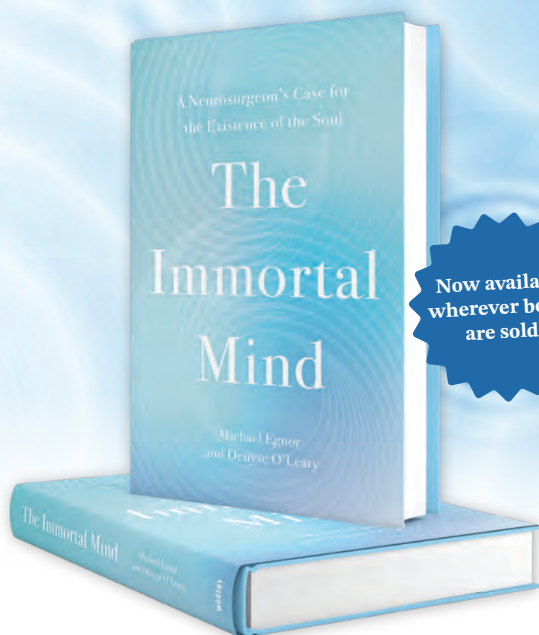
Are We Already Transhuman-Compliant?

Quay’s argument demands a thoughtful response. How much of the insistence on the right to *artificially* control one’s own fertility functions as an early acceptance of transhumanist premises?

Despite the “How to Resist” phrase in the subtitle, Quay has little to say about proposed responses; perhaps that is for another book. Here he mainly challenges us to consider the extent to which we are already transhuman-compliant. We can’t be sure where we should go unless we first understand where we are. ☉

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Michael Egnor



Denyse O'Leary

Manhood in the Balance

Nothing But a Man

by Anthony Esolen

In October 1969, just after the baseball season ended, the owner of my favorite team, the Saint Louis Cardinals, traded two all-stars, Gold Glove outfielder Curt Flood and catcher Tim McCarver, to the Philadelphia Phillies for the much-troubled, troublemaking, and immensely talented first baseman Dick Allen. There were a few other players in the mix, but that was the heart of the trade. Flood and Allen were black.

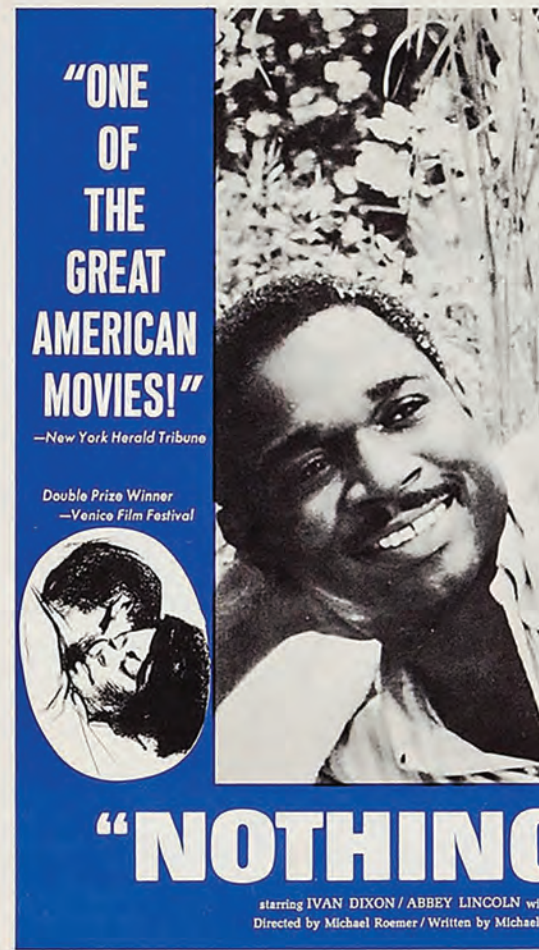
Allen, who had grown up in the more tolerant working-class suburbs of Pittsburgh, underwent one misery after another, trying to play in Philadelphia for racist and notoriously unforgiving fans. Flood, whose early career had been stalled by a racist manager in Saint Louis, did not want to leave his team and his city. The Cardinals had recently gone to three World Series, winning two, led by Hall of Famers Bob Gibson, Lou Brock, and Flood himself, all of them

black. He held out and sued Major League

Baseball for its infringement of his right, and every player's right, to negotiate contracts on his own. He said he wanted to be treated not as a piece of merchandise, not as chattel, but "as a man." He lost the suit, but it would not be long before the principle he fought for would carry the day.

"As a Man"

It is hard now to remember that the male leaders of the Civil Rights movement spoke in such powerful and straightforwardly masculine terms. They wanted their *manhood* to be honored and to be given full freedom in the workplace and in other areas of civil life. To duck and shuffle and put up with a hundred indignities every day, without a chance to let a good sock in the jaw clear the air and perhaps forge a friendship across the racial divide, was to agree to be less than a man. But then, there were plenty of other ways to be less than a man, ways that have nothing to do with race but that racist indignities set as a snare before your feet, or embittered you if you did fall into them. And here we come to the most remarkable film about race and manhood that I have ever seen. It is not the gritty and justly celebrated *In the Heat of the Night* and certainly not the sentimental and embarrassing *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*—the latter a terrible vehicle for Sidney Poitier's brilliance; for that brilliance, and for the



Nothing But a Man (1964)





G BUT A MAN"

h Gloria Foster & Julius Harris / Produced by Robert Young-Michael Roemer-Robert Rubin
Roemer and Robert Young / A Roemer-Young Du-Art Production / A Cinema V Presentation.

subject of racial conflict and hatred, see *No Way Out* or *The Defiant Ones*.

No, the film I have in mind is *Nothing But a Man* (1964), starring Ivan Dixon—handsome, quiet, as a smoldering fire is quiet. Dixon was as talented an actor as anyone of his day, but roles for black actors were only beginning to loosen up. You may know him as the radio operator Kinchloe in that zany and campy World War II sitcom *Hogan's Heroes*, where his talents were mostly wasted. But perhaps my glance at World War II is apropos. The director of *Nothing But a Man*, Michael Roemer, who was also one of the two writers of the screenplay, had escaped as a Jewish boy from Nazi Germany, where he had witnessed how racism there prevented his father and his grandfather from providing for their family, and that was *before* the mass murders. He eventually came to the United States, where he was a professor of literature at Yale University, passing away several weeks ago as I write these words. He and his co-writer Robert M. Young went to the South to live with black families in order to try to experience life through their eyes,

while being themselves objects of hatred, contempt, and threats of deadly violence.

To Be a Man

The plot avoids every cliché, every easy answer to the problems besetting the black man. For the title of the film is also a challenge: to deserve treatment as nothing but a man, you must first *be a man*. Duff Anderson (Dixon) is a worker on a railroad gang. That's how the movie begins, with that hard work on the railroad, as one man sets the spikes to secure the new track and hammers them in so they do not move, while another man follows with a hand-held diesel-powered spike driver to pound them all the way down. The workers are black. Your first assumption will be that it's a chain gang from a southern prison. It isn't. The men are free, at least in a legal sense. But freedom without virtue is just another snare, and Duff's fellow workers fall for it, spending their idle time and their good but idle wages on drink, gambling, and cheap women.

So one night Duff walks to the nearby town, wandering over to the black church, where a revival is being held—and Roemer secured the services of one Reverend Marshal Tompkin to play the part of a visiting revivalist minister, leading the congregation in a charismatic frenzy filled with singing and shouting and the swaying of heads and shoulders unlike anything I've ever experienced. Duff, who says he isn't religious but who admits that he does sort of believe in God, isn't moved by the words, if you can make them out, but by one of the singers in the choir, Josie (played by jazz singer Abbey Lincoln).

We need men. Those communities and nations that get them will be dominant in the world to come. I don't know if that was one of the things that Ivan Dixon wanted to get across. Perhaps it was, perhaps it wasn't. *Nothing But a Man* shows it nonetheless.

Josie is intelligent and very pretty, and she has noticed Duff, too. She is also the daughter of Reverend Dawson, the pastor of the church, a man who represents one way of dealing with racism, the strategy of waiting things out, not making waves, building up

self-contained and self-sufficient communities. It has worked, modestly so. They haven't had a lynching in town in eight years, he says. They're getting their own school.

Reverend Dawson and his wife do not want Josie to go out with Duff, and there's good reason why not. Duff has openly admitted to Josie that he's not interested in marriage at all, but in having a good time with her. That attitude is seconded by the men, half-men, he has been working with. It is also seconded by Duff's father, Will Anderson, whom he hasn't seen since he was a small boy—and lest we get sentimental and view Duff as merely a victim, we find out that he himself has had a son whom he hasn't seen since he was a baby. That little boy has no words in the film. He's been cared for by a woman, not his mother, who doesn't give a damn about him; it appears that it may have stunted his intellectual and emotional development.

At this point, we see that the film can go in one of two predictable ways. Either Duff is converted by the Dawsons, or Josie Dawson is corrupted or brought down into the gutter by Duff. The film avoids both. Things are not so easy. Duff hunts his father down, an intelligent but worthless man, hopelessly alcoholic though loved by the woman he lives with and does not support. "Is she good in the hay?" asks old Will Anderson about Josie, when Duff mentions her. "No point marryin' her just to find out." The film doesn't present that as bawdy and jocular advice. We have seen in the opening of the film the dreadful results of that way of life: a black woman named Doris, debauched, broken-spirited, and ugly, hanging about the bar to sell for a beer or two what nobody wants. When Will dies, Duff and Will's woman Lee manage to get him buried decently, and all he has in the world is what's in his pockets, which isn't much.

Nor are we to accept Reverend Dawson's way, even granting its strong and mostly beneficial influence upon Josie. For Josie keeps both her counsel and her virtue, resisting Duff's irresponsible advances, till finally she breaks free from her father's house. They go to the City Hall and get married. It will not mark any rapprochement between the two men. Duff must give up the good wages he was making as an itinerant on the railroad, but when he gets a job at the local sawmill, he finds he can't get along with the whites, even when they treat him in what they think is a friendly way; he will not be bullied by the obnoxious, or patronized by the smug. He loses that job straightaway, and Reverend Dawson tells him he knew it was going to happen. But Duff won't take that from him, either. "You been stoopin' so long," Duff says, "you don't even know how to stand straight no more! You just half a man!" A slight

tremor in the lips gives us to know that the sword has struck home.

A High Aspiration

"Nothing but a man," that's all Duff wants to be, but that's also a high aspiration, something we in our time have largely forgotten. The boy does not simply and effortlessly grow up to be a man. There are dragons to be slain along the way, and those include the dragons within. The love between Josie and Duff is warm and real; they can tease each other and laugh; their relations as man and wife are as hot as iron in the furnace. Soon, Josie is carrying his child, and she's already told him she wants to adopt that abandoned son of his. Reverend Dawson, meanwhile, manages to get Duff a job at a local gas station, making not as much money as when he was at the sawmill. But when Duff bristles at the foul treatment he gets from the imbecilic white boys who stop for 38 cents' worth of gasoline, who really just want to needle him, and who even say some threatening things about his wife, Duff refuses to answer them, and when the sympathetic boss at the gas station asks him to apologize, he refuses to do that too. So the job is gone.

Can Josie bring him round with a pep talk? Not at all. Duff must find his manhood, which in his case will require loyalty and suffering. I won't spoil here the ending of the film.

It's not clear to me whether Ivan Dixon was a religious man, nor do I know whether Michael Roemer practiced the Jewish faith of his fathers. I recommend *Nothing But a Man* for its excellence as a work of art, for its honesty, and for an implicit message to Christians. We must live in the world, such as it is. But it is too easy, in our habits, to let the world do the dictating, and to have Christ sit quietly in a corner somewhere, or to let him out now and again in a revival for the emotions but not for concerted action. It is also easy, especially now that one sort of conformist Christianity has been swept aside, that which was characterized by Reverend Dawson and which was criticized by Martin Luther King, to embrace a different sort of conformist Christianity—for example, the conformism of several notable bishops in my own church, the Roman Catholic, who have not learned the lessons of sexual breakdown that this film in 1964 already had to teach. But compromises with the world come in many guises, not only in the mock liberal.

We need *men*. Those communities and nations that get them will be dominant in the world to come. I don't know if that was one of the things that Ivan Dixon wanted to get across. Perhaps it was, perhaps it wasn't. *Nothing But a Man* shows it nonetheless. ☺



No Neutral Ground

When Truth is Under Siege, It's Time to Plant Your Flag

by Thomas Williams

In the 16th century, Pope Clement VII refused to grant an annulment to the marriage between England's King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. In response, Henry rejected the authority of the pope and had himself declared "Supreme Head of the Church of England."

When Henry required all royal officials and church clergy to affirm his headship by signing the Oath of Supremacy, his chancellor, Sir Thomas More, resigned. The 1966 film *A Man for All Seasons* vividly depicts the ordeal More endured as a result. His conscience prevented him from endorsing King Henry's takeover of the church, but, knowing that open opposition to the king would be fatal, More did not state a reason for his resignation. He never spoke either for or against Henry's takeover, hoping silence would grant him sufficient legal protection.

Because More was well-known as a man of impeccable integrity, his silence rang loudly throughout the realm. Craving the one

endorsement that would lend an air of legitimacy to his takeover, Henry refused to accept More's silence as final. He ordered his ministers to harass More with endless interrogations, pressuring him either to sign the oath or stumble into self-incrimination. But More consistently declined to sign and adroitly sidestepped their verbal traps.

The Wisdom & Dangers of Silence

Ecclesiastes chapter three tells us there is "a time to keep silence and a time to speak." Silence may sometimes be the way of wisdom; a given issue may not be sufficiently important to warrant conflict. Or, when an issue inflame

irrational hysteria or rage, arguing can be like spitting into the wind. In such cases, silence may be a way of embracing Jesus's warning not to cast pearls before swine; pressing unwelcome truth may incite volatile retaliation that merely escalates conflict without advancing acceptance of the truth.

Jesus illustrated this principle when his enemies tried to trap him with a loaded question about whether the Jews should pay taxes to Caesar. To answer yes would inflame the Jews, and to answer *no* would inflame their Roman overlords. With his brilliant reply, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's," Jesus gave his critics an irrefutable answer which addressed a larger principle while also preserving silence on their gotcha question. His silence on the specific question of paying taxes to Caesar defused the volatile potential for unprofitable conflict on a controversy not central to his mission.

Sometimes, however, an issue may be of such magnitude that silence is not an option. Silence is not morally acceptable when an injustice or abuse needs to be challenged. Increasingly today, silence is not an option for another reason. Debate over hot-button issues has generated a toxic environment much like that which ensnared Sir Thomas More. If you don't agree with today's secularists on the racial, sexual, and social justice issues dear to them, they may come after you. Neutrality is not allowed. To many, silence is construed as opposition. Celebrities have been excoriated for failure to support ideologies such as Critical Race Theory, climate change, and transgenderism though they never voiced any opinion, positive or negative.

The Escalating War Against Truth

The targets of the enemies of truth have expanded beyond out-of-step celebrities. We ordinary

citizens in everyday vocations can now find ourselves in the woke culture's crosshairs. One example is Peter Vlaming. Vlaming was a popular French teacher in a Virginia high school when a female student announced that she identified as a boy. School policy required teachers to accommodate such declarations. Mr. Vlaming, a committed Christian, believes that one's sex is an unalterable biological reality. He also believes in speaking truth and that referring to a female using masculine pronouns would signal complicity with a lie.

Mr. Vlaming managed to comply technically with school policy by adopting a strategy similar to that of Thomas More. He avoided pronouns altogether and referred to the student only by her name, even when pronouns would be more natural. But that was not enough for school officials. They ordered him to stop avoiding male pronouns when referring to the student. Vlaming refused, and the school fired him. He wasn't fired for what he said but for not

saying what in good conscience he *could not* say. He was fired for his silence.¹

The Unity of Truth

Was this controversy over pronouns a hill worth dying on? Peter Vlaming obviously thought so. He realized this issue was tethered to a larger one involving the nature of truth itself. All truth is unified and to break with one part of it is to break with the whole.

As depicted in the film *Thomas More*'s friends and family were blind to this principle. They urged him to save himself by acquiescing to what they saw as a relatively minor issue so he could live to fight another day over greater issues more hostile to truth. But both More and Vlaming knew that to yield even to a seemingly small lie would mean taking a step away from truth that would weaken their resistance to taking subsequent steps.

In Peter Vlaming's case, to comply with the gender lie would be to endorse a cultural shift away from reality, a shift that is

plunging Western culture into sexual chaos. He faced a decision we all are at risk of facing each day as woke culture encroaches on our freedom to express our convictions. Is any truth too trivial, too low on the scale of values, to merit the risk of laying our neck on the cancel-culture chopping block? It's easy to say yes. It's easy to point out that there are larger issues looming over us than the use of gender pronouns. It's easy to rationalize and ask what harm is there in sparing a confused teenager emotional distress by accommodating her gender preference? Why not yield to her pronoun demands? You can still hold in your mind a private conviction that gender is indelibly binary, that male and female are unchangeable realities. Where is the danger in making such a trivial compromise?

The danger is great. Failure to defend truth in a culture increasingly hostile to it can harm us in at least three ways. First, it can harm our personal integrity. We express who we are in our words

An advertisement for Salvo magazine. The background is a photograph of a city square with a digital display showing the magazine's website. The website features the headline "The Epic Struggle Is Real" and several article thumbnails. Overlaid on the left is the website URL and a list of subscriber benefits. On the right, the word "Read" is above "Salvo" in large bold letters, with "everywhere" below it in a smaller font. A thick black horizontal bar is at the bottom right.

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and actions. To say or do anything inconsistent with our inner conviction causes our actions to conflict with our inner self; our lives are not integrated. To put it bluntly, we lack integrity. To maintain integrity is to seamlessly integrate one's conviction with truth and to reflect that conviction in what we say and do. To act or speak in ways inconsistent with one's belief is to lie, not only to others, but also to ourselves—and to God.

Second, taking that first step in the wrong direction makes it easier to take the second. The film depicts King Henry's hatchet man, Thomas Cromwell, inducing the ambitious young Richard Rich to finally step over a moral line he's been tiptoeing toward but has hesitated to cross. Cromwell offers him a lucrative position in exchange for revealing confidential information gleaned from private conversation. After Rich succumbs, Cromwell says, "There, that wasn't too painful, was it?"

"No," replies Rich.

"And you'll find it easier next time," Cromwell assures him. Sure enough, by taking this first little step away from truth, Rich embarks on a descent into duplicity that eventually leads him to deliver in court the lie that finally convicts the innocent Thomas More to death.

Third, one who glosses over "trivial" truths for the sake of living another day to fight larger battles deceives himself. Failure to defend the "small" truths atrophies the moral muscle needed to defend the larger ones when the need arises. In the 1964 film *Man in the Middle*, Robert Mitchum plays Lt. Colonel Barney Adams, a military lawyer whose superiors pressure him to conduct his defense of a psychotic man in a way that will ensure the defendant's conviction for murder. At issue is the U.S. Army's determination to sacrifice this man, whether guilty or not, for political reasons, in the belief that his execution will

facilitate the greater good of shortening the war.

Adams comes to realize that he holds the key not only to an innocent man's life, but also to a gate that will release a stampede of truth-trampling relativism in the name of beneficial pragmatism. If he chooses not to defend this "less-important" truth because it stands in the way of an objective superior view as more important, not only does an innocent man lose his life, Adams himself loses the integrity required to defend truth at all.

The Shrinking Neutral Ground

Like Sir Thomas More, Peter Vlaming, and Lt. Col. Adams, we face a corrosive relativism that can eat away not only our perception of truth but also our personal integrity. In a highly secularized society, where truth is under fire or even deemed nonexistent, no truth is too small to be defended. Truth is that which conforms to reality, and it cannot be divided into categories of small or large, expendable or critical. Reality is a unified whole encompassing everything that is true. It is that to which we must conform our lives, the unmoving rock on which we must plant our flag if we are to mount a defense against the age-old war on truth.

In his novel *That Hideous Strength*, C. S. Lewis warns that good and evil are becoming ever more sharply defined and neutral ground is shrinking to nonexistence. When silence can no longer be maintained with integrity, God calls us not to seek neutral ground, but to speak the truth and take the consequences. Near the end of *A Man for All Seasons*, Thomas More's daughter urges him to take King Henry's oath to save his life,

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saying that in any state where virtue reigned, he would be lauded as a hero. More replies,

If we lived in a state where virtue was profitable, common sense would make us saintly. But since we see that avarice, anger, pride, and stupidity commonly profit far beyond charity, modesty, justice, and thought, perhaps we must stand fast a little, even at the risk of being heroes.

We are called to stand fast now, while we have the freedom to do so. A time is coming when the option to choose a side will be closed forever. At that point every knee shall bow to the eternal, living embodiment of all truth. ☺

Note

1. After five years of legal wrangling, the school board cleared Mr. Vlaming's firing from his record and agreed to pay \$575,000 in damages and attorneys' fees.

Make Your Own Morality?

C. S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*

by Douglas Groothuis

Clive Staples (C. S.) Lewis (1898–1963), the bookish and book-writing Oxford don, is known for myriad literary achievements, both academic and popular, both fiction and nonfiction. I have been reading and re-reading his many books for nearly fifty years and have seen during this time a steady stream of books about nearly every aspect of his work and life. (I await *C. S. Lewis and his Dogs*, however.) For thirty years, I taught a course on the philosophy of C. S. Lewis, which kept me absorbed in his thinking consistently year after year (although I was immersed in it previously). Lewis never gets old and will be read a hundred years from now.

The man known for his (literally) epic children's series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and for his perennial bestseller, *Mere Christianity*, also wrote technical academic works throughout his career. One of the more scholarly works was a small book called *The Abolition of Man*, which is comprised of three transcribed lectures and an appendix. While many have told me that they find it difficult

if not impossible to read, I first read it while in college in 1977 and found a compelling argument for how materialism fails to support objective moral values.

The Abolition of Man, while not an apologetic for Christianity per se, argues cogently for a moral *telos* and standard for mankind. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis claims that a personal God is the best explanation for these truths.

Innovators & Conditioners vs. the *Tao*

But what does that odd title mean? How can man be "abolished"? Despite the title, Lewis does not mean the extermination of the human race. It all starts, seemingly innocuously, with a textbook for British high school students. Lewis hides the identities of two writers, authors of what he calls *The Green Book*, who claim that all statements of value are only statements about the person making the statement and are thus not very significant. In discussing a passage in Coleridge about whether a waterfall is "pretty" or "sublime," the two writers claim the dispute rests on a confusion, since the ascription should be traced to the one making the statement and not to the object in question (the waterfall). "This confusion is continually present in language as we use it," they write. "We appear to be saying something very important about something; and actually we are only saying something about our own feelings."

Lewis judges this assertion to contain a ghastly philosophy, that, if consistently applied, would destroy all objective value and leave human beings as soulless animals, subject to the command of those who create their *own* values willy-nilly and inflict their will on others with no apprehension of a moral law beyond themselves. Lewis calls them "Innovators." They reject what Lewis defends: "the doctrine of objective value" or "the *Tao*"—meaning, "the way of morality," not Taoism. By the *Tao*, Lewis means "the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are." Another phrase for this is realism with respect to value, whether moral or aesthetic. The claim Lewis is exposing and wants to refute is called relativism or nonrealism. But I get ahead of myself. What about that waterfall?



Lewis begins his analysis with an aesthetic judgment, not a moral one. This may strike us as odd. Isn't beauty in the eye of the beholder? What does a waterfall have to do with "the abolition of man"? He agrees with Coleridge that a waterfall has objective aesthetic value and properties, which can be identified, misidentified, or dismissed as nonexistent. The same applies to moral judgments, such as those pertaining to patriotism. But the two authors of *The Green Book* have evacuated the world of moral meaning, leaving the world a collection of material states and leaving us as no more than glorified organisms whose pretensions to being more than animals must be dressed down. If objective value is not resident in a transcendent objective reality, then neither instinct nor institutions can give it a home. In one of many lapidary quotes found here, Lewis writes,

From propositions about fact alone no *practical* conclusion can ever be drawn. *This will preserve society* cannot lead to *do this* except by the mediation of *society ought to be preserved*. *This will cost you your life* cannot lead directly to *do not do this*: it can lead to it only through a felt desire or an acknowledged duty of self-preservation. The Innovator is trying to get a conclusion in the imperative mood out of premisses in the indicative mood: and though he continues trying to all eternity he cannot succeed, for the thing is impossible.

In other words, you cannot derive a moral *ought* from a natural *is*. This is the mistake the atheist Sam Harris makes in *The Moral Landscape*. He simply assumes certain positive human and political values and proceeds to apply them to a godless world. But

he cheats, as Lewis here explains, and as philosopher William Lane Craig cogently insisted in a debate with Harris in 2011. Harris assumes what his worldview will not allow: objective moral value that is not based on mere physical states.

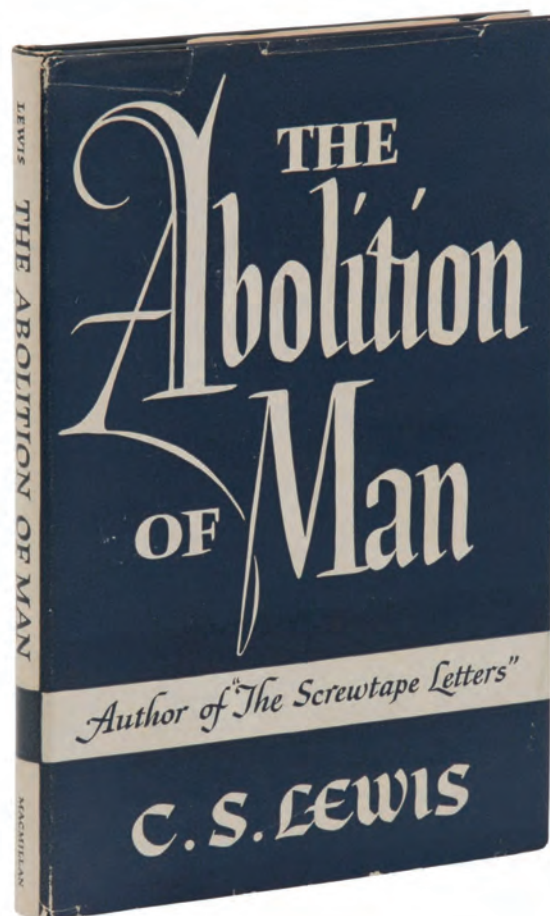
Instinct cannot be the guide if the *Tao* is removed, since there is no way to rank instincts without a moral standard, and our instincts may conflict with each other with no referee available. Lewis writes, "Telling us to obey Instinct is like telling us to obey 'people.' People say different things: so do instincts. Our instincts are at war." (As he writes in *Mere Christianity*, "The Moral Law tells us the tune we have to play: our instincts are merely the keys [of the piano].")

Those who reject the *Tao* have abolished the idea of human nature and its norms. They become "the Innovators," those who invent morality. To control society, they, as "Conditioners," must invent new and arbitrary rules and *condition* (not teach) people to follow them. (Francis Schaeffer called these "arbitrary absolutes.") Rational persuasion is impossible, since there is no practical reason remaining to guide us in this wasteland of a worldview. "The abolition of man" is complete, at least philosophically.

Moral Relativism & Its Consequences

Godless governments must abolish the biblical view of humanity—and all objective moral value—in order to implement their secular goals. Leaders become surrogate gods, wielding untutored power.

Lewis illustrates this philosophy in his fictional work, *That Hideous Strength*, which pairs well with *The Abolition of Man*, since Lewis was a brilliant Christian philosopher who was a master of both prose and fiction



Today, the rejection of human nature and its attending norms finds extreme expression in transgenderism—the claim that sexuality lacks any built-in purpose, but is, rather, subject to arbitrary revision according to subjective preferences. The abolition of man results in the abolition of sexuality as historically and biblically understood.

Man cannot truly be abolished, but he can be bruised, abused, and violated by false philosophies. Lewis's masterpiece is an intellectual antidote to that disaster. ☉

For Jesus, Jews & the World

How Aaron Abramson Found His Life's Purpose

by Terrell Clemmons

Aaron Abramson grew up in Seattle in a religiously mixed family and attended both synagogue and a Messianic Jewish congregation as a youth. When he was 15, his family relocated to Israel, where he enrolled in an orthodox yeshiva (Hebrew school) and then served in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) for three years.

The army years were intense, and by the time his service was up, he found himself in a dark place, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. He had seen things he couldn't unsee. One of his close friends had been kidnapped, tortured, and killed. The situation in Israel seemed hopeless. *What was the point of it all? Is there really a God out there? If God did call people, what does that mean? What is the purpose of being Jewish? And what about the rest of the world?*

He returned to the U.S. for some time away, where he travelled aimlessly with a friend, a car, and a backpack—sometimes working a job here or there, other times just meeting people and drifting and seeking ... something. He read

books on topics from Nietzsche to Hare Krishna to New Age spiritualities. Bits and pieces struck him as possibly true, but nothing resonated directly. After a year on the move, he felt more lost than ever.

"The Answers You're Looking For"

He returned to Israel and picked up a New Testament. A few chance encounters in the U.S. had provoked his curiosity. One took place in San Diego, where he'd met a blind seminary student who had veritably lit up when he discovered Aaron was from Israel.

"Wow! You're from Israel! My faith is Jewish, and I believe in a Jewish Messiah!" he had said.

What does he mean by that? Aaron wondered.

The man even invited Aaron to his home. "Come use my home! Take a shower. I'll make you something to eat."

Who is this person? Why would he invite me to his home? Aaron found the whole encounter confusing, but the way the stranger reached out had made an impression. At another point, soon before his return to Israel, another person he'd met suggested he read the New Testament: "I think you'll find there all the answers you're looking for."

What did he have to lose? He started reading.

Immanuel

He was especially taken with the Gospels. Jesus' life, his words, the things he said and did drew Aaron inexorably to him. The idea that Jesus loved the world, that God loved *him*, brought tears to his eyes. If ever in history there had been a Messiah, or even an *idea* of a Messiah, these were the kinds of things the Messiah would say and do. Sitting on a bench in Jerusalem's Independence Park, he cried out to God: *I don't know where else to go. I don't know who to turn to. But this Jesus that I'm reading about? I really want him to be the Messiah.*

It was a simple, honest prayer. But, how to follow Jesus? Aaron had no idea, but Jesus' departing words, "And lo! I am with you always to the very end of the age," helped him see a way forward. *Jesus' name is Immanuel*, he reflected (Immanuel means "God with us"). *God wasn't going to leave him to try and figure out life and faith on his own. Jesus would walk with him and never leave him.*

He started to pray and share this great news, starting with two of his closest friends. *Lord, if I'm going to follow you, I need you to help my two friends see the truth. They're going to have to follow you too. Otherwise it won't work.* Later, he would realize that this



was a rather naïve prayer, but both of his friends did become believers within a few months, and the three of them began to grow together. None of them knew how to “be a Christian,” but God began to teach them, and they began to grow.

Church

Next came church. Church felt utterly foreign to him, so he prayed about that, too. *God, I need your help because I don’t fit into church.* He ended up trying one in the old city called the Jerusalem Church. Most of the members were former Muslims of Arab descent. In a way, it was an early test of the faith. *If Jesus is really who he says he is, thought Aaron, and he reconciles men to God and men to one another, then the people in this church should be my brothers.* And, indeed, Aaron was welcomed with open arms.

The gospel truly is good news, and it was there that he discovered the beauty of it. Not only that, but the Jewish teachings and practices he’d been exposed to as a youth took on fresh meaning. The revelation of God’s faithful care and presence had been right there in the Hebrew scriptures all along. He was not a distant God but had been active throughout history and especially among his people. Surely, he is the same God today.

Jews for Jesus

The following year, a new adventure opened up. Sharing faith in Jerusalem was very difficult, but he met some people who appeared to be remarkably comfortable with it. They called themselves “Jews

for Jesus.” They were part of an evangelistic organization founded in 1973 specifically to reach out to Jewish people.

Aaron wanted to learn how to share the faith the way they did, and he was invited to train with them at Moody Bible Institute. Following the training, he took part in a month-long evangelistic campaign in New York City. A year later, in 1999, he joined Jews for Jesus as a staff member, and he’s served with them in various locations and capacities ever since.

He was stationed in New York, in fact, when the September 11th terrorist attack rocked the city.

Bringing the Gospel to the Jews

Evangelism always has its challenges, but being Jewish can further complicate it. He explains:

People would attack us, yell at us, or berate us, even throw coffee on us. Some people just didn’t like the fact that we were Jews for Jesus, especially if they were Jewish. Some find it a threat that a Jew had accepted Jesus but still called himself a Jew. If we had said, “I’m giving up my Jewishness; I’m a Christian, now,” they might still have an issue with us, but it wouldn’t be the same. I think a big part of it was that they felt we had betrayed our people. There are so few Jews in the world. How could we now become Christians?

Over the ensuing years, Jews for Jesus has expanded its outreach methods from the street evangelism of the early days. The website, JewsForJesus.org,

The revelation of God’s faithful care and presence had been right there in the Hebrew scriptures all along. He was not a distant God but had been active throughout history and especially among his people. Surely, he is the same God today.

contains a wealth of information and resources, including video testimonies of Jews who profess faith in Yeshua (Jesus) and a chat box where an inquirer can interact with a live person (not a bot). Staff and volunteers speak and teach in churches, especially on topics related to the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. They host dinners and holiday events so that people can experience, say, a Shabbat from a Jewish perspective. They operate a women’s shelter and have even opened coffee shops in Los Angeles, New York, and Tel Aviv. When war came to Israel on October 7, 2023, their boots on the ground mobilized to love their Israeli neighbors by providing hot meals and care packages to anyone in need.

Today, the feelings of meaninglessness and hopelessness are past history. Taking the gospel of Jesus to the Jews has become his life’s work. “I know what a transformative difference-maker Jesus was for me,” he says. “We have good news, and we want Jewish people to hear about it.” ☺





PERSON OF INTEREST

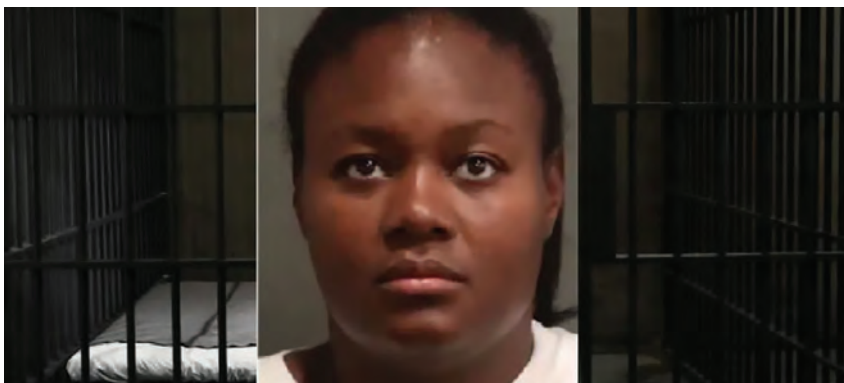


Pardoned for Life

A Conversation with Activist Bevelyn Beatty Williams

by Terrell Clemmons

Bevelyn Beatty Williams spoke at a “Jesus Matters” rally in front of an abortion clinic in New York City in June 2020. At this time, abortion centers were operating as normal while schools and businesses had been ordered closed because of Covid. The rally was intended to be an opportunity for Christians to come together and speak up for the children who could not speak for themselves. Law enforcement was present throughout, and she was not arrested or even ticketed for any violation of law.



More than two years later, she was notified that she was being charged with two crimes in connection with the rally. After a two-week trial, she was sentenced to 41 months in federal prison.

Your pro-life activism is not about being judgmental or holier than thou. It's personal for you.

When I first started going to the abortion clinic, it was because Governor Cuomo had legalized abortion up to nine months. I was more comfortable ministering to the homeless and things like that, but when he did that, I decided my comfort is irrelevant. This is a new devil. This is Moloch and Baal. These are God's children walking in here and God's children being scheduled to die.

When I was 15, I went into an abortion clinic. My dad's girlfriend took me. There were people outside, and I remember her saying, “Don't look at them. Look down.” So I looked down, and I did the unthinkable. I got my abortion done. Years later, standing in front of this clinic in New York, the Lord hit me. Boom! Those people were my opportunity to say, *I've changed my mind*. But I wasn't brave enough at the time to do that. At the time, I was thinking they were just crazy white people with their signs; let me just ignore them. Years later, I realized they weren't crazy. They were witnesses of Christ. So now I'm going to do for girls walking in what they did for me back then.

How did you become a Christian?

I was your bad girl party girl. One night I came home from the bar after doing shots with my friends. I was definitely intoxicated. I didn't like to show any vulnerability then, so I went into the bathroom so my roommate wouldn't hear me, and I started to cry. I cried and cried.

I prayed to God, *God help me because I am miserable.*

About two weeks later I was in jail waiting to be bailed out by my dad, and I met this Middle Eastern woman. She was mute. She didn't speak, and I was curious because she did not look like she belonged in jail. So I went up to her, and I introduced myself. She looked at me intently. She got out a piece of paper and wrote, "You need to surrender your life. God knows about that time you were in the bathroom crying out. You know, the next thing after jail is death. You need to give your life to Christ. The Lord will change your life around for the better, but you need to surrender."

That woman just read my life. For her to read me like that—I knew, this is God! This God is speaking to me. I'm struck! My heart is pierced. And I'm thinking to myself, I don't want to die. I don't want to end like that.

I remember walking out of that jail and saying to God, *Lord, I don't really know how to be a Christian. I don't know how to have faith in you.* I never thought Christ didn't exist. I knew he was Lord, but I didn't know how to

make him *my* lord. Up until this time, I did everything I did to survive. My circumstances were tough, so every decision I made was a survival decision. To go from survival mode to faith—I didn't know how to do that. So I said, *Lord, I'm going to trust you, but you're going to have to show me.* And that was the introduction to my faith.

How did you hold yourself together in prison?

By the time I went to prison, I was rooted. I wasn't ashamed when they asked me, why are you here? I'm here for preaching the gospel. I know who I am. I know where I came from. I'm not walking around with regrets. I'm solidified in my faith.

Did I want to be in prison? Absolutely not! But at the same time, I knew why I was there. I knew who I was there for.

You were quite literally a prisoner because of the gospel.

Correct, for my faith. Persecution, the Bible tells you, comes with the package. But at the same time I am also promised that the kingdom of heaven will be mine. Blessed are those who are persecuted for his name's sake, for the kingdom of heaven will be theirs. So I was walking in his promises, even in a concrete jungle.

Still, I could not sit and stew in depression in

"You want this woman arrested, but everybody's breaking the rules here. You have the pro-choice people blocking the door. You're opening the door. This is chaos. No." And that was it. Everyone walked away. Two years later, I'm federally indicted as a violent FACE Act offender.

prison. I could not stew too much on being away from my daughter, on being away from my husband, or I would break. And on top of that, I'm mission based. I thought, *Here I am in the same position as that woman who ministered to me and pulled me out of my sin. There must be some bad mama jamas in this prison that I gotta talk to. They must be so heavy for God's kingdom that I have to get up out of my satin pajamas and my comfy little memory foam bed to be in this prison for them. So I'm going to do it. They must be worth it.*

At the Jesus Matters rally, you were not arrested or ticketed for anything, but there was some kind of altercation.

Planned Parenthood has a strict non-engagement policy, but they went against their own policies and recruited abortion supporters to protest our rally. I was standing on a public sidewalk—as long as



PERSON OF INTEREST by Terrell Clemmons

I'm not blocking the door, there aren't legal restrictions on standing there. When anyone wanted to get in, I moved. I've been going there since January of 2019, and I was never arrested.

On this day in June of 2020, a lady was walking in, so I moved aside. But as I'm moving, one of Planned Parenthood's protesters opens the door. Boom! She whacks me with the door! I lost my balance and fell against it. As I'm getting up and off the door, she claims, "My hand, my hand's stuck in the door!" The police were there. They looked around and said to her, "There's a lot going on here. We're not getting involved in that. You want this woman arrested, but everybody's breaking the rules here. You have the pro-choice people blocking the door. You're opening the door. This is chaos. No." And that was it. Everyone walked away.

Two years later, I'm federally indicted as a violent FACE Act offender.¹ There were two charges: FACE and conspiracy. They wanted to indict me on conspiracy as a ringleader. A FACE conviction gets you maybe six months. If you get convicted on a conspiracy charge, that's a five-to-ten-year sentence. My FACE indictment was based on my Jesus Matters rally. My conspiracy indictment was based on all the different rallies I had been to around the U.S., including Atlanta, Nashville, and Fort Myers, Florida. They jumbled those up and tried to paint a picture to the jury of me as a ringleader, saying that I conspired all of these events. What they failed to realize is that I'm not the only person who does pro-life events. If any pro-life organization is having a pro-life event, whether they're Catholic, Protestant, or whatever, if they invite me, I'm coming. The prosecution was saying that because I attended these other events, because I recorded them, and because I was loud, I was the one who orchestrated them. I was the ringleader.

The jury found me guilty on FACE, but they found me not guilty of conspiracy. Yet during sentencing, all the other locations were brought back up. So basically, even though I was found not guilty of conspiracy, the judge used the same accusations to beef up my sentencing bracket. That's how I got sentenced to three and a half years.

You were being made an example of.

And they said that.

You described having a kind of epiphany at sentencing.

The judge asked me if I wanted to say anything. I asked if I could use the bathroom first, and while I was in there, I looked in the mirror and said, *Lord, Holy Ghost, you take over my mouth. Whatever I'm about to say, I want you to say it.* And then, I went back out and it all just flowed. The gist of what I said was this:

You guys look at my background—my petty crimes from 10 years ago that I did before I became a Christian, a misdemeanor trespassing charge from Nashville, and me being a "ringleader," even though I was found not guilty of that—y'all look at that record of things that y'all think I did wrong, and you judge me.

You know, I feel like a negro out of line. If I were a real criminal, I believe I would have gotten a slap on the wrist. I also believe if I were walking around here half naked, twirling around the stage and doing the things that you approve of us doing, I would have been applauded. But because I am standing against an agenda like abortion, I'm public enemy number one.

It's such a contradiction. You tell people this is a yellow brick road that you pave for us to go and get these abortions. Y'all just pave it and say, go. It's your body, your choice. But now, after I get the abortion, I was suffering from a broken heart, and I have this record that you judge—now you're ready to throw me in jail. Y'all are setting us up for failure.

Jesus came into my life. He delivered me. He set me free. I did what I did for Jesus. That's the reason why all these people here came to my sentencing. They are my family. They're all different colors, all different backgrounds, all different creeds. The one thing that brought us together was Jesus. I didn't stand out there doing what I do to condemn or judge anyone. I did it because I experienced abortion. I lived it. But Jesus saved me. Jesus washed me, he set me free. I'm not sitting here putting up a façade. This really happened. I really got saved.

After I finished, all the judge said in response was, "All right. Well, 41 months."

I just pray that she repents. She doesn't understand the cost, the cost of leadership. They think they get away with it. But you don't. You will answer to God for the decisions you make on someone else's life. ☸

—Bevelyn spent three months in prison until President Trump pardoned her on his third day in office

Note

1. Signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrance (FACE) prohibits obstructing the entrance to an abortion facility as well as using force or threatening force against someone seeking to enter.



as understood within Christianity, informs or interacts with the views advanced within a critical theoretical framework.

Critical Theorists in Their Own Words

Trueman places the origin of critical theory in the works of Hegel and Marx, then traces its development through thinkers like Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács to the Frankfurt School and Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Reich. As he lets these thinkers speak for themselves from their own writings, he provides the necessary commentary and clarification to draw out what is really there—what it is they are really putting forth. What Trueman delivers turns out to be a much more complicated and nuanced picture than an outright rejection (common among the political right), or full-throated acceptance (from the left), of critical theory. At the end of each chapter, he offers short postscripts with key takeaways from a Christian perspective—falsehoods that must be rejected, but also elements of truth the theorists were picking up on, though in a distorted way.

Trueman's balanced and thorough approach reminds us that,

The challenge to which critical theory therefore summons the church is to show, not merely to argue, that she has the answers. Critical theory does not so much provide Christians with a useful tool to think about the world as clarify a set of questions to which we have the answers already, if we open our eyes to see them.

And those questions are being asked by increasing numbers of people today, which gives us all the more reason to be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us. ☉

Critical Theory Matters

A Review of To Change All Worlds: Critical Theory from Marx to Marcuse by Carl R. Trueman

by Joshua Pauling

All of a sudden, everyone seems to have an opinion on critical theory. The once-obscure names of Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Wilhelm Reich, and others are now bandied about with an air of familiarity. But do we really know what we're talking about? How are we to think about critical theory—or, to put it more accurately, critical *theories*?

Enter Carl Trueman to clear the fog. Trueman has published a string of stellar books on the philosophical and cultural forces that have shaped our world today. And with this new one, *To Change All Worlds: Critical Theory from Marx to Marcuse*, he has added another to the list. In this book he sets out to help readers better grasp some of the foundational critical theorists on their own terms. In this sense, the book is not nearly as sweeping as his 2020 volume, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, nor perhaps as accessible as his 2022 book, *Strange New World*, though certainly there are some familiar names and ideas that provide important groundwork for all three. But this latest release is no less important, for it can help us make sense of some philosophers of the past few centuries who are difficult to understand but whose ideas have made an outsized impact on the lifeways and thought patterns of the modern West.

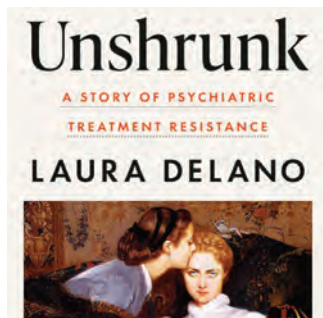
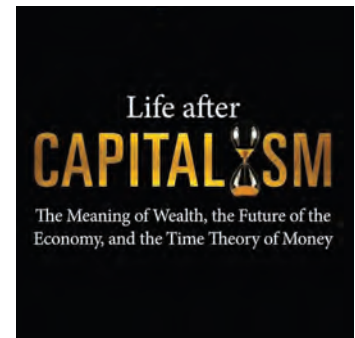
The Central Question: What it Means to Be Human

Trueman explains that this book is “an attempt to expound the critical theoretical ideas of a few chosen thinkers associated with the early development of critical theory in order to help us engage with more clarity on some of the most pressing issues of our own age.” Those pressing issues include everything from critical race theory to LGBT issues, from calls for abolishing the police to DEI policies in human resource departments. Trueman argues that all these types of hot-button topics are symptomatic of confusion at a much deeper level: “the issue of anthropology, the understanding of what it means to be human.” As Trueman provides an invigorating and incisive tour of key critical theorists, he returns to this foundational question and expounds on how the true understanding of human beings,

Life After Capitalism: The Meaning of Wealth, the Future of the Economy & the Time Theory of Money by George Gilder

Contrary to statist economic thinking, which is based on a zero-sum, materialistic paradigm, economics is not an *incentive* system to be manipulated, says visionary entrepreneur George Gilder. It is an *information* system to be freed. According to the information theory

of economics, wealth is *knowledge*; growth is *learning*; information is *surprise* (the unexpected as opposed to the determined); and money is *time*. This book explains what all that means, why it works, and how it furthers our role as creators made (like our Creator) to create.



Unshrunk: A Story of Psychiatric Treatment Resistance by Laura Delano

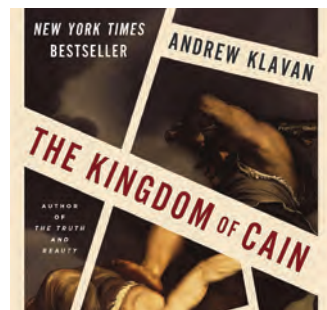
Laura Delano spent 13 years in the throes of the mental illness-treatment industrial complex, as “expert” professionals subjected her to one “remedy” after another. At age 27, she awakened to the realization that the treatments had not helped

her but had instead inflicted serious—and unnecessary—harm. She has since founded a nonprofit to help people make more informed choices about psychiatric diagnoses, drugs, and drug withdrawal. This is her memoir telling that story.

The Kingdom of Cain: Finding God in the Literature of Darkness by Andrew Klavan

Christians are called to live both joyfully and honestly in a world in which terribly evil things happen. How is that even possible? Klavan recounts three historic murders and literary works that followed them, reflecting on how, in light of the cross

and resurrection, we can have “a heightened awareness of evil, injustice, and suffering accompanied by a seemingly absurd increase in serenity and joy.” Art, beauty, and a faithful response to suffering, he says, are the answer to Cain.



The Berliners by Vesper Stamper

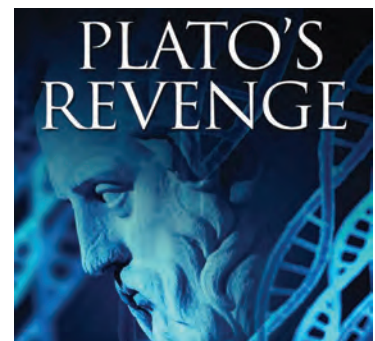
Set in divided 1961 Berlin, this historical novel explores themes of worldview, different approaches to governance, human freedom vs. order, and sin and conscience in an era when workaday survivors of the war must wrestle with guilt, whether

collective or individual (or both). The subjects are heavy, but the story is engaging and honest. Though written for teens, adults, too, will find here important food for thought. This would make a great book club choice.

Plato's Revenge: The New Science of the Immaterial Genome by David Klinghoffer

A central dogma of biology holds that DNA makes RNA, RNA makes proteins, and proteins make us. Contra this tenet, Richard Sternberg suspects that the informational resources supplied by the material genome alone are insufficient to account for the life of

an organism. In remarkably understandable, non-technical prose, David Klinghoffer explains what Sternberg means by that. Warning: terms like “agency,” “telos,” and “a purposive infusion of information” may upset avowed philosophical materialists.





Standing Against the World

When the plot of *God's Not Dead* (2014) turned on a John Lennox quote which challenged the atheistic reasoning of Stephen Hawking, Hollywood actor Kevin Sorbo became fascinated with the Oxford University math professor and sought him out. This

documentary follows along as the two men explore Lennox's faith formation, public encounters with world-renowned atheists, and reasons for believing that the Christian faith is the most evidentially supported explanation of reality. Viewing options at StandingAgainstTheWorld.com.

The Big Picture: Life Inside the Control Grid

Catherine Austin Fitts, former Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, suggests that the levers of many domestic and global bureaucracies—banking, intelligence, healthcare, etc.—are more geared toward centralizing control than serving the

public. Whether it's organized or not, she calls the network the "control grid." This film raises important questions that free-minded citizens should be exploring. Available at <https://live.childrenshealthdefense.org/chd-tv/events/the-big-picture-life-inside-the-control-grid/>.



Average Joe

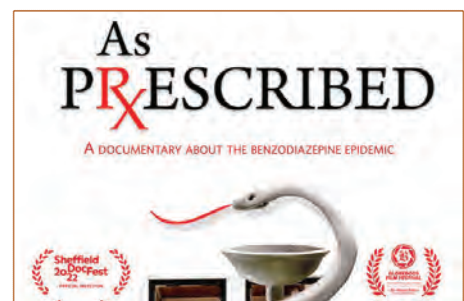
Once troubled and trouble-making youth, retired Marine Joe Kennedy accepted a high school coaching position, not for love of football but because he believed God was calling him to help boys become men. He promised God he would thank him after every

game, win or lose—and he did until he was relieved of coaching duties in 2015 for not keeping his prayers to himself. A trained fighter, but by then a principled one, he sued, and in 2022, the Supreme Court ruled 6–3 in his favor. This feature film dramatizes his remarkable story.

As Prescribed

Benzodiazepines are a class of sedative depressants widely prescribed as a remedy for anxiety. Brand names include Xanax, Ativan, Klonopin, Valium, and Restoril. This film tells the stories of several patients who took one of them as

prescribed and experienced debilitating side effects, especially when they tried to come off of it. It also follows the efforts of some who are seeking to raise awareness of the problem and institute informed-consent legislation around the drugs.



Disposable Humanity

Beginning in 1939, Nazi officials and medical workers systematically euthanized institutionalized psychiatric patients and people with physical and cognitive disabilities. Aktion T4 was the code name for this, the first of the Nazi mass killing programs. In

this disturbing but important film David Mitchell, a Disability Studies professor, tours T4 killing facilities in Germany, Austria, and Poland to memorialize the injustices and warn against practices that dehumanize people, especially those with disabilities.



Made for Bigger Things

*Why We're Not Satisfied ,
Even If We Should Be*

by John Stonestreet & Timothy D. Padgett

A few weeks ago, a self-described fitness enthusiast described life today this way:

- Work a desk job
- Grind 9–6
- Lift weights to feel something
- Marry someone beautiful enough
- Move to suburbs
- Get a dog
- Have two kids
- Drive an American SUV to Costco on weekends
- Buy a house you'll never finish paying off
- Call it happiness

Is this the dream? or just a life we were sold?

Responses varied. Many responded that, objectively speaking, the world—especially the Western part of it—is better off than it has ever been. One scientist noted that people used to live to an average age of 35, half of all kids died in childhood, even minor infections often led to death, and starving was a common human experience.

As my colleague Shane Morris observed, visit almost any old

graveyard and it will be full of tombstones with only one year inscribed for both birth and death. Though miscarriages are still tragically common, deaths in infancy are increasingly rare. Less than a century ago, nearly everyone would have had one or more siblings die in childhood. Today, our biggest health problems are from obesity, not starvation. Modern medicine, dentistry, technology, indoor plumbing, and all kinds of other things prevent and protect us from diseases, calamities, and accidents that proved fatal in previous generations.

The Timeless Malaise

On the other hand, a different doom and gloom, the kind reflected above, still resonates with many. In fact, it sounds a bit like a work of poetry written almost 3,000 years ago by a man of wealth and power who learned that “having it all” isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. His words are often quoted, perhaps most famously by The Byrds in their song, “Turn, Turn, Turn” and the Dave Matthews Band in “Tripping Billies.”

Ecclesiastes may be the most depressing book in Holy Scripture. The bulk of the text is a meditation on how life is meaningless

and then you die. The first chapter immediately declares that life is pointless.

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is
vanity.

What does man gain by all
the toil
at which he toils under the
sun? ...

I have seen everything that
is done under the sun, and
behold, all is vanity and a
striving after wind.

“The Preacher” has tried a life of wisdom, a life of pleasure, and a life of wealth. None was satisfying. Everyone dies. All seems pointless. Everything we attempt to live for or build our lives around turns to dust. Within just a few generations, no one will remember our names.

With language stark and hopeless, the Preacher sounds like someone who has lost faith in God. However, the words describe life *without* God. The things he listed—money, pleasure, wisdom—none are bad. They’re blessings given by God for our use and joy. But none will bring us the peace, meaning, or fulfillment for which we long.

The God-Sized Hole

Much later, in his *Confessions*, Augustine of Hippo would describe why. “[Y]ou have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee.” When people complain this world is broken and unfulfilling, they miss that God’s good gifts are instead meant to point to the Giver of the gifts. They cannot fulfill the human heart because the hole in it is God-sized, not stuff-sized. We were made for bigger things. We were made for God. ☉

—This article first appeared at *Breakpoint.org*. Used with permission of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.



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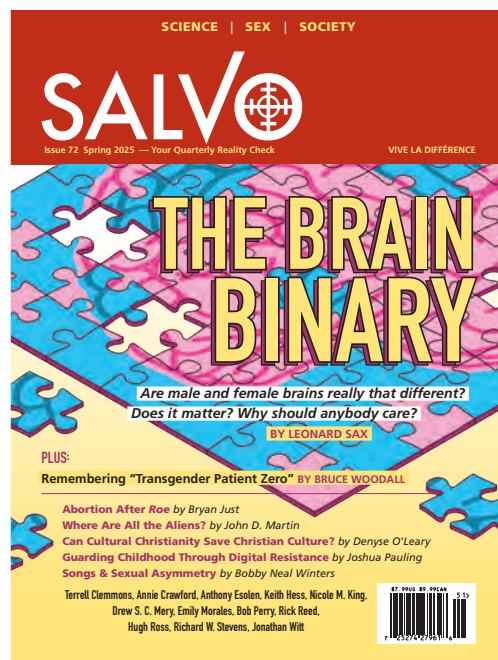
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