

Praise for *The Great Campaign*

“*The Great Campaign Against the Great Reset* is a 911 call for humanity! Jason Jones writes as he speaks — at a brilliant yet deep level that expresses the dangers of what is happening in our society and our churches. And unfortunately, things are ramping up to get worse. This is a must-read for all of us who love our Faith and our country and want to do something about it before it is too late.”

— **SR. / DR. DEIRDRE M. BYRNE**, P.O.S.C.,
Superior of D.C. convent,
Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts

“Jason Jones is a madman. By that I mean he’s crazy enough to flout ‘expert’ pronouncements and scoff at ‘elite’ consensus. He’s crazy like a fox because he’s wise enough to see through the sophistry of fools. For his whole adult life, he has been fighting against the ‘settled law’ of abortion on demand. He opposed every stupid war our military-industrial-media complex told us was vital to U.S. security. He sets out to make obscure, inspiring films that nobody will ever fund or see — and they get made and win mainstream awards. At the height of the COVID panic, Jason was the first person in America arrested for protesting the fascist lockdowns. I’ve saved my picture of Jason being led away in handcuffs from the Hawaii State Capitol. He spoke up early and fervently against the fetus-based vaccine. And now Jason is giving smart young people all the tools they need to fight against the globalist, anti-human agenda getting shoved into every bodily orifice. Good for him! Buy his book! I don’t think they’ll let you take it with you to the gulag, but maybe you could memorize it, as in *Fahrenheit 451*.”

— **ALEX JONES**, INFOWARS

“Once again, Jason Jones comes through with powerful clarity and a lion’s roar like the voice of Elijah and the grit of John the Baptist — which can exist only because he has lived this ‘Campaign’ with every fiber of his being by the grace of God as long as I have known him. Read it and tell your friends to read it.”

— **BEAR WOZNICK**, Author, *12 Rules for Manliness: Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?*

"The Great Campaign Against the Great Reset is a timely book that examines elements that tear apart today's society — which the author describes as a 'cocktail' of *1984*, *Brave New World*, and *The Matrix*. Jones distills five critical problems that drive a wedge between all entities in our society: friendships, couples, mothers and their babies, kids and their parents, boys and their natural masculinity, going as far as one's own life and one's purpose in life. Everything is subject to separation. This is the objective of the "Great Reset," a social engineering that at times does not feel different from the "Great Cultural Revolution" in communist China. Jones frames it in one sentence: "The Great Reset wants our hearts." What makes the book fascinating is the author's approach. He provides a wealth of information that one might not find in today's news media, and yet he resists preaching his opinion to his readers. The facts speak for themselves, and readers have the room to come to their own conclusions. Although Jones addresses inconvenient, and even divisive, topics, the read is not confrontational. After providing surgical information about the challenges, Jones then moves on to develop and propose solutions. The essence of responding to the artificially created wedges is simple: dare to meet the person next to you and discover the love and solidarity you have for each other — which Jones describes as "the death of resentment and distrust". Don't fall into the trap of scapegoating, and don't be deceived by the Gnostics, who might understand a lot and can explain even more, but who cannot bring you one inch closer to your spiritual paradise. No matter what the Great Reset arranges, in the end, the people remain confined in their bodies, detached from themselves, with body and heart separated. As Jones tells us, the Great Reset and its technocratic advancements "disincarnate" us. This is where the human mind of the social engineers ends and the promise of Jesus Christ continues. The answer to the Great Reset is to find our Great Purpose."

— **TORSTEN TREY**, M.D., Ph.D., Co-author, *State Organs* and *An Unprecedented Evil Persecution*

“Jason Jones is that rare thing, a polymath: a gifted filmmaker, a dogged pro-life activist, and a human rights worker who helps to rescue the most endangered minorities on earth from religious and racial persecution. Now I see this book, and I’m forced to admit that he’s a brilliant writer as well! In *The Great Campaign Against the Great Reset*, Jones offers a scathing, detailed analysis of the anti-human ideologies that global elites are foisting on their subject populations. He also warns against the temptations to false or self-defeating reactions on the part of conservatives and Christians. Instead, Jones points to the rich heritage of natural law and Western civilization that must guide our efforts to rebuild our society, one healthy loving, faith-filled family at a time.”

— **ERIC METAXAS**, *The Eric Metaxas Show*

“I met Jason Jones in 2006 when he joined our team in support of our award-winning film *Bella*. I should have known then he was trouble — of the very best kind. Soon Jason invited me to join him on trips to help some of the most vulnerable communities on earth. I went with him to Darfur, where we delivered millions of dollars in medicine and inspected water wells being dug for desperate Christians fleeing genocide. We’ve also been to some more glamorous but equally troubled places. We’ve worked together on Hollywood movies sets, and lobbied at the Vatican, the White House, and the U.S. Congress for threatened minorities. We have prayed together outside abortion clinics, worked together in crisis pregnancy centers, and visited women inmates on death row. From the moment I met Jason Jones, I saw his commitment to solidarity with the vulnerable. This book is the newest front that Jason is opening in his battle on their behalf. More than in almost any book I’ve read, this book’s author has made its message his life.”

— **EDUARDO VERÁSTEGUI**, Producer, *Sound of Freedom*

“Jason Jones is one of the most fierce and fearless warriors I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet in our movement. He’s also one of the most honest. So when he sounds the shofar, do not view it as mere clickbait or brand building, as too many others are prone to do these days. Heed his warning, and run to the battle.”

— **STEVE DEACE**, Bestselling Author and Host of *The Steve Deace Show*

“Jason Jones’s new book is that rare thing: a clear-eyed diagnosis of the various cancers assailing the body politic and the Church — and also an actual program for restoring our culture. Aimed at younger readers who have often been betrayed and abandoned by their elders, it warns them against the false prophets who wish to misdirect their youthful energy down toxic rabbit holes of conspiracy and godless tribalism. It offers them grounding and guidance in the core principles that built Western civilization and grounded the American experiment — principles of freedom, faith, and patriotism informed by love of neighbor.

“Jones echoes the humaneness of J. R. R. Tolkien, the clarity of G. K. Chesterton, and the joy of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. You will enjoy his duel with the monsters of globalism, transhumanism, and the pagan Climate Cult. Jason leaves them all gasping and sputtering on the floor.”

— **SEBASTIAN GORKA**, Ph.D., Former White House Official and Host of *America First with Sebastian Gorka*

“I had the blessing of sharing the daring struggles of saving Christian Afghan lives with Jason after the disastrous pullout of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan. The challenge was daunting, frequently frustrating, and long. As several partners in this mission started to leave the table, Jason remained there, always consistent, always a happy warrior. So I know where the enlightening words of this book come from: not from a place of bitterness or hatred for our adversaries but from a place of hope, Christian optimism, and love for God, humankind, and country. No warrior, especially among the young, should miss this work.”

— **ALEJANDRO BERMUDEZ**, Journalist and Founder, Catholic News Agency

“*The Great Campaign Against the Great Reset* is a deeply principled defense of humanity and monotheism at a time when nihilism, ‘wokeism’ and the profoundly anti-human logic of transhumanism are ascendent and seemingly inevitable. All I can say is a sincere ‘thank you’ to Jason Jones for his commitment to humanity and this gift to all who still believe in the potential of the human community to advance life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

— **DR. ROBERT MALONE**, Physician and Biochemist

“Under the gathering shadow of the most inhuman ideologies in history, it doesn’t take a genius to forecast the storm about to break. But Jones does more than prophesy. He offers inspirations from the wisest corners of the human heart, touched with cosmic love and revelation. Cometh the hour, cometh the author; a mind like his comes once a generation at the most. Written with plainspoken sincerity and even a kind of personal affection, this book cuts through all pretension and opportunism. It will leave the reader consoled, motivated, and well-armed in mind and spirit.”

— **STEPHEN HERREID**, Singer and Songwriter

“As a filmmaker, Jason has consistently helped advance the goodness of life, love, and family. As a private citizen, he has risked time and treasure fighting for the most vulnerable among us, from unborn children to women in need to the homeless. In this book, Jason uses his vast experience to rebuke the global ideologies that drive so much confusion and destruction and offers a message of hope grounded in truth. This book will assuredly resonate with readers, and its influence will last for decades.”

— **KEVIN SORBO**, Actor, Director, Producer, Author

“Jason Jones has helped pregnancy shelters stay open, brought coal to freezing victims of mismanaged U.S. wars, and fought against tyrannical lockdowns that were crippling our country. Now he boils down his fighting creed in defense of the innocent into a set of core principles that can guide young people wisely out of the morass of false and beguiling messages barraging them. This is the kind of book I want my own children to read. Buy copies for all your friends’ kids too!”

— **SAM SORBO**, Actress, Author, Filmmaker,
Education Freedom Advocate

“Jason Jones has the heart of a humanitarian and the mind of a philosopher. His words, even if one does not agree with them, are not those of a commoner detached from the realities of which he speaks. Rather, they come from a man whose whole life represents the distillation of enlightened thought into heroic action on behalf of his fellow image-bearers. For that reason alone, he is worth listening to far more than most. He is a loving, clear, and prophetic voice crying in the wilderness of this spiritually desolate age. If his are among the voices we heed, we can still avoid the darkest of dark ages to come. If not, may God have mercy on us.”

— **JOSHUA CHARLES**, Former White House
Speechwriter, *New York Times* Best-selling Author

“From the first time I spoke to Jason, when I was trapped in Afghanistan, he was a voice of hope. His first words to me were, ‘You are going to be okay; I will be with you until you are safe.’ He saved my life, my wife’s life, my friends’ lives. Together we set up a network to save people from the Taliban in the wake of the U.S. pullout. I didn’t meet him for six months after that, all the way across the world in Los Angeles. I was thrilled and honored that I could help his mission via the Vulnerable People Project. It’s one of the things in my life that I am most proud of. This book is a manifesto of respect for man’s God-given dignity and care for the most vulnerable people on earth, who are otherwise abandoned.”

— **PRINCE WAEA**, Former U.S. Military Translator

“When I think of Jason Jones, I think of a man who refuses to let those voices of the vulnerable who cry out for help go unheard. Whether it’s the Yazidis in Iraq, our former allies in Afghanistan, or persecuted communities in the Middle East or Africa, Jason Jones is always there to lend his voice to theirs. From the first days of the invasion in Ukraine, Jason was present on the ground serving the vulnerable, especially women and orphans. He has supported my work of removing landmines in Ukraine from the very beginning. This book gives you a glimpse into the worldview of that man. Pick it up, buy it, read it, and share it with your friends!”

— **RYAN HENDRICKSON**, Retired Special Forces and Green
Beret, Founder/CEO, Tip of the Spear Landmine Removal

“Although he’s the last person to admit it, Jason Jones has been a warrior on the front lines fighting for basic human rights and to make this world a better place. Not only is he an entertainer, a podcast host, and a producer; he is a writer with incredible insight from decades of experience. He is an inspiration to many, and I am honored to call him a friend.”

— **SHEMANE NUGENT**, *New York Times* Best-selling author, award-winning TV producer, and host

“*The Great Campaign Against the Great Reset* is an absolute triumph. At a time when a false, performative ‘morality’ dominates our society, and when each new all-consuming, ‘existential’ crisis is met with ‘solutions’ that are shockingly, perhaps intentionally, counterproductive, Jason Jones offers a cogent, deeply resonant picture of what’s really going on. Further, he envisions a principled and effective response to the madness, through the eyes of a devout Catholic who has made a life of directly — and successfully — helping some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

“Leaning on the Judeo-Christian tradition, Jones makes a universal case for a return to a ‘solid intransigent moral code’ based on a traditional vision of faith, divinity, freedom, and liberty. Rife with examples, *The Great Campaign* is one of the most thoughtful and comprehensive prescriptions for the malaise of our times that I’ve seen. Required reading.”

— **JAN JEKIELEK**, Senior Editor, *The Epoch Times*
and Host of *American Thought Leaders*



THE GREAT CAMPAIGN



JASON JONES

THE GREAT CAMPAIGN
AGAINST THE
GREAT RESET

CRISIS
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Dedication

*For my wife Alexandra Jones,
our children Isabella, Eva, Marion, Andrew,
Jacob, Maximilian and Micah.
and our grandchildren, Naomi, Elijah and Valentina.
And to our posterity that they may inherit
a culture of life and a civilization of love.*



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I wish to thank from the bottom of my heart:

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The team at the Vulnerable People Project, especially Marilis Pineiro, Prince Wafa and Nicole Ibrahim; all of our donors, volunteers and partners. It is a great honor to be a part of a team so committed to serving the most vulnerable people in the world in the most challenging places and times.

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Our researchers Grayson Quay and Vijay Jayaraj for their dogged, persistent, and cogent analyses of the complex issues of public policy treated throughout this book.



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*“Enemy-occupied territory---that is what this world is.
Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has
landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us
to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.”*

— C.S. Lewis



THE GREAT CAMPAIGN





INTRODUCTION FOR YOUNG AMERICANS

The Adventure of Love: Eros, Piety, and Posterity

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF warnings about the “Great Reset.” But most of the commentary you can read elsewhere on the topic does more to intimidate than to motivate. Like scary stories told idly around a campfire, the whole point is to chill and horrify people. Then we shake off the chill and move on, with no plan of action and no substantial response.

We don't change anything about our own lives, and we certainly don't feel much hope of changing the course of history.

The threat of the Great Reset is no ghost story. It's real. And if we have any hope of preventing it, it starts with understanding this moment not as the end of a simple, easy life of hopes and dreams, but as the beginning of a dramatic, adventurous life — a life of great loves, high stakes, and, with almighty God as our King and Commander, assured victory.

It is true that elites have been at work for decades, laying traps, bending and dulling the minds and hearts of the public, preparing the world for their final assault by trickery and stealth.

But as G. K. Chesterton once wrote: “An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered.”¹

¹ G. K. Chesterton, “On Running after One's Hat,” in *All Things Considered* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 28.

This book is not idle entertainment, like the stories people tell when they don't believe their real lives are worth talking about. Think of it more as a mentor — and a guide to rightly considering the inconvenient time you were born into.

Because, rightly considered, the inhuman authors of the Great Reset are not our conquerors, but our opponents in a battle we've yet to fight. And rightly considered, the worst wounds they've inflicted on the world are not death blows, but indications of their greatest fears — a road map to their weaknesses.

EROS

In Scripture, God uses the language of marriage and erotic love to describe His love for us.

He is a “jealous” God, outraged by the infidelity of His people when they behave like a “harlot” by giving themselves to false idols.

The Bible's Song of Solomon, a parable of God's love, is a song of *eros*. An erotic love song filled with high poetry about the greatness and strength of the lover and the beauty of the beloved — her hair, her lips, the way her voice excites the heart and inspires devotion.

While God points to that kind of love as the key to understanding our purpose in the universe, today's elites have struck at its heart.

False feminist campaigns drove people away from each other and into a more and more “virtual” online dating world — bloodless, impersonal, and utilitarian, breeding resentment and distrust between men and women.

The endless flood of pornography on the smartphone in everyone's pocket has destroyed young people's ability to experience erotic love.

No longer is attraction about the way her hair drapes over her shoulder when she tilts her head in song — or the way he stands, hands clasped behind his back, when he's lost in thought.

The mystery of *eros* is reduced to perverse images of naked, violated bodies under the glare of cheap studio lighting.

PIETY

In addition to erasing erotic marital love, elites have also severed young people's relationship with their parents. This severing is profoundly isolating and can weaken young people to the point of total defenselessness in the face of today's ferocious ideologies.

Love of parents is the seed of all *piety* — the virtuous love that gives us each a meaningful role to play in relation to our God, our nation, our neighbor, and ultimately our own children and grandchildren.

It's piety that compels us to render worship *only to God*, to show a warrior-like loyalty to our people, and to serve our families and communities.

In place of piety, elites have given young people only a few thin and incoherent abstractions: "The good of the earth," "humankind," and "global interests." We are "citizens of the world" who must be "one," united not by God and our common understanding of what it means to belong each to his own family, but by an enforced uniformity, frogmarching us toward an empty future devoid of property, ethnic character, and the natural bonds of lovers, tribes, and families.

In the "build back better" view, every political community must be stripped of its sense of peoplehood and nationhood. It's such a violent contradiction of our nature that, while it breeds a craven backstabbing attitude in some, it also spurs on a resurgence of primitive brutality and racial tribalism among others.

And that racialism plays into the hands of elites as much as any of the ideologies they promote. Because it only further divides the people of God — and further dilutes piety, the only thing capable of making any community formidable and able to defend and preserve itself.

POSTERITY

As I mentioned, young people have been robbed of *eros*. But what's more, they've unconsciously adopted the prevailing *fear of children* promulgated by environmentalism and a culture of death.

Those now coming of age aren't even "hooking up" as often as the frivolous sexual libertines of the previous generation. The sexual relationships they do have are sterile and wracked with anxiety: the possibility of begetting children terrifies them.

Young men have become afraid of making public displays of romantic love and only show off a two-dimensional, impotent "masculinity" from the safety of an app. Young women resist intimacy and bonding, replacing the rewards of marriage and children with "freedom" and "bodily autonomy."

Even some of the most traditional young people fear each other's sexuality.

Promoters of "masculinity" online unwittingly lead men into one of the biggest traps of the Great Reset — training them to resent women and see them as *inherently* cynical and treacherous, demanding hangers-on who aren't worth the effort.

Female voices, meanwhile, despair — and help spread the culture-killing message that men are emotionally weak and insecure, predatory and never to be trusted.

Cutting people off from their parents and their heritage is one thing. But as I mentioned, elites have done something much more far-reaching: they've sapped young people of *eros*, the natural love that characterizes human life at its best.

I mean the erotic love of a husband and wife, yes, but also the cosmic love that gives mankind his undefeatable nobility and connects us all across generations, tribes, and races.

It's the love of the God of revelation, who made us in His image, then showed us what it means to be what we were made to

be. And more to the point, it's also the love that motivates our deepest natural desire: the desire to produce and provide for our posterity.

The Great Reset isn't just a threat to our conveniences, our freedoms, and our peace. And it doesn't just want our property and our political institutions.

No, it wants our hearts.

So unless you're already prepared to surrender, that's where the upcoming battle lies: it will be a battle for love, and — if you're willing to fight — the adventure of rediscovering love starts now.

THE ADVENTURE OF LOVE

When I first studied screenwriting, I was surprised to learn that it's a carefully, reverently crafted art based on the greatest and most archetypal Western mythologies and works of foundational literature. That's right, screenwriting as we know it is based on Homer, Hesiod, Virgil, and even Christian Scripture.

That's because the pioneers of modern screenwriting knew that for new stories to be as moving and inspiring as possible, they would have to imitate the stories that resonated with the greatest portion of mankind over the longest period of time.

Another thing that surprised me was that most screenplays tell the audience up front what the hero will have to accomplish. In fact, the most masterful storytellers typically introduce the hero, his mission, and the main obstacle or villain he has to overcome *all within the first ten minutes of the movie*.

It's *after* those revelations that the adventure begins.

But there is one point in a good screenplay when the story is anything but straightforward — when things get dark and unpredictable, and you grasp for answers and even come close to losing faith that there is any way out for the hero.

It's the moment that "spoilers" are usually all about. Screenwriters call it by various names: "the Inmost Cave," "the Ultimate Ordeal," or simply "the Abyss." And what follows from it is usually a devastating loss that seems to cripple or trap the hero, virtually guaranteeing his defeat.

You probably know where I'm going with this: *you are now standing in the Abyss.*

Not only are you faced with the Great Reset — that leviathan project of the world's most powerful and seemingly omnipresent elites — but you've also been hobbled, robbed of your greatest strengths, the inner powers and external supports that you needed most to overcome the ordeal.

What comes next in the script?

ESCAPE AND THE FINAL BATTLE

"Remember who you are," says Mufasa to Simba. "Use the Force, Luke," says Obi-Wan Kenobi. "It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo," says Samwise Gamgee; "Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't. They kept going, because they were holding on to something. That there is some good in this world, and it's worth fighting for."

One of my favorite movies is *Moana*. It represents the archetypal Hero's Journey better than any other movie I've seen. At this point in the story, the demigod Maui is defeated. He was an unwanted baby, thrown away by his parents. That bitter trauma left him desperate for the love of his fellow humans, but it ultimately crushes his spirit to the breaking point. He abandons the princess Moana when she needs him the most, refusing to help restore order and bring civilization back to life.

What comes after the Abyss is a moment of rediscovery. It's when the hero summons again all the goodness and strength and light the enemy has taken away from him. When Simba takes up his

royal mantle and returns to the pride to defeat the usurper. When Luke summons the ancient art of the Force, which he inherited, in order to destroy the empire that oppresses his people. When Frodo and Sam recall the vast story of Middle Earth and take their heroic place in it by liberating the world from the demonic threat of Sauron's unnatural Ring of Power. And when Maui overcomes his resentment, becoming the hero that Princess Moana and her people need.

The escape from the Great Reset is the moment when we rediscover love. The *eros* of marriage. The romantic, passionate love of God for man. The pious, courageous love of families for their forebears and their posterity.

There's another name writers often use for the Abyss: the Moment of Death and Rebirth.

In our case, I believe that this adventure will demand the death of the resentment and distrust between men and women. We must also put to death the racist hatreds that pit us against each other in a self-destructive skirmish while the real war — the war of mankind against those who would destroy it — still looms. And finally, we must kill once and for all the culture of death, and with it the cowardly fear of taking on the responsibility of begetting children and fighting for a world in which they can thrive.

The adventure of love awaits you, if only you show yourself willing to sacrifice the weaknesses and cultural rot that our elites have planted among us.

These godless madmen see the future of the entire world and everyone in it as a pet project, every inch of it sanctioned, raped, sterilized, neutered, monitored — broken and remade in their image. Their dystopia will be custom-fit for mankind — like a straitjacket — with a strap, a “smart device,” or a shackle appointed for each of our deepest and noblest human characteristics and impulses.

All that's left to the newest generation is the question: Does it suit you?

Will you surrender yourself, your nation, your parents, and your posterity as sacrifices to the Great Reset? Are you willing to accept the bland, lukewarm rations and shallow pleasures of the dystopia in exchange for everything that gives human life its purpose and meaning?

If not — now you know your escape route.



PART ONE

THE NEW IDEOLOGIES OF EVIL





WE ALL LIVED THROUGH it, though we might not like to remember it. Some of us were quicker than others to realize what was being done to us — that the manufactured panic about bioengineered COVID was being used as a psy-op to terrorize the citizens of most countries on earth, to strip them of basic liberties, centralize wealth, censor all media, and grant unthinkable power to unelected elites.

None of us wanted to believe that. It was like the plot of some Roger Moore-era James Bond movie, whose very vastness and madness made critics sound paranoid and helped to advance the Big Lie. Even today, I find it hard to believe that Klaus Schwab is actually real and running the World Economic Forum, meeting with presidents and moving lawmakers like chess pieces, rather than some cartoonish villain from a hack screenwriter's rejected first draft.

Of those who were bold enough to admit the truth, some sank into torpor. They were staggered and battered, like hostages held in a basement. They just wanted to survive this artificial crisis, hope for the best, and wait for someone else to fix things.

Others stepped up — and were promptly stepped upon. Pro-lifers who insisted on rejecting an abortion-linked vaccine were marginalized and scapegoated. They were condemned by the Vatican, which minted a coin to celebrate the useless, immoral vaccination of children.

Doctors who warned of the grossly inadequate research behind the vaccine or promoted alternative treatments to those failing patients around the world lost their practices, their licenses, and their reputations.

Civil libertarians who objected to the selective closure of churches and businesses, which somehow spared abortion clinics, casinos, and big box stores, and the politicized suspension of state constitutions, were smeared as “racist-adjacent” and ostracized.

When the entrepreneur Herman Cain died of COVID after attending a Trump rally, media figures sneered at him for going to a “super-spreader event.” But white Marxists from Antifa who rioted in our cities were lauded for fighting “racism as a threat to public health.”

I could go on for hundreds of pages. But you know what I mean. And that’s why you’re reading this book. You also remember how, in the midst of this manipulated crisis fueled by censorship and lies, financial oligarchs and leftist politicians — from Bill Gates to Justin Trudeau, from George Soros to Joe Biden — announced that they had no intention of ever letting our lives return to normal. This crisis would not go to waste.

Instead, they would “build back better” via a “Great Reset” that permanently stripped away the liberties that we’d foolishly surrendered temporarily, allegedly to get us all through a pandemic.

This book is an attempt to clarify and organize the movement to resist, reject, and expose the agenda of globalist power-grabbers who used a bioweapon to rob them of basic human rights and dismantle the political institutions (such as the U.S. Constitution) that their ancestors fought and died to create. We must admit that there was a conspiracy, without becoming conspiracy theorists. Acknowledge that we have enemies, without becoming paranoid. Admit the vastness of the task that faces us, without descending either into despair or nihilistic rage.

And that's only possible with God. No political philosopher could have prepared us for this. No tradition of learning, however wholesome and sophisticated, can offer us all the answers. We face principalities and powers in the high places, whose contempt for the human race itself and the human condition sets them apart from past historical villains. You can't look to the history books to find an evil that wants to wipe out, or completely pervert, the human species. For that you need to read things like C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, or Robert Hugh Benson's *Lord of the World*.

That's why this book is centered solidly in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the powers of reason by which we mortals express it, and the still-living institutions in the West that embody it. We need to use each of these tools if we're going to craft a successful response and moderate our rightly outraged passions. Otherwise, we will fall into the Enemy's trap — and do more harm than good.

The Great Reset proposed by the godless, anti-human elites who dominate the West is the most comprehensive dystopia ever invented by man, a kind of cocktail of Orwell's *1984*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, and the nightmare world of the *Matrix* films. The future proposed by elites is a boot stomping on a human face, forever — but the face is no longer human. It has been bioengineered and reconditioned to expect and even *enjoy* this kind of treatment.

We need to confront the reality that our self-styled leaders have rejected the sane assumptions that once were shared by every Westerner and which permitted secular liberals and Christian conservatives to find common ground. So, we must begin by exposing the five "ideologies of evil" that constitute a genuine pandemic, a disease in the minds and souls of the most influential people in the richest parts of the world.

Let me name them and briefly summarize them here.

- ✘ **Victimism:** The systematic corruption of Christian empathy for the weak and the marginalized, and its transformation into a cynical political tool for grabbing power, amassing wealth, attaining prestige, and leaving the real victims of our day forgotten and abandoned.
- ✘ **Gnosticism:** The perversion of rational discourse and honest debate into a tool for elites to hide their abuse of power, intimidate their critics, and silence anyone brave enough to question their tyrannical agenda.
- ✘ **Transhumanism:** The rejection of our human nature itself as God created it, as an embodied soul, with two sexes, who lives in families and raises children to worship God and live in freedom. The perversion of that human nature into a frustrated, would-be “god” that detests creation and wants to replace it with the shabby works of man.
- ✘ **Anti-humanism:** The turn against humanity itself as something good, worth preserving and advancing. The replacement of benevolence toward our fellow human beings with invented, allegedly ecological visions of a planet thriving after the erasure of 90 to 95 percent of its human population.
- ✘ **Climate Cultism:** The grab for central micromanagement of all political power and economic activity on earth, via the seizure of energy supplies, allegedly to “save the planet” from climate changes that are largely natural, incidental, and beyond human control.

These are the slogans, the fantasy scenarios, the political manifestos of the enemies of Christ. We must understand the lies that these people have told themselves and the world, before we present a sober, gospel-based, and rational alternative. You can't beat nihilism with nothing.

We must fight each of these ideologies on its merits, locating what grains of truth they might contain, then showing how sloppy

thinking, hunger for power, the herd instinct, and other ancient temptations have built up a pyramid of lies. That's what this book aims to do.

But we must do more than run around putting out fires. There's a reason that such grotesque caricatures were able to come to dominate among highly educated Westerners: they rushed in to fill a vacuum, which nature abhors. Since the so-called Enlightenment, the Christian West has been living off of its savings, going ever further out on a limb of the Tree of Knowledge, and sawing it off at the trunk.

It might have seemed safe to nineteenth-century Brits like Charles Darwin and to Austrians like Freud to hack away at the supports for human dignity, family life, morality, and reason. Surrounded by the built-up riches of Christendom, they couldn't imagine what bankruptcy their gambling habit would lead to.

We can. We grew up in the poorhouse, the howling void of meaning, value, and beauty that was left when the last implications of an integral Christian worldview were finally swept away. And in that empty space the principalities and powers have offered us golden calves, primitive fetishes, elaborate phantasms — shiny objects that make loud noises to distract us from the fact of our desperation and the need to turn back to Christ.

We now have a pope who scoffs at reverent liturgy, biblical sexual ethics, unborn life, and the organ harvesting of the Communist regime in China in order to focus on exploiting shell-shocked and bewildered refugees, battling "climate change," and boosting Pfizer's stock price. Countless lesser Christian leaders in various churches pursue the same inverted priorities, auditioning to serve as tame, live-in chaplains to Caesar, Mammon, and Sodom.

We can do better. We must. In the face of these old errors and new delusions, we turn to what is timeless: the law God wrote on the human heart, which He first made clear to man in the covenant of Noah. The natural law, enriched by the truths of divine revelation, is

our guide. Think of it as the instruction manual to the human race, which our Maker helpfully left us — but which most of us are too proud to read.

In my last book, written ten eventful years ago, I distilled that natural law down to five core principles. *The Race to Save Our Century* didn't argue for these principles from some set of abstract definitions, of the kind that philosophers argue about in journals that few people read. No, it looked at the cavalcade of atrocities and horrors that began in 1914, which turned a “century of progress” into the great age of genocide, tyranny, and destruction. Then it asked which moral maxims could have prevented these massive abuses of human life and dignity. As it turned out, the five core “whole-life” principles that would have saved the twentieth century were also the pillars of Catholic social teaching.

Having watched the decade that followed, my conviction has only grown stronger. Our culture went even further in its rejection of natural law than even I'd thought possible, and these five principles are more urgently important than ever. In this book I'll lay them out again, more briefly, and in each chapter I'll show how they need to be applied today, as emergency medicine:

- ✧ The innate dignity of every human person, regardless of race, age, or handicap, as the image and likeness of God, known as **personalism**.
- ✧ The existence of a transcendent moral order, or **natural law**, by which we judge the justice of all laws and policies.
- ✧ The need for a **humane economy** that embraces freedom in a context of social responsibility.
- ✧ The crucial importance of **subsidiarity** — decentralized, responsive government that preserves civil society and freedom.

- ✧ The need for **solidarity**, for a sense of fellow feeling and common obligation toward each and every member of the human race.

These aren't specifically Christian teachings, which people need the grace of faith to comprehend and accept — although, since our reason is fallen, grace certainly helps. Fighting for these principles isn't "religious," much less "intolerant" or somehow (as the left likes to say) promoting a "theocracy." In fact, as we can see by the degraded state of our culture in the absence of these principles, fighting for the natural law is the only truly human thing to do. And if we value the human race, we will order our lives to serve this struggle.

We might, like the hobbits in *The Lord of the Rings*, be fighting "to save the Shire, but not for us." It's possible that our efforts will win us persecution and poverty and only leave rewards to our children or grandchildren. For centuries, men planted olive trees that only their descendants would live to eat from. At a time when too many people are eating the seed corn, we ought to act like hobbits instead of orcs.





CHAPTER 1

VICTIMISM

The Counterfeit of Christian Ethics

THE COMING OF CHRIST, His death on the Cross, and the spread of Christianity transformed human culture worldwide. That's a fact that Christians and non-Christians alike have no choice but to admit.² Look back at ancient Assyria, Greece, Persia, and Rome. In those societies, for the strong to openly and shamelessly wield power over the weak was not an offense that could conceivably get them “canceled.” It was the kind of achievement that Assyrian kings would boast about in inscriptions, listing all the cities they'd pillaged and depopulated. Nobody ever thought of boycotting goods that were made by slaves. Instead, people boasted about how many slaves they owned, and leaders launched wars with the promise that they would bring back their conquered enemies to toil in the field. In fact, we get the name *triumph* from the Roman festival where crowds cheered the mass importation of conquered slaves and the murder of prisoners of war.

Citizens of the most philosophically and artistically advanced Greek city-states would gladly attend human sacrifices when the oracles told the priests that the city's best interests required it. Carthage's smartest citizens yielded up their firstborn infants for public

² Tom Holland, the historian (and non-believer), makes this abundantly clear in his 2019 book *Dominion*.

sacrifice, to win the favor of the Canaanite fertility gods whom the city's founders had carried over from Phoenicia. According to historians, gladiatorial games began with the sacrifice of slaves to mark the death of important, aristocratic Romans. The sporting aspect of this sacrifice came later.

Jesus' death on a cross, in the style of a slave, did not provoke general pity but contempt — even from one of the other men being crucified that day! Christians themselves were reluctant for centuries to even depict it. Of all the cultures on earth, only one made room for the idea that a man marked off by society and rejected, punished, and then murdered might in fact be innocent — that, what's more, he might be righteous, a sign of contradiction whose killing reflected not his own guilt, but that of the community that attacked him: the Jewish culture, organized around a covenant and leavened by many prophets. Their deaths would come to be seen by that culture itself as shameful betrayals of the God who had blessed the Jews, and the people would repent of them. The deaths of previous prophets, who would come to be seen as martyrs, prepared the way for Jesus — as Peter would point out in the synagogue, when he boldly went there to preach after Pentecost.

French thinker René Girard had written a number of bold, provocative books where he tried to interpret the death of Jesus and its impact on human culture not from a theological but from an *anthropological* perspective. He analyzed the pre-Christian practice, which he found to be universal in human cultures, of scapegoating the innocent and sacrificing them. According to Girard, ancient myths from around the world (including our beloved Greek myths) show everywhere traces of this basic social mechanism.

To oversimplify Girard's complex and fascinating analysis: unlike our animal cousins who are driven wholly by instinct, human beings are formed by our cultures. We learn how to live and what to do, what we should desire and what we should shun, from our families and neighbors. We learn, in other words, by *imitation* (mimesis).

This is unavoidable and morally neutral. But, in man's fallenness, that process of imitation goes astray. It corrupts and taints entire societies. Because we learn what to want from the people around us, we prove all too prone to want what "they" have: their goods, their status, their spouses. We even desire their identities, as we want to become them — to replace them. That's why a full 20 percent of the Ten Commandments are devoted to prohibiting precisely that: coveting what belongs to others.

The rivalry among people for status, pleasure, and profit eventually spins out of control. The fight for an ever-greater share of limited goods at some point turns human society into a deadly war of all against all. Girard calls this outcome a *crisis*. Over and over again, all around the world, societies have resorted to the same solution to these crises. We identify a scapegoat: some helpless person or group, which we blame for the spiraling crisis. We heap these scapegoats up with guilt and convince the mob that their problems can be traced to the sins of the few. Then we persecute and destroy the designated victim as a villain. The social cohesion lost by competition and rivalry will be restored — at least for a while.

When needed, the process can repeat itself, through a new persecution or war. Meanwhile, those inequalities that result from injustice get lumped in with those traceable to natural differences of talent, hard work, and luck. The "natural order of things" requires the suffering of the weak.

But there is a stumbling block in our way. His name is Jesus. Girard explains that Jesus' patient endurance of persecution, His refusal to condemn His persecutors, and His Resurrection from the dead exposed the falsehood of scapegoating mechanisms everywhere. Myths that depicted previous scapegoats as actually guilty and responsible for the ills that plagued their communities (*Oedipus Rex*, for example) were in fact artistic cover stories for real-life, historic persecutions of the innocent. Even the book of Job, Girard argues, is a thinly veiled

depiction of scapegoating; Job's friends represent the society that has chosen him as the designated villain. They spend most of the story trying to get him to accept his guilt. He refuses, and clings to trust in God throughout, becoming the first prophetic sign of contradiction of many in the Scriptures debunking the scapegoat mechanism.

Societies where the Hebrew prophets' stories and Jesus' story get preached can't comfortably go on scapegoating and persecuting. When they do, it inevitably backfires on them. So, for instance: After becoming Christian, Roman emperors had to cancel the gladiatorial games. They felt compelled to punish the routine infanticide that had always made helpless newborns the scapegoat for sexual indulgence. Slavery went into decline, until (many centuries later) Christian societies became the first in history to abolish the institution.

Yes, there were appalling, outrageous persecutions of the innocent in Christian societies. But because they contradicted (rather than flowed from) the most basic beliefs and stories on which those societies rested, these persecutions failed to achieve the unity and concord intended.

Abusing and expelling Jews and heretical Christians, or framing people as witches, didn't buy the social peace that rulers sought in country after country. The burning of Jan Hus for heresy didn't extinguish his ideas, but made him a martyr and helped to spread them. We see this process repeat itself over and over again during the mutual persecutions by Catholics and Protestants throughout the Reformation, as each side's cruelties provided the other with new Christ-figures who died for their beliefs. Wicked men certainly did resort to brutal and unjust methods to reach for social harmony, but the old method no longer worked. Jesus had exposed it.

Centuries of meditating on the gospel had taught people to see the abuse of the weak and vulnerable not as the necessary price of greatness and public order — or even the inevitable “way of things”

akin to nature “red in tooth and claw” — but as an outrage. Pope John Paul II wrote in *Memory and Identity* that the true political ideals of the Enlightenment, which resulted in the American founding, the abolitionist movement, and religious toleration, were the fruit of the Christian view of the person finally permeating the West and bearing fruit.

But there was a dark side, as there always is, since man is still fallen and subject to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Church and state institutions whose members in past centuries had compromised themselves by victimizing the innocent reaped a whirlwind of condemnation — even if they’d recognized and stopped committing such evils (such as the persecution of religious dissenters). King Louis XVI annulled all legal disabilities for Jews and Protestants, for instance. But he, his wife, and his son would pay the price for his ancestors’ sins — in fine scapegoat fashion. So would dozens of innocent priests and nuns in Paris, and some three hundred thousand Catholic peasants targeted for genocide in the Vendée region for clinging to their faith, all allegedly to prevent the return of the Inquisition, in which they had played no part. Likewise, innocent clergy and ordinary believers would pay for the sins (real and imagined) of their religious ancestors in Spain, Mexico, China, Vietnam, and countless other countries.

When the Enlightenment fully flowered, self-styled religious skeptics started judging the Church as insufficiently Christian — based on the profoundly Christian principles that they had learned from the Church herself. The rise of socialism and Marxism saw this process go even further, as worldly philosophers tried to turn Jesus’ embrace of the poor and weak into a global political movement for revolution and dictatorship as a means to build a utopian order by human means, here on earth. Liberation theology would devastate and empty the churches of Latin America by openly claiming that Jesus came to empower the global proletariat and that the Church

was simply another name for the Marxist movement to establish their dictatorship.³

The civil rights movement in America was the last great moment of unified Christian witness, as Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., drew on the genuine biblical vision of people as fundamentally equal, which is inscribed in our founding documents. Because that movement was led by churches, not separatist mosques or the Communist party, it was able to tap into the deepest beliefs of even prejudiced white Americans and establish legal equality. No longer would black Americans be scapegoated by wicked laws and biased juries with impunity.

But many of the same churches and churchmen who'd rightly marched for civil rights soon signed on to other causes that weren't genuinely based in justice or the Christian view of the person. Within a few years of the Civil Rights Act, radicalized versions of feminism were calling for legal abortion, and the "gay liberation" movement was demanding the long list of "rights" that culminated in same-sex "marriage."

Tom Holland, in the final chapters of *Dominion*, explains how the woke ideology we face today is a mutation and hypertrophy of biblical principles, unmoored from any basis in revelation or natural law, which threatens to swallow its father: Christianity. From a prophetic voice that calls on us to skepticism of power and compassion for the vulnerable, the Christian impulse has been perverted and hijacked into a strategy for grabbing power and picking different scapegoats — all the while claiming the mantle of being the guardian of the "marginalized" and the champion of the "oppressed."

Hence FBI agents, with straight faces, can designate as dangerous "domestic extremists" PTA moms who show up at school board meetings to question sexually explicit books and "drag queen"

³ For a more detailed application of Girard's sharp analysis to our contemporary scene, see the writing of his most faithful inheritor, Gil Bailie, especially his fascinating recent book, *The Apocalypse of the Sovereign Self*.

performances aimed at their small children. Because sexual dissenters — however much financial and cultural power they wield — are now designated “victims,” such that anyone who resists them (regardless of their political, cultural, or economic power) is an “oppressor” who deserves no empathy and no quarter. He belongs in a prison cell, like the non-violent protestors on January 6 who walked into the Capitol past welcoming policemen.

René Girard warned us about all of this — and predicted where it would lead. He warned in his book *I Saw Satan Fall Like Lightning*, “Victimism uses the ideology of concern for victims to gain political or economic or spiritual power.” Girard also said in interviews that the rise of Victimism was profoundly ominous, even apocalyptic. The perversion of Christianity that Victimism represents is a “new gospel” preached by antichrists, who use Jesus’ own words and example to promote abortion, pornographic excess, political censorship, and the persecution of faithful Christians. When the last Christian succumbed to Victimism, Girard speculated, we would see the end of the world.

Intersectionalism, the most radical movement now taking over campuses, is the most powerful expression of Victimism. It is also, in crucial ways, like a new religion: a Calvinism without Christ. But even more than that, it’s a semi-coherent ideology — the fancy word for a half-baked idea with a fully loaded gun. It’s a tissue of rationalizations for accumulating power, imposing collective punishment, and scapegoating the innocent. White males must pay for the sins of their ancestors. Christians must be punished and marginalized because of events in the Middle Ages that their churches now condemn. Traditional families must pay for the self-loathing of sexual eccentrics. Europeans living in their own countries must be subject to violence and intimidation at the hands of newcomers who live on public welfare.

And no measure of punishment will ever be enough. It never was for the Jacobins during the French Reign of Terror. Nothing was ever enough, either, for the Bolsheviks when they seized control of Russia. There is no real injustice being corrected; after all, it's not real slave-owners, Klansmen, or Indian-killers being punished. But the need for vengeance can never be slaked. The sacrifices will continue until the Victimists are exposed, deposed, and scorned.

Victimism is a subtle and sophisticated weapon, which can be used to camouflage any cause—however elitist and cruel—as a campaign for justice on behalf of the vulnerable. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, spent the 1920s and thirties cooperating with eugenicists and open racists. One of her closest allies, Eugen Weber, ran a concentration camp in Africa for the Germans before World War I, experimenting on natives. Sanger wrote laws mandating forced sterilization for people who failed biased IQ tests, under which more than sixty thousand Americans were victimized. The Nazi regime modeled its own laws on hers; they invited her partner Harry Laughlin on a whirlwind tour of Germany, granting him an honorary degree from a Nazi college.

But once Allied troops began liberating concentration camps, and survivors of Nazi eugenics started telling their stories, Sanger slipped off her Klan hood. (Yes, she admitted to addressing Klan meetings in her memoirs.) She recast herself as the advocate of poor, disadvantaged women, whom wicked, callous clergy were forcing to bear unwanted children. She also “discovered” (in the wake of a war that killed eighty million people) a “population explosion.”

Sanger found whole new pretexts for advocating the exact same policies: coercive birth control aimed primarily at the poor. No longer was she ripping up “human weeds” (her term in the 1920s for impoverished immigrants, blacks, and other “undesirables”). Now she was offering “family planning access” to the “needy.” That’s how

opening abortion clinics in black neighborhoods can be portrayed as advancing “civil rights.”

Victimism, as Girard diagnosed it, is the cynical exploitation of concern for the weak and the marginalized, as a means of seeking power. Think of Hitler’s tears shed for “persecuted” Germans in Czechoslovakia or Lenin’s pretended concern for downtrodden Russian peasants. As we’ve seen with Sanger, you needn’t be a successful candidate for dictator to harness the power of Victimism. In fact, that very strategy let woke elites back in our day dominate politics and culture and leverage huge corporations to back their pet causes.

Think of Colin Kaepernick. A mediocre football player whom few teams wanted to sign, he made himself famous by “taking a knee” during the national anthem. Kaepernick claimed he protested the anthem to commemorate black victims of police violence and racism. Despite an initial backlash from fans, Kaepernick soldiered on — especially when the sports equipment leviathan Nike adopted him as its spokesman and corporate icon. When the Black Lives Matter-directed riots broke out in spring 2020, Kaepernick became a legend. He was even offered a TV series about his life, which was met by lavish media flattery.

Even as Nike calculated that backing Kaepernick would make them money in the long run, they were producing sneakers in Chinese factories manned by Uyghur Muslim slave laborers. The company had no problem using such slave labor, offered by a regime that imprisoned two million people for their race and religion. It could buy public approval by hiring Kaepernick, who had no scruples at all using the suffering of some black Americans to paper over the misery of millions.

That’s peak Victimism, people. It doesn’t get more cynically efficient than that.

But it does get more sophisticated and sinister, especially when Victimism replaces genuine Christianity at the Vatican. And that, it breaks my heart to say, has happened under Pope Francis.

I don't say such a thing lightly or flippantly, or in a spirit of partisan resentment that Pope Francis's politics displease me. I say it after a decade of watching this man and his appointees in action, comparing and contrasting their priorities with those I find in the Gospel.

What is the warm, beating heart of Christian ethics? To cleave to Jesus Christ, wherever He goes, whatever He does. Sometimes that will mean standing as the witness to staggering glory, as at the Transfiguration or wondering at miracles of healing and forgiveness. At the end of time, it will mean being gathered to help judge the nations, as Christ returns in glory.

But most of the time, for most of us, in this fallen world cleaving to Christ means helping Him carry the cross. Or standing with Mary at Calvary, being spat on by the crowds and menaced by Caesar's soldiers. Or seeking out the innocent who have been scapegoated by worldly powers as Jesus was, tending their wounds, defending their rights, championing their dignity by joining them at the margins where the "nice people" won't go — whether that's the abortion mills in our major cities, the villages of Afghanistan, the prison camps in East Turkestan, or the embattled front lines in Ukraine.

We can judge whether the recent synod at the Vatican, and Pope Francis's statements surrounding it, are authentically Catholic (or even Christian) by applying this criterion. Historically, the Church has summoned gatherings of its shepherds in response to some crisis — either a deep doctrinal confusion or a pattern of corruption that needed to be corrected. Such meetings were often contentious, as learned theologians debated the finer points of doctrine. It wasn't always obvious how to balance our affirmation of Christ's full divinity and humanity, or His sonship to the Father that still entailed co-equal Godhood.

So what crisis in society, in the Church, occasioned the recent synod that Pope Francis summoned at the Vatican, which gathered handpicked bishops and carefully vetted laymen chosen by local elites? Which basic Christian doctrine was under challenge, and needed defending? Which corrupt or destructive practice required correction by Christ's chosen shepherds? And what response did Pope Francis offer to such challenges and practices?

In this time of ramped-up persecution of Christians in Africa and Asia, of legal attacks on the religious freedom of Christians in Western Europe and America, brutal grinding war in Eastern Europe, and the slaughter of Armenian and Israeli civilians, Pope Francis seems to think that the most pressing issue facing Catholics is ... the wish of same-sex couples in rich, Western countries to have posh little rituals in church blessing their "unions," mimicking the trappings of legitimate Christian weddings. Oh yes, and the desire of China's brutal, Communist government to see its abuse of the environment justified by attacks on Western consumers.

Is that Pope Francis's idea of standing at the foot of the Cross, of welcoming the penitent prodigal son, of seeking out the desperate lost sheep? At a time when Western governments are ramping up the pressure on orthodox Christians to abandon the truth of marriage, grounded in natural law and six thousand years of divine revelation, what has Francis done?

He stripped every Catholic pastor on earth of his best legal defense, in refusing Caesar's demand for sacramental travesties of marriage: the argument that he's simply following Church law. Now Francis has said that such a decision is "pastoral" and has washed his hands of the question.

John Zmirak warned, way back in 2016, that Pope Francis was preparing the groundwork for secular persecution of pastors, by undercutting their First Amendment defense:

How soon will it be before pastors in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and other post-Christian wastelands are authorizing transvestites to hand out Holy Communion, same-sex couples to teach pre-Cana classes, and activists promoting sodomy to serve as principals of Catholic schools and seminaries — citing the language Pope Francis used to encourage compassion toward Catholics who have abandoned their sacramental marriages?

Under previous popes, faithful Catholics at least had firm, unambiguous papal statements to cite against such destructive local abuses, and to use in court when they had to defend their religious freedom against intolerant secular activists: “I’m sorry, Your Honor, but my Church explicitly requires this . . .” How long will it be until a well-informed judge, or a homosexual activist attorney, finds it useful to cite *Amoris Laetitia* against such beleaguered Catholics, and accuses them, in the pope’s own words, of “sitting on the chair of Moses”?

Not just our faith’s integrity, but our religious liberty is endangered by the pope’s ill-chosen words.⁴

Zmirak wrote that years before the FBI was infiltrating traditional Catholic parishes and raiding pro-lifers’ homes, before the Department of Justice labeled as “domestic extremists” parents who spoke up at school board meetings against pornographic books given to their children. I hate when my dear friend John turns out to be right. We will see in the next few years faithful Catholic pastors given the Jack Phillips treatment, sued again and again and again by lavishly funded LGBT groups for refusing to hold sacrilegious “blessing” ceremonies. And Pope Francis will be on the record as siding with their accusers.

⁴ John Zmirak, “Through the Eye of a Loophole,” OnePeterFive, April 22, 2016, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://onepeterfive.com/through-the-eye-of-a-loophole/>.

Who else is marginalized and persecuted, like Jesus and the first Christians?

- ✠ Non-violent pro-life demonstrators in Washington, D.C., who face long prison terms for exposing illegal late-term abortions in our nation's capital.
- ✠ Uyghurs and other prisoners of conscience, who are imprisoned and vivisected for their organs to be sold on the global black market — a practice that Francis's right-hand man, Bishop Marcelo Sorondo, went to China to defend.
- ✠ Doctors and other medical professionals who resisted the COVID panic, and the rush to churn out abortion-tainted, untested "vaccines" and force them on the public. These brave healers face attempts to drive them from their professions. Pope Francis commanded the faithful to brush aside their pro-life objections to that vaccine, and even minted a Vatican coin to commemorate the useless, dangerous vaccination of children.
- ✠ Poor people around the world who lack access to reliable sources of energy. The Climate Cult, which barely even pretends to concern itself with the good of the human family, would strip them and all of us of access to fossil fuels. Instead, we must rely on dodgy, unpredictable "green energy" sources and drive electric cars that rely on dangerous minerals mined with spoons by impoverished children in Africa. Pope Francis has thrown the full weight of his moral authority behind this coercive movement.
- ✠ Pastors like Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, and Cardinal Joseph Zen of Hong Kong, who have courageously spoken out against this new Church alliance with Caesar, Mammon, and Sodom — whom Francis has kicked to the curb and treated as unhinged extremists.

The Church, as Pope Francis sees it, is no friend of the marginalized and persecuted. Instead it is the court jester and public relations agent of the powerful — both societal institutions and prevailing narratives. It hijacks the language of Christian ethics, as cynics now must do, to pretend that it speaks for the weak and the unjustly accused.

But in fact, Pope Francis makes his sympathies absolutely obvious by whom he chooses to praise and meet with. Francis has hosted Chelsea Clinton, Jeffrey Sachs, Alexander Soros, and even Whoopi Goldberg at the Vatican. Yet when Cardinal Zen got a three-day leave from the prison where Francis's Chinese allies keep him and flew to Rome, Francis refused to see him.

The Church we face today is not led by apostles like Peter, confronting the Sadducees in the Temple. Instead, our shepherds creep about like courtiers in Pontius Pilate's palace, trying to make themselves useful. Victimists such as Pope Francis use the language and gestures of authentic Christian ethics, emptied of their real meaning, as tools for wielding power and making friends with Mammon. They already have their reward.

The answer to Victimism is not what the alt-right trolls are telling you — to renounce Christianity, embrace “Bronze Age” pre-biblical aristocratic cruelty, such as Friedrich Nietzsche preached. The Nazi movement was a massive experiment attempting exactly that, and we saw the monstrous outcome. Instead, we must hold fast to the truths about human life and morality that emerged from the biblical tradition and devote our lives to standing by them and rebuking their crass distortion. That won't be cheap, easy, or fun.

You can purchase a comfortable, meaningless life by joining our elites and your fashionable neighbors in their embrace of Victimism. You can feel virtuous and “socially responsible” driving an electric car made using African child labor, wearing sports clothes made by Uyghur slaves, or taking vaccines derived from aborted baby parts. You can establish your moral bona fides by denouncing the sins of your

long-dead ancestors and renouncing the prospect of having any descendants. (Their “carbon footprints” might wreck the climate.) You can gain and hold political power by tarring your enemies as advocates of “hate,” “inequity,” and “bigotry.”

The only downside is that you would be a contemptible hypocrite and a coward — and answer for all your actions on Judgment Day to a Christ who isn’t fooled and isn’t amused. He would point to the victims of abortion, of human trafficking, slavery, and religious persecution, whom you dismissed and ignored, and say:

“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.” They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?” He will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” (Matt. 25:41-45)





CHAPTER 2

GNOSTICISM

The Hijacking of Faith and Reason

GNOSTICISM IS A WORD with many meanings. It can be used in a narrow, historical sense to describe a particular religious movement with identifiable tenets, which flourished in the late Roman empire, especially in cosmopolitan cities such as Alexandria. Believers in ancient Gnosticism taught a wide variety of elaborate, systematic doctrines that most readers won't wish to explore in tedious detail. (Those interested can consult books such as *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, available online.) Gnostic thinkers multiplied cosmic entities and created elaborate hierarchies of demons, demi-gods, lesser gods, and other intermediary spirits who could block or bridge our contact with the ultimate source of Being — a nebulous god-principle identified with “light.”

Gnostics rejected traditional religious revelations, such as the Old Testament and large segments of the New. They also discarded the inherited cults of ancient paganism. Along with those, they disdained the philosophical systems that prevailed among intellectuals, such as Stoicism, Neoplatonism, and Epicureanism. But Gnostics also burrowed into such movements, trying to win over their adherents, claiming that their “secret” doctrines offered the “real” answer to fundamental questions. The Christian churches of major centers such as Alexandria were partly compromised by such Gnostics.

Gnostics believed that the truth about existence is knowable, but not via the public revelations proclaimed by Moses or Jesus, or via the academic debates that appealed to Greek philosophers. Instead, the truth of things is a mystical secret, available only to the select few who took part in a Gnostic sect's rituals, which would grant the curious soul the unique insight that cut the Gordian knot of human existence.

Orthodox worldviews such as the Hebrew and Christian religions (and some which split off from them) hold that there are enduring paradoxes of human existence: body/spirit, causality/freedom, person/community. The task of embodied religions based on real revelation (and even of genuine philosophy, such as Plato's) is to work out how we must live on this earth within these real and enduring tensions.

Gnostic systems weaponize the impatience we feel with such paradoxes and tensions and seek to collapse the realities of Being into one pole or another — either all body or all spirit, all fate or all freedom, the solitary self or the collective Herd.

Most ancient Gnostics believed that the material universe is not just lower than the realm of the spirit, but evil — opposed in principle to the aspirations and dignity of the soul. We humans are souls condemned by fate, or by a bumbling, unfriendly Demiurge (lesser god), to lengthy prison terms in a false, misleading world. The Marcionites, the first great heretics in the Christian Church, claimed that the Yahweh of the Old Testament was such a lesser god, whom Jesus had to come to rescue us from and proclaim a whole new religion. The Marcionite answer appealed to new Gentile converts, who might have balked at the “primitive” content of the Hebrew Scriptures or resented the prior claim of ethnically Jewish Christians (a shrinking minority of the growing Church).

A human being, for the Gnostics, is a pure and eternal spirit imprisoned in a decaying machine of flesh and bone that offers us

only brief, degrading pleasures and enduring physical suffering, before we expire. Only by illuminating ourselves via secret knowledge or rituals can we discover the eternal “spark” of the soul and learn to liberate it from its fleshly, temporal prison.

It’s worth exploring the claims of this strange, speculative worldview because doing so sheds a piercing light on a wide array of much more current, historically powerful movements that still afflict us today. Tragically, these movements are no longer confined to extremist political parties, totalitarian governments, or even the political left. In fact, there’s a very great danger of many conservatives and Christians, even Catholics, falling into this ancient evil. To clarify the difference between the literal, ancient believers and those who in our age have fallen prey to the same temptations, here we will capitalize the former but not the latter. Hence modern *gnostics* retrace the steps of ancient *Gnostics*.

The broader sense of the word *Gnosticism* was first applied by the great refugee from Hitler’s Germany Eric Voegelin, a political philosopher and analyst of modern totalitarianism. The successor to Max Weber in German academia, Voegelin invoked the specific beliefs, intellectual impulses, and apparent motivations of ancient speculative mystics to understand more modern, pressing questions. Voegelin struggled to explain the surprising appeal to millions of alienated modern people of the clunky, unconvincing philosophy and discredited economics of Karl Marx and the wildly irrational, pseudo-scientific messianic claims of Adolf Hitler. Voegelin’s books *The New Science of Politics*; *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*; and *Ersatz Religions* were devoted to this theme.

Both Marx and Hitler claimed the mantle of modern research and “progress.” Marx claimed that he had adopted the most sophisticated philosophical apparatus ever developed — Hegel’s “dialectical” system — and improved upon it by aiming it not at the vaporous fictions of the human “spirit,” but rather at the sturdy, documentable

facts of tangible mass production, political movements, and conflict among the social classes. Marx believed that he had come along to do for economics and politics what Darwin had done for nature — demystify and unveil in the cold light of day the hidden mechanisms that explained what was really going on, without any need to appeal to unseen “spiritual” entities.

Hitler, for his part, firmly believed that he was applying the “proven” claims of Darwin more consistently than Darwin had himself, to the whole range of human existence from politics and war to family life and religion. If Marx was unlocking human life with the skeleton key of class-based economics, Hitler claimed to do so with the lockpick of natural selection. Instead of a perennial war among social classes, which Marx taught was the engine of history, Hitler preached a perennial competition among the races.

We can say that both Marx and Hitler tried to don the “white lab coat” worn by laboratory scientists, in order to arrogate for their own speculative systems the prestige and credibility that centuries of applied science had gained by explaining such long-mysterious phenomena as the circulation of the blood, the origin of diseases, and the means for harnessing vast natural forces to human purposes via steam engines and flying machines.

Adopting these scientific pretensions gave to these new, unproven (and untestable) comprehensive worldviews a false authority, which could replace traditional sources such as religious faith, philosophical reason, or even the evidence of our senses — because when mere reality didn’t match the claims of the gnostic ideology, the gnostic dismissed the evidence, as “bourgeois” economics or “Jewish” physics. So a new and fanatical faith in spurious “science” could launch whole new armadas of apostles and inquisitors — though no new saints.

When Eric Voegelin tried to explain the rise of “ersatz religions” such as communism or National Socialism, he had to reach back and

find ancient texts of Gnostic cosmic fantasy. We need not work that hard, since one of the most popular films in history perfectly embodies the gnostic worldview — and indeed helped to popularize it. I mean *The Matrix*.

The first *Matrix* film was at once a wildly exciting action film and the most paranoid fantasy possible. It imagined a world where every thought, feeling, experience, memory, and action of human beings throughout the world was a toxic delusion — a fantasy artificially created by a conspiracy of highly intelligent exploiters who held the human race prisoner, using our bodies as “batteries” to fuel the computers on which an artificial intelligence (the “Matrix”) depended for its energy.

Instead of being a clever, entertaining one-off, the film became a sensation, spawning two disappointing sequels and creating phrases that still resonate today, on both sides of the ideological spectrum. Clearly, the public was ready to consider gnostic explanations, instead of religious or rational ones, to unlock the mounting malaise and sense of alienation that suffuse ordinary postmodern life. Whenever you hear someone claim that he has been “red-pilled,” for instance, he’s making a *Matrix* reference, claiming that he has joined a tiny elite of those in the know (*gnostic* means literally that, in Greek), in contrast to the millions of hapless “sheeple” who plod along, their heads clouded by lies that elites have planted in their heads.

Now, in light of that, can you see why this subject is important? The filmmakers, a pair of brothers whose obsession with online erotica eventually led both of them to embrace the transgender delusion and undergo sex change operations, admitted that their sense of being “trapped” in the “wrong” bodies helped inspire their creation of this film.

Indeed, the transgender movement depends on asserting a gnostic view of our lives. It argues — contrary to both classical philosophy and Christian doctrine — that we are not body/spirit amalgams.

Nor are we ghosts co-existing uncomfortably with machines, as Descartes insisted. Instead, we are somehow spirits with “gender identities” that are completely unconnected from the biological realities that even give the sex polarity meaning. (Pure spirits wouldn’t have genders any more than bacteria do, since they don’t reproduce sexually.) There aren’t just two sexes, but *forty-seven*, according to the fantasies that appeal to one theorist. Others argue for an infinite variety of “gender identities.” And yet we must be free, and publicly funded, to mutilate our actual bodies and their sex organs to match these free-floating, non-biological categories that have no parallels in the rest of the animal kingdom. Furthermore, the state must punish anyone who dares to point out that the “emperor” has no uterus.

Ironic, isn’t it, that the Wachowski brothers (now calling themselves “sisters”) who created *The Matrix* fancied themselves as rebels against a cruel and oppressive “establishment,” to the point of harnessing the music of Rage Against the Machine? In the films, the heroes of the Resistance champion the gritty, real embodied existence of biological human beings, preferring the grit, sweat, and scarcity they found in “the desert of the Real” to the comfortable, corporate fantasies pumped into men’s heads by the AI’s Matrix.

But the transgender movement, which the brothers support and helped to launch, is in fact closely aligned with billion-dollar Big Pharma companies, which stand to make trillions more as thousands of young people decide that their real bodies are “wrong.” (See feminist scholar Jennifer Bilek’s scathing expose, “The Billionaires Behind the LGBT Movement,” in *First Things* magazine.) Those “wrong” bodies that don’t match the fantasies of the disembodied human spirit must be “corrected” with pricey surgery and hormones, as directed by well-paid professionals who will be reimbursed by the taxpayer. Parents who dissent from this medicalization of their children’s budding sexuality can lose custody. Recently, a Canadian father was imprisoned for using the “wrong” pronouns for his child.

It's not just the secular left that's embracing such gnostic phantasmagoria, alas. In the course of my pro-human-rights, pro-life activism, I've encountered many sincere and lifelong Christians and conservatives who have adopted the strange gnostic vocabulary of the *Matrix* movies. Learning the truth about the 2020 election, or the COVID panic, or the war in Ukraine is described as getting "red-pilled." Gullibly accepting the official stories supported by the Deep State, social media, or the medical establishment means that you are "blue-pilled." Letting the enormity of the (all-too-genuine!) evil we face in such institutions drive you to nihilistic despair means that you have been "black-pilled." And I was genuinely shocked to hear a blasphemous reference to Holy Communion when a pro-lifer referred to receiving the Sacrament and the holiness it's meant to infuse as "getting white-pilled." Does it not strike such people as strange and slightly suspicious that they're using the jargon of a movie made by leaders of the transgender movement to describe a Christian sacrament?

But that is precisely the toxic, viral power of small-g gnosticism and why I think it originates with the Enemy. Precisely because dangerous secular, anti-Christian gnostics have managed to take control of crucial institutions — from agencies of our government to high positions within our churches — the paranoid style of gnostic discourse becomes all too plausible. As I wrote at *The Stream* not long ago:

In the wake of COVID and the 2020 election, conservatives — or, more accurately, the normal, hard-working people of America — have undergone relentless gaslighting. It came from the media, the White House, and even our religious leaders.

A weaponized Department of Justice abuses us; PTA moms and devout Catholics are terrorized by the FBI while Hunter Biden goes on a globe-trotting financial and sex crimes spree undeterred by the law. In a world where

all the old heroes have shape-shifted into villains, why can't the villains shape-shift into heroes?⁵

Thus, American Catholics of Polish descent *trans*-form themselves (pun intended) into admirers of KGB veteran Vladimir Putin, sending their ancestors spinning in their graves. People who rightly denounce FBI attacks on U.S. pro-lifers deny or justify appalling abuses of priests, ministers, children, and other civilians by Russia's invading armies. Catholics who've spent years promoting the message of Fatima repeat Russian propaganda uncritically, claiming that Putin's regime (a center for sex trafficking) is somehow our ally against the global sex industry and the LGBT juggernaut that threatens us in the West. All this to prove that they aren't taking the "blue pills" dispensed by Joe Biden's State Department and the homogenously leftist mainstream media.

And if you try to offer them well-sourced facts and rational arguments, these people wave you off as being a programmed, deluded dupe of a misinformation machine. The skepticism they rightly apply to what comes out of NBC or Fox News suddenly fails when they see reports from a "based" blog or social media account. They suppress the crucial questions that ought to make them dubious of such convenient "facts," in exactly the same way that Marxists dismissed probing questions about Marx's failed and flawed economics and ultra-nationalist Germans waved off the crank origins of Hitler's biological theories.

The most tragic instance of gnosticism taking hold in conservative, Christian circles is QANON.

Yes, it's true that the mainstream media try to use the existence of this gnostic conspiracy theory to discredit every legitimate objection to the latest mask or vaccination mandate, unjust indictment of

⁵ Jason Jones and John Zmirak, "Is the Answer to Zombie Neocons . . . Zombie Putinists?," *The Stream*, July 18, 2023, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://stream.org/is-the-answer-to-zombie-neocons-zombie-putinists/>.

a Republican politician during an election year, or effort to groom our children in public schools.

Likewise, some right-wingers in the 1950s made careless and baseless attacks on Americans, falsely claiming that they were Communist sympathizers or spies. But there *was* a large, sophisticated network of Communist influencers and even espionage agents in the West, which tried to control the content of Hollywood movies and take over labor unions and which succeeded in stealing the secrets to building the atomic bomb. (For proof of that, consult *The Venona Secrets* by Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel; *Dupes* by Paul Ken-
gor; and *A Life* by Elia Kazan, among many other reliable sources.)

Those actually involved in a conspiracy directed by the genocidal dictator Stalin hid behind the innocence of patriotic Americans who'd been smeared by a few alarmists and grifters. And it worked like a charm.

The parallels now are stark and depressing. As my old friend John Zmirak wrote in *Chronicles* magazine, reviewing the film *Sound of Freedom* by another old friend, Eduardo Verástegui:

We know for a cold, hard fact that there is a high-level conspiracy among our elites to sexualize children; to remove the last, lingering taboo against molesting them; and to strip their parents of the power to protect their innocence and even to raise them with religious values. The legislature of our country's largest state, California, is considering a bill that will allow courts to strip custody from parents for ... pushing back against school counselors who urge their children to mutilate their genitals and chemically castrate or sterilize themselves.

We know that the Sexual Revolution was led by dishonest, pseudoscientific perverts like Alfred Kinsey—a man who cheerfully collected data on “infantile orgasm” from a molester who preyed on babies. For proof of this and much, much more, see Jennifer Morse's book *The*

Sexual State. We can read with our own jaded eyes the manifestos by the revolutionaries of 1968, who called for an end to taboos against preying on children.⁶

With all these tragic realities easily verifiable from mainstream, unimpeachable sources in five minutes of Internet research, who does it benefit to advance elaborate, unprovable charges based on vague insinuations, rumors, and dubious medical claims about “adrenochrome”?

The Biden administration has provably thrown open U.S. borders to the mass importation of children by human traffickers. It has openly, on the public record, abolished the DNA tests imposed by the Trump administration that tried to verify or falsify claims by adults that the children that they were transporting were blood relatives. As Eduardo Verástegui warned back in 2017, the refusal of Congress to build Trump’s border wall has turned over control of the U.S. border to cartels that traffic children by the thousands, in addition to drugs and weapons. You don’t need access to secret message boards on the Dark Web to show all this — and to make strong arguments against it.

What does it accomplish to gild this flower of evil with lurid, unprovable claims about satanic rituals, lifespan extensions based on cannibalistic medical practices, and even (in some cases) the involvement of extraterrestrials? Which group of people in the world benefit most from linking solid, horrible facts with elaborate, unverifiable claims? No, really: step back for a moment and think about that, in good conspiracy-realist fashion: *Cui bono?*

Just as those few anti-Communists in the past who smeared the innocent or indulged in anti-Semitic fantasies helped real Stalinists to get away with murder, the people who tout unprovable theories about the “real” goals of child sex traffickers are only helping the sex

⁶ John Zmirak, “A Spark to Start a Wildfire,” *Chronicles*, September 2023, <https://chroniclesmagazine.org/reviews/a-spark-to-start-a-wildfire/>.

criminals. They are discrediting real reformers and doing perhaps as much as the corrupt, bumbling Joe Biden to keep the supply of child sex slaves flowing without interruption.

As I said, the source of gnosticism is the Enemy, and his demonic intelligence allows him to outwit us — to beat us in every move of this vast game of chess. The real evils that we face are soul-crushing and almost unthinkable. That tempts us to abandon faith and reason in favor of wild fantasy, scapegoating, and careless calumny. If we give in to that temptation, then our very efforts to fight those evils end up helping them to thrive and spread.

I have had good friends drift out of practicing Christianity, in favor of obsessing about the claims of QANON. At least one person I know was driven to suicide from despair, after months of submerging himself in its dark, labyrinthine fantasies. Countless otherwise good people become willing to make outrageous, slanderous charges against public figures based on the thinnest “evidence” collected from anonymous strangers on the Internet.

But let’s say that most people avoid the worst extremes to which such gnostic scapegoating can lead. At best, those who have suspended their rational faculties and ceased to take comfort from their faith fall into one deeply destructive habit. I’ve seen it again and again, and I butt my head up against it constantly in my efforts to serve the vulnerable worldwide, the people victimized by the callousness of the powerful from Afghanistan to Maui, from Planned Parenthood’s clinics to our lawless border with Mexico: Gnosticism makes people useless. It convinces them that the most productive thing they could do to fight very real evils is to gather more information, spread additional rumors, and burrow ever deeper into a silo of fellow “red-pilled” people — most of whom they never even meet.

Instead of volunteering at a crisis pregnancy center, or donating to feed Christian refugees, such gnostics think that they’re fighting evil by recruiting more people to believe in their secret explanation

for why the cosmos is now disordered. That dispenses them from the duty to actually help real people in the real world who are actually suffering because of provable evils, such as sex trafficking, the war in Ukraine, or America's crass surrender in Afghanistan.

I refuse to shape my thinking according to the categories of a paranoid fantasy, whether it's that of ancient mystics in Alexandria or transgender filmmakers in Hollywood. I won't call Communion a "white pill" or the sober, plain truth a "red pill." I will cling to the criteria of reason and the tenets of revelation and orient my life according to what the Church has always taught to be virtuous and Christ-like. That's why my non-profit, the Vulnerable People Project, focuses on standing with the vulnerable, with those whom our elite scapegoats and the mob menaces, whom timid souls reject — lest they be contaminated by embracing the lepers of our day. We don't offer them secret knowledge, or ideology, but the Corporal Works of Mercy. We feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bury the dead.

The way to avoid cooperating with the evil we see around us is not to burrow our way down into it, obsessively seeking to ferret out its "secrets," as if exposing them would somehow melt them, like water thrown on the Wicked Witch of the West. That doesn't work. Besides, there is nothing arcane going on here. We've known since the Garden of Eden that the world, the flesh, and the devil war against the Spirit of God. There is no gnostic formula that we can utter like a spell that can change any of that.

What we can do is unite ourselves with the victims, with those who are vulnerable to the grim effects of evil, and be willing to share their struggle. To suffer with them, if need be, uniting our passion to Christ's. That's why I was one of the first people in the United States arrested for protesting the COVID panic lockdowns. I knew that a slowdown in food production would produce famine — and warned about that in print, while there was still time to prevent the greatest hunger crisis since World War II.

My concern for the vulnerable led me to flout executive orders and protest destructive lockdown policies. I launched the “film your hospital” movement in February 2020, when I saw that the COVID testing offered by my local government was a charade. I wasn’t motivated by QANON or conspiracy theories, but for concern for the vulnerable. When I saw that COVID was producing seven-mile-long lines for food, I set up a food pantry — and faced down the police whom our virus-crazed local government sent to shut it down. That same concern drove me to help the victims of Biden’s craven surrender in Afghanistan and his callous warmongering in Ukraine. We’ve helped Afghan translators who’d served with American soldiers escape the Taliban and Ukrainian families recover from the impact of Russian aggression.

The answer to gnosticism is to stand with the vulnerable, at whatever cost to yourself. To do that we must face facts, master rational arguments, and avoid the Enemy’s rabbit holes. We can do that by keeping our gaze fixed firmly on Jesus Christ. There is no other way.





CHAPTER 3

TRANSHUMANISM

Remaking Man as a Monster

MEET THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY, who became famous as “Darwin’s Bulldog.” Huxley was an early adopter of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. He went on to defend it vociferously in an 1860 debate with Anglican bishop Samuel Wilberforce. The bishop’s father was William Wilberforce, the great English legislator who led the fight to abolish the British slave trade in 1807. Soon, British fleets around the globe were rescuing slaves and forcing foreign powers to discontinue the buying and selling of human flesh.

Abolition was a uniquely Christian achievement, a triumph of the idea that all men are created in God’s image and that there is only one race: humanity. With the rise of Darwinism, though, the cause of human equality suffered a blow to its foundations even in the midst of its ascendancy.

Huxley won the debate with Wilberforce by painting the bishop as a religious obscurantist out to suppress scientific truth. Today, though, Huxley has fallen victim to a different kind of religious zeal. In 2021, a historical study group recommended that Imperial College London remove a bust of Huxley, citing his belief in “a racial hierarchy of intelligence” that led to the development of eugenics—the use of selective breeding (and selective sterilization) to enhance the human race.

The English Catholic journalist G.K. Chesterton wrote in his 1908 book *Orthodoxy* that he had no problem with evolution as a scientific proposition. “God might just as well do things slowly as quickly,” he argued, “especially if, like the Christian God, he were outside time.” What frightened him was Darwinism’s potential to obliterate the idea of humanity itself. Taken to an extreme, it would mean that “there is no such thing as an ape to change, and no such thing as a man for him to change into. . . . There is only one thing, and that is a flux.”⁷

For millennia, the great prophets and philosophers took it for granted that human nature was a fixed and static thing. Not anymore.

Whether or not Huxley believed in eugenics (he was a staunch abolitionist) doesn’t matter. What does is that he and Darwin laid the groundwork for it. (Darwin opined in a private letter to Rev. Charles Kingsley that the non-white races would eventually be exterminated and that the human species would advance as a result.) Huxley may not have been a eugenicist, but his intellectual children were. So was one of his literal grandchildren.

It was, in fact, Julian Huxley who popularized the term *transhumanism* in a 1951 essay. Thanks to advances in science, he wrote, “It is as if man had been suddenly appointed managing director of the biggest business of all, the business of evolution — appointed without being asked if he wanted it.”⁸ And man’s first act as managing director was to implement eugenics. Julian himself served as president of the British Eugenics Society. In that capacity, he gave speeches arguing that the poor were genetically inferior to the rich and were breeding too fast. This, of course, meant that they should be put on birth control, denied access to hospitals, and sterilized if they were

⁷ G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, in *G.K. Chesterton: Collected Works, vol. 1*, ed. David Dooley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 238.

⁸ Julian Huxley, ed., *New Bottles for New Wine: Essays* (London: Harper, 1957), 13.

unemployed for too long. Only then could humanity accelerate its own evolution into whatever came next — which was, of course, desirable for its own sake. To most intellectuals in the early twentieth century, this sounded perfectly reasonable.

This is not some hypothetical dystopia. During the twentieth century, more than sixty thousand “feeble-minded” Americans were involuntarily rendered infertile. Virginia performed the country’s last state-sanctioned sterilizations in 1979.

Eugenics is less popular today due to widespread backlash against the horrors of the Holocaust. Still, the ideas underlying it continue to spread.

On the left side of the political spectrum, we see eugenic attitudes in the unwillingness of most first-world countries to ban abortion in cases of Down’s Syndrome and other genetic defects. Iceland’s own government admits that it has nearly genocided Down’s out of existence. Between 2008 and 2018, only two to three children per year were born with the disorder in that country. The rest were aborted.

On the right, eugenics rears its head in the Nietzschean fringe represented by alt-right activists, especially the pseudonymous author known as Bronze Age Pervert (or “BAP”). These figures obsess about “human biodiversity.” They argue that the belief in human equality before God, which inspired early Christians to rescue “defective” infants from the garbage dumps where their parents left them to die, has polluted the gene pool and poisoned the human spirit. Only eugenics can rescue the strong from the tyranny of the weak, mewling, miscegenated masses. And yes, this belief has a strong racial component. BAP compares “non-Western man,” who desires only to “breed indiscriminately,” to yeast: an “amorphous blob” endlessly expanding but serving no higher purpose.

Ultimately, though, transhumanism is more than eugenics. It also dreams of adjusting human personalities through neuropharmacology, growing designer babies in artificial wombs, living to 150,

and uploading your consciousness to the cloud. And in fact, this ideology goes even further.

Transhumanism is, at bottom, a rejection of human nature. No thinker has ever defined its central tenet as succinctly as the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, who said in a famous 1945 lecture that, for human beings, “existence precedes essence.”⁹

The term *essence* means a thing’s inherent identity and purpose. For something like a pocketknife, Sartre explained, essence precedes existence. Someone sat down, designed a device for cutting things, and then brought it into being. A good knife is one that cuts well. But humanity is not a pocketknife. As the product of blind evolutionary forces, we have no transcendent purpose. There is no “right” way to be human any more than there is a “right” way to be wood. What we *are* provides no insight into how we *ought* to live. We need not even remain what we are. To be human is to be blessed (or cursed) with total freedom. The only real sin is to inhibit someone else’s exercise of that same freedom. We have the right — and, increasingly, the power — to decide what we will be.

This freedom might seem enticing, but its primary effect is to sever the bonds of solidarity between the dead, the living, and those yet to be born. In his 1943 book *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis wrote that the tradition that respected human nature and recognized transcendent values “dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly.”¹⁰ That will no longer be possible. Children will not be the same kind of beings that their parents are. How, under such circumstances, are we meant to love one another?

It took a third Huxley — Julian’s brother, Aldous — to begin envisioning the future consequences of transhumanism. He was especially

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Citadel Press, 1987), 13.

¹⁰ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (Logos Light, 2017), 62.

prescient when it came to human reproduction. Consider the opening scene of his 1932 novel *Brave New World*, in which a “Hatchery” operator explains the process of growing babies in bottles on a mile-long conveyor belt. He

told them of the growing embryo on its bed of peritoneum. Made them taste the rich blood surrogate on which it fed. Explained why it had to be stimulated with placentin and thyroxin. Told them of the *corpus luteum* extract. Showed them the jets through which at every twelfth metre from zero to 2040 it was automatically injected. Spoke of those gradually increasing doses of pituitary administered during the final ninety-six metres of their course. Described the artificial maternal circulation installed in every bottle at Metre 112; showed them the reservoir of blood-surrogate, the centrifugal pump that kept the liquid moving over the placenta and drove it through the synthetic lung and waste product filter. Referred to the embryo’s troublesome tendency to anæmia, to the massive doses of hog’s stomach extract and foetal foal’s liver with which, in consequence, it had to be supplied.¹¹

Huxley also notes that, before they get bottled to gestate, many of the embryos are “bokanovskified.”¹² Hatchery staff blast the fertilized eggs with radiation, causing them to divide into multiple sets of identical twins while also leaving them with varying degrees of retardation. Those babies grow up to become Deltas, Gammas, and Epsilons, who perform menial tasks while Alphas and Betas focus on enjoying themselves.

In his 2002 book *Our Posthuman Future*, Francis Fukuyama points out that, in such a society “there is no such thing as the human race any longer,” since these “separate castes ... are as distant from

¹¹ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, in *Brave New World: Including Brave New World Revisited* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004): 22–23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

each other as humans are from animals.”¹³ With such technology, it would be all too easy to turn the racist delusion that there are multiple humanities — some presumably more “human” than others — into a terrifying reality.

For Huxley’s original audience, the Hatchery would have seemed fantastical. More than ninety years later, we still haven’t caught up. A group of scientists managed to keep a lamb fetus alive in an artificial womb called a “biobag” for four weeks back in 2017. The biobags, basically plastic fluid-filled sacs with tubes sticking out of them, could eventually be used to save the lives of premature babies. (Naturally, feminists worry that, by pushing back the date of fetal “viability,” this technology could jeopardize the “right” to an abortion.)

For some futurists, though, these artificial wombs are not emergency lifesaving devices, but universal replacements for the natural process of pregnancy. In December 2022, Berlin-based biotechnologist Hashem Al-Ghaili released a concept video for a facility he calls EctoLife. The computer-animated video shows rows and rows of pods — up to four hundred per location — each growing a new human being. Cameras mounted in the pods allow parents to use the EctoLife app to access “a high-resolution live view of your baby’s development,” while built-in speakers make it possible to “directly sing to your baby and make them familiar with your voice before birth.”¹⁴

The video cites infertility and maternal mortality as justifications for artificial wombs, but the real purpose is more insidious. Previous advances in obstetrics and gynecology have all been aimed at helping women to do more safely and successfully what their bodies are designed to do. But for a transhumanist, the fact that evolution

¹³ Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Picador, 2002), 6.

¹⁴ Hashem Al-Ghaili, “The World’s First Artificial Womb Facility,” AEM, January 30, 2023, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://aemagazine.pk/article/the-worlds-first-artificial-womb-facility>.

randomly produced a biological process that works in a particular way is no reason to treat that process as normative. It can be altered or abolished altogether according to individual preference or societal interest. Perhaps we'll even live to see natural pregnancy outlawed, having been deemed too burdensome for hospitals and too risky for mothers and infants. Imagine it — women could finally be equal. All they'd have to do is betray their own bodies. Lady Macbeth was prophetic when she called on demonic spirits to “unsex me” as a prerequisite for her empowerment.

We may not have working artificial wombs yet, but other technologies can undermine human nature in similar ways. Take surrogacy, for example. When Russia invaded Ukraine, wealthy Western Europeans scrambled to get their babies' mothers out of the country, which is a popular haven for couples seeking human incubators. Chinese millionaires prefer to hire Californian surrogates, since any child born on American soil is automatically a U.S. citizen, which makes college applications easier in the future. Socialite Khloé Kardashian made headlines in May when she tearfully confessed that she struggled to bond with her surrogate-born son. Surrogacy contracts often include a clause stipulating that, upon the request of whomever commissioned the baby, the woman carrying it must obtain an abortion or forfeit her six-figure payment.

A report from the Heritage Foundation found that children born by surrogacy “are more likely to have low birth weights and are at an increased risk for stillbirth” and that surrogates themselves are “at a three-fold risk of developing hypertension and pre-eclampsia.”¹⁵ But despite all these drawbacks, commercial surrogacy has exploded, with births by surrogate nearly quadrupling between 2004 and 2015. The

¹⁵ Grace Melton and Melanie Israel, “How Surrogacy Harms Women and Children,” The Heritage Foundation, May 5, 2021, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://www.heritage.org/marriage-and-family/commentary/how-surrogacy-harms-women-and-children>.

lure of avoiding nausea, stretch marks, insomnia, back pain, dietary restrictions, and all the other inconveniences of pregnancy is certainly powerful. If some impoverished woman has to pay all those costs and more for the sake of another woman's liberation, then so be it.

Another way to circumvent biology is through birth control. Contraceptives have proven so popular that our culture tends to treat artificial sterility as the norm and fertility as the exception. In a small but meaningful way, a girl who's placed on birth control at thirteen and never experiences a normal menstrual cycle until she tries to get pregnant at thirty is a different animal from all her female ancestors. There's a reason Mary Harrington calls the contraceptive pill "the first transhumanist technology."¹⁶

The Pill was "a total paradigm shift in what medicine is for," Harrington explains, "because it doesn't set out to fix something that's wrong with me, like a broken arm or a kidney that's not working properly. It sets out to break something that's working properly in accordance with desire." Allowing that desire to shape our embodied nature is the very essence of transhumanism.

The end result of this paradigm shift is that procreation is severed from the marital love that ought to accompany it. In fact, as philosopher John Finnis pointed out, it ceases to be "procreation" at all and becomes mere "reproduction," establishing a "maker-product" relationship between one generation and the next.

For all of human history, we've followed the same pattern: people make love and love makes people. Adopting transhumanist reproductive technology changes all that. A child is no longer the natural result of a sexual relationship. You don't need to have sex at all! Just order a baby *a la carte*. Even for a loving married couple, a

¹⁶ Mary Harrington, "Mary Harrington: Birth Control Was the First Transhumanist Technology," American Moment, May 5, 2023, YouTube video, 19:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmoTIyi22jU>.

child born via surrogate, grown in a pod, or conceived after a long period of self-inflicted infertility takes on the quality of an optional add-on to their marriage, like heated seats in a new Chevy Equinox. In fact, a fully customizable car is a pretty good metaphor for what we become under transhumanism. Only in this case, the chassis is your body and there's no real agreement on what a car is *for*.

I have been told by my doctors and teachers that I have ADHD. That's Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Don't feel bad for me, though. Yes, my "condition" makes it difficult for me to sit still. I struggled in school because five minutes into class, my mind would begin to drift from daydream to daydream. One minute I would be visualizing sacking quarterbacks in an upcoming football game, and the next I would be strolling through the streets of Paris hand in hand with the girl sitting two rows in front of me in French class. Even today, if you put me in a cubicle with a bunch of spreadsheets on a screen, my brain would immediately clock out. You'd have to fire me. And honestly, I'd be grateful. Some people are wired for jobs like that. They love nothing more than to shut out all distractions and lose themselves in the data for hours on end. To me, that sounds like the ninth circle of Hell.

Thankfully, I was able to blaze my own trail. By the time I got to high school, I realized I could skip most days, not turn in homework, and still manage to maintain eligibility for sports if I aced all my tests. While everyone else was sitting in class, I was out exploring Chicago, sneaking into museums, or plopping down in the corner of a used bookstore surrounded by piles of books on my latest enthusiasm — Zen Buddhism, or objectivism, or Herman Hesse, or Rastafarianism, or World War II. Or else I spent the day alone, wandering through a forest preserve, skipping smooth stones, eating wild strawberries, sitting on moss-covered rock reading *The Phantom Toll Booth* for the hundredth time. Today, instead of working a desk job, I

get to travel all over the world, making movies and serving vulnerable communities.

My ADHD isn't a disability. It's a superpower. A Ferrari might be a liability in stop-and-go traffic, but the solution isn't to swap in a Hyundai engine. It's to open it up on the Autobahn.

But not everyone is as blessed as I've been. When I was in college, I worked at an after-school program for children, and one kid in particular reminded me of my hyperactive self. To him, the whole world was an endless panoply of delights. Every toy, every bug, every blade of grass was charged with God's grandeur. He perfectly embodied G.K. Chesterton's maxim: "The world will never starve for want of wonders; but only for want of wonder."¹⁷

Then, one day, his mother bowed to pressure from teachers and school administrators and consented to put her son on Ritalin. The school principal would line the students up, (ironically, under a "DARE to keep kids off drugs" poster) and hand out their pills. It was like some sick parody of the Eucharist, only instead of elevating them toward the Beatific Vision, this pseudo-sacrament was designed to crush it out of them. The kid spent the remainder of the afternoon staring at his shoes. The next day, I handed out pamphlets to all the parents warning them about the dangers of Ritalin. Almost six million American children, mostly boys, have been diagnosed with ADHD; of those, more than 60 percent take medication. If I could save one student, I had to try. The day after that, I was fired.

These parents weren't evil. They probably thought that they were doing the right thing for their kids. "Of course I don't *want* to give my children drugs," they might have reasoned, "but we have to take the world as we find it, and in this world, you need to be able to sit still and pay attention." Maybe they lacked the resources to give their kids a homeschool education with plenty of time for hands-on

¹⁷ G.K. Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1920), 7.

outdoor activities. Maybe they lacked the imagination to look beyond the college-to-desk-job pipeline and realize that Junior would be much happier (and probably better paid) as a land surveyor or a tugboat crewman. Whatever their thought processes, they were most likely motivated by nothing more than love.

The problem is that ADHD isn't like deafness or a cleft palate. These are obvious defects, and any loving parent would have them corrected. But ADHD has no obvious physiological cause. Its definition is highly subjective, as Fukuyama explains in *Our Posthuman Future*. "Despite several decades of searching, no one has been able to identify a cause of . . . ADHD. It is a pathology recognized only by its symptoms," he writes. It is, however, entirely possible that there is no cause to discover. The simplest explanation for the ADHD "epidemic" is that "ADHD isn't a disease at all but rather just the tail end of the bell curve describing the distribution of perfectly normal behavior," Fukuyama writes. "The fact that we increasingly demand that [young boys] sit still in classrooms, or that parents and teachers have less time to spend with them on interesting tasks, is what creates the impression that there is a growing disease."¹⁸

In other words, there's nothing wrong with ADHD kids. They're just (to use a completely made-up number) in the ninety-fifth and above percentile for hyperactivity. Why should we call that a disorder? We don't do the same for shoe size or height. If being hyperactive impacts their quality of life, then the fault (dear Brutus) is not in our children but in our institutions.

The struggle between human nature and inhuman aspects of society is at least centuries old, maybe millennia. The Psalmist warned that those who worshiped idols of silver and gold would become like them, losing all insight and initiative. The English Romantic poets raged against an Industrial Revolution that uprooted men

¹⁸ Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future*, 47.

from their native soil and made them cogs in a soulless machine. Even the most ambitious schemes, however, had to accommodate themselves to humanity as it actually exists or else fail entirely. Revolutionary France (with its cult of Reason) and Stalinist Russia (with its ideal of the New Soviet Man) paid no mind to the natural affections of the human heart. And so, they collapsed. This won't be the case for much longer. Soon, we'll be able to create utterly inhuman societies and then cut our humanity to fit them.

Greek mythology tells the story of a psychotic innkeeper named Procrustes. Whenever a traveler stopped for the night, Procrustes would lead the poor soul to the inn's only bed. If the guest proved too short to fill the bed, Procrustes would stretch him until he did. If the guest was too tall, he'd amputate however much leg hung over the edge.

For the Greeks, this was an absurdity. For us, it's reality. Demand for leg-lengthening, which can add three inches of height for around seventy-five thousand dollars, has exploded in recent years. Why would so many men subject themselves to this painful and expensive ordeal? My theory is Tinder. Study after study has shown that women have all the power on the popular dating app. While men are stuck swiping on hundreds or even thousands of profiles to get a single match, girls can afford to be choosy, often setting up filters that exclude huge swaths of the potential dating pool. One of the most popular filters limits potential matches to men over, say, five feet ten inches.

As more and more of the dating scene moves to apps, singles of both sexes — but especially women, who have more options — are encouraged to view prospective partners less as flesh-and-blood people than as entries on a spreadsheet, with a column for each “stat.” A five-foot-ten-inch man who approaches a woman at a bar can present himself holistically. If he's funny and charming, he might have a shot with her, even if she tells her friends she'd never date a man under six feet. But on Tinder, he'll never get past her filter. And in the post-#MeToo era, approaching women in public is

increasingly frowned upon. That's what dating apps are for. So under the knife our hero goes.

Think about what this means. The user interface of a smartphone app produced trends in social life, to which people conformed themselves by carving up their physical bodies.

Other examples abound. In 2019, Jia Tolentino wrote a *New Yorker* piece on "The Age of Instagram Face." According to Tolentino: "It's a young face, of course, with poreless skin and plump, high cheekbones. It has catlike eyes and long, cartoonish lashes; it has a small, neat nose and full, lush lips."¹⁹ Women spend billions every year on cosmetic surgery to achieve this ideal. And where did it come from? The name gives it away: Instagram. The popular photo app provides filters that adjust the subject's facial features in the direction of the Instagram Face ideal.

Having seen that artificial glamor in the faces of goddess-like influencers (who would never dream of posting an unfiltered selfie) and fallen in love with it in their own photos, these women can't resist turning to scalpels and injections to en flesh the beauty that once existed only in the world of pixels. A vicious cycle results — the more women use cosmetic surgery to achieve a beauty standard, the more women will feel pressure (or permission) to do so.

This dynamic doesn't just apply to faces. Teenage girls are increasingly seeking out labiaplasties, a procedure that reduces the size of the external female genitalia. This spike in demand coincided almost perfectly with the ubiquity of the smartphone and the near-endless access to pornography it provides. Porn-addled teen boys spend hours staring at the petite, camera-ready labia of "adult film" actresses, then shame and humiliate their real partners who fail to

¹⁹ Jia Tolentino, "The Age of Instagram Face," *New Yorker*, December 12, 2019, accessed January 3, 2024, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/decade-in-review/the-age-of-instagram-face>.

conform to that ideal. Young girls also increasingly watch porn, giving them ample opportunity to develop that particular body image issue without any help from the boys.

Mary Harrington calls this state of affairs the “Meat Lego Matrix.” In the Meat Lego Matrix, “human bodies are not sacred, let alone inseparable from consciousness,” she writes. “They’re inert meat we’re entitled to enclose for profit, instrumentalise at will, and rearrange like toy building-blocks to suit our sense of self.”²⁰ Our senses of self are inevitably shaped by social conditions. So are the opportunities for profit, as expressed in aggregated consumer demand via the free market. Such a society cannot be humane because humanity is no longer at its center. Instead, human minds and bodies become raw material to be carved and stretched into any shape whatever by free-floating whims and fads and by institutions that feel no obligation to maintain a human shape or a human scale. Our whole society is a Procrustean bed now.

In the future, we can expect augmentation — whether genetic, surgical, or pharmaceutical — to become even more widespread, perhaps even universal.

Our cultural values provide no clear limiting principle. The transhumanist creed rejects the so-called “naturalistic fallacy.” Just because an individual person *is* a certain way, doesn’t mean he *ought* to remain that way. Nor does the existence of a normal distribution of human traits mean that we ought to remain within that distribution. Transhumanism also emphasizes self-ownership and self-expression, the right of each individual to be whatever he or she wants to be. Do you want blue eyes? A mellower disposition? Different genitals? Longer arms? A third arm? It’s your body. Do what you want.

²⁰ Andrew Orlowski, “Facebook’s Metaverse Megalomania Reflects a Revulsion for Humanity,” *Telegraph*, October 24, 2021, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2021/10/24/facebook-abhorrent-metaverse-reflects-revulsion-humanity/>.

There are also practical reasons to augment oneself (or one's children). Imagine a scenario in which Big Pharma succeeds in developing a "limitless pill" that instantly boosts IQ to at least the 110th percentile. It hits the market at five hundred dollars a pill. The children of the ultra-rich pop one every day, giving them an even greater edge in standardized testing, college admissions, and job performance that guarantees their place atop the meritocracy. Twenty years go by, and the patent expires. The generic version of the pill only costs thirty dollars a tablet. That puts the cost at around ten thousand dollars a year, bringing the pill within the budget of the upper-middle class. Suddenly millions, not thousands, of kids are on this pill. Inner-city students fall even further behind.

Theoretically, the new bio-aristocrats could continue enhancing themselves as new augmentations become available, further solidifying their status while depriving the merely human peasants of dignity and social mobility. To prevent this, a group of senators introduces legislation to make the "limitless pill" free. And as it becomes free, it also becomes almost obligatory. With enhanced intelligence as the new benchmark, any crunchy hippies or Bible-banging fundamentalists who want their kids to rely on their God-given wits will be dooming those children to a life of poverty and social ostracism. It might even be called child abuse.

Or imagine a procedure that can edit embryonic genes in the early stages of gestation. Should we fix Down's Syndrome? Almost everyone would say yes. What about a predisposition toward early baldness? That's a little trickier. Going bald in your twenties certainly conveys some disadvantages. So do being ugly, stupid, short, chubby, hairy, smelly, or uncoordinated. Can we fix all of those? And if so, how bad does a trait need to be before it qualifies for fixing? Below the twentieth percentile? The fiftieth? The ninety-ninth? When you think about it, there's no reason not to shoot right past the limits of humanity itself. By this logic, giving birth to an unaugmented child

would come to be considered cruel, maybe even criminal. Exactly as it was in the pages of *Brave New World*.

But what will guide those augmentations, once we've abandoned human norms as the standard? The only answer can be mere whim. Today, parents might stick their kids with a stupid faddish name that's embarrassing twenty years later. Tomorrow, those fads could be more serious. Dragon scales, perhaps. "For a few years there in the mid-2090s, everybody wanted a dragon baby ..."

As with the parents who poisoned their kids' souls with Ritalin at the after-school program, the ones who edit out their offspring's genetic bent toward halitosis will probably think they're doing her a favor. Again, though, we see that transhumanism destroys solidarity between generations. A gene-edited baby is no longer truly the offspring of her parents. She is, at least in part, a product of the medico-industrial complex and of whatever socially constructed ideal that complex was serving at the time. And she'll have lost not only her link to her parents, but to the entire human patrimony. In her world, stable identity will be out of reach.

Every moment, she'll know that her neurochemistry, her appearance, and even her biological sex are hers to reshape as she wishes, according to caprice, convenience, or economic necessity. Brands will line up to sell her the latest new identity, face, or personality. As the world becomes less human, so will she. And when she asks, "Who am I?" (or even "What am I?"), the only response she'll ever receive is "Whoever and whatever you want to be!" Children who grow up in a transhumanist society can expect to live their entire lives in a perpetual adolescent identity crisis. And if other transhumanist technologies deliver on their promises, those lives may be very long indeed.

Bryan Johnson is a vampire. I don't mean that he sleeps in a coffin (though he probably would if he thought it would help) or that the only way to kill him is with a stake through the heart.

What I *do* mean is that he sucks blood. Specifically, blood plasma. More specifically, the blood plasma of his teenage son. Once a month, they meet up for a transfusion. Why? Because Bryan Johnson wants to live forever. “What I do may sound extreme, but I’m trying to prove that self-harm and decay are not inevitable,” he told *Bloomberg*. Not only does this sound insane, it’s also expensive. The forty-six-year-old tech entrepreneur spends about two million dollars a year hacking his body to achieve “the brain, heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, tendons, teeth, skin, hair, bladder, penis and rectum of an 18-year-old,” as the outlet puts it. And it seems to be working. Doctors have found that Johnson “has the heart of a 37-year-old, the skin of a 28-year-old and the lung capacity and fitness” of a kid just old enough to vote for the first time.²¹

As Johnson and other wealthy would-be immortals continue to pour millions into life extension research, we’re likely to see more and more breakthroughs.

Naked mole rats are the longest-lived rodents on earth, with an average lifespan of around thirty years. Some live even longer. A 2018 study found that their mortality rate does not increase with age. A twenty-five-year-old mole rat is no more likely to drop dead than a spry five-year-old. This led the study authors to officially label the miraculous rodent as a “non-aging mammal.” In August 2023, the prestigious journal *Nature* published the results of splicing a mole rat gene into a mouse. Their theory was that mole rats live so long because of a gene that produces high molecular weight hyaluronic acid (HMW-HA), which helps repair damage to cells. Sure enough, the “mice showed an increase in hyaluronan levels in several tissues, and

²¹ Ashlee Vance, “How to Be 18 Years Old Again for Only \$2 Million a Year,” *Bloomberg*, January 25, 2023, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2023-01-25/anti-aging-techniques-taken-to-extreme-by-bryan-johnson?embedded-checkout=true>.

a lower incidence of spontaneous and induced cancer, extended lifespan and improved healthspan.”²²

Could this work on humans? The study’s co-authors are way ahead of you. Vera Gorbunova notes that it took researchers “10 years from the discovery of HMW-HA in the naked mole rat to showing that HMW-HA improves health in mice” and that now they hope “to transfer this benefit to humans,” while Andrei Seluanov explains that scientists have “identified molecules that slow down hyaluronan degradation and are testing them in pre-clinical trials.”²³

It’s too early to say whether this (or any other) avenue of research will bear fruit, but let’s assume that one of them works. What will this newfound longevity do to the human race?

In some ways, we’re already seeing the answer to that question play out. In 1940, the average U.S. life expectancy was 60.8 years. For every retiree on Social Security, there were forty-two workers paying taxes to support them. Today, life expectancy is over seventy-six years, and the ratio of workers to retirees is three-to-one. By 2050, it’ll be two-to-one. That means that every newlywed couple will immediately have their own geriatric dependent to clothe, feed, and house, whether they’re ready to have kids or not. As the birthrates of developed nations continue to collapse, this disparity will only worsen, spiraling into a full-blown crisis. The only real solution is immigration from the developing world at levels so drastic that massive social upheaval is all but guaranteed. And even that might not work, given the sharp decline in the fertility among the children of immigrants.

²² Zhihui Zhang et al., “Increased Hyaluronan by Naked Mole-Rat Has2 Improves Healthspan in Mice,” *Nature* 621 (2023): 196–205, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-023-06463-0>, abstract.

²³ Lindsey Valich, “Longevity Gene from Naked Mole Rats Extends Lifespan of Mice,” University of Rochester, August 23, 2023, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/gene-transfer-hmw-ha-naked-mole-rats-extends-mice-lifespan-565032/>.

Okay: maybe the oldsters will just have to stay in the workforce a little longer. They might even want to, if scientific breakthroughs can extend physical vigor and mental acuity well into one's eighties or even nineties.

Well, that comes with its own problems. We've already seen a slew of think pieces about the "American Gerontocracy." President Joe Biden is eighty-one. Former President Donald Trump is seventy-seven. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is eighty-one. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is eighty-three.

This trend will only get worse. Imagine eighty-year-old Logan Roy from *Succession* clinging to power for twenty more years as his children stew in their frustrated ambition. Imagine that Tom Cruise, sixty-one, remains Hollywood's most bankable star well into the 2040s, his boyish charm intact as he hogs the leading roles that should've gone to up-and-comers. Imagine turning forty still stuck in an entry-level job, unable to afford children or a house, because everyone above you refuses to retire. And that's if there are any entry-level jobs left once AI really takes off.

King Charles III waited seventy-three years to take the throne. His experience may well provide the blueprint for future generations.

Even as the young struggle to make their way in the world, the old find themselves growing ever more selfish and narcissistic. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the sprawling Florida retirement community known as the Villages, the most infamous "swinger community" in the United States.

In the Villages, 115,000 boomers and counting have left colder climates (as well as their own families) to live out their remaining years in paradise. Thanks to aggressive pesticide use, there are no bugs, but there are plenty of golf courses, gun ranges, social clubs, swimming pools, exercise classes, and drinking parties. It's like fraternity row for septuagenarians.

Interestingly, the community is a hotbed of political conservatism. They all seem to watch a lot of Fox News. They parade through the streets with Trump signs on their golf carts. Local residents complain that retirees have turned the formerly Democratic district ruby red.

And yet their lifestyle is anything but conservative. “Life down here is different,” one Villages resident explains in the Vice documentary *The Bubble*, “because you don’t have your family around. You don’t have to put on a façade for them. . . . When you’re the matriarch or the patriarch of the family, you’re meant to be a different kind of person.” Their attitude seems to be that because they’ve worked hard all their lives, they deserve to cap it off with a decade or two of pure hedonism. That’s not how life works. There are duties and virtues proper to every part of human life.

Instead, one villager says she’s glad to be far from her children and grandchildren. “I think a lot of children think that when their parents get older, that they’re basically sitting around waiting for that phone call [to come watch the grandkids]. We have to fit them in because there’s so much going on in our lives,” she tells the interviewer.

It’s not entirely their fault. Many of them seem to have decamped to the Villages because there was nothing for them anywhere else. One man explains that he moved eighteen times in his career and that he no longer knows anyone from his hometown. Our economy, which encourages mobility, hollows out small towns, and clusters college grads in a few major cities, seems designed to prevent us from developing the close (not just relationally but geographically), multigenerational families that were humanity’s lifeblood for centuries, if not millennia. Nor is our culture, which idolizes youth and views once-cherished elders as stubborn bigots, much help in this regard. No wonder the villagers don’t want to get old.

But no matter how many years we can add to our lives and how much vigor we can add to those years, it will never be enough. Humans have always desired immortality because God has “set eternity

in the human heart” (Eccles. 3:11). Death, no matter how long deferred, just feels wrong. Our ancestors, however, were able to express this yearning for transcendence in noble and useful ways — through achievement, procreation, and holiness.

In ancient Greece, warriors did great feats on the battlefield with the hope of winning *kleos* (“glory” or “fame”). In Homer’s *Iliad*, the Trojan commander Sarpedon reminds his friend Glaukos that men cannot “live on forever, ageless”²⁴ and that therefore they ought to throw themselves “in the fighting where men win glory.”²⁵ He knows his shade will go down to Hades when he dies, but he can live forever in legend, and that spurs him to heroism.

We see a slightly less violent version of this among the great philanthropic captains of industry, who founded universities, endowed hospitals, and built libraries. Think of Andrew Carnegie, perhaps the greatest.

Few men can be great, but the path of procreation is open to nearly everyone. The speaker of Shakespeare’s second sonnet, fearing that his best friend will die childless, urges the fair youth to imagine himself old and decrepit. “When forty winters shall besiege thy brow” and everyone asks where all your good looks went (Shakespeare’s speaker asks), wouldn’t you love to be able to answer that it lives on in “this fair child of mine”? We see the same thing in Homer when the Trojan hero Hector prays to Zeus that, one day, men will say of his son that “he is better by far than his father.”²⁶

And for those who swore off both greatness and children — or even for those who merely understood that both were perishable — there was holiness. But not holiness as some selfish pursuit. St. Paul wished “that all of you were as I am” (i.e., single; 1 Cor. 7:7),

²⁴ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), bk. 12, l. 323, p. 286.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, bk. 7, l. 113, p. 189.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, bk. 6, l. 479, p. 184.

not so that they could contemplate abstract principles, but so that like him they could devote themselves to serving their fellow Christians and to spreading the gospel. In doing so, Paul tells the Corinthians, “I became your father through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15).

Those who withdraw from the world can mentor younger Christians and, by their prayers, show love to those they’ll never meet. This solidarity extends even into the afterlife. Catholics believe that the souls in Purgatory long for the prayers of the Church Militant, even as the souls in Paradise intercede for us on earth. “Do not weep,” St. Dominic told his followers on his deathbed, “I will be of more use to you after death than I ever was in life.”

In each case, the desire for immortality reinforced the ties between generations, whether by offering great deeds as inspiration, aiding impoverished children, continuing one’s own family line, or providing believers yet unborn with an advocate before God’s throne. Bryan Johnson’s vampirism, and the less literal vampirism of his spiritual kindred, accomplishes none of these.

There are, of course, other paths to immortality. Transhumanist writer Ray Kurzweil hopes to upload his consciousness to a computer and live forever. “We’re gonna become increasingly non-biological to the point where the non-biological part predominates,” he said in 2013, “In fact, the non-biological part, the machine part, will be so powerful that it can completely model and understand the biological part, so even if that biological part went away, it wouldn’t make any difference because the non-biological part already understood it completely.” He thinks that we’ll get there by 2045.

Picture it. A virtual pantheon of deathless gods, living on a post-scarcity Olympus. Like Zeus, you can take whatever shape you want — swan, bull, shower of gold. Give yourself rippling muscles and thunderbolts to hurl. Ravish virtual maidens.

You’ll be a god in other ways too. “Right now, we only have 300 million pattern recognizers [in the human brain]. . . . But we could

make that 300 billion or 300 trillion,” Kurzweil says. “We’ll be thinking grander, deeper, and more hierarchical thoughts than ever before.” Forever. World without end.

All of this, of course, assumes that the brain is nothing more than a meat computer, which is in no way obvious. Even if he could arrange ones and zeroes in such a way as to replicate Ray’s personality perfectly, there would be no guarantee that Virtual Ray was actually self-aware. Are you talking to the real Ray or to a program that’s really good at mimicking him? There’s no way to know.

In 1998, a prominent neuroscientist bet a philosopher a case of wine that within twenty-five years, scientists would have discovered the secret of human consciousness. In 2023, the neuroscientist paid up.

No matter how much they’d like to, scientists have not yet been able to reduce the human psyche to the mere firing of neurons. One theory holds that consciousness is an accidental byproduct that emerges from high levels of processing power. It doesn’t seem very likely though. We’ve built some pretty powerful computers, and none of them have started praying or rejoicing or feeling existential angst. The relationship between the human mind and the physical body, including the brain, remains mysterious.

And yet, the brightest minds in Silicon Valley have devoted themselves to tampering with that relationship. Elon Musk’s company Neuralink seeks to develop a “brain-computer interface” that would, as the name suggests, be implanted into the human brain. The recipient of such an implant could interact with the digital world just by thinking about it and have information beamed straight into his own brain.

With this marriage of flesh and technology, humanity will become a race of cyborgs living in augmented reality (AR), in which our devices provide a digital overlay to the physical world. In an article for the *American Mind*, journalist Grayson Quay compared AR

to having a real-life version of the heads-up display popular in video games: “waypoint, minimap, inventory, tips, health bar, the works.” The only problem, he continues, “is that your reality would become whatever the software’s designers decide it should be.”²⁷ You would see only what your Silicon Valley overlords permitted. Imagine pop-up ads crowding your peripheral vision, a world of ugliness papered over by AR filters, a world where objects and even people can be turned invisible to those not authorized to see them.

Niantic CEO John Hanke, the man behind the rudimentary AR smartphone game *Pokémon Go*, envisioned the creation of separate “reality channels” that would show users an entirely different world each time they changed the channel. You think America’s polarized now? Imagine when we literally live in different realities. Naturally, the real world would go to pot in the meantime. Why clean anything up when you can just slap a pretty filter on it?

In fact, though, we don’t even need implants to enter this dystopia. In some ways, we’re already living in it. As Musk observed in an interview with Joe Rogan, “We’re already a cyborg to some degree ... because you’ve got your phone ... if you don’t bring your phone along it’s like you have missing limb syndrome.” Augmented reality glasses are already on the market and will only improve with time. Nobody will make you buy them, of course, but nobody made you buy a smartphone either, and I’ll bet you have one. The more people adopt AR technology, the more of a disadvantage you’ll be at if you don’t. Maybe they’ll phase out physical stoplights in favor of AR versions. Wham! Now you’re dead.

Smartphones are deadly in their own way, especially to children. Kids who do nothing but stare at screens are less likely to

²⁷ Grayson Quay, “These Motherf—rs Aren’t Real,” *American Mind*, August 23, 2023, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://americanmind.org/features/the-exterior-darkness/those-motherf-rs-arent-real/>.

date, drive, or drink. They're also fatter, more depressed, and more likely to kill themselves. Teen suicide spiked by 31 percent between 2010 and 2015, coinciding with the mass adoption of smartphones by that age group. Teenagers who spent five or more hours a day on the Internet — with much of that screen time driven by mobile devices — were 71 percent more likely to have at least one suicide risk factor than kids who spent less than an hour a day online.²⁸

Smartphones may not transform our sensory perceptions the way that AR glasses and brain implants could, but they have a subtler way of detaching us from the real world. The limitless connectivity these devices offer turns us into what literature professor Mark Edmundson calls “possibility junkies.”²⁹ Being constantly online, he writes, dissipates one’s “energies and interests outward, away from the present, the here and now.”³⁰ It *disincarnates* us. It expands our capacities while separating us from our embodied humanity. We read national news and neglect local news. We befriend Internet strangers from halfway around the world but never meet our own neighbors. Why talk to the cute girl in your math class when there’s infinite porn in your pocket (or, worse, a digital version of that exact girl created solely to fulfill your desires)? The generation who grew up with tablets in their strollers and iPhones propped on high chairs will never know what it is to be fully present anywhere or with anyone.

Some states, like Utah and Virginia, have passed laws designed to protect children by requiring porn sites to verify the age of their users. A bipartisan group of U.S. senators has proposed going even further, introducing a bill that would require all social media

²⁸ Jean Twenge, “Are Smartphones Causing More Teen Suicides?,” *Guardian*, May 24, 2018, accessed December 28, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/24/smartphone-teen-suicide-mental-health-depression>.

²⁹ Mark Edmundson, *The Heart of the Humanities: Reading, Writing, Teaching* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 330.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 334.

platforms to implement age verification in order to keep out anyone under thirteen. But even if this bill were to become law, for many children it would be too little, too late.

Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg's motto is to "move fast and break things," and the mass neurological experiment that was the introduction of the smartphone certainly broke something. It broke a generation of children. A small price to pay, perhaps, for profits and progress.

The ultimate dream of the transhumanists is to leave behind the physical world forever. They despise such limitations. To be tethered to a dying sack of meat, to be constrained by atoms and molecules, to exist in just one place at one time — the transhumanist feels all of these as personal insults. It never occurs to him that those limitations might serve some purpose, or that transgressing them might produce boundless misery.



CHAPTER 4

ANTI-HUMANISM

The Campaign to Wipe Out Humanity

WHAT DO YOU THINK of babies? When you see them in the media, or encounter a pregnant woman, do you have the natural reaction that human beings have had over millennia and feel a warm, happy surge at the presence of human life? At the hope, risk, potential, and infinite possibilities contained in a tiny little being who's your brother or sister from Adam — and perhaps your sibling in Christ?

Or do you feel weirdly ambivalent? Have you begun to succumb to the barrage of propaganda being pumped via all our media, which chips away relentlessly at this most natural human reaction?

Take time and really think about it. When you see old ads from the 1960s that picture families with four or more children, do you consider that weird — almost animalistic, as if these were kittens or puppies: too many, too needy, too greedy?

In the last several decades, especially lately, audiences and media consumers have been bombarded with messages, articles, and cover stories proclaiming that babies and children are bad — that they hurt the environment and detract from the self-fulfillment of the individual. This message does not come from the fringe media, but the core, flagship media of the contemporary, postmodern, woke corporate left.

Our elites want to make us feel guilty for being alive, for being human. They want us to apologize to despise ourselves — or, better

yet, to despise other people for reproducing themselves, and decide against doing the same.

Nothing can illuminate this reality more clearly than hearing it in our masters' own words. Here are just a few representative headlines; they could fill a whole book of their own:

“Would You Give Up Having Children to Save the Planet? Meet the Couples Who Have,” *Guardian*, June 20, 2018.

“Want to Save the Planet? Don't Have Children! Study Finds Bringing New Life into the World Is the Most Destructive Thing You Can Do to the Environment,” *Daily Mail*, July 12, 2017.

“To Advance Humanity and Save Nature We Need a Common Agenda,” The Overpopulation Project, July 4, 2023.

“Want to Fight Climate Change? Have Fewer Children,” *Guardian*, July 12, 2017. (The first sentence in the article boasts, “Gwynn Mackellen was 26 when she decided to get sterilized.”)

“Aging Populations Can Be Good for the Climate Change Fight,” *Time*, January 26, 2023.

“Is Population Control a Climate Change Solution?,” Johns Hopkins Bloomberg Public Health, October 26, 2022.

“Fewer Children to Fight Climate Change?,” German state-owned *Deutsche Welle*, July 14, 2017.

“Why Declining Birth Rates Are Good News for Life on Earth,” *Guardian*, July 8, 2021.

“*New York Times* Op-Ed Says Population Decline May Make ‘Climate Change Easier to Combat,’” Fox News, September 15, 2022.

“Let’s Celebrate a Lower Birthrate, Not Lament It,” *New York Times*, June 5, 2021.

“Birth Strikers: Meet the Women Who Refuse to Have Children until Climate Change Ends,” *Guardian*, March 12, 2019.

“Don’t Want a Baby Because of Climate Fears? You’re Not Alone,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 2023.

“The French Nationals Going ‘Childfree’ to Save the Planet,” French state-owned France 24, July 11, 2021.

“Should You Not Have Kids Because of Climate Change? It’s Complicated,” *Washington Post*, December 2, 2022.

“The New ‘Childfree:’ Fearful amid Climate Change, Some Young Canadians Abandon Plans to Have Children,” *Globe and Mail*, October 19, 2019.

“No Future, No Children,” Greenpeace, September 23, 2019.

“No Future, No Children: Teens Refusing to Have Kids until There’s Action on Climate Change,” *USA Today*, September 19, 2019.

“The Adults Celebrating Child-free Lives,” British public-funded BBC, February 14, 2023.

“Why a Generation Is Choosing to be Child-free,” *Guardian*, July 25, 2020.

“We Are Childfree: The Movement,” *Psychology Today*, September 26, 2021.

“The Rise of the Childfree Movement on TikTok,” Mashable, September 30, 2021.

“‘No Children, Please!’ — The Childless-by-Choice Movement,” *Times of Israel*, July 11, 2022.

“Childfree and Not Regretful,” banner by the website www.StopHavingKids.org, July 30, 2022.

“No Babies for the Climate — Some Activists Do Not Even Shy Away from Human Self-Sacrifice to Save the World,” CNE News, July 30, 2022.

“The Childfree Life — When Having It All Means Not Having Children,” *Time* front cover, August 12, 2013.

“Earth Now Has 8 Billion Humans. This Man Wishes There Were None,” *New York Times* article on Les Knight, founder of the “Voluntary Human Extinction Movement” with their motto “May we live long and die out,” as well as “Thank you for not breeding,” November 23, 2022.

“Science Proves Kids Are Bad for Earth. Morality Suggests We Stop Having Them,” NBC News, November 15, 2017.

“Preferring Biological Children Is Immoral,” *Wired*, August 31, 2023.

So, if you’ve wondered why every policy, every single decision imposed on us by our elites is deeply anti-human, just read their ideologies, their ideas, and their agenda. They are not hiding it. Suddenly, a long list of leftist stances makes sense, from abortion to euthanasia, from drug access to porn. The avalanche of laws and policies always favoring divorces and undermining the family. And yes, transgenderism, castrating children, even sexualizing minors. Every single policy is deeply anti-human.

Basically, the small group of influencers who set the agenda in our society are saying that nature and the environment are good, but people are bad.

The anti-humanism goes further:

We cannot hide away from human population growth, because it underlines so many of the other problems. All these things we talk about wouldn't be a problem if the world was the size of the population that there was 500 years ago.³¹

Side note: five hundred years ago, the world had approximately five hundred million people. Today, it has eight billion. This statement from Goodall sums up the depopulation agenda: a wish for a population 94% smaller than what it is today. According to this world view, only one in twenty humans alive today deserves to even exist. "When we invest in clean energy and electric vehicles and reduce population, more of our children can breathe clean air and drink clean water," said Vice President Kamala Harris during a July 2023 speech on climate change.³²

The White House had actually altered the transcript of these remarks, claiming later that Harris meant *pollution*, not population, reduction. I think that it was a Freudian slip.

But she got big applause for demanding "population reduction." The audience? Professors and students. We know what they're teaching and learning.

Let's look at a few empirical questions before we go further, to determine if our leaders are responding to genuine problems or acting out of some perverse ideological spasms.

Out of two hundred countries in the world, one hundred have below-replacement fertility. That means that half of the world's nations

³¹ Ape specialist Jane Goodall at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, quoted in Sophia Tulip, "Conservationist Jane Goodall's Words on Population Distorted," Associated Press, December 28, 2022, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-jane-goodall-population-299442560681>.

³² Victor Nava, "Kamala Harris Says US Must 'Reduce Population' to Fight Climate Change in Latest Gaffe," *New York Post*, July 15, 2023, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/07/15/kamala-harris-says-us-must-reduce-population-to-fight-climate-change-in-latest-gaffe/>.

simply cannot replace themselves. They are on the road to vanishing. Populations require people to sustain them: to buy their resources, to supply them with goods, to use their services. Humanity is interlinked across socioeconomic and generational bounds. Without new people, the whole system collapses. Scientists understand this when studying species whose existence they approve of. When the subject turns to people, they suddenly lose focus, or interest.

For some years, outliers have been sounding the alarm on depopulation, but in recent years, mainstream publications as well as public figures have been voicing concern. For example, the *Economist* had a front cover about this on June 1, 2023, with a headline: “Global Fertility Has COLLAPSED, with Profound Economic Consequences.” The subtitle read: “What Might Change the World’s DIRE Demographic Trajectory.”

The *Economist* uses the word *collapse*, not *decline*, or *decrease*, or *drop*. This stark word choice emphasizes the dramatic decline in fertility. The *Economist* cover story is illustrated with an empty playground on the front cover. There are no children in sight.

The global fertility rate went from 2.7 births per woman in 2000 to 2.3 in 2023. That’s a 15 percent drop just in this century. The replacement level for stable population is 2.1 children per woman.³³

The *Financial Times* warned on August 22, 2023: “Global Spread of Birth Rate Decline Makes Problem More Not Less Urgent.” In April 2022, that paper started a series of articles with an intro: “Global Birth Rates Are Falling, and the World Population Will Begin to Contract in the Coming Decades.” A new *FT* series

³³ “Global Fertility Has Collapsed, with Profound Economic Consequences,” *Economist*, June 1, 2023, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2023/06/01/global-fertility-has-collapsed-with-profound-economic-consequences>.

asks “whether policymakers can do anything about” this alarming “baby bust.”³⁴

A UN report from 2019 says that between 2020 and 2100, ninety countries are expected to lose population.³⁵ To those who live in the moment, that sounds like the distant future, but it’s not. The days are passing slowly, but the years are flying by. Several decades is just a blip in the long history of a nation or of humanity.

The United States is no exception to these global trends. Unfortunately, it has reached sub-replacement fertility in all fifty states. In other words, not a single American state can sustain its population with the current birth rate and fertility rate. The national average is 1.66 children per woman. At this moment, the United States needs 27 percent more births, or massive immigration, just to maintain the population, much less allow for any economic growth.

There are big differences among the states, and within the states. Here are the states with the highest fertility rates:

South Dakota (2.07)

Nebraska (1.95)

North Dakota (1.94)

Utah (1.92)

Alaska (1.89)

Louisiana (1.87)

³⁴ Federica Cocco et al., “Baby Bust: Can Policymakers Boost Dwindling World Fertility Rates?,” *Financial Times*, April 19, 2022, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/530cde70-eea2-47ff-8b4e-5efa8b9630d5>.

³⁵ Anthony Cilluffo and Neil G. Ruiz, “World’s Population Is Projected to Nearly Stop Growing by the End of the Century,” Pew Research Center, June 17, 2019, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/06/17/worlds-population-is-projected-to-nearly-stop-growing-by-the-end-of-the-century>.

Idaho (1.85)
Iowa (1.85)
Kansas (1.84)
Arkansas (1.84)
Oklahoma (1.83)
Mississippi (1.82)
Kentucky (1.81)
Texas (1.81)
Indiana (1.79)

The fifteen states with the lowest fertility rates in 2021 were:

Washington, D.C. (1.34)
Vermont (1.37)
Rhode Island (1.42)
Massachusetts (1.43)
Oregon (1.43)
New Hampshire (1.48)
Maine (1.48)
Colorado (1.52)
California (1.54)
Washington (1.56)
New York (1.56)
Illinois (1.57)
Connecticut (1.58)

New Mexico (1.58)

Nevada (1.61)

This means that the states like the Dakotas, Nebraska, Utah, or Alaska have a 50 percent higher fertility rate than places like D.C., Vermont, or Massachusetts. What's more, it is almost a universal rule that the big cities have a much lower fertility rate than the more rural counties.

Undoubtedly, the United States is heading toward a population crisis caused by an aging population. What does this mean for our future? The initial impacts will be problems with schools, a surplus of teachers, more retirees, and fewer taxpayers shelling out for their Social Security and Medicare.

In economic terms, we can speak about a fertility rate recession, also known as a baby deficit. To put it in stark economic terms: fewer people means a shrinking economy. Imagine if our economic growth had fallen by 20 percent within twelve years. There would've been emergency meetings, and the crisis would've been all over the headlines.

When the number of babies and the number of children is going down almost no one notices. But the recession of life affects everything. These are not just abstract points, but they make up the future of this and every other country.

Ask yourself why, on every issue that could affect child-raising and fertility, our elites always take the most anti-human stance, the position that will prevent the birth of children? Why are we suddenly being offered "child-free" airline seating, restaurants, even hotels? To accommodate and accelerate the culture-wide trend of disdain for children and parents.

As we've said, anti-humanism calls for less children. It wields the power of the state and of huge corporations, of media influence and public pressure to increase the number of people who never marry

and who never have children or grandchildren. We should not be surprised that pushing people into that lifestyle has ushered in an epidemic of loneliness.

It is one thing to be single and alone at the age of thirty or forty, but it is a different story when the loneliness happens at the age of sixty, seventy, or eighty. Imagine going to bed alone for decades, not holding someone's hand, not chatting before sleep or sharing coffee in the morning. Again, at younger ages, this can be idealized. But people don't calculate the harsh realities of loneliness in their old age.

Anti-humanism condemns its adherents to a life that will likely end with no visits from grandchildren, no calls or text messages for New Year or Halloween, an empty table for Thanksgiving and Christmas. They will spend their lonely birthdays on the web. The landscape of a life becomes bleak.

Those who espouse the ideals of the depopulation agenda often do so in the name of extreme, apocalyptic environmentalism (see chapter 5). Some think that they are making a morally superior choice. In the end, they themselves may well be the biggest victims of their ideals.

No family, no spouse, no sons or daughters, no grandchildren. These are choices made by the young that carry heavy consequences later in life. A short-term choice made in response to temporary circumstances later becomes a destiny.

Coupling this trend with modern man's (and woman's) addictions to their screens creates a perfect storm. Individuals, without children, alone in their small apartments, constantly on their devices: those are the clinical symptoms of an epidemic of loneliness. When this epidemic becomes widespread enough, then it in fact becomes a "system" — defined "a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network," "forming a

complex whole.”³⁶ This new system is perpetuated by the postmodern elites and the woke media. Those who resist, and insist on forming families, face an unfriendly culture and laws that discriminate against them. Those who blindly obey will pay a much heavier price.

As this social and societal mechanism spreads, citizens increasingly interact only via censored social media. They’re alone and childless, dependent on hostile corporations for human interaction and the Nanny State to care for them as they age.

Can we trust that state? Remember the tens of thousands of citizens trapped in nursing homes during COVID, deprived of visitors, infected by viral patients callously dumped in their midst, denied last rites, and even denied Christian burial: thousands were incinerated as “medical waste,” just like the babies destroyed at abortion clinics.

The ideologues of the Nanny State want you alone. They want you atomized, abandoned, without family and community around you. They want you defenseless in every possible way. They want you addicted to social media that they control, either directly or by their algorithms.

They want you to constantly consume their message, their narrative, and their agenda. It is a voluntary prison, where you stay home, in your tiny house or apartment, and better yet: in their fifteen-minute cities. They want you: you are the target, and it’s much easier for them if you’re alone. They want you vulnerable, because that’s how they have control. They don’t care if you’re unhappy. Your loneliness and defeat and self-destruction in fact serve their agenda.

The same people that are saying that there are forty-seven genders are convincing the young women that being a mother is

³⁶ Encyclopedia.com, s.v. “System,” accessed January 3, 2024, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/medicine/anatomy-and-physiology/anatomy-and-physiology/system>.

somehow irresponsible. Serving the boss at work or working for the corporation is “freedom,” but serving your kids is “oppression.”

So, what is the antidote to this pernicious system? What choices can you make to fight this future?

“Family is a life jacket in the stormy sea of life.”

—J. K. Rowling

“Family is not an important thing. It is everything.” —Michael J. Fox

“Rejoice with your family in the beautiful land of life.” —Albert Einstein

We live in a time when we are bombarded with information and advice (and even mandates!) about what it will take for the environment to thrive, for certain species of animals, vegetation, and trees to thrive. We are wired to recycle, to not throw plastic in the oceans, to not kill honeybees, to be careful how our canned tuna is sourced to ensure the safety of dolphins. These are all positive things in themselves, especially if we think of them as faithful stewardship of creation.

But . . . when is the last time that you heard someone talk about what it takes for humans to thrive?

Humans are relational beings at our core. We are designed by God for relationship: first with Him and then with each other. The family is a relational organism at its most fundamental level. Outside of the context of relationship, the human heart becomes more narrow, more self-centered and self-focused. And thus, unmoored, unsettled, and unhappy.

A wise man once said: “Humans thrive in a society of cousins.” Humans are happiest and healthiest when they have healthy relationships with other people. This starts in the family.

A family is molecular. It has Mom and Dad, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncle and cousins, grandparents and great aunts and great

uncles. These kinds of relationships place a person in a context beyond himself; there is no isolation possible. Instead, there is a continuity of place, of person, of generation. We can more easily identify and understand ourselves in the broader story of our families.

The life of a single child, from parents who were single children, is one destined to a sad kind of isolation. No brother? No sister? No cousins? When the parents pass on, that child (that grown man or woman) is alone. These invaluable bonds of humanity and connection are denied to that human heart because of the parents' decision to have only one child.

In case we might think that the single-child household is a rare occurrence, let us take a look at that question on a global level. There is in fact a tsunami of single-child families.

The ruthless China "one-child policy" is fast becoming a global norm. Our anti-humanist elites don't wield a strictly coded law as in Red China, but a comprehensive set of coercive policies. The results, however, are strikingly similar: an invisible hand that helps ensure that you have just one child or one grandchild. If that. But you think you made that decision freely, all on your own.

Review the European countries, North and South America, as well as Eastern Asia. Almost everywhere there is a fertility rate of 1.1 to 1.7 children per woman. That means that in many places half of the children don't have a brother or a sister.

If the fertility rate is around 1 to 1.4 (as in New York City, Boston, Singapore, Taiwan, China, Japan, Spain, or Italy), that means that *most of the children* in that country or that city don't have a brother or a sister.

This outcome isn't an accident. It's not a bug, as the kids say, but a feature. The people who wrote the program want you to be alone and atomized, dependent on the government. It will take courage for us to push back and seize the remedy as old as time: get married, love your family, have children, fight to protect your wife and children,

provide for them. The rewards are incalculable, but nowadays they're almost a secret.

You will naturally find yourself outside of the system designed to isolate and control you. By the mere fact of being married and having children and grandchildren, you have taken your stance for life and for human freedom and thriving.

Everyone has a story. Every family has a story. Before your story started, your family story and your family history brought you here. The vast majority of our ancestors were simple, common people. Often they were poor, unimaginably poor by today's standards.

Within that context, with its hardships and circumstances, they raised their children and served their families. Among other things, they did that because they *had you in their mind*. Each generation (except arguably the present one) has lived with an eye to make its children's lives better and more prosperous than their own. It has remembered its ancestors — and planned for its descendants.

Did these people have cars and iPhones? Computers and GPS? Airplane flights? Refrigerators? Available hospitals? Basic medicines? Electricity? Air conditioning? Warm showers and boilers? Did they have access to microwave dinners, frozen vegetables, and Uber Eats?

None of the above. In some cases, they lived in poverty, exposed to dangerous diseases, scarce resources, and high mortality rates.

You think that it's "stressful" today if you have too many emails or text messages to answer? Compare that to the 50 percent mortality rate among newborns and young children not too long ago. Compare your hardships to a funeral one hundred years ago, when the casket was two feet small — and often there were multiple funerals with small caskets within several years.

Each one of us has two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents. This amounts to literally hundreds of ancestors who sacrificed themselves for their

children, their grandchildren, and now for you. Each of them had his own struggles, hopes, motivations, low points, hard times. And now many of us are ready to simply call it quits, to close the curtain on that family story, ending not with a bang but a whimper.

Carrying on that human story is why your great-grandmother and great-grandfather cried when your grandfather or grandmother took his or her first breath and opened his or her eyes. This is why your ancestor 150 years ago ate less, just to feed his family and children. They rejoiced when the baby was breathing. For the sake of love, life, the next generation; for carrying the flame of life in a cold, dark galaxy.

Will you continue the line? Or does the story end with you? You're unique, with your body, character, genetic material, hopes, and feelings. Never before, and never after, will you be repeated. You are a truly unique combination. You need to continue the story.

To honor the dead, we need to continue life. Everyone needs a sense of belonging and purpose, destiny and mission. Because we will not be forever on this earth. We need to continue the story. Life needs to win over death. And nothing says yes to life more than welcoming a brand-new baby.





CHAPTER 5

CLIMATE CULTISM

The Global War on the Poor

THE FIRST RULE OF being in a cult is simple: you don't ask if it's a cult. You don't even step back and think about it. If you did, that would be disloyal. It would make you feel dirty and weird — and possibly get you ostracized and punished. But what if I told you that the global movement to obsess about “the Climate” and micromanage the lives of billions of human beings in the Climate's name was effectively a cult, on the order of Scientology or the Rev. Jim Jones' “People's Temple”? You might be resistant, even if you think of yourself as a Christian and a conservative. Because the rites and hymns of this invented religion are everywhere drummed in our heads, to the point where we hardly notice that we've been indoctrinated, and we unconsciously strive not to blaspheme against this “god” whom our masters have foisted on us.

Don't believe me? Try this thought experiment. Imagine you started going around telling people that you strive to use only fossil fuels, and you urge them to do the same. How would that work out for you? About like getting your hair cut in a mullet, moving into a double-wide festooned with Confederate flags, and blasting Nickelback at your neighbors day and night. It's just not the thing done among the right sort of people.

Amongst our upper classes (and especially among those desperate to join them or fit in with them), protesting against coal, oil, and natural gas is the poshest brand of virtue you can signal. But do people realize how much fossil fuels are a part of their lives? Are they aware that fossil fuels are the source of more than 90 percent of the products they use on a daily basis? Most of the items in your life, including your car tire and toothbrush, are made possible by fossil fuels. The list is endless and includes your shoes, freezers, washing machines, coffee makers, furniture, pens, eating utensils, eyeglasses, commodes, medical supplies, and camping equipment. Care to do without all those things? May I ask for a show of hands, please?

Even wind turbines and solar panels — the two most cherished fetishes of the Climate Cult — are manufactured using fossil fuels. A typical wind turbine is made up of at least 66 percent steel, which we make predominantly with the help of fossil fuel energy.³⁷ (How many solar powered steel mills are out there? Go do some research and try to find one.)

The rest of the wind infrastructure mostly comprises fiberglass/resin/plastic, copper, aluminum, and iron. In the production of contemporary fiberglass, the batch is melted using gas, oil, or electricity. Furnaces that burn both fossil fuels and electricity are frequently used for all the production of all these components that make up a wind turbine and blade. In other words, the most basic needs and treasured comforts of everyday existence are made possible by using fossil fuels.

Must we give up those comforts and renounce all the things that permitted the people of the world to increase by billions and live for decades longer in comparative comfort and health? Is it our duty to

³⁷ “What Materials Are Used to Make Wind Turbines?” U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-materials-are-used-make-wind-turbines>.

the planet to die off by the billions, and live like peasants in the year A.D. 1000, for the sake of “sustainability”? Believe it or not, that’s the message being taught to young people in college and drummed into the culture by misanthropic elitists, from the World Health Organization and the Gates Foundation to the U.S. Department of Energy and Pope Francis’s Vatican. Seems like a big ask to me, based on data that’s either shaky or just plain untrue.

The earth’s climate has changed enormously during the past six hundred million years in terms of CO² and temperature, according to the geologic record, without human-caused CO² emissions from fossil fuels. The last six hundred million years’ worth of CO² vs. temperature data indicate little to no link for the vast majority of that time. Even if we are to discount the long-term changes in climate and narrow our focus to the past two millennia, we see a trend where temperatures have risen long before human greenhouse gas emissions were sufficient to make any difference. Two of these phases were the Roman Warm Period during the time of Christ and the Medieval Warm Period during the tenth century. More recently, there was the occurrence of the Little Ice Age during the sixteenth century. In addition to causing periods of starvation, disease, and huge depopulation, the Little Ice Age also hindered worldwide plant growth. Historians record a “dark age” in the Northern Hemisphere, as plants froze to death. One person, referring to the plant deaths, recorded, “All things which grew above the ground died.”³⁸

The Little Ice Age eventually came to an end in the 1800s, and temperatures have been rising ever since then. Of specific interest are the temperatures during the past five decades or so. Record highs in recent decades do not prove or disprove anthropogenic global warming. In the

³⁸ “Europe’s Little Ice Age: ‘All Things Which Grew Above the Ground Died and Starved,’” *National Post*, November 8, 2018, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/europes-little-ice-age-all-things-which-grew-above-the-ground-died-and-starved>.

context of a broader climatic period, they are just variations in temperature. Understandably, during a warming phase (like the one that we are in now), local record highs occur more frequently. New records are almost guaranteed to be set every year because the temperature has been rising nominally since the end of the Little Ice Age.

However, the temperature measurements during the past three decades show that the issue of global warming is not a “settled science,” as claimed by the media.

The year 2016 was an El Niño year (a weather phenomenon that caused a spike in temperatures). Although there were warnings of exceptionally hot weather, nobody could have predicted the mildly warm post-2016 period that persisted until just recently and saw temperatures lower than in 2016. Numerous record-breaking extreme cold weather events occurred worldwide during 2017. The coldest Thanksgiving in a century occurred in New York City in 2018.³⁹ The greatest winter snowfall in New York’s recent history occurred from 2020 through 2021.⁴⁰ Extremely low winter temperatures have become the norm, even in tropical nations like India.

India’s capital city of New Delhi saw the coldest December day in 119 years in 2021.⁴¹ The mainstream media did not dive into the climate side of the extreme cold-weather event and its implications for our understanding of global warming. None of them expressed

³⁹ Judson Jones, “The Coldest Thanksgiving in Over a Century for Millions Plus Traffic Troubles,” CNN, November 24, 2018, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/19/us/thanksgiving-weekend-weather-forecast-wxc/index.html>.

⁴⁰ Daniel E. Slotnik, “The Storm Was among the Biggest in New York City’s Recent History,” *New York Times*, February 2, 2021, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/02/us/nyc-heaviest-snow.html>.

⁴¹ “Behind Delhi’s Coldest December Day in 119 Years, a Rare Weather Phenomenon,” *Hindustan Times*, August 14, 2020, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/behind-delhi-coldest-december-day-in-119-years-a-rare-weather-phenomenon/story-3NwxC3ZOTNXfvDqmexOHjO.html>.

alarm about the faulty predictions of climate doomsayers, which left no room for the severe winters that have occurred over the planet.

In 2023, the El Niño weather pattern returned, causing a steep rise in both sea and land temperatures. The question here is not whether human activity exerts some modest but real impact on global warming. It very well might. But such a modest impact isn't sufficient to convince people planet-wide to empower their elites to cull the population by 80 to 90 percent and abandon reliable heating, fuel, transportation, and all the other benefits of modern technological living. For that kind of power-grab you must employ bogus prophecies of a coming apocalypse.

The modern global warmth, which began in the eighteenth century (before mass industrialization, even in Britain), combined with new technologies to create enormous improvement in human life over the past three centuries. The phenomenal rise of human civilization has been facilitated by climate change, notwithstanding the claims of the politically correct and the media. Being a species born in the tropics, humans are prone to greater morbidity and mortality in winter. People exposed to cold conditions have a higher risk of stroke, respiratory infection, and other injuries due to reduced strength and dexterity in low temperatures. Whether the threat is a flu infection or a fall, the risk is generally greater in the more challenging environment of cold weather.

But since the onset of global warming, there has been an eight-fold rise in human population, more abundant crop yields, and a general greening of the earth. The fertilizing action of carbon dioxide, whose atmospheric concentration has increased in recent decades, has contributed to the bounty. In 1961, the world produced about 205 million tons of maize, or corn. The globe produces 1.16 billion tons of maize today, five times more than in the past. All of the main food crops, such as rice, wheat, soybeans, cereals, nuts, and vegetables, have shown gains that are comparable. Humans are more

shielded than ever from the wrath of nature. Around the world, the yearly death toll from natural disasters has drastically decreased since the 1920s and 1930s.

Point out inconvenient facts like that one, and our masters will change the subject. They'll point to lithographs of beautiful animals that have sadly gone extinct — and imply that the price of human expansion has been the rape of nature. Again, this is partly a gross exaggeration, and partly just a lie.

The majority of population decline among mammals has happened because of improper or reckless hunting and not because of climate change. Certain species, like the Bengal tigers of India and the polar bears of the Arctic, have been making a return after being hunted almost to extinction. Polar bears are used by climate alarmists to elicit public sympathy. However, if you believe polar bear populations are vanishing, it means that you've been drinking the Kool-Aid.

Polar bear populations have *increased* dramatically during the previous sixty years. They increased from five thousand in the 1950s to eight to ten thousand in the 1970s, twenty to twenty-five thousand by 2005, and an estimated twenty-two to thirty-one thousand by 2015.

In India, the iconic Bengal tiger population has doubled in recent decades. The elephant population in India's Bandipur-Nagara-hole forest region — surrounded by some of the largest cities in the world — has doubled from fifteen thousand to thirty thousand since 1992.

In the United States, the number of gray wolves in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin rose from 1,100 in 1975 to 3,600 in 2018.⁴²

⁴² Vijay Jayaraj, "Elevated Living Standards Contradict Climate Doomsayers," RealClear Energy, December 14, 2022, accessed December 27, 2023, https://www.realclearenergy.org/articles/2022/12/14/elevated_living_standards_contradict_climate_doomsayers_870053.html.

In 1963, there were just 487 bald eagle pairs in the entire United States. By 2006, this figure had risen to ten thousand.⁴³

Between 2006 and 2022, the population of humpback whales in the western South Atlantic doubled.⁴⁴ The bulk of mammal species' population collapse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was caused by overhunting and improper forest management, not by fluctuations in temperature.

Okay, okay: we're not microwaving the polar bears or nuking the whales, our elites might be forced to admit. But our lavish modern lifestyles endanger the people of the future, don't they? Look at all the extreme weather events like wildfires, hurricanes, floods, and droughts. Surely, they're the result of climate change.

This claim is just outright false. In the past, floods were common in many regions of the world, and wildfires in California were considerably more destructive. Over the past fifty years, there has been a notable *decline* in the number of deaths linked to climate change, and extreme weather events are now less common. Firstly, the number of hurricanes that make landfall on the contiguous United States (mainland) has reduced in the past few decades.⁴⁵ The U.S. hurricane strikes by decade statistics from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration date back to 1851. They demonstrate that, since the 1930s, the number of significant hurricanes that make landfall in the United States has decreased by nearly 50 percent.

In his article in the *Christian Post*, environmental researcher Vijay Jayaraj writes,

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "U.S. Hurricane Strikes by Decade," National Hurricane Center and Central Pacific Hurricane Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, accessed December 27, 2023, www.nhc.noaa.gov/pastdec.shtml.

Despite the faulty [climate] models, let us assume that the model predictions do come true miraculously. Experts indicate that the maximum damage from climate inaction (and the dangerous increase in temperature as per the model forecasts) would be a reduction of global GDP of only around 2 to 4 percent by the end of this century (2100). (The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, also admits that a loss of 2.6 percent of global GDP will occur only if no action is taken to reduce carbon dioxide emissions — which is highly unlikely.) ... Even after 2 to 4 percent loss of GDP in 2100, average world GDP per person will almost certainly be nearly double today's; could be fifteen times today's; and can be conservatively forecast at five times today's. People all over the world will be much wealthier than they are today. And that wealth will enable them to thrive despite whatever climate change brings their way.⁴⁶

If our elites manage to stamp us into accepting an “energy transition” away from cheap, reliable fossil fuels, what will actually happen? We will all, around the world, face an unthinkable level of energy scarcity, such as our ancestors faced when they starved and froze in their cottages. Economic growth will be halted before it even begins in places like Africa. People in industrialized nations will drastically regress in their lifestyles, and some will become impoverished. And do you know what people usually do when they suddenly go from rich to poor? They go to war with their neighbors.

Whether one looks at India and China in recent decades or at North America and Europe during the industrial age, the tale of economic prosperity is the same everywhere. The energy sector is the

⁴⁶ Vijay Jayaraj, “No Pope Francis, the World Is Not in a Climate Emergency!,” *Christian Post*, September 30, 2020, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.christianpost.com/voices/no-pope-francis-the-world-is-not-in-a-climate-emergency.html>.

fundamental bedrock on which economies flourish. Fossil fuels have always been the main force behind significant, sustained economic growth. They were instrumental in the development of human civilization, and even the staunchest climate doomsayer cannot deny the well-documented reality of fossil fuel-driven development since the nineteenth century.

Between 1950 and 2015, power generation in China expanded eighteen times, allowing 1.3 billion people to have greater access to electricity and experience unprecedented economic growth. This is primarily because of China's reliance on (gasp!) *coal* for electricity. Even in the agricultural sector, fossil fuels have made a world of difference. Fossil fuels are used to make fertilizers, which add vital nutrients to the soil such as potassium, phosphorus, and nitrogen, thus enhancing fertility and soil structure. Through up to a 50 percent increase in crop yields, fertilizers have been instrumental in helping to meet the world's food needs.

The economic rise of Western society has also helped in reducing mortality due to extreme weather events. As a more affluent society, fueled by cheap and plentiful energy resources, we have developed more resilient infrastructure that can endure catastrophic weather events and sophisticated reporting systems that alert people to potential threats. More than anything, fossil fuels provided the fundamental and reliable energy bedrock on which the entire economic apparatus can operate smoothly.

However, as governments shift toward "green" energy sources, the costs of electricity, gasoline, natural gas, and heating have soared. This places an unnecessary burden on low-income individuals and families who are already struggling financially. Extreme green measures have a disproportionate impact on low-income families. This effect deserves a name: *energy poverty*. For the disadvantaged, higher energy bills can have a variety of detrimental effects, such as:

- ✘ Spending less on other necessities like food, medication, and shelter;
- ✘ A rise in debt;
- ✘ Social isolation resulting from people's inability to pay for social activities;
- ✘ Health issues because people cannot afford to power necessary medical equipment or heat their houses.

The reason for higher energy costs and the non-availability of energy resources is misguided policies that stimulate the growth of wind and solar assets while restricting the production of fossil fuels. The pain of “green” regulations becomes a daily reality when unfortunate consumers are refused access to electricity, whether it's a scorching Colorado summer or a freezing winter in the United Kingdom.

Increased grid instability, power outages, higher costs, and general mayhem brought on by blackouts are the predictable outcomes of state legislators and energy suppliers choosing to include more “renewable” technology in their energy mix. Pub closings in the United Kingdom soared by 60 percent in 2023 due to high energy bills. Between January and March 2023, 153 pubs in England and Wales closed as a result of “decimating” energy costs. According to data from Altus Group, fifty-one pubs, or more than two per day, were forced to close on average each month between January and March.⁴⁷ Such pubs are historic centers of community with a long heritage in Britain. Now they're vanishing, thanks to the Climate Cult. What else will disappear, at the whim of deluded elites?

In 2022, the United Kingdom's Federation of Small Businesses claimed that “nearly 15 percent of small- and medium-sized firms polled fear they may have to close or downsize as a direct result of the

⁴⁷ “60% Rise in Pub Closures during First 3 Months of 2023,” *CLH Digital* 156, April 14, 2023, https://issuu.com/clhnews/docs/clh_digital_issue_156, 3.

spiraling energy bills.”⁴⁸ British journalist Julia Hartley-Brewer tweeted, “The fact that we’re talking about rationing energy, kids dying from the cold, thousands of businesses facing closure, millions unable to afford to keep warm this winter, should be a matter of national shame. None of this just ‘happened.’ It’s the result of political choices.”⁴⁹

In 2023, the world was in for a shock when the ruling administration in the United Kingdom made a sharp turn from its commitments to reduce fossil fuel emissions. Rishi Sunak, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, announced a slew of measures that focused on making energy more affordable for the ordinary citizens. On October 2, 2023, the United Kingdom’s energy secretary Claire Coutinho said, “Net zero has become a religion.” Coutinho endorsed Sunak’s decision to scale back on the United Kingdom’s green goals, saying that it would be “immoral” to “impoverished” people in the United Kingdom.⁵⁰

But not all leaders recognize this. Many governments are still pushing for impractical and dangerous “green” mandates that will see unprecedented energy insecurity problems, which mostly hurt the poorest. Countries as diverse as South Africa, Germany, and the United States are struggling with high costs and shortages to varying degrees.

The fixation of the so-called elite with achieving carbon dioxide emission elimination is not only incredibly harmful, but also unachievable. Despite decades of investing billions of dollars in these

⁴⁸ Vijay Jayaraj, “European Leaders Cling to Green Fantasy as Citizens Suffer,” *RealClear Energy*, September 7, 2022, accessed December 27, 2023, https://www.realclearenergy.org/articles/2022/09/07/european_leaders_cling_to_green_fantasy_as_citizens_suffer_852170.html.

⁴⁹ Julia Hartley-Brewer (@JuliaHB1), “The Fact That We’re Talking about Rationing Energy,” Twitter, September 3, 2022, 4:27 a.m., <https://twitter.com/JuliaHB1/status/1565994761965772802>.

⁵⁰ Daniel Martin, “Net Zero Has ‘Become a Religion,’ Says Energy Secretary,” *Telegraph*, October 2, 2023, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/10/02/net-zero-become-religion-energy-secretary-claire-coutinho/>.

technologies, wind and solar power still account for a pitiful little portion of the world's electricity production. On the other hand, fossil fuels are quite efficient.

Berlin's, Vienna's, and London's governments rely on coal-fired power facilities to keep their residents from going without electricity when blackouts threaten. This phenomenon was observed when the European governments were compelled by the Russian gas embargo to repress their aversion to coal. It was akin to a scarcity of produce driving vegetarians toward specialty restaurants.

The case in the United States is a unique and most important one. Between 2010 and 2020, the United States achieved unprecedented energy production, reducing its reliance on major oil-producing countries. The shale gas boom in the United States ushered in the American Energy Renaissance, an era of abundant energy. Indeed, it is fair to say that the natural gas boom flipped the script on the international energy market, weakening both Putin's Russia and Middle Eastern dictatorships.

Between 2011 and 2016, shale gas output more than doubled, and known reserves (shale gas that can be produced and used for electricity) continued to grow as exploration continued. However, after Joe Biden assumed the presidency, these wholesome trends suddenly ended. The Biden administration urged the country to give up on coal and oil and viewed natural gas as a necessary evil to get the country to a "green" utopia. The situation in the United States is dire.

The administration would do well to take a cue from the United Kingdom, where utility providers have urged citizens to bundle up with their dogs during the winter months rather than cranking up the heat. Industrial Revolution pioneers could never have predicted that illogical energy policies designed to solve a made-up crisis would obliterate their hard-won technological revolution. But it seems to be our current course.

During August 2022, energy demand peaked in Colorado due to soaring temperatures. More than twenty-two thousand Xcel Energy customers in the state were prevented from reducing the temperature, due to energy shortage.⁵¹ The reason for Xcel's energy rationing is not weather-related; rather, it stems from the utility's acceptance of the absurdity of substituting abundant and affordable fossil fuels with so-called renewable energy sources that are not suitable for producing enough electricity to power huge cities.

California is in a similar situation: the price has increased and energy produced has become volatile due to a drastic increase in reliance on wind and solar. Thus, millions of customers nationwide face the possibility of experiencing energy shortages as a result of their providers' unwillingness to use fossil fuels and their deliberate ignorance of the dangers involved in forsaking energy security in obedience to the high priests of the Climate Cult.

The fact that the poor in the United States cannot afford energy costs is a brutal reality. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Community Services (OCS) has programs that are aimed at helping the poor. One of them is the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) which, according to the official website, "provides federally funded assistance to reduce the costs associated with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization, and minor energy-related home repairs."⁵² The reality that our government has to help people afford energy costs is in itself a failure of

⁵¹ Kieran Nicholson, "Thousands of Xcel Energy Rewards Customers Were Hot after Losing Control of Thermostats," *Denver Post*, September 1, 2022, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.denverpost.com/2022/09/01/xcel-energy-rewards-customers-thermostats/>.

⁵² "Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)," Office of Community services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, November 29, 2023, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/liheap>.

basic energy economics, where green energy has been prioritized ahead of the need to provide energy at an affordable cost.

While many industry “experts” claim that renewable energy is becoming cheaper, that is simply false. In fact, it is fair to conclude that increased addition of wind and solar systems into the grid has been one of the primary drivers of higher costs faced by the consumers. This has been well documented across the world. A new study in the *Harvard Business Review* says that the waste generated by solar panels will increase the cost of solar electricity by four times, contrary to what the world’s top energy analysts had predicted. It says, “by 2035, discarded panels would outweigh new units sold by 2.56 times. In turn, this would catapult the LCOE (levelized cost of energy, a measure of the overall cost of an energy-producing asset over its lifetime) to four times the current projection.”⁵³

Michael Shellenberger, an environmentalist and author, says that this is a problem that is not unique to solar technology. He pointed out in 2021 that “more than 720,000 tons worth of gargantuan wind turbine blades will end up in U.S. landfills over the next 20 years. According to prevailing estimates, only five percent of electric-vehicle batteries are currently recycled — a lag that automakers are racing to rectify as sales figures for electric cars continue to rise as much as 40% year-on-year.”⁵⁴

In many instances, the Climate Cult’s impact can be immediately lethal. In 2023, Hawaii experienced one of its worst wildfires in history. Initial observation suggests that there has been a lack of

⁵³ Atalay Atasu, Serasu Duran, and Luk N. Van Wassenhove, “The Dark Side of Solar Power,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 18, 2021, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://hbr.org/2021/06/the-dark-side-of-solar-power>.

⁵⁴ Michael Shellenberger, “Dark Side to Solar? More Reports Tie Panel Production to Toxic Pollution,” *Forbes*, June 21, 2021, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelshellenberger/2021/06/21/why-everything-they-said-about-solar---including-that-its-clean-and-cheap---was-wrong/?sh=ca5cc735fe53>.

planning for major fire events like this. Even worse, it is likely that the state's environmental policies could have actually contributed to the scale of the disaster.

Hawaiian Electric, the power company that supplies power to 95 percent of Hawaii's population, admitted that the blaze in Maui was caused by its power wires.⁵⁵ But the incident had a precursor, a long one. In 2019, Hawaiian Electric acknowledged that there was a need to secure the power lines against potential fires. The *Wall Street Journal* noted that, "four years ago [2019], the utility said it needed to do more to prevent its power lines from emitting sparks. It made little progress, focusing on a shift to clean energy."⁵⁶ Moreover, this request fell on deaf ears, as the state's focus was solely on green climate campaigns and not on existing problems with power lines.

In 2022, Hawaiian Electric requested permission to spend \$189 million to "protect against wildfires and downed power lines" from the state Public Utilities Commission. This was followed by repeated warnings from Hawaiian Electric that stated that "the risk of a utility system causing a wildfire ignition is significant." Despite this, the money spent on fire suppression was less than 1 percent of what was suggested.⁵⁷ The failure to identify and pursue rational priorities is clear; the cost of that failure is incalculably high.

The *New York Post* reported that "the climate-change activists played a role here too, by persuading the politicians that the state and

⁵⁵ "Hawaiian Electric Says Power Lines Sparked Fire but Firefighters Fell Short," *Guardian*, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/aug/28/maui-wildfires-hawaiian-electric-company>.

⁵⁶ Katherine Blunt, Dan Frosch, and Jim Carlton, "Hawaiian Electric Knew of Wildfire Threat, but Waited Years to Act," *Wall Street Journal*, August 17, 2023, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/wildfire-risk-maui-hawaiian-electric-7beed21e>.

⁵⁷ "Hawaii Invests in Renewable Energy Rather than Wildfire Prevention," Institute for Energy Research, August 23, 2023, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.instituteforenergyresearch.org/renewable/hawaii-invests-in-renewable-energy-rather-than-wildfire-prevention/>.

the utility must spent [*sic*] tens of millions trying to meet a foolhardy 2015 mandate requiring 100% of the utility's electricity to come from renewable sources by 2045."⁵⁸

Experts say that the lack of land management could have also been a major factor in Hawaii's disastrous fire event. Biologist Jim Steele said,

Unmanaged, nonnative grasslands that have flourished in Hawaii after decades of declining agriculture have provided the fuel for more rapidly spreading and extensive wildfires.

As Maui's pineapple and sugar cane plantations were abandoned, they became dominated by invasive annual grasses that flourish in disturbed soils. Fire experts categorize such small diameter grasses as 1-hour lag fuels, meaning that within half a day of dry weather, these grasses become highly flammable, allowing fires to rapidly spread in even moderate winds.⁵⁹

Steele concluded that "the key [to preventing further fires] is managing the dead grasses that become flammable in just hours. Climate change was irrelevant." In addition to failing to avoid the Hawaii fire disaster, the state apparatus incorrectly blamed climate change and refused to accept responsibility for their faults in prioritizing climate programs.

As governmental priorities change toward green policies that allocate disproportionately huge sums of money to pointless emission

⁵⁸ Stephen Moore, "Green Activists Have Hurt the Environment by Letting Hawaii and California Burn," *New York Post*, August 21, 2023, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/08/21/green-activists-have-hurt-the-environment-by-letting-hawaii-and-california-burn/>.

⁵⁹ James Steele, "Hawaii Fires Are No Excuse for Climate Emergency Power Play," Shale Directories, accessed December 27, 2023, <https://www.shaledirectories.com/blog-1/hawaii-fires-are-no-excuse-for-climate-emergency-power-play/>.

reduction goals, disasters like the one that struck Hawaii will only become more common in the near future.

For example, approximately half of Africans do not have access to power when they need it. Only 14.3 percent of the Central African Republic's citizens enjoy this basic necessity.⁶⁰ The aggregate electricity output of forty-eight Sub-Saharan African countries matches the output of a single Western economy the size of Spain's.⁶¹ The most catastrophic impact of energy poverty is felt in health care facilities, 60 percent of which lack electricity in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁶² According to the U.S. Agency for International Development, one hundred thousand public health facilities in the region lack reliable power. It would be conceivable to assume that Africa can generate wind technology and electricity on its own, ignoring the harsh reality of electricity generation and the energy poverty that millions of people face. Those who argue against the use of fossil fuels in Africa in favor of wind and solar have contributed directly to the continent's high morbidity and death rates.

Homes without electricity for lights and refrigerators, businesses without enough power to increase output, and millions living in abject poverty ... all because of a lack of energy that would otherwise be available from the much-publicized fuels of coal, oil, and natural gas.

⁶⁰ "Central African Republic: Increasing Electricity Supply and Access and Supporting the Health System," World Bank, June 3, 2022, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/03/afw-central-african-republic-increasing-electricity-supply-and-access-and-supporting-the-health-system>.

⁶¹ "Closing the Energy Gap in Sub-Saharan Africa," World Steel Association, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://worldsteel.org/steel-stories/infrastructure/closing-energy-gap-sub-saharan-africa/>.

⁶² "Power Africa COVID-19 Response," United States Agency for International Development, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.usaid.gov/powerafrica/coronavirus>.

Environmental commentator Vijay Jayaraj says, “Africans ... have the barest of energy supplies, far less than what is regarded as a basic convenience in the rest of the world. And no end to abject poverty in sight. The solution to Africa’s immediate energy needs and long-term economic improvement is more investment in coal, oil, and natural gas — fuels that offer reliability and affordability.”⁶³ His words are echoed by P.D. Lawton, a researcher committed to the continent’s restoration: “It is through manufacturing goods, be it value addition in agriculture, high tech components, tractors, machine tools, household goods or even bread that sub-Saharan African economies will reduce poverty by supplying productive employment and enabling economic growth.”⁶⁴

Northeast Group LLC’s Steve Chakerian says that “Sub-Saharan Africa’s economic development remains tied to sustained growth in the power sector.”⁶⁵ Providing electricity to the more than six hundred million people in the region who do not now have it will be crucial to the future of Africans. African nations will be doomed to constant poverty and reliance on pitifully unstable renewable energy infrastructure. Admonishing the anti-fossil fuel climate action policies proposed by Europeans, Niger president Mohamed Bazoum says:

Africa is being punished by the decisions of Western countries to end public financing for foreign fossil-fuel projects by the end of 2022.... We are going to continue to fight, we have fossil fuels that should be exploited.

⁶³ Vijay Jayaraj, “End Carbon Imperialists’ Impoverishment of Africa,” *RealClear Energy*, July 27, 2022, accessed December 29, 2023, https://www.realclearenergy.org/articles/2022/07/27/end_carbon_imperialists_impoverishment_of_africa_844810.html.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Vijay Jayaraj, “Africa’s Priority, Unrestricted Energy Development,” *Cornwall Alliance*, November 9, 2020, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://cornwallalliance.org/2020/11/africas-priority-unrestricted-energy-development/>.

Let the African continent be allowed to exploit its natural resources. It is frankly unbelievable that those who have been exploiting oil and its derivatives for more than a century prevent African countries from reaping the value of their resources.⁶⁶

Asian countries, and India especially, face a significant challenge similar to Africa due to their high poverty rates. Nearly three hundred million Indians — roughly equivalent to the population of the United States — live in poverty.⁶⁷ As in Africa, adopting extreme green policies runs the risk of depriving a significant portion of the populace of affordable power. This exacerbates economic disparities and obstructs the advancement of sustainable development.

The high costs associated with switching to “green” energy sources prevent those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged from escaping the cycle of poverty by limiting their access to opportunities for education and basic needs.

Hardly any mainstream media talk about the other side of the green coin: problems with wind and solar technologies. In addition to killing birds directly, wind turbines also disrupt ecosystems and devastate bird habitat. The fact that hundreds of thousands of birds die each year, whether in the United States, Europe, or Asia, has been confirmed by science. As with other raptors and migrating animals, bald eagles, a highly protected species in the United States, are permitted by statute to be killed by turbines. The claim that these deaths are no different from bird deaths due to cats and tall buildings is the most ridiculous defense of wind turbines. When was the last time

⁶⁶ Jayaraj, “End Carbon Imperialists’ Impoverishment of Africa.”

⁶⁷ “Understanding Poverty in India,” Asian Development Bank, January 2011, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.adb.org/publications/understanding-poverty-india>.

you witnessed a house cat murder a hawk, falcon, or bald eagle? Or when did you witness a lofty structure sever a bird's wings?

A 2018 peer-reviewed study analyzed raptor interactions with wind energy across the globe and concluded that “Collision mortality, displacement, and habitat loss can cause population level effects, especially for species that are rare or endangered.”⁶⁸ This is why the U.S. government has “bald eagle-killing quotas” for wind turbine companies, wherein they are allowed to slaughter a certain number of eagles each year.⁶⁹

These “killing quotas” by the U.S. government are not exclusive to avian species. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issues “harassment quotas” to offshore wind companies. These quotas allow wind companies to create oceanic noise pollution that can injure, disorient, and even kill whales off the coast of the United States. In fact, the offshore wind development along the East Coast is now believed to be the major driver of whale deaths, including of the unbelievably high number of deaths among the endangered right whales.

The environmental and human harm caused by the industrial extraction of rare earth materials for the production of wind and solar power equipment is another issue that the greens ignore. In the craze for so-called renewable technologies, entire communities and lakes have become poisonous. Green energy advocates have tried hard to convince the public that solar panel prices are coming down.

⁶⁸ Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center, “Attempts to Measure and Mitigate the Effects of Wind Turbines on Wildlife Have Been an Integral Part of Wind Energy Development,” U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, March 9, 2018, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.usgs.gov/news/raptor-interactions-wind-energy-case-studies-around-world>.

⁶⁹ Molly Espey and Eamon Espey, “Using Markets to Limit Eagle Mortality from Wind Power,” PERC, July 26, 2022, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.perc.org/2022/07/26/using-markets-to-limit-eagle-mortality-from-wind-power/>.

But none of them reveal the reason: China. Analysts say that China has been able to produce cheaper solar panels because of forced labor, cheap fossil fuel electricity, and a high environmental cost.

The *Global Times*, a daily tabloid newspaper run by the Chinese Communist Party, admits that “Xinjiang has become a major polysilicon production hub in China, as the industry requires extensive amounts of energy, and that makes relatively cheaper electricity and abundant thermal power in Xinjiang appealing.”⁷⁰ Xinjiang is the province notorious for forced labor by persecuted Uyghurs, which was verified by a United Nations expert in 2022.⁷¹ Not only is the use of coal counter-productive for solar and wind manufacturing in China, but it also leads to widespread environmental damage and even encourages human rights violations.

Regardless of our views on climate change, there is a concerning trend that needs to worry everyone: a readiness to forfeit lives in order to lower harmless CO² emissions. The animosity toward fossil fuels alone claims lives because it makes energy too costly or inaccessible for the impoverished, who are destined to live in poverty, suffer from illness, and die young. Fossil fuels (i.e., oil, natural gas, and coal) constitute the foundation of our modern way of life.

Over the past few centuries, humanity has made significant progress — at enormous financial expense — to attain the current condition of energy abundance that it enjoys. Elite policymakers are undoing this achievement by depriving people of the energy necessary for survival, much less prosperity. Contemporary human

⁷⁰ Zhang Dan, “News Analysis: ‘Forced Labor’ Lies Won’t Beat Down Xinjiang Solar Firms,” *Global Times*, May 16, 2021, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202105/1223611.shtml>.

⁷¹ “One Year after UN Xinjiang Report Release, Pressure on China at the UN Remains Steady,” International Service for Human Rights, November 24, 2023, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/one-year-after-un-xinjiang-report-release-pressure-on-china-at-the-un-remains-steady/>.

civilization — both globally and locally — would abruptly come to an end and those individuals still alive would have to return to living like hunters and gatherers if the net-zero CO² policy or the likes of the Green New Deal were to take effect.

The cultists don't give a damn if you have a healthy economy that promotes growth and well-being for individuals as well as for generations. They don't care if you can't afford their "green" energy, or whether the whales in the ocean or the birds in the sky die by the thousands. Obsessed with their new religion, they shrug as food markets empty and poor people starve, due to a war on nitrogen emissions from farming areas. To put it briefly, the Climate Cult is prepared — possibly even required — to sacrifice humans and the planet's magnificent wildlife to feed its ravenous false gods — just like the Aztecs feeding their gods with human hearts.

We must emulate Hernán Cortés and bring that sacrifice to a halt.



PART TWO

FIVE WHOLE-LIFE PRINCIPLES TO HALT THE GREAT RESET





IF YOU’VE READ THIS far, you know that we live in dangerous times. Ancient truths aren’t rejected by angry rebels, as they were in 1918 and 1968. Instead, they are simply forgotten, like lost languages or species that went extinct. Apart from the very old, and those in committed religious subcultures that cling to these venerable teachings like treasured family recipes, the core principles of Western civilization have simply disappeared — as if we lived on some island where castaways from a British ship in 1750 had washed up, and their descendants had lapsed into illiteracy and cannibalism.

If you doubt the truth of that statement, seek out some secular college students and ask them basic questions about morality and logic. For instance, try the following:

- ✧ What is a woman? If the definition is not based in biological sex, then why give “trans” people sex-change operations?
- ✧ Why is racism wrong? How does that answer account for “the survival of the fittest”? What other basis could there be for morality than the facts about human evolution?
- ✧ Why is equality a value, instead of hierarchy and order? What if I identify as an aristocrat instead of an egalitarian?

- ✧ Why do privacy rights and personal autonomy cover abortion and sexual behavior, but not vaccination decisions?

You could choose other questions, of course, but those would make a good start. They'd also keep your conversation short, since the students you asked them of would pretty quickly stalk off, confused and angry and ready to report you for harassment.

This book is almost a time capsule, intended to preserve in short, accessible form the five core moral principles that made a free, prosperous, tolerant, and humane society possible, in case anyone out there would like to try implementing them again, someday.



CHAPTER 6

PERSONALISM

Belief in the dignity of every human being

THE OVERTURNING OF *ROE v. Wade* provided a wonderful service, in removing from the U.S. Constitution a fundamental incoherence based on judicial fraud. Justice Samuel Alito's majority opinion in the *Dobbs* decision is a model of scrupulous legal scholarship, to the point that no pro-choice legal philosopher has made any serious effort to answer it. He's clearly right on the history, the principles, and the facts. There is nothing in the U.S. Constitution or any of its amendments that licenses abortion based on "privacy," "liberty," or anything else. It was all a lie from the beginning.

But the *Dobbs* decision, of course, settled nothing at all. In fact, it unsettled America profoundly, as our elites responded to Alito's calm, sober scholarship with a collective primal scream: massive demonstrations, an attempt on Justice Kavanaugh's life, and the collusion of the federal government with Big Pharma and drug store chains to offer chemical abortions even in states that protected unborn life. Abortion is as fundamental to many in the blue states as slavery was to those who ruled the Confederate states, and any threat to it amounted to fighting words.

Elsewhere, the picture is grimmer. Between the time I started working on this book and when I finished it, Canada's government decided that being clinically depressed is grounds for euthanasia.

That's right: instead of protecting suicidal patients from becoming a threat to themselves, the leftist government of our English-speaking neighbor decided to collude in those patients' self-destruction.

Step back for a moment. Suppose some nasty extremist proposed euthanizing ... trans people. We Christians would be just as appalled as we are at the idea of euthanasia for the depressed, but in this case *the left would join us*. Its outrage would know no bounds, and in Canada itself the person proposing trans euthanasia might well be prosecuted for hate speech.

Why would the left agree with the churches that killing trans people was wrong, when it can't conclude the same thing about killing the depressed?

Because there is simply no principle whatsoever underlying the left's rejection of murder. It opposes killing some categories of innocent people — if they fall into groups the left approves of and considers either socially valuable or historically “victimized.” But other groups — unborn children, the handicapped, the critically ill, or the depressed — don't make the magic circle and hence their lives just don't really matter.

That's how human beings end up thinking when they abandon core principles and act merely on prejudice, fashion, collective emotion, and political expedience. They act like castaways whose ancestors went feral, making up taboos and totems out of nothing, stranded on an island.

In this chapter, I'd like to offer a different standard: the coherent case that human life is good in itself and ought to be treated as sacred. If we want our children to inherit a recognizably human world, we must rewrite our collective will to include one sacred heirloom that has almost been lost in our time, which is *a sacramental respect for the human person*. We must reaffirm the founding truth of humanism — that every human being is important, unique, and dignified. He or she deserves the same reverence we demand for ourselves.

We love ourselves with a passion, and such love is the model for how we should try to act toward our neighbor. This principle is best called *personalism* because it makes the human person the first and primary object of our concern, which should fall short of worship, yet ought to be imbued with a sense of religious awe.

Those of us who read the Bible will know that we are called to love God even more than our neighbor. But we meet our neighbor first, and if we do not love him, our love for God is a sham. The proper, passionate love of our fellow man is the starting point for every other good thing on earth, and any project or program that forgets this will turn to ashes in our mouths. Christians will remember that man is called an “image of God,” a thing “a little lower than the angels,” who is meant for union with God. Believing in such a theology can make it much easier to remember human dignity, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient. Think of Christians who burned heretics or traded in slaves, and then of the heroic atheist Albert Camus, who served in the French Resistance and later helped to expose the crimes of the Soviet Union.

Making of man an object of solemn reverence is a good deal more difficult than it sounds — in part because of the confused and contradictory notions that we have acquired of mankind. But there are more basic human reasons why treating each other as truly human entails such heavy lifting.

Human existence is, at root, a paradox. Any answer that fails to admit this is dangerously misleading.

Our lives are a bundle of howling contradictions, of seemingly irreconcilable claims that pull us in different directions like wild horses yoked together, threatening to rip the fragile, complex truth into jagged, hazardous pieces. We are animals and mathematicians, street fighters and symphonists, carnivores and pet lovers, jingoistic champions of our tiny tribes who are simultaneously haunted by the brotherhood of man. We are Adam newly born from the hand of

God—and the sinners who cringe at the Last Judgment; we are Macbeth and we are Hamlet; we are Romeo and Cordelia. We are the “naked ape” who stole fire from Heaven, and we are Oedipus, blind but wise. Cain and Abel, Peter and Judas, are equally our brothers.

The great temptation of ideologues is to divide the sheep from the goats—to resolve man’s paradoxical nature into brutally stark polarities. We are told that “our people” (our tribe, class, or party) represent what is best in man, and we must unite to purge the “other,” a unity that elicits the very basest tendencies that we tell ourselves we don’t share.

Perhaps the most bitter truth about the human paradox comes from the mouth of a man who did more than almost any other to divide and persecute: Joseph Stalin. He was the architect of the Ukrainian Famine and the Purge, Hitler’s willing ally in 1939, and the inventor of the Gulag. He is reported to have once said, “A single death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic.” Stalin’s war against the people of the Soviet Union killed, in peacetime, more than twenty-one million citizens.

Stalin may have been a butcher, but his words ring true. A master of backroom politics and political blackmail, this former seminarian had an intimate knowledge of our soul’s darkest unswept corners. If Mother Teresa was right that any one of us (herself included) is capable of committing any crime, then each of us has something to learn from Stalin.

He knew (and in his thuggish way, admitted) something that most of us won’t put into conscious thought: *life is at once both sacred and cheap.*

When we let ourselves think it, we know this to be true, both instinctively and from experience. In the first place, we consider our own lives sacred, our own rights inalienable. When we are threatened by violence or are victimized, we swell up with righteous anger and rouse each other to action. Our perception of self-sacredness extends

easily to those we love. Some of us have held a tiny child of our own, looked at each of his perfect fingers and gleaming eyelashes, felt the faint flutter of his heartbeat, tended to his needs when he cried. In those moments we are suddenly certain that this innocent life is of infinite importance, and the very thought that someone might snuff it out fills us with rage. Our conviction may even make us willing to sacrifice our own life in order to save his. This is how we typically love a sibling, a parent, a spouse.

Like a drop of ink in a glass of water, the intensity of our empathy tends to diminish as it spreads. For friends and neighbors, for those who look like us, or pray like us, and finally for our fellow citizens, we feel some shadow of that same passionate attachment we feel for ourselves and those we love.

With each degree of separation from our ego, conviction fades, until at last, we find total strangers at the furthest extent of our empathy — those on the other side of the world with whom we have little in common beyond the human condition. Some may even be our enemies. At this distance our ability to understand the sacredness of human life finds little support in our viscera. Suddenly, what we once understood so well requires the active support of our minds, an abstract philosophical or religious opinion. We will ourselves to care, and sometimes we succeed — which is why billions of dollars in private charity flow to foreign countries every year.

Sometimes, however, we fail, and our failure explains the ease with which we overlook or even cooperate in the abuse of humans far from home. “Our people” become soldiers killing civilians, businessmen poisoning rivers, or social engineers sterilizing poor women “for their own good.” Hannah Arendt pointed out forty years ago in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that well-formed British and French soldiers, who would never have stolen a stick of gum in their mother country, were capable of appalling savagery in “the colonies.” In our own history, American white men could not long stand the presence

of white indentured servants — so they replaced them with black Africans, who looked different enough to justify two hundred years of servitude and a hundred more of legal discrimination.

If we can manage to stand far enough away, the life we know as sacred appears more and more expendable. We drive past a graveyard full of strangers and react with a melancholy shrug.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with loving your family members more than you do a stranger. In fact, if you love a stranger equally, it's probably because you love your own family too little. (Think of the Dickens character Mrs. Jellyby, who denied her own children milk so that she could send milk money to the missions.) But if we want strangers — who may feel little for us — to respect our lives as sacred, we must accord them the same courtesy. This is the basic treatment, the bare minimum that every human being deserves simply by virtue of being human.

It may sound utilitarian, but respecting human life is not some charade we engage in solely to protect ourselves. Rather, it is an act of the will that cleaves to a fundamental truth — the one truth that can guard us against totalitarianism and imperialism, utilitarianism and eugenics: the infinite moral value of every human being. The fact that the right choice may also seem useful is only evidence of the fact that truth is accessible by reason.

Had the men leading great nations in the bloody twentieth century been convinced of this single truth, there might still have been wars, poverty, and repression, just as there were in the Middle Ages. What would not have happened is the mass destruction of “undesirable” civilians by their own governments and the callous use of strategic bombing against defenseless populations in enemy countries. Only the most profound failure of empathy, motivated by ideology and animated by technology, could achieve the colossal death toll of the twentieth century.

The more distant, alien, or unattractive we find people, the harder we must work not to act on what we feel — indifference, or even hostility — but on what we know: that each of these people was once a child whose mother was intimately certain that his life was infinitely precious. That we must will to respect others is a truth that applies equally to soldiers in foreign countries and to the civilians who surround them, to the loved ones we cherish across the dinner table and to the inmates in our prisons, to helpless children in the womb and to vulnerable Alzheimer’s patients.

When we start making exceptions to suit our convenience, we will not stop, since the list of human beings who may prove an obstacle to what we want is as limitless as our desires. History proves the true steepness of this slippery slope. The stern truth that innocent life is sacred is the antidote to tribalist vengeance, ideological hatred, and technological hubris. It was known to the Israelites, whose Commandments said, “Thou shalt not murder,” and to the Greeks, whose Hippocratic Oath made doctors promise “to give no deadly medicine.”

The age we mark as modernity began with grand, exhilarating gestures: discourses on method that would set us free from the dead hand of tradition (Descartes); declarations of the rights of man (the French Revolutionary Assembly); manifestos rejecting the tyranny of mere economic laws over the lives and labor of men (Karl Marx). The grand progression of heroic humanism was full of such golden moments, which moved through the dark night of history like torches leading us forward to a glittering future that would make life at long last worthy of man. At the end of all the struggles, after the next (surely final!) conflict, we were promised without any irony a brave new world, an earthly Paradise. Descartes had no doubt that science would end disease and aging, so that men could live forever. Robespierre offered public safety and a reign of absolute virtue. Marx fought to eliminate war, inequality, and even boring jobs: in the

stateless, classless Communist end point of history, no one would even have to specialize in anything. We could move from one career to another from day to day and have ample time in the evening to philosophize or write poetry. As Thomas Paine said, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.”⁷²

And we did. That’s what we spent the nineteenth and twentieth centuries doing, energetically. We broke up historic empires into nation-states, where men forgot their loyalty to a tiny village or global Church, and learned to think as members of ethnic tribes or aggrieved social classes. After these collectives had done their work, and proved themselves too dangerous, we set about smashing them, too. We broke down the ramshackle, inefficient structure of the old extended family to its minimal, nuclear core.

When that didn’t seem economically vital, we split it into atoms. When we decided that families have no fiscal impact or political import, we redefined them at last as consensual, temporary alliances of adults, to whom the state contracts the duty of caring for children overnight, in the hours when schools and daycare facilities aren’t open. We have very thoroughly accomplished the job modernity’s founders set us: liquidating every barrier to the assertion of the Self, short of the laws of physics. We have killed all the fathers. We are free to make of ourselves exactly what we will, no less and no more. We have learned to fetishize productivity and freedom, while debasing and disregarding the people who produce things and exercise freedom. We have sold the precious artwork to pay for its glittering frame.

The road we took to get here should be clear: in the high-minded, ruthless war of liberation we fought against the past, against

⁷² Thomas Paine, “Common Sense (1776),” National Constitution Center, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://constitution-center.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/thomas-paine-common-sense-1776>.

authority, against every duty or imperative that each of us as individuals had not freely signed on to as consenting adults, we had to destroy the vision of human life our superstitious ancestors clung to, in which a human being was something radical and unique, an amalgam of spirit and flesh whose destiny may have begun inside the uterus, but which stretched on forward into eternity. You would meddle with such a mystery at your peril, remembering that the penalties could haunt your own eternity. So the Russian peasants used to mutter at the soldiers and the secret policemen, who laughed as they carted them off to collective farms or gulags. But these “new men” were unafraid of judgment. In that sense, and that sense only, they were free.

The only support, it turned out, for having a high opinion of other people’s lives (remembering that our own are sacred by definition) lay not in the shiny new laboratories or libraries we were building, but in the drafty, candlelit houses of worship we had to bulldoze to make room. The old sacred books that old men quoted to thwart the free play of our desires, which we piled in bonfires or smirked at as curiosities, were more important than we realized. They held crucial information, the shibboleths needed to make men treat each other a certain way — a way we had come to take for granted. That way of treating people — respecting the weak, sacrificing for the young, venerating the old — emerged in human history as the side effect of specific assertions about the world. The most important was this one, whose implications for our ethics are almost infinite: that man is made in the image and likeness of God.

We didn’t want to believe this. We resented the rules it imposed on our behavior, the limits it placed on research and productivity. But we craved the rights and dignity that this principle granted us. So we split our minds into two, hermetically sealing one off from the other.

To suit the way we feel about ourselves, we act as if life is sacred, the individual is precious, and each of us has a dignity that no one can deny. What we see in nature is that life is cheap, that all our DNA cares about is replicating itself, and that we are no more than one species among many millions, on a trivial planet in a clockwork universe (one of many) that's gradually running down. We are atheists who want to think of ourselves as angels, but know deep down that we are beasts. We are free of the very things that gave us the right to freedom. We "know" that we are special — and realize that we aren't. I'm not, and neither are you. But we will each agree to pretend that we don't know this, and go on dancing the minuet as the lights slowly fade to black and the knives come out. Because pretense is not enough in times of crisis, as our survey of twentieth-century history has confirmed. When the economy collapses, or war erupts, the only force strong enough to stop us from searching out scapegoats, or matching our enemies atrocity for atrocity, is a solid, intransigent moral code — one that we believe in so firmly that it can resist the shrill voice of expedience or the roars of collective rage.

A once-controversial, now-beloved American president spoke out bluntly about the inexorable creep of darkness only two years after taking office. Too few stalwarts in his political party, which still venerates his image, remember what Ronald Reagan wrote in 1983:

Abortion concerns not just the unborn child, it concerns every one of us. The English poet, John Donne, wrote: "... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

We cannot diminish the value of one category of human life — the unborn — without diminishing the value of all human life. We saw tragic proof of this truism last year when the Indiana courts allowed the starvation

death of “Baby Doe” in Bloomington because the child had Down’s Syndrome. . . .

The real question today is not when human life begins, but, What is the value of human life? The abortionist who reassembles the arms and legs of a tiny baby to make sure all its parts have been torn from its mother’s body can hardly doubt whether it is a human being. The real question for him and for all of us is whether that tiny human life has a God-given right to be protected by the law — the same right we have.⁷³

How was it that such a fundamental right could be obscured? Being brutally candid, we can say that such a forgetting was willful and conscious, an example of empathy failing in the face of selfish desires wrapped up in utopian slogans. With the rise of contraception and the apparent defeat of “venereal diseases” by antibiotics, modern man saw the glimpse of a promised land of sexual freedom that had eluded wistful libertines throughout human history. Sex could be freed from its biological moorings and used as a pleasure balloon. Unhinged from commitments that outlast fleeting desire, unburdened by reproduction, without the ballast of guilt and shame, what advocates hopefully labeled “free love” could serve the cause of Progress, dissolving the unwanted social bonds and inherited social structures that the new left saw as repressive: the nuclear family, the Church, and “bourgeois” codes of behavior. Indeed, in the 1960s, there were relatively few student activists who were well versed in Marx and Engels, or more than passingly interested in improving the lot of the “workers.” Instead, the new left cannily channeled youthful rebels to knock down the barriers to pleasure. The hard-won peace and

⁷³ Ronald Reagan, Speech on the Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, January 22, 2010, quoted in *United States of America Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 111th Congress, Second Session*, vol. 156, part 1, January 5, 2010 to February 11, 2010 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), 560–561.

prosperity that the generation that survived the Second World War had scraped together, from amidst the graves of more than sixty million dead, seemed to prosperous young Westerners a mere entitlement of birth. Few apart from reactionaries and churchmen thought to warn how fragile social order would prove when the acid of adolescent desire was applied to its bricks and mortar.

There was just one snake in the garden — the inconvenient fact that human beings are mammals, who reproduce the species through sexual intercourse. The human reproductive system is cunning, and over time will defeat most methods of contraception. (If your failure rate is “only” 10 percent, and you fool around for ten years ... even Americans can do that kind of math.) The result was that the rise of birth control was accompanied by an explosion of unwanted pregnancies — the increase of promiscuity always outracing the improvements in contraception. By the middle of the 1960s, the barrier to sexual liberation was no longer the tut-tutting of priests and prudes, or the fear of social disgrace, but a constant crop of squalling, unwanted infants. The progressive movement to free man from every obstacle to his desires was suddenly faced with a purely human obstacle — the reverence that pregnant women felt toward their very own unborn children. A feminist movement that had begun with Susan B. Anthony calling abortion a monstrous crime that men imposed on women adapted instead the ethic that Simone de Beauvoir had cribbed from her faithless lover, Jean-Paul Sartre: a search for self-liberation from every societal bond or external influence, which entailed women reengineering their sexuality to match that of “playboy” males. Abortion went from an illegal convenience mainly favored by single, promiscuous males, to a fundamental human right demanded by female activists and favored with quiet philanthropy by population controllers, such as the Rockefeller Foundation — whose alarmist reports, with strong overtones of eugenics, would influence Justice Harry Blackmun, the author of *Roe v. Wade*.

Just as owners of slaves during the Enlightenment found “scientific” rationales for the immoral practice on which their own “liberty” rested, so sexual libertarians looked for support in the tenets of modern subhumanism. Then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger exposed the dynamics in his famous essay, “The Problem of Threats to Human Life”:

An individualistic type of anthropology [like the one proposed by the Enlightenment] . . . leads one to consider objective truth as inaccessible, freedom as arbitrary, conscience as a tribunal closed in on itself. Such an anthropology leads woman not only to hatred toward men, but also to hatred toward herself and toward her own femininity, and above all, toward her own motherhood.

More generally, a similar anthropology leads human beings to hatred toward themselves. Man despises himself; he is no longer in accord with God who found his human creation to be “something very good” (Gn 1:31). On the contrary, man today sees himself as the destroyer of the world, an unhappy product of evolution. In reality, man who no longer has access to the infinite, to God, is a contradictory being, a failed product. Thus, we see the logic of sin: by wanting to be like God, man seeks absolute independence. To be self-sufficient, he must become independent, he must be emancipated even from love which is always a free grace, not something that can be produced or made. However, by making himself independent of love, man is separated from the true richness of his being and becomes empty. Opposition to his own being is inevitable. “It is not good to be a human being” — the logic of death belongs to the logic of sin. The road to abortion, to euthanasia and the exploitation of the weakest lies open.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “The Problem of Threats to Human Life,” 5, accessed via Catholic Culture on December 29, 2023, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=187>.

The power of choice, that freedom that *Roe v. Wade* held as more sacred than life itself, is nothing to speak of lightly. Liberty is the hard-won product of thousands of years of struggle. It's the logical implication of Classical reason and Jewish-Christian revelation. It's the crowning glory of human dignity. It is every single one of these things — or else it is nothing at all, a mere illusion, a flickering of electrical activity in the brain stem of a mammal.

The very picture of human nature that leads people to consider sacred their reproductive choices, religious freedom, and right to pursue happiness implies the sanctity of life itself. In fact, its only foundation, the only intellectual barrier against totalitarianism, is that sanctity and all it implies. Deny the sanctity of life (in order, say, to allow women the “right” to abortion), and you remove any consistent argument against the state (or the Party, the Race, or some scientific elite) overriding every other human right. A state that allows abortion has no good argument against requiring it (when it suits the public interest) — or forcing particular women to bear children and preventing others from doing so. In the long run, even in the medium run, there is no middle ground between the old Judeo-Christian world and the Brave New World. Stumble out of the first, and you are already headed into the second.



CHAPTER 7

THE NATURAL LAW

A transcendent moral order, by which
we judge all laws and policies

THERE ARE TWO POWERFUL movements among conservatives in America, and both of them are wrong. One can be summed up as a “#MeToo” liberalism, which sees people in positions of power within conservative institutions try to somewhat moderate the extreme demands made by the left, while holding back what it regards as the dangerous passions of populists and “fundamentalists.” Icons of this movement include the staff of *National Review*, the leaders of the Republican party establishment enthused by candidates like Asa Hutchinson and Nikki Haley, and writers such as David French — who (in) famously defends Drag Queen Story Hours aimed at schoolchildren as one of the “blessings of liberty.” The partisans of this position seem to believe that the same left that demands abortion through birth and transgender “transitions” for children without parental consent can somehow be reasoned with — and is at any rate less threatening to civil peace than supporters of Donald Trump.

I don’t think that people in this camp arrived at their positions for intellectual reasons, but out of careerism, class scorn, or cowardice. So, there is no point in arguing with them. They will only change their stance when it becomes clear to them, pragmatically, that there’s no future in it. So, the way we educate them is simply to defeat them.

Another insurgent movement includes Catholic integralists and Protestant Christian nationalists. These people seek not to moderate the left but to imitate it — to use the force of state coercion to impose on the general public specific teachings of Christian faith that emerge from divine revelation, not natural law. Hence Catholic integralists might prohibit Protestant churches, while Calvinist Christian nationalists would ban Catholic ones. Both would put Jews and other non-Christians under various disabilities as citizens.

I've written before on what I think caused earnest people to lurch toward such an extreme. I think that these people started off in a good place, before they went off the rails. Like them, I want to see the natural law made the bedrock on which most public laws rest. That would mean rolling back the Supreme Court and the culture's corruptions of the Constitution's plain meaning on everything from abortion to same-sex marriage and transgender madness. It would mean, frankly, rolling back most of the Sexual Revolution. The only thing setting integralists apart, and making their movement unique, is they imagine a future state that persecutes fellow-Christians who aren't Catholic. That's it. That's integralism's "killer app," its secret ingredient.

So, what's the big deal, people ask me? Of course, the integralists won't achieve their fantasy outcome. You couldn't enforce orthodox Catholicism in Vatican City these days, so why not let the young people have their fun? Let the twenty-eight-year-old boys dress up as Torquemada when they go to the Renaissance Fair. Let them rail against America's founding as "satanic" and snicker about the kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara by Pius IX. Everybody wants to be an "ed-gelord" these days. What harm does it do?

Well, for one thing, it's pornographic — not in the literal sense, of course, but in the deeper sense of living vicariously, in fantasy, in a world where you have all the power. This changes people — and not for the better. It wastes their time and darkens their spirit. As Christians, we

think that matters. Is it really any healthier if your daydreams are all about burning Martin Luther at the stake or working Huguenot fathers to death in King Louis XV's galleys?

More fundamentally, at its very heart the urge to use coercive force to compel religious compliance is evil. The whole point of the biblical view of man is that God created us free. Why bother to give Adam and Eve a choice if the whole point of God's outreach to man wasn't a free response in love? Why'd God offer a covenant (a free agreement) to Abram? And why did the angel Gabriel wait on the Virgin Mary's consent, instead of treating her as Zeus treated Danaë and Europa?

Why do Catholics believe that forced Baptisms are both illicit and invalid? Why do we insist (against the Calvinists) that even divine grace is resistible? Because it seems clear from Scripture that God awaits our consent. He allowed all creation to fall rather than override it. God asks for our obedience, modeled on Christ's: willing, humble, and loving. He doesn't want us twisting our spirits in fantasies of coercion, power, and violence. Those are the province of the Enemy, who's ever ready at our elbows, offering us at least the fantasy of dominion over earth and all its kingdoms.

As John Zmirak wrote in his essay "Why Integralism Is False":

Most Catholics believe that the Virgin Mary appeared at Fatima and delivered messages to children for the benefit of mankind. Included in those messages were warnings about the evil effects of women dressing "immodestly." Now, would it be reasonable for the state to take those warnings from heaven, and enact them into law? Should we force women — Catholic, Protestant, pagan — to dress more modestly, based on the Virgin Mary's message?

[No, that wouldn't be reasonable.] But why would you say that? Because believing in a heavenly message

from Mary doesn't proceed from the *clear conclusions of reason*. You can't expect it from a Jewish citizen, for instance. Or even from a Protestant citizen, who doesn't believe that Jesus' mother talks to Portuguese children from heaven. To force such citizens to act on something you can't demonstrate to them is reasonable isn't reasonable. It's tyranny, in fact. Furthermore, if you gave bishops like Cardinal McCarrick police powers, they'd just use them to arrest for heresy the reporters digging into their sex abuse and coverups. . . .

. . . You cannot demonstrate the central mysteries of faith based on reason alone. Apologetics just tries to remove rational barriers, not implant the virtue of Faith in someone's heart. That is what we called an "infused" virtue, which only the Holy Spirit can grant someone. You or I cannot know whether any given person has in fact received such a grace. So it's unreasonable for the state to demand that people act on it. That's why it's wrong to compel people, even baptized ones, to repeat a particular creed or attend our church's services. We cannot know whether they have been given the grace from God to believe in those things. So it's tyrannical to force them.⁷⁵

Instead of dreaming of a state that enforces my Faith on those to whom God hasn't granted it, I stand with pro-life legal hero of many decades Hadley Arkes, who in a book called for "mere natural law" as the proper basis for the coercive laws enforced by the state. This chapter explains how we discern what's contained in that law — and how we argue for it to fellow citizens who might not share all (or any) of our Faith.

Over and over again throughout our history, Americans have been moved to test themselves against abstract ideals, sometimes at

⁷⁵ John Zmirak, "Why Integralism Is False: A Primer for Puzzled Catholics and Friendly Onlookers," *The Stream*, November 9, 2021, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://stream.org/why-integralism-is-false/>.

the expense of their short-term self-interest. The American Revolution was driven not so much by outrage at trivial taxes on stamps or sacks of tea as by the sense that King George and his Parliament had no moral right to tax the Colonies without allowing them representation. This violated the traditional rights of Englishmen, but as Thomas Jefferson carefully explained in the Declaration of Independence, it also flouted the laws of “nature’s God.” He built his rationale for the bloody, risky venture of American independence on the groundwork of “unalienable rights” endowed by our “Creator.” It was to defend these rights that the signers of the Declaration pledged “our Lives, our Fortune, and our sacred Honor.”

In other words, the very foundation of the United States rested on a proposition about reality: the existence of an objective, transcendent moral order. By making the rights of the person the cornerstone of the national edifice, Jefferson won sympathy from like-minded people across the world, who might otherwise not have cared about a tax dispute among Anglophones. He also planted a time bomb, an intellectual premise that would be used again and again to challenge unjust institutions — including slavery, an institution that made Jefferson’s life of leisure possible. Although it would have been impossible to unite the colonies and simultaneously abolish slavery, by making “unalienable rights” the core American principle, Jefferson wrote slavery’s epitaph in advance.

The content of “nature’s laws” has been an endless source of argument in American politics. The phrase itself was intentionally ambiguous, in the same sense that Jefferson’s chief intellectual influence, John Locke, had been equivocal in his writings on natural law. The Lockean-Jeffersonian account of natural law is one that philosophers would call “thin,” containing little or no normative substance about what man is or how he ought to live if he hopes to thrive. Instead, the Enlightenment code merely prescribes a set of rules by which men should interact, based on rights that are not grounded in any assertions about

human nature; these rights are simply asserted as “self-evident” and “unalienable.” Such vagueness makes for effective political rhetoric, but tells us little about how to frame or interpret our laws, much less about how they relate to human flourishing — that is, to the authentic pursuit of happiness.

To make sense of Locke’s and Jefferson’s assertion of human rights — and to understand why such a bold expression of the rights of the individual could serve as effective political rhetoric in eighteenth-century America and Europe, as opposed to the Ottoman Empire or the Empire of Japan — we must look to the broader cultural and religious context: an overwhelmingly Christian West, with its elevated idea of the person, and its history of the separation of spiritual and temporal powers.

Whatever his moral authority at the height of historical Christendom, the pope never ruled over Europe as a theocrat (as the caliphs had in Islamic lands) or claimed the status of incarnate god (as the emperor of Japan would until 1945). While popes fitfully attempted to assert their superior authority over secular Christian monarchs — for instance, by deposing rulers and absolving their subjects of their duty to obey them — such efforts often failed. What is more, the pope was bound in his interactions with rulers by the universal European assent to a body of common law that was grounded in a lively tradition of natural law. That natural law was not the fruit of divine revelation, although some of it was echoed in the Bible; rather, it was the organic product of thousands of years of reflection by philosophers and statesmen (especially Aristotle and Cicero), whose arguments were drilled into the heads of prospective clergymen and bureaucrats through Scholastic disputation at centers of learning such as the universities of Paris, Oxford, and Bologna. No pope claimed the power to revoke or override the natural law, and even his divinely guaranteed authority was bounded in its exercise by the common opinion of scholars and theologians concerning that

natural law. On matters of revelation, too, the pope was constrained by Tradition and could be corrected: Pope John XXII (1244–1334) famously developed a personal heresy that asserted that human souls “sleep” at the moment of death and are only awakened again at the day of judgment. Members of the College of Cardinals, alarmed by his public discourses asserting this opinion, intervened and compelled him to silence.

In the wake of the Reformation, the West no longer had a commonly accepted highest authority that could settle disputed questions of natural law or revelation, but the sources that academics cited remained largely the same: classical philosophers and the Fathers of the Church. Along with the authority of the Church, the persuasiveness of medieval precedents and the Aristotelian tradition came under question in the Enlightenment, as political philosophers such as Hobbes and Locke followed Descartes’s example in claiming to assert only what unaided reason could convincingly prove. But the men who signed the American Declaration of Independence, and those who later wrote its Constitution, were by no means a mass of skeptical Enlightenment *philosophes* who dismissed the verdict of history and tradition, along with the Aristotelian tradition of natural law reasoning. The Deists among the founders were a small and cautious minority among an overwhelmingly orthodox Protestant body. Hence if we seek to interpret America’s founding documents according to their original intention, we must see that its concepts of “liberty” and “equality” were meant to be read in a Christian context that took for granted the traditional tenets of natural law. The meaning that we give to *liberty* and *the pursuit of happiness* must be colored by that tradition. *Liberty* in this sense is the freedom to exercise one’s natural powers as they were intended by the Creator and as reason tells us human beings ought to use them. (Hence suicide and prostitution are not activities that our liberty grants us the God-given right to practice.) Likewise, the “happiness” that we must be free to pursue

is the happiness proper to a human being — which is incompatible with chattel slavery or segregation.

The founders of America's free government firmly believed in both the dignity of the person and the existence of a timeless, rationally knowable natural law that reflected the intentions of the Creator — which most of them thought could be known even more reliably through the study of Sacred Scripture. Indeed, the Constitution's famous refusal to establish a single church in the United States was born of a recognition of America's pluralist culture, not of a Deist disdain for outmoded religious dogmas.

The overpowering legitimacy that most Americans for most of American history granted the appeal to religious sources as a way to correctly interpret the rights asserted by the nation's founding documents can be seen in the extended national argument over slavery. In the course of this decades-long debate, pamphleteers, scholars, and legislators made repeated appeals to the Bible, both in defense of slavery and in building up the powerful abolitionist movement, which found its most reliable spokesmen among the ministers of New England. So critical were churchmen to the political debate over the moral status of slaves that religious denominations, such as the Baptists, split into southern and northern denominations over this question. Classical formulations of natural law, such as Aristotle's, had made room for slavery — the cornerstone of the social order in classical Greece, which only the radical Sophists would dare to question. But the Christian notion of the person as the image of God, redeemed and elevated to sonship with God through the Incarnation of the Son of God in the form of a human person, had rendered slavery an anomaly, a pagan holdover that could be rendered repugnant to Christians through prophetic speech and action. The first great abolitionist movement, which arose in England under the leadership of William Wilberforce, was wholly the product of the Methodist movement in English churches.

As the abolitionist movement grew in strength, its leaders would use the Declaration as its chief rhetorical weapon, pointing out the stark hypocrisy of slave masters who cherished their “liberty.” Although they never won a national consensus for outlawing slavery, the abolitionists did successfully render that institution distasteful to most non-Southerners — such that Americans of other regions opposed its expansion into new western states and were outraged when the Fugitive Slave Act compelled Northern free states to act as slave catchers. The election of Abraham Lincoln was the expression of this outrage. Although he fought first to save the Union, Lincoln saw in the midst of war an opportunity: by tying the fight for union to the cause of emancipation, he made of the Civil War a crusade for America’s founding principles — which relied for their legitimacy on the existence of a transcendent moral order (the laws of “Nature’s God”).

The postwar Jim Crow laws that were enacted throughout the country (not just in the South) prevented the full recognition of the rights of nonwhite persons. It would take another century for the civil rights movement to force Americans to take a more rigorous look at the principles upon which our country rests. Many of their opponents tried to paint the civil rights protestors as anarchist or Communist agitators — citing the cynical use by the American Communist Party of real racial grievances to recruit new party members. But because our very existence as a nation was only justified by this set of transcendent moral laws, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was able to make the case that equal rights for all was a patriotic principle. Despite the bitter resistance that claimed King’s life, America was able to enact full, legal equality for all without tearing itself apart.

Martin Luther King, Jr., did not rely on Marxist class analysis or ethnic self-assertion when he called for civil rights from Birmingham Jail, but cited the great Western and Christian tradition:

A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law.⁷⁶

Because he cited the core principles of our country and our culture, King's arguments prevailed.

America is not the first or only country to recognize a transcendent moral order. In fact, the realization that positive laws must accord with (or bow to) the laws of Heaven goes all the way back to the roots of Western culture — to Classical Greece. Sophocles put this awareness of a transcendent law in the mouth of Antigone, who sacrifices her life to disobey King Creon's unjust edict. In the play, her brother, Polynices, committed treason by attacking the city of Thebes and died in battle. Creon decides to impose on Polynices the ultimate punishment — to deny his soul rest in the underworld by refusing him proper burial. His body is left to the dogs and crows, and the death penalty is promised for anyone who dares to inter him. Antigone confronts the king, whose power is theoretically absolute, and insists that his laws are subject to an extralegal arbiter, the laws of the gods. Interestingly, Antigone cites not so much the “higher” law of the Olympian gods as the “lower” or primordial law of the gods of the underworld. This literary device points out the fact that a transcendent moral order is not only the proper criterion by which earthly laws can be judged; it is also the ground from which they grew. She tells Creon that she defied his decree because it

⁷⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963, accessed via African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, on December 29, 2023.

was not a law decreed by Zeus, nor by Zeus' daughter, Justice, who rules with the gods of the Underworld. Nor do I believe that your decrees have the power to override those unwritten and immutable laws decreed by the gods.

These are laws which were decreed neither yesterday nor today but from a time when no man saw their birth; they are eternal! How could I be afraid to disobey laws decreed by any man when I know that I'd have to answer to the gods below if I had disobeyed the laws written by the gods, after I died?⁷⁷

Creon's claim to flout the eternal law and dishonor the dead rests on his embrace of what we might (anachronistically) call legal positivism, a philosophy of jurisprudence that treats only official, codified laws as of any authority, regardless of their adherence to moral principles. Previously in the play, the Chorus has laid out this theory, telling Creon, "You have the right, son of Menoeceus to do as you please and to decree what laws you want, both for the dead, as well as for the living." In an authoritarian context, this argument rings hollow to us today, but keep in mind that we, too, have a principle of legitimacy: democratic assent. In a modern setting, a government that sought to override the precepts of the moral law would cite not the will of the monarch but of the majority, claiming that "the American public demands" and that "only extremists and fundamentalists oppose" a proposed course of action. Creon also argues from expediency, from the necessity for the safety of the city, to set an appalling example of a traitor's ultimate fate. In other words, Creon defends his actions in terms that would recur throughout history whenever legal regimes attempted to override the fundamental precepts of the timeless moral order.

⁷⁷ Sophocles, *Antigone*, act 1, accessed via Poetry in Translation on December 29, 2023, <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Antigone.php>.

Antigone does not enter the dispute on Creon's terms. She asserts that he simply lacks the jurisdiction to make decisions that affect a man's eternal destiny. Such choices are suprapolitical — and immune to even the absolute power of the man who ruled an ancient polis. The dead have an absolute right to burial, which no human ruler can revoke.

Returning to our history, the debate over slavery in America hinged, in the end, on whether the positive law of the Constitution (which explicitly allowed for the institution of slavery) would be allowed to stand, or whether that law was intrinsically unjust according to the higher standard of the natural law — in which case that law was null and void, should be repealed, and in the meantime could be disobeyed. This conflict was decided in favor of positive law by the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott decision; it took an appallingly bloody civil war to overturn that verdict.

Similar debates occurred among Americans during the civil rights movement, when blacks who tried to use segregated facilities were denounced as “lawbreakers,” and they have arisen again thanks to the Supreme Court's 1973 judicial fiat, *Roe v. Wade* — a ruling that stated that the “privacy” rights granted by the positive law of the Constitution trumped the intrinsic right to life of an unborn child, which the law does not recognize as a person.

Perhaps the most dramatic confrontation of positive law and natural law, of the Creon tradition of jurisprudence and the Antigone tradition, arose in the wake of the Second World War, when the victorious Allies sought to mete out justice to the leaders of the defeated, disgraced Third Reich. Throughout the course of the war, the Western Allies had repeatedly denounced Axis atrocities against civilians and promised that after their defeat the responsible parties in the governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan would face a court of justice. At first, President Roosevelt had announced the intention of trying Nazi generals and bureaucrats according to the legal systems

of the occupied countries in which their crimes had been committed, but this quickly showed itself to be impractical; the same SS commander might have executed hostages, deported Jews, and starved civilians in Belgium, Poland, and Greece. Trying him successively in each of these countries was not a realistic option. The Soviets preferred to try the German war criminals they captured in their own courts, on the model of the “show trials” that had marked Stalin’s Terror. The Allies knew that such political trials would be transparently biased and hold no moral legitimacy in the eyes of the world—and that the spectacle of Stalin’s criminals putting Hitler’s criminals on trial might even evoke some sympathy for the devils. Concerned to avoid such a spectacle, some British leaders favored summary justice—execution upon apprehension of Nazi leaders and commanders. The Americans, however, thought that this form of victor’s justice would bring with it the same moral hazards as the approach the Russians proposed.

So Roosevelt (and after him, Truman) insisted on international tribunals that would be conducted with every concern for fairness and the rights of the accused, which would record for the eyes of history the precise details of the crimes the Axis leaders had committed and shame the members of the respective aggressor nations who had supported their governments’ policies. A number of obstacles presented themselves to the prosecution of war criminals, such as the differences between Anglo-American and Continental legal systems and standards of evidence and the politicized nature of Soviet trial proceedings and jurisprudence. But the most important problem was philosophical: How could the Allies prosecute individual officers and officials for acting on behalf of a government—“following orders”—and doing things that had not been illegal in their own country at the time, such as organizing a genocide or conspiring to fight an aggressive war? For a comparative case, imagine that the U.S. government after 1865 had prosecuted former slaveholders or that a

future U.S. government tried to prosecute doctors for performing abortions after 1973. The prohibition of “ex post facto” prosecution is in fact a core principle of English common law — the system that largely prevailed at Nuremberg, at the insistence of the United States.

There was only one logical solution to this conundrum: to assert that the war criminals had in fact broken laws that preexist and transcend the positive laws of any regime, such as Nazi Germany or fascist Italy, laws that any rational human being should be able to perceive and know are binding. The Allies were forced, de facto, to acknowledge a principle that had largely dropped out of Western jurisprudence: the existence of a transcendent moral order. However, the intellectual taboo against explicitly asserting such an order was powerful. The modern philosophical skepticism about there being a rational order that pervades the universe, much less one that aptly describes human nature and hence human rights and duties, had permeated the legal field as thoroughly as any other — not just in Germany, but throughout most of the West. (It was mostly in Catholic universities and in faculties of international law that the tradition of natural law was passed along to students.) The Allies rightly condemned the Axis officials for “crimes against humanity,” but lacked an explicit account of what humanity is and what humans deserve. The newly created United Nations would offer such an account in the 1946 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that showed significant natural law influence, thanks to the insistence of drafters such as France’s René Cassin and Lebanon’s Charles Malik.

But even the outrage of the victorious Allies, after six years of grinding conflict that had claimed more than forty million lives, was not sufficient to revive in legal circles the concept of natural law, and relativist objections to even the concept of “supra-positive” law would dog prosecutions of war criminals for years. In the Israeli trial of Holocaust architect Adolf Eichmann, for instance, the defense attorneys would assert:

A solid awareness of values, which alone could make such supra-positive ideas binding and at the same time enforceable in law, does not exist at present — and not only in the national but also in the international sphere. Thus, for instance, Jescheck has raised doubts “whether supreme legally protected interests of the community of international law, recognized by the whole of mankind as absolute values, do exist at all.” Schwarzenberger has confirmed these doubts in his book *Power Politics*. At the outset, he emphasizes the religious origin of most ethical systems which, by a process of secularization, have developed, later on, a more or less greater degree of “autonomy” from their religious origin. Schwarzenberger then asks the following question:

“Does not this very origin of moral rules establish a presumption against the existence of an universal code of international morality? Do not necessarily Western, Soviet and Far Eastern statesmen mean very different things when they speak of justice, equity, honour or friendship between States?”

Sadly, there is some validity to this ploy on the part of a mass executioner’s defense attorneys. The West had spent the better part of the Enlightenment dismantling the metaphysical underpinnings of a transcendent moral order, even as ethically minded secular philosophers such as Immanuel Kant struggled manfully to manufacture a code of universal morality that could stand atop the void created when God was banished and ultimate reality was deemed beyond the powers of man to know with certainty. By the nineteenth century, few jurists or philosophers of law in Europe were inclined to rule much differently from the U.S. Supreme Court’s chief justice Roger B. Taney, whose decision in *Dred Scott* had ignored the transcendent truth of the humanity of slaves, to affirm their positive legal status as no more than chattel. The collapse of a common sense of international morality was

surely a contributing factor to the brutality with which both the First and Second World Wars were waged — and indeed, to the surges of fanatical nationalism that made such wars themselves inevitable.

The melancholy story of how the West forgot its reasons for deeming wrong aggressive war, genocide, and the murder of civilians has been chronicled in exacting scholarly detail. But the best account of it does not date from after the Second World War and the Nuremberg Trials. In fact, it was published in 1936, by an ordinary German lawyer named Heinrich Rommen, who had watched with horror for three years as erudite jurists, philosophers of law, and prominent attorneys disgraced themselves with their willingness to accommodate the Nazi seizure of power and the perversion of the centuries-old system of German justice to suit the arbitrary dictates of a totalitarian ideology. Rommen served as a prophet at the risk of his career and even his freedom, in the full knowledge that opponents of Nazi ideology were already languishing in concentration camps such as Dachau. His signature work, *The Natural Law: A Study in Legal and Social History and Philosophy*, managed to escape prior censorship, but it ended Rommen's legal career, forcing him to flee Nazi Germany in 1938. He would later teach legal theory at prominent American universities, including Georgetown. In that book, Rommen traces the historical duel between the Creon and the Antigone traditions, from ancient Greece up through Weimar Germany — showing in painful detail how the abandonment of natural law in favor of legal positivism tends to serve the interests of tyrannical regimes and laying out with considerable philosophical sophistication the intellectual reasons why one theory or another came to dominate.

In essence, Rommen writes, the difference between positivism and natural law comes down to a theory of origins: What is the first principle in nature and the universe? Is it power or is it reason? He shows how Christian nominalists, orthodox Muslims, and materialists

such as Hobbes and his successors agree in embracing power — either the arbitrary will of an inscrutable God whose decisions are absolute or the blind forces of nature, which include the irrational passions of instinct-driven human mammals. Plato, Aristotle, the Roman Stoics, the Catholic Scholastics, and those Protestants who carried on the natural law tradition by contrast saw divine reason as the guiding force of the universe, holding that God binds Himself and His own decisions by the self-consistent rules of the reason that inheres in His very being. Likewise, humans can see, through their own God-given reason — which is impaired but not obliterated by sin — the structure, purpose, and proper shape of human life. What we learn from reflecting on man's own nature, from what he needs to fulfill it and live it integrally, provides the meat of the natural law, which statesmen are bound to embody in the positive laws they promulgate and which must guide our own daily decisions. Laws that imperfectly embody the natural law ought generally to be obeyed, in the interest of maintaining the great good of public order; but laws (such as the Nazi race laws, in Rommen's time) that flagrantly contravene the basic principles of human dignity ought to be resisted as vigorously as prudence permits. They are the unjust laws that Aquinas (and later, Martin Luther King) would call "no law at all."

Because of his almost reckless courage in denouncing the lawless laws of the Nazi dictatorship while living at its mercy, Rommen is the man we hold up for emulation as the icon of the transcendent moral order. Here is his precise summary of the high point of natural law thinking in the writing of St. Thomas Aquinas, which Rommen cited in the face of Nazi irrationalism, perverted Romanticism, and blind worship of power:

The essences of things, which are exemplifications of the ideas conceived by the divine intellect, constitute at the same time the end or goal of the things themselves. The

perfection or fulfillment of the things is their essence: formal cause and end are one (*causa finalis* is ultimately identical with *causa formalis*). Accordingly in the essential nature of the created world, as it came forth in conformity with the will of the Creator, are imbedded also the norms of its being. In the essential nature is likewise founded essential oughtness, the eternal law, which is God's wisdom so far as it directs and governs the world as first cause of all acts of rational creatures and of all movements of irrational beings. The eternal law, then, is the governance of the world through God's will in accordance with His wisdom. This law is thus the order of this world. Creatures fulfill this law in conformity with their nature as it has been fashioned by God: from the lifeless and inorganic realm of creation, through the living but dumb creatures, to the rational and free beings....

Oughtness, not blind compulsion and necessity, characterizes the way man obeys the law. Hence for man, as a free rational being, the eternal law becomes the natural moral law. Man must (i.e., ought to) thus both will and achieve the perfecting or fulfillment of the potentialities of his being which God has put into his nature, as he perceives them in virtue of his reason and becomes conscious of them.⁷⁸

Had Germans in 1936 awakened their consciences and rejected the seductive excuses of legal positivism and metaphysical skepticism, few of them could have continued to cooperate in the preparation of aggressive war, mass genocide, or any of the other crimes that Hitler had openly promised to commit in his political manifestos and fervid speeches. There was still time to resist, and there were powerful elements in the

⁷⁸ Heinrich Rommen, *The Natural Law: A Study in Legal and Social History and Philosophy*, chapter 2, "The Natural Law in the Age of Scholasticism" (Liberty Fund, 1936), <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/hittinger-the-natural-law-a-study-in-legal-and-social-history-and-philosophy>.

German army who were prepared to launch a coup against Hitler's regime, provided that they saw sufficient public support for such a move. The seamless cooperation of Germany's famous bureaucracy, its punctilious judges and lawyers, and the faculty of its universities was essential to maintaining and solidifying the Nazi regime.

Likewise in our time, crimes against the human person are only made respectable and raised to legality with the aid of highly educated collaborators — from the lawyers who work pro bono for Planned Parenthood, to the bioethicists who make excuses for euthanasia, to the political figures who justify torture and preemptive war. If we have any hope of preventing in the twenty-first century a higher-tech repetition of the crimes and outrages that bloodied the twentieth, we must regain a lively sense that our actions have intrinsic moral value — a positive or negative one that transcends the words of the Constitution, the letter of federal law, the shifting winds of elite and mass opinion, and even the urgent demands of so-called "necessity." We must be willing to stand with Antigone — and even be prepared in extreme cases to die alongside her rather than to join, assist, applaud, or merely enable her killers.





CHAPTER 8

A HUMANE ECONOMY

One that embraces freedom in a context of social responsibility

THE FALL OF THE Soviet Union in 1991 was supposed to have settled the question: socialism doesn't work, and the free market does. But the three decades since then have unsettled that consensus. The "liberalization" in Russia turned into a mad grab by oligarchs and ended with an aggressive kleptocracy ruled by a dictator and the largest land war in Europe since World War II. In China, economic reform did not (as our elites all promised) yield a freer political system. Instead, a Chinese form of National Socialism emerged, which, like the German version, relied on corrupt state-business collusion, massive surveillance, and slave labor on an unspeakably vast scale. Yet the alliance of these unfree empires is even now growing in power and influence around the world, while the United States sees its own ruling class fall back in love with Marxism — albeit in the blackface of critical race theory.

Meanwhile, many conservatives are taking from this geopolitical rivalry the lesson that the state ought to manage the economy after all — albeit in service not of a spurious equality or earthly utopia, but rather in service of the common good. But given that we as a nation cannot agree on whether or not women exist, it seems unlikely that any government-backed notion of a common good would really exist either. More likely it would produce crony privileges for the

politically well-connected (the Biden family, anyone?) and trample over basic liberties we've taken for granted, while impoverishing the many for the enrichment of the few.

It's crucial that those of us who cling to the core values of Christendom understand the proper moral basis for defending economic freedom, while championing human dignity and the genuine good of common folk like us. That's the case I lay out here.

Private property is the natural and necessary implication of the dignity of the human person, since wealth is the outcome of human labor intelligently mixed with the bounty of nature. This definition of wealth seems like plain common sense to most modern people. It was most memorably asserted by the political philosopher John Locke, and it was subsequently endorsed by Pope Leo XIII, giving it the imprimatur of both the moderate Enlightenment and of the Catholic Church. But this description of wealth is in fact the fruit of thousands of years of reflection and debate. In the ancient world, philosophers and theologians alike conceived of wealth quite differently, seeing the fruits of the earth and natural resources largely as a fixed supply of the necessities of life, which man essentially gathers without increasing or improving it.

So, the task of sages and saints was to convince us to distribute this God-given, finite amount of wealth wisely and fairly, taking account of the needs of the state and the wants of the poor. In the zero-sum game that ancient thinkers believed that mankind is doomed to play, one man's accumulation could only come at his neighbor's expense. And indeed, the ancient economy was largely based on agricultural production, much of it done by slaves. The value added by tradesmen and bankers — who performed the vital work of distributing goods and capital from places where they are not needed to sites where they can be used more productively — was poorly understood and often dismissed, with merchants and moneylenders condemned as economic parasites. From Aristotle to St. John

Chrysostom, you will look in vain for influential thinkers who recognized how economic exchanges could yield mutual benefits and increase the general store of wealth, by allocating it more efficiently and serving human needs more effectively.

Late medieval Scholastics, especially a group of Dominican friars in Spain, would advance the understanding of wealth by studying empirically the nature of economic exchanges and the mutual benefits they conferred on both parties in any honest trade. These friars — themselves sworn to poverty — were encouraged in this endeavor by the explosion of wealth that marked the High Middle Ages, which was driven by both technological improvements in agriculture (such as more effective plows and crop rotation) and the explosion of trade with the Middle East in the wake of the Crusades.

The medieval guilds, composed of producers and tradesmen who had organized along religious lines under patron saints, formed interest groups that spoke up for the moral legitimacy of profit-seeking ventures and the social usefulness of commerce — even as they used their guild privileges to choke off competition. The economic power of urban elites began to threaten the dominance of aristocrats, allowing burghers to purchase exemptions from strangling feudal laws and cities to establish themselves as sanctuaries from serfdom, where common people could succeed or fail based on their merits, rather than staying fixed in the caste where they had been born.

The expansion of economic liberty helped to create a base of support for political freedom, and demands grew for representation of citizens in government, for instance in institutions such as the English House of Commons. This thrust toward representative government would clash with the efforts of princes to subjugate nobles and commons alike in the pursuit of “absolute” monarchy. Conflicts such as the English Civil War and the “Glorious Revolution,” and the successive Swiss wars of independence against absolutist France and

Austria, ensured the survival of the principle of representative government and the expansion of the kind of economic and political freedom that American civic leaders would rally to defend in 1776.

The implications of private property are not primarily political or even economic but moral. When we accept this principle, we see that the gap between a patch of fertile dirt and a loaf of bread is bridged only through the work of human beings, each of whom is a unique and irreplaceable creation. Each person in the chain of production — from the farmer who plants the seeds to the investors in John Deere Worldwide whose factories made the tractor — has the right to dispose of his own labor and wealth and to be its primary beneficiary. Regardless of his vaccine status, every man-hour of work that a person performs, whose fruits are taken away from him by force, amounts to forced labor.

So, when we seize the wealth of one person to spend it on someone else, we ought to admit to ourselves what we are doing: conscripting people to work against their will, for someone else's benefit. A just society will try to avoid conscripting people's labor, or seizing part of their wealth, first of all out of deference to their human dignity and freedom of action. Taxes that take part of one person's wealth — that conscript his labor — will only be imposed when their use is demanded by one of the core principles essential to human flourishing, such as the sanctity of life or the transcendent moral order. The wealth of citizens should be seen not as a common pool to be dipped into at the discretion of their rulers, but as an extension of their liberty, which should not be trespassed lightly.

The preferences people express through supply and demand, which reach producers through the exquisite supply communications network we call the price system, are an expression of human dignity. People have the right to make imprudent decisions, to make mistakes, and using the government's coercive power to corral people into making "healthier" choices entails treating citizens not as responsible adult human persons, but as loveable, wayward pets.

There are certain types of transactions (for instance, sale of nuclear weapons) that the state can and should refuse to permit and some contracts (such as the sale of human embryos) the community can simply refuse to enforce. Of course, we should impose pollution and safety regulations that protect innocent third parties from toxic side-effects, which often are not accounted for in the prices of goods or services. But our interventions will be fewer, more prudent, and more reluctant if we remember that the price system and the market are, at heart, the source of economic order, an exquisitely subtle organic system that we no more wish to distort and destroy than we do the human reproductive system.

It is possible to over-emphasize private property rights, to absolutize them in a way that indeed distorts their crucial role in the function of a free and fair society. Nineteenth-century laissez-faire economists were sometimes guilty of neglecting the moral and social preconditions that make private property a worthy concept in the first place. Rather than deal with the usual exceptions offered to the sanctity of private property — such as Thomas Aquinas’s observation that a starving man may justly steal a loaf of bread — we think it is more useful to consider property as simply an outgrowth of liberty. Where solidarity, or human dignity, or the transcendent moral order would place limits on the individual’s claim to “self-ownership,” it may also lay claim to some control over his use of property. Insofar as a person has only been able to accumulate wealth because of the efforts of others, he owes them or their society some share in the wealth that he has won. Hence store owners who benefit from functioning roads and police protection must contribute through their taxes to the support of such government services. Businesses whose products undermine true human dignity can be subject to restrictions, and those that violate the transcendent moral law may be prohibited altogether — although we must carefully weigh the evil side-effects of increasing government power.

The starting point is and must remain liberty, and every proposal that would limit the liberty or impinge on the property of a person should be subject to the strictest scrutiny — given the fact of human dignity and the ugly habit majorities have of coercing and bullying minorities, particularly when the latter enjoy greater wealth. Remembering the humiliating restrictions, repeated confiscations, and ultimate persecutions that harried Jews in Christian Europe, Armenians in Turkey, and Chinese through much of Asia, we should be wary indeed of economic measures that unduly target the prosperous.

If we use the same scale of moral indebtedness that sets the limits on self-ownership (see chapter 10) to judge the limits of private property, the economic structures that we promote will be much more natural, just, and unintrusive than those prescribed by modern ideologies. Yes, our property is our own because our labor is our own. But to whom do we rightly owe some part of our labor? First of all, to those who made that labor possible — our parents, and the local communities that have provided a safe infrastructure where we may live. We also owe some of our labor to those whom we have promised support, such as our spouses. We are also obliged to “pay forward” to future generations — especially to our own children — the love and care we received from our own parents. This chain of moral obligation extends beyond what the law can make explicit and enforce; indeed, the law is a clunky and blunt instrument that we should use only when people utterly fail to meet the most essential moral obligations — for instance, when “deadbeat dads” neglect their minor children. Likewise, the moral duty imposed by solidarity demands that we provide some safety net for those in our community who cannot care for themselves. The best means for meeting those needs (see chapter 9) are usually the voluntary efforts of private charities, and subsidiarity calls on us to build up a robust

network of such initiatives, rather than turn to the state to use coercion to channel wealth where it is needed.

A political and economic system that starts with the freedom of the human person and allows him to meet his natural obligations willingly — only employing coercion when real injustices cannot be resolved in any other way — deserves a better name than *capitalism*, a term that Karl Marx invented to describe a system that he believed privileged property over people. My writing partner John Zmirak and I have proposed a term coined by the great free-market economist and social philosopher Wilhelm Röpke: a humane economy. The word *humane* conveys what we mean, both in its literal meaning and in the connotations of kindness that it carries: man's dignity demands an economic system that provides for his needs, enables his efforts, and takes account of both his self-centered drives and his fundamentally social nature. It is in the context of the family that man first lives in society, and the family is the crucible where basic selfishness is refined into something nobler: a concern for the welfare of other human beings, first of all those with whom one has shared upbringing and blood, and then for those people we choose to marry, and then those whom we bring into this world through procreation.

The family is the school of unselfishness, or rather of a higher selfishness that stretches and extends the circle of empathy, expanding one's love and work to a circle of other people. The habit of altruism can then be applied to neighbors and fellow citizens and finally to every member of the worldwide human family. Our concern for others will be diminished, of course, in proportion as we move further out from the circles where we really interact with people, but the principle of solidarity teaches us that it should never fall to zero. To treat even distant foreigners as less than fully human is to invite once again all the murderous hatreds and atrocities that marked the twentieth century.

The way for modern totalitarianism and genocide was paved in the nineteenth century, when people in the very same nation, often of the same race, treated members of lower social classes as less than human. The historical reality of capitalism was marked by profound moral blots, moments when business owners took unfair advantage of desperate workers, when laws protecting the basic human dignity of laborers were not in place, and employers used the power of the state to coerce their workers or close out free competition. American slavery, for all the feudal and paternalistic pretensions of plantation owners, was a firmly capitalist institution, providing cheap, reliable labor to large-scale farmers who engaged in the speculative enterprise of international commodity production. We see a similar model in China today, with Uyghur Muslims toiling away in forced labor camps producing textiles and electronics for world consumption. While those unfortunate souls face organ harvesting and other tortures, Asian immigrants in America would be marched at gunpoint from place to place as “coolie” gangs to do the dirtiest, most dangerous jobs that slaveowners would not risk their human “property” doing. Irish laborers who had come to escape the Potato Famine were thrown into deadly working conditions, and child labor helped to keep down adult workers’ wages — and left the uneducated young people suited for no other kind of work outside the factories.

The necessary reforms that marked the late nineteenth and early twentieth century probably saved the market economy from the excesses of capitalism, by enacting legal restrictions and guarantees that recognized the true humanity of workers and prevented employers from treating them interchangeably with machines. Had such reforms not been passed, it is likely that workers’ revolutions would indeed have swept the West and subjected Europe and America alike to an economic system that was in the long run even less compatible with human freedom and dignity: socialism. That system pretends that political systems and cultural reconditioning can remake man

himself, purging him of the inborn urge to first look out for himself and the people he loves and forcing on him altruistic self-sacrifice on behalf of a class or race.

In fact, we naturally empty and even deny ourselves for the sake of our families and are proportionately willing to make lesser sacrifices for others, our willingness generally diminishing the further people are away from what rightly remains our vital center — our selves. Each of us is first and foremost the steward of his own being, with the right and the duty to preserve himself and the unique human dignity with which he was born. In this context, where we speak of legitimate self-interest (psychologists call it “healthy narcissism”), we may echo Rabbi Hillel’s famous question: “If I am not for myself, who will be?” However, the self that we rightly champion is not the angry monad imagined by Ayn Rand, but the person whose life and loves are shaped by a profound exchange of love and service in human families and other communities. We should never deny those real relationships in the name of a misguided quest for total autonomy, nor pervert and replace them with a coerced community imposed on pain of imprisonment.

One of the classic texts written in defense of political and economic freedom is Frederic Bastiat’s *The Law*. Probably the best known essay by Bastiat is “What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen,” where he points out what economists call the “broken window” fallacy. A dry and gracious stylist, Bastiat recounts this concept in what sounds like one of Aesop’s fables, but it boils down to this: certain economists seem to think it a good idea to run around breaking windows in order to create jobs for glassmakers. Such thinkers fixate on what is seen — the newly employed glassmaker — and completely ignore what is not seen: the other, more prudent uses of the money that was wasted fixing the window. Once you have smashed the window, you can see with your own two eyes the friendly glassmaker who is happy to earn some money

fixing the thing; what you will never see is the person who might have been hired to plant the garden if the window hadn't been broken, or the roses that never grew there.

Bastiat's logic here is unassailable and applies throughout the economy. Critics of value-neutral economics have noted that every divorce increases the Gross Domestic Product, by creating jobs for attorneys and daycare center workers. Likewise, cases of lung cancer create new jobs for doctors, nurses, and hospice workers. The term in introductory economy classes for the wasted window-fixing money is "opportunity cost," since the broken window costs the homeowner other opportunities for spending the money more usefully. But more important is the key distinction between what is seen and what is not seen, especially when we move from questions of productivity to those of justice.

Kind-hearted people, in reacting to political and economic issues, have the bad habit of fixating on what is seen and ignoring what is not seen. They do so most commonly in conflicts between employees and employers, or members of designated "victim" groups and non-members who dispute their claims. We can see the bedraggled, outraged schoolteacher picketing the statehouse and hear his concrete, specific claims of why he needs more money. We can feel his pain. We do not typically see the millions of taxpayers who share the cost of employing these teachers and literally cannot imagine what else they might have done with the money that the government did not confiscate.

The case gets even more poignant when what is seen is a person who is palpably poor, demonstrating outside the statehouse asking for benefits. It is all too easy (and common nowadays) to airily dismiss the people who are not seen — the overtaxed working-class people who cannot afford parochial school, or SAT prep classes, or other worthy uses of their own money for which they have worked. The same thing applies to policy issues such as affirmative action: we see the hopeful

face of the black or Latino kid who got an extra boost into a state university, but we do not see the lower-income white kid who was turned away to give him a place. The language typically used by social justice advocates to champion what is seen includes stock phrases like “a concrete, living, needy image of God,” while they dismiss the interests of the person who remains unseen as “mere abstractions.”

In such cases we are no longer considering simple productivity, pointing out that smashing windows to make new jobs is wasteful. Especially when we are discussing the government using coercion to confiscate someone’s wealth and transfer it to somebody else, we are talking instead of justice. Is it just to force this taxpayer over here to fund the benefits of that tax-taker over there? Is it fair (or wise, or free) to construct a value-neutral bureaucracy, managed by a distant federal government over which each one of us has only the tiniest influence, and allow it to confiscate nearly half of everyone’s paycheck, to use as its hired managers see fit? Subsidiarity and solidarity dictate that in certain matters only the government, and in a few cases only the federal government, can remedy grave injustices or prevent the commission of new ones. But is that really true of almost half of life?

When Christians speak of a “preferential option” for the poor, do they really mean that in every case where a person wants something funded by someone else who has more money, the former should get it? Is the right of private property, the freedom to harness the fruits of your labors and spend them as you think wise — including on charitable giving that you freely choose — so faint and tenuous that any claim at all by someone poorer must always prevail?

In the name of a pseudo-Christian paternalism, we would have in fact embraced the suffocating, managerial state that Pope John Paul II warned against in *Centesimus Annus*. Worse yet, since the modern state is secular, by giving it half our wealth (and, hence, half our work), we have surrendered vast arenas of life to value-neutral, utilitarian managers. In overtaxed New York City, the Catholic

schools are closing because parents cannot afford their tuition, while thousands of dangerous, less effective public schools are lavished with funds. In how many other areas of life are our individual choices taken away from us and handed over to strangers with alien values, who use the coercive power of government to redirect our money as they see fit?

But this habit of choosing the seen over the unseen has even darker implications; it is, in fact, at the heart of the “pro-choice” mentality. Those who are addicted to choosing the seen over the unseen look at the issue of abortion with the same unthinking concreteness of the window-smashing economist. They hear the distress of women with unintended pregnancies; they see their distressed condition and can picture themselves in their place and empathize with their suffering. What they don’t see, can’t hear, and will not imagine are the merely “abstract” rights of the preborn child who waits in the darkness. And so, in the name of compassion, they side with what they think are the best interests of the person whom they can see.

A richly literary understanding of life makes a good starting point for understanding economics, which amounts to one important way of understanding human actions and decisions. But the economy itself is radically unlike a poem, especially a lyric poem. The tightly controlled language, finely honed emotion, and disciplined progress of thoughts that we associate with lyrics by Keats or Milton are much more like the economic life inside a well-run monastery or convent — where everyone present has made a conscious decision to renounce his private pursuits and embrace the “evangelical counsels” of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Here, and only here, property is organized “to each according to his needs, from each according to his ability.” This arrangement works and is morally good because, and only because, it is voluntary. Each person has renounced the primary biological project of reproduction and willingly surrendered the fruits of his labor to serve a common good, as

determined by a superior whom he obeys (excepting sin) as the voice of God. This calling is sacred and comparatively rare.

Even the Catholic Church does not want the vast majority of human beings to enter monastic life; for those who are not called to this radical inversion of natural human instincts, such a life would be a kind of Hell. To force people into living the evangelical counsels is no more virtuous than forcing a young woman into marriage. Just so, political attempts to organize society as if it were a monastery cannot but end in brutal dictatorships, of varying levels of evil from Venezuela to North Korea. Forcibly taking from people the property, fertility, and liberty that monks and nuns willingly give up ends in a diabolical parody of the good.

So, if economic life is not the tightly organized, centrally directed movement we look for in a finely crafted poem, what is it really like? The closest literary metaphor is a staged production of Shakespeare. For one thing, Shakespeare's plays are much more wild and wooly than a (good) short lyric poem. His characters are so richly imagined that they seem to take on lives of their own, making each production of his plays much more a unique event than a different actor's recitation of "Ode to a Nightingale."

But the comparison carries further than that. Each actor has his own voice and unique humanity, and however tightly a director might try to control the various readings, the outcome will escape and exceed his intent. People flub their lines, trip on scenery, and have to make quick recoveries. Even the audience's reaction can influence how the actors perform their parts. Economic life is not at heart poetic but dramatic — and it functions without the guiding hand of an author. All its parts are improvised and all the actors are self-taught volunteers, yet somehow the play seems to work, and its outcome is infinitely richer than a dramatic monologue performed by a single, all-powerful player.

Not every destructive economic distortion can be blamed on politics or the government. A healthy humane economy depends on healthy humans, whose level of character and civic virtue determines whether or not the complex, sensitive mechanism that is a free economy can actually function — or whether it will collapse into poverty, tyranny, and war. Economic reality is not the DNA that forms the social organism, dictating which poems will be written and which constitutions amended. Marx’s vulgar materialism, predicated on an a priori rejection of God, refuted itself over seven blood-soaked decades from Königsberg to Cambodia, as the world relearned this truth: it is culture that drives politics — and the dance between the two that produces the kind of economy that emerges from a country. Leave aside “black swan” events like the Potato Famine or the Black Death, and you can trace a people’s economic fortunes to the social values that motivate them and the institutions those values have built. Of course, there is a constant feedback loop among these human realities, since economy, politics, and culture shape, form, and sometimes distort each other. As Peter Viereck documents in *Metapolitics*, ninety years of increasingly vehement and irrational romantic nationalism in Germany prepared the way for the First World War. Defeat in that war brought with it crippling reparations, which the desperate Weimar Republic attempted to deal with through hyperinflation. That economic tactic had a profoundly destructive impact on German society, as Sebastian Haffner’s memoir of that period, *Defying Hitler*, recounts. Inflation that could make a morning’s wages almost worthless by dinner time punished the thrifty by wiping out life savings and rewarded the worst kind of reckless gambling, both in economics and in politics. So economic collapse, brought on by a culturally driven war, prepared the way for the deepest kind of social, political, and moral corruption.

In *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, scholar Robert Reilly points to a similar, centuries-long feedback loop in the contemporary

Islamic world, suggesting that the stagnation, instability, and lack of technological infrastructure that plague so many Muslim countries can be traced to Islam's credal rejection of reason and even causality in understanding nature: According to orthodox Islam, a rock falls not because of gravity, but because God happens to will it — and it is perfectly possible that any given rock might hang in mid-air forever, should He wish it.

Accepting such a doctrine has consequences that ripple all through culture, discouraging rational analyses, long-term planning, and the willingness to compromise — and in times of crises, fomenting extremist solutions.

This is no moment for us to be bashing other cultures, however — not in the face of the persistent economic malaise that grips most of Western Europe and America, which has proven so grave and intractable that it has spawned a cottage industry among those who wish to explain where we went wrong. Some suggest that we are witnessing a general failure of the free market system. Others point to big government gone wild, printing money to fuel artificial economic growth that rests on “irrational exuberance” and reckless investments. Financial industries engaged in shuffling money from place to place have become major economic and political players, replacing invention and entrepreneurship as the source of the wealth of our top “one percent.” American manufacturing has collapsed, with industries fleeing to former third-world countries, where people are willing to hazard long hours and harsh conditions, sacrificing their present happiness (and sometimes their health) for the sake of their families' futures.

However serious each of these problems is, each is also a symptom of something deeper. A common cultural cause underlies the decline of so many Western nations. We live now for ourselves — and for pleasures in the present or the very near future. In the language of economics, we have learned to adopt a “low time preference,” a low

regard for the prospect of long-term benefits over short-term satisfaction. (The classic test of time preference is to ask someone if he would prefer one dollar now or some larger sum in the future. His time preference is measured by how high a long-term reward, if any, he will accept in return for delaying gratification.)

Our forefathers may have lapsed from time to time into foolish, self-destructive acts of hedonism, but the culture in which they lived and the faith they followed called things what they were: they knew sin as sin, and they knew the need for repentance and reparation. These people knew that we live not only for ourselves, but at the very least for the sake of our children. Italians planted olive trees that their distant descendants would someday profit from; now they have ceased even to plant the children, attaining one of the lowest birth rates now on earth. (They compete with the Spaniards and the Quebecois for that honor.) Even free-spending, big-government American Democrats such as Franklin Roosevelt built their policies on the classic assumption that the basic unit of society was not the individual but the family. As Allan Carlson documents in his classic *The American Way*, for all the flaws of the New Deal (it centralized power in Washington, wasted money, starved the private sector, was largely unconstitutional, and probably prolonged the Depression), at least its policies were driven by a deeply wholesome agenda: to let men be the breadwinners for their families, so that women could raise healthier, smarter, more productive citizens. That common-sense, instinctual principle is now considered so radically retrograde and offensive that simply stating it is enough to drive a politician out of public life.

Since the Sexual Revolution and its angry stepsister, feminism, overturned our assumptions about what sex means and what it's for, we have almost forgotten how to form families, or what they are. Divorce laws have made the contract of marriage tragically easy to escape from, even as we have tightened up bankruptcy laws and canonized student loans as sacramental covenants. Judges and voters alike have

redefined marriage in many states to include homosexual unions. Single people can adopt children, and couples can cook them up in petri dishes, discarding the “surplus” embryos or sending them up to Harvard to be cannibalized for parts. What agenda is served by all these bizarre acts of rebellion against the plain nature of things and the immemorial structure of human society? Nothing so elevated or insane as Marxist-Leninism. Nothing so cool and mathematical as capitalism. The philosophy underpinning our current crisis, which explains our Keynesian politics and addiction to credit card debt, Europe’s falling and our own flat birth rates, and our willingness to tax our children (via deficits) instead of ourselves is a simple creed known to every teenager: “We want the world and we want it now,” in the words of Dionysian rock-god Jim Morrison, who died a bloated shell of a man at age twenty-eight, leaving behind no acknowledged children, but at least twenty paternity suits filed by women he had abandoned.

Repulsed by the gray “organizational men” who toiled without credit or creativity inside massive corporations, the young (who are now middle-aged) took as their creed a vulgar hedonism, papered over for some by new left politics. Even when hippies cut their hair and got “real” jobs, the creeds that they had popularized changed our economy and politics all across the Western world. Gone was the stern frugality of the Depression generation, the optimistic fecundity of those who birthed the baby boom. In its place came a cleverly calculating Epicureanism, a breed of men who lived for pleasure but knew how to avoid overdoses and venereal disease, who relied on now-legal abortion to clean up the unintended consequences of pleasure, who looked to vacant New Age spirituality, or endless acquisition for its own sake, with endorphin rushes from risk buffered by the certainty that their banks were “too big to fail.” When the focus of life becomes not pursuing the Good, or even transmitting life so that someone else has the chance to, and descends instead to the accumulation of diverse, amusing experiences, man as an organism

ceases to function as he was built to. His machines, lazily tended, break down and fall apart. His governments, overburdened and underfunded, welsh on their debts. His countries are either depopulated or colonized by fertile foreigners. He looks around, and he shrugs. If he majored in English, he might remember Eliot's line from "The Hollow Men": "This is the way the world ends/Not with a bang, but a whimper."

If we are to restore effective government and prosperous economies throughout the West, the first step will have to be averting our gaze from the funhouse mirror into which most of us have been staring for much of our lives. We must start to think as *members of families* first, and individuals *second*. We need to see our fertility not as a toxic waste that sometimes spills, but a primary purpose of life — perpetuating the human family. Our parents made real sacrifices to put us on this earth. Are we too weak or feeble to pay it forward and replace ourselves? But there is the rub. Having children is ipso facto proof that each of us is replaceable — for here are the little ones ready to replace us. That means that we are mortal. And who wants to admit something like that?



CHAPTER 9

SUBSIDIARITY

The Duty of Governments to Defend Civil Society

WE LIVE IN DERANGED times, with elites that seem driven not by ideologies but “principalities and powers.” Global alliances of Big Tech media monopolies cooperate with the Communist Party in China, America’s Deep State, Big Pharma, and radical activists to censor our free speech. Our own Department of Justice and FBI target peaceful pro-lifers, election skeptics, and PTA moms as “domestic extremists.” As I write this, our government is prosecuting the opposition political candidate for president and threatening him with prison time for raising the same kinds of questions about election fraud that the candidate he defeated in 2016 raised about that election. Meanwhile, millions of unvetted illegal migrants — many hailing from countries rife with terrorist organizations — stream across our borders, which are controlled not by the government but by human trafficking cartels.

The only word to describe the two-tier justice system that faces American Christians today is *anarcho-tyranny*: anarchy for me, and tyranny for thee. In the face of that, it’s more important than ever to understand the proper, healthy, just relationship that ought to prevail between the state and the free institutions of civil society that are meant to counterbalance its power over us.

The historian Lord Acton is famed for reflecting that “power tends to corrupt.” This is less an observation about power itself than

it is about human nature and its vulnerability. Whatever our aspirations toward ideals, we are also goaded by instincts, biased by prejudices, and prone to self-serving rationalizations. To use an old-fashioned expression, man is fallen.

Our imperfect and egocentric nature makes it perilous for any of us to gain coercive power over our fellow men, since such power lets us indulge in selfishness, hubris, sadism, and other symptoms of the hunger to be “as gods.” Give someone the power to dominate, and these dark drives will rise and begin to corrupt the man, who might have otherwise been virtuous, until (as Acton warned) “absolute” power corrupts him “absolutely.”

Clearly, this statement alone is a little too pessimistic, and if applied too crudely might be misleading. A parent deserves the power to coerce her minor children, a general to coerce his soldiers, and a policeman to force a tipsy driver out of his car. Although such powers can be (and frequently are) abused, only a truly delusional utopian would imagine that human society can liquidate every trace of hierarchy or compulsion. It is a sad fact that many of the most destructive ideologies that emerged to mar modern life found their first motives in the urge to eliminate injustice and the abuse of power, only to become themselves more destructive than any of the old abuses. In twentieth-century politics as in nineteenth-century medicine, the cure was often worse than the disease.

Justified complaints about the coercive powers of fathers and husbands helped to generate current forms of feminism that threaten to liquidate family life altogether — and we have seen it, in fact, disappear from major sectors of Western society, with large swaths of the poor born to single mothers, dependent on distant government aid instead of husbands and fathers.

Outrage at abusive work relationships and unjust working conditions gave birth to the various forms of socialism, from the murderous Marxist-Leninism that collapsed in 1989 to the stagnant modes

of socialism that prevail now in Western Europe, which make it so hard to fire any employee that it is hazardous ever to hire one and which cocoon every citizen with guarantees and subsidies that have now become “human rights.”

The racial biases and petty tyrannies that sometimes marked local government in America have encouraged two equal and opposite errors: the radical libertarianism that seeks to dismantle the state altogether and its evil twin, the fervent centralism that would concentrate all power in the hands of federal bureaucrats charged with enforcing a uniform, utilitarian code of conduct on every community in America.

This last tendency, bureaucratic centralism, is a growing menace in America, as our federal government cheerfully contemplates the prospect of closing every Catholic institution in the country, rather than letting employers follow their consciences on what kind of health care they will offer. Reformers who see in every kind of existing inequality *prima facie* proof of injustice are willing to steamroll over religious freedom, property rights, and economic freedom in their relentless drive to ensure that every citizen receive a full menu of “basic human rights” that accrue at the moment of birth (and not, we must note, at conception) without imposing any responsibilities beyond one’s duty to pay his taxes. The state will take care of the rest, and it will see to it that there is no escape from its all-encompassing power, which invades every nook and cranny of private life and demonizes and then suppresses dissent, until the agenda of those who control the central power has imposed its ultimate goal: a total political and intellectual uniformity.

Much of the West already is subject to such regimes; Western European countries we still call “free” are devoid of private schools and colleges, bare of private charities, unfriendly to parents’ rights in education (some, such as Germany, jail homeschoolers and take away their children), and willing to punish impolitic speech with

terms in prison. It is our task as sober defenders of ordered liberty to recognize real injustice where it occurs and to offer solutions that do not cause more harm than good.

So how do we navigate among all the various destructive extremes that fail to do justice either to our unalienable individual rights or to our nature as social creatures whose very identities are formed by family and community? This issue divides political movements across the contemporary spectrum — and we do not pretend to offer a comprehensive answer. Instead, let us offer some principles of discernment, which any citizen can use in analyzing political questions as he encounters them. It is best to begin with a question:

At what point in an argument is it right for me to pull out a gun? Or call the cops, so they can pull out their guns? The answer you give to this question determines pretty much what system of government you favor, what kind of economic and social policies, and even what level of taxes and regulation. In fact, most of the disputes in politics can be boiled down to the issue of which social, moral, and economic goods ought to be defended by police force and backed up by the threat of prison. When should you call in the police and threaten your neighbor with jail time because his actions don't conform to your vision of the good? On any given issue (drug use, abortion, wage levels, pollution, discrimination, "hate speech" — fill in the blank), there are three possible judgments a person could make:

1. This is morally indifferent; the natural law (see chapter 7) doesn't teach that one course of action or another is required. You are free to act as prudence tells you.
2. There is a right course of action here, and as a matter of justice and the common good, the state must be willing to enforce that course of action and punish those who act otherwise.

3. There is a right course of action here, and a wrong one. But getting the state involved would be imprudent because it would violate other goods that are too important.

Examples of issues that fit the first category are easy to think of. Should you direct your charity toward soup kitchens or crisis pregnancy shelters? Should Billy go to graduate school or join the army? And so on. Large segments of life fall into this category, which we might label “neutral.” Obviously, no one but a totalitarian would wish to politicize decisions such as these.

Problems arise when we try to distinguish what belongs in the second category from what really belongs in the third. The great divide between illiberal, paternalistic governments (e.g., feudal, theocratic, or socialist) and free governments rests on how we routinely settle this question. Do we assume as a matter of course that the state ought to promote the good by using its coercive power to seize our property and march us at gunpoint to prison? Or do we see the use of coercive power as a necessary evil and try to minimize it as much as possible? Our focus in this chapter is on how to resolve such questions intelligently and apply the answers to practical questions of politics.

While the state might still exist even absent the fall of man — Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, thought it would have — it is only because of the fall that the state requires the use of violence, both to prevent and correct injustices and to wage war in self-defense. Traditional just war theory (see chapter 2) insists that the use of violence by the state is properly a last resort, when every other means to resolve a conflict has failed. Of course, governments have routinely violated this principle over the centuries, waging wars they insisted were “just” for trivial or arbitrary reasons and fighting in ways that failed to respect the rights of unarmed civilians.

Nevertheless, the fact that just war principles have been routinely flouted does not invalidate them, as Machiavelli and other practitioners of *realpolitik* came to assert. We saw in the bloody twentieth century what results when men in power give up even the pretense of respecting justice and equity in the conduct of international politics and the waging of war — and we punished such men at Nuremberg.

It is no coincidence that the regimes that abandoned any principle of restraint in waging war had previously discarded norms restraining the power that they wielded over their own citizens in peacetime. Total war walks hand in hand with the “total” or totalitarian state, whose governing principle Benito Mussolini summed up in a 1928 speech: “All within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.” The regimes in Germany and Russia were much more rigorous in applying this principle than the creaky Italian dictatorship, and it is no coincidence that they were also more effective at liquidating internal political opponents and “unwanted” ethnic minorities and at waging total war.

Since the structure of totalitarian governance seems to mirror total war, it is worth considering that the proper answer to resisting and restraining the abuse of government power in peacetime would resemble just war teaching. Could we come up with an equivalent moral principle to govern the proper use of state coercion outside of war — a “just peace” theory, if you will?

It turns out that we don’t need to. Such a doctrine already exists, and it has a name. The *principle of subsidiarity* amounts in fact to the application of the same principles that govern just war theory to the ordinary business of lawmaking and government. Precursors of the idea of subsidiarity were influential over the centuries and arose in a number of countries. The concepts of federalism in America, and decentralism in Switzerland, aimed at the same goals we now subsume under *subsidiarity* — a term that was popularized by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*. This

document was published in 1931, when totalitarian parties already governed Italy and Russia, and brawled in the streets of Germany, seeking absolute power. Pius XI laid out the principle of subsidiarity in clear and straightforward terms:

Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.⁷⁹

The pope did not derive this principle from some tenet of Christian theology that nonbelievers could be expected to reject, but from a sober consideration of the natural law tradition in the light of the social problems of his day; moreover, he cited it as a timeless principle, which held true implicitly wherever human beings live in community.

Let us translate this principle into contemporary language and concerns. Subsidiarity demands that social problems be resolved, whenever possible, by free individuals working together as families, charities, churches, or other units of “civil society.” Only when it is obviously clear that a vital good, or a norm of justice, cannot be maintained without the use of government force are we even permitted to call in the police. And wherever possible, the person we call should be the sheriff — not the FBI or the United Nations. In other words, subsidiarity dictates that any problem addressed by the state should be resolved at the local level, by the relevant town or county. Only issues that cannot be fixed this way should be referred to the

⁷⁹ Pius IX, encyclical letter on Reconstruction of the Social Order *Quadragesimo anno* (May 15, 1931), no. 79.

next highest level of power, the state or province. If a problem eludes the power and expertise of New York or Ontario, only then should it be referred to the federal government. Issues that reach beyond even what national governments can resolve must be addressed by the United Nations or through treaties.

Just as rulers throughout the centuries have flouted just war teaching, governments have trampled all over the truths about human rights summed up in subsidiarity. A student of history need only consult the record of early modern “absolute” monarchs to see the inexorable liquidation of local autonomy and the gathering in of coercive power over the lives of citizens by the centralizing states that dominated most of Europe. Political writers served the interests of monarchs who sought to accumulate power, from England’s James I to France’s Louis XIII, and to this end they revived and modernized the paternalistic political theories of classical Greece, applying to the vast expanses of national empires ideas that had been conceived for tiny, compact city-states. While of course we can’t presume here to sum up the philosophies of government of Plato and Aristotle, we can identify a key element that distinguishes their thought from the Christian liberal tradition that shaped the founding of the United States: a top-down philosophy of government, which centered on the “rights” of lawgivers and rulers to enforce their vision of the Good in citizens’ lives instead of the rights of citizens against the powers of the state. A rival, personalist politics of liberty also arose from Christian sources, to match the exalted Christian idea of each human being, and was expressed in institutions like English Common Law and Swiss democracy. It coexisted with the older, pagan authoritarian strain, and in a few countries, such as England and Switzerland, the idea of liberty won out against its rival—largely because of historical accidents such as extreme religious divisions in the countries that demanded the separation of powers or decentralist policies. Similar divisions, and the strong influence of the liberal

tradition in England, led America's founders to embrace a highly decentralized form of government, with branches of government that were intentionally set up in opposition to each other to restrain the activist temptation to which political leaders are too often prone.

With this core principle in mind, of a preferential option for nonviolence and noncoercion, we should look with prudent care at every social and political issue, from economic inequality to health care, from drug laws to foreign policy. We must avoid the intellectual traps that lie on every side of the truth. Too many modern Westerners use liberty as a pretext for sliding into relativism, letting their healthy aversion to calling the cops and throwing their neighbors in jail corrupt their sense of what is good and true. Just because the state is not permitted to enforce religious orthodoxy does not mean that religious truth is of no importance. The state may not imprison people for adultery as the U.S. military still does, but that fact does not ratify as good every "sexual choice" of each "consenting adult."

Some indignant religious conservatives fall not into relativism but illiberalism, concluding that whatever is morally good ought to be fervently promoted with all the blunt force of the state. For instance, God's existence can be known by reason alone; hence atheism flies in the face of the natural law. So an atheist raising his children in unbelief could be said to be flouting that law. Does that mean that the state should intervene and take them away? Of course not, because the good of family life is too vital to be disturbed in this way. Some sexual acts violate the natural law. Would we favor hidden cameras in every citizen's home so that violators can be arrested and imprisoned? No, we would not. Does that refusal to violate privacy and grant enormous power to legislators and bureaucrats imply that we are sexual libertines? No, it does not.

Liberty is a vital good, especially given the fact of human fallenness. The men who draft and enforce a law are every bit as rife with original sin as any citizen. Power may not in every case corrupt, but

it is always a near occasion of sin, which ought to be treated warily. This is the lesson that the American founders took to heart — and that too many Americans are now lazy enough to forget.

Even as we join the libertarians in defending the individual from tyranny and fighting the growth of Leviathan, we also must see that the isolated individual is not the hero of our story. Cut off from family, church, and culture, he is an atom whirling in the void — an all-too-tempting target for manipulation and control by a power-hungry state. It is only in the context of healthy nonstate civil society, and a participatory local government, that persons can live a fully human life, blunt the jagged edges of Darwinian competition for success, and find the meaning that “mass man” has learned to see in the state, the Party, or the Race.

We propose instead to embrace decentralism, diversity, and the gorgeous mosaic of unequal outcomes that such a bottom-up approach to government power will generate, as the fifty states, and thousands of towns, act as laboratories of modern, democratic living. Let the people of Vermont towns ban stores like Walmart if they wish, while Texans carry loaded guns and Coloradans smoke whatever pleases them. Only a broadly decentralized power that lets the diverse body of Americans vote with their feet on how they wish to live can accommodate a country as wild and woolly as ours, without homogenizing by force the many strands that make up our society. The mores of cosmopolitan towns should neither dominate nor liquidate those of rural communities, and life in America should thrive as a vibrant patchwork, instead of a drab uniformity imposed on all from above. That model alone will avoid tyrannizing minorities or persecuting dissent. Happily, it is the very model our Constitution envisioned, and it is one that is within our reach if we have the courage to grasp it.

Given the tenacious nature of poverty in America and the growing social dysfunction of the people who make up the poor — the

fracturing of their families, their lack of class mobility, the almost hereditary nature of reliance on public assistance — it should be clear that the approach our country is taking toward addressing poverty is not working. Decades of research have shown the failures of programs such as the Great Society, which have served less to mobilize the poor and move them upward than to tame them and make them manageable. We have no more urban riots, as we did in the 1960s, before the Great Society's advent. But the lives and the prospects of America's poor have not improved — and in many ways are growing worse, as Charles Murray documents in his alarming recent study *Coming Apart*, which notes that the level of family breakup and other social problems among America's white majority is currently at the level that so alarmed Daniel Patrick Moynihan when he saw it in the African-American minority in 1965. What was tragic when it befell a single community is downright menacing when it spreads to the rest of society.

When what you have been trying has clearly failed over the course of five decades, and in fact appears to be making matters worse, it is only sane to reexamine the very premises of your efforts. We would like to suggest that the reason America's poverty programs fail is that they violate the truths about human nature that subsidiarity recognizes and inadvertently reinforce and encourage the self-destructive habits that they were meant to help people overcome — such as illegitimate childbearing, the failure to marry, and the absence of paternal role models in the homes of poor families. Our system, in the laudable effort to provide nutrition and health care to the children of the poor, lets their fathers entirely off the hook — and thus removes the strongest incentive young women have historically felt for avoiding sexual conduct until they are married. As George F. Gilder observed back in 1973, in *Sexual Suicide*, the Welfare State steps forward as the surrogate father, the default provider for every deadbeat dad — and needless to say, it does not

offer all the human and moral benefits of an actual human father. A teenage girl who gets pregnant can apply for a range of benefits that make it possible for her to move out of her parents' home and begin her own household, fully supported by the government. If our national goal was to increase the incidence of teenage pregnancy and suppress the marriage rate among the poor, how exactly would we do things any differently?

It is hard to see how a government-sponsored program, in our age of postmodern morality, could possibly act otherwise. It allots the poor financial "entitlements," and cannot inquire how they are putting them to use. Apart from minor, easily flouted restrictions on the use of things like "food stamps," government programs do not and cannot offer incentives that spur the poor toward less self-destructive behavior. Each subsequent out-of-wedlock child that a young woman has will bring with him a new set of benefits, since we rightly do not wish to punish innocent children for their mother's mistakes. But in setting up such a system, we mask the fact that such decisions are mistakes. We put a Band-Aid on the short-term problem of how a young mother will feed her children and get them health care, and disguise the long-term ills that such children suffer from growing up without fathers and with mothers whose experience of the world of paying work will be intermittent at best.

The answer to this problem is not some eugenics-infected program to place "welfare mothers" on more effective birth control or sudden cuts in public welfare programs that leave the poor unprovided for. Instead, we should prepare the way for a gradual rollback of public welfare benefits by building a new safety net, one that is funded and administered by private agencies — some of them faith-based, all of them informed by a more elevated view of the human person as a responsible adult who can make rational choices.

In a justly famous article, "How Dagger John Saved New York's Irish," William J. Stern of *City Journal* documented in detail how such

a benevolently paternal, private charity system worked: how it addressed the crippling social pathologies suffered by the Irish who had escaped the Potato Famine and landed in New York City. It is worth quoting him at length:

New York's Irish truly formed an underclass; every variety of social pathology flourished luxuriantly among them. Family life had disintegrated. . . . In *The New York Irish*, Ronald Bayor and Timothy Meagher report that besides rampant alcoholism, addiction to opium and laudanum was epidemic in these neighborhoods in the 1840s and 1850s. . . .

An estimated 50,000 Irish prostitutes, known in flash talk as “nymphs of the pave,” worked the city in 1850, and Five Points alone had as many as 17 brothels. Illegitimacy reached stratospheric heights — and tens of thousands of abandoned Irish kids roamed, or prowled, the city's streets. . . .

Death was everywhere. In 1854 one out of every 17 people in the sixth ward died. In Sweeney's Shambles the rate was one out of five in a 22-month period. The death rate among Irish families in New York in the 1850s was 21 percent, while among non-Irish it was 3 percent. Life expectancy for New York's Irish averaged under 40 years. Tuberculosis, which Bishop Hughes called the “natural death of the Irish immigrants,” was the leading cause of death, along with drink and violence.⁸⁰

The man who took it upon himself to address this appalling problem was not a government official but a private citizen acting on behalf of a free institution of civil society — Bishop John Hughes, the Catholic prelate of New York. Because he did not represent a modern, morally

⁸⁰ William J. Stern, “How Dagger John Saved New York's Irish,” *City Journal* (Spring 1997), <https://www.city-journal.org/article/how-dagger-john-saved-new-yorks-irish>.

neutral Welfare State, but a Church with a crystal-clear code of virtuous living, Hughes was free to build a program of social restoration that drew on the fuller, more accurate vision of human life to be found in classical natural law — a vision that forced recipients, on pain of being cut off, to assume responsibility for themselves and become self-reliant citizens. In other words, to claim the kind of “freedom” that the U.S. founders actually fought to defend. As Stern explains:

Hughes’s solution for his flock’s social ills was to re-spiritualize them. He wanted to bring about an inner, moral transformation in them, which he believed would solve their social problems in the end. . . .

With unerring psychological insight, Hughes had his priests emphasize religious teachings perfectly attuned to re-socializing the Irish and helping them succeed in their new lives. It was a religion of personal responsibility that they taught, stressing the importance of confession, a sacrament not widely popular today — and unknown to many of the Irish who emigrated during the famine, most of whom had never received any religious education. . . .

... Hughes proclaimed the need to avoid sin. His clergy stated clearly that certain conduct was right and other conduct was wrong. People must not govern their lives according to momentary feelings or the desire for instant gratification: they had to live up to a code of behavior that had been developed over thousands of years. This teaching produced communities where ethical standards mattered and severe stigma attached to those who misbehaved.

The priests stressed the virtue of purity, loudly and unambiguously, to both young and old. Sex was sinful outside marriage, no exceptions. . . . The Church’s fierce exhortations against promiscuity, with its accompanying evils of out-of-wedlock births and venereal disease, took hold. In time, most Irish began to understand that personal responsibility was an important component of sexual conduct.

Since alcohol was such a major problem for his flock, Hughes — though no teetotaler himself — promoted the formation of a Catholic abstinence society. In 1849 he accompanied the famous Irish Capuchin priest, Father Theobald Mathew, the “apostle of temperance,” all around the city as he gave the abstinence pledge to 20,000 New Yorkers.⁸¹

Today’s American “underclass” suffers from the exact kind of social chaos that afflicted Hughes’s desperate New York Irish. The value-neutral Welfare State, which is prohibited by a wide array of policies and court decisions from promoting any other notion of human flourishing apart from utilitarian hedonism, can blunt the impact of economic scarcity. But insofar as it will not and cannot foster the necessary character virtues that history has shown make the climb out of poverty possible, the welfare system in effect enables and subsidizes dysfunction. Given how dominant utilitarianism is in so many sectors of American life, it would seem arbitrary (and hence politically unthinkable) to demand of those on public assistance that they hew to a higher standard as the price of receiving aid. The welfare system is doomed by its very nature to reinforce the social chaos that it was meant to ameliorate. When liberals are in power, it can do so generously and recklessly; when fiscal conservatives dominate, it can do so stingily and punitively. But the welfare system, because it has no coherent, true philosophy of human flourishing, can never serve the actual welfare of its recipients. It was not built to do so, but was rather built to make the poor less dangerous to the rest of society.

The same profound, unfixable problems need not afflict private charities, as the example of Archbishop Hughes’s efforts in New York City indicates. Just as parochial schools are able to maintain better order and achieve superior academic outcomes than public schools

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

in blighted urban areas, so private charities can practice a wholesome paternalism and firmly guide recipients toward morally healthier behavior. The aid that private charities dispense is not a legal “entitlement” but a free gift that can be withheld or increased, at the discretion of administrators who speak to recipients face-to-face and who are guided by a richer, more comprehensive and fully human view of how people flourish and what holds them back from success. Although many might bristle at the notion of church-based charities conditioning aid on the moral behavior of those whom they try to help, this in fact is a far more human model of compassion, one that treats poor people as responsible adults whose actions have consequences, who are free to make consequent choices and are responsible for dealing with those consequences. That is how life works in the world of work, and we do the poor no favors by treating them as wayward pets, or “blind mouths” that must be warehoused, controlled, and fed.



CHAPTER 10

SOLIDARITY

The Moral Unity of the Human Family

IF THERE IS A single, core moral truth that was forgotten in the bloody twentieth century, and remains neglected today, it is this one. Solidarity refers to the debt of respect that each of us owes every other person that forbids us from using him as merely a means to an end; even in the most pragmatic, urgent endeavor like fighting a fire or waging a war, we must know in our hearts that *each human being is an end in himself*—a person of real and transcendent dignity of equal worth to ourselves and each of our loved ones. Because our wills are fallen, and resources are limited, it is all too tempting to lie to ourselves, to live in denial of the truth that forbids this moral shortcut or that pragmatic compromise. Those barbarians, or Indians, or Africans, aren't really *human* in the same sense as me and my kids—surely, we can find a rationale for enslaving them. Those enemy civilians have made themselves complicit by failing to rise up against their tyrant; that means it is moral to carpet-bomb them so that we can shorten the war for our soldiers. Those land-hungry peasants or disobedient workers are sabotaging our progress toward a perfect, classless utopia; the voice of History tells us to remove them. And so on, through the centuries.

The central principle of solidarity in practice is simple and timeless: the Golden Rule. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This ethical maxim, which Jesus quoted from the Old

Testament, exists in some form in every culture on earth. It is so ubiquitous that it is easy for us to assume that it is universally accepted — at least in theory — although far too rarely practiced. But in fact, things are darker than that.

Another maxim has crept into Western culture via “worldly philosophers” such as Macchiavelli and Hobbes, who deeply influenced the modern frame of mind. It is the principle of the “consenting adult.” According to the worldview underpinning this phrase, none of us is the least bit responsible for the decisions made by others — and if they make stupid choices, that is not our problem. Even if we have led them to make the choice — if we have exploited them personally, economically, or sexually — we still are immune from responsibility: he or she was a “consenting adult.” He should have known better, we tell ourselves with a shrug.

In the place of an ethic that rests on a deep reciprocity — and a care for the human value of each person based solely on his status as our fellow human — we embrace a heartless, pragmatic ethos that shrugs at suffering and confusion, that is more than willing to take advantage of other’s mistakes. So “consenting adults” work in sweatshops overseas making our iPads or resort to “abortion providers” when boyfriends abandon them. No individual rights were violated, no crime was committed or contract broken — and secular modernity has nothing meaningful to say. Attempts by Marxists, feminists, and others to discuss “structural injustice” ring hollow — built as they are on borrowed Christian premises (the sanctity of life) that those activists reject. Only a comprehensive morality constructed on human solidarity can fill this empty core at the center of modern life.

Solidarity is the only solid ground on which social policies can be made that respect the humanity of each person who we say we are trying to help, that deal with them as our moral and metaphysical equals, and that aim at empowering and lifting up the poor — rather than buying off our consciences, treating poverty as a problem much like pollution.

Alongside the myth of the consenting adult, one of the most commonly cited reasons for rejecting solidarity is self-ownership, the principle promoted by radical libertarians that claims that none of us owes anything to anyone, unless we have freely agreed to give it to him as either a gift or an exchange. We are self-made men and women, creators of our destinies un beholden to anyone or anything, rugged individualists who have carved out all that we have and are from the rough-hewn stone of unforgiving nature, with a clear title to everything that we attain or acquire. This is the picture of man popularized in the perennial best-selling novels of Ayn Rand, but it is echoed throughout popular culture in works where the misfit, the loner, or the outcast is held up as a hero for refusing to be cowed or seduced by the crowd. Philosopher Edward Feser summed up the underlying theory as follows:

For many libertarians, the thesis of self-ownership is the foundation of their political philosophy. Natural rights to life, liberty, and property — the protection of which is, according to the libertarian, government’s sole legitimate function — derive from self-ownership, in particular one’s ownership of his body and its parts, of his capacities and labor, and, by extension, of whatever he can acquire by his non-coercive exercise of them.... Government cannot legitimately interfere with an individual’s use of his body, abilities, etc., where that use does not involve the infringement of the rights of others, even when that individual’s use is otherwise immoral. Even if, for example, one decides to use narcotics or to drink oneself into a stupor night after night, the state has no right to stop him from doing so.⁸²

⁸² Edward Feser, “Self-Ownership, Abortion, and the Rights of Children: Toward a More Conservative Libertarianism,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2004), 91–114, <https://mises.org/library/self-ownership-abortion-and-rights-children-toward-more-conservative-libertarianism-0>.

Conversely, for the libertarian, if the state has no right to stop someone from destroying himself, it also has no responsibility to rescue him. People who make themselves unemployable or sick through their own bad habits will have to deal with the consequences on their own, or with the help of voluntary charity. Indeed, even those who through no fault of their own are too poor to afford housing, food, or medical care must be provided for through voluntary, private sector efforts; the state has no business redistributing income in pursuit of the vision of social justice imposed by those in power.

This vision of the proper limits of government action has broad appeal because it is, on many crucial matters, correct. Certainly, the modern Welfare State with its nearly confiscatory taxes routinely violates the property rights of better-off citizens (see chapter 10), even as it serves to enable and reinforce self-destructive behaviors among the poor. Citizens of every social class are held back in their moral development when the state steps in to take over duties that rightly belong to individuals — such as saving for their retirements, caring for their aging parents, funding their kids' educations, and purchasing insurance. The crucial habit of thrift and the difficult skill of delaying gratification are constantly undermined when inflation or easy credit goads citizens to become spoiled consumers. The motive for amassing savings against a rainy day is removed when the government stands at our elbow, waiting like P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves with an umbrella.

So, when it comes to policy, the libertarians are much closer than the liberals to getting the answers right. There is an important core of truth in the principle of self-ownership that is worth emphasizing after a century that saw the rise of totalitarian dictatorships and total war. Certainly, the past hundred years of history ought to make us sympathetic to a presumption that each of us owns himself. A strong dose of self-ownership thinking in 1914 might have stopped the rulers of Europe from forcibly drafting millions of men to fight a

brutal war over frivolous causes. Had self-ownership prevailed in Russia, millions of peasants would not have been deprived of religious freedom, thrown off their land, deported thousands of miles to Gulag camps, starved to death, or simply shot. Had Germans respected self-ownership, they would not have “Aryanized” (that is, looted) the property of Jews, deprived them of civil rights, and finally exterminated them in camps. Had Japan respected self-ownership, it would not have sent its soldiers to China to engage in mass rape, organized pillage and slaughter, and use Chinese prisoners as human guinea pigs for biological weapons. Self-ownership might have prevented the death by shooting or starvation of up to eighty million people in Mao Zedong’s Communist China. And so on. As I have already noted, R. J. Rummel estimates in *Death by Government* that in the twentieth century, states have been responsible for 169 million intentional homicides — not including soldiers, or civilians accidentally killed during wartime. Every one of those deaths was a murder. Those of us who defend the need for a state after all that organized, state-based slaughter have got some explaining to do.

But so do libertarians. Although the government of China is indeed responsible for millions of forced abortions, most of the uncounted tens of millions of preborn children who died in surgical or chemical abortions were killed with their mother’s consent, while the state stood by and watched. That is the libertarian Holocaust, brought on by the sick implications of “self-ownership.” It’s a bitter irony that modern liberals defend this one exercise of a principle that they otherwise hold in contempt — gleefully imposing their degraded notions of the common good and trampling on the rights of individuals to work, trade, speak, and pray, but defending this single instance of radical, libertine self-ownership. A woman is free, in today’s America, to abort her nine-month-old fetus — but is forced to get a Covid-19 vaccine in order to keep her job or eat at a restaurant.

Some might step in at this point and say that they are pro-life libertarians, who recognize the implicit right to “self-ownership” of the preborn child. But the brute, biological fact of the human fetus’s utter dependence, for nine long months, on the flesh and blood of another human being will strike most libertarians as an outrageous imposition on the liberty of the mother, who has every right to expel this “intruder” from the sanctuary of her womb. That was the position of Murray Rothbard, whose version of libertarianism (anarcho-capitalism) has attracted a surprising number of otherwise pro-life religious believers — no doubt because of its appearance of philosophical rigor and its justified rejection of the intrusive secular state. But let us listen to Rothbard on the subject of preborn children:

The proper groundwork for analysis of abortion is in every man’s absolute right of self-ownership. This implies immediately that every woman has the absolute right to her own body, that she has absolute dominion over her body and everything within it. This includes the fetus. Most fetuses are in the mother’s womb because the mother consents to this situation, but the fetus is there by the mother’s freely-granted consent. But should the mother decide that she does not *want* the fetus there any longer, then the fetus becomes a parasitic “invader” of her person, and the mother has the perfect right to expel this invader from her domain. Abortion should be looked upon, not as “murder” of a living person, but as the expulsion of an unwanted invader from the mother’s body. Any laws restricting or prohibiting abortion are therefore invasions of the rights of mothers.⁸³

Self-ownership, as the ruthlessly consistent Rothbard construes it, has other implications for the rights and duties of parents,

⁸³ Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 98.

extending far beyond the intimacy of the womb. He writes later in the same chapter:

Applying our theory to parents and children, this means that a parent does not have the right to aggress against his children, *but also* that the parent should not have a *legal obligation* to feed, clothe, or educate his children, since such obligations would entail positive acts coerced upon the parent and depriving the parent of his rights. The parent therefore may not murder or mutilate his child, and the law properly outlaws a parent from doing so. But the parent should have the legal right *not* to feed the child, i.e., to allow it to die. The law, therefore, may not properly compel the parent to feed a child or to keep it alive. (Again, whether or not a parent has a *moral* rather than a legally enforceable obligation to keep his child alive is a completely separate question.) This rule allows us to solve such vexing questions as: should a parent have the right to allow a deformed baby to die (e.g. by not feeding it)? The answer is of course *yes*, following *a fortiori* from the larger right to allow *any* baby, whether deformed or not, to die. (Though, as we shall see below, in a libertarian society the existence of a free baby market will bring such “neglect” down to a minimum.)⁸⁴

So, self-ownership, as a principle, prevents the state from intervening when parents starve their children. At this point, it is tempting to simply toss the very concept aside as toxic, to decide that any theory that cannot account for and defend the most basic unit of society, the family, can hardly be trusted on larger and more complicated questions. But self-ownership is not entirely wrong. It is radically incomplete, an important piece of the truth which when ripped out of its living context leaves a bloody trail.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 100–101.

Private property and its protection from arbitrary confiscation or control are implications of human dignity — because property is at its heart the fruit of our labors, which ought to be free. In that sense, we do own ourselves. But let's ask a few pointed questions about what that ownership really means, how far it extends, and in what ways that ownership is conditioned by what we have ourselves received.

It is clear that no human being is really “self-made.” We are born to parents, without whose care we would quickly die. Human beings are dependent for longer than any other creature on the constant protection of parents. Nor, once we reach adulthood, can most human beings survive alone. We are physically and emotionally dependent on cooperation with others. Our very consciousness is constituted and formed into fullness through the mediation of language — of words and grammatical structures that we learn from others, who have themselves inherited them from their ancestors.

Likewise, we are the beneficiaries of the hard work done by our ancestors in establishing an orderly society that protects individual rights and creates the infrastructure for education and technology. Think of the immense advantages in lifespan, opportunity, health, and wealth that a modern American or European enjoys over a persecuted Nuba tribesman or a Brazilian living in a favela; can any of us rightly take credit for these? No, these are gifts that we have been given, and without them we would not have the knowledge, skills, freedom, or physical safety that make possible our efforts at creating wealth.

Two people with similar talents and comparable work ethics will fare very differently if one of them is born on New York's Upper East Side and the other in an aboriginal community in Australia. The discrepancy between the opportunities offered to these two people ought to show us the measure of how much we owe to

others, how little of the selves that we have become for which we can take sole credit.

We do not give birth to our bodies, nor do we create ourselves. We take a vast array of inherited gifts and opportunities and do our best to steward and make good use of them. Given that fact, our ownership of our labor and our wealth is not complete and absolute. That ownership is conditioned by what we owe to others who came before us. For that reason, adults are expected to care for their aged parents. But even more than paying back the care and opportunities we have received, we are expected to pay them forward, to offer the next generation the best chance to thrive in its own right. This debt is more than a moral truth; it is a fact of mammal biology, of a race whose young are born from the bodies of parents, not hatched from abandoned eggs and left to fend for themselves.

In light of these social, biological, and moral realities, we can see that we do not own ourselves outright, free of any liens or claims. We in fact owe a great deal to our parents — and significant debts to the society that shaped us and made it possible for us to thrive. We owe the most to those who are closest to us: our parents, our children, and our direct benefactors. We owe a little less to those in our local community and proportionately less to total strangers who are far-away fellow citizens. Our debt is least to people who live in distant countries with whom we interact little except to buy the fruits of their labor. However, we still owe them something, a debt that may seem to materialists intangible or meaningless — but which in times of crisis can mean the difference between peace and war. We owe every human being by virtue of his membership in the human family respect for his intrinsic dignity (see chapter 6). We owe even distant strangers the recognition that their equal humanity is not affected by differences of wealth, race, or religion. We owe them the debt imposed by the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

If it is ever hard to accept and internalize this truth, here is a helpful mental exercise: When you look at some desperate refugee on television, waving an emaciated hand to keep the flies away from his eyes, do not compare him to yourself as you live now — in relative comfort and safety. Remember instead that you and he were once just alike, tiny fetuses nestled inside another person, utterly dependent on her protection and goodwill, completely incapable of making any efforts on your own behalf. At that point you were exactly the same, completely equal. Then think of all the things that must have happened in his life, and yours, to land you in such very different places — and how few of them depended on your decisions, how little you really did to end up so much better off than he is. That is the cold, unvarnished truth, and it isn't a comfortable one. That is why we work so hard to hide it from ourselves.

Perhaps if you try to extend your empathy to every human being on earth, from conception to natural death, you will simply fail — as liberals do, so they end up favoring free laptops for Rwandans, along with abortion on demand. There's not enough butter on earth to spread across that much bread. On the other hand, if you limit your moral concern to those with whom you can *feel* empathy, you will act like a moral monster. The answer lies elsewhere — outside the emotions, in the solemn and timeless rational truths that compose the natural law. Whatever your gut pretends, the fact remains that every human being on earth, regardless of age, is starkly your moral equal. That's true in the same sense that gravity and mathematics are true — and true regardless of how you feel about it. So act accordingly, and maybe your heart will catch up with your brain. Or maybe not. Do the right thing anyway: it's called being an adult.

The people of the prolife movement, from those who work on Capitol Hill to those who operate pregnancy shelters, offer us hope. They challenge the lies we tell ourselves, the evasions we depend on, and the barriers we cobble together against our wholesome natural

instincts. And the most natural response in the world for a mother to have toward her child is to *care for it*. We know, deep down in our soul, that this is the “right” decision. We must in our day-to-day lives, and political action, hold this fundamental human truth in mind. No society that rests on falsehoods can long endure — it will sink into chaos, crime, and poverty.

Of course, incorporating solidarity into our worldviews and our lives cannot be limited to people like abandoned single mothers, whom we rightly view largely as innocent. We would prove ourselves no better than Pharisees if we were to pretend that our common humanity only matters when we are speaking of fellow Americans whom we consider victims.

Solidarity is a universal principle, which extends to embrace every member of the human family, and its most important function is to force us to take seriously the rights and human dignity of the people whom we are tempted to write off as threats to our comfort and safety. Those are the people whose very lives may depend on our practice of solidarity, whom we will otherwise write off as collateral damage.

Other proper subjects for our solidarity include, in America, prisoners — who in too many places are relegated to subhuman living conditions. According to Just Detention International:

Sexual assault behind bars is a widespread human rights crisis in prisons and jails across the U.S. According to the best available research, 20 percent of inmates in men’s prisons are sexually abused at some point during their incarceration. The rate for women’s facilities varies dramatically from one prison to another, with one in four inmates being victimized at the worst institutions.

The death penalty as we now know it in America is disproportionately applied to killers who lacked proper legal representation, to the point

where it no longer upholds its old societal function: as a secular sacrament of public order, imposing on the worst of criminals the ultimate punishment. Instead it has become just another extension of poverty and inequality — including radically unequal legal assistance when their very lives are on the line.

Within our own nation's borders, there are millions of people whom we routinely treat as less than fully human: illegal immigrants. These fellow members of the human family lack many of the protections of law that the rest of us take for granted. They are grossly exploited by unscrupulous employers, who can intimidate them with threats of deportation. Their presence in the labor force, in turn, enables the exploitation of native-born, legal workers — by driving down their wages or simply handing their jobs to more compliant illegal workers who will not form unions or report safety violations.

Any sovereign country needs to control its borders. Currently, the U.S./Mexican border is controlled — by drug gangs, human traffickers, American-based gun smugglers, and other criminal elements who are ravaging whole cities throughout Mexico. No American, Latino or otherwise, should favor this chaos. It is mostly Latinos who suffer as a result — who are gunned down by narco-terrorists, packed into Mack trucks to suffocate, or left in the desert to die. If America is ever to manage a comprehensive reform of immigration, securing the border must come first. If that means fencing it off and patrolling it, then that needs to happen, for the safety of citizens on either side and would-be migrants themselves.

We need to end the underground economy, where workers are treated as they were in 1870, and extend the protection of law to every worker in America. That means (as part of immigration reform) imposing controls on employers and improving and making mandatory a program like E-Verify, by which employers can (in minutes) check the legal status of any new employee. They will have no more excuses for their sweatshops. This was the feature of the

1986 amnesty that broke down — thanks to complaints from businessmen to the Reagan administration.

As a pro-life activist, I move in conservative circles. Sometimes I hear otherwise humane people — who raise money to save the pre-born babies of Latino mothers — switch gears to speaking of immigrants as if they were aliens landing from some hostile planet. We have met people who pray to Mexican saints like Juan Diego speak from the other side of their mouth about “invasion” and *reconquista*. I have even met dogged supporters of mass deportation who employ illegal workers — explaining this away as “a reality of doing business.” Conservatives need more integrity and a deeper sense of common, human solidarity with the people whose actions have left them trapped in the underground economy. It has been a long time since any of us have used rhetoric like “welfare queens” to describe impoverished Americans. It is long past time for discussions of immigration to reflect a similar courtesy and decency.

Immigrants who came here illegally have certainly benefited from America’s order and prosperity. They have gained untold opportunities, used public schools and hospitals, and sometimes collected government benefits. But Americans have also benefited from their presence. Employers have prospered using cheap labor, consumers have enjoyed lower prices, and countless Americans have had their houses built, grounds maintained, meals cooked, and children or elders cared for, by workers who did not enjoy the protection of law. Large elements of America’s market economy used these people to evade the costs imposed by the New Deal. We have enjoyed for decades a two-tier system: twenty-first-century labor and safety laws for legal workers and nineteenth-century “robber baron” conditions for illegal immigrants.

As we impose order on the border and in the workplace, we must acknowledge the fact that the people already here are not some looming threat to national security, or a tumor to be removed. They

are neighbors, co-workers, friends, fellow parishioners, even family members of millions of Americans. They have earned through sweat and equity a place at our national table, and it's time to bring them up out of the underground economy. The way to do that is to offer a path to citizenship to otherwise law-abiding migrants — as the final phase of a comprehensive approach to controlling the border and enforcing our workplace laws. No path to citizenship can (or should) be passed until the U.S. border is fully secured and mandatory workplace verification is in place. To offer an amnesty without such measures would simply invite millions more would-be migrants to risk their lives. We would be advertising the fact that human trafficking works. Thousands more would die in the desert.

Solidarity might motivate us to secure the U.S. border and ensure the just treatment of every worker within it, but the principle extends far across national boundaries, to embrace every human being regardless of citizenship, race, or religion. Our foreign policy and military doctrine will be morally bankrupt if they do not reflect this fundamental human truth.

If solidarity helps hold the state back from using its monopoly of force excessively or unjustly, this principle also demands that sometimes the state swing into action, in defense of those who would otherwise be utterly helpless. When “states’ rights” failed in the post-Reconstruction South and local governments showed themselves unable or unwilling to defend the rights of African-Americans, it was the duty of the federal government to step in and override the unjust decisions of local officials — through legislation such as the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. It’s an enduring American shame that it took almost a century after the end of slavery for blacks to gain the full rights of citizenship.

Likewise, solidarity imposes limits on our attempts to pare back government. While we can and should resist the imposition of unjust or burdensome laws and crippling taxes, we know that there is

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a line beyond which libertarian, anti-government rhetoric ceases to be reasonable. Certainly as Americans convinced of the truth of subsidiarity, we want the government's powers to be as limited and localized as possible — without sacrificing justice or denying the common good. But when shrinking the state endangers those core values, it undermines the order that makes real liberty possible, creating the chaos that historically has always yielded to tyranny. Sometimes these evils co-exist. So today there is chaos in the womb, as the laws refuse to protect the rights of preborn children, and tyranny in the lab, as hundreds of thousands of embryonic human beings languish in the freezers of fertility clinics. There is chaos on the Internet, as pornography of the vilest kind is pumped onto the tablets and phones of America's youth, and tyranny in the dens of the sex industry, where women who are often the victims of human trafficking are exploited in the most dehumanizing ways. No one who accepts the core principles we advocate here can be an outright anarchist, precisely because in the absence of government there can be no reliable way of ensuring that solidarity is taken seriously. The human person deserves better — it deserves ordered liberty.





EPILOGUE

by Gil Bailie

“THE CITY IS THE soul writ large.” So said Plato in book 2 of the *Republic*. If this is true, what does the current state of our cities tell us about the souls of those of us living in what was once a distinctively Judeo-Christian culture? How are our lives and our moral and spiritual predicament reflected in the major cities in what, without irony, we once called the Judeo-Christian West? What conclusions can we draw from the conspicuous deterioration of urban life in our nation and in the other outposts of Western civilization? Jason Jones has given us an extensive assessment of our current crisis: “No society that rests on falsehoods can long endure — it will sink into chaos, crime, and poverty.” Of the many lapidary insights that Jones provides his readers, this might most succinctly sum up the thrust of his remarkable book.

We are living in the midst of a civilizational crisis, at the heart of which is a set of anthropological blunders that Jones has methodically catalogued and brilliantly diagnosed. These blunders are anthropological ones precisely because they fail to correctly assess the inherent form and content of human existence. More to the point, they fail to reckon with the fact that we humans are religious creatures. Our tranquility and happiness depend on the degree to which our religious beliefs conform to reality, suffuse our imagination, inform our lives, and shape our moral reflexes.

Perhaps the most puzzling thing about the multifaceted crisis we now face is that it is largely intentional. Recognizing this fact is the first step toward responding to it effectively. “Never let a crisis go to waste,” declared former Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel. The common feature of most of the crises we face is that the solutions on offer are deeply unpopular. Taking power in a republic with a long history of democratic rule requires the consent, even if grudgingly or reluctantly given, of a sizeable portion of the electorate. The problem is that convincing people of the wisdom of ideas and programs that have universally failed in the past is a challenge. In a time of crisis, however, some portion of the electorate might be convinced to grudgingly accept emergency measures that, once in place, become very difficult to reverse or rectify.

The association of the word *crisis* with both danger and opportunity has now become commonplace. The word *emergency* itself implies the emergence of something out of its unsuspecting harbinger. One cannot rule out the possibility that a crisis might well arouse an overly credulous population. Indeed, there is evidence that this is happening today. Quite obviously, however, this is not the sort of crisis of which Rahm Emanuel spoke. However grateful we should be to him for bringing this ruse to our attention, what he meant was a crisis of the sort that would stampede the electorate into accepting policies the majority would question under normal circumstances. The consortium of international elites — the “globalists” — were quick to recognize the political usefulness of their methodically con-fected hysteria.

At the heart of the religious impulse of Western civilization is a sacrificial principle: that both moral and social problems are best addressed by sacrifice. The outstanding question, of course, is whether we invoke that principle by willing acts of self-sacrifice or, alternatively, by allowing ourselves to be caught up in social spasms of sacrificial scapegoating, a parody of the personal sacrifices Christ asks of

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His faithful. Jason Jones knows all of this. He also knows from a lifetime of experience that today's poorly enculturated denizens of Western culture will try to escape from the inconsequence of a life without transcendence by fashioning pseudo-religious political imperatives out of some admixture of eroticism, political radicalism, narcotics, or any of the proliferating soul-numbing escapes now on offer, each leading inexorably to nihilistic fury in one of its myriad forms. Jones writes:

When the economy collapses, or war erupts, the only force strong enough to stop us from searching out scapegoats, or matching our enemies atrocity for atrocity, is a solid, intransigent moral code — one that we believe in so firmly that it can resist the shrill voice of expedience, or the roars of collective rage.

The roars of collective rage, indeed. Do not such roars now fill our cities and our daily news? Most of Jones's readers, praise God, may not live in proximity to such rage. But the gravitational power of such things cannot be overlooked. Carl Jung once said that when a wave of indignation sweeps the nation, you will probably find yourself among the sweepings. The world today is filled with such rage. It represents an almost instinctive urge to offload the whole farrago of resentment, confusion, disorientation, and spite born of spiritual emaciation from which no small number of our brothers and sisters now suffer.

Jones arms his readers with both bedrock moral, political, and economic principles and richly rewarding historical examples that give force and nuance to his argument. His is a steely-eyed account of our practical moral, political, and economic responsibilities. His analysis is grounded in his insistence on the centrality of the family as the first and most essential social institution and the indispensability of our Judeo-Christian heritage. An example he cites seems to

capture the essence of Jung's remark, one in which most of Jones's readers will recognize an eerily familiar nexus of social forces.

Had Germans in 1936 awakened their consciences and rejected the seductive excuses of legal positivism and metaphysical skepticism, few of them could have continued to cooperate in the preparation of aggressive war, mass genocide, or any of the other crimes that Hitler had openly promised to commit in his political manifestos and fervid speeches. There was still time to resist, and there were powerful elements in the German Army who were prepared to launch a coup against Hitler's regime, provided they saw sufficient public support for such a move. The seamless cooperation of Germany's famous bureaucracy, its punctilious judges and lawyers, and the faculty of its universities was essential to maintaining and solidifying the Nazi regime.

This passage was written before the outbreak of anti-Semitism that erupted across the Western world in the aftermath of Israel's response to the savage October 7 Hamas attack on Israeli civilians. Deracinated young people, their heads swimming with shallow slogans, seem completely unaware that they are reviving the fascism which, prior to the Hamas attack, they claimed to be opposing. Such are the ironies of our present situation.

This civilizational crisis is not just manifested in the troubled streets of our urban centers. We are being besieged by bureaucracies, judges, lawyers, and university faculties and an army of administrators who are systematically undermining the moral bedrock of our civilization and proclaiming manifestos completely at odds with commonsense and common decency.

Though he doesn't cite it directly, Jones is keenly aware of the ramifications of Justice Anthony Kennedy's almost casual remark in the Supreme Court's 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* case: "At

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the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." There is a word for Kennedy's reduction of liberty to personal choice: *nihilism*, one of the most salient manifestations of which was Pontius Pilate's "What is truth?" Pilate's shrugging nihilism was quickly echoed by the vulgar nihilism of the mob: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Echoes of that nexus of shrugging and vulgar nihilism are everywhere in our world today. As Jason Jones knows, the heart of true liberty is not self-will; it is one's power to subordinate his own comfort and convenience to the demands of truth and justice.

Our author also knows that persevering and remaining faithful will come at a cost: "We must hold fast to the truths about human life and morality that emerged from the biblical tradition and devote our lives to standing by them and rebuking their crass distortion. That won't be cheap, easy, or fun." Jones quotes his friend, John Zmirak:

We know for a cold, hard fact that there is a high-level conspiracy among our elites to sexualize children; to remove the last, lingering taboo against molesting them; and to strip their parents of the power to protect their innocence and even to raise them with religious values. The legislature of our country's largest state, California, is considering a bill that will allow courts to strip custody from parents for ... pushing back against school counselors who urge their children to mutilate their genitals and chemically castrate or sterilize themselves.

Of the many passages in which one might see the overall thrust of Jones's arraignment of the cultural shambles into which we have stumbled is this:

The old sacred books that old men quoted to thwart the free play of our desires, which we piled in bonfires or smirked at as curiosities, were more important than we realized. They held crucial information, the shibboleths needed to make men treat each other a certain way — a way we had come to take for granted. That way of treating people — respecting the weak, sacrificing for the young, venerating the old — emerged in human history as the side effect of specific assertions about the world. The most important was this one, whose implications for our ethics are almost infinite: that man is made in the image and likeness of God.

Lest we become preoccupied with grand schemes inherently beyond our control, Jason brings us back to the touchstone of the family. The family, he reminds us, “is the crucible where basic selfishness is refined into something nobler: a concern for the welfare of other human beings, first of all those with whom one has shared upbringing and blood, and then for those people we choose to marry, and then those whom we bring into this world through procreation.”

Not one for mincing words, Jones senses where the anti-natal spirit adopted by so many secular feminists and climate change ideologues will lead: “Perhaps we’ll even live to see natural pregnancy outlawed, having been deemed too burdensome for hospitals and too risky for mothers and infants. Imagine it — women could finally be equal. All they’d have to do is betray their own bodies. Lady Macbeth was prophetic when she called on demonic spirits to ‘unsex me’ as a prerequisite for her empowerment.”

The ideologues of the Nanny State want you alone. They want you atomized, abandoned, without family and community around you. They want you defenseless in every possible way. They want you addicted to social media which they control, either directly or by their algorithms.

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Jason Jones has issued a clarion call to his contemporaries, urging us to awaken to the gravity of the challenge before us. And he has provided, in great detail, a catalogue of these challenges and, more importantly, a call to meet these challenges by reawakening the enormous spiritual treasure trove our ancestors bequeathed to us. God bless him for doing so.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JASON JONES IS A film producer, author, activist, popular podcast host, and human rights worker. He is president of the Human-Rights Education and Relief Organization (H.E.R.O.), known for its two main programs, the Vulnerable People Project and Movie to Movement. He was the first recipient of the East Turkistan Order of Friendship Medal for his advocacy of the Uyghur people. Jones was an executive producer of *Bella* and an associate producer of *The Stoning of Soraya M.* His humanitarian efforts have aided millions in Afghanistan, Nigeria, and the Ukraine, as well as pregnancy centers and women's shelters throughout North America. Jones is a senior contributor to *The Stream* and the host of *The Jason Jones Show*. He is the author of two other books: *The Race to Save Our Century* and *The World Is on Fire*. His latest film, *Divided Hearts of America*, is available on Amazon Prime.



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