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DEEP STORIES:
NARRATIVE'S ROLE IN AMERICAN
RELIGION AND POLITICS

Reading Packet 1

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DEEP STORIES:

NARRATIVE'S ROLE IN AMERICAN RELIGION AND POLITICS

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Sessions's Use of Bible Passage to Defend Immigration Policy Draws Fire

By Julia Jacobs

- June 15, 2018 – The New York Times

Attorney General Jeff Sessions turned to the Bible this week to defend the Trump administration's immigration policy. His use of religious text to justify a federal policy drew some fire; the text itself drew more.

Many were concerned that Mr. Sessions's chosen chapter, Romans 13, had been commonly used to defend slavery and oppose the American Revolution.

Speaking to law enforcement officers in Fort Wayne, Ind., Mr. Sessions used a passage on Thursday to defend the right of the federal government to enforce a directive to prosecute everyone who crosses the border illegally. The directive has led to the fracturing of hundreds of migrant families, funneling children into shelters and foster homes.

Mr. Sessions said, "I would cite you to the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13, to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained the government for his purposes."

He added: "Orderly and lawful processes are good in themselves. Consistent and fair application of the law is in itself a good and moral thing, and that protects the weak, it protects the lawful."

Referring to the Bible in political speeches is nothing new, said John Fea, a professor of American history at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush did so liberally, for example. But using Scripture as an enforcement tool for a particular federal policy is of greater concern, Dr. Fea said.

"The founding fathers created the criminal justice system to be a largely secular criminal justice system," he said. "They didn't have in mind punishing criminals and condemning them using Bible verses."

And the passage he chose drew considerable criticism. Historians and theologians took to the internet to point out that Romans 13 has been used to defend antiquated or outright contemptible points of view.

Before the nation's founding, it was frequently used by Loyalists to oppose the American Revolution, Dr. Fea said. And in the 19th century, pro-slavery Southerners often cited

the chapter's opening verses to defend slavery — in particular, adherence to the Fugitive Slave Act, which required the seizure and return of runaway slaves.

Outside the United States, the passage was used by Christians in Europe to defend [Nazi rule](#) and by white religious conservatives in South Africa to [defend apartheid](#), an article in Slate [pointed out on Friday](#).

“It’s an endorsement of empire,” Gay L. Byron, a professor of the New Testament and early Christianity at the Howard University School of Divinity, said of the passage on Friday. “Whenever governments need to try to gain leverage in a debate, they say something like that.”

A Justice Department spokesman said in a statement Friday evening that Mr. Sessions cited the Bible in his speech because he was responding to religious leaders’ criticism of the zero-tolerance policy on illegal immigration.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, addressed the issue on Thursday in response to a reporter who asked, “Where does it say in the Bible that it’s moral to take children away from their mothers?”

Ms. Sanders responded that she was not aware of what Mr. Sessions was referring to but added that it is “biblical” for a government to enforce the law. “That is actually repeated a number of times throughout the Bible,” she said.

Several conservative Christian leaders have recently [come out in opposition](#) to President Trump’s immigration policy and its effect of separating migrant families. The Rev. Franklin Graham, son of the Rev. Billy Graham and an outspoken supporter of the president, has called it “disgraceful” to see families “ripped apart.” On Wednesday, a cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church called it “immoral” to separate mothers from their children.

Dr. Byron, the divinity school professor, said Mr. Sessions’s use of the passage is a classic case of a politician “cherry-picking” the Bible for statements that match their policy. “What’s missing is the fact that there are so many other biblical statements and mandates to take care of children and take care of those who are marginalized,” she said. “We don’t hear Sessions referencing those texts.”

Correction: June 18, 2018

An earlier version of this article misidentified a news outlet that described how Romans 13 has been used to defend Nazi rule and apartheid. It was Slate, not The Atlantic.

Mother Jones



I Spent 5 Years With Some of Trump's
Biggest Fans. Here's What They Won't Tell
You.

How Donald Trump took a narrative of unfairness and twisted it to
his advantage.

CHARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016

ISSUE

Stacy Kranitz

In a framed photo of herself taken in 2007, Sharon Galicia stands, fresh-faced and beaming, beside first lady Laura Bush at a Washington, DC, luncheon, thrilled to be honored as an outstanding GOP volunteer. We are in her office in the Aflac insurance company in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and Sharon is heading out to pitch medical and life insurance to workers in a bleak corridor of industrial plants servicing the rigs in the Gulf of Mexico and petrochemical plants that make the plastic feedstock for everything from car seats to bubble gum.

After a 20-minute drive along flat terrain, we pull into a dirt parking lot beside a red truck with a decal of the Statue of Liberty, her raised arm holding an M-16. A man waves from the entrance to an enormous warehouse. Warm, attractive, well-spoken, Sharon has sold a lot of insurance policies around here and made friends along the way.

A policy with a weekly premium of \$5.52 covers accidents that aren't covered by a

READ MORE: Rust Belt Democrats wage an uphill battle against Trump's promise to turn back time. *Pema Levy*

worker's other insurance—if he has any. “How many of you can go a week without your paycheck?” is part of Sharon's pitch. “Usually no hands go up,” she tells me. Her clients repair oil platforms, cut sheet metal, fix refrigerators, process chicken, lay asphalt, and dig ditches. She sells to entry-level floor sweepers who make \$8 an hour and can't afford to get sick. She sells to flaggers in highway repair crews who earn \$12 an hour, and to welders and operators who, with overtime, make up to \$100,000 a year. For most, education stopped after high school. “Pipe fitters. Ditch diggers. Asphalt layers,” Sharon says. “I can't find one that's not for Donald Trump.”

Sharon Galicia sells accident insurance to Louisiana laborers. Stacy Kranitz

I first met Sharon at a gathering of tea party enthusiasts in Lake Charles in 2011. I told them I was a sociologist writing a book about America's ever-widening political divide. In their 2008 book, *The Big Sort*, Bill Bishop and Robert Cushing showed that while Americans used to move mainly for individual reasons like higher-paid jobs, nicer weather, and better homes, today they also prioritize living near people who think like they do. Left and Right have become subnations, as George Saunders recently wrote in *The New Yorker*, living like housemates “no longer on speaking terms” in a house set afire by Trump, gaping at one another “through the smoke.”

I wanted to leave my subnation of Berkeley, California, and enter another as far right as Berkeley is to the left. White Louisiana looked like it. In the 2012 election, 39 percent of white voters nationwide cast a ballot for President Barack Obama. That figure was 28 percent in the South, but about 11 percent in Louisiana.

To try to understand the tea party supporters I came to know—I interviewed 60 people in all—over the next five years I did a lot of “visiting,” as they call it. I asked people to show me where they'd grown up, been baptized, and attended school, and the cemetery where their parents had been buried. I perused high school yearbooks and photograph albums, played cards, and went fishing. I attended meetings of Republican Women of Southwest Louisiana and followed the campaign trails of two right-wing candidates running for Congress.

When I asked people what politics meant to them, they often answered by telling me what they believed (“I believe in freedom”) or who they'd vote for (“I was for

Ted Cruz, but now I'm voting Trump"). But running beneath such beliefs like an underwater spring was what I've come to think of as a *deep story*. The deep story was a feels-as-if-it's-true story, stripped of facts and judgments, that reflected the feelings underpinning opinions and votes. It was a story of unfairness and anxiety, stagnation and slippage—a story in which shame was the companion to need. Except Trump had opened a divide in how tea partiers felt this story should end.

It was a story of unfairness and anxiety, stagnation and slippage—a story in which shame was the companion to need.

"Hey Miss Sharon, how ya' doin'?" A fiftysomething man I'll call Albert led us through the warehouse, where sheet metal had been laid out on large tables. "Want to come over Saturday, help us make sausage?" he called over the *eeeeech* of an unseen electrical saw. "I'm seasoning it different this year." The year before, Sharon had taken her 11-year-old daughter along to help stuff the spicy smoked-pork-and-rice sausage, to which Albert added ground deer meat. "I'll bring Alyson," Sharon said, referring to her daughter. Some days they'd have 400 pounds of deer meat and offer her some. "They're really good to me. And I'm there for them too when they need something."

These men had little shelter from bad news. "If you die, who's going to bury you?" Sharon would ask on such calls. "Do you have \$10,000 sitting around? Will your parents have to borrow money to bury you or your wife or girlfriend? For \$1.44 a week, you get \$20,000 of life insurance."

Louisiana is the country's third-poorest state; 1 in 5 residents live in poverty. It ranks third in the proportion of residents who go hungry each year, and dead last in overall health. A quarter of the state's students drop out from high school or don't graduate on time. Partly as a result, Louisiana leads the nation in its proportion of "disconnected youth"—20 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds in 2013 were neither in school nor at work. (Nationally, the figure is 14 percent.) Only 6 percent of Louisiana workers are members of labor unions, about half the rate nationwide.

Louisiana is also home to vast pollution, especially along Cancer Alley, the 85-mile strip along the lower Mississippi between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, with some 150 industrial plants where once there were sugar and cotton plantations. According to the American Cancer Society, Louisiana had the nation's second-highest incidence of cancer for men and the fifth-highest rate of male deaths from cancer. "When I make a presentation, if I say, 'How many of you know someone that has had cancer?' every hand is going to go up. Just the other day I was in Lafayette doing my enrollments for the insurance, and I was talking to this one guy. And he said, 'My brother-in-law just died. He was 29 or 30.' He's the third

person working for his company that's been in their early 30s that's died of cancer in the last three years. I file tons and tons of cancer claims."

Sharon also faced economic uncertainty. A divorced mother of two, she supported herself and two children on an ample but erratic income, all from commission on her Aflac sales. "If you're starting out, you might get 99 'noes' for every one 'yes.' After 16 years on the job, I get 50 percent 'yeses.'" This put her at the top among Aflac salespeople; still, she added, "If it's a slow month, we eat peanut butter."

The yard of a Trump supporter Stacy Kranitz

Until a few years ago, Sharon had also collected rent from 80 tenants in a trailer court. Her ex-husband earned \$40,000 as a sales manager at Pacific Sunwear, she explained, and helped with child support; altogether it allowed her to pay her children's tuition at a parochial school and stay current on the mortgage of a tastefully furnished, spacious ranch house in suburban Moss Bluff. She lived in the anxious middle.

And from this vantage point, the lives of renters in her trailer park, called Crestwood Community, had both appalled and unnerved her. Some of her tenants, 80 percent of whom were white, had matter-of-factly admitted to lying to get Medicaid and food stamps. When she'd asked a boy her son's age about his plans for the future, he answered, "I'm just going to get a [disability] check, like my mama." Many renters had been, she told me, able-bodied, idle, and on disability. One young man had claimed to have seizures. "If you have seizures, that's almost a surefire way to get disability without proving an ailment," she said. A lot of Crestwood Community residents supposedly had seizures, she added. "Seizures? Really?"

As we drove through the vacated lot, we passed abandoned trailers with doors flung open, tall grass pockmarked with holes where mailboxes once stood. Unable to pay an astronomical water bill, Sharon had been forced to close the trailer park, giving residents a month's notice and provoking their resentment.

In truth, Sharon felt relief. Her renters, she said, had been a hard-living lot. A jealous boyfriend had murdered his girlfriend. Some men drank and beat their wives. One man had married his son's ex-wife. Beyond that, Sharon had felt unfairly envied by them. "I've been called a rich bitch. They think Miss Sharon lives the life of Riley." And while her home was a 25-minute drive away, the life of her renters had felt entirely too close for comfort. "You couldn't talk to anyone at Crestwood whose teeth weren't falling out, gums black, missing teeth," adding that she gave out toothbrushes and toothpaste one Christmas. "My kids make fun of me because I brush my teeth so much."

To her, the trailer park both did and did not feel worlds away. For one thing, a person's standard of living, their worldview and basic identity, seemed already set on a floor of Jell-O. Who could know for sure how you would fare in the era of an expanding bottom, spiking top, and receding middle class?

Sharon's maternal grandfather had established a successful line of local furniture stores and shown how far up a man with gumption could rise. Sharon herself had graduated magna cum laude from McNeese State University in Lake Charles and been elected president of Republican Women of Southwest Louisiana. But her youngest brother had dropped out of high school and, while very bright and able-bodied, had not found his way. Her father, a plant worker who'd left her mom when Sharon was a teen, had remarried and moved to a trailer in Sulphur with his new wife, a mother of four. Looking around her, Sharon saw family and friends who struggled with bad relationships and joblessness. Some collected food stamps. "I don't get it," she said, "and it drives me nuts."

For Sharon, being on the dole raised basic issues of duty, honor, and shame. It had been hard to collect rent that she knew derived from disability checks, paid, in the end, by hardworking taxpayers like her. "I pay \$9,000 in taxes every year and we get nothing for it," she said. Like others I interviewed, she felt that the federal government—especially under President Obama—was bringing down the hardworking rich and struggling middle while lifting the idle poor. She'd seen it firsthand and it felt unfair.

"He's had like eight surgeries. He's still working, though. He doesn't want anything from the government. He's such a neat guy."

As we drove from the trailer park to her home, Sharon reflected on human ambition: "You can just see it in some guys' eyes; they're aiming higher. They don't want a handout." This was the central point of one of Sharon's favorite books, *Barefoot to Billionaire*, by oil magnate Jon Huntsman Sr. (whose son ran in the 2012 Republican presidential primary). Ambition was good. Earning money was good. The more money you earned, the more you could give to others. Giving was good. So ambition was the key to goodness, which was the basis for pride.

If you *could* work, even for pennies, receiving government benefits was a source of shame. It was okay if you were one of the few who really needed it, but not otherwise. Indignation at the overuse of welfare spread, in the minds of tea party supporters I got to know, to the federal government itself, and to state and local agencies. A retired assistant fire chief in Lake Charles told me, "I got told we don't *need* an assistant fire chief. A lot of people around here don't like *any* public employees, apart from the police." His wife said, "We were making such low pay that we could have been on food stamps every month and other welfare stuff. And

[an official] told our departments that if we went and got food stamps or welfare it would look bad for Lake Charles so that he would fire us.” A public school teacher complained, “I’ve had people tell me, ‘It’s the teachers who need to pass the kids’ tests.’ They have no idea what I know.” A social worker who worked with drug addicts said, “I’ve been told the church should take care of addicts, not the government.” Both receivers and givers of public services were tainted—in the eyes of nearly all I came to know—by the very touch of government.

Sharon especially admired Albert, a middle-aged sheet metal worker who could have used help but was too proud to ask for it. “He’s had open-heart surgery. He’s had stomach surgery. He’s had like eight surgeries. He’s still working, though. He wants to work. He’s got a daughter in jail—her third DUI, so he’s raising her son—and this and that. But he doesn’t want anything from the government. He’s *such* a neat guy.” There was no mention of the need for a good alcoholism rehab program for his daughter or after-school programs for his grandson. Until a few days before his death Albert continued working, head high, shame-free.

Rob Maness, a Republican candidate for US Senate in Louisiana, speaks at a tea party meet-and-greet. Stacy Kranitz

Sharon’s politics were partly rooted, it seemed, in the class slippage of her childhood. As the oldest of three, the “little mama” to two younger brothers, she said, “I got them up in the morning, made their beds for them, so my mama wouldn’t come down hard on them.” Sharon’s mother, the daughter of that prosperous furniture store owner, had grown up with a black maid who’d made her bed for her. She’d married a highly intelligent but high-school-educated plant worker, a Vietnam vet who never spoke of the war and seemed in search of peace and quiet. Privileges came and went in deeply unsettling ways and made a person want to hold on to a reassuring past. “One time when I had to travel to Florida on work, I left the kids with my mom, and Bailey called me for help: ‘Grandma’s forcing me to make her bed!’” Sharon answered, “I’m really sorry, Bailey; make her bed.”

With the proud memory of an affluent Southern white girlhood, her mother took a dim view of the federal government. She’d trained as a social worker, volunteered in a women’s prison, and remembered its inmates in her daily prayer. A devoted Christian, Sharon’s mother believed in a generous church. But government benefits were a very different story. Taking them meant you’d fallen and weren’t proudly trying to rise back up.

As we pulled up to her home, Sharon reflected on various theories her mother had. “Have you heard of the Illuminati? The New World Order?” Sharon asked so

as to prepare me. “I’m tea party,” Sharon said, “but I don’t go along with a lot that my mom does.” Whether they clung to such dark notions or laughed them off, tea party enthusiasts lived in a roaring rumor-sphere that offered answers to deep, abiding anxieties. Why did President Obama take off his wristwatch during Ramadan? Why did Walmart run out of ammunition on the third Tuesday in March? Did you know drones can detect how much money you have? Many described these as suspicions other people held. Many seemed to float in a zone of half-belief.

The most widespread of these suspicions, of course—shared by 66 percent of Trump supporters—is that Obama is Muslim.

What the people I interviewed were drawn to was not necessarily the particulars of these theories. It was the deep story underlying them—an account of life *as it feels* to them. Some such account underlies all beliefs, right or left, I think. The deep story of the right goes like this:

You are patiently standing in the middle of a long line stretching toward the horizon, where the American Dream awaits. But as you wait, you see people cutting in line ahead of you. Many of these line-cutters are black—beneficiaries of affirmative action or welfare. Some are career-driven women pushing into jobs they never had before. Then you see immigrants, Mexicans, Somalis, the Syrian refugees yet to come. As you wait in this unmoving line, you’re being asked to feel sorry for them all. You have a good heart. But who is deciding who you should feel compassion for? Then you see President Barack Hussein Obama waving the line-cutters forward. He’s on their side. In fact, isn’t he a line-cutter too? How did this fatherless black guy pay for Harvard? As you wait your turn, Obama is using the money in your pocket to help the line-cutters. He and his liberal backers have removed the shame from taking. The government has become an instrument for redistributing your money to the undeserving. It’s not your government anymore; it’s theirs.

I checked this distillation with those I interviewed to see if this version of the deep story rang true. Some altered it a bit (“the line-waiters form a new line”) or emphasized a particular point (those in back are *paying* for the line-cutters). But all of them agreed it was their story. One man said, “I live your analogy.” Another said, “You read my mind.”

A poultry worker in Lake Charles Stacy Kranitz

The deep story reflects pain; you’ve done everything right and you’re still slipping back. It focuses blame on an ill-intentioned government. And it points to rescue: The tea party for some, and Donald Trump for others. But what had happened to

make this deep story ring true?

Most of the people I interviewed were middle class—and nationally more than half of all tea party supporters earn at least \$50,000, while almost a third earn more than \$75,000 a year. Many, however, had been poor as children and felt their rise to have been an uncertain one. As one wife of a well-to-do contractor told me, gesturing around the buck heads hanging above the large stone fireplace in the spacious living room of her Lake Charles home, “We have our American Dream, but we could *lose it all* tomorrow.”

Being middle class didn't mean you felt secure, because that class was thinning out as a tiny elite shot up to great wealth and more people fell into a life of broken teeth, unpaid rent, and shame.

Growing up, Sharon had felt the struggle it took for her family to “stand in line” in a tumultuous world. Three years after her father wordlessly left home when she was 17, Sharon married, soon embracing a covenant marriage—one that requires premarital counseling and sets stricter grounds for divorce. But then they did divorce, and Sharon, once the little mother to her own siblings, now found herself a single mother of two—a mom and dad both. She was doing her level best but wondered why the travails of others so often took precedence over families such as her own. Affirmative-Action blacks, immigrants, refugees seemed to so routinely receive sympathy and government help. She, too, had sympathy for many, but, as she saw it, a liberal sympathy machine had been set on automatic, disregarding the giving capacity of families like hers.

Or as one tea partier wrote to me: “We're so broke. Where does this food & welfare money come from? How can free stuff (including college, which my 4.2 student needs) even be on the table when the US owes \$19,343,541,768,824.00 as of July 1? Is it just me or does it seem like the only thing ANYONE cares about is themselves and their immediate circumstances?”

Pervasive among the people I talked to was a sense of detachment from a distant elite with whom they had ever less contact and less in common. And, as older white Christians, they were acutely aware of their demographic decline. “You can't say ‘merry Christmas,’ you have to say ‘happy holidays,’” one person said. “People aren't clean living anymore. You're considered ignorant if you're for that.” An accountant told me, “Other people say, ‘You're too hard-nosed about [morals].’ Better to be hard-nosed than to be like it is now, so permissive about everything.” They also felt disrespected for holding their values: “You're a weak woman if you don't believe that women should, you know, just elbow your way through society. You're not in the ‘in’ crowd if you're not a liberal. You're an old-fashioned old fogey, small thinking, small town, gun loving, religious,” said a minister's wife. “The media tries to make the tea party look like bigots, homophobic; it's not.” They resented all labels “the liberals” had for them, especially “backward” or

“ignorant Southerners” or, worse, “rednecks.”

Dancing to a Cajun band at Fred's Lounge in Mamou, Louisiana Stacy Kranitz

Liberal television pundits and bloggers took easy potshots at them, they felt, which hardened their defenses. Their Facebook pages then filled with news coverage of liberals beating up fans at Trump rallies and Fox News coverage of white policemen shot by black men.

For some, age had also become a source of humiliation. One white evangelical tea party supporter in his early 60s had lost a good job as a sales manager with a telecommunications company when it merged with another. He took the shock bravely. But when he tried to get rehired, it was terrible. “I called, emailed, called, emailed. I didn't hear a thing. That was totally an age discrimination thing.” At last he found a job at \$10 an hour, the same wage he had earned at a summer factory union job as a college student 40 years ago. Age brought no dignity. Nor had the privilege linked to being white and male trickled down to him. Like Sharon's clients in the petrochemical plants, he felt like a stranger in his own land.

But among those walking in this wilderness, Trump had opened up a divide. Those more in the middle class, such as Sharon, wanted to halt the “line-cutters” by slashing government giveaways. Those in the working class, such as her Aflac clients, were drawn to the idea of hanging on to government services but limiting access to them.

Sharon was a giving person, but she wanted to roll back government help. It was hard supporting her kids and being a good mom too. Managing the trailer park had called on her grit, determination, even hardness—which she regretted. She mused, “Having to cope, run the trailer court, even threaten to shoot a dog”—her tenant's pet had endangered children—“it's hardened me, made me act like a man. I hate that. It's not really *me*.” There was a price for doing the right and necessary thing, invisible, she felt, to many liberals.

And with all the changes, the one thing America needed, she felt, was a steady set of values that rewarded the good and punished the bad. Sharon honored the act of giving when it came from the private sector. “A businessperson gives other people *jobs*,” she explained. She was proud to have employed two people at the trailer park, and sad she'd had to let them go. “I promised, ‘The whole month of October you're going to get paid because you're out looking for another job.’ That's a whole month. I feel an obligation.” If you rose up in business, you took others with you, and this would be a point of pride. There was nothing wrong with *having*; if you had, you gave. But if you took—if you took from the government—you should be

ashamed.

It was the same principle evident across the conservative movement, the one Mitt Romney had hewed to when he disparaged 47 percent of Americans as people who “pay no income tax” and “believe that they are victims,” or when Romney’s running mate, Paul Ryan, spoke of “makers and takers.” The rich deserve honor as makers and givers and should be rewarded with the proud fruits of their earnings, on which taxes should be drastically cut. Such cuts would require an end to many government benefits that were supporting the likes of Sharon’s trailer park renters. For her, the deep story ended there, with welfare cuts.

Sharon Galicia applies makeup. Stacy Kranitz

But for the blue-collar workers in the plants she visited, the guys who *loved Donald Trump*, it did not. When Sharon and I last had dinner in March, shortly after Trump’s 757 jet swooped into New Orleans for his boisterous rally ahead of his big win in the Louisiana primary, Sharon told me about conversations with her Aflac clients that had shocked her. “They were talking about getting benefits from the government as if it were a *good thing—even the white guys.*”

Sharon was leery of Trump and tried to puzzle out his appeal for them. “For the first few weeks I was very intrigued. I was like, ‘What is this guy talking about? He’s a jerk, but I like some of what he says.’ But when you really start listening, no!” What troubled her most was that Trump was not a real conservative, that he was for big government. “Is he going to be a dictator? My gut tells me yes, he’s an egomaniac. I don’t care if you’re Ronald Reagan, I don’t want a dictator. That’s not America.” So, I asked, what did her clients see in Trump? “They see him as very strong. A blue-collar billionaire. Honest and refreshing, not having to be politically correct. They want someone that’s macho, that can chew tobacco and shoot the guns—that type of manly man.”

EARLIER: Meet the white nationalists supporting Trump. David Goldman/AP

But something else seemed at play. Many blue-collar white men now face the same grim economic fate long endured by blacks. With jobs lost to automation or offshored to China, they have less security, lower wages, reduced benefits, more erratic work, and fewer jobs with full-time hours than before. Having been recruited to cheer on the contraction of government benefits and services—a trend that is particularly pronounced in Louisiana—many are unable to make

ends meet without them. In *Coming Apart: The State of White America*, conservative political scientist Charles Murray traces the fate of working-age whites between 1960 and 2010. He compares the top 20 percent of them—those who have at least a bachelor's degree and are employed as managers or professionals—with the bottom 30 percent, those who never graduated from college and are employed in blue-collar or low-level white-collar jobs. In 1960, the personal lives of the two groups were quite similar. Most were married and stayed married, went to church, worked full time (if they were men), joined community groups, and lived with their children.

A half-century later, the 2010 top looked much like their counterparts in 1960. But for the bottom 30 percent, family life had drastically changed. While more than 90 percent of children of blue-collar families lived with both parents in 1960, by 2010, 22 percent did not. Lower-class whites were also less likely to attend church, trust their neighbors, or say they were happy. White men worked shorter hours, and those who were unemployed tended to pass up the low-wage jobs available to them. Another study found that in 2005, men with low levels of education did two things substantially more than both their counterparts in 1985 and their better-educated contemporaries: They slept longer and watched more television.

How can we understand this growing gap between male lives at the top and bottom? For Murray, the answer is a loss of moral values. But is sleeping longer and watching television a loss of morals, or a loss of morale? A recent study shows a steep rise in deaths of middle-aged working-class whites—much of it due to drug and alcohol abuse and suicide. These are not signs of abandoned values, but of lost hope. Many are in mourning and see rescue in the phrase “Great Again.”

Trump's pronouncements have been vague and shifting, but it is striking that he has not called for cuts to Medicaid, or food stamps, or school lunch programs, and that his daughter Ivanka nods to the plight of working moms. He plans to replace Obamacare, he says, with a hazy new program that will be “terrific” and that some pundits playfully dub “Trumpcare.” For the blue-collar white male Republicans Sharon spoke to, and some whom I met, this change was welcome.

Still, it was a difficult thing to reconcile. How wary should a little-bit-higher-up-the-ladder white person now feel about applying for the same benefits that the little-bit-lower-down-the-ladder people had? Shaming the “takers” below had been a precious mark of higher status. What if, as a vulnerable blue-collar white worker, one were now to become a “taker” oneself?

Trump masculinizes benefits, but with a key proviso: restrict government help to real Americans.

Trump, the King of Shame, has covertly come to the rescue. He has shamed virtually every line-cutting group in the Deep Story—women, people of color, the disabled, immigrants, refugees. But he's hardly uttered a single bad word about unemployment insurance, food stamps, or Medicaid, or what the tea party calls "big government handouts," for anyone—including blue-collar white men.

In this feint, Trump solves a white male problem of pride. Benefits? If you need them, okay. He masculinizes it. You can be "high energy" macho—and yet may need to apply for a government benefit. As one auto mechanic told me, "Why not? Trump's for that. If you use food stamps because you're working a low-wage job, you don't want someone looking down their nose at you." A lady at an after-church lunch said, "If you have a young dad who's working full time but can't make it, if you're an American-born worker, can't make it, and not having a slew of kids, okay. For any conservative, that is fine."

But in another stroke, Trump adds a key proviso: restrict government help to real Americans. White men are counted in, but undocumented Mexicans and Muslims and Syrian refugees are out. Thus, Trump offers the blue-collar white men relief from a taker's shame: If you make America great again, how can you not be proud? Trump has put on his blue-collar cap, pumped his fist in the air, and left mainstream Republicans helpless. Not only does he speak to the white working class' grievances; as they see it, he has finally stopped their story from being politically suppressed. We may never know if Trump has done this intentionally or instinctively, but in any case he's created a movement much like the anti-immigrant but pro-welfare-state right-wing populism on the rise in Europe. For these are all based on variations of the same Deep Story of personal protectionism.

During my last dinner with Sharon, over gumbo at the Pujo Street Café in Lake Charles, our talk turned to motherhood. Sharon wanted to give Bailey and Alyson the childhood she never had. She wanted to expose them to the wider world, and to other ways of thinking. "When I was a kid, the only place I'd ever been, outside of Louisiana, was Dallas," she mused. "I want my kids to see the whole world." She'd taken them on an American-history tour through Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, DC, where nine years ago she'd lunched with Laura Bush. She'd taken them to Iceland, which "they loved," and she'd just scored three round-trip tickets for a surprise tour of Finland, Sweden, and Russia.

But Sharon's gift to her children of a wider world carried risks. Her thoughtful 17-year-old, Bailey, had been watching Bernie Sanders decry the growing gap between rich and poor, push for responsive government, and propose free college tuition for all. "Bailey likes Sanders!" Sharon whispered across the table, eyebrows raised. Sanders had different ideas about good government and about shame, pride, and goodness. Bailey was rethinking these values himself. "He can't stand Trump," Sharon mused, "but we've found common ground. We both agree we

should stop criminalizing marijuana and stop being the world's policeman, though we completely disagree on men using women's bathrooms." The great political divide in America had come to Sharon's kitchen table. She and Bailey were earnestly, bravely, searchingly hashing it out, with young Alyson eagerly listening in. Meanwhile, this tea party mom of a Sanders-loving son was reluctantly gearing up to vote for Donald Trump.

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FACTANK

NEWS IN THE NUMBERS

JANUARY 24, 2019

Like Americans overall, U.S. Catholics are sharply divided by party

BY MICHAEL LIPKA AND GREGORY A. SMITH

Politicians have long pursued the “Catholic vote” – a potentially big prize, given that the nation’s roughly [51 million Catholic adults](#) constitute the largest single religious institution in the United States. But while Catholics once were more [likely to vote Democratic](#), they have never been monolithic politically. Today, Catholics are evenly split between the two major parties and are [sharply polarized](#), much like the broader U.S. public.

[Roughly equal shares of Catholic registered voters](#) have identified with or leaned toward the Democratic and Republican parties in recent years (47% vs. 46%, respectively). And [according to exit polls](#), nearly identical shares of Catholics voted for Democrats (50%) and Republicans (49%) in 2018 elections for the U.S. House of Representatives. White Catholics are [more likely to vote](#) Republican, while Hispanic Catholics overwhelmingly back Democrats. (Most American Catholics are either white or Hispanic. Black and Asian Americans [each make up roughly 3%](#) of the U.S. Catholic population, according to the Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study.) Collectively, however, Catholics essentially balance themselves out at the polls on the national level.

Meanwhile, when it comes to a number of specific issues – including some on which Catholic teachings leave little room for doubt – Catholic partisans often express opinions that are much more in line with the positions of their political parties than with the teachings of their church.

Take abortion (which [the Catholic Church opposes](#)), for instance: Among Catholic Republicans and GOP leaners, 55% say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, identical to the share among all Republicans. ~~At~~ the same time, 64% of Catholic Democrats

and Democratic leaners say abortion should be *legal* in all or most cases — slightly lower than the share for Democrats overall (76%). On balance, however, Catholic Democrats are more likely to favor legal abortion than to oppose it.

Partisan dynamics also are at work regarding views about climate change. Pope Francis has [expressed a need to act on the issue](#), and like Pope Francis, eight-in-ten Catholic Democrats (along with 78% of Democrats overall) agree that the Earth is warming mostly because of human activity, such as burning fossil fuels. But just 22% of Catholic Republicans (and 24% of Republicans overall) say they believe the Earth is warming because of human activity.

Partisan gulfs among Catholics exist on several other issues, too — including views toward poverty and immigration, two areas in which the church has been active. Nearly two-thirds of Catholic Democrats (64%) say government aid to the poor does more good than harm because people can't get out of poverty until their basic needs are met, while just as many Catholic Republicans (67%) say government aid to the poor does more harm than good by making people too dependent on government assistance.

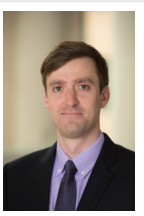
When it comes to immigration, Catholic Democrats also are much more likely than their Republican counterparts to say immigrants strengthen the country (86% vs. 47%), rather than being a burden. And nine-in-ten Catholic Democrats (91%) oppose substantially expanding the wall along the U.S. border with Mexico — while 81% of Catholic Republicans favor it, according to [a survey conducted by the Center earlier this month](#).

There are also gaps between Democratic Catholics and Republican Catholics on questions about homosexuality and same-sex marriage, but majorities in both groups express opinions that are arguably in opposition to church teachings. For instance, six-in-ten Catholic Republicans (59%) and three-quarters of Catholic Democrats (76%) say they think same-sex couples should be allowed to marry legally, despite the church's [opposition to gay marriage](#). Similarly, most in both groups say they think homosexuality should be accepted by society (69% among Catholic Republicans, 84% among Catholic Democrats).

There was a time when Catholics in both parties were largely united in their admiration for Pope Francis. But in recent months, even these views have become more polarized along party lines, with Catholic Democrats and Democratic leaners viewing Francis more

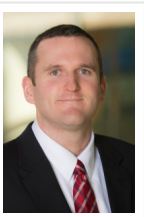
favorably than Catholic Republicans and GOP leaners. Among Catholics, Republicans are now much more likely than Democrats to say the pope is “too liberal” (55% vs. 19%) and “naïve” (32% vs. 18%). While most Catholic Democrats (67%) say Francis is doing an excellent or good job spreading the Catholic faith, just 45% Catholic Republicans say so. And as of early 2018, nearly twice as many Democrats (71%) as Republicans (37%) said Pope Francis represents a major change for the better.

Topics [Catholics and Catholicism](#), [Christians and Christianity](#), [Religious Affiliation](#), [Political Polarization](#), [U.S. Political Parties](#), [Political Attitudes and Values](#)



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NOVEMBER 7, 2018

How religious groups voted in the midterm elections

BY **ELIZABETH PODREBARAC SCIUPAC** AND **GREGORY A. SMITH**

Voters in North Carolina cast their ballots. (Logan Cyrus/AFP via Getty Images)

A preliminary analysis of the 2018 midterm elections finds considerable continuity in the voting patterns of several key religious groups. White evangelical or born-again Christians backed Republican candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives at about the same rate they did in 2014. Meanwhile, religiously unaffiliated voters (also known as religious “nones”) and Jewish voters once again backed Democratic candidates by large margins.

Three-quarters (75%) of white voters who describe themselves as evangelical or born-again Christians (a group that includes Protestants, Catholics and members of other faiths) voted for Republican House candidates in 2018, according to National Election Pool (NEP) exit poll data reported by [NBC News](#). That is on par with the share who did so in midterm elections in 2014 (78%) and 2010 (77%).

At the other end of the spectrum, seven-in-ten religious “nones” voted for the Democratic candidate in their congressional district, which is virtually identical to the share of religious “nones” who voted for Democratic candidates in 2014 and 2010. Roughly eight-in-ten Jewish voters (79%) cast their ballots for the Democrats, higher than the share who did so in 2014, but somewhat shy of 2006 levels. (Data on Jewish voters were not available in 2010.)

The 2018 exit polls show a slight shift in Catholic voting patterns compared with recent midterm elections. This year, Catholic voters were evenly split between the parties: 50%

avored the Democratic candidate for Congress in their district, while 49% favored the GOP's nominee. In the past two midterm elections (2014 and 2010), Catholics leaned in favor of Republican candidates by margins of roughly 10 percentage points.

Among Protestants, 56% voted for Republican congressional candidates and 42% backed Democrats. Among those who identify with faiths other than Christianity and Judaism (including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and many others), 73% voted for Democratic congressional candidates while 25% supported Republicans.

Voters who say they attend religious services at least once a week backed Republican candidates over Democrats in their congressional districts by an 18-point margin. Those who attend services less often tilted in favor of the Democratic Party, including two-thirds (68%) of those who say they never attend worship services.

Analysis of the religious composition of the 2018 midterm electorate shows that 17% of voters were religiously unaffiliated, up from 12% in 2014 and 2010. Meanwhile, 47% of voters in 2018 were Protestants, down from 53% in 2014 and 55% in 2010. There was little change in the share of voters who identify as Catholic, Jewish or with other faiths. And the 26% of 2018 voters who were white and identify as born-again or evangelical Christians is similar to other recent midterm elections.

This preliminary analysis reflects data for 2018 as published by [NBC News](#) as of 11 a.m. on Nov. 7, 2018. If data are subsequently reweighted by the National Election Pool (NEP), the consortium of news organizations that conducts the exit polls, the numbers reported here may differ slightly from figures accessible through the websites of NEP member organizations.

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21 Lessons
for the
21st Century

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YUVAL NOAH HARARI



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*To my husband, Itzik, to my mother, Pnina,
and to my grandmother Fanny,
for their love and support throughout many years*

Disillusionment

The End of History Has Been Postponed

Humans think in stories rather than in facts, numbers, or equations, and the simpler the story, the better. Every person, group, and nation has its own tales and myths. But during the twentieth century the global elites in New York, London, Berlin, and Moscow formulated three grand stories that claimed to explain the whole past and to predict the future of the entire world: the fascist story, the communist story, and the liberal story. The Second World War knocked out the fascist story, and from the late 1940s to the late 1980s the world became a battleground between just two stories: communism and liberalism. Then the communist story collapsed, and the liberal story remained the dominant guide to the human past and the indispensable manual for the future of the world—or so it seemed to the global elite.

The liberal story celebrates the value and power of liberty. It says that for thousands of years humankind lived under oppressive regimes that allowed people few political rights, economic opportunities, or personal liberties, and which heavily restricted the movements of individuals, ideas, and goods. But people fought for their free-

dom, and step by step, liberty gained ground. Democratic regimes took the place of brutal dictatorships. Free enterprise overcame economic restrictions. People learned to think for themselves and follow their hearts instead of blindly obeying bigoted priests and hide-bound traditions. Open roads, wide bridges, and bustling airports replaced walls, moats, and barbed-wire fences.

The liberal story acknowledges that not all is well in the world and that there are still many hurdles to overcome. Much of our planet is dominated by tyrants, and even in the most liberal countries many citizens suffer from poverty, violence, and oppression. But at least we know what we need to do in order to overcome these problems: give people more liberty. We need to protect human rights, grant everybody the vote, establish free markets, and let individuals, ideas, and goods move throughout the world as easily as possible. According to this liberal panacea—accepted, in slight variations, by George W. Bush and Barack Obama alike—if we just continue to liberalize and globalize our political and economic systems, we will produce peace and prosperity for all.¹

Countries that join this unstoppable march of progress will be rewarded with peace and prosperity sooner. Countries that try to resist the inevitable will suffer the consequences until they too see the light, open their borders, and liberalize their societies, their politics, and their markets. It may take time, but eventually even North Korea, Iraq, and El Salvador will look like Denmark or Iowa.

In the 1990s and 2000s this story became a global mantra. Many governments from Brazil to India adopted liberal recipes in an attempt to join the inexorable march of history. Those failing to do so seemed like fossils from a bygone era. In 1997 U.S. president Bill Clinton confidently rebuked the Chinese government, stating that its refusal to liberalize Chinese politics put it “on the wrong side of history.”²

However, since the global financial crisis of 2008 people all over the world have become increasingly disillusioned with the liberal story. Walls and firewalls are back in vogue. Resistance to immigra-

tion and to trade agreements is mounting. Ostensibly democratic governments undermine the independence of the judiciary system, restrict the freedom of the press, and portray any opposition as treason. Strongmen in countries such as Turkey and Russia experiment with new types of illiberal democracies and outright dictatorships. Today, few would confidently declare that the Chinese Communist Party is on the wrong side of history.

The year 2016—marked by the Brexit vote in Britain and the rise of Donald Trump in the United States—signified the moment when this tidal wave of disillusionment reached the core liberal states of Western Europe and North America. Whereas a few years ago Americans and Europeans were still trying to liberalize Iraq and Libya at gunpoint, many people in Kentucky and Yorkshire now have come to see the liberal vision as either undesirable or unattainable. Some discovered a liking for the old hierarchical world, and they just don't want to give up their racial, national, or gendered privileges. Others have concluded (rightly or wrongly) that liberalization and globalization are a huge racket empowering a tiny elite at the expense of the masses.

In 1938 humans were offered three global stories to choose from, in 1968 just two, and in 1998 a single story seemed to prevail. In 2018 we are down to zero. No wonder that the liberal elites, who dominated much of the world in recent decades, are in a state of shock and disorientation. To have one story is the most reassuring situation of all. Everything is perfectly clear. To be suddenly left without any story is terrifying. Nothing makes any sense. A bit like the Soviet elite in the 1980s, liberals don't understand how history deviated from its preordained course, and they lack an alternative prism through which to interpret reality. Disorientation causes them to think in apocalyptic terms, as if the failure of history to come to its envisioned happy ending can only mean that it is hurtling toward Armageddon. Unable to conduct a reality check, the mind latches onto catastrophic scenarios. Like a person imagining that a bad headache signifies a terminal brain tumor, many liberals

fear that Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump portend the end of human civilization.

FROM KILLING MOSQUITOES TO KILLING THOUGHTS

Our sense of disorientation and impending doom is exacerbated by the accelerating pace of technological disruption. The liberal political system was shaped during the industrial era to manage a world of steam engines, oil refineries, and television sets. It has difficulty dealing with the ongoing revolutions in information technology and biotechnology.

Both politicians and voters are barely able to comprehend the new technologies, let alone regulate their explosive potential. Since the 1990s the internet has changed the world probably more than any other factor, yet the internet revolution was directed by engineers more than by political parties. Did you ever vote about the internet? The democratic system is still struggling to understand what hit it, and it is unequipped to deal with the next shocks, such as the rise of AI and the blockchain revolution.

Already today, computers have made the financial system so complicated that few humans can understand it. As AI improves, we might soon reach a point when no human can make sense of finance anymore. What will that do to the political process? Can you imagine a government that waits humbly for an algorithm to approve its budget or its new tax reform? Meanwhile, peer-to-peer blockchain networks and cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin might completely revamp the monetary system, making radical tax reforms inevitable. For example, it might become impossible or irrelevant to calculate and tax incomes in dollars, because most transactions will not involve a clear-cut exchange of national currency, or any currency at all. Governments might therefore need to invent entirely new taxes—perhaps a tax on information (which will be both the most important asset in the economy and the only thing

exchanged in numerous transactions). Will the political system manage to deal with the crisis before it runs out of money?

Even more important, the twin revolutions in infotech and biotech could restructure not just economies and societies but our very bodies and minds. In the past, we humans learned to control the world outside us, but we had very little control over the world inside us. We knew how to build a dam and stop a river from flowing, but we did not know how to stop the body from aging. We knew how to design an irrigation system, but we had no idea how to design a brain. If a mosquito buzzed in our ear and disturbed our sleep, we knew how to kill the mosquito, but if a thought buzzed in our mind and kept us awake at night, most of us did not know how to kill the thought.

The revolutions in biotech and infotech will give us control of the world inside us and will enable us to engineer and manufacture life. We will learn how to design brains, extend lives, and kill thoughts at our discretion. Nobody knows what the consequences will be. Humans were always far better at inventing tools than using them wisely. It is easier to manipulate a river by building a dam than it is to predict all the complex consequences this will have for the wider ecological system. Similarly, it will be easier to redirect the flow of our minds than to divine what that will do to our personal psychology or to our social systems.

In the past, we gained the power to manipulate the world around us and reshape the entire planet, but because we didn't understand the complexity of the global ecology, the changes we made inadvertently disrupted the entire ecological system, and now we face an ecological collapse. In the coming century biotech and infotech will give us the power to manipulate the world inside us and reshape ourselves, but because we don't understand the complexity of our own minds, the changes we will make might upset our mental system to such an extent that it too might break down.

The revolutions in biotech and infotech are currently being started by engineers, entrepreneurs, and scientists who are hardly

aware of the political implications of their decisions, and who certainly don't represent anyone. Can parliaments and political parties take matters into their own hands? At present it does not seem so. Technological disruption is not even a leading item on the political agenda. During the 2016 U.S. presidential race, the main reference to disruptive technology concerned Hillary Clinton's email debacle, and despite all the talk about job loss, neither candidate addressed the potential impact of automation.³ Donald Trump warned voters that the Mexicans and Chinese would take their jobs, and that they should therefore build a wall on the Mexican border.⁴ He never warned voters that algorithms would take their jobs, nor did he suggest building a firewall on the border with California.

This might be one of the reasons (though not the only one) voters even in the heartlands of the liberal West are losing faith in the liberal story and in the democratic process. Ordinary people may not understand artificial intelligence and biotechnology, but they can sense that the future is passing them by. In 1938 the condition of the common person in the USSR, Germany, or the United States may have been grim, but he was constantly told that he was the most important thing in the world, and that he was the future (provided, of course, that he was an "ordinary person" rather than a Jew or an African). He looked at the propaganda posters—which typically depicted coal miners, steelworkers, and housewives in heroic poses—and saw himself there: "I am in that poster! I am the hero of the future!"⁵

In 2018 the common person feels increasingly irrelevant. Lots of mysterious words are bandied around excitedly in TED Talks, government think tanks, and high-tech conferences—globalization, blockchain, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, machine learning—and common people may well suspect that none of these words are about them. The liberal story was the story of ordinary people. How can it remain relevant to a world of cyborgs and networked algorithms?

In the twentieth century, the masses revolted against exploitation

and sought to translate their vital role in the economy into political power. Now the masses fear irrelevance, and they are frantic to use their remaining political power before it is too late. Brexit and the rise of Trump might therefore demonstrate a trajectory opposite to that of traditional socialist revolutions. The Russian, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions were made by people who were vital to the economy but who lacked political power; in 2016, Trump and Brexit were supported by many people who still enjoyed political power but who feared that they were losing their economic worth. Perhaps in the twenty-first century populist revolts will be staged not against an economic elite that exploits people but against an economic elite that does not need them anymore.⁶ This may well be a losing battle. It is much harder to struggle against irrelevance than against exploitation.

THE LIBERAL PHOENIX

This is not the first time the liberal story has faced a crisis of confidence. Ever since this story gained global influence, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it has endured periodic crises. The first era of globalization and liberalization ended in the bloodbath of the First World War, when imperial power politics cut short the global march of progress. In the days following the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo it turned out that the great powers believed in imperialism far more than in liberalism, and instead of uniting the world through free and peaceful commerce they focused on conquering a bigger slice of the globe by brute force. Yet liberalism survived the Franz Ferdinand moment and emerged from the maelstrom stronger than before, promising that this had been "the war to end all wars." It seemed that the unprecedented butchery had taught humankind the terrible price of imperialism, and now humanity was finally ready to create a new world order based on the principles of freedom and peace.

Then came the Hitler moment, when, in the 1930s and early 1940s, fascism seemed irresistible for a while. Victory over this threat merely ushered in the next. During the Che Guevara moment, between the 1950s and the 1970s, it again seemed that liberalism was on its last legs and that the future belonged to communism. In the end it was communism that collapsed. The supermarket proved to be far stronger than the gulag. More important, the liberal story proved to be far more supple and dynamic than any of its opponents. It triumphed over imperialism, over fascism, and over communism by adopting some of their best ideas and practices. In particular, the liberal story learned from communism to expand the circle of empathy and to value equality alongside liberty.

In the beginning, the liberal story cared mainly about the liberties and privileges of middle-class European men and seemed blind to the plight of working-class people, women, minorities, and non-Westerners. When in 1918 victorious Britain and France talked excitedly about liberty, they were not thinking about the subjects of their worldwide empires. For example, Indian demands for self-determination were answered by the Amritsar massacre of 1919, in which the British army slaughtered hundreds of unarmed demonstrators.

Even in the wake of the Second World War, Western liberals still had a very hard time applying their supposedly universal values to non-Western people. Thus when the Dutch emerged in 1945 from five years of brutal Nazi occupation, almost the first thing they did was raise an army and send it halfway across the world to reoccupy their former colony of Indonesia. Whereas in 1940 the Dutch gave up their own independence after little more than four days of fighting, they fought for more than four long and bitter years to suppress Indonesian independence. No wonder that many national liberation movements throughout the world placed their hopes on communist Moscow and Beijing rather than on the self-proclaimed champions of liberty in the West.

Gradually, however, the liberal story expanded its horizons, and

at least in theory came to value the liberties and rights of all human beings without exception. As the circle of liberty expanded, the liberal story also came to recognize the importance of communist-style welfare programs. Liberty is not worth much unless it is coupled with some kind of social safety net. Social-democratic welfare states combined democracy and human rights with state-sponsored education and healthcare. Even the ultracapitalist United States has realized that the protection of liberty requires at least some government welfare services. Starving children have no liberties.

By the early 1990s, thinkers and politicians alike hailed "the End of History," confidently asserting that all the big political and economic questions of the past had been settled and that the refurbished liberal package of democracy, human rights, free markets, and government welfare services remained the only game in town. This package seemed destined to spread around the whole world, overcome all obstacles, erase all national borders, and turn humankind into one free global community.⁷

But history has not ended, and following the Franz Ferdinand moment, the Hitler moment, and the Che Guevara moment, we now find ourselves in the Trump moment. This time, however, the liberal story is not faced by a coherent ideological opponent like imperialism, fascism, or communism. The Trump moment is far more nihilistic.

Whereas the major movements of the twentieth century all had a vision for the entire human species—be it global domination, revolution, or liberation—Donald Trump offers no such thing. Just the opposite. His main message is that it's not America's job to formulate and promote any global vision. Similarly, the British Brexiteers barely have a plan for the future of the Disunited Kingdom—the future of Europe and of the world is far beyond their horizon. Most people who voted for Trump and Brexit didn't reject the liberal package in its entirety—they lost faith mainly in its globalizing part. They still believe in democracy, free markets, human rights, and so-

cial responsibility, but they think these fine ideas can stop at the border. Indeed, they believe that in order to preserve liberty and prosperity in Yorkshire or Kentucky, it is best to build a wall on the border and adopt illiberal policies toward foreigners.

The rising Chinese superpower presents an almost mirror image of this scenario. It is wary of liberalizing its domestic politics, but it has adopted a far more liberal approach to the rest of the world. In fact, when it comes to free trade and international cooperation, Xi Jinping looks like Obama's real successor. Having put Marxism-Leninism on the back burner, China seems rather happy with the liberal international order.

Resurgent Russia sees itself as a far more forceful rival of the global liberal order, but though it has reconstituted its military might, it is ideologically bankrupt. Vladimir Putin is certainly popular both in Russia and among various right-wing movements across the world, yet he has no global worldview that might attract unemployed Spaniards, disgruntled Brazilians, or starry-eyed students in Cambridge.

Russia does offer an alternative model to liberal democracy, but this model is not a coherent political ideology. Rather, it is a political practice in which a number of oligarchs monopolize most of a country's wealth and power and then use their control of the media to hide their activities and cement their rule. Democracy is based on Abraham Lincoln's principle that "you can fool all the people some of the time, and some people all of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." If a government is corrupt and fails to improve people's lives, enough citizens will eventually realize this and replace the government. But government control of the media undermines Lincoln's logic, because it prevents citizens from realizing the truth. Through its monopoly over the media, the ruling oligarchy can repeatedly blame all its failures on others and divert attention to external threats, either real or imaginary.

When you live under such an oligarchy, there is always some cri-

sis or other that takes priority over boring stuff like healthcare and pollution. If the nation is facing external invasion or diabolical subversion, who has time to worry about overcrowded hospitals and polluted rivers? By manufacturing a never-ending stream of crises, a corrupt oligarchy can prolong its rule indefinitely.⁸

Yet though enduring in practice, this oligarchic model appeals to no one. Unlike other ideologies that proudly expound their vision, ruling oligarchies are not proud of their practices, and they tend to use other ideologies as a smoke screen. Thus Russia pretends to be a democracy, and its leadership proclaims allegiance to the values of Russian nationalism and Orthodox Christianity rather than to oligarchy. Right-wing extremists in France and Britain may well rely on Russian help and express admiration for Putin, but their voters would not actually like to live in a country that copies the Russian model—a country with endemic corruption, malfunctioning services, no rule of law, and staggering inequality. According to some measures, Russia is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with 87 percent of wealth concentrated in the hands of the richest 10 percent of people.⁹ How many working-class supporters of the National Front want to copy this wealth distribution pattern in France?

Humans vote with their feet. In my travels around the world I have met numerous people in many countries who wish to immigrate to the United States, Germany, Canada, or Australia. I have met a few who want to move to China or Japan. But I have yet to meet a single person who dreams of immigrating to Russia.

As for "global Islam," it attracts mainly those who were born in its lap. While it may appeal to some people in Syria and Iraq, and even to alienated Muslim youth in Germany and Britain, it is hard to see Greece or South Africa—not to mention Canada or South Korea—joining a global caliphate as the remedy to their problems. In this case too, people vote with their feet. For every Muslim youth from Germany who traveled to the Middle East to live under a Mus-

lim theocracy, probably a hundred Middle Eastern youths would have liked to make the opposite journey and start a new life for themselves in liberal Germany.

This might imply that the present crisis of faith is less severe than its predecessors. Any liberal who is driven to despair by the events of the last few years can recollect how much worse things looked in 1918, 1938, or 1968. At the end of the day, humankind won't abandon the liberal story, he might think, because it doesn't have any alternative. People might give the system an angry kick in the stomach but, having nowhere else to go, they will eventually return to it.

Alternatively, people might completely give up on having a global story of any kind and instead seek shelter in local nationalist and religious tales. In the twentieth century, nationalist movements were an extremely important political player, but they lacked a coherent vision for the future of the world other than supporting the division of the globe into independent nation-states. Indonesian nationalists fought against Dutch domination, and Vietnamese nationalists wanted a free Vietnam, but there was no Indonesian or Vietnamese story for humanity as a whole. When it came time to explain how Indonesia, Vietnam, and all the other free nations should relate to one another, and how humans should deal with global problems such as the threat of nuclear war, nationalists invariably turned to either liberal or communist ideas.

But if both liberalism and communism are now discredited, maybe humans should abandon the very idea of a single global story. After all, weren't all these global stories—even communism—the product of Western imperialism? Why should Vietnamese villagers put their faith in the brainchild of a German from Trier and a Manchester industrialist? Maybe each country should adopt a different idiosyncratic path, defined by its own ancient traditions. Perhaps even Westerners should take a break from trying to run the world, and focus on their own affairs for a change.

This is arguably what is happening all over the globe, as the vacuum left by the breakdown of liberalism is tentatively filled by nos-

talig fantasies about some local golden past. Donald Trump coupled his calls for American isolationism with a promise to "Make America Great Again"—as if the United States of the 1980s or 1950s was a perfect society that Americans should somehow recreate in the twenty-first century. The Brexiteers dream of making Britain an independent power, as if they were still living in the days of Queen Victoria and as if "splendid isolation" were a viable policy for the era of the internet and global warming. Chinese elites have rediscovered their native imperial and Confucian legacies as a supplement to or even substitute for the doubtful Marxist ideology they imported from the West. In Russia, Putin's official vision is not to build a corrupt oligarchy but rather to resurrect the old tsarist empire. A century after the Bolshevik Revolution, Putin promises a return to ancient tsarist glories with an autocratic government buoyed by Russian nationalism and Orthodox piety spreading its might from the Baltic to the Caucasus.

Similar nostalgic dreams that mix nationalist attachment with religious traditions underpin regimes in India, Poland, Turkey, and numerous other countries. Nowhere are these fantasies more extreme than in the Middle East, where Islamists want to copy the system established by the Prophet Muhammad in the city of Medina 1,400 years ago, while fundamentalist Jews in Israel outdo even the Islamists and dream of going back 2,500 years to biblical times. Members of Israel's ruling coalition government talk openly about their hope of expanding modern Israel's borders to match more closely those of biblical Israel, of reinstating biblical law, and even of rebuilding the ancient Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem in place of the Al-Aqsa mosque.¹⁰

Liberal elites look in horror at these developments and hope that humanity will return to the liberal path in time to avert disaster. In his final speech to the United Nations in September 2016, President Obama warned his listeners against retreating "into a world sharply divided, and ultimately in conflict, along age-old lines of nation and tribe and race and religion." Instead, he said, "the principles of open

markets and accountable governance, of democracy and human rights and international law . . . remain the firmest foundation for human progress in this century."¹¹

Obama has rightly pointed out that despite the numerous shortcomings of the liberal package, it has a much better record than any of its alternatives. Most humans never enjoyed greater peace or prosperity than they did under the aegis of the liberal order of the early twenty-first century. For the first time in history, infectious diseases kill fewer people than old age, famine kills fewer people than obesity, and violence kills fewer people than accidents.

But liberalism has no obvious answers to the biggest problems we face: ecological collapse and technological disruption. Liberalism traditionally relied on economic growth to magically solve difficult social and political conflicts. Liberalism reconciled the proletariat with the bourgeoisie, the faithful with atheists, natives with immigrants, and Europeans with Asians by promising everybody a larger slice of the pie. With a constantly growing pie, that was possible. However, economic growth will not save the global ecosystem; just the opposite, in fact, for economic growth is the cause of the ecological crisis. And economic growth will not solve technological disruption, for it is predicated on the invention of more and more disruptive technologies.

The liberal story and the logic of free-market capitalism encourage people to have grand expectations. During the latter part of the twentieth century, each generation—whether in Houston, Shanghai, Istanbul, or São Paulo—enjoyed better education, superior healthcare and larger incomes than the one that came before it. In coming decades, however, owing to a combination of technological disruption and ecological meltdown, the younger generation might be lucky to simply stay in place.

We are consequently left with the task of creating an updated story for the world. Just as the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution gave birth to the novel ideologies of the twentieth century, so the coming revolutions in biotechnology and information tech-

nology are likely to require fresh visions. The next decades might therefore be characterized by intense soul-searching and by the formulation of new social and political models. Can liberalism reinvent itself yet again, just as it did in the wake of the 1930s and 1960s crises, emerging as more attractive than ever before? Can traditional religion and nationalism provide the answers that escape the liberals, and might they use ancient wisdom to fashion an up-to-date worldview? Or perhaps the time has come to make a clean break with the past and craft a completely new story that goes beyond not just the old gods and nations but even the core modern values of liberty and equality.

At present, humankind is far from reaching any consensus on these questions. We are still in the nihilist moment of disillusionment and anger, after people have lost faith in the old stories but before they have embraced a new one. So what next? The first step is to tone down the prophecies of doom and switch from panic mode to bewilderment. Panic is a form of hubris. It comes from the smug feeling that one knows exactly where the world is heading: down. Bewilderment is more humble and therefore more clear-sighted. Do you feel like running down the street crying "The apocalypse is upon us"? Try telling yourself, "No, it's not that. Truth is, I just don't understand what's going on in the world."

The following chapters will try to clarify some of the bewildering new possibilities we face, and how we might proceed from here. But before exploring potential solutions to humanity's predicaments we need a better grasp of the challenge technology poses. The revolutions in information technology and biotechnology are still in their infancy, and it is debatable to what extent they are really responsible for the current crisis of liberalism. Most people in Birmingham, Istanbul, St. Petersburg, and Mumbai are only dimly aware, if at all, of the rise of artificial intelligence and its potential impact on their lives. It is undoubtable, however, that the technological revolutions will gather momentum in the next few decades and will confront humankind with the hardest trials we have ever

encountered. Any story that seeks to gain humanity's allegiance will be tested above all in its ability to deal with the twin revolutions in infotech and biotech. If liberalism, nationalism, Islam, or some novel creed wishes to shape the world of the year 2050, it will need not only to make sense of artificial intelligence, Big Data algorithms, and bioengineering but also to incorporate them into a new and meaningful narrative.

To understand the nature of this technological challenge, perhaps it would be best to start with the job market. Since 2015 I have been traveling around the world talking with government officials, businesspeople, social activists, and schoolkids about the human predicament. Whenever they become impatient or bored by all the talk of artificial intelligence, Big Data algorithms, and bioengineering, I usually need to mention just one magic word to snap them back to attention: jobs. The technological revolution might soon push billions of humans out of the job market and create a massive new "useless class," leading to social and political upheavals that no existing ideology knows how to handle. All the talk about technology and ideology might sound very abstract and remote, but the very real prospect of mass unemployment—or personal unemployment—leaves nobody indifferent.

Work

When You Grow Up, You Might Not Have a Job

We have no idea what the job market will look like in 2050. It is generally agreed that machine learning and robotics will change almost every line of work, from producing yogurt to teaching yoga. However, there are conflicting views about the nature of the change and its imminence. Some believe that within a mere decade or two, billions of people will become economically redundant. Others maintain that even in the long run automation will keep generating new jobs and greater prosperity for all.

So are we on the verge of a terrifying upheaval, or are such forecasts yet another example of ill-founded Luddite hysteria? It is hard to say. Fears that automation will create massive unemployment go back to the nineteenth century, and so far they have never materialized. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, for every job lost to a machine at least one new job was created, and the average standard of living has increased dramatically.¹ Yet there are good reasons to think that this time it is different and that machine learning will be a real game changer.

Humans have two types of abilities—physical and cognitive. In