

Born to Win

The Solitary Man

by Ronald L. Dart

Genesis 1

KJV

²⁷ So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Nearly everyone knows this verse by heart. The translators don't even want to change it, even though they may see some improvement in the language. It's just too familiar. But there's something here that I think lies unnoticed, even though it is *crucial* to the story. Going on a little later in the Book of Genesis—chapter 2, verse 18:

Genesis 2

KJ2000

¹⁸ And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.

So on the sixth day of creation, God not only created man and woman. He created something else. He created a relationship. We call it marriage. Don't make a mistake here; he really did *create* this relationship. It didn't just *fall out* as a result of a man and a woman being alone together without any clothes on (if that would do the trick). But no, no, it's *more* than that. It was not good for the man to be *alone*. He should have someone *with* him, alongside of him. And in this formulation, "It's not good for Man to be alone", God iterated a universal principle—a universal truth—that goes *far* beyond marriage. We know these things almost intuitively, but sometimes it isn't easy to express them clearly. Solomon, however, found a way. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, he said this:

Ecclesiastes 4

AKJV

⁹ Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor.

¹⁰ For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he has not another to help him up.

¹¹ Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

¹² And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Now, this is *so* obvious, so true—not only in the Bible, but in human experience—you would think that it would transcend all argument. But you would be wrong if you thought that.

In the 18th century, there was a Swiss-born French philosopher named Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He was one of the most influential thinkers and writers of the Enlightenment. And if you've read much of

history and political thought, you will have heard of him—usually in the best of terms. But ideas have consequences, and many of Rousseau’s ideas are *still* producing a lot of mischief in the 21st century. I’m indebted to Nancy Pearcey and her book, *Total Truth*, for some new insights into Rousseau’s theory of Man. She said this:

Rousseau said the way to grasp the essence of human nature was to hypothesize what we would be like if we were stripped of all social relationships, morals, laws, customs, traditions—of civilization itself. This original, pre-social condition he called the “state of nature.” In it, all that exists are lone, disconnected, autonomous individuals, whose sole motivating force is the desire for self-preservation—what Rousseau called self-love.

Nancy Pearcey - Total Truth

Now, it’s interesting as you read through this to think about it. What he’s asking us to do is to imagine the impossible. He’s to imagine us stripped of *all* of our social relationships—even of civilization itself. And all that we’re going to look at is this lone, disconnected, autonomous individual who has one and *one only* motivating force—self-preservation. Now, take special note: This is what Rousseau calls the original condition of Man—the *state of nature*. And take special note of the image of Man as alone, disconnected, autonomous individual has *no motivating force beyond self-love*. In French, it’s *amour de soi*. We may be hearing the first echoes here of what is today called “self-esteem”. The self-esteem movement today grows *straight from* Rousseau’s self-love—his *amour de soi*. Ms. Pearcey asks:

What did that mean for Rousseau’s view of society? If our true nature is to be autonomous individuals, then society is contrary to our nature: It is artificial, confining, oppressive. [...] For Rousseau, the really oppressive relationships were personal ones like marriage, family, church, and workplace. [...] This explains why it was so revolutionary when Rousseau proposed that individuals are the sole ultimate reality. He denounced civilization, with its social conventions, as artificial and oppressive.

Nancy Pearcey - Total Truth

Now, if you’re going try to take notes on this, don’t miss this one. Individuals, he said, are the *sole ultimate reality*. Now, *nothing* could be more contrary to the revelation of what God *really did*. Note this well: God created Man *in his own image*, male and female. And since God is a *family*, he created Man *in family*.

But let’s go back to Rousseau for a further moment. What do you suppose Rousseau advanced to *liberate* Man from the oppression of family, marriage, church, workplace? Now, fasten your seatbelt and get a grip on the steering wheel. I don’t want you to get whiplash from this. What liberates Man from the oppression of family, marriage, church, the workplace, even of civilization? The state.

The state would destroy all social ties, releasing the individual from loyalty to anything except itself [*the state*]. Rousseau spelled out his vision with startling clarity: “Each citizen would then be completely independent of all his fellow men, and absolutely dependent on the state.” No wonder his philosophy inspired so many totalitarian systems.

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Which it did.

[...] Robespierre in the French Revolution, as well as Marx, Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, and Mao. Even Pol Pot, who massacred a quarter of the population in Cambodia, was educated in Paris and read his Rousseau. [...] Rousseau theorized that the ideal legislator “should feel within himself the capacity to change human nature.”

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You think about that for minute. You’ve got a judge sitting on a court, you have a legislator sitting in Congress, and he feels within himself the capacity to *actually change human nature*.

For if human nature is indeterminate and can no longer be defined positively, then there is an unlimited space for the state to impose its own definition of human nature.

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That’s one of the most frightening things I’ve ever heard in my life. And I have to realize that this level of thinking has been around for a long time. It’s been there in academia. It’s penetrated our schools. It’s penetrated into Congress, and we have congressmen who sitting up there thinking how they can *improve* on human nature—how they make us over into a different image from what we have now. Nancy Pearcey continued:

In the state of nature, human beings are autonomous selves, with no ties to others except those they choose for themselves. Virtually by definition, then, any relationships not a product of choice are oppressive—such as the biological bonds of family, the moral bonds of marriage, the spiritual bonds of the church, or the genetic bonds of clan and race.

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Now it was right here, as I read about Rousseau’s theory of the social contract, that I began to understand finally the genesis of the language of abortion and a woman’s right to choose. When a woman becomes pregnant, she has entered into an *involuntary* relationship—forced to carry another life within her body. According to this line of political thought, the *natural* bond of mother and child are *oppressive*. She must be free to *choose* the relationship and not be forced to assume it. It seems that to be pro-choice is a *whole* lot more than just being pro-abortion. It has *huge* political and moral overtones.

When Rousseau came on the scene, the idea of the state as liberator was a totally new concept. It was certainly new to me, when I read it. When I read that Rousseau’s solution to the liberty of Man was *the state*, my first reaction was, “What?” It was Hannah Arendt...I have not read her book, but it was pointed out to me that in her book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she says that “disconnected, isolated individuals are actually the most vulnerable to totalitarian control because they have no competing identity or loyalties.” And when I think about it, I can kind of see how that works. Nancy Pearcey says:

That’s why one of the best ways to protect individual rights is by protecting the rights of groups such as families, churches, schools, businesses, and voluntary associations. *[I suppose even the country club.]* Strong, independent social groupings actually help to limit the state because each claims its own sphere of responsibility and jurisdiction, thus preventing the state from

controlling every aspect of life. [...] Contrary to Rousseau, protecting moral, social, and kinship bonds actually protects individual freedom.

Nancy Pearcey - Total Truth

Who'd have thought it? Unfortunately, I think an *awful* lot of the younger generation have been *profoundly* influenced by Rousseau's doctrine of radical autonomy. And a lot in the older generation have experienced what can happen in *spiritual* totalitarianism. It's kind of an odd thing to consider, but when all loyalties are subordinated to *one center* you can have *terrible* things happen—even in religious communities where all loyalties are given to one. Nancy Pearcey said:

In liberalism, the individual exists prior to its membership in moral communities such as marriage, family, church, and polity.

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But, you see, when you read *the Bible*, it was on the sixth day that male and female—man and woman—were created and put into a relationship right from the start. Man and woman were created *in relationship*. She said:

Thus for liberalism the core of our personhood is our ability to choose our own identity—to create ourselves. This is why relationships and responsibilities are often considered separate from, and even contradictory to, our essential identity—why individuals often feel they need to break free from their social roles (as husband, wife, or parent) in order to find their “true self.”

Nancy Pearcey - Total Truth

So here's kind of a summary she offered us:

[...T]he basic tenet of liberalism is that no individual can have an obligation to which he has not consented. All human attachments are to be dissolved, and then reconstituted on the basis of choice—that is, contracts. [...] Ideas like these do not remain purely abstract and academic. They filter down from professors to their students, who may well put them into practice.

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You know, if you really want to know where the Supreme Court found the right to privacy that's articulated in *Roe v. Wade*, you need look no further than Jean-Jacques Rousseau, because that is where it all began to come together.

Now, I have felt for a long time that a lot of the radio talk hosts and television talk show hosts paint with too broad a brush when they talk about “liberals this” and “liberals that” and “liberals the other thing”, but Nancy Pearcey, in her *Total Truth* helped me to clarify in my mind what that term actually *means*. The basic tenet of this is that no individual can have an obligation to which he has not consented. But the truth is we are *born* into obligations that we *must* consent to. It's a part of our nature. It's a part of the way we are made.

So why am I telling you all this? Well, because God did not create us to be divided all over the landscape—isolated from one another, a man all by himself, a solitary man, a man alone. When Jesus

came on the scene, one day he came to his disciples (you'll find this in the 16th chapter of Matthew) and he said:

Matthew 16

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¹³ [...] Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

¹⁴ And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

¹⁵ He said unto them, But whom say you that I am?

¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father who is in heaven.

¹⁸ And I say also unto you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church [*assembly*]; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.

Now, here's something you need to take away from this. "The church" is not a synonym for "Christians". It's not a term to be applied to scattered sheep. The church is an assembly, and it *isn't* a church until the individuals who make it up come together. If we think of ourselves along the lines of modern political thought (it may liberal, it may be conservative)...If we think of ourselves as autonomous individuals like atoms in space, the gates of hell might indeed overpower us. I'm persuaded that this is the point of what Jesus is saying. "The gates of hell" is just another way of saying that *together* we can defeat the most powerful force the enemy can throw against us. It's also a way of saying that if we don't hang together, we may hang separately. It was Peter who said:

1 Peter 5

AKJV

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour[.]

And guess what he's looking for: He's looking for the solitary man, the solitary woman. to the truth. To tell you the truth, I think we blame the devil too often for stuff he can't really pull off. And we often blame him for our own foolishness, our own stupidity. But there's *one truth* that cannot be avoided: We *do* have an enemy that has our destruction as his objective. And we are more vulnerable off by ourselves than we are when we are together. And that, kind of, is the sum of everything I've been trying to say to you all through this program. We are more vulnerable off by ourselves than we are when we are together.

Now, the reasons for this seem to me to be fairly obvious. In the Book of Hebrews, for example, the 10th chapter, the author tells us:

Hebrews 10

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²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

What he is saying is, "Hey, the church is a *support group*. It makes demands on us and it offers us help at the same time. We've got to be together so we can *spur one another on*. We've got to be there so we can *encourage* one another. And we must not *give in* to the habit of staying away and alone." But there's another level of this that we have to think about: Is it really a good idea for *your church* to be

out there all by itself? Consider a fairly mundane example: During the reign of Claudius Caesar, there was a *terrible* drought throughout the known world. It was not a total surprise, however, to the church. You find back in Acts 11 that:

Acts 11

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²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,

²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

²⁷ During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)

²⁹ The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Now that's a really quick in-and-out by Luke on this subject in Acts. He just tells us it was prophesied it was going to happen and the church (actually, as it turns out, throughout the Roman world) responded because they wanted to send contributions. Not of money; that wouldn't have helped. When there's no food, you can't buy anything. But to send *food* to Jerusalem so that the saints there would survive the coming famine.

Now, there's an interesting section in both of Paul's letters to the Corinthians. The first one is in **1 Corinthians 16**. The second section is a much longer section in **2 Corinthians, chapter 8**. And the point of these is the *whole effort* of putting this contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem together. Apparently there was grain—there was food—in Greece. And so in Corinth in the south, in the northern provinces of Greece, and across the isthmus there in Troas, all of the people in the churches were putting this stuff together. And Paul, Barnabas, and the others collected it all up, took ship, and brought it to Jerusalem.

Now, one of the really interesting things (in Acts and in Paul's letters): There is not a *hint* of authoritarian administration in the whole thing. *Someone*—a prophet—saw what was coming and told people about it. *The people* went to work and met the need. And they were able to do this without email; without cell phones; without the internet; without the printing press; without cars, SUVs, trains, trucks, or airplanes. They traveled on foot, on donkeys, on sailing ships—sailing ships I'd be afraid to embark on. And they could put us to shame. I might have said that but, you know, I have *really* been impressed with the way the churches all came together after the terrible hurricanes of 2005 and took care of one another and a lot of people who weren't even Christians.

So what am I saying? What I'm saying is it's not good for Man to be alone. It's not good for us to isolate ourselves. It's not good for us to go off in our little church, even, here in our own community, and isolate ourselves from the other churches in our community. The time may come when we will need each other a great deal more than we might imagine today. There's an obscure prophecy in Malachi that reveals something very important about this. The prophecy is in Malachi 3. Malachi is really taking these people to task because of the way they were responding to God.

Malachi 3

AKJV

¹³ Your words have been stout against me, said the LORD. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against you?

¹⁴ You have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance,

and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? [*What good does it do? What's the point?*]

¹⁵ And now we call the proud happy; yes, they that work wickedness are set up; yes, they that tempt God are even delivered.

“Not a good thing”, says God. Then comes this fascinating statement:

Malachi 3

AKJV

¹⁶ Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD listened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought on his name.

¹⁷ And they shall be mine, said the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.

You know, it's a *staggering* thing to consider that when we pick up the phone to call a brother who is down the dumps—with some encouragement, with some news—someone, right in the presence of God, writes that down in a book that God keeps. When you send an email prayer request to people you know about someone *they* know, that's written down in God's book of remembrance. It's there. It's unambiguous. There is a book of remembrance in front of God, and somebody sits there and writes this stuff down. Now, I don't exactly how it happens, but I certainly believe what I read here. When we communicate back and forth about church projects and plans, it all goes into the book. When we struggle with doctrinal and theological issues, exchanging scriptures and doing our best to understand one another, it goes down into the book. It is a book of remembrance, which means God will never forget it.

Now, why do you think that is? I don't know, but one thing is abundantly clear: It is *vitaly important* that we communicate. And not just among our own little church circle; we need to think bigger than that. When hurricane Katrina rolled through Louisiana—followed by Rita—did you notice that it was the churches who were providing most of the shelter and clothing and food for evacuees? Do you think a Methodist would turn down shelter in a Catholic church? Would a Baptist church refuse you shelter because you were another breed of Christian? You know they wouldn't. You *know* they would not turn you away. How could one kind of Christian look down his nose at someone who is giving him food and clothes and shelter because they weren't the right *kind* of a Christian?

What's my point? The day may come when people who name the name of Jesus are all going to have to hang together. And we need for the world to see us united in Jesus Christ even though we may bicker over the details. Jesus said:

John 13

AKJV

³⁵ By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.

So what am I to think when a local Baptist church loves me enough to give me shelter from the storm?

We are the salt of the earth, and nothing I am saying should be construed to mean that I think that each of us—each church, each group—should lose our distinct flavor. We should by all means be who we are and stand for what we stand for. But we should also *stay in touch* with those who don't taste quite the same. I would love to share my salt with any brother.

I don't know where God is leading us, but the wind of the Spirit is moving the leaves on the tree, and all of us need to be bigger in heart and soul and spirit, and we need to share ourselves with others. We

need to be in church. Our church needs to be in communication with others. Our denomination needs to be in communication with others.

Malachi 3

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¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.

Until next time, I'm Ronald Dart.

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