I. INTRODUCTION


II. THE ASSAULT ON THE PAST

In 1984, the main character, Winston Smith, has a vague recollection of his family from his childhood years and remembers his wife Katharine, a woman who mysteriously disappeared from his life during the purges after the revolution. A man without a wife and family, Winston’s entire past has been erased along with the history of England. In his official position at the Ministry of Truth, Winston is engaged in revisionist history by altering facts to fit the propaganda of Big Brother and deleting information and records that do not conform to ideological theory. As O’Brien, one of the powerful members of the Communist Party states, “We, the Party,
control all records, and we control all memories.” Winston’s only contact with the truth of the past is his own memory, not the official records of the Ministry of Truth. As he explains to his lover Julia, “Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered” (128). Winston realizes the richness of the glorious past when he visits the antique shop and marvels at the beauty of an old mahogany bed, the craftsmanship of an old-fashioned glass clock, and a rare sculptured glass paperweight shaped in the form of a rose all works of art that evoke in Winston “a sort of nostalgia, a sort of ancestral memory” (82). Such craftsmanship is banned from Oceania because beautiful art lifts the heart and soul to a contemplation of eternal realities that transcend Big Brother, the Party, and the Revolution.

In *Brave New World*, Mustapha Mond, the Controller of this utopian society, explains that censorship is required in the New World to eliminate the influence of the past upon the present and to prevent a critical comparison between the way things are and the way they ought to be: “We haven’t any use for old things here. ... Particularly when they’re beautiful. Beauty’s attractive, and we don’t want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones.” Thus the great art, literature, and wisdom of earlier cultures are banished from Brave New World: Shakespeare’s plays, the Bible, and other literary works are all notably absent from the schools, libraries, and society of *Brave New World*. Old age is not associated with wisdom but with the ugliness of aging: missing teeth, wrinkles on the face, and the flabbiness of the body. Mandatory euthanasia at age sixty maintains health and youth as supreme values in *Brave New World* and accents the cult of the new, the young, and the modern at the expense of the traditional, the old, and the past: “Youth almost unimpaired until sixty, and then, crack! the end” (111). The ideological strategy of the *Brave New World*, the Controller explains, has been “to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness.” That is, whereas “knowledge was the highest good, truth the supreme value” (234) in past ages, utility, efficiency, ease, and instant gratification are the *sumnum bonum* in the utopia of the modern world.

In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke explains how the revolutionaries have disowned a great moral legacy in their irreverence toward the past and shown contempt for France’s noble traditions that cultivated the land of saints and knights. In attacking monarchy, priesthood, and hierarchy (the basis for French civilization), the Jacobins have terminated “the great primaeval contract of eternal society,” the partnership between the generations that links those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. A relationship between a society and its past that Burke compares to that between children and their father: “we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are prompted rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces” (194). To Burke, the moral traditions and civilized norms of a society deserve the same kind of reverence and awe that are due to a venerable parent or ancestor. Burke views the moral corruption of the French Revolution as a reversion to barbarism and a violation of “all natural sense of wrong and right” a radical “revolution in sentiment, manners, and moral opinions” that subverts “antient (sic) institutions” and “antient principles” (175). To Burke the past represents an invaluable “inheritance from our forefathers” founded upon “precedent, authority, and example” (117).

In the culture wars that accompany the sexual revolution, Supreme Court judges also dismiss the old for the new. They invent law rather than interpret the Constitution as constructionists, decreing as “unconstitutional” time-honored moral prohibitions against such evils as abortion and homosexuality. The legalization of abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and sodomy in the name of “privacy” are all direct assaults against ancient, enduring moral traditions and are a violation of the natural law tradition in American jurisprudence. Universities dismiss the wisdom of the ages as the patriarchal bias of “dead white males” and the bigotry of Eurocentric dogmatism, substituting gender studies, cultural studies, and feminist studies for the great classics of Western civilization. The modern contraceptive mentality has divorced sexuality from marriage and procreation, substituting the ideology of “safe sex” for the perennial virtue of chastity and relegating the universal commandment “Thou shalt...
not commit adultery” to mere religious opinion.

III. THE ATTACK UPON MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

After judging the past as a record of unenlightened ideas determined by bias, ignorance, or oppression, ideological revolutions attack the institution of the family and marriage as impediments to the Brave New Worlds of the future. In 1984, Big Brother does not allow members of the Party the natural right to marry and establish a family. Winston Smith is forbidden to court a woman, to fall in love, or to satisfy his natural desire for fatherhood. Big Brother cultivates sexlessness among the women in the party, who deliberately avoid beautifying themselves or accenting their femininity: “He had never before seen or imagined a woman of the Party with cosmetics on her face” (118). Notorious for its sexual puritanism, the Party promotes its agenda of the supremacy of the state and demotes the primacy of the family through the Junior Anti-Sex League, an organization that discourages romance. On the other hand, in the Prole district where the common people are allowed to marry and have children, sexual permissiveness is the rule: “promiscuity went unpunished; divorce was permitted” (62). Thus Winston suffers the fate of a man living in a sexless society denied the normal pleasures of courtship, romance, love, and marriage. The natural attraction between the sexes is a forbidden pleasure for Winston because it would commit his life to a family rather than to the state. A kind of Manichaean contempt for marriage and procreation on the one hand, and sexual liberation on the other both serve to undermine the foundations of marriage and the family in 1984.

In Brave New World, the family has been made obsolete because children are conceived in test tubes in an assembly-line production in the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre. They are reared in government-controlled nurseries where they are conditioned for their social destiny as determined by the Controllers of the state. Neo-Pavlovian behavior modification involving electric shock, loud noises, and hypnopædia (sleep-teaching) indoctrinate the child’s mind with mechanical responses and mindless slogans: “Till at last the child’s mind is these suggestions, and the sum of these suggestions is the child’s mind” (28). Love and life are separated, and sexuality and procreation are divorced in Brave New World. The motto of the day is “civilization is sterilization,” (11) and the words “mother” and “father” stigmatized: “To say one was a mother—that was past a joke: it was an obscenity.” (55) Natural conception, rather than test-tube conception in a modern fertilizing room, carries with it a stigma, the pejorative phrase “gross viviparous reproduction,” and fatherhood is equally disgusting: “The word [father] was not so much obscene as... merely gross, a scatological rather than pornographic impropriety” (153). While incubators and test-tubes replace mothers and fathers and nurseries assume the role of families, men and women pursue the cult of pleasure in the form of the drug, soma (“Euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinant”), the “Feelies” (pornographic movies), and fornication (“Everyone belongs to everyone else,” 43). By pandering to the carnal nature of man and exploiting human nature’s propensity for sloth, the Controllers of Brave New World achieve their ideological revolution through the temptations of consumerism, a high standard of living, and uninhibited sexual pleasure.

Burke condemned the atrocities of the French Revolution for the hardheartedness, violence, and bloodshed that resulted in the slaughtering of kings, queens, and the children of royalty at the guillotine. He found it morally repulsive that young children “with the tender age of young infants, insensible only through infancy and innocence of the cruel outrages to which their parents were exposed” were subjected to cruel massacre, and Burke considered it barbaric for the Jacobins in their fanatical madness to kill women and children. Recoiling in horror, Burke writes,

As things now stand, with every thing respectable destroyed without us, and an attempt to destroy every principle of respect, one is almost forced to apologize for harbouring the common feelings of mankind. (175)

To Burke, the most venerable moral ideals and most civilized manners enshrined in Western civilization—chivalry, honor, knighthood, and “the spirit of a gentleman” have been abandoned in the name of political innovation, as evil becomes good and good evil:

All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the super-added ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns and the understanding ratifies, as necessary
to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion. (171)

In short, the ideological attack on morals, manners, and “the common feelings of mankind” reduces man to the level of an animal and undoes centuries of education, refinement, and civilization. Common decency, respect for women and children, and the sense of the sacredness of human life are all denigrated to the realm of the absurd or the antiquated-in modern parlance, to the religious opinions of extremists.

A similar phenomenon occurs in the contemporary culture wars. “All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off,” as innocent children lose their modesty in their exposure to sex education and sodomy in the public schools. “One is almost forced to apologize for the common feelings of men,” as Christians are accused of intolerance, homophobia, and extremism when they call abortion murder, refer to sodomy as perversion, or object to sex education as indoctrination. To allude to “safe sex” as fornication, to condemn contraception as selfishness, and to object to abortion as the destruction of innocent life is to be vulnerable to the criticism of religious bigotry, of outdated ideas that smack of “a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion.” Indeed the practice of partial-birth abortions further verifies Burke’s judgment of the French Revolution: “But the age of chivalry is gone,” and it proves beyond a doubt that a revolution has occurred in “the moral sentiments”—a loss of “all natural sense of wrong and right.” The chivalrous defense of the innocent, the Christian knight’s protection of women and children, and every vestige of honor and nobility vanish as might becomes right in the war against the unborn. The cruelty of partial-birth abortions—a physician puncturing a hole in the skull of the infant and suctioning its brains seconds before it is born—should, in Burke’s words, “shock the moral sentiments of all virtuous and sober minds” as much as women and children being beheaded at the guillotine.

The revolution in moral sentiments that has followed the cultural wars has created the “culture of death” described by Pope John Paul II. The contraceptive mentality, legalized abortion, no-fault divorce, and physician-assisted suicide all exemplify the ideology of *Brave New World*, where “civilization is sterilization” and “ending is better than mending.” In Huxley’s novel, as in contemporary society, people organize their lives around the availability of contraception and abortion. Typical of all the women in her society, Lenina “wore a silver mounted green morocco-surrogate cartridge belt, bulging ... with the regulation supply of contraceptives” (50). In being administered physician-assisted suicide at age sixty, she is given extra dosages of the drug soma with the promise of enjoying “an eternal soma holiday” of euphoric peace and the consolation of knowing that “we can go on being socially useful even after we’re dead. Making plants grow” (73). The revolution in moral sentiments in the culture wars has led to a transformation of the definitions and meanings of good and evil: the evils of contraception, abortion, euthanasia, divorce, and homosexuality have all been either legalized or acquired respectability, and the moral sentiments that acknowledge the sacredness of the moral law and the sanctity of human life are constantly being subverted in legislatures, courts, schools, and the media. No-fault divorce, daycare institutions, single-parent families, radical feminism, gay rights, and population control have all factored into ideological attacks upon the family to the point where United Nations conferences no longer define a family as consisting of a father, mother, and children but as having a “plurality of forms,” and no longer recognize sexuality as maleness or femaleness but also as homosexuality, lesbianism, and bisexuality. Thus the culture wars in many ways exceed even the excesses of 1984 and *Brave New World*, where the notion of same-sex marriages and the idea of gender plurality never appears.

Both in 1984 and *Brave New World*, religion is removed from the lives of people, and Christianity becomes a relic of the past. When Winston discovers a picture of a church in the antique shop in the Prole district, fond memories of the past awaken as he remembers the rhyme, “Oranges and lemons say the bells of St. Clement’s” (84). The church had been converted into a museum with various propaganda displays, and every vestige of the sacred had been destroyed after the political revolution had replaced God with Big Brother: “Everything
faded into the mist. The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth” (64). Without religion as a cultural force, modern life in 1984 lacks a transcendent dimension and acquires an insufferable blandness and dullness: “It struck him that the truly characteristic thing about modern life was not its cruelty and insecurity, but simply its bareness, its dinginess, its listlessness” (63). In Brave New World, God has been replaced with science and technology that conjure utopian visions of efficiency, comfort, and pleasure. Mustapha Mond the Controller explains, “God isn’t compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness” (240).

The dystopias of both 1984 and Brave New World portray religion as a form of ignorance and superstition that hearkens to the dark ages, as an impediment to freedom, progress and to a world order where totalitarian regimes determine truth, law, and morality. In 1984, Big Brother distinguishes between the “enlightened” modern world, the product of the Communist revolution, and the benighted middle ages, the victim of religion. In Orwell’s novel, Big Brother manipulates the entire objective order of reality, even calling into question that “stones are hard” and “water is wet.” Winston’s greatest fear is that Big Brother will dictate that “two and two made five, and you would have to believe it” (65). In 1984, a man replaces God, the state separates itself from the Church, and propaganda substitutes itself for common sense and Truth. In Brave New World, religion serves no practical purpose and is an outdated idea. The Controller argues that Christianity is obsolete and superfluous: humans no longer need the comforts and consolations of religion because the Brave New World has eliminated pain, suffering, tragedy, and grief. “Getting rid of everything unpleasant instead of learning to put up with it” (245) displaces redemptive suffering. Uninhibited sexual license, an unending supply of the drug soma, and euthanasia render the life of virtue redundant: “There isn’t any need for a civilized man to bear anything that’s seriously unpleasant,” (243) the Controller elaborates. Self-denial, chastity, heroism, and nobility are archaic virtues in a society whose idea of happiness consists of “seven and a half hours of mild, unexhausting labour, and then the somoration and games and unrestricted copulation and the feelies” (230). The Controllers in Brave New World assume the role of Divine Providence and act as the arbiters of life and death from the test tubes in the Fertilizing Room to the Death-Conditioning that culminates in the Slough Crematorium.

Like their literary counterparts, the radicals of the French Revolution also attacked the traditional foundations of the social order. Inspired by skeptical, atheistic freethinkers who mocked religion, the Jacobins conceived of the state as a purely human institution governed by the light of abstract reason and emancipated from the superstitions of religion. In contrast, Burke argues that “All other nations have begun the fabric of a new government, or the reformation of an old... by some rites or other of religion” (124-125). Burke expresses outrage at the blasphemy and sacrilege of the Reign of Terror, which witnessed the murder of bishops and the seizure of church property and savaged two of mankind’s noblest institutions, monarchy and religion. In Burke’s view, “man is by his constitution a religious animal,” (187) and “religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and all comfort” (186). Unlike the Enlightenment thinkers who viewed religion as an oppressive burden interfering with progress, Burke equates Christianity with culture: the “Christian religion... has been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us” (188). Cherishing tradition rather than innovation and esteeming the accumulated experience of the entire human race rather than the abstract theory of rationalist philosophers, Burke defends the timeless moral wisdom of the world, a wisdom perpetuated by religion:

We know that we have made no new discoveries; and we think that no discoveries are to be made in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born. (182)

The culture wars are fought by some on the presumption that man has discovered a new morality independent of the Bible, two thousand years of Christian tradition, and the natural law—what Burke calls “the
collected reason of ages.” Contraception violates both traditional Catholic teaching and the Protestant morality of Calvin, Luther, and Wesley. Abortion and euthanasia undermine the original ancient Hippocratic Oath that forbids physicians to assist at abortions or suicides: “I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; furthermore, I will not give to a woman an instrument to procure an abortion.” The legalization and tolerance of homosexuality as normative, legitimate behavior or as an “alternative lifestyle” not only defies the self-evident truth of the natural law that man and woman are created for each other in love and marriage and for the procreation and education of children but also repudiates Old and New Testament teaching about the evil of sodomy. Radical feminism attacks the hierarchical nature of the family and society, denying the natural, complementary differences between man and woman and claiming that sexual equality demands that women are entitled to a “safe, legal” abortion that will grant them the same freedom from childbearing that men possess. Also, radical feminism considers marriage as an enslaving patriarchal custom rather than as an institution ordained by God and elevated to the status of a sacrament. Thus the culture wars have resulted in a new morality that has supplanted the moral wisdom of the natural law tradition and Biblical teaching. Fathers urging abortion for their unwanted children, mothers valuing their careers above their children, and children being abandoned to day-care institutions bespeak a new morality.

In relegating religious authority, wisdom, and tradition to the level of eccentric, narrow-minded opinion, the culture wars have removed the stigma from sin and emasculated the meaning of virtue. The ideology of population control opposes the virtues of generosity and sacrifice and dishonors God’s commandment to “be fruitful and multiply.” The ideology of sex education and Planned Parenthood subverts the virtues of chastity, purity, and modesty. The acceptance of cohabitation and the prevalence of divorce attack the ideal of Christian marriage as sacramental and indissoluble and undermine the virtue of fidelity. The ideologies of “political correctness” and “multiculturalism” violate the ideal of a liberal arts education based on what Cardinal Newman in The Idea of a University called “universal knowledge,” and corrupt the virtue of intellectual honesty, the dispassionate love of wisdom for its own sake and a desire for the truth that makes man free. Feminist ideology assaults Christian teaching about the relationships between husbands and wives, and it violates the virtue of obedience: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them” (Colossians 3:18-19). The ideology of abortion and euthanasia ignores the role of Divine Providence in each person’s life and dishonors the Biblical view of man as created in the image of God, violating the Commandment “Thou shalt not kill.” Thus cultural ideologies have attacked religion to accomplish their revolution in destroying universal “moral sentiments” and perennial moral truths.

IV. CONCLUSION

The ideological attack upon the past, the family and marriage, and religion are all brazen attempts to reinvent society, deny the nature of things, alter the structure of reality, and escape the obligations of the moral law. The changes advocated by the dystopian regimes of 1984 and Brave New World, as well as those realized by the radicals of the French Revolution, and the continuing culture wars, defy man and exalt man’s power and sense of control: Big Brother in 1984 and Mustapha Mond the Controller in Brave New World replace God. The deceptive rhetoric of “liberte” during the French Revolution or “reproductive freedom” and “the right to choose,” in the contemporary culture wars masks concerted attempts to deprive man of his dignity and human freedom to choose what is true, right, and just according to God’s laws. Winston is the slave of the Party in 1984, and the inhabitants of Brave New World are enslaved by “soma.” Ideologies such as these are based on the notion of relative truth, not universal norms. All of these ideologies resort to violence in accomplishing their revolutions, whether it is the guillotine in the French Revolution, the purges in 1984, physician-assisted suicide in Brave New World, or abortion in modern America.

The only real opposition to these ideological attacks is truth, whether it is in the form of common sense, “the moral sentiments” of the human heart, the great art and poetry of the past, the venerable institutions of society, or the timeless truths of the Christian faith. As Winston writes in his diary, “Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows” (69) As John the Savage insists in Brave New World, “But I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness” (246). As Burke states, “We have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosoms” (182). And as Pope John Paul II writes in Evangelium Vitae,
Human life and death are thus in the hands of God, in his power: “In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind,” exclaims Job (12:10).4

Truly great must be the value of human life if the Son of God has taken it up and made it the instrument of the salvation of all humanity!5

These sobering truths defend man from the insidious lies, pro paganda, and fantasies of fanatical ideologies that brainwash and indoctrinate in their attempt to destroy man’s reason, harden the human heart, and dull the moral conscience.

The culture wars are indeed battles for the souls of men. While ideologies view human beings as the functionaries of a political party, as objects or things which serve a utilitarian purpose in the state, the wisdom of the past regards men and women as members of a family, a partnership “between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born,” in Burke’s famous formulation. While materialist ideologies reduce human beings to mere pleasure-loving animals governed entirely by the passions and the appetites for whom death is no more than “an eternal soma holiday,” the Christian faith respects the dignity and personhood of each individual and recognizes in each person an image of God with an immortal soul and a heavenly destiny. While we have seen modern ideologies that offer utopias which experiment with new moralities, social engineering, and genetic innovations, nevertheless the weight of history, the perennial nature of the family, and the authority of religion continue to remind us of the unchanging nature of things, the absolute nature of good and evil, and the fallen condition of mankind desperately in need of the wisdom of the past, the love of a family, and the truth about God.

**NOTES**

1 George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), 225. All future references will be cited parenthetically within the text according to page number.

2 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1946), 205. All future references will be cited parenthetically within the text according to page number.

3 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1982), 194-95. All future references will be cited parenthetically within the text according to page number.


5 Ibid., #33.