

And maybe policy, though crucial, won't be enough. Hatred and intolerance are moral, even spiritual, problems. Great moral and spiritual changes tend to emanate from somewhere other than legislatures. Unfortunately, that's one of the few things you can confidently say about them. This part of the solution isn't nearly as predictable as the problem.

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Will Love Endure?

By LAURA KIPNIS

IN THE FUTURE, LOVE WILL MAKE EVERYONE VERY happy. No one will do stupid things for the sake of love: no more sacrificing dignity, no more whining, so long to petty jealousy. In short, no more torment. Also, in the future love will last. Divorce rates will plummet, possibly into single digits. You won't suddenly realize that the person you've loved for the last decade is an entirely different person from the one you thought you knew. No one will "just get really sick of" a spouse or partner. Mates won't become boring because new depths will continually be revealed; there will be fascinating and novel things to talk about, unexplored facets of the relationship to plumb. Phrases like "for the sake of the children" will become as quaint as Victorian-era notions seem to us now. Not only will love endure, so will sexual desire—for one person, and one person alone—for the course of a lifetime. No more sneaking around or seven-year itch, no snooping through desk drawers or mysterious credit-card charges leading to screaming matches.

In other words, we will all be heavily medicated—even more so than at the moment, I mean: on new, even more effective versions of serotonin promoters or endorphin boosters or other forms of chemically synthesized beatitude. Pharmaceutical interests will have perfected a pill or patch for women whose sexual desire is flagging—according to the American Medical Association, some 43 percent of the female population. Finally, goodbye to "sexual dysfunction" in both sexes. (Promising results from testosterone patches for women are already being reported—with a \$100 million ad campaign planned for Procter & Gamble's *Intrinsa*, which everyone's hoping will be the female *Viagra*. So what if there





Wedding (1997), by Bo Bartlett

are suddenly a lot of women with mustaches?) And when those 43 percent of sexually indifferent women get a libido boost, husbands will stop fleeing intimacy or watching sports all weekend, and those “little things” of shared domestic life will no longer grate. Trust between the sexes will finally prevail. Men and women will discover that they’re really more alike than different. Or that they’re more different than alike, but that’s OK—*vive la différence!* And when everyone’s more maritally fulfilled, opposition to gay marriage will evaporate too. After all, shouldn’t everyone share the joy?

That old relationship snafu, lack of self-knowledge, will be a thing of the past as well. A saturation of talk-show therapeutics and self-help bestsellers finally will have solved that little problem. Your own motives will no longer be a mystery to you! Goodbye to “acting out” (though it was fun while it lasted, if less so for those on the receiving end). Other people will be transparent, too, because we will all be so much more psychologically *astute*. You will know absolutely where the other person stands. The mystery will be gone—but so will the terrifying uncertainty of romance.

So that’s one possible future for love: Between Big Pharma and pop therapeutics, we can finally overcome the human condition. It was always so annoying, wasn’t it? On the other hand, we might find ourselves muddling along much as we do at the moment: inelegantly. Unions will be formed, and dumb luck will have a lot to do with the outcome. And when unions fail . . . it will still always be the other person’s fault.

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Will Religion Still Seem an Illusion?

By WILFRED M. MCCLAY

A CENTURY AGO, WESTERN INTELLECTUALS WERE sure they knew the eventual fate of religion. “The more the fruits of knowledge become accessible to men,” Sigmund Freud averred in his confidently titled book *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), “the more widespread is the decline of religious belief.” Religion was a psychological disorder, a “neurotic relic,” a collective fantasy built

upon unfulfillable infantile desires. Its presence should not be regarded as a lasting state. Instead, religion should be seen as an evolutionary way station, a condition that was, as Freud further elaborated it in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), “parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.” Its days were numbered.

Today, such words look rather different. It is not so much that Freud has been discredited. It is, rather, that the secularist vision he so compellingly presented now appears to be just another mythos, another master narrative, another hubristic projection of human desire and ignorance into our vast, mysterious universe. Call it the mood of the postmodern, if you like. But what once seemed the ultimate in master narratives, the prospect of triumphant secular rationality endorsed by Freud, now seems a far more limited mythos than the ones it sought to replace. Its appeal is limited to a very small and demographically shrinking group, the university-bred elites of Western Europe and the United States. More importantly, it is a mythos that cannot provide the overarching meaning without which human existence becomes empty and directionless. Science is a magnificent human achievement. But it cannot tell us how to live, or what we should live for. The need for that kind of meaning is, for us humans, as deep and relentless as the need for food or water. It cannot be denied for long.

As we begin the 21st century, the secularism whose triumph once seemed as inevitable as the arrival of spring now seems a fading flower, while religion, in both traditional and novel forms, is in renewed bloom, and even making a play for full-scale reentry into public life. There is much more to this story than the worldwide resurgence of Islam. Writers such as Philip Jenkins of Pennsylvania State University, author of *The Next Christendom: The Rise of Global Christianity* (2002), have detailed the explosive growth of Christianity in the non-Western world. Many observers have even argued that the United States is experiencing a religious “awakening” today.

The story is equally about secularism’s lost élan. Even in such bastions of public secularism as France and Turkey, the airtight proscription of religious expression in public life is being reconsidered, while the more permeable American model is being looked at afresh. And who holds the moral high ground in China, the brutal