**Separation**

**And to rule over the day and over the night,**

**and to divide the light from the darkness:**

**and God saw that it was good.**

***(Genesis 1:18)***

**Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth?**

**I say to you, no, but divisions.**

***(St. Luke 12:51)***

**For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels,**

**nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present,**

**nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,**

**will be able to separate us from the love of God,**

**which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

***(Romans 8:38-39)***

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**Either the Republicans or Democraats control both the legislature and the governor’s office in all but 13 states. As a result, blue states are moving to the left on issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion, unions, and taxes, while red states are moving to the right. In affect, America is splitting apart without an actual civil war. *(Salon.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 21, 2013)***

**An estimated 238,500 American children have lost a parent or primary caregiver to Covid, according to calculations by the Imperial College London. Globally, there are more than 8 million such “Covid orphans.” *(CNN, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 7, 2023)***

**Americans who lived through the great tumult of Truman’s era understood that the isolationist slogan “America First” meant America alone. America alone meant America weakened. That lesson was taught by harsh experience: a depression that was deepened and prolonged by destructive tariff wars, by each afflicted country’s hopeless attempt to rescue itself at the expense of its neighbors; a world war that was enabled because democratic powers would not act together in time against a common threat. The lesson was reinforced by positive post-war experience: the creation of global institutions to expand trade and preserve the peace; the U.S.-led defeat of Soviet Communists and the triumphant end of the Cold War.(David Frum, in The Atlantic magazine)**

**More than 550 Americans are reported as missing in Mexico, according to Mexican government records – up from 324 in 2020, and almost certainly an undercount. All told, at least 112,150 people have gone missing in Mexico, amid an ongoing plague of drug-cartel killings and abductions. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 24, 2023)***

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**Baltics unplug from Russia: The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania severed their electrical grids from Russia's and plugged into the EU network this week. The switch from the aging Soviet-era transmission lines had been planned for years but was accelerated after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. "This is freedom," said EU chief Ursula von der Leyen at a ceremony in Vilnius. "Freedom from threats, freedom from blackmail." All three Baltic states were once Soviet republics, and after the 1991 fall of the USSR they joined NATO and the EU. For the past three years they've no longer been buying power from Russia, but their continued connection to a Moscow-controlled grid left them vulnerable to Kremlin pressure. Polish President Andrzej Duda said cutting the link makes Europe more secure and marks the end of the "post-Soviet sphere of dependence." *(The Week magazine, February 21, 2025)***

**Bees socially distance, too: Humans aren't the only species to practice social distancing. Honeybees also appear to give one another a wide berth when a pathogen threatens the health of their community. A team of European scientists examined how bees behave in hives that were naturally infected with the Varroa destructor mite – a parasite that can cause colonies to collapse – compared with those in hives that were treated to kill the pest. In the infected hives, they noted that the foraging bees performed dances to indicate the direction of food sources further away from the center of the colony, where the queen and the younger bees are found. The foragers tend to be older and "are one of the main entrance routes for the mites," co-author Alessandro Cini, from University of College London, tells the The Guardian (U.K.). "So, the more they stay away from the brood and the young individuals, the better it is in terms of preventing the spread of the mites." The researchers also spotted changes in where bees groom one another, with the activity becoming more focused in the central part of the hive in infected colonies. "They're probably concentrating their efforts toward the more important part of the colony," says Cini, "leaving the grooming of foragers." *(The Week magazine, November 19, 2021)***

**Disconnecting from change does not recapture the past. It loses the future. *(Kathleen Norris, poet)***

**Good week for: Secessionists, after representatives from eight rural Colorado counties began making plans to form a breakaway state, North Colorado, to escape the state's gun-control laws and oil-industry regulations. "This is not a stunt," said Weld County Commissioner Sean Conway. "Our very way of life is under attack." *(The Week magazine, July 26, 2013)***

**In the 1400s, China built huge ships and led all seafaring nations. Suddenly by decree, rulers outlawed shipbuilding and turned isolationist. Worldwide exploration was taken over by Portugal, Spain, Holland and England. Were it not for that decree, historians say, China would have dominated the oceans, and so the world. *(L. M. Boyd)***

[**It’s not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences. *(Audre Lorde***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)***)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**The number of people around the globe displaced by conflict or natural disasters reached a record high of 71.1 million in 2022. More than 12 million people were displaced by the wars in Ukraine and Syria, while the total displaced by disasters such as floods and famine was 8.7 million, up 45 percent from 2021, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 26, 2023)***

**An estimated 2.5 million Americans were displaced from their homes by weather-related disasters last year, according to new census data. More than a third of those were displaced for longer than a month. The U.S. experienced a record 28 disasters costing more than $1 billion in 2023, including hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 8, 2024)***

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**It is estimated that 5 million pet dogs suffer from separation anxiety and many are medicated to calm them down. (Don Voorhees, in *The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 164)***

**Family separation was raised and rejected for two reasons,” Jeh Johnson, President Barack Obama’s secretary of Homeland Security, told me recently. First, “I already had in my mind the vivid visual image of a mother clinging to a child in a Border Patrol holding statio8n – and I8 was not going to ask somebody from the Border Patrol or ICE to take that child away.” Secondly, “it would have overrun” government shelters for children. “So it was heartless and impractical.” *(Caitlin Dickerson, in The Atlantic magazine)***

**What I came to realize is that our country is more profoundly divided than I’d ever understood. I remember a time when people expected diverse political opinions. You didn’t have to agree, but you respected one another enough to listen. Now the partisanship is so intense that people refuse to even try. They ignore facts in favor of tribal politics. That’s how you wind up with dangerous conspiracy theories. The controversy over masks illustrates a fundamental misperception of how science works. In reality, our understanding of COVID continually evolved, and our medical advice had to change to reflect this. *(Dr. Anthony Fauci, in The Atlantic magazine)***

**We must hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall hang separately*. (Benjamin Franklin)***

**Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children. *(Kahlil Gibran)***

**Good week for: Having space, with a reported surge in the number of U.S. married couples who live apart so they don’t get on each other’s nerves. About 4 million married Americans currently live separately from their spouses, the U.S. Census Bureau said – a 25 percent increase from the year 2000. *(The Week magazine, December 30, 2022/January 6, 2023)***

**The Hole Truth: People who refuse to get involved in the problems of their community are like the two shipwrecked men in a lifeboat. From their end of the boat, the pair watched as those at the other end bailed frantically to keep the boat afloat. One said to the other, “Thank heaven, the hole is not in our end of the boat.” *(Leo Aikman, in Atlanta Constitution)***

**Inflaming division: Former President Trump doubled down this week on his new stump-speech line that undocumented immigrants are “poisoning the blood of our country,” dismissing suggestions that he’s echoing Adolf Hitler by saying, “ I never read Mein Kampf.” Trump’s attack on migrants, who he says come from “mental institutions,” drew criticism from some Senate Republicans, including Susan Collins of Maine, who called the remarks “deplorable,” and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. But Trump’s allies appeared unbothered; Tommy Tuberville of Alabama said, “I’m mad he wasn’t tougher than that,” and Ohio’s J.D. Vance said it’s “obviously true” that “illegal immigrants were poisoning the blood of the country.” In recent speeches, Trump has also quoted Russian President Vladimir Putin saying that the U.S. “cannot pretend to teach others about democracy.” *(The Week magazine, December 29, 2023/January 5, 2024)***

**Lebowitz’s permanent tech holiday: Fran Lebowitz is famously set in her ways, so it might not come as a surprise that she’s also a devout Luddite, said Fiona Sturges in The Guardian (U.K.) The acerbic New Yorker, 72, doesn’t have a mobile phone or computer, and detachment from the digital world helps insulate her from criticism of her writing and speaking gigs. “It’s not that I don’t care what people think of me as a person,” says Lebowitz, 72. “But I don’t care how they feel about what I think. It really surprises me, in gehneral, how angry people get because they don’t agree with someone. What differerence does it make?” Cancel culture, she says, is irrelevant to her, “I might even be canceled,but I would never know it.” Instead of wasting time online, Lebowitz enjoys going for walks in her beloved Manhattan, browsing in bookstores, and reading incessantly and voluminously. She owns about 12,000 books. Lebowitz hates to travel, and does so only to get paid for her comedic speaking engagements. Even at home in Manhattan, Lebowitz can be hermetic, at least when the sun’s out. “If I had a choice, I wouldn’t go out in the day,” she sa8ys. “I like the night. But unfortunately, I have appointments and the dentist won’t see me at midnight.” *(The Week magazine, December 30, 2022/January 6, 2023)***

**Men may be divided almost any way we please, but I have found that the most useful distinction to be made between those who devote their lives toconjugating the verb “to be,” and those who spend their lives conjugating the verb “to have.” *(Sydney J. Hall, Publishers-Hall Syndicate)***

**Nothing will divide this nation more than ignorance, and nothing can bring us together better than an educated population. (John Sculley, in The Atlantic)**

[**The real division is not between conservatives and revolutionaries, but between authoritarians and libertarians. *(George Orwell)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

**One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors. *(Plato)***

**The separation of powers was adopted by the Convention of 1787 not to promote efficiency but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power. *(Louis Brandeis, Supreme Court Justice)***

**The first recorded quarantine occurred in 1377, when Dubrovnik, a port on the Adriatic, protected itself against a resurgence of the bubonic plague by admitting no visitors until they’d spent a month in a town or islet just outside the city. A half-century later, Venice built the first of Europe’s many hospitals dedicated to quarantining, a word derived from the Italian for “40 days.” The tactic has been among humanity’s most effective methods of combating the spread of disease, but it has been easier for people to impose quarantine on others than to submit to quarantine themselves. *(The Week magazine, August 13, 2021)***

[**When you reach for your phone first thing in the morning, it's like having 100 people in your bedroom screaming at you. *(Robin Roberts, news anchor, in People magazine)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

**What is irrational divides us; what is rational unites us. *(Bertrand Russell)***

**Perhaps Abraham Lincoln made a mistake. When some Americans believe the current president is a communist cult leader trying to brainwash the nation's schoolchildren, and other Americans want the last president to be dragged off his ranch in handcuffs, it is time to reaccess the state of our union. So may I make a modest proposal. There is a way to end the bitter bickering over health care, abortion, affirmative action, religion in the public square, taxation, torture, and the proper role of government. It is called secession. Yes, I know: Splitting the United States into two nations is a bit extreme. But extremism in the defense of America's sanity is no vice. And since we're already segregating ourselves by what we watch, listen to, and read, why not go all the way? Think of the possibilities. In a new nation fashioned out of the current red states – call it, for the sake of argument, Limbaughland – the federal tax rate could be cut to 10 percent. Medicaid and Medicare and Social Security would be abolished, abortion would be illegal, gays would be closeted again, and Christianity would be the official state religion. Anyone could buy any kind of gun, no questions asked. In the current blue states, which we will call here ObamaNation, the federal tax rate would top out at 90 percent; all employers would institute quotes for minorities, women, and less-abled persons; and you'd get your health care from a single-payer system like Canada's. Fast foods and guns would be banned, while gay marriage and marijuana would be legal. Volla! No more rancor, leaving only the remaining probem: What would we all feel aggravated about? *(William Falk, in The Week magazine, September 18, 2009)***

[**Tax status: Happily separate: A growing number of married couples are finding savings through separate tax return filings, said Laura Saunders in The Wall Street Journal. One factor likely boosting the trend is the income-driven loan repayment program for student loans. Borrowers in this program pasy a percentage of their monthly income, and the remaining debt may be forghiven after a term of years. This incentivizes couples to “file separately to lower their income.” Not all states require filers to use the same status for the state return as the federal one. One couple “reaped substantial savings by having one spouse file separately for Illinois” while the other, who is retired, claimed residence in Florida. “They filed jointly on the federal return.” One downside: “Married couples filing separately can’t take certain tax breaks,” including child- and dependent-care credits. *(The Week magazine, March 17, 2023)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

[**To understand how the American government took children away from their parents with no plan to return them, you have to go back to 9/11. Following the deadliest attack in U.S. history, the Bush Administration created a new federal department. Comprising 22 offices and agencies, the Department of Homeland Security became the largest federal law-enforcement agency in the country. Its hundreds of thousands of employees were charged with vetting foreigners as they entered the U.S., any of whom could be carrying out the next plot to take American lives. *(Caitlin Dickerson, in The Atlantic magazine)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

**When vaccinated adults refuse to see friends indoors, they’re working through the trauma of the past year. When they keep their kids out of playgrounds and urge friends to stay distanced at small outdoor picnics, they are continuing the spirit of the past year, when civic duty has been expressed through lonely asceticism. That’s a hard idea to give up. But some progressives have not updated their behavior based on the new information. And so as the rest of vaccinated America begins its summer of bacchanalia, rescheduling long-awaited dinner parties and medium-size weddings, the most hard-core pandemic progressives are left, Cassandra-like, to preach their peers’ folly. *(Emma Green, in TheAtlantic.com)***

[**What One Hour Away from Your Phone Can Do: More than 3.5 billion people worldwide spend an average of three hours a day glued to their smartphones – on social media, texting, checking emails. According to a German study, there’s good reason to cut down. Researchers found that people who lowered their usage by one hour every day were happier, spent more time being physically active, were less depressed and reduced anxiety symptoms by more than 30%. Cutting back was more effective than total digital detox: People who had spent one hour less per day on smartphones during the one-week intervention were more likely to successfully change their habits over the long term than abstainers who put their smartphones away entirely for a week. *(Mark Witten, in Reader’s Digest, December, 2022/ January, 2023, page 38)***](http://www.bbc.co.uk/)

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