

God's Children

ADD LAUREN SANDLER'S

Righteous to the growing stack of books that attempt to explain American evangelicalism. Sandler's particular interest is young evangelicals, a population she believes is growing prodigiously. She calls this cohort the "Disciple Generation." To belong, you've got to be age 15 to 35, and "equally obsessed with Christ and with culture as a means to an Evangelical end." Sandler makes the rounds through young evangelicals' subculture across the country, attending Christian rock concerts, talking to pastors about their cruciform tattoos, wandering the halls at Patrick Henry College (a Purcellville, Virginia, conservative Christian college founded in 2000 for students who were home-schooled), and interviewing biology teachers who endorse intelligent design. At a Colorado Springs megachurch, Sandler finds fervent Air Force cadets who view the conflict in Iraq as a holy war of the end times. Over coffeecake in a Seattle kitchen, she listens to a young wife and mother explain her belief in "wifely submission"—the idea, drawn from Ephesians 5:22, that wives should submit to their husbands "as to the Lord."

Sandler is a skilled reporter whose work has appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Elle*, but here she writes as a secular prophet too, and her book is something of a secularist's *cri de coeur*. She is baffled by the religious, philosophical, and political choices that members of the "Disciple Generation" make. How can kids whose moms burned their bras at Equal Rights Amendment marches grow up to embrace "wifely submission"? How can college students who've read Locke and Rousseau proclaim that the Bible is the inerrant word of God? And more than baffled, she is fearful. "There is a tyranny over the hearts and minds of this generation," she writes, and everyone, religious and secular, should be concerned.

RIGHTEOUS:

Dispatches From the Evangelical Youth Movement.

By Lauren Sandler.
Viking. 254 pp. \$24.95

Sandler's conclusion—that people in the modern world are lonely and isolated, and that loneliness brings people to religion—is not especially innovative. People have been spinning variations on this functionalist theme for centuries. Then Sandler makes a less predictable move: She turns her scrutiny on herself and her own community. Secularists "can't even find the words to express why life is worth living," she writes. In Sandler's account, they have left the task of meaning making to the likes of Rick Warren, the California pastor who wrote the best-selling manifesto *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and novelist Tim LaHaye, coauthor of the apocalyptic *Left Behind* series. If those on the secular left want to prevent America's takeover by fundamentalists, they must do a better job of articulating a vision of the good life that is compelling and humane: "It is time for our own secular Great Awakening," Sandler writes.

Perhaps she ought to give us a sequel in which, instead of describing a community she perceives as inimical, she uses her journalistic skills to paint pictures of secular folks who are living that good life, and does a little evangelizing for the values she believes are under threat.

—Lauren F. Winner

Party til the Cows Come Home

IF A PARENT SINCERELY believes that everyone is bound for either eternal paradise or eternal damnation, what could be worse than a child's selecting the wrong destination? The threat is doubly harrowing for the Old Order Amish, for whom the separation from a wayward child is as real in this life as it will be in the next. Amish adolescents who walk away from their faith do so literally, abandoning the drab attire and buggies of their communities for the fashionable dress

RUMSPRINGA:

To Be or Not to Be Amish.

By Tom Shachtman.
North Point. 286 pp. \$25



Amish teenagers taste life outside the strictures of their religion during *rumspringa*, a period of worldly experience that their elders condone, as shown here in the 2002 documentary *Devil's Playground*. Afterward, the vast majority of Amish youth return to the church.

and fast cars of the open society. Many of the seemingly excessive strictures in the unwritten rulebook, or *ordnung*, adhered to by the 200,000 Plain People concentrated in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania are designed to bind families together. It's hard to get far from home when your buggy can travel only 10 miles before your horses need to rest.

How then to explain *rumspringa*? This "running around" time is a culturally endorsed opportunity for Amish offspring in their teens and early twenties to taste as much forbidden fruit—alcohol, sex, fast cars—as they like, without leaving the faith. Most don't even leave home. *Rumspringa* participants can be baptized as soon as they turn 16, or can dabble with experimentation indefinitely. The practice, which emerged when Anabaptists took to farming in pluralist 18th-century Pennsylvania, is essentially an institutionalized period of apostasy, a rush of experience preceding the determination to reject the wider world and join the church permanently.

Consider a typical weekend party described in *Rumspringa*, journalist Tom Shachtman's

uneven but enlightening study of the practice. While their elders sleep, hundreds of Amish teenagers travel back roads by buggy and the occasional recently purchased car, using cell phones pulled from beneath aprons to find the farm where festivities will be held. "A good party is when there's, like, 200 kids there," one reveler explains, "really loud music, and everybody's drinking and smoking and having a great old time." Couples wander into the dark pasture to hook up, while Amish drug dealers sell marijuana, cocaine, and crystal methamphetamine. The party ends when it's time for the hosts to milk the cows.

Shachtman and several colleagues spent more than 400 hours interviewing teenagers and Amish leaders for this book and the 2002 documentary *Devil's Playground*. Though Shachtman ably records *rumspringa*'s excesses in both projects, he aims to provide a sympathetic portrait of confused adolescents faced with a decision between religious order and worldly freedom. The reporting is anecdotal and the pace often slack, but the conversations do reveal subjects who find their lib-

erty unsettling. A young Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, farmer considers a new life but wonders, "If it isn't any better out there, why would I leave?"

Between 80 and 90 percent of Amish teenagers choose not to leave the order. The deck is stacked—their schooling ends after age 14, they are pressured to avoid socializing with their mainstream peers, and, as Shachtman notes, "the experiences they have on the outside are usually shallow, most of them involving minor excursions into sex, drugs, and rapid transport." Few gain the imaginative tools needed for radical self-reinvention; for most, the choice is between being an Amish day laborer or a partying factory worker.

Base pleasures, fleetingly encountered, are no match for the safety of familiar community, the support of parents, and the promise of salvation. Says one young man, "It's in the back of my mind every day: If I don't change my ways I might not get to Heaven." In the end, for most who grow up Amish, the God they know is better than the devil they don't.

—Aaron Mesh

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Body Sketchers

WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION of the work of Leonardo da Vinci, anatomical illustration has generally been a collaborative effort. There is the anatomist who dissects the bodies and at least one artist who, working with the anatomist, his notes, and sometimes his sketches, illustrates the findings. Since illustration is by definition an editorial process—things are left out, subdued, or emphasized for clarity or impact—it is an ideal tool for the anatomist who wishes not only to record what has been observed but also to teach it. Over the past 500 years, these partnerships between artists and anatomists have produced many works both useful and occasionally even magnificent, and *Human Anatomy: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age* offers an enjoyable look at them.

HUMAN ANATOMY:

From the Renaissance to the Digital Age.

By Benjamin A. Rifkin, Michael J. Ackerman, and Judith Folkenberg. Abrams. 343 pp. \$29.95

ATLAS OF HUMAN ANATOMY AND SURGERY:

The Complete Coloured Plates of 1831-1854.

By Jean Baptiste M. Bourgery and Nicolas Henri Jacob. Taschen. 714 pp. \$200

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