

any imperial project. Nevertheless, even if white evangelicals gained the whole world, it is hard to imagine them surrendering their souls—their persecution complexes—no matter how many rights they restrict, history textbooks they rewrite, and white Christians they elect to high office. Kerby is to be commended for persevering in study of persons who single her out to the group like this: “This is Lauren. She’s from Boston. She’s not a terrorist” (3).

Mark Edwards
Spring Arbor University
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Family Matters: James Dobson and Focus on the Family’s Crusade for the Christian Home. By Hilde Løvdal Stephens. Religion and American Culture. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019. xii + 291 pp. \$49.95 cloth; \$49.95 e-book.

In *The Jesus Machine: How James Dobson, Focus on the Family, and Evangelical America are Winning the Culture War* (St. Martin’s Press, 2007), journalist Dan Gilgoff argued that scholars and pundits had neglected Dr. James Dobson and his organization. “One reason Focus on the Family has been overlooked,” Gilgoff suggested, “is that it is more complex” than its contemporaries on the Christian Right, such as the Moral Majority or Concerned Women for America (xv). These “straightforward political advocacy groups” contrasted with Focus’s “primarily apolitical” influence that Gilgoff described as—paradoxically—central to late twentieth-century American politics. Founded in 1977, Focus had ballooned into a broadcast, print, and internet empire by 2007. It funded scientific research and promoted politically conservative think tanks; it had a political lobbying wing; and when its influential leaders—especially before Dobson’s departure in 2009—spoke out on contemporary issues, people listened. This wide but diffuse influence left Gilgoff to fall back into “culture war” clichés that mirrored the approach taken by scholars of the Christian Right, such as sociologist William Martin and historian Daniel K. Williams who positioned Dobson and Focus at the margins of a much broader political movement. Meanwhile, ethnographer Susan B. Ridgely moved from national politics into the intimate confines of the home to explore how Christian families use Dobson’s advice literature to raise righteous families. Whether narrowing in on the intimate or expanding to consider the national implications of the organization, scholars and pundits have usually focused on one aspect of Focus on the Family and failed to account for the multifaceted nature of the organization.

Hilde Løvdal Stephens’s *Family Matters* enters this literature as a focused and smartly conceived study of “the world Dobson built” through “his writing, his ministry, and his battle to preserve the traditional family” (6). At the outset, Løvdal Stephens explains that her book is about how the concept of “family values” peddled by Dobson and Focus “worked both in tandem with and as a protest against the changing times” (6). Through an introduction, five thematically organized chapters, and an epilogue, Løvdal Stephens explores how *family* became metonymic for *truth* in twentieth-century white evangelical culture (7).

In chapter 1, Løvdal Stephens shows how Dobson's vision of a "traditional family" naturalized the structure of heterosexual, monogamous, white, midcentury, middle-class American culture into the essence of an ordered, Christian civilization. The enemies of this truth were abortionists, pornographers, and homosexuals—anti-Christian and anti-American, these threats worked to undo the natural complementarian hierarchy embodied by men, women, and their offspring. Chapter 2 outlines how evangelical parenting strategies compensated for newly employed mothers working outside of the home by cultivating emotionally invested fathers. Chapter 3 explores how Dobson challenged both evangelical and secular sex education by "blending ... biblical insights with modern ideas of human sexuality" (96). He offended evangelicals by arguing children were not asexual and urging the toleration of masturbation while simultaneously defying secular norms by insisting that adolescents and young adults must govern their sexual desires through abstinence and heterosexual marriage.

For this reader, the final two chapters mark the book's most significant contribution. In them, Løvdal Stephens weaves together the thematic threads of race and homosexuality into an important argument about how Dobson's organization correlated two trends in American evangelicalism. First, the message of Focus marked white evangelicals' drift away from Cold War-era warnings about the threat of "godless" foreign Communist invaders toward a new discourse focused on battling the homegrown agents of "secular humanism." Next, when Dobson singled out the family as the primary target of secular humanists, Løvdal Stephens notes that his rhetoric opened up a space for an uneasy alliance between white and Black evangelicals in the post-Civil Rights era. In the 1970s and 1980s, Dobson and his staff worked to incorporate African American leaders into Focus around the issues of abortion and homosexuality. By politicizing the family on these grounds, Dobson sought to turn the page on the overt racism of post-World War II white evangelicals who had synthesized theology and politics around protecting states' rights, segregated schools, and white flight. This outreach proved underwhelming. A 2009 poll of pastors supporting Focus found 87.3 percent were white and a mere 3.4 percent Black (150).

Løvdal Stephens argues persuasively that Focus abandoned its opposition to interracial marriage as the possibility of legalized same-sex marriage became increasingly clear to Dobson. Thus, while Dobson had once suggested that interracial relationships made marriage harder, by the early 2000s Focus insisted there was "no biblical or moral considerations that would prohibit interracial marriage" (150). Following Paul Harvey, Løvdal Stephens concludes: "The evolution Dobson and Focus on the Family went through in their position on interracial marriage mirrored a wider shift among white evangelicals, especially in the South. Earlier, they had believed a divinely racial hierarchy and segregation made for an ordered society, but now gender roles functioned as the foundation of moral and social order" (153).

Beside these significant reflections, this book also provides a service by not only offering a nuanced overview of Focus's many publications, broadcasts, videos, and Dobson's own voluminous writings, but Løvdal Stephens also decenters this material and demonstrates Focus's output was about managing the expectations of white evangelical Protestants who were adjusting to a rapidly changing America. Through close readings of editorials and user-generated content published across Focus's vast media ecosystem, she highlights significant change over time as Dobson had to balance his growing stature as a national political figure with the opinions of the rank-and-file consumers of his media output. Whether tackling distinctions between Christian dating and courtship cultures or disagreements over female submission to their husbands

and arguments about women entering the workforce, Løvdal Stephens makes clear that Dobson and his staff had to walk a tightrope between insisting on the naturalness of “traditional” families and acknowledging the changing social and economic realities that sent women to work and made men less economically essential to their families. This, alongside her important insights on race and sexuality, marks another important conclusion from Løvdal Stephens’s book: it makes clear that change and failure to adhere to a “traditional” family ideal were the norm and not the exception in the world Dobson built.

Michael J. McVicar
Florida State University
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***The Limits of Tolerance: Enlightenment Values and Religious Fanaticism.* By Denis Lacorne. Translated by C. Jon Delogu and Robin Emlein. Religion, Culture, and Public Life. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. xiii + 280 pp. \$35.00 hardcover.**

This is the English translation of a book originally published in France in 2016 and now endowed with a new introduction and an epilogue addressed to an American audience. The book is divided into two distinct and uneven sections, each of five chapters. The first five chapters survey the philosophy of tolerance in Locke, Bayle, and Voltaire and identify various regimes of tolerance in Colonial America, the Ottoman Empire, and the Venetian Republic. This part is mildly interesting but of limited relevance to the main argument, and all the early modern primary sources are cited from secondary works, which is the method of a journalist rather than a historian. The book gets to the heart of the matter in chapter 6, entitled “On Blasphemy,” which is devoted to the Salman Rushdie affair as well as to the crisis provoked by the caricatures of Muhammad that culminated in the terrorist attack on the journal *Charlie Hebdo*. The author sees in these contemporary controversies an anachronistic resurgence of the will to punish blasphemy, which he blames on Islam. In the second part of his work, chapters 6 to 10, the author is most interested in case studies that test the limits of tolerance and blur the distinction between free speech and hate speech. He is a very clever and attentive reader of current events, and he usefully contextualizes the examples he compiles from Western Europe and America. Chapters 7 through 9 survey the various exemptions granted or denied to religious minorities by Western judicial systems and the controversies that have arisen over the public display of religious symbols. Chapter 10 compares the limits of tolerance, in the sense of unrestricted freedom of speech and assembly, in the United States, France, and Germany. The epilogue revisits two incidents that hit the headlines after the French edition of the work came out: the Unite the Right riot on the campus of the University of Virginia and the rather tamer controversy over the use of so-called “burkinis” on the Côte d’Azur. Perhaps the author’s most prescient case study involves religious exemptions from vaccination, which he touches on briefly in chapter 7. In an era of pandemic, such cases may well define the new limit to tolerance (or the new confusion between tolerance and extinction). In fact, America is now experiencing a grave crisis caused by people who