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A Biblical Diagnosis of Suicidal Empathy and the West's Death Spiral

Gad Saad's *Suicidal Empathy: Dying to Be Kind* (2026) diagnoses a real and accelerating pathology in the West. Drawing on evolutionary psychology and extending arguments from *The Parasitic Mind*, Saad shows how a noble human capacity, empathy, becomes dysregulated when severed from reason, boundaries, and self-preservation. The result is policies that prioritize criminals over victims, non-citizens over citizens, and select "oppressed" groups over the productive, while envy is rebranded as compassion and enforced through progressive and rapacious taxation and forced wealth redistribution. Saad correctly identifies the mechanism: what begins as emotional expression ends in a parasitic attack on producers, eroded incentives, capital flight, cultural grievance, and civilizational decline. He rightly contrasts the more entrepreneurial American ethos with Canada's heavier redistributive and socialistic model.

Complementing Saad's analysis, R. J. Rushdoony's *The Politics of Guilt and Pity* (1970) supplies the deeper biblical and theological grounding. Rushdoony demonstrates how sin and the Fall produce a politics driven by guilt and misplaced pity, in which fallen man seeks self-justification and atonement through the state rather than through Christ. The pathologies Saad describes are the predictable outworking of this dynamic once the Christian foundations are rejected.

Saad and Friedrich Hayek supply powerful descriptions of the symptoms. Hayek exposed the "fatal conceit" of central planners who imagine they can engineer and produce "social justice" better than a free and competitive market. But progressive taxation has no internal limiting principle; it treats citizens unequally to manufacture "equal outcomes" and replaces dispersed knowledge with political favouritism and cronyism. The long-term results are always the same: destroyed incentives, poverty traps, stagnating economic growth, and bitter resentment.

Yet these analyses, however accurate on the mechanics, remain incomplete. They diagnose the disease without identifying its ultimate cause. Only the Bible supplies that cause. The pathologies Saad describes are not primarily failures of psychology or economics; they are the predictable fruit of rejecting the Christian worldview rooted in Genesis 1-3, as Rushdoony shows in his exposition of guilt-driven politics. Secularism is not neutral. In fact, it is parasitic. To the extent that it survives, it lives completely on borrowed Christian capital, which includes objective dignity and human value, the dignity of work, property rights, and an ordered compassion. Secularism cannot produce or sustain any of these values without Christianity. Once these foundations are removed, the death spiral that Saad lays out accelerates.

Genesis 1-3: The Only Coherent Foundation

Genesis 1 declares that God created the cosmos by His sovereign Word and placed humanity in it as His image-bearers. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). This establishes objective human dignity that does not depend on productivity, feelings, or State decree. It also issues the dominion mandate: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). Productive work, stewardship of resources, entrepreneurship, and innovation are not optional or exploitative; they are creational obedience and blessed by God.



Genesis 2 establishes marriage, family, and meaningful labour in a world without sin. Genesis 3 records the Fall. Sin enters through rebellion. Envy appears immediately in Cain as a result of the Fall. The ground is cursed, work becomes toilsome, and death reigns. Yet even here God is gracious and promises redemption through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). Total depravity, including the envious heart, is not a social construct; it is the universal condition of fallen humanity living in rebellion against the Triune Creator.

The Fall introduces not only sin but guilt and shame. Apart from Christ's atonement, fallen man seeks self-justification through self-atonement or through political means, cultivating guilt in others to justify state power and misplaced pity as a substitute for justice as Rushdoony so clearly lays out from the Scriptures. It is only the Biblical framework that accounts for this reality. Man is neither a blank slate nor a purely selfish animal. He bears God's image yet he is fallen and given over to sin. Societies must therefore restrain evil while being obedient to the dominion mandate and working in a God-honouring manner toward productive ends. Biblical justice distinguishes victims from perpetrators and citizens from strangers (Exodus 23:1-3; Deuteronomy 1:16-17). Biblical compassion is ordered by truth, moral absolutes and godly wisdom, not fallen sentiment and sinful emotions detached from Biblical revelation (Ephesians 4:15; Proverbs 14:15).

How Rejecting Genesis Produces Suicidal Empathy

When a society discards these chapters, every element of Saad's diagnosis follows logically, and Rushdoony's analysis of the politics of guilt and pity explains the underlying spiritual mechanism.

First, the loss of imago Dei removes any fixed standard of human worth. Value becomes arbitrary, assigned by power, feelings, or political utility. Envy, explicitly forbidden in the Tenth Commandment ("You shall not covet"), is no longer a sin against a holy God but is elevated into public policy under the name of "social justice." Progressive and rapacious taxation along with forced redistribution become theft disguised as virtue (Exodus 20:15). The State assumes the role of redeemer, extracting from hard-working producers to satisfy the envious and greedy. This violates both property rights grounded in God's command for stewardship and the biblical prohibition on covetousness. Here the politics of guilt operates: collective guilt is systematically cultivated to justify coercive redistribution as a form of societal self-atonement.

Second, rejection of the dominion mandate inverts the creational work ethic. Genesis presents labour as a dignified calling. Scripture repeatedly condemns sloth and commands diligence (Proverbs 6:6-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). High marginal tax rates and expansive welfare punish extra effort and subsidize non-work. The result is precisely what Saad and Hayek observed: reduced innovation, capital flight, and poverty traps. The "fatal conceit" of central planning is not merely an economic error; it is theological rebellion against God's design for human responsibility under His immutable law. Rushdoony notes that the welfare state functions as a false redemptive order, offering security in place of the liberty Christ provides.

Third, empathy becomes disordered. Biblical love is never detached from justice or truth. Christ's compassion always operates within His moral reality and character. He healed the sick but confronted sin, welcomed sinners but demanded repentance. Secular "empathy," untethered from creation order and the reality of sin, prioritizes feelings over facts. It extends compassion to repeat offenders while endangering citizens, or to incompatible ideologies while eroding cultural cohesion. This is not kindness; it is what Scripture calls "compassionate" folly that leads to destruction (Proverbs 14:12). The feminization Saad notes, empathy dominating without balancing masculine traits of protection and the enforcement of just and righteous laws, reflects the same disorder. Societies that lose protective instincts unleash predators. What Saad diagnoses as suicidal empathy, Rushdoony identifies as the politics of pity: sentimental, promiscuous compassion detached from biblical justice that inverts order and empowers the state as caretaker.



Fourth, the absence of transcendent meaning and a doctrine of sin produces utopianism. Secularism cannot explain persistent evil except by blaming “society” or “structures,” which then justifies ever-greater State power, which always leads to an even greater evil! Envy-driven redistribution promises equality but delivers poverty and coercion because it ignores the fallen and sinful heart. After all, you cannot redistribute what has not been produced. Hayek saw the economic road to serfdom; the Bible goes further and reveals the spiritual road which actually undergirds the economic road. Once the restraints of biblical law and the fear of God are removed, envy becomes institutionalized and the state expands to manage the chaos its own policies create. Guilt without the gospel demands a saving state to atone for inherited sins through welfare and coercion.

Residual Christian Capital and Accelerating Decline

The relative strength of the United States compared with more secularized Western models (including Canada) is not accidental. America’s founding ethos retained stronger echoes of imago Dei equality before God, covenantal limited government, separation of powers and the dignity of work. These were never perfectly applied, yet they provided borrowed Christian capital that restrained envy longer than in societies further along the path of apostasy. As that capital is spent, through rejection of the Genesis foundations, moral relativism, and the sacralization of grievance, the pathologies Saad identifies intensify: merit yields to equity, excellence is pathologized, and self-preservation is labeled bigotry and racist.

Retained Christian capital also restrained the politics of guilt and pity Rushdoony identifies as the engine of statism. As these foundations erode, guilt and pity become the dominant political currencies, accelerating decline through manipulated consciences and coercive “compassion.”

History confirms the pattern. Societies built on explicit rejection of Christian foundations (all socialist experiments) produced precisely the parasitism, stagnation, and tyranny the Bible predicts when envy rules. Post-Christian welfare states experience the same trajectory more gradually but no less certainly. Canada is a perfect example.

The Only Coherent Remedy

Saad’s call for “calibrated empathy” and Hayek’s defense of spontaneous order are necessary but insufficient. They require the transcendent grounding they lack. Rushdoony demonstrates that only the gospel’s true atonement in Christ liberates fallen man from the bondage of guilt and the compulsion toward political self-atonement. The biblical alternative is not theocracy but public acknowledgment of Christ’s Lordship over all of life, what Doug Wilson has called “mere Christendom.” Government’s legitimate role, according to Romans 13, is the administration of justice with the sword, not the redistribution of wealth or the engineering of outcomes. Property rights, the rule of law, and ordered compassion flow from recognition that humans are image-bearers under God’s authority, not raw material for state experiments. Christ is Lord, not Caesar.

Such a recovery would restore incentives by lowering the tax burden that punishes dominion. It would recalibrate empathy by re-grounding it in truth, distinguishing citizens from non-citizens and victims from perpetrators. It would replace grievance culture with a culture of responsibility and gratitude. Most importantly, it would confront the envious and guilty heart with the gospel of Jesus Christ, which alone can transform it and free the conscience from bondage to the state.



Conclusion

Gad Saad has performed a valuable service by exposing how misdirected empathy, married to envy, produces policies that are economically suicidal and culturally corrosive. Hayek exposed the economic incoherence of socialism. Yet both stop short of the root. Rushdoony shows that the West is dying not merely from bad psychology or bad economics, but from the deliberate rejection of the God who created man in His image, commanded fruitful dominion, and warned that the wages of sin is death. The politics of guilt and pity is the direct political expression of that rejection. Re-anchoring in Genesis 1-3 does not guarantee earthly utopia, fallen people remain fallen, but it alone supplies the moral and metaphysical framework in which ordered liberty, productive work, restrained compassion, and genuine justice can again flourish. Without that foundation, the death spiral continues. With it, renewal remains possible by the grace of God and the powerful and transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Yet true change from the inside out comes only through the gospel of Jesus Christ, which alone regenerates the human heart and frees it from guilt-driven slavery. As the apostle Paul declares, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

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