

Christian Integrity versus Non-Regenerate, Amoral Schizophrenia:  
Overcoming Our Jekyll & Hyde Disorder through Christ



By Calvin Best

What's wrong with people? I mean, what's really the problem? How is it that we can be so malicious and cruel? Is the problem that we say one thing but do another? Why is the dictionary filled with so many negative adjectives, from *insidious* to *profligate* to *troglydytic*? Are we inherently unstable beings who have yet to reach a proper level of consciousness so that one day in the future, as a collective whole, we can get it together, ushering in utopia? I doubt the last one will happen, for we simply need to look at the amount of war and famine-related deaths during just the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to recognize that there is something tragically and extraordinarily wrong with human nature:

*According to Matthew White's estimate on the [web] page Worldwide Causalities, Massacres, Disasters, and Atrocities , a total of about 123 million people died in all wars of the 20th Century, thereof 37 million military deaths, 27 million collateral civilian deaths, 41 million victims of "democide" (genocide and other mass murder), and 18 million victims of non-democidal famine.*

The above statistics certainly put things in perspective in that those deaths forced people to die prematurely and in many cases through brute force. Lives were snuffed out with machine precision and indifference, and many people

who “survived” lived with compromised health and broken psyches. Moreover, the above deaths were often an extension of nationalistic violence (or the necessary and aggressive defense against it). Some of the above deaths were even instantaneous such as the nuclear holocausts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan at the conclusion of World War II. Again, we need to ask these questions: what’s wrong with us? Why do we as a species not live in peace and harmony? As an Orthodox Christian, I think I can articulate answers, but before I look at specific examples of Biblical thinking, I need to discuss at length something that has been an issue with people since Adam and Eve, and that concerns integrity because I hope to show by the end of this essay that Jesus Christ created for us a mechanism to overcome the amoral insanity that led to the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the Orwellian foolishness of our own time.

What exactly is integrity?

Let’s first look at standard definitions from Merriam-Webster:

1. A firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values: incorruptibility
2. An unimpaired condition: soundness
3. The quality or state of being complete or undivided: completeness

All three definitions will be of value to this discussion, but the third one will serve us the best. However, before I breakdown my main thesis about how Christ Jesus has provided the only real pathway out of our naturalistic, amoral schizophrenia, I want to address first a secular example of how contradiction forms the backbone of our problems because it drives our day-to-day, Jekyll and Hyde, behavioral duality. Stay with me, please, as you will see how this matter unfolds in terms of the life we now face, both within ourselves and in the external world. I’ve placed part of an article below that I wrote about two years

ago concerning the contradictions associated with standardized testing in Texas public schools. That article will take us where we need to go. It will be the first leg of the journey; afterwards, we will conclude the overall essay.

High-Stakes Standardized Testing:  
The Contrived & Expensive Bridge to Nowhere



By Calvin Best

I will begin my comments about the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) High Stakes Standardized Testing -- commonly called STAAR and EOC -- by approaching the topic from perhaps an odd point of view through two questions: What is a contradiction? How does a person or an institution such as a public school reconcile a contradiction?

Webster's online dictionary explains that "a statement or phrase whose parts contradict each other [such as] a round square is a contradiction in terms." That definition is perhaps the easiest to grasp, as it's like saying "I love you!" in one breath while proclaiming "I despise you!" in the next. A person would obviously ask, "Well, which is it?" There is, however, another definition that has more to do with our overall topic, and it follows: "a difference or disagreement between two things which means that both cannot be true." There is still one more definition that helps underpin this discussion: "a proposition, statement, or phrase that asserts or implies both the truth and falsity of something." The sky cannot be blue and maroon at

the exact same time just as it cannot be 95 degrees in the shade and 37 degrees in the shade simultaneously. I cannot text while driving my car in Dallas traffic during rush hour and sincerely claim that I am practicing good and safe driving skills. We all understand that.

What does any of that have to do with TEA's High Stakes Standardized Testing? The answer has to do with what the stated purpose of the testing is. Why, in other words, does the Texas Education Agency spend hundreds of millions of dollars of tax payer's funds on school tests, generating a great deal of anxiety for all involved, causing in reality educators to teach to-the-test, making instruction too robotic and sterile? In searching for the answer online, I found documents that discussed the new tests that are now called "STAAR: The Next Generation," but it was somewhat difficult to locate from TEA information that clearly explained why we teachers, administrators, students, and staff jump through the high stakes testing hoops. I did find an online and helpful article from Wikipedia: *The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, commonly referred to as its acronym STAAR (star), are a series of state-mandated standardized tests used in Texas public primary and secondary schools to assess a student's achievements and knowledge learned in the grade level. It tests curriculum taught from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, which in turn is taught by public schools. The test is developed by Pearson Education every school year, along with the close supervision of the Texas Education Agency.*

Eventually, I came across a PDF file from TEA that was of help: *STAAR is an assessment designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned and is able to apply the knowledge and skills defined in the state-mandated curriculum, the TEKS. Every item on every STAAR test is directly aligned to the TEKS currently in effect for the grade and content area being tested. In grades 3–8, students are tested in mathematics and reading. In addition, students are tested in writing at grades 4 and 7, science at grades 5 and 8, and social studies at grade 8. The STAAR EOC assessments*

*are available for students in English I (reading and writing), English II (reading and writing), English III (reading and writing), Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, physics, world geography, world history, and U.S. history.*

Much of this kind of testing actually accelerated as a result of President George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind* legislation, which passed Congress in 2002. The Education Week website explains: *The No Child Left Behind law – the 2002 update of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – effectively scaled up the federal role in holding schools accountable for student outcomes. It was the product of a collaboration between civil rights and business groups, as well as both Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill and the Bush administration, which sought to advance American competitiveness and close the achievement gap between poor and minority students and their more advantaged peers. Since 2002, it's had an outsized impact on teaching, learning, and school improvement – and become increasingly controversial with educators and the general public.*

There is one more quote that we should utilize from the Education Week website in order to understand why BISS and almost all Texas school districts utilize STAAR/EOC: *The NCLB law – which grew out of concern that the American education system was no longer internationally competitive – significantly increased the federal role in holding schools responsible for the academic progress of all students. And it put a special focus on ensuring that states and schools boost the performance of certain groups of students, such as English-language learners, students in special education, and poor and minority children, whose achievement, on average, trails their peers. States did not have to comply with the new requirements, but if they didn't, they risked losing federal Title I money.*

So in a nutshell, the Texas Education Agency's use of STAAR/EOC is really an extension of the national government's effort to improve student academic performance by holding schools accountable to a standard that is outside of their own curriculum architecture. In other words, just because Johnny Q. Public, a freshman, earns decent grades in his specific English and biology

classes, both taught by college educated, veteran teachers who base their teaching on the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills), the federal and state governments are saying that "they" need to be sure Johnny Q. Public is understanding English language arts and biology at a level that will cause him to be truly ready for college. Johnny Q. Public also needs to be internationally competitive with students from other countries. The Texas Education agency, said another way, created STAAR/EOC to make sure, using a complex system of accountability standards and methodologies devised and controlled in Austin, Texas, that educators are getting the academic job done in their classrooms in public school districts for all students, and it is they who will determine if that is so through their tests.

My contention is that TEA's High Stakes Standardized Testing is a mammoth contradiction and needs to be significantly altered from its current form if not entirely eliminated. Let's discuss why that is so. If the purpose of high stakes testing is to uplift Johnny Q. Public into college readiness, making sure that all teenagers are also ready for international competition, then let's see if that is actually happening. It only makes sense to see if we are achieving the goals of the tests, but before we proceed, let's take a look at what it means to know if something is doing what it claims.

In pharmacology, before a new drug can be placed on the market with FDA approval, it is tested to determine its rate of efficacy. In other words, experts want to be sure the new drug does what it says it does and does it safely. The efficacy rate indicates to what degree that is so. Let's say that a pharmaceutical company introduces a new drug called Clearenall that reportedly combats the more debilitating effects of Alzheimer's. Most of us would agree that such a drug would be a good thing for certain people. We would hope, of course, that the new drug not only does what it claims but that its side effects are minimal, as we would not want the drug to create more problems than it solved. That all makes sense and follows this logical progression: *If*

*Clearenall does what it is supposed to do, which is alleviate many of the more debilitating effects of Alzheimer's, then drug company leaders will market the drug to people who suffer from that disease.* In critical thinking studies, we call that an if p, then q statement. What happens, however, if the new drug does not achieve its goal or is generally ineffective or even dangerous? That can be expressed as a negation of the previous statement or what is called the contrapositive: if not q, then not p. That would look like this: *Company leaders will not market Clearenall to people who suffer from Alzheimer's if it does not do what it claims to do; namely, reduce the more debilitating effects of Alzheimer's.* The contrapositive logically negates the hypothesis and the conclusion. It's actually no more complicated than saying, "If it's a nice day with calm winds, we will go fishing at Hubbard Creek Reservoir" or its negation, "We will not go fishing at Hubbard Creek Reservoir if it's not a nice day with calm winds."

There is a vast difference, of course, between the two scenarios. For instance, if a group of friends made the above statement about fishing and then went to Hubbard Creek Reservoir anyway even though the day was windy and terrible, no moral or ethical dilemma would probably arise because of it. More than likely, the people involved would have had an annoying day in the wind and not much success with fishing. They might have even regretted their decision to go to the lake because it was against their better judgment and because they were miserable, but they would not have done anything wrong, although if they ventured out in the middle of the lake in a small boat, they might have put themselves at risk. What if leaders in the pharmacology company, on the other hand, said the following behind closed doors? "Well, the new drug, despite our hopes, not only does not work well, it actually presents new dangers to patients, but we will still market it to the public; we will simply classify the results of the tests." The "leaders" at the drug company would have engaged in this scenario: if p, then q, but now, given the unfavorable results, not q but p anyway, which follows: "Even though the drug tests have confirmed that

Clearenall does not do what it says it does and even presents new risks to patients, we are marketing the drug anyway so that we can recover costs and move forward with other related programs." That, in my view, is the cornerstone of deception and immorality, and it's the antonym of integrity.

We can easily see where I'm headed with this argument: *If we can establish or prove that utilizing high stakes, standardized testing causes students to become truly ready for college in key academic areas and simultaneously makes them ready to compete effectively with international students, then we will (or should arguably) continue to use them on a yearly basis.* The negation, to avoid contradiction as defined at the beginning of this article, is just as important: *We will not continue to use high stakes, standardized tests on a yearly basis if we cannot prove or establish that those tests cause students to become truly ready for college in key academic areas and also make them ready to compete effectively with international students.*

I visited TEA's website concerning Breckenridge High School's graduation from college rates under this heading: *Results of a Combined Cohort Graduating High School AY 2002-2004.* Here's what the report stated: out of 324 BHS graduates from 2002-2004, 74 earned a bachelor's degree (and the report indicates from which college/university), which translates to 23%. Another way to state the data is that over the course of three years 77% of our BHS graduates did not earn a bachelor's degree. Please keep in mind that some form of high stakes testing has been occurring for many years.

How does high stakes, standardized testing improve the above numbers? Here's the glaring contradiction: TEA's mandatory, high stakes tests -- STAAR/EOC -- do not improve the above numbers whatsoever, which is what they claim to do and why they exist. Breckenridge High School has had about the same college graduation rate of approximately 23% for many years because of all kinds of complicated, real-world factors that have nothing to do with college "readiness" or our school's ability to graduate students who can successfully compete with their international counterparts. If this college graduation rate is

true, and I think I have demonstrated that it is, then why are we still putting our students and teachers through the high stakes testing process? What are we achieving?

We are still left, however, with the second question from the introductory paragraph: how does a person or institution reconcile a contradiction? If a person or institutional leader runs the *if p, then q and if not q, then not p* scenario, he or she can find a clear or at least reasonable answer (or path) by following the integrity of the logic, and that requires honesty and work (and submission to the findings!), of course. If a person or institution engages in a rationalization, then things can become awkward if not highly political (which is perhaps the case at the federal and state levels). I think that TEA avoids this discussion and actively resists seeing if their STAAR/EOC tests actually do what they say they do. I think TEA, in other words, embraces a contradiction and refuses to reconcile it through logical means. TEA is in the classic yet highly regrettable "if p, then q," but then "if not q, we perform p anyway" scenario just like the fictitious drug company above.

Finally, let's be sure we understand the definition of "rationalization" since I am stating that TEA's continued use of standardized testing must be based on one. From Wikipedia: *In psychology and logic, rationalization (also known as making an excuse) is a defense mechanism in which controversial behaviors or feelings are justified and explained in a seemingly rational or logical manner to avoid the true explanation, and are made consciously tolerable - or even admirable and superior - by plausible means.* A rationalization is how a person or company justifies the illogic of "if p, then q" and then "if not q, we will do p anyway."

Dallas Morning News Website: <http://educationblog.dallasnews.com/2015/02/officially-texas-cant-say-the-cost-of-standardized-tests-through-the-decades.html/>

## Return to Our Main Topic: Christian Integrity

Now we can return to the main topic, which concerns this thesis: *non-regenerate human beings suffer from a natural, amoral schizophrenia or behavioral duality, which is the backbone of sin and the opposite of Christian integrity, that operates in similar manner to the fictional pharmaceutical company in the previous essay. There is in us a proclivity to reconcile contradictions through rationalizations rather than through integrity; in other words, we are "naturally" people of the lie.* Moral integrity, the opposite of amoral schizophrenia, drives the logic of the if p, then q system and its contrapositive, logical negation statement. When we engage in rationalization, we embrace, knowingly or not, the if not q, then p anyway contradiction that creates psychosis in people and so often a subsequent meanness or even violence in culture, destabilizing individuals and our entire world. Indignation flows from the kinds of results produced by this insult to integrity.

My contention is that human beings, once separated from Eden, really did experience "Paradise Lost" in that we forfeited a perfect integrity with God where we could likely have addressed any and all moral and ethical challenges that are part of Free Will through the logic of reconciliation as described above. There was no ethical duality. In our post-Eden, fallen, morally confused state, a condition of sin dominated us then and controls our existence right now, but what is sin? Yes, sin is definitely characterized by a broken relationship between us and God (and with each other) due to moral transgressions relative to the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes -- a fate seemingly unavoidable because of Free Will. That is true, but the thing that drives it can perhaps best be understood as our tendency to reconcile contradictions with rationalizations or lies rather than with the truth of integrity. That's our default condition, is why we are naturally out of fellowship with God (and often with each other) in the first place, and perplexed. Christian integrity points us back to the external standards

that are greater than people: The Ten Commandments and The Beatitudes – back to Jesus Christ. Our inability to live in direct relationship with those standards, which requires humility and meekness, spawns the wicked, Hellish conditions here in this world right now and has done so all throughout history. That condition also explains power politics, secular ideologies, pornography, narcissism, war, genocide, materialism run-a-muck, hate, and the overall ethical incongruence of life.

What's the solution? Accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the beginning and necessary first step, but it is only the beginning. When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He actually gave us the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (building upon the Ten Commandments) because he showed us precisely what God expects of us. He taught us how we are to live, and those instructions are exceedingly counter-intuitive because they represent the path toward perfect integrity according to God. The Sermon on the Mount is the sanctification process or mechanism -- the instruction manual -- whereby we co-labor with God through Christ, His Word, and with fellow Christians so that our character is regenerated and so that we can extend His Kingdom. We become people who now quest for integrity (rather than run from it) and thus thrive because we can, with Christ, actually reconcile our own contradictions and those of the fallen world with Christian principles rather than through the flawed calculus of the rationalizations described above. It's as beautiful as it is freeing because it generates the most soul-satisfying levels of certitude, relational happiness, and ethical well being this side of Heaven.

Natural man is lost in the cosmos, often destroys and/or ruins the lives of his fellow man, is generally self-misunderstood, and is condemned because of his natural separation from God. He does this because he lives a life of natural, amoral schizophrenia where the latter is best understood as a Jekyll and Hyde existence predicated upon rationalizations and lies. Man cannot correct that deficiency in his character. He sometimes will see it and take limited,

intermittent steps toward improvement, but he still cannot put into practice the efficacious, lasting solution. Man will nowadays even create humanistic campaigns that are reminiscent of Christian works, but, alas, he fails because he is the center rather than God. Man cannot save himself. He cannot and will not set himself and the world right because he is born into a condition of self-centeredness and is a natural enemy of Christian integrity. It is only Jesus Christ who provides us the way out of that condemned existence and existential puzzle so that we can thrive in this life, living in Hope & Love, preparing with our Christian brothers and sisters for the full Kingdom of God. Jesus is the Christ, and He ignited a New Revolution of Redemptive, Restorative Grace, and that has made all the difference!

Addendum:

Let me make a few additional remarks about free will and sin. Many people, and I'm one of them, have wondered why the "structure" or "arrangement" of human development or just life in general is plagued with so much wickedness, sadness, suffering, and confusion. Why does the human design, so to speak, allow for that? Atheists perhaps do not speculate about that as much since existence for them is the result of a mindless accident still "evolving" into perfection, but we Orthodox Christians definitely think about it. How, asked another way, if there is an all powerful and good God, could there be tragedies such as the World War II Holocaust? There really is a great deal of hate, conflict, depression, and gnashing of teeth associated with humankind. There are many urges to resist and many crises to face. Clearly, Jesus Christ is the pathway out of that pitiable condition, as we have discussed, but why does that tragic kind of circumstance exist in the first place? Why did omni-powerful God create us with free will and consciousness, knowing, obviously, that we would be early-on

dropped-kicked out of the Garden of Eden into a life of thorns and thistles? Why, indeed? Was it a cruel, maddening joke?

I think it is helpful to address the above question first by looking at the animal kingdom. My wife and I own and maintain two roping horses. I have managed as many as seven horses at a time for years and never once heard any of them say “please” or “thank you.” I have also never seen them engage in this kind of equine conversation.

*Buck Rogers: Samurai Jack, have you ever considered being some kind of animal other than a big, flea-bitten-gray, gelded Quarter Horse?*

*Samurai Jack: Hmmm . . . actually, yes! I not only would like to be a giraffe, but I think it would be very cool to be a girl giraffe or perhaps a female dolphin. What about you, Buckskin?*

*Buck Rogers: I think it would be cool to be a mountain lion like the one that freaked us out last night at 2:30 in the morning. We would be the king of the West Central Texas jungle. I could go for that. Of course, we'd have to shift from eating oats and grass to eating uncooked meat that we kill through extreme aggression!*

My point here is that horses do not enjoy human consciousness or language any more than any other animals. They are permanently living their lives in the here and now with little if any knowledge of their own nature or the world in which they live. They neither laugh nor cry, worry about the earth or global temperatures, and they follow a chemical algorithm in their minds that runs something like this: Eat - Yes/No; Run: Yes/No; Drink: Yes/No; Sleep: Yes/No and so on. They can no more make their own protective shelter than a rabbit can compose, send, and receive email. I could walk right up to my horses

and ask them any number of questions, yet they would simply stare at me or look away because they do not speak English.

It is only human beings who enjoy (and/or struggle with) consciousness because we are the only beings created in the image of God, and we are the only creatures who operate well outside the aforementioned algorithms. Animals, in other words, do not make moral choices; therefore, they do not engage in moral wrongdoings. Animals never commit a crime of any kind; they are 100% free from sin. They also do not design commercial jet aircraft, build rockets, spaceships, or bombs, and they do not invent personal computers and smart phones, generate amazing works of art or music, and they do not erect skyscrapers (or fly airplanes into them) or produce thirty-one flavors of ice cream. They also do not commit mass murder or wish to become something other than what they already are. Moreover, they do not complain or create victims' rights groups or engage in what we now call identity politics. No one accuses animals of demonstrating bad character.

Animals are trapped inside of and limited to their chemical algorithms; human beings are not, but people mishandle that freedom so tragically that I refer the reader back to the death statistics at the beginning of this essay and the millions of abortions in the US alone since the early 70s.

It is human free will that makes and breaks us. The Bible indicates in Genesis that there was an unspecified amount of time when Adam and Eve were in an uncompromised state of collaboration and fellowship with God, but as many have said, it was untested. Eventually, they exercised their free will outside of God's requirements because he allowed them to do so. They disobeyed a directive from God, Himself, because they "could." Somehow, that set things in motion so that life for people became a tragedy as much as an opportunity for unprecedented levels of choice and creativity. I wish that had not happened; all sincere Christians (and non-Christians if they are honest) wish that some other outcome could have occurred whereby human beings could have

received freedom of choice but without the calamitous consequences such as we have seen throughout history. Perhaps we would like to be like Mr. Spock from the Star Trek universe - a mix of the human and the Vulcan with emotions and foolishness under good control? Free will, however, did not and could not allow for any other result, as we have seen. To have control over one's life in a way that is enormously dissimilar to animals is to become a sovereign being who can easily be out of fellowship with God, living in a non-regenerate state of sin because, and unlike the animal kingdom, we face choices that involve ethical challenges of right and wrong. That's the trade off of having received free will or consciousness, and it's sadly a damning one, but it does allow for the existence of relational love and joy, and it causes integrity to be a choice rather than a dogmatic algorithm or decision-tree-prison. Contradiction, hubris, and foolishness are the backbone of free will and consciousness as much as happiness, laughter, and solidarity. None of that applies to animals.

Another way to analyze this situation and in context to our earlier discussion is to say that the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde way of life (or amoral schizophrenia) is a result of free will. Functional insanity is also another way to describe this condition of living far outside the Garden of Eden. Having a self is a heavy burden because we all face character-logical fragmentation or compartmentalization. *We are all Jekyll and Hyde to varying degrees* because we all too often reconcile contradictions with rationalizations rather than through the system of integrity as discussed previously. If we seek to improve that condition, we can learn the moral logic of Christian Integrity from Jesus, Himself.

Again, Christ Jesus, who is the one and only God-Man, came to this earth to reconcile us to God through the perfect integrity of restorative grace yet did so within the system of free will, which does explain at least partially His unusual, counterintuitive methods and the ongoing confusion of his pre-Easter disciples. Christ made it clear by his resurrection and subsequent ascension that we now can know with certainty what God expects of us and that we can, should we

choose to do so, exercise our free will to join once and for all the Kingdom of God in the way that Christ has stated in the Sermon on the Mount (that is built upon the Ten Commandments). We can become like Christ because we can co-labor with Him through his Biblical directives and Holy Spirit, or we can co-labor with sin and reap its polluted fruit, contaminating still further the world and those around us.

Many people utilize their God-given freedoms to escape reality. Those people, it could be argued, never develop Christian integrity; rather, they run away from their freedom, embracing the functional insanity of the broken world. *We can and should use our powers and gifts - our consciousness and free will - to escape from functional insanity*, entering the New Kingdom where Christ has defeated sin for us because we cannot. That solves the existential riddle of why there is human free will in the first place and to what end. To be "Saved through Christ" is to be psychologically and spiritually born again into a New Kingdom so that the work of becoming like Christ - sanctification - can begin in earnest.

The atheist will think this line of thought no more than a nonsensical extension of the never-ending, Christian fairytale. Emotional, success-theology Christians may even resist this approach to God because it requires the hard word of regeneration via the Beatitudes and a reassessment of materialism and family-centric living. Liberal Christians, who have already cherry-picked their way out many of Christ's demands, will clearly think amoral schizophrenia and its Christian solution irrelevant because it requires sanctification and a behavioral affirmation of the unpleasant parts of scripture. Besides, post-modern Christians like to chant the following relativistic mantra: "All things in moderation; sin is so passé!" The agnostic will still be anxious and unsteady because God allows suffering and evil, but the Orthodox Christian will seek restoration, fellowship, and collaboration with God through Christ Jesus, being joyful, obedient, regenerated, and saved! That is what really and truly causes us to thrive in life and to be inclusive rather than exclusive -- so that we can

participate actively in extending the Kingdom with others to others; that is  
Christian Integrity!