Glossary

Abraham Patriarch of the book of Genesis (chapters 11–25), revered as a founding figure by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Born Abram in Ur, he left Mesopotamia at a divine call, was promised land and descendants, and was renamed Abraham, "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5). Tivy reads him as an archetype of rejecting false value.

Anarchism The political philosophy that rejects the state and coercive hierarchy in favor of voluntary, self-governing association.

Anglos People of English or broadly British descent; in North American usage, English-speaking whites as distinct from other ethnic groups.

Canaan The land of the southern Levant, roughly modern Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and western Jordan, which God promises to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:7).

Catharsis An emotional release or purging; Aristotle's term (*Poetics*) for the cleansing of pity and fear that tragedy produces. Here, the grief a funeral or a community would normally allow.

Circumcision, covenant of In Genesis 17, God commands Abraham to circumcise every male of his household as the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham's descendants. Tivy reads it as a mark of belonging to something set apart from the surrounding society.

Divinize To make into a god or treat as divine. Genesis 1:14–18 calls the sun and moon "lights" set in the sky, where neighboring religions worshipped them as deities.

Early Christians, Puritans, Mormons Three communities that built a shared way of life against the society around them and were persecuted for it: Christians under Rome until 313; English Puritans, many of whom emigrated to New England in the 1620s and 1630s; and the Latter-day Saints, driven from Missouri and Illinois before their trek to Utah in 1846–47.

Epistemic Having to do with knowledge and how it is justified. A "hard epistemic problem" is one where it is hard to know what is true.

Ethos The characteristic spirit, values and code of conduct of a person, group or culture.

False value Tivy's term for goals and goods that look worth pursuing from inside a society or subculture but do not serve the pursuer's real interests, often because the institutions that teach them profit from the pursuit. Its opposite is *hard natural value*.

Fentanyl A synthetic opioid roughly fifty to a hundred times as potent as morphine. Illicit fentanyl, often mixed into other drugs without the user's knowledge, has driven most American overdose deaths since the late 2010s.

Genesis The first book of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament: the creation, the flood, and the stories of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Great-grandmother rule Michael Pollan's advice in *In Defense of Food* (2008): "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food." Tivy adapts it: don't value what Abraham wouldn't recognize as valuable.

Hard natural value Tivy's name for goods that exist outside any symbolic or social system and cannot be faked: many descendants, territory under one's own control, lasting fame, blessing to friends and harm to enemies, benefit to all peoples, and harmony with natural law. He draws the list from God's promises to Abraham.

Harran An ancient city in upper Mesopotamia, now in southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border, where Abraham's father Terah settled and died on the way from Ur to Canaan (Genesis 11:31–32).

Homies Slang for close friends from one's neighborhood. To "pour one out for the homies" (spill a drink in memory of the dead) is a hip-hop custom; Tivy pairs it with the ancient *libation*.

"I am" When Moses asks God's name at the burning bush, God answers "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14), Hebrew *ehyeh asher ehyeh*. The divine name YHWH is generally connected with the verb *hayah*, "to be."

Idols Images or objects worshipped as gods. Jewish tradition (though not Genesis itself) tells of the young Abraham smashing the idols in his father's shop. Tivy extends the word to any false object of devotion: prestige, wealth, lifestyle.

Ingroup The social group one identifies with, as opposed to outsiders. Ingroup markers are signs, such as clothes, slang or diets, that show who belongs.

Isaac, binding of In Genesis 22, God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, then stops him at the last moment and provides a ram instead. Jewish tradition calls it the *Akedah*, "binding."

King of Sodom After Abraham rescues the captives taken from Sodom, the king of Sodom offers him the recovered goods. Abraham refuses "a thread … to a shoelatchet," lest the king say, "I have made Abram rich" (Genesis 14:21–24).

Libation A drink, often wine, poured out as an offering to a god or in honor of the dead; a practice of ancient Greek, Roman and Near Eastern religion.

"The LORD" The usual English rendering of YHWH, the personal name of God in the Hebrew Bible, set in capitals to mark it. Out of reverence Jewish readers substitute *Adonai*, "Lord."

Lot Abraham's nephew. When their herds grew too large to share land, Lot chose the well-watered plain near Sodom (Genesis 13); he was later taken captive in a raid and rescued by Abraham (Genesis 14).

Mesopotamia "Land between the rivers": the region between the Tigris and Euphrates, mostly modern Iraq. Home of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon and Assyria, and the oldest center of urban civilization.

Monarchism Advocacy of rule by a hereditary sovereign.

Monotheism Belief in a single God, as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all of which trace their lineage to Abraham.

MSNBC; Tucker Carlson Partisan cable-news poles of the time: MSNBC on the left, and Tucker Carlson, whose primetime Fox News show was the most-watched on cable until he left the network in April 2023, on the right.

Natural law For Tivy, the real order of nature, which rewards some ways of living and punishes others regardless of what a society says. In philosophy, a long tradition (Aristotle, Aquinas) that holds moral order to be discoverable in nature by reason.

New Atheists Writers of the 2000s, among them Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens and Daniel Dennett, who attacked religion in polemical bestsellers. The jibe Tivy recalls is that monotheists are atheists about every god but one.

Ontological Having to do with being: what exists and what kind of thing it is.

Opium Wars Two wars (1839–42 and 1856–60) in which Britain, and later France, defeated Qing China and forced it to accept the opium trade. Tivy's joke turns on China now being a main source of fentanyl precursors.

Palladium In Greek legend, the wooden image of Pallas Athena on which the safety of Troy depended; hence any safeguard. *Palladium* is the magazine of governance and culture in which this essay first appeared.

Pharaoh The king of Egypt. In Genesis 12:10–20, Abram goes down to Egypt in a famine; Pharaoh takes his wife Sarai, and Abram leaves enriched with flocks and servants.

Primitivism The view that civilization, agriculture or industry was a wrong turn and that people should return to simpler, often foraging, ways of life (anarcho-primitivism).

Promises to Abraham God's repeated promises in Genesis (12:2–3, 13:16, 15:5, 22:17–18): a great nation, offspring like the dust and the stars, the land of Canaan, a great name, blessing for those who bless him and curse for those who curse him, and blessing through him for all the families of the earth.

Providence God's foresight and care in guiding events; trusting in Providence means acting on faith that things will be provided for.

Psycho-social hypochondria Tivy's phrase for anxious over-diagnosis of hidden social and psychological harms.

Rat race An exhausting, competitive routine of work and status-seeking that leads nowhere.

Slavecoin Tivy's coinage for anything that seems valuable from inside the spectacle but cannot buy independence from it or be redeemed for "hard vital power": prestige, credentials, career attainment, identity validation, luxuries, and financial wealth that no longer buys power.

Smell of sulfur Sulfur, or brimstone, is traditionally associated with hell and the devil; smelling sulfur means sensing evil at work.

Social fabric The web of relationships among kin, neighbors and generations through which a community shares experience, keeps traditions, and corrects its members.

Social perspective Tivy's term for one's working picture of what matters and how to live: values, plus the practical wisdom that implements them and the answers to their critics. It is too large for one person to build, so it depends on a "supply chain" of other people; it is *trustworthy* when those suppliers share one's real interests.

Social reproduction A sociologist's term for the ways a group or structure perpetuates itself, recruiting and forming new members to replace the old.

Sodom A city of the Jordan plain, rich but wicked in Genesis, and destroyed by fire and brimstone (Genesis 19).

Sovereign Holding supreme authority, answerable to no one higher. A sovereign house controls its own land, production and security.

Spectacle From Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967): a society in which life is lived through images and representations. Tivy uses it for the symbolic system of status that pays out in slavecoin.

Taboo Something forbidden to say or do by social custom rather than argument.

Terah Abram's father, who led the family out of Ur toward Canaan but stopped and settled in Harran (Genesis 11:26–32).

Transhumanism The movement to transcend human biological limits, such as aging, disease and cognition, through technology.

Transvaluation of values Nietzsche's phrase (*Umwertung aller Werte*, "revaluation of all values"): a wholesale overturning of a culture's values. Tivy applies it to Abraham's break with the cults of Mesopotamia.

Triangulate To fix a position from several independent reference points; here, to check one's views against several trusted sources.

Upper middle class The affluent professional and managerial stratum: doctors, lawyers, executives, academics, and the like.

Ur A great Sumerian city in southern Mesopotamia, near the Euphrates in modern Iraq; "Ur of the Chaldees," Abram's birthplace (Genesis 11:28–31).

"Wrenched out of Ur" Tivy's image for his own escape: like Abraham, called out of a decaying civilization and its false values.

Value grounding Anchoring one's values in something real, so they answer to reality and not to whoever is teaching them.

Woke Originally African American slang for being alert to injustice ("stay woke"); Tivy uses it, half ironically, for someone awake to how institutions manipulate people.