

SALVO

Issue 54 Fall 2020

Unmasked Truth

The Grandest PROGRAM

■ **The Hyper-Dynamics of Your DNA Will Blow Your Mind!**

—by Ken Pedersen

■ **Megadeath: A Timeline**

■ **Disaster Ethics & Triage**

—by Heather Zeiger

■ **Hope in Times of Unrest**

■ **False Racial Theories**

—by Nicole M. King

■ **Psycho Babble**

—by Denyse O'Leary

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—by Allan C. Carlson

✚ **The Gateses, The Chosen & The Deplorables**

WITH Peter Biles, Terrell Clemmons,
Anthony Esolen, James M. Kushiner,
Louis Markos, John D. Martin,
Benjamin R. Merkle, Hugh Ross,
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AMERICA *on* TRIAL

A Defense of the Founding

"Robert Reilly digs down very deep into the past, down before America . . . to the ultimate source of the transcendent law available to human reason, the 'Laws of Nature and of Nature's God'. Under these laws, America was formed."

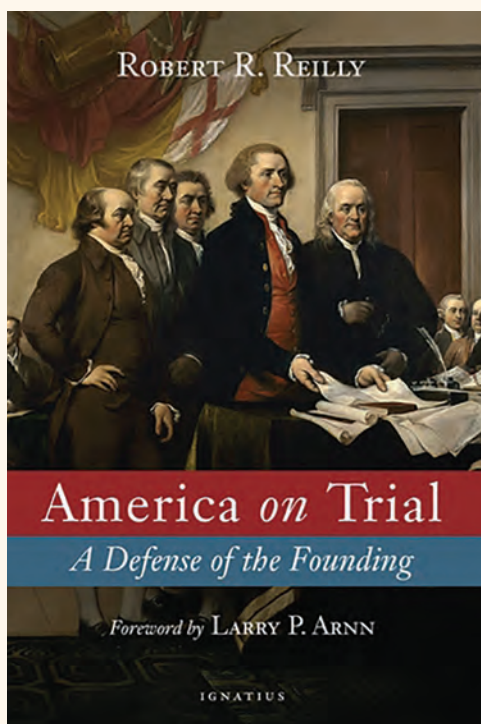
— **Larry P. Arnn, Ph.D.**,
President, Hillsdale College

"A defense of the principles of natural law, morality, and natural religion as the foundation of American policy from the beginning and a historical 'big picture' of their classical, medieval, and modern origins."

— **Peter Kreeft, Ph.D.**, Professor of Philosophy, Boston College

"It's become fashionable in Christian intellectual circles to condemn the American Founding as just so much bad Enlightenment philosophy. Reilly shows convincingly that these charges are misguided."

— **Jay Richards, Ph.D.**,
Senior Fellow, Discovery Institute



"It would be hard to imagine a more robust or comprehensive account of the deep roots of the American Founding than Reilly provides here. His strong, steady voice warrants particular attention."

— **Robert Royal, Ph.D.**,
President, Faith & Reason Institute

"Reminiscent of Russell Kirk. Reilly makes clear that the intellectually broad, historically deep arguments of the Founders cannot be reduced to those of John Locke. Essential reading about America's real roots."

— **Benjamin Wiker, Ph.D.**,
Professor of Political Science,
Franciscan University

"Reilly demonstrates that the roots of our country are grounded deeply not in Modernist heresies but in Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome. Our current decay can be reversed by embracing where we really came from."

— **Austin Ruse**, President,
Center for Family & Human Rights

The Founding of the American Republic is on trial. Critics say it was a poison pill with a time-release formula; we are its victims. Its principles are responsible for the country's moral and social disintegration because they were based on the Enlightenment falsehood of radical individual autonomy.

In this well-researched book, Robert Reilly declares: not guilty. To prove his case, he traces the lineage of the ideas that made the United States, and its ordered liberty, possible. These concepts were extraordinary when they first burst upon the ancient world: the Judaic oneness of God; the Greek rational order of the world based upon the Reason behind it; and the Christian arrival of that Reason (Logos) incarnate in Christ. These may seem a long way from the American Founding, but Reilly argues that they are, in fact, its bedrock. Combined, they mandated the exercise of both freedom and reason.

Why are these concepts being rejected today? Reilly reveals the underlying drama: the conflict of *might makes right* versus *right makes might*. America's decline, he claims, is not to be discovered in the Founding principles, but in their disavowal.

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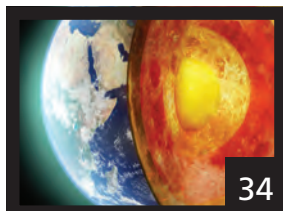


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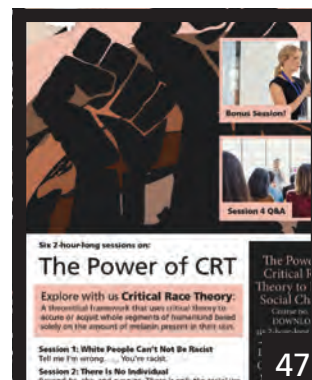
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SALVO

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Published by:

The Fellowship of St. James

P.O. Box 410788, Chicago, IL 60641

Subscription Services: 1-800-283-8333

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salvo n. (säl'vō)

1. A mental reservation
2. An expedient for protecting one's reputation
3. A forceful verbal or written assault
4. A group of shots fired simultaneously for effect

A publication of The Fellowship of St. James (www.fsj.org), *Salvo* is dedicated to debunking the cultural myths that have undercut human dignity, all but destroyed the notions of virtue and morality, and slowly eroded our appetite for transcendence. It also seeks to promote the Christian worldview. The opinions expressed by individual contributors are not necessarily those of the editors or publisher.

SALVO (USPS #025-638) is published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter by The Fellowship of St. James at 4125 W. Newport Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641-4009. Periodicals Postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SALVO, PO Box 410788, Chicago, IL 60641-0788.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES: For new or gift subscriptions, renewals, changes of address, or questions about your subscription, contact: *Salvo* Subscription Services, P.O. Box 5866, Big Sandy, TX 75755, 1-800-283-8333. Back issues, missing or damaged copies: orders@fsj.org.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: U.S.: \$29.99 for one year (four issues); \$54.99 for two years (eight issues). Canada: \$36.99 (U.S.) for one year; \$68.99 (U.S.) for two years. Other foreign: \$41.99 (U.S.) for one year; \$78.99 (U.S.) for two years. **Special rate for students** and those on reduced incomes: \$15.99 for one year. Digital only subscriptions are also available: \$15.99 for one year. Bulk rates are available. Visit salvomag.com for details.

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REASONS TO BELIEVE



Fall 2020

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Marxism & Morality

Ignorance of History Is No Excuse for Current Events

by James M. Kushiner

In response to criticisms of police actions against student demonstrators during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Mayor Richard J. Daley famously declared, "The policeman isn't there to create disorder; the policeman is there to preserve disorder." That's not a typo; Mayor Daley was prone to such gaffes. But it does raise the topic, pertinent to 2020, of clashes between citizens and police and the differences between order and disorder.

In 2020, protestors and police around the world have clashed in places as disparate as Seattle and Hong Kong. Each side views the other as, at best, impediments to a proper and just social order, and at worst, instigators of disorder and injustice. In judging so, they both assume the existence of a moral order that justifies their own actions and that shows their opponents' moral compass to be defective. Morality is at issue.

What may appear to be a very stable social order may in fact be deeply and morally disordered. The Soviet Union was a highly ordered society, but Stalin's murderous communist regime violated the humanity of its citizens, depriving them of life and liberty by brute force. The Marxist-socialist order was fundamentally inhumane and disordered, and, despite claims to the contrary, any honest examination of its record would confirm that verdict.

Tragically Deceived

In the early 1930s, Western elites were divided in their opinions about the new Soviet socialist "experiment." Amazingly, tens of thousands of Americans, some hurting from the Great Depres-



Minneapolis, MN, May 28, 2020

sion, moved to the Soviet Union to participate in what they saw as a promising new social order. The true story about them is told by Tim Tzouliadis in *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* (Penguin Books, 2008) and in the 2002 documentary film *Amerikantsi: The Lost Victims of Stalin* (at Prime Video, aka *Cover Up Amerikants*). Few of these Americans ever returned; the majority eventually were executed or sent to the gulag by Stalin.

If only those Americans had known the truth about Marxist ideology and its implementation under Stalin! Yet facts were discovered and known, but ignored. *New York Times* reporter Walter

Duranty, who covered the Soviet Union the 1930s, admitted that he covered up and suppressed the evidence of Stalin's crimes, including the starvation of perhaps as many as ten million Ukrainians. Yet for his reporting on Russia he was given a Pulitzer Prize.

Even today, the factual record of Marxism is ignored or downplayed by many university professors, who applaud (and sometimes join) protestors who unwittingly support Marxist organizers and are ignorant of Marxism's true track record. An organization calling itself Black Lives Matter, instigator of many of the 2020 protests that have quickly turned disorderly and violent, is admittedly a Marxist-inspired, anti-traditional-family organization that seeks to create disorder for the sake of a new social order of its own making.

Fighting Ignorance

Salvo editors and writers believe in a deep, created moral order by which we can judge human actions. Sadly, today's opponents of the traditional Judeo-Christian moral order

increasingly refuse to participate in discussion and debate about the moral order. They absurdly assert that using rational argument, logic, and evidence is oppressive, aggressive, abusive, or even violent. Some call appeals to logic and facts "white" and seek to "cancel" those who reason in this way. They think facts do not matter and can be ignored, which can only increase the amount of ignorance in the world.

Salvo is published to fight against ignorance and to raise the level of debate. Whether on matters societal, sexual, or scientific, we endeavor to appeal with good reason to the moral order of things. ☺

Lockdown Double Standards

For the first two months of the coronavirus lockdown mandates in the United States, large gatherings were prohibited. When protests emerged in dissent of lockdown restrictions (as at the state capitol building in Michigan), some lawmakers and politicians (among them, Nancy Pelosi) rebuked the demonstrators for “endangering the public.” However, following the police-related death of George Floyd in May, the very same critics have praised massive (“beautiful”) protests in the name of social change and justice.

In another example of hypocrisy, New York City mayor Bill de Blasio and the state’s governor, Andrew Cuomo, permitted and even celebrated the protests taking place in New York City,

while simultaneously condemning religious gatherings as dangers to public health. De Blasio even threatened members of a local synagogue with arrest for gathering for worship.

Similar discrimination was the subject of a lawsuit filed in June on behalf of two Catholic priests and three members of an Orthodox Jewish congregation in New York. After holding a hearing, U.S. District Attorney Gary L. Sharpe issued a preliminary injunction against the mayor and governor and warned that

they must either hold everyone to the health guidelines of the state or permit all protests, gatherings, and demonstrations without discrimination. •



(Source: Fox News [June 12, 2020]: [foxnews.com/us/new-york-cuomo-de-blasio-coronavirus-discrimination-lawsuit](https://www.foxnews.com/us/new-york-cuomo-de-blasio-coronavirus-discrimination-lawsuit))



New Discourse on Racial Fragility

After the death of George Floyd, Robin DiAngelo’s book *White Fragility*, first published in 2018, soared to become the number one bestselling book in the United States. Along with other “antiracist” books, it is being heavily advertised on Amazon and other influential platforms, as people seek to educate themselves on racial issues.

While much of the mainstream media is declaring *White Fragility* a “must-read,” commentators at *New Discourses*, an online forum for free discussion, beg to differ. *New*

Discourses features dozens of articles critiquing the ideologies of power dynamics, Marxism, and postmodernism, all of which lurk behind DiAngelo’s race-obsessed book. A review by Anne Bailey, for instance, titled “5 Reasons Why ‘White Fragility’ Is Shallow and Destructive,” points out that the book actually promotes division in race relations by causing people to suspect their friends and even family members of “deep-seated” racism, thereby damaging formerly healthy relationships. The book would have you believe that everything is about race and that

everything people do, white people in particular, is saturated with racial awareness or racism. •

(Source: *New Discourses* [June 17, 2020]: <https://newdiscourses.com/2020/06/5-reasons-book-white-fragility-shallow-destructive>)



Isolating the Causes of Isolation

As the Covid-19 lockdowns were extended from weeks to months, people began expressing concerns about the detrimental effects of prolonged isolation, especially on the elderly. But Cathy Ruse, a senior fellow with the Family Research Council, pointed out in an article for *The Stream* in May that the problem of severe social isolation in the United

States was nothing new; it had been raised in an article in *The Washington Post* in 2006, fourteen years ago.

In "Our Culture Needs Marriage, Because It Needs Mothers," Ruse wrote:

We were heading toward radical social isolation even before Covid-19. The virus just

accelerated our pace. Seniors in nursing homes cannot lay eyes on anyone related to them. Parents are dying in hospitals without the succor and support of children and grandchildren. The coronavirus pandemic gives a glimpse of the future in store for those who have foregone marriage and children.

Ruse pointed to the sexual revolution as a prime factor in causing the isolation that many older people are experiencing today. Forgoing marriage and children can lead to loneliness in the long run. Add a global pandemic to the mix, and you may find yourself foreclosed from even the possibility of spending the end of your life surrounded by people who care.

Ruse calls for a remediation of this aspect of the sexual revolution. "Even if women are persuaded that they do not need marriage, marriage needs them, and our culture needs marriage. To put it bluntly, wives and mothers are needed very much today." In a time when radicalism of every stripe exalts the self above all bonds and commitments, marriage and family remain a fundamental bulwark against isolation. •

(Source: *The Stream* [May 10, 2020]: <https://stream.org/wife-mother-and-other-essential-work>)

Writers' Blockade

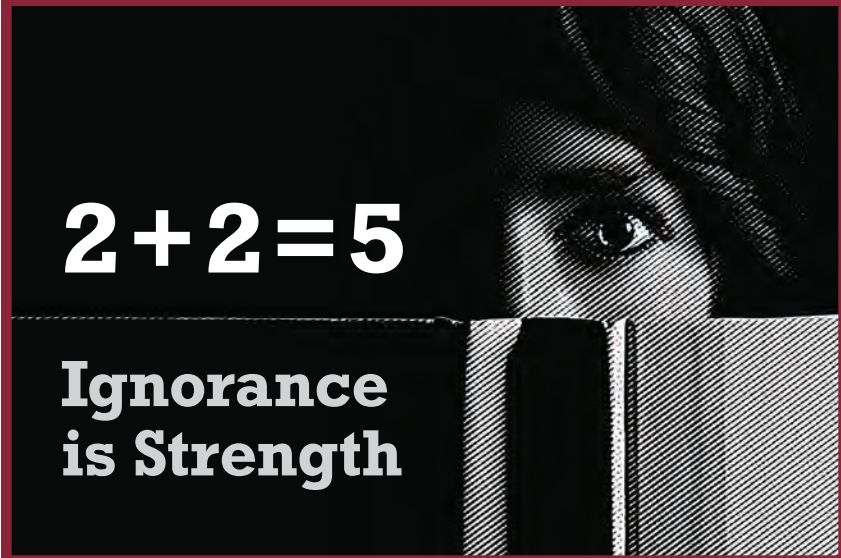
In July, 150 mostly left-leaning writers and activists jointly issued a letter objecting to "cancel culture," the practice of shaming, silencing, boycotting, and otherwise attempting to ruin the lives of individuals who have voiced an opinion or supported a policy that doesn't conform to the ideological narrowness of "wokeness."

The letter called for a culture in which differences of opinion are respected, and expressed concern that "the free exchange of information and ideas, the lifeblood of a liberal society, is daily becoming more constricted." Among its signatories are such prominent feminists and leftists as J. K. Rowling, Margaret Atwood, Gloria Steinem, Noam Chomsky, and Salman Rushdie.

This perhaps surprising resistance to cancel culture, given that it comes from the left, follows in the wake of a growing number of people being harassed, silenced, or fired from their jobs for disagreeing with or even showing neutrality towards the Black Lives Matter movement and other causes, especially those pertaining to gender and sexuality. Rowling herself, for instance, has been criticized for remarks deemed "trans-phobic" by the left, and Stephen Pinker, the eminent liberal Harvard professor, has been attacked for remarks he made about police shootings. The letter calls for an end to public shaming and the "cancellation" of individuals who simply want to participate in public discourse. •



(Source: *Independent* [July 8, 2020]: independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/jk-rowling-harpers-open-letter-cancel-culture-a9607116.html)



2+2=5

Ignorance
is Strength

Bad-Mouthing Math

In July, Brittany Marshall, a self-described teacher and Ph.D. student, posted on Twitter that the basic mathematical equation of $2 + 2 = 4$ is merely cultural and a result of “western imperialism.” She wrote: “Nope

the idea of $2 + 2$ equaling 4 is cultural and because of western imperialism/colonization, we think of it as the only way of knowing.”

Her post was part of a larger Twitter thread in which certain folks claimed that “standards” were imposed and therefore subjective. Another teacher named Kim tweeted, “Stan-

dards aren’t objective. That’s the whole point. Math isn’t objective either. It’s always down to interpretation.”

A PJ Media article reporting on the Twitter thread connected these claims to a scene in George Orwell’s iconic dystopian novel *1984* in which the protagonist, Winston, is forced to say that $2 + 2$ does not equal 4, but 5. The idea is that every standard of truth and error is socially constructed, usually for the oppression of a certain class of people. Now even basic math is seen as an imperialistic instrument meant to suppress people.

But if any subject historically seen as objectively tied to the actual state of affairs is indeed “up for interpretation,” then what about all these vehement Twitter claims? Are they up for interpretation, too? According to the Tweeters’ own postmodern assumptions, aren’t *their* claims just as subjective? The ideology that so many of these people are adopting is based on a fundamental fallacy. If you claim as true “There is no truth,” then you are logically *required* to abstain from making truth claims of your own, including that one. In other words, you need to just shut up. •

(Source: *PJ Media* [July 8, 2020]: <https://pjmedia.com/news-and-politics/paula-bolyard/2020/07/08/orwellian-teacher-blames-western-imperialism-colonization-for-concept-of-224-n614048>)

Highway Robbery

Since the death of George Floyd in late May, violent protests have occurred in dozens of cities across the United States, with rioting and looting causing millions of dollars in damages and the loss of many people’s livelihoods. But business owners are not the only ones who have suffered from the mayhem; truck drivers have as well. Daniel Horowitz cited some examples:

[A] group of four males [in Minneapolis] attempt[ed] to pull truckers out of their cabins. Another trucker was reportedly driving on the Bobby Jones Expressway in Augusta, Georgia, when his fully loaded tanker truck came under gunfire, as if he were traveling in Afghani-

stan. Similar stories have reportedly occurred on I-70 in Ohio and I-95 in Connecticut. Truck drivers have reported at least two shootings on interstate highways near Memphis, Tennessee.

Horowitz also cited a poll from mid-June revealing that 79 percent of truck drivers do not want to drive through areas where law enforcement is defunded. What kind of further violence may break out if city officials are increasingly pressured to accommodate the demands of rioters and mobs to cut law enforcement budgets? •



(Source: *Conservative Review* [June 26, 2020]: conservativereview.com/news/horowitz-america-afghanistan-growing-danger-truckers-americas-roads)

Marchers' Madness

Along with destroying people's private property, "anti-racist protesters" have torn down a wide array of historical sites and statues. Not just figures associated with the Confederacy have been targeted, but many other figures as well. For instance, statues of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington have been vandalized and torn down by mobs because these men were slave owners, or so the argument goes. But contradictorily, the Lincoln Memorial, honoring the president who pushed the 13th Amendment through Congress in 1865, has also been desecrated.

Not even statues of slavery *abolitionists* have been spared. In Madison, Wisconsin, a statue of Hans Christian Heg, a 19th-century Norwegian im-

migrant who fiercely opposed the institution of slavery, was decapitated and deposited in nearby Lake Monona. Heg had gone so far as to form a militia to fight against slave chasers, and he helped countless people gain their freedom. Even more ironically, a statue of Frederick Douglass was removed from its pedestal in Rochester, New York, on July 5, the anniversary of one of Douglass's most famous speeches, entitled "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?", which the former slave delivered in that city in 1852.

With even figures like Heg and Douglass in jeopardy of being "cancelled," it is uncertain who will be next in the absurd campaign. Martin Luther King Jr.? Perhaps the rioters would like to see statues of themselves erected to replace the old ones. But if their convictions pass on into the next generation, their statues will be cancelled, too. •



Green Judas

Environmentalist Mike Shellenberger was supposed to have an article published by *Forbes* in June, but the magazine cancelled its publication at the last minute after pressure was applied by radical "green activists." Shellenberger has contributed vastly to environmental causes over the years, as he details in his article, which he ended up posting independently.

Nevertheless, he received intense pushback when he veered from radical green orthodoxy by saying that although "climate change is real," it is "not the end of the world." He backed up that view by citing statistics indicating that there is no valid cause for environmental alarmism—for instance, the facts that fires have declined around the world by 25 percent since 2003, and that the total amount of land used for meat production has declined "by an area nearly as large as Alaska."

Shellenberger further claims that, contrary to the assertions of doomsday environmentalists, humans are *not* causing a "sixth mass extinction" and "climate change is *not* making natural disasters worse." To those who hail angry activists like Greta Thunberg as prophets for pronouncing the planet's imminent doom and implicating all of humanity in its ruin, Shellenberger's article was not a welcome piece despite its balanced reasoning and notwithstanding the author's proven concern for the environment. •

(Source: *Breitbart* [June 30, 2020]: [breitbart.com/politics/2020/06/30/delingpole-forbes-cancels-environmentalist-who-wrote-i-apologize-for-the-climate-scare/](https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2020/06/30/delingpole-forbes-cancels-environmentalist-who-wrote-i-apologize-for-the-climate-scare/))



Megadeath

A Timeline of Plagues, Epidemics & Pandemics

by Heather Zeiger

DEFINITIONS

Outbreak

The sudden rise of the incidence of disease or the sudden rapid increase in the number of harmful organisms, particularly insects (ref: Merriam-Webster Online).

Epidemic

When an outbreak spreads rapidly, as in the case of infectious diseases, and affects a disproportionate number of people within the same population, community, or region at the same time.

Pandemic

When an epidemic occurs over a wide geographic area.

Plague

A widespread calamity, infestation, or epidemic with a high rate of mortality. Can also be a reference to The Plague, which is caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*.

An outbreak can lead to an epidemic, which in turn can lead to a pandemic.

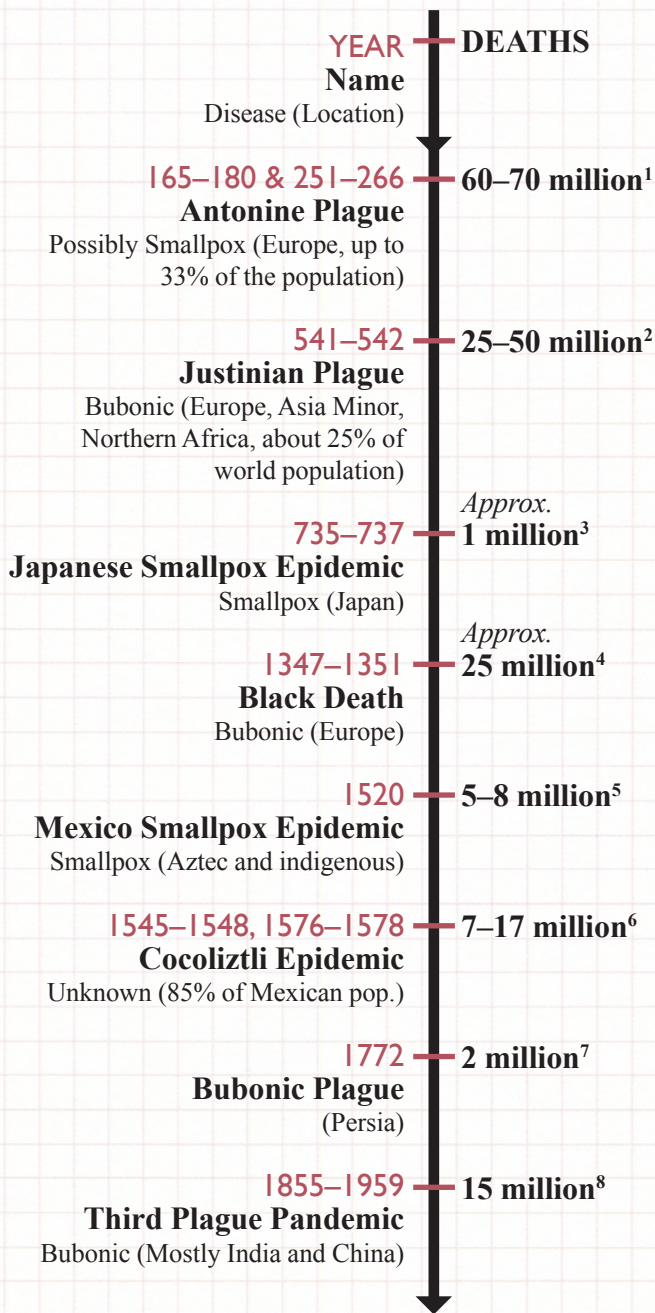
Note: In the timeline at right, I have distinguished between an epidemic (or pandemic) and a disease. For example, influenza is a disease, but there have been many flu epidemics. The number of deaths reported is for a particular epidemic. Also, I selected particularly deadly epidemics that killed a significant percentage of the population. Many epidemics have not been included in this list, as I have tried to pick ones that were historically significant and had approximate death counts. I did not include a separate listing for Native Americans in the U.S. because, although a large portion of the population died from smallpox, measles, and other diseases, they did not necessarily die from one particular disease with a death toll. This is in contrast to the Aztecs in Mexico who died of smallpox.

Notes

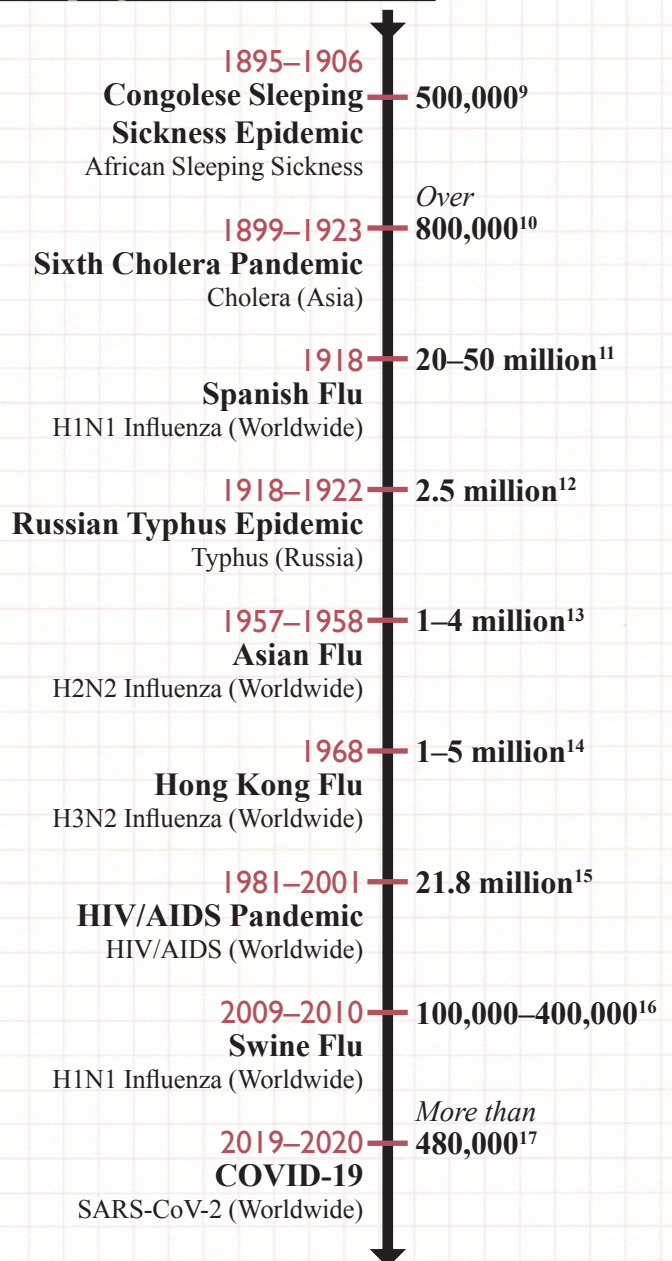
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2. John Horgan, "Justinian's Plague (541–542 CE)," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*: ancient.eu/article/782/justinians-plague-541-542-ce.
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The plague of Florence, 1348



Spanish Flu, 1918



Who Owns Slavery?

Beware Biased Reporting on Racial Theories That Ignores History

by Nicole M. King

In a July episode of *All Things Considered*, NPR religion correspondent Tom Gjelten argues that “White Supremacist Ideas Have Historical Roots in U.S. Christianity.”¹ The piece focuses first on two nineteenth-century Southern pastors, Henry Lyon, Jr., and James Henley Thornwall, who defended slavery from their pulpits. A review of these men and others leads Gjelten to conclude, “Elements of racist ideology have long been present in white Christianity in the United States.”

He goes on to catalogue a few other historical and living Southern clergy, whom he believes have focused on the salvation of souls to the detriment of social justice. “Evangelicals in particular generally prioritize an individual’s own salvation experience over social concerns,” Gjelten believes. “The primary mission of the church in this view is to win souls for Christ. Working for racial justice, in contrast, may be seen as a ‘political’ issue.”

Gjelten is employing a certain sleight-of-hand here, insofar as many of the things he and the left consider necessary aspects of “social justice”—such as so-called abortion and LGBT rights—have nothing to do with race and are rightly opposed by Christians. But even putting that aside, his story ignores the many, many Christians who fought for racial justice in the past two millennia, and also the many Christ-haters who actively sought to oppress their fellow man.



Abolitionist Charles Finney

Christians Against Slavery

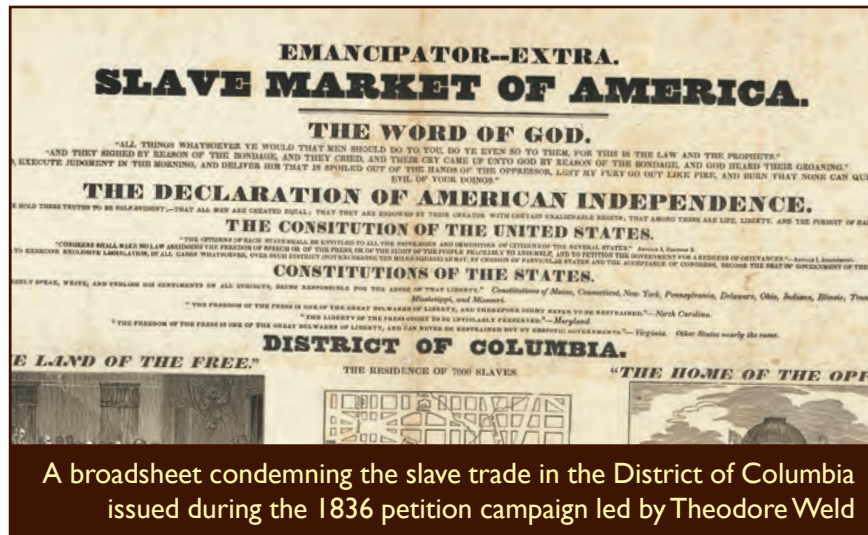
Christians were among the first to speak out against slavery. Historian Rodney Stark argues that Christianity is actually the reason that European slavery was eventually abolished. “Slavery ended in medieval Europe,” writes Stark, “only because the church extended

its sacraments to all slaves and then managed to impose a ban on the enslavement of Christians (and of Jews). Within the context of medieval Europe, that prohibition was effectively a rule of universal abolition."² Increasingly, church officials preached against slavery, and many converted kings began to outlaw the practice within their lands.

Fast-forward some centuries. In an impassioned speech before the House of Commons in Britain, abolitionist William Wilberforce (1759–1833) proclaimed, "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners." British preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) was also fiercely opposed to slavery, writing, "I do from my inmost soul detest slavery . . . and although I commune at the Lord's table with men of all creeds, yet with a slaveholder I have no fellowship of any sort or kind."³

Many key players in the American abolitionist movement were also devoted Christians. Tim Stafford writes in *Christian History* that abolitionists were

Many key players in the American abolitionist movement were also devoted Christians. Tim Stafford writes in *Christian History* that abolitionists were "the most hated men and women in America." They were also, he argues, "inescapably Christian in their motives, means, and vocabulary."



"the most hated men and women in America." They were also, he argues, "inescapably Christian in their motives, means, and vocabulary," even when they weren't connected to an actual church. Indeed, a "large proportion" of abolitionists were "orthodox Christians."⁴ Charles Finney (1792–1875), a notable preacher of the Second Great Awakening, saw slavery as an abomination, and believed that "Christian indifference" to the issue of slavery was an impediment to the work of sharing the gospel.⁵

Leading abolitionist Theodore Weld (1803–1895) was also a Christian, having been converted in one of Finney's revivals.⁶

So while a few so-called Christians in the history of the South tried to justify slavery through their particular reading of the Bible, a rather greater number tried to abolish the "peculiar institution" because of their conviction of the equality of all men before God.

Darwin & Eugenics

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the modern eugenics movement picked up steam from the writings of

none other than noted agnostic Charles Darwin. Darwin's work on species led him to conclude that there were vast physical and intellectual differences between the races, which made some races superior to others. Specifically, Darwin believed that the white races, and particularly Europeans, were more "advanced" than Africans, Aboriginal Australians, and other races which he classified as "savages."⁷

An example of Darwin's social hierarchy appears in his book *The Descent of Man* (1871). In Chapter 6, Darwin discusses the seeming "breaks" that appear in "the organic chain in between man and his nearest allies," and how these breaks do not invalidate his arguments, because the extent of the breaks depends only upon "the number of related forms which have become extinct." He elucidates as follows:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes . . . will no doubt be exterminated. The break will then be rendered wider, for it will

intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.

The implications here are obvious. Darwin saw the Caucasian race (and, he hoped, something more advanced than it in the future), the black race, the indigenous Australians, the gorillas, and the baboons on a kind of continuum, with "the negro or Australian" being closer to the gorilla than the Caucasian. (Darwin's views on the place of women in this scheme weren't much better, incidentally.)

A little later in that chapter Darwin discusses skull dimensions and brain sizes, asserting that since Caucasians have the largest brains, they must also possess the greatest intellect. Indeed, writes neuroscientist Steven Rose, Darwin "enthusiastically endorsed his cousin Francis Galton's view of hereditary genius transmitted down the male line, and nodded cautiously towards eugenics"—the idea that the human race can be improved via selective breeding. Darwin's *Origin of Species* was actually the taking-off point for Galton, who is considered the father of modern eugenics.

Nazi Race Theory

Some 60 years after *Origin of Species* was published, Darwinism fathered one of its most horrifying children: Nazi racial theory. Historian Richard Weikart writes that, contrary to what many Darwinists would like to believe, "the historical evidence is overwhelming that human evolution was an integral part of Nazi racial ideology."⁸ Hitler identified with Darwin's theories, and the official Nazi school curriculum taught Darwinian evolution.

According to Nazi race theory, the Aryan or Nordic "race" had become superior because it had faced greater pressure during the Ice Ages, which had weeded out the weak and unfit. The Nazi goal of the purification and dominance of the Aryan race depended, among other things, on eliminating intermarriage between white and black Germans. Thus, many programs targeted not only the Jews and Romani (Gypsies), but also African-descended Germans, who were sterilized by the busload.⁹

It is also worth mentioning that Margaret Sanger—certainly not a Christian, and a hater of Catholicism in particular—bought into these racial theories and was an ardent eugenicist herself. She was particularly interested in spreading birth control centers throughout the American South to limit the growth of the black population (though Planned Parenthood claims this was due to her compassion for African-Americans and not racism).

Suppressing the Truth

Gjelten's NPR piece is merely an attempt to disguise an anti-Christian hit piece as high-quality journalism. By cherry-picking a handful of nineteenth-century pro-slavery pastors, Gjelten pretends to be able to demonstrate that racism has always been an intrinsic feature of American Christianity. Some putative Christians were, in fact, white supremacists, and mishandled the Word of God so as to justify slavery. But Gjelten actively seeks to suppress the truth: at its core, Christianity is radically impartial.

As Stark writes, "That God treats all equally is fundamental to the Christian message: all may

Tom Gjelten actively seeks to suppress the truth: at its core, Christianity is radically impartial. As Rodney Stark writes, "That God treats all equally is fundamental to the Christian message: all may be saved."

be saved."¹⁰ Jesus caused scandals by publicly associating with those considered the dregs of society: the prostitutes, the poor, the leprous, the tax collectors. History makes it clear that Christianity was key to the beginnings of many abolitionist movements worldwide, while those who rejected the faith were the originators of some of the most horrifying, destructive programs and theories the world has ever seen. ☉

Notes

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Questionable Health

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

by Nicole M. King

Background:

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was formed in 2000, when the Gates Learning Foundation merged with the William H. Gates Foundation.¹ Today, it is the wealthiest and largest charitable giving foundation in the world, with over \$51 billion in assets.²

As of 2018, the foundation had given away some \$50 billion since its inception. In recent years, it has become one of the most powerful voices in the area of global public health. It pours billions of dollars into vaccination programs, HIV/AIDS relief, and other medical and preventative aid. Lately, Bill Gates has become the self-proclaimed expert on the COVID-19 pandemic, and an outspoken critic of the Trump administration's response to it. Most media outlets welcome his voice. One recent *Vogue* headline read, "Why Isn't Bill Gates Running the Coronavirus Task Force?"³

Reason for Surveillance:

A few voices, however, have begun to object to the foundation's near-monopoly on public health,

and they argue that Gates's track record on vaccination programs should give the world pause before it hands over to him the reins of the response to the pandemic.

In the past decade or so, the Gates Foundation has poured most of its efforts into vaccination programs for children in Africa and Asia. But a recent story on the programs highlights the fact that the vaccines the foundation uses have been discontinued in America and most other developed countries.⁴ In the case of OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine), for example, the story reports that more children have been paralyzed by OPV in recent years than by wild polio.

The foundation also continues to promote the use of outdated and dangerous contraceptives. One of these is Norplant, pulled from the U.S. market in 2002 and now "slightly modified" and sold as Jadelle. It is promoted by the Gates Foundation in alliance with USAID and an organization called EngenderHealth. The latter used to be called the Sterilization League for Human Betterment, and its original mission was to "improve the biological stock of the human race."⁵

This brings us to the Gates Foundation's real identity: it's a rebranded version of the eugenics programs of the early 20th century. In an interview in 2012, Bill Gates responded to a question on how the world should handle the "problem" of population growth by asserting that "the population growth issue at the global level is not that daunting," but there is a problem insofar as "the population is growing the fastest where people are less able to deal with it . . . Northern Nigeria, Yemen, Chad," and Niger.⁶

What does the Gates Foundation see as the solution? Cheap, outdated vaccines, and dangerous contraceptives promoted by eugenic organizations. Recent research funded by the foundation demonstrates that such efforts are "working." The study forecasts that by 2100 the global TFR (total fertility rate) will be 1.66 births per woman (replacement level is 2.1).⁷ The researchers' estimate of population size by 2100 is significantly less than previous estimates, and this change, they say, is largely attributable to fertility decline in contemporary "high-fertility countries," particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa.

The racist eugenics programs of the early 20th century are alive and well, and winning their war against life. ☹

Notes

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4. Loffredo and Greenstein, note 2.
5. Loffredo and Greenstein, note 2.
6. "A Conversation with Bill Gates: Population Growth," YouTube (Aug. 21, 2012): [youtube.com/watch?v=ozlbeXrb_5A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozlbeXrb_5A).
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ABORTING THE BEGGAR

Margaret Sanger, Eugenicist

Today we consider Margaret Sanger to be the founder of Planned Parenthood and thus of the abortion movement. And in part, this is true—she did found Planned Parenthood, and her theories lay at the groundwork of the abortion industry in the United States. At the core of her life's work, however, Margaret Sanger really fought hardest for birth control, and she even tried to distance herself from abortion for most of her career. She was, in fact, one of the four people originally responsible for the development of Enovid, the first hormonal contraceptive pill.¹



Margaret Sanger (seated behind desk)

To argue for the necessity of the birth control pill, Sanger wrote convincingly of the plight of the poor women she had served while working as a nurse in the slums of New York. These women, she argued, wanted smaller families—they were suffering physically from the rigors of pregnancy and childbirth, they were exhausted from caring for hordes of children, and they were mired in poverty with no way to get out.

But her motives for wanting birth control went deeper than the gut-wrenching personal stories she told. Combined with those more compassionate inclinations were Sanger's ardently eugenicist and Malthusian leanings.



BIRTH CONTROL = EUGENICS

"Choice" is a crucial concept in the pro-abortion position, but what both Sanger and her close associates wanted was for certain classes of people to "choose" to eliminate themselves. Sanger thought that the promotion of birth control and of a woman's choice to become a mother would create a "new race" of mankind. Once "liberated" from the "slavery" of "involuntary motherhood," as Sanger terms it in *Woman and the New Race*, women would be free to pursue education, careers, and a more "enlightened" motherhood. They would produce better children, because they themselves would be healthier and more educated. Sanger writes:

Birth control itself, often denounced as a violation of natural law, is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, or preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives.²

In a 1921 article in her journal, *The Birth Control Review*, Sanger argues for the link between eugenics and birth control even more firmly—and champions the need for both. "[T]he campaign for Birth Control

is not merely of eugenic value," she says, "but is practically identical in ideal, with the final aims of Eugenics." She continues:

As an advocate of Birth Control, I wish to take advantage of the present opportunity to point out that the unbalance between the birth rate of the "unfit" and the "fit," admittedly the greatest present menace to civilization, can never be rectified by the inauguration of a cradle competition between these two classes. In this matter, the example of the inferior classes, the fertility of the feeble-minded, the mentally defective, the poverty-stricken classes, should not be held up for emulation to the mentally and physically fit though less fertile parents of the educated and well-to-do classes. On the contrary, the most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective.³

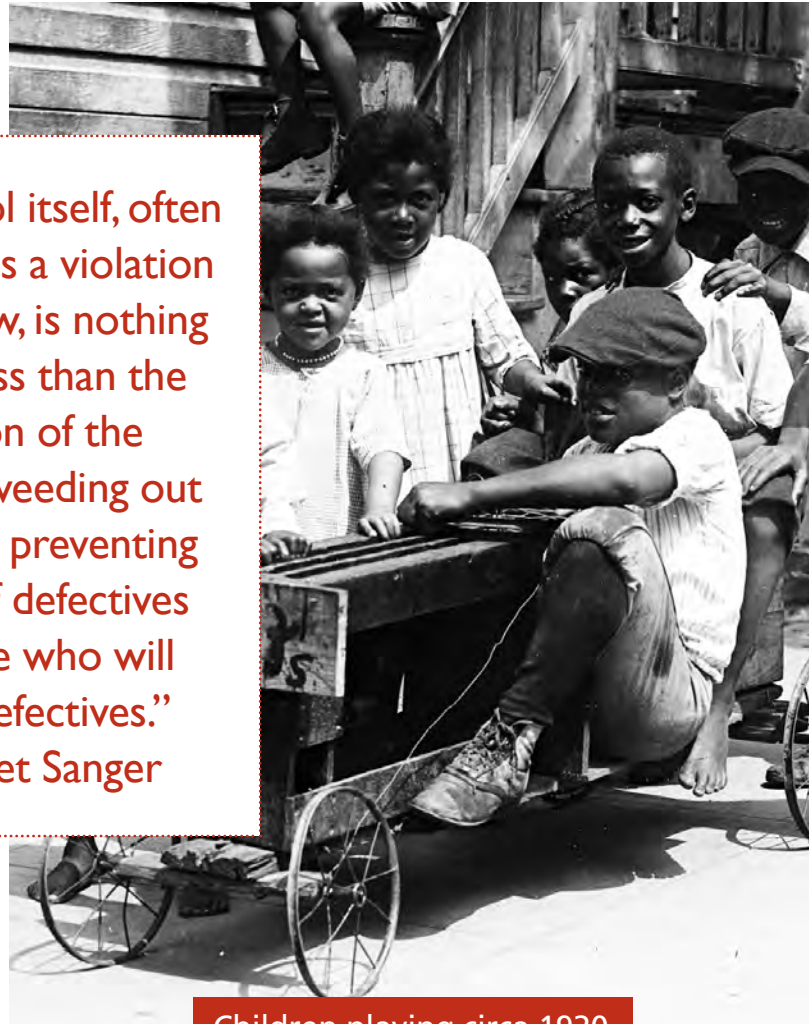
To summarize: the poor and otherwise "unfit" have too many children, outnumber the wealthy and educated, and are thus a "menace to society." But the wealthy will never manage to outbreed the poor. So instead, birth control propaganda must be deployed to convince the poor of the benefits of limiting their fertility.

Again, in *Woman and the New Race*:

If we are to develop in America a new race with a racial soul, we must keep the birth rate within the scope of our ability to understand as well as to educate. We must not encourage reproduction beyond our capacity to assimilate our numbers so as to make the coming generation into such physically fit, mentally capable, socially alert individuals as are the ideal of a democracy.

In this view, eugenic birth control is a necessary component to a functioning democracy. The United States needs to be able to "assimilate" its

**"Birth control itself, often denounced as a violation of natural law, is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, or preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives."
—Margaret Sanger**



Children playing circa 1920

"numbers"—i.e., all those born—into the ideals and convictions of the educated and wealthy upper classes. Since it would be impossible to assimilate a great many poor, uneducated, unintelligent, or physically unfit people, they would be a drain on the whole system—and also get out of the control of the elites.

TELLTALE COMPANY

Not only was Sanger herself a eugenicist, but so also were the people with whom she surrounded herself. During a trip to England (she fled the country in 1914 rather than face charges related to distributing birth control materials), she spent significant time with Havelock Ellis, a British physician who wrote widely on issues of sexuality. Ellis shared Sanger's leanings, writing at one time, "The superficially sympathetic man flings a coin to the beggar; the more deeply sympathetic man builds an almshouse for him so he need no longer beg; but perhaps the most radically

sympathetic of all is the man who arranges that the beggar shall not be born.”⁴

The journal that Sanger helped to found, *The Birth Control Review*, frequently published prominent eugenicist voices. Take, for example, the article, “Eugenic Sterilization: An Urgent Need,” which appeared in the April 1933 issue. The author of this piece, Dr. Ernst Rudin, was a chief eugenicist under the Nazi regime, and responsible for the mass sterilization and murder of thousands.

ELITIST & DISDAINFUL

Did Sanger want to help poor woman? Arguably, yes. Her experience as a nurse in the impoverished neighborhoods of New York gave her ample exposure to women who were struggling to make ends meet, women who were physically worn down with heavy work and poverty.

These are historical realities that many in liberal or feminist circles would prefer to ignore or forget, but the truth is that both contraception and abortion were strongly endorsed by those in the eugenicist movement as a means to “better” mankind by “weeding out the unfit.”

But hand-in-hand with her sympathetic view of the poor was Sanger’s elitist, paternalistic, and disdainful view toward them. They were to be rooted out, sterilized; their numbers were to be reduced enough that they could be controlled by the educated elite. The “defectives” must be eliminated, or else they would overrun the democracy. Or, as she wrote in *Woman and the New Race*, “The most merciful thing a large family can do to one of its infant members is to kill it.”

These are historical realities that many in liberal or feminist circles would prefer to ignore or forget, but the truth is that both contraception and abortion were strongly endorsed by those in the eugenicist movement as a means to “better” mankind by “weeding out the unfit.” And this historical reality still echoes in modern-day efforts at reducing or controlling the fertility of poorer women.

For an example of this, take a trip to a local county health department. Alongside pamphlets on communicable diseases and childhood vaccines, there will almost always be a large assortment of pamphlets, advertisements, wall notices, and such like encouraging female clients to talk to someone about their birth control options, or even explaining the rationale for child spacing.

Such literature is but the legacy of Sanger and the other eugenicists responsible for the mass promotion of contraception and abortion at the beginning of the twentieth century. Alongside the rhetoric of “choice” is the admonition to choose “wisely”—meaning to have fewer children. But behind such efforts lies prideful and elitist disdain for the poor, the working classes, and the handicapped. ☉

Notes

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Black Lives Matter Official, May 2019



UNFAIR CARE

Disaster Ethics & the Trouble with Triage

"Pandemics are uniquely destabilizing." Matthew Lee Anderson, founder of the journal *Mere Orthodoxy*, gave a presentation on the *imago Dei* and the value of a life at The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity's virtual conference on June 26, 2020. The West, he said, derives its idea of human rights from the concept that men and women are made in the image of God, and therefore have intrinsic value and worth. From this, we can determine ethical norms on how a patient should be treated in a medical setting. Those norms, however, get turned on their heads in a triage situation.

During a disaster—whether a natural disaster, armed conflict, or pandemic—the medical infrastructure can become overwhelmed due to the sudden surge of patients requiring medical care. When this happens, decisions must be made as to who receives limited supplies or who will be treated when there are limited numbers of medical personnel. At times, rather than receiving the normal standard of care, a patient is merely stabilized. Treatment may have to wait until supplies or personnel become available. In

the direst circumstances, some patients may be given comfort care because their death is imminent.

Normally, the physician's priority is to care for the particular patient. In a surge situation, the priority changes to saving the most lives. As Dr. Cheyn Onarecker, who serves on the triage team at St. Anthony's Hospital in Oklahoma City, said in his presentation at the conference, this shift in priorities cuts to the very core of doctors' values and can lead to mental harm.

In a pandemic, which is less localized and less temporally bound than a natural disaster, hospitals will go from having adequate resources one week to repurposing other wards and triaging supplies another week. Dr. Aaron Kheriaty, in his article on the impossible ethics of triage situations in *The New Atlantis*, points out:

This one unsettling fact always remains to haunt us: If hospitals exceed their surge capacity, patients who otherwise would have lived will die. Lives will be lost simply because we lacked the resources to offer everyone the basics of modern medicine.¹

The difference of one week may be the difference between surviving COVID-19 and dying from it. To a patient and his family, this can feel like a cruel injustice.

Outside of the hospital, governing bodies have to balance the harms done by not imposing some kind of quarantine or stay-at-home measures on the populace and the harms done by stifling the economy, which can be particularly devastating to the poor. U.S. leaders felt this tension in June, when cases increased. As the British magazine *The Economist* put it, the U.S. had too many cases to open safely and not enough cases to justify fully remaining in lockdown.²

Either option comes with harms, which is the nature of disaster ethics. The same is true in the hospital setting, and even in our personal lives.

Choosing to isolate ourselves from loved ones in long-term care facilities may be the right option to protect them from getting COVID-19, but isolation and loneliness come with their own set of mental and physical problems. Even when all appropriate actions are taken to mitigate harms, a pandemic creates a context where options come with a moral cost.

DELIBERATING BETWEEN WRONG & WRONG

A friend of mine, who teaches ethics at a local university, said ethics is not really about deliberating between right and wrong, because if something is clearly right, that is what one must do. Rather, he says, ethics is about deliberating between wrong and wrong. Even in our pluralistic society, where objective right and wrong are no longer a given, my friend had a point: the most difficult ethical discussions are about how we mitigate wrongs.

This comes into clear view when we encounter a disaster scenario. What is the right course of action, considering that harm will be done no matter what one chooses to do?

As an example, let's assume that three patients are admitted to the ICU with severe COVID-19 symptoms. All three are struggling to breathe and require ventilation. There are only two ventilators available. How do you decide who gets a ventilator? Certainly there are protocols, such as ensuring that the third patient is given oxygen and other types of standard care, but that patient may very well die because there are not enough ventilators. Any criteria you use would entail discrimination of some kind, whether based on age, disability, behavior (e.g., smoker versus non-smoker), or some other factor.

Some argue that medical personnel should get preferential treatment when medical supplies are limited. After all, saving one doctor may allow him

to get back into the fray and save other patients. But as Dr. Kheriaty asks, what about police officers or janitors or food service workers? Or the lead scientist working on a COVID-19 vaccine? Are their jobs any less vital than the medical worker's? Then there are the long-term ramifications of those decisions:

In any case, if we consider some to be indispensable in this hour, does this not imply that others—the artists and poets, the homeless and unemployed—are dispensable? How will such practices shape our attitudes and impact social solidarity once the virus is gone and the dust has settled?³

Even in the face of impossible ethical choices, it doesn't mean we give up altogether. In times of limited resources, there are some ethical norms we can turn to. First, limited

medical resources should go to those who have the most immediately severe cases but who are also the most likely to survive if given treatment.

Second, standards should be in place for those in at-risk groups. For example, an older person with diabetes may benefit from taking a particular drug while in the ICU, whereas a younger person with no underlying conditions may find that same drug less beneficial. The older person, therefore, should receive the drug first.

Third, according to Dr. Onarecker, criteria such as age, chronic disease, or disability should not be used to exclude patients from access to critical services. Some bioethicists say that in certain triage situations, it is permissible to use selection criterion, such as prioritizing medical professionals, because they knowingly put themselves in harm's way and they can later help save other patients. One could make this case for medical professionals who had not been equipped with proper protective equipment but still cared for patients. But discriminating on the basis of age, disease, or disability can veer into stigmatization

One pastor I know said that anger is a secondary emotion that comes out of fear, hurt, or frustration. A pandemic caused by an unknown virus breeds these emotions, but in the midst of this destabilizing situation, there are truths that remain stable.

rather than selecting the most “appropriate” patient to put on a ventilator.

Fourth, Dr. Onarecker recommends not having the triage decisions be made by the attending physician because the physician’s duty is to treat the patient. Someone else, such as a triage officer or triage team member, should make the decisions as to who gets treatment. From the patient’s perspective, this helps maintain patient-doctor trust.

LIVING WITH THE UNFAIRNESS OF A PANDEMIC

Ethical deliberation and enumeration of norms is one thing. Living with what is ethically sound is another.

Some doctors and nurses have reported on the fear they feel when they go into work. Some isolate themselves from their families because they do not want to spread the virus to their loved ones. Other medical professionals must contend with the fact that their neighbors protest against wearing masks or obeying lockdown orders, while they wish they had *more* protective equipment and could safely see their families. Some have had to tell patients’ families that their loved ones will not be put on ventilators because there are none left. Many doctors end up with PTSD or moral injury.

From the patient’s perspective, it can seem unfair. I had a small taste of what it is like to potentially be re-prioritized because of limited medical resources. I live in Dallas, and Texas saw some of its worst numbers for the pandemic at the end of June. On the Thursday before the CBHD conference, Governor Abbott signed an executive order mandating that all elective surgeries in Dallas, Harris (Houston), Travis (Austin), and Bexar (San Antonio) counties be halted until further notice to provide additional space for the increase in COVID-19 patients. In this case, “elective” meant “not immediately, medically necessary to correct a serious medical condition or to preserve the life of a patient who without immediate performance of the surgery or procedure would be at risk for serious adverse medical consequences or death, as determined by the patient’s physician.”⁴ Surrounding counties would be ordered to follow suit if more hospital space was needed.

This order came thirteen days before I was scheduled to have surgery to remove the remainder of the cancer doctors had discovered in my abdomen in March. My situation was not life-threatening, although it was medically necessary, placing me in that blurry space between “elective” and “immediately necessary.” I did not know if my surgery was going to be de-prioritized and rescheduled to a later time.



As of this writing (June 29), I am still scheduled for surgery, but that could change in the next week, depending on the needs of both COVID and non-COVID patients. My situation is mild compared to that in places like New York. I cannot imagine how many patients and their families felt when they were placed in a potentially fatal triage situation because there was too little room or too few ventilators. Undoubtedly it must have felt incredibly unfair.

At the end of the day, the triage situation *isn't* fair. In a fallen world, there are times when we cannot fully live out the principles we know are right because one principle—such as caring for one patient—conflicts with another principle—such as saving as many lives as possible. For all of us in our respective situations, this conflict of principles hurts.

I think this pain fuels the anger we see on the news, at our jobs, in our churches, and even among family members. One pastor I know said that anger is a secondary emotion that comes out of fear, hurt, or frustration. A pandemic caused by an unknown virus breeds these emotions, but in the midst of this destabilizing situation, there are truths that remain stable. One of these is that every human being, whether he or she is elderly, or has underlying conditions, or cannot be placed on a ventilator, has inherent dignity found in the *imago Dei*. ☺

Notes

1. Aaron Kheriaty, “The Impossible Ethics of Pandemic Triage,” *The New Atlantis* (Apr. 3, 2020): thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-impossible-ethics-of-pandemic-triage.
2. “Decoding the confusing messages of the coronavirus epidemic in America,” *The Economist* (June 27, 2020): [economist.com/united-states/2020/06/27/decoding-the-confusing-messages-of-the-coronavirus-epidemic-in-america](https://www.economist.com/united-states/2020/06/27/decoding-the-confusing-messages-of-the-coronavirus-epidemic-in-america).
3. Kheriaty, *ibid.*, note 1.
4. Governor’s office press release (June 25, 2020): <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-issues-executive-expanding-hospital-capacity-order-suspends-elective-surgeries-in-four-texas-counties>.



Portland, Oregon, July 25, 2020

ALWAYS BURNING

The Hope of the Christian in Times of Unrest

One weekend recently, I made the seemingly simple decision to go to a chain store to shop for a swimsuit. “Oh, wait,” my husband said, and pulled out his cell phone. “Okay, so you shouldn’t go to the one on State Street, because that’s where the protestors are tonight.”

No problem. There’s another one. I got in the car. My husband appeared at the door to the garage, holding up one finger while again looking at his phone. “Don’t take North Main, either,” he warned. “There was just a shooting there.”

Good grief, I thought to myself. This is getting ridiculous. But I complied, made it to the store, parked, and started walking in.

That’s when I realized I had forgotten my face mask, which was required at that point in Illinois in any circumstance in which social distancing wasn’t possible—so pretty much everywhere indoors. I turned around with a grimace. The man behind me

clearly had done the same thing, and swore loudly as he returned to his car.

I finally completed my errand and returned home, but the experience left my head spinning. “What is happening to this world?”, I couldn’t help but wonder.

PLAGUES & RIOTS ARE PERENNIAL

Plagues. Riots. Wars and rumors of wars. Violence. Unrest. Racism. Calls for dismantling the police. And the list goes on. It’s the type of world wherein one feels afraid to raise children—perhaps that’s one of the reasons why the United States’ birthrate has fallen to historic lows.¹

For the Christian, though, some historical perspective might be helpful here. As Peter Biles summarized in March on the *Salvo* blog,² this is not the first time that the world has faced plagues. Plagues have riddled every age of human history, from the ancient era, to the Middle Ages, to the Renaissance, and right up through to modern times. Medicine has progressed so far in our day that we often forget that the human body is still susceptible to new, frightening, and unknown maladies, such as those unleashed with COVID-19 this year.

Social unrest as a response to injustice—real or perceived—is also a historical reality. The ancient Romans rioted at the assassination of Julius Caesar. In the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, the English rioted at the imposition of a new poll tax. A group of American colonists dumped an estimated (modern-day) one million dollars’ worth of tea into the Boston Harbor during the 1773 Boston Tea Party. More recently, there were race riots in Detroit in 1943 and again in

1967, the Rodney King riots of 1992, and the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014.

In a 2015 *TIME* piece on American rioting, psychology professor Sherry Hamby wrote that “riots are not great solutions, but riots are usually caused by real injustices.”³ Social unrest is often a response to injustice, and oftentimes it does bring about some degree of social change, though whether for good or ill is another question.

THE CHRISTIAN PATH FORWARD

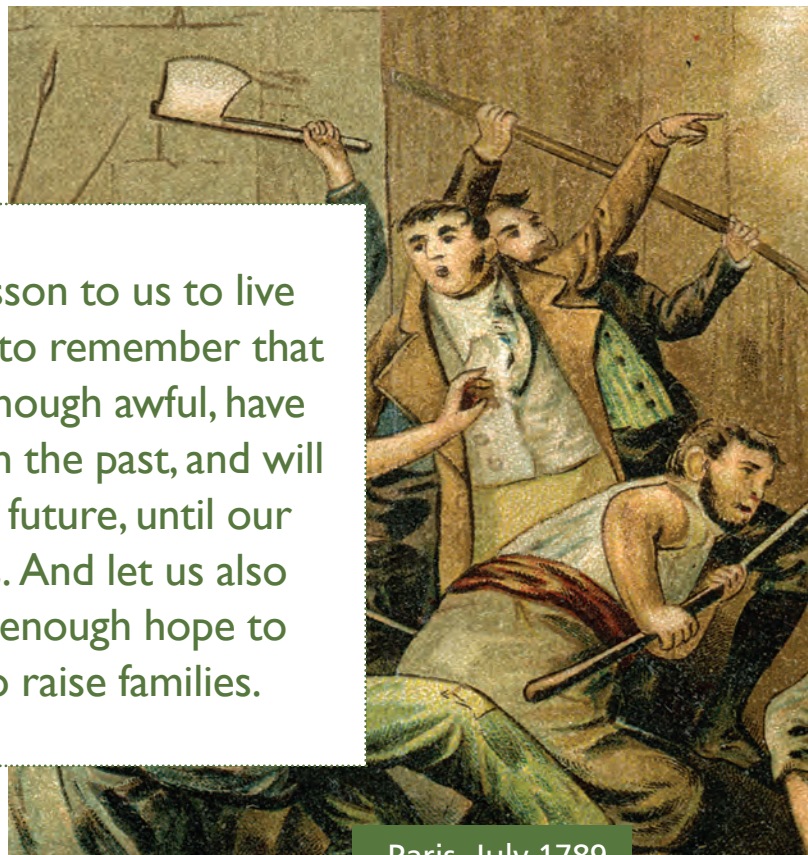
What are Christians to make of such times? How should Christian families respond? History has given us some good insight into what works. Historian Rodney Stark, in *The Rise of Christianity*,⁴ writes that Christianity actually grew rapidly in times of plague, for a number of reasons. One of them is that Christians took care of the sick, whereas pagans refused to come into contact with them. And so, unsurprisingly, Christians had a better survival rate.

Moreover, Christian compassion made Christianity attractive to those who were suffering. Even in the midst of widespread chaos, Christian parents in the ancient world continued to eschew the practices of contraception and infanticide, both of which were widely practiced by the pagans all around them. Again, unsurprisingly, this led to better survival rates and the continued spread of Christianity.

Christians also have some clear directives from God’s word regarding the way to treat our fellow man. “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). We are also commanded to live at peace with one another: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom. 12:18). We are to refrain from stealing, and hence also from destroying the property of others.

Interestingly, when it comes to racial injustice in particular, Stark writes that Christianity is actually the reason why slavery was eventually abolished in medieval Europe.⁵ In the nineteenth century, William Wilberforce and others were motivated by their

Let it be a lesson to us to live charitably, and to remember that these times, though awful, have had their like in the past, and will have it in the future, until our Lord returns. And let us also have hope—enough hope to continue to raise families.



Paris, July 1789

Christian faith to work to abolish the African slave trade. Thus, treating people with the dignity and respect that they deserved as children of God eventually led to the abolition of an evil and inhumane practice.

Let such things be a lesson to us to live charitably, and to remember that these times, though awful, have had their like in the past, and will have it in the future, until our Lord returns. And let us also have hope—enough hope to continue to raise families.

Finally, let us remember the lessons that God’s word and church history give us regarding how to best “love justice” in a way that builds up the Church. These lessons are timeless, and they will teach us the way forward even as modern-day events remind us of historical tragedies. ☉

Notes

1. Sally C. Curtin and Paul D. Sutton, “Marriage Rates in the United States, 1900–2018,” CDC National Center for Health Statistics Health E-Stats (April 2020): cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/marriage_rate_2018/marriage_rate_2018.pdf.
2. Peter Biles, “We’ve Done Plagues: Church History as a Guide to the Coronavirus,” *Salvo* blog (March 24, 2020): <https://salvomag.com/post/weve-done-plagues>.
3. Sherry Hamby, quoted in “When Rioting Is the Answer,” *TIME* (July 9, 2015), originally published at Zócalo Public Square, available at <https://time.com/3951282/riot-violence-use-american-history>.
4. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (HarperOne, 1997).
5. Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason* (Random House, 2005), p. 28.

The Grand

The Hyper-Dynamics of Your DNA Will Blow Your Mind! by Ken Pedersen



DNA is a digital memory. Human DNA has more than 3.1 billion ladder steps capable of storing information in base 4 arithmetic. This is the equivalent of over 6.2 billion binary bits (ones and zeroes) such as we use in our computers. If you wanted to print this information in book form with 50 characters (ones and zeros) per line, 30 lines per page, and 200 pages per book, it would take over 20,000 volumes, and a very big library, to hold all the information that can be stored in the DNA of one of your cells.

Less than two percent of this information storage capacity (about 300 of the 20,000 books) is used to store the instructions for the design of the more than 20,000 different proteins used in your body. Remarkably, these instructions control the cellular manufacturing process, which uses an alphabet of 20 amino acids to construct long strings of molecules (consisting of 100 to 2,000 amino acids each), which are then precisely folded to become the protein molecules you require.

So what does the other 19,700 books' worth of information do? Initially, scientists called the protein coding instructions "genes," and the remaining 19,700 books' worth of information "junk DNA." They assumed that this junk DNA had no purpose, that it just comprised the mistakes left over from a random, accidental evolutionary process. In retrospect, this judgment proved a bit

dest Program

rash, if not totally naive, since it takes a lot more information to design, construct, and maintain your body and mind than a list of protein molecule designs.

Remarkable Sophistication

Today we are discovering the immense complexity of the program stored in human DNA. In particular, it has been discovered that RNA reads and uses over 80 percent of the DNA code.¹ We don't know *how* it uses the vast majority of it; however, we now know that well over 17,000 volumes in the DNA library are not meaningless "junk." They are instead a remarkably sophisticated digital program.

This "software sophistication" starts with the fact that the DNA program is not a straightforward linear program, with one section of code determining a specific output. Instead, in many

cases, it takes many totally different sections of code co-operating in a mysterious way to produce specific features and processes within you. Coding at this level is a little like graduating to playing three-dimensional chess.

Next, the DNA program is a marvelously adaptive program that expresses and suppresses sections of code and their actions depending upon the situation, the environment, the current state of the cell, and the entire organism that is you. This results in entire sections of code being used only on a very selective basis, and the intelligence to do the selecting is somehow written into the DNA program itself.

Mind-Blowing Adaptability

One very mysterious aspect of this adaptive coding is that apparently the same section of code can have different functions and even

We now know that well over 17,000 volumes in the DNA library are not meaningless "junk." They are instead a remarkably sophisticated digital program.

different purposes, depending upon how and when it is called upon. This property of the same section of code having different effects at different times in different cells makes understanding the flow of DNA code extremely difficult.

This adaptive coding capability spotlights the fact that the stored DNA program is only one part of the information processing system at work within your cells. The computers we humans design are static hardware systems that read digital instructions

(like those stored in DNA) and act upon those instructions. These “hardware” computers are designed to respond to a specific code sequence in the same way every time it is read.

But the organic system that reads and acts upon DNA code is a constantly changing one. DNA is being read in different types of cells and under varying organic conditions in any individual cell. Effectively, the computer system reading the DNA code at time A is not exactly the same as the computer system reading that same DNA code at time B.

Similarly, the computer system reading a section of DNA code in, say, a muscle cell is not the same as the computer system reading the same section of DNA code in a nerve cell or a liver cell or any one of the hundreds of other types of cells in your body. Consequently, the same section of DNA code can have different effects at different times, depending on the state of the entire information processing system of the cell that is reading it at that instant.

If you are a computer scientist, the last few statements have probably just blown your mind. Welcome to the club. How are we ever going to understand all that is going on here, with these 20,000 volumes of non-linear, adaptive code being read by constantly changing organic computer systems that the code itself is creating as the total system flows through time?

Today, “epigenetic” is the term popularly used to describe information that supposedly does not come from DNA code but that still influences how your cells and body develop. I believe that most of what appears to be evidence for the existence of this mysterious “epigenetic” information can be attributed to all the confusion caused by time-varying processor systems that are unique to each different type of cell. However, since DNA code created all of these different types of cells and controls how they behave under different conditions, there is really nothing “epigenetic” about this information, nor is there any separate source for it; all of the information that defines these time-varying cellular processors is written in the DNA code.

The Real Mystery

Take a breath; despite all of this coding complexity, the real mystery of the DNA code is what it does. DNA starts with the capability to control the remarkable complexity of a single cell, creating and controlling protein workers in an automated factory assembling millions of parts per second. Then, somewhere in those 20,000 volumes of code, DNA stores the design of your entire body; every cell, every capillary, every organ, your brain, your senses, your physical and mental capabilities.

You emerge from the information stored in your

DNA. Now the question I want to address is, “What are the mathematical chances that this level of coding complexity could have come about through a series of fortuitous random accidents?”

Let us consider a very small subset of the coding problem, finding the design of a specific protein. Recently, several scientific studies have sought to determine the precise probability of random accidents within the DNA code resulting in the creation of functional proteins. Let us take a relatively small protein, one composed of only 150 amino acids. The results of research by Dr. Douglas Axe show that you would have to have more than 10^{74} random trials on a protein made of a string of 150 amino acids to “randomly” come up with just one of the smallest proteins used in your design. It has been estimated that it would take over 10^{225} random trials to “accidentally” design all 20,000 proteins in your body.

These are startling numbers considering that there are fewer than 10^{90} quantum particles in the entire visible universe. Furthermore, if you consider all the biomass, all of the living cells, that could have existed in the three billion years of life on Earth and allowed every cell to randomly make a single DNA mistake every minute, you would end up with fewer than 10^{50} random trials available to write the correct code. Therefore, in the entire history of Earth, the number of random trials

(DNA mistakes) possible is far fewer than the number of random trials required to stumble upon the right sequence of DNA code to design even one of the proteins in your body.²

When a mathematician compares 10^{50} available trials to the trials actually required, he realizes that, even if all of the random DNA trials possible in the history of life on Earth occurred, he could not possibly find the 20,000 proteins required by the human body. Furthermore, if he did accidentally find a useful protein, it would have to be produced at exactly the right time and place to be of any use in improving the design. That adds hundreds more powers of ten to the already astronomical odds against its ever happening.

Thus, it is safe to say that it is mathematically impossible that random accidents produced the 300 volumes of DNA code that contain the design of the 20,000 proteins in your body. Now, the DNA code that contains the protein design is very simple linear code. It simply lists the amino acid sequence required for each protein. We actually understand this code. It may be the only section of the DNA code that we really do understand.

As discussed above, the other 19,700 volumes of code are much more complex, embodying a level of sophistication we are just beginning to decipher. Now, any rational person, when faced with the impossibility of randomly

Given the sophistication of the code and the constantly changing organic information processing system it creates and functions within, we might say that the Intelligence that designed this total system is playing N-dimensional chess, and we have no idea how large N is.

writing the 300 volumes of simple protein design code, has to realize that the probability of randomly writing the other 19,700 volumes of extremely sophisticated DNA code dwarfs the protein code writing problem.

Giving Reality a Purpose

Since random accidents could not have written these volumes of DNA code, the only rational conclusion is that some form of intelligence had to be involved to make this all happen. And given the sophistication of the code and the constantly changing organic information processing system it creates and functions within, we might say that the Intelligence that designed this total system is playing *N*-dimensional chess, and we have no idea how large *N* is.

The fact that all of this “*N*-dimensional” code designing results in the mental dimension that we are free to roam around in is an incredibly beautiful and meaning-

ful thing. It gives reality a purpose, and if you really think about it, the mental dimension is the only thing that could give reality a purpose.

The designing Intelligence began by creating digital information in quantum fields and then designed layers of progressively more sophisticated and capable information processing systems until He reached the level of DNA-controlled life. Then He wrote the grandest program of all, and our mental realm emerged to take information processing to exciting new levels, to experience, explore, and love His design.

Perhaps, the most intriguing feature of His amazingly complex design is that He has given us the mental capabilities required to start to glimpse how He created us. •

Notes

1. Jonathan Wells, *Zombie Science* (Discovery Institute Press, 2017).
2. The last two paragraphs are a very brief summary of chapter 11 of my recent book, *Modern Science Proves Intelligent Design* (Archway Publishing, 2019), and much of that chapter was derived from the work of Douglas Axe in *Undeniable* (HarperOne, 2016) and Stephen C. Meyer in *Signature In The Cell* (HarperOne, 2009).

Families & the Economy

Perils & Opportunities

by Allan C. Carlson

The Covid-19 crisis has taught important lessons about economics. First, a true free market is simply a specialized expression of mutual human relationships, involving the voluntary exchange of material goods and services (from the same root word as “servant”). This market economy works well only when undergirded by the virtues of honesty, trust, fairness, and basic justice. Second, the contemporary globalized economy of frenzied energy, mass production, and bigness is actually quite fragile, subject to massive disruptions with high human costs. And third, recent aggressive government controls, even bans, on human economic exchanges also bring on mass unemployment and the disappearance of a wide range of necessary goods, from pork chops to toilet paper.

These lessons also point to an alternative economics, one that was being discovered by some young Christians even before the coronavirus scare.

“Everything I know becomes obsolete every 3–5 years,” commented Minnesota software engineer Rory Groves. “It is difficult to build anything of a lasting inheritance for my children and future generations in this over-specialized field.”



The Groves Family

Welcome to “creative destruction,” economist Joseph Schumpeter’s apt description of life within industrial capitalism.

Rory and his wife Becca resolved to do something about it. They left the city and moved to a small farm, in order to gain “a more sustainable lifestyle, to grow our own food and keep animals,” and to recover the “lost knowledge of living off the land.” Now six years into this experiment, they have created a small family business resting on gardening, animal husbandry, and the tending of an orchard.

Without planning to do so, they also turned to home schooling. “It didn’t feel congruent to send our kids away from the homestead,” Rory explained, for the children “would miss out on all that we were experiencing.” The Groves also discovered that choosing to keep them home also meant “that having more children is not financially prohibitive.” Pleasant biological “economies of scale” emerged, and they welcomed their fifth child last August.

While gaining a certain independence in these ways, Rory and Becca Groves have also become more focused on building true community. They meet regularly with other homesteading families “for support and encouragement,” and they help each other with the purchase of farm implements, machinery repair, and the slaughtering of chickens. In the summer months, the Groves family hosts outdoor worship services at their farm and a “Farm Camp” for children.

The Separation of Home & Workplace

In these ways, they are quietly and effectively defying the negative incentives of an industrial capitalist order. This is significant, for the existing dominant economic system actually poses two major threats to healthy family life. Most basically, the current industrial order rests—almost by definition—on the separation of workplace from home. Prior to 1800, for all of human history and in every land and culture,

the normal practice was to live and work in the same place. This could be on a peasant or family farm, in an artisan's workshop, in a fisherman's cottage, or even in a nomad's tent.

The rise of factories, which initially used water or steam power, shattered such expectations and produced a fundamental breach in human relationships. Man and woman, husband and wife, would no longer form a productive economic unit. They were now commonly pulled

in different directions: one to this factory or office; the other to a second industrial employer. Moreover, children, the aged, and the infirm lost their significant places in small family economies. They had been, in some ways, economic assets by helping with the light chores that need doing in any small enterprise. They now became liabilities.

Moreover, with active adults pulled out of their homes for 10 to 12 hours a day, a related question emerged: Who would care for the very young and the very old? The early answer was for couples to sharply reduce the number of

children they had, through aggressive birth control and abortion (even where and when illegal). In the long run, the industrial order came up with other answers as well: commercial daycare and nursing homes.

The industry model also intruded into education. Home-centered learning, apprenticeships, and small private or religious schools gave way to mass state schools, organized for efficiency. Family autonomy again surrendered to the factory order.

Remarkably, albeit predictably, the Covid-19 scare has exposed the flaws in this system, from the near-collapse of mass state education to food shortages to the horrific death rates found in nursing homes.

The Lack of Limits

The second threat to family life has come from capitalism's lack of respect for limits, once the virtues of fairness and justice have been lost. Whether in the development of life-saving medicines or the production of hard-core pornography, the post-virtue capitalist order has relentlessly sought to meet demand—any demand—and increasingly to use advertising to create demand artificially. The remnants of many family-centered economies have commonly been bulldozed in the process.

As an example, *The Wall Street Journal* carried a remarkable article in 2017 on how one “super-sized”

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Factory Workers circa 1920

landowner in Kansas was crushing the prospects for family-scale farmers in his county. The owner of this mega-farm—we shall call him Mr. Smith—was 59 years old, unmarried, and without children or other heirs. He already owned 30,600 acres of cropland and reported annual profits in seven figures, even in the recent years of low commodity prices. As a good capitalist, he accomplished this through close attention to efficiency and scale.

But even with all of this bounty (including a grand farmhouse and two large vacation homes), Mr. Smith has never been satisfied. Whenever other cropland comes up for sale, he routinely outbids the young couples trying to get a start on the land. He has acknowledged this behavior, noting that people ask him, “Haven’t you got enough by now?” His answer continues to be *no*. Capitalism unfettered from the virtues—even in agriculture—has no place for limits.

There is a human price. One of Mr. Smith’s neighbors—Michael, age 29—has been trying for nearly a decade to buy or rent land to farm himself: “For as long as I can remember, it’s been what I wanted to do.” This has resulted in a grueling

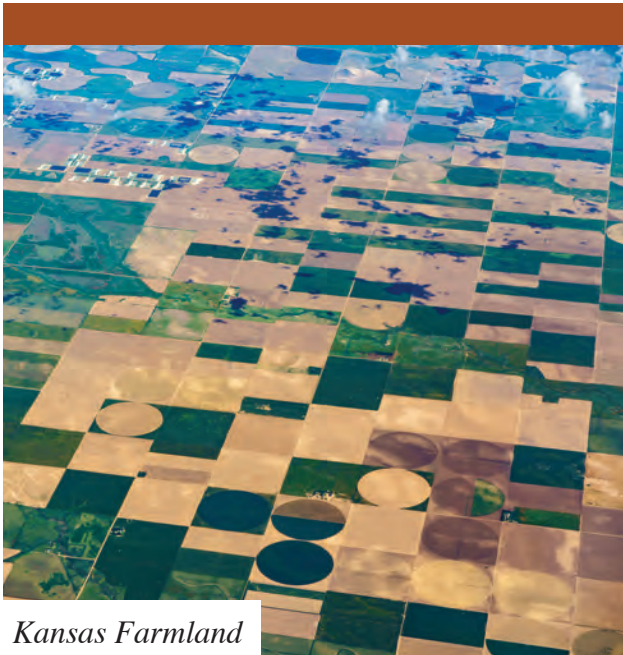
schedule, working for other farmers during the day while climbing out of bed early in the morning to make his own hay in the dark. It has also meant missing out on much of his son’s early childhood.

When some new land recently came available for rent, Mr. Smith again beat him out. Michael remarked, “That’s aggravating—opportunities like that where I could get some more land, but [absentee owners] will go directly to the big guys.”

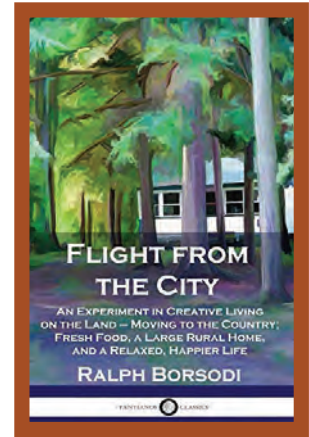
In addition, the *Journal* article reported that “young people are moving away” from that county, the local cooperatives are shriveling—Mr. Smith: “They can’t

change quickly enough to keep up with competition that can turn on a dime”—and the schools emptying. Moreover, on his death, this successful industrial farmer plans to place all of his land in a foundation or trust, where it would in effect be permanently alienated from potential ownership by future farm families.

This story is actually a textbook example of what the English author Hilaire Belloc calls the rise of “the Servile State,” where farmland and other productive property is held by ever fewer persons, while the great majority remain without property and dependent on wages and/or government largesse.



Kansas Farmland



Ralph Borsodi's Solution

So what should be done? Nearly a century ago, a Madison Avenue advertising executive named Ralph Borsodi keenly analyzed these very problems, and proposed a solution. In 1920, he and his Iowa-born wife, Myrtle Mae, seeking a better place in which to raise their boys, moved from Manhattan to an abandoned seven-acre farm in nearby Rockland County. That first summer, Myrtle Mae canned her garden’s tomatoes and proudly presented them to her husband. “Does it really pay?” the economist in him asked. He did his calculations and found, to his surprise, that home canning using modern equipment was more cost-efficient than deriving the same product from a factory. Much of the cost of contemporary factory products, he found, derived from marketing, advertising, and distribution, not the item itself.

In books such as *This Ugly Civilization* (1929) and *Flight from the City* (1933), Borsodi mounted a strong critique of the hyper-industrialized American economy.

He condemned federal court decisions that had given special constitutional rights to commercial corporations as “artificial persons” (confirmed in 2010 in the *Citizens United* case). The result, he said, was to facilitate a cascade of corporate misbehavior alongside granting privileges—such as limited liability and ease in raising capital through stocks and bonds—that were denied to families. He condemned, as well, all of the dominant economic theories, which uniformly ignored home production—ranging from home gardening and carpentry to maternal nursing—as a contribution to national wealth and human wellbeing.

Defending *appropriate* technology as a friend of small-scale family enterprise, Borsodi also targeted the real enemy: “It is the factory, not the machine, which is reducing all men and all commodities to a dead level of conformity. . . . It is the factory, not the machine, which destroys both the natural beauty and the natural wealth of man’s environment.” The factory, he continued, “has robbed men, women, and children of their contact with the soil;

looked at Myrtle Mae and, “when I compared [her] to the average school teacher . . . I saw no reason why she could not teach the children just as well, if not better.” They quickly discovered that only two hours of coursework a day were necessary for their boys to keep pace with their state school counterparts. The remaining hours could be filled with activities in the garden, the woods, and the workshops. Moreover, the Borsodis learned that true education “was really reciprocal; in the very effort to educate the boys, we educated ourselves.”

Ralph Borsodi also explained how attachment to a homestead was bound to a flourishing family life. He found the “companionate” family model of the mid-twentieth century—which featured limited commitments by the spouses, relatively few children, and informed consumerism rather than functionality—to be inadequate. Rather, he believed, satisfying living meant being a “corporate member” of a true family, ideally including three generations living together, tied to inheritable land, and bearing a distinctive genealogy, values, history, and traditions. This, he held, was the surest path to happiness.

During the 1930s, “Borsodi homesteads” mushroomed, particularly in the Northeast. And yet, something important was missing. Curiously, Borsodi himself was a strong atheist. While he would work closely with groups such as the Catholic Rural Life Conference, the glue that

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their intimacy with the growing of animals, birds, vegetables, trees, and flowers; their familiarity with the actual making of things.”

His alternative was clear: a widespread restoration of productive homes, a new wave of homesteading that would heal the wounds of industrial capitalism. Each family, he held, should begin “an adventure in home production,” rooted in “true organic homesteads . . . organized to function not only biologically and socially, but also economically.” Gardens, chicken coops, a cow or goats, carpentry workshops, loom rooms: all such things contributed to strong family homes. In 1934, the Borsodis founded a School of Living to teach the skills of self-sufficiency.

In a way, the Borsodis also invented modern home schooling. Unhappy with the local public school, Ralph



helps intentional communities to survive the inevitable troubles or crises that arise—shared religious beliefs—was absent from his program.



Homestead Fair

A More Faith-Filled Path

Successful efforts at post-industrial living that emerged later in the twentieth century followed a different path. In 1973, the young Southern Baptist pastor Blair Adams and his wife Regina founded a storefront ministry in the then-troubled Hell's Kitchen area of lower Manhattan. They soon attracted a cluster of believers from diverse backgrounds: Puerto Rican, African American, Jewish, Italian, German, and Russian. Like the Borsodis over fifty years before, Adams's group sought ways to counter the urban squalor around them. They resolved to "de-industrialize" education and were among the first in their era to embrace homeschooling. Seeking some measure of independence in food, they planted vegetable gardens in nearby vacant lots. Believing that childbirth was not a pathology requiring hospitalization, they embraced home births. And, eschewing the nursing home industry, they cared for the aged and disabled members of their community in their homes.

Eventually seeking closer attachment to the soil, 120 believers left New York in the early 1980s to settle on a rented ten-acre farm in Colorado. Here, they learned the lessons of small-scale agriculture. A decade later, they acquired a large parcel of land on the Brazos de Dios ("Arms of God") River in Texas, which they christened the Homestead Heritage. They have since grown into a faith community now several thousand strong, still committed to individual and community self-sufficiency in food production, personal craftsmanship in furniture, pottery, and fabric, and sharing with their neighbors.

Their activities now include: holding an annual Homestead Fair at Thanksgiving that attracts 20,000 visitors; welcoming over 6,000 schoolchildren each year, along with another 40,000 curious visitors; and the creation of the Ploughshare Institute for Sustainable Culture, which—like the prior Borsodi School of Living—teaches young men and women how to thrive in a post-industrial order. Subjects taught include woodworking, beekeeping, gardening, sewing, weaving, and ax-making.

Potential Public Policy Reforms

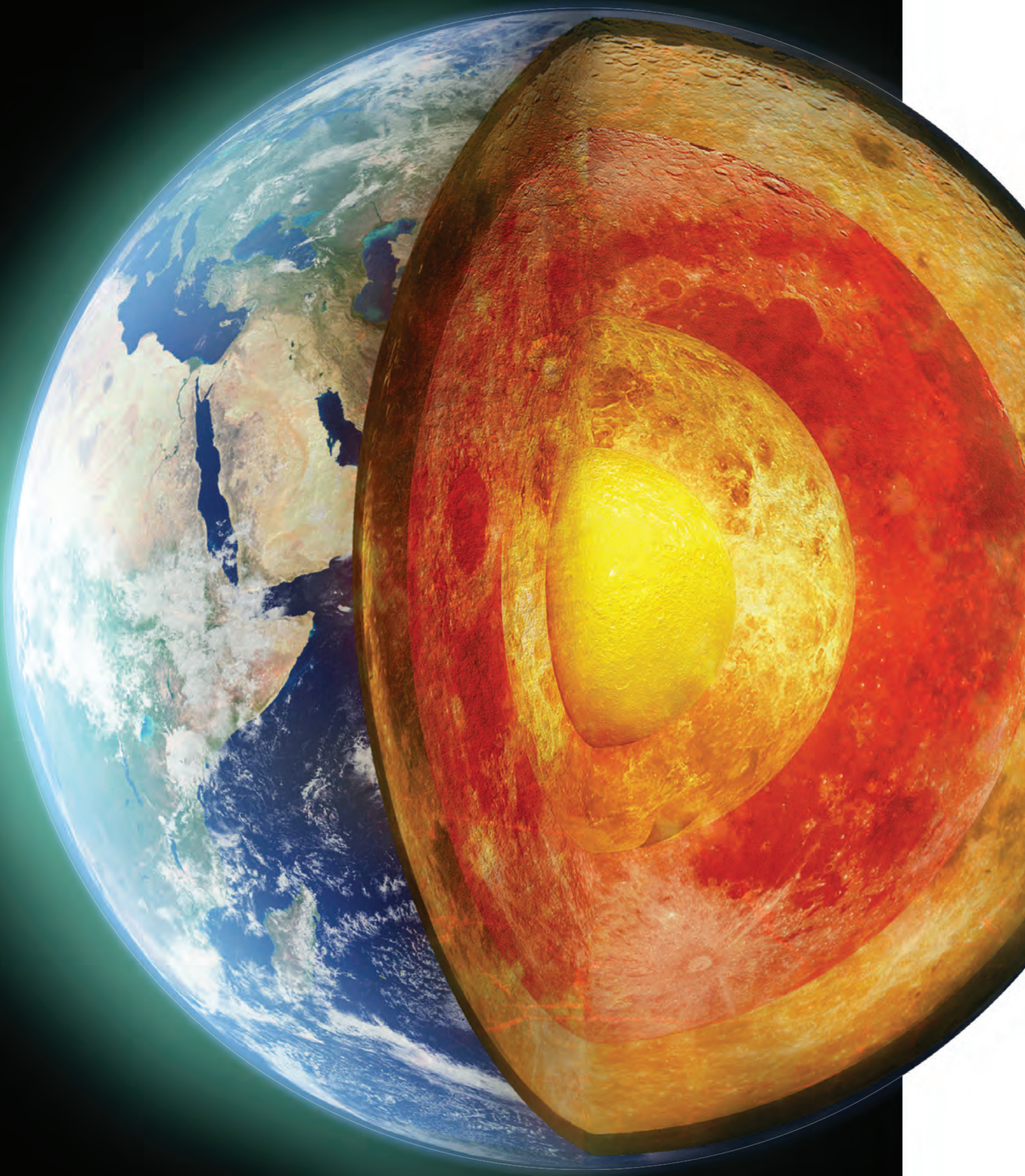
These moves by families and small communities into a very new—and also very old—economic order represent ideal forms of action: voluntary, faith-based, and wonderfully free. Still, in a larger framework, such efforts must swim upstream against negative legal and regulatory currents. Accordingly, public policy changes could offer

another vehicle for countering the destructive aspects of industrial capitalism, while reinvigorating healthy free exchanges. Specifically, the law can give the dominant economic system the one thing it cannot auto-generate: limits. Possible reforms include:

- **At the state level, imposing a progressive land tax that leaves family-scale farms tax-free while encouraging the great landowners to break up their properties for sale;**
- **Using differential taxation to limit the number of chain stores that any one company can operate, thereby encouraging local ownership of and variety in retail outlets;**
- **Regulating banks so as to favor local credit unions and lending to small farming and manufacturing entities; and**
- **Adjusting corporate law to discourage consolidation and to favor division and decentralization.**

Wouldn't this result in higher prices? Perhaps. Rory and Becca Groves, though, have a better answer. From conventional measures of price and efficiency, they admit that "it doesn't make sense" to live as homesteaders. However, "we find fulfillment and satisfaction in the work" of the homestead and "a common purpose to which Christ has called us."

Family-centered and child-rich: Might this be the economy of the Kingdom? ®



Set for Life

The Exquisite Design of Earth's Internal Thermostat

by Hugh Ross



With global attention fixed on Earth's surface temperature and the relatively narrow range required for the existence and preservation of life as we know it, perhaps we may be excused for failing to appreciate the significance of Earth's just-right internal heat flow. The fact that this heat flow happens to occur within the ideal range to produce two of our planet's unique life-sustaining features seems every bit as improbable—dare I say miraculous?—as Earth's present 9,500-year window of extreme climate stability.

Recent research shows Earth to be the internal heat flow champion among rocky planets of its size and age. Earth's size and age would lead scientists to expect negligible heat transfer from the core all the way up through the mantle to the crust. On Mars, for example, the heat flow from its interior to its surface measures a paltry 7 milliwatts per square meter.¹ This lack explains why Mars is missing at least two life-essential features that are sustained on Earth: long-lasting plate tectonics, and a powerful, long-lasting magnetic shield.

Some 70,000 measurements show that, on average, every square meter of Earth's continental surface is warmed by 92 milliwatts of heat flowing from Earth's interior.² Every square meter of ocean surface is warmed by 67 milliwatts.³ (Note that heat flows more readily through continental crust, mostly

silicates, than it does through oceanic crust, mostly basalts.)

On Earth's surface, incident radiation from the Sun dominates the heat flowing from Earth's interior. The Sun warms every square meter of Earth's surface by an average of 340.2 watts.⁴ Thus, internal heat flow accounts for only 0.024 percent of Earth's surface warmth. No wonder we don't seem to notice it. However, the Sun's incident radiation penetrates only some tens of meters into Earth's crust. Below that, internal heat flow from Earth's core and through its mantle dominates solar heat. So, without that internal heat, Earth would be as lifeless as Mars and all other known candidates for life support. This leads to questions about how Earth happened to come by this astounding level of internal, perfectly circulating heat.

Sources of Interior Heat Flow

One of the two major sources of Earth's interior heat is radioactive decay of long-half-life radioisotopes (radiogenic heat). This radiogenesis accounts for 58 percent of the total current heat flow.⁵ The second source is referred to as primordial heat—heat lost in the ongoing cooling process from the intensely hot accretion (gravity-induced accumulation of matter) that formed Earth.

Earth has a remarkably high level of primordial heat because of its unique formation process. Like all rocky planets, it began to form through the accretion of planetesimals, dust, and gas, a process that generated much internal heat. However, Earth's accretion history did not end there. Our planet experienced three additional accretion events, all major. The most significant occurred a little less than 100 million years after Earth's initial formation. Theia (a planet 15–45 percent of Earth's original mass) merged with the primordial Earth, increasing Earth's mass, producing the Moon, and substantially augmenting Earth's accretion heat.⁶ Shortly after this event, Earth received a "late veneer"—a bombardment by large asteroids and comets.⁷ Then, about 3.9 billion years ago, the Late Heavy Bombardment of large asteroids and comets struck the Earth.⁸ As a result, Earth's primordial heat from accretion rose far beyond the norm for rocky planets of its size.

Earth possesses an even more remarkable level of radiogenic heat. Compared to the calculated average abundance levels in rocky exoplanets, Earth possesses 90 times more potassium,

340 times more uranium, and 610 times more thorium, on average.⁹ Apparently, Earth became super-endowed with these elements due to the timing and manner by which our solar system, and Earth in particular, formed. Within the complexities of this process, all the solar planets became enriched with these elements.¹⁰ However, Earth received a super-endowment far beyond the levels of the other solar system planets.¹¹ What's more, this endowment exists at great depth, not just in the crust, where it would dissipate rapidly, as it did on Mars 4 billion years ago.

Heat Flow Pathways

In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain's famed physicist, Lord Kelvin, assumed that all of Earth's internal heat came from a single accretion event, the condensation of Earth from planetesimals. He also assumed that this heat flowed from Earth's interior strictly via conductive cooling.¹² As it turns out, both assumptions have proved incorrect.

Convection plays a far more important role in heat transport than does conduction in both Earth's mantle and its liquid core (see Figure 1). For Earth's crust, the dominant heat trans-

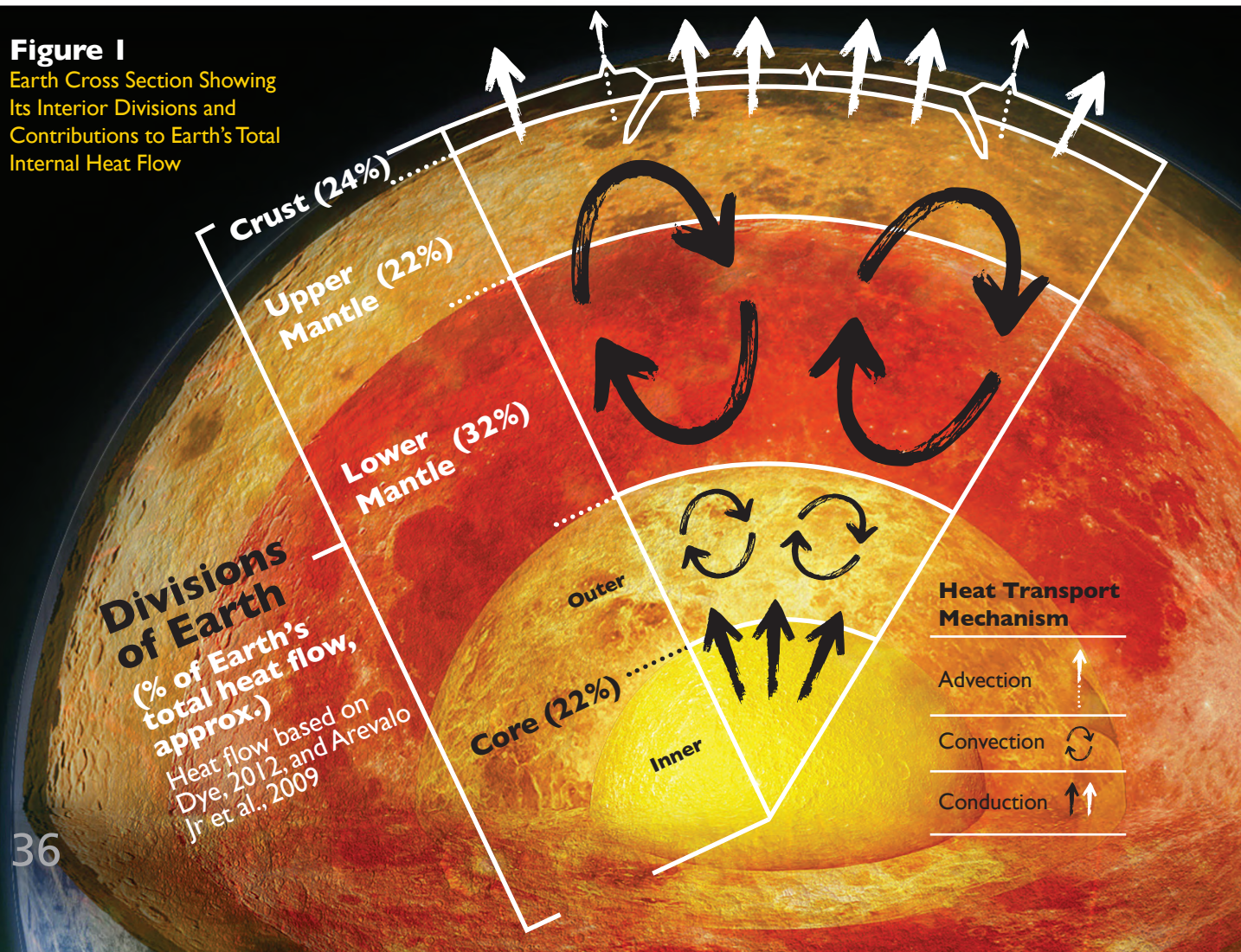
port mode is volcanic advection (flows of molten lava and volcanic gases). For the outer core and mantle, convection is the dominant mode, while conduction still dominates in the inner core. Convection is an important reason for Earth's sustained internal heat flow over billions of years.

History of Earth's Interior Heat Flow

Interior heat flow from both accretional and radiogenic heat changes over time. The heat left over from accretion gradually dissipates as it flows from Earth's deep interior through the mantle, through the crust, and to the surface and beyond.

When Earth was less than 100 million years old, its radiogenic heat was dominated by several short-half-life

Figure 1
Earth Cross Section Showing
Its Interior Divisions and
Contributions to Earth's Total
Internal Heat Flow



radioisotopes. Since then, just four radioisotopes—potassium-40, thorium-232, uranium-235, and uranium-238—have accounted for more than 99 percent of Earth’s radiogenic heat. Figure 2 shows the relative contributions of potassium-40 (K-40), thorium-232 (Th-232), uranium-235 (U-235), and uranium-238 (U-238) to Earth’s internal heat flow throughout the past 4.5 billion years.

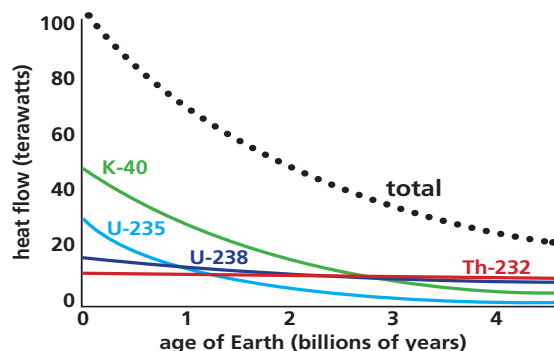


Figure 2

History of Radiogenic Heat Flow from Earth’s Interior Radioisotopes

Favorable Effects of Earth’s Interior Heat Flow

Today, the mantle temperature just under Earth’s oceanic crust is 1,410°C.¹³ This high temperature means upper mantle material has a low viscosity (think of melted butter as compared with a cold, high-viscosity stick of butter).

Thanks to the mantle’s low viscosity, tectonic plates in Earth’s crust have been able to move relative to one another for

the past 3.8 billion years.¹⁴ This tectonic activity transformed Earth from a waterworld to a planet with both continents and oceans on its surface. This combination of surface continents and oceans and enduring, powerful tectonic activity established the conditions for life to exist and survive. For one, they established biogeochemical cycles that kept Earth’s surface temperature at an optimal level for life despite the Sun’s ongoing brightening.¹⁵ For another, they maintained the recycling of many of Earth’s life-essential nutrients.

Without Earth’s strong, enduring interior heat flow, only microbial life could have existed anywhere on Earth, and that for only several million years—not enough time for the physical and chemical transformation of Earth’s surface environment to take place that would allow for plants, animals, and humans to exist.

Meanwhile, the composition of Earth’s outer core—almost entirely iron, cobalt, and nickel, all easily magnetized elements—kept liquid by the outer core’s heat and driven by convection currents in the outer core, has allowed Earth to sustain a powerful magnetic field throughout at least the past 3.7 billion years.¹⁶ This power-

ful, enduring magnetic field has shielded Earth’s surface life from both deadly high-energy particles flowing from the Sun and equally deadly high-energy cosmic rays. Also, without this shield, solar radiation would have sputtered both Earth’s atmosphere and its surface water into interplanetary space.

In other words, without the powerful and enduring heat flow from the furnace in Earth’s core, we would not be here. Neither would animals, trees, plants, oceans, and the atmosphere. The remarkable fine-tuning of Earth’s formation, interior composition, and heat flow makes possible our high-technology civilization and our ability to recognize that we are *intended* to be here. We are creatures of destiny. ☉

Notes

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PSYCHO BABBLE

Evolutionary Psychology’s Remarkable Rubbish

Is evolutionary psychology going the way of Freudianism?

Commentator Roger Kimball captures the immense cultural power of evolutionary psychology in an anecdote he relates in his Introduction to the second edition of *Darwinian Fairytales* (Encounter, 2006). This book, by agnostic Australian philosopher David Stove (1927–1994), was a risky takedown of the discipline at the time. In the Introduction, Kimball writes:

I remember leaving a party a few years ago with a friend, an eminent biologist, who I knew admired some of David Stove’s other writings. I was in the midst of reading *Darwinian Fairytales* for the first time. At the coat check, I retrieved the book and gave it to him to leaf through. I looked on with concern as the smile on his face faded and a frown appeared. “But this is terrible!” he said, turning the pages, “this is awful!”¹

Kimball makes clear that neither he nor Stove (by then deceased) objected in principle to Darwinism, as applied to nature. In fact, Kimball was contemptuous of the very idea of design in nature. His (and Stove’s) target was rather “evolutionary psychology,” the application of Darwinian “selfish gene” principles to human society. Kimball agreed with Stove that this pseudo-discipline was ridiculous.

But frankly, to question any silliness whatever that derives from Darwinism comes perilously close to questioning Darwinism itself. Hence Kimball’s biologist friend’s reaction.



And hence also, most likely, the reason why science media yawn and continue to publish evolutionary psychology’s remarkable rubbish even now. Thus, it was not until 25 years after the first edition of *Fairytales* (Avebury, 1995) that another philosopher decided to weigh in, declaring that evolutionary psychology may be “impossible.” The University of New Hampshire’s Subrena E. Smith asks, How would we know if evolutionary psychology’s claims about human psychology are true?

THE MODULE PROBLEM

As Smith explains in a recent paper, evolutionary psychologists posit that our behavior is governed by modules in our brain, which we inherited from our remote ancestors and pass on to our descendents. These modules perform tasks such as “predator avoidance, mate selection, and cheater detection.” We don’t and can’t realize that our behavior today is not generated by conscious awareness of and reactions to our current circumstances, but rather is governed by these modules. As one research group claims, “Behavior in the present is generated by information-processing modules that exist because they solved adaptive problems in the past.”

Awkwardly, modern neuroscience, which has mapped the brain in exquisite detail, has not identified any of these storied modules. But suppose it did. How would we know that these modules were identical to the ones that governed humans who lived in the vastly different environment of 50,000 years ago? There are no fossil brains. Smith calls this the “matching problem”: “Unless the challenge can be overcome, evolutionary psychological explanations fail. Put more strongly, if the matching problem cannot be solved, evolutionary psychology is impossible.”²

Evolutionary psychologists generally respond to this problem—seldom put to them as starkly as it has been by Smith—in one of two ways. One is to identify a typical modern behavior (how we vote, for example³) and then try to explain how that behavior would have helped our remote ancestors survive. Alternatively, they identify challenges that our ancestors faced and then try to determine how their way of facing those challenges shapes our behavior today. Snake avoidance, for instance, helped our ancestors stay alive; thus, our typical dislike and fear of snakes is just that same “module” kicking in.

No one can know, of course, if these speculations match history, because history is just what we *don’t* have. Advantage Smith.

But Smith isn’t done yet. She points out a critical distinction between evolutionary human psychology

and contemporary animal psychology. We have no reason to believe that chimpanzees' lifestyle today is much changed from the way they lived millions of years ago. Thus, if we want to argue that chimps' current behavior reflects past survival advantages encoded into their brains, we at least have the evidence of the pattern's stability, even if we can't find those modules. But human life has changed vastly over the same period. So we have no basis for assuming that people today behave as they do because of modules created by Stone Age survival rates. Not that we have much information anyway.

DEEPER PROBLEMS

Smith raises yet another issue, one that is in certain ways far more troubling. Evolutionary psychologists offer what she calls "subpersonal" explanations for human behavior. She offers an illustration of the problem: A 2009 study using American college students as subjects claimed to provide support for the view that men care more about infidelity than women do because in the Stone Age the biological cost of raising another man's offspring was so high.⁴

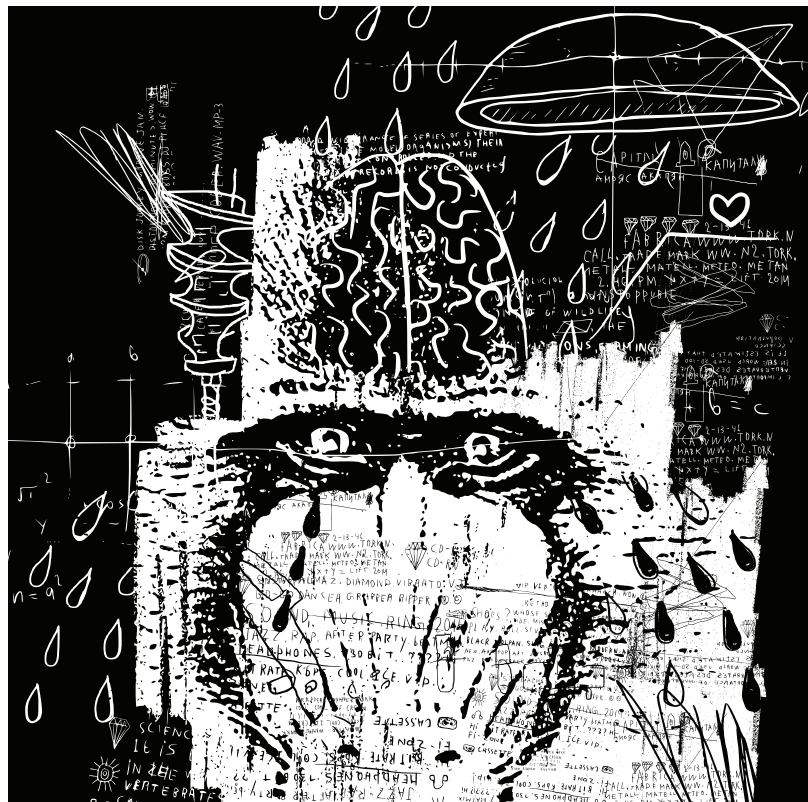
There's a lot wrong with such a claim, which Smith explores. But there is a deeper issue as well, implied in the term she uses in her paper: "subpersonal." Any such thesis makes no distinction between what humans can know and what animals can know.

A recent buzz in the popular science media provides a handy illustration: we are informed, as if it were some kind of a surprise, that men see themselves as fathers and male gorillas don't.⁵ Explanations for this difference are offered, but the most obvious one is simply ignored, like the elephant in the sunroom: Does it make a difference that men know how children come to exist and which children in a community are their own? We know nothing of how such momentous realizations came about. We are reasonably sure, however, that they never happened to gorillas.

A CLEAR WARNING

Kimball identifies a useful habit of thought that Stove sought to pass on, one that may help us understand the sunset of Darwinism better: Stove is good at exposing the "amazingly arrogant habit of Darwinians" of "blaming the fact, instead of blaming their theory" when they encounter contrary biological facts:

Doctrinaire Darwinists have an answer for everything, always a bad sign in science,



since it means that mere facts can never prove them wrong. Does it regularly happen that increasing prosperity leads to lower birth rates? And does this directly contradict Darwinian theory? No problem, just announce that the birth rates in such cases are somehow "inverted," evidence of a "biological mistake."⁶

In short, evolutionary psychology is, like Freudianism, unfalsifiable on the basis of evidence. With Freudianism, eventually, public patience ran out. Time will tell if the same thing happens to evolutionary psychology. But Subrena Smith's critique is a clear warning. ☹

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ART FOR NOTHING

Darwinism & the Devolution of Story

Think about great movies, novels, and plays. They probe the physical world of flesh and blood and, at the same time, draw us into things spiritual and immaterial: the sublime and the ridiculous; love, heroism, envy and prejudice; good and evil.

But a strain of modern thought says that those immaterial things aren't real. Darwinian materialism holds that all species evolved from the first tiny cell in a process without guidance or design. And the human mind is no exception. Harvard evolutionist E. O. Wilson describes it as just a byproduct of the physical brain, and the brain as "the product of genetic evolution by natural selection."

On this view, if fiction reaches toward a higher plane, then it reaches toward an illusion, since

matter and energy are the only fundamental reality. Free will, good and evil, love and heroism, all are a mirage.

As for our favorite movies, novels, and plays, along with our favorite songs and paintings, all of these artistic creations, according to Wilson, have "been produced by the genetic evolution of our nervous and sensory tissues."

He's serious. "To treat them as other than objects of biological inquiry," he says, "is simply to aim too low."¹

IMPOVERISHING ART & ARTISTS

Wilson is suggesting that his approach to the arts is nobler than the traditional view. But treating art as a mere byproduct of Darwinian evolution doesn't ennoble our understanding of art. It undermines the very foundation for saying that art or anything else can be noble or low or wicked.

If Darwinian materialism is right, a few of our ancestors had a mutation that led them to imagine there is a spiritual dimension and that things like nobility actually exist. This illusion supposedly helped them survive, reproduce, and pass the mutation along from one generation to the next in a growing population of deluded but successful ancestors. These creatures eventually worked out their delusion in everything from religion to art.

Darwinian materialism suggests, more specifically, that the impulse toward artistic creation is merely the human songbird attracting a mate—great art as the byproduct of sexual selection.

Thus does modern evolutionary thinking impoverish our understanding of art and the artist.

It also impoverishes the content of particular works of art. Works shaped by the Darwinian outlook tend to present humans as mere animals, or as hapless cogs in a pitiless meat grinder. They present the material world as the only reality, and life as ultimately meaningless.

This is an impoverishment because life is ultimately meaningful, not meaningless; the material world isn't the only reality; and humans are animals, yes, but ones made in the image of God, with stewardship capacity and a high calling.

True, there are great and gifted artists who embrace Darwinian materialism, and yet whose work retains much goodness, beauty, and truth, including insights into human nature and the human struggle. I'm not arguing that faith in Darwinian materialism utterly bankrupts art. I'm arguing that it compromises, mars, or to a significant degree impoverishes artistic creations.



LITERARY NATURALISM & A TIME MACHINE

The first place we can see the effects of Darwinian materialism on literature is in the literary movement known as naturalism. Émile Zola, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and Stephen Crane are examples of authors who wrote in this vein. Some, such as Hardy, began as literary realists and, in the wake of Darwin's theory of evolution, were drawn into the naturalist mode.

As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* succinctly explains, naturalism "was inspired by adaptation of the principles and methods of natural science, especially the Darwinian view of nature," and it emphasized

man's accidental, physiological nature rather than his moral or rational qualities. Individual characters were seen as helpless products of heredity and environment, motivated by strong instinctual drives from within and harassed by social and economic pressures from without. As such, they had little will or responsibility for their fates, and the prognosis for their "cases" was pessimistic at the outset.

There were also authors influenced by Darwinism who wrote in a fantastical mode. In H. G. Wells's science fiction classic *The Time Machine* (1895), the protagonist travels hundreds of thousands of years into the future only to discover that humans have evolved—devolved really—into two separate races. One is a thuggish underworld group. The other lives above ground and is hardly more ambitious than a flock of sheep. The inventor-protagonist then travels further forward in time and finds that all traces of humanity have disappeared. The sun is burning out, and life on earth is heading for extinction. This aptly conveys Darwinian materialism's vision of a meaningless universe grinding pointlessly toward a meaningless end.

BEYOND THE SHELTERING SKY

In a similarly cheerless vein, Robert Bowles's 1949 novel *The Sheltering Sky* depicts the blue sky as a

Darwinian evolution doesn't ennoble our understanding of art. It undermines the very foundation for saying that art can be noble or low or wicked.

façade protecting us from the reality of a dark, meaningless universe, with human civilization serving the same function. In an interview with *The Paris Review*, Bowles commented:

If I'm persuaded that our life is predicated upon violence, that the entire structure

of what we call civilization, the scaffolding that we've built up over the millennia, can collapse at any moment, then whatever I write is going to be affected by that assumption. The process of life presupposes violence, in the plant world the same as the animal world.

Why assume that life is ultimately meaningless and life predicated on violence? Likely because those are tenets of Darwinian materialism: matter is ultimately all there is, and humans and other creatures evolved in a pitiless, dog-eat-dog process of mutation and natural selection—the survival of the fittest.

In the 1960s, screenwriter Robert Ardrey influenced Hollywood in this direction, not through his screenplays but through two of his books, *African Genesis* and *The Territorial Imperative*. Ardrey pressed the idea that humans evolved to be violent—that we're the vicious descendants of vicious apes. Two filmmakers influenced by him are Sam Peckinpah, director of the 1969 western *The Wild Bunch*, and Stanley Kubrick, director of *Spartacus*,



A Clockwork Orange, and the science fiction classic 2001: *A Space Odyssey*.

The latter movie doesn't begin in space but in the prehistoric past, with a little tribe of pre-human hominids. The opening scene shows an African landscape where water is scarce. The words appear on screen, "The Dawn of Man."

This little ape-like tribe lacks the mental capacity even to use animal bones as weapons, and they've been driven from their watering hole by another little tribe. The next day, a strange black monolith appears in their midst, several feet high, shaped roughly like a domino, but perfectly smooth and geometrical. It emits a strange noise. The ape-like creatures draw near, terrified but also fascinated. Eventually one of them touches the monolith. His fellow tribesmen follow suit.

A bit later our protagonist is toying with some animal bones and thinking. Suddenly, he gets an idea. He picks up one of the longer bones and tentatively strikes the ground with it. He grows a little bolder. He tries striking some of the other bones. He grows more excited, thrilled by the idea now dawning on him: the bone can be used as a tool . . . as a weapon. He raises his arm and brings the bone crashing down on an animal skull, which smashes to bits.

The implication is clear: the alien monolith has somehow bequeathed to him and his little tribe a sudden quantum leap in brain power. In the next scene they use the animal bones to drive away the tribe that earlier drove them away from their watering hole. When the victory is complete and one of the enemy hominids lies battered and motionless at their feet, our protagonist tosses the bone up into the air in ecstatic triumph.

At this point the film drops into slow motion and, as the bone spins through the air, the scene switches to a scene in space, with the bone suddenly replaced by another human tool of a similar shape, though far larger: a space vessel in the near future of the modern age.

AN ESCAPE HATCH

These opening minutes of the film convey several themes. Most obviously, they reinforce the Darwinian idea that humans descended from ape-like ancestors. There is also here the central premise of Robert Ardrey's *Territorial Imperative*—man as a violent territorial animal, programmed by millions of years of evolution to kill and conquer.

And lastly, the film provides an explanation, if only fictional, for the great gap between apes and humans: an alien monolith came down and, upon

being touched, bequeathed our ancient ancestors with a major brain boost, setting us on a trajectory stretching from primitive bone tools to the glories of space travel.

Both in this opening scene and later in the story, the film epitomizes a futurist ET myth that Michael Keas excavates and describes in his excellent recent book *Unbelievable: 7 Myths About the History and Future of Science and Religion*.

To grasp what Keas means by a futurist ET myth, some additional background is helpful. Darwinian materialism, taken at face value, strips life and the world of higher meaning and purpose. (H. G. Wells deserves credit for facing those implications in *The Time Machine*.) But many who accept Darwinism don't want to go there. One escape hatch is the idea of humanity rescued and exalted by a race of wise and advanced extra-terrestrials—a substitute god to replace the God of the Bible Darwin is said to have killed with his theory of evolution.

This is the ET myth that Kubrick reenacts in 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. It's the artist whose vision of reality has been impoverished by Darwinism grasping for meaning and purpose in a mirage.

FAITH IN MORE THAN MATTER

We've only scratched the surface of Darwinism's impoverishing effects on literature and film. Darwinism is partly responsible for the slide into ugliness and formlessness in the arts. It is also a key contributor to the postmodern turn toward a hermeneutics of relativism and nihilism, championed in the deconstructionist criticism of thinkers such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. But that's an essay for another time.

Here, suffice to say that Darwinian materialism's impoverishing effect on literature is so much of a problem that my alma mater, a Christian university in Texas, published an anthology of literary works that are not nihilistic and materialistic, just to provide balance for the typical literary anthologies assigned to students in freshman and sophomore English.

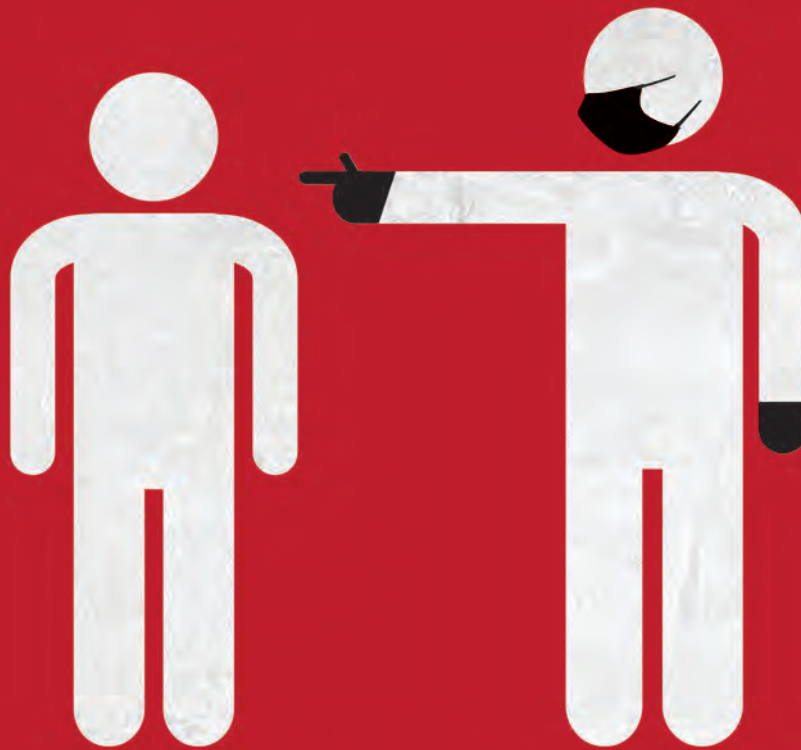
It's called *Shadow and Light: Literature and the Life of Faith*. It includes short stories and poems from various great authors who maintained faith in a cosmos that is more than matter—John Milton, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Flannery O'Connor, Isaac Bashevis Singer, John Updike, and various others. I highly recommend the book. It's one of many efforts not only to recognize the threat that materialism poses to our culture, but also to do something about it. ☺

Note

1. E. O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Harvard UP, 1978), pp. 195, 204.

FIGHTING FACEISM

SOMETIMES ANTISOCIAL



ALWAYS ANTIFACEIST

IS YOUR SOCIAL DUTY

WHAT IS FACEISM?

Faceism is a political movement comprised of people who go around bare-faced, not complying with the new mandates, not fearful, not hectoring others, going about their lives as if COVID-19 isn't really that scary.

A FACEIST IS SOMEONE WHO . . .

X doesn't enjoy talking about masks and COVID all the time.

X thinks that the indefinite lock-down is worse than the disease.

X doesn't go on a rant when he passes a group of faceists outside enjoying themselves.

X cites unapproved sources, statistics, and data on COVID.

X compares COVID to past pandemics, diseases, and other causes of death.

X does not wear a mask.

X does not fight faceism.

facebook.com/antifaceist



Stagecoach (1939)

WESTERN VIRTUES

John Ford's Stagecoach

"When Bozo drives the bus," I used to say to my fellow home-schoolers, "don't expect it to stop at the Smithsonian." That was my way of assuring parents that their

children would hardly be missing some height of culture and learning that students in school would attain. I could speak from my many years of teaching college freshmen, grading their work, and talking with them outside of class. If the rare young person in a thousand could read Shakespeare with ease, it was almost certain that he had not gone to school. And he would be better looking, too, without that telltale scar on the forehead, near the frontal lobe.

That was a long time ago, and I believe more than ever that Christian parents have a lot of explaining to do if they send their children to a public school, or even to many a private or parochial school. But I also see something I had missed. It is how mass entertainment, and the expectations of others among whom those children will study and work after they have graduated from high school—and perhaps the latter is simply a way of restating the former—will suffice for the soul-curdling and intellect-rotting work that schools do. It is not Bozo driving the bus, but the inheritors of Hugh Hefner and his Playgirls, less intelligent, more depraved, more rabidly political, and slick in their presentation. Forget about expecting the bus to stop at Chartres Cathedral. Soon you will forget that such a place as Chartres even exists. You would not *want to go there anyway*. You will be "absorbed," as my daughter puts it.

I had underestimated the monstrous power of the institutions that deform the human imagination. That is why I am going to write for *Salvo* these features about films. Just as you cannot fight a creed with a story, you cannot fight a story with a creed. You need another story—a truer story, more artfully made. You cannot fight well-made art in the service of evil with poorly made art in the service of good. You need a masterpiece to fight a masterpiece. What man cannot see in image, in story, he will soon cease to believe at all.



Ringo

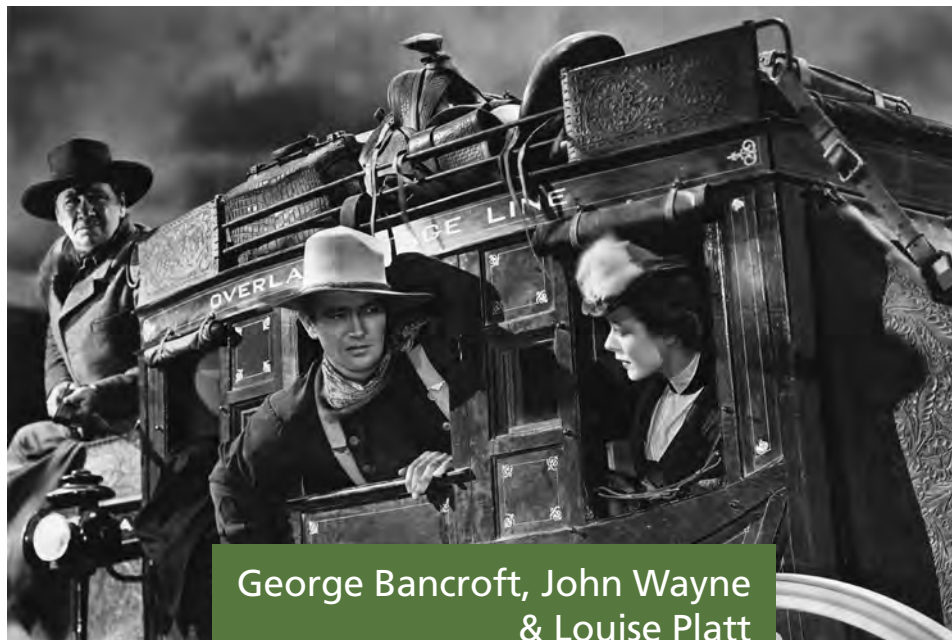
THE ROLE OF THE WESTERN

Let us begin our journey into the world of a healthy and mature Christian imagination with a film about a journey: *Stagecoach* (1939), directed by the incomparable John Ford. It was not the first big-budget Western that Hollywood made, but it was the first of the great westerns, and it set the template for the future.

It's a commonplace to say that Hollywood westerns portray a West that never was. Cowboys were more courtly than savage. Whenever a few settlers established a town, a church and a school were the first public buildings to go up. Murder was not a daily occurrence. But that criticism misses the point. The Western did for thirty years what science fiction, which is hardly ever about science, began to do later on: it provided an imaginative world just on the limits of our world, to give us an unusual vantage from which to view how we live. It is easy to call for promise-keeping, manly honesty, and feminine grace from the security of your parlor, when it costs you little, and when your life is not on the line. It is a different matter when a sudden and silent arrow may lodge its fork in your heart, or when a world of savagery is nearby, dark and tempting.

THE DIRECTOR & HIS CHARACTERS

John Ford, a rough-talking and not conspicuously pious Irish Catholic who took his faith seriously, was *always* thinking about the benefits and the costs of civilization, the virtues that make life in community possible, and the vices that corrupt and destroy it. *Stagecoach* centers on the lives of several people who are being cast out of the community for crime or vice, or who can hardly find a place in the community to begin with. The hero, Ringo—a slim and youthful



George Bancroft, John Wayne
& Louise Platt

Ford insists upon moral laws that are greater than mere customs, the most important of which is that you must do your duty, no matter the danger, no matter that you may lose your only chance to be happy in this life, no matter that you might shrug the obligation away without blame.

John Wayne—is in handcuffs. A friendly and intelligent marshal (George Bancroft) is supposed to take him back to the prison he broke out of. We don't learn much about Ringo's past, except that he was not very bad, and that he believes he must avenge the murder of his father and his brother. The murderer and his flunkies are at Lordsburg, where the stagecoach will be stopping.

The heroine, Dallas (Claire Trevor), is a saloon girl, dressed to the nines. A group of hatchet-faced old ladies wants her out of town. Ford never sentimentalizes evil. The question is not whether prostitution is bad, but whether hardheartedness and sanctimony are even worse. The ladies also have it in for Doctor Boone, a notorious drunk, and a shrewd observer of human failings. The doctor is played by Thomas Mitchell,

who gets my vote for the most brilliant and versatile character actor in the history of Hollywood; you may remember him as the daft Uncle Billy in *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Five more characters fill up the stagecoach, with-in and on top. The comic foil to the marshal, holding the reins, is Buck (Andy Devine), a courageous coward, if that makes sense, who says that his Mexican wife puts out so many children, he'll soon be father to half the province of Chihuahua. The female foil to Dallas is a young married woman from Virginia, Lucy Mallory, whose husband is in the cavalry out west. She can hardly bring herself to look at Dallas. Mr. Peacock, a little fellow played by the aptly named Donald Meek, is a whisky drummer from Kansas City, whose samples Dr. Boone energetically consumes. The tall and felinely genteel Mr. Hatfield, a card sharper (John Carradine), is a Virginia gentleman who, as it turns out, served under Mrs. Mallory's father in what he calls the war of northern aggression. He, too, does not fit. The last of the principals is the town banker, a loudmouth, who has secretly absconded with a bag full of money, but who does nothing but complain about how long it takes for the coach to get to Lordsburg.



FORD'S ABSOLUTE VALUES

Two things complicate what ought to be a straight trip. They are related, in the person of the young married woman. The first complication is expressed in a telegraph message consisting of a single word: "Geronimo." The Apache chief is on the warpath. In other films, Ford will show great interest in the plight of the Indian; in *Stagecoach* it is not to the point. The second complication, which the characters learn about only when an Indian attack brings on the crisis, is that Mrs. Mallory is with child by the husband she has come out to find, and the terror pitches her into labor. Dr. Boone must then be dried out with doses of black coffee and—out of sight of the camera—vomiting.

Ford is a poet who lets the human face and significant actions speak, when a thousand words could not say as much. An example is when the people from the coach sit down at table for a meal, and the faded gentleman Hatfield, noticing that Mrs. Mallory is not comfortable sitting next to Dallas, offers to

move her plate to a place near the window, where she can enjoy the cooler air. Dallas feels the insult, which she takes as a matter of course. Ringo, however, quietly takes her part, and thus begins a love affair that is remarkable for its few words and few gestures—not even a kiss.

The crucial turn comes when Mrs. Mallory gives birth, and Dallas, the only woman near, must assist. For John Ford, childbirth, the family, marriage, manliness, and womanliness are absolute values. Ringo sees Dallas holding the baby wrapped up in a blanket, and it moves him. He tells her that he has a bit of a ranch south of Lordsburg, and a house, where a man might live well—if he had a woman with him. The sexual attraction is thus fully human: it is spiritualized because it is fully grounded in the good and holy order created by God, and it spans the generations. Marriage is the tree that bears the fruit of children.

When Dr. Boone was being thrown out of town, the ladies of the Law and Order League called him worthless and shameful, while the score played an off-key parody of the revival hymn, "Shall We Gather at the River." Ford, whose films (with one startling exception—*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*) are filled with music, plays no hymns for the proposal that Ringo makes to Dallas. He does not need to. We are looking at man and woman at the beginning of a new creation.

Stagecoach is filled with dramatic action: a full-scale Indian attack, with the few male defenders on the coach running out of ammunition; a woman seeking a husband she fears may be dead; people who turn the corner of moral regeneration without fanfare, and in surprising ways; a showdown of three bad men against one man who would be good if he had the chance. Ford also insists upon moral laws that are greater than mere customs, the most important of which is that you must do your duty, no matter the danger, no matter that you may lose your only chance to be happy in this life, no matter that you might shrug the obligation away without blame. Ringo is not vindictive. He does not want the showdown. But what a man wants and what he must do are seldom the same.

If you are not familiar with the films of John Ford, I think you will find, with *Stagecoach*, that you have discovered a forthright artist of great power, whose vision is informed both by the natural virtues we have forgotten, and by the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love. Were he here to read these words, no doubt he'd swear and give me a cuff to the back of the head. But the truth is what it is, Mr. Ford, and I am obliged to speak it. ☉

"I look down and I see that there's a rope around my neck."

—Jussie Smollett
Actor

"How can I say that if you are white, your opinions on racism are most likely ignorant, when I don't even know you? I can say so because nothing in mainstream US culture gives us the information we need to have the nuanced understanding of arguably the most complex and enduring social dynamic of the last several hundred years."

—Robin DiAngelo
Author, *White Fragility*

"My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor... I was taught [wrongly] to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will."

—Peggy McIntosh
Author, *White Privilege and Male Privilege*

"If this country doesn't give us what we want, then we will burn down this system and replace it. All right? And I could be speaking ... figuratively. I could be speaking literally. It's a matter of interpretation."

—Hawk Newsome
Greater New York Black Lives Matter president

"We are trained Marxists."

—Patrisse Cullors
Black Lives Matter
Co-Founder



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A Devilish Either/Or

Screwtape Explains Science vs. Faith

by Louis Markos

This piece was written in response to a challenge by a friend of the author, who thought a new letter from the wily old devil Screwtape might be called for, since the science-versus-faith issue is more compelling now than it was when C. S. Lewis's classic book, The Screwtape Letters, was first published in 1942.

My dear Wormwood,

I can see that you have re-formulated yourself after I devoured you back in the 1940s and are ready to again take up your tempting duties. The last time I wrote to you, the British were embroiled in their second war with the Germans. Today, as you prepare to win souls for our Father Below, I would like to draw your attention to a very different kind of war, one that, if you use it properly, can secure a new crop of souls for our banqueting table.



The humans call it the war between religion and science, and it has proven an absolute boon to our efforts to cut humans off from the Enemy. Throughout much of history, we kept the majority of men enslaved to a belief that physical matter was either evil (as it was for the Gnostics) or an illusion (as it was for the Hindus and Buddhists) and that they couldn't, and shouldn't, trust their senses to determine the nature of reality. If we did allow them to study nature, we fooled them into believing, as the pagans of old believed, that what they saw was random, controlled by the whims of arbitrary gods.

That is, until the Church let the cat out of the bag! Buoyed up by their faith that the Enemy had created a good, ordered, and rational cosmos and that they could uncover that goodness, order, and rationality if they used their reason, clergymen across Europe began to observe and study and measure their world. Assured that the universe outside them and the reason within them had been created by the same Person, they knew it would only be a matter of time before they could discover and put into mathematical formulas the laws by which the universe ran. We found ourselves powerless to stop the onslaught.

In England alone, that ghastly period the humans call the Middle Ages produced Robert Grosseteste, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. And things only got worse when the Renaissance began. Men who believed that the Enemy had revealed himself both in the Bible and in the book of nature ripped back the veil to reveal the Enemy's creations—natural and human—in all their beauty, wonder, and mystery. I can barely write the names of these meddling scientists without vomiting: Copernicus and Galileo, Bacon and Boyle, Kepler and Kelvin, Newton and Pascal, Faraday and Mendel.

And the list goes on and on.

We had almost given up in despair when things took a most auspicious turn. That venerably confounded man they call Charles Darwin came up with a theory stating how all the complexity of the world, and of human life itself, could be accounted for by unguided material forces. The theory was helpful, for it offered humans who were eager to avoid spiritual accountability a way by which they could (so they thought) explain everything apart from the Enemy.

Still, the theory alone did not secure for us the real victory. The Christian humans might very well have done what they had always done before: take the new scientific theory and test it against their reason and their study of the Bible.

But they didn't. In the late 1800s, we got an American university president, Andrew Dickson White of Cornell, to invent a fictional conflict between religion and science. (How gratifying to be able to use one Christian creation—the university—to turn another Christian creation—science—against the Enemy!) Despite the abundant historical evidence to the contrary, White (and others, including John William Draper) made humans believe that they had to choose to follow either religion or science. You will wonder, Wormwood, why the humans didn't expose this phony conflict as a false dichotomy. Never fear, we nudged them into abandoning logical thinking long ago!

This religion-versus-science tactic is best used on college students, especially ones who grew up in a sheltered home and are on their own for the first time. Convince them (it's not hard to do) that since science deals in "facts" and religion is just a "feeling," that they must, as educated scholars, accept the facts and abandon the feeling. Better yet, convince them that the "facts" they have been learning from their secular teachers are all based on "new"

You will wonder, Wormwood,
why the humans didn't
expose this phony conflict
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Never fear, we nudged
them into abandoning
logical thinking long ago!



evidence of which the Christians of the past had not the slightest inkling.

Listen carefully, Wormwood, and I'll give you some concrete examples you can use. As far back as Pythagoras, Plato, and Ptolemy, the humans knew that the universe was vast, but they did not reason, on the basis of that data, that the earth was unimportant or that humans were insignificant. But your patient won't know that, since he's been taught that the people of the past were all ignorant of "science." Your job is to make your patient believe that the immensity of the cosmos is a new discovery that "proves" that human life, particularly his own life, is a product of arbitrary, meaningless forces.

After you've taught your patient to find cause for despair in the heavens above, turn his gaze back down to the earth below. Draw his attention to the pain and suffering that abound in nature, to the way one animal feeds on another and the way one species rises victorious above others. Then blind him to the glaringly obvious fact that Christians have known this for centuries and have accepted it as clear proof of the Bible's teaching that man and nature were created good, but that man sinned, causing himself and nature alike to fall into a state of corruption and futility. If you blind him to that,

he will naturally accept the lie that this information is new and is proof that natural selection is the process by which human life, and even human consciousness, arose.

I advised you in the first letter I sent you all those decades ago that it is best to keep your patient away from science altogether. That advice still holds—unless the science you expose him to is a naturalistic science that offers itself up as an alternative to, rather than a co-laborer with, religion. Remember, you must force him to choose religion or science, facts or feelings, reason or faith. Don't let him seek a harmony between the Enemy's book and the book of nature. If you can persuade him (1) that he must surrender either his belief in the Bible or in science, (2) that if he surrenders the latter, he will be a superstitious, "medieval," closed-minded yokel, and (3) that if he surrenders the former, he will be a rational, modern, free-thinking chap, your patient will do the rest.

From being one of the chief exposers of our lies, science has morphed into one of our greatest covers. Use it well, Wormwood, and you will plunge your patient into a kind of existential despair from which he will find it hard to extricate himself.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape



A Unique Cultural Phenomenon

The Chosen Both Faithfully & Innovatively Presents the Gospels

by John D. Martin

Fans of Christian film who are familiar with the name Dallas Jenkins likely know it from *What If?*, *The Resurrection of Gavin Stone*, or *A Midnight Clear*, his three best-known works. Connoisseurs of Christian pop culture in the broader sense will likely recognize the Jenkins family name from the *Left Behind* series of Christian fiction best-sellers from the 1990s and early 2000s and the movies based on them. Those familiar with both Dallas Jenkins's earlier work and his Christian media pedigree would be utterly surprised by the scope and ambition of his newest project, a streaming series called *The Chosen*.

In format, *The Chosen* aims to be a multi-season series with a closed narrative arc in the mode of *Game of Thrones*, *The Sopranos*, and *Breaking Bad*. But its subject matter is about as far from that of those series as sunrise from twilight. *The Chosen* is the first multi-season series based on the Gospels. Not one single Gospel, as has been done in many theatrical films, TV films, and mini-series over the years, but all four of them.

This puts the work of Jenkins and his writing team fully within a tradition of Christian drama and biblical literature stretching back past the Reformation to the medieval Gospel plays and even to the ancient Gospel harmonies such as the *Diatessaron*. But in modern film and television, the undertaking is completely unprecedented. It is this aspect of *The Chosen* that has already drawn considerable media attention to the series, in

Christianity Today, *World, Plugged In*, and numerous Christian entertainment blogs.

Innovative Marketing

The means of distribution is also unprecedented. VidAngel, the production and distribution company behind *The Chosen*, aims to put its presentation of the Gospels into as many hands as possible by releasing the series first and primarily as an app downloadable from Google Play or the Apple Store. DVD and Blue Ray copies of the series can be purchased of course, but VidAngel has opted to give pride of place to this new and revolutionary means of bringing its finished product to consumers.

The way the series is being funded is also a radical departure from anything done before in Christian media. The producers of *The Chosen* have embraced and combined the global trends of streaming and crowdfunding. As of this writing, the series has set a record for money raised through crowdfunding for a project of this kind (\$11 million for season 1 and a bit over \$3 million for season 2; you can monitor the progress of



Simon Peter (Shahar Issac) and his brother Andrew (Noah James) in episode 4.

the online fundraising campaign from their online store.¹ The production and filming of the series are therefore proceeding on a pay-as-you go model, unheard of in Hollywood.

The decision to market the series primarily by means of an app rather than by streaming it through an existing service is also ground-breaking. Sure, Netflix, YouTube, and Amazon shows can be viewed through their respective apps, but in these cases the viewer is watching the show through an app controlled by Netflix or Amazon and not by the series' creators themselves. *The Chosen* is an app unto itself, making it independent of any platform that would deprive the people making the show of their direct control of distribution. This certainly obviates the risk that any of these platforms would block or de-monetize the series for ideological reasons (e.g., "So, Mr. Jenkins, that line where Jesus says, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'? You need to re-write that so he says, 'I am one of the ways to the truth and the life'; you know, for our Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim viewers. We can't afford to lose market share.").

More importantly, releasing the series in the form of an app serves the evangelistic purpose of getting this dramatization of the Gospels, the life of Jesus and his disciples, into the hands of as many people as possible as quickly as possible. Social media campaigns promoting the series are quite active on both Facebook and Twitter. The free global livestreaming event for *The Chosen* that took place on YouTube during Easter week drew, depending on the episode, between 250,000 and 512,000 views.

Perceptive Writing

The format and marketing approach, however, are not the only aspects of the series that distinguish it very significantly from



biblical films and mini-series of the past. *The Chosen* provides a coherent and character-rich narrative that fills in historical details and gives context to the Gospel narratives—the origin of Jacob's Well, for example, and Moses' act of forging the bronze serpent—in part by providing the backgrounds of the major characters in the series. Megan Basham at *World* magazine described the challenge of doing this:

It's a dicey prospect: inventing backstories and side plots for Bible characters without undermining the source material. That Jenkins and his team navigate these hazardous waters without wrecking their ship on

the rocks of contradiction, as so many big studio and network productions have, is thanks to a deep theological understanding of the New Testament.

The series doesn't just check off events as they occur chronologically. It uses creative camera shots, flashbacks, and quick references to the Old Testament to make a holistic case for Jesus as the Messiah.

As Jenkins states in an interview posted on *The Chosen's* Facebook page, those more speculative aspects of the series, along with the references to the Torah and the prophets as the context for Jesus' life on earth, are

all informed by input from Catholic, Evangelical, and Messianic Jewish Bible scholars. The writing team aims for cultural and theological consonance with the biblical sources in these elements of the

story but also for greater psychological and emotional breadth.

We all know, for example, that the brothers Peter and Andrew had lives before they met Jesus, and that they made their living

The writers and actors have presented these familiar scenes and characters from the New Testament with a depth and complexity that have rarely been seen on film.

as fishermen. The series enhances the depiction of their life situation by adding more social/interpersonal details and easily relatable touches than are usually found in dramas of this sort. Similarly, we know from the text of John 3 that Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel, but it is a rare biblical drama that allows the audience to see him teaching, attempting to perform an exorcism, and dealing with the bureaucratic inconveniences imposed on the Jewish people by their Roman conquerors—in short, to see him doing the sorts of things that would be required of a leading first-century rabbi.

Another remarkable aspect of the series is the depth it lends to the Roman praetor Quintus and the centurion Gaius. Quintus is witty, charming, and absolutely determined to assert Roman power. He is also contemptuous of the conquered Jewish people, sometimes subtly, other times openly. Gaius is himself from a conquered people (the Germanic tribes of central Europe) and has made the decision to “join the winning side”—to use the dialogue from the series.

The addition of these relationships and characters does not detract from the series’ commitment to bring the gospel to its audience; rather, it serves to give the characters a depth that is almost always lacking in Bible-based films and television shows.

Convincing Acting

Nevertheless, however well-written, none of that added depth would be conveyed effectively without an excellent cast portraying these characters. None of the actors are exactly household names. The two with the broadest experience, Erick Avari and Brandon Potter, have surprisingly extensive experience as a character actor and voice actor respectively. Both are thoroughly persuasive in their respective roles as Nicodemus and Quintus.

But the real stand-outs in this first season have been Paras Patel, Elizabeth Tabish, and Jonathan Roumie. Patel gives us a Matthew as we have never seen him depicted before: he is younger than the other disciples and has Asperger syndrome. Tabish’s excellent performance as Mary Magdalene (depicted both before and after being delivered from demonic possession) is all the more impressive because it is her first work in series television. Roumie’s portrayal of Jesus is noteworthy for its careful avoidance of the “and now I speak Scripture” tone when actual words from the Gospels are spoken. Roumie delivers that dialogue with the same kind of natural cadences as he does the other, more speculative dialogue. There is no jarring discontinuity between the flow of Jesus’ conversations with Simon (played by Shahar Isaac), Andrew (played by Noah James), and Eden (Simon’s wife, played by Lara Silva) in their house while they are preparing for his meeting with Nicodemus (episode 7, “Invitations”) and his manner of teaching at the house of Zebedee (episode 6, “Indescribable Compassion”).

The writers and actors have presented these familiar scenes and characters from the New Testament with a depth and complexity that have rarely been seen on film. Indeed, Roumie’s depiction of Jesus, informed by the actor’s own faith, aims at conveying humor and warmth in the person of the Savior of the world, aspects that are generally absent from most screen portrayals of Jesus.

While it is remarkable how well this group of character actors, some with little or no prior experience in film or television, carry off their individual roles, it is even more remarkable how well they perform as an ensemble. The fraternal dynamic between Andrew and Simon feels authentic, which is quite a credit to both the writers and the actors. Similarly, the dynamic between the Roman

authority figures, Quintus and Gaius, and their Jewish subjects seems both eminently human and fraught with potential menace for the Jewish characters. This is not an easy dynamic to convey, and the cast of *The Chosen* does so convincingly. The best cinematic parallel I can think of is the relationship between Commandant von Luger and the Allied officers Ramsey and Bartlett in *The Great Escape*. That is to say, the cast of *The Chosen* has faced some remarkable dramatic challenges in their material and their characters and mastered them.

Minor Flaws

There are, of course, flaws in *The Chosen*. It faces tight budget constraints (approximately \$1,100,000 is budgeted for each episode), and this is reflected in some of the costuming and set work. Though the dialogue is generally very well-written and employs a breadth of vocabulary lacking even in supposedly high-quality American television, there are occasional lapses. No one in the first century A.D. would have said “okay,” and there are plenty of modern words that would better retain the illusion of “long ago and far away.” And there is one place in the otherwise excellent depiction of the meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus in which modern sensibilities come crashing in like a bag of lead shot onto the floor.

But these are minor flaws in a surprisingly fresh and intelligent biblical drama that is being delivered to the world through a revolutionary new method. The funding for season 2 is still incomplete as of this writing (late April), and it is sincerely to be hoped that the crowdfunding effort does not fall prey to the economic dislocations brought about by the Covid-19 crisis. ☺

Note

1. <https://studios.vidangel.com/the-chosen/store>.

Wooing the Deplorables

A review of *Irresistible*

by Nicole M. King

What the turmoil of the 2016 presidential election revealed more than anything is how jaded and corrupt the American “political process” is. From campaign antics (remember Donald Trump, accused of sexual harassment, on stage with all the women who had ever accused Bill Clinton?) and post-election disbelief and riots, to the media’s consequent fascination with the idea that somehow Russia was responsible for Trump’s victory, what became apparent is how little respect the political elite has for Middle America.

In *Irresistible*, writer and director Jon Stewart satirizes American elections, to good effect. The main character, Gary Zimmer (Steve Carell), is a Democrat political strategist whom we meet after his candidate suffers a resounding defeat in 2016. Still reeling, Gary sees a YouTube video of retired Marine Colonel Jack Hastings defending “undocumented workers” at a town meeting in his conservative Wisconsin home of Deerlaken. Convinced that Col. Hastings might be the key to winning over Republicans in Middle America, Gary flies to Deerlaken and convinces him to run for mayor.

Gary’s plans seem to hit an obstacle when Republican political strategist Faith Brewster shows up in Deerlaken, but we quickly learn that Faith’s presence was part of Gary’s plan all along. He wants this little local election to take center stage in the national media, and so to win back the Heartland for the Democrats. It soon becomes apparent that the Hastings campaign needs more money than anyone in little Deerlaken has in his checking account, so Gary flies the colonel

to an elite fundraising party in New York. There, the colonel tells the party’s hosts how crazy it is that they care about a little Podunk town in Wisconsin—and in admiration of his “authenticity,” the fakey New Yorkers open their checkbooks.

Indeed, the checks are a main feature of this film. A couple of scenes depict individual checks and the vast amounts of money being poured into this race—\$5,000, \$25,000, \$125,000. With the extra funds, Gary hires his “A-Team” political strategists, who analyze local data to ensure victory. But the A-Team is equally out of touch with these particular constituents; for example, at one point they identify a Deerlaken neighborhood with a highly concentrated cluster of “single women” and decide to send these women brochures on how Hastings will

protect their access to contraception. The single women, it turns out, are nuns, and they’re none too happy about the targeted ads.

The film gets off to a slow start—the first few lines are stale and awkward, leaving the viewer wondering if this is one of those films where all the good lines are already packed into the trailer. But as it gets going, *Irresistible* picks up steam, becoming funny enough to overcome a few bad lines here and there. The point of the film is to make the audience ponder the way we elect our officials, and to realize how much “spin” there really is in the process. As Brewster and Zimmer tell hordes of cameras at the very beginning: they lie, the media know they lie, and yet, here they are—at the center of a media circus. No one even seems shaken by the lying. The film closes with a

plot twist that’s almost as unexpected as the outcome of the real 2016 election, but that also emphasizes some genuine and serious shortcomings with the electoral process.

Irresistible merits its R rating for language, including sexually explicit language. Zimmer and Brewster are an on-again, off-

again couple, and they continually make pretty nasty sexual remarks to each other. But even here, the remarks have a purpose—to reveal the soullessness of the American political elite, and to point out how very different its members are from most other Americans.

As Jack Hastings’ daughter Diana tells Zimmer toward the end of the film, “This system, the way we elect people, it’s terrifying. And exhausting. And I think it’s driving us all insane.”

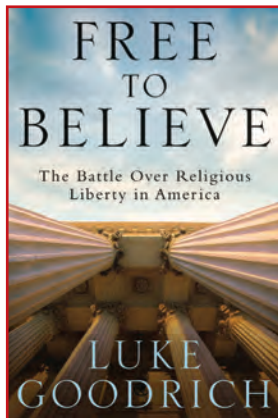
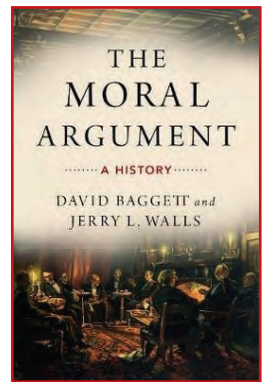
It’s hard to argue with that. ☺



The Moral Argument: A History

by David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls

The moral argument essentially says that God is the best explanation for the existence of ethics and morality. Beyond that, philosophers also suggest that morality gives us a window into the nature of ultimate reality. This book is not an explication of the moral argument *per se*, but rather offers a historical narrative of its more prominent expressions through history. It's an edifying read for the careful, complete thinker.

**Free to Believe: The Battle over Religious Liberty in America**

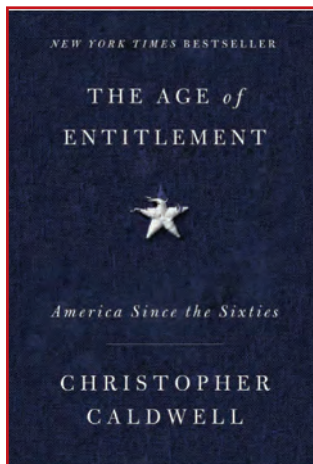
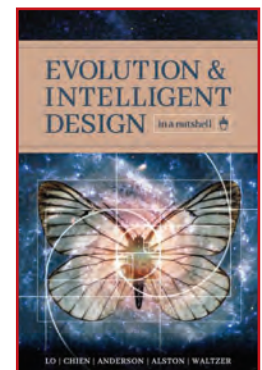
by Luke Goodrich

Religious liberty benefits everyone in a society. In simple terms, it means that, within reasonable limits, the government leaves religion alone as much as possible. Attorney Luke Goodrich has specialized in this field of law for more than a decade, and this book will help your religious organization serve wisely and proactively as salt and light in an increasingly secular culture. Every church in America should have someone read it.

Evolution & Intelligent Design in a Nutshell

by Thomas Y. Lo et al.

Thomas Lo grew up in Taiwan and became a Christian at age twelve, but tensions later arose when he studied science and engineering. Now he has spearheaded the publication of this handbook to help others resolve the alleged conflict between science and faith. Drawing on recent developments in cosmology, chemistry, biology, and paleontology, this collaborative effort makes the evidence for intelligent design accessible to the armchair scientist.

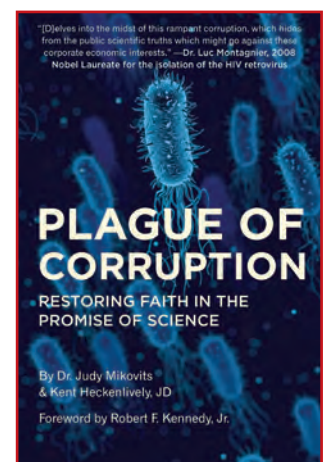
**The Age of Entitlement: America Since the Sixties**

by Christopher Caldwell

The 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed mainly to prohibit unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, employment, and public accommodations. As well-intended as all that was (and is), Caldwell argues that since then, a "civil rights ideology" has hardened into a *de facto* "constitution" utterly incompatible with the original, *de jure* Constitution of 1787. This is an important read for anyone concerned about the deterioration of political discourse and the loss of political liberty.

Plague of Corruption: Restoring Faith in the Promise of Scienceby Dr. Judy Mikovits & Kent Heckenlively, JD
A research scientist for nearly four decades, Dr. Judy Mikovits is either a discredited, whack-job

conspiracy theorist or the Erin Brockovich of human retrovirology, exposing high corruption in our public health-related agencies. Touching on chronic fatigue syndrome, autism, vaccines, and more, this is her gripping story of being targeted, search-and-destroy style, for uncovering scientific data unfavorable to certain interests at the intersection of Big Government, Big Science, Big Media, and Big Pharma.



The Fight of Our Lives—Defeating the Ideological War Against the West

Civilizations can collapse rapidly, and we should be wary of assuming that ours can't. This film explores the looming threats to Western culture, both from within and from without. Noting that the former aid and abet the latter, it exhorts us, the heirs of Western civilization, to recognize and set about defending the admirable qualities of our heritage and preserving its durable values for the sake of posterity.



Film Blips 



Planet of the Humans

Jeff Gibbs had always believed green energy was going to save humanity from extinction. Then he discovered that the so-called "green energies" not only are heavily reliant on the fossil fuels they purport to replace, but also that their champions (think Al Gore, the Sierra Club, et al.) are in league with the dreaded capitalists. On the one hand, this film is weirdly comical, but on the other, it's deadly serious, as Gibbs concludes that the enemy of humanity is . . . humanity.

Never Again?

Anti-Semitism, the most recent version of which finds expression in the BDS movement (for Boycott, Divestment and Sanction of Israel), seems to wax and wane globally, but never really die. This haunting but ultimately hopeful film weaves together the life stories of elderly Holocaust survivor Irving Roth and former radical anti-Semite Kasim Hafeez, who now labor together advocating for peace, true tolerance, and universal equality.



Out of Shadows

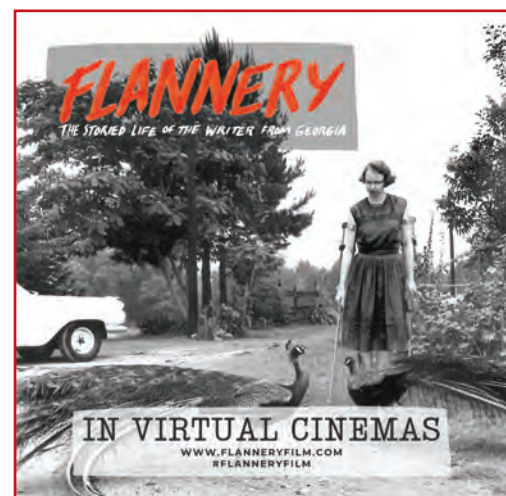
Mike Smith was a professional stunt performer until a career-ending back injury provoked him to take a more skeptical look at Hollywood. In *Out of Shadows*, he looks at corruption in the entertainment industry—from sinister government involvement to pedophilia and sex-trafficking, including Satanic ritual abuse of women and children. He

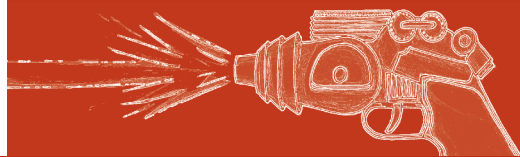
wants to start a healthy conversation about the media, so see the film for free and join the movement at OutOfShadows.org.



Flannery: The Storied Life of the Writer from Georgia

As a single, white woman writing in the post-WW2 Deep South, Flannery O'Connor was no stranger to the tumults of social change, and as a perceptive Irish Catholic, she observed social dynamics from a biblically informed understanding of human nature. Her characters were often dark, and her storylines satirically biting. With cancel culture now coming down on her indiscriminately for her use of racial epithets, this bio-documentary is a refreshing reflection on literature as a provocative means of admonishing whole societies.





My Taste Test Failure

Sipping Poison Won't Make You Wise!

by Benjamin R. Merkle

The wisest person isn't always the most experienced. I had to learn that the hard way.

I graduated from high school as an evangelical kid—innocent enough to feel at home in church, yet insecure enough in that innocence to feel I was missing out on something.

I wanted to add a layer of toughness to my skinny frame, thinking that would make me more interesting. So I joined the Marine Corps. There was a reserve unit just outside my hometown, a tank unit, so I could drive tanks on the week-ends and be a college student during the week. I'd be a manly man who could strut and say things like, "Back when I was in the Corps. . . ."

I remember teargas training. As the room filled with teargas, the drill instructor started marching around the room and making guys take off their masks. When he came back by and showed you his fist, you could put your mask back on. It went fast enough that you could hold your breath until he returned. Then, once your mask was on, you would plug the filters with your hands and blow out hard. This would clear all the gas out of your mask and you could breathe in filtered air.

Things started out all right for my group. We took off our masks

obediently and held our collective breath. A minute later the drill instructor gave me the signal to put my mask on. I was done. I just needed to put on my mask and clear it.

My Dumb Idea

But then I started thinking, *How many people can say they've been tear-gassed? How many skinny, Christian kids from Idaho have gone through this?* The thought continued: *Now I know what it's like to have teargas on your skin and in your eyes, but what would it feel like to have teargas in your lungs?* The resolution followed: *Maybe I should just take a little sip of the teargas before putting my mask back on. Because then I would know; I would have that experience; I would be wiser.*

So I took just one little sip. Sure enough, my lungs lit on fire and I exploded into a fit of coughing. It felt like napalm had been poured down my throat. Panicking, I pulled on my gas mask quickly, but I had no air left in my lungs to clear the mask. All I could do was suck in the teargas now inside the mask. Total panic set in and I ripped my mask off, thinking I just needed to run for the door and be free.

But I pulled myself together, got my mask back on a second time, and, with a good deal more retching and gagging, breathed through the trapped teargas until

I started getting relatively clean air from the filters.

Forbidden Wisdom

It was such a weird impulse to succumb to. I've never told that story and had someone say, "Lucky you!" It's usually more like, "Why?" It was a dumb thing to think and an idiotic thing to do. But at that moment it seemed like an opportunity to do something that would distinguish me from everyone else. To be that much more impressive because I had experienced something that most had not.

Such stupidity is a fundamental error that plagues us all, going back to our first parents.

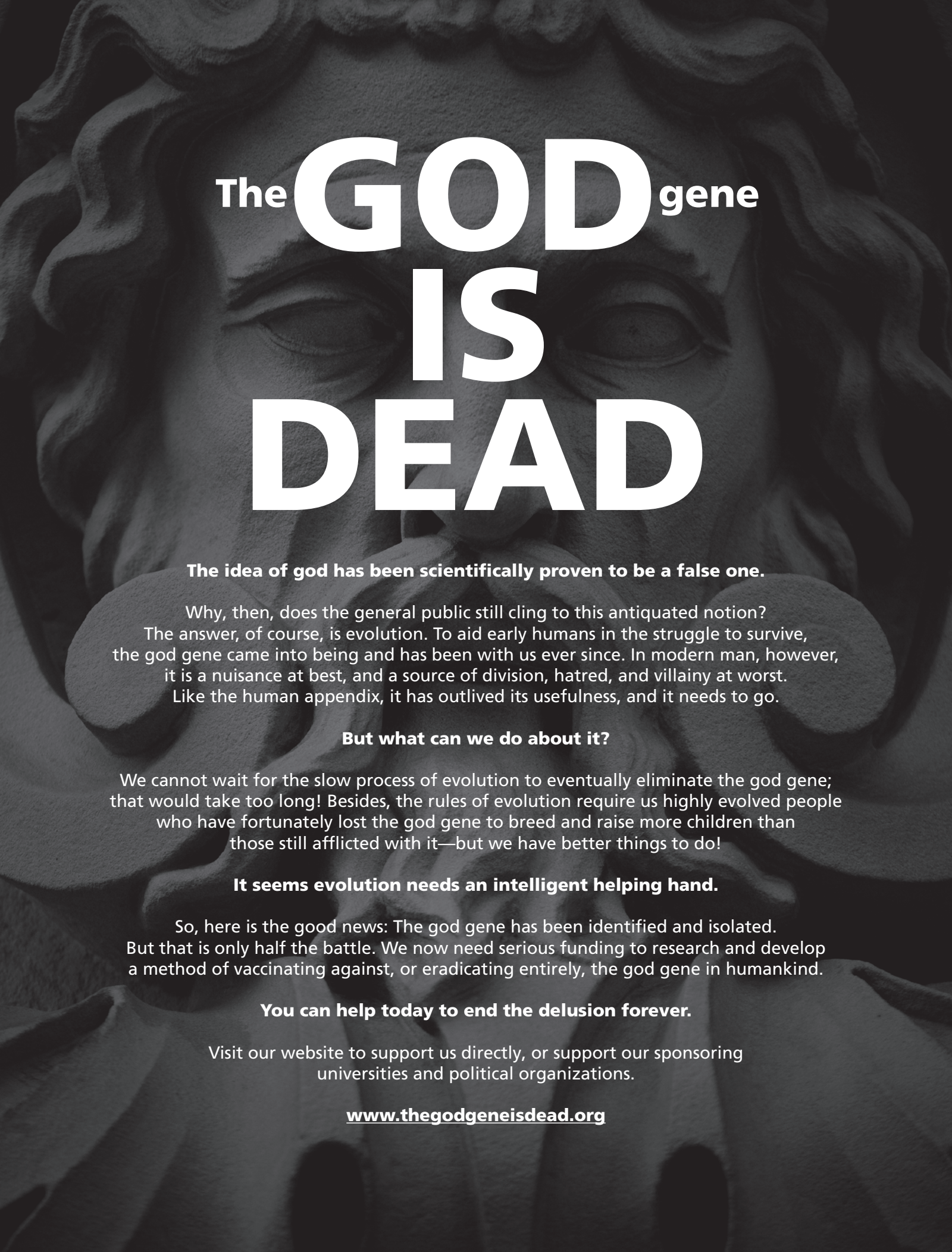
When the serpent tempted Eve, he told her that when she ate the forbidden fruit her eyes would be opened, and she would be like God, knowing good and evil. The power of the serpent's temptation was the idea that just tasting that fruit would open her eyes and make her wise. She would become distinguished by her experience. And to that temptation she succumbed.

This type of temptation still pulls at each of us with an incredible power. We feel that tasting a forbidden thing will bring us greater wisdom and make us more impressive. In fact, think of how easily we can feel embarrassed by all the sins we haven't committed! We can actually become ashamed of our own innocence. Who wants to be naïve and inexperienced?

In our confusion, innocence becomes insecurity. Such confusion can be cleared up, though, by answering a simple question: *Does experience with sin make you wiser or more foolish? Does falling into real sin turn you into someone we should want to be like, or does it turn you into something we should want to avoid?* ☹

—Abridged from *thegospelcoalition.org/article/sipping-poison*. Used with permission from the Gospel Coalition.





The **GOD** gene IS DEAD

The idea of god has been scientifically proven to be a false one.

Why, then, does the general public still cling to this antiquated notion? The answer, of course, is evolution. To aid early humans in the struggle to survive, the god gene came into being and has been with us ever since. In modern man, however, it is a nuisance at best, and a source of division, hatred, and villainy at worst. Like the human appendix, it has outlived its usefulness, and it needs to go.

But what can we do about it?

We cannot wait for the slow process of evolution to eventually eliminate the god gene; that would take too long! Besides, the rules of evolution require us highly evolved people who have fortunately lost the god gene to breed and raise more children than those still afflicted with it—but we have better things to do!

It seems evolution needs an intelligent helping hand.

So, here is the good news: The god gene has been identified and isolated. But that is only half the battle. We now need serious funding to research and develop a method of vaccinating against, or eradicating entirely, the god gene in humankind.

You can help today to end the delusion forever.

Visit our website to support us directly, or support our sponsoring universities and political organizations.

www.thegodgeneisdead.org

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