

SALVO

Issue 58 Fall 2021

CHANGE IS GOOD

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Can Darwinian Evolution Survive It?

by Tom & Elizabeth Siewert

The Weasel Program

What Hath Darwinism
To Do with Shakespeare?

by Jonathan Witt

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by Hugh Ross

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*The Return of the
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HOW TO TRULY LIVE THE GOOD LIFE!

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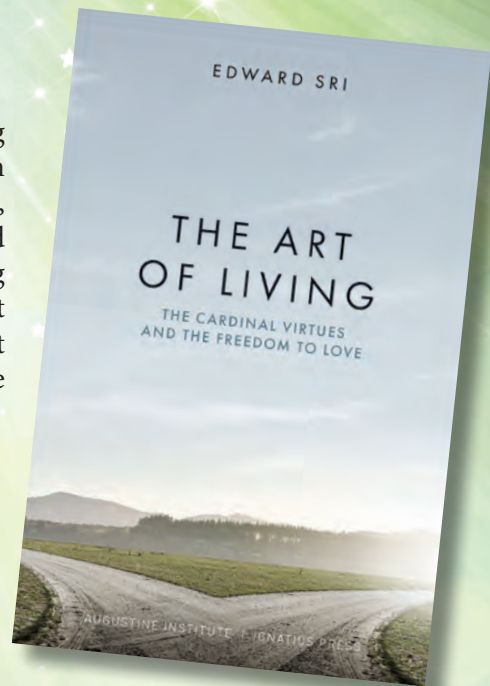
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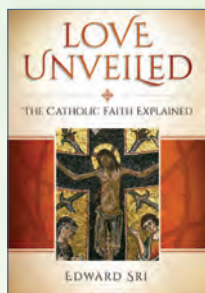
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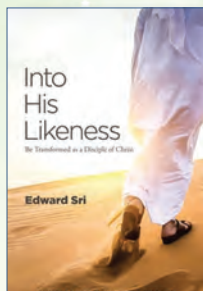
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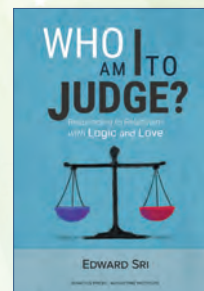
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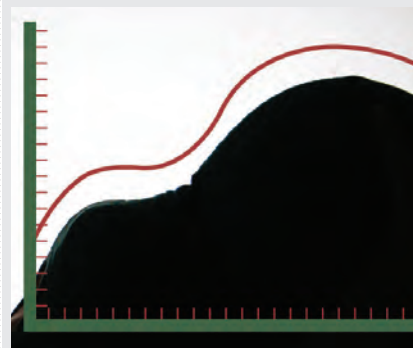
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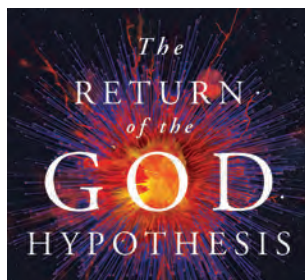
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salvo n. (săl'vō)

1. A group of shots fired simultaneously for effect
2. A forceful verbal or written assault

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.

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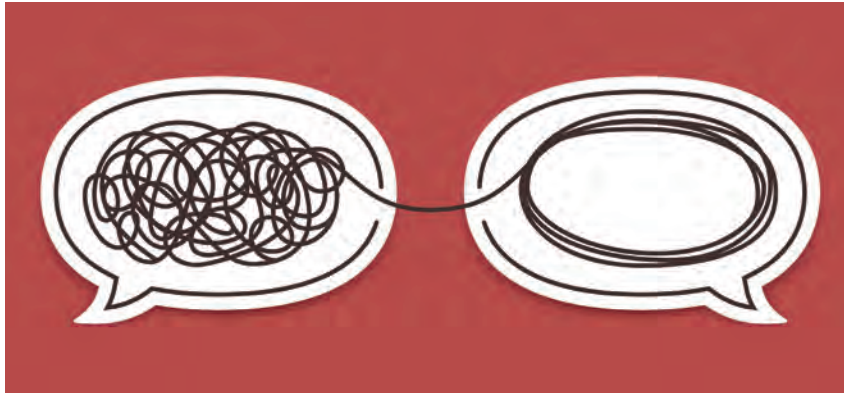
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Oh, the Things You Can Think!

Staking Out Solid Ground in the Wash of Information

by Terrell Clemmons

In 2014, **Martin Gurri** quietly self-published an e-book called *The Revolt of the Public and the Crisis of Authority in the New Millennium* (2nd edition 2018). A former CIA analyst, he had specialized for years in global media, which meant that he monitored the internet and watched its effects around the world. At first, he said, people in power tended to dismiss bloggers as inconsequential nobodies. But that began to change after a series of eruptions, later collectively dubbed the “Arab Spring,” led to the upheaval of long-held norms and authority structures in the Middle East and North Africa.

Gurri saw that these were all post-internet developments, and he predicted that more would come. Since then, we have witnessed (or experienced) such populist reprisals as Brexit, Trump, the French Yellow Vests, Hong Kong freedom rallies, Black Lives Matter, and WallStreetBets, the subreddit enclave that bought up GameStop to put the squeeze on hedge fund managers. All of these, says Gurri, are products of the internet’s “democratization” of information.

But what appears to be runaway destabilization may not necessarily be the net increase in entropy it seems at first glance.

Back in the “olden days,” Gurri explains, decision-making within the CIA would be politicized and fractious, but the messiness was *contained*. To the public, the institution appeared composed, unified, and stable. Similarly, before the internet, the seemingly enduring and authoritative *New York Times* would tell us the story, and we might respond or react accordingly. Now the authority hierarchy has been reversed, and the messiness is on the *outside*. Major news stories *follow* what’s trending on Twitter. Andrew Cuomo *went out* to protesters and said, “You won. What do you want?”

That turned out to be a question not so easily answered. The people’s primary unifying force had been *repudiation*. They were long on angst but short on solutions or even workable narratives for making sense of their distress.

At *Salvo*, we believe the biblical picture of reality provides the best and most workable narrative for making sense of the world. And so we aim to deliver thoughtful, reasoned articles grounded in the unity of a few enduring principles we believe are *true*: that there is a self-existing, transcendent God; that he created the world *good*; and that even now he is firmly in control and in the midst of the melee is working out a full restoration of all things.

With these stakes in the ground, if you will, we seek to shed light on areas where biblical truth claims are met with fierce contention. And we seek to do so in such a way that even those who disagree with us might come away with a new angle on the subject. Sometimes that means spotlighting the marvelous intricacies of an everyday insect (“Metamorphosis,” p. 28). At other times, it means drawing out the irony of a moment, as when Robin Phillips shows how people decrying Dr. Seuss have themselves *reenacted* the very tale they protest, as they, like the Sneetches, run about in circles, branding and rebranding themselves, having altogether dispensed with their reason for protesting in the first place (“How the Woke Stole Tolerance,” p. 16).

Whether for good or ill, democratized information is here to stay. It dumps on us a veritable tsunami of disjointed data every day, and it can take considerable effort just to figure out how to *think* about it all. But think about it we must. We hope what follows helps you chart solid ground beneath the flood, so that we all might resist being carried away by the winds of human cunning and crafty schemes. Happy thinking. ☉

Intelligent Design 3.0

Scientists have been informally employing engineering concepts to describe living systems for some time, and now the Engineering Research Group (ERG) at the Discovery Institute's Center for Science & Culture (CSC) has convened the first-ever conference explicitly integrating the two. The Conference on Engineering in Living Systems (CELS) 2021 brought together biologists, engineers, medical practitioners, and researchers to explore ways to (1) apply engineering principles to better understand biological systems, (2) craft a design-based theoretical framework to explain and predict the behaviors of living systems,

and (3) develop research programs to demonstrate the engineering principles at work in living systems. Topics explored include information design and processing, the fine-tuning of the human body, and the architecture of living systems, from molecules to ecosystems.

ERG head Steve Laufmann said CELS 2021 resulted in dozens of ideas for new research projects involving collaboration between engineers and biologists. "This is the starting point for new and fascinating (and much-needed) work," he said. Physicist and CSC Research Coordinator Dr. Brian Miller concurred, calling the potentially historic conference "a turning point for the ID movement but also a turning point for the biological sciences." •

ENGINEERING IN LIVING SYSTEMS

ENGINEERING RESEARCH GROUP



—Sources: (1) <https://evolutionnews.org/2021/06/cels-2021-a-report-from-the-trenches>; (2) <https://evolutionnews.org/2021/06/biology-as-engineering-the-way-forward>



Feminists Oppose “Anti-Feminist” Women

The Women's Human Rights Campaign (WHRC) is concerned to protect “women's sex-based rights,” that is, rights for women who are biologically women. So they are opposing “An Affirmation of Feminist Principles,” signed by 515 organizations around the globe, calling it “anti-feminist” in its own recent declaration for its failure to protect women.

While the WHRC declaration supports transgenderism—“The right of individuals to dress and present themselves as they choose is compatible with women's sex-based rights”—they draw a line:

However, the concept of “gender identity” has enabled men

who claim a female “gender identity” to assert, in law, policies, and practice, that they are members of the category of women, which is a category based upon sex.

The concern is that women's rights won by the feminist movement will be compromised by the notion that any man can be given these rights simply by claiming to be a woman. An example:

Some men who claim a female “gender identity” seek to be included in the legal category of mother. The CEDAW [the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women] emphasizes maternal rights and the “social significance of maternity.” Maternal rights and services are based on women's unique capacity to gestate and give birth to children. The inclusion of men who claim a female “gender identity” within the legal category of mother erodes the social significance of maternity, and undermines the maternal rights for which the CEDAW provides.

The WHRC also opposes males who claim to be women “identifying” as lesbians, because “lesbian” is a sex-based category. This is just another sign of the illogical mess being created by transgender theories. •

—Sources: (1) womensdeclaration.com/en/resources/anti-feminist-principles; (2) feministaffirmation.org/letter

Truth from a North Korean

The latest pushback against the woke takeover of the universities has come from an unlikely source: a North Korean defector. Yeonmi Park endured enormous suffering to escape to South Korea when she was only 13. She has chronicled her escape in her 2015 memoir, *In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom*. A year after the

book's release, Yeonmi transferred to Columbia University in New York, where she enjoyed reading English literature. UK journalist Peter Hitchens reports what happened next:

Almost immediately she met the new, sweet and sticky marshmallow totalitarianism which has taken over so many Western seats of learning. A

staff member ticked her off when she revealed that she enjoyed classics such as the books of Jane Austen. "I said, 'I love those books.' I thought it was a good thing," she told Fox News in an interview. But the staff member replied: "Did you know those writers had a colonial mindset? They were racists and bigots and are subconsciously brainwashing you."

After encountering the new requirement that students must use gender-neutral pronouns, Yeonmi exclaimed, "Even North Korea is not this nuts. . . . North Korea was pretty crazy, but not this crazy," adding, "You guys have lost common sense to a degree that I as a North Korean cannot even comprehend." Peter Hitchens writes:

She is not claiming that the modern West is like the thuggish Kim regime. She is saying that we willingly give in to what has to be forced on to Koreans by police terror, sealed borders and labour camps. . . . North Koreans, who live under a regime of brainwashed fear and who are forcibly isolated from all news of the outside world, have an excuse for believing the mad bilge pumped out by their government. We don't. •



—Source: [dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9704389/PETER-HITCHENS-North-Korean-warns-brainwashed.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9704389/PETER-HITCHENS-North-Korean-warns-brainwashed.html)

Naked Man Exposes Legal Absurdity

Can a man who identifies as a woman go into the female section of a spa and proceed to join the women and girls . . . completely naked? That was a question that was raised this summer after a biological male allegedly went into the section of a Los Angeles spa set aside for nude females.

The spa became the scene of protests and counter-protests. Clashes between trans activists and anti-trans

activists became so violent that riot officers and an LAPD helicopter were dispatched to the site.

Many papers responded by suggesting that the whole event had been staged, or even a hoax. But when researching the event, *Salvo's* Robin Phillips discovered a little-known fact that has not been reported by the papers and puts the whole incident in a new light. When combing through customer reviews of the spa, Phillips

found that a biological man who was given access to the women-only section of the spa is reportedly seeking a female girlfriend and claims to have already had sex with a hundred women. "He goes there quite often," a patron reported.

Significantly, women and girls who might be uncomfortable being undressed in the presence of this sexual adventurer have no legal recourse and can be dismissed as bigots for wanting to avoid fraternizing with such an individual. But their reaction is quite unsurprising and perhaps will open some eyes. •

—Sources: (1) <https://nypost.com/2021/07/06/furor-over-trans-in-la-spa-proves-progressives-arent-really-feminists-after-all/>; (2) https://web.archive.org/web/20210715090852/https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g32655-d2280100-r631551818-Wi_Spa-Los_Angeles_California.html



Heard but Not Helped

At the behest of feminist agitators, New South Wales (NSW), Australia law enforcement is no longer permitted to conduct thorough investigations in the case of rape allegations but rather is *required* to treat complainants as victims, regardless of evidence. Now, NSW Attorney General Mark Speakman wants to up the ante. In 2018, he asked the NSW Law

Reform Commission (LRC) to examine proposed changes to sexual consent laws,

then in 2021, announced his intent to exceed LRC recommendations by implementing a new “affirmative consent” standard for determining guilt. “It’s very simple,” he said. “The accused will have to have done something or said something, reasonable in the circumstances, to ascertain consent.”

While these developments might make for peculiar romantic comedy

(picture a suitor collecting proof of consent in advance), this is no laughing matter. It turns longstanding jurisprudence on its head, with its presumption of guilt and shifting of the burden of proof from the prosecution to the defendant.

“No law can ever erase the trauma of sexual assault,” Speakman said, “but we can send the message that survivors’ calls for reform have been heard.” But this is not reform. This is overturning the rule of law. •

—Sources: (1) <https://thinkspot.com/discourse/lgu5M6/post/bettina-arndt/weaponizing-our-criminal-justice-system-against-men/bvZtjy>; (2) abc.net.au/news/2021-05-25/nsw-unveils-sweeping-changes-to-sexual-assault-laws/100162870; (3) dcj.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/811564/consent-law-reform.pdf.

Open Season

Since 1979, the scientific community has recognized a “14-day rule” prohibiting research on human embryos more than fourteen days past fertilization. The rule, now codified into law in several countries, purportedly represents a compromise between the two moral extremes of “absolutely no research on humans” and “anything goes.” In May, the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) issued revised guidelines, sans the restriction, saying the new guidance responds to advances in science and encompasses “a broader and more expansive scope of research.” No worries, though, they assure us. The guidelines

also “underscore widely shared principles [ensuring that] research is conducted with scientific and ethical integrity.”

They’re right, at least about that “broader and more expansive scope” part. But about adhering to “widely shared principles of ethical integrity,” well, that’s another matter. According to David Prentice, Ph.D., of the Charlotte Lozier Institute, the guidelines favor “no limits whatsoever, and they allow virtually unrestricted manufacture of human-animal chimeras of any type, as well as creation of genetically altered human embryos and lab constructed human embryo ‘models.’” These sound more like a giant leap toward “anything goes.” Since when has *that* been a widely shared value? •



—Sources: (1) isscr.org/policy/guidelines-for-stem-cell-research-and-clinical-translation; (2) lifefnews.com/2021/07/08/scientists-will-create-unborn-babies-who-are-part-human-part-animal-for-research.

Pornifying the Preteens in Public School

Disputes erupted in the fall of 2019 between parents and school administrators in Ludlow, Massachusetts, after some teachers and parents objected to sexually explicit materials in the Baird Middle School library. Books depicting gay sex, oral sex, underage drinking, gender fluidity, and multiple-partner promiscuity were being put before children at reading time, while crass and vulgar posters appeared (or perhaps disappeared if parents were expected) in the hallway. *Sex Is a Funny Word*, for example, a comic book for reading ages 7–10, said, “sex is like a carnival or fair.” School officials defended the materials on such grounds as the First Amendment and

diversity. The Massachusetts chapter of the American Library Association said they were not only “entirely appropriate” but that removing them would violate the children’s “intellectual freedom.”

The following January, the teacher who spearheaded the objection—through the proper channels—was formally charged with harassment, bullying, discrimination, and hate crimes, and legal wrangling ensued. In 2021, the school’s transgender librarian resigned, as did the superintendent, but not before seeing to it that the teacher was fired. Meanwhile, the matters of sexualized public schooling and sharp divisions between parents and education bureaucrats continue. •



—Source: massresistance.org/docs/info3/Ludlow-MA-middle-school.html



The Shroom Boom

The medical normalization of hallucinogenic drugs, particularly psilocybin, the psychoactive agent in “magic mushrooms,” is well underway, with the prestigious Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine leading the charge. In 2000, the Johns Hopkins Center for Psychedelic & Consciousness Research obtained regulatory approval to study the effects

of psychedelics in “healthy, psychedelic-naïve volunteers” (presumably, non-drug addicts). Researchers hoped to discover treatments for such human maladies as addiction, PTSD, and other psychiatric ailments.

In 2016, the Center published a study showing reduced anxiety and depression following psilocybin treatments in cancer patients; then, in 2020, it published a study suggesting improved outcomes for patients suffering persistent major depression. Meanwhile, in 2018, the FDA officially declared psilocybin a “Breakthrough

Therapy,” a designation designed to expedite development and review. Investors are now calling psychedelics “our new Miracle Drugs.”

Paul McHugh, former director of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at Johns Hopkins, noted that we’ve seen this before—in the 1960s drug culture. “The unmentioned fact . . . is that LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, and the like produce not a ‘higher consciousness’ but rather a particular kind of ‘lower consciousness’ known well to psychiatrists and neurologists [as] ‘toxic delirium.’” •

—Sources: (1) <https://hopkinspsychedelic.org>; (2) ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5367557; (3) <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2772630>; (4) fda.gov/patients/fast-track-breakthrough-therapy-accelerated-approval-priority-review/breakthrough-therapy; (5) <https://psychedelicstockwatch.com/psychedelic-stock-news/psychedelic-drugs-the-miracle-drugs-of-the-21st-century>; (6) commentarymagazine.com/articles/paul-mchugh/the-harvard-psychedelic-club-by-don-lattin.



Gone Girls

India Is Missing 13.5 Million from Sex-Selective Abortion

by Heather Zeiger

India is a country in which the ratio of boys to girls is unnaturally skewed in favor of males. A study published in *The Lancet* in May showed that millions of girls have been “missing” from India’s population over the last thirty years.¹

The normal, naturally occurring sex ratio is 103–107 boys born for every 100 girls born. A ratio of more than 107 boys for every 100 girls born does not occur naturally, indicating that some policy or practice, such as sex-selective abortion, has been put into play on a large scale. India’s ratio in 2017 was 109.75 to 100.

Using the number of boys born in India in the three decades between 1987 and 2016 as a

baseline, the *Lancet* researchers calculated the number of girls that would have been born in those decades if the sex ratio had been normal.

The actual number of girls born was 13.5 million less, and these constitute India’s “missing girls,” those who should have been born but never were. Breaking the numbers down by decade shows that the problem has worsened decade by decade:

Missing girls from 1987 to 1996:

3.5 million

Missing girls from 1997 to 2006:

4.5 million

Missing girls from 2007 to 2016:

5.5 million

The *Lancet* researchers determined that the missing girls can mainly be accounted for by the practice of prenatal gender testing and the subsequent abortion

of female fetuses. This practice is legally banned in India, but in a society that strongly favors boys it still goes on, especially in families that already have a daughter.

Notes

1. “Trends in Missing Females at Birth in India from 1981 to 2016: Analysis of 2.1 Million Birth Histories in Nationally Representative Surveys,” *The Lancet*, vol. 9, no. 6 (April 8, 2021): [thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00094-2/fulltext](https://thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00094-2/fulltext).
2. “Systemic assessment of the sex ratio at birth for all countries and estimation of national imbalances and regional reference levels,” *PNAS*, vol. 116, no. 19 (April 15, 2019): pnas.org/content/116/19/9303.



Details from the *Lancet* Study Broken Down by Decade

1987–1996

244 million births

117.03 million girls

boy-to-girl ratio
108 / 100

The Breakdown

- **29%** of births were first-borns
107 boys / 100 girls
- **13.2%** were second-borns with one earlier son
106 / 100
- **12.5%** were second-borns with one earlier daughter
111 / 100
- **4.6%** were third-borns with two earlier sons
102 / 100
- **4.9%** were third-borns with two earlier daughters
116 / 100
- **9.2%** were third-borns with one son & one daughter
109 / 100

1997–2006

252 million births

120.26 million girls

boy-to-girl ratio
108 / 100

The Breakdown

- **31.2%** were first-borns
106 boys / 100 girls
- **14%** were second-borns with one earlier son
104 / 100
- **13.5%** were second-borns with one earlier daughter
113 / 100
- **3.9%** were third-borns with two earlier sons
101 / 100
- **8.4%** were third-borns with two earlier daughters
116 / 100
- **4.8%** were third-borns with one son & one daughter
109 / 100

2007–2016

247 million births

117.66 million girls

boy-to-girl ratio
110 / 100

The Breakdown

- **37.5%** were first-borns
108 boys / 100 girls
- **15.6%** were second-borns with one earlier son
102 / 100
- **15.5%** were second-borns with one earlier daughter
116 / 100
- **3.2%** were third-borns with two earlier sons
103 / 100
- **5.1%** were third-borns with two earlier daughters
131 / 100
- **7.3%** were third-borns with one son & one daughter
114 / 100

A Wide-Ranging Problem

Along with India, the following countries either have skewed sex ratios currently or have shown increasingly skewed sex ratios for births between 1970 and 2017, resulting in more than 23 million missing female births world-wide. Here are their boy-to-girl ratios in 2017:²

Albania
108.35 / 100

China
114.35 / 100

Nepal
107.33 / 100

Armenia
111.72 / 100

Hong Kong
107.83 / 100

Taiwan
107.59 / 100

Azerbaijan
113.41 / 100

Morocco
106.94 / 100

Vietnam
112.23 / 100





**New Harmony, a utopian attempt
Depicted as proposed by Robert Owen**

The Meaning of Community

by Rick Reed

n. a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage (Webster's College Dictionary, 2010)

History:

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *community* first appeared in writing in the epic poem *The Bruce* by the 14th-century Scottish poet John Barbour. In that epic, Barbour used the word to mean "the body of those having common or equal rights or rank, as distinguished from the privileged classes." By the late 18th century, the growing number of meanings for this essential word included "joint or common ownership." Subsequent to the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, it took on the specialized definition of "a socialistic or communistic society," akin to the short-lived "utopia" founded in 1825 by Robert Owen in New Harmony, Indiana. As the term expanded in meaning, 20th-century speakers began to use *community* to denote "a group of people having common interests." By the 21st century, the connotation began to creep toward "faction" or the ever-evolving "tribe."

Etymology:

Community derives from the Latin adjective *communis*, meaning "common, public, universal, ordinary." The Latin noun, *communitas*, meaning "fellowship," passed into Late Middle English as *communitie*, meaning "citizenry." The root from which it shoots is *munus*, meaning "gift, spectacle, function, tribute, or service." You can see how the different meanings of the original have yielded now-familiar English words such as *common*, *communication*, *communion*, *immunity*, and *municipal*. Combining the Latin prefix *con-* with *munus* and the suffix *-ity*, meaning "quality or state of," yields the etymological meaning, "the state of serving or functioning together." The word took on its current spelling in the 16th century.

Effect:

Since *community* first appeared in English, its common usage has evoked images of civic pride, moral

coherence, and neighborliness. Writing in the 18th century, however, Jean-Jacques Rousseau saw the community as an obstacle to the fullest realization of the "authentic individual." Contemporary heirs of that view have developed critical theory as a tool for eroding the older concept. As part of that process, they have promoted identity politics to supplant the idea of a civic community with groupings based on a multiplicity of shared racial, sexual, and other traits, typically called "communities" despite the fragmentation.

Whether in a medieval village, a modern suburb, or the LGBT movement, "communities shape consciousness," Carl Trueman observes in *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. Trueman further asserts that "our moral consciousness is very much shaped by our community." So he calls on Christian churches to function as Christian communities as they did in earlier times, caring for people's needs and passing on moral structures based in the realities of the body and objective truth. In his conclusion, Trueman recalls the world of the second century, during which the church "laid down the foundations for the later successes of the third and fourth centuries . . . by existing as a close-knit doctrinally bounded community that required her members to act consistently with their faith and to be good citizens of the earthly city as far as good citizenship was compatible with faithfulness." Distinctly different from modern communities based on online anonymity and an ethic of condemnation, early Christian communities grew from personal interaction and care for others, and were united by a shared faith. Today, faithful Christians could counter our society's increasing fragmentation by heeding Trueman's advice and building on that ancient model of community focused on faith rather than politics. ☉



Miscarriage of “Birth Justice”

Forward Together’s Stealth Attack on Motherhood

by Susan Martin

As an adoptive mother, I often felt sheepish standing up in church with the many biological mothers to receive my carnation and curvy-lettered prayer card on the second Sunday in May. I was plagued with self-doubts because I believed that I lacked the key experience common to all biological mothers: childbirth. In part because adoptive parenting put me more in contact with the losses of birth parents, I was initially sympathetic when I came across discussions of “Mamas Day,” an alternative holiday to Mother’s Day. I thought that any holiday that stood up for marginalized mothers and the mother-child bond, especially in these days of working women postponing childbearing, would be a help to mothers. Yet I couldn’t have been more wrong.

By offering design-it-yourself greeting cards for men pretending to be women, the Mamas Day website¹ reveals what it’s really talking about, the so-called birth justice movement. “Birth justice” is that part of the reproductive rights movement that focuses on pregnancy and birth. It presents giving birth to a child as the ultimate expression of individual identity. According to its proponents, giving birth is an experience that each human body has a right to participate in. Yet, somewhat contradictorily, this includes the right to decide “whether or not to carry a pregnancy,” as well as the right “to choose when, where, how, and with whom to birth.”² According to birth justice activists, racism and inequality are responsible for health disparities among various groups, and must be addressed by providing midwives and doulas to minorities at government expense.

Forward Together, the organizational sponsor of Mamas

Day, recognizes a child’s ties to his biological mother, but only as a means to political empowerment. The bond between parent and child is important not for its own sake, but because it can be used to generate sympathy for certain political causes. Mamas Day proponents link motherhood to social justice causes by tacking the word “mama” onto several controversial issues, including radical feminism (called movement mamas), substance abuse and its decriminalization (called incarcerated mamas), and the LGBT agenda (transgender mamas).

Amid omnipresent images of mothers and babies with raised fists, Forward Together’s web page states, “We know that mamahood is not one size fits all. But most popular images of mothers exclude mamas based on their sexual orientation, race, income, immigration status and more.”³ But how do they know that one size doesn’t fit all? Natural motherhood, as a

station in life and as the foundation on which love and care for a child rests, does fit all women, even though some wish to claim their experiences as an expression of their ethnic or sexual identity.

Redefining the Family

Founded in 1989, Forward Together is, as the name implies, a partnership-building organization that is able to fund radical groups (Alicia Garza of Black Lives Matter, for example, sits on its board) by making reproductive politics look family-friendly. Through slickly designed polls and state campaigns, its activists pull local voters into their network by promising to deliver changes in healthcare policy. Often these promises exploit fears and insecurities that are just a part of motherhood. Fear of inadequacy, for example, is met with the idea that the nuclear family imposes unrealistic expectations on parents. Better, then, to change what the family is.

Forward Together is known for its Strong Families Initiative, a ten-year strategy whose goal is to “redefine Family Values on their terms—valuing families as they are, not as the Right thinks they should be.”⁴ But redefining family values does not really capture the initiative’s aims. It is more accurate to say that its goal is to exclude the reality of biological sex from the concepts of family and birth. Strong Families works toward this goal by normalizing LGBT partnerships with children and reclassifying them as “families.”

Redefining Motherhood as an Expression of Identity

Partner organizations, such as Black Mamas Matter Alliance and the Southern Birth Justice Network (SBJN), redefine the family by redefining motherhood as a queer, transgender, black, or indigenous

experience. They contend that birth is not simply a natural occurrence, but one that individuals construct to fit their experience in a meaningful way. Women giving birth—especially if they are members of a minority group—are victims of a medical establishment that refuses to give them control over birth.

These are old allegations with a new twist. These organizations cite a high maternal mortality rate among minority women—referencing, for example, CDC data showing that black women are two to three times more likely to “die from a pregnancy-related cause” than white women⁵—as evidence of the need for “gender inclusive” social programs. They also use real health risks to project an existential urgency onto the woman giving birth, thus shifting attention away from the natural focus on mother and baby. Birth equity organizations that pledge to correct maternal mortality through social programs for “nonbinary” persons are not addressing mortality rates so much as they are marketing an existential crisis of identity.

Identity mothering—the idea that the only acceptable mama is the one who makes her sexual or racial identity the center of her maternal experience—underlies the birth justice movement. Its activists say they are correcting injustice, when in fact they are redefining motherhood.

The problems with this are le-

gion, but perhaps the most important is the failure to recognize that “birthing” is not an experience that persons have, but is the event that brings forth an independent

human life—an event that only biological women can participate in. Women who make childbirth into an expression of identity politics are missing the point: individual experience does not define what motherhood is.

Living out the principle of self-sacrifice that is built into women’s maternal instinct is not entirely without risk. To think of motherhood primarily as a culturally conditioned experience in which nothing is ventured is both to rob it of its importance and to assign more weight to the cultural aspects of how a birth takes place—at home or

in a hospital—than is warranted. With their insistence on the pre-eminence of atomized identity, groups like the SBJN assail what should be one of the most unifying forces for good in human society: motherhood.

The birth justice movement has redefined the facts and logic of birth. The natural process of birth is such that female physiology is required for it to happen. In other words, only women can actually give birth. The illogic of the social justice birthing model is evident in its claim that women living as men can also “birth”—i.e., that giving birth can also be a masculine activity.

Making Birth Political

While the SBJN advertises itself as providing midwife care that is “holistic, healing and humanistic,” this goal is hard to reconcile with the invitation to “help us decolonize birth,” stated on the same webpage.⁶ That statement belongs to the model of reproduction as a collective work that is shared equally among “birth partners”

who make up a loosely connected “community.” SBJN’s founder and director, Jamarah Amani, believes that motherhood and giving birth build local political power by being treated as an ideological training ground. Her mentor, the radical judge and midwife Claudia Booker, did as well when she wrote, “Once again it is birth political [sic]—a community who cannot birth itself cannot survive—if we have to go outside of our own resources to ensure the birth and growth of our children, our future is out of our hands.”⁷

This encapsulates the Marxist ideology of the birth justice movement. In assuming that perpetuating a particular racial and even revolutionary identity is paramount, mothers as such need not enter into the equation at all.

The primary route to obtaining community resources is to demand rights. In fact, the first document on SBJN’s website is a “birth justice bill of rights.” According to that document, “mamas” have the right to know their history and to use it to enforce codes of conduct on others. Right number 7, for example, to “care for all my identities,” means providers should only use a patient’s preferred gender pronouns. Right number 10, to “respect my family structure,” asserts that the nuclear family is a social construct, such that even the line on a typical intake form for filling in the name of a baby’s father is too exclusive; instead, people should be asked “what their family structures look like.”⁸ Amani suggests that women bring the SBJN bill of rights to their provider and have those rights incorporated into their birthing plans. This will result in abnormal gender categories and nonexistent intersectional categories being written into the forms and legal documents surrounding birth.

Finally, the birth justice movement has redefined the facts and logic of birth. The natural process of birth is such that female physi-



ogy is required for it to happen. In other words, only women can actually give birth. The illogic of the social justice birthing model is evident in its claim that women living as men can also “birth”—i.e., that giving birth can also be a masculine activity.

Fighting for Natural Motherhood

Defining being a “mama” by virtue of membership in a racial or sexual minority group will have severe consequences on society. Under this model, the authority for placing just value on the human condition devolves to the state and the language it chooses to use. Natural motherhood, by contrast, occurs in the context of the traditional family, wherein a woman exercises charity by caring for her own children and wherein she may extend that charity to the wider society through such works as adoption, orphan care, or evangelizing children. Natural motherhood is designed by God to magnify tasks and persons that society views as “casual and small,” and through them, to reveal himself. It is thus a far more powerful example of caring for the mar-

ginalized than any social justice program could hope for.

I eventually did recover from thinking that not having experienced childbirth myself was to blame for my normal parenting struggles. A friend once told me, “You know, to her you really are mom.” This is the big secret that many in the birth justice movement want to keep hidden: that being a mother by nature or by grace really is enough. Women should be wary of any movement that exploits the difficulties, risks, and humanity of being a mother. They should therefore be very wary of Forward Together and the birth justice movement. ☹

Notes

1. <https://mamasday.org>.
2. <https://southernbirthjustice.org/birth-justice>.
3. mamasday.org/about.
4. <https://womenintheworld.org/solutions/entry/forward-together>.
5. cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/disparities-pregnancy-related-deaths/infographic.html. Cited, e.g., here: <https://blackmamasmatter.org/bmhc-2021>.
6. See the Mission Statement and Doula Mentorship descriptions at <https://southernbirthjustice.org>.
7. <http://narm.org/news/midwife-spotlight-tribute-to-the-life-and-legacy-of-claudia-booker>.
8. See “Birth Advocacy, Part 1 of 3,” at youtube.com/watch?v=QKSjOFT3The, time index 21:44 and following.



How the Woke Stole Tolerance

On Dr. Seuss & the Absurd Cancellation of His Liberal Anti-Racism

by Robin Phillips

Earlier this year, when the left waxed woke until six of Dr. Seuss's books were withdrawn from print, and the right went into predictable paroxysms of rage over "censorship," the really interesting part of the controversy went unnoticed by both sides. The real story is that in the topsy-turvy world of the woke, tolerance has become the new bigotry, and race neutrality has become the new racism.

The strange itinerary that brought the popular children's author Dr. Seuss from being an icon of the political left to being considered its enemy is illustrative of the devolution of liberalism itself as it collapses into the successor ideology of wokeism. As the left cannibalizes its own values, equality is being replaced by "equity," tolerance by redistributive "justice," and non-discrimination by bigotry against "oppressor groups."

To understand how Dr. Seuss got caught up in liberalism's strange metamorphosis, we have to dig deeper than examining the six titles that were pulled from stores and libraries, and instead explore what leftists are saying about a comparatively less well-known work, the title story from *The Sneetches and Other Stories*.

The Sneetches: Real Anti-Racism

Dr. Seuss published *The Sneetches and Other Stories* in 1961, at the apex of the civil rights movement. The story "The Sneetches" shows

the absurdity of racism through the struggles of an imaginary community of bird-like creatures called sneetches.

The sneetches are divided between those who have stars on their bellies and those who do not. The star-bellied sneetches exclude and ostracize the plain-bellied sneetches with their own version of Jim Crow laws.

One day a man named Sylvester McMonkey McBean shows up, claiming he can fix the sneetches' problems. He assembles a star-on machine on their beach that, for a small fee, will put stars on the plain-bellied sneetches. But this only makes the star-bellied sneetches concerned that they will become indistinguishable from the others and thus lose their superiority. So McBean brings out a star-off machine so the first group can be different again, and so preserve their special status. As the mark of distinction keeps changing from starred to not-starred, the sneetches race back and forth between the machines, spending all their money in vain efforts to keep up with the group that has

privileged status. At day's end, McBean packs up his machines and leaves, laughing at the silly creatures.

But the sneetches actually learn from their folly. The story ends with them letting go of their prejudices to accept one another regardless of what is or isn't on their bellies.

The significance of this simple story should be obvious, but it may be useful to know some background about its author, and his agenda in writing it.

Dr. Seuss Against the Racists

A native of Massachusetts, "Dr. Seuss," whose real name was Theodor Seuss Geisel (1904–1991), frequently hid a political message behind his goofy illustrations and his "genial rhyming nonsense," as cartoonist and graphic novelist Art Spiegelman described it. During World War II, Seuss worked as a political cartoonist, often taking up controversial issues that other cartoonists wouldn't touch. In a 2019 article commemorating the 115th anniversary of Seuss's birth, Spiegelman told the BBC that Seuss's wartime output "rail[ed] against isolationism, racism, and antisemitism with a conviction and fervor lacking in most other American editorial pages of the period." Seuss's cartoons were "virtually the only editorial cartoons outside the communist and black press that decried the military's Jim Crow policies and Charles Lindbergh's antisemitism."¹

**Did you get that?
Dr. Seuss's story
must be canceled
because of its
message of
acceptance and race
neutrality...
It really does matter
which sneetches
have stars on their
bellies and which
ones do not.**



Dr. Seuss's classic children's works explored many of the same themes as his political cartoons. When he wrote "The Sneetches,"

he was concerned about racism in general, but particularly about antisemitism.

Not surprisingly, "The Sneetches" became a favorite resource among leftists for teaching anti-racism. For instance, Teaching Tolerance, a program of the Southern Poverty Law Center, used the story in a K–5 curriculum designed to teach racial tolerance.

The BBC's commemorative article about Seuss's "radical politics" praised him as an anti-racist and progressive, and specifically mentioned "The Sneetches" for its stance

against discrimination. In his book *Dr. Seuss: American Icon*, Philip Nel echoed the widespread consensus by calling "The Sneetches" an "anti-racism fable," while Seuss enthusiast Charles D. Cohen referred to it as a "groundbreaking diatribe against bigotry."

From Civil Rights to Social Marxism

In short, Dr. Seuss represented the preoccupations of postwar 20th-century liberalism, which found expression in the civil rights movement with its concern for promoting fairness, race neutrality, and anti-discrimination policies.

But even as mid-20th-century civil rights activists were struggling to bring liberal values into mainstream America, Marxist revolutionaries were also engaged in a struggle, hoping to bring the communist revolution to the West. The Christian values in America secured the success of the civil rights movement even as they (for a time) secured the failure of Marxism. But the Marxist revolutionaries didn't

go away; they simply changed their strategy.

Instead of focusing on redistributing wealth from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, mid-20th-century Marxists created an ideology for redistributing cultural capital from the oppressors to the oppressed. Instead of mobilizing workers to take over factories, they mobilized oppressed groups to take over the institutions, and to use institutions to alter values imperceptibly. This Marxism 2.0 is often referred to as social Marxism.

From Social Marxism to Wokeism

Throughout the 20th century, social Marxism was limited to the polysyllabic erudition of intellectuals associated with the Frankfurt School, or in the output of philosophers subscribing to Critical Theory. However, by appropriating the language of the civil rights movement, even while inverting its basic values, these activists gradually succeeded in mainstreaming their ideas in popular culture.

Now, in the 21st century, the Marxists' cultural revolution has finally arrived, and it has a name: wokeism.

Wokeism is a crude, populist version of social Marxism with its emphasis on redistributing power from oppressors to victims. Wokeism seeks to elevate groups with victim status even if this means discriminating against other groups. Such discrimination is justified in the interest of balancing out historic oppression. Activist Ibram X. Kendi, director of the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University, expressed this idea when he wrote, "the only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination." Meanwhile the view of Chief Justice John Roberts, who wrote in 2007 that "the way to stop discrimination

based on race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race," is dismissed as bigotry, a hangover from America's racist past.

Under the influence of such ideas, once-liberal institutions have been quietly rewriting their creeds and even the names of their bodies, replacing the terms "equality" and "tolerance" with "equity" and "justice," replacing the concept of "equality of opportunity" with "equality of outcome," and finally agitating for *inequality* of outcome in the interest of elevating favored groups and bringing down oppressor groups.



How Acceptance Became the New Bigotry

As liberalism has collapsed into wokeism, the story "The Sneetches" has been recast as racist precisely because of its message of acceptance. Teaching Tolerance decided to stop using "The Sneetches" to combat racism and explained why on its website. Referencing a study that purported to find "white supremacy" and "racism" in Seuss's corpus, Teaching Tolerance asserted that the problem with "The Sneetches" is precisely its message of acceptance:

The solution to the story's conflict is that the Plain-Belly Sneetches and Star-Bellied Sneetches simply get confused as to who is oppressed. As a result, they accept one another. This message of "acceptance" does not acknowledge structural power imbalances. It doesn't address the idea that historical narratives impact present-day power structures. And instead of

encouraging young readers to recognize and take action against injustice, the story promotes a race-neutral approach.²

Did you get that? Dr. Seuss's story must be canceled *because of its message of acceptance and race neutrality*. The study alleging racism in Dr. Seuss adds, "In reality, not only is not seeing race not possible, it should not be something children are encouraged to aspire to."³ This is an extraordinary admission, since it posits that even if race neutrality were possible, it would not be desirable. It really *does* matter which sneetches have stars on their bellies and which ones do not.

We Are All Sneetches Now

And what happened to the organization Teaching Tolerance, which previously used "The Sneetches" to teach non-discrimination? Now that it is taking an explicitly anti-white stance, it has removed the term "tolerance" from its name and instead calls itself "Learning for Justice."

The irony could not be more acute, since these types of ideological reversals are exactly the situation Dr. Seuss describes in "The Sneetches." Like the sneetches, who constantly changed the criteria for determining privilege, wokeism continually changes the parameters of what constitutes oppression. In the world of the woke, acceptance is now recast as racism, race neutrality as white supremacy, and tolerance as bigotry.

The absurd reality Dr. Seuss warned about in "The Sneetches" has arrived, and it is our reality. We are the Sneetches. ☹

Notes

1. [bbc.com/culture/article/20190301-the-surprisingly-radical-politics-of-dr-seuss](https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20190301-the-surprisingly-radical-politics-of-dr-seuss).
2. learningforjustice.org/magazine/its-time-to-talk-about-dr-seuss.
3. <https://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1050&context=rdyl>.



Unplanned Demography

The Grim Realities of China's Eugenics & Population Control

by Heather Zeiger

In June 2021, the Chinese government announced that couples are now allowed to have three children, a step up from its two-child policy enacted in 2015 and its one-child policy enacted in 1980. This comes in response to China's latest census, which shows a continuing decline in birthrates. The census data showed a fertility rate in China of 1.3 children per woman in 2020, in line with the trends from previous years. That may be compared to 1.36 children per woman in Japan in 2019 and 1.7 children per woman in the U.S. in 2019.¹

Most advanced societies' birthrates ebb and flow, usually in connection to changing demographics and socio-economic factors. For example, the birthrate in the U.S. decreased during the Great Depression but increased after World War II, the so-called baby boom. It decreased again in the 1970s, increased somewhat during the 1990s' tech boom, and started decreasing again after 2008. Many other developed countries have seen similar trends, with a gradual drift toward lower birthrates as factors such as child mortality and urbanization influence the number of children.

However, China's decreasing birthrate and increasing elderly population are more acute and precipitous than those in the U.S. and even in Japan, and they speak to a looming demographic crisis in the country. The severity of the problem is due to the population control measures taken by the Communist Party of China (CCP), some of which pre-date the party's one-child policy instituted forty years ago.

CHINA'S FUTURE WORKFORCE

In both the U.S. and China, there was a baby boom in the 1950s and 1960s. If we look at the subsequent generations in both countries, we can see how China's heavy-handed population control methods affected its population.

Currently in the U.S., the number of 15-to-25-year-olds is 100 percent of the number of 45-to-55-year-olds. In other words, for every person in the 45-to-55 age range, there is a person in the 15-to-25 age range. So, in 10 to 20 years, when members of the former group hit retirement age, they will be replaced by about the same number of younger people moving into the prime of their careers and raising families of their own.

In Japan, where the average age skews older, the number of 15-to-25-year-olds equals only 79 percent of 45-to-55-year-olds. In China, the percentage is even worse, at 72 percent. This means that, in 10 to 20 years, when those currently 45-to-55 years old retire, China will not have enough people to re-supply its workforce. This in turn will hamper the CCP's long-term goals



A mural in a Guangzhou street for China's "one child" policy

of achieving technological and economic supremacy, not to mention military predominance. Some demographers project that by 2100, China's population will be only half of its current 1.41 billion.²

The U.S. birthrate has remained steady largely because of immigrant populations. The U.S. takes in more immigrants than any other country, while China and Japan have historically been insular countries. According to 2017 data, 15 percent of the U.S. population was born in another country, but 23 percent of all births that year were to immigrant women. For many years, the largest number of immigrant births were to women from Mexico, but their numbers have decreased recently. In 2018 there were more immigrants from Asian countries, especially China and India, than from Mexico and Latin America, and consequently, Asian immigrant births made up more than half of all immigrant births in the U.S. that year. According to Pew Research, the largest number of new immigrants to the U.S. in 2018 came from China, at 149,000.³ China, however, is not receiving nearly as many immigrants, further diminishing its own population numbers. To add insult to injury, Chinese millionaires, who can afford to have more children, are migrating from China to other countries, such as Australia, where they can protect their wealth.⁴

China's four-decades-long one-child policy has also resulted in an over-abundance of men. Natural birth patterns result in a sex ratio of about 104 boys born for every 100 girls born. This is a remarkably stable ratio; therefore, when a population has anything above 107 boys for every 100 girls, some large-scale, deliberate action must account for the disparity, such as sex-selective abortion or pre-implantation screening of IVF embryos to favor boys. The unregistered adoption of girls or under-reporting of the birth of girls may also occur, though that would mean the official figures are inaccurate.

As of 2020, China officially has about 113 boys born for every 100 girls. The age group with the most-skewed sex ratio is 10-to-14-year-olds, among whom there are over 116 boys for every 100 girls.⁵ Other sources say the disparity is even greater, giving a ratio of 120 boys for every 100 girls, though the numbers vary by region.⁶

When the CCP announced its three-child policy, young people responded negatively, with some saying they couldn't have three children if they wanted to. Northwestern University professor Nancy Qian, a native of Shanghai, says state-level control of the birthrate will not solve China's underlying demographic problems. She points to the cost of living in China, which is higher than in any other country at

the same income level, as well as to dwindling job opportunities for university graduates. Additionally, because pensions are limited in China, older people are dependent on their adult children for financial support, but since many of the latter are only children—thanks to the one-child policy—they do not have siblings to help share in the cost of caregiving. That means one working-age couple may be supporting a child and as many as four parents.

Another factor is the urban/rural divide in China. Birthrates are higher in rural areas where the cost of living is lower, but rural people also have worse healthcare and lower life expectancies, which incentivizes many young people to move to the cities.⁷

Qian cites educational levels as another example of the urban/rural divide.

From 2010 to 2012, the percentages of urban enrollment in middle school, high school,

and college were 100, 63, and 54, respectively.

During the same period, rural enrollment was at only 70 percent for middle school, and a meager 3 and 2 percent, respectively, for high school and college.

When the CCP announced its three-child policy, young people responded negatively, with some saying they couldn't have three children if they wanted to.

HISTORY OF CONTROLLING FAMILY SIZE

Sociologists Wang Feng and Yong Cai point out that population control is a "pillar of the Chinese Communist Party's monumental social engineering project." Mao considered a large population an asset until the 1970s, when overpopulation became a concern in many countries because of medical advances that decreased mortality rates. Additionally, people in China were incentivized to have more children because of rationing rules within the socialist system. Other than the years of the Great Chinese Famine (1959–1961), mid-century China saw much higher birthrates and lower death rates, leading to a burgeoning population.⁸

At the same time, however, China also experienced economic crises, for which it became convenient to blame over-population rather than poor

government policies or the failure of the socialist system. So the Chinese authorities responded by enacting a one-child policy in 1980 that remained in effect until 2015, when people were allowed to have two children. However, birthrates increased only moderately in 2016, then continued to decline.

Many people within China, particularly local government officials in China's northeast "rust belt," have called on the national government to lift all birth restrictions as soon as possible to avoid even worse outcomes. But Wang Feng and Yong Cai say that this will probably not happen because "lifting controls over births would be, for the Chinese Communist Party, a tacit admission that its state policies have failed." Instead, the CCP has layered new policies on top of its failed older ones.

However, sources told the *Wall Street Journal* that the Chinese government is considering eliminating birth restrictions by 2025, when the party's current five-year plan ends. Those sources speculate that the birth policies will be lifted even sooner in provinces with exceptionally low birthrates, such as Heilongjiang and Jilin, where people were allowed to have a third child in 2016.⁹ Yet others say that the CCP will never give up control because the government only wants *certain* Chinese citizens to have more children, but not others.

UYGHURS & OTHER MINORITIES EXCLUDED

While the Chinese government is encouraging middle- and upper-class Han Chinese couples to have more children, the birthrate in areas where many Uyghurs and other minorities live has declined even more drastically. In *Salvo* 55 ("Eugenicide"), I wrote about Uyghur women being forcibly sterilized or inserted with IUDs as a punishment for having had too many children or having a second child within four years of the first.

The Australian Strategy Policy Institute (ASPI) analyzed Chinese government statistics dated between 2017 and 2019 and found that the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China has experienced the sharpest decline in birthrates ever seen in the 71 years that the United Nations has been recording global fertility data—sharper even than the declines resulting from the Rwandan genocide and the Syrian civil war. Moreover, the birthrate decline in Xinjiang is greater than that seen in the rest of China during the entire time the one-child policy was in effect.



Chinese mothers hold babies in Ganzhou, Jiangxi, China

From 2017 to 2019, birthrates in regions with large numbers of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other largely Muslim ethnic minorities decreased by 43.7 percent. The ASPI also unearthed "government notices showing that Xinjiang officials are being given quotas to lower birthrates, with punishments meted out to those who failed to meet family planning targets. A target set in one heavily Uyghur county is lower than the birthrate of South Korea, the lowest in the world at 0.92 in 2019."¹⁰

History has shown the catastrophic consequences of state-sanctioned "breeding" (and suppression) of human beings. No matter how many children it has or hasn't allowed, the CCP's population policies, as well as its repression of China's minorities, are eugenics in all but name. ☹

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Babies Bumped

Learning from the Surprising Baby Bust of 2020

by Nicole M. King

In the early days of the Covid pandemic, jokes about a coming baby boom were common. What would be more natural, many thought, than for couples now stuck at home together to do what couples have always done? How many new little bundles of joy would the United States expect to see in nine months?

Nine months and more have come and gone, and instead of a boom, most reports are now indicating a continued “baby bust.” Official birth data from the final months of 2020 indicate that there were nearly 40,000 “missing births” in the U.S. last year, according to one Brookings Institution estimate.¹ To obtain this number, the researchers first compared fertility rates in the final quarter of 2019 to those in the final quarter of 2020, and then took into account that American birthrates have been falling

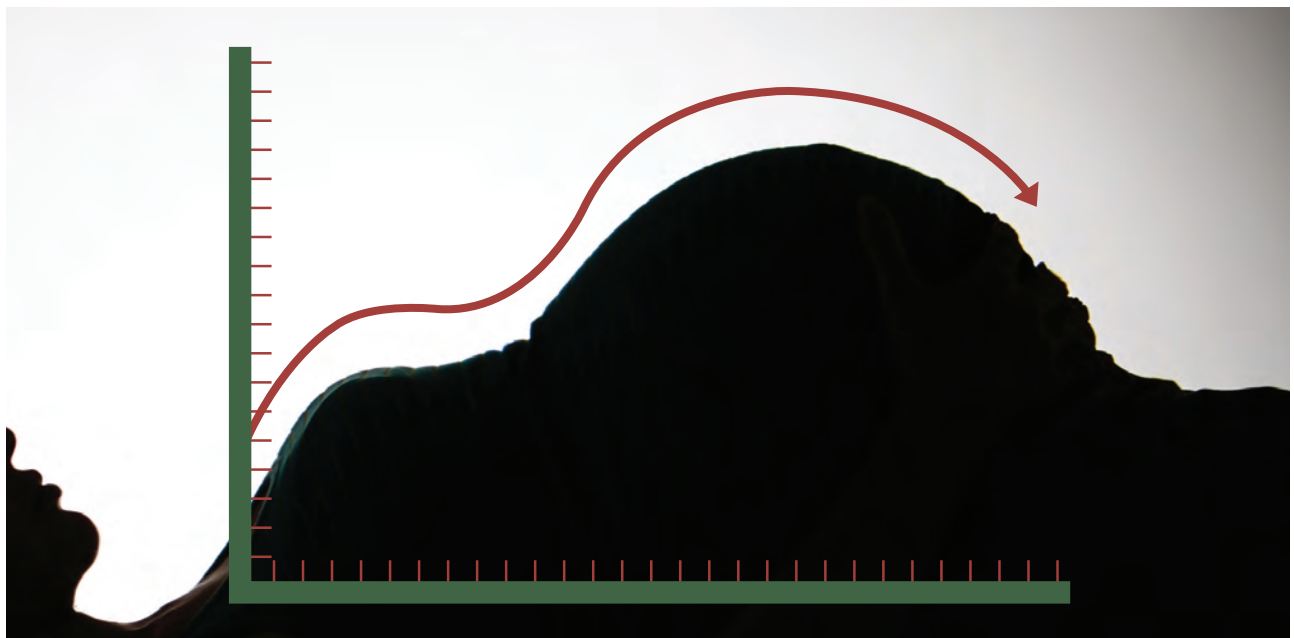
steadily for some decades now. Assuming a gradual rate of decline, the researchers estimated that there should have been an “extra” dip of 4.3 percent in 2020 over 2019. But the actual decline was twice as large, 8.6 percent.

A corresponding CBS story reported similar news. As of March 3, 2021, health departments in roughly half of the United States were reporting a drop in births of 7 percent for the month of December—about nine months after the first lockdowns began.² Reports also indicate that the U.S. birthrate dropped last year to its lowest point in over a century.³

The birthrate decline is not unique to the United States. A remarkable *Lancet* article from last year predicted that the global population was set to peak at 9.73 billion in 2064, and then begin falling—rapidly. By 2100, according to *The Lancet's* predictions, the world's population will already have fallen by a billion people.⁴

LOOMING RAMIFICATIONS

These rate declines matter, according to the experts. Because developed societies have gotten better and better at keeping people alive, there have naturally been huge increases in the numbers of



elderly people. As demographer Dowell Myers of the University of Southern California told CBS, “We need to have enough working-age people to carry the load of these seniors, who deserve their retirement, they deserve all their entitlements, and they’re gonna live out another 30 years. . . . Nobody in the history of the globe has had so many older people to deal with.” As nations continue to pay out entitlements to their older citizens while having fewer and fewer working-age adults available to contribute to their support, serious economic problems loom—some even predict economic collapse. As a result, countries like Japan and China have begun aggressive government PR campaigns to get couples to have more babies.

What are the reasons for the coming population crash? Though theories differ, they don’t necessarily cancel each other out. In the U.S., suggested reasons for declining birthrates include skyrocketing housing and education costs, more women in the workforce, not enough governmental support for families, a delay in the age of first childbirth, and growing uncertainty about the future (especially in the year of a global pandemic). Some Asian countries, like China, are now seeing the results of decades-long, government-enforced depopulation programs. Others, like Japan, are witnessing the pinch that a booming economy and ultra-competitive workplace have put on young men and women alike.

FAITH & FEAR

There is something to be said for all of these reasons. But I’m going to posit another theory, one that may well underlie all the others: a global loss of faith. In a recent essay in *Foreign Affairs*, the late Ronald Inglehart, founder of the World Values Survey, argues for the pertinence of what he calls “the global decline in religion.”⁵ Since 2007, Inglehart maintains, religiosity has dropped in all but five of the 49 countries he studied—in both developed and developing nations alike.

Inglehart views this decline as a natural result of modernization and increased physical and financial security. He summarizes his argument thus: “As societies develop from agrarian to industrial to knowledge-based, growing existential security tends to reduce the importance of religion in people’s lives, and people become less obedient to traditional religious leaders and institutions.” On this view, the world is less afraid, and therefore needs (or thinks it needs) religion less. Faith is perceived as some sort of emotional crutch, useful for people when death and disease run rampant, but no longer necessary when

technological and medical advances have made life easier and more secure.

Alas, what if Inglehart has it backward? What if it was faith in God that kept fear at bay for previous generations, allowing them to pursue occupations and families even during times of great uncertainty? What if belief in God’s sovereignty, and the knowledge that this earth is not our true home, gave a sense of purpose and deep joy to man for millennia? What if it was this joy that allowed parents to find meaning in their daily toils, to see beauty and sanctity in life and family, and to not allow setbacks like hard economic times or even sickness to steal their peace?

The baby bust of 2020–2021 may have much to teach us about our own human frailty, and about our need for God to save us. ☉

“Nobody in the history of the globe has had so many older people to deal with.” As nations continue to pay out entitlements to their older citizens while having fewer and fewer working-age adults available to contribute to their support, serious economic problems loom—some even predict economic collapse.

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Social-Justifying the Means

The Move from Equality to Equity Invites Tyranny

by **Regis Nicoll**

“Equality,” as understood in classical liberalism, is the state in which all persons, regardless of race, class, sex, religion, or ethnicity, are treated equally as citizens. Derived from the uniquely Christian conviction that “all men are created equal,” *equality* was the battleground over which the campaigns for abolition, emancipation, women’s suffrage, and civil rights were fought and won.

But with the rise of progressivism over the last half-century, the goal of social change shifted from *equality* to *equity*. Whereas equality is about equal treatment and opportunity, equity is about equal outcomes, which, contrary to the principles of liberalism, require the *unequal* treatment of persons according to race, class, sex, religion, ethnicity, and, now, sexual orientation and gender identity.

As Nobel economist F. A. Hayek once explained to William F. Buckley, “To make people equal a goal of governmental policy would force government to treat people very unequally indeed.”¹

Fighting Discrimination with Discrimination

In *California v. Bakke* (1978), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that while *racial quotas* were unconstitutional in college admissions, *affirmative action*, whereby “significant but not determinative weight” is given to race, was not. In defense of that decision, Justice Harry Blackmun opined, “In order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently.” Critical race theorist Ibram X. Kendi agrees.

In his book *How to Be an Antiracist*, Kendi argues that “the only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.”

If you’re a benighted soul who was taught that “two wrongs don’t make a right,” Kendi wants to educate you. “Racist power,” you see, “has transform[ed] the



Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders, August 28, 1963

In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that while *racial quotas* were unconstitutional in college admissions, *affirmative action* was not. In defense of that decision, Justice Harry Blackmun opined, “In order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently.” Critical race theorist Ibram X. Kendi agrees.

act of discriminating on the basis of race into an inherently racist act.” But if racial discrimination “is creating equity, then it is antiracist,” not racist. Got it?

Evidently, Gary Garrels didn’t. Garrels was a senior curator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art until public pressure led to his resignation. His crime? While affirming continued commitment to diversity in art collections, Garrels refused to discriminate against white artists by banning their acquisitions.

Sadly, this ends-justifies-the-means remedy is catching on. A few more examples:

- » In June 2020, Adidas and Google announced that 30 percent of new positions would be filled with “underrepresented” groups by 2025.
- » In September 2020, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences rolled out “representation and inclusion” criteria that future movies would have to meet to be eligible for the Best Picture Oscar. The new standards require representation of racial, ethnic, LGBT, and other minority groups, not only in the cast (in both leading and minor roles) but also on the creative and production teams, in the subject matter and storyline, and in the way films are marketed.
- » In December 2020, thirty-seven companies pledged to cumulatively hire one million black Americans over the next ten years.
- » In May 2021, Chicago mayor Lori Lightfoot announced that she would only grant one-on-one interviews to journalists of color.
- » In June 2021, up to 13,000 non-white farmers received debt forgiveness on USDA loans, plus a 20-percent payout to cover the tax burden on that benefit.



Call it what you will—“affirmative action,” “inclusion,” “diversity,” “representation,” whatever—all these measures are instances of privileging certain races over others, thus of using racial discrimination to fight racial discrimination, just as Kendi demands.

Ironically, two years before *California v. Bakke*, the Supreme Court ruled that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects whites against discrimination the same as it does blacks. (The majority opinion was written by none other than Justice Thurgood Marshall, the country’s first black justice.) While affirmative action was not the subject of that case, the ruling signified that “ends-justifies-the-means” social justice is no justice at all.

Two Visions of Justice

In the classical understanding, *justice* is giving people what is owed them, without bias or favoritism, out of a cultivated² sense of fairness (e.g., an employee is owed a fair wage by his employer; an accused criminal is owed a fair trial by a court, a child is owed the protection and care of his parents).

[The welfare programs of the Great Society subsidized sex without consequences, marriage, and homes without fathers, resulting in large increases in single-parent homes and out-of-wedlock births—conditions strongly correlated to poverty, crime, and

By contrast, *social justice* is giving certain “groups” what is allegedly owed them by other “groups” through the force of law and/or social and economic pressure. However, instead of achieving justice, social justice movements tend to create more or different types of injustice. For instance:

- » Progressive tax and income redistribution policies were intended to lift people out of poverty but instead created a subculture of idleness, dependence, and victimization among the people they were supposed to help.
- » The welfare programs of the Great Society subsidized sex without consequences, procreation without marriage, and homes without fathers, resulting in large increases in single-parent homes, fatherless families, and out-of-wedlock births—conditions strongly correlated to poverty, crime, and other negative outcomes.

» *Roe v. Wade*, which putatively leveled the playing field for women with respect to sexual freedom, did so at the price of denying the unborn their natural right to life.

The impact of these policies on the black community has been staggeringly disproportionate. Consider: prior to 1960, two-parent households were the norm in black families, and the rates of out-of-wedlock births and crime were on par with those of whites.³ Today among blacks, fatherless homes are the norm, and illegitimate births and *per capita* violent crimes are three times greater than among whites.⁴ What’s more, black babies account for nearly 40 percent of the 1.2 million annual abortions in the U.S.⁵ Over the last 45 years, that’s 25 million black artists, poets, scientists, teachers, statesmen, businessmen, doctors, engineers, and others whose lives were cut short before they could take their first breath.

Rushing to Reparations

Recently, there has been a renewed push for so-called monetary reparations, something that, ever since the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, has been proposed now and again as a form of redress for slavery.

When originally proposed, reparations were intended for the direct victims of slavery, i.e., former slaves and their families, but today they are proposed not just for the direct descendants of slaves, but for everyone in the black community, in order to make up for racist practices deemed responsible for the black-white wealth gap.

Even apart from the difficulty of tracing someone’s ancestry back to an actual slave, there is the even greater problem of determining the monetary value of wrongs committed 150 and more years ago. Any figure one came up with would be arbitrary at best, and would provoke contention and criticism on all sides. What,



1960s family, Chicago

quences, procreation without
-parent homes, fatherless families,
me, and other negative outcomes.



for instance, would be done about biracial people (like Barack Obama) or about those whose ancestors were slave owners in this country, or whose ancestors were slave owners or slave traders in their native lands? But principally, what's the moral justification for taking money from people who had no part in antebellum slavery and giving it to those who were not its victims?

Those difficulties notwithstanding, last June, the mayors of eleven U.S. cities, from sprawling Los Angeles to tiny Tullahassee, Oklahoma (pop. 200), pledged to pay reparations for slavery. As one mayor explained, "We need decisive action to address the racial wealth gap holding communities back across our country." The "decisive action" decided upon in Evanston, Illinois, was to award \$400,000 to "eligible black households," part of a pledge to spend \$10,000,000 over the next ten years.⁶

While such measures may assuage black poverty for a time, it is not likely to present a long-term solution. The "rags-to-riches-to-rags" stories of lottery winners demonstrates that not all poor people—black or white—are poor simply because they lack wealth; many are poor because they make poor choices.

The upshot is that money and opportunity are not sufficient to keep people out of poverty if they have a faulty view of the world, life, and human flourishing. Without a worldview that engenders wholesome values, prudence, and good judgment, the "suddenly rich" are likely to be drawn back into the orbit of dependence by unwise choices.

Freedom or Tyranny?

In his book *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth*, Thaddeus J. Williams points out that "different people with different priorities making different choices will experience different outcomes." These "different outcomes are the price of freedom," he writes, while, conversely, "tyranny is the price for equal outcomes."



Consider those "eligible black households" in Evanston, Illinois. If they do not share the same value system, economic equity will last among them only until each household starts choosing how to spend its windfall. With each choice made by each household, disparity will grow until someone again complains of "inequity." At which point, there will again be a decision to make: Do we want freedom or "equity"?

If we choose the former, we will be obliged to respect the value system of our neighbor even if it results in inequity. If the latter, we will be obliged to accept the value system of the state at the cost of liberty and, if the statist regimes of the twentieth century are any guide, consequences up to and including re-education camps, gulags, and mass graves. ☉

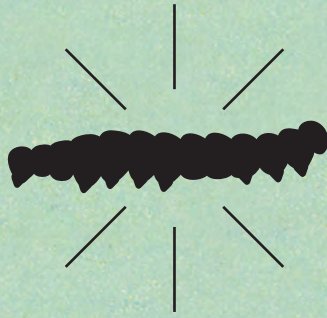
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SALVO #58



Me



Another Severe Challenge to Darwinian Evolution

by Tom & Elizabeth Siewert

tamorphosis

Classical evolutionary theory describes how the diversity of plants and animals that we see today developed gradually over time in form and function from a single universal common ancestor. In his book, *On the Origin of the Species*, Charles Darwin reasoned that, just as mankind can develop desirable traits in domestic plants and animals by selectively breeding for these traits, nature can develop desirable traits by a similar process (albeit, undirected), which he called “natural selection” acting on random variation. The key point is that each step needs to provide some increased survival benefit for the individual, or there is no reason to retain it for future generations.

We need to realize that the word *evolution* by itself has a range of definitions. Colloquially, we speak about a situation “evolving.” Frequently, shifts within an existing species’ population that are due to environmental changes are referred to as examples of evolution (e.g., peppered moths). A more expanded understanding of the word is the idea that one species can actually morph into a new, closely related

species over many generations (e.g., brown bears and polar bears). The most extreme definition of evolution is Darwin’s theory, where he states that all the varieties of plants and animals are descended from a single primordial cell by way of an undirected, incremental process.

The first few of these definitions are generally accepted, but the last one is still subject to some controversy, simply because there are large gaps in the data, and some findings don’t seem to fit the existing models and descriptions. That is why research continues.

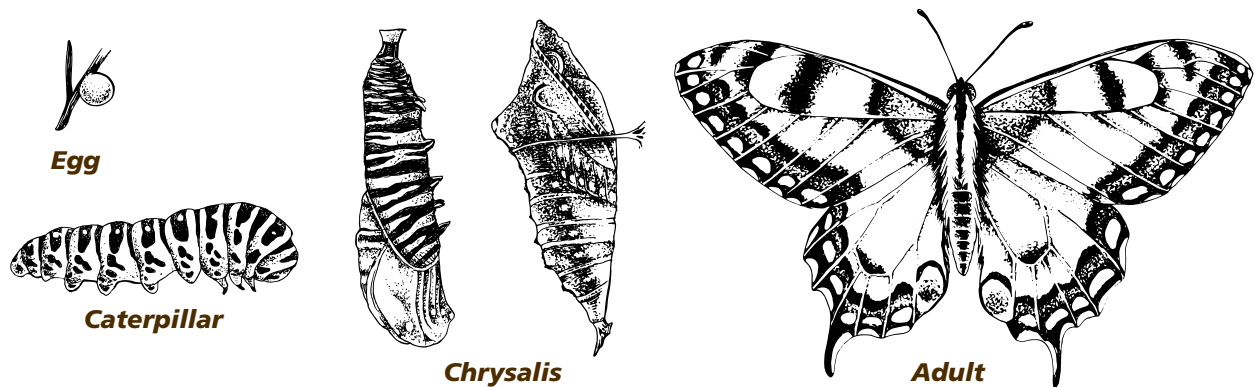
Gradual Development

Researchers in the field of evolutionary development (Evo-Devo) study the developmental processes of various organisms and seek to determine from their findings how various organisms are related and how they evolved. It seems reasonable to imagine that changes during development in an individual life cycle could reflect how a species might evolve into another species over time.

For example, tadpoles slowly grow legs while their tails are absorbed, and their gills disappear as their lungs develop. The development of a tadpole into a frog or toad can be used as an analogy for how a species could evolve from living in a water environment to living in a land environment through long-term evolution over many generations.

Another example is crickets that hatch from eggs. Although newly hatched crickets look similar to adults, they go through several stages of growth, known as “instars,” before reaching full maturity. As they continue to eat, they fill out their exoskeleton until there is no more room. They then

Monarch Metamorphosis



completely shed this exoskeleton (even over complex shapes, such as eyes, mouth parts, and legs), and let the new exoskeleton harden (a matter of days), so they are protected while they continue to grow.

Similarly, grasshoppers progress through a series of instars, usually about six. Unlike crickets, they change incrementally from the initial nymph stage to the adult form, with their wing-buds increasing in size at each stage. After the final molt, the wings are inflated and become fully functional. Here we see the same amazing ability to shed the exoskeleton that crickets have, but with a new level of complexity—gaining the ability to fly.

These developmental processes seem reasonable to many people as analogies to Darwin's evolutionary process. One can imagine the existence of a prehistoric grasshopper without wings, since it would be able to survive by moving about with just its legs, like a cricket. One can then speculate as to how wings might gradually develop, giving the insect a survival advantage by making it even more mobile.

Abrupt Metamorphosis

However, some organisms show *abrupt* changes during their lifecycle, which present significant hurdles to evolutionary theory. The butterfly is one such creature; its change during development is so abrupt that we call it a metamorphosis (see Figure).

The first part of the lifecycle of butterflies is similar to that of crickets and grasshoppers in that they begin as eggs. Then, unlike crickets and grasshoppers, they develop into caterpillars, which go through a series of molts (usually about five), shedding their skin as they grow in size by two or three orders of magnitude (effectively doubling in mass every couple of days over a period of a few weeks). During this stage, their external shape stays basically the same through each instar.

The next stage for butterflies, however, is an abrupt transition, far greater than the transitions experienced by crickets or grasshoppers. Right before beginning its last molt, the caterpillar attaches itself to a twig. Under the skin that

it sheds, there is a different type of skin that hardens to form the chrysalis. Inside this chrysalis (or pupa), the caterpillar completes its transformation into an adult butterfly. This stage involves the simultaneous development of a whole variety of new body parts and shapes—all of which are necessary for a successful butterfly. This process appears much more difficult to explain by an evolutionary framework.

Let's look at the various changes that occur inside the chrysalis, and then decide which ones are essential to the functioning of the butterfly, and how they could form incrementally. We will use the Monarch butterfly as our example, as it is well studied and most people are familiar with it.

The first thing that happens inside the chrysalis is that the caterpillar's body digests itself from the inside out, using some of the same digestive juices it used to digest the leaves it previously ate. It then proceeds to assemble a new body with new structures—amazingly, while it is still alive. The new structures include:

- **A thinner, lighter, multi-segmented body:** Three segments of thorax develop, each of which has a pair of legs attached to it, while the second and third segments each have a pair of wings attached as well.
- **Six long, thin, segmented legs, instead of sixteen stumpy ones:** The hind four

legs grip vegetation and flowers when the butterfly lands on a plant. The two front legs are held close to the body most of the time, but are used to taste-test milkweed before the butterfly lays its eggs.

❏ **Four wings:** Two forewings and two hindwings are attached to the second and third body segments respectively, each with its necessary muscles and a system to inflate them. The butterfly can move these wings either by using muscles in the thorax (for flying) or by flexing the thorax itself (to move the wings out of the way when it is feeding on flowers). Recently it has been shown that each of the larger veins in a butterfly wing contains a central tracheal tube and one or two hemolymph channels; these control temperature and give the two-dimensional wings structure, strength, and support.¹

❏ **Two-part hollow tongue:** The straw-like proboscis is the butterfly's tongue, through which it sucks in nectar and water (instead of chewing leaves) for nourishment. The tongue is formed in two halves and must be assembled after the butterfly leaves the chrysalis. Since the proboscis is very long (sometimes up to 1.5 times the length of the body), it would be in the way and might be damaged when not in use, so it conveniently is able to be curled up.

❏ **A much smaller digestive system,** modified for digesting nectar instead of leaves.

❏ **An improved sense of smell and taste:** While the caterpillar has tiny tentacles near its mouth-parts, which provide some sense of smell, the butterfly's antennae, palpi

(a pair of protrusions on the front of the head), legs, and feet have abundant sensory receptors with which it can locate flowers that have nectar, potential mates (producing pheromones), and milkweed plants where it can lay its eggs.

❏ **An improved sense of sight:** A butterfly's compound eyes are made up of thousands of ommatidia, each of which senses light and images, instead of six pairs of simple eyes that barely detect light versus dark. This allows the butterfly to maneuver effectively at speeds thousands of times faster than a caterpillar.

Which of these structures is not essential for the butterfly to function (and so would not need to appear until a later generation)? Which of these changes might happen first and allow the caterpillar to make the initial step toward developing the capabilities we see in a modern butterfly? We submit that all of them are essential and that none of them appears to be beneficial by itself.

Too Much Change, Too Little Time

You may recognize this problem as one of irreducible complexity, a term coined by Lehigh University biochemist Dr. Michael Behe in his book *Darwin's Black Box* (Simon and Schuster, 1996). As Behe explains, if a system needs *all* its component parts to be in place simultaneously in order to function, there is no pathway for this to occur through a gradual Darwinian process. This is what Behe means by an irreducibly complex system. His specific examples include:

- Blood clotting: a cascade of clotting factors, including calcium ions, twenty-odd proteins, and other factors, all of which must be present for the system to function.
- The bacterial flagellum: a multi-component molecular motor that rotates at speeds up to 100,000 rpm to permit motion.
- Transport mechanisms within the cell: multi-component processing and signaling systems that are used to transport a newly made protein to where it's supposed to go.
- The immune system: another complex system by which the body defends itself against invasive pathogens.
- The production of nucleic acids: these are the building

blocks that make up DNA and RNA and are involved in energy production.

Behe also makes passing references to other cellular mechanisms (DNA replication, photosynthesis, transcription regulation, etc.).

The characteristic that marks all these systems as irreducibly complex is that every single component in the system must be present *at the same time* in order for it to function, just as multiple, simultaneous changes must occur within the chrysalis for the emerging butterfly to survive and function. In the butterfly, all these changes occur within the two-week period it spends inside the chrysalis. The combined probability of these necessary components coming into existence virtually at once is astoundingly low. Even billions of years is not enough time to give all this a reasonable chance of happening by a random process.²

The complexity becomes even greater when we move down to the genetic level and examine the molecular changes that trigger the functional changes we just listed. In the journal *Genetic and Molecular Research*, Shun Yao and others describe the developmental changes in genetic expression in another species of butterfly, the swallowtail butterfly.³ They found 1,723 differences in genetic expression between the caterpillar and chrysalis stages, and 1,162 such differences between the chrysalis and adult butterfly stages. They identified these differences as being related to the changes that occur in the digestion, cuticularization (skin formation in the caterpillar stage), chemoreception (for the sense of smell), wing formation, and other systems. Since mutations are relatively rare (and most would negatively affect the ability of the insect to live), the chance of all of these needed mutations occurring simultaneously, and correctly, is far beyond an astronomical number.

In a previous *Salvo* article,⁴ we reported on the time it would take for ten small proteins to form that would allow a rudimentary eyespot to detect light—a length of time, it turned out, that is far beyond the estimated age of the universe. In other words, it is basically impossible. A calculation of the time it would take for all the necessary genetic changes to occur that would allow a caterpillar to transform into a butterfly would yield a figure far, far greater. In fact, the time span is so incomprehensible that it strains reasonable analogies, making the random development of the necessary changes effectively impossible.

Sheer Cliffs on All Sides

Yet, Richard Dawkins, in his book *Climbing Mount Improbable* (Norton, 1996) suggests a way in which it could be possible. On one side, Mount Improbable, as he calls it, rears straight up from the plain in a sheer cliff face, making its towering summit seem unreachable. But around the other side of the mountain, there are gently inclined meadows, over which one can climb steadily and easily to the



top. The height of the peak does not matter, says Dawkins, so long as you do not try to scale it in a single bound. Locate the mildly sloping path, and the ascent is only as formidable as the next step.

Following this guidance, let's try to imagine a scenario in which the caterpillar could slowly morph into a butterfly through successive "gentle gradients"—first developing wings, perhaps, then longer legs, then a long tongue, and so on until all the butterfly's features are in place. The problem is that no single one of the new features would be retained for succeeding generations of butterflies, since, by itself, the feature would not present a survival advantage. In fact, any of these features, developed singly or even in pairs, would be detrimental to the caterpillar's survival. Can you imagine a caterpillar with a long, straw-like tongue and sixteen stumpy legs?

Thus, we seem to have arrived at a total impasse in trying to find a Darwinian evolutionary path for a butterfly to evolve. It seems as though *this* Mount Improbable has insurmountable cliffs on all sides.

So how *can* these changes occur? The remaining explanation is that the information needed to trigger them was present in the caterpillar from the start. In other words, the butterfly's life cycle was intelligently designed from the beginning. ☺

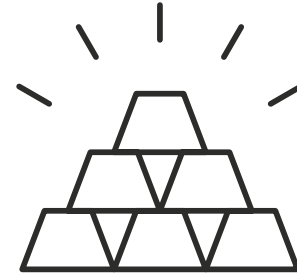
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1. Cheng-Chia Tsai et al. "Physical and behavioral adaptations to prevent overheating of the living wings of butterflies," *Nature Communications* (Jan. 28, 2020): <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-14408-8>.

2. The short video *An Everyday Miracle*, showing the stages in the Monarch's life cycle can be found at: <https://thejohn1010project.com/an-everyday-miracle.html>.

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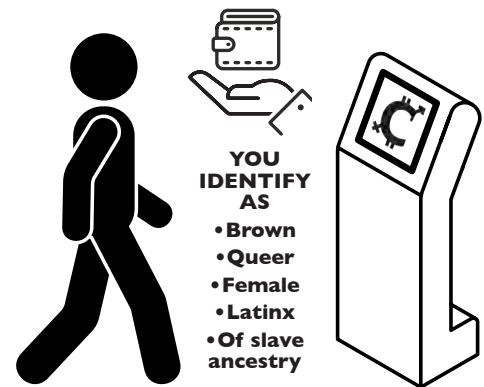
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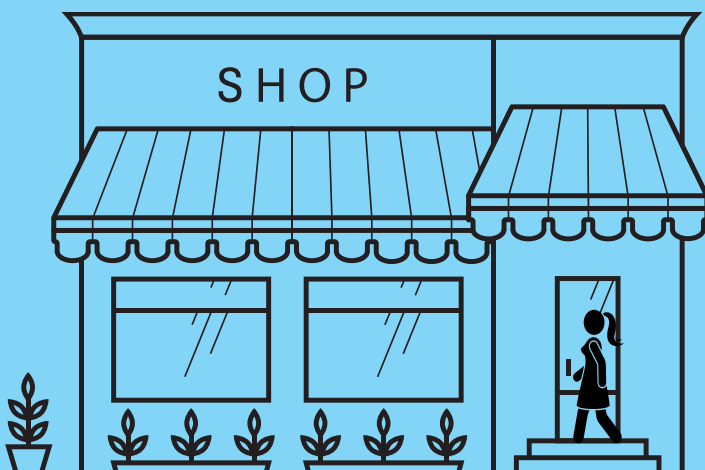
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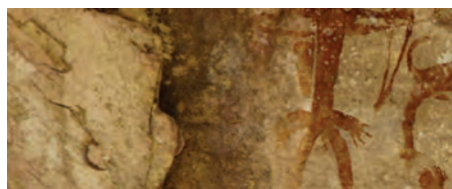
Uncertainties & Systematic Errors in Dating Human Origins

by Hugh Ross

When did humans originate and why does it matter? Is the date consistent with humans arising from common descent or through special creation? Is the scientific date consistent with the biblical date? Crucial to answering these questions is recognizing the scientific errors and their significance.

Establishing a scientific date for the origin of humans is challenging and methods for doing so far from reliable. All the methods involve big statistical uncertainties and even larger systematic errors.

Statistical uncertainties, also known as random errors, refer to lack of precision in making measurements. *Systematic errors* refer to environmental and instrumental factors that could shift *all* the measurements either up or down in value.



Carbon-14 Dating

The most reliable dating method developed for human history is based on carbon-14, a carbon isotope with six protons and eight neutrons (carbon-12 has six of each). This method measures how much time has passed since a living organism or tissue has stopped respiring, drawing carbon molecules from the atmosphere.

Carbon-14's half-life (time for radioactivity to reduce the original isotope quantity to half its value) is $5,715 \pm 30$ years.¹ Dates derived from radioactive decay measurements cease to be reliable when a given sample's age is less than 1/7th or greater than 7 times the half-life. For carbon-14, dates for anything that lived less than 800 years ago or more than 40,000 years ago will be unreliable.

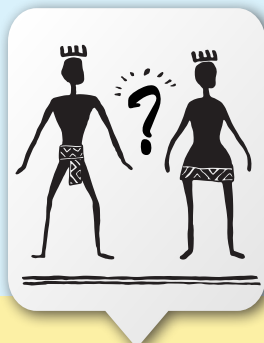
Carbon-14 dating must also account for systematic effects. Carbon-14 is produced in the atmosphere by cosmic rays striking nitrogen-14. During the past 44,000 years, four supernova events have occurred within 360–820 light-years of Earth,² close enough for their cosmic rays to have altered carbon-14 dates, though likely by no more than about 10 percent.

Nitrogen-14 exposed to uranium-235, uranium-238, and thorium-

232 radioisotopes transforms tiny amounts of nitrogen-14 into carbon-14. These radioisotopes explain why some billion-year-old zircons and diamonds have registered carbon-14 ages of only 58,000 years.

An organism's location when alive may also alter the carbon-14 measurement. If it lived at high elevation, it would have been exposed to more cosmic radiation. If it lived underground or under a dense forest canopy, it would have been exposed to less.

Systematic errors in carbon-14 dating can almost always be detected, and their source identified and measured. Therefore, carbon-14 dating, where applicable, is the preferred method. It is the most reliable method, but useful only for remains and artifacts between 800 and 40,000 years old.





山顶洞人石像
Stone Tools from
Upper Cave, China

山顶洞人头骨 (模型)
Skull of Upper Cave Man (Cast)
Late Homo sapiens

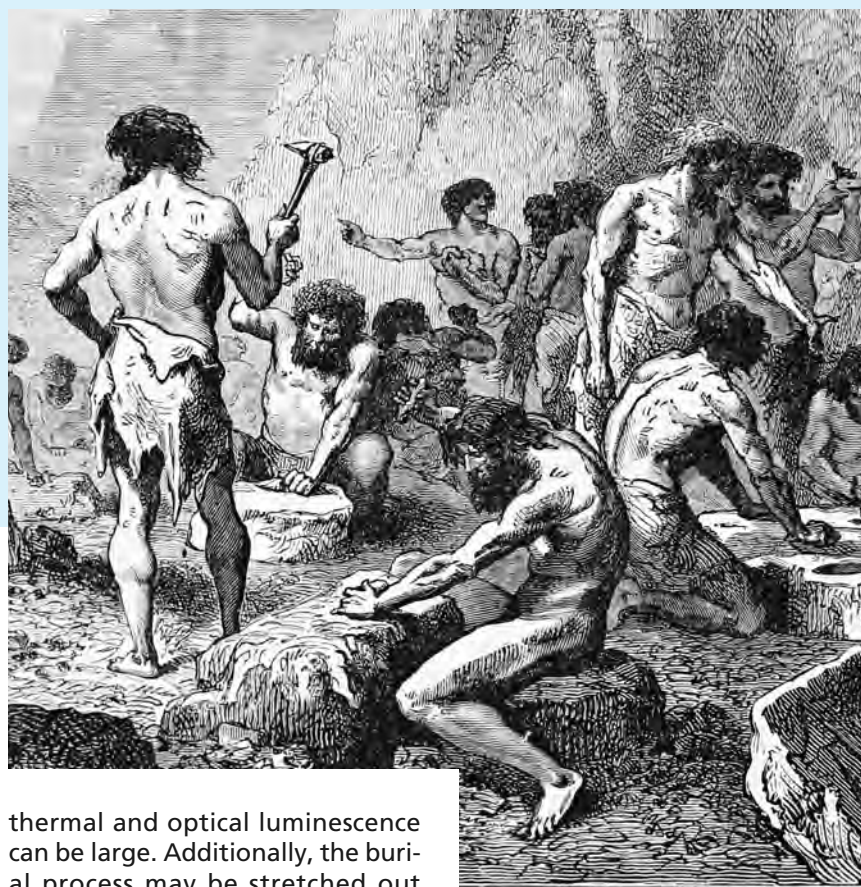
Thermal & Optical Luminescence

Most often, anthropological samples are too old, the carbon is not from once-living tissue, or the carbon comes from disparate sources for use of the carbon-14 method. The most common alternate dating methods measure luminescence, through heat—thermal luminescence—or light—optical luminescence.

Heat and light cause certain chemicals in samples to fluoresce. Thermal and optical luminescence indicate how long a sample has been cut off from heat or light exposure, usually sunlight. Typically, a sample's capacity for fluorescence measures how long it has been buried.

When a crystalline grain, such as quartz, is buried and cut off from sunlight, the radioactive decay of uranium and thorium in surrounding rocks and soil knocks electrons in the crystal out of position. Some of these electrons build up over time. Optical luminescence measures the buildup degree to determine how long ago the crystal was buried.

Because the heat or light intensity before a sample's burial can be high or low, depending on its environment, the systematic errors in



thermal and optical luminescence can be large. Additionally, the burial process may be stretched out over time, rather than occurring immediately, or the burial may have been interrupted or disturbed on occasion.

When using thermal and optical luminescence, researchers date one or more mineral crystals in a proximate artifact, not the organism's remains. One must assume the artifact arrived at its location by its association with one or more humans (not by other means) at approximately the same time. An artifact buried in recent sediment may be moved by several geological processes or by animals—for example, by bears digging into an older sediment layer.

Examples of major systematic errors in thermal and optical luminescence dating occurred with the Jinmium Rock Shelter artifacts in northern Australia. Anthropologists cited thermoluminescence dates of aboriginal artifacts as evidence humans occupied Australia 60,000 years ago.³ A later carbon-14 analysis showed that the oldest artifacts were only 3,000 years old.⁴

This Jinmium artifacts' reassessment does not rule out human occupation in Australia prior to 3,000 years ago. However, it reduces the date estimate by a factor of two. Other Australian sites where both radiocarbon dating and atomic mass spectrometry have been applied yield dates of about 30,000 years ago for human artifacts.⁵

Electron spin resonance, another frequently used method, is a sophisticated version of thermal and optical luminescence methods. It measures the quantity of unpaired electrons in a sample that has been previously exposed to natural radiation (the infrared and visual portion of the electromagnetic spectrum). However, for an accurate age determination, a researcher must know the timing and degree of the sample's past exposure. Thus, electron spin resonance dating is subject to the same systematic errors hampering thermal and optical luminescence dating.

Chemical Precipitation

Another frequently used method examines the relative abundance of uranium and thorium in a sample. This method takes advantage of uranium's solubility and thorium's insolubility in water. The uranium-234 isotope decays into thorium-230 with a half-life of 245,000 years. (Uranium-234 exists despite Earth's 4.567-billion-year age because it is an indirect

decay product of uranium-238, with a half-life of 4.468 billion years.) By determining the ratio of thorium-230 to uranium-234 in a sample, researchers can determine the time since its precipitation—its transition from a dissolved substance into an insoluble solid. But that's *only if* (1) the sample is known to have come entirely from a single, rapid precipitation event, and (2) the sample suffered no significant disturbances or contamination subsequent to the precipitation event. Herein lies the potential for errors.



DNA Dating

The two most familiarly cited tools are mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosomal analysis. All humans' mitochondrial DNA comes exclusively from their mothers. All males' Y-chromosomes come exclusively from their fathers. Therefore, geneticists seek to determine how far back in time the first woman and first man lived, from whom we all descended. They

1. measure the genetic diversity in the present human population,
2. assume mutation rates for mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosomal DNA, and
3. assume an average time between human birth and reproduction in a single generation.

Scientists realize, however, the mutation rate is not the same for all humans in all times and all regions. While certain environmental and social factors are known to alter human mutation rates substantially, a host of other factors have yet to be studied.

Even known environmental and social factors can involve huge uncertainties. Examples include mutations generated by cosmic rays from past supernova events and major solar flares. During the past



10,000 years, no supernova eruptions have occurred closer than 5,000 light-years from Earth.⁶ However, four occurred 22,000–44,000 years ago at distances of 320–820 light-years, and nine more occurred 35,000–115,000 years ago at distances of 350–700 light-years.⁷ Similarly, no major solar flares have blasted Earth during the past 10,000 years, but it seems likely several occurred 10,000–115,000 years ago. Failure to consider just these two types of events suggests published DNA dates for the origin of humans may be much too ancient.

Likewise, assumptions about the average time between birth and reproduction throughout hu-

man history likely are incorrect. Current values, based on widespread birth control and long career-launch times (before childbearing), likely skew the numbers.

From a biblical perspective, when God created Eve, he may have endowed her eggs with a diversity of mitochondrial DNA. In that case, the time *calculated* to have elapsed from the present back to when the first woman lived, based on mitochondrial DNA analysis, would be much greater than the *actual* elapsed time. Similarly, the biblically reported shortening of potential human lifespans after Noah's flood may have involved God's alteration of Y-chromosomal DNA.

Dating Prehuman Hominids & Their Artifacts

Reliable dating methods exist for pre-human artifacts and remains. For example, argon-argon dating and paleomagnetic dating can be

employed reliably on samples ranging from 250,000 years to several million years in age.

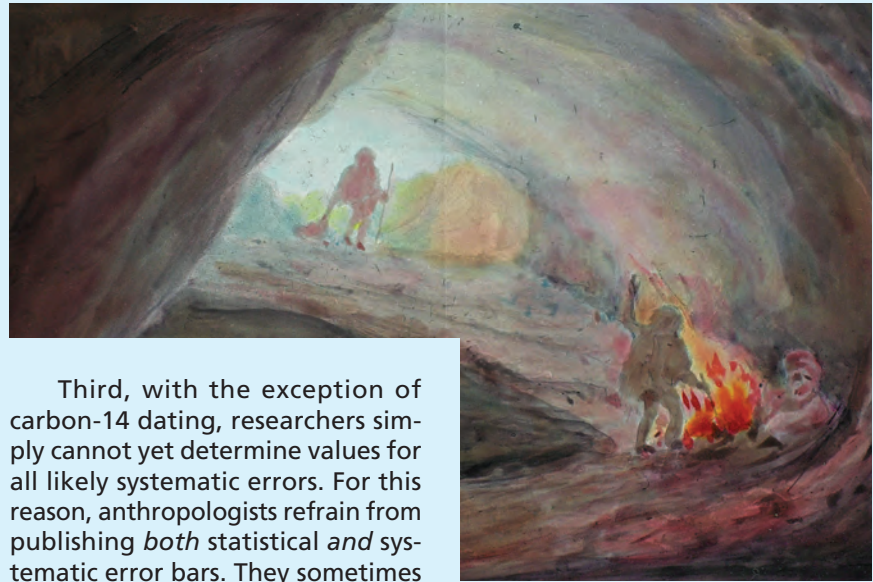
These methods are not entirely free of systematic effects. However, possible errors measure much smaller than those associated with methods used in dating human artifacts. This difference explains why we can place greater confidence in scientific dates for pre-human hominids.



Four Cautions

How, then, should readers evaluate and interpret scientific dates for human origins and/or artifacts attributed to early humans? First, we must beware of edge-of-the-error-bar bias. For example, some journalists and bloggers claim humans date back 200,000 years, based on published calculations that mitochondrial Eve lived $157,000 \pm 40,000$ years ago. The 200,000-year date (outermost edge of the error bar) ignores the given range of 117,000–197,000 years ago.

Second, many published human origins dates acknowledge statistical errors only. Often such errors amount to less than 10 percent of the claimed age. We might look at a small statistical error and conclude the claimed age is trustworthy when, in fact, a systematic error could be $\pm 1,000$ percent.



Third, with the exception of carbon-14 dating, researchers simply cannot yet determine values for all likely systematic errors. For this reason, anthropologists refrain from publishing *both* statistical *and* systematic error bars. They sometimes identify likely systematic effects, but without assigning values. Such researchers are to be commended.

Fourth, systematic effects in age measurements are almost always much larger on the minus side than on the plus side. That is, ages likely are closer to the more recent end of the range. Where systematic effects probably are large, stated ages are

best viewed as approximate upper limits.

An appreciation of how statistical and systematic errors can impact human origins dates calls for tentativeness and humility. For now, determining a precise scientific date for humanity's origin remains elusive. ☹



Notes

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7. Firestone, "Observation of 23 Supernovae."



The Weasel Program

What Hath Darwin to Do with Shakespeare, Richard Dawkins?

by Jonathan Witt

Modern evolutionary theory holds that all life blindly evolved from one or a few single-celled organisms in the distant past. No intelligent design required—or allowed. A significant shortcoming of this idea is that evolutionists can't even show microbes evolving from one form to a fundamentally distinct microbial form, much less point to whole new body plans emerging through a blind process. The theory is primarily based on various inferences and assumptions. That alone shouldn't disqualify the theory, but it does mean we need to take a careful look at the various links in the inferential chain.



For example, evolutionists point to common stretches of DNA among different plant and animal forms and insist that evolutionary common descent is *the* explanation. But common design is also a logical explanation, much as software engineers

might reuse a software module in several different computer programs. Bill Gates famously said DNA is like a computer program, so why not? Is it common descent or common design? The challenge is to study the evidence and suss out clues that would decisively favor one explanation over the other. Unfortunately, many defenders of evolutionary theory prefer instead to settle the issue by ruling the design option out of court ahead of time. Such a tactic should not impress.

Another inference on offer from evolutionists: they argue that computer programs that evolve from simple to complex effectively simulate biological evolution and strongly support evolutionary theory.

That's an intriguing claim, but the only way to know if it holds up to scrutiny is to actually scrutinize it. A good place to begin is with a famous evolution simulation by atheist evolutionist Richard Dawkins. It's sufficiently famous that it has its own *Wikipedia* entry and nickname: "the weasel program." The simulation gradually evolves a string of gibberish letters into a line from Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*: "Methinks it is like a weasel."

Dawkins apparently was inspired to use a line of Shakespeare in the program by the oft-repeated notion that if a bunch of monkeys randomly banged away on typewriters, eventually one of them would

MELDINLS IT

METHINGS IT

METHINKS IT

METHINKS IT

T ISWPRKE Z WECSEL
T ISWLIKE B WECSEL
T IS LIKE I WEASEL
T IS LIKE A WEASEL

reproduce a Shakespearian sonnet. Mathematicians have worked out just how long this would take, and as it turns out, the entire universe would burn out long before any of these industrious primates chanced upon a Shakespearian sonnet. Even getting a complete quatrain out of one of them, even with a typo or three allowed, would be far, far beyond the reach of chance over the course of millions of billions of years.

To Dawkins's credit, he understands that the monkeys would fail. He explains that he uses his computer simulation not to argue for the power of brute chance, as in the typing-monkeys illustration, but for the power of chance-plus-Darwinian-natural-selection.

However, even as an illustration of chance-plus-natural-selection, Dawkins's weasel program founders.

TWO GLARING PROBLEMS

First, on its evolutionary journey from gibberish to the line from Shakespeare, Dawkins's computer simulation passes through and builds from wholly nonsensical and dysfunctional verbal intermediates. That's a big problem because Darwinian natural selection tends to eliminate dysfunctional offspring, favoring the functional over the dysfunctional.

Second, an intelligent designer programmed the computer simulation to aim for a particular distant goal—specifically, the weasel line from *Hamlet*. That's an equally big problem because Darwinian evolution doesn't work toward specific distant goals. It isn't mindful but mindless. It lacks foresight. Dawkins concedes all this in *The Blind Watchmaker*:

Although the monkey/Shakespeare model is useful for explaining the distinction between single-step selection and cumulative selection, it is misleading in important ways.

One of these is that, in each generation of selective "breeding," the mutant "progeny" phrases were judged according to the criterion of resemblance to a distant ideal target, the phrase METHINKS IT IS LIKE A WEASEL. Life isn't like that. Evolution has no long-term goal. There is no long-distance target, no final perfection to serve as a criterion for selection, although human vanity cherishes the absurd notion that our species is the final goal of evolution. In real life, the criterion for selection is always short-term, either simple survival or, more generally, reproductive success.

His candor is refreshing, but then he waves off these shortcomings, claiming his weasel program is only meant as a sort of promissory note for more sophisticated computer simulations soon to come, ones that will properly mimic the Darwinian mechanism while demonstrating how wonderfully productive blind evolution can be.

Some 30-plus years on, we're still waiting. More sophisticated evolution simulations have been rolled out to much fanfare, but as com-

puter scientist Winston Ewert, philosopher and mathematician William Dembski, and others have shown, Avida and similarly bal-lyhooed simulations all possess one or more of three deal-killing flaws: (1) They dramatically oversell how easy it would be for a blind

evolutionary process to move forward without dysfunctional intermediates. (2) They employ an unrealistically enormous number of chance events, far beyond what was available for biological evolution. Or (3) they smuggle in a distant goal for the program to chase, something blind evolution cannot

There's one other big problem with Dawkins's weasel program and argument. To see what I'm talking about, we need a bit more context from Shakespeare's play. . . .

do. These more sophisticated computer simulations may do a better job of disguising their shortcomings than did the weasel program, but the shortcomings remain. (For more on this, check out the Evolutionary Informatics Lab at evoinfo.org.)

METHINKS CONTEXT IS INDISPENSABLE

There's one other big problem with Dawkins's weasel program and argument. To see what I'm talking about, we need a bit more context from Shakespeare's play. Benjamin Wiker and I spend several pages on this in our book *A Meaningful World* (IVP, 2006). What follows is a quick distillation.

The weasel line in *Hamlet* comes in a conversation between Prince Hamlet and Polonius, the king's chief adviser, in Act 3, Scene 2:

Hamlet: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in the shape of a camel?

Polonius: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

Hamlet: Methinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius: It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet: Or like a whale?

Polonius: Very like a whale.

Before Dawkins quotes this passage, he has a bit of fun at the expense of all those unenlightened religious folks who believe in things like a Creator, though Dawkins is rhetorically canny enough to come at the matter sideways.

"Sometimes clouds, through the random kneading and carving of the winds, come to look like familiar objects," he writes. "There is a much published photograph taken by the pilot of a small aeroplane of what looks a bit like the face of Jesus, staring out of the sky. We have all seen clouds that reminded us of something." Dawkins then introduces the Hamlet/Polonius passage and explains that they are commenting on how a passing cloud resembles this or that animal.

The conjunction is hardly unintentional. It's Dawkins's underhanded way of telling us—*Imagining that you see the handiwork of God in the apparent*



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design of animals is almost as silly as imagining that a cloud which resembles Jesus was actually designed to look like Jesus.

The irony is that the *Hamlet* passage actually illustrates exactly the opposite point: namely, the tendency of some to view an intelligent cause as a purely mindless material cause. To see this, we need more context from the play than Dawkins provides.

A DEATH INTELLIGENTLY DESIGNED

At the beginning of the drama, we learn that King Hamlet died recently and that his brother, Claudius, seized the throne before young Prince Hamlet could return home from university. Claudius also married the widowed queen, Hamlet's mother, within a couple of months of the funeral.

Hamlet has a low view of his conniving uncle Claudius, and he's depressed about his father's death and his mother's speedy remarriage. The prince, however, doesn't know the half of it yet. Eventually he discovers that Claudius poisoned King Hamlet so as to steal the throne and take the man's wife. Hamlet's father didn't simply die of some natural malady, as everyone supposed. Claudius murdered him.

What did old King Hamlet's chief adviser, Polonius, do about all this? The man fancies himself a wise and penetrating fellow, yet he remained oblivious to any wrongdoing and quickly aligned himself with the new King Claudius after King Hamlet's death. Polonius also ordered his beautiful daughter, Ophelia, to keep away from Prince Hamlet, being convinced that Hamlet is just toying with her and has no intention of marrying so far beneath him.

So Hamlet dislikes Polonius on two grounds: Polonius has cut Hamlet off from the woman he loves, and he's a clueless court toady who imagines he's wise and discerning.

In the scene quoted above, the two men actually only pretend to think the clouds look like particular animals. What's actually going on here is that Hamlet is feigning madness and using the cover of insanity to expose Polonius as a clueless yes-man. The prince gets Polonius to agree that the cloud looks, first, like a camel, then like a weasel, and then like a whale. In this way Hamlet demonstrates that the sycophantic Polonius will agree to almost anything a royal tells him.

Put yourself in Hamlet's shoes. He desperately needs Polonius's help to prove King Claudius's guilt, but Polonius is too busy currying favor with the new king to suspect the man of a crime. Polonius sees what he wants to see and ignores what is convenient for him to ignore. After all, he's safely ensconced as



Hamlet and Dawkins—er, Polonius

the new king's right-hand man. Why rock the boat?

So we see that the scene and the wider tension between Prince Hamlet and Polonius actually involve Polonius's refusal to see intelligent design where it actually exists—namely, in the designed death, the murder, of old King Hamlet. Polonius attributes the death to wholly natural causes when in fact the king's death was intelligently, if maliciously, designed—that is, it was foul play.

DAWKINS = POLONIUS

There is an arresting parallel here to the issue of biological origins. Richard Dawkins is a modern-day Polonius. Like Polonius, he ignores the evidence of intelligent design, which should be abundantly clear to him.

And the moral of the story, provided we allow ourselves to draw a line so far afield from the original play: Don't be Richard Dawkins. Don't mistake an intelligent cause for a natural one. And don't miss the point by missing the wider context.

Dawkins did this when he misread the point of the Hamlet/Polonius weasel scene, and he does it when he ignores the evidence that not only living cells but our entire living planet, our solar system, and the laws and constants of physics and chemistry are all finely tuned—intelligently designed—to allow for the existence of living things such as camels, weasels, and whales. And scientists and poets into the bargain. ☉

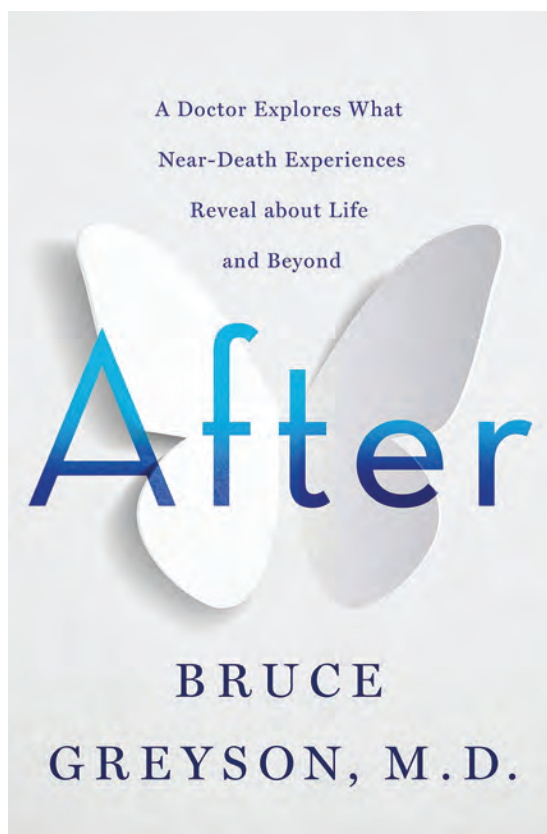


Near-Death Puzzles

A Review of Bruce Greyson's After

by Denyse O'Leary

Psychiatrist Bruce Greyson, professor emeritus at the University of Virginia, tells us that he first started thinking about near-death experiences many decades ago, when a young woman, rescued from suicide, asserted that she had seen a spaghetti stain on his tie during an out-of-body experience. She could not have known that he had gone to considerable pains to conceal the embarrassing mark from his colleagues.



Nothing in his background had prepared him, as a young psychiatrist, for taking seriously the possibility that the mind could be detached from the brain. He grew up with a chemist father who had a great love for science but no metaphysical convictions. But he just could not forget the spaghetti stain episode, and that background prompted him to study near-death experiences (NDEs) from a scientific perspective. He went on to develop the NDE scale for assessing such experiences, a scale that met the standards for professional diagnostics. His new book, *After* (St. Martin's, 2021), is the outcome of a lifetime of study.

A GENUINE SCIENTIFIC PURSUIT

Needless to say, Greyson sometimes found himself in a rather difficult position with his colleagues. But he fought back: "Far from leading us away from science and into superstition, NDE research actually shows that by applying the methods of science to the non-physical aspects of our world, we can describe reality much more accurately than if we limit our science to nothing but physical matter and energy." Having no particular religious convictions, he is willing to entertain the idea that NDEs may be brought on by "physical changes in the brain." But he is also willing



to consider the possibility that “the mind may be able to function independently of the brain.”

We all know which of these two theses would get him in more trouble with the current research establishment. From a generally agnostic perspective, he is prepared to stand behind a number of research findings that would not please materialists.

One such finding is that NDEs are more common than we might have expected (for example, in research studies, 10 percent of people whose hearts stopped reported them). People have NDEs whether or not they believe in them. As we might expect, they use “whatever cultural or religious metaphors they have available in order to describe things that don’t have familiar labels” (p. 47), but many interview subjects simply had difficulty finding words to describe their experiences.

STRIKING TRANSFORMATIVE POWER

NDE experiencers tend to report that time slows down and that their senses are greatly sharpened. “More than 80 percent of the experiencers who’ve participated in my research report having had a sense of being outside their physical bodies,” Greyson writes. He also notes that more than two-thirds

encountered at least one other person, and that many underwent a “life review,” where, for example, they saw their actions from the perspective of others. Almost all became convinced that there is life after death.

They tend to change their lives as a result, generally coming to value relationships much more than possessions. The NDEs that were frightening or distressing tended to be taken as invitations to “turn their lives around,” which included ceasing suicide attempts. Greyson summarizes, “If you take only one thing from this book, I would want you to appreciate the transformative power of these experiences to change people’s lives” (p. 164).

So far, it is encouraging but subjective. However, NDEs do not appear to be wholly subjective.

Significantly, some experiencers can accurately describe their surroundings while clinically dead:

Counseling professor Jan Holden reviewed ninety-three reports of out-of-body perceptions during NDEs. She found that 92 percent were completely accurate, 6 percent contained some error, and only 1 percent were completely erroneous.

The fact that any out-of-body perceptions are accurate should be enough to make us scratch our heads. (p. 72)

Curiously, some experiencers reported meeting recently deceased people who, at the time, were not known to have died. The fact was only discovered later.

“Far from leading us away from science and into superstition, NDE research actually shows that by applying the methods of science to the nonphysical aspects of our world, we can describe reality much more accurately than if we limit our science to nothing but physical matter and energy.”

Verified NDEs, in which the experiencer cites information that is not known or knowable by other means, are a strong argument for the partial independence of the mind from the brain.

GETTING HARDER TO DISCREDIT

Attempts to easily discredit NDEs have not gone as expected because, thanks to modern medicine, many more accounts are available to researchers today than were available in the past. Conclusions can be drawn from large databases. For example, according to clinical research, people with mental problems do *not* have more NDEs than others, nor do epileptics. No one part of the brain is especially active compared to others (there is no “God spot” in the brain). Memories of NDEs are processed as if they were real events rather than fantasies or imagined events.

The conundrum, of course, is why a person losing vital signs has any experience at all. As Greyson explains:

When the heart stops, breathing also stops, and blood carrying oxygen and fuel no longer flows to the brain. Within ten to twenty seconds, there is no detectable electrical activity in the brain. The person is then considered clinically dead. People who survive such a crisis generally don’t have clear thoughts and perceptions during the period when their hearts stopped. And after they are revived, they have no memories of the time they were unconscious. And yet, 10 to 20 percent of such people remember vivid and detailed NDEs that occurred while their hearts were stopped, and some experiencers accurately report events that occurred during that time. (p. 119).

Again, the best and simplest explanation is the elephant in the room: The mind is *not* merely what the brain does, as is so often claimed.

SOME NEGATIVE ASPECTS

It’s not all sweetness and light, either. Greyson, much to his credit, reveals some jarring facts about NDEs. Many experiencers do not recover well from them. They can be angry or despondent at still being alive. And NDEs routinely wreck relationships:

Some experiencers have difficulty reconciling their NDEs with their religious beliefs. Some find it hard to resume their old roles and

lifestyles, which no longer have the same meaning, or to communicate to others the impact of the NDE. Some experiencers report anger at still being alive—or at being alive again. (p. 194).

Researchers in the United States and in Australia have found that marriages in which one partner has had an NDE are less well-adjusted and less stable than they were before the NDE, with 65 percent ending in divorce. This marital instability is usually attributed to problems communicating about a couple’s challenges, disagreements on roles, and dissimilar values and goals. (p. 204).

His own wife worried, Greyson tells us, whether, when he went off to NDE conferences, she would get back the same man. “And I must admit that sometimes I wondered that as well,” he admits, doubtless because things haven’t always gone that way for everyone.

LESS COMFORTABLE FOR MATERIALISTS

He sums up his work, citing a fact that is hard to explain in materialist terms: “I don’t know whether some kind of continued consciousness after death is the best explanation for NDEs in which experiencers see deceased loved ones no one knew had died. But I don’t have any alternative explanation for the evidence” (p. 221). He is wise to leave it there just now. The second question becomes: Can the topic be researched in comparative peace from materialist enforcers?

The book is lucidly written, with many case histories. I offer one caution—well, a note more than a caution: the experiencers’ accounts that Greyson collected feature a very similar, quite literate style. I don’t think that means that the accounts were made up. For one thing, the content is similar to that of thousands of other NDEs. Making them up would be superfluous. More significantly, the stylistic effect is not most apparent in the most remarkable accounts, so there does not appear to be an agenda. An old editor myself, I suspect an editorial hand in the matter, with the generous purpose of making many experiencers sound more literate than they perhaps otherwise would.

In the absence of a good reason to doubt the general pattern of the findings, that’s just a quibble. If there are more books like this and they gain a wide hearing, the world will soon become less comfortable for hard-core materialists. ☺

The PC hordes have risen from their dark netherworlds . . .

To CanCel Your Soul!

**WHen
zomblES
Go Woke**

**no more
SaFe
SpaCeS**



*The awoken never sleep . . .
plaguing the earth . . .*

*digging up old tweets . . .
devouring livelihoods!*

THEY need To GeT a lIfE . . . Your S!

Xomble

The Awakening

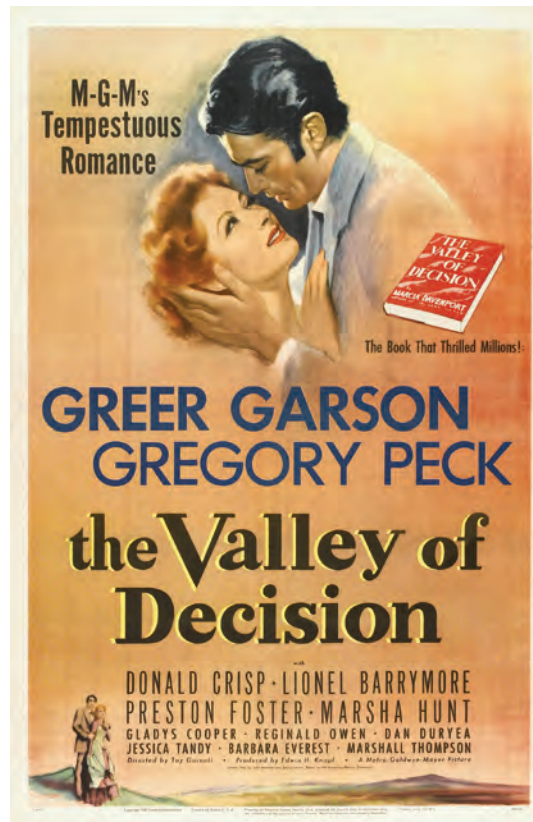


Drama in the Making

MGM's *The Valley of Decision*

by Anthony Esolen

It has been a long time, in the United States, since the members of either major political party have paid much attention to men who make things in the great factories of the world. When I was born, Detroit was a muscular city, the fifth largest in the nation, turning out cars and trucks by the millions. Where would you look for tires and rubber, if not to Akron? And Pittsburgh, the city of the three rivers, a *port city* more than two thousand miles by water from the sea, was the city of steel, its iron coming by way of the Great Lakes from Michigan and Minnesota, and its coal coming from the apparently inexhaustible mines of the mountains nearby. There was smoke, sure, and there was pride. The Pittsburgh man could say, "The next time you cross a bridge, think that the river below you might as well be our Allegheny."



I doubt that Hollywood nowadays is any more interested in industrial matters than most politicians are. Industry is too masculine, perhaps. Who wants to descend into the fire, the steam, and the sweat of a foundry?

But it was not always so. Industry, as it must be and not in a utopian dream, brings us almost immediately into dramatic conflict and potentially tragic compromises.

We have the human will against the tough resistance of brute matter. We have great machines that both extend the power of man and threaten to obliterate it. We have men risking life and limb, so that others can sleep on a train—or eat beans from a can. We

have immense outlays of capital, and the immense expenditure of human labor. We have the great boon of commodities that bring ease and sometimes even beauty to our lives, at the cost of smoke and sludge belched into the air or leached into the water, while the flares of the furnaces make the city seem devil-driven through the night.

BEING IN CHARGE & CARING FOR MEN

The Valley of Decision (1945) is an excellent example of what Hollywood could once do, when so many of its directors, writers, and actors came from the working class, and knew by observation or by the memories in their muscles what it was to farm, to fish, to fight in war—or to make steel. If

you expect it to show the usual conflict between poverty-crushed labor and fat greedy capital, perhaps you want to check out some propaganda, and not an honest work of human art.

The time is the 1870s, when the industrial states were flooded with immigrants from northern and central Europe. The bullhorn for the unhappy steelworkers, Pat Rafferty (played by Lionel Barrymore, who by this time was confined to a wheelchair), is

an old Irish immigrant who lost his legs in a terrible accident at the mill. He is a naturally benevolent man warped by hatred and vindictiveness.

His imagined enemy is the mill owner, William Scott (Donald Crisp, the essential patriarch; see him as the heroic coal miner in *How Green Was My Valley*). Scott lives in a mansion now. But he is the son of another Irish immigrant, his father, who came to America with nothing, and who by hard work and much good fortune built up the Scott Mills. Nor has Mr. Scott forgotten Rafferty. We learn that he provided him with a monthly pension equal to his pay when he was crippled for life.

What is at stake for Scott, his wife (Gladys Cooper), and the most loyal of his four children, his son Paul (Gregory Peck), is the very question: What does it mean to be in charge of making things, and to care for the men who do the grueling work? The film begins and ends—I will not give away the ending—with an offer to the Scotts, to sell the mill to the “big fish,” Andrew Carnegie. Mr. Scott turns down the first offer, despite its generosity, because the mill is a part of him, and though he is a “little fish,” and though he cannot claim to make nearly as much steel as Carnegie makes, he can claim to make *better steel*, even the best in America.

That is when Paul comes back from Europe—not from a grand tour for the rich boy, but from a survey of German steel mills—with the idea of the open hearth, for mixing a wide variety of ingredients to produce steel fit for all kinds of purposes. It will be hugely expensive, and there is no guarantee it will work. But Mr. Scott, a proud and courageous man, tells him to go ahead.

LOVE, LABOR & CONFLICT

Meanwhile, Rafferty’s lovely daughter Mary (Greer Garson, with a delicate Irish brogue) has taken work as a servant in the Scott mansion. There, by her efficient work and her intelligent treatment of the two youngest of the Scott children, Ted (Marshall Thompson), who likes to live it up too much, and Connie (Marsha Hunt), a girl with a soliciting eye, she wins the trust and friendship of Mrs. Scott, and the interest of Paul. Unlike some of the people with whom the Scotts associate, Paul is no snob. He and Mary fall in love. But a young society woman (Jessica Tandy) has other things in mind. We are not easy sentimentalists here.

The film does seem to argue that you cannot be both a snob and an excellent industrialist. You need to get your hands dirty in the work. In fact, the massive hearth Paul plans to build requires the



Greer Garson & Gregory Peck

knowledge and the efforts of the chief engineer among the workers, Jim Brennan (Preston Foster), who boards in the Rafferty house after Mary leaves. Brennan is in love with Mary, too, though she looks upon him only as a good and long-time friend.

Paul does not know of that love. Day after day, night after night, he and Brennan and a couple of the most capable steelworkers sweat over the plans, the models, and the experimental machines, suffering one failure after another, to the tune of \$650,000—an immense sum in that time.

Nor are all things well at the mill; talk of a strike has swept across the city, and the Scott Mill is not deaf to it, though Scott himself has the reputation of a fair man and an honest employer. Of course, the crippled Rafferty is oil to the fire.

The men do strike, and Paul, caught in the middle and urged by the woman he loves, tries to arrange a meeting between his father and the workers, on a bridge over the river. His brother Willie (Dan Duryea), who never has had anything to do with the works or the men, is bringing strike-breaking thugs from Detroit, while Ted is sent to the train station with a message to order them to stay away. But while Ted waits, the bar at the train station is open, and he cannot resist the call of drink.

I am not going to reveal what happens; it is not a plot by Hollywood formula. If for nothing else than for the brilliant cast, *The Valley of Decision* is well worth your time. But it delivers much else besides, asking important questions about factory ownership, labor, responsibility, and the common good. Christians need to raise those questions again. No one else is doing so. ☉



Getting Gilgamesh

The Earliest Action Hero for Young Men Today

by Rick Reed

"Friends hold a mirror up to each other; through that mirror they can see each other in ways that would not otherwise be accessible to them, and it is this mirroring that helps them improve themselves as persons." —Aristotle

In an era when action heroes and comic book superheroes captivate the imaginations of young audiences, the best classic book to offer young men might be *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. The oldest known story in written form, this epic's oral tradition may well reach back five thousand years, predating Homer by more than a millennium. Yet the story of a semi-divine—but mortal—hero and his friend has the same appeal as Marvel's Thor or DC's Wonder Woman, both of whom derive from mythic roots.

The epic opens by declaring of Gilgamesh, king of Uruk:

This was the man to whom all things were known; this was the king who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went on a long journey, was weary, worn-out with labor; returning he rested, he engraved on a stone the whole story.

Gilgamesh possesses the broad knowledge that characterizes Iron Man and the understanding of mysteries like those delved into by Indiana Jones. He even records his own story, just as audiences see Bilbo Baggins doing in the Peter Jackson films based on J. R. R. Tolkien's sub-created mythologies.

In more than one way, Gilgamesh is the archetypal embodiment of boys' aspirations. First, he is handsome and

courageous, these gifts having been given him by Shamash, the sun god, and Adad, a weather god somewhat equivalent to Zeus the Thunderer. As king of Uruk, he is also a builder, and is credited with erecting "walls, a great rampart, and the temple of the blessed Eanna for the god of the firmament Anu, and for Ishtar the goddess of love." So in addition to reflecting a boy's dreams, Gilgamesh also speaks to manly concern for civic defense and for religion, hardly ever found in contemporary fare written especially for boys.

Legendary Friendship

The king's boisterous companion, Enkidu, is also archetypically appealing. He, too, is a warrior. But while Gilgamesh is a man of the city, Enkidu is a man of the wilderness. The epic describes him as having "joy of the water with the herds of wild game." In this, he is like many boys, loving sport and the outdoors. Ninsun, the mother of Gilgamesh, describes Enkidu as "a strong

comrade, the one who brings help to his friend in his need."

Indeed, friendship is a central theme of the epic. Because Ninsun says that Gilgamesh was drawn to Enkidu—by her design—"as though to a woman," some critics today declare Gilgamesh and Enkidu to be the first homosexual characters in literature, even as they have attempted to characterize David and Jonathan in the Bible and Achilles and Patroclus in the *Iliad* in the same manner. Elsewhere, official voices declare martial prowess, nation-building, and even sport to be evidence of "toxic masculinity."

In contrast to these specious conjectures, both Gilgamesh and Enkidu are sketched as fully masculine characters. In part, Enkidu is sent to "tame" Gilgamesh, who has at first expressed his masculinity as an oppressor of his people. Following a physically contentious first encounter, they bond and begin a questing adventure.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu are both mortal. Like all mortals, they are prone to excess and bad judgment. Before he meets Enkidu, Gilgamesh makes war for the sake of making war, and he takes the women of the city as his own. When the people of Uruk pray for deliverance, the gods create Enkidu to be Gilgamesh's equal and to provide for him a companion with whom he can properly channel his warrior spirit.

The details of their first encounter parallel those of the first meeting of Arthur and Launcelot or of Robin Hood and Little John. Like those other legendary heroes, Gilgamesh and Enkidu engage in a full-on brawl, shaking the very walls of Uruk. From this initial combative encounter, the two bond, as Enkidu comes to speak as Gilgamesh's conscience but never abandons his friend in a time of need. When Gilgamesh faces the fact of his own mortality, he must learn the heaviest fact of life, which all men face.

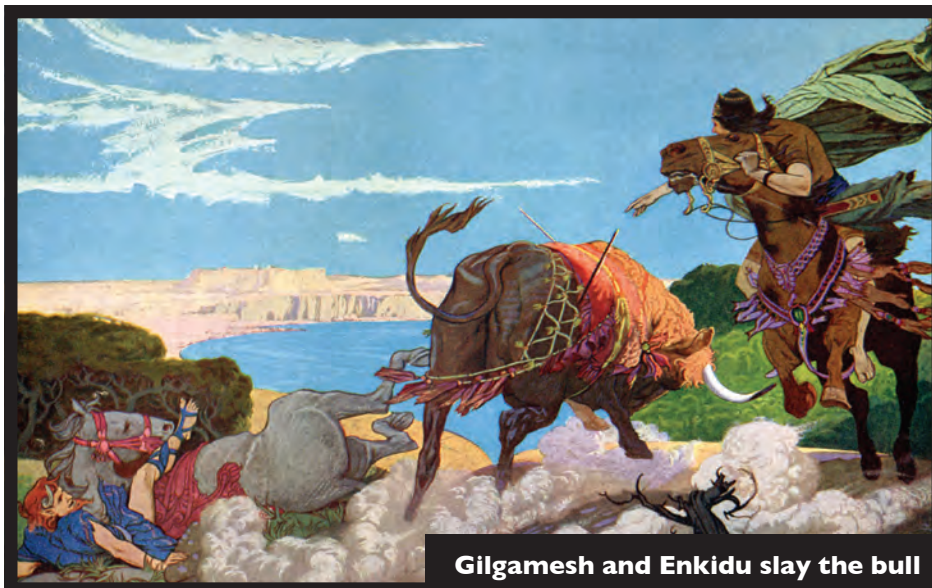
Two Great Quests

Like Bilbo Baggins, Gilgamesh is a man on a quest, though perhaps not the quest he thinks he is pursuing. Like Bilbo, who thinks he is on a quest to recover the lost treasure of the dwarves, Gilgamesh sets for himself two great quests: one to battle a giant, in order to gain fame; the other to discover the secret of immortality, in order to avoid the common fate of death.

In fact, like Mr. Baggins, Gilgamesh quests for self-knowledge. In his first adventure, he gains a full understanding of friendship and the fulfillment it brings to life. In the second, he seeks to discover the secret of the only immortal human, the Akkadian counterpart of Noah, but instead he discovers the limitations of his humanity and comes to accept them. In a time when young men and women are told that they can become “whatever they dream,” *Gilgamesh* offers a dose of the reality of limitations without quashing aspiration or adventure.

Archaeological Adventure

Though *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is a work of the Sumerian civilization—it was recovered from the library of the ancient king Assurbanipal by archaeologist Austen Henry Layard in the nineteenth century—it has come to be included in the Western canon both because of its inherent interest and because of the influence on scholarship it has exercised. Indeed, the history of the discovery and translation of the epic is something of an adventure in itself. An abbreviated account of that history appears in the worthwhile introduction to the N. K. Sandars translation, the prose version my students read



Gilgamesh and Enkidu slay the bull

for most of the years I taught the work.

Following the initial discovery of a number of broken tablets that contain the tale in cuneiform, the hard work of deciphering the ancient script began. After Henry Rawlinson accomplished that feat, the quest to recover the full text of the epic began, driven largely by the desire to find a complete account of the Flood story told near the end of the epic.

Student Enthusiasm

When I taught *The Epic of Gilgamesh* to high-school juniors and seniors, they found it fascinating. The students were not put off by the repetition common to most works that arose from an oral tradition, which include not only this epic, but also the foundations of Homer’s two great poems.

Though the Babylonian pantheon was unfamiliar to my students, they grew curious about the correspondences between the Greco-Roman gods and those appearing in *Gilgamesh*, and they enjoyed exploring the similarities and differences between the two pantheons. When I later had them read the story of Noah in Genesis, they drew contrasts between the starkly different motives for the

sending of the Flood in each story, as well as between the passengers in the two arks, and the ultimate outcome for the protagonists, Noah and Utnapishtim.

While *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is rather short compared to the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, it not only held my students’ interest but sparked their curiosity about archaeology as well. This they explored by engaging in a project of “recovering” and translating a “lost story” my colleague and I put together. For this project, the students had to write proposals for a grant to finance their “expedition” and then had to negotiate with “local authorities” (teachers who volunteered as such) to gain access to fragments of the story. Finally, they had to translate the fragments and assemble a recension. They had fun, learned a bit about archaeology, and got creative with their presentations.

A quick online search will yield at least a dozen currently available translations of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, in both prose and verse, usually in paperback. Adaptations have been published as well, but they are not a substitute for the original. If you know a young person—especially a boy—who likes adventure or mythology, a copy could make a great gift. ☉



Free At Last

Born into Chinese Communism, I Found Christ and Freedom in the West

by Pingnan Shi

I grew up during the Cultural Revolution in China. Both of my parents were Communists. I was taught that there is no God and all religions are just superstitions. Communism is scientific and therefore is true. I was expected to become a Communist official just like my parents.

But some life events changed all of that.

When I was five, my dad was imprisoned during the big purge after Mao overthrew the central government in a coup. The whole party apparatus was dismantled, and many party officials were jailed.

My family was kicked out of our nice apartment and exiled to a mud house near the countryside. My mom was forced to work in a factory cafeteria. Fortunately, she was a strong woman and took it bravely. After three years, my dad was reinstated back to his former position, and we moved back to an apartment.

Thinking About Life & Death

When I was about ten, one of my classmates died in an accident. I saw him leaving school excitedly one afternoon. A couple of hours later, I heard the news of his death. He had been trying to fetch eggs from a bird's nest and had touched a high-voltage power line. He was electrocuted.

Months later, an older boy who lived one floor below us drowned in a river. His death sent a shockwave throughout our community. He had been like a big brother to me. He owned many

books and could build radio sets. I had spent hours in his home reading books. One of the books described a TV set as small as a watch that could also be used as a phone!

But I lost him so suddenly. I was so lonely and so afraid of death. One night, when I was looking at the stars, it dawned on me how small the earth is and how insignificant I am. I will die! Everyone I know will die! So what is the meaning of life? What is the purpose?

Losing Faith in Communism

The Chinese Communist Party indoctrinated us into thinking that our purpose was to make Communism a reality in China and spread it all over the world. The loudspeaker near our apartment complex would end each day with *The Internationale*: "Do not say that we have nothing; we shall be the masters of the world."

Mao died in 1976. A couple of years later, universities were reopened after having been closed during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. Many evil deeds carried out in Mao's name were exposed. I started college in 1978 and had access to many books and magazines. As a

result, I lost faith in Communism.

I found out that almost everything I had been taught was not true. I learned that people who lived in capitalist countries had big houses and nice cars. They even had real elections. People outside of China didn't need us to liberate them. It was we who needed liberation.

During that time, I did not read much about Christianity. I only knew stories that were usually negative, such as stories about hypocritical priests or kings who used Christianity to rule their subjects. I believed Marx's assertion: "Religion is the opiate of the masses."

Losing Faith in Science

After I graduated from college, I won a scholarship to do graduate studies in Canada. I spent two years studying English. One day I borrowed two cassette tapes to practice listening comprehension. When I got to side B of the second tape, all I heard were Christmas songs. I didn't understand the lyrics, but the music was so peaceful and sweet. Those songs gave me a glimpse of a wonderful, strange world.

I went to Vancouver, Canada, in the summer of 1984. I did not know then that it was a very liberal city. I didn't know anyone who went to church. When I visited a church as part of a tour, there were only old people inside, so I became convinced that Christianity was just a thing of the past.

Like other Chinese students, I firmly believed in science. But when I started my Ph.D. studies in 1987, I saw its underbelly. To the



Demonstration on Tiananmen Square during the Cultural Revolution in 1967, Beijing, China

general public, scientists know what they are doing. But now that I was in that world, I realized that many times scientists can only make educated guesses.

In science, we use logic to prove a statement true or false. But to do so, we have to assume that the natural world is orderly and logical. If it is, then *why* is it so? Who gave it such an order? As an engineer, I see designs everywhere. Then, who is the designer? Many great scientists' discoveries came from inspiration. *Who*, then, inspired *them*?

To my surprise, I learned that many great scientists from the past were Christians who believed God created the world. Galileo Galilei once said, "Mathematics is the language with which God has written the universe." Isaac Newton claimed, "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being."

It is ironic that I lost faith in science when I was doing my Ph.D. studies. But I consider it the most important education I have ever received. Science needs theology as its foundation.

Losing Faith in Democracy

In April 1989, students in Beijing occupied Tiananmen Square and demanded democracy and freedom of the press. The movement grew rapidly, and soon many students in other cities joined the protest.

On May 20, the Chinese government declared martial law in Beijing. As many as 250,000 soldiers were sent to the capital, but Beijing citizens bravely blocked their entrance into the city.

Angered by the government's totalitarian measures and encouraged by the bravery of Beijing citizens and students, many students studying in Europe and North America also started protests on their campuses to support the students in the square.

However, in the early morning of June 4, the Chinese government sent in tanks and soldiers with automatic weapons to forcefully clear the square. We still don't know how many students and citizens were massacred that day. The estimates range from several thousand to twenty thousand. The Chinese Communist Party finally showed its evil nature to the whole world.

I was blacklisted for my involvement in the protests. Fortunately, the Canadian government allowed all Chinese scholars and students who were in Canada to stay and become permanent residents. The

United States and some Western European countries did the same.

I participated in the democracy movement after the June 4 massacre. But I was soon disillusioned after witnessing fights between and within different groups. I realized that democracy won't work for China unless the Chinese people believe that their rights are given by God and they have the moral courage to defend them. I later learned that John Adams said: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and

religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." We tried to copy America's form of government and failed miserably because we didn't have "a moral and religious people."

Searching for Truth

I was still not interested in religion, but my wife was invited to a Bible study on campus. As a good husband, I went with her. The first song we sang that night was *Amazing Grace*. It touched my heart. I was lost and wanted to be found. But was God real?

My wife and I spent five years in the Bible study group. Two Chinese students at Regent College led the study: one had a

Ph.D. in chemistry and the other in theoretical physics. We asked all kinds of questions until we had none left.

One day, one of the two students was preaching. One of his

arguments caught my attention. He said that if we are truly objective, we will find that there is more evidence supporting the existence of God than otherwise. Until that time, I had been looking for proof of God's existence. Now I realized that my atheistic belief was also lacking concrete proof. From a probability point of view, if I have to choose, I'd better choose theism.

By that time, my wife had accepted Jesus. I'd seen the change in her. Of course, she wanted me to become a Christian, too, and one day

when a believer invited me to say the prayer, I did. On July 15, we both got baptized.

But I didn't yet understand what it meant to be a Christian. I didn't feel anything different. We soon joined a church and found that many members live like nonbelievers except for attending Sunday services. I started to doubt my new-found faith.

Following His Call

In late September 1995, I came to Indiana to work as an engineer. My faith was very shaky. Fortunately, my wife's faith was strong. We joined a house fellowship, and got serious about studying the Bible.

Through most of 1996, the Holy Spirit kept bothering me. I knew I was not a true follower yet. I didn't want to give up my career. I wanted peace, happiness, and success. I was afraid that God would call me to become a pastor or a missionary.

But I knew I had to make the commitment. In late December, my wife and I were attending a retreat. When the speaker invited us to commit our lives to God, I stood up, took her hand, and went to the altar.

But God didn't ask me to give up my career right away. Instead, he helped me overcome many difficulties in my work. But in 2008, I felt the calling to become a high-school math teacher. I had never wanted to become a teacher, and my kids were not in college yet. How would I put them through college on a teacher's salary?

Three years later, I finally submitted to the Lord's will and started looking for a math-teacher position. One day in late September, I attended a pastors' lunch. One of the pastors asked about my plan. He told me to apply to a Christian private school. I emailed the headmaster and got a response the next day for an interview. A couple of days later, I was hired. It turned out that the previous calculus teacher was on maternity leave and had decided to be a stay-at-home mother. Talk about God's timing!

In January 2019, I took another leap of faith and volunteered at Hope Center Indy to provide high-school equivalency and job readiness classes to survivors of human trafficking and substance abuse. I consider myself blessed that I am still serving them today.

I escaped from Communism at twenty-one years of age and then escaped from Satan's dominion at thirty-one. I have found true freedom in Jesus Christ. It has been and will always be with me regardless of my physical and financial situations. ☉

The Evidence Strikes Back

A Review of The Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries Revealing the Mind Behind the Universe, by Stephen C. Meyer

by Terrell Clemmons

From a young age, Stephen Meyer was interested in both the natural sciences and the big philosophical questions of life. In the 1980s, after graduating from college, he attended a science conference where the origins of the universe and of life were debated by leading voices from both the theistic and materialistic perspectives. Intrigued, he entered Cambridge University a year later as a grad student with the goal of working on the question of the origin of life. Specifically, *could a rigorous scientific argument for the concept of intelligent design be made?*

In *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (2010), he made the case for intelligent design (ID) as the best explanation for the origin of the functional digital information resident in DNA. Following that, in *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design* (2014), he argued for design as the best explanation of the source of the information necessary to produce the major innovations in the history of life as discernible in the fossil record. Notably, Meyer did not argue in either book for the Judeo-Christian concept of God, since the intelligence necessary to supply the information central

to these arguments could have arisen from somewhere *within the universe*, at least in principle.

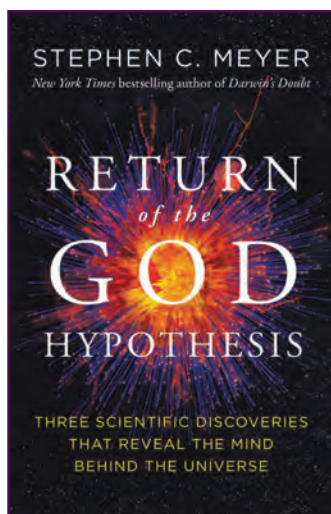
In *The Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries Revealing the Mind Behind the Universe*, he widens the purview and argues for the *theistic worldview* as the best *metaphysical* explanation of the universe we observe. The three referenced scientific discoveries, all based on developments of the last century, are: (1) evidence from cosmology that the universe is *not* infinite but that it had a material *beginning*, (2) evidence from physics showing that *from the beginning*, it has been “finely tuned” to allow for the possibility of life, and

(3) evidence from biology establishing that *since the beginning*, large amounts of new functional information have arisen in the biosphere to make new forms of life possible.

Although *The Return of the God Hypothesis* is very much a book of science, especially physics and cosmology, it is equally about the *philosophy* of science—how to reason *about* the evidence. Whereas most of mainstream science limits itself to positing only naturalistic causes as explanations for the evidence it uncovers, thus imposing, *de facto* (and often unstated), a presupposition of philosophical materialism, Meyer lifts that limitation and evaluates *competing metaphysical worldviews*, especially materialism versus theism, to assess how well each one can account for this new evidence. Ironically, although critics often charge that ID is “not science,” Meyer’s manner of reasoning, called the “method of multiple competing hypotheses” or “inference to the best explanation,” is the exact same method Charles Darwin employed in *The Origin of Species*, which raises awkward questions for critics deploying the charge.

The case is compelling on its own, but Meyer bolsters it by including an entire section addressing the critics’ competing explanations of the same evidence (a courtesy many of them have been loath to reciprocate), and he shows how, in each case, they don’t work quite so well as their proponents imagine.

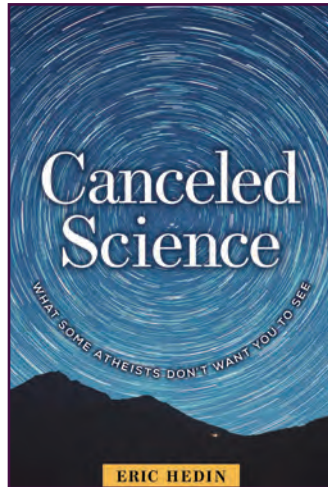
Meyer is an exquisitely clear writer, and although a few spots get weedy and technical, he brings these wide streams of thought together into a remarkably readable *tour de force* showing how contemporary science and theistic belief integrate into a comprehensive, coherent, and marvelously peaceable whole. This book will become a landmark classic for the science and faith discussion. ☉



Sex and the Unreal City: The Demolition of the Western Mind

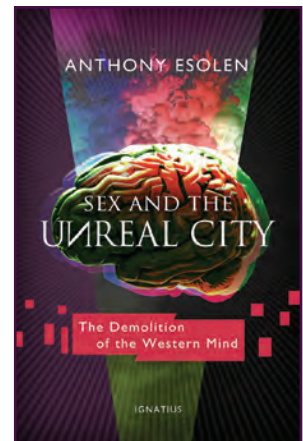
by Anthony Esolen

If it feels to you like the world is going stark raving mad, you're not off base. Cultural elites and principalities are attempting to establish *unreality*, or, as Esolen puts it, the Unreal Sexual City, where Western civilization used to be. With biting wit, he sizes up debasements in academia, science, media, and more before pointing us back toward the sanity of reality, the knowledge of which begins with a healthy fear of the Lord.

**Canceled Science: What Some Atheists Don't Want You to See**

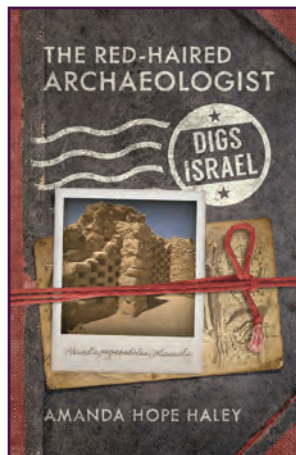
by Eric Hedin

In 2014, atheist biologist Jerry Coyne sicced a pack of atheist attorneys on Hedin's Boundaries of Science class at Ball State University. Sadly, Ball State caved and shut the honors course down. Now Hedin has put the evidence and arguments they sought to suppress into a book—and it is a beautiful summation of state-of-the-art knowledge in cosmology, physics, and biochemistry, all of which points to a purposeful, designing intelligence behind the world we find ourselves inhabiting.

**For a Greater Purpose: The Life and Legacy of Walter Bradley**

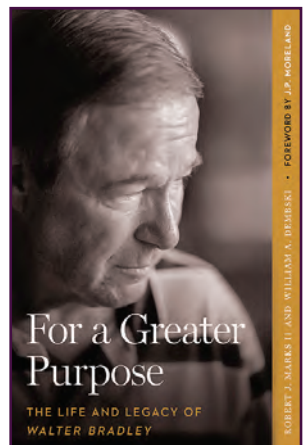
by Robert J. Marks II & William A. Dembski

As a young engineering professor on a secular campus in the 1960s, Walter Bradley made a personal commitment to openly declare his faith in Jesus Christ. This biography reflects on his long and distinguished career as an academic, innovator, teacher, and mentor to thousands, and pays tribute to his work in pioneering the theory of intelligent design in origins science. This is an inspiring read for anyone who wants to live a life of excellence and purposeful faith.

**The Red-Haired Archaeologist Digs Israel**

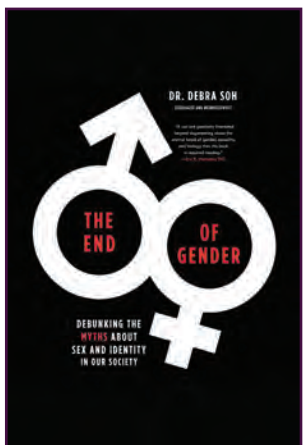
by Amanda Hope Haley

Amanda Hope Haley was first exposed to archaeology in the fifth grade and went on her first dig as a Hebrew Scriptures grad student. The past intersects with the present on every page of this combination travelogue/Bible reflections commentary as she treats her parents and husband to a personally guided tour of the Holy Land. As a bonus, their adventures offer an on-the-ground window into the region's perennial conflicts that you won't get from any news outlet. This book is both delightful and edifying.

**The End of Gender: Debunking the Myths about Sex and Identity in Our Society**

by Dr. Debra Soh

Dr. Soh is an atheist, LGBT-affirming sex scientist. She even affirmed gender transitions for children . . . until she read the research literature and realized that the public (and parents) weren't being given all the relevant information. Despite her sexually licentious outlook, this book is a laudable defense of biological reality as well as a courageous exposé of politicized science, weaponized medicine, bullied clinicians, and the ill-conceived bizzarries of gender ideology.



The House That Rob Built

Six years after Title IX legislation expanded opportunities for female college athletes, Robin (Rob) Selvig became head coach of the University of Montana Lady Griz basketball team. Starting from scratch, he recruited mostly from within Montana, often hiring former players as assistants, to build a powerhouse program with a hometown family atmosphere. This is a wholesome, all-American story about grit, selfless dedication, and community bonding.

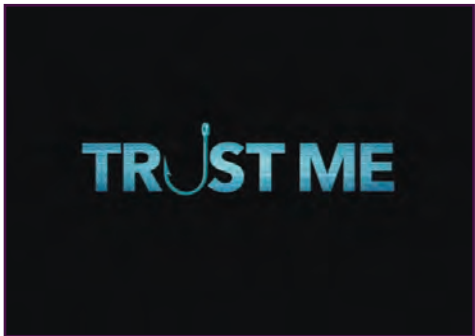
Paint the Wall Black: The Story of Nini's Deli

Juan-Elias Riesco and his family owned and operated Chicago's super-popular Nini's Deli until a violent mob besieged them for not expressly supporting the Black Lives Matter organization. An ex-gay, thief, and vagrant turned Christian, Juan had dedicated his life to serving *all* people as if serving Christ himself, and this commitment led to a dramatic clash between a mob gone mad and a small family of courageous Christians. The story is instructive for peace-loving Americans on all sides of the issues.



On January 19, 2019, at the 46th annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., a run-in involving Native American Nathan Phillips, a gang of Black Hebrew Israelites, and students from Covington Catholic High School in Covington, Kentucky, resulted in the most vile tsunami of journalistic and societal malfeasance in the history of the internet. This film is an urgently needed review of the shameful episode and a compelling call for discernment in media usage.

Trust Me: Are You Being Manipulated?



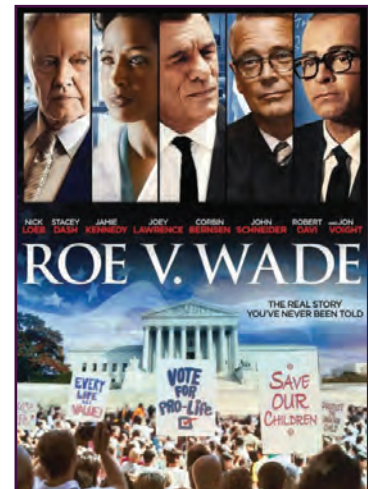
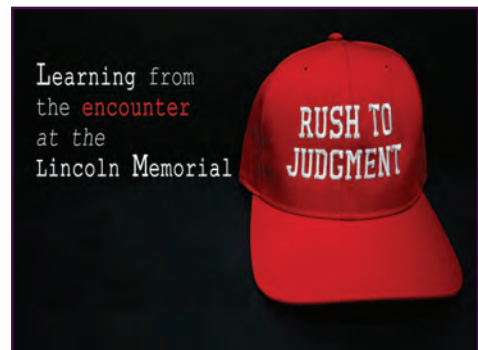
Produced by the Getting Better Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to (for lack of a better word) positivity, *Trust Me* explores information technology, human propensities, and how the economic incentives now driving media (both mass and social) do not serve our best interests. The film aims to foster media literacy, and though it doesn't espouse any biblical foundation, it demonstrates well the critical importance of truth and the destructive power of falsehood.

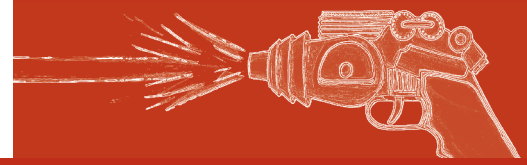
Roe v. Wade

This feature film dramatizes the behind-the-scenes machinations that culminated in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Told through the eyes of Dr. Bernard Nathanson, cofounder of NARAL and an early abortionist who later converted to Christianity, it brings to the screen disturbing truths about the twentieth century's most controversial ruling: pro-choice malfeasance, sloppy law, dubious ethics, media complicity, and conflicts of interest on the part of Supreme Court Justices. This is the history of *Roe* that every American should know.



Film Blips





The Heresy of Wokeness

Without Christianity, It Wouldn't Even Exist

by John Stonestreet & Glenn Sunshine

In 416 B.C., during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, Athens decided to attack the neutral island of Melos. When the Melians protested they had done Athens no wrong, the Athenians replied, “The strong do what they can; the weak suffer what they must.” The Melians were starved into surrender, their men were killed, and their women and children were sold into slavery.

None of this was unusual in the ancient world. The strong, it was supposed, had every right to dominate the weak. Neither the gods nor the moral codes opposed domination. Atheist historian Tom Holland describes his feelings about the Greco-Roman world this way: “It was not just the extremes of callousness that unsettled me, but the complete lack of any sense that the poor or the weak might have the slightest intrinsic value.”

So what changed? As Holland notes, the difference was Christianity.

Christians and Jews believed that all persons were made in the image of God. Thus, every person had intrinsic worth and dignity. On this basis, oppression of the poor and weak was condemned. Neither might nor wealth made right. Christianity further emphasized the spiritual and moral equality of all people. Not only do we all share the same humanity, but we all suffer from the same problem—sin.

Because of these ideas, Christianity is the sole historical source of concepts now taken for granted: human dignity, human equality, and universal human rights. As other prominent atheists such as

Jürgen Habermas and Luc Ferry admit, these ideas are at the root of our modern concern for the poor and oppressed.

This is why it's accurate to call “wokeness” a Christian heresy.

“Heresy” comes from the Greek verb *hairein*, which means “to choose.” The idea is, heresy is the result of choosing one thing that is true and then running with it until it distorts everything else. “Wokeness,” a

way of seeing the world built on critical theory, fastens onto the Christian idea that oppression is evil, but makes it the sole significant fact about humanity and society, while rejecting so much else that Christianity teaches—original sin, forgiveness, and salvation.

Various expressions of critical theory and “woke” rhetoric resonate with so many Christians because the appeal is rooted in legitimate biblical concerns about the poor, the marginalized, the

oppressed, and the potential misuse of power. However, it fails on many other levels.

Given their failure to diagnose sin, it's not surprising that critical theories lack an adequate understanding of salvation. At best, acceptance is offered to those who accept its worldview, but even then, the guilt of certain groups and the moral superiority of other groups is fixed and perpetual. This also means that forgiveness and reconciliation are effectively ruled out a priori.

Wokeness is built on a worldview without salvation, and it offers an eschatology with no real hope. Though the proclaimed goal is to end oppression, it's what the late sociologist Philip Rieff called a “deathwork,” dedicated to tearing down things but unable to build, or offer, anything better. Advocates of critical race theory, for example, argue that although race is a cultural construct, racism is an inevitable and irredeemable

Advocates of critical race theory cannot offer a vision of the world in which this sin is defeated or redeemed, much less one in which the guilty are forgiven and restored.

trait of certain groups and society. They cannot offer a vision of the world in which this sin is defeated or redeemed, much less one in which the guilty are forgiven and restored. The best that can be hoped for is to replace one set

of powers with another.

Playing off legitimate concerns about power and corruption, concerns first introduced to the world by the Christian vision, critical theories push these ideas to the point of reframing the Gospel.

The real problems with race and injustice in America need to be addressed. However, any expression of critical theory fails even as an analytical tool for Christians because it is built on a flawed and contrary worldview. ☉

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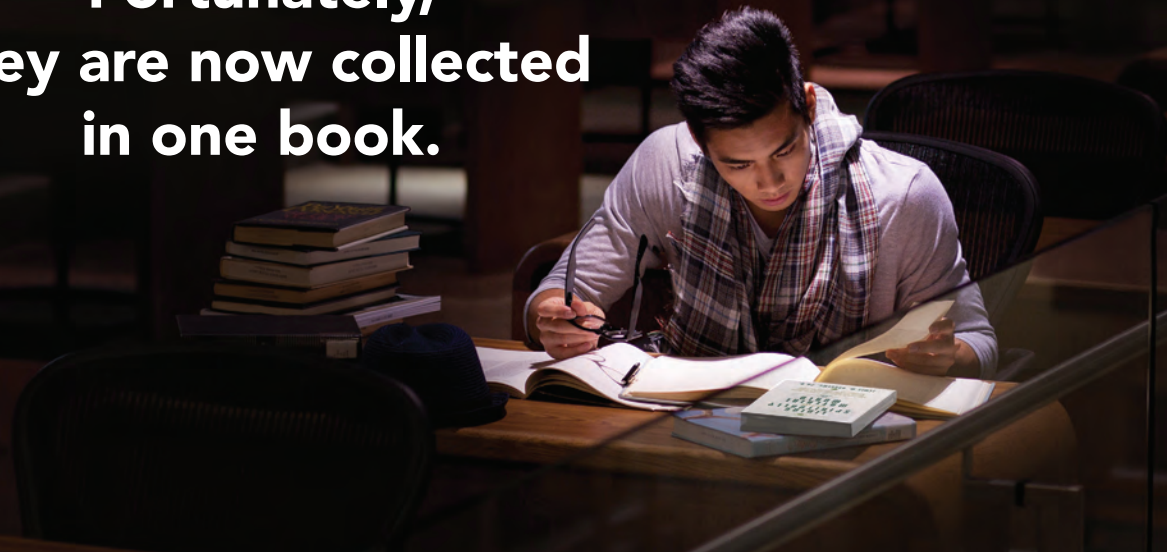
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