

# CCU Review

of BOOKS, CULTURE, MEDIA, LIFE

Volume 8  
Issue 1



COLORADO CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY

*Grace and Truth*

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### CCU Review

The CCU Review of Books, Culture, Media, and Life, a values-driven journal of peer-reviewed scholarly and creative work, is published semiannually by the Office of the Chancellor and the Communications and Creative Services department. While emphasizing articles of scholarly merit, the CCU Review is a collection of reviews and essays that are informed by and further enhance the values of Colorado Christian University as outlined in our Strategic Priorities and our Statement of Faith. We welcome suggestions on reviews and essays that are centered on ideas of interest that further the mission of CCU as a Christian, liberal arts university.

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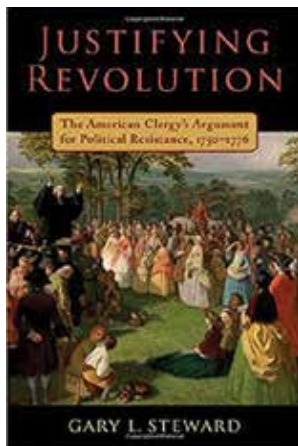
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# Justifying Revolution: The American Clergy's Argument for Political Resistance

by Gary L. Steward

REVIEW BY AMANDA MARIAGE

Executive Assistant to Dr. Janet Black – Vice President of Academic Affairs (CUS)



How hard could it be to teach eighth grade students about the American Revolutionary War? I had studied it, read books, watched documentaries, and had the teacher's edition of the textbook. Hit the key people; throw in important dates and events; do a couple of maps and

timelines. Ta da, unit finished! A very naïve idea to say the least. When this plan was coupled with the textbook from a Christian publishing company that stated the colonists should not have fought the Revolutionary War, my so-called “perfect” unit plan quickly pivoted in order to determine how to present this new thought to a room full of eighth graders. The idea that the colonists were wrong to fight the British had never crossed my mind or been presented in any of my classes in school. That a Christian publishing company stated it as fact and used Romans 13:1, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities,” to support their position contrasted sharply to my way of thinking.

Now seventeen years later, *Justifying Revolution: The American Clergy's Argument for Political Resistance, 1750-1776* provides an in-depth look into this very thought, so clearly the idea of revolutionaries revolting as contrary to biblical command was

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***Justifying Revolution fills a gap in our collective understanding of the American Revolution.***

more widespread than anything I was aware of as a young teacher. Whereas many historians place an emphasis on men like John Adams, George Washington, and Patrick Henry, Gary Steward sets out to help us understand the American clergy and how many of them were able to support the Revolutionary War. In doing this, Steward uses their own words from letters, sermons, and publications as testimony to their belief that political resistance was a legitimate response to the king and Parliament. *Justifying Revolution* fills a gap in our collective understanding of the American Revolution.

In chapter one, the central figure is Jonathan Mayhew, a colonial minister from Boston and a key figure in voicing the belief of political resistance to authorities who abuse their power. Through Mayhew, Steward shows that the American clergy believed that obedience to government was neither blind nor absolute. As Mayhew stated, “It is blasphemy to call tyrants and oppressors 'God's ministers.' They are more properly the messengers of Satan to buffet us. No rulers are properly God's ministers, but such as are just, ruling in the fear of God. When once magistrates act contrary to their office ... they immediately cease to be the ordinance and ministers of God and no more deserve that glorious character than common

***For the colonial clergy, the urgency stemmed from seeing it not only as their right to resist but in some cases their duty. They viewed civil and religious freedom as connected.***

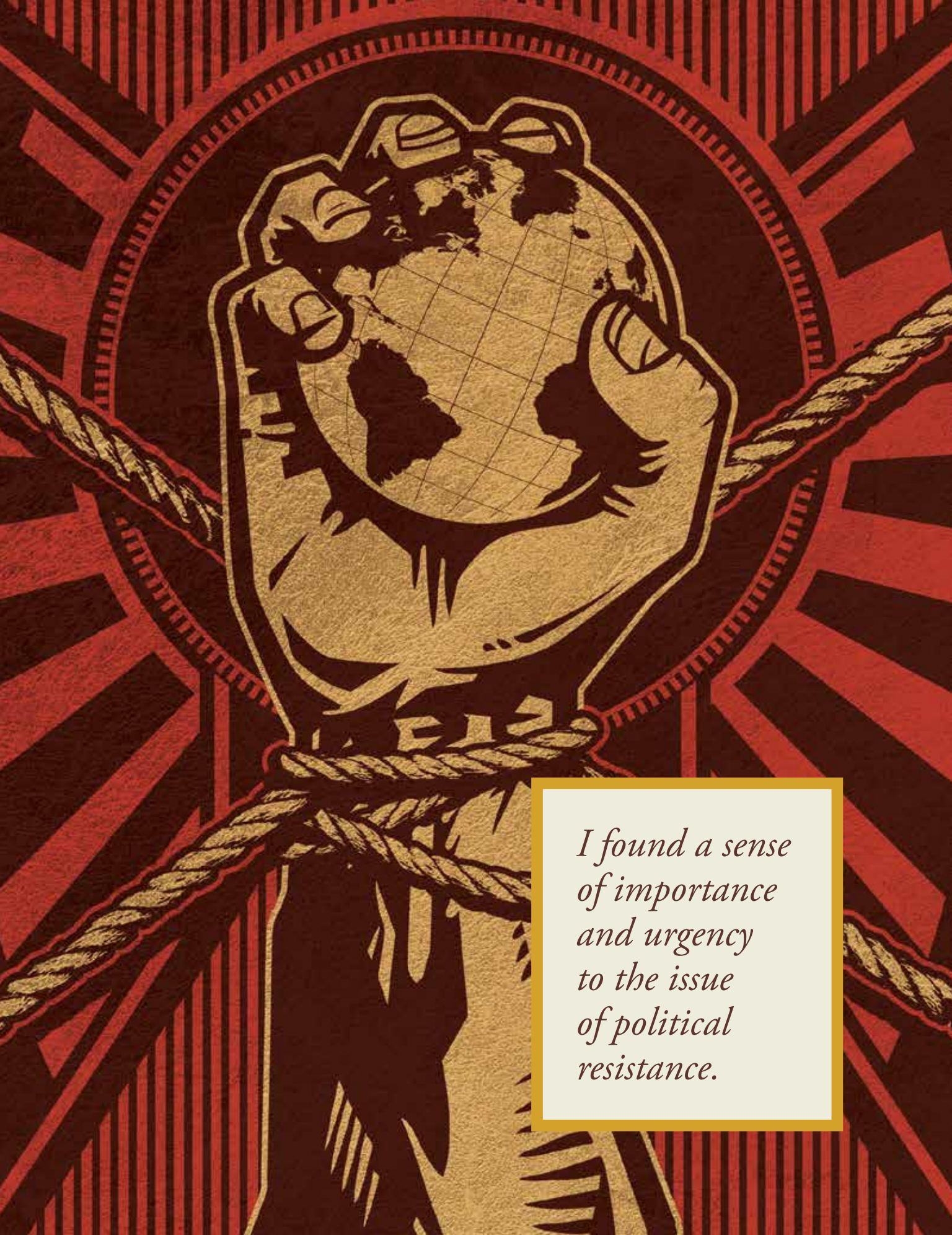
pirates and highway men.”<sup>1</sup> While the textbook I used provided no support for its interpretation of Romans 13, Steward’s research revealed much. Mayhew along with other American clergy affirmed that Romans 13:1-7 taught Christians to submit to civil authorities; however, they saw that submission was not absolute.<sup>2</sup> The interpretation of Romans 13 by the clergy has nuance rather than a blanket directive to follow at all times and in all circumstances. As Steward argues, the clergy saw that submission to authority, “only gives Christians a general duty to submit to their governing authorities.”<sup>3</sup>

With the clergy’s interpretation of Romans 13 established, Steward moves next to expose that the American clergy already had a foundation for believing in the right to resist politically without the commonly held belief that resistance came from the Enlightenment: “Long before John Locke argued for a right of resistance, Protestant theologians had already made the case that the biblical command to submit to the civil authorities is not absolute and that godly resistance is not only allowable but also sometimes required.”<sup>4</sup> British clergy advocated for political resistance against their own monarchs: Mary Tudor, James I, and Charles I as they advocated for absolute submission to their authority, which was contrary to the Protestant interpretation of Romans 13. In some of these examples, Protestant resistance even led to armed resistance against the ruling monarch. The Christian perspective of political resistance extended to mainland Europe, as well: “The Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander expressed the view in 1529 that the command to submit to one’s governing authorities in Romans 13 refers not to wicked magistrates but only to civil rulers who perform their office properly.”<sup>5</sup> Steward goes on: “Calvin also argued that in times of oppression, God may sometimes raise up ‘open avengers from among his servants...with his command to punish the wicked government and

deliver his people, oppressed in unjust ways, from miserable calamity.”<sup>6</sup>

In reading of the strength with which these individuals spoke, I found a sense of importance and urgency to the issue of political resistance. For the colonial clergy, the urgency stemmed from seeing it not only as their right to resist but in some cases their duty. They viewed civil and religious freedom as connected. As Steward states, “The colonial clergy of the 18th century widely held that civil liberties and religious liberties were naturally linked. A threat to one was seen as a threat to the other.”<sup>7</sup> So as talk increased that Britain would establish Episcopal bishops in America, the clergy’s concern for both civil and religious liberties increased as well. Steward says, “Powerful ecclesiastical hierarchies, whether Episcopal or Roman Catholic were not welcome. Both posed a significant threat to religious liberty, and both appeared to be operating in tandem to take ecclesiastical self-government away from American colonists.”<sup>8</sup> The concern that these freedoms were linked was even supported by British evangelist George Whitefield. Whitefield’s recorded words spoken to clergymen on April 2, 1764, are as follows: “I can’t in conscience leave the town without acquainting you with a secret. My heart bleeds for America. O poor New England! There is a deep laid plot against both your civil and religious liberties, and they will be lost. Your golden days are at an end. You have nothing but trouble before you. My information comes from the best authority in Great Britain. I was allowed to speak of the affair in general, but enjoined not to mention particulars.”<sup>9</sup>

How fascinating to learn that British clergy were concerned for colonial freedom! But it is also intriguing to hear that Whitefield played a part in supporting the alarm felt by colonial clergy. Until reading this in *Justifying Revolution*, I had not heard this statement before. While Whitefield was mentioned in the Christian textbook I used, reference to him was not related to the Revolutionary War; our text reduced him to being an evangelist who spoke to very large crowds with a loud booming voice, all without a microphone. Steward’s inclusion of Whitefield provides a deeper understanding of the turmoil the clergy faced during this time and provides detail for how living during this time affected Whitefield.



*I found a sense of importance and urgency to the issue of political resistance.*

Steward’s clear arguments and evidence convinced me that resistance is also biblical. But in moving to chapter five, the question in my mind was, how did they know when it was time to actively resist? As if reading my mind, Steward quotes Caleb Evans, a Baptist minister from Bristol, England, with these poignant words, “Resistance to one’s government should only be offered as a last resort: ‘A wise and a good man would think himself bound to consider how far resistance to a bad government might be likely to produce more good in the end than a patient acquiescence in it, and a peaceable endeavor to improve it should any favorable opportunity offer for that purpose, and would never make a choice of resistance but as the last resource, and when the probable evils of resistance are over-balanced by the certain evils resulting from a pusillanimous submission.’”<sup>10</sup> We learn that while absolute submission to authority is not what God intended, He also does not mean for us to raise an army and attack at every grievance. God has made us as rational beings with the ability to think and apply wisdom to various situations. John Witherspoon, in Steward’s final chapter, helps drive this idea home: “I am of the opinion that the whole Scripture is perfectly agreeable to sound philosophy, yet certainly it was never intended to teach us everything.”<sup>11</sup> Steward rephrases: “Scripture does not give us specific teaching on every moral and ethical question that man encounters, so moral reasoning can be a helpful exercise, especially in the area of political ethics.”<sup>12</sup>

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Gary Steward, *Justifying Revolution: The American Clergy’s Argument for Political Resistance, 1750-1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 14.
- 2 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 13.
- 3 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 10.
- 4 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 24.
- 5 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 20.
- 6 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 21.
- 7 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 54.
- 8 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 68.
- 9 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 36.
- 10 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 96.
- 11 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 119.
- 12 Steward, *Justifying Revolution*, 119.



***“I am of the opinion that the whole Scripture is perfectly agreeable to sound philosophy, yet certainly it was never intended to teach us everything.”***

## JOHN WITHERSPOON

The reading of history is valuable as it gives us understanding of our past and influences decisions we make now. In reading *Justifying Revolution*, I have much left to consider. I see godly individuals reaching different conclusions about how to interpret Romans 13. I see the clergy speaking boldly on political issues because they recognized that they had been placed by God in a specific time and place, which meant an engagement with politics and not an abandonment or retreat from it. I find comfort that in our culture of political upheaval we are not the first to question how to respond to challenges. We need a strong sense of duty to hold on to both political and religious liberty, not just for our good but for the good of other nations and future generations.

## REVIEWER BIO



### AMANDA MARIAGE

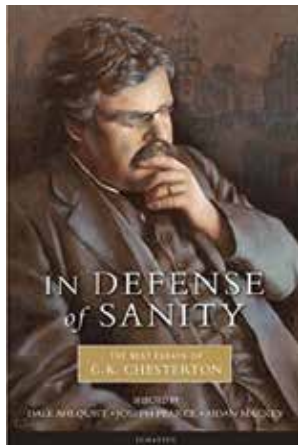
Amanda Mariage (M.Ed., University of Toledo) is the executive assistant to Dr. Janet Black, vice president of Academic Affairs (CUS) at Colorado Christian University. She was a middle school history and language arts teacher for 18 years before coming to CCU in October 2020. Her interests include reading, coffee, exploring Colorado, and spending time with family and friends.

# In Defense of Sanity: The Best Essays of G.K. Chesterton

by Dale Alquist, Joseph Pearce, and Aidan Mackey, eds.

## REVIEW BY DR. EARL WAGGONER

Dean, School of Biblical & Theological Studies in CCU's College of Adult & Graduate Studies



G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was one of the twentieth century's most influential writers. Evangelicals from Charles W. Colson to Philip Yancey praise his impact on their lives. But the list of grateful influencers extends beyond Evangelicalism: Lewis, Tolkien, Hitchcock, and Hemingway are

among many more. Although Chesterton never completed college, he wrote eighty books, five plays, five novels, hundreds of poems, 200 short stories, and over 5,000 essays. This volume under review presents the best of those essays — a mere tip-of-the-iceberg from this astonishingly productive writer.

The three editors compiled this volume in order to elevate the value of Chesterton's essays within his entire literary corpus. The sixty-seven short works span his extensive range of interests, from Shakespeare to cheese, politicians to vulgarity, Jane Austen to gargoyles, and Victorians to God. Dale Ahlquist describes what happens in each of these selections: "He [Chesterton] combines his literary powers — a crispness of style, a lightness of touch, and a clarity of thought — to point to the truth. That is his goal. He gets there, and he gets there beautifully, often taking the scenic route."<sup>1</sup>

Chesterton fans will find several favorites here. Among them, "A Piece of Chalk" and "The Drift

from Domesticity" are worth mentioning. In "Chalk," Chesterton moves from his silly craving to draw with some chalk on brown paper to his reception of a profound revelation based on white (the chalk he left behind!) being not the absence of all color but the presence of it all. Even so, "virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral dangers."<sup>2</sup> Rather, like white, virtue is brimming with moral content, a "plain and positive thing like the sun." Chesterton thus declares, "God paints in many colours [sic], but he never paints so gorgeously ... as when he paints in white."

"The Drift" essay opens with one of Chesterton's most popular illustrations, that of an old fence. Why would a person tear it down just because they see no reason for it? "Some person had some reason for thinking it would be a good thing for somebody. And until we know what the reason was, we really cannot judge whether the reason was reasonable." Chesterton develops this into sound reasoning for not tearing down the institution of the family, even if contemporary, social fads see no reason for it. For Chesterton, the family "is the social structure of mankind, far older than all its records and more universal than any of its religions; and all attempts to alter it are mere talk and tomfoolery."

Being a collection of essays, this book does not pretend to have a single, narrative arc. However, certain themes show up often (e.g., family) and thus provide insight into what Chesterton elevated as important and attacked as worthless. His writing engages through wit, humility, paradox, and perhaps above all: the writer's unique expression of truth. Though Chesterton was definitely a man of his time, so much of his insight is still spot-on.

*Why would a person tear it down just because they see no reason for it? “Some person had some reason for thinking it would be a good thing for somebody.”*

#### REVIEWER BIO



#### DR. EARL WAGGONER

Earl Waggoner is dean and professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, College of Adult and Graduate Studies at CCU. He and his wife live in Evergreen, CO and have three adult children and seven grandchildren.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 Dale Alquist, Joseph Pearce, and Aidan Mackey, *In Defense of Sanity: The Best Essays of G. K. Chesterton* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), xvi.
- 2 Alquist, Pearce, and Mackey, *Defense of Sanity*, 33. Emphasis added.

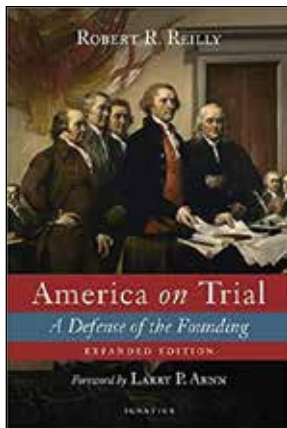


# America on Trial: A Defense of the Founding

by Robert Reilly

REVIEW BY DR. BOLEK K. KABALA

Assistant Professor of American Politics in CCU's School of Humanities & Social Sciences



With civic unrest reaching new heights, Robert Reilly's *America on Trial: A Defense of the Founding* arrives at a crucial time. On the Left, the 1619 Project sees white supremacy as America's core. On the Right, Patrick Deneen, Michael Hanby, and others discover in the Constitution and Federalist Papers a

“poison pill” of individualism leading to relativism and cultural decline. Reilly finds this convergence disheartening. Our disunited States need to recover Constitutional wisdom, but this first requires a defense of the American project.

What led to the American Founding? For Reilly, it was a specific set of ideas. To summarize, they represent a combination of natural law and theological insights or the legacy of Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome. Crucially, these foundational concepts are grounded in human nature and ordered towards an objective understanding of happiness. They include human equality, popular sovereignty, the foundational importance of consent, and the right of revolution. And they travel from the ancient world, through the medieval era (chapter 2) into the thought of Robert Bellarmine, Francisco Suarez, Richard Hooker, and Algernon Sidney (chapter 5). What is unique about the American Founding is not the ideas themselves but their application, and how they constitute a commonwealth.

This vision of human dignity supported by reason and natural law was not, on Reilly's account, unopposed. Nominalism and voluntarism, as developed by William of Ockham and Martin Luther (chapters 3 and 4), held that there are no essences in nature and that it is exclusively God's will and not reason that matters. Such metaphysical and theological ideas spill over into politics: absolutism, where a state is essentially only a reflection of the arbitrary will of a prince, is their progeny. According to Reilly, our charter of government is, therefore, a rejection of these extremes of modern thought. In an important sense, it reaffirms the constitutionalism of the Middle Ages (chapter 2), during which the existence of two powers (civil and ecclesiastical), often in tension, contributed over time to the checks and balances that support individual liberty.

Reilly makes clear that this project of reason, restored at the Founding, does not exclude those who dissent from the Church of Rome. Natural law is mistakenly sometimes considered a Catholic preoccupation. As Reilly shows, the Protestant Richard Hooker took it seriously in his 17th-century defense of liberty in England (chapter 5). The Founders were aware of and quoted this important thinker.

Indeed, if anything, Reilly understates the strength of his own case. A tantalizing footnote in *America on Trial* (pg. 153), whose point is supported also by Scott Pryor in his work on Calvin and natural law, emphasizes continuities between Calvin and Thomas, if not Luther and Thomas, in the American colonial context.<sup>1</sup> Luther himself, as Jarrett Carty has shown in a discussion of the Reformer's commentary on Psalm 101 and his resistance of the Holy Roman Empire, accepted the importance of

***This vision of human dignity supported by reason and natural law was not, on Reilly's account, unopposed.***

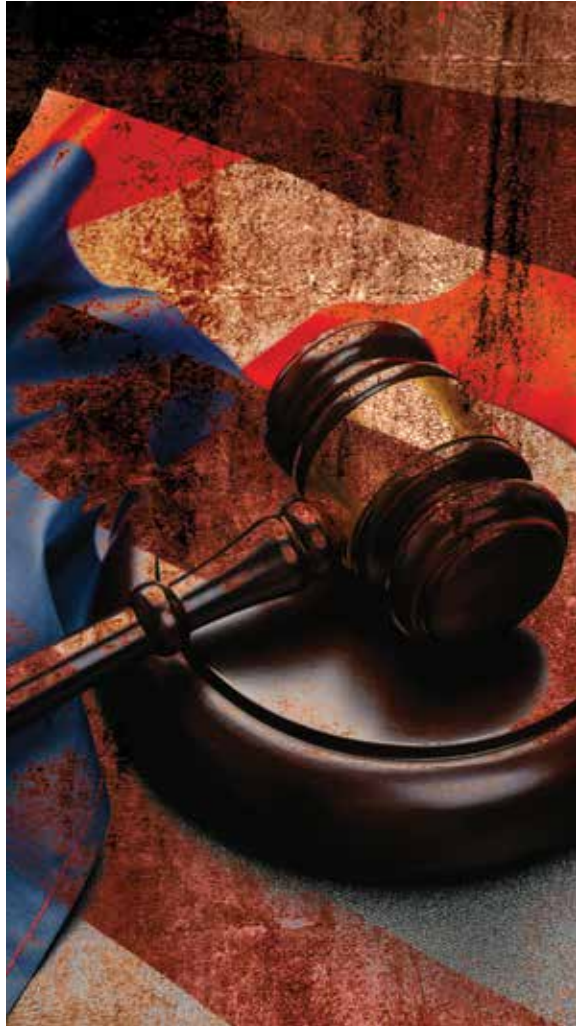
natural law — Reilly himself seems to acknowledge this as a later development in Lutheranism.<sup>2</sup> (Also, and importantly: If every thinker prioritizing the will over the reason of God is responsible for absolutism and arbitrary rule, what of John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *The Reasonableness of Christianity*? His voluntarism in those works is accepted by Greg Forster, a Locke scholar whose interpretation of the author of the *Second Treatise of Government* Reilly favors).<sup>3</sup> The Reformers can also be seen to contribute generally to the cause of popular government through the important doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, as pointed out by Quentin Skinner in his important *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, to which Reilly refers on more than one occasion.<sup>4</sup>

Reilly could even hold back less in discussing the Constitution and Declaration as instruments of freedom. The Declaration was certainly followed by the abolition of slavery in several states, as he points out, but there is also no "enforcement mechanism" in the Constitution to guarantee the return of runaway slaves in Article IV, which was a body blow to slaveholders. These minor observations aside, *America on Trial* addresses us with a fierce urgency. In uncovering the obscured natural law inspiration of our Constitution, it makes the case for our charter of government as enhancing human freedom in the face of new challenges to reason. In this and other ways, it is a blessing.

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**FOOTNOTES**

- 1 C. Scott Pryor, "God's Bridle: John Calvin's Application of Natural Law," *Journal of Law & Religion* 22 (2006): 225–254.
- 2 Jarrett A. Carty, *God and Government: Martin Luther's Political Thought* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017); Robert Reilly, *America on Trial: A Defense of the Founding* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017), 153.
- 3 Greg Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.
- 4 Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Volume 2: *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).



**REVIEWER BIO**



**DR. BOLEK Z. KABALA**

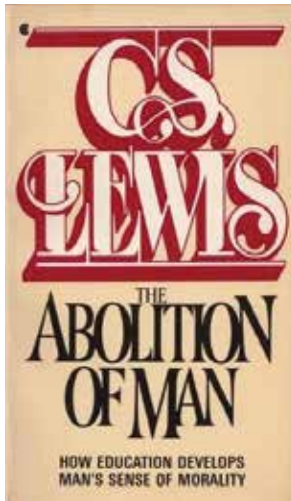
Bolek Kabala (Ph.D., Yale University) is an Assistant Professor of American Politics in CCU's School of Humanities & Social Sciences at Colorado Christian University. He specializes in American politics, and in particular, different ways to conceptualize judicial review, as well as the overlap of politics and religion informed by 17th-century debates between Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza. His recent research applies notions of power, as contested by these early modern thinkers, to illuminate contemporary controversies in judicial politics. He is also the lead editor of the interdisciplinary *Augustine in a Time of Crisis* (Palgrave, 2021).

# The Abolition of Man

by C.S. Lewis

REVIEW BY DR. DONALD W. SWEETING

Chancellor, Colorado Christian University



It is rare in this journal to have a review of an important book, and then also to have a review of a book about the important book. Such is the weight and significance of the little classic (less than 100 pages) by C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*. Some say this is one of the greatest defenses of natural law ever written. Lewis himself considered it “almost my favorite among

my books,” though it was largely overlooked by the public.

*The Abolition of Man* is a prophetic reflection on the crisis of the late modern age and what happens when you deny transcendent, objective value. To put it in the context of his other writings, in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis deals with the challenge of those who say there is no meaning. In *The Problem of Pain*, he deals with the challenge of those who attack ethics. And in *The Abolition of Man*, he deals with the challenge of those who say there is no objective, transcendent value. This is a book about the death of education and the consequent spiritual death of culture and humanity.

Reading this book becomes an “aha” moment for many readers because Lewis makes important connections. He argues that there is transcendence.

There are permanent things that never change — call it natural law, moral law, or the Tao (as Lewis

does in this book). When a society dismisses the idea of absolute value, or transcendent moral law, that society will soon reap the whirlwind. Is this not something we are experiencing today as we stand in the midst of a cultural revolution that seeks to deconstruct everything around us, including human nature?

Lewis begins his book in a somewhat surprising way. He writes, “I doubt whether we are sufficiently attentive to the importance of elementary textbooks.” Then he goes on to examine one that he came across in 1942 in the English schools; he calls it *The Green Book*, for short. But Lewis points out that something insidious is happening with the “new” education in Britain. Under the guise of teaching English, these educators hold that all values are simply statements of feeling. In other words, the authors of *The Green Book* are smuggling in relativism, without an argument, trying to subtly reshape the minds and souls of children.

It was the reading of this book that prompted a series of lectures that Lewis gave at Durham University in 1943, which subsequently became *The Abolition of Man*.

*The Green Book* then became a springboard for Lewis’s thoughts on education and teaching value. So, as you read *The Abolition of Man*, remember — on one level, it is a critique of an educational theory; on another level, it is an attack on relativism; and on still another level, it is a sober warning of the dark consequences of this kind of thinking which he believed could change the course of history, causing people to ultimately lose their humanity.

In chapter one, “Men Without Chests,” Lewis directly challenges *The Green Book* which instills

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***When a society dismisses the idea of absolute value, or transcendent moral law, that society will soon reap the whirlwind.***

in young readers the idea that there are no existing objective realities or truths — that all judgements about value are really statements of feeling. Although Lewis does not put it this way, students are shifting from “I think” to “I feel,” a shift from the idea of there being true truth to expressions of “my truth” and “your truth.”

Lewis strenuously objects. These modern educators are producing children without character and consciences. He says that the task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts, and inculcate just sentiments and rightly ordered loves through teachings/books/classics which affirm this. The old education involved “transmitting manhood to men;” but the new education is merely propaganda. It is not only morally vacuous, it will make a whole generation subject to massive manipulation.

While on one level the post-war world was calling for moral qualities, these new educators were undermining the enterprise. Lewis writes:

“Such is the tragi-comedy of our situation — we continue to clamor for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more drive, or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or creativity. In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”

By the way, that is a statement to ponder before deciding on which school to send your children and grandchildren to!

Lewis believed that this new kind of education would lead not just to the corruption of students, but to the destruction of society, which takes him to chapter two, titled “The Way.”

Lewis writes, once these educators deny objective value, they cannot successfully reconstruct a coherent basis for morality. They try to find an “ought,” a basis for moral obligation, but they fail to reconstruct an adequate foundation for morals. They have removed the trunk of the tree and still expect the branches to flourish.

Furthermore, while these educators claim to be value-free, they in fact hold “with complete uncritical dogmatism, (a) whole system of values



which happen(ed) to be in vogue.” Of course, we also see this in our day, in the so-called “value-free” secularism which not only demands the dismantling of religious and moral values but imposes a godless view of reality in its place.

This takes us to chapter three, “The Abolition of Man.” Note the progression here.

Lewis starts with the power of modern educators, then sees this moving in a direction where the conditioners and molders work toward building a new kind of humanity. Asserting their own will to power, they employ the dictates of an ever-growing state, education and propaganda, and scientific technique (eugenics, prenatal conditioning) to remake society and man himself. They will deconstruct human nature and then decide what humanity henceforth shall be.

With a stunning prophetic insight way back in 1943, Lewis, a professor of medieval literature, saw the consequences of relativism — that it would make self-control and a free, democratic society impossible. He saw the destructiveness of progressivism. He rightly predicted how relativism and deconstructionism would erode the foundations of Western Civilization. He even saw an ascendant collectivism/socialism and warned of the emergence of elite controllers who would manipulate with a soft and then a hard despotism. Lewis said this could be the work of both communists and democrats who at some point would have no qualms about liquidating the “unsocial elements.” Lewis’s foresight was amazing, but he was no dystopian pessimist. He and others (The Inklings, etc.) promoted with their life and writings an alternative vision of “men with chests.” These writers (Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, T.S. Eliot, etc.) were Christian humanists putting forth an alternative vision of what it takes for human beings to flourish. They believed in ultimate value and truth. This is what they gave themselves to in their fiction and non-fiction writings. They believed in human dignity and human nature. They understood, as Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II did, that in the aftermath of World War II, the Western world needs to be re-evangelized. They knew that the battles of our age are ultimately spiritual battles, but their writings were full of hope and not despair. They believed that truth stands, the gates of hell do not prevail, and that God’s grace and truth are stronger

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***Lewis believed that this new kind of education would lead not just to the corruption of students, but to the destruction of society.***

than man’s sin and rebellion. This is something we also passionately believe and teach at Colorado Christian University.

And so, this little, weighty, prophetic book, *The Abolition of Man*, is extremely important. It was way ahead of its time, long before the seeds of mid-20th century subjectivism came to full flower with post-modernism and the current assaults of neo-Marxism. It is not a breezy read, but it is worth reading and pondering. Lewis helpfully suggested that you read it along with his science fiction novel, *That Hideous Strength*.

*The Abolition of Man* is not the typical Christian classic, yet it makes a classic defense of key parts of a Judeo-Christian worldview that we must think about. Because the ideas of *The Green Book* are now deeply embedded in our schools and culture, many of Lewis’s warnings have come to fruition. Those of us who care about education must point the way beyond the abolition of man to humanity’s restitution.

#### REVIEWER BIO



#### DR. DONALD SWEETING

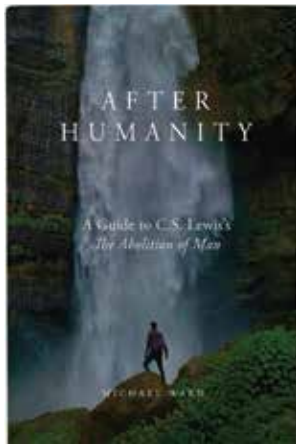
Donald W. Sweeting (Ph.D., Trinity International University) is the Chancellor at Colorado Christian University and an ordained minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

# After Humanity: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*

by Michael Ward

REVIEW BY DR. IAN HUGH CLARY

Associate Professor of Historical Theology



were fearful about returning to school after a long hiatus. To set the tone, I required my students to read C. S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* in advance so that they could see the need for clear philosophical thinking in the midst of a fractured culture. While my idealistic young mind thought it would be great to expose the students to this most important of Lewis's philosophical works, it turned out to be a bad idea. On the first day, students were confused as to what the book was about. Why does it start with a discussion of children's education? What do waterfalls have to do with philosophy? Why is Lewis speaking positively about something non-Christian called 'the Tao'? Why should we care about men without chests? Aside from giving generic answers, I was not able to definitively address their concerns. As it turns out, I didn't learn my lesson, because I did nearly the same thing when I first started to teach at Colorado Christian University. In my first semester, I was given a general education course introducing the history and themes of western

In January 2014, I had the privilege of getting to teach the first course at the newly launched Munster Bible College in Cork, Ireland, which was life-changing for me. The course was an introduction to apologetics, and the class was a mix of around 30 college-age and mature students, a number of whom

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## ***What do waterfalls have to do with philosophy? Why is Lewis speaking positively about something non-Christian called 'the Tao?'***

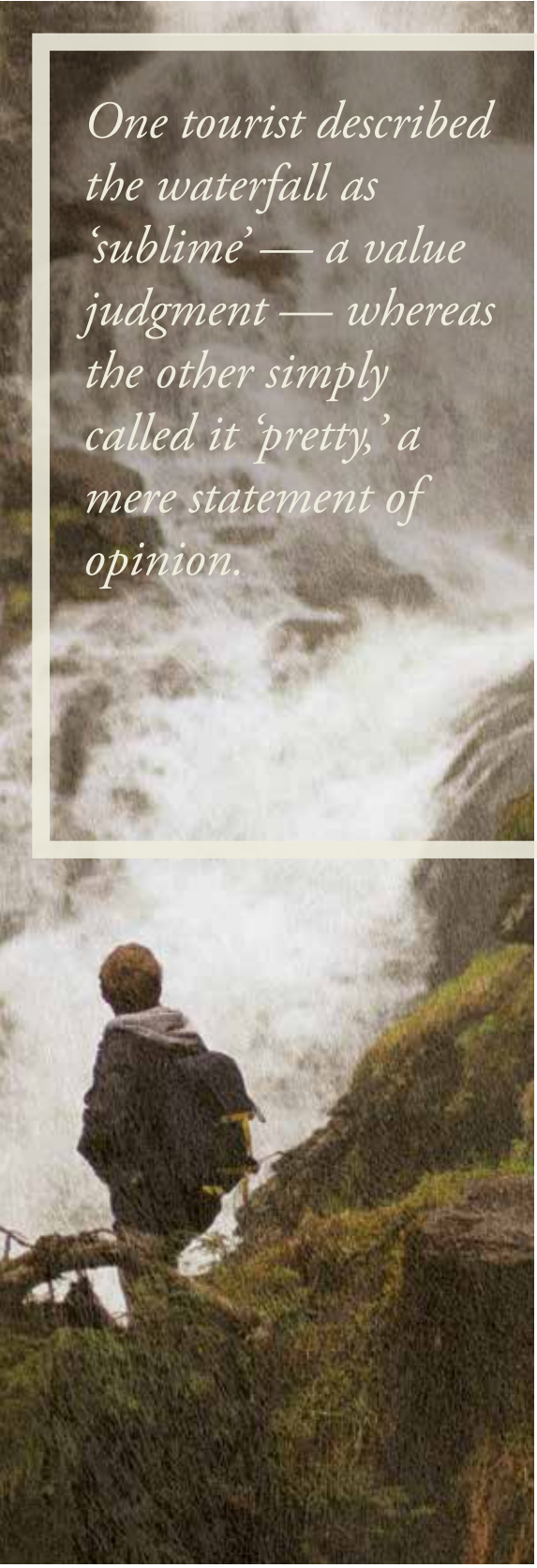
philosophy. I set the book review assignment as, of course, *Abolition of Man*. The results were similar to those in Ireland, though I was better prepared to answer the students' confusion. Nevertheless, I was still underequipped. This put me in a bind. On the one hand, I could feel the importance of Lewis's work — there was much good that the students could benefit from. Yet, on the other hand, short though it was, *Abolition of Man* was remarkably dense and hard for the untrained to get through. I remain convinced that the published form of lectures that Lewis delivered in England in 1943 have a lot to teach us in the 21st century. Nevertheless, I wanted my students to see the benefit of philosophy more immediately, instead of having to fight their way towards it, so I switched texts.

As it turns out, my experience was not uncommon. Many argue that *Abolition of Man*, though difficult, has a strangely prophetic quality about it. Though Lewis was writing in the mid-20th century, it was as if he were speaking about today. Yet the book can at times be opaque as it dealt with abstract concepts of objective value, natural law, subjectivism and emotivism, positivism, and the eventual collapse of society. Happily, Michael Ward has provided us


with an excellent introduction in *After Humanity: A Guide to C. S. Lewis's The Abolition of Man* that helps new and seasoned readers alike get at the scope of Lewis's argument and the nitty-gritty of how he constructed it. Ward is arguably the world's leading Lewis scholar. He is famously credited for cracking the "Narnia code" in his important *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis*. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the prestigious Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, and served as the warden of Lewis's old home in Oxford called The Kilns.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Ward is the ideal tour guide and *After Humanity* the ideal map for Lewis's remarkably important book.

*After Humanity* starts with a series of short chapters introducing *Abolition of Man* in broad contours. Here Ward looks at the way it has been positively received by thinkers as diverse as A. N. Wilson, John Lucas, Francis Fukuyama, Wendell Berry, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Probably its most noteworthy detractors were Ayn Rand and B. F. Skinner, which is telling. After framing the book's importance, Ward describes Lewis's occasion for writing. *Abolition of Man* was originally delivered as the Riddell Memorial Lectures at the University of Durham, the UK's third oldest university. The lectureship addresses 'religion and contemporary thought,' and though not taking a distinctly religious theme, Lewis dealt what he believed to be the greatest challenges facing his society, namely problems of subjectivism, positivism, and emotivism. The dominant philosophy in the UK in the mid-20th century was logical positivism, shaped by philosophers like A. J. Ayer and critics like I. A. Richards — two thinkers who were effectively, though not explicitly, in Lewis's crosshairs. Though Lewis was writing near the end of World War II, the problems are as relevant for us today as they were then.

After setting the scene, Ward delves into the contents of Lewis's argument. Here we learn that the infamously anonymous '*Green Book*' that Lewis criticized was written not by anyone named Titius or Gaius, but was in fact a book called *The Control of Language* by Alec King and Martin Ketley. *The Green Book* was a children's textbook and Lewis took issue with it because of the way it undermined objective value. Lewis would take aim at a children's textbook because he well knew the importance of value in education. Famously, *The Green Book*



*One tourist described the waterfall as 'sublime' — a value judgment — whereas the other simply called it 'pretty,' a mere statement of opinion.*



*Rather Lewis was showing that, because humans live in a structured, ordered reality, we share overlapping moral commitments with other humans, even though our religions be diametrically opposed.*

described an encounter that the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge had with tourists at a waterfall. One tourist described the waterfall as ‘sublime’ — a value judgment — whereas the other simply called it ‘pretty’ — a mere statement of opinion. This will set Lewis on a course arguing why objective value judgments are important because they speak to the concreteness of reality and the moral judgments that must follow.

In the third chapter, Ward describes the meaning of the terms that title each chapter in *Abolition of Man*: ‘men without chests,’ ‘the Tao,’ and ‘the abolition of man.’ By ‘men without chests,’ Lewis refers to the imbalance humans have when it comes to relating the intellect (the head) with appetite/desire (the belly). Some will err on the side of intellectualism whereas others err on the side of feeling. What the chest does is link the two, forming the whole human. Lewis says, “It is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.”<sup>2</sup> It is at the proverbial chest where humans make real value judgments based on their engagement with reality, which he terms ‘the Tao.’

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***The Tao, which can be defined as ‘the way,’ is best understood as the natural law — the reality that we all live in and must live by.***

Drawing from Confucianism, ‘the Tao’ has caused concern for Christians who misunderstand Lewis to be arguing for a syncretistic morality. Ward argues cogently that Lewis was not putting a religion like Christianity on the same truth-plain as Confucianism. Rather, Lewis was showing that, because humans live in a structured, ordered reality, we share overlapping moral commitments with other humans, even though our religions be diametrically opposed. The Tao, which can be defined as ‘the way,’ is best understood as the natural law — the reality that we all live in and must live by. Thus, Lewis speaks of living “within the Tao,” the idea that all humans exist with certain moral codes (Lewis lists examples from thinkers across time in his appendix), and the more in line



***Once we step outside of the natural law we start to devalue the notion of ‘value’ itself, and turn radically subjective, which results in the abolition of man.***

with the Tao, the greater human flourishing there will be. The further away a person or a society moves from the Tao, the more brutish they become. Once we step outside of the natural law, we start to devalue the notion of ‘value’ itself and turn radically subjective, which results in the abolition of man.

The phrase ‘the abolition of man’ is an apt one for the context that Lewis wrote from, namely World War II and the horrors of Nazi Germany. Lewis speaks to the way that ‘Conditioners’ capitalize on a society’s lack of values in order to manipulate and control it, much as the Nazis did. With the framework for morality dismantled, it becomes easy for the wicked to assume power and use it for nefarious ends. This radical subjectivizing of morals is seen clearly in our own context as Lewis’s prophecy is coming true today. As Prof. Michael Plato noted in his 2018 Symposium address at CCU, “philosophy has moved past the issues laid out in postmodernism as we are now facing graver concerns with transhumanism and posthumanism.”<sup>3</sup> Lewis saw this move clearly from the 1940s, and the title of Ward’s book indicates that he too sees it, as he writes ‘*After Humanity*.’

After the introductory chapters, Ward turns to a lengthy chapter of commentary where he goes almost page by page, sentence by sentence, explaining and evaluating Lewis’s book. The helpful balance Ward provides with the other chapters keeps this from being an atomizing commentary, where the forest can’t be seen for the trees. Instead, we see how individual thoughts relate to the larger arc of the book. It is here that Ward shows himself to be the Lewis expert he is, and his command of Lewis’s writing, as well as the context that Lewis was writing from, is astonishing. If readers were ever confused by Lewis’s quoting of a Latin term like Horace’s *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* (“It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country”), we now understand that Lewis affirmed this sentiment in

the face of the pessimism of Great War poets like Wilfrid Owen or Siegfried Sassoon. By providing context to these sorts of statements, Ward gives readers a sense of clarity and grounding.

Lewis himself recognized that not all would be able to understand his book, and so wrote another, a work of fiction, to illustrate his arguments. This he did in the third of the Space Trilogy called *That Hideous Strength*, that stands alongside the writings of Orwell, Huxley, and Bradbury as one of the 20th century’s most prescient examples of dystopian fiction. As the rule of thumb has been to read *That Hideous Strength* alongside *The Abolition of Man*, it should now become commonplace to include Ward’s *After Humanity* as well. This guide will help generations of readers ‘live within the Tao,’ which will in turn help culture and society return to some semblance of sanity.

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 2 C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (1944; New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 25.
- 3 Plato, M. (2018, September) *Being Human in a Post-Human Age* [Colorado Christian University Symposium]

## REVIEWER BIO



### DR. IAN CLARY

*Ian Hugh Clary (PhD, University of the Free State) is associate professor of Historical Theology at Colorado Christian University. He is the author or editor of a number of books, including the recently published God Crowns His Own Gifts: Augustine, Grace, and the Monks of Hadrumetum (2021). He is the book review editor for Evangelical Quarterly and the co-host of the Into Theology podcast with The Gospel Coalition Canada.*

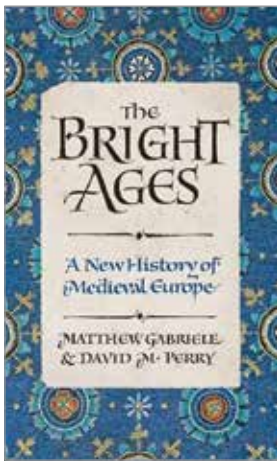
# The Bright Ages:

## A New History of Medieval Europe

by Matthew Gabriele and David M. Perry

### REVIEW BY DR. MEGAN DEVORE

*Professor of Church History and Early Christian Studies*



*The Bright Ages* debunks the popular belief that the Medieval era was a ‘Dark Age’ of brutality, filth, ignorance, and superstition. In a dazzling scenic tour through the Middle Ages, this book’s dynamic revisionist narratives and vivid geographies display an era that contains “light and dark, humanity and horror (but alas not a lot of dragons)” (xvii).

In a brisk 256 pages, Matthew Gabriele and David M. Perry’s *The Bright Ages* guides readers through a compelling narrative tour of 1,000 years of medieval history. The authors’ purpose is clear: They want us to reconsider what we think we know about this era. “The story of the Dark Ages as an isolated, savage, primitive medieval Europe continues to pervade popular culture. It was never true” (248). The title of the work offers a new image: The Middle Ages were quite bright in terms of culture, religion, scholarship, and technical skill. This assertion is compellingly demonstrated on every page by professional historians who are expert storytellers. For those wishing to divest themselves from old assumptions about the ‘Dark Ages’ and listen to an exhilarating narrative that exposes ways that this era has been misunderstood and manipulated, *The Bright Ages* is a fascinating — though not flawless — read.

This is no dry textbook. Chapters are verbal landscapes highlighting “the beauty and communion

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***... the Middle Ages were quite bright in terms of culture, religion, scholarship, and technical skill.***

that flourished alongside the dark brutality.” Attended throughout are aspects often neglected by other broad history books — for example, the significant activity of Jews, notable achievements and roles of women, and artistic and architectural productions that reveal so much about context and culture. In *The Bright Ages*’ journey from the 5th century to the 15th, chapters unfold a series of narratives oriented in a geographical region with specific art and artifacts – buildings, statues, royal annals, and more — that buttress the authors’ arguments and show the multidimensionality of medieval culture. As the authors move between locations and the chronology advances, readers are given an enthralling array of stories and details. Chapters typically involve two or more centuries in order to show the networks of people, places, and religions involved in the broader panorama of history. The authors begin in Ravenna, alight at Jerusalem and Rome, visit Charlemagne’s kingdom, journey with Vikings in Europe and beyond, highlight the cultural and religious dynamism of the Iberian Peninsula, Africa, England, France, and the Asian steppe (among others), then return to Italy to depict first the devastation wrought by waves of the plague, then the exile of Dante at the dawn of the Renaissance.

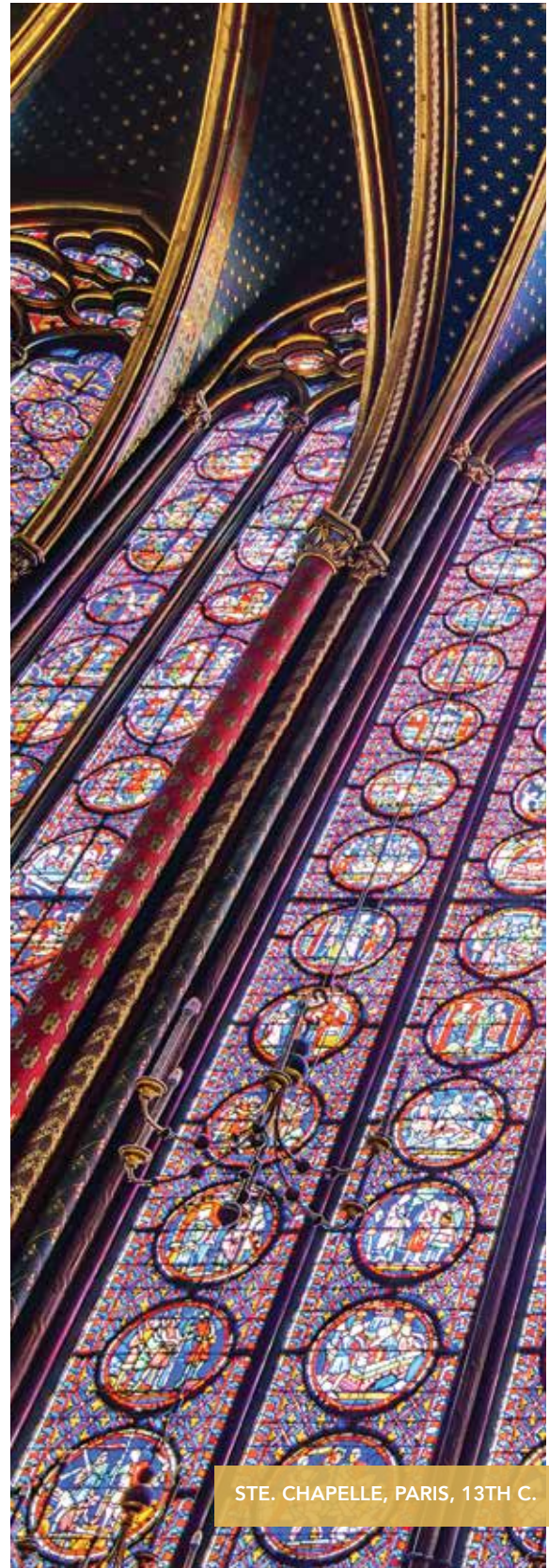
Highlights include Gabriele and Perry's brilliant beginning in the glittering city of Ravenna and an empress whose life spanned the decades typically associated with Rome's 'fall.' Chapter 10's voyage into the complex world of Spain rightly situates the blooming scholasticism of Europe in "a grand international cross-cultural multi-generational, multi-lingual, and multi-religious network of intellectuals" (145). Chapter 16's Bubonic Plague is treated such interdisciplinary scientific detail, tenderness, and urgency as could have only been written by those who had themselves lived in a pandemic. Arguably, one of the most important narratives is found in the epilogue, which depicts a debate in the Spanish Kingdom of Castile in the 1550s. On one side is a modern secularist, advocating for progress and justifying oppression, violence, and colonization; the other is a learned Dominican monk, arguing that the indigenous people of America were not barbarians but fellow humans created by God whose true conversion to Christianity can only happen in peace. Throughout, it is evident that the medieval era is far more complicated than typically assumed. Twenty pages of resources for further study beyond the book's scope is a treasure trove at the end of the text.

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***Throughout, it is evident that the medieval era is far more complicated than typically assumed.***

In 17 chapters, then, Perry and Gabriele deliver a thousand dazzling years. Throughout, the authors are clear that 'bright' does not mean sanitized or romanticized. Evidence of brutality is attended, yet violence is not permitted to entirely characterize the era.

Who can fail to appreciate such candor? In reading this book, I was initially enthused. Then, with each turn of the chapter, my zeal became unsettled. As I reached the final page, I had enjoyed a fabulous journey with tour guides whose presentation was so rapid and polished, so extreme in glistening examples of beauty and gritty examples of brutality, and so silent on other significant aspects of the medieval world, that I was left with the indelible impression that something was not...quite...right.



STE. CHAPELLE, PARIS, 13TH C.

Like the very centuries that *The Bright Ages* detail this book is not without 'shadows.' Even as the basic thesis of *The Bright Ages* can be praised, its problematic aspects must be thoughtfully addressed.

It is quite clear that while the authors are debunking the myth of the 'Dark Ages,' they are maintaining other false popular narratives. It is here that the greatest caveats about the book can be voiced. An academic critique might point out the odd absence of Matilda of Tuscany or Frederick II, or argue that a return to the court of Byzantium, especially impactful eighth-century figures like the Empress Irene and John of Damascus, would strengthen the book. The authors were quiet about the vibrancy, involvement, and variety of monasteries throughout the medieval period. This absence complimented silence on the vital role of Christian intellectual and theological activity during this entire period. (Where is Cassiodorus, for example?) It is as though the authors painted with a beautiful landscape but bizarrely neglected an essential color.

Perhaps it is impolite to criticize a book for what is missing. Difficult choices must be made as to what to exclude in every piece of writing. There are a few historical errors, primarily regarding the era just prior to the medieval. Examples include comments like "the apparatus of the Roman state melded quite easily with the existing church" in the fourth century (p. 124). The fourth century is far more complicated: Debates about public monuments, tense misunderstandings of Christianity among more than one emperor, and the difficult ministries of those like Ambrose and John Chrysostom reveal that easy 'melding' is a myth. Other blunders include a barely appearing, misconstrued Augustine (with a strange accounting of his just war theory) and the frequent use of the fraught term "Christianities" to include both orthodox Christian believers and those who rejected foundational faith norms (such as the Trinity or the deity of Christ). It is clear that the fourth and fifth centuries are neither authors' field of study, so perhaps here too we could withhold stronger critique.

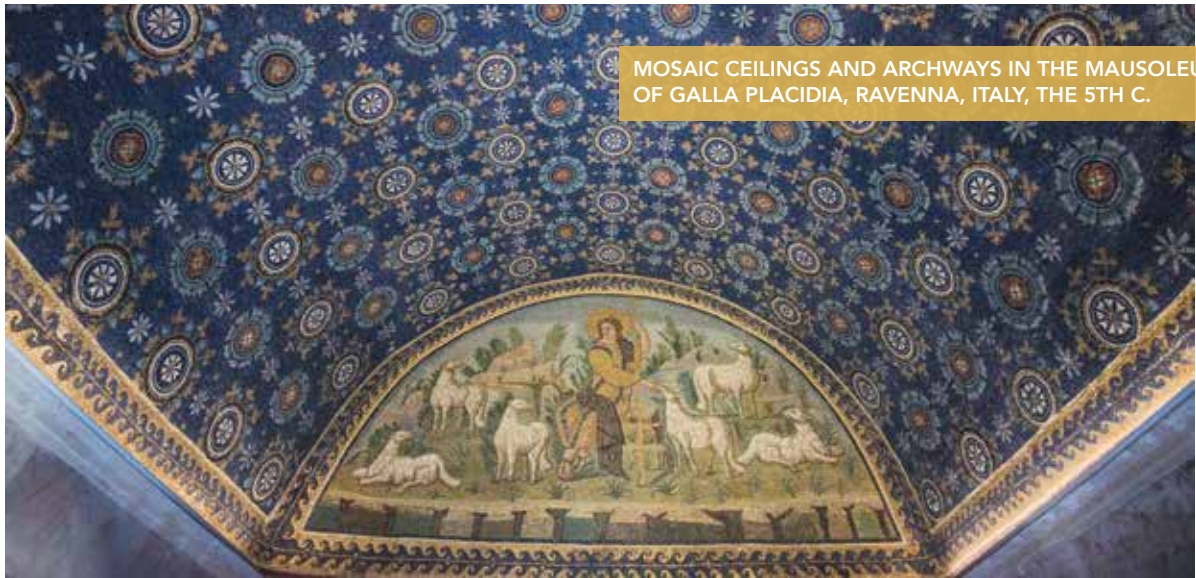
Worthy of the most caution, however, may be that while Gabriele and Perry counter many misconceptions of the Middle Ages, they echo other contemporary assumptions. The authors' 'straw men' are white supremacists and religious fanatics, who are frequently invoked and blamed for misrepresenting history and causing violence. The book has

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***In every age, there are restless and proud hearts than can exact great damage, and there are God-oriented hearts that create great beauty, show kindness and courage, and impact the culture. Every era is bright and shadowed ... this not because of tolerance or intolerance, but because of the presence of both God and human sin.***

drawn praise among media reviewers, because it fits the narrative of our times. In Gabriele and Perry's account, injustice and religious intolerance directly caused medieval human suffering. In such a thesis, human flourishing is the result of parity and diversity. This is an extremely contemporary ideological correlation, and it leaves us with unanswered questions. Where does parity come from? How is it preserved? The 'enlightened' answers might be tolerance, curiosity, information, and diversity. All fine, but where do those come from? Clearly, the answer cannot be mere human nature nor advanced knowledge: Our hearts and habits are not swayed by information alone (if they were, there would be no diet industry), nor do we tend naturally towards the Good, True, and Beautiful (as much as we may desire them).

Here we recall the insight of a great early medieval figure: "Our hearts are restless." Augustine received lamentably little attention in *The Bright Ages*, but his writings help explain the problem that underlies Gabriele and Perry's thesis. "You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You," Augustine famously penned in the *Confessions*. The Middle Ages, like every era, are human. In every age, there are restless and proud hearts that can exact great damage, and there are God-oriented hearts that create great beauty, show kindness and courage, and impact the culture. Every era is bright and shadowed ... this is not because of tolerance or intolerance, but because of the presence of both God and human sin. The Triune God creates, sustains, and revives life. Sin dehumanizes, disorders, and destroys. It is as simple (and profound) as that.



MOSAIC CEILINGS AND ARCHWAYS IN THE MAUSOLEUM OF GALLA PLACIDIA, RAVENNA, ITALY, THE 5TH C.

Can *The Bright Ages* be recommended? Gabriele and Perry offer a journey through centuries which they quite compellingly show are more dazzling than dim. Here I am enthused. In my years of teaching both history and theology at CCU, it is the medieval era that my students most often mischaracterize. I want them to appreciate the ‘Bright Ages,’ whose centuries offer a different and lived spirituality, attention to the significance of our embodiment, awareness of the preciousness of grace and the holiness of God, conviction about the importance of the local church, investment in the holy significance of the arts, and a familiarity with patience. We have forgotten the richness of our mMedieval ancestry, no doubt. Like our own day, and eras prior, there was both brokenness and beauty, spiritual depth, and depravity.

If I were to assign this book to my students, however, it would be as a case study. Even as the authors debunk old presuppositions, they present new presuppositions — ideas promoted in our own age that do not necessarily represent a robust, informed Christian worldview. Yes, the medieval age “should be understood as both complicated and human,” in which people at times seek “to understand and work with one another, other times to hate and to harm” (144). We see the same paradox of history throughout Scripture. But we would assert that the medieval era is not bright because it is diverse, or dark only in times of intolerance. It is bright and dark because it unfolds among humans on the earth that God created and is even now at work within.

Even in reading this book, we are reminded why the Strategic Priorities of CCU are so important. It can be easy to become enamored with popular revisionism. Instead, CCU students are equipped with the intellectual tools to dissect inadequate worldviews, then to provide a robust and informed analysis and mature, God-oriented hope.

In this vein, *The Bright Ages* should be read for its beauty, discussed for its discrepancies of content and thesis, and then ultimately answered with an even greater depth of informed and intelligent wonder.

#### REVIEWER BIO



#### DR. MEGAN DEVORE

*Dr. Megan DeVore serves as professor of Church History and Early Christian Studies at Colorado Christian University, where she has taught for over 15 years (meanwhile publishing on historic Christianity, mentoring, and speaking at various seminaries, churches, and conferences). She is married to a local pastor and has three children.*

# In Order to Live

## A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom

by Yeonmi Park

### REVIEW BY JEFF HUNT

Director of the Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University



As a young girl, Yeonmi Park risked her life to escape the poverty, torture, and control of North Korea to reach freedom. She got to America through tremendous trials only to experience similar problems in modern-day universities.

North Korea isn't as crazy as an American college these days. This was the shocking sentiment from author Yeonmi Park, a North Korean defector, while attending Columbia University. "I thought North Koreans were the only people who hated Americans, but it turns out there are a lot of people hating this country in this country."<sup>1</sup> Park has an interesting perspective. Growing up in the hermit kingdom of North Korea, she experienced the end result of central planning — poverty, famine, torture, and control.

In her book *In Order to Live*, Yeonmi Park details everyday life in North Korea. Initially a socialist paradise outperforming South Korea, the country eventually "ran out of other people's money," as Margaret Thatcher once said about socialism. It turns out North Korea was propped up financially by the Soviet Union. The result of the collapse was a life mired in poverty. Park was lucky to get meat twice a month. She and her sister would scour forests for leaves and dragonflies to eat. Many days she had only a single meal.

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***Park has an interesting perspective. Growing up in the hermit kingdom of North Korea, she experienced the end result of central planning — poverty, famine, torture, and control.***

North Korean society is heavily class-based, with 50 subgroups in the caste system. Those of the highest class serve the political party in power. If one falls out of favor with the political elite, it will prove almost impossible to provide for their family. This happened to Park's family when her uncle was accused of raping one of his students and attempting to murder his wife. "In North Korea, if one member of your family commits a serious crime, everybody is considered a criminal."<sup>2</sup>

Every adult in North Korea is constantly monitored by neighbors and officials in an effort to gauge their loyalty to the political state. Notes are kept in local administrative offices, and these files determine where you can go to school, where you can work, where you can live, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Students in North Korea are educated in the 10 Principles of the Regime, a version of their Ten Commandments. Park only lists three, but if you review the other seven, they are very similar.<sup>4</sup>

1. We must give our all in the struggle to unify the entire society with the revolutionary ideology of the Great Leader comrade Kim Il Sung.



*The effects of godless socialism are very clear: poverty, pain, brokenness, and corruption.*

2. Respect the Great Leader comrade Kim Il Sung with the utmost loyalty.
3. Pass down the great achievements of Great Leader comrade Kim Il Sung's revolution from generation to generation, inheriting and completing it to the end.

Every Saturday, North Koreans meet for propaganda and self-criticism meetings. In addition to memorizing quotations from Kim Il Sung, North Koreans must confess their sins to the state. An example given by Park is, "This week, I was too spoiled and not thankful enough for my benevolent Dear Leader's eternal and unconditional love."<sup>5</sup> Confession ends with, "Since then, our Dear Leader has forgiven me because of his benevolent, gracious leadership. I thank him, and I will do better next week."<sup>6</sup> As Park's family entered the lower levels of North Korea's caste system, her father turned to bootlegging in an effort to provide for his family. He was eventually captured and placed into a prison work camp. His wife was also sent to a re-education camp.

On the brink of starvation, Park and her mother make a daring escape into China only to find themselves sex-trafficked by another culture suffering from central planning. China's one-child policy has resulted in a broken ratio of men to women. Given its patriarchal culture, the Chinese favor a boy over a girl and abort or abandon girls. As a result, unfavorable men must purchase trafficked women from North Korea to be their wives. Properly titled, *In Order to Live*, Park and her mother endure horrific rapes by a series of criminals as they are passed around in a human sex-trafficking ring. Every step of the way to America was a battle against horrendous organized crime and overbearing government control. Ultimately, it was Christian missionaries who got her to Mongolia, then South Korea, and eventually to America.

The book is not a historical review of policy decisions and their implications. You have to surmise the consequences of socialism and central planning by looking at their day-to-day implications for average North Koreans. The effects of godless socialism are very clear: poverty, pain, brokenness, and corruption. The book is also not rose-colored when it comes to Yeonmi Park. She confesses her sins, that while in China, she helped facilitate sex trafficking to serve her crime bosses. But her




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***Park's warning about modern American college campuses should be taken seriously... At the publication of this review, Yale Law School students recently sought to stop an event on free speech.***

repentance, strong spirit, and commitment to her family are admirable.

What is Colorado Christian University to learn from this book? The natural state of government is not to embrace individual liberty, constitutional order, and limited government — quite the opposite. The natural bend of government is towards ever more controlling power. As is so clearly evident in this book, centralized planning does not result in human flourishing. There is strong historical evidence that a society based upon Christian values supports individual liberty, limited government, strong families, compassion, and tolerance — this is common grace for all. Park's warning about modern American college campuses should be taken seriously. They are ever more fascist in their



*The natural state of government is not to embrace individual liberty, constitutional order, and limited government — quite the opposite. The natural bend of government is towards ever more controlling power.*

worldview. In November 2022, Yale Law School students sought to stop an event on free speech. According to the fascist worldview at Yale Law School, free speech is not equal for all. Only those the fascists approve can speak. It sounds a lot like North Korea.

North Korea, through the eyes of Yeonmi Park, shows us the end result of godless, central planning. The fact that this worldview is being promoted in colleges across America should be highly alarming. Thank God for a university like Colorado Christian University and its commitment to Christ, grace, truth, and its strategic priorities of limited government, personal freedom, and traditional family values.

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 “North Korean defector slams ‘woke’ US schools,” Mark Moore and Mark Lungariello, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2021/06/14/north-korean-defector-slams-woke-us-schools/>
- 2 Yeonmi Park, *In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 26.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Park, *In Order to Live*, 48.
- 5 Park, *In Order to Live*, 86.
- 6 Ibid.

## REVIEWER BIO



### JEFF HUNT

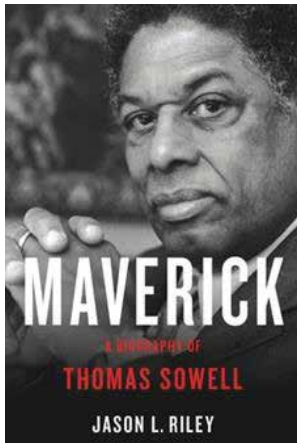
Jeff Hunt is the director of the Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University. He previously served the Rick Santorum and Mitt Romney presidential campaigns.

# Maverick: A Biography of Thomas Sowell

by Jason L. Riley

REVIEW BY DR. STEPHEN SHUMAKER

Professor of Politics



Jason Riley's *Maverick* recounts the embattled career and thought of Thomas Sowell, one of our greatest contemporary minds. Sowell's broad-reaching intellectual exploits subvert numerous prominent, destructive ideologies, whether in economics, sociology, or politics. His brilliance and unflinching

commitment to the truth have made him a beacon of conservative insight.

One can call Thomas Sowell “Maverick,” that’s fair enough, as our author, Jason Riley, gives us good reasons to do so. He details Sowell’s youth through his graduate years at the University of Chicago, his teaching career at Cornell, and his writing career afterwards, noting how Sowell made an extraordinary life with his ‘go-it-alone attitude,’ even at great cost to himself. Yet perhaps there is a better nickname for him, and since according to what we might call the “Law of Jack” — namely, that all good conversations inevitably lead back to C.S. Lewis — why not call him by the name of that famous Narnian Marsh-wiggle, Puddleglum? It certainly captures what Thomas Sowell’s average, inept (or corrupt) critics all but do — when they’re not just ignoring him. Sowell is, from their perspective, something of a bizarre, mythical hybrid creature (a conservative person of color?!) that dwells in rather swampy realms with what appears to be

nothing but dreary-eyed pessimism to pour over their otherwise glorious, unconstrained dreams. Truth be told, Thomas Sowell has been a one-man wrecking crew of so many of the most intoxicating, destructive ideologies in America these last 50 years that perhaps nothing would offer greater relief to his critics than to discover that Sowell was indeed, after all, merely a harmless creature in some bygone fantasy novel written for children!

Although it’s certainly Riley’s intention that we discover and admire the merits of Sowell’s intellectual life and career — and I want to return to this later — the first question at hand is why should we read Jason Riley’s account itself? Why not skip *Maverick* and go straight to Sowell? To this very sensible question I would reply in a somewhat medieval fashion: You have either read Thomas Sowell or you have not. If so, then you should read *Maverick*; and if not, you should read it still. In all fairness, it’s probably the case that *Maverick* is a book you’ll only read once, but that very once is important and worth your time.

If you haven’t read Sowell, then *Maverick* provides an easy, engaging map of his work with plenty of flesh-and-bones biographical insights to bring his thought to life. Sowell is, after all, a very interesting man apart from his usual intellectual achievements. Riley reveals this through recounting Sowell’s longstanding interest and talent with photography, as well as his research on late-talking children. Beyond this, however, Sowell’s work is so broad (and at times sufficiently dense) that a solid map or an admiring tour guide is exactly what’s called for in order to get a sense of how you should tackle Sowell on your own. Is it economics and epistemology

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***Maverick* effortlessly introduces us to the fundamental contours of Sowell's controversial thoughts one by one.**

that interest you? Perhaps the sociology of global cultures and ethnic groups? There is, of course, Sowell's extensive economic and empirical analysis of the phenomenon of racism, as well as the history of poor urban Blacks in the United States. *Maverick* effortlessly introduces us to the fundamental contours of Sowell's controversial thoughts one by one. Some of the more prominent of these include the notion that minimum wage laws are damaging to the poor, that affirmative action is simply counterproductive, and perhaps most importantly, that social equality in terms of 'equality of results' is not only impossible to sustain, but essentially destructive to any stable, prosperous human society. *Maverick* is the perfect front door into Sowell's expansive mansion of thought.

Let's say, on the other hand, that you've read and appreciate Sowell's work already. Is it still the case that you should read *Maverick*? I think so. First of all, it's almost certainly the case that you haven't read all of Sowell's work; so in that sense, it can still provide a useful map for those undiscovered regions before you. Beyond this, there is something truly inspiring about Riley's insights into the singular commitment of Sowell's 'go-it-alone' mindset, especially in terms of the lifelong costs this entailed for Sowell's career and reputation. Riley makes clear that Sowell is not just some contrarian curmudgeon, delighting in raining on people's parades, but truly a fearless, principled lover of truth. Sowell should have had a long, brilliant career teaching at Cornell. He should have exerted untold influence on our nation's brightest, aspiring young Black men and women. He should have been universally heralded — not just as one of the greatest Black conservative thinkers of our times, but as simply one of the greatest thinkers of our time. None of this happened as it should have because of Sowell's singular commitment to stand for the truth — alone and at whatever costs. One can never have too many stories of such thinkers sufficiently brought before our hearts and minds, and we have Riley's *Maverick* to thank for doing us this service.


Finally, if you will indulge me, I'd like to return briefly to consider the broader question of the value of Thomas Sowell's intellectual labors. As I mentioned above, there is something to the idea of labelling Sowell after Lewis's Puddleglum, but not in the pejorative sense of his misguided critics. Or to be more accurate, Sowell is really more like Lewis himself (in all of his brilliance) but someone, who rather than channeling his wisdom through a character, chose willingly to play that character's part in the world at large. What do I mean? Puddleglum's great, heroic moment comes when the serpent queen of the shadowy Underworld has nearly succeeded in completely dispiriting the young children with her enchantment: "There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sun, no sky, no Aslan." It is then that the Marsh-wiggle — knowing that it will hurt — deliberately chooses to walk over to the enchanting fire and stamp it out with his bare foot. He breaks the spell. At least for me there is no more apt image. Where our culture continually murmurs enchanting but insidious lies, it's Thomas Sowell who lets the truth lead him to the fire. It's Sowell who breaks the spell.

#### REVIEWER BIO



#### DR. STEPHEN SHUMAKER

*Dr. Stephen Shumaker is professor of Politics at CCU, as well as the coordinator of CCU's Augustine Honors Great Books Liberal Arts program. His Ph.D. is from the University of Dallas's interdisciplinary, Great Books graduate school, The Institute for Philosophic Studies. He has taught for over 25 years and has constructed and directed a series of undergraduate and graduate Great Books programs that involve the conversational exploration of the Great Books of the Western world from a strong biblical foundation and perspective. It's his conviction that genuine education is in its essence conservative and liberating, directed by the best of what has been thought in the past and towards a deep sense of gratitude for God's goodness and one's heritage.*



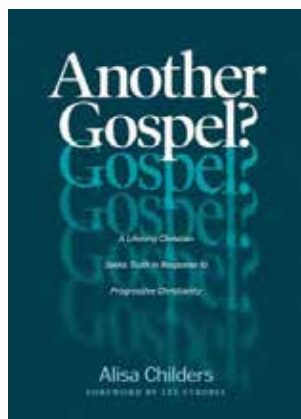
*My faith was  
confronted ... rocked  
by a pastor who had  
won my trust, respect,  
and loyalty.*

# Another Gospel?

by Alisa Childers

REVIEW BY MARK MITTELBERG

Executive Director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics



*It felt like I'd been plunged into a stormy ocean with waves crashing over my head. No lifeboat. No rescue in sight. In the film The Perfect Storm, one of the last images is of the giant ship being capsized and pushed underwater by a wave the size of a skyscraper. The tiniest form of a human head peeks above the water for*

*a split second before disappearing into the depths.*

*That was me.*

These are the words of Alisa Childers near the beginning of her critically important book, *Another Gospel?* as she describes her spiritual state after having her faith undermined through a seemingly unlikely source.<sup>1</sup> Childers did not appear to be a candidate for such spiritual doubt or “deconstruction.” The daughter of renowned Christian music pioneer, Chuck Girard of the band Love Song, she was also a singer in a popular Christian music group called ZOEGirl and seemed to have matters of faith pretty well sewn up. Then she started attending what on the surface appeared to be a vibrant evangelical church with lively worship and a youthful pastor who was a highly effective communicator. Soon, she was asked to join a by-invitation-only discussion group of church insiders, who the pastor would personally teach on a regular basis. Childers was excited to get to know some of the members more deeply — not as it seemed.

“My faith was confronted ... rocked by a pastor

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***“I knew what I believed; now I was forced to consider why I believed. Dog-paddling to keep my head above the water in that storm-tossed ocean, I begged God for rescue...”***

who had won my trust, respect, and loyalty... an educated, intellectual, calm, and eloquent church leader — someone who expressed love for Jesus,” Childers reports. “He was a brilliant communicator, and he had a bone to pick with Christianity.” “Meeting after meeting,” she continues, “every precious belief I held about God, Jesus, and the Bible was placed on an intellectual chopping block and hacked to pieces.” Eventually, the pastor confided to the group that he was, in reality, a “hopeful agnostic.”<sup>2</sup> “This pastor began examining the tenets of the faith. The Virgin Birth? Doesn’t matter. The Resurrection? Probably happened, but you don’t have to believe in it. The Atonement? That would be a nope. And the Bible? God forbid that you believed Scripture was inerrant. He pointed out that even the high schoolers had moved beyond that primitive notion.”<sup>3</sup>


After four months, reeling, Alisa left that discussion group as well as the progressive church that was hosting it. “I was thrust into a spiritual blackout — a foray into darkness like I’d never known. I knew what I believed; now I was forced to consider why I believed. Dog-paddling to keep my head above the water in that storm-tossed ocean, I begged God for rescue: ‘God, I know you’re there. Please send me a lifeboat.’”<sup>4</sup>

Over the next few years, God answered that prayer in a multitude of ways — including through a Christian apologist who Childers happened to listen to one day on the radio. “I heard a gentle, grandfatherly voice addressing one of the very claims that had been lobbed at me by the progressive pastor. What I heard took my breath away and then poured it right back into my lungs ... [He] systematically took down objection after objections with no fear or anger. He was kind. He was resolute. He was far more convincing and fact-based than the progressive pastor. I had been searching for truth, and on the radio that day, I found it.”<sup>5</sup> God ultimately used Childers’s experience at that church to strengthen her faith. She was much more motivated than ever before to research the reasons for her beliefs. She studied book after book about Christian history, theology, and apologetics. She attended conferences and found biblically-based leaders who helped mentor her. I personally got to know Alisa when she attended a conference for emerging apologists at which I was teaching. Since that time, she has become a leading voice in challenging so-called progressive Christianity. She addresses these issues and helps many people struggling with doubts through her blogs and podcasts ([www.alisachilders.com](http://www.alisachilders.com)) and through her

bestselling book, *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity*.

How strongly do I recommend this book? Here’s what I said after first reviewing the manuscript a couple of years ago and providing an endorsement to her publisher: “*Another Gospel?* is one of the most important books of our time. It shows how progressive Christianity redefines the nature of God, the mission of Jesus, and the message of the gospel — while undermining the authority of Scripture. In these pages Alisa Childers exposes this dangerous movement and points us back to a biblical faith.”

In addition, Lee Strobel wrote the foreword for *Another Gospel?* He said: “With clarity, passion, and unrelenting charm, Alisa exposes the often-subtle deceptions that too many Christians have been uncritically accepting as gospel truth. Her discernment is razor-sharp, her compass is pointed unswervingly toward the real Jesus, and her conclusions are solidly supported.” “It’s an understatement to say this book is important,” Strobel continued. “It’s vital. It’s the right book at the right time. In fact, it may be the most influential book you will read this year. Please study it, underline



*With clarity, passion, and unrelenting charm, Alisa exposes the often-subtle deceptions that too many Christians have been uncritically accepting as gospel truth.*

***“Please study it, underline it, highlight it, talk about it with others, give copies to friends and church leaders, use it in your discussion groups, quote it on social media. Take its admonitions to heart.”***

it, highlight it, talk about it with others, give copies to friends and church leaders, use it in your discussion groups, quote it on social media. Take its admonitions to heart. Let it solidify your own faith so that you can confidently point others to the unchanging gospel of redemption and hope.”<sup>6</sup>

I couldn't agree more — and would add that it was to address matters like these that Lee and I launched the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University ([www.strobelcenter.com](http://www.strobelcenter.com)). We want to equip more and more students to not only stand strong in their faith, but to lead countless others toward a confident allegiance to the one and only true Savior, Jesus Christ.

## FOOTNOTES

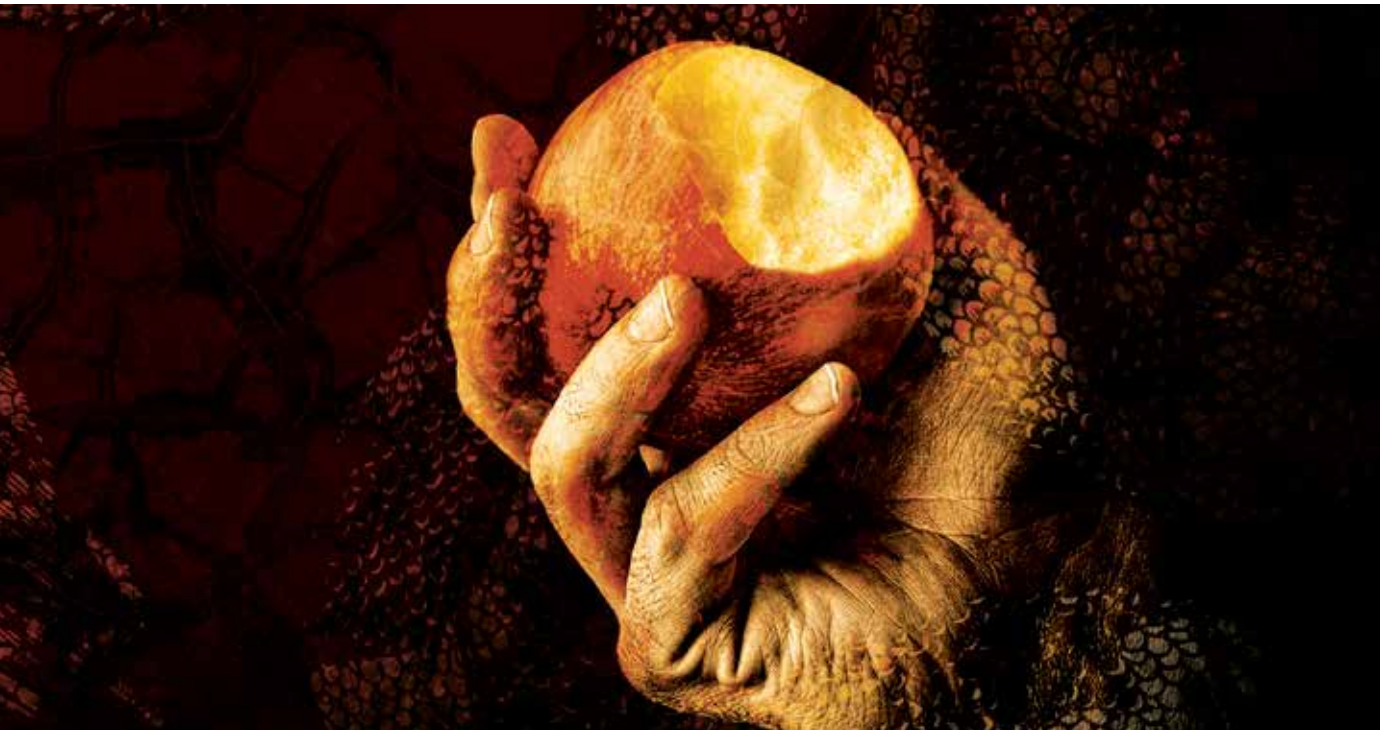
- 1 Alisa Childers, *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2020), 4.
- 2 Childers, *Another Gospel?*, 6.
- 3 Childers, *Another Gospel?*, 6–7.
- 4 Childers, *Another Gospel?*, 8.
- 5 Childers, *Another Gospel?*, 9.
- 6 Childers, *Another Gospel?*, xiv–xv.

## REVIEWER BIO



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