

Hitler was neither a deep nor a systematic thinker. But he was not a madman in the sense that many people imagine him to be. He had a theoretical, ostensibly scientific rationale for his racism, aggression, and German nationalism. For historians of Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Third Reich, Weikart has provided a very helpful study of the mind of Hitler.

For students of evolution and its impact on moral and social theory and practice, Weikart provides a rigorous argument that evolutionary ideas did indeed make way for Hitler's evil. Weikart is a careful historian, and in this book sticks closely to the original sources: Hitler's writings and his contemporary's recollections. Weikart never opines on the validity and morality of Darwinian evolution. Also, Weikart never claims that belief in Darwinian evolution *necessarily* leads to racism, eugenics, and holocaust. He does, however, present a powerful argument that, as a matter of historical fact, ideas based on Darwinian evolution have been used as a rationale to justify some of the most horrific events of the twentieth century. With any attempt to find causes and explanations for historical events, there will always be room to debate details. But it seems certain that no one can blithely dismiss the role of evolutionary thinking as trivial in the Nazi edifice of evil. Modern day Darwinists may be uncomfortable with this conclusion, but at one level or another, serious scholars will have a hard time denying this.

References

1. Bowler, P.J., *Evolution: The History of An Idea*, rev. ed., University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, p. 88, 1989.
2. This belief was shared by many other social Darwinists in the early 20th century, although it should be noted that only one subset of these were anti-Semitic.
3. The classic history of Nazism, William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, Simon & Schuster, p. 38, 1960, describes Ernst Röhm (leader of the Blackshirts) as "like so many of the early Nazis, a homosexual" (see also pp. 50, 120 and 225).

Britain's decline— a novel approach?

A review of
*The Undercover
Revolution: How Fiction
Changed Britain*
by Iain H. Murray
The Banner of Truth Trust,
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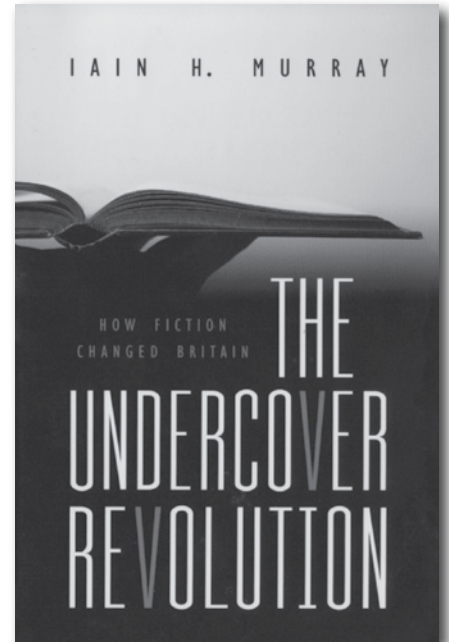
I loved Iain Murray's biography of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. So I couldn't resist getting into this booklet—more like a handful of brief essays—when someone sent it to me. Easy to down at one sitting, I found it almost an odd little book by comparison. And there is a thread running through it that led to some disquiet, as will be seen.

The first chapter deals with Robert Louis Stevenson (of *Treasure Island* fame), the second with the novelist Thomas Hardy. The third, called "The novelists multiply" details a number of other writers of the period with links to the first two and each other. The names covered at least briefly include George Bernard Shaw (writer of *Pygmalion*, from which the musical *My Fair Lady* was derived), the philosopher Bertrand Russell and science fiction pioneer H.G. Wells.

The closing chapter, "Is Christianity Fiction?" is really more of an appendix, with standard apologetic arguments for the reality of the death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Despite the subtitle's promise, the book spent little time on the mechanics of how "fiction changed Britain". The following points seemed to be largely assumed:

- Everyone knows of Britain's staggering post-Christian moral decay.
- The authors in question were immensely popular in the years transitioning to the current decay,



and so would have greatly influenced the culture.

Murray's compact text leaves a fair few dots for the reader to connect. Most of it is taken up with how these writers, who also mingled with one another, were in a state of anti-Christian rebellion and that their lives showed the consequences of this.

Murray repeatedly concludes that wilful rejection by these writers of Christ's claim on their lives was the root cause of the moral decay and its negative consequences that they each experienced (and also, by extension, of the moral decay they caused via their popular writings).

But in emphasizing this biblically indisputable, almost self-evident, truth (of wilful rejection emanating from a rebellious and unregenerate heart), it frequently comes across as if he is deliberately seeking to downplay the conclusions of those who have pinpointed the powerful influence of evolutionary thought in triggering and nurturing these radical social upheavals. Murray acknowledges

the writings of Darwin and Huxley as having ‘played a part’—in fact he does so more than once. But always with some sort of ‘but’—almost like raising the point in order to knock it down, or at least to ‘damn it with faint and qualified acknowledgement’. The basis for his ‘but’ is sometimes that the real problem is not science, it is the human heart (more on that later). Or, that these writers had far more influence on popular culture than the era’s evolutionary scientists. But this is also self-evident (of course more people will read popular fiction than read a science treatise), and misses the point.

The average person whose view on morality today has been dramatically influenced by evolutionary humanism in society has not even read Darwin, or even today’s evolutionary teachers. They are, however, influenced from a thousand directions by people who have been influenced (either directly, or via further intermediaries in the chain) by people whose thinking would not be what it is today were it not for evolutionary belief, emanating from and underpinned by those science writings that the average person has never read.

Ideas do affect people

At the deepest level, the person who uses evolution to evade the gospel is indeed engaged in wilful rejection of the truth. But at another level, people *are* influenced by the social milieu, by ideas and arguments. Hence Paul’s comment about the apostles’ role in “tearing down arguments” that set themselves up against God—2 Corinthians 10:5). Just as the heart set on rejection of God can use evolution as an excuse, the spirit of God can also use (and in our experience, has often so used) the force of reasoned argumentation to pierce through the evolutionary armour and convict the searching heart.

For me, having this different angle on the influences that helped shape the West’s moral decline was of

interest. But I fear that this work will, probably unintentionally, reinforce the notion of ‘why bother’ with apologetic arguments. Specifically, why bother with creation apologetics when it’s all a matter of the heart anyway, and far more people were influenced by fiction than by evolution. Whereas in fact the book leaks hints, almost in spite of itself, of the powerful way in which these fiction writers were indeed influenced by the pervasive evolutionism of the time, as we will see. In short, it is likely that if these writers had not lived in and been influenced by the culture prevailing in an era strongly pervaded by Darwin/Huxley, their lives may have taken a very different turn.

Whether it would have altered the outcome in terms of their personal salvation is impossible to know. But certainly, their impetus and capacity to taint society would have been severely blunted. Righteousness and right thinking exalts a nation, even when only a minority are truly born-again. The ability of the church to be salt and light on moral matters has a lot to do with the perceived authority of the Bible, even by the unregenerate. Once the Bible was perceived in Victorian culture as undermined by ‘science’ insofar as its history was concerned, the restraints were off as far as morality went, too.

Stevenson’s apostasy commenced at Edinburgh University, eight years after Darwin’s publication. His friend Henley wrote his famous humanist rally cry only six years later, and it bears repeating in the light of the common creationist reminder that if people believe that God did not really make us, then He does not own us, the Bible cannot be true, and He will not be our judge.

Henley’s proclamation was something which would have been unthinkable in a pre-Darwin-era British university setting:

“It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments
the scroll;
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.”

Clues within the text

There are stronger clues to the influence of evolutionary belief on these writers, even in Murray’s ultra-brief chronicling of their lives. For example, Murray refers to the man who has been credited with corrupting Stevenson, Edmund Gosse, son of the evangelical intellectual Philip Gosse. Edmund wrote *Father and Son*, in which he rejected his Christian upbringing by Gosse Sr.¹ What readers may not be aware of though is that the father’s tragically misfired *Omphalos* (trying to explain the fossils as having been created by God) made him a laughing stock, and likely helped earn the son’s contempt of both his father and his father’s Christianity—although Gosse’s idea was rejected by almost all Christians.^{2,3} But *Omphalos* would not have been written without the agonizing choices demanded of the Christian world by evolution and millions of years. This was detailed by Prof. T. John Rendle-Short, the founding chairman of the Brisbane-based ministry that is now Creation Ministries International (Australia), in a fascinating section of his book *Green Eye of the Storm*⁴—the ‘storm’ being the gathering clouds of Darwinism over England.

Perhaps Stevenson would still have died an unbeliever without Darwin, but it would have at least made it less likely that he would have so firmly insisted that for him, as Murray writes, “Life was only ‘a pilgrimage from nothing to nowhere’.”

Murray also writes that Stevenson’s father believed that the most damaging influence on his son was Herbert Spencer. (Spencer was a popular evolutionist who applied evolution to religion and society, and apparently coined the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’.) However, he then seeks to downplay this.

When we get to the novelist Thomas Hardy, we read that he was influenced by a major revival. This took place the year Darwin published, but thereafter, there was a gradual decline in the belief Hardy once professed. Murray says, “It is beyond my present purpose to discuss what

had brought this change of belief”, but nonetheless mentions a few factors, the first two of which are:

1. Essays on *liberal theology*. The way in which this surged as a result of the rapid acceptance of evolution within the church hardly requires further documentation.
2. The “agnosticism of Thomas Huxley” (aka ‘Darwin’s bulldog’ for his aggressive promotion of evolution, including to the wider society).

Nevertheless, Murray approvingly quotes Gertrude Himmelfarb’s view that the agnosticism in Hardy and his colleagues was not, as often supposed, due to the proof of evolution, but rather their rediscovery of an “old and obvious truth”.

While Murray is right to conclude that “unbelief suits human nature”, one wonders if he is aware of just how much (hopefully unintended) comfort his stance could give to those within the church who want to continue in their various compromises with the plain truth of Genesis. The last thing the church needs at this crucial time is another reason to continue to slumber about the factors not only causing, but accelerating the decline, as the bad seed of past generations bears more and more fruit. Unbelief suits human nature, true, but that is equally true of the times of the great Christian eras of the past as to later times. Thus, it tells us nothing of the actual cause of the slide to apostasy, nor what our responsibility should be in the face of it. While revivals are ultimately the work of God’s spirit, how can we expect Him to bless and honour a culture in which those who bear His name so frequently deal in cavalier fashion with His revealed truth concerning the history of man and the universe?

Murray incisively dispatches the notion that Hardy (whose novel *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* I had to study in an Australian high school) was some sort of ‘harmless agnostic’, showing instead that he was profoundly opposed to the biblical God. But here, too, he overlooks clues that this imbibing of/ contributing to the spirit of the age had

a lot to do with the rejection of Genesis Creation/Fall. Hardy’s anti-Christian poetry quoted by Murray refers to a ‘god’ who says of the world,

“It lost my interest from the first,
My aims therefore
succeeding ill.”

The first line reflects deism of the sort that encouraged Darwin to take God ‘off the hook’ by taking him ‘out of the picture’.⁵ The next line seems to sarcastically point to the imperfections of nature as signs of God’s failure to get it right. This again reflects a culture which had not taken the Genesis Fall seriously for years, due to geology’s long-age views. This prior long history of Genesis compromise⁶ helped Darwin (who made good use of this ‘imperfections’ argument) to prevail in record time.

Murray quotes a very revealing portion of another Hardy anti-Bible poem:

“Since Reverend Doctors
now declare
That clerks and people
must prepare
To doubt if Adam ever were...”

But he fails to follow through on the obvious implications of how compromises on Genesis strengthened the hand of unbelievers. This would of course have seriously weakened his apparent stance of ‘Evolution’s not the problem, it’s the heart’ (as if these were mutually exclusive).

The father of science fiction— evolutionist to the core

We then arrive at a brief overview of a batch of other acquaintances of Stevenson and Hardy. These include H.G. Wells, ironically renowned for not just his aggressively anti-Christian stance but also his rampant evolutionism, something upon which he repeatedly based his objections to Christianity. His writings (for example, *The Time Machine*) are commonly laced with evolution-derived themes.

Jerry Bergmann’s well-documented 1994 article in *Journal of Creation*, titled “H.G. Wells: Darwin’s disciple and eugenicist extraordinaire”,⁷

is forthright in highlighting these many obvious connections in the life of Wells, who professed a Christian faith in his youth. It states *inter alia*:

“As a youngster, Wells stated he had a ‘crude conception of evolution’ but when he got to college he became fully persuaded of its ‘truth’. As a result, he eventually rejected God, Christianity and religion. Among the books that he read was Henry Drummond’s *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. Drummond was a theistic evolutionist who wrote several best-selling books defending Darwinism and trying to harmonize Darwinism and Christianity.”

In this section, too, Murray relates facts that stand in contrast to his repeated downplaying of the importance of the boiling evolutionary thought of the era. Of George Bernard Shaw, Murray writes that he, along with his whole band of friends (which included all those covered in Murray’s book), “believed evolution proved the slow progress of man to perfection. Salvation could be hoped for—as H.G. Wells also theorized—in supermen of the future.” And of one of this band, philosopher Bertrand Russell, Murray states that the “main problem he addressed was where certainty and happiness are to be found, given that man is only an ‘accident of evolution’.”

Such clues and hints about the influence of evolution on these writers keep popping up. Despite this, however, towards the end, Murray returns to his theme: that even though many have said it was science, and in particular the teaching of evolution, that caused the change in Britain, it was really the human heart. But this is a bit like blaming plane crashes on gravity. True, but totally unhelpful in explaining why a particular plane crashed. Similarly, blaming the *universally* corrupt human heart for Britain’s apostasy gets nowhere, because it fails to explain why it was *particularly* corrupt at *this* time.⁸

As ‘exhibit A’ for this conclusion we are told that “none of the men we have considered was a scientist”. But as alluded to earlier, this sadly misses the point in many ways. Not the least of these is the fact that the vast majority of the millions of people influenced by the conclusions of scientists are themselves not scientists. Most have probably never even read the primary scientific sources of the ideas that have changed their culture and their view of the world. For pop icons to declare in their lyrics today,

“You and me ain’t nothin’
but mammals,
So let’s do it like they do
on the Discovery Channel”,

the opening premise is clearly a deduction from today’s rampant evolutionism. But it is hardly necessary for the songwriter to have been a scientist, or have read any books by scientists, to have been both influenced by evolutionary ideas, or to be himself highly influential in influencing large numbers of others.

Murray correctly states of the era and the writers he discusses that “the writings of Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Huxley were made use of in defence of unbelief”, but again seems to brush that fact aside to bolster his contention that it really was not science/evolution, but rather, the human heart. In highlighting the unfortunate way in which such cavalier dismissals may aid and abet the cause of compromise (which from Murray’s other writings I would be sure was far from his intent) one would want to unhesitatingly agree with his diagnosis re the human heart *per se*. But I would suggest a profound disagreement with the ‘either/or’ he seems to set up, such that the ‘heart’ idea means to some extent ‘dissing’ the idea that the effects of evolution were crucial in the decline of the UK’s once-Christian culture.

Conclusion

We cannot change the human heart, but God can. And one of the tools He uses and has used to great

effect is creation evangelism—defending and proclaiming the great truths of biblical history. If powerful creationist arguments and apologetics had been available and widely known in the era just following Darwin, it is overwhelmingly likely that we would not have seen the same rise to prominence, and arrogant certainty of unbelief, of the writers whose influence Murray rightly bemoans. Also, if the powerful geological and theological arguments of the Scriptural Geologists had been better known,⁶ the church before Darwin would not have abandoned biblical history by capitulating to geological uniformitarianism, and adopted notions like ‘fixity of species’ and ‘centres of creation’. These were straw men for Darwin to knock down, and geological uniformitarianism paved the way for Darwin’s biological uniformitarianism.

We are commanded to be ready to “give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15), and we emulate the apostles by being ready to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 10:5) as they did. They clearly understood the ultimately spiritual nature of the battle no less than the author of *Undercover Revolution*. But they nevertheless saw engagement with the ‘marketplace of ideas’ as crucial in the gospel battle for hearts and minds; false ideas are worth countering, because ideas influence hearts and minds. These earliest followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, directly commissioned by Him, knew about the sinful condition of the human heart, and the primacy of God in salvation; the same Paul who wrote the above Corinthian passage also wrote Romans Chapters 1 and 2, for example. They could have taken a similar ‘spiritual-sounding high road’ by saying, for instance, “Well, yes, we know there are all these very persuasive philosophies out there, but really, the main problem is that their hearts are hardened”—and

thus have diluted the passion of their fellows for actively countering such teachings. We can be thankful that they did not.

References

1. A modern biographer of the Gosses, Ann Thwaites (*Glimpses of the Wonderful: The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, 1810–1888*, Faber & Faber, London, 2002), claims that Edmund’s portrait was highly inaccurate, because of Edmund’s poor memory and willingness to change the facts to fit the story, and that he was jealous of his father’s superior abilities, e.g. as one of the best known naturalists and authors of his day.
2. My colleague Dr Sarfati has written: “Gosse’s failure was unfortunately to invent the *unbiblical* idea that *time moved in a circle*, which God interrupted when He created. The time of real history since creation he called ‘diachronic’, while ‘before’ creation, the cycling time was unreal, ‘virtual’ time he called ‘prochronic’. Thus Adam and Eve would have been created with a navel to reflect a prochronic history of growing from a mother’s womb, even though there was no real ‘diachronic’ history of such a thing. The fossils were likewise created in prochronic time. Indeed, no evidence in the present could differentiate features produced in diachronic or prochronic time.”
3. *Omphalos* was a passing phase though, despite what Edmund claimed. Philip wrote 4 books and over 30 scientific papers in the next 3 years, and made enough money to live in comfort.
4. Banner of Truth Trust, UK, 1998; see review by Bates, G., *Tempestuous times*, *J. Creation* 13(2):31–33, 1999.
5. Lines borrowed from the narration of CMI’s Darwin documentary, *The Voyage that Shook the World*.
6. Mortenson, T., *The Great Turning Point: The Church’s Catastrophic Mistake on Geology—Before Darwin*, Master Books, Green Forrest, AR, 2004.
7. *Journal of Creation* 18(3):116–120, 2004.
8. I am indebted to Jonathan Sarfati for this thought, which in turn reflects economist Thomas Sowell’s comments on why it is irrational to blame ‘greed’ (which is somewhat of a *universal* in human society) for a *particular* financial crisis.