

1. DIGNITY: Created in the Image of God

Twenty-six year-old Heidi Crowter loves God, loves life, loves her husband – and is a passionate campaigner. In 2021 she brought a legal challenge against the government of the United Kingdom, over a law which discriminates against unborn babies with disabilities. Heidi was born with Down’s syndrome.¹ As a teenager, she was cruelly trolled on social media. ‘It was hurtful’, she says. ‘When I hear things like that, I go to the Bible: “I praise you because I am fearfully and

1 Down syndrome (or Down’s syndrome) refers to a condition where a child is born with an extra copy of their 21st chromosome (about 1 in 700 babies in the US). They may have some developmental delays and disabilities, but many people with this syndrome enjoy happy and fulfilled lives. <https://www.healthline.com/health/down-syndrome#causes> (accessed 24 January, 2022).

wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). It reminds me what **God** thinks about me.²

'JUST A TUMOUR ON THE EARTH'?

On The Origin of Species by Charles Darwin was published in 1859. It led to an increased acceptance of evolutionary theory. In turn, that fed into a worldview which insisted that there is no Creator God, and we are here by chance. Today, many assume that we are just material beings, shaped by chemical, physical and economic forces.

That's a 'naturalistic' worldview. It implies there's no ultimate 'purpose' for our existence at all, and that there's no reason to see human beings as possessing unique dignity. We're just on a continuum with the rest of nature.

Radical green activist, **Pentti Linkola (1932-2020)**, insisted that humans are like a tumour on the earth, consuming more than our fair share of nature's resources. Logically, he argued, the majority of humans should be

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/dec/03/my-life-is-just-as-important-as-everybody-elses-meet-the-disability-leaders> (accessed 13 August, 2021).

killed.³ A growing number of radical activists regard humans as the 'enemy' of the planet. They want to give legal rights to animals and plants.⁴

Others don't go that far. But they'd argue that if we just evolved, the good of the species is the most important thing. Arguably, we should get rid of weaker people, and those who are 'useless' to others. Some believe that some human lives are 'not worth living'. Those who suffer intense pain, or terminal illness should be helped to die. Those with disabilities should be aborted before birth.

But evolution is 'a theory in crisis'!⁵ It is an observable fact only at a small scale: the variations which are usually called **micro-evolution**. An increasing number of scientists question the way in which Darwin 'jumped' from **micro-evolution** to **macro-evolution**.⁶

3 Pentti Linkola, *Human Flood*, http://www.penttilinkola.com/pentti_linkola/ecofascism_writings/humanflood/ (accessed 28 July, 2021).

4 <https://waronhumans.com/the-war-on-humans-documentary/> (accessed 24 January, 2022).

5 Denton, M, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Adler and Adler Publishers, 1986).

6 Johnson, P E, 'Evolution: Fact or Fantasy?' *Apologetics Study Bible* (Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), p. 7.

The concept of macro-evolution has been challenged by the discovery that the universe had a beginning; the discovery of 'fine tuning' in the universe;⁷ and the discovery of information in every cell. Each cell is filled with exquisite machinery. One pinhead of DNA could hold enough information to fill a stack of books stretching from the earth to the moon 500 times.⁸ **God has left His signature in every cell.**⁹

THE DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky,

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- 7 The various conditions on earth are precisely balanced in order to support life, in a way so precise that it cannot reasonably be explained by chance. McDermott, G R, *Everyday Glory: The Revelation of God in all of Reality* (Baker Academic, 2018), pp. 63-80.
- 8 'DNA the Language of Life', *Answers in Genesis*, 1 July, 2008, <https://answersingenesis.org/genetics/dna-similarities/dna-a-summary/> (accessed 30 December, 2020).
- 9 This phrase is taken from the title of a book by Stephen C Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (Harper One, 2009).

DIGNITY: Created in the Image of God

over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' (Gen. 1:26-28)

The first chapter of the Bible is clear. *Every* human being is created by God in His image, and has dignity and worth. Each time a male sperm fertilises a female egg, a unique life begins. After conception, no new genetic information is added. The Christian worldview affirms that *every human life* should be valued from conception right through to natural death.

The sixth commandment, 'You shall not murder',¹⁰ is placed on the conscience of every person. God is angry at all wrongful taking of human life.¹¹ And yet, globally, more than

10 Exodus 20:13.

11 Genesis 9:6.

seventy million unborn human lives are ended every year. Abortion is also horribly damaging for the mother. Tragically, many women are coerced into it.

God is also angry if we treat other people badly, or even look down on any person made in His image:

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God. (Prov. 14:31)

The celebrity filling up your social media? Made in the image of God. The homeless person who sits outside the supermarket each day? Made in the image of God. The greatest possible affirmation of human dignity, is the fact that God Himself became human, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE UNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE

Evolutionary ideas gave rise to the flawed 'science' of eugenics. This fed into the evil idea of racial supremacy.

Racism is an ugly reality. **Shelby Steele (born 1946)**, an American author, remembers that as a child, whenever he drove with his dad into a new town, they had to look for places

to eat where they would not be turned away because of their skin colour.¹²

All forms of racism are evil, because the Bible teaches the essential **unity of the human race**. We are all descended from the same first parents.¹³

***From one man** he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. (Acts 17:26)*

We are all more closely related than most people realise.¹⁴ There are no ‘absolute’ identities of ‘black’ or ‘white’.

12 Steele, S, *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era* (Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 8.

13 Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 19:4; Acts 17:26; Romans 5:12 ff; 1 Corinthians 15:21f, 45f, Bavinck, H, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Volume 2 (Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 523-26.

14 Jeanson, N, <https://answersingenesis.org/genetics/shocking-and-glorious-new-science-human-race-ethnicity/> (accessed 30 December, 2020); McDermott, G R, ‘Misunderstanding Race and the Bible’, *Public Discourse*, 20 October, 2020, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2020/10/72125/> (accessed 22 October, 2020). For discussion of Critical Race Theory, see James, S, *The Lies we are Told: The Truth We Must Hold* (Christian Focus Publications, 2022).

Some today claim that Christianity is a 'Western' religion. In fact, it's the world's first truly global religion! A third of the world's population are Christian, at least in name. Christianity is growing fastest *outside* the West. And across the world, Christians are following Christ, sacrificially serving those who are suffering from injustice and abuse.

In India, for example, where the great majority are Hindu, a large section of the population, the Dalits, are still, despite theoretical legal protection, regarded as 'untouchable'. The caste system creates an ocean of abuse and suffering. But many Indian Christians are extending practical and legal help to Dalits: medical clinics, primary schools, adult literacy classes, vocational and business training and more. Many Dalit people are equipped with the education that enables them to escape dire poverty. Some Indian Christians work tirelessly for the release of those who are held in labour slavery in harsh and dangerous conditions.¹⁵ Most importantly, Dalits are offered spiritual hope, and a sense of dignity.¹⁶

15 <https://www.ijmuk.org/> (accessed 26 January, 2022).

16 <https://www.om.org/dk/en/news/freeing-dalits> (accessed 26 January, 2022).

When we see examples of cruelty, oppression and wrongful discrimination, the fact that we care at all indicates that we've been made in the image of the God of justice. God cares. So should we.

That's why Heidi Crowter willingly sacrifices time, and resources, to campaign for those with Down's syndrome. She challenges people to look past her disability, to see that her life is 'just as important and just as joyful as everybody else's'. She knows that God made her, and God loves her.

Main point

Every human being is created by God in His image, and has dignity and worth.

Questions for Reflection

- How does a naturalistic worldview undermine the uniqueness of human dignity?
- Why should all human life be valued?
- Why is it wrong to claim that Christianity is a 'Western' and oppressive religion?