Red Dynamite

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In April 1949, an aging J. Frank Norris stood once again to address the members of the Texas state legislature. When Norris had last occupied that speakers’ platform in 1923, his main subject was evolution. Now, more than a quarter-century later, Norris was speaking as an expert on communism, which loomed larger than the beast doctrine in the public mind. A week earlier, the state House of Representatives had passed a resolution honoring Norris for his work in rooting out “subversives.” Presenting the seventy-one-year-old Norris with a large printed copy of the resolution, the House clerk introduced him as an authority on “Communists,” “fellow-travelers,” and “all those who seek to destroy the things that are good in this land.”

Norris did get around to the topic of evolution, but he began with the Red Menace. The most insidious threat facing Americans was not the out-and-out Communists but rather their allies who were “boring from within.” As Aimee Semple McPherson had warned in 1934, Americans were “asleep” and needed to be awakened to the real danger. These
“Benedict Arnolds” were radical labor union leaders, professors, and clergy whose nefarious activities paved the way for Soviet control. Even if such people had not broken any law or openly revolted, they were “traitors,” Norris charged.

They betrayed their country by following the immoral “religion” of communism. They did the devil’s work by denying the word of God. They promoted materialism, or “blind force,” ruling God “out of the Universe.” Without initially invoking evolution by name, Norris explained the communist belief that “man is just a beast and dies like a dog.” Worst of all, the betrayers sink “into the deepest depths of immorality.” As evidence, Norris recalled that the University of Texas had fired ten “homosexualist” employees, and that in Houston, a man was advocating “some things I wouldn’t even mention to a mixed audience.” Fortunately, Norris related, the “real men” of Houston rode him out of town.

The sexual immorality of communism encompassed what Norris called, in an ironic nod to Communist political terminology, “the negro question.” Claiming that he was the “best friend” of “the Negro,” Norris stated that he believed in “social equality” and that Blacks should not be denied equal schooling. Norris nonetheless raised an alarm. The “pith of the whole business,” Norris claimed, was that communists had prodded Blacks into desiring that the races merge into a “mongrel race.” There was no need for Norris to specify that this radical kind of “social equality” was interracial sex and marriage.

Finally, Norris arrived at the topic of evolution. He attributed to subversive professors the idea that humans were mere “beasts.” These educators of our children were not just purveyors of Darwinistic ideas; they were “evolutionists and communists, two sides of the same question.” As before, Norris joked about evolution. He drew his audience’s attention to its “moral effect.” To the men, if your wife is jumping on you “with hatchet and tongs,” that’s the “hyena in her.” And to the women, if you discover that your man has been lying about his whereabouts and running around town, that’s just the “bearcat” in him. Redeploying his 1923 text, Norris gave his mocking summary of how some unknown thing had evolved into “so many bald-headed men” who ended up teaching evolutionary science. This time, however, he added an ugly detail about where they got their suits—“from a second-hand Jew joint down here at Austin.” During World War II, Norris had proudly declared his solidarity.
with European Jews and supported American Zionist leaders. But Christian Zionism and anti-Semitism were not mutually exclusive.

The themes evoked in Norris’s speech—including the sexually charged connections between communism and evolution—were familiar. Yet his appearance before Texas lawmakers in 1949 marked the transition to a new era. Norris’s influence was fading within his own church. Loyal lieutenant G. Beauchamp Vick had labored for decades for Norris and served as pastor at the Norris-founded Temple Baptist Church in Detroit. No longer able to tolerate Norris’s authoritarian ways, Vick broke with him in 1950 and founded the Bible Baptist Fellowship (BBF) and the Baptist Bible College (BBC) in Springfield, Missouri. With William Bell Riley’s death in 1947 and Norris’s in 1952, leadership of the fundamentalist cause fell to a younger generation of evangelists, including Sword of the Lord editor and Norris protégé John R. Rice (1895–1981). The man whom Jerry Falwell would decades later call “the most trusted man in fundamentalism,” Rice played an underappreciated role in linking together generations of conservative Christian activists. He also made his own distinctive contribution to the Red Dynamite tradition in a 1954 sermon (later published as a pamphlet) titled Dangerous Triplets. In that same banner year, the US Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education sparked renewed organizing both to break down the walls of Jim Crow and to keep them intact. The defense of racial segregation under the banner of “racial purity” drew from the book of Genesis in ways that offered surprising connections between creationism, “massive resistance” to civil rights, and anticommunism.

A generation younger than J. Frank Norris, John R. Rice was born in Cooke County, Texas, in 1895. His father, Will Rice, attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, joined the revived Ku Klux Klan, and was elected to the Texas State Senate in 1921 along with a raft of other Klan-supported candidates. Young John started his own career as an elementary school teacher near Dundee, Texas, while working on his father’s ranch. Attending Decatur Baptist College in 1916, he met Lloys McClure Cooke, who would become his wife and close collaborator in all things spiritual. Rice was drafted in 1918 but did not see service overseas, thanks to a mumps epidemic in his Seventh Division unit. After the war, he and Lloys both attended Baylor, and upon graduation, John taught briefly at a Baptist college in the fall of 1920.
In light of his subsequent fundamentalist leadership, Rice’s next move was surprising: he headed north to attend divinity school at the liberal Baptist bastion of the University of Chicago. Of this move, Rice’s grandson and biographer Andrew Himes speculates that “he was feeling a strong pull away from the rigidity of the small churches in Texas where he had grown up.”

For the short time that Rice was in Chicago, he entertained a range of modernist ideas, including theistic evolution. But then, in May of 1921, Rice heard William Jennings Bryan deliver “The Bible and Its Enemies.” Linking Darwin’s ideas to their evil social and political consequences, Bryan clarified for Rice the stakes in the debate over evolutionary science.

Primed by Bryan’s sermon to save the nation’s children from evolutionary teachings, Rice began to question his career plans to become an academic, or, as he put it, a “great educator.” The turning point was an encounter with a “drunken bum” at the Pacific Garden Mission in downtown Chicago, where none other than evangelist Billy Sunday had been converted to Christ. Kneeling next to this sinner, Rice showed him the way to God’s grace. All of a sudden, Rice recalled, “I saw the transformation in his face, the evidence of wonderful peace in his heart.” That evidence proved to Rice that his calling was in the ministry. That summer, John and Lloys left Chicago for Texas. They were soon married and enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, just miles from J. Frank Norris’s First Baptist Church. John became an ordained Baptist minister. Ministerial assignments took the couple from Decatur to Plainview to Shamrock and, in 1932, back to Norris territory in nearby Dallas, where Rice pastored the Fundamentalist Baptist Church.

Rice’s criticism of the insufficiently fundamentalist Southern Baptist establishment had drawn Norris’s notice by the early 1920s. In 1926, Norris offered Rice a weekly radio program on his Fort Worth station and called the younger man “a great preacher of the gospel of Christ.” In 1928, Norris invited Rice to preach at First Baptist, and that same year, Rice followed Norris by taking his congregation out of the Southern Baptist Convention. The two evangelists joined forces in campaigning for Republican Herbert Hoover and against the Democratic candidate Al Smith, warning of Smith’s beliefs in “social equality” for Blacks. In 1932, Norris called Rice “the greatest Bible teacher among us.”
academia behind, but he would become a “great educator” for thousands of conservative Christians for decades to come.

In 1934, still on good terms with Norris—who would break with him over the following year—Rice launched the Sword of the Lord as the newspaper of his church. Rice drew its name from the biblical story of Gideon, a Hebrew “judge” or leader of the Tribe of Manasseh. According to the book of Judges, God chose Gideon as his instrument to bring the Hebrew people back from their worship of foreign idols. With God’s help, Gideon’s small army prevailed over the much more numerous Midianites. The Hebrew people were restored to God. As Rice’s masthead indicated, “And they cried, The Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.” In 1934, Rice viewed himself as a modern-day Gideon, both a warrior and a weapon in the hand of God. In these early years, the full title of his newspaper was “The Sword of the Lord and of JOHN R. RICE.” A short mission statement followed: “An independent religious weekly to preach the gospel, expose sin, spread premillennial Bible teaching, and foster the work of the Fundamentalist Baptist Church.”

Rice and Norris were marching side by side into battle, but Norris’s patronage of Rice did not last. As readership of Sword of the Lord expanded, Norris grew jealous of Rice. As even Norris’s admirers admitted, he was not one to share the limelight. In 1936, when Rice organized a citywide revival in Binghamton, New York, the first such attempt in the North for many years, Norris attempted to sabotage it by spreading false rumors that Rice had Pentecostal “holy-roller” tendencies. Rice succeeded despite Norris. To signal his independence from the “shooting parson,” he not only answered Norris’s charges in print but renamed his church Galilean Baptist, since “Fundamentalist Baptist” had Norrisite overtones. Rice also rewrote his newspaper’s mission statement. Now more pointedly fundamentalist, it stood for the “Verbal Inspiration of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, His Blood Atonement, Salvation by Faith, [and] New Testament Soul Winning.” It stood against “Sin, Modernism,” and in a clear swipe at Norris, “Denominational Overlordship.”

Unlike Dan Gilbert, John R. Rice would take longer to make explicit connections between evolution, communism, and “sexual sin.” But his articles, pamphlets, and sermons on moral decline shared with thousands of Sword readers formed a rich soil that would allow those connections to flourish. In a sermon Rice described as “dynamite,” he denounced dancing
as the “road to hell.” Divorce, unless granted for proven adultery, was a sign of “sex sin.” Rice also spoke out about “criminal abortion,” which he viewed as plain evidence of “sinful and illicit” sexual relationships between married men and young unmarried women.

During the 1940s, Rice devoted substantial attention to promoting proper gender roles for men and women in marriage. Without explicitly addressing “sex radicals” like Schmalhausen and Calverton, Rice was implicitly holding the line against a social evolutionary view of gender. In *Rebellious Wives and Slacker Husbands* (1941), and *Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives, and Women Preachers* (1943), Rice spoke out against modern “feminist” notions of women’s equality. For their part, men were ordained by God to lead their households. A man was to be “like a god in his home.” The fact that many men were shirking this responsibility, Rice told his readers, explained the “train of evils” that was afflicting American society, from broken homes to misbehaved children to women who dressed “immodestly.” Men who behaved in this way were “degenerate, weakling men, slackers and shrinkers and quitters, not willing to take the place of manhood.”

For their part, women were to submit to the leadership of their husbands. They were to cover their bodies and to wear their hair long, so that they were clearly distinguished from men. A woman was obligated to obey her husband regardless of his character, his treatment of her, or even whether or not he had accepted Jesus Christ as savior. The woman whom others viewed as “rebellious” or “bossy” was not only acting with bad manners. She was falling victim to the evil impulses that emanated from Satan. As Rice wrote, “the heart of all sin is rebellion against authority,” just as Satan rebelled against God in heaven. Moral rebellion was not just a personal matter but formed part of the whole social and political picture. The satanic spirit of rebellion, Rice averred, explained the “crime and lawlessness which plagues America and other governments.” It is the desire of God, explained Rice, that children obey their parents, servants obey their masters, citizens follow their government, “even if administered by wicked and corrupt men,” and women obey their husbands.

By the time Rice wrote these words, he was gaining a national audience. Not only did he reach thousands through the pages of his newspaper, but he preached widely and could be heard in the late 1930s on the daily noonday radio broadcasts in Chicago. To pursue new opportunities
to spread God’s word and to build a national fundamentalist network, Rice, Lloys, and their six daughters moved north to Wheaton, Illinois, in the spring of 1940. As Rice explained the move, Chicago was “the center for fundamentally sound Christian work.” It was strategically situated for Rice to stage revivals all over the Midwest; it sported the Moody Bible Institute and the Northern Baptist Seminary; and his new hometown was the seat of Wheaton College, the “strongest and largest of the independent Christian colleges in America.” That same year, a young evangelical student arrived at Wheaton, attended Rice’s citywide revivals, and subscribed to *Sword of the Lord*, where his own sermons would later appear in print for the first time. His name was Billy Graham. He was not the last prominent young evangelical leader to be mentored by John R. Rice.15

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**Figure 10.** John R. Rice at a *Sword of the Lord* preaching conference, c. 1965. A fierce Baptist fundamentalist who battled evolution and communism, Rice was a living link between the old Christian Right of J. Frank Norris and William Bell Riley and the New Christian Right of Jerry Falwell. Courtesy of John R. Rice Papers, B.H. Carroll Center for Baptist Heritage and Mission, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.
When Rice addressed evolution during these years, it became clear that his grim assessment of humanity’s future prospects informed his perspective. Evolutionary ideas, argued Rice, were the product of unfounded human pride, of the “crack-pot” evolutionist who believed that he could use the Bible to support modern scientific ideas and take a “personal, creating, supervising God” out of the equation. Such “proud and disdainful men,” wrote Rice, failed to acknowledge the reality of human sin. They were oblivious to the fact that far from progressing, humanity was headed on a downward slide. Monkeys are not becoming men, he wrote, men are becoming monkeys. Rather than evolution, Rice concluded, we have “devolution” and “degeneracy.” In Rice’s pessimistic account, social and biological regression seemed to merge together.16

While Rice’s antievolutionism was typical of his fellow fundamentalists, his views on racial and national oppression were not. Where Winrod and Riley had applauded Hitler’s measures against Jews, Rice called out the Führer for “Jew-hate” and “concentration camps.” By this time, Riley had also come out against Hitler as a Darwin-inspired exemplar of the “survival of the fittest.” In a telling omission, however, Riley’s pamphlet Hitlerism: Or, The Philosophy of Evolution in Action (1941) said not a single word about Hitler’s treatment of Jews.17 Rice denounced Hitler and the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis as comparable in their brutality. “What difference is in high-riding Ku Klux Klansmen in America who beat offending Jews or negroes or foreigners,” Rice asked, “than a German machine-gunner, strafing refugees in Poland with a machine-gun?”

Despite his seemingly evenhanded denunciation of evil human behavior as rooted in original sin, Rice still reserved a special critical edge for communism, both in Russia and in the United States. Bolshevik Russia, according to Rice, was a “land of slaughter, of poverty, of famine, of oppression, of violence and atheism.” It was far from the “working-man’s paradise” that “millions” of Russians had imagined it might become. It had become the opposite, a hell on earth. And Rice had an explanation for this that went beyond original sin. Citing Revelation 16, Rice claimed that Stalin, like Hitler, was surely aided by Satan; Russia and Germany both were “Godless and atheistic bandit nations.”18

The road to John R. Rice’s 1954 Dangerous Triplets sermon at Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee, ran through nearly a decade of post–World War II preaching, editorializing, and organizing
Sword of the Lord conferences. Rice viewed himself as a “soul winner,” one who more than anything else wished to help America’s sinners find their way to Jesus Christ. For Rice, that task meant orienting his readers and listeners toward a Bible-believing faith and steering Christians away from a false modernist one. The pages of Sword in that postwar decade were filled with both seemingly nonpolitical appeals to individual sinners and explicitly political pieces that warned readers of the dangerous lure of false prophets. In this respect, Rice continued to follow in the footsteps of his erstwhile mentor, J. Frank Norris. Navigating through these turbulent political waters, Rice allied himself, for a time, with fundamentalist separatists like Carl McIntire as well as their soon-to-be foe, the increasingly ecumenical, “neo-evangelical,” and longtime Sword of the Lord reader Billy Graham.

John R. Rice’s ally Carl McIntire (1906–2002) was one of the fiercest and most influential anticommunists of the twentieth century. A Presbyterian fundamentalist minister, McIntire trained at Princeton in the late 1920s under the conservative New Testament scholar J. Gresham Machen. When Machen left Princeton to found Westminster Seminary, rejecting both a liberalizing trend at Princeton and a populist fundamentalism based on premillennialism, McIntire joined him and then helped form a succession of new, independent Presbyterian sects, the last being the Bible Presbyterians in 1937. Pastoring a Bible Presbyterian church in Collingswood, New Jersey, for decades after, McIntire took the lead in creating a fundamentalist rival to the liberal Federal (later National) Council of Churches (FCC/NCC) called the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC). What distinguished McIntire from other midcentury fundamentalists, including John R. Rice, was McIntire’s refusal to join the relatively conservative National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). An exponent of “secondary separation,” McIntire demanded not only that the member churches of his group be fundamentalist, but that their parent organizations be as well. Since many NAE member ministers pastored local churches that remained in the Southern and Northern Baptist Conventions, that put them beyond the pale. McIntire started the weekly Christian Beacon newspaper in 1936, began to publish books in the mid-1940s, and quickly gained a national following as a highly articulate and uncompromising foe of modernism and communism.
McIntire’s collaboration with John R. Rice supports biographer Markku Ruotsila’s contention that McIntire was a “pivotal transitional and transformative figure” in the long history of the New Christian Right.\textsuperscript{21} McIntire’s second book, *The Rise of the Tyrant* (1945), first captured John Rice’s attention. Over the next four years, Rice reprinted excerpts from this book as well as *Christian Beacon* articles in *Sword of the Lord*. As many *Sword* readers (and Rice himself) were NAE members, and others sympathized to various degrees with the FCC/NCC, McIntire’s writings spurred both angry and supportive letters to editor Rice. In a commentary on the articles as a whole, Rice acknowledged that he had been, on occasion, “irritated” by McIntire’s extremism. And yet Rice agreed with the essence of McIntire’s message and happily shared it with readers.\textsuperscript{22}

That message was summarized by the headline of the very first article Rice reprinted: “The Modernist-Communist Threat to American Liberties.” Just one week after the Japanese surrender, McIntire noted that America had no longer anything to fear from foreign foes but now faced an internal enemy—what Norris had labeled “Benedict Arnolds.” Singling out Methodist bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, the FCC president, McIntire charged him with promoting economic collectivism. Like the Social Gospelers and Christian Socialists decades earlier, mainline Protestant leaders were relatively friendly to reforms that would curb the power of big business. But such Christians, in McIntire’s judgment, were misusing the Bible and their ecclesiastical authority. If Christians wanted to protect the “true church,” McIntire wrote, they needed to defend the “profit motive, competition, private enterprise, and the individual,” all of which rested on biblical foundations. McIntire’s identification of greater control of the economy by the state with tyranny was the same message contained in works by secular authors, most notably Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) and John Flynn’s *The Road Ahead* (1949). What distinguished McIntire’s approach was his biblical defense of capitalist economic institutions.

In a subsequent *Sword* article, “Private Enterprise in the Scriptures,” McIntire demonstrated how the Bible endorsed capitalism. God’s command to the Hebrew people, “Thou shalt not steal,” in McIntire’s view, was about “private enterprise.” It underlined the divine origin of private property and economic individualism. When the FCC pushed for greater collective economic responsibility, it was “attacking the eternal truth of
God.” The Bible endorsed not only private property, but profit. Why else would Solomon, the wisest of all men, have said, “In all labour, there is profit”? Confirmation came from the New Testament, where Luke tells of a nobleman who sends his servants to trade, and on their return, wants to know “how much every man had gained by trading.” “Here is private enterprise,” wrote McIntire, “the profit motive.” In case any reader might miss the meaning of these details, editor Rice added a long subheadline in all capital letters that began: “A DISTINGUISHED CHRISTIAN LEADER SHOWS THAT THE SCRIPTURES ESTABLISH CAPITALISM AND FREE ENTERPRISE, AND ARE AGAINST COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM.” If John R. Rice had ever harbored any suspicion that the Bible endorsed socialism—as had a young William Bell Riley—McIntire helped to bury those suspicions for good.

While Rice did not yet in the late 1940s explicitly join together the dangers of communism and evolutionism, he made it clear that modernist Christians who promoted evolution were dishonest, ungodly, and downright evil. In an article on modernism that gave extended coverage of evolution, Rice invoked Matthew 7:15 on evil fruits and Second Peter 2:1 to describe modernist evolution-believing Christians as dangerous, hypocritical “false prophets” and as sneaky “fifth-columnists” who were stealthily introducing “damnable heresies” within Christian churches. Riley had quoted these same passages two decades before in his sermon on “Bestial Bolshevism.” The false prophet was a metaphor well suited to the battle between fundamentalists and modernists in Christian congregations—for spotting the enemy within.

For any Christians who were considering partaking of the evil fruit of theistic evolutionism, Rice made it clear that they needed to choose: evolution or the Bible. The two were “irreconcilable.” At the same time, Rice did make a gesture, if only a confused one, toward a scientific consideration of evolutionary science. Evolution, he maintained, remained far from a “proven fact.” It was, rather, “a theory, a hypothesis, a guess.” No transitional forms—“missing links”—had been found, charged Rice. The discoveries of the bones of human ancestors were either unconvincing or outright fakes. Rice mistakenly attributed to Darwin (rather than Lamarck) the claim that giraffes had acquired long necks in the course of their lives by reaching for leaves high up in the trees and described this
idea as “natural selection.” He mocked this Darwinist idea, in Weismann-like fashion, noting that after a “thousand generations” of sheep with tails cut off or “thirty-five centuries” of circumcising Jewish boys, sheep still had tails and Jewish boys were born with foreskins.25

To his growing pro-capitalist and openly antievolutionary views Rice added an increasingly vehement anticommunism. Rice condemned the “socialistic” New Deal and its legacy in the Truman administration. On the eve of the 1948 presidential election, he answered a letter from a Sword reader asking about his stance on Christian Nationalist Crusade leader Gerald L.K. Smith. Rice restated his previous stance on Smith’s virulent “antijewish propaganda” as “wicked” and “unchristian.” But he also took the occasion to urge readers to vote the Republican ticket of Dewey and Warren. Roosevelt and his New Dealers had encouraged labor strikes and radicalism in the labor movement, given Stalin “far too great a hold on the world,” stifled “free enterprise,” and promoted “class and race hate in America.”26

Rice also published philosophical pieces by others who addressed the one big question facing Christians in the Cold War world: Christianity or Marxism? In “Karl Marx or Jesus Christ?” the address given by Wheaton College president (and fellow Wheaton resident) Raymond Edman to graduates in 1959, Edman cautioned students that Marxism was not a mere academic theory but rather a “religion” to “millions” around the world. Comparing the two men as personalities, Edman found that Marx was “inconsiderate,” “hostile,” and cold, while Jesus was devoted, loving, compassionate, and “unspeakably sweet in spirit.” Their philosophies were similarly contrasting. Marx’s “religion” preached materialism, godlessness, “brute force,” and destruction, while Jesus offered spiritual values, a change in heart, and regeneration “by the grace of God.”27

For all of the space that John R. Rice provided to fellow anticommunist Carl McIntire, Rice had a greater affinity for his Baptist forebears, not only his erstwhile mentor J. Frank Norris, but also William Bell Riley. In an April 1947 piece on the occasion of Riley’s eighty-sixth birthday, just months before the aging fundamentalist’s death, Rice paid tribute to the man’s “rich achievements for God.” Rice admired Riley’s defense of the fundamentals of the faith, his opposition to evolution—“science falsely so-called”—his warnings about communism and “un-Americanism,” and his building up of an empire for God in the Northwestern complex of
schools. Rice followed up this endorsement of Riley with reprints of his articles. “Atheism, the Enemy of Civilization” identified atheists with “men of reprobate morals” and pointed to the immoral “bitter harvest” of evolution, including the “debauch of infidelity” in Bolshevik Russia.

One aspect of Riley’s ministerial message that Rice could not publicly praise was the Minneapolis preacher’s fanatical devotion to the Protocols. In “The False ‘Protocols’ and Wicked Anti-Semitism,” Rice rejected this position, noting that Henry Ford had publicly apologized for endorsing the czarist forgery. Communism, Rice clarified for his readers, was not a plot of the Jewish “race,” but rather was the product of humanity’s sinful nature and our temptation by Satan. But neither did Rice denounce Riley for his position. Nowhere were Sword readers reminded that the man most responsible for popularizing a set of ideas that Rice had identified as “wicked” was the same man whom Rice had thanked for living a life in service of God. Rice’s silence on Riley’s pro-Nazi politics helped obscure that inconvenient fact for future generations of evangelicals.

Another aspect of Riley’s legacy initially garnered great enthusiasm from Rice and only later ambivalence and then outright rejection: the appointment as his successor at Northwestern of a young preacher named William Franklin “Billy” Graham. The evolving relationship between Rice and Graham sheds additional light on the history and politics of creationist anticommunism. Born in the waning days of World War I in Charlotte, North Carolina, to a Methodist father and Presbyterian mother, Graham accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior in 1934 during a weeks-long tent revival held on his family farm by the fiery Baptist moralist, antievolutionist, anticommunist, and Protocols-based conspiracy theorist Mordecai Ham. As Graham has related, he was aware, at the tender age of sixteen, that Ham had been accused of being “anti-Semitic.” But Graham claimed that “I had no way of knowing if that was true; I did not even know what that term meant.” Perhaps so, but Graham may have absorbed Ham’s ideas nonetheless.

That possibility emerged in a spectacular way decades later, when secretly recorded tapes of Graham’s 1972 meeting with then-president Richard Nixon and his chief of staff H.R. Haldeman came to light. All three men expressed typical anti-Semitic ideas about Jews dominating the media. Graham spoke of Jewish culpability for pornography. In a
subsequent telephone conversation with Nixon, Graham reiterated Jewish responsibility for pornographic literature and “obscene” films. Graham attributed this activity to a particular subset of Jews that the Bible refers to as “the synagogue of Satan.” These claims were common currency for Christian fundamentalists in the 1930s. But they also evoked the sermonizing material that Mordecai Ham, channeling Henry Ford’s *International Jew*, was spouting in Elizabeth City a decade earlier.

In the sermons that persuaded Graham to accept Christ into his heart, Mordecai Ham dealt with the standard fare of “money, infidelity, the Sabbath, and drinking.” After selling Fuller paint brushes in California for a summer, Billy Graham spent one semester at Bob Jones College. In a sign of his future departure from fundamentalism, Graham chafed under the tight restrictions on student conduct and soon left. He obtained a college degree from the Tampa-based and unaccredited Florida Bible Institute, affiliated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA). He began preaching at a small CMA church near Tampa and was ordained as a Southern Baptist minister. Soon, some visitors with connections to Wheaton College heard Graham preach in Florida and offered him a scholarship to Wheaton, where he arrived in the summer of 1940. There he met Ruth Bell, his future wife, and daughter of L. Nelson and Virginia Bell. Stationed in China as Presbyterian missionaries, the Bells returned the following year to the US, where L. Nelson Bell would help lead a movement to resist modernism in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Newly married, Graham used his Wheaton degree and connections to start a career in radio preaching and then public preaching with Youth for Christ in Chicago and throughout Europe.

While Youth for Christ made Graham into a national figure and attracted the attention of William Bell Riley, another crucial influence on the young evangelist was John R. Rice. Once ensconced in Wheaton, Graham became close friends with Rice. Graham read *Sword of the Lord* and was impressed by Rice’s ability to organize citywide “union” revival campaigns, soon a hallmark of Graham’s preaching. Some of Graham’s first published sermons appeared in *Sword*. In the late 1940s, Graham appeared as a speaker at several *Sword* conferences, alongside the Bob Joneses, Rice, and other prominent evangelists. Soon after Riley tapped Graham to lead Northwestern Bible College, Graham returned Rice’s favors by placing John R. Rice on the school’s board of trustees.
The sermon Graham preached at the 1948 Sword conference on the various “crises” afflicting America is a good reference point for the fundamentalist standard that he would soon abandon. It also places him in the pantheon of those alarmed by the twin evils of evolution and communism. First and foremost, Graham told his audience, there is a “philosophic” crisis. Based on his work at Northwestern, Graham said he had “found out” that we were living in an age of “materialism . . . evolution and naturalism.” “If you study geology or any other of the sciences,” Graham explained, “you will find that the basis for all the false teaching today is evolution, which denies the existence of God Almighty.” Closely related was the “moral” crisis. It found expression in an alarmingly high divorce rate, a crime wave, the growing incidence of prostitution, the end of Prohibition, and billions spent on gambling. In addition to these “obvious” evils, which he illustrated with examples, Graham cited, without any specifics, “social unrest and industrial strife on every hand in America.” There was also a political crisis, exemplified by the near-triumph of the Chinese Communists and the probability of renewed war with the Soviet Union. This raised the prospect of the end of humanity, whether it be through atomic weapons, a “death ray,” or “germ bombs.” Finally, there was a religious crisis. In North Africa, the “Arab race” was uniting under the banner of Islam; Roman Catholics were repressing Protestants in Franco’s Spain. Most threatening was the “fanatical religion” of communism, growing by “leaps and bounds.” In the face of these multiple crises, the only chance America had was to “repent” its evil ways. Citywide revivals organized by modern-day Jonahs raised up by God were the key.

Billy Graham’s revival campaign preached in Los Angeles the following year made him into an evangelistic superstar. For the next several years, John R. Rice and other fundamentalist stalwarts were proud to have nurtured and encouraged the young Graham. Even as Graham no longer spoke at Sword conferences, Rice continued to publish his sermons and publicly praise him. Though he was unalterably alienated from Rice, J. Frank Norris was also initially enthusiastic about “Billie” Graham. In February 1950, Norris traveled to hear Graham preach a revival in Columbia, South Carolina, and invited the evangelist to preach at Norris’s churches in Fort Worth and Detroit. He described Graham to a fellow Baptist as “the greatest soul winner of this hour” and contributed money to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. In a March 1950 letter to
Graham, Norris gushed with praise for the young evangelist, telling him that in comparison with the famed Billy Sunday (whom, Norris boasted, he had met “three different times”), you are “different and I think far ahead.” Norris’s love for Billy Graham did not last long. Even as Norris was effusing about “Billie” in 1950, Graham was wary of the “shooting parson.” In a 1950 letter to Norris, Graham confessed that he had not answered earlier letters from Norris because he feared that Norris might publish his reply in the Fundamentalist. Graham allowed as well that he had differed with Norris’s tactics and that he remained faithful to the Southern Baptist Convention. Norris had made headlines in 1947 when he appeared at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in St. Louis and confronted its new modernist president Louie Newton. Pastor of the liberal Druid Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta, Newton had drawn fire after his recent visit to Soviet Russia. In An American Churchman in the Soviet Union (1948), Newton wrote that “Baptists stand for the same thing as the Russian Government—renouncement of, and resistance to, coercion in matters of belief.” After Norris was physically removed from the meeting hall, he fired off a telegram to his Fort Worth congregation, boasting that he had achieved the “greatest victory in [the] history [of] fundamentalism.” Over the next few years, as it became clear that Billy Graham was willing to work with all denominations, as well as with open modernists, to build the biggest possible revival meetings, Norris joined with separatist extraordinaire Carl McIntire in denouncing Graham’s compromises.

It was during this transitional period, in which Norris and McIntire were pulling away from Graham, but Rice was not, that Rice was at the height of his influence and made his distinctive contribution to the Red Dynamite tradition. The circulation of Sword reached ninety thousand in 1953. Sword evangelism conferences, held in Winona Lake, Indiana, the home of Grace Seminary, and Toccoa, Georgia, continued to draw top evangelical preachers and big crowds. Now living in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Rice had joined and helped lead Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, a prominent independent (non-SBC) fundamentalist “mega” church located forty miles from Dayton, the site of the Scopes trial. Pastored by Lee Roberson, a longtime friend and
associate of Rice’s, who spoke often at Sword conferences, Highland Park was influential in fundamentalist circles. Rice called it “the greatest soul-winning church in the world.” When members of Highland Park were recruiting the up-and-coming Roberson to pastor their church in 1942, the local welcoming committee included T.W. Callaway, the man who had “outed” John T. Scopes as a red-diaper baby in 1925. Roberson published the Evangelist, launched a weekly radio program called Gospel Dynamite, and preached to thousands in his church each Sunday. As fond of the explosive metaphor as J. Frank Norris, Roberson published a book of his sermons, titled It’s Dynamite, with Sword of the Lord publishers in 1953. Roberson’s Highland Park “complex” included Temple Seminary (later Tennessee Temple University), of which Rice was appointed vice president, and a Department of Evangelism, which Rice headed, starting in 1954.43

At Highland Park in the summer of 1954, Rice offered his own Red Dynamite sermon. His July 27 sermon was titled “Dangerous Triplets: 1. Russian Communism, 2. New-Deal Socialism, 3. Bible-Denying Modernism.” For anyone in the congregation that morning who had been reading Sword over the past half decade, many of Rice’s references would have been familiar. He opened with Matthew 7:15 on false prophets, followed up with 2 Peter on the same, and cited Raymond Edman on the immorality of Marx. He presented McIntire-esque arguments to prove that the Bible endorsed capitalism, with one section titled “Investment and Interest in Invested Capital Approved by Jesus.”44 Rice provided “damning” quotations from socialist-leaning religious modernists like G. Bromley Oxnam. And he lambasted various New Deal projects, including the Tennessee Valley Authority, as handouts for “deadbeats.”

The task that Rice set himself in this sermon was not only to highlight the evils of the separate phenomena of socialism, communism, and modernism, but to show that they were intimately, genealogically related. Rice knew that some Highland Park members did not see these connections. They resisted the idea that “modernists” were in the same category as the obviously immoral and evil communists. It was one thing to lambaste Soviet leaders or even Franklin Roosevelt, but quite another to denounce other Baptist preachers. Right after the opening words of his sermon, quoting from Matthew, Rice said, “You say, ‘why all this shouting about modernism?’” Then a bit later, Rice added, “Someone says, ‘I don’t like
your calling these men names and saying things about them.’” Near the
eend of the sermon, Rice acknowledged the uncomfortable predicament of
false prophets close to home: “You say, ‘But my friends.’”

To help Chattanooga’s fundamentalist faithful face the painful truth
and accept the need to break friendships, Rice offered four reasons that
modernists, communists, and socialists were “alike.” Their kinship re­
volved around the question of whether humanity was the creation of
God or the evolved product of nature. First, all three “triplets” hated
the Bible. Second, they believed in evolution, that man came by slowly
evolving from lower forms of life.” That claim, Rice told his audience, is
“part of the particular doctrine of Karl Marx.” As proof of that connec­
tion, Rice asked if anyone knew to whom Marx dedicated the Communist
Manifesto. “To Charles Darwin!” he shouted. Then he gave a synopsis of
Marxist evolutionary thought: “He says that the human race is evolving
upward and that therefore, little by little, society is growing into a better
state and eventually we will not have any private property, and everybody
will own everything together. And he says that evolution is absolutely
certain to bring communism over the whole world. So Stalin taught, so
all communists believe.” Rice’s Marx sounded remarkably un-Marxist.
He was more like the early Socialist Party’s version of Spencer, envisioning
a future society as the gradual and inevitable product of organic growth.
Revolutionary change was nowhere in evidence. Rice made an uncharac­
teristic error in substituting the Manifesto for Capital. But the basic point
was accurate. Marx was a Darwin fan.45

Rice’s third reason amplified the second by noting that the triplets all
opposed the notion of God’s creation of humanity and the related con­
cept that we are fallen creatures whose hearts were “desperately wicked.”
Instead, the triplets believed that “man” was “essentially good.” The
“system” was wrong. And we could improve the world through a “collect­
ive state,” as the Bolsheviks had done in Russia and as liberals had tried
to do through the New Deal. This was yet another reason why the triplets
“run together,” as Rice put it.

In laying out the fourth and final reason tying the “dangerous triplets”
together—“a certain wicked immorality”—Rice reached the emotional
climax of his sermon, doing his best to make sure that Highland Park’s
members understood what was at stake. The case was simple for the
communists. Since they rejected the Bible, they had no moral standards:
“If lying will win, if murder will win, if stealing will win, if rape will win, that is alright. Communists have no morality.” Rice had prepared the punch behind this point earlier in the sermon by quoting selectively from the Communist Manifesto to “prove” that Marx and Engels were in favor of establishing a legalized “community of women.”46 This charge drew strength from the long-standing story of the Bolshevik “Bureau of Free Love.” In the published version of Rice’s sermon this section is titled “Communism Would Abolish the Family As We Know It.”

The modernists were trickier. They pretended to be men and women of God. And then these false prophets used their clerical authority to break down the faith of Christian believers. Between the modernists and communists, concluded Rice, there was a “kinship” of immorality. What is the difference, Rice asked, between spies who steal America’s secrets and betray their country—no doubt referring to the Rosenbergs, executed the previous year—and Baptists trained at the SBC seminary who then betray the true Christian faith? They were both guilty of crimes akin to “murder.” They were both “wicked, rebellious sinners, against God and against Christ, against the Bible and against Bible morality, and Bible doctrine and Bible truth.” These, concluded Rice, are the “dangerous triplets” you are facing in the world today. Just as Rice’s mentor J. Frank Norris, in his 1923 address to Texas legislators, had held evolutionists responsible for war, crime, and immorality, John Rice all but said that evolutionists deserved the death penalty.

If Billy Graham had been present that day in Chattanooga, he might well have agreed with his “old friend.” But he and Rice would soon part ways. Their break was precipitated by Graham’s changing stand on evolutionary science and its relation to the Bible. In March 1955, Sword published an article in which Graham listed “Books Which Have Most Influenced My Life.” Coming in at number three was The Christian View of Science and Scripture (1954) by Bernard Ramm (1916–1992). A Baptist theologian with a serious interest in science, Ramm did graduate work at the University of Southern California, where he wrote a master’s thesis on James Jeans and Arthur Eddington, the cofounders of British cosmology, and a dissertation on the philosophical implications of Einstein’s “new” physics.47 Though he began his teaching career at the fundamentalist Bible Institute of Los Angeles, by the 1950s he had taken a position at Baylor
University, Rice’s alma mater, and was looking for a middle way between a discredited fundamentalism and outright modernism.

Ramm’s *Christian View* was one facet of the broader liberalizing neo-evangelical trend. Leading neo-evangelicals Carl F.H. Henry, L. Nelson Bell, and Harold Ockenga, among others, formed the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942 and soon filled the pages of *Christianity Today*, established in 1956. Like them, Ramm held on to biblical “inerrancy” but refused to defend what he called the “pedantic hyperorthodox” interpretation of scripture. Fearing that “the masses at large” thought that one needed to choose between the Bible and modern science, Ramm offered a way out of this dilemma by harmonizing science and scripture in a unique way. Ramm’s work won over Billy Graham, prompting the break with Rice, but by the end of the decade his work also provoked a counterreaction. It led to the publication of Whitcomb and Morris’s *The Genesis Flood* and a revival of young-earth creationism that has continued to this day.

Ramm began by reiterating his evangelical bona fides. Scripture was inerrant, inspired by God, and the data of the natural world were imbued with a “purpose and teleological ordering.” But he quickly followed with his key argument that the language of scripture was filtered through the cultural idiom of its time and place. That idiom was, in his words, “popular, prescientific,” and, using terminology drawn from the philosophy of science, “non-postulational.” The Bible’s words, that is, were inspired by the Spirit of God, but they do not “theorize as to the actual nature of things.” This formulation allowed Ramm to construct an interpretation of scripture that took into account the findings of modern science in the twentieth century.

God could perform miracles, in Ramm’s view, but in other cases, science had a better explanation. Did God actually make the sun stand still, as narrated in Joshua 10? Clarence Darrow asked this very question to William Jennings Bryan at the Scopes trial. Rather than repeat Bryan’s simple affirmation of the words of Joshua, Ramm preferred to cite the English astronomer E.W. Maunder. His study of this passage had convinced him that what Joshua had requested was to keep the sun from shining. In response, God sent a hailstorm, which obscured the sun and refreshed Joshua’s soldiers, thus giving them the illusion that they had marched far less than they actually had. For details of Maunder’s
argument, Ramm referred readers to his “astronomical, geographical, exe­getical, and historical data.” In the final analysis, God had intervened—miracles occurred—but there was also a natural explanation underlying the apparently supernatural account.52

In sections on geology and biology, Ramm presented his perspective on evolution, which he called “Progressive Creationism.” Crucially, Ramm accepted an old age for the earth. He rejected the notion that God created the world in 4004 BC, based on Bishop Ussher’s calculations. Rather, Ramm offered, we should accept the claim, based on modern geological research, that the earth is “at least four billion years old.” This claim flew in the face of the arguments advanced by George McCready Price, whose influence Ramm called “staggering.” To Price’s contention that dating rocks by fossils and fossils by rocks amounted to circular reasoning, Ramm affirmed the validity of radiocarbon dating. Ramm also concluded that the Noachian flood was not universal but local.

At the same time, Ramm did not wholly accept the day/age thesis, nor was he enamored of the gap theory, popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible and then by antievolutionist Harry Rimmer. Instead, Ramm argued that God created the heavens and earth, and then returned at various times to perform “great creative acts, de novo.” Having rejected Price’s young-earth view and yet seeking to maintain fidelity to Genesis, Ramm argued for what he called “Pictorial Day” creation. As he put it, “creation was revealed in six days, not performed in six days.”53 Whatever exactly that meant, it allowed Ramm to both affirm the inerrancy of the biblical account and to accept the findings of modern geological science about the antiquity of the earth.

When it came to biology, Ramm attempted to carry out a similar balancing act. He allowed for the possibility that “root-species” created by God could have given rise to other species by “the unraveling of gene potentialities or recombination.” But he asserted that this sort of change was only “horizontal radiation,” development within the “root-species,” or, as Price might have said, within the created “kind.” There could be no “vertical” progress without divine intervention. Ramm was emphatic about the impossibility of human evolution: we humans have a “mental or spiritual nature which must come from above and not from below.” Ramm distinguished his view from theistic evolutionism. On the other hand, Ramm knew many Christians who did believe in God-directed
evolution. He was not prepared to conclude unequivocally that evolution was “metaphysically incompatible with Christianity.”

And yet, having opened the door to the possibility of theistic evolution, Ramm made a clear point about the moral and political dangers of naturalistic evolution that George McCready Price, William Bell Riley, J. Frank Norris, and Dan Gilbert would have appreciated. Surveying the varieties of evolution, Ramm identified an “antichristian” type that “atheists and naturalists and materialists” used to “club” Bible-believing Christians. He related this kind of evolution to communism: “Dialectical materialism, the official philosophy of Russia, glories in evolution as the scientific doctrine of creation which frees man from faith in God.” So that there were no doubts among his readers about where Ramm stood politically, he added that “evangelical Christianity will always be at war” with this “use of the theory of evolution.”

In defending theistic evolution from its fundamentalist detractors, Ramm suggested that they ought to be paying less attention to evolution and more attention to “atheistic philosophies, atheistic psychologies, and atheistic sociologies.” According to Ramm, the “hyperorthodox” had not uttered a “squeak” against them. That was untrue. Riley, Norris, Gilbert, and others had been pillorying atheistic social sciences for decades. At the same time that Ramm sought to provide a middle way between fundamentalists and modernists, he affirmed his own anticom­munist credentials and urged conservatives to step up their attacks on communist- and evolutionary-tinged social science.

John R. Rice was not persuaded. He temporarily continued to ally himself with Billy Graham, accompanying him on a whirlwind evangelistic tour to Scotland in the spring of 1955. But that summer, Rice laid down the gauntlet with a review of Ramm’s book. Titled “Shall We Appease Unbelieving Scholars?” Rice’s response took issue with Ramm’s view of the Bible as mediated through Hebrew culture. Rice thought that Ramm was influenced, “perhaps unconsciously,” by the modernists and “neo­orthodox” types. More pointedly, Rice told his readers that “we cannot recommend and we will not sell this book.” It was only a matter of time before Rice split with Graham. The penultimate act was a simmering conflict from 1954 to 1956 between the Southern Baptist Convention and Roberson’s Highland Park Baptist Church. A week after Roberson pulled Highland Park out of the SBC in March 1956, Graham sided with
the SBC. In October, Christianity Today began publication, a clear alternative to not only the modernist Christian Century but to Rice’s Sword of the Lord. The next month, Rice publicly broke with Billy Graham. As Graham came to embody the neo-evangelical worldview, including Bernard Ramm’s proto-theistic evolutionism, Graham’s willingness to view evolution and communism as dangerous twins receded. He remained an anticommunist, but antievolutionism faded from his sermons. Conflict over the politics of evolution helped to precipitate a signal break in the fortress of American fundamentalism.

In the same year that Ramm published the book that divided Graham and Rice, the US Supreme Court announced a nationally polarizing decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. “Separate but equal” was now “inherently unequal.” The 1954 Brown decision capped more than a decade of renewed civil rights organizing starting with the March on Washington movement that pressured President Franklin Roosevelt to issue an executive order in 1941 banning racial discrimination in government war contracting. Under pressure from African American activists and their allies, the Democratic Party added a civil rights plank to its 1948 party platform. President Truman ordered the desegregation of the Jim Crow army that same year. Like the initial opposition to Roosevelt’s order, the rise of “massive resistance” to Brown was justified on the grounds of states’ rights. But that sentiment drew its popular power from the association of civil rights activists with communism, as well as fears of interracial sex and marriage—“race mixing” and “mongrelization.” These themes infused a theological defense of segregation, which provided a popular and powerful vehicle for mobilizing white southerners. In this light, it should not be surprising that resistance to civil rights had an anti-evolutionary subtext as well.

Public discussion of racial desegregation, with its communistic and sexual overtones, was well under way in the decade leading to Brown. Two years before J. Frank Norris spoke to Texas legislators in 1949 about racial desegregation by alluding to the dangers of a “mongrel race,” he received a supportive letter from Texas preacher Ranald McDonald. Norris had just made headlines for confronting Louie Newton at the SBC convention in St. Louis, and McDonald had read an article attacking Norris. A widely reprinted piece from the Atlanta Constitution by antisegregationist
editor Ralph McGill called Norris “a Ku Klux yelper and a loud-mouthed shouter in many demagogic political and hate rallies.” McGill’s article, McDonald told Norris, proved that the writer was a Communist. Such subversives always label their opponents as Klan members. Elaborating on the point, McDonald explained Communist logic as follows: “If you refuse to aid Negro rapist [sic] in raping your neighbor’s [sic] wives and daughters you are a Ku-Kluxer.” McDonald ended his brief letter assuring that he was wholeheartedly on Norris’s side—“ten billion percent.”

McDonald’s equation of racial desegregation with rape and his desire to go exponentially beyond 100 percent for Norris conveys how intensely the issue was felt seven years before Brown.

While McDonald mentioned God and Christianity as he lashed out at integrationists, he did not explicitly ground his comments in biblical verse. But many did. On the high end of education and “respectability” was Judge Horace C. Wilkinson (1887–1957), whose 1948 piece in the Alabama Baptist on the dangers of desegregation found its way into Norris’s files. Educated at the University of Alabama law school, the “distinguished” Wilkinson was described by the Alabama Lawyer as “one of the State’s most active and successful trial lawyers.” After serving as assistant attorney general in the early 1920s, with a populist reputation, he helped lead the state Ku Klux Klan, launching vicious tirades against Jews, Blacks, and Catholics. Dispensing patronage as a local politico in Birmingham during the 1930s, Wilkinson was appointed to the bench and emerged as a power broker in the Alabama Democratic Party. Speaking to a group of Birmingham businessmen in 1942, he raised alarms about the gains that Blacks had made during the war, and emphasized the threat posed to both working-class whites and their employers. He also pointed the finger at “activist” judges who had incited Blacks to “murder and ravish and rob.” He ended his talk by calling for a League to Maintain White Supremacy.

Writing in the Alabama Baptist in 1948, Wilkinson took up the challenge from a growing number of white southern Baptists who wondered if racial segregation might be “unchristian.” The proper way to examine this question, according to Wilkinson, was to ask another one: is “racial purity” unchristian? As his fellow Baptists knew, the answer could not possibly be yes, since racial purity was a gift of God. Wilkinson cited Bible verse in support of this claim. He began, appropriately, with Genesis and
set the key text in bold type for emphasis: “And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature **after his kind**, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth **after his kind**: and it was so.” Segregation had arisen by “divine command.” It was embedded in the act of creation. God had commanded that every separately created “kind” must “reproduce ‘after his kind.’”

Wilkinson did not draw out the issue of evolution, but his insistence that each “kind” remained constant over time was significant. The word “kind” held no status in modern biological classification systems, the closest term being “family.” Yet since it appeared in the King James Bible, creationists felt compelled to employ it. In 1944, a creation scientist coined the term “baramin”—after the Hebrew *bara* (created) and *min* (kind)—to evade this problem. Though Wilkinson may have been oblivious to this fact, he was employing, for different purposes, the precise argument that antievolutionists had been making and would be making in the years ahead.

While Wilkinson considered Blacks to be fellow human beings with a common “Adamic” origin, he also observed that God had separated “the different races” at the Tower of Babel. God kept them separate so that each race could “maintain its racial integrity.” So that “racial purity” remained intact, the races needed to be kept separate in all spheres. “We know beyond a reasonable doubt,” wrote Wilkinson, “that social association and political intimacies between people of different races inevitably brings about and leads to intermarriage.” Intermarriage meant interracial sex and pollution of racial purity. Surely, argued Wilkinson, God did not intend for this to happen. Any movement in the direction of breaking down these barriers must be opposed as ungodly. Segregation was sacred.

Reverend Carey Daniel Jr. (1915–1987) agreed and amplified the pro-segregation message for millions, with a nod to the politics of evolutionary science. Pastor of the First Baptist Church in West Dallas, Texas, Daniel served as vice-chairman of the Dallas chapter of the Texas Citizens’ Council, which organized resistance to the *Brown* decision. By 1954, Carey Daniel was not only the pastor of a prominent church. He was well connected. His cousin, Price Daniel, was the junior US senator from Texas. A protégé of the senior senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Price was a tireless
proponent of “states’ rights,” whether they concerned tidelands claimed by the federal government or the issue of racial segregation. In what became a landmark case, Daniel defended the state of Texas in its refusal to admit African American student Heman Marion Sweatt to the University of Texas law school. Sweatt lost at the state level but won in the US Supreme Court, which ruled in 1950 that the “separate but equal” facilities for Black law students at the Texas State University for Negroes were distinctly unequal. When a group of nineteen US senators and eighty-two US representatives signed the “Declaration of Constitutional Principles” (better known as the “Southern Manifesto”) in 1956, in defiance of Brown, Daniel was among the signatories.66

Despite Price Daniel’s record as a supporter of segregation, pressure generated by his brother Carey probably helped to ensure that he would sign. Not only did Carey write to Price, warning him not be “soft” on integration, but Carey knew how to get the people of Texas fired up about the issue.67 On May 23, 1954, the Sunday following the announcement of Brown, Carey Daniel preached a sermon at First Baptist in West Dallas. It was published in the form of a twelve-page pamphlet the following year as God the Original Segregationist. Daniel ranged over the Old and New Testaments to demonstrate that God, Moses, Jesus, the apostle Paul, and even Mother Nature, “God’s second book,” were advocates of racial purity. In “other objections answered,” Daniel showed how racial segregation did not violate the golden rule, constitute disobedience to civil authority, illustrate the increasingly discredited “curse of Ham,” contradict the Declaration of Independence, or amount to racial hatred. Over the following decade, Daniel’s pamphlet sold more than a million copies.68

Daniel began with the book of Genesis. Unlike Horace Wilkinson’s account of God’s segregationist intentions, which began in the Garden of Eden, Daniel’s began at Babel. In this respect, his story was less explicitly “creationist.” There was no talk of “kinds.” And yet Daniel’s focus on Nimrod, who commanded the Tower of Babel to be built, was an anticipation of Babel-based explanations for the origins of evolutionary thinking that emerged over the next several decades in the works of Henry Morris. Nimrod, Daniel tells us, was Ham’s grandson, and his name means “Rebel” or “Let Us Rebel.” He was a “two-fold rebel, a double-dyed anarchist,” who literally elevated “man” as if he were a god and resisted God’s plan for scattering the races.69 This political language fit well with
Daniel’s contention, later in the piece, that there was “no Negro problem” until “Communist-inspired pressure groups” created one. Daniel misread history, but communists and socialists active in the labor movement had played an outsize role in the early decades of the Black freedom struggle, demonstrating the ineluctable connection between “cultural” and class battles.

Like many biblical commentators, Daniel also described Nimrod as an agent of Satan, “a mouthpiece of the Devil.” Indeed, Daniel counterposed Nimrod to God by labeling this section of the pamphlet “Nimrod the Original Desegregationist.” He half-jokingly added that “I might have done better if I had entitled this section ‘Satan the Original Desegregationist.’”71 In similar terms, Henry Morris would describe Nimrod, in league with the devil, as the original evolutionist. Daniel’s words might sound bizarre to secular ears, but Daniel knew his audience. By linking civil rights groups with the devil, and through guilt by association tying the Communists to the Evil One as well, Daniel had raised the religious stakes as high as possible. If Satan was behind the Brown decision, he needed to be stopped at all costs.

As Time magazine reported the following year, on the eve of the 1956 presidential election, Daniel led by example when he offered to turn over the buildings of the West Dallas First Baptist Church to establish an all-white school in the event that desegregation came to Texas. Explaining his plan to the press, Daniel noted that in setting up such a school, he would not only combat segregation but “correct several other evils” as well. His curriculum would condemn the United Nations and its “oneworld ideology” (often referred to as a modern Tower of Babel). Daniel’s school would also present “evolution as a damnable heresy and not as scientific fact.”72 As members of Daniel’s flock knew well, he was not just taking a random swipe at evolution, but was referring to 2 Peter and its warning about false prophets spreading “damnable heresies,” just as John R. Rice had warned at Highland Park Baptist in Chattanooga two years earlier.

In 1956, Carey Daniel’s offer to turn his church into a segregated private school with a distinctly right-wing Christian curriculum was the beginning of the development of “segregation academies” that sprouted across America in the coming decades. Many of these would serve to inculcate in young people a suspicion toward if not outright hostility to
evolutionary science. Starting in the 1960s, such institutions, and like-minded teachers in public schools, would draw on a newly aggressive and influential “creation science” movement, led by Henry Morris and John Whitcomb Jr., culminating in the founding of the Institute for Creation Research in 1970. In the 1950s, evolution was still a subterranean political issue. But through public battles over religious modernism and racial segregation, Americans learned about the connections between communism, animalistic and interracial sex, atheism, and Satan. With such a combustible set of raw materials, the “anti-Darwin” fuse would not take long to light.