



"This is not an age in which to be a soft Christian."
—Francis Schaeffer

16-Jun-06

Slowly But Surely?

Common [wisdom](#) posits that given enough time, water runoff can reduce even the tallest mountain to countless grains of sand scattered over the ocean floor. Geologists assert that the stunning Grand Canyon was carved over eons by the flow of the Colorado River. A few years ago, a documentary on the Himalayas warned that, because of the composition of the rock that they are made of, the world's tallest mountain range was subject to lightning-fast erosion, geologically speaking. Sometime during that same geologic period, they say, California will crack in two along the San Andreas Fault, and the western half will become an island in the sea.

These are geological examples of a process called *gradualism*. Normally, this term is applied to evolutionary biological ideas: As *The American Heritage Dictionary* puts it, "The view that speciation proceeds by imperceptibly small, cumulative steps over long periods of time rather than by abrupt, major changes." In other words, many evolutionary biologists believe animal and plant species evolved slowly rather than quickly, in baby-steps rather than giant leaps, over millions—yea, billions—of years. Right.

Gradualism is also part of the political lexicon: "The belief in or the policy of advancing toward a goal by gradual, often slow stages." This nefarious

strategy has been in place in this country—planned and coordinated or not—since its founding. While the ink of its signatures was still drying on the Constitution, the two political parties that formed during the Constitutional Convention were already looking for ways to amend it to conform to their ways of thinking. Over the two and a quarter centuries since then, the basic law of the land has been amended, re-interpreted, ignored, and generally mishandled until the United States, despite being powerful and wealthy, is a mere shadow of its former self in values, nobility, and freedom.

The evolutionary concept of gradualism reaches out to encompass other areas of life too. It is used in various treatments, especially to "cure" addictions. For instance, the nicotine patch and nicotine gum, extremely popular a few years ago, worked on this principle. A smoker wanting to kick the habit wore a patch with slightly less nicotine than is found in a cigarette. After a set time, he transitioned to another patch with even less nicotine, and he repeated this process until he was weaned from his addiction to the drug. For some, this drawn-out process apparently works. It would be interesting to find out if the makers of the nicotine patch and/or gum (or better yet, an independent laboratory) ever did a study on the actual success-rate of this product line.

Educators in our public schools have also used gradualism very effectively—but note that "effective" does not mean "proper." Psychologists use the less-innocuous term "conditioning" for this process. Children of only five years of wisdom enter the system with, as Rush Limbaugh calls it, "skulls full of mush." Teachers, whose curricula are often mandated at higher levels, begin to indoctrinate them in various socially or politically correct notions, say, for instance, environmentalism. Within a short time, these children are lecturing their parents on the benefits of recycling, leaving old-growth forests to the owls, and driving "green" automobiles. By the time such children have graduated from high school, many of them are full-fledged environmentalists, ready to save Gaia from horrible, hateful humanity.

Similar gradualism occurs every day in the larger society. In 1980, homosexuality was still "in the closet." When the AIDS crisis broke out in 1981, HIV was considered a "gay disease," confined to the bathhouses of San Francisco and wherever homosexuals were concentrated. Within a few years, once the homosexual PR machine began to crank, the public was

manipulated into feeling pity for AIDS "victims," and a short while after that, into conferring a kind of "favored minority" status on not just those with the disease, but also on all homosexuals. Now the gradual process has come to the point where the public is being pressured just about daily to approve not just civil unions for gays but marriage! Thirty years of gradual, persistent assault on the mores of America has resulted in nearly total tolerance, if not acceptance, of what was once considered deviant, perverse, and sinful.

As used by liberal advocacy groups everywhere, gradualism is a real-world demonstration of the "frog slowly boiling in a pot of water" metaphor—and a scheme of which we need to be aware. Advertisers and public relations firms use it all the time to sell merchandise and ideas that people would otherwise reject, and most of the time for good reason. Personally, just a few years ago, I would never have purchased a cell phone—nor did I even consider that I had a need for one. But now that I have been worked over by the media, I wear a cell phone clipped to my belt everyday as I head off to work! In just this same way, we are worn down, ever so gradually, until we accept what we formerly rejected out of hand.

Behind all of this, of course, is [Satan](#) the Devil, a master manipulator. By hook and by crook, he has managed to win over one-third of the angels and every human being ([Revelation 12:9](#)) to his way of thinking—rebellion against [God](#). Those who would try to change us back to that anti-God way of life will use the same stratagems. We need to watch out for such ploys, Paul warns, "lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" ([II Corinthians 2:11](#)). And do not think that he would not try to trip us up—he tried his best to wear down our Savior in much the same way (Matthew 4; Luke 4).

Paul advises us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can defend against Satan's tricks ([Ephesians 6:11](#)). Part of every good defense is having a good idea what the enemy can and will throw against us. So, beware of gradualism and stand firm!

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Preventing Deception](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Gullibility and simple-minded credulity emerge from time to time in the greater church of God. Like advertising — which relies heavily on deception, hiding the down-side or defects and exaggerating the efficacy or desirability of a product — religious hucksters use deceptive tactics, using the bait or temptation of self-gratification, selling non-essential, twiggly or downright heretical positions. Like highly trained U.S. Treasury agents, the elect keep themselves undeceived by knowing the real article inside-out. If one knows the real article, the counterfeit will become readily apparent. Like a lamp rolling back the darkness (Psalm 119:105), the truth, revealed by God's Word, provides the best defense or antidote against deception and error.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[What Evolution Really Means](#)

by David C. Grabbe

In the church, the argument over evolution was settled long ago, but such is not the case in the wider world. David Grabbe goes beyond the science to what embracing evolution actually says about a person's—and a society's—relationship with God.

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).
