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The Great War and the Death of God: Cultural Breakdown, Retreat from Reason, and Rise of Neo-Darwinian Materialism in the Aftermath of World War I

Charles a. O'Connor III

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The catastrophic Great War left humanity feeling the world no longer trustworthy and reassuring but seemingly meaningless and indifferent. Instead of restoring humanity's sense of cosmic purpose, postwar Western culture abandoned concern for metaphysical meaning, lost confidence in human reason, and enabled the modern scientific worldview of neo-Darwinian materialism to emerge and eventually dominate the Western mind. According to scientific materialism, science is the only genuine source of truth, nature is solely the product of blind evolutionary processes, and reality at bottom is just physics and chemistry. Thus, God is dead and continued belief in a transcendently purposeful universe is intellectually indefensible and self-delusional. This book attributes the remarkable and unwarranted success of this atheistic cosmology in displacing the deeply rooted belief in nature's divine governance to the First World War, which tragically disengaged Western theology, philosophy, literature, and art from the eternal questions about the nature of our world.

"Charles O'Connor's readable new book is a timely critique of scientific materialism and the cheapening effect it has had on contemporary culture. The author has no complaints about science, including evolutionary biology, but he rightly and convincingly undermines the smugness of academically sponsored materialist interpretations of scientific discoveries. What this book has and many other such critiques generally lack, is a polished awareness of how the Great War contributed to the enshrinement of materialism as an authoritative and influential cultural motif in twentieth and twentieth-first century thought and artistic expression. Strongly recommended."
?John F. Haught, Professor Emeritus of Theology, Georgetown University.

"In The Great War and the Death of God, O'Connor revisits the 20th century's journey from Nietzsche's declaration of the "death of God" to the rise of materialism as the dominant worldview of western intelligentsia. We live in a world that has largely expelled both mind and meaning from the citadels of serious intellectual pursuit, and O'Connor's book is a fascinating and scholarly expedition into the "how" and "why" of that troubling development. Atheists, agnostics, and religious people alike will find much to contemplate in O'Connor's carefully argued work, as he shows us that the philosophical commitments of materialism are historical, contingent, and in need of examination-worthy of robust questioning and healthy dissent."
?Carter Phipps, author of Evolutionaries

"I found this topic to be top-rate. The book is well researched and conceived, nicely narrated and analyzed, and an original body of inquiry into a challenging, fascinating intellectual tradition."
?Ronald M. Johnson, Professor Emeritus of American History, Georgetown University.

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