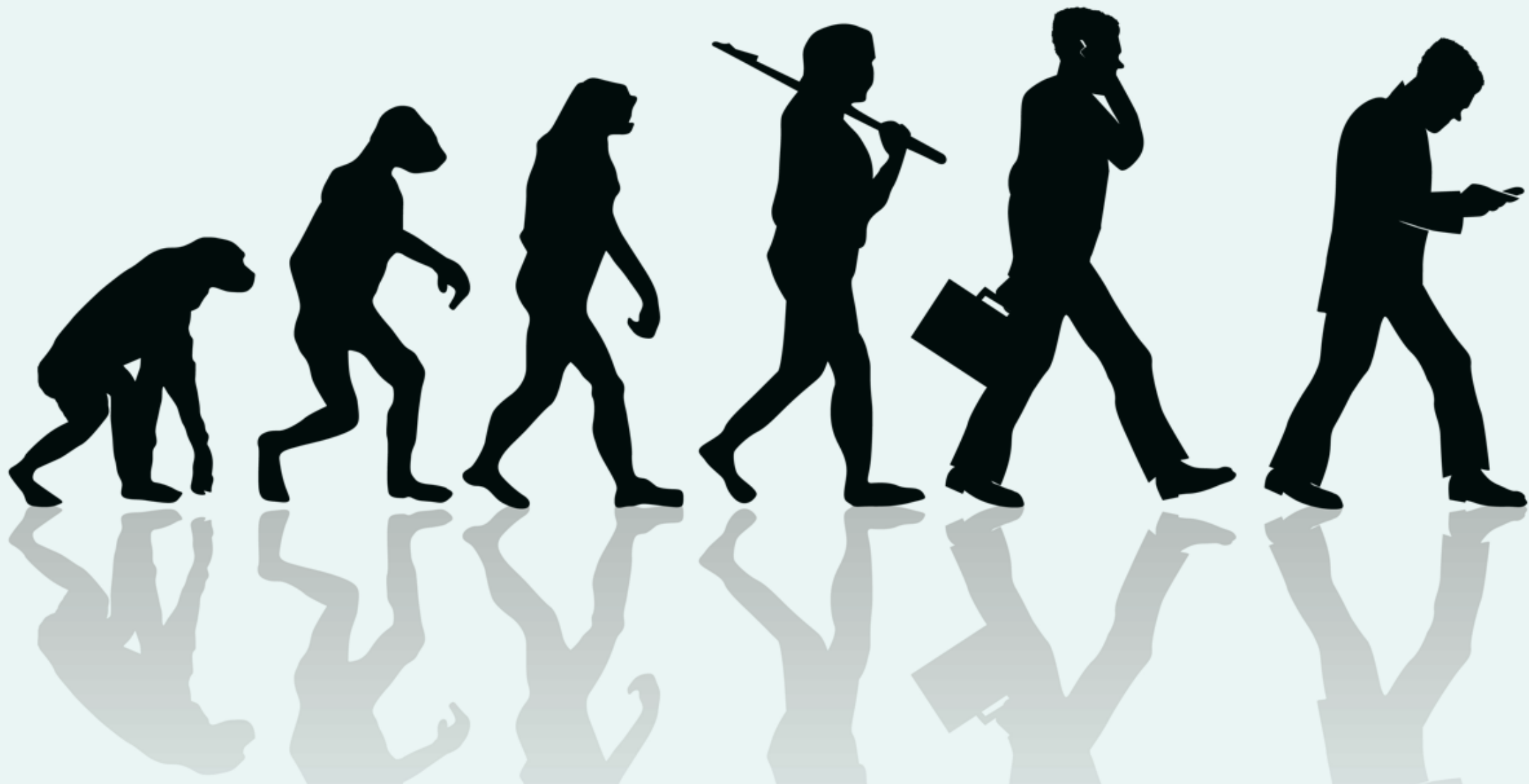


Isn't the Bible morally outdated?

- Peter J. Williams
- Tyndale House, Cambridge
- www.tyndalehouse.com
- Twitter: @DrPJWilliams





Reasons to think
the Bible is
morally
outdated

Violence

Slavery

Sexism

Homophobia



Violence

Preliminary
remarks

Given atheism, it's hard to
show why violence is wrong

Not all use of force is
violence

Not everything narrated is
approved

The worst case against the Bible

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- It's always immoral to kill innocent people
- It's incompatible with 'God is love' (1 John 4:8)
- It's just like lots of religious violence we condemn in the world today

Do we all agree that people who deliberately seek to fly aeroplanes into collections of innocent people are evil?





11 September
2001

- F-16s scrambled to intercept and bring down United Airlines Flight 93 (40 passengers + 1 in utero).
- Brigadier General Mark H. Sasseville: 'I'm going to go for the cockpit'
- Lieutenant Heather Penney: 'I'll take the tail'.



I have 20 points to make but don't have time

- We take innocent life as heroes; God is the giver of life and due authority to command ending of life; God has future knowledge and that changes things; evidence of God's benevolence; these are miraculous narratives; God did most of fighting; you can't compare miraculous narratives with non-miraculous; we do not know that Canaanite children were worse off dead; command was given with objective evidence; Canaanites were wicked; there may have been no alternative; Israel was God's judicial representative; Canaanites were warned and able to repent; this is not what genocide laws were made to prevent; we easily misjudge cultures; usual atrocities were absent; weaker was attacking the stronger; no one is absolutely innocent; you couldn't imitate these stories if you tried; An objection needs to be a statement, not just a question 'Why did God ...?'



Slavery

Atheist Sam Harris

- “In assessing the moral wisdom of the Bible, it is useful to consider moral questions that have been solved to everyone’s satisfaction. Consider the question of slavery. The entire civilized world now agrees that slavery is an abomination. What moral instruction do we get from the God of Abraham on this subject? Consult the Bible, and you will discover that the creator of the universe clearly expects us to keep slaves:”

Sam Harris quotes:



- “As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are round about you. You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. You may bequeath them to your sons after you, to inherit as a possession forever; you may make slaves of them, but over your brethren the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another, with harshness” (Leviticus 25:44-46 RSV)

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- 5) We know that slavery is wrong
- 6) Therefore biblical texts approve of something that is wrong

EXPERT

LEVEL
70

MOVE
28

BEST
--



Translation

Occurrences of 'Slave'

- *Slave*:
 - KJV 2×; NKJV 46×; NIV 130×; NRSV 166×
 - JPS 1917 3×; JPS 1985 135×
- *Sklave/in*:
 - Luther Bibel 1912 0×; Revised Luther Bibel 1984 70×; Elberfelder 1993 161× + *Sklaverei* 4×
- *esclavo or esclava*:
 - Reina-Valera 1909 4x; 1960 25x; 1995 65x

Words for slave and servant

	Chinese Union Translation (simplified)	Chinese Standard Bible (simplified)
奴隶	1	13
奴仆	83	93
仆人	681	653

Belonging to Shema the *'ebed* of Jeroboam



The word *'ebed*

- Translated both 'servant' and 'slave'
- Not inherently negative
- Possibly never negative
- Related to work
- Subservient
- Israelite subjects are 'servants' of the King

The essence of the OT
institution

The patriarchal system

- Work: herdsmen, domestic servants
- Eliezer of Damascus will inherit (Genesis 15:3), children of Bilhah and Zilpah inherit
- Children of Hagar, Bilhah, and Zilpah are free
- Trusted
 - To travel with valuables (Genesis 24)
 - with weapons (Genesis 14:14)
- No approved 'selling' of people

Slave systems compared

Conditions

	OT	Roman	New World
Holiday	Yes	No	Variety
Food enough	Yes	No	No
Legal redress	Yes	No	No
Sexual protection	Yes	No	No
Kidnapped	No	Yes	Yes
Chains	No	Yes	Yes
Torture	No	Yes	Yes
Physical abuse	No	Yes	Yes

Runaways

Bible: “You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your towns, wherever it suits him.”
(Deuteronomy 23:15–16 ESV)

Ante-bellum South USA: failure to deliver back escaped slave of suffer 6 months prison and fine of \$1000

'Sale' and 'buying'

- Debt slavery / servitude
- People 'sell'
 - Themselves
 - Their daughters
- Temporary leasing
- No salesmen / intermediaries
- Bodies retain rights
- God owns everything

The New Testament?

Doesn't the NT endorse slavery?

- Christians could not change the legal system (no suffrage)

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- Slaves who rebelled would be executed
- Limits to emancipation of slaves
 - *Lex Fufia Caninia* (BC 2): only free 2 of 3; half of 4-10; a third of 11-30
 - *Lex Aelia Sentia* (AD 4): slaves under 30 can't be freed without legal procedure
 - Slave manumitted under 30 could never be citizen

NT teaching on slavery

- Love others as Christ loved us

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- Brotherhood

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- Kissing

NT teaching on slavery

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- Eph 6:9 ‘the same’ (*ta auta*); no threatening; God doesn’t prefer masters
- Col. 4:1 ‘what is right and what is equal’ (*to dikaion kai tēn isotēta*)
- Philemon 15 ‘no longer as a slave, but above a slave, a beloved brother’

Jesus is Lord

A dark, irregular ink blot with the word "Sexist?" written in white in the center. The blot is surrounded by a light, textured background with scattered dark specks.

Sexist?

A problem

- >3000 named characters in Bible
- <150 named women
- <5% of named individuals in Bible
 - (*Lord of the Rings* 18% female)
- Futile to try to argue that the Bible treats male and female equally

But what is equality?



Many terrorists treat all their victims equally



Secular Equality!

- The human race is just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet, orbiting around a very average star in the outer suburb of one among a hundred billion galaxies. We are so insignificant that I can't believe the whole universe exists for our benefit. That would be like saying that you would disappear if I closed my eyes. (Professor Stephen Hawking, Cambridge University)

Secularism: lots of talk of
'equality', but not delivering
a good deal for women

Abstract

The US government estimates that between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders annually.¹ At any given time the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that 2.5 million people are being trafficked around the world; approximately 80 percent of trafficked individuals are women and girls, and 50 percent are minors.² The revenue from human trafficking is large with an annual estimated average of US \$13,000 per trafficked victim, totaling US \$32 billion per year.³ Kevin Bales, co-founder of Free the Slaves, believes that international human trafficking has become a modern euphemism for international slavery.⁴ Bales estimates that there are 27 million people enslaved around the world at any given time.⁵ Even though slavery has been outlawed in almost all countries

Jennifer K. Blank, 'Human Trafficking, Migration and Gender', in M. W. Karraker (ed.), *The Other People*, Springer, 2013, pp. 55-72.



Antonio Mario Costa, Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- “If supply is very much an issue of developing countries, demand - at least for sexual exploitation - is largely the problem of the developed world. So let us not be too quick to pass judgement on sexual discrimination in poor countries. Sexist attitudes, life-styles that insult the dignity of women, and expensive media and advertising campaigns that exploit their bodies create a market for gender-based exploitation.”



Old people neglected



Biblical Equality: Pictures of God

Bible history hangs on the women

Tamar vs. Judah

Hebrew midwives

Rahab changes sides

Bathsheba vs. David

Jehosheba hides Joash

Esther saves Jews

Mary mother of Jesus

Women at tomb vs. male disciples

Two different views of men and women

Secular
materialist:

- Equal worth
- Assembly of chemicals
- Value socially relative
- Differ only in area of reproduction

Two different views of men and women

Secular materialist:

- Equal worth
- Assembly of chemicals
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Christian:

- Equal worth
- Infinite worth because made in God's image
- Are example of divinely created variety

The Bible has a higher
view of women than any
other philosophy in the
world

The Bible has the highest
view of the value of a
woman that it is logically
possible to have

We don't see this because we often assign value to humans based on what they do, rather than on what they are

The Old Testament story:
polygamy always damages

A dark, irregular ink blot with the word "Homophobic?" written in white text in the center. The blot is surrounded by a light, splattered background.

Homophobic?



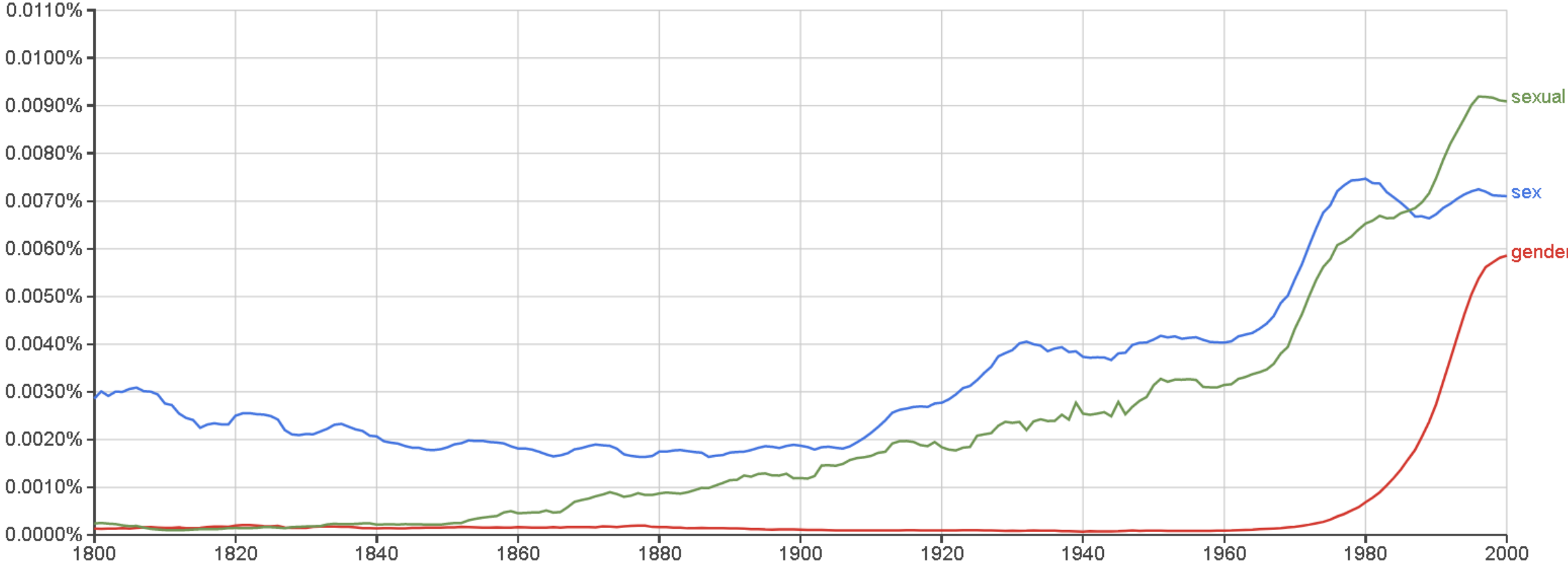
Inventing sex

Not every language has a word for
activities grouped as 'sex'

Google Books Ngram Viewer

Graph these comma-separated phrases: case-insensitive

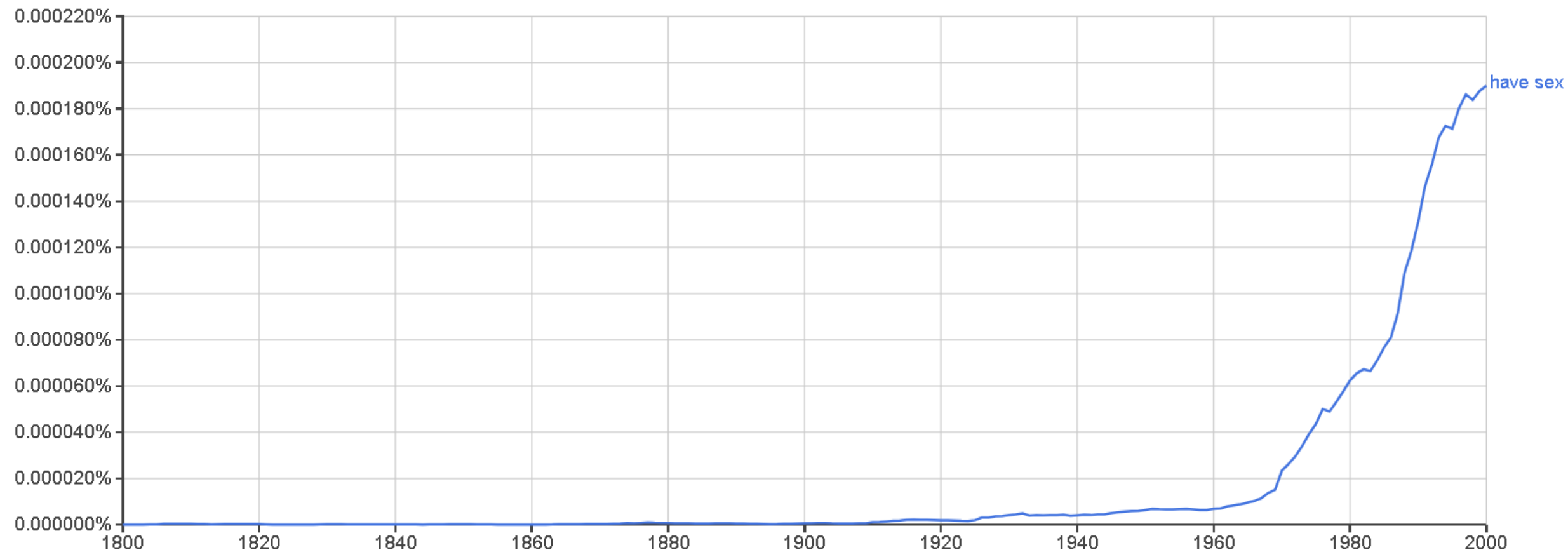
between and from the corpus with smoothing of [Search lots of books](#)



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Graph these comma-separated phrases: case-insensitive

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Google Translate

- Sex → 性別 → gender
- Have sex → 做愛 → make love

What is sex?

- A recent category
- A socially constructed category
- Groups diverse physical actions
- Separating actions from relational and social contexts
- A commodity
- The third thing in the bed
 - 'Have sex with N' vs 'Adam knew Eve'

Sex (for activities) is a word you don't actually need, though it's slightly useful in biology and medicine

If 'sex' is an unnecessary
word, then all words
built on it are also
unnecessary

The moves

- 'Sex' (activities) invented to create commodities

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- Once 'sex' is invented you can build 'sexual', 'sexuality', 'homosexual', 'heterosexual' upon it
- Once 'homosexual' is invented, it can be replaced by 'gay'
- 'Gender' displaces 'sex' (identity)

Sexualism is the religion
which worships sex and
defines everything by it

The contradictions within sexualism

- Sexuality is fixed: opposition to medical change
- 'Gender' (was 'sex') is fluid: help for medical change
- Women are to be protected
- Act so that women become vulnerable:
 - Men may become women
 - Encourage prostitution and pornography

An alternative
way of thinking



Jesus's teaching

- ¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” (Matthew 19:10-12)

In beginning: Male and
female

Now: Male + female (+
eunuchs)

God is our benevolent owner



He owns us twice over



Galatians
3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”

基督既為我們受（原文是成）了咒詛，就贖出我們脫離律法的咒詛；因為經上記著：凡掛在木頭上都是被咒詛的。

God owns everything and allows us to possess some things

- Having someone/something you may not have = sin

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- Having someone/something you may not have = sin
- Temptation to have someone/something you may not have \neq sin

God owns everything and allows us to possess some things

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- Temptation to have someone/something you may not have ≠ sin
- Attraction to someone/something you may not have ≠ sin

God owns everything and allows us to possess some things

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- Temptation to have someone/something you may not have ≠ sin
- Attraction to someone/something you may not have ≠ sin
- Visual appreciation of someone/something you may not have ≠ sin

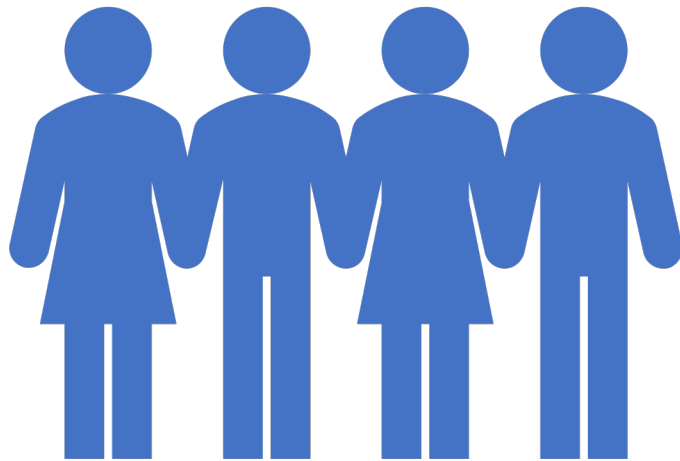
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- *What you appreciate and are attracted to is not your identity*

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- What you appreciate and are attracted to is not your identity
- *It is good to find members of both sexes beautiful: God made them beautiful*

The two main classes of human



- Those who accept God's owns them and knows best
- Those who reject God's ownership and think they know better

Jesus loved us more than anyone
ever has. It's worth giving up
everything for him



Questions?

Twitter: [@DrPJWilliams](https://twitter.com/DrPJWilliams)

www.tyndalehouse.com

Free Bible Software: www.stepbible.org