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AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN BALDWIN

BY MIRANDA SAWYER

THE BABY OF THE BALDWIN ACTING CLAN WAS A 'BADLY BEHAVED DUMB JOCK' UNTIL HE FOUND THE LORD. NOW, DAYS AFTER HIS EVICTION FROM CELEBRITY BIG BROTHER, HE TELLS MIRANDA SAWYER ABOUT HIS 18 TATTOOS AND HOW HE SAW THE DEVIL IN TWO OF HIS HOUSEMATES.

STEPHEN BALDWIN, 43, HAS 18 TATTOOS. HE SAYS "THEY REPRESENT VARIOUS MOMENTS IN MY LIFE." WHETHER IT BE SHOWING MY LOVE FOR MY WOMAN IN A VERY MACHO WAY – THERE ARE THREE OF THOSE – TO THE ONES WHICH EXPRESS MY COMMITMENT TO SOBRIETY. I HAVE ONE FOR MY CHILDREN. THE 3.30 ONE ON THE BACK OF MY NECK IS THE TIME I'M SUPPOSED TO BE HOME! NO, IT'S A SCRIPTURE IN THE BIBLE THAT I FEEL COMPELLED TO REMIND MYSELF OF: JOHN 3.30 WHICH READS 'I MUST DECREASE SO THAT HE MAY INCREASE.' IT'S ABOUT CONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMILITY. I'M WALKING THIS WALK AND MY LIFE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MY PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD. IT'S ALL GOD! HOW DO I FUNCTION WITHIN HIS PLAN?"

STEPHEN BALDWIN IS A CHARACTER. EVEN HIS TATTOOS ARE BANANAS. THE YOUNGEST AND, SOME SAY, DUMBEST OF THE BALDWIN BROTHERS IS A PUMPED-UP BALL OF ENERGY, A GLITTER-EYED ALPHA MALE, AND A CHARISMATIC CHRISTIAN. HE CHARMS EVERYONE THAT WANDERS INTO HIS LIGHT.

IT'S THE SUNDAY AFTER STEPHEN'S FRIDAY-NIGHT EVICTION FROM THE BIG BROTHER HOUSE. LAST NIGHT, HE TREKKED TO AN INTERNET CAFE AT 3AM SO HE COULD CO-HOST HIS RELIGIOUS RADIO PROGRAMME, CALLED BALDWIN/MCCULLOUGH XTREME RADIO, WHICH GOES OUT LIVE EVERY SATURDAY EVENING TO 195 STATIONS ACROSS THE US. HE DIDN'T GO TO SLEEP UNTIL SIX IN THE MORNING.

STILL, THERE'S NOT MUCH EVIDENCE OF TIREDNESS WHEN WE MEET, IN THE RESTAURANT OF HIS HOTEL. HE AVAILS HIMSELF OF THE BREAKFAST BUFFET AT A LEISURELY PACE. THERE IS AN ENORMOUS BIBLE ON THE TABLE. STEPHEN TAKES IT EVERYWHERE; HE SPECIFIED IN HIS BIG BROTHER CONTRACT THAT HE BE ALLOWED TO READ IT FOR AN HOUR A DAY WHILE IN THE HOUSE, DESPITE THERE USUALLY BEING A BLANKET BAN ON READING MATERIAL.

BALDWIN SAID "I AIN'T GOING IN THE HOUSE OF HELL WITHOUT MY SWORD!" I ONLY LOOK STUPID … AND THERE WASN'T MUCH TO DO, SO GUESS WHAT? THE BIBLE READINGS BECAME A BIG THING! I'M LIKE, 'WAIT A MINUTE: I'M NOT HOLDING A BIBLE STUDY CLASS WHILE THE WHOLE WORLD WATCHES, AM I?' I SPOKE WITH EVERYONE ABOUT GOD, EXCEPT FOR VINNIE."

ACTUALLY, STEPHEN – OR STEVIE B, AS HE REFERS TO HIMSELF – IS CONVINCED THAT HE SAW THE DEVIL WHILE HE WAS FILMING BIG BROTHER, WORKING FROM WITHIN TWO OF THE HOUSEMATES (HE WON'T TELL ME WHICH, THOUGH I'D GUESS AT MILD NICOLA T AND DIMBO DANE BOWERS, BOTH REMARKABLY UNDEMONIC). WHATEVER, THE DEVIL POPPED UP AND STEVIE B SPOTTED THE LITTLE RASCAL.

BALDWIN SAID, "DEMONS MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS. FOR INSTANCE, OUT OF NOWHERE, SOMEBODY CAN BECOME VERY ANGRY FOR NO REASON. THAT'S NOT JUST AN EMOTION. THAT'S A DEMON."

STEPHEN TRIED TO TALK ABOUT THIS WITH OTHER HOUSEMATES, BUT THEY DIDN'T SEEM THAT BOTHERED THAT SOME OF THEIR MEMBERS WERE POSSESSED.

(STEPHEN, THAT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY FIGURED OUT THAT ONLY ONE OF THEIR MEMBERS WAS POSSESSED).

SO HE CONSULTED WITH GOD, AND CAME TO THIS CONCLUSION: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ALLOWING STEPHEN TO SEE CERTAIN THINGS. THEN BALDWIN SAID "BUT! IF I MENTIONED IT, IT WOULD DESTROY MY CREDIBILITY IN THE HOUSE. SATAN WOULD BE USING MY KNOWLEDGE THAT HE EXISTS AGAINST ME! I CAN'T REVEAL THE TRUTH! THIS IS GNARLY WARFARE."

(STEPHEN, WHAT CREDIBILITY?).

WE TAKE A CAB TO THE BIG BROTHER HOUSE, IN ELSTREE. ON THE WAY, STEPHEN TALKS ABOUT HIS FAMILY. BORN IN A SMALL TOWN ON LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK, HE'S ONE OF SIX CHILDREN – TWO GIRLS, ELIZABETH AND JANE, AND FOUR NOW-FAMOUS BOYS: ALEC, BILLY, DANNY, AND STEPHEN. THEIR CATHOLIC PARENTS WERE RESPECTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS – HIS DAD WAS A SCHOOLTEACHER, HIS MOM FOUNDED A BREAST CANCER CARE CENTRE – AND THE BALDWIN BROTHERS WERE POPULAR. AS DESCRIBED BY STEPHEN: "BADLY BEHAVED, OUTSPOKEN, FAMOUS-IN-OUR-TOWN, DUMB JOCKS."

STEPHEN WAS THE BABY, HIS MOM'S FAVOURITE: BALDWIN DESCRIBED HIMSELF, "LIKE MICHAEL JACKSON IN THE JACKSON 5 YEARS, WITH CONFIDENCE IN MY CHARM AND A BELIEF IN MY ABILITY TO BE ENTERTAINING."

ALEC, THEN AND NOW THE LEADER OF THE BALDWINS, BECAME PRESIDENT OF HIS SCHOOL'S STUDENT BODY, FOLLOWED BY BILLY AND JANE. HE STUDIED ACTING AT NYU AND, IN 1980, ALEC GOT A ROLE IN A DAYTIME SOAP CALLED THE DOCTORS. THE OTHER BOYS FOLLOWED, LANDING MODELLING AND ACTING JOBS THROUGH, SAYS STEPHEN, "CHUTZPAH, PERSONALITY, DRIVE AND A BELIEF THAT ANYTHING'S ACHIEVABLE." EVERYTHING CAME EASILY TO THE CONFIDENT BALDWIN BROTHERS.

UP UNTIL HE FOUND THE LORD, STEPHEN WORKED PRETTY SOLIDLY AS AN ACTOR. HIS ­BIGGEST ROLES BEING IN MID-90S MOVIES 'THE USUAL SUSPECTS' AND 'BIO-DOME'; THOUGH HE NEARLY BLEW HIS CAREER EARLY ON, BY GETTING HEAVILY INVOLVED WITH ALCOHOL AND COCAINE.

(STEPHEN, I DON'T REMEMBER ALCOHOL AND COCAINE BEING PART OF THE SACRAMENTS).

HE FIRST TOOK COKE AT HIS HIGH SCHOOL PROM. BUT HE WAS CLEAN AND OUT OF REHAB BY THE AGE OF 23, HAVING MET HIS BRAZILIAN WIFE, KENNYA, WHEN HE WAS 19. THEY MARRIED IN 1990 AND HAVE TWO GIRLS, ALAIA, WHO'S JUST TURNED 17, AND HAILEY, 13.

(SO STEPHEN, 23 YEARS OLD, 2 CATHOLIC PARENTS, AND THE BEST GOD COULD DO FOR YOU WAS REHAB?).

KENNYA HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN STEPHEN'S CONVERSION FROM CATHOLICISM TO BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIAN.

(MIRANDA, ARE YOU SURE STEPHEN'S NOT ON COKE RIGHT NOW? HOW DO YOU CONVERT FROM CHRISTIANITY TO ... CHRISTIANITY? LAST TIME I CHECKED, CATHOLICS ARE CHRISTIANS. IN FACT THEY WERE CHRISTIANS 1,500 YEARS BEFORE THE PROTESTANTS CAME ALONG AND TRIED TO CLAIM THE NAME FOR THEMSELVES).

WHEN ALAIA WAS FIRST BORN, KENNYA HIRED A BRAZILIAN WOMAN, AUGUSTA, AS A HOUSEKEEPER. AS SHE WORKED, AUGUSTA KEPT SINGING ABOUT JESUS AND KENNYA ASKED WHY: AUGUSTA REPLIED THAT HER LOCAL CHURCH IN BRAZIL HAD TOLD HER THAT SHE SHOULD TAKE THE JOB WITH THE BALDWINS BECAUSE, IF SHE DID, THEY WOULD BECOME BELIEVERS AND HAVE THEIR OWN MINISTRY. KENNYA TOLD STEPHEN. HE LAUGHED.

SOME TIME LATER, KENNYA BECAME BORN AGAIN. SHE SAID, "I GAVE MY LIFE TO THE LORD TONIGHT." STEPHEN SAID, "THAT'S AWESOME." BUT IT INVOLVED MORE THAN HE EXPECTED: EVERY DAY KENNYA WOULD GET UP AND PRAY SILENTLY FOR TWO HOURS, HER FACE PRESSED TO THE FLOOR.

(MIRANDA, DOESN'T THAT SOUND LIKE JUST THE GREATEST WAY TO SPEND YOUR MORNINGS? I WONDER IF KENNYA KNOWS HOW MANY MILLIONS OF BACTERIA AND OTHER TINY LITTLE CREATURES COULD CRAWL FROM THE FLOOR UP INTO HER NOSE, EARS, EYES, AND MOUTH IN 2 HOURS?).

SHE DID THE SAME THING EVERY NIGHT, AS WELL AS STUDY HER BIBLE FOR 45 MINUTES.

(MIRANDA, WHAT A GREAT USE OF TIME. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW MUCH SHE COULD HAVE LEARNED OR ENJOYED IF SHE HAD PUT THOSE 4 HOURS TO BETTER USE THAN TALKING TO INVISIBLE GHOSTS?

THINK ABOUT THE 4 HOURS EACH DAY THAT SHE COULD HAVE SPENT WITH LITTLE ALAIA AND LITTLE HAILEY. OR MAYBE SHE DID: MAYBE SHE MADE THEM TALK TO INVISIBLE GHOSTS FOR 4 HOURS EVERY DAY TOO.

AFTER AROUND NINE MONTHS, STEPHEN JOINED IN, THOUGH HE DIDN'T REALLY FEEL THE FORCE UNTIL 9/11 AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE TWIN TOWERS.

(MIRANDA, MANY PEOPLE SAW 9/11 FOR WHAT IT WAS: THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF WHAT RELIGION HAS BROUGHT TO OUR WORLD. UNFORTUNATELY, MANY PEOPLE LIKE STEPHEN, ONLY SAW IT AS A WAR BETWEEN 2 GHOSTS, GOD AND THE DEVIL, NEITHER OF WHOM CAN SEEM TO GET THE UPPER HAND AFTER THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF WARFARE).

STEPHEN SAID "I LIVE IN NEW YORK AND I THOUGHT, 'WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?' IT WAS THE PROPHETIC, SUPERNATURAL, SPIRITUAL IMPACT OF 9/11. SOMETHING SHIFTING FOR NO LOGICAL REASON. WELL THEN, JESUS CHRIST COULD COME BACK FOR REAL.

(RELAX STEPHEN, WE'VE BEEN HEARING THAT FOR 2,000 YEARS NOW. IF JESUS WAS GOING TO COME BACK, HE WOULD HAVE COME BACK WHEN HE SAID HE WOULD - IN THE LIFETIME OF HIS DISCIPLES.

UNLESS ONE OF THEM IS STILL ALIVE ... HE LIED).

THINGS ARE NO LONGER AS THEY WERE BEFORE.

(BRILLIANT STEPHEN. YOU SHOULD SUBMIT THAT TO THE EDITORS OF 'THE JOURNAL OF DEEP THINKERS'. "THINGS ARE NO LONGER AS THEY WERE BEFORE."

WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT?).

NOW THE IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE; AND IF THE IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE, AND A WOMAN CAME AND TOLD MY WIFE THAT WE WOULD LEAD A MINISTRY. WELL ..."

(NO STEPHEN, THE IMPOSSIBLE IS NOT POSSIBLE - BY DEFINITION. THINGS THAT YOU THOUGHT WERE IMPOSSIBLE MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE POSSIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE CHANCE THAT YOU COULD MAINTAIN A COHERENT TRAIN OF THOUGHT MIGHT SEEM IMPOSSIBLE, BUT IF IT EVER HAPPENED THEN ... NEVERMIND).

STEPHEN WAS CONVINCED THAT 9/11 WAS A SIGN FROM THE LORD.

(STEPHEN, THE MUSLIMS FEEL EXACTLY THE SAME WAY - AND GUESS WHAT - THEIR GOD WON THAT ONE).

WHICH IT MAY HAVE BEEN, THOUGH IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT GOD CAUSED ALL THAT TRAGEDY JUST TO INFORM ONE FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL ACTOR THAT HE SHOULD JACK IN HIS CAREER AND START SKATEBOARDING FOR JESUS.

(MIRANDA, APPARENTLY IT'S NOT THAT HARD FOR STEPHEN TO BELIEVE).

BUT ANYWAY, STEPHEN SET UP A COMPANY CALLED GLOBAL BREAKTHROUGH MINISTRY AND STAGED A VERY POPULAR ARENA TOUR AROUND THE US, WHICH MIXED EXTREME SPORTS AND EVANGELISM. A SPIN-OFF VIDEO CALLED 'LIVIN IT', WHICH HE DIRECTED, HAS GONE ON TO SELL 500,000 COPIES.

OPPORTUNITIES KEPT COMING: HE DID A TOUR OF CHURCHES, HOOKED UP WITH KEVIN MCCULLOUGH AND STARTED HIS RADIO SHOW, WROTE TWO BOOKS, SET UP AN OUTREACH SERVICE TO HELP MEMBERS OF THE US ARMED FORCES. OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, HOWEVER, HE SAYS HE'S TRIED TO CALM DOWN AND LISTEN TO THE LORD MORE.

(SO STEPHEN, YOU'RE STILL HEARING THE VOICES?).

AND THIS, WEIRDLY, HAS LED HIM TO DO A SERIES OF REALITY SHOWS IN THE US, INCLUDING 'I'M A CELEBRITY … GET ME OUT OF HERE', WHICH HE HATED, AND CELEBRITY BULL RIDING CHALLENGE, WHICH HE ENJOYED.

STEPHEN GOT $300,000 FOR THE SHOW. WHICH SOUNDS A LOT, BUT HE WENT BANKRUPT LAST YEAR, OWING OVER $800,000 IN UNPAID MORTGAGE AND AN UNSPECIFIED AMOUNT, BELIEVED TO BE OVER $2M, TO THE IRS:

(STEPHEN, WHAT IS IT WITH YOU GHOST WORSHIPPERS ANYWAY? ALCOHOL, COCAINE, REHAB, CHEATING THE GOVERNMENT OUT OF TAXES, NOT PAYING YOUR MORTGAGE, AND THOSE ARE JUST THE THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT.

HERE'S MY QUESTION: WHAT THE HELL WOULD YOU BE LIKE WITHOUT JESUS? A SERIAL KILLER? A PEDOPHILE? WHY IS THIS CHRISTIAN STORY SO COMMON AS TO NOT EVEN RAISE EYEBROWS ANYMORE?

HERE'S MY ANSWER: YOUR BIBLE ALLOWS YOU TO COMMIT THE MOST UNSPEAKABLE EVIL AND STILL BE FORGIVEN; WITH SUCH A PATHETIC MORAL CODE, THERE IS NOTHING TO KEEP YOU FROM COMMITTING SIN ANYTIME YOU WANT TO; AND APPARENTLY, YOU WANT TO ... A LOT).

HE SAID, "I DIDN'T PLAN FOR A RAINY DAY.

(STEPHEN, I THINK YOUR ISSUES ARE FAR MORE SERIOUS THAN AN INABILITY TO PLAN).

I DIDN'T KNOW THE JESUS FREAK THING WAS ON THE HORIZON!"

(THAT'S RIGHT STEPHEN, THE MONEY WAS JUST A SERMON AWAY. ALL THOSE MILLIONS OF SUCKERS WHO WILL SEND YOU MONEY JUST FOR TELLING THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR. GREATEST RACKET EVER INVENTED; AND NOW YOU'RE BACK IN THE GAME).

A CASTING DIRECTOR TOLD HIM RECENTLY THAT HE'D BEEN PUT UP FOR THREE DIFFERENT FILMS, BUT EACH TIME, THE DIRECTOR SAID NO, SPECIFICALLY BECAUSE STEPHEN CAN'T KEEP QUIET ABOUT HIS FAITH. ANYWAY, HE TELLS ME, HE CAN'T DO THE FILMS HE USED TO, BECAUSE OF THE GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE, BAD LANGUAGE AND SEX. IF HE WERE OFFERED TO BE IN 'THE USUAL SUSPECTS' TODAY – WHICH IS UNLIKELY – HE WOULD HAVE TO SAY NO.

(OKAY LISTENERS, LET'S SEE A SHOW OF HANDS: HOW MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT ONE?).

HE KEEPS ­TELLING ME NOT TO QUOTE HIM WHEN HE USES WHAT HE THINKS IS BAD LANGUAGE SUCH AS "BALLS." BEING A CHRISTIAN, FOR HIM AS FOR MANY AMERICANS, MEANS HE HAS TO STICK TO A RIGIDLY CONSERVATIVE AGENDA.

(MIRANDA, AS STEPHEN JUST DEMONSTRATED, THAT AGENDA MEANS KEEPING UP A FALSE FACADE. THAT IS WHY THE WORDS 'CHRISTIANITY' AND 'HONESTY' ARE ANTONYMS).

IT IMPACTS DIRECTLY ON HIS LIFE: HIS FATHER-IN-LAW, WHO DIVORCED KENNYA'S MOM NINE YEARS AGO, IS NOT ALLOWED IN STEPHEN'S HOUSE WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND. IT WOULD BE OK IF THEY WERE MARRIED, BUT UNTIL THAT HAPPENS, NO. HE SAID, "UNTIL HE IS ACTING IN A WAY WE FEEL ACCEPTABLE ACCORDING TO OUR FAITH - NO WAY."

(STEPHEN, THAT IS SO JESUS OF YOU. MAYBE YOU NEED TO READ YOUR BIBLE AGAIN. MIGHT I DARE SUGGEST THAT YOU ACTUALLY GO INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT?).

OUR FINAL STOP IS A SMALL SHOP IN KENSINGTON, WHERE A SERVICE FOR THE 'EVERY NATION CHURCH' IS BEING HELD. EARNEST, SMILEY YOUNG PEOPLE SIT ON CUSHIONS TO HEAR THEIR PASTOR SPEAK. THEY SIT A LOT LONGER FOR STEPHEN'S TALK: ONCE HE STARTS, HE CAN'T STOP, TELLING THEM THE STORY OF HIS CONVERSION, DRAGGING IT OUT FOR GIGGLES, RELISHING HIS CHANCE TO SPEAK FREELY ABOUT HIS FAITH WITHOUT VINNIE JONES BUTTING IN. IT'S 45 MINUTES OF FUN. I THINK STEPHEN IS A REMARKABLY LIKABLE MAN.

(MIRANDA, DO YOU THINK HE EXPLAINED TO THEM WHY HE CHEATED THE GOVERNMENT OUT OF 2 MILLION DOLLARS?).

BUT THEN, THE DAY AFTER, WE SPEAK AGAIN ON THE PHONE AND I ASK HIM WHAT HE'D DO IF ONE OF HIS GIRLS CAME OUT AS A LESBIAN AND THE OTHER BECAME A STRIPPER. BALDWIN REPLIED, "JESUS OR NO JESUS, IF MY KID STARTED WORKING IN A STRIP CLUB, I'D BEAT HER ASS."

(WELL DONE STEPHEN. THAT IS SO OLD TESTAMENT OF YOU: SPARE THE ROD, SPOIL THE CHILD. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE PUNISHMENT SHOULD BE FOR GROWNUP KIDS WHO DO ALCOHOL AND DRUGS? CHEAT THE GOVERNMENT? DON'T PAY THEIR MORTGAGE? WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO THEM?).

NOW, THE OTHER QUESTION IS INTERESTING AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT. I HAVE TWO OR THREE VERY DEAR FRIENDS WHO ARE HOMOSEXUAL AND THEY KNOW I'M BORN AGAIN AND WE HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING THAT WE'RE JUST NOT GOING THERE …"

(MIRANDA, LET ME TRANSLATE THAT ANSWER FOR YOU: HE FEELS THE SAME WAY AS HE DID ABOUT THE DAUGHTER BECOMING A HOOKER, HOWEVER, HE KNOWS IT IS POLITICALLY INCORRECT TO SAY THAT SO HE JUST BAILS OUT OF THE DISCUSSION. LIKE I SAID, MOST GHOST WORSHIPPERS DON'T HAVE AN HONEST BONE IN THEIR BODIES).

I'M NOT SURPRISED. FOR THE NEXT 20 MINUTES, WE HAVE AN INTENSE DISCUSSION – AN ARGUMENT, REALLY – DURING WHICH STEPHEN REVEALS THAT HE'S ALL FOR GAY MEN WHO, THROUGH THEIR FAITH, REJECT THEIR HOMOSEXUALITY AND GET MARRIED: HE SAID, "TO TURN AWAY FROM THAT LIFESTYLE IS ASTONISHING."

(STEPHEN, SO HOW LONG DO YOU THINK TED HAGGARD WILL STAY OFF "THE GAY?").

YES, STEPHEN, IT IS. AND HE'S DEFINITELY NOT FOR GAY MARRIAGE. WHAT ABOUT CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS, I ASK WEARILY.

BALDWIN SAID, "I BELIEVE THAT THE FAMILY UNIT HAS FUNDAMENTALLY BEEN THE MOST POSITIVE THING FOR SOCIETY AND I DON'T BELIEVE THAT ANY MINORITY HAS THE RIGHT TO CREATE CHANGES THAT IMPACT ON THE MAJORITY. THAT'S REALLY THE ONLY ISSUE FOR ME."

(STEPHEN, IF THOSE CHANGES INVOLVE ACHIEVING RIGHTS THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE HAD ALL ALONG UNDER THE CONSTITUTION THEN YOU ARE WRONG. ONE EXAMPLE IS SLAVERY. OUR FOUNDING FATHERS DECLARED THAT ALL MEN WERE EQUAL YET THEY ALLOWED SLAVERY. THE FREEING OF THE SLAVES CREATED A CHANGE THAT INVOLVED A MINORITY THAT IMPACTED ON THE MAJORITY IN

THE SOUTH; SO DO YOU THINK AFRICANS SHOULD HAVE REMAINED ENSLAVED?

CERTAINLY YOUR BIBLE BELIEVES SO).

AND SO STEPHEN AND I PART COMPANY, BOTH FEELING DISAPPOINTED IN EACH OTHER.

(MIRANDA, I WOULD AGREE WITH YOU EXCEPT THAT I HAVE LEARNED TO HOLD GHOST WORSHIPPERS IN SUCH LOW ESTEEM THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO DISAPPOINT ME ANYMORE. SOMEHOW, THEY ALWAYS MANAGE TO LIVE DOWN TO MY EXPECTATIONS. STEPHEN IS NO DIFFERENT).

IT'S A SHAME, BUT IT'S ONE OF THOSE THINGS. YOU CAN REALLY LIKE SOMEONE, BUT WHEN YOU DISAGREE SO DECISIVELY ON THE WAY YOU SHOULD TREAT OTHERS, YOU CAN NEVER REALLY BE FRIENDS.

(MIRANDA, THAT WAS AN EXCELLENT OBSERVATION).

HONESTLY, WHAT IS IT ABOUT AMERICAN BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS THAT MAKES THEM SO INTOLERANT? WHATEVER HAPPENED TO LOVING THY NEIGHBOUR?

(MIRANDA, THAT WAS AN EVEN BETTER OBSERVATION).

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

FLYING SNAKES, CAUGHT ON CAMERA

FIVE RELATED SPECIES OF TREE-DWELLING SNAKES FOUND IN SOUTHEAST AND SOUTH ASIA MAY JUST BE THE WORST NIGHTMARES OF OPHIDIOPHOBES (PEOPLE WHO HAVE ABNORMAL FEARS OF SNAKES). NOT ONLY ARE THEY SNAKES, BUT THEY CAN "FLY" -- FLINGING THEMSELVES OFF THEIR PERCHES, FLATTENING THEIR BODIES, AND GLIDING FROM TREE TO TREE OR TO THE GROUND.

TO VIRGINIA TECH BIOLOGIST JAKE SOCHA, THESE CURIOUS REPTILES ARE SOMETHING OF A BIOMECHANICAL WONDER. IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY DO WHAT THEY DO, SOCHA AND HIS COLLEAGUES RECENTLY STUDIED CHRYSOPELEA PARADISI SNAKES AS THEY LAUNCHED THEMSELVES OFF A BRANCH AT THE TOP OF A 15-METER-TALL TOWER.

FOUR CAMERAS RECORDED THE CURIOUS SNAKES AS THEY GLIDED. THIS ALLOWED THEM TO CREATE AND ANALYZE 3-D RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE ANIMALS' BODY POSITIONS DURING FLIGHT -- WORK THAT SOCHA RECENTLY PRESENTED AT THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY DIVISION OF FLUID DYNAMICS MEETING IN LONG BEACH, CA.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONS WERE COUPLED WITH AN ANALYTICAL MODEL OF GLIDING DYNAMICS AND THE FORCES ACTING ON THE SNAKES' BODIES. THE ANALYSES REVEALED THAT THE REPTILES, DESPITE TRAVELING UP TO 24 METERS FROM THE LAUNCH PLATFORM, NEVER ACHIEVED AN "EQUILIBRIUM GLIDING" STATE -- ONE IN WHICH THE FORCES GENERATED BY THEIR UNDULATING BODIES EXACTLY COUNTERACT THE FORCE PULLING THE ANIMALS DOWN, CAUSING THEM TO MOVE WITH CONSTANT VELOCITY, AT A CONSTANT ANGLE FROM THE HORIZON. NOR DID THE SNAKES SIMPLY DROP TO THE GROUND.

INSTEAD, SOCHA SAYS, "THE SNAKE IS PUSHED UPWARD -- EVEN THOUGH IT IS MOVING DOWNWARD -- BECAUSE THE UPWARD COMPONENT OF THE AERODYNAMIC FORCE IS GREATER THAN THE SNAKE'S WEIGHT. HYPOTHETICALLY, THIS MEANS THAT IF THE SNAKE CONTINUED ON LIKE THIS, IT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE MOVING UPWARD IN THE AIR -- QUITE AN IMPRESSIVE FEAT FOR A SNAKE. BUT OUR MODELING SUGGESTS THAT THE EFFECT IS ONLY TEMPORARY, AND EVENTUALLY THE SNAKE HITS THE GROUND TO END THE GLIDE."

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FAMOUS QUOTES

THOMAS PAINE

"ALL NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF CHURCHES, WHETHER JEWISH, CHRISTIANS OR TURKISH, APPEAR TO ME NO OTHER THAN HUMAN INVENTIONS, SET UP TO TERRIFY AND ENSLAVE MANKIND, AND MONOPOLIZE POWER AND PROFIT."

"IT IS ALWAYS TO BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED, THAT THOSE WHO OPPOSE AN EQUALITY OF RIGHTS NEVER MEAN THE EXCLUSION SHOULD TAKE PLACE ON THEMSELVES."