

REFORMED

Volume 20 Number 12 October 2001

A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

Perspective

ENVIRONMENTALISM

*God placed humans as rulers
or stewards over creation.*

What's inside?

Forgiving Racism

**Junk Science
and the
homosexual
rights debate**

**Reformer's dying
words**



Editorial

by Jon Dykstra



Framing the issue

One more reason why we keep losing the abortion battle

How you frame a question can often determine the answer you will get. For example, if you ask a child, "Are you going to clean up your toys?" he may very well give you an answer that is not to your liking. If, however, you reframe the question and ask, "Are you going to clean up your toys, or am I going to have to give you a spanking?" it is much more likely you will receive the answer you were after.

The same holds true in politics – how you frame an issue can often determine the public's response to it. Frame it badly and you'll be sure to lose.

What have we been doing wrong?

Just look at how framing has affected the abortion debate. A 1999 Gallup poll found only 28 per cent of Canadians¹ believe abortion should be allowed in all circumstances. That means a vast majority, up to 72 per cent, believe that at least some restrictions should exist for abortions. And yet in Canada there are no restrictions at all. How can that be? Don't we live in a democracy?

We do indeed, but the problem is the abortion issue hasn't been framed well. Instead of pitting those who believe there should be at least some restrictions against those who believe there shouldn't be any at all, we've pitted pro-lifers against pro-choicers. And what's a pro-lifer? Someone who believes that life should be protected from conception onward. The same Gallup poll found only 15 per cent of Canadians believe that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances – only 15 per cent were pro-life.

Now if you're not a pro-lifer, what are you? If you're not committed to protecting life from the moment of conception onward, what are you? If you have some doubts, if you're unsure of what your stand is, what are you? Well, everyone knows if you're not pro-life you must be pro-choice. So now instead of having a 72-28 per cent split in our favor, in favor of at least some restrictions on abortion, we have an 85-

15 per cent split against us, in favor of the pro-choicers. That's why we lose every battle. That's why there are no restrictions on abortions in Canada at all. We've framed ourselves into a minority position.

Don't shoot!

We can do better – and just as important, we can do better without compromising our own pro-life stand. One of the tricks we can use is to reframe the issue to make doubt our friend, not our enemy. As it stands now, when people are unsure about when life begins, they automatically get grouped into the opposition. But as US president Ronald Reagan pointed out while talking about the abortion issue, "If there's doubt about it, and if there is mystery, then shouldn't we be extraordinarily careful?"²



Make doubt our friend, not our enemy.



Author Greg Koukl put it another way, comparing the situation to that of a hunter in the woods. As any good hunter knows, you don't go around shooting at every rustling sound you hear in the bushes. Sure it may be a duck, or a moose, or whatever animal you're after, but it might also be your buddy, Fred. So the cardinal rule is, if you're not 100 per cent certain what it is, you don't shoot it.

The same holds true in the abortion debate – doubt is *our* friend. Instead of banishing the doubting and uncertain into the enemy's camp, we can recruit them. It's as easy as telling them that before you can kill something you have to be certain you know what it is. And if you aren't sure, you are morally obligated to err on the side of caution. That's an argument everyone can understand.

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The enemy of my enemy . . .

But what do we do with someone who is certain human personhood only begins once brain waves can be detected (at 40 days)? How should we deal with someone who is positive that human life only begins once the human form is actually recognizable (at seven weeks)?³ Can we recruit even these people?

We can (we must!), and we can do it even as we make our own strong pro-life case. In his book *Politically Correct Death* Francis Beckwith shows how this can be done. First he makes his own staunch pro-life position abundantly clear. But then he adds that his readers don't have to necessarily agree with everything he says to be against the "radical" abortion position that currently prevails in this country – all they have to do is buy some of his arguments. If, for example, a woman believes that life begins at seven weeks, then she must oppose any who would suggest killing the unborn at eight weeks.

But for Beckwith's strategy to be effective we have to stop applying the same label to this more "moderate" crowd that we use for the radical pro-abortionists. We can't keep lumping them together even as we're trying to set them against each other. Maybe we can call this middle group the "in-betweeners."

Conclusion

To be clear, I'm not saying that simply reframing the issue will let us win the abortion war. To do that we're going to have to convince a majority of Canadians that human personhood begins at conception – that's the long-term strategy. But in the short term reframing *can* help us win some battles. The vast majority of Canadians want at least some restrictions on abortion, and yet we don't have any. That's a battle we can win right now, if we fight it the right way.

¹August 2000, *The Interim*, Paul Tun's "Polls show Canadians not settled on abortion."

²August 18, 2001, *WORLD* magazine, Joel Belz's "If there is mystery."

³Francis J. Beckwith's *Politically Correct Death: Answering Arguments For Abortion Rights*.

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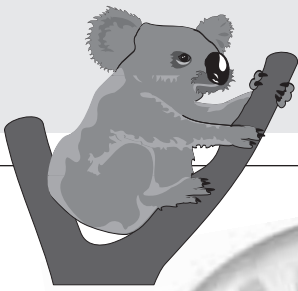
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Report from Australia *by Rene Vermeulen*



versus



In August the almost unimaginable happened. The conservative government of the Northern Territory, in office for 26 years, received its marching orders from the electors. This means that only one state, South Australia, still has a conservative government and that government must face the electors before the end of the year. South Australia may well be the next to fall to the Labor Party onslaught. And then there is the Federal Parliament, where at this stage the Prime Minister John Howard still holds the reigns of power. But for how much longer?

It is a question being asked by many in the land. Labor, under Kim Beazley, seems to have the upper hand. One thing that should worry the Labor leader is the possibility that Australians will vote John Howard back in simply so that Labor will not finish up with all the seats of power, in the states as well as federally.

John Howard did what no Australian Prime Minister has attempted in peacetime; he set about changing the tax structure in Australia. He brought in the Goods and Services Tax (GST), he abolished a raft of other taxes and did it all in a three year period. In the past it has often been argued that major changes to tax law could only succeed where a government has a longer term than three years. The next election will show whether this argument is correct.

Labor will enter this election with the promise to transform Australia into the

“Knowledge Nation,” whatever that means, and to roll back the GST. The latter may be a little harder to do than Mr. Beazley seems to think. Some of his colleagues seem to think this to be the case. Not only that, but the states, who are the beneficiaries of the GST, may well like this tax when the election comes around.



While they saw its faults, they felt that leaving would be dishonorable.



It seems to me that Labor will recognize some of these things and concentrate on their “Knowledge Nation” theme as their campaign. After all Knowledge Nation sounds pretty good and we all like to think our country is better than others.

A moral makeover?

What should concern Christian Australians is the direction in which Labor wishes to take our country morally. Many in the Labor camp are people who want the nation to radically change in favor of homosexual marriages, greater freedom for abortions, euthanasia and many other changes. This does not mean that this de-

sire does not live in the conservative camp; it does, but the leadership is restraining those pushing for such changes. There is little indication that such restraint is being exercised by the Labor leadership.

Labor as a party has changed over the years. In the fifties and sixties it was truly a party of working class people, with the unions having a big influence. It was dedicated to the nationalization of utilities and industry. This meant that where possible industry would be taken over and made a state instrumentality. As a result the government owned the railways, the power utilities, brickyards, and many other industries.

In the seventies a new breed of Labor man and woman came to belong to the party. Their background was not the union movement but academia. They were the “dinks” people, double income, no kids. Many had cut their political teeth in the anti-Vietnam movement and in the women’s liberation movement. Their reason for joining Labor was that they saw it as an opportunity to break through the arch-conservatism of the late Sir Robert Menzies and his ilk.

Today these people have a major say in all the various state branches of the party. The poor union men, the blue collar Labor stalwarts who are still party supporters, are good for doing some of the traditional work, while the major tasks are assigned to the new breed of people.

As mentioned, this does not mean that in conservative ranks there are no “dinks,” no new age people. What it does mean is that conservative politicians are more aware of where a large part of their support is coming from and therefore act carefully with new ideas. In the Labor camp that is far less necessary because the unions make sure that the party gets the support of the union membership. Some of these older unionists remind me of people my dad told me about who did not leave the Synodical church because, while they saw its faults, they felt that leaving would be dishonorable. After all, you don’t leave a sick mother. This is the argument of concerned church members throughout the ages.

The coming election

Later this year, the Lord willing, there will be a federal election in which it will be decided whether John Howard or the current opposition leader Kim Beazley will be the next Prime Minister. It may be worthwhile to tell our readers something about the other parties featuring on the federal scene.

First of all there are the Democrats. This party is led by the youthful Senator Natasha Scott Despoja. The Democrats are, if anything, more modern than Labor. As a party they would be in favor of mat-

ters such as euthanasia, in vitro fertilization for lesbians, and other such sinful undermining of morality. They, together with the Greens, are to the left of the Labor party.

A party not represented in the Parliament currently, but nevertheless much in the news, is the One Nation Party of Pauline Hanson. This party is on the right of the political spectrum and is condemned by all for supposedly being racist. Without a doubt Pauline and her party will feature large in the next election. I fail to see why but these are the facts of political life. Her party has received notoriety even in parts of Asia because of its supposed racist attitudes.

Another party not represented in the Federal Parliament, even though its leader, Rev. Fred Nile, and his wife are members of the New South Wales Parliament, is the Christian Democratic Party (CDP). This party espouses many of the beliefs so dear to the heart of Reformed people.

It must be remembered, of course, that election to our parliaments is by preferential voting and election to the Senate is based on proportional representation. This means that one can vote for, say, the CDP as one’s first preference with another party for 2nd and so forth (see my article, “My democracy is better than your

democracy,” October 2000, for more on this topic.)

Summary

As things stand now it is more than likely the Mr. Beazley will lead his Labor party into power at the next election. The conservative parties, the Liberal and the National Party, have themselves to blame should that be the case. Labor will play on the idea the government is tired and needs to rest a spell. And to some degree they are probably right – the government of Prime Minister Howard looks tired indeed.

With both the conservative parties and the Labor party in the middle of the political spectrum, of greater interest than who is elected to the treasury benches will be how the other parties fare, the Democrats, One Nation and the Greens. Their success or failure will more accurately indicate the attitude of the Australian electors.

As for the Christian Democratic Party I cannot see them getting any seats in the Federal Parliament. The party is too small and those with Christian principles in politics, too few. Still, also those things are in the hand of Almighty God. We hope to report further once the election is announced.



The Rev. Fred Nile is the leader of Australia’s Christian Democratic Party. He and his wife, Elaine Nile, are members of the New South Wales Parliament.



Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

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A trick that's a treat

The Dutch have through the years earned a reputation for being wise with their money. We, after all, invented the Dutch treat, which halved the cost of dating! But while we worked hard to earn this reputation we can't just rest on our laurels and hope to retain our penny-pinching crown. In other words, what have we done *lately*?

RP has been canvassing Dutch people across the world asking them for their best money-saving ideas (and if you have any please pass them on). We've gotten a few ideas so far, and one that's even appropriate to this time of year. It seems a particularly smart Dutch mother used to send her children out trick-or-treating early. Very early. The children would hustle door to door, as quick as they could. Then, when they had enough, they would run on home to their mother, who would proceed to divide their bounty into two piles: one of stuff they liked, and the other of all the candy they didn't want. She then handed out this second pile to the trick-or-treaters who came to her door!

This is the sort of stuff that will let us keep our thrifty reputation intact.

SOURCE: Two Dutch people

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English is a silly language

No wonder it's hard to spell correctly. As Bernard Shaw once pointed out, *ghoti* could quite logically spell "fish": with the *gh* from the word *enough*, the *o* from *women* and the *ti* from *nation*.

SOURCE: Tom Burnam's *The Dictionary of Misinformation*

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Now do you get it?

In the July 2001 issue of *Faith in Focus*, Dick G. Vanderpyl tells the story of Jack, and his blasphemous coworker. Jack was a good Christian lad, so when his coworker started taking the Lord's name in vain, Jack asked him to stop. Unfortunately, no matter how Jack begged him to stop, this guy just couldn't do it. It was an ingrained habit!

Well, one morning, just as they were starting work, Jack decided to use a different approach. When his workmate started swearing Jack started swearing back, not using God's name, but instead using the Queen's name as an expletive. That got his mate really riled up, and he demanded that Jack stop abusing his Queen.

"If you can abuse my Lord and King, I can abuse your Queen," Jack responded. Though the whole incident almost resulted in a punch-up, in the end Jack's mate laughed, apologized, and never swore around him again.

.....

More tricky treating

If you're not a fan of the blood and gore associated with Halloween, take a curmudgeonly stand this year and reserve most of your sweets for the sweet. When a cute little princess shows up at your door, give her a huge handful of goodies. An adorable fuzzy bear deserves at least a few Mars bars and a couple of those really good chocolate doppler candies. A courageous knight might even be

worthy of a giant milk chocolate letter "C" (for courageous).



The forces of evil should not fare as well. Dark sinister skeletons, for example, only rate a tootsie roll at best, while a guy with an ax stuck in his head should get no more than a breath mint (the undead supposedly have really, really bad breath).

This discriminatory candy giving is even more fun when a ghoulish zombie shows up on your doorstep at the same time as a lovable puppy dog. Give the Zombie his due, and then watch his eyes grow as the lovable puppy get richly rewarded.

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Quote of the Month

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke

Forgiving racism: **HOW WE HELP THE OTHER GUY**

by James Dykstra

There are some topics you just don't talk about in polite company – they're too controversial. Things like religion, government, and race issues fall into this category. So it's not surprising that the *United Nations' World Conference Against Racism* generated fireworks.

At first glance a conference on racism seems harmless enough. Who's in favor of racism? No one? Then you'd think the conference would end right about there.

It seems that it's not quite that simple. Some Arab states wanted a declaration that called the Zionist movement, which led to the founding of modern Israel, a racist movement. Muslims states fought to preserve the right to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Though this might have been reason enough for fighting, there was more to come.¹

Money?

Some African nations attending the conference had planned to ask for "reparations" because of the issue of slavery. They didn't want to talk about modern slavery, mind you, which happens in countries like Sudan where many local Christians are sold into slavery by the government. No, they wanted to talk about the historic issue of slavery where many European countries and the United States had black slaves whose labor is argued to have helped these nations' economies.

It's argued that the African nations who lost these men and women to slavery suffered untold harm and were subjected for decades to the Europeans due to these nations' weakened state. Of course, in many, if not most cases the slaves them-

selves fared poorly and often died early deaths due to overwork and disease. Because of that some American blacks and some African nations have called for financial compensation.

However, not all blacks want to be compensated for slavery. Abdoulaye Wade, the president of Senegal, called the whole thing "absurd." He wondered just how money was supposed to make up for the problems of slavery and colonialism. Even more problematic are the blacks themselves who were involved in the slave trade, capturing and selling other blacks into slavery. Wade mentioned that his ancestors did not sell slaves, but had armies that included thousands of them. Should the descendants of the president of Senegal and the blacks who sold slaves also be required to pay reparations?²



Abdoulaye Wade, the president of Senegal, called the whole thing "absurd."



It makes for an interesting debate, but a distant one for Canadians where slavery was abolished more than 200 years ago. Yet strangely, the issue did come home to Canada. Some blacks in the Halifax area have demanded reparations for slavery. Halifax lawyer Burnley Jones said that governments around the world – including Canada's – owe the people of African descent reparations for the damage done by

slavery. Esmeralda Thornhill, a law professor at Dalhousie University, suggested that since attempts have been made to compensate people for the Japanese internment in World War II and the Jewish Holocaust, it was time that something was done about the slavery question.³

Not all agreed. Some anti-racism groups didn't want to tackle the issue. Notably, the Canadian-based Artists Against Racism, claiming members like Dan Ackroyd and Lenny Kravitz, "sympathized" with the reparations call, but wouldn't support it.⁴ Apparently to this group the issue wasn't quite so neatly defined.

Racist, apartheid Canada

The curious thing is that before the American Revolution, Canada had a relatively small population of blacks. The United Empire Loyalists who fled to the Maritimes from what had become the United States were rewarded by the British government. Though the reward seemed meager – some poor farmland in a largely empty province – the white Loyalists as well as the black received exactly the same reward. Apparently there were significant problems and many Loyalist blacks did not receive the farmland they'd been promised, but the fact remained that for possibly the first time the law was trying to treat black and white British citizens the same. Despite this ground breaking move, some 80 years before the Civil War ended slavery in the United States, some Canadian blacks see the way they were treated as having been very similar to the way American blacks were treated.



How much does forgiveness cost?

The fun, and absurdity, at the conference didn't end there. Matthew Coon Come, leader of the Assembly of First Nations, decided to attend the South African conference to denounce Canada. Taking significant liberties with history, Coon Come told the conference that Canadian natives "had been assigned to tiny, marginal areas of land called Indian reserves." He blasted the Canadian government for racist treatment of Canadian natives – comparing the treatment of natives to the way blacks were treated under apartheid. In response, he received gasps of sympathy from black South Africans, shocked to learn the "truth" of the Canadian situation. Coon Come even received a bear hug from Winnie Mandela, former wife of anti-apartheid hero and former South African president Nelson Mandela.⁵

Compensating great-great-great-grandpa

While comparing the treatment of Canadian natives to apartheid, or Canadian blacks to treatment received in slave states is clearly offensive, this isn't to say that Canadians have always treated their minorities well. Bob Beal and Rod Macleod wrote about the Métis and native rebellion in *Prairie Fire: The 1885 North-West Rebellion*, laying the lion's share of the blame for this revolt at the feet of the Canadian federal government. The 1907 anti-Asian riot in Vancouver is another example of how Canadians have sometimes treated others. The World War II internment of Japanese

Canadians is just one more chapter in our often less than impressive history. Anybody who wanted to could easily trace dozens of other incidents where minorities have been poorly treated.

What makes the black and native questions so startling is that the people who were affected by the incidents are long dead. There has not been a black slave in Canada within anyone's memory. The natives do live on reserves, but the people who had to make the transition from living on the wide open country to the relatively confined reserves have been dead for decades. In most cases, an entire century has elapsed to allow natives to adapt to the new society brought to them by the mainly European settlers who came to Canada. The very serious question is simply that if we're out to compensate someone for perceived injustices of the past, who are we to compensate? Of all the people who were wronged, there's no one left alive.

The problems with compensation could go on. At least some Acadians want an apology for the British expulsion of the Acadians in 1755.⁶ Some Christians have traveled to the Middle East to apologize for the Crusades, more than 900 years ago.⁷ One is left to wonder when the Prime Minister of Italy will apologize to the British for the Roman invasion of the British Isles, some 2000 years ago.

The missing word

This doesn't mean the whole question of compensation, strange as it is, can simply

be laughed off. The one word that did *not* come out of the United Nations conference was forgiveness. Though it seems odd, and even unreasonable, to request compensation for events that happened long before you were born, the anger behind the call for reparations is real enough. The blacks, the natives, or even the Acadians might continue to think they have been wronged. Maybe something can be done for them, but probably not. The perceived wrong will likely remain unrighted. In other words, the problem may never see a just solution, but that doesn't mean forgiveness is unnecessary or even impossible.⁸

The Bible talks repeatedly about forgiveness. How many times do we forgive the same person who has wronged us? Seventy times seven. Why do we forgive? Because, as Matthew 6: 14 and 15 indicate, it is one step in living rightly before God. When we forgive we experience a small part of what God does for us. Right now you might be thinking that many, if not most, of the verses in the Bible about human forgiveness apply to one brother in Christ forgiving another. If you thought that you're probably right.

Our obligation, as expressed in James 5, is to confess our sins to each to help facilitate the process of forgiveness. As Paul says in Ephesians 4, we are to be kind and compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven us. We can forgive, because we understand God's forgiveness. It's not necessary to have the wrong righted in order to forgive. We forgive simply because God's forgiveness has made it possible for us to do that.

This remarkably simple message is one that wasn't heard at the South African conference. Though it wouldn't solve the problems that create racism, forgiveness might solve a lot of the damage it creates: the hurt, the anger, the self-destructive bitterness. The fact that this single word – forgiveness – remained out of the discussion is an indictment against Christians. They need to be getting out

into the far corners of the world and inviting to the banquet anyone they find. They need to make sure that their churches are not only havens for themselves on Sundays, but welcoming buildings – with doors flung open – that call to the passers-by to come and experience God’s forgiveness. The banquet hall must be filled with guests.



Christians have traveled to the Middle East to apologize for the Crusades.



Matthew Coon Come’s message at the UN Conference went too far. Likewise, the call by Nova Scotian blacks for reparations simply misses the point. The injustices the natives and blacks believe that their forefathers have suffered can’t be undone with money, or with harsh, vicious rhetoric at conferences. Those injustices can only be salved in the present by the message of forgiveness. We must make sure that message goes out.

¹Edmonton Journal, “Hot issues may overwhelm UN conference on racism,” August 28, 2001

²National Post, Diadie Ba, “Slavery reparations called absurd,” August 13, 2001

³National Post, Brian Fleming, “Nova Scotia no place for reparations,” August 15, 2001

⁴Toronto Star, Ali Sharif, “Canadians split over reparations,” August 12, 2001

⁵National Post, Corinna Schuler, “White mobs beat my people, Coon Come,” August 31, 2001

⁶Edmonton Journal, Duncan Thorne, “City Order of Canada winner urges royal apology to Acadians,” August 27, 2000

⁷Christianity Today, “An Apology, 900 Years in the Making,” September 6, 1999

⁸Christianity Today, “The Forgiveness Factor,” Gary Thomas, January 10, 2000



TEARS OF THE OPPRESSED

Christian persecution around the world

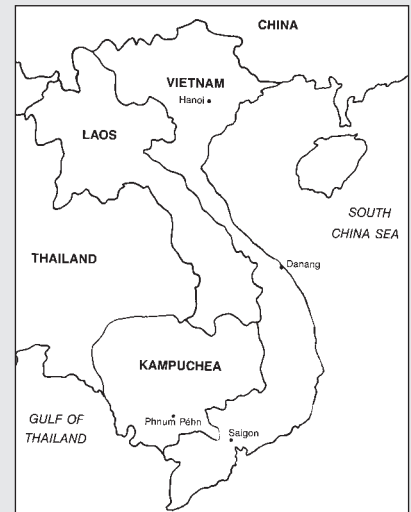
by Joanne Teitsma

Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. Ecclesiastes 4:1

FOCUS ON: VIETNAM

Fast Facts

- Population: ~77,400,000
- Leader: Pres. Tran Duc Luong
- Religion: Buddhist, Taoist, Roman Catholic
- Official Language: Vietnamese



The communist government in Vietnam perceives Christianity as a Western religion that is a threat to its regime and so they try to stifle its growth. Nevertheless, in 1995 the United States normalized diplomatic relations with Vietnam, ignoring the overwhelming evidence of religious repression. As a result the Viet-

nam government has, since then, felt free to not only continue but to even step up its restrictions on Christianity. Churches are required to register themselves so that the government can force them to submit to communist control. In some areas, Christians face fines, property confiscation and short-term detentions without trial for “illegal religious gatherings” or possession of forbidden religious materials. The most severe pressure has been concentrated against ethnic tribal groups such as the Hmong, Hre, Koho, Jeh, Rhade and Jerai where Protestantism has grown dramatically. More than half of the 580,000 Hmong in Vietnam are Christian. They are currently being persecuted more than any other people in Vietnam. Government officials feel threatened by the number of Hmong people coming to Christ and are forcing them to leave their homes and families for the South. Believers are continually threatened, interrogated, beaten (sometimes to death), arrested and fined. Pray that the Vietnamese Christians may have faith strong enough to hold fast to Christ through all harassments.

Sources: Paul Marshall’s *Their Blood Cries Out*, Nina Shea’s *In the Lion’s Den*, *The World Almanac: 2000*, *Voice of the Martyrs* newsletters (June 1999, March 2000), www.gospelcom.net, www.persecution.com



HOMEFRONT

Confession Booth

by Jane deGlint

The architecture of church buildings can be astounding. How is it possible that a structure of stone, wood and glass can convey such a powerful message of faith and glory? Whether it is a tenderly staunch chapel or a massively elegant cathedral, a well-built house of God evokes awe for our almighty Lord, who creates and recreates.

One such beautiful edifice stands its ground in downtown Vancouver. Valiantly and successfully resisting being drowned out by over-towering office buildings, it shamelessly reminds the suave executive and avid shopper of higher values. Obviously those who rush by are not interested in reading the elegant sign, which stipulates the times of worship. And even less will they take note of its bottom line, "Confession by appointment."

Yet it was that little line which made a sudden impact on me. Having been raised in the Reformed faith, I am not at all familiar with the practice of confessing sins to an invisible person through a slot in the wall. If anything, I have been taught how improper it is to expect any form of absolution from a fellow human being. But in spite of these mental obstacles, I suddenly longed for an unseen clergyman, in whom I could confide the burdens of my soul. For the first time in my life I considered the worth of articulating my concerns, my struggles, my guilt to an actual person who, having heard all the details, would still say, "Your sins are forgiven. Go home, dear friend, and sin no more."

A good thing that I have learned better. As appealing as this form of confession seemed to me at the time, it is, at best, a fairly superficial way of dealing with one's sinful inclinations. Admittedly, it stresses that we are accountable to the Lord for our actions and it points to the forgiveness of sins. Still, though it fills the soul's need for

confession and absolution, it takes the acknowledgment of a transgression out of its proper context and perspective.

We do not confess to unburden our souls, but to restore what is broken. Every breach in a relationship runs in two directions: horizontal and vertical. Our behavior toward our neighbor is linked to our position toward the Lord. The law of God is one. If we do not serve the Lord, we cannot truly love our neighbor. "No one does good, not even one" (Romans 3:12). And, conversely, when we sin against our neighbor, we sin against the Lord. "I have sinned against heaven and before you" (Luke 15:21). Confession is meant to heal our communication with God and with man.



More often than not the insults occur in both directions.



For that reason our confession of sin must involve both God and the person against whom we transgressed. A good clergyman will point us to the throne of God and to the house of our neighbor. A confession in a booth can be a start, but is never the end. As sin against man is connected to sin against God, so apologizing to our neighbor is linked to being forgiven by the Lord. It is not possible to say which one comes first. It occurs in reciprocity. As we realize how severely we have mistreated our neighbor, we must acknowledge this to him/her and to our Lord.

However, all these things are easier said than done. Very often our first reaction to our own sins consists of outright denial. Exhausting every extenuating cir-

cumstance possible, we excuse ourselves. Even if we manage to admit that we did something wrong, we immediately distance ourselves from any responsibility by stressing that it definitely was not our fault. It is only by the grace of God that we can come to the realization of our guilt.

And that is just the first step. Next we will have to confess, to God and man. Amazingly, we are inclined to fear our visible neighbor more than our invisible God. It is one thing to confess to our Lord in prayer, but quite another to meet our fellow man face to face. Consequently many people get stuck in the stage of willful non-confessing to their neighbor. They would rather avoid the person who used to be their friend, than openly own up to their mistakes. Let us be thankful for the pain of non-confessing. The Spirit may use the guilty conscience to drive a person back to his wronged friend, thus opening the road to healing and forgiving.

In most cases a face to face meeting is the preferred setting for expressing our guilt and apology. Public confession of sin takes inner strength. We need courage to make the appointment, to get ready for it, to go to the house of our friend, to ring the doorbell, to wait and see who opens the door, to start the conversation. But it needs doing. A face to face apology will convey the message that we are really sorry and that we are very serious about our intent to have the breach healed. It also provides the opportunity for immediate feedback. We can read the other person's reactions: his facial expression, the tone of his voice, the pauses in his speech. Even if we do not achieve an immediate and jovial acceptance of our apology, we have laid a sound foundation for rebuilding the relationship.

Another tried and true method is the writing of a letter. Though this form of

confession lacks the benefit of personal interaction, it does have advantages. First of all, it forces the confessor to carefully articulate what he really means. If, at rereading, his words sound phony or ambiguous, he can make improvements. He can rephrase an awkward sentence. He can ask someone for advice before the trip to the mailbox is undertaken. And secondly, a letter provides the wronged person with tangible proof that the apology is not done superficially. The written confession becomes a document, which embodies sincerity and which can be read again to confirm its validity.

The email-message is the modern variation of the traditional letter. Though it travels substantially faster than a stamped envelope, it often suffers from carelessness. Its prospective traveling speed seems to predispose the writer to haste. It might be better to go through the extra trouble of opening a file in one's word-processing program. If care is taken that the letter to be emailed is thought-through and well worded, we can use this means of technology to have it arrive at its destination instantaneously.

Then there is the telephone. It is like the confession booth, with the difference that we speak directly with the person whom we have hurt. But he does not see us, and we do not see him. This is probably more an advantage to the confessor than to the other party. Not only can the confessor draw strength from the security of his own home, he also determines the moment of the call. The person who picks up the receiver could be having a late dinner, or he could be settling a dispute between his children. He might appreciate being offered the option of a future calling time that would suit both parties.

So far we have concerned ourselves with the more or less abstract case of one person doing something wrong, and another person being wronged. Yet, life is hardly ever so simple. More often than not the insults occur in both directions. This



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A good clergyman will point us to the throne of God and to the house of our neighbor.

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can lead to a very complicated knot in the lines of communication, which grows ever tighter as obvious avoidances are noticed and gossip stories come full circle. During the ensuing stalemate both parties convince themselves that this mess is not their fault. "Why should I make the first move to restoration? Really, the other person started it all. How could I have reacted in another way to such insults, lies and plots?"

Though ideally both parties reach the point of confessing simultaneously, once we understand our own contribution to the mess, we must apologize to our friend, independent of his admission of mistakes. Our confession does not depend on someone else's claim to his share of the guilt. This can be very difficult, especially when the other party reacts quite self-righteously to our confession, in terms of "I am glad you see the wrong of your ways." But it must be done, and the potential disappointments are outweighed by our regained confidence.

Confessions do not guarantee an immediate return to the old familiar ways. Healing is a process. But there must be a commitment to rebuild. With care, love and trust, the breaches can be restored. The bonds may even become stronger. As the process of restoration is completed, we may notice a new layer in the relationship. The added value flows from the knowledge that our friend loves us in spite of glaring flaws.

Also here we can make the connection from our neighbor to our God. As we acknowledge our sins to Him, He accepts us again, overlooking our glaring flaws. He declares us clean, washed in the blood of the Lamb, restored in the strength of the Spirit. Confessing our misdeeds to God and experiencing the forgiveness of sins, we are overwhelmingly reminded of the Lord's unconditional love for us.

Regularly we must retreat to the privacy of our room, and from that secluded booth we must send our prayers and confessions to our heavenly Lord. He will hear us and forgive us. During these private prayer sessions our eyes will be opened to the pain we may have caused our neighbor. Strong in faith, we will be able to make the necessary confessions to our fellow men. Firsthand we will experience how confessing heals and unites.

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for restoration, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).



Who's brainwashing whom?

PREPARING FOR UNIVERSITY PART 2

by Karen Dieleman

The good news is, you're finished high school and University awaits. The bad news is, the Christian environment of your high school is now behind you, and you're going to have to confront the often anti-Christian environment of your local secular university. And you're going to have to confront the many unchristian theories taught there.

In last month's article "Don't buy everything they're selling," I described how today's theories about language and literature not only devalue the study of literature but also have far-reaching consequences for our views of history. In this article, I will show how such literary theory is applied to the definitions of gender, ethnicity, race and the self. To do so, I must first return to that term "to construct" and show its link to another important term for the theorists, namely "performance."

You will remember that many critics today believe that the meaning of a text is constructed, or built, and that history is also constructed and cannot tell the truth.

The idea of *constructing* is set over against the idea of *essentials*. A Christian believes in certain essentials, or givens, such as: God created man to be different in nature than woman; or, God created human beings in His image – that is their essential defining feature, what separates them from the animals. The idea of essentials is denied in the universities today because it implies that things *can* be traced to an authority or a truth – the authority of God, for example. Instead, the critics talk about *performance*. What they mean is that society has so successfully conditioned us to *perform* in certain ways that we *think* certain behaviors or modes of thinking are part of our nature in essence, but they really are

not. Instead, we have built certain patterns for ourselves to follow and we then perform those patterns. Once we realize how we have been brainwashed, we can start the process of struggling to free ourselves from the constructed ideas. We can begin to perform whatever we want. The idea of performance is then applied to several areas:

1. Gender

First, gender: the word "gender" is chosen as distinct from the word "sex." One's sex is considered a biological factor having to do with body parts. Gender, however, is a term taken from grammar and used to distinguish masculine, feminine, and neuter words in some languages. Literary theorists use "gender" to mean the categorizing of people according to a socially constructed view of their sexes. In other words, a man's role is not necessarily to be a leader, but for centuries society has constructed the leadership role as belonging to the man, and now he feels compelled to perform that role (well, OK, he doesn't feel compelled anymore, but he used to). The woman's role has been constructed as passive or nurturing rather than aggressive, but she is not necessarily a nurturer. Breaking down the traditional roles of men and women is viewed as breaking free from these false constructions. Men and women are being freed to perform their sexual identities as the old barriers are removed.



Of course, once we "realize" that biological sex has nothing to do with gender performance, we have nothing further to say to homosexuals, bisexuals or transsexuals. The "woman" born by some biological error into a man's body can release herself from this imprisonment of sex by using hormone treatment and radical surgery to turn "her" male body into a female body. She can then perform the gender role that she feels is her real self. The male who wishes to dress like a woman is only setting himself free from the construction society has imposed on him and is expressing the gender behavior in which he is comfortable. Who can say that "he" or "she" is going against the very nature in which God created man and woman? There are no essentials.

In this view of gender construction and performance, the great literature of the past becomes the enemy which has perpetuated the myth of specific sexual identities and differences for men and women. That literature must be brought down. Theorists talk about the *body of the text* as if it were a human body – the written body is performing a role and must be attacked for its falsity and the oppression it *embodies*.

2. Race and ethnicity

Second: race and ethnicity. To explain the theory about race and ethnicity, I will talk about the title of one of the courses I took last year: namely, "Writing Ethnicity

and the Canadian Nation.” For a long time, I was puzzled by this title. I turned it over and over in my mind. Wasn’t there a word missing? Shouldn’t it read, “Writing *About* Ethnicity and the Canadian Nation”? Or was there a spelling error – “Writing *Ethnically* in the Canadian Nation”? You see, I thought the course was going to be about Canadian literature written by immigrants. And in a way, it was. The main focus of the course, however, was to address this question: How have various (Canadian) writers *written into existence* the particular way in which ethnic groups have been and are viewed in Canada?

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What can the Christian student interested in pursuing post-secondary education do?

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In other words, the way I think about Slavic people has nothing to do with something inherent or *essential* in Slavs, but is the result of what has been *performed in the literature* by and about them. When a British Canadian author such as Ralph Connor writes in *The Foreigner*: “The Slav is a religious man, intensely, and if need be, fiercely, religious,” then he is writing the ethnicity of the Slav into existence. If the Slav likes this particular description, he will promote it and live it and write about it himself. If he doesn’t like it, he will attempt to write another performance (which may or may not be accepted by the dominant [ie. white British] group of people).

Similarly, no such thing as “the Canadian nation” actually exists. Instead, literature has been busy for 150 years writing into existence various ideas of what it means to be a Canadian. None of the ideas are inherently true. We simply perform what we have been taught. As an example, the theorists might point to the boy Sandor’s thoughts in John Marlyn’s *Under the Ribs of Death*: “What was May the Twenty-fourth in Hungary but just another day? Here in Canada it was a national holiday. There would be a

parade with soldiers and bands. . . .” Sandor is taught in his Canadian school how to perform the national holiday, even though the reason for the holiday is the birthday of a (British) queen who has nothing to do with his (Hungarian-Canadian) life.

3. Self

Third: the self. Perhaps by now I can be brief, since the pattern is the same. Do you know who you are? You are not an essential being with a specifically created purpose in a relationship with God that gives meaning to your life. No, you are actually a construction of social forces which have conditioned you to think and act in certain ways that may actually be hiding your true personhood. Literature has participated in this process of construction without you being aware of it. To be truly free, you must find who and what you really want to be. Identify and build the self you want. Break out of the mold in which you have been cast: the gender mold, the ethnic mold, the national mold, the societal mold. If you are going to study literature, make it part of your liberating process. Construct the meanings of literature that will advance your cause for freedom. Deny the existence of a single authority because truth is a fiction and you will never find it in reality. Reality itself may be a fiction that someone has constructed.

The Christian response

The deadly thing about some of these ideas is that a small element of truth clings to them. Who can deny that the people around us influence us? Our parents, our teachers, and our friends – they all participate in shaping us into the people we become. The things we read, the things we watch, the things we hear – they all contribute to the way we understand ourselves and our world. The way a woman behaves in Canadian society is not the same as the way a woman behaves in Japanese society. Cultural expectations modify our behavior. For most literary theorists today, these examples are proof that nothing essential, nothing true exists. For the Christian, however, these examples prove that judgment is required to separate the things that influence our identity from the things that are inherently part of our created being.

We started with language, literature and history. We have ended in psychology, social work, women’s studies, cultural studies, and the like. Today’s secular university is permeated with the type of thinking I’ve described.

What can the Christian student interested in pursuing post-secondary education do? We certainly don’t want to give up the field of academic study to these theories! Christian scholars are needed to claim also the academic field for Christ. I suggest several things for the Christian student to do.

First, read the Bible and listen to sermons like you never have before. Put on the armor of God to defend yourself against the attacks of the evil one. Pray for insight.

Second, in your own mind, always put the onus on the theory to prove its claims, not on your Christian faith. The Biblical principles are the correct ones. What doesn’t accord with them is wrong no matter how plausible the experts make it sound.

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Strengthen your thinking along Christian lines and it will have a protective effect elsewhere.

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Third, make time to attend Christian speeches and lectures, even if they don’t directly apply to your studies. Strengthen your thinking along Christian lines and it will have a protective effect elsewhere. Read books that criticize the modern university establishment.

And fourth, seriously consider studying at a Christian university if there is one where you live. You would rather face financial pressure than spiritual pressure.

May we enter a new academic year with eagerness and a love for learning. May the LORD protect us from ideological and spiritual harm and give us insight. May we submit everything we learn to the test of Scripture, and may Christ be praised in our work.



Reformer's dying words still challenge our commitment

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by Bartha Hill

Some years ago, while walking through Brussels, Belgium, I came across the Royal Albert Library. As I really had nothing better to do, I wandered in and, when a guard asked me to produce a student ID, discovered that I happened to have my Massey University (New Zealand) card in my bag.

He let me in, but there weren't any books to be seen in this library. Instead I was handed a search form to fill in. I casually wrote the name "Guido de Brès," a 16th century martyr, who, according to family tradition, is one of my ancestors.

I was assigned a desk and, to my amazement, found a pile of ancient books on the counter when my number was called.

As I struggled with the rather archaic Dutch and French works, two things moved me profoundly. The first was the prayer of his mother and the second his letters to his wife and mother as he lay imprisoned in a filthy cell, awaiting certain execution.

As I read the works, this "tall, gaunt man, with reddish beard, high shoulders and a rounded back, wearing a shabby black greatcoat with a large collar," author of the *Belgic Confession*, became flesh and blood and the dramatic story of his life unfolded before me.

A climate of reform

At the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, all over Europe people were beginning to question the excesses of the Church of Rome.

Courageous – and often young – monks, with fire in their bellies, dared to preach against corrupt popes and church

hierarchy. As one such fiery preacher addressed the faithful in the Cathedral of Mons (a small town not far from Brussels) in 1522, a pregnant young woman was moved to beg God to inspire her soon-to-be-born child to preach the gospel with such power one day.

Had she known the price she would pay, would she have prayed this prayer? Late in the autumn of 1522 she gave birth to a son and called him Guido.

Two brothers

As soon as they were old enough, Guido and his brother, Christoffel, started work in their father's stained-glass workshop. While they assembled the brilliantly colored pieces of glass into magnificent designs, they overheard many a whispered conversation concerning changes that were sweeping the Roman Church in Europe.

The boys began to ask questions and look for answers in the forbidden, but now readily available, New Testament. Noting the inconsistencies of the church they had grown up in, as compared with the purity of the early church they read about, their hearts were stirred and, soon after Guido turned 20, they joined the growing band of like-minded "Protestants." They didn't make this decision lightly: the Roman Church persecuted defectors and subjected them to torture and death whenever they found them.

Almost at once the brothers determined, in obedience to God's calling, to tell others how what they had discovered had changed their lives. They used their spare time to sell Bibles in the villages surrounding Mons. Christoffel managed the sales, while Guido exercised his growing skill as a speaker to explain the truth of the Gospel

Before Guido became a preacher he created stained glass windows.



as found in Scripture. Soon they gave up the workshop and devoted all their time to this ministry.

It wasn't long before suspicious village priests started to ask questions about the two itinerants and sent reports to their superiors about increasing numbers of people staying away from Mass. National church leaders, fearing the political, social and economic implications of rebellion within the established church, stepped up persecution. Increasing numbers of Protestants were caught, tortured and killed. As well-known leaders were obviously a special target, Guido came under extreme pressure and in 1548 was forced to join the steady stream of refugees to London.

A safe haven

London provided a safe haven for many Protestants from the continent. King Edward VI supported the Reformation and offered the redundant Austin Friary for this lively congregation. There were great opportunities for younger men to learn from experienced church leaders, such as Johannes a Lasco from Poland, who introduced Guido to the principles of Christian growth, pastoral care and good preaching. The London group also prepared a simple statement of faith, which Guido used to develop his Confession later on.

When Edward died, Catholic Mary came to the throne. She was absolutely determined to restore her church and started a new wave of harsh persecution. In the face of this, the Austin Friary congregation disbanded and many of its leaders returned to the continent. But the situation wasn't much better there. Philip II of Spain, who was married to Mary, but lived in the Netherlands, was zealously working to cleanse the Roman Church of all who questioned her teaching and led her people astray.

Guido returned to Belgium in 1552 and, basing himself in Lille, moved from one little group of believers to another,

preaching at small secret gatherings out in woods, caves, fields or private homes.

Recognizing a need, he began to write clear, simple guides to clarify biblical teaching on the doctrines of the Trinity, Baptism, Communion, marriage, the authority of the Scripture, images in churches and the Last Judgement. In the face of intense persecution, his people needed to be certain what they believed and be able to give an account of themselves if they were caught.

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Its first two ministers were publicly burned.

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In 1556 it became impossible for the new believers to hide Guido any longer and they encouraged him to move away from the heat for a while. Reluctantly he went to Frankfurt where he met again some of the friends he had made in London.

A chance meeting with John Calvin led to his decision to go to Geneva and study under this gifted teacher. The next three years were a golden time for Guido. He loved the freedom to worship in a public place, to study and discuss and to sing during services. But he yearned to share what he had learnt with the people he loved.

After his ordination in 1558, at the urgent request of the people of Tournai, he returned to Belgium.

Tournai welcomes Guido

Tournai was the capital city of the district of the same name. It held a strategic position on the river Schelde with strong industries and rich merchants. But it was a city in trouble.

Traditionally French, it had been conquered by Charlemagne and added to the lands of the Dukes of Burgundy in 1521. Its new rulers reduced the power of the guilds, took over the city administration, the right to raise taxes and ran the justice

system. A new upper class hierarchy ruled the city. But there were other changes too.

Once famous for its processing of English wool, the industry went into decline when England started its own manufacturing plants. River traffic drew to a slow halt and those whose lives had been tied up in its support structures were out of a job.

Spiritually speaking, the townsfolk were disillusioned about the excesses of the Roman Church, which did not have to pay the heavy taxes that burdened citizens. So it was a city looking for new solutions, ripe for reform. A small, secret, Protestant congregation had started in Tournai in 1544, but its first two ministers (Pierre Brully and Quentin Thierry) were publicly burned. It was a church that had grown out of the seeds of martyrdom. Guido had no illusions about the task that faced him. A member of the group offered him the use of a well-hidden little cottage in his garden under the shelter of the city wall.

He soon met and married Catherine Ramon, who was just as committed to the dangerous ministry Guido was engaged in. It was to cost her dearly. Their marriage was blessed with four children.

A strategic approach

Guido had a strategic plan for his ministry in Tournai. He thought that, if he could win people in positions of leadership in the city, they would use their influence to improve the situation of the Protestant congregation. His theological training made him readily acceptable in educated circles. The social elite of Tournai held regular dinner parties and he accepted many invitations to lead the after-dinner discussions that were a feature of such occasions.

He also recognized that few Protestants clearly understood the new teaching and, when caught, as many were, they could not state plainly what they believed. Using the London pattern – and drawing on what he had learnt in Geneva – he wrote what became known as the *Belgic Confession*.

It was a clear statement of faith, especially prepared to meet the needs of his people. He sent drafts to a number of Reformed scholars in the Netherlands and, with minor alterations, it was finally adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1619.

He also planned to use the Confession to explain to the King of Spain, who now ruled, that Protestants were law-abiding citizens who simply wanted to practice religion as it was in the Bible and that it was quite unreasonable for him to persecute them. To this end, he wrote a letter, parceled it up with a copy of the *Confession* and threw it over the wall of the Regent's residence on the night of November 1, 1561.

Although no one knows for certain, it is likely that the parcel eventually reached the king, but it did not achieve its purpose; in fact, it made life very dangerous for Guido.

Dangerous demonstrations

Guido had a further problem. In the absence of a trained minister, a hotheaded young lay preacher had been leading the worship of the Tournai congregation. This young man felt intimidated by the arrival of

an ordained minister and, in any case, did not like Guido's painstaking strategic approach. He was keen to try the idea of a public demonstration, local Protestants marching through the town reciting Psalms and the Ten Commandments, and singing specially prepared choruses.

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*On this coming
Reformation Day look
again at what our faith
cost those who went
before us.*

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Guido feared that this would only infuriate the city fathers and lead to more persecution. The young man went ahead in spite of Guido's objections. As a result, the knives were out and Guido was forced to escape. His library and letters fell into the hands of his persecutors and were burnt. Unfortunately they also found Guido's congregational records.

On the run

For the next four years he carried out an itinerant ministry with Reformed groups in Sedan and Antwerp. Then in 1566 he went to visit his sister in Valenciennes and, at the invitation of the local minister, Peregrine de la Grange, preached regularly at secret services. Valenciennes had always been a free-thinking community and many of its influential citizens were supporters of the Reformation. So strong was the group that they dared to make a complaint to the city authorities about the discomfort of having to run services in the fields in winter and applied for permission to build a suitable venue.

The request was approved but the Regent heard about it and immediately sent an army to lay siege to the city to bring its citizens to heel.

Aware that Guido de Brès was in the city, the Regent's general had special orders to capture him alive. The Protestants hid him for a time, but it became too dangerous and, at last, he escaped over the wall in the dead of night, with Peregrine de la Grange and two young supporters. One of these was a young nobleman, Michael Herle, who in his hurry only had time to throw a cape over his well-cut clothes. Their first thought was just to be out of the city, out of the reach of their would-be captors. They wandered in the woods for a few days, until hunger overtook them.

In the hands of the General

The fugitives were close to the little village of St. Amand, well known to them as many of its inhabitants regularly attended their outdoor services. Taking courage in both hands, they confidently entered the local inn and ordered a meal.

The innkeeper was used to scruffy wanderers, but became suspicious when he spotted a glimmer of what appeared to be a jeweled sword under Michael's cloak. While serving his guests, he sent a servant to the village hall. The mayor had them picked up and was astonished to discover



John Calvin was one of Guido's teachers.

He spotted a glimmer of what appeared to be a jeweled sword.



the next morning that he had caught two very big fish indeed. At the request of the authorities, he sent the two men to Valenciennes on a trash cart. They were thrown into a filthy jail to await trial and certain execution.

Where is God?

For the first time in his life, Guido was beset by doubts. In a final letter to his wife, referring to his capture, he wrote: "When I was caught, I said to myself: 'We were wrong to travel together, one or another could have betrayed us. We should never have stopped.' And in the midst of all these thoughts, I was bowed down under the heavy load of my imagination, until my spirit rose and I began to think about the providence of God. Then I began to experience a wondrous peace in my heart. I said: 'O God, you caused me to be born at the time and in the place of your choosing, protected me through my life and kept me safe in many dangers. And rescued me from them. If indeed my hour has now come, when I must leave this life and come to you, your will be done.'" A wonderful peace came over Guido and his cell became a place of pilgrimage for countless people seeking after truth.

His letter to Catherine continues: "I am happy, yes even joyful, nothing is lacking in the midst of my sorrow. I am filled to overflowing with the riches of my God. I

am so comforted that I have enough for myself and for any I might speak to."

And to his mother, who so many years before had prayed that he might become the great preacher that he was: "So then, my beloved mother, as you see me well prepared and joyful, rejoice with me over the honor God gives you, in that He gave you a son who proclaimed His word

God allowed you to see all your children married and the next generation as well."

On May 31, 1567, early in the morning, he heard his crime read out, he had served Holy Communion outside of a church building. He did not dispute the charge and went to the scaffold. He tried to kneel, but was not allowed. He was roughly forced to climb the ladder. Pausing with the noose around his neck, he exhorted those who had braced the cold spring morning to be there, to honor their civic leaders, but, above all, to hold to the truth, listen to the voice of God and promote the gospel of salvation. Then he sealed his Confession with his blood.

His words ring out to us today, calling us to renew our commitment to the Lord we serve. His sacrifice challenges us on this coming Reformation Day to look again at what our faith cost those who went before us.



Administrator

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Is There Joy in Heaven Over Me?

by Christine Farenhorst

“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.’ Then Jesus told them this parable: ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

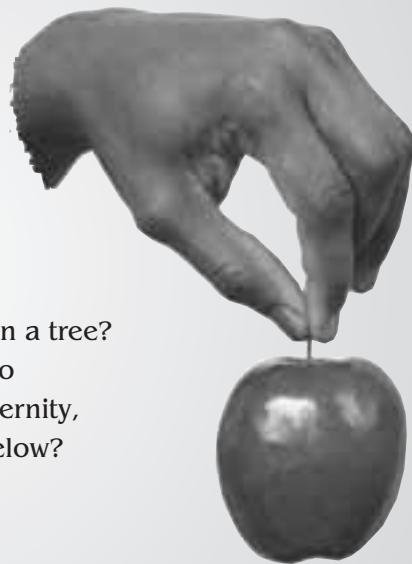
Luke 15:1-7

I read the Bible and I live
A decent life that yields
A monthly quota; always give
To causes on the mission fields.
I work my shift. In sweat my brow
Is bent. I do not slack.
I pray before I eat and bow
For things I do not lack.

I keep the law, at least I try,
And pray the Lord’s own prayer.
I never bother God with why,
And never drink or swear.
I never lie or steal or cheat,

But can it really be,
That I can wipe my own two feet
On doormats of eternity?

Ah, Lord, this Pharisaic skin
Holds You at bay. Alack!!
Where is my need of Christ? This sin
Erodes my soul to black.
Let Jordan bathe my leprosy!
Let Jesus wash my feet!
Oh, angels, angels, dance for me!
Repentance is so sweet!



Am I a Christian on a tree?
An apple ripe to go
All glossed into eternity,
Polished by life below?

Am I ...
an apple
ripe to go?

Jesus and his Angels

— — — — —

Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light,
and usher in the morning.
O shepherds, shudder not with fright,
but hear the angel's warning:
this child, now weak in infancy,
our confidence and joy shall be,
the power of Satan breaking,
our peace eternal making.

(Johann Rist, 1641)

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by Johan Tangelder

In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem there is a spot pointed out as being “the center of the world.” But the real center of the world is not in Jerusalem but in nearby Bethlehem: the small town where the Savior was born in a squalid stable, a manger for a crib. The turning point in history is the incarnation.

The world has commercialized and romanticized the Christmas story, but the reality is far from romantic and sweet. When the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14), Satan unleashed all his evil powers to hinder the mission of the Savior and to stop the fulfillment of the prophecy God gave to the serpent in the beginning of history: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3:15). Satan tried to prevent Christ from leaving the manger to go to the cross. He wanted to block the completion of God’s plan of redemption – the justification of sinners, the sanctifica-

tion of the saints, the salvation of the elect. But God has his own army at his disposal for battle against Satan. The Old Testament testifies that angels worked behind the stage of history; they were the messengers who prepared the world for the coming of the One who is greater and more glorious than even the mightiest angel.

It seems, therefore, perfectly natural that when the eternal Son of God left heaven in obedience to his Father’s will, the angels should attend Him through each stage of his earthly ministry. With the birth of Christ there is an exodus of angels from heaven to earth. They form a shield to protect the ministry of our Lord. They are under his rule. Jesus is the center of the angelic world. They are his angels. They belong to Him as He has made them messengers of his plan of redemption (Heb 1:14). Thus Jesus’ earthly ministry witnesses an amazing and unusual activity of angels – from the beginning to end. But they never draw attention to themselves, they always point to the Savior. They want

sinners to see Jesus as the only hope and light of the world. Christians may not overlook the role of angels in the life and ministry of our Lord. If we neglect their role, we dishonor the Lord. How can we confess the reality of Christ without acknowledging the reality of the spiritual world? Our Lord, who had been in the presence of angels before his incarnation, obviously accepted their existence and their vitality.

Angels’ big role

The angels are the messengers of glad tidings, reflecting the glory and majesty of God, in whose presence they live and minister – thus the sense of awe and fear when angels appear. When the angel Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary that she was chosen to be the mother of the world’s Redeemer, she was greatly troubled and overcome with awe. And Gabriel said to her, “Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favor with God” (Luke 1:30). Joseph was assured by an angel that, “what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit”



New Age and popular literature always describes angels as harmless beings – they’ve got it wrong.

(Matt 1:20). When the life of the infant Jesus was threatened by the wicked and cunning king Herod, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt” (Matt 2:13). The angels announced to the lowly shepherds the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem. A choir of angels welcomed his coming in a hymn of praise to God (Luke 2:12f). The singing of the Gloria by the angels allowed the music of heaven to be heard on earth. The King has come! The Savior has finally arrived! Praise be to God! The angels give God the glory. They did not overshadow the wonder of the Christ child. They knew that God so loved the world that He gave his only Son (John 3:16). And the angel’s song described exactly Jesus’ own wish and mission. As Jesus would testify, “I seek not to please myself but him who sent me” (John 5:30). The angels’ celestial song is still repeated in the Church’s praise, “Glory to God in the highest.”

Angels came to Jesus to strengthen Him after his long exhausting fast, and the intense struggle with Satan, his archen-

emy (Matt 4:11). Toward the end of his life of suffering and toil, his heavenly Father sent angels to come to his Son’s aid. When our Lord was in the Garden of Gethsemane, facing the betrayal and crucifixion, agonizing in prayer, an angel came from heaven to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). Angels were present at, and assisted in his resurrection from the dead. Our Lord was buried in a tomb, which was sealed with a stone and guarded by soldiers so that the body could not be stolen. But the tomb could not hold Jesus. He walked away from it.

God has his own army at his disposal for battle against Satan.

“There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were

white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead man” (Matt 28:3f). The angel also spoke to the women who had come to the tomb (Matt 28:2-7). Angels accompanied Christ at his ascension. From the Incarnation to the Ascension, Jesus Christ was surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God “brings his firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all God’s angels worship Him’” (Heb 1:6).

Are angels useful today?

As the disciples were witnessing Jesus’ ascension, two angels said to them, “Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus . . . will come back in the same way you see him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). The angels tell the disciples that Jesus will return in his own good time; the latter is the best-kept secret in the universe. Presently, our Lord waits for his Father’s signal to return to earth. Our times are dynamic and fast moving.

Someone asked me, “Do angels still serve a purpose today?” Yes, they do. While we are waiting, the angels are at work. They are even employed in the government

of the world (Dan 10:12-11:1). They press victoriously onward to the final consummation of history when the Lord will come again in the radiance of his glory. In the background of world events we may not forget that a fierce spiritual warfare is being waged. Satan does his devilish utmost to wreak havoc for God's children, but the ultimate victory belongs to the Lord. The Lord and his angels are stronger than the forces of Satan.

How will He come again? "This same Jesus" spoken of by the angels to the disciple indicates that his coming will be personal, the Eternal Son of God still possessing his glorified human nature and body. His coming will be visible and glorious. When He comes "every eye will see Him" (Rev 1:7). Instead of returning alone, as He went, angels will come with Him. The Book of Revelation describes the heavens opening and Christ descending with armies of angels (Rev 19:11ff). The angels, who work behind the curtain of history, will be seen by everyone. The Lord and his angels are making everything ready for his soon return. Satan knows that his time is short (Rev 12:12). The angels who appeared to the virgin Mary, the shepherds, the disciples and others will be seen, and all will become struck with awe. The invisible world will become visible. And what glory that will be!

Jesus told Nathanael that he would see the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him (John 1:51). Jesus was not referring to anything that took place during the lifetime of Nathanael, or any of the other disciples, or even us. He was talking about the future, his return in glory. I wonder how many Christians anticipate Christ's return with joy.

The coming of Christ should mean a great deal to us. We live in expectation of the great, public, victory of the Son of God over Satan and his armies. "O the joy to see thee reigning, Thee, my own beloved Lord!"

Fearful angels

New Age and popular literature always describes angels as harmless beings, ready to come to the aid of one and all. But in Scripture, angels are repeatedly spoken of in terms of brightness, white and shining raiment. They are feared when people first see them. They are powerful creatures (cf. 2 Pet 2:11).

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They use their great powers to execute judgment.

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Angels are not only associated with bringing glad tidings of great joy, but also with judgment. They have the power to destroy. The two angels who visited Lot told him to get out of Sodom with his family in the morning "for we are about to destroy this place . . . the Lord has sent us to destroy it" (Gen 19:12f). An angel slew the firstborn in Egypt in punishment for Pharaoh's pride (Ex 11,12). God sent an angel to destroy the army of Sennacherib, when he threatened the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35). An angel struck Herod with a loathsome disease for his blasphemous flattery (Acts 12:23). And the angels have been given the task to carry out the judgment of the Lord on the

last day of history. There is nothing sentimental about angels. They are God's avengers, zealous for his holiness. They use their great powers to execute judgment. When the Lord returns in glory, He will be seen not only as Savior of the elect, but also as Judge of the wicked. He will separate people "one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matt 25:32). Jesus said that He "will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 13:41ff). Thus, when we pray "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20), we also expect the angels to leave heaven to accompany the Lamb of God, the Lord of Glory, and to carry out his will.

Before the Lord ascended to heaven, He commissioned his disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Immediately after his ascension two angels told the disciples not to waste their time gazing into the sky. Their calling was not to recall with nostalgia their past experiences with Jesus, they were to spend their lives in bringing the Gospel in word and deed to a lost world. Our task is the same. Although the study of angelology is important and the Lord's return is our glorious hope, we must not forsake our calling to be the Lord's salt and light in this broken, sinful, and terribly hurting world. Jesus warned, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).



This Is My Father's World: **The Case For Christian Treehugging**

by Pete Scholtens

Earlier this summer I had a unique experience with God's creation. My wife and I traveled to Thetis Island, one of the Gulf Islands found off the southeast coast of Vancouver Island in the Strait of Georgia. We were going to a camp for one night to visit some friends there.

That evening, the camp staff invited us out to see the bioluminescence in the water. I had read about this phenomenon before in books, but I had never actually seen it. It was incredible. We went out in kayaks and as I paddled, the water I disturbed with the paddle blades sparkled and glowed. Light sparkled from the tips of my fingers like stars in the currents I generated. As I paddled through the water, streaks of light moved down into the water, likely the result of fish darting away as the kayak moved through the water.

I found out later that the primary cause of the bioluminescence is a group of algae called dinoflagellates, especially two groups named *Noctiluca* (night light) and *Pyrocystis* (fire cell). It's thought that they give off light when disturbed in order to blind predators or to attract higher order predators to feed on the organisms that are feeding on them. Researchers are using bioluminescent organisms as pollution indicators. The more pollution there is, the fewer light producing organisms survive, and therefore the less light produced. Pollution levels are indicated by the amount of light produced.

The exhilaration of having light seemingly produced from the tips of my fingers caused me to reflect on what God was feeling when He was creating the heavens, flinging stars into the sky from his fingertips. Psalm 8 speaks of the heavens as the works of his fingers. And yet, learning

about the practical use of these beautiful creatures made me stop and consider the powerful impact that we as humans have on the rest of creation. Even the microorganisms in the vast expanse of the sea are under our power.

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God placed humans as rulers or stewards over creation.

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Psalm 8 also addresses this. It speaks about our role within creation. "You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herd, and the beast of the field" (Psalm 8:6, 7). This passage is a reflection of Genesis 1:28, the so-called cultural mandate: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." It is evident therefore from both God's Word and his work, that we have been given stewardship over all creation. We have been given a position of power and responsibility.

This generates the two presuppositions that should undergird all discussions about the environment. First of all, God created it. Secondly, God placed humans as rulers or stewards over creation. I would like to elaborate on these two points to come to a general understanding of why we as humans, and especially, as Christians, should care for creation, demonstrating creation stewardship.

God Created It

The very nature of the word "creation" implies that there is a creator. God created the world out of nothing. He owns creation (Psalm 95:4, 5), is active in it, and continues to sustain it (Psalm 145:16, Matthew 6:26, 30). God also rejoices in his work, just like human artists who rejoice in work well done (Psalm 104:31). God created the universe with certain attributes He has revealed to us in Scripture.

What are these attributes? Firstly, in the first chapter of Genesis God declares that creation is good, not just once but a number of times. In all literature, including Scripture, repetition is a means of emphasizing something important. Secondly, creation reveals God and his attributes to us. Scripture tells us that creation speaks about God to all nations (Psalm 19:1-6), revealing his eternal power and divine nature, leaving all men without excuse (Romans 1:18-20). Thirdly, creation itself worships God (Psalm 148). The sun, moon, and stars, great sea creatures, lightning, snow, cattle, birds, young men and old, peasants and kings are all capable of praising God. Lastly, creation suffers with us and because of our fall creation will share in our redemption and restoration (Romans 8:19-22). God cares about the earth and will not allow us to be destroyed. According to Scripture, creation will be better off after the day of redemption (Ezekiel 47:6-12, Isaiah 11:6-9). Creation looks forward to Christ's return, when He will come to judge the earth (Psalm 96:10-13).

It is not difficult for us to acknowledge these points. It is like saying, "Jesus is Lord!" Easy to say, more difficult to apply. We know that God is the Creator of

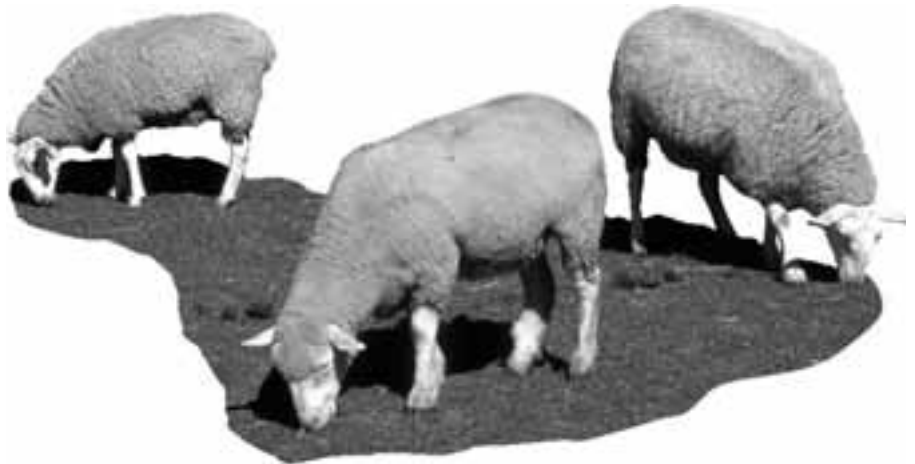
all things, including the earth. We accept as fact that as Creator, God also owns creation and sustains it. If God were to relax his sustaining hand, that very second creation would cease to exist. Lastly, we all are aware that God has placed our species, *Homo sapiens*, as stewards over his creation, to rule the earth, fill it, and subdue it. But what difference does this all make?

We Take Care of It

First of all, since creation reveals God, then one way to learn more about God is to study creation. If we acknowledge God as the Creator, then He is like an artist and creation is his art. One of the ways of getting to know an artist is by studying his work. Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, wrote, "While it is true that God declares Himself to us by His Word, nevertheless we are inexcusable when we have not at all considered Him in His works Let us note then that St. Paul says, (Acts 14:17) that when God causes the sun to shine, sends the diverse seasons, fructifies the earth, that He does not at all leave Himself without good testimony Let us then only open our eyes and we will have enough arguments for the grandeur of God, so that we may learn to honor Him as He deserves." Through studying creation, we will learn more about God.

Secondly, if God loves creation and cares for it, so should we. Francis Schaeffer, in his seminal work on Christianity and creation, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, wrote, "If I am going to be in the right relationship with God, I should treat the things he has made in the same way he treats them."

John Stott, another Christian writer, in the introduction to a book called *Under the Bright Wings*, written by Christian conservationist Peter Harris, stated, "Christian people should surely have been in the vanguard of the movement for environmental responsibility, because of our doctrines of creation and stewardship. Did God make the world? Does he sustain it? Has he com-



You put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beast of the field.

mitted its resources to our care? His personal concern for his own creation should be sufficient to inspire us to be equally concerned." Our goal as Christians is to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1); if God loves and cares for his creation, so should his children.

One of the ways of getting to know an artist is by studying his work.

If we do love and care for creation as God does, how should this be manifest in our lives? In general terms, we should behave as servant rulers over creation. Godly rulers will do what is best for their subjects, placing their subjects ahead of their own interests. Psalm 72 and Deuteronomy 17 tell us this is the way kings should behave and they describe the resulting blessings for their subjects. This is a powerful analogy that also describes Christ's rule over us. Who would not wish to have a ruler like this?

From a negative perspective, we should not waste or destroy creation actively or by neglect. Nor should we pollute it, filling it with our waste. We should not diminish creation any more than is necessary to meet our needs. Interestingly enough, this ties in directly with what is perhaps the greatest idolatry of our North American society, materialism. Materialism, worship of the god Mammon, causes

us to place our own wants ahead of God, ahead of the needs of his creation, and ahead of the needs of future generations, our children and grandchildren.

From a positive perspective, we are free to do many things on behalf of creation. I am convinced that humans have a necessary role within creation to fight against the effects of sin and to help creation fulfill the roles God has given it. God commanded creation to be fruitful in Genesis 1:22, and we can help creation fulfill that command. God, through the fruitfulness of his creation, will fill our needs and more, giving us much to share with others in need. As Christians, our role in creation is also similar to our role in society, to work towards its restoration.

Typically, Christians have used the word "stewardship" only in the context of money. Creation stewardship is much broader than just economics, and is something we need to spend a great deal more time thinking about and taking a more active role in. When it comes down to it, Christians have a better reason than anyone for caring for creation. It is God's world, for which He loves and cares. What better reason do we need?

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Looking at Broader Principles

A Christian Response to Environmentalism

by Tim Bloedow

Articulating a Christian response to environmentalism is perhaps one of the most challenging theological tasks in our day, primarily because environmentalism blindsided an unprepared church. The result is that many Christians have adopted different elements of environmentalist belief. In fact, many of the same Christians who recognize the hostility of the mainstream media to the truth when it comes to issues such as abortion and “family values” treat the same sources as authoritative on environmental matters.

As a result, although you will be able to find quite a bit of Christian environmental material today, unless you know where to look, you will become thoroughly frustrated trying to find material that goes deeper. With very few exceptions – one being Calvin E. Beisner, *World* magazine another – the same problem exists in Reformed circles as in the broader Christian community. All claims need to be questioned from global warming to species extinction, ozone depletion to fear of nuclear energy, risks associated with chemical use to landfill waste disposal.

This is the first point – the need to question all claims of crises – that Christians need to be prepared to address if they want to arrive at a Biblical perspective on environmental questions. But it takes courage to question these claims because it strikes at the heart of the leading expression of the western world’s favorite modern religion – pantheism. The anti-scientific, anti-rational attack on U.S. president George Bush following his decision to abandon the Kyoto Accord

on global warming shows how dangerous it can be to go up against the modern environmentalist ethic.

Population control

One of the most common characteristics of the environmentalist message is the hostility towards technology, economic growth and industry. Environmentalists also tend to be strong advocates of population control. It is probably safe to say that among this magazine’s readers, there are many who are sympathetic to environmentalism but very few who would support the idea of population control. Nobody has, to date, however, demonstrated a way to accomplish the anti-growth environmentalist agenda without resorting to population control. Environmentalists who make the connection are at least being intellectually honest in terms of their philosophical, or theological, premises; Christians who deny the connection aren’t.



All claims need to be questioned.



Environmental questions are essentially economic questions. Environmentalists make this clear from their perspective, proposing economic solutions to environmental problems. This makes sense, also from a Christian perspective. The Bible rarely deals directly with what we would

call environmental issues. There are a few exhortations about our treatment of animals (Exodus 9:3; 20:10 & 17; Deuteronomy 14:4ff; Psalm 8:6-9), and a few other statements (cf. Exodus 20:24; Leviticus 26:3-4; Psalm 104:10ff; Proverbs 14:4; Matthew 10:29). The Bible doesn’t seem to treat environmental issues as of immense import in and of themselves. From Genesis and the Dominion Mandate onwards, its focus seems to be on the environment as it relates to man’s responsibility to obey God’s law. The issue of how environmental problems develop and how they are solved, therefore, in broader categories, comes down to the on-going battle between private property rights and free enterprise vs. political and economic centralism / socialism.

Better than the alternative

Unfortunately, many Christians who generally recognize that Biblical truth teaches – in terms of broad principles – private property rights and free enterprise over against socialism/statism seem to have become increasingly embarrassed at defending those principles in the face of allegations of environmental disaster at the hands of free individuals. There is no need for such an attitude: free enterprise does not usher in utopia, but compared with the effects of statism, such as in former Soviet countries, it leaves no doubt as to which social structure is superior from an environmental perspective.

Humanism and greed may well be leading to a growing number of environmental and other problems in today’s

Christians don't believe everything they read in the newspaper so why should they believe all the gloomy environmental news?



society, but most Christian environmental analysis does not bother to also consider the ongoing effects in today's western society of the redemptive activity of by-gone Christians seeking to live the dominion mandate. Wealth is good; conveniences are wonderful. The problems with wealth come from its abuse, but wealth also buys better health, better food, more protective shelter, etc. We are still seeing innovations, technological development and other dynamics in society that are constructive and can probably, therefore, be tied to the application, either currently or historically, of the Biblical dominion mandate.

Unfortunately, many Christians today have such a negative predisposition towards modern western civilization that they can't see any good. This attitude also makes them vulnerable to the analysis of environmentalist movement. Certainly, some Dispensationalist Christian leaders have used the claims of environmental catastrophe to buttress their eschatological views.

Another important point to remember regarding environmental matters is the resilience vs. fragility issue. One of the non-negotiable religious tenets of environmentalism is that the world, including all its individual "eco-systems," is extremely fragile and, therefore, sensitive to destructive upheaval at the slightest interference in natural processes. Such a view is, of course, absurd to anybody who believes that the global flood recorded in Genesis was a literal historic event.

The Biblical response to this environmentalist faith claim is that the world and all that is a part of it is both fragile and re-

silient but that its resilience supercedes the fragility because the world is held together and overseen by a God who is both personal and almighty (cf. Psalm 148, Colossians 1:16-17). Take human skin as an example. Even when it is cut or scratched, it heals. But you can pierce it with a blade or a bullet to the complete undoing of the person whose skin you have penetrated. Skin, therefore, is both resilient to harm and fragile, but more resilient than vulnerable in the normal course of events. This is also the case with man's interaction with the rest of creation.

Many Christians like to call themselves environmentalists because the term is in

vogue, although they emphasize that they do not advocate radical environmentalism. It is important to note, though, that philosophically, there is no consequential difference between radical environmentalism and the mainstream environmentalist movement. Christians should, therefore, be very careful about the terms they use when identifying their views regarding this front-line "culture war."

Tim Bloedow is a regular contributor to Christian Renewal and The Interim. He is also a researcher and lobbyist for Campaign Life Coalition and a researcher for Canadian Alliance MP, Maurice Vellacott in Ottawa.



Environmentalists: How to tell the bad ones from the good

by Jon Dykstra

In 1997, while completing a science fair presentation, 14-year-old Nathan Zohner devised a way to test for bad environmentalists. The first part of his presentation was on the dangers of dihydrogen monoxide – this chemical is a major component of acid rain, can cause severe burns in its gaseous form, and is often lethal when accidentally inhaled. After explaining these risks, Nathan surveyed his listeners and asked how many of them would support a ban of this hazardous chemical. Of the 50 people he surveyed, 43 supported a ban, 6 were unsure, and only one realized that dihydrogen monoxide is H₂O, or water.¹

Forty-three people wanted to ban water. Let’s forget for the moment that this works out to an amazing 86 per cent of the respondents. Right now let’s just focus on the fact that at least 43 people *in the world* thought that banning water was indeed a good idea. These 43 people are bad environmentalists.

MARKS OF A BADDIE

Some readers might object at this point and argue these people aren’t actually bad environmentalists – they were just tricked.

But how were they tricked? Nathan never lied to them, and never even exaggerated the truth. He told them the chemical’s true hazards: water is a major component of acid rain, it can cause severe burns in its gaseous form, and drowning (accidentally inhaling water) is often lethal. Yes, it’s true they wouldn’t have banned water if they had known it was water, but the point is they were willing to ban a very useful chemical based on very limited information. That makes them bad environmentalists.

And they aren’t the only ones. Bad environmentalists abound, and some of them are very influential. Before Chris-

tians jump on the environmental bandwagon they should be sure the people they listen to are actually the good environmentalists. Telling the difference between the good and bad ones can often be very hard, but the “baddies” have at least a couple of flaws that observant Christians should be able to spot.

1. They make decisions based only on the dangers of use

Nathan Zohner’s 43 bad environmentalists were ready to ban a chemical after only hearing about its hazards. Would they have come to a different conclusion if they had also heard about dihydrogen monoxide’s many benefits? Just imagine if Nathan had told them that yes, it can be lethal when inhaled, but on the other hand, if man is deprived of it for as little as three days, he will die. Hmmm . . . this dihydrogen monoxide sounds like a pretty important chemical, doesn’t it? They wouldn’t need to have known it was actually water to come to a different conclusion; they just needed to know about its benefits.



These 43 people are bad environmentalists.



But far too often environmentalists emphasize only the hazards. DDT is perhaps the most striking example. This chemical has been vilified for the last number of decades and yet since its commercial introduction in 1944 it has been credited with saving between one hundred million² and 500 million³ lives. Though it is useful as a general insecticide its most impressive results came when it was used to stop mosquito born diseases like malaria. In 1948,

for example, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) had 2,800,000 reported cases of malaria. In 1962 large-scale DDT programs had reduced that to only 31 cases.⁴ Results like this garnered Dr. Paul Muller, the Swiss chemist who patented DDT as a contact insecticide, the Nobel Prize in medicine.

But the odds are, when you hear the word DDT, you don’t think of a beneficial chemical. You are more likely to recall the accusations leveled against the chemical in the 1960s. Environmentalists back then tried to get DDT banned, claiming it:

1. was harmful to bird populations, because it caused a thinning of their egg shells,
2. was persistent in the environment and didn’t break down quickly
3. was a cause of human disease since it built up in human fatty tissues.

There was some merit to these claims, particularly the first one, but there was a good deal of hype to these claims as well. Even as US bird populations were supposed to be suffering due to DDT spraying, the Audubon Society was noting an upward trend in the numbers of most birds.⁵ The persistence of DDT in the environment was both a hazard as well as a benefit, as it meant the chemical didn’t need to be sprayed as often. It was true that DDT did build up in the fatty tissues of animals and humans, but only to very low levels that were not hazardous.⁶

The point here is not to argue that DDT is harmless. Its use does seem to have some impact on birds and here in the western world we can probably afford to use other methods that are safer to birds. But the move to ban this chemical is a worldwide movement. In 1963, the last year Ceylon had wide scale DDT spraying, malaria cases had dropped to 17. Then they stopped and by 1969, only 6 years later, the number of cases had risen back to 2,500,000. India

used DDT to bring their cases of malaria down from an estimated 75 million in 1951 to only 50,000 cases in 1961. But then they reduced their use of DDT and by 1977 the number of malaria cases had risen to at least 30 million.⁷

Worldwide there are between 300 million and 500 million cases of malaria each year. There are 2.7 million deaths annually.⁸ Even if you accept all of the claims made about the hazards of DDT, even if you believe it does cause harm to birds, does persist in the environment, and may be a contributing factor in some cancers, DDT is still the cheapest and one of the most effective means of fighting malaria. If you factor in both the hazards *and the benefits* DDT seems to be a clear winner. But of course, if you just focus on the hazards even water should be banned.

2. They view the world as a closed system with limited resources

In 1980 two prominent environmentalists, Julian Simon and Paul Ehrlich, made a remarkable bet. The bet itself was fairly straightforward – Simon bet Ehrlich that any 5 metals Ehrlich chose would in ten years time be cheaper than they were in 1980.⁹ The remarkable part was the motivation behind this bet. Simon and Ehrlich had two very different views of the world’s resources, and the bet was a way for them to wager on whose view was right.

Ehrlich thought the world’s resources were finite and limited, and as we used them, we were getting closer and closer to the point where we would run out of them. The predictions of doom you frequently hear in the newspapers are usually based on this worldview. As resources became more and more rare, they should become more and more expensive, so Ehrlich was sure the 5 metals would be more expensive in 10 years time. Simon, on the other hand, had a much more optimistic view of the situation. Rather than running out of resources, Simon was sure the opposite was true. He was so optimistic he let Ehrlich choose the metals (copper, chromium, nickel, tin and tungsten) they would wager on. It didn’t matter what the specific resources were, he was confident they would be more plentiful, and therefore cheaper in 10 years.



Well, when 1990 rolled around Simon emerged the winner, and by a landslide. All five metals had dropped in price, chromium by 5 per cent and tin by an amazing 74 per cent.¹⁰ But even as Simon emerged the clear winner, it was less clear how he won. Ehrlich for example, conceded he lost the bet, but refused to concede that Simon’s view of the world had beaten his worldview. Simon’s optimistic worldview just didn’t seem to make sense. How can the world’s resources keep increasing even as we keep consuming *non-renewable* resources?

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“Baddies” have at least a couple of flaws that observant Christians should be able to spot.

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The world’s resources can keep increasing, *because man can create new resources*. For example, in Alberta there are huge oil sands deposits that were absolutely useless to mankind until quite recently. Then someone figured out a way to separate out the oil and suddenly Alberta had vast new oil sources. Yes the oil was always there, but it wasn’t a resource until man’s ingenuity figured out a way to get at it.

Man can create resources in another way as well. One of the more interesting examples of this has to do with copper, which was an important component of phone lines. As the number of phone, faxes and computer modems increased, the number of phone lines increased as well. The cost of the copper in all these phone lines started becoming a concern for phone companies, so they began to investigate cheaper ways of transmitting the phone signals. Now, instead of copper, many phone systems use fiber optic lines made of glass. And glass is made of sand. Man’s ingenuity turned common sand into a resource that can be used to replace the more limited resource of copper. And these “sand” telephone lines can now be used to transmit hundreds of times more information than the old copper lines ever could.¹¹

So the most important resource God has given us is ingenuity, and it is limitless.

Conclusion

This article is not an attempt to proclaim that all is right in the world. We live in a fallen world and that evil extends into environmental matters as well. People pollute; it is in our nature to deface and abuse this planet.

But things are also not as bad as they are sometimes made out to be.

Sources:

¹National Review, Nov. 10, 1997
²Dr. Elizabeth Whelan’s *Toxic Terror*, pg. 71
³National Post, Aug 19, 2000, “Let’s use DDT”
⁴Dr. Elizabeth Whelan’s *Toxic Terror*, pg. 69
⁵pg. 75
⁶Michael Sanera and Jane S. Shaw’s *Facts not Fear*, pg. 202
⁷Julian Simon’s *Hoodwinking the Nation*, pg. 88
⁸The Edmonton Journal, Sept 12, 1999, “The DDT dilemma”
⁹The Edmonton Journal, August 12, 2001, “Green but not gloomy”
¹⁰National Post, September 3, 2001, “Running on empty?”
¹¹Michael Sanera and Jane S. Shaw’s *Facts not Fear*, pg. 83



"Junk Science"

and the Homosexual Rights Debate

by Michael Wagner



Genetically identical twins will share the same eye color, but won't always have the same sexual orientation.

Science can be an extremely useful tool in political debates. If you can claim that your view is supported by the latest scientific evidence, you can generally silence your opponent, or at least put him on the defensive. Thus science is frequently referred to in a variety of contemporary political debates.

One such debate concerns homosexual rights. Homosexual rights activists want to get rid of all of the laws that discriminate in any way against homosexuality, or that privilege heterosexuality. They argue that all forms of discrimination against homosexuality are based on bigotry. In their view, their struggle for rights parallels the struggle of racial minorities to achieve rights and overcome discrimination in various Western countries. In both cases they say, bigotry and hatred are the basis for opposing the rights claims.

Gay rights opponents have pointed out that homosexuality is a pattern of behavior, rather than an innate characteristic such as race, thus making such a comparison invalid. Homosexual rights activists counter that science has proven homosexuality to be genetically determined, therefore innate, unchangeable, and normal, making opposition to their behavior similar to racism. If homosexuals are born that way,

they should not be expected to suffer any consequences for something they cannot control. Only "hatred" would lead someone to argue otherwise.

Gay spin doctors

Science has therefore become an important tool in the drive to gain homosexuality the same legal position and benefits long enjoyed by heterosexuality. The scientific evidence offered in support of the gay rights movement has been carefully analyzed by psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover in his book *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996). Satinover points out that the scientific claims made in support of the homosexual rights movement are wildly inflated. "The claim that 'homosexuality is genetic' is certainly false as a scientific statement" (p. 125).

The primary reason for the desire to establish a genetic cause for homosexuality is, of course, political. "The belief that homosexuality is 'genetic' tends to translate into a more positive attitude towards it. Gay activists know this and research studies confirm it" (p. 77). Thus the homosexual rights movement has a major stake in convincing people that their sexual orientation is genetically determined. "This 'public relations' effect has precipitated a

recent media outpouring on the biology and genetics of homosexuality. Starting in 1991, media all across the country have trumpeted the discovery of a series of supposed brain differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Commentators claim that these findings will halt any remaining uncertainty that homosexuality is either a choice or a consequence of factors in upbringing. In this light, to continue supporting anything less than full acceptance of homosexual behavior would be proof positive of prejudicial hatred" (p. 78).

Cause or effect?

It is true that some studies have found differences between the brains of homosexuals and heterosexuals. Satinover points out, however, that the studies are too few in number and too small in extent to draw any significant conclusions. "Furthermore, even if such brain differences were convincingly demonstrated to be present, their significance would be on a par with the discovery that athletes have bigger muscles than nonathletes" (p. 79). Just as muscles become larger with frequent use, so certain parts of the brain grow larger with frequent use. For example, blind people who read Braille experience a growth of brain tissue in the area that controls the reading finger (p. 79). Thus

differences between the brains of homosexuals and heterosexuals should be expected since their sexual behaviors are so different. But that does not provide any evidence that homosexuals are born with that sexual orientation or that it is unchangeable.

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The choice to play basketball has a clear genetic component.

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The study of identical twins provides clear evidence regarding genetic influences on various traits. This is because identical twins have the same genetic make-up, and thus anything that is genetically determined will be exactly the same in both twins. "If 'homosexuality is genetic,' as activists and their media supporters repeatedly claim, the concordance rate between identical twins – that is, the incidence of the two twins either both being homosexual or both being heterosexual – will be 100 percent. There would never be a discordant pair – a pair with one homosexual twin and one heterosexual twin. When we say that 'eye color is genetically determined,' this is what we mean. That's why identical twins always have the same eye color" (p. 83). Interestingly, none of the studies conducted on twins showed anywhere near a 100 per cent concordance rate for homosexuality. The highest rate of concordance that has been found is 50 per cent. In other words, when one twin was homosexual, only half the time was the other twin also homosexual. And this study involved identical twins who were raised together. Thus it is quite possible that the 50 per cent concordance rate could be explained entirely by environmental factors (since the twins were raised in the same social environment) rather than genetics (p. 85). Hence the study of identical twins leads to the conclusion, as stated by some British researchers, "that genetic factors are an insufficient explanation for the development of sexual orientation" (p. 87).

It is important to be clear about this point: science has not proven that homo-

sexuality is genetic. Indeed, if it was genetic, "Lower reproductive rates among homosexuals should lead to its diminishment and eventual elimination from the population" (p. 100). By definition, homosexuals will not have as many children (on a proportional basis) as heterosexuals. "To whatever extent that homosexuality is significantly and directly genetic – and thus homosexuals would mostly discover their 'orientation' prior to marriage – its presence in the population would shrink from one generation to the next. Unless it was continuously 'redeveloped' by some nonheritable cause or causes . . . it would eventually disappear" (p. 103).

The basketball link

Satinover notes, however, that there may be a sense in which there is a genetic "component" to homosexuality. But this needs to be clearly distinguished from the idea that there is a genetic "cause" for homosexuality. All he is saying is that certain genetic characteristics may "predispose" some people towards homosexuality more than other people. He uses an analogy of tall people and basketball to make his point. "Someone born with a favorable (for basketball) combination of height and athleticism is in no way genetically programmed or forced to become a basketball player. These qualities, however, certainly facilitate that choice. As a consequence the choice to play basketball has a clear genetic component, most evident in the high heritability of height. Were scientists to undertake a study of basketball-playing comparable to the studies that have been done to date on the genetics of homosexuality, they would find a much higher degree of apparent genetic influence" (p. 94). That is, there would be more evidence that basketball-playing has a genetic cause (i.e., height) than that homosexuality has a genetic cause. But to summarize this point, "a certain genetic constitution may make homosexuality more readily available as an option, but it is not a cause of homosexuality. Without that constitution it would be unlikely for an individual to choose homosexuality freely. With that constitution, it may be more likely that he or she would" (pp. 114-115).

What, then, "causes" homosexuality? Satinover points out "hard science is far from providing an explanation of homosexuality, let alone one that reduces it to genetic determinism" (p. 117). There are a number of factors that could contribute to homosexuality, both innately biological factors (genetic predisposition, influences on the fetus in the womb, etc.) and environmental factors (family setting, societal mores, etc.). This final factor is quite important from a political perspective. "[G]iven that such cultures have existed where the incidence of homosexuality is far greater than at present, the incidence of homosexuality is clearly influenced by mores. Where people endorse and encourage homosexuality, the incidence increases; where they reject it, it decreases. These factors have nothing to do with its genetics" (p. 116). Currently, homosexuals constitute about 2.8 per cent of the population (p. 53). This figure is likely to increase as the homosexual movement continues to achieve its goals, and its opponents are successfully branded by the media and government as "hate-mongers."

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Where people endorse and encourage homosexuality, the incidence increases.

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Science has not demonstrated that homosexuality is genetically determined. Homosexuals are not "born that way." While homosexuality is not a "choice" in the simplistic sense of that word (according to Satinover it is actually a compulsive behavior pattern that is hard to change [pp. 130-133]), it is not "caused" by genetic factors. Claims to the contrary are not truthful. They are political statements that are used to silence opponents of the homosexual agenda. Beware of political agendas in scientific garb. In our society the term "science" often provides a convenient Trojan horse to conceal destructive forces making further inroads against our already tattered Christian social foundation.



Flipped Stones

by John Siebenga

A Tsunami of Grace



The Pacific Seashore can be a dangerous place. Signs as you enter the beach warn that no one should turn their back to the ocean. Sneaker waves can catch one unaware and cause a soaker at best or loss of life at worst. Riptides can be especially strong at high tide as waves rush ashore and the receding waves slide underneath the incoming waves. The unwary wader can be pulled in and dragged under the water before he has a chance to call for help. Then there are tsunamis that can strike at anytime along the Pacific coast. San Andreas Fault runs a hundred or so kilometers from the Oregon and California coastline. Any movement in this fault translates into an earthquake and a tsunami. Therefore don't turn your back on the ocean; you could get swamped. We did a couple of times. The first time is always the one that creates a memory and instills a cautious and respectful association with the ocean. My sister and my two daughters had waded into the water a short ways. The water was ice cold so I was not into this wading stuff. Instead I lazed on the warm sand, allowing the sun, the wind and the mist to enthrall me. I carried my sister's camera, one of these fancy ones that need to be focused. I focused on the three of them as they ventured in up to mid-calf. I hollered at them when I got the camera focused, and they dutifully turned and waved at me, hollering in return. As I clicked the shutter a wave that was quite a bit bigger than all the rest caught them unawares and before they knew it they were in water up to their mid-thigh. They laughed and tried to run for shore but the wave kept getting higher and higher and prevented them from hurrying like they wished. From my

vantage point on the dry shore, I waited anxiously to see if I would need to wade into the surf and pull one of them out. Thankfully they made it and tumbled laughing and panting on the beach beside me. A little wetter; a little wiser.

There was another time that caused even more concern. It was the first time our family ever set eyes on the heaving, pulsing Pacific Ocean. Taking Highway #4 across Vancouver Island in 1986, we rounded the last curve of the road, and lying suddenly before us was the blue expanse of the Pacific. It looked so like a lake, so calm and serene. We parked in the first parking area we could find and tumbled from the car. We ran down to the water and, with our rubber boots on, began to wade in the water. We did not know about every seventh wave being a big one. We had not been at the beach more than five minutes when a wave swept in that was much bigger than the others. It soon was up to my older daughters' knees – so much for their rubber boots. I grabbed them both by their coats and began to drag them to shore. The younger of the two tripped and fell into the rising swell. Fifteen minutes later we were looking for a motel in Ucluelet to dry and wash our clothes. Thus began our love affair with the ocean. Thus began a growing respect for its incredible power.

Why do I relate this story? It occurred to me again the other day when I watched a broken substance abuser turn his life back to the only God. The grace of the Lord had overwhelmed him and bowled him when he had his back to the Lord. Don't ever turn your back on the Lord.

PUZZLE PAGE ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

SEND PUZZLES, SOLUTIONS, IDEAS to Puzzle Page, 43 Summerhill Pl., Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 OR robleach@aol.com

NEW PUZZLES

Chess Puzzle #71

BLACK

WHITE

WHITE to Mate in 3 (2 SOLUTIONS)
OR, if it is BLACK's move, BLACK to Mate in 2 (1 SOLUTION)

Problem to Ponder # 62 – "Busy Banners"

In a school gym, there are 4 banners on the wall. The closer they are to the gym door, the more frequently they flip over due to a wind blowing into the gym. The first flips once every 10 seconds, the second one flips once every 20 seconds, the third one flips once every 30 seconds, and the fourth one flips once every 40 seconds. If all the banners start off with their front side showing, how long will it take for all four banners to have their backs showing at the same time? How long until all four will have their front sides showing?



Riddle for Scientific Punsters #71

What is the difference between a pilot and a frog?
 The frog enjoys _____ and the pilot enjoys _____.

What do a pilot and a frog have in common?
 The frog and pilot enjoy a short "___" going from one place to another.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (SEPTEMBER) PUZZLE PAGE

Solution to Problem to Ponder #61 – "Nutty Filling for the Whole Hole"

Even though it is only September, the chipmunks Chipper and Nutworth are already storing up nuts for winter. Their tree hole will hold 50 chestnuts or 30 walnuts or 80 acorns. What fraction of the hole is filled if the chipmunks have gathered 20 chestnuts? Altogether what fraction of the hole is filled if the chipmunks have also put into their tree hole 10 walnuts and 16 acorns? How many more walnuts would be needed to fill the hole completely?

First, 50 chestnuts by themselves would fill the hole, so 20 chestnuts will fill $20/50 = 2/5$ of the hole.

Similarly, 10 walnuts will fill $10/30$ or $1/3$ of the hole, and 16 acorns fill $16/80 = 1/5$ of the hole.

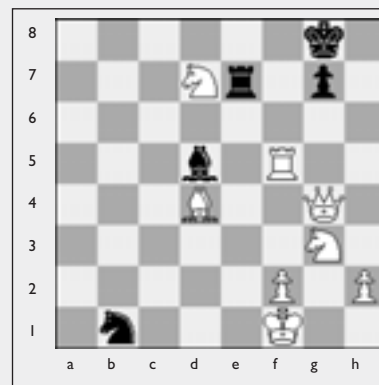
Thus, 20 chestnuts, 10 walnuts and 16 acorns will fill $2/5 + 1/3 + 1/5 = 6/15 + 5/15 + 3/15 = 14/15$ of the hole. (So $1/15$ is not yet filled.)

Finally, 1 walnut fills $1/30$ of the hole, so 2 walnuts will fill $2/30 = 1/15$ of the hole, which is the amount still needing to be filled. Therefore **2 more walnuts** are needed to fill the hole completely.

Answer to Riddle for Scientific Punsters #70 – What is "nuclear fission"?

When you try to catch trout using a pole that g l o w s in the dark.

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 70



WHITE to Mate in 2 Descriptive Notation

1. R-B8 ch K-R2
2. Q-g5 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Rf5-f8+ Kg8-h7
2. Qg4-h5++

OR, if it is BLACK's move, BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

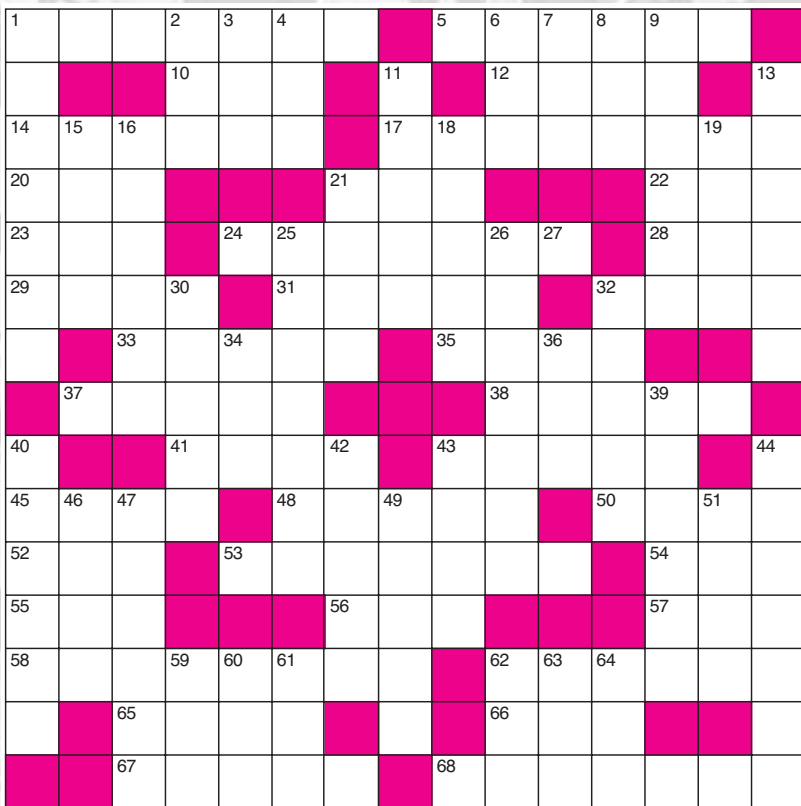
1. _____ N-Q7 ch
2. K-N1 R-K8 ch
3. N-B1 RxN mate

Algebraic Notation

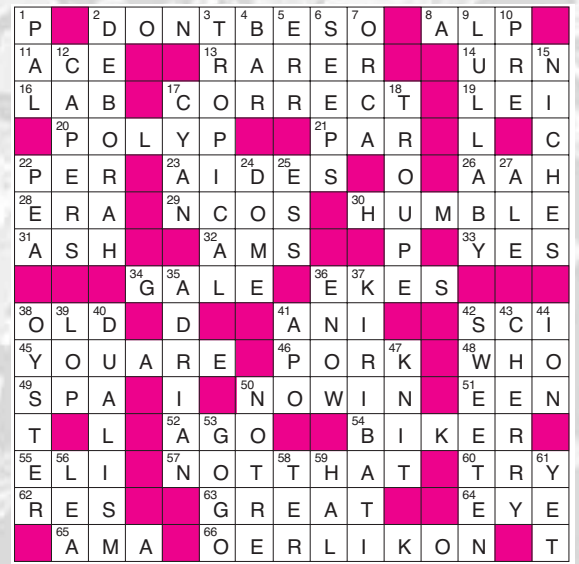
1. _____ Nb1-d2+
2. Kf1-g1 Re7-e1+
3. Ng3-f1 Re1xf1++

Crossword Puzzle

Series 9, No. 9



Last month's solution Series 9, no. 8



Joyce

ACROSS:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Well-known dictionary | 38. Blanket used as a shawl |
| 5. Summer wear | 41. Plant part |
| 10. Smoked delicacy | 43. Squander |
| 12. Finished | 45. Not difficult |
| 14. Mouse sound | 48. Insert |
| 17. Tuna | 50. Put a stop to |
| 20. Destructive vandal | 52. Snake |
| 21. Employ | 53. Vehicle dispatcher |
| 22. Farm cage | 54. Famous poet |
| 23. Grease | 55. Winter sport |
| 24. Steal the show from | 56. Louse egg |
| 28. Trendy | 57. Mine find |
| 29. Members of a certain Indian tribe | 58. Appraise |
| 31. Local official | 62. Season |
| 32. Starling | 65. Historical times |
| 33. Taste | 66. Fuss |
| 35. Therefore | 67. Wisdom |
| 37. Good thing to have | 68. Fishing boat |

DOWN:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Failure | 39. Used to make # 3 down |
| 2. Envision | 40. Rents a car |
| 3. Drink | 42. Intended |
| 4. Antlered animal | 43. Famous female figure skater from Germany |
| 6. Cutting tool | 44. Boat guider |
| 7. Female gametes | 46. Inquires |
| 8. Type of room | 47. Offends |
| 9. Winner's reward | 49. Attempted |
| 11. Grease a turkey | 51. Something that is learned |
| 13. Letterwriting buddy | 59. Wrath |
| 15. Stop | 60. Fellow |
| 16. Except | 61. Donkey |
| 18. Depart | 62. Active conflict |
| 19. Horse holder | 63. A mountain also called "Kaz Dagi" |
| 21. Computer owner | 64. Presently |
| 25. Object to | |
| 26. Relevant | |
| 30. Mouthy | |
| 32. Year division | |
| 34. Certain doctor | |
| 36. Car fuel | |