

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

FEBRUARY 2015
Volume 34 Issue No. 4

PERSPECTIVE

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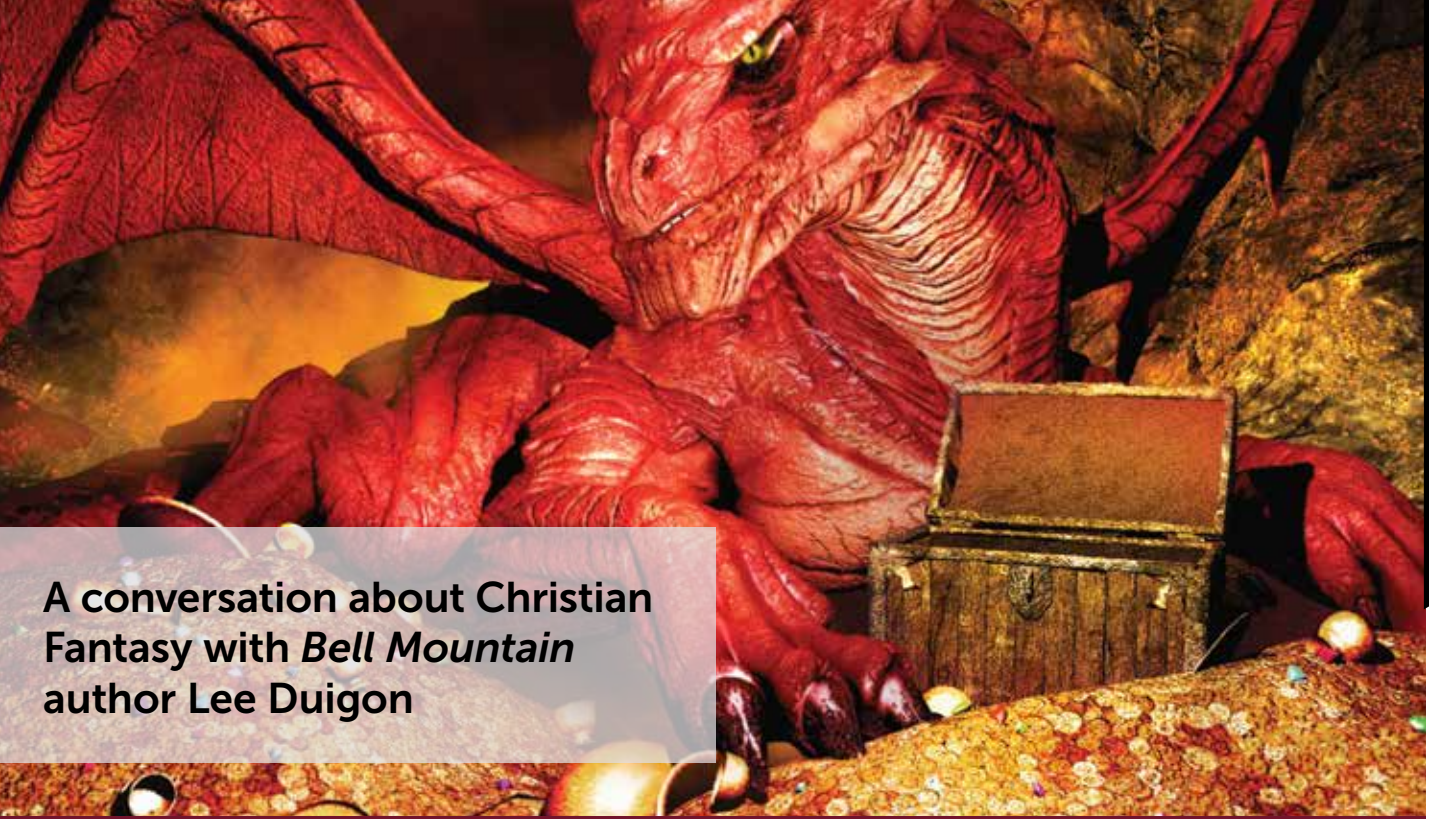
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A conversation about Christian Fantasy with *Bell Mountain* author Lee Duigon

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by Jon Dykstra



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Cornerstone Christian School, located in beautiful Lynden, Washington seeks candidates to fill potential teaching openings (elementary and high school) for the 2015-16 school year.

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FROM THE EDITOR

What makes us valuable

Ability ≠ worth but the world thinks it does, and sometimes we do too

While we were at the library one of my daughters grabbed *Nice Wheels*, a book featuring a boy zipping across the cover in a wheelchair. I thought it was a great choice; my children don't know anyone in a wheelchair so this seemed like it would be a good way to teach them that whether we're standing or sitting, we're all people.

But that wasn't the moral of this story. The author wanted to teach my daughters that our value comes from what we can do.

The book begins with a wheelchair-bound boy rolling into class and a second boy wanting to know, "Can he do what we can do?" By day's end we've learned that the boy in the wheelchair can sing just like everyone else, and can paint, and listen, and laugh, and eat lunch, and share like everyone else too. And as the story draws to a close the second boy decides that, shucks, if this boy in his wheelchair can do everything we can do, why not be his friend?

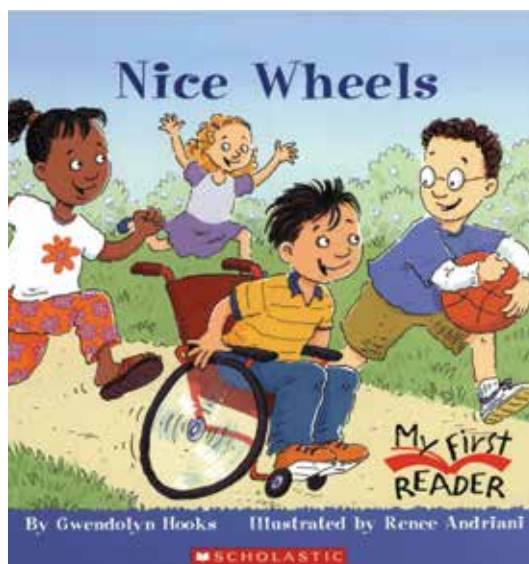
While the author's heart was in the right place, her thinking couldn't be more wrong. If we're worth befriending because we can *do* things, what if we can't do things? If our value is tied to what we can do, then what of a boy who can't sing, or paint, or eat lunch with the other kids?

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

The world believes that our worth is tied to our ability. That's why we have feminists arguing that women can do anything men can do, even including all that brawny stuff. No matter that men have way more muscle, feminists won't admit men make better firefighters, soldiers or alligator wrestlers. They can't concede that men can *do* more in these areas because in their worldview that means men are more valuable than women.

Feminist confusion is comical, but

equating ability with worth can also be deadly. It's this same thinking behind abortion: we can kill the unborn at 10 weeks because they can't *do* this yet, or at 20 weeks because they can't *do* that yet. And this is what's behind legalized euthanasia: if a strong healthy young man wants to commit suicide we'll try to stop him, but if an old man requests euthanasia because his physical and mental abilities are diminishing, well, that's supposed to be understandable.



DRIPPING IN THE CHURCH

In our churches we oppose abortion and euthanasia. We know our lives are valuable even when we can't do anything at all. We know it, but daily we manage to forget it. We tie our sense of worth to how much we make, or have donated, or to the position we hold. Or we base it on how well our kids behave, how many books we've read, how many invitations we do or don't get, or how many Facebook likes we've collected. We know better, but we still fall for the lie that our worth is somehow tied into what we can accomplish or earn or achieve.

There can be something appealing about this lie in the short-term, particularly just after we've lost 20 pounds, or scored a game-winning goal. But in the long run it all fades; relying on our own strength is a dead-end.

UNEARNED

What a blessing it is to know, then, that our value doesn't come from our abilities. Ours is a derived worth that comes from the God in whose image we are made (Gen. 1:27, 9:6, Psalm 8:6). Our status also comes from God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). But it doesn't come from what we can do. We're valuable because of how God made us, and because of what God commanded.

So it's all gift.

Understanding that frees us from the impossible burden of trying to earn it. When we know for a fact that nothing we can give could ever be good enough for God that frees us from worrying whether or not it will be. It frees us to simply respond in thankfulness, giving freely of ourselves and our gifts without being self-conscious about how little it is we have to offer.

And understanding where our worth comes from should stop us from expecting others to earn their status. The newcomer to our church shouldn't have to smile first before we welcome them. The lonely girl shouldn't have to accept one of our first ten invitations before we offer her an eleventh. The awkward guy shouldn't have to play hockey to be a part of our group. And that kid in the wheelchair doesn't have to show he can do everything that the other boys can do before he's worth befriending.

They shouldn't have to earn it. They *can't* earn it. *We* can't earn it.

It's all a gift from God.

Jon Dykstra can be reached at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

NOTA BENE

News worth noting

ANDREW LUCK'S ULTIMATE TRASH TALK

BY JON DYKSTRA



N FL quarterback Andrew Luck made the news this past season for his “trash talk.” *The Wall Street Journal*’s Kevin Clark interviewed opposing players who complained that what Luck said after a play was disturbing, confusing, and just generally getting in their heads. As Washington Redskins linebacker Ryan Kerrigan put it, “In all the years I’ve played football I have (never) heard anything like it. Nothing even close.” So what kind of trash is Luck talking? He’s “congratulating – sincerely and enthusiastically – any player to hit him hard.” As Clarks writes:

When New England [Patriot] pass rusher Rob Ninkovich pulverized

Luck last month in a Patriots 42-20 win, he got the customary congratulations. As Ninkovich tells it, he found himself paralyzed with confusion by the well wishes, so he blurted out, “Thanks for...uh... accepting that hit?” before running back to the huddle.

The other players Clark interviewed expressed varying degrees of confusion and frustration. Eagle defensive back Nolan Carroll said, “You know if you hear a quarterback get mad, you are in his head. With Luck, you thought you hurt the guy, you hear ‘good job’ and you just say ‘aw, man.’” Teammate Connor Barwin put it this way: “You love it but at the same time you really, really hate it.”

His father explained that when Luck was in high school he had played so many sports in middle school that he knew most of the opposing players from playing with them on various teams. He was playing against them now, but still playing with friends, so telling them “great job” was just a natural thing to do.

The Wall Street Journal article makes no mention of whether Andrew Luck is a Christian, but in this one respect

Christian athletes would do well to imitate him. Sure, in our Christian schools both parents and coaches will be quick to rein in any of our students who “dis” opposing players. But do we encourage our children to congratulate opposing players when they make a great play? Do we not only discourage *disrespect*, but encourage *respect*? As appreciators of all that is right, lovely, and admirable (Philippians 4:8) shouldn’t we be able to appreciate the sweet give and go the opposing point guard just burned us with...even as we’re doubly determined not to let it happen again?

SOURCE: Kevin Clark’s “Andrew Luck: The NFL’s most perplexing trash talker,” updated on WSJ.com on Dec. 16, 2014



GOV'T ASKS WHY DO WE PAY MORE (FOR MILK)?

BY JON DYKSTRA

In December the federal government introduced legislation that would force retailers to explain why Canadians sometimes have to pay more than Americans for the same goods. In response the *National Post* ran an editorial that said the cause was already obvious: the government is to blame.

Case in point, one estimate has Canadians paying one-and-a-half to three times as much for dairy products like milk and cheese. This is due to the government-created marketing boards that limit supply by telling dairy farmers how much milk they are allowed to produce. When supply is limited then price, naturally, goes up. This helps producers, but at the expense of consumers.

Instead of demanding an accounting by retailers, the government should own up to its own role in creating the US-Canada price gap.

SOURCE: Mark Milke’s “The cause of the Canada-US price gap is obvious – the government” posted to NationalPost.com on Dec. 15, 2014

MARK DRISCOLL IS BACK

BY JON DYKSTRA

In our September 2013 issue *Reformed Perspective* ran a feature article on Mark Driscoll who was, at the time, a pastor of one of the fastest growing and most influential churches in North America.

We featured him because he was also popular among many of the young people in our Reformed churches. And there was good reason for him to be so. Driscoll's theology was largely Reformed (so, in most cases, quite sound) and because he was trying to reach the unchurched in Seattle he tackled everything a young Christian or inquiring unbeliever might want to know about God and what it means to follow Him. His congregation heard primers on marriage and dating and addictions and sexual brokenness and manliness and homosexuality. Part of the attraction for our young people was that, while we do tackle these topics in our circles, we don't necessarily hear them addressed off the pulpit.

But there were also reasons for some caution. For example, in his feature article Jonathan Chase noted that Driscoll held to adult-only baptism, was a non-cessationist and, in his earlier years, was often irreverent.

After our article ran, Driscoll was entangled in three separate controversies, that last of which ultimately led to him stepping away from the church he founded. The first two involved his books. Driscoll's Mars Hill Church bought copies of his *Real Marriage* book to boost its sales and get it onto the *New York Times* bestseller list. Though other Christian authors have done the same, Driscoll later wrote, "I now see [that] manipulating a book sales reporting system...is wrong..."

Later it was discovered that a small passage from one of his books was taken verbatim from someone else's commentary. He was accused of plagiarism but that was a particularly

harsh assessment of what could have been understood as simply a mistake.

The third controversy was the most substantial one: Driscoll was accused of being domineering, quick tempered and arrogant. This charge was leveled at him by dozens of his former elders and ultimately led to him resigning from his church in October of 2014. Driscoll conceded that, "aspects of my personality and leadership style, have proven to be divisive within the Mars Hill context." He also noted that he has in the past been guilty of "pride, anger and a domineering spirit." So, rather than anything criminal or heretical or sexual, this brilliant pastor's downfall was, in large part, due to his leadership style. One of the problems that comes with a domineering leadership style is that the leader is isolated, and lacks the benefits that come with accountability and an abundance of counselors (Prov. 11:14). That Driscoll lacked accountability was evident in the way his church was structured. Instead of a consistory, he had an external accountability board that was made up of people who didn't attend his church. As board member Paul Tripp later noted, "a distant, external accountability board can never work well because it isn't a firsthand witness to the ongoing life and ministry of the church."

So to his own detriment, and that of his congregation, Driscoll got away with a

domineering and even bullying style of leadership. A few months after he resigned from Mars Hill, the mega church he founded formally dissolved.

Then, as 2015 began, Mark Driscoll was back in the public eye with the unveiling of a new online presence. MarkDriscoll.org has as its goal the distribution of "Pastor Mark Driscoll's past and future Bible teaching and resources." There are already more than 300 resources available.

So is his public reappearance a good thing?

It is for occasions such as this that the expression "time will tell" was first crafted. But it is disconcerting that at this point the website makes no mention of who, other than Driscoll, is involved. It was a lack of accountability that caused many of his troubles, so we should hope (and pray!) that he doesn't repeat his mistake by trying to go it alone in this new effort.



CANDACE CAMERON BURE ON BEING A "SUBMISSIVE" WIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

Actress Candace Cameron Bure is best known for her role on the 90s TV series *Full House*. Last January, and this year again, the professing Christian hit the headlines for describing herself as taking a "submissive" role in her marriage.

In an interview last year with the *Huffington Post* that spread across the Internet she noted:

The definition that I'm using with the word "submissive" is the biblical definition of that. It is meekness; it is not weakness. It is strength under control....It is very difficult to have two heads of authority. It doesn't work in the military. I mean, you have one President....When you are competing with two heads that can pose a lot of problems and issues. So

in my marriage we are equal in our importance, but we are just different in our performances.

The world portrays biblical submission as outdated and chauvinistic. But they don't seem to know what to make of Candace Cameron Bure.

This is a woman who is successful at what she does, but who still places herself under the authority of her husband. And he, though her head, doesn't dictate to her. As she told *Yahoo! Parenting* in a January 11 interview this year:

I used the word "submissive" because it's from the Bible but people who don't understand that see that as offensive. My husband is not a dictator. We work together but I don't want to dig my heels in and I have no aspirations to be the ruler of my family. We are two equal people but I love my husband and I want him to lead. With big picture

issues such as where we live or what schools the kids attend, if he feels strongly about something and I think our family would benefit from it, I am going to share my thoughts. But ultimately, I trust that my husband has our family's best interests at heart, so I wouldn't fight him on that. And when I feel strongly about something, he agrees with me. It goes both ways.

SOURCE: Yasmine Hafiz's "Candace Cameron Bure explains being 'submissive' to husband" posted to HuffingtonPost.com on January 6, 2014; Elise Solé's "Candace Cameron Bure: I want my husband to lead" posted to www.yahoo.com/parenting on January 11, 2015



PRIVATE SCHOOLS ARE NOT "SUBSIDIZED"

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

A popular misconception is that private schools are "subsidized" by the government at a cost to taxpayers and/or public education. This is a misunderstanding of the term "subsidy" and a belief that needs to be quashed. Subsidy is defined as "a sum of money granted by the government or a public body to assist an industry or business so that the price of a commodity or service may remain low or competitive." Private education isn't something that strives to be low-priced or competitive – the competition (public schools) is free.

What our neighbors need to know is that if all the students in private schools went to public schools, then the cost to taxpayers would go up! In Canada, that would mean an influx of more than 350,000 extra students into the public school system, meaning more teachers, schools, classrooms, and tax dollars. Right now, those private school students cost way less for the average taxpayer to educate than a public school student because the government doesn't fund their education to nearly the same degree as public school students. If taxpayers really care and understand where their money is going, they will promote funding for private schools – they're getting a half-price deal on every student enrolled!

SOURCE: Mark Milke's "Opinion: Private schools are not subsidized", posted to www.vancouversun.com on Sept. 11, 2014.

DUTCH LOOK TO HARVEST FROM THE SUICIDAL

BY JON DYKSTRA

In the Netherlands doctors have already taken organs from people who have killed themselves via euthanasia, but to this point have only done it a half dozen times. To increase those numbers the Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam has drafted national guidelines for harvesting organs from those who end their life via euthanasia. The guidelines are currently being studied but even though the guidelines include "safeguards" it doesn't take a genius to see how this will lead to sick people feeling pressure to end things quickly by killing themselves so that others can make use of their organs. And it offers a dangerous justification for suicide to anyone who is having a difficult time dealing with suffering – they could now view suicide as something noble, since it could enable someone else to get a new set of lungs or a new heart, etc.

But this values a person only for what they can give. If this is how we view people then the weak and disabled are soon going to be seen as being worth less than the abled bodied and strong. The only counter to this monstrous lie is telling the world that our value doesn't come from what we do, but instead from in Whose image we are made. That's the truth that needs to be heard.

Anniversary

*We did reach number fifty-five
Due only to the God of life,
He made us one, so long ago
Kept us with Him through high and low.
His love in Christ has carried us,
Our praise to Him for all He does.*

*This love alone helped us portray
It, to each other day by day.
God deals with us in great compassion,
Should we then not in this same fashion
Treat our life's partner as He will,
His law of life try to fulfill?*

*In spite of all the times we fail
The many good times make them pale.
Increasingly the ties that bind us
Get stronger with more years behind us.
We reached the point where we can claim
That more and more we think the same.*


*Our wishes oft anticipated,
To one another dedicated
This makes a parting hard to bear
For all the things in life we share
Will only be a memory.
One must go on... the other sinless,... free.*

*What does life here find such an end
In spite of all the years we spend
As one in faith and hope and life
In praise of God as man and wife?
But know that it's not what you see
This praise goes on... eternally.*

*This union which we formed below
To glorify our God did show
Much imperfections in our song,
God gives correction what was wrong
One day together we will sing
In harmony Him praises bring.*

*- Riemer Faber
January 2014*





While sea ice shrinks & grows,
And temperatures rise or don't,
One constant is the demand to...

by Margaret Helder

**KEEP
THE
MONEY
COMING!**

We all hear the Arctic ice is shrinking. But what about the Antarctic?

We've all heard that Arctic ice is shrinking. The media regularly informs us that sea ice in the Arctic is much less widespread than in former generations, which, they say, is a sure sign of global warming and of disasters soon to come. Governments are urged to spend ever more on renewable energy and to discourage the use of fossil fuels, the burning of which contributes to increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ANTARCTIC?

Again and again we hear about what's happening at and around the North Pole. But what about the South Pole? What the media are not telling us is that sea ice around the Antarctic continent has achieved a record high extent for the third year in a row! Since satellites began to take measurements in 1979, the area covered by ice around Antarctica has grown substantially in recent years, having reached 20.11 million square kilometres in 2014 (*Nature* October 16, 2014 p. 279).

Some readers will remember some dramatic events in December 2013 in the Commonwealth Bay region near Antarctica. This was actually the warmest time of the year in these regions. However, on December 24, 2013, the Russian registered ship *MV Akademik Shokalskiy*, carrying scientists and tourists, became trapped in thick ice. In response to distress calls, Australian, Chinese, French and American ships responded. The rescue effort ran into some troubles when the Chinese ice breaker *Xue Long* also became trapped!

Eventually on January 2, the passengers of the Russian ship were

taken by helicopter to an Australian vessel. Finally on January 8, 2014 the Chinese and Russian vessels managed to escape when shifting weather conditions allowed them to break free of the ice. The events during this Antarctic summer should perhaps have attracted some discussion as to why the ice was so unexpectedly treacherous.

MAYBE THE WARMING IS STILL HAPPENING... BUT JUST AT THE ARCTIC

Fast forward to commentary from *Nature* (October 2, 2014) on the state of current climate change studies. It so happens, declares these scientists, that the average global temperature has not increased since 1998. As an editorial in *Nature* stated on August 29, 2013: "Although a prolonged hiatus in warming does not necessarily contradict prevailing theory, this one came as a surprise and has been used to discredit the climate-science community."

While carbon dioxide levels have continued to rise, the predicted increases in the global average temperature have not been observed. Because of this situation, commentators in *Nature* recommend that we stop talking about increasing temperatures. Climate change is not about global warming anymore. They suggest that the ocean temperature is rising instead, and that this is impacting other aspects of the climate such as the Arctic. Thus they declare: "High-latitude climates [near the poles] are more sensitive than the planet as a whole.... Amplifications in the Arctic *might be* causing extreme weather in middle latitudes" (*Nature* October 2, 2014 p. 31, italics mine). Thus these commentators declare

that the reason we see no obvious warming "*almost certainly lies in the oceans*" (p. 31 italics mine).

A CALL FOR MORE MONEY

Despite such unexplained and unexpected observations as the levelling of global average temperatures, scientists David Victor and Charles Kennel urge governments to continue to devote "big investments" to climate protection (October 2, 2014 p. 30). And what will these expenditures achieve? The public needs to understand, they say, that governments are investing in lower carbon dioxide concentrations and lower ocean heat content. Forget about "global warming;" nobody understands the connection between climate and these other parameters. They want us to just keep supporting the climate change community with lots of tax dollars. What the climate change community does not want is anybody asking critical questions about actual observations. 

While carbon dioxide levels have continued to rise, the predicted increases in the global average temperature, have not been observed.

IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE NUTSHELL

BY JON DYKSTRA

G.K. CHESTERTON ON DRAGONS AND MONSTERS

Chesterton valued reading fantastical fiction to children, or at least the sort where good triumphs. He wrote:

“Fairy tales do not give the child his first idea of [monsters]. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of [monsters]. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon. Exactly what the fairy tale does is this: it accustoms him for a series of clear pictures to the idea that these limitless terrors had a limit, that these shapeless enemies have enemies in the knights of God, that there is something in the universe more mystical than darkness, and stronger than strong fear.”

A COMMON BIBLE-READING BLUNDER

Some of people’s favorite verses in the Bible can be misleading out of their broader context. For example, in the movie *Soul Surfer*, after Bethany Hamilton loses an arm to a shark attack, she grabs hold of Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” – as an assurance that she will again return to surfing. But when we look to the broader context in which this verse appears we see it is not about being able to *do* anything but rather about the author, the apostle Paul, being able to *endure* anything through Christ.

In the January 2015 issue of *Solid Ground* (www.str.org) Greg Koukl succinctly summarizes what’s going wrong here:

A host of popular verses have been consistently misunderstood by

well-meaning Christians because of a simple mistake they’d never make with other writings. Here’s their blunder: *They think there are verses in the Bible*. What I mean is, the numbers creating individual verses give the false impression that sentences or phrases stand on their own as spiritual truths. But they almost never do. When you ask, “How does this verse apply to my life?” you may be assuming it has significance – and therefore, application – disconnected from the larger narrative or flow of thought. That’s the problem. Most people would be surprised to discover there actually are no verses in God’s inspired Word. They were added 1500 years later. As a result, some of the most popular passages have been consistently misread by believers because the numbers got in the way.

EVANGELISM IS VITAL, BUT WHY?

“Mission is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Mission exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man.” – John Piper

BIBLE READING BLUNDER II

As incendiary blog post titles go, this one was scorching: “The One Page of the Bible I’d Like to Rip Out.” But this truly was addition by subtraction: Chad Bird wants to rip out a page that is “blank except for three words: ‘The New Testament.’” As he explains:

...it’s more than a page; it’s really a mind-set that this page represents. It’s the wrongheaded assumption that a radical separation exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament....the biblical stream flows deeply and freely from Malachi to

Matthew, but too many Christians don’t see it that way. They see two, very distinct, often even opposing, bodies of water. They look to the left and see the “river of law” in the OT; and to the right they view the “river of Gospel” in the NT.... Rather than confessing that the writings of Moses and the prophets *are Christian scripture*, they treat them as Jewish scripture from which Christians might learn a few things. So you see, it’s not so much that I want to rip the page out of the Bible that divorces the OT from the NT, but that I want to rip that mindset out of the heads of modern Christians.

SOURCE: Dec. 19, 2014 blogpost on BirdChadLouis.wordpress.com

GREAT HORRIBLE PUNS

- I stayed up all night trying to figure out where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.
- I took the job at the bakery because I kneaded dough.
- I went to buy some camouflage trousers yesterday. I couldn’t find any.
- I couldn’t remember how to throw a boomerang but then it came back to me.
- I didn’t like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.
- I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. Then it hit me!

SOURCE: Repeated here there and everywhere on the Internet

PIERRE VS. JUSTIN ON ABORTION

Early in 2014 Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau announced that anyone running for his party in the next election would be expected to vote against any limits to abortion. In response pro-life Conservative MP Maurice Vellacott shared an old newspaper quote to contrast Justin Trudeau’s view on abortion – as an unquestionable and absolute right – with the view of his father, Pierre Trudeau. Though the former prime minister eliminated most of the unborn’s legal protections he was against the unfettered access his son supports. In a May 25, 1972 article the

then Prime Minister Trudeau was quoted in *The Montreal Star* saying:

You know, at some point you are killing life in the foetus in self-defense – of what? Of the mother’s health or her happiness or of her social rights or her privilege as a human being? I think she should have to answer for it and explain. Now, whether it should be to three doctors or one doctor or to a priest or a bishop or to her mother-in-law is a question you might want to argue.... You do have a right over your own body – it is your body. But the foetus is not your body; it’s someone else’s body. And if you kill it, you’ll have to explain.

It’s hard to determine which Trudeau’s position is the more detestable: the father who admitted that another body – another somebody – was involved and still wanted abortion to be allowed in many circumstances, or the son who has never made such an admission, but wants abortion allowed in every circumstance.

THOSE FORGIVING PRIVATEERS

Spotted on a T-shirt:
To err is human; to “arr!” is pirate.

ANSWERING A FOOL

In Proverbs 26:4-5 God says we shouldn’t argue with fools...except when we should.

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

The danger in responding to fools is in coming off looking like them. So if a fool simply wants to engage in a shouting match or online flame wars we can’t answer that kind of folly; we’ll seem like just another angry fool.

But when a fool offers an actual argument, then we can answer him in his folly by showing him where his argument will logically take him.

Here’s how this looks in real life. In an online forum an abortion advocate wrote:

I don’t get why a human that lives 80 years with modern medicine is more important than a tree that lives 500 years.

Long-living trees are more important than short-living humans? How do we expose this for the foolishness it is? By following it to its logical end and considering what it would be like if we actually lived that way. Then we can contrast this foolishness with the wisdom of what God says. So our response might look something like this:

God says that man is the pinnacle of creation, but you place us somewhere behind trees. Do you live your life consistent with that belief? How do you treat trees? Do you read books? (You do know what those are made of, don’t you?) Have you sat around a campfire and enjoyed watching the flames dance over countless wooden carcasses? What is your home made out of? Your coffee filters? Do you use toilet paper? If

you’re participating in the slaughter of trees your lifestyle shows even you don’t believe trees rate above humans. So instead of this foolishness, explore what God has to say about his creation, and how Man is to care for it. And that begins with caring for the littlest and the weakest who are made in His image right from conception.

WHY WE WANT REALLY SMART COPS

In 1999 Robert Jordan took the New London Police Department to court for discriminating against him on the basis of Jordan having too high of an IQ. The courts eventually ruled that if they wanted to, it was okay for police departments to discriminate against high IQ applicants, who, they theorized, would quickly become bored with the day to day of police work.

But in his book, *The Notes*, Ronald Reagan offered one very good reason why extra smart officers would be ideal. He shared a quip about a rookie cop who was asked, in an exam, how he would go about breaking up a crowd. The officer replied, “I’d take up a collection.”

WHAT YOUR CHURCH BASEBALL TEAM WILL BE WEARING NEXT SEASON

(Find it at www.puritanshop.com)





Evaluating others

Who is your friend?

by Jay Younts

How can you know if someone is your friend? This is a crucial life skill that you and your children must master. Failure to discern who is a genuine friend leads to being manipulated and used. This may result in bitterness and a crippling inability to trust others.

God has provided tools in Scripture so that you can recognize genuine friendship. Becoming intimately familiar with passages that teach what friendship in action looks like is a way to start. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is such a passage.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

TRUTHFUL, NOT TACTLESS

Another place to look is in the Proverbs. Most Proverbs should not be read as commands but as reliable observations about life. For example look at Proverbs 12:18:

The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

These words provide insight about how to distinguish between the wise

and the reckless. The reckless or rash person's words hurt and bring pain. They cut deeply. So when you see someone who claims virtue for speaking his mind and is yet insensitive, you can know this is not a person to be trusted. In contrast, the words of the wise bring healing, even if they hurt. The words of the wise are well thought out. The words of a wise person do more than blurt out the obvious. They bring healing and comfort. The wise person will be a good friend.

CARING ENOUGH TO CONFRONT

Here is another example found in Proverbs 27:5-6:

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

These two verses work together to drive home a particular point. This is a common occurrence in Hebrew poetry, formally called parallelism. Parallelism has several subtle forms. In this case the first lines of verses 5 and 6 make a positive observation. The second lines of the two verses illustrate the negative application. Here is how it works.

"Better is open rebuke" in verse 5, connects with "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" in verse 6.

In contrast, "than hidden love" in verse 5 connects with "profuse are the kisses of an enemy" in verse 6.

The way these verses are structured

Someone who loves you enough to honestly, but lovingly, tell you hard things is your friend.

allows us to make an observation that we may not make without the parallel thoughts. Verse 5 shows that love that is hidden, that is, love that stays in the shadows, is not love at all, but cowardice. So, rather than speak the truth, a person is showered with false kisses. This is a way to identify manipulation at work.

Positively, an open rebuke is connected to the faithful wounds of a friend. Someone who loves you enough to honestly, but lovingly, tell you hard things is your friend.

By using these real life observations you can learn to identify those who will be faithful friends. Teach these things to your children. Practice them for yourself.

This was first published on www.shepherdpress.com and is reprinted here with permission. Jay Younts is the author of Everyday Talk: Talking freely and naturally about God with your children, as well as many other excellent materials on parenting.



Evaluating others What was he/she thinking?

by Jay E Adams

Over the years I have noticed that one of the chief ways people get into trouble with one another is by judging motives.

How often husbands and wives quarrel over what they think lies behind their spouses' words or actions rather than judging those words or actions themselves. How frequently members of the church misunderstand the true goals and objectives of pastors and other Christians while attributing to them all sorts of intentions that never crossed their minds. How seldom do we admit we are only guessing and do not really know what is going on in someone else's mind.

We think and act as though we have the ability to read minds, but the fact is, we don't.

ONLY ONE MIND READER

The self-appointed mind readers who appear on the stage and on TV do not read minds at all; they use clever methods of deceiving people into

*...my friend,
you must
acknowledge your
inability to read
minds and motives*

thinking they have this power. I can say that with assurance because God tells us so in the Bible: "Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Those words also clearly indicate that you do not have the power either. So, my friend, you must acknowledge your inability to read minds and motives and stop acting as if you had this power. When you do, things will go much better for you and for the others who associate with you.

The ability to read minds and motives belongs to God alone. When you arrogate that power to yourself, in effect, you claim to be God. It is an act of proud rebellion, lifting yourself into the place of deity.

Not only is it idolatrous, arrogant, and heinous to do so, but also it is almost always a sin against the one whose mind you judge. That is because, as sinners, usually we judge others' motives when we are angry, and as a result, we attribute to them many motives, thoughts, and goals that are actually foreign to them. Even when now and then we happen to hit on a true motive or thought, because we couldn't be sure before making the accusation, we sinned in doing so.

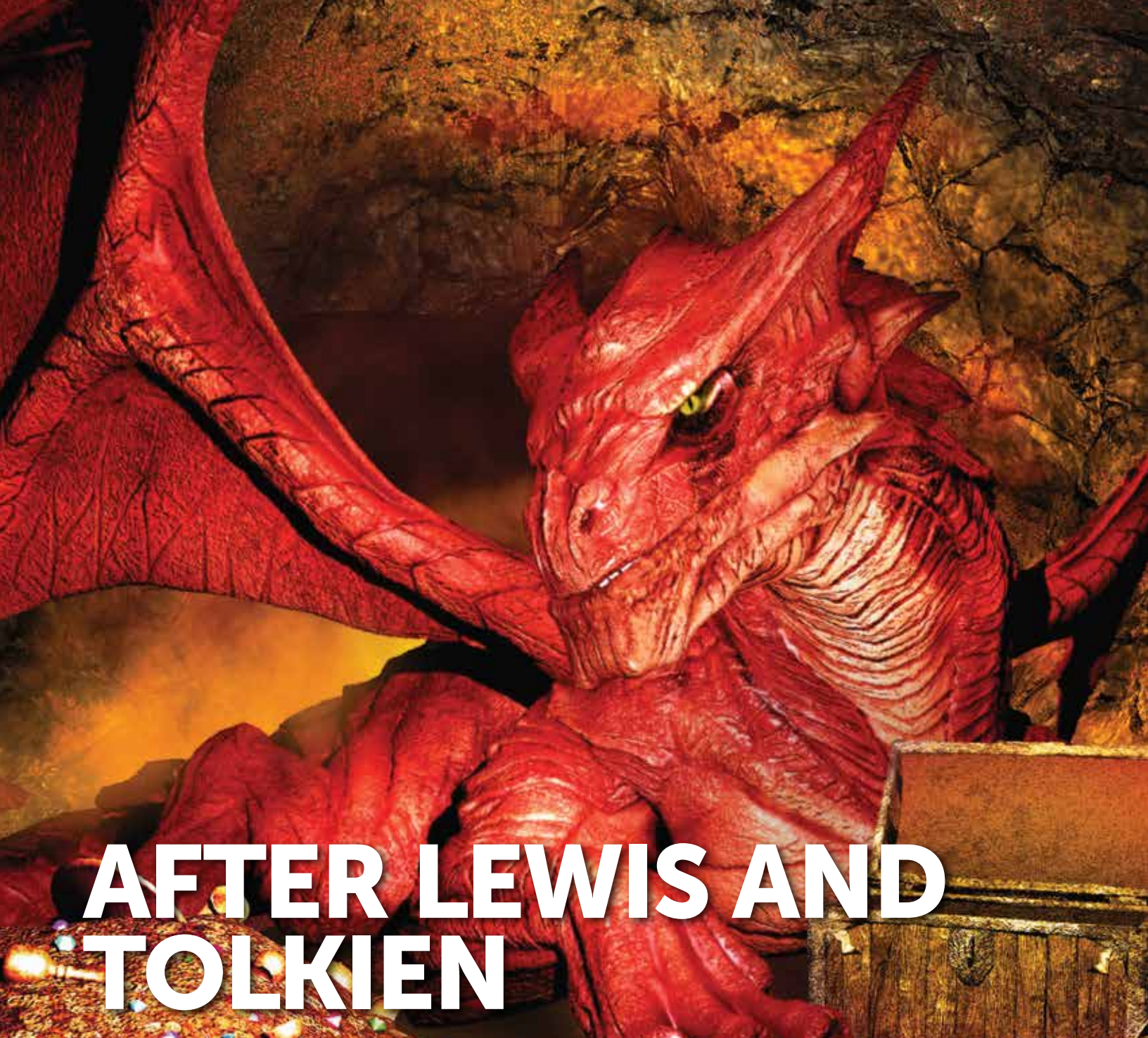
Instead, until the evidence proves otherwise, we are to make the loving interpretation of another's words or actions, always giving him or her the benefit of every doubt: "Love . . . believes all things, hopes all things" (1 Cor. 13:7).

IT'S A SIN

Let me urge you, therefore, to give thought to the matter. Probably this very day you found yourself judging another incorrectly by judging his motives rather than his words and actions. Confess that as a sin to God and to him. Then ask God to help you stop.

Learn instead to judge on the basis of what is yours to do, to evaluate the "outward appearance." Remember too, "By their fruit you will know them." We will know in time, when fruit appears, whether the inner heart of another was in harmony or disharmony with his words or actions; but we cannot know right away. Our judgment of another must always be tentative, giving him the benefit of any doubt in love, subsequent to revision only when the visible fruit indicates we were wrong. Our judgments must, therefore, be functional, not final. Final judgment is God's prerogative. But, since we must function in relationship to others, making judgments about them, we may only judge provisionally, on the basis of what we see and hear, and not on the basis of what we suspect is going on in their minds.

Jay E. Adams might best be described as the Martin Luther of the biblical counseling movement – he started a reformation which returned counseling to its biblical foundation. This article was published on nouthetic.org under the title "Motives" and is reprinted here with permission.



AFTER LEWIS AND TOLKIEN

A CONVERSATION ABOUT CHRISTIAN
FANTASY WITH *BELL MOUNTAIN*
AUTHOR LEE DUIGON

by Jon Dykstra



It's hard to believe but C.S. Lewis has been gone long enough for his works to have entered into the public domain – in Canada that happens 50 years after the author's death. His good friend J.R.R. Tolkien outlived him by a decade, but has been gone for four. How is it that their fantasy fiction remains as popular as it has ever been?

The answer, in part, is because secular fantasy fiction doesn't understand the way the world really is. That's the secret to great fantasy writing – it has to be anchored in reality for it to have an impact. Yes, there can be wizards and elves and all sorts of unreal creatures, but at its core a fantasy novel has to say something truly true. While Tolkien was far more subtle than Lewis about the inclusion of his Judeo-Christian worldview, it was this worldview that allowed him to see and share truths about the pull of temptation, the strength of humility, and the nature of love. Lewis's series is intriguing for children, but it is his Christian understanding of man's failings and God's grace that give the books enough depth for adults to read again and again.

However, if it was these men's Christian worldview that elevated their fiction then why, in the decades since their deaths, haven't we seen other Christian writers joining them at the top of the fantasy genre? Why, in fact, is most of the fantasy you'll find in a Christian bookstore simply dreadful?

These are good questions, and Lee Duigon is the right man to ask. He's not only blogged about how to improve the state of Christian fantasy (see www.LeeDuigon.com), he set out to do something about it himself. Since 2010 he's published seven books in his *Bell Mountain* fantasy series about a boy and a girl and an assassin and a wise clever squirrel-like creature who all set out on a quest. A review of the first book in the series appears on page 33 of this issue, so all I'll say here is that these books are a better brand of Christian fantasy fiction than we've seen in a long time. Mr. Duigon graciously agreed to an interview and what follows is an edited version.

Magic, wizards, elves, and dragons are core elements of most fantasy. But your *Bell Mountain* series doesn't have any of them. Why not?

For one thing, wizards, elves, and dragons have all become clichés. Fantasy is supposed to ignite your imagination, but clichés have the opposite effect.

Wizards, elves, and dragons have been so overdone it's like, "Oh, well, ho-hum, there's some elves." They're so common in the literature, they might as well be checkout clerks at your local supermarket. In my books I have replaced these with figures which I hope readers will find refreshingly unusual. Instead of elves, I have little, hairy, manlike creatures – like Wyt – who fulfill the literary function of being "other than human," but are intelligent and able to interact with humans. Instead of dragons, I have creatures patterned after little-known prehistoric animals. And instead of wizards, I offer some dangerous and nasty human beings who play at being wizards and create the illusion of having magical powers.

As for magic, well, the reason I don't use it is because it seems a lazy writing device. Things in a story that get done by "magic" might also be accomplished by hard work, ingenuity, faith, hope, or love, and wouldn't that be far more interesting?

... the writer who resorts to magic is lazy, using it as a shortcut to getting things done.

We are God's creation, living in the world He created and subject to His laws of nature, whether we like it or not. Genuine "magic" – as opposed to technology or trickery that only looks like magic – would circumvent or overturn those laws, thus making the

magician himself a kind of god.

So on the one hand, the writer who resorts to magic is lazy, using it as a shortcut to getting things done. On the other, he is imagining something which is not allowed. God has not permitted us to do real magic. It would disorder His Creation – and surely we already make enough mischief without any magic whatsoever.

So would you still classify your books as fantasy, and if so, how would you define fantasy as a genre?

I say my stories are fantasy because they describe an imaginary world, different from ours but still subject to God's laws. The whole point of fantasy is to fire up the reader's imagination: to gain access to regions of the heart and mind not easily reached by other kinds of fiction.

An excellent example of this is the classic fantasy movie, *The Princess Bride*. There's nothing in that story that violates God's laws of nature. But it's certainly full of unusual people, places, and things.

To that formula I have added the presupposition that God reigns in my imaginary world just as He reigns in our own. And following the trail blazed by C.S. Lewis in his *Chronicles of Narnia*, I have the characters in my fantasy world interacting with God's will and coming to know Him better – although their interaction with God is more like it is in our own world than in Narnia. God speaks to them through scripture, prophecy, and promptings of the spirit – with the occasional use of a spiritual messenger. For this my inspiration and model is not fiction, but the Bible.

Why do so many readers crave fantasy?

For the same reason we crave science fiction, romance, westerns or what have you. For escape, of course.

Now the whole idea of escape is to go to a better place, from a worse. People don't tunnel into prison camps. So the fantasy reader has the desire to seek a better world, an imaginary world, and escape into it, if only for as long as it

takes to read the book.

How are we able to imagine a world that seems better to us than the one we live in? If you imagine yourself in Tolkien's Middle-Earth, for instance, you have monsters and dragons to deal with, not to mention a terrible Dark Lord. But you don't have politicians' lies to listen to, enormous taxes sucked out of your paycheck, race hustlers, militant sodomy, squawking idiot liberal churchmen, or natural beauty spots torn down to make way for "smart growth." You don't have any of that. So you escape to Middle-Earth for a few hours and are all the better for it.

How is it, asks Puddleglum in C.S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair*, that a few children playing a game can imagine a play-world that licks the supposed "real" world hollow?

Because the God who made us built into us an unending desire for something better.

Our worldly leaders promise us a better world, but can't deliver. Our Science with one hand gives us air conditioning and YouTube, but with the

Some Christian writers seem to think that the rules of literature shouldn't apply to them because they're writing about the Kingdom of God.

other gives us nerve gas and Darwinism. Our worldly philosophers give us what can only be described as dreck.

God gives us salvation and a promise to regenerate His whole creation, but many of us don't seem very interested in that.

Tolkien said that Christianity is the one myth that is true. We should be hearing that from our theologians and our pastors, but in all too many cases, we don't.

Never mind. We've got the Bible, and it tells us the truth. That's where the thirsting fantasy writer found the water of life – because that's where it is.

What reasons are there for Christians, and particularly parents, to be wary of secular fiction? What are its most common faults?

Its biggest fault is that most of it seems to be written with the presupposition that there is no God.

It also omits any mention or description of the religious dimension of human life. If a space alien were to try to learn about life on earth by sampling our fiction, he'd never know there was any such thing as a religious impulse. And that's not a realistic description of human life, unless you want to count what goes on in faculty lounges.

On your blog (LeeDuigon.com) you point to C.S. Lewis as an example of Christian fantasy done right. What does he get right?

In his *Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis makes it clear that the source and creation of all life is Jesus Christ, symbolized by the Great Lion, Aslan. And Aslan tells the children who come into Narnia from our world that they were there because He has called them; and that they will know Him in their own world, too – only "by another name." It takes a very dense reader not to know that this other name is Jesus.

This is what Lewis gets right. In all seven Narnia books, the theme is getting to know Christ. For the most part, this is accomplished through obedience and love. This is a very big thing to get right.

Though you praise Lewis, you've also written that you respect parents who have a problem with the way Lewis uses magic in some sections of his books. Could you explain?

As a former atheist groping his way to a better knowledge of Christ, Lewis did make some mistakes along the way. I cringe when one of his characters says, "It's all in Plato." Anyone who comes to Christ through Plato has performed a very neat trick.

The real magic in Narnia, the "Deep Magic," belongs to Aslan/Jesus. In that sense it isn't magic at all, but rather the underlying law of all reality.

But then there's the White Witch, whose magic imposes winter on all Narnia for many decades. She is not human, and her "magic" can do nothing but destroy. She cannot create.

There's also "minor magic" done by some of the characters in Narnia, and magic attempted by lawless human beings like Uncle Andrew – "magic" that never turns out as desired.

I can't say why Lewis allowed this. His friend Tolkien warned him not to. Tolkien saw it as a flaw, and I agree. The only Biblical basis for it is Pharaoh's magicians' ability to imitate the first few miracles that God performed against Egypt through Moses and Aaron. The



witch of Endor did succeed in raising the ghost of Samuel, but I always feel she was surprised it actually worked. But all the rest of the “magic” in the Bible is revealed as fraud; and that’s how I handle it in my own books.

By allowing a certain amount of magic in Narnia, Lewis deviated from the Biblical model. In deference to his evident love and reverence for Christ, I overlook it as a human failing. But those readers who are uneasy with it – and I’ve heard from quite a few of them – have nothing to apologize for.

I wanted to ask you about the role of magic in Christian and secular fantasy. I’ve just been reading a series by Christian author Andrew Peterson, his *Wingfeather Saga*, and he uses a conversation between mother and son to lay out his own thoughts on magic. After the son has a vision, his mother tells him:

If you asked a kitten, “how does a bumblebee fly?” the answer would probably be “Magic!” [The world] is full of wonders and some call it magic. This is a gift from the Maker - it isn’t something that [your sister] Leeli created or meant to do, nor did you mean to see these images. You didn’t seek to bend the ways of the world to your will. You stumbled on this thing the way a kitten happens upon a flower where a bumblebee has lit.

What do you think of Peterson’s take on magic here? And what principles do you think Christian authors should follow in using magic?

I like what Peterson writes here. It’s an elegant way of saying that just because we perceive a thing as “magical” doesn’t mean it really is. We are a long way from understanding everything about how God’s creation works. The kitten sees the bumblebee’s flight as “magic.” And if you brought a flashlight into the world of King Arthur, his people would think it was a magical item.

In my books I don’t use magic at all.

My fantasy world contains a few pieces of technology left over from an ancient period of history. Readers will understand that these are not magical items, but the characters in the stories won’t. The few individuals who get a chance to use these items think they’re making magic.

If a Christian writer simply must use “magic,” he would do well to remember that all power comes from God. It would be a challenge to square that with a story in which a teenage girl uses a magic spell to lasso her dreamboy (ugh – there’s so much of that in Young Adult fiction). As a matter of realism, I would always allow the appearance, or the illusion, of magic. We still have plenty of that in our own world today.

I would allow fantastic creatures, as long as they don’t violate the laws of nature – as would, for example, a flying hippopotamus. But to a person living in another world – a world, say, where unicorns exist – a kangaroo or a chameleon or an octopus might seem an utterly fantastic creature which he might refuse to believe in.

If a fantasy can’t stir up a sense of wonder, it isn’t much of a fantasy. As Ray Harryhausen used to say, no one goes to the movies to see a sinkful of dirty dishes.

But “magic” has been so overused in fantasy, it’s really more of a challenge to the writer’s imagination to get things done without magic.

Why is so much Christian fantasy fiction so bad?

It seems to be a rule of the market that when demand for a certain kind of story is high, but the supply is low, publishers fill the gap by publishing bad books. Fantasy, especially among young readers, is very popular. And there’s a demand for stories that don’t insult the Christian reader’s sensibilities. Simply, there isn’t enough high-quality fantasy being written to meet the demand. That’s because it isn’t so easy to write as a lot of



people think it is.

Some Christian writers seem to think that the rules of literature shouldn’t apply to them because they’re writing about the Kingdom of God. So they feel perfectly free to traffic in corny dialogue, one-dimensional characters, ridiculous coincidences, and clumsy language. But all you wind up with, that way, is a bad book.

But while a lot of Christian fantasy is bad, a lot of secular fantasy is bad, too. I’ve read fantasies so awful, they could dry up ponds. I’ve read Christian fantasies in which the writer excelled at handling his theme, only to have his book go belly-up because he can’t write dialogue. Few authors have a gift for fantasy, but that doesn’t stop everyone and his brother from thinking they can write it.

What are some of the most common mistakes made in Christian fantasy writing?

Here’s a couple:

1. *Write it as if it were a perfectly ordinary fantasy story, like everybody else’s, only plug in a few scenes of characters praying or going to church.*

Why two Christian fantasy authors didn't make the cut

by Jon Dykstra

This issue we feature four different Christian fantasy authors, all of them good, and a couple of them – Lee Duigon and Andrew Peterson – great. But two more authors, both Reformed, didn't make the cut. And that's even though one of them might well have been the best storyteller of the lot.

Why weren't these two authors included? Because both took God's name in vain in their books.

Not taking God's name in vain seems a pretty minimal expectation for Christian authors, but many don't meet it. I've exchanged emails with a few to ask them about it. I noted that if it was about realism, why didn't anyone in their books use the F-word? God's name is abused in many a Christian fiction title, but you will not find the F-word. Why is it that authors (and readers – this is driven by what we demand) seem to make more of a fuss over the F-word than over the abuse of God's Name?

The authors who've replied have given a variety of responses. One apologized and promised he would never do it again. But the especially talented fellow misunderstood my point and asked if I was also against the depiction of murder in Christian fiction. Were Christian writers, he asked, only allowed to write about nice people doing nice things?

I hadn't been clear enough: I wasn't objecting to the *depiction* of sin – I was objecting to the *committing* of it. When a character murders someone, no actual murder has taken place, so the author has done nothing wrong. When a character steals, no theft has taken place.

But things are quite different when it comes to a character taking God's name in vain – then a commandment really is being broken and it's not being broken by the character. It's the *author* who is using God's Name in a way God never intended: as a substitute for a swear word.

God says we can use his Name to talk to Him. And we can use his Name to talk about Him. But a writer may not use God's name simply because his heroine has stubbed a toe and he wants the reader to understand that it really hurt. To be clear, the problem here is not so much that the *heroine* is taking God's Name in vain but rather that the *author* is doing so. God's Name is too holy to be used simply because a writer lacks the creativity or patience to think up another interjection.

This author who misunderstood my objection is both brilliant and prolific and will probably write many more books in the future. So it would be wonderful if a man who clearly wishes to honor God in his work would understand the importance of honoring God's holy Name. So I'm going to try contacting him again.

Could you do the same? The next time you run across God's Name being abused in a Christian book, could you take some time to try to contact the author, or his publisher (their website often has contact info), and explain why we find this objectionable? It could take some effort and time but I'm convinced it would be time well invested. This is a sin of ignorance where we simply have to explain. Once it's made clear, what reason would any of these Christian authors have to continue to abuse God's Name?

Like Christian rap and Christian rock and Christians vs. Zombies video games, Christian fantasy is too often a not-very-good imitation of a secular pop culture product with some outward trappings added. I read a "Christian thriller" recently in which the good guys, every now and then as if it had just popped into their heads for a moment, would pray or casually make some trifling Bible reference like, "Yeah, we gotta hang tough, like David." Period. My rule of thumb is, if the story can get on without the "religion" you've put in it, then that's not a critical element and you haven't written a Christian fantasy.

And that's usually because the writer has mistaken the outward appearance of Christianity for the real thing. It's easy to throw in a few sentences that show your characters praying or going to church. The mistake in "Christian fiction" is to settle for that.

2. Have God give the good guys better magic than the bad guys have.

Remember what happened to Moses when he snapped at the children of Israel, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" God did all the miracles, but here was Moses taking credit for one of them.

I just read a book featuring a great big magical duel, and it left a bad taste in my mouth. "May the mightiest magician win!" is hardly a sentiment found anywhere in the Bible. What we do find in the Bible is God using weak and inconsequential things to confound the great and powerful. So Balaam is rebuked by his donkey, David slays Goliath, and the whole world is conquered not by armies, but by a baby in a manger.

Any attempt to write Christian fantasy must be anchored in the truths of the Bible, be they applied to this world or to an imaginary world, and must focus on the spirit of Christianity rather than any outward show of it – unless, of course, you're writing about the vanity of outward show. In a Christian fantasy, the story must grow out of the writer's quest to know God better and to share Him with the readers – and all without being heavy-handed, obvious, or preachy.

Over that last several years there has been a dystopian trend in the Young Adult bestsellers with books like *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* and *Maze Runner*. Many of these same books have teens killing teens. Why are Young Adult books so grim these days?

YA books are dark and unwholesome because they're written by adults with troubled souls and a superficial understanding of life. *Maze Runner*, for instance, is idle, pointless cruelty, obviously not written by a teenager.

It's a common fallacy among the pseudo-intelligent that whatever is ugly, painful, destructive or mean must be "realistic." On the other hand, *Divergent* is written by a professing Christian who seems to be warning us not to let our world deteriorate into the grim and nasty world of her stories.

Every day, we're all bombarded by bad news, always stuff we can't do anything about. Enough of this will make anybody downhearted – which is just another good reason for writers and readers alike to steep themselves in the Bible.

Why should Christians read fantasy...and write it? How can fantasy be "truer" than some other genres of fiction?

Fantasy is like poetry. A good fantasy gets under your skin. It says more than it appears to say.

If you're writing Christian fantasy, what you're doing is going into the parable business. You're writing extended parables. And although Christ's short parables were fiction, He used them to tell truths. This is what our long parables should do.

Christians should write fantasy because there's such a high demand for it, especially among the younger readers. If Christians don't write it, non-Christians and anti-Christians will. Do we really want to concede such a big chunk of our popular culture to the godless? Christians should remember how energetically, a few years

If you're writing Christian fantasy, what you're doing is going into the parable business.

ago, the ungodly pushed – to teens and pre-teens – Philip Pullman's aggressive atheist fantasy, *The Golden Compass*. We ought to be competing with junk like that and trying to crowd it off the shelves.

I won't say Christians "should" read

fantasy. It's a matter of personal taste. But if the fantasy writer's art is up to the challenge, and the reader is open to it, a visit to an imaginary world can sometimes shock the reader out of his habit of taking reality for granted: and by showing him strange new things, we may move him to see the old familiar things from a new perspective.

In my books I force my characters to live in contact with God and His will. He's shaking their world, and won't allow them to take Him for granted anymore. Let the reader wonder, "Wow! What must that be like?" If I've gotten the reader to think along such lines, I think I've done a good job. RP

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BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO DIE IN THE LORD

by Christine Farenhorst

To die or not to die is not a question – all men must die, unless the Lord returns first.

“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” So Paul pens in Philippians 1:21. For him death was the doorway into Christ’s presence.

Not all men are eager to embrace their last moment on earth. As a matter of fact, many are afraid of death. Partly this is an apprehensiveness of the unknown. But most of all this fear comes from an innate knowledge of sin; from a troubled conscience which relentlessly warns of condemnation. Consequently, even Christians who should know better often recoil at the thought of the moment of death.

There is an anecdote about Dr. Samuel Johnson, (1709-1784), the literary figure renowned for his many essays, and whose English dictionary published in 1755 was a work of great scholarship. Johnson, a devout, conservative Anglican, was also a compassionate man who supported a great many poor friends under his own roof even when unable to provide for himself. But he was haunted by the

fear of death. A friend once remarked to him that he was not afraid of death. Dr. Johnson replied: “I have never had a moment in which death was not terrible to me.” When he was told he should not have a horror for that which is the gate of life, he answered:

No rational man can die without uneasy apprehension. It is so natural to man that all of life is one long effort not to think about it.

A DOORWAY

My father-in-law, Dick Farenhorst, was struck by lung cancer just past his sixtieth birthday – a relatively young age – and lived only nine months after he was first diagnosed with this disease. He was a faithful man – one who lived for his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It was a pleasure to speak with him and to watch his cheerful demeanor both before and after he was taken ill. Early on in his illness, he had his moments of doubt and sadness. But what I remember most of all was his increasing godly faith as his body failed. “God has, after all,” he said, “given life.

And because it is His gift, I do love life so very much. And yet,” he went on to say, “even though I do not like the thought of death, God in His mercy has opened the door to heaven a crack and each day He opens it a little further so that I can see more of what He has in store for me. The more the door is opened, the more I long to be with Him in heaven.”

A few weeks ago we stopped in to see my parents’ graves. My Dad and Mom Praamsma’s bodies are buried in a flat, rather dreary-looking cemetery with no upright stones on their plot of land at all. We presume this makes for easier summer grass mowing and also know that upright gravestones are expensive. However, their common horizontal slab of marble shines with hope. It is an open doorway with the words “Victory through Jesus Christ” engraved on it.

Again, to die or not to die is not a question - for all men must die unless the Lord returns first.

ALL AROUND US

When my husband and I were in the hospital for the birth of our second child,

there was a woman in the next room who was in heavy labor. She continually called out, "I've changed my mind. I've changed my mind. I don't think I'll have this baby after all." We smiled. But even as one cannot avoid giving birth when in the last throes of labor, so one cannot avoid dying even by calling out that one has decided against the practice.

There is a site on the Internet on which you can see ticking what is termed the "World Death Clock." There you can glance over the calculation of how many people are dying in the world every second. Although the statistics are certainly not infallible, on an average, this site tells you, there are an estimated 56 million deaths that take place every year. Another site exhibiting the world's current death rate breaks down that annual death guesstimate, stating that some 153,424 people die every day. This number is again broken down for you to about 1.78 deaths per second, 107 deaths per minute, 6,390 deaths per hour, and so on. That would equate to a great number of corpses for cemetery plots!

When you go about your daily business of waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, showering, dressing, eating, and working until you retire again at night, you rarely think of tombstones, elegies and the brevity of life. But it's all around us - in every day, minute and second - and we cannot avoid death by taking an alternate route.

COMMON TO ONE AND ALL

A bare two months ago it was still 2014. A number of people who very likely expected to go on living and breathing into 2015, stopped doing just that and died. There was Phil Everley, one of the famous singing Everley brothers, who died of lung disease in January. He stopped breathing just a few days prior to Ariel Sharon, the former Israeli Prime Minister. (Sharon had been in a coma for about 8 years.) People we might have been fond of, such as Shirley Temple, that very cute and dimpled child actress and Maria Franziska von Trapp, the last surviving member of the *Sound of Music* family, both died in February. Paco de Lucia, one of the world's leading

guitarists, stopped plucking strings. His hands could not move any longer after rigor mortis set in.

It does not matter whether one is Christian or not - the curse of death lies on all mankind. It embraces believers and unbelievers alike in a literal breathing scene. Frequently believers and unbelievers in eastern countries face horrible deaths. In February 2014 more than 100 Christians in Izghe, northeast Nigeria, were hacked to death in a church by Muslim fanatics. This tragedy has repeated itself over the year throughout every month. Christians have been persecuted and killed again and again. In March, for example, 3 Christian villages in Nigeria's Kaduna state, were razed by Muslim gunmen and more than 100 people were killed. In October 220 Albu Nimr tribesmen were executed by ISIS and in December 132 children and 16 staff members were slaughtered in a Peshawar Pakistan school by Taliban militants. And so on and so on.

Internationally known as well as internationally unknown citizens turn back to the dust from whence they came. Adolf Suarez died of Alzheimer's in March. He was Spain's first democratically elected PM after Franco. As well, Jim Flaherty, former Canadian Finance Minister, died of a massive heart attack in April. Farley Mowat, Canadian author and outspoken environmentalist, succumbed in May. And in June, Aya, a 13-year-old Tunisian girl, died of burns inflicted on her by her father because she walked home with a male classmate. And who will remember them?

The obituaries rush on. Louis Zamperini, who survived 2 years in a Japanese war camp, passed away in July. As well, "Dutch" Van Kirk, the man who navigated the Enola Gay which dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, permanently closed his eyes that same month. Robin Williams, depressed and unaware of redemption in Christ, took his own life in August the same month that James Wright Foley, an American journalist, was beheaded in Iraq by ISIS. And in September, Gerald Larue died of a stroke, his claim to fame being that he


Last year a number of people who very likely expected to go on living and breathing into 2015, stopped doing just that and died..

was a former pastor turned agnostic and the founder of the Hemlock Society. And where are they now?

Mr. Edward Greenspan, the infamous criminal lawyer who spoke out against the death penalty was once asked if he ever planned to retire. He jokingly replied that his hope was to die in a courtroom immediately after hearing a jury return with the words "not guilty" on their lips. Edward Greenspan defended people such as Robert Latimer, the Saskatchewan father who killed his disabled daughter in 1993, sparking debate on euthanasia. Mr. Edward Greenspan died in December of 2014. He himself is standing before the heavenly Judge. And who is defending him?

OUR REDEEMER LIVES

Actually, to die or not to die is a question, a question which can also be phrased in this way: "Wretched sinner that I am, who will save me from this body of death?" The answer lies in John 11, the account of Lazarus' death. Jesus loved Lazarus. When we are tightly focused on *our* love for Jesus, on what we have done for Him, we run the risk of turning that love into a work. It is good to remember that if there is any love for Christ in our hearts, it is because *He first loved us*, even as He loved Lazarus. And recall the words Jesus called out to His friend, the one whom He loved: "Lazarus, come out." And the man who had died came out and was unbound.

Blessed are those who die in the Lord. 

A vibrant, multi-colored nebula with stars in the background. The nebula features a mix of blue, orange, yellow, and green hues, with numerous bright stars scattered throughout the scene.

DEEP TIME THE GOD OF OUR AGE

BY JASON LISLE

Throughout history, human beings have had the tendency to reject their Creator, and replace Him in their lives with gods of their own making. From the Greek and Roman pantheons, to the Egyptian sun-god, people would rather worship a god that they create than the God who created them. Such false gods always have the following characteristics:

- 1) They are attributed one or more characteristics or powers that belong only to the Living God, especially a power over some aspect of nature.
- 2) They are given allegiance, worship, or reverence above God in at least some way.
- 3) They are created either physically or conceptually by man.
- 4) They are not the Living God, the Creator of all things.

In our modern “educated” world, people often look back at the silliness of the Greek, Roman, or Babylonian gods, as if we are far too sophisticated for such primitive nonsense. But that just isn’t the case. There are many false gods in our modern world; entities that are revered by people above God, and attributed powers that they cannot literally possess. Whether it is the worship of concepts like nature, or power, or physical entities like money, such things should not be respected above God, and they cannot do what God alone can do.

ONE FALSE GOD THAT STANDS OUT

But one false god stands out among others today; this god is worshipped and revered as the ultimate god of our culture. Many books have been written about him, and dedicated to him. He is the foundation of most modern philosophy and education. What is the ultimate false god of our age? Is it Evolution? No, Evolution is certainly a popular god. But many people doubt Evolution. And in any case, Evolution answers to a higher god – a god who is far more popular and powerful than Evolution: the god Deep Time.

Deep Time is the concept of vast ages of pre-history: the notion that the Earth and universe are billions of years old. It is a popular belief today, and is considered by many people to be the mainstream “scientific” position. Disciples of Deep Time would probably object to the notion that he is a god, or that he is even a person at all. They might say that Deep Time is an academic concept, the conclusion of scientific reasoning – not a person with power. However, by their actions, Deep Time disciples do indeed imbue him with personal characteristics and powers that only a conscious being can possess. Students of logic will recognize this as a reification fallacy. Nonetheless, for this article, we shall honor their beliefs and refer to their god as their actions suggest that we should. Deep Time, as he is commonly followed today, does indeed fit the characteristics of a false god.

1. They attribute to Deep Time a power that belongs only to the Living God

Deep Time has characteristics and powers that belong to God alone. In fact, the parallels are truly amazing!

For example, Deep Time has the power of creation. According to His followers, he has made stars, planets, and galaxies. He has made canyons, and mountains. Deep Time separated the continents and oceans. He has made all living creatures through his servant – Evolution. Indeed, Deep Time took the elements of this world, and from that dust he made man. These are all powers and actions that are rightly reserved for God alone (Nehemiah 9:6, Psalm 33:6, Job 38:4, Psalm 104:5-8, Genesis 1:9-10, Genesis 1:20-25, Genesis 2:7).

But it doesn’t end there. Deep Time is also said to have tremendous power to direct the course of events in the universe. Deep Time creates and destroys species and civilizations at a whim. He gives life and takes it away. He continually shapes the earth as he sees fit – changing deserts to lush gardens, and gardens to deserts. Deep Time existed long before man, and will

Deep Time is the concept of vast ages of pre-history: the notion that the Earth and universe are billions of years old..

continue long after man, or so we are told. Again, these are characteristics that are rightly attributed only to God (Acts 17:26, Job 42:2, Isaiah 46:10, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Acts 17:25, 1 Timothy 6:13, Job 1:21, Isaiah 51:3, 43:19-20, Genesis 13:10, Deuteronomy 29:23, Genesis 17:1, Deuteronomy 33:27, Isaiah 43:10, Revelation 22:13).

But according to his disciples, nothing is too difficult for Deep Time! He is able to do any miracle! Consider this famous quote from Dr. George Wald:

Time is the hero of the plot. ...

Given so much time, the impossible becomes possible, the possible becomes probable, the probable becomes virtually certain. One only has to wait; time itself performs the miracles.

Yes, the gradual evolution of dust into people may seem impossible. But with Deep Time, all things are possible! He is the “hero of the plot!” Compare this with the characteristics associated with the biblical God (Matthew 19:26, Jeremiah 32:17).

2. Disciples of Deep Time worship him with reverence and awe

They may deny this with their words, but their actions indicate that they do cherish this god above all others. This makes sense: if indeed Deep Time does have the powers and abilities that his disciples attribute to him,

Deep Time is a cruel, uncaring creator. He creates billions of organisms, only to slaughter them off at a whim.

then he should be worshiped. Such worship takes place in the schools and universities, where Deep Time's wonderful works are praised all the day long.

The worship of Deep Time is found in many a science textbook too. Sandwiched in between the discussions of science will be stories about the amazing feats of Deep Time. A little science here, and an amazing story there. Although Deep Time has nothing to do with science, often the science and the stories are interweaved such that it can be difficult to tell where one begins and the other ends! The mixture makes for an entertaining, though deceptive, read.

Devotees take their religion very seriously. Deep Time must not be questioned. That would be sacrilege! Those who fail to worship at the altar of Deep Time are ridiculed, and face being expelled from the classroom. Textbooks that fail to acknowledge the supreme lordship of Deep Time are not likely to be used, or even published. Those who wish to work as professors must swear allegiance to Deep Time and His servant Evolution if they want to be hired.

3. Deep Time is manmade

The concept of vast ages of prehistory is not something that has been revealed to us by the Living God, nor recorded by the history books of men. Rather, it is an invention of man to account for the characteristics of our present world

without invoking biblical history. The modern version of Deep Time can be traced back to James Hutton – a medical doctor who lived in the 18th century. His ideas were further popularized by Charles Lyell in the early 19th century. However, this is merely a re-imagining of a much older idea. A number of ancient cultures believed that the Earth was significantly older than the biblical timescale.

4. Deep Time is not the Living God

Deep Time is not an aspect of God, a creation of God, or an ally of God. Deep Time exists only as a concept, created by the mind of men. He has no literal existence. Although his disciples ascribe to him many of the characteristics of the biblical God, it is clear that Deep Time is fundamentally different than the God of the Bible.

The biblical God is love (1 John 4:8). The biblical God is righteous, just, and merciful. He made a perfect world with no pain or death, a world that was corrupted by Adam's sinful actions. God punishes evil, as any good judge will do. However, God is so full of love and mercy that He has extended forgiveness to all who will trust in Him. He has paid the penalty for their treason by dying on a cross in their place, and will undo the curse of death by resurrecting everyone.

But Deep Time is a cruel, uncaring creator. He creates billions of organisms, only to slaughter them off at a whim. He does not care about justice or love, and is merciless and arbitrary in his judgments. He creates using death and pain, and does not listen to the cries of anguish of his creations. He punishes the innocent along with the guilty, and rewards evil and good alike. There is no forgiveness or mercy to be found in Deep Time – only the certainty of death.

This last characteristic deserves special attention. For the biblical God, death is an enemy that was introduced by Adam's sin: an enemy that God Himself will destroy (1 Corinthians 15:21, 25-26).

But death is Deep Time's ally and servant. Evolution works through death. Progress is made incrementally by the slaughtering of billions of creatures, so that one may gain a slight improvement. What a sadistic and inefficient process that Deep Time has chosen! I can only say that I'm grateful to the Living God that Deep Time doesn't actually exist. What a horrible god he would be!

"YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME"

Since Deep Time is so contrary in nature and actions to the God of Scripture, it is disappointing that many Christians attempt to honor and serve both of them. There are those who teach that God used Deep Time to create the universe, in stark contrast to God's own revelation of creation. They claim that God used billions of years of death and suffering to get the world to be the way He wanted it (apparently unaware that death is an enemy of God, and one that was introduced as a punishment for Adam's sin.) It's not that modern Christians want to give up the True God. Rather, they simply want to add another god, one who is contrary in nature and actions to the Living God. Unfortunately, this type of syncretism has been a common failing in God's people.

Consider the Israelites. Their main struggle was not with giving up God completely, but with adding other gods. They wanted to merge their beliefs with the pagan practices of the day, and worshiped and served the gods of Canaan. This was totally inappropriate, not only because the Canaanite gods are fictitious inventions of the mind, but because God alone deserves our worship and does not tolerate idolatry. In the First Commandment, God states that, "You shall have no other gods before Me." The phrase translated "before Me" has the meaning of "in my presence." Scripture is clear: God alone is to be worshiped as God (e.g. Matthew 4:9-10).

Remember reading of Baal? Baal was the Canaanite god of weather and thunder. The Israelites often fell into

... death is Deep Time's ally and servant. Evolution works through death.

Baal worship, in violation of the First Commandment. Elijah pointed out their absurd inconsistency in 1 Kings 18:21, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." It was illogical for the Israelites to attempt to serve two contrary gods (and immoral). Are we any different today when we try to add other gods to Christianity?

No man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Those Christians who want to believe in Deep Time along with the biblical God are being dreadfully inconsistent. They may claim that they serve the Lord alone, but by their actions they reveal that Deep Time is their primary god, and the Lord is secondary. We can tell this by the way they handle Scripture. For the Deep-Time-Christian, all Scripture is interpreted in light of the dictates of Deep Time. Thus, Deep Time is primary, and the Scriptures are secondary. Indeed, if the Scriptures were primary, then the individual would have to reject Deep Time as a false god (Exodus 20:3, Isaiah 45:5-6) and fictitious concept (Exodus 20:11)

It can be discouraging to see so many Christians attempting to serve the pagan god Deep Time. It often feels like the Christians who truly stand on God's Word are so very few. But we should remember that Elijah was discouraged as well. In a time when he was afraid for his life, and thinking that he was the last faithful believer he cried out to God (1 Kings 19:14). But the Lord responded: "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18). Think of this the next time

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you are discouraged about the rampant compromise within the Church. How many more Christians has the Lord kept for Himself who have not bowed the knee to Deep Time?

This was first posted to Dr. Jason Lisle's blog www.jasonlisle.com on November 9, 2012 and is reprinted here with permission.



READY TO REASON: The role of reason in apologetics

BY GREG BAHNSEN

A surge of pious agreement overcame me the first time I heard someone confidently assert that, “The word of God no more needs defense than does a lion in a cage. Just let the lion loose, and it will take care of itself!” There seemed something very right about that sentiment.

It almost appeared irreverent to disagree with it.

IS IT NECESSARY?

Well, something about that assertion is indeed right. God is certainly not in need of anything – much less the puny efforts of any particular man or woman to defend His word. He is the Creator of heaven and earth, almighty in power, and sovereign in controlling all things.

The Apostle Paul, when reasoning with the Athenian philosophers, made that very point: he declared that God is not worshiped with men’s hands “as though He needed anything, seeing that He gives to all life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:24). If God were ever to hunger, for instance, He would not

need to tell us since the fullness of all creation is His (Ps. 50:12)! He depends upon nothing outside Himself, and everything outside of Him depends upon Him for its existence, qualities, abilities, accomplishments, and blessings. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

So it is obvious that God does not need our inadequate reasoning and our feeble attempts to defend His word.

GOD REQUIRES IT!

Nevertheless, the pious-sounding remark with which we began is still mistaken. It suggests that we should not concern ourselves with efforts at apologetics¹ because God will directly take care of such matters Himself. The remark is just as mistaken as saying that God does not need us as evangelists (He could even make the stones to cry out, couldn’t He?) – and therefore efforts at evangelistic witness are unimportant. Or, a person might misguidedly think that, because God has the power and ability to provide his family with food

and clothing without “help from us,” he does not need to go to work tomorrow.

Thinking like this is unbiblical. It confuses what God Himself needs from us and what God requires of us. It assumes that God ordains ends, but not means to those ends (or at least not the instrumentality of created means). There is no need for God to use our evangelistic witness, our daily work for a paycheck, or our defense of the faith... but He chooses to do so, and He calls us to apply ourselves to them. The Bible directs us to work, although God *could* provide for our families in other ways. The Bible directs us to evangelize, even though God *could* use other means to call sinners to Himself.

*It confuses what
God Himself needs
from us and what
God requires of us.*

And the Bible also directs us to defend the faith – not because God would be helpless without us, but because this is one of His ordained *means* of glorifying Himself and vindicating His truth.

Christ speaks to the church as a whole through Jude, commanding us to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). False and heretical teaching was threatening the church and its grasp of gospel truth. Jude very well knew that God was in sovereign control, and indeed that God would in time directly deal with wicked teachers, consigning them to everlasting condemnation. Still Jude *also* urged his readers themselves to contend with the error of false teaching, not sitting back and expecting that God would simply take care of it Himself.

Paul wrote to Titus that overseers (pastors and elders) in the church are required to be especially adept at refuting those who oppose the truth of God (Titus 1:9).

However this is not merely the assigned task of ordained men. All believers are commanded to engage in it as well. Addressing himself to all members of the congregation, Peter penned the following command:

...sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to give an answer to anyone who asks from you a reason for the hope that is within you, yet with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

It is God Himself, speaking through Peter’s inspired words, who calls upon us as believers – each and every one of us – to be prepared to defend the faith in the face of challenges and questions which come from unbelievers – any one of them.

The necessity of apologetics is not a divine necessity: God can surely do His work without us. The necessity of apologetics is a moral necessity: God has chosen to do His work through us and called us to it. Apologetics is the special talent of some believers, and

the interested hobby of others. But it is the God-ordained responsibility of all believers.

WHAT IT ISN’T

We should look at 1 Peter 3:15 again and notice a few things that it does not say.

1. *It doesn’t mean picking fights*

It does not say that believers are supposed to take the initiative and start arrogant arguments with unbelievers, telling them that we have all the answers. We do not have to go out looking for a fight. We certainly should not sport or encourage an “I’ll prove it to you” spirit, an attitude which relishes refutation. The text indicates that we offer a reasoned defense in answer to those who ask for such from us, whether they do so as an opening challenge to the integrity of God’s word or as the natural response to our evangelistic witness.

The text also indicates that the spirit in which we offer our apologetic answer is one of “gentleness and respect.” It is not pugnacious and defensive. It is not a spirit of intellectual one-up-manship. The task of apologetics begins with humility. After all, the fear of the Lord is the starting point of all knowledge (Prov. 1:7). Moreover, apologetics is pursued in service to the Lord, and “the Lord’s servant must not strive, but be gentle toward all, apt to teach” (2 Tim. 2:24). Apologetics is not a place for vain flexing of our intellectual muscles.

2. *We can’t make them see*

Another thing that 1 Peter 3:15 does not say is that believers are responsible to persuade anybody who challenges or questions their faith. We can offer sound reasons to the unbeliever, but we cannot make him or her subjectively believe those reasons. We can refute the poor argumentation of the unbeliever, but still not persuade them. We can close the mouth of the critic, but only God can open the heart.

It is not in our ability, and not our responsibility, to regenerate the dead heart and give sight to the blind eyes

of unbelievers. That is God’s gracious work. It is God who must enlighten the eyes of one’s understanding (Eph. 1:18).

The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them because they are Spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

Until God in His sovereign grace changes the sinner from within, he will not see the kingdom of God or submit to the King. Jesus taught this to Nicodemus, reminding him that, “the wind [same Greek word as “Spirit”] blows where it will... So is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Our task is to present a faithful and sound witness and defense. The task of persuasion is God’s. That is why apologists should not evaluate their success or adjust their message on the basis of whether the unbeliever finally comes to agree with them or not.

3. *We don’t have to argue apart from the Bible*

Yet another thing that 1 Peter 3:15 does not say is that defending the faith has a different ultimate authority than does the task of expounding the faith. It is a common mistake among evangelicals to imagine that the authority of God and His word is the basis for their theology and preaching, but the authority for defending this faith must be something other than God and His word – or else we would be begging the question raised by unbelievers. Accordingly, believers will sometimes be misled into thinking that whatever they take as the ultimate standard in apologetical thinking must be neutral and agreed upon by believer and unbeliever alike; and from here they go on to make the second mistake of thinking that something like “reason” is such a commonly understood and accepted standard.

These ideas are quite obviously out of accord with Biblical teaching, however. Does apologetics have a different epistemological² authority than expounding theology? Our theology is

founded upon the authority of Christ, speaking by His Spirit in the words of Scripture. 1 Peter 3:15 teaches us that the precondition of presenting a defense of the faith (apologetics) is *also* that we “sanctify [set apart] Christ as Lord in your hearts.” It would be a mistake to imagine that Peter is speaking of the “heart” here as though it our center of emotions over against the mind with which we think. In Biblical terminology the “heart” is the location of our reasoning (Rom. 1:21), meditation (Ps. 19:14), understanding (Prov. 8:5), thinking (Deut. 7:17; 8:5) and believing (Rom. 10:10). It is just here – in the center of our thinking and reasoning – that Christ is to be consecrated as Lord, when we engage in apologetical discussion with inquiring unbelievers. Thus theology and apologetics have the same epistemological authority – the same Lord over all.

REASON AND REASONING

Believers who aim to defend their faith make a serious mistake when they imagine, then, that something like “reason” should displace Christ as the ultimate authority (Lord) in their thinking and argumentation. They also fall into very sloppy and confused thinking due to misunderstanding over the word “reason.”

Christians are often befuddled about “reason,” not knowing whether it is something to embrace or to eschew.

This is usually because they do not pinpoint the precise way in which the word is being used. It may very well be the most ambiguous and obscure word in the field of philosophy.

On the one hand, reason can be thought of as a tool: man’s intellectual or mental capacity. Taken in this sense, reason is a gift of God to man, indeed part of the divine image. When God bids His people. “Come let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18), we see that we, like Him, are capable of rational thought and communication. God has given us our mental abilities to serve and glorify Him. It is part of the greatest commandment of the law that we should “love the Lord thy God... with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37).

REASON NOT ULTIMATE

On the other hand, reason can be thought of as an ultimate and independent authority or *standard* by which man judges all claims to truth, even God’s. In this sense, reason is a law unto itself, as though man’s mind were self-sufficient, not in need of divine revelation. This attitude commonly leads people to think that they are in a position to think independently, to govern their own lives, and to judge the credibility of God’s Word based on their own insight and authority; more dramatically, this attitude deified Reason as the goddess of the French Revolution. “Professing themselves to

be wise, they became fools,” as Paul said (Romans 1:22).

This view of reason does not recognize that God is the source and precondition of man’s intellectual abilities – that reason does not make sense apart from the perspective of God’s revelation. It does not recognize the sovereign and transcendent³ character of God’s thought:

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are. . . My thoughts higher than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:9).

REASON AS GOD’S GIFT

Should Christians endorse the use of reason? Two equal but opposite mistakes are possible in answering that question.

- 1) Believers can recognize the appropriateness of using reason, taken as their intellectual faculty, but then slide into endorsing reason as intellectual *autonomy*.
- 2) Believers can recognize the inappropriateness of reason as intellectual *autonomy*, but then mistakenly think this entails rejecting reason as an intellectual *faculty*.

The first group honors God’s gift to man of reasoning ability, but dishonors God through its rationalism. The second group honors God’s ultimate



A surge of pious agreement overcame me the first time I heard someone confidently assert that, “The word of God no more needs defense than does a lion in a cage. Just let the lion loose, and it will take care of itself!”

authority and the need for obedience in all aspects of man's life, but it dishonors God through anti-intellectual pietism.

Paul counterbalances both of these errors in Colossians 2. He writes that, "all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are deposited in Christ" (v. 3). Accordingly we must "beware lest anyone rob you through philosophy, even vain deceit, which is after the tradition of men, after the elementary principles of the world, and not after Christ" (v. 8). This exhortation is not a diatribe against the use of reason or the study of philosophy.

Paul makes it clear that believers have the advantage of the best reasoning and philosophy because Christ is the source of all knowledge – *all* knowledge, not simply religious matters or sentiment. Moreover, if there are many philosophies that are not "after Christ," there is also that philosophy which is. Anti-intellectualism throws the baby out with the bath. It destroys true wisdom in the name of resisting foolishness.

On the other hand, it is equally plain from Colossians 2 that Paul does not endorse reasoning and philosophy that refuse to honor the ultimate authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that wisdom and knowledge must be found. Any alleged wisdom which follows the traditions of men and elementary principles of the world – rather than Christ – is to be rejected as dangerous and deceitful.

The Bible teaches us, therefore, that "reason" is not to be taken as some neutral authority in man's thinking. It is rather the intellectual capacity with which God created man, a tool to be used in serving and glorifying the ultimate authority of God Himself.

SHARPENING THE TOOL

Reason properly understood (reasoning) is to be endorsed by believers in Christ. In particular it is to be employed in defending the Christian faith. This is one of the things that Peter communicates to us when he wrote that we should always be "ready to give a defense to anyone who asks from you

The Bible teaches us, therefore, that "reason" is not to be taken as some neutral authority in man's thinking.

a reason for the hope within you" (1 Peter 3:15). A word of explanation and defense is to be offered to those who challenge the truth of our Christian faith. We are not to obscure the glory and veracity of God by answering unbelievers with appeals to "blind faith" or thoughtless commitment. We are to "cast down reasonings and every high thing exalted against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5), realizing all along that we cannot do so unless we ourselves "bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

In 1 Peter 3:15 Peter uses the expression "always ready." This is significant for those who wish to honor the Biblical necessity of engaging in apologetics. What the Lord asks of us is that we be *prepared* to offer an answer in defense of our faith, whenever anybody asks us for a reason. We are to be "ready" to do this – indeed, "always ready." And that means that it is imperative that we reflect on the questions that unbelievers are likely to ask and challenges that are commonly laid down to Christianity. We should study and prepare to give reasons for our faith when the faithless ask.

Christians need to sharpen the tool of their reasoning ability so as to glorify God and vindicate the claims of the gospel. We should all give our best efforts in the service of our Savior, who termed Himself "the Truth" (John 14:6). Every believer wants to see the truth of Christ believed and honored by others. And that is why we, need to be "ready to reason" with unbelievers. This study and those which follow are intended to help us become better prepared for that necessary task.

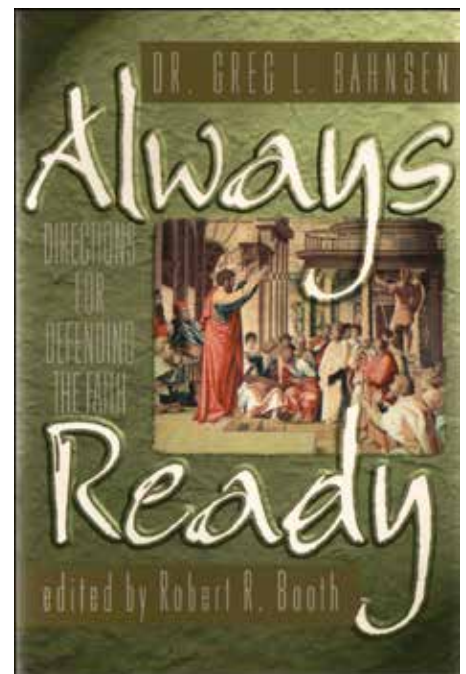
END NOTES

¹ "Apologetics" is the term commonly applied to the defense of the

Christian faith against the intellectual opposition and objections of unbelievers.

² "Epistemology" refers to one's theory of knowledge (its nature, sources, limits). When we ask, "How do you know that to be true? (or how could you justify that claim?)," we are asking an epistemological question.

³ Whatever originates beyond man's temporal experience or exceeds that finite experience is said to "transcend" man.



This article was first published in the December, 1990 issue of The Biblical Worldview (Vol. VI:12) and is also available in Dr. Bahnsen's book Always Ready. It is reprinted with permission of Covenant Media Foundation, which hosts and sells many other Dr. Bahnsen resources on their website www.cmfnow.com.

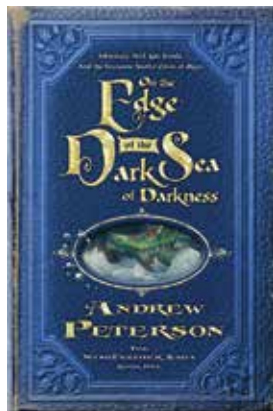
REVIEWS

FANTASTIC CHRISTIAN FANTASY FICTION

BY JON DYKSTRA

ON THE EDGE OF THE DARK SEA OF DARKNESS

BY ANDREW PETERSON
284 PAGES / 2008



I probably read enough of this out loud that my wife doesn't need to read it herself anymore. The appeal was the humor – the title gives a clue right off as to Peterson's goofy sense of fun and the subtitle is even better: "Adventure. Peril. Lost Jewels. And the fearsome toothy cows of Skree."

The heroes of this epic tale are siblings: Janner, his little brother Tink, and their littler sister Leeli. The villains are the Fangs of Dang, under the direction of the "nameless evil...whose name was Gnag the Nameless."

A word of warning might be due as far as the comedy is concerned. Some of it could be described as juvenile: no potty humor, but Janner does, at one point, discover a candle made of "snot wax." Peterson peppers the book with footnotes and for the candle he has this entry: "Snot wax is too repulsive a thing about which to write a proper footnote."

While the author is Christian this is not a specifically Christian fantasy. However, the virtues lauded in this book are of the sort found in Philippians 4:8. These three siblings know they can look to their grandpa for guidance, for love, and to see what sacrificial leadership looks like.

I'd recommend it for boys 12 to 112 who will be happy to know there are three more books in the series.

FOUNDLINGS

BY MATTHEW CHRISTIAN HARDING
256 PAGES / 2009



Lord McDougall is unabashedly awkward around the ladies, which embarrasses his man-at-arms, Fergus (who wishes his lord had a more regal bearing), but doesn't faze the man himself. And as awkward as he might be in social situations, he makes up for it in battle, becoming deadly to whatever man or beast he might face.

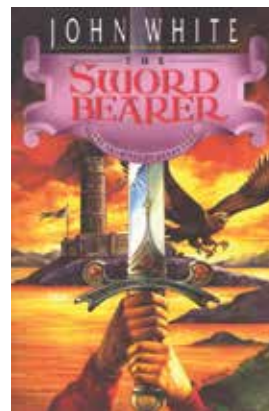
And some pretty fearsome foes come his way. *Foundlings* is set a few generations after the Flood, when dragons (dinosaurs) and giants still lived. There are dwarves too, who came to be a separate race when, for decades, an evil king kidnapped short folk to work deep underground in his mines.

This is the author's first go at fiction, so some sections could have used a bit more polish. But Harding's dialogue is often far more realistic than most Christian fiction. Characters share the Scriptures naturally, calmly, and in exactly the sort of way you could imagine yourself doing it if you only had the courage. There is nothing forced or fake, or preachy about it. It really is brilliant dialogue, and inspiring too.

I'd recommend it for ages 12-16 but add that I loved it too. It's the first in a three-book series that can be found at www.Christianbooks.com.

THE SWORD BEARER

BY JOHN WHITE
294 PAGES / 1986

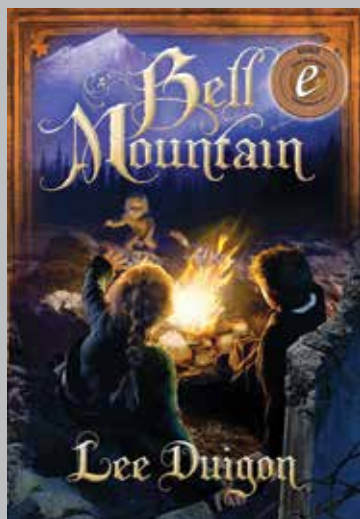


On John Wilson's 13th birthday his grandmother promised she would tell him about his parents, but she dies before she can share that secret. It turns out to have been quite the secret because when he does turn 13 John is magically transported to the kingdom of Anthropos. Here he is acclaimed as the Sword Bearer, the hero who will slay the Goblin Prince.

Anthropos is populated by Matmons (dwarfs), talking donkeys, eagles, bears and evil goblins. This isn't a continuation of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* but there's certainly a passing resemblance because author John White crafted his six-book set after his children asked him for some Narnia-like stories.

Like Lewis, White wants readers to know that the God of these books is the Christian God. Referred to as the "Changeless Changer" and the "Beginner of the beginning," this God saves his followers by grace alone, and not because of heroic deeds they may do.

White has written a solid children's series. It doesn't have enough of Lewis's depth to interest adults, but for children interested in Narnian-esque tales this is a pretty good stand-in. I'd recommend it for 10 to 14-year-olds.



BELL MOUNTAIN

BY LEE DUIGON
267 PAGES / 2010

Jack and Ellayne are on a mission from God: they are going to ring the bell that King Ozais built on the top of Bell Mountain. However, there are a few things in the way.

First, it's a long journey and they're just kids. They don't know anything about mountain climbing, traveling through the woods, living off the land, or evading the strange new creatures that have just recently started appearing. Second, they're not sure there really is a bell on the top of Bell Mountain – no one alive has ever seen it. Third, while they don't know it, a talented assassin has been sent to stop them. And finally, there is a distinct possibility that ringing the bell might bring about the end of the world.

It's quite the mission and quite the opening for this, the first book in author Lee Duigon's six-going-on-seven-book series, (with plans for at least eight). The setting seems to be a medieval one: travel is conducted by horse and oxen, people live in walled cities and villages, and they fight with swords and spears. But when Jack and Ellayne meet a little squirrel-sized chirping man-creature named Wyyt it becomes clear this is not our world. Here Man once had the power to fly through the skies, but no longer – something happened long ago that left behind destroyed cities, and set technology back a thousand years. In this post-apocalyptic world the national church (called "the Temple") has become so corrupt that no one reads the Old Books anymore and instead only the Temple's interpretation of the Old Books is shared. (If this makes you think of the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic Church, I'd agree that the author's Reformed bonafides are showing.) As the author puts it, people have forgotten how to listen to God. They don't even know how to pray – that's something the priests do for them. So now God is going to use two little children to rectify the situation.

This is definitely a children's story. The heroes are children, the tension level is appropriate for ten and up – lots of peril but nothing nightmare inducing – and the plot, while nicely layered, is simple enough for children to follow. But, like the *Chronicles of Narnia* series, there is a depth to the books that will make them enjoyable for adults as well.

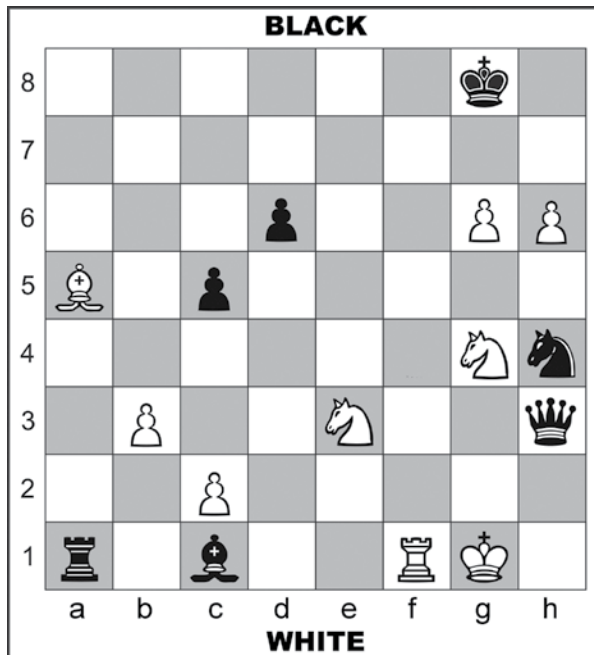
Lee Duigon is simply good at what he does: I knew from the get go this was a quest story, but I was always eager to find out what was going to happen next. I quickly worked my way through the first six titles and I know I will enjoy reading them again with my daughters in a few years.

The only way to purchase this series in Canada seems to be via the Chalcedon Foundation website store (chalcedon.edu/store). The Chalcedon Foundation is Reformed, as is our readership, but they are also Christian Reconstructionists, which most in our readership are not. It might be worth noting, then, that nothing particularly "Christian Reconstructiony" comes up in the series.

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #218



WHITE to Mate in 4
Or, If it is BLACK's Move,
BLACK to Mate in 3

Riddle for Punsters #218

"Not commonly thought of as common!"

Why is an engaged woman like a phone? They both have a ___ ___ g.

Why is the furniture in your home like fingerprints left behind at a crime scene? They both need to be ___ ___ ed.

Problem to Ponder #218

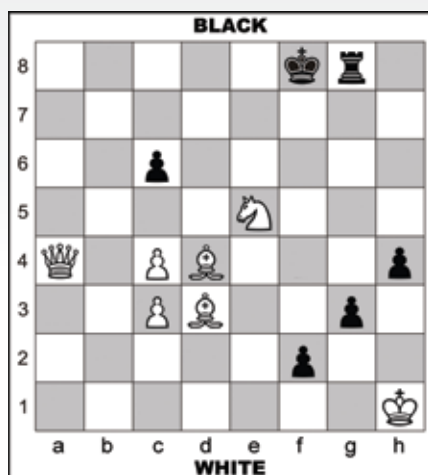
"Do not slumber – find the number!"

NOTE: Two answers are possible for each of the first three questions.

1. The square of what number is added to the square of the square of 2 to produce the square of 5?
2. What number, when squared and then added to the square root of 625, produces the square of 13?
3. A number is multiplied by the square of 4, then that product is squared. The result is 64. The original number was what fraction?
4. A number plus double the number plus one less than the number plus three times double the number minus the product of that number times negative four results in 41. What is the number?

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #217



WHITE TO MATE IN 4

Descriptive Notation

1. Q-R8 ch K-N2
2. Q-R7 ch K-R3
3. B-K3 ch R-N4
4. Q-R7 mate

White wins sooner if:

1. Q-R8 ch K-N2
2. Q-R7 ch K-B1
3. Q-KB7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Qa4-a8 + Kf8-g7
2. Qa8-a7 + Kg7-h6
3. Bd4-e3 + Rg8-g5
4. Qa7-h7 ++

White wins sooner if:

1. Qa4-a8 + Kf8-g7
2. Qa8-a7 + Kg7-f8
3. Qa7-f7 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- P-N7 ch
2. K-R2 P-N8=Q ch
3. K-R3 Q-N6 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- g3-g2 +
2. Kh1-h2 g2-g1=Q +
3. Kh2-h3 Qg1-g3 ++

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#217 - "A Door to Future Possibilities"

When the door maker lost his factory job just before Christmas he felt shut off from his co-workers. However, his frame of mind improved when he got a handle on a better paying job opening at a different factory. He applied right away since his family's financial stability hinged on him getting that job.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#217 - "The Coming of the Messiah"

Unscramble the following names (not in chronological order) of some of the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ.

HASIJO=**JOSIAH**

HABIAJ=**ABIJAH**

MARAHAB=**ABRAHAM**

SESJE=**JESSE**

CASIA=**ISAAC**

MOONSLO=**SOLOMON**

NORZEH=**HEZRON**

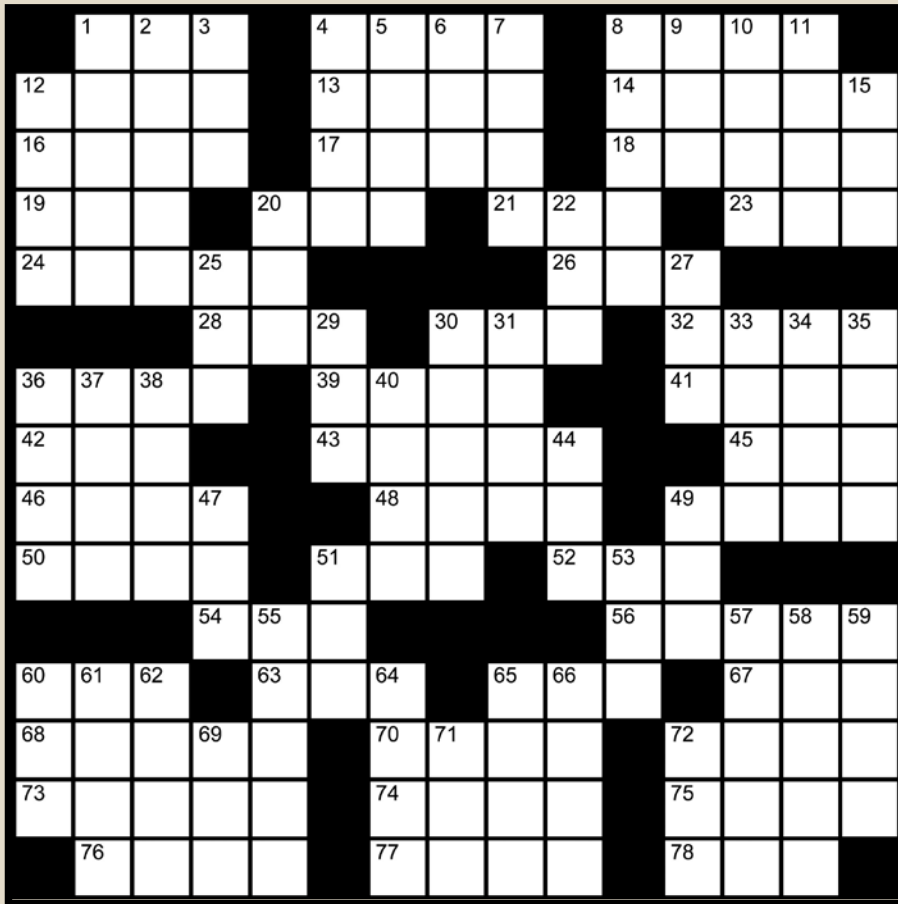
LABBEZURE=**ZERUBABEL**

HAKEHIZE=**HEZEKIAH**

BAROHOME=**REHOBOAM**

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page,
43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 or
robgleach@gmail.com

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SERIES 1-6

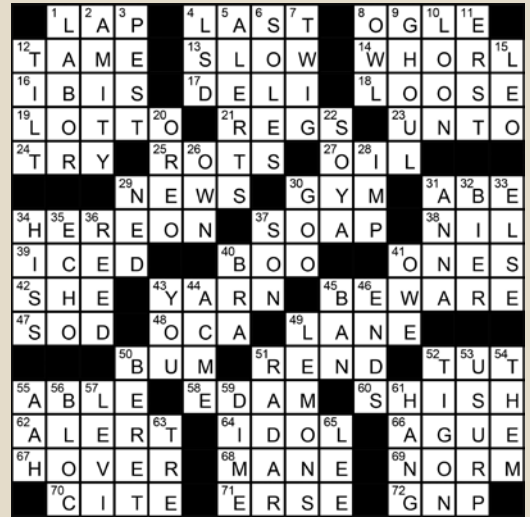
PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

1. ___ and flow
4. Infection on the eyelid; not where a pig lives
8. Where you find articles (short form)
12. Jump in figure skating involving rotation
13. Type of exam or method of medication
14. It's good to perform like a well-_____ machine.
16. "Then they _____ in his face" (Matthew 26)
17. Make a loud wailing cry
18. Foreboding and fear
19. Beginning of the night, poetically speaking
20. _____ on the back; reverse of tap
21. Plural of am or is
23. Tolkien's talking tree; very _____ertaining
24. Found in green or blue, freshwater or marine
26. Hannibal crossed them (singular form)
28. Place for experiments; or big black dog
30. "...do not _____ in water" (Jeremiah 13)
32. Urban trees: Dutch ones subject to disease
36. "I press on toward the _____" (Philippians 3)
39. Color and material of piano keys (short form)
41. Supposed goddess of New Age religion
42. "There the _____ nests" (Isaiah 34)
43. Structure used to support a roof or bridge
45. Suffix for a follower of a worldview or ideology
46. Sound of a horn or cartoon Roadrunner
48. Part in a choir
49. "...at _____ a rooster crowed" (John 18)
50. "This _____ pleased Haman" (Esther 5)
51. When it will likely get here: abbreviation

52. Title for an Italian father or a British dean
54. "Having eyes do you not _____?" (Mark 8)
56. Fruit (or car) that leads to a sour expression
60. Section of a circle
63. In a pair, this is downhill or cross-country gear
65. Fast-rising and fast-ending trend
67. Supposed transport for aliens (abbreviation)
68. Cast off old skin or feathers
70. Strike with an open hand
72. "...you shall come _____ the ark" (Genesis 6)
73. Setting on a blender (useful for baby food)
74. "For your servant is _____" (2 Samuel 19)
75. On-to-Ottawa _____: 1935 walk by homeless
76. Uphill lift useful to do 63 across downhill
77. Female sheep
78. "Terah took Abram his _____" (Genesis 11)

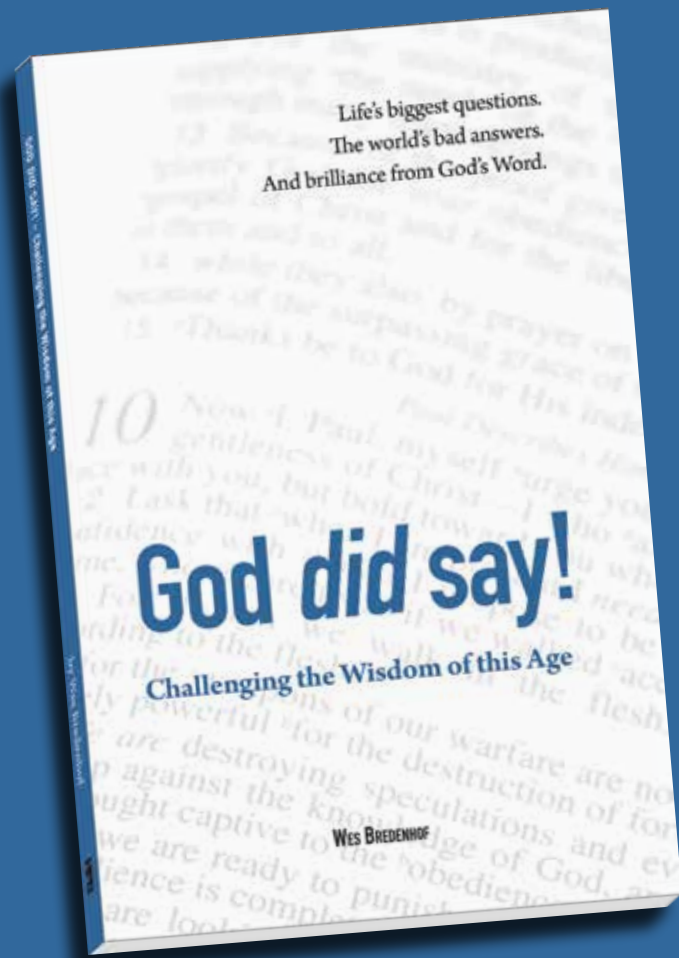
LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 1-5

DOWN

1. Kick out of school
2. State-of-_____ verb, like those in 21 across
3. Abbreviation for popular sandwich
4. Type of bean or sauce
5. Gait for a horse; slower than a gallop
6. Motion of plane or ship around axis of motion
7. Jazz singer _____ Fitzgerald
8. "...be a _____ of good works" (Titus 2)
9. "Look at the birds of the _____" (Matthew 6)
10. Mirth and merriment
11. Irish version of John
12. On the ocean
15. Pesticide used to prevent spread of malaria
20. Vegetable found in a pod
22. Form of music performed by Lecrae
25. "...mother of _____ living." (Genesis 3)
27. "...the tent _____ in his temple." (Judges 4)
29. Wager
30. Non-medical helper to a woman in childbirth
31. _____itute for Creation Research
33. "But Jonah... had _____ down" (Jonah 1)
34. Assorted or unsorted (abbreviation)
35. Satisfy one's appetite or desire
36. Desert in Mongolia
37. "Pay to all what is _____" (Romans 13)
38. Away from the side; toward the lee side
40. Ill-behaved kid who will not listen
44. Material for a lawn or a pioneer's house
47. Mates for mas, or French for step
49. "...shall strike... as _____ man..." (Judges 6)
51. Reaction to a mouse from a cartoon wife
53. "He who is eight days _____" (Genesis 17)
55. Poly-_____
57. Nobel-Prize-winning author Alice _____
58. "...he _____ refreshed me" (2 Timothy 1)
59. Hidden or secluded spot, or cozy corner
60. Short form for a measure of electrical current
61. "...he put his adversaries to _____" (Psalm 78)
62. Raised edge of roadway
64. Short form of Island, as in _____ of Skye
65. "...his _____ spread everywhere" (Mark 1)
66. One of King Solomon's famous imports
69. Open field or meadow
71. "The Book of the _____" (Joshua 8)
72. Hers, his, theirs, and _____



E-book (pdf) \$5
Paperback \$16
(\$10 + \$6 shipping)

“Did God really say?” It’s the first question in the Bible, and a very modest one it seems. But what enormous trouble it caused! To Eve it may have seemed the Serpent was trying to clarify what God had said, but his purpose was something else entirely. This, here, was a *challenge* to God’s Truth; this was the Devil trying to raise doubt.

Today some within the Church are asking this same question for the same reason: though they profess God’s Name, these are people who have embraced a worldly form of wisdom. They ask this question not to seek Truth, but to *obscure* the wisdom of God’s Word.

In *God did say!* Dr. Bredenhof clears away the confusion by taking us straight to Scripture. He lays out the answers God has given to Life’s biggest questions, like: “What is Truth?” “What is Right and Wrong?” and “How did we come to be?” He explains what the Bible says about Sin, about Satan, and about the Bible itself. And he exposes the foolishness of the world’s wisdom by contrasting it with the wisdom of God’s Word.

So while some within the Church want to encourage doubts and questions about even the most foundational of doctrines, Dr. Bredenhof wants us to understand that there is no need for uncertainty, because God *did* say!

Order at www.tinyurl.com/GodDidSay