

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

JANUARY 2015
Volume 34 Issue No. 3

PERSPECTIVE

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THE VERY BEST DINOSAUR BOOKS!

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REAGAN VS. OBAMA

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MY DEMOCRACY IS
BETTER THAN YOUR
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FROM THE EDITOR

Behind the scenes at *Reformed Perspective*

What we're doing to be the best tool we can be

Reformed Perspective's constitution states that our mission is to publish material that promotes "Reformed principles in all spheres of life, especially the social, political and economics realms."

Or, as I've explained it to my barber, "we get to explore what God is doing in the world those other six days of the week."

But exploring and publishing only capture a part of what we're trying to do. The other part involves readers reading it. As a great philosopher once asked, "If a tree falls in the forest, and is taken to the pulp mill, and turned into paper, which is brought to the printing press, and finally emerges as a wonderful Reformed periodical, but no one reads it, did it really make a sound? And the answer is no. If we're going to be of use to anyone we need to be read.

So the goal of *RP* is to be edifying, challenging, instructive *and as readable as possible*.

HELPING FORM READERS

A common complaint these days is that no one reads anymore, but a quick glance at the people around us at the bus stop, or at the mall, or at the coffee shop shows that isn't true. More people are reading in more places than ever before. The real concern is about *what* we're reading. Tweets, blog posts, status updates and text messages all have their place, but as Christians – as a people of the Word – we know we need to be able to dig deeper.

However, no one is born a reader. It takes training, and *Reformed Perspective* can help with that. We're a magazine for the Christian family, so we have articles on church discipline and marital issues and the problem of evil – we have articles that are meant to challenge adults – but we're also trying to be a tool that parents can use to get their teenager children reading more than blogs.

That's why *Reformed Perspective* has multiple "access points." These are different places where the less than avid reader can ease into the magazine: our comics, our crossword, the "Nota Bene" pages and the "In A

Nutshell" section

That's also why a lot of thought is put into how we're going to present our meatier material. These longer articles are going to take some commitment to work through. However, even the toughest article can be made more accessible by looking good. Beauty is the perfect compliment to Truth.

Let me take you on a behind the scenes tour of this issue to show you why we do things the way we do them, and how we can best be put to use in your family.

COVER

It all starts with the cover. Regular readers will open the magazine no matter what's on the front. But if we're going to grab your son's attention a big bright picture is vital for catching his eye. So bold pictures are a must. And when it's hard to find bold, then *unusual* isn't a bad substitute, as happened with this month's edition. A guy in a dragon suit isn't brilliant, but it is... curious.

NOTA BENE

After curiosity gets someone to pick up the magazine, that doesn't mean we have them committed yet. A potential reader will flip through, page by page, and stop only if something grabs their eye. This is where the multiple "access points," like our "Nota Bene" pages, come in. Lots of picture and lots of variety, and all of it paired with Reformed reflections.

"Nota Bene" is all about working through how we should understand the news. Like our bigger articles, the goal is to teach us how to discern God's view, but the method is very different. A four-page article will be able to explore a topic in depth, while these 200 to 400-word items have space for only a few lines of Reformed analysis. However, their short size leaves room to cover many more topics in the same space one big article would take, and that's how they have their impact: via a flurry of quick hits.



This section is great fodder for discussions with our kids. I know a dad who will read some of these pieces over dinner to get everyone talking. My nephew shared that his teacher got students to read “Manufactured Outrage” from the November issue to start a discussion about the media. This month we have a very short piece on temptation that could serve as a good dinner-table introduction to that topic.

IN A NUTSHELL

The “In A Nutshell” page is another “access point.” I had one of my nieces suggest I should compile a few years’ worth of this column and publish them as *Uncle Jon’s Bathroom Reader*. She also shared that this was always the first thing she would read in each issue. For a while it was also the only thing...but it did eventually lead to more.

“In a Nutshell” is meant to be a mix of things to laugh about and items that leave us in awe of all that God is up to. It’s trivia that’s always fun and not always trivial.

ARTICLES

Of course, not all of the magazine is an easy read, and that’s intentional too. We need to grow in our faith and in our understanding of who our God is. In learning about Him there are going to be topics worth investigating that are not easy to read. For example, anyone who has fed themselves a steady diet of Margaret Helder’s science articles is going to be well inoculated against the theistic evolutionary nonsense we are currently being hit with. But her articles can take some effort to work through. Sometimes it might even mean plowing past a harder paragraph to get to the next, knowing that even if we understand only in part, that part is worth learning.

However, there are ways of making even the most challenging read a more attractive and accessible one. This issue we have an article on abortion that’s been paired with an eye-catching visual. Reagan and Obama arm wrestling? How cool is that? How could anyone help but start reading that article? To make it even more accessible, on the next page a smaller “sidebar” article is accompanied

by a cartoon that ably illustrates the piece’s main point. This short sidebar can serve as another way of easing people into the main article – the sidebar is an easier place to start reading. This is why we try to have great sidebars accompanying most of our longer articles.

BOOK REVIEWS

In the interest of encouraging reading we have a lot of book reviews. These reviews come in two types, both on display in this issue. Raoul Kingma’s “The Mundane Task of Obedience” shares with readers the key ideas in both Michael Horton’s *Ordinary* and David Platt’s *Radical*. If his review gets some readers to buy either or both books that’s great, but it isn’t the primary goal of these longer reviews. They’re meant to give us the best of good books so that even if we never read them, we’ve still benefited from them.

Our other reviews – short 200-word ones like you’ll find on page 32 – are all about selling the book. There are piles of great books out there, but they can be hard to find in the larger mass of absolute trash. It’s hard to find what’s excellent and praiseworthy. We sift through the trash to find the very best. This issue our sifting has left us with the best of the best dinosaur books. If anyone wants to give a boy of pretty much any age a great birthday present (grandparents, we’re talking about you) we have some wonderful recommendations for you!

Now, since even the best books can have elements that are problematic we note those. Our reviews cover the “3 Cs”:

- **CONTENT:** What is the book about?
- **CAUTIONS:** Does it have anything our readership might find objectionable? (If there are too many objectionable bits, we won’t review it, but if there are just a few, and the book is great, this is how we address it)
- **CONCLUSION:** Who is the book for? What age/type of reader would love it?

All of us only have so much time to read. *RP* can help you make the best of that time by pointing you to the very best books.

VARIETY

Our behind the scenes peek is coming to the end and I haven’t even mentioned why we have comics, and Christine Farenhorst’s stories, and Remier Faber’s poem this issue. Or why we tackle so many different topics – in the last year we’ve explored God’s thoughts on humor, prostitution, sleep, and parenting teens.

It comes down to variety. God is amazing, and He’s done amazing things everywhere, so we want to explore it all. And we want to explore it via articles, and stories, and pictures and comics and poems and anything else we can fit in between the cover and the back page.

CONCLUSION

We’re here to equip you and your family. We want to challenge adults, and train young men and women. And together we can explore God’s thoughts on economics and basketball and wine and Islam and Rap music.

But if we’re going to be an effective tool for your family, we need to be read. So leave the magazine lying around where your kids hang out. Read Christine Farenhorst’s Christmas story out loud to your spouse. Discuss interesting *Nota Bene* bits over supper. Share the best comic with your son. Point out articles that would interest your daughter...and then ask her what she thought about them.

Reformed Perspective is a tool. Use us.



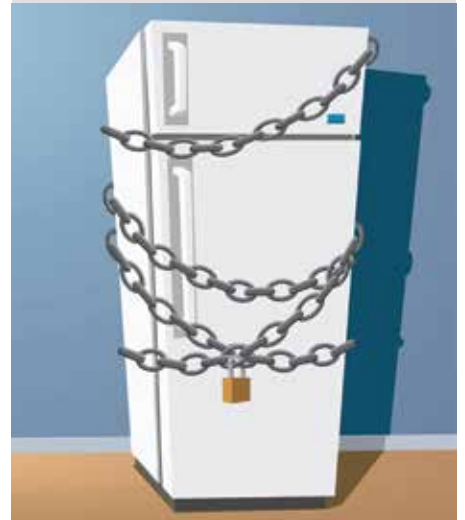
Jon Dykstra can be reached at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

NOTA BENE

News worth noting

THE KEY TO RESISTING TEMPTATION

BY ANNA NIENHUIS



Breaking news: a study, reported on in the *Wall Street Journal*, has found that those who

are best able to resist temptation are those who purposefully avoid tempting situations. The fact that it took a study to determine this indicates how far we as society have strayed from God's laws, as He warns us to flee lustful desires, sexual immorality, idolatry, and every form of evil (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Of course, for Christians, simply avoiding temptation is not the full solution. As the *Wall Street Journal* article points out, the reason for this ability to resist temptation is active self-control...although they don't mention that being one of the fruits of the spirit :). It isn't just about fleeing evil; we must also actively move *toward* God, and places and people of purity, love, and peace. Being active in this way will make us better prepared when we are inevitably faced with temptation, since even if we aren't seeking temptation, it may be seeking us.

SOURCE: Ann Lukits' "The secret to resisting temptation" posted to online.wsj.com Nov. 24, 2014.

IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE CAN DO

BY JON DYKSTRA



In December, *WORLD* magazine highlighted a short, well-acted, well-produced pro-life film called *Mitosis* (which can be seen at tinyurl.com/MitosisFilm). It begins with a woman about to have an abortion, and we get to see what her son will grow up to accomplish if she doesn't abort him. It turns out her unborn son would cure cancer.

The intent of the film is admirable, and the execution is wonderful, but what of the underlying premise? The film seems to be arguing that abortion is wrong because our baby might grow up to be someone important, someone vital even – we have no idea of what they might grow up to do!

But is that really why abortion is

wrong? What of the mother who has heard that her baby has some severe mental disability? If our value comes from what we may be able to accomplish in the future, then what does the film say of those of limited abilities?

The foundational pro-life rationale is that we are valuable not because of what we can do (or may be able to do in the future) but because of in Whose Image we are created (Genesis 1:27). Our worth is a derived worth, a reflected worth, that finds its origins in God.

Of course that won't be a convincing argument to non-Christians, but to them we should issue a challenge: come up with any rational basis for equality. If our worth is founded in anything other than being made in God's image – if it is based on anything we can *do* – then in what sense are any of us equal? No one is equal to anyone else in ability.

Mitosis is a well-intentioned film, but by grounding an unborn child's value in what they may be able to do, it sends a very un-prolife message about anyone whose abilities are limited.

DR. DOUMA LEAVES CANRC'S DUTCH SISTER CHURCH

BY JON DYKSTRA



How bad are things getting in the Canadian and American Reformed churches' Dutch sister churches? So bad that Dr. Jochem Douma says he has to go.

Language issues have made the happenings in the Netherlands hard to follow for unilingual English folk (and that includes yours truly). But thankfully those with command of both languages have been monitoring events. What follows is a slightly abbreviated version of an article that appeared in the November 29, 2014 issue of *Una Sancta* (frca.org.au/unasancta), the denominational publication of the Free Reformed churches of Australia. It is reprinted here with kind permission.

An article published on November 15, 2014 in the *Nederlands Dagblad*, a Christian national newspaper in the Netherlands reports that emeritus professor and ethicist Jochem Douma (82) has left the Reformed Church of the Netherlands (RCN, with the Dutch acronym being GKV), the Dutch sister church of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

He has joined the Reformed Church in Hardenberg, which had earlier separated from the RCN. Dr. Douma was professor at the (then) RCN Kampen Theological Seminary from 1970 to 1997 and was one of the church's leading spokesman on many issues to the outside world. He published many books, including *The Ten Commandments*, which is an English translation of a larger work on Scriptural ethics.

On November 15 2014 Dr. Douma published a booklet titled *Afscheid* (Farewell) that outlines his reasons for leaving the church. According to the newspaper Dr. Douma says the RCN is in decline and losing its Reformed identity. He mentions that changes in liturgy,



church services and church unity (with other churches) are indicators of this decline.

He criticizes the significant freedom given to the local churches regarding the above and not addressing congregation members who live in sin; in other words there is lack of church discipline. "In this way the church, which we all want to hold onto, slips away through our fingers" he said.

Dr. Douma, continues the article, says that the June 2014 RCN synod decision to seek unity with the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) was the last straw that triggered his and his wife's departure. He writes that this synod decision filled him with great indignation. It contradicts an earlier decision by the RCN churches not to allow female office bearers. That decision should have been an obstacle to seek unity with the NGK who do have women in office.

Instead both churches now mutually agree that they both use Scripture correctly. With that, the RCN has actually already made the decision to allow women into the offices.

Dr. Douma says he has always opposed, and continues to oppose, the idea that iron and clay, the truth and the lie, black and white can be officially kept together in the church. That is what the RCN is doing by not rejecting wrong developments.

For several years Dr. Douma has been very vocal in the RCN pointing out where things are going wrong, but, as he says, he was a voice in the wilderness. In 2012 his warnings were still accompanied with a call to those who were very concerned not to separate from the church. He urged them to do everything possible to turn things around. But for Dr. Douma this too has come to an end.

Dr. Douma has enjoyed a positive reputation in North America due to his book *The Ten Commandments*, but it is worth noting that Dr. Douma himself is no conservative. As Dr. John Byl noted in his blog *Bylogos* (www.bylogos.blogspot.com):

In 2004 Dr. Douma published his book *Genesis*, wherein he declared himself to be open to big bang cosmology and evolution.... In an interview on April 3, 2009 Dr. Douma related that, although he had wanted to read Genesis 1 in a childlike fashion, astronomy with its many light years led him to another reading of Genesis 1.

It seems Dr. Douma, too, has embraced a non-literal reading of Scripture. How then, can he fault others who do the same? Dr. Douma may not like the liberal direction of our Dutch sister churches, but as Dr. Byl notes, "one can only wonder how much of this is to be attributed to Dr. Douma himself."

LIVING LONGER

BY JON DYKSTRA



The news is dominated by all that is bad, but we shouldn't lose sight of just how blessed we are. Many of these blessings were evidenced in a December article in the medical journal. It reported that the average global life expectancy at birth has gone up dramatically since 1990 – an increase of almost 6 years. That's up from 65.3 years in 1990 to 71.5 years in 2013. More specifically, it is up nearly 5.8 years for men, and 6.6 years for women.

This increase represents great progress in fighting infectious diseases. Millions, who in previous decades might have died from illnesses as simple as diarrhea or measles, were instead saved. This was due in part to better, quicker care from medical personnel and facilities that, in the poorer countries, might not have been in place three decades ago.

SOURCE: "Global, regional, and national age-sex specific all-cause and cause-specific mortality for 240 causes of death, 1990–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013" published online at www.thelancet.com on Dec. 17, 2014

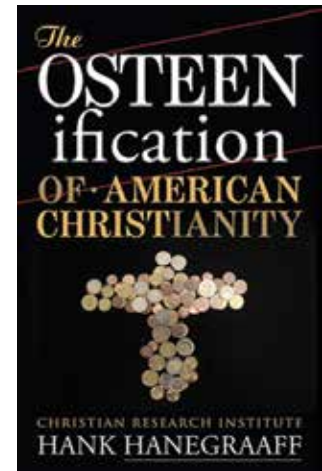
JOEL OSTEEN AND THE CRYING NEED FOR EVANGELISM

BY JON DYKSTRA

The Bible Answer Man, Hank Hanegraaff, has a new book out, and though small – just 80 pages – its target could hardly be bigger. *The Osteenification of American Christianity* is an exposé of Joel Osteen, a mega-church pastor who has written five *New York Times* bestselling books, and whose church is a former sports arena. According to his website he preaches to 38,000 in person each week, and another 7 million weekly via TV.

The most frequent criticism of Osteen is that he is more self-help guru than pastor, and that he says very little about sin. Hanegraaff highlights another problem: "Despite stupendous successes the sad reality is this: Osteen's sermons are plagued by undocumented anecdotes and urban legends buttressed by misinterpretations of the Bible." As an example, Hanegraaff points to a passage (this is just one of many) found in Osteen's book *Become a Better You* where Osteen's lack of wisdom is apparent. Osteen writes:

I read of an interesting study done in 1993 by the US military.... The researchers extracted some white blood cells from a volunteer and they carefully placed them in a test tube. They then put a probe from a lie detector machine down in the test tube, to measure the



person's emotional response. Next, they instructed the same volunteer to go a couple of doors down a watch some violent scenes from an old war movie on television. When this man watched the scenes, even though the blood that was being tested was in another room, when he got all uptight and tense, the lie detector test shot off the page. It was detecting his emotional response even though the blood was no longer in his body.

We can laugh at this foolishness – it's hard not to – but it should also motivate us to get out and evangelize. I think what holds most of us back is that we figure we don't know enough. The fact is in our churches we all know more about God than Osteen, and if millions are desperate enough to turn to him for guidance about God, that means there are millions out there who would benefit from hearing from any one of us.

RIGHT TO "SELF DETERMINATION" USED TO JUSTIFY MORE THAN GAY MARRIAGE

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

A recent challenge by a brother and sister couple in Germany led a government ethics committee to

recommend that the country's law against incest be abolished, claiming that the couple's "fundamental right" to "sexual self-determination is to be weighed more heavily than the abstract idea of protection of family."

While the government isn't likely to follow this recommendation, the language used by the ethics

committee is of the sort used in the United States and Canada when justifying homosexual marriages. If sexual self-determination is considered enough justification in one case, why not another?

SOURCE: Damon Linker's "How liberals are unwittingly paving the way for the legalization of adult incest," posted to TheWeek.com on Sept. 30, 2014.

The old man's wish

The old man, almost eighty-five,
Some years ago had lost his wife.
He lived alone counting the days,
And meditating on God's ways.
His hearing gone, his body bowed,
The picture of old age he showed.

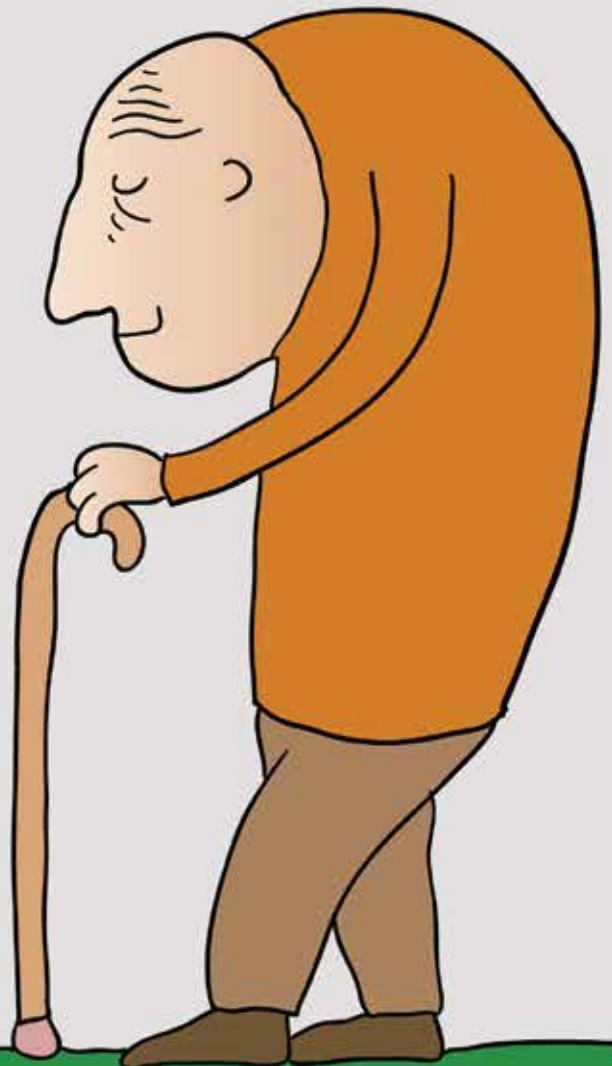
He could not do so many things,
Yet his old heart God's glory sings.
He loves the first day of the week
When all, God's holy face do seek.
Leaning on grandson's arm he gains,
A front row seat to nurse his pains.

He never would skip this event,
For nowhere time was better spent
Than in the presence of his Lord,
Where God does all free grace award.
He wished and prayed that God would
rise,
Bring him from here, to Paradise.

And God, He heard the old man's wish,
He thus brought home this child of His.
The worship service moved along,
It had come to the closing song.
They sang God's praise, Psalm 17;
The old man's eyes were all agleam.

But then, ...the tune he could not keep;
His head slumped forward as in sleep.
"Yet I, when I wake up shall see,
God's face in righteousness and glory,
O with Your likeness then before me,
How rich and full my joy shall be."

- by Reimer Faber, based on a true story
relayed by his mother



The little matter of Matthew 5

by Christine Farenhorst

It is with a sinking feeling that we often read or watch daily news items:

- An earthquake of 6.4 magnitude in Puerto Rico
- Hitler's *Mein Kampf* topping ebook charts
- Thousands of teens completing Hamas' "pioneers of liberation" training camps in Gaza, camps which train

high-school children to follow in the footsteps of suicide martyrs

- Seven members of a Christian family in Nigeria murdered by Muslim gunmen
- The number of children in Britain presently treated for depression runs between four and five thousand.

Within the course of five minutes these items can crop up in black and white, either on newsprint or on the TV screen. Is there no good news?

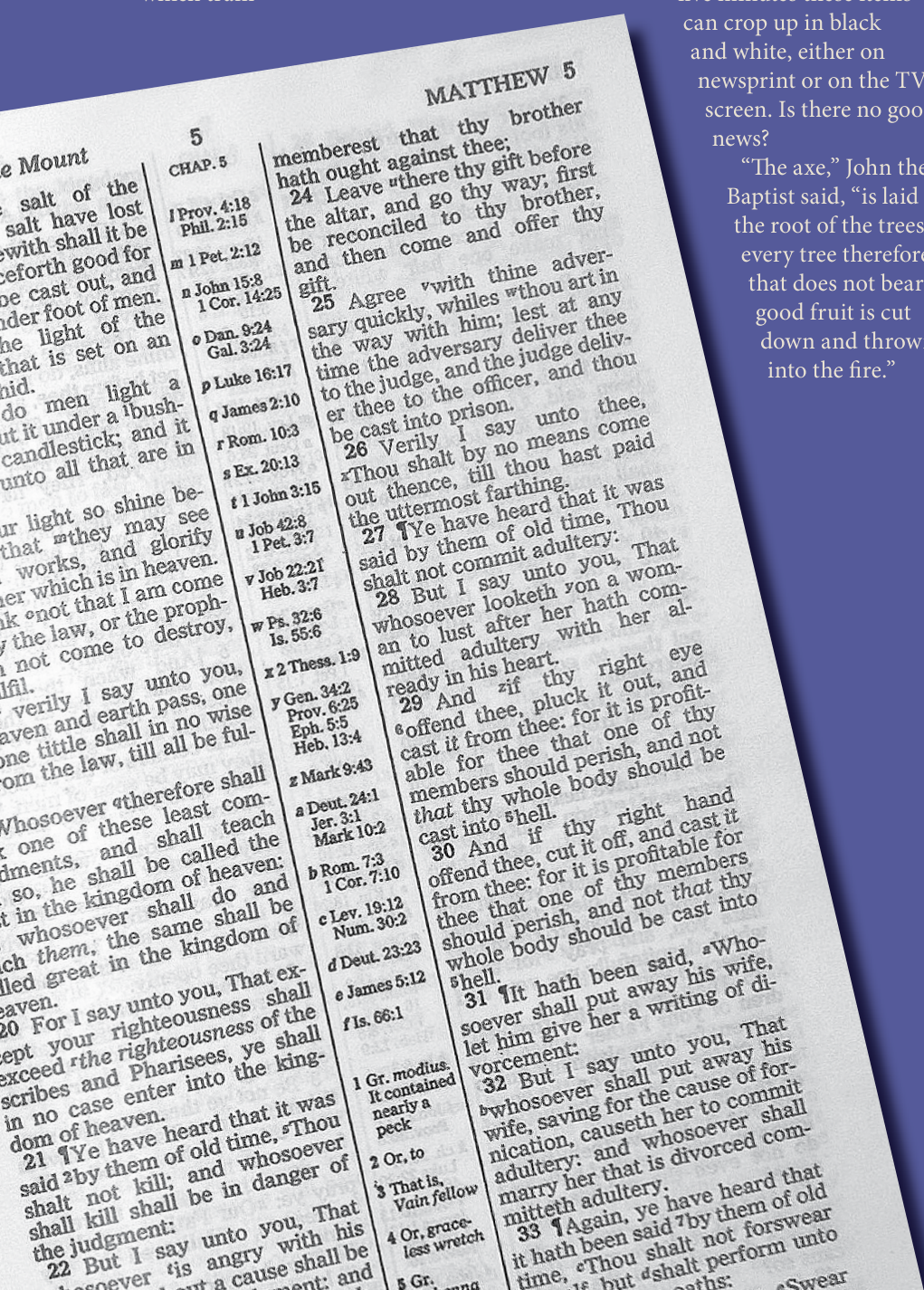
"The axe," John the Baptist said, "is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

ALL THE WICKED AROUND US

Good fruit seems far removed from our newspapers and from our TV screens. A volcano erupts on Indonesia's Java, causing hundreds of thousands to be evacuated. The Iranian-American pastor, Sayeed Abedini, held in an Iranian jail since 2012, is severely beaten and refused medical treatment by his captors. A coat hanger pendant is offered by the D.C. Abortion Fund to all who donate ten dollars or more a month to their organization to help provide abortions for women who can't afford them. Thirty-three North Koreans are condemned to death by Kim Jong-un for receiving money from a South Korean missionary to aid in church building. How bad is fruit today anyway?

And yet, think on this. Human beings, all of us, are appointed to die. No one lives forever. Hitler has been dead for a great number of years. So are and will be all the Neros, Saddam Husseins, and Pol Pots who have ever lived. All human beings, no one exempted, are destined for an eternal existence outside of this life – after a judgment day. Knowing this gives a certain satisfaction.

So when we read that a sheikh from Dubai advertises for young and beautiful



Hitler has been dead for a great number of years. So are and will be all the Neros, Saddam Husseins, and Pol Pots who have ever lived.

women, preferably Italian, with refined knowledge of haute couture, to accompany the Saudi sheikh and fifty of his buddies on a shopping spree, we think, “In the long run you will be punished, you dirty, wicked old man.” And when we note that Silvio Berlusconi, the former Italian prime minister, has been assigned to community service by an Italian court because he was convicted of tax fraud, we applaud because Mr. Berlusconi, we think, had it coming to him. And when Donald Sterling, the former Los Angeles Clippers’ owner, is banned from the NBA because he made certain racist remarks, we are in total agreement.

WE RECOGNIZE JUSTICE

There is an innate quality within us that recognizes the plain truth of God’s commandments. We shrink from open sins, from debased acts of corruption, and know instinctively that these ways will be punished. And so we should think. We walk about cemeteries gingerly stepping over cement slabs under which countless thousands have gone on to eternity and we whisper names whose souls now stand before the Almighty – names of both the elect and names of the condemned.

Newspapers continue to be delivered to our front doors, and newscasters continue to read the news to us at twelve o’clock and at six o’clock...and actually at every o’clock of the day.

There is the possibility, however, that listening without truly knowing ourselves, we become too smug in our armchairs, and too fixed in our church pews. Current events are often far removed from us and we forget that we also are part of the fallen human race. We shake our heads as marijuana sales in Washington are now allowed; as mosques and shrines are destroyed by ISIS and their troops march across Iraq and Syria; as air strikes and artillery fire continues between pro-Russian separatist and Ukrainian troops; and as Bibles are removed from rooms in the British hotel chain, Travelodge.

Pastor Octavius Winslow, (1808-1878), was concerned that his parishioners know themselves. He wrote:

Real spiritual-mindedness springs from new and spiritual life in the soul. It is the effect of a cause, the consequence of a certain condition of mind. Before a man can exercise any degree of true heavenliness, he must be heavenly. Before he can bring forth the fruits of holiness, he must be holy. Dear reader, is this your condition?

Pastor Winslow had a good point. He was a good pastor who loved his

... we think, “In the long run you will be punished, you dirty, wicked old man.”

congregation and he went on to ask his audience a few good questions – questions we do well to bear in mind when we listen to and judge the news.

Do you have the life of God in your soul? Have you passed from death to life? Is the fruit you bear the result of your engrafting into Christ? You attend the service of the sanctuary; you visit the rooms of the suffering; you administer to the necessities of the poor; you are strict in your duties and zealous in your charity; but does it all spring from faith in Christ and from love of God? Is it *from* life, or *for* life? Oh, remember that the spiritual-mindedness the Bible recognizes, and God approves, has its root in the life of God in the soul!

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY OF US?

For a believer to recognize that laws are broken every day by people in the news is not difficult; but to see and to recognize that laws are broken by the self as well, is a much more difficult occupation. There is the little matter of Matthew 5 and we do well to read it carefully alongside the news.

Murder is reported in the news and plenty of it, but Jesus said (with regard to the commandment on killing), “... that everyone who is angry with his brother is liable to judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

There are many immoral men and women portrayed in the news each day, but Jesus said, (with regard to the commandment on adultery), that “...everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” Matthew 5:28).

There are numerous stories about fraud and lying on the news, but Jesus said, (with regard to the commandment dealing with lying), “... Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is His footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King...” (Matthew 5:34-35).

The hatred consistently displayed in the front page headlines is shocking, but Jesus said (with regard to the fulfilling of the law), “... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father Who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust...” (Matthew 5:44-45).

Do we know ourselves for whom we are? Do we realize from what awful condition we have been saved? Can we truly weep at the state of the world and say, “There, but for the grace of God, go I?” Can we pray with heartfelt love for those who have not been brought up with the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

That is the little matter of Matthew 5.

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

WATTS WAS A WONDER

Isaac Watts (16-74-1747) was a gifted poet and hymn writer, perhaps best known for *Joy to the World* and *O God, Our Help In Ages Past*. When he was a young lad, his gifts were already in full bloom, but they weren't yet fully appreciated by those closest to Watts. In fact, as Douglas Bond recounts in his biography *The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts*, the poet's mother didn't even believe that the poems she was finding around the house were actually Watts' own compositions. Sure, the boy said they were his, but what seven-year-old child could write like this? She assumed they must be poems he had memorized and then written down as his own. So, to put him to the test, she sat the boy down at the kitchen table and asked him to write her a poem. This is what he came up with.

*I am a vile polluted lump of earth;
So I've continued since my birth;
Although Jehovah grace does daily give me,
As sure this monster Satan will deceive me.
Come, therefore, Lord, from Satan's claws
relieve me.*

*Wash me in Thy blood, O Christ,
And grace divine impart.
Then search and try the corners of my heart,
That I in all things may be fit to do
Service to Thee, and sing the praises too.*

After he show it to his mother, she thought her suspicions were confirmed. This, clearly, was a copied piece, showing a theological depth far beyond the insight (let alone poetic ability) of any mere child. But then Watts told his mother to look at the first letter of each line for proof – the boy has crafted an acrostic that spelled out his own name, “Isaac Watts.” As Bond writes,

This was, not doubt, one of those moments that a mother cherishes and

hides up in her heart. Imagine Sarah Watts' wonder at her son's gifting, but still more, the gratitude to God any Christian mother would have for so obvious a working of grace in her son's heart.

CONFUSING, AND POSSIBLY BRILLIANT

“If you don't believe the Bible literally, you literally don't believe the Bible.”

– RC Sproul Jr. in an Aug 6, 2014 post to his Twitter account. He went on to clarify that by literal he meant “in the literary style intended” or, as he elucidated in a later tweet, “2 nt believe Bible history as history or poetry as poetry is 2 disbelieve.”

CREDIT CARD 101

Earl Taylor is an American high school principal who thinks it is vital our kids learn how to use credit cards responsibly while still at home. He proposed a two step method that involved giving a son or daughter getting a card as soon as possible (16, 17, maybe 18) with two stipulations:

- 1) It has to be paid off in full each month
- 2) If there was ever a time when it wasn't paid off in full, then the card would be cut up.

And then the whole process could be tried again 6 months later.

HAVING CAKE AND EATING IT TOO

A carving on a Cambodian temple built around 800 years ago seems to depict a stegosaurus. Christians know that dinosaurs and people lived at the same time, so this is no surprise for us. The artist might have seen a stegosaurus himself, or perhaps only heard a description passed on through the generations.

But evolutionists say that dinosaurs

died tens of millions of years before man appeared, and if that's true then there is no way this artist could have seen a stegosaurus or had an accurate description of them passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next – not if the span was millions of years! So evolutionists need to explain how this carving could have come to be. In an article on Smithsonian.com Brian Switek offers two possibilities that can be summed up as:

1. It doesn't really look like a stegosaurus

“If viewed directly, the carving hardly looks *Stegosaurus*-like at all. The head is large and appears to have large ears and a horn. The ‘plates’ along the back more closely resemble leaves, and the sculpture is a better match for a boar or rhinoceros against a leafy background.”

2. It looks so much like a stegosaurus it must be a hoax

“There are rumors that it was created recently, perhaps by a visiting movie crew (the temple is a favorite locale for filmmakers), and it is possible that someone created something *Stegosaurus*-like during the past few years as a joke.”

SOURCE: “Stegosaurus, Rhinoceros, or Hoax?” posted to Smithsonian.com on March 12, 2009



HELPING STUDENTS OVERCOME A FEAR OF FAILURE

The goal of genuine learning isn't to pass tests

by Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

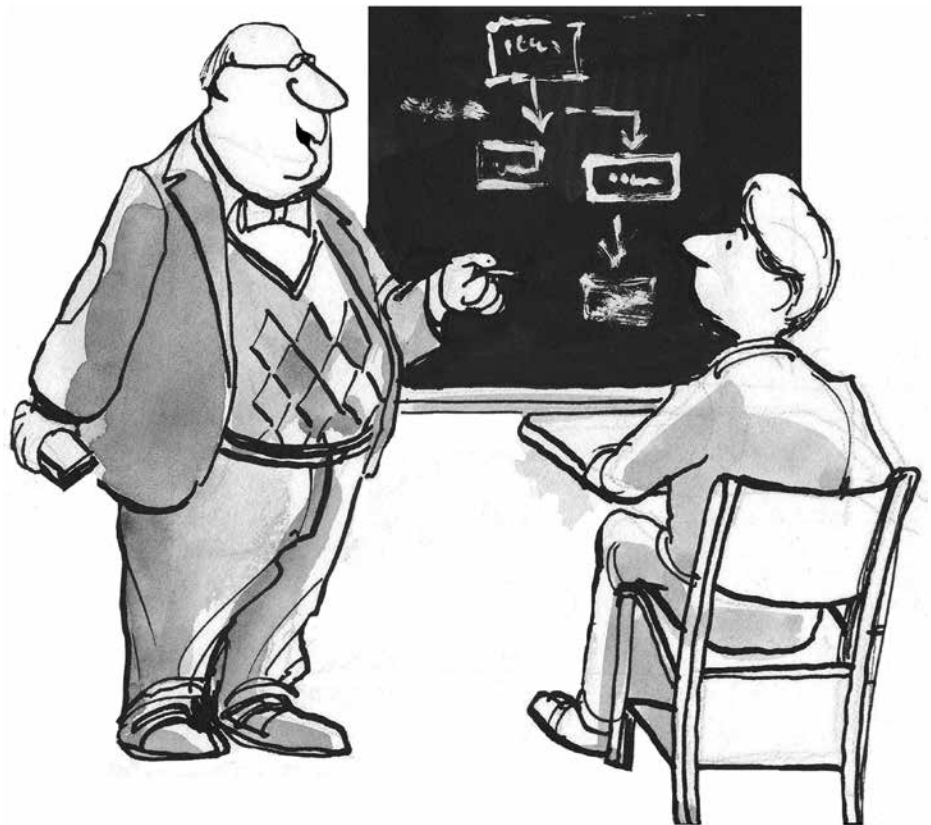
Among the most common mental attitudes hindering the pursuit of a genuine education by young people is *fear of failure*. When the focus of the student's attention turns away from the subject matter of a course and how well it is understood and applied, concern will be directed rather to *formal* considerations like:

- “How much has to be done in order to pass this test?”
- “How many pages must be written for this report?”
- “What will the final grade be on my report card?”

Whether or not one can use algebraic formulas successfully, can write a clear and grammatical sentence, can appreciate the literary merits of Shakespeare, or see the fallacy in materialistic philosophy – all these and similar, educational concerns are lost in the scramble to make sure that one has enough points to pass the course. The worst thing that could happen, in the mentality of many students, is that they would receive an F for a course, rather than that they would have failed to *understand* a course.

It stands to reason, then, that parents and teachers who want students to receive a genuine, intellectually maturing, personally enriching *education* – and not simply formal *marks* on a report card filed away – will aim to overcome the student's obstructive fear of failure.

Why do students have such fears? Generally because they have not developed successful habits of study (inside and outside the classroom) and



“I know last week's class was brutal,
but I have all new material today.”

are *aware* of their lacking. They are just not sure how to tackle the challenge of new work, new concepts, and stiff assignments.

How can parents and teachers help students to overcome fear of failure? There *are* things that can be done. There is no need to throw our hands up in despair, imagining that it is somehow a fortuitous matter of “chance” (fate, luck) that some students do well and others do poorly in schoolwork. *Every* student of normal ability (i.e., every student who is free of physical or mental handicaps) can do well in schoolwork. As blunt or even as harsh as it may seem at first, we will eventually have to face up to the grim truth that there is no such thing as a (normal) student who *cannot* do passing work. There are simply some students who *will not* (choose not) to do passing work. Now they may very well desire to have at the outcome of the course a passing mark. They want that *end* – BUT without being willing to pursue *the means* to that end.

The age in which people commonly believed in magic has not passed. It has simply taken on a more sophisticated front. Parents and teachers who believe that (or operate as though) the difference between successful and unsuccessful students is a mystery beyond our control assign good schoolwork, in effect, to magic or chance – beyond any cause-

“Why do students have such fears? Generally because they have not developed successful habits of study...”



“I was going to teach them the meaning of life ... but it wasn’t on the test.”

effect explanation. Students who want a passing grade at the end of the course, but who ignore or refuse the means to that end, are hoping for a magical deliverance. We live in a universe where events (effects) have their corresponding causes. There are appropriate causes of good performance in school. This is bad news and good news. The bad news is that students who fail cannot “cop-out” and blame their failure on something beyond their control. The good news is that something can indeed be done to improve a student’s work in school. There is *hope* because there exist proven methods of achieving success as a student.

What help can we offer them? What are some principles of educational success?

DON'T LEAVE THINGS AT THE RAMADA INN

The *first* piece of advice which we can give students who fear failure is not to leave things at the Ramada Inn. Let me

explain that remark. This last summer my family took a vacation, traveling up the coast to Monterey and San Francisco, then across to Sacramento and Reno. In Monterey we stayed at the Ramada Inn. Imagine that when we left the Ramada Inn we inadvertently left behind the overnight case, only to realize that fact an hour and a half on the way to San Francisco. What a painful discovery that would be! We certainly needed the items in the overnight case, and yet to get the case we would be forced to backtrack an hour and a half on the road.

If this had actually happened to us, what do you suppose we should have done? Well, one thing we could have done is to continue traveling up the road, bemoaning the fact that we were going to be inconvenienced. We could have complained that the Ramada Inn was an hour and a half (now an hour and three quarters) drive back to Monterey. We could have driven on and on, hoping against reasonable hope, that the overnight case which was an

hour and half (now two hours) behind us might miraculously catch up with us before we stopped that night. But when all the murmuring and imagination had been indulged, the fact would have been that we knew we had to go back to the Ramada Inn. The trip could not successfully continue until we went back and picked up what had been left behind. The sooner we realized that hard fact, the better for the continuation of the vacation.

The same principle applies to schoolwork. As a course progresses through a semester, more and more new material and new concepts (or skills) are set forth to the student. Later material presupposes the foundation laid by earlier material. Growth in understanding is cumulative. Consequently, when a student does not understand something which has been taught, does not do the necessary homework which has been assigned, does not complete the reading which goes with a unit of teaching and *yet continues on in the course*, that student is set up to fail the later portions of the course. Understanding the later material depends on a previous understanding or exposure to the earlier material. When something has been left behind, the trip cannot successfully continue.

Students are sometimes funny – unrealistic, really. They figure that they can tune out part of a lecture, omit a reading assignment, or not bother to ask for help when they do not understand something in a course, *and then tune in and begin understanding at some later point*. But as with vacation travel, so also with schooling. The sooner we realize that we *must* go back to the Ramada Inn (or to the material, which has not been read or understood), the better it will be for us. Students simply must keep abreast of what is being taught in the course, not hoping to go back later and fill in the gaps in their understanding. And if they do fall behind, then it is important to go back and pick up what as omitted, and so the sooner we do so, the better.

LEARN HOW TO READ

A second rule to be observed for achieving success in school is that students *must learn how to read*. A shocking suggestion, perhaps, because the assumption commonly held is that high school students *already* know how to read. But that is held because we erroneously think that reading is merely a matter of knowing how to sound out words, recognize punctuation, and understand basic vocabulary. That is, we are often satisfied simply with the *mechanics* of reading – getting the encoded message on the page through the eyeballs, into the (reasonably alert) brain. I do not doubt that most (if not all) of our high school students can do this. Reading mechanics – the basics – have been mastered.

But reading has not.

Once the basics have been learned, students need to learn how to tackle a reading assignment in such a way that they understand its meaning, point, and structure. They need to master skills of comprehension and retention. In a

...the assumption commonly held is that high school students already know how to read.

word, they need to learn how to analyze and interpret – not simply translate – the message encoded on the page(s) of their assignment.

Let me suggest a proven method of reading. Never plan to read an assignment only once; good readers will read at least twice and usually three times.

1. Read

The *first* time through should be a quick and casual reading to familiarize yourself with the material and find out

the main point(s) the author intended to communicate.

2. Write

The *second* time through you should take notes for yourself, attempting to outline (roughly) the material presented so that the way in which the author gets to his conclusion is made clear; also write out important lists which may appear in the reading, along with key sentences which express important insights or necessary declarations (as far as the author is concerned).

3.. Highlight

Only after these two steps have been accomplished should you go through the assignment again the *third* time and underline (or highlight) the words, phrases, or sentences which will help you to review and recall the material later. Keep these underlinings to a minimum, for too many such markings will simply force you later to reread most of the assignment again – which defeats the purpose of underlining. By the time these three steps have been completed, the reading assignment will be clearly recorded in the mind.

The reading notes, along with underlinings, will facilitate quick and effective review of the material, which should be accomplished once a week until the end of the term. This method of reading may appear to consume more time initially than the less rigorous style practiced by most students, but in the long run it saves not only time (for instance, rereading the entire assignment every time a quiz is possible) but also emotional energy which is lost over the fear of failure at exam time.

This article was first in two parts in the September and December 1981 issues of The Conqueror under the titles “On Not Leaving Things at the Ramada Inn” and “Learning How to Read in High School.”

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The Dominee's Friend

by George van Popta

There is style and there is class. Dominee may not have had much style, as the world considers style, but he had class.

Dominee had accepted a call to another church. At such a time we cover up the pain of separation with laughter. How could we be happy? This was the man whom God had sent to us to speak to us the Word of God every Sunday. We heard the voice of the Great Shepherd through His under-shepherd twice every Lord's day. Because Dominee's voice was so familiar, and his sermons somewhat predictable, we thought we knew him. We knew from the cadence of his heavily accented sentences when he was wrapping up the sermon — just the final song yet, and the benediction, and we'd soon be outside chatting, swapping stories, and laughing.

Dominee was not what you would call an especially stylish man. During all the years he preached to us he wore a grey suit. He may have replaced it with a new one once in a while, but we never noticed because the new one was identical to the previous.

Nothing stylish about Dominee. Even when he would drop by because of illness in the family or if someone needed encouragement, he'd wear a grey suit.

We thought we knew him, until his farewell evening.

As I said, when we are sad, we turn to laughter. To cover up our sadness.

The farewell evening had begun and was evolving in a predictable way. There was only one unusual thing that immediately caught everyone's attention. Near the front of the church sat an old Sikh gentleman and his wife. We could tell he was a Sikh because he was wearing a turban. The turban happened to be pink. Later I was told it was, in fact, lavender.

The chairman of the men's society, a serious man, ascended the pulpit. He read some Scripture, prayed, and invited us to sing a well-known Psalm. On behalf of the men's society, he spoke some kind words of farewell to Dominee, his wife, and the children, and then presented them with a gift, a beautiful painting of local scenery: "We don't want

We did not know whether we were clapping for Dominee or the Sikh. Likely, we were clapping for the Lord. We had seen a remarkable thing.

you to forget this beautiful part of the country!"

This was followed by several presentations — women's, young people's, youth. And on it went, predictably and comfortably. The presentations alternated between funny, sad, and poignant. But mostly we laughed. When the elders and deacons performed a humorous skit about Dominee's typical way of leading a meeting, we laughed heartily. When one of Dominee's local colleagues told a story about Dominee at a classis meeting, we laughed so hard we thought our sides were going to burst.

After several hours, when everyone was good and ready for coffee and cake, the chairman of the men's society ascended the pulpit once again. With gravity, he thanked everyone for coming, bade Dominee farewell once more, and asked if there was anyone whom he had missed, or who had not been on the program but yet wanted to say something. The Sikh gentleman stood up.

Well, this was interesting. Slowly, with age and dignity, he walked to the front of the church. He began to speak. This was very interesting. No one could remember a Sikh speaking in our church. He began to tell a story.

It had been a hot summer afternoon when he and his wife were walking along the sidewalk. Suddenly overcome by heat, thirst, and exhaustion, he sat on a stone wall in front of a house. That house, as it turned out, was the Manse. Dominee was sitting in the shade reading a newspaper from the old country that had just come in the mail. He noticed the Sikh man sitting at the end of the driveway on the stone wall, and the man's wife bending over him with a look of concern on her face.

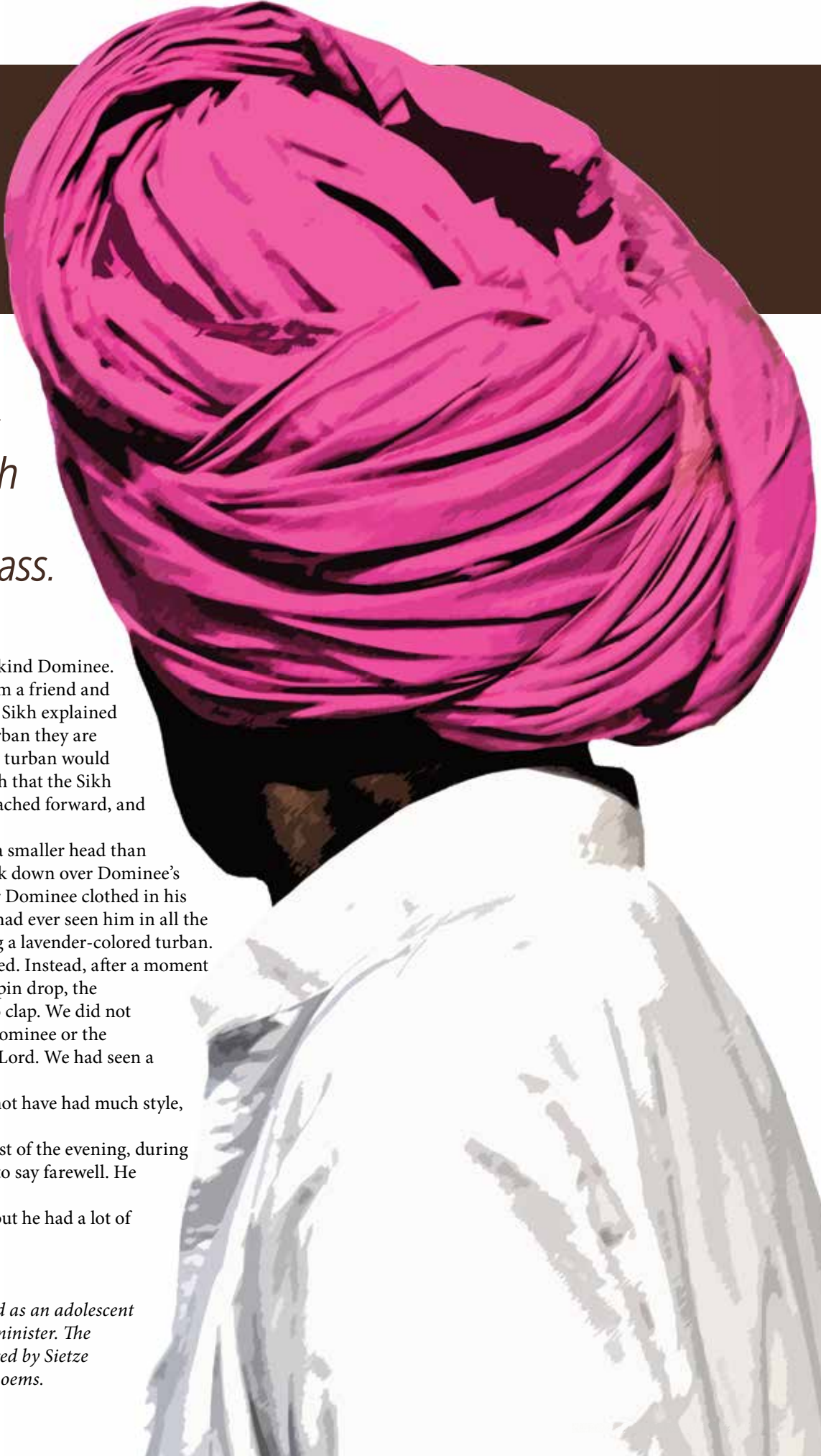
Dominee got up to see if he could help. "My husband is very thirsty," said the lady. "Could he please have some water?"

Dominee went to the house and came back with a pitcher of water and some glasses. He poured two glasses of water, and then he took a moment to speak about the other water, the living water that Jesus provides.

On that day Dominee and the Sikh became friends. The Sikh gentleman and his wife would drop by more often to talk with Dominee.

We never knew. We thought we knew our Dominee.

We all listened intently to the



Our immigrant congregation may not have had much style, but on that evening we had class.

Sikh as he told us the story about our kind Dominee. He considered it an honor to count him a friend and wanted to give him a parting gift. The Sikh explained that it was their custom to give the turban they are wearing to their departing friend. The turban would be a reminder of their friendship. With that the Sikh removed the turban from his head, reached forward, and placed it on Dominee's head.

Dominee was mostly bald and had a smaller head than his Sikh friend, and so the turban sank down over Dominee's forehead. It was a sight to behold! Our Dominee clothed in his trademark grey suit, the only way we had ever seen him in all the years he had ministered to us, wearing a lavender-colored turban.

No one laughed, snickered, or tittered. Instead, after a moment during which you could have heard a pin drop, the congregation slowly rose and began to clap. We did not know whether we were clapping for Dominee or the Sikh. Likely, we were clapping for the Lord. We had seen a remarkable thing.

Our immigrant congregation may not have had much style, but on that evening we had class.

Dominee wore the turban for the rest of the evening, during coffee and as we all came by his table to say farewell. He wore it with pride.

Dominee did not have much style, but he had a lot of class. And we thought we knew him.

There is style, and there is class.

This is a true story, which I experienced as an adolescent boy at the departure of a neighboring minister. The references to style and class were inspired by Sietze Buning's Style and Class collection of poems.

THE MUNDANE TASK OF ob-ed-ien-ce

Contrasting and comparing David Platt's *Radical* with Michael Horton's *Ordinary*

by Raoul Kingma

There's little question that David Platt's book *Radical: Taking back your faith from the American Dream* has made a splash in the evangelical world. Since its debut in 2010 the book has sold more than a million copies and is the primary reason that "Radical Christianity" has become a part of the Christian consciousness in North America.

Platt's message is simple: he argues that we have often molded Jesus into our own image. To escape the force of his teaching we've imagined that Jesus shares our (often materialistic) middle-class proclivities. We must repent of this idolatry of self and pursue "radical obedience." That is, believing and obeying everything Jesus teaches in his Word about sin and salvation, the Great Commission, and discipleship. Like the first disciples, we are to leave everything in order to follow Jesus.

A quick survey of the North American church scene confirms that Platt's concerns are based in reality. In many places Christianity is treated as a consumer item. The Church falls into modeling herself after the wisdom of big business, treating evangelism as marketing, and expecting pastors to operate things like CEOs overseeing their corporate boards.

While other churches – including the Reformed by and large – aren't "commercializing" our churches, other dangers remain. Many can (sometimes unwittingly) compromise core principles to avoid unwanted conflict or difficulty. Soft forms of materialism can creep in easily, starting with something as small as avoiding the tithe or other charitable obligations to make room for vacations, toys, and financial security. In this sort of environment, the Platt's message feels like a blast of ice water from a fire-hose – shocking, but invigorating!

BATTLING COMPLACENCY LIKE BONHOEFFER

And this sort of message has some rather distinguished company. Almost

eighty years ago Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* to battle the complacent Christianity of his own day. He famously remarked that, "when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die," and he lambasted the "cheap grace" that offers "forgiveness without requiring repentance...grace without discipleship."

The life of a disciple, argued Bonhoeffer, means carrying a cross and sharing in our Savior's suffering, rejection and crucifixion (Mark 8:34). This is not meant to be a religious platitude that's understood in only a spiritual sense. The life of discipleship *will* entail real earthly suffering because becoming a disciple of Christ means following Him through the cross, which is the only path to the resurrection. Bonhoeffer embodied this truth in his own life, refusing to compromise his faith or principles in the face of Nazi oppression. He paid the price, being hanged by the Nazis in the Flossenburg prison just weeks before the end of the war in Europe.

So what exactly does "radical obedience" look like in practice? What should it look like? For Platt, radical obedience is primarily associated with each Christian's responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission.

... we must recognize the importance of the mundane and cultivate a love for it.

We are not to leave the spreading of the gospel to the professionals, but take it upon ourselves to move to unchurched or lowly areas, sacrifice financially, and to share the gospel whenever and with whomever we can. Platt gives many examples of folks who are doing just this. One started a Bible study in his neighborhood, another gave up a comfortable teaching job to teach at an inner-city school, and still another sacrificed a cushy retirement to contribute to disaster relief and missions abroad.

RADICAL ONE-UPMANSHIP

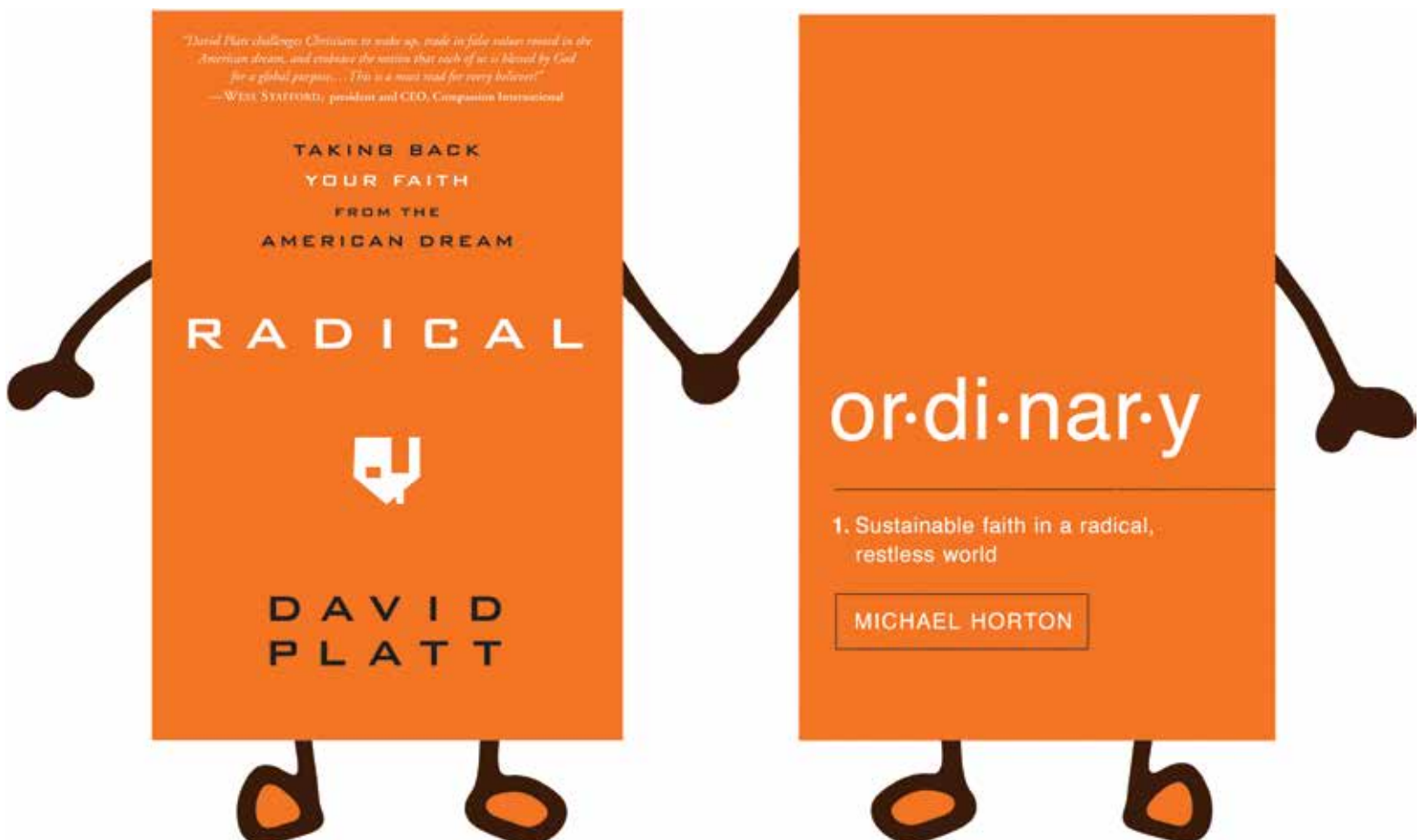
Though Platt's message has its strengths, it can take an unfortunate

turn given our present cultural tendencies. We are a society that has enshrined novelty and immediacy, and routinely disparages the ordinary as boring. Social media provides a stark showcase for this obsession. From birth announcements, to proposals, to new haircuts, it seems as though everyone is trying to one-up their friends and get noticed. But no sooner has a day passed than these valiant efforts make their way to the dustbin of history and the cycle starts anew.

In this setting, "radical" can quickly become equated only with high-profile (and usually mission-oriented) activities such as those mentioned above. Those with the time and gifts

for such activities can implicitly be placed on higher plane within the kingdom. Those who are overwhelmed with mundane daily duties (such as caregiving or putting food on the table) can be made to feel inadequate or even shamed because of their inability to serve in more "radical" ways. Both groups may worry that they are not doing quite enough "for the kingdom." Furthermore, the drive for immediate results can cause anxiety and burnout in those whose actions fail to achieve noticeable change. Though well-intentioned, the push to be radical can lead, as Anthony Bradley put it, to a new sort of legalism.

Their titles might make it seem like these two could never get along.
But in some respects their contents compliment one another.



ORDINARY RADICALS

Two clarifications concerning radical obedience are necessary in order to avoid this trap. First, we must recognize the importance of the mundane and cultivate a love for it. In his fine book *Ordinary*, Michael Horton points out that the majority of our life is spent doing ordinary things and it is precisely here that life is sustained and nourished. To maintain your health, daily meals of regular staples are more important than infrequent seven-course feasts. To maintain your marriage, daily displays of mutual affection and communication are more important than a once-a-year vacation to the Bahamas. To sustain your faith, attendance at the weekly preaching and sacraments is more important than going to the inspiring conference featuring your favorite speaker. When we reverse this order we are in danger of reaping a double consequence: not only does our relentless pursuit of novelty wear us down, but can also dull our senses by transforming the extraordinary into the ordinary.

It is also important to note that it is in the mundane where our obedience is most severely tested. It is much easier to serve cheerfully and faithfully in ways that are recognized and where the praise of others can serve as ample motivation. It is much more difficult to serve where you won't be seen and where the only motivation can be obedience to our Father. How many of us serve cheerfully at the soup kitchen, only to curse at traffic on our way home? For how many of us do the words "Love your neighbor as yourself" flow easily off of our tongues, until a real-life neighbor keeps us up during the night with pounding music? Being obedient in the particulars of everyday life is a monumental task which we may not neglect; our Savior Jesus himself taught us that "one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much" (Luke 16:10). If we are to speak of radical obedience, it must mean an all-encompassing obedience which goes all the way down into the details of daily life.

VOCATION, VOCATION, VOCATION

Second, we must recover a proper conception of vocation, or calling. One of the great triumphs of the Reformation was to liberate the common people from believing that only spiritual work, such as that of a priest, really mattered. Instead, all work (provided it has a proper end) should be seen as on an equal level. Mothers, fathers, nurses, engineers, janitors, teachers, carpenters, comedians, farmers, preachers, and landscapers can all rightly claim to be doing kingdom work. This is because God's plan of redemption is not only about saving souls, but also involves restoring a corrupted creation. The creation mandate of subduing the earth is restored, not replaced, by God's work of redemption.

This means that our various vocations are meaningful for their own sakes and not merely as means to some higher spiritual purpose. For example, being a carpenter is a noble pursuit whether or not it gives you a good platform for sharing the gospel with your customers. As Dorothy Sayers once noted, in the case of this carpenter, "the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables." It is through attending to our vocations, whatever they may be, that obedience to the commands to love God and love neighbor receive concrete expression.

This recovery of vocation is wonderfully liberating for the Christian, freeing us to pursue work based on our individual strengths without fear that our chosen vocation does not contribute enough to the kingdom. It also restores the dignity and importance of seemingly unimportant vocations. The church, after all, is a body made up of a whole variety of parts that work together in a wonderful and mysterious way. No part of the body can be denigrated as unneeded and no part can be elevated as if it were the body itself (1 Corinthians 12). If we are to speak of radical obedience, it must be an obedience that operates in the diversity of vocations that God has given, and

*... it is in the
mundane where
our obedience
is most severely
tested.*

not one limited to a narrow set of high-profile activities.

ONLY ONE KIND OF OBEDIENCE

We could suggest a third clarification of radical obedience: perhaps the best way to understand it is to drop the word "radical" altogether. Obedience is, by definition and without any modifiers, a wholehearted following of God's commands that must touch every part of our lives. Anything short of this is not some other (un-radical) variety of obedience, but simply disobedience. Such a change in language can help to avoid the two-tiered Christianity mentioned earlier.

These clarifications help us to escape the pitfalls that can sometimes accompany the language of "radical obedience."

At the same time, we can take Platt's fundamental concern for a living and active faith seriously. He is right that we cannot become complacent and remake the gospel to fit our preferences. We cannot coast through life chirping "Grace! Grace!" while failing to put off our old nature. We must be obedient even when it is excruciating – obedient even unto death. But this does not require us to become superheroes. Christ calls us to obey where we are now, no matter how lowly that place may be, and to trust that he will use our actions, however small, for his kingdom building purposes. After all, this is a Savior who has long been in the business of turning small loaves into food for thousands. And is this not all just another way of saying that we must live by faith, and not by sight?

Toward a new Green Revolution

What if we could grow more, with less fertilizers?

by Margaret Helder

The Earth's growing population over the last century led some environmentalists to make predictions of worldwide famines. But Man is more than just a mouth to feed; he also has a brain to think. American plant scientist Norman Borlaug and Indian rice geneticist M. S. Swaminathan put their brains to work to help develop improved strains of wheat and rice in the 1960s and 1970s that resulted in a doubling of crop yields. They had started a Green Revolution!

However for optimum growth, these crops require the widespread application of nitrogen fertilizers and other chemicals. As a by-product of this practice, a significant amount of fertilizer ends up in natural waterways. As a result, scientists now consider the application of such chemicals as "so last century!" (*Nature* October 30, 2014 p. S52). The hunt is now on for crops that do not require chemical inputs and yet produce high yields.

TURNING SUNLIGHT INTO SUGAR

This quest was already begun in the early 1960s in Brisbane, Australia where scientists working at the Colonial Sugar Refining Company set out to discover why sugar cane produces and stores so much sugar. By 1965 they had discovered and described a new biochemical process in plant leaves that results in much more efficient capture of the sun's energy, resulting in enhanced storage of sugar. This new photosynthetic process, called the Hatch-Slack pathway after its two discoverers, has been discovered in about 20% of all plant species. Which plants have it and which don't is very patchy – some species in a taxonomic group may display this capacity and others not.

These efficient plants, called C4 plants, grow best at higher temperatures and they manage with less nitrogen inputs and less water (the terms C3 for normal plants and C4 for efficient plants, refer to the number of carbon atoms in the first product during the photosynthetic

process). Corn, millet, sorghum and sugar cane are all C4 plants, as are many other grasses.

Rice, however, is a C3 plant. Not surprisingly, plant breeders think longingly about how nice it would be if rice were a C4 crop too. Farmers might be able to obtain 30-50% increases in yield with no need for an increase in water, fertilizer or land. But the differences between C3 and C4 plants are major. Two additional chemical reactions are required before photosynthesis actually begins and some anatomical changes are required as well. This is no small research project.

MIXING IN SOME BLUE GREEN ALGAE

A new initiative makes use of a highly surprising source of efficient photosynthesis.

All plants make use of an enzyme called RuBisCo in the first step of photosynthesis, but RuBisCO exists in a much more efficient form in C4 plants than in C3 plants. Since the 1970s, scientists have known that blue green algae is a C4 plant. The C4 enzyme does need a higher amount of CO₂ present for it to work efficiently, but C4 plants have anatomical and biochemical design features that compensate for this need.

For example, in blue green algae we find tiny carbon-concentrating mechanisms which maintain elevated CO₂ levels around RuBisCo. Thanks to these carbon-concentrating mechanisms, blue green algae is able to utilize the C4 form of RuBisCO that is almost three times as efficient as that found in C3 plants.

In blue green alga, special pumps encourage the uptake of bicarbonate ions (HCO₃) and CO₂ into the cell. All this then enters small structures in the cell called carboxysomes which reconvert the HCO₃ back into CO₂. The RuBisCO

Could we increase rice production 50% without any need for more water?



Chance and random processes are not going to make the conversion happen!

which is located in the carboxysome structures, acts on the CO₂ which eventually results in lots of sugar.

The new initiative, under the direction of English and American researchers want to, for starters, insert genes from the blue green algae into tobacco plants. The tobacco plant is popular as a subject for experiments – it's the plant equivalent of a guinea pig! Thus the scientists have successfully knocked out the gene for a large component of RuBisCO from the tobacco plant, and replaced it with the gene for the blue green algae version of the enzyme. They also inserted a gene for a "chaperone" protein that encourages the RuBisCO protein to fold properly. If a protein does not fold correctly, it cannot function.

However, in order to achieve a successful C₄ system in plants like tobacco, scientists will need to add (in addition to the blue green algae form of RuBisCO), proteins to form the shell of the carbon-concentrating structures (carboxysomes) along with the pump proteins and also other proteins which facilitate the conversion of HCO₃ into CO₂ at a point adjacent to the RuBisCO. These precise and complex requirements mean that scientists do not expect any successful "C₄ tobacco plants" for many years to come.

If they get it functioning this system will certainly have the hallmarks of intelligent design! Chance and random processes are not going to make the conversion happen!

CONCLUSION

It is amusing to reflect on the source of the efficient RuBisCO enzyme. We can see that blue green algae are highly sophisticated organisms with a fancy photosynthetic apparatus. Yet their outward appearance is uncomplicated and most scientists have long considered that these cells are among the most "primitive" organisms that we know about. Some scientists suggest that blue green algae were among the first living cells to appear. It is all the more ironic that scientists would like to improve the efficiency of crops like rice and tobacco, by inserting a number of genes for C₄ photosynthesis from cells that supposedly come from the base of the evolutionary tree.

What we actually see from all of this is that photosynthesis is an amazing process. We can be very thankful for

the gift of plants that are able to supply the food to support all life on earth. And if the efficiency of the process in some crops can be improved, we can be thankful for that too, since a world population that is still growing will require more food in the years to come. And reduced nitrogen run-off at the same time from the growth of these improved crops, can't hurt either.

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Candidate Alberts

Candidate Bostock

Candidate Caramia

My democracy is **BETTER** than your democracy

Three different ways of voting:
Proportional Representation
vs. First Past the Post
vs. Preferential

by Rene Vermeulen

I was asked to pay some attention to the specifics of the Australian electoral system and to contrast and compare it with other systems, such as are found in Canada and the US.

FIRST PAST THE POST

Most English speaking countries seem to follow the “first past the post” system of voting. This means that in an election there may be three candidates which respectively receive, say, A=33%, B=33% and C=34% of the vote each. C having received 34% of the vote is deemed elected under this system, squeaking in “first past the post” by just the end of his nose.

While C did get more votes than the other two candidates, the other way we could interpret this outcome is to say that 66% did not want C to represent them in the legislature!

This first past the post system also

means that minor parties have very little chance of being elected. Even if voters find them the most attractive party, they won’t want to “waste” their vote on a smaller party they don’t think will win. Which, of course, means that the smaller party *will* never win, and the voters instead vote one of the major parties’ candidates, even though they may not like them.

Anyone who takes an interest in politics can understand such a reaction even if it is not very principled. However, the fault lies first of all in the system.

In Australia two major systems operate successfully. For the purpose of this article I will concentrate on elections for the Federal Parliament and generally ignore elections in the state, although it is fair to say that in most instances the states use similar systems. These systems are preferential voting and proportional representation.

PREFERENTIAL VOTING

The preferential system largely overcomes the problem of first past the post voting. It more fairly determines the will of the electors in that it takes account of not only the first choice, but also the second choice of the electors.

Let us design a voting slip for the election of these three candidates.

As I understand it, in Canada you simply tick one of these boxes indicating your choice of candidate. In Australia we would have to number each of the boxes so that the above ballot paper would show our first choice, second choice and third choice. In times past if you did not number one of the boxes so that you had your first and second choice but no third choice your ballot would be invalid. Lately that has been changed so that people may fail to give their third choice and yet cast a valid vote. There are other refinements but

YOU MAY VOTE IN ONE OF TWO WAYS

Either:

Above the line
By placing the single figure 1 in one and only one of these squares to indicate the voting ticket you wish to adopt as your vote

☐ or ☐ or ☐ or ☐ or ☐
 PARTY A PARTY B PARTY C PARTY D E

Or:

Below the line
By placing the numbers 1 to 17 in the order of your preference

| A PARTY | B PARTY | C PARTY | D PARTY | E | Ungrouped |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> SURNAME Given names PARTY | <input type="checkbox"/> SURNAME Given names PARTY | <input type="checkbox"/> SURNAME Given names PARTY | <input type="checkbox"/> SURNAME Given names PARTY | <input type="checkbox"/> SURNAME Given names PARTY | <input type="checkbox"/> SURNAME Given names INDEPENDENT |
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Illustration 2: In the lower section all the names of the candidates appear in party order and a box along side each candidate. So above the line the elector has only to fill in one square, but below the line all squares must be numbered. The elector decides how he/she wishes to vote.

This system applies for all elections to the House of Representatives and in almost all states of Australia.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

The Senate in Australia is also referred to as the States' House. The framers of the Australian Constitution wanted to assure that there would be some equality in representation between the various states. If you consider that well over half the population of Australia lives in two states – Victoria and New South Wales – and these two states have more than half of the members of the House of Representatives, it would be easy to imagine a situation where these two states could make decisions which would be contrary to the wishes of the smaller states. To overcome this problem the solution was found in having a Senate that would have the same number of senators from each state. Hence the state of Tasmania, which has a population of less than 500,000, elects 12 senators, the same number as the largest state New South Wales with more than 5.5 million people. Not that this has made a lot of difference. Also in the Senate most senators vote along party lines. In that respect the idea of the framers of the Australian constitution has not worked out as they intended. But the idea was good.

Thus each state makes up one electorate and the people of that state must elect twelve senators. This gives smaller parties a chance to get some representatives, at least in the Senate.

How does this work? Proportional representation is really quite simple. It means that when all the votes for a state's Senate election are in, the electoral officer determines the number of votes needed for each Senate seat. So if your party has one twelfth of the number of votes, you get one of the 12 Senate seats. Any leftover votes are distributed according to the preferential system.

This is unlike the Netherlands' version of proportional representation. In that country there have been instances where a Reformed party did not get quite enough votes for a seat and then had its votes added to a party totally opposed to what Reformed voters are about. In Australia

we won't go into that in this article lest I lose most of my readers.

Using this example (shown on the top of the previous page) let's suppose the votes were as follows:

- Candidate Alberts: 1651 votes
- Candidate Bostock: 1649 votes
- Candidate Caramia: 1700 votes.

The candidate with the lowest number of votes is Bostock with 1649 votes. He is now excluded from the ballot and his 1649 votes are distributed between the two remaining candidates based on his voters' second choice. Or to put it another way, the second preferences allotted by voters who chose Candidate Bostock as their number one are now allocated to Alberts and Caramia.

Under the first past the post system Caramia would have been elected. But under the preference system Alberts might well receive more second preference votes than Caramia. So in that case Alberts would be the winner.

Just to complete this picture let us assume that Alberts receives 923 of Bostock's preferences and Caramia the remaining 726. Then the final count would be as follows:

- Candidate Alberts:
 $1651 + 923 = 2574$
- Candidate Caramia:
 $1700 + 726 = 2426$

Therefore even though Alberts had less votes than Caramia at first, in the end he receives more than half the votes cast and is elected with a majority of 148 votes.

This process is a bit more complicated than the Canadian system, but I think you will agree, fairer and more reflective of the will of the voters. It can also take some time before a winner can be declared. Also often in these situation a recount is called for and if granted may delay a decision even longer. This wait can be a little hard on the leaders of the parties, admittedly. They may not know for some days which party will form the government.

that wouldn't happen because the idea of preferential voting also applies to the Senate. This then means that the fairest distribution of the will of the electorate takes place.

There are, of course, difficulties with this system. To illustrate this let us take the state of Western Australia. During the last election in our state there were some 50 candidates for a senate seat. In bigger states these numbers can grow to more than a hundred. As someone remarked, you need a toilet roll for each ballot paper. A recent refinement to the system created a ballot paper which has an above the line section where only the parties are listed, and a below the line where all the candidates are listed (see opposite page). For the above the line vote the parties publish their preferences – they list their candidates in order of who they would most like in. So, for example, if they get enough votes for two senators, then the top two candidates on their list would get in. Voters then have a choice to vote

either strictly preferential, in other words, number each square (quite a job when you must place the numbers 1 to say, 100) on a ballot paper, or they can vote above the line and simply vote for one party. Those votes are then distributed according to the

This then means that smaller parties can also be elected to the Senate.

preference list supplied by the party. Prior to the election parties will have come to an agreement about sharing preferences.

This then means that smaller parties can also be elected to the Senate. From the government's point of view it makes

life more difficult for them. Legislation that passes the House of Representatives without any difficulty, the government having the upper hand, may well fail in the Senate where a number of smaller parties and independent Senators can vote against the proposed legislation. It might, sometimes, involve a fair bit of horse-trading to get legislation through the Senate, but that is a fact of life.

Some people feel that the type of proportional representation as applied in the Netherlands is the best system. In the Netherlands there is only one electorate/riding for the whole country. That is, in my opinion, fine for a small country like the Netherlands but hardly appropriate in large countries such as Canada and Australia. Someone in British Columbia can hardly be expected to represent people in Ontario, the same as it is in Australia with someone from the west coast representing people in Queensland, on the other side of Australia.

TO SUM UP

It seems to me that Australian legislators have done well in the electoral system they have developed over the years. I consider that the preferential system, while a little cumbersome at times, does allow the best outcome for the electorate. Electors can vote as their conscience dictates to them, while at the same time being able to assure that their vote for their preferred candidate will flow on to their next choice should their candidate not garner enough votes to be elected. At least no one in the electorate can seriously argue that he/she couldn't vote for a candidate because they would then risk wasting their vote.


Proportional representation as applied in elections for the Senate in Australia assures that even small parties, special interest groups and one-issue candidates, have a chance to be elected. The major parties might not like it but they will have to live with it.

A version of this article was first published in the September 2000 issue. Rene Vermeulen contributed more than 150 articles to the pages of Reformed Perspective from 1984-2010.


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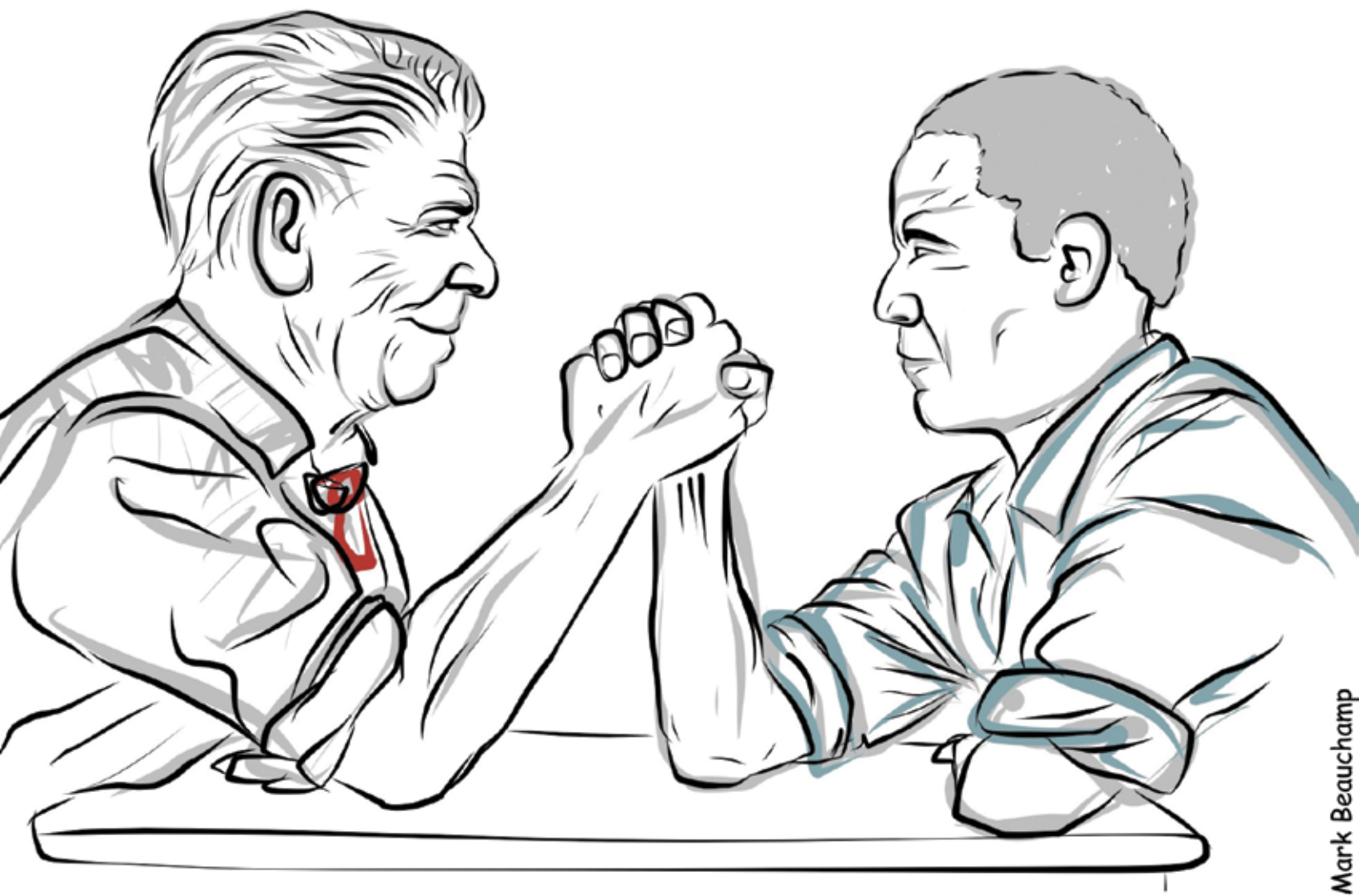
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Reagan vs. Obama ***ON ABORTION***

by Michael Wagner and Jon Dykstra

Barack Obama is likely the most pro-abortion president in US history. But thirty years ago the President of the United States was a man of undoubted pro-life convictions; when Ronald Reagan published *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation* he became (and still is) the only president to put out a book against abortion while in office.

Reagan and Obama differ not only over abortion itself, but also over how they present the issue to the public. One offers cheap and deceptive political slogans while the other offered substantial and thoughtful analysis.

OBAMA'S PRO-CHOICE ARGUMENTS

Obama has consistently been a strong abortion supporter, but his reasons have never been strong or clear.

Confusion doesn't means we can kill

In fact, in 2008, when the then Senator Barack Obama was first running from president, he offered up his own confusion as a defense of legalized abortion. As a part of the presidential campaign, the senator had a sit down discussion with evangelical pastor Rick Warren, in front of a crowd of several thousand. Warren took the opportunity to ask Obama, "At what point does a baby get human rights, in your view?" Obama responded,

Well, I think that whether you're looking at it from a theological perspective, or a scientific perspective, answer that question with specificity is above my pay grade. But let me speak more generally about the issue of abortion....I am pro-choice – I believe in Roe vs. Wade – and I come to that conclusion not because I am pro-abortion, but because ultimately I don't think women make these decisions casually. I think they wrestle with these things in profound ways, in consultation with their pastors, or their spouses or their doctors and their family members. So for me the goal right now, should

be – and I think this is where we can find common ground... – is how do we reduce the number of abortions?

It was a long way of saying, "I don't know." While it was wonderful that Warren bravely and bluntly asked Obama about the unborn, the pastor missed an opportunity in not asking two important follow up questions.

1) *Do you think, if we aren't sure whether something is human or not, that we can kill it? And before you answer, I want to share with you something that President Reagan wrote:*

I have often said that when we talk about abortion we are talking about two lives – the life of the mother and the life of the unborn child....I have also said that anyone who doesn't feel sure whether we are talking about a second human life should clearly give life the benefit of the doubt. If you don't know whether a body is alive or dead, you would never bury it. I think this consideration, itself should be enough for all of us to insist on protecting the unborn.

President Reagan is saying here that if we don't know when life begins – if that is above our pay grade – then surely we can't kill. If there is any doubt, how could we kill? Isn't that so Senator?

2) *Why would we want to reduce the number of abortions?*

It's hard to imagine what answers Obama could have given to the first, or second. If the unborn aren't human beings – if they are just bits of tissue – then why would we care how many abortions occur? Tonsillectomies remove a bit of tissue, and yet no one is calling for members of both parties to reduce the number of tonsillectomies. And if the unborn aren't just bits of tissue – if they are precious little human beings – then isn't it clear we need to end, rather than reduce, abortion?

Reagan takes a much humbler approach: "It is not for us to decide who is worthy to live and who is not."

Private matter

As president, Barack Obama has framed the abortion issue as one of keeping the government out of people's personal affairs. His official spokesman put it this way: "The government should not intrude in medical decisions or private family matters in this way." In July of 2013, Obama put out a tweet stating, "When politicians try to get in the way of a woman and her doctor, it's time to #StandWithWomen." And he has repeatedly talked about how women are competent to make their own medical decisions so they don't need politicians making those decisions for them."

Obama's rhetoric is designed to make it seem as if pro-lifers want politicians to make personal medical decisions for women. His approach is to generate opposition to the pro-life cause by misrepresenting its aims.

But, of course, no one objects to women making *their own* medical decisions. Our concern is when the decisions they make *kill another person*. When another person is involved, it is no longer just a "private matter."

We also should not overlook the irony in Obama talking about how the "government should not intrude in medical decisions." This president, probably more than anyone else, has worked to increase the government's influence over healthcare – politicians now have more control over medical matters in the USA than ever before.

Obama vs. Cheney

The Abortion Debate: Round II

by Jon Dykstra

In a 2008 interview, the man who would become the next president of the United States said that he didn't know when life began – it was above his pay grade – and that regardless he still supported abortion. But back in 2006 Vice President Dick Cheney had already illustrated why, if we have doubts, it is immoral to kill.

The Vice President made his pro-life case while out on a hunting trip with a man by the name of Harry Whittington. Admittedly, Cheney wasn't trying to score pro-life points – he was trying to shoot birds. But what was a bad day for the birds, and for his fellow hunter, turned out to be an unforgettable defense of the unborn.

Things took a pro-life turn soon after the two hunters separated – Whittington was searching for a bird they had previously downed. As Whittington returned to the group, a bird popped out of the bushes behind Cheney, and Cheney, without checking first where Whittington was, fired off a shot. That shot may or may not have hit the bird, but certainly impacted Whittington, spraying his chest and face with birdshot.

Fortunately, the 78-year-old Whittington survived his wounds. Cheney went on to become the butt of many, many jokes, including one from President Obama, who said that Cheney's memoirs were going to be titled, *How To Shoot Friends and Interrogate People*.

Everyone, including President Obama, understood that what Cheney had done was foolish. A cardinal rule in hunting is that you can't fire your gun unless you're sure people aren't in your line of fire. Pleading ignorance is no excuse – you have to *know* no human life is being endangered or you can't fire. It's that simple.

Obama mocked Cheney for proceeding with deadly intent, not knowing whether or not he was endangering human life. But Obama's justification for abortion is just as foolish. His plea that when life begins is above his pay grade means that he doesn't know one

way or the other whether what's in the womb is human life. So how then can it be moral to kill what's there?

Vice President Cheney's misfire reminded us that if we're unsure, we can't shoot. Human life is so precious we have to *know* we're not killing it before we can proceed. That truth holds true for abortion too: if we don't *know* the unborn aren't yet human, then how could it possibly be moral to kill them?



If there's doubt,
can he continue?

REAGAN'S PRO-LIFE STAND

In sharp contrast, Ronald Reagan did not think the abortion question was above his pay grade. In 1983, his third year in office, and a decade after the *Roe vs. Wade* decision of the US Supreme Court, President Ronald Reagan wrote a lengthy article for the pro-life journal *The Human Life Review*. It was titled "Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation."

Franky Schaeffer, the son of Presbyterian apologist Francis Schaeffer, thought this article was so significant that it should be published as a book. Through his efforts, the following year Thomas Nelson Publishers issued it as a small hardcover book, with afterwards by C. Everett Koop, the surgeon general of the United States, and Malcolm Muggeridge one of the best-known writers of the twentieth century. The book was published under the same title as the article.

Reagan is unambiguous about getting to the heart of the issue. It's about the value of life: "We cannot diminish the value of one category of human life – the unborn – without diminishing the value of all human life."

Reagan's discussion of abortion isn't trying to dissemble or deceive. He doesn't use cute little phrases and slogans to divert public attention away from the central issues.

SUPREME COURT MISCARRIAGES

Abortion became a national issue in the USA as a result of the infamous *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision of 1973, striking down state laws prohibiting or restricting abortion. As Reagan points out, the Supreme Court ruling was not justified by the US Constitution: "Nowhere do the plain words of the Constitution even hint at a 'right' so sweeping as to permit abortion up to the time the child is ready to be born."

Reagan compares the controversial results of *Roe v. Wade* with a previous Supreme Court ruling known as the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857. Basically, the *Dred Scott* decision said that blacks could not be US citizens and therefore didn't have rights under the Constitution. This

decision helped set the stage for the Civil War a few years later. After considerable effort, the nefarious effects of the *Dred Scott* decision were ultimately overturned. Similarly, with much effort the nefarious effects of *Roe v. Wade* can be overturned as well (presumably not through another civil war). Reagan states that God's help will be needed for this battle. "I have often said we need to join in prayer to bring protection to the unborn. Prayer and action are needed to uphold the sanctity of human life."

PEOPLE KILLING PEOPLE

Those on the so-called "pro-choice" side of the abortion debate do not consider every human to be deserving of rights. As Reagan points out, "They insist that a member of the human race must have certain qualities before they accord him or her status as a 'human being.'"

In their view, people receive rights as human beings by fulfilling some sort of criteria such as having "consciousness of self." By this reasoning, newborn infants are not human beings. If held to consistently, it would also, of course, deny status to people in comas.

The outcome of the pro-choice reasoning is that some people get to decide that other people (whom they have determined are not truly human beings) can be killed. Reagan takes a much humbler approach: "It is not for us to decide who is worthy to live and who is not."

At the end of his book, Reagan refers back to the Civil War years and the president who won a great battle for the rights of a large group of Americans:

Abraham Lincoln recognized that we could not survive as a free land when some men could decide that others were not fit to be free and should therefore be slaves. Likewise, we cannot survive as a free nation when some men decide that others are not fit to live and should be abandoned to abortion or infanticide.

Skeptics may want to criticize Reagan by pointing out that abortion was legal

We also should not overlook the irony in Obama talking about how the "government should not intrude in medical decisions."

throughout his presidency, making his commitment to the pro-life cause questionable. But in the US political system, a president cannot just outlaw abortion with a presidential order. Reagan faced major legislative and judicial obstacles to implementing his pro-life views, and he was ultimately unsuccessful in his efforts.

However, by using his prestige as president, he added substantial legitimacy and credibility to the pro-life cause through his article and book.

CONCLUSION

In comparing the two presidents, it's interesting that the Left tried to portray

President Reagan as a dimwit who didn't understand significant issues. That is a false assertion, and his book on abortion demonstrates a depth that President Obama publicly doesn't exhibit on this issue.

It's frustrating that the current president resorts to cheap and deceptive talking points to deal with what many believe to be the most important political issue of our time. Thousands of babies are dying every week, and that's okay with him. Thankfully, Obama's term in office will end in two years, and maybe someone with the substance of Reagan will replace him.

Someday the killing will end.

How can purchasing a casket be "PRO-LIFE"?



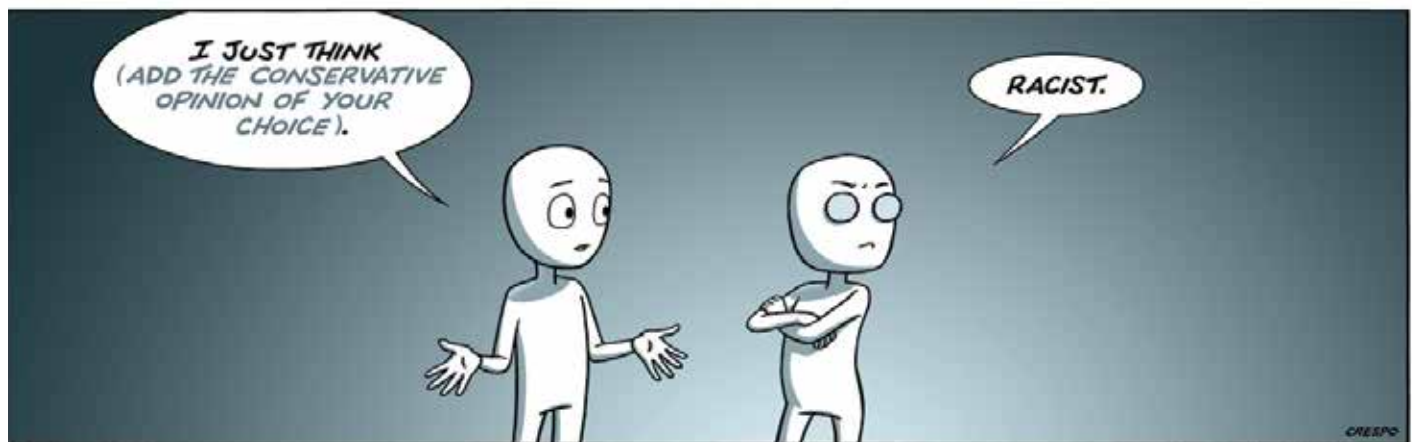
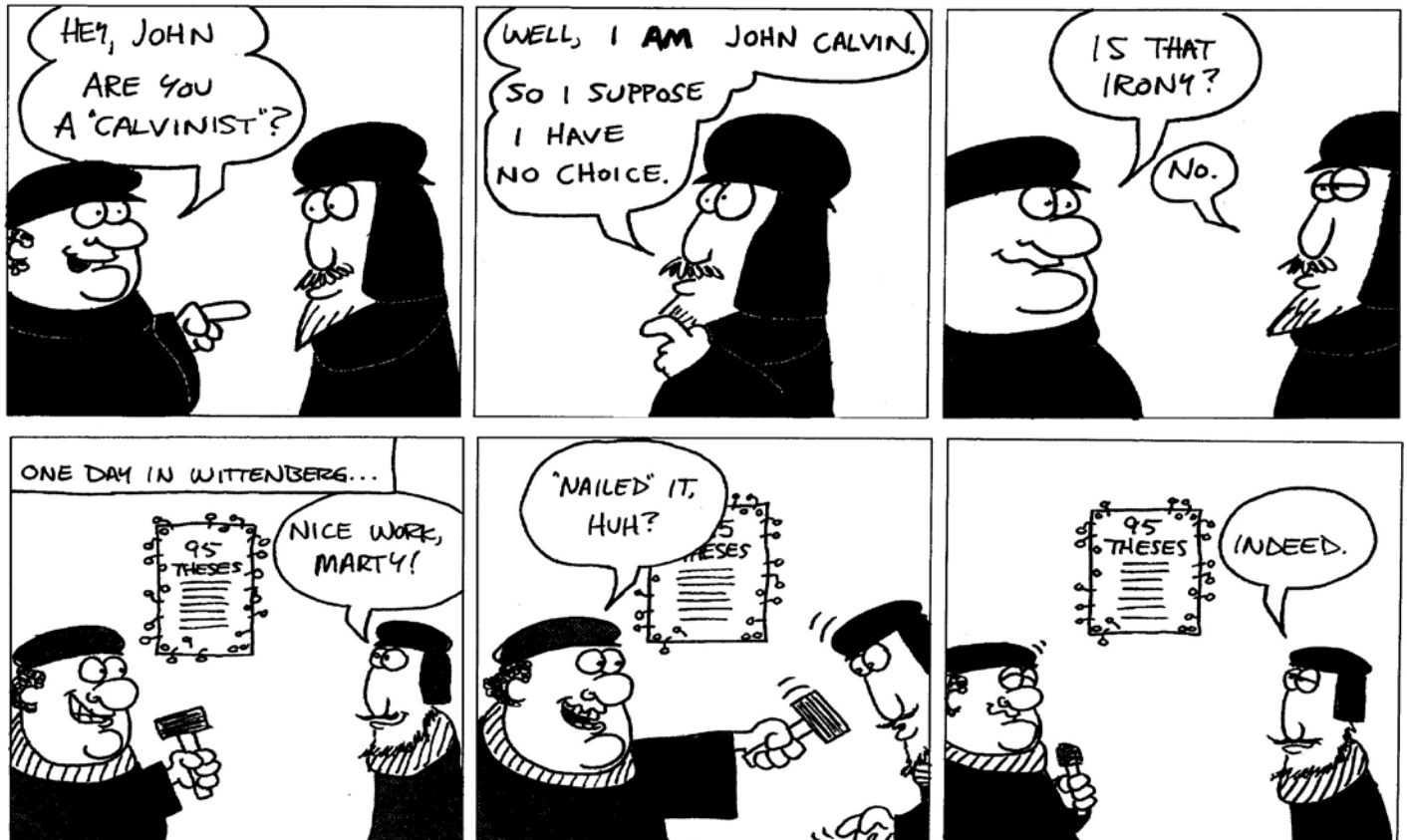
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Recife...(heh-see-fee)

Recife, the fifth largest metropolitan area in Brazil with close to 4 million people, is currently the hub of Reformed mission activity. The IRB has one instituted church in Recife with eight congregations: six under the care of one council, and two under the care of our missionaries.

Recife is a city of contrasts. In one area you can find expensive shopping districts, and people purchasing luxury items from Hugo Boss, Versace and Mercedes Benz. However, just a few miles inland the poverty is evident.

It is in this area that the LORD has allowed His Word to flourish and His church to be gathered through His blessing and the work of pastors J. VanSpronsen & K. Wieseke.

Our Mission Aid worker Chris Boersema labours in the area as well, cooperating with the missionaries in organizing seminars and retreats at the nearby Aldeia Training Center. Chris is currently travelling amongst the churches teaching a personal financial course based on stewardship through Scripture. The course is being well received and the plan is to extend it to other areas and churches of the IRB. We pray the LORD will continue to bless those who labour in the land!



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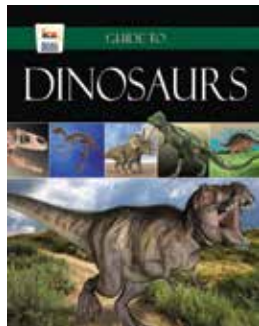


THE BEST

THE TRUTH ABOUT "TERRIBLE LIZARDS"

GUIDE TO DINOSAURS

BY THE INSTITUTE FOR CREATION RESEARCH
118 PAGES / 2014



Of the five books reviewed on these pages, this one has, by far, the most breadth. Some of the topics covered include:

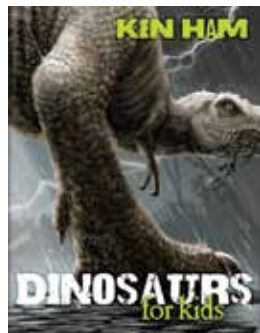
- The history of dinosaur discovery (including who the first dinosaur fossil hunters were, their rivalries and feuds, and the dinosaurs they discovered)
- Dinosaur soft tissue finds
- How dinosaur fossils are dated
- The bird to dinosaur evolutionary theory
- Tips on how best to approach a visit to a dinosaur exhibit in a secular museum
- Dinosaurs as described in the Bible
- How dinosaurs could have fit on the Ark
- Near-modern encounters with dragons

The last half of the book is devoted to two pages spreads on particular dinosaurs or dinosaur suborders. We're told how big each kind is, how they were discovered, any controversies or creationist insights that might be specific to them.

So if an adult or teen was fascinated by dinosaurs and was going to pick just one of the five books reviewed here, then they should get this one: its large pages offer (and by a good margin) the most information of any of them. It is a very good guide produced by the trusted guides at the Institute for Creation Research.

DINOSAURS FOR KIDS

BY KEN HAM
64 PAGES / 2009



Ken Ham has crafted a great kids' primer on the creationist perspective on dinosaurs, showing them how to understand the evidence. He begins by outlining the "seven ages" that apply to dinosaurs.

1. FORMED – when all animals including dinosaurs were created
1. FEARLESS – when people and dinosaurs lived together without fear
3. FALLEN – when sin came and dinosaurs (and man) began to die
4. FLOOD – when most dinosaur fossils were formed
5. FADED – when dinosaurs died out
6. FOUND – when their fossils began to be discovered
7. FICTION – today, when we are told dinosaurs lived millions of years ago.

One caution is worth noting, particularly since this title is aimed at children as young as 9 (and up to about 13). It concludes with a very brief Gospel presentation and invitation to pray the sinner's prayer, which could leave readers with the impression that this prayer is not simply the beginning of something, but the sum total of it. The book's strengths are its colorful full-page pictures and the gentle way it introduces children to evolutionary thought – we hear their theories, but in pretty safe, sheltered confines.

A POCKET GUIDE TO DINOSAURS

BY ANSWERS IN GENESIS
94 PAGES / 2010



Dinosaurs clocks in at just under a 100 pages which gives it room to explore and address the big questions, but not in any sort of overwhelming detail. I appreciate short digestible books, and found this a good balance of information and brevity.

The nine chapters are each written by a different author. Ken Ham starts it by giving an overview the different ways that evolutionists and creationists understand dinosaur fossils and how this is a clash of opposing worldviews – the same evidence is seen by both sides, but interpreted very differently based on their presuppositions (their starting assumptions). Other topics dealt with in the book include:

- Why don't we find dinosaur and human fossils together?
- How did the dinosaurs fit on the Ark?
- Were there dinosaurs recently?

This would make a fantastic give-away to anyone who believes the Bible and also evolution. There is probably not enough in here to turn an ardent evolutionist, but many who accept evolution do so on the sheer volume of evolutionary propaganda they've encountered, rather than for any specific reasons, and a book like this could be a real eye-opener for them.

MAN & DINOSAURS

These are awesome. Both make an argument that responds to the evolutionary claim that dragons (ie. dinosaurs) died off millions of years ago, long before any humans roamed the earth. Or, as *National Geographic* put it, "No human being has ever seen a live dinosaur."

Vance Nelson says that ain't so, because the artifacts show so. In *Dire Dragons* he shares artifacts from country after country. There are sculptures, drawings, etchings, reliefs, paintings, pendants and more, all of which were crafted hundreds of years ago, and yet clearly depict dinosaurs, sometimes with stunning accuracy. If no human has ever seen a dinosaur, then how did these artists get it so right?

The editors of *Dragons: Legends & Lore of Dinosaurs* also say it ain't so, but in their case, it's because the legends show so. They share the many ancient stories from around the world that tell of brave warriors fighting fearsome dragons... and the descriptions of these dragons bear a striking resemblance to dinosaurs. This is a short book, just 24 pages long, but these are no ordinary pages: one has a half dozen envelopes to open with messages within, others have flaps to unfold, and on a couple there are even mini books to read. So there is a lot to explore!

The one downside is that target audience for this book – boys 12-year-olds and up – is also a group that would very likely lose or rip bits of it. So if parents make a gift of it, they either need to give it to very careful kids, or be fine with it getting tattered over time.

While *Legends and Lore* is a kid's book, Nelson's *Dire Dragons* is for an older audience – adults – and maybe as young as 15 or 16. It is slick with the best ultra-realistic dinosaur reconstruction pictures I've seen – my three year old and five year old didn't have the patience for the text, but thought the dinosaurs pictures were "pretty cool."

Some of the many artifacts that Nelson uncovers include:

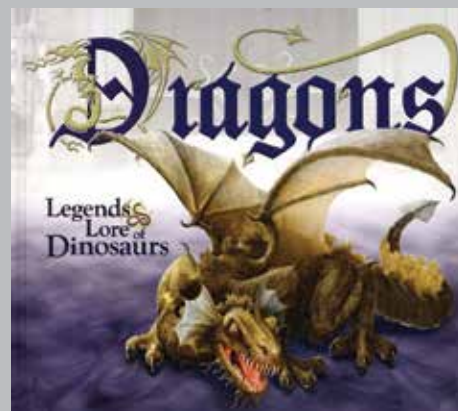
- a petroglyph in Utah dated at more than 800 years old shows a Sauropod
- A pre-Columbus pot from Peru which seems to show a Protoceratops
- A brass etching in Britain from 500 years ago which shows to Sauropods intertwined.
- A turquoise dragon carving from China, dated to 4000 years ago which looks nearly identical to an adolescent Protoceratops

Nelson shares dozens and dozens more, some more impressive than others, but all of them contributing to a wealth of evidence showing man did indeed live at the same time as dinosaurs.

I've read articles, and seen a documentary or two on similar subject matter before (and, of course, just finished *Dragons: Legends & Lore*) so I was pleasantly surprised to learn that, as the author notes, "Most of the evidence presented in this book is 'new'" and hasn't been previously published elsewhere.

Another thing I really appreciated was how Nelson was willing to share what the critics said about the evidence he's marshaled. For example, in the first example I listed above – the Utah Sauropod – at least one evolutionist thinks it's just depicting a squirrel. Hmmm.... I don't think so. But I do appreciate hearing the other side.

So these are two great books on the same topic, but coming at it from different directions and intended for slightly different age groups. But there's a lot to love in both. If I was only going to get one it would definitely be *Dire Dragons* but the two books are often sold together, and there's a good reason for that: they are two sides of the same story.



DRAGONS: LEGENDS & LORE OF DINOSAURS

EDITED BY BODIE HODGE AND LAURA WELCH
2011 / 24 PAGES

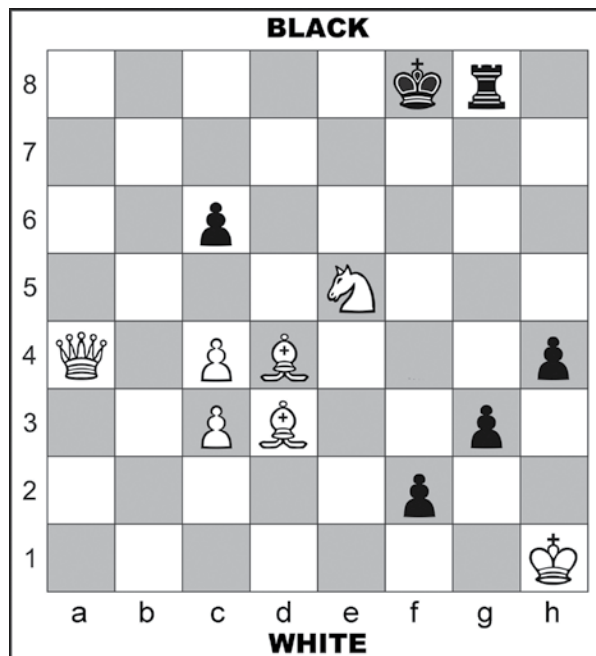


DIRE DRAGONS

BY VANCE NELSON
2012 / 139 PAGES

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #217



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

Riddle for Punsters #217

"A Door to Future Possibilities"

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

Problem to Ponder #217

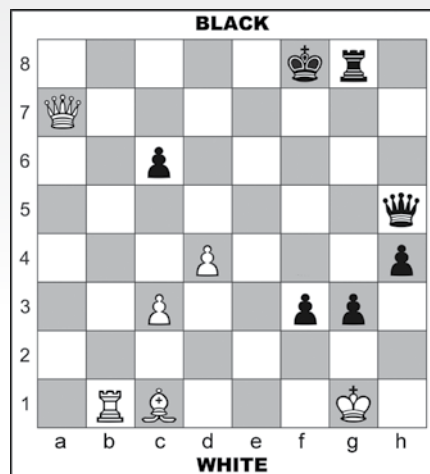
"The Coming of the Messiah"

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

| | | | | |
|-----------|---------|--------|----------|---------|
| HASIJO | MOONSLO | HABIAJ | NORZEH | MARAHAB |
| LABBEZURE | BAROHME | SESJE | HAKEHIZE | CASIA |

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #216



WHITE to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. R-N8 ch Q-K1
2. B-R3 ch P-B4
3. BxP mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Rb1-b8 + Qh5-e8
2. Bc1-a3 + c6-c5
3. Ba3xc5 ++

1. Rb1-b8 + Qh5-e8
2. Bc1-h6 + Rg8-g7
3. Qa7xg7 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ---- P-B7 ch
2. K-N2 P-R6 ch
3. K-B1 Q-Q8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ---- f3-f2 +
2. Kg1-g2 h4-h3 +
3. Kg2-f1 Qh5-d1 ++

Answers to Riddle for Punsters

#216 - "Feeling Semi-fatigued!"

- Why did the heavily loaded transport truck have trouble getting up a steep hill? It was already quite tired before going up the hill.
- Why were the diesel fumes given off by the semi not able to travel far up the hill? They were already very exhausted.
- Why was it hard for the truck windshield to get up the hill after there had been a rainstorm? At the bottom it already felt totally wiped.

Answers to Problem to Ponder

#216 - "Travelling by Goose Air-lines"

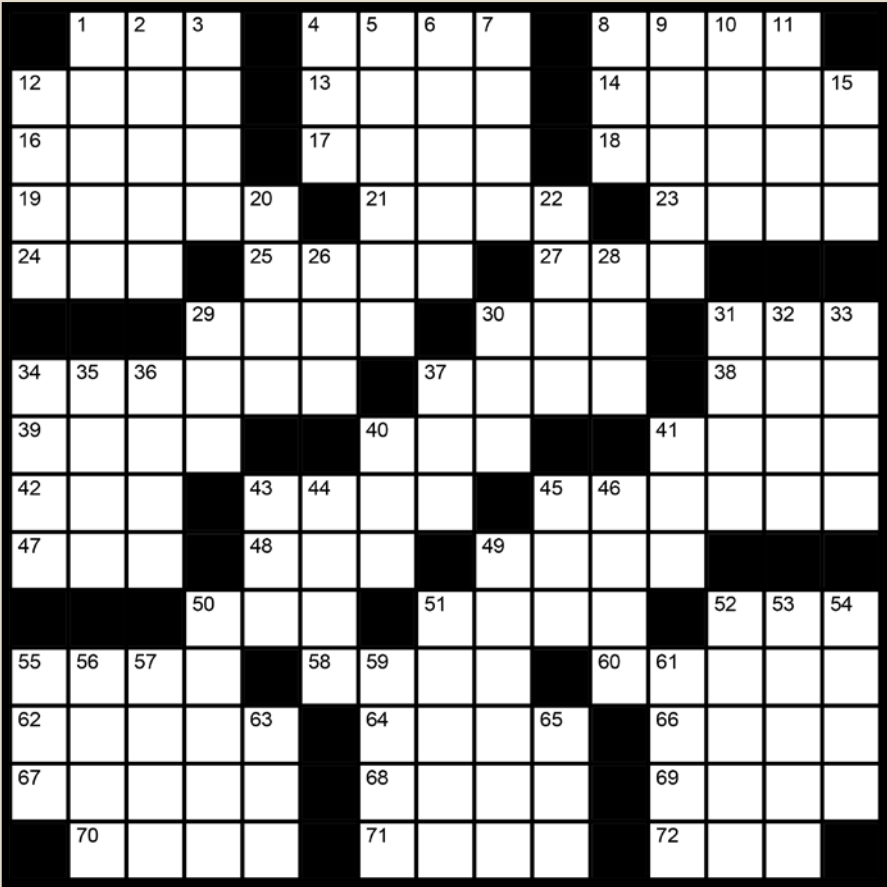
A flock of geese flew for 8 hours at a fairly fast speed. The next day the geese flew for 10 hours at an average speed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the first day average speed. The next day the geese flew for 5 hours at an average speed 10% faster than that of the first day. Finally, on the fourth day the geese flew for 4 hours at the same average speed as the first day then at a speed 20% less for 5 hours. A) If the geese travelled 2,320 km in the 4 days, what was the first day average speed? B) How long (in hours) will it take the geese to travel 2175 km more to reach their destination if they (helped by a tail wind) travel that distance at an average speed $\frac{6}{5}$ of the average for the first 4 days?

a) Let x km/h be the first day's average speed.
Distance = (speed)(time) so:
 $2,320 = x(8) + 0.75x(10) + 1.1x(5) + x(4) + 0.8x(5)$
 $2,320 = 8x + 7.5x + 5.5x + 4x + 4x$
 $2,320 = 29x$ so $x = 2320/29 = 80$ so **that speed was 80 km/h.**

b) For the first FOUR days the average speed was total distance/total time = $2,320/(8+10+5+4+5) = 2,320/32 = 72.5$ km/h so the last 2,175 km will be at an average speed of $72.5(6/5) = 87$ km/h so **the time taken will be distance/speed = $2,175/87 = 25$ hours.**

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

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SERIES 1-5

PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

- "The lot is cast into the ____" (Proverbs 16)
- "Abraham breathed his ____" (Genesis 25)
- Look lustfully, lecherously, and leeringly
- "no human... can ____ the tongue." (James 3)
- "____ to speak, ____ to anger" (James 1)
- Circular pattern in fingerprints or icing
- Long-legged wading bird once revered in Egypt
- It sets sliced meat
- "____ the bonds of" (Isaiah 58)
- Game of chance similar to bingo
- Specific details of laws (short form); not larges
- "Be faithful ____ death" (Revelation 2)
- "Prove me... and ____ me" (Psalm 26)
- Food does it, and unbrushed teeth too
- "____ to make his face shine" (Psalm 104)
- No ____ is good ____

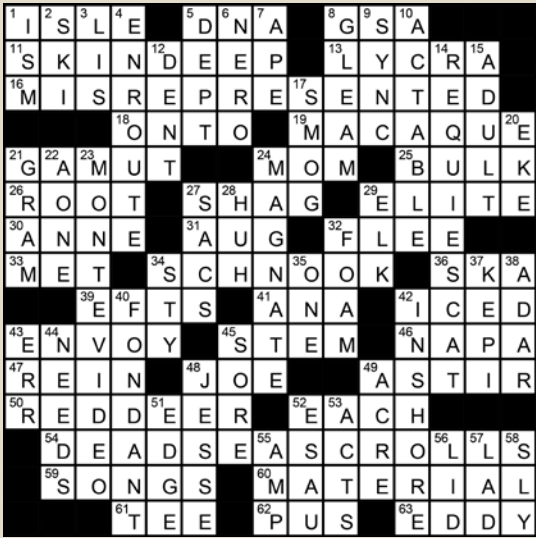
- School course, or where you take it
- Nickname of a legendary "Honest" president
- "From ____ things are gonna be different!"
- "he is... like fuller's ____" (Malachi 3)
- Zero; zilch; nothing; nada
- Americans call it sweet tea. Canadians call it ____ tea
- Peek-a-____
- The digit after the tens place in counting
- Typical pronoun for countries, ships, cars...
- Tangled tale, or knitting material to get tangled
- "____ of false prophets" (Matthew 7)
- Material laid in square yards or any shape yard
- Edible tuber grown in South America
- Superman's girlfriend Lois
- Contemptuous word for a homeless man
- "____ hearts and not... garments" (Joel 2)
- Ancient Egyptian king with a supposed curse

- "he is ____ to save" (Hebrews 7)
- Type of cheese that is *made* backwards
- "Fire up the barbecue for your ____ kebab!"
- Ready for action, watching carefully
- "An ____! A craftsman casts it..." (Isaiah 40)
- An ____ can really pl____ you! (It rhymes!)
- What a hummingbird or a ____ craft can do
- "Do you clothe his neck with a ____?" (Job 39)
- Bears sleep in it (backwards)
- Slimy sticky substance; is said twice to babies
- Woman who lived in temple waiting for Christ
- Stand for a casket or coffin to be carried
- "please send someone ____" (Exodus 4)
- "The merchants... ____ at you" (Ezekiel 27)
- When the world talks back to you
- "Egypt... a staff of ____ to you" (Ezekiel 29)

DOWN

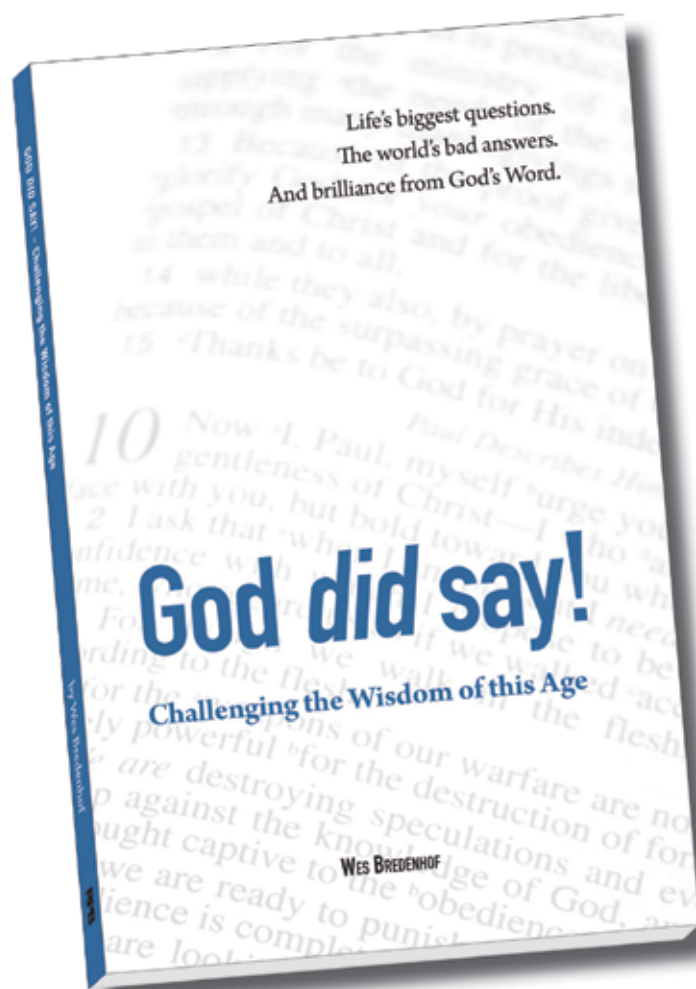
- "Rachel went into ____" (Genesis 35)
- Friendship between groups or nations
- Someone or something that

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 1-4

- annoys you
- Lysergic acid diethylamide (abbreviation): a drug
- A rooster ____ us to the dawn
- What cobblers mend; opposite of leather uppers
- Leafy stick that's still attached to the tree
- Glimfeather the ____: part of C. S. Lewis's Narnia
- Evil monster of folklore that eats human flesh
- Bird with haunting call on Canadian dollar coin
- Archaic form for long ago or formerly
- Don Quixote would do this at windmills
- Typical name of a lion or a pope
- Best cookies ever
- A bean used to make soy sauce
- To rent, or to ____
- Mythical being like a fairy or goblin
- Bears sleep in it (backwards)
- Slimy sticky substance; is said twice to babies
- Woman who lived in temple waiting for Christ
- Stand for a casket or coffin to be carried
- "please send someone ____" (Exodus 4)
- "The merchants... ____ at you" (Ezekiel 27)
- When the world talks back to you
- "Egypt... a staff of ____ to you" (Ezekiel 29)
- "...that he gave his only ____" (John 3)
- Not an abbreviation for brother, nor something he would wear
- "Pay what you ____" (Matthew 18)
- What ____ see when ____ look in the mirror
- Wile E. Coyote's mail order company
- Prohibit, forbid, or prohibition
- "to the ____ of the earth" (Job 28)
- "When life gives you _____, make...!"
- Soft, round, flat-crowned hat
- Invention that helped Britain in World War II
- Hybrid of tiger and lion (but not a liger)
- Take power illegally or by force
- 1953 science fiction film about giant ants
- Satisfied reaction in the hot tub
- ____ Quebecois (separatist party in Canada)
- Violent son of Jacob, fathered a priestly tribe
- ____ store novel; only coin typically called thin
- "Your cords ____ loose..." (Isaiah 33)
- Italian for *three* (that *he* is not part of)
- Denim jeans brand; place sheltered from wind



120 page
 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