

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

JUNE 2015

Volume 34 Issue No. 8

PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS

FALSE DILEMMA

Is Genesis 1 Historical or *Poetic*? p.16

THROUGH WHICH
GLASSES?

P.18

A BOOK FOR EVERY
MINISTER, ELDER, AND
DEACON

P.24

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED GENESIS

CHAPTER 1

IN the "beginning" God created the heaven and the earth.
2 And the earth was "without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep."
3 "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."
4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided "the light from the darkness."
5 And God called the light "Day," and the darkness he called "Night." "And the evening and the morning were the first

CHAP. 1

BC 4004

1 John 1:1, 2

Heb. 1:10

1 Ps. 8:3

Is. 44:24

Acts 17:24

Rev. 4:11

2 Jer. 4:23

2 Ps. 33:6

Is. 40:13.

14

3 Ps. 33:9

3 2 Cor. 4:6

4 Heb. be-

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light and

between

darkness

5 Ps. 74

5 Heb.

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6 J

7



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FALSE DILEMMA

Is Genesis 1 Historical or *Poetic*? p.16

by Jim Witteveen



THE PRESIDENT KILLED
MY SON

- Ken Wieske

p.10



THE SOCIAL MEDIA GAME

- Martin VanWoudenberg

p.12



THE BIBLICAL AND
HISTORICAL BASIS FOR
PARENTAL RIGHTS P.24

- Michael Wagner

FROM THE EDITOR P.5

- Jon Dykstra

NOTA BENE P.6

TO GUYS WHO FLIRT P.9

- by Rebecca Korvemaker

IN A NUTSHELL P.11

Did Adam have a belly button?

Why we need to clarify Article 14 of the Belgic Confession

In the fourth century a big battle was fought over a one letter difference. The Church professed that Christ was *homoousios* – “of the same substance” – as God the Father, while the Arians argued that Christ was *homoiousios*, or merely “of a similar substance.” The two Greek terms differed by only a single iota (the Greek “i”) but what was at stake couldn’t have been bigger: the Arians said Christ was merely *like* God but was actually a creature.

Today we’re contending with an issue that seems quiet small: our battle is over a belly button. On the side are those that profess Adam had no belly button, because he had no mother and because he was never born. As the Belgic Confession Article 14 puts it,

...God created man of the dust from the ground...

On the other side are those who say Adam may well have had a belly button and a mom, and ancestors, and may have shared one of those ancestors with the chimpanzees.

So this belly button battle quickly shows itself to be about matters that are of great importance. It comes down to whether Adam brought death into the world through the Fall into sin, or whether God used death – millions of years of creatures evolving up from the primordial slime – to bring about Adam. The issue here is every bit as big as Christ’s nature: it’s about the character of God.

That’s why Hamilton’s Providence Canadian Reformed Church has proposed amending Article 14 of the Belgic Confession to clarify that Adam has no ancestors. They propose that the Article now begin with these two lines:

We believe that God created the human race by making and forming Adam from dust (Gen. 2:7) and Eve from Adam’s side (Gen. 2:21-22). They were created as the first two humans

and the biological ancestors of all other humans. There were no pre-Adamites, whether human or hominid.

Their addition would add about 40 words to the confession, and remove any doubt as to what should be believed.

But is the change needed? Is there really anyone in our church circles that’s confused about Adam’s origins?

Yes, and yes. Not only is there confusion in our churches, this same confusion exists in other Reformed churches including our sister denomination, the OPC.

CANADIAN REFORMED CONFUSION

One prominent member of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Jitse Van Der Meer, was asked how he could square man and chimpanzees having a common ancestor with what we confess in the beginning of Belgic Confession Article 14 about man being made from the dust. In a post on the Reformed Academic blog Prof. Van Der Meer answered:

I am not sure why you think there is something to square between Article 14 and the idea of a common ancestor for chimpanzees and humans, but let me make a guess. Some have taken Gen. 2:7 to mean that God acted like a potter. If you take that literally you might see a contradiction with the idea that chimpanzees and humans have a common ancestor. But other biblical scholars reject the literal “potter” interpretation because they see this as coming close to disrespect: Did God fashion the liver, the lungs of clay? My conclusion is that the text neither justifies nor excludes the possibility that humans and chimpanzees had a common ancestor for the obvious reason that it is not a scientific text.

Prof. Van Der Meer manages to take both Genesis 2 and Belgic Confession Article 14

and read them in such a way as to allow for the possibility that humans and chimpanzees had common ancestors. According to this perspective, Adam may have been crafted from the dust, but may still have had a belly button, a mom and dad, grandparents, and much, much more.

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CONFUSION

The Christian Reformed churches also hold to the Belgic Confession. But it hasn’t served as a sufficient safeguard against evolutionary inroads. Almost 25 years ago, in the CRC’s 1991 Statement on Origins they stated in “Declaration F”:

The church declares, moreover, that the clear teaching of Scriptures and of our confessions on the uniqueness of human beings as image bearers of God rules out the espousal of all theorizing that posits the reality of evolutionary forebears of the human race.

That sounds good, right? But this was part of a minority report. The majority had recommended that there be no statements made about human evolution because, “much research remained to be done in that area.” So the majority of the committee, even back in 1991, didn’t want to go as far as to rule out ancestors for Adam. Synod did adopt Declaration F, but attached two notes which rendered the Declaration meaningless.

NOTE 1: Of course, private research, theorizing, and discussions are not addressed by this declaration

NOTE 2: Declaration F is not intended and may not be used to limit further investigation and discussion on the origin of humanity.

In other words, even as the 1991 Synod of the CRC took a stand against Adam having ancestors, they specifically allowed for their academics to talk about Adam

having ancestors. What the right hand giveth the left taketh away!

In 2014, the CRC did away with Declaration F altogether. They still hold to Belgic Confession Article 14, but that is not being understood as an impediment to speculation about Adam having ancestors.

CONFUSION IN THE OPC

Closer to home, confusion about Adam's origin also exists in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Our sister church was running into trouble way back in 1992 in a case that involved a Calvin College biology professor by the name of Terry Gray. Dr. William VanDoodewaard gives an account of Gray's case in his book *The Quest for the historical Adam*:

Terry Gray...proposed that both the increasingly accepted hermeneutical alternatives to the literal tradition and what he viewed as the realities of the record of natural history should allow for the possibility that Adam and Eve were created through a process involving primate ancestors.

How did Gray address Genesis 2:7, where we are told "...the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground..."?

Disagreeing with John Murray's literal reading...Gray argued that the "dust of the ground" was "a non-technical term" that simply referred to "the physical-chemical constituency of the human body" and that the verse did not address the process by which God formed man.

When complaints were first made about Gray's stance, his session (the OPC term for consistory) "held that the charges were unwarranted." His Presbytery (similar to our Classis) ruled against Gray, and the 1994 OPC General Assembly also ruled against him.

So the OPC stood strong, right? Not so fast.

Gray was suspended from his office as a ruling elder, but as he explained in a blogpost titled "Being an Evolutionary Creationist in a Confessionally Reformed

Church" he was restored in 1998 after he admitted:

...I did not know how to hold my views about human evolution together with the uniqueness of Adam as taught in the Confessions and in Scripture."

Gray found that what Scripture taught conflicted with his views about evolution. But that did not lead him to reject evolution. Instead he simply stopped trying to revolve the conflict, continuing to hold to evolution, but no longer suggesting as to how it could be fit in with Scripture.

That the OPC thought this an acceptable resolution to the issue underscores the need for clarity. If something is found to conflict with Scripture then it needs to be rejected, not sequestered! That's what it means to live by God's Word.

Gray eventually left the OPC, joined the CRC, and worked with others there to get Declaration F rescinded.

CONCLUSION

In the fourth century you can be sure there were many who wondered what all the fuss was about. Just one letter! But the fight was about the very identity of Christ – Who He is – so it wasn't possible to compromise.

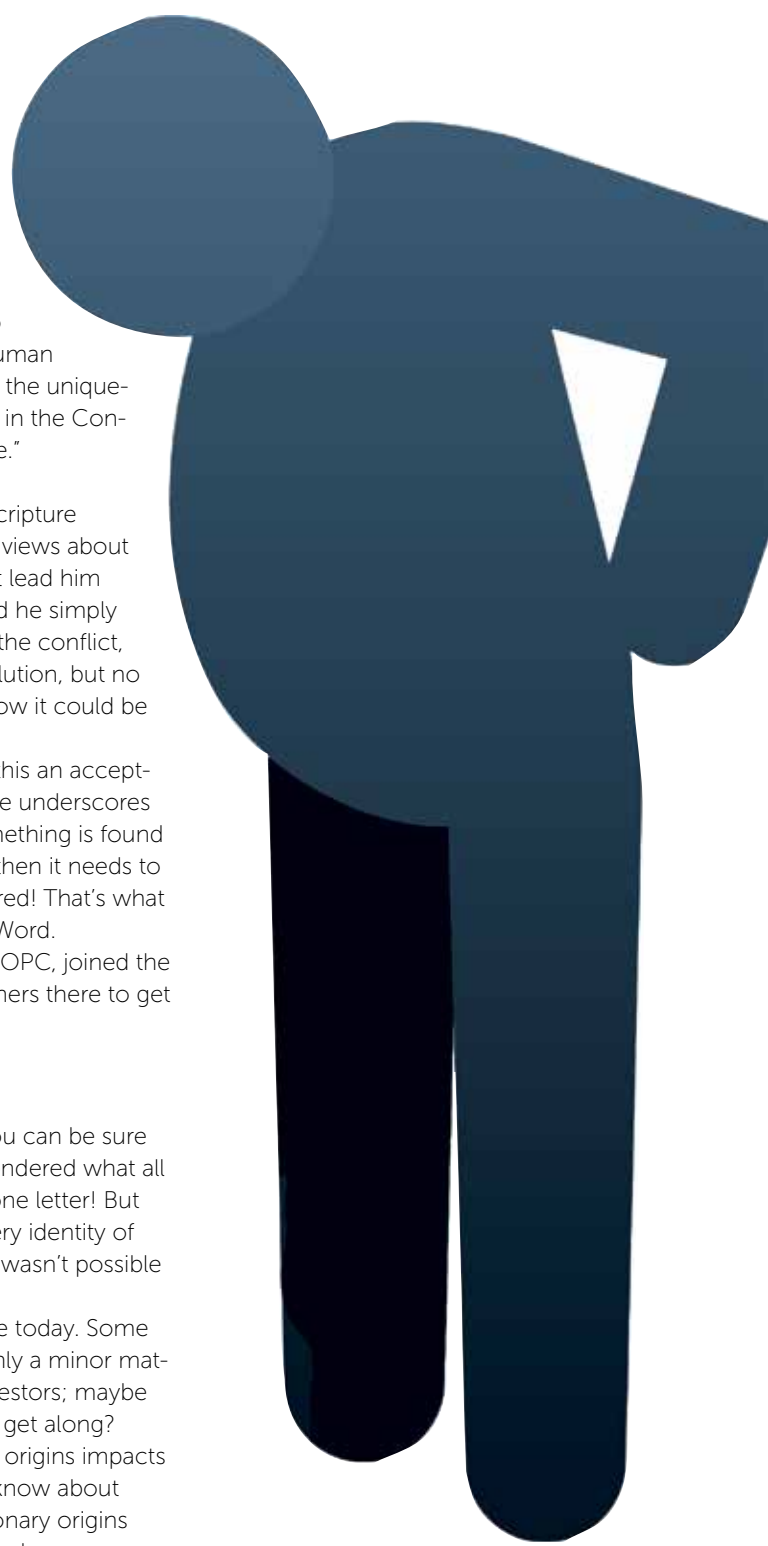
The same has to be true today. Some want to position this as only a minor matter. Maybe Adam had ancestors; maybe he didn't. Can't we all just get along?

But the issue of Adam's origins impacts every aspect of what we know about God. If Adam had evolutionary origins then he came about through a process of death, disease, and dead ends. Then, rather than Adam bringing death into the world via the Fall, it was death that brought about Adam. If God created using the tooth-and-claw, survival-of-the-fittest, process of evolution which He then called "good" and "very good" that completely changes our understanding of what good is. It changes how we understand our good God.

What's at stake here is our understanding of God's character. So no, we can't all just get along. We need to help the con-

fused and stop those who causing this confusion. One very good way to do so would be to adopt Providence's proposal to revise Belgic Confession Article 14.

You can find the proposal, and supporting documents, on the Providence Canadian Reformed church website ProvidenceChurch.ca. Jon Dykstra can be reached at editor@ReformedPerspective.ca.



NOTA BENE

News worth noting

TWITTER & BRITAIN'S YOUNGEST MP

BY JON DYKSTRA



In May the United Kingdom elected their youngest Member of Parliament since the 17th century. Mhairi Black, just 20 years old, was only 2 when incumbent Douglas Alexander first won his seat in the 1997 election. She is also one of the very first MPs to have spent a third of her life with a Twitter account: Miss Black signed up when she was 14.

In the course of her campaign her old tweets were pored over by opponents and the media for any gaffes of which there were plenty.

These posts revealed her teenage self to be insulting, vulgar-mouthed, and at least on occasion involved in underage drinking and drunkenness. Of course, that makes her not so very different from many an intemperate teen who has yet to grow up. But while the stupid things many of us might have said or did when we were teens have long since been forgiven and forgotten, she posted her sins online for all the world to retweet. And though she tried to delete them, once something is out on the Internet it is there forever.

While social media might seem like a conversation between friends, Miss Black's experience shows it to be more akin to publishing something in the world's biggest newspaper: this is a permanent record everyone can access. That's something parents need to understand. When it comes to our kids, we need to treat this the same way we do our 2-ton truck, or our sheathed and shiver-inducing bread-knife. Before our kids are allowed to use dangerous implements we want to ensure they know how to use them safely.

SOURCE: Marcus Roberts' "Introducing Britain's youngest MP for 350 years" posted to MercatorNet.com on May 12, 2015.



Irish "same-sex marriage" campaigners

HONORING GOD IN DEFEAT

BY KEVIN BRATCHER



In Friday, May 23rd, Ireland became the first nation to approve "same-sex marriage" by popular vote. The turnout was considered large – more than 60% of eligible voters cast ballots – with a final count of 62% in favor and 38% opposed.

The results make it clear that we are operating in the minority, politically speaking. This helps to clarify our methods of engagement with the world as Christians: we must not wait for our governments to govern on this moral issue according to God's design and purpose.

We must also understand that this has come to pass in part because the church has failed to preach and model God's Truth to the world. This was a measure approved by the people and so our main strategy now – as it should have always been – is to preach to the people.

BATTLE OVER VERGARA'S EMBRYOS

BY JON DYKSTRA



Nick Loeb, the ex-fiancé of actress Sofia Vergara is suing to preserve two frozen female embryonic babies the couple created via the process of in vitro fertilization (IVF) before they broke up. Why does he want to save the two embryonic children? According to *In Touch* magazine, it is because he is pro-life “and believes that life begins at conception.”

Loeb is right to battle for these unborn children – life is precious. But why would someone who understands life begins at conception agree to freeze his children in the first place?

These are hazardous surroundings. According to information Randy Alcorn cites in his book *Pro-life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments*:

Not all embryos survive the freeze-thaw process. A 50% survival rate is considered reasonable. After the thaw, embryos retaining 50% or more of the cells they had before freezing are cultured and placed back in the uterus via a tube inserted in the cervix.

Additionally the placing of children in cold storage until some future and often-indefinite date is to treat them as a commodity rather than as image bearers of God.

While pro-lifers should find such treatment of the unborn objectionable, there is a good reason for Christians to participate in one type of IVF. Because the IVF process routinely involves the production of “extra” embryos that couples often later decide not to

implant themselves, there are hundreds of thousands of unwanted embryonic children in cryogenic freezers around the world. Most of these children will eventually be destroyed, or given over to scientists for lethal experimentation. But some of these children can be rescued; some are being made available for what’s been nicknamed “snowflake adoption.”

This involves the implantation of these embryonic children in the womb of the adoptive mother in the hope that the baby can be carried to term. There are no guarantees, and the process can be expensive but the adoptive parents are giving these embryonic children something they didn’t have before: the opportunity to continue to grow and develop. IVF is a morally problematic way to “produce” children, but it can be an ethical and wonderful way to rescue those already conceived.

SOURCE: “Nick Loeb reportedly suing ex Sofia Vergara over frozen embryos” posted to FoxNews.com on April 15, 2015; Picture credit: s_bukley / Shutterstock.com

POPULATION UP, NUMBER OF UNDERNOURISHED DOWN

BY JON DYKSTRA



Even as the population of the world continues to grow, the number of hungry people is dropping. According to the United Nations’ report *State of Food Insecurity*, over the last 25 years the number of undernourished has dropped 216 million, from over a billion people, down to 795 million. During this same period the world population has

increased 1.9 billion.

The greatest drops occurred in East Asia and Latin America where, over the last quarter century, the number of undernourished people has been cut in half.

But in Africa the number of hungry people went up, from 182 million in 1990-1992 to an estimated 232 million today.

The report notes that the countries in Africa where advances are being made are primarily those that have “enjoyed stable political conditions” even though many of these same countries “have experienced high population growth rates.”

This shows that hunger reduction can be achieved even where populations are increasing rapidly, if adequate policy

and institutional conditions are put in place.

While 795 million undernourished people represents progress it is still a huge number and more needs to be done. But if continued progress is going to be made, the problem has to be properly understood. Too often poverty is blamed on overpopulation. But as we learn from the Bible, and as this report echoes, the having of children is not the cause of poverty – poverty can go down even as population goes up if there are stable political conditions in a country. Instead of targeting pregnancy in our fight against poverty our attention would be better spent fighting governmental corruption and incompetence, and taking in refugees from countries destroyed by war.

POLITICIAN DISCOVERS FACEBOOK POSTS NOT THE BEST WAY TO MAKE DELICATE POINTS

BY JON DYKSTRA

Aruckus started in Alberta this past May when a member of the PC party typed up a Facebook post about the new NDP minister of health. Jason Lien, PC vice-president in charge of Southern Alberta wrote:

Our morbidly obese Health Minister Sarah Hoffman is going to ban the sale of menthol tobacco product in Alberta as of September. Where does the nanny state begin and end?

While Lien's comments were rude he was denounced as "sexist" and "misogynist" by critics quoted in *The National Post*, the *Huffington Post* and *CBC* because, so they claimed, no one would ever say such a thing about a male politician. However, Rebel Media's Ezra Levant quickly showed that to be untrue: a year ago Quebec's Health Minister Gaétan Barrette was also

criticized for being morbidly obese.

While Lien wasn't misogynist, his comment was rude. None of us like to have our personal appearance evaluated so shouldn't we "do unto others" and avoid any such talk?

That would be true in general, but exceptions apply. In this case Lien was trying to make a larger point but failed to fully lay out his argument. He was echoing a point made a day earlier by *Rebel Media's* Ezra Levant, who, while reporting on menthol cigarette ban, questioned why someone who wasn't making the healthiest of choices for herself didn't find it ironic to then use the power of her office to make health decisions for everyone else. He acknowledged that he himself was on the chubby side, but argued that the difference was that he wasn't trying to dictate to others what they should do regarding their health. Levant made it

clear this wasn't about weight, but was about governmental intrusiveness. As a Libertarian, Levant always argues for less government, and for him this was just one more example of a politician using the power of the State to tell us to do what they say, not what they do. Levant was making a clearly political point – he was calling her a hypocrite.

Again, that's likely what Lien was trying to do to too, but instead of carefully crafting his statement, as the delicacy of this situation required, he fired off a Facebook missive. The end result was that while Levant got off relatively unscathed, Lien was vilified by the national media.

What lesson can we learn? We need to understand that venting on Facebook never advances a discussion. It certainly isn't the same thing as giving an answer "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). So far as we are able, let's ensure the world hates us for our content, not our delivery.

DO WE HAVE A BETTER SOLUTION?

BY KEVIN BRATCHER

At the recent National Summit on Youth Violence Prevention in May, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan suggested one possible solution to youth violence might be public boarding schools. Citing homes where there's no mother, father, or even grandparent at home, Duncan stated that, "There's just certain kids we should have 24/7 to really create a safe environment and give them a chance to be successful."

The Secretary's concern is laudable. However, his particular solution is highly distasteful given the dangerous flaws inherent in the government-run foster and educational systems. That these children need to have stable upbringing is undeniable. That our governments – engaged as they are in the dilution of God's Truth and the promotion of immorality in a multitude of forms – are capable of raising children in a beneficial manner is hard to imagine.

That said that, Christians must pay attention to the dire need to step up and provide the social services that these young victims need. We ought not to dare any criticism of the meager justice of unbelievers if we are not at least seeking to provide the Godly alternative at the same time.



JAPAN'S SHRINKING POPULATION

BY JON DYKSTRA

For the fourth year in a row Japan's population has shrunk – down this last year by 215,000 – bringing it to levels it was last at in the year 2000. The government has warned at this rate by 2060 the population will have shrunk from 127 million to just 87 million. The biggest challenge concerns the proportion of youth to seniors. When we look at the numbers we find that Japanese citizens over 65 increased by 1 million, to a total of 33 million. But in just the last year the under 65 population shrunk by roughly 1.2 million.

For decades, the United Nations and other groups have warned against overpopulation, saying the planet couldn't handle more people and worldwide poverty and famine would occur. But this was an ideological, rather than empirical, position. It wasn't based on facts – poverty isn't caused by overpopulation but is more closely linked to wars, governmental corruption, and tyranny. This ideology position viewed children as more mouths to feed. Meanwhile God speaks of children as a blessing, and his cultural mandate (Genesis 1:28) directs us to see children as not just mouths that consume, but hands that produce and minds that create.

It is no coincidence that when the world spurns the blessing of children, as Japan has, a curse results: Japan is facing the problem of no longer having enough young people to care for parents and grandparents as they age.

SOURCE: Marcus Roberts' "Japanese Population: Welcome back to the year 2000!" posted to www.mercatornet.com May 6, 2015



To Guys Who Flirt

by Rebecca Korvemaker



Let me put this simply; girls have hearts. I don't mean that guys don't have hearts. I mean we girls have really touchy hearts. Let me explain.

While guys are busy thinking about cars and building stuff and burning stuff and whatever else they think about, girls are thinking about the future. That future probably involves a house and kids and a stable life and maybe a dog and of course marriage. I would say what most girls think about is marriage and living "happily ever after" with prince charming.

That's what they think about and it's what they think you guys think about too.

So when a guy flirts with a girl it's probable that she will think he likes her, as in, wants-to-live-with-her-till-they're-80-and-in-the-nursing-home likes her. Meanwhile he probably thinks it's just fun to get her attention. But here's the thing; girls read into *everything*.

Now I don't want to paint all girls with the same broad brush. Some girls are really good at not reading into everything, especially if they have a clearly defined relationship with the guy in question. I have some very good guy friends who I've talked to about our relationship and we both know where we stand when it comes to the romance stuff. We're clear on being just friends so we can joke around and have a great time without anyone's heart getting broken.

But, if you are a guy and you have a friend who is a girl and you don't have

a clearly defined relationship *be careful that you don't lead her on*. Boys can be so confusing and sometimes clueless. When you ask a girl out for coffee and don't clarify why, or send her text messages that have pet names like "dear" or "honey," or when you talk to a girl a lot and give her lots of attention (like hours a day) and don't clarify your intentions, that is *brutal* on her heart. Her heart is not yours, it's hers and God's and her future husband's. Don't mess with it.

So don't flirt or be overly friendly.

HOW TO KNOW


But how do you know if you are flirting or being overly friendly? A good rule of thumb is to imagine her future husband (who will be really protective and a lot bigger than you) is standing right next to her reading your texts to her and watching you interact with her. If you feel uncomfortable with thinking about how her husband would feel about how you are acting you should probably stop doing what you're doing. That means you are probably acting to her in a way that only her husband (or someone with those

aspirations) should.

Another thing to do is ask your sister or mom or some other woman what she thinks about your relationship. Women understand other women better than men do (I know, *shocker*). Or if you get the feeling that she thinks you are "more than friends" you could move to another country and delete her from every media device you have...or you could just talk to her.

MAN UP

I would like to challenge my brothers in Christ to be men and protect the hearts of their sisters. You're men. You're awesome at protecting stuff. And I would also like to challenge you to search out and know what God would have you do and who He would have you marry. A pastor I know recently commented that there is a man drought among the churches. There are not enough Christian men who take their faith, the doctrine of covenant, and the idea of family seriously.

Guard your heart, and the heart of your sisters, and be the man God wants you to be. 

Flirting, flattery, & falsehood

To flirt is to "behave as though attracted to or trying to attract someone, but for amusement rather than with serious intentions."
– OxfordDictionaries.com

"A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin."

– *Proverbs 26:28*

THE PRESIDENT KILLED MY SON

Or, How Spanking Saved Him

by Ken Wieske

Under Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff children now have a "right to be educated without the use of corporal punishment." That means no spanking. Our president thinks this is cruel and degrading.

I want to tell her that this law would have resulted in the death of my son.

A FATHER WHO LOVES HIS SON DISCIPLINES HIM

When my eldest son was very young (he is now 18), I taught him that obedience brings joy, but disobedience brings pain. He was trained from an early age to obey immediately and cheerfully. The Bible teaches something that our current government does not want to acknowledge: that children, by nature, want to follow their own will, not the will of the authorities duly appointed by God to care for them. To correct this dangerous willfulness, it is sometimes necessary to apply discipline, and that discipline needs to hurt. Only in this way, do children learn that disobedience is not a good thing. That's how they learn it's not worth it. The small lessons

learned in childhood all contribute to the huge life lesson which teaches us that when we cheerfully submit to God's Word, there is eternal joy, but when we rebel against His will, there is everlasting destruction.

In accordance with the Word of God, I have guided my son making use, among other things, of corporal punishment. He learned to obey immediately when he received an instruction from his father or his mother. This worked very well; we would also be careful to give very few instructions, leaving our son plenty of freedom. But when we did tell him to do something, he knew he was expected to obey.

FRUIT OF DISCIPLINE

During the first three years of my son's life we lived in a tiny hamlet that was quite a distance away from the big city. He had a big yard in which he could play, and did not know the dangers of a big city. When we suddenly moved to the huge, bustling city of Recife, he was not prepared for urban life. For his entire three years of existence on this earth he had lived a life where it was safe to run pretty much anywhere. But on the streets of Recife things were quite different.

A few days after our arrival, we were on the sidewalk in front of our building in the busy Boa Viagem neighborhood. My little son decided to run towards the street. The stoplight had turned green and the cars got up to speed quickly and were now hurtling down our street. His view of the oncoming traffic was blocked



My son didn't know to stop running.

by a car, so he didn't see the danger. My son didn't know to stop running. He was too far for me to reach in time. Within seconds, he would die.

"Chaim! Stop!" I yelled.

He stopped. That instant. Without hesitation.

CONCLUSION

Three years of firm and loving discipline saved the life of my son. Small doses of pain on his behind, reddened by a spanking, were used by God to spare him from being horribly killed by traffic.

If President Dilma had passed her law back then I would have been a criminal for having applied this firm, kind, and biblical discipline.

Or, if I had been an obedient subject, my son would be dead today. **RP**

Rev. Wieske is a missionary in Brazil, and this article is a translated version of the Portuguese original, and reprinted here with permission.

*But when we
did tell him to
do something,
he knew he was
expected to obey.*

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

THIS JOKE IS EITHER FUNNY OR EDUCATIONAL

“There are just two kinds of people in this world: those who believe in false dichotomies, and penguins.”

SOURCE: *Spotted on a t-shirt*

LAUNDRY TIPS FOR GUYS

- Shirts have to be changed daily; jeans can last forever.
- No one sees it, and it doesn't wrinkle anyway – don't fold your underwear.
- Stress relieving tip: when buying black socks, make sure all of them are *exactly* the same.
- Pairing sock wastes time – dump the mass of them straight into your sock drawer.
- No one knows how to fold a fitted sheet – don't try.
- Washing your shirts in cold will keep your whites from becoming pinks. Only your underwear, towels, sheets, and workout clothes need to be washed in hot.

NOTHING LIKE A GOOD (OR GROSS) ILLUSTRATION TO CLEAR AWAY THE CONFUSION

While it seems safe to say no *Reformed Perspective* reader went to see *Fifty Shades of Grey* many professing Christians did. And one of the justifications they used might sound familiar. It goes like this: “I'm not watching it for the sex; I'm watching it for the story.” Though that might seem ridiculous when applied to pornography like *Fifty Shades*, this is a line that many a Christian has used to justify watching many a film that would never meet with grandma's approval. This makes it seem as if we understand the sex scene is vile, and we're enduring it to get to all the other good stuff in the film. But *WORLD* magazine writer Emily Whitten says Christians are just lying to themselves with this type of justification. In a Feb. 9 article she makes use of a simple illustration see

through their self-deception.

Here's a quick reality check as to whether the [sex scenes] played a role in your enjoyment: If all the sex in the movie were replaced with [equally] long scenes of the characters' experiencing recurring diarrhea, would you still find the story as endearing or entertaining? Would you be willing to sit through something so disgusting to get to the love story? If not, then you are seeing it for the sex scenes at some level.

SOURCE: *Emily Whitten's "Five myths about Fifty Shades of Grey"*

I THINK I GET IT, THEREFORE I AM

Rene Descartes walks into a bar. The bartender asks, “Would you like a beer?” Descartes replies, “I think not,” and then promptly disappears.

SOURCE: *Andy Simon's "25 Jokes that make you sound like a genius" in the Sept. 2014 issue of Reader's Digest*

THE BIBLE IS A MIRACULOUS WHOLE

In my first year English class our learned professor told the class that the Bible was most certainly the greatest book ever. He praised it for the excellence found in its many parts – I can still remember the quiet awe that came over him when speaking of the Bible's poetry.

But despite that awe, he wasn't a Christian. I don't think he understood how all those excellent parts came together in a remarkable whole. As pastor R.A. Torrey once explained, the unity of the Bible gives evidence of the One Mind behind it all.

The Bible consists of sixty-six books, written by more than thirty different men, extending in the period of its composition over more than fifteen hundred years; written in three different languages, in many different countries, and by men on every plane of social life, from the herdman and fisherman and cheap politician up to the king upon his throne; written under all sorts of circumstances; yet in all this wonderful conglomeration we find an absolute

unity of thought.

A wonderful thing about it is that this unity does not lie on the surface. On the surface there is oftentimes apparent contradiction, and the unity only comes out after deep and protracted study.

More wonderful yet is the organic character of this unity, beginning in the first book and growing till you come to its culmination in the last book of the Bible. We have first the seed, then the plant, then the bud, then the blossom, then the ripened fruit.

Suppose a vast building were to be erected, the stones for which were brought from the quarries in Rutland, Vermont; Berea, Ohio; Kasota, Minnesota, and Middletown, Connecticut. Each stone was hewn into final shape in the quarry from which it was brought. These stones were of all varieties of shape and size, cubical, rectangular, cylindrical, etc., but when they were brought together every stone fitted into its place, and when put together there rose before you a temple absolutely perfect in every outline, with its domes, sidewalls, buttresses, arches, transepts—not a gap or a flaw anywhere. How would you account for it? You would say:

Back of these individual workers in the quarries was the master-mind of the architect who planned it all, and gave to each individual worker his specifications for the work.

So in this marvelous temple of God's truth which we call the Bible, whose stones have been quarried at periods of time and in places so remote from one another, but where every smallest part fits each other part, we are forced to say that back of the human hands that wrought was the Master-mind that thought.

GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY

“[Feminism] is mixed up with a muddled idea that women are free when they serve employers but slaves when they help their husbands.”

– G.K. Chesterton

THE SOCIAL MEDIA GAME

by Martin VanWoudenberg

There is a game that millions play every time they log into Facebook. I am not talking about Farmville or one of the many other free-to-play games that Facebook peddles. This one is far more subtle – so much so that many do not even know they are playing it. In fact, it is not unique to Facebook alone, as almost all social media sites will compel you to play it. Ironically, the only way to win this game may be to actively refuse to play it at all. But to do that you have to know you are playing, and many do not.

The game is called *Life*, and the way you score points in this game is by showing you have a better life than everyone else.

It's this impulse that drives social media popularity and billions of dollars in products. Every time you look at other people's status updates, their vacation photos, their evenings out, and their

lovely images of adorable children, you are being subtly reminded that you are not winning.

Tallying how you are doing is not as hard as it might seem – Facebook has added a wonderful counter that determines your score, and many other social media sites have followed their model. For Facebook, it is the “like” button, and comment count. For other sites it is the “retweet” or “promote,” “re-pin” and “share” functions. The more followers, “likes” and positive comments you receive, the better you are doing.

A POPULAR GAME

Based on Facebook usage statistics, 29 years of human existence are consumed by Facebook each day. Social media use is exponentially rising, with more than two-thirds of Internet users being frequent social media users. It now ranks above email as one of the most common activities.

So there are a lot of players involved in this game. The problem is, this game has some very real hazards.

In the first place, it can be extremely addicting. It creates a dopamine reaction in the brain, similar to a “hit” from a drug. There is a notable “buzz” many teens and adults get, when comments are “liked” or the encouragement pours in. The problem is that the effect wears off so quickly. The only way to get more is

to post more. A young teen girl changes her profile picture every few days. As the “likes” and comments pour in, she feels validated in her photo skills, and her physical attractiveness. A few “lovely” and “gorgeous” comments really boost her esteem throughout day. As the commenting starts to fade off, she will proceed to tagging people in relation to the photo, prompting them to visit her page, and also leave a comment. When that fades off, she does it again.

This reveals a second problem, and that is the need to create something that is worth commenting on and validating oneself for. It can be either positive or negative in nature, and true social media junkies know to alternate between the two. There is nothing like a posted status such as, “Having a very hard time today,” to prompt a flood of, “What’s the matter?” responses to interact with. And there we have it: multiple validations of our importance and value in a single post!

UNDERSTANDING THE GAME

Perhaps this seems an overly negative way to look at Facebook and other social media. But consider your own postings, and those of your friends: how many reflect the reality of life, and how many are simply “click bait”? Does the world need to know when a husband buys his wife flowers? (Aren’t some thank-yous

.... the way you score points in this game is by showing you have a better life than everyone else.

If, as adults, we can fall into the game without realizing it, how much more do our teens and pre-teens buy into this without thinking?

better said in private?) Do I really love my wife if I haven't praised her in a post this week? And is parental love only proven when it's posted? These are the pressing questions of our day.

The point here is not to vilify Facebook and other social media. It can be put to good use. But Facebook invites me to tell the world all about me. And then I get rated on the portrait I present. Unfettered, Facebook and social media will tend to promote narcissism. And they are very effective about rewarding it.

If, as adults, we can fall into the game without realizing it, how much more do our teens and pre-teens buy into this without thinking? During the years when status and esteem are both important and fragile, the feedback loop of social media is a powerful force.

It is doubly alarming when advancing in status is also achieved by putting others down. The rampant epidemic of cyber-bullying is a testament to that, and the number of police investigations and suicides are sobering. Amanda Todd was just one of the few that we all heard about, but even being directly responsible for the death of another person was not enough to cause one of her abusers to take pause. As one young woman stated, on social media, "Yes I teased Amanda, and I know she killed herself, but I don't give a [expletive]."

Christian youth are not immune to any of this, and doubly so when they see it unconsciously modeled for them at home. Again, that is not to say that there

is no place for sharing our lives online, but the "what" and "how" should have more reflection than they seem to now. Perhaps the sheer volume of it is the issue to start with. How many times do we post each day? How many times do we post in a single morning or afternoon? Of course, there is a protocol to even this, as my daughter explained to my wife, "...people get annoyed if you post more than one or two things on Instagram a day." Thankfully, I can Instagram, tweet, post, and pin all in the same hour.

A RELATED CONCERN

And here is one more reason some reflection may be prudent, and that revolves around the social media business model.

How do Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other sites make money? Since you do not pay to use their services, how can a site like Facebook be worth billions? It is quite simple: the product they sell is you. Your photos are their property, your browsing habits, comments, affiliations, product likes, favorite stores, political affiliations, and even banking statistics are up for sale. And many are buying.

As you keep that Facebook tab open, it quietly tracks your other site visits, clicks, and minutes spent at each. Are you looking up cars on Craigslist? Facebook knows it, and can target you with ads for a new car by a local dealer. Did you just do some online banking with CIBC? Perhaps you are interested in the mortgage rates that the Royal Bank has on offer? And those are just the simple algorithms on the surface. Facebook has also run social experiments on its users, secretly altering news feeds and measuring the habits, posted content,



and buying decisions based on a highly negative or highly positive feed. No, that is not actually legal. Facebook did it anyway.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the scriptural warning against outward adorning takes on a new angle in the age of social media. Perhaps the fabricated realities we portray, or are peddled towards us, are the fake diamonds and fool's gold of our day. This is not to say there is no place for social media, and I can find a wide range of legitimate uses for it. But it needs discernment. If parents show so little, how are the children to navigate it wisely?

Thankfully, there are tools to help us monitor and restrict device and social media use, and there is a great deal concerned parents can do. But, to fix a problem, you need to know it exists. ^{RP}

For the past 7 years Martin Van Woulenberg has spoken on topics such as technology in the classroom, managing media in education, and digital parenting. If you'd like to learn how you can manage and monitor media use in your home visit his website www.BehindTheScreen.ca.

For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, for He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down:

LET US KNEEL BEFORE THE LORD OUR MAKER

Psalm 95:3-6

by Christine Farenhorst

We can define an “invention” as a created thing, typically a process or device, such as, for example, the printing press of the fifteenth century. Often linked with the word invention are other words such as originality, creativity, imagination and inspiration.

God, of course, is the Creator par excellence. Made in his Image, human beings also like to make things. Some people, unbelievers as well as believers, are endowed with particular gifts in making things, in inventing. We need only read Genesis 4 to be reminded of Jabal, the maker of tents; of Jubal, the father of music; and of Tubal-cain, the first forger of all instruments of bronze and iron.

Many inventions have occurred during the centuries leading up to the one in which we currently live. One of the most important was possibly that of movable type by Johann Gutenberg in 1450. It encouraged the manufacture of paper so that it became more readily available; it

helped spread God’s Word; and it led to the Reformation of the church.

CREATIVE KEPLER

Young earth creationist Johannes Kepler’s (1571-1630) top four inventions might be eyeglasses, the Kepler telescope, log books, and the Rudolphine Tables (data about stars). When he was a young boy, Kepler had smallpox, which severely affected his vision. Perhaps in his providence God afflicted him so that Kepler would later be motivated to develop glasses for both near and farsightedness.

Here’s an aside: What did Kepler reply when he was asked, “How many astronomers does it take to change a light bulb?” “None! Astronomers aren’t afraid of the dark.”

Being a Christian, Kepler was a man of the Bible, one who refused to accept ideas which contradicted Scripture. He is quoted as saying that God was the Creator who brought forth nature out of nothing.

TWO-IS-TWICE-AS-NICE NEWTON

Not all inventions have unique and noble aspects. The story goes that Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), a bachelor and well known for his many inventions, was fond of dogs and cats. Distressed by the fact, however, that they scratched the furniture and urinated on his carpet, he summoned a carpenter to come to his

rooms at the University of Cambridge. The man was given the task of sawing two holes in his door – a large one for the mother cat and a smaller one for her kittens. And so the pet door was born! It is questionable as to whether or not this story is true but apparently there are to this day, two plugged holes in the said door of Newton’s apartments at Cambridge with the right dimensions to meet the needs of felines. There is an every-day, personal flavor about this story – one with which we can better emphasize than Newton’s his refracting and reflecting telescopes.

Thomas Edison (1847-1931) was an American inventor. His devices, which have since been developed further, are used the world over. They include the phonograph, the light bulb, and the stock ticker. Edison was not a Christian and not that easy to get along with. He rejected the idea of a soul, immortality and a personal God. He believed the Bible to be manmade and iterated that religion should definitely not be taught in public schools. How sad that such a very clever and inventive man should be so foolish!

DANGERS TOO

There are many inventors in the daily life of every metropolis - many people using the minds God gave them to think up little innovations and creative activities. Some give Him glory and others do not; some are helpful and some

One of the most important inventions was possibly that of movable type...

are disastrous.

There is the story of a man by the name of Samuel Wardell – a man who lived during the late 1800s in the US. Samuel Wardell was a street-lamp lighter and lived in Flatbush, Brooklyn, New York. At dusk he ignited lamps in the Flatbush district by means of a flame on a wick at the top of a long pole. Lighting up the street, he sometimes paused to look back. And looking back he was satisfied to see the steady row of flickering poles. At dawn Samuel had to return to extinguish those same flames by using a small hook on the same pole. There were some 70 to 80 poles he had to service and the pay was about \$2 a day.

Samuel Wardell was not married. He did not have a wife to tell him in the early hours, “Honey, it’s time to rise and (un) shine.” He lived alone in a one-room apartment without parents or siblings. Because his alarm clock had failed to waken him one morning, causing him to be almost dismissed from his job, he had invented a foolproof method of rising at the correct time. Depositing a ten pound stone on the shelf by his bed, he connected this stone by a wire to the alarm clock. When the alarm struck, this wire pulled a catch which then let the shelf dip. The dip caused the stone to fall to the ground with a good loud smack.

On Christmas Eve of the year 1886, Samuel Wardell invited about 30 young men over for a late supper. Quite a few guests for a one-room apartment! Consequently Samuel moved his furniture to the cellar. He left to light his lamps and upon coming home had a good supper and a time of fellowship with his friends. When they departed, he carried his bed back up to his room, and, understandably, being very tired, did not pay close attention to where he placed it. He also forgot about his clock. When he lay down, too weary for words, his head was directly under the shelf. When the alarm went off early that next morning, the stone fell on his head. Discovered later that day by a friend, he was rushed to the hospital where sadly enough, he died. An invention that turned into a disaster!



AFTER DISCOVERING THE LAW OF GRAVITY NEWTON WENT ON TO INVENT THE APPLE PIE.

APPRECIATING THE CREATOR

Whether acknowledged or not, inserted into all human’s make up is the knowledge that God is our Creator. The evidence that God is the all-powerful Creator can be clearly seen. God reveals Himself both through Scripture and through creation. We need not all be Marconis or Michaelangelos in inventing magnificent, amazing things, but all of us can and should reflect on the beauty of creation and the Creator. Our God is a practical God. We can see that everything in nature works harmoniously, teaching us He is a God of order. We need to look to Him for instructions on why we exist and these instructions are in His Word.

We are creatures who must ultimately give account to God for what we do with the creative talents He has given every one of us. Even if we never invent a cat door, we can thank Him for the

*Creativity is a
walking and a
talking with the
Creator.*

miraculous beauty of cats. Even if we never draw up plans for a solar-paneled greenhouse, we can praise his Name for the sun. Even if we never compose a sonata, we can sing joyful songs to the Lord. And even if we never invent a new formula for curing baldness, we can cook meals to feed our family and neighbors.

Creativity is a walking and a talking with the Creator. Such walking and talking will lead to the beginning of Genesis. “In the beginning.... God... created....” It is the foundation of everything else. **RP**

FALSE DILEMMA

Is Genesis 1 Historical or *Poetic*?

or Doctrinal?

or Theological?

or Covenantal?

or an Accommodation?

or so on and so on

by Jim Witteveen



We know you can't have your cake and eat it too. We know a man cannot serve two masters. And we know Genesis 1 cannot be both history and mere metaphor. That's all true.

But can Genesis 1 be history and much, much more?

NOT AN EITHER/OR

Among Christians one of the more common ways of undermining the historical reliability of the opening chapters of the Bible is to highlight some other attribute of this passage. We're told that the point here isn't to tell us *how* things were created but rather *Who* is responsible. This is a theological treatise, not a scientific one, right? And it can't be history because in some ways it resembles poetry.

In his book *God's Pattern for Creation: A Covenantal Reading of Genesis 1* United Reformed pastor Dr. W. Robert Godfrey gives several examples of this same dismissive approach. The President of Westminster Seminary in Escondido, California contrasts a covenantal understanding of Genesis 1 with understanding it as history. He says a choice has to be made since the days of creation as described in Genesis 1 "are not a timetable of

God's actions but are a model timetable for us to follow." While "the days and week of Genesis 1 are presented to us as a real week of twenty four hour days," "these days and week... do not describe God's actions in themselves but present God's creative purpose in a way that is a model for us."

He pitches this same contrast, between a historical and covenantal understanding again and again.

"Genesis is not a world history text... it is a covenant history focusing on what the people of God need to know about their God and about themselves"

"Genesis is not written as a history book for uninformed, worldwide readers, but is part of the covenant history written for a covenant people who already know their God"

"The revelation of God as the all-powerful creator is not just information for the world. It is a message to the covenant people about the character of their God."

"Genesis 1 is not an encyclopedia of history or science but a covenant revelation of the character of the creation that God made for man..."

Clearly, given the repeated "not this... but that" rhetorical device used by Godfrey, his assertion that Genesis 1 is "covenantal" in character is meant to counter an opposing view of the creation account. To Reformed Christians, this kind of "covenantal language" has its appeal; we love the covenant, and we love covenant theology, because we see in the covenants of Scripture the structure and beauty of God's relationship with His people, and indeed with all of creation. But I question Godfrey's assertions in all of these statements, because they create a conflict where one does not necessarily exist!

This "not this... but that" language creates the impression that the two parts of the statement are mutually exclusive. If Genesis 1 is "covenantal" in its character, does that necessarily mean that it is not a history of the world? Of course, Godfrey does use the phrases "world history text" and "encyclopedia of history or science," appearing to assert that those who argue for the "six consecutive real days that actually happened in history" view actually consider the opening chapters of the Bible to be a scientific treatise of some sort. This kind of language is not at all helpful, and it mischaracterizes those

It's not "either-or." It's "both-and"!

who believe that God created all things in the span of six actual historical days.

BOTH/AND

Here's an example of this kind of thinking in practice. Suppose for a moment that two men come across a field of barley for the very first time. One man looks at the barley and says, "Clearly this crop is meant only to form the basis for a beverage. I will harvest it, mash it, ferment it, and make beer."

The other man looks at the barley and says, "Clearly this crop is meant only to form the basis for bread. I will harvest it, grind it, and use the end product to make bread."

Both men refuse to acknowledge the truth of the other's discovery. So, the one man makes nothing but beer, and the other man makes nothing but

bread. Both die, one from cirrhosis of the liver, the other from dehydration. Why do they die? Because they both failed to realize that they were not dealing with an "either-or" equation, but a "both-and." Barley has multiple uses; therefore, one use does not exclude the other. In creating a false dichotomy between two applications of the text, Godfrey misses out on a very important aspect of the message of the six days of creation.

A TRUE EITHER/OR

Now I should note that while Godfrey does *not* accept Genesis 1 as a real chronology of events, he still insists his view is a literal interpretation and "also historical in its approach as it affirms that God created in time and by his sovereign power everything described in Genesis 1." Given the fact that, according to Godfrey, "we must conclude that the days of creation in Genesis 1 are not simple chronology" I

find it difficult to harmonize Godfrey's actual view with his claims. In contrast to the false dilemma that Godfrey presents, between understanding Genesis 1 as true history or as covenantal, there does seem need for a choice to be made here. He can't offer up his view as literal and historical and still dispute that creation occurred in six actual days.

CONCLUSION

So yes, we can't have our cake and eat it too. But no such choice has to be made between understanding Genesis as historical and covenantal, between it being historical and theological. These are simply false dilemmas. RP

Rev. Witteveen is a missionary pastor of the Canadian Reformed Mission in Prince George. He blogs at www.CreationWithoutCompromise.com and jimwitt.ca.

Theology and history! by Jim Witteveen

Another common objection to Genesis 1 as history is that we should instead take it as theology. We're told that God wants us to learn about Himself, and not history here. But, once again, it doesn't have to be one or the other.

In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle Paul says something very important about the relationship between the "text" of Scripture and the "history" recorded in Scripture. We need to keep this connection between God's work in history and the message of the words of Scripture in mind, so we can rightly understand the importance of the events recorded in Scripture. Paul is speaking in this passage about the events of the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings, and the importance of these events for his readers:

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire

evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. – 1 Corinthians 10:6-11, (ESV)

Note carefully the words Paul uses in this passage. "These things occurred." "These things happened." These were actual events in history, and that is important.

To say that they were recorded in Scripture to make a theological point,

a theological point that should have a great impact on all of God's people, is absolutely true. They were "written down for our instruction." But not only were these stories written down as warnings, "these things happened to them as an example"!

There is no dichotomy here between theology and history; the two are so tightly linked that they cannot be torn apart. It's not "either-or." It's "both-and"! Did God use a recognizable pattern in his work of creation? Yes, he did, and that pattern was meant to teach us many very important things. But to say that his work is recorded in a pattern that is meant to teach must not be used as a reason to deny that what is recorded is a true and accurate account of actual events. Our God is the God of history, not merely the God of ideas.



THROUGH WHICH GLASSES?

Some Christians want us to interpret the Bible in light of the findings of secular Science.

But Calvin tells us that it is through the “glasses” of Scripture that we can properly see and understand the world around us.

by Joel Beeke

John Calvin said that the Scriptures are given to us as eyeglasses by which we can properly see and understand God’s general revelation of himself and his ways. Without these corrective lenses, our sin-clouded eyes distort what we see in the world.

It appears that those who deny Adam have reversed this order. They deny that the Bible says anything authoritative about scientific matters. On the contrary, they treat modern science as the eyeglasses by which we should read the Scriptures, so that through our scientific knowledge we can sift out God’s message from the erroneous beliefs of the ancient community of faith. The result is a view

of Scripture that says that God did not breathe his truth into the details of the text, but only inspired its core theological message. Thus they say, “The sacred author was not as concerned about factual details as he was about clearly presenting theological concepts understandable by his intended audience.” This is a far cry from the position taken by the Lord Jesus: “The scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

ONE DENIAL LEADS TO MORE

Those who deny the existence of Adam may affirm that, “the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God.” However, they do not mean what

evangelical and Reformed Christians have meant by this statement. They do not hold to the Bible’s inerrancy, but instead believe that it contains many errors and false teachings derived from the culture and time in which it was written. They also do not affirm the Bible supreme authority in resolving religious controversies. Instead, the Bible must bow to the changing theories of human science. Ironically, they reject some teachings of the Bible as simply the notions of ancient culture, while they impose other ideas upon the Bible from modern culture. Instead of absolute divine authority governing our faith, we have only the relative authority of human culture and opinion.

... he says that we need not follow Paul's views, for he was an "ancient man," and we know better today.

For example, Peter Enns readily acknowledges that the apostle Paul believed that Adam was just as real as Jesus Christ. But he says that we need not follow Paul's views, for he was an "ancient man," and we know better today. He also teaches that Paul intentionally twisted the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures in order to fit his gospel message: "reworking the past to speak to the present." The same man says that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but composed piecemeal and brought together after the exile, several centuries after the exodus from Egypt. He corrects conservative evangelicals for believing that if the Bible is God's Word, then it must "be historically accurate in all its details." Instead, God "adopted mythic categories" from the ancient world, myths that we may now discard, so long as we retain the kernel of truth they contain.

These are clear and sobering examples of how denying the reality of Adam puts one on a trajectory to deny the full trustworthiness of the Holy Scriptures. It would turn the Bible into a collection of fables, or mythic stories with a spiritual or moral point, as if all Scripture were one long parable and

not a mixture of doctrinal instruction, historical narrative, poetry, proverbs, epistles, prophetic oracles, parables, allegories, types, and apocalyptic literature.

NO REASON TO DOUBT IT

Those who take this route perhaps may not realize that they are departing from the path of biblical orthodoxy and following the same road as unbiblical neo-orthodoxy... It is not necessary for us to go in this direction. Why couldn't the ancient Hebrews have understood it if God had told them that he created by a long, slow process of evolutionary change? Every day, as they planted and harvested crops or worked with sheep and cattle, they could see change and improvement in the various seeds they planted or the animals they bred.

Why couldn't God effectively communicate to them that he had conferred a human soul upon an existing animal rather than breathed life into a body formed directly out of the earth? Why not reveal in Genesis that God made many human beings at first, instead of just one? Why would these things have been harder for them

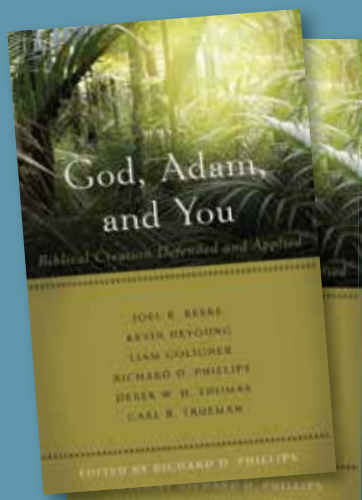
to accept than the idea that there is only one true and living God, given that all their neighbors worshipped many gods? And why must we separate the way in which God created from the fact that he is the Creator?

Does it not glorify God as Lord to know that He created man, not through any natural process, but by a supernatural act of creation? Yes, the account of the historical Adam's creation greatly honors God as Creator and Lord.

LOSING IT ALL

Furthermore, this is a dangerous direction to go. If the Bible is a mixture of cultural dressing wrapped around divine truth, then how can we be sure which part is the husk and which is the kernel? What one generation embraces as the kernel of divine truth could very well be rejected by another generation as merely more human culture and tradition. We see this happening around us even now with respect to the definition of marriage and homosexuality. RP

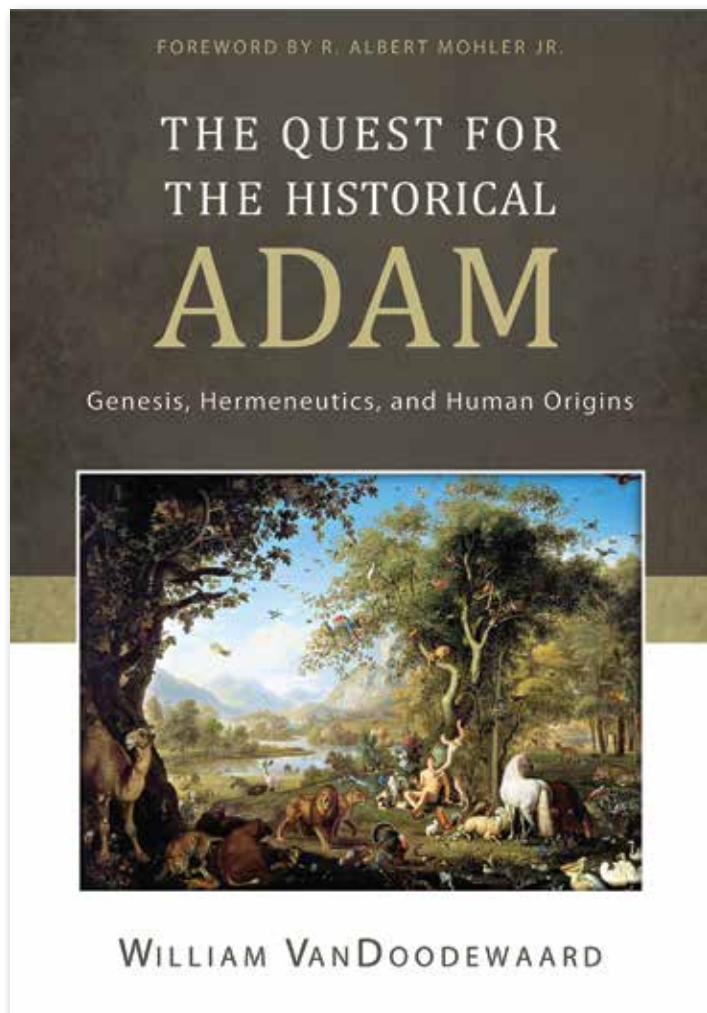
This is an excerpt from Joel Beeke's contribution to the book God, Adam, and You edited by Richard Phillips (ISBN 978-1-62995-066-2). Beeke's article was titled "The Case for Adam" and this excerpt is used with permission from P&R Publishing Co., P O Box 817, Phillipsburg, N.J. 08865 www.prpbooks.com.



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A BOOK FOR EVERY MINISTER, ELDER, & DEACON

reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

Once in a very rare while I come across a book which brings me to think, “If I had the means, I would get a copy of this into every single Canadian Reformed home.” This is one of those books. If I couldn’t get it into every single CanRC home, I would settle for getting it into the hands of every single minister, elder, and deacon.

The Quest for the Historical Adam is not only relevant, but crucially important for these days in which a biblical view of origins is under pressure. This volume could do a world of good if it would only receive the careful attention it deserves.

The author, William VanDoodewaard, is a church history professor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is also a minister of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP). For those

unfamiliar with this church, the ARP is a long-time member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). Alongside his seminary teaching, Dr. VanDoodewaard is also an ARP church planter in Grand Rapids.

The title of this volume plays off a much earlier book by Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. In that book, Schweitzer examined how historical conceptions of Jesus led to a variety of “Jesuses.” However, while Schweitzer did not honor the authority of Scripture (so his conclusions were necessarily flawed) VanDoodewaard has the highest view of Scripture as he traces out how people have variously conceived of Adam.

The author points that contemporary debates over origins are often afflicted with what he calls “historical amnesia.” This volume seeks to recover our collec-

tive memory of how ages past have written about, preached about, and thought about our first parents and their origins.

The first chapter provides a general overview of what Scripture says about Adam. From this overview, the author reaches this conclusion,

...there is no inherent ground to posit anything aside from a special, temporally immediate creation of Adam and Eve as the first humans on the sixth day of creation.

The following five chapters trace out the post-biblical history of how Christians have looked at the early chapters of Genesis. If anything is clear from these chapters, it is that there has been a consensus view for millennia. The consensus is that the first chapters of Genesis must be taken seriously as a his-

... it would have been unthinkable for forms of theistic evolution to be tolerated in Reformed churches.

torical record. When it comes to human origins, the vast majority of Christian interpreters have understood Scripture to teach a special or immediate creation of Adam and Eve, a creation which allows for no prior biological ancestry of any sort.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

The concluding chapter is entitled, “What Difference Does It Make?” Here the author lays out ten areas of doctrine that are affected by how one views the origin of Adam. What are those ten areas?

1. Scripture and hermeneutics
2. Man and the ethics of human life
3. Marriage and unity of race
4. Human language
5. God, the Creator
6. The goodness of creation
7. In Adam’s fall sinned we all?
8. Christ as Creator and Redeemer
9. Adam, Christ, and the Covenants
10. Adam and accountability: the last things

Dr. VanDoodewaard convincingly makes the case that no one can soundly argue that one’s view of origins can be hermetically sealed off from the rest of one’s theology. Even taking an agnostic view or allowing for latitude in the matter will invariably have some impact.

FOUR HIGHLIGHTS

The heart of the book is the historical overview. Let me mention four highlights that are worth sharing. There are many more highlights that I could mention, but I hope these four will whet your appetite and motivate you to buy the book.

1. The pre-Adamite invention

Today we sometimes encounter the idea of pre-Adamites – human beings or human-like creatures (hominids) who lived before and beside Adam. One of the first to promote a form of this idea was a Frenchman named Isaac La Peyrère

(1596-1676). While he worked with the text of Genesis in his book *Men Before Adam*, he did so in a rather revisionist way. He argued that only the Jews were descended from Adam, and that Genesis 2 only described where the Jews came from. Everyone else came from other groups of human beings who had existed long before Adam.

What motivated La Peyrère to develop this theory? He wanted to make Genesis more reasonable so that unbelievers would be more receptive to the Christian faith. Does this sound familiar?

La Peyrère developed a small following in Europe. His ideas were widely discussed, but uniformly rejected by Reformed theologians. His ideas were also rejected by Roman Catholic figures such as Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). Following what Scripture taught on this matter, Pascal held to a young earth of about 6,000 years age and “was also explicitly critical of pre-Adamite thought.”

2. Critiquing revisionist history

Another valuable contribution of VanDoodewaard is his critique of historian Ronald Numbers. Numbers wrote an influential 1992 book entitled *The Creationists* in which he argued that a literal understanding of the early chapters of Genesis only exists in our modern day because of the influence of American creation scientists, and particularly through the writing of a Seventh Day Adventist, George McCready Price. “However,” writes VanDoodewaard, “more thorough scholarship reveals significant evidence of a strong stream of both nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources that remained firmly in the millennia old tradition of a literal hermeneutic.”

What Numbers and others have failed to see is that, entirely apart from twentieth-century creation science, theologians and clergymen have for centuries maintained a literal reading of Genesis, reaching their conclusions based on the text alone. Our author gives several good examples with Dutch-American

Reformed theologians like Geerhardus Vos, William Heyns, Foppe Ten Hoor, and Louis Berkhof.

3. Seeing the patterns

An important part of the work of a historian is discerning patterns. The Quest for the Historical Adam reveals an important pattern in thinking about origins. It starts with sources outside of Scripture and Christian theology pressuring an alternative explanation – these sources could be philosophical, scientific, literary, or archaeological. Under that pressure, interpreters begin to make allowances for alternative explanations. Other generations eventually arise which take things a step further and assert these alternative explanations more stridently, also following through on their logical consequences. This pattern is evident throughout the book.

4. Where other churches have faltered

As mentioned earlier, Dr. VanDoodewaard is an Associate Reformed Presbyterian minister. It is not surprising then to find his church and its struggles with this question mentioned. He notes that the ARP adopted a synodical teaching statement in 2012 that affirmed the clear biblical teaching on origins.

He contrasts that with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). He notes that efforts were made to have the PCA clearly rule out aberrant teachings on origins. A 2012 effort to have the PCA General Assembly issue a teaching statement on this matter floundered. Why? There was a convergence of two broad camps. VanDoodewaard writes:

Some argued that the confessional standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms provided sufficient clarity on the topic – positing that if there were concerns, they ought to be pursued through the means of church discipline. Other delegates held that belief in evolutionary biological

processes in human origins, as circumscribed by Collins, Keller, or others, was harmonious with Scripture and represented a legitimate latitude of ecclesiastical theology (248).

These two lines of argument paralyzed the PCA and prevented it from taking a stand. The result is that various forms of theistic evolution continue to have a comfortable home in the PCA and very little, if anything, can be done about it. Will we in the Canadian Reformed Churches learn from this history while the opportunity is still there?

WHERE I WOULD HAVE LIKED MORE


Obviously, I have a great deal of appreciation for this book. However, there are a couple of oversights that I noticed. Chapter 3 deals with “Adam in the Reformation and Post-Reformation Eras.” While the author does spend some time with the Westminster Standards (especially the issue of “in the space of

six days”), he disregards the Three Forms of Unity or other Reformed confessions. This is important in our day when we hear it asserted by some that theistic evolution falls within the bounds of our confessions. Nevertheless, VanDoodewaard’s research certainly does support the position that in the era in which these confessions were originally written, it would have been unthinkable for forms of theistic evolution to be tolerated in Reformed churches.

Chapter 6 deals with the 1950s to the present. The author has some discussion about developments in the Christian Reformed Church, but there could have been more said. For instance, it would be helpful for readers to see how the tolerance of theistic evolution in the CRC grew out of a weakened view of biblical authority starting in the 1950s, especially under the influence of the Free University of Amsterdam.

CONCLUSION

The Quest for the Historical Adam is a unique contribution to a vitally important topic. It might be a bit technical at times for some readers, but those who persevere will be rewarded. As intimated in my introduction, this is especially an important book for office bearers. As those who have promised to “oppose, refute, and help prevent” errors conflicting with God’s Word, we need to educate ourselves about those errors and the patterns that lead to them being accepted. This is all the more case when an error is right before us, threatening to undo us.

I heartily commend Dr. VanDoodewaard for writing this valuable book and Reformation Heritage Books for publishing it. May the day hasten when historians look back and say that the publication of this book was a turning point for the maintenance of orthodoxy on origins! 

Wilhelm (Bill) Gortemaker

October 17, 1945 - April 28, 2015

On April 28, 2015, our Lord called to himself Bill Gortemaker, age 69. Bill was a founding member of *Reformed Perspective* magazine and served many years as its managing editor.

Throughout Bill’s decades of involvement with *Reformed Perspective*, he remained unwavering in his commitment to promote Reformed principles and equip Christians for engagement in the social, political, economic and scientific realms. His diligence, insight, and support were instrumental in ensuring our magazine could continue publishing despite significant challenges. Although



Bill always preferred a background role, he was willing to do whatever was needed and did so with determination. He played a leading role in the evolution of the *Reformed Perspective* Foundation, which eventually gave rise to the

creation of ARPA Canada.

We at *Reformed Perspective* are grateful for his many years of faithful service to our magazine and wish to express condolences to his wife, children and grandchildren. We hope that they can be comforted, as we are, in the knowledge that the light and momentary troubles he endured in this life achieved for him an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

*Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.*

— Psalm 62:1-2

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A photograph of a white and brown dog, possibly a Jack Russell Terrier, standing on a sandy beach. The dog is leaning forward, sniffing a jellyfish that is partially buried in the sand. The background shows the ocean waves breaking on the shore.

THERE'S MORE GUESSWORK IN
THE ORIGINS DEBATE THEN YOU
MIGHT THINK. SO WE NEED TO
BE DISCERNING READERS AND....

Evolutionists agree that vertebrates (animals which have backbones, like this dog) evolved from some form of invertebrate (animals without backbones, like this jellyfish). But while they are agree it happened, they can't agree as to how.

WISE CONSUMERS

by Margaret Helder

There is no doubt that it is hard to be a discerning consumer of information and arguments. After all society seems to roughly divide into experts and the uninformed masses. And who are we the masses to question the experts?

Certainly one wants to show respect for expertise which may have taken years to acquire. However, in most disciplines we find experts who support very different conclusions. One has only to think about psychology, medicine, biotechnology, economics, or climate science, to realize how divided expert opinion can be. Certainly it is good to

provide the opportunity for all points of view to have their say. It then soon becomes apparent that worldview has a lot to do with the conclusions taken by any given expert within a field of study.

Now, one cannot accept all the different points of view. It is important to critically evaluate the arguments, even those which claim to represent the majority position, particularly in science, which some in society assume is the arbiter of all ideas that are worthy of support.

It cannot hurt, for example, to find out on what basis scientists draw their conclusions. Does worldview drastically

affect the shape of their arguments? An interesting insight into this issue was an interview by Suzan Mazur published in *Huffington Post* (online May 7, 2015). She interviewed Eugene Koonin, director of the Evolutionary Genomics Group at the National Center for Biotechnology Information in Bethesda, Maryland. This expert declared that when we look for information on origins, all we have to go on is inference (conclusions drawn on the basis of indirect evidence). Suzan Mazur quotes Dr. Koonin as declaring:

Everything we're saying about the past is inference – yet, inference is not a derogatory term. We are

Does worldview drastically affect the shape of their arguments?

very confident about much of this inference.... We are confident that all animals had a common ancestor about 700 million years ago, a little less. Although, do we know that? No. And no one is ever going to find that ancestor and experiment on that ancestor. In that sense, we do not know that. Do we have doubts? No. Reasonable evolutionary biologists have no doubts about that.

Obviously those who share Dr. Koonin's views on evolution will agree that the inferences he draws are worthy of acceptance. But the more we look at evolutionary theory the more reason we have to be critical. It is less certain than it seems – its conclusions built on flimsy evidence.

CLUELESS BUT CONFIDENT

Take for example the way evolutionary scientists will compare various living organisms, speculating how one more complex body type might have evolved from another simpler one. Common theories hold that:

- cells without nuclei (prokaryotes) evolved into cells with nuclei (eukaryotes)
- single cell animals (protozoans) evolved into animals made up of many different kinds of cells (metazoans)
- animals without a body cavity (acoelomate) were the ancestors of those today with a body cavity (coelomate)
- those with a body plan divided into many symmetrical parts (radially symmetrical) evolved into those with two sides which are mirror images of each other (bilaterians)

In all these cases there are many theories which take for granted that evolution from the one group to the

other occurred, but these theories cannot agree on what exactly the evidence indicates. They agree that it happened, but disagree as to *how* it happened – in other words, no matter how differently they understand the evidence, they all come to the same final conclusion. That should highlight for us the speculative, and worldview-based, nature of their conclusions.

Take as a further illustration some recent articles on vertebrate origins and evolution. Vertebrates are animals with a backbone (animals without a backbone are called invertebrates). In creatures that have a backbone, their body plan consists of a straight progression from head to tail, or from mouth to anus.

In invertebrates, however, there may not necessarily be a head, and the body shape may be coiled or radiating in many directions: the sky is basically the limit in design choices. Well-known invertebrate body types include corals, jellyfish, clams, octopus, snails, flatworms, sponges, sea cucumbers, and various worm designs.

A series of articles on vertebrate origins and evolution appeared in the April 23, 2015 issue of *Nature*. In introductory remarks, the editor of this series declares:

...vertebrates have so many special features, from large brains to complex physiologies to unique tissues such as enamel and bone – that their evolution from invertebrates is obscure.

Hmmm. Notice that while there is no clear evidence as to how it might have happened, the editor does not ask *whether* an evolutionary process took place. He assumes that it did. Authors of the first article similarly begin by declaring:

Biologists have considered nearly

every major taxon of animals as the key starting point for the evolution of vertebrates.

Hmmm again. This does not look very promising as a basis for studying vertebrate origins – things are so unclear they don't even know where to start.

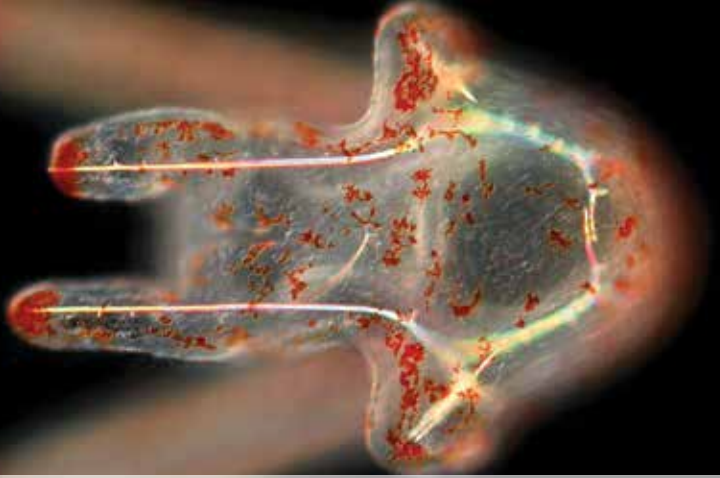
WHICH CAME FIRST?

It gets even more interesting. Invertebrates like starfish begin their lives as swimming larvae before they later transition to their adult stage.

Now, the experts are sure that vertebrates evolved from invertebrates but they disagree as to which stage of invertebrates' lives evolution acted on. Some think that initially evolution first acted only on the invertebrate ancestors' swimming larval stages, while others think that it first acted on their adult stage.

The experts who think vertebrates came from evolution acting on the larval swimming stage think the best course of investigation is, therefore, to compare appearances and similarities of various invertebrates' immature swimming stages. They assume that at first, this larval swimming stage was all there was to these organisms. It was only much later that some of them developed sedentary shapes and biology that are much different from the swimming stages and much different from the later development of other swimming stages. For example, there are some swimming larval stages of starfish relatives that later settle down into creatures with bodies divided up into multiples of five equal parts. Another group, the sea squirts, have swimming larvae that later settle down to appear like sedentary vases with a side spout as well as an upper opening.

Now, the swimming larvae from various groups may show a fair number of similarities to one another, even though in their adult forms they look totally different. How such extremely different adult shapes and biologies came to be added onto their life cycle, the experts do not worry about so much.



Did evolution act at the starfish larval stage...

(Picture by Bruno C. Vellutini)

...or did it act on the adult stage?

Meanwhile, other experts assume that the initial state of these organisms was actually like the adults that we see today and they argue that it was the swimming larval stages that only appeared much later. So when these experts try to figure out invertebrates evolved into vertebrates these experts only consider the characteristics of the adult stage. How the development of the adult stage was later delayed to accommodate a new totally different swimming larval stage is, again, anybody's guess.

IF WE CAME FROM WORMS

There is another major source of disagreement between experts when considering vertebrate origins. Some support the "annelid theory." Earthworms are annelids. They have a nerve running along the underside of their body (ventral position). However vertebrates have the major nerve running along the top or back body wall (dorsal position). What the experts propose is that the position of the nerve cord was somehow relocated from front of the body to back during the invertebrate-to-vertebrate transition.

The alternative theory is called the acorn worm (enteropneust) theory. The original expert who focused on these marine worms was British geneticist William Bateson in 1886. These very weird looking worms have three body regions, a proboscis, collar, and trunk. Bateson thought these were a good potential ancestor of vertebrates because they have gill slits (considered an important vertebrate characteristic during development). Bateson suggested that

these worms already have their nerve cord in the dorsal position, but others declare that these worms have no nerve cord at all, just a nerve net which could potentially evolve into a dorsal nerve cord. It is apparent that what you label a structure determines how significant it will be in arguments about origins.

I could cite many other examples from this series of *Nature* articles to highlight just how speculative the nature of evolutionary conclusions can be. I'm going to restrain myself, however, to keep this already technical article from getting too technical. What I am trying to highlight here is that conclusions concerning lines of descent toward vertebrates depend upon very indirect arguments. The only conclusion that the experts agree on is the idea that vertebrates developed from some sort of invertebrate ancestor.

CONCLUSION

So, remember that one should not feel intimidated by technical discussions. Find out the definitions of the jargon terms and dive into the material. You don't need to understand every part of the discussion to be able to get an overall understanding of the shape and quality of the arguments being made. One article in the vertebrate origins series, for example, included the following caveats in close succession:

- "it seems reasonable to assume"
- "it is likely"
- "may have facilitated"
- "may have allowed"
- "thus was probably"

... these are clues that the conclusions may be largely speculation.

- "a likely scenario"
- "might have enabled"
- "usually taken to support the contention"
- "may have been fostered by"

Terms like these are clues that the conclusions may be largely speculation. Often, too, commentaries by other experts can help one understand the significance of the material in the technical article.

The take home lesson is that you should not allow yourself to be intimidated by experts who claim to support the consensus (majority) view. There is plenty of room for critical evaluation of these views and for consideration of alternative interpretations. It is evident that careful reading of technical articles can reveal some very interesting shortcomings in evolutionary conclusions even though they are so confidently proclaimed by many authorities in the field. Expert conclusions are often only as good as the values on which they are based. The experts may be attractive personalities, they may sound confident and their arguments may at first sound plausible, but this is no excuse to uncritically accept what they say. RP

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."
John 12:21



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THE BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL BASIS FOR PARENTAL RIGHTS

BY MICHAEL WAGNER

With the onset of parenthood, couples suddenly find that this new role is now dominating their lives. Children have become a central factor in how time and money are spent, and these same children also become a source of anxiety. Are they okay? Are they alright? The well being of their children becomes an overwhelming feature of parents' lives.

Parents want what's best for their children so the decisions they make are with this objective in mind. Christian parents will want their children to be instructed about God and his Word because they understand that spiritual

matters are of the greatest concern. This normally includes education in a Christian school or homeschooling.

Historically, in the English-speaking democracies, parents' ability to choose Christian education for their children has frequently received widespread support. Of course parents can choose what education their children are to receive! Who else could make that kind of decision?

Sadly, there are threats on the horizon. Powerful forces in the media and various governments are increasingly suspicious about parental influence in education. These kinds of threats make it imperative for Christian

parents to understand the basis of their rights in making authoritative decisions for their children.

One excellent source of information is American lawyer John Whitehead's 1985 book entitled *Parents' Rights*. Many of the matters he discusses in the book are dated because it was written thirty years ago. But the biblical and historical information he provides about parental rights are still valid and useful to know today.

THE BIBLE

In the Bible, God has ordained three key institutions: the family, the church, and the state. Each one has specific

roles and responsibilities. Each one also has specific powers and authority. However, the power and authority are not inherent in the institutions themselves but are delegated by God. Family, church and state have “derivative” authority from God – it comes from Him. Therefore the authority they exercise must always be used in accordance with God’s revealed will. There is no just authority that can be exercised in opposition to God’s truth.

To which of the three institutions did God give the oversight and care of children? Clearly, it is the family. Already in the first chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve are told to be fruitful and multiply. Whitehead notes:

Not only is there a command to have children, but there is the teaching that children are from God. When Eve had borne a child, she recognized that she had not done this alone and understood that the Creator was the ultimate source of the child. She said: “I have gotten a man from the Lord.”

In Genesis 33:5, Genesis 48:9 and Joshua 24:3-4, it is explicitly stated that children are given by God. As Whitehead explains:

These verses indicate that children are given by God to families and not inanimate institutions or governments. Not only are children given, but they are also called gifts and blessings: “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward.” As such, children are not just given to any family. The implication is that specific children are given to particular parents as a gift from God.

The centrality of the family in the raising of children is further buttressed by the primacy of the family as an institution:

The family was the first institution created by God, even before the state. Because it was the first, it can be considered to be the foundational

institution upon which all others are built.

HISTORY

John Whitehead is American, so the historical discussion he provides about parental rights is primarily about the United States. Nevertheless, the USA is part of the broader Anglo-American culture (“Anglosphere”) that shares legal precepts descended from Britain. The other Anglosphere countries have operated under the same basic principles.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, Puritan settlers from England began arriving in the North American colonies. This area became known as New England. Later in the century the colonies adopted laws requiring children to learn to read and to be catechized. It was clearly recognized that teaching children was the responsibility of parents and these laws reinforced that fact. As Whitehead points out,

All of these enactments were concerned simply with the basic education of children, and should not, therefore, be confused with modern compulsory education laws which require classroom attendance at state-approved schools.

Parents in the colonies did, in fact, take their responsibility seriously and children learned to read on a wide scale. “At the time of the Revolution, literacy rates had reached unprecedented heights, and by 1800 literacy was virtually universal.” That is, decades before the public school system was created in the USA, almost everyone (excluding slaves, unfortunately) could read and write in that country. Universal literacy was not the result of public education.

JOHN LOCKE

John Locke (1632-1704) has been one of the most influential political philosophers in the history of the English-speaking world. He was the key philosopher behind the founding

*...instead of
belonging to their
parents, children
belong to the
Creator. Parents,
then, hold children
in trust for God.*

of the United States, and his thought underlays many early American documents and institutions. Although there is a debate over the degree to which Locke reflects a genuine Christian perspective, there are some clear biblical ideas in his work.

Locke understood that God had created the world and everything in it. As Whitehead explains, Locke saw children as being the creation of God:

Therefore, instead of belonging to their parents, children belong to the Creator. Parents, then, hold children in trust for God. This means that parents, as stewards, are to take care of their children for God. The child must be raised to live the sort of life which is pleasing to the Creator.

Children, of course, are born without the ability to take care of themselves or make decisions for their lives. They will eventually develop those capacities and become independent adults. But in the meantime it is necessary for the parents to care for them and take steps to see that they grow morally and mentally into responsible individuals. As Locke saw things:

the child’s weakness is a source of parental authority, which in turn is a source of parental obligation. Thus, parents are under a God-mandated obligation to “preserve, nourish, and educate” their children. This is not a choice parents have. *The obligation is not to the child, but to God.*

In other words, parents are accountable to God, first and foremost,

... the erosion of parental rights that has occurred in recent decades is strongly related to the decline of Christianity

for how they raise their children. The children are really God's children entrusted to the parents, so those parents must answer to Him for their child-rearing efforts.

THE COURTS

Locke's perspective on the position of parents reflects the Christian thought that dominated the US during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whitehead states that, "it was this parental authority and obligation that was embedded in the law and protected by the courts."

Whitehead discusses particular American court cases from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that demonstrate how strongly parental rights were upheld in common law. He summarizes the situation thusly:

Parental power, the early court decisions indicate, is essentially plenary. This means it should prevail over the claims of the state, other outsiders, and the children themselves "unless there is some compelling justification for interference."

It is important to note that the erosion of parental rights that has occurred in recent decades is strongly related to the decline of Christianity in the USA and in the other Western countries as well. This is reflected in American court decisions:

The older cases specifically noted that they were relying on Christian principles. However, the modern phobia over the separation of church and state prevents any reference to the Christian principles in terms of them being truth.

Parental rights were historically based on Christian ideals. As the Christian basis of the West has deteriorated, the foundation for parental rights has weakened as a result.

There is still some support for parental rights in the USA and other countries like Canada. But Whitehead thinks that continuing support is best explained as being part of "the cultural memory" of the past "when the Christian idea that children are gifts from God was an assumed principle."

CONCLUSION

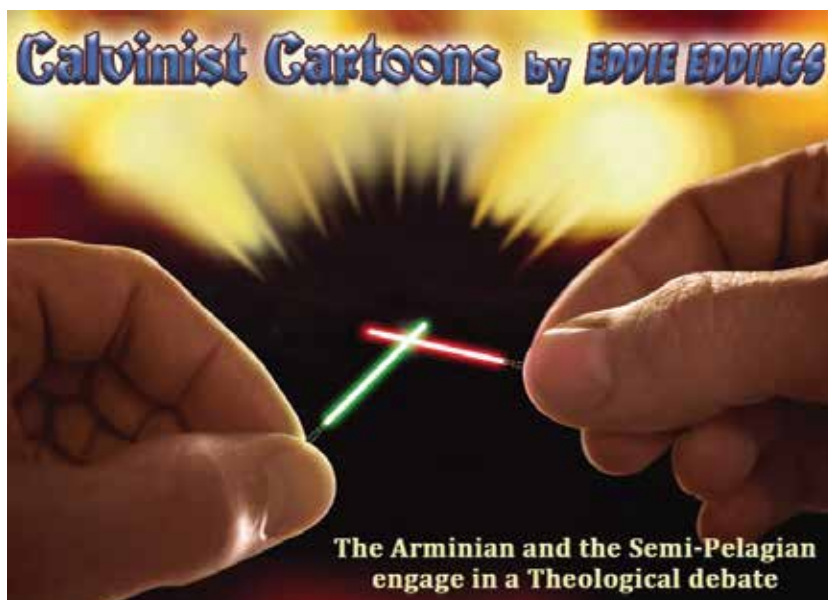
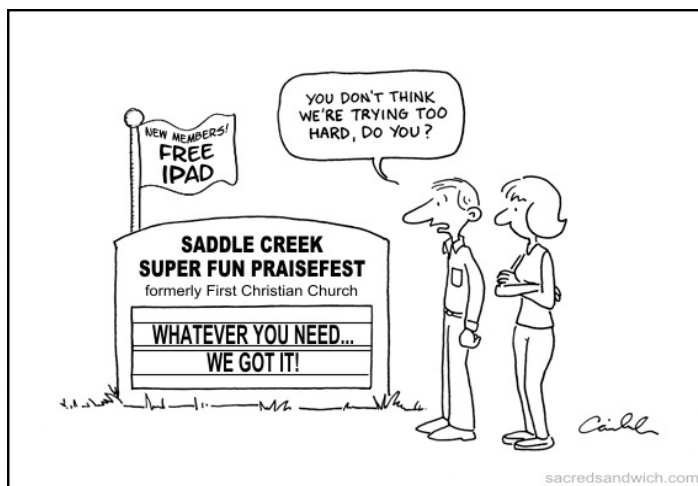
Whitehead suggests that there are two key commitments Christians must make if they are to secure parental rights. "The first is, of course, the commitment to be good parents." Parents must raise their children in accordance with God's loving commands and expectations. In other words, parents must take their responsibilities and obligations seriously if they want their parental rights to be recognized.

"Second, as Christians we must be committed to stand strong for the truth." Parental rights are ultimately rooted in Christianity, so it is especially incumbent upon Christians to advocate for them. The purpose and rationale for parental rights need to be explained.

In the end, parental rights are not primarily for the benefit of parents, but for the benefit of children. Children need the loving care of their parents. No institution can take the place of the family in the lives of children. As Whitehead puts it, "The state is simply, and will always be, a poor and ineffective parental substitute." RP



COMICS



CARTOONISTS

We're looking for
a few good
stick men

Do you have humorous
insights to share? Can
you draw a stick figure?
Then why not craft
a comic or two for
Reformed Perspective?

Send your submissions to:
editor@ReformedPerspective.ca



RADIANT: FIFTY REMARKABLE WOMEN IN CHURCH HISTORY

BY RICHARD M. HANNULA

330 PAGES / 2015



I found this book very interesting and met a lot of fascinating women.

- Professor Eta Linnemann who taught historical-critical theology for 30 years but in 1978 became convinced that she was wrong and she threw out all the books and articles she had written and asked those who had bought her material to do the same.
- Bilquis Sheikh (1912-1997), a very wealthy woman in Pakistan in a prominent caste who was unhappy with what she read in the Koran. She compared it to the Bible and became a Christian. Her daughter asked her why she was doing this. Bilquis answered: "My dear, there is nothing that I can do but be obedient." She was baptized but had to flee the USA to save herself from being murdered.
- Queen Berta (550-606) who prayed for her husband, King Ethelbert to be converted. She was a shining example of a Christian wife and eventually he did become a Christian. The Pope sent him along with Augustine and 40 monks for mission work to the Kingdom of the Franks where they were given a run down little church which was the beginning of Canterbury Cathedral.
- Monica, the mother of Augustine, is

also mentioned. It was told her by the Bishop that "it cannot be that the son of these tears should perish."

There are many more short profiles including Martin Luther's wife, and Francis Schaeffer's wife.

The author and publisher come from a Reformed background, so most of the women Richard Hannula profiles are people we'd agree with on most theological matters. But as you might expect in a book that covers 50 different women, there are also a few who got notable matters wrong. For example, Hannula tells us of Amanda Smith, a former slave, who travelled the world singing and sharing her testimony about Jesus Christ. She was told that the Holy Spirit could perfect here on Earth so that she could live her life from then on without sin. She prayed for this perfection and believed she had received it.

So this should not be read as some sort of theological treatise. It is, however, a fascinating look at, as my minister Rev. Kampen once put it, how the Lord spreads his Gospel message using imperfect people, in imperfect ways, with their problematic interpretations of the Bible. What came to mind in reading this book was how St. Boniface brought the Bible to those stubborn and wild Frisians – I remembered my mother once telling me that Boniface not only brought the Gospel but also relics. His was a flawed presentation, but it was still the Word of God, and we must not underestimate how God will use it.

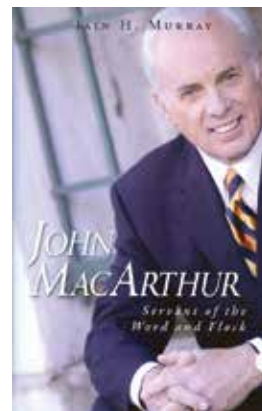
My thoughts are not with some of the irritations as mentioned above but with the amazing women in "God's army" who had such a love for the Word of God and were so convicted to follow His example. These are wonderful stories. I would most certainly recommend it, but add the caution that readers do need to have some level of discernment.

– JO VANDERPOL

JOHN MACARTHUR: SERVANT OF THE WORD AND FLOCK

BY IAIN H. MURRAY

240 PAGES / 2011



It might be too much to characterize John MacArthur as a fighter, but he certainly doesn't back down from one. He's appeared on talk shows and been willing to speak truth in settings where it is barely tolerated. He's written books denouncing and rebutting Pentecostalism, evolution and "easy believe-ism." And while he admires J.I. Packer, when Packer minimized the differences between Catholic and Protestants, MacArthur was willing to speak up again.

So he's a brave principled man... and to top it all off, he's Reformed!

But he's also Baptist. And he's a Dispensationalist. He is wrong about these major matters.

That's why, when I found out Iain Murray had written a biography on him, I knew I'd have to check it out. On the matters where we differ with MacArthur, Murray does too, so his biography highlights the great good God is doing through this man, and takes gentle note of areas where both Murray and we too would differ.

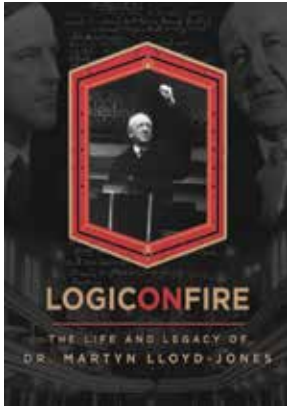
While I really enjoyed Murray's account – it's short and an easy read – this isn't a book with broad general appeal. I'd only recommend it for those who already know and appreciate MacArthur.

– JON DYKSTRA

LOGIC ON FIRE

DOCUMENTARY

2015 / 102 MINUTES



Even if you don't know Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones (1899-1981) you likely do know some of the people praising him in this documentary. The list includes John MacArthur, Iain Murray, Kevin DeYoung, Sinclair Ferguson, and RC Sproul, who says of him: "I believe that Lloyd Jones was to twentieth century Britain what Charles Spurgeon was to the nineteenth century."

Best known for his passionate preaching, the film highlights how very different Lloyd Jones was from the other pastors of his time (and many of the celebrity pastors of our own). As one interviewee shares:

...he wasn't at all seeker-friendly. In fact he was seeker-unfriendly, because he felt that a non-Christian out to be deeply *uncomfortable* in church. Because you actually want him to be uncomfortable because you need to realize your need for the Gospel.

My wife and I both enjoyed this very polished production. It comes with 2 bonus disks and a small hardback book among the extras. One caution: while there is lots to love about Lloyd Jones, he got some matters wrong, most notably baptism. But it is his preaching, and his generally Reformed perspective, that are the focus here. *Logic on Fire* would make a great gift for pastors and anyone who enjoys Church history. It can be ordered in Canada via BannerOfTruth.org/US.

- JON DYKSTRA



THE HARDEST PEACE

BY KARA TIPPETTS

2014 / 189 PAGES

In this part biography, part devotional Kara wants us to understand it was not in spite of her long battle with cancer, but because of it and through it, that God showed his goodness to her. She writes of how her life hasn't always been pretty – full of surgeries, and chemo, and hair loss, and scars, and medical tests, and radiation – but God has ensured it was beautiful.

This is a must read for everyone. Whether you are near death or far from it, there is but one ending for us all – death is the final enemy, and before it there is the loss of strength and loss of ability, loss of friends and loss of family. It is easy to trust God when the going is good, but what of when we have to ask, "Who is our only comfort in death?"

At one point Kara shares how, as one of her daughters was being tucked into bed, the girl asked her father, "Is Mama going to die of cancer, or old age?" Kara's husband couldn't find the strength to say the words, and asked Kara for help. So Kara padded down the hall and slipped under the covers with her daughter.

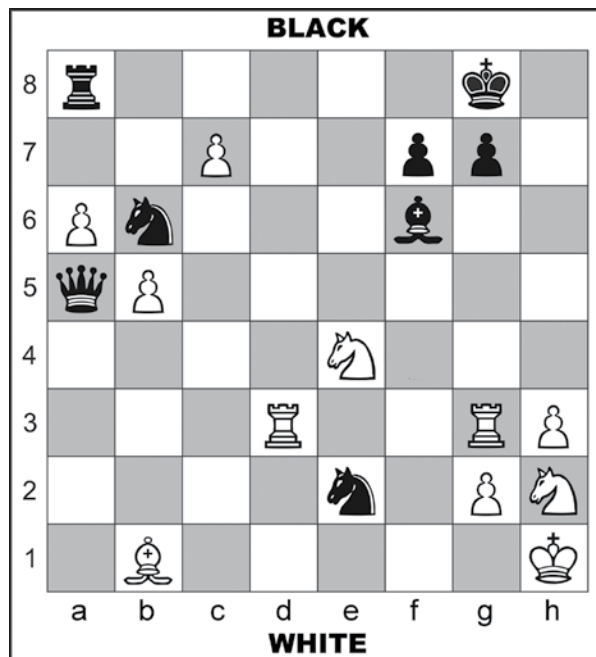
She wasn't asking for false hope; she wanted me to love her with honesty. I told her I had heard her question, and I asked her my own question in response. I asked her if she believed God would meet her in both of those places. I looked at her face and wondered at her love, her beauty, her tenderness and I asked her a question many grown people cannot answer or embrace. In the most painful fear and hurts of our lives, will God be good? Not just the simple: God is good, indeed always good. Not the rote, recited, memorized answers we have been trained to give in the edges of life. But the asking: Is Jesus really good in the awful of cancer, fire, heartbreak and devastation? In the face of all that is broken, is God good?

We all know the answer, but it is one thing to know the answer and another to believe it when the going is not good. This is why I loved this book: Kara praises God for his goodness, and all that He provided her, and she also acknowledges her own weakness and doubt. And in that weakness and doubt, God gave her what she needed right to the end – on March 22, 2015, Kara Tippetts lost her battle with cancer but rose victoriously to be with her Lord and Savior.

- JON DYKSTRA

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #222



Riddle for Punsters #222

"Let's not BLAB about the LAB"

Why do dilute chemicals not do well on tests in the lab? They just do not have the c _____ n necessary.

Why did the acid's report cause a lot of negative r _____ ions? Its information b _____ clearly lacked n _____ ity.

Problem to Ponder #222

"Plan a Party for the Birthday Girl?"

Jim is presently twelve years older than Tim but three years younger than Kim. Six years ago Jim was twice as old as Tim was then.

How many years from now will Kim have her fortieth birthday?

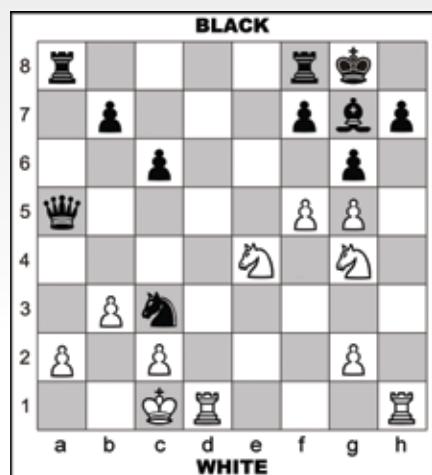
WHITE to Mate in 4

Or, If it is BLACK's Move,

BLACK to Mate in 3

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #221



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

Starting with either knight:

1. N-B6 ch BxN
2. NxB ch K-N2
3. RxP mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Ng4-f6 + Bg7xf6
2. Ne4xf6 + Kg8-g7
3. Rh1xh7 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- N-K7ch
2. K-N1 QxP mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Nc3-e2+
2. Kc1-b1 Qa5xa2++

Answer to Riddle for Punsters #221 - "Just Too Pricey!"

Why did Mrs. Stingysnob faint in the carpet store? When she found out how much it would cost to replace all the carpeting in her large house, she was just floored.

Answer to Problem to Ponder #221 - "One letter makes all the difference"

Change the **middle letter** of the first five-letter word, whose meaning is first given, to make the word whose meaning is given second.

For example, blaze, waterfall -> flame, flume

Hoax, path -> TRICK, TRACK

Slippery, loose -> SLICK, SLACK

Accumulate, watch intently -> STORE, STARE

Wonderful, crush -> GRAND, GRIND

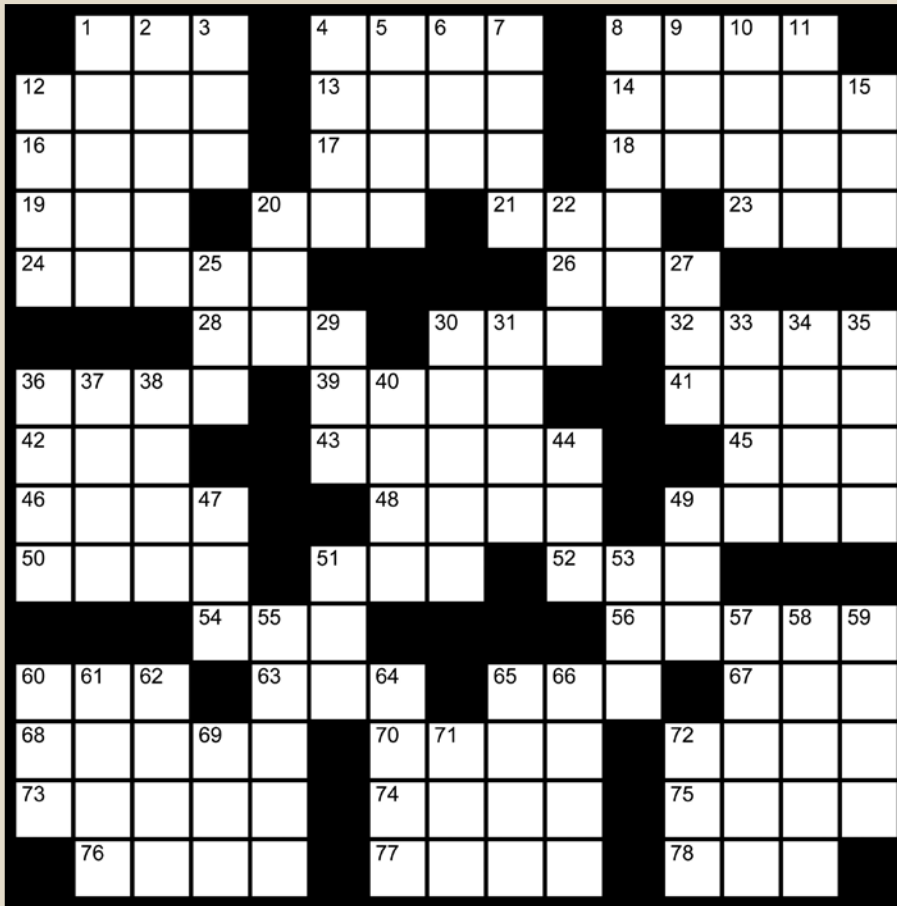
Trap, nasal wheeze -> SNARE, SNORE

Bad smell, was smelly -> STINK, STANK

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

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 1-10

PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

1. US Federal Commission to regulate Communications
4. "He makes Lebanon to ____ like a...." (Ps. 29)
8. These provoke "aahs" – aye, there's the rub!
12. Shapeless shape (for instance, of dough)
13. "Go ____ the ark" (Gen. 7)
14. The kind of temper criticized in Proverbs 14
16. Not a win or a tie but rather a ____
17. Flat circle; flying ones used for a form of golf!
18. French farewell like the English Go with God.
19. "copper is smelted from the ____" (Job 28)
20. "____ I have borne him a son" (Gen. 21)
21. "To ____ is human...."
23. Helps an electric guitar be heard
24. Anagram of cocoa; plant needed to make it

26. Computer program for smartphones
28. Hero of Dubble Bubble gum comic strips
30. Abbreviation on turntables or car dashboards
32. Cogito, ____ sum (philosopher Rene Descartes)
36. Slangy abbreviation for a man of quality
39. "An ____! A craftsman casts it...." (Is. 40)
41. One way you can compare apples and oranges
42. Drink served to pirates in a pub
43. Raise doubts or objections
45. As well as, in addition to, in conjunction with
46. "The LORD has heard my ____" (Ps. 6)
48. "Gift of the ____" (O. Henry short story)
49. Raw treasures found in mines
50. ____ of Sandwich (the one who invented it)

51. 2000 pounds
52. Before GPS we used a ____
54. Neck ornament for Hawaiian holidayers
56. Often rare cut of meat
60. World wonders, but we know this didn't come first
63. "....the fish of the ____" (Gen. 1 and 9)
65. "....Absalom hanging in an ____" (2 Sam. 18)
67. "____ Baba and the Forty Thieves"
68. "____ in the LORD with all...." (Prov. 3)
70. The part of the ear that usually gets pierced
72. Gator's cousin
73. Radiation unit (named after early physicist)
74. "____, Fly, Don't Bother Me!"
75. Sneak a ____ when a glimpse is what you seek.
76. Aaron ____: U.S. vice president in 1804 duel
77. Supposed sign of things to come
78. They pay for "free" web-sites or TV shows

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 1-9

DOWN

1. Vegetation (a word often paired with fauna)
2. Abbreviation for obscure trig function
3. One of the Big Three US television networks (still?)
4. "....gave them rest on every ____" (Josh. 21)
5. You do this with needles
6. "....each belonging to ____ kind" (Gen. 1)
7. Facebook attention-grabber
8. A type of cheddar
9. Slang for apartment (with lily if rented to frog?)
10. Biggest and most populous continent
11. Handle of a pipe, or of a golden lampstand
12. The Soviet one lost the Cold War.
15. Opposite of nope
20. Second person pronoun
22. Substitute offering for Isaac in Genesis
25. A particularly fit abbreviation for apartment
27. Vigor from three fifths of Pepsi serving
29. What Katy ____ (1872 children's novel)
30. We aren't this type of Catholic
31. Stopper for a drainage outlet
33. "....attack their ____ guard." (Josh. 10)
34. It's a hereditary thing!
35. A not very new town in Alberta near Calgary

36. Stare open-mouthed
37. ____ Enchanted (novel about Cinder____)
38. Not ever (as a poet might condense it)
40. Not the real thing (shortened)
44. Ideally a basketball does not hit the ____
47. "____ things work together for...." (Rom. 8)
49. Choose (to)
51. "____ up your garment" (2 Kings 4)
53. "____, and it will be given...." (Matthew 5)
55. Specific type of organic compound
57. Having (a specific type of) ears
58. Plants having curative properties
59. "hard for you to ____ against" (Acts 26)
60. And so on, and so on, and so on (abbreviation)
61. Beetle larva (or food, in slang)
62. Teacher or master in Eastern religions
64. Too
65. Instrument for the duck in Peter and the Wolf
66. A very long time (archaically spelled)
69. Dear ____: possible salutation of cover letter
71. Unit of electrical resistance
72. Accountant certified by a professional charter

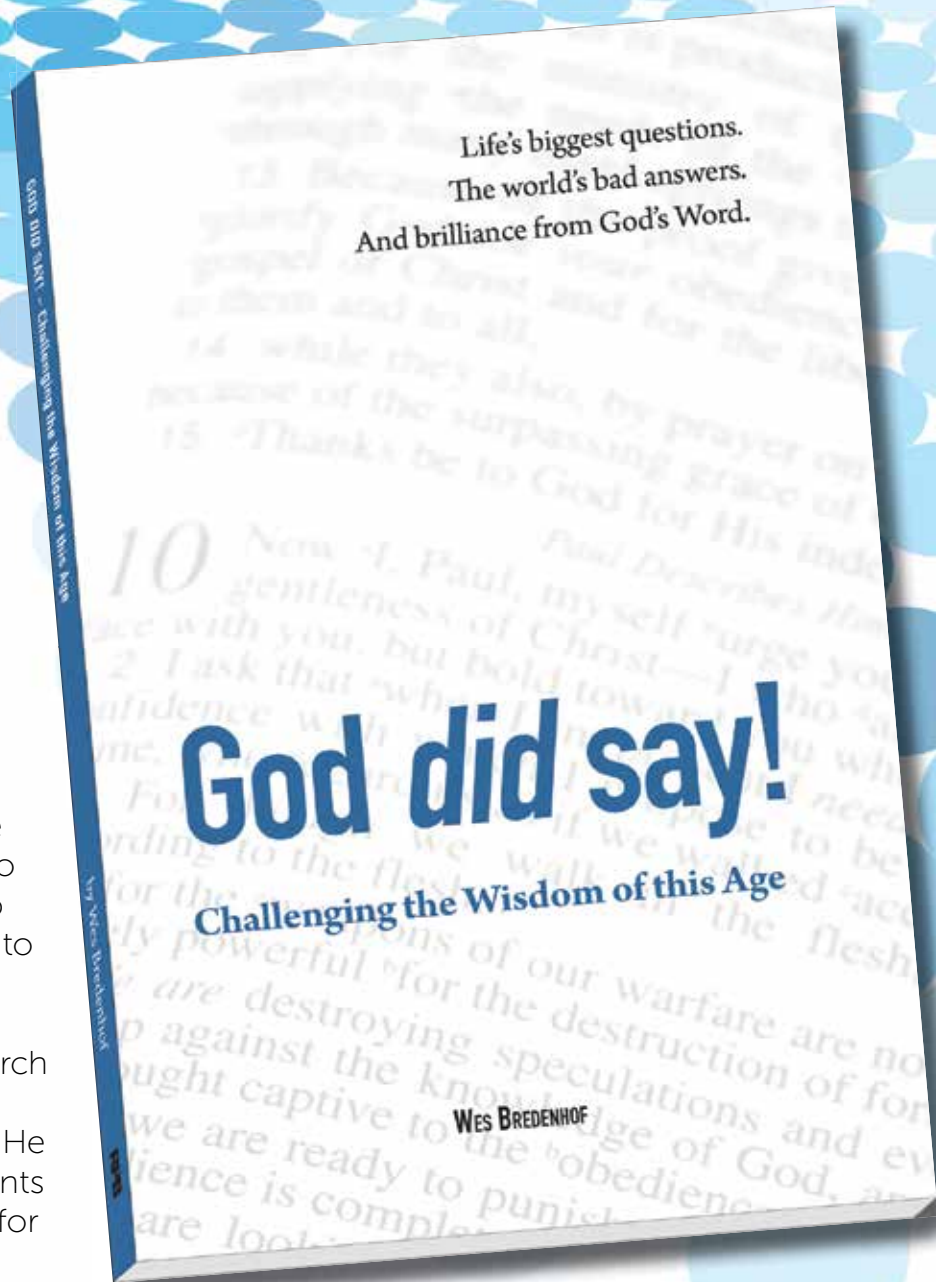
from Reformed Perspective Books

Consider these two questions:

- "What did God say?"
- "Did God *really* say?"

The first one is about finding clarity. The second seems like the first, but when the Serpent asked it of Eve his intent wasn't to *confirm* what God had said, but rather to *challenge* it. He was asking this question to raise doubt.

The same is true today. Some in the Church are questioning, but not to find out what God said. They want to undermine what He said! In his new book Dr. Bredenhof wants us to understand that there is no need for uncertainty, because God *did* say!



120 page

E-book (pdf) **\$5**

Paperback **\$16**

(\$10 + \$6 shipping. These are Canadian prices. US and International will be different)

Order at www.tinyurl.com/GodDidSay