

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

SEPT/OCT 2021
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PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

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Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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For print magazine requests or to change your address, contact:

Sherri Harsevoort - Reformed Perspective Administration,
Box 1039, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0
admin@reformedperspective.ca
1-204-751-0613

For Letters to the Editor, Advertising and Submissions, contact:

E-mail: editor@reformedperspective.ca

Editor: Jon Dykstra

Regular Contributors: Sharon Bratcher, Christine Farenhorst, Margaret Helder, Rob Slane, Michael Wagner

Board of Directors: Bruce DeBoer (Chairman); Marty VanDriel (Treasurer); Chris deBoer (Executive Director); Aren Vreugdenhil; Aubrey Vandergaag; Sharon de Boer (Secretary); Lucas Holtvlüwer

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THE HIDDEN TAX OF INFLATION

by Peter Jacobsen

Prices are on the rise in countries around the world. Canada saw its highest rate of inflation in over a decade in July when the annual pace of inflation hit 3.7%.

Compared to the U.S., though, Canada is in a relatively good spot. The Consumer Price Index (CPI, which measures inflation by comparing a fixed group of goods over time), rose to 5.4% for the month of July. This ties with June's numbers for being the largest rate of price increase since 2008. An alternative measure of inflation, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, reached its highest rate in 30 years.

Economists have mixed feelings about how long inflation will last, but one thing is clear. Prices are on the rise, and you've likely noticed your money isn't

stretching as far as it used to.

So why is this happening now? Well, Nobel-price-winning economist Milton Friedman famously commented, "inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon." In other words, if you want to see why prices are rising, follow the *money*.

MONEY-PRINTING MANIA

When a central bank prints more currency and puts it into circulation, those who get first access to the money are in for an unexpected payday. So, what will they do with this new money? Well, some of it will be saved, but some will be spent. Suddenly the newly printed money in your pocket might let you buy something you've had your eyes on for a while. The store then

generates more revenue which can go to investors or paying new workers. So, spending increases, and this might not sound so bad so far. But this is when the problems began.

As that new money goes into the pockets of new workers or investors, they spend some of it too. But, as demand increases while this new money circulates, prices begin to rise. There are more dollars in the economy, but the same amount of stuff. So, the value of dollars decreases relative to the value of goods and services. Money loses some of its value, and prices rise to reflect the money's lower value. When the central bank prints money, it creates this process whereby money loses its value.

This is exactly what's happening around the world. In Canada, a com-

mon measure of the quantity of money in circulation shows an increase from \$1.8 trillion at the beginning of 2020 to \$2.2 trillion today. That's approximately a 22% increase in the quantity of Canadian dollars in circulation in less than two years!

As you might expect from the higher rate of inflation, the increase in the supply of US dollars has been even more alarming. The supply of US dollars has increased by 32% in the same period. Nearly one-fourth of *all* U.S. dollars in circulation today were printed since January 2020.

This money printing, unprecedented in recent history, was in a large part to prop up economies being damaged by COVID-19 lockdowns. However, we're beginning to feel the effects of this temporary solution, and Christians should recognize the consequences of money-printing.

INFLATION HURTS SAVERS... ESPECIALLY AMONG THE POOR

The problem isn't simply that, after a period of having more money, consumers now have to face higher prices. Remember, the first person to receive new dollars is able to benefit from spending them. However, as the money circulates more, prices begin to rise. This means not everyone gets the benefit from this newly printed money. And this new money comes at a cost.

As prices rise, the money in people's savings account loses value too. In this way, inflation acts as a tax on savings. By taking future purchasing power from the thrifty, government can print money and give it to private banks to lend to businesses today. Inflation hurts savers.

There are a few work-arounds to this problem. There are financial tools which help savers to shield the value of their money from the degradation to inflation, but, unfortunately, these tools and methods are costly to learn about and utilize. As such, we should expect inflation to be especially deleterious to poor and middle-class savers who don't have time to focus on protecting their wealth since their weeks are consumed by making enough wealth to survive until the next paycheck.

The problems don't end there. While some have the luxury of a job where pay can be re-negotiated easily, this is not true for everyone. Many jobs involve contracts wherein workers agree to a specified wage rate for a definite period. In this case, not only is the savings account of these workers losing value due to inflation, but the weekly paycheck they receive will also be hurt. If you receive the same paycheck every two weeks, but the paycheck can buy you fewer goods and services due to price increases, you're worse off. Economists call this a decline in the *real wage*.

WHY WOULD THE GOVERNMENT INFLATE?

So what is the benefit to government lowering the purchasing power of citizens? Well, there are a couple of benefits to government.

First, a government can lower its debt burden. Governments often finance spending by selling government bonds. These bonds are promises to pay back the purchaser with interest. When inflation strikes, prices and wages rise. As a result, the amount of tax revenue the government collects increases. This makes it easier to pay back debt which remains stagnant as prices and incomes rise.

Second, remember that the "new" money maintains high value before it circulates widely. As a result, government can appease special interest groups in the financial industry by putting the newly printed money into banks first. The new money in banks provides access for large corporations to take the high-powered money out as loans for new projects.


BE WARY OF THE INFLATION TAX

Christians should be especially wary of the tax imposed via inflation for two major reasons.

First, inflation disproportionately impacts the poor. When prices on everyday goods like groceries, energy, and transportation rise, this disproportionately hurts the poor. While 5% more expensive food is a relatively small increase for a millionaire, food can easily make up a huge percent-

age of monthly pay. Someone living paycheck-to-paycheck can't afford a rise in prices. Further, the wealthy often receive income through financial assets like stocks. Stock prices also tend to increase during times of inflation, so the income of the rich stays relatively stable. The poor, often locked into prior wage agreements, don't see their incomes rise immediately with inflation.

Second, inflationary policies encourage behavior the Bible explicitly calls foolish. Proverbs 21:20 (ESV) tells us, "precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it." This verse is descriptive. A fool *consumes* all of his wealth, whereas a wise man *saves* it in his dwelling. However, remember that inflation destroys the value of savings. If someone was keeping \$1,000 in savings, and a grocery store trip costs \$200 before inflation, and \$250 after inflation, the saver goes from being able to afford five trips to being able to afford four. If instead, the consumer had used the \$1,000 to buy a new flatscreen TV, inflation would not have had any effect. This example illustrates an important point. Because inflation taxes savers, it discourages frugality and encourages consumerism. Why save for tomorrow if money-printing is going to make savings worthless?

Unfortunately, monetary policy is hardly, if ever, discussed on political debate stages let alone Christian churches. However, if we believe our role as Christians in democracy involves looking out for the poor among us, we should watch out for policies which seem tailor-made to harm their interests. 

Peter Jacobsen is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Ottawa University and the Gwartney Professor of Economic Education and Research at the Gwartney Institute. He has previously written for both the Foundation for Economic Education and the Institute for Faith, Works, and Economics.

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NOTA BENE

News worth noting
by Jon Dykstra

CHINA TAKES A PRO-LIFE TURN

This comes under the category of: "Come and see what God has done: He is awesome in His deeds..." (Ps. 66:5). A country notorious for forced sterilizations and abortions and government-mandated infanticide has just announced they are now putting restrictions on abortion.

For 36 years China enforced a One Child Policy by tearing unborn babies out of their mothers' wombs. But then the Chinese government began to realize their policy would leave a single child supporting 2 parents and 4 grandparents, without help from siblings, uncles, aunts, or cousins, because none of them would ever have existed. China's policy left an aging populace supported by a shrinking workforce.

That may be why the policy wasn't universally enforced across the country. But from 1979 when it was first implemented, to 2015 when it was changed, the birthrate per woman dropped from 2.7 to 1.7. A replacement birthrate – one that keeps the population at the same size – is 2.1, with the

two children there to take the place of their two parents (the .1 is there to account for childhood deaths.)

But since the One Child Policy was expanded to a Two Child Policy in 2015, China's birthrate, after inching up slightly right afterward, has been declining for the last four years to 1.3.

Thus the Chinese government's newly

announced restrictions on abortion.

There's nothing repentant about this pro-life turn – this is the same utilitarian ethic that motivated their One Child Policy. They wanted to slow their population then, so they killed babies; they want a growing population now, so they are saving babies. It's all about effective management of their population and their economy. But in this one area, their policies have switched from defiance to God's revealed will – children being a blessing, not a curse (Ps. 127:3) – to being much more in accord with it (Gen. 9:6). It may be too late for them to halt their demographic decline, but there will still be fruit from this pro-life turn. The God who spoke all into being defines reality, and there is a benefit in aligning with His reality, rather than trying to run headlong against it.

We can be rightfully ashamed (and fearful) that this leaves Canada along with Vietnam and North Korea as the only countries with unfettered abortion. But we can also celebrate that in China, and Texas, and other places around the world, there are governments aligning themselves with reality by beginning to protect unborn children like the blessings they are.

SOURCE: Kaamil Ahmed's "China to clamp down on abortions for 'non-medical purposes'" posted to TheGuardian.com on Sept. 27, 2021; Bruno Tertrais' "Does China's population bust herald our own?" posted to InstitutMontaigne.org on May 2021



US HOMESCHOOLING GROWS BY A MILLION

In 1973, there were as few as 13,000 children being homeschooled across the United States. From those small beginnings, the movement has grown over the last 50 years, until there were an estimated 2.6 million homeschoolers as of March of 2020. This stay-at-home educational option got even more popular after public schools closed due to COVID lockdowns. But that growing popularity wasn't just due to public school closures. Otherwise, there would have been only a temporary boost in homeschooling, for only as long as the lockdowns lasted. But now, with public schools largely back in session, the number of homeschooling students has risen by a million, to 3.7 million (with some estimates putting it as high as 5 million).

Saw how their children were being catechized

This homeschooling surge may have been motivated by what parents saw when they were able to watch their children's online Zoom classes. Parents could see for themselves how their children were being catechized about race, sexuality, environmentalism, equality, privilege, and, most recently, gender fluidity.

Public school attacks on God have, in the past, been somewhat subtle, in that they opposed God largely by ignoring Him. The public school curriculum taught by omission that the Lord of All wasn't important at all to anything and everything students were learning.

The system's ungodliness has been more overt in recent years, with maybe the most noticeable being how confused boys are now embraced as girls, allowed on girls' sports teams, given access to female washrooms, and addressed with feminine pronouns. And vice versa for confused girls. While God made us male and female (Gen. 1:27), that's not what little Timmy is being taught by his government-approved curriculum. And long-distance, in-home Zoom learning allowed parents to see this curriculum close up.

Parents taking charge

While COVID hasn't had many silver linings, parents taking back their God-given educational role (Deut. 6:6-7, Prov. 1:8-9, 22:6, Eph 6:1-4) from the State is a big one. There are also at least 5.7 million children being educated in private schools. So, in round figures, that is almost 10 million students out of the public system, compared with approximately 50 million being educated in public schools.

There's more progress to be made, as not all these homeschooled students are being educated to know and love the Lord – even atheists are jumping on the homeschooling bandwagon. But with minimal State support for homeschooling, it means that for these students at least, our tax dollars aren't being used to catechize them against God's Truth.



A ready alternative to the public system

Those of us who support Christian schooling haven't always felt very invested in debates about the public system. We're aware of the dangers, but we haven't known what to do about them. Should we call for the shutdown of the public system? But if so, what alternative can we offer? Our own Christian schools are confessional, allowing in only families that hold to the same creeds and confessions we do. Thus they aren't an option we can present to the general public.

So if we're going to oppose a godless public system using our tax dollars to teach the children of our friends and neighbors that God is irrelevant, what can we offer as a substitute?

We could push for a voucher system, where the government's educational dollars are directed by parents, rather than given to schools. Then parents could send their "voucher" to the school of their choice, and by that means, create more responsive, and, in some instances, more godly, schools. Of course, so long as the government controls the purse strings, they might also try to dictate the curriculum. Another problem is that this is a long-term goal – we aren't

going to get a voucher system overnight.

This highlights a strength of the home-schooling movement: it is an educational alternative that parents can turn to right now... as many more hundreds of thousands did just this last year.

Celebrating what we once opposed

Historically, our Reformed churches haven't celebrated homeschooling. The perception has been that any church families that chose to homeschool were diverting their support away from the local Christian school, which was usually in need of every dime it could get. Thus homeschooling was seen as competition that undercut the financial security of our Christian schools.

But where two legitimate educational options exist – both fulfilling parents' baptismal vows to raise our children in the doctrine of the Lord – how can we say which is undercutting the other? It would make as much sense to say that Christian schools undercut homeschool cooperatives, which might otherwise be larger and more effective but for the energy and money devoted to our Christian schools. Of course, no one is making that argument, because we all know there is no Scriptural command requiring us to homeschool. Thus no fault can be found with those who choose not to homeschool (even if their involvement in homeschooling might have been a great help to other parents doing so). The same is true the other way around: no fault should be leveled at those who choose not to use our Christian schools but instead fulfill their baptismal vows by homeschooling instead.

Instead of antipathy towards homeschooling, we should thank God for the possibility it presents to our neighbors that our own Christian schools cannot. By growing more than 40% in a single year, homeschooling has shown itself to be an at-the-ready, instantly-expandable alternative to the increasingly ungodly public system.

SOURCE: SOURCES: Brian D. Ray's "How many homeschool students are there in the United States? Pre-Covid-19 and Post-Covid-19: New Data" posted to NHERI.org, Sept 9, 2021; Kaelan Deese's "More than 11% of US households are homeschooling: Report" posted to News.Yahoo.com on Aug. 31, 2021



4 TIMES AS MANY CANADIANS HAVE DIED FROM ABORTION AS COVID



Official estimates are that approximately 30,000 Canadians died from Covid over the last 18 months.

To combat the illness, provincial governments locked down businesses for weeks and even months, and kept people from church, from attending funerals, from seeing their aged relatives, and from seeing much of anyone else. Masks were mandated in most public settings, while vaccines went from being offered to being required to travel on trains or planes. And at the federal level, the government was spending almost \$1 billion a day on Covid.

The point here isn't to question these impositions and costs, but to contrast them with what's being done for the unborn. We don't even know how many unborn babies were murdered over the same 18-month period because that toll isn't being printed in our daily newspaper. Their deaths aren't thought important enough for figures to be kept current, so we have to go back to 2019 to get any statistics. The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada reports 83,576 unborn children

were killed that year, though this number only includes hospital and clinic abortions, so the overall toll could be much higher. So, over the same time period that we've been dealing with Covid, a conservative estimate would put the abortion death total at well over 120,000 Canadian children.

Long before Covid hit our shores, abortion was already ending the lives of one in five Canadian babies. We can be grateful that there are signs Covid may be abating, but that same isn't true of abortion.

Christians should pray for our governments to take action to protect the unborn, but the contrast presented here is one for God's people to consider too. If the deaths of 30,000 concerned us enough to shut down the country (and got even our Liberal Prime Minister arguing that when there are other lives at risk then "My body, my choice" shouldn't apply), how should we respond when we learn that another plague is killing four times that number? What sort of attention should we give, and what sort of time, energy, and money should we devote, to fighting abortion?

TWO SMUT PEDDLERS GET WOKE...AND HOPEFULLY BROKE



Playboy and the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* have long been about pushing boundaries, showing more and more, with models that wore less and less. Courting controversy has been a marketing ploy, with the resulting publicity helping them sell more copies. But with every sort of obscenity now just a click away, what kind of boundaries can they still push, to spark the publicity they're after?

Well, in July the annual *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* featured its first "trans" model on the cover.

This fellow had amputated some key bits down below, and then inflated his pecs with silicone to aid his masquerade as a miss. Then, this past month, the cover of *Playboy* featured an effeminate guy wearing one of their bunny suits.

One has to wonder if God is turning their rebellion against them. While sales figures aren't readily available, it doesn't take a prophet to predict that magazines appealing to men's lowest lustful urges won't break sales records featuring effeminate men on their front covers.

CHRISTIAN FATHERS ARE COACHES

by Andrew J. Pol

Have you ever felt frustrated in dealing with your children? Have you found yourself complaining to your spouse that your child “just doesn’t listen well”? Why is it that children misbehave, and what is it that we can do about that? The first few verses of Ephesians 6 offer some guidance.

Paul begins by addressing children’s side of the issue in Ephesians 6:1: “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Then, in verse 4, he focuses on the fathers.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

PATIENCE AND MORE PATIENCE

The apostle wants fathers to be actively involved in the lives of their children. How? In a positive way. So he begins, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.” Children can sometimes become angry with their parents without having a good reason for this. But sometimes parents can be unreasonable with their children. That’s what Paul is referring to.

How old is your child? Are you keeping that in mind? If you don’t there may be a backlash. Children have a lot to learn. Don’t assume that it’s enough to teach them something just once or twice. Some things will stick in their memory very easily. Other things will need to be repeated again and again. Are you patient when you do this?

Pay attention to how you express yourself in your interaction with your children. Are you loud and overbearing or gentle and considerate in your dealings with your children?

Fathers in particular need to be careful in their dealings with their children. Little ones are like soft wax, very impressionable. Harsh words can leave deep scars that may last for a lifetime.

KEEP YOUR REAL GOAL IN MIND

Do you sometimes get very worked up about small details in the lives of your children? Paul warns against making a big deal about something trivial. Stay focused on your main goal. What is it? He explains, “Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

What does the word “discipline” bring to your mind? Punishment? Although that may be part of an interaction between a parent and a child, that’s only part of the picture here. The term Paul uses is broader than that. It includes such concepts as upbringing, training, instruction. It’s goal-oriented, as becomes clear in what Paul says further.

What’s your ultimate purpose in raising your children? To be “nice” to everyone... and especially to you? To please you? To just stay out of your way when you are in a bad mood?

It’s not enough to provide for their basic physical needs. Are you focusing on their spiritual development? What do they know about God as their heavenly Father? What do they know about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, their Saviour? Do they know what joy it gives to live as his Spirit-filled and Spirit-led followers, people who know and love him for who he is and what he has done for us?

IN IT FOR THE LONG-RUN

Think in this connection of the idea of “training” your child. A “trainer” or coach really has to focus on the person being trained. This is a long-term



commitment. You need to be aware of a child’s motivation as well as abilities. Talents have to be developed and bad habits need to be eliminated.

The apostle Paul gives well-rounded advice to fathers. He not only speaks about “training” children. He also speaks of the “instruction of the Lord.” The Greek word translated as “instruction” can be unfolded in a positive and negative sense. Children need to know what the Lord regards as “right” in our life for the Lord. They also need admonitions or warnings as to what is “wrong.” You can find many examples of this in the book of Proverbs. So remember to focus on both, so that your children will learn to discern what loving the Lord looks like and what he hates.

So, fathers, how are your children coming along? Are you coaching them properly? You have a beautiful and challenging task! Approach it prayerfully with an open Bible. Teach your children to know the Lord and to serve him with love in the light of his Word! That will help them to deal with the many questions and the many difficulties and challenges of life. RP

Dr. Pol is a retired minister of the Carman West Canadian Reformed Church in Manitoba.



GEZELLIG: COZY, RESTFUL

by Evelyn Kruis

When I think of my mom, an image that often comes to me is one of her sitting in her rocking chair, holding her cup of coffee, either reading her Bible or cuddling a child. It is not just an image, it is a feeling, one of safety and of rest. Those who know my mom know she is one of the hardest workers in Christ's field, always serving her family and his church, filling her home with baked goods for anyone who stops by, and frozen meals so that unexpected visitors are always expected.

Yet, a hard-working pattern of life at my parents' home is also a life of rest. How?

My parents are both children of Dutch immigrants who fled Holland in the years following WWII. These grandparents of mine helped start

faithful Reformed churches and worked incredibly hard to survive in a new land. They brought their Dutch traditions with them, some that continue to be practiced among their grandchildren, and some which have likely faded away with time. One simple, but beautiful tradition that may start fading in our modern world is that of a *gezellig* coffee break.

Gezellig means something cozy, restful, a comfortable conviviality that fills you up with joy. The Swedish word is *fika* and in Danish, *hygge* means something similar. Having a *hygge* life has become more popular in North America in the past few years, books have been written on it, numerous blog posts talk about it. *Hygge* is the pursuit of everyday happiness, a sense of comfort and togetherness; it is warm

socks and a crackling fire.

In the modern world, people are in desperate need of an excuse to slow down, a practice to help them savor the moment. When I started to notice these words pop up on my social media feed I was immediately transported to my Dutch upbringing of coffee and cake after church, coffee time each afternoon when dad came home, and morning coffee time.

Unfortunately, my usual practice is to make coffee for myself in the morning and then carry it around with me wherever I go for the next two hours. I know this is not unique, in fact, it has become a marketable practice as special coffee cups to transport and keep your coffee warm are now a regular commodity.

Last summer I got the privilege of

spending three months on my parents' farm. Each day my parents were up early working, but at 10:00 am we always stopped for a coffee and snack break. 15 minutes of rest, then back at work till lunch, then work until 3:00 pm for another short rest with a drink and snack. A much-loved tradition in the hearts of all us siblings, and in our many friends over the years, was an added nightly ritual around 9:00 pm of gathering together for a drink and snacks to spend time talking about our day and enjoying one another. My husband and I remarked to each other many times throughout last summer that we did not understand how we could end a day feeling more productive than usual, but also more rested. I believe the answer is in these natural patterns of life my parents had, with these simple breaks to gather and be still.


For me, this practice of hard work and regular coffee breaks has become a daily reminder of the life of a Christian.

Living on this side of heaven we still must work hard to fight against sin, the world, and the devil. We are not yet fully in the Promised Land. Yet, already in Christ we also have all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (Eph.2:6-7). We work and simultaneously rest, resting in the joy that it has all been accomplished, in Christ who has declared, "you are mine!"

The coffee break does not have to include others, the routines of these moments of sitting and resting are also a habit of the heart to rest in the day that the Lord has made. A day of hard work becomes marked by the joy also of looking forward to these quiet times of savoring the moment, leaning into Christ, and having fellowship in your home. My children love to have "tea-time" with mom, a momentary break each day to sit and see the little blessings we have, the birds that fly by our yard, the taste of the tea, a little snuggle, and a plan for what the rest

of the day will look like. Of course, when your children are young not each day will be *gezellig*: for each magical morning you may have one terrible one, and two mediocre ones, but it's the life-long pattern that matters, and it's the building of relationship blocks that will have your children coming over for coffee time way into their adulthood. Do not underestimate how beneficial it may be for your marriage to have a daily practice of sitting for 15 minutes and enjoying the day together. My parents did that faithfully, and it's another one of those images that brings me delight in the wisdom they taught by example.

Work hard and rest. Sit on your own. Fellowship with your family. Invite friends and strangers over. Let the watching world see your deep joy rooted in a simple life filled with the beautiful blessings of rest and a gaze towards the One who gives it.

One last note: a *gezellig* coffee break has no room for cell phones! 



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

A CREATIVE WORKAROUND

After stocking up the pantry with only the healthiest of foods, I found myself eating a couple of gummy vitamins because they were the closest thing to junk food that I could find.

PLUCK OUT THE INTERNET?

"Most of the publications I write for are online.... I would still get rid of the Internet tomorrow if I had the chance, just to get rid of porn because of how poisonous it is. People are saying 'Well the Internet has brought so much good.' I wouldn't take the tradeoff. 53% of American divorces court cases cite pronography as one of the key reasons for that divorce. 80% of young people view porn by the time they are between the ages 9 and 11. It's tearing at the social fabric of families, of couples, relationships, churches. None of that is worth the ability to get a hold of each other faster, and to email each other quicker and to sell junk online. None of it is worth the cost that we pay for having it turn into the largest distributor of sexual violence in human history."

— Jonathon Van Maren on *Real Talk* (www.RealTalkPodcast.ca)

WHY MARRIAGES LAST

On the occasion of his 23rd anniversary, Greg Koukl asked his daughters why they thought he and his wife had stayed together this long. One daughter quickly answered, "because you loooooove each other." Koukl's response: "That's not it." That, he noted, was the Hollywood answer, but as couples who have been married for any length of time know that there are times where you might not feel all that loving towards your spouse and yet God calls on you to still love your spouse. How is that possible if you're just not feeling it? Part of it is that love isn't simply a feeling, but also an action, and even when you don't feel it, you can still act it. Koukl shared this story:

"I heard a priest once, at a wedding, say something very profound on this line. He said: 'You have come together this day, for this wedding, to get married because *you love one another*. From this day forward, that order is reversed. That is, you love one another, *because you are married*.'"



WEARING YOUR CONVICTIONS

A friend used to go to the "reproductive rights" group on campus every time they set up a display to talk with them. I thought it a waste of time, but would tag along just to grab one of each of their pamphlets so that I could later shred. I knew it was a rather pathetic, even petty, effort, but it struck me as more useful than what my friend was doing. What good would talk do?

Except that, after visiting them repeatedly, he actually managed to reach one of them. I'm not saying she changed her mind, but she did actually hear him. She said, "You really think it's a baby, don't you?"

I'm convinced that many on the other side don't know anyone who thinks differently. Or if they do, they don't know that they do because the massacre of the unborn is a topic that few dare broach. But, for the unborn's sake, we must. And wearing your pro-life convictions on your sleeve, or rather, your chest, is one way to spark a conversation. Anyone who is open to the truth will then know who to talk to. Americans can pick up this one up at LiveAction.

Canadians can look for pro-life shirts at MarchForLife.ca and if you know any other good sites, let me know at editor@ReformedPerspective.ca.

BRING THE CONDEMNATION WITH CONCERN

This is an abbreviated version of a joke Douglas Wilson has passed along. At the risk of ruining the joke, I'm going to frontload an application. The moral of this story is something we need to have in our hearts when we talk to people caught up in sins that disgust us. Do they hear concern, or only condemnation?

When a little Methodist chapel up in the boondocks lost their pastor of many years, the congregation wanted another of the same stock. Their old pastor was old school, from beginning to end. He was a fiery fundamentalist, and he believed the Bible, all of it, and the people loved him.

So they wrote their bishop down in the city, and requested he send them a "hellfire and brimstone" preacher, and not one of those new-fangled kinds. This threw the bishop for a total loss, because he wasn't sure he had one of those, but he made a few delicate inquiries. Much to his astonishment, he found one, and shipped him up there. And to his dismay, about three weeks later, they sent their new man packing.

The following week, they sent the bishop another letter,

asking for a “hellfire and brimstone” preacher. The bishop wasn’t sure he was going to be able to help them, but he made further inquiries, and found another one. He sent him up, but he only lasted two weeks.

When the same scenario played out the third time, the bishop had almost given up hope. When he found a third preacher who seemed to fit that description, he commissioned him and sent him off, but without much hope. To his great surprise, this third man conducted a long and fruitful ministry at this little chapel, preaching hellfire and brimstone up there for two or three decades.

This mystified the bishop, and he couldn’t make any sense. But one day he was at an ecclesiastical conference of some sort or other, and he spied an old-timer from that church who happened to be attending. His curiosity getting the better of him, he walked up to the old-timer and said, “Do you mind if I ask you a question?” The old-timer said sure, and the bishop said, “I sent you people three hellfire and brimstone preachers, and you rejected the first two out of hand, and kept the third one for years. Do you mind explaining that for me?”

At this, the old-timer grinned, and said, “It is pretty simple, bishop. The third one sounded like he didn’t want us to go.”

ON LIVING IN A COVID AGE

Corrie Ten Boom and C.S. Lewis both died long ago, but both have thoughts to share on living in our current Covid age. The Lewis quote is from his essay, “On living in an atomic age” while the quote from Ten Boom isn’t properly sourced though it is widely dispersed online. But as Abraham Lincoln once warned in another quote widely dispersed online: “Don’t believe everything you read on the Internet.” So whether it was Ten Boom or not, there’s wisdom there for our day.

“In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. “How are we to live in an atomic age?” I am tempted to reply: “Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.”

“In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anaesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at

all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.”

– C. S. Lewis

“Worrying is carrying tomorrow’s load with today’s strength – carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn’t empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.”

– Corrie Ten Boom

ARE WE TRYING TO CREATE POLITE PAGANS?

Christians, in an effort to impact their culture, will often mute their Christian witness. We enter the public square promoting God’s morality on abortion and sexuality, but without ever mentioning it to be *God’s* morality. When we do that we’ve misunderstood the purpose for which God created us, to glorify Him.

“...in your public involvement, don’t conceal the roots of your convictions about what is right and wrong. Don’t try to get a better hearing through downplaying your dependence on Christ and his Word and the gospel.

“This is where many Christians, it seems to me, lose their saltiness and their light. Advocating for behaviors that are Christian is not the light of the world. Advocating for restraining behaviors is not the light of the world. There is nothing gospel in it. The light of the world is Christ and all that God is for us in him, all his gospel, and all his promises. If Christians become practical atheists in public, but simply advocate for behaviors that correspond to Christian ethics, they may see a little more political acceptance and affirmation in the short run, but they will lose the larger battle for the eternal good.

“Do we really want to invest in a society whose outward behaviors are moral while everybody goes to hell?”

– John Piper interviewed on DesiringGod.org April 26, 2016 on the question “Should Christians partner with non-Christians on social issues?”

“It is not your primary calling to *change your culture*.... Instead, you must constantly remember that the Lord has called you to be his *witness* before the lost and condemned world in which you now live.”

– John MacArthur (from his daily devotional *Moments of Truth*, with emphasis added)

CLASSICAL ME, CLASSICAL THEE

BY REBEKAH MERKLE
99 PAGES / 2017



While its focus is on classical schools, *Classical Me, Classical Thee* is a really good discussion of the basis for any Christian education.

Rebekah Merkle uses several analogies to explain the “superpowers” that a good Christian education gives to students. She stresses that such education is not only a “pizza with extra toppings” in comparison to public education but “a fundamentally different pizza.” Why? Because, in addition to the seemingly miscellaneous puzzle pieces (facts and figures) of a secular worldview, good Christian education shows how to connect those pieces by using the picture on the puzzle box (ie. a Biblical foundation for students’ varied studies).

So what are the superpowers bestowed by a solid Christian education?

- Literature teaches us to read for detail.
- Math and Science show us not only the order in the universe, but also the Divine source of that order - something hidden from public school students.
- History shows us how we got to the misunderstandings of secular culture, and therefore how to fruitfully address those misunderstandings.
- Learning another language (Latin or French, or Spanish) gives us the basic structures of language that enable us to speak and write clearly.

– JEFF DYKSTRA

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS APPROACH ORIGINS?

BY JOHN BYL AND TOM GOSS
67 PAGES / 2015



Blaise Pascal once quipped that he had written a long letter because he hadn’t the time to write a short one. Well, in this booklet it is evident that the authors put an enormous amount of time and effort to boil down the key issues of the origin debate. In just 67 pages they gave an overview of:

- the difference between historical and operational science
- why secular scientists deny miracles as a matter of dogma
- why many professing Christian scientists do, but shouldn’t, deny miracles
- materialism and naturalism
- what the various origins positions are
- why Christianity is incompatible with any form of evolution
- how dating methods can be unreliable
- what books would be good for further reading

That isn’t even all of it, and yet the book is compact. This smaller size makes it ideal to share with university students, and anyone looking for an introduction to the origins debate. It concludes by pointing readers to where they can find great resources to go deeper.

We featured this 5 years ago when it first came out, and the reason we’re featuring it again is because the authors have now made the e-book available for free at ReformedPerspective.ca.

– JON DYKSTRA

SOLOMON SAYS: DIRECTIVES FOR YOUNG MEN

BY MARK HORNE
148 PAGES / 2020



If you are not governed by God’s Word, which calls you, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to govern yourself, then you will *not* be more free. Instead, you will be governed by your own urges, and will also lose the ability to govern God’s creation, as we were originally called to do (Gen. 1:28). In *Solomon Says*, Mark Horne shows how Proverbs reveals to young men just how to work out that creation mandate.

Horne writes to show the superiority of wisdom demonstrated in Proverbs over many of the methods our society thinks will get us ahead. Headings include:

- Handguns Can’t Shoot Down Poverty
- Immortality Impoverishes You
- Solomon On Cyberporn
- Control Chaos, Don’t Inflame It – about the power of the tongue
- Leaving Toxic Talk Culture – a great warning about our social media feeds
- Wisdom Is Better Than Folly Even When It’s Risky
- Total Ownership – about the need for making a genuine plan for change

Horne shows just how practical and up-to-date the wisdom of Proverbs is.

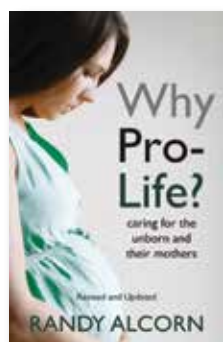
There is little explicit mention of Christ, but for young men seeking to live out their commitment to Christ, there is great guidance on “building a better man.”

– JEFF DYKSTRA

FOR LONGER VERSIONS
OF THESE REVIEWS GO TO
REFORMEDPERSPECTIVE.CA

WHY PRO-LIFE?

BY RANDY ALCORN
172 PAGES / 2012



Randy Alcorn has written a much longer pro-life book called *Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments*, but while I would recommend it highly, at 455 pages, it's a bit much to take in in a short period.

On the other hand, *Why Pro-Life?* is an excellent concise call to love both mother and child in a crisis pregnancy. Originally published in 2004, and then updated in 2012, both editions include sections on:

1. The Basics
2. The Child
3. The Woman
4. Other Important Issues
5. Spiritual Perspectives and Opportunities.

The 2012 edition adds:

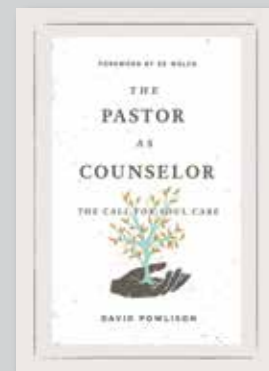
- Do Birth Control Pills Cause Abortion?
- Abortion in the Bible & Church History
- Bible Passages Relevant to Life Issues
- Talking Points for Communicating the Pro-Life Message.

Why Pro-Life? Is an insightful look at an important issue and will be invaluable for both those skeptical of the pro-life position and those who are new to the pro-life movement. You can get the 2004 version for free at EPM.org, and buy the 2012 edition on Amazon.

– JEFF DYKSTRA

THE PASTOR AS COUNSELOR: THE CALL FOR SOUL CARE

BY DAVID POWLISON
2021 / 76 PAGES



Some have difficulty applying adjectives like “kind” and “compassionate” to biblical counselling. But when I think of the late David Powlison, those words spring straight to mind. Though I never met him personally, I’ve been blessed by many of his books, articles, and talks. In all of them I hear the voice of someone kind and compassionate, someone you can readily recognize as a disciple of our Lord Jesus. This little book, Powlison’s last, is no different. He loved God *and* he cared about people.

As the title indicates, it’s written for pastors. It’s about the pastor’s calling to take care of souls. However, Powlison wrote it hoping that others would listen in as well. This is because, as he writes, “All Christians are meant to become wiser counsellors” (p.16).

Being a pastor, I know how easy it is to either neglect or deflect the work of counselling. But Powlison makes the case that pastors can’t forget their sheep and they shouldn’t be too quick to pass off their sheep to “professionals,” especially those who aren’t Christians. He points out how “Counselling is not essentially a technical enterprise calling for technical expertise. It is a relational and pastoral enterprise engaging in care and cure of the soul.” This is true for every type of counsellor, Christian or not. But unbelieving mental health professionals are handicapped:

...they serve in pastorates with no God and no church. They aim to restore straying, suffering, willful, dying human beings. But they consider Christ unnecessary to their pastoral work. As a matter of principle, they will not lead strugglers to the Savior of strays. You know better.

Powlison proceeds to explain how pastors should redefine counselling. Perhaps it would be better to say how pastors can play a role in restoring counselling to the church, because I think that’s what Powlison was aiming at.

The second chapter explores the uniqueness of pastoral counselling. According to Powlison, pastors:

- have a unique responsibility to counsel
- have unique opportunities to counsel
- do counselling in a unique manner
- counsel with a unique message
- counsel in a unique community context

Indeed, pastors are able to counsel unlike anyone else. Realizing that should motivate us to take it seriously and pursue it with excellence.

I can heartily recommend this little gem to my colleagues in pastoral ministry. As mentioned above, others can benefit from it too. In that regard, if I would have just one small criticism, it’s about the fact that Powlison doesn’t address elders. Elders are also called to pastoral counselling and the church only benefits when elders take that calling seriously.

So whether you’re an ordained full-time pastor or an elder with a pastoral responsibility, do take a couple of hours to chew on the meat offered in this book. We can all learn not only from Powlison’s kindness and compassion, but also his experience and wisdom.

– WES BREDENHOF

DAVID WIESNER: Weird and Wonderful

by Jon Dykstra

Super creative? Ultra creative? Mega creative? *Every* good picture book author is imaginative, but somehow David Wiesner (1956-) manages to be all the more so. His living clouds, flying frogs, and artistic lizards always provide a surprise – a reader starting one of Wiesner’s stories will never be able to predict how it is going to end. That’s a joy for parents to experience right along with their kids: a children’s story that isn’t predictable!

And since several of Wiesner’s works are wordless, they can also be great books for reluctant readers to tackle alongside mom or dad. Wordless doesn’t mean it’s an easy “read” but together parent and child can put their detective skills to work to figure out all that’s going on!

What follows are my family’s recommendations – our favorites – and then a few that we’ve read but which for this reason or that, I’m not going to recommend like the rest. Finally, there are three that really aren’t worth bothering with.

RECOMMENDED

Free Fall

1988 / 32 PAGES

A little boy falls asleep and we get to come along in his dream. As dreams often are, this is wordless throughout, one page streaming into the next as the boy goes from meeting a dragon to growing giant-sized, to flying home on a leaf. It makes sense only in the ways that dreams do. But the smart-eyed reader will be able to spot on the last page, when the boy wakes up, all the objects in the room that inspired the different parts of his dream. This is one to “read” slowly and enjoy every picture.

Hurricane

1990 / 32 PAGES

Two brothers are worried about a coming hurricane. But when the lights go out, and the family is still together, the boys realize it’s not so bad after all. It even gets quite good the next day, when they discover a huge fallen tree in their neighbor’s yard. In the days that follow the huge trunk becomes their spaceship, and the branches a jungle, and the both of them together a pirate-hunting sailboat.

Tuesday

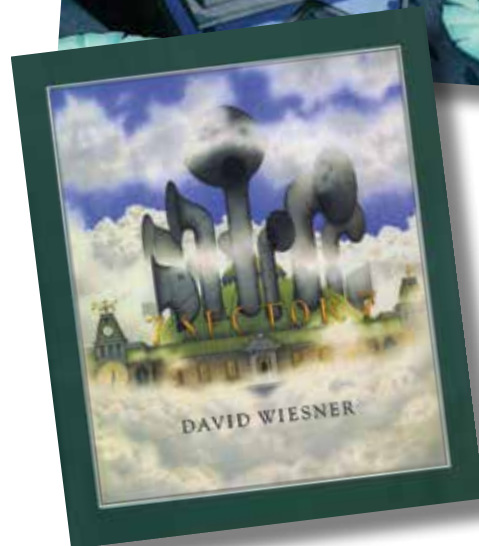
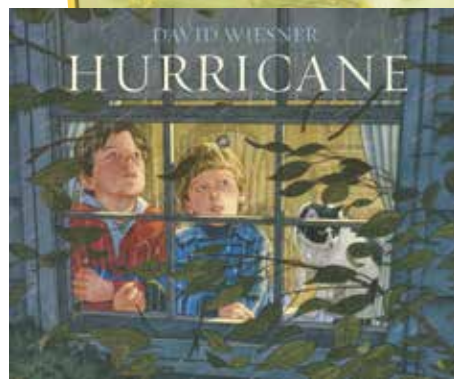
1991 / 32 PAGES

The only words we see tell us the time, and that it is a Tuesday. For reasons that are left entirely mysterious, at around 8 pm, a swarm of frogs suddenly starts flying (or is it their lily-pads that are doing the levitating?). They flock into town, chase some birds for fun, watch a little telly, and then, just as they are heading back, dawn breaks, and the sun’s rays seem to sap their flying powers. That leaves the whole lot of them hopping back to their pond. This is silly nonsense and kids are sure to love it.

Sector 7

1999 / 48 PAGES

A boy on a field trip to the Empire State Building meets a rambunctious cloud (he discovers that clouds are people!) who takes him back to “Sector 7” high up in the sky where the clouds get their orders about what shape of cloud they should be. But the clouds seem a bit bored with these shapes and appear to ask the boy to draw them up some alternatives. And what fun to see clouds mimicking the sea creatures he draws! Eventually, the rambunctious cloud



returns the boy to the Empire State Building, but his visit to Sector 7 might have some lasting impact, as the clouds quite like being fish-shaped. This is another of Wiesner's wordless books and another one that parent and child will be pouring over to see all that the pictures have to say.

The Three Pigs

2001 / 40 PAGES

When our middle daughter discovered this one she just *had* to share it with her younger sister right there and then. This is a creative spin on the old tale as the Big Bad Wolf blows the pigs right out of the story and into some others (including Wiesner's own *The Loathsome Dragon*). As they travel from storybook to storybook the pigs decide there is no place like home, but also decide to bring along a guest from another story – a dragon! – to give this pesky wolf quite the surprise.

Art & Max

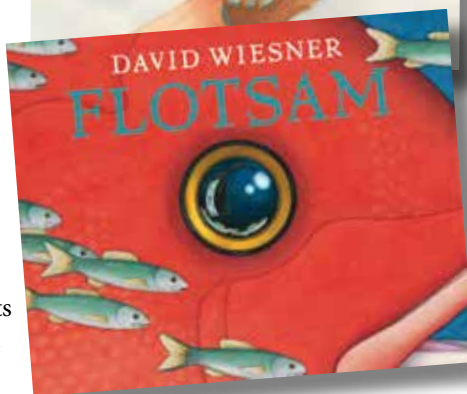
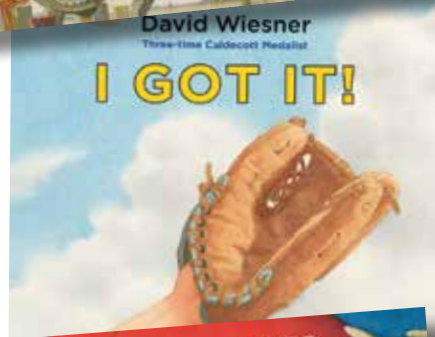
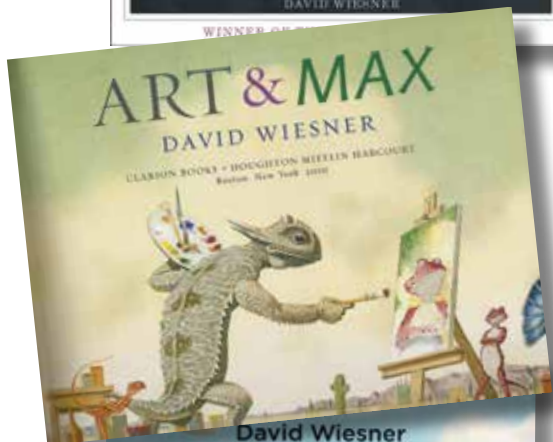
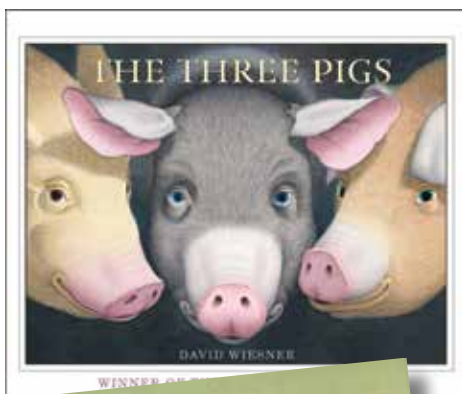
2010 / 40 PAGES

This might be my favorite picture book. It involves just two characters, which makes this one easy to read out loud to the kids, and there's so much energy on each page that performing it becomes so easy to do. Art knows how to paint, and Max desperately wants to learn. (Both are lizards, but aside from the fun way they look, that doesn't really matter.) But who should Max paint? When Aurthur suggests himself, Max literally starts to throw paint on Art. And that's when it gets wacky! As Max tries to clean the paint off Art, he starts to clean *all* the color off him. Art is see-through; he's just lines! Then, when that line starts to unravel, Art becomes just a scribble. Fortunately, his friend Max is on it, and proves, as he turns that scribble into a work of Art, that he has some mad skills too.

I Got It!

2018 / 32 PAGES

Once again David Wiesner lets the pictures do (almost) all the talking. When a long flyball is hit into the outfield, a boy declares, "I've got it!" which are the only



words in the story. But does he really have it? One dropped ball is followed by another, and it's almost like there are obstacles (getting bigger and bigger) just reaching out to trip him up. His repeated drops have his teammates moving in closer to catch it for him, since he can't. But then, in one last stretching leap, our boy in red jumps past the obstacles and beats his teammates to the ball for a wonderful game-winning catch. This is a very fun story, but I could see some kids needing a little help to understand what's going on. But hey, reading together is fantastic!

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

The Loathsome Dragon

1987 / 32 PAGES

An evil queen/stepmother casts a spell which turns a princess into a loathsome dragon. Along comes a brave prince who has to kiss the dragon three times to break the spell. The only twist in this tale is that the brave prince is her brother, and not a husband-to-be, but that's not enough to make this seem fresh. I should add that while I was unimpressed, my girls liked this a lot more than I did.

June 29, 1999

1992 / 32 PAGES

A young girl, Holly, sends vegetable seedlings into the ionosphere for her science project just to see what might happen. Soon after giant vegetables – house-sized and bigger! – start floating down from the sky. But wait! Some of these vegetables are not the sorts that she sent up. So where did those come from? At book's end we discover the giant vegetables came from a giant alien chef accidentally losing his ingredients while flying above Earth. Very fun to see the giant vegetables all over the landscape but I think it would have been better without the aliens tacked on at the end.

Flotsam

2006 / 40 PAGES

When a boy discovers an old-style underwater camera washed up on the beach, he brings the film in to be developed. There he discovers pictures, seemingly taken by underwater creatures themselves. The world that they live in is certainly something to behold: little mermaids and mermen, robotic fish, giant turtles carrying shell cities on their backs, and even what looks like aliens taking rides on the guppies. Done without any text at all, each picture is another discovery. The very last snapshot is of a girl holding up a picture. And in that picture is a boy holding a picture of a girl holding a picture of a boy. A look through a magnifying picture shows this goes deeper still, and further back in time. The boy's microscope reveals more still layers to the photo. This is inventive and fun, with the only cautions

being that the young target audience may have to be informed that though the photos look quite realistic, the aliens and mermen are fantasy, not fact.

DON'T BOTHER

Mr. Wuffles

Tiny tiny aliens have landed, but unfortunately for them, their ship attracts the attention of Mr. Wuffles, who thinks it's one of his cat toys. To repair their ship the little aliens recruit help from ants and bugs – their treasure trove of lost marbles, pencils, loose change, and paperclips turn out to be just what the aliens need to fix things up. There's some vague religious-type imagery written by the bugs on the house walls that, along with the aliens, makes this one I'd rather just skip.

Fish Girl

Wiesner's only graphic novel is the story of a mermaid girl kept captive in an aquarium by the owner who she believes is the god Neptune. It's odd all the way around, and

that she is swimming around topless for most of its 192 pages (though always with strategically placed hair, or fishes) makes this another good one to skip.

Robobaby

Robots get their babies in a box, with some assembly required. The story loses much of its quirky charm when Mom and Dad, Uncle Manny, and even the Robobaby tech service can't assemble Junior properly. Then the child amongst them knows just what to do, and this become just one more adults-are-dumb-and-kids-know-everything story that we can really do without (Prov. 20:29, 22:15).

CAUTIONS


David Wiesner is an incredibly imaginative picture book author, which makes him very fun to read, but it's that same active imagination that seems to lead him into a bit of over-the-top weirdness now and again. I couldn't figure out what Wiesner's worldview/philosophy is, and it'd be a bit much to conclude he must *not* be Christian just because he features

aliens on occasion, though aliens (at least the intelligent sort) would seem to be incompatible with Christianity (but demons masquerading as aliens would not be).

However, there's nothing in his books that would give us reason to conclude he *must* be Christian. In lieu of evidence one way or the other, that's good reason for parents to approach his future output with some caution.

CONCLUSION

If you have a creative kid, Wiesner's best could be just the spark they need to think bigger and bolder. And if you have a not-particularly-creative kid, Wiesner might be an inspiration for them too, showing them how there are all sorts of possibilities to explore and fresh ways of looking at things.

Finally, if you have a reluctant reader, Wiesner's wordless books – *Freefall*, *Tuesday*, *Sector 7*, and *I Got it!* – might be an encouragement for them to page through, especially if mom or dad comes alongside for the "read." 

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An Exhaustive Exegetical Extravaganza!

Reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

Dr. C. Van Dam begins his latest book by explicitly laying out his presuppositions. He's upfront about his non-negotiable assumptions and biases. As I review his book, it's appropriate that I share mine too. I share his presuppositions about Scripture as the trustworthy Word of God, but I also bring a personal bias to the table. Back in the day, Van Dam was my Old Testament professor at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. I had an affectionate nickname for him in view of his ability to put the smack-down on unbelieving or shoddy scholarship: "Wham-Bam-Van-Dam." This was always said with the greatest admiration for Dr. Van Dam. As a seminary professor he was nothing if not thorough and careful.

FAR MORE THAN A COMMENTARY

This new book exhibits that same kind of comprehensive and precise approach to the two opening chapters of Scripture. Van Dam leaves no stone unturned. *In the Beginning* is an exhaustive treatment not only of the meaning of these two chapters, but also the various challenges that have been raised in Old Testament scholarship regarding them. What you're looking at here is not just a commentary on Genesis 1-2, but far more.

Over the last decade or so John Walton has become well-known for his views on the early chapters of Genesis. Walton argues that we often misunderstand Genesis 1-2 because we don't take

into account the ancient Near Eastern context of these chapters. Once we do that, says Walton, then we can see that Genesis 1-2 was never meant to be taken literally as history. The history can then be filled in with what science teaches us, including what science says about human origins. In chapter 2 of *In the Beginning*, Van Dam discusses Walton's views at length and explains how and where they fail to do justice to the character of Scripture as the Word of God. In my view this is the most important chapter of the book.

A SAMPLING

To whet your appetite further, let me share a selection of questions that Dr. Van Dam answers elsewhere in the book:

- Can new scientific data be regarded as general revelation given by God?
- What is the relationship of Scripture to science? Is Scripture a scientific textbook?
- Can geology give us a history of creation?
- Was Herman Dooyeweerd faithful to Scripture in his view of origins?
- How are we to evaluate Meredith Kline's Framework Hypothesis?
- Did the ancient Israelites believe that heaven was a solid vault above us?
- Why is there no mention of evening and morning with the seventh day in Genesis 1?
- What does Scripture mean when it

says that God created through his Son?

- Can the breath of life in Genesis 2:7 be equated with the Holy Spirit?
- Was there animal death before the fall into sin?
- Why did God create everything with an appearance of age? Was he being deceptive in so doing?

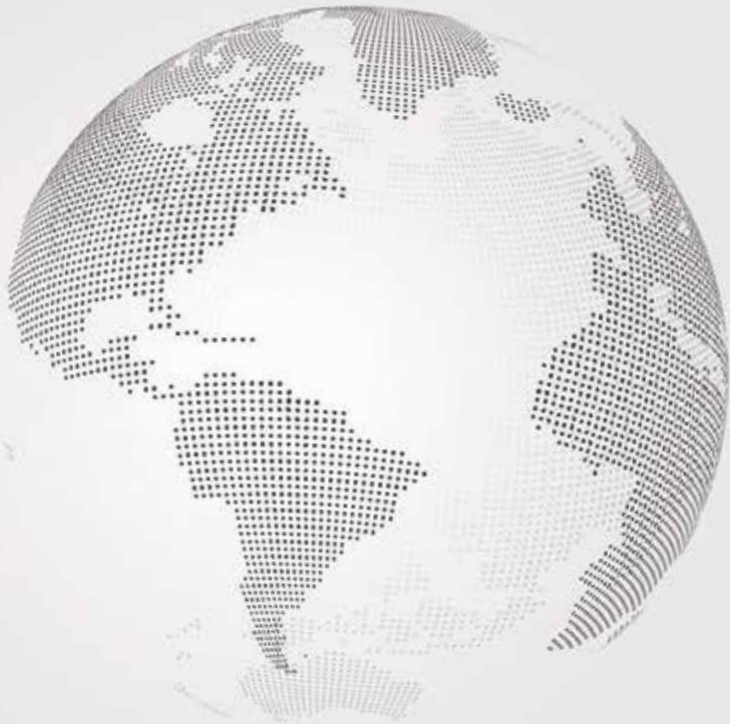
Those are just a few of the questions answered. There are far more. What I appreciate about Van Dam's answers is that he bases them on what Scripture says. He doesn't want to go beyond Scripture and so he'll sometimes say, "Scripture doesn't say more than this – this is as far as we can go."

A POINT OF DISAGREEMENT

If I would venture some respectful disagreement, it would be in the final chapter where the author briefly discusses whether there's a need for new confessional formulations to address the challenges of evolution. In 2014-15, I was involved with an effort to add some clarification to article 14 of the Belgic Confession in the Canadian Reformed Church. That effort was ultimately unsuccessful. I don't regret having made the effort, nor do I think it unnecessary to this day.

Van Dam argues that Scripture is clear and our "confessions faithfully reflect that testimony." However, that fails to account for those who have argued that the Three Forms of Unity provide the latitude needed to hold to forms

CORNELIS VAN DAM



In the BEGINNING

Listening to Genesis 1 and 2

IN THE BEGINNING: LISTENING TO GENESIS 1 AND 2

BY CORNELIS VAN DAM
2021 / 371 PAGES

What I appreciate about Van Dam's answers is that he bases them on what Scripture says. He doesn't want to go beyond Scripture...

of theistic macro-evolution. Their arguments have persuaded some. This wiggle-room ought to be addressed, especially if there is openness to theistic macro-evolution in your churches.

Van Dam also posits that:

"A difficulty with preparing a new formulation asserting the historicity of Genesis 1 and 2 is the temptation to go beyond what Scripture says, in other words, to provide specifics about that which Scripture gives no additional detail."

However, the proposal to add clarification to BC 14 was to state what Scripture states: that Adam was created from dust (Gen. 2:7) and Eve from Adam's side (Gen. 2:21-22). As a consequence: "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." If one thinks that this infringes upon the freedom of exegesis, then one is willing to grant the latitude for theistic evolutionary accounts of human (and other) origins.

CONCLUSION

That criticism notwithstanding, *In the Beginning* was a delight to read – personally it brought me back to many of the OT lectures I enjoyed from Dr. Van Dam in my seminary years. While I found it enjoyable, it could be tough-going at times for some. It's not highly technical, but in places Van Dam does go academic. It's not a book you'd necessarily be giving out as gifts to those doing profession of faith. It would, however, be a great gift for someone doing post-secondary studies, whether in the sciences or in the humanities. And it's definitely a recommended read for those who've completed such studies. RP

Dr. Bredenhof first posted this review to CreationWithoutCompromise.com, a blog "promoting the biblical understanding of origins" and it is reprinted here with his permission.

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by Peter Holtvlüwer

IMPROVING THE ELDERS' HOME VISITS

October is here once again, and as “home visit season” ramps up, my thoughts turn to how home visits are being conducted and whether our methods serve well to accomplish the purpose of the visit.

I believe that elders visiting members in their homes is biblically based and has for long stretches of church history been implemented to the good of the church. However, are they today as effective as they could be? In Reformed churches of Dutch descent we have our customs in the way such visits are conducted, but are these truly “best practices”?

A TYPICAL HOME VISIT

What exactly are our customs? Well, in my own denomination, the Canadian and American Reformed churches, most homes see the elders once per year in the annual home visit. Elders duly prepare themselves for this visit by studying a passage of Scripture and praying for the family. Many godly and sincere elders have thus entered numerous homes with every intent to build up and bless. And no doubt

the Lord has used their efforts to bless his people (including me and my family) and yet I can't help feeling that, despite the best of intentions, something is off kilter with our practice.

A typical home visit goes something like this: two elders enter the home and are invited to sit with the family. Small talk follows for a few minutes. Then one elder clears his throat to “open” the visit with prayer and Bible reading. An air of formality fills the room and the family falls quiet.

The passage chosen could be out of the blue or, as is often the case, the Bible reading is connected to the “home visit theme” adopted by the consistory and perhaps preached on by the minister. That theme could be centered on one of the ten commandments, a petition of the Lord's prayer, worship, Christian lifestyle, living membership in the church, or the like. The lead elder then begins to expound on this theme out of the Bible passage and starts directing questions to the children and parents about either the passage's meaning or how it might apply to that person's life. The bulk of the visit is spent conversing

about this Bible passage (and/or chosen theme) and how the family works out this biblical teaching in practice.

Toward the end of the visit the elders may or may not ask more general questions of the kids and parents, but time-wise the thrust of the visit is spent explaining and applying the teaching of a particular Bible passage to that household.

While discussing a Bible passage can certainly be beneficial, I ask myself: is this the purpose of a home visit? For elders to enter and teach? To the family it can feel like they're being tested on their knowledge on the Bible passage in question. When a theme is chosen, members and families are often asked to read the passage in advance and “prepare for the home visit.” Again I ask: is this the intention of a home visit? To have a mini Bible-study on a passage and ascertain how well parents and children understand and apply that particular passage (or theme) in their lives? And if a passage is “sprung” on the family and questions are asked of them, it can be a very intimidating experience for children and parents alike. It seems to me that we

are missing something significant in this approach to home visits.

THE PURPOSE OF HOME VISITS

As churches and as elders we have made a promise to make home visits. That promise, captured in Article 22 of our Church Order, summarizes the purpose of such visits as well:

“The specific duties of the office of elder are... to faithfully visit the members of the congregation in their homes to com-

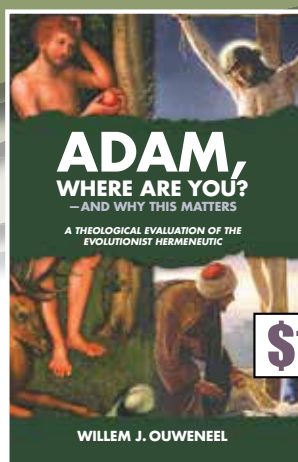
fort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God.”

There are three verbs here: *comfort*, *instruct*, and *admonish*. From the above description it would seem that elders have the second verb in the forefront of their mind and so they come prepared to instruct. In itself this is commendable. Scripture tells us that elders should be “able to teach” and should indeed “be able to give instruction in sound doctrine” (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9). And no doubt many families have learned

and benefitted from what elders have taught. But should that teaching be “out of the blue” or with little understanding of the particular circumstances and needs of the family (or individual)?

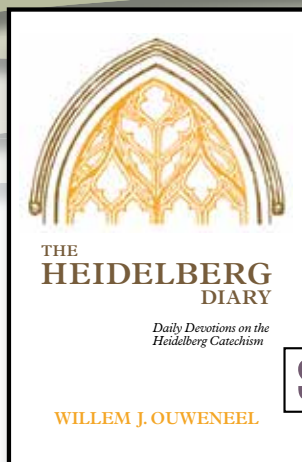
That’s where I think the way we conduct our home visits has gotten out of focus and become imbalanced. Elders enter the home focussed on conveying a scriptural message, intent on teaching and applying the doctrine of the passage they’ve been intensely studying on their own, *without having first listened carefully to what’s going*

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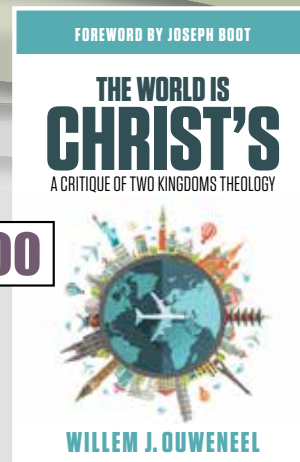
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on in the home. While gentle admonitions and words of correction might come out of the teaching passage, almost forgotten by the elders on a home visit is the duty to “comfort.” That shows that something is out of whack. There’s been a largely one-way period of instruction on a pre-chosen topic instead of a careful application of God’s Word to the specific circumstances of the family.

All of this, I’ve observed, often creates an unintended disconnect. After an hour dialogue with the family about the passage where the kids and adults could gamely answer questions and make comments, the elders come away with a favourable impression. In the car they comment to each other: “that went well, don’t you think?” But meanwhile in the home, the kids feel as if they’ve been in school for an hour and the parents feel frustrated that the elders didn’t inquire more personally into each family member’s walk with the Lord. The elders may have a good feeling that the family is on a solid footing in the faith but the family feels like the elders hardly know them and don’t “get” them.

Maybe the worst of it is that those visited fail to see how God’s Word speaks into the concrete reality of their day-to-day lives. We need to fix this.

LISTENING

Here is where the art of listening and seeking to understand needs to find a fresh place in our thinking as elders. Though the Church Order does not mention the need to “listen,” it is clearly implied in the duty to “comfort, instruct, and admonish.” How can elders comfort a member or a family if they don’t first know what difficulty or misery they may be experiencing? Of course, every person as a sinner experiences the general misery of sin and its consequences, but almost always individuals or families are feeling the effects of sin in very particular ways. They have their own troubles and for the elders to bring comfort to that household they must first take the time to ask about and understand those troubles.

It is the same with admonitions. To admonish is to gently give reproof or words of correction to someone who’s acting, thinking, or speaking in an unbiblical way. How can elders correct a member unless they

know if, how, and where he is going astray? In a conversation on a single Bible passage or theme, a certain limited area needing correction may come out, but there is so much to life and so many possible areas needing correction that a wide-ranging conversation (more than one even!) is needed before meaningful admonition can be brought. If the Bible passage is too much in the spotlight of the annual home visit, much of the family’s personal views and practices may remain in the shadows, unseen by the elders. Elders need to bring those out of the shadows by asking good questions in order to get a clear picture of a person and/or a family. Of course, it’s not to be an interrogation like with police officers but it ought to be a caring inquiry like that of a concerned father, who truly wants to help his son to stay on or find his way back to the pathway of life.

Teaching or instructing by elders in the home, too, is meant to come on the heels of listening. Certainly, members are instructed (and admonished and comforted) in a general way from the pulpit by the preaching of the Word. Although the Holy Spirit definitely applies the preaching to individual lives in personal (and often surprising!) ways, the minister can’t single out a particular family or individual and their needs from the pulpit. But elders can when they enter someone’s home. That’s one of the privileges elders have, to bring God’s Word into the specific, individual lives of the members they visit. That means they must come to know these sheep very well, up close and personal, so they can skillfully apply God’s Word to the particular needs of the household.

It seems to me that too often elders are replicating what the minister does from the pulpit: they enter the home and the first thing they do is give a mini “sermon” on a passage with some pointed questions to the family. That’s like prescribing a certain medicine for a person without knowing the extent of his ailment or his overall condition. Wouldn’t it be far better if elders first took time to listen to all that’s going on in the lives of the parents and children and *then* came with the instruction, encouragement, comfort, and admonition of God’s Word? Wouldn’t that be establishing a genuine pastoral connection between el-

ders and members that would be profitable for members and under-shepherds alike, upbuilding for the church, and glorifying to the Lord?

A REVISED APPROACH

To bring this about I would suggest two things. First, elders make it a point to get to know the individuals and families in their ward as soon as possible after they are appointed to office. One home visit per year is hardly sufficient to get acquainted beyond the surface of things. Elders normally come into office in the spring. Home visits start in the fall. Why not use the summer months to drop in for a more casual acquaintance visit? Consider hosting a social for those under your direct care.

You might think: that’s a lot of extra work! Yes, it is. But it’s the Lord’s work and it’s good and beneficial. Besides, it doesn’t have to be a huge burden. Elders generally oversee a ward in pairs, so the two partners could divide the ward in halves with each taking responsibility to getting to know one half over the summer months. A casual visit to become acquainted plus regular chats in the church parking lot will do a lot to establish both a bond and a base level of understanding of the person/family. That will set up the home visit to be a time of deeper connection and thus more genuinely helpful for the household.

The second thing I would suggest is that elders re-order the flow of a home visit and change the focus of the visit. Instead of the customary:

prayer
Bible reading
instruction
conversation/listening
prayer

...which focuses on teaching a pre-conceived lesson, why not try:

prayer
conversation/listening
Bible reading
instruction/application
prayer

...which focuses on understanding the family’s needs in order to aptly apply God’s

Word to their situation.

Remember that neither Scripture nor the confessions nor the Church Order prescribe the order or manner of home visits. It is left to us to apply the principle of God's Word (i.e. shepherds caring for the sheep) to the situation.

As far as I can see, it would be a great improvement to the effectiveness of home visits if elders began with a brief prayer for the Lord to bless the visit with openness, honesty, a willingness to share what's in the heart along with a good understanding for the elders and the ability to bring God's word beneficially for the family. Indeed this is something those visited should pray for in advance as well – the ability to be vulnerable with the elders and for the elders to give wise counsel from the Word of God.

The next and larger part of the visit would be spent inquiring about the family's daily life and their walk with the Lord, listening carefully to their struggles and joys, to what really lives in their hearts and home. Equipped with an understanding of where the person/family is really at, the elders could then open God's Word to apply its teaching directly to their realities. The concluding prayer can then bring to the Lord the details of thanksgiving/praise and needs that were raised in the visit (drawing in also what came out of the Scripture passage).

In this way the individual/family will experience that Christ's appointed shepherds have understood them well, genuinely care for them, and are using God's Word to help them grow closer to the Lord. In this way Scripture (and prayer) can more truly and fully be used to comfort, instruct, and admonish members for their good and the glory of God's name.

TOO DIFFICULT?

At this point an elder might say: but I can't think that fast on my feet! Every household is different. How am I supposed to have a Bible passage that I can quickly pull out that will speak to the particulars of a given family?

I realize this may sound daunting but it's not as bad as it seems. Even if an elder only prepared one text thoroughly in advance, he would be better able to apply it meaningfully to the people *after* hearing what lives in their home than if he read it before all of that was discussed.

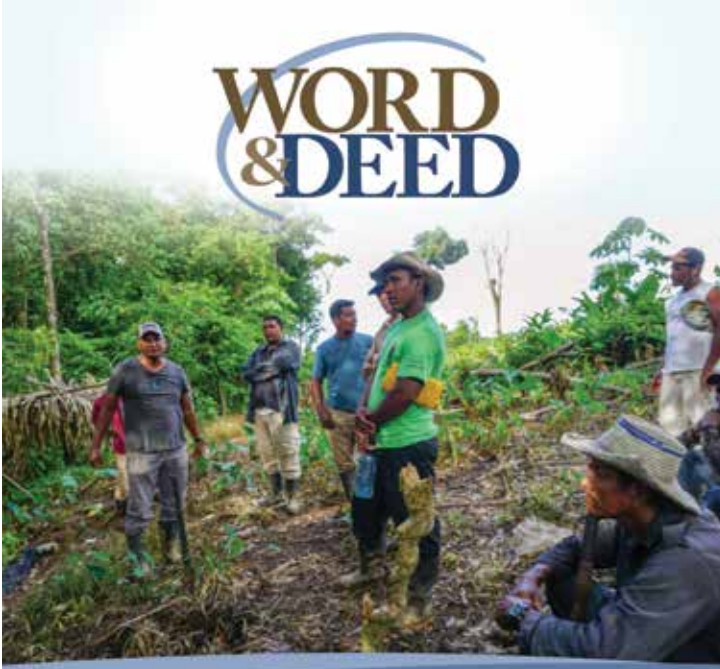
However, many elders already have the habit of selecting two or three passages to use at home visits throughout the season. They study them so they know them well enough to use as needed. This allows both variety and flexibility to use a certain passage in a home where they have an inkling it will better fit than another passage. Elders can simply build on this approach. Even if a home visit theme is selected by consistory (and I'm not sold on the idea that this is the best way to go), experienced elders know that they need to be flexible and that the theme just doesn't work in some situations.

I don't think it's too much of a stretch if an elder would work in advance to be very familiar with five distinct passages, each with its own accent. One passage could highlight the comfort we have in Christ as forgiven sinners; another the ability that Christ works in us to lead holy lives and his calling to do so; another could be the glorious future the Lord is preparing for

us; still another could be a reflection on the love, power, and grace of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); a fifth could deal with our task as living members of the church. After listening and grasping the nature of a person's (or family's) situation, the elder could mentally select one of his five passages, read it, and go to work applying its message to them specifically.

Elders should not feel intimidated by this, as if selecting a text to match the needs of the visit is beyond their capability. Not so. I have always found it amazing how so many Bible passages can be applied in a variety of circumstances and do good to God's people. His word is living and powerful. It always has something to say to those who belong to him. When elders, prayerfully relying on the Spirit of Christ, seek to bring his Word to meet the needs of his people, they will be blessed in doing so. The voice of the Good Shepherd will be heard by the sheep and they will be fed and led by him to continue walking in his way. In this way the home visit may be revitalized and experienced by all as a blessing from the Lord. RP

Rev. Peter Holtvliwer is pastor of the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church and editor of the 4-volume commentary "Christ's Psalms, our Psalms" available at the ReformedPerspective.ca store. This article first appeared in Clarion, Issue 16 (Vol. 69) under the title "Improving home visits" and is reprinted here with permission.

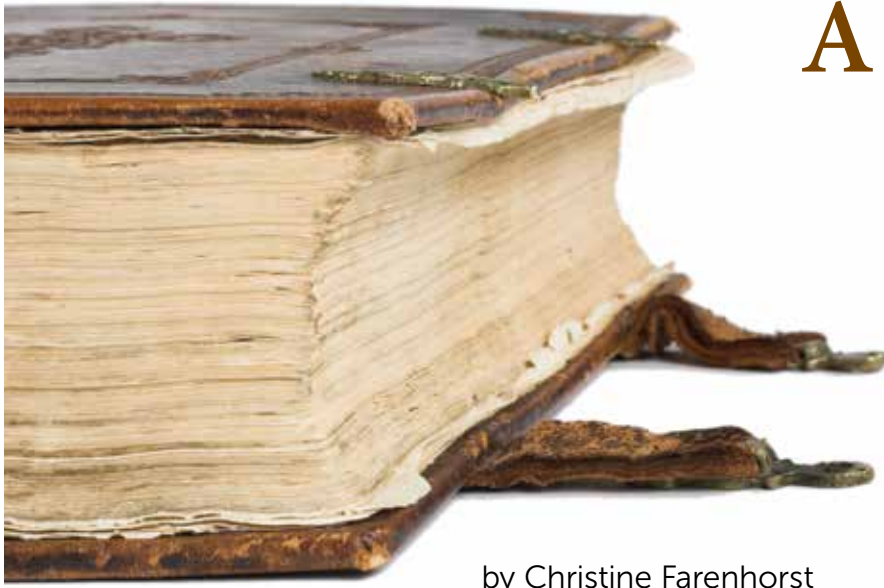


WORD & DEED

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:17

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A Tale of Two Fathers

"...even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved."
(Eph. 1:4-6)

by Christine Farenhorst

Our Father in heaven is the perfect example of what a father ought to be like. He is, therefore, the model that should be followed in families. Children who have godly fathers – that is fathers who obey the Lord in faithfully following His commands and displaying humility, love and mercy – have a wonderful guideline for how to behave in their own lives.

Children who do not have godly fathers, will have a difficult time finding their way in life.

There was a rather unique story in an English newspaper recently about a little girl who had lost her father, a man by the name of Tony, when she was just four months old. The article gave no information as to how her father had died – whether the man had been ill, had been a casualty of war, or had suffered an accident. The readers were simply told that since the age of 4 months the little girl had been raised by her mother. Such things do happen and, by the grace of God, they can work out fine. The eight-year-old girl was from Braunstone, Leicester in the UK.

In June, when Father's Day rolled around this last summer, the child felt uneasy and somewhat left out. All her friends were making cards and presents for their dads, but she had no one for whom to make a gift. So she thought to write a letter to her dead father, something she had done before on special occasions. Her mother said it was fine for her to do so again. When the little girl had finished her letter, which was filled with "I love you, Dad!" and "I miss you, Dad!" she asked her mom where her father now lived and what address she should put on the envelope into which she had neatly folded the letter. Her mother replied: "Put down Heaven, Cloud 9."

There are two reactions that the initial part of this anecdote brings to mind and heart. One is anger and the other is com-

passion. Obviously there had been no interaction between the girl and the mother about where dead people might be. For the mother to tell her child that she could connect with her earthly, dead father by mailing a letter to an imaginary, fuzzy, warm-feeling type of place was fundamentally misleading; and for the mother to leave out the comfort of a very real Heavenly Father who desires a relationship through prayer was to put her child on a path of hopelessness.

The letter was duly mailed and when a postman named Simon opened the red pillar mailbox on his route he happened to notice it. He saw that the envelope did not carry postage and that it was addressed to "Dad in Heaven, Cloud 9." Having recently lost his own father, he asked his manager if he could try to locate the family to discover who sent the letter. Having obtained permission, he took a picture of the envelope and posted it on Facebook. Thousands of people responded. The mother and child were subsequently tracked down and the Facebook responses were sent on to them. The mother was astonished at all the responses that had come in.

"I haven't stopped crying since," she said, "I never thought for a second that anyone would find the letter or do anything with it."

Simon the postman later met the little girl and gifted her a father-daughter figurine as a remembrance. Her mother placed the Facebook comments in a box for the little girl as a memento.

Perhaps some of the people who responded to the Facebook photo sent messages of a heavenly Father. We are not privy to that information.

My own father, Louis Praamsma, was also very young, (he was six years old), when his father, Riemer Praamsma, passed away. Riemer Praamsma, who was a Christian school principal,

died of pneumonia. Before he died, however, he left instructions for his children as to how to deal with his death, and his wife made sure that all the children would receive these instructions.

My father, Louis Praamsma, decades later, still remembered what had happened, and he wrote it down before he himself died, so that I and my five siblings would also be guided even as he had been guided. These were his words.

"When my father suddenly fell ill in 1916, I and my six siblings were all parceled out amongst relatives for ten long weeks. At the onset of these weeks, however, I was sent for to stand at his bedside. My father had himself taught me to read, and the family Bible was placed in my small hands. I have now forgotten so many things, but I have never forgotten that my father asked me, at this time, to find Psalm 25. When I had found it, he said, 'Read, Louis. Read the first few verses of this psalm.' And I read:

"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul, O my God, in You I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for You shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous."

"I have especially remembered the next few verses - verses 4 and 5 of this psalm:

'Make me to know Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day long.'"

The picture of my father as a little boy standing in front of his father's deathbed is solidly imprinted in my mind. All of six years old, he was undoubtedly not totally aware of the gravity of the situation. His miniature hands could barely hold the large Bible and his immature voice read in a thin, childish treble. When he was done with the passage, he saw his father nod with satisfaction and that made him feel good. My father always recalled that moment. It was the last time that he saw his father alive.

He told me more about his father's death. He related that a huge crowd of schoolchildren followed their principal's funeral carriage on its way to the cemetery. Every child and adult wore black and the carriage itself was also shrouded in black. And at the grave-side hundreds of voices sang:

Lo, as for man, his days are like a shadow,
Like tender grass and flowers of the meadow,
Whose morning beauty fadeth with the day;
For when the wind but lightly passeth o'er it
'Tis gone anon and nothing can restore it;
'Tis found no more, it vanisheth for aye.

After the funeral, the Praamsma house was filled to overflowing with people, all bringing their condolences to the bereft widow and the brood of seven children. My father, Louis Praamsma, walking between the crowd of legs, hardly realized that his

beloved friend and companion was gone and would never come back. He later penned for his own children to read:

"I had such little conception of death that I did not fully understand that I would never see my father again. Caught up in the crowd of mourners who surrounded my mother, I suddenly walked up to a grown man, reached for his hands, and tried to 'climb up.' It was something my father had always done with me. Taking both my hands, he would allow me to 'climb up' and then, with a flourish, would swing me through the air before depositing me on the ground once more. But even though for a moment I thought that the stranger was my father, I quickly comprehended that he was not.


"When I later questioned my mother as to why my father was not coming back, as to why he had died, she gave me an answer that I shall also never forget. 'It is,' she told me, 'because God has better use for father in heaven than He has for him here on earth.' That answer gave me peace."

Evangelism, making disciples of all nations, surely begins at home.

Perhaps that little girl in England will also have someone who will speak to her at some time about a heavenly Father with whom she can have a relationship. Perhaps someone will point her to all the notes and letters that this Father has written to His children.

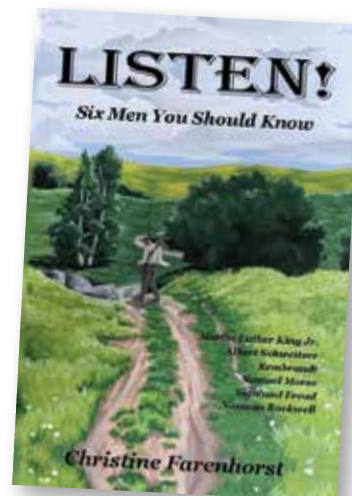
It is incumbent upon all of us to endeavor to make disciples of our children, of little neighbor girls and boys, and of all the people God places on our way each day. Jesus has said so:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

– Matthew 28:19-20 

Christine Farenhorst has a new book, "Listen! Six men you should know," with biographies on an intriguing selection of famous figures: Norman Rockwell, Sigmund Freud, Samuel Morse, Rembrandt, Albert Schweitzer, and Martin Luther King Jr. You can find it via online retailers including Dortstore.com.

Evangelism, making disciples of all nations, surely begins at home.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY PAUL LEISTRA

SEPT-OCT 2021

PUZZLE CLUES

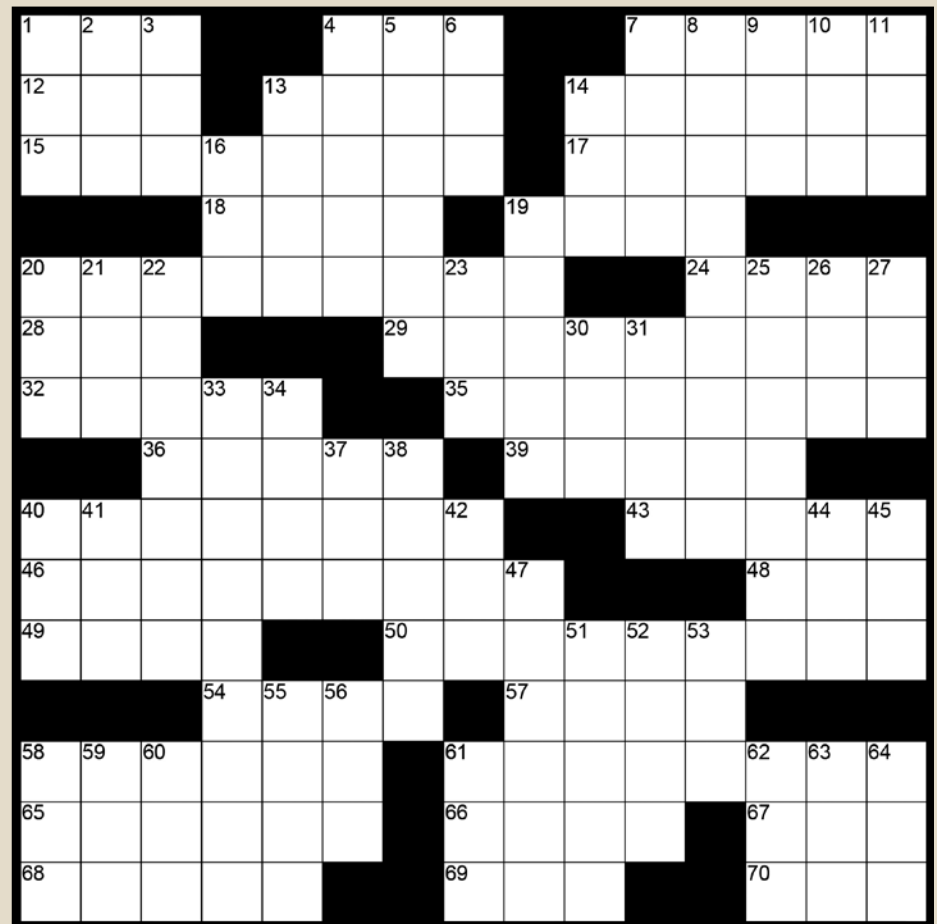
Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. Cul-de-_____
4. TV type lcd
7. Run off and get married
12. Supposed sixth sense
13. Ripped
14. A Reformation sola
15. Another Reformation sola
17. Zodiac fish sign
18. Scottish girl
19. Pessimist's word
20. Like some Dutch churches in 1944
24. Spoken
28. Puncture prefix
29. A third Reformation sola
32. Not neat
35. Ruled over
36. What Jacob did at Bethel
39. _____ work (two words) construction sign
40. Netherlands _____, country that dissolved in 2010
43. Holey kind of cheese
46. A fourth Reformation sola
48. Make a mistake
49. Former frosh (abbreviated)
50. Multiple _____, illness of the central nervous system
54. Heavy reading
57. Bass or treble
58. Greek goddess of wisdom
61. The fifth of the five Reformation tenets
65. Luther posted 95 of them
66. Wicked
67. Commotion
68. Gnats and flies
69. Director Craven or preacher Bredenhof
70. Both 95 and 1517 but not 12 or 1944

DOWN

1. "Hold on a ___!" (abbreviation)
2. Campfire residue
3. Training that's provided by St John's Ambulance
4. Many, informally
5. Pizza bases
6. _____ Moines
7. _____ Brockovich, not Moses' brother
8. Camel's back-breaker



9. What CCRTC hopes to grant after its accreditation, or drugs that are not behind the counter (abbreviation)
10. Easy as _____
11. Teachers' aides (abbreviation)
13. Ivan the Terrible, for example
14. University stat
16. Island in French
19. DVD predecessor cd-rom
20. O.T. book written by Jeremiah (abbreviation)
21. The rocks in "on the rocks"
22. Where many walk their children in the morning
23. Hospital test (abbreviation)
25. Em and Mame or, Tantes
26. Rage
27. Mom's husband
30. "___ got to go" (contraction)
31. Sties
33. Most slender
34. Bellow
37. Arafat's organization (abbreviation)

38. Abrupt
40. 30-second TV spots
41. _____ Calvinism, movement attributed to Abraham Kuyper
42. Often follows a written error
44. _____ Lanka
45. 12th graders (abbreviation)
47. Nook
51. Statue of Liberty is on _____ Island
52. Not fake
53. Bug spray brand
55. Small bills
56. Pas' mates
58. Rafael Nadal's organization (abbreviation)
59. With 64-Down, concluding words
60. "For ___ a jolly good fellow"
61. Darn
62. Words of commitment (two words)
63. Accomplished
64. See 59-Down

A CALL FOR EAGER HANDS!

There were Reformers before Martin Luther, like John Wycliffe (1320-1384) and Jan Hus (1369-1415), but one reason Luther is called the “Father of the Reformation” and they are not, is a tool he had at his disposal that they did not.

It was Johannes Gutenberg’s movable-type printing press – operational in 1450 – that allowed, for the first time, the mass distribution of information. So it was that in 1517 Luther’s 95 Theses, could be copied and shared, and in the sharing could spark the start of a widespread Reformation of the Church. Luther was not only the man for the job, but God equipped him with the megaphone of the printing press. Some years back Time-Life publications rated Gutenberg’s press as the most important invention of the second millennium. Christians might well agree, as it made it possible for the average man to have his very own Bible.

But even the right man, and the right tool weren’t enough, because pamphlets, tracts, and Bibles don’t hand themselves out. So it was, that God also gave his Church thousands of eager hands willing to grab hold of, and pass along the biblical Truths that were being rediscovered. Without those thousands, sola Scriptura, sola fide, and sola gratia, wouldn’t have travelled much farther than the reach of Luther’s voice.

A NEW PRINTING PRESS

The printing press still plays an important role today. Reformed Perspective can

circumvent the online “cancel culture” by getting a print magazine directly into readers’ hands via the old-fashioned sort of mail.

But as important as paper and ink remain, the Internet has created opportunities to distribute God’s Truth further, and more cheaply, than ever before. That’s why, even as our print circulation has doubled in the last 5 years, we’ve been fo-



cused on getting more and more content up online.

But, like Luther, it isn’t enough to have the content, and have a “printing press” whether with movable type, or bits and bytes. That material isn’t going to reach anyone if it isn’t being eagerly shared. And our articles have been shared, to the extent that in the last 5 years, we’ve had 1 million “article reads” overall. That’s what can happen when our readers, all over the world, share with their friends, children, siblings, and parents.

However, there’s much more that could be done. We’ll have articles that were read by a thousand, “liked” by a hundred, but only shared by ten. The material was

good, the printing press was in place, but there weren’t many eager hands at the ready, to spread it.

CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

Each month we ask for your support, and point you to the form at the right here, which you can use to become a monthly financial supporter. But there’s another sort of support that is every bit as important. If we’re putting out good, useful material, we need you to share it.

You don’t even have to be computer savvy: I get periodic updates from a gentleman who mails photocopies of materials he wants to share. Not on social media? If you have an email account, you can do as another friend does, emailing his contacts en masse with suggested links (while letting recipients know they can opt out by sending him a note). For those who are on Facebook, MeWe,

Twitter, or others social media, sharing articles can be as simple as copying and pasting a link, while including a sentence or two about why people should check it out – that makes it much more likely your friends will do so.

A TOOL TO BE USED

While my goal in this article is to promote RP’s efforts, the goal of RP is to equip God’s people to know, and live, and spread God’s Truth. God has given His Church a new printing press, and the call is out for eager hands to spread what has already benefited them. RP

- JON DYKSTRA, EDITOR



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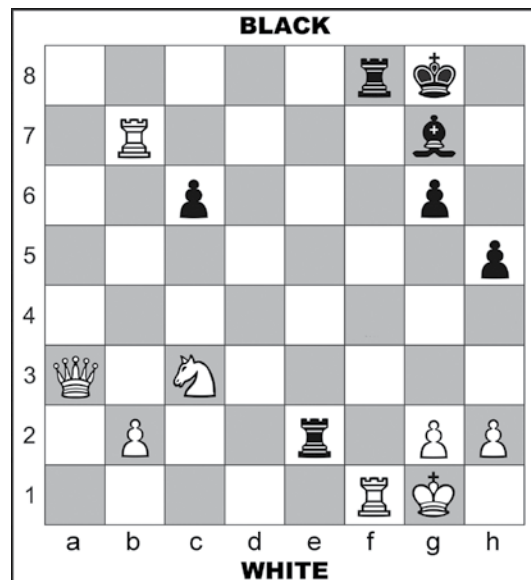
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ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #266



WHITE TO MATE IN 3
Or, If it is BLACK's Move,
BLACK TO MATE IN 2

Riddle for Punsters

#266 - "The Kettle Company is in Hot Water?"

Easy Boilover was pretty stumped that his new kettle stopped working after only a week. It boils down to this: he muddled out on a lot of hot drinks after that week, but what about the complaint department people going to do about it? Easy is still hoping to avoid a heated discussion about the situation.

Problem to Ponder

#266 - "Number Combinations - Part 1"

Use, EACH ONLY ONCE, the digits 1, 3, 4 and 6. Use the operations addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, each AT MOST ONCE. If desired, round brackets may be used, but AT MOST ONCE. Of course, the order of algebraic operations (known as BEDMAS) must ALWAYS be followed. For example, to produce the result 9 two possible answers are $4 \times 6 / 3 + 1 = 24 / 3 + 1 = 8 + 1 = 9$ OR $4 \times (6 / 3) + 1 = 4 \times 2 + 1 = 8 + 1 = 9$.

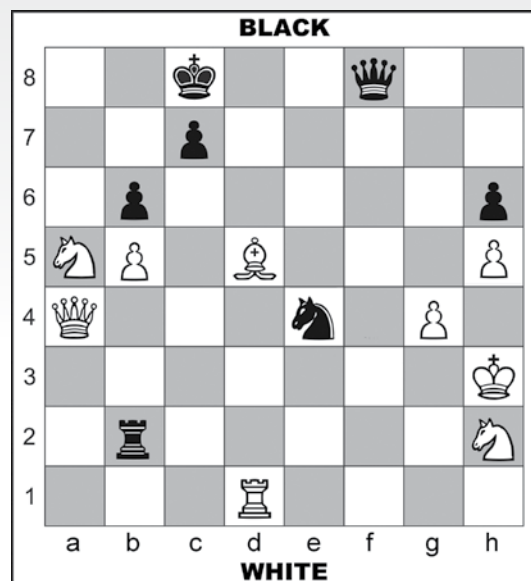
Find at least one way to produce the following results.

a) 41 b) 10 c) 3 d) 18 e) 17.

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

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTIONS

Solution to Chess Puzzle #265



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. B-N7 ch K-N1
2. N-B6 ch KxB
3. Q-R6 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Bd5-b7+ Kc8-b8
2. Na5-c6+ Kb8xb7
3. Qa4-a6++

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#265 - "Shockingly Simple Advice for No Charge?"

I am currently dealing with anger issues because my laptop battery only lasts a revoltingly short 15 minutes after being charged. My best friend has advised me to find an outlet for dealing with that problem.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#265 - "A big MOOve for the family?"

Hilda's parents bought a farm that had chickens, cows and horses. There are five times as many cows as horses. Hilda counted all the animals' legs and there were 104. She also counted a total of 8 wings. How many cows are there on the farm?

A total of 8 wings means 4 chickens having 8 legs leaving $104 - 8 = 96$ legs in total from the cows and horses.

Let h represent the number of horses, having 4h legs, so the number of cows is 5h having $4(5h) = 20h$ legs. Therefore $4h + 20h = 96$

so $24h = 96$

so $h = 4$

so $5h = 5(4) = 20$.

Therefore there are 20 cows on the farm.


BLACK TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- N-N4 ch
2. K-R4 or K-N3 Q-B7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Ne4-g5+
2. Kh3-h4 or -g3 Qf8-f2++



by Chris deBoer

WHY AND HOW THE NICENE CREED CAME TO BE

The word “orthodoxy” comes from the Greek *orthos* which means right, true, or straight, and *doxa* which is praise, or opinion. Therefore, *orthodoxy* is having the right opinion on a specific topic, usually religious.

In the early church, orthodoxy had to be discovered and established by means of study, debate, and decisions. While the early church was quite unanimous in the use of baptism in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there was some significant disagreement about the nature of the interrelationship between, and nature of, each person of the Trinity. For example, Sabellianism taught that there was not three distinct persons in the Trinity, but that God simply manifested himself differently for different purposes: God was Father at Creation, Son at Redemption, and Spirit in Sanctification.

ATTENDING TO ARIUS

The impetus for articulating the Nicene Creed, however, was not in response to Sabellianism, although it certainly addresses this belief, but in response to Arianism. Arius taught that Jesus was the first created being, created from nothing, and inferior to God. As Bruce Shelley puts it in his, *Church History in Plain Language*:

“He was a lesser being or half-God, not the eternal and changeless Creator. He was a created Being – the first created Being and the greatest, but nevertheless himself created.”

Arius was an elder in Alexandria, and the bishop of that city was Alexander, whom Arius falsely accused of Sabellianism. However, Arius and his followers were eventually deposed and excommunicated by a Council held in Alexandria, which included 100 bishops from Egypt and Libya.

But his deposition did not keep Arius from hosting religious assemblies and sharing his views. Even some well-positioned bishops empathized or agreed with his position. As time progressed, “Alexander vs. Arius” became a dividing point between bishops, between provinces, and started to cause increased division in the church.

The emperor at this time was Constantine. He noticed that the debate on the nature of Christ was dividing the Church and might even be a threat to the empire. In a startling shift from the severe persecution by Diocletian the previous emperor, Constantine invited bishops and elders from all across the empire, at his expense, to come to Nicea, in order to reach a consensus on this important issue. There were between 1500-2000 attendants at this council.

In his *History of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff explains that the members of the council were divided into three camps. The smallest camp was made up of members who believed in the deity of Christ from eternity (i.e., Alexander, Athanasius, etc.). The second group was made up of those who agreed that Christ was created and of a lesser substance than the Father (i.e., Arius, etc.). The third group, the vast majority, leaned towards the orthodox position, but were undiscerning and did not seem to care for doctrinal debates or scholastic discussions. They could have been prepared to accept a compromised position.

Arius’ camp proposed the first summary of their position; their creed was quickly dismissed and the debate must have been convincing. Sixteen of the eighteen original proponents of the Arian creed abandoned the cause.

NO ROOM FOR COMPROMISE

Eusebius, a church historian at that time, presented an alternative creed, originally approved by Emperor Constantine. It was similar to the completed Nicene Creed, but missing the claim that Christ was of the same substance as the Father. It acknowledged, in general terms, the divine nature of Christ,

NOW, THAT'S A NICAEAN PUN!

A self-described “heretic,” famous for formerly being the lead singer of a popular Christian band, got some attention this summer for this tweet:

Jesus was Christ.
Buddha was Christ.
Muhammad was Christ.
Christ is a word for the
Universe seeing itself.
You are Christ.
We are the body of Christ.

The best response in this case might seem to be no response at all, as this fellow already knows what the Bible actually says and doesn't really need more publicity (which is why I'm not bothering to share his name). But for those getting confused by the singer, the best response might have been the clever rejoinder by Andrew Snyder:

“If you can't say something Nicaean, then don't say it at all.”

– JD

but was not explicit in articulating the co-equality and co-eternality of Christ with the Father. The Arian camp was prepared to adopt the creed as presented by Eusebius which caused the camp of Alexander and Athanasius to be quite suspicious. They wanted a creed that Arians would reject entirely. There was no room for compromise. They continued to insist on the inclusion of the phrase “of one substance” which Arians rejected as Sabellianism – that the Trinity is three modes of the one God, not three persons. However, as the debate continued, Constantine noticed that Eusebius' creed would not pass, and so he gave his consent to insert and include “of one substance” in the creed.

The version of the Nicene Creed, adopted by the Council and signed by most of the members at the Council read thus:

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten; that is of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from there he shall come to judge the quick [living] and the dead.

“And in the Holy Ghost.

*“But those who say: ‘There was a time when he was not,’ and ‘He was not before he was made,’ and ‘He was made out of nothing’ or ‘He is of another substance’ or ‘essence,’ or ‘The Son of God is created,’ or ‘changeable,’ or ‘alterable’ – they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.” (Philip Schaff's *Creeeds of Christendom*, Vol. 1)*

This is the first instance in the Christian Church that office-bearers signed such a document. It expresses agreement with, and also submission to, the content of this creed. Eusebius, the one who had presented the creed without “of one substance” was prepared to sign this creed without the last paragraph, the condemnation of Arius teaching, and for this he was deposed and banished until he later conceded to sign the creed in its entirety. In the end, only two bishops, together with Arius, refused to sign and were banished. This is also the first time that there was a *civil* consequence applied because of church issues. The separation of church and state was eroding quickly.

ROUND 2

We might think the story ends here and the debate on the nature of Christ and his relationship to the Father is finished. We'd be sorely mistaken. Some of those who had

signed this did so because of the Emperor's approval of it. As such, it didn't take long for some of them to come to the defence of Arius.

Eusebius the historian (who presented the compromised creed) started to throw all of his influence against those who supported the phrase “of one substance.” Even Constantine was convinced at some point of the idea that Christ was created “of a *like* substance” to the Father (not the same), but eventually came back from that. However, Arius was no longer banished and he was expecting to take up his place as elder as he had previously, but by this time Athanasius was the bishop and refused to reappoint him to the office. However, two Arian councils were held that condemned Athanasius, and even the Emperor banished the bishop for being a disturber of the peace.

Arius was formally acquitted by a council in Jerusalem (A.D. 335) and was to be received as a full member by the church at Constantinople. Schaff goes on to explain,

“But on the evening before the intended procession from the imperial palace to the church of the Apostles, he suddenly died (A.D. 336), at the age of over eighty years, of an attack like cholera, while attending to a call of nature. This death was regarded by many as a divine judgment; by others, it was attributed to poisoning by enemies; by others, to the excessive joy of Arius in his triumph.”

Athanasius had to wait until the death of Constantine (337) to be recalled from his banishment (338) by Constantine II.

A few months later, he convened a Council in Alexandria to reaffirm the Nicene Creed, but his victory was short lived. The changing emperors, the constant divide between the Eastern and Western portions of the empire with regards to church doctrine, and the opposing Councils hosted by various bishops did nothing to bring peace or unity. At one point, Constantius, a son of Constantine, held three successive synods that supported a moderate Arianism (i.e., “of like substance”) and forced the decrees of these councils on the entire Church, East and West, and then deposed

and banished bishops. At then, as Schaff highlights, he even brought in the troops:

“[Constantius] drove Athanasius from the cathedral of Alexandria during divine service with five thousand armed soldiers and supplied his place with an uneducated and avaricious Arian.”

For a number of decades, through various emperors, the fight for orthodoxy seemed grim. At some point, even in the city of Constantinople, there was only one congregation, pastored by Gregory Nanzianen, that remained faithful to the Nicene Creed. Many bishops had been banished, recalled, banished again, etc., depending on the emperor's perspective. During a short period of a revival of paganism, under the rule of Julian the Apostate, both parties were invited to exist side by side as he wanted the Church to keep fighting among itself in order to destroy itself.

Finally, in 381, Theodosius the Great, who was educated in the Nicene faith, called the second ecumenical council at Constantinople in May. Only bishops from the East came to this Council, it seems, as the Roman (Latin) church was quite agreed with the orthodox position. This Council did not create a new creed, but they rearticulated the Nicene Creed, as we have it today, for the most part. Schaff explains that, by July, the emperor “enacted a law that all churches should be given up to bishops who believed in the equal divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost... the public worship of heretics was forbidden.”

CONCLUSION

Orthodoxy had to be discovered and defended. Today, almost anyone who identifies as a Christian confesses the truth of the Trinity as expressed in the Nicene Creed (Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are significant exemptions). I sometimes wonder if we truly appreciate the battles that were fought in order to maintain truth and to keep a right understanding of scripture. This, of course, is the most significant outcome of the battle for and around the Nicene Creed.

However, two other major points that were mentioned briefly should be reconsidered for a moment.

Many churches have reacted to the changing of society by changing what they consider to be orthodox.

First, the importance of adding one's signature to the Creed at the first Council: office-bearers today also sign a form of subscription when they enter upon their respective offices. We do this, in part, to protect orthodoxy, and the orthodoxy of our churches, as it were. We express agreement with the Ecumenical and Reformed Creeds, and should we have any concerns with any part of them, we agree not to address them in public, and to submit to the decisions of our local consistory or classis. Doing otherwise would lead to being suspended from the office. This sounds similar to what happened at the Council of Nicea.

The second important point is the role of the government in these affairs.

Once Constantine championed Christianity, the emperors that followed thereafter had a significant role on the formation, deformation, and reformation of the Church. Under Constantine's rule, the Church enjoyed an unprecedented sense of prestige, protection, and power but with the change of an emperor, things quickly changed.

However, the truth of God's Word does not change with changing circumstances. That's important to keep in mind, as today again, the Church's circum-

stances have changed dramatically from even fifty years ago. In the West the Church is no longer held in any sort of regard, but is considered a fringe organization, especially when it persists in defending orthodoxy. Many churches have reacted to the changing of society by changing what they consider to be orthodox.

May faithful churches today continue to strive in remaining faithful to the entirety of God's Word, to his honor, and all the more so when persecution, tribulations, and trials come our way. Culture does not define or set the parameters of the truth of God's Word, but God's truth should define what is acceptable and good to cultivate. RP



PASTOR SEARCH

Covenant Reformed Church of Grande Prairie, Alberta is prayerfully seeking a Full-Time Pastor to join us as we continue to be a faithful witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this city of 70,000

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Expressions of interest along with a resume can be emailed in confidence to the Elders: at clerk@grandeprairieurc.org or alternatively you may reach out to the chair of consistory directly: Wietse Jagersma 780-882-9616

OPERATION MANNA

by James Dykstra

When two enemies collaborate for the common good, could it be anything less than a miracle?

It was a bad time to be Dutch. The winter of 1944-1945 was a particularly difficult one. Not only were there the usual difficulties of occupation that the Dutch had grown used to during the war, but food was in short supply. The northwestern Netherlands, especially the provinces of North and South Holland, were under siege by Allied forces.

My grandmother told me that her family had nothing to eat for six months but turnips, morning, noon and night. After that experience, she didn't eat another turnip for the next 60 years until the day of her death.

My grandmother, however, was one of the lucky ones. Many were reduced to eating tulip bulbs, and 20,000 people died during the months that are known as the Hunger Winter. The situation became desperate enough that the German forces occupying the Netherlands went looking for help. Since they couldn't supply the food, they needed someone who could.

OPERATION BAD PENNY

The Dutch resistance sent a message to the Canadian army claiming that German commander, General Blaskowitz, wished to talk about the desperate situation. That's the kind of message that seems like an obvious trap. The enemy wants to talk to us face to face? What could go wrong?

But intelligence operatives Major Ken Cottam and Captain Farley Mowat decided it was worth the risk. On April 26, 1945, the two of them, along with Mowat's aide, Sergeant "Doc" MacDonald headed off for the German occupied region of the Netherlands in a risky and perhaps foolish mission.

Somehow they got through. The men had a large white flag flying from their jeep, and along with that and the Major's knowledge of German, a lot of bravado, and a very vague invitation to talk to the General about food supplies, they were allowed through and even escorted to the German headquarters. By the 27th, the men sent a message back to their own headquarters that they had negotiated a truce to allow the Allies to drop food to the Dutch civilians.

By April 29, the first plane was loaded with food and ready to test the Germans' goodwill. The Lancaster bomber took off with a crew of 7, five of them Canadians, and a lot of food where normally the plane would carry bombs. The Germans hadn't officially agreed to a ceasefire at this point, so this mis-

sion was dubbed Operation Bad Penny. While a bad penny is an object that you don't want, according to the saying it's also one that keeps coming back.

The plane flew very low to the ground, at about 50 feet, since the food was not parachuted but dropped in large gunnysacks. As the bomber climbed back into the air, the message "mission accomplished" was sent out.

With this success behind them, the effort to drop food began in earnest. It was dubbed "Operation Manna" in reference to the Biblical story where God sends the Israelites food that literally falls from heaven. Flight after flight, in fact 3,298 of them, dropped food to the desperate Dutch.

FAUST TOO...

Because the planes were insufficient, they were supplemented by convoys of military trucks that the Germans also let through in what was labelled Operation Faust. Faust is a character in literature who made a deal with the devil to get what he needed..

The flights kept coming in very low



...they had negotiated a truce to allow the Allies to drop food to the Dutch civilians.



Flights kept coming in very low... so low in fact that one pilot described waving up to Dutch civilians on the balcony of a windmill.

in order to prevent damage to the food being dropped, so low in fact that one pilot described waving up to Dutch civilians on the balcony of a windmill. In total, Operation Manna dropped 6,680 Imperial tons of food. The related American Operation Chowhound dropped a further 4,000 tons.

It was one of the most incredible operations in military history, for one military called on its enemy for assistance in helping the civilian population. Two mortal enemies laid aside weapons to feed the hungry population, dropping manna from heaven, as it were.

CONCLUSION

As for Captain Mowat, one of the intelligence agents who helped make Operation Manna possible, he went on to lead a remarkable and often exciting life. He became one of Canada's best known authors, with books like *Never Cry Wolf*, *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be*, and *Owls in the Family*. But the fighting he'd seen in the Second World War seemed to have scarred him, and he spent much of his life tilting at

windmills, "in search of something to give him hope in mankind." He said of his experiences in the war that "It made me consider that perhaps we weren't the greatest form of life on Earth, not the absolute work of God, but perhaps some kind of cosmic joke, and a rather devilish one at that."

And maybe he has a point. In this broken and fallen world, man's inhumanity and his capacity to hurt his fellow humans can be staggering. But what

Mowat didn't see and we shouldn't lose sight of, is that in that misery we aren't alone. There is hope, there are miracles, and, sometimes, there's even food falling from heaven. RP

This article is taken from an episode of James Dykstra's History.icu podcast, where history is never boring. You can check out other episodes at History.icu or on Spotify, Google podcasts, or wherever you find your podcasts.

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sales representative
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Bill BROUWER
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905-341-4400



Ron MULDER
sales representative
905-327-4544



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by Michael Wagner

PAGANISM STRIKES BACK

The 60's Sexual Revolution brought all sorts of sexual issues to the fore in politics – abortion, homosexual rights, pornography, and more. Laws that enforced the older traditional morality were swept away and, as “progressives” see it, society was finally liberated from the oppressive confines of Christian sexual ethics. Finally, people could legally engage in any form of consensual sexual behavior they desired, and unwanted “products of conception” could be eradicated.

Conflicts over these issues still rage in today's “culture wars.” One segment of society is pushing (successfully) for government policies to support the Sexual Revolution, while conservative Christians and some others are resisting those policies. That's the culture wars in a nutshell: the Christian worldview perspective that largely formed the basis of Western society for over a thousand years is being replaced by another worldview.

RETURN OF THE OLD PAGANISM

Much has been written about these matters, and one superb offering is by Steven D. Smith, a law professor at the University of San Diego. In his 2018 book, *Pagans and Christians in the City: Culture Wars from the Tiber to the Potomac* he offers a comprehensive explanation of the cultural change of recent decades and how it affects the public life of conservative Christians.

A COUPLE KEY TERMS

Immanent: God is, or is in, the world and universe

Transcendent: God transcends (is beyond or outside) the universe

As Smith sees things, the decline of Christianity in the West goes hand-in-hand with a re-paganization of the West. That is to say, the West, in some sense, is returning to the pagan worldview that dominated the Roman Empire at the time of the early Church.

Now, the paganism that's returning is not in the form of idol worship or any explicitly religious practices. Smith explains that the old pagan outlook located the sacred in this world. “For pagans,” that is, “this city and this world were, and are, our home – the only home we have. This life, and the good things of this life, are the only ones we need to concern ourselves with.” That's the paganism that is returning – the eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die paganism.

In contrast, Judaism and Christianity saw the ultimate significance of life and meaning as being transcendent, or beyond this world.

The implications of these different religious perspectives are very significant. As Smith writes:

“what may seem like abstract differences in the location of the sacred, support fundamentally different orientations or attitudes toward the world – different orientations with effects and profound implications for even the most mundane aspects of life.”

CHRISTIAN VS. PAGAN SEXUAL MORALITY

One obvious difference between pagan and Christian ethical standards is their approved sexual behavior. For Christians, sex is reserved for marriage, same-sex sexual relations are condemned, and prostitution is prohibited. Smith adds that:

“Even more important than the specific prohibitions, though, was the ‘new foundational logic of sexual ethics’ that supported the specific rules. In its underlying logic, Christian sexual morality did not rely on the assumptions that informed Roman attitudes and practices, but instead was grounded in an entirely different set of premises.”

The different perspectives on sexuality were the consequences of different religious outlooks:

“The confinement of sex to one partner within the sanctified bonds of matri-

mony was correlated with monotheism; conversely, the Roman practice of a more wide-ranging sexual prodigality was the manifestation of a kind of polytheism.”

The Christian perspective on sexuality was much stricter than that of Roman paganism. To some degree, the Christian view was resented by pagans as a perceived infringement of their liberties. The Romans disliked the Christians’ judgmental approach to their sexual practices. Christianity was diametrically opposed to what one scholar described as Rome’s supposed “sexual paradise.”

Not only that, but the Christians claimed to worship the one true God, and insisted that Roman deities were false gods. With this in mind, Smith writes, “it is easy to see why from the pagan perspective the Christian stance would have seemed arrogant, unsociable, and unreasonable.”

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ONLY EXISTS UNDER CHRISTIANITY

Christians were viciously persecuted at various times and places under the Roman Empire. The persecution ended when Constantine enacted toleration for Christianity in 313. That initiated a life-and-death struggle for control of the empire between paganism and Christianity throughout the fourth century, a struggle that Christianity won. Subsequently, over the next several centuries, there was a kind of revolution in which the Christian worldview replaced the paganism that had previously been dominant.

Smith explains that:

“As Christianity became the dominant religion of the empire, Christian sexual norms also gradually came to be reflected in law. Prostitution, enthusiastically supported under the earlier emperors, was now legally regulated and discouraged. Pederasty and homosexual conduct were forbidden. The shift from pagan to Christian morality amounted to ‘a revolution.’”

Today, however, paganism is forcefully advancing a counter-revolution that has overthrown Christian sexual morality and greatly limited Christian public influence.

The pagan counter-revolution is now going even further, undermining the concept of religious freedom itself.

Unlike what many people seem to believe, religious freedom is not based on some notion of neutrality with the state as a kind of referee among various beliefs and practices. Instead, it arose from the philosophical infrastructure provided by the Christian worldview. Thus, as the Christian worldview is uprooted from Western countries, the philosophical justification for religious freedom is also being undermined.

CONSCIENCE-PROTECTION IS CHRISTIAN

Smith summarizes the worldview foundation of religious freedom by explaining that it:

“...is based on an acknowledgement of a transcendent reality, or at least of the possibility of such a reality. In that sense, the accommodationist approach to religious freedom [accommodating those that believe differently] not only grows out of a Christian history and conception, it also betokens a community, or a city, constructed and constituted not on Christianity per se but on a conception of transcendence that was a legacy of the Christian tradition.”

In recent years, religious freedom has been in decline in North America. In some cases, Christian medical professionals are expected to take part in immoral activities such as abortions and assisted suicide, or they must actively help the person desiring

such services to receive them from someone else. Christian businesses offering wedding services are sometimes required to participate in same-sex weddings.


Christians who object to this kind of state coercion are labeled as bigots by the political and cultural elites, and their appeal to religious freedom is dismissed as nothing more than a smokescreen for hate.

As Smith explains, the loss of religious freedom is a direct consequence of the transcendent perspective of Christianity being replaced by the immanent perspective of paganism:

“the contemporary battle over religious freedom is a sort of microcosm of the current and perennial struggle between transcendent and immanent religiosities, and an attempt to roll back the Christian revolution of the fourth century.”

Thus, the continuing decline of religious freedom is a direct result of decreasing Christian influence. A revival of the pagan worldview is successfully rolling back the Christian dominance achieved in the fourth century.

CONCLUSION

Steven D. Smith’s book *Pagans and Christians in the City* offers a deep and penetrating explanation for the underlying roots of the culture wars in the West, particularly in the United States. The culture wars are the consequence of an older pagan religious perspective replacing Christianity as the worldview basis of Western society. Understanding the religious nature of the underlying conflict helps to put the political issues into perspective. The outcome of this religious struggle will determine which side wins the culture wars. 

...Christian medical professionals are expected to take part in immoral activities such as abortions and assisted suicide...

The Problem with Pacifism

“Wars are not abnormal; peace is abnormal”

by Johan D. Tangelder

The 20th century was the bloodiest in history. It started badly with the 1914-1918 conflict, which was called “the war to end all wars.” People sincerely believed that after that terrible event a halt would be put to war preparations. An effort was made – in the years after this World War there were many proposals and negotiations for disarmament. In 1928, for example, the “Treaty Providing for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy” known as the Kellogg-Briand Pact, promised to “outlaw war.” In 1931 the influential Dutch Reformed (GKN) pastor S.G. De Graaf wondered if the time had not come to condemn every war as sin. In Canada such interchurch groups as the Fellowship of the Christian Social Order strongly opposed war. And the United Church of Canada was heavily in support of the pacifist position.

But all their well-meant efforts had dismal results. And all the duly signed peace treaties neither produced disarmament nor were able to prevent World War II. But the world keeps on trying. The United Nations Charter (Article 2) outlaws both the threat and initiation of war. But we still face entrenched dictatorships and totalitarianism on every side. Disease, poverty, and disorders are found in wide areas of the globe.

PACIFISM

Pacifism – the belief that all disputes can be settled peacefully – was a strong movement in the 1930’s. Many then believed that historical progress was inevitable and believed that human perfectibility was possible here on earth. The dream of a perfect society, a utopia on earth, seemed within reach.

The famous Russian author Leo Tolstoy’s (1828-1910) idealistic-pacifist ideology had a great impact on the liberal mindset. He believed in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth rather than anticipating it in an afterlife. Christ’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) was for Tolstoy the key to achieving this end. This sermon expressed the essence of love and the guidance for conduct that must follow it. And love admits no exceptions. Tolstoy wrote, “The Christian teaching in its true meaning, recognizing the law of love as supreme, and permitting no exceptions to its application to life, ruled out any form of violence and consequently could not but condemn the whole structure of the world founded on violence.” He looked for a world where “men who practice daily in preparation for a universal war of extinction no longer hate those whom they must fight, and not one of the leaders has the courage to declare war.” However, while he preached progress through a gradual evolution of moral self-perfection, men, women and children were being slaughtered on the streets of Russia.

Tolstoy’s most lasting influence was in India. He and Gandhi had begun a correspondence in the early years of the twentieth century, with Gandhi referring to himself as Tolstoy’s “humble follower.” In fact, Gandhi’s campaign of civil disobedience and passive resistance owes much to Tolstoy. For many Americans, Gandhi, with his rather successful resistance of British “imperialism,” became the grand exemplar of the Christian “way,” the “strategy of love,” the “politics of the Cross.”

The American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) didn’t share these utopian illusions. He abandoned pacifism

to oppose Hitler, trying to persuade the Protestant church that military intervention was necessary. He regarded most Christian pacifism as not only a deplorable political strategy but also a pernicious heresy. He stated that it reduces the “good news” to a “challenge” and to a gospel of “we must try harder.” But the heresy of the goodness of man seems to have a life of its own.

Of all people who should know better, the famous South African Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, sounded more like Tolstoy than the apostle Paul when he addressed a crowd in Grand Rapids in March 2003. He said that after watching enemies in South Africa reconcile themselves with the past, he was more convinced that goodness prevails in the human heart.

“At the end of the truth and reconciliation process, I came away exhilarated by the fact, that yes, we have this capacity of evil, but we have this remarkable glorious capacity of good. It is quite extraordinary. We are fundamentally good!”

SIN

But we are not “fundamentally good.” The Bible paints a realistic picture of human nature. It plainly states that “there is no one who does good, not even one” (Rom. 3:12). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We live in a fallen world where evil people do dastardly things. We are all capable of doing real harm to our neighbor. We confess with the Heidelberg Catechism the brutally frank truth about ourselves that we have a natural tendency to hate God and our neighbors (Q&A 5). Human nature,



Augustine said that those "who fight for peace" may do so because this is a way to ending an armed conflict.

therefore, may not make war inevitable, but it does make war difficult to avoid.

Far from the world being a safer place than in the past century, terrorist groups have access to weapons that were previously restricted, or not even imagined. Wars are signs that we cannot and will not live in peace and harmony in this present age. We cannot be trusted to keep the peace. John Calvin said the Anabaptist pacifist position would be right "were we angels in this world." But the sad fact is the world is full of "cruel monsters and wolves and rapacious men. The rise of the sword will therefore continue to the end of the world." In his sermon in response to the war in Iraq, Philip Jensen, dean of Saint Andrew's Anglican Cathedral in Sydney, Australia, stated that wars and rumors of wars are normal in the last days. "Wars are not abnormal; peace is abnormal."

Pacifism is a mistaken ideology. It is an impossible position to hold in a fallen world. The horrors of World War II led many pacifists to change their minds. German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) became deeply involved in the German resistance movement, which to him was more important than his natural inclination to pacifism. He saw how war exploits the baseness of the human heart. His deep commitment

to Jesus Christ led him to do his utmost to oppose the barbaric-pagan tyranny of the Nazi regime. For his participation in the plot against Hitler, he was hanged at Flossenburg concentration camp, within a month of the end of the war.

Bonhoeffer observed that the French Revolution revealed the true nature of man. He wrote, "The French Revolution was the laying bare of the emancipated man in his tremendous power and his most terrible perversity." Since the French revolution, the western world has become essentially hostile to the church. When people turn their backs to God, people will risk all for their own gain. As Bonhoeffer put it, "It is only when Christian faith is lost that man must himself make use of all means, even criminal ones, in order to secure the victory of his cause."

So how can we expect a peaceful world when violence in the movies and on television is tolerated? How can we expect peace among nations when many families cannot keep peace among themselves? What are we doing to improve conditions for peace?

How many in our Western society would be willing to lower their standard of living for the sake of the suffering people in the Congo, Ethiopia, or Haiti? Instead, in our consumers society many

appear convinced that the good life can be bought. As one reads the newspapers and watches television, one can hardly avoid the impression that the interests of many people largely concern jobs, strikes, houses, inflation, prices, entertainment, sports, and cars.

WHAT IS PEACE?

What do we mean by peace? The horrors of modern warfare have made this question a matter of agonizing daily concern for every sensitive spirit. It has always thrown the Christian community into a fundamental struggle over the nature of the Gospel itself. It throws into clear relief our understanding of salvation, the nature of man and history.

When we hear the word peace, we immediately think of it as the absence of war. But peace can also refer to war. Augustine said that those "who fight for peace" may do so because this is a way to ending an armed conflict. But real peace can only come when rebellious sinners become reconciled to God through Christ's shed blood on the cross (Col. 1:20). One cannot be a peacemaker until first he finds peace for himself. Reconciliation with God enables us to be reconciled with ourselves and with people from every race, nation, or background (Cf. Eph. 2). True peace

then is not the result of human enterprise or transaction, but it is received. It is a gift of God. It is Christ Himself. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14-17; cf. Rom. 5:1). Peace means salvation from sin and death, from the devil and hell, being surrounded by the goodness of God, and living under the Lordship of Christ (cf. Luke 1:79).

world, Jesus' message for His people still is, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). But this peace is an active peace that we have to manifest in our daily lives and in the public square.

nations; being a peacemaker means much more than demonstrating against the war in Iraq or elsewhere. As Christians we are to live in peace. It is the fruit of Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The Bible exhorts us to "live in peace," to "be in peace," to "seek peace with all." Furthermore, the Bible does not allow us to take refuge in our private little world and in our private virtues. We may not be blind and deaf to the wrongs we see and hear in our world. We have been given the word and deed ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:20). And positive peacemaking is an implicit part of it.

Peacemaking calls for loving your neighbor. As Christian this cannot be some type of abstract love – we can't merely talk about our love. Talk is cheap, so deeds are demanded! Think of the many missionaries, for example, who have been called idealistic, unrealistic, and so on, but who use their talents, their resources, and accept cheerfully untold difficulties as positive peacemakers. They proclaim the liberating Gospel, feed the hungry, seek justice for the oppressed, not because they are do-gooders or taken in by a social gospel, but out of gratitude for what God has done in their lives. The history of missions tells us how during the 19th century explosion of missionary activity, peacemaking often arose out of an encounter with immoral religious practices and unjust social structures.

In India, for example, missionaries focused on *sati*, the burning of Hindu widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, infanticide, and the caste system. In China, missionaries and mission stations were the main providers of modern medicine and care until the state began to take over the function in the 1920s. Millions of Chinese were treated. Hundreds were given medical training in Christian schools such as Peking (Beijing) Union Medical College. Missionaries were also among the leaders of the movement to abolish the horrible practice of footbinding. The toes of girls, usually aged between seven and eight, were bound under their insteps until the arches of their feet were broken. A crippling experience, it left women with short pointed feet that Chinese

...in the midst of tribulations we can have amazing peace.

But peace with God does not guarantee a tranquil life. In fact, it is accompanied with warfare against the demonic powers still at work in our world (Eph. 6:12). Wherever the Gospel is preached, the devil opposes. We are sheep among ferocious wolves. Jesus warned His disciples about the cost of following Him, but also of the coming victory. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

So in the midst of tribulation we can have amazing peace. In this fearful

POSITIVE PEACE

True peace then, is more than the absence of war. The Bible describes it as *shalom*. Shalom seeks the good and opposes evil (Jer. 29:11). Shalom brings joy to life (Isa. 55:12) and brings harmony. It means everything that is needed by the individual and society for wellbeing and happiness. It makes life worth living.

But this "positive peace" is costly. It calls for responsible action. To be a peacemaker means more than sitting on a study committee to discuss peace; it requires more from us than demanding the Western world right the wrongs in underdeveloped



Chinese women often had their feet bound to prevent growth. This x-ray was taken some time between 1890 and 1923, which was the last generation to bind feet.

men found erotic. In his book *The Small Woman*, Alan Burgess tells the true and amazing story of Gladys Aylward, a London parlor maid who became an effective and courageous missionary. She did not only bring the Gospel in word. When she saw injustice, she spoke out. When she was asked by the Mandarin of Yangcheng to become a Foot Inspector to break down the centuries-old custom of footbinding, she accepted this position for the sake of the Gospel.

UNIVERSAL PEACE

But despite all the best efforts of Christians, an ideal society will never be achieved. Many will continue to dream

about a world without violence and war, with everyone living in peace and harmony, but it will remain a dream. We will have to live with wars and rumors of wars until the end of time.

There is never any time or place for saying: Peace - when there is no peace (Ezek. 13:10)! The coming universal peace is bound to the coming of our Lord. The earthly city of self-love and rebellion against God will be replaced then by the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. In the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21), there won't be any more wastage of the earth's resources for war preparation, no more fear of nuclear proliferation, no more terrorist attacks, no more sickness,

no more death, and no more senseless luxury of some or senseless poverty of others. The followers of Jesus, therefore, look forward to the end of time when God will intervene to bring about peace, "when nation shall not take up sword against nation, nor will train for war anymore" (Isa. 2:4). While the Church waits, prays, and longs for the Lord's return, she has the responsibility to proclaim "the good news of peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). RP

Rev. Johan Tangelder (1936-2009) wrote for Reformed Perspective for 13 years.

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CHRISTIAN HERITAGE PARTY - CANADA

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Restore Traditional Marriage	✓	✗ ¹	✗	✗	✗	✗
Repeal Assisted Suicide	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Balance the Budget	✓	✓	✗ ²	✗	✗	✗ ⁴
Protect Free Speech	✓	✓	✗ ³	✗	✗	✓
Eliminate Carbon Taxes	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Defend Conscience Rights	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Enforce Border Protection	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

¹ Maxime Bernier marched in a pride parade; NO policy on abortion or gender ideology

² Conservatives added \$144 Billion to the national debt in 9 years

³ Conservative leader does not allow free speech for his own MPs

⁴ <https://ifsd.ca/en/blog/last-page-blog/green-2019-platform-2>



**Rod Taylor,
CHP Leader**

I agree with the following: There is one Creator God—the God of the Bible. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms acknowledges the Supremacy of God and the Rule of Law. All innocent human life must be protected by law from conception until natural death. Marriage is the exclusive union of one man and one woman. Parents are the primary authority for the care and education of their children. Canadian laws must reflect biblical moral standards.

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**YOU *WILL BE*
OFFENSIVE**

**and need
to speak
loving
truth
anyway**

An excerpt from Rachel Jankovic's
*You Who? Why You Matter
and How to Deal with It*

Imagine you have always believed that it was up to you to craft yourself. You have bought into inspirational quotes such as this gem from Nathan W. Morris:

“Edit your life frequently and ruthlessly. It’s your masterpiece after all.”

You believe absolutely that you are creating a story in which you are the hero and that it is your responsibility to make this story what you want it to be. You must make yourself what you need to be because that is the only way to live fully! So you select things that you want to be in this masterpiece. You might add an interest in houseplants. You might edit out a toxic aunt. You might add spin class, or you might edit out additional responsibilities and clutter. You are crafting the story the way you want it to be.

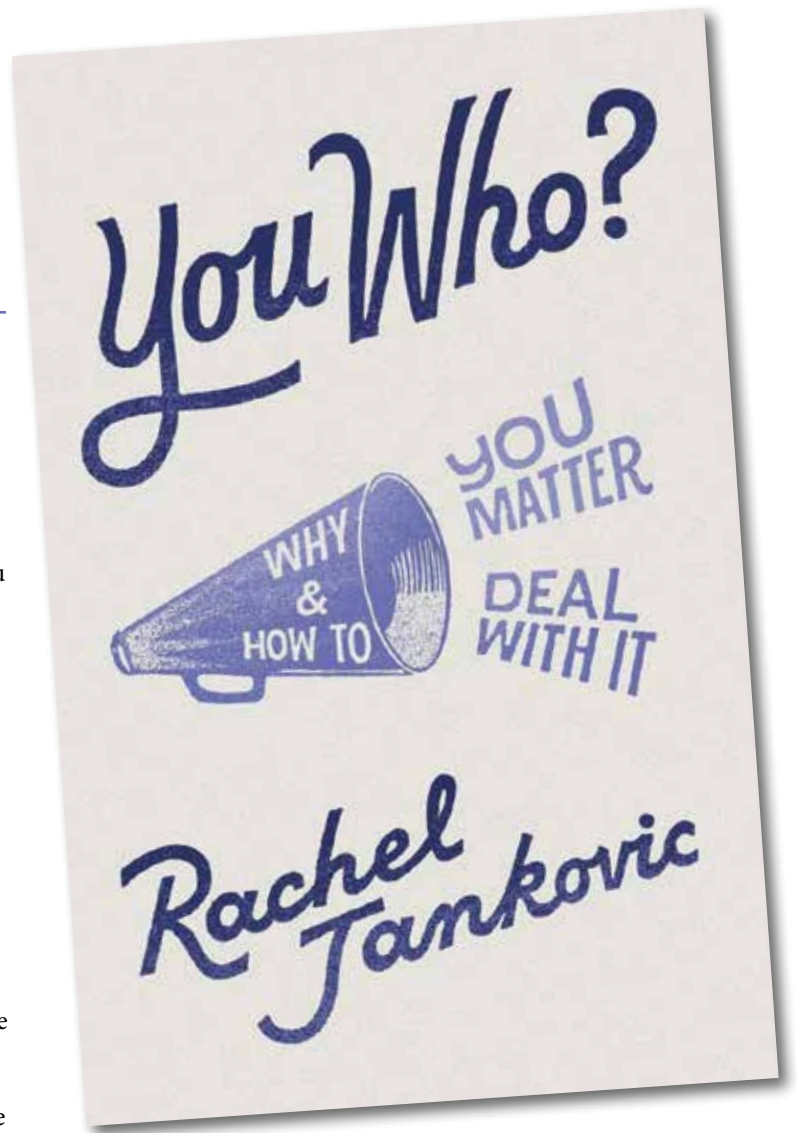
Say that what you are trying to self-actualize is an interesting, vibrant, well-loved fun person. In addition, say that in this self-created world you are also (either coincidentally or centrally) a lesbian, or gay, or trans, or whatever other status you may have decided to incorporate. You see the story this way, and you think it is wonderful and intriguing and fun, and it is all according to your plan for who you think you are. You intentionally wrote these things into your story, or you discovered them to be part of your identity, so you have decided to feature them.

Given all this imaginary set up, do you see why it would feel like hate if Christians do not “affirm” your story? It would feel truly spiteful because it would seem like someone had come into your story to criticize it unfairly. If you penned in all these things with a note in the margin (“and everyone loved her and was jealous of her life”), then even a quiet disagreement with your choices from others would make you (the author) into a liar.


Imagine that you are confidently writing your story assuming the genre is romantic comedy. Imagine a Christian coming in to tell you (the tone of voice is really irrelevant here) that actually this is a tragedy and the main character is about to die.

But how? How could someone else dare to make you a liar in your own story? How could the author become a liar about herself? You do get to write your own story, don’t you? Isn’t this what everyone has always told you? How dare anyone come along and flat-out deny your truth? How dare they say, “No, you aren’t a boy, and you never will be.” How dare they tell you that you may not do whatever you want to do or be whatever you want to be? How dare they come and tell you that you are not the author and that this story is wholly other than what you think you have been writing? As a trans person recently said to someone who refused to use their special pronouns, “Are you denying my existence?”

This is not a collision of preferences or manners. This is a collision of answers to the most basic questions of life... “Who are we? Who decides? What does it mean, and why does it matter anyway?”



If the Christian idea about identity is right, then all the self-constructed people in the world have been building their little selves out in the thin air off the cliff edge like so many Wile E. Coyotes. The bottom isn’t about to fall out from under them because it has never been there at all. There is no safety, there is no refuge, there is no security. It is understandable that all they can see in our Christian claims is hate.

But from our Christian perspective, speaking the truth is very far away from hate. The more any of us tries to cobble together the pieces of things around us – racial identity, sexual identity, hobby identity, political identity, pet owner identity – the smaller we become. In other words, the more we try to build up an identity apart from God and apart from His Word, the less truly us we become. It doesn’t matter how long or thoughtful or detailed the story you are writing is. If it is written by a character in the story rather than the Author of the story, it can only ever be tiny; it will always be minuscule by comparison. You cannot, as a character, out-write the Author of you. 

This is excerpted here with the permission of the publisher, Canon Press. You can find “You Who?” at online retailers everywhere, and find our review up on ReformedPerspective.ca.

FILMS

TRUE, OR INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

by Jon Dykstra

BALTO

FAMILY / ANIMATED

1995 / 78 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



In 1925, the city of Nome, Alaska was hit by an outbreak of diphtheria, a coughing sickness that is deadly to children. While that might not seem the best topic for a kid's animated movie, they went and did it, and made something special! This is the story of Balto, one of the dogs that helped get the medicine, via dogsled, to the kids that needed it.

Or, rather, this is sort of his story. Hollywood felt they had to make tweaks so now Balto is half-wolf, which makes him an outsider among the town's other dogs. He also has a goose and two polar bears as friends. And he and his villainous rival Steele are both interested in the same girl, a sable-colored dog named Jenna. In reality, Balto was a Siberian husky that didn't hang around with geese or polar bears. And we have no details about his love interests.

The big caution for this film is its level of tension. There's really no letting up, whether Balto is fighting a bully, a bear, or nature itself. For kids who can handle the tension, this will be super-exciting with lots of actions but also lots of laughs. But this will certainly be too tense for many kids under 12.

END OF THE SPEAR

DRAMA

2005 / 108 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



In 1956, five missionaries were killed by the Waodani tribesmen they were trying to befriend. The men were speared to death, and while their murders caught the attention of the worldwide media, it was what followed that was even more attention-worthy. Three years later one missionaries' wife, and his sister went to live with the tribe, presenting the gospel of the forgiveness of sins by offering that forgiveness. This was quite something because the tribe wasn't just murderous to outsiders – one estimate was that 60% of the Waodani died by "unnatural" means. And over the decades that followed God used the witness of these women to transform the tribe, with many turning to Him.

This being the Hollywood-ized version, the Gospel is muted, with Jesus never being explicitly mentioned. That said, God's transformation of the tribe is central to the story, so His presence is still inescapable, and that's what makes this a film to see.

Cautions would include violence – the men were all speared to death – and immodesty. The natives are depicted wearing more clothes than they actually did, but there is still a lot of skin on display, especially backsides.

For a more thoroughly Christian presentation, see the documentary *Beyond the Gates of Splendor* (though it has even more exposed backsides).

FREEDOM

DRAMA

2014 / 94 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



Freedom is really two stories in one, the first loosely based on the life of John Newton, slave trade ship captain who in later life rejected the slave trade and wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace."

The second story takes place 100 years later, and is a fictional account of a family of slaves fleeing Virginia via the Underground Railroad. Cuba Gooding Jr. stars as the father, Samuel, who has no interest in God. How, he asks, can any slave think God cares about them? Samuel does come to God before film's end, but both he, and we, are left with the realization that God might not give us all the answers we are after, or at least, not on this side of Heaven.

What connects these two stories is a Bible that John Newton supposedly gave to Samuel's great grandfather. Samuel's mother still has it, and we take the leap back in time when she tells the story of how Newton came to give a Bible to a slave.

The cautions would be onscreen violence against slaves, which, while limited, is brutal, making this suitable only for teens up. Also, like many a film "inspired by true events," this is not good history though it is pretty decent cinema.

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THE SWORD AND THE ROSE

FAMILY / DRAMA

1953 / 92 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



As a bold and beautiful princess, Mary Tudor (not to be confused with her niece, Bloody Mary) is much admired by all the young men of the court. But as the sister to the king, her marriage prospects are tied up with her brother's political machinations, and he wants her to marry the aged King of France.

She, however, is a very stubborn lady, so it's an open question as to whether she'll do as he says. It's only when she falls in love with the Captain of the Guard, and tries to sail off to the New World with him, that the king gains the upper hand. The couple is caught, and her knight in shining armor is going to be hung for treason... unless she submits to her brother's wishes and marries the French king. I won't give away the ending, but will note there is, ultimately, a happy ending for all.

Our whole family enjoyed it, though our youngest, at 7, needed the film to be paused at times, so we could explain, for example, how a brother could decide for his sister who she would marry. This is a "Disneyfied" version of history, and that is both its strength and weakness, suitable for all ages, but gentler than the events really were.

CLASSIC YOU CAN WATCH FOR FREE

This is the true story of the first black man to play Major League Baseball, made all the more interesting by the fact that Jackie Robinson plays himself and does a solid job of it.

The story starts with Robinson as a boy getting his first glove. Time passes quickly and we soon see him showing his athletic skills in multiple sports at the college level. But athletic skills, and even a college degree, didn't get his brother a good job, so Jackie isn't feeling optimistic about his future. He eventually lands a job with a traveling African-American team, but for low pay and with long days of travel keeping him away from his girlfriend.

However, it's on that traveling team that he catches the eye of a Brooklyn Dodgers scout, who invites him to try out. Team president and part-owner Branch Rickey has both practical and principled reasons to want to integrate blacks onto his team: he had seen discrimination impact someone close to him, and he also knows that whatever team is first to

integrate will have their pick of the best black players. Rickey wants Robinson to understand what sort of abuse he'd be signing up for. And most importantly, the two of them need to be agree that no matter what insults are directed at Robinson, he can't hit back. Robinson's play, not his fists, needs to do that talking.

When Robinson agrees, he's sent first to the Dodgers' minor-league affiliate, the Montreal Royals. After leading the league in hitting, he eventually gets the call to the Dodgers, and on April 15, 1947, he made his debut for them, blowing open the doors for many others to follow.

CAUTIONS

A modern-day reviewer criticized the film for presenting a muted version of the real events: we aren't shown the worst of the insults and threats that Robinson had to deal with, and consequently, we don't get a full appreciation of the courage he had to have to endure that gauntlet.

That's a valid observation, but it misunderstands this film's target audience. While it isn't suitable for the very young, this is meant to be family viewing. Robinson is humble enough here but he is also trying to set an example that will impact the next generation. To reach that generation, he couldn't make a gritty R-rated film. The end result is an account of a courageous man, and his backers, fighting both deep-seated bigotry and the more surface-level ignorant sort of racism, and his story has been made suitable for ages 10 and up.

CONCLUSION

Robinson made this film in the off-season, just three years after breaking into the major leagues. While he continued to get death threats throughout his career, this still marks an encouraging shift in the populace's thinking. Just three years after many folks were jeering at him to get out, many more were now flocking to theaters to learn how he made it in.

So, even as this is "muted" there's lots to love about it, including Robinson's mother directing him to God, as he wrestles with decisions he has to make. And because *The Jackie Robinson Story* is in the public domain, you can watch it in black and white for free at ReformedPerspective.ca. You can also find it in higher resolution, and also in a colorized version, available on many streaming platforms that would make for much better viewing for a family movie night.



THE JACKIE ROBINSON STORY

DRAMA

1950 / 77 MINUTES

RATING 7/10



SQUIRREL WONDERS

& the failure of evolution to explain them

One of the most abundant wild mammals living in moderate latitudes is the common squirrel. Squirrels thrive in almost every habitat, from tropical rainforest to semi-arid desert. They avoid only the cold polar regions and the driest deserts.

Squirrels are also one of the very few mammals that thrive in cosmopolitan areas. Some wild squirrels have even become pets of a sort, or at least comfortable around people, if the human is patient and not aggressive towards the animal.¹ As two of the leading squirrel authorities observed, “one can only marvel at how well adapted squirrels are to exploiting a forested environment” and, one could add, an urban environment as well.²

Their diversity is enormous and the squirrel family includes, not only tree and ground squirrels, but also flying squirrels, chipmunks, marmots, groundhogs and prairie dogs, all which deserve a separate paper. Many of

the 273 squirrel species live in North America where they have very few enemies. This paper covers only tree squirrels, which nest and live in trees and have bushy tails to help them balance while running up and down trees. Ground squirrels live on the ground, have shorter, less bushy tails, and their fur is usually brown-gray with gray and white dots.

EXTREMELY WELL-DESIGNED

Squirrels are very well designed for their terrestrial and arboreal life. Growing up in Michigan, I remember tree squirrels moving on the ground by a “hopping run” travel mode to scurry up a tree. Their sharp claws enable them to run down the tree about as fast as they can run up it. Their trademark is their slender bodies with very long, very bushy tails.

The term “squirrel” derives from the bushy tail, which is one of their more-defining traits. Their large eyes give

them excellent vision, allowing them to jump from one limb to another limb of the same tree, or even to other trees. They are one of the few mammals, aside from primates, that have color vision.²

Their excellent sense of touch uses the vibrissae (whisker-like hairs) on their strong flexible limbs as well as their heads. This system allows them to navigate telephone wires with ease, even while running on a wire almost as rapidly as they run on the ground.

A TALENTED TAIL

Their tail is central to maintain balance on telephone wires high up the ground as well as in trees. Its function is similar to how a tightrope walker uses a pole to balance. They can also use their long tail, which is 40 percent of their body length, to protect their face and body from dogs, raptors, and other predators.

The blood vessels in the tail serve as an efficient thermoregulation system,

Squirrels are only one of hundreds of examples of living fossils.

THEIR DIET

Squirrels are herbivorous, subsisting on seeds and nuts, but some will eat insects and even very small vertebrates.² They have large incisor teeth designed to crack open their diet of walnut, acorn, hickory and other nuts. Their constant gnawing helps them to keep their teeth razor sharp. Both tree and ground squirrels live in the same area year-round, including the cold winters. A motivation to write this paper is to understand how squirrels survive the ferocious winters where I live. Ground squirrels live on, or in the ground, and not in trees, and hibernate during the winter. Their heart rate and breathing rate slows down greatly and their body temperature falls below zero in preparation for hibernation.

In contrast, gray tree squirrels rely on sheltered nests made from twigs and

leaves, or dens in trees like woodpeckers, to sleep. In the winter they sleep in their nest or den and rely on fat reserves, and stored food to survive the long, cold winters³. Also, in preparing for winter, they maximize their food consumption and

body mass. They venture out during the morning and evening only if their food supply is low. They prepare for the winter by storing acorns and other nuts, berries, and tree bark in shallow holes near the trees where their nest is located. Squirrels use spatial memory to locate stored food, and often bury their food near landmarks to aid them in remembering where they stored it.⁴

EVIDENCE FOR SQUIRREL EVOLUTION

Evolutionists believe that squirrels evolved about 36 million years ago from some hypothetical “more primitive rodent.”⁵ Previously, the earliest squirrel fossil evidence was found in western North America Darwin-dated to about 36 million years ago. A nearly complete skeleton was discovered in 1975 which “is surprisingly like that of a modern tree squirrel.”⁵ The skeleton of the find, determined to be a *D. jeffersoni* breed squirrel, was:

“...discovered in early Oligocene deposits of Wyoming, [and] represents what may be the oldest fossil squirrel known... Except for minor differences in joint construction, the skeleton is strikingly similar to that of *Sciurusniger*, the living fox squirrel. It differs from extant ground squirrels in the more gracile proportions of its long bones and asymmetry of foot construction. This early member of the squirrel family was clearly an arboreal squirrel, with morphology, and presumably habits, very similar to those of extant *Sciurinae*.”⁶

The bones that were examined were judged to be “identical” to modern squirrels.⁶

The newest discovery after 1975 was a squirrel-like creature from China Darwin-dated over 200 million years old. The fossils were discovered by private collectors and amateur paleontologists in the fertile fossil province of Liaoning.⁷ The phylogeny [evolutionary relationship] of the fossils found “remains unsolved and has generated contentious views on the origin and earliest

by Jerry Bergman



God has given squirrels a tail that not only aids their balance, but acts as their own air conditioner.


opening blood circulation to the tail to cool the squirrel, and closing it to retain heat. Raising their tail over their body affords them the ability to enjoy the cool shade it provides. It also serves as a warm blanket that greatly helps to keep them warm during cold winter nights. Lastly, their tail is critical in communicating to other squirrels and potential predators.³

evolution of mammals.”⁸ As two of the leading experts of squirrels observed:

“biologists consider tree squirrels to be living fossils because they remain virtually indistinguishable from European and North American specimens that lived more than 5 million years ago.”²

Squirrels are only one of hundreds of examples of living fossils.⁹

Many examples of variations within the genesis kind exist, such as documented by Michael Steele and John Koprowski,² but I have been unable to locate any evidence for the evolution of squirrels from a non-squirrel. In short, the origins concern is not of variations within the genesis kind, but the evolution of the first squirrel from a non-squirrel. From what is known, the first squirrel was very close to identical to

modern squirrels. And if a local squirrel is making off with seed from your bird feeder, just reflect that they are all wonderful creations! 

This is reprinted with permission from Creation Dialogue Volume 48, #2 (Create.ab.ca) and is by Jerry Bergman, the author of “Wonderful & Bizarre Life Forms in Creation.”

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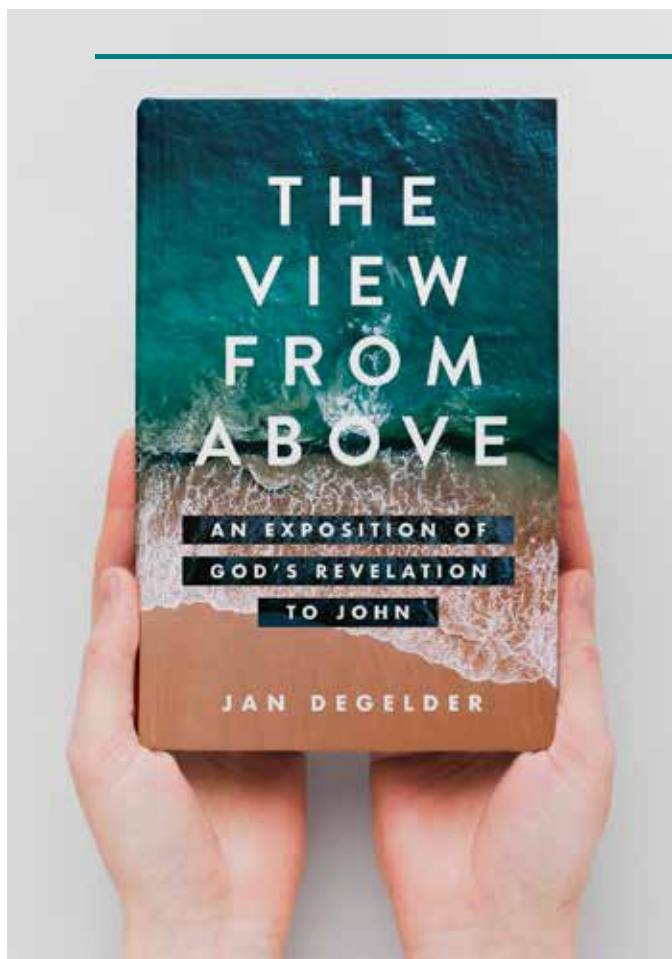
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