

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

NOV - DEC 2022
Volume 41 Issue No. 6

PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 40+ YEARS

ADDRESSING THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

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BE MY KID"
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A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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KINGDOM WORKERS WANTED

by Mark Penninga

When I started my undergraduate studies at university, I was on track to become a history teacher. It didn't take long before I fell off that track.

I'm not alone. The feature article in this issue includes an encouraging statistic: based on surveys of grade 11 and 12 students that were done in 2019 and 2021 in Reformed Christian schools, about 40 percent of students considered teaching as a career. Yet good intentions don't necessarily translate into reality. Reformed schools are reporting that the number of qualified applicants that they are receiving dropped from an already-poor 1.2 applications per opening in 2020 to a dismal 0.76 in 2021. Ouch.

Canadian businesses are feeling the pinch of a worker shortage this year. But this is nothing new for Reformed schools, which have struggled with a lack of teachers for years now.

With many different school communities all operating independently across a huge country, it seemed to the editorial team at *Reformed Perspective* that the issue of teaching and teacher shortages would benefit from some investigative research and extensive coverage.

A COMMON THEME

Listening to the thirteen individuals who graciously shared their insights with me as I worked on the feature article, I began to see a theme arise:

- A carpenter shared that he decided to teach and exit his former profession after being told by a client "I don't really care what it costs, I just want my neighbor to be impressed." He didn't want to build structures that are just for showing off. He wanted to do something "with permanent value." Convinced by a sermon about seeking God's kingdom rather than his own, his journey led him to serving as a high school shop teacher. Read his full story later in this issue.
- A successful consultant with a degree in chemical engineering shared "I saw the need for Christian educators, listened to some advice of those much wiser than me, and decided to give teaching another chance. It was the best decision of my life to

...for frontline role,
extensive training required,
lower pay,
high expectations,
few advancement possibilities.
Opportunity for eternal impact.

date." You can find his testimonial later in this issue as well.

- Six high school teachers shared their thoughts about the pros and cons of their profession. At the top of the list was "Can feel a lot of satisfaction helping covenant kids grow in the Lord and helping parents fulfill their baptism promises."
- While interviewing John Wynia and Kent Dykstra – two of the leaders behind "Teach With Us Canada," a relatively new effort to address the teacher shortage – I pressed them on the question of the salary discrepancy between teachers and many other professions. They politely pushed back, reminding me that their surveys showed that those who pursue teaching are motivated less by financial gain and more for advancing God's kingdom.
- A school administrator who devoted many years to serving in Reformed schools before working in an interdenominational school, said he was struck by, and impressed with, how the interdenominational school spoke of teaching as a ministry. This wasn't something he heard in the Reformed teaching context.

WHAT IS "KINGDOM WORK"?

These perspectives challenged me to consider some terms that get thrown around but are rarely defined. Is teaching a calling? A ministry? Kingdom work? Which careers do these terms apply to? Only pastors? The mission statements of Reformed schools make it clear that a teacher's role is deeply spiritual in nature. But isn't it dualism to elevate spiritual missions over physical or practical ones? Our Reformed heritage is hesitant to distinguish some professions as "callings" when we know that every task and job can be a means through which we honor God and further His kingdom.

I have seen first hand how Christians can faithfully serve in God's kingdom in many different realms and careers. My dad was a plumber all his life who has blessed countless families (including my own) with his skills and services. A school can't stay open without plumbing! The same is true of my mom, who cared for our family of ten her whole adult life,

never making a penny from her hard work. Likewise, I have seen very honorable people who were motivated to expand their business for financial gain. But their motivation was not selfish. It was for God's kingdom. Because of their kingdom hearts, I can get paid a salary to work for *Reformed Perspective*, and many other worthy causes are given the means to exist.

Does teaching belong in a special category when it comes to importance in the Christian community?

WE NEED MORE, BUT NOT JUST ANY

Well, next to parents, teachers often have the most influence on our lives. Pastors have commented that they notice the difference of serving in a congregation where the youth attend a Reformed school or not. Where they don't, the students are further behind when it comes to their understanding of biblical truths. Because of this great responsibility, it is appropriate that the apostle James reminds us that "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). Yet alongside this warning, the entire Old and New Testaments include a consistent and frequent calling to teach.

But simply being a teacher (or a pastor, or a stay-at-home mom) doesn't make someone a kingdom worker either. The role has to be filled with someone who actually uses it to further God's kingdom and glory. We have likely all seen examples of where a pastor, teacher, or stay-at-home mom can cause great harm to God's kingdom and glory. However honorable the intentions are with starting a Reformed Christian school, that doesn't mean that what happens inside is going to be kingdom work.

WHO WE SERVE, NOT JUST WHERE

The key, then, to whether we are doing kingdom work, is that wherever we serve, we do so "seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Each of us has to make decisions every day again to put God and His kingdom first. That applies to deciding which career to pursue, as well as how to actually fulfill the vocation we have been given. We can move forward with confidence, trusting that God will take care of us.

While this ad may be merely myth it's a famous one, ranked by some as the best advertisement of all time. In 1900, British explorer Ernest Shackleton was said to have posted this advertisement in London's *The Times* newspaper to recruit crew for his 1901 expedition to the Antarctic. While there's reason to think the ad never happened, the appeal is real. What it recognizes is that there are things more important than money and a comfortable life. What it misunderstands is that the "more important" isn't fame or honor.

WHAT'S INSIDE

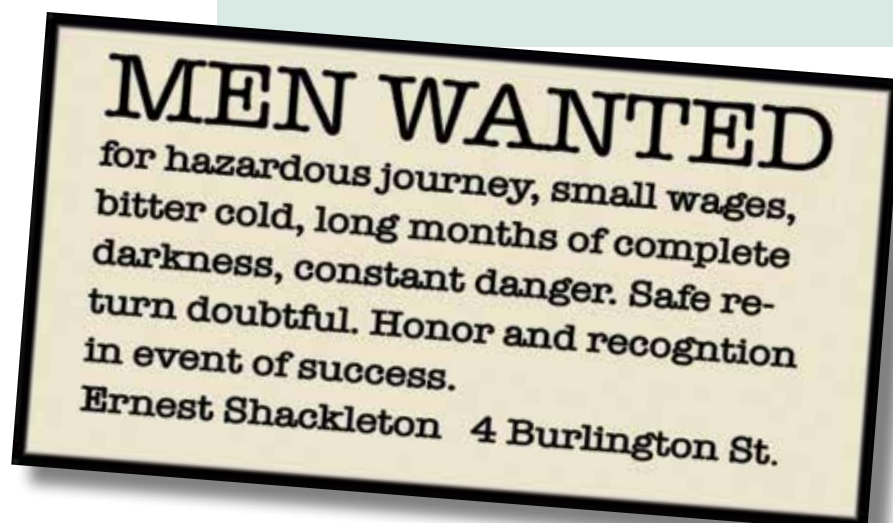
A very blessed Christmas and New Year to all of you, our dear readers!

We conclude the year of our Lord 2022 and enter 2023 with the beautiful reminder that He has already come to this world to bring salvation. Our God is with us, and our God reigns!

We are excited to bring you a series of articles and testimonials that, when combined, are meant to bring light to a challenge that most Reformed schools have been battling for some years now: a significant teacher shortage. We hope you will be encouraged to see the efforts that are already being made to address this, and are inspired to bring some of the ideas to your own community. And if there is someone who you think would be a good teacher, consider giving him or her a copy of this magazine and encourage them to consider pursuing the profession, seeking first His kingdom.

In our last issue we featured a new youth section. It was a hit. We are thrilled to have Stephanie Vanderpol's beautiful and inspiring kids' section this time around. Stephanie is, among other things, a children's picture book author, with her first book, *Cheetahs Eat Cantaloupe*, exploring God's creation from a child's unique perspective. Find out more about the book and the author at stephanielorinda.com. Stephanie is keen to continue with *RP*'s kids's section, and to work with submissions from our young readers.

We would love for this magazine to be interactive with you, our readers. It is meant to be a conversation. Although the print magazine comes out every two months, we publish content on our website, app, podcast, and social media almost daily. For example, one of our podcast listeners heard us talk about the teacher shortage issue on a recent Real Talk Roundup and shared his thoughts over email. With his permission, we could then include his feedback in this print issue, alongside the feature topic about teacher shortages. Let's keep the conversation going and build each other up (1 Thess. 5:11).



In regard to the current teacher shortage, the feature article makes the problem and some potential solutions clear. What we now need is a willingness from some of God's children to step up for service:

- For some, it could be a courageous transition from a career where they aren't doing much to advance God's kingdom, even if it translates into less pay or more instability.
- For current teachers, it may mean choosing to endure some trials (like large classrooms filled with ungrateful children) with joy (James 1:2).
- For those who need to choose a career soon, it can be a decision to not waste years trying out a variety of studies and careers to see which feels the most meaningful. We won't find heaven on earth. It may also mean intentionally forgoing opportunities that offer treasure on earth "where rust and moth destroy,

and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20).

- For many of us, it may mean cheerfully giving more for school tuition, or as donations to schools, so that they can help cover some of the debt that new teachers incur, and ensure salaries allow a teacher to provide for his or her family.

IT'LL TAKE COURAGE ... AND TRUST


When it comes to our choices for careers and how we spend our finances, Reformed Christians have to be mindful of the temptation to be too careful, looking out for ourselves rather than trusting God to provide. As Kevin DeYoung says so well in his book *Just Do Something*:

"We should stop looking for God to reveal the future to us and remove all risk from our lives. We should start looking to God – His character and His promises – and thereby have

confidence to take risks for His name's sake."

He later adds: "We walk into the future in God-glorifying confidence, not because the future is known to us but because it is known to God. And that's all we need to know."

Speaking for myself, if some of the strategies that are being pursued by the Teach With Us Canada team (see the feature article later in this issue) were in place twenty years ago, I may well have stayed on track and been serving as a teacher today. Yet I'm grateful that the LORD has many places for us to serve, as long as we do so for His kingdom and glory.

"To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life." – Romans 2:7 

Mark Penninga is the Executive Director of Reformed Perspective.



ChurchSocial

Merry Christmas

From the team at Church Social,
wishing you the Lord's blessings in 2023!



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RP's

"What needs reforming today?"

CONTEST!

505 years ago, Martin Luther courageously nailed 95 revolutionary opinions onto the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

As children of the Reformation, we recognize our natural inclination to drift away from the LORD, requiring continual reformation in our hearts, families, schools, churches, and society.

Our challenge to you is to make the case for something that needs reforming in 2022. It could be how we manage creation, farm, observe the Sunday, invest our money, use smartphones, take part in Young People's Bible studies, or something entirely different. Here is your opportunity to nail your own thesis!

Teachers, this could be a great project for your students.

And we aren't just looking for essays (though they are welcome too). We welcome contributions of art, cartoons, satire, and any medium that you desire to make your point.

CATEGORIES:

- Youth (under 18)
- Adults (18+)

RULES:

- Maximum two entries per person
- Work must be faithful to God's Word, also as preserved in the great Reformation
- Must be an original work
- No minimum length. Maximum 1,500 words or two pages
- Submitting your work requires giving permission to RP to publish it online and/or in print if selected by the editor

PRIZES:

- \$100 gift card to Christianbooks.com and \$50 for the runner-up for both categories
- Winners may be published in Reformed Perspective

DETAILS:

- Send your submissions to admin@reformedperspective.ca **before December 10, 2022;**
- For youth submissions please include age, and permission from parents for the article to be used by RP



* While Luther did write his 95 theses, it turns out it is less certain whether he "nailed it" or mailed it.

YOU SAID IT!

Feedback from RP's readers, listeners, and viewers



EMAIL RESPONSE TO JON DYKSTRA'S EDITORIAL "WHY THE RIGHT ALWAYS DRIFTS LEFT"

"I don't ever remember making highlights in a magazine article before but I did this morning as I read your insightful article. You're challenging us as followers of Jesus Christ to truly be the unashamedly salt and light in our culture. To do what you suggest is to feel the force of a basically depraved society. Should we be surprised? Certainly not! Jesus said that if they persecuted Him so should we expect the same treatment as we speak the truth (as found in Scripture) in love."

– Dave Hidlebaugh

RESPONSE TO THE REAL TALK ROUNDUP EPISODE WHERE MARK PENNINGA TALKED ABOUT TEACHER SHORTAGES:

"I just listened to the latest episode of Real Talk and wanted to share my thoughts on being a teacher. I am 39 years old now and am working as a Senior Field Technician for a home automation company in London, Ontario. I am married with three children, one in high school, the younger two still in elementary. I don't have a lot of opportunity to teach because of the line of work I'm in, but when I do, I really enjoy it and feel drawn to it. However, I haven't been able to pursue teaching as a full-time career primarily due to financial reasons. Even if I were to somehow survive financially through the education period, the starting salary grid in our schools is not enough to support me and my family. Money is the biggest barrier for me to come into the teaching profession.

"I totally understand the argument that salary shouldn't be what attracts a person to the teaching profession. I don't think any teacher should look at the profession and think that it would be the quickest or easiest path to financial security or a wealthy lifestyle. But in my situation, I also have a responsibility as the Godly head of my household to ensure that my family is provided for, and in our world and society that includes ensuring we have the financial resources to pay for basic needs like shelter, food and Christian education. My understanding of the salary grid, as it is currently, is that teachers



are compensated financially based on years of experience. And I think that the design works well for those individuals who start a teaching profession early in life. For a young person, prior to marriage to begin their career and build up years of experience (and thus also additional financial compensation) as their family grows and matures and has greater financial needs; it all makes sense. However, in my situation where I felt like being a teacher would be an excellent way to build God's kingdom and that realization coming later in my life; I don't see a way for me to fulfill my calling as a teacher AND be able to fulfill my God given responsibilities to take care of my family."

– Jonathan Janssens, London ON



FEEDBACK AFTER LATEST *RP* MAGAZINE DISTRIBUTED TO CHURCHES

- "My wife and I were at a couple's house on Sunday night from our URC church and their 12-year-old son was eating up the latest edition of *RP* reading it, in his words, from "cover to cover." Neat to see!"
- "We are missionaries to Mexico and picked up an issue of the *Reformed Perspective* in a church while on deputation. We have thoroughly enjoyed the content of the magazine and appreciated its relevance."
- "As our congregation currently has a fair number of new converts and regular visitors that are hungry for reformed reading, my wife and I see this as an excellent way to broaden the horizons and give food for discussion to our membership."
- "We received a copy of your reformed magazine and are extremely happy with the content and would love to receive copies for our church members."
– a member of a Christian Reformed Church in Ontario



The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. invites applications for the following positions:

Teachers

Full-Time, Part-Time, 12-month or 6-month appointments considered

At JCS, our vision is to be a *strongly connected* community of learners, *deeply committed* to our faith and to continual growth, nurturing individuals to be their best in the service of God and to His glory.

We are looking to add enthusiastic, committed teachers to our team for the 2022/23 school years. Due to growing class sizes we need additional, suitably qualified, teachers. Applications for full-time and part-time employment welcome, with 6-month or 12-month appointments considered.

John Calvin School currently has over 120 students from Kinder to Grade 10 with an average combined class size of 19. We are a well-resourced school, located in Launceston, a beautiful city in the north of Tasmania, a breathtaking part of God's creation.
(<https://www.discovertasmania.com.au/>)

Applicants must be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches, be able to be registered to teach in Tasmania and be registered to work with vulnerable people.

Conditions and salary are based on the Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020.

Expressions of interest for future positions, full-time or part-time, are welcome.

For application forms, see the school website (www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment).

Forward completed applications to the Business Manager:

- E-mail: wielstrak@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Address: PO Box 89, Launceston 7250, Tasmania, Australia.

For more information, contact the Principal, Mr Daniel Coote

- E-mail: cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au



A CALL TO TEACH

by Mark Penninga

“Inviting applications!” the ad calls out. It goes on to list four teaching positions that need to be filled, and tries to paint an inviting picture of the location and supporting community. The problem is, it is drowned out by many others exactly like it.

Look in any Reformed church magazine and you will likely find the majority of the advertising space devoted to one thing: job postings for teachers.

What has been an occasional challenge for some schools has broadened to become one of the most pressing challenges for almost every Reformed school in the country, with little hope on the horizon for change.

Since each school is independently run, it has been a challenge to get a clear picture of what is causing the teacher shortages and whether there is potential for collaboration by the Reformed community to address and reverse this trajectory.

Thankfully, work is already being done behind-the-scenes to change this.

GOING BEYOND ANECDOTAL STORIES

If there is one man who has a finger on the pulse of Reformed education in Canada, it is John Wynia. Wynia’s own education began with homeschooling in his elementary years, a Reformed Christian high school, and an Education degree at Redeemer University. He then served as a teacher at Reformed schools in southern Alberta and southern Ontario, before taking on the full-time position of League Coordinator for the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies (LCRSS) in 2018 where he is still serving today. There is no other position like it in the country, dedicated entirely to coordinating and blessing Reformed school societies in Ontario.

I met with Wynia to learn more about the teacher shortage and what’s already being done. Wynia shared that when he started his role as League Coordinator in 2018, his very first “League Learning Day” with schools in Ontario was devoted to this problem because it had been a huge challenge for a few years already.

“Anecdotally it is a problem. You can see it in the advertisements in the various periodicals, the *Clarion* or *Christian Renewal* or whatever it may be,” Wynia shared.

And it isn’t limited to a particular denomination. “Rehoboth Christian School, the Free Reformed schools, Heritage Christian School, they all reported similar challenges,” Wynia added that even in the case of the schools that are reporting they are fully staffed, it is often because they asked a mom, or a retired teacher, to come back to teach part-time. “They are making do.”

The 2018 meeting highlighted the need for better data, to go beyond anecdotal information. And it sparked an initiative called “Teach With Us Ontario” (TWUO). The TWUO team started gathering information from schools about enrollment, the number of teachers, attrition rates (the number of teachers that leave each year), reasons for teachers leaving, and more. They also developed a teacher appreciation program, found a teacher champion for each school, and made a webpage

John Wynia served as a teacher at Reformed schools in southern Alberta and southern Ontario before taking on the full-time position of League Coordinator for the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies (LCRSS) in 2018 where he is still serving today.



– LCRSS.ca/teachwithus – that featured videos and stories about the blessing of serving as teachers.

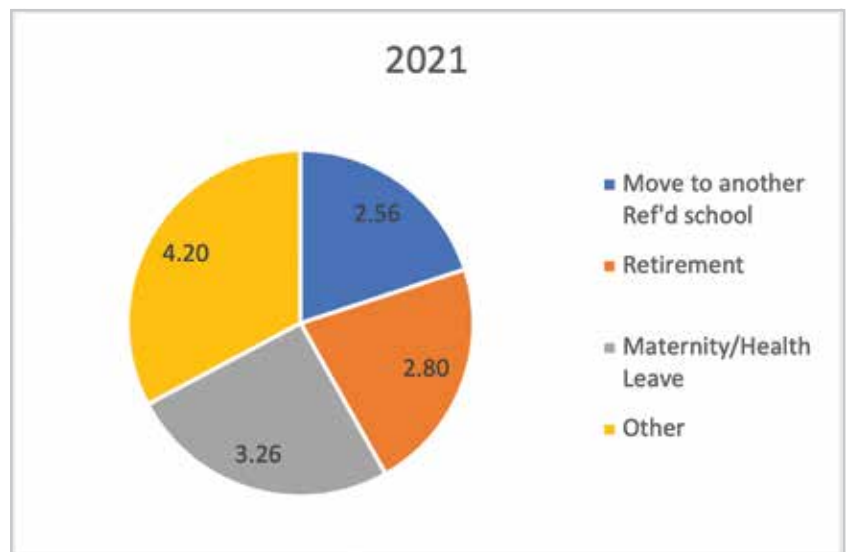
It didn't take long before schools from western Canada expressed the same need and TWUO morphed into TWUC – "Teach With Us Canada." Kent Dykstra, Principal of Credo Christian High School in Langley, BC, served as the primary contact point for gathering data from Reformed schools in Western Canada.

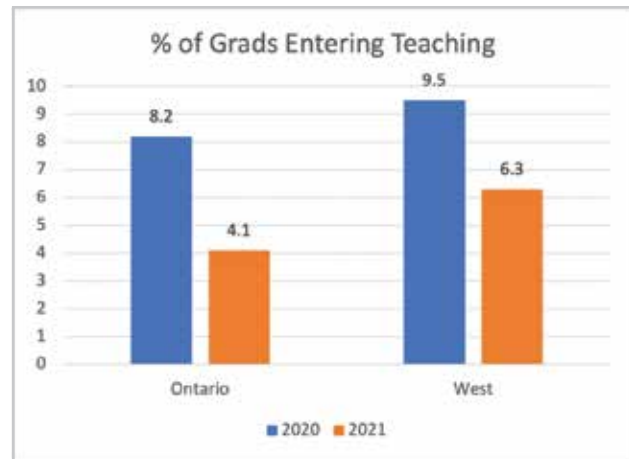
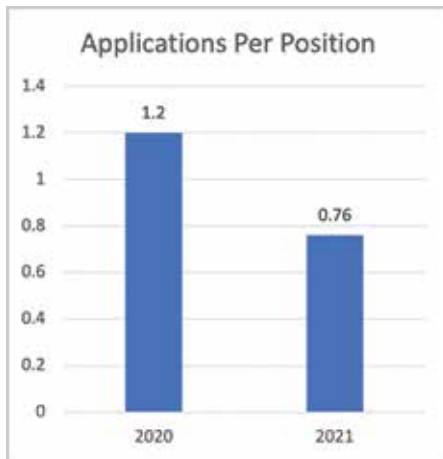
Although the data doesn't account for all Reformed schools, it is likely representative. They found:

- Enrollment is increasing steadily, from 4,593 students in 2014-2015 to 5,252 this past year in the schools counted. Generally speaking, more students require more teachers. Maintaining the teacher numbers won't be sufficient long-term if the trajectory of increasing student population continues;
- There was a slight decrease in the number of teaching staff from 2020 to 2021, and incomplete data prior. The total Full-Time Equivalent Teaching staff was 355.4 in 2021 and 367 in 2020.
- The attrition rate (percent of teachers leaving the profession in a given year), not including to other Reformed schools, increased from 9.5% to 10.3% in 2021. Wynia explained that these attrition rates are somewhat higher than other professions, and higher than for teachers in the public schools, where it is about 6-7%.
- Of the reasons for leaving, 4-5% of the total number of teachers leave annually for reasons other than health, retirement, maternity, or going to

| Number of Teachers in LCRSS-Affiliated Schools (Data from Teach With Us Canada) | | | | | | |
|--|---------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Ontario | | West | | Combined | |
| | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 |
| FT Staff | 133 | 131 | 144 | 145 | 277 | 276 |
| PT Staff | 89 | 89 | 68 | 64 | 157 | 153 |
| Total Staff | 222 | 220 | 212 | 209 | 434 | 429 |
| Total FTE Staff | 192.4 | 180.6 | 174.6 | 174.8 | 367.0 | 355.4 |
| Average PT Load | 67% | 44% | 45% | 53% | 56% | 48% |
| Attrition (by head count) | 8.6% | 10.5% | 10.4% | 10.1% | 9.5% | 10.3% |

PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS LEAVING THE PROFESSION





another Reformed school.

A DEARTH OF APPLICATIONS

One side of the challenge is making it possible for teachers to stay in the profession long-term. A goal every bit as important is recruiting more people to join the profession, either transferring over from other professions or as their first career.

The TWUC team sent out a survey in 2019 and 2021 to grade 11 and 12 students in Reformed high schools, exploring why these students would or would not consider teaching as a career. It found:

- 37%-42% of students considered a teaching career
- Far more female students (48%) than male (27%) consider teaching
- The most important factors cited by students to consider teaching were: “Using my God-given gifts and abilities,” “Desire to pass on a Reformed worldview” and “Desire to make a difference”
- As for reasons to not consider teaching, the top factors were: “Passion for another profession/career,” “Feeling called to another profession/career” and “Limited opportunities for professional advancement”

Although a substantial percent of students consider teaching, these ambitions are not culminating in an abundance of qualified men and women for the job openings for teachers. The opposite is

true.

From the “Applications per position” chart, courtesy of TWUC, we see that the 37-42% of students with ambitions to teach doesn’t materialize into teachers. Only 4.1-6.3% are graduating from a teacher education program. (The drop off from 2020 to 2021 is likely attributed to Covid restrictions).

Another helpful statistic from TWUC’s research is the number of qualified applications that schools are receiving for each position they have open. In 2021, it wasn’t even one application for each opening. Kent Dykstra clarified that a “qualified” applicant doesn’t necessarily mean they even have a Bachelor of Education degree or equivalent. In provinces that allow people to teach without this, these applicants are also deemed to be qualified. When we factor in the reality that new graduates who are looking for a position likely send their application to multiple schools, that leaves most schools high and dry.

Adam Kloostra, Principal of Rehoboth Christian School in Copetown, Ontario – which has members from Free Reformed, Netherlands Reformed, and Heritage Reformed churches – shared with me that their school community has very similar challenges. “I’ve just begun my fourth year as principal, and I can confirm that each time we post a job opening we’re only receiving 1-2 applicants on average per posting. We’ve been seeing this trend for a number of years now and have instituted a “teacher attraction and retention

committee.”

The same is true for Heritage Christian School, which is one of the largest Reformed school in the country, based in the Niagara peninsula of Ontario. Their principal, Brian Kemper, shared with me that “in past years, there were often plentiful teacher applicants. Now, some years pass by and we don’t even get one applicant for a teaching position.”

WOKE UNIVERSITIES

The huge gap between interest in the teaching profession from Grade 11 and 12 students and the number of applications being received points to some significant challenges. What is happening? As helpful as data is, to get to the heart of this issue it often helps to talk to the people on the ground.

The accompanying sidebar article “Report from the Front Lines” was graciously compiled by six current high school teachers, in an effort to give their honest reflections on the blessings and challenges of serving in this vocation. The benefit of frank and anonymous data is that it is more likely to cut to the heart of the issue. At the top of the list of “cons” is “Need to jump through a lot of hoops to get trained. Lots of unnecessary/politicized courses and topics to cover, which can get tiring and demoralizing.”

I asked one of these teachers to speak to this further. He shared that when he went through university in the 90’s, although it was no small feat to go through six

years of study on his own dime, at least he received a quality education from professors who wanted to teach their disciplines well.

The same can't be said anymore. We won't even factor in the disruptions caused by the vaccine mandates and other Covid restrictions over the past two years. For the past couple of decades, Canadian universities have become bastions of political correctness. It is one thing to jump through a six-year hoop and get a decent education. It is another to withstand six years of sensitivity training and woke indoctrination.

A recent study by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, published this September, bears this out. It found that a staggering 88% of professors on Canadian university campuses identify as left-leaning, compared with only 9% who are conservative. And that tiny minority who are conservative are censoring their own thoughts, out of fear of negative consequences.

Reformed Christians have very few options for a quality degree in education that is accredited. One noteworthy institution, which has been making an effort to uphold its Reformed roots, is Redeemer University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Reformed Perspective's "Real Talk" podcast recently interviewed the university's new president Dr. David Zietsma, in which he detailed, in-depth, his desire to lead the institution faithfully and with a Reformed confessional basis. However, for most Canadians, attending Redeemer would mean moving to southern Ontario and paying substantially more than secular schools (though Redeemer has cut tuition significantly in recent years).

Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College (CCRTC) is another solid option for teacher training. It is also based in Hamilton and has been providing teachers' training since 1976. They now provide a Diploma in Education and a Diploma of Teaching, and have graduated many students who have gone on to teach in Reformed schools throughout Canada. However, their lack of government recognition – formal accreditation – for their diplomas has meant that graduates have primarily served Ontario schools, one of the few provinces that doesn't require teachers to have accredited degrees. In recent years, the CCRTC has been going through a rigorous process to achieve accreditation, which would go a long way to attracting students from across

the country who desire a solid Reformed teacher's education.

THE INCREASING COST OF LIVING

Another "con" listed by teachers in the "Report from the Front Lines" sidebar is:

"Pay not that good for that much university training – many trades pay better, RN nurses start at around \$90k, RCMP make \$106,576 after three years, etc., while most teachers start at \$50k and max out at \$80k."

Although salary was ranked as the least important factor for Grade 11 and 12 students, it doesn't take long until young adults realize they have massive bills to pay for tuition, living, and potentially also raising a family. These costs have escalated significantly with inflation and a housing market that has more than doubled in price. It is one thing for established teachers in rural communities to continue to get by with salaries of \$50,000-\$80,000. But it is another thing for those who recently finished six years of post-secondary education with student loans and face a housing market that starts in the neighborhood of \$800,000 to purchase a mod-

REPORT FROM THE FRONT LINES

Honest reflections on the pros and cons of teaching in a Reformed high school

by Mark Penninga

It is one thing to hear from school administrators, boards, and parents about what is contributing to a teacher shortage. But how do the teachers themselves feel about serving in the career right now? *What follows are the thoughts of six high school teachers with 104 years of teaching experience between them.*

It's worth noting that teachers in different schools or provinces may well come up with different answers. What's on offer here could provide direction for schools trying to figure out how best to retain current teachers. My hope is that it will also be a great encouragement to those considering the profession.



ON TEACHING AS A CAREER

PROS:

1. Can be very satisfying helping covenant kids grow in the Lord and helping parents fulfill their baptism promises – it's very meaningful work (Eccl. 5)
2. Often excellent communal support – all pulling together for a good cause – many allies

est family home. As much as someone may want to teach, they have to pay their bills and support their families.

At the same time, wages for trades have increased substantially in recent decades. As the teachers shared “5-6 years of university – expensive, especially if you have to move out of town. Lost wages for 5-6 years, and lost years of experience, seniority, working your way up in other careers. Takes decades to catch up to peers (if ever).”

Brian Kemper from Heritage Christian School concurs. “Teaching is a demanding calling and wages are not very high. Often, there are teachers who supplement their income with other work/investment opportunities. The high cost of living in the Niagara area is also a significant factor. More people are leaving for other opportunities or to move to other areas.”

Reformed schools are supported by families, and in Ontario the entire budget for private schools comes from donations and tuition, as there is no government support. Increasing salaries generally means increasing tuition fees, which are being paid for by families who are also facing the pressures of rising costs and limited finances.

“I think there is a desire to find ways

to support teachers,” Wynia offered. “The scholarship idea is a start.” However, “the money has to come from somewhere. We are venturing into this territory for the first time. The desire would be there to provide more support. Especially in supporting their education.”

“I can speak from experience of living on a teacher’s salary, paying off student loans, trying to buy a house, though prices weren’t where they are now. We have a good life. We don’t get to do all the things that others do. But that doesn’t bother us.” Wynia added that in the church, where there is a lot of affluence, we have to be careful to not lose sight of what the most important things are.

SEEKING HIS KINGDOM FIRST

At root, it is evident that teaching won’t stand out from other professions because of the ease of getting into the profession or the salary and benefits. Although all professions can be understood as “callings” when we recognize that all the earth is God’s, the calling for men and women to raise covenant children in the fear of the LORD requires the support of an entire church community and won’t happen unless it is prioritized.

“We want people to understand the joy

of being a teacher and the calling of it” shared Wynia. “We need to have our current teachers and parents and community pass on the beauty and joy of Reformed education and the blessing to be a part of it. We have work to do on that front.”

Adam Kloostra, from Rehoboth Christian School, agrees. “They’re in it because they love it and they want to be used by God to serve others – so it’s far more a calling than a job. We’ve started to take this approach in our community and amongst our students – we want our students to consider teaching in Christian education as a calling that the Lord may be leading them towards – so we do what we can to show forth positive attitudes towards our positions here. Our behavior in relation to our calling definitely impacts our students’ perception of the calling.”

Brian Kemper reminded me that when a school is up front about its identity it will be attractive to those who want to pursue a meaningful career. Heritage Christian, where he serves, is “a Reformed, parental, covenantal school that equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for a life of service to Christ and their community. Teacher applicants know who we are, and when they apply for a position here, they

3. Good support structures in place in daily school work – administration, parent committees, learning assistance department etc.
4. Great colleagues who share the faith and worldview make for a pleasant work environment
5. Job stability, including when the economy is suffering and jobs are harder to get
6. Lots of holidays – off when your kids are off, and in good seasons (like summer months)
7. Easier on the body – manual laborers can get worn out elbows, backs, knees, etc. More noticeable by middle age (assuming teachers take care of themselves)
8. Decent wages – similar to a lot of government jobs – fairly close to public school teachers (about 90%)
9. Benefits can be quite good – comparable to similar careers
10. Indoor, climate controlled, clean, comfortable work environment especially nice in winter months – great resources and access to good supplies
11. Good hours – never have to work odd hours, weekends, awkward shifts, unless you choose to (but there is a lot of work outside of school hours that needs to be done)
12. Can make extra money, do bigger projects, go on long trips in summer holidays
13. Some flexibility in when you want to work (go home sooner and work at home in the evening, e.g.)
14. Good variety – can teach different age groups, courses, etc., and room to change things up over the years
15. Potential for lots of fun – many of the activities or topics are quite enjoyable
16. Kids can be easier and more fun to work with than adults – enjoyable to be around, lively and enthusiastic, great sense of humor – keeps you young (but can be exasperating, too)
17. Freedom to come or go – sign contract yearly or choose to go elsewhere if you want, rarely any long-term commitment.

get excited about the Heritage that they are joining.”

As discussed further in the editorial for this issue, whether it is teaching or a different profession, the key ingredient is a heart that is seeking first God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:25-34). In the broader Christian community there is often a lack of volunteers to serve in positions of church or school leadership. This points to an underlying spiritual problem that can’t be resolved through practical strategies. There won’t be enough kingdom workers if there aren’t enough people seeking His kingdom first. Thankfully, there seems to still be plenty of people willing to serve as volunteers in Reformed schools, which suggests that the problem likely has more to do with the challenge of entering and staying in the teaching profession rather than a lack of heart for Christian schooling.

A COORDINATED STRATEGY

Recognizing that practical steps can go a long way, some schools are looking at ways to increase their pay scales or offering scholarships to students pursuing a teaching career. As helpful as these efforts are, it was clear to the leadership of TWUC that a larger-scale and more

coordinated effort was needed.

Covid delayed the progress of this new national effort till the spring of 2022, when an ambitious strategic plan was developed. The plan settled on five strategies and immediately got to work in making all five a reality:

1) **Student scholarships/bursaries:**

Implement a program providing scholarships/bursaries to eligible students. All school boards would have an opportunity to contribute to fund the program. The hope would be that the fund is self-perpetuating once it is set up. Ads would then be put in Christian publications, to make students aware of the opportunity. Surveys could be done to better determine how important a bursary would be for pursuing teacher training.

2) **Mature students’ education:** Survey Reformed school societies for individuals who are already in a vocation but may consider becoming a teacher, through a mature student education program. This also involves working with the Covenant Teachers College to determine the feasibility of a program for mature students.

3) **Local awareness program:** Come up

with local awareness initiatives, such as developing an outline of talents that a prospective teacher should or could possess, survey Grade 11 and 12 teachers for potential teacher candidates among their students, promote teaching as a second career, establish contact with recent grads from any vocations to promote teaching, and more.

4) **Teacher in-training registry:** Create and maintain a registry of teachers, including students pursuing a teaching career, to ensure good communication and awareness between schools and potential teachers.

5) **Professional development:** Design and implement programs to strengthen teaching abilities, including mentorship programs and opportunities for specialization.

TWUC hopes to develop these five prongs concurrently and begin implementing them next spring. If anyone is interested in helping, they are encouraged to reach out directly to John Wynia at coordinator@LCRSS.ca.

Other schools have also been working on a coordinated strategy. Daniel Van-Brugge, a teacher at Timothy Christian

CONS:

1. Need to jump through a lot of hoops to get trained – lots of unnecessary/politicized courses and topics to cover, which can get tiring and demoralizing
2. 5-6 years of university – expensive, especially if you have to move out of town – and lost wages for those 5-6 years, and lost years of experience, seniority, working your way up in other careers, requiring decades to catch up to peers (if ever)
3. Pay not that good for that much university training – many trades pay better, RN nurses start at around \$90k, RCMP make \$106,576 after three years, etc., while most teachers start at \$50k and max out at \$80k
4. Exhausting to be working with 20+ students all day – overstimulating and draining making decisions non-stop and trying to attend to them all, and especially hard if you’re an introvert (as quite a few teachers seem to be)
5. Many students are getting harder to teach – less respect, less attentiveness, less willingness to work, more distractions outside of school
6. Multiple students with learning issues mean more adaptations and modifications to ensure they are all included – this can take a lot of time and work
7. Often lots of longer hours – marking, report cards, etc. – especially if there are large classes or if the course or grade level is new
8. Can be pressure to teach new grades, courses, etc., which means you often cannot get familiar with one grade level or one set of courses (esp. in smaller schools or when there is lots of staff turnover)
9. Government curricula changes regularly, forcing rewrites of course outlines, and the various bureaucratic hoops can get tiring and cause disillusionment
10. Can be emotionally draining when you have troubled or struggling students
11. A very public job – everybody in the community knows you and could have opinions about you (either good or bad).

School, a large school with students from local Netherlands Reformed and Heritage Reformed congregations, shared that “in our own NRC schools the vast majority of up-and-coming teachers are ladies. Very few men have made the decision to study for teacher right out of high-school.”

In response “at least two communities have hosted an “Own-the-Issue” evening that brings together teachers, school leaders, church leaders, parents, and grandparents to raise awareness that the teacher supply is a community problem that will be best solved by the community coming together (as opposed to just the school board trying to brainstorm and address the issue).” And since Netherlands Reformed congregations have direct oversight over schools, their church leadership has also taken action. “Our educational committee at the NRC Synod level has done a denominational-wide study on the numbers of high school students considering, or planning to study for teacher. The issue looks like it will remain. It’s an important topic.”

BROADENING THE FIELD

In Canada, the provincial government sets expectations for who may teach in schools. Most provinces require a Bachelor of Education degree, in addition to a standard undergrad degree. Ontario is an exception, allowing schools to set their own criteria.

Ontario schools are increasingly making use of this freedom. Klooststra shared that “Ideally, when an applicant does come along, they have their B.Ed. – but we have found that this is no longer a pillar we can bank on each time a position opens up. So we have several staff members who don’t have their B.Ed. and despite not having it, they’re doing great things – right on par with teachers who have spent the 5-6 years accomplishing a B.Ed.”

Other provinces allow exceptions. For example, in BC a school can hire a teacher who doesn’t have an education degree if they can prove that they advertised the position and didn’t find someone more qualified to fill it. The schools have to repeat the process annually but are generally not met with resistance by



Kent Dykstra, principal at Credo Christian High School, is curious whether increasing the pool from which schools could recruit teachers would really address the teacher shortage: “It probably would attract some teachers. But if we open up the hiring policy, would it not be consistent to open up the admissions policy? And if we open up the admissions policy you might cancel it out because you need more teachers.”

the government. This allows schools to broaden the range of who can fill positions, but the lack of stability means that not many people would consider it to be a long-term career.

Another option to expand the pool of teachers is to broaden the criteria of which churches or denominations a prospective applicant can come from. For example, instead of restricting applications to a particular denomination, a school could welcome teachers who are members of a NAPARC-affiliated church, or some other criteria that maintains a confessional and orthodox Reformed basis. (NAPARC stands for “North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council” which includes the CanRC, URC, OPC, PCA, and RCUS among its member denominations.)

When I asked Kent Dykstra about this possibility, he observed that parents and school members are rightly concerned about the worldview of those teaching their students. “There is some flexibility, and some boards and some communities are using that flexibility that is written in their founding documents. Others are changing their documents to reflect that reality, but there is also some sensitivity.” That said, it may not even help. “I’m curi-

ous whether opening up the hiring policy would address the problem. It probably would attract some teachers. But if we open up the hiring policy, would it not be consistent to open up the admissions policy? And if we open up the admissions policy you might cancel it out because you need more teachers.”

FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS

School societies are understandably very hesitant to increase salaries and benefits because the cost is felt directly by families who are paying tuition, many of whom struggle with paying their own bills. Yet what isn’t often publicly acknowledged is the massive increase in wealth that many Reformed families have experience in recent decades. In the past six years alone, the average Reformed family in Canada has received an extra \$1,000-\$2,000 in tax-free income every month from the federal government in the name of child care benefits (up to a maximum of \$6,639 per child under 6 and \$5,602 for ages 6-17 each year, adjusted for income). Others have seen their property values climb into the millions. Lifestyles so easily adjust accordingly. The percentage of a family budget that goes to tuition decreases, especially when

compared with what our grandparents and parents contributed. As one very elderly and wise lady shared with my wife when reflecting on raising a family with limited means “after paying for church and school, there just wasn’t much money left for things like shoes.”

To be clear, there are many Reformed schools that pay fair, and even generous, wages to their teachers and employees. The fact that other professions have seen massive pay increases does not need to translate into pressure to go beyond what is already fair.

A different but related issue that has been raised already in this piece is the “hoop” that teachers have to jump through to become certified – five or six years at secular universities that are offering sub-par educations. There are very few solid Christian institutions, and the two that come to mind require a student to move to Ontario, or pay higher tuition.

Some schools have come up with cre-

ative efforts, such as providing a slightly higher wage for the first year of teaching, or offering a scholarship to students who are becoming teachers. But as helpful as these are, it is hard to see them actually resulting in more people pursuing teaching. For example, a \$5,000 scholarship sounds generous, but it can’t be depended on and doesn’t actually go that far when you consider the cost of six years of full-time studies (including tuition, living expenses, and not being able to work full-time). It would help alleviate the expense, but likely wouldn’t sway someone to proceed if the education requirements are a barrier.

One idea that I haven’t heard discussed by schools or TWUC is to offer students who are pursuing teaching a loan (for example, up to \$15,000 per year for five years), contingent on them studying at a solid Reformed institution like Covenant Teacher’s College or Redeemer University and maintaining a full course load and

good grades. Then, when they take up a teaching position, a portion of the loan can be forgiven for each year of teaching (e.g. a \$15,000 signing bonus, with \$10,000 being forgiven each year for the next five years). The original pool can be contributed by investors who have the means and want to see more teachers. But the pool can be maintained by school societies who cover the loan repayment. That way, if a school really wants a teacher, they can pay to make it happen. If a school doesn’t struggle with finding teachers, they don’t have to offer to repay any loans.

YOUR IDEAS WELCOME

What ideas do you have? This article was written to start a discussion in homes and communities across the country. We invite you to share your ideas and insights by sending them to editor@reformedperspective.ca. Our hope is to compile some of these for the next issue. RP

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Paul Bartels: from carpenter to high school shop teacher

The following is the result of a lightly edited phone interview with Mark Penninga conducted in mid-October.

My story starts in 1998. I was working as a carpenter with my own company. I replied to an ad in a bulletin to go on a Faithworks team [mission trip] and ended up going to the Dominican Republic. While I was there, I met a missionary and thought “I could do this job.” He was a former police officer from the Netherlands and he had made the switch. That is what I ended up doing; for four years my family and I moved down to the Dominican Republic and we ended up building Christian schools with Worldwide Christian Schools (now EduDeo).

After four years we knew it was time to come back.

WHOSE KINGDOM?

However, I wasn’t exactly happy about being back. I enjoyed what I did in the Dominican. And for nine or ten years afterward I was really angry with God

about being here. At the end of that time, my wife asked me to listen to a sermon from Pastor Hilmer Jagersma, on the petition “your kingdom come” from the Lord’s Prayer. The gist of the sermon was “what are we praying for? Are we praying for our own kingdoms or are we praying for God’s kingdom? What is more important in our lives?” I decided for a month I was going to pray, but I wasn’t going to pray for anything in my kingdom. It was all going to be about God’s kingdom.

At that time, I was subbing for a landscaping company and we were building some pretty high end backyard structures. I had one customer say to me “I don’t really care what it costs, I just want my neighbor to be impressed.” That morning I decided, *That’s it, I’m out of this industry. I don’t want to be involved in that.* I didn’t think that was good for anyone – I’m building structures that are just to show off. It just played against everything I ever really felt about Christianity.

MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE MATERIAL

I quit and over the next year did some interviews. Then a friend of mine, who was actually the board chairman at [Guido de Bres Christian High in Hamilton, Ontario] asked me if I would consider being the high school shop teacher since I was a carpenter. I said “Nah, I’m looking for a missional job.” He said “well, pray about it.”

I went home and talked to my wife and we prayed. A week later I was at a breakfast meeting with one of our pastors and he was standing in line waiting for his food, talking to someone else, and he was saying that if he hadn’t become a pastor, he would be a high school teacher since it was so missional. It’s funny how God works in those situations. I immediately clued in, so I applied, got the job and that’s the reality of it.

I think what I was searching for in life was something that had permanent value. I can’t think of anything more permanent than salvation and eternal life and being a catalyst to bring that into people’s life.

When I went in for the interview [spring

Calvin Hutchinson: from chemical engineering to high school teacher

My pathway into teaching is a fairly bizarre one.

I went to university at McMaster in Hamilton, graduating with a chemical engineering degree. With this degree I was able to get hired by a consulting firm, and for the next little while I worked with a number of different companies doing IT management, project management, and general business analyst work.

After spending some time working in New Brunswick, I came back to Ontario and was asked to fill in at Emmanuel Christian High School (ECHS) for a teacher who had to take emergency medi-

cal leave. I finished one semester and, while I had fun helping out, I made the decision to go back to consulting as I felt that I was too close in age to the students at the time.

God wasn’t letting me leave education completely though. Shortly afterwards I was asked to help out with coaching the boys’ basketball teams.

And then I joined the board of directors for ECHS. It was through this experience that I received the “management” view of the school, and realized there was a huge need for effective educators. A major part of the board’s early spring meetings, and a huge source of stress, was

making sure that we had enough staff in place to even run the school for the following school year. This still happens every single year in many of the Reformed Christian schools. The private Christian education I had taken for granted my entire life seemed to actually be struggling to continue.

The story of how I decided to become a teacher again is a fairly personal one, but to sum it up, I needed a change, I saw the different talents and paths God made available to me, and saw the need for Christian educators, I listened to some advice from those much wiser than me, and decided to give teaching another

of 2019] they asked me why I wanted to do this. I said “to be honest, I don’t really care about teaching woodworking to kids. That is not my goal. My goal is to teach them about God.” They said “perfect,” so that’s how I got hired.

One of the issues that I feel is affecting the draw of teachers – more so for males than females – is “whose kingdom are you working for?” I think that if people would take real stock of what they are working for, they might find that material goods are high up on their list, whereas God’s kingdom is not. That’s really what I’m hearing, and what I experienced in my life. I was a Christian but never really took the time to take stock or just pray about God’s kingdom. I think that is one of the biggest pulls that can influence people to go into a career as a teacher, (or even a pastor) – asking, what are we doing for God’s kingdom, and, is it permanent?

GREAT CONVERSATIONS

Hands-on tech students will often have certain characteristics. Some like to be busy, can’t sit in a desk long, and they can’t focus on reading. So, it takes a

different style to teach them. By adapting my way of teaching to their style, it gives me a level of credibility. They think “finally, someone who understands us.” That then opens up the possibilities for better discussions. I get to develop a personal relationship with these students.

It has been an awesome opportunity. I have had students who have contacted me with some of their problems and we have taken time to pray about it and try to develop their prayer life as well. However, Covid did put a big stomp on that.

We often talk about the providence of God and how He looks after us. I think a lot of times we forget about His providence when we go to work on Monday. We need to develop a holistic view of our lives. We’re not just people who go to church twice on Sunday and wear the appropriate clothes. We need to be asking, what are we really doing with our lives for God’s kingdom? That is what I’m preaching



to people struggling with their careers, and not happy with what they are doing. Maybe there is no enjoyment because you are not doing what God wants you to be doing. **RP**

chance.

It was the best decision of my life to date.

It doesn’t matter how grumpy I am in the morning, how little coffee I have had, or even if my car gets a flat tire on my way into work and everything goes wrong, whenever the students come into the class, I start to smile. Each student is completely unique, and has their own personalities and quirks that are fun to get to know and interact with. This makes teaching the same subject year after year seem completely new, as each group of students will respond to a different teaching method and delivery.

And when you are willing to create an environment where having fun while learning is the norm, then there is no

end to the uniqueness that students are willing to bring to the class. I remember teaching a class on microbiology where I made an analogy comparing enzymes to turbochargers. I was told I was wrong, and received a 30-minute lecture from my students telling me why I was wrong, and on the difference between superchargers and turbochargers. A little off of the government curriculum maybe, but I guarantee that the students remember what an enzyme does.

Interactions like that happen on a daily basis, and it is amazing to experience. I have so much fun doing my job every single day, and am so grateful that God led me down the pathway to being a teacher. **RP**



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

COACHES WITH A PARENTING TIP FOR US ALL

It's said that practice makes better... but better at what? A basketball player that practices badly will engrain those bad habits. Then, whatever he might be doing wrong, whether it's a high dribble, or putting no arc on his shot – he'll actually get more consistently bad by practicing at it. And parents, the same is true for our children: if they're mouthing off with regularity, or responding with the right words but the wrong tone, they are practicing being bad. And if that's left uncorrected then they'll get really good at being bad... especially when they hit the teen years. So just as it is important to practice basketball the right way, our kids need to not just say the words, but practice saying them the right way... lest they be practicing and reinforcing and engraining the wrong way.

WIT AND WISDOM OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

While best known as one of America's Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin was also a printer, postmaster, scientist, diplomat, and inventor. On top of all that, he had quite the reputation as a public wit, spouting such well-known aphorisms as "Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead," "Fish and visitors stink after three days," and "Love your enemies, for they tell you your faults."

While he was likely not Christian (he seemed to deny Christ's deity) many of his common-sense witticisms have some depth to them. Might it be because he was riffing off of the inspired Word? What follows are a few Franklin selections paired with texts that say something similar. Is the connection real or imagined?

"Well done is better than well said."

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." – James 1:22

"Fools need advice most, but wise men only are the better for it."

"The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice." – Prov. 12:15

"He's a fool that cannot conceal his wisdom."

"A prudent person conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness."
– Prov. 12:23

"He that lies down with dogs, shall arise with fleas."

"One who walks with wise people will be wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm."
– Prov. 13:20

"Search others for their virtues, thy self for thy vices."

"...in humility count others more significant than yourselves." – Philippians 2:3

WHY IS ONLY THE OTHER SIDE QUOTING THE BIBLE?

In US politics one party is still acknowledging God's Word as authoritative. And it's not the Republicans. In an October debate with Florida governor Ron DeSantis, Democratic challenger Charlie Crist alluded to both Matthew 7:1 and 7:12 to, blasphemously, defend abortion



This is an excerpt from Jason Bouwman's unique devotional, *Still Thinking*, which Canadians can buy at StillThinkingBook.com

and to justify allowing double mastectomies and other genital mutilations on children.

"I believe that we need to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. It's called the Golden Rule.... we're all children of God. And that doesn't mean that you [DeSantis] are the one who's supposed to judge what others are supposed to do, particularly women, with their bodies."

A month earlier, another prominent Democrat, California governor Gavin Newsom, ran billboards in Mississippi and Oklahoma that read: "Need an abortion? California is ready to help." This offer of abortion was justified with Mark 12:31, included underneath, which reads "Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these."

Such mangling of the Bible for political purposes is nothing new of course. In the 2004 presidential campaign, the Democratic contender, John Kerry, called "Honor your Father and your Mother...one of the oldest Commandments" seemingly unaware that God gave all Ten Commandments at the same time.

But even as Democrats continue to cite the Bible, it's worth considering, why does it increasingly seem that the only folks willing to quote God's Word are the murderers and mutilators? They do so blasphemously, taking God's Words in vain... but in a strange way they, at least, are one upping us, treating God's Word as both relevant and authoritative in the public sphere. Would that God's people would be willing to do the same!

LYRIC OF THE MONTH

This might be an oldie but it is a real goodie from the Newsboys:

Real Good Thing

*Born to sin / and then get caught.
All our good deeds / don't mean squat.*

*Sell the Volvo / shred the Visa,
send the cash to Ma Teresa.
Great idea / the only catch is
you don't get saved / on merit badges.*

*Doctor's coming / looking grim:
"Do you have a favorite hymn?"*

*Check your balance through the years,
All accounts are in arrears.
Guilt is bitter. / Grace is sweet.
Park it here / on the Mercy Seat.*

*When we don't get what we deserve,
that's a real good thing.
When we get what we don't deserve,
that's a real good thing.*

FREE VS. FREE

"There are constant calls from NDP candidates and MPs for free post-secondary tuition, free childcare, free dental care, free drugs (both pharmaceutical and recreational), free housing, free wifi . . . even free money (Universal Basic Income). The only thing they don't want free is 'dom' . . . (as in freedom). They don't want a free press. They don't want free speech. They don't want parents free to raise their children as they see fit. They don't want a free conscience. They don't want free thinkers at universities."

– Christian Heritage Party leader Rod Taylor, "Socialism ...on the Instalment Plan"

HIT BACK?

It is a Christian parent's repeated role to explain to their pint-size progeny that Jesus did *not* tell us to "do unto others as they did to us." But, as Greg Koukl recent pointed out, there can come a time in debate or discussion when that is good advice – you may need to give as good as you got.

It is the appropriate response when someone tries to pin you with what's called the "Kafka Trap." In his novel *The Trial*, Franz Kafka presented a Soviet-style interrogation where the denial of something would be presented as proof of guilt. So, for example:

I think you have a drug addiction.

What? I do not!

That just proves it – drug addicts always deny it!

Today this Trap is most often used to accuse people of racism: if you deny you're racist, that just proves that you are. When you're hit with this you're-hooped-either-way attack, Greg Koukl offers this tactic: do unto them as they've done to you.

...accept his approach, then turn the Kafka trap back on him.
Here's an example:

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"I knew you'd say that, and I'm glad you did."
 "What! Why?"
 "Because it proves you're wrong."
 "Huh?"
 "No one says that unless they're mistaken. Don't you see it?"
 "No."
 "That's even more proof you're wrong. Sorry."

Or...

"Do you know what 'social justice' means?"
 "Of course I do."
 "That proves you don't. No one who really understands social justice thinks he understands it."

Doing to others as they've done to you isn't wrong here because this isn't about revenge, but rather clarity. You're exposing them for just how insubstantial their rhetoric really is.

THOMAS SOWELL ON THOSE WHO CAN'T, CRITIQUING THOSE WHO DO

"The beauty of doing nothing is that you can do it perfectly. Only when you do something is it almost impossible to do it without mistakes. Therefore people who are contributing nothing to society, except their constant criticisms, can feel both intellectually and morally superior."

CHESTERTON SAW IT COMING...

A hundred years ago, in the Aug 14, 1926 edition of the *Illustrated London News*, G.K. Chesterton wrote a column that could be a commentary on our own time. The extreme skepticism that leads some to reject God was going to lead them to reject ever more of the real world.

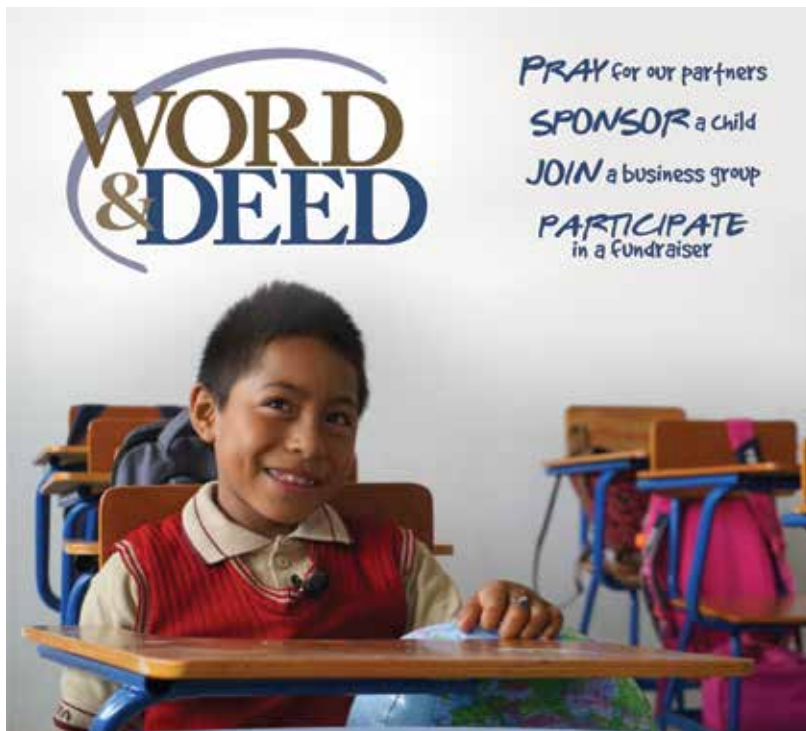
"The Declaration of Independence, once the charter of democracy, begins by saying that certain things are self-evident. If we were to trace the history of the American mind from Thomas Jefferson to William James, we should find that fewer and fewer things were self-evident, until at last hardly anything is self-evident. **So far from it being self-evident to the modern that men are created equal, it is not self-evident that men are created, or even that men are men.** They are sometimes supposed to be monkeys muddling through a transition stage before the Superman. But there is not only doubt about mystical things; not even only about moral things. There is most doubt of all about rational things. I do not mean that I feel these doubts, either rational or mystical; but I mean that a sufficient number of modern people feel them to make unanimity an absurd assumption. Rea-

son was self-evident before Pragmatism. Mathematics were self-evident before Einstein. But this scepticism is throwing thousands into a condition of doubt, not about occult but about obvious things. **We shall soon be in a world in which a man may be howled down for saying that two and two make four,** in which furious party cries will be raised against anybody who says that cows have horns, **in which people will persecute the heresy of calling a triangle a three-sided figure, and hang a man for maddening a mob with the news that grass is green.**

SECULAR ISN'T A SYNONYM FOR NEUTRAL

"It turns out that, however you might wish otherwise, you eventually wind up wherever it was you were going. If you get on the plane to Chicago, and I would ask you to follow me closely here, you are going to land in Chicago. We are now arriving where a godless education must necessarily go. The public schools in America were not secular, they were godless. The public schools in America were not neutral, they were godless. The public schools in America were not even agnostic, they were godless."

– Douglas Wilson



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A group of 50 BC doctors are challenging Dr. Henry's vaccine mandates in court

by Marty VanDriel

During the past two years, Canadians in the medical field who were skeptical about COVID vaccines have faced difficult decisions and challenging work environments. If they were unwilling to be among the first to get the jab, they'd no longer be allowed to work in hospitals and extended care homes. And even as restrictions have eased in most of the world, in British Columbia unvaccinated health care workers are still barred from working in public health care facilities.

Now a group of British Columbia physicians – the Canadian Society for Science and Ethics in Medicine (CSSEM) – along with some like-minded nurses, are trying to get that reversed. They've submitted a petition for a judicial review of the COVID restrictions. They are asking that a judge rule on whether or not it is reasonable that these employment bans on the unvaccinated continue in light of the current state of the pandemic.

Dr. Matt Dykstra of Smithers, BC helped form the CSSEM. He has deep roots in the Smithers area and in the local Reformed community. While he moved away for post-secondary study, he returned to northern BC in 2019 with his wife Fio and their growing family to take over a family practice. During



the first couple of years Dykstra spent time with patients at his practice, made house calls, and made rounds at the local extended care home and hospital, where he regularly worked in the emergency department.

Then COVID turned things upside down.

DR. HENRY DECIDES FOR EVERYONE

In October of 2021, BC's Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, made

vaccines mandatory for all health care workers: get vaccinated or be prepared not to enter public health care facilities. Dykstra was hesitant about taking the vaccine himself, and struggled to find any strong evidence that his unvaccinated status posed a risk to his patients: he believed that more time was needed to study the effects of these new inoculations on different age groups, and that a one-size-fits-all mandate was not a helpful medical directive.

Although he maintained a low profile on the issue, it was not long before he found himself in the center of a controversy. Dykstra was the only one, of more than a dozen local area doctors, who did not sign a statement of unconditional support for the vaccine and the vaccine mandates. When the healthcare workers' mandate went into effect, he was no longer able to

provide services in the local hospital's emergency department or maternity ward, nor to see patients there or at the extended care facility.

Since over a third of his practice's revenue had come from Dykstra's work in these public facilities, his decision to abstain from the vaccine had a very real effect on his income and workload. Dykstra is thankful that he has been able to continue to see patients at his prac-

tice. While a handful of Dykstra's patients chose to find other doctors, nearly all remain under his care, and many have been supportive whether or not they received the vaccine themselves.

However, over a year after the mandate went into effect, Dykstra and many other doctors and nurses remain shut out of public health care facilities.

ASKING FOR ANSWERS

Now, the CSSEM is applying legal pressure on Dr. Henry's office. The judicial review they requested is scheduled for ten days, beginning November 28. Dykstra explains:

"Essentially, we are forcing Dr. Henry to show her evidence – which I believe doesn't exist, or the medical society would have received it by now – or have the mandate rescinded. Alberta Health has already rescinded their mandate and has been hiring back their health care workers... I believe these mandates are not reasonable, and must end... [When] the mandates are defeated, unvaccinated lab techs, receptionists, unit clerks, and others will also get their jobs back along with us doctors and nurses."

He expressed concern over the manner in which the vaccines were pushed on both doctors and on the general public – that pressure, he said, is not in alignment with physicians' classical training surrounding important ethical principles.

"What bands us in the CSSEM together is our adherence to the pillars of medical ethics: bodily autonomy – the patient decides what happens to his/her own body, and it's wrong to force care/medications/vaccines/treatments on someone; and informed consent – ensuring the patient has all the information related to the benefits and risks of accepting a proposed treatment and the benefits and risks of rejecting a proposed treatment."



The Dykstra family: Matt, Fio, and the kids

IT ISN'T AS MUCH ABOUT THE VACCINE AS IT'S ABOUT THE PRESSURE

Dykstra believes that neither doctors nor government workers should put undue pressure on the public to accept a "one size fits all" course of treatment.

"The vaccine mandates forced doctors to give medical advice without using their own professional judgment, and without allowing patients to see both the positives and negatives of the vaccines."

”

The vaccine mandates forced doctors to give medical advice without using their own professional judgment...

Dykstra also wishes to clarify that in opposing the vaccine mandate, he isn't trying to say others were wrong to get vaccinated.

"My hope is that your readers who chose to get the vaccine did so because they thought it was the best choice for them and their families – that's great. But for those who got vaccinated under threat or coercion – I'm sorry the medical system did that to you, and that most doctors didn't oppose."

As for fighting this coercion, Dykstra feels quite strongly that doctors should lead the charge. "I

don't think it's the mechanic's or teacher's duty to fight against the crumbling of medical ethics as much as it is mine."

The fifty physicians who make up the CSSEM have spent about \$150,000 of their own funds on this legal challenge. They have asked for public support for the remaining \$300,000 they expect to spend to see this review all the way to its end. While Dykstra himself was initially reluctant to ask for donations, his wife Fio reminded him that this is a cause that many people feel strongly about, and that donating may be a way for them to show support to healthcare workers in this predicament. Dykstra ended up sending a letter to members of the local Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches in the Bulkley Valley (Smithers, Telkwa and Houston), and to other friends and supporters, explaining the upcoming judicial review, and inviting them to support this work by donation or letter.

"The response has been very positive; it's been a great encouragement," said Dykstra. "Many people have reached out, even if they're unable to contribute, to thank me... for standing up in what I believe in, and that's regardless of the people's vaccination status."

You can find out more about the Canadian Society for Science and Ethics in Medicine and their court case at CSSEM.org. ^{RP}



I HAVE A BRIDGE TO SELL YOU

(and other deals too good to be true)

by James Dykstra

I recently received an e-mail from a Nigerian prince who wanted to share his wealth with me. He told me it was millions and millions of dollars. However, he needed a few thousand dollars from me upfront to help cover bank fees and other expenses. I'd have to be a fool to turn him down, wouldn't I? What could go wrong?

I just received a text from a bank where I don't have an account. They said they had four million dollars to transfer to me

from a great uncle I can't remember. All I had to do was click on the link in the text. I'd have to be a fool to turn that down, wouldn't I? What could go wrong?

PREYING ON THE NEWLY LANDED

These are the types of scams a lot of people fall for and it's nothing new. Preying on people's greed is probably as old as time itself and, yet, we fall for it again and again. Perhaps one of the most infamous people to prey on that desire for easy

riches was George C. Parker, a New York based confidence man.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Parker made a habit of meeting the immigrants getting off the boats at New York's Ellis Island. While many of the immigrants coming in at the island were the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free, some came to America with substantial amounts of money. It was these that Parker sought out.



When he was able to strike up a conversation with one of these wealthy individuals, he would maneuver the discussion to the topic of the Brooklyn Bridge. This New York landmark, joining the districts of Brooklyn and Manhattan, is visible from Ellis Island. In the late 1800s it was one of the most recognizable symbols of the prosperity of the mighty America. Just imagine how much money you could make if you owned the bridge and were able to charge tolls to cross it.

ONCE, TWICE, THRICE...

When Parker managed to get his new immigrant friend to the beginning of the bridge there was, as if by magic, a “For Sale” sign attached to the bridge. Like other con men who tried to sell the structure, Parker likely learned the schedule of the regular rounds of the New York City beat cops. If the police never saw a sign advertising the sale of the bridge, they really couldn’t get upset about it.

To further the scheme, Parker ap-

parently had impressive, but forged, papers showing him to be the owner of the famous landmark. And so with the documentation, the “For Sale” sign, and the promise of fabulous wealth from tolls, Parker managed to sell the Brooklyn Bridge to the gullible immigrant. And, being successful as a con man – if successful is the right word – Parker sold the bridge to someone else as well, and then he sold it again, and again, and again. It wasn’t until the unfortunate purchaser of the bridge tried to set up toll booths that they learned from the police that they’d been fleeced.

There’s a story that Parker bragged about selling the bridge twice a week for decades on end. And while no one I read believes the claim, it highlights Parker’s audacity. He got caught sometimes, being convicted of fraud on three occasions. But in 1908, after his second conviction, he put on a sheriff’s coat and hat that had been left lying around and simply walked away from the courthouse.

“I’VE GOT A STATUE TO SELL YOU...”

The man was flexible as well. If the bridge had no appeal for his mark, Parker was not above trying to sell the person Madison Square Garden, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, or the Statue of Liberty.

What did him in was not trying to sell New York infrastructure, but passing a bad check. A state law imposed a mandatory life sentence on anyone convicted of

four felony offences. Though the check was only one hundred fifty dollars, and not the fifty thousand that he’d sometimes scammed from his victims by selling the Brooklyn Bridge, the offence sent Parker to prison for the last eight years of his life. He was said to be a popular prisoner since, as a scam artist, he had learned how to spin a tale and most of those tales were of his own exploits.

SOMETHING FOR COMPARATIVELY NOTHING IS A BAD DEAL

What allowed Parker’s career was simple human greed. Greed blinds us. We see an enormous profit and we fail to understand the risks. We fail to do what the investors call “due diligence.” Wanting something too badly can blind us to the risks whether in our finances, our relationships, or our careers. We can’t – or won’t – see the obvious peril right in front of us. It’s a risk we all run, and we’ve all certainly felt the sting out of wanting something a bit more than is good for us. And if you don’t believe me there, let me just say that I’ve got a bridge to sell you. **RP**

James Dykstra is a sometimes history teacher, author, and podcaster at History. icu “where history is never boring.” Find his podcast at www.History.icu, or on Spotify, Google podcasts, or wherever you find your favorite podcasts.

Parker sold the bridge to someone else... and then he sold it again, and again, and again.

Come and EXPLORE

THE ARMOR OF GOD

RP

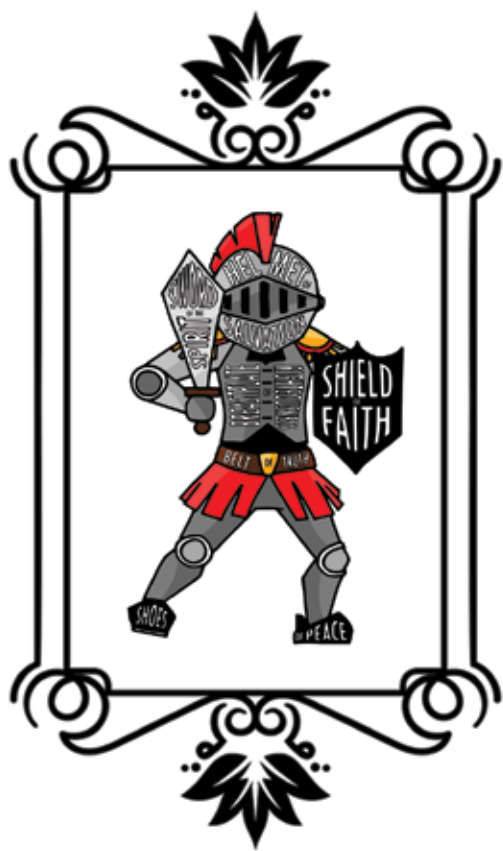
RP

let's read

EPHESIANS 6: 10 - 18a

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.



FREE DOWNLOAD

Head to
reformedperspective.ca/kids
to download and print this 8x10
Armor of God graphic!

(Download permissions for personal use only.)





IT'S COLD OUTSIDE! DON'T FORGET YOUR... ARMOR?

As the weather grows colder, the need for thicker clothing and a good coat becomes very evident. And that's why, as the kids get ready for school, mothers will most likely call out, "It's cold out! Don't forget your coat!" But what do we put on when it's not the cold that we're up against? Paul speaks to the Ephesians, and also to us, that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces. What good is a thick, waterproof coat?! Truth is, none.

It's a good thing God has not left us defenseless! Let's learn ways we can put on the Armor of God!



THE BELT OF TRUTH

Study God's word so that you may be able to recognise God's truth verses the lies of the evil one and be able to discern whether or not something is God's will, or whether you should just say "No".



BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Confess that your righteousness has been obtained through Christ and live your life doing deeds of thankfulness, choosing to do what is right, speaking the truth and working with integrity for the Lord and not for the praise of men.



THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Share the good news of the gospel to yourself and to those around you, with confidence that it is the Lord who puts faith into the hearts of men and that you can be used as His instrument.



THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Ask in prayer, with humility, that the Holy Spirit would strengthen your faith in Jesus and make sure to you the promises and hope of the future, rejoicing that God has already triumphed over Satan, rendering his arrows powerless.



THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Remind yourself of the gospel work of Christ in your life, confessing your sins and asking for forgiveness, knowing that there is "No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" (Romans 8:1)



THE SHOES OF PEACE

Memorize passages of scripture that confirm your confidence in Christ against the pressures of doubt and difficult questions that you might come across. Dig your feet into your firm foundation and stand firm!



This may seem like a lot of things to do before breakfast each morning, but starting your day with a simple prayer and reading God's Word is the best way to arm yourself before walking out into the battlefield. When your mom calls after you to put on your coat, starting your day putting on your armor will give you great confidence that not only the cold, but even the schemes of the Devil will not be able to overcome you. So you can call back to your mom and say, "Thanks, mom, and don't worry, I've remembered my Armor already!" Then head out into your day, having everything you need in order to stand firm... and warm.



BIBLE VERSES

to strengthen your armor:

Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

2 Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Speaking of armor,

DID YOU KNOW?

1. During the Zhou Dynasty (1045-256 BC) rhinoceros hide was used for armor.
2. To some of the animals, God gave their own suit of armor for protection! The rhino, armadillo, porcupine, and pangolins are a few of them.
3. An entire suit of armor usually weighed between 45 and 55 pounds, not including the helmet which weighed between 4 and 8 pounds.
4. King David refused armor in order to fight Goliath. He used a stone and a sling to go alongside his faith in God!

Let's do a wordsearch!

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | E | M | O | R | I | Z | A | T | I | O | N | B | R |
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| M | R | B | F | U | A | S | W | P | E | M | E | A | E |
| T | S | E | I | R | B | I | O | E | N | D | N | S | L |
| S | L | A | Y | B | R | S | R | R | S | E | S | T | M |
| A | S | T | C | A | L | H | D | P | B | C | U | P | E |
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| O | S | S | T | U | S | T | L | E | B | B | I | E | E |
| N | N | U | H | O | V | S | H | O | E | S | R | O | E |

FAITH SPIRIT PRAYER BREASTPLATE
SHOES SHIELD MEMORIZATION SWORD
SALVATION HELMET TRUTH PEACE
RIGHTEOUSNESS BIBLE BELT

This is just
ridiculous.



Make and Decorate YOUR OWN SWORD!

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

An adult, printer, this magazine, scissors, cardboard, glue, aluminum foil (optional), decorative stickers (optional), packing tape (optional)

Step 1: Head on over to reformedperspective.ca/kids to print out this page. (Print two copies if you want the sword image to be on both sides of your sword!) OR if your mom lets you, just use this page from the magazine!

Step 2: Use scissors under the supervision of an adult (or have your dad do it for you) to cut out the shape of the sword according to the dotted lines.

Step 3: Using the cut out, trace the shape of the sword onto cardboard, and have an adult cut out the sword shape from the cardboard.

Step 4: Use your glue to stick the sword image onto the cardboard and wait for it to dry.

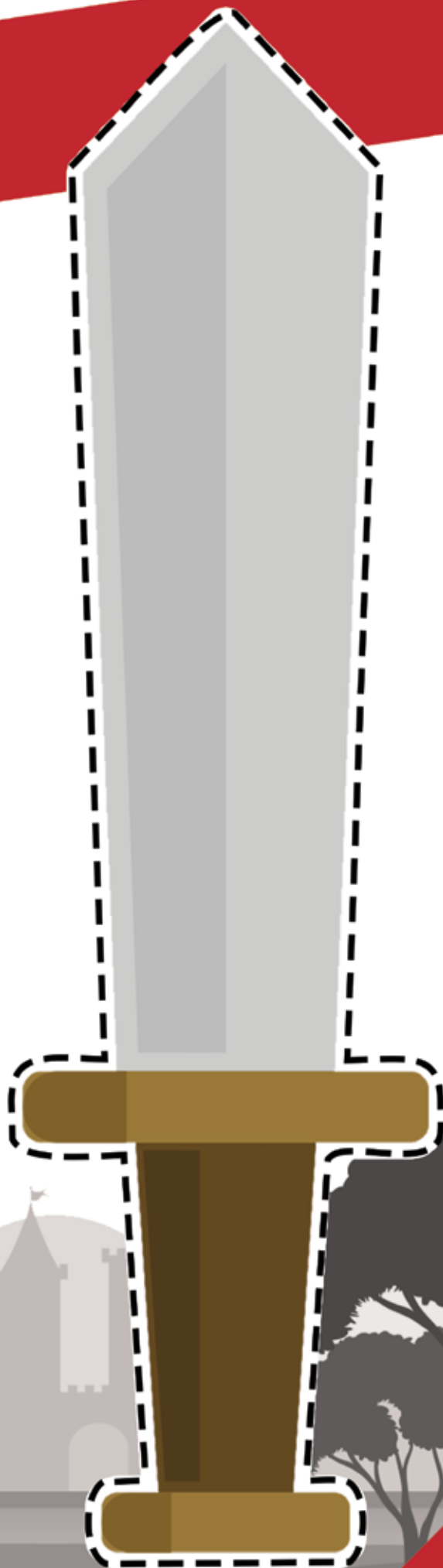
Step 5: Once the glue is dry, decorate your sword! Add jewels or designs to the handle, aluminum foil makes a great shiny surface for the blade! Get creative! You can even add a layer of packing tape to secure everything.

Step 6: Go have fun!



DID YOU ENJOY THE CRAFT?

Send in a picture to
editor@reformedperspective.ca and have your
photo printed in the next issue!



Masters of Disguise!

by Calvin Smith



Photo credit: VelvetFish/istockPhoto.com

“Poppa! Have you seen the Mimic octopus?”

My oldest granddaughter’s question was lit with excitement. I had been mentioning a presentation I was working on featuring animals with incredible design features, highlighting that some of them were incredibly difficult for evolutionists even to begin to explain. When I mentioned squid and octopus camouflage, her question above popped out.

My response of “I don’t think so” initiated a frantic scramble for a nearby phone and a hasty search on YouTube. What I watched for the next minute and forty-nine seconds¹ left me with my mouth agape and led eventually to

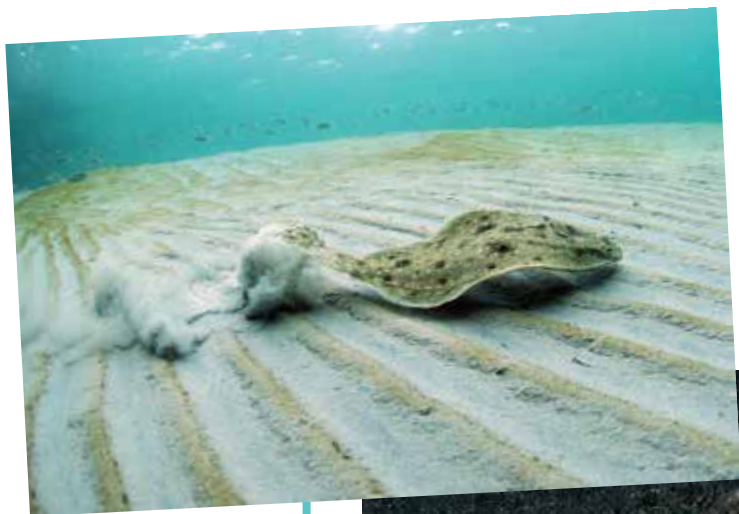
a salt-water aquarium in my home with one of those very creatures inhabiting it. (It’s amazing what homeschoolers learn about!)

LIKE A SECOND SKIN

Even the “average” octopus species is truly incredible, capable of rapid color changes a chameleon could only dream of. Like a pixelated video screen, flashes of light can erupt from their skin surface, sometimes pulsating and other times creating waves of shadowy patterns that make them almost impossible to spot along the ocean floor among its corals and sea plants. They are capable of texture changes to their skin that are downright eerie, which means not only

can they simulate the color of objects in their surroundings but also the shape of them to an extent.

Rather than describing these creatures’ sophistication and complexity as simply a reflection of the brilliance and glory of their Creator, some naturalists have attempted to explain some of their intricacies as being alien in origin. So “advanced” are these creatures’ abilities (and yet so early do they appear in the evolutionary timeline, supposedly 296 million years ago²), some evolutionary scientists have seriously suggested they perhaps had biological input from alien lifeforms at some point in their “evolution”!³



The mimic octopus's most impressive copying act is its take on the flounder. It even undulates across the ocean floor just like the flounder does.



WHY DO YOU ACT THAT WAY?

But as amazing as “regular” octopi are, the mimic octopus is in a class by itself: it’s the first living thing ever observed to impersonate the shape and *behavior* of other aquatic species along with color and texture changes. Discovered in 1998 off the coast of the island of Sulawesi (Indonesia), it’s been spotted now as far as the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, so may be more widespread than originally thought.⁴ Many of the creatures it imitates are venomous, so it fools predators into thinking they are encountering a dangerous adversary rather than a sly cephalopod.

The exact number of creatures it’s able to mimic is unknown, but watching a video of one hide its body and six legs in a hole, change the color of its two exposed arms to the distinctive black and

light stripes of the banded sea snake, and then wave them in opposite directions to impersonate a striped serpent is unnerving to say the least! Known “avatars” the mimic imitates include flatfish, crabs, jellyfish, mantis shrimp, stingrays, lionfish, and sand anemones.

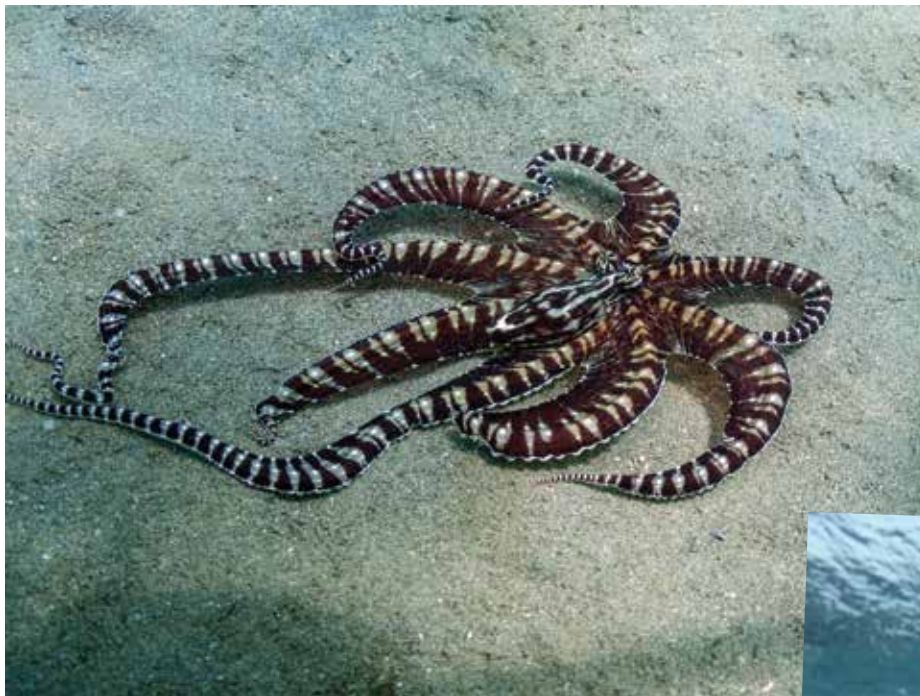
The uncanny thing about these octopi is that they seem to be able to make accurate and intelligent decisions as to what creature they should imitate depending on the environment they are in or the predators they encounter. For example, because damselfish are hunted by banded sea snakes, mimics often adopt their “snakelike” form, color, and behavior when they encounter damselfish to frighten them away. When traveling across a seabed with little cover, mimics may transform their tentacles to look like the poisonous barbed fins of a lionfish

and imitate its pulsing, distinct movement so as to ward off predators.

THE QUICK-CHANGE ARTIST

When considering this creature’s day-to-day activity, you quickly realize it has several sophisticated abilities that depend on accessing and activating tremendous amounts of coded, genetic information.

- **Sensor array:** Obviously, the mimic must be capable of monitoring and analyzing its current environment constantly.
- **Response analysis:** It must also have the ability to determine an appropriate response(s) needed in different environments or when encountering specific predators it interacts with. (I.e., if A, then B; if X, then Y, etc.)
- **Catalog of aliases:** Once a specific



While the photo to the left doesn't fully capture the best version of this imitation, can you see how the mimic octopus can masquerade as the poison-tipped lionfish below?



Photo credit left: Jenhung Huang, iStockPhoto.com; right: Vitalii Kalutskiy, iStockPhoto.com

creature to mimic has been decided upon, it must then access other detailed “files” for all of the abilities, features, and behaviors of the different creatures it can possibly mimic.

- **Immediate response:** The mimic’s systems must then correctly activate commands to alter its shape, color, texture, and movement, which of course requires a body that has the capability to expand or contract, become smooth or rough, rigid or soft, multi-textured, multi-colored and/or precisely patterned almost instantaneously.

MEET “MORPH”

I named my own mimic, procured from a local pet store, Morph. Morph lived for eight months, but he exhibited spectacular behavior and executed many brilliant performances during that time, with nightly “light shows” being commonplace. Although very shy for the first three days I had him, he became more

comfortable, and I was able to hand feed him shrimp for his supper eventually.

Because octopus aquariums are typically a one-species environment (either the octopus eats whatever else is in there or they get eaten by what is), he only “mimicked” once, as there was nothing in the tank to react to. Upon entering my tank for the very first time, Morph impersonated a jellyfish, slowly pulsed down, and then switched to his regular form once he had cover. This made sense, because upon entry he was at the top of the tank with nowhere to hide and didn’t know if there were predators in that environment.

Note that his mimicry involved imitating another creature not immediately present in his environment (rather than simply blending into the background), which leads to the question, how did he “know” what to do? Mimic octopi are only thought to live nine months (the longest-living octopus live for a maximum of five years), so scientists don’t believe they are simply observing and

copying other creatures’ behavior; they are born with it. Which means all of that programming is already present and passed on to each subsequent generation. But how could that have come about?

MASTERFUL DESIGN

Consider this: If a person today were to create and program a mechanism that could perform half the functions this creature does, they would likely receive all of the accolades the scientific community could possibly bestow upon a human being, and probably be hailed as the most brilliant scientist on the planet. Their creation would be highly esteemed as an incredible example of intelligent design. However, despite the obvious evidence of design in nature, naturalists seem bound to evolutionary interpretations. One evolutionary blogger from Nature.com tried explaining the mimic this way:

In this species we see the evolutionary “perfect storm” in which a species with



The mimic octopus will burrow down, leaving just two of its tentacles visible, to do a decent impression of the banded snake eel, shown above.



flexibility in their skin and body shape is consistently exposed to a predator-rich environment that contains toxic or venomous species such as soles, lionfish and banded sea snakes. This combination provides both the selective pressures and the opportunity to these otherwise vulnerable animals to evolve into the world's greatest masters of disguise!⁵

But that isn't a real explanation of anything. It's like saying because evolution is true, evolution happened. But design requires a designer, and programming requires a programmer. Natural selection or genetic mutation are simply not sufficient explanations for what we see in creatures like the mimic octopus. And despite evolutionists concocting many "just so" stories to attempt to explain how so many precisely coordinated and irreducibly complex mechanisms could have arisen in creatures without a designer, for those with eyes to see, the

conclusion is obvious.

But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? (Job 12:7-9)

The master designer, the God of the Bible, created these along with all of the other magnificent sea creatures on day five of creation. As much as evolutionists try to mimic God's creative power through the story of evolution, creation declares its Creator, even in an insignificant octopus! **RP**

FOOTNOTES

¹ Most intelligent Mimic Octopus in the world, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-LTWFnGmeg>

² Rachel Nuwer, "Ten Curious Facts About Octopuses," *Smithsonian Maga-*

zine, October 31, 2013, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/ten-curious-facts-about-octopuses-7625828/>.

³ E. Steele, et al., "Cause of Cambrian Explosion—Terrestrial or cosmic?" *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology* 136 (2018):3–23, doi:10.1016/j.pbiomolbio.2018.03.004.

⁴ "The Mimic Octopus," *National Geographic*, www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/m/mimic-octopus/.

⁵ Sarah Jane Alger, "The Mimic Octopus: Master of Disguise," October 28, 2013, https://www.nature.com/scitable/blog/accumulating-glitches/the_mimic_octopus_master_of/.

This article was written by Calvin Smith [Executive Director and Speaker for Answers in Genesis CA], is published with permission, and originally appeared at <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/calvin-smith/2020/09/07/masters-disguise/>.



by Chris Martin

We can't save the world, and that's OK

What if our insatiable interest in the world's injustices is really just an Edenic desire to be gods ourselves?

We are weary. Gloom and malaise are the shadows of the moment, inescapable beneath the blazing ball of stressors that blinds our eyes to what is true and hinders our feeble attempts at faithful living.

Why?

Why do weariness and anxiety trail us wherever we walk or however fast we try to run? There are, of course, any number of reasons that an individual person may feel weary or sad or anxious. But there is reason I believe that our collective sense of dread is at least partially self-inflicted.

We are weary because in an attempt to image our Savior we may actually be trying to *be* him.

THE PARALYSIS OF INFORMATION

Our parasitic relationship with the social Internet leads us to see a literal world of burdens and deceives us into believing we must bear them all.

This isn't a new phenomenon: in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman traced it all the way back to the advent of the telegraph:

The news elicits from you a variety of opinions about which you can do nothing except for offer them as more news, about which you can do nothing.

Prior to the age of telegraphy, the information-action ratio was sufficiently close so that most people had a sense of being able to control some of the contingencies in their lives. What people knew had some action-value.

We feel burdened by the events of the world because we consume information in such a way that we could never meaningfully act on the information we consume.

This isn't just a practical problem or a mental health problem. This is a spiritual problem.

BEARING BURDENS OR BEING GODS?

In Galatians 6:2 Paul tells us to:

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

To live as a faithful follower of Christ in our own daily lives is difficult in its own right. But to bear others' burdens, like those of our family, friends, or church family, is what we are called to do in this verse. Bearing one another's burdens is important! It is one of the ways we most clearly image Christ to the world.

But I think it is fair to say Paul is not calling us to bear the burdens of the *world*, a destructive calling to which many of us believe we have been called simply because of our ever-increasing awareness of world events. How can we possibly faithfully follow Jesus while also attempting to bear the countless burdens highlighted by our Twitter feeds? We can't. And we should stop trying.

This is not to say we shouldn't care for and pray for the global church or the state of humanity in general. Of course we should approach our God on behalf of others who may be suffering any variety of plight around the world.

My call is not a call to global ignorance but local faithfulness. One of my concerns is that our rightful concern for the vast brokenness and injustice around the

world distracts us from faithfulness in our neighborhoods and churches.

Beyond that, though, the constant gnawing we feel as we scroll through pictures of poverty and clips of corruption on our thousand-dollar smartphones may be a God-given conviction toward justice and righteousness ... *but it also may not be.*

What if our insatiable interest in the world's injustices is really just an Edenic desire to be gods ourselves? The social Internet becomes a virtual tree of knowledge of good and evil – it opens our eyes to the harsh realities of a world fractured by sin and fools us into bearing the burden of the world's brokenness. Our convictional awareness of the world's problems may actually be a modern manifestation of our most ancient transgression: our desire to be gods rather than trust God.

Wearying ourselves with public injustices in front of a watching world is

more appealing than quietly advocating for justice in our communities because it makes us feel like gods, and gods receive praise. Good friends and neighbors usually don't. To bear the burdens of others is to fulfill the law of Christ and to image Christ to the world. To want to save the world is to attempt to *be* Christ and reap the praise he alone is due.

THE MEASURE OF THE WORLD

Reflecting on the cultural power of the nightly news broadcast in 1985, Postman wrote:

"It has not yet been demonstrated whether a culture can survive if it takes the measure of the world in twenty-two minutes."

Indeed, one may say that it has not yet been demonstrated whether a culture can survive if it takes the measure of the world in a brief scroll of Twitter, but the

forecast is, well, *a bit gloomy.*

Perhaps we, and our communities of faith or proximity, would be better served if we attempt to bear the burdens of our neighbors rather than feeling as though we have to bear the burdens of the world. Everyone's problems are not all of our problems. Yes, we are called to bear one another's burdens, but not *everyone's* burdens.

Christ alone can bear the burdens of the world. Our feeble attempts to do this are the roots of our gloom and malaise. Being a Savior is exhausting and it's not who we were made to be. RP

This originally appeared in Chris Martin's "Terms of Service" newsletter and is reprinted here with permission. "Terms of Service" looks at the social internet from a Christian perspective, and you can sign up at www.termsofservice.social. His book, also called "Terms of Service," is available at online retailers.

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CAN TWO DENOMINATIONS BECOME ONE?

CanRC and URC relations: where are they at?



This is an overview of an episode of Lucas Holtvliwer and Tyler Vanderwoude's Real Talk, a biweekly podcast under the Reformed Perspective umbrella. It features great guests talking about a host of issues affecting our Reformed community, ranging from social and economic, to theological and educational. If you haven't checked it out already, you should. And you can, at www.RealTalkPodcast.ca.

The Oct. 10 episode of *Real Talk* was all about church unity. Hosts Lucas and Tyler were talking with a couple of pastors representing two denominations working towards being just one. Their guests were Rev. Steve Swets, pastor of the Rehoboth United Reformed Church (URC) in Hamilton, and Rev. Dick Wynia of Lincoln Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC). The conversation covered the history of both the CanRC and URC, as well as the current and potential future status of the two federations' relationship.

TWO PASTORS, THREE DENOMINATIONS

Both pastors were uniquely suited to the conversation. Rev. Wynia grew up as a member of a Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in St. Catharines, but studied at the Canadian Reformed Theological College in Hamilton, prior to being ordained in Aylmer CRC in 1987. He then helped to lead a Calgary congregation out of the CRC federation and (eventually) into the newly formed URC federation. And for the past fourteen years, Rev. Wynia has served at Vineyard CanRC in Lincoln.

With his experience serving churches in three different federations, he brought a unique perspective to the conversation.

Rev. Swets calls himself "an American serving in Canada": he was a minister at Abbotsford (BC) URC for over seven years, prior to taking the call to Rehoboth URC. Rev. Swets grew up in the south Chicago area, and as a teenager, was part of a church split out of the CRC that resulted in the formation of a new URC. Rev. Swets is the secretary of the United Reformed Churches' Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity,

and has preached in many Canadian Reformed churches over the years too.

A LITTLE HISTORY TO START

To begin, Rev. Wynia gave a general outline of the history of how and why the Canadian Reformed Churches were founded, with a helpful explanation of the main reasons that many immigrants from the Netherlands who were members of the “liberated” churches, could not find themselves at home long term in the CRC congregations, nor in the Protestant Reformed Churches they found in Canada.

(The CRC had not taken much interest in the church split that had happened in the Netherlands in 1944, with “liberated” churches on the one side, and the GKN church federation they’d been driven out of on the other. But by not taking a side, the CRC effectively supported the GKN. In addition, church leaders in the CRC did not want to bring any of the controversy from the Netherlands into churches in North America, and did not want immigrants to speak about these issues. But such a restriction couldn’t be acceptable to “liberated” believers – they couldn’t be somewhere where they weren’t allowed to talk about the stand they’d thought so important they’d taken it at the cost of friendships and family relationships too..)

Prof. K. Schilder, one of the leaders of the “liberation” had warm regard for the Protestant Reformed Churches (PR), so some of the “liberated” immigrants formed PR churches in Hamilton and Chatham, Ontario shortly after arriving in Canada. However, the PR Synod of 1950 required that their churches subscribe to a specific view of the covenant. This restriction on covenantal views was the very reason the “liberated” members had left the GKN, and so they could not live with a condition like this after their significant struggles in the Netherlands.

After this CanRC history lesson, Rev. Swets summarized how the United Reformed Churches came to be founded. They were begun largely by former members of the CRC who disagreed with that denomination’s views and decisions on the authority of the Bible:

“It really came to a head around 1995, when the CRC opened all the church offices to women... and there were issues of theistic evolution, and practicing homosexuals in good standing in the church. There were a lot of peripheral issues but really what it came down to is the Scripture.”

As Rev. Swets explained, by making the Scriptures and Biblical teaching limited to the culture or time of Paul or Moses (as the CRC was doing),

“you start to undermine the authority of the Scriptures: The Bible does not actually say what it means... all of a sudden you’ve kind of knocked the foundation out of the authority of Scripture. I’d say that is the real reason why these churches left the CRC.”

Rev. Wynia also recalled the controversies regarding the teaching of Calvin College professors like Harold Dekker, who denied limited atonement, and Howard VanTil, who held to theistic evolution. They held views that were not Biblical but which were being tolerated.

WHY DIDN’T CRC EXILES JOIN THE CANRC IN THE 90S?

Holtvliwer asked if those who left CRCs in Canada during this period considered joining with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Rev. Swets answered that although he wasn’t involved personally at that time, his understanding was that

“the URC needed to be established, and we needed to figure out who we were.... Dr. DeJong, and Dr. VanDam’s advice (to us) was to get ourselves established first, and then we’ll meet... and we can figure out a way forward of how we can become one that makes sense... So the advice was to become your own federation first.”

Rev. Wynia recalled asking Dr. Jelle Faber, his former professor from the CanRC seminary, for advice:

“I remember as a pastor in Calgary

saying, ‘What do I advise my congregation to do; you know, there’s a true church in Calgary: should we start a new church, or should I say to (our members) that we are obliged to go there?’ And (Faber) said, ‘You have to be the shepherd of your sheep; if you advise them (to join the CanRC in Calgary), they will scatter, and this way [starting an independent congregation] you hold them together.’”

Some of the history of personal relationships and acquaintances was also a factor in the new federation forming. Rev. Wynia remembered that “at that time, you would have had members who remembered the Liberation (in the Netherlands), and... that was a bitter thing... I mean, they had their conflicts in the Netherlands, and to some degree in Canada, and they remembered.”

The group also discussed the impression that especially twenty-five years ago, some CanRC members would have considered their federation the only true church. While this was never an official position of the federation, enough CanRC members may have defended that idea to make former CRC members hesitant about getting together. Rev. Wynia brought up the counterpoint that whenever this issue was raised at the level of consistories talking to one another, the issue was quickly dealt with. As one CanRC consistory put it to Rev. Wynia, “If we didn’t think you were true churches, we wouldn’t be talking to one another.”

“There’s a lot of personal issues (in the past), and the pastors and leadership knew this,” said Rev. Swets. Some of these issues, dating back to the 1950s were still, in 1995, remembered by older church-goers. But not any more, 25 years later. As all four gentlemen could agree, there is excellent cooperation today between churches from the two federations.

THREE OBSTACLES TO UNIFYING

In 2001, the two federations accepted one another as “sister churches,” and there were some fairly aggressive timelines proposed for an official joining

together. These discussions stalled for a variety of reasons (including a lack of enthusiasm from many of the URCs in the United States). The three main obstacles seemed to be:

1. a Proposed Joint Church Order which neither federation could entirely accept,
2. the issue of federational or independent theological seminaries for the training of ministers,
3. and a non-theological issue that still is close to members' hearts – what songbook could be used in the worship services.

This last issue highlights a difference in the decision-making process within each federation. The URCs overall prefer that a matter like which songs may be sung in worship services would remain within the purview of the local elders.

While agreeing that Christ's authority rests with local elders in local churches, the CanRCs have traditionally decided many things together at their General Synods. Rev. Swets stated, "There is a perception from the URC that the Canadian Reformed (church order) is too hierarchical, and that Synod has too much authority; Synod says too much." With the URC's history, coming out of the CRC denomination where the problems started at the top, this is a particularly understandable concern.

WE HAVE GROWN CLOSER

The first half of the podcast might have had listeners believing that there is no foreseeable path towards unity for these two church federations. However, much of the second half of the podcast highlighted the progress that has been made over time. In Canada especially, there's all sorts of cooperation between churches: in education, in mission work like Streetlight Ministries in Hamilton, and in recognition of one another.

In 2016, the URC took a six-year hiatus from further unity talks with the CanRC. But this year, in the URC Synod Niagara 2022, unity efforts will resume. The Synod will hear reports from the

URC Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, including the results of a survey that the committee put out to each URC. (This podcast was recorded about a month before Synod Niagara took place.) The results of this survey suggest that a small majority of the 58 URCs that responded are in favor of federational unity with the CanRC.

As might have been expected, a higher percentage of the Canadian URCs are in favor, while less than half of the American URCs responded positively. Only eight of the churches surveyed indicated they had any "theological concerns" regarding a potential union. One of the theological concerns brought up is the fact that the CanRCs have not made a federational statement on the Federal Vision movement, although professors from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary have participated in meetings and forums to explain the CanRC view of the covenant, and of the Federal Vision.


Looking further at the survey, Rev. Swets pointed out that "Twenty-eight of the 58 churches said they perceive the Canadian Reformed to have a hierarchy." He personally disagreed with this perception, and stated that the URCs could also be perceived as having structures that are hierarchical. "We actually have a Stated Clerk of the URC; we elect him every Synod... he's an employee of the URC."

Rev. Wynia reminded the group that both federations "have some diversity of views when it comes right down to it... Professor Schilder, before the Liberation in Holland, would say that he could live in the same church federation as Kuyper, (despite their) different views of the covenant. We can tolerate theological divergencies. There's an acceptable range that we would judge as within the bounds of the confessions and live with those differences."

Rev. Swets shared one possible route to unity, by the CanRCs accepting the URC church order:

"Since the URC church order is broader than the Canadian Reformed, the Canadian Reformed church order

can fit within the URC church order... The way that would work is that you would have to introduce regional synods into the URCs, or have the seminary under the oversight of, for example, Regional Synod Canada, and therefore it still has church jurisdiction, still has professors appointed by and overseen by a church ecclesiastical body. That would be the fastest way forward that... If you did that, nothing would have to change in the life of a Canadian Reformed Church: you aren't forced to have the Trinity Psalter Hymnal if you don't want, it's up to each church. You can keep the Book of Praise... Whereas if the URCs become Canadian Reformed, we'd have to throw away our Trinity Psalter Hymnal for corporate worship, and we'd have to sing out of the Book of Praise... There would have to be more changes for the URCs to become Canadian Reformed, whereas in practice there wouldn't be changes for the Canadian Reformed to become URC. The things you'd have to change are behind the scenes, like the oversight of the seminary, and how does superannuation work for ministers, but in the life (of the average member) nothing would have to particularly change."

In his concluding remarks, Rev. Swets said, "When you talk about church unity, there's a lot of issues to deal with. But at the very foundation of all unity is that it has to be given by the Holy Spirit. It can be frustrating because it takes time; you have to be patient in it, and pray, pray the Holy Spirit will work in this way..." Rev. Wynia expressed thankfulness for the unity that the two federations do have already, and for the progress made so far, in these discussions together. 

Readers who would like to listen to more are encouraged to download the 90-minute podcast at www.RealTalkPodcast.ca, or watch the video version at [YouTube.com/ReformedPerspective](https://www.YouTube.com/ReformedPerspective) and at ReformedPerspective.ca.



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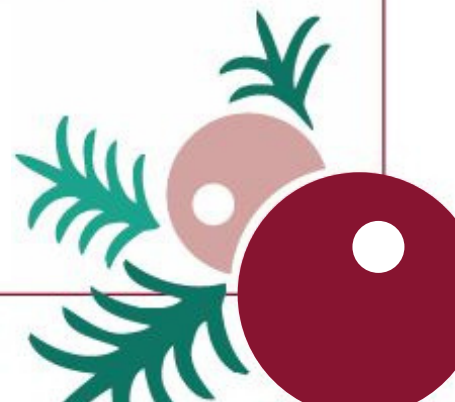
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Four days in the life of Albert Tenfold

by Christine Farenhorst

"I'M GOING OUT TONIGHT, MOTHER..."

"Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have..."

Albert always felt slightly uncomfortable reading this passage. He ran his hand over the thin paper of his Bible page and cleared his throat.

"What's the matter? Do you have a sore throat?"

"No, mother."

His mother sat across from him, regal and straight, in the red, high-backed plush chair that had been his stepfather's. She peered at him through her bifocals.

"Shouldn't let your thoughts wander, Albert."

He cleared his throat again and continued to read. *"...should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband."*

His mother's voice picked up where he had left off. They took turns reading two verses each after meals. He regarded her for a moment as she read, ring-fingered hands resting in her lap. It was one of the few moments he could observe her without her knowledge. Her rather coarse face had an equally coarse voice. Loud it was, and monotonous to the point of dull. She hadn't gone to school here, so perhaps the English.... But then, come to think of it, when she read in Dutch there was no inflection either. The voice was always flat and without feeling. Her gray, rheumy eyes suddenly met his.

"Albert, where are your thoughts tonight? Verse five, child."

He found the place and read on. *"Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent...."*

As he read, his thoughts smoothed out, smoothed out ridges which he occasionally tripped over and when he

later breathed the words: *"for it is better to marry than to burn with passion..."*, he was able to keep his mind on Paul without focusing on the lack of passion in his own life – a passion he occasionally desired.

Before Albert cleared the table, he helped his mother to the couch. "Do you want the paper? Or shall I turn on the television for you?"

She shook her head to both questions. "I'm a bit tired, son. I think I'll have a small nap while you do the dishes. In that way I'll be fresh for Scrabble when Mrs. Dorman comes later. Be sure to set out the cups for tea and the cookies..."

He stopped the avalanche of words with "I know, mother. I know."

There was a certain resignation in

his voice as he pulled the afghan over her body but a thin thread of irritation unraveled in his hands and a sudden clumsiness overtook them.

In the kitchen Paul's words swam about as Albert placed the dishes in the sink.

"It is better to marry than to burn with passion..."

Had Paul known more about passion than he did? Had Paul been married? Had he taken a wife with him on his missionary journeys? Or a mother? If Paul had had his mother...

He suddenly grinned at the suds but then became serious. What did he, Albert, know about marriage anyway? His expertise lay in being single. He scrubbed at the potato pan with vigor



In the kitchen Paul's words swam about as Albert placed the dishes in the sink.

and frustration. The small kitchen surrounded him with apathy. There was nothing new. Coffee mugs hung on a small rack in the same way that they had hung for years and years. A birthday calendar, with numerous Dutch aunts and uncles enshrined on separate dates, hung beside it. The white refrigerator stood squarely and the patterned tiles on the floor reflected cleanliness and care. The wooden plaque on the wall spoke to him in Peter's voice. "*Cast all your care upon Him for He careth for you.*"

"But what are my cares, Peter?" Albert questioned the apostle out loud and repeated: "What are my cares?"

"What's that, Albert? I can't hear you."

"Nothing, mother. Just go to sleep."

"I'm sure I heard you say something."

"No, mother." He folded the dish towel over the rack and walked into the living room.

"Are you sure you didn't say something, Albert?"

"Yes." He stood in the middle of the room, undecided as to what to do.

"Sit down, son, and read the paper."

"I'm going out tonight, mother."

"Out? But Mrs. Dorman..."

"She's your friend, mother. She's coming to play Scrabble with you."

"But you always play with us. She..."

"I'm going out tonight, mother." His voice was firm.

"Where are you going?" She half sat up, reaching for her bifocals on the side table.

"I'm going out." It was all Albert could manage.

"But..."

"You'll be all right. And I'll be home in good time."

He was out in the hall before she could formulate a reply. "Albert?"

Opening the closet door, he took his coat off a hanger.

"Albert?" Her voice was growing in intensity.

"I'll see you later, mother." The door handle felt cold under his hand and the hinges squeaked.

"Albert?" It was more of a shout this time and he shut the door firmly, feeling both guilt and relief.

INTO THE NIGHT

Albert Tenfold lived on the fifth floor of a high-rise apartment building with his widowed mother. He was thirty-five and she was seventy. His stepfather had died when he was a teenager. Cast into the mold of male provider at an early age, he had never really been young. Fiercely dependent, his mother had leaned on him heavily, and he had settled under the weight. To the outward eye, they were a model family — a stalwart son providing constant love and care for an aging, frail mother. And it had seemed that way to Albert also — had seemed that way until this last month. Perhaps because he was rapidly approaching his thirty-sixth birthday, he had been doing some thinking. Ten years from now he would be forty-five, almost forty-six, and his mother would be eighty and then, ten years later, he would be in his mid-fifties and she would be ninety. Unless she died — but somehow he could not envisage his mother dead — even though deep down he sometimes wished it. He would be her son forever, her son and not someone's husband. And then guilt would flood over him like a wave of hot wind and he would break out into a sweat. How could he be thinking such thoughts?

The hall was empty. As he plodded heavily towards the elevator, Albert awkwardly buttoned up his coat. It had all been very well to tell his mother that he was going out, but the truth was that he had no inkling as to where he would go. He had few friends — few friends outside his mother's circle, that is. There were a great many Mrs. Dormans; widows who delighted in visiting back and forth; who excelled in speaking of rheumatism and the weather; and who always commented on how fortunate his mother was to have him. The elevator had brought him down to the first floor. He legged it towards the front door. It was raining outside and he stood for a moment, contemplating the sidewalk through the heavy glass panels. He could possibly go to the library. As he resolutely opened the entrance, both the sound of the rain and the fresh air comforted him. Raindrops were a sound he had always enjoyed. Sighing deeply, he pulled up his collar and struck out.

It was quiet outside and almost dark.

The faint glow of streetlights reflected and trembled in the puddles. He wished he were going somewhere — somewhere where someone was waiting for him. It began to rain harder as he passed Mary's Dome, the large Roman Catholic cathedral. Although he had quickened his step with the downpour, he stopped for a moment to contemplate the cathedral's colossal size and grandeur through the sheets of rain. Stone arches glistened in their wetness. He suddenly shivered and coveted shelter. Perhaps he could sit inside for a while. Just until the rain stopped. Turning, he climbed the stone steps which led to massive wooden doors. Gingerly pressing down on a wrought-iron door-handle, he pushed. As the door creaked heavily, an aperture appeared and Albert stepped inside ... RP

Starting back in the winter of 1991 – *31 years ago!* – it has been an annual tradition for *Reformed Perspective* to feature a longer Christine Farenhorst Christmas story. The year end was when families would gather and when there might be some time available for mom or dad, or perhaps even grandma or grampa, to read this story to the whole family. Early on that did require some patience, as the story would be divided over two or three issues – it was too big for just one. Space constraints still impact us today, but technology is opening up new possibilities. Rather than splitting up the story to be read over a number of issues and a number of months, we wanted to make the whole 12 pages available for you right now – yes, Albert Tenfold's story continues online! Scan this QR code below with your phone, or type **ReformedPerspective.ca/fourdays** to read the complete 12-page story in its entirety.





PORN USE AND THE “COULDN'T BE MY KID” DELUSION

by Jonathon Van Maren

Sexual temptation caught up Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived; Samson, the strongest man who ever lived; and David, a man after God's own heart. Our kids are not immune.

I gave my first presentation on the dangers of pornography eleven years ago at a United Reformed youth camp in Alberta. At the time, as Internet use became ubiquitous and smartphones were becoming the norm, the availability of digital pornography was beginning to become an increasingly dangerous problem. Pastors and community leaders were noticing that porn use was becoming increasingly normal.

Nobody, however, suspected just how prevalent it would become over the next decade. I have given presentations to Reformed audiences – high schools, churches, youth camps, and other events – of nearly every denomination, and in the past several years I have reached an awful conclusion. Pornography use has increasingly become normal.

REFORMED KIDS ARE GETTING ADDICTED

I know this is difficult for many Reformed people to believe. We would like to think that preaching, parenting, and education have made us at least partially immune to this scourge. Unfortunately, as I have written in this publication before, we underestimated the extent to which the digital age would make this tremendously addictive sexual poison a nearly omnipresent temptation to nearly everyone with access to a digital device with Internet capacity – and the ways in which the porn indus-

try works to place these images in front of every Internet user, young and old. I have spoken to hundreds of Reformed people who were exposed to pornography by accident, and ensnared as a result.

I've now spoken with many kids who have been hooked on pornography prior to the age of ten – something I almost never encountered just a few years ago. One young man was fifteen, and had been addicted since the age of five. Several others first encountered porn at the age of 7 or 8. I've lost count of the number of kids who say that they began using porn in Grade 6. Many of them got addicted by using one of the unused cell

We would like to think that preaching, parenting, and education have made us at least partially immune to this scourge.

phones lying about the house, which they used to connect to Wifi and access porn – circumventing any protections their parents had put in place. (Indeed, many of the kids I spoke to came from homes where the Internet was monitored and parental efforts had been made to keep the home porn-free.)

Many young men who have reached out to me have shared that because their addiction started so young – indeed, profoundly impacted the brain development – they have been rendered incapable of viewing women and girls in a pure way. One, in desperation, told me that he badly wanted to ask a girl to graduation, but that he couldn't even look at a girl without pornographic images surging through his mind. Young men – and increasingly, young women – are pumping hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of sexual toxins directly into their minds for years. They are taking these images into their relationships.

YOUNG WOMEN TOO

A key development that I have noticed over the past several years is the spike in porn addiction among girls and young women in Reformed communities. Pornography addiction among young women has always existed, but has generally been different than male porn addiction – pornographic books, for example.

But the sheer prevalence of porn addiction and its common usage amongst many teens has changed that. At one Reformed school, every girl in high school had at least watched it. Some were struggling with several addiction issues. Accompanying this trend is sexting – personalized pornography. Most Reformed schools have had to deal with this issue at least once, and the young ages of some of the participants highlights the extent to which this problem has exploded.

I've also lost count of the stories I have been told by young men and women who entered marriage with an undisclosed pornography addiction (and very frequently, a consequently deformed view of sexuality), causing their spouse tremendous pain. Many of these couples struggled to heal their marriage for years; therapy is often necessary to do so. "Betrayal trauma" – which psychiatrists compare to post-traumatic stress disorder – is becoming a norm for young spouses in the first years of marriage (or, if the addiction remains hidden for years, later on). Pastors and church leaders have told me that porn use within the Reformed community is a leading cause of marriage strife, pain, and in the worst cases, divorce.

THE "COULDN'T BE MY KID" DELUSION

I know there are many parents who will read this and think: *This couldn't be my children. This is other people's kids.* I had one mother come up to me after a presentation and tell me how glad she was that her sons hadn't struggled with this poison; both of her boys had talked to me about their struggles with porn. A father told me after a parents' evening on the porn problem that he didn't think it was that big of an issue, but he supposed it would be worth it if one kid quit. At least one did quit as a result

of attending – his son.

Because pornography is everywhere, all kids have access to it – and "good kids" get hooked just as often as rebellious ones. The Scripture warns us never to think that we will not be susceptible to sexual temptation – to say this would be saying that we are wiser than Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived; stronger than Samson, the strongest man who ever lived; and closer to God than David, the man after God's own heart. Job was called a perfect man, but he knew his own heart well enough to commit to making a covenant with his eyes to avoid sexual sin.

PARENTS, WE NEED TO TALK

After presentations at high schools, I take questions from the students on pieces of paper (so that they will be willing to ask whatever is on their mind). Over and over again, I get the same question: *How can I get help?* There are hundreds – very likely thousands – of kids in our communities who are struggling with this, too scared and ashamed to ask for help; too nervous that the adults will not be able to handle their struggles. Many have sought and received help, but many struggle alone. It is essential that we have these conversations in our homes first, but also in our schools and our communities. The teenagers are ready. Couples struggling with this are ready. It is time for us to start fighting in earnest—and begin rebuilding. ^{RP}



LIFE RENEWAL

Life Renewal offers a confidential, supportive community where we share, pray, and encourage each other, working through a 28 week program. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, people are transformed to freedom, living in a right relationship with God and others.

Life Renewal is governed by a Board of Directors, all professing members of Reformed churches within NAPARC (North-American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). The program adheres to Reformed faith summarized in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. We seek to come alongside Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in Canada to provide and promote a sound, Biblical support program for its members and their communities. We train local coordinators and facilitators to equip them with the skills to lead their groups of participants through healing and create a safe and confidential environment.

For more information and to enrol in the program commencing September, 2022, please visit our website at www.liferenewal.ca or email admin@liferenewal.ca.

SCRIPTURAL TEACHING.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT.

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

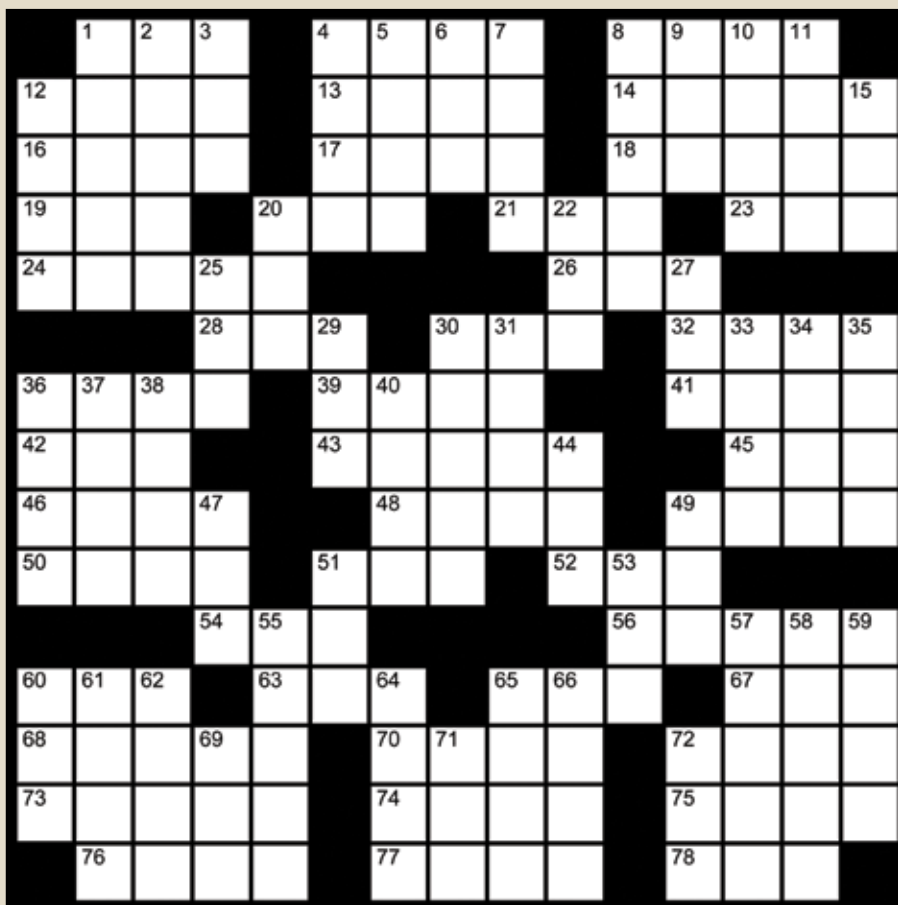
7-6

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. Not against
4. "delivered up according to... ____" (Acts 2)
8. Sharp; eager; "cool"
12. "____ and purple and scarlet" (Ex. 28)
13. "not an ____ will pass... until" (Matt. 5)
14. Looked leeringly and lustfully at
16. "Come, let us cast ____" (Jonah 1)
17. They lead the way when you walk.
18. "Paul was a ____ citizen." (Acts 22)
19. "Is not Boaz ____ relative...?" (Ruth 3)
20. What maple syrup comes from
21. "not a wisdom of this ____" (1 Cor. 2)
23. Rhymes with "Aahh," for good reason
24. "to a good and ____ land" (Ex. 3)
26. Tibet's beast of burden
28. Zero, especially in scorekeeping
30. Suffix showing ideology or belief
32. One of several in a list or agenda
36. Prophesied way to enter the city (Matt. 21)
39. Where wise men came from (Matt. 2)
41. It's great for serving.
42. Spanish for a wise man's gift (Matt. 2)
43. Relative by marriage
45. It can hold ashes or coffee.
46. What you do after you undo
48. "the king ____ his garments" (2 Sam. 13, KJV)
49. It's a butte, all right, only shorter and wider.
50. "if anyone... is not a ____" (James 1)
51. Precious stone sounding like Scout's brother
52. Jem's relationship to sib in Harper Lee novel
54. ____ Airways (even though it can't fly)
56. Conscious or informed (of)
60. Buddy; friend; chum
63. Somewhat; to some extent; Hebrew for *man*
65. Swamp; marsh
67. Give more gas to; speed up
68. One of the four (or five) on Earth
70. ____ Sharif (actor in *Lawrence of Arabia*)
72. Easiest part of the ear to pierce
73. The first one could give an editor a chill.
74. Acronym for four emerging nations
75. The final word in prayer?
76. Opponents of 66 Down
77. They're essential, also for painting.
78. She gets 72 Down backwards.



DOWN

1. "The... grain... shall yield no ____" (Hos. 8)
2. Instrumental closing passage of music
3. It can be hi or lo.
4. Hollow flatbread
5. ____ the ____: airplane maneuver
6. "He... ____ grass like an ox" (Dan. 4)
7. Agency behind moon landings, Space Shuttle
8. North and South on either side of DMZ
9. Conscious self; should not be inflated
10. Are Dutch ones less immune to disease?
11. Opposite of spring tide
12. Glob
15. Genetic double helical molecule
20. Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars")
22. Sounds like Jim goes here for a workout...
25. It can carry 10 to 50 times its own weight!
27. ____ Carson: American frontiersman
29. ____ Day: part of Hawaii state celebration
30. Main religion of many Arab countries
31. Guide for "wise men" (Matt. 2)
33. "The ____ light... coming into..." (John 1)
34. "But they... stopped their ____" (Zech. 7)
35. Bird kept as pet in southern Asia
36. It's umbilical or electrical.
37. It unites black and white with good taste.
38. It may contain 42 Across.
40. Upping this shows confidence.
44. Spiderman "spins a ____ any size."
47. It may contain 42 Across.
49. Shorten the grass
51. One of the Caesars' nicknames?
53. "Maple Leaf ____" (Scott Joplin music)
55. They make coins.
57. Distinctive trait of two of wise men's gifts
58. He's revolting.
59. "____ winds and sea obey him" (Matt. 8)
60. Like two peas in a ____
61. Size of battlefield for Jonathan (1 Sam. 14)
62. David ____ (director of *Lawrence of Arabia*)
64. Derisive term for a homeless person
65. Rhymes with jail, but helps you avoid it
66. Villains of *The Lord of the Rings*
69. Not stern when you look back
71. Medical imaging scan (abbreviation)
72. Gap in time, especially in jet flight

TWO THANK-YOUS



Ongoing changes to the magazine means that this issue marks a good-bye for the Puzzle Page, which Bob Leach has been creating faithfully for almost three decades now. Back when his very first edition appeared, Jean Chretien was still prime minister, Amazon had yet to sell a book, and no one would “google” anything for another three years. The Puzzle Page has been a part of *Reformed Perspective* for a very long time, and the lighter tone was a great balance to some of the weightier material that appeared elsewhere in its pages. And it taught a weighty lesson of its own, implicitly affirming that our God is sovereign over every sphere of life, including Chess, and math, and puns too.

Yes, right from the start, in that March 1995, edition, Bob’s puntastic sense of humor was on display: *Why did the banker always wear a three-piece suit? Investments were his business!* Bob’s puns, math problems, and chess puzzles have appeared in 270 issues since then, which if they were all put together, amount to almost a year’s worth of content, all by himself (and his chess puzzles go back even further, starting in 1987). As editor I want to thank Bob Leach for being a contributor I could always count on. And on behalf of the readers, I want to thank Bob for faithfully providing dose after dose of head-scratching fun. May God bless you and your family.

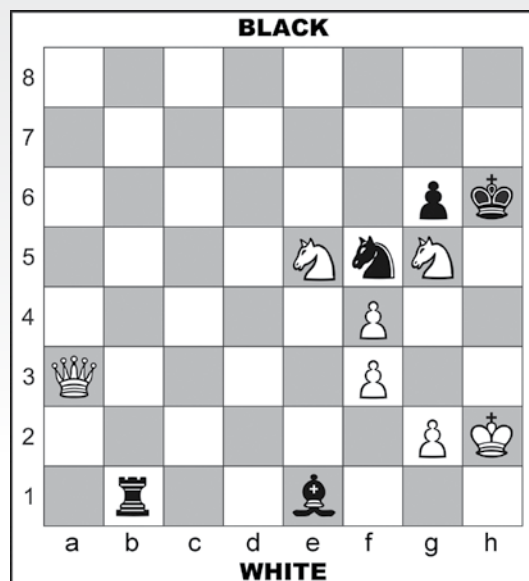
- Jon Dykstra

Bob also wanted to offer a **thank you**, which we include here:

Since RP Magazine will no longer include the Puzzle Page I would like to take this opportunity to thank the publishers and editors for their work in providing such a socially relevant magazine with diverse topics truly presented from a “reformed perspective.” I also extend warm thanks to readers who have encouraged me in the production of the puzzles over the past 25 years, especially dedicated chess players. God bless you all.

LAST MONTH’S SOLUTIONS

Solution to Chess Puzzle #270



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. Q-B8 ch K-R4
2. P-N4 ch K-R5
3. NxP mate

Black loses sooner if:

1. Q-B8 ch N-N2
2. Q-KR8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Qa3-f8 + Kh6-h5
2. g2-g4 + Kh5-h4
3. Ne5xg6 ++

Black loses sooner if:

1. Qa3-f8 + Nf5-g7
2. Qf8-h8 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- B-N6 ch
2. K-R3 R-KR8 ch
3. K-N4 R-R5 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Be1-g3 +
2. Kh2-h3 Rb1-h1 +
3. Kh3-g4 Rh1-h4 ++

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#270 - “Can you picture him in jail?”

Why was the art thief sad? He was in a depressed **frame** of mind because he had just had a serious **brush** with the law for **canvassing** on behalf of a crooked election candidate and the trial judge did not **paint** a rosy future for the thief even though the thief maintained that he had been **framed**.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#270 – “Memorable, and costly, holidays!”

Travis’ family spent a week on holidays at a mountain lake resort in the forests of B.C. He and his wife and their 2 children each paid \$245.20 for round trip airline tickets on sale. The resort cost was \$1850 (incl. taxes) and included free continental breakfasts each day. They averaged \$135 per day for the family’s other meals during the week. Travis paid \$790 at the airport for a one week car rental. They spent \$355 on gas during their trip, including driving to and from the closest Reformed church on Sunday, and spent \$83.55 on souvenirs. Tertullian’s family also travelled to that B.C. forest but he rented, for \$180 per day, a motor-home for his family to stay in for 7 days at the forest’s trailer park. They spent 2 days travelling each way and each time spent one night in a trailer park for \$45. They spent a total of \$560 on groceries and supplies. The motor home travelled 5 km per L of gasoline, for which the average price was \$2.25/L, and they travelled 2150 km each way. Rental insurance for the motor-home was \$230. Which family’s holiday cost less? By how much?

For Travis and his family,

Cost to fly was $\$245.20 \times 4 = \980.80 Rental of car fee was \$790
Resort cost \$1850 Cost of gasoline \$355
Food expense was $\$135 \times 7 = \945 Souvenirs came to \$83.55
so **the TOTAL was \$5004.35**

For Tertullian’s family,

They travelled a distance of $2150 \times 2 = 4300$ km
5 km needed 1 L of gas so 4300 km required $4300/5 = 860$ L of gas
With a cost of $\$2.25/L \times 860 L = \1935 for gasoline

Thus, the amount spent on gasoline was \$1935 Food expense was \$560
Car Rental fee was $(2+7+2) \times \$180 = \1980 Rental insurance \$230
Trailer park fee was $2 \times \$45 = \90 so **the TOTAL was \$4795**

Thus, Tertullian’s family holiday cost less, by $\$5004.35 - \$4795 = \$209.35$

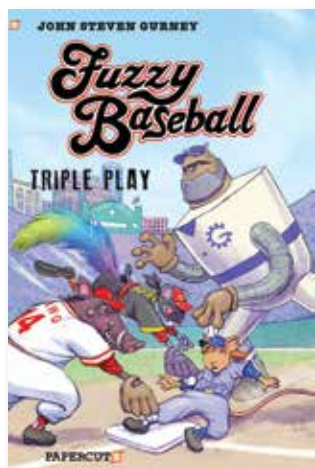
BOOKS

COMICS FOR YOUNG AND OLD

ReformedPerspective.ca/books

FUZZY BASEBALL: TRIPLE PLAY

BY JOHN STEVEN GURNEY
2022 / 176 PAGES



This is three stories in one, each involving the Fernwood Valley Fuzzies baseball team taking on a different opponent. The Fuzzies are quite a cuddly team, even if their manager is a bear. Other players include a koala, a wombat, and a penguin. In the first story we're introduced to their biggest fan, Blossom Possum. But when the Fuzzies keep losing to their rivals, the Rocky Ridge Red Claws, this fan decides she has to do more than cheer from the sidelines: Blossom tries out and makes the team! But can a little possum really get a hit playing against the fearsome critters of the Red Claws? What can she do versus a crocodile, warthog, bull, rhino, or wolf? As you might imagine, there is a happy ending. Then the team travels to Japan to play some ninjas, before returning home in the third story to play some robots!

The only caution would be for the next book in the series, *Di-no Hitters*, where they play dinosaurs. While I've only read the back cover, it has a couple of allusions to evolution, so I suspect that this one will have more than a few jokes about millions of years and such.

This would make a fantastic present for any kid who likes baseball, fuzzy animals, comics, or even none of the above.

SNOW WHITE

BY MATT PHELAN
2016 / 216 PAGES



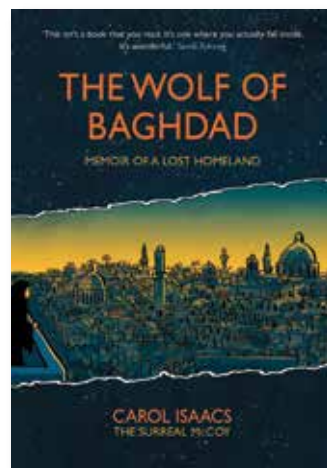
This is Snow White inventively reimagined as a 1920s Depression-era American tale. The "king" is a stock trader who has managed to survive the stock market crash. The stepmother is still a queen, but this time of the Ziegfeld Follies, a popular Broadway show. The mirror is now a stock ticker, and the seven dwarfs are seven street-smart kids. Prince Charming? Well, I shouldn't give too much away!

Though over 200 pages, this is a very quick read, because it is much more pictures than text – several times there are stretches going on for pages, where there are no words at all.

I first thought it would be hard to pick exactly who'd be the ideal audience. Fairy tales are typically for children, but this seemed too somber to attract little ones – done in black and white, it has a dark, noir style...all but for the last few pages with their happily-ever-after full-color conclusion. Some of the historical touches only adults would pick up on, but how many of them would pick it up? It's listed as for teens at my local library, but our Christian school library also got it, and there it seems more of a tween hit. This is an inventive, and very intriguing tale, done with style.

THE WOLF OF BAGHDAD: MEMOIR OF A LOST HOMELAND

BY CAROL ISAACS
2020 / 208 PAGES



For more than 2,000 years, Jews have lived in Baghdad and as late as the 1940s a third of the city's population was Jewish. But within a decade most of Iraq's 150,000 Jews had fled the country, such that in 2016 there may have been only 5 Jews left in Baghdad.

In this impactful graphic novel, Carol Isaacs has a woman walking through the deserted streets of the city, but seeing ghosts of a sort. These aren't the dead though, but memories of how life used to be – as she wanders we see a shadow of what used to be, with see-through Jews and others living side by side as they once did. The presentation is all the more powerful for how Isaacs pairs wordless comic pages – the woman walking with no one to talk to – with a full page highlighting a quote from one of the exiles, also recalling what once was.

This is not a book for the reluctant reader, as it needs to be pondered, not flipped through. But for a history lover, this will be powerful.

There are no cautions. I did wonder if a Jewish history might present a Jewish understanding of God, but the Jewish religion hardly comes up.

A COUPLE FOR CREATING

Comics can combine not simply exceptional writing but outstanding art, doubling the creative potential to explore. That's why Christians really should dive into this medium... and here's two fun books that can help.

THE COMIC BOOK LESSON: A GRAPHIC NOVEL THAT SHOWS YOU HOW TO MAKE COMICS

BY MARK CRILLEY

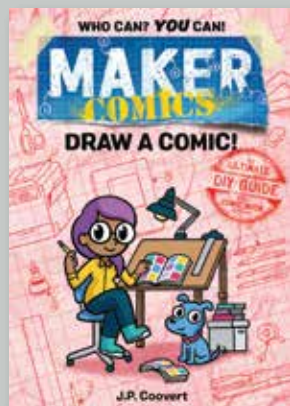
2022 / 156 PAGES

Emily is a young artist with plans for a comic book – she wants the hero to be a “pet finder” coming to the rescue of any and all who have lost their furry friends. But it's one thing to have a story and the skills to draw it and yet another to know how to transform it into comic book form. So how can she bridge that gap? She just needs the right sort of mentor. What author Mark Crilley has given us is a story showing aspiring cartoonists how they, too, can learn what Emily wants to know – we get to come along for her journey as she meets three talented ladies who are all willing to teach her.

This is not so much a “how-to-draw” book as it is a “how-to-decide-what-to-draw” book. Emily learns things like how adding a couple more frames can make a scene more dramatic, and how important it is to arrange the word bubbles and write the script for the comic *before* drawing.

This is one of the tamest/safest instructional book on comics you'll find, and I'd recommend it without reservation for teens. But for preteens there are a few oddities that parents might want to discuss with them, like how one of Emily's mentors mentions she is writing a comic book about assassins-for-hire. Hmm... okay....

The Comic Book Lesson is a solid piece of “edutainment.” And if your son or daughter enjoy it, they may also appreciate Crilley's earlier effort, *The Drawing Lesson*.



MAKER COMICS: DRAW A COMIC

BY JP COOVERT

2019 / 124 PAGES


This might be the best overall introduction to cartooning I've seen. Our guides, Maggie and her dog Rex, are trying to fulfill her grandfather's dream of having a comic library, but the villain of the piece, Dr. Stephens, wants to turn the building into a parking lot. How can they stop him? A treasure map might lead to just what they need to buy the building.

Alongside their treasure quest, readers are given 6 projects to complete, including making a mini-comic book out of one sheet of paper. There's piles of information here, but kids only have to use the bare bones of it to start creating.

Then, if they get into it, they can dive back in to learn more about different pencils, pens, brushes, and techniques they can use to get better. What's absent are actual drawing lessons – kids will have to turn elsewhere to find more on that. This is about equipping kids to present their story or joke with some polish, even while their art skills might be at the stick figure level. The only caution: a passing mention made about dinosaurs living 65 million years ago.

The book's biggest strength? If you give it your children, they can grab it, and produce mini-comics immediately. It's been very fun to watch one of our daughters figure out the folding, and then start filling in the pages with her art.

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RP'S 52 IN 22 CHALLENGE: PART IV

3 gents, 1 book a week, for 1 year

It's been almost a year, and 116 books, since a lawyer, a minister, and an editor – André Schutten, Jim Witteveen, and Jon Dykstra – challenged each other to read 52 books in 2022. To help with the motivation, they agreed to donate \$20 per book for however many they fell short of the mark.

Space doesn't allow for a listing of all the books they've tackled, so what we have on offer here are some of their favorites selected from the books they've read most recently. To find the complete list, be sure to check out ReformedPerspective.ca/52. Or follow the challenge on RP's social media channels at Facebook, MeWe, Instagram and Gab under the hashtag [#RP52in22](https://twitter.com/RP52in22).

THE LAWYER – ANDRÉ SCHUTTEN

It took me all summer, and an encouragement from a friend to see it through, but I finally took up and finished *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* by Carl Trueman (2020, 432 pages). The genesis of the book was Prof. Trueman's desire to answer the question of how our entire

culture came to accept the statement, "I'm a woman trapped in a man's body" as true or reasonable. It's a dense read, especially in the first quarter, where Trueman explains some important cultural theory from three modern philosophers. However, the concepts like "po-

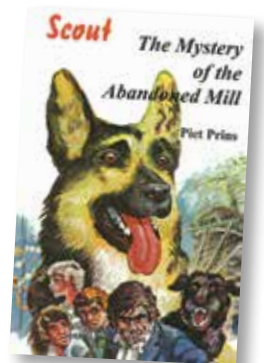
litical man, religious man, psychological man" and "the social imaginary" explained in this first part are helpful to understand our cultural moment. In part 2, Trueman covers the philosophical and cultural impact of thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Charles Darwin. All of them shifted the understanding of who man is inward, Rousseau particularly with his ideas of the

"authentic self," and all attempted in their own way to tear down various institutions like the family and the church as oppressive. In part 3, Trueman explains the impact of Sigmund Freud's thinking on our culture: Freud asserted that to be human is to be a sexual creature from birth. Others combined these ideas with the themes of oppression from Marx and Nietzsche, producing a sexual revolution that saw moral (sexual) codes as not merely outdated but oppressive to the authentic self. Trueman's book was enlightening for me, stitching together various parts of history, philosophy, and cultural analysis to make a compelling case for how we got to where we are: the dominance of the LGBTQ+ alliance and the triumph of transgender politics. Trueman does so while remaining quite objective throughout (though his post-script adds the necessary pastoral perspective and an encouragement for the church as she moves forward in this new reality). I recommend this book particularly for pastors and teachers to make sense of the times. (Trueman has also written a much shorter book – just 187 pages – on this same topic called *Strange New World*.)

I feel a little sheepish reviewing this book, but it's worth talking about. Piet Prins' *Scout: The Mystery of the Abandoned Mill* (1982, 127 pages) is a book for all ages. It's the sixth in a series of seven Scout books written by the Dutch author

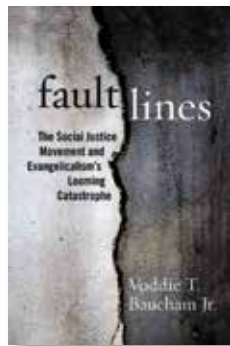
soon after World War II. It tells the story of three teen boys and their trusty canine Scout, a smart, loyal, and strong companion. In this particular story, the boys are trying to find a lost treasure, hidden from the Nazis during the occupation of the Netherlands, in order to return the treasure to its rightful owner. But they are competing with a ruthless villain who wants the treasure for himself. What I love about reading the Scout books (I read it aloud to my eight-year-old son, who begs me each night to please, please, pretty please keep reading just *one* more chapter!?) is that not only are they great page-turning adventures, they are also saturated with Christian references:

going to church on Sunday, praying at mealtimes, thinking about God's oversight and providence, praying to God when afraid, being ashamed for prideful actions, etc. Each of these references become an easy opportunity to pause and discuss with my son these concepts. So, I recommend this book to dads or moms who want a good book for – and good discussions with – their 6–12-year-old children.



THE MINISTER – JIM WITTEVEEN

There are a number of excellent resources out there that deal with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Social Justice movement, but if I would be forced to recommend only one of them to an interested Christian reader, it would be *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (2021, 251 pages) by Voddie T. Baucham Jr., who has written several books on other issues that I would also highly recommend. As a Reformed Baptist, he evidences a high regard for Scripture in his work as well as an informed and critical eye on culture and its impact on the church. In *Fault Lines*, Baucham addresses CRT (and, more generally, Critical Social Justice) as a movement



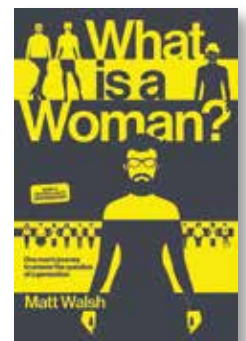
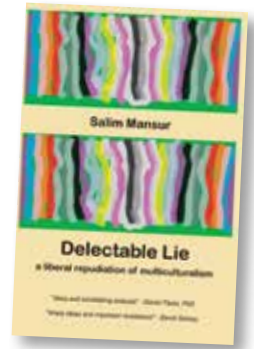
that has created a dangerous divide in the evangelical and Reformed/Presbyterian world. A good part of this book is autobiographical in nature, as Baucham describes his own experiences as an African-American, from growing up in a single-parent family, to his educational experiences, to his conversion to Christianity and his life as a pastor, writer, and speaker. Countering the conclusions drawn by Critical Race theorists, Baucham points to his own personal experience, and the experience of many others like him, to emphasize the importance of good parenting in children's lives. While he emphasizes the centrality of God's grace in leading him to where he is now, he acknowledges the importance of the role his mother played in his life: "I thrived in large part because, by God's grace, my mother protected me, sacrificed for me, advocated for me, and disciplined me," he writes in the conclusion of his chapter on his childhood. *Fault Lines* is much more than an autobiography, however. Baucham also goes into great detail about the religious nature of CRT, a movement that has its own cosmology, its own version of original sin, a new law (the

work of antiracism), a new priesthood, and a new canon. In the end, Baucham argues, CRT is a false religion that is absolutely incompatible with the Christian faith. There is much more that could be said about this book, but I hope this brief review will suffice to encourage you to pick up a copy of it yourself. This book not only reveals the fault lines that exist in the church, but also provides encouragement and good counsel on how to find a way forward, remaining on solid ground.

In 1971, under the leadership of Pierre Trudeau, Canada became the first country in the world to officially declare itself to be "multicultural." Over time, it has become more and more difficult for people in the public square to question the wisdom of multiculturalism. Salim Mansur is a Canadian academic who has dared to confront it head on. Mansur is a professor emeritus of political science at the University of Western Ontario; he is also a Muslim. In *Delectable Lie: A Liberal Repudiation of Multiculturalism* (2011, 183 pages), Mansur argues that multiculturalism is inherently destructive to a society. The dreams of multiculturalism, and the promises it makes, Mansur writes, are nothing more than a lie. As an ideology, multiculturalism holds a certain appeal to many people – thus the word "delectable" in the book's title – but ultimately, the cultural relativism of multiculturalism is its fatal flaw. Ultimately, Mansur writes, "the worm inside the doctrine of multiculturalism is the lie that all cultures are worthy of equal respect and equally embracing of individual freedom and democracy." While proponents of multiculturalism argue that cultural relativism is the result of open-mindedness and tolerance, Mansur argues that just the opposite is the case; political correctness has led to the stifling of free speech and the expression of differences, has led to shallow thinking about cultural issues, and discourages reflection and debate about the qualities of different cultures. Mansur writes from the perspective of a Muslim classical liberal, and his liberal ideals appear to be the guiding principle behind his political and social philosophy. He rightly recognizes that the foundations of classical liberalism can be found in what he calls its "faith tradition anchored in

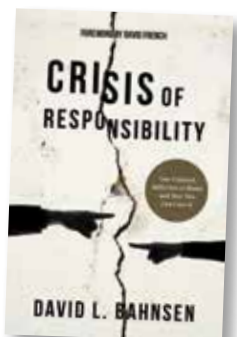
Judeo-Christian ethics," and while his arguments are based more on the primacy of liberal ideals than on the Christian principles that undergird those ideals, he puts forward a strong challenge to the accepted wisdom that has all but excluded every other opinion from public debate. The book does not make for the easiest reading, but it is a worthwhile contribution to what has become a very one-sided debate, not only in Canada, but in many parts of the world.

Those who are familiar with Matt Walsh know that he has a rather acerbic style, and that he pulls no punches when it comes to questions of culture and morality. While that style may rub some people the wrong way, I believe that it suits this subject perfectly, because it reveals the absolute absurdity of the transgender cultural phenomenon. His book *What is a Woman?* (2022, 253 pages) is basically a recapitulation of the documentary of the same title that came out earlier this year. Walsh sets out to answer what he refers to as "the question of a generation" – a question that many seem to be unable to answer. His journey takes him to various "experts" on the subject, medical and psychological professionals, as well as a transsexual who regrets her sex change surgery. Walsh also goes into some detail about the history of the transgender movement, revealing the often-sordid history behind the ideology and its promotion, and details the forces that are behind the spread of transgenderism today. In the end, the simplicity of the question (and its correct answer) is revealed through an account of Walsh's discussion of the issue with a group of Maasai people in Kenya, whose response to Walsh's titular question reveals



that it's not so hard to answer after all. *What is a Woman?* is a well-written and engrossing book, an informative and interesting read. It does include some foul language (albeit lightly censored with the use of asterisks), mostly in direct citations of Walsh's interviewees. With that proviso in mind, I do recommend this book as a revealing look at the true nature of the transgender movement, which reflects a worldview that cannot maintain itself, because it rejects the wisdom and truth of God himself.

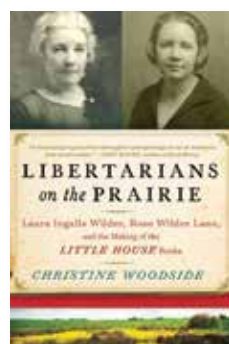
Regardless of the kind of problem we're considering, one question always seems to be close at hand: *Who is to blame?* Generally, our response is this: "Someone else." This has been true since the fall into sin, when the blame game was first played. But as the subtitle of David L. Bahnsen's *Crisis of Responsibility: Our Cultural Addiction to Blame and How You Can Cure It* (2019, 170 pages) says, our culture is addicted to insisting that everything negative is someone else's fault, and we as individuals cannot be held responsible in any way. It is this addiction to blame that Bahnsen takes on in this interesting and challenging book. While this book largely focuses attention on political and financial matters, its thesis is broadly applicable to all of life. Bahnsen leads the reader to consider his own responsibilities, and to examine the areas in his own life that need to change, and reminds us that we must take responsibility for our own actions and the results that those actions have. Bahnsen emphasizes that "what we need now is to end our addiction to blame and accept the responsibility that comes from being part of a society governed of, by, and for we, the people." I believe that Bahnsen shows a tendency toward under-emphasizing the deliberate work that has been done to undermine our culture by ideologues in the mass media, the political sphere, and the educational establishment. But at the same time, this book



offers a healthy corrective to those who are tempted to neglect their own responsibilities and cast the blame on one of the various institutions that he refers to as "the bogeymen."

I grew up reading and re-reading the "Little House" books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Fast-forward a few decades. The naivete of childhood long past, I was aware that the Little House books could not be an exact account of what had actually occurred in the lives of the Ingalls family and young Almanzo Wilder in 19th-century America. So it wasn't a shock for me to learn in Christine Woodside's *Libertarians on the Prairie: Laura Ingalls Wilder, Rose Wilder Lane, and the Making of the Little House Books* (2016, 259 pages) that the driving force behind the Little House books was actually Rose Wilder Lane, Laura Ingalls Wilder's daughter. A successful author herself, Rose Wilder Lane took her mother's writing (which itself took some liberties with the actual events upon which they were based) and rewrote the manuscripts, polishing them up and shaping them into the best-selling series of books that they became.

What is particularly interesting, however, is the way in which the political convictions, both of mother Laura and daughter Rose, shaped the stories that they told. Rose Wilder Lane is known as one of the mothers of American Libertarianism, and her book *The Discovery of Freedom* (first published in 1943) is still considered a must-read in libertarian circles. It was Laura and Rose's emphasis on personal freedom, personal responsibility, and self-reliance that shaped the message of the Little House books, as well as the events in the Ingalls family history that they chose to include, as well as exclude. *Libertarians on the Prairie* is a well-written account of the writing of the Little House books, an honest yet sympathetic look at the lives of the Wilder family and the books that made them famous. I highly recom-



mend this book to anyone interested in the history of the Little House books, or for anyone who enjoys history and biography.

THE EDITOR – JON DYKSTRA

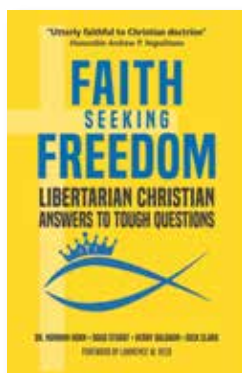
Every now and again I'll hand out a book to any nephews or nieces willing to give it a go. With Caleb Fuller's *No Free Lunch: Six Economic Lies You've Been Taught and Probably Believe* (2021, 138 pages), I've found the next book I'm going to pitch them. While Fuller addresses six lies, there is one truth he's trying to present: that every opportunity you pursue, comes at a cost. What cost? The time and money you put into it – and here's the important part – which can't then be spent on *other* opportunities. This "opportunity cost" could be known as the "you-can't-have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too principle" or, as the book title puts it, "there's no free lunch." So, then, when a government jobs program funds summer work for students, what we see are all the students who are getting jobs. But what we don't see is the opportunity cost to this program – we don't see all the other jobs (maybe even full-time positions) that companies might have started on their own – had the government not taxed them to fund their summer jobs program. Fuller shows how much damage is done by the well-meaning, but economically ignorant, and he highlights how there is, on many issues, a consensus among economists on both the Left and Right that politicians on the Left will simply defy. My only disappointment with this punchy book is that this Christian professor never makes plain *why* the Left fails and the free market works. He never mentions how the foundation for the free market – private property rights – is obedience to God's command, "Do not steal" (Ex. 20:15).

On occasion, I have described myself

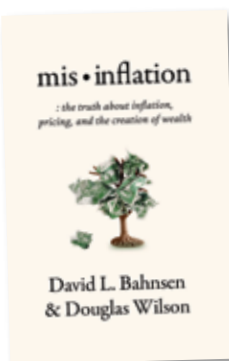


as a "libertarian Christian," meaning by it that I was for a much much smaller government. How small? Don't know, but we could cut for a long time before we'd run the risk of going too far. But libertarians can often be moral *libertines* seeing little to no role for the government in restricting prostitution, pornography, drugs, and even abortion. That's what prevents me from embracing the term. Still, I was curious to read *Faith Seeking Freedom: Libertarian Christian Answers to Tough Questions* (2020, 142 pages). It's an FAQ-style book by a group of writers who are not at all reluctant about describing themselves as Christian libertarians. The work's strength is in the unique ideas being expressed. Have you ever considered whether, in this Internet Age, the government should be funding libraries (and using your tax dollars to buy all sorts of inappropriate children's material)? Where else would you get hit with a question like that? The book's weakness comes in the divide the writers make between God's law as revealed in the Bible (his special revelation), and natural law which is the portion of God's law that's evident even to people who have never read the Bible (God's general revelation). On the issue of abortion, the writers basically elevate natural law to a position on par with or even above biblical law. The result is that they take an issue that is clear in the Bible – don't kill image-bearers of God – and waffle on it because, based on natural law alone, there might seem more room for arguing either position. They are choosing their libertarian values over their Christian ones here, and it's wrong. That's why, even as I remain a small-government proponent, reading *Faith Seeking Freedom* has made me more hesitant about labeling myself a "Christian libertarian."

Over the last ten years hyperinflation has wiped out the Venezuelan currency, reducing it to 1/40-bil-




lionth of what it once was. Are we next? What with Western governments' stimulus handouts, quantitative easing, and COVID emergency spending, why hasn't hyperinflation already hit us? That's the lead question that Pastor Douglas Wilson asks financial manager David Bahnsen in *Mis-Inflation: the truth about inflation, pricing, and the creation of wealth* (2022, 140 pages).



The book is a series of back-and-forth emails, with Wilson the interviewer, and Bahnsen (son of Reformed presuppositional apologist Greg Bahnsen), giving

his best replies. The short answer is that we probably don't need to worry about Venezuelan-type hyperinflation (and, consequently, don't need to start buying gold), but stagnating like Japan is a real danger. More important still was

a connection made between economic worries and the biblical parable of the talents – the unfaithful servant fearfully buried his talent, but we are called, even in economic downturns, to take what God has given us and seek a return on it to his glory. This small book takes some effort – it took me about three chapters to begin to understand what Bahnsen was explaining (though Wilson's questions did help unpack Bahnsen's answers). However, if you are interested in the topic, it has answers that don't seem readily available anywhere else, which makes it worth that effort! 

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7 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES Of Environmental Stewardship

by Levi Minderhoud

As environmental issues have become centerpieces in recent elections, policy-making, and public discourse, Christians must promote a biblical understanding of what the environment is, what humanity's relationship with the environment is, and what God's plan for the environment is. The mandate to care for the planet – including the animals, plants, land, water, and air – is a theme present throughout God's Word. Christians have a responsibility to articulate these biblical principles and to shape environmental public policy in a way that is consistent with Scripture.

Here are seven biblical principles about the environment and how humanity should interact with the non-human creation. These principles form building blocks for a Reformed Christian perspective on public policy concerning environmental care and expose flaws in other environmental perspectives.

PRINCIPLE 1: God, the Creator of all things, has commanded mankind to exercise fruitful stewardship over His creation

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."¹

Those opening words of Scripture form the foundation of environmental stewardship. Because He created the earth and everything in it, God is the sole proprietor of all creation. All of creation belongs to Him.² No human can lay *ultimate* claim over any aspect of creation – land, natural resources, or animals.

Nevertheless, God delegated authority over creation to humanity at the very beginning of history. In Genesis 1:28, often

called the *cultural mandate*, God commands mankind to

"be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."³

In Genesis 2:16, He also placed the man "in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Caring for the earth is one of God's purposes for humanity.

The first command in the cultural mandate – be *fruitful* – can be understood through the Parable of the Talents.⁴ In this parable, Jesus likens the Kingdom of God, which encompasses all of creation, to a master who entrusts his property to his

three servants. The servants understand that the property under their care is not ultimately theirs but belongs to their master. This master will eventually demand an account of how his servants managed his property. The two servants who fruitfully invested their master's money were rewarded. The third servant, who neglected to fruitfully invest it, was condemned for his unproductivity. If the servant who allowed his master's property to remain stagnant was condemned, how much worse would it be for a servant who deliberately wastes or ruins his master's resources?

This framework of fruitful stewardship over financial resources can also be applied to mankind's treatment of the rest of creation. God entrusts the non-human creation to humanity, not necessarily so

In the cultural mandate, God also commands humanity to multiply and to fill the earth... a growing population should be considered inherently good.



that humanity can simply preserve it in its natural state, but so that humanity might be fruitful with it.⁵ This requires mankind to develop and transform the earth's natural resources, while also preserving ecosystems that provide valuable goods and services to mankind and that declare the glory of God (see Principle 2).

Progress and development are implicit commands of God.⁶ As Dr. Cornelis Van Dam writes:

“The divine mandate involves harnessing creation’s resources and making the most of its potential while being careful to use the resources wisely... It is telling that although the world began with a garden it will end with a great and beautiful city.”⁷

At the end of our lives or at the end of the world, God will reward those who fruitfully managed the creation that He has given to humanity, but will punish those who have not repented from their neglect or active destruction of it. Fruitful stewardship is mandatory.

PRINCIPLE 2: All creation is valuable, but humanity, as the image-bearers of God, is the most valuable created being

Scripture demonstrates that the whole of creation has intrinsic worth in the sight of God.⁸ After each day of creation, God declared his creation to be good – day and night, land and sea and air, plants, sea creatures, birds, and all animals.⁹ He commands the living creatures to “be fruitful and multiply”¹⁰ and to “abound on the earth.”¹¹ After the great flood, God covenants with Noah *and* “every living creature” that He will never again destroy the earth with a flood (Genesis 9:8-17); in this passage, God mentions “every living creature” *six times*.¹² God also covenants with the *earth* (Genesis 9:13) and *the day and the night* (Jeremiah 33:19-25). The book of Job and the Psalms abound with descriptions of how God delights in His creation. Matthew 6:25-33 also illustrates God’s care for His creation; He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass of the field with glorious lilies. The various parts of creation, in turn, also declare the glory of their Creator.¹³

The environment also has value to man-



While God values all of His creation, He uniquely values mankind that He made in His image.... [God] set humanity to rule over the rest of creation.

kind.¹⁴ The resources of creation – food, water, air, stone, wood, metals – nourish us and allow us to improve our standard of living. Creation provides many ongoing services that are indispensable to human flourishing.¹⁵ For example, plants use photosynthesis to transform carbon dioxide into the oxygen required for human respiration.

Because creation is valuable both in the sight of God and humanity, God decreed how Israel was to exercise responsible stewardship over the environment in the Old Testament. Humanity was to allow animals to rest on the Sabbath¹⁶ and to treat animals well.¹⁷ Productive fruit trees were not to be cut down during the siege of a city, so that the productive capacity of the land would not be diminished.¹⁸ Even the land itself was supposed to rest fallow every seven years.¹⁹ Although these commands were made in the specific context of Old Testament Israel, the underlying principle to be responsible stewards over creation still applies.

While God values all of His creation, He uniquely values mankind that He made in

His image.²⁰ Although after every day of creation God pronounced His creation to be *good*, God declared that creation was *very good* only after His creation of man. Thus, humanity is not merely equal to the animals or some other part of creation. He set humanity to rule over the rest of creation and gave plants²¹ and later animals²² to humanity as food. God established His original covenant with humanity and made humanity the object of this covenant. And, in Matthew 6:25-33, Jesus says that if God devotes such care for birds and grass, how much more will He care for humanity?

Thus, a hierarchy exists in the created order.²³ God, the sovereign and providential Creator, presides over both humanity and the other parts of creation. Humanity, the image-bearers of God, is below God but above the rest of creation.²⁴ The non-human creation, although inherently valuable in the sight of God and man, rests at the bottom of this hierarchy. Humanity therefore should not adopt a “biocentric” philosophy that aims to preserve all life, nor an “ecocentric” philosophy that aims to preserve the environment in its natural

state, nor an “anthropocentric” view in which nature’s only purpose is to serve humanity. Instead, humanity should adopt a “theocentric” view of both caring for and subduing the rest of creation in a manner prescribed by God.²⁵

PRINCIPLE 3: God commands that humanity exercise both dominion and care over all of creation²⁶

In the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28, God commands humanity to have *dominion* over the earth and to *subdue* it. Theologians point out that the original Hebrew word for *subdue* (*kavash*) is a “fairly strong term” that “means to overpower, to conquer, to bring under control.”²⁷ This subduing of the environment includes extracting the natural resources of creation to increase human standards of living (both before and after sin infected the world). For example, God created hills out of which humanity “can dig copper”²⁸ and trees that men could “cut down” for wood.²⁹ Jesus both curses an unfruitful fig tree and suggests that it should be cut down, for “why should it use up the ground?”³⁰ The Mosaic Law prescribed a number of practices to prevent the spread of disease.

Unfortunately, our ability to properly exercise dominion over God’s creation is limited by humanity’s finitude and is marred by sin.³¹ Humanity has the capacity to overconsume, pollute, and destroy as we endeavour to exercise dominion over the non-human creation.³² Focusing only on Genesis 1:28 may lead us to think we have the “right to do anything we want to the earth”³³ – that the sole purpose of the environment is to serve as raw materials to fuel human needs and desires.³⁴ We might ignore the health of other living creatures or long-term sustainability.

In case humanity is tempted to simply exploit nature, God balances this command to *subdue* the earth by revealing His purpose for humanity: to *keep* (ESV), to *take care of* (NIV), to *tend* (NKJV), or even to *serve* (YLT) the garden.³⁵ Exclusive attention to this command in Genesis 2:15 may also lead to an incomplete understanding of environmental stewardship. Under a care-only philosophy, humanity is to preserve the environment the way



Human activity can cause catastrophic environmental damage (e.g. the Chernobyl nuclear disaster or the Exxon-Valdez oil spill).

it is, to never harm or kill animals, or to make conservation the highest calling of humanity.

Combining the commands of both of these verses (*subdue* and *serve*) may seem contradictory, but a proper Christian understanding of these terms makes them perfectly compatible. Authority and service go hand in hand within families, within government institutions, and within environmental stewardship.³⁶

Christians acknowledge that human beings have an imperfect capacity to exercise responsible stewardship over the rest of creation. This requires humanity to continuously refine and re-evaluate its exercise of dominion and stewardship over the environment. We should study how our activities may threaten animal species, interfere with a nutrient cycle, or pollute a water source. The solution to imperfect stewardship is not to abandon the responsibility of stewardship altogether, but to develop our stewardship techniques.

PRINCIPLE 4: God commands humanity to multiply and fill the earth

In the cultural mandate, God also commands humanity to multiply and to fill the earth, exercising stewardship – fruitfulness, dominion, and care – as they go.³⁷ Indeed, He scattered humanity when they failed

to spread out around the world.³⁸ Humanity’s capacity for multiplying and filling the earth expanded markedly with the Industrial Revolution and modern medicine, prior to which the world population grew much more slowly and numbered only in the hundreds of millions. Earth’s population has multiplied many times over in the past two centuries, reaching approximately 7.8 billion people in 2020. The UN projects that the human population will peak at around 11 billion by the end of the century.³⁹

Although this rapid population growth allows humanity to fulfil God’s command to multiply and fill the earth at a whole new level, this significant growth has come with growing pains. This growth has led to problems such as the overexploitation of natural resources and excessive pollution. However, these problems are the result of specific human choices and habits, such as rampant materialism and consumerism,⁴⁰ not simply the overall number of people. Although a large and growing population may exacerbate existing problems and even create new challenges, a growing population should be considered inherently good. Indeed, “inquisitive, creative, and resourceful human beings” are “the ultimate resource” in this world.⁴¹

Many secular environmentalists fail to recognize this. In their zeal to care for the

environment, they oppose both population growth and particular human habits. Some go so far as to claim that humanity is a parasite destroying the environment, worthy of eradication.⁴² But such a perspective ignores the fact that God has placed humanity as active stewards over His creation. Human multiplication must be considered “a blessing, not a curse.”⁴³

PRINCIPLE 5: Although God allows humanity to suffer the consequences of poor environmental stewardship, the end of history will occur according to God’s sovereign plan

A society’s eschatology – their view of how the world will end – will inform its policies on environmental stewardship. Secular environmentalists, ignoring the creation and providence of God, attribute the end of the world to human action or some natural disaster – an asteroid, a virus, or variation in the sun’s rays, for example. The fate of the planet rests in either the hands of humanity or the whims of chance.

A biblical worldview, however, understands that all of history, including the end of this world, is directed by God. God “created heaven and earth and everything in them” and continually “upholds and rules them by His eternal counsel and providence.”⁴⁴ This includes animals, plants, and the physical environment. God upholds His creation in ways we describe as *laws of nature* (e.g. the law of gravity, the law of thermodynamics, the law of biogenesis, etc.). Indeed, these laws of nature illustrate the covenant faithfulness of God.⁴⁵ Although humanity may mistakenly ascribe these laws of nature to nature itself, Christians know that these laws are issued by a Supreme Lawgiver. Absolutely nothing in creation occurs without God’s direction or permission.

Despite the reality of God’s providence, God also allows humans to suffer the natural consequences of their actions. Adam and Eve’s disobedience and its consequence – the introduction of sin and evil into a good world – profoundly changed creation.⁴⁶ As a consequence of man’s actions, God said:

“Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of

your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.”⁴⁷

These thorns and thistles represent how all of creation has been impacted by the Fall. Because of the original human sin, the living creation now naturally experiences suffering, sickness, and death.⁴⁸ Romans 8:19-23 also speaks about how “creation was subjected to futility,” is in “bondage to corruption,” and is “groaning together in the pains of childbirth.”

In the same way humanity must continue to grapple with the environmental effects of sin today. Human activity can cause catastrophic environmental damage (e.g. the Chernobyl nuclear disaster or the Exxon-Valdez oil spill). A basic Christian eschatology does not “guarantee that some form of global or cosmic catastrophe [resulting from the actions of humanity] will be averted,” just as we do not believe that any natural catastrophe – a devastating earthquake, hurricane, or volcanic eruption – will be averted because of God’s promise to Noah.⁴⁹

Although God allows humanity to suffer the environmental consequences of sinful actions or negligence, the fate of the world is in God’s hands, not in human hands.

Many prophesy that human activity will cause an environmental apocalypse, while others envision a technological utopia. Christians should reject both visions as unfounded. Although human care and dominion may contribute to the redemption or reconciliation of creation, only God can ultimately fix the sin and brokenness that afflicts this world.⁵⁰

PRINCIPLE 6: God created the environment to be simultaneously resilient and dynamic⁵¹

God created every individual organism, plant, animal, person, and the wider environment with an astounding resiliency. The human body, for example, can survive weeks without food, can heal cuts to its skin, and can run a marathon. The earth also has positive and negative feedback loops that keep weather patterns predictable, animal populations in check, and nutrients recycling themselves all across the globe.

However, the environment is also fragile.⁵² Microscopic doses of certain natural and man-made drugs are lethal.⁵³ An extra copy of a particular gene on a particular chromosome causes Down syndrome. The eruption of a single volcano – such as the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 – can

The environment is both astonishingly resilient and also fragile.



temporarily lower the world temperature and cause local or global famines. A single virus like COVID-19 can kill millions of people worldwide.

The environment is sufficiently resilient to support huge numbers of people, even well beyond the current number, without apocalyptic impacts to our atmosphere, oceans, or critical habitats, if managed well.⁵⁴ This is a comfort to Christians who rest in the sustaining, providential care of God who will bring history to its conclusion in His timing. But the environment is not so resilient that we can do whatever we want without regard for our impact on the environment. The fragility of the environment necessitates the exercise of environmental stewardship by Christians and non-Christians alike so that we do not reap the consequences of our unwise actions.⁵⁵

PRINCIPLE 7: Although cost-benefit analysis is an important tool to determine the wise use of resources, cost-benefit analysis cannot be completely comprehensive

Many attempts to preserve or exploit the environment stem from an incomplete assessment of the value of the environment. Carefully weighing the costs and benefits is required in effective environmental stewardship.⁵⁶ Of course, the challenge is to account for *all* the relevant costs and benefits (e.g. monetary, health, and environmental costs and benefits across wide swaths of the human population) as much as is reasonably possible.

These costs and benefits cannot be properly estimated by experts in any single field. Although ecologists, biologists, chemists, and atmospheric and environmental scientists may lead the evaluation of the effect on the environment, experts in other fields – economics, political science, law, ethics, sociology, and psychology – must also contribute to developing the best human response.

However, much debate exists about how to value the benefits that the environment provides and the cost of disturbing the environment. Some secular environmentalists, immersed in their study of nature, assign almost infinite value to the natural environment. Other professionals and laypersons, ignorant of the existence of

many goods and services that the environment provides, assign virtually no value to the environment. Both forms of creation's value mentioned earlier – its intrinsic value in God's sight and its utilitarian value to humanity – must be considered when estimating costs and benefits.

It is impossible to precisely appraise this value that God places on His creation and plug it into a cost-benefit equation. Instead, Christians should marvel at the handiwork of God, remembering that humanity is a steward of *His* creation. Even if a forest did not help convert carbon dioxide into oxygen or its trees provide useful timber for construction, it still reflects God's creativity and praises Him; it should not be destroyed without ample cause, even if humanity cannot assign monetary costs and benefits to it. Thus, although empirical cost-benefit analysis is critically important, the moral component of environmental stewardship must be considered as well.

CONCLUSION

These seven principles outline a faithful Christian understanding of environmental stewardship that is fundamentally different from a secular understanding of the environment. Christian environmental stewardship recognizes that the environment is the creation of God and properly understands the responsibility of humanity, as the image-bearers of God, to exercise stewardship over the resilient yet fragile environment. Although humanity should carefully consider the consequences of their actions, Christians understand that God – not man – controls the end the world.

May each of us be active, biblical stewards of the world that God has entrusted to our care! RP

Levi Minderhoud is the BC Manager for ARPA Canada (ARPACanada.ca) where he endeavors to bring biblical principles to bear on political issues of all stripes. In his spare time, he enjoys playing hockey, tickling the ivory, sharpening his wits with a good board game, and fellowshiping with friends and family. He and his family reside in Mission, BC, and attend the neighboring Abbotsford United Reformed Church. A version of this article complete with endnotes is available at ReformedPerspective.ca/7principles or by scanning the QR code with your phone.



The Timothy Project

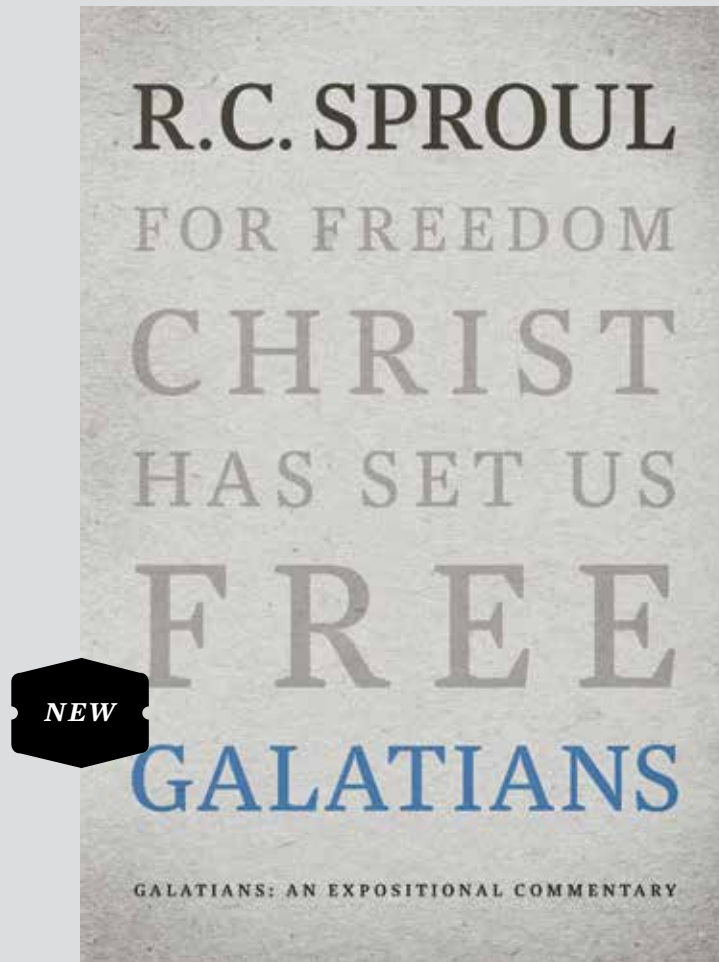
A number of years ago, we made you aware of the work of the *Reformational Study Centre* being done by our sister churches in South Africa for furthering the gospel and preparing men for service in the churches. This has been a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel of Christ with those who otherwise would not hear it. Over the years, this ministry has continued to expand, and every day receives requests for theological material from Christian users in more than 60 countries across the world.

The Vineyard Church in Lincoln has partnered with the Timothy Project to raise the funds to support this ministry that has powerfully affected the lives of so many. We are writing with the express intent that you

2 Timothy 2:2
"...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

Cheques may be addressed to Vineyard CanRC with Timothy Project in the memo line and sent to: Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church attn. Elsa DeVries 4628 John Street, Box 831 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0 Receipts will be issued as requested. Please forward questions to us at info4timothyproject@gmail.com

prayerfully consider our request for donations to support this worthwhile project. In Christ, the Timothy Project Committee



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JAMIE SOLES:

"THEY THAT SPEAK OF ME"

OR WHY YOU, TOO, SHOULD LISTEN TO JAMIE SOLES

by Mark Coolen

I like Jamie Soles! From his music telling Bible stories for kids to his versifications of the Psalms there is something for every Christian in his repertoire. As his website, solmusic.ca, says, "If you love how the whole Bible testifies of Jesus, you will love this music!"

A BIT OF HISTORY

We've been listening to Jamie Soles for a long time. Our boys grew up on his Bible stories from albums like *The Way My Story Goes* and *Fun and Prophets*. To give you a bit of a taste of some of my favourites, I'll share some excerpts. My son Isaac and I once performed "Chariots" from *Fun and Prophets*. Imagine these words sung in a lovely, boyish treble.

I won my heart's desire when a chariot
of fire
And a horse named Blaze took my
master away.
Imagine my delight to behold such a
sight
Of Elijah in flight on the wind.

Soles turned stories about lists of kings and apostles and repeated sacrifices by Jewish tribal representatives into memorable and singable songs that prompted questions and looking up of Bible passages. We are indebted to him for helping us to teach our children the Bible because, as he put it in "These Are They," "stories are your biblical A-B-Cs."

These are only part of it,
This is but the start of it,
Stories are your biblical ABCs! Now...

All these stories, they show My glories.
These are they which speak of Me.

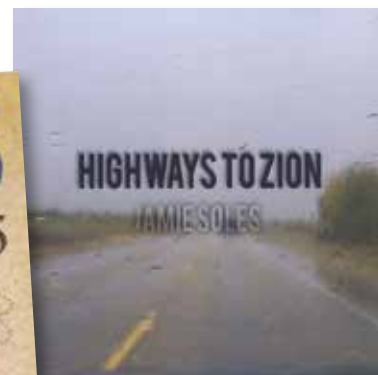
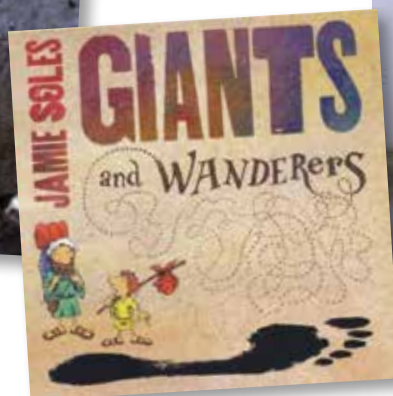
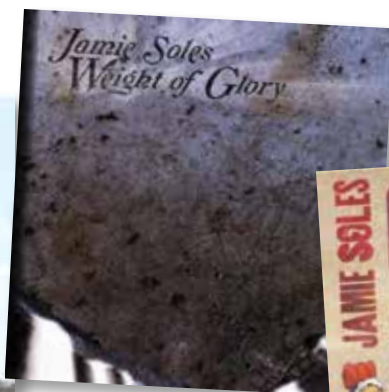
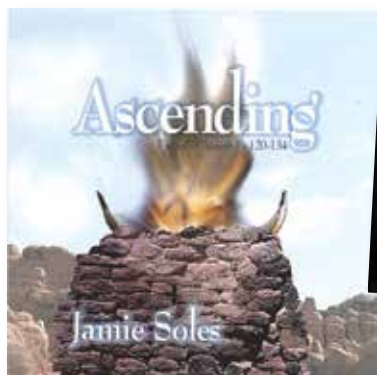
I think we were introduced to Jamie Soles back when we lived in the Hamilton area. I played violin at our church and was teaching music to one of our pastor's daughters. We visited with their family a lot, and on one visit the children

came to me and excitedly asked me to listen to "This is the Sign," which is about the covenant significance of circumcision. It begins with God explaining his covenant to Abraham:

Ninety and nine seems a long time
But I have been waiting longer than
you have
To give you My Word that you've
become Mine
The father of kings and nations...

I remember thinking, "Wow! That's not something most people write a song about." I've been hooked ever since.

We took our boys years later to one of Jamie's concerts, and met up with him at Ontario Christian Home Educators' Connection (OCHEC) conferences as well. His music is still a part of our lives and I find myself humming tunes like "These are the Prophets" and "Jesus to





the Rescue” on a fairly regular basis. I’ve even purchased his albums as gifts for friends on more than one occasion.

WHY I’M TELLING YOU ABOUT THIS

Music is a big deal! It’s an important way to teach your children about God’s word. It’s also an important way to help fill your heart with scripture and worship. Music is obviously an essential aspect of corporate worship on Sundays as well.

The thing is, Christian music should be skilfully done and it should be theologically sound. Jamie Soles delivers on both counts. You can’t go wrong with teaching his songs to your kids, and you can’t go wrong with walking around humming them yourself either.

Until my family was introduced to Jamie Soles, the music that often played in my head when reading scripture came from the libretto of Handel’s “Messiah” or Mendelssohn’s “Elijah,” not to mention the songs of Michael Card. But now, as I read through Numbers 23 I hear the

sounds of “Dust of Jacob.” Jamie’s songs will be with my family and me for the rest of our lives, and we’re thankful.

Soles’ music is very difficult to categorize. It ranges from what sounds a bit like folk to songs that are more akin to rock and roll. But his music and his words always suit each other and he seems to always have a fresh take on a biblical theme or a little-known Bible story. It doesn’t hurt that his wife and his children have often been a part of his albums and their contributions make many of his recordings that much better.

I highly recommend Jamie Soles’ music. You can find all of his albums on Spotify and you can purchase them as CDs or MP3 downloads at SolMusic.ca.

I want to leave you with one song that I especially love. In “Gates of Nain” Soles’ wife Valerie sings the poignant story of Luke 7:11-17 from the perspective of the widow whose only son has died. My sons call me a softy, but this never fails to bring me to tears, mainly because of the widow’s realization that this man is the

great prophet whom God has finally sent to Israel.

*Through my tears I see the crowd has grown
A Man approaches with compassion shown
He says, “Do not weep.”
And our march of death and time stands still
Nothing could prepare me for this
What could have prepared me for this....
He spoke to my son, my dead son, my only son
And He told him to arise, and he did!* **RP**

Christian music should be skilfully done and it should be theologically sound. Jamie Soles delivers on both counts.



ON BAKING MORE PIE...

With *Reformed Perspective* being given away for free, how is that going to impact Christian publications that rely on subscriptions?

That is a fair question, first raised after *RP*'s decision five years ago to move away from subscriptions to a donor-supported model. And it has become all the more relevant now that *RP*'s circulation has grown to over 10,000 copies each issue. To ask it another way, are we undercutting our competition?

We don't think so, because we don't believe this is a competition. Our hope is that *RP*'s expansion can be a blessing to magazines like *Christian Renewal*, *WORLD*, *Clarion*, *The Messenger*, *By Faith* and more. Allow me to explain.

There isn't just a limited number of readers out there who'd be interested in solid Christian publications – there isn't just a "small pie" to draw from. It's not like, if one publication gets bigger, they can only do so by slicing off a bigger piece of the pie for themselves and, consequently, leaving less for the others. That simply isn't an accurate analogy.

What we've been doing is making *RP* freely available to an ever larger group of people – this last issue went to all the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) affiliated churches in Canada. We're not cutting ourselves a bigger piece of the same old pie; instead, we are making the pie itself bigger. We're reaching people who might not read *any* Reformed magazine, or consider paying to subscribe to a publication like this.

We're also reaching people who were never exposed to *RP* in the past and don't even know it exists. By publishing all our content online, and distributing it through a variety of means (website, e-newsletter, podcasts, and social media) we're reaching over 1,000,000 a year, from all around the world. The majority of these visits are from people who don't even attend confessional Reformed churches in Canada. Instead, they are people who have come across our resources through social media and





Google searches, and appreciate what we have to offer.

To add to all of this, it isn't even accurate to say that *RP* is the same "pie" as the quality publications listed above. Although it is more similar to some, by and large we are producing content that is unique from these others, and through different channels.

If you are looking for meditations and reflections from Free Reformed church leaders and about Free Reformed matters, *The Messenger* (FRCNA.org) is the place to go! If you are looking for something similar, but Canadian Reformed, that is what *Clarion* (ClarionMagazine.ca) is for. And be sure to subscribe to *By Faith* (ByFaithOnline.com) if you are interested in the PCA churches. *Christian Renewal* (CRMag.com) is similar to *Reformed Perspective* in including content on culture and society. But its specialty is coverage of Reformed church life and developments, which we don't tackle (with a few minor exceptions).

So why do we need to see this as a competition? Why can't we be edified by numerous sources? Our secular neighbors are happy to read the print version of the *Toronto Star* while also subscribing to the social media channel from the *Globe & Mail*. We can benefit from multiple Christian publications too. In fact, these publications can sharpen and help each other.

Speaking personally, I have been educated and shaped by these magazines my whole life. My family has long subscribed to *Christian Renewal*, *Clarion*, and *By Faith*. On top of this we get *WORLD* magazine. If you have been following *RP* since this spring, you likely know that *WORLD* is a bit of an inspiration to us. And when I reached out to the leadership at *WORLD* to share our hopes and plans for *RP*, they weren't the least bit cold to us, and didn't view us as competition. They welcomed us with open arms and encouraged me to stay in touch so that we can work together moving forward. *WORLD* is so much further ahead than *RP*, and much larger, but they are primarily American. Our hope is to benefit from programs they offer, like the World Journalism Institute (WJI.world). Likewise, our hope

is that over time *RP* can nurture a growing team of writers and contributors in Canada, who can go on to bless a wide variety of causes and publications, including those listed above.

So please subscribe to quality publications like *Christian Renewal* (CRMag.com) – \$48 for a year's worth of quality information, delivered to your mailbox every few weeks, is a bargain. Nobody is making any profit from it. I would also encourage you to add a subscription to your denominational magazine, as well as *WORLD* (WNG.org). Even if the cost is \$175 per year for the three, it'll be worth it. Professionals typically pay a couple thousand dollars for a simple professional development course – consider this your spiritual development fund, for your whole family! For those who have the means, go beyond a subscription and give them a donation too. None of these publications can survive from subscriptions alone. Behind each of them are small and large donors who give humbly and generously of their time and money.

There is one kingdom, and it belongs to our LORD Jesus Christ. And as kingdom citizens we aren't competing with one other. Instead, we can seek to amplify each other's efforts, growing Christ's kingdom by working alongside each other in love. RP

Mark Penninga is the Executive Director of Reformed Perspective. To support the work of Reformed Perspective scan the QR code below with your phone to go to RP's donation page, or visit ReformedPerspective.ca/donate.





THIS MAGAZINE IS

(not actually)

FREE!

The cost to print and ship the issue in your hands right now is about \$24,000. This is being graciously covered by 565 donors who want to see a *Reformed Perspective* shared freely with the world.

RP's budget for 2022 is close to \$325,000. This includes paying a team of 11 staff and contractors, two of which are full-time and two are volunteers. Although this is a lot of money, the impact is massive. Through our websites, social media, e-newsletter, podcast, and magazine, our reach is over 1 million. Looking at the print magazine alone, if each magazine is read by just two people, that is over 20,000 readers – equivalent to the largest NHL arena at full capacity.

Unlike most media in Canada, *RP* doesn't benefit from government funding. We rely on donations for about 90% of our funding (with advertising covering the other 10%).

If you are unimpressed with the mainstream media and see value in an alternative based on the rock-solid foundation of God's Word, will you come alongside these 565 donors so that we can continue this work into 2023?

Go to www.ReformedPerspective.ca/donate for donation options via credit card and pre-authorized debit. E-transfer can be sent to admin@reformedperspective.ca while cheques can be mailed to **Reformed Perspective, Box 3609, Smithers BC, V0J 2N0**. All donations will receive a charitable tax receipt.



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