

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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PERSPECTIVE

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Loving our Indigenous Neighbors

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The lesson that's being lost

Our governments need to stop indoctrinating children

by Jon Dykstra

As history teachers never fail to remind us, “those who don’t learn their history are doomed to repeat it.” The double meaning is most often lost on their students – that if they don’t pull up their grades, they’ll be doing History 11 next year too. But as adults it’s the original intent of this adage that we too often overlook: that if painful lessons of the past are forgotten, then we’re going to feel that same pain again. That’s especially true when it comes to the history of Canada’s Indigenous residential school system, where one of the key lessons is being lost.

As Canadians have become aware, the

history of the schools is a history of sins being committed against the country’s Indigenous peoples. The sins were of two different sorts, and both have been publicly acknowledged, especially in recent years. But sadly, only one of the two is being universally rejected.

1. IDEOLOGICAL INDOCTRINATION

The first sin involves the indoctrination of Indigenous children. It’s been more than a decade now since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) started traveling the country to collect testimonies about Canada’s residential schools. As a nation, we learned about

how the schools had been intended to teach the children a government-approved ideology, even over the objections of their parents. When the TRC report was released in 2015, the chief justice of Canada’s Supreme Court, Beverley McLachlin, said the findings amounted to “cultural genocide.” The chair of the TRC, Justice Murray Sinclair, agreed with her assessment:

“The evidence is mounting that the government did try to eliminate the culture and language of Indigenous people for well over a hundred years. And they did it by forcibly removing children from their families and placing them within institutions that were cultural indoctrination centres.”

2. ABUSE

It’s the second sin that’s dominated recent headlines. In May of 2021, news broke that “a mass grave filled with the remains of 215 Indigenous children, some as young as three...” had been discovered on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. The reaction across the country was immediate: impromptu memorials appeared, and flags were lowered and kept at half-mast for the next half year. Just a few days later a bill passed unanimously in the House and Senate that declared a new statutory holiday: Sept. 30 would be the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Today, eighteen months later, it’s starting to look like this mass grave might not be a grave at all – no bodies have been unearthed. But the initial reports made headlines across the country, and around the world, and in the process brought



IT'S STILL HAPPENING: Sooke School District students on a public school system float in the 2019 Victoria Pride Parade. The government has never stopped using schools as cultural indoctrination centers. (Picture credit: Blake Elliot / Shutterstock)



INDOCTRINATION CONDEMNED: Justice Murray Sinclair, who headed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, called the residential schools “cultural indoctrination centres.” (Picture credit: Art Babych / Shutterstock)

more attention to the physical harms that had been done within the schools’ walls. The TRC had interviewed more than 6,000 former students and staff, and their testimonies included thousands of instances of molestation and all sorts of physical abuse. The Kamloops mass grave might not be real (and as Mark Penninga notes further on in this issue, it is important to find out one way or the other), but the outrage it spawned brought renewed attention to very real sins of the past.

A DIFFERENCE

Two sins were committed in the residential schools, but our governments are only repenting of one. They are repenting of the past abuses, even as in the present they continue to use their schools to indoctrinate another generation.

It’s the unrepentant and ongoing nature of this sin that makes it the more pressing to deal with. We need to recognize, too, that the problem isn’t simply that it continues, but that it’s built right into

the system. The abuse was a matter of neglect, while the indoctrination was a matter of deliberate design. As League of Canadian Reformed School Societies coordinator John Wynia noted in a recent Real Talk episode:

“In residential schools, parents of First Nations children had their kids taken away from them. The idea was to assimilate them into the ideology of Western society, so that they could fit, and that has had devastating impacts on the Indigenous community. And it is recognized as a terrible thing, but it will be interesting to see whether that lesson of history is applied to the sexual orientation and gender identity movement.”

Will that lesson be applied? It hasn’t been to this point. The reason the lesson is being lost is because the connections between past and present aren’t being made. In a January 5 article the *National*

WHAT’S INSIDE

This issue, on Canada’s residential schools, owes a debt of thanks to the organizers of the “Indigenous Perspectives in Reformed Schools” conference that took place in November of last year, in Langley, British Columbia. Reformed educators from across Canada came to discuss how best to teach about First Nations, their spirituality, their history, their politics, and about what was done to them in Canada’s residential schools. Four of our five feature writers either spoke at that conference or attended it.

While I’m always hoping each issue will be read front to back, this time around I’m a little more focused: I’d love it if you read all five of the feature articles. We’re tackling an important chapter in Canada’s history that has in the past been seldom told, and in the present is often badly told. But in this issue, we have five brothers bringing five very different emphases, and yet, still united in their shared biblical perspective. Reading their contributions, I was reminded of Prov. 18:17, which might be the Christian journalist’s credo: “The first to state his case seems right, until another comes and questions him.” How do we get to the heart of a story? By turning to many counselors, hearing from the first, and then listening to how the second writer (and the third, and the fourth...) expands on what the first offered. This is what’s meant when you hear that the whole is even greater than the sum of the parts!

And if you appreciate this issue, remember it’s all available online, and easily shareable at ReformedPerspective.ca. – JD

Post's Tom Blackwell highlighted a current and devastating example of how government schools are still deciding they know better than parents what's best for their own children:

"When a student in a Calgary Grade 6 class came out as transgender this year, the teacher made one thing clear to the other pupils: they mustn't let slip their classmate's new gender identity to her parents. The couple was not yet aware of the change. It seemed like an odd message for a group of 11-year-olds, says the mother of one of the pupils. 'This upset me so much,' she says. 'Kids were being taught to lie to parents.'"

Blackwell clearly doesn't like what's happening. But he didn't make the connection to what happened in the residential schools. He didn't recognize that this is just more of the same.

The lesson is even being lost on the victims. Instead of opposing today's "cultural indoctrination centres," Indigenous

groups are trying to use government schools to present their own ideology to students. In British Columbia, for example, university education students have been required to include one of nine "First Peoples Principles of Learning" in their lesson plans. Some of the principles are pretty mundane, more Dale Carnegie or Jordan Peterson-esque than anything specifically Native. "Learning involves patience and time." Sure. Okay.

But the very first principle reads:

"Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors."

Learning does *not* support the spirits and the ancestors. And pushing that on education students is a promotion of a Native spirituality, over and against Christianity.

In November of last year, Canadian Reformed teachers in Western Canada came together for an "Indigenous

Perspectives in Reformed Schools" conference and I was allowed to tag along. One of the speakers, Patti Victor, is a Pentecostal pastor, a member of the Stó:lō, and a First Nations advisor for Trinity Western University. I asked her what she thought about the government requiring more First Nations content in the curriculum, regardless of what parents might want. She conceded that the approach was less than ideal, but argued that sometimes less than ideal means have to be used to push forward what needs to be done. She didn't recognize that this same sort of thinking – pushing a certain ideology even against parents' wishes because it's for the kids' good – would have been a motivation for the residential schools too. She wasn't making the connection either.

LOST NO MORE

Our history teacher's adage has proven itself true: Canada hasn't learned from its history, so we're doing it all again. Even when a government or First Nations leader expresses horror at how residential schools were used as "cultural indoctrination centres," they don't apply the lesson to what's going on today. Of course, it's no surprise that our governments aren't making those connections. But what they won't do, we can. When Sept. 30 comes again this year we can voice the lesson that's been lost: that education is a God-given parental responsibility, and government will never be up to the task.

To demonstrate the government's inability, we can remember what happened in the residential schools, and make the connections no one else will, to the horrors going on in government schools today: the far from safe-sex that's taught, and the gender confusion, depression, and anxiety that's being fostered. We can explain that this is all a fruit of what the government's schools are teaching about God. As R.C. Sproul put it:

"Every education, every curriculum, has a viewpoint. That viewpoint either considers God in it or it does not. To teach children about life and the world in which they live without reference



REPENTING OF THE PAST, BUT NOT PRESENT SINS: The caption for this June 1, 2021 stock photo noted it was part of a "memorial in tribute to 215 aboriginal children whose remains found in Residential School in Kamloops." While the 215 graves look like they won't turn out to be graves at all, their "discovery" shifted attention from the ideological indoctrination that was behind the creation of these government schools to the physical and sexual abuse that were not. This shift of focus has allowed our governments to get away with repenting only of their past abuse, even as their schools unrepentantly continue ideological indoctrination to this day. (Picture credit: Wandering views / Shutterstock.com)


to God it to make a statement about God. It screams a statement. The message is either that there is no God or that God is irrelevant. Either way the message is the same.”

For generations residential schools taught First Nations children that their parents were irrelevant. Today’s schools teach that God is irrelevant too. It all has to stop.

CONCLUSION

While “stop indoctrinating children!” is a good message, God’s people – and specifically our Reformed churches – can give the rest of our country so much more. God has gifted us with Christian schools, and while we aren’t going to open the doors to the rest of Canada, we can invite them to come take a look. They’ll need to: the government has been running its schools for so long, the average Canadian can’t even imagine how education could be done any other way. We can show them there is another way: parental schools do exist! We’ll need to invite our friends, neighbors, and coworkers to come see what a family and a community looks like when parents are taking up their God-given educational responsibilities.

This isn’t about showing off our bricks and mortar, textbooks and curriculum. It’s about taking off the bushel and letting our light shine. Shy sorts that we are, we might not want to invite our neighbors’ scrutiny since we know we’re far from perfect. We’ll need to remember this really isn’t about us; what we’re showing off is that God’s ways are best, and how it’s only because we’re listening to Him that we have fruit to show. Our homes aren’t perfect, but they are calmer, our kids better adjusted, harder-working, less troubled, kinder and happier – they are a light! So we should invite the world to look, and tell them that it has nothing to do with us, and everything to do with our God.

And, finally, we can invite our fellow Canadians to imagine what it would look like in their own families, communities, and in the country if parents everywhere took up their God-given responsibilities to shape and mold their own children. 

Hope Reformed Christian School

Hope Reformed Christian School is a Christian K-12 school in Paris, Ontario, serving the local Reformed Christian communities of southwestern Ontario. We offer a Christ-centered, Reformed education, nurturing and developing the students’ God-given gifts, character, and Biblical faith for the glory of God and the building of His Kingdom.

Due to staff moving, maternity leaves, and an expanding student population, we are currently accepting applications for the 2023-2024 school year for the following:

Kindergarten Teacher - (part time, every other day)

Primary Elementary Teacher - (full time)

Junior Elementary Teacher - (full time)

Intermediate Elementary Teacher - (part time – 50%)

Elementary and/or High School French Teacher

High School Teacher – Various subject areas - (full and/or part time)

High School Teacher/ Vice Principal - (full time)

We are looking for passionate applicants who are new or experienced and seek to serve Jesus Christ in the area of Christian education, as well as submit to Biblical truth as summarized in the Ecumenical Creeds and the Reformed Confessions.

Please submit a resume with a statement of your philosophy of education, a statement of faith, and references, including one from your current pastor. Inquiries and/or applications can be forwarded to: **Mr. J. Kikkert, Principal**

331 German School Road
Paris, ON N3L 3E1

Via email: principal@hopercs.ca

Phone: 519-448-9913

www.hopercs.ca

The Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School



invites applications for the following possible positions for the 2023-2024 school year:

Primary teacher

Junior teacher

Intermediate teacher

Educational assistant

Part-time French specialist

ACRES is on a 100-acre property in a beautiful rural area in Niagara/Haldimand. We serve several Reformed churches in the area, and are blessed with a close-knit staff, a supportive community and a student population of over 200.

For more information, please contact the principal, Mr. Clarence Blokhuis at principal@acreschool.ca

Applicants should be members of a Canadian Reformed Church or sister church. Applications for teachers should include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of education and two letters of reference.

Applications for educational assistants should include a resume, a statement of faith and two letters of reference.

Applicants interested in a part-time job-sharing position are also welcome to apply.

Applications may be sent to hrcomm@acreschool.ca



NEWS

IN PERSPECTIVE

POPULATION OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST COUNTRY BEGINS TO DECLINE

BY MARK PENNINGA

For the first time since the early 1960s, deaths have outnumbered births in the world's largest country –over the course of 2022 China's population shrunk by 850,000. This development was a long time coming, as the country has seen a steady decrease in births since the 1970's. That is thanks in part to China's One-Child Policy, which stayed in force till 2015, and which penalized parents for having more than one child. The Communist government has been trying to reverse the downward trend since then, but with no success. China's fertility rate is a dismal 1.28 children per woman, and still decreasing each year. To simply stay stable, a country's fertility rate needs to average out to 2.1 children per woman, the two children to take the place of their two parents in the next generation, and the .1 to account

for the fact that not all children reach adulthood. According to the *Globe & Mail's* coverage:

"no country has successfully reversed birth-rate decline, which tends to track with development, as wealthier, urbanized populations choose to have less children."



"China's demographic and economic outlook is much bleaker than expected," demographer Yi Fuxian commented in response to these findings. China is realizing quickly what Psalm 127:3 proclaims: "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from Him."

However, even as China is being confronted by this truth, Canada and much of the Western world continues to discourage children and is relying on immigration to keep the population and economy stable or growing. But where are these immigrants coming from, and what happens when these countries too need people? And if no country has been successful with reversing a decline, what happens when the world's population begins to decline, as is expected later this century?

Through birth, fostering, and adoption, Christian families have an opportunity to show to the world the gift that life is.

CRYPTO COMPANIES LOSING EMPLOYEES, LOSING PUBLIC TRUST

BY MARTY VANDRIEL



In early January, several firms involved in cryptocurrency announced that they would be reducing the size of their workforces significantly. Genesis, Coinbase, Blockchain.com and Crypto.com are all seeking to cut costs as they experience fallout from the huge decline in the value of various cryptocurrencies in 2022, and from the well publicized collapse of cryptocurrency exchange FTX. Some of these firms are laying off employees just a few months after their last round of downsizing in the fall.

Public trust in companies involved with cryptocurrency has been steadily dropping, after several high-profile firms were found to have defrauded investors of billions of dollars: some of these companies operated very much

like old-fashioned “Ponzi” schemes – guaranteeing rates of return much higher than could be realistically expected, and paying out investors “profits” with funds deposited by new investors, without any underlying real business activity.

Some analysts are predicting huge returns for crypto investors this year, while others predict a decline. Just days apart, CoinShares’ chief strategy officer predicted a \$15,000 to \$30,000 range for Bitcoin, while Skybridge Capital’s founder foresaw prices from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per Bitcoin in two or three years.

Why the huge fluctuations, and price uncertainty? A recent paper by the investment firm Starkiller Capital observed that:

“cryptocurrencies have very little intrinsic value in the sense that a long track record of... valuing these assets using a generally agreed upon set of fundamental variables does not exist.”

While a Christian could perhaps use cryptocurrency as a payment system, *using* is not the same as *investing*. Because cryptocurrency has “little intrinsic value,” putting your retirement money into it is simply speculative, gambling rather than investing.

In Proverbs, Solomon reminds us of the value of hard work and diligence, and the foolishness of seeking shortcuts:

- “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.” – Prov. 12:11
- “Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.” – Prov. 13:11
- “In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.” – Prov. 14:23

If an investment looks “too good to be true,” or promises something that no one can guarantee, perhaps we could read a few chapters from Proverbs to keep us from a foolish path.

SPERM COUNTS PLUMMET

BY MARK PENNINGA

An Oxford Academic journal has found that human sperm concentrations have dropped an average of 51.6% in the past 45 years, from 104 million to 49 million sperm per milliliter of semen. The findings are based on data from 223 papers that looked at sperm samples from 57,000 men from 53 countries worldwide.

Declines in concentration were seen throughout the world, and the rate of decline seems to be increasing – to 2.64% annually since the year 2000.

According to a report from the *Guardian*, previous studies suggested that sperm count begins to affect fertility when it decreases beneath 40 million per ml.

Reactions to the study have been mixed, with some experts arguing that we need better data to determine with certainty that sperm counts are decreasing. There also isn’t clarity on what may be causing the decline, with sugges-

tions including chemicals or environmental factors that are impacting the development of preborn boys. Others suggest that smoking, drinking, and a poor diet all contribute.

It’s important to note, though, that while the fertility rate has been plummeting throughout the world since 1963 – when it was 5.3 children per woman, compared to about 2.3 today – this decline is not because couples are unable to have children. Rather, through abortion and birth control, children simply aren’t welcomed into many lives any more. Canada’s rate is a dismal 1.4, meaning that our population would be plummeting if not for immigration.

The very first command God gave to humanity was “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Young men and women, let’s not get old trying to discern God’s will for our lives when much of His will is printed in black and white in His Word. Find a godly spouse, get married, and embrace the gift of children if you are able. He knows what is best for us.

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 welcomed, with 6-month or 12-month appointments considered.

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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 to work with vulnerable people.

Conditions and salary are based on the 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.ca



ABORTION WAS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN 2022

BY JON DYKSTRA



According to the organization Our World in Data, 67 million people died in 2022. Among the leading causes of death were heart disease (approximately 15 million), cancer (10 million), and stroke (3 million).

But nowhere in that list was the actual number one cause of death. And the overall 67 million death toll estimate was nowhere near the true number. As the World Health Organization reports:

"around 73 million induced abortions take place worldwide each year... 3 out of 10 of all pregnancies, end in an induced abortion."

The true death total for 2022 was, then, approximately 140 million, of which 52% of them – *over half* – were murdered before they were even born. More people died of abortion than of cancer, heart disease, car accidents, war, COVID, stroke and absolutely everything else, combined.

SOURCE: [Deadorkicking.com/death-statistics/worldwide/2022/](https://deadorkicking.com/death-statistics/worldwide/2022/)



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NO, DINOSAUR TISSUE ISN'T IMMORTAL

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

Paleontologists believe they have discovered a nearly fully preserved “dinosaur mummy” while on a scouting trip in Dinosaur Provincial Park, northeast of Brooks, Alberta. The tail and part of the hind leg of a juvenile duck-billed hadrosaur can be seen poking out of a hillside.

“It’s so well preserved, you can see the individual scales, we can see some tendons, and it looks like there’s going to be skin over the entire animal,” Brian Pickles told *USA Today*. Pickles is a paleontologist and ecology professor at the University of Reading in the U.K.

The research team estimated that the animal died about 75 million years ago, which brings up an obvious question: how can animal tissue or protein survive for this long a time period? Writing for *Answers in Depth*,

a publication of *Answers in Genesis*, Dr. Kevin Anderson has previously reported that

“Biochemical decay studies demonstrate that even under ideal conditions detectable levels of collagen (a long-lasting common protein found in all animal bones) do not survive even more than a million years.”

Further, the presence of other common but less long-lasting proteins such as actin and tropomyosin is “further direct biochemical evidence that dinosaur fossils are not millions of years old.” As scientists find more and more examples of intact protein and



tissue in dinosaur bones and fossils, the evidence is mounting that dinosaurs lived recently, just thousands, and not millions of years ago, with the likely cause of all these fossilized remains being the world-wide catastrophic flood recorded in Genesis 7.

SOURCE: Orlando Mayorquin's "Dinosaur mummy": Researchers believe they found one of the best preserved dinosaurs ever" posted to USA Today.com Sept 13, 2022; Kevin Anderson's "Are Dinosaur Proteins Virtually Immortal?" posted to AnswersInGenesis.org, Dec 15, 2017
PICTURE CREDIT: Daniel Eskridge / Shutterstock.com

THE PROBLEMATIC PUSH FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVs)

BY AARON BOSSCHER



Electric vehicles (EVs) are the way of the future. Maybe you aren’t convinced, but our “higher-ups” are – political leaders in Canada, and in US states like California and Washington, are so confident about EVs that they have announced plans to cut out the internal combustion engine in a matter of years. For example, California Governor Gavin Newsom wants all new cars to be electric by 2035, just a dozen years from now.

LifeSiteNews.com contributor

Jeremy Williamson, in his article “Trudeau wants 60% of new cars to be electric by 2030. That’s both stupid and dangerous” spends some time pointing out some small details that may throw a wrench in Trudeau’s plans.

1. EV sales are way down in Canada, making increased EV production risky for any manufacturer who wants to make money.
2. EVs are expensive and are outside of the average family’s budget. With the recent surge of inflation, they are not getting cheaper any time soon.
3. There is little infrastructure for charging EVs. The Canadian government plans on installing 85,000 charging stations across the country within four years. For reference, there are currently 12,000 gas stations across the country.

4. Researchers have shown that lithium-ion batteries, stored in below-freezing temperatures, can damage their housing and reduce their storage capacity. If this damage allows the chemicals to mix, fires may occur. That’s quite a problem for a cold country like Canada.
5. Then there is the ethical dimension: there are reports of thousands of children being “employed” in cobalt and lithium mines, with human rights abuses widespread.

Although promising, EV technology has a long way to go before it can be considered a viable alternative to the internal combustion engine. Any sort of hardline date, therefore, is more about pandering to the green energy crowd, than a realistic goal.

PICTURE CREDIT: Marc Bruxelle / iStockPhoto.com.

BC TEACHER FIRED FOR NOT BACKING DOWN ON CAUSES OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL DEATHS

BY MARK PENNINGA

After four decades as a teacher, Jim McMurtry was fired February 21st by the Abbotsford School District. McMurtry shared in a tweet that he was “charged with ‘extremely serious misconduct’ for teaching residential school deaths [were] mostly from disease, fires, accidents.”

According to an article by *National Post*’s Michael Higgins, the incident that led to McMurtry’s firing happened two years ago. Shortly after the news broke of the 215 “unmarked graves” at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in 2021, one of McMurtry’s students said that priests had murdered and tortured the children. McMurtry responded by explaining that most children at residential schools died from disease, especially tuberculosis. Within an hour, McMurtry was being disciplined for his comment in the classroom.

But was he right? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission devoted years to studying the deaths at residential schools and its report concluded that where the cause of



death was known, the most common cause was tuberculosis. Unfortunately, this didn’t align with the narrative that the Abbotsford School Board wants to advance. “Mr. McMurtry’s personal opinions regarding residential schools were seen in contradiction to the truth and reconciliation work that is currently underway in the District,” the board report said.

McMurtry has a master’s degree in the history of education and a doctorate in philosophy of education, specializing in Indigenous history. That may explain why he didn’t back down. “There’s people who believe that Canada is systemically racist and that all our ancestors were monsters. And I’m the person who is saying, ‘Well, let’s debate it. Let’s look at it.’” He added

“Teachers are walking on eggshells on all sorts of issues. Teachers need to stop now and say, ‘Enough is enough.’”

It isn’t just the Abbotsford School District that’s on the offensive. In response to growing questions about the news reports of unmarked graves, NDP MP Leah Gazan told the *CBC* that she plans to draft legislation to “outlaw attempts to deny that genocide and make false assertions about residential schools.”

In a sense, it might seem a small thing to note that the deaths at the schools were in large part due to tuberculosis and not torture and murder. After all, the blame for the deaths of children who caught tuberculosis at schools that they were forced to attend could also be laid at the government’s feet. So McMurtry wasn’t defending the government here or the priests. What he was defending was the truth of the matter. And the truth is critical if we care about justice and reconciliation.

SOURCE: Michael Higgins’ “Truth ignored as teacher fired for saying TB caused residential school deaths,” posted to *NationalPost.com* on Feb. 21.

CANADA TAPS THE BRAKES ON THE RUNAWAY EUTHANASIA TRAIN

BY MARK PENNINGA

After the Society of Canadian Psychiatry (SCP) sounded the alarm late last year, the government of Canada has now temporarily put the brakes on its expansion of the country’s already liberal euthanasia regime. It had planned to make euthanasia available to the mentally ill as of March 2023, but is giving the system more time to get ready. The SCP’s warning was based on clinicians’ current inability to assess when a mental illness is or is not “irremediable” (i.e., irreversible/incurable). The SCP asserted as a given that euthanasia shouldn’t be given to people who may still recover. So, their argument went, since we can’t yet tell when someone with a mental illness will or won’t recover, it is prema-

ture to be offering it to the mentally ill.

The organization Dying with Dignity, which has been leading the charge for state-sponsored death in Canada, was upset by this decision. “We must avoid creating barriers that will prolong grievous suffering.” Sounding very similar, Justice Minister David Lametti said:

“Remember that suicide generally is available to people. This is a group within the population who, for physical reasons and possible mental reasons, can’t make that choice themselves to do it themselves.”

Before Canada legalized assisted suicide back in 2016, ARPA Canada urged the Supreme Court of Canada

and the federal government to recognize that once the sacred line of the 6th Commandment is crossed, condoning some killing, it will become impossible to draw a new line that will hold. The past six years bears this out. Our society no longer knows which suicides should be prevented and which should be celebrated as an expression of choice.

Lobbying government to stop (and reverse!) the train is important and needs to continue. But given that the train keeps roaring down the tracks, the Church needs to do what it can to get people off the tracks. More than ever before, Canada needs to hear the hope of the Gospel, which gives meaning to all lives. Have your neighbors heard it?

Australian Christian couple wins discrimination case against foster care agency

by Marty VanDriel



In 2017, Byron Hordyk, a self-employed carpenter, and his wife Keira Hordyk, decided that they could open their home to provide foster care to needy children. The Hordyks, who are members of Baldivis Free Reformed Church (FRC) in Australia, applied with Wanslea Family Services, a Perth-based agency that connects families with foster children, among other services.

During the application process, the Hordyks were asked how they would deal with a child who was homosexual, or began to be interested in homosexuality. The couple had made clear that they were interested in providing short-term care to young children under the age of five (since their oldest at that time was about six years old), so this line of questioning seemed a bit out of place. (Some of the questions dealt with how the Hordyks would deal with reports from school about same-sex attraction or gay activity.)

Byron and Keira answered honestly that they would not be able to encourage homosexuality. As Christians, they believe that a gay lifestyle is against the Word of God, and therefore they would not be the best fit long term for a child who persisted in pursuing that way of living. The Hordyks made clear that the

agency would not need to immediately remove the child from their home, and that they would still show love and support to such a boy or girl while in their care.

Ultimately, Wanslea Family Services rejected the Hordyks' application in 2019, marking their case file as "assessed not to meet competencies" (although they were earlier judged to be suitable to become foster parents). Despite the fact that there is an enormous shortage of families willing to provide foster care in Western Australia, the agency did not believe that the Hordyks were fit to give a home to needy children, simply because of their Christian view of homosexuality.

Disappointed, Byron and Keira sought legal advice from John Steenhof, a lawyer and fellow FRC member. Steenhof saw the potential importance of the case for religious liberty and against religious discrimination, and took on the case pro bono. (Steenhof at the time was working in private practice, and has since gone on to join the Human Rights Law Alliance.) He recommended that the Hordyks challenge Wanslea Family Services' rejection as discrimination under Western Australia's Equal Opportunities Act. The Act states that it is unlawful for a person who provides services to discriminate against another person on the basis of their religious or political conviction.

Giving testimony to the Tribunal along with the Hordyks was Rev. Wes Bredenhof, frequent contributor to *Reformed Perspective*. Bredenhof provided an extensive written background of the Free Reformed Churches, showing that the Hordyks' belief that homosexuality is sinful has long been a shared stance of confessional churches that take the Word of God seriously, such as the FRC.

This past December, over five years after the Hordyks' initial application, the

State Administrative Tribunal ruled in their favor, deciding that Wanslea Family Services had treated the Hordyks unfairly, and awarding them damages of \$3,000 each. Many news agencies including ABC News in the US, and newspapers all across Australia covered the court case, often with an antagonism to God's warning against homosexuality.

Lawyer Steenhof believes the case is an important one for religious freedom and against discrimination. He wrote that:

"this landmark case demonstrates how societal hostility to religion – and especially Christianity – is increasing, especially within our institutions. Christians who established, grew and then gave to Western cultures their key social institutions such as hospitals, universities, aged care facilities and foster care agencies are now facing increasing exclusion from those very institutions."

After five years in this process, the Hordyks are eager to put this chapter of their lives into the past. They have gone on to have two more children, and are not likely to re-apply to become foster parents, since they would have to start all over again, and their personal circumstances have changed. Through discrimination against Christianity, Wanslea Family Services has removed from the pool of potential foster homes a family that could have provided loving care for kids in their community. Christians may hope that the Hordyks' perseverance in this case, and the hard work of their legal advisor Steenhof and others, may result in more fair treatment for potential foster families in the future.

The Lord has not promised us an easy road here on this earth, but Christians in the western world have become

accustomed to relative freedom to hold to the timeless truths of the Bible. We are seeing more and more that the world is rejecting God's truths, and wants to outlaw speech and thought that calls sin what it is. May the Lord provide courage to us all to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet doing so with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). RP



COURT DECISION "A WELCOME DOSE OF BALANCE AND COMMON SENSE"

by John Steenhof

The recent decision by the State Administrative Tribunal that Byron and Keira Hordyk were discriminated against because of their religious views is a landmark case that demonstrates how societal hostility to religion – and especially Christianity – is increasing, especially within our institutions.

As supported by expert evidence in the case, the Hordyks' beliefs on marriage were consistent with those held by almost all branches of the Christian faith up until the sexual revolution of the mid-20th century, "that marriage is a lifelong relationship between one man and one woman; all extra marital sexuality is contrary to the Bible. Homosexual lusts and behaviors are contrary to the Bible and that there are two fixed genders or sexes, namely male or female."

Wanslea Family Services considered the Hordyks' views unacceptable. This is increasingly common in many Australian institutions. The Hordyks were rejected as potential foster parents not because they were unsuitable to provide a temporary home for vulnerable toddlers, but because they held unacceptable religious views.

The Hordyks are not alone in falling afoul of these institutional purity tests. In 2022, Andrew Thorburn at the Essendon Australian Rules Football

Club was forced to resign because he held the wrong views. In 2021, the Australian Christian Lobby had venue bookings cancelled by the Western Australian government because their Christian beliefs were inconsistent with "diversity, equality and inclusion."

This increasing animosity to religion can be attributed to a variety of factors: the increasing secularization of Australian society generally, the irresponsible and hostile reporting of religious issues in the media, the ascendancy and triumph of LGBTQ dogma in Australian culture, the hard fusion in popular discourse of Christianity with the evils of colonialism, and the fragmentation and polarization of civil dialogue in a social media age.

Whatever the causes, these cultural trends should be of concern to all Australians. While heteronormative Christians are the target today, there is no reason why this cultural trajectory will not progress to declare other social and political convictions as anathema and beyond the pale.

The recent Essendon public apology to Andrew Thorburn, and the Hordyk decision are a welcome dose of balance and common sense in an otherwise fevered cultural environment.

The tenacity of the Hordyks in seeking vindication through a gruel-

ing 5-year process demonstrates that there is value in pushing matters to the Courts past the loud cultural voices that have captured many of Australia's institutions and which have declared Christianity anathema and unsafe.

A pluralistic and multicultural society requires the participation of a variety of people with diverse and conflicting religious beliefs, political convictions and personal opinions. The friction lines between competing views will often be difficult to adjudicate, but the Courts have shown that, regardless of the prevailing ideological fashions of the day, religious Australians must be given a fair go.

John Steenhof is the Principal Lawyer at Human Rights Law Alliance (HRLA), founded in 2019 to "provide assistance, advice and advocacy to ordinary Australians under attack for living out their faith and convictions in public." Find out more about the HRLA at HRLA.org.au. John and his wife Lana have six children between the ages of 6 and 19, and now live in Canberra, Australia's capital, where they attend Southside Bible Church, a Reformed evangelical church.

A CALL TO ACTION:

by Mark W. Slomp

Many Canadians, Christians included, are unfamiliar with the painful history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Chief Dan George, born in North Vancouver and former leader of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, provides a summary of this history and its impact on Indigenous peoples, and he suggests a path to healing:

“My culture is like a wounded stag that has crawled away into the forest to bleed and die alone. The only thing that can truly help us is genuine love. You must truly love us, be patient with us and share with us. And we must love you with a genuine love that forgives and forgets ... a love that forgives the terrible sufferings your culture brought ours when it swept over us like a wave crashing along a beach ... with a love that forgets and lifts up its head and sees in your eyes an answering look of trust and understanding.”¹

Chief Dan George’s words, written 50 years ago, remain relevant today and it is especially important that we, as followers of Jesus Christ, consider the extent to which we know the history he references and the extent to which we are demonstrating understanding, genuine love, and compassion to our Indigenous neighbors, as fellow image bearers of our God.

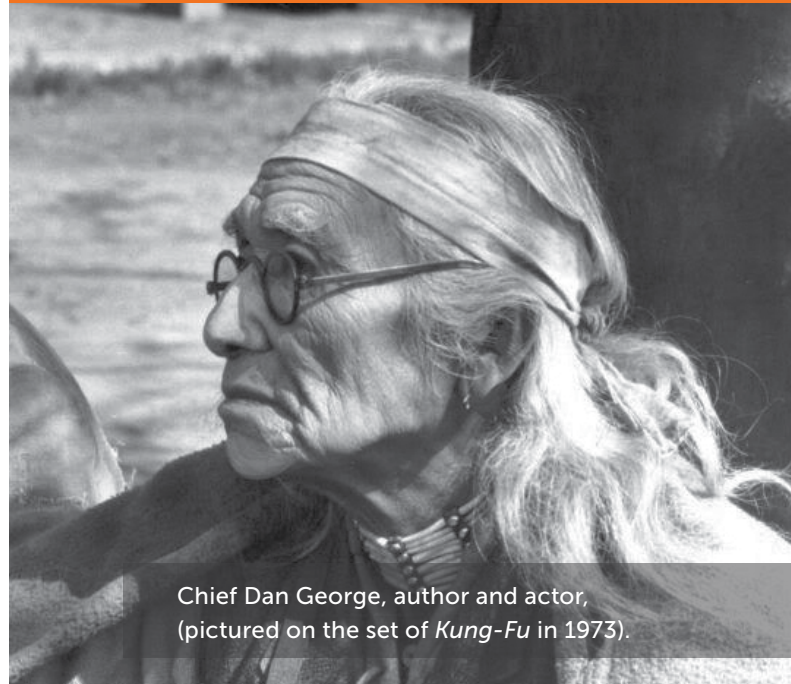
PURSUING THE TRUTH

God calls us to pursue knowledge, truth, and understanding. The emphasis on knowing rightly in Scripture means pursuing biblical truth, and truth about the reality of the world as God created it, but it also includes pursuing historical truth.

So, what is the truth of the Indigenous experience in Canada? What are the sufferings that Chief Dan George references? A quick survey of Canadian history will suffice to provide some of the broad strokes.

Shortly after Confederation, the Canadian government looked to realize the potential of the West and to fully realize a country from “sea to sea.” One of the challenges was Indigenous land title. Government officials entered into treaties with Indigenous peoples beginning in the 1870s when they realized that they could not afford to engage in “Indian wars” as were happening in the United States. At the time, the United States was spending \$20 million on its Indian Wars and Canada’s entire budget was

LOVING OUR INDIGENOUS NEIGHBORS



Chief Dan George, author and actor, (pictured on the set of *Kung-Fu* in 1973).

\$20 million.² A simple economic calculation swayed the government toward pursuing treaties rather than fighting.

Interestingly, Indigenous peoples recognized that education was necessary to help their communities adjust to changing economic and social circumstances. As a result, they insisted that schools, teachers, and teachers’ salaries be included in the treaties negotiated in the 1870s. The early treaties called for on-reserve schools, and from Treaty Seven (1877) onward, the treaties committed the government to pay for teachers.³ There was no mention of residential schools when these treaties were signed – rather the focus was on the establishment of schools, on the reserves, for the instruction of Indigenous children.

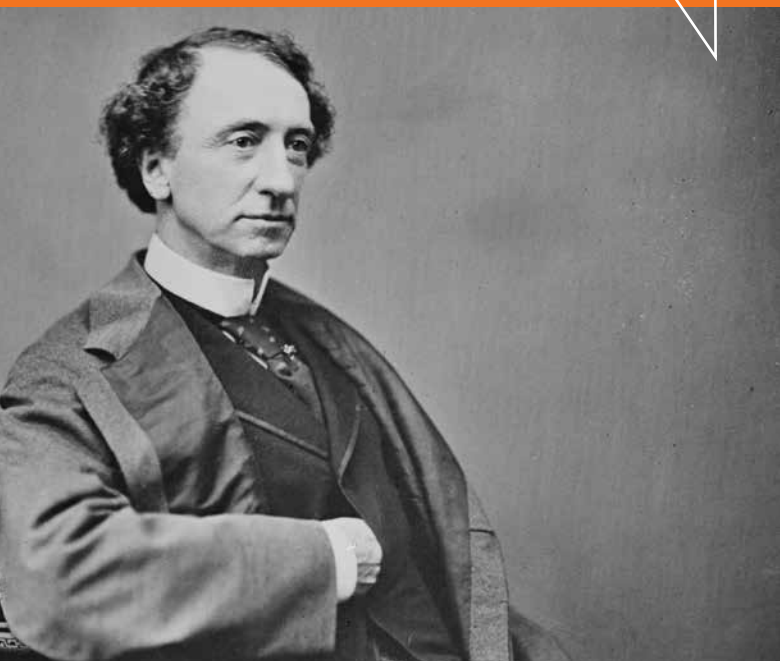
A MISGUIDED APPROACH

The Davin Report signaled the beginning of residential schools. Nicholas Flood Davin was appointed by the federal government to investigate the boarding school system in the United States. In 1879, he submitted his report. He concluded that Indigenous peoples should not have a voice regarding the

character and management of their schools. Rather, he recommended that Indigenous children be removed from their families and communities and that the federal government partner with Canadian churches to provide Indigenous children an education off-reserve.⁴ Christian churches – forgetting that God gives children to parents, and not to the State or Church⁵ – agreed to this arrangement and supported the removal of children from their families and communities to eradicate their culture, language, and beliefs.

When these schools were established, their goal of dismantling Indigenous culture, language, spiritual beliefs, and practices quickly became evident. Residential schools were seen as preferable to on-reserve day schools because they separated

“...Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.”



children from their parents, who were certain to oppose such intentions. Residential schools were, therefore, not established to meet the government's treaty obligations to provide schools (which were supposed to be on reserves), but to further its long-term aim of ending the country's treaty obligations by assimilating its Indigenous population.

The prejudice and racism that formed the foundation of the residential school system can be seen clearly through the words of those responsible for putting this system in place. Nicholas Flood Davin stated:

“... As far as the Indian is concerned, [l]ittle can be done with him. He can be taught to do a little farming, and stock-raising, and to dress in a more civilized manner, but that is all ... Indian culture is a contradiction in terms. They are uncivilized. The aim of education is to destroy the Indian.”

John A. Macdonald, Prime Minister during this chapter of Canadian history, similarly commented:

“When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who has learned to read and write.”

Additionally, he said:

“It has been strongly impressed upon myself ... that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.”

Duncan Campbell Scott, former Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, revealed similar views when he opined:

“Indian children in the residential schools die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this does not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is geared towards a final solution to our Indian problem.”

Throughout their history, residential schools were chronically underfunded, and the quality of education provided was exceedingly low (designed to ensure that it would only prepare students for menial work). The quality of the education provided has been described as:

“inappropriate education, often only up to lower grades, that focused mainly on prayer and manual labour in agriculture, light industry such as woodworking, and domestic work such as laundry work and sewing.”⁶

EARLY CALLS FOR THE SCHOOLS' END

Already early in the 1900s, voices were calling for an end to the schools over death rates and poor health conditions. In 1908,

federal Indian Affairs minister Frank Oliver concluded that the “attempt to elevate the Indian by separating the child from his parents and educating him as a white man has turned out to be a deplorable failure.”⁷

Similarly, Dr. Peter Bryce, Medical Inspector to the Department of the Interior and Indian Affairs (and, incidentally, also a Presbyterian elder) was vocal about the serious failings of these schools after extensively touring them. Known as the “whistleblower of residential schools,” Bryce wrote numerous reports and newspaper articles about the exceedingly high rates of disease and death found in these schools.

Duncan Campbell Scott acknowledged these grim realities – in a review of the Department of Indian Affairs’ first forty-five years he wrote that “fifty percent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education they had received therein”⁸ – but he did nothing to change course. Instead, he forced Bryce out of office, and eliminated the position of medical inspector.⁹

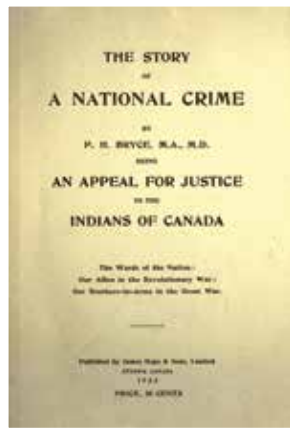
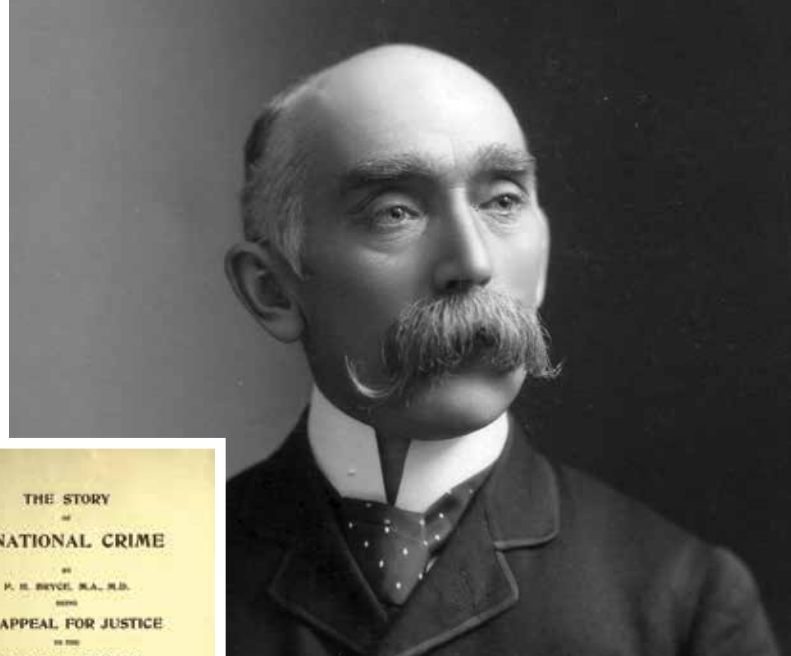
In 1925, after being forced out of office, and after being ignored by government officials at all levels for nearly two decades, Bryce published *The Story of a National Crime: An appeal to justice to the Indians of Canada*. However, all his protestations, over several decades, fell on deaf ears because of a government, and a Canadian public, rife with prejudice.

DURING THE 100 YEAR HISTORY...

The number of residential schools rose and fell during its 100+ year history, but the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement formally recognized the existence of 139 such schools spread across Canada. The Roman Catholic Church operated most of the schools, up to 60 percent at any one time. The Anglican Church operated 25 percent of them, the United Church operated about 15 percent, and the Presbyterian Church ran 2 or 3 percent.

Over 150,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families by the RCMP between the establishment of these schools in the 1870s and the closure of the last school in the mid-1990s. While in the schools, students frequently encountered emotional, physical, sexual (schools knowingly hired convicted “child molesters”), and spiritual abuse as well as barbaric punishments (duly recorded by federal bureaucrats and officials with the churches that ran the schools) such as being shackled to one another, placed in handcuffs and leg irons, beaten with sticks and chains, and sent to solitary confinement cells for days on end.¹⁰

The Missing Children Project (formed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate student deaths at residential schools) recorded more than 4100 deaths, including more than 500 unidentified children (although the actual number is believed to be much higher). In some residential schools, 20 to 75 percent of students died. Pneumonia, influenza, beatings, injuries from being thrown, accidents, fire, drowning, infection, freezing deaths, a fall downstairs, lack of professional medical treatment, and poor overall health were among the many ways that students died.¹¹



After being forced out of office, and after being ignored by government officials at all levels for nearly two decades, Bryce went straight to Canadians with his findings.

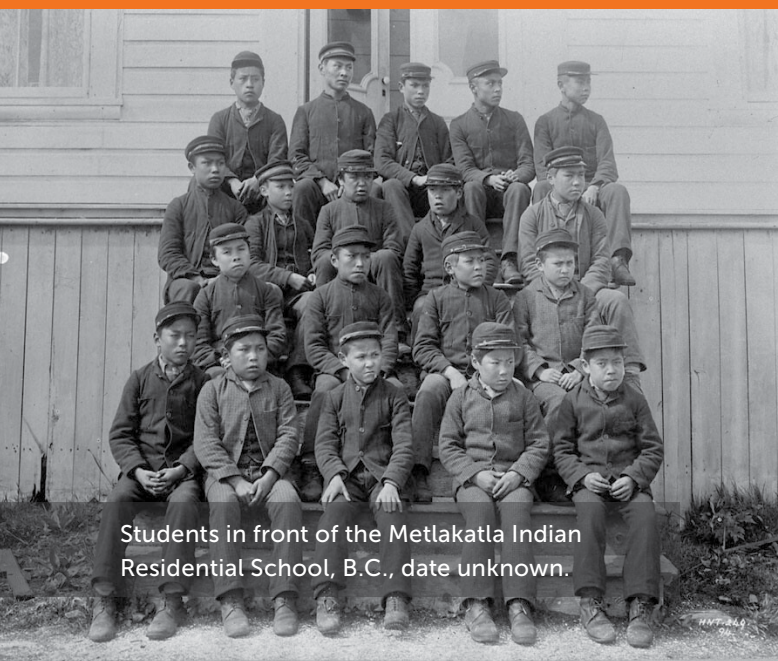
That is the truth of the Indigenous experience in Canada. Waves of suffering have swept over their communities – sadly, often at the hands of those who professed to follow Jesus Christ. The removal, by force, of Indigenous children from their homes to impose the Christian faith and eradicate their culture, language, and spiritual beliefs was a grievous evil masquerading as righteousness. The effects are still being felt today due to the resulting disintegration of families and communities. Successive generations of Indigenous children passed through these schools such that:

“The impacts began to cascade through generations, as former students – damaged by emotional neglect and often by abuse in the schools – themselves became parents. Family and individual dysfunction grew, until eventually, the legacy of the schools became joblessness, poverty, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdown, sexual abuse, prostitution, homelessness, high rates of imprisonment, and early death.”¹²



Students at the Blue Quills Residential School, Alberta, 1940

...many children were taken by the government – and their families simply never saw them again.



Students in front of the Metlakatla Indian Residential School, B.C., date unknown.

As Jonathan Van Maren notes, one can only imagine how Dutch-Canadian communities, for example, would react to the same intrusion on parental and religious rights. He comments,

“[Through residential schools] children were forcibly removed by the state from their families for the express purpose of destroying their family bonds and eradicating their language and culture. I hail from the Dutch diaspora in Canada, and like many immigrant groups in our multicultural patchwork, our communities have remained largely culturally homogenous. Imagine if the Canadian government had decided, at some point, that Dutch-Canadian (or Sikh or Ukrainian or Jewish) culture needed to be destroyed for the good of the children in those communities, who needed to be better assimilated. Then, imagine if the government forcibly removed children as young as three years old from the parental home – state-sanctioned kidnapping. At school, they were deprived of their grandparents, parents, siblings, language, and culture – and told that their homes were bad for them. At the end of the experience, if the child survived disease, abuse, bullying, and loneliness, he or she would have been remade in the image of the state—and community bonds would have been severed and many relationships irrevocably destroyed. The children who died of disease were often buried on school grounds. That means many children were taken by the government – and their families *simply never saw them again*. Imagine, for just a moment, if that was *your* family. If *you* were removed from your family. If *your* children were removed from you. How might you feel about Canada if her government had, for generations, attempted to destroy everything precious to you? It is a question worth reflecting on.”¹³

It is indeed worth reflecting on. And it is also worth reflecting on how you would feel about Christian churches if you'd known that they were an integral part of the establishment, and operation, of these schools. Additionally, it's worth reflecting on whether religious and parental rights exist for everyone. If we, as Christians, insist on our religious and parental rights should we not protect those same rights for others?

While some Indigenous people reported having positive experiences in these schools, the premise of these schools was seriously misguided and the evidence of the damaging effects of these schools is overwhelming. And it is important to note that this history is recent with many survivors of these schools still alive today.

FUNCTIONING AS AMBASSADORS OF JESUS CHRIST

This begs the question: How should we respond as followers of Jesus Christ to these historical events and to the effects they have had on Indigenous people to the present day?

As mentioned earlier, we first need to be knowledgeable about the history of Indigenous people in Canada. As followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot be content with holding opinions based on a lack of awareness. One of the ways we can pursue the truth is by

educating ourselves and by listening, with humility and compassion, to the stories and experiences of Indigenous people. We should invite them into our homes, our schools, and our churches. We should build bridges of knowledge, understanding, and love with our Indigenous neighbors.

In addition, we need to consider how we should function as ambassadors of Jesus Christ to a people who have experienced much injustice, prejudice, and racism. Augustine once commented that a Christian is a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps. We do well to consider how we are exhibiting the mind, voice, heart, and hands of Jesus Christ to our Indigenous neighbors. Do they find us to be compassionate, full of grace, lovers of truth and justice or do they find in us a prideful and judgmental attitude and a lack of desire for justice and truth? As we read in Micah 6:8:

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

God is clear about the premium He places on the dignity and worth of every human being (whom He made in His Image) and the priority He places on justice and compassion.

Finally, this chapter of history provides an opportunity to reflect on how the gospel message should be spread. In the case of residential schools, the gospel was spread through force, by contravening parental and religious rights, and was imposed upon Indigenous people. But we must remember that God's Word should never be imposed; rather, it should be proposed. As Chuck Colson once stated,

“[Christians are] seen as wanting to impose our views on people. Don't let them tell you that. We don't impose anything; we propose. We propose an invitation to the wedding feast, to come to a better way of living. A better way of life. It's a great proposal.”¹⁴

Ambassadors of Jesus Christ need to ensure that their witness draws others in to know more about Him who loves truth, justice, mercy, gentleness, compassion, and kindness. Much brokenness remains in Indigenous communities and Christians need to be part of the healing by truly exemplifying the love of Jesus Christ. RP

Dr. Mark W. Slomp is a Fellow with the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. He is a Registered Psychologist and holds a senior leadership role in a Canadian university. He is also the founder of “XP

Counselling, Speaking & Writing” focused on the promotion of the flourishing life in Jesus Christ. He can be reached at xp.counselling@gmail.com for inquiries about speaking, counselling (career and personal), and writing.

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Coaldale Christian School

CCS is a growing K-12 Reformed School with over 200 students in beautiful Southern Alberta, offering Prairie town living in an amiable community of believers. We are 15 minutes away from the historic city of Lethbridge (pop. 104,000), and 2.5 hours from the heart of the Rocky Mountains. \$400,000 gets you into an established neighbourhood, with new subdivisions to select from. 330+ days of full sunshine comes free.

coaldalechristianschool.com



Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

Inviting applications to fill the following positions:

Elementary Teacher

Duties to commence **March 13, 2023**

This position will start as a Grade 2 maternity relief position, with anticipated vacancy(s) in the 2023/24 school year.

Elementary Vice Principal

Duties to commence August 1, 2023

High School Teacher

Duties to commence August 1, 2023

Strengths in English and Social Studies would be an asset for the high school position.

Applicants need to have a B.Ed and be a member of a Canadian Reformed Church or one with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship.

Inquiries may be directed to

Principal, Jeff Van Raalte
(403) 345-4055 | jeff.vanraalte@coaldalecs.com

Applications may be sent to

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Tragedy, resistance and change

Glimpses into the Lejac Residential School near Fraser Lake, BC

by Dave Penninga

The following is based on numerous original letters, reports and other primary source correspondence that is available online.

It attempts to provide some insights and context into a 10-year period (1937-1947) in one of the many residential schools set up by the Canadian government to assimilate and educate Indigenous children.

FRIGID ESCAPE TO FREEDOM

The five boys walked steadily along the tracks, heading east toward freedom. They no longer glanced over their shoulders to see if they had been spotted or were being followed. It was 5:00 PM and darkness had already descended, since it was January 1st and daylight was scarce up in north-central British Columbia.

As evening turned into night, the temperature kept dropping from an already cold -20 °C toward -30 °C. The boys had been hoping to leave earlier, but since it was a holiday at their boarding school, lunch had not been served until very late – 4:30 PM – and they had less than two hours before their absence would be noticed at supper.

Paul Alex, who was ten and the oldest, was having second thoughts about running away and trying to make it home to their village of Nautley about 12 kilometers

distant. It was so cold, but if they turned around now they could still make it back to the school in time for supper and escape detection. Besides, although quite a few of his classmates had run away over the years, they were usually caught and brought back by school officials or the BC provincial police, and the punishment was very harsh, maybe even a beating in front of all their classmates.

The railway tracks were easy to walk on since there was little snow, and trains rarely came through. They followed the south edge of the large lake, and very soon the boys came to a spot where they were right near the shore of the frozen expanse. Here they stopped, and far off in the distance, diagonally across the lake, they thought they could make out the electric lights of their village about ten kilometers away.

Allen, age 9, John, age 7, and Justa and Andrew, both 8, wanted to head out onto the ice and travel home in a straight line, while Alex preferred to stay on the tracks – a longer route, but more sheltered, and one that other escapees had used successfully in the past. He knew the ice was thick, but it had about 15 centimeters of snow on it, and no protection from the wind. The other four insisted on crossing the ice.

Oh, why hadn't Bishop Coudert let them go home when they asked him earlier this morning? It was so unfair! Some of his classmates' families had visited the school to see their children earlier in the day, since it was a New Year's Day holiday, and it hurt so much when they drove off in their Model T's and wagons. The boys' hearts ached for their families and homes, especially during the Christmas week, and they would do anything to get back there, even though it was against the rules. The Indian Act, since 1920, said that it was mandatory for all Indigenous children aged seven or older to attend residential schools where there were no day schools. Since there were almost no day schools on the remote BC reserves, this meant that the children had to go to residential schools far away from home.¹ Parents who did not send their children to the boarding schools could be arrested, and several from these villages who tried to defy this law were sent to prison.² Alex knew how frustrated the parents were, too, and how almost all of them did not want their kids to go to the school.

The younger four made up their minds and headed onto the ice. Alex couldn't stop them, and dared not follow... and he didn't have the courage to go on alone down the tracks. It was just too dangerous and too cold, so he turned around and headed miserably back to the school. If he hurried, he could make it back before dinner and wouldn't get caught or punished.

DISCOVERY AND A BLUNDERED RESPONSE

Alex darted back into the school undetected, thankful for the warmth and the food but worried about his friends. Sister Noella, in charge of the dining room, noticed the boys were missing and immediately reported it to the Sister Superior, who in turn informed one of the priests. He told someone else in charge, but this man thought that the bishop had given the missing students permission when they asked to be allowed to go home earlier in the day. The principal, Father McGrath, had been gone for most of the day, and there were tensions and poor communication issues



The Lejac Indian Residential School

among some of the school leaders.

As a result, McGrath wasn't told until later that night, around nine o'clock, and by then he thought the boys were already safely in Nautley... likely even gone home with relatives in the late afternoon. The postmaster of the school settlement had a motorcar and it was decided to have him drive to the village in the morning to bring the boys back.

The next morning it was still very cold and the train with the mail came late, so the driver didn't make it to Nautley until just past noon. The chief and some of the parents said that the boys hadn't arrived, and suggested that maybe they had gone to Stellaquo, a village on the other end of the lake around 30 kilometers away. Some of the boys had relatives and friends there.

The chauffeur drove back to the school and reported to Principal McGrath, who jumped in the car with him and drove to Stellaquo to look. Nothing. The men became very worried and drove back to Nautley. Could the villagers be hiding the boys? But it quickly became obvious that they weren't. And while there was still a bit of light late that afternoon, search parties were sent out to find them.

STUMBLING HOMEWARD IN THE COLD

The previous evening, Allen, Andrew, Justa, and John were shuffling steadily across the large lake, angling toward their

village near the mouth of the outflowing Nautley River. The cold was biting, and although they wore wool socks, their short rubber boots did little to protect their feet, and the cold seeped through their jeans. Their hands were getting numb and they couldn't stop shivering, but they pressed resolutely on, keeping their faces pointed toward the slowly-brightening lights and home.

As the kilometers slipped by, and as they got closer, they knew they didn't have much strength or time left. Only a kilometer to go! But their hearts fell, for as they got closer a large black patch appeared ahead of them, blocking their way. It was open water, freezing cold but ice-free because of the current of the nearby Nautley River. The lake ice was thin and treacherous along the edges, and the water was too deep to walk through. They stood in shock, shivering uncontrollably and utterly exhausted. They knew that going around to the left and further on to the lake would mean a long detour, while going to the right would mean moving to the nearby shore but away from the village. They'd have to push through the brush to the road then follow it north over the bridge to get home. But they had no energy for this anymore, hardly any strength to call out, and even if they could the villagers were all sleeping and the river was too loud. Around midnight, they slowly turned right and staggered towards the nearby shore.

THE BOYS ARE FOUND

The next afternoon, after it was clear that the boys were not at either village, search parties were sent out. The boys' tracks in the snow were discovered and followed by three men from Nautley. Around 5:00 PM, at dusk, they found the four small bodies frozen on the ice.

Two were huddled together, one was lying face down beside them, and the fourth was about 25 meters away. The searchers quickly returned to the village, only a kilometer distant, and the coroner and local police officer were called from nearby Fraser Lake and Vanderhoof. They arrived quickly, were led to the bodies, and carefully examined them. After verifying that the boys had died of exhaustion and freezing, they allowed them to be taken to the village. One can only imagine the shock and grief, as well as the anger and frustration, that must have been felt in the villages, as well as in the school.

FAR-REACHING EFFECTS

Two days later, on Monday, January 4, 1937, a jury was called together and an inquest held in the nearby village of Fraser Lake, to look into the circumstances surrounding the deaths. It lasted from 10 AM to 5 PM and heard from the key witnesses and people involved. The verdict concluded that Allen, Johnny, Justa, and Andrew died on the night of January first from exhaustion and consequent freezing. They also added the following:

1. that more definite action by the school authorities should have taken place
2. more cooperation and better communication between the parents and school administrators needed to occur
3. corporal punishment, if practiced, should be limited
4. the two disciplinarians hired by the school should be able to speak and understand English (they were French priests).³

CAREFUL INVESTIGATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By the next day the story appeared in many major Canadian newspapers, and some implied or stated that there were

underlying circumstances that led to this tragedy: inadequate clothing, harsh discipline, and poor communication among school staff. The local Indian agent, R.H. Moore, sent off a detailed letter on January 6 to his superiors at the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, explaining what had happened.⁴

About a month later, Harold W. McGill of the Department asked Major D.M. MacKay, the Indian Commissioner for BC, to investigate more fully. MacKay immediately traveled up to the school at Lejac (a challenging journey by rail and car along wintry gravel roads) and spent several days interviewing school staff, students, Indigenous families, and others who could shed light on this tragedy. His eight-page report provided a thorough account of what happened.

"I am of the opinion, from the evidence and information before me, had energetic action been taken to organize a search party when the absence of the children was first noted, the children would not have perished."

The poor communication and confusion over authority amongst the leaders of the school was a major cause for this, and it led him "...to the conclusion that the Department should take steps to

strengthen its administrative control of our Indian residential schools..."

After many interviews, the BC Commissioner also wrote:

"Father McGrath [the principal] was well-liked by the school children and highly regarded by their parents. There was no evidence to show that punishment of any kind had anything whatever to do with the boys leaving the school without permission. It was simply a natural desire for freedom and to be with their parents during the holidays."

He stated that he "visited a number of Indian homes and discussed the tragedy with nearly all the adult Indians I met, and although I found indications of unrest and resentment, this was mostly confined to the relatives and friends of the dead children. There was no demand among the Indians or the residents of the white communities visited for a judicial inquiry, nor do I think such an inquiry at this time would be in the best interests of the Indians."

INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE LEADS TO POSITIVE CHANGES

However, dissatisfaction with the residential school at Lejac continued and



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escalated in the next several years. The principal told the inquest on January 4, 1937 that 90 percent of the parents did not want their children to attend. It's also clear from the 1944 principal's report, seven years later, that many local Indigenous people were strongly opposed to sending their kids to Lejac – he estimated that two-thirds were not coming to school, and that many didn't start until age ten and only stayed for two or three years. He recommended that the law requiring all native children to attend should be enforced more rigorously.

No doubt the loss of the four boys, and the fact that so many kids ran away from the school encouraged the parents to resist even more, despite the threat of arrest. They were not opposed to education, but rather to having their children required to attend and live in an institution that was attempting to erase their culture and assimilate them into mainstream Canada. Parents lobbied instead for regular day schools to be built in their own villages, where the children could live at home and experience their own culture, similar to how most students were educated in Canada at the time.⁵

In September, 1945, the Member of Parliament for the region, William Irvine, met with a delegation of chiefs from the area to listen to their concerns about the Lejac residential school, and he in turn wrote to the Indian Affairs Branch in Ottawa summarizing their arguments and interceding on their behalf. The letter pointed out their issues with Lejac, namely, diseases like tuberculosis spreading easily in the crowded dorms so that healthy children would catch it, and the students spending too much time tending the fields and animals of the school to help cover the costs, which came at the expense of their education.⁶

In another letter, written in 1946 by the local Indian agent, the following additional reasons are provided for why 100 students did not show up when school opened (and of these, only 30 appeared when the truancy section of the Indian Act was enforced with the help of the RCMP).

"The Indians list a number of grievances, such as the time spent by students in manual labour, and religious instruction, and also, their desire for Day Schools, as reasons for keeping their children at home. The antagonism and opposition displayed by the Indians toward the Lejac residential school is more marked in recent months than at any time since I took over the agency 8 years ago."⁷

The parents even hired a lawyer in Prince George to help them.

... thousands of Indigenous children were forced to attend from all over northern and central BC.

In January of 1947, the parents' efforts began to pay off. Robert Howe, the Indian agent, wrote to the Indian Commissioner for BC, outlining the cost to upgrade a recreation hall in the village of Stoney Creek to enable it to become a school for the 66 pupils there (Andrew Paul, one of the children who'd died, was from Stoney Creek about 50 km east of the Lejac school). Howe noted in his letter that when the school opened:

"...it would be very difficult to enforce attendance at Lejac school for those who are now enrolled at Lejac. With the exception of a few orphans and underprivileged children, the parents would emphatically insist on the children attending the day school."

He concluded his letter by stating:

"In view of the opposition and antagonism displayed by the Stoney Creek Band toward the Lejac Indian Residential School in recent years, and the extreme difficulty experienced in enforcing attendance at Lejac, I would strongly urge that authority be granted to proceed with the necessary improvements to the Recreation Hall, and that a teacher be engaged to open the Day School September 1st next."⁸

THE CLOSING AND LEGACY OF THE LEJAC RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Lejac remained open until 1976, and over its 54 years of operation thousands of Indigenous children were forced to attend from all over northern and central BC. Things did change as time went on: more day schools were built, and by the 1960's students from nearby reserves were bussed in to Lejac each day and no longer had to live there. Reading excerpts from the Lejac.blogspot.com blog, and looking at the many submitted pictures suggests

that there were also many happy memories from Lejac and many staff members who respected and loved the students.⁹ The memories and photos, though, are mostly from the last two decades of the school's existence, when many of the earlier issues and problems had been addressed to various degrees. However, there was still a lot of misery and trauma, especially relating to being separated from the families and other community members back home.

Besides the four boys who died in 1937, 36 other students died there, almost entirely from diseases like TB, influenza, and measles – an average of about one per year despite fairly good medical care.¹⁰ One wonders how this would compare to a non-native boarding or residential school from the same era. As well, there were allegations of sexual abuse, and in 2003 a former dormitory supervisor, Edward Gerald Fitzgerald, who worked at Lejac in the 1960s and 70s, was questioned regarding numerous sexual crimes he is alleged to have committed at Lejac (and one other BC residential school); but he then moved to Ireland so he was never prosecuted (it appears that he has since died in his 90s).¹¹ Stories of trauma came out in the recent Truth and Reconciliation hearings from former students who attended over the years, and the legacy of

FOR MORE...

If you want to dig deeper you can find even more on Canada's Indigenous peoples, the residential schools, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada at ReformedPerspective.ca. Other articles on the website include:


- "No other gods: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #64 is a challenge to Christian churches and schools... and the First Commandment" by Mark Penninga
- "Residential schools and the devastation of State-perpetrated family breakup" by Jonathon Van Maren
- "Residential schools: what worldview is to blame?" by Jon Dykstra
- "Looking at two more of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action" by Jon Dykstra

To find these articles and more you can either use your phone's camera app to scan the QR code, or type **ReformedPerspective.ca/tag/Indigenous-Peoples** into your browser.



harm extends until today.¹²

In 1976 the school and most of the buildings were demolished and the land was turned over to the Nadleh (Nautley) band. The fenced cemetery is about all that remains, and some Roman Catholics still make an annual pilgrimage there to visit the grave of Rose Prince, a former student and helper at Lejac in the 1940's and 1950's, whom many now regard as a saint.¹³ This cemetery, though, is currently situated behind a huge 700-person Coastal Gaslink pipeline camp that has been set up on the property just north of Highway 16 in partnership with the Nadleh band.¹⁴

The location where the boys perished is just off the beach from Beaumont Provincial Park, located just south of the Nautley River and the village. Today, anyone who drives along Highway 16 between Fraser Lake and Fort Fraser can see the stretch of railway track and the section of Fraser Lake where the four children walked and died 86 years ago... a sad chapter of BC's and Canada's history. 

ENDNOTES

¹ George V Sessional Paper No. 27 A. 1921 Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31 1920. Ottawa Thomas Mulvey Printer. See especially page 14. <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=1920-IAAR-RAAI&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>

"The recent amendments give the department control and remove from the Indian parent the responsibility for the care and education of his child, and the best interests of the Indians are promoted and fully protected. The clauses apply to every Indian child over the age of seven and under the age of fifteen. If a day school is in effective operation, as is the case on many of the reserves in the eastern provinces, there will be no interruption of such parental sway as exists. Where a day school cannot be properly operated, the child may be assigned to the nearest available industrial or boarding school."

² Varcoe, Colleen and Annette Browne. Equip Healthcare. Central Interior Native Health Society. Prince George, BC: Socio-historical, geographical, political, and economic context profile. P.13. <https://equiphealthcare.ca/files/2019/12/EQUIP-Report-Prince-George-Sociohistorical-Context-September-18-2014.pdf>

³ Multiple original source documents can be found here: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Stuart Lake Agency – Lejac Residential School Death of Pupils 1934-1950. Pages 28-62. https://indiandayschools.org/files/RG10_881-23_PART_1.pdf Inquisition is on pp. 36-37.

⁴ Ibid. Jan 6, 1937 letter

⁵ First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) - 1944 Principal's report. P.90. <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IRSR10-CaseStudy3.pdf>

⁶ FNESC – Sept. 1945 Irvine letter. pp. 91-92. <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IRSR10-CaseStudy3.pdf>

⁷ FNESC – Sept. 1946 letter from Indian Agent R. Howe. P.94. <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IRSR10-CaseStudy3.pdf>

⁸ FNESC – Jan. 24, 1947 letter from Indian Agent R. Howe. Pp. 95-96. <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IRSR10-CaseStudy3.pdf>

⁹ Lejac blog (many stories and pictures from former students). <http://lejac.blogspot.com/search/label/Lejac>

¹⁰ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation – Lejac (Stuart Lake) <https://nctr.ca/residential-schools/british-columbia/lejac-stuart-lake/>

¹¹ Fitzgerald articles: <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2003/police-lay-more-charges-in-b-c-residential-abuse-investigation/>

¹² See TRC website esp. videos of former students: *Indian Residential School History & Dialogue Centre Collection – Lejac* (lots here, including testimonies of past students): <https://collections.irshdc.ubc.ca/index.php/Detail/entities/49>

¹³ The Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince George. *Rose Prince – Reflecting on an Extraordinary Life*. <https://www.pgdiocese.bc.ca/lejac/>

¹⁴ Coastal Gas Link. *A New Chapter for the Nadleh Whut'en and Carrier People*. <https://www.coastalgaslink.com/whats-new/news-stories/2020/a-new-chapter-for-the-nadleh-whuten-and-carrier-people/>

THE TRUTH MATTERS:

Analyzing the facts beneath “mass burials” at residential schools

by Mark Penninga

“**S**earches for unmarked graves at the site of a former northern Ontario residential school have uncovered 171 ‘plausible burials’...”

That’s what *The Globe and Mail* reported earlier this year, but it was back in 2021 that the discovery of alleged burial sites next to residential schools first made headlines. Nearly two years ago news agencies, in Canada and around the world, reported that a mass grave of 215 Indigenous children had been detected, with the help of ground-penetrating radar, next to a former residential school near Kamloops, BC. Since then, hundreds more “plausible burials” have been alleged at other school sites across the country.

But are these plausible burials *actual* graves?

That’s a question worth asking because Truth is critical for pursuing justice and reconciliation. As the Heidelberg Catechism says about the ninth commandment, “I must not give false testimony against anyone...nor condemn or join in condemning anyone rashly and unheard.” Determining the facts about these alleged graves is necessary before making decisions about how to respond, including whether to take part in the resulting initiatives like the “every child matters” t-shirts, flags, and displays.

Now that “Truth and Reconciliation Day” is a stat holiday in Canada, and the curriculum in some provincial education systems requires extensive coverage of Indigenous culture and residential schools, Christians can’t stand on the sideline but should be eager to “love the truth, speak and confess it honestly, and do what I can to defend and promote my neighbour’s honour and reputation” (Q&A 112 HC).

FALL-OUT FROM THE DISCOVERY

In response to the 2021 media reports, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mandated that all flags of federal buildings fly half-mast (it took over five months before many public buildings and schools brought the flags back to the top of the pole, so that they could be lowered for Remembrance Day). Governments also committed \$320 million to fund more research, and another \$40 billion towards settlements with students of residential schools. The Pope issued a formal apology on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church (which oversaw the majority of residential schools) and followed that up with a visit to Canada in 2022.

Another response was far more vindictive. Over 70 churches have been vandalized or burned to the ground in Canada since the “discovery” of these “mass graves.”

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called the situation “a large scale human rights violation” and Amnesty International demanded that those responsible for the “remains” that were “found” be prosecuted. Ironically, even China piled on to the calls for an investigation.

Beyond the political response, the public rallied to show their concern with “every child matters” displays, often featuring 215 orange flags to remember the lives lost. The local Roman Catholic school that I walk past regularly has replaced its Canadian flag with an orange “every child matters” flag, and many of the storefronts in my community still featured the “every child matters” message, even over a year after it first became a news story.

DIGGING FOR ANSWERS

Solomon tells us that “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him” (Prov. 18:17). Unfortunately, the Canadian mainstream media, academia, and politicians, refuse to ask basic questions to confirm the truth of these serious allegations. Why this lack of journalistic inquisitiveness? It’s because few issues are as politically charged and culturally sensitive in Canada today as Indigenous affairs. When Senator Lynn Beyak attempted to defend some positive things accomplished at residential schools, the attacks were so swift and strong that she chose to retire rather than face imminent ejection from the Senate.

But some smaller publications have dared tread where Canada’s mainstream press hasn’t. In an essay in *The Dorchester Review* titled, “In Kamloops, not one body has been found,” Jacques Rouillard,

”
...the Canadian mainstream media, academia, and politicians, refuse to ask basic questions to confirm the truth of these serious allegations.



An "Every Child Matters" rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery on July 1, 2021.

professor emeritus in the Department of History at the Université de Montréal, asked:

"After months of recrimination and denunciation, where are the remains of the children buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential School?"

In a detailed article on the topic by the *New York Post*, the local First Nations band confirmed that indeed, no bodies have yet been exhumed, and there are not plans to start digging or to share the report from the radar.

The *Post* also revealed that these discoveries were made very quickly, and with little accountability. The band hired a young anthropologist named Sarah Beaulieu on May 17, 2021, who scanned the site from May 21-23, and the band announced its findings already on May 27.

"Beaulieu said that remote sensors picked up 'anomalies' and what are called 'reflections' that indicate the remains of children may be buried at the site," reported the *Post*.

"My findings confirmed what Elders had shared," Beaulieu said. "It's an example of science playing an affirming role of what the Knowledge Keepers already recognized." The "Knowledge Keepers" is a reference to the Indigenous elders, who

pass on their history orally.

Indeed, science can affirm oral history. Yet for it to be trustworthy, scientific inquiry includes a peer review process and investigations to substantiate a hypothesis.

And the investigations made public to date aren't helping with building trust.

An in-depth report called "Graves in the Apple Orchard" has since been published anonymously by someone who knows the site and its history intimately. The report includes detailed maps and drawings of excavation work that was done at the residential school through the last century, and how it correlates with the sites of the "anomalies." While anonymous sources are understandably suspect, this one cited his sources. The *National Post's* Terry Glavin also spoke to the source and confirmed that he had some expertise in this area as "an architectural consultant who specializes in site inspections." The source wished to remain anonymous because "his company does work with First Nations." Some of the report's findings include:

"Since the rumours of a graveyard began, more than 30% of the orchard has been excavated. Archaeologists have been active on site since the 1980s, conducting excavations and monitoring construction work. Deep

trenches have been cut straight across the orchard and a sewage lagoon was excavated from the entire southwestern quadrant. No graves have ever been discovered....

"In July of 2021, Dr. Beaulieu admitted that 15 'probable burials' were actually 'archaeological impact assessments, as well as construction.' Evidently, well documented site work was not accounted for in her initial survey. Several of the remaining 200 'probable burials' overlap with a utilities trench dug in 1998, as can be seen in drone photography captured after the GPR survey. Still other 'probable burials' follow the rout of old roads or correlate suggestively with the pattern of previous plantings, furrows and underground sewage disposal beds....

"Given that the apple orchard is deeply textured by centuries of human activity, how can it be said that Dr. Beaulieu's targets are more 'probably' graves than probably other features of human activity?

"With more than 30% of the orchard already excavated, is it probable that a staggering 200 burials were missed?"

Professor Jacques Rouillard, again, in *The Dorchester Review*, detailed how quickly the allegations became a new narrative.

"From an allegation of 'cultural genocide' endorsed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) we have moved to 'physical genocide,' a conclusion that the Commission explicitly rejects in its report. And all of this is based only on soil abnormalities that could easily be caused by root movements, as the anthropologist herself cautioned in the July 15 press conference."

At least one Indigenous scholar from BC is asking similar questions. The *New York Post* also spoke with Eldon Yellowhorn, professor and chair of the Indige-

nous Studies department at Simon Fraser University. A member of the Blackfoot nation, Yellowhorn grew up on a reserve where many of his family attended residential schools, before becoming an archeologist and anthropologist. He was hired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to search for and identify grave sites at residential schools since 2009.

"I can understand why some people are skeptical about the Kamloops case," Yellowhorn told the *Post*. "This is all very new. There's a lot of misinformation floating out there. People are speaking from their emotions."

He added that "The only way to be certain is to peel back the earth and ascertain what lies beneath. We have not gotten to the point where we can do that. It's a huge job."

Unfortunately, there seems to be little interest in substantiating just how "plausible" these graves are.

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION REQUIRE TRUTH

Nobody disputes that some children died while attending residential schools, and that these schools bear blame for some of these deaths. The accompanying story in this issue about the Lejac residential school in 1937 is an example of this. But that story also shows that when four children tragically died after trying to run away back home in the freezing cold, the matter was investigated swiftly and thoroughly, and the school was appropriately chastised. The story was shared across the country. An effort was made to discover the truth and to enact justice.

It is possible that some of the "anomalies" detected by the ground-penetrating radar are indeed burial sites. And it is also possible that some unmarked graves hide injustices that were perpetrated against Indigenous children at these schools. The many proven examples of sexual abuse by Roman Catholic leaders (as well as those from other denominations) have legitimately eroded the trust of the public towards some churches' care for children.

The 2007-2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a nine-year effort by the Government of

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found 49 children who died between 1915 and 1964, most buried at their homes. Although the data is not complete, it is a far cry from allegations of hundreds of missing children.



Canada to travel across the country, listen to 6,500 witnesses, and facilitate reconciliation with former students and their communities. It also led to the creation of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, an archive of the data obtained during the commission. It found 49 children who died between 1915 and 1964 at the Kamloops residential school. Records have been found of 35 of these students, 24 of whom were buried at their homes and four in Kamloops. Although the data is not complete, it is a far cry from allegations of hundreds of missing children.

Scripture speaks strongly in defence of the vulnerable, including the widow, orphan, and the immigrant. The young boys and girls at residential schools, separated from their parents, and under intense pressure to abandon their culture, definitely qualify as vulnerable. And Christians of all kinds now publicly recognize that it was wrong, even wicked, for the government to forcibly separate children from their parents.

But the fact that evil was committed at these schools does not mean that the only appropriate response to new allegations

can ever be an assumption of further guilt and evil at these institutions. In this broken world, it doesn't take long to find evidence of abuse and other forms of evil in most institutions. It is then reasonable to compare and assess. (For example, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings, the death rate in residential schools between 1921 and 1950 is twice as high as the general population, though between 1950 and 1965 it was comparable to the Canadian average for youth age five to fourteen.)

Truth and reconciliation are laudable objectives that align with Scripture. The truth should be welcomed, and the facts acknowledged. When necessary, this should lead to an acknowledgment that claims made were wrong, and efforts made towards restitution and repentance.

When truth is verified, trust is built, and a foundation exists for genuine justice and reconciliation. **RP**

To go deeper: Find an extensive analysis by Terry Glavin in his May 26, 2022 *National Post* article "The year of the graves: How the world's media got it wrong on residential school graves."

Truth & reconciliation is possible, but not as it is being popularized

by Jim Witteveen

Until recent decades, “victimhood” was definitely not a status that people would deliberately embrace. In fact, many who were actual victims would do their very best to avoid being labeled as such. Instead, they sought to be heard and understood not as members of some “victim class,” but as unique individuals who had suffered injustice, but who were not defined by that suffering.

For example, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who gave his life in his struggle for civil rights for African-Americans, said this in a 1953 radio broadcast:

“We are not responsible for the environment we are born in, neither are we responsible for our hereditary circumstances. But there is a third factor for which we are responsible, namely, the personal response which we make to these circumstances.”

But as the civil rights movement evolved, and with the advent of identity politics, victimhood itself has become a means of

attaining power. Many individuals and organizations have turned victimhood into something of an industry, and have sought victim status as a means of gaining influence.

REAL SINS OCCURRED

Now, there certainly is no shortage of genuine victims in this world – people who have been oppressed, abused, mistreated, excluded from society, persecuted, and even killed simply because of who they are. This cannot and should not be denied. Grave injustices have been committed throughout history in this fallen, sin-stained world.

The question that we face is this: how can these injustices (past and present) be dealt with?

REAL GUILT ISN'T APPORTIONED BY SKIN COLOR, GENDER

The answer that has predominated over the past generation is that of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which has become the dominant ideology in the “civil rights”

arena. Identity politics has taken center stage in public discourse. According to identity politics, people can be divided into two basic classes: the transgressor, and the innocent. Within these two classes are a myriad of sub-classes, understood according to the sociological perspective known as “intersectionality,” an aspect of CRT that has its roots in feminist sociology.

According to the doctrine of intersectionality, all individuals can be categorized according to where they stand on the “victim” scale. On the one end of the scale stands the white, heterosexual, Christian male. This individual is categorized as *the* transgressor, as a member and representative of the oppressor class. The white heterosexual Christian female can be considered as somewhat less of a transgressor, while on the opposite end of the spectrum stands the person who is the most “marginalized,” the non-cisgender person of color.

The absurdity of this categorization scheme becomes apparent when one considers that a white man who depends

on welfare to survive and lives in a run-down shack in the Appalachians of West Virginia is still viewed as a member of the “oppressor” class, while a multi-millionaire African-American whose resume includes an education in elite private schools and Columbia University is still identified as a member of the “innocent” class (as long as his political views are considered to be appropriate).

REAL FORGIVENESS ISN'T ON OFFER

Ultimately, it is impossible for the “transgressor” to either redeem himself or be redeemed, and even members of the transgressor class who sympathize with and identify themselves with those on the opposite end of the spectrum can never truly rid themselves of CRT’s version of original sin. In the end, it appears that apologies and reparations and expressions of contrition can have no result until perfection is achieved in this life, and every wrong is righted according to the dominant standard.

When it comes to Indigenous issues in Canada and elsewhere, it is the theory and outworking of Critical Race Theory and identity politics that is currently guiding public policy and shaping public discourse. As mentioned, there is no doubt that grave

injustices have occurred since the first contact was made between European explorers and settlers and the indigenous populations of the lands where they settled.

Sadly, but truly, the experience of the native inhabitants of the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand is not unique to them. The history of the world is replete with examples of colonization, empire-building, what we would now define as “war crimes,” and even genocide. In fact, yesterday’s oppressors often become tomorrow’s victims, and vice versa. In all of human history, is there a single ethnic group that can honestly claim to have an unstained record in this regard?

This does not excuse more recent evils, but it does put them in the proper context, and allow us to consider how to answer the question that I posed above: How can these injustices best be dealt with?

Those who adhere to the tenets of Critical Race Theory believe that all change must be accomplished using a top-down approach. It is the State that must right previous wrongs, and the State that must enforce “reconciliation.” The populace must be trained to think correctly about the issues at play. This training is being done at every level of the educational system through the Indigenization of curri-

cula, in which an “Indigenous” worldview must be included in every subject. It is reinforced through special events and days of commemoration, like the Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

And finally, the message is inserted into everyday life by means of repetitive “liturgical” acts, such as the repeated land acknowledgements which have become an essential element of many public events. Through these techniques, the “transgressors” are constantly reminded of their ongoing guilt and responsibility, and the “innocent” are encouraged to remain in a perpetual state of victimhood. It seems that there is nothing that either the transgressor or the innocent can do to rectify this state of affairs; this rectification must be accomplished by the State.

REAL REPENTANCE COMES FROM THE RIGHT HEART

How should we, as Christians, think about what can only be described as the massive cultural shift that is happening all around us?

First of all, we must recognize Critical Race Theory and identity politics for what they are: ideologies that have hijacked certain Christian concepts (like justice, reconciliation, transgression, and innocence)

REAL SINS OCCURRED:

This “memory blanket” was displayed at the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in 2015 and included statements from former students’ writings. Several noted that students were given numbers rather than names. Among the messages: “My new name is 7,” “Today I got beaten for speaking Mi’kmaq. It slipped out at the lunch table, as I was asking another girl for some bread. I don’t understand what the problem with...” “Today I saw one of the older girls had a black eye. I tried to ask her about it, but she wouldn’t say,” “This is my last time writing in this book. I’m going to kill myself. Why because I hate it here, the white people are getting worse and worse every day,” “It’s this certain serenity you feel when you know something terrible will happen. My grandfather said you feel this before you die,” “I want to go home.”

Picture credit: Susan G. Enberg / Shutterstock



and turned them into radical distortions of the truth of Scripture. According to God's Word, all of us are transgressors. There is only One who was truly innocent, our Lord Jesus Christ. True justice is connected with righteousness, and absolute justice will never be accomplished in this world, try as we might. Heaven will never be created on earth, and apart from the redeeming work of Christ, true reconciliation between God and man, and between human beings themselves, cannot happen. All attempts to implement a utopian vision of society are doomed to fail, because they begin, as CRT and identity politics begin, with false beliefs about the nature of the world and about human nature itself.

Neither can true reconciliation and justice be implemented from the top down. It is very possible for the State to convince the entire population to recite what it deems to be the appropriate words and avoid expressing (at least publicly) "inappropriate views." But the

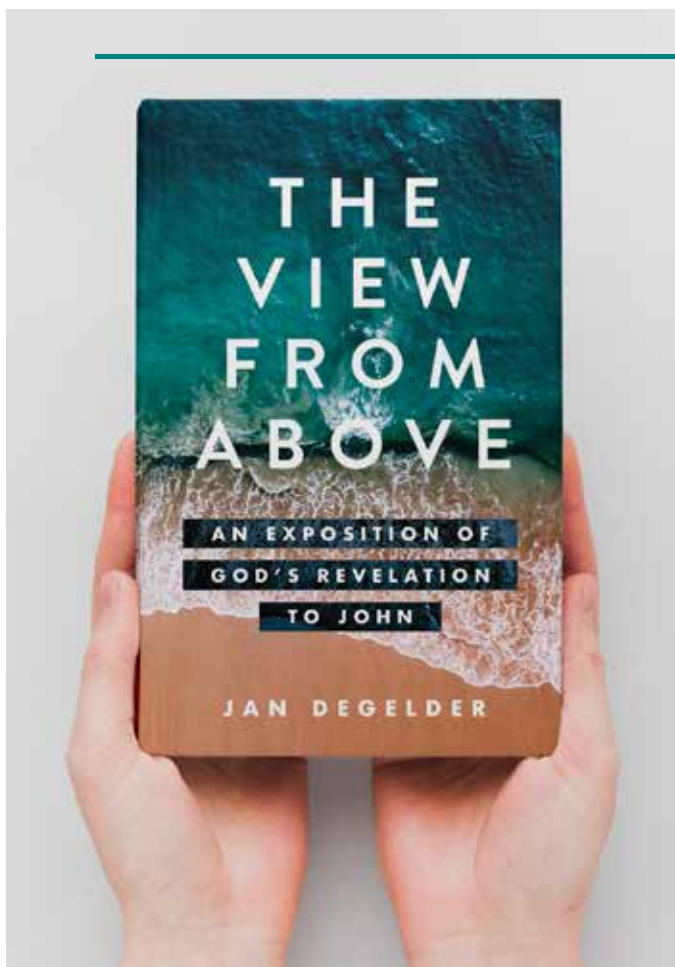
State cannot change the human heart, and neither can it legislate love, which is vital to reconciliation and the redressing of wrongs. Love must be expressed on a personal level, in the context of interpersonal relationships, and cannot be implemented through impersonal programs and activities imposed from above. We are called to love our neighbor, regardless of his or her ethnicity. As Christians, we are called to show that love, the love of Christ, through our own actions, in a very personal way.

REAL REPENTANCE MIGHT BE COSTLY

This is a costly attitude. It will take us out of our comfort zone. It requires sacrifice. It doesn't offer any kind of "quick fix," nor does it imagine that it will solve all of the world's problems once and for all. But it is genuine, and the outworking of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. Institutional programs and policies are impersonal, often completely ineffective

or even counter-productive, and history shows that they do not accomplish the goals that they set out to achieve. They allow individuals to pass on responsibility to others while perhaps saying the right things and expressing virtuous opinions, but in the end they can neither bring about genuine reconciliation nor bring about lasting, positive change. This is something that can only be done through the hard work of getting to know our neighbors – whatever their ethnicity – and building living relationships with them. In this way, beginning with the first great commandment, to love the Lord with all our heart, we will put into practice the second: to love our neighbor as ourselves. RP

You can listen to Rev. Jim Witteveen's podcast at Dan1132.com. His latest book, "How in the world did we get here?" is available in Canada at ReformedChristianBooks.com.



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

WHAT DARWIN DIDN'T KNOW

Darwin, ignorant of the inner workings of the cell, could imagine them to be simple. But the more we learn of the cell today, the more we discover there is to learn, and thus explain. And that's a growing problem for evolution. It isn't as if the more we learn, the more we begin to understand how life could have evolved – it's the very opposite! As David Berlinski put it:

"The cell is an unbelievably complex bit of machinery, unfathomably complex. And we haven't understood its complexity at all. Every time we look there seems to be an additional layer of evocative complexity that needs to be factored into our theories. Don't forget the eternal goal is to explain the emergence of this complexity, and if we're continually behind the curve because the complexity is increasing every time we look that eternal goal is also receding from view, not approaching. It's receding; it's becoming more and more difficult to construct a theory for that."

SOURCE: Peter Robinson's Uncommon Knowledge interview show, in a June 6, 2019 episode titled "Mathematical Challenges to Darwin's Theory of Evolution," available on YouTube.com and Hoover.org.

A GRANDDAD JOKE

Grandpa always said "when one door closes, another one opens." He was a great man, my grandpa, but a horrible cabinet maker.

WIT AND WISDOM OF THOMAS SOWELL

While it's not clear whether American economist Thomas Sowell is Christian – he almost never talks about God – his understanding of human nature certainly lines up with what the Bible says about our fallen state. Here are a few of his pithier quotes, along with the biblical connection.

- "Fair" is one of the most dangerous concepts in politics. Since no two people are likely to agree on what is "fair," this means that there must be some third party with power – the government – to impose its will. The road to despotism is paved with "fairness."
When there is no submission to God, His standards, and His definitions – whether of fairness, life, marriage, gender, and more – then there is no justice exercised, only power.
- There are three questions that would destroy most arguments of the Left. The first is – compared to what? The second is – at what cost? And the third is – what hard evidence do you have?
Continuing from the point above, we can add one more – by what standard?

- When you want to help people you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.
"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." – Prov. 27:6
- One of the most important reasons for studying history is that virtually every stupid idea that is in vogue today has been tried before and proved disastrous, time and again.
"...there is nothing new under the sun." Eccl. 1:9b
- The strongest argument for socialism is that it sounds good. The strongest argument against socialism is that it doesn't work. But those who live by words will always have a soft spot in their hearts for socialism because it sounds so good.
"...with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires. So they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." – 2 Tim. 4:3b-4

FIXING DEMOCRACY IN ONE STEP

Every ballot needs a "none of the above" option. Then, if the "nones" won, the election would be run again with an entirely new slate of candidates – all of the original candidates would be disqualified.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU AND YOUR KIDS

I ran across a book by Les Christie, *What if....?*, which offered up 450 discussion starters for parents to tackle with their teens. The idea is great, the book only okay, because of the inclusion of some troubling questions. But what follows are some of the best.

You and your teen can both try to answer them, either working through all the possible answers (including what the Bible might have to say) or just running through them quickly and then making up some questions of your own. So, what if:

- you could speak to the prime minister for 1 minute?
- you inherited a million dollars?
- the Internet went down?
- you could be your parent for a day?
- you could only read 10 books from now on?
- a store clerk accidentally gave you back \$10 extra in change?
- a flood meant you could only save 3 things from your room?
- you could begin one new tradition in your family?
- you had to name three of your heroes?
- you had to pick a slogan to describe your life?





IDENTIFYING AS RIGHT

In the recent online abortion debate between conservative commentator Michael Knowles and online “influencer” Brontë Remsik, a clever defense of the unborn also ended up highlighting why Christians can’t adopt “inclusive” language.

Just short of the half-hour mark, the third-year medical student Remsik took Knowles to task for refusing to use terms like “pregnant people” rather than “pregnant women.”

Brontë Remsik: It’s interesting, you come into this conversation trying to hold this moral superiority, but when I use inclusive language – which it only takes a couple extra syllables to use inclusive language...

Michael Knowles: To include who?

BR: To include people who don’t identify as women but can become pregnant.

MK: So, like a person who is born a woman and then identifies as a man and is pregnant. So, you’re telling me that to be a moral person I need to accept the idea that someone who is born a man can really become a woman. That’s a prerequisite of my being a moral person.

BR: Yes, to me it is. Because if you are trying to deny someone of their identity and deny what their life experience is then that doesn’t seem like a moral stance to me. I want to be accepting and I want to respect people’s life experiences. And I want to respect how they identify, and respect how they want to present themselves to the world.

MK: I would like to identify, I do identify actually, as the correct person

on this issue of abortion. I identify as being correct, and more correct than you on this issue. And I would just ask that you accept and affirm my identity. Do you?

BR: You are not a medical professional, and abortion and pregnancy is a medical concern.

MK: I’m just sharing my identity.

BR: That’s not your identity.

MK: That is my identity. I promise you that *is* my identity.

Remsik understood that if she had accepted Knowles’ identity, she would have conceded the debate. The same is every bit as true in the gender debate where one side recognizes that God determines our gender, and the other insists that we do. Requests to address a man with female pronouns might be positioned as a matter of politeness, but such an act would, in fact, concede the argument. It would be to identify him as correct about being a her.



C.S. LEWIS, G.K. CHESTERTON AND

A WHOLE BUNCH OF T-SHIRTS TAKE DOWN SOCIALISM

My wife gave me a t-shirt screen printer for Christmas and since then I’ve been looking for some quotes worthy of being emblazoned across my chest. I’ve also been on an economics fix for the last year, so in keeping an eye out, I’ve seen a lot of t-shirts with pretty good socialism take downs. I also added a couple of longer quotes – from Chesterton and Lewis – that are either simply too long, or would necessitate me doing a few thousand push-ups or so, before my chest would be a wide enough canvas. But hey, maybe that’s just the motivation I need.

- “It may be said of Socialism, therefore, that its friends recommended it as increasing equality, while its foes resisted it as decreasing liberty.... The compromise eventually made was one of the most interesting and even curious cases in history. It was decided to do everything that had ever been denounced in Socialism, and nothing that had ever been desired in it...we proceeded to prove that it was possible to sacrifice liberty without gaining equality.... In short, people decided that it was impossible to achieve any of the good of Socialism, but they comforted themselves by achieving all the bad.” – G.K. Chesterton in *Eugenics and Other Evils: An Argument Against the Scientifically Organized State*
- “...those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.” – C.S. Lewis in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology*
- Don’t ask the government to fix problems they caused
- Nothing the government gives you is “free”
- Capitalism makes. Socialism takes.
- The F in Communism stands for Food
- Trust God. Not government.
- The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people’s money
- Conservatives are such elitists: they think they can run their lives better than the government
- “Individual ambition serves the common good.” – Adam Smith
- Socialism: the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, the gospel of envy
- Child of God. Not of the State.

ELECTRIC CARS AREN’T GREEN

“Let’s clear something up... Electricity is not a power source, it is a delivery mechanism. Electricity will never be a power source. So it is inappropriate and inaccurate to say ‘electric cars are green.’ The cars themselves are not green, they are the color of the fuel used to create electricity. Electric cars are only as green as the electricity they consume. And infrastructure they require, and storage they rely on.”

– David Salch



HOW TO HAVE A PROPER CONVERSATION

or Confessions of a loquacious person

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Loquacious: *tending to talk a great deal*
We might all think that we know how to have a conversation, having learnt a particular style of conversing from how we were raised. But conversational styles differ greatly from family to family, anything from the children being almost afraid or forbidden to say a word (i.e. “children should be seen and not heard”), to everyone at the dinner table talking at the same time. Family members may have had to wait a long time to be heard if their extroverted siblings hadn’t learned conversational etiquette – “manners” may or may not have been taught, depending on whether the parents ever learned them, or whether they considered free-for-all conversations to be a problem!

In my case, I thought that it was normal for family members to talk over one another. But my husband found it completely disorienting as my side of the family got louder and louder, switching subjects frequently and repeating anecdotes when someone in a separate conversation caught a snatch of it and requested to hear all of it right then. Since we loved to hear ourselves talk, we were most happy to oblige, even if we didn’t realize at the time that “talking” was what was most important to us.

Loquacious people love to share details about their lives. After church, they might go from person to person telling the same stories and bits of information about their week, their trip, their surgery, or their job challenges. It’s what’s on their mind so they share it with others.

But what about the people they are talking to? Do they ask about what happened in other folks’ lives during the past week? When they get home, do they even remember whom they “conversed” with since they did the majority of the talking?

This article began with a bit of blaming: “This is how my family did things.” But there’s more to it than that. So let’s take a closer look at why a person talks too much and is not a good listener because, as Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” It’s not simply a learned habit.

SELF-CENTEREDNESS

When we talk too much, as mentioned already, it is because we like to hear ourselves talk and we – rightly or wrongly

A proper conversation includes and indeed emphasizes listening.

– imagine that others are entertained, inspired, or enlightened by what we have to say. The first consideration should be whether our subject matter meets those criteria! We can all think of people whose conversation could bless us for hours, and others with whom we would be bored. We have probably all been the talker in both situations!

We also ought to realize that we like to talk because we like to be in control. Celeste Headlee points out in her TED talk *Ten Ways to Have a Better Conversation* that we control the conversation so that “we won’t have to hear anything that we are not interested in.” It makes us the center of attention, and perhaps is essential to “bolstering” our own identity.

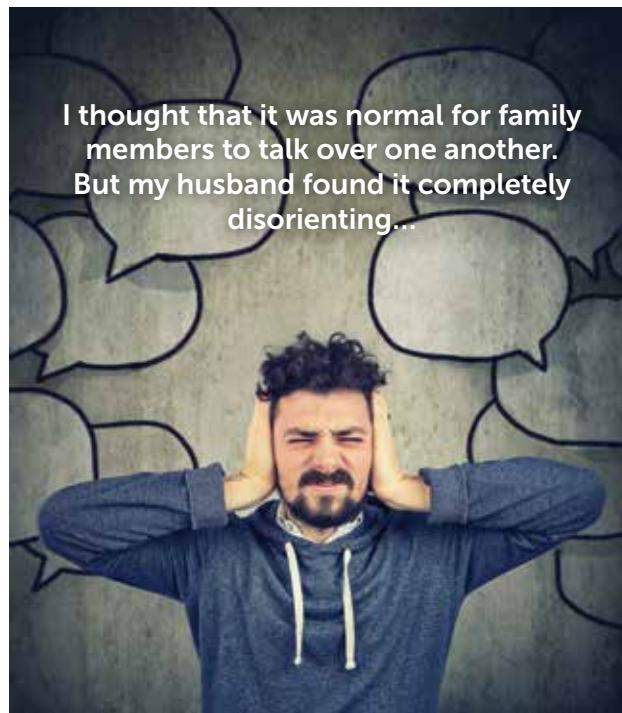
Ouch! But as Headlee concludes, “Conversations are not a promotional opportunity.” Did we even realize that we were being self-centered? We need to, because self-centeredness is destructive to relationships, whereas love for others is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

BEING A GOOD LISTENER

In order to have a proper conversation, we need to be intentional and attentive listeners. One of the most difficult challenges is to realize that when people are relating their experience, *that conversation is not about us*. As Stephen Covey has said, “Most of us don’t listen with the intent to understand. We listen with the intent to reply.”

While someone is talking, we automatically think of our experience that we think parallels theirs, and eagerly formulate how we will present our information.

My parent also died. I also have knee/car/kid/plumbing trouble. I also took a vacation to Timbuktu and here’s what I did. To launch directly into our somewhat connected experience shows that to us, their commentary was merely a catalyst to get ours started. And whether we realize it or



not, we may be, as Headlee suggests, taking that moment to prove how amazing we are or how much we have suffered! Self-centered.

When we truly listen, we should squelch those thoughts because our experience, even with grief, is not the same as theirs. Squelch them, and instead ask follow-up questions, seeking to understand what their experience was like and how it affected *them*. Think about what they say. Ask them how it affected them and what they think about it now. Tell them you’d love to hear more about it.

Tell them how wonderful (or awful) it sounds. Sincerely offer prayer or assistance if the situation calls for it.

A proper conversation includes and indeed emphasizes listening. It takes energy and effort to truly *listen* to the point of caring about the speaker and the content, and not just planning our response while we wait for them to finish, or even worse, interrupt them as soon as they take a breath. To interrupt is to declare that you consider yourself and what you want to say more important than the other person’s words. There may be a good reason to share some of our experiences later, but only after we have sufficiently listened, and only if it may truly benefit the hearer.

LISTENING TO YOUR CHILDREN

It is particularly important to learn to listen attentively to your children. Parents need to learn to listen to what their children are saying and to ask questions that show a desire to understand and appreciate them.

Listening needs to be done in a non-judgmental manner where the kids aren’t afraid that a rebuke or lecture will flatten them as soon as they speak their mind and open their heart. It may be that an issue will have to be addressed *later* if wise counsel or discipline are necessary. But a thorough listening should

come first. Proverbs 18:13 gives the admonition that, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” Half-hearing or speeding through the conversation so that we can go do something “more important” is not really listening.

We sometimes think as parents that we need to have “the answer” immediately. We are not perfect and it may be best on some occasions to state that we are going to think about a matter for a while before we fully respond. Of course, this takes more time and effort than giving a quick

answer while multitasking. But it is time well spent. There's a popular adage that nobody when growing old will say, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office" or, as a companion to that remark, "I wish I'd cleaned my house better when the kids were young." But we may wish we had listened more attentively.

SCRIPTURE SAYS...

The Book of Proverbs has a lot to say about our speech. Proverbs 10:19 states: "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent" and 17:28 says: "Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent."

We are taught that our speech is to be truthful (4:24, 6:12), noble and straightforward (8:6-9), wise (10:31), gentle


(15:1), knowledgeable (15:7), righteous (8:8; 16:13), and pleasant (16:24).

We are commanded that our speech should *not* be devious (4:24), destructive of our neighbor (11:9), rash like sword thrusts (think about that image!) (12:18), a scorching fire/perverse/slanderous (16:27-28). Proverbs 31:26 says, "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, Paul says: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. *It does not insist on its own way*; it is not irritable or resentful." Jesus and Paul taught us to love our neighbor as ourself. Should this not include listening carefully with a desire to learn and understand, rather than just popping off the first connection that comes to mind? We can learn to not be self-centered.

QUICK TO LISTEN

In James 1:19, we read, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." What if we would rush in to listen to others, instead of to talk? These verses show us that we should analyze our recent conversations, and perhaps ask friends, family, and the Lord if we have been "too loquacious" and not a good listener. We should ponder Paul's words from Philippians 2 which certainly apply to how we converse with others:

"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4) 

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Obituary for my Beloved:

Anco Farenhorst (1948-2022)

On December 5, 2022 the soul of my husband, Anco Farenhorst, was carried to heaven. He was taken and rested in the full assurance that his body would rise again to be reunited with his soul. He knew even as he was drawing his last breath, that the voice which called Lazarus out of the grave, would also call him.

Funerals of those we love may seem like the end. But there is a God

Who raises the dead. Anco was my beloved husband for almost 53 years. December 27 would have been our anniversary. God blessed us with five children and twenty-nine grandchildren.

Many of you have reached out to our family through prayers and phone calls and hugs. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Below is a note that was read on my behalf at the funeral and I would like to share it. These are the times which God uses to make us see so very clearly that when we are weak, then we are strong.

First of all, I would like to thank everyone here that they came to mourn with us. The apostle Paul gently nudges us to say that for Christians to weep for fellow Christians who have died is not a mourning as those who have no hope. So thank you on behalf of our whole family here that you have come and that you are surrounding us with love and comfort. It is a great blessing to have such a host of caring people around us right now.

I have, on a number of occasions these past few days, struggled to write some things down, but was not able to do so. My thoughts were jumbled, scattered and blew away in tears. One thought that came to me, however, was this. Anco and I were reading various parts of Scripture at different times of the day. One Scripture was Exodus 34:29-35.



Anco's bookmark was still nestled between the pages of the Bible in that place. It is about when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets, and after his time with God, his face was too bright to look on.

In the past few days I have been so longing to feel, to touch and to see Anco's face just one more time. I'm sure that my children and grandchildren feel the same way. But the truth is that at this point his

face will have the same shining texture, the same radiant glow, that Moses had. For my dear one, my beloved Anco, is beholding and speaking with his Savior. If, at this point in time, while we are all still in our earthly bodies, we actually could see him, we would be so struck in awe with the beauty of his face that we would not be able to bear it.

We have a closed casket. There is a picture of him on the casket – a picture which represents him with a smiling and loving face. But oh, multiply that smile and increase that earthly joyfulness by a million and you still would not come close to measuring the fulness of delight with which he is now clothed. We cannot fathom it. We cannot even come close to envisioning it.

I do know this. If Anco were here and was able to speak with you, he would say to every single one of you: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8) And he would urge you to confess your sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever believes in Him, will not perish but have everlasting life.

Again, I thank you so much for coming. The Lord make His face to shine upon you all and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you all and give you peace.

– Christine Farenhorst

RP CALL TO ACTION

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



Your thoughts on...

Last issue we asked you to “share your love story” in 400 words or less, and share your thoughts on “what lesson should we learn from COVID?” in just 100 words. Two very different topics, and we got two very different responses. In total, we received more than 30 COVID-related replies, but just a couple on love.

We were thrilled at the response, and especially at how many entries we got from youth. COVID clearly remains a topic very much on our minds. Love? Either we need to work on it, or perhaps it’s just that a lot of us are better at expressing love with hugs or flowers, rather than words? Let’s go with that.

While space doesn’t allow us to share them all, we have included a Top 10 from the COVID entries, and paired that with our lesson on love. Most of the entries have also been edited for length.

A big thank-you to all who sent in a contribution. We love hearing from you!



WHAT LESSON SHOULD WE LEARN FROM COVID?

ADULT ENTRIES

Two things stand out as lessons learned from our recent experience of COVID-19. The first is the amazing power of God: in a matter of weeks, He brought the entire world to its knees – something one theoretically knows but otherwise would never dream possible. The second lesson is the power of the devil: he so stifled us, making us lose our focus, that we missed using such a great opportunity of bringing the Christian message to a world which, especially in COVID’s early stages, was so full of fear and panic.

– LIZ VAN WEERDEN

Regarding gathering limits there are some lessons to learn. In Matt 22:21b the Bible says, “And He said to them. ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.’” Jesus very clearly lays out there are things that belong to God. Question: Is public corporate worship as confessed in HC Q&A103 a “thing” that belongs to God or to government? Question 2: If you agree that public corporate worship is a thing that belongs to God, scripturally, does the government have a right to restrict it? No, not when it is a thing that is exclusively God’s.

– LUKE MULDER

In recent years, as many people drift away from traditional religions, new worship and ideologies have taken hold of people’s hearts and minds. When scientism and expertism became the operating principles during COVID we fell prey to closing our eyes to the weak, neglecting the lonely, abandoning the sick, forsaking the grieved, and disregarding the communion of saints. We need to discern the new “religions” and never forget to test the spirits. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4).

– JUDY SLAA

One lesson to learn from COVID is the need to be engaged in God’s word in understanding what we really believe. Personally, it took this event to make me question and study what I believe about many different doctrines such as eschatology (what “mil” do I confess?), worldview (sphere sovereignty or Dualism?), worship (what does the Old Testament teach us about worship?), and the list goes on. I see God at work using COVID to bring us closer to him. Perhaps this means reforming will continue not just in personal lives but as body of Christ.

– RICHARD FEENSTRA

YOUTH ENTRIES

Happiness is learned through hardships, and dealing with conflicts in our lives. Over the past few years I have realized how much freedom I actually take for granted in my everyday life. Maybe some more hardship in our narcissistic world would do our world some good.

– NEIL P

Covid made people realise the blessings they really had in the things they never thought would be taken away. It was a reminder that was needed, that everything is provided by the Lord, and it cannot be taken for granted.

– JAYLEEN S

In my own family, my mom got Covid and was in the hospital for nine days, which was hard for my family. So just always trust in God and rely on him.

– KIRK M

The result of Covid-19 on the young people of the congregation is that they are more distant from each other. This can result in social anxiety as well as the lack of communion of saints. This is a time for young people to pull together. It is important for the young people to have the communion of saints. This causes better social skills as well as healthy relationships with others in the congregation.

– GARNETT H

The pandemic taught us to submit to the authority that God has set in place (exercising self-control), and that a difference of opinion should not cause hatred (showing love). We learned how desperately we need the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

– ZAHARA V

SHARE YOUR LOVE STORY!



A lesson on love

The whistle blew and the soccer ball flew up field towards Brooke's teammate. Brooke cut open for a pass. Sure enough, the ball sailed in her direction. She chased it. A perfect chance for a shot. She planted her left foot and was about to swing her leg when out of nowhere she was shoved from behind. Her face hit the grass.

Brooke sat up and wiped the mud off her sweaty face. To no surprise, she saw number 12 dribbling the ball down the field, her long brown hair flying behind her. She glanced at the ref in confusion. No whistle had blown, and the play was still going. She held her tongue and, not being the dramatic type, got up and kept running down the field to help her team defend.

Brooke was used to this. Whenever they played Sealine School, number 12 was dirty. It didn't help that the refs were inexperienced, and hesitant to call anything.

As the game went on, Brooke started to realize that number 12 wasn't just dirty, she truly disliked Brooke. With each push Brooke got more and more frustrated. She wanted to yell at the clueless refs. At one point she had got a beautiful goal, top-right corner. She turned to celebrate with her teammates and came face to face with number 12, who swore at her. Instead of feeling angry, Brooke realized she felt bad for her. She sadly sidestepped her and ran to her cheering teammates.

The final score was two to one. Thanks to Brooke's last goal they had won and were going to the semi-finals. They lined up for the handshakes. Brooke smiled and genuinely shook each girl's hand. She came to Number Twelve, who unsurprisingly pulled her hand away and skipped her.

"Good game," she said anyway.

That night while climbing into bed, Brooke considered the previous events. That girl. What was wrong with her. It was so frustrating. It would have been so easy to blow up at her and swear right back into her face. Did it make a difference how she had treated her? Did it change anything? She opened her devotional. Her eyes landed on the verse at the top of the page:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." – Matthew 5:43-48

Brooke knew that God was using even the little things. Being His child, she had to show love to others, just as she was shown love by God.

– MIRIAM P.

VIRGINIA LEE BURTON: Queen of nostalgia

by Jon Dykstra

A mom reading *Katy and the Big Snow* to her daughters might remember her own parents reading the same book to her. Since they first came out in the 1940s, Virginia Lee Burton's books have been enjoyed by three generations. These are *classics*!

But there's more to the nostalgia, because even when they were brand new, they likely had a timeless feel because, rather than being about Burton's present, they were a look back, celebrating a not-so-distant past that seemed calmer, simpler, better.

The idyllic yesteryear that Burton presents is just a bit before her own childhood, in the transition period between the late 19th and early 20th century. It's a curious time to pick as the wistful pinnacle of civilization. It's an age in which mechanization is already in place, so why is *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* worth celebrating, but the diesel shovels that followed are somehow threatening? But that is the pinnacle she picks, not only in *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, but *Maybelle the Cable Car*, and then again in *The Little House*.

While these stories are all quiet laments at the technological advances that were revolutionizing the Western way of life, they are also a hubbub of activity, with all sorts of machines at work, and so much to see on every page. This busyness is then contrasted by the happy, calm conclusion to each story.

While it's fun to take a peek at the past from someone who really appreciates the age she's depicting, parents

might remind their children of what the Preacher says in Ecclesiastes 7:10: "Say not 'Why were the former days better than these?' For it is not from wisdom that you ask this." To romanticize the past can sometimes be to overlook the many blessings God is showering on us right now.

RECOMMENDED

Burton's four most popular are available separately and also in a compendium together. They are wonderful!

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

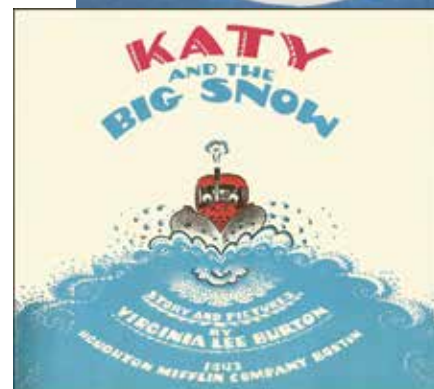
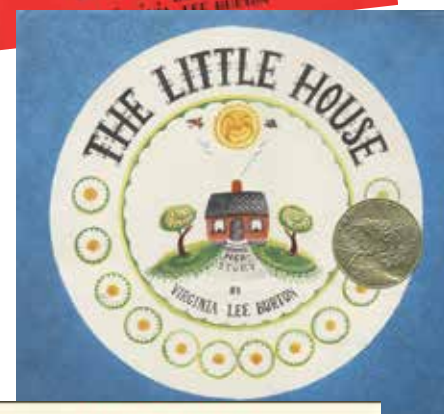
1939 / 48 PAGES

Mike Mulligan and his beautiful red steam shovel, Mary Anne, do a lot of digging in this story: cutting canals, lowering hills, straightening curves. But as technology advances, and new electric, diesel, and gasoline shovels come along, no one wants to hire a steam shovel. But instead of sending Mary Anne to the junkyard, Mike takes her to a small town looking to dig the cellar for their new town hall. He tells them that Mary Anne can do the job in a day, or they won't have to pay him. The real fun here is not in finding out whether she gets the job done in time, but in the sweet way the story ends, with Mary Anne and Mike finding new jobs to keep them both busy.

The Little House

1942 / 44 PAGES

The story starts with a solid little house in the country that can just see the lights of the city on the horizon at night. But as the decades pass, the city approaches and then engulfs the little house, making her



sad. But when the first owner's great-great-granddaughter comes across it, she decides to move the solid little house to a new spot, out in the country once more.

Katy and the Big Snow

1943 / 40 PAGES

A big red crawler tractor named Katy can push dirt in the summer, but when winter comes, she's the only one strong enough to push through all the snow. When a "big snow" hits, and all the plow trucks get stuck, and the snow piles up to three feet, five feet, and even more, then it's time for Katy to save the day. She clears roads for ambulances, fire trucks, the police, the mailman, the phone and electric company, and then even clears the runway for a plane that otherwise would have crashed. Katy saved the day!

Maybelle the Cable Car

1952 / 52 PAGES

Maybelle is a cable car who spends her days going up and down San Francisco's steepest streets, and she's been doing so for decades. But now the city wants to do away with all the cable cars and replace them with big new buses. Will Maybelle be out of a job? No, because a campaign by citizens to keep the money-losing cable cars wins the day. Yay? What this presumes is that, so long as the majority says so, it's okay to use tax dollars for non-necessities of all sorts, including wistful ones. Parents might have to talk their children through this one, to ensure little ones don't walk away with that lesson.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

Fun to read once or twice, these don't need to make the cut for personal or school library shelves.

Calico, the Wonder Horse

1941 / 67 PAGES

A peaceful Western county is disrupted by a gang of bad guys. The wonder horse Calico disguises herself with a black mud bath so that Stewy Stinker, leader of the gang, will mistake her for his horse. When he does, she gives him a wild ride to jail. He escapes and makes plans to hold up the stagecoach only to discover that it is full of presents for the town's children for Christmas Eve. Stinky starts crying because "I didn't know I was that mean... holding up

Santa on Christmas Eve. I'm never going to be bad anymore." So the bad guys all decide to be good. This is a fun exciting story, but this *people-are-only-bad-because-they-are-misunderstood* turn at the end obscures that there is real evil in the world, people who are fully determined to be wicked, and they must be fought and not coddled.

Choo Choo

1937 / 48 PAGES

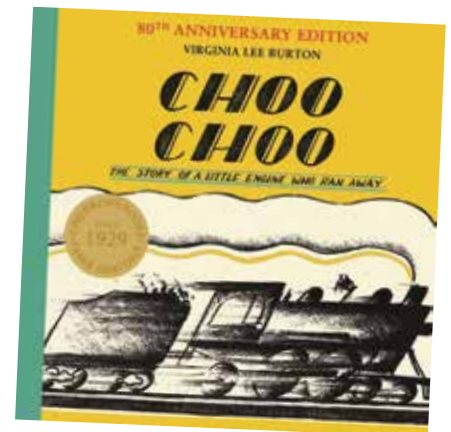
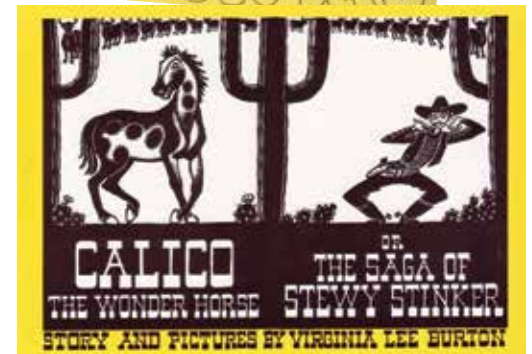
A hard-working train engine, Choo Choo takes a bratty turn and decides she wants to go out on her own, so she runs away. After a misadventure, causing all sorts of mishaps as she flies through crossings and even leaps over an open train drawbridge, Choo Choo eventually runs out of steam and is left all on her own at the end of an abandoned line. Fortunately, her conductor, engineer, and fireman go after her, find her, and bring her home, much to Choo Choo's relief – she's learned her lesson and pledges never to run away again.

DON'T BOTHER

The second book below made this category on, admittedly, a bit of nitpick, but the first earned its spot, being nothing but propaganda.

Life Story – At 80 pages, this is Burton's biggest book by far, and all of it a godless evolutionary account of how life on earth originated. We move through millions of years of history until, in the concluding pages set in Burton's time, there is on display, her wistful longing for a simple, country life.

The Emperor's New Clothes – Burton illustrated this Hans Christian Andersen classic. As much as I like the story, what I'm looking for in an illustrated version for children is for the Emperor's nakedness to be strategically and artfully obscured. Burton almost pulls it off, but on the last page we have a naked butt, and yes, it is a cartoonish naked butt. However, she's already shown in previous pages that this nudity is unneeded. For this tittering age group, one naked butt is one too many.



CONCLUSION

If one could overdose on Virginia Lee Burton that might lead a child to romanticize the past, and maybe even take an anti-progress, almost Luddite turn. But Burton didn't write all that much, so this isn't much of a concern.

Instead we can just enjoy her timeless books for the lovely look back that they are. We can dig up our own old copy, and point out all the action going on, the favorite bits that we recall from so many years ago "when your grandpappy used to read this to me." Burton at her best offers up stories that will endure at least long enough for you to read them to your grandchildren too. **RP**

come and
EXPLORE

APHIDS + ANTS = BFFS

Aphids secrete a sweet, milky substance which the ants LOVE to snack on. In return for their kindness, ants protect their milk making friends from their predators.

PROVERBS 6 : 6 - 8

"Go to the ant, you sluggard;
consider its ways and be wise!
It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,
yet it stores its provisions in summer and
gathers its food at harvest."

Find the lazy
ant and repeat
the text to him
so he will get
back to work!

LIFE CYCLE

1. Egg - fertilized eggs become females, while unfertilized become male ants.
2. Larvae - this stage lasts about two weeks and constantly needs to be nourished with food by worker ants that tend to the nursery.
3. Pupae - having spent its life, so far, focused on eating, the baby ant now takes time to rest and grow. And grow. And growooooow.
4. Adult - the final stage. As an adult, an ant finds its groove discovering where it fits the best, either as a worker in the nest, a nursery attendant or as a food gatherer.

Ants like to keep their nests neat and tidy, removing trash (dead ants, bodily waste and other odds and ends) into a garbage chamber within the nest or even outside it.

TRASH

THE QUEEN'S ROOM
by appointment only

Despite her impressive title, the queen doesn't do very many things that you would expect (like ordering ants around and collecting taxes).
The Queen ant is for one purpose: to build the number of ants in her colony.

She lays eggs. And LOTS of them. Some species can lay up to 800 eggs per day!

Once a nest is big enough (up to the Queen's discretion), the Queen will breed male ants with the specific purpose for them to leave the nest ASAP (using their nifty wings) to find a mate and start a new colony. Once the male ant has mated with a princess, she becomes the queen of a new colony, and the male ant dies.

WAIT. WHAT?!

My name
is BOB

ANTS CAN CARRY UP TO 50 TIMES THEIR OWN WEIGHT!
SO IF YOU WEIGH 70LBS, YOU COULD CARRY A GIRAFFE!

DEBRIEF AREA

How do ants communicate if they can't speak?

Ants use "pheromones" which are chemicals and can sense what other ants are communicating with their antennae. Sort of like if we communicated using our sense of smell!

Ants move at a rate of 9 body lengths per second. In human terms, it would equal up to 30 miles per hour! The fastest man in the world, Usain Bolt, clocks in at 27.5 miles per hour.

LARVAE AND PUPAE NURSERY

FOOD STORAGE room 1 of 10

Ants are OMNIVORES! Their shopping list would look something like this:

- ☒ Fruits
- ☒ Insects
- ☒ Small Living or Dead Invertebrates
- ☒ Meat
- ☒ Aphid Milk
- ☒ Plant Sap
- ☒ Sugar
- ☒ Leftover Cheerios
- ☒ Spilled Juice
- ☒ Dead Relatives
- ☒ Discarded Gum

You're under arrest. Not for any particular reason, we just need more workers. You start Monday.

Hey, don't mind me. Just taking one of my 250 one-minute power naps. I'll be back to work in a jiffy.

All the worker ants in a colony are sterile females. Their job is to dig, dig, dig and expand housing for the growing colony members.

come and
EXPLORE

Let's dig deeper!

Take time today to go outside and find some ants. Take a magnifying glass, if you have one, and do as God has instructed in the text, "CONSIDER its ways..." Write down what you observe.

Using the facts from the illustration on the previous page, as well as your new observations, take some time to **IMAGINE** what you could do if you were an ant. Share your thoughts below!

Any parent would be pretty happy if their kids could activate the same "power" that ants have. Just think about how their busy bodies keep going, minute after minute, doing exactly the thing that God created them to do! Ponder their strength, their teamwork, their communication! Aren't ants incredible? Wouldn't you love to be an ant, just for one day, just to experience how they live?

Ants are amazing, incredible, tiny creatures. They have many qualities that we as humans can learn from and adopt into our own lives. Go back to your lists above. How can you adopt some of the things that you have learned from ants? Think for a while about this. Discuss your findings with a friend or your parents.

Everybody benefits from relaxation. But when relaxation takes the place of obeying your parents, doing your chores, helping others or going to work, we turn our relaxation into an idol. Being a sluggard is not what God created us for. Our purpose on earth is to honor God in what we do and to do our work with joy. So whether that is at our jobs, at school, doing our chores, playing nicely with a sibling or folding laundry, we bring glory to God! As it says in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters" and in Philippians 2:14-15a, "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God."

So when you consider the choices you will make today, will you take initiative like an ant, doing the things you need to get done for God's glory? Or will you choose to be a sluggard, sluffing off the work that needs to get done in pursuit of selfish, idle things?

Look around the room you are in right now. Is there anything that needs to be done? Activate your ant-initiative and get to work!



Stephanie Vanderpol is a Christian self-taught artist who lives with her rambunctious family in Smithers, B.C. Along with her husband and four children, she loves to explore God's creation from the teeny tiny ants to the great blue whales! Her love for art started when she was really young, and through years of practice, well, she's made progress! She is so excited to be able to use her talents for RPI!

She cannot juggle. But she can draw an ant who can!





HELP! It's my first time out of the nest and I'm lost. Can you get me back to my home?



Ask your mom to play you this song on youtube or spotify!

Go to the Ant! Oh sluggard
See how she works all day!
And she doesn't even have a captain to tell her what to do,
but she works hard anyway!
Go to the Ant, and listen
Tell me, does she complain?
God made her, now you imitate her - Go to the Ant!

TAKE INITIATIVE

Boredom hits everybody, even adults. The next time you find yourself terribly bored, take initiative and do something off of this list!

- learn how to knit ☐
- play with your sibling ☐
- make a card for someone sick ☐
- draw some ants ☐
- read a good book ☐
- read the rest of RP ☐
- help your mom with laundry ☐
- draw a picture for your Oma ☐
- do your homework ☐
- go outside and find ants ☐
- read your Bible ☐
- mow the neighbor's lawn ☐
- write a story ☐

How to draw an ant:

1

Start with a wacky lookin' snowman!
big (ish) circle
squashed smaller circle
medium circle



2

two circles for the eyes
two teeny circles for the pupils



3

antennae for "smelling"
a wee little U makes a good smile



4

ants have 6 legs!



Check out the video tutorial at www.reformedperspective.ca/kids

Interview with an artist

Stephanie Vanderpol has a zoologist in the house

by Jon Dykstra

Stephanie Vanderpol is the author and artist behind RP's "Come and Explore" children's pages, and she's also the author of a new picture book, *Cheetahs Eat Cantaloupe*. If this title sounds a bit odd to you, that's because it's an example of the various other animals "facts" that you'll find inside. I had a chance, recently, to ask the author how her book came about.

– JD

Jon Dykstra: In the opening of "Cheetahs Eat Cantaloupe" you explain that it was "inspired by the comical 'animal facts' as stated by my daughter Scarlett." It sounds like you had a zoological expert in the house. What sorts of animal facts was she sharing?

Stephanie Vanderpol: Scarlett has always been interested in animals. When she was two, she had a pet spider, a bucket of worms, and a collection of snails that she would play with on the regular. Outside, of course! Between the ages of six and seven she started sharing animal "facts" like in the book, things like "chipmunks stuff their cheeks because they cannot climb when their hands are full." The facts were mainly born out of curiosity, sort of her way of answering her own questions of "why does that animal do that?" Sometimes she would write them down and I would find them, or I would overhear her teaching her brother the ways of these animals, or, sometimes, she would outright just tell me.

JD: What prompted you to turn it into a book?

SV: I had been illustrating my daughter's animal facts and posting them to Instagram at the beginning of COVID thinking that people could use a little bit of joy in their day. A few months in, the winter was looming over me and I knew I needed some sort of project to keep me sane through the winter. I actually got on my knees and asked God to direct my ways, to give me a project that would give Him



glory and keep my head above water. He led my heart to the book project. It was initially just for my daughter Scarlett's 8th birthday, one copy, just for her. But as I posted about it, people got excited and by printing date I had a fair amount of pre-orders. I never would have thought!

JD: What did Scarlett think of how you illustrated each of her "facts"?

SV: Either she would giggle, at which point I knew she liked it, or she'd critique it and tell me what to change. She was very involved in the sketching stage, so it was a cool bonding moment. Maybe I hit the "cool mom" stage with her... though, of course, she never said that out loud.

JD: What was involved to turn this from idea to finished book?

SV: It took over a year to go from the first sketch until I held the final copy in my hands. During the day I would be doing my regular mom job, folding laundry, making meals, keeping the house clean, and then once my kids were tucked into bed at night, I'd whip out all my art supplies, sit on the couch, open up my folding table and get to work. My husband is a

school teacher so it worked out well. He'd be sitting with me, marking tests and prepping for the next day, and I'd be playing with my pencils and watercolors, with baby no. 4 kicking away in my belly.

JD: What was the process for a single two-page spread?

SV: Each page had a similar process:

Step 1: Take one of Scarlett's animal facts and imagine what it could look like.

2: Sketch the image onto paper until it came out right (sometimes this took up to 15 different tries).

3: Run the sketch for approval under the careful eye of Scarlett for laughability, my husband, for common sense and continuity, and my best friend Breanna for accuracy in facial expressions and other artistic critiques.

4: Trace the sketch onto watercolor paper using a lightpad and a water-proof pen.

5: Using my watercolors, paint the image. This was my favorite part!


6: Scan the images into the computer and arrange them and the text in Photoshop, creating the pages as they are in the book.

7: Once all the pages were done, I ordered a proof copy of the book to go through final edits, including text, done by my editor, Julia. After many edits and proof copies, I ended up with the final copy!

8: Snuggle up on the couch and read the final book to my kids!



JD: We've got your book in the school library down here in Lynden, WA. Where else has it reached? And how can people get a copy?

SV: *Cheetahs Eat Cantaloupe* has made it all across Canada and into the United States, and there's even a copy in Scotland, too, which is pretty cool. I have a few copies left of the first print run that can be purchased through my website, www.stephaniorinda.com, or on Instagram @stephaniorinda. And if I run out, I'm happy to take pre-orders for the second edition. 





THINKING ON THE MARGIN, OR WHY SOME POLLUTION IS BETTER THAN NONE

Another economic principle Christian teens (& adults) need to know

by Peter Jacobsen

An important aspect of economics is counting the costs of an action or purchase, and, on the flipside, also evaluating the benefit that could result. With these two concepts, cost and benefit, we can understand how people make their decisions. When the benefit of taking an action is greater than the cost, people will take that action.

For example, if buying a soda would bring you \$3 worth of enjoyment, but it only costs \$1, then you'll choose to buy the soda. And afterwards, if you've had your fill of soda, you might hardly enjoy another soda, and perhaps value it at just a quarter. So of course you then won't buy it for \$1.

WHAT IS "MARGINAL THINKING"?

This example illustrates the meaning of the concept of *marginality*. When

economists use the term "marginal benefit," they are referring to the benefit added by the last unit purchased – in this case the last soda.

Another example: when you decide whether to work for another hour, you don't consider the cost and benefit of all the hours you *already worked*. Instead,

DEFINITIONS:

Marginal utility is the additional utility (i.e., additional usefulness or enjoyment) a consumer gets from buying one more unit of a good or service. It generally decreases with the number purchased because, while one pencil is nice, as are two, we can't use a hundred. Marginal utility can even take a negative turn, as there is such a thing as too much: one drink is nice, and maybe two, but when a line is crossed each additional drink isn't just worthless, it does increasing harm. **Marginal benefit** describes how much a consumer is willing to pay for one more unit. We might value a first pencil at a dollar but might value the one hundredth at zero.

– Jon Dykstra

you consider the cost and benefit associated with the final (or marginal) hour under consideration.

So when you “think marginal,” then think about the cost and benefit of “one more unit.”

And whether people realize it or not, we all engage in marginal thinking. Imagine you’re deciding to buy an ice cream cone. Let’s say a single scoop cone costs \$2, and every additional scoop costs 50 cents. When deciding whether to buy a single scoop you have to compare how much benefit you get from the single cone to the cost of the cone (\$2). So long as you value the single scoop cone at more than \$2 you buy it. When the marginal benefit of an action is greater than the cost, people will do that action.

What about the second scoop? Well, each scoop is 50 cents, so you’ll choose to buy the second scoop if you enjoy it at a value more than 50 cents. You’ll keep purchasing more scoops but at some point, another scoop just won’t be worth another 50 cents to you, so you’ll stop.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

So hopefully you understand marginal thinking, because now we have to consider why it matters. Marginal thinking is valuable in all sorts of applications.

For students, marginal thinking can help you prioritize your studying. I always tell my students that, if their goal is a good GPA, they shouldn’t spend much time trying to improve their grade from a 96% to a 98%. Why?

First, both grades are an “A” so the marginal benefit to your GPA is nothing. Also, once your grade is already high, it’s much more difficult to move it up. Therefore, the *cost* is high and the marginal *benefit* is low.

Most students would be better off dedicating their time to working on a class where they have a 79% since the cost is lower – just a little more study could boost them up a letter grade – and the marginal benefit is higher.

In Luke 16, Jesus tells the story of a man who manages the money of a rich man. The manager is going to be fired because of his wasteful practices. When

he discovers this, he forgives the debtors of his master to make friends before he’s fired. Jesus tells us in Luke 16:8a, “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly.”

In 16:9 He goes on to give the meaning of the parable, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” The point of the parable is not that we should be dishonest in our dealings. Instead, it’s that we should use our resources shrewdly for the Kingdom. Christians are called to be good stewards of the resources we are given, which includes our time. As the studying example above illustrates, effective use of time requires the ability to consider the relevant costs and benefits of a given decision.

THERE’S A “GOOD” AMOUNT OF POLLUTION AND CRIME?

Marginal thinking is also valuable when it comes to thinking about policy.

Economists have a pithy saying: *the efficient amount of anything is not zero*. It’s tempting to believe bad things should be eliminated completely. For example, many people would likely support the phrase, “politicians should eliminate pollution.”

But imagine what it would mean to eliminate the very last “units” of pollution. Almost every vehicle, either personal or those used for transporting goods and services, relies on some form of pollution to operate. If we had zero pollution, our grocery stores would receive zero food deliveries because we wouldn’t have semitrucks, and they would receive zero visits from us, because we wouldn’t have cars. An elimination of all pollution, at least at this point, would result in most of humanity returning to subsistence conditions – the cost is too high, and thus that is a “purchase” we shouldn’t make.

Of course, *some* pollution should be eliminated. If a factory is dumping toxic

CHINA’S ZERO-COVID POLICY

by Jon Dykstra

As Peter Jacobsen explains in his article, zero crime and zero pollution might sound nice, but pursuing either as an actual goal would be quite terrible. Why? Well, it’s just not realistic – so long as we live in a fallen world, pollution and crime will always exist.

Marginal thinking highlights another problem. We understand that a crime-ridden area would benefit enormously by having a police officer walk a regular beat. The crime his mere presence prevents would be more than enough to pay his salary. So this first “unit” of police protection is an attractive “purchase.” Likewise, two officers could also be a great benefit. But to entirely eliminate crime, we’d need many, many more officers. And at some point, the amount of crime that one more officer will prevent will be quite minimal. And it won’t be anywhere near what it takes to pay his salary. Thus this “purchase” wouldn’t be desirable.

A zero COVID policy is, likewise, far more expensive than China seemed to realize when they pursued this goal over the past year. To try to eliminate COVID deaths altogether could only be done via massive lockdowns. Those lockdowns then brought their own problems including both food shortages and of course the mental stress that comes of being imprisoned in your home. That in turn led to protests in which Chinese citizens told their government that this cost was too high, and demanded that their government stop buying any more “units” of safety.

waste into a public river, the cost of allowing the pollution to continue is very high.

As strange as it might sound, the efficient amount of crime is also not zero. Imagine how much money and how many resources would need to be spent to ensure zero crime. We'd need a police officer on every street corner 24/7. Think of how high your taxes would need to be to support those pensions! Surely taxpayers have other priorities with higher marginal benefits than preventing some minor traffic violation.

NO NIRVANA NAIVETE

This sort of logic can be summarized neatly by saying economics as a field is inherently opposed to the Nirvana fallacy. The Nirvana fallacy is the mistake that is made when people compare the real world to an unrealistically ideal alternative.

We would all like to get a grade of 100% in every class and live in a world without crime or pollution. But these are unrealistic desires for this world.

A solid understanding of marginal analysis complements the Christian understanding of our fallen world. When politicians offer us a vision of a world where all bad is eliminated, a clear understanding of marginal analysis provides us with an

argument for why such a world is out of reach.

Economists Armen Alchian and William Allen rightly summarize this in the foreword of their book *Universal Economics*. They say:

“since the discouraging fiasco in the Garden of Eden, all the world has been a place conspicuous in its scarcity of resources, contributing heavily to an abundance of various sorrows and sins. People have had to adjust and adapt to limitations of what is available to satisfy unlimited desires.”

In sum, marginal thinking helps us better understand the nature of our own decisions. When applied properly, this way of thinking provides a more sober view of the important decisions we make in our personal lives and in the public square. ^{RP}

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



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by Kenechi Okoli

HOW DOES THE WORLD EXPLAIN LIFE'S ORIGINS?

or, highlighting the problems with a Naturalistic explanation

Naturalism can be defined best by what it doesn't believe: in the Supernatural; it denies the existence of God.

That means that all Naturalists are left with to explain all that exists, why we exist, and how we came to be is Nature and natural laws. And that presents them with a problem. Nature cannot provide us with an explanation for *abiogenesis* – life coming from non-life.

You don't have to take my word for it – this is also acknowledged as a foundational problem by many scientists, sometimes explicitly, and sometimes only by the irrational arguments they'll offer as an alternative to acknowledging God.

In what follows I'm going to share both the publicly acknowledged problems with naturalistic abiogenesis, as well as some of the theories the world has proposed to address those problems. Both are revealing.

THE RNA PROBLEM

In paleontologist Peter Ward's book *Life As We Do Not Know It*, he addresses how RNA (or ribonucleic acid) – because it is simpler than DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) – is theorized as an evolutionary step in the development of DNA. But, Ward notes:

Amazingly, one of the major criticisms of RNA life...the hypothesized last common ancestor of all DNA life, is that it probably did not exist because it would have been impossible to build RNA through natural chemical processes. Paul Davies notes: "*without a trained organic chemist on hand to supervise, nature would be struggling to make RNA from a dilute soup under any plausible prebiotic condition.*" [emphasis added]

Or, as organic chemist Clemens Richert wrote in the Dec 12, 2018 edition of *Nature Communications*:

Experimentalists in the field of prebiotic chemistry strive to re-enact what may have happened when life arose from inanimate material. How often human intervention was needed to obtain a specific result in their studies is worth reporting.

When Diego Maradona was asked about having used his hand to score a goal in the quarter-finals of the 1986 soccer World Cup, he initially claimed that there had been divine intervention, and the term "Hand of God Goal" was coined. – There had been manual intervention, and there had been an understandable interest of the player not to admit it. – Organic chemists, if not all experimentalists in the field of prebiotic chemistry, are faced with



It's one thing for highly trained chemists to create RNA in a lab, but another thing entirely for unaided Nature to accomplish the same.

a similar dilemma. We do our best to perform experiments that we believe re-enact possible steps of prebiotic evolution, but we know that we need to intervene manually to obtain meaningful results.

Further, the ideal experiment does not involve any human intervention.

He also frankly said:

Understandably, this has drawn the ire of those who feel that no or only minimal intervention is allowed for a process to be called prebiotically plausible. After all, it is not easy to see what replaced the flasks, pipettes and stir bars of a chemistry lab during prebiotic evolution, let alone the hands of the chemist who performed the manipulations. (And yes, most of us are not comfortable with the idea of divine intervention in this context.)

Whether divine intervention or human intervention, there's a conscious entity doing the intervening. So even if our friends were to succeed in creating life in the lab, that would only demonstrate that intelligence and deliberate intent are needed to create a living thing. I'm glad this issue is explicitly acknowledged.

Every honest Origin of Life (OOL) researcher will agree fully. It's one thing for highly trained chemists to create RNA in a lab, but another thing entirely for unaided Nature to accomplish the same.

Especially considering that Nature is not *trying* to make RNA, and has no intention of doing so.

THE MULTIVERSE "SOLUTION"

But, if the researcher is committed to Naturalism and atheism, then he has no choice but to maintain a strong (and unrealistic) faith that Nature did it anyway, even though he knows it's not possible.

One such researcher, Eugene Koonin, resorted to "an infinite multiverse" as a potential way out of this problem. This is the view that supposedly, anything that can happen will happen in an infinite multiverse, and this would also include the chance origin of life.

In a 2011 book, *The Logic of Chance: the Nature and Origin of Biological Evolution*, he added this:

The origin of life is one of the hardest problems in all of science, but it is also one of the most important. Origin-of-life research has evolved into a lively, interdisciplinary field, but other scientists often view it with skepticism and even derision. This attitude is understandable and, in a sense, perhaps justified, given the "dirty" rarely mentioned secret: Despite many interesting results to its credit, when judged by the straightforward criterion of reaching (or even approaching) the ultimate goal, *the origin of life field is a failure – we still do not have even a plausible coherent model, let alone a validated scenario, for the emergence of life on Earth*. Certainly, this is due not to a lack of experimental and theoretical effort, but to the extraordinary intrinsic difficulty and complexity of the problem. A succession of exceedingly unlikely steps is essential for the origin of life, from the synthesis and accumulation of nucleotides to the origin of translation; through the multiplication of probabilities, these make the final outcome seem almost like a miracle. [emphasis added]

"Almost like a miracle" is a frank admission of what OOL entails. Nevertheless, in the same book, Koonin continued to cling to the multiverse hypothesis as a guaranteed solution to the problems involved with OOL. Here's the summary of Koonin's argument, in his own words:



There's no evidence for the multiverse... except that Naturalism needs it to exist.

Simply put, the probability of the realization of any scenario permitted by the conservation laws in an infinite universe (and, of course, in the multiverse) is, exactly, one.... Thus, spontaneous emergence of complex systems that would have to be considered virtually impossible in a finite universe becomes not only possible but inevitable under MWO [Many Worlds in One]...

What he's saying is that if you have an infinite number of universes then anything, no matter how improbable, not only can happen, but will happen... in some universe somewhere within the multiverse. Including naturalistic abiogenesis.

According to Koonin (and some "Many Worlds" physicists who agree with him), in some universe somewhere right now, there's a guy who's a practicing neurosurgeon, a janitor, and the lead actor in a recent blockbuster movie – simultaneously. He owns 271 cars, and is married to his high school sweetheart (who happens to be a princess from a tribe of highly-advanced super-beings). Their son adopted a pet chimpanzee named Wilson, while their twin daughters are ballistic missile experts in the local galactic army.

No, this isn't a hypothetical story I just made up. Or, rather it is, but according to Koonin's logic these things are actually going on right now as we speak, in some universe somewhere. The pet chimp is also very clever, and has learned how to fly a helicopter, among other things.

Now think about this trained monkey trying to synthesize life in a chemistry lab. What are the odds of him succeeding?? Exactly. But even the monkey has a better chance than a prebiotic Nature which has no intent or purpose whatsoever.

In any case, simply postulating an infinite multiverse in an attempt to overcome the problem does not help – Koonin doesn't put forth any mechanism whereby life could be naturally synthesized, but just makes the bold assertion that it must certainly happen given a multiverse.



Would Nature alone be able to synthesize and assemble the ingredients needed to make a tiny piece of a Skittle? No. Never. Not in ten billion years!

TIME IS NO SOLUTION

Another factor that is usually seen as a possible helper for abiogenesis is Time. If Nature has billions of years to work with, she should be able to eventually get the right combination to the safe, right?

No, not at all. That would be akin to claiming a blind engineer could invent a BMW, or a Model-T Ford, given billions of years to live and try. It's clear why time isn't the problem. The blind engineer actually has better odds in this analogy than Nature does, since he at least knows what he's attempting to accomplish.

THE LANGUAGE/ INFORMATION PROBLEM

The origin of life gets all the more complicated when we realize it also necessitates the origin of information, and the origin of a language to convey that information. I could employ many quotes here concerning what information is, but I like how physicist and information theorist Hubert Yockey put it in this simple statement:

The meaning, if any, of words, that is, a sequence of letters, is arbitrary. It is determined by the natural language and is not a property of the letters or their arrangement ... For example, "O singe fort!" has no meaning as a sentence in English, although each is an English word, yet in German it means, "O sing on!" and in French it means "O strong monkey." Like all messages, the

life message is non-material but has an information content measurable in bits and bytes.

Or, as chemistry professor Michael Polanyi already noted way back in 1958, in his book *Personal Knowledge*:

Information in the DNA could no more be reduced to the chemicals than could the ideas in a book be reduced to the ink and paper: something beyond physics and chemistry is encoded in DNA.

The origin of encoded genetic information is also assumed to have just happened miraculously under the multiverse scenario. Information here isn't just the physical nucleobases, or even their sophisticated ordering alone, but the ribosomes' *understanding of the language*, and their ability to decode and use those instructions to build the specified proteins. And then we have multiple regulatory genes in addition, which are all information networks.

There's actually a \$10 million challenge out there still ongoing, for anyone who can demonstrate a set of coded information that didn't originate from a mind, i.e., that can be spontaneously generated by Nature. The judges include well-respected biologists George Church and Denis Noble, and the Royal Society has also gotten involved recently. No one has claimed the prize.

THE COMPLEXITY PROBLEM

Most of us don't actually know, much less appreciate, the number of things that need to be done in order to arrive at the "simplest" cell. Nature has no goal or aim or plan to create a cell. The fact that highly trained, highly intelligent chemists still can't do it, speaks volumes.

So how is it that some lay naturalists and even some with degrees think all that's needed is lots of time, and then Nature will eventually produce a living cell? The sheer amount of intellectual effort that goes into OOL research is more than impressive, and we still can't make life ourselves – we can't pull it off. But a mindless prebiotic Nature with no intention of creating a cell somehow did?

Consider the ingredients needed to make a basic candy. Here's the list for Skittles:

- Sugar
- Corn syrup
- Hydrogenated palm kernel oil
- Citric acid
- Tapioca dextrin
- Modified corn starch
- Natural and artificial flavors
- Colors (Red 40 Lake, Titanium Dioxide, Red 40, Yellow 5 Lake, Yellow 5, Yellow 6 Lake, Yellow 6, Blue 2 Lake, Blue 1, Blue 1 Lake)
- Sodium citrate
- Carnauba wax

Now consider just a miniscule piece of a Skittle. Would Nature alone be able to synthesize and assemble the ingredients needed to make a tiny piece of a Skittle? No. Never. *Not in ten billion years!* But many adults believe Nature somehow synthesized and assembled everything that's needed to make a living, metabolizing, self-replicating cell.

THE EXTRATERRESTRIALS "SOLUTION"

But what if we were to claim that life on earth resulted from *panspermia* – that Extraterrestrials (ETs) seeded the first life on Earth? This is indeed what some among our SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) friends propose.

Well, then they'd have the problem of explaining how Nature produced those ETs. As Richard Dawkins wrote in *The God Delusion*:

...there are very probably alien civilizations that are superhuman, to the point of being god-like in ways that exceed anything a theologian could possibly imagine. Their technical achievements would seem as supernatural to us as ours would seem to a Dark Age peasant transported to the twenty-first century...In what sense would they be superhuman but not supernatural? In a very important sense...the crucial difference between gods and god-like extraterrestrials lies not in their properties but in their provenance. Entities that are complex enough to be intelligent are products of an evolutionary process. No matter how god-like they may seem when we encounter them, they didn't start that way...They probably owe their existence to a (perhaps unfamiliar) version of Darwinian evolution.

Saying ETs put the first life on Earth still keeps us inside the box of Naturalism. And then Nature still has to create and evolve the ETs, so the abiogenesis problem – how life can ever have come from non-life – remains.

Then there's at least one scientist in peer-reviewed publication who also

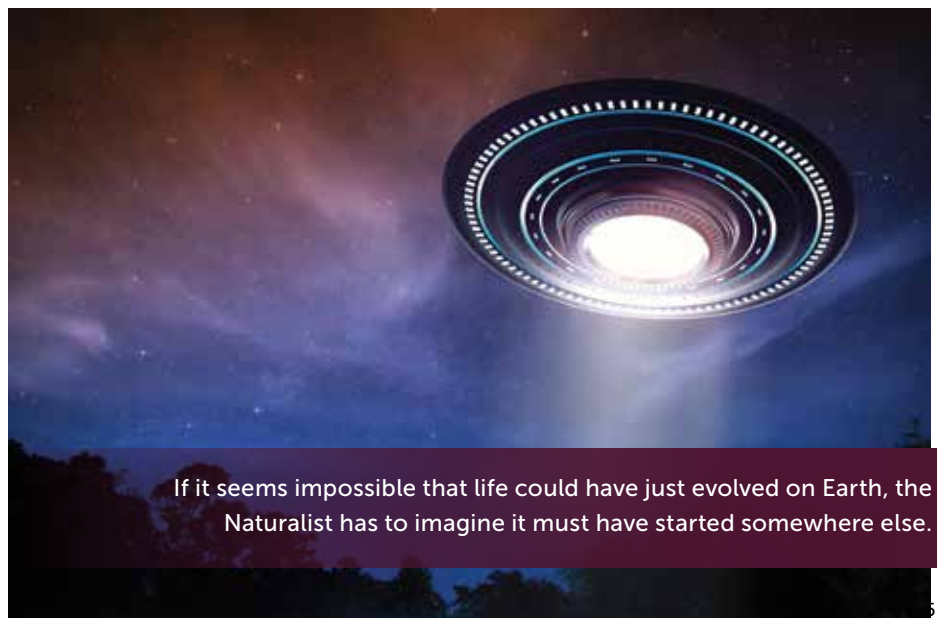
thinks panspermia by ETs isn't a good enough proposal. Brig Klyce concedes there's one of two possibilities:

- 1) "supernatural intervention or intelligence" (aka God)
- 2) or that cellular life has existed from eternity

This concession appeared in a paper ("Cause of Cambrian Explosion – Terrestrial or Cosmic?" in the August 2018 edition of the journal *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology*) that Klyce co-authored with more than a dozen other scientists. He believed "that the complexity and sophistication of life cannot originate (from non-biological) matter under any scenario, over any expanse of space and time, however vast." But if that's so, then how is life here? Rejecting the possibility that God was involved, Klyce then proposes this:

A strictly scientific way around this dilemma would be to amend or tweak the big bang theory to allow for life from the eternal past. After all, the big bang theory is relatively new and still occasionally amended. Therefore, it seems unready to forever overrule the unviolated principle and consistent evidence that life comes from life.

Yes, that's an actual suggestion from a peer-reviewed secular scientific paper



If it seems impossible that life could have just evolved on Earth, the Naturalist has to imagine it must have started somewhere else.

– that life started here from a universe before the big bang. So either God did it, or self-replicating microbes have always existed. The difference between the two proposals is that:

- God is an eternal *Supernatural* Being. This is logically consistent and plausible, and even a metaphysical necessity to avoid an infinite regress of causes.
- On the other hand, proposing an eternity of replicating microbes, each of which had a beginning and an end, is trying to say that abiogenesis never happened because there was no “first ever microbe.” But things that have a beginning still need to have an expla-

nation for that beginning. Trying to hide that behind an infinite regression isn’t an answer to this problem.

CONCLUSION

For decades, highly trained experts have been striving to create life from scratch, using the raw materials found in nature. They have yet to succeed.

Even if they did eventually succeed somehow, that would only demonstrate that a high level of intelligent input is needed to create biological life; which is what we’ve been saying the evidence has always shown. Proposing an infinite multiverse where “anything that can happen will happen” is an unsubstantiated assertion with no empirical evidence

whatsoever, and doesn’t offer a mechanism for abiogenesis or even address the issue that Nature has no intent to create life. The suggestion that microbial life has always existed and self-replicated is a logical absurdity, since there can be no such thing as an infinite regress of causes.

Thus in the question of God vs Naturalism, there is no question as to which answer is absurd. **RP**

Kenechi Okoli is a Christian who loves science, and in his free time he enjoys reading, music, and cooking. While he lived for over a decade in the US, he now resides in Nigeria.

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

8-2

PUZZLE CLUES

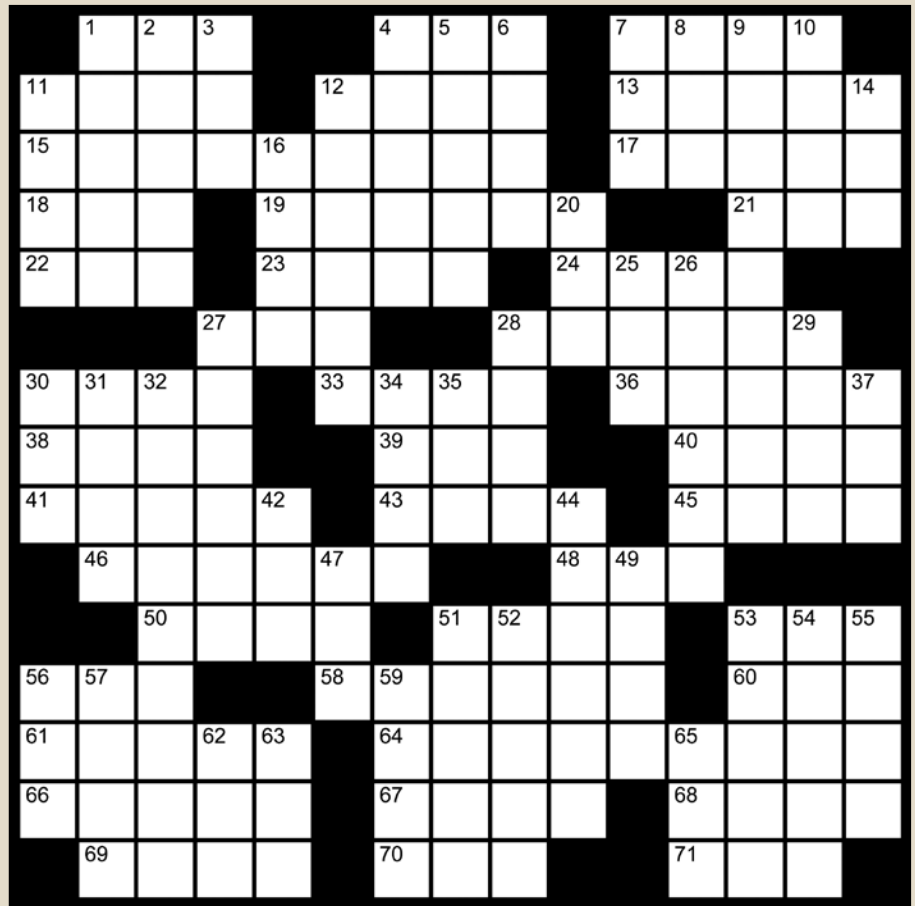
Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. "And they stood still, looking ____." (Luke 24)
4. "____! Humbug!" (famous Scrooge line)
7. High priest's belt (Exodus 28, 38)
11. Being against, say, your mother's sister?
12. Puerto ____
13. Along with sackcloth, a sign of sorrow
15. What you might give, or find in a jam?
17. A rhyme: Use a ____ to mark the time.
18. "Fire and ____" (nine-line Robert Frost poem)
19. Make dear (to)
21. "the ____ fell on Matthias" (Acts 1)
22. Abbreviation in criminal record (= *alias*)
23. Underhand throw (for trash or suggestion)
24. Birthstone for October
27. Maw's spouse
28. _____ Brezhnev: former Soviet leader
30. Abbreviation for *decentralized finance*
33. ____-____ zones: dangerous areas
36. "a gate to the ____ court" (Ez. 40)
38. Relating to the ear
39. "arose and ____ to the tomb" (Luke 24)
40. "the _____, thin cows" (Gen. 41)
41. Unattractively thin animal or person
43. What ostriches take poor care of (Job 39)
45. Largest continent
46. To this matter or document
48. Snakelike freshwater fish
50. You either play it in the water, or on a horse, but not both at the same time
51. Distinctive quality surrounding something
53. "Put it on my ____." "Pay off your ____ first."
56. Boston Symphony Orchestra (abbr.)
58. "put them in the _____ prison" (Acts 5)
60. Suffix after *auction*, *chariot*, or *mountain*
61. Resident of Midwestern state
64. It might be named *Secretariat* or *Seabiscuit*.
66. Guiding set of beliefs (Latin for "I believe")
67. What the baker does with the cake
68. If you ____ a lot, you may have to eat it.
69. Dance of either a turkey or a fox
70. It's the first syllable of its emissions.
71. Favorite dance of a faucet

DOWN

1. What you eat between meals
2. Confused, even when you're sailing (two words)
3. "shall ____ his finger in the blood" (Lev. 4)
4. "_____ of the air have nests" (Luke 9)
5. *Green* _____ (sitcom, 1965-1971)
6. Tropical plant in the dogbane family, or a Georgetown basketball player
7. Pouch in animal or plant containing fluid
8. The end of cigarette smoking?
9. There are around 20 in a pound.
10. Prefix relating to blood
11. Single-voiced song in an opera
12. "They were... men of _____" (Gen. 6)
14. "he ____ his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9)
16. The guy running just behind the alpha male
20. ____ versus Wade: ruling overturned in 2022
25. Hawaiian food made from mashed taro, also, a Person of Interest
26. "the three _____ feasts" (2 Chron. 8)
27. A less than noble adventurer
28. "he had ____ desired to see him" (Luke 23)
29. Where the meat is delicious, to start?
30. Before Microsoft Windows there was this
31. Engrave (a-sketch?)
32. Destructive military capacity
34. Layered cookie best consumed with a glass of milk
35. Stop someone's speaking
37. Swedish handmade rug, the Royal Yachting Association.
42. Congeal: coagulate; clot
44. Baseball has one for the World
47. "torn in two, from ____ to bottom" (Mark 15)
49. Per person, apiece, a pop
51. Species of Philippine banana
52. Medical problem of 1984's Winston Smith
53. _____ firma (solid ground)
54. Author of "The Tortoise and the Hare"
55. Make beer or tea
56. Disposable pen brand
57. "birds of every ____" (Ez. 17, 39)
59. _____ acid: You need to get rid of it daily.
62. Without further ____ (no more delay)
63. "____ as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26)
65. Important month in octopus life?





by Hank Van der Woerd and Maria Dawes

SIMPLE STEPS FOR LIVING GENEROUSLY

Jesus says: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34). It should go without saying that our giving is a reflection of our devotion to Him. God calls on us to share *His* wealth, for all you have is in fact His. And if you don’t, might that mean that you don’t belong to Him in the first place?

In today’s climate of “earn more to buy more,” it can be hard for Christians to focus on any other uses for their time, talent (skills) and treasure (material resources). Regardless of this challenge, Scripture clearly calls believers to a life of giving and living generously.

“DO WE HAVE TO?” MISSES THE POINT

In the Old Testament, the tithe was introduced as a 10% minimum for Israelites to give back to God to show their thankfulness and dependence on Him. This practice is shown in both Abraham and Jacob’s life (Gen. 14:19-20 and 28:20-22), and then introduced into Israelite law in Leviticus (27:30). Additional giving – the freewill offering – was also encouraged (Lev. 22:18 and Num. 15:3). Giving at this level would have been very difficult at times; the Israelites frequently went through seasons of war and poverty.

The word tithe literally means “*a tenth*” and denotes the minimum amount that Israelites were required to give to God. The nature of the *type* of gift God desired is described as the first fruits (Prov. 3:9, Lev. 19:23-25). Giving of the first fruits was meant to be a gift of the first and best that God provided.

It is important to understand that giving of the first fruits is an exceptionally sacrificial act. It is the small harvest at the begin-

ning of the season that follows a long winter and spring filled with the sweat and labor that goes into the growing season. There was often hunger and self-denial involved in this sacrifice. The Israelites would have had a strong recognition that the rest of the harvest, the part that would provide for their family’s daily food and provisions for months or maybe even the remaining year, was still pending and not at all guaranteed. This required much trusting in God for His provision.

Whether tithing is mandated today is a hotly debated topic in Christian circles. But what should not be in question is the discipline and sacrificial nature of giving that the tithe and first fruits promoted, and the generosity Christ put on display by giving up His life for us. Making regular giving a natural and normal part of your financial routine is critical to promoting a life of generosity. Also, the recognition that God has blessed you with what you have, and you are entirely dependent on His provision, is a difficult but necessary reality for Christians to live within.

GETTING, GIVING, GOING

Many have good intentions to give regularly and generously, but often those intentions are not fully acted upon. Sometimes all that is required is the creation and implementation of a good financial plan. Practically speaking, this includes the application of sound financial principles, such as:

- Spend less than you earn and do it for a long time. This requires you to know where your money is going, to communicate effectively with family members, and to be a disciplined spender.

- Live in a home you can afford.
- Do not presume upon the future. God provides for your needs, but He does not guarantee you a smooth journey.
- Be very careful with your use of debt and avoid it if possible as a form of slavery (Prov. 22:7).
- Strive purposefully to provide for your family's needs (1 Tim. 5:8).
- Build into your life financial accountability, especially in areas where you may struggle.


To give *deliberately* and *sacrificially*, some practical steps to implement might include:

- As soon as income is received, remove a portion to give. This could mean transferring it to another bank account, immediately writing the check for Sunday's service, or even e-transferring to your church if that is an option.
- Take regular (quarterly or annual) inventory of your personal and business net worth and give on the growth. This includes a portion of the return on your investment portfolio, inheritances received, and dispositions in property and business.
- Devise and implement a plan to give of your time and skills as well as your material wealth. If you have a spouse and children, get them involved and make it a family plan.
- Teach your children to give with paper money and not with coins since God is not a God of leftovers (Mal. 1:8; Luke 6:38).



Devise and implement a plan to give of your time and skills as well as your material wealth.

Consider the challenge contained in the concept of the first fruits. What will you give to feel the sacrifice of the gift? Would you still give at the same financial level if a tax incentive was not offered? Is your lack of intentionality and organization preventing you from giving at a level that is truly worshipful? Consider including your time and your talents as part of your giving plan.

Do not offer God worthless gifts. Give deliberately, sacrificially and excellently. 

This has been a father-daughter collaboration: Rev. Hank Van der Woerd (MDiv) is an emeritus minister (URCNA) and past president of the Mortgage Brokers Association of BC; Maria Dawes CIM CFP is a Portfolio Manager for Capstone Asset Management (www.capstoneassets.ca).

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The bad king that prompted the Great Charter

How Robin Hood's nemesis Prince John was the impetus behind the *Magna Carta*

In this excerpt from "A Christian Citizenship Guide" by André Schutten and Michael Wagner, we go way back to the time of the fictional Robin Hood and the very real Prince John to learn about the development of the Magna Carta, which has been described as "the greatest constitutional document of all times – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot."

Once upon a time there was a king named Richard the Lionheart. He became king of England in 1189. The time before this date, in English law, is known as "time immemorial."¹ Important legal and political developments occurred in this "time out of mind" and contributed to the development of the system of law and government that we have today.² While important and formational, those developments can't be covered in detail

here. However, we must begin the story of our constitution somewhere, and so we will begin the day *after* time immemorial.

Most storybooks suggest that Richard the Lionheart was a good king, but that's really quite debatable. All we know for sure is that his brother John was worse. Richard was a military man and mainly used England to fund his military exploits. He spent all but 6 months of his 10-year reign outside of England fighting various battles and pursuing various exploits. Once, on his way back to England, King Richard was kidnapped in a German territory and held for ransom. His brother John, temporarily ruling England in his place, not only refused to pay the ransom but offered the kidnappers money to keep his brother in custody! (You get a sense of John's character, don't you?) King Richard eventually returned to England but died shortly thereafter and, because he had no children, his younger brother John

officially took the throne in the year 1199.

King John ruled as an absolute monarch, as had most of the kings preceding him. He was the ultimate law maker and the final judge of any legal dispute, and he set himself above the law. King John was also a particularly cruel and greedy king, which is where the tales of Robin Hood come in. His excessive taxation impoverished the people and united the factions opposed to him. All sectors of society rose up: the barons, church leadership, merchants, and commoners.

SIGNED NOT JUST TWICE OR THRICE

In early 1215, a group of 39 barons (out of a total of 197) openly revolted against the king, with the blessing of Stephen Langton, the archbishop of Canterbury. The barons successfully took over the city of London and more barons came to their side. By midyear, King John knew he had to negotiate. And so, on the 15th day of June, 1215, in an open meadow known

as Runnymede, the barons and the king signed a truce negotiated and drafted by archbishop Langton. That truce is known as the *Magna Carta*, or the Great Charter, and it is quite possibly the most significant legal document in the history of English law. Lord Denning, one of the greatest English judges in history, once described the *Magna Carta* as “the greatest constitutional document of all times – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot.”³ Lord Chief Justice Bingham wrote that “the sealing of *Magna Carta* was an event that changed the constitutional landscape in [England] and, over time, the world.”⁴

The *Magna Carta* stands for the rule of law that all free men must be treated fairly and that no one is above the law, not even the king.⁵ By signing the *Magna Carta*, King John swore that he, and subsequent kings, would not be able to order the execution of his political enemies or any other citizens that displeased him without a proper criminal trial, heard by an impartial jury. Nor could he exact taxes from the people without first consulting with a council of barons (the very beginnings of a Parliament). And, often overlooked in modern political textbooks, the very first clause of the *Magna Carta* guaranteed the freedom and protection of the church.⁶ This was particularly important because King John wanted the power to appoint only those who agreed with him to be bishops of the church. The ecclesiastical leaders were known to speak out against the excesses and abuses of the king and often paid a steep price for doing so. King John’s father, King Henry II, infamously had archbishop Thomas Becket murdered inside Canterbury Cathedral in 1170 for standing up to the king on matters of church independence.

While most parts of the *Magna Carta* have since been replaced or repealed by subsequent statutes, the ancient Charter has enduring value. One clause still in force today is Clause 40 which states: “To no one will we sell, to no one will we deny or delay right or justice.” This clause is an expression of the principle of equality before the law, cemented into Canada’s Constitution in section 15(1) of the

the Magna Carta, or the Great Charter, ...is quite possibly the most significant legal document in the history of English law...

Charter of Rights and Freedoms 767 years later. The Canadian version reads, “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection of the law and equal benefit of the law without discrimination.”

If you’re wondering whether the *Magna Carta* was a particularly Christian document, the answer is, “Yes!” Not only does the *Magna Carta* open and close with declarations about the church’s independence from state interference (the beginnings of constitutional protections for religious freedom), but the author, archbishop Langton, was the leading churchman in all of England. His legal training in Europe was in canon law (or church law), and he applied this legal training and the scriptural principles of law to his drafting of the *Magna Carta*. He had “a scripturally informed conscience from which emerged truth’s uninhibited voice in *Magna Carta* [which] encourages proper and good government, resulting in increased justice.”⁷

Unfortunately, the signing of the *Magna Carta* didn’t restrain King John’s excesses all that long. Three months after signing it, the devious king had it annulled by the pope, and England was plunged into bloody civil war. But thankfully (for the English people anyway), King John died the next year from excessive diarrhea⁸ and the war came to an end.

The *Magna Carta* did not die with King John. John’s nine-year-old son Henry III became king and reigned for the next 56 years. With the advisors and supporters of the young king seeking stability and an end to the civil war, the *Magna Carta* was reinstated in 1216. And when Henry reached adulthood in 1227, he reissued the *Magna Carta* again as law, though a shorter version of it, in exchange for the barons’ consent to a new tax. In 1253,

in exchange for another tax to fund his battles in France, King Henry III swore on pain of excommunication “and stinking in hell” to uphold the *Magna Carta*.⁹ A decade later he broke his oath, imposing yet another tax, which sparked a rebellion known as the Second Barons’ War. That war concluded in 1267 with a peace treaty that required King Henry III to reaffirm the *Magna Carta* yet again (if you’re counting, that’s the fourth time).¹⁰

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTS

King Henry III eventually died in 1272, and his son Edward I became king. Edward I (a.k.a. Edward Longshanks, because he was quite tall) did much good from a constitutional perspective, despite his depiction as a particularly cruel and cold-hearted English king in the Mel Gibson movie *Braveheart*. Edward I instituted a major review of political corruption and the abuse of power by citizens who held substantial power. In 1275, he passed *The First Statute of Westminster* to put on paper many of the existing laws in the country. He also worked to strengthen the policing system and restore public order.


One of King Edward’s biggest contributions is that he initiated the first official Parliaments in England, calling about 46 Parliaments in his reign. The first Parliament, in 1275, included members of the nobility, clergy, and the election of two county representatives and two representatives from the towns or cities to attend.¹¹ Twenty years later, this form of representative parliament became standard practice, known as the Model Parliament, and all future Parliaments, including Canada’s, are based on it. The nobility and clergy make up the House of Lords (comparable to Canada’s Senate), and the elected representatives of counties

or towns make up the House of the Commons (or House of Commons). Importantly, before the king could increase taxes, he had to gain approval from Parliament.

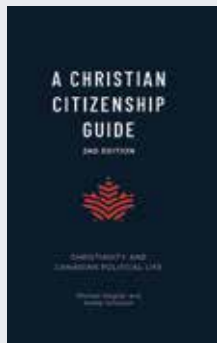
Parliament was also a check on the absolute authority of the king in other respects. After another dispute over taxes between the king and Parliament between 1294 and 1297, the *Magna Carta* was amended and passed by Parliament as a statute for the first time and signed into law by King Edward I. This 1297 version of the *Magna Carta* is the officially recognized legal text in English law today and remains a part of the constitutions of Britain and Canada. Over the next one hundred years, Parliament continued to pass statutes (known later as the Six Statutes¹²) that clarified and expanded on sections of the *Magna Carta*, constantly working to restrain by law the otherwise

unlimited power of the monarch. These statutes ensured that any action taken against a subject, whether taxes, fines, evictions, imprisonment, or execution, had to be done by trial or due process of the law and not at the whim of the king or his officials. Some of these constitutional principles developed in the 1300s¹³ are enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.¹⁴

The passing of the *Magna Carta* as a statute in Parliament marks a significant shift in the understanding of the power and authority of kings. The kings from the Norman Conquest (William the Conqueror in 1066) until the establishment of Parliaments believed “they ruled by means of their force and will (*vis et voluntas*), not by the grace of God or legal right.”¹⁵ Most people accepted this at the time, but cultural developments shifted toward “the principle of the supremacy of

law.”¹⁶ The law was no longer a tool used by the king to get his way; rather the king himself was bound by the law and under the law. This shift did not happen by accident. Many of the legal rules and procedures that developed around this time were adapted from canon law (church law) which the king’s lawyers would have studied in the universities, which were also run by the churches. In the canon law tradition, “the idea that the rule of law was antithetical to the rule of men lay dormant.”¹⁷ 

To read the rest of the story, order a copy of André Schutten and Michael Wagner’s “A Christian Citizenship Guide” available for a suggested donation of \$25. Email info@ARPACanada.ca or visit ARPACanada.ca/CitizenshipGuide.



A CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP GUIDE: CHRISTIANITY AND CANADIAN POLITICAL LIFE

BY ANDRÉ SCHUTTEN AND MICHAEL WAGNER
2022, 256 PAGES

My brother Jeff is a high school English teacher and a shared favorite topic is what books we’d want teens to read before they graduate. We’re still working on the list, but this is one that deserves a spot!

What makes *A Christian Citizenship Guide* remarkable is the systematic overview it provides of how a recognition of God’s Law and of a King above any earthly king brought about the recognition of human rights.

Human rights have always existed. When God forbade murder, His prohibition against killing is what gave us a right to life. And His command not to steal is what gives us property rights. But even as these foundational rights have always been, they haven’t always been recognized, so it’s fascinating to read through the history of how a working through of Christian theology gradually brought us to a better and clearer understanding of what foundational rights we all have. It took a long time for the ruled and rulers to understand there are rights that even a king can never take away (though he might violate them).

This was an eye-opening read, but so well written I repeatedly forgot that its primary purpose was educational and not entertainment. How can a reader not be entertained when they learn that the fictional Robin Hood’s nemesis Prince John was real indeed, and as bad as the legends made him out to be? He was so bad, in fact, that his nobles couldn’t abide with him, and forced him to concede – four separate times even, and in writing – that even the king should be accountable to the law. That history is in the book’s opener, and what followed is also as important as anything you’ll read, and much more entertaining.

Subsequent chapters cover how Canada’s government works at its different levels, how the country’s Charter of Rights impacts us all, and how the idea of “sphere sovereignty” – that family, church, and government all have their different roles – can help us understand what we should and should not ask of our political leaders. Find out more about the book, as well as how to get your own copy at ARPACanada.ca/CitizenshipGuide.

– JON DYKSTRA

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ “A time out of mind” or “time immemorial” refers to a point beyond which legal authorities believed it was impossible to speak with certainty. See Ryan Alford, *Seven Absolute Rights: Recovering the Historical Foundations of Canada’s Rule of Law* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), pp. 79-80.
- ² This includes the Law Code developed by King Alfred the Great (r. 871-899) which incorporated the 10 commandments into the laws of England, the tradition of the coronation oaths of the Anglo-Saxon kings, the Norman Invasion of 1066 led by William the Conqueror and the Charter of liberties his son King Henry I (r. 1100-1135) instituted.
- ³ Danny Danziger & John Gillingham, *1215: The Year of the Magna Carta* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004), at p. 278.
- ⁴ Tom Bingham, *The Rule of Law* (Penguin Books, 2011), at p. 11.
- ⁵ Clause 39, still in force today, states: “No free man shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or deprived of his property, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed, nor shall we go against him or send against him, unless by the legal judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.” The only other clauses still in force today are Clause 1, which guarantees the freedom of the church, and clause 13 (renumbered clause 9 in Magna Carta, 1297), which guarantees the ancient liberties of the City of London.
- ⁶ The first clause reads in part: “First, that we have granted to God, and by this present Charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity, that the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired.”
- ⁷ Brent Winters, *Excellence of the Common Law* (2008: self-published), p. 554, note 1383.
- ⁸ We are not 100% sure, but this may be why toilets are called “johns”. Some observe that, because King John was so despised, no king has ever been named after him. There has only ever been one King John, and he was bad enough.
- ⁹ Alford, *Seven Absolute Rights*, note 2, at p. 84
- ¹⁰ The Magna Carta was reconfirmed by various kings dozens of times, having last been confirmed by Henry VI in 1423. Ben Johnson, “The History of the Magna Carta,” *Historic UK: The History and Heritage Accommodation Guide*, online: <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/The-Origins-of-the-Magna-Carda/>
- ¹¹ Some might argue that King Edward’s father, King Henry III, instituted the first Parliaments. However, those earlier assemblies were more a collection of barons as advisors than a Parliament. Henry III did issue the first summons of parliamentum generalissimum to 24 barons to convene in January 1237, though only 18 attended. This evolved over time into the House of Lords. King Edward I was the first to have elected representatives from the

towns and counties to attend. Those elected representatives evolved into the House of Commons.

- ¹² See discussion on the Six Statutes in Alford, *Seven Absolute Rights*, note 2, at pp. 885-88.
- ¹³ These principles were developed by Parliament in the 1300s but are borrowed from canon law developed in the 1200s. For example, Pope Innocent III maintained that “a prince could not abolish the judicial process or ignore an action, because he was bound by natural law to render justice.” See Alford, *Seven Absolute Rights*, note 2, at p. 89.
- ¹⁴ These rights include the right not to be arbi-

trarily detained (s. 9 of the Charter), the right to a fair trial (s.11(d) of the Charter) and a trial by jury in serious offences (s.11(f) of the Charter).

- ¹⁵ Alford, *Seven Absolute Rights*, note 2, at p. 87. Alford further explains, “The expression of royal anger and ill will (ira et malevolentia) was integral to royal status. Vassals had to accept the possibility of their destruction at the king’s hands as a fact of life.”
- ¹⁶ Alford, *Seven Absolute Rights*, note 2, at p. 88.
- ¹⁷ Alford, *Seven Absolute Rights*, note 2, at p. 88.



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by Jon Dykstra

Pureflix.com is a per month subscription streaming service that provides Christian content on both sides of the US/Canadian border. While much of its content is mediocre, there are gems to be found. What follows is a Top 10 list of movies for mom and dad, some of which could be watched with the older kids too. And as a bonus, I've also included a Top 10 of shows that the kids might like. In most cases longer reviews are available for these films at ReformedPerspective.ca.

We made use of Pureflix.com's free week's trial to test the site out, and paid for a couple months after that. By then we'd watched (or at least started) all the titles that seemed worth a look.

MOVIES FOR MOM AND DAD

1. Woodlawn

A Sony Pictures film about the early 1970s integration of black students into the predominantly white Woodlawn High School. Parents



aren't happy with the school's football team coaching staff when black students earn starting positions. When Christian sports chaplain Hank Erwin asks permission to speak to the football team after a riot at the school, Coach Tandy Gerelds reluctantly agrees. He's stunned when each and every player on the team, black and white, responds to Erwin's altar call and dedicates or re-dedicates their lives to Christ. In time, the team decides that devoting their season to the Lord is more important than winning or losing, and – what do you know! – they find athletic success along the way. This wouldn't be believable if it hadn't been based on a true story.

2. The Most Reluctant Convert: The untold story of C.S. Lewis

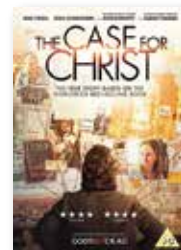
This is the story of Lewis's conversion from ardent atheist to "the most reluctant convert," bowing his knee to God not because he wanted to, but because he couldn't do otherwise. It's also a story superbly told. If you already



know Lewis you're going to love this film; if you don't, this film will soon have you loving Lewis for the way he could put into words the wonder God worked in his and our own hearts.

3. The Case for Christ

A true story, based on a book of the same name, about journalist Lee Strobel, who set out to disprove the faith of his wife. But in researching the resurrection of Christ, Strobel kept coming across evidence supporting it.



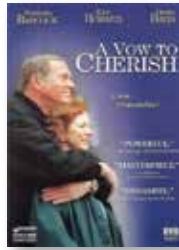
4. The Long Goodbye: The Kara Tippetts Story

The remarkable documentary is a tearjerker about a mom facing terminal cancer, who offers us encouragement in her confidence that God has both her and her family.



5. A Vow to Cherish

John and Ellen Brighton are a 50-something couple living a blessed life. But then Ellen faints, and the diagnosis is Alzheimer's, and their trouble-free life is falling apart. This was produced by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and they did it right, with talented actors, and solid cinematography. And the script here is realistic enough that I thought it might be a true story.



6. Tortured for Christ

Tortured for Christ is a must-see film about Richard Wurmbrand's courageous and faithful stand against the Soviets when they took over Romania. In one scene a guard asks him what he could possibly be praying to God for: he was in prison, his wife was too, and his children were basically orphans. So why, the guard wanted to know, was Wurmbrand still praying? "I am praying for you," Wurmbrand tells him. He wanted the guard who beat him every night to know the love of his Lord.



7. Beyond the Mask

When a young 18th-century assassin wants to leave his dark life behind his employer tries to have this loose end tied up, with a bomb. The assassin survives thanks to the warning of a passing vicar who ends up paying for his kindness by getting blown up himself. In search of a new life and a new identity, Reynolds adopts the vicar's identity, and meets Charlotte, a young woman who knows a lot more about God than this "vicar" does. Romance, intrigue, daring-do and plenty of explosions follow. A concern would be the violence, which, while never



gory, is frequent – lots of fisticuffs going on here. That said, this is one of the better produced, better acted, better written, Christian films.

8. Time Changer

In the year 1890, seminary professor Russell Carlisle proposes teaching morality to the masses without making mention of God, reasoning that even if people don't become Christians it would be a good thing if they were at least taught that stealing was wrong. But after a colleague uses a time machine to send the professor more than a hundred years into the future, to present-day USA, Carlisle realizes that morals founded on anything but God have no foundation at all, and are just dismissed as opinion. This is a good-looking science fiction movie with an important and powerfully presented Christian message.



9. The Ultimate Gift

Jason, a spoilt rich kid, is given an inheritance by his billionaire grandfather, but it comes with conditions. To get the money Jason has to complete 12 separate tasks, all of which are intended to humble and shape him. It's a fun film, with a grandfather handing out tough love from beyond the grave in the hopes he can still teach and help his aimless grandson. Emily, a child with a terminal condition also teaches Jason some important lessons, but her eventual death makes this one kids won't like. A sequel, *The Ultimate Life*, is only middling.



10. Extraordinary

Extraordinary is based on the real-life story of Liberty University professor and ultra-marathon runner David Horton, who runs races not just



hours long, but weeks long. That's meant he's left the homefront to be managed by his wife on her own. And she might have had enough. Overall, *Extraordinary* is a lightweight comedic drama about a doofus husband who takes a while to get his priorities right but who figures it out in time for a happy ending for all. That's all it is, and on some evenings that's really all we're looking for.

Pureflix also has a collection of classics worth checking out, so long as you don't mind black and white and the slower pacing common to these older films. *Meet John Doe*, *The Amazing Adventure* and *The Jackie Robinson Story* are all good.

BONUS: TOP 10 SHOWS FOR THE KIDS

1. Life at the Pond

A Christian series aimed at the preschool set that, like *VeggieTales*, pairs simple animation with somewhat sophisticated humor – there's yuks here for mom and dad to enjoy too. The four stars are aquatic:

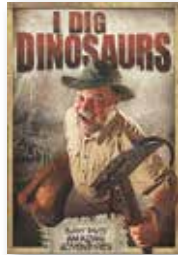


- Bill the Duck is a regular joe; we are Bill the Duck
- Tony the Frog fills the role of wise-cracking comic relief
- Floyd the Turtle is the most child-like, and often the straight man setting up Tony's zingers
- Methuselah the Alligator is older, and a voice of biblical wisdom

The first two episodes, *There's Something Funny in the Water* and *The Little Things*, are calm enough for even the youngest, while *The Alligator Hunter*, *Big Mouth Bass*, and *The Rise and Fall of Tony the Frog*, have some tension, and even some frantic action, so might be best for 5 and up.

2. Buddy Davis' *Amazing Adventures (and The Creation Adventure Team)*

Buddy Davis is a musician, dinosaur sculptor, and children's entertainer. In his *Amazing Adventures* series, he's teamed up with the folks at Answers in Genesis to share a half dozen expeditions – underground, to Alaska, Africa, the swamps, and more – that kids will really enjoy. In *The Creation Adventure Team* he pairs up with a robot dinosaur sidekick to investigate when the dinosaurs died, how they lived, and whether there were any on the Ark. These two videos feature pretty frenetic action, some decent special effects, and a number of clever spoofs.



3. *Defense of New Haven*

Defense of New Haven is a wonderfully bizarre adventure: a steampunk Christian allegoric comedy adventure, with every character played by a child actor, even though the characters are adults. Our hero, Alec, is a one-armed man who gets recruited by a fully-bearded six-year-old to carry a secret message to the city's miniature-steamboat-driving defensive forces so that they'll be able to stop gas-mask-wearing raiders. That is a sentence I never imagined writing, but this is a movie I would have never imagined seeing. And it is both cheesy and fantastic. If you enjoy this, you'll also like the producer's earlier all-children film, *The Runner from Ravenshead*, which is also available.



4. *Boxcar Children: Surprise island*

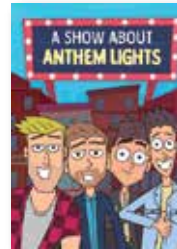
This is based on the *Boxcar Children* book series about four siblings, two boys



and two girls, who go to live with their kindly (and quite wealthy) grandfather. They go on adventures, but of a very quiet sort, which will be great for gentle kids, but might bore those over 10.

5. *A Show about Anthem Lights*

A real-life Christian cover band, *Anthem Lights*, has turned themselves into a cartoon. This reminded me of *Duck Dynasty*, with band members playing dumber, funnier versions of themselves.



6. *Storm: Luther's forbidden letter*

Storm Voeten is the 12-year-old son of a printer living in 1500s Antwerp. Martin Luther has written his 95 Theses and his ideas are a source of debate and division across Europe. That's also true in the Voeten household, where Storm's mother, a staunch Catholic, doesn't even want to hear Luther's name. But his father is interested in learning more...and he's even willing to print Luther's ideas. This is a pain-free way for kids to learn this important history.



7. *Back of the Net*

A science geek girl, looking to spend a semester on the seas studying sea creatures, accidentally ends up at a soccer academy. Hijinks ensue, and while there is just a bit of boy/girl oohing and aaahing, that silliness is kept to a minimum making this a fun one for the fam.



8. *Jack and the Beanstalk*

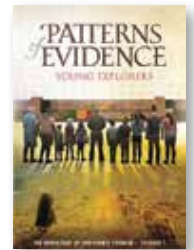
While this Abbott and Costello classic puts a bit



too much slap into its slapstick, it's otherwise a pretty fun flick.

9. *Patterns of Evidence: Young Explorers*

This 5-episode series is based on filmmaker Timothy Mahoney's documentary *Patterns of Evidence* about his search for evidence of Israel's captivity in Egypt. The original was part mystery, part biblical history and this sequel covers the same ground, but with a group of kids along for the ride. It's not simply a documentary, but a docudrama, with fact and fiction, education and entertainment, all mixed together. There is humor on two levels here, with pratfalls for the kids, and dry humor for the adults – there are some snort-worthy moments! The 5 episodes cover:



1. The adventure begins when the kids hear about Timothy Mahoney's work and are eager to help
2. They learn that we may know where Joseph lived in Egypt
3. The team searches for signs of captive Israel's population explosion
4. The Young Explorers go search for signs of the 10 plagues
5. The search continues on into Israel, where the team now investigates the fall of the walls of Jericho

10. *VeggieTales*

They seem to have all or at least most of them, but only some are recommended, including *Lord of the Beans*, *Sheerluck Holmes and the Golden Ruler*, *Tomato Sawyer & Huckleberry*



Larry's Big River Rescue, *Veggies in Space*, *MacLarry & the Stinky Cheese Battle*, *Madame Blueberry*, and the *Larry-Boy* series. For the why, check out this article at ReformedPerspective.ca. RP

— READERS' CONCERNS —

Why are there Freedom Convoy stories and pictures of handguns in *RP*?

A few of our readers reached out to me in response to our last issue, respectfully sharing their concerns about the content. As one reader put it so well:

“I think this publication, *RP*, has a unique opportunity to do much to repair the damage and rifts that the COVID pandemic has caused in our community. I am speaking about helping people to find ways to focus on what unites us instead of what has divided us.”

She proceeded to list a few particular examples of how she believes the last issue didn't accomplish this: the feature story about some Canadian families who moved to the USA, a picture of a young man with a handgun, and a story about a Reformed Christian who had a leading role in the Freedom Convoy.

We are very grateful when you take the time to interact with us, both publicly through submissions, and privately. Although our intention is to promote faithfulness and unity, we pursue this goal with weakness and sin, and cherish your help, also through respectful critique.

WE NEED TO DISCUSS

Over the last year, *RP* has been incorporating more journalism. Instead of just writing about issues in a theoretical way, and avoiding some of the topics that we know are sensitive, we are purposefully and carefully tackling topics that we know that the Reformed community is grappling with. This also includes meeting with people who are in the center of some of these controversial matters and telling their story. Examples include less-sensitive issues like the struggle to find more teachers and our country's push to broaden euthanasia. But it also includes more sensitive issues. And something that may seem safe for

one community is sensitive for another: loving our Indigenous neighbors may seem somewhat irrelevant for a community in urban Ontario, but BC Reformed schools are having to decide whether to drop a mandatory course like Bible or Church history to teach a new government-mandated “First Peoples” course.

We believe that a big reason why Christ's Church has struggled in the past two years is because of a problem that has been hiding under the surface for much longer than Covid. We struggle with the difficult job of applying God's Word to the issues of our day. It is relatively easy to feel united with others if we avoid application, especially around social, political, and cultural topics. The temptation is that instead of dealing with these sensitive issues corporately, we seek out our own communities – especially online news sites or social media – that serve as echo chambers. In other words, Covid didn't polarize so much as expose the differences that naturally exist between people.

It is a beautiful reality that the body of Christ has many different members (1 Cor. 12). But it also brings challenges. Exemplifying the fruits of the Spirit, we need to listen to each other, talk with each other, and at times also change our thoughts and conduct accordingly.

IF IT IS IMPORTANT IT MIGHT ALSO BE HARD

My home church is currently running the Life Renewal program and is being blessed by it. It is a painful journey to confront hurt and sin from the past and to deal with it today. But, when done in the context of the Gospel, this pain brings great fruit and healing that couldn't have been achieved otherwise.

Likewise, there is a degree of vulnerability and even pain that can come from some of the issues *RP* covers and the


people that we feature. But we believe it is healthy to discuss matters corporately, as long as we do so in accordance with God's Word, and seek to build up and love our neighbor. Instead of forming our opinions based on reports from a very secular mainstream media, or simply hear-say, let's listen directly to what our sisters and brothers have to say.

And if that story needs more perspective, *RP* is trying to include it. For example, the editorial last issue provided a counter-balance to that same issue's feature article, explaining why a move to the USA may not help, and may also mean missing opportunities to move and serve in Canada.

MULTIPLE COUNSELORS

We also try to provide perspective by publishing multiple authors/angles. In this issue you are holding you will have noticed five very different angles on what it means to love our Indigenous neighbours. Each makes its own valid and faithful point. However, brought together, the sum is greater than the parts (Prov. 11:14).

That is also true of the communion of saints. We are blessed when iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). Rural Reformed Christians who value guns may make some urban Reformed Christians uncomfortable. But instead of each reading their own publication, we can get to know each other by listening, reflecting, and engaging.

If you have an issue or story that you want to see featured here, please let us know. We may not be able to tackle it immediately, but we desire to be of the churches and for the churches. And please don't hesitate to send in your own letters and submissions. 

Mark Penninga is Reformed Perspective's Executive Director.

STAND FIRM

Eph 6:14



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