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Putting Off Procrastination

Editorial by
Jon Dykstra

FACEBOOK: Not for kids

There's a lot to like about Facebook. Status updates for example. Through them I've learned when a friend was excited about an upcoming trip to New York, or in need of prayer because of their medical situation, or stressed because both their children had the flu, or happy because they were expecting another little one. One friend's update even helped me save valuable minutes every laundry day:

"Jan has a laundry confession – she doesn't fold underwear. It's true. Try it! C'mon – free yourself from folded underwear tyranny!"

This website is often derided as a timewaster, but if it weren't for Facebook I would have been forever condemned to worrying about wrinkles in items of clothing that no one even sees!

A starting spot

So there's a lot to like about Facebook, but the site does have an unpleasant side. Like the Internet itself, it is not a place teens should be allowed to go unmonitored. And younger children should not be allowed on the site at all.

How young is too young? You have to be at least 13 to get a Facebook account (though many children get around this restriction by simply pretending to be older). If 13 is the standard this secular group sets, that seems a good indicator that Christian parents should consider an older age limit.

WHAT IS FACEBOOK?

Facebook was created in 2004 as a "social networking" website where members can leave online updates about themselves and read updates written by and about their friends. It is very popular: currently 7 million Canadians are active users and in the US 75% of youth 18-24 have Facebook accounts.

Problematic applications

Some of the parents I've talked to have signed up to Facebook specifically to keep track of what their children are up to. But even some of these parents are oblivious to the dark side of Facebook. This is a site that encourages curiosity – the more you explore the more cool applications, pictures and games you can find. But if children do start exploring they are sure to come across Facebook's sleazy side. A quick perusal of the 20 most popular applications revealed that at least 11 of them had material that was not appropriate for children. . . or adults for that matter.

1. Funwall: Lots of cute posters, but about 10% of the material is pornographic
3. Superwall: Users can share videos, half of which seem to be pornographic
4. Bumperstickers: Contains a category called "F-you"
5. Owned: Allows users to buy and sell friends
6. Texas Hold 'Em Poker: A great place to practice gambling
7. Friends For Sale: The name says it all
13. Super Poke: Loads of street slang sexual references
16. My Sexy Friends: Encourages the objectifying and rating of friends
17. Mob Wars: For anyone who wants to be the head of a murderous gang
19. Zoosk: A dating service
20. Likeness: How similar are you to the movie stars you idolize?

Other problems

Pornography is a big problem but applications like Fun Wall, SuperWall and Bumpersticker are also problematic in that they contain clever insults, cutting put-downs and vulgar jokes. This is just the sort of source material that teenage boys use to impress their friends in the schoolyard, and Facebook is an endless source.

The site has also been used by students in our Reformed schools to pass comments to each other about

their favorite and least favorite teachers. We all know that students have always said nasty things about teachers, but doing it on Facebook brings it to a whole new level. The mean words spoken between students in a school hallway are soon forgotten, but the same words posted on a Facebook page encourage friends to add to and expand on these insulting words.

The same thing can also happen between friends – silly insults spoken between friends aren't that significant. But they become far more hurtful when they are posted on Facebook for dozens and even hundreds of others to read.

I've seen some rather horrid material being said by Christian youth. I can only assume that their parents don't know what these children are up to.

Conclusion

And that's the real problem; many parents aren't monitoring their children's use of Facebook. A responsible parent always knows where their children are and it shouldn't be any different with the Internet and with this website.

Like the Internet itself Facebook has some amazing content that makes it very attractive. Facebook allows friends to share photos and news, keep track of birthdays and email addresses, organize events, play games like Scrabble and Boggle together, and even monitor the cheapest plane fares to Europe. Mature users can decide to make use of the good material and ignore the rest.

But younger users may not make the right choices so parents must takes steps to know what their offspring are up to. To do that, you'll have to sign up as your child's Facebook friend and check their page regularly. If you don't know how, ask your child or someone in their early twenties and they'll almost certainly be able to help. And if your child is under 13 get him off the website. If the world admits the site is inappropriate for children this young why would we think different?

This is the second article Jon Dykstra has written about Facebook. The original article, "Facebook Frenzy," can be found in the November 2007 issue, or online at www.ReformedPerspective.ca



What's Inside

The feature article this issue on procrastination is so good that New Growth Press has decided to publish it as a booklet. A single person can often get by with this bad habit by working long nights as deadlines approach, but among the married, procrastination often leads to the theft of time from spouse and children to finish projects at the last minute. So procrastination is more than an idiosyncrasy, or harmless personal quirk. Fortunately, as with other faults, God can help us, and change us, and sanctify us. This is an article well worth reading. . . now.

Induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells are a hot topic these days. In Rene Vermeulen's "Report from Australia" these iPS cells are hailed by one pro-lifer as the ethical alternative to embryonic stem cells. But, as Margaret Helder points out in her contribution "Beyond Scary," not everyone is so certain they are ethical. . . and that includes the researcher behind iPS cells,

Human rights are also quite topical right now. Human rights tribunals and commissions across Canada have been putting Christians up on charges for supposedly violating the "rights" of homosexuals and Muslims to be free from criticism. We're going to explore these events in more detail in the coming issues, but start things off this month with an article by Johan Tangelder on just where our rights actually come from.

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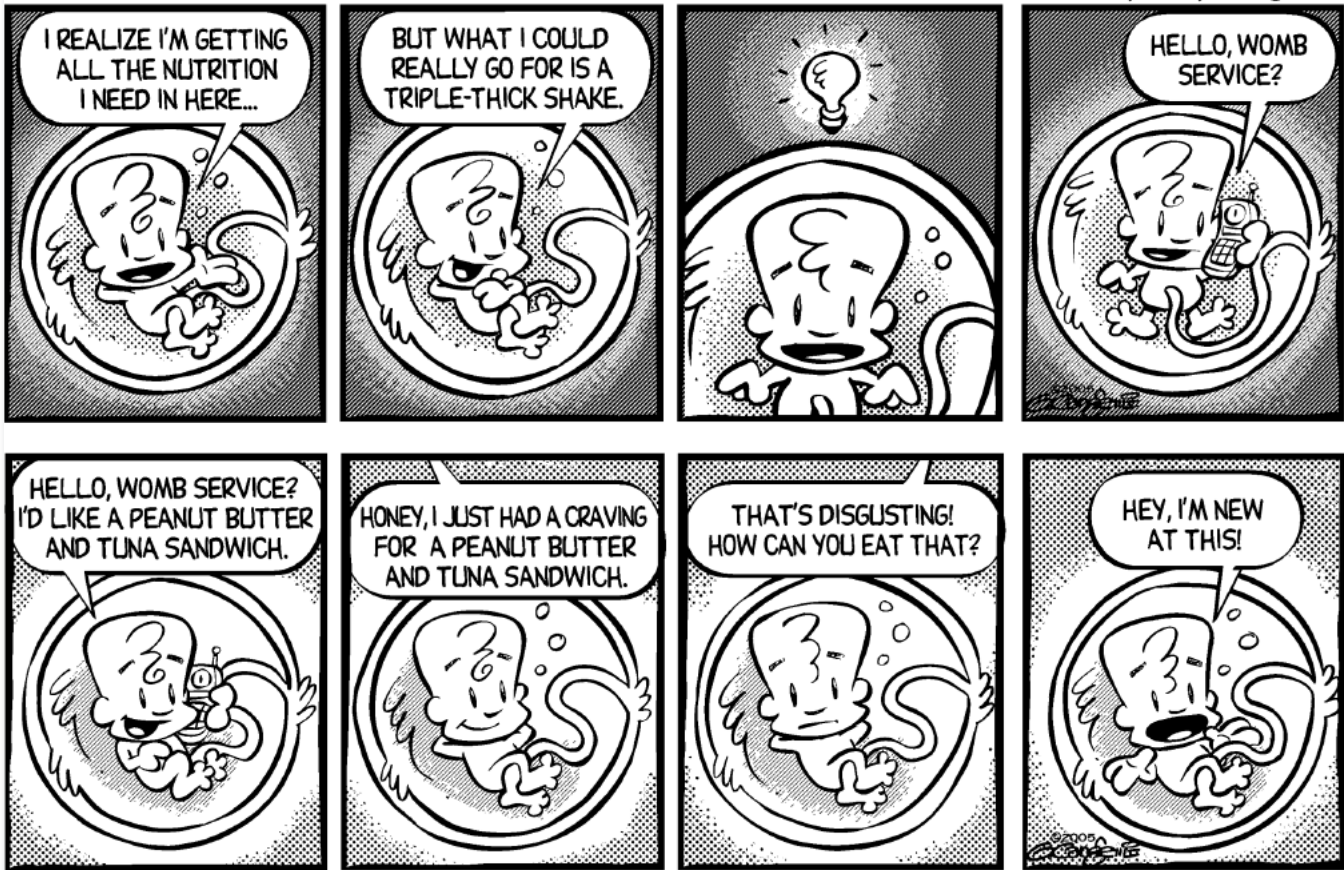
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Umbert the Unborn

by Gary Cangemi



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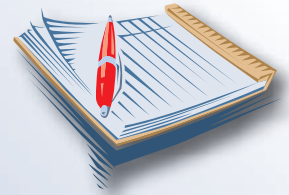
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Readers' Response



Dear Editor,

I write regarding John Byl's February 2008 article, "A Christian Perspective on Math." Central to Dr. Byl's otherwise helpful article developing a Christian perspective on math is his suggestion that one should "ground the truth of math on the attributes of the biblical God." However attractive this approach appears, it has its difficulties. In particular, it seems to suggest that in some sense the universe could not have been made any differently in its numerical and logical aspects. It is important to remember that God chose to create the cosmos in a particular way without any constraint upon Him, and the same applies to the way in which He continues to govern and sustain it. Any constraint is of His own choosing. So the way in which we experience mathematical reality is due entirely to features God has implanted into this *particular* world. The laws of logic and numbers as we discover them are not that way because they have to be so, but because that is how God chose for them to be. God could have (and perhaps has) created other universes with different laws of mathematics and different laws of logic. If the truths of mathematics exist from eternity within the mind of God, then so do all the other possible truths of alternative mathematics of other universes, none of which we can ever access even in our imagination. If we must appeal to the attributes of God to validate mathematical truths as we discover and experience them, those same attributes would be appealed to by mathematicians in alternative universes in which the mathematical truths are different, and so we are no further ahead, unless we insist that God was forced to make things the way they are.

But God was free to create as He pleased. The laws of logic and of mathematics are, then, not true because they are co-eternal with God, but because He created this universe in this particular way and remains covenantally faithful to it. Otherwise we are close to making it appear that the universe in some senses emanates out of God's being, which blurs the distinction between Creator and creation. In God's creative declarations of Genesis 1, God is bringing into existence entities whose being and behavior is truly novel, and as we explore the creation we both discover relationships and create theories (including mathematical ones) which are valid and helpful to varying degrees.

*Arnold E. Sikkema
Langley, British Columbia*

Dear Editor,

In her article "Why does anything exist?" (April 2008) Margaret Helder outlined some exciting developments and related projects in particle physics of the last 50 years. She also made it her thesis that many of the scientists in this field don't want God to be any part of the answer to their questions about matter. There can be no doubt there are a significant number of scientists who subscribe to a secular materialism and deny the existence of God.

However, there are also a significant number who affirm the existence of God, and not just a deistic God. This is the other half of the story – the very best part – that was left out.

The quote from Abraham Kuyper on the cover of the very issue in which this article appears speaks an awesome truth: Jesus is Lord of the whole universe. A look at the Hubble deep field image PRC96-01a stretches our concept of the universe beyond human comprehension. Hubble focused on a segment of the sky 1/30th the diameter of the moon (from our earthly perspective) and recorded an image displaying hundreds of galaxies. The universe is greater than anyone had fathomed just a few decades ago, and Jesus Christ is Lord over it all!

He is even Lord over the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). The LHC is not a 21st century tower of Babel that a bunch of godless scientists fashioned to prove God does not exist. Even here, God renews and reclaims his creation through faithful covenant people. God has ensured that a number of the scientists working on the LHC call on his name, and they work with eagerness to observe how God's breathtaking creative mastery might be made more fully known through this massive accelerator. Some of these scientists sing praises with you on Sunday morning. And those who are not scientists, myself included, can wait with keen ears to learn new and amazing things about how our God has fashioned this universe of staggering beauty and symmetry. There is redeeming work and learning to be done in particle physics, and God's people should not be discouraged from such valuable efforts.

*Ben Vandergugten
Surrey, British Columbia*



Nota Bene

News worth noting

by Sarah Meerstra



Canadian Christians forced to embrace homosexuality

The Christian organization *Christian Horizons* has been fined by Ontario's Human Rights Tribunal for rejecting a homosexual employee. The organization, which is one of Ontario's largest providers of community living services for developmentally disabled individuals, is now required to pay \$23,000, plus two years wages, to a woman who lost her job after entering into a homosexual relationship

while working there. Furthermore, the Tribunal is forcing them to stop using an employment contract that requires employees to promise not to enter into a homosexual relationship. *Christian Horizons* management and employees will also be required to participate in a pro-homosexuality "human rights training program."

Tristan Emmanuel of the evangelical group Equipping Christians for the Public Square, declared the ruling to be yet one more "blow for religious liberty."

Source: LifeSite News, April 25, 2008

New assisted-suicide bill to be drafted in Canada

Francine Lalonde, the Bloc Quebecois MP who first introduced an assisted suicide bill in Canada in 2005, has made it clear that she intends to do so again. Although the new bill has not yet been presented, her past record suggests that it will be far-reaching. Her earlier Bill, C-407, would have legalized assisted suicide for those with chronic physical and mental pain, regardless of whether they had sought out effective treatment for their condition. She also proposed that euthanasia could be performed by any individual, as long as they are assisted by a "medical practitioner."

Whatever her new bill looks like, it appears that once again the Canadian government will be debating whether or not Canadians have the right to kill each other.

Source: LifeSite News, April 14, 2008

Pro-Life, the pro-Life candidate

Marvin Richardson, a Senate candidate from Idaho has legally changed his full name to "Pro-Life," and will appear that way on the election ballots. He says that he plans to run for office every two years for as long as he is able, and will advocate murder charges for doctors who perform abortions and women who have them.

Not everyone who supports the pro-life cause is thrilled by his actions. Some are concerned that the name on the ballot will cause confusion and errors in voting, resulting in the nullification of a significant number of pro-life ballots.

Says Pro-Life, "I think it's just and I think it's proper to have Pro-Life on the ballot. If I save one baby's life, it's worth it."

Source: CBS News, March 18, 2008

Divorce costs US \$112 billion/year

A new study out of the United States has for the first time documented the tremendous costs of marital breakdown. Not only does the decline of marriage have negative social and emotional consequences, it also imposes an extraordinary financial cost on taxpayers. The study found that high rates of divorce and unmarried child-bearing cost US taxpayers at least \$112 billion per year.



"These costs are due to increased spending on anti-poverty, criminal justice and education programs, and through lower levels of taxes paid by individuals whose adult productivity has been negatively affected by increased childhood poverty caused by family fragmentation," said principal investigator Ben Scafidi, Ph.D., economics professor at Georgia College & State University.

It's not the best reason, but it's yet another reason for governments to encourage and strengthen marriages.

Source: LifeSite News April 16, 2008

Americans and sin

A recent study has found that the vast majority of Americans, religious and not, believe in the concept of sin. The study questioned 1,000 adult Americans about whether they considered various behaviors to be sinful. Topping the list was adultery (80%), followed by racism (74%), hard drug use (65%), not saying anything when a cashier gives you too much change, (63%) abortion (56%), and homosexual activity (52%).



The study delved farther, investigating religious and political differences in what people considered to be sinful. Not surprisingly, people with religious beliefs were found to be more likely to believe in sin, as were political conservatives. Protestants, particularly evangelical Christians, were more likely than Catholics to classify behaviors as sin.

Interestingly, however, Catholics were more likely than Protestants to believe that not attending church was a sin, and only a minority of evangelical Christians believe it is a sin to miss church, work on Sunday, not give financially to their church, watch R-rated movies, or play the lottery.

Source: The Christian Post

Catholic magazine targeted by Human Rights Commission

Catholic Insight, a conservative Catholic magazine with a circulation of only 3,500 subscribers is being investigated by the Canadian Human Rights Commission after an Edmonton man accused them of spreading “hate literature” because of articles they published speaking out against the homosexual lifestyle.

The magazine’s editor, Alphonse De Valk, admits that the publication does sometimes contain “strong words” opposing homosexuality, but insists that in-

Designing your ideal baby

The UK’s already controversial proposed Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill could get even more so. The original controversy was over a section of the bill that allowed for the creation of hybrid embryos – part human, part animal – for research purposes.

The new controversy is over a clause that forbade using embryo screening to create a child with a serious medical condition. In the past embryo screening has involved the creation of a large number of embryos with the intent of examining them and keeping only the ones that are perfectly healthy and free of any genetic defect. All others are killed. So in the past embryo screening has been used to kill off the disabled before they are even born.

But some members of the deaf community were outraged that deafness was included as one of the serious medical conditions, and now the Health Department has agreed to remove it from the list. This means that deaf couples could purposely select an embryo that would be profoundly deaf.

Supporters of this amendment argue that the legislation was discriminatory, because it allowed parents to create “designer babies” free from any genetic defects but forbade them from creating babies that *shared* the parents’ disability. They think it is only fair that they have the right to select a deaf child and kill off the able-bodied children – embryos who would be able hear – before they are born.

The bill is expected to pass through the House of Commons later this year.

Source: The Daily Telegraph, April 14, 2008

dividual persons were never attacked. He is carefully following the Human Rights cases against journalists such as Mark Steyn and Ezra Levant, and is encouraged by the support he sees for them. He realizes, however, that his battle may be much more difficult. Individuals like Steyn and Levant, he says, are perceived to be fighting Islamic extremism, and so “have the wind in their sails.” For most Canadians, however, “gays drive for equality under the guise of its being a right” has been popular. “They have achieved their triumph with the co-operation of the majority in Parliament.”

Step by step: a pro-life advance in Idaho

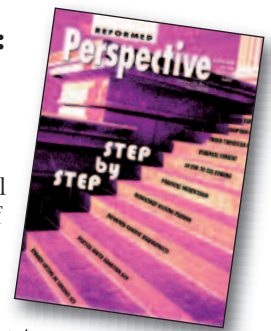
In April the state of Idaho passed a law making it illegal to coerce a woman to have an abortion, the first state to enact such legislation. In making her case before the House Committee tasked with looking at this bill, Brandi Swindell of the organization *Engage the Culture* argued:

“We currently have laws that protect a woman’s right to choose abortion but virtually nothing that protects a woman from being forced into having an abortion. Predators, abusive boyfriends and angry mothers and fathers have been violently coercing women into getting abortions for years.”

Pro-abortion groups, of course, opposed this legislation. To this, Swindell replied, “Where’s the choice in a forced abortion? The abortion lobby sees House Bill 464 as a threat to their pro-choice belief system. The majority of Idahoan’s, including me, see this bill not as pro-life or pro-choice but as pro-woman.”

In any case, it is now against the law in Idaho to use any form of physical harm or verbal threats to try to force a woman to have an abortion. A small step, perhaps, but certainly one in the right direction.

Source: LifeSite News, April 14, 2008



Should the complaint succeed, it could set a dangerous precedent for magazines including

Reformed Perspective, which could come under fire for expressing beliefs which some segments of our society deem “hateful.”

Source: The Catholic Register, April 2008



Charity never faileth... but charitable tax status is another matter

“Charity never faileth” – 1 Corinthians 13:8

by Michael Wagner

In June 2004 the Roman Catholic bishop of Calgary, Fred Henry, posted a pastoral letter he wrote on his website that was critical of Prime Minister Paul Martin. Martin claimed to be a devout Catholic but Bishop Henry pointed out that Martin’s claim didn’t add up. The Roman Catholic Church officially opposes abortion and gay marriage whereas Prime Minister Martin and his government firmly supported both.

Bishop Henry subsequently received a phone call from an official of Revenue Canada requesting that the letter be removed from his website. As Henry explained, the government official “reminded me very forcefully from the beginning that I wasn’t to engage in partisan politics, pointing out that my actions were in contravention of the Elections Act and implying that my actions jeopardized my charitable tax status.”

Bishop Henry refused to be intimidated by the implicit threat and refused to comply with the request for its removal. He argued that he was not in violation of the Act and had not told anybody how to vote. No further action was taken.

This story illustrates a potentially emerging problem that may be faced by churches in Canada. Increasingly, the charitable tax status of religious groups is being called into question by secular humanists. This kind of thinking appears to be increasing among government officials who deal with charities and official charity status.

Within the power of the bureaucrats

Robert Knechtel of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities wrote an article about recent trends in charity law for the book *The Place of Religion in Modern Society* (1999). As an expert in this field, he argues that there is good reason for Christians to be concerned about developments taking place.

.....

Historically, the state was (rightfully) seen to be the greatest threat to individual liberty

.....

The perceived role of religion in society has been changing in Canada and other Western countries for many years. Christianity (of one sort or another) used to have a central place in the lives of most Canadians, but in recent decades it has become increasingly marginalized. Knechtel states that,

“There is a movement in secular humanist philosophy away from the concept that the pursuit of religion embraces and cannot be separated from service to the community (i.e. advancement of education, the re-

lief of poverty, care for the sick, etc.) to the concept that religion is simply a private relationship between the individual and the divine.”

As the idea of what constitutes legitimate religious activity shrinks, the spectrum of functions that churches may legitimately perform as charitable activity narrows. As the government develops a less favorable view of religion, it becomes less willing to grant charitable status to religious organizations such as churches. Knechtel notes, “Certain activities a church or other religious charity which have traditionally been carried on under the concept of the advancement of religion may not continue to qualify. The [Income Tax] Act has not changed, but the view of the role of religion has.”

So even without any legislative changes, bureaucrats at Revenue Canada can reduce the number of church activities that are considered to be charitable. This is because some bureaucrats, as well as some academics who work in this field, “claim that neither the establishment nor the advancement of theistic religion has a place in the public policies of a pluralistic state at the threshold of the twenty-first century.”

Religion as approved by the state

Speaking of academics, a professor from the University of Toronto wrote an article for the September 2006 issue of the *Literary Review of Canada* in which she questioned the legitimacy of charitable



Won't have women in office?

Then your church may end up without charitable status too.

tax status for conservative religious organizations in Canada. This professor, Janice Stein, is Jewish, and she complains that in her congregation women do not get to participate as equals with the men. So in her view, her own religion violates the rights she is entitled to under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It's not just conservative Jewish groups that violate women's rights in this sense, but many conservative religious organizations, including Christian churches. And this leads directly to the issue of charitable tax status. Stein writes:

"If religious institutions are able to raise funds more easily because governments give a tax benefit to those who contribute, are religious practices wholly private even though they benefit from the public purse? Are discriminatory religious practices against women a matter only for religious law, as is currently the case under Canadian law, which protects freedom of religion, or should the values of the Charter and of human rights commissions across Canada have some application when religious institutions are officially recognized and advanced in fundraising? Does it matter that the Catholic church,

which has special entitlements given to it by the state and benefits from its charitable tax status, refuses to ordain women as priests?"

You can see where this is going: Stein believes that charitable tax status should only be granted to religious organizations and churches whose practices align with the values and philosophy underlying the Charter of Rights. She seems to be demanding that churches replace the Bible with the Charter of Rights as the final authority in all matters.

Who's the real threat?

The view that Stein expresses is, unfortunately, not unique to her. It is called "postliberal constitutionalism" and it involves applying the Charter beyond the realm of government. The original idea of a constitutionally-entrenched rights document is known as "liberal constitutionalism." In liberal constitutionalism, the constitution applies to the government and restricts only what the government can do. Historically, the state was (rightfully) seen to be the greatest threat to individual liberty, and so the constitution would provide established legal limits to government activity. Pro-

tecting individual liberty from the state was the main purpose of a constitution in this view.

But as Canadian political scientist Thomas Bateman explains in the March 1998 issue of the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, the "postliberal" view holds "that the Charter should apply indiscriminately to 'private' activity as well as governmental activity as it is traditionally understood."

Postliberal constitutionalism basically turns liberal constitutionalism on its head: instead of limiting the power of the state, to enhance the freedom of individuals, the constitution empowers the state to enforce its own ethical system (its own worldview) onto the various groups or organizations within society (churches, clubs, businesses, etc.). Rather than protecting freedom, the constitution becomes the justification for restricting freedom.

Comply. . . or else

For example, Stein's view noted above would withhold charitable tax status from churches that don't allow female pastors. The Charter declares women to be equal to men, so churches that don't allow women to fill all of the offices open to men are violating the Charter and must not receive any government privileges – charitable tax status in this case – until they comply with the Charter. The same would apply to churches that "discriminate" against homosexuals by teaching that homosexuality is sinful and prohibiting practicing homosexuals from holding church offices. In such cases, churches would need to choose between faithfulness to God and the Bible on one hand, and charitable tax status on the other.

The war over charitable tax status is not in full swing, but there are skirmishes at the perimeter. The increasing marginalization of Christianity may eventually have a financial sting for church members. Church leaders that speak out on political issues, like Bishop Henry, can already find themselves in hot water. But even those who remain quiet may begin to feel the heat if people like Janice Stein get their way.





Victories in Australia

The right side wins two important battles

by Rene Vermeulen

In the last couple of days the newspapers have reported that the West Australian Parliament's upper house has rejected a bill that would have allowed stem cell research using human embryos. If the bill had been passed scientists would have been able to, at the very beginning of human life, destroy unborn children for research into finding cures for many diseases.

This has prompted many letters, for and against, in the papers. It might be of use to see some of the letters to the editor so our readers can see the type of arguments used by both sides.

No results

This letter, written by one Dunstan Hartley, nicely summed up the practical side of the argument. Embryonic stem cells have shown no results:

"The outrage expressed by writers about the rejection of the Human Reproductive Technology Amendment Bill 2007 by the Legislative Council would be quite justified had the technique they are so enamored of been responsible for even a smidgeon of success in alleviating the condition of a fraction of the diseases which it is predicted to control. It has failed to deliver one favorable outcome.

"The reasons for this are very simple: tissue rejection and formation of cancers which are insurmountable hurdles to the continuation of this research. On the other hand, adult stem cells have already delivered many promising avenues of research and, to cap it off, Professor Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University has been able to produce pluripotent stem cells, identical to embryonic stem cells, using an ethically superior technique. This research has been replicated by Rudolph Jaenisch at MIT and endorsed by Professor Ian Wilmut, the pioneer of cloning, who produced Dolly the sheep.

"The smart money is now backing this latest form of research, so why are people mesmerized by the now technologically redundant 'therapeutic' cloning?"

Looking to future results

The following letter, by a Mr. Ivor Davies, presented the typical argument for embryonic stem cell research – that someday the results will come:

"In October 2004 the Spanish government approved new conditions about Research with embryonic stem cells allowing scientists to investigate using frozen embryos while seeking cures to diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimers and diabetes. The deputy prime minister, Fernandez de la Vegas, said: 'It's pure common sense.' This is something the Upper House of the WA Parliament seems to be lacking."

This decision by the state parliament is being reported around the world. Quite something for a state with a population of just over 2 million people.

In Australia there is an organization called the Australian Christian Lobby which regularly informs its subscribers to what is happening and what action can be taken by individuals. If you want to be kept informed about this issue on a weekly basis, by email, you can sign up to their e-news at www.acl.org.au.

PM's intervention saves marriage

Canberra, the Capital city and seat of the Federal Parliament has its own government, very much like the state governments. The Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Mr. Jon Stanhope and his government were forced recently to back down from their intention to introduce a form of homosexual marriage called civil partnerships – they backed down because of pressure applied by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's office.

The reversal was completed when the ACT Legislative Assembly dropped marriage-mimicking ceremonies from its law recognizing relationships between same sex couples.

Before the last election, Mr. Rudd promised the Christian constituency he would not allow the federal marriage law to be tampered with, but would seek to address issues of discrimination against same sex couples through nationally consistent state-based relationship registers.

This allows interdependent relationships, be they sexual or otherwise, to be recognized in state law for purposes of finance and property sharing.

The Australian Christian Lobby expressed that it was grateful to Mr. Rudd and his Attorney General Robert McLelland for honoring this commitment under enormous political pressure from homosexual activists and elements of the media.

There has been significant debate in the media about the value of marriage in our society, with one of the best contributions coming from the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Peter Jensen. His article in *The Australian* on May 8 was well worth reading. It was titled "Unique Union" and he concluded it by saying:

"It seems to me that we would be better off spending a lot more time and energy thinking about the moral meaning of marriage between a man and a woman than agitating on behalf of relationships that mimic, but can never replicate, it."

Christian schooling attacked

It is clear that Prime Minister Rudd takes some note of the Christian constituency as he considers himself a Christian. So it will be interesting to see how this affects many of his colleagues, some of whom are openly anti-Christian.

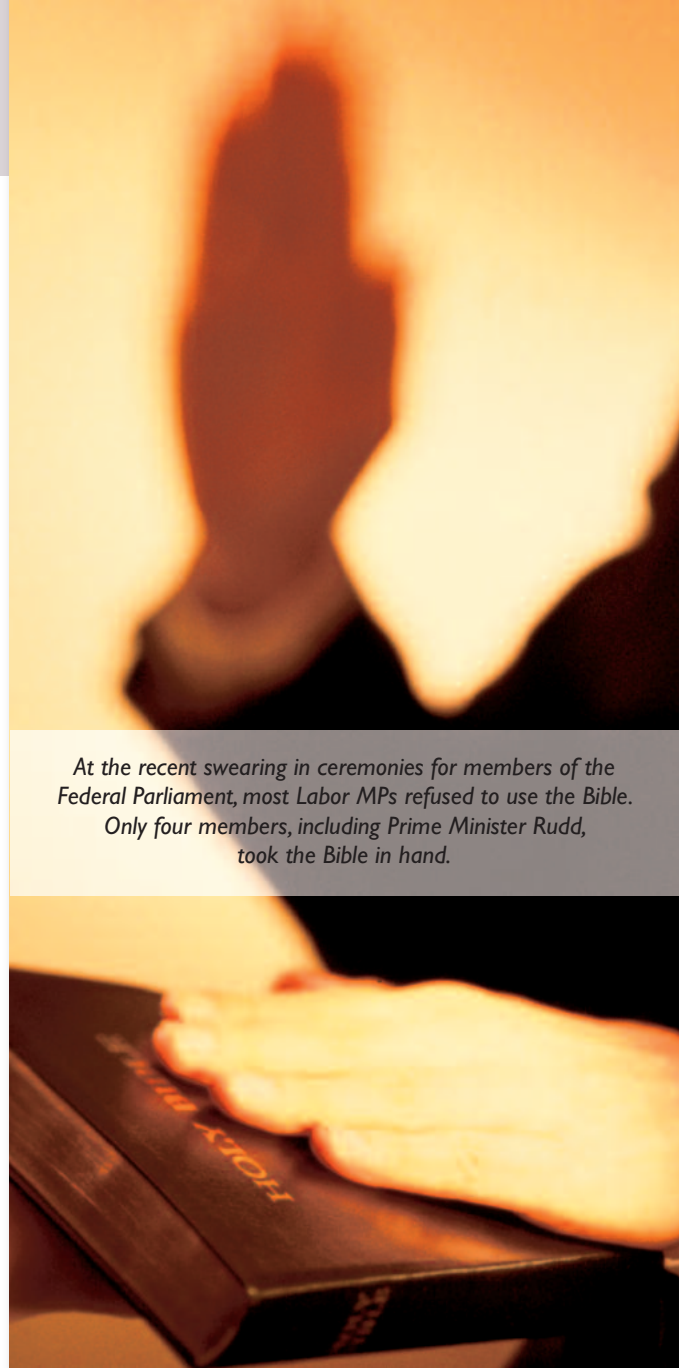
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...they backed down because of pressure applied by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's office

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This came out recently when his Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard gave an indication that she opposed private schools. She did this by quoting one Prof. Barry McGaw who was criticizing Christian schools and who wanted the government to drastically change the way private schools are funded and allowed to run. McGaw was quoted in *The Age* newspaper saying: "These people often form a narrowly focused school that is aimed at cementing the faith it's based on. . . If we continue as we are, I think we'll just become more and more isolated subgroups in our community."

That is an interesting comment, but is it borne out by the facts? When I look around our communities in Australia we see people involved in all sorts of community activities. People are volunteers in the local Fire Brigade, Red Cross, Meals on Wheels and a host of other organizations.



At the recent swearing in ceremonies for members of the Federal Parliament, most Labor MPs refused to use the Bible. Only four members, including Prime Minister Rudd, took the Bible in hand.

Prof McGaw's arguments fail because they are not based on truth. They are based on his own imagination. But it is an argument that is accepted by the Deputy Prime Minister. She is rather left wing, and according to most accounts, a women's liberationist. If our Prime Minister continues in the way he is going I can see them clashing sooner or later.

Parting thought

While I was finishing this article I came across some comments by a Bill Muehlenberg who pointed out that at the recent swearing in ceremonies for members of the Federal Parliament, most Labor MPs refused to use the Bible. Only four members, including Prime Minister Rudd, took the Bible in hand as they declared their allegiance to Queen Elizabeth and her heirs and successors. It is clear that Mr. Muehlenberg fears that this government and the state governments are anti-Christian in their thinking. It will be worth watching in the time ahead.



The Bible and politics: How do they mix?

by Mark Penninga

Consider this scenario: You have received an official-looking letter in the mail. It is addressed from the Honourable Prime Minister Stephen Harper and inside is a memo that explains that you have been selected to appear before a special Parliamentary committee that must make a decision about whether Canada will sign onto an international coalition fighting global warming. Your fear of public speaking is irrelevant – you have been summoned and must fly to Ottawa next week. “What am I going to say to this panel?” you ask your family and friends. “I don’t believe in this whole global warming thing – and I’m no scientist!”

Realizing that this is quite a remarkable opportunity, you phone up your old high school classmate who you know went to university to study the sciences. He gives you a number of studies which question the “science” of global warming and which suggest that climate change is probably caused by natural fluctuations that have always happened. Armed with these studies, you work furiously the next few days, trying to write up a brief that you will present to the government panel.

But what are you going to say? How should your Christian faith influence your presentation? Should you be quoting the Bible? Or are you just going to “stick to the facts” about climate change since the panel probably isn’t interested in hearing your Christian beliefs about the environment?

It applies to all of us

Granted, it’s not likely that any of us will receive an invitation like this in the mail. But the issue of how we, as Christians, interact with our secular government (and the secular world in general) is important and something that we must consider. After all, Christ has commanded us to “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Regardless of whether we are involved with politics, the issue of bringing the Bible to bear on public life must apply to all of us because we all share a calling to be a light in this world.

This is also a matter that the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada has to understand. At the very least, we will face this issue in simple correspondence (emails, letters, etc) with our leaders. And it is an issue we’ll face when we, the Lord willing, appear before Parliamentary committees.

Nature, the Bible or both?

We can easily be intimidated about bringing our faith into the discussion when we are speaking with a secular person. After all, they don’t believe in God so why should they accept His authority? Even if they do believe in God, Canada is a secular nation and most people believe that religion should have no place in politics. After all, we don’t want Muslim Sharia law to apply here, right?

One popular response to these difficult questions has been to separate the

laws that come from revelation (the Bible) from the laws that can be known from nature, and then to only speak of the laws of nature when bringing our perspective to government.

But what exactly are these so-called “laws of nature”? The Apostle Paul alludes to them in Romans 1 when he speaks about how man is without excuse because the invisible qualities of God can be known from the creation that surrounds us. Natural law theory holds that objective laws, which are unchanging and readily known by everyone, exist independently of man-made law. They are natural principles that help govern this world. For example, the Golden Rule is a classic natural law that is held by people throughout the world, regardless of their religion or nationality.

The *Belgic Confession’s* Article 2 explains that there are indeed two ways that we can know about God: by reading through Scripture, and by looking at “the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to perceive clearly the invisible things of God. . . .” Studying nature and the way that God has ordered this world can teach us valuable lessons about how our lives ought to be lived.

This means that natural law can also be brought to bear on the political issues of the day, since it is understandable by all people. One need not be a Christian to agree with us if we rely on the laws of nature.

For example, in the introductory scenario it would mean that you bring a message based on science which jives with what the Bible says about global warming.

Avoiding mention of God?

There are very few who would question that we can use natural law when speaking with our government. However, how much of our message should be grounded in natural law, and how much should come from the Bible?

If you were to sit in on a presentation being made by a Christian group to gov-

ernment, it is very well possible that you won't hear anything about God or the Bible. Instead, you will hear a lot about sociological or scientific arguments which show that a particular policy is good or bad for our society, families, institutions, etc. They'll most often choose to use a natural law approach.

But is this the right approach? Does the Bible have no place in our letters, emails, letters to the editor, or presentations to the government of our secular nation? As Reformed Christians, we believe that the authority of the Bible applies to every sphere of our lives,

including the public spheres such as politics and community service. There is little doubt that God wants us to be courageous ambassadors of His Word: "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. . . . When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." (Luke 12:8-11)

When do we argue from Natural Law and when do we use the Bible?

Now that it has been established that the Bible has a place in public policy discussions, how do we know when or where to apply it? Here are some things to consider:

1. The context

Who is your audience? Some contexts provide excellent opportunities to speak about how the Bible agrees with what we know from nature. Other contexts are not so appropriate. If you are presenting your argument as an article for an academic journal (for example, an article on global warming for the *Scientific American*) it may not be helpful to cite the Bible as support for your case. Many journals strive to be empirical and would view anything spiritual or metaphysical as inappropriate. As a result, your whole argument could be discredited and may not even be accepted for publication.

However, if you were presenting the same issue in a context where you have an opportunity to speak directly to your audience, it may well be appropriate to testify to how the Bible wonderfully agrees with what you have already established from nature. A lunch meeting with your MP is one example. Try to know your audience and how receptive they would be to a Biblical message. And remember to be brave – just because an audience may be unfamiliar with hearing the Bible does not mean that it is inappropriate to use it.

2. The issue

In an age where traditional morals are being questioned and even dismissed, it is important to know when to argue for something from nature or from the Bible. For example, many Christians have made the mistake of trying to rely on natural law to argue against redefining marriage to include homosexuals. But the standard arguments quickly fall flat. Just because society has almost always recognized marriage as between a man and a woman does not mean that it has to continue that way. We change things all the time. But marriage is ultimately grounded in the Bible because it was God who defined it already in Genesis. We can use the Bible to show how marriage is ultimately a religious institution and therefore should not be redefined by the state. Relying on natural law can even discredit our position because when the natural law arguments begin to fall, our overall argument falls. But when we rely on the Bible we can know that its truth can never be undermined. We must be sure that the laws of nature that we use on a particular issue are indeed objectively grounded and can be agreed upon by others.

If you were called to speak before a Parliamentary committee would you quote the Bible to them? Should you?



Never!

The reality is that we do tend to worry about what we are going to say, and how we would be received if we were to make our faith or God's Word public. Perhaps one of the most common worries is that our message will be written off as religious dogma which doesn't belong in the public square. Or perhaps we don't want to be labelled a "religious fundamentalist." As well intentioned as these fears are, they belittle the strength of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that, "the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

Our message must be different than the message of the world. Our ultimate purpose should be to testify to the truth. We can hope that the message will have a receptive audience, but ultimately that is not in our control. Our Parliament and courts have heard many good arguments to support the things that we believe in and that has not stopped them from making wrong decisions. Behind it all, there is a spiritual battle waging at the hearts and minds of our leaders. We have a responsibility to show this and to testify to the truth of the Word.

Using both

This does not mean that natural law has no place in our discussions or that we have to refer to the Bible in every situation. Far from it. It should not be one

or the other, but both the law from revelation and the law from nature that we use, depending on the circumstances, the issue, and the audience. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to rely entirely on the laws of nature. After all, the same Author wrote both laws so creation should testify to the truth of what we find in God's Word.

This means that it is appropriate to quote the Bible in a letter to our MP, or in a presentation to a special Parliamentary committee that is studying global warming. But when doing so, we also need to keep in mind that citing a Bible text is not the end of the conversation. We must explain why the message of the Bible is something that is good for our society. And this takes effort and time. As David McIlroy explains in his book *Christian Perspectives on Law: A Biblical View of Law and Justice* "In order to create a viable, coherent set of propositions from natural law, it is necessary to interpret nature in the light of Scripture. On the other hand, if Christianity is not to be brought into disrepute, Christians must be able to demonstrate the social utility of the laws they are proposing; in other words, it would be wrong to impose on society a law whose benefit could not be argued from nature."

Courageously bringing a Biblical perspective to our secular society and defending the social utility of it is no simple task. It requires God's guidance, difficult research, and thought. But this is very important, as ignoring God's Word or refusing to explain its meaning and significance to people who don't believe in its authority can take away from the message that our world needs to hear. After all, we are – all of us – prophets, with a most valuable message that can ultimately lead to life or death.





HOMEFRONT



Men Who Fear the Lord

by Jane deGlint

It truly is a wonderful thing when a man fears his Lord. With God-given insight he takes on his task of protector and provider. He has eagerly learned this since his youth. He adored his father and loved his mother. More emphatically, he was passionate about his mother. He would give his life to protect her from harm and to shield her from pushy door-to-door salesmen. He would give all his energy to build her a house and to buy her the best refrigerator. In fact, he would love to sleep in the same bed with her in order to feel the reassuring force of reciprocated love and protection.

This most beautiful and delicate relationship that a young man has with his mother is embellished and empowered by the exemplary role of his father. The young man wants to be as strong and as courageous as his father. It is his firm resolve, that, when he grows up and marries his mother, he will look after her in the way his father does now. To him this is a holy thing. It has nothing to do with vulgarity or abnormality. Wise parents intuitively guide their son through this stage with understanding and awe. They know that in due time he will so gradually awake to the mystery between man and woman. He will not even remember when his focus switched. To be sure, the switch in focus does not imply a switch in loyalty. A God-fearing man is able to find a perfect balance between his love for his mother and his devotion to his wife.

Firmly founded on his relationship with his parents the young man takes on the challenges of adolescence. Guided by the Spirit he prepares himself for a line of work that suits his gifts and circumstances. He accepts a position of responsibility in his church. He prepares himself emotionally and financially for marriage. All this while temptations abound. The love of money. Slothfulness. Overly flirtatious women. Excessive partying. Devilish whispers of spirituality that are not based on the Word. But strong in his Lord the young man receives the strength and fortitude to make the right choices.

When such young man enters into marriage with a God-fearing and mature young woman, the role-division in the marriage will not be problematic. The awareness of a common purpose overrides personal inconveniences and facilitates reasonable compromises. The husband does not individualistically pursue his own wishes. With grace and insight he searches out what is best for his family. Conflicts may initially be painful, but they turn into opportunities for reaching more rounded solutions and for enriching the relationship between the marriage partners.

Sadly, there are people who do not believe for a minute that such God-fearing men exist. Their lives in the darkness of abuse and distrust prevented them from ever experiencing or observing healthy relationships between men and women.

Yet, there can be no doubt. It is possible for the light of God's love to penetrate the darkness of sin. By the grace of God there are men who in their lives reflect the love which our Lord feels for his people. In truth, they mirror the love that Christ feels for his church. From helpful

boys and dependable students, they have grown into faithful men. Regardless of their academic gifts or financial status, they serve the Lord in their family lives. Even though they may not be aware of their own uprightness, it is very obvious to others that they have received the grace to walk in the ways of their Lord. Graciously they dedicate their lives to God as a continuous offering of thankfulness for being sons of the Most High.

It must be recognized, however, that not all God-fearing men live in harmonious relationships. Some find themselves in situations that constantly test their commitment to the Lord. Usually such predicaments arise at the place of employment or through marriage, with a possible relation between those two. When a Christian young man enters a secular work environment, he has to make choices. When colleagues do not leave him to his convictions nor appreciate his contributions, there is

*The young man wants to
be as strong and as courageous
as his father*

enormous pressure to conform to unscrupulous business practices. Profit is placed over integrity. Greed is coupled with lust.

The temptations to betray his faith are immense for a God-fearing man in such situations. Rather than get out, he compromises. It is usually not long till the ravenous wolf of greed and lust attacks him mercilessly. In this oppressive struggle a Christian young man may gradually cross over the boundary of purity and defile himself with a woman who does not share his convictions. And even if he receives the strength to keep his body pure, he may still find himself so emotionally attached to an unbelieving woman that the desire to marry her takes over his mind. A marriage which is the result of such a relationship is programmed for trouble. It rests on an uneven footing. Before long the walls of trust will crumble and the ceilings of spiritual health will split. The powers of evil filter in through the cracks. An atmosphere of disharmony, dishonesty and even immorality slowly descends upon the family.

Admittedly, avoidance of secular influences is not an absolute guarantee for a trouble-free marriage. Even within the church there are little foxes that spoil the vineyard of marital peace. A loyal, dedicated husband may come to the painful realization that his wife has grown bitter and vindictive. Some women start to refuse marital relations at the prime of their years. Others become unfaithful, secretly or publicly.

Under such circumstances it can become very difficult for a God-fearing man to give proper guidance to his family. If ever, it is now of crucial importance that he looks after the spiritual health of his family. Family devotions are primary opportunities to discover specific ways in which the Lord can heal broken relationship and sinful habits. Attending the worship services lifts our eyes on high. Through these means of grace the husband will experience that the pain of his predicament can be borne in faith. It is not easy, but the Lord will give strength from day to day. This strength includes both the peace of God and the support of fellow believers. Invaluable is the help of a brother or sister in the Lord, to offer perspectives, to provide distraction, to build the faith, to develop an eye for the blessings, and, if all fails, to carry one through the ruins of a divorce.

More sorrowful than the Christian man who faces spiritual opposition in his own home, is the man who himself is the cause of grief for his faithful wife and children. Some men call themselves Christian, yet they do not reflect God's love into their families. Rather, they hold a reign of power over their wife and children. This abuse may be hidden behind a front of piety. In many cases the disguise is so convincing that the man may hold an ecclesiastical office. But behind the front we find a man in the grip of self-gratification.

The reign of power may take several forms. There is the husband who ridicules his wife in front of friends and puts her down in front of the children. There is the man who keeps the wife short on funds while allowing himself expensive luxuries. There is the father who demands absolute obedience without involving himself in the lives of his children. He often demands absolute obedience of his wife as well, sometimes with an ex-

PLICIT reference to the command that wives must be submissive to their husbands. Some of these men enter into relationships with other women, justifying their unfaithfulness with the excuse that they are not appreciated by their own wife.

Young boys who grow up in such families face many obstacles. They do not have a God-fearing father as an example for holy living. They often become very competitive with their siblings in an effort to impress their father. They do not learn to serve, but to demand. They may show excessive levels of aggression to their mother, their siblings, their friends, their teachers, and eventually to their wife. They may lack all initiative to reach the full potential of their talents.

As broken as these families may be, the healing breath of the Spirit is strong enough to generate revival and restoration. Though the ways of the Spirit cannot always be analyzed or predicted, certain patterns of healing can be detected. The Spirit emboldens the members of the hurting family to acknowledge among themselves that they do not function properly. The power of the husband and father blocks their functioning as family and their participation in the congregation. As they involve themselves more, they find God-fearing role models. As the fruits of the Spirit become apparent in the family life, the members are emboldened to continue on the path of openness and participation.

Under the guidance of the Spirit it is often the wife and mother who is used by the Lord to disarm the self-serving man. She does not do so with forceful means. She simply resolves to

serve her caring Lord rather than her selfish husband. Whereas she used to obey his every whim, she now looks after him for the sake of her Christ. Before she used to fear his unpredictable reactions, now she is confident in her Lord. Acknowledging her sinful nature she knows that she makes mis-

takes. But she trusts that her heavenly Father forgives her mistakes and uses them in a positive way.

At first glance it seems to be a reversed picture – a faithful wife who restores her wayward husband. We are used to Bible passages where the Lord depicts himself as the husband who remains faithful to his blatantly adulterous wife. Yet, the seemingly reversed picture is equally significant and touching. In the New Testament the Woman stands symbolically for the church. It is in her womb that new life is conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Woman, the Bride of Christ, nourishes her children and teaches them to walk in the ways of the Father. Blessed is the woman who is used by the Lord to pass on the life of the Spirit.

And blessed is the man who delights in his God-fearing wife. The talents in his family will shine and bring forth much fruit. His house will be a haven for hurting souls. He does not desire riches, since his reward is in heaven. Confidently he accepts trouble as heavenly corrections, which will increase his spiritual resilience. In truth, he is an honorable representative of his heavenly Lord.

“Blessed is the man who fears the LORD” (Psalm 112:1).



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Even within the church there are little foxes that spoil the vineyard of marital peace

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Human Rights need God

by Johan D. Tangelder

Do human rights need God? Bluntly stated, it all depends on your God.

Of course secular humanist and atheists dismiss the need for and even the possibility of a god. Human beings are responsible for their own destiny, they say, and create their own morals. . . and even their own rights.

But the standard secular account of human rights is mistaken. What is widely overlooked today is that a worldview based on godless evolution cannot provide a reasonable foundation for either the universality or the permanence of human rights. How can relativism, so prevalent in the West, guarantee human rights? Philosopher Jacques Ellul properly warned us that it cannot protect “established human rights. . . against arbitrary power or against totalitarian definitions of right and wrong.”

Grounded in God

The truth is that human rights issues are deeply religious issues and therefore, the God question cannot be avoided.

Our God is the Lawgiver of the universe. No person, not even the highest government official, is above God’s law or above God’s judgment. Therefore, in our practice of human rights we are answerable to God, who is “the judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25). This truth gives the victims of injustice the assurance that in the ultimate scheme of things they do not have to “settle” for the injustice done to them or anybody else. All injustice will be rectified when God “will judge the world in righteousness” (Ps. 96:13).

But won’t basing human rights on God lead to a theocracy? Not if we keep in mind what belongs to God and what belongs to the state. As the church father Tertullian (c.160-230) pointed out: “Render to Caesar *money*. Render to God *yourself*. Otherwise, what will be God’s, if all things are Caesar’s?” In other words, the state does not bestow human rights, but it does have a duty to recognize and safeguard these rights. It must protect not only specific political rights like (like voting) but also non-political rights such as the right to worship, freedom of association, parental choice in education, and so forth.

Biblical authority

We can make a compelling argument in a secular society for human rights which are originally from God and finally vindicated by God. As Christians our starting point is the Bible; it is the foundation for our thoughts and actions. So does the Bible offer a working perspective of human rights? And if so, what is it?

The idea of human rights is not actually mentioned anywhere in the Bible, yet it is present everywhere. In clear language the Bible speaks to us about right and wrong, about good and evil, about God’s law which is finer than gold and sweeter than honey, about doing justice to the poor, the needy, the orphans, and those who have no helper, about not withholding wages of your hired laborer, about showing mercy and doing justice to

foreigners and sojourners, about doing good even to your enemies.

The Bible also speaks of divinely inspired duties, including the Ten Commandments, which, when taken to their ultimate conclusion, form the basis of what we today would call human rights. The commandment, “You shall not murder,” teaches that human life is sacred and implies that there is a right to life. Thus, the commandments are formulated as human obligations to God and not as explicitly conferring tangible rights or benefits upon humanity.

But the commandments do, in fact, provide a philosophical basis for putting a high value on humans. And Jesus said that human duties to God are ultimately reduced to two: Love God with one’s whole being, and love others as oneself (Matt. 22:34-40).

The Bible deals with human nature and with personal relationships more than with specific problems. But much of its teaching nonetheless expressly bears on public policy concerns. This is seen in the role of the Old Testament prophets. Kings were reminded of their violation of God’s law that protected the rights of weaker members of their society. The prophet Nathan rebuked King David for violating the rights of Uriah (2 Sam. 12:7-10). Elijah’s rebuked King Ahab for violating the right of Naboth (1 Kings 21:17-22). Both Nathan’s rebuke and Elijah’s rebuke were taken seriously because David and even Ahab were rulers of Israelites’ society that still recognized God’s law and judgment.

Man has been created in God's image

The most basic issue at stake in the concern for human rights can be phrased very simply with the question, "What is man?" The undergirding rationale for all human rights is the fact that each one of us has been created in the image of God. The Roman teacher Lactantius (c.250-325 AD) noted, "We call everyone together to the heavenly pasture, without any distinction either of sex or of age" (cf. Gal. 3:28).

Each person is highly valued in the sight of God. In fact, when a person's basic right to life is violated, God's right is violated. The Bible declares that any assault on another person is taken as an assault on God Himself. And He will ultimately vindicate the innocent and punish the criminal (Gen. 9:5-6).

This concept of human dignity, as well as the ideas of justice, righteousness, and human freedom (especially freedom from oppression) flows from Scripture's high view of human beings. Consequently, we insist on the universal dignity, rights and responsibilities of all human beings. When human beings are no longer seen as God's image-bearers, they will be treated as mere objects, products of evolution, a collection of molecules. As the Christian apologist Tertullian (c.160) aptly commented, "Man is not, as the croaking philosophers say, merely a rational animal, capable of understanding and knowing. . . Rather, man alone is the image and the likeness of God."

The status of a human being does not depend on his or her age, race, size, stage of development, or condition of dependency. Each person is

made in the image of God, and endowed with dignity (Ps. 8). Each human being is, therefore, a person possessed of a dignity we are obliged to respect by virtue of being created in the likeness and image of God. And each person is both an individual and communal creature, who lives beneath God's sovereignty, answerable to his norms of justice, stewardship, and love. The right to dignity demands that we treat all human beings with dignity. This includes protecting the rights of those with whom we disagree.

Rights must be tied to responsibilities

In much of human rights talk today, little is said about responsibility. God makes it clear, however, that we do not have rights for rights' sake. Rights are tied to responsibility.

We must accept responsibility for what we do. Responsibility is about caring for others. And ultimately the cause of human rights is inseparably bound up with our responsibility to God (Ps.139). We cannot shirk our duty like Cain did, when he said to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

As Ed Vanderkloet noted in his essay *The Iron and the Clay in the Foundations of Human Rights*: "Man is first of all responsible to his Maker; his speech, his association, and all his action must be a response to God. It is here that the Christian and the humanist world-and-life

view clash. For the creed of human autonomy does not allow for the element of responsibility to a sovereign God. If man is his own master and lawgiver, he is only responsible to himself."

The fall of Man

Why are human rights so often violated? Why can't the "reasoned intentions of all men of goodwill" bring about public justice and the renewal of society? Why can't we all just get along?

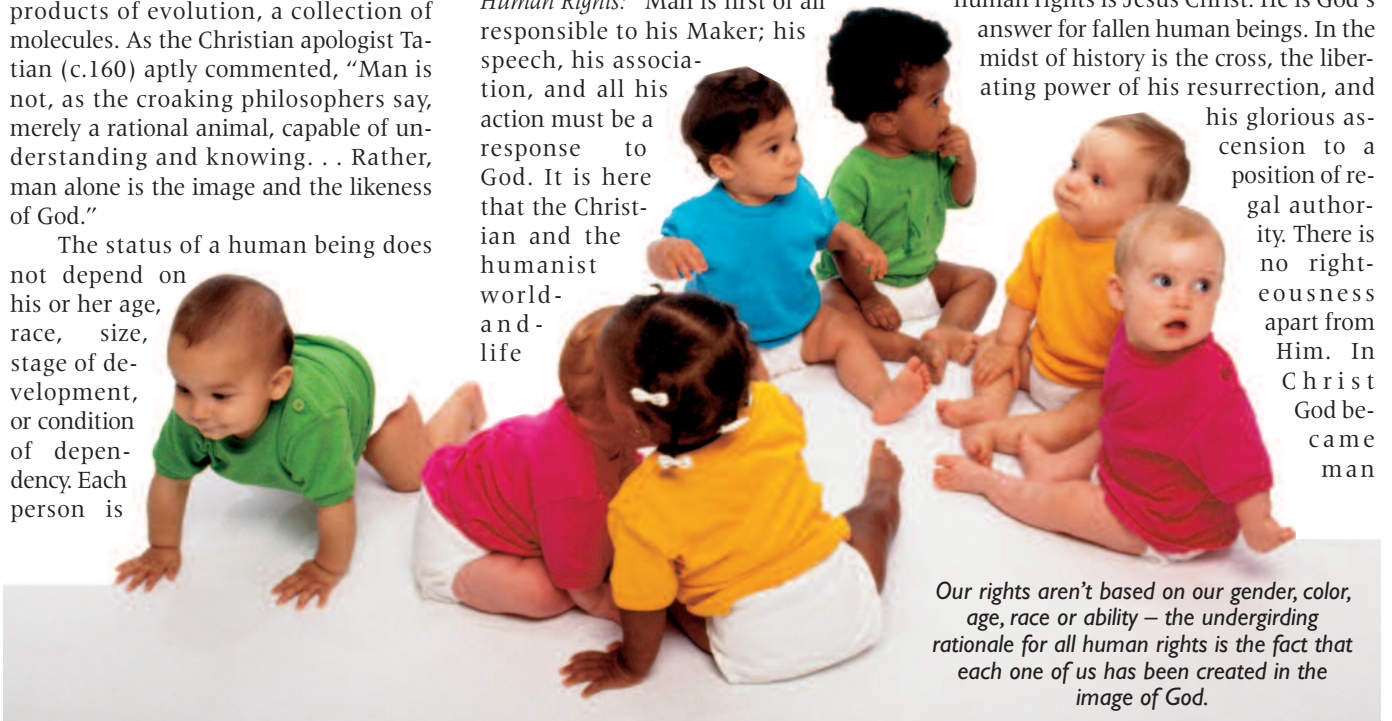
This sometimes seems to be a bit of a mystery to non-Christians. But we know the reason: Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Sin now disrupts the good order and harmony of God's creation. The curse of sinful transgression, of the broken covenant, and of the estrangement from God, fellowmen, and the world, now hangs over all human relationships.

But the fall could not and did not destroy our responsibility to God. God maintains his righteous claims upon us even in a broken world. Do human rights need God? Yes, as only God can counter human sin.

Jesus Christ, the God-Man

At the heart of the Christian view of human rights is Jesus Christ. He is God's answer for fallen human beings. In the midst of history is the cross, the liberating power of his resurrection, and

his glorious ascension to a position of regal authority. There is no righteousness apart from Him. In Christ God became man



Our rights aren't based on our gender, color, age, race or ability – the undergirding rationale for all human rights is the fact that each one of us has been created in the image of God.

and as the God-man, the long-awaited Messiah, He reveals perfectly the divine image (Col. 1:15), restoring the image of God in us.

The incarnate Divine Word is, therefore, the measure of the fullness of our humanity (Eph. 4:13). By God's grace, this is the firm and final foundation of the exercise, personally and communally, "To all who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

The doctrine of the Incarnation demonstrates the ultimate worth of human beings (John 3:16). Jesus Christ, both fully God and fully human, concretely lived in the midst of time and space. Through Jesus, the New Testament shows God's interest in people from all segments of society – Jesus demonstrated respect to the outcasts of society.

So how do we practice true (James 1:26-27) religion? We turn to the Bible. It is the Word of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). He is the Way we are to walk, the Truth we are to believe, the Life we are to live. The apostle Paul exhorts us to fulfill "the law of Christ," which means assuming the obligation "to bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). The claims of love are at the heart of the "law of Christ." As Justin Martyr observed, "All of us pray for you, and for all men, as our Christ and Lord taught us to do. For He commanded us to pray even for our enemies, and to love those who hate us, and to bless those who curse us."

Will we ever gain a world where all human rights are perfectly respected? The Bible is clear. A perfect world will only come when our Lord returns. With one eye scanning the clouds, watchful for our Lord's return, we are to fix our other eye on the needs of our fellow image bearers around the world. Therefore, here and now we do what is right in God's sight. And Christ entrusts the church with the great commission as the supreme "declaration of human rights" – the right and responsibility of all people to hear and believe the gospel, and the

right and responsibility of his disciples to proclaim it (Matt.28: 18-20).

The Church

The Church is the community of saints from every nationality, class, and race. As public light, salt, and leaven, she can make a positive contribution to human rights, showing concern for the public good. As she presents the Gospel of salvation to a spiritually lost world, she has also the task to equip the people of God, both personally and communally, to serve as fervent advocates of justice, peace, and compassion in every sector of life.



***The state does not
bestow human rights,
but it does have a duty
to recognize and
safeguard these rights***




And the church has a unique position in the world. When one part of the Church suffers, there will be voices of encouragement from other parts; when another part of the Church becomes too comfortable with status and power, a word of admonition will be forth coming. And the Church has made a difference for the good in many parts of the world. For all the ambiguities, foibles, and outright betrayal of Christianity's own best principles, the Word and Deed Gospel has opened the door to the development of dynamic pluralistic democracies which protect human rights of both persons and groups. The record shows that the church opened her heart to the needy, cared for the poor and hungry, ministered to the enslaved and imprisoned, established orphanages and centers of learning, generated movements for societal reform, offered diaconal assistance, and sponsored programs of world relief.

Already in the first centuries of the Christian era, the Church sought the public good. For example, Lactantius wrote, "It is an equally great work of justice to protect and defend orphans and widows who are destitute and stand in need of assistance. Therefore, the divine law commands this to everyone." Christians opposed and condemned the culturally imbedded custom of child abandonment. The 2nd century church father Clement of Alexandria condemned the Romans for saving and protecting young birds and other creatures while lacking moral compunctions about abandoning their own children. But the early Christians did more than condemn child abandonment. They frequently took these child castaways into their homes and adopted them. Despite all the persecutions suffered, they did not relent in promoting the sanctity of human life. Their persistent efforts eventually paid off. When Emperor Valentinian outlawed infanticide in 374, he also criminalized child abandonment.

Conclusion

Do human rights need God? Yes. The infallible Scripture of the Triune God gives shape to human rights issues. Human rights in the biblical perspective are now rights by the grace of God, recalling us to our task to make things right in this world just as Zacchaeus did: "If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold" (Luke 19:8).

As believers in the pursuit of human rights, we must maintain an independent prophetic voice. "We should realize that the humanist and Christian concepts of justice and rights are as incompatible as iron and clay," noted Vanderkloet. "To build our political order on a foundation of those [humanist] ingredients is acting like the man who built his house upon the sand. Such foundations will crumble and cause the collapse of the structure when the winds and floods of new ideologies arise and beat against it." 



Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

Experience times 27

CBS's *The View* is one of the last places you'd expect to see a common-sense defense of spanking. But when Rose Rocks, a mother of 10 and foster mother of 17 appeared on the morning show and started talking about her approach to discipline, no one was going to question her qualifications.

In raising her 27 children she has made a restrained use of spanking because she found a momentary smack on the bum was far less painful, and left less scarring than yelling at children. Spanking and yelling are not the only two options for disciplining children, but if parents refuse to ever do the former they may find themselves doing a lot of the latter.

The sport of ex-athletes

If you used to be a basketball gym rat, but now find the fastbreak is passing you by, if you were a football fanatic but can't pick yourself off the turf anymore, if your hockey slapshot has become a piffle, and your soccer skills are shot, worry not, there is still a sport for you.

It is called Roofball, and involves players taking turns (through ten rounds) throwing a football at a steel pipe chimney on a garage roof. Five points are scored for "pinging" the pipe, one point is scored for catching the ball as it comes off the roof, and a negative five points are scored if you throw the ball over the roof. Daniel "Danno" O'Reilly won the recent 2008 Roofball World Championships with a score of 54. For a more detailed

look at the rules, or information on how you too can play Roofball, check out www.Roofball.org.

Self-referent humor

New York Yankees manager Yogi Berra was a master of self-referent humor. In fact, ninety per cent of Berra's quips were self-referent half of the time. Actually, that may not be true since 87.5 per cent of all statistics are made up. I was thinking about promising that you'll enjoy the self-referent quips that follow but I never make predictions. Never have and never will. Some of the quotes that follow are anonymous; most of the others are by people I don't know.

- It's like déjà vu all over again
- Yogi Berra
- Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
- Repeat after me. We are all individuals. - Graham Chapman
- There are 10 types of people: those who understand binary and those who don't.
- I've felt like a goat, ever since I was a kid - James Demastus
- I want to join the Optimist's Club, but they probably won't accept me.
- David Cervera
- Aibophobia: the fear of palindromes
- The two rules for success are: 1. Never tell them everything you know.

The insanity of assisted-suicide

An article in the May 12 edition of *The Guardian* shows just how heartless assisted suicide is. Documentary filmmaker Jon Ronson originally set out to make a movie that advocated for assisted suicide, but

after following around "right-to-die" advocate George Exoo for several years, off and on, Ronson has changed his mind.


The one incident that had the biggest impact on Ronson happened in May of last year. That was when he got to meet Exoo's new assistant who was being trained to take over Exoo's role.

"Susan [not her real name] lived alone, a middle-aged lady with a collection of plastic lizards. While we waited I asked her how they met. 'I was bitten by a brown recluse spider in 1993,' she replied. 'It was so painful I wanted to die.' She said she called the official right-to-die groups, 'but they wouldn't help me.' 'Because you weren't terminally ill?' 'Yeah, they rejected me,' she said. 'But then somebody said, "You might want to call George.'" Kind of like under the counter.' Susan said she would have killed herself with Exoo's help - he was perfectly willing - but she couldn't find anyone to look after her pet snake. Eventually, they got talking. If she wasn't going to be his client, perhaps she should be his assistant."

Susan once wanted to die, but then found a reason - a very perverse reason - to go on. She wanted to commit an irrevocable act, but then changed her mind. And yet she is now traveling the world helping people kill themselves. It's ironic and it's insane. May God open her eyes.

Quote of the month

"I dream of a better tomorrow, when Chickens can cross the road without having their motives questioned."

- Author unknown 

Putting Off Procrastination

by Walter Henegar

I procrastinate. I've been doing it most of my life. If a particular task is even remotely unpleasant, my first and persistent tendency is to put it off. It's not that I'm lazy; I'm actually very busy. I just wait as long as possible to do the really hard stuff. I always pull it off in the end, but it regularly makes me miserable.

Beating this habit is not about polishing my halo. My procrastination is a serious, deep-rooted pathology that negatively affects almost every area of my life, only it happens to be acceptable in our culture. For much of my life, I've even been perversely prideful about it.

But over the past couple of years, God has graciously given me the faith, insight, and power to fight it. My procrastinating desires are still strong and seductive, but by God's goodness and grace, I am changing. Writing this article is an attempt to share the hope I have been given.

A procrastinator's story

"Pressure makes diamonds." That was my personal motto in college, when I first began to recognize the pattern. I started most of my papers the night before they were due, and I usually got As. My friends all teased me about it, but I defended myself with an old saying called Parkinson's Law: "Work expands to fill the time available for its completion." *Why spend a week on a paper if I could spend a night and get the same result?*

The working world only reinforced my pattern. Sitting in front of a computer screen all day offered limitless opportunities for procrastinating: e-mail, Internet, mindless little games like *Minesweeper*. As long as I was busy doing *something*, no one would complain if I pulled off the big jobs at the last possible minute. I had a few close scrapes, but I was generally a valued (or over-valued) employee.

When I got married, my uncle, who married us, joked about my well-known tendency right in the middle of the ceremony. His sermon was about the necessity of change in marriage, and

looking right at me, he said, "One who is a procrastinator, if he gets over it, will put that off as long as he can."

And that's exactly what I did, though married life made it increasingly more difficult. My designated crunch times now belonged to my wife as well, and I had to push her away to get last-minute work done. Even worse, I began dragging my feet about some of our shared responsibilities, like creating (and sticking to) a budget, praying together, and washing the dishes. Instead of pride, I began to feel ashamed. Or perhaps I should say, defensive. I mean, everyone knows I'm a responsible guy. *This is just a quirk of my personality, right? Can't she just cut me some slack?*

She did cut me some slack, but only as much as her chronically ill body would allow. Repeated hospital stays and constant bouts with pain forced her to lean heavily on me to take care of her – and our two children. If marriage is God's cold chisel for sanctifying us, then children only sharpen the edge. The three of them drove my work responsibilities deeper into my free time and farther into the hours of the night. I slept less and less. I still managed to pull most things off, but the quality of my work suffered, and my list of undone to-dos grew. I was continually weary and discouraged. I felt sorry for myself. A couple of times, in the throes of last-minute working, I even experienced something like panic attacks. I envied my more disciplined friends but saw little hope of becoming like them.

Then about two years ago, a counseling class in seminary challenged me to give Scripture a shot at diagnosing my problem and setting a course for change. What captured my imagination was the biblical metaphor of a tree, and the suggestion that my prickly branches of procrastination were being nourished by unseen roots growing deep in the chambers of my heart. A hope even flashed that I might uncover *the* root, and somehow cut it out once and for all. In retrospect, this second hope was a reflection of my procrastinator's heart, always looking for a shortcut or a silver bullet.

Initial insights

In order to get down to the roots I had to start with the branches, and my self-study soon yielded two unexpected insights. The first was that my procrastinating patterns were highly *systematic*; that is, not only infecting all areas of my life, but operating in orderly, predictable ways. My heart seemed to have its own dysfunctional flow chart of if-thens: *If it's not due tomorrow, you've got plenty of time. . . If it's crunch time, neglect every other responsibility. . . If you've just finished a big job, reward yourself, and so on.*

My procrastination is a serious, deep-rooted pathology

Secondly, I realized that I am largely ignorant of the system most of the time. This one was hard to take because I've always considered myself an introspective guy, and my procrastination had been on the radar for some time. But I had always defined it as an absence: I wasn't working hard enough – or soon enough, at least. The question that hadn't occurred to me was: If something is *absent*, then what's *present*? All of those hours were going somewhere, but what exactly was I *doing* with them?

I began deliberately paying more attention to the way I spent my time, particularly those hours designated for work. And I discovered that most of the time, I did *good* things! I would reorganize my desk, return letters, balance the checkbook, or practice the guitar. Of course there were less noble activities scattered in there, too: an hour or more of TV, scrounging for junk food, window shopping on the Internet for things I didn't need. But the "good" activities began to explain how I had justified my procrastination as a necessary evil for an overworked guy.

During that time I was also searching Scripture for insights about work. Not surprisingly, there are numerous verses on the necessity of hard work. One, in particular, jumped out at me: 2 Thessalonians 3:11 describes a group of *idlers* or *busybodies* who were not pulling their weight in the young Thessalonian church. The word "busybody" intrigued me, so I looked it up in the original Greek. It turns out that it's actually a compound of the verb meaning "to work" and a preposition meaning "around." So the second part of the verse could be translated literally: "Such people do no work at all; instead, they work *around*."

All of a sudden I could see myself clearly. There I was, buzzing diligently around the room, while the one thing I needed to do most sat unheeded in the middle of it. I wasn't just a procrastinator; I was a work-around-er.

I remembered reading Charlie Hummel's little booklet, *Tyranny of the Urgent*. Hummel marveled that Jesus could say on the cross, "It is finished," even though so much of his kingdom-building work was yet incomplete. He argued that Jesus could only say it because he had done "all the work the Father gave

him to do." The connection to my own sin was clear: Unless I'm doing what *God* has called I'm to do, I'm doing someone else's work. When I procrastinate, I'm effectively *meddling* in things that are "none of my business" – much like the common definition of a busybody.

Digging deeper

I began to feel like I was really figuring myself out, and it was still early enough in the semester to think I was staying on top of things. I'd notice when I started slipping blatantly into procrastination, and it was easy enough to stop – at first. But soon midterms hit, and everything quickly fell apart. I found myself pulling all-nighters again, and it was back at square one. Ironically, though, I still had to work on an assignment for my counseling class. I reluctantly dove back, this time trying to get at deeper issues. It wasn't hard to begin naming things. Pride was surely operating: every time I pulled an all-nighter to finish a job, I was protecting my reputation before my friends and superiors. Fear of others was closely related. When I had those mild panic attacks, the fear of others' disapproval was foremost in my head. Laziness wasn't the main thing, but it definitely played a part; sometimes I just didn't want to do anything. Pleasure seeking and escapism were big players, too, though I generally confined myself to acceptable thrills like watching movies and bingeing on Ben & Jerry's.

My head still did need straightening, but now it was theological

Naming these heart issues seemed useful, but it didn't produce the catharsis I had sought. Not only were they intimidating (*How could I ever put a dent in pride?*), but they were *internal*, and I still suspected that external factors played a key role. Sometimes I really did have unreasonable amounts of work to do. Even when I planned out my time, unexpected events would often force me to work at the last minute. Sometimes my last-minute work was actually pretty good, and when I started other jobs early [like this article!], they really did expand to fill the time.

Turning my attention outside myself, I easily composed a long list of "if onlys" – circumstances that would make it all better if only they changed. My wife's illness was at the top of the list, followed by the financial constraints of being in graduate school, followed by the geographic and vocational unsettledness of our situation.

The list kept growing. *"As soon as our daughter sleeps through the night, or finishes teething, or gets out of diapers – then I'll have time to start exercising again."* *"When we stop traveling so often and get into a routine, then I'll be able to begin my days in prayer."* *"I'd be a much more disciplined guy, if I only had a mentor to show me how."*

Then the really sinister ones started to emerge. "If my wife were more disciplined herself, I'd have less to do around the house." "If my friends cared enough to grill me about this stuff, I wouldn't struggle with it so much." "If my parents had modeled better work habits for me, I'd be light-years ahead by now."

Finally I uncovered a similar list of excuses that characterized the way I work. "I just need to get this out of my system, and then I'll buckle down." "This semester is already a wash, so I'll work on that next semester when I've got a clean slate." "The first of the month should be a good time to start that." "I'll just set my alarm and do it in the morning."

Ugh! Now those broad categories like pride and escapism were taking on specific contours, and it wasn't pretty. I started seeing my foolishness, rationalizing, and self-deception everywhere. I began to despair, though I still clung vainly to the hope that things might get better, if only I could get my head on straight.

Theological truths

My head still did need straightening, but now it was theological. Yet I thank God that he did not leave me alone with my Bible, or I would not have gotten far. Through the words of my professors, the writings of others, and the preaching of my pas-

tor, I began to confront my lack of confidence in some essential, biblical truths of the Christian faith.

The most significant was my tendency to doubt that God could change me at all, which itself was an expression of my pride. I didn't really doubt my salvation; I just doubted that much change was possible this side of heaven. If there was an "old man" and a "new man" inside of me, the old man clearly had the advantage (see Col. 3:9).

But that simply was not true. I was reminded that the New Testament repeatedly characterizes salvation as a decisive shift from death to life, from slavery to sonship (see 1 John 3:14, Rom. 6:6). While the "tree" of my life will always grow some thorns, I am fundamentally a *fruit* tree. In Christ I have been genetically re-engineered to produce the fruits of the Spirit – and self-control is one of them! (See Gal. 5:22.)

Lest I then resort to shallow triumphalism (as I am prone to do), I was also reminded that in Scripture, sanctification is a thoroughly *progressive* reality. I always *said* I believed it – "nobody's perfect" is a self-evident truth in any culture – but in practice I still *expected* to be more sanctified right away. My continual longing for a silver bullet to slay my sin exposed the impatience and laziness of my unbelief in progressive sanctification.

As I recognized my unbelief in these areas, the question now became, "What do I do with it?" And the unmistakable answer was, "Repent." My seminary studies had already begun

10 reasons to just do it... NOW

Religious

1. "How soon 'not now' becomes 'never.'" – Martin Luther
2. "God has promised forgiveness to your repentance; but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination." – Augustine of Hippo
3. "One does evil enough when one does nothing good." – German Proverb

Anonymous

1. "The chief cause of failure and unhappiness is trading what we want most for what we want at the moment." – Anonymous
2. "Many of us spend half of our time wishing for things we could have, if we didn't spend half of our time wishing." – Anonymous

Miscellaneous

1. "He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else." – Benjamin Franklin
2. "Anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment." – Robert Benchley

Humorous

1. "Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." – Will Rogers
2. "He who hesitates is last." – Mae West
3. "Procrastination is something best put off until tomorrow." – Gerald Vaughan

teaching me that repentance was a gracious gift and a joyful essential of the Christian life. But now, instead of just repenting of clearly definable acts of sin, I also began repenting of general attitudes and dispositions in my heart.

There was no shortage of these, particularly as I uncovered new ways that I rationalized and clung to my procrastinating habits. It still wasn't pleasant, but I wasn't afraid of facing my sins anymore, now that I regularly experienced the true catharsis of taking them to the cross. My accountability group with two seminary friends became a weekly excuse to confess to each other and repent to God together. Though I often resisted that initial bending of my knees, I would inevitably become reluctant to leave the posture of prayer. I began to really *experience* the forgiveness of God, and it freed me to pursue him more fervently.

I became convinced that repentance was always the first step in the process of change. Without repentance I was a guilt-driven man relying on my own strength and my own skewed perception of my problems. With it I was a grace-driven man with God's strength and a more biblical perception of my problems.

As I pursued it more regularly, my repentance took on a more positive, forward-looking character as well. Even as I prayed for God's forgiveness, I thought through future situations where I'd be tempted in the same way, and asked for strength to act wisely when they arrived. God answered my prayers, and I really started to change. Even my wife noticed. Rather than ascetically forcing myself to complete every little unfinished task – or coast until the next “clean slate” came around – I forced myself to accept some losses and focus on absolute top priorities.

Now my time in prayer to God was at the top of that list, followed by time with my family and adequate sleep. Non-negotiable school assignments followed, and though they weren't as good as they could have been, they weren't altogether bad. I still learned a lot that semester.

Ongoing change

In the last two years, I have continued to grow in my understanding of procrastination, particularly as I've recognized the impact it has on other people. While revisiting that 2 Thessalonians passage about busybodies, I discovered an antecedent passage that explained *why* Paul treated the matter so seriously: “so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders, and so that you will not be dependent on anybody” (1 Thess. 4:12). In other words, both my witness to non-Christians and my love for the church (not to mention my family) are crippled by my procrastination.

Seeing my failures in these areas not only provided more fodder for repentance, but new awareness of the consequences of my sin. Less blindered now by the anxiety of impending work, I saw how insensitively I had been unloading my responsibilities onto my wife and daughters. I began seeing how many opportunities to love and serve others I was missing because of the disorder in my own life. Every time I broke a commitment or fudged a deadline, I saw how poorly I reflected God's character to a world that already distrusts his people – for good reason. For the first time I heard Jesus' command, “Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’” as a direct extension of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

Requirements:

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- Ad must be no more than 200 characters (and that's including spaces)
- Ad must be for events that go beyond the local – if it's just for your congregation you can advertise it in your bulletin
- this is for non-commercial groups (whose philosophy and worldview is in accord with that of *Reformed Perspective*, so we reserve the right to refuse any ad)

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FOUR LINES FREE

Do you have an event going on
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 or other non-profit group is selling cookbooks,
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 or staging a play
 you can post the details here.

As my battle with procrastination has matured, I'm learning not so much how to "figure out" my heart, but more how to subdue it. There's not a fully sanctified part of me that can perfectly diagnose and treat the sinful part; rather, my whole heart is unreliable – or as Jeremiah says, "deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9).

Recognizing the unreliable nature of my heart has given me greater appreciation for corporate means of sanctification, particularly my close friends who have a standing invitation to show me my sin – and to remind me of the gospel. When I've got a lot of work coming due soon, I ask them to encourage me to work ahead diligently, and to challenge me when I get overwhelmed. Knowing how much I need that outside input has given me greater courage to do the same for them, "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Just as I had been largely ignorant of the machinations of my heart, I had also lost sensitivity to the whole-person consequences of neglecting and abusing my body. In the last year I've begun running three times a week with a close friend. Both of us have become better stewards of our physical health, and I have lost over thirty pounds. I haven't entirely forsworn Ben & Jerry's, but I eat much healthier now, and my energy level is more consistent. Lately I've been working to recognize when I'm full, and (of all things!) to stop eating.

Similarly, I now see sleep as a God-given responsibility, and not something I can sacrifice without cost. When I have to do last-minute work (which still happens, I'm afraid), instead of staying up half the night, I'll go to bed around 9:00 p.m. and get up at 4:00 a.m. That's still seven hours of sleep, and I have several quiet hours left for rested and focused study. I always considered myself a "night person," but it turns out that I work much more efficiently in the morning. Following a schedule that's closer to my wife's has also improved our day-to-day sense of companionship.

The road ahead

I am profoundly grateful for the change God has wrought in me in this area, though there is much more to work on. My procrastinating desires tug at me right now, even as I write this article. All those years of working under pressure have made working ahead unnatural and inefficient. My new ideal is to work with last-minute focus and intensity, but well before the deadline. I don't do that very well yet, and Parkinson's Law still plagues my best efforts.

I also need to re-learn many of these lessons, particularly the theological ones. It is easy to drift out of a repentant mindset when conspicuous sins aren't showing up every day. Yet that complacency itself is something to repent of, and cause to ask God to continually "search me and know my heart" (Ps. 139:23). Just as I once confronted my unbelief that God can change me, I now need to confront my unbelief that he wants to change me "more and more" (See 1 Thes. 4:1). I'm still lazy, prideful, and prone to escapism, and those desires won't leave me in this life.

There are surely other desires stewing in my heart that I haven't fully examined yet. One of the great inconsistencies of my procrastination has been my proactive diligence in some areas, particularly those related to money and possessions. I've always paid my bills early, and every dollar I've spent in the last

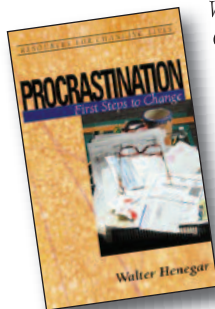
six years is accounted for in Quicken. I do my taxes in February. I service my car according to the manufacturer's schedule, and I fix things around the house immediately after they break. None of these are bad things, of course, but anything done "religiously" surely has religious implications. I probably have some idolatrous attachment to the security I find in money and things.

Another issue is that growth in this area can protect me from the fear of others – though my desires to maintain their respect are still fierce. I hate having to confess my failures, even to my wife, who knows me better than anyone. And when I do confess, I'm noticing how habitually I "spin" the details – if I stayed up till 1:59 a.m., I might tell her I went to bed around one o'clock. This spin factor is looking like a big iceberg in my life, and I'm reluctant to see how much more is submerged.

Conclusion

So I'm working out my salvation "with fear and trembling," yet with hope and confidence that "it is God who works in [me] to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12-13). Procrastination is a distinctive tendency of mine, but it is not the only area where I need to change. As a man preparing for ordained ministry in the church, I long for a much more outward-directed and other-centered way of life. I want to fear God and to desire to please him more than anyone else. I want "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10). I want to become more like Jesus, so that others will come to know him, too.

It won't be easy, but I'm confident that God will do this, because he promised he would. And he doesn't procrastinate.



Walter Henegar is a church planter in Atlanta, Georgia. Back in the Fall of 2001 when this article was published in the Journal of Biblical Counseling he was a student at Westminster Theological Seminary. The article has now been published as a small booklet called Procrastination – First Steps to Change and is available for only \$2.99 US at www.newgrowthpressbookstore.com. It is reprinted here with permission.



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REFLECTING ON BLOOD

It saved him. . .

but only for a time



by Christine Farenhorst

There is a hospital in Germany today known by the name of *Jüdische Krankenhaus Berlin*, which translated reads “Berlin Jewish Hospital.” In April 1945, when the victorious Soviet troops succeeded in taking over a stretch of Berlin neighborhood on the Iranischestrasse, they found, much to their amazement, a hospital sheltering hundreds of Jewish people – doctors, nurses, patients, non-medical staff and others. A spokesman stepped forward, greeting the Russians.

.....

There remained only a skeletal group of Jewish doctors and nurses

.....

“This is a Jewish hospital,” he said, cautiously continuing with, “and we are Jews.”

The last remaining

There were eight hundred Jews there that particular liberation day. In an upper room of the administration building of the hospital, reports had carefully been filed away documenting these last Jews of Berlin.

Behind barbed wire, in what had been until 1944 the hospital’s pathology department, the Gestapo had maintained Berlin’s last *Sammellager*, or holding camp, where Jews awaiting deportation were kept until their number was sufficiently large to fill a transport to a concentration camp. In February 1945, the number had stood at six thousand two hundred and eighty four.

These numbers were broken down into categories assigned by Nazi racial regulations. They were:

1. Full Jews living in “privileged” mixed marriages (privileged marriages were marriages to an Aryan, or a non-Jew.)
2. Full Jews living in “non-privileged” mixed marriages
3. Half-Jews to be treated as if they were full Jews (Geltungsjuden)
4. Geltungsjuden living in “privileged” marriages
5. Geltungsjuden living in “non-privileged” marriages
6. Full Jews not living in a mixed marriage

Only one hundred and sixty-two of the people who met the Russians in April 1945 in the Berlin Jewish Hospital were full Jews. An amazing truth was that all the time during the intensive bombing of Berlin during the latter months of the war, the hospital had not been damaged. If one overlooked the slight scarring of the structure, as well as the fact that the grounds had been turned into a vegetable garden and cow pasture, and that barbed wire surrounded the pathology building, the hospital more or less looked the same as it had prior to the war. The words *Krankenhaus der Jüdischen Gemeinde*, or Hospital of the Jewish Community, were still solidly carved into stone above the main gate.

When the Soviets came, the vestiges of a functioning hospital were still visible, but there remained only a skeletal group of Jewish doctors and nurses. Many had been deported. Day after day they, as well as the patients, had lived in fear of being on a list of people assigned for Auschwitz or other concentration camps.

Fortunate Fildermann

The Gestapo had, during the last years of the war, as well as confiscating the pathology department, also confiscated the top floor of the hospital, turning it into a police ward for "war criminals." Conditions in labor camps and concentration camps were bad and not many survived. Yet for some reason known only to God, on occasion a Jewish individual who fell ill was sent to the hospital's police ward to be treated. The ward, intended as a way station on the road back to a labor or concentration camp, sometimes had quite a few bed occupants. In 1944, one such occupant was a young man by the name of Fildermann.

.....

Sooner or later Fildermann would be sent to a concentration camp

.....

Fildermann, whose middle name was an obligatory Israel, (all male Jews were required to carry the middle name of Israel and all female Jewesses the name Sarah on pain of arrest and deportation), and whose first name is not known, was in his mid-thirties. The son of a prominent Jewish leader in Romania, he was living in Cannes, France. The Germans arrested him there and took him to Berlin. He was thoroughly interrogated and kept in solitary confinement. It was thought that he might know of the whereabouts of his father and he was suspected of being in contact with him. For this reason, Israel Fildermann was not subjected to the brutal torture other prisoners had to endure. The Gestapo hoped he would furnish them with information and when he did not confess they decided to keep him in the Jewish Hospital's police ward. In that ward, Israel Fildermann was again kept in solitary confinement. But even though interrogations were continued, he did not talk.

The Gestapo eventually lost interest in him and Fildermann was allowed a little more freedom. He walked the grounds, was able to communicate with the staff, and was fed as much food as they could supply. It was an established fact, however, that sooner or later Fildermann would be placed on a transport and sent to a concentration camp.

At this point the young man was diagnosed by the Jewish doctors at the hospital as a diphtheria carrier who needed to stay in isolation. The Gestapo had a horror of diphtheria. As a matter of fact, the diphtheria quarantine ward was the only place in which the German police never set foot. A blood sample was needed, however, to verify Fildermann's condition. Consequently, the blood of another patient who was known to test positive for diphtheria, was substituted. As a result, Israel Fildermann spent the rest of the war as a police ward diphtheria patient and was one of the group of people who greeted the Russians in April 1945. He had been saved by someone else's blood.

A temporary fix

It's a fascinating page of history – a slice of life they call such pages. And it's such pages we like to read about because, to a certain degree, they make us happy. People have been saved. We literally see them standing in the foyer of the hospital, afraid but joyful at the same time. We smile and share their almost disbelief at finally being free to come and go as they please. They are safe now. They have escaped death. But have they?

The Bible tells us very clearly that it is appointed for all men to die. That whole happy, excited group of people, including Israel Fildermann, would die regardless of the sweetness of moment they experienced when they were saved from the Nazis. And seeing that it is now more than sixty years after the fact, there is a good chance that most of them have already died. The blood of Fildermann's fellow patient did save his physical life for a certain period of time. There is no disputing that. However, whether or not Fildermann, or any of the hospital group, were saved spiritually by Someone else's blood is not known. Whether or not they came to see Jesus as that Dear and Glorious Physician, Who could take them to the camp of eternal bliss, is unknown; and whether they accepted Jesus as the only One whose blood could save them from the eternal concentration camp of hell is veiled from our knowledge.

There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all and bestows His riches upon all who call upon Him. Which camp are you bound for?



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THE NEW STEM CELLS

Beyond scary

Induced pluripotent stem cells are being hailed as an ethical alternative to embryonic stem cells.

The scientist who first produced them isn't sure

by Margaret Helder

The scientist credited with developing a new type of stem cell says he is very concerned about the process. The ethical problems go far beyond any issues with embryonic stem cells.

Exploiting embryos

For a decade many medical research laboratories around the world have rushed to investigate the potential of embryonic stem cells. An editorial in the journal *Nature* (Nov. 29/07) declares that scientists are not unmindful of the ethical issues involved in work with embryonic stem cells. There are two specific concerns: the work involves ripping apart developing human embryos (individuals a few days old) in order to extract the stem cells, and women must donate eggs in order for suitable embryos to be created. The process of obtaining eggs from women is highly invasive, painful and potentially damaging to the health of the donor woman.

In spite of all this, many scientists consider the work “scientifically necessary.” If the scientists involved were the victims, instead of the perpetrators of these processes, perhaps this research would be less appealing to them.

The attraction of embryonic stem cells is that they have the potential to develop into any, or all, of the cell types found in the human body. “Pluripotent” is another term for this potential of embryonic stem cells to differentiate into many, or all, of the

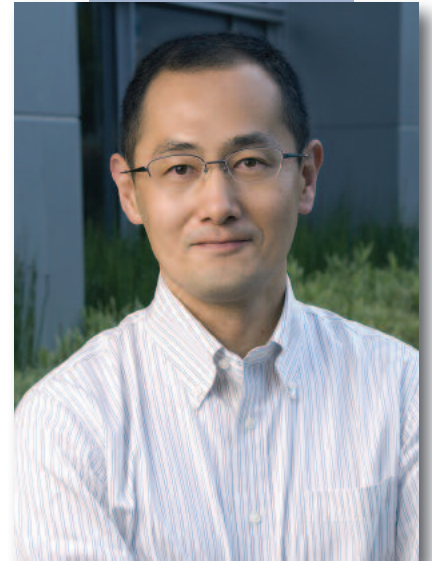
various types of cell in a fully developed individual. The word pluripotent comes from the Latin *plures*, meaning “very many” and *potens*, meaning “powerful, able or efficacious.”

Because the term pluripotent carries less emotional baggage than the term embryonic (since fewer people even know what it means) American scientists have shown a preference for the term pluripotent when referring to cultures derived from embryos. It is evident therefore that many people would be pleased if similar results to embryonic stem cell cultures could be obtained by some other means.

Some other means

In 2006 Shinya Yamanaka and Kazutoshi Takahashi of Kyoto University in Japan began to work on cultures of adult mouse skin cells. By means of retroviruses, four genes were added into the culture and some cells ended up with all four genes inside them.

A retrovirus is like the AIDS virus. It is able to insert its genetic material into the DNA (genetic information) of the host cell. Thus in some cells, all four genes now were inserted into the mouse genetic information. The four genes, called Oct4, Sox2, Klf4 and Myc, code for proteins which cause other important genes to be expressed. The resulting cascade of expression by other genes, each calling for their own protein to be



Dr. Shinya Yamanaka

Photo courtesy of the Gladstone Institutes

produced, in this case leads to the skin cells becoming pluripotent. Neither eggs nor embryos were needed to produce these pluripotent mouse cells.

The interesting thing about this new technique is that it is relatively easy compared to the difficulties of working with eggs and embryos. For scientists used to working with tissue cultures, this process is very easy, and, what is more, it is not subject to any licensing requirements from boards concerned with ethics. At this point however the research involved only mice.

On the downside, Yamanaka's research revealed that the success rate was extremely low. At any one time, less than 0.1% of the skin cells were successfully converted to the pluripotent state. In order to identify successful cells, the scientists inserted yet another gene into the culture. This gene was for antibiotic resistance, but it would only be expressed if the other 4 genes were also expressed. The addition of the antibiotic to the culture then would kill off all the normal mouse skin cells, leaving only the pluripotent cells. Once this was achieved, the Japanese scientists termed their cultures "induced pluripotent stem" cells or iPS cells, for short.

Amid the general rejoicing over the potential for the new method, some disquieting facts were evident. The iPS cells are riddled with viruses. Some of these viruses have the potential to activate oncogenes (able to turn a normal cell into a cancerous one). In addition, one of the inserted genes, MyC, has also been implicated in the onset of cancer. When the pluripotent cells were added to developing mouse embryos, the iPS cells developed too and became part of the baby mouse. That individual could now be called a chimaera, with a combination of tissues derived from very different sources. Interestingly, 20% of the baby chimaeric mice developed cancer. This is definitely not a record one would want to duplicate in clinical trials with humans. That was how events stood in the year 2006.

iPS done with human cells

On November 20, 2007 Dr. Yamanaka announced that he had used his retrovirus technique to produce iPS cells in a culture of human skin cells. Again, the success rate was very low, only 10 successful cultures from 50,000 skin cells. The announcement caused some experts to renounce other techniques which involve use of human eggs. Ian Wilmut, famous as one of the creators of Dolly, the cloned sheep, announced that he now plans to use Yamanaka's technique in his research.

On the premise that it is hard to argue with success, the Japanese government rushed to develop a Japanese based centre for iPS research. By December 22, only one month after the initial announcement, the science ministry announced plans to increase funding tenfold for iPS research in Japan. In addition, the Japanese government plans to create a research centre devoted to iPS at Kyoto University. This sudden action on the part of the Japanese government, is very rare. However they did not want to lose the initiative in this popular field of medical research. After all, the benefits of the research are attractive to many people. The technique could enable patient-specific stem cells to be produced. Some day, it is hoped, the cultures may be safe enough (not cancer inducing) to use in the patients from

whom the cultures were derived. Such patients could be provided with healthy heart cells, nerve cells, insulin-producing cells or whatever the patient needs to return them to a healthy state. What is more, any lab with the equipment and skills to carry out human tissue cultures can now produce pluripotent human cells.

Scientist is concerned

It all sounds like a win/win situation. Indeed President George W. Bush soon hailed the iPS technique as an ethical alternative to embryonic stem cells. Dr. Yamanaka however soon declared that the ethical issues with iPS cultures are worse than they are with embryonic stem cells. For a start, since the technique is so relatively easy, laboratories all over the world could soon be producing such cultures, all without any ethical oversight at all.

.....

***Neither eggs nor embryos
were needed to produce these
pluripotent mouse cells***

.....

Dr. Yamanaka is greatly concerned that some scientists soon will try to produce human gametes (sex cells) from the cultures. This, apparently, is not beyond the realm of possibility. It may not be too difficult to produce both eggs and sperm from a culture of cells from a man. This would allow a gay couple to produce offspring. Lesbians, on the other hand, could not achieve this as they lack a Y chromosome, essential for the formation of sperm. Dr. Yamanaka also fears that maverick scientists, working with iPS cells, may try to clone a human. Such techniques are already being attempted with mice.

As a result of Dr. Yamanaka's pressing concerns, on Feb. 21/08 the Japanese government sent directives to all universities and research agencies. In Japan, no one is to attempt to implant embryos made from iPS cells into human or animal wombs, to produce an individual in any way from iPS cells or to introduce iPS cells into any stage of developing embryo or unborn young. Also the production from iPS of cells which lead to gametes is also expressly forbidden. Apparently, Dr. Yamanaka supports the idea that society, not scientists, must decide the ethical parameters surrounding the use of iPS cells. While this scientist is proud of his technical achievement, he nevertheless feels burdened by the possible ramifications.

It is obviously important for all of us to be aware of the issues involved in many areas of medical research. Dr. Yamanaka's expressed concerns led to important governmental controls on the research options of Japanese laboratories using iPS cells. What, one wonders, are similar labs in other parts of the world undertaking at this time? Will other governments issue similar directives? We hope so, and soon. It can't hurt to make sure that governments providing funds for medical research are informed about these issues.





Soup & Buns

Titus 2 Men and Women

Are you one? Are you learning from one?

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Mile after long mile, the cars on the eastbound turnpike lined up because of a multi-vehicle accident. Initially, I was glad to be traveling westbound and spared from being the storyteller with the tale of the “terrible Christmas Eve traffic jam.”

After eight miles of vehicles, traffic on the other side became normal. I was alarmed that there were no signs of the “jam” on the eastbound. Unknowing drivers were getting on the turnpike completely unaware of the mess that was just ahead. I had endured one of those jams recently, and I desperately wanted to pull over near the toll booth and wave my arms at those about to enter. I wished for poster board and markers, and I felt willing to give an hour of my time just to stand nearby and warn people: “*Don’t* get on the eastbound! There’s a terrible traffic jam and you may get stuck for hours!” So many people were going to be inconvenienced and upset. If only there was a place to safely and legally do this! Would they even believe me? Would they change their minds?

I expressed my concern to the toll taker when I arrived: “Isn’t there *some* way that you could warn the drivers *not* to get onto the eastbound turnpike?” With little concern, he shrugged, “They should listen to the traffic report on the radio.”

Full of good advice

In a similar manner, those of us with a few years behind us watch as young people make decisions that affect their entire future. We have learned from both our good and our bad decisions and we feel certain that “if they would just listen, it would save them a lot of heartache!” “Study hard!” we say. “Finish your degree!” “Don’t quit that job until you secure another!” “Don’t waste money!” “Don’t date anyone who won’t make a good mate!” “Wait until marriage to have sex.” We are full of advice on every subject!

As we move along the road, our expertise increases: we buy homes and vehicles and learn from the blessings and difficulties. We marry and have children and learn which methods and philosophies work and which do not.

But will they listen?

We and our friends and acquaintances have been down the road. Wouldn’t it be ridiculous for us to make a poster board sign and stand up to warn those who are coming? Some are

headed for trouble! If only there was a way to persuasively warn them. Would they even believe us? Would they change their minds? Will they listen to the “reports” that could warn them?

The Apostle Paul tells us in Titus 2:1-8 that the older men and the older women are supposed to teach the younger men and the younger women how to think and behave. They are to be an example. The older men should be “temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.” The older women should be “reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.”


Seek them out

The Church needs Titus 2 men and women, and a wise young person will find “Titus 2” people to learn from.

My first course in “Mothering 101” came from watching my Mom with my little brother Mark. I learned a lot of essentials, and was therefore less nervous about raising children than a lot of other women that I met. I spent time with two mothers in our church, watching them carefully as they loved and disciplined their children, and shared with me their strategies and reasons. These were life lessons – what to do in this and that situation, and how to apply God’s Word to everyday life.

Books on “wife-ing” and mothering provided “Titus 2” people to learn from as well. I started out with Linda Dillow’s *Creative Counterpart* and Edith Schaeffer’s *What Is A Family?* and moved along to the excellent books on the family from Canon Press by Doug and Nancy Wilson and *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* by Ted Tripp and *Age of Opportunity* by his brother Paul Tripp.

I avoided a lot of traffic jams because of the advice I received from those who had been down the road before me. The young do well to listen. And those of us who are older will do well when we teach and exemplify Truth to the young.

“Exhort the young men to be sober-minded. . . a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” 

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NEW PUZZLES

Riddles for Punsters #145 – “Full of Compassion”

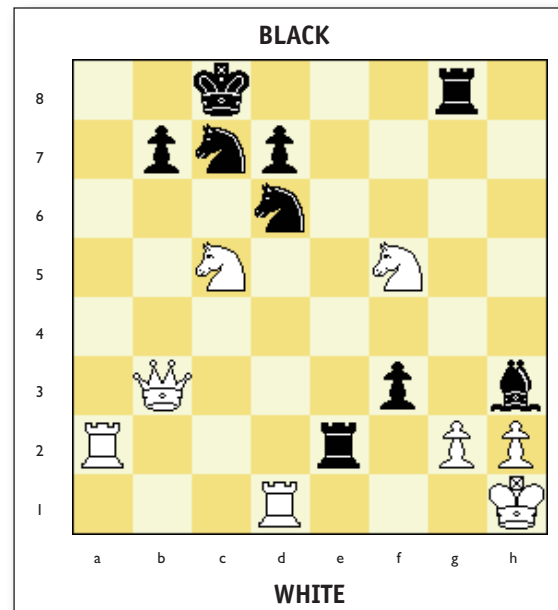
Deborah, although a math whiz, forgot to take her money with her to the gas station. She had filled her car’s gas tank before she realized that she could not pay for the gas. A kind stranger felt pity and paid for the gas for her. Deborah was, of course, very f u ! for this.

Problem to Ponder #145 – “Continual Calculations”

Cindy picked a positive whole number. Deborah, a math whiz, subtracted 3 from it then multiplied the result by 5. That result she then squared. The result of that she divided by 20 and ended up with 5 as the final result. What number did Cindy choose initially?

Charley then picked a negative integer. Deborah, wanting to complicate things, subtracted 3 from it then multiplied the result by $\frac{5}{3}$. Next she added 16, then divided the result by 12. Finally she took the AVERAGE (mean) of that result and the number 4, producing $2\frac{1}{4}$ as the average. What negative number did Charley choose?

Chess Puzzle # 145

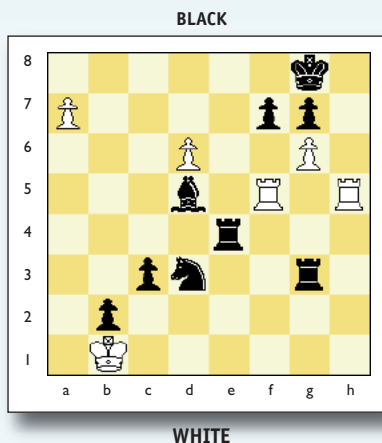


WHITE to Mate in 3

Or, If it is BLACK’s Move, **BLACK to Mate in 2**

SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (MAY) PUZZLE PAGE

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 144



WHITE to Mate in 3 Descriptive Notation

1. P-R8=Q(or R)ch BxR
2. PxP ch K-B1
3. R-R8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. a7-a8=Q(or R)+ Bd5xa8
2. g6xf7 + Kg8-f8
3. Rh5-h8 ++

BLACK to Mate in 2 Descriptive Notation

1. _____ R-K8 ch
2. K-B2 N-N5 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. _____ Re4-e1 +
2. Kb1-c2 Nd3-b4 ++

Answer to Riddles for Punsters #144 – “Cool Calories”

What is a lifeguard’s favourite dessert during the summer?
An ice cream f l o a t.

Answer to Problem to Ponder #144 – “Rapid Rescue from Widespread Waters?”

The town of Floatville has flooded due to the fast melting of excessive winter snow. Joe can move 4 stranded townspeople to safety in his boat in 15 minutes. Jack can move 6 stranded townspeople to safety in his larger boat in 12 minutes, while John can move only 3 to safety every 20 minutes. If the three boats are used simultaneously and continually, starting at the same time, a) how long will it take to rescue 450 stranded townspeople? b) How long to rescue 458? c) If Jack’s boat broke down after 2 hours of use, how long would it take to rescue the 450 townspeople?

- Joe rescues 4 people in $\frac{1}{4}$ hour (15 minutes), so 16 people per hour. Jack rescues 6 people in $\frac{1}{5}$ hour (12 minutes), so 30 people per hour. John rescues 3 people in $\frac{1}{3}$ hour (20 minutes), so 9 people per hour. **ALTOGETHER, the 3 boats can rescue $16+30+9 = 55$ people per hour.** Thus, **in 8 hours** $55 \times 8 = 440$ people can be rescued. Of the remaining ten of the 550, Joe rescues 4 (**in 15 minutes**) while Jack rescues the last 6 (**in only 12 minutes**). **All 450 are rescued in 8 hours 15 minutes.**
- As shown above, **in 8 hours** $55 \times 8 = 440$ people can be rescued. To rescue 18 more, $2(6)=12$ can be rescued by Jack in $2(12) =$ **24 minutes** and 4 by Joe in 15 minutes and the last 2 by John in 20 minutes. Thus, **458 can be rescued in 8 hours 24 minutes.**
- For 2 hours**, at 55 people per hour, **110** people are rescued. Once Jack’s boat breaks down, only $16+9 = 25$ people per hour can be rescued, so **in 13 more hours**, $13(25) = 325$ can be rescued, making a total of 435. Of the 15 remaining, John can rescue $2(3) = 6$ in $2(20) = 40$ minutes while Joe rescues the other 9 in 3 trips (taking $4+4+1$ or $3+3+3$) in $3(15) = 45$ minutes. **The total rescue time is thus 15 hours 45 minutes.**

Crossword Puzzle

Series 15 No 8

Last month's solution
Series 15 No 7

1		2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12
		13				14				15				
16	17					18				19				
20					21		22		23		24			
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73						74				75				

1	E	M	E	N	D		6	A	L	L	I	G	A	11	T	O	R		
14	L	I	G	E	R		15	S	I	E	G	E		16	I	P	A		
17	E	A	G	L	E		18	E	N	S	U	E		19	G	E	T		
P			20	L	E	T	21	E	S	A		23	M	E	R	E			
24	H	E	D			27	I	B	S	E	N		29	E	R	A	S		
30	A	R	R	A		31	N	G	E		32	N	A	L	A				
33	N	O	O		34	O	R	E	S					36	R	A	P		
39	T	D	S		40	D	E	P	I	41	C	T	S	44	I	R	O		
45	S	E	S					46	M	A	R	S		47	G	R	R		
				48	B	U	S	50	Y		51	P	E	T	S	H	O	P	
52	C	O	H	O		55	N	E	56	M	E	A			57	T	W	O	
58	O	S	I	A		59	I	M	O		60	D	A	62	S			I	
63	L	I	P		64	O	P	E	R	65	A		66	R	A	67	68	P	S
69	I	E	P		70	T	E	N	E	T		71	A	G	R	E	E		
72	C	R	O	C	O	D	I	L	E		73	B	A	S	E	S			

ACROSS:

1. Slang for legitimate
5. Flowback like a tide
8. Put in reserve
13. A tree that produces caучо
14. Large body of water
15. Japanese wrestlers
16. Once more
18. Soak up the sun
19. Narrow strips of wood
20. Second biggest country
22. Hospital employees
24. Big plant
25. Teamster command
26. Light bulb inventor
28. Helps
29. Middle Eastern country
30. Blue colour
32. Stain
35. Disguised
36. Had dinner
39. John Philip _____, band conductor
41. Sofa
43. Vietnamese New Year
44. Jeer at, or mock
49. Immediately following in time or order
50. Kind of dolphin
51. English town with college
53. Neck area
56. Tree fruits
58. Flying watchdog agency, for short
61. Atmosphere
62. Winter sport
63. City in Greece
65. Establish the truth
67. _____-de-France
69. Send money to pay up
70. Window parts
71. Before, poetically speaking
72. Tree
73. Aware
74. Senora, for short
75. Also know as emir

DOWN:

1. To percolate, as water
2. Bat droppings
3. Hipbones
4. Soft
5. French direction
6. Rockie dangers
7. Indian bread
8. Balaam's transport
9. Absolute ruler
10. Multi-coloured Japanese porcelain
11. Lavished attention on
12. Curvy letters
17. Gen. accounting office (abbr.)
21. First man
23. A side channel
27. Lady's name
29. _____ a wonderful life
31. Sum up
32. Fast plane
33. Edgar Allan _____
34. Not in
36. Hail, or farewell
37. Money charge
38. Certain Dr. specialty
40. Fuss
42. Traveler's stop
45. Airport abbrs.
46. Canadian mountains
47. Van _____ Waal's Equation
48. Volcano in Sicily
50. Canadian symbolic mammal
52. A genus of mollusks which included oysters
53. Kind of leather
54. Pertaining to the ear
55. Lying flat
57. A bearing lubricating device
58. French lady
59. Black cuckoo
60. Flower
64. Ship wheel or tiller
66. Ontario's time zone
68. Historical time

Joyce