

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

APRIL 2014
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PERSPECTIVE

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TO BE KINGDOM HEIRS / P. 18

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“WE MUST TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO BE KINGDOM HEIRS—NOT JUST LABORERS IN THE MARKETPLACE”



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Join us for the March for Life this May 8

Join thousands of others and speak up for Canadian pre-born children in a mass rally on Parliament Hill and a March for Life through the streets of Ottawa on Thursday, May 8.

WHERE: First Baptist Church
140 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa

WHEN: 10:00 a.m. May 8, 2014

Before the March, please join us at a Reformed Protestant prayer service co-hosted by Jubilee Church and ARPA Canada. The message this year will be delivered by Reformed Christian blogger Tim Challies, followed by an interactive Pro-Life 101 presentation by André Schutten and a motivational call to action by Mike Schouten.

A free, paper-bag lunch is available for all those who RSVP attendance to Niki@arpacanada.ca.

Put the PROTEST back in Protestant!

Two Noah films fail to float

Two Noah films were released last month, the first a \$100 million Hollywood production, and the second a half-hour direct-to-YouTube release by evangelist Ray Comfort.

In the Hollywood version, giant rock people who are actually fallen angels help Noah build the ark. Other biblical departures include the insertion of theistic evolution, only one son bringing a wife on board, a villainous fellow hacking his way into the side of the boat, and this fellow then bribing Ham to keep his presence a secret, which sets up a battle scene between the villain and Noah eight or nine months later. The biggest change is to Noah himself, who is transformed from a prophet of God into a butt-kicking action hero, and who, in a psychopathic turn, plots to kill his whole family. Paramount said the film was still “true to the essence, values and integrity” of the story, and called these changes “artistic license.” We have another term for it.

But if Hollywood got it wrong, how about Ray Comfort? This is the man who crafted the excellent pro-life film *180* (www.180movie.com) so there was good reason to hope this, too, would be an excellent film. And there are quite a few moments to like, the funniest being a clip of a prosperity preacher asking for money who makes this Freudian slip: “Satan gave me this message.”

Premise isn't true

However, the overall message of the film is flawed. As the film's full title reveals – *Noah and the Last Days* – this is as much about the end times as it is about Noah. In the film's opening moments Comfort explains the premise of the film:

Did you know that according to Jesus the events surrounding the life of Noah are directly relevant to you? Jesus said, “As in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man.” In

other words, the things that happened in Noah's day will be similar to the things that are going to happen during the time referred to in the Bible as the end of the age. In a moment you're going to see clearly that the end of the age is happening now.

Comfort is referencing Matthew 24:37 here, to mean that if we understand what happened in Noah's time that will allow us to predict the end of the world. While Matthew 24 is one of the harder to understand chapters in the Bible, this verse, when read in context, doesn't support Comfort's interpretation. In fact, it says almost the exact opposite.

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. *As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.* For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (vs. 36-39)

Jesus isn't pointing to Noah's time as a way of knowing we are in the end times. Instead, Jesus is explaining that just as they were oblivious to what was coming back then, so, too, will the coming of the Lord *be a surprise*.

Signs aren't

From this flawed start, Comfort goes on to list ten biblical signs that we are in the end times. Again, Comfort badly mangles some of the texts he uses.

For example, in Sign #5 Comfort points to Luke 17:28-30 to say that an increase in homosexuality is a sign of the end times. But if read in the context




Jon Dykstra can be reached at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

of verses 20-30 it becomes clear this has nothing at all to do with homosexuality being a sign of the end times.

In Sign #3 Comfort points to Acts 2:20 to say that a blood-red moon is a sign of the end times. But this, read in context (start reading at verse 14), shows that Peter is talking about this occurring way back then! It isn't about today.

Conclusion

Comfort is normally a pretty reliable biblical expounder, but that may be because he normally stays away from the harder-to-understand passages of the Bible. Here he tries to go deeper, and simply sinks. Of course his *Noah* is much better than Hollywood's version – no rock people here! – but neither film does the biblical text justice.

If you are interesting in learning more about Noah's Ark and the Flood, turn to Genesis 6 to 9, then check out our Review pages (26 & 27) to find five excellent resources that can help you answer common objections to a global flood and give you a good understanding of what the ark looked like. This is the real story, and better than anything Hollywood could come up with! 

DEAR EDITOR,

In his article "Killing Beethoven" (Feb 2014), author Rob Slane disagrees with the "Beethoven argument," which measures the value of human life by success or accomplishments. He reasons that the pro-life argument is not based on what people may accomplish in life, but on their "status as bearer of the Imago Dei," the image of God.

Is that really Reformed or scriptural?

Indeed, Mankind came into being on the sixth day of creation, for "in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). However, man forfeited "the image of God." For we read in Genesis 5:1-3 that after the Fall, all individuals

on earth are born in "the likeness and image" of Adam (vs 3). Matthew Henry's Commentary explains that Adam was made in the image of God; but, when he was fallen and corrupt, he begat a son in his own image, sinful and defiled, frail, mortal, and miserable like himself, consisting of body and soul, but a sinner like himself, guilty and obnoxious, degenerate and corrupt. Even the man after God's own heart owns himself conceived and born in sin, Psalm 51:5. This was Adam's own likeness, the reverse of that Divine likeness in which Adam was made; but having lost it himself, he could not convey it to his seed. Note, grace does not run in the blood, but corruption does.

The image of God is lost, unless it is connected with God's righteousness and holiness. Paul's description shows this in Ephesians (see also Canons of Dort, Chapter III/IV, Rejection of Errors #2 Book of Praise page 573). In Christ, man is "to

put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24).

Therefore, did man not terminate his office of image bearer? Does man not need Christ to get it back? People who claim their status to be "bearers of the Imago Dei" can be like non-repenting Jews, who boast on their status of being sons of Abraham. Baptists may believe that all men are conceived and born as image bearers of God, but Scripture teaches otherwise. Why did our forefathers above all confess man's total corruption? (HC, LD 3; CoD, Chapter 1, art 1; B.C. art 14) The answer is simple and straightforward. God made man "a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" and made him ruler over creation, putting all other creatures under his feet. (Psalm 8:5,6). Therefore, human life is "sacred," and human dignity can indeed not "be forfeited by reason of our sins." The life of all beasts belongs to



man, but the life of humans belongs to God alone, because God gives life through the generations, and so He demands an accounting for the life of man (Gen 9:4,5). By God's providence all individuals are secretly and wonderfully crafted by God in the mother's womb (Psalm 139). He allowed and made everyone to be conceived and born in sin with the mandate to repent and believe. That mandate includes to be, or to become, the image bearer of God in Christ. Or as Rev. P.G. Feenstra puts it in his devotional *Unspeakable Comfort* "... the Lord has to make an entirely new beginning with us. Only through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit can we be renewed after the image of Jesus Christ." We are born in the image of Adam, but share in Christ's anointing.

Dennis Teitsma
Winnipeg, MB

EDITOR'S RESPONSE

You are certainly right that after our fall into sin Mankind no longer reflects God's image like we did beforehand. But even afterwards there does still remain some sense in which we are made in God's image.

We learn this in James 3:9 where, in talking about the tongue, James notes how ridiculous it is that: "With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are *made in the likeness of God*" (emphasis added). Then in Genesis 9:6 we read, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." Cursing and murdering our fellow man has been forbidden because Mankind is made in the image of God.

So when Rob Slane says our human dignity doesn't come from anything we can do but instead comes from in Whose image we are made, this is Reformed and scriptural.

NOTA BENE

News worth noting

SPOON-FEEDING STILL RECOGNIZED AS BASIC CARE

BY ANNA NIENHUIS



In a victory for anti-euthanasia fighters, the B.C. Supreme Court denied a family's request to stop spoon-feeding Mrs. Bentley, a resident of Maplewood Seniors Care home, who has been deemed incompetent to make her own medical decisions. The Court ruled that feeding is not considered medical care – which can be decided by the family – but rather it is basic personal care. The decision noted:

Withdrawing oral nutrition and hydration for an adult that is not capable of making that decision would constitute neglect within the meaning of the Adult Guardianship Act.

Providing basic nourishment to sustain life remains a legally protected right, regardless of a person's mental state that renders them unable to make informed decisions regarding their medical care.

SOURCE: Alex Schadenberg's "BC court rules fluids and food are basic personal care." Feb. 3, 2014, alexschadenberg.blogspot.ca

AMERICAN IDOL JUDGE SHOWS HOW TO GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

BY JON DYKSTRA



In February *American Idol* judge Harry Connick Jr. made headlines for questioning one contestant's song choice.

Emily Piriz sang "Paris (Ooh la la)" and after her performance Connick asked her to speak, rather than sing, the first two lines. She did, and couldn't help but laugh (other appropriate reactions would have been blushing, or a sad shake of her head). The lines were:

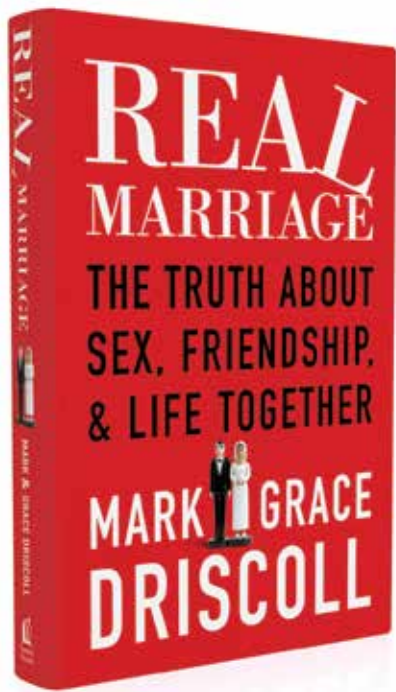
*You got me down on the floor.
So what'd you bring me down
here for?*

Connick couldn't get over how lurid the lyrics were and asked her, "Is that really

what you want to be singing about? It that really what you want to do?" News reports called out Connick for "embarrassing" or "shaming" Piriz.

However, the role Connick was playing in this exchange could be better likened to the little boy who noted the missing items in the emperor's attire. Connick wasn't embarrassing Piriz; he was only noting what she had already done to herself. Piriz picked the song despite knowing Connick hated it. In an earlier episode Connick had taken issue when a 15-year-old contestant sang the same song, which includes the line "If I was a blade I'd shave you smooth." Connick commented, "To hear you sing about shaving me smooth is really creeping me out."

The Connick/Piriz exchange serves as an example of how parents can start talking with their teens about today's pop music. Reading lyrics out loud isn't the only way to evaluate music, but it is a good first test. Piriz's performance also highlights why there is a pressing need for a new English word: lurid + lyrics = lurics.



MARK DRISCOLL AS A TARGET OF CHRISTIAN JOURNALISM

article, one reader asked the magazine why they published this information. The reader characterized the article as:

[feeling] like an attempt to dig up some dirt so as to create a story. By writing this article, you have placed the character of Mars Hill & Mark Driscoll in question.

But there was a notable difference between the *WORLD* magazine article and the November radio interview. While *WORLD*'s Warren Cole Smith contacted Mars Hill and gave them time to respond, Janet Mefferd didn't alert Mark Driscoll to the purpose of their interview. Driscoll thought he was on her show to promote his book, and he was clearly confused when Mefferd started making her accusations. This was "gotcha journalism" – it made for good radio, but had nothing at all to do with correcting a brother, or seeking the truth. Driscoll was called to account, but was given no opportunity to investigate her claims.

Mefferd later apologized, not merely for the way she conducted her interview, but for bringing the plagiarism issue "to the attention of listeners publicly." Instead, she said, she "should have contacted [publisher] Tyndale House directly..."

Both Mefferd and the *WORLD* magazine reader seem to believe that Driscoll's errors should be corrected in private only. But Mefferd's error wasn't in publicly questioning Driscoll; it was in doing so in a way that didn't leave him a fair opportunity to respond.

It turned out that Driscoll was largely innocent of the accusations Mefferd first leveled. While Driscoll made use of Dr. Jones' ideas, he did not copy his words – he could have better credited Dr. Jones but that doesn't rise to the level of plagiarism. However, it was later learned that, in another book, Driscoll lifted several paragraphs nearly verbatim from someone else's commentary. Afterwards, on the Mars Hill website a statement acknowledged that these passages were not properly cited, and offered as an explanation that

during the editing process, content from other published sources were mistaken for research notes. These sentences were adapted instead of quoted directly. We are grateful this was brought to our attention...

While Mefferd's interview was not Christian journalism at its best, Smith's article was a much better example. He brought to light that Mars Hill made use of marketing practice that the church now acknowledges as being "unwise" and one they do not want to repeat. And we got to hear Mark Driscoll and his church's response because Smith gave them the opportunity to explain themselves. While the full truth of any story is hard to capture (there isn't enough ink in the world to cover every side of a story), giving both sides a fair hearing does give us a far better understanding (Prov. 18:17).

SOURCES: Warren Cole Smith's "Unreal sales for Driscoll's Real Marriage" posted Mar. 5, 2014 to www.WORLDMag.com; <http://marshill.com/2014/03/07/a-note-from-our-board-of-advisors-accountability>; Kate Tracy's "Publisher: Mark Driscoll Improperly Copied Paragraphs from Bible Commentary" posted to ChristianityToday.com Dec. 9, 2013

BY JON DYKSTRA

Seattle pastor Mark Driscoll has been making the news for all the wrong reasons in the last six months. During a November 21 interview with Christian radio host Janet Mefferd, Driscoll was accused of plagiarism. Mefferd said that in Driscoll's book, *A Call to Resurgence*, he had quoted extensively from the works of Dr. Peter Jones but hadn't given him the credit he was due.

Then, in a March 5 article in *WORLD* magazine, it was revealed that in 2011 Mark Driscoll and his Mars Hill church arranged to buy 11,000 copies of his *Real Marriage* book to get it listed on the *New York Times*' Bestseller List. A statement on the church's website acknowledges that this marketing strategy, "while not uncommon or illegal" was "unwise" and "is not one we had used before or since, and not one we will use again."

In the comment section for the *WORLD*

JUDGES DECIDE WHAT CONSTITUTES ABUSE

ANNA NIENHUIS

ANew Jersey Court ruled in January that a mother of four who left her sleeping 19-month-old unattended in a running vehicle for 5 to 10 minutes while she shopped was guilty of child

abuse. Children up to age 18 are covered under child abuse laws, and no specification was given as to when it becomes acceptable to leave a child in the car. In a similar case, a mother left her sick two-year-old in the car while she bought him some medicine: in this case, the mother was not found guilty of neglect or abuse. It seems that

circumstances and intent are the issue rather than genuine safety concerns such as kidnapping or suffocation, as the New Jersey judge cited.

We want to protect children, certainly, but we don't want to take a parent's every minor misstep to the courts.

SOURCE: Salvador Rizzo's "Leaving a child unattended in a car is abuse or neglect, NJ court rules", Jan. 14, 2014, www.nj.com.

GERMAN HOMESCHOOLING FAMILY ALLOWED TO STAY; AMERICANS' "RIGHT TO HOMESCHOOL" STILL IN LIMBO

BY JON DYKSTRA



In the February *RP*, readers learned about the plight of the Romeikes, a German homeschooling family that had fled to the US because homeschooling is illegal in Germany. They were going

to be deported back to Germany but in early March, after the US Supreme Court refused to hear their appeal, the Romeikes were told the government had granted them "indefinite deferred status." This means the family can stay in the US permanently, as long as they aren't convicted of a crime.

This is a wonderful victory for the family. Michael Farris, one of the lawyers helping the family, gave God all the praise, called it a "miracle from God." In a release posted to Facebook he quote Proverbs 21:1 "The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the Lord; He guides it wherever He pleases."

But this "deferred status" leaves the "right to homeschool" unresolved – the Romeikes were going to be deported because the government contended that families have no such right. And the Supreme Court never weighed in to say otherwise.

As *TheChristians.com*'s Link Byfield noted:

...all 50 [states] now allow home schooling, but all 50 also have mandatory school attendance laws. Though courts have generally favored parental choice, none has struck down mandatory attendance – thus empowering states to supervise homeschoolers as much or as little as they wish.

He adds that while Christians have traditionally supported such attendance laws, they "can't have it both ways: if the state can compel attendance, it can supplant parents."

SOURCES: Link Byfield's "The home-schooling Romeikes' plight is resolved, but not the issue", posted to *TheChristians.com* on March 10, 2014; Erica Ritz's "The Romeikes can stay!!!: Shocking 180 in the case of German home-schooling family", posted to *TheBlaze.com* March 4, 2014; Romeike picture supplied by the Home School Legal Defense Association (www.hslda.org).



GOING ALL MATTHEW 7 ON MICROAGGRESSION

BY JON DYKSTRA

McGill University student politician Brian Farnan could not have seen this coming. Last October Farnan shared a short clip from *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* with 22,000 of his fellow students, trying to relieve some of their exam stress. The clip had been doctored to show President Obama leaving a

press conference by kicking open a side door, and in his accompanying message Farnan added the text, "Honestly, midterms get out of here."

His light-hearted note resulted in a very serious complaint: Farnan was formally accused of racial insensitivity. This complaint resulted in Farnan agreeing to undergo sensitivity training, and with him issuing an apology in January that read, in part:

The image in question was an extension of the cultural, historical and living legacy surrounding people of colour – particularly young men – being portrayed as violent in contemporary culture and media.... By using this particular image of President Obama, I unknowingly perpetuated this living legacy and subsequently allowed a medium of SSMU's communication to become the site of microaggression; for this I am deeply sorry.

A *National Post* article on the McGill incident defined microaggression as

"subconscious insensitivity towards minority groups."

Joey Shea, the student executive's Vice President for University Affairs, was one of Farnan's critics. While she did not personally find the clip offensive, she said, "The fact that a complaint did come forward does prove that someone was harmed."

In Matthew 7:1-2 we learn the danger of judging others by unreasonable standards – that same standard can then legitimately be used to judge us! So perhaps the best defense from hypersensitivity might be to grant to those who are hypersensitive the opportunity to have their own speech evaluated by the very standard they support. For example, Joey Shea said that if one complaint comes forward, it proves someone was harmed. Should someone lodge a complaint against her, would she still view it as proof that someone had been harmed?

SOURCES: Sarah Boesveld's "McGill faces massive backlash after 'ridiculous apology for microaggression over emailed joke Obama clip'", *NationalPost.com*, Feb. 19, 2014; Graeme Hamilton's "McGill student forced to apologize for racial 'microaggression' after email joke Obama clip", *NationalPost.com*, Feb. 18, 2014

CHP COMES OUT IN FAVOR OF HIGHER GST AND IT SEEMS TO MAKE SENSE

BY JON DYKSTRA



In the Christian Heritage Party's February 18 *Communiqué* Andrew Moriarity characterized the Conservative government's budget as "A Do-Nothing Budget." He proposed as an alternative the CHP's plan to *increase the GST*. Why would anyone want to increase the GST, you might be asking?

Moriarity explained that the GST hike would be paired with the complete elimination of the personal income tax. They oppose the personal income tax as being a tax on work and productivity. "As our past leader, Ron Gray, said, 'when you tax something, you get less

of it. Why are we taxing work?'"

GST is a tax on consumption, so raising this tax would encourage thrift, saving and investment rather than consumption, which would in turn encourage exports and increase government revenues. Moriarity cites C.D. Howe estimates that "just a one percent shift from income to consumption tax would increase total revenues by \$1.7 billion in the first year!"

There seems to be something to this idea. One possible problem is that as the GST increased, so, too, would the underground economy, with businesses offering customers a "GST discount" if they are willing to pay cash and not ask any questions. That said, a tax on consumption, rather than income, does otherwise seem to encourage the sort of behaviors we would most like to see.

ARPA RADIO IS NOW ONLINE!

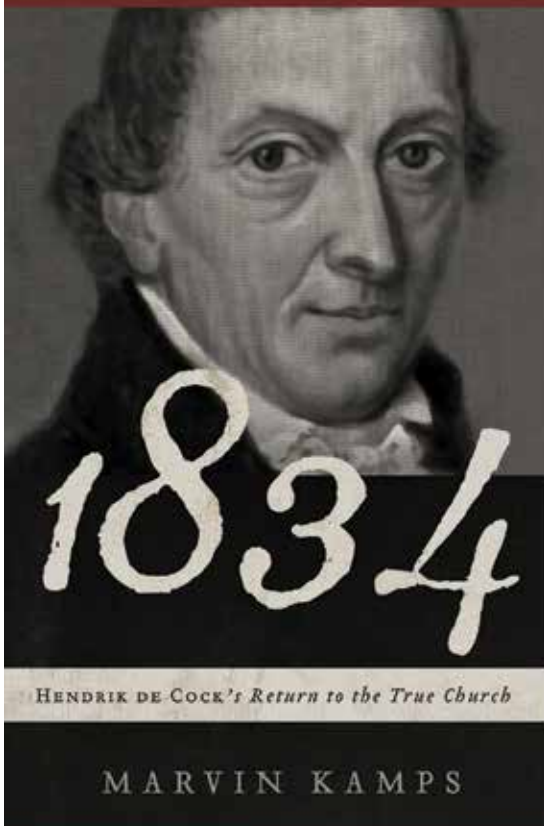
BY JON DYKSTRA



If you've been tracking what ARPA Canada has been up to over the last half dozen years you can't help but be excited.

The Association for Reformed Political Action Canada has spawned local ARPA committees across Canada, and grown from a one-man organization to now having eight part and full-time staff.

The newest addition is Al Siebring, a media veteran with more than 35 years of experience. He is the host of *Lighthouse News*, ARPA Canada's new online radio show. The broadcasts can be found at www.arpacanada.ca/lighthouseNews where there is a link to download the roughly 15-minute shows as podcasts.



A gripping account of one man's struggle against a spiritually desolate state church, this book witnesses to the sole authority of sacred scripture and the binding authority of the Reformed creeds.

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IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY JON DYKSTRA

was born 969 years before the Flood and died the very year of the Flood. When Methuselah was born, almost a millennium before the waters covered the Earth, his father Enoch may have given him a prophetic name (note that “may” again). According to several sources, “Methuselah” can be translated two different ways, as either “Man of the dart or spear” or “his death shall bring judgment.” If the latter is the right way, then it means God gave a warning almost a thousand years beforehand of his anger, and his coming judgment.

While these two interpretations are not at all certain, they do match up well with what we learn about God’s loving patience elsewhere in the Bible, like in 2 Peter 3:8-9: ...with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

ON DEBATE

Leonard Read was a free market advocate who had (at least!) a couple of very good thoughts about debating:

- Do not argue – first present a better idea.
- No bad idea is ever overcome by attacking those who believe it.

CREATIONISM VS. THEISTIC EVOLUTION

“The Bible teaches that Adam produced death. The opposing view has to say that in some manner death produced Adam.” - Douglas Wilson

FOR WANT OF A COMMA

In her best seller *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, author Lynne Truss highlighted the importance of commas with the story of a Panda who enters a bar, asks for a meal, then shoots the bartender and exits. When the Panda is asked why he took this violent turn, he opens up a dictionary, and points to the entry on Pandas where it says that, “The Panda eats, shoots and leaves.” A badly placed comma did the bartender in!

Clearly then, commas are important. Just take a look at what mayhem can occur when commas are taken out of these sentences or placed in the wrong spot.

- I love, love, love cooking my husband and my kids.
- You have a voice, like Celine Dion.
- Let’s eat everyone.
- Slow children at play
- Attention: this restroom only for disabled elderly pregnant children.
- My heroes are my parents, Margaret Thatcher and William Wilberforce.
- I like shooting hoops and all of the New Kids on the Block.

SOURCES: Adapted from many a joke on the Internet

SINCERITY ISN’T ENOUGH

“If you sincerely drink poison, it will kill you: if you sincerely cut your throat, you will die. If you sincerely believe a lie, you will suffer the consequences. You must not only be sincere, but you must be right.”

- C.H. Spurgeon

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: PATIENCE

We read in Genesis 6 that God was grieved by the great wickedness of Man, and decided to blot out this wickedness, and start again with Noah and his

family. What often gets overlooked in the story of the Flood is what it may tell us about God’s patience. I use the word “may” here, because while what follows is not simply conjecture, it also isn’t certain. So don’t forget that very important “may.”

It isn’t much of a leap to think that it would have taken Noah and his sons years to build the ark. All that time, their actions would be a witness to the wicked that God’s coming judgment was coming.

But God was patient for more than just those few years. In Genesis 6:3 we read that God has appointed for man a limit of 120 years. This has been interpreted by some as a new limit that God was going to give to how long men could live. Previously men had lived hundreds of years, but that would stop now. This seems a plausible interpretation, as no one today lives any longer than 120. But a better way to understand this passage might be as a 120-year countdown to the coming judgment. This fits in well with the context of the surrounding chapter, and if this is the proper understanding, it means that the wicked were given more than a century to turn to God and repent!

But now consider this: Noah’s grandfather was Methuselah, who

SINCERITY

“If you sincerely believe a lie, you will suffer the consequences.”



STOP “STRUGGLING” WITH PORNOGRAPHY

DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT IT - DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

by Jonathon Van Maren

I'm very frustrated.

Over the last several years, I've done quite a few presentations in different Christian communities (Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta) on sexuality and pornography. Each time I've given the presentations, I've changed them quite a bit, adding things I've learned, tweaking it based on the needs of the community and the feedback I've gotten. I've gotten anonymous emails detailing the struggles of porn addicts in Christian homes and had anonymous letters stuck in the door of my home. The more I hear from the men and women and youth in the communities where these topics are presented, the harder I actually find it to

speaking on those topics.

Many of the things I hear make me angry.

While it is legitimate to be angry about the use of pornography – it's much worse than just lust, it is sexual cannibalism, the one-sided consumption of a human being created in God's image for personal pleasure – one must be very careful not to slip into the sin of pride. When dealing with issues of sexuality, we can never say, “Well, that's not a sin I struggle with, and thus I am somehow better than those who struggle with these sins.” After all, in John 8 we see how the Lord Jesus dealt with those guilty of sexual sin, after challenging those who sought to stone a woman taken “in the very act” of adultery: “He

that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” One by one, they left, “convicted by their own conscience.” Jesus then said to her, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Pride, we see in the New Testament and in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, was condemned far more harshly than sexual sin. We have to assist each other in becoming free from sexual sin, not set ourselves above other people.

DON'T OVERESTIMATE YOUR STRENGTH

My frustration is not simply the result of seeing just how widespread the use of pornography is, and how damaging it is. As I heard one speaker put it, those who do not think they are susceptible to

sexual sin are saying they are stronger than Sampson, wiser than Solomon, and closer to God than David, the man after God's own heart. What frustrates me is that, time and time again, men I speak to refuse to do what it actually takes to kick porn addiction and purge their minds of this scourge.

In all cases, pornography is by its very nature predatory, perverted, narcissistic, and in direct opposition to how God created sexuality. It is, simply, self-inflicted destruction that contributes to the external destruction of so many of the lives that make up those dehumanized pictures. This is not just our culture, our church, our own "little lust problem" or "bad porn habit." This is people consciously deciding to consume other people like a product, destroying their own relationships, twisting their perceptions of the opposite sex, and creating neural pathways in their brain that will often prove almost impossible to subvert.

DON'T JUST TALK

Porn flourishes because people can nurture their obsession in private. No one is looking over their shoulder, no one is seeing what they're seeing, and they have the opportunity to make whatever material they viewed virtually untraceable after the fact. That's why the one filter I always push for those who want to leave their porn addiction behind is an accountability filter (for example, see www.CovenantEyes.com) – a filter that sends your Internet history every week to someone who will hold you accountable for what you viewed in the week past. I recommend this type of system to everyone who tells me that they're struggling with pornography, but it never ceases to amaze me how many want to talk about their porn problem, but don't actually want to kick it.


If you want to stop looking at porn, sign up for an accountability filter, and make your accountability partner – the person receiving your weekly history – your pastor, a church leader, one of your parents, your wife, your sister. Do you really think that you'll browse some filthy porn site if your minister, or a

church elder, or your mother or wife, will see at the end of the week what you've looked at? Perhaps in some cases there will be slip-ups. But it's generally very unlikely. With people you love dearly and respect much "looking over your shoulder" when you're on the Internet, it's almost guaranteed that you'll view your "porn problem" quite a bit differently – imagining how your wife or mother would feel if they realized what you were looking at would change your own view immediately and drastically.

When I suggest this step, I'm often told it's "drastic." No, it's not. Looking at porn is disgusting and predatory, and this solution is not at all "drastic" when put into the context of the problem. If you think that porn consumption is not a big enough deal to take "drastic" steps to get rid of it, then you haven't realized just how big of a deal it is. Yes, people can get around filters. You can decide to take one of your devices (cell phone, iPad) off of the accountability filter. But that's a choice – a choice to continue the sexual consumption of other human beings. You don't just "fall" into looking at porn.

Let me explain: I smoked cigarettes for close to ten years. For me to "fall into" smoking cigarettes again, I would have to get in my car, drive to the store, purchase the pack, take a cigarette out, and then light it. There are at least five conscious decisions that take place before I "fall into" smoking cigarettes and am "struggling" with it again.


The same applies to watching or looking at pornography again. You have to go home, or someplace where you can be alone, boot up your laptop or device, log on, search for whatever porn you're "struggling" with, and then view it. There are multiple decisions taking place here. While pornography addiction is incredibly powerful, you do not simply "fall into" viewing porn again when you're trying to kick the habit. You make a series of decisions that result in you viewing porn. You may be addicted, but you're not helpless. And I do get frustrated when I hear from guys that they're still "struggling," but they still haven't taken the drastic steps necessary to kick this habit. I'm sorry, you only



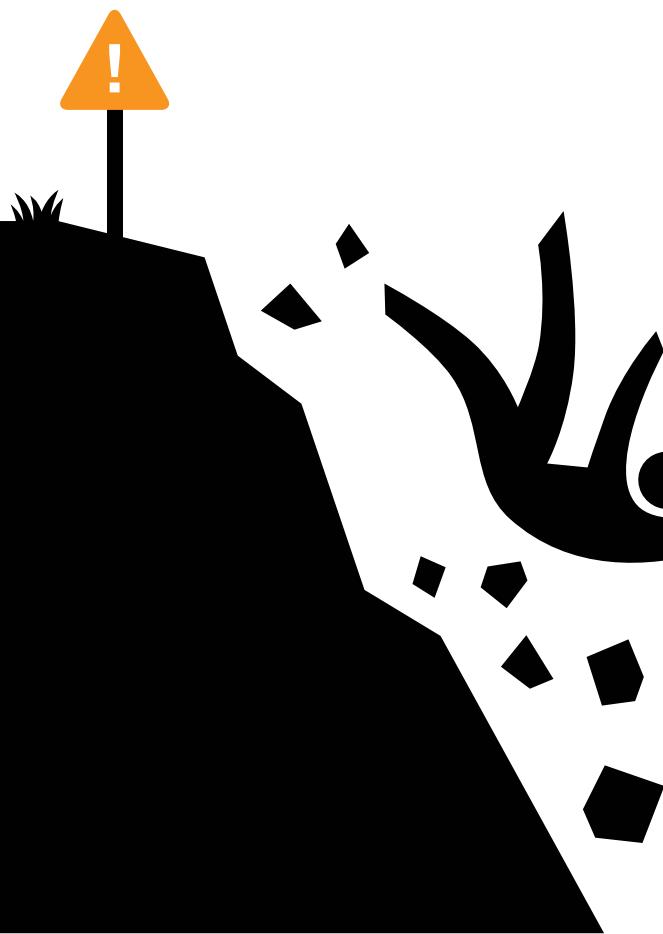
...those who do not think they are susceptible to sexual sin are saying they are stronger than Sampson, wiser than Solomon, and closer to God than David

get to say you're "struggling" if you're actually taking all of the necessary steps to get free.

CONCLUSION

Sexual sin is, in this day and age, one of the most common and destructive of sins. I understand that many people get hooked as the result of simply stumbling upon imagery on the Internet, or being exposed to it by friends, or even, in many cases, being exposed to it at a very young age in the home. But there are ways to free yourself from this addiction. There are people who want to help you get free of it, and people who won't judge you or think that they are somehow better. To say to someone struggling with sexual sin that those who struggle with different sins are somehow better would be to defy what the New Testament tells us. But you do have a responsibility to cease this destructive and disgusting habit. The help is available. The choice is yours. 

You can download an accountability filter at www.CovenantEyes.com. This article was first published January 28, 2014, on the ReformedProlifer.com blog and is reprinted here with permission.



WHEN YOU'RE AT YOUR BEST, PLAN FOR YOUR WORST

BY TIM CHALLIES

My children are growing up fast and, between you and me, they're growing up a little bit faster than I had expected. My son is 13 now, just a half school year away from being in high school. I sometimes find myself remembering when I was 13, and the kinds of things I awakened to and became interested in. Though I see now that I was only a kid, I was sure that I was all grown up. It's disquieting at best. Meanwhile my oldest daughter is 11, going on 16. I love her to death, but she, too, is getting far too old for her own good. There are three kids in our home, but only one of them is still a child.

As my kids grow up, I find that I need to have important but uncomfortable discussions with them. They are unfortunate discussions, but the kind you've got to have in a world like ours. I suppose the only thing worse than having those discussions is not having them.

UNDERSTANDING TEMPTATION

Some time ago we implemented a plan in our home to protect the kids from some of what lurks out there on the Internet. We removed Internet

access from some devices, limited it on others, and applied filters that keep tabs on what we are doing online. It has been very smooth from a technological perspective, but a little less so on the interpersonal level.

Recently my son said, "Dad, you're treating me like I'm addicted to pornography. But I haven't ever seen it and don't want to see it!" And he's right, to some degree. If I'm not treating him like an addict, I am at least treating him like a pre-addict, someone who has the inclination, or who may well have it before long. In this way I think I understand him a little better than he understands himself. Of course our Internet plan is not designed only to protect the children from exposure to pornography, but that is still one of its major purposes.

But his exasperation and hurt feelings gave us opportunity to talk about one of the principles I have found helpful in my own life: *When you are at your best, plan for when you are at your worst.* I see this as an application of 1 Corinthians 10:12-13:

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Right there, in the middle of this discussion about sexual immorality, the power of temptation and the promise *in* temptation, Paul gives a call to humility: "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." This is consistent with what he told the church in Rome:

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Romans 12:3).

There is a kind of weakness, a kind of vulnerability, that may come when we are convinced of our strength. It is when we are *not* being tempted, it is when we


The wise Christian fights sin even when sin seems distant and dormant.

are standing strong in the Lord's grace, that we ought to consider the times we will be weak and tempted and eager to sin. We need to assume such times will come, and we need to use the moments of strength to put measures in place that will protect us when we are weak. The wise nation builds its defenses in peace time, not once the enemy has invaded its borders; the wise homeowner buys insurance before the big catastrophe, not once the flood has already risen. The wise Christian fights sin even when sin seems distant and dormant.

PREPARING FOR IT

I do not consider myself particularly prone to the temptation of pornography. I can sit at a computer early in the morning or late at night and not feel any pull to abuse the privilege. Not at this point. And yet, I explained to my son, I treat myself as one who is disposed to the temptation. I do this because I know my own proneness to sin, and I do this because I have seen so many men shock themselves and their families by succumbing to the temptation. This is obviously Satan's major point of attack

on men today – old men and young men alike – and it would be folly to assume I'll never face it. It would be folly not to prepare myself right now while I'm thinking straight. And it would be folly for my boy as well.

I have yet to meet the man who hasn't been tempted at one time or another. And for this reason I have filtering software and accountability software and, even better, men who ask me good questions about my life. In the end, I explained, I am only holding my son to the standard I use for myself—the standard of a sinful man, wanting desperately to avoid a major fall, and all too aware that, in those times I begin to lose my delight in God, I grow in my delight in sin. This, I hope, is the sober judgment the Lord calls us to. 

This article was first posted to Challies.com on January 22, 2014, and is reprinted here with permission.

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Should we be free to obey our conscience?

by André Schutten

There has been a lot of noise in the news lately about the State of Arizona striking down a bill that would have allowed Christians to discriminate against gays. Or at least, that's what the media wants us to believe the bill was all about.

The bill and the controversy generated a lot of discussion, even among Reformed Christians, on news sites, blogs and social media. I was a little shocked by some of the statements by leaders within the Christian community, including lines like, "If Christians are going to do business in public, they have to serve everyone," and, "We wouldn't like them to discriminate against us so we shouldn't discriminate against them."

I think those who spoke or thought along these lines didn't quite know what the law was about. I'd like to clarify what the law actually said and what some Christians are actually objecting to.

WHAT THE LAW ACTUALLY SAID

SB 1062, Arizona's failed religious freedom bill – widely dubbed the "anti-gay bill" by the press – was very similar to the federal religious freedom law. There were widespread (and obviously misleading) reports that the bill authorized businesses to refuse to serve gay people at all and for no reason. But an actual reading of the bill cannot justify labeling the Arizona bill as "anti-gay." The bill does not mention gays, homosexuality, or same-sex marriage, and because it largely mimics the federal *Religious Freedom Restoration Act* (a law that was enacted by large bipartisan majorities that included many liberals and was signed by President Clinton, a liberal, in 1993 before gay-marriage was even contemplated), those who suggest it

is "anti-gay" would also have to conclude that so was President Clinton, which is nonsense.

The bill would not have authorized business owners to turn away gay customers. It would not even have authorized bakers to refuse to make a cake for a same-sex wedding, *carte blanche*. It would simply have given

If a Christian photographer has to take pictures at a gay wedding, does a church have to rent their hall for a gay wedding?

those bakers a claim in court (a defense justifiable in law by statute) against a discrimination claim, should they be dragged there by government actors or private litigants. There is no guarantee that the baker would win, but he would at least have a new tool for a fighting chance.

WHAT THIS IS REALLY ALL ABOUT

That being said, there is a worrying downward trend for religious freedom in both Canada and the United States. Examples abound of Christian T-shirt printers, bakers, photographers, print-shop owners, wedding dress makers, florists and caterers who are being

forced by the State (through human rights commissions) or through lawsuits to participate in same-sex weddings in violation of these various business people's consciences. In *every* case (with the exception of the wedding dress maker for obvious reasons), each Christian business person said they *would* bake, cater, arrange flowers, print invitations, take photos, print T-shirts, etc., for a gay person's birthday or retirement party or any other celebration – they just wouldn't do it for a same-sex wedding.

This means the objection is not about discriminating against gay people. It never was. It's very specifically about endorsing a definition of marriage or a specific act that fundamentally violates God's design for marriage.

STAND UP FOR OTHERS

I know of Christians who can, with a clear conscience, bake, photograph, etc. a gay wedding. And I know some who can't. (See 1 Cor. 8). This is a legitimate discussion to have between Christians. The much bigger question is: should the State force the latter group to do as the former? If you are a Christian and you advocate that the State is justified in making Christians participate, in any way, in a gay marriage, I believe you've ripped the rug from under yourself – if it is fine for the State to violate other Christians' consciences this time, what's to prevent them from violating yours next?

If a Christian photographer has to take pictures at a gay wedding, does a church have to rent their hall for a gay wedding? (This happened in British Columbia in 2005.) Or must an organist play for a gay marriage ceremony? Or will a



Should an atheist printer be allowed to decline printing Christian tracts?

Christian marriage commissioner be forced to officiate for such a celebration? (In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, this is the case.)


NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF THE BILL FOR CHRISTIANS

Does this mean that I'm ready to let the State allow the same kind of discrimination against Christians? If an atheist decides he doesn't want to take photos of a Christian wedding, am I okay with that? Well, the State can't force all citizens to embrace, encourage and support the Christian faith, because that wouldn't be freedom of religion, would it? Freedom of religion is freedom *from* the State (not from fellow citizens). Your *Charter* rights protect you from the

I know of Christians who can, with a clear conscience, bake, photograph, etc., a gay wedding. And I know some who can't.

busybody government interfering in your religious practices and beliefs. They are not meant to make the government interfere in your personal or professional

relationships in order to promote, oppose or defend your religion.

So, to be clear and consistent, I do expect and accept being shunned by others because of my Christian beliefs. (Christ predicted it, didn't he?) I would not expect the State to go to bat for me if a gay bookstore refused to sell my book on a Biblical understanding of gay marriage or if an Islamic school refused to hire me as a janitor. If I wanted to publish a Christian defense of capital punishment, I wouldn't expect the State to force a Mennonite printer to publish it for me. With liberty comes responsibility. That includes responsibility to go find another printer, or baker, or candlestick maker. 

EDUCATING ROYALTY

by Roy Alden Atwood



WE MUST TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO BE KINGDOM HEIRS— NOT JUST LABORERS IN THE MARKETPLACE

Who are you?” a university student once asked me.

Odd question, I thought. I’d handled countless student questions, but this one caught me unprepared.

“Uh . . . I’m a professor,” I answered weakly.

“No!” he shot back. “I don’t mean what do you *do*, but *who* are you?”

His question unsettled me. Like most North Americans, I’d been carefully, though not intentionally, catechized since a lad at my parents’ side that the first and most important question we ask adults at first meeting (after getting their name) is, “What do you do?”

I’d learned that catechism lesson well, repeating it literally hundreds of times in all kinds of social settings over the years. But that catechism had left me quite unprepared to answer *this* more fundamental question about my personal identity separate from my place in the market.

That grieved me because, as a Christian, I had been better versed in the catechism of secular pragmatism than in Lord’s Days 12 and 13 or the Scriptures. And I knew I wasn’t the only one.

THE ANSWER THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that *we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...*
— Romans 8:16-17a

As I have reflected on that encounter over the years, I’ve realized that the biblical and covenantal answer to the question “Who are you?” is a glorious one that stands in stark contrast to the secular myth that our employment or “career” defines us. Of course, our work and callings as Christians in the marketplace are important. Providing

for our families is a great privilege and responsibility. But the priority of work in both our lives and the education of our children is almost certainly misplaced and overemphasized today in Reformed circles.

Our Calvinistic work ethic and sense of vocation – serving the Lord in all things – are a glorious heritage, but in our 21st century context, they have become largely indistinguishable from the middle class idolatry common among our unbelieving neighbors (i.e., having “another object in which men place their trust” [Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 95]).

In fact, over 30+ years of university teaching, evenly divided between secular universities and Christian colleges, I can testify that the one question all parents – Christian and non-Christian alike – ask about higher education is, “*What kind of job* can my kid get when he/she graduates?”

Intended or not, that question reveals

deep worldview priorities. And such a question is certainly not the fruit of careful, prayerful parental reflection on what it means to educate covenant children as heirs of Christ who will *seek first* the kingdom.

By contrast, the Scriptures never identify God's covenant children as people with jobs who happen to hold to a particular religious tradition. Instead, the Bible repeatedly calls us heirs of a kingdom, the adopted sons and daughters of the King of the universe. We are not just Christians who happen to have various jobs or work to do. *We are royalty* (Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 1:3-6, I Peter 2:9).

We will reign over all creatures with Christ eternally (Heid. Cat., Q. 32). We are the adopted children of God and fellow *heirs* with Jesus, with all the privileges of the sons of God (Luke 2:11, Acts 10:36, I Tim. 6:15, Rev. 19:16; Heid. Cat., Q. 34). We are princes and princesses of the King of kings! *We are royal heirs!*

And that answer to the question, "Who are you?" *changes everything!*

Like young Prince George, the baby heir to the throne of England and the United Kingdom, a day mustn't pass that we wonder who we are, why we are being educated, and what we are being prepared to be and to do. We are heirs to a throne and a Kingdom far greater and more glorious than the one in England. The House of Windsor pales in comparison to Jesus's realm and our divine inheritance! How much more, then, should we, who are heirs of the King of kings and Lord of lords, prepare ourselves and our children to be thoroughly and faithfully educated in everything it means to be a son and daughter of the Creator, Redeemer, and Lord of the Universe. Thoroughly and faithfully educated in everything it means to be royalty.

WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE?

If we understand we are educating royalty, how should that impact how we teach, and what we expect?

Then we will understand there is no

time for the wicked nonsense about "sowing wild oats" or setting a low bar of expectations for our children. That is the rebellious spirit of prodigals who forget who they (and their children) really are. Those who are in line to take their places in Christ's kingdom as princes and princesses must expect more of themselves and of their children. "To

..the priority of work in both our lives and the education of our children is almost certainly misplaced and overemphasized today in Reformed circles.

whom much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48). Because we are royalty in Christ, God has king-sized expectations and blessings in store for us and our children – if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

The entire book of Proverbs is Solomon's instruction to his royal heirs to

know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth – let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles (Prov. 1:2-6).

A SLIGHTLY, BUT NOT SO, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON REFORMED EDUCATION

by Jon Dykstra

There is another way to do Reformed Education.

In the February issue we had three Canadian Reformed authors talking largely about Canadian Reformed Christian schooling. In this issue we go outside our circles to get what will still seem a familiar perspective – the men we are turning to also believe that education is a parental responsibility, and believe that parents must provide their children with a thoroughly Christian education – but they don't run their schools quite the same way we do.

This issue's feature article is by Dr. Roy Atwood, the president of New St. Andrews College in Moscow, Idaho. Dr. Larry Stephenson, the principal of Logos School (also in Moscow), makes an appearance, via a review of his book, *The Administrator's Handbook for Christian Schools*. Both Dr. Atwood and Dr. Stephenson believe in classical Christian education (a rigorous academic program that includes, among other things, taking Latin and rhetoric) and that difference pops up in both articles.

Part of the value in hearing from these gentlemen comes in noting the differences in their approach and then comparing what we're doing against the educational approach of these, in many ways like-minded, people. Is our way better than theirs? In what way? Is there something we need to learn from them? This "outsider's perspective" will allow us to spot some of our unquestioned assumptions, and better evaluate why we do what we do.

But it isn't just the differences that matter – what Dr. Atwood has to say about our students' true identity is directly applicable to our schools and every other Christian school anywhere.

So I hope you will enjoy and benefit from this slightly, but not so, different Reformed perspective on education.

We are princes and princesses of the King of kings! We are royal heirs!

Such an education must provide much more than an awareness of fragmented facts or specialized work skills for a place in the job market. Again, that's not to say that facts and skills are not important. Nor is it to say that we should suddenly trade pragmatic, nose-to-the-grindstone sweat of our brows for pious-sounding spiritual platitudes.

The issues are

1. where does the education of Christ's royal heirs fit in our list of priorities, and
2. what should that education look like?

PRIORITIES: WE ARE ROYALTY. SO START ACTING LIKE IT.

Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the *instruction* of the Lord, nor be weary when corrected by him. For the Lord *instructs* the one he loves, and corrects every son whom he receives." It is for *instruction* that you have to endure. *God is treating you as sons.* – Hebrews 12:5-7

Those who are fellow heirs in Christ know that His regal ways are not the power-grabbing, lording-it-over-others, self-seeking ways of the ungodly. Far from it. Christ ascended to His Father's throne only *after sacrificing everything* for His people and His creation. He gave himself away. His royal way is the way of selfless love and sacrifice. He died that we might die to sin and death. He lives that we might live in glory forever. Sacrificial service for the sake of the kingdom is the mark of true kingship, true royalty. It characterizes our Lord Christ. And it must characterize our Lord's true heirs in their lives and in their education.

As Christ's royal heirs, we dare not be content to prepare ourselves or

our children merely to be cogs in the economic machinery of our secular consumer culture. Even the ancients understood that slaves are trained only to perform tasks. They have no rights of inheritance, no deeper identity. A slave's identity is his work.

But free citizens and royalty, who will dedicate themselves to the advancement of the kingdom, must be educated deeply for the day when their royal leadership and service are expected. Similarly, we are called to a higher purpose and bear greater responsibility for how we live and prepare our children for their royal callings.

Unfortunately, we have, as the author of Hebrews suggests, forgotten the divine exhortation to educate our children in the *nurture and instruction* of the Lord (Eph. 6:4, Heb. 12:5ff). We have forgotten in part because we have forgotten who we are.

A ROYAL EDUCATION: RECOVERING THE LOST TOOLS OF LEARNING

This memory lapse is most evident in *how* we educate our children today. Education, even that which purports to be Christian, is now often devoted primarily to the goal of producing good little workers for the secular labor force, efficient widgets for our economy's production line, and little more.

That falls far short of the biblical expectation that Christian children be saturated in the instruction of the Lord and grow up knowing what it means to be royal heirs of Christ the King. An education bearing the name of the King ought, at the least, to offer His royal heirs ...

1. *A comprehensive and integrative understanding of God's world and of how all things cohere in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:4-11).*

Such an education will give children the "big picture" of how all things, all spheres of creation, are interrelated in

the glory of their Creator.

The university itself was a Christian invention in the Middle Ages (the earliest established between A.D. 1100 and 1200), designed to give students an integrated Christian vision and foundation for all future learning. That was the original purpose of the classical liberal arts (meaning, the arts of a free citizen). For almost a millennium, Christian universities taught the classical liberal arts or the so-called *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*:

- The *Trivium*, or the Three Ways, stressed the good structure of language (Grammar), the way to discern truth (Logic), and how to express truth beautifully (Rhetoric)—all to encourage a student's life-long love of goodness, truth, and beauty in words and language, as typified by the Word Himself in John 1:1-14.
- The *Quadrivium*, or the Four Ways, encouraged a life-long love of goodness, truth, and beauty in the use of numbers (Arithmetic), numbers in space (Geometry), numbers in time (Music or Harmony), and numbers in space and time (Astronomy), revealing the unity and diversity of creation and of our Triune Creator Himself (Deut. 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one," and Matt. 28:19, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the *Father* and of the *Son* and of the *Holy Spirit*").
- Together, the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*, the original seven liberal arts, offered students essential insights into the harmony and wholeness of God's diverse world and into the interrelated truth, goodness and beauty of its Triune Creator. They didn't give students just the facts or skills for a job, but the tools of

lifelong learning from a Christian perspective.

Unfortunately, today's arbitrarily selected smorgasbord of academic subjects and randomly structured university curricula, following the modern analytic, scientific tradition, tend to do the opposite: they offer fragmented bits of information with no principle of coherence or relationship. But in God's economy, the whole is always more than the sum of its parts. An education that does not teach us *how* to see the *wholeness* of God's creation, and to equip us to understand how *all things cohere in Christ*, inevitably misses the big picture about creation and creation's God. It is a partial, incomplete, distorted education.

Curiously, *specialization* at the undergraduate level was virtually unknown in North America prior to the late 19th century. University students did not "major" in narrow academic disciplines or vocational specializations prior to 1879. They couldn't. "Majors" simply didn't exist before then. Instead, all undergraduates received a classical, integrated liberal arts foundation. The universities gave them essential tools for learning that applied to all their various callings as sons and daughters, spouses, parents, neighbors, citizens, providers, voters, buyers and sellers in the marketplace, and parishioners. Their work skills and the job training needed to provide for their families were developed outside the classroom in on-site training or apprenticeships done in the context where the work was actually being done. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Kuyper, C.S. Lewis – all the greatest leaders in our Christian tradition – were so classically educated in the traditional, integrative liberal arts of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* and practically trained.

But pragmatists of the late 19th and early 20th century sold their Christian academic birthright for a mess of modernist career pottage. They turned schools into egalitarian job training camps for the workers of the world and abandoned the Christian pursuit of wisdom and knowledge in the Lord. The

schools dumbed down, and the church has grown steadily weaker ever since.

Reversing that trend will require that the King's royal heirs expect ...

2. *Truly godly and wise teacher-mentors (Luke 6:40).*

According to Jesus, the teacher – not the curriculum, not the lesson plan, not the technology, not the facilities, not the accreditation, not the tuition rate – is the single most important factor in a child's education. "A student, when mature, will be like his teacher," Jesus said. All the other bells and whistles may be nice (though they can often be more of a distraction than a help), but *the teacher is key*.

Yet, in my experience, Christian parents often know more about a school's university admission rates, or a college's career placement rates, or tuition rates, or financial aid plans, or sports programs than they do about the character and spiritual health of the men and women who will actually be shaping the minds and lives of their children in and out of the classroom. Sadly, many Christian school administrators and boards aren't much better, giving higher priority to paper credentials and standardized test scores and bricks and mortar than to the character and spiritual integrity of their teachers. Of course, academic expertise and standardized testing have their place. But parents, administrators and school promotional literature often stress most what actually counts least from a Kingdom perspective. And such misguided emphases have the potential to catechize generations of parents and children in what is least in the Kingdom.

The teacher is so crucial, as Jesus says, because all education is fundamentally *personal*. That's because *truth itself is personal*. Truth is a person. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Truth is not some collection of brute facts or scientifically verifiable propositions. It is a living person. Teachers either faithfully represent or embody that Truth before their students or they don't. Parents or educators who misunderstand this crucial biblical

...the teacher – not the curriculum, not the lesson plan, not the technology, not the facilities, not the accreditation, not the tuition rate – is the single most important factor in a child's education.

principle put their children and students at grave risk of misunderstanding the Truth and being catechized in lies and ungodliness. No matter how much parents think their child can be a "good witness" in a secular education environment, that child is not the teacher, but the one being taught. And no matter how mature we imagine our children to be (often overestimating), their "cement is still wet." They are still students seeking to be taught and led into maturity, readily influenced by others older and more experienced. The question is, *who* will teach them and lead them into what kind of maturity?

Moreover, those who think that new distance learning technologies will provide a quality education without putting their children at risk under ungodly teachers make a similar mistake. Learning godly knowledge and wisdom is not a data download. A student will be shaped by his or her teacher, no matter who that teacher is, no matter how the instruction is delivered.

Finally, the education of the King's royal heirs ought also to include ...

3. *The shaping of our desires for the things of the Kingdom*

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But *seek first the kingdom of God* and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
– Matthew 6:25, 32-33

Jesus did *not* say, “Seek first vocational-technical training, and all that kingdom of God and righteousness stuff will be added later.” Yet to hear parents of university-bound students talk today about their educational goals for their

children, you’d think he had. The dominant secular vocational paradigm for higher education has influenced us more on these issues than our Christian schools, our catechism classes, and even our churches. For that, we must repent. Our heavenly Father knows everything we need to live and to thrive, and He will provide them for us by His perfect means according to His perfect timing. He tells us explicitly not to stress over the little stuff. Grasping at college majors and career preparation will not add one penny to our bank accounts, put one more meal on the table, or add one more second to our lives that He has not already ordained. So stop majoring in the minors. Instead, major in God’s priorities: Christ’s kingdom and His righteousness.

What our schools and universities must encourage in our covenant children is a deeply held heart-desire for the things of God and of His Kingdom.

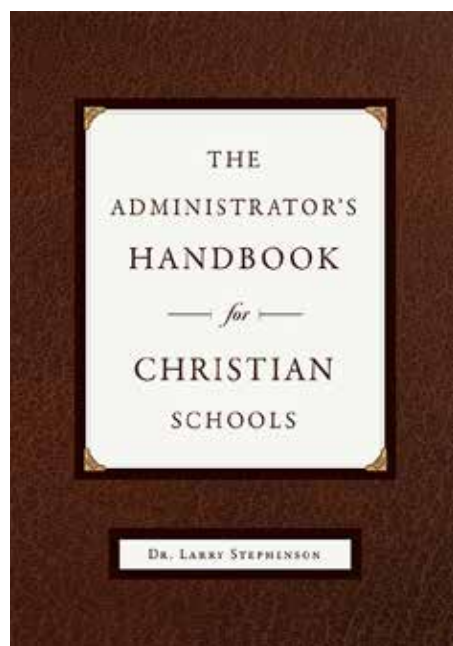
CONCLUSION

As Calvinists who take the sovereignty of God – the crown rights of Christ – seriously, we cannot, must not, train our children merely to be good little widgets in the secular marketplace who also happen to go to church each Lord’s Day. We vowed to raise them for much greater things at their baptisms.

So, “Who are you?”

- You are the royal heirs of the King of kings; *start acting like it.*
- Your children are royalty; *start treating them like it.*
- Your children are inheriting a Kingdom; *so start educating them for it.* RP

Dr. Roy Alden Atwood is the president, and a founder, of New Saint Andrews College (www.nsa.edu) in Moscow, Idaho.



THE ADMINISTRATOR'S HANDBOOK
FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
LOGOS PRESS, 2013
250 PAGES, \$55 US
WWW.LOGOSPRESSONLINE.COM

ANOTHER REFORMED PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION

DR. LARRY STEPHENSON'S BOOK OFFERS US ADMINISTRATIVE LESSONS FROM A SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT IS SIMILAR YET DIFFERENT

by Otto Bouwman

Any new principal or new school board member would likely appreciate a book that spelled out all that they had to do. And in Dr. Larry Stephenson's *The Administrator's Handbook for Christian Schools* it would seem we have the very thing. The author is not just Christian but Reformed, so he is in important ways a man of like mind to the educators and administrators in our Canadian and American Reformed schools.

But it is also important to note that he is from outside our school circles, and does not have quite the same set of assumptions or exactly the same vocabulary.

This book is valuable, then, as both a reinforcement of the many values we share with the author – articulated well in this book – and valuable as an invitation to examine another way of doing things in the areas where our educational choices have been different.

CONTENTS

FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The book begins with a brief description of the mission of the Christian school: it is to seek to “graduate young men and women who think clearly and listen carefully with discernment and understanding.” As the author unpacks the how-to of establishing such a school, it becomes clear that the preferred methodology to use in preparing such a student is Christian education in a school where everything that is done is done deliberately to God’s glory, where parents are closely involved, and where children are “taught to master a subject in the effort to better equip themselves for the work God has planned for their life.”

This is a good start, and will have most of us who are involved in Reformed Christian schools very interested in what he has to say in this how-to manual of Christian education.

FOR ADMINISTRATORS

The content of Stephenson’s book weaves back and forth between the foundational and the practical. After reviewing in the first chapter the Biblical imperatives for Christian education, and making the case that education cannot ever be neutral, the author introduces in the second chapter numerous policies that school administrators would need to have, ranging from student admissions and money collection policies, to building emergency procedures, to policies regarding grading and reporting of student progress. The list of policies discussed might be of interest to school administrators, as they compare their own policies (or lack thereof) to his recommended ones.

WHAT EVERY PARENT AND TEACHER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CURRICULUM

The third chapter turns to something that would be of substantial interest to a much broader audience in “our” schools; boards, parents, teachers, and students will all have their thoughts about the curriculum the school offers.

The chapter begins with the following definition: “Curriculum is the means of instilling in each student a love for truth, wisdom, discernment, and learning through the use of excellent materials.” The curriculum is the skeleton on which the rest of the school’s program is built; the curriculum is the core of the institution. All aspects of the school’s curriculum must clearly align with the school’s goals, and it is the responsibility of the school’s administration to define and continue to refine that alignment.

The content of Stephenson’s book weaves back and forth between the foundational and the practical.

In this chapter it becomes clear that Stephenson is a proponent of a particular type of curriculum called “Classical Education.” There is no short definition that quite captures what Classical Education entails, but it has ancient roots, back to at least the Middle Ages, and involves high academic standards and learning “classical subjects” such as Latin and debate. Stephenson encourages readers to read Dorothy Sayers’ essay “The Lost Tools of Learning” (which is helpfully included as an appendix in the book), since it provides a clear defense of Classical Education. In the words of Stephenson, “I have seen great educational strides when it [Classical Education] is put into practice.” [Editor’s note: for a further explanation of Classical Education see the section of Dr. Atwood’s article “Educating Royalty” on the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*.]

After a review of the broad brushstrokes of each area of the curriculum, the author introduces a few more policies that logically build on his material. A powerful evident conviction

is that students need to demonstrate mastery of material; if they don’t, the system falls apart. It is the responsibility of the administration to ensure that mastery is achieved by the students; the desire for mastery places a great responsibility on teachers, parents, and students. And in the end, if mastery is not there, the student will need to part ways with the school.

If the task of the school is to shape the minds of the young people and to help them develop a deep love for truth and learning, then much of the material of this chapter is a profoundly healthy challenge for Christian school leaders.

ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The fourth chapter moves back and forth again between foundational and practical issues related to student discipline. It is evident that Stephenson believes the behavioral bar shouldn’t be any lower than the “academic mastery” bar: “Obey right away, all the way, every day, in a cheerful way!” The author is convinced that without a healthy and happy atmosphere in the classroom, it will be very difficult to create an appropriate learning environment. Students unable or unwilling to contribute positively to the school’s culture ought to be warned, and their parents informed, that continued involvement in the school’s program requires godly behavior. The alternative would be that the family would need to find another educational provider.

ATHLETICS

Another entire chapter is dedicated to the role athletics can play in an educational institution, and the policies that a school needs to have around its athletic program. As becomes clear, a school’s athletic program needs to dovetail smoothly with the rest of the school’s program; the school is, first and foremost, an institution for the training of the mind.

BOARD

The author also discusses board governance, as the board plays a critical role in the development and ongoing

...Stephenson's book, particularly the chapters related to curriculum and student behavior, presents quite a challenge.

evaluation of the school. The task of the board should be “to exercise spiritual leadership and ensure that your school achieves appropriate results, for appropriate persons, at an appropriate cost, while avoiding unacceptable actions and situations.” Clearly, the board, in Stephenson’s mind, does not involve itself in the day-to-day operation of the school; that is the task of the principal whom the board has hired. One of the board’s most important tasks is to hire their administrator, as the daily operation of the school will be the principal’s responsibility. After hiring the day-to-day manager of the school, the focus of the board will be on policy development, since that will be of the greatest assistance to the administrator, who will put those policies into practice. This chapter alone would make excellent discussion material for any board to consider as they reflect on their role in the school.

In addition to the wide variety of topics mentioned above, the author appears to try to cover all the bases associated with the operation of a school; topics such as school finances, report cards, parent forms, personnel management, and long-range planning all receive their due attention. The book appears to be an attempt to cover all topics from a to z that are relevant to the establishment and ongoing operation of a Christian school.

IS THIS A GOOD BOOK FOR US?

How relevant is the book for those involved in Christian education in institutions that do not have a Classical Education character?

Canadian Reformed educational institutions are generally regarded as ones where there ought to be room for *all covenant children*. We typically seem to presume that, because our children are covenant children, there needs to be room for all of them in our Christian covenant schools. More often than not,

the phrase “covenant education” affirms the “right” of all covenant children to attend a Christian school. As a result, our schools go to great lengths to accommodate everyone – and in many respects, this is a great thing!

In this regard, Stephenson’s book, particularly the chapters related to curriculum and student behavior, present quite a challenge. Stephenson affirms that Christian education needs to be given to Christian students, to mold them and to develop their God-given talents to their utmost capacity. In that sense, their covenant status needs to be a motivator for parents and teachers alike, inspiring everyone to hold these precious children to high standards (both behaviorally and academically) that the school needs to clearly establish and enforce. For those students unable or unwilling to meet that bar, Stephenson believes alternative educational institutions will need to be employed.


WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE?

There is a tension between understanding the concept of “covenant education” from a “rights perspective” and a “responsibility perspective.” I believe Stephenson’s book represents a healthy challenge to our school communities in terms of how we define academic and behavioral expectations. Accommodation is more than a noble desire; it requires courage and hard work to deliberately accommodate everyone. But, equally, it takes courage and hard work on the part of a school administrator to establish and maintain clarity of expectations that all students must achieve. In that regard, the material the author presents regarding board/principal relationships is very helpful for those needing to navigate their way through these challenging questions, because clarity there will be invaluable for the overall effectiveness of the school. Perhaps in light of a conclusion from a recent Cardus survey in Canada, which

suggested that Reformed high schools perhaps have not stressed academic performance quite as much as might have been expected, further exploration about this tension might be helpful.

CONCLUSION

To most Canadian Reformed ears, the thought of not accommodating all covenant children is one that is not quickly embraced. Please keep in mind that, in the world of the author, what type of Christian schooling Christian parents send their children to is very much a *parental choice*. Our preference to keep covenant children together in their local Christian school – consider, for example, pressures that some homeschooling parents face – is so strong that we have a hard time seriously considering alternatives. In Stephenson’s world, Christian parents have legitimate and genuine options regarding the educational setting that parents provide to their children. Consequently, as he sees it, it is not the school’s responsibility to accommodate everyone.

Since the author’s intended audience is presumed to be at least partial to Classical Education, it is possible that some readers who are not appreciative of that educational methodology might quickly dismiss it or misinterpret it. I believe that much can be gained by charitably interacting with the foundational and practical material that Stephenson presents here. Scriptures speak of iron sharpening iron; those involved in leadership positions in Christian communities only stand to benefit by wrestling with the types of questions that Stephenson raises. For discussion purposes, the book is definitely recommended. 



Loving the husband you have

by Maryanne Helms

My husband and I love one another deeply, and the longer we are married, the more we find we are a healthy balance for one another. But marriage is like any other relationship, in that it has seasons – some of which are easy, and some of which are more challenging. These are the periods in which we do not connect well and seem to have a more difficult time than usual living with understanding and grace.

For my part, the biggest heart issue that hurts my marriage is this: *Sometimes I fight to love a man that does not exist.*

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

In the valleys of our relationship, I stand in front of my husband, and I see a shadow behind him, a vision of who I want him to be. And all the while I say quietly in my heart: *I will love you when you are THAT man. I will accept you fully when you are THAT man. I am angry with you for not being THAT man. See that shadow behind you? I love THAT man!*

The problem with my vision is two-fold. First, it is *founded on a lie* - the lie that perfect human love can be sought and found, and tied up neatly in one person. This belief denies sin's pervasive

Sometimes I fight to love a man that does not exist.

reign and rule on this earth, tempting me with an unrealistic view of one man's ability to measure up and deliver. The lie I believe exhausts my marriage if I do not identify it readily.

The second problem with my vision is that I begin to *justify my lie*. One lie always leads to another. As I commit to a belief that perfection should be found in my spouse, I begin to blame him for not meeting my expectations – my unreasonable expectations.

REAL MARRIAGE

But marriage vows are based on the premise that perfect love will never be found this side of eternity. The vows we speak on the day of our wedding when all of life's bumps lie ahead are made public to ensure that we know, and others know, that we are all in. Countless untruths circulate about married love, particularly the lie that *only* the one who meets your every need, want and desire is worthy of your love. But healthy marriage cannot be based on

continued thoughts of self-advancement. Real marriage requires tremendous reserves of humility, grace and mercy. It requires depths of compassion, kindness and desire to elevate the needs of another above your own. It requires a very different temperature of love than that which our misled generation states it will.

Someone has beautifully said that marriage is a process of falling in love time and time again, but always with the same person. And how true! Marriage is an overall cumulative climb toward the strengthening of *the* foundational relationship in society. In the weaker moments of my marriage or yours, the reminder that a perfect mate is not the goal is helpful. "Til death do us part" means loving through every bit of weakness, with a firm foundation of: "I am with you in this. I will stand by as God works in you, as He works in us." This is the stand-out beauty of committed, married love. This is the victory! And this is the truest blessing of being hand-in-hand with one man forever: we are learning through falling down, to fall in love repeatedly in new ways, with new resolve. RP

This is a modified version of a post that first appeared on Maryanne Helms' blog ForYourTomorrow.net.

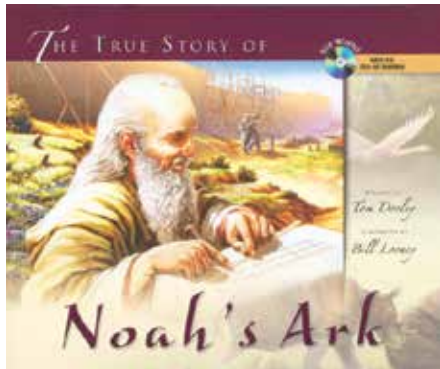
REVIEWS

DIG DEEPER INTO NOAH'S ARK & THE FLOOD

Jon Dykstra

THE TRUE STORY OF NOAH'S ARK

BY TOM DOOLEY AND BILL LOONEY
72 PAGES / 2003



What must Noah's Ark have looked like? In *The True Story of Noah's Ark*, author Tom Dooley and illustrator Bill Looney team up to show and tell us how things may have been.

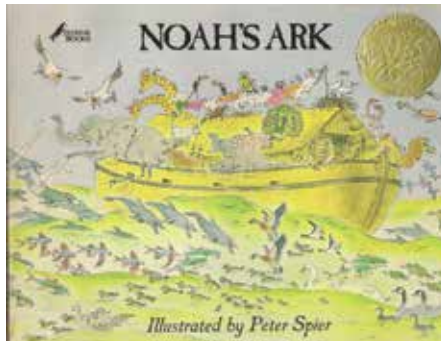
This is a brilliant book, but an admittedly speculative one – one friend noted that it was a tad ironic that this book was titled “The True Story” when so much of it was guesswork. While the book does contain a lot of phrases like *probably, perhaps, maybe, most likely, very likely, must have, may have, and might have*, what I like about the book is that it tells readers no lies – when the author is supposing, he is clear about it. He is also very respectful to the biblical account; his guesswork is built on a biblical foundation.

The highlight in the book is a four-page foldout of what the Ark may have looked like. We get a feel here for the sheer size of this vessel, and how it could very easily have fit all of these many animals inside.

My mom, a retired grade one teacher, said this would be great for younger children, 5 to 7 years old, but I know it was plenty interesting for me, too. This is a gorgeously illustrated book, and while quite speculative, it is always truthful.

NOAH'S ARK

BY PETER SPIER
48 PAGES / 1977



This is a beautifully illustrated, nearly wordless, account. Only three of the 48 pages contain text: two contain biblical quotations, and one page is given to an English translation of a 400-year-old poem about the Flood by Dutchman Jacobus Revius.

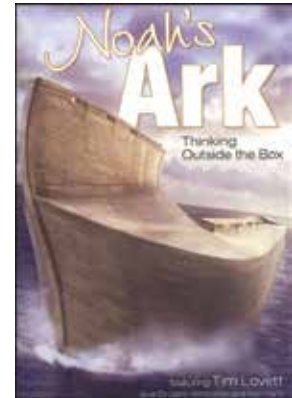
The rest is filled with seemingly simple, but incredibly detailed, pictures of Noah and his family as they build the Ark, bring in the animal pairs, and feed and care for them inside. Some of the detail is whimsical – a mouse is shown trying to push an elephant's foot off its fellow mouse's tail – but we also see the floodwaters overtaking the animals that were left behind. This is no cutesy, sanitized account!

I will add that a friend thought the pictures a tad too whimsical – that they were making a joke out of things. The only problem I had is one picture where it appears as if Noah (rather than, as the Bible says, God) is closing the Ark doors. But a reader can choose to assume God is on the other side sealing them shut.

Most Bible storybooks are problematic in that they so often mangle the biblical text. What I appreciate about Spier's account is that, because it is wordless, it actually requires that you go to the Bible to read the original account. So it is not meant to replace Bible reading, but is instead meant to spur further thinking on God's Word.

NOAH'S ARK: THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

DOCUMENTARY / 25 MIN / 2008



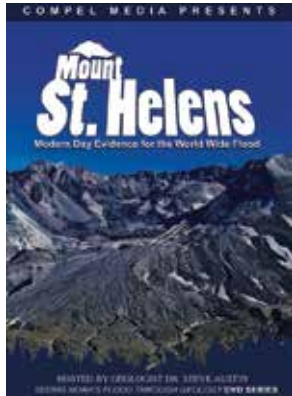
This documentary is a fun and fast look at what Noah's Ark might really have looked like.

The picture most of us have in our heads comes from classic paintings, which show an ungainly, rotund, oversized rowboat that simply doesn't look seaworthy. Or we see in our mind's eye those cute cartoon depictions we remember from our children's story bible that had an Ark so small the giraffes had to stick their necks out the top. No wonder, then, that so many people – Christians included – are skeptical about the Bible's account of Noah, his Ark and the Flood. But as Tim Lovett shows in this documentary (and in his book of the same name) close examination of what the Bible says gives us dimensions that have more in common with a modern ocean-going oil supertanker than the bathtub toy Ark we played with as a kid. Lovett has studied ancient shipping building practices, and finds in them a hint as to how the bow and stern might have looked. He argues that ancient (post-Flood) boats probably copied these distinctive and stabilizing design features from the Ark.

Crisp computer animation, large-scale models and a liberal dose of good-natured humor make this a DVD that parents and teens will enjoy. You can see the trailer and buy it on DVD or via download at AnswersInGenesis.org.

MOUNT ST. HELENS: MODERN DAY EVIDENCE FOR THE WORLD WIDE FLOOD

DOCUMENTARY / 36 MIN / 2012

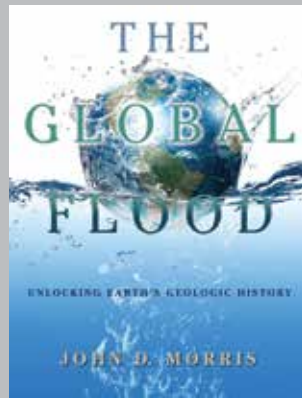


Thirty-four years ago Washington State's Mount St. Helens blew its top. The eruption on the morning of May 18, 1980, knocked 1,300 feet off the top of the mountain, sending a massive landslide down its slope, clearing out a forest of trees, and washing out the lake at its base. For nine straight hours it put out the energy equivalent of about *one Hiroshima-type atomic bomb every second*.

The sheer power of this eruption makes it interesting, but this event is of particular interest to creation scientists like Dr. Steve Austin. The eruption scoured the area clean, but also lay down layers and layers of rock strata from the volcanic ash. The eruption also caused the creation of deep, new, instantaneous canyons, that – if we didn't know better – looked to be many thousands of years old.

In other words, the Mount St. Helens eruptions showed that catastrophic events can rapidly create huge geological features. Dr. Austin shows how this has implications for the Flood, showing how it, too, could have rapidly laid down many layers of rock strata, and carved out even huge features, like the Grand Canyon. Just because it's massive does not mean it took long to form!

The DVD can be ordered at AnswersInGenesis.org and Creation.com or you can watch it online for \$3 at FloodGeologySeries.com.



THE GLOBAL FLOOD

BY JOHN D. MORRIS
176 PAGES / 2013

In many ways, John Morris's book is a repackaging of Steven Austin's *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe*. But while Austin's book was aimed at the academic reader, this new book is written in non-technical language, with many illustrative maps, diagrams and beautiful photographs that make it a great one for youth or adults who want to learn more about the Flood.

The Global Flood first presents the Biblical context such as the warnings of the apostle Peter that many will scoff in later times at the idea of a universal Flood.

In chapter 3, the author highlights scientific details in connection with the days of creation, the curse, the pre-Flood world, geologic changes to the earth as a result of the flood, and dispersal of the people from Babel.

Chapter 4 examines the global extent of the Flood. In chapter 5, the author considers historical references as well as oral traditions and related pagan myths.

In chapter 6 the author discusses many practical details such as where the water came from, and where it went at the end of the Flood. In this context he footnotes several important technical papers by Dr. John Baumgardner on Catastrophic Plate Tectonics. He later briefly touches on the causes of the subsequent ice age.

Chapter 7 is an extensive discussion of the catastrophic nature of the Flood. Thus we see perhaps the earliest flood deposit in North America, the Tapeats Sandstone which covers large sections of North America. At higher levels we find the St. Peter Sandstone, the Chattanooga Black Shale and even higher up the less extensive Morrison Formation. Obviously these maps demonstrate the uniquely widespread nature of the Flood.

Lastly, the author turns his attention to the significance of the Flood, focusing his discussion on New Testament references.

It is an attractive book, with the discussion packaged in easily accessible fashion, including having some important issues dealt with in separate sidebars. Youths and adults alike will find this a very useful and attractive reference on the Flood.

– Margaret Helder



On the most important political issue of our day, the Conservative government got an F.

REPORT CARD:

ASSESSING CANADA'S CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT ON 10 KEY ISSUES

by Mark Penninga

In a June 2011 article for *Reformed Perspective* I detailed 10 realistic goals that could be accomplished for our nation under this Conservative government if our leaders have the courage to lead and if citizens give them the encouragement and accountability to do so. Now that we are about halfway through this government's mandate, how are we faring on these issues?

1. GIVE ABORIGINALS THE RESPONSIBILITY AND HOPE THAT BELONGS TO ALL CANADIANS

GRADE: B+

Not long after ARPA published a policy report on this issue in 2012, we were very encouraged to see the federal government announce a number of bills and policies to increase accountability, equality, and opportunity for Canada's Aboriginal peoples. In June 2013, the *First Nations Financial Transparency Act* became law. Aboriginal MP Rob Clarke has also introduced a private member's bill C-428 entitled the *Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act*. And the government has also taken steps towards allowing private property ownership on reserves and increasing parental responsibility in education.

As encouraging as these changes are, they are small steps in light of the enormity of the problem. And given that the issue crosses into provincial responsibility, much more can also be done in having the provinces and federal government work towards a common vision.

2. REFORM THE CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

GRADE: C-

In light of all the opposition from all sides of the political spectrum to problematic sections of the Canadian Human Rights Act, it is striking that it took a private member's bill (Brian Storseth's C-304) to finally abolish Section 13 in the summer of 2013.

This was a huge victory, but the

current government can't take much credit for it, apart from not actively opposing it. Much more can be done to reform or even abolish the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

3. APPOINT SUPREME COURT JUDGES WHO RESPECT THEIR ROLE AS BEING UNDER THE LAW

GRADE: D

Mr. Harper has appointed six Supreme Court justices already, fundamentally changing the make-up of the court. Although legal scholars note that these judges aren't known for being "judicial activists," their record suggests that neither are they friends of social conservatism.

When the prostitution law was struck down in late 2013, five of the justices that made the decision were appointed by Stephen Harper. The same can be said of the "safe injection" Insite case (where a unanimous Court, including two Harper appointees, ordered the minister of health to allow the drug injection site in Vancouver to stay open), and the Whatcott case (where another unanimous Court, including two Harper appointees, held that Mr. Whatcott's flyers outlining the harms of extreme homosexuality were hate speech, upholding the fines against him).

4. REDUCE SPENDING, SHRINK GOVERNMENT, AND DECREASE OUR DEBT

GRADE: C

We are on track for having a "balanced budget" in 2015. Although that is commendable, we are far from paying back our enormous federal debt, now at \$616 billion (increasing by \$2 million every hour). To put that in context, one writer has noted:

Since first being elected in 2006, [Harper's] government has recorded only two annual surpluses, thanks to the previous Liberal government. If the deficit is finally eliminated in 2015-16,



We have to look at ourselves - what have we done to address the issues noted above?

it will have taken eight years since the 2009-10 recession and resulted in an increase of \$175 billion in federal government debt.¹

As for taxes and the size of government, when compared to GDP, government revenue is declining, which is encouraging. But that does not mean that the size of government itself is being rolled back. Given that this is a majority government, one could have expected much more significant cuts to the size of the government (including programs like the CBC).

5. DROP THE "ISM" FROM ENVIRONMENT

GRADE: B

This government is to be commended for standing out from the other mainstream parties in its hesitance to use "climate change" rhetoric which blames human activity as a primary cause of changing climates (since when do climates not change?). The government has also opposed carbon taxes and pulled back from the previous government's efforts to push "climate change" policy on the international community. But it has stopped short from openly challenging the deeply flawed science and economics that prevail on the issue in Canadian public policy.

...the government has also taken steps towards allowing private property ownership on reserves and increasing parental responsibility in education.

6. DEVELOP A GOOD PROSTITUTION LAW

GRADE: TBD

The Conservatives failed to draft a new law when it had the opportunity to do so. As a result, the Supreme Court struck down the current (and flawed) law in December of 2013. Thankfully, the Court gave Parliament one year to craft a new law. We will see whether Parliament follows through, and we will certainly encourage Parliament to do so. We sent them a policy paper on the issue two years ago which includes solid reasons to follow the Swedish model.

7. TAKE AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH TO ABORTION LAWS

GRADE: F

In 2013, the Conservative government actively opposed M-408, which would have condemned sex-selective abortions. They did this in spite of overwhelming public opposition to gendercide. And in 2012, little support was given to Stephen Woodworth's M-312 which would have formed a committee to investigate issues pertaining to preborn life.

Prime Minister Harper is convinced that this is an issue his government should not address, in spite of the more than 95 per cent vote of support for a gendercide policy at the party's 2013 convention and the abysmal reality that Canada is the only democracy

in the world without abortion legislation. Thankfully, in spite of the government's strong pro-abortion stance, Canadian society is increasingly realizing that we need a law. It is quite realistic that we will begin to see laws introduced and passed in the next decade, but we can't expect to see them come (at least federally) while Harper is Prime Minister.

8. ALLOW INCOME SPLITTING FOR FAMILY TAX PURPOSES

GRADE: TBD

It is reported that income splitting will be announced in the upcoming budget, to come into effect after the budget is balanced. We will be watching whether this will be announced and fulfilled. Of course, if spending was curbed sooner and more intensely, we could have seen income splitting a few years ago already.

9. INCREASE THE FERTILITY RATE NOW TO AVOID A DEMOGRAPHIC WINTER SOON

GRADE: D

The fertility rate declined once more, to 1.61. The demographic, social, and economic impact is going to be astronomical. Yet, because of the moral dimension associated with the issue (i.e., promoting marriage, the family, and a culture of life) the federal government has not been talking about it or taking measures to address it. Sadly, it looks like we are following Russia's example. In that country, they have realized too late that a nation without enough children to replace itself is on the road to implosion, with only immigration to counteract it. Immigration is only a partial answer, as it does little to address an aging population, and it creates new social challenges.

10. LISTEN TO EUROPEAN NATIONS TELLING US THAT MULTICULTURALISM IS A FAILURE

GRADE: B


Former Minister of Immigration Jason Kenney has introduced substantial

changes to Canada's immigration policy, with success. As one writer noted in late 2012, Kenney:

may not admit that he intends to abolish multiculturalism as an objective of immigration reform, but his immigration policies appear to be directed towards post-multiculturalism, a new order that avoids the excesses of multiculturalism without imposing the harsh policies of assimilation that are happening in Europe where he has been borrowing most of his ideas of reform.²

SUMMARY

It is encouraging to see real progress on some of these important issues - something we should not necessarily expect to see in an increasingly secular democracy. Yet, in light of this government claiming to hold conservative values, and being made up of many Christians, a majority of seats should embolden it to accomplish more than it has. This is especially true when it comes to educating the Canadian public and mainstream media about why these changes are needed.

But we can't stop at just grading our government. Canada is not a dictatorship - the citizens have many opportunities to shape public policy and public thinking. We have to look at ourselves - what have we done to address the issues noted above? Have we taken the time to build a personal relationship with our elected representatives, and then used that relationship to talk about matters like these? If not, what is stopping us? Let's give ourselves an honest grade, and then work to improve it. You can find more information on most of these issues, including suggestions for action, at www.ARPACanada.ca. 

ENDNOTE

¹Scott Clark and Peter DeVries, 'Harper is a fiscal conservative - except when he isn't' (30 Oct 2013) *iPolitics Insight*.

²Joe Rivera, 'The end of Canada's multiculturalism' (09 Nov. 2012) *Uncomplicated Mind* blog, online: <<http://anuncomplicatedmind.blogspot.ca/2012/11/the-end-of-canadas-multiculturalism.html>>.

The best news ever!

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:32-43)

by Kieran Beville

Three people were taken that day to a hill outside Jerusalem to be crucified. One died *in* sin. One died *to* sin. One died *for* sin.

Two were guilty. One was innocent. Two were paying their debt to society. One was paying our debt of sin.

Consider, for a moment, the one who died *to* sin: the repentant thief. He made some remarkable observations. His was a remarkable conversion. Of all the converts among the rich, the religious and the rejected, his is the most amazing.

Both of these men asked Jesus to save them. One of the men being crucified said, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” (vs. 39). His words were sarcastic and sneering.

The other man said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (vs. 42). His words were simple and sincere. Hear the response of Christ: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” The repentant thief rebukes the other criminal. He recognizes his own guilt and admits that he and the other man both fully deserve death. “We are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong” (vs. 41). Pilate and Herod said this but did not respond appropriately to that knowledge.

There was one essential difference between these two convicted criminals. One sought to be saved from his situation. The other sought to be saved from his sin, and he would hear the best news ever, “...today you will be with me in Paradise.”

CONVICTION COMES BEFORE CONVERSION

Notice how conviction comes before conversion. The repentant thief says, “...we are receiving the due reward of our deeds” (vs. 41).

What was happening in this man’s life? Was he afraid of falling into the hands of the living God? The Bible says: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). He understood what was happening. He sensed the eternal significance of the occasion.

Scripture also says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight” (Proverbs 9:10). Here in this unfolding drama there are two very different attitudes to Christ. The repentant thief admits his own sinfulness. What led to his conviction and conversion? Was it fear or was it that he heard Jesus say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (vs. 34)? Was it the fact that Jesus forgave His tormentors? Maybe he had heard about Jesus. God was certainly working in his heart. He not only rebuked the other thief, he not only admitted his guilt, but he confessed Jesus as the innocent one.

And then he did one more thing for which he will always be remembered. He said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (vs. 42). He looked at the battered and bruised body of Jesus and saw a king! And he anticipated Christ’s resurrection and coming of his kingdom. What a remarkable insight!



He didn't ask for a place of honor. All he dared to ask was to be remembered.

He didn’t ask for a place of honor. All he dared to ask was to be remembered. But he was speaking to the One who is able to do immeasurably more than we can imagine. In all His agony and anguish Jesus had time to win one more soul. The promise of paradise is great news.

We know so little about this man. What we do know is that at this point in his life he recognized he was a sinner and that Jesus could help him. That is all he needed to know.

TWO RESPONSES TO CHRIST AND THE CROSS

Our personal prejudices will sometimes have us writing off this person or that one as “not salvageable.” Perhaps we have our petty excuses for not reaching others. But in all the discomfort of the cross Jesus reaches out to this undeserving man. This shows the selfless nature of Christ. This shows that the excuses we offer for not reaching out to others are so petty. We should never give up on sinners.

The paths of three men met in death. Much of humanity is represented in these two responses to Christ and the cross. The cross is not good news for everybody. One of the dying men mocked Christ. The words of the hymn

Three Crosses by Helen Franzee Bower, put this idea beautifully:

*Three crosses on a lonely hill,
A thief on either side,
And, in between, the Son of God...
How wide the gulf, how wide!
Yet one thief spanned it with the words,
"Oh Lord, remember me";
The other scoffed and turned aside
To lost eternity.*


*Forsaken is the hilltop now,
And all the crosses gone,
But in believing hearts of men
The center cross lives on.
And still, as when these sentinels
First met earth's wondering view,
The presence of the Lord divides.
Upon which side are you?*

CHRIST'S EMPIRE

This repentant thief looked at Jesus and saw himself as he really was. When we look to Jesus we, too, see ourselves as we really are. This thief was deemed

One sought to be saved from his situation. The other sought to be saved from his sin...

unfit to live in the Roman Empire but God gave him a place in his empire.

Remarkably, the man who asked to be remembered expects Jesus to complete his work. All those who trust in the completed work of Christ can have the same assurance: "...today you will be with me in Paradise." This passage of Scripture shows us that it is possible to have (in this life) the assurance of sins forgiven, and that we can be sure of heaven after death. This must be the best news ever! 



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

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CREATIONWISE



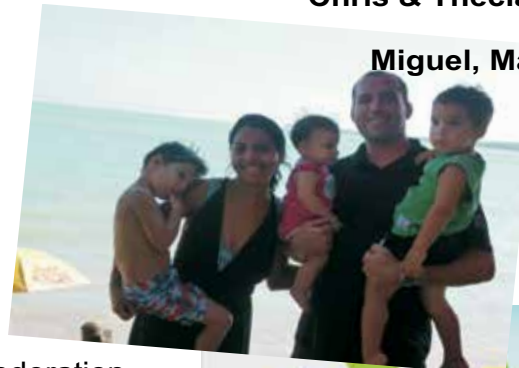
Needless to say, this would be the last time Mrs. Jenkins was allowed to bring something to the church potluck.

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Chris & Thecia Boersema

Miguel, Martin & Brianna



Since 1971 the Canadian and American Reformed Churches in western Canada/USA have been supporting mission work in Brazil.

Based in Recife and Maragogi, Chris Boersma continues the work of Mission Aid amongst the schools and churches of the reformed federation while supporting the missionaries Rev's Ken Wieske & Julius Vanspronsen.



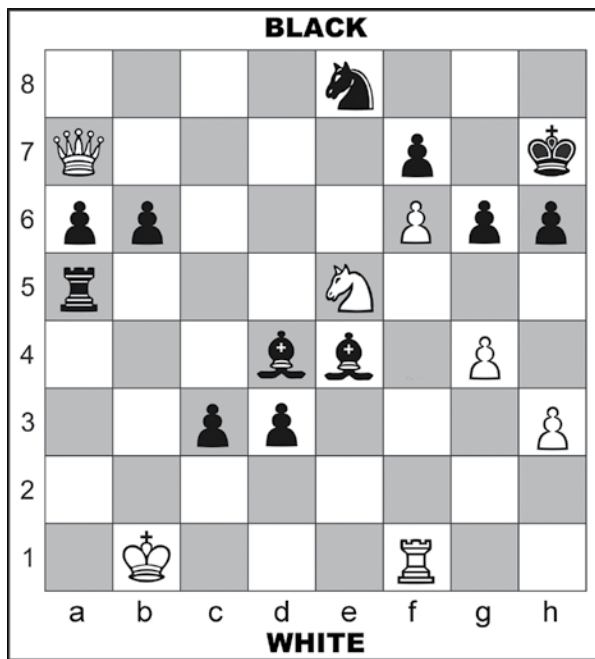
Chris was born in Canada but spent a large part of his childhood in Brazil during the term of his father, missionary Ralph Boersema. Chris & his wife Thecia have 3 children and are expecting a fourth from the hand of the Lord!

We covet your prayers as our brother continues to labour in the field.



ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #209



Riddle for Punsters #209

"No Kidding It's Serious"

What advice did the father goat give to the youngest of his offspring?

"Listen, k ___, do not tease those older male goats. Do you know what the ___ ifications could be if you try to b ___ heads with those stubborn guys?"

Problem to Ponder #209

"Parts of the Human Body Word Scramble"

For example, sungl would be lungs

slalc _____
 lecsum _____
 thare _____
 narib _____
 chostma _____

padenixp _____
 seesnittin _____
 skinyed _____
 slaken _____
 laneoit _____

WHITE to Mate in 4

Or, If it is BLACK's Move,

BLACK to Mate in 2

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #208



WHITE to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. Nxp ch K-N1
2. N-Q7 ch BxN
3. Qxp mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Na4xb6 + Kc8-b8
2. Nb6-d7 + Be6xd7
3. Qb2xb7 ++

BLACK to Mate in 4

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- R-B8 ch
2. RxR N-K7 ch
3. K-R1 QxR ch
4. B-N1 QxB mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Rf5-f1 +
2. Rb1xf1 Nd4-e2 +
3. Kg1-h1 Qf6xf1 +
4. Bh2-g1 Qf1xg1 ++

Answers to Riddle for Punsters

#208 - "Shoe Store Sums"

When some footwear salesmen had a contest, mentally adding up their sales for the day, everyone figured that Jacob would win. As one of them stated, "Heel be a shoe-in to be the first to figure out his daily toe-tal."

Answers to Problem to Ponder

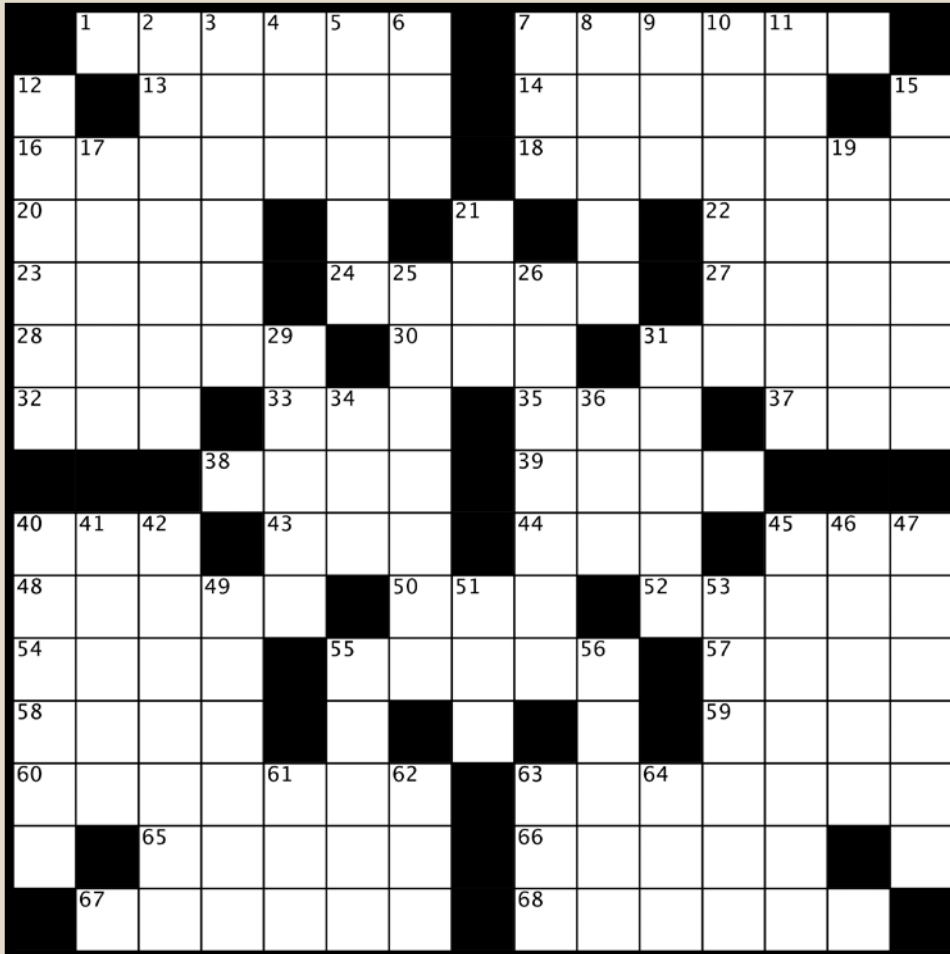
#208 - "Olympic Sibling Rivalry"

In the 2014 Winter Olympics, four brothers from Lutherania competed in downhill skiing: Johann, Klaas, Heindrick and Igor. Klaas had a better score than Heindrick. Igor is the second oldest. The highest scorer was born first whereas the score of the youngest was lower than that of only two brothers. Igor scored only slightly higher than Klaas. Determine their placing "relative" to each other as well as their relative ages.

Igor scored only slightly higher than Klaas who scored higher than Heindrick. **Igor is second oldest** so cannot be highest scorer (who is oldest), and so the **oldest and the highest scorer must be Johann, followed in score by Igor then Klaas then Heindrick**. The score of the youngest was lower than that of only two brothers so **Klaas must be youngest**, so **Heindrick is left to be third oldest**, with (as already determined) **Johann as oldest and Igor second oldest (as given)**.

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

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SERIES 20 #11

ACROSS

- 1. British desserts
- 7. List of important people
- 13. Sri Lanka coin
- 14. Playful prank
- 16. There is a North and a South of this
- 18. Plant that has pinkish-purple flowers
- 20. Observed
- 22. Heavy book
- 23. What comes with an entrée
- 24. US/Cdn airforce command
- 27. Small wingless insects that like hair
- 28. Huge, archaically speaking
- 30. Larger container for liquids
- 31. Units of heredity

- 32. Lunar dune buggy, for short
- 33. Lyric poem
- 35. Unite together
- 37. Obtain
- 38. Boot heel attachment
- 39. Long periods of time
- 40. Tree
- 43. French one
- 44. No room at the ____ (backwards)
- 45. Pretend
- 48. Bend over
- 50. Joining word
- 52. Soaring bird
- 54. Check up of skills
- 55. Loot that is hidden away
- 57. Train road
- 58. Report (abbr.)
- 59. Loves film, a _____ file
- 60. A short aria
- 63. Enclosing with an

- wall of earth or stone to confine a river
- 65. To follow stealthily online
- 66. Starts the day for business
- 67. Live at
- 68. A piece of landed property

DOWN

- 2. National independence
- 3. One who fashions objects on a lathe
- 4. Greek prefix meaning "upon"
- 5. Gather information (shortened)
- 6. Body of water
- 7. Team shout
- 8. Upright (two words)
- 9. Station (abbr.)
- 10. Small dot

- 11. Repeating sound
- 12. A group of indeterminate number
- 15. The most liberated
- 17. Mine, in Germany
- 19. Master of ceremonies
- 21. Time period
- 25. Pig out on food (two words)
- 26. Goes to a lecture
- 29. To dispose of and finish with (two words)
- 31. Mythical wish granter
- 34. Color of a certain horse
- 36. A charged atom or molecule
- 40. Related to stars
- 41. Male bovine raised for beef
- 42. House of shelter for pilgrims
- 45. In opposition to

- 46. Sound made by two wine glasses
- 47. A magical talisman or charm
- 49. Aquatic mammals
- 51. Arrest
- 53. Secrets of nature
- 55. Satisfied the appetite
- 56. Camel's characteristics
- 61. Terminal endpoint identifier (for short)
- 62. Mimic
- 63. Run away to marry, minus L and P
- 64. Gamble

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



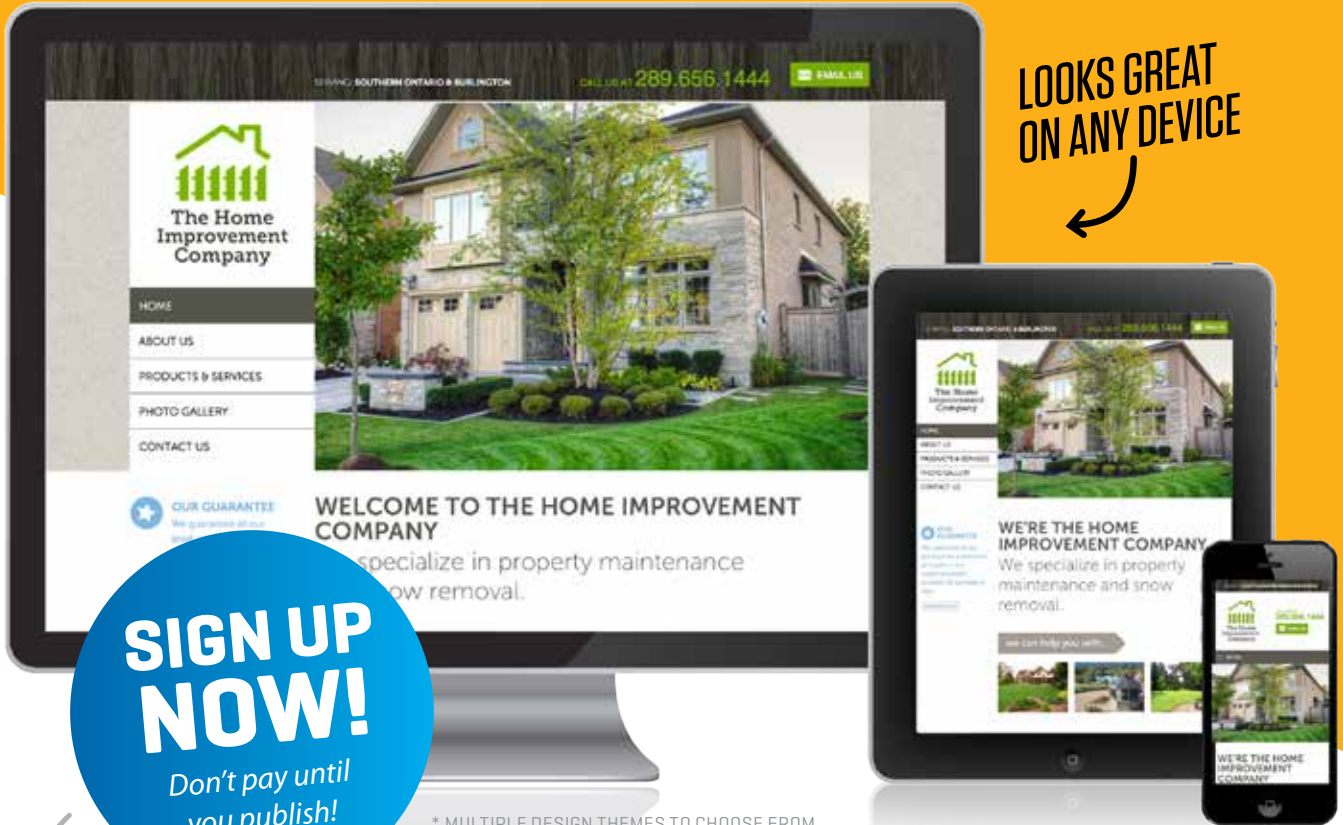
SERIES 20 #10

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