

**REFORMED**

# Perspective

A MAGAZINE  
FOR THE  
CHRISTIAN  
FAMILY

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April 2011

**Were there  
fossils  
in Paradise?**



# “Just wait until I’m elected. . .”

## In an increasingly unchristian country, should Christians on the campaign trail stay quiet about their convictions?

Editorial

Jon Dykstra

How should a Christian politician approach the campaign trail? If ours was still a Christian country it wouldn't be very difficult for a Christian to get elected. But it's not Christian, and it is difficult.

So how then, can we get Christians elected to Parliament? What do we need to do; what sort of campaign strategy should we employ? Would it be wise or foolish for a Christian candidate to loudly champion the unborn's right to life as he goes from house to house door-knocking?

### Quiet and careful

The answer to this last question would seem obvious. If Canada is a godless country then talking about abortion on the campaign trail – or talking about gay marriage, euthanasia, or any other “Christian issue” – would be a sure way of *not* getting elected.

So what's the alternative?

Well, instead of being loudly Christian, what if we tried a more cautious, more strategic approach? If our goal is to get more Christians elected by voters who are increasingly unchristian then the best strategy would seem to be the one currently being employed by Christian candidates across the country. They are engaged in a stealth campaign – the “just wait until I'm elected” strategy.

This is the strategy that some think Stephen Harper is using on abortion – “Sure he won't do anything about it now, but *just you wait 'til he's elected with a majority*; then we'll see things happen!” However it seems unlikely Harper is actually a secret pro-lifer, biding his time. He has never given us any indication he's pro-life.

But while there's no reason to think Harper is employing this strategy, most Christian candidates *are* making use of this cautious, careful approach. We can see the evidence that they are putting this strategy into action in how many candidates are listed as pro-life on the Campaign Like Coalition website (see CandidateQuestions.notlong.com) and how very little we have heard from them about the unborn during the campaign. Have we heard anything at all? No matter how strong their personal convictions – no

matter how grieved these Christian politicians may be knowing that 100,000 unborn children are being killed each year – they are committed to saying nothing about it. On their websites, in their brochures, and in their speeches – nothing at all! They have committed themselves to this stealth approach.

### Problems with this strategy

In our increasingly godless country, this may be exactly what a Christian has to do to get elected. If he doesn't employ this strategy, it's likely he won't be able to win. But now imagine, using this stealth strategy, a Christian does get elected. What happens next? This strategy may have helped him get elected, but it also creates at least a couple of problems for any Christian who employs it.

#### 1) *If silence is the price for success, when does a politician stop paying?*

If a Christian candidate had to be quiet about his convictions to get elected, what changes have after he wins? There is always another election just around the corner – Canada has seen four federal elections in the last seven years! If silence is what it took to get into office, isn't continued silence what it will take to stay there?

So one notable problem with this stealth strategy is that it doesn't have an expiry date. The very reason a candidate will decide to use this strategy – an electorate hostile to his values – is the same reason he'll keep using it, endlessly. This is the trap that many a good Christian politician has fallen into, only regaining their courage to speak up once they decide they aren't running for re-election anyway.

#### 2) *From whence comes our mandate?*

Imagine now that the stealth strategy works on a grand scale. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> we wake up to discover that so many Christian politicians are heading to Parliament they make up an easy majority and can set the legislative agenda!

Great news! But if these men and women haven't brought up “Christian issues” during the election how will the electorate react

should such changes start being made? Under this “moral majority” we may be able to protect the unborn, bring in income splitting, and cut all funding to the CBC, but the electorate never gave us a mandate to make these changes, and they will be furious. Come the next election, members of this moral majority, and any changes they made, will be punted out the door.

So another notable problem with this stealth approach is that while it may get Christians into positions of power, it doesn’t get them there with a mandate to make the changes we are after. And without the voters behind them, any changes that are made will be quickly unmade.

### Re-evaluating our aims

The biggest problem with this stealth approach is not that it is ineffective, but that it is dishonest. We know we live in an unchristian country and we’re trying to trick voters into electing Christians!

We’ve misplaced our priorities. Power has become our goal, even though this power is purchased with our silence. In our increasingly unchristian country we are contributing to the slide by shutting up our mouths.

Compare this stealth strategy to what God has called us to do:

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

The terrible irony in all of our campaign strategizing is that, while the Lord calls on us to be a light to the world – to speak his Truth loudly and attractively – we’ve decided instead to offer Him seats in Parliament that we’re purchasing with our strategic silence.

So how should a Christian politician approach the campaign trail? He should approach it as yet another area of life into which God’s light should shine. We must be silent no longer, and must count our victories not in seats won, but in obedience given.



## On the outside, screaming in

*The best way to exert influence can be from outside the halls of power*

To have influence in politics you have to be in power, right? Not so fast, says Milton and Rose Friedman. In their book *Free to Choose* the two make a compelling case that the most influential political party in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one that was never in power – the Socialist Party. They note:

“Because it had no hope of electoral success on a national level. . . it could afford to be a party of principle. . . It got less than 1 percent in 1928 and only 2 percent in 1932 (for Norman Thomas). Yet almost every economic plank in its 1928 presidential platform has by now been enacted into law.

The Friedmans wrote this in 1980, so it took just fifty years for the platform of a party that no one voted for to be adopted.

In Canada the best example of this same sort of “on the outside, screaming in” type influence is Svend Robinson. He was an NDP Member of Parliament (MP) from 1979-2004 but was never a part of any government. However, despite always being on the outside looking in, he was an enormously influential advocate for the homosexual lifestyle because, no matter how fierce the opposition to his views, he would never be shut up. So during his time in office:

- He went from being the first openly homosexual MP, to one of several
- “Gay marriage” went from being unthinkable to a right recognized by the courts.
- Homosexuality went from being widely viewed as a perversion to being celebrated in public school curriculum.

He was Canada’s loudest homosexual, and as the Friedman’s noted about the Socialist Party, it was precisely because he was *out* of power that he was free to speak out – *shout out!* – about what were, back then, controversial political positions.

Better to be on the outside with a megaphone, than on the inside with a muzzle!

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**TOM KNEW IT WAS CRUCIAL TO ESTABLISH HE WAS THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS**

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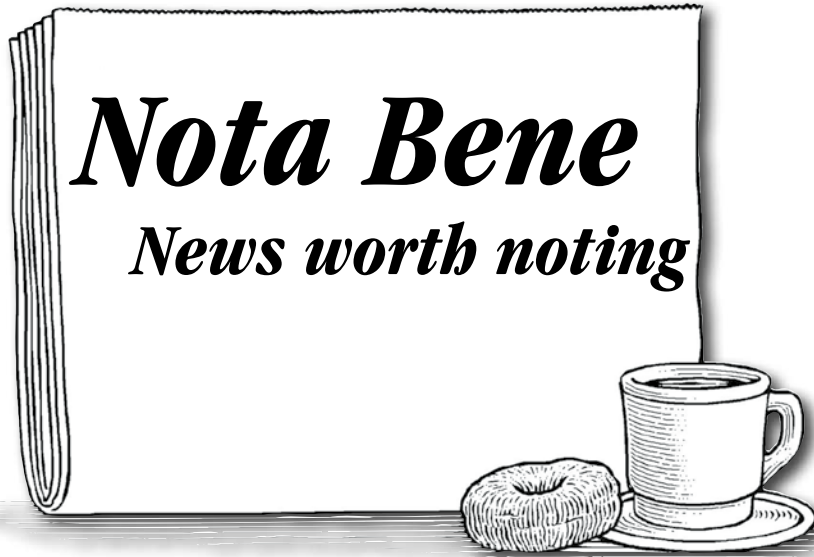
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**The 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment and Stephen Harper**

*by Jon Dykstra*



Despite all that our Prime Minister has done to dispel it, a rumor persists (particularly in our Reformed church circles) that he is pro-life. He is merely biding his time, so it is said, until he has a majority; then he will bring in legislation to help the unborn!

But on what basis is this rumor being circulated? Stephen Harper has repeatedly stated he won't do anything for the unborn. In January again, when asked by journalist Peter Mansbridge in a nationally televised interview "Would you reopen the abortion issue?" Harper answered, "No, no, I've spent my political career trying to stay out of that issue." In early April he was happy to repeat himself, telling reporters that he had "no intention of opening up" issues such as abortion if the Conservatives secure a majority.

And yet the rumor persists.

We must stop spreading it!

God in the 9th Commandment forbids us from bearing false witness and that includes gossip. Harper has told Canadians unequivocally that he likes the abortion status quo – a status quo that involves the murder of 100,000 unborn children each year. So he's made it clear he is *not* pro-life. . . and anyone who says different needs to stop gossiping.

**Is the US still capitalist?**

*by Jon Dykstra*

Government entitlements, including Social Security, Medicare and unemployment insurance, now make up



more than 1/3 of the total wages paid to Americans. According to TrimTabs Investment Research, the portion the government hands out is now up to 35 per cent this year, compared to just 21 per cent in 2000 and 10 per cent in 1960. This number doesn't even include the wages paid to all the various government employees at the federal, state and municipal levels of government.

These figures prompts the question, is the US still a capitalist economy?

Source: CNBC, 03/08/11 [www.cnbc.com/id/41969508](http://www.cnbc.com/id/41969508) "Welfare State: Handouts Make Up One-Third of U.S. Wages" by John Melloy

**Cross-dressing a new right for British convicts**

*by Anna Nienhuis*

Prisoners in England now have the right to access clothing and makeup to make them feel comfortable in their "acquired gender," as long as it doesn't pose a security risk. This means transsexual men will be allowed padded bras and foundation to cover up beard growth, among other things, while women can attain "sophisticated prostheses" on the list of allowances.

The British government seems to be going always one step further with recent laws and legal reforms aimed at placating extreme demands made by the homosexual, bisexual and transgender movement. Children can be given in adoption to such couples, while "Christians who teach that sodomy is a sin can be prohibited from acting as foster parents."

Laws such as these are sad indications of the state the world is in and the direction it is heading as tolerance takes on a whole new meaning in some areas and becomes ominously missing

in other areas, such as our Christian freedom to publicly state and live by our beliefs.



## Time to stop taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood

by Anna Nienhuis

Pro-life advocates in the United States feel momentum is on their side in the abortion debate, and a group of women took the opportunity in March to go on a week-long cross-country tour to campaign for the elimination of taxpayer subsidization of Planned Parenthood, America's largest abortion provider.



Lila Rose, the president of Live Action

The U.S. House of Representatives has suddenly made defunding Planned Parenthood a priority, and pro-life advocates want to ensure that this continues and that their support is strong and clear.

Naturally, Planned Parenthood was less impressed with this shift, and their supporters were at each of the pro-life tour's stops to protest. They pointed out that Planned Parenthood does do work besides abortion, and these cuts would impact that other work – giving woman medical check-ups and birth control – as well. Marilyn Musgrave, leader of the pro-life tour, had a simple solution, saying, "If you really want to do women's services, just separate the two. . . and don't ask our tax dollars to fund abortions."

Planned Parenthood is already on thin ice with the voting public after a recent series of undercover videos showed them to be facilitating secret abortions, rather than reporting the abuse and sexual exploitation of minors. A pro-life group, Live Action (LiveAction.org) sent in actors, posing as juvenile victims of sex trafficking, and secretly taped the clinic staff, who, instead of calling the police, counseled the "minor" on how to cover it up.

Let us hope and pray that the wind has indeed shifted in a pro-life direction, and that God will bless the efforts of the pro-life movement to be heard in support of positive political decisions regarding abortion.

Source: John Jessup's "Pro-life activists embark on anti-abortion tour", March 10, 2011; www.cbn.com

## Sex doesn't sell, studies show

by Anna Nienhuis

*Movieguide* (www.movieguide.org) has been studying and reporting on the content of top rated movies since 1992, and in 2010 found again that family-oriented, clean movies are consistently more successful at the box office. As well as evaluating plot and storylines, *Movieguide* also looks at the extent of sexuality, swearing, drug-use and alcohol-use in movies.

Ted Baehr, the founder of *Movieguide*, reported that, "movies with no foul language, sex, nudity or drug abuse averaged the most money at the theatrical box office in America and Canada." These were not small differences either. For example, 2010 films devoid of swearing or profanities averaged \$50.44 million at the box office, while movies with more than 25 instances of such language averaged less than half that, at \$23.42 million. Similarly, movies with no sex scenes averaged \$55.44 million, while mild or implied sex scenes brought that down to \$35.72 million.

These numbers are consistent with studies *Movieguide* has done over the past 19 years. They've noticed a



marked increase in movies with "at least some positive Christian, biblical, and/or moral content" in recent years so they believe their work is making an impact on Hollywood. . . even if movie-makers are doing it solely to increase their bottom line.

Source: Drew Zahn's "Guess again! Sex doesn't sell," Feb. 21, 2011; www.wnd.com

## Can Canada be a "Child Safe Nation"?

by Anna Nienhuis

Canada Family Action has launched a national multi-media campaign with the slogan, "Child porn is not porn – it's a crime scene" in an attempt to pressure national parties to pass Bill C54, the "Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act" before the next federal election.

The campaign has attracted huge support from Canadians, with over 88,000 signatures on petitions to date, and thousands of individuals contacting their local Members of Parliament on the subject. However, there has also been shocking resistance to the Bill, with mandatory minimum sentences for pedophiles being called "unfair" and others saying that such sentencing practices may have a negative impact on rehabilitation.

Nathan Cooper, from Canada Family Action, states that:

"the point of Bill C54 is to protect kids from sexual assault, rape and exploitation. . . Children's Charter rights to safety override any supposed rights of pedophile criminals."

Source: "Child porn is not porn campaign becomes controversial", March 3, 2011; no-apologies.ca and childsafenation.ca



Photo courtesy of Canada Family Action

### The debt clock tour

Do you know how high the national debt is? The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) spent February and March trying to make sure that you did.

In the lead-up to the federal election the CTF – a lobby group that pushes for lower taxes – toured the country with a trailer carrying the “National Debt Clock.” This clock was equipped to, in real time, keep Canadian updated on just how much the fed-



eral government owes, and what their personal share of that debt is.

The Tour traveled right across the country, and concluded as the writ was dropped for the Federal Election. Though the tour is now complete, the national

debt is still increasing at a rate of \$1,284 per second. Hopefully the Tour will succeed in making the debt we are leaving for the next generation an issue in this election.

Source: <http://taxpayer.com/node/14281>

### Muslim mob attacks witnessing Ethiopian Christians

by Anna Nienhuis

Ethiopia, a predominantly Christian country with the right to freedom of religion, is experiencing problems with pocket areas where Islam is the dominant religion. This was illustrated recently, when a group of Christian students who were handing out Bibles while on a mission trip to one of these

areas was attacked by a Muslim mob. Seventeen people were injured.

Jonathan Racho, a spokesperson for International Christian Concern, says this right of freedom of religion, which includes propagating your beliefs, “is not being respected” and is calling on the Ethiopian government to take action in support of this freedom.

Source: Charlie Butts “Muslim mob assaults Christian students in Ethiopia”, March 6, 2011; [www.onenewsnow.com](http://www.onenewsnow.com)

### Peruvians united against abortion and gay marriage

by Anna Nienhuis

Peru is standing strong after a recent wave of external pressure to legalize gay marriage and abortion. Presidential candidates for the upcoming elections, some backed by big American money, have proposed legalizing gay civil unions. Planned Parenthood has flooded the country with condoms and is seeking to lower the age of sexual consent to 14, despite the fact that Peruvians fear this will lead to the sexual exploitation of young people, as pre-marital sex is currently very rare in Peru.

A public opinion poll of the Peruvian people came back with unequivocal results: almost 76 per cent of Peruvians oppose the legalization of abortion, with a further 7 per cent unsure, and 69.5 per cent oppose gay civil unions, with almost 75 per cent against homosexual “marriage.” The current president cheered these results, which will hopefully discourage the pressuring parties from continuing their campaign to change Peru.

Source: Matthew Hoffman’s “Peruvians overwhelmingly reject abortion, gay ‘marriage’ in new poll”; [lifesitenews.com](http://lifesitenews.com), Feb. 17, 2011

### Internet voting? Just vote no.

by Jon Dykstra

When the Liberal Party unveiled their platform, part of it included directing Elections Canada to develop an “online voting option” to help increase voter turnout.

The justification for this venture? For the “2008 federal election, voter turnout in Canada dipped to an all-time low of less than 59 percent.” The Liberals seem to think that the reason for this low turnout has something to do with voters finding it too difficult to get to the polls, so they want to make it easier to vote. Of course voters in the past didn’t find it a burden to walk or drive to the polls, so what has changed? Is this decline caused by voting difficulties. . . or by apathy?

Not only have the Liberals misdiagnosed the problem, the solution they’ve proposed is likely to *increase* the voter apathy.

Canada’s present electoral system is the most transparent in the world and can be trusted by all voters. Our paper ballot system, and the inclusion of representatives from every political party when the votes are counted, prevent not only the possibility of voter fraud but prevent even the appearance of it.

In the US, conspiracy theories abound, and accusations of vote tampering are commonplace every election, and this distrust is only going up as their vote counting is being turned over to electronic counting machines. Without a literal paper trail, voters can’t know for certain that their vote really does count. And creating an electoral system that voters aren’t sure they can trust is one certain way of *increasing* voter apathy.

For more on this topic, see the January 2010 article “Do machines count better than men?” which is featured right now on the front page of [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca).



# What if a candidate had courage?

## A politician eager to speak out might put out a brochure that looks like this

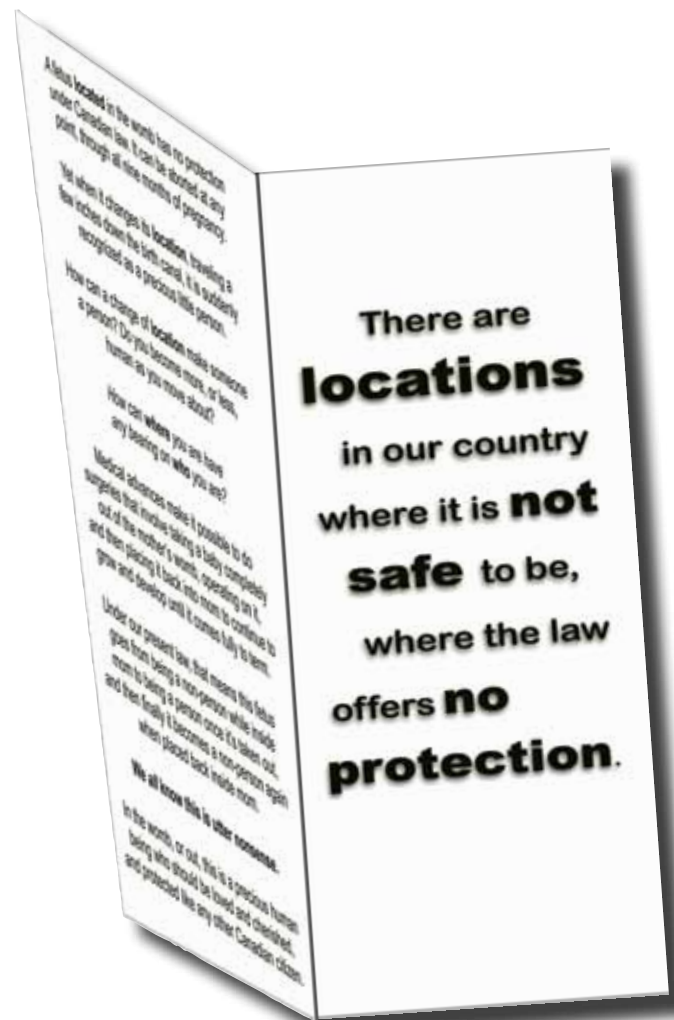
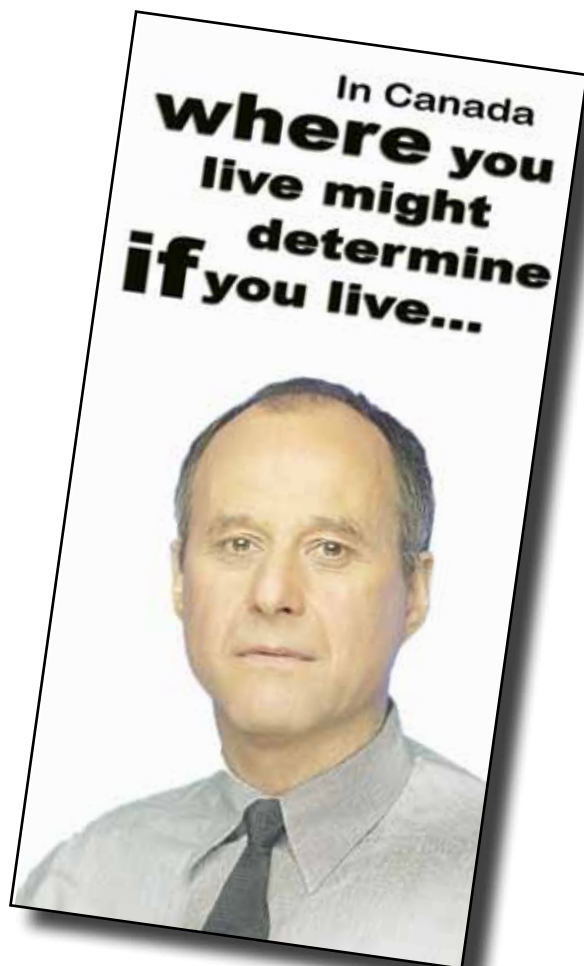
by Jon Dykstra

Few politicians speak out in defense of something unpopular in the hopes of convincing people to see it their way. It happens so rarely most of us accept that it would be silly for a politician to do it: "If a guy running for office speaks up for the unborn on the campaign trail, he is going to lose, so why would he ever do *that?*"

But what if a politician recognized that there is something more important in the political sphere than vote totals? What if a candidate understood that there is another

way of measuring success that has nothing to do with coming in first, and has everything to do with communicating the truth as widely, as loudly, and as compellingly as possible? What if a politician sought to honor God by speaking out *during* the campaign, instead of putting it off until when/if they won?

Well this sort of politician would put out brochures that made arguments and started conversations. He would put out brochures that looked like this:





## Location, location, location

In Canada *where* you live might determine *if* you live.

There are **locations** in our country where it is not safe to be, where the law offers no protection.

A fetus **located** in the womb has no protection under Canadian law. It can be aborted at any time through the nine months of pregnancy.

Yet when it changes **location** and travels a few inches out the birth canal, it is suddenly recognized as a precious little person.

How can a change of **location** make someone a person? Do you become more human (or less) when you move from one room to the next? How can *where* you are have any bearing on *who* you are?

Medical advances make it possible to take a fetus completely out of its mother, treat the child, and then place it back inside mom to continue developing until it comes to term.

Under our present law, this child is recognized as a person when it leaves its mother's womb but stops being a person when it returns inside.

### **This is nonsense.**

We need laws that protect all babies. . . wherever they live.

In Canada *where* you live shouldn't determine *if* you live.

*For one other "If only candidates had courage" brochure see "Four Stupid Arguments Against Gay Marriage. . . and one good one!" under "Politics" in the "Resource Articles" section of ReformedPerspective.ca*

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We need laws that protect all babies... where ever they live.

In Canada  
**where you  
live shouldn't  
determine  
if you live...**



# Deliverance from this body of death

by Christine Farenhorst

During the late 1600s, during the reign of James II of England and VII of Scotland, there were various rebellions and battles in those countries. The tyranny of James drove his Scottish subjects to take up arms against him. Sir John Cochrane was one of these subjects. Surrounded, at a certain battle, by James II's troops, he was captured and imprisoned in Berwick. Tried by a court, he was condemned and sentenced to die on the scaffold. The only thing that was keeping him from the grave was the death warrant – a warrant that, after it had been signed by the king, would be sent by post to Berwick, Scotland.

The prison days were long, but not long enough for Sir John. For was it not so that each day done brought him closer to death? He was fitful, uneasy, and filled with foreboding as to what would happen to his wife and his children – his three sons and his one daughter.

The heavy oak door which kept the prisoner in his cell, grated open one afternoon, and the keeper allowed a visitor to appear in the doorway. A young woman stood silhouetted against the dim light of the corridor. In an instant, Sir John was on his feet, quickly stepping forward to embrace the young lady, drawing her into his dank cell. She was his only daughter and the apple of his eye.

"Grizel! My child! How come you here?"

"You've only got a short while," the keeper interjected, before he turned, closing the door, leaving the father and his child together.

"God help and comfort you." Sir John spoke while he led his daughter to a chair. "I was afraid I should die," he continued, "before seeing you again. But here you are, and I am blessed and I do give you my last blessing."

"No, not your last blessing," the girl rejoined hastily and rather violently, "because you will live. I know you will live, father."

Fearing that his daughter bordered hysteria, Sir John bode her to be calm, to keep her mind still and to simply rejoice in this last time together. But he did not heed his own advice and regarding the girl with love, he almost began to weep. "My own child," he said, "there is now no hope. Within three days you and my sons will be fatherless and your mother will be a widow."

"Three days," Grizel repeated dully, but then added, "No, it shall not be. I just know it shall not be."

"Yes, it will be so, child," her father repeated louder than before and firmly, "you must not live in false sentiments."

"But there is hope," she cried, "for is it not so that grandfather, the Earl of Dundonald, is the friend of the king's con-

fessor? Well then, he will most certainly beg for your life and it may be. . . ."

"No, my child," the father said again emphatically, "It cannot be. The king has already signed the order for my execution and the messenger carrying the post is on the way to Berwick at this very moment."

"Oh, father," the girl sobbed, hiding her face in her kerchief, and then standing up and clinging to him, all the while repeating "Oh, father!"

The jailer returned, admonishing Grizel to let go of her father, gruffly adding that it was time for her to leave. She obeyed the man, and moved towards the door. One last bleak glance over her shoulder and she disappeared into the corridor almost as if she had not been there at all. Sir John was once more left alone within the confines of four solid stone walls.

## The rider comes

The next evening, by some act of providence, the rain fell in torrents and the wind howled upon the wilds in Tweedmuir, which for many misty miles stretched out over heath and brushwood. It was an area through which the king's post must pass on horse before reaching Berwick and its prison. The rider of the post, confounded by the bad weather, was slowed to a trot. Straining to see through the fog and sheets of rain, he was surprised to suddenly feel his bridle grasped by a hand, the horse immediately halting.

"Dismount!" a muffled voice commanded, and a pistol pointed menacingly at the dispatcher's chest.

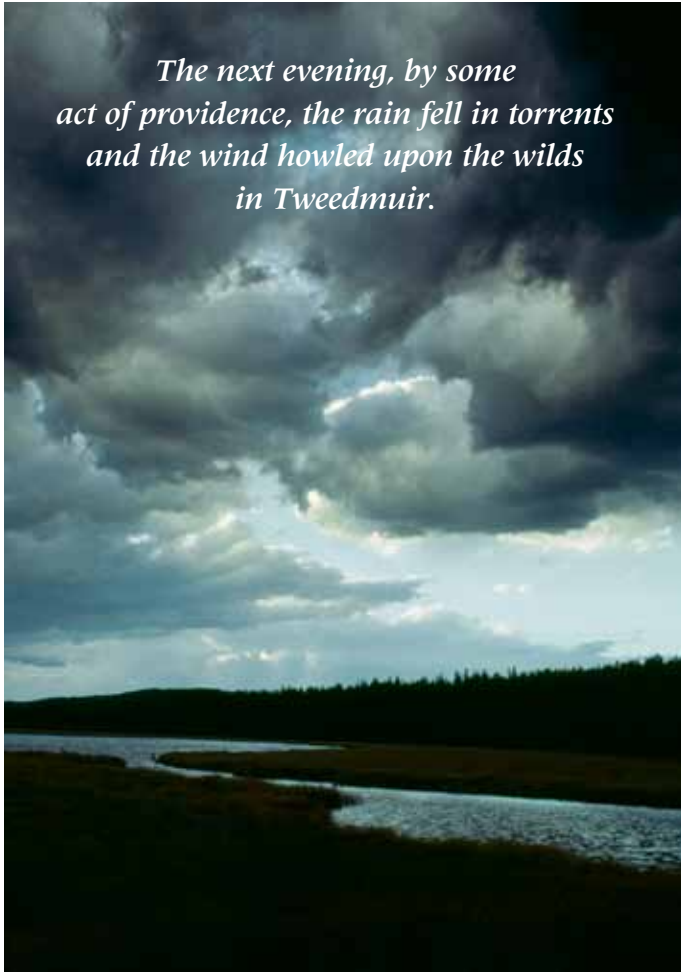
When he hesitated, the highwayman let go of the bridle and pulled the rider off his steed. The man fell on his face in the muck and lay senseless for a few moments. When he came to, the leather bag which contained the mail, including the signed death warrant for Sir John Cochrane, had disappeared together with his assailant.

The constable of Berwick was hard put the next morning as he studied the area where the robbery had taken place. Rain had washed away footprints and there was not much evidence to go on to trace to which place the robber might have been bound. Scratching his head, he was perplexed. The mail was gone – stolen – and the execution of Sir John Cochrane must be postponed until another death warrant was signed and sent.

## The rider returns

Sir John Cochrane's father, the Earl of Dundonald, in the meanwhile, begged for his son's life through his friend,

*The next evening, by some act of providence, the rain fell in torrents and the wind howled upon the wilds in Tweedmuir.*



the king's confessor. Two weeks passed and word came that the intercession had been fruitless. A second death warrant had been signed by the king and was again being sent via express rider to Berwick. Another day or so would mean certain execution.

"It is the will of God," whispered Sir John, "and the will of heaven must be done."

For a second time the man carrying the post rode across the muir of Tweedmouth. This time it was a clear night. There was none of the storm and rain that had so characterized his former run. The moon shone over the desolate waste land, casting pale shadows on every bush and copse around him. Spurring his horse on to by-pass what he deemed a miserable memory, the rider was suddenly thrown backward as his horse reared violently in reaction to a pistol shot. The postman fired his own pistol into the air in retaliation. The horse reared again and the rider was thrown onto the ground. A boot sank upon his chest; a dagger flashed before his eyes and when a gruff voice demanded his arms, he fearfully and instantly gave up his pistol.

"Go!" the voice commanded, "Depart from this scene! But leave the horse and mail, and I won't harm you."

The man half-sat up, then crawled away a few feet before finally daring to stand up. Walking backwards, his eyes never leaving the hooded figure, he then, at a motion from his attacker, turned and fled towards Berwick. The robber, getting on the horse he had stolen, took off in the opposite direction.

The preparations for Sir John's execution, although well under way, were stalled once again. And, much to his chagrin, the second death warrant also having been absconded, the Sheriff of Berwick scratched his head more in anger than in perplexity.

Before two weeks had passed, the Earl of Dundonald entered his son's prison cell. He had against all hope, at long last, procured a pardon from the king. Free to go, Sir John hastened to his home, his father at his side, where the family received him with joy. And as they sat around the table in the great hall, all marveled that in God's providence things had gone in this manner.

While they were thus rejoicing and wondering, there was a knock at the door. A stranger stood outside, a stranger wearing a coarse cloak around his body and holding a scarf in front of his face.

"After you have read these," he said with a gruff voice to Sir John, handing him two letters as he spoke, "make sure you burn them."

Sir John opened the letters and glanced at them. "These are," he said softly but clearly so that everyone heard him, "my death-warrants."

The room went totally silent and everyone stared at the stranger.

"By what name shall I thank you?" Sir John said at last.

The stranger pulled away the scarf, dropping the cloak and all could see that it was Grizel.

### **That great heavenly truth**

We, all of us, labor under a death warrant. We, all of us, await execution in this body of ours. Punishment is inevitable. Sir John, as well, sooner or later would die. Pleas from his father, no matter how highly situated the man was, would not stop the punishment due; and even his beloved Grizel's, would not be able to stop the rider on the pale horse.

The story of Sir John Cochrane is only a small earthly tale of valor and hope. And earthly analogies only dimly do justice to that great heavenly truth which gives us eternal hope even as we labor in these vessels of clay. Wretched men that we are! Who will deliver us from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!



# Guidance on what it means to be a successful woman

*Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies."*

– Proverbs 31:10

reviewed by Rose Bredenhof

To quote the old cliché, “What often pours in the world tends to drip into the church.” And since the world has some pretty mixed up ideas about what it means to be a successful woman we shouldn’t be surprised if those ideas start to influence the thinking of our daughters, our sisters, and even our mothers. *Girl Talk* was written to counter some of this crooked thinking.

Though it was first published back in 2005, the encouragement and mentorship in this devotional-type book seem to be even more needed in 2011. *Girl Talk* includes conversations between the authors – a mother and daughter team – on important topics regarding biblical womanhood and they give many practical suggestions on how to talk openly on what it means to be a godly woman. There are also tips and study questions included that can help guide these conversations.

In the back there is a rather large appendix with further resources, tips, and a write-up by C.J. Mahaney, the husband of one author and the father of the other. The appendix also includes a number of “heart check” questions that are not always easy to answer. These are questions that make you search your own heart and your own motives, which may sometimes be an uncomfortable experience.

Some of the subjects covered throughout the book include:

- dealing with conflict
- modesty
- the “idols” we like
- discipline
- open communication
- true beauty
- the role of a mother’s humility
- a mother’s faith
- a daughter’s obedience
- a mother as biblical friend
- sexual purity
- the importance of homemaking
- courtship
- the importance of a father’s leadership
- career choices.

In addition the book’s content speaks to all kinds of different relationships from married moms, single women, single moms, step moms, adoptive families, and those in either healthy or difficult relationships.



## **Girl Talk**

By Carolyn Mahaney and  
Nicole Mahaney Whitacre  
Crossway Books, 2005  
224 pages; Paperback;  
\$14 Can.

*Girl Talk* is a very easy read (it kept my interest and attention even after evenings in a row of being up with an ill child or nursing). And even though the book is written in a chatty and comfortable way, the concepts are well-defined and well-organized. As a mom, I was forced to acknowledge in humility some of my weaknesses and sins that passages brought to light. Yes, this book may make you squirm a bit. Still, I have recommended it to many women friends because it’s an easy way to address some tough mother-daughter relationship aspects that *should* be addressed, but which may otherwise be difficult to discuss.

Moreover, this was a biblically-grounded book, with nothing to drive me crazy theologically. There were biblical texts (not taken out of context) backing up the discussions. If anything, this book will make you realize that we must continue to live in union with Christ. We know God is sufficient and can be trusted to the end so our mothering forecast should be one of victory and not defeat.

I highly recommend this resource to help others build a stronger relationship with their daughters. I liked it so much I think I should go check out another book by one of these authors, *Feminine Appeal*.



# Canada's law was based on God's Word

## *Blackstone, Britain, the Bible and the legal heritage of the English-speaking countries*

by Michael Wagner

Canada's law was largely based on God's law.

That's a claim many would dispute – they don't want to give God credit for the freedoms, and legal protections we enjoy in our country. But disputing the facts doesn't change them. Canada's political and legal institution can largely be traced back to Britain – our “mother country” – and when the British laid down the foundations of their own legal system, they were an officially Christian country (with Anglicanism in England and Presbyterianism in Scotland) that had set out to build their laws and legal system on a biblical foundation.

It is this Christian legal and political foundation that Britain transferred to Canada.

### **Documenting Scriptural influence**

During the eighteenth century an English legal scholar, Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780), wrote a multi-volume set of books called the *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. This was no ordinary set of legal books. Blackstone's *Commentaries* were quickly accepted as the authoritative account of English law and philosophy of law. This is noteworthy because in the *Commentaries* Blackstone was very explicit about the influence of the Bible upon the law of his time.

Robert Stacey, a professor of government at Regent University in Virginia, has written about the significance of Blackstone in his book, *Sir William Blackstone & the Common Law*. In our day it often seems that the law works against Christianity, so Christians need to be reminded that our current legal situation is a deviation from our country's history. In this book Stacey briefly traces the development of common law in England and how Blackstone deeply influenced the American colonies and the early American republic.

### **800s – King Alfred's “Dooms”**

A key figure in the initial development of common law was King Alfred the Great of England. He formulated a body of law known as “Alfred's Dooms” in the ninth century that relied on the Ten Commandments as well as other aspects of the Mosaic Law and the New Testament. Stacey writes that the Dooms were “steeped in Christian principles of right and wrong” and they “became the starting point for English law to come.”



*William Blackstone's Commentaries – and the Christian worldview they contained – had an enormous influence on the legal education and jurisprudence of the United States, as well as Canada, Australia and New Zealand*

### **1200s – Magna Carta**

In 1215 some prominent English citizens forced King John to sign the Magna Carta which placed significant limits on the monarch's power and recognized certain rights and liberties for English subjects. The idea that monarchs are not above the law, but are under it just as their subjects are, was a central theme that reflected Biblical ideals.

### **1600s – King and country are not above God**

During the seventeenth century, Edward Coke, a major judicial and political figure in England at that time, led the fight against Charles I, a king who claimed illegitimate powers for himself. According to Stacey, Coke “resisted both Crown and Parliament whenever either attempted to operate outside its



common law boundaries or act in violation of God’s law.” He also wrote a multi-volume *Institutes of the Laws of England* which was the standard work on English law until Blackstone’s *Commentaries* in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Anyway, the overall point that Stacey is trying to make by surveying the history of English law is that “the common law emanates from a distinctly Christian worldview.” More precisely, “the common law traces its origin to two sources, Holy Scripture and the natural law.”

It’s important not to be confused by the term “natural law” in this context – today that term is often used to describe foundational law that finds its origin in Nature rather than God.

But Blackstone did not see it as a rival authority to the Bible. Rather, in using that term he is

“acknowledging the common law’s roots in Scripture and God’s created order, as applied to the circumstances of England by many past generations of great Englishmen, exercising a providentially granted wisdom that was perhaps less common in Blackstone’s own, more humanistic age.”

Or to put it another way, Blackstone was using the term “natural law” for what the Apostle Paul describes in Romans 2:14-15 as the law that is written on our hearts.

### 1700s – Christian legal heritage challenged

Already in the eighteenth century, English law was being challenged by Enlightenment-inspired secularists. Blackstone defended the earlier Christian heritage of the law. In contrast to the man-centered concepts of law,

“Perhaps the most foundational principle for the whole of common law is the axiom that the source of all good and just law is outside of man. Man does not act on his own to produce justice, but acts justly only when he conforms to external standards of justice, in short, the law of God.”

Blackstone was very influential in his own day as well as during much of the nineteenth century. His *Commentaries* appeared in the late 1760s and sold thousands of copies in England and America. According to Stacey:

“His intellectual and practical impact on American political philosophy, governing institutions, and legal system being more profound than it was even in England, Blackstone’s *Commentaries* may be justly counted among the foundational canon of America.”

“According to some estimates, the *Commentaries* were the most widely read work in revolutionary America after the Bible.”

Blackstone’s *Commentaries* remained the standard for American legal education until the second half of the nineteenth century when secular theories of law began to dominate the field.

.....

***Christians need to be reminded  
that our current legal situation is a  
deviation from our country’s history***

.....

The United States and Britain were not the only countries where law was powerfully affected by Blackstone: “Blackstone’s influence was also felt in such far-flung corners as Canada, Australia, New Zealand. . .” and certain other countries.

The fact that Blackstone helped to shape the law and legal education in the English-speaking countries is not just historical trivia. His influential perspective on law both reflected and helped to develop the Christian foundation of law in these countries. “Blackstone effectively advocated a God-centered legal system at a time when many leading culture-shapers sought to impose a man-centered system.”

### Christian influence waning

Looking at Blackstone’s *Commentaries* reveals the degree to which the common law of England – and therefore also the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – was rooted in a Christian worldview. This Christian influence on the law has been progressively discarded over the last few decades, but it was there for hundreds of years previously. It’s not a coincidence that these countries are becoming less hospitable to Christians as the Christian foundation of law is being lost.

Law is always rooted in a particular philosophical perspective, and if that perspective isn’t shaped by Christianity, it will be shaped by a different worldview. Modern law in the developed English-speaking countries is increasingly shaped by secular humanism which is inherently hostile to Christianity. It is a very different perspective on law than the original perspective Canada inherited from its “mother country.”



# A different sort of Cuban vacation

## Two Canadian Reformed couples decide to take up smuggling. . .

by Fenna Bredenhof

“Santa Biblia!” His eyes lit up as we handed him a Spanish Bible, “This is the best present – the best present!”

Shortly after we arrived in Cuba, as we were loading up our rental car, we heard a mechanic working on the bikes next to our car singing and we recognized the tune: “Onward Christian Soldiers.” So we grabbed a Spanish Bible from one of our bags and gave it to the man, asking him if he was a Christian. This was his reaction – the excitement in his voice about how he now had his own Spanish Bible, well, it was overwhelming!

### Guards here and there

My husband Brad, daughter Anna, and I had joined two friends, Andy and Gerda Vandenhaak on a week-long trip to Cuba to bring in Bibles, Bible study books, medicine, soap, clothing, shoes, and other necessities. While Andy and Gerda had made Bible-smuggling trips into Cuba before, Brad and I didn’t know what to expect.

Arriving at the airport in Manzanillo, we were hit with the warm, humid air of the Caribbean. At the baggage claim it was chaos: people trying to get at their luggage in a small room, a dog sniffing out drugs, guards standing here and there, looking through hand luggage. While the others waited by the carousel for our over 130 kilograms of luggage, I stood by our carts, guarding them and praying. I was praying that they would not go through our luggage, praying that they would not find the Bibles, praying that we would get everything in.

And, the guards waved us right through. When we stepped out the door, past all the guards, my heart soared – we were in! All forty-four Bibles were in!

### Straight to the resort

An hour and a half bus ride later, we arrived at Marea Del Portillo, the resort where we would be staying for the week. After giving thanks to God for our safe arrival, we all zonked out – it was past midnight.

Later that morning, after a bit of a sleep, we got ourselves organized. We traded in half our Canadian money for “Cuban Tourist Pesos” (which are different than the pesos



Cubans use), rented a vehicle, and unpacked. That afternoon, we drove over to Pilon, where we would be spending a lot of time, and we visited a couple named Niover and Yami. On one of their earlier trips the Vandenhaaks helped Yami set up a home business – renting out wedding dresses, suits, and other dresses for special occasions – in the hopes that she will be able to stay home with their four (soon to be five) children. As it is now, both Niover and Yami have to work to get enough food for their “large” family. Everyone in Cuba makes 350 Cuban Pesos a month, unless you are a doctor – then you make 400 Cuban Pesos!

Now 25 Cuban Pesos are worth just 1 of the Cuban Tourist Pesos we were using, and 1 Cuban Tourist Peso is worth just over one dollar Canadian. So, once you do all the conversions, it means Cubans make the equivalent of between \$16 and \$19 Canadian, per month.

With this money, they buy their rations, clothing, and other items as they become available. Often, an item is just not available. For example, it seems that their shampoo factory closed down, so any soap we brought in was the first item to go. Also, Cubans receive rations for milk only if they have children less than seven years of age so adults just don’t drink milk.

### Seeing the sights

The next day we drove back to Pilon and visited a small family, Jorge and Norbelis and their son Otoniel. Thankfully Jorge could speak some English, as he is a teacher for Computers and Electronics. Norbelis gave three of us a haircut, as the Vandenhaaks had, on a previous trip, set her up as a hairdresser. When Hurricane Dennis came through a couple of years ago, they lost everything. Norbelis spent a long time searching for her scissors in the rubble of their home but couldn't find them back. At the time this was a real setback for her as there are no scissors available; she couldn't just go buy a new pair.

This family is currently living in a small classroom that is split between three families. The partitions used to be shower curtains and any other piece of material they could find that was long enough. However, now they have "upgraded" to panels of asbestos. You can hear the conversations of the other families from their section. Their whole home was smaller than our bedroom!

They are working on building a new house but this takes years as often there is no cement and when there is, it costs a lot of money. Also, their bathroom is an outhouse without a door and without toilet paper – toilet paper is a luxury there.

### Benny Hinn makes an appearance

The next day was the Lord's day. After breakfast, we drove to Pilon and attended the worship service there in the Methodist Church. Because they are only allowed to do church things on Sunday, they have church all day and people come and go as they wish. When we arrived, they started a Bible study while the pastor was leading a new convert's class.

We were able to understand a lot of what was going on as a group of Americans had brought along an interpreter from Havana (the Americans had to go through a lot of paperwork to be able to come to help this congregation build a church building.) The Bible study was on respecting authority and the lady leading it mentioned having respect for your pastor even if you don't agree with him or if you think he isn't all that he should be in your eyes. This was interesting as their pastor is greatly influenced by Benny Hinn and the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. At one time their pastor was imprisoned for his faith but now with this gospel that he preaches and believes, he has become proud – they have a beautiful building, many new converts, and he himself is much better off than before. The reason is that they (even the pastors) have so little resources to study the Bible with – usually only the Bible – that they gobble up any material that comes in, including heresies such as the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. There is a great need for good literature and for good teachers in this Gospel-hungry land.

The rest of the worship service that we stayed for was very loud – this is a remnant of the pagan thought that if you sing or pray loudly, the demons will not dare to come in. It seemed almost Pentecostal in that they sang with clapping,



*A Cuban woman paging through the Bible she has just received.*

raising their hands in the air, and those types of things. We ended up handing out some reading glasses (something we did at nearly every place we went) for if someone cannot read or see, then they cannot work. It is almost impossible to get glasses there but unfortunately we could only help those who needed reading glasses, since prescription glasses are just too expensive to bring, unless they are an old pair that is not being used.

### Few men in leadership

After lunch, we picked up Yami, who directed us to a Baptist house church. There we joined their service for the afternoon. Worship was done with solemnity and joy. We noticed that the only man in the church was the preacher – all the rest were women and children. They did tell us that there is one man who is a member, but he was not there that day.

We gave the pastor a stack of Bibles and small study books for his congregation. He seemed overwhelmed, and then we brought out a suitcase of clothes, shoes, soaps, glasses, etc. He was speechless as the ladies started to hand out the clothes. It was all done with a lot of thought – they looked at approximate sizes and also handed them to each other based on the individual need. One lady was there with a toddler – only, he wasn't toddling. He was too weak and skinny from malnutrition and was just hanging on his mother. My heart ached looking at the both of them. I remembered the few cans of formula I had brought for our daughter Anna, "just-in-case," and realized that this little boy needed them more than Anna would. It wouldn't do a lot, but it might give a bit



of a boost. . . and it was all we could do at the time. I wished I had brought along a whole can of powdered formula instead!

We left there and looked up another pastor who leads a Methodist house Church. We gave him a stack of Bibles and study books – tears filled his eyes and his face just shone with joy. The suitcases were also emptied – he received what remained for the members of his congregation. What a blessing it is to see the joy on these people’s faces as they receive what is most precious to them: God’s Word!

### **Bibles here. . .**

Monday morning we headed out to find a particular group of Christians. We drove along the southern edge of Cuba; at one point there were cliffs on the left-hand side and ocean on the right-hand side. The cliffs caused avalanches to cover half of the road at times, and the other half would be eaten away by the ocean. A very narrow road was all that was left since the Cubans do not have resources or equipment to repair or maintain their roads. In fact, the end of the road for us on that day was a bridge where one of the pilings had washed out in the hurricane. They had never fixed it, and the only thing stopping a vehicle from driving onto it was a small pile of dirt with some sticks stuck up in it. To get around, you had to drive down into the valley and through the river – something we were not going to try with the gutless car we were using. However we did find this Christian group and gave them some Bibles as well.

### **. . . Bibles there**

It was the ninth of November that we met the mechanic that was working on the bikes beside our rental vehicle. We were heading out to Yanellis’ (Jane) house in Niquero. She

introduced us to her pastor and we were able to give him a stack of Bibles, and some study books for his congregation. This church building was more normal for Cuban standards – nothing like the church in Pilon. The building was made of wood and had large cracks between the boards. The sunlight poured in and the “pews” were plastic lawn chairs – very simple and modest for their standards.

We ate a meal at two other homes but we found out that they had saved up a lot of rations to feed us – they had no breakfast because they had or were going to feed us. They reminded us of the Philippians who gave out of their poverty. If we had declined to have a meal at their homes, we would have insulted them, and they even encouraged us to eat more, that there was lots left!

### **If only Bible were everywhere!**

We left with almost empty suitcases – but with joy in our hearts and a strong desire to do more. We want to encourage you to pray for countries like Cuba to hear the true Gospel, and pray for others to bring Bibles into countries like Cuba when heading there on vacation (or to make it a trip just for that). Pray for our fellow Christians in these countries which have been or are closed to Christianity and where the Church is hungry for the Word.

*To read more exploits of Canadian Reformed folk smuggling Bibles into Cuba, turn to the December 2001 issue for an article by Gerda Vandenhaak: “Twelve at a time: A retired couple brings Bibles into Cuba.” If you are interested in bringing Bibles to Cuba and want more information on what’s involved you can contact the author at [bradfenna@hotmail.com](mailto:bradfenna@hotmail.com) or Gerda Vandenhaak at [gerandy@tbwif.ca](mailto:gerandy@tbwif.ca).*



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Email Patricia at [tturnedlezp@shaw.ca](mailto:tturnedlezp@shaw.ca) for info on the RMSSG website.

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# 5 Things I'm Surprised I Can't Find in the Bible

by RC Sproul Jr.

God is all and only wisdom, the very font of all truth. The Bible is His Word, and is true in all that it teaches, as well as sufficient to guide us into every good work. His Word is perspicuous, that is clear, and understandable. Not all of the Bible, however, is as clear as all the rest.

These ground rules inform us, broadly speaking, that the Bible tells us everything we need to know, but that it might not all be right out there in the open. He has not only not left us orphans, He has not left us blind. That said, here are five things that are less clear in the Bible than I might, in the abstract, expect them to be.

## 1. Proper form of church government

The Bible is crystal clear that women are not to rule in the church, and that we are to submit to the elders over us. See Hebrews 13 for the latter. Thus the Reformers were correct to list discipline as a mark of the true church. If you are not under the authority of name-able specific elders, you are not part of the visible church and thus do not have a credible profession of faith. Repent, and get under authority.

That said, good men have read all the relevant texts and ended up believing that only the local elders of a local church have any authority. That is what we call, historically, congregational church government. John Owen believed this and John Owen is pretty good company.

Others believe that a body of elders in a given region oversee the local elders at the local church. This is Presbyterian church government. This is what Knox, Calvin, and all the great Princeton divines affirmed.

Then some see oversight of particular congregations being done by bishops, individual men with peculiar callings. Here we find Lattimore, Ridley, and Cranmer. The Bible doesn't come with a Form of Government.

## 2. Proper form of a service of worship

The Bible forbids us to forsake the gathering together of the saints. It tells us, in rather great detail, exactly how worship was done in the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant we know that we are not supposed to shed blood anymore. We know, anecdotally, what happened at this meeting and that. But even the most ardent supporter of the most narrow construction of the Regulative Principle of Worship has to confess that we tend to construct our orders of service like Frankenstein constructed his monster, a part here, a part there, cobble it all together and hope lightning strikes.

## 3. Proper form for preaching the Word

The Bible is clear that there is power to change us in the preaching of the Word. We know we are to preach the Word, and not our own wisdom. We know we are to preach Christ, and Him crucified. That, however, doesn't tell us everything. I confess that I could preach for days on how to preach a proper sermon, but I would run out of proof-texts the first hour.

## 4. Proper way to move from single to married

The Bible is clear that marriage is between one man and one woman. They are to leave and cleave. And there are any number of specific instructions on how to be married. Not so much on how to get there in the first place. For such an important decision, it's kind of scary there isn't more direction here.

## 5. More information on the incarnation and the Trinity

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is a man. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is God. The Bible clearly teaches that the Father is God, the Spirit is God and that God is One. How these things can be, that's where it gets awfully complicated.

For the first five hundred years after the ascension of Christ the church wrestled over these complex issues of doctrine. Athanasius was exiled five different times for championing the orthodox position that eventually prevailed.

### An instructive exercise

This exercise, of course, isn't designed to register complaints with the Bible. It is perfect. The exercise does, however, instruct me. I am far less than perfect. It reminds me to not shout where God has whispered. It reminds me to seek to align my priorities with His. It reminds me that while the Bible is not less than a rule book for the Christian, it is more than that. It is the very food by which we live. When we find ourselves troubled by the Bible, either by what is in there or what isn't, we get a clue as to where our troubles lie.

We learn submission to authority is more important than the form of the authority.

We learn that while form matters, worship is a matter of the heart.

We learn to allow preaching to correct us, more than we correct preaching.

We learn that being a godly spouse is more powerful than picking the perfect spouse.

And we learn that we have eternity to learn more about who God is.

The Bible, like its author, is perfect. Praise that author that He is perfecting me through it.



# One Issue Politics, One Issue Marriage and the Humane Society

**Being against abortion doesn't make someone a good candidate  
But being for it does make them a bad one**

by John Piper

By the time you get this the Pipers will probably have bought their first dog. Investigating dog life in Minnesota has solidified my decision to vote against those who endorse the right to abortion and for those who endorse the right to life.

## **One issue doesn't make someone qualified**

No endorsement of any single issue qualifies a person to hold public office. Being pro-life does not make a person a good Governor or Mayor or President. But there are numerous single issues which disqualify a person from public office.

## **. . .but it can be enough to disqualify you**

For example, any candidate who endorsed bribery as a form of government efficiency would be disqualified no matter what his party or platform was. Or a person who endorsed corporate fraud (say under \$50 million) would be disqualified no matter what else he endorsed. Or a person who said that no black people could hold office – on that single issue alone he would be unfit for office. Or a person who said that rape is only a misdemeanor – that single issue would end his political career. And on and on.

Everybody knows a single issue which for them would disqualify a candidate for office.

## **Just like marriage**

It's the same with marriage. No one quality makes a good wife or husband. But some characteristics would make a person unacceptable. For example, back when I was thinking about getting married, a woman who disliked cats would not have been disqualified to be my wife, a woman who disliked people would. Drinking coffee would not, but drinking whiskey would. Kissing dogs wouldn't, but kissing the mailman would. And so on. Being a "single issue fiance" does not mean that only one issue matters. It means that some issues may matter enough to break off the relationship.

## **This one thing is enough. . .**

So it is with politics. You have to decide what those issues are for you. What do you think disqualifies a person from holding public office? I believe that the endorsement of

the right to kill unborn children disqualifies a person from any position of public office. It's simply the same as saying that the endorsement of racism, fraud or bribery would disqualify him – except that child-killing is more serious than any of those.

At the humane society I picked up a brochure on the laws of Minnesota concerning animals. Statute 343.2 subdivision 1 says, "No person shall. . . unjustifiably injure, maim, mutilate or kill any animal." Subdivision 7 says, "No person shall willfully instigate or in any way further any act of cruelty to any animal." The penalty: "A person who fails to comply with any provision of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor."

.....  
***A person who said that no black  
people could hold office – on that  
single issue alone he would be  
unfit for office***  
.....

I wonder: if the eight-week-old human fetus (with beating heart, EKG, brain waves, thumb-sucking, pain sensitivity, finger-grasping, and genetic humanity) is not a human person with rights under the 14th Amendment ("no state shall deprive any person of life. . . without due process of law"), then is the fetus at least an animal? Could we at least charge abortion clinics with cruelty to animals under Statute 343.2 subdivision 7? Why is it legal to "maim, mutilate and kill" a pain-sensitive unborn human being—but not an animal?

I would not vote for a person who endorsed such an evil even if he could balance the budget tomorrow and end all taxation.

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# IN A NUTSHELL

## Tidbit relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

.....  
**"Be home on time for supper!"**

For the last 15 years Columbia University's Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) has been researching the differences between teens who eat dinner at home frequently – at least 5 times a week – and those who do so infrequently – 3 times a week or less. They found some remarkable differences:

- Teens who ate at home infrequently were twice as likely to make use of tobacco and marijuana as those who at home frequently
- They were 50 per cent more likely to use alcohol
- 50 percent more likely to get Cs or lower at school

Elizabeth Planet, CASA vice-president, said, "The emotional and social benefits that come from family dinners are priceless." A Christian might account for that difference by noting that dinnertime is a good time to do what God tells parents to do in Deut 6:6-7:

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deut 6:5-7)

Source: Mike Huckabee's *A Simple Government*

.....  
**Lyric of the month**

Jamies Soles is well known among conservative Reformed churches in Canada, but for those that don't know of him, below are the lyrics of a song based on Luke 7:11-18 from one of his children's albums "Fun and Prophets" which is available (along with more info) on the artist's website SolMusic.ca.

*Gates of Nain*

My husband died, and now my son  
I'm all alone though the crowds have come  
I walk by this bier to a field of stones  
in my soul  
I know that death, it awaits us all. . . .

I can't catch my breath from this dizzy fall  
All that I've hoped for  
Is lying still and cold in this crowd  
Crying aloud for the pain  
Weeping through the gates of Nain

Through my tears I see the crowd has grown  
A Man approaches with compassion shown  
He says, "Do not weep."  
And our march of death and time stands still  
Nothing could prepare me for this  
What could have prepared me for this. . . .

He spoke to my son, my dead son, my only son  
And He told him to arise, and he did!

My boy sat up and then began to speak  
This man named Jesus gave him back to me  
The crowd was filled with awe, and they glorified God

"A great prophet has arisen among us!  
A great prophet has arisen among us!"  
A great prophet indeed has arisen for me  
And given me life again  
In the gates of Nain

.....  
**Why capitalism works here. . . for now**

Author Hernando de Soto wanted to discover why capitalism worked so well in the West, but didn't seem to

work anywhere else. So de Soto and his research team headed to Lima, Peru to try to open a small one-person business – a garment workshop. They knew that this would involve paperwork, some permits and forms they would have to file with the government before they could open the business's doors, but the total amount of paperwork was mind-boggling. The team put their efforts together and worked at the registration process six hours a day and it still ended up taking them *289 days to complete!* And to add insult to injury, the cost of the process was \$1,231, or roughly 30 times the country's monthly minimum wage.

Little wonder then, that there are few Peruvians starting businesses. Even the hardest working, and most industrious souls would find these costs, and this mountain of red tape too much to overcome.

The team also investigated what it would take to build a house on state-owned land in Peru (the state owns much of the land):

"To obtain legal authorization. . . took six years and eleven months requiring 207 administrative steps in 52 government offices. . . . To obtain legal title for that land took 728 steps."

The team found a similar state of affairs in countries such as Egypt, the Philippines and Haiti and Third World countries overall.

In the West we can be thankful we have nowhere near this amount of bureaucratic regulation. . . though we do have politicians who are intent on having us catch up.

Source: Hernando de Soto's *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails everywhere Else* and Wayne Grudem's *Business For the Glory of God*

# Were there fossils in Paradise?

## Did Creation take six days? Or millions of years?

by Miep von Lindheim-Westerink

In 2009, the Year of Darwin, questions were asked in our church circles about the length of the creation days. We know that the prevalent view among scientists is to talk of the earth as being a few billions years old. Does that mean that the days of creation were not ordinary days but rather much longer periods? Maybe even millions or billions of years long?

It seems as if millions of years would have been required for the formation of the thick layer of strata that we see today in the Earth's crust, with its many layers of fossils (fossils are petrified remains of plants and animals that once lived in earlier times). Is it possible these fossil-bearing strata originated during that creation period? Might there then have already been fossils in Paradise?

In this article I would like to show that the idea of long creation periods is difficult to reconcile with the Bible.

### Millions of years?

At one time mammoths and dinosaurs lived right here in the Netherlands. How do we know that? Because mammoth bones are regularly discovered in our Dutch soil, and because it was in a limestone quarry at Maastricht, Limburg that fossil remains of a swimming dinosaur – the Mosasaurus – were first discovered!

Dinosaurs are among the most striking examples of fossils, but they are not the only sort. Fossils are found in the strata, seemingly organized layer by layer, with bacteria found in the bottom layers, above them sea creatures, then the land animals and flowering plants, and finally, in the top layers, Man. According to mainstream science, these fossils occurred over 3.5 billion years and modern Man “only” evolved a mere 500,000 years ago.

### Creation periods?

But when we speak in terms of millions of years, that puts before us a problem: the Bible does not seem to allow space for this long a period of time. The biblical account tells of a creation in six days, and then a history that seems to be “only” several thousand years old. How can this then be reconciled?

Can we simply say that “Science” gets it wrong? That is too simple. Science is, after all, examining the same reality that the Bible tells of – the world that God created

Might this notable difference in estimates of the universe's age be due to a biased interpretation of the facts? Does “billions of years” spring out of the atheistic worldview, with its need to explain the origin of everything without reference to God or the Bible?

Or are we, perhaps, interpreting the Bible wrong? In the days of Galileo the Catholic Church held strictly to the belief that, according to the Bible, the sun revolved around the earth. Today nobody objects to Galileo's heliocentric (Sun at the center) view of the Solar System. If we now stick to creation days of 24-hours, do we make the same error as the church in the seventeenth century?

Or is it possible to reconcile the concept of millions-of-years-long geological history with what we read in the Bible? Many religious scientists are convinced of this: they say you can place practically all of geological history (i.e. the part before the creation of Man) within the creation days. Of course these “days” must then be understood to be very long – millions of years long!

In *De Reformatie*, one contributor, a Dr. Schaeffer, advocated that both understandings of the creation week be accepted<sup>1</sup>: the six 24-hour-days explanation, and the millions-of-years-long “day” explanation. Or to put it more clearly, he thought both the young earth and old earth interpretations

## They don't match up

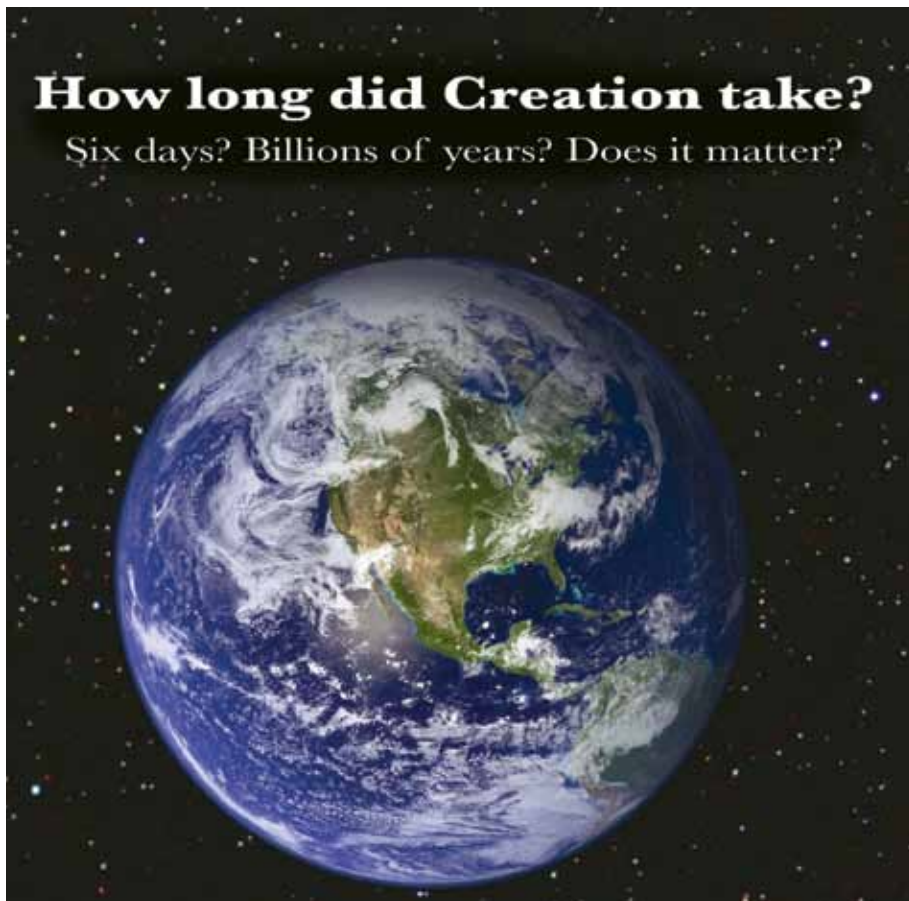
### The order of creation of living things according to:

#### The Bible

- Plants (Day 3)
- Sea creatures and birds (Day 5)
- Land animals (Day 6)
- Man (Day 6)

#### Fossil strata

- Sea creatures
- Plants
- Land animals
- Birds and Man



of Genesis should be accepted. He questioned why people were even getting so concerned about this. Isn't it, as is often said, more important that God created all things, than exactly how he did it?

**Six problems with long ages**

However, as I stated earlier, I doubt whether the long days of creation position can be reconciled with the biblical account of creation. There lie within this view at least six exegetical problems.

**#1 – Different order**

The view that God created using long periods of time implies that we should be able to find a record – a report of sorts – of creation in the fossil strata. But here, already, the problems with this view start emerging. Why? Well, because the order of fossils as they are found in the fossil layers varies considerably from the creation order of Genesis 1.

According to the Bible, first land plants were created, and then, successively, life in the sea and birds, followed by land animals and finally Man. But in the fossil strata we see a very different order. Starting from the bottom and working our way up to the top we see first the sea animals, then plants, then the land animals. Only in the higher layers do we find the birds and finally Man.

There is another difference. In Genesis 1 we read that God only began the creation of life forms once there was dry land. However, most fossil-bearing strata already begins

when the continent was almost completely submerged.

So in many ways the popular scientific interpretation of the fossil strata does not fit with the biblical account of the days of creation. Now if you see the strata as a reliable record of God's creative acts, this will have direct implications for your views of Genesis 1. It is then impossible to accept this chapter as history – you're forced to read it like poetry, as a narrative framework, or as a myth.<sup>2</sup>

Now many have noted that the first chapters of Genesis have a poetic structure; it is beautifully descriptive, with a clear structure, and full of repetitive elements. Poetry is certainly able to portray a story that did not literally happen, but it can of course also describe true events poetically. What is the case here? I believe that the Bible gives no indication that the creation story is to be understood metaphorically (i.e. not literally). Rather, Genesis 1 is used to relay a description of reality. Passages like Exodus 20:11 and 31:17, where the division of our week is based on the creation week, and Romans 5 where Paul speaks about

Adam as a historical man give added additional evidence that the creation account is to be taken as literal.

Prof. B. Kamphuis writes: "Genesis 1 provides the creation story not as myth but as history."<sup>3</sup>

**#2 – Treasury. . . or cemetery?**

Stretching out the creation days by millions of years each to allow them to coincide with geological history has additional consequences. If this is your starting point you can then look to the strata and fossils to get a peek at how God went about his creation – we can get a peek at how He created the Treasure that is Earth.

But here again, problems arise. In the strata we find large numbers of fossils and according to this long age view, this would be billions of years worth of all sorts of plants and animals that would have died in creation times. Death was therefore already present on Earth, as well as illness, weakness, suffering and pain long before Man ever arrived.

The strata are, in fact, large mass graves – they witness to the earth as a huge cemetery. Here we find examples of competition between plants and animals for food, living space, and partners. This is the "struggle for life" as Darwin said, where only the strongest survive.<sup>4</sup> Moreover there were predators, blood was shed, there was cruelty. And all of this happened long before the creation of Man. That would mean that suffering, bloodshed and death are inherent to God's "good" creation before the Fall.

This same geological record tells us that the Earth was full of menace and violence before Man's arrival. Everything was certainly not quiet; large-scale disasters played out. Traces are found from at least 160 craters, created by comets and asteroids that bombarded Earth. Some of these strikes caused great floods and tsunamis. Massive volcanic eruptions took place, as well as earthquakes, and abrupt climate change. Hard times, drought, and scarcity of food occurred.

In short, the geological history tells us about endless suffering and the unbridled force of nature. Compared to this, the misery of the Christmas tsunami of 2004 is completely dwarfed.

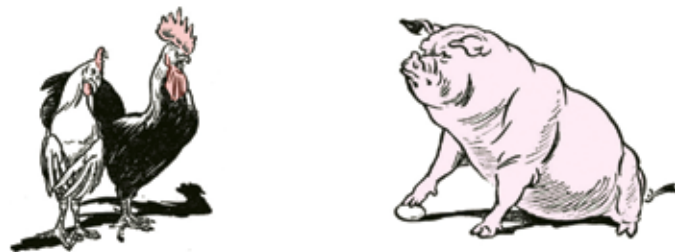
Because of these disasters in the geo-past, according to standard Science many plant and animal species became completely extinct. There appear to have been several major rounds to extinction so that up to 90 per cent of the existing species disappeared and life on Earth seemed almost destroyed.<sup>5</sup> Think for example, of the disappearance of the dinosaurs. That too must have happened during one of the lengthy creation days, long before man was created (or evolved). Then, when Man finally came into the world, there was only a fraction left of the wealth of plants and animals from the long creation periods that occurred before him.

All these phenomena – extinctions, great floods, tsunamis, earthquakes – also occurred after the appearance of Man. This means that with the appearance of Man, and his subsequent Fall into sin, no noticeable change in the Earth's state occurred. There were disasters before, and after, so Man's Fall brought about no rupture in Nature, no curse on the Earth, no change at all.

You must accept these conclusions if you advocate the theory of creation days as long time periods. In short, the geological repository is definitely not a treasury of a good, harmonious creation, but a cemetery, a world full of death, destruction and degeneration. Creation was, then, an endless agony full of dead ends, failures and mass destruction – what a waste!

### 3. What does it say about the present, the future and our Lord?

Creation days that are millions of years long force us to have a very different understanding of what God meant in Genesis 1 when He thought his creation "very good." The pic-



**The Chicken or the Hog?**  
Which came first? Mainstream science and Genesis do not agree.

ture of the creation as some sort of paradise must give way for a new understanding, but this new understanding isn't limited to the past; the present, the future and even our understanding of God Himself will be completely changed.

Let's look closely at the present. Is this, our present Earth, a creation under the curse and subject to futility? Or does it remain much like it was during the millions of years long creation "week"? Is this the good creation as it was originally intended by God? Is this what He meant by "very good"?

After the 2004 tsunami many asked, "how could God permit this?" Are we to say, "This all belongs to the good creation"? Or are we to explain that the tsunami is an evil consequence of the Fall? When a species become extinct, do we say: "That's good! That was the way it was during creation as well"? Or does such a loss cause us pain, because we know it shouldn't be this way?

How we understand the creation week will also impact and change our understanding of who God is. After all, God tells us repeatedly in his Word that He is good, but what sort of "good" does that involve? Our understanding of the creation week will have a direct impact on our understanding of God as well!

And how will our future be? When He restores the world, bringing in the new Heaven and new Earth, what will "good" look like there?

These are major theological questions.

### 4. The age of humanity

Another problem is the following: according to standard geology the first people emerged about 500,000 years ago. When one accepts the prevailing geological dating, one should not only stretch the creation days to millions of years each, but should also stretch the period after the appearance of Man.

When we add up the ages in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, the creation would have occurred around 6,000 years ago. Now if we are open to the possibility that these genealogies only mention the most important patriarchs, then in between the names that are given, others generations might have lived in between. In that case the Earth would be about 10,000, or at most 15,000 years old. But how should we read the genealogies in order to come to a half million years? For this they must be incredibly stretched!

### 5. The Flood

The next problem with the long periods view of creation concerns the Flood. Under the currently accepted science, there are at the very top in the "archives" of the strata, after the appearance of Man, no visible traces of a global flood disaster to be seen. That is strange in two ways.

Firstly, it is strange to imagine the Flood as a quiet babbling happening without geological consequences. This image does not match what the Bible tells us about the Flood, The floodgates of heaven were opened, the fountains of the great deep burst open, the mountains were covered with water. It was an incredible natural disaster!

But perhaps the Flood was only a local event, happening in just one area of the world. In that case, the rescue of the animals in the Ark would have made little sense. And if mankind had already existed for tens and even hundreds of thousands of years by then, we are safe in assuming that they were spread all over the globe. Then a regional Flood would certainly not have destroyed all sinful people all over the Earth, as God intended (Genesis 6:13, 7:21,23). Moreover, God's promise never again to give such a Flood, would have been broken many times. Catastrophic regional flooding has been frequent after the Flood.

So if you see the days of creation as long periods when the fossil-bearing strata formed, then you cannot escape from minimizing the biblical story of the Flood. This is also contrary to 2 Peter 3:5-7, which speaks of the Day of Judgment, which Peter compares with the Flood story. Peter expresses it in global terms, that "the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished."

Secondly, it is strange to connect fossil-bearing strata with long periods of creation and not with the Flood. After all the major characteristics of the lower formation of these deposits is that they exactly picture the global flood catastrophe. The continents are covered with thick layers of sand, limestone and clay, which are deposited from the deep sea in great mudslides over the land masses. So these lower strata therefore show the characteristics of destructive global flooding that you might expect from the Flood.

## 6. Historicity of the Fall

So far, only problems associated with the presumed age of the strata were noted. However, many Christian scholars who assume long periods of creation, are also willing to accept the evolution theory.<sup>6</sup> They plead then for a "theistic evolution," an evolution that was directed by God. Darwin has already shown that killer competition, extinctions and untold suffering



**“Very good?”** If mass extinctions were part of the creation “week” that would mean they are part of what God thinks is “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

are integral parts of Evolution – that makes any form of Evolution hard to reconcile with the Bible.

The biggest problem though, concerns the creation, or evolution, of Man. Are we humans evolved from apelike ancestors, with their animal instincts? Are we the result of a process of gradual transitions from non-Man, to Man? If so, then there were not first two people, Adam and Eve, created in God's image, but there were groups of intermediate forms.<sup>7</sup> And then we were not created as sinless people formed in God's image. And if we were not first sinless, then God himself is the cause not only of death and suffering, mentioned earlier, but also of evil and sin – then God made Man “so wicked and perverse” (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 3) that he had no choice but to sin. Theistic evolution also eliminates the unique effects of the Fall into sin as we read them in Genesis 3:14-20, that is, the curse that God laid on all of creation – if there wasn't a sinless Adam and Eve then there was no Fall. This then makes questionable the reflections of Paul in Romans 8:20-22, about the dilapidated state of nature as

the result of the Fall. And Paul's comparing the first and the second Adam in Romans 5:12-19 loses its meaning as well. In short, theistic evolution puts all edifice of Christian theology on a slippery slope and collapses it like a house of cards.

## The creation day

We have discussed six exegetical problems areas with the long “day” view, but there is still more to say about the length of the creation days.

I believe that we should understand them as “normal” days. The “day” in Genesis 1 is carefully defined as night and day, with the dark being called night and the light being called day.<sup>8</sup> And in between one evening and one morning we have a “normal” day, as we all know it. This is accentuated by the use of numerals in the text – we have a “first day,” a “second day” etc.

Now it is difficult to describe a vast geological periods in this way: centuries of light, followed by centuries of darkness. Plants and animals would not survive!

Now some might ask, was this “normal” day therefore an exactly 24-hour-day? The truth is, such a question



makes little sense: it depends on how an hour is defined (what is an hour, if not a day divided in 24 sections?).<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the day differed in degree from the length of our days today – I am not interested in quibbling over details. What is important is that the way the text reads makes it impossible to reconcile with the ages that mainstream science claims. There is no way to read the days in Genesis 1 as periods.

In Genesis 1 God wants to make it obvious to us that it is He who created this world, this present reality. See that sky above you? The land you are standing on, the animals around you, the green plants and trees? All that I have created. Just as I have created the light you see around you – the day – and then darkness – the night.

Now in the first three days there was no sun. Can this then still mean these were ordinary days? Yes it can, because it is not the Sun that marked what makes a day, but rather the “evening” and “morning” which are the very same words used for all the other days. So while days without a Sun might seem strange to us if we use the exegetical rule of having the clear explain the unclear, then I think there is every exegetical reason for us to accept the creation days as normal days.

### Conclusion

So, to conclude, the idea of the creation week involving long periods during which most of Earth’s geological history played out, delivers great exegetical and theological problems. This “long days” position concerns a lot more than just the length of creation days so we cannot remain stuck in a position of: “Well, six days or six million years, what does it matter?” It matters. Our understanding of what God thinks good is at stake here! We might think this impacts only the past, but when we learn what God thought good in the past, that tells us what He thinks is good today, and what He will regard as good in the future. So this is about much more than the past! And it concerns the historicity of Paradise, the

Fall into Sin and the consequences of that Fall. Purely on biblical grounds we must, therefore, reject the idea of long creation periods.

If we reject long creation days that has two consequences. The first is that we will no longer look at the fossil-bearing strata as originating during the creation week and we are able to read the days in Genesis 1 just as they appear in the text: as normal days of approximately 24 hours. The second consequence is that we are then led to conclude that the development of the fossil strata must have occurred after the Fall.

If we conclude that the creation week must have been six 24-hour days, that leads to many questions, including questions about how we are to understand that geological column, the fossil strata, and how and when exactly these many layers were laid down. These are

questions I plan to address in another article, but before I take on that task I want to write an article that looks at how creation must have been – what God really meant when he described creation as “good.” What was this perfect world really like? Isn’t it naive to believe that before the Fall, there were no predators, no death, and no suffering? In other words, are the objections I listed in my second of six exegetical problems valid objections? That is what we will explore next.

### End notes

<sup>1</sup> *De Reformatie* (The Reformation), vol. 84, No. 21, Feb. 28. 2009.

<sup>2</sup> A view that is adhered to by many Christians. See the survey in *Nederlands Dagblad*, May 16, 2009, p. 12 and 13.

<sup>3</sup> *De Reformatie*, vol. 84, No. 41, July 18, 2009. In *Nader Bekeken* vol.16, No. 6, June 2009, the Rev. JW. van der Jagt writes, “There is much not revealed.” True, but



**Thomas Cole's**  
***The Subsiding of the Waters:***  
Accepting long creation days necessitates  
denying a global flood.

that should not tempt us to assume that creation was different than the things which are revealed.

<sup>4</sup> These mechanisms, which Darwin discovered, rule even now in today's Nature. They are examples of Natural Selection acting on the variability within species: weaker animals die off, the stronger and better-adapted survive. Though the two are often confused, Natural Selection is different than the Theory of Evolution, which postulates that all complex life forms originated from simpler, lower forms (i.e. Man evolved from a single-cell organisms). Evolution requires the gaining of entirely new characteristics; Natural Selection involves selecting from already available variability.


<sup>5</sup> There are five major extinction rounds with the following percentages of extinct species: Cambrian: 70%, Devonian: 60%, Perm 95%, Triassic / Jurassic: 50%, Cretaceous / Tertiary: 75%. All this far before the creation of Man, so this took place in the creation period, according to the long ages view. And in between these major extinction rounds there were dozens of smaller extinction rounds.

<sup>6</sup> Another suggestion is that of progressive creationism, i.e. the order of the fossils in successive layers show separate creative acts by God, each separated by long periods of time (Progressive creationists also believe in an Earth that is billions of years old).

<sup>7</sup> Some do want to continue to talk about Adam and Eve. According to them, God out of the large group of people who populated the earth for thousands of years, separately put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He then created them in his image.

<sup>8</sup> The six days of creation are sometimes talked of as being the "work days of God" (eg. Prof. H. Bavinck) to make a distinction between them and normal days. Here the days are understood as being analogous but not identical to normal days. This thinking is behind J.D. Looney questioning whether God's definition of the day is anchored in a human perception of time, *De Reformatie*, vol. 84, No. 47, Sept. 10. 2009. Or, some say, since the creative work of God is beyond our comprehension, we can't say anything about what sort of days they were. Essentially, this says that the length of days is beyond our comprehension, even though nothing else in the creation account is similarly incomprehensible. After all, we can understand what a plant is, or a star; these aren't incomprehensible. It seems then that we are only to think that what a day amounts to, is beyond our comprehension.

<sup>9</sup> Is the format of a day, a revolution of the earth, in 24 parts? Has the Earth always rotated equally rapidly on its axis? Is it an absolute measure, determined by the atomic clock? Did the atomic clock always run this fast?

*Dr. Miep von Lindheim-Westerink is a biologist who passed away shortly after this article was first published in the July/August 2010 issue of Nader Bekeken (Vol 17, Issue 7/8). Her article is reprinted here with their permission, and the permission of her husband and has been translated from the original Dutch by Joanne Berends.* 

## FIGURING OUT THE PERFECT GIFT

Are you trying to find the perfect present to celebrate a birthday, wedding, anniversary graduation, etc?

Below we have a list of 16 thoughtful gifts, and through the wonder of some complex number manipulation, we can help you figure out which one of them would be the perfect gift for that certain someone.

To start, ask the person you are shopping for to pick their favorite number from 1-9

- Take that number and multiply by 3
- Add 3 to the sum
- Multiply the total by 3 again
- Now add the two digits together

Voila! Check that number against the list below and you've now found the perfect gift for your special someone.

1. Bath robe
2. ESV Study Bible
3. Toy Story DVD
4. Tie
5. One dozen red roses
6. Pedicure gift certificate
7. Toy Story 2 DVD
8. Box of chocolates
9. *Reformed Perspective* subscription
10. Bohnanza card game
11. Silver pendant
12. Grace and Truth Paradox book
13. Toy Story 3 DVD
14. Shaving set
15. Another tie
16. Bath soaps

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# Earthquake research makes us humble

## What we know is vastly outweighed by what we don't know

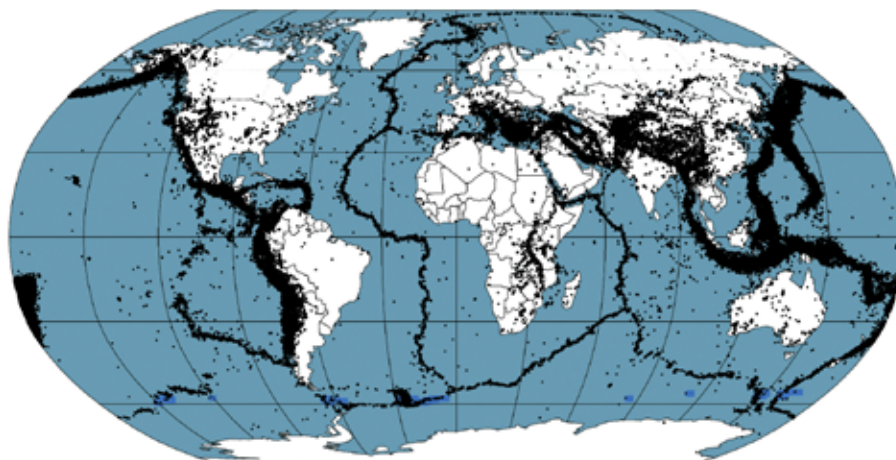
by Margaret Helder

Hindsight, they say, is a wonderful thing – everything seems so clear and obvious, after an event has already happened. Nowhere was this more evident than in the issue of earthquake prediction in Italy. After a devastating earthquake decimated the town of L'Aquila on April 6, 2009, the townspeople wanted to know why they hadn't been warned beforehand. They were looking for someone to blame, and they looked no further than the country's top seismologists, seven of whom were charged on July 11, 2010 with manslaughter for failing to warn the citizens of the imminent event.

There is no doubt that the citizens of L'Aquila suffered greatly. The magnitude 6.3 earthquake shattered the town and neighboring villages, leaving almost 300 people dead. It destroyed much of the local university and left most of the professors homeless. Much of this agony could have been prevented, the locals afterward declared. Scientists had observed a series of small seismic events in the region in the early months of 2009. These culminated in a minor earthquake event of magnitude 4.0 on March 30, 2009. The very next day, the country's top seismologists converged on the town to discuss if and when a major event might be expected. It was the consensus of the meeting that while a major event was unlikely, it could not be entirely ruled out.

Subsequent to the meeting (which lasted only an hour), two of the scientists met with the media. Bernardo De Bernardinis, deputy head of the government's Civil Protection Agency, is reported to have declared that there

### Finding the fault lines 200,855 events of magnitude 3.5 or higher from 1963 to 1998



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was no danger since the smaller events would serve to dissipate any stress in the rocks. This statement is not valid, but it seems fair to ask whether De Bernardinis was correctly quoted by the media.

#### Earthquakes continue to evade prediction

At any rate, although the remark may have provided a false sense of security, it is a fact that no one could have predicted that a major event would occur, or when or where it would occur or how strong it would be. Indeed of all the scientific disciplines which resist solution, earthquake prediction certainly ranks close to the top of the list. One need only review the history

of recent major events to discover how difficult this issue is.

Consider, for example, the 7.9 magnitude earthquake in Sichuan province in central China, which took place on May 12, 2008. Concerning this event, a commentator in *Nature* (May 14, 2009) declared: "More so than other quakes, this one has uncovered gaps in earthquake hazard research, both in China and elsewhere."

It happened this way. Beginning in October 2006, the Chinese government established a network of 300 broadband seismometer stations in the western part of Sichuan province. Spaced on average 5-30 km apart, these solar powered receptors received signals from an area covering about 370,000

square kilometers. It was the densest array of such sensors in the world, and it definitely was the envy of Western scientists. Nevertheless, when the quake occurred near the towns of Yingxiu and Bailu, it took everyone, including the scientists, by surprise.

It so happens that scientists had formerly studied the nearby Beichuan fault. The data pointed to a very quiet region in terms of seismic activity. And prior to the major event of May 2008, no increase of tremors was recorded. So how could the scientists have foreseen this event? Obviously they could not.

.....

***A lengthy list of possible preliminary signals has been studied and all have been found to fail as warning signals***

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Not surprisingly, scientists tend to focus their attention on faults that show active motion, with a history of past large events. They pay attention to regions which might produce a significant event at least every few hundred years, not ones which might be expected every several thousand years!

The Sichuan earthquake of May 2008, then was a surprise because the region had exhibited little recent seismic activity. From this situation, scientists concluded that they had paid too much attention to regions of recent seismic activity and they had therefore underestimated the potential hazard of other areas. But this is a conclusion of futility since what other clues could scientists use to predict earthquake hazard anywhere on the globe?

**Quakes far from fault lines?**

The Chinese earthquake is an example of a major earthquake event which occurs within a "tectonic plate." According to current theory, the globe is broken up into a number of large plates which interact with each other at their edges, moving under an adjacent plate edge, or over it. Theory holds that most violent events such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes will occur at these plate boundaries. However plate tectonic theory gives "no insight into where and when quakes will occur within plates because the interiors of ideal plates should not deform" (*Nature* November 5, 2009).

It is evident therefore that scientists have very little understanding of why earthquakes happen at all inside plate interiors and they certainly are not in a position to predict any such events.

One of the most studied regions of intraplate (within plate) activity is the town of New Madrid, Missouri which lies 2000 kilometers from the nearest plate boundary. However it

was in this region that on December 16, 1811 and for three months afterward, a series of strong earthquakes occurred which shook the entire eastern half of the country.

At the same time, widespread "sand blows" occurred. These phenomena result when a quake of magnitude 7.6 or stronger, causes saturated sandy sediment to become liquefied. It then violently erupts from the surface and is deposited over the nearby landscape. The sand from the 1811-12 events, covered wide areas of farmland in a layer so deep that cultivation was difficult for many years to come. Geological analysis of the area, moreover, suggests that there were three or four such major events within the past two thousand years.

The mystery of the events near New Madrid lies in the fact that GPS measurements for the past twenty years show no detectable activity in the landscape. There is no obvious difference between the New Madrid region and the rest of the central and eastern United States. So why have there been such events near New Madrid? Nobody knows, and expert opinion is divided on whether more such events can be expected in that region or not. Even if these events are a thing of the past, that does not explain why major quakes ever happened there in the first place.

**Difficult to predict even on fault lines**

If earthquake prediction is difficult in intraplate regions of the world, it actually is not that much better near plate boundaries. The disastrous magnitude 9.0 Japanese earthquake of March 11, 2011 is a case in point. Already in 1978 and still in April 2006, according to *National Geographic*, the Japanese government had identified the Tokai region 160 km southwest of Tokyo as the probable site of the next great earthquake in Japan. Contingency plans for such an event, with minute attention to detail, have been prepared for the area. Sadly, the terrible (worst ever) earthquake, when it did come, was near Sendai, 270 km *northeast* of Tokyo instead of, as predicted, to the *southwest*.

Similarly the frightful Sumatra-Andaman magnitude 9.1-9.2 earthquake of December 26, 2004, took everyone by surprise. While scientists had equipment deployed and were monitoring various regions of concern around Indonesia, the actual massive event took place in a region with few sensors because practically nobody expected such a major event where it actually happened. (*Nature* March 2, 2006). This event was the first giant event in which some sensors were able to record the progress of the event. Apparently, over the space of 8 minutes, a rupture occurred which progressed over 1300 km so that a block about 150 km wide was moved about 20 meters. The event was much larger than might have been expected in the area. Thus scientists concluded that any such fault can potentially produce a large event. So much for informed assessment of specific risk!



*The Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906:  
Sadly, despite a hundred years of research, earthquakes continue to surprise us.*

### **More complicated than we knew**

Since scientists have had access to more and fancier sensors for studying earthquakes, they have discovered how complicated these phenomena are. Following the terrible 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, Henry Fielding Reid of John Hopkins University, proposed that earthquakes display a repeating pattern of pressure accumulation and release. For about a century, this idea has formed the basis of most earthquake predictions. However it now seems that these events are much more complex than formerly assumed, in fact the contributing factors seem chaotic or too complex to understand.

According to Reid's elastic rebound theory, for example, the site of a major event should exhibit an interval of recovery before another such disaster strikes. Now, however, it seems that one large event may trigger others both far and near. Some scientists therefore fear that it may well be impossible and impractical to predict events based on physical measurements or even at all. Moreover a lengthy list of possible preliminary signals has been studied and all have been found to fail as warning signals. The list includes accelerated strain changes, short lived uplift, gas release from the ground, unusual electrical and magnetic values, changes in speed of motion along a fault, and changes in the water table. None of these is an adequate predictor of earthquake events to follow (*Nature* February 11, 2010). Indeed some quakes like the 2008 event in China have been observed to occur without any preliminary signals of any kind.

California's San Andreas (near San Francisco) provides an excellent location for research into earth movements and

earthquake risk. Near the town of Parkfield, for example, a dense network of instruments was set up in the 1980s with the expectation that moderate quakes occur there on a 22-year cycle. They expected a quake in 1993, but it did not come until 2004, 11 years late.

In September 2008 scientists lowered a set of nine instruments into a 3100-meter deep shaft in the vicinity of the fault. The set included 3 seismometers for measuring motion, 3 accelerometers for measuring speed of motion, 2 tiltmeters and a electromagnetic coil for picking up any electrical or magnetic changes that might precede a quake. Unfortunately these sensors stopped working within a few days after installation. A year later, there were still no firm plans or funds to fix the problem. This represented a potentially wasted expenditure of \$25 million dollars. Earthquake research is indeed fraught with difficulties!

### **Beyond us to predict; within us to react**

Thus much as the Italians would like to hold their scientists accountable in criminal court for failing to warn the citizens of impending disaster, similar terrible events around the world clearly show that accurate forecasts are not possible. All too often we place a most uncalled for faith in the powers of modern science and modern technology. Much as we would like to think that we can control risk, we still are frail creatures living our lives according to the good favor of our God. Meanwhile, societies and governments must take what prudent precautions are possible, such as strict building codes in "at risk" areas. And when such terrible events do strike, we must show compassion and speedy, generous assistance to the victims.





# Soup & Buns

## Read the Bible in 90 days

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Reading the Bible for about 50 minutes per day might seem like a long time – but only because it’s the Bible. For some reason most of us have convinced ourselves that a chapter or less is plenty when it comes to God’s Word. But actually, reading a 90th of the Bible takes just the same amount of time as reading:

- 12 pages of *Reformed Perspective*
- 10 pages of most local newspapers
- 24 pages of a typical paperback novel

This is also less than half of the time spent watching most movies.

My son Tim and I recently participated in a program entitled *The Bible In 90 Days*, written by Ted Cooper, Jr., and published by Zondervan. They offer a Bible that is marked at every twelfth page to indicate one day’s reading. You can use any Bible to do this simply by dividing its total number of pages by 90 to find the right number of pages you’ll need to read each day. It will take the average reader 45-60 minutes per day.

We made the commitment with a local church, but the program can be done individually as well. We agreed not to skip any pages. We could also use an audio version such as the one at their website: ([www.biblein90days.org](http://www.biblein90days.org)).

The program drew church members and some Roman Catholics from the neighborhood. Many had *never* read the Bible, and thought they should read the book that they “supposedly” believed in. Tim and I found it interesting and challenging, listening to their awe and surprise, and endeavoring to comment helpfully during discussions.

Each week we discussed our progress, sometimes commiserating, sometimes excited, but always pulling one another up with encouragement. Then we would watch two videos where three Bible teachers gave an overview and historical information about the recent reading, and the upcoming sections. We found the teaching insightful, inspiring, and accurate.

Everyone struggled to keep up daily, especially in the early weeks. We all discovered the hard way that it was much more difficult to catch up on 24 or 36 pages, so we endeavored not to get behind. I read in my comfortable living room chair, or listened to tapes in my car. Tim read mostly while on his night shift at work. One family of four read it all aloud to one another after dinner.

Some of the books were more difficult than others. The 11 chapters of genealogies in 1 Chronicles were very hard to plow through; but after reading them, the first chapter of Matthew was a piece of cake! Just like exercise, doing more made us all capable of doing more. I also found some parts of the prophets difficult, especially when I listened to Ezekiel’s description of blood and destruction while driving home on a dark and deserted road!

Everyone experienced worthwhile results. A Catholic woman from the neighborhood was glad she had read it all, but she wasn’t sure she accepted it all. She detested all of the Old Testament bloodshed and struggled with the concept of election and also struggled to grasp the idea of a loving, forgiving God. I pray that she will come to know the Lord as her Savior, just as the writer of this study, Ted Cooper, Jr., did. He was an agnostic when he first read the Bible; half-way through, he became a believer.

My son Tim said that “it was a life-changing experience” for him. It reorganized his priorities and caused him to contemplate God and His divinely organized plan. He saw anew that the Bible *must* have been inspired by the Holy Spirit because there is no way that a diverse group of writers over several centuries could have put together something so cohesive and connected. That cannot be said of the sacred writings of any other religion.

I discovered that I could enjoy just sitting and reading the Bible for a long period of time: an hour, or even two hours. Not just as an afterthought. I got *used* to reading long passages and whole books. I found many surprising phrases spoken by the prophets that I’ve never heard in a sermon. I may have known more about the Bible than my Catholic classmate, but I was reminded that I still have far more to learn.

Because the books and verses and phrases stayed fresh in our memories, we noticed connections and repetitions we hadn’t seen before. Reading the entire Bible in 90 days gave us an overview of God’s entire plan which left us eager to go back and study the intriguing parts that we marked in passing.

This plan would benefit our churches, Bible study groups, schools, and families immensely. I recommend it highly.

Consider taking this 90 day plunge into the water of life. It is most refreshing!



# ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page, 43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 OR [robleach@gmail.com](mailto:robleach@gmail.com)

## NEW PUZZLES

### Riddles for Punsters #176 – “A Party at the Zoo”

Leo Lion went to the party and had a r \_ \_ \_ ing good time. Joe Crocodile spent much of the evening eating bits and b \_ \_ \_ \_ . Tom Lamb would have gone but felt s \_ \_ \_ \_ ish about asking someone to accompany him. Peter Polar Bear spent the evening just relaxing on the comfortable f \_ \_ niture.

### Problem to Ponder #176 – “Word Transformations”

Transform a given word into another word into another word by changing one letter at a time, never changing a letter in a given position twice.  
For example: is -> as -> ad or had -> hat -> sat -> sit.

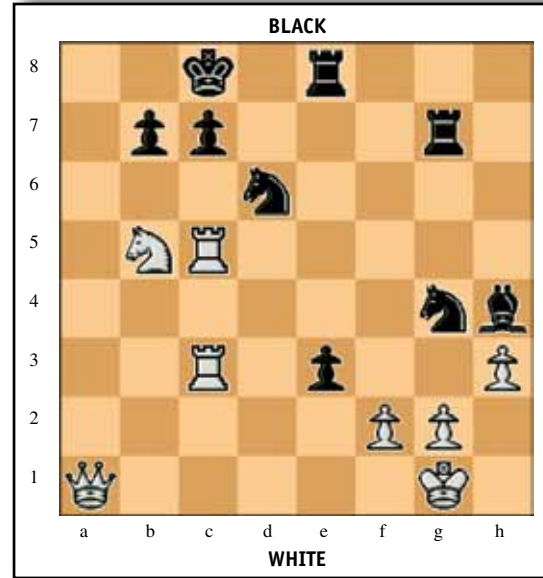
he -> \_\_ -> by

big -> \_\_\_ -> \_\_\_ -> dot

farm -> \_\_\_\_\_ -> \_\_\_\_\_ -> \_\_\_\_\_ -> held

chews -> \_\_\_\_\_ -> \_\_\_\_\_ -> \_\_\_\_\_ -> \_\_\_\_\_ -> trust

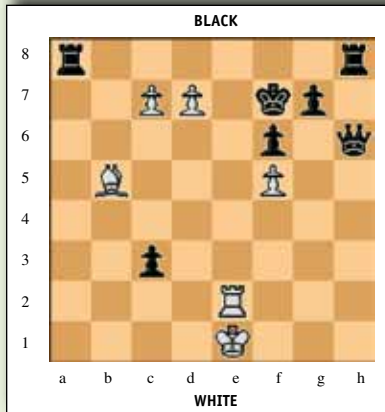
## Chess Puzzle # 176



**White to Mate in 4**  
Or, if it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 3**

## SOLUTIONS TO THE (MARCH) PUZZLE PAGE

### SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 175



#### WHITE to Mate in 3 Descriptive Notation

1. B-B4 ch K-B1
2. P-B8=Q ch RxQ
3. PxR=Q mate

#### Algebraic Notation

1. Bb5-c4 + Kf7-f8
2. d7-d8=Q + Ra8xd8
3. c7xd8=R ++

**OR**

2. c7-c8=Q + Ra8xc8
3. d7xc8=Q ++

#### BLACK to Mate in 3 Descriptive Notation

1. \_\_\_\_\_ R-R8 ch
2. K-B2 Q-B5ch
3. K-N2 R-KR7 mate

#### Algebraic Notation

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Ra8-a1 +
2. Ke1-f2 Qh6-f4 +
3. Kf2-g2 Rh8-h2 ++

### Answer to Riddles for Punsters #175 – “A Catcher and a Professor”

Why did the baseball catcher hum a popular song during a game?  
He thought that it was c a t c h y.

Why did the professor wear a tux when teaching his students?  
He thought that it was c l a s s y.

### Answers to Problem to Ponder #175 – “Filling the Tank, Emptying the Wallet”

If gasoline costs \$1.20 per litre, what is the cost of:

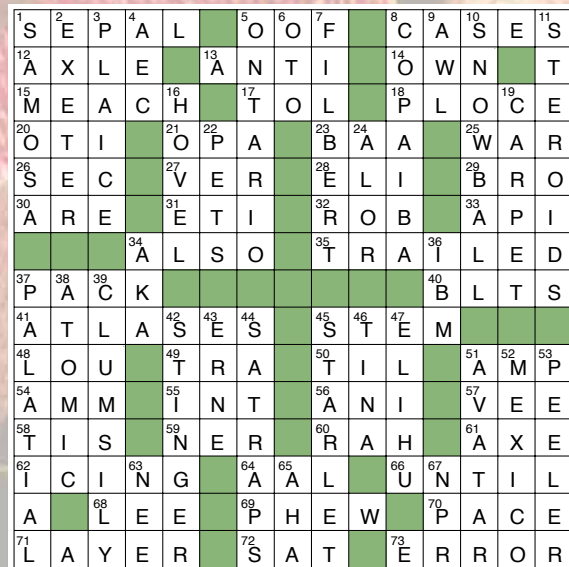
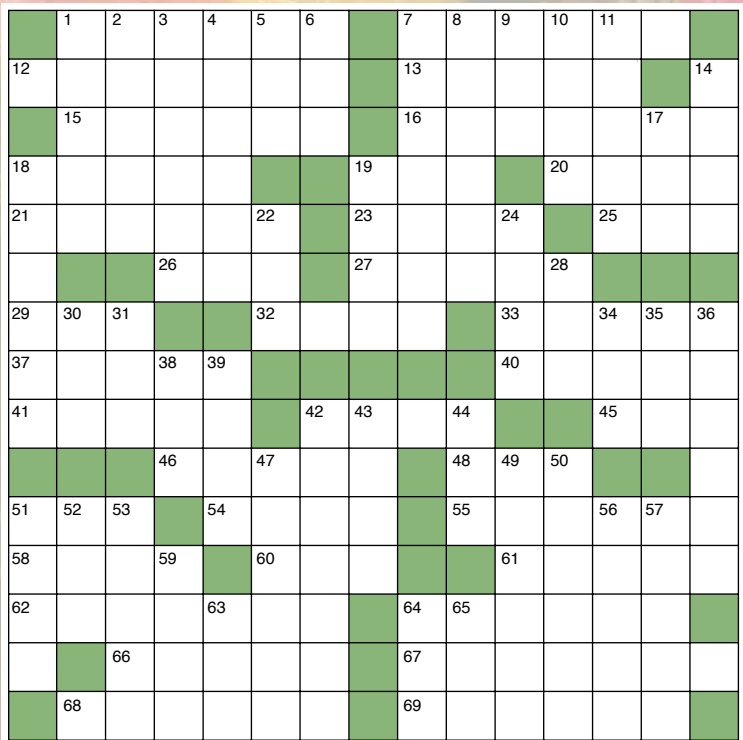
- 1 millilitre of fuel? (**Note** that 1 mL = 1 cubic centimetre, about the volume of a sugar cube)
  - 1 cubic metre of fuel?
  - 800 L (to fill 10 minivans, each having 80 L tanks on “empty”)
  - the amount of fuel needed to put 60 L of gas into a car each week for one year?
- 1 mL = 1/1000 litre so will cost 120¢/1000 = 0.12 cents
  - 1 cubic metre = (100 cm)(100 cm)(100 cm) = 1000000 cubic cm = 1000000 mL = 1000 L so will cost \$1.20 x 1000 = \$1200
  - 800 L will cost \$1.20 x 800 = \$960
  - 60 L x 52 weeks/year = 3120 L/year will cost \$1.20 x 3120 = \$3744



# Crossword Puzzle

Series 18 No 3

Last Month's solution  
Series 18 No 2



## ACROSS:

1. Unit of pressure or stress
7. Cricket term for ball throw
12. Zoo inhabitant
13. Archer's missile
15. Made money
16. Meddles with secretly
18. Made a mistake
19. Possessive word
20. Time periods
21. Regard highly
23. Informal word for large quantity
25. Luxurious retreat
26. Three (comb. Form)
27. Man's name, means "the king," in Old French
29. Goes with 'outs'
32. Ceases to live
33. Venezuela, for short
37. Support or maintain, as of old
40. \_\_\_\_\_ nous
41. Peruses a book
42. A fool, simpleton
45. Beginning of maple syrup
46. Had dinner
48. Configuration control board (abbr.)
51. Elevated railroads, briefly speaking
54. Official position in the armed forces
55. Scarcely
58. Little spasms
60. Children's Aid Society (abbr.)
61. Kitchen appliance
62. City in central Israel aka Rehoboth
64. Mediterranean country
66. Place in U.S. not to be forgotten
67. Big wave riders
68. Relating to stone pillars
69. Contemptibly small

## DOWN:

1. People of the same social status
2. Separate in space or time
3. City road
4. Fire part
5. Drink
6. Special lightbulb
7. War fights
8. Pencil part
9. Human limb
10. Brood dejectedly
11. Pitchers
14. Plural of 'os' (bones)
17. Knock sharply
18. Spookier
19. Island
22. Part of the middle position
24. Made a rug on a loom
28. Japanese money
30. Nat'l Stock Exchange
31. Sickle Cell Anaemia (abbr.)
34. Nat'l Trust for Scotland
35. Division of geologic time
36. A gentle, mild breeze
39. Russian ruler
42. Member of the senate
43. Printer liquids
44. Polychlorinated biphenyl, toxic chemical
47. US mountain a.k.a. Mount Rainier
49. Picture taker
50. Concise lawyer statements
51. To be, in France
52. Tell an untruth
53. Dutch darling
56. Surpass in accomplishment
57. Suspicious
59. Fish
63. \_\_\_\_\_-d'Or
64. Global System for Mobile communication
65. Regret

*Joyce*