

The Hunger Games

A book that doesn't tackle the issue it raises

Jon Dykstra

A book about kids killing other kids, that is written for the teen market? If that doesn't grab your attention, then you must not be a parent.

The Hunger Games is the first book in a trilogy by Suzanne Collins that has, since 2008, sold more than 5 million copies. On March 23rd a movie adaptation of the first book hit theatres and made a quarter of a billion dollars in just 10 days. This is the latest big thing in teen fiction. And like *Twilight* before it, a pivotal element of the plot is causing concern for Christian, and even non-Christian parents: this is a story about kids killing other kids.

Deadly plot does not a bad book make

Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen lives in a post-apocalyptic world where what's left of the United States has been divided up into 12 Districts, all subservient to "the Capitol." We learn that there was once a 13th district, but it rebelled, and in the resulting war the Capitol destroyed it.

Every year since then, as show of their submission, each of the Districts has had to provide the Capitol with two Tributes, a boy and a girl, to fight to the death in a made-for-TV spectacle reminiscent of the Roman gladiatorial games. Katniss becomes the District 12 female Tribute after she volunteers to take her 12-year-old sister's place.

Now the setting is grim, but a grim setting does not necessarily a bad book make. After all, "kids killing kids" would serve as a good summary of *Lord of the Flies*. In William Golding's classic he makes use of grim plot elements to talk about Man's depravity, and how even "innocent" children are fully capable of murder (or as the catechism puts it: "we are all conceived and born in sin"). A great writer can use a dark setting to present an important Truth.

Rooting for the anti-hero

However, Collins is no William Golding. Her premise is intriguing – the hero of our story is placed between a rock and a hard place. Since there is only one final winner in these "Hunger Games," Katniss would seem to have a terrible decision to make: to kill or be killed?

But Katniss never makes that decision. Collins has



This book is one many of our young people have already read (or seen the movie adaptation). And if they enjoyed *The Hunger Games*, some may be quite eager to defend it and to explain why this review is unfair. If so, that is quite an opportunity. Parents, let them tell you all about it... but require from them that they defend it using *God's standards*.

created a moral dilemma that, on the one hand, drives the action, but on the other, is hidden far enough in the background that it never needs to be resolved. Neither Katniss nor any of the other Tributes ever consider the morality of what they are being told to do. And Collins so arranges the action that Katniss is not put in a situation where she would have to murder someone to win the game – she does kill several in self-defense, but the rest of the Tributes kill each other, and Katniss’s only immoral kill (which the author clearly doesn’t think is immoral) is a “mercy kill” near the end.

This is quite the trick, and it is the means by which Collins maintains tension throughout the book: we’re left wondering right to the end, will she or won’t she? But consider just what we’re wondering: will the “hero” of our story murder children to save her own life, or won’t she? When the plot is summarized that way, it’s readily apparent why Collins never presents the moral dilemma clearly; if it is set out in the open, it isn’t a dilemma at all. It’s wrong to murder. It’s wrong to murder even if we are ordered to. It’s wrong to murder even to save our own lives. And it is better to be murdered than to become a murderer. That’s a truth Christians know from Scripture, but one even many in the world can intuit;

Conclusion

Golding used his grim setting to teach an important Truth. Collins uses her grim setting to the opposite effect, hiding Truth, and obscuring right and wrong. She uses the mush of her relativistic worldview to hide the sinfulness of obeying obscene orders. “You have been chosen to go kill other children for the enjoyment of a viewing audience.” Confronted with such a command Collins’ unquestioning Tributes, Katniss included, bear a striking resemblance to the guards working at the German concentration camps during World War II. They, too, were just following orders.

So this is not a book that will help our young people think God’s thoughts after Him.



What’s Inside

This issue we delve into the public school system, which may have some of our readers scratching their heads. Why focus on a system most of us have already left?

Two reasons. First, though we’ve left its destructive influence behind, we have seen recent efforts by government in Alberta and Quebec to impose the government’s secular values on students who aren’t even attending the public system. So what’s happening in their schools is not as removed from us as we might like. Second, while we have Christian schools for our children, most Canadians are not as blessed. So whether it is out of self-concern, or concern for our neighbor (Luke 10:27) we have good reason to want to know more about **our state schools**, and the values that are being instilled there.

In addition to two articles, we have two DVD reviews on this same theme. Things got a mite messed up here, in that the better of the two films got the shorter of the two reviews. *IndoctriNation* is by a Reformed filmmaker, so it’s no surprise this documentary has some theological depth. What is a tad unexpected is just how engaging, eye-catching and plain ol’ professional the film is - after all, Christians still aren’t known for our great filmmaking abilities. However, director Colin Gunn has put together a production that is cinematically indistinguishable from the very best secular documentaries. And did I mention he’s Reformed? Just a great documentary every which way you look at it.

We also have a heavy emphasis on the sciences in this issue. Margaret Helder delves into the complexity within bacteria. As small as these cells are, scientists have recently learned that some of them have immune systems of a sort! Then John Byl and Jerry Johnson take turns responding to two common and comical critiques against **biblical creationism**.



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THE WELCOMERS

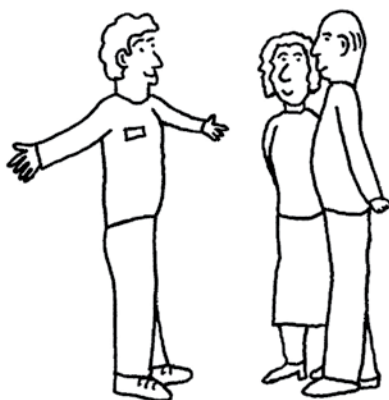
IT IS THE
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This CartoonChurch.com cartoon by Dave Walker originally appeared in the Church Times.

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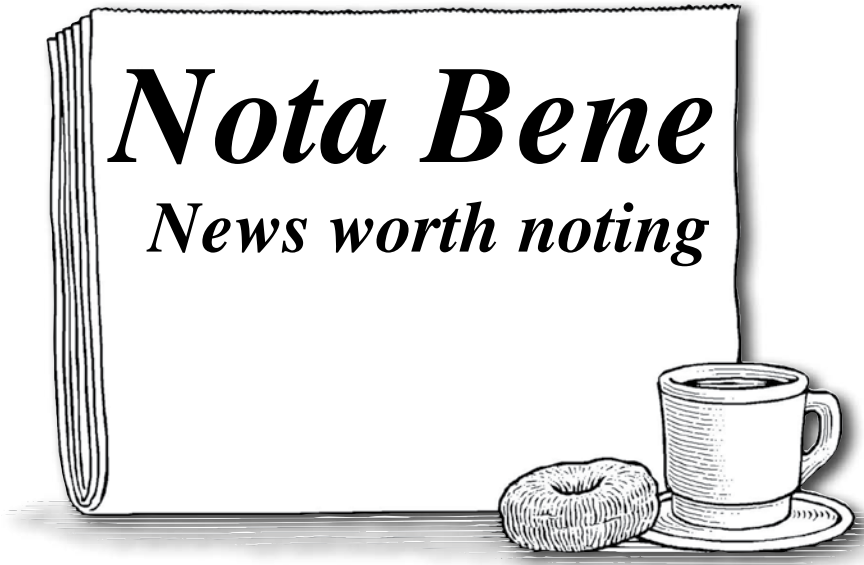
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Nota Bene

News worth noting



The Red Deer Advocate pulls a fast one

by Jon Dykstra

On March 8, the *Red Deer Advocate* quoted Alberta Home Education Association board member Paul van den Bosch as saying:

We don't have a problem with the human rights act. What's troubling is the way that act has been used in the past in obstructing freedom of thought, expression and religion.

Based on this quote Tim Bloedow, at ChristianGovernance.ca, questioned why van den Bosch would give an endorsement of sorts to the Alberta Human Rights Act. After all, this Act has been used to attack Christian pastor Stephen Boissin and Catholic Bishop Fred Henry and publisher Ezra Levant. But then Mr. van den Bosch provided him with a complete copy of the quote, which read:

It's not an Act I like. But the issue today, for the Alberta Home Education Association, is the Education Act. Today, we have a problem with the Education Act. So, one thing at a time. For today, we don't have a problem with the Alberta Human Rights Act. What's troubling is the way that Act has been used in the past to restrict and diminish freedom of thought, freedom of expressions, and freedom of religion.

The full quote makes it clear how deceptive the *Red Deer Advocate* had been. By cutting where they did, in mid-sentence, they made it seem as if Mr. van den Bosch had no problem with an Act that he clearly states he does not like.

So the moral of this story is, as [ChristianGovernance's](http://ChristianGovernance.ca) Tim Bloedow put it, "that it's hard to distrust journalism too much. Never be embarrassed over your suspicion of the media. They have earned their reputation." The solution? Replace your mainstream media intake with news sources you can trust.

SOURCE: March 21, 2012 ChristianGovernance.ca newsletter

Fearful apologies for Koran burning

by Jon Dykstra

In late February riots sparked by the burning of Korans on a US military base in Afghanistan resulted in 41 deaths, including the murder of four US military personnel.

The Korans were part of a collection more than 1,600 books that had been boxed up and removed from the library at the Parwan Detention Facility. These boxes had been moved to storage, and on February 22 they were mistakenly sent to the incinerator. Afghan garbage collectors working on the base noticed the Korans among the charred books and reported their findings to an Afghan National Army commander. When the news got out, Muslims came out in mass protests that quickly became riots. In addition to the 41 deaths, more than 250 people were injured. US President Barack Obama quickly issued an apology for the

burning of the Korans, which White House spokesman Jay Carney called an appropriate response given the fact that "...his primary concern as Commander-in-Chief is the safety of American men and women in Afghanistan..."

That the President thought apologizing could help keep his troops safe exposes the lie of a peaceful Islam – the President of the United States has never felt the need to apologize to protect his troops from Christians.



President Obama disembarking Marine One

Coke or Pepsi?

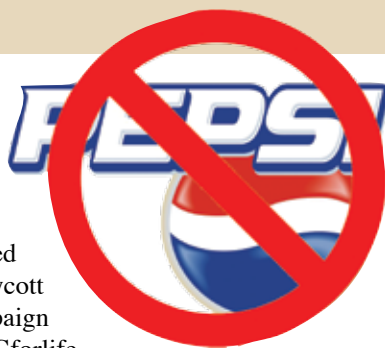
by Jon Dykstra

Which is better: Coke, or Pepsi? That question became a whole lot easier to answer in March, after news broke that the Pepsi Company was using cells derived from an aborted fetus in flavor-enhancing research. There are no fetal cells actually in Pepsi products, but in 2010 PepsiCo signed a 4-year, \$30-million agreement with Senomyx, a company that uses aborted fetal remains in their research. Or to put it more plainly, Pepsi hired Senomyx to use the remains of murdered embryonic children to do research on “flavor enhancement.”

A group called Children of God for

Life has started a boycott campaign (COGforlife.

org/pepsiboycottnews.htm) that involves buying alternatives to Pepsi, as well as writing the company to explain why you are no longer buying their product. Many boycotts fail when consumers find it difficult to find an alternative, but in this case the alternative, whether generic, or Coca-Cola, is simply a few steps further down the grocery aisle.



Brit PM defends Christian schools

by Jon Dykstra

A few months back infamous atheist Richard Dawkins asked why the British Prime Minister supported Christian schools for children. Surely, Dawkins argued, the PM would never think of having a student taught so as to be a “Keynesian child” or a “Conservative child,” so why would he allow some students to be taught so as to be Christian children?

Mr. Cameron responded: “Comparing John Maynard Keynes to Jesus Christ shows, in my view, why Richard Dawkins just doesn’t get it.” He added, “The church was providing good schools long before the state ever got involved.”

SOURCE: *Evangelicals Now*, January 2012

Thoughts as crimes

by Neil Dykstra

A high-profile trial in the United States concluded recently with the jury finding the defendant, Dharun Ravi, guilty of “bias intimidation,” a hate crime that carries a five to ten year sentence.

He was also found guilty of other charges including invasion of privacy and witness tampering, but it is the bias intimidation conviction that garnered the most attention - it wasn’t based on what he did, but on the supposed motivation behind it. Or to put it another way, this was a “thought-crime” charge.

Ravi was an 18-year-old freshman university student who was assigned a dorm room with another 18-year-old, Tyler Clementi, who had just come out of the closet as a gay man. Within a couple weeks, Clementi asked Ravi to leave the room for the evening. Ravi saw a man in his 30s enter his dorm room, and Ravi accessed his webcam in the room on his friend’s computer. He saw the two men kissing, and tweeted, “...saw [my roommate] making out with a dude. yay.” Clementi was immediately aware of the tweets, but arranged for a second evening tryst. Ravi invited his friends over twitter to watch his webcam feed, but claims he thought better of it and turned his computer off. He wrote an apology to Clementi, which was sent about the same

time that Clementi posted on Facebook that he was jumping from the George Washington bridge. This is a tragic end to the events, and while it is not altogether clear whether Ravi’s violation of his roommate’s privacy prompted his suicide, we would all agree that such a violation is ugly and reprehensible.

But what we must dispute is the charge of “bias intimidation.” Gay activists have

hailed the conviction as an important precedent to banning any and all opposition to homosexuality, including Christians’ belief that homosexuality is a sin. The issue Christians need to raise doesn’t necessarily have a direct connection to our opposition to homosexuality. What we must ask is whether it is the government’s place to punish thoughts and beliefs.

We know the government has been put in place to punish certain actions, and determine the culpability of the offender – that is clear enough. But is there any Scriptural reason to think the government should try to punish people for their beliefs?

To secure the conviction, all the government had to prove was that Ravi held “animus towards gays.” The only evidence they had, other than the tweet described earlier, was that he expressed some discomfort at being assigned a dorm room with a gay student. But that, according to the jury, was enough.

As we stand up against the tide towards criminalizing our faith, we must remember that as Christians we are called to treat everyone with dignity and respect. But by this standard, it would seem any Christian, if we were to express our opposition to homosexuality, is guilty of bias intimidation.



A new way to settle political (or maybe theological) differences?

by Wes Bredenhof

They've called it "The Thrilla on the Hilla." Conservative senator Patrick Brazeau and Liberal MP Justin Trudeau went head-to-head in a boxing match on March 31. Brazeau was the odds-on favorite going in, but Trudeau surprised everyone with a third-round TKO. The match was all for a good cause, raising over \$200,000 for cancer research. Following the bout, Brazeau kept his word, trimmed his trademark locks and wore a Liberal jersey on Parliament hill for a week.

Leaving aside the ethics of boxing or even boxing for charity, the story reminds one of the long history of duelling in western society. Two men would go at one another with a sword or pistol to resolve their differences. Many know the story of how astronomer Tycho Brahe ended up with a metallic nose implant because of a duel that didn't go his way. But did you know there is a story involving two Reformed theologians and a duel?

The story happened at the great Synod of Dort in 1619. It was January, not exactly the season for warm and happy moods in northern climes like the Netherlands. The Synod was wrestling with the question of the extent of Christ's atonement. The Arminians had argued that Christ died to make salvation possible for all. Reformed theologians maintained that Christ died only for the elect. However, there were some theologians who tried to moderate between these two positions. One of those was Matthias Martinius, a German delegate from the Reformed church in

Bremen.

Franciscus Gomarus was a Dutch professor delegated to the Synod. He would have nothing of moderation on this point. Gomarus was getting angrier with Martinius. Finally, towards the end of the day, Gomarus literally threw down his glove at the Synod and challenged Martinius to a duel. Gomarus wanted to go at it with Martinius right there in front of the Synod! Martinius had a cooler head and refused. The Synod president stepped in and called it a day, finishing with Bible reading and prayer, hoping that these devotions would defuse the potential violence. No sooner had the president said "Amen," than Gomarus went after Martinius again and challenged him to armed combat. To his credit, Martinius walked away, and the two never did get into the proposed duel. Thankfully, Reformed synods no longer feature such antics. But will we see more of it in Canadian politics?



Occupy movement calls for general strike on May 1

by Jon Dykstra

The Occupy Wall Street movement, which sprung up in the Fall of 2011 and largely disappeared over the winter, may reappear on May 1st. Various Occupy-related websites have called on

supporters to stay home from work and school and to abstain from shopping, banking, and even chores on that day as a sign of their support for the movement.



A protest sign at an "Occupy Wall Street" event in Los Angeles on October 2, 2011, that highlights the anti-Christian nature of much of this protest. Private property is specifically approved of, and protected by, God in the Eighth Commandment (Ex. 20:12).

Photo by Gerry Boughan / Shutterstock.com

On fatherhood and anti-fatherhood

We are to be imitators of God

by Douglas Wilson

The following is a sermon delivered by the author on March 18th.

Our world is filled with fathers because it is a world created by God the Father. Fatherhood lies at the center of all things, and because the Father created the world, the world has to reflect that reality. But because it is a world that has—because of the disobedience of our first father—fallen into sin and rebellion, it is also a world that is filled with false information about fatherhood. We have a Father of all good things, but there is also a father of lies out there (John 8:44). This means that we must start our study of what fathers should be with a corrective. What is sinless fatherhood like?

Matthew 3:16-17

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased...”

The facts in this episode are well known. Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized by him – a baptism of

repentance. John protests, but Jesus insists, identifying with the sins of His people from the very beginning of His ministry. As He was coming out of the water, the heavens opened up to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God in the form of a dove, descending until it rested upon Him. Then a voice from Heaven spoke concerning His Son.

In these two brief verses, we are given a glorious vision of what fatherhood in its essence is actually like, and so let us begin there.

In the first place, when Jesus was baptized, beginning His earthly ministry, His Father was there. His Father was present, not absent. The second point to make is that the Father made His presence felt by sending His Spirit. He was not present and detached, but rather present and engaged. In the third place, He made His presence known by speaking. The Father revealed His mind with propositional content. The rest of what we might glean is taken from what He said. Fourth, He identified with His Son. He said, “This is my Son.” This is a verbal affirmation that goes alongside the giving of the Spirit. He identifies with His Son, and claims the relationship. Fifth, He expressed His love for His Son. “This is my beloved Son.” And then the last thing we learn is that God the Father was well-

pleased with His Son. He praised His Son.

Archetypical fatherhood

In all of human history, there is no other event we might consider that will teach us more about what fatherhood ought to be like than this one. This is the heart of fatherhood. This describes it. This is therefore the pattern, this is the template. A human father is more like what a true father ought to be the more he lines up with this. The more he veers from it, the less so.

The divine Father speaks here for the first time in the New Testament. First words are important.

Consider the opposite

Suppose a father (for some reason) wanted to act out the role of an anti-father? How would that look?

- He would be absent, not present. He would be gone.
- If he had to be present, he would be emotionally absent. His presence would not be engaged.
- If he had to be present, he would remain silent. He wouldn't say anything
- If silent, he would therefore not then

identify himself as being “with” his son or daughter.

- If silent, he would therefore not express love for his son or daughter.
- If silent, he would therefore not praise or honor his son or daughter.

But a man acting this way would be a lying father, not an anti-father. This is because he still holds the office of father, but his discharge of that office is contrary to the job description for it that God provided for us in His Word. And it is this kind of disparity that provokes children to anger (Eph. 6:4).

All fathers are talking about God the Father all the time. They do not have the option of remaining silent. God the Father has told the truth about Himself—He does this throughout all creation in natural revelation, and throughout all the Scriptures in special revelation, but particularly here, in the baptism of Jesus. Here is fatherhood.

As His children

The Ephesians (together with us) are told to be imitators of God, as dearly loved children (Eph. 5:1). Notice that He is doing the same sort of thing with us that He did with the Lord Jesus. The Father was there; He was present (Eph. 1:3). The Spirit had been given to them (Eph. 1:2, 2:18). The mystery of God’s will in the gospel was now made known (Eph. 1:9). The fact of our adoption was declared; we are His children (Eph. 1:5). We are called His beloved children (Eph. 5:1). And He tells us that we can walk in a way that is worthy of our calling; He can be pleased with it (Eph. 4:1).

So then, fathers...

So then, fathers, you have a Father who has told you to imitate Him (Eph 5:1). On the way home from church today, you all may be driving along in silence. Suddenly a voice comes from the back seat, “Dad, don’t apply the sermon in any ways that make us all feel awkward.” And you know what you should say? “I’m gonna.” If you have drifted away from this biblical pattern, there is no way to recover your

footing without some kind of ice-breaking weirdness. So go for it.

Let’s keep this simple.

- Be there. Unless providentially hindered, make your physical presence with your kids a high priority. Be there for dinner; be there for school plays; be there for recitals.
- Be engaged while there. Pay emotional attention. Don’t go to the kindergarten graduation so you can check your email on the phone.
- Say something about it. Talk about it. Register your presence verbally.
- Identify with your son or daughter every chance you get. “This is my son.” “This is my daughter.”

Everybody in your life should know who goes with you.

- Express your love for them to them. Do not assume that such things go without saying. If ever they could have gone without saying, it would have been at the baptism of the Son of God. And His Father still expressed His love.
- Praise them. Have the praise come from your pleasure in this, and not because somebody guilted you with a sermon.

Rev. Wilson is a pastor at Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho. This sermon was reprinted, with permission, from his blog dougwils.com.



**Fatherhood means talking with your kids
... no matter what it takes!**

The assurance of things hoped for

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble."

"Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!"

(Job 1:20-21, 14:1, and 19:23-27)

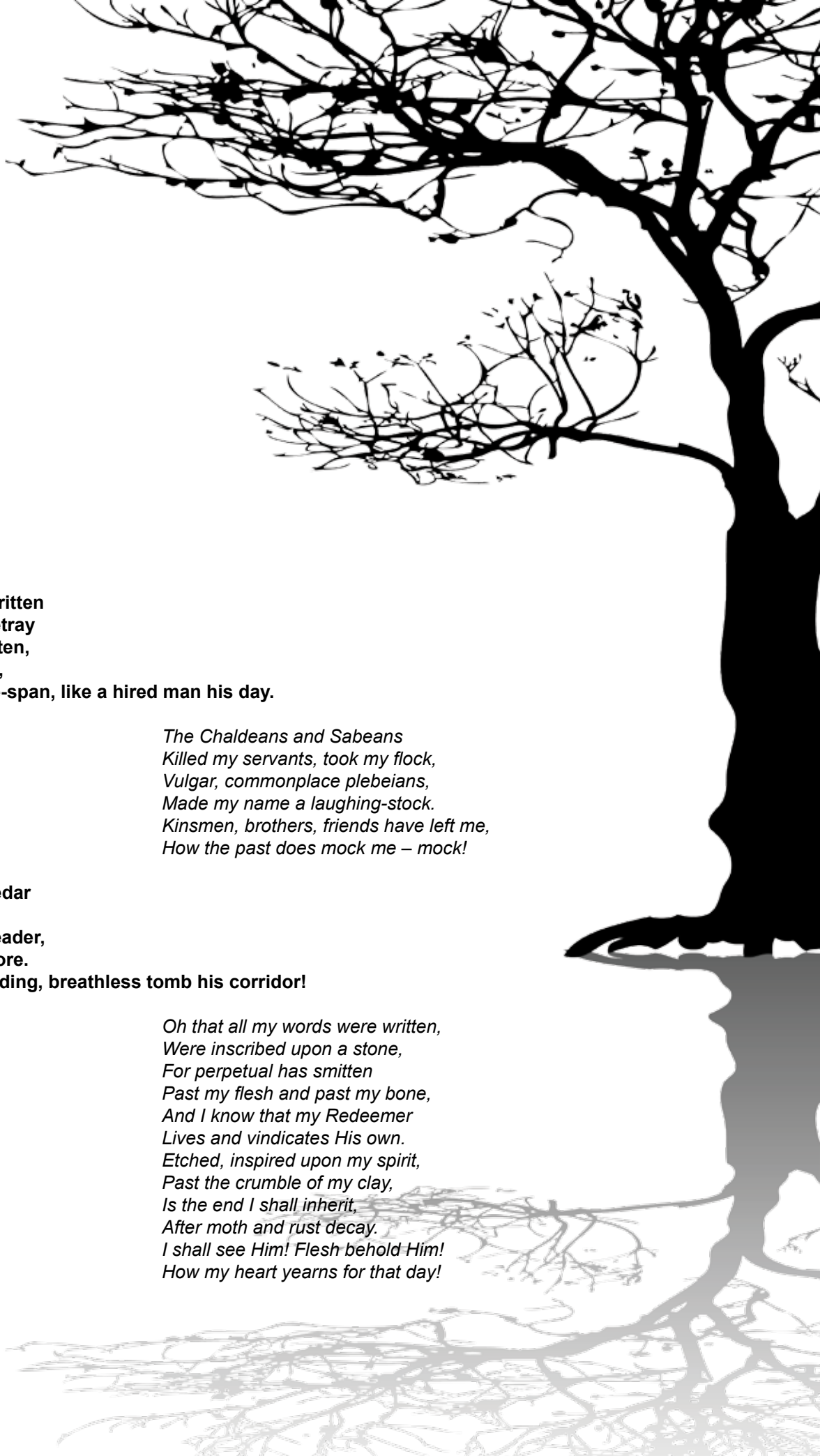
*Naked came I, naked go I,
Given, taken, has the Lord,
This my answer, this my outcry,
Let His name be blessed, adored,
Naked came I, naked go I,
Blesséd be the sovereign Lord.*

**Few of days and full of sorrow,
Is the tree of mortal man.
Here today and gone tomorrow,
Like a shadow is his span,
Like an evanescent shadow is the tree of mortal man.**

*Shadows, shadows, swift and fleeting,
Seven sons and daughters three,
Seven thousand sheep stopped bleating,
Gone were irrevocably
My possessions, all possessions,
And my name is poverty.*

**Predetermined is his hour,
Length of leaf a few small sighs,
Caterpillar days devour,
Space he briefly occupies,
Space he briefly and with hardships, but a moment dignifies.**

*Hardships like the muted lowing
Of the beasts of yesterday,
Hardships like God's fire throwing
Particles of red my way,
Ash to dust and dust to ashes,
Taking all, my all away.*



**Number of his months is written
On the bark. Crow's-feet betray
That the temporal has smitten,
That determined is his stay,
That determined is his time-span, like a hired man his day.**

*The Chaldeans and Sabeans
Killed my servants, took my flock,
Vulgar, commonplace plebeians,
Made my name a laughing-stock.
Kinsmen, brothers, friends have left me,
How the past does mock me – mock!*

**Whether birch or pine or cedar
Of the Lebanon of yore,
Wise man, beggarman or leader,
All will vanish from this shore.
Cease existing, come to ending, breathless tomb his corridor!**

*Oh that all my words were written,
Were inscribed upon a stone,
For perpetual has smitten
Past my flesh and past my bone,
And I know that my Redeemer
Lives and vindicates His own.
Etched, inspired upon my spirit,
Past the crumble of my clay,
Is the end I shall inherit,
After moth and rust decay.
I shall see Him! Flesh behold Him!
How my heart yearns for that day!*

– Christine Farenhorst



Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

On public schools

“Is there an idea more radical in the history of the human race than turning your children over to total strangers, who you know nothing about, and having those strangers work on your child’s mind, out of your sight, for a period of twelve years? Could there be a more radical idea than that? Back in colonial times in America if you proposed that as an idea, they would burn you at the stake, you mad person! It’s a mad idea!” - John Taylor Gatto, former teacher, in the 2011 documentary *IndocriNation: public schools and the decline of Christianity in America*

Words will hurt us

Do you say “gay” or do you use the term “homosexual”? In a recent video blog, Reformed commentator Jerry Johnson explained how the choice of terms used in a debate can determine who will win it. For example, in the abortion debate the other side wanted to be known as “pro-choice” and wanted us to be called “anti-choice.” But if we had allowed the debate to be about choice, rather than life, well, we would have lost right there – who wants to stand with the anti-choicers? So it was strategically important that we highlighted the truth behind our position and fought to be called “pro-life.”

It is just as important, then, that we make careful use of the right terms in the many other cultural debates we are involved in. Johnson suggests the following alternatives to what we most often hear in the secular media. When the term “stimulus” is used to talk about government spending, we need to respond with the more accurate “spending spree.” When mention is made of everyone

getting their “fair share,” we need to identify this for what it is: “socialism” or “covetousness.” We need to stop using the term “gay marriage” and talk instead of “homosexual unions.” And in his most creative substitution, Johnson proposed an alternative to “regulate”: “When they talk about ‘regulate,’ as in ‘regulations,’ what they really mean is ‘constipate.’ They want to back up progress.”

To watch the entire commentary, go to AgainstTheWorld.tv, and select “War of Words.”

Should we recycle glass? Probably not

The Cornwall Alliance For The Stewardship Of Creation is a Christian environmental group that has some very unusual ideas about what good stewardship actually entails. What follows is a small item from the February 22 newsletter called “Tips for Earth Stewards,” by Douglas Gregory, that explains why recycling is not always a good idea.

Simple things you can do to make the earth more fruitful, beautiful, and safe. If recycling is cheaper than producing virgin resources, market incentives will prefer virgin product. If hauling glass to a dump, for which room is not a concern, is \$35 per ton (national US average), and recycling costs \$150 per ton, recycled product must sell for at least \$115 per ton; glass does not fetch this much. This is one of the reasons glass is recycled less frequently than steel or aluminum.

Different types of glass (clear, amber or green) have different properties and chemical make-ups. Mixed ground glass (cullet) is more difficult to

separate and turn into useful glass than virgin product. Much of the glass that is recycled is “downcycled,” usually being ground up for fiberglass or other construction materials. Natural forces slowly pulverize glass that ends up in landfills; over time it will become silica (sand) again. Energy savings on glass recycling is only 21% over virgin product (as opposed to 95% for aluminum), not including the cost of collecting and sorting. Glass retains usefulness as long as it remains whole, but that does not frequently happen in recycling. It does, however, happen if you keep glass in your home for various purposes, such as keeping cooking oil or fat drippings.

Harvestable sand is not at risk for running out, but at this point industrial recycling is too expensive to be worth it. When sand becomes more expensive, there will be an incentive to recycle glass.

You can sign up for the Cornwall Alliance newsletter at their website CornwallAlliance.org (this extract was reprinted with permission).

Great pro-life slogans

Love lets live – Abort73.com
Kill the patient, not the pain – Euthanasia Prevention Coalition
What if you’re wrong? – as seen on a pro-life billboard
A person is a person, no matter how small – *Horton Hears a Who*
The answer to a crisis pregnancy is to eliminate the crisis, *not the child* – Jeannie W. French
Birth before death – Abort73.com



Our public schools are toast

**Education is always taught from a particular perspective.
In Canada, in our public schools, that perspective is clearly anti-Christian**

by Michael Wagner

When Dutch immigrants began arriving in Canada in large numbers after World War Two, one of the first actions they took was to set up Christian schools for their children. Since education is never neutral, they wanted to ensure that their children received explicitly Christian education as commanded in the Bible (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:7). Those immigrants were right to do so then, but their efforts are even more strongly vindicated now, as the public schools have become more consistently anti-Christian.

In the twentieth century, the existence of private Christian schools was controversial, even among most conservative Protestants. Christian schooling (as well as home schooling) remains controversial in some circles today. This is because most Christians who claim to believe the Bible send their children to public schools.

Sending children to private Christian schools is seen by these people as “segregating” children from mainstream society and thus preventing them from being a testimony for Christ in the public schools. Furthermore, education is often considered to be a neutral endeavor: mathematics, English and science are the same for Christians and non-Christians, it is argued.

At best, such a view is naïve. Education is always taught from a particular perspective. There have to be criteria for determining what children need to be taught because they cannot be taught everything about the world. Which literature should be taught? Which aspects of history should be taught? What moral perspective (if any) should underlie the

curriculum? Every educational program must answer these kinds of questions, and the answers are determined (at least in part) by the philosophical perspective or worldview of the people answering them.

Parents who want Christian education for their children must make enormous sacrifices. It is much easier to send children to public schools, and most conservative Protestants do send their children to public schools. But doing so (at least in Canada) is getting harder and harder to justify.

How so? Well, to give just one illustration, public schools are soon going to be (and some are already) used to teach that homosexuality is normal and good and that anyone who disagrees is a hater. Gay marriage, too, will be presented as good and proper. The political battle that ended with the legalization of same-sex marriage means that our federal and provincial governments have now embraced the view that homosexuality is just as valid as heterosexuality. The implications of this view must now play themselves out in the public schools (and perhaps other venues as well).

Never neutral

University of Windsor law professor Richard Moon is an expert on the modern notion of human rights. He is very leftwing and a strong supporter of homosexual rights. He has recently written an article about homosexual rights as it applies to public education in Canada (“The Supreme Court of Canada’s Attempt to Reconcile Freedom of Religion and Sexual Orientation Equality in the Public

Schools” in *Faith, Politics, and Sexual Diversity in Canada and the United States*).

Moon is very conscious of the fact that education is not neutral, and he draws out some of the implications of homosexual rights for the public schools. Because education must be based on a particular perspective (or worldview), schools

... cannot be neutral towards, or even tolerate, all values. The affirmation of any value or set of values will involve the exclusion or rejection of other values, perspectives or commitments in the community, including the deeply held religious beliefs of some teachers, parents, and students.

Since homosexual relationships are equal to heterosexual relationships, this must be reflected in the curriculum from the earliest grades. Stories involving same-sex relationships should be available to children as soon as they enter the public school. “Including these stories in the kindergarten curriculum will normalize same-sex relationships and, in effect, affirm their value.” The government believes that homosexuality is normal and good, so this must be taught to all children in the public schools!

This bears repeating: The government’s view is not a “neutral” position on sexual lifestyles. The government is going to promote the view that homosexuality is good. As Moon writes:

To be meaningful, the acceptance or affirmation of same-sex relationships must involve a public statement or



It's clearer than ever that our children should not be in public schools.

He argues this way:

If a school board or provincial government decides to advance or affirm a particular set of values, they must also reject other values – values that may be part of the religious commitment of some community members. Parents may have to live with the democratic consequence that their values are not included in the civic curriculum and perhaps even that their children are exposed to, or taught, views to which they are opposed.

involve nothing less than a repudiation of the religious view that homosexuality is sinful (Emphasis added).

Although the Bible says that homosexuality is sinful, the government says (in accordance with “human rights” and the Charter of Rights) that it’s not.

Should Christians send their children to schools that “repudiate” conservative Christian views? Not if they want to obey the Lord.

Praise God for our Christian schools!

indication that such relationships are normal and valuable.

Many parents who send their children to public schools are not going to like the positive portrayal of homosexuality, but Moon doesn’t care. As far as he is concerned (and this will be reflected in government policy):

If equality, including sexual orientation equality, is an important public value, it should be affirmed in the schools and should underpin classroom learning, even in the face of religiously based opposition from some parents.

He argues that not including same-sex relationships in school materials will be experienced by homosexuals as “discrimination.” If same-sex relationships are not portrayed in public school curriculum (and portrayed in a positive manner, I might add), that amounts to exclusion and discrimination towards homosexuals.

Whose values?

Take note of his view: excluding the (positive) representation of same-sex relationships is discrimination. However, while he is opposed to excluding representation of same-sex relationships in the curriculum, he is not opposed to all forms of exclusion. In fact, he is decidedly in favor of excluding conservative, traditional values from public education.

If homosexuality is excluded from the curriculum, that is discrimination. If Christian values are excluded from the curriculum, that is just a “consequence” of living in a “democratic” society. Too bad for you, loser. Exclusion is only discrimination when homosexuality is being excluded.

Anti-Christian

There is actually a very important point being made here by Moon. It is impossible for public schools to embrace contradictory values. If a certain set of values is affirmed, other values are therefore rejected. As Moon points out, “the state ... must prefer some values. . . it cannot treat them all equally – as equally true or right.” Thus when the government decides that homosexuality is normal and valuable (as it has), perspectives that oppose homosexuality are rejected. The government has chosen sides and now favors an explicitly pro-homosexual position and, consequently, actively opposes the Biblical Christian view.

Actually, it’s even worse than that. As Moon puts it, the government’s pro-homosexual position is a “repudiation” of Biblical Christianity:

The public commitment to sexual orientation equality, expressed in federal and provincial human rights laws, and recognized under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, should be affirmed in the public schools. *This affirmation will*

The legalization of same-sex marriage was sometimes promoted as a “live and let live” kind of libertarian issue. You do things your way, and let others do things their way; it’s a pluralistic society after all. But since same-sex marriage was accepted, we have begun to see that the alleged pluralism of our society is shrinking. It’s certainly not pluralistic enough to allow conservative Christian views on sexual morality into the public schools!

On the one hand, this is a negative turn of events. But on the other hand, it is a vindication of those who have chosen the difficult path of Christian education for their children. Christian education was always the most Biblical option, but that is even more obvious now than ever before. The current situation presents a tremendous opportunity to present the historic Reformed view on the necessity of Christian education to Christians whose children are still in public schools. The contrast between Christian and public education is greater than ever before, and the need for Christian education is more obvious than ever before.

The public schools are toast. Their students are going to be force-fed the view that homosexuality is good. No disagreement will be allowed. This is called “equality.” All students will be required to swallow the official government ideology, or else.

Will conservative Christians pull their children out of the public schools before it’s too late?



Waiting for “Superman”

One of the saddest days of my life was when my mother told me “Superman” did not exist. ‘Cause even in the depths of the ghetto you just thought he was coming... She thought I was crying because it’s like Santa Claus is not real. I was crying because no one was coming with enough power to save us. - Geoffrey Canada

The public school system in the US is so bad mere mortals don’t seem capable of fixing it. And sadly Superman isn’t available. So how can it be fixed? And more importantly, why should the primarily Canadian, private-school-supporting readership of this magazine care to find out?

Let’s start with this last question first. There are two reasons our community should watch *Waiting for “Superman”*. The first: to better appreciate the blessing that our schools are. The second: to ensure our schools never make the mistakes that have destroyed the US public schools.

Doing the opposite

There is, of course, Someone powerful enough to fix all that’s wrong in these schools, but He isn’t welcome there. In fact, watching *Superman* is like being given a close-up look at a system based on the very opposite of what God instructs us concerning the education of our children.

- God says education is a parental (Prov. 4) responsibility? Not so in the public system; there the parents have little to no say.
- God warns that teachers will “be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1). The teachers’ unions won’t stand for that. They’ve negotiated contracts based on the idea that “we shouldn’t make any distinctions among teachers. A teacher is a teacher is a teacher.” In

some districts unions have managed to make it next to impossible to fire teachers (disciplinary hearing can last as long as three years!), no matter how bad they might be.

So what happens when you do the opposite? Very bad things. The American system has thousands of schools so pathetic they’ve been labelled “failure factories.” If your child is unfortunate enough to have to attend one of these schools, it may not matter how gifted or determined they are - their educational future could be determined by the teachers they are saddled with.

Everyone seems ready to admit the system is broken, but the opposing sides have very different ideas of what and who is to blame. The teachers’ unions put the blame on class size, and a lack of funding. But director Davis Guggenheim argues money can’t be the pivotal factor:

Since 1971 educational spending in the US has grown from \$4,300 to more than \$9,000 per student. And that’s adjusted for inflation.... So we’ve doubled what we spend on each child but double the money is worth it if we’re producing better results. Unfortunately we’re not. Since 1971 reading scores have flat-lined, and math is no better.

Fixing what’s broken

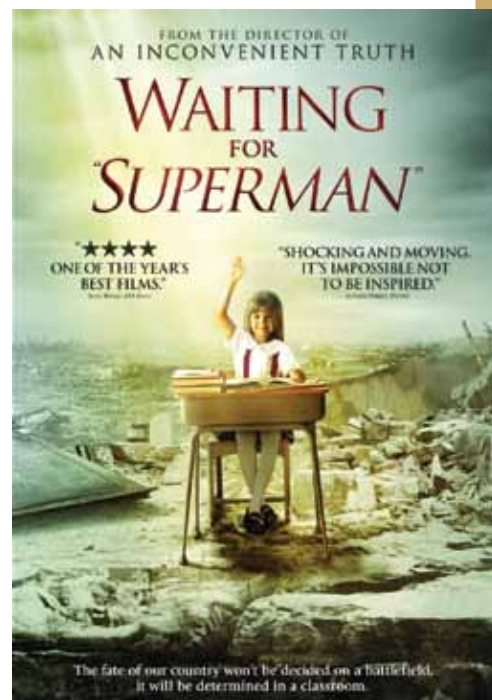
So how can this system be fixed? The approach suggested in *Superman* involves charter schools. If the unions won’t let bad teachers be fired, then, educational reformers argue, it’s time to start a new school system that isn’t controlled by the unions.

Geoffrey Canada is one of those reformers, and is a central figure in the documentary. He has started up charter

schools in the very worst educational districts and given parents a seemingly outrageous promise: if they enroll their children in his schools, he will ensure they not only graduate, but qualify for college. His confidence is based largely on the caliber of teacher he is able to recruit and reward. We’re told that “a bad teacher covers only 50% of the curriculum for the year; a good teacher can cover 150%.” So the ability to weed out the worst and retain the best can make an enormous difference.

Worth remembering

Superman shows us how good we have it. Our Christian schools are parental schools, staffed by teachers we know and go to church with. And our teachers know their role - that they are there to be an aid to, not a replacement for, parents. What



Waiting for Superman
111 minutes, 2010

a contrast with the horrors of the public system we see in *Superman*.

But the film can also serve as a cautionary note, warning us against errors we could easily slip into. For example, we have parental schools, but not all of our parents take an active role in their children's education. Our teachers know their role is to assist parents, which means they must know the parents they serve, but when faced with unpleasant parents, it could be tempting to try to minimize contact. And though our school boards know the students are the reason for our schools, it could be easy, for charitable reasons, to continue to employ a lousy teacher.

So *Superman* is a good reminder of our blessings... and the need to keep in clear focus the purpose and vision for our schools.

Cautions

We're shown the problems in the public system but *Superman* doesn't do as good a job at presenting the solution. Charter schools and their superior teachers are an improvement, certainly, but one more marked improvement, which goes almost unmentioned, is how these charter schools are more responsive to parents. Again, as the Bible makes clear, the education of children is a *parental responsibility*, so this unnoticed improvement is actually the most important one.

Conclusion

We're shown here what can be done when parents and excellent teachers set high expectations for their children. It is

an inspiring and attractive production. The interviewees are likeable, brilliant, or quirky, and to add to the energy there's a constant stream of short clever cartoons interspersed throughout.

Superman also shows what happens when a nation forgets that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Prov. 9:10). The public system in the US ignores Him not just in the classroom, but in acknowledging education as a parental (not state) responsibility (and it is no different in Canada).

I would highly recommend this to all parents. High school students who don't properly appreciate the blessing that our schools are would also benefit. You can find *Waiting for "Superman"* at Amazon.ca and Amazon.com.

IndoctriNation

The narrative for the film is the Gunn family's trip, in a big yellow school bus, across America. They travel from place to place visiting educational experts, and Reformed theologians, and uncover the

radically anti-Christian roots of public education. It's this exploration of the historical roots of American educational philosophy that makes *IndoctriNation* highly relevant to Canadians; this same philosophy pervades our schools north of the border, too.

Two interviews with public school teacher Sarah Laverdiere serve as stunning bookends for the film.

LaVerdiere is a Christian who has a hard time reconciling her job with her faith – she doesn't know if she should be making parents feel good about sending their children to a public school. At about the 26-minute mark LaVerdiere is asked, "How long would your career last if you were to start teaching Scripture from the front of the classroom?" Laughing, she answers, "I'd probably be out of here that day!"

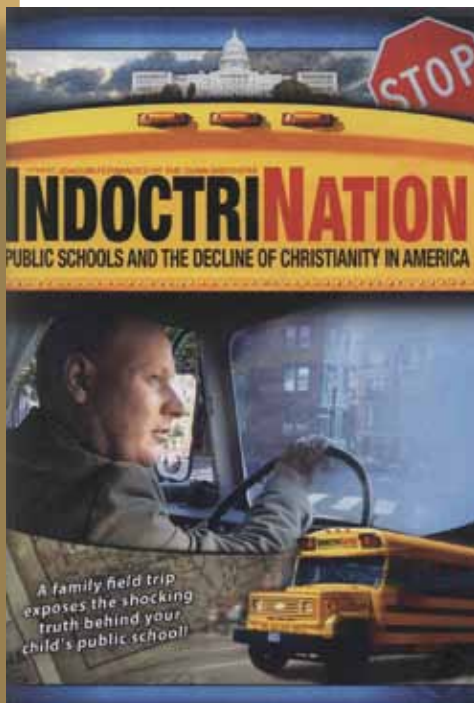
Those were prophetic words.

An hour further into *IndoctriNation* we meet her again. Since her first interview LaVerdiere had decided she could not remain silent about God in the classroom, so she had offered her resignation. She was initially supposed to teach another

two weeks, but after she wrote a letter (at her principal's request) explaining her decision, she was asked to resign immediately. What was in her letter? LaVerdiere noted that she could not continue to teach where Christianity was not welcome, and where homosexuals, radical environmentalists and atheists were encouraged to pervert the minds of the students. When the principal saw her letter LaVerdiere was asked to resign that day.

I did return to the elementary school that day. And the principal supervised me as I cleaned out my classroom. They had the students go on a back playground, and they had me go around a different way than I normally do so that the students could not see me while they were on the playground... when all I had done was tell my students I was leaving because I was a Christian.

That, in a nutshell, summarizes the state of public education: it is at war with Christianity. You can buy it at Christianbooks.com.



IndoctriNation
102 minutes, 2011

Longer versions of these reviews can be found at the ReelConservative.com.



The purpose of schools?

“The first purpose of schools is not education but socialization.”

by James Dykstra

A long time ago my first-year Educational Foundations professor startled us by announcing that schools weren't mainly about teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. For a class of aspiring teachers this was a revelation. These schools, my prof argued, were about teaching people how to behave.

Schools were there to teach people the rules and values that society lived by. They were about “socialization.” After all, to teach someone to read doesn't take a massive organization like a school, let alone a whole school district. If you read through history you'll find hundreds of examples of prominent people taught to read by their immediate family, or even self taught. To justify a structure as big as our educational system has become you need to have a grander motive than just teaching a few people how to read and write.

Assimilation, not education

Egerton Ryerson, considered the father of public education in Canada, organized public schools in Ontario – then called Canada West – starting in the 1840s, and completed his massive project just before his retirement in the 1870s. At least part of his work was inspired by the school



FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE NATIVES – For generations now, schools have been used to wrest children away from the values of their parents. The natives and the infamous residential schools are an early example. More recently we've seen the Supreme Court of Canada rule that parents cannot exempt their children from classroom instruction that directly opposes God's exclusive claims (“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” John 14:6) and substitutes instead a form of religious relativism. The picture, titled “Morley School for Native students,” is of a residential school in Morley, Alberta, around 1900.

movements that were then occurring in Europe.

However, another part of what drove him and others onward was the vexing question of how to get new arrivals to Canada to behave like good Canadians instead of acting like the feared Americans. The problem with new immigrants was that they didn't think like Canadians... and they might just think like revolutionaries. After all, many of the countries they had emigrated from had recently become free via revolution: the United States in 1776, France in 1789, and other countries all over Europe in 1848. The schools were used to show the children of immigrants that Canadians were first of all peace loving, and also, and possibly more importantly, not at all like the radical, disruptive republican Americans to the south.

This attempt to assimilate recently-arrived immigrants should not be seen as something mean-spirited. Ryerson was a Methodist preacher who had fought all his life for religious liberty and against the extremism that can paralyze even the most promising of societies. However noble his motives were, he still had set out to develop the way people think into a consistent pattern that would eventually, he hoped, form a coherent society. Certain values became a government decision, not a matter of individual conscience.

Taking kids from their parents

Ryerson's motives were consistent. Early in his career developing the educational system in Canada West, his advice was sought on how to best educate the various native groups in the region. His four-page report advised assimilation of the natives. This report is often seen as the first step in building Canada's infamous native residential school system. Many readers might be aware of the physical and sexual abuses that occurred at some of these schools, but even if those hadn't occurred these schools would still have been controversial – the central idea was to impose values on children that their parents did not share or choose. This, they thought, was the means to educate the next generation of natives what it meant

to be good Canadians and force them to develop the values it was believed a good citizen should hold.

In assimilating immigrants and natives, the intent was to bring them into a Christian culture that would benefit them. We can agree bringing the gospel to non-Christians is a worthy goal, but it isn't something we should attempt through unchristian means. God gives children to their parents to educate so we may not

.....
...the central idea was to
impose values on children
that their parents did not
share or choose.
.....

simply indoctrinate them in government-mandated schools, however noble our motives.

In addition, educators, in trying to give people a Christian culture, attempted to wipe out the immigrants' and natives' entire existing set of traditions. As a Christian I may be against some of the spiritual practices of natives, yet that doesn't mean that their entire lifestyle needs to be wiped out in order to "civilize" them. The problem was that the government decided on appropriate values for the individual, and government bureaucracies are very bad at making those sorts of choices. Faith cannot be forced on someone.

Assimilation continues today

This attempt at using the public school system to assimilate others into the mainstream didn't end with native schools and immigrants. It's still being practiced today.

In February the Supreme Court ruled that a mandatory religion course being run in Quebec schools does not infringe on the freedom of religion of Catholic parents who had challenged the requirement. According to the *National Post* (Feb. 17) the parents complained that the course imposed a form of moral relativism equating all religions as equal. However, Justice Marie Deschamps argued that "Parents...[remain] free to pass their

personal beliefs on to their children if they so wish."

In March, "Bill 2," an education bill, threatened to end the right of Alberta parents to exempt their children from sex-ed and life-skills courses that teach content many religious parents oppose. According to the March 14 *National Post*, the proposed changes to the Education Act also threatened to, in government eyes at least, officially remove parents as the "primary educators" of their children. Fortunately an election call at the end of March interrupted the attempted changes. Bill 2 died on the order paper and won't be passed, at least for now.

Even where the public education system is fairly friendly to alternatives, the underlying intent to mold children into good Canadians who share common values is obvious. Here in Manitoba the department of education is formally known as Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. One of the "core values" of the Manitoba Social Studies program is "citizenship," and how it is defined there is not always in accordance with Christian values. Teaching children to be good Manitobans is high on the list of priorities of Manitoba Education.

Conclusion

Though we were surprised by my professor's declaration, I fear he was probably right. The public education system has always been used to spread "common" values, and the cost for very many has been extremely high. The costs can be seen for many who went through residential schools, but also for others who have adopted the moral relativism that public schools teach. It is hardly surprising that so many parents have homeschooled their children or set up independent Christian schools to do the work for them. Whatever the government of Alberta may think, parents still see themselves as the primary educators of their children.

James Dykstra teaches in an independent Christian school in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



How do we choose our charities?

by Anne van Arragon Hutten

The Canadian Cancer Society made the news in 2011 when it was discovered that only 22 per cent of funds raised are used for cancer research. Disillusioned donors stopped giving to many other charities as well.

In December I received a fundraising letter from the Lung Association of Nova Scotia, asking for help on an emergency basis. Donations to the Lung Association, it said, were down by 40 per cent, preventing it from carrying out its work. I wrote a letter to the organization's president and CEO, asking him whether they employ an outside fundraising agency. I also asked, why didn't he address the real issue, which is loss of trust in charities that purport to exist for the benefit of the suffering masses? Why not state what percentage of donations received goes directly towards research?

My letter was polite, but two months later I have not received a response.

Another appeal came from Smile Train, which provides corrective surgery for children born with cleft palate. Seeing the heartbreaking faces on the envelope, I went online to check them out. According to the Charity Watch website (charitywatch.org). Smile Train's president, Brian Mullaney, earned \$678,058 in 2009. Their fundraising letters claim that "100 per cent of your donation goes to program – 0 per cent goes to overhead," and the organization defends this claim by saying all overhead expenses are paid for by Founding Supporters.

Corruption is common

Revelations like these have made many of us skeptical about supporting so-called

good causes. Many of us contributed to earthquake survivors only to find that two years later there are still untold numbers of people living in tents, lacking clean water, medical care and employment. Where has the money gone?

Some of us like to help small churches in third world countries. However, a member of the church I attend has just returned from a mission trip to Kenya. JoAnn worked closely with a missionary there who is doing outreach work to Muslims. They traveled one road that had a small church every few kilometers, all belonging to the same denomination. JoAnn was told that there was much corruption in these churches. People are desperately poor, and the love of money holds sway even in churches.

Do your research online

So how do we choose our charities?

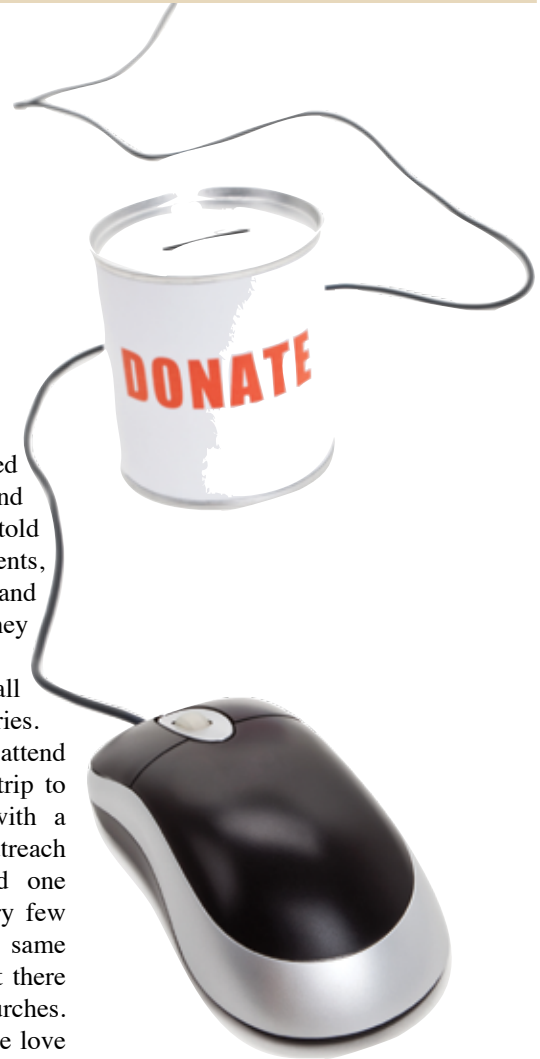
A great place to start is by looking online. I've already mentioned Charity Watch, from the American Institute of Philanthropy (AIP), which rates various charities. It uses blunt speech, for example under the heading, "Cancer Charities Need Dose of Organizational Chemotherapy." The report says that, "cancer charities perform poorly – half of the cancer charities that AIP rates ... receive a D or F grade and only 37 per cent receive an A or B." Admittedly this is an American website but, given last year's revelation about the Canadian Cancer Society, there's good reason to think things are no different here.

Another good place to look is MoneySense.ca which has an easily

accessible list of charities (list.moneysense.ca/rankings/charities/2011), complete with the percentage of funds going to programs, fundraising efficiency, and overall grade. Their list awards only a B- to the CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind), an A- to the Canadian Red Cross Society, and a C+ to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Canada, among others. Salaries for the highest paid employee of each organization range from \$120,000 to \$349,999 annually.

The concept of good stewardship is integral to Christian thought. Researching the charities we support seems a good place to begin.

A version of this article first appeared in Christian Courier. It is reprinted here with the author's permission.



The destruction of innocence

The devil's strategy involves targeting children

by Jonathon Van Maren

It is clear to all those of a socially conservative bent in today's society that, from a Christian point of view, things are going drastically wrong: abortion is legal and prevalent, pornography addiction is at staggering highs, marriage is constantly being twisted and "revised" to include and celebrate unnatural sexual relationships, and promiscuity is rampant to the point that news sites straight-facedly publish headlines such as "Amsterdam Decriminalizes Public Sex in Famous Park."

These various problems are often viewed as separate issues, with separate groups dedicated to combating each one. We have groups focused on ending abortion, groups protecting traditional marriage, groups fighting pornography and still more groups focused on promoting abstinence.

But are these problems separate? There is one obvious element linking them all together, but besides the fact that these practices and lifestyles are sinful, is there another common denominator between the various public sins creeping – or sprinting – into Western society today?

Yes. All involve the systematic destruction of innocence.

The original sin

"Innocence" has a number of definitions, all of them meaning more or less the same thing: "freedom from sin

or moral wrong," "guiltlessness," and "lack of knowledge or understanding." Innocence was once prized in traditional cultures. Fathers protected their children, and for the most part it was agreed that the darker demons of human nature should be kept harnessed and out of sight to avoid the corruption of society at large. The concept of "public indecency" or "public lewdness" – which would now be referred to as "Tuesday in San Francisco" or "the Gay Pride Parade" – was still one that was

.....

Taking a child downtown in the city for the day is like setting out into a moral minefield; it is a full-scale, frontal assault on what John Bunyan called "the eye-gate."

.....

held in healthy contempt.

Of course, Christians would trace the very concept of sin itself back to the destruction of innocence: when Satan appeared as a serpent in the Garden of Eden, he promised them knowledge and the ability to be like God, knowing right from wrong. Instead, when their innocence was destroyed by their adherence to Satan's suggestions, they realized that they were naked...and they were ashamed. Instead

of being able to discern right from wrong, mankind learned how to *do* wrong. And humans have been perfecting that skill – if I may be briefly paradoxical – ever since.

An active assault

When we carefully consider each of today's most public and prevalent evils we find the destruction of innocence at the very heart of each.

Pornography wrenches the concept of love and sex away from the institution of marriage, and sells the bodies of girls and women as commodities to be abused for one-sided pleasure.

The gay liberation movement flaunts their "pride" in the streets, showing off their bodies and their fantasies, and broadcasting their sexual proclivities to the public at large, regardless of age or willingness.

And everywhere, the promotion of sex. Dripping from billboards and movie posters, blasting from speakers in malls, stores and vehicles. Taking a child downtown in the city for the day is like setting out into a moral minefield; it is a full-scale, frontal assault on what John Bunyan called "the eye-gate." Satan doesn't need to disguise himself as a serpent anymore. He can put on a suit and stroll down the street.

There is a reason why the forces of secularism are trying to force the ideals of hedonism and relativism on children first

and foremost. If they destroy innocence at its earliest, they will create citizens ready to settle into the brave new world.

This is why we see California dictating that children must learn about “gay heroes.” Quebec now forces school children to take a relativistic religion course, even if their parents oppose it. New York has proposed sex education that details the most vile and deviant sexual practices. We also see “children’s entertainment” increasingly awash with crude sexual innuendo. And everywhere in our public schools we see the promotion of sexual promiscuity. There is no discussion of why preserving sex for a meaningful marriage relationship is genuinely healthiest. Instead there is simply a presenting of the various “options,” handing out free condoms and telling them to have fun.

This assault on innocence has progressed to the point where the defense of innocence and purity is considered bigoted, intolerant and close-minded. Do you oppose the gay pride parade for its public lewdness? Bigot! Do you want the children in your family to learn about sex at an age-appropriate time and in the context of God’s plan for mankind? Prude! Do you and your family oppose abortion and the sex slave industry of

pornography? Intolerant misogynists!

Looking out for our neighbor

In this day and age, Christians must remember that Christianity makes absolute claims – that the truths expressed in the Bible apply not only to churchgoers, but to everyone. When Christians push for restrictions on pornography, they are engaging in an act of goodwill towards all of their fellow countrymen. When we fight against the watering down of the institution of marriage, we are not only striking a blow for Christian principles, but also for families and the children who depend on them everywhere. When we fight for the lives of the pre-born, we are preventing our pre-born neighbors from the most horrific demise, and protecting their parents from guilt, shame and regret.

It is hard to conceive at times, but fighting against secularism and the destruction of innocence, regardless of how controversial, is actually the best way for us to “love our neighbor.”

Innocence preserved

So we know things are getting very bad. But what can we do about it?

There is much that can be done. First of all, we need to take the threat seriously. This is not a passive threat – they are actively trying to corrupt our children. So we need to be active in our response. Parents need to be both involved in preserving innocence and preparing their children for the eventual exposure they will encounter in the broader world. Ignoring the threat will not make it go away. The Devil is armed with many tricks, so let us be sure that our children do not go out into the world unarmed. Here are some active steps that can be taken to address the main conduits of perversion into your house:

- **Internet** – Get an Internet monitoring/filter program such as Covenant Eyes (CovenantEyes.com) or BSecure.com. These, or a variety of other Christian-based Internet filters, should be used to prevent accidental or active exposure to pornography.
- **Television** – Monitor TV watching by placing it in a highly trafficked room. Teach your children to make conscious choices about what they watch. Then they can choose what is good, as opposed to being exposed to whatever is on. Another good

Even Anne!

by Jonathon Van Maren

In a rather blunt attack on innocence, there are some today who insist that every close relationship must have had a sexual aspect. A friend of mine in one of her university classes recently protested another student’s notion that Anne of Green Gables and her friend Diana (in the Canadian classic by Lucy Maud Montgomery) had a lesbian relationship. My friend’s criticism prompted the theorist to accuse her critics of being “hetero-centrist.” However, my friend’s response puts it perfectly:

She fails to understand that perhaps

what [I] found troubling was not the possibility of a homosexual character, but rather the implication that a perfectly innocent and beautiful friendship between children is being described as sexual. While it is true that homosexuality remains a taboo topic in certain social circles, in Anne’s case, [my] outrage is directed not at homosexuality, but at the perverse need to make the chaste appear sensual.



option is getting rid of cable TV altogether – even when you pick only good programs, you never know what they are going to advertise in the commercials! Then you can turn to your local library for DVDs, or maybe some of the “on demand” websites to make good choices about what programs or movies you will watch.

- **Social media** – Be your children’s Facebook/Google+ friend, so you can monitor what they write. Talk to them often about what they are reading, and teach them good “netiquette.”
- **Music** – This seems to be an often forgotten area. Do you know what’s on your child’s iPod/MP3 player? Discuss with them what sort of artists they want to listen to and support.
- **Friends** – You want to talk to your children about sex early, so they don’t get their information from friends. You want to be the first source they turn to for this information. So have “the talk,” and then have it again...

and again. This isn’t a one-time event, but an ongoing process to explain how God intends sex to be used, and how empty and often insidious the “pleasures of Egypt” actually are. We need to explain to them how damaging perversions inevitably will be.

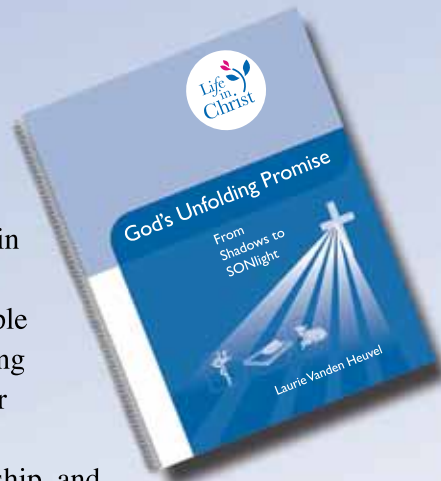
Outside our homes

Groups such as the Association for Reformed Political Action, the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, and Focus on the Family need the time, voices and support of church-going people everywhere to succeed. They are not shouting fire in a crowded theatre – they are telling us that the city is on fire, and that our churches will also burn if we do not speak out and take action. Our choices are clearly outlined: We can be firefighters, or we can fiddle while our countries burn. There is no need for despair – indeed, there is no time. We can become firefighters. We can let Canadians know that there are

other options besides nihilism. And if God allows us, we can succeed. There is much to be hopeful for.

While the forces of hedonism and relativism and the cacophony of their leaders attempt to destroy “the innocence of a child” and whatever innocence the rest of society has left, it is important to fight back against these insidious practices and worldviews. We must fight to stop the destruction of pre-born children. We must fight against access to pornography, which reduces the women of our society to a saleable “item” and rewires the brains of countless youth. We must preserve the Christian institution of marriage, with all its benefits and all its security. And we must not allow the concepts of innocence and purity to be lost forever. We already lost Paradise. Let us not lose the future of our children.

Right now, on ReformedPerspective.ca’s front page, we have a great article about Covenant Eyes.



This book is a study in the Life in Christ curriculum, with ample text, suitable for young people and adults, for church education, evangelism, discipleship, and homeschooling purposes. A manual, *Teacher Tips*, for teachers and leaders, is available online for download. The author of the book and manual is Laurie Vanden Heuvel, a Christian school teacher for thirty years, and coeditor with her husband, Rev. Thomas Vanden Heuvel, of *The Outlook* magazine for eleven years.

Order your copy today from www.reformedfellowship.net; phone (877) 532-8510; address: Reformed Fellowship, Inc. 3500 Danube Dr. SW, Grandville, MI 49418-8387

Do we and our children really have a working knowledge of the *unity* of the Scriptures and how, from Genesis through Revelation, it is *all about Christ*—many books, *one message*? This book, *God’s Unfolding Promise: From Shadows to SONlight* (currently being translated into and published in Russian), *selects* biblical materials and *integrates* every book of the Bible to demonstrate that theme. The “shadows” of the Old Testament become reality in the SONlight of the New Testament.

Emergence and miracles

Naturalists say they don't believe in miracles. But they do, by another name.

by John Byl

A well-known cartoon by columnist Sydney Harris is often used by naturalists to chide adherents of intelligent design or creationism.

Naturalism itself, however, often has great difficulty providing completely naturalist explanations. It is well known that naturalism has great difficulty solving the following mysteries (see my book *The Divine Challenge*):

- why the universe exists and continues to exist
- why the universe has a particular mathematical structure
- how random interactions give rise to increasingly complex information
- how purposeless non-life can give rise to purposeful life
- how matter can produce mind
- why our minds are capable of purposeful, rational thought.
- how non-physical factors (e.g., logic and morals) can influence the mind
- how our mental choices are transformed into physical action

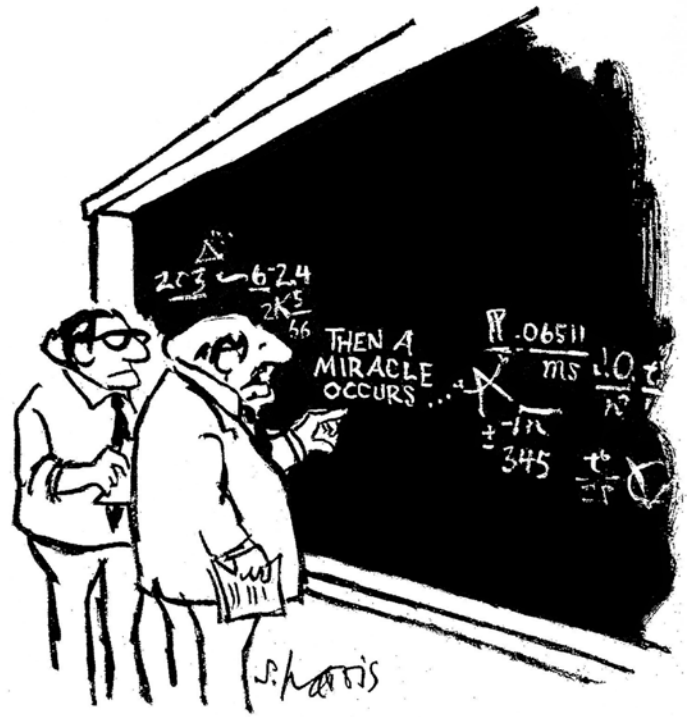
These numerous explanatory gaps are all the more glaring given the grandiose claims of naturalists. Consider, for example, Edward Wilson's book *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (1998), which asserts that all truth can be acquired by the reductionist methods of natural science. All knowledge, Wilson believes,

can ultimately be reduced to the laws of physics.

Naturalists like Wilson are confident that, since scientific reductionism has answered many questions about the natural world, it will eventually be able to answer all questions. Naturalist explanations are deferred to as yet unknown (natural) laws, to be discovered by future research. But these are mere promissory notes of wishful thinking.

And it is simply not the case that materialist science is steadily reduc-

ing the mystery about material reality. For example, the discovery of quantum mechanics *deepens*, rather than explains, the mysteries of how matter behaves and how it connects with mind and mathematics. Similarly, the discovery of DNA, with its intimate connection to information, which



"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

is generally a product of intelligence, deepens the mystery of life.

Emergence: another way of saying "We don't know"

Naturalists often bridge gaps by an appeal to emergence. At certain levels of complexity new properties allegedly emerge quite naturally, introducing new higher-order laws. Emergence is held to account for the jumps from non-life to life, to consciousness, to rational thought, and so on. Such appeals are, however, never

Naturalism is a worldview that seeks to explain (to reduce) all of reality to terms of purely natural processes and things. As such, it almost always includes an evolutionary process wherein everything in the universe – even man – evolved from primitive, purposeless matter/energy. Consequently, in naturalism, man is viewed as being merely a complex machine that ceases to exist once his material body dies - he has no soul or spirit.

backed up by any plausible mechanisms. Surely the onus is on naturalists to show how these gaps can be bridged – at least in principle, if not in practice.

The difficulty is that these gaps are anything but trivial. It is not a question of merely filling in a few minor details in an otherwise complete naturalist portrait of reality. Rather, these are huge leaps across quite different categories, from non-life to life, from matter to mind, and so on. These *are*, in fact, the fundamental things that need explaining.

Naturalism may be able to describe fairly well how matter interacts with other matter but it fails miserably in explaining the deeper mysteries of the universe.

A naturalist appeal to miracles and/or faith

Some naturalists have come to acknowledge that assertions of emergence amount to no more than appeals to magic. Yet, if genuine, natural emergence is ruled out, what other options do naturalists have?

One possibility is to simply concede that the jumps are inexplicable. For example, physicist Kenneth Denbigh doubts that genuinely new things can simply emerge from previously existing things. He believes that the emergence of a new level of reality is always indeterminate. It has no cause at all (*Inventive Universe* 1975: 145). But to say that emergence happens for no reason at all is to give up on rational enquiry, which seeks to explain why things are the way they are. To render the gaps naturally inexplicable is to admit naturalist defeat.

Naturalist philosopher Colin McGinn believes that the deepest philosophical problems – such as free will, the self and how the brain can give rise to conscious mind – are humanly insoluble. Our minds have inherent limitations, imposed by the biology of our brains. McGinn states:

... it is the purest dogmatism to believe that the human mind, at this particular stage of evolutionary history, has reached the pinnacle of cognitive capacity. (*The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World*

1999: 45)

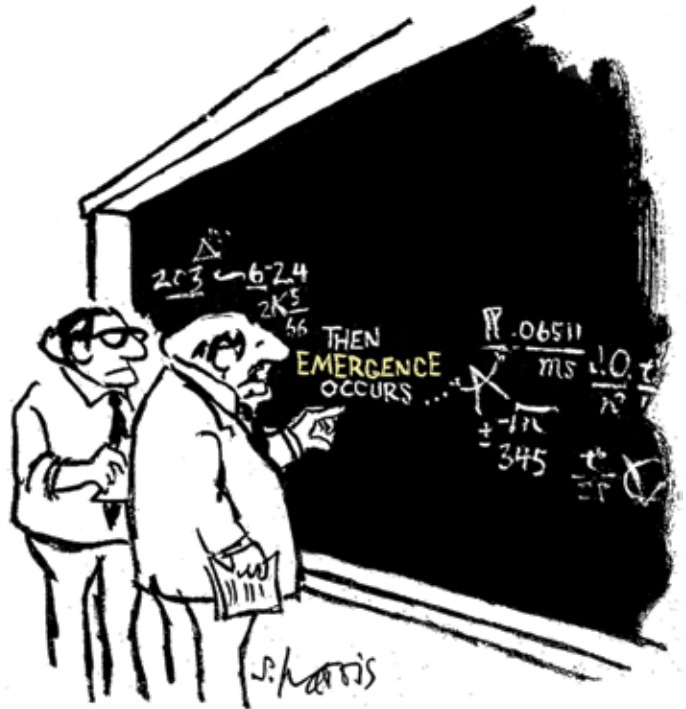
McGinn believes that the problem of consciousness, for example, is so fundamental that we cannot even conceive of any process that could account for it. Nevertheless, he is confident that there is a naturalist explanation, even though humans are as yet incapable of conceiving it. He insists that this mystery requires no theistic miracle. Yet, were our human minds indeed as limited as McGinn supposes, his claim that there exist a naturalist explanation is itself pure naturalist dogmatism. McGinn's agnostic solution, too, amounts to an admission of naturalist defeat.

Conclusion

Naturalist attempts to explain the origin of life via chemical evolution are compared by William Dembski to medieval alchemy. Perhaps the Harris cartoon should be modified along similar lines to that suggested by Dembski: "then *emergence* occurs."

The naturalist might object that grounding the links between matter, mind and mathematics in the nature and activity of God is no more of a solution than ascribing them to emergence. Miracle and emergence, it might be thought, are no more than empty words expressing our ignorance.

Yet there is a difference. The Christian ascribes miracles to the purposeful work of a living, rational and omnipotent God. The naturalist, on the other hand, ascribes



"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

such miracles as the emergence of life, mind and mathematics to the purposeless complexity of dead, insensible and inert matter.

Given the popularity of the Harris cartoon among naturalists, it is ironic that Sydney Harris himself had the following to say about naturalist explanation:

... to believe that the universe originated and evolved out of pure chance is to be a greater believer in the "miracle" of mathematical probabilities than those who believe in the "miracle" of creation by design. ("Thoughts at Large", *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Nov.15, 1979, p.11)

In sum, emergence is just another name for miracle – but one that allegedly happens entirely by itself... like magic without a magician.

This article is reprinted, with permission, from Dr. Byl's very helpful blog, bylogos.blogspot.com.



Bacteria with their own immune systems?

This CRISPR is not for salads

by Margaret Helder

Sometimes it seems as if information is the most important commodity in our technological age. Information, of course, can be put to good or bad uses. We would all agree, no doubt, that computer viruses are a bad use of information. In that situation, a small piece of computer code (information), once it is inside your computer, can take over the whole operating system, with disastrous results for your interests.

Of course such problems are nothing new. The term “virus” comes from natural phenomena that do the very same thing to living cells. Invading information occurs to even the smallest cells, bacteria. In fact, some of the bacteria that most threaten our health are themselves the victims of invasive information from outside unrelated sources.

E. Coli not so bad... originally

Consider the case of the infamous *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7, cause of potentially fatal hamburger disease and, in some isolated situations, contaminated water. *E. coli* (short for *Escherichia coli*), is a normal component of human intestines and dairy animal intestines. In the past, *E. coli* has not been known to cause disease. However, since this bacterium is rarely, if ever, found outside of the intestines except where pollution from human sewage or animal manure has occurred, it is obvious that water containing *E. coli* has always been considered unfit for us to drink.

There are some other similar bacteria which live in the intestines, but which cause nasty diseases, at least some of the time. *Salmonella typhimurium*, for example, lives happily in the intestines of birds and mammals, but should some of these bacteria contaminate human food,

these microbes can cause food poisoning in human consumers.

Another similar organism, *Shigella dysenteriae*, causes dysentery. This organism produces a particularly dangerous poison – the Shiga toxin. However, some people can be unaffected carriers of the disease.

In the Western world we haven't had to be too worried about dysentery, because these bacteria do not survive well in water. They may be spread to food by insects that have had access to bodily fluids of carriers, or patients, but in our society, with closely enforced standards for cleanliness, that isn't a big concern, and most people are pretty careful about the possibility of food poisoning from animal sources.

It takes a toxic turn

However, our complacency concerning dysentery ended with a bang in 1982. In that year, some people in Oregon and Michigan, who had consumed fast-food hamburgers, became very ill with hemorrhagic colitis. Some of them died. Scientists soon discovered that the causal agent in the undercooked hamburgers was none other than *E. coli* itself. But this particular strain was slightly different. It contained a gene for the Shiga toxin, previously known only in *Shigella dysenteriae*.

This prompted the pressing question, how did *E. coli* 0157:H7 come into possession of the Shiga toxin?

It so happens that bacteria,

even unrelated bacteria, are able to link together by means of thin tubes. Then some genetic material is able to move from one cell to the next through the tiny tube. The process is called “conjugation.” Usually the transferred information consists of a small ring of genetic information and this ring is called a “plasmid.”

Since 1982 we have had to deal with a strain of *E. coli* that can live in cow intestines without problem, but when it contaminates meat which is ground up, or water contaminated by manure, some terrible outbreaks of hemorrhagic colitis have resulted in people.

Conjugation can pass along antibiotic resistance

The question arises obviously, if bacteria can become invaded by a toxin-producing gene, what else could bacteria acquire through conjugation? Genes for drug resistance spring to mind. Not



E. coli on undercooked burgers is only a fairly recent concern.

surprisingly, this conjugation process is a major source of antibiotic-resistant “superbugs” (bacteria).

It appears that some bacteria have long possessed genes that confer resistance to antibiotics, even long before the use of these drugs came into common use. Many antibiotics, after all, are natural products produced by other microbes. It is not surprising, then, that bacteria can pass on antibiotic resistance through the process of conjugation.

In hospitals where various patients are being treated for a variety of infectious diseases, the opportunities for diverse strains of bacteria to come into close contact is high. Thus in 1961 the first superbug appeared in a hospital in the United States. MRSA or Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* is a much-feared bacterium that crops up in many hospitals today.

Then, in 2002, strains of *Staphylococcus* resistant to the antibiotic of last resort (vancomycin) began to appear in hospitals. Apparently this Vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (VRSA) had also acquired its resistance through conjugation from a less dangerous pathogen.

Obviously conjugation is a major problem for doctors.

Immune system of sorts

But while conjugation can sometimes help bacteria gain antibiotic resistance, conjugation can also hinder bacteria as

well, giving them extra genetic info they don’t need. It turns out bacteria usually do better when they are not loaded down with extra information that they must express.

Amazingly, scientists have recently discovered that some bacteria have a form of immune systems that help them “fight off” the bits of foreign genetic information that have been inserted via conjugation.

Twenty years of mystery

This “immune system” can be found in the manner in which these bacteria’s genetic code is arranged, but it took scientists a long time to discover it.

It is only recently that scientists were able to analyze DNA. However, once scientists were able to figure out the order of the genetic code in small organisms (with relatively small amounts of code), they were then able to carry out extensive comparisons between various organisms. Soon scientists noticed a curious pattern in a number of bacteria. What they observed were patterns involving a section of highly organized code followed by a short piece of unique code, followed by the original highly organized segment, followed by another unique stretch of code, repeating on and on. The pattern is like an arrangement of beads such as: striped bead, unique red bead, striped bead, unique blue bead, striped bead, unique yellow bead, striped bead, unique green bead, etc.

In 1987 the above strange arrangement of coding was discovered in *E. coli*. It featured an arrangement along the DNA molecule of short highly organized pieces of DNA. These were stretches of code that read the same in opposite directions. For example “Madam, I’m Adam” can be read in opposite directions. This is called a palindrome, and these pieces of code observed in the *E. coli* were palindromes. Sandwiched between identical palindromes were other pieces of code, each different from the others. These unique spacers separating the palindromes were brief, for example from 21 to 72 “letter characters” long. Thus there was palindrome, spacer A, palindrome, spacer B, palindrome, spacer C, etc. Scientists have named these collections of information CRISPRs, short for “Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats,” of genetic code. Trust the scientists to come up with a catchy acronym to facilitate discussion!

Twenty years would pass before scientists had any good ideas as to the significance of these pieces of code. It now appears that this fancy section of the bacterial genome (total genetic information) provides an amazing system for acquired immunity for the bacteria. This system enables many bacteria to maintain their genetic integrity from becoming corrupted by invading genetic elements like plasmids.

How does it work?

So how does the system work? In the bacterial DNA

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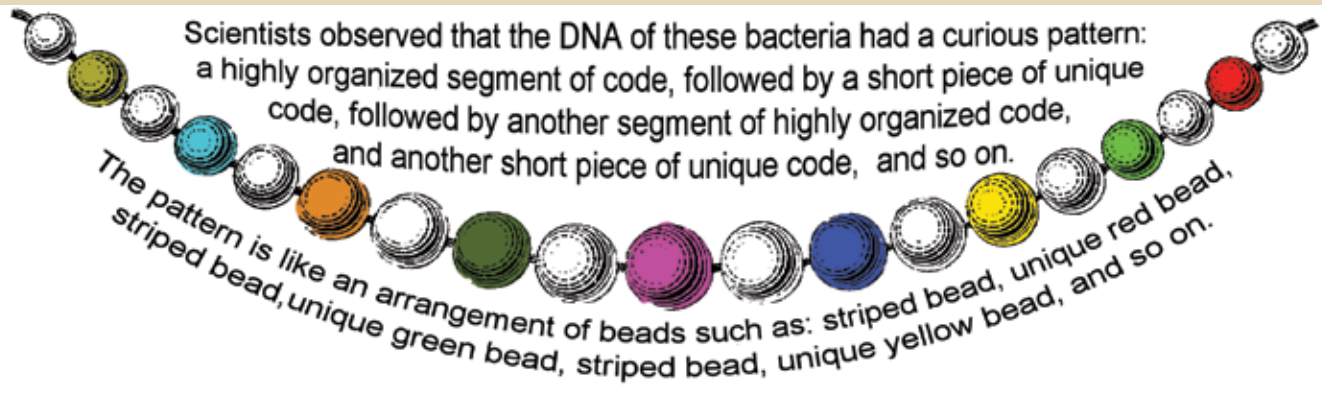
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molecule, the CRISPR system comes complete with a leader sequence at one end to initiate activation of the system and a collection of genes for associated proteins at the other end. When a piece of foreign DNA invades a bacterial cell, the leader section causes the CRISPR part of the DNA to be copied into the related information-bearing molecule RNA. Then CRISPR-associated proteins cut up the long RNA chain into fragments, each of which consists of one palindrome with attached unique spacer.

It is as if the bead chain mentioned above were chopped into two bead sections consisting of one striped bead with one colored bead attached. So there would be a couplet of striped bead with red bead, another couplet of striped bead with a green bead, and so on.

Each unique spacer (the “colored beads”) is an exact code replica of a part of some foreign DNA that invaded the cell in the past. The spacers remind me of children’s adventure stories where a pagan has a string of scalps along his belt to remind him of past foreigners encountered. The bacteria cell next compares each unique spacer with the code in an invading plasmid. If there is a match, then it has been recognized as an invader! That prompts the associated proteins to chop up the invading DNA. And behold, the invading information has been quickly destroyed!

The short interspaced pieces of unique DNA provide a memory of past invaders into the cell. If there is a match with the invading plasmid, the plasmid is destroyed.

But what happens if there is no match? In many cells, the invader goes unchallenged and manages to stay. However, occasionally a cell will manage to capture a piece of the DNA from the invader and incorporate it into the CRISPR apparatus. After that, none of these invaders will be successful. They will all be chopped up.

A recent experiment with the non-disease-causing bacterium *Streptococcus thermophiles* demonstrated how the system works. Very few of these cells in nature contain plasmids, and it is easy to see why. In the experiment, a plasmid equipped with an antibiotic-resistance gene was inserted into some of these cells. The culture was allowed to grow under normal conditions for sixty generations. When finally tested, six percent of the cells had entirely lost the antibiotic-resistance gene. Of 30 cells which were now sensitive to antibiotic, it was discovered that there were 14 different unique sequences (spacers), all from the same invading plasmid that had been incorporated into the CRISPR

system of one or other of these cells. The CRISPR apparatus certainly made mincemeat of that invading plasmid! The pieces of code from the invader will provide the genetic memory to exactly identify any identical invaders on other occasions.

The scientists concluded that the CRISPR system, with associated genes, provides a simple and natural way to develop a bacterial strain that resists the invasion of plasmids that might carry antibiotic resistant genes. With parts of antibiotic resistance genes incorporated into its biochemical memory in the form of a CRISPR sequence, that bacterium will continue to be susceptible to the antibiotic because it will chop up the plasmid which would allow it to become resistant. How exactly this insight might be used in practical terms is not immediately obvious, but the knowledge does suggest that there is a possibility that safer microbial strains can be developed. The problem is how to eliminate other bacteria from the population that do not carry the CRISPR memory of past invaders.

Many different versions of this “immune system”

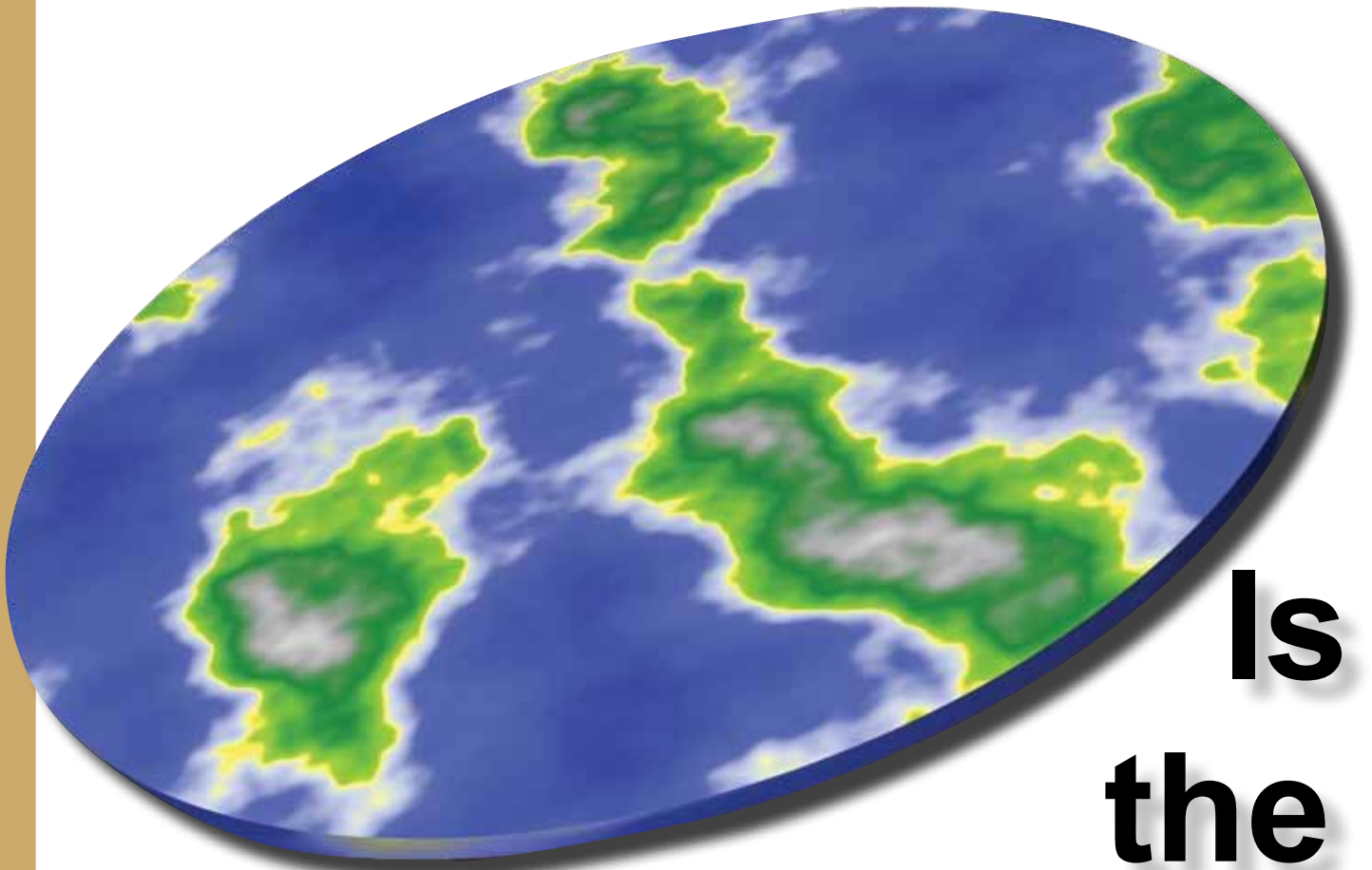
The other interesting aspect of the CRISPR system is how much variety there is in the system design in different bacteria. It is in the associated proteins that we see the greatest variety, and they direct the operations of the system. Other bacteria exhibit other combinations of associated proteins so that the apparatus and process for matching invader with memory code may be quite different, but the end result is the same.

The whole system demonstrates choices and wise design. What an elegant system! It appears so simple, and yet it manages to carry out such sophisticated and highly precise technical tasks. The system is much too varied to have involved evolutionary processes of development. We see information capture, memory storage, memory retrieval and information matching, with the end result of certain destruction of unwanted damaging information. Who designed this system? Who designed the many similar systems in bacteria to produce the memory, hardware and the operating systems which constitute a firewall against hostile invasions of information code? All praise to the Creator of all things great and small!

Sources

Nature Nov. 4/10 pp. 45-46; 67-71; *Nature* Mar. 31/11 pp. 588-89; 602-7; *Nature* Sept. 22/11 pp. 486-89.





Is the Earth flat?

by Jerry Johnson

A popular notion today is that the Christian Church has held science captive. If we want scientific knowledge to progress, then we need to get religion out of the picture. As proof of this claim, many will cite as evidence, and falsely I might add, that during the middle ages the average person believed, and the Church taught, that the earth was flat.

But is this true? Did the Church teach that the earth was flat? Was religion holding science captive?

Church fathers knew the world was round

To answer the question simply, no! The Church nor the Bible ever taught that

the earth was flat. So why do so many today point to this as proof that the Church had a stranglehold on science, retarding its growth for nearly a millennia?

Enter an unscrupulous writer by the name of Andrew White and his book *The Warfare of Science With Theology*.

Throughout this book, he claims that this is a fact, but if you take the time to read through this work and pay attention to what he begrudgingly admits, you will quickly realize that this book is sheer fiction.

For example, in chapter two the author has to admit that the fathers and great doctors of the Church, including such notables as Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, Isidore, Albertus Magnus and

Aquinas, all accepted and believed that the Earth was a globe – a sphere and not flat.

That there may have been a few folks on the fringes of society who taught this I do not dispute, but it was not the majority. Andrew White and his book are the quintessential example of the logical fallacy known as the “hasty generalization.” He takes the ranting of a few and then broadly applies it to the whole.

The exception, not the norm

Cosmas Indicopleustes was one such man on the fringes. He was a merchant traveler during the sixth century who retired to become a monk in the Egyptian

desert. He was not even an orthodox Christian but actually embraced a heretical form of Christianity known as Nestorianism.

At the end of his travels, he wrote a treatise on Christian Topology that included his flat Earth cosmology. It was widely ignored at the time, and Christian scholars like John Philoponus derided it as the work of an uneducated fool – and the book, well, it was quickly forgotten.

In fact, I could not find one instance of his work being quoted favorably or unfavorably in the West prior to the 18th century.

Why? Because the book was written in Greek and was, therefore, unavailable and unknown in the Latin West, contrary to Andrew White’s insinuations that it was authoritative.

It wasn’t until 1776 that the book was finally published in the West. Really, the book had no influence in the Christian Church or the culture at large, but these facts didn’t stop White and others who claimed that its influence was universal.

Hear me on this! The Christian Church has always understood and believed the earth was round, citing the Bible as proof:

- Proverbs 8:27, “When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep...”
- Job 26:10, “He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.”
- Isaiah 40:22, “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth...”

By the way, Matthew Poole, who died in 1679, Matthew Henry, who died in 1714, and John Gill, who died in 1771 – every one of these men taught the earth was a globe and not flat.

The real debate was about size

So was there a debate about the earth?

Yes! Was it over its shape? No! The real debate was on the size of the globe. Remember, Columbus didn’t know the North American continent was in his way as he set sail for India.

So where did this myth come from? Dr. Jeffrey Burton Russell of the University of California, in his book *Inventing the Flat Earth*, documents that 19th century anti-Christians invented and spread the falsehood that people in the Middle Ages, re-enforced by Church dogma, believed that the earth was flat.

Interestingly, Russell examined a large selection of textbooks and found those written before 1870 usually included the correct account that people in general and the Christian Church in particular believed the world was round. However, the textbooks written after 1880 uncritically repeated the erroneous claims of such men as Andrew White.

Russell concludes that men like Andrew White were the main culprits responsible for introducing the myth that, until science set the record straight, people believed the earth was flat.

An attack on God’s Church

Sadly, those whose only goal in life is to make a mockery of Christ and His Church continue to propagate this historical inaccuracy, perhaps better stated “lie,” maintaining that ignorant Christians were and continue to suppress rational knowledge about the world.

What’s the old saying? Repeat a lie often enough and people will believe it is the truth.

Jerry Johnson is the president of NiceneCouncil.com, and this is an edited transcript of an episode of Against the World, titled “Is the Earth Flat?” which has been printed here with permission. You can find this episode, and many others, at AgainsttheWorld.tv.



Six Lines FREE

March for Life on Parliament Hill
May 10. Preceded by Can. Reformed prayer service led by Rev. G. Van Popta at 10:30 AM at First Baptist Church, 140 Laurier Ave W., Ottawa
For info: campaignlifecoalition.com

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How to approach a porcupine

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Some Christians seem quite like porcupines.

They are so bristly and sharp that people are reluctant to come close to them for fear of getting hurt. It seems wise to the onlookers to practice self-preservation. Who among us enjoys unpleasantness? Who craves the company of a negative-Nancy, a whining-Wilfred or an angry-Anderson? Who runs out into the street when Mack-truck-Maggie is barreling right at them? Most are not so brave.

“In my heart,” said one porcupine Christian, “I wanted *so* much for everyone to come and hug me and tell me that they cared. Once, a woman told me that she had really wanted to, but she was afraid that I would lash out at her in my pain. How I wished she could have overlooked my weakness and reached out to me.”

How do people turn into porcupine Christians?

That path starts with lack of forgiveness, or misunderstanding. Unrecognized selfishness and envy accrue, leading to confusion, pain, futility, resentment, anger, and bitterness. The church experience seems to be the opposite of what Paul says in Philippians 2:5, where it says, “let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus....” In the porcupine’s mind, the earlier verses seem the reverse of what they should be:

There is no encouragement from being united with Christ, and not likely to be any comfort from His love around here, let alone fellowship, tenderness or compassion. Nobody is going to try to please Jesus by acting like He would, showing love like He would, or working together in the same spirit or purpose. What you want is more important, and your opinion is as worthy as anyone else’s, so make sure you follow your dream and make everyone else do as you want. After all, nobody else is better than you are, and no one else will do it right. And, if your busy family has things to do, you only need to take care of yourselves, and let everyone else take care of their own interests. Really, who wants to be a servant in this day and age?

Such is his perception, but in all honesty, don’t these thoughts at times live in all of our hearts?

The initial distress is like a little pile of dried mud on the rug that gets swept underneath that rug. It might start with taking

offense at a word or action. Or it might start with being criticized for taking offense, so that one believes that there is no way to resolve the problem. It might begin with someone saying, “Oh, he’s always like that – don’t bother trying to talk to him.” Sweep, sweep, sweep.

If someone’s words or actions have caused us to feel angry, we are not allowed to sweep! Jesus said we must go and talk: “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over” (Matthew 18:15). Hopefully, you will either receive an apology or discover your misunderstanding. Both parties, in

love, must notice their own sins, and attribute to the other the highest of motives, “Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3-4). This first step must not be neglected!

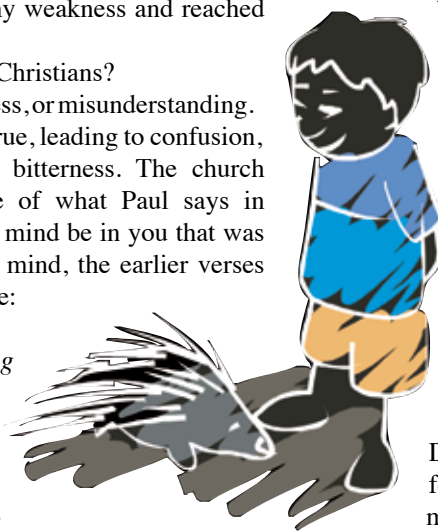
Otherwise, years may go by, with quills of bitterness growing and no one knowing where and why everything went wrong. People begin to avoid the porcupine, and the pain just deepens. Fear controls behavior as everyone stays away rather than running the risk of facing an angry retort.

But inside, the porcupine longs for comfort and peace, even while consumed with bitterness. Difficulty with emotions does not stop the desire for the warmth of brotherly Christian love; it just makes it nearly impossible to obtain. Sin continues, unchallenged by mercy, due to fear.

Before we take the easier path of thinking, “I’m not going to say anything to *him*,” or “you could never hug *her*,” let’s determine whether we might be at fault in the situation, and remember that Jesus also told us, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).

And if we are not at fault, but are just brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us cease our fear, because a soft word and a loving gesture will do more to smooth down the quills than avoidance ever will.

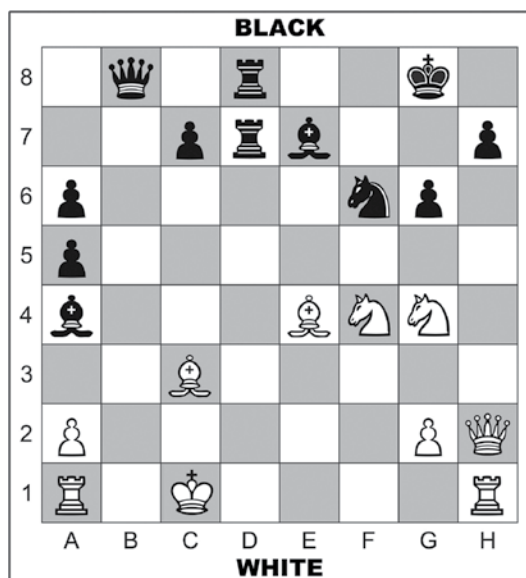
Squeeze that hand. Give that hug. Say a word. Drop off that cake. Write that note. Today.



ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

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

Chess Puzzle # 187



NEW PUZZLES

Riddle for Punsters #187 – “Counting the Cost of Continuing”

Mr. Mortgagemaker wanted his daughter to work in his credit union when she was finished college. However, she had not shown much _____ t in a career in a financial institution and he did not want to _____ r what to do. At least they could spend time fishing together on a local river _____ .

Problem to Ponder #187 – “The Winner’s Name Begins with ‘D’”

Five boy’s at Marty’s fifth birthday party decided to have a race across a field. In alphabetical order, the boys’ names were Dale, Dan, Dave, Dennis and Doug. Dave beat at least two boys, including Dennis. Only two boys finished behind Dan but Doug was not one of them. Dennis did not finish last nor did Dave finish first. In what order did the boys finish the race?

WHITE to Mate in 4
Or, If it is BLACK’s Move,
BLACK to Mate in 2

SOLUTIONS TO THE MARCH PUZZLE PAGE

Answers to Riddles for Punsters #186 – “Rise and Shine, Off to School!”

When Cynthia arrived at school each day, she looked forward to being enlightened by her teachers. She was a bright student and all her teachers said that she was a real delight to have in class. She was a hard worker but did not mind to have a light homework assignment on occasion.

Answers to Problem to Ponder #186 – “Going overBoard, but what else Coin he do?”

Cynthia’s little brother, Joseph, loved to collect coins and play chess. One day he decided to put one penny on the corner square of his chessboard, then 11 pennies on the next, 21 on the next, and so on. How many pennies would be on the tenth square? How many would be on the last (64th) square? How many pennies would there be in total on the chessboard? What would their total value be in dollars and cents? What would the total value be if Joseph used loonies instead of pennies?

There are 10 more pennies added to each new square, so by the time the 10th square is reached, $9(10) = 90$ have been added to the first one so there are **91 pennies on the 10th square**. Similarly, there are $1 + 63(10) = 631$ pennies on the 64th square.

The sum of pennies on the first to n^{th} square is the number of squares times the average number of pennies per square, so the sum is n times $1/2(1 + \text{pennies on the } n^{\text{th}} \text{ square}) = 64[(1 + 631)/2] = 64(316) = 20224$ pennies on the 64 squares, with a value of \$202.24. If loonies are used instead, the coins are all worth 100 times as much so the total value

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 186

WHITE to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. NxP ch K-R1
2. RxR ch RxR
3. RxR mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Ng4xh6 + Kg8-h8
2. Rf2xf8 + Re8xf8
3. Rf1xf8 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- N-R6 ch
2. K-R1 B-B6 ch
3. RxB Q-N7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Ng5-h3 +
2. Kg1-h1 Be2-f3 +
3. Rf2xf3 Qd2-g2 ++

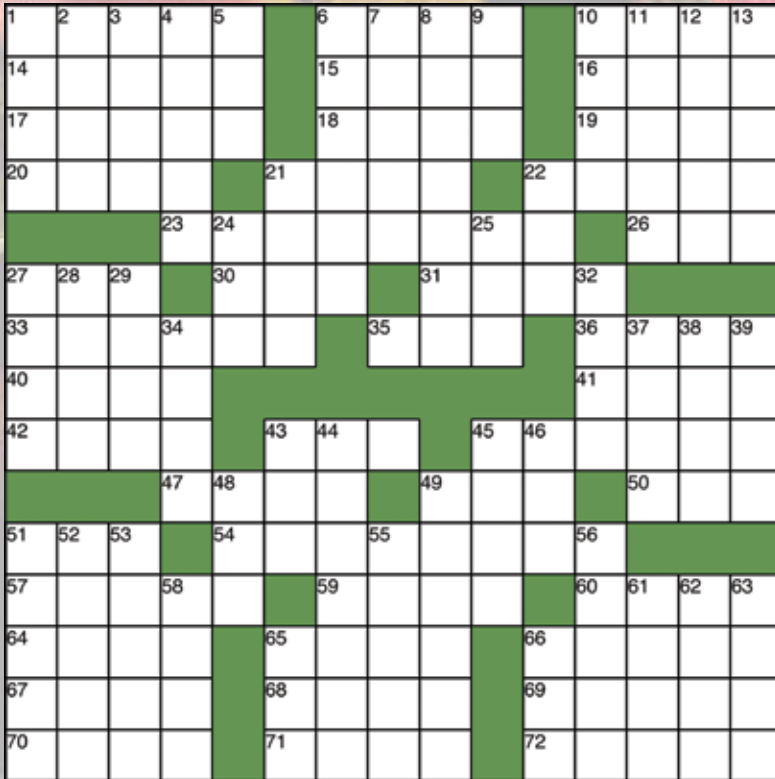


would be \$20,224, enough money for a down payment on a house or a college education!

Crossword Puzzle

Series 19 No 2

Last Month's solution
Series 19 No 1



ACROSS:

1. Tent caterpillar
6. Self-addressed stamped env.
10. Professional Standards Review Org.
14. Dutch shoes
15. A CB radio enthusiast
16. A left-handed Benjamite who killed King Eglon, Judges 3
17. Kingdom
19. Nerve branches
20. "___ the hills I lift my eyes"
21. French egg
22. Soap, in Paris
23. Battery notation
26. Unit of work
27. Direction
30. Tall tree
31. Dry and withered
33. Pipe opening
35. Start of many stories
36. Journey, or fall
40. Hog meat
41. Nathan, to his pals
42. Pitcher with a wide spout
43. Pig pen

45. Locations
47. Big lake in Ontario
49. Power of attorney, for short
50. Style of music that is full of angst
51. Environmental Protection Agency
54. American finches
57. Excessive or unreasonable enthusiasm
59. Fisherman's holdall
60. Top cards
64. Exterior covering of some seeds
65. Strong affection
66. A special happening
67. Chinese silk tapestry woven in a pictorial design
68. What "vous" are in French
69. Rich cake made with little or no flour
70. Thought
71. Assistant, for short
72. Wave or dune top

DOWN:

1. Light color
2. Small valley
3. Farm animal
4. "Great" Moabite king who made Jericho his capital (Judg.3)
5. Regimental Sergeant major (abbr.)
6. Scary holler
7. Concerning
8. Only looking out for one's own needs
9. Before, poetically speaking
10. Former name of Beyoglu
11. Remove hair
12. Gossipy murmur
13. Overdosing on drugs
21. Stare at
22. Unit of weight in India
24. Mouse greeting, perhaps?
25. Type of neckline
27. To ooze, or soak through, in Scotland
28. Winter precipitation
29. To be in Paris
32. Active Italian volcano
34. Land measurement
37. Competition
38. Thing on a bill
39. South American coin
43. Take a wee drink
44. Afternoon refreshment holders
45. Place of recreational water
46. Community regulation
48. Republic of S. Africa
49. What a Levite was
51. Japanese illustrated text; picture scroll
52. Peeled a potato
53. Aromatic herb of the carrot family
55. Enthuses about something
56. Appreciate the flavor
58. Broad upper parts of hip bones
61. Part of a parrot's beak
62. Ear, nose and throat Drs.
63. Let it stand, editorially speaking
65. Meadow
66. And so forth (abbr.)

Joyce