



REFORMED

Perspective

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A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

**On
being
a father**

Ashamed of God?

It's not enough to do *what's* right if we're afraid to admit to *why*

Editorial

Jon Dykstra

Between the years 1998 and 2002 Jennifer Knapp made quite a bit of money for Christian bookstores across North America – her albums sold over 1 million copies. But in 2010, when she released her first new album in eight years, many of these same stores decided they weren't going to stock it. The reason? LifeWay Christian Store's Chris Rodgers said it was because:

"Jennifer Knapp has been out of the music scene for a long time, and we have not been carrying her product in our stores for several years. . . . Stocking her music is not an issue since there is no demand for her product in our stores or on our Web site."

The reasons given was a lack of demand for her product. That's a good, solid business reason, the sort of reason that would prompt any good, solid business to this course of action. But this is a Christian bookstore so it doesn't seem too presumptuous to think there was one other reason they didn't want to sell Knapp's new album – this year she outed herself as a lesbian.

Trying to do the right thing

The bookstore's decision was an understandable one – Knapp has embraced a sinful lifestyle that Christians oppose, because God opposes it. But LifeWay seemed embarrassed to admit the decision had anything to do with God's prohibition against homosexuality.

It may strike readers as odd that a *Christian* bookstore would be timid about mentioning a *Christian* reason for their action. But what if a similar situation involved a company that didn't have the word "Christian" right in their name? Would this cautious approach be understandable if it was, instead, simply a business run by a Christian?

Last September a bakery in Indianapolis, *Just Cookies*, received an order from a college homosexual group for rainbow-decorated cupcakes to celebrate "National Coming Out Day." The store's owner, David Stockton, thought that accepting this order would involve him in the promotion of homosexuality, a lifestyle he

recognizes as sinful. So what do you think he should do?

When details of Stockton's story were first posted to VisionToAmerica.org one of the comments below the article provided a solution of sorts:

" . . . simply [say]: 'Thank you for your order, however, we are so busy at the moment it will be three weeks before we can guarantee delivery. Do you still wish to place your order?'"

If Stockton were to take this piece of advice he could get away with doing what he thinks is right – he could avoid promoting homosexuality

A college homosexual group placed an order for rainbow-decorated cupcakes



– but only by avoiding any mention of his true motivation, honoring God’s law. If he’s honest, well, then we all know there is going to be trouble.

And, indeed, that is what happened. Stockton was upfront about why he declined the order, and he was threatened with eviction from the city-owned market where he’s rented space for the last twenty years.

Divorcing the why from the what

There’s good reason then for Christians to feel pressured to obscure the *why* behind *what* they’re doing – there can be a cost to being upfront about our Christian motivations. But we need to recognize there is also a cost to being deliberately vague about why we’re doing what we’re doing – God doesn’t get glorified.

.....
***It should be clear that the
 one thing we can’t do
 is hide why we do what we do***

Last year a high school in Mississippi told student Constance McMillen that she could not take a same-sex date to the prom. The reason given? According to LifeSiteNew.com, the explanation offered was “it would create a disturbance that many would find uncomfortable.” When the courts got involved the school decided, rather than opening up their prom to homosexual couples, they would cancel prom altogether. Instead a private party was organized, but kept secret from McMillen. She was sent to an “alternate prom” that the school had agreed to host, but when she arrived she found only five other students. The rest of her graduating class was celebrating at the secret prom.

I am presuming the school administration was made up of Christians who because of their faith felt the need to take

a stand against same-sex dates. There is another possible explanation for their stance: they may have been bigots.


If it had been clear they were Christians taking a Christian stand they could have looked principled. . . even if many people didn’t understand or agreed with their position. But because they never owned up to *why* they were doing *what* they were doing, they ended up looking petty, and acting like mean-spirited tricksters.

Of course we know that if they had been upfront, and explained to Constance that they weren’t going to allow homosexuality at the prom because it is a sinful lifestyle, they would have been persecuted. But that beats the alternative – instead they ended up looking like the *persecutors*. What’s worse is, despite the school administration never making mention of God, they didn’t fool anyone – God still got the “credit” for what his followers did here.

Conclusion

Sometimes it is easy to figure out what God would want us to do – it’s clear that a Christian bookstore shouldn’t sell CDs by homosexual artists. But does a Christian bakery owner really have to turn down an order for rainbow-decorated cupcakes? And what exactly should the Mississippi school have done? That’s not as certain.

But while it is sometimes difficult to determine what the right thing to do might be, it should be clear that the one thing we can’t do is hide *why* we do *what* we do (Mark 8:38). As the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, the chief end of man “is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Why do we do what we do? To glorify God! And we can only do that by being ready – eager! – to acknowledge that He is *why* we do *what* we do.

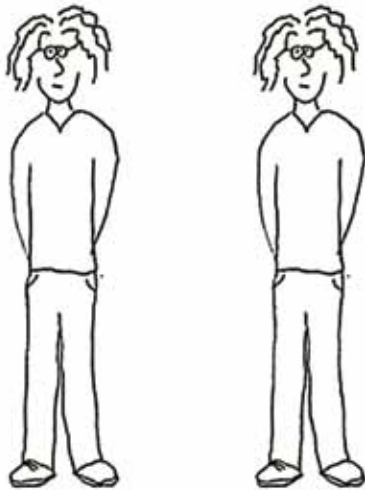
“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim 1:17 NIV). 

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When Calvinists and Arminians debate



↑
ME

↑
MY OWN WORST ENEMY

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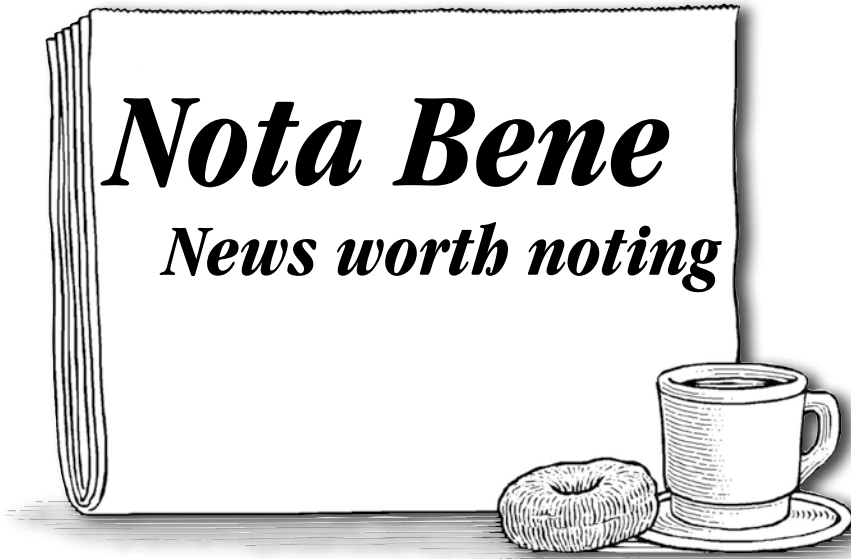
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Nota Bene

News worth noting



ARPA at the Supreme Court?

by Anna Nienhuis and Jon Dykstra

On May 2, 2011, the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada filed a Notice of Motion with the Supreme Court of Canada to be granted intervenor status in the upcoming case of Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission v. William (Bill) Whatcott. This is a very important case for Reformed Christians as the decision will impact the power that human rights commissions and tribunals have to prevent Christians from publicly stating our beliefs on social or political issues when they are deemed to be “offensive.”

Bill Whatcott was initially brought to trial for distributing flyers titled “Keep Homosexuality out of Saskatchewan’s Public Schools.” Four recipients of the flyers filed complaints that he was encouraging hate, and he was ordered to pay over \$17,000 in fines. However, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal overturned this ruling, and now the case is going to the Supreme Court of Canada.

In its submission to the Supreme Court, ARPA Canada argued that it is a

fundamental freedom to be able to apply our faith to issues of public policy. Although many may not agree with the way that Mr. Whatcott wrote about homosexuality (much of what he writes even Christians would find tactless and lacking grace) that is not the point. Parts of the Bible are seen as offensive by our secular society. If being inoffensive is the standard for what is permissible, then Christians will be forced to keep their faith private. We are already witnessing a growing unwillingness to talk about controversial issues because of fears of human rights complaints.

While this case will look specifically at a section of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, the decision extends to all provinces. For many years Christians have been urging reforms to the human rights commissions and tribunals. This Supreme Court case could either be a big victory for freedom or a disappointing endorsement of the status-quo. Visit the ARPA website (www.ARPACanada.ca) for updates and more information.

SOURCE: arpacanada.ca, May 2, 2011; Karen Selick, National Post, Nov. 3, 2010; www.scc-csc.gc.ca

24: Leftwing TV series to jump to big screen



For eight seasons counter-terrorism expert Jack Bauer had the hardest job on TV but it seems his job is still not done – coming in the summer of 2012 a 24 movie will open in theatres.

Year after year Jack kept finding himself in situations where he had just 24 hours to save millions from the horrible death that would befall them if he didn’t defuse/recover/destroy the nuke/virus/nerve gas that was imperiling them. While the series is best known for its format – 24 one-hour episodes that together cover the events of one 24-hour day – it also gained a reputation as a rightwing show because of its implicit endorsement of torture as an unpleasant, but sometimes necessary means of extracting information.

But as *National Review*’s Jonah Goldberg has pointed out, “24 is a decidedly left-wing show.” How so? Well whenever Jack runs into problems there is always some “super-competent, nimble and savy government” agency to turn to. He makes a call, and within seconds gets the answer he was after. As Goldberg notes,

“There’s no ‘You have reached the offices of the Counterterrorism Unit. None of our customer-service operatives are available right now. . . .’”

He concludes, “simply depicting such onmicompetence. . . breeds the assumption that the State could solve all our problems if only we allowed it to.”

SOURCE: *National Review* May 3, 2010, “Fantastically Efficient.”

“Mother Earth” to get human rights?

by Anna Nienhuis

Bolivia is campaigning to the United Nations to recognize “Mother Earth’s” right to “life, water and clean air...and the right to be free from pollution.” They hope to establish a Ministry of Mother Earth and provide the planet with an ombudsman who would hear nature’s complaints as voiced by activist groups and environmentalists.

These rights, as well as rights for bugs and trees, have already been enacted in Bolivia by president Evo Morales, Latin America’s first indigenous president. He is working to reflect traditional South American beliefs, in which the earth goddess Pachamama is the center of all life and worthy of honour and respect. Morales also led the initiative that resulted in the United Nations establishing an International Mother Earth Day, which was celebrated for the second time on April 22, 2011.

While we believe in the responsible, stewardly use of our planet and its resources Bolivia is taking it several steps further, elevating the earth to human status. However, it is an interesting indication of how much impact a determined leader can have in advancing his nation’s causes and traditional beliefs on an international scale.

SOURCE: Steven Edward’s “UN resolution looks to give “Mother Earth” same rights as humans; nationalpost.com, April 11, 2011



Canadian Reformed MP!

On May 2nd Canadians elected the Conservative Party to power with a firm majority, winning 167 out of 308 seats. One of the new Conservatives sent to Ottawa is a man familiar to many *Reformed Perspective* readers, the first Canadian Reformed Member of Parliament, Winnipeg’s own Lawrence Toet. He won in a close vote, unseating the incumbent, New Democrat Jim Maloway, by just 300 votes.

It is a blessing indeed that the many Reformed Canadians across the country can know there is someone

in Ottawa who understands their beliefs, and who wishes to honor God in the political realm. Mr. Toet received strong support from the Reformed

community during his campaign and now that he has won, let’s all remember to keep him, and the whole Toet family, in our prayers as he takes on this new and challenging task.



Pampers plays to different attitudes in Canada and the US

by Jon Dykstra

How different are attitudes towards the unborn in Canada and the US? A new Pampers commercial gives a hint. It begins with an ultrasound video of a baby moving around in the womb, and the caption “whether he’s planned. . .” The next picture is that of an obviously pregnant bride and the caption, “. . .or not. . .” Other pair-



ings follow, including, “Whether she’s three months early. . . or ten years late. . .” and “Whether she has special needs. . . or a lot of needs. . .”

But the American and Canadian versions end differently. In the US this rambling sentence has a strongly, if implicitly, pro-life clincher: “. . .every baby is a miracle.”

But Pampers believes that is too much for Canadian audiences. Our version instead concludes, “. . .Pampers believes every baby should be swaddled in the comfort and security of our softest diaper ever. . . our softest protection for every little miracle.” In Canada, a country that has no laws restricting abortion, the commercial’s strong pro-life undertone had been undercut because it had to be, to be palatable.

Both commercials can be found at www.youtube.com/user/Pampers.

Church in the news is almost never good news

by Anna Nienhuis

The Anglican Church in Australia has come under criticism for publicly stating that it “wanted the government to reconsider population incentives” and limit immigration into the country. Australia is well-known for its substantial baby bonuses (\$5,294 is paid to any family that earns less than \$75,000 for the 6 months after a baby’s birth) and many believed the church’s statement was aimed at this policy, which has also been criticized by other groups. The Anglican Church

quickly tried to clarify that it had not meant to aim at the baby bonus specifically, but had meant to make the argument to the government that population growth is not the key to economic growth and success.

The church, however, is an organization that is supposed to support families and view children as a gift from God, and it did not sit well with parishioners or the general public that they would consider supporting the end of a major benefit for families.

SOURCE: optuszoo.com, April 28, 2011; Bill Muehlenberg’s “When churches go bad”; billmuehlenberg.com, April 29, 2011

Was Osama Bin Laden a Muslim?

by Jon Dykstra

The US government has regularly insisted that Bin Laden was not a Muslim. When announcing Bin Laden's death in a national address President Obama made this point again: "I've made clear, just as President Bush did shortly after 9/11, that our war is not against Islam.... Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer of Muslims."

But, as *Human Events'* Jason Mattera was quick to note, it seems curious then, that Bin Laden was given a traditional Muslim burial. If the US government was certain Bin Laden wasn't Muslim, why did they treat him as one for his burial? Was he, or wasn't he Muslim? It has to be one or the other.

This is part of a more significant question – is violence, and terrorism, part of Islam? The US government's

answer seems to be that living terrorists are certainly not Muslim, but dead ones may be.



Osama Bin Laden was celebrated for his murderous ways: pictured is a calendar used to remember him all year long.

Limited government? What's that?

by Jon Dykstra

Three items in May with a common theme:

1. the US federal government sent a letter to the NCAA – the group overseeing American college athletics – notifying them that the current format they have for their football playoffs may not be acceptable to the Justice Department.
2. the California State Legislature debated whether hotels should use straight or fitted sheets on all their beds.
3. Canoe.ca reported that a Quebec family had been ordered by the

courts to put their children in daycare and public school so they could be "socialized." The parents have not been accused of abuse or negligence.

We see in these actions governments that are eager to involve themselves in every aspect of life. There is nothing they'll leave well enough alone, not even college athletics, hotels bed sheet choices or how our children should be raised.

We need to speak out against these governmental excesses – our elected officials have mistaken themselves for God, thinking all of life is under their domain.

SOURCE: <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Politics/2011/05/11/18136461.html>

Russia restricts abortions to boost birth rates

by Anna Nienhuis

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin gave a speech in April to say that measures must be taken to boost the flagging birthrate, with the goal being a 25 to 30 per cent increase over the next 3 years. Russian is not the only country struggling with birthrates below the replacement rate of two births per woman, but their population decline has been particularly dramatic, plummeting by 4.5 million people since 1995.

Russia also has the highest abortion rate in the world, with 53 abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44, or 1022 abortions for every 1000 births. Those are just the numbers for recorded abortions, and some estimate the actual rate may be much higher.

Anton Belyakov, author of a bill making changes to the country's abortion policy, calls Russia's abortion rate "unacceptable" and hopes his bill will stem the population collapse the country is facing. Abortion will be disqualified as a medical service funded under the national health plan and doctors will be allowed to refuse to perform abortions. If women decide to have an abortion regardless, doctors will be required to warn women that "it may cause infertility, death, or negatively affect physical and mental health."

While these restrictions are being enacted only for demographic, political reasons and not for reasons of morality, the resulting environment will undoubtedly be of great benefit to the thousands of unborn children at risk in Russia. Unfortunately, such restrictions without proper motives will likely not result in changing people's minds and may simply result in an increase in abortion outside of doctors' offices and away from official records.

SOURCE: Hilary White's "Russia considering abortion restrictions to slow population collapse"; lifesitenews.com, April 28, 2011



Being conservative is good for you!

by Michael Wagner

Did you know that being a political conservative is good for you?

It's true – there are a number of positive personal characteristics that are associated with being conservative. However you wouldn't know that from following the mainstream media – in the press conservatives are commonly portrayed as of a more stingy, nasty and uninformed nature whereas liberals are supposed to be more generous, nice and thoughtful.

Peter Schweizer, an American academic, decided to comb through the various surveys and studies comparing conservatives and liberals to see if these stereotypes could be substantiated. What he found instead is that the stereotypes frequently turn the facts on their heads. The results of his research were published in a recent book with the lengthy title: *Makers and Takers: Why conservatives work harder, feel happier, have closer families, take fewer drugs, give more generously, value honesty more, are less materialistic and envious, whine less ... and even hug their children more than liberals.*

Smart folk listen to Rush?

Liberal commentators often assume their own intellectual superiority to people on the Right. Conservatives just don't know much, it is claimed, and they're too stupid to see that government programs are the answer to various economic and social problems.

But the evidence doesn't show that liberals are so much smarter than conservatives. Quite the opposite, in fact. "Authoritative studies show that conservatives are actually better informed, more knowledgeable, and better educated than liberals." People who listen to talk radio aren't the knuckle-dragging Neanderthals commonly portrayed. The prestigious "National Election Study found that the more you listen to Rush Limbaugh, the more knowledgeable you are about politics."

More likely to give their own money

It's good to know, of course, that conservatives aren't the mindless people that elements of the media like to insist. But more importantly, conservative ideas are beneficial to those who hold them in ways that liberal ideas are not. As Schweizer puts it, "Modern liberal ideas consistently encourage bad habits and destructive behavioral tendencies."

For one thing, liberalism tends to promote a more selfish view of life. Liberals like to claim that they want to help

the poor. But it seems that for them, supporting increased government efforts to eradicate poverty is sufficient to prove one's compassion for the poor; actually helping the poor or giving to the poor is unnecessary. People on the left think that conservatives are "selfish" for opposing increased government spending on welfare policies. But conservatives are more likely to actually give money to charities that help the poor than liberals are.

Schweizer states that "Many liberals who lecture about the need for greater compassion fail to give anything to the poor." Instead, they see promoting leftwing social programs "as a substitute for directly helping the poor." This has led to a situation where "Claiming sympathy for the poor while actually doing very little for them is a widespread phenomenon on the left."

Despite their rhetoric to the contrary,

"Surveys confirm that the more strongly someone espouses the view that the government should equalize income in the United States, the more likely they are not to give to charity."

People who want the government to help the poor are actually less likely to help the poor themselves.

Of course, from a conservative perspective this looks hypocritical. If leftists are genuinely concerned for the poor, why can't they do something themselves? Why do they simply demand that the government (i.e., other people) do something to help the poor?

Schweizer believes the problem is rooted in the fundamentally selfish nature of this leftwing worldview.

"Modern liberalism, as a philosophy and way of life, provides the best means to pursue the interests of the Mighty Me. As a liberal in good standing, you can outsource your responsibilities and focus on what's really important – yourself – with nary a twinge of conscience."

Up by our bootstraps

Conservatives, it seems, also value working hard more than people on the left do. The survey data provided by Schweizer show that, generally speaking, conservatives believe that working hard can improve people's life situation. If you work hard, you can get ahead. By contrast, a large percentage of people on the left believe that your life situation is largely the result of luck. Some people win the lottery of life

Arrogance:

A necessary element of the liberal worldview

by Jon Dykstra

In *Makers and Takers* Peter Schweizer not only sings the praises of conservatives, he exposes the arrogance of liberals. One example is particularly telling – Schweizer writes about the media's reaction to a Presidential IQ report that looked at the scores for each American president in the last 50 years. The report found that the last six Democratic (liberal) Presidents had an average IQ of 155, with Bill Clinton scoring the highest, at 182. Republican Presidents (conservatives, or at least, more conservative than Democrats) average *more than 40 point lower* at just over 115. The lowest Republican score was George W. Bush, at 91.

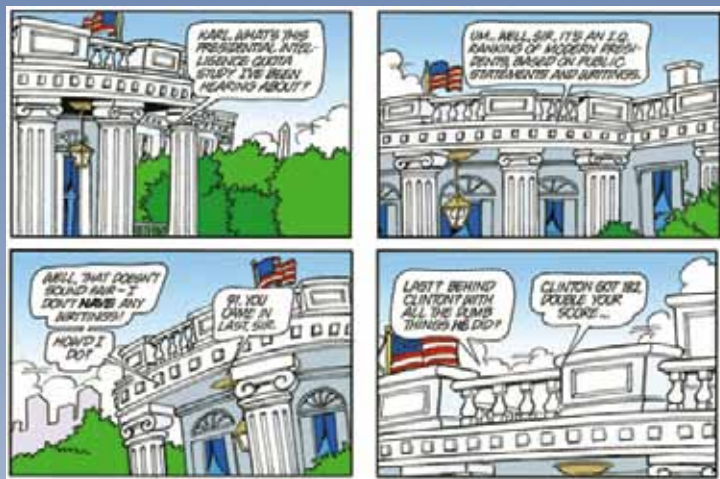
Now to give this some context, Albert Einstein's IQ has been estimated at between 160 to 180, which puts him a shade below Bill Clinton. And George W. Bush's reported score was exactly half that given for Clinton.

If that strikes you as a little suspect, congratulations – that's means you must not be a liberal, because a host of them did fall for it. The press including *"The Economist* magazine, *the St. Petersburg Times*, London's *Daily Mirror*, radio talk show hosts and liberal bloggers eagerly ran with the story." Even editorial cartoonist Garry Trudeau swallowed it whole, basing one of his *Doonesbury* comics on this Presidential IQ report.

But while many in the press were ready to believe anything – no matter how implausible – that said liberals were smarter than conservatives (and smarter even than Einstein) the report was a hoax. The only real info the report provided was the illumination it had given on the press's hard bias against conservatives.

Think I'm been a little hard on the gullible media? Not at all, As Schweizer notes:

"Imagine if someone had published a report claiming that conservatives had much higher IQs than liberals. Would newspapers and commentators run such a story uncritically? To the contrary, they would likely first check on the results and subject the findings to serious scrutiny. In short, the bias in favor of 'smart liberals' seems widely accepted in our society."



Why did they fall for it?

While it might seem odd that liberals are so ready to think themselves much smarter than conservatives, this arrogance is an integral part of the liberal worldview. Liberals believe in bigger government, with the government taking an increasingly prominent role in education, healthcare, the arts, childcare, and, of course, all aspects of the economy including the arts, agriculture, forestry, tourism and sports stadium construction.

But government on such a grand scale is going to require some amazing leaders if things are to be run competently. So if one presupposes, as liberals do, that bigger government is the answer to many of our problems, it is necessary for them to also presuppose that the super competent, super smart administrators necessary to run it, do actually exist. Or to put it more succinctly liberals overestimate their intelligence, because they need to, to maintain their trust in big government.

Conservatives, on the other hand, think that such a huge responsibility is beyond any one person, or any one group's competence, no matter how smart. So they want the government to take on only limited responsibilities, like those of justice and defense, (Romans 13:4) which God has specifically assigned to it.

Conclusion

While liberals think conservatives to be of limited intelligence, conservatives think this true of both liberals and conservatives – everyone, even the smartest among us, have only limited intelligence and no one has the omniscience that would be needed to competently oversee all that Ottawa, or Washington are involved in today. This touch of humility is as central to conservatism as a sense of arrogance is to liberalism.

while others lose it. There's not much you can do. Whether you work hard or not, it doesn't really matter.

What is the result of this sort of belief in the life of the person who believes it? Schweizer points out that "if your belief system tells you that hard work doesn't matter that much, you are unlikely to work very hard." Not surprisingly, therefore, people with conservative views value hard work more than those with leftist views because hard work can improve one's lot in life from a conservative perspective.

In one particular study, in

"Great Britain, researchers found that those who voted Conservative most embraced the hard work ethic, followed by Labor supporters [Labor is the moderate socialist party]. Marxists came out the laziest."

This simply makes sense. If, like Marxists, you believe your financial situation is set by the capitalist system, and you can't do anything about it, why would you work hard? That would be like banging your head against a brick wall. If you can't get ahead anyway, you might as well take it easy.

Here the harmful consequence of leftist beliefs comes plainly into view: by telling people their life circumstances are fixed and can't be changed, they are condemning those very people to their current level of existence. If someone believes he can get ahead through hard work, he is likely to work hard to achieve his goals. But if someone believes at the outset that he can't get ahead regardless of his own efforts, he would be a fool even to try. So the leftwing view actually prevents people from working harder and improving their lives. In other words, the leftwing view is actually hurting people by holding them back from the better lives they would achieve through hard work.

Try vs. cry

The leftwing view also tells these same people that because they are in fixed circumstances through no fault of their own, they are victims. So rather than work hard to improve their lives, they should demand government programs. Victim status "justifies a smorgasbord of government entitlements and special privileges to ameliorate the victim's suffering." Being a victim is much more fun than working hard. If you believe your poverty is someone else's fault, you can still maintain high self-esteem while being lazy.

Schweizer notes that the idea of being a "victim" has really caught on in modern society. People like to justify various claims based on their alleged status of being victims. It's gotten so bad that "Political scientist Aaron Wildavsky calculates that victims now account for 374 percent of the population."

Happier too

Conservatives also tend to be happier and more content than liberals. This manifests itself in different areas of the lives of liberals, not just in politics. As it turns out,

"the farther to the left you go, the more anger you encounter. Liberals are not only angrier about politics than conservatives, they also tend to be angrier in their daily lives. They are more likely to seek revenge against those

PETER SCHWEIZER

New York Times Bestselling Author of Do As I Say (Not As I Do)

MAKERS AND TAKERS

**WHY CONSERVATIVES WORK HARDER,
FEEL HAPPIER, HAVE CLOSER FAMILIES,
TAKE FEWER DRUGS, GIVE MORE
GENEROUSLY, VALUE HONESTY MORE,
ARE LESS MATERIALISTIC AND ENVIOUS,
WHINE LESS . . . AND EVEN HUG THEIR
CHILDREN MORE THAN LIBERALS**

who anger them, more likely to hold a grudge, and more likely to take offense at criticism."

Besides the disproportionate amount of anger, liberals also have other significant issues to deal with in their personal lives. Schweizer says that "liberals are between two and six times as likely to have had a mental health problem as conservatives." In fact, the "farther to the left you go, the more likely you are to find depression and other related emotional problems."

Conclusion

Overall, then, it seems that conservatives are better off than liberals in many areas of life. Keep in mind, however, that the data used in Schweizer's study are just statistical figures, so it doesn't mean that every conservative is better than every liberal. There are undoubtedly conservatives who are stupid, greedy, lazy, angry, etc., and liberals who are intelligent, generous and hard working. But generally speaking, people who hold to conservative views are less likely to have such negative characteristics in comparison to liberals.

There's an old saying, "don't believe everything you read," and it's always good to keep that in mind, especially when reading mainstream media sources. The idea that conservative-minded people are ignorant and bad people goes back at least to the 1950s. But numerous studies paint a very different picture. As Schweizer clearly demonstrates in his book, positive personality traits are more closely identified with people who believe in conservatism than people who believe in liberalism.



When have we done enough?

Balancing time for politics, community, faith, family, and the rest of life

by Mark Penninga

At a recent ARPA Canada event, a woman in the audience piped up during question time “we are constantly being told to do more! When have we done enough?”

What a fantastic question. Although the Reformed community in Canada has a history of faith-based political and social action, the reality is that it has always struggled making the transition from talk to walk. To hear comments suggesting that too much is happening is heart warming to a guy who has a job devoted to promoting political action.

But it does beg the question; just how much time should we be spending on political efforts when so many other important things need to be done? Here are some guidelines that I think can help us each make that decision in our own lives.

1) Time is not ours

It’s important to remember that time is not something we own. We have given our lives to God as a sacrifice of thankfulness (Romans 12:1) and just as we acknowledge that God owns our possessions, he also owns our time. Deciding how to use “our” time dramatically changes when we believe that it actually belongs to God and He has given it to us to invest it. Then a better question is “how has God asked us to use the time He has given us?”

2) God puts us in different roles

The amount of time I devote to politics should not be the standard for others. Neither should we look at our parents, pastors, or friends. A stay-at-home mom has different responsibilities than a recently-retired man. We should focus on the place where God has put us in life rather than where God has placed others. Don’t put your expectations for what you should do too high or too low based on what others are doing.

3) Our roles have priorities

All of us have multiple commitments and responsibilities and are forced to allocate time to each of them. Sadly, we often “wing it” and give our time to whatever suits us at the moment, often leaving our commitments to the deadline.

Worship, Bible reading, marriage, parenting, church leadership, education, exercise, and leisure require substantial amounts of time from many of us. The point is that these things should come as priorities and even within these priorities, some are more important than others. Applying our

faith to the public square should never get in the way of our commitments to God, spouse, or children regardless of how important we think the cause is.

4) Goals are essential

With all of these priorities competing for our time, we need to make firm commitments about how much we ought to give to each of them. If you don’t write down your goals it is very difficult to keep them and make decisions when new challenges and opportunities face us. Make long-term (1-5 years), medium-term (this year), and short-term (this week) goals, write them down, and look at them regularly to make sure you are staying on track. Don’t bother writing down goals that you don’t intend to keep.

.....
A better question is “how has God asked us to use the time He has given us?”
.....

It is much easier to say “no” when you see a list of previous commitments you have made. And it is more difficult to say “yes” to something you want to do when you see how it will take time away from other things you like. Goals bring discipline and discipline is essential for time management.

5) We each have a civic duty to take part in public life

Democracies don’t just work “by themselves.” They require the active commitment of their citizens. That is why it is a civic duty to participate. And participation does not just mean voting every four year. We are called to follow the issues that our communities and nation are grappling with so that we can make informed decisions and share our views with our elected representatives. We are abdicating our civic responsibility if the Reformed community devotes all of its time to its own churches, schools, families, and sports leagues.

6) We have a Christian duty, as prophet, priest, and king, to take part in public life

Lord’s Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that being a Christian means that we are all prophets, priests,

.....
***If you don't write
down your goals it is
very difficult to
keep them***
.....



and kings. That means we all share the calling to “fight against sin and the devil in this life. . . .” The myth persists that political and social engagement is for “those who like that sort of thing.” When sin and the devil are running rampant in Canada and destroying marriages, abusing the elderly, selling the vulnerable into the sex trade or exploiting children to gratify the perversity of adults, we each have a calling to fight. That means getting off our lazy-boys and taking action in meaningful ways.

7) Our civic duty can be accomplished in little time

Following the issues of the day and taking action in the public square does not mean that we have to devote our lives to that cause (though we could sure use more youths who pursue careers with this in mind).

We can be politically aware and active and still have as much time as we did previously. For example, we can take 15 minutes per day that we currently invest in watching TV shows or reading novels and use that time to read newspaper articles, books, and magazine articles on current affairs. We can also make use of the work of organizations like ARPA Canada to respond to current issues in a timely

way. Subscribe to ARPA Canada’s E-Luminary newsletter at www.ARPACanada.ca and get the news sent to your inbox at no charge. Armed with the information, we can then take action. A mere 4 minutes is all that is needed to make use of our Easy Mail technology to write a letter to the appropriate government officials. Or you can devote 40 minutes to writing a letter to the editor. If you set a goal of one action item per month, plus attending one public event per month, the total time is minimal.

Conclusion

Political and social action should generally take up a very small part of our lives. Small is OK, as long as it is focussed and goal-oriented. It is very easy for us to say we are “too busy” without analyzing what exactly we are busy with and what God wants us to do with the time He gave us. It is amazing how much can be accomplished if we devote a small but regular amount of time towards a cause. And if you have done this already – great! Don’t do more just because you get another email about an important issue. Go outside and kick the soccer ball around.



Abortion and “Men”

by Jonathon Van Maren

Several weeks ago, one of my friends from Vancouver contacted me to ask for advice. A girl she knew was planning to have an abortion.

Over the next two weeks I, and another one of my pro-life friends from Vancouver, attempted to help her convince this young woman not to abort her child. The girl was initially open to our discussion, but had her phone taken away by her boyfriend, and was eventually coerced into having an abortion by a man who saw his own future as more important than the offspring he had fathered.

This is when a question struck me: what has manhood in today’s culture become when two girls in Vancouver are fighting harder for the life of a child than the child’s own father?

While the abortion debate is often centered on the woman and the pre-born child, the male is almost never mentioned. I have noticed in dozens of debates on campuses and in the streets that women will state “I can’t raise a child on my own” as if it is a foregone conclusion that the father of this child will not step up to his responsibilities. Even more often women cite their significant other leaving them as one of the motivations behind aborting their children in the first place.

This brings a glaring question to the forefront of the debate: where are all the men?

What makes a man?

Traditionally, manhood was defined by a number of things. Men were supposed to be loyal, courageous, responsible and self-sacrificial in the service of those they had a duty to protect – namely, women and children (see Eph 5:25, 1 Peter 3:7).

*A manly man,
but not the world’s idea of one.*



This protective instinct was considered to be as natural as the female maternal instinct. In historian William Manchester’s classic narrative history of

America, *The Glory and the Dream*, the author describes young men during the first half of the 21st century gleaning their values from heroes of the past,

noting that “The virtue which brought victory was most frequently an ability to control the self, for instance, to be brave.”

Self-control is a virtue that God thinks highly of (see Galatians 5:22-23, Proverbs 25:28, 2 Peter 1:5-7) but today popular culture seems to have a mirror image of manhood, measuring a man by how many women he has slept with. When debating others, I have often found myself facing this same ideal. One university student asked how I was a man if I wasn’t “sleeping with chicks.” I informed him that I held to the quaint point of view that it took more of a man to keep one woman happy for a lifetime than dozens for only minutes.

When I was doing a pro-life demonstration on the streets of Vancouver with two friends, one middle-aged man walked past and asked us, “shouldn’t you guys be out trying to get laid or something?” This shocked me. Whether or not you agree with our position, surely it is more admirable to defend your beliefs in your free time rather than trying to “get some”?

What makes a boy?

This is why catch phrases such as “pro-choice” are heralded by many men with such ferocity – because “pro-choice” to them doesn’t just mean the woman’s right to kill her pre-born child, it also means they are “pro-choice” in regards to whether or not they have to stick around and care for the offspring they fathered.

One of my friends who regularly pickets abortion clinics says we would be shocked to see how many sobbing girls are pushed into abortion clinics by their angry boyfriends and fathers. Perhaps more women would stop being “pro-choice” about killing pre-born children if the fathers of these chil-

dren would stop being “pro-choice” about actually shouldering their responsibilities, as has been the tradition of true manhood in the past.

I wonder how many people actually find it admirable for a man to uphold “choice” – such a man is defending nothing more than an escape from responsibility from his offspring. These are simply deadbeat dads who turn lethal to protect their own self-interest. At the last Genocide Awareness Project I attended at the University of Calgary, there were more male than female protesters. One young man I debated on campus actually said to me, “but what if I get my girlfriend pregnant by accident? Is that really my fault?”

The fact that a grown man could ask such an utterly pathetic question turned my stomach. This is how children act, refusing to accept responsibility for what they do. It is this refusal to grow up, this refusal to be responsible, that has “men” sending their girlfriends, sisters, and wives to have their bodies violated in an absurd crime against nature and have their offspring dismembered.

Not men at all

The old-fashioned values of fidelity, responsibility, self-sacrifice and self-control are scorned by many of today’s academic elites, but we all know that, deep down, everyone recognizes that such men do not deserve the title of “man” – their actions defy the term. While responsibility for abortion is shared equally by men and women, I believe that many women would choose life if men chose to be men. Instead, thousands of pre-born children are sacrificed on the altar of their fathers’ selfishness.



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*To know wisdom and instruction,
to understand words of insight,
to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in righteousness, justice and equity;
to give prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the youth –
Let the wise hear and increase in learning,
and the one who understands obtain guidance,
to understand a proverb and a saying,
the words of the wise and their riddles.*

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Proverbs 1:1-7

A Proverb in the Hand is Better than Two Jewels in the Bush

by Christine Farenhorst

Crime does not pay, so indeed, goes the adage and we all know this to be true. There are stories, numerous stories illustrating this to be a fact.

Human adages, however, don't always cut it. It's actually better to rely on Biblical proverbs – proverbs such as “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered” (Prov. 28:27).

To be tested by the Lord

There was a young man once, a long time ago, whose name was Andreas Stubenrauch. He was born in the early 1800s and he had been taught a respectable occupation by his father – that of armorer. Andreas Stubenrauch, as his family name rather betrays, was a German, a Bavarian actually. Well-trained in using his hands in metal-working, he settled in the town of Coburg, Saxony. He chose not to pursue the trade his father had taught him, but instead used that training to become a locksmith. Being a locksmith was no mean position. Locks were in demand and could be fashioned for a great many people in many walks of life. Andreas consequently could have had a busy and successful occupation, a fruitful and happy way of living.

However, Andreas frequently tripped over the tenth commandment. He was somewhat of a covetous person meaning that when he saw something he liked, he desired to have it for himself. “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,” says Proverbs 17:11, “and the Lord tests hearts.” And Andreas Stubenrauch's heart was tested – it was tested by the Lord.

There was a death in Coburg. One of the leading ladies of that city, the Duchess Augusta of Sachsen-Coburg, at the age of seventy-six, died on November 16, 1831. She was buried three days later. Widow of the late ruler of Sachsen-Coburg, she had been much loved, and the entire population of Coburg mourned her. For three hours they were permitted to file past the body as it lay in state in residence in the early morning hours of November 19. As they slowly walked past, it was whispered behind hands that the Duchess would be laid to rest wearing expensive jewelry – diamond rings and ornate finery. Indeed, everyone could plainly see that the body was decked out not only in a fine gown, but also that the dead hands glittered with costly stones and that a magnificent necklace adorned the still neck. It was not to be wondered at. The dead duchess had been the mother of

the present Duke of Coburg, the grandmother of the King of Portugal, mother of the King of Belgium, mother-in-law to the Grand-Duke of Russia, the English Duke of Kent and the German Duke of Württemberg. Everyone in Coburg was convinced that every royal and princely house had contributed to a piece of the jewelry they had the privilege of seeing in the casket.

Among those filing by the body laid out in state was the locksmith, Andreas Stubenrauch. He had closed up his shop to see for himself if the rumors were true, if it was really so that the body lying in state would be wearing all that jewelry. "A stingy man" Proverbs 28:22 says, "hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him."

Not a smile about him

Using human standards, Andreas Stubenrauch was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a handsome man. As a matter of fact, it actually could be surmised that he was ill-favored, or, to put it in harsher terms, ugly. Dark brown stubby hair capped a broad, low-set forehead. Sinister, dark eyebrows almost hid his deep-set grey eyes. His nose was flat, and two flaring nostrils gaped. Beneath them was a large mouth and a drooping lower lip. The result was unfortunate. A good, kind heart, however, can make up for such motley, ill features; a warm smile and a loving hand make one beautiful. And the truth remained that Andreas Stubenrauch had been created in the image of God.

As Andreas Stubenrauch shuffled past the body, amid a throng of other Coburgers, he did indeed see the jewelry with his own eyes. He also beheld death. That was unavoidable. The Duchess had been out of time, as they say, for three days and she was waxen faced, pale and not breathing. It is at funeral homes that we are reminded of our mortality. It is when the death bell tolls that the thought strikes us that our hearts will, sooner or later, stop. Andreas Stubenrauch, however, ignored his mortality; he did not care to remember that his heart would cease to beat; and he did not heed the Lord's hand on his shoulder reminding him that he must stand, as all of us will, before his throne. "Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him" (Prov. 27:22).

Andreas also attended the funeral service. Many of the people of Coburg did. And he continued to listen to the gossip winding like a rope around his neck, gossip which breathed into his heart the notion that along with all the jewelry in the coffin, there was also a great deal of gold and silver. "The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down to the inner parts of the body" (Prov. 26:22). He heard not a word of the sermon; he listened not to the prayers offered; and he did not sing – not one note came from his lips. Instead he stood in the pew thinking, "What a waste!! What a colossal waste!! After all, she is dead and what can she do with this wealth."

In one respect Andreas was right, for earthly wealth is nothing when you face eternity. But he did not carry this truth through to its logical conclusion for himself, that conclusion being Jesus words: ". . . What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). At any rate, moved by material lust, Andreas Stubenrauch resolved to enter the mausoleum in which the Duchess would be buried at some time in the future, to acquire for himself some moth and rust assets.

Fallen

The mausoleum was located some distance away from the Ducal palace. Hidden by trees, it was not easily seen. This suited Andreas' purposes very well as he scouted the landscape in the weeks that followed. He did not, however, until some nine months after the funeral, take action.

The evening of August 18, 1832, armed with tools, a candle, as well as a flint and steel, he made his way by moonlight towards the Ducal grounds. Heavy step after heavy step trod the grass grounds; heavy step after heavy step trod the gravel paths. After climbing over a wall which surrounded the mausoleum, Andreas faced an eight foot high gate. Unable to pick the lock, perhaps he was a rather inept locksmith, he climbed this impediment as well and found himself in front of the oak mausoleum door. It took him an hour to wedge open that door with his tools, but wedge it open he finally did. He was now confronted with the dark vault – a vault with no visible steps descending into it. Not knowing the depth of the vault, and a little nervous about lighting a candle, Andreas Stubenrauch trudged back to the gate and the wall, climbed back out, and found a pole in the Ducal garden by which a fruit tree was tied. He dragged the pole back to the gate with him, and after some hard work, eventually got it into the mausoleum. Perhaps tired at this point, he made the mistake of leaning over the vault opening a bit too far as he was using the pole to gauge the depth. Losing his balance, he tumbled in and fell twelve feet down. Unconscious for a short while, he woke up to find that his bedfellows, as he lay on the ground, were two coffins – those of the late Duke Franz and Duchess Augusta of Sachsen-Coburg.

The turn of events had not phased Andreas. It was enough for him that he had come this far. He sat up, used his flint and steel and lit the candle. Ascertaining which of the two coffins belonged to Augusta, he found it to be secured by two locks. So rusted were those locks, however, that he could not open them. His other tools being twelve feet up, he had no recourse but his large hands. Eventually these hands broke one of the hinges on the coffin, enabling him to lift the lid. Peering in, while holding the lid with both hands, he could detect no jewelry – he could only vaguely see the shape of the dead, disintegrating body whose hands were crossed over the chest. Each time

*The evening of August 18, 1832, armed with tools,
a candle, as well as a flint and steel,
he made his way by moonlight towards the
Ducal grounds.*



Andreas Stubenrauch endeavored to hold up the lid with only one hand, so as to insert the other into the coffin to grope for silver, gold and jewels, the lid would come crashing down only narrowly avoiding his limbs.

After a great many series of crashes, Andreas came to the inevitable conclusion that it simply would not work. And then it finally dawned on him that he was twelve feet down in a mausoleum vault without a ladder. He tried everything he could think of to extricate himself. He stood on the coffin, he jumped up and down to try and grab hold of the edge of the main flooring; and he manipulated the pole. But it was all to no avail. Andreas Stubenrauch was in the vault to stay until, or if, some outside help would come. Eventually he lay down between the deceased Duke and the Duchess and tried to get some sleep.

The next morning, which happened to be a Sunday, and a special day in Coburg as it was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession of the present Duke, the town came alive with celebration. Andreas Stubenrauch, who had, between cat naps, reflected seriously on his situation the rest of that night, came to the conclusion that he would rather be caught than die in the mausoleum. Consequently, he began to shout when he heard footsteps on the gravel path close to the building. It was not long before the would-be thief and grave-robber was apprehended and taken from the vault. The Coburg court sentenced him to prison for eighteen months of hard labor.

You would think that such an episode would change a man in that he would be content afterwards. "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them, will obtain mercy" (Prov. 28:13). Having served his sentence, Andreas was free to start again. God had, in effect, given him a new lease on life. But Andreas was not paying attention! Four years after his release, he was again arrested for theft and once more sent to jail. And upon his release after that second stint, he was again arrested for theft a number of years later. "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly" (Prov. 26:11). Andreas Stubenrauch was, indeed, an old dog who refused to learn new tricks!

In 1854, Andreas Stubenrauch committed suicide in a small wood near his home. In his pockets were found an empty purse and an empty bottle of brandy. "He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing" (Prov. 29:1).

Conclusion

Proverbs, or wisdom literature, is addressed to all people in their daily walk of life. It is not enough to know the Proverbs; the way of life that is held up must be actively pursued.

It was by wisdom that the world was made or, as Psalm 33:3 says "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made." Jesus Christ is the Word. Jesus Christ is wisdom incarnate. He is that divine person through Whom God made the world and through Whom God redeemed the world. And we can not only *not* be broken beyond healing, we can also have life, eternal life, through Him.

There is some of Andreas Stubenrauch in all of us. Or rather, we are all born and conceived in sin.

Fear God, therefore. "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding, for the gain from it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her" (Prov. 3:13-14).



BEST BOOKS: THREE BOARD BOOKS

reviewed by Janet Faber

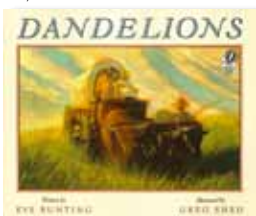
DANDELIONS

by Eve Bunting

The picture book *Dandelions* by Eve Bunting uses the transplanting of dandelions as a metaphor for the struggles of a mother who must be uprooted to a new place.

Dandelions is a story of a pioneer family in the 1800s who move to Nebraska. The head of the family, Father, sees this as the beginning of a better life. Mother sees it as an uprooting of all that is dear to her. All adapt to pioneer life except the mother who is overwhelmed with loneliness. The children try to find ways to cheer her up. The girls dig up clumps of dandelions and plant them on the roof of their sod house. Dandelions, like people, are not easily transplanted, but over time they will take root and prosper. The book ends with the roof of the sod house a brilliant yellow from the dandelions, and mother acknowledging that given time she too can be transplanted.

The illustrations set the mood for this story. The gold tinge in many of the pictures gives the feeling of intense sunshine beaming on the weary travelers. Some pictures give a panoramic view of the open landscape giving the feeling of the vast loneliness of pioneer life. *Dandelions* captures the joys and heartaches of many families who left home and hearth to begin a new life. (Ages 5-9)



ACROSS THE WIDE AND LONESOME PRAIRIE:

The Oregon Trail Diary of Hattie Campbell

by Kristiana Gregory

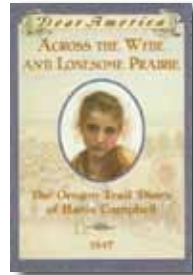
Today, when we travel we just get in a plane and go; in the 1800's that was impossible. Back then families could only travel across North America by wagon, which was a long and difficult journey.

In the form of a diary, *Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie* tells the story of 13-year-old Hattie Campbell and her family's trek from Missouri to Oregon. With the prodding of her Aunt to tell both the good and the bad, Hattie writes of the many trials and triumphs along the trail.

Hattie's trials include: the horror of watching fellow pioneers drowning in a river crossing, the guilt of poisoning children with poison hemlock that she mistook for wild parsnips, and the daily grueling walk in the dust of the wagons. Her triumphs include: the friendships forged between travelers, the joy of forgiving a woman who continually did her wrong, and the delight of finally seeing the green lush forests of Oregon.

Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie is a book in the "Dear America" Series, each of which is written by a different author as the diary of a young girl during a historical time period. I highly recommend this series.

Kristina Gregory aptly captures the spirit of American Pioneer life and maybe can help the reader realize how convenient life is now. (Ages 9+)



THE BELONGING PLACE

by Jean Little

The hardest thing about pioneer life is not the physical hardships, but rather the loss of a sense of belonging to a certain place and people. In the children's novel *The Belonging Place* author Jean Little addresses the question: when and where does someone truly belong?

In *The Belonging Place* young orphan Elsbeth, along with her aunt and uncle, travels from England to Upper Canada. After an arduous journey comprising a lengthy sea crossing and a wagon ride and walk through thick forests, the family arrives at their new place. For Elsbeth the life in this new country is full of loneliness and the drudgery of daily chores. However, through Elsbeth's struggles she realizes that she is now part of this new family and this new land. Although Elsbeth has many difficulties in her early life the author creates her as a pioneer with a sense of growth and a love for the country and family she now belongs to.

Canadian Jean Little, is an exceptional storyteller whose vivid characters makes history come alive. Though the author is legally blind she has written over 30 books and received many awards. Because of her challenges in life, her characters are created with empathy.



The Belonging Place will appeal to readers 10-years-old and up who enjoy reading adventurous historical fiction about pioneer life. (Ages 10+)

Jon Dykstra and his siblings blog on books at ReallyGoodReads.com where longer reviews of these books can be found.

He is Faithful

*It is so tough to always love,
with a love resembling Jesus.
Our feelings battle with the truth,
and we do whatever pleases.*

*Our emotions tie us up in knots
and our thoughts get in the way.
We hear some things we do not like,
and have hurtful things to say.*

*How can this really happen?
The fact is, and I know it's true,
Christians come with baggage
that's the truth for me and you.*

*So when you find that you've been hurt,
or let down by the one you trust,
remember God knows everything,
He remembers we are dust.*

*People aren't always reliable;
their feelings often changing.
And issues masking them from Truth,
selfish motives rearranging.*

*Thanks be to Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who God sent from above!
When people fail us here on earth,
He is Faithful in His Love.*

*O Holy Spirit guide us,
when our hearts fill up with grief.
Work through the pain and heartache,
turn to good our unbelief!*

- Lorinda Verhelst

Five things I wish I had known *... about being a father*

by Robert Andrews

As I have met many fathers around the country at conferences and homeschool conventions, I am often reminded of my own time as a father with three children in the 1970s, 80s and early 90s.

Charles Dickens used a phrase to describe the time of the French Revolution that in many ways describes my experience as a parent – it was the “best of times and the worst of times.” Nothing in my life has given me as much fulfillment and joy as being a father to my children. I can also now see that nothing has been as difficult, even though at the time I was blissfully oblivious to most of my weaknesses and shortcomings. Only as my children have become adults have many of my own failures surfaced.

What follows are five of those “blind spots” to which I was completely unaware as a young father and that have come to light only in the past few years.

1 – I did not see that loving my children is different from worshipping them

We are all in some way unconscious idolaters in our hearts. For some of us, our prevalent idol is our job, money, success, personal recognition, fame, leisure time, entertainment, sports, sex, intellectual attainment or even religious achievement or Christian ministry. These are all perfectly innocent pursuits in themselves until they come to occupy the central place in our hearts around which all else revolves – the place reserved for God alone.

I did not recognize it at the time, and I would have vehemently denied it if you had suggested it to me, but my children became my predominant idol of choice, though there were others always waiting in the wings, vying for my attention. I taught in their Christian high school and coached their basketball teams, coached all their little league teams and was always eyeball deep in all they did.

Only from the distance of more than a decade have I realized that much of the recognition, success and achievement that my involvement in their lives encouraged was for me as much as for them, because their success made me look like a successful father. “My, what well-behaved, smart, successful children Robert and Jill have. They must be wonderful parents.”



My son; my idol:

“My children became my predominant idol of choice... I taught in their Christian high school and coached their basketball teams, coached all their little league teams and was always eyeball deep in all they did.”

All of our idolatry is really in some way the exaltation of ourselves. I have discovered that my children had indeed, very subtly, become idols in my life. I was too busy congratulating myself for the wonderful parenting job I was doing for that thought ever to enter my mind!

2 – I did not know that the goal of parenting was not to be the perfect parent or even the best parent I could possibly be, but to be a parent who is a repentant sinner

I did not know that the way to a real relationship with my children was to walk in the light with them, not by living in darkness, convincing myself that while I was not the perfect parent, I was at least in the top echelon. Oh, there were occasional flashes of lightning that illuminated the fact that I was nowhere close to a perfect parent, but after a brief time of uneasiness, I was always able to return to my comfortable darkness.

1 John 1:7 encourages us to “walk in the light,” and “walk” implies a way of life. I didn’t understand that an open, daily recognition of weakness and dependency on the Lord and not my superior parenting skills was the way to true relationship with my children. 1 John 1:7 says that “fellowship (genuine relationship) one with another” is the result.

When my sons were early teenagers, both came to me on separate occasions for help in resisting the pornography that a neighbor boy had shown them. I counseled them on the dangers of pornography, how addictive it is and how destructive it can be to their future relationship with their wives. I then prayed with them that God would give them the power to resist. I was being the perfect father, standing for righteousness, but not being a transparent, repentant one. I didn’t understand that parenting by the gospel meant walking in the light with them, confessing to them my own struggles with pornography over the years, and then praying for us both that in our weakness God would be our power. I missed a golden opportunity to strengthen my relationship with my sons.

3 – I did not know that I shouldn’t compare my children with other children, either positively or negatively

In 2 Corinthians 10:12, Paul says it is foolishness to compare ourselves with others. The only standard for comparison is the law of God, whereby we are all judged as sinners, including our children.

My modus operandi was to proudly compare my children to others around me and to invariably find them far superior. As a result, I unconsciously ignored besetting sins in their lives for which they needed their father to help them face; not only the obvious sins of the flesh, but pride, self-righteousness, the fear of man, etc. However, I was unable or unwilling to see them clearly and therefore unable to help them to see themselves because of my pride in their performance compared to others.

On the other hand, some parents are dissatisfied with their children for what they see as always falling short of the

performance of other children. If we are dissatisfied with our children, be assured that it will be communicated to them, no matter how hard we try not to do so. The result will be defeat and discouragement because they will feel they can never measure up enough to please us.

Parenting by the gospel rather than the law involves an evaluation of a child’s gifts and abilities so that unrealistic expectations are not imposed upon him or her. Gospel parenting is practically applied as the parent models for his child how to handle besetting sins (laziness, making excuses, irresponsibility, taking offense, etc.) by the parent facing those sins squarely and openly in his own life and then repenting! Without this step, “What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say” will be the order of the day. All children have a powerful “hypocrite-detector” that improves exponentially in effectiveness as they grow older. Comparing our children with others is foolish because it leads to self-righteousness when children are judged as superior, or discouragement and even rebellion when parents feel their children never seem to reach their standard of achievement.

How we approach our children, by law or gospel, reflects how we see our relationship with God. Since I am most generally an “older brother” from the parable of the prodigal son, my tendency is to see myself, and therefore my children, as superior. A “younger brother” will see himself and therefore his children as failures, never quite measuring up. But we are all sinners, loved by God with a love that is not in any way affected by our sin. It is seeing God’s love for us as fathers that will allow us to love our children in the same way and free us from comparing them with others.

4 – I did not know that I was creating a default mode in the hearts of my children that would either help them to think the best of others or foster judgment and criticism

When my oldest son was in college, he was the head-resident on his floor in his dorm, charged with the very loose responsibility of keeping order on the floor. On a visit to campus, I asked him about the other boys on the floor, which included a good number of rather rowdy football players. “Oh Dad, they are just a bunch of meat-heads.” His attitude of scorn and judgment struck me like a thunderbolt and I heard the Lord say to me, “He got that critical attitude straight from you!”

I am sorry to say that much of the heritage I have left with my children that they now carry with them is judgment and criticism. I have an opinion about what everyone ought to do, even when I have no responsibility in their lives, and I do not hesitate to make that opinion known. How much better to love them with a love that covers all things and does not expose sin but believes and hopes for the best in them (1 Corinthians 13).

Too bad that is not my spontaneous reaction! My default mode is to be critical and judgmental. As they were growing up my children constantly heard me be critical of

others and the decisions they made, the life style they chose to live and the friends they kept.

It is not my job to even have an opinion about what others do if I have no God-given authority in their lives. They answer to their own master and not to me (Romans 14:4).

I was sharing my besetting sin of critically judging everyone I see with a friend. His reaction was, "Oh, we all do that." My response to him was, "So, what's your point? Do the sins of others excuse me to sin? Does 'everyone does it' give me a free pass?"

As we Andrews are recognizing this sin, acknowledging it and repenting, the Lord is graciously beginning to reset our default mode, even as adults. This is the only possible way for me to "Be holy, even as I am holy" – not by trying harder but by facing my sin, acknowledging it, repenting and trusting the Spirit within to change my critical heart. I know it will be a life-long process.

Have you ever recognized a besetting sin of yours reproduced in your children? What was it?

5 – I did not know that there are times to be a sympathetic listener and not an answer man who can "fix the problem"

James 1:19 says to be "swift to hear and slow to speak." Legions are those to whom I have done just the opposite. I have had correct biblical answers to questions they really weren't asking me, though I was convinced they should be. More often than not, they already knew the answer – they just needed me to listen, understand and then encourage them to trust the Lord for the power to do what they already knew to do. There is nothing less attractive than an answer man who is always the teacher and never the learner himself.

Just recently I fell into the trap again of giving a close friend the right answer for what he should do about a vicious personal attack by a member of his extended family, someone with whom he had grown up and who supposedly loved him. His confidence as a

man was shaken. He did not need to hear initially what he should "do," but that I loved him, as did God, Who also believed in him, was pleased with him and had him right on schedule in his spiritual growth. There would be plenty of time later to let God show him a course of action.

Interestingly enough, this family crisis is bringing my friend's immediate family together; what the enemy meant for evil, God intended for good.

This has been my pattern over the years with my wife and children as well. Their struggles have more often than not elicited an answer as to what they should do rather than addressing the insecurity that comes from wondering whether or not their problem-solving father really cares about them as people. As the one who represents God in my family, my attitude is to be a reflection of His, and His primary concern is His relationship with me, not what I do, what I say or the theology I believe. If I understand His great love for me in spite of what I do, what I do will naturally and unconsciously change.

Conclusion

Seeing these five failures in my parenting that we have discussed over the past few weeks has surprisingly been a source of encouragement to me and a means of strengthening the relationship between my wife and me and our grown children. Grandfathers and grandmothers are still little children in God's classroom of learning to face their sin, repent and walk by faith!

Does it make sense to you that openly facing failure as a parent can strengthen family relationships and be a source of genuine encouragement to all family members?

Robert Andrews has been a college campus evangelist, high school chemistry teacher and basketball coach, church teaching elder, church planter, national conference speaker and certified business coach and is a husband to one, a father to three and a grandfather to ten. His website, where this article was first published, is www.gospelparenting.com.

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Sunday: A MEDICAL POINT OF VIEW

by Verna Wright

“Hurry, Worry, Bury” is the epitaph for many people in this century. The increasing number of patients taking tranquilizers; the rising incidents of stress diseases; the frequency of attempted suicide, which has reached epidemic proportions; all these reflect sadly on our modern society and demand an answer.

I have no doubt that a proper regard for the Lord’s Day would help to ameliorate these problems. Speaking as a physician, there are good reasons physically, mentally and spiritually why we should set aside the first day of the week as a special day unto the Lord.

Physically

There are natural, in-built laws which govern human behavior. An obvious example is that you cannot continue to work without sleep indefinitely. After a certain number of hours, you fall asleep, whatever you are doing. In a torture situation where people are forcibly kept awake, there comes a break point when they crack up catastrophically.

There are many examples of 24-hour cycles in the body (called circadian rhythms), showing the natural functioning of the body on a daily basis. Your temperature varies by two degrees; many chemicals in the blood stream alter in their concentration; and your ability to concentrate fluctuates in a cyclical manner. You can test the last by keeping awake all night – at around 6 a.m. you begin to “wake up,” even though you have not been asleep!

Similarly, there are weekly cycles. It is significant that the natural split of the year is in lunar months (4 x 7 days) rather than calendar months. From time to time, societies have tried to extend the working week to eight days or ten days. Each attempt has failed. The natural variation is six days of work, one day of rest. The body cries out physically one day in seven for rest and change.

At the University of Leeds, we have measured for several months in a working man the 17-oxogenic steroids in his urine. These chemicals are breakdown products of the hormones from the adrenal gland. High volumes occur with stress and activity. There was a weekly rhythm of these chemicals in the urine. The lowest levels were on a Sunday. It is not clear whether this was an inherent rhythm, or whether it was a reflection of decreased stress and activity.

Whichever it was, it demonstrates the beneficial effect of a weekly day of rest.

This is one reason why responsible union leaders are opposed to Sunday trading and shopping. They recognize that their members need a day of rest. Once legislation permits the opening of shops on a Sunday as a general principle, storekeepers who do not wish to open seven days a week will be forced to do so if they wish to remain competitive. The burden of extra work will fall on the employees – and not only must this mean higher prices, but shop workers will be subjected to even more unsocial hours and physical pressure.

Mentally

The poet once wrote:

*What is this life if full of care
We have no time to stand and stare?*

He appreciated that to get the best out of life, we needed time to relax mentally.

We need time to unwind from the tensions of the week, whether these are produced by the frustrations of a repetitious job, or by the demands of an administrative position. Doctors have to treat many illnesses which are categorized as “stress diseases.” These include peptic ulcer, muscular rheumatism, migraine, hypertension (raised blood pressure), and coronary heart disease. Stress is not the only factor. Very often there is a constitutional predisposition, shown by a family history of the same condition. Nevertheless, as the sufferers are only too well aware, stress plays an important part in precipitating attacks. Animal experiments by Professor Hans Selye, a pathologist of Montreal, have provided confirmatory evidence, suggesting that these stresses affecting the mind produce many hormones from the adrenal glands, and these, in turn, harm the body. God’s provision of a day of rest helps to combat the harmful effects of a week of stress. The verse of Sir Matthew Hale, a former Lord Chief Justice, remains even more true today than when first written:

*A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content
And health for the toils of tomorrow;
But a Sabbath profaned, whate’er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.*

As a university teacher, I warn my students against over-studying before exams and in particular advise them not to revise on Sundays. The most striking and sad case we had was a student who worked throughout Sunday, and took amphetamines to keep himself awake as he remorselessly revised through the night. He sat down to the exam on Monday and spent three hours covering sheet after sheet of paper with nothing but his name.

The brain is an amazing computer which God has programmed to need one day's rest in seven. That is not a rash analogy. There is suggestive evidence that most dreams are the computer ditching rubbish. Your own experience will tell you that often the solution to a problem comes when you have laid it on one side and you are relaxing – then out of the blue the answer comes to your consciousness. The computer has been working, uncluttered by the additional data and signals you are trying to feed it. That is why Archimedes leapt out of his bath shouting 'Eureka!' It was while he was relaxing in the warmth of the water that his great principle came. Intense, single-minded, unremitting concentration is not the best stimulus for creative thinking. We need that one-in-seven time to set our mind on other things.

George Nachman printed a delightful piece in the *Chicago Tribune*. He wrote, not as a Christian, but as a shrewd observer.

"One weekend, recently, I looked out the window and discovered that Sunday had disappeared. Nobody had swiped it exactly, but something had gone out of the noble day. Suddenly, I realized what it was: Sunday had turned into Tuesday. Out on the street, people no longer were strolling about. They had direction, a midweek glint in their eyes that meant business. They were walking briskly in and out of stores instead of browsing quietly past the windows. The scene was as busy as your average workaday Tuesday, throwing the whole week out of whack.

"Now Sunday is just another day, and it appears to have lost its real purpose. Back in the old days, Sunday had character. It was prim, but underneath it had a certain toughness, some confidence and a sense of security. It was the most sturdy and unflappable of days, one people could count on. You did not market; you did not go to the office for a few hours; you didn't even hunt for antiques. One of the things you definitely did not do was go downtown and buy sheets in a sale.

"Sunday was the only day you could be legitimately lazy, since nobody else was getting a whole lot accomplished either. But just try lying around the house on Sunday now – knowing that half the world is out there doing things. Even people who claim to be relaxing are jogging and exercising like mad. So you see, we truly do need Sunday back the way it was, as a weekend cushion – unless Sunday has simply outlived its usefulness and people just plan to proceed from Saturday into Monday without that placid old day-long hammock in between."

He sat down to the exam on Monday and spent three hours covering sheet after sheet of paper with nothing but his name.



Spiritually

To live as if man is just a body and a mind is to be guilty of unutterable folly. It leads to futility and frustration. It has driven many of the most "successful" to suicide. It flies in the face of overwhelming evidence that Man has a spiritual dimension to his nature.

Indeed he is distinct from the animal creation in being made in the image of God. For his spiritual wellbeing, he needs one day in seven to concentrate on this vital aspect of his character. We can too easily forget that "healing" and "holy" come from the same root. Since God made us *in toto*, He certainly knows what is best for us as individuals and as a society. No one quibbles with the prohibition on stealing, lying, coveting, murder – nor even in their honest moments with the command "You are not to commit adultery," despite our permissive age with its epidemic of venereal disease and broken homes. Why should we argue with the command that we are to keep holy the Sabbath day?

A man told me it was needlessly restrictive. Yet it is no more needless than the law which forbids you to drive on the left side of road, or to mainline with heroin for pleasurable purposes. Restrictions are necessary for our welfare and the benefit of others. True freedom is not the liberty to do what you like, but the ability to be what you were meant to be and the power to do what you ought. Physically, mentally and spiritually there are bounds within which we must live if we are to fulfill our destiny. Within that fence, we have an almost endless variety of possibilities for freedom. That is why it says of the Lord Jesus Christ, "His service is perfect freedom."

A man said to me recently, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Surely that means man can do what he likes on a Sunday.

Perhaps I may illustrate the problem and solution in this way. I am driving along a clear road early one morning. As I approach a large "Keep Right" sign, a child darts out from the pavement. The only way I can avoid the child is to drive to the left of the sign. I do so unhesitatingly because the sign was made for man, not man for the sign. Yet as a general rule I still keep to the right of such signs.

Jesus himself delineated the two clear areas of exception, works of necessity and works of mercy. I will go into hospital to see a patient of mine who has developed a medical problem on Sunday, but I will not accept invitations to teach general practitioners taking postgraduate courses on the Lord's Day.

"But I thought we lived under grace, not under law," another man said to me.

It is true that our salvation is entirely of grace. I may keep the Sabbath meticulously, but it will not save me. I trust entirely in the redeeming work of Christ upon the cross for my

salvation, not pleading a single good deed to merit favor with God. Justification is by faith alone. But that does not mean I ignore the law. Apart from being my schoolmaster to lead me to Christ, it provides the guiderails for my Christian living. Indeed the teaching of Jesus sharpens the law; it doesn't dispense with it. Adultery is now in a look, not just an act. Murder comes down to the harboring of hatred in the heart. Nevertheless, the motive for keeping the law is different.

.....
***Your own experience will tell you
that often the solution
to a problem comes when you
have laid it on one side and
you are relaxing***
.....

Let me illustrate the point again: I drove to a friend in Norfolk who lived in a stately home. In the built-up areas, I restricted my speed to 30 miles per hour (especially when I saw a police car in my rear view mirror!). As I turned into the drive leading up to the hall, no speed limit applied, since I was off the main road. Nevertheless I kept well below 30 miles per hour, because I knew my friend appreciated those who drove slowly through the grounds. Love was an even more powerful influence in keeping me below the limit than the law. In other words, love fills the loopholes of the law as Romans 13:10 advocates. God has made it perfectly clear what he desires as far as the Sabbath day is concerned. Out of love for Him I wish to obey.

Conclusion

From a medical point of view, one day set apart for rest and worship is best for man physically, mentally and spiritually. The Creator God who made man in his own image certainly had man's welfare at heart when, from the beginning of creation, He instituted the weekly Sabbath. The fourth commandment underlined its importance. We ignore the Sabbath at our peril. We keep it to our inestimable benefit.

The late Verna Wright (1928-1998) MD, FRCP, was a Professor of Rheumatology at Leeds University. He was also Co-Director of the Bioengineering Group for the study of human joints and a Consultant Adviser to Sir Henry Yellowlees, who was the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health and Social Security. This article is edited from the booklet The Lord's Day, a Medical Point of View, published by Day One (www.dayonebookstore.com) and is used with permission.



Is it Science vs. Faith? Or Faith vs. Faith?

by Miep von-Lindheim Westerink

Mainstream science tells us that the Earth is a few billion years old, and that it was during these eons of time that all life forms slowly evolved, and the rock strata, with their many fossils, were laid down. This is widely proclaimed as an irrefutable, proven fact and anyone who does not believe must be, at the very least, old-fashioned.

But how strong is this claim, really? How solid is the evidence?

MILLIONS OF YEARS?

In two previous articles (in the May and April issues)¹ we examined whether the Creation week could be understood as having taken billions of years. Were the fossil-bearing strata laid down in six “days” that spanned eons? We concluded that, on biblical grounds, we had to reject this position. These strata, we realized, must have been formed *after* the Fall into Sin, because in them we see evidence of evils such as earthquakes, extinctions, suffering and death. The Bible also doesn’t leave room for millions of years to have occurred since the Fall.

So where does that leave us? Well, when we, on the basis of biblical arguments, reject the idea of a Creation lasting millions of years, this will have two major consequences for our attitude towards Science.

1. We’re saying “Science” got it wrong

First, when we reject millions of years, we are also rejecting mainstream science’s evolutionary explanation of how life began.

Now it seems rather bold to reject the findings of science – after all science has proven itself time and again, and given us amazing innovations. Consider the complexity of computers, or of space probes that with great precision are aimed at destinations on the other side of the Solar System. No one places question marks behind this sort of science.

So why would we question what science has to say about how the universe and life began? Why would we question “origins science”? Don’t such questions fly in the face of the clear and impressive results we’ve seen from science? If we go down this route, aren’t we committing the same error the church made in the days of Galileo? Do we want to be like the Church of that time, that held on to the idea that the Sun revolved around earth (Joshua 10:12), even though “science” had proven it was the other way around?

Yet, the clear biblical and theological objections to long Creation “days” force me to ask this crucial question: exactly

how strong *is* mainstream science’s claim that the world we see today took millions of years to form?

In this article, I want to give an answer to that question.

2. We should offer an alternative

In the second place, rejecting millions of years places before us a big challenge, namely to come up with an alternate explanation of the origin of the strata and fossils.

This is something I will briefly touch on in the conclusion of this article, and more completely in a fourth and final article in this series; there we will present a biblically faithful alternative to the current model proposed by mainstream science.

HOW STRONG IS THE EVIDENCE?

So in the first place, let’s begin by remembering we should always assess science knowledge critically, because science is still fallible work done by fallible people. Theories or models are compiled and updated and also frequently rejected. Even the greater concepts, the very paradigms, can change.

There is nothing wrong with that. On the contrary, that is how science works. One example is the theory of the dispersal of the continents – this theory was first proposed in 1915 and until about 1960 the followers of this theory were still ridiculed and reviled. Today, however, it is part of the general knowledge of even primary school pupils.

Origin sciences

We should also note there is a considerable difference between the operational sciences and origins science.

Operational science (or experimental science) examines how the laws of nature work in the here and now. Think of chemistry, physics and engineering. Here we can test hypotheses’ and theories’ accuracy by direct observations and experiments.

In *origins science* (or historical science) that is different. In this field researchers investigate how life was at the beginning using fragmentary remains from the distant past: strata, fossils and archaeological objects. The researcher attempts to reconstruct how these “facts,” – these traces of former events – came to be. He tries to extrapolate from them which processes were at work, and what events played out in times long past. So the notable difference here is that the researcher is not a direct observer of what he is investigating, and the events he is investigating cannot be duplicated by experiment for testing. However reasonable or credible his theories are, he can never be sure whether his interpretations or reconstructions are truly correct.

Margins of uncertainty

This means that the development of theories in origin science is by definition speculative, and this leaves lots of room for multiple interpretations using the same “facts” – the same fragmentary remains from prehistoric time. Therefore personal biases and prejudices will have an impact in the formation of any theories.

Take, as an example, the discovery of fossilized remains of a dinosaur. From the bones it is possible to properly reconstruct the form of an animal. But for the rest, our thinking about these animals is rather speculative. Were they warm-blooded or cold-blooded? Did the animal live where it was found, or could it have been washed there by a flood? Was such a flood a disaster of the same magnitude as the flooding we see today? Might there have been other, presently unknown, factors involved in where it was found? How can we research that? And how much time was needed to form the strata in which the animal was found? A few hours? A millennium?²

In short, with origins sciences we have to allow for large margins of uncertainty. This also means that providing “proof” against or for a particular theory is more difficult here than in the operational sciences, if not impossible. For example, when it comes to the extinction of the dinosaurs there are, in mainstream origins science, no less than one hundred (!) theories circulating, without anyone really knowing what the most likely cause might be.

At best one can say that the theory that explains the most facts in an acceptable way, is the best; it’s the most likely. But we must still acknowledge that subjective judgments and personal biases play an important role.

The pillars of evolutionary theory are tottering

This is why many Christian scientists have declared that mainstream science’s evolutionary explanations of our origin are, in fact, unproven.

It also seems that in the last few decades, secular scientists have started noticing this lack of evidence. During this time we have seen new insights occur in the fields of biology and geology, and a number of common theories have since been revised or been given auxiliary hypotheses that are supposed to explain this lack of evidence. This shows how weak the evidence for the evolutionary theory is: major pillars of the theory have started to totter and shake.

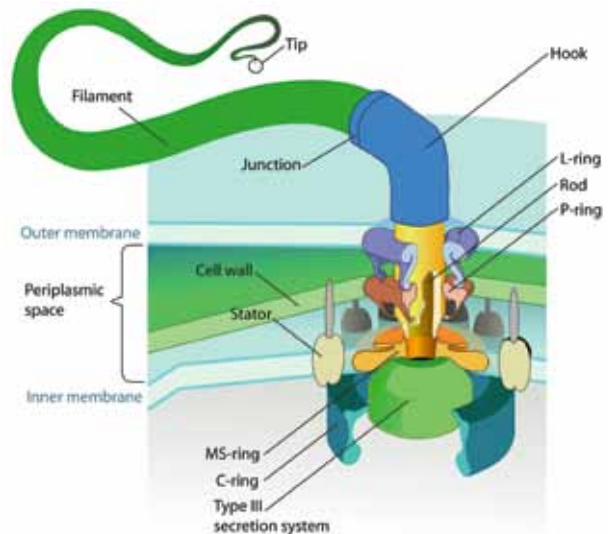
We will examine some of the pillars, starting first with a discussion of the two major arguments for the very old age of the earth and we will then follow that by evaluating three crucial aspects of evolutionary theory.

1. The thickness of the strata doesn’t say the Earth is old

The first argument for a very old dating of the strata, is the thickness of it.

For this thick layer to come into being an extraordinarily long time must have been needed, or so is the claim. These layers could only have been formed by slow and gradual geological processes, in much the same way that we see new layers form today.

This is the theory of “gradualism” and for almost two centuries it was the unquestioned consensus.



The incredible complexity of even the simplest life forms baffles evolutionists’ attempts to explain life’s origin. Here we see the intricate inner workings of a Bacteria’s flagellum – its outboard motor.

Today, however, this claim is considered obsolete. In the 1980s large impact craters of celestial bodies were discovered on Earth and it was easy to picture the possible catastrophic effects of such impacts: large-scale volcanic activity, drastic climate change, rapid mountain formation, great floods, mass extinctions and the accelerated shift of the tectonic plates. Problems with the gradualist assumption were also highlighted after the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980, which had unexpectedly large effects. In just a very short period of time thick strata were formed and deep canyons were carved through the many layers. Except for the smaller scale, these formations – created almost overnight – looked much like the Grand Canyon, which is said to have taken eons to form. So, while it was thought until recently that the many layers of strata could only be had through processes that would take millions of years, it is now generally acknowledged that practically all strata could have formed in very short periods of time, as the result of catastrophes.

Still. . . we continue to hear that the strata we see is a record of millions of years. It is now assumed that between episodes of rapid layer formation, there were long periods without any significant geological activity.³ How long did these inactive periods last? Did they really occur? There is little evidence. Between the individual layers there is often no detectable sign of soil formation and erosion so there is, therefore, good reason to defend the theory that the different layers were deposited in quick succession, without long periods in between.

The thickness of the strata is no reason to believe it took millions of years to form. This is a pillar that offers no real support for the old Earth position.

2. Radiometric dating isn’t a reliable proof of the Earth’s age

The second “proof” that is usually brought up to support a great age for the Earth is that its age can be measured using radiometric dating.

However, there are quite a number of objections that can be raised about this manner of dating since the measurements

are based on a large number of assumptions that are impossible to prove experimentally. The (non creationist) scientist A.D. Miall, citing Joseph Barrell, notes:

“The exact formulas of a mathematical science often conceal the uncertain foundation of assumptions on which the reasoning rests and may give a false appearance of precise demonstration to highly erroneous results.”

We also know that the various radiometric dating techniques can yield results that are drastically different from one another. That’s why at least 70 per cent of the results given by these techniques are set aside, because they are obviously incorrect. Dating of recently formed lava has produced some of these obviously erroneous results. When volcanic deposits from the 1980 Mount St. Helens’ eruption were tested, they were dated as being millions of years old. And lava samples from Hawaii, from an event that occurred in the year 1800, have been dated at 140 million to 3 billion years, depending on what dating technique is used.

Geologists do offer some theories or possible explanations for these patently false results. These lava samples, they say, much have been contaminated with much older material from the surrounding area.

But then this raises another question: if the dating of the recent lava samples is invalid, how do we know that the dating of other, older rocks isn’t equally invalid? We know Mount St. Helens samples are not millions of years old – of that we can be certain. But how can we know that other rocks, dated to millions of years, really are that old? It is only assumed these are accurate measurements – it hasn’t been proven that they are. And, indeed, it *can’t* be proven.

There is even very good reason to question these dates, as traces of DNA have been found in strata that are supposed to be hundreds of thousands, and millions of years old. For example, under the Greenland ice all kinds of intact DNA has been found in strata that are supposed to be 500,000 to 800,000 years old. We’ve also found bone tissue from dinosaurs (not fossil remains, but actual bone tissue!) that is purported to be no less than 65 million years old. And in Permian rock salt, dated at 250 million years, living bacteria appear.

Radiometric dating is, therefore, far from conclusive.

Problems with evolution theory

As should be clear, if the Earth is not millions of years old, then an evolutionary origin for plant and animal species is impossible. Evolution necessarily requires vast periods of time.

But time isn’t all that Evolution requires – it needs an explanation for how life began in the first place, it needs to show a record of intermediate or transitional forms as animals evolved from one species to another, and it needs a mechanism by which animals can increase in complexity. That’s what it needs, but this is where three problems in the theory occur.

3. *The origin of life is a mystery to evolutionists*

The origin of the first life is still a great mystery to evolutionists. The problem they face is the incredibly complexity of even the simplest life, like bacteria. Though origin-of-life have been at it for more than fifty years, the best their experiment have produced is a few amino acids.⁴

Evolutionists are so mystified some have turned their focus to other planets. Since there is no credible explanation, or any evidence, for how life could have originated on Earth, the question is now being asked, could the very first simple cells have originated “out there” and then have been brought to Earth by comets or even aliens?

No one knows how life could have originated “out there” either and the possibility is only raised out of sheer desperation, because there is not a trace of evidence for the spontaneous origin of life on Earth.

4. *Intermediate forms of the fossils*

With a gradual evolution of plant and animal species, numerous transitional forms between major groups should have been found. While Darwin already saw the lack of intermediate and transitional fossil forms as “perhaps. . . the most obvious and serious objection to my theory;” now, after about 150 years of intensive search, they have still not been found. A non-creationist fossil expert has said that “The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology.”

To explain this lack of evidence a new twist to the Theory of Evolution has been proposed, called Punctuated Equilibrium.⁵ This new hypothesis assumes that for long periods of time species remain stable, but these long periods are interspersed by short periods where, in some removed, remote locations, new species develop rapidly. So it’s because these periods were so short that we can’t find the transitional forms.

So what’s the evidence for this new hypothesis? That we can’t find transitional forms. In fact this theory recognizes that the fossil record provide no evidence for Evolution: the intermediate forms can not be found.

5. *An evolutionary mechanism has yet to be discovered which increases complexity*

An important question is how, according to the Theory of Evolution, did plants and animals continually develop into more complex species? That there is variation and selection, such as Darwin discovered, is a fact that creationists don’t dispute.

But Evolution claims that complex organisms such as Man evolved from much simpler, single-celled organisms. So Evolution needs to have a mechanism by which species can gain in complexity.

For a long time it was believed that this increased complexity might come about through mutation. Mutations are random changes that occur in an organism’s genetic coding. While mutations do occur, decades of research have shown that mutations are most often harmful, and only in the rarest of circumstances beneficial.⁶

At the present time another direction of research is being pursued: it examines how species can be impacted by drastic changes in the environment. It has been observed that large changes in temperature, air pressure or the chemical make-up of an animal’s surroundings can spur great variations in a specie’s body shape, as well as its food preferences. Even new defense and attack mechanisms may appear. The interesting thing here is that genetic material itself does not change. It is apparent that, found within many animals’ DNA is the

built-in option for dramatic changes to cope with whatever new environmental conditions may come to light.⁷

But since the DNA is not changed, this is not an example of true Evolution. There is no increase in complexity. These new insights into the genetics do not constitute support for evolutionary theory. On the contrary, they fit extremely well with a biblical doctrine of creation, and its acknowledgement of a wondrous Designer.

Conclusion: no evidence

The conclusion is clear: the Theory of Evolution and the assumed age of the Earth rest on five very shaky pillars:

1. The Earth's thick strata did not need millions of years to form.
2. Radiometric dating is based on a large number of unproven assumptions.
3. All available data suggests that the spontaneous emergence of life is impossible but evolutionists still assume that at some point a living cell spontaneously originated from lifeless chemicals.
4. Transitional forms, between species and families of organisms, appear not to exist. Yet these transitions are presumed to have occurred, and occurred very rapidly
5. Beneficial mutations in which an organism grows in complexity and gains new abilities, have never been observed, but are presumed to have occurred.

The lack of clear evidence is a growing embarrassment for the Theory of Evolution and it only gets worse when the "fixes" that are proposed to account for this missing evidence are scrutinized. What evidence is there for Punctuated Equilibrium, or for Panspermia, the theory that the first life on Earth came from outer space? None. Both are based on a *lack* of evidence: first, the *lack* of transitional forms, second, the *lack* of any explanation for how life could have originated on Earth.

These proposed solutions defy direct observation. And as theoretical science these views are extremely weak: the reliability of these theories can not be measured (to prove or falsify). So in fact they are simply dogmas.

TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE

The ingrained atheistic bias

Now you might at this point ask yourself: Could modern science ever come around and recognize that the Theory of Evolution isn't well-established? Could they ever admit there has been no evolution?

It seems unlikely. It's more likely they will continue to label divergent data as tentative, or "as of yet unexplained," or they will continue to explain the lack of evidence with even more alternative hypotheses. This is how they will attempt to hold on to the whole paradigm of an autonomous, evolutionary origin to the world and all that is in it.

Here is where we see their biases playing an important role. Many scientists are well aware that the Theory of Evolution is far from proven but it is inconceivable to them that it might not be true, because they refuse to consider the only alternative. They don't believe science should even be open to the possibility of a Creator-God – as geneticist Richard Lewontin put it, "We cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door."

This here is the heart of the matter – the ultimate "prejudice" of mainstream science is that God and the Bible may not play any role in our explanation of the world and the origin of it. The worldview of the Theory of Evolution is entirely horizontal: naturalistic and materialistic.⁸ However this is not a scientific conclusion; no, this is in fact a faith-based conclusion. They take it as a matter of faith that Nature operates autonomously, and without supernatural interference.

Our Christian "bias"

Christians have a different basis for our faith: God's revelation gives us trustworthy knowledge. God himself has given us His eyewitness account and told us how this world began.

Therefore the conflict between a Christian and a non-Christian who are debating out origins is, at its core, not a debate between religion and science, but between faith and faith.

Now that we recognize what is at the heart of this debate, Christian geologists and paleontologists have before them a challenge they must take on – presenting a biblically faithful alternative to mainstream science's account. That will be the topic of our fourth and final article.

ENDNOTES

¹ "Were there fossils in Paradise?" April 2011, and "And behold, it was very good" May 2011

² While it was believed until recently that millions of years were needed for the formation of granite, in a recent article in *Nature*, it was stated that a few months to at the most centuries are needed. N. Petford, Others, *Nature* 408, 2000, p. 669-673.

³ See works by the (non-creationist) D. Ager, *The New Catastrophism*, Cambridge UP, 1993; V. Clube and B. Napier, S.J. Gould.

⁴ The production of amino acids is an incredibly small step in an extremely complex series of steps required to form a living cell. See R. Junker, and S. Scherer, *Evolution, A Critical Textbook*, (German language) Weyel Lehrmittelverlag, Giessen, 2006. Or see K. Ham (ed.) *The New Answers Book 2: "Chapter 6: Can Natural Processes Explain the Origin of Life?"* Master Books, 2010 (Answersingenesis.org/articles/nab2/natural-processes-origin-of-life).

⁵ For more on "Punctuated Equilibrium" see the work of S.J. Gould and N. Eldredge.

⁶ In very rare cases, a mutation has a beneficial side effect, for example, that a bacterium becomes immune to an antibiotic.

⁷ This phenomenon is called differentiated gene expression. See also my second article. M.w. Kirschner and J.C Gerhart, *The Plausibility of Life: Resolving Darwin's Dilemma* 2005. P. Borger, *Back to the origin, or How the new biology ended the era of the Darwin*, De Oude Wereld, Urk, 2009.

⁸ It may be useful here to make mention of two types of naturalism, that most often go hand in hand. The first is methodical naturalism, which means that people (particularly in the experimental sciences) want to explain everything using natural laws. The second is philosophical naturalism, that sees all intervention from God as impossible.

The late Dr. Miep von Lindheim-Westerink was a biologist in the Netherlands. This article was first published in the November 2010 issue of Nader Bekeken (Vol 17, Issue 11) and is reprinted here with their permission, and the permission of her husband. It has been translated from the original Dutch by Joanne Berends.





Soup & Buns

There's nothing to worry about

by Sharon L. Bratcher

*Cheer up, ye saints of God, there's nothing to worry about!
Nothing to make you feel afraid, nothing to make you doubt.
Remember Jesus never fails, so why not trust Him and shout –
You'll be sorry you worried at all tomorrow morning.*

I have often sung this little chorus to remind myself not to worry. It seems hard not to worry about ourselves and our loved ones. Ill health, accidents, fear of suffering pain, fear of loss! Career problems, loss of revenue, fear of poverty, of suffering!

Dr. Richard Gaffin preached a very good sermon on the topic of worry. He began with the very familiar Matthew 6:25-34, which says, in part:

“. . .do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? . . . For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

Why do we worry? Is it *normal*? Is it a solution, a part of life, a coping mechanism?

Three that lead to worry

Let's think about these three words: forgetfulness, pride, and ingratitude.

We worry because we *forget* who our God is. He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is our Father.

“He loves me so much that I do not doubt He will provide whatever I need for body and soul. He desires to do so because He is my loving Father; He is able to do so because He is Almighty God” (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 9).

But *why* do we forget? We forget because our pride gets in the way. Pride is at the root of all of our selfishness. We look at life as a circle where we are the center. We ask ourselves: what are *my* needs, and *my* desires? We develop a level of expectation as to what *we* want to have. This pride sets us on a spiral of desire that leads to frustration and anger when we do not get what we want, and worry is one of the results.

What do we worry about? All worrying is about suffering and loss. We do not want anything to happen that we consider “negative.” In every instance it comes down to being concerned that our desires will not be satisfied.

That's a pretty harsh way to look at a devastating loss, though, isn't it? But when we pray “Thy kingdom come, thy

will be done,” we acknowledge that our place is as the clay in the Potter's hands. We forget that He loves us, and instead fear that He might not give us what *we* want. We fear He will decide differently and we will not like it.

The way to be free from worry is to humble ourselves before God. This is, as Dr. Gaffin preached, a “distinctly Christian contrast to the unrealistic outcome of pride.” When we are humble, we see ourselves exactly as we should be, as we are. A humble Christian sees that the God with the mighty arm *will* work things out. We can be free of worry, and stop acting like the unbelievers.

We forget because we do not spend much time in prayer. Our pride shuts us up inside of ourselves, making our prayer superficial. But prayer is where God reminds us where our hope and faith are. It is a means of grace that He has provided. It is the opportunity to cast ourselves on our God and to be taken lovingly in His arms. He allows us to leave the matter with Him.

We forget and become ungrateful. We are no better than the Israelites, as we often forget all that God has done for us. We as God's people have the deepest source of genuine thankfulness, and no good reason to worry. Unbelievers, on the other hand, have every reason to worry, because they “bear the wrath of God.” Those who fear death end up fearing life also. They cannot teach us how to live.

Conclusion

Now, there is also a difference between genuine constructive concern and counterproductive worrying. We must pray earnestly, with thanksgiving, and ask our Lord to help us to discern that difference. A pain in the chest should cause concern and provoke a visit to the doctor if not an emergency call. And it is our normal human response to feel afraid or sad or grief-stricken at given times. But the definition of worry is: “to torment oneself with or suffer from disturbing thoughts; fret.” We must leave the “what ifs. . .” with the Lord.

It is the humble, prayerful, thankful Christian who can be free from worry.

45 of Sharon's articles are in Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God's Word for Your Daily Struggles. \$10 (US)/book plus shipping.

Contact sharoncopy@gmail.com.



ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

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NEW PUZZLES

Riddle for Punsters #178 – “Dog-tired”

Why did the dog-catcher look so tired by quitting time?
He had a really __ f f day.

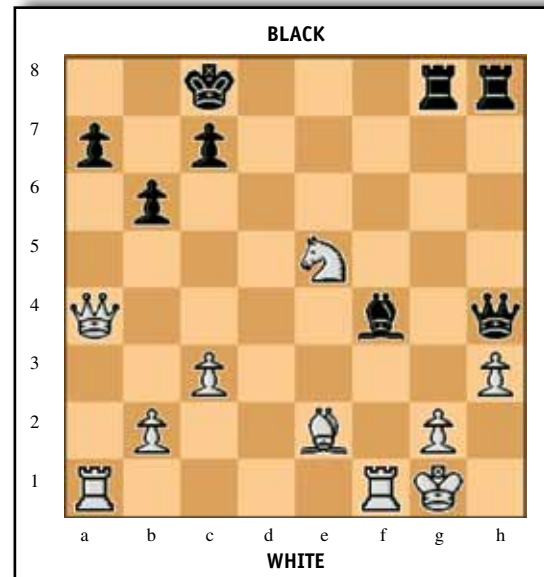
Problem to Ponder #178 – “April showers bring May flowers. . . and dandelions!”

Joe likes to have his lawn looking good. However, his next-door neighbour’s lawn looks like a dandelion garden! Monday morning Joe noticed 20 dandelions in his lawn. He pulled them out in the afternoon. The next day there were 44, which he pulled out. Each day there were 24 more dandelions than the previous day and each plant had an average mass of 50 grams. What total mass of dandelions (in kilograms) would Joe collect by Saturday evening?

If the neighbour’s lawn measures 9 m by 25 m and the density of dandelions on that lawn is 225 plants per square metre and each of those plants has an average mass of 125 grams, what mass of dandelions (in kg) is on that lawn?



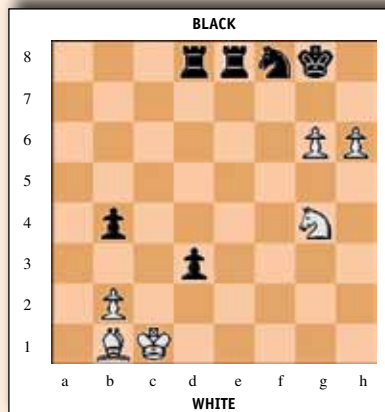
Chess Puzzle # 178



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

SOLUTIONS TO THE (MAY) PUZZLE PAGE

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 177



WHITE to Mate in 2

Descriptive Notation

1. N-B6 ch K-R1
2. P-N7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Ng4-f6 + Kg8-h8
2. g6-g7 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. _____ P-Q7 ch
2. K-Q1 R-K8 ch
3. K-B2 P-Q8=Q mate

BLACK wins sooner if

1. _____ P-Q7 ch
2. K-B2 P-Q8=Q mate

Algebraic Notation

1. _____ d3-d2 +
2. Kc1-d1 Re8-e1 +
3. Kd1-c2 d2-d1=Q ++

BLACK wins sooner if

1. _____ d3-d2 +
2. Kc1-c2 d2-d1=Q ++

Answers to Riddles for Punsters #177 – “Learning Difficulties”

What did the flight school student say to his classmate?
I did not have time to study for this test so I will just have to w i n g it.

A medical student was constantly being annoyed by a classmate so his friend said to him, “That pest is just trying to n e e d l e you.”

Answers to Problem to Ponder #177 – “eXcellent words”

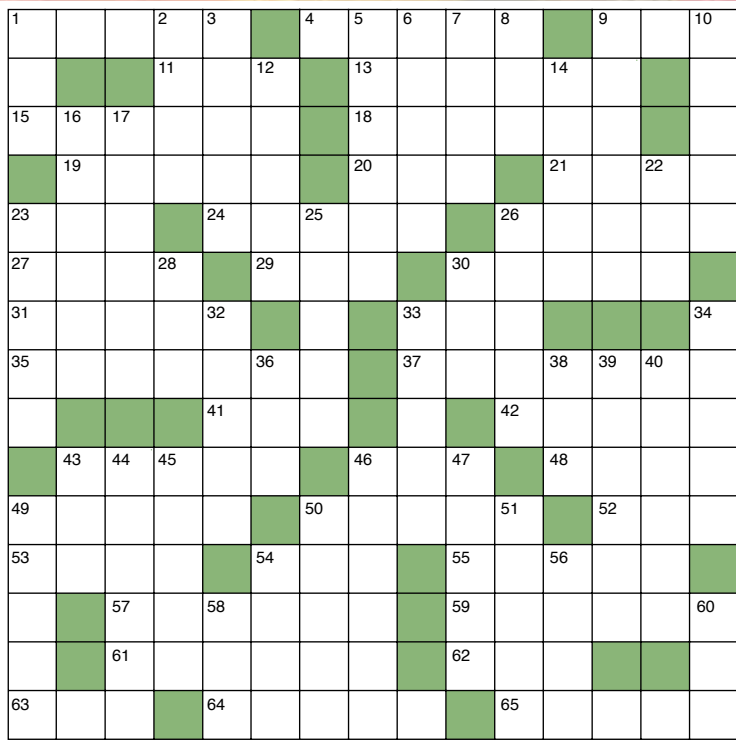
Determine which word (of the English language) containing the letter “x” is being defined or described.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| _____ exit _____ | leave a place |
| _____ Texas _____ | American state |
| _____ xylophone _____ | musical instrument |
| _____ Mexican _____ | a language of North America |
| _____ ambidextrous _____ | both left and right handed |
| _____ text _____ | a book used by students |
| _____ vex _____ | to wear down one’s patience |
| _____ dextrose _____ | a type of sugar |
| _____ exclaim _____ | voice loudly; cry out |
| _____ lexicon _____ | a dictionary |
| _____ extremity _____ | a limit; a boundary |
| _____ explain _____ | give details; clarify. |

Crossword Puzzle

Series 18 No 5

Last Month's solution
Series 18 No 4



ACROSS:

1. Sat for a portrait
4. Second ruler of Ottoman dynasty
9. Drink accessory
11. A beverage
13. Stands used in painting
15. Holy
18. Vehicle user
19. French beer
20. King of Judah
21. Flower holder
23. Ancient Hebrew unit of capacity
24. Particular period of time
26. Sneaks a look
27. AKA Oder, Czech river
29. To work at tatting
30. Not late
31. Certain playing card
33. Society of Exploration Geophysicists
35. Basic and real nature of a thing
37. Happy about something
41. Very small amount

42. Bigger/older children, perhaps
43. Choice food delicacies, of old
46. Mineral
48. Industrial engineer
49. One who stockpiles his money
50. Warning
52. Pharmacological term for salt
53. Alternative sandwich covering
54. Round (abbr.)
55. Spirit of the air in Shakespeare's Tempest
57. Prolonged outburst
59. Figure of speech comparing words
61. Proverbs
62. Famous poet's initials
63. Rocky pinnacle
64. Insects that annoy
65. Famous princess

DOWN:

1. Not, in Paris
2. To be in Paris
3. Famous tractor name
5. Revise or edit
6. Not tactful
7. Continent
8. Nevada abbr.
9. Middle Eastern country
10. Makes more comfortable
12. Very skilled
14. Machine part
16. Homes
17. Kind of cloud
22. Atmosphere, blue at times
23. Secret scripts
25. Rowed
26. Pioneer of modern pathology, disease named after him
28. Expert
30. Kind of fish
32. Come in
33. Church part
34. 1956 car
36. Children's Aid Society
38. ktema es ____ = a possession for ever
39. Karate teacher
40. Ultimate purpose
43. Automobile
44. Graphical representation of a person
45. Lukewarm
46. The person farthest along in years
47. Delete
49. One of the 5 tastes
50. Mountain range
51. Group of three
54. Terrible anger
56. A regiment of Zulu warriors
58. Sharp knock
60. Historical time period

Joyce