

REFORMED

Perspective

A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

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March 2011

“Honey. . .

I blew
the budget”



Facing our reflection

The R.C. Sproul, Jr. Principle of Hermeneutics

Guest Editorial

R.C. Sproul, Jr.

So what is the R.C. Sproul Jr. Principle of Hermeneutics?

I'm so glad you asked. Hermeneutics, of course, is the science of interpretation, typically Bible interpretation. There are any number of basic, fundamental principles we all ought to be aware of.

Two basics from a good book

One principle argues that we interpret less clear passages in light of more clear passages. Anyone who builds a theology on that text that mentions "baptism for the dead" is likely all wet.

A second principle reminds us to interpret the historical sections of the Bible in light of the didactic (instructive/teaching) sections, not the other way around. So this means we learn our understanding of Christian marriage from Jesus' reminding the Pharisees that from the beginning it has been one man and one woman. And we don't develop our understanding of marriage by looking at Solomon's family portrait. The Bible, in its historical books, tells us all sorts of things people did wrong. When it is teaching, rather than giving us true history, it tells us what we need to know.

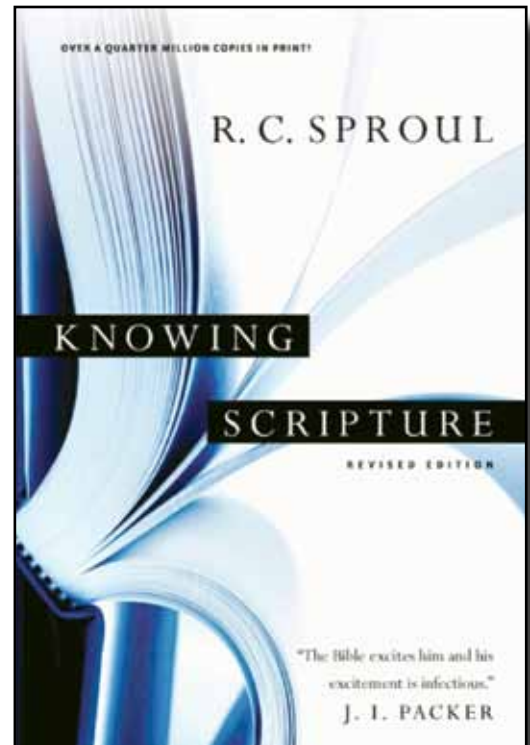
For a simply wonderful introduction to proper biblical interpretation, let me commend to your reading *Knowing Scripture*, by a completely different RC Sproul.

I named it after myself

The RC Sproul Jr. Principle of Hermeneutics is a tad more personal, and not just for me, its namesake. I did not, by the way, name this after me because of my pride. I named it for me because of its subject matter – stupid people.

The principle is this:

Whenever you see someone doing something really stupid in the Bible, do not say to yourself, "How can they be so stupid? Instead say to yourself, "How am I stupid, just like them?"



Another Sproul has also written on the subject of Hermeneutics, and among other things *Knowing Scripture* covers two foundational Hermeneutic principles:

- 1) *Interpret the Bible's Historical Narratives by the Didactic.*
- 2) *Interpret the Implicit by the Explicit*

You see it's all too easy to look down our noses at those unsophisticated, pre-modern people in the Bible, and to pat ourselves on the back for not being like them. Trouble is, we are like them. We think, for instance, that had we been sent to spy out the Promised Land we would have come back like Joshua and Caleb, confident that God can deliver the land. Chances are – 10 in 12 in fact – that we would have been among the frightened and foolish crowd.

This principle is born out of two more basic ones – people don't change, and people are sinners. If we see a sin crop up in the Bible, it's extremely likely that we will struggle with that same sin. Because we are sinners, however, we sinfully think ourselves not to be sinners. And that, of course, is just what the sinners in the Bible thought about themselves.

The Bible is a mirror, and we are ugly. If we would be changed by it, we have to be willing to face that reality. We need to learn to see ourselves in the sinners in the Bible in order to rightly learn from the Bible.

Facing our reflection

Which reminds us of the first corollary to the RC Sproul Jr. Principle of Hermeneutics. Whenever you are reading a story in the Bible, whether it be a parable or even history, and you want to know how it applies to you, you have to first know who you are in the story. Here's the Corollary: *You are the sinner*. If there are two sinners in the story, such as the Prodigal Son parable where both sons were sinners, you are both.

The Bible is a mirror. And we ought to be able to look at our own sin. Wishing it away does nothing. Jesus, however, is busy washing it away. We can boldly face the fullness of our sins because we live in light of the fullness of His grace.

This article is reprinted with permission from Dr. RC Sproul Jr.'s blog RCSproulJunior.blogspot.com



What's Inside

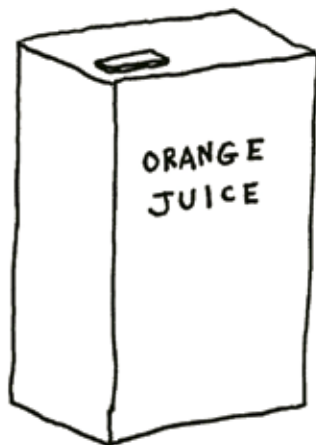
The world thinks the smarter and more capable a young man or woman might be, the less they would have any reason to listen to their parents' advice. But the Bible says the truly wise young man is someone who is smart enough to want and seek after his parents' counsel. This issue we have a pair of articles on the relationship of parents and their teens, but one directs teens to their parents, while the other takes completely the opposite tack, telling parents how they can reach out to their teens.

In This Issue

Guest Editorial – Facing our reflection — R.C. Sproul, Jr.	2
Nota Bene	5
“The process is the punishment” — Ron Gray	7
Ending abortion is possible	
— Jonathon VanMaren.....	11
“Honey I blew the budget!” — John Voorhorst.....	13
Being Gay for Jesus: Or, homosexuality above the Bible	
— Michael Wagner	15
Best Books — reviewed by Jon Dykstra.....	17

Five things teens want their parents to know. . .	
— William Boekestein	18
Being wise when you are young means you are quick to. . .	
Go ask your parents! — Martin VanderWal.....	21
Follow the Evidence? — Wes Bredenhof.....	24
Those hands are grace — Christine Farenhorst.....	27
In a Nutshell — Jon Dykstra	28
Soup & Buns – Liking our own work — Sharon Bratcher.....	30
Puzzle Page — Bob Leach	31
Crossword Puzzle – Series 18 No 2	32

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Nota Bene

News worth noting



Christian college controversy

by Anna Nienhuis

Ontario's Redeemer University College is under scrutiny by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) for allegedly restricting academic freedom by requiring faculty to commit to a Christian worldview. Redeemer is the latest in a string of similar investigations, including one aimed at Trinity Western University in British Columbia.

The three previous institutions investigated have all been found guilty of restricting academic freedom, and Redeemer has declined to cooperate with the investigation, stating that the results are a foregone conclusion.

Thankfully the targeted institutions are not the only ones realizing

the injustice of these investigations, all of which have been started without any cause and without any complaints having been filed against the schools. Redeemer's president, Hubert Krygman, said of the CAUT, "It's obvious they disagree with faith-based institutions, but why they see it necessary to attack us is unclear." Over 150 scholars around the country, including a former CAUT official, agree, and are speaking out against the investigations and in favor of the rights of these schools to maintain their Christian standards.

Source: Charles Lewis' "Christian University says it won't cooperate with investigation from teacher's federation"; life.nationalpost.com, Feb. 9, 2011 and Teri Pecoskie's "Academic Scrutiny Hits Redeemer"; thespec.com, Feb. 10, 2011

Egypt – do we want Democracy?

by Jon Dykstra

Egypt has been much in the news lately, so the results of a recent Pew Research poll are worth noting. According to the poll while 48 per cent of Egyptians say suicide bombings are never justified, 32 per cent say they can be justified rarely, another 12 per cent say "sometimes" and 8 per cent say they are often justified. That works out to a majority of 52 per cent saying there are occasions where the right response is a suicide bomber. Other noteworthy results include:

- 77 per cent believe cutting off the hand of a thief is proper punishment.
- 82 per cent favor stoning adulterers to death.
- 84 per cent favor executing Muslim converts to Christianity.

Winston Churchill once said that Democracy was the worst possible political system. . . except for all others. If he were alive today, would these poll results make him reconsider? It may be that for Egyptian Christians a democratic Egypt would be the worst option, worse even than the authoritarian government they've lived under to this point.

SOURCE: Patrick Buchanan's "The perils of democratist dogma" on www.wnd.com Feb. 10, 2011; "Muslim Publics Divided on Hamas and Hezbollah" on PewGlobal.org/category/survey-reports/ December 2, 2010



CHP candidate gets positive press for stand on immigration

by Anna Nienhuis

Mike Schouten, a Canadian Reformed candidate for the Christian Heritage Party in Surrey, is calling for the riding's MP, Conservative Russ Hiebert, to take a stand on immigration policies regard-



ing radical Muslim nations. Hiebert feels the laws are clear enough but Schouten points out that "it is naïve" to think that all immigrant cultures "can be compatible with Canadian values."

He is pointing to the current situation in Europe (see *Multiculturalism a failure?*) where top European leaders are trying to cope with an immigration-fueled dramatic rise in Muslim extremism. While Schouten acknowledges the sensitivity of the topic, he stresses that Canada has been given a chance to learn from Europe's experience, saying we are in an "enviable po-

sition" as far as they are concerned, as pre-emptive action can still be taken. British Prime Minister Cameron has pointed out that "hands-off tolerance" of those who reject western values has failed, and Schouten is getting positive press for his stance that an examination and alteration of immigration policies will protect freedom of religion for all Canadians, including Muslims.

Source: Alex Browne's "Naïve to think all cultures compatible with Canadian values"; blocalnews.com, Feb. 12, 2011 and Tom Zytaruk's "New Muslim immigration policy would fix past failures, say Surrey CHP candidate"; thenownewspaper.com, Feb. 10, 2011

Full-scale Ark to be built in Kentucky

by Jon Dykstra

A group in Kentucky has announced plans to build a full-scale replica of Noah's Ark, to give visitors an idea of just how enormous it was. The ark will be the main attraction in a \$150 million "Ark Encounters" theme park the group intends to open in the spring of 2014.

The project started off on a controversial note when Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear announced that it would



qualify for the state's tourism-related tax-rebates. Critics argued that this is

a violation of the proper separation of church and state. They understand this "proper separation" as requiring the state to discriminate against any project that considers the Bible to actually be true.

The controversy hasn't been entirely negative. On the project's website ArkEncounter.com they note the negative accounts in the press prompted one newspaper reader to donate \$1 million to one of the project's supporters, Answers in Genesis.

SOURCE: Pictured used with permission of Answers In Genesis.

PM: No Canadian abortion law coming

by Anna Nienhuis

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has made it clear from the beginning



of his career that abortion is not an issue he is willing to touch politically. This was reinforced in a January interview that marked 5 years of his minority government leading the country. CBC's Peter Mansbridge asked if abortion would be addressed if his party was to win a majority government, but Harper stated it would still be off-limits.

Being unwilling to take a stand on this, the most controversial of all political issues, may be a wise career move but it means that under all three major national parties Canada will continue on with no laws regarding abortion. As it currently stands, abortion is allowed at any stage in a pregnancy, and taxpayers are the ones footing the bill.

Harper addresses the issue only by saying, "If you want to diminish the number of abortions, you've got to change hearts, not laws." He got it half right – while it is true hearts need to be changed, laws can certainly help in limiting and drawing attention to the abortions that are taking place. In the meantime, changing hearts is indeed all we can work on, while praying to eventually be given a leader who is both able and willing to address the issue and enact laws protecting the unborn.

Source: Rebecca Millette's "Prime Minister Harper: No abortion law even if Conservatives win majority"; lifesitenews.com, Jan. 19, 2011

Multiculturalism a failure?

by Anna Nienhuis

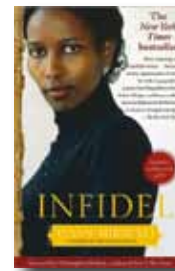
European leaders are beginning to speak out against the policy of multiculturalism their nations once espoused, with British Prime Minister David Cameron being the latest to state unequivocally that "multiculturalism has failed."

Multiculturalism is a touchy issue, as anyone who criticizes it is quickly labeled a racist. However, European leaders are taking a stand as they recognize the dramatic rise in Islamic extremism and violence in their countries, including the Netherlands.

The policy of multiculturalism was intended to allow a variety of people to immigrate and make a new nation their home. But underlying this policy was the assumption that immigrants would appreciate and respect the values of their new country. After all, if they didn't find the culture attractive, why would they move there?

The policy has been a failure because this assumption has proven to be naïve. Waves of immigrants have come to Western countries intent on remaking those countries. And our governments have accommodated, often applying different rules to various groups, ignoring many situations in immigrant families that they would not ignore elsewhere, including spousal abuse, polygamy, and forced arranged marriages.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, author of the revealing autobiographical novel *Infidel*, immigrated to Holland from a Muslim country and became ac-



tive in Dutch politics. Now working in the United States, and having renounced Islam, she is very vocal about the need to limit immigration from extremist Muslim nations, as she argues

that the religious training that dominates in these countries is in no way compatible with Western values. Unfortunately, she takes it a step further and calls for an end to *all* faith-based schools, claiming they allow parents to "indoctrinate" the next generation.

Prime Minister Cameron focused his February speech on "home-grown" Islamic extremists who have precipitated various terrorist attacks in the name of their religion and clearly have no loyalty to the country they call home. The issue now, he states, is to find solutions to a problem that may already be out of control.

Canada and the United States are now in a unique position, as they can see the problems facing Europe and have an opportunity to take action for their own nations in terms of their immigration policies. The Christian Heritage Party is raising the issue in British Columbia (see related article on CHP candidate Mike Schouten), and it will be interesting to see where we go as nations on this issue.

Source: Douglas Murray's "Cameron's Multicultural Wake-Up Call"; online.wsj.com, Feb. 9, 2011 and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's book "Infidel."

“The process is the punishment”

The victims of Canada’s human rights commissions deserve mention in the country’s museum devoted to human rights

by Ron Gray

The letter that follows is one that Ron Gray sent in February to Mr. Arni Thorsteinson, the chair of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, to ask that the museum in some way cover the plight of the many victims of Canada’s human rights commissions and tribunals. He describes his own encounter, when he was head of the Christian Heritage Party, with the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC). The details of that encounter shows the CHRC to be a punitive bureaucracy. And as Ron Gray notes, he is not the only victim.

What can we do to stop these commissions? One option is to join with the people behind the “Stand up For Freedom Canada” campaign, which has as its goal curtailing the power of these commissions. You can find more information about this campaign at humanrightscommissions.ca. You can also help by speaking out, and passing on this information to friends and neighbors as this information is not being given much coverage in the mainstream media (Mr. Gray released his letter to 120 media outlets and ten days later only two – Reformed Perspective and RoadkillRadio.com – responded).

Dear Mr. Thorsteinson:

Last year, I attended the Vancouver public information forum of the Canadian Human Rights Museum, where I received a DVD and documents which invited conference participants to submit ideas for possible inclusion in the Canadian Museum of Human Rights being built in Winnipeg.

I want to suggest inclusion of an important dimension that, to the best

of the information I have read, has not yet been discussed: the plight of Canadians who have been pilloried and persecuted by Canada’s Human Rights Tribunals. The stories of two – Ezra Levant and Mark Steyn – gained some media attention, primarily because the targets of those cases were media personalities. But there are many more.

Nothing hateful about this material

The story behind my case actually begins in California in 2000, when the two co-editors of *The Stanford Law Review* decided to devote an entire edition of their quarterly magazine to legal issues surrounding the “gay rights” agenda. They solicited articles from more than a dozen recognized legal



and sociological authorities representing both sides of the issue; but when the *Review* was published in Spring 2001 it contained only the politically correct pro-“gay” essays. One of the two co-editors had censored articles that in any way questioned the validity of the “gay rights” agenda.

The other co-editor took the excluded essays to Regent University Law School in Virginia, proposing that they be published in the *Regent Law Review* in order to present “the other side” of the issue to legal scholars and the interested public.

The *Regent Law Review* published those essays in April, 2002; when that issue of the *Regent Law Review* and the story behind it came to the attention of *WorldNetDaily.com* (WND) – the world’s largest independent Internet news site – they carried a story summarizing some of the censored essays. In the interests of balanced journalism, before publishing the story *WND* showed it to PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) – and their comments were included in the *WND* story.

When I read that story on *WorldNetDaily*, I felt the information was important to the public policy debate then raging in Canada (this was still before Parliament had passed Bill C-250, the “hate crimes” amendment to the Criminal Code, or Bill C-38, legalizing same-sex “marriage”). So as National Leader of the Christian Heritage Party (the fifth-largest registered national political party in Canada), I reproduced the *WorldNetDaily* story on the CHP’s website. The story was also reproduced on the local webpage of the CHP’s Skeena Electoral District Association.

Fact: homosexuality is harmful

From its inception, the CHP has had a policy which states:

“It should be beyond the power of any legislative or administrative body to recognize, affirm, condone, or discriminate in favor of identifiably sexually aberrant individuals or groups.”

This policy was put in place because of a wealth of evidence that homosexuality harms society in many ways: where it is being taught in schools as “an acceptable alternative lifestyle,” it is potentially harmful to the children: Dr. Scott Lively, who taught law at Pepperdine University in California, warned school trustees that if their schools promote acceptance of homosexuality as “normal” or “natural,” and if as a result some children are tempted to experiment, and as a result contract one or more of the sexually transmitted diseases that are epidemic among homosexuals, the school boards might be liable. The American College of pediatricians also warned school boards that such programs are harmful to children.

The French Parliament, after more than a year of study, voted not to allow same-sex “marriage” or same-sex adoptions. The Parliamentary committee’s statement on adoption was: “The purpose of adoption is not to give a child to a family, but to give a family to a child.” Numerous studies have shown that children do much better when they have a father

and a mother, rather than two same-sex parents. And several recent studies, by homosexual researchers, show that the incidence of domestic violence is markedly higher in same-sex couples than in normal family formations.

The CHP remains the *only* federal political party in Canada that opposes same-sex “marriage” or civil unions, and/or teaching children that homosexuality is “normal” or “an acceptable alternate lifestyle.” We contend that, since homosexual behavior shortens life expectancy by as much as 20 years (according to a study conducted in Vancouver in 2000, and reported in the *Journal of the Canadian Medical Association* and in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*; some experts say homosexual practices impact life expectancy even more severely), it is demonstrably unhealthy; and we in the CHP contend that its recognition and acceptance should not be promulgated in schools, nor by public events like “Gay Pride” parades.

.....
“The purpose of adoption is not to give a child to a family, but to give a family to a child”
.....

Publishing the *WND* article on the CHP webpage was intended to make important articles by sociological and legal experts available to the Canadian public, and to provide peer-reviewed academic support for our long-established policy.

The process begins

I first learned of the three complaints by an Edmonton activist in December, 2006 when the CHP’s Skeena/Bulkley Valley Electoral District Association faxed me a copy of a letter they had received from the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC), informing them that a complaint had been filed against them for reproducing the *WND* article on the Skeena EDA website.

Subsequently, in January of 2007 I was informed by the CHRC that the same man had also filed complaints against the CHP National Office; and against me, personally.

The first contact was an invitation by the CHRC mediator for us to enter into mediation with the complainant. I contacted the mediator and said I could alter my travel schedule to come to Edmonton for mediation on Feb. 26, 2007. The CHRC mediator, Mr. Bob Fagan, said he would contact the complainant and let me know. I asked Mr. Fagan to allow me to act (as Party Leader) for all three complaints, and he concurred.

By Feb. 19, the day when I had to leave for meetings of the CHP National Board in Lethbridge, Alberta, I had not yet heard from Mr. Fagan; so I called him to say that it was now too late for me to re-arrange my travel schedule. I then asked that he and the complainant suggest an alternate date for mediation, and said I would try to accommodate them to the extent that my work and travel schedule allowed. I also

asked permission to have an observer from the Skeena EDA (as a co-defendant) accompany me.

I received no reply.

At the same time – Feb. 19, 2007 – I wrote to Mr. Richard Tardif, Deputy Secretary-General of the CHRC, asking him to explain why he thought the CHRC would have jurisdiction over a registered federal political party and its leader, articulating a long-standing official policy approved by the triennial convention.

To this day, I have had no response from Mr. Tardif.

The next communication from the CHRC to me was June 7, 2007, when Mr. Michel Paré, Director of Alternative Dispute Resolution Services Division of the CHRC, informed me that “since both parties have refused mediation” – which was not true: I had offered to facilitate mediation by traveling from my home in Langley to Edmonton – the case was being turned over to Investigations Branch. (It seemed to me that if the complainant rejected mediation, the complaint itself should be dropped.)

I wrote to Mr. Paré, reviewing the history of the three complaints, and correcting his misunderstanding that I or the CHP had rejected mediation. We were willing to enter mediation, but had heard nothing at all from the mediator. I also sent him a copy of my letter to Mr. Tardif, raising the issue of jurisdiction.

I received a letter from Mr. Paré, dated June 29, 2007, simply stating that the complaints had been referred to the Investigations Division.

However on June 25, 2007 the Skeena EDA of the CHP had already received a letter from an investigator for the CHRC – which they faxed to me. I called the investigator and explained to her that I had not received answers to *any* of my communications with the CHRC, and that I was still ready to meet with the mediator, and that I was responding to all three complaints. She told me they had previously experienced similar difficulties with the Mediation Branch, and she asked that I fax her copies of all the previous correspondence – which I did.

The next communication I received from the CHRC was an email from the investigator – dated June 25, 2007, but only received by ExpressPost at my home in Langley, BC on July 13, 2007 – asking me four questions. I replied that I did not believe I should attorn to jurisdiction by answering her questions, until the issue of jurisdiction had been settled.

I told the investigator that if the complainant truly felt that the CHP and I were motivated by hate, he should file his complaint with the RCMP under Sec. 319 of the Criminal Code.

I had also mentioned to the mediator, when speaking to him Feb. 19, that it seems to me an abuse of the Canadian Human Rights Act to use it as a weapon with which to censor ideas with which one disagrees; his response was astonishing. “The Human Rights Act is about censorship!” he replied.

I retained a lawyer – Mr. Ron McDonald of Lethbridge, AB – who prepared an extensive brief and forwarded it to the CHRC investigator.

Late in 2008, the CHRC informed me that the investigator had concluded that the complaints against me and the CHP were without foundation, and the file had been dropped.

Punished to the amount of \$51,000

I want my case, and others like it, to be included in the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, so the public can be informed of how CHRC mishandled a spurious complaint, and that their incompetence cost me two and a half years and \$51,000; and seriously impaired my service to the CHP during those years.

It is also important that the Canadian public know that, while all the complainant’s legal fees and other related costs are covered by the taxpayer, the defendant – whether guilty or innocent – must bear his or her own expenses. And, outrageously, the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits lawsuits against the Commission or the complainant to recover expenses in a vexatious complaint.

Not the only victim

Of course, I’m not alone. Here’s a partial list of those whose human and civil rights have been impaired by the quasi-judicial powers of Canada’s federal and provincial human rights tribunals:

- Christian Horizons in Ontario
- Scott Brockie in Toronto
- Ezra Levant in Calgary
- Bill Whatcott in Saskatchewan
- Calgary Street Church (Art Pavlovski, Pastor)
- Stephen Boisson in Red Deer
- Will Goertzen in Yellowknife
- Chris Kempling
- BC Knights of Columbus
- Calgary RC Bishop Fred Henry
- Kari Simpson of the Citizens’ Research Institute (and now RoadKill Radio)
- Manitoba, Sask & Nfld Marriage Commissioners
- David Hauser in Port Coquitlam (fired by Costco)
- Students in BC since June, 2006 (Corren Agreement)
- John diCicco in Kamloops
- Catholic Insight magazine
- Ontario Catholic School Boards
- Parents in Hamilton-Wentworth (Ontario)
- Mark Steyn & Maclean’s magazine
- Marc LeMire
- Linda Gibbons
- Don Spratt & Cissy von Dehn
- Diane Hakssett
- Hugh Owens
- Vancouver Rape Relief Society
- Mark & Connie Fournier, proprietors of Free Dominion website
- Dagmar and Arnost Cepica, owners of Beach View Bed and Breakfast, PEI
- Susan & Les Molnar, Grand Forks B&B owners

But a select few are safe from the commissions

On the other hand we can see that some Canadians need not fear the commissions, no matter what they do. What follows is quoted from Ezra Levant's blog (ezralevant.com):

The Canadian Human Rights Commission has rejected a human rights complaint filed against a radical Muslim imam who published a viciously bigoted book about gays, Jews, women, Christians – and even called for the murder of “infidels.” Marc Lebuis, the publisher of the Quebec blog *Point de Bascule* filed a complaint with the CHRC back in April, after reading *Islam or Fundamentalism*.

The book plainly meets all the tests of section 13, including the jurisdictional test – it was written by a radical Muslim cleric here in Canada, named Abou Hammaad Sulaiman Al-Hayiti, and it was published on the Internet by him, too.

More importantly, Al-Hayiti's book seethes with hate. According to Lebuis's careful notes, it included statements such as these (Editor's note – this is an edited, shortened list):

Homosexuals

- Homosexuals and lesbians should be “exterminated in this life”
- “Homosexuals caught performing sodomy are beheaded”

Men are superior to women

- “men are superior to women and better than them.” In general, “men have a more complete intellect and memory than women”
- “If a Muslim woman marries a non-Muslim man. . . their marriage is invalid, in fact it is adultery”

Slavery

- “owning slaves is not prohibited”
- “Allah has allowed men to marry two, three or four women, but one who fears he will not be fair can marry only one or have slaves.”


Jihad is a duty of sedition

- “[freedom] serves to justify corruption” and “stooping to the lowest levels of bestiality”
- “Anyone who leaves Islam, cut his neck”
- . . . in an Islamic state, Christians and Jews can keep their religion but they must pay a sum of money, the Jizyah. “The purpose of the Jizyah is to humiliate and punish Infidels to encourage them to accept Islam.” The other Infidels (Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, etc.) have no options but to accept Islam or be killed.”

Such a publication goes far beyond “fair comment,” and (unlike the *WND* story reprinted by the CHP) has no supporting peer-reviewed evidence to support its statements. Yet the CHRC rejected the complaint (perhaps cowed by the memory of the violence that resulted from the Danish cartoons which Mr. Levant had the courage (unlike any other Canadian news media) to publish.

Conclusion

The Canadian Human Rights Museum will be severely impaired in telling the full story of the fight for human rights in Canada if these stories are not included; their exclusion would leave the Museum as a one-side propaganda instrument. I know you do not want that to happen.

Sincerely, Ron Gray 

Five Lines FREE

(as the title is “five lines free” all ads need to be laid out so they will be no longer than five lines, and will preferably be exactly five lines)

March for Life – Ottawa (Parliament Hill) May 12, 2011:

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- Send your requests to editor@reformedperspective.ca. Ads will appear in the issue two months after submission (ex. if you submit in December, it will appear in February).

This is for groups and individuals whose philosophy and worldview is in accord with that of *Reformed Perspective*, so we reserve the right to refuse any ad.

Ending abortion is possible

But we can't change it if we aren't willing to talk about it . . . and even shock people about it

by Jonathon VanMaren

In 1807, the slave trade was finally ended in Britain.

I say finally, because it took twenty-six years of dedicated effort by William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson and the "Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade" to get the British Parliament to pass the Slave Trade Act. For twenty-six years, William Wilberforce decried the inhumanity of slavery in Parliament to no avail. Excuses were always given for maintaining the status quo; they ranged from the negative economic impact of banning slavery to the importance of slavery in Western society.

But in 1807 a breakthrough was finally made. The difference this time was that the educational work of Wilberforce, Clarkson and the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade had finally paid off. Images which graphically illustrated the plight of slaves had been widely distributed, and these pictures humanized the victims of the barbaric institution. This resulted in increased public sympathy for abolition of a now more exposed practice.

Additionally, the memoirs of former slaves and even slavers were widely dispensed to the public to make clear the reality and repulsiveness of the slave trade. Former slave ship captain John Newton wrote his autobiography, in part for Wilberforce's use, while Thomas Clarkson compiled graphic evidence in a work titled *Abstract of Evidence*.

The reason that it took twenty-six years for Wilberforce to pass a law abolishing slavery in Great Britain was that public opinion had to be changed before public policy could be changed. Until politicians felt that their constituents approved of, and even demanded a change, they refused to act. Disregarding or misreading their public mandate could have resulted in the termination of their political careers.

We face a similar situation today.

Disappointing political leadership

While many of us in the pro-life movement may have felt that Stephen Harper's election would bring a change in government policies towards life

and death issues such as abortion, his stance on these issues cannot be characterized as anything but pro-abortion.

For example, he has stated:

"Let me be very clear on the positions that I've taken on that. I want there to be no misunderstanding. I've said repeatedly, that I will not, that my Conservative government will not be tabling any legislation impacting in any way the woman's right to choose."

This was disappointing as it seemed Harper would be no different than Jean Chretien or Paul Martin. Many of us still hoped that, even if he wasn't receptive to any sort of pro-life legislation, maybe his Conservative governing



These trucks are one way the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform are confronting the public with truth about abortion. You can learn about other ways, including the Genocide Awareness Project, and Choice Chains by visiting their website www.unmaskingchoice.ca.

party would be, at least a little bit. But Harper didn't want to leave us with even this small hope. In response he stated that his,

“Conservative government won't be initiating or supporting abortion legislation, and I'll use whatever influence I have in Parliament to be sure that such a matter doesn't come to a vote.”

Harper recently followed up on this statement by adding that it will still apply even if the Conservatives won a majority government.

Harper went further still when he voiced his opposition to and voted against Roxanne's Law, a bill that wasn't even going to restrict abortion, but only criminalize the act of forcing a woman to have an abortion. His spokesperson reiterated that the reason for this is that, “our Conservative government will not initiate or support any legislation that opens the abortion debate” (emphasis mine).

Teach and talk to the public

So once again, we see that our situation today in regards to abortion is similar to the climate that Wilberforce faced when he first began to advocate for the abolition of slavery. We don't seem able to make any political progress.

This is why the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform (CCBR) believes it is necessary to engage the culture and reveal what abortion is. By showing the truth – humanizing the victims – we can make abortion unthinkable. CCBR uses this approach due to the effectiveness and success of social reform advocates such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson in shifting public opinion as a precursor to a shift in public policy.

Legislative action to restrict or re-criminalize abortion is necessary – however, it will not be successful until politicians begin to feel a grassroots pressure from the people. This is the very reason that pro-abortion groups are attempting to censor many university pro-life clubs across the country – to name just a few, Carleton University, UBC Okanagan, Lakehead University, University of Victoria, and University of Calgary. Pro-abortion groups know we are forcing a discussion, and that if that discussion starts, they will have very little to stand on – it's hard, after all, to argue with the truth.

Are the pictures offensive. . . or the procedure?

Many pro-lifers are concerned that graphic images of abortion will offend people and make them angry. We do not dispute this. The question is, why shouldn't they be offended and angry? Abortion is a tragedy! And a secondary tragedy is that Christians and others are not becoming offended and angry.

Wilberforce could show his fellow parliamentarians slave ships and force them to listen to the testimony of former slaves. The pro-life movement is defending those who have no voice at all – the victims cannot march in rallies or protest their treatment because they have all been dismembered, disemboweled and decapitated out of the public eye.

As Center for Bio-Ethical Reform founder Greg Cunningham has noted, “Injustice that remains invisible will inevitably become tolerable.”

Bringing pictures of this barbaric process into the public discussion forces those who support the process to defend their actions. When they ask us why we show offensive pictures, we simply ask them which is more offensive: pictures of the procedure, or the fact that this procedure takes place over one hundred thousand times a year in Canada alone?

This strategy is being employed through projects such as “Choice” Chain, which involves showing single, graphic signs/posters of abortion, or the Genocide Awareness Project, which compares the denial of personhood in abortion to the denial of personhood the preceded other genocides (ex. Nazis said Jews weren't persons, slave owners said blacks weren't persons).

It's working!

While some question these strategies, the results speak for themselves. I was in Calgary in this past August, and I did “Choice” Chain in the downtown Calgary with six summer interns from CCBR. A middle-aged woman walked up, pointed at my sign, and asked what it was.

“This is what an abortion looks like at ten weeks,” I told her.

“I had two abortions,” she replied, “If I had known it did this, if I had seen these pictures, I don't think I would have.”

This is just one anecdote, but it's representative of what happens every time CCBR brings its graphics into the public. Just last semester, when SFU Students for Life joined with UBC Lifeline to do “Choice” Chain, we had one student walk up, look at a sign, and tell us “I used to think that abortion was okay in the first trimester. That sign just changed my mind.”

On a larger scale, CCBR is forcing the debate into the national consciousness through the media coverage it has been receiving for its projects. It had been years since the topic of abortion was so openly discussed in the media. And, in an almost unprecedented move, some of media even showed the public these graphic pictures.

Conclusion

I greatly appreciate that there are those who are trying to enter politics and work towards pro-life legislative reform. We need such people. However, before they can accomplish their legislative goals we need to change public opinion first.

So we have to engage our culture, and show the reality of abortion to an apathetic public. Our country will not discuss abortion, so we have to force the discussion to take place. Babies are being brutally butchered at the rate of 100,000 a year. Now is the time to act. We must educate ourselves, each and every one of us, and in turn educate others. If we do not, history may one day judge us in the same light as those who stood by while slaves were brutally murdered and abused, but chose not to act.



"Honey I blew the budget!"



A few thoughts on getting back in the black after taking a plunge into the red

by John Voorhorst

"Honey I blew the budget!" Do those words sound familiar to you? Were you one of many Canadian couples that made a New Year's resolution to build a budget and live according to it? And February 14th came along and you blew it? Or perhaps the budget was blown before you even started because your Christmas spending made the budget a non-event? Or perhaps it is a much less dramatic event that got you off to a bad start: you just can't seem to stay within the amounts you had agreed on.

How to start: prayer

Let's see if a frank discussion of some potential issues can benefit us all. Before we do that I believe that everyone should begin their budget process with prayer. Pray that God would grant you the courage you need to be honest with yourself and your spouse as you build the budget. Also pray that God will grant you a sense of satisfaction with the gifts He does grant. Pray that God remove the sense of covetousness from your heart. Pray that God would forgive your sense of entitlement if that is something you struggle with.

A sense of entitlement?

What do I mean with that last line? In my business I often hear the following excuse when a couple comes to me and they are having serious difficulty making ends meet. Often it is because one or both of them have what I call "a strong sense of entitlement." They say things like, "We deserved that one-week vacation in Mexico because we both worked very hard these past three months."

Or, "I deserve that new dress or new suit, because I have not treated myself to anything new for a long time now."

Or perhaps you blew it on Valentines Day; you dropped in at the flower shop on your way home and purchased a dozen roses for your wife and then, when you got home, you told her, "Honey, I am taking you out for dinner tonight!" So you take her to that very special (read *expensive*) restaurant downtown. The dozen roses are \$25 and the dinner was \$100. But your entertainment budget for the month was \$30.

So what do we do now? Well, the temptation now is to reduce your contribution to the church for the month because the church, after all, has lots of other people that can pay.

No easy way, but there is a way

So, how can we deal with these kinds of blown budgets? Discipline. One word only. Discipline.

There is no easy way to deal with this temptation. Once again, let me urge you to pray. In John 15 Jesus encourages his disciples to bear good fruit and He also says, "*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you*" (verse 7). You see! Jesus clearly says it. Of course we need to keep this in its context. Jesus is saying this in light of His other comments regarding the bearing of much fruit. I take this to mean that there is a relationship between what we are to ask for and bearing fruit. So, pray that God will help you in your struggle with covetousness. Or ask God to grant you His peace and satisfaction so that you are truly at peace with what He gives you and you don't just use that Visa credit card that makes it so easy to grab "stuff" that God has not granted you.

Looking at the grocery budget

But let's move on, because there may be other ways we can help you with your budget.

Let's take a hard look at your grocery budget. Do you really think \$1,000 per month is what it takes to provide a family of five, two parents and three children, with all that is needed? Perhaps we can find a way to do this for \$700. This is not always the most fun part of running a household but perhaps you can make it a little more enjoyable.

First, it's vitally important that you plan a menu for every day of the week. If you know that Monday you are going to have chicken and rice and a vegetable for dinner, then the two weeks before you can keep an eye on the flyers and purchase that chicken when it is on sale at one of the grocery stores. If you put together a planned menu for the entire month, you have a great weapon that you can use in your battle with the budget. If pork comes on sale this week and you know that there is pork planned for next Thursday's dinner, buy it now when it is on sale, and freeze it. Or if your family regularly has oatmeal for breakfast, (I know, oatmeal is old school, but it's healthy and it's cheap) then find a store that sells oatmeal in bulk – leave the individual packages on the shelf and buy it in bulk. You will easily save 20 per cent.

As I said earlier, grocery shopping is not always the most fun, but what you can also try is to band together with one or two of your friends. I know, for example, that here in Alberta one of the grocery outlets will give you a \$50 gift card when you buy \$250 dollars of groceries. So join forces. Go to the store with two or three of you. Make sure you all have a list – impulse buying is dynamite on grocery budgets (it blows them up!). When you go through the check-out, ask the cashier to sub-total at each person's purchases. That saves you the hassle of having to total it up at home. And then share the gift card on your next trip. Try to purchase fruits and vegetables that are in season (when possible). In the summer and fall, find a farmer's market and buy some extra beans and carrots and freeze them.

Don't improvise

In my experience though, it is not the grocery dollars that destroy a budget; it is the impulse buying. It is the idea that I must have a new 40 or 50-inch television, even if that means it goes on a credit card. Or, it is the new stereo for the car or the new cellphone with all the latest technical stuff. Or even just the cellphone plan that we just have to have – the one with unlimited texting! – or the cable plan that has all those sports channels. or the new chesterfield and chair that we just have to have.

The unexpected expenditure

Some other things that can blow a budget are things like a hot water heater that bursts, or a furnace or a refrigerator that packs it in. Now these truly are valid items that need to be dealt with. But once again, a few tips may be beneficial. Check out the nearest used furniture and appliance outlet or go through the local free "buy and sell" magazine. You may be surprised at how often you can find a very good used furnace or a refrigerator (I have a used hot water heater stored away just in case). The wealthy in your town or city often will be replacing perfectly good mid-efficiency furnaces for a high-efficiency furnace and often you can buy their used one for as little as \$200.

Insurance

There are some other areas in which we can save money as well. One of the areas I often look at with my clients is the cost of all their insurance. Call to a few other brokers and see if the premium you are paying to insure your home really is the best premium available. If you are not in BC or Manitoba, check the rate on your car insurance as well.

Another high cost is the cost that many young people pay for life insurance. The life insurance industry will go to quite some lengths to show you why you need a million dollars of life insurance and a further \$200,000 critical illness policy. But I would suggest that you look at that more carefully. Also look at the *type* of life insurance that you have. Ask the insurance salesman why he might be recommending whole life or universal life insurance when a 20-year-term policy at less than half the price may be all you really need.

You won't live like your parents

Another mistake we often make is we compare what we have to what we had when we were still living with our parents. But remember, our parents have been working for 20 plus years and are often at the top of their pay scale while we are starting at the bottom of the pay scale. Once again, at risk of sounding repetitious, be satisfied with what God grants you. Greed and covetousness are sins that are spoken of in many places in God's Word and these are sins that we need to fight against daily.

So, if we go back to our initial statement, "I blew the budget," don't despair. Ask God to bless your attempt to start the process again. And do not be afraid to start a third or a fourth or even a tenth time. Living within a budget is a tough thing to do and it does require some determination. But when it works it works well.

Always remember that when you come up with other ways to save money, share them with your friends, and also your friends at Reformed Perspective (the editor would love to hear about them - editor@ReformedPerspective.ca).



Being Gay for Jesus: Or, homosexuality above the Bible

by Michael Wagner

The Rev. Dr. Mel White was raised in an evangelical household and his father was an evangelical pastor. White ended up getting theologically trained and also became an evangelical pastor. He was extremely gifted in communications and helped to produce evangelical video documentaries and “ghost-wrote” books for famous Christian leaders such as Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson.

From the outside he appeared to be an exemplary Christian leader, advancing the cause of conservative Christianity. However, he was secretly struggling with homosexual tendencies. Ultimately, those homosexual tendencies won out. He divorced his wife and began living in a homosexual relationship with a man.

I do what I like, and God loves it

Not content to fade away from conservative Christianity, White decided to go on a campaign against the “antigay” teachings of conservative churches. He wants to straighten out all those Christians who think homosexuality is incompatible with the Bible. According to him, as he states in his book *Religion Gone Bad: The Hidden Dangers of the Christian Right* (2006), “the real problem” homosexuals have today is “the antigay religious teachings and actions that support intolerance and discrimination.”

White’s agenda is to “dialogue” with conservative Christians to show them that the traditional Christian view of homosexuality is based on lies, half-truths and caricatures. If Christians would look at the real truth, they would see that “Homosexuality is not a sickness, not a sin.” After being brought up in an evangelical household, White had to learn this for himself. Now he understands that “God created me a gay man and loves me exactly as I am.”

In fact, he claims that “homosexual intimacy” is “another of God’s loving gifts.” God doesn’t just accept homosexuality, He thinks it’s great! Referring to living with his gay lover, White is confident that “God not only approves of our relationship, God celebrates it. God blesses it. God informs and inspires it.”

Conservative Christians who read those statements will likely be puzzled. Doesn’t the Bible clearly condemn homosexuality in both the Old and New Testaments? Particular verses from Leviticus and Romans come to mind. Don’t be so foolish, Mel White would reply, the historic Christian view of

homosexuality is simply based “on a few isolated verses from the writings of Paul and Moses, who knew a lot about God and nothing about sexual orientation.”

Paul and Moses didn’t know anything about homosexuality! Really? Or is it that you can’t accept what they say about it?

White continues:

“America’s preeminent Bible scholars demonstrate clearly that the biblical authors knew nothing and therefore say nothing about homosexuality in either the Hebrew or Greek testaments. The Bible literally is silent about homosexual orientation as we understand it today.”

We need to turn to science for our answers

Therefore the Bible alone cannot provide the basis for a Christian view of homosexuality. But that doesn’t mean we have nothing to go on. There are plenty of other sources for reliable information. Multiple disciplines together provide a coherent view that everyone should embrace. In sum, the “latest scientific, psychological, historic, pastoral, and biblical evidence” demonstrate “that homosexuality is neither sickness nor sin but another of God’s mysterious gifts.”

Don’t get hung-up on what appears to be some very obvious Old Testament verses to the contrary, because scholars “assure us that the author of Leviticus says nothing about homosexual relationships as we understand them today.”

According to White, the little reliable information about homosexuality that we find in the Bible is actually quite positive. In Luke 7:1-10 there’s an account of Jesus healing the servant of a Roman centurion. That servant was the centurion’s homosexual lover. The centurion wanted his lover to be healed by Jesus, but he realized that if Jesus actually came to his house he would be “outed” as a homosexual and then be ostracized. So he asked Jesus to heal the servant without coming into his house.

White writes that, “Jesus must have smiled to himself knowing that the centurion and his lover had no reason to be embarrassed or ashamed. He knew why they hid their loving relationship from the local religious authorities and the gossips on the street, but they had no reason to hide their relationship from God, who created them and loved them exactly as they were. Instead of taking that risk, Jesus healed the outcast lover on the spot.” Isn’t that interesting?

Jesus doesn't have anything against homosexuality. In fact, he accommodated the centurion so that he would not get ostracized by the religious authorities.

If you haven't seen all the gay-positive passages of the Bible, perhaps it's because of faulty translation. White claims that "Our GLBT [gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans-

gender] Bible stories have been taken from us by homophobic translators, and it's time we take them back."

According to him, a proper translation of John 13:23 reveals the following interesting information:

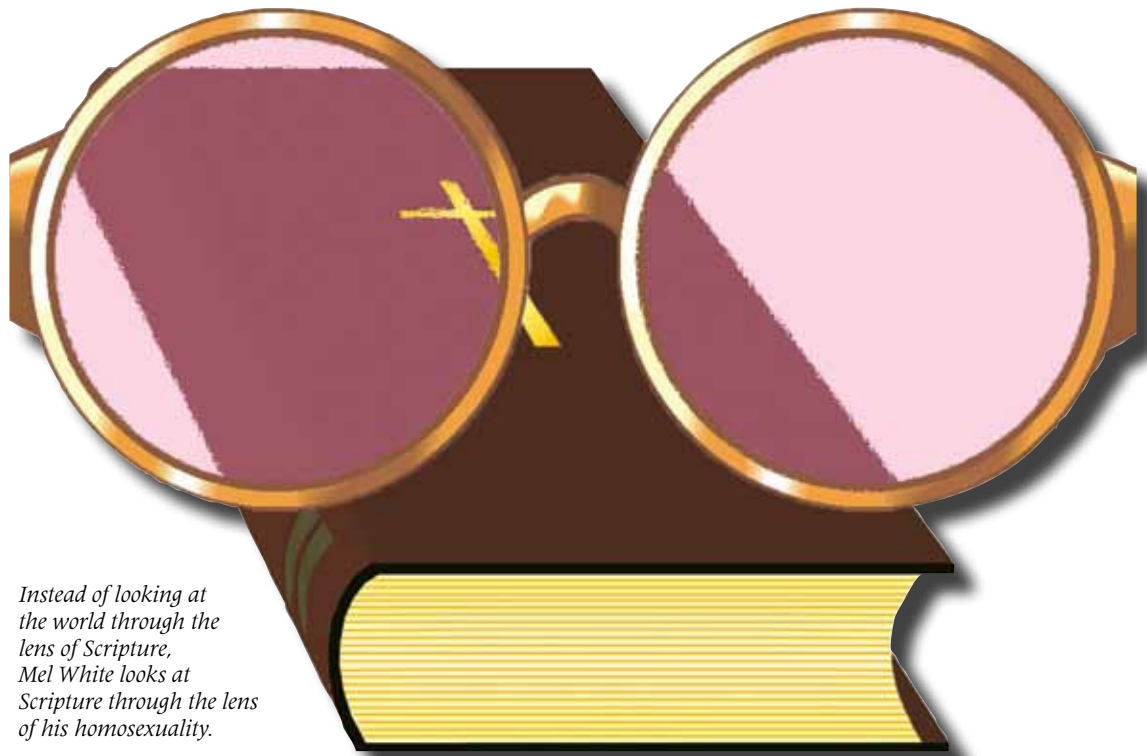
"The 'beloved disciple' was either in Jesus' lap looking up at him or lying between his legs leaning up against his chest, or if Jesus was reclined on one elbow, the disciple could have used Jesus as a pillow."

White claims that this reveals, "that Jesus is not afraid of intimate physical contact with another man." Get it? Wink, wink, nudge, nudge. If you find this interpretation compelling, you're probably not a regular reader of *Reformed Perspective*.

Errant, fallible and definitely not literal

Mel White sees conservative Christianity as the great obstacle to the widespread acceptance of homosexuality in society. Or, as he puts it, fundamentalist Christianity is "the real problem." So the way to overcome this problem is to undermine the conservative Christian view of the Bible and the Bible's teaching on homosexuality. He claims that conservative Christians have adopted an "excessive commitment to a literal Bible" which has resulted in a particular form of idolatry, "bibliolatry." "The Bible becomes a dead idol when we call the words between its covers inerrant, infallible, to be taken literally." So it is neither inerrant, nor infallible, nor to be taken literally. And we need the liberal "scholars" to tell us what it means.

Here is White's argument in a nutshell: The Bible contains errors and it is fallible. Therefore it is unreliable. Besides, when read "correctly" – that is, through the eyes of liberal "scholars" – the Bible presents a positive view of homosexuality. Thus the whole foundation for "antigay" views



Instead of looking at the world through the lens of Scripture, Mel White looks at Scripture through the lens of his homosexuality.

is undermined. There is absolutely no reason whatsoever to oppose homosexuality. Case closed.

Truth is quite different

It sounds simple enough but it's not true. White was raised within a Christian household and no doubt imbibed a Christian worldview. But since his homosexual desires overwhelmed him, he needs to justify himself in light of that worldview. Basically, homosexuality and Biblical Christianity are incompatible – one of them has to go. It's like in the old Westerns where a gunslinger would tell his rival, "this town ain't big enough for the both of us." So White shoots Biblical Christianity.

But he's shooting blanks.

As White's own examples demonstrate, the pro-gay interpretation of the Bible is clearly grasping at straws. Declaring that Moses and Paul didn't know anything about homosexuality, and twisting some verses to say Jesus approves of homosexuality, just goes to show how far people will go to justify their sin. Being unwilling to admit the obvious – that the Bible condemns homosexuality – White wants to convince people that the Bible has been misunderstood and that its real meaning is supportive of homosexuality and gay rights.

In other words, White has put politics above the Bible. Homosexuality and the extension of homosexual rights are more important to him than the Bible. Therefore the Bible has to be reinterpreted to suit his goals. Rather than change his lifestyle to conform to the Bible, he'll change the Bible to conform it to his lifestyle. He accuses conservative Christians of idolatry, but the real idolatry is right here. Mel White's god is homosexuality, and he wants Christianity to bow down to that god.

BEST BOOKS: THREE THAT GIVE PERSPECTIVE TO THE MIDDLE EAST

reviewed by Jon Dykstra

NOW THEY CALL ME INFIDEL

by Nonie Darwish

CONTENT: Nonie Darwish lived the first 30 years of her life in Egypt and the Gaza Strip, and is the daughter of a “shadeed,” a Muslim martyr. She makes the case, with stories from her life, that radical Muslims are in charge in the Middle East, and are making inroads into the US as well. She acknowledges that there are many moderate Muslims, but argues that they are so intimidated by the radicals, that they aren’t willing to speak up. And because the moderates won’t resist, the Islamic world continues to take a turn to the extreme.

CAUTIONS: The author turned her back on mosques, and started attending a Christian church, but readers should not look to her for any insight into our Christian faith. It is evident that she prefers Christianity to Islam, not because she understands that Jesus is “the Way and the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6) but rather because Christianity is more in accord with her own personal moral code.

CONCLUSION: The author is a knowledgeable guide to understanding the Middle East culture and Islam. While she is a talented writer, and the book is a very enjoyable read, it does assume some familiarity with the Middle Eastern conflict, so it would be recommended for readers who either lived through, or were taught about, some of the events (like the Six Day War, the 1948 establishment of Israel) that she describes.



UNDERSTANDING THE KORAN

A Quick Christian Guide to the Muslim Holy Book

by Mateen Elass

CONTENT: This is a 192-page introduction to the Koran by a Presbyterian pastor, who was raised in Saudi Arabia. It outlines how the Koran is a compilation of muddled Bible stories, Gnostic accounts, and Jewish folk tales, and it compares and contrasts Christian views on our Bible with Muslim views about the Koran.

CAUTIONS: In Chapter 6 “Is Allah a False God?” the author argues that, like the Samaritans in New Testament times (see John 4:22), Muslims worship the real God, but in ignorance. This is a controversial stance, but it becomes much less so when the author makes it clear he isn’t arguing for any sort of equivalence between Islam and Christianity or that Muslims can be saved apart from Jesus.

CONCLUSION: Introductions to Islam can generally be divided into those that have nothing but good to say about Islam, and those that have nothing but bad. The strength of this title is that it takes a third approach – the author is Christian, but one knows and loves Muslims, so while he is direct, thorough, and quite devastating in his critique of the Koran, he always remains calm, and never resorts to rhetoric. *Understanding the Koran* is small (and engaging) enough to be read in a few evenings, but the depth of material, and the review questions for each chapter make this one worth rereading at a more studious pace.



ONCE AN ARAFAT MAN

by Tass Saada

CONTENT: A former PLO sniper and chauffeur Yasser Arafat, who fought the Israelis and assassinated civilians, immigrates to the United States. Almost twenty years later, he becomes a Christian and starts reaching out, first to Jews, and then to Arabs in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, hoping, with God’s help, to bring hope to the youth.

CAUTIONS: Tass Saada’s conversion is described by him as a “mystical experience.” After hearing just one line from the Bible (John 1:1) he was forced to his knees, saw a light and heard a voice speak John 14:6. He has a few other such encounters where he hears a response from God. Such spiritual encounter claims are something Christians should examine with caution, as we know in some churches spiritual mysticism replaces the Bible, and sometimes blatantly contradicts it (a friend of my father once told him that God has ordered him to divorce his wife and marry his hot young girlfriend). But while caution is warranted, extreme skepticism is not – nothing Saada hears from God conflicts with what He has said in his Word.

CONCLUSION: Though the author is not Reformed, his life is proof of God’s irresistible grace. God turned this violent young man into someone willing to risk death to spread the Good News to Muslims.



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

FIVE THINGS TEENS WANT THEIR PARENTS TO KNOW. . . BUT MAY NOT BE TELLING THEM

by William Boekestein

Last year I had the privilege of sitting on the grass surrounded by twenty high-schoolers sharing in one of the most honest and sincere conversations I've had in some time.

I asked a few teens if they would help me write an article on some of their family struggles. Our discussion centered around several questions that could be summed up in one: "What would you like your parents to understand about you?" This conversation was not designed to be a complaint session but, rather, the questions were carefully asked and, for the most part, thoughtfully and respectfully answered. Wanting to avoid the bandwagon effect, I asked the students to write down their answers first before we discussed them. Notwithstanding this safeguard, their answers were strikingly similar.

This article will seem rather lopsided. It is. Remember, this is just one side of what, ideally, would be a two-way conversation. But I believe if parents would take these concerns seriously, they might hear themselves reading in a younger voice, reminiscent of when they were teenagers.

What follows are five things your teens would like you to know but may not be telling you. Take these points for what they are worth, but keep in mind that they come from the real words of real teenagers who are quite likely similar to yours.

#1 "You don't understand me"

This may sound like a line right out of a punk-rock song but several teens lamented that their parents have "forgotten what it's like to be teenagers." According to one teen, her parents only know her according to her likes and dislikes (an okay way to know a restaurant menu but not a person). One especially insightful teen would like to remind her parents that she's still trying to figure out who she is and could really use some help. Perhaps the first line of help her parents

might take would be to spend some time getting to know her more intimately.

On a related note, several of the teens expressed frustration over being compared with their siblings. As important as groups are to teenagers, they still desire to be known as individuals. Many parents have defended themselves by insisting: "I treat all of my children exactly the same." Given the reality of human complexity and diversity, this approach is probably counter-productive.

There is comfort in being known. The Psalmist rejoices that God has searched him and has known him (Psalm 139:1). In a similar way, your teenager desires to be truly known by you.

#2 "You treat me like a child"

In the interest of disclosure, some of the teens admitted they kind of like playing the "kid card" when it's convenient (as in, "Don't expect too much of me, I'm just a kid"). In some sense teenagers are children. Parents should not expect the same level of performance from them as they would from themselves or other adults. Several of the teens expressed anguish over the too-high expectations of their parents. Could it be that overly-ambitious parents tend to push their teens to be equally overly-ambitious? One teen is getting the message from her folks that participation in more activities makes a better person.

Still, the reality is that teens are quickly becoming adults and they do rightly expect an increasingly more mature relationship with their parents. When this doesn't happen, frustration and disillusionment set in. According to one frustrated teen: "My parents think I don't have a say until I'm an adult." My suspicion is that many of our teens have heard a variation on the phrase "Just wait till you get into the real world"

FOR PARENTS ABOUT THEIR TEENS

one too many times. They want to remind their parents that they do live in the real world and really do have problems. Trivialization of this fact causes pain.

One of the great challenges of family life is succeeding in helping children develop into wise adults. The oft-quoted proverb on child-rearing (22:6) begins with the word “train.” The word implies that the relationship between the trainer and trainee will change as the latter matures.

#3 “You don’t spend enough time with me”

This might be surprising. With few exceptions, teens want more independence. But they are also yearning for closeness, even with their parents. Several teens claimed to spend less than fifteen minutes a week in meaningful, personal interaction with their parents. Social commentators remind us that as connected as teens are today, they are as lonely as ever. One sixteen year old said that he and his parents only communicate at dinner and in the car. Teenagers can tell when family time is conveniently squeezed into these otherwise “unproductive” time slots.

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Several teens claimed to spend less than fifteen minutes a week in a meaningful, personal interaction with their parents
.....

Some families’ schedules are simply too hectic to allow for any real heart-to-heart time. One of the most foundational texts on child-rearing strongly implies that real training and growth requires spending considerable time together (Deut. 6:7).

Seventy-five per cent of the teens I talked with wished the main provider of their family worked less. A young man, whose dad works hard to provide his family with all the “stuff” of the good life, still notices how much he isn’t home. Another noted: “I don’t like it when my mom isn’t around to hang out with me.”

A few years ago at a parenting conference, I heard Paul Tripp challenge breadwinners to consider taking a demotion,



FOR PARENTS ABOUT THEIR TEENS

trading in their new cars and homes for older, less luxurious ones and begin recapturing the hearts and calendars of their kids. Not every provider will have to respond so drastically. It might be enough to say “no” to one or two non-family obligations per week and schedule some family time instead. The burden upon breadwinners differs from one situation to another. But remember that a father’s main duty to his child is to “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). It is difficult to fulfill this duty and pursue the American dream at the same time.

As an encouragement, one teen summed up what others may be feeling: “I don’t care about money. . . I love my dad more than anyone in the whole world and would like him around more.” Contrary to the impressions they sometimes give, most teens don’t want more stuff. They want you. Buck the current trend of busyness and consider ways of making yourself more available to them.

#4 “I want to communicate better with you”

You might be inclined to respond, “Well, then why don’t you?” A typical teen’s answer: “I’m afraid of a negative response.” Young people want to communicate openly but many have realized that they can avoid a lecture if they just keep their discouragements and fears and sins to themselves.

Let’s make this concrete. How would you respond if your son had the courage to tell you that he recently struggled with pornography? How different would your response be if the same revelation came from a close friend? Remember, as your teens grow up, they begin to move into the position of becoming your peer.

On the other hand, teens also regret not being as open as they know they should be. They know that, despite how they are received, they owe a debt of honesty to their folks. If this is true of your teen, it might not take much on your part to facilitate the kind of honesty and openness you both desire.

#5 “I don’t have everything together”

The teens honestly admitted their shortcomings in their relationships with their parents. The character failures they listed will sound familiar to you: I’m disrespectful, impatient, stubborn, irresponsible and overly blunt. I have a quick-triggered tongue and a negative attitude. I regularly fail to communicate and get easily angered.

I don’t know about you, but that list reminds me of someone: ME! As a parent I don’t have everything together either. How much energy do we, like our teens, expend trying to put up a façade? One way to begin dismantling that façade is to

implement James 5:16, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another. . . .”

Regrettably, an “us-versus-them” mentality seems to exist between many parents and teens. A helpful question both “sides” should ask is, “In what way am I contributing to this conflict?” God knows that parents may provoke many of the disagreeable traits listed above. He, therefore, warns especially fathers to examine their own hand in their children’s faults (Eph. 6:4).

.....
Contrary to the impressions they sometimes give, most teens don’t want more stuff. They want you.
.....

Most of the teens either hinted at or explicitly affirmed their love for their parents. Most of them didn’t give the impression that their parents were failing them. Still, if the above is any indication, parents and teens could use some help.

What can parents do?

Read *Age of Opportunity* by Paul Tripp (P&R, 2001). Off hand, I cannot think of a book, in any category, that has been more helpful to me than this one. One of the simplest suggestions he gives parents is to pursue their teens. “Don’t ever let them view you as being outside of their functional world.”

Talk to your teen about some of the issues raised here, but don’t announce to him that the two of you are going to “have a talk” about your relational problems. Instead, plan an intentional, quiet moment with him (Deut. 6:7), tell him that you really value your relationship and want to be more open, honest and involved. Ask for his forgiveness for your part in the distance that has developed between you. Then ask a few simple questions with the intention of *not* following up his answers with a lecture. Instead, you might hear your teen out, thank him for his openness, and pray together seeking God’s forgiveness and intervention. In the coming weeks, continue to talk and pray and rejoice as you see the Lord causing your relationship to flourish.

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FOR PARENTS ABOUT THEIR TEENS

BEING WISE WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG MEANS YOU ARE QUICK TO. . .

GO ASK YOUR PARENTS!

by Martin VanderWal

If you look up Proverbs 1:8, 2:1, 3:1, 4:1-5 & 7:1 you will find over and over again the call of a father to his son: "My son, listen. . . ." These words, repeated as often as they are, might give us the impression that Solomon must keep calling his son back to him. This son might need to have his attention called back to the wisdom his father wishes to teach him. Or this son might need to be pursued by his father to turn him back to the wisdom that he must learn from his father.

You teenagers of the church must know your part in the wonderful transaction of wisdom set out in the whole book of Proverbs. What must your wisdom be? Your wisdom is not to go your own way until your parents get in front of you and confront you about that way in order to turn you from it. Neither is your wisdom to wait until your parents say to you, "My son!" or, "My daughter!" Your wisdom is to go and ask your parents.

Don't take your parents for granted

This wisdom is part of your spiritual maturity. As you grow in the strength of youth you receive more privileges and more freedoms, but also more responsibilities. You are expected to become more responsible. That responsibility does not only mean additional chores, or that you must use the freedom you have to do good and not do evil. That responsibility also touches on the relationships that you have. You are responsible to maintain them and keep them in good shape.

That responsibility is easier when it comes to relationships with your friends. How eager you are to talk to them, share with them the things that happen to you, and discuss what you think about different topics. But that responsibility is more difficult when it comes to your relationship with your parents.

What makes that responsibility more difficult is that your relationship with your parents has gradually changed from the

time that you were very young. As you have become older, your view of your parents has changed. No longer do you view them simply as authority figures who instruct you and expect your obedience to their instruction. No longer are you completely dependent on them for so many of your needs. You are more able to make your own decisions. You have gained more independence in your thinking and actions. You are better able to judge matters for yourself. With this growth and development, your relationship with your parents has changed. And your role in that relationship changes. You have become responsible for actively promoting a good relationship with your parents.

It is easy for you to maintain relationships with your friends, but there is temptation to put all your efforts into those friendships, and leave nothing for your parents. Your relationship with your parents you might neglect and take for granted. As a result, your relationship with your parents would suffer tremendous damage. So well-known to your friends, you would become a stranger to your parents!

Go ask your parents

Your wisdom is not to let yourself become a stranger to your parents. Who knows you better, your friends or your parents? Whom do you wish to know you better, your friends or your parents? Whose approval and whose love do you cherish more, your friends' or your parents'? Go ask your parents!

Why go ask your parents? Because God has given you to them and them to you. Your relationship to them is more solid and sure than any of your friendships. That relationship is of great benefit to you, and through your care for it the Lord will richly bless you. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God gives thee." "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; For they shall be an ornament of

FOR TEENS ABOUT THEIR PARENTS

grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (Prov. 1:8-9). "So shall you find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man" (Prov. 3:4).

Your parents have been given wisdom by God! In God's wisdom He has determined to give you, His child, to them. He has given to them the calling to teach you His wisdom. He has given them wisdom as they read, study, and know His Word. He has given them wisdom as they have lived their lives in the light of God's Word. You honor God when you act according to His way, seeking that wisdom from your parents.

.....
***You are in a position to get to know
your parents on a mutual basis***
.....

Your parents' wisdom is a particular wisdom. Their wisdom has been shaped and molded by their years under God's Word. The Lord has given them their wisdom through the different experiences of their lives, including their care and nurture of you. Their wisdom is especially for you. They have been prepared by God's providence especially to raise you up in wisdom and knowledge. But they also have known you your entire life. They know you as only parents can know their own children. They know you better than you know yourself.

So go, ask your parents!

Ask your parents about themselves

Your parents have also been given authority to instruct you. That authority God has established in the Fifth Commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother. . ." (Ex. 20:12). You honor your father and mother by going to them to ask them their opinions and judgments. You show them that you esteem them highly and that you value their thoughts. You treat them with honor and respect when you seek out their knowledge and advice. You show a delight in God and in God's gift to you of your parents by going to them and asking them.

So go ask your parents! Show an interest in them. Ask them about their day. Ask them about the different projects in which they are involved. You are in a position to get to know your parents on a mutual basis. As you grow older you will

find that you and your parents have a great deal in common, far more than the same address, the same looks, and the same temperaments. You will find you have the same goals and interests, perhaps the same ways of looking at life, the same ways of solving problems and dealing with difficulties.

Along those same lines, ask your parents if there is anything that you can do to help them. Make yourself available to them in a way that is forward instead of waiting for them to hunt you down. Show that you are completely at their disposal. Do not only ask them when there are chores to be done. Ask if you can help when they are busy in their hobby or a special project.

Ask about yourself

Ask your parents about yourself, if you dare! Ask them if there is any part of your life that needs improvement. Ask them about your clothes, your music, your appearance, your friends. Especially if you have your doubts about what is right, look for their input. If you wonder whether or not this or that friend, or even a group of friends, is good for you, ask them. Ask them about the person you're dating. Would he or she make a good husband or wife?

Ask about God

Ask your parents about spiritual things. Ask them to help you with your catechism homework and your Bible homework. Ask them to explain when you run across a difficult passage in your Scripture reading. When it is your turn to lead in a Bible study or after-recess discussion, be sure to get their help. Seek their advice when you see a friend going in a bad direction and ask them what you should do to help him. Ask them what they think about moral issues that come up in conversations with your friends.

Conclusion

You will find many benefits from asking your parents. You will find that the conflicts you might have with your parents will occur less and less and may even disappear altogether. You will notice that you will not be defensive around them. Nor will you always think they are prying into your matters. This is because you make yourself more open to them, and, as a result, the trust that they have for you grows. Your confidence

**FOR TEENS
ABOUT THEIR PARENTS**

in them will grow as you see the wisdom that the Lord has given them for your benefit. You will also better understand their good motives in their concern for you and your heart and walk. You will also feel less conflict and strife within yourself and more assurance. You will have your parents' approval and delight because of your good, strong relationship with them. "A wise son makes a glad father" (Prov. 10:1, 15:20).

You will also find yourself growing much stronger spiritually. Having a good relationship with your parents means that you are open to their godly influence. They will be encouraged to bring you into their discussions about doctrine and worship and other matters of the church. They will be much more eager and forward to share with you what they discussed and learned in their study of God's Word in their societies and in their personal devotions. For in your questions to them they will find evidence of a receptive mind, eager to grow in the knowledge of your God. In the solid, spiritual relationship you enjoy with your parents you will find much support and encouragement for your walk with the Lord.

.....
***Your confidence in them will grow
as you see the wisdom that the Lord
has given them for your benefit***
.....

So go now, ask your parents! If this is a completely different way for you, change now. If this will surprise your parents, the sooner the better. Surprise them. It will be a pleasant surprise. This difference will not be a step backward, back to the time when you were a child simply adoring and worshipping your parents and thinking them flawless. It will be a step forward into a maturity that is the strength of a Christian, covenant son or daughter of covenant, Christian parents.

You can start now: go ask your parents!

A version of Rev. Martin VanderWal's article was first published in Vol 87, Issue 6 of The Standard Bearer. It is reprinted here with permission.



FOR TEENS ABOUT THEIR PARENTS

Follow the Evidence?



Following the evidence is like getting on a roller coaster ride, hitting highs when the evidence seem to confirm the Bible, and plunging into the depths when other evidence seems to oppose it

by Wes Bredenhof

There was a refrain frequently heard on early episodes of TV's *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. Gil Grissom was training rookie crime scene investigators, sharing with them his many years of experience in the field. Grissom would often say, "Follow the evidence. . . ." The understanding was that just following the evidence would lead to the perpetrator of the crime. Following the evidence would lead to the truth.

In the world of TV crime scene investigation, this might usually work as a sound philosophy. Even there occasionally writers and producers have explored the possibility that the evidence can be tainted by factors related to those investigating it. The evidence is not always interpreted objectively and thus conclusions (right or wrong) can still ultimately be reached on the basis of prejudice or gut feeling. This "follow the evidence" philosophy sounds good in principle, but it doesn't always work out in practice.

A very popular principle

Moving into the real world, the principle of "follow the evidence" is the basic philosophy behind much of Christian apologetics today. Walk into a vanilla Christian bookstore these days and if they have an apologetics section, it's likely everything there will be based on this principle. Lee Strobel is popular with his *The Case for a Creator*, *The Case for Faith*, and *The Case for Christ*. I won't discount everything he writes in these books, but it should be noted that his basic principle is the same as CSI Grissom: follow the evidence. The same is true for the majority of others writing on the subject of apologetics today. For that reason alone, this principle needs critical evaluation.

Yet there is another reason why we should pause for careful reflection. In the Canadian and American Reformed Churches we're in the throes of debate on the compatibility of Christianity and evolution. It might not seem like "throes" at the moment because some of our church press has shut down discussion on it. However, we ought not to kid ourselves, these issues are not going away. If the historical experience of the Christian Reformed Church is any indication, we should expect proponents of theistic evolution to keep

trying until they not only make room for their position, but also gain converts to the point of having their position as the dominant one.

In this debate, the allegation has been made that young university students have been sent into turmoil when encountering the evidence for evolution. As the story has it, these students were taught creation science at home, church, and school. They were told that the evidence made it clear that God had created the world *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) in six ordinary days some thousands of years ago, not millions or billions. Arriving at university, they encounter a different batch of evidences not previously considered. This sends their faith into a tailspin and, so the story goes, some of them even end up committing suicide.

On a superficial level, we can join in bemoaning this approach to such issues. Here is some common ground with those attempting to make room for theistic evolution in our churches – we can agree that something has gone awry with those young university students, though we would still likely disagree on the details. From their perspective, the problem rests with creation science, which produces faulty evidence because of certain faith convictions regarding creation. From our perspective, staking your faith on extra-biblical evidences is always problematic. Let me explain why.

The theological background of evidential apologetics

Evidential apologetics is a philosophy of defending the faith which rests upon the use of evidence.

This system of apologetics is usually traced back to Joseph Butler (1692-1752), an Anglican bishop. Butler lived during the time of the Enlightenment, also known as "The Age of Reason." There were serious challenges being posed against the Christian faith at that time, including Rationalism, the belief that reason could provide the basis of all knowledge – this idea had infiltrated not only society, but also many churches. The Enlightenment was a weak period for theology, and Reformed theology was also affected (or better: infected).



Butler recognized that Enlightenment philosophy endangered the Christian faith, and he saw the danger that one particular Enlightenment philosophy – Deism – posed. Deism is the belief that God is a clockmaker: He created the universe, wound it up like a clock, and from there the universe has been proceeding onwards without His input. So, according to Deism, God takes an arms-length approach to the world. Butler rightly saw that this philosophy was in conflict with the teachings of the Bible.

In 1736, Butler published a book entitled *The Analogy of Religion*. This work was a response to Deism. It was a defense of the faith. Butler aimed to show there are no sound objections to the Christian religion. He said all the evidence, especially the evidence in the natural world, points to the very probable truth of Christianity. As long as a person doesn't ignore the abundance of evidence, he or she should not reject

the Bible or any of its teachings. Unprejudiced minds, said Butler, would see the design inherent in the world and almost inevitably reach the conclusion that there is a Creator. A fair evaluation of the external evidence would likely push the open-minded unbeliever to accept the Bible. Butler purposed to demonstrate the truth of the Bible through facts, evidence and logic – and he believed it was not only possible to do this, but also pleasing to God.

How our presuppositions impact us

When evaluating Butler's approach, we have to remember the importance of what we call *presuppositions*. These are our most non-negotiable beliefs or assumptions about the way the world really is.

Butler was an Arminian and one of his presuppositions was that man had not fallen so far as to completely corrupt his thinking. He did not confess the doctrine of pervasive

(or total) depravity found in the Canons of Dort, and instead repudiated it. This had consequences for his system of apologetics. So did another related presupposition: the freedom of the will of fallen man. According to Butler and other Arminians, fallen man retains free will to choose for or against God. He need only use his faculties rightly in order to make the right choice.

While Butler saw the dangers of the Enlightenment and wanted to combat Deism in particular, the weapons of his warfare were earthly and unscriptural. We might wish that Butler was a mere footnote in the history of Christian apologetics, but unfortunately his approach became widely accepted. Much of what we see today in non-Reformed (“evangelical”) apologetics finds its historical roots in the Arminian apologetics of this Anglican.

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We should expect proponents of theistic evolution to keep trying to the point of having their position as the dominant one

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Evidential apologetics, historically and in its modern form, makes its case based not only on the evidence (and the nature of evidence), but also on a certain understanding of human nature. According to this system, human nature is not pervasively depraved. The human intellect is not fallen or dead in sin, only weakened or sick. Neutrality is not only possible, but a reality. When confronted with the evidence, and with perhaps a little help from God, the unprejudiced man will recognize the truth and turn to the Bible and believe it. This is Arminian theology applied to apologetics.

Unfortunately, this system has been appropriated by many involved with creation science. Many creation scientists have been Arminian in their theological convictions, so this should not come as a surprise. It is only consistent for Arminians to adopt evidential apologetics, whether in general, or whether specially applied to the question of origins. Inconsistency emerges when Reformed believers adopt this approach. “Following the evidence” is not our way.

A biblical approach

When we approach the question of evidence, we need to do so with Reformed, which is to say biblical, presuppositions. There are several of them we could discuss. However, in the interests of time and space, let me restrict our discus-

sion to two of the most important. These are the presuppositions – the non-negotiable beliefs that will govern how we consider the place and use of evidence in apologetics.

1) Fallen man, fallen reason

The first is our confession regarding the nature of fallen man. As Ephesians 2:1 puts it, the unregenerate person is dead in transgressions and sins. This spiritual death extends to all the parts of a fallen human being: heart, mind, and will are all without a sign of life. When it comes to the Christian faith, fallen man does not have the capacity to interpret the evidence rightly. What the fallen man needs is regeneration. He needs to be made alive by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit needs to open his eyes so that he may see, understand, and believe. The Holy Spirit does this work of regeneration through the Word of God. Therefore, the Word of God, not external evidences, needs to be the focus of our apologetical efforts. From a Reformed perspective, apologetics involves bringing the Word of God to bear on unbelief to expose its futility and to vindicate and commend the Christian worldview.

The Bible is our foundation

A second necessary presupposition builds on that. We always start with a belief that the Bible is God’s inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word. Those doctrinal positions are not conclusions that we reach through reasoning and proofs. They are held in faith. We hold to what is called the self-attesting authority of Scripture. That means the Bible attests or confirms its own authority. It does not need to be proven. The Bible claims to be the Word of God and we receive it as such. This is a settled truth for Christians. Therefore, the Bible is the basis and standard for all our apologetics. We are defending the Bible and the biblical worldview, but the Bible is also the guide for how we defend the Bible. The Bible gives us the means and strategies to use in defending the Bible.

“The evidentialist roller coaster”

Where does that leave external evidences? Well, for one thing, we do not build our system of apologetics upon them. Instead, our system has to be grounded on the Word of God. The Word is the supreme authority, not outside evidence. The Holy Spirit does not promise to regenerate people through external evidences. He does promise to do that through the Scriptures, though it is not inevitable in every case, obviously. What’s more, because evidence is always interpreted evidence, and the interpretation is always done by sinful minds, evidence must always be evaluated according to the supreme standard of the Word of God. Since there are no neutral facts or neutral methods for considering the facts, the Word must

always be recognized as standing over the facts. It must be the grid through which the “facts” are sifted.

There is a place for evidence in apologetics and in the debate about origins. Evidence from outside the Bible can corroborate the Bible’s teachings. However, it is not the starting place, nor is it the authority. Moreover, external evidences can be fickle. What was thought to be evidence in one generation can turn out to have been misinterpreted by the next and if this is what we are resting our faith on, we are sure to be “tossed back and forth by the waves. . .” (Ephesians 4:14).

How do you stay off what one writer called “the evidentialist roller coaster”? How do you stand firm against humanists and theistic evolutionist compromisers? Not by retreating to evidence, but by standing firm on what the Word of God teaches. And by evaluating all evidence in the light of the Word of God. That also means being open to the possibility that external evidences, whether for or against biblical teaching, may be wrongly interpreted. When it comes to evidences, one should retain a level of skepticism. After all, creation scientists and humanists/theistic evolutionists are all human beings, prone to sin and to mistakes. The only firm foundation is the Word of God.

Conclusion

“Follow the evidence” might be acceptable for fictional TV characters, but in God’s world his children can’t accept this procedure when it comes to apologetics. To “follow the evidence,” as if we are all neutral observers of the world is to sell out on our fundamental presuppositions. It’s regrettable that the surge of interest in apologetics has led some in our Reformed community to dabble with evidentialist apologetics. It’s sad too that we have often imbibed these apologetics as mediated to us through some creation scientists and their organizations.

Thankfully, in the last number of years, some creation scientists have adopted a Reformed, presuppositional approach to the question of origins. Most notable are Dr. Jonathan Sarfati and Dr. Jason Lisle, both affiliated with Answers in Genesis. I recently reviewed Lisle’s book, *The Ultimate Proof: Resolving the Origins Debate*, and I want to take this opportunity to again commend it to you as a good example of how to apply Reformed apologetics to this issue. Some of Lisle’s final words in *The Ultimate Proof* provide a suitable conclusion: “Our defense of the faith comes from learning to think and to argue in a biblical way. God is logical, and we should be too. God tells us that all knowledge is in him (Col. 2:2-3), so we should train ourselves to recognize this fact” (173).

Dr. Bredenhof is the pastor at Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario.



**“Your decrees are the theme of
my song wherever I lodge”**

Psalm 119:54

THOSE HANDS ARE GRACE

by Christine Farenhorst

**We sing together – straight the
street –**

**Covenant sandals on our feet,
God’s people we. He holds our
hand**

**Electingly. The finger band
Might tighten as a childish fear
Sees something dangerous draw
near.**

**So safe our lives. Yet at a whim
We walk on paths condemned by
Him,
On paths that sing falsetto lies,
In euphony with compromise.
And – as we sing the rooster crows –
And Jesus turns – and Jesus knows.**

**Stumbling in sorrow, wailing we
Resemble Peter. Wittingly
We sang at dissonance, denied
Our Lord and Savior crucified.
And – weeping in our agony –
We know hell holds no harmony.**

**Yet through the discord of our place
Pierced hands sing out**



IN A NUTSHELL

Tidbit relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

“The free market is a bathroom scale”

“The free market is simply a measurement. The free market tells us what people are willing to pay for a given thing at a given moment. That’s all the free market does. The free market is a bathroom scale. We may not like what we see when we step on the bathroom scale, but we can’t pass a law making ourselves weigh 165. Liberals and leftists think we can.” – P.J O’Rourke

News Flash: Your horoscope may be wrong!

In January a Minnesota NBC news outlet reported on how everyone’s astrological signs may not be what they thought they were. According to astronomer Parke Kunkle there’s been quite a shift in Earth’s alignment to the Sun in the last few thousand of years, so Zodiac signs don’t match the dates they did back then. So, for example, someone born on March 20 used to be thought to be an Aries but taking the shift into account, would now be a Pisces.

A January 14 article on the *Huffington Post* noted how important this news was for anyone who follows astrology as it may mean they:

- chose the wrong career
- will have to get a tattoo removed
- aren’t actually astrologically compatible with their spouse
- will have to follow an entirely different generality each day!

SOURCE: Katia McGlynn’s “New Astrological Signs: What this means for you, posted Jan 14, 2011 on HuffingtonPost.com; “You Zodiac Sign may not be what you think” posted on Jan 12, 2011 to www.nbc-2.com

Are you wearing anything ten years or older?

Angela Reitsma Bick, the editor of *Christian Courier*, recently wrote about how friends were surprised to learn that they weren’t wearing anything that was as much as ten years old. The surprise was probably prompted by the realization that thirty years ago the situation would have been quite different. Kids’ clothing in particular was treated differently a generation ago, with patches (and patches upon patches) being far more common. Darning socks was more common, and the resoling of shoes too.

Whenever one generation decides to do something differently than the previous, it is worth a moment’s reflection – if you aren’t wearing anything from the nineties, why might that be?

- Is it a result of shoddy manufacturing and living in a throw-away culture? Are clothes simply not made to last like they once were?
- Are we financially blessed, to the point that we don’t need to wear worn out clothes?
- Are we financially irresponsible, spending money on clothes when that money could be put to better use?
- Is it a matter of clothes being less expensive to replace than they once were?
- Might it mean we are overly concerned with keeping up with the latest fashions?

Joke of the month

LADY, TO HER DOCTOR: “My husband, a marriage counselor, often refuses to accompany me to par-

ties and get-togethers. He says that so many people spoil his evening by asking him for advice. Does this happen to you too?”

DOCTOR: All of the time! But it doesn’t bother me anymore.

LADY: What do you do?

DOCTOR: “I have a wonderful remedy. When someone begins to tell me his ailments I stop him with one word: ‘Undress.’”

SOURCE: Bob Phillips’ *The Return of the Good Clean Jokes*

The way it was . . . and could be?

In the 1940s, in the Netherlands, most men worked six days a week at physically-taxing jobs. So come Sunday it could be quite a struggle for these men to keep attentive through the church service, especially when it came time to pray, and eyes were shut and heads were bowed. And to make it harder still, the prayers were quite often fifteen minutes long.

In his wartime biography *The Way It Was* author Sid Baron notes that to help these men stay attentive it was the practice then to allow the option of standing during prayer. So throughout the church, as most bowed their head to pray, many farmers and laborers would rise.

This practice is no longer common anywhere in Reformed churches, most likely because ministers no longer tax their congregation’s attention with fifteen minute prayers, and because far fewer members do heavy physical labor. Still, it might be a practice worth reviving for some particularly sleep-deprived folk: mothers and fathers of newborns!



.....
Brother, can you spare a dime?

by Gregory Koukl
(from STR.org)

You can't help having mixed feelings when people beg for food on the street. Your heart goes out to them, but you have reservations too. Is there a real need here, or is this just laziness disguised?

Here's a simple solution. Give food to the poor by helping fill the cupboards of your local church feeding program. If your church doesn't have one, find a Christian facility that does. They make sure food goes to people with a genuine need, and the Gospel goes out along with it.

Another alternative is to make up a couple of bags of food and keep them in your trunk. Include the kinds of things that can be opened without tools and eaten without cooking. Include plastic silverware that's sealed together with a napkin that you get from take-out food places. Then give it in Jesus' name.

Welfare is not God's answer to the needs of the poor. Instead, He asks for charitable, responsible, obedient giving. Don't give money to someone begging in the street. Instead, send your money to a reputable Christian agency in your area, or give food in prepackaged parcels. You'll have the peaceful confidence you've really done something for the poor and homeless.

SOURCE: This is reprinted with permission from www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5149

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Biblical, musical ABCs

Jamies Soles is well known among conservative Reformed churches in Canada, but for those that don't know of him, below are the lyrics of a song from one of his children's albums "The Way My Story Goes" which is available (along with more info) on the artist's website SolMusic.ca.

"These Are They"

Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures
For in these, you say, your life will
never end,
Don't be misled; the life you're looking
for Is found in Me, for I am found
in them.
And. . .

"These are they, these are they,
These are they which speak of Me."

Adam, Abel, Abraham,
Aaron, Ammon, Amnon, Andrew,
Abishai, Abishag, Abigail, Ahab, tell
the world of Me.
Ahaziah, Amaziah, Ahimaaz,
Ahasuerus,
Ahithophel, Abiathar, Ahitub, too,
Asahel and Absalom, Abner and
Abednego,
Asa and Amasa, just to name a few.
Now...

These are they. . . .

Boaz, Balaam, Barzillai,
Balak, Barak, Baal, Babel,
Baasha, Baruch, Benjamin, all tell the
world of Me.
Barnabas and Bethel, Bezalel and
Bilhah,
Benaiah, Belial, and Bashan, too,
Bethlehem and Ben-Hadad, Beelzebub
and Babylon,
The Bible bubbles over with Me; how
'bout you? Now...

These are they. . . .

Caesar, Caleb, Caiaphas,
Canaan, Cain, and Chedorlaomer,
Cushi, Chloe, Claudius, all tell the
world of Me.
Corinthians, Cyrenians, Cyrus and the
Cretans,
Cornelius, Capernaum, and Chimham,
see?
These are only part of it

This is but the start of it
Stories are your biblical ABCs! Now. . .

All these stories, they show My glories
These are they which speak of Me.

.....
Top 10 verses: important omission

BibleGateway.com is a website that includes dozens of different translations of the Bible. It gets more than 8 million visitors each month, and when they listed their site's most-search for verses of the Bible, Collin Hansen at TheGospelCoalition.org noticed a startling omission among them.

While the top ten includes verses that are often emblazoned on shirts, or are held up on signs at sports events (John 3:16 was the #1 verse) none of the top ten most-searched-for-verses talked about *sin*! It isn't until verse #19 that sin is mentioned: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

It's not surprising that talking about sin is unpopular. But the Good News of the Gospel only makes sense after we understand our own sinfulness, and God's hatred of sin. Then it is good news indeed that God has sent us a Savior and Mediator!

So it isn't a surprising omission, but it is a glaring one.

.....
It's not polite to talk a woman's age

Our culture worships youth, so it's no wonder *they* think it's rude to make mention of someone's age. But why do we think it's rude? After all, the Bible speaks quite highly of the elderly, as it is with age that wisdom can come (at least among the righteous). That's why Proverbs 20:29 notes that "gray hair is the splendor of the old" and Prov. 16:31 tells us: "the silver-haired head is a crown of glory." Among Christians old should be excellent!





Soup & Buns

Liking our own work Creativity to His glory

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Someone sent me an article about how a writer felt when he published his first article. It was very amusing to read about how he had read and re-read the article when it had arrived. And then, when he published his first book, he ran his hand over his name, printed on the front cover. He practically expected people to stop him on the street and say, "Aren't you the one that wrote that great piece on how to shingle a roof?" I laughed because I saw myself in this silliness, and I passed it along to my writing friends, and they laughed too.

Made in God's image. . .

Recently, I had about ten minutes to spare and I was about to grab my *Reformed Perspective* and re-read my article to appraise how I had worded my thoughts a couple of months ago when it was written. Since I write about things that the Lord lays on my heart and convicts me about, reading it again later is often a reminder to me. I suppose it's a bit like a minister paying attention to his own sermon and application.

Then I thought, "no – I only have ten minutes – I ought to start my day with reading a chapter of Scripture. As much as I might like reading over what I wrote, I will be better served with reading what God wrote."

Then I began to ponder: God likes it when we read what He wrote, just like I do. God likes it when He hears us reading aloud what He wrote, just like I do. And God, as an author, must be pleased when He hears His own words sung again also. It was a kindred feeling that I hadn't experienced before.

. . .not the other way around

God blesses us with creativity to use it to His glory. But there is a real problem when people use their creativity in ungodly ways. For instance, take a look at the account in Judges chapter 17. This seems like an odd story, about a man named Micah (not the prophet) who stole his mother's money, and then after telling her he took it, seemed loved by her all the more. She gave him part of the money to make an idol for his household, and then he appointed his own son as the priest for his family. Later on a young

Levite happened by and Micah offered him ten shekels of gold and some good-looking clothing if he would stay there and be the official priest for his family. Now he felt like he really had the very best situation, because he had a genuine Levite as the priest for his little group. The Levite received the gifts and a place to stay and no doubt had an easier life and more prestige than he would have had if serving in the temple. . . .

The whole point of Judges is actually summed up in Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

We might feel rather superior as we read this story, knowing that in no way would we ever make a couple of little idols and start worshipping them in lieu of worshipping God. But the point in the book of Judges is that God's people kept moving further and further away from Him until scenes like this one have no Judge ruling at all, and there is not even any mention of God! These were God's people. Us. If we move further and further away, little by little – eventually we won't even consider what it is that God might want us to do. We'll figure it out ourselves, devising what suits us.

As the saying goes, "God made man in His own image and then man returned the favor, making God in *his* own image."

Conclusion

God gave us creative minds and capable hands and there are many ways in which we can be happy with our work. An exquisite quilt, a field ripe for harvest, a contract to build a new item and, yes, even our words put together in a useful way. All of our best work pleases us and we are glad for the effort that went into it.

But when it comes to things that God makes clear YES or NO, we don't get to be creative, excusing our sins. We need to do things His way. "No gods before me." "No adultery." "No stealing." "No doing hateful things to or towards our neighbor, which is akin to killing."

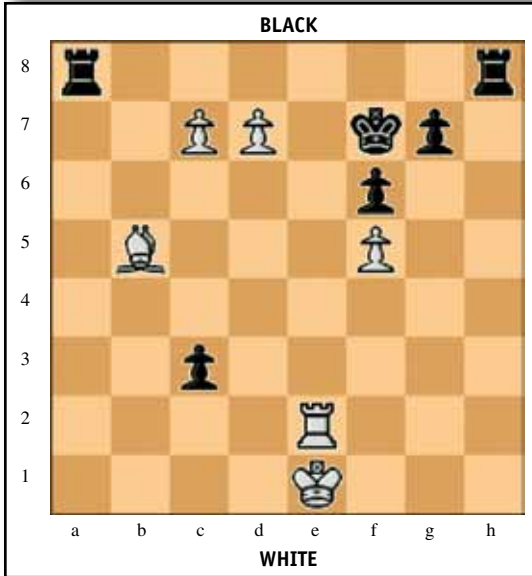
We need to analyze: are our actions right in *our* eyes, or in His?



ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

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

Chess Puzzle # 175



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

NEW PUZZLES

Riddles for Punsters #175 – “A Prof, A Catcher and a Mechanic”

Why did the baseball catcher hum a popular song during a game?
He thought that it was _____y.

Why did the professor wear a tux when teaching his students?
He thought that it was _____y.

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

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

- 1 millilitre of fuel? (**Note** that 1 mL – 1 cubic centimetre, about the volume of a sugar cube)
- 1 cubic metre of fuel?
- 800 L (to fill 10 minivans, each having 80 L tanks on “empty”)
- the amount of fuel needed to put 60 L of gas into a car each week for one year?



Answer to Riddles for Punsters #174 – “Fishy Choices”

What kind of sea creature is liked by:

- bowlers? b a l l o n fish.
- theologians? a n g e l fish.
- carpenters? h a m m e r head sharks.
- astronomers? s t a r fish.
- jewellers? g o l d fish.
- dessert chefs? j e l l y fish.

Answers to Problem to Ponder #174 – One must score and the other must miss”

Imagine two hockey teams playing a long, exhausting game that ends in a tie score, even after an overtime period, making a shoot-out necessary. Imagine that they also tie on the initial “best of three” part of the shootout. **Now the win goes to whichever team’s player scores while the other team’s player misses.** Also imagine that the probability of a Team A player shooting and scoring on goal is 0.3 or 30% while the probability of a Team B player shooting and scoring is 0.4 or 40%. (Therefore the probability of a team B player missing is 60%.) It is a Team A player that shoots first each round.

Probability A scores is 30% or 0.3 so probability A misses is 70% or 0.7 while P (B scores) is 40% or 0.4 and P (B misses) is 60% or 0.6

What is the probability of **Team B** winning in the **first** round?
(That is, what is the probability of the team A player missing and then the team B player scoring?)

P (A misses **then** B scores) = (0.7)(0.4) = **0.28 = 28%**.

What is the probability of **Team A** winning in the **second** round?

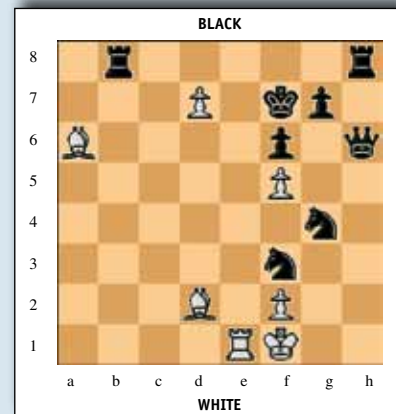
P (A misses, B misses, A scores, B misses) = (0.7)(0.6)(0.3)(0.6) = **0.0756 = 7.56%**.

What is the probability of **Team B** losing in the **third** round?

P (A misses, B misses, A misses, B misses, A scores, B misses) = (0.7)(0.6)(0.7)(0.6)(0.3)(0.6) = **0.031752 = about 3.2%**.

SOLUTIONS TO THE (FEBRUARY) PUZZLE PAGE

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 174



WHITE to Mate in 3 Descriptive Notation

- B-QB4 ch K-B1
- B-N4 ch RxB
- P-Q8=Q mate

Algebraic Notation

- Ba6-c4 + Kf7-f8
- Bd2-b4 + Rb8xb4
- d7-d8=Q ++

BLACK to Mate in 3 Descriptive Notation

- _____ N/N5-R7 ch

- K-N2 Q-R6 ch
- K-R1 N/R7-N5 dis.ch. & mate

NOTE: BLACK WINS EVEN SOONER IF

- _____ N/N5-R7 ch
- K-K2 QxB mate

Algebraic Notation

- _____ Ng4-h2 +
- Kf1-g2 Qh6-h3 +
- Kg2-h1 Nh2-g4 ++

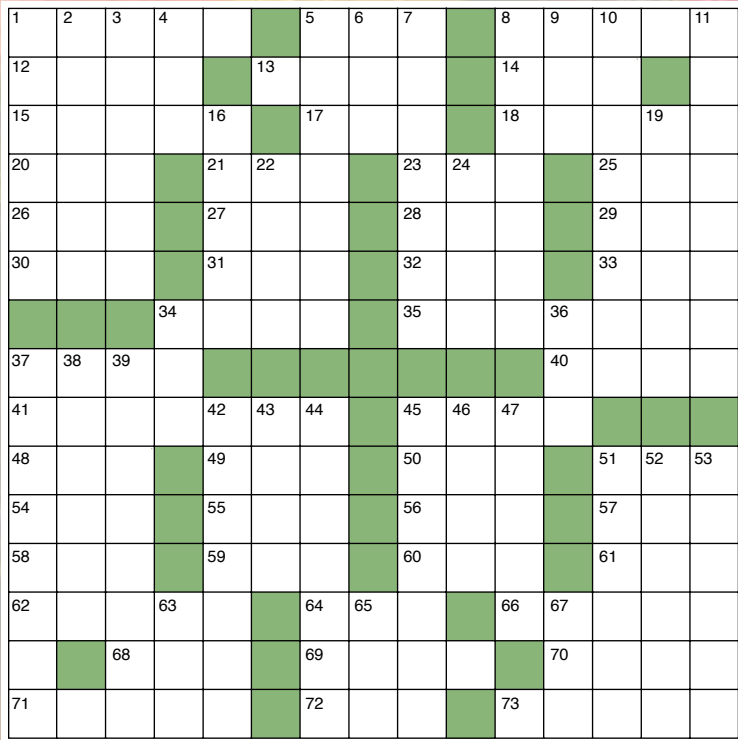
NOTE: BLACK WINS EVEN SOONER IF

- _____ Ng4-h2
- Kf1-e2 Qh6xd2 ++

Crossword Puzzle

Series 18 No 2

Last Month's solution
Series 18 No 1



ACROSS:

1. Flower part
5. Sound one makes when struck in the abdomen
8. Pillow covers
12. Car part
13. Prefix of opposition
14. Possess
15. To skulk, to cower; as of old, or a lake in Canada
17. Airport code for Toledo Express Airport
18. Repetition of a word to gain emphasis
20. Open Tool Interface (computer abbr.)
21. Dutch grandparent
23. Sheep's call
25. Fight between nations
26. Wine term
27. Short form for verse
28. Priest's name
29. Sibling
30. Exist
31. Extraterrestrial intelligence (abbr.)
32. Steal

33. Application Program Interface (computer abbr.)
34. In addition to
35. Lagged behind
37. Prepare for a trip
40. Certain sandwiches
41. Map books
45. Flower part
48. Man's name, short for Louis
49. Start of a song refrain
50. Sesame plant
51. Stereo part
54. Antimissile missile (abbr.)
55. Interest abbr.
56. Black bird
57. Letter of the alphabet
58. ___ the season
59. Abner's father (1 Sam. 14)
60. Team cheer
61. Lumberjack's tool
62. Cake topping
64. Anterior Axillary line (abbr.)
66. Up to the time
68. Protective shelter
69. Expression of relief

70. Rate of walking
71. Cake part
72. Made a lap
73. Mistake

DOWN:

1. Indian fried turnover
2. English town with a university
3. Kind of flatfish
4. Atomic Energy Commission, for short
5. Canadian province
6. Ear, prefix
7. Kind of nut
8. Tropical tree used in varnishes
9. Hole puncher
10. Winter ammunition
11. Certain drugs
16. Humble dwelling
19. Floor covering
22. Family members, at times
24. Indonesian islands
2. Bee's weapon
3. Sea eagle
44. Ancient Persian governors
45. Young actress
46. Lady's name
47. Young man conversing with Job
51. Person's image used on internet
52. N. American country
53. Kitchen tool
63. Maiden name
65. Exclamation of discovery
67. Nat'l Public Radio

Joyce