

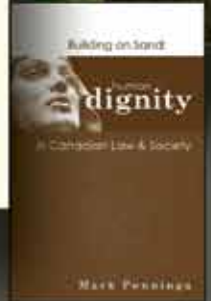
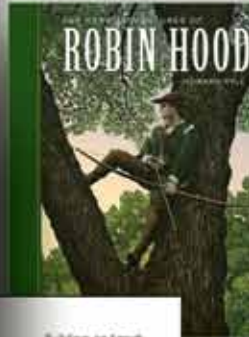
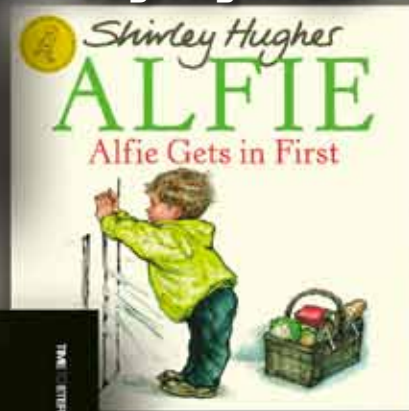
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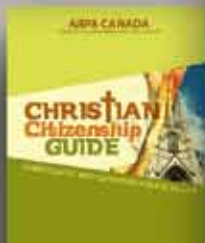
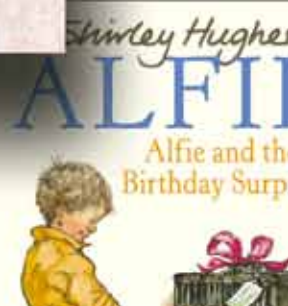
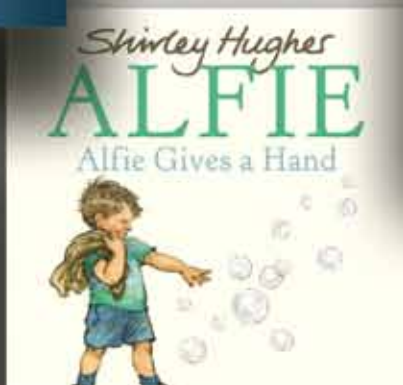
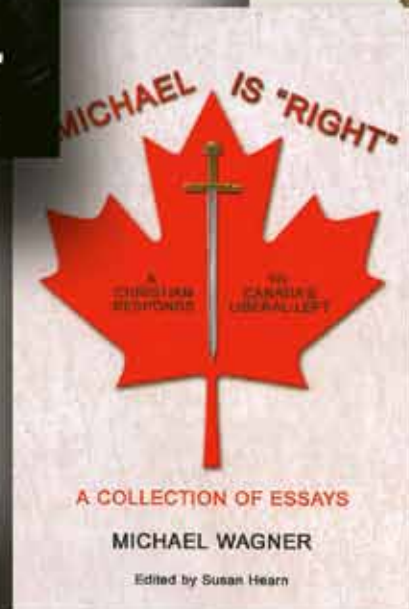
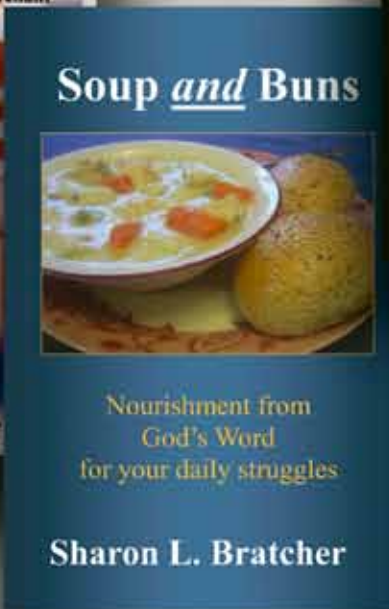
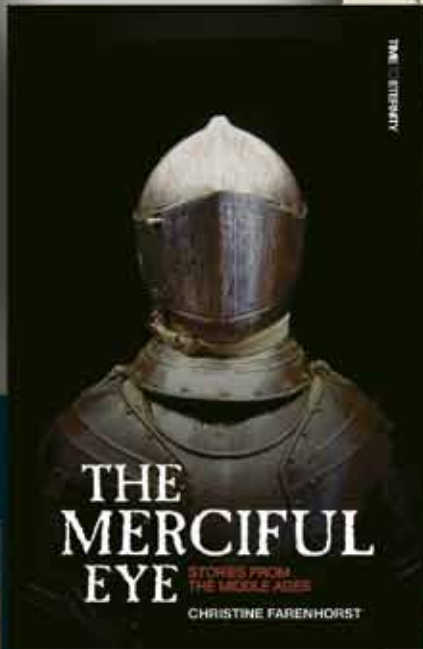
A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

Volume 30 No 9/10

July/August 2011



The Anglosphere's
Broken Covenant
Discovering the Validity and Importance
of the Solemn League and Covenant



People we should know

Cornelius Van Til

Champion of the Truth

Guest Editorial

by Michael Wagner

Cornelius Van Til was one of the greatest Christian thinkers of the twentieth century. He revolutionized Christian apologetics, the field of study specializing in defending the faith. Van Til developed what is known as “presuppositional” apologetics, but he thought of it as simply the consistently Reformed method of defending the faith.

Much has been written about him in the last twenty years or so, but it is John R. Muether’s recent biography that is the most complete: *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman* (P & R Publishing, 2008).

Coming to America

Van Til was born in the Netherlands in 1895. At the age of ten he moved with his family to the United States, where he grew up on a farm in Indiana. His family were faithful members of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

After high school he attended Calvin College and then Calvin Theological Seminary before transferring to Princeton Theological Seminary where he received his PhD in 1927. At that point he became pastor of a CRC congregation in Michigan.

But Van Til’s superior intellectual abilities had been recognized at Princeton Seminary and so he was invited to teach apologetics there in 1928.

From Princeton to Westminster

Princeton Theological Seminary was the foremost conservative Calvinist seminary in the English-speaking world from the mid-nineteenth century until about 1929. However, by the time Van Til was studying there in the late 1920s, Princeton was at the center of a struggle between God-honoring theological conservatives and rapidly apostatizing theological liberals in the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA). The conservative side was led by Gresham Machen, a Princeton professor and internationally recognized scholar.

To make a long story short, the liberals captured control of Princeton in 1929.

Van Til had become close friends with Machen and he admired Machen’s desire to defend historic Christianity. With the fall of Princeton, Machen founded Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1929 to continue the former Princeton tradition of scholarship in defense of the truth. He wanted the best conservative professors from Princeton to join him at Westminster, and that’s basically what happened. Four Princeton professors, including Van Til, came to help start Westminster.



Cornelius Van Til is best known for his “presuppositional” approach to apologetics, which he argued was simply the proper Reformed approach to defending the faith.

Van Til was initially reluctant to go to Westminster. He really wanted to be a CRC pastor. But Machen and others basically begged him to teach at the new seminary and he finally agreed. In those days the conservative-liberal battles in Protestantism were national news and this event made the news as well. As John R. Muether writes, “Under the headline ‘Seminary Loses Fourth Teacher,’ the *New York Times* reported Van Til’s appointment to apologetics at Westminster.”

This was but the start to Van Til’s rise to prominence. Due to his active involvement in various theological controversies in the years ahead, “Van Til’s reputation extended far beyond Westminster Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.”

From the CRC to the OPC

In 1936 Machen was deposed by the PCUSA basically due to his efforts to oppose the spread of theological liberalism. He then determined to form a new Presbyterian church adhering to historic Christianity. Many conservatives left the PCUSA to join him. This effort ultimately became the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

Van Til followed Machen into the OPC. The CRC recognized this as a great loss. On many occasions there were attempts to lure him back to the CRC, including four attempts to recruit him as a professor at Calvin College or Calvin Theological Seminary. However, Van Til remained at Westminster and in the OPC for the rest of his life.

He did, however, continue to interact with theological developments in the CRC, most of which were not good. As liberal trends became more pronounced within the CRC, Van Til was decreasingly appreciated there. As Muether puts it, “In a sense, Van Til did not leave the CRC so much as it left him.”

Standing up again and again

Van Til was in the forefront of efforts to defend Biblical Christianity from theological compromise in all its forms. He was, for example, the leading English-language conservative Protestant critic of popular Swiss theologian Karl Barth.

But he was also critical of evangelicalism where it failed to be fully Biblical. So when evangelist Billy Graham told new converts to Christianity to go to a church – seemingly any church – without concern for how obedient or orthodox the church might be, “Van Til charged that Billy Graham embodied the cooperative spirit of evangelism and that Graham’s popular crusades also undermined the doctrine of the church.”

Presuppositionalism refined

While teaching at Westminster, Van Til developed his distinctive apologetic position. "Simply put, Van Til devoted himself to the insistence that only a Reformed apologetic could properly defend and propagate the Reformed faith."

In his view he wasn't really doing something new. He believed he was simply introducing the English-speaking world to the work of Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921). "Van Til did not so much create a new apologetic as he refined Bavinck's approach, applying it to modernism, old and new."

In some respects his work involved adding Dutch thinking to American Presbyterianism. Muether writes,

"Van Til became the conduit for a more penetrating analysis of American Calvinistic theology, especially bringing to the forefront the insights of Dutch Reformed theology, which sought to advance the church beyond the old-Princeton tradition."

It is widely recognized that Van Til's greatest contribution to the church was his development of apologetics. In the English-speaking countries at least, before Van Til apologetics consisted largely of attempts to reason with unbelievers on an alleged common ground between Christians and non-Christians. These attempts assumed that believer and non-believer could together "look at the evidence" for Christianity, and presumably see that it must be true.

But this sort of apologetics makes something besides God's Word to be the starting point (presupposition) of apologetics – e.g. history, archeology, science, etc. – and puts the Bible in the position of having to measure up to this starting point. The truth of the Bible must be proven according to another standard, and therefore that other standard inadvertently becomes a higher authority than the Bible itself.

Muether briefly explains Van Til's point this way:

"The authority for the believer is the Word of God, and there can be no epistemological common ground between the dependent believer and the autonomous unbeliever. Therefore, because he viewed unbelievers as being in fundamental rebellion against God and blind to the truth of the gospel, Van Til rejected general appeals to the reasonableness of the Christian faith on primarily rational or empirical grounds (from either 'classical' or 'evidential' approaches) that failed to proclaim the specific claims of the gospel."

It's interesting to note that Van Til's approach helped to spawn other positive developments in theology. For example, "According to Jay Adams, the 'nouthetic school' of biblical counseling rested on a firm Van Tilian foundation." When the Bible is recognized as the ultimate starting point, other fields of thought (like counseling) can be revolutionized, not just apologetics.


A pastoral professor

Despite Van Til's greatness as a Christian philosopher, he maintained the heart of a pastor. "Van Til gave attention to the little as well as the great. He doted on children, he visited the sick, he counseled those in need. His witness to the grace of the gospel even brought him to occasional street-corner preaching."

Van Til retired from Westminster Seminary in 1972 but continued to teach courses there for a few more years. By the 1980s he was becoming increasingly concerned about the direction of Westminster Seminary as well as the OPC. He feared that militantly Reformed distinctives were beginning to wane in both of those institutions. He died in 1987.

Conclusion

Muether summarizes Van Til's life by saying that he "was unrelenting in his defense of the faith, he was consistently biblical in his approach, and he steadfastly resisted any compromise with unbelief."

Although Van Til's books can be difficult to read, there are books by "Van Tilian" presuppositionalists that explain his apologetic method in easy to understand English. From the perspective of Presbyterian and Reformed Christianity, this presuppositional approach is the essential form of apologetics for those who want to defend the faith, or even just want to strengthen their own confidence in the truth of Biblical Christianity. 

For further study

To learn about the man, I recommend the book I used as the basis of this article:

- *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman* by John R. Muether, P&R Publishing, 2008.

To learn about Cornelius Van Til's presuppositional apologetic method I recommend these two books by Van Til disciple Greg Bahnsen:

- *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* by Greg Bahnsen, Covenant Media Press, 1996.
- *Pushing the Antithesis: The Apologetic Methodology of Greg L. Bahnsen* by Greg Bahnsen, American Vision, 2007.

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I DO NOT REALLY HAVE
ANYTHING INTERESTING TO SAY



I WILL JUST SEND MY TWITTER
FOLLOWERS A QUICK MESSAGE TO
INFORM THEM THAT THAT IS THE CASE

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Nota Bene

News worth noting



Child to be raised as “genderless”

by Jon Dykstra

A Toronto couple, Kathy Witterick and husband David Stocker, aren't telling anyone the gender of their new baby, Storm Witterick. In an email explaining the decision the mother wrote: “In not telling the gender of my precious baby, I am saying to the world, ‘Please can you just let Storm discover for him/herself what s(he) wants to be?’” The parents said that they believe too many choices are made for young children, who, they insist, are quite capable of making decisions for themselves. So they plan to let their newborn choose a gender at some point in the future. The couple's five-year-old boy Jazz has been making decisions for himself for years, and has decided he likes to wear pink dresses and have his hair in long braids.

When the *Toronto Star* first ran an article about the couple on May 21 it prompted a heated reaction. The online comments showed that most thought this was a ridiculous experiment, but no one seemed able to explain precisely why it was ridiculous. Foxnews.com turned to the American Psychological Association (APA) to ask for their position. Spokesman Clinton Anderson, said that while the APA supports gender nondiscrimination, there is no research available to gauge whether raising a child as genderless might be good or bad. “I don't think the APA has any

basis for concluding one way or the other on that issue. . . . In the short term, in the long term, there's really just no basis for saying.”

So the experts too, don't know what to say. That the experiment is ridiculous is obvious, but because our society has rejected God and his standards, they don't have a basis to object when someone takes godlessness to the next level.



Christians then, are the keepers of common sense. We know, because God has told us, that there are real differences between the genders, and different roles (Gen 1:27, Prov. 31, Eph. 5). He has also made clear to us that children, rather than being left to their own devices, need parental guidance and loving discipline (Prov. 13:24, 23:3-14). So how should we respond to such silliness? By explaining to the world what God has said, and then asking them to see which way – God's, or the Wittericks' – works best. In that way we can make common sense a little more common, to the glory of God.

Sources: foxnews.com/world/2011/05/24genderless-child-creates-media-firestorm-toronto/#ixzz1NK2xMKuL christianpost.com/news/genderless-baby-myth-50455/ parentcentral.ca/parent/babiespregnancy/babies/article/995112--parents-keep-child-s-gender-secret.

Toy Story's “Woody” endorses homosexuality

by Anna Nienhuis



You may have seen a new Google Chrome ad running during primetime television reaching out to the young homosexual community with the message that they have support and not to worry about the bullying and stigma now because “it gets better.” Openly pro-homosexual-lifestyle, the massive search engine company Google has been featured in *Nota Bene* before for its plan to pay homosexual employees more than their heterosexual colleagues to counteract “injustice” in traditional health plans.

This most recent commercial is part of an advertising campaign focusing on the slogan, “The web is what you make of it.” Stars including Lady Gaga and Anne Hathaway are featured broadcasting the message that “it gets better” if you continue your homosexual lifestyle, and the animated cowboy Woody from *Toy Story* is one of the “celebrities” speaking out. The use of this popular children's movie character is a good indication of whom they hope to impact with the ad.

The ad is a disappointing public stand from an influential company, but it should remind us that the web is indeed “what we make of it,” and as Christians we should also make it work for us in promoting and disseminating healthy Christian views and values.

Source: visiontoamerica.org; “Google and ‘Woody’ from Toy Story endorse homosexuality in new ad,” May 4, 2011 and youtube.com.

Colson says: Democracy not always the answer

by Anna Nienhuis

While Syria is racked by civil war and there is talk of the cure democracy would be, many are urging caution in this endorsement of democracy. In his May 13 column Christian author Chuck Colson noted that our western view and version of democracy is not what would be instituted in Syria or in many other Middle Eastern nations, and it is important to take into account the complex factors at play when trying to implement our ideas and worldview in such a different culture.

Despite its much-reported brutality, the current Syrian government has maintained some safeguards for religious minorities, and Syrian Christians are one group fearful of enforced democracy. What many don't realize is that democracy in Syria does not come with any sort of western Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Rather, democracy simply means there will be some sort of vote to determine the government. This means it could end up as simply a new form of tyranny, with "mob rule by the majority," which could be very dangerous for Syrian Christians and other minority groups.

Source: Chuck Colson's "Democratic tyranny: Middle Eastern mobs vs. Christians"; linksmkt3980.com, May 13, 2011.

Why IVF is not an option for Christians

by Anna Nienhuis

At a recent speech connected with Canada's annual March for Life, Roman Catholic Archbishop Terence Prendergast summed up succinctly why in-vitro fertilization (IVF) is not a legitimate option for Christians.

IVF is accomplished by conceiving several children simultaneously in a lab setting and only allowing some to be implanted in the mother's womb. As a result, Prendergast pointed out, the surviving baby only gets to live at the expense of its other siblings. Instead of IVF, he states that society needs to recognize the "suffering of infertile couples" and support them so they can avoid the temptation to view babies as commodities and get a baby "at any cost."

Source: Kathleen Gilbert's "Ottawa archbishop: IVF provides children 'at the expense of their brothers and sisters'"; May 12, 2011, lifesite news.com.



Largest "March for Life" to date

by Anna Nienhuis

The 14th annual March for Life kicked off on Parliament Hill this year with the largest turnout to date – close to 15,000 by some counts. Of special interest was the high turnout of youth, both high school and college age, with approximately 800 expected to attend the Youth Conference the day after the March. This support from such a young demographic is a positive sign, as these are the very people abortion is often marketed to.

Another positive development in the pro-life movement is the planned "defund abortion" rally to be held in Toronto on September 17, 2011. The first rally of its kind in Canada, the goal is to stop taxpayer money from being used, as it currently is, to fund abortions. Events such as these, especially when turnout is strong, provide ideal opportunities to let our voices be heard and keep our government aware of how much and how many people care about the abortion issue they have so far refused to touch.

Source: John Jalsevac's "Record-breaking 15,000+ attend Canadian National March for Life"; May 12, 2011, lifesitenews.com.

Photo by Joanne Dieleman

Harold Camping has no shame, but still has followers

by Jon Dykstra



Harold Camping is an American radio evangelist who predicted that on May 21, 2011 the world would be hit with powerful earthquakes, such that the graves would open, and approximately three per cent of the world would be raptured up to Heaven. His Family Radio group put up an estimated 1,200 Billboards throughout the US, and another 2,000 overseas, advertising the date. In addition, as the date approached, it started getting a lot of media attention. Even editorial cartoonist Garry Trudeau chimed in, making the prediction the subject of a number of his *Doonisbury* com-

ics. Some of Camping's followers sold their possessions and used the money to further publicize the upcoming Judgement Day.

When May 21 came and went without the promised rapture, Camping pointed to Oct. 21, 2011 as his absolutely certain, can't be wrong, guaranteed, you can believe me this time, date for the end of the world.

The Scripture verse most often quoted to refute Camping's predictions is Matthew 24:36: "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." But this was not Camping's first Judgement Day prediction – he had previously said it was going to come in 1994 – so the Scripture that would be more to the point is Deuteronomy 18:22: "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed."

Source: <http://americanvision.org/4566/life-and-death-and-the-last-days-or-why-eschatology-matters/>

2011 March for Life was the biggest yet

We're making progress. We have further to go

by Joanne Dieleman

The 14th annual March For Life brought people from all walks of life together in Ottawa for what turned out to be the largest March held to date.

Canadian Reformed presence

This year was notable for its sunny and warm weather, which long-loyal marchers know is not always the case in May. More significantly, though, the March was notable in that at least 60 per cent of the attendees were under the age of 25, an encouraging sign for the future of the pro-life movement – which is to say, for the unborn at risk.

Before we went to Parliament Hill to join the 15,300 people for the March through the streets of Ottawa, we attended the prayer service of the Canadian Reformed church, held in the Merivale United Church. The guest minister, Rev. John Roke, delivered a message entitled “Life is Precious,” based on Psalm 106:36-39 which reads:

“They worshipped their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood. Therefore the Lord was angry with them and handed them over to the nations.”

The message reminded us that abortion kills a human being and we may not be silent about it. How can we be content when virtually all our federal and provincial leaders allow or even favor the killing of helpless babies?

In Canada, over 100,000 precious babies are aborted each year, making the unborn the most unprotected human beings in our country. Although God ordained the government to protect human life, including that of the unborn, our land is filled with the blood of the unborn. Christians need to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

The Bible speaks clearly; Science concurs

Many people claim that what is in the womb is not a real child, but we know them to be wrong both from Scripture and from medical research.

The Old Testament tells us that a man who, while fighting, caused the death of an unborn child, had to pay with his life. The New Testament tells us that a pregnant Elizabeth said to Mary, “When your greeting came to my ears, the baby leaped for joy.”

Science confirms these truths. We now know that a new human being begins at conception, complete with his/her own DNA which is present from the first day. The new little person's sex is also determined from the beginning. At 18

days the little heart is beating, the baby moves around at six weeks. At 8 weeks every part of the body is formed. We know that what is in the womb is a person, fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139). Such a child needs our protection.

It started back in 1967

With this message in mind, we proceeded to Parliament Hill for the March, which is annually held around May 14. This date has been picked to commemorate the legalization of abortion in Canada, a sad chapter in our history.

In 1967 Prime Minister Pearson and Justice Minister Trudeau launched an attack on the family by bringing in permissive laws on abortion and divorce. In the summer of 1967 – when there was virtually no pro-abortion movement in Canada – Prime Minister Pearson set up a committee, ironically in the Department of Welfare, to “study” the question of abortion. At the same time, Justice Minister Trudeau started preparing his Omnibus bill proposing changes in the Criminal code with regard to abortion, lotteries, homosexuality and even gun control. Mr. Trudeau knew he would not be able to change the abortion law in a separate bill on a free vote, so he buried the abortion bill in this “Omnibus Bill.” On May 14, 1969, the Omnibus bill of then Prime Minister Trudeau passed, and open season was declared on unborn children.

Despite the cosmetic limitations that remained in the criminal code (abortions to be performed in an accredited hospital by a three-person committee), the number of abortions rose quickly, with the committees rubber-stamping abortion requests.

Well over 3.2 million children have been killed since May 14, 1969 – a population the size of a city like Montreal or a province like Alberta.

Consequences

All of this has had consequences, for society and for the women having abortions, not to mention the lethal consequences for the child.

Abortion advocates sell abortion as a solution to the problem of an unwanted pregnancy. Abortionist Henry Morgentaler even claims that legal abortion solves problems such as crime and child abuse (even though statistics for both went way up since abortion was legalized in 1969). But rather than solve problems, abortion creates new ones. Today there are millions of families affected by abortion and many women are suffering physically, mentally and psychologically. Post-abortive



WHAT CAN WE DO?

Pray

- In our daily personal and family prayer we need to ask God to turn the tide of injustice being done to the unborn.
- Organize and attend prayer vigils in front of abortion clinics.
- Attend “LifeChain,” a worldwide event held on the first Sunday in October where people join in an hour of praying. Here in Grimsby we just started a LifeChain event and picked our own time so it would not interfere with our Sunday service. It has made an impact on our little town. We even were in the local paper. (For more information see LifeChain.net.)

Educate ourselves

- Join the local pro-life group and read their literature.
- Subscribe to the *Interim* (TheInterim.ca), Canada’s national pro-life newspaper.
- Support ARPA and read their newsletters.
- Subscribe by email to LifeSiteNews.com, a daily pro-life daily news website.
- Discuss this issue with other Christians, perhaps in small groups with the help of a video or speaker.
- Attend pro-life conferences.

Be heard

- Sign petitions.
- Wear a pro-life “little feet” pin or put a bumpersticker on your car (LifeCycleBooks.ca).
- If you know of a hospital that commits abortions, get a friend and a sign and spend out in front.
- Set up a pro-life booth at your local fair.
- Make an appointment with your M.P. or write them a letter.
- Attend the March for Life. On our trip to Ottawa we had a young family with 4 children of twelve, eleven, nine and seven. On the way home they could not stop talking about it and were full of questions. The youth are key – they surely will make a difference in the future.

Be helpful

- Volunteer at a crisis pregnancy centre, or donate to one.

women are more prone to suicide, divorce, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, eating disorders and reduced maternal bonding to future children. According to the Archives of General Psychiatry, 1.6 per cent of women who have abortions suffer from Post Abortion Syndrome (PAS), a variant of post-traumatic stress disorder. In Canada that means that 50,000 women are suffering emotionally due to their abortions. Studies by Dr. Hanna Soderberg suggest an even higher percentage.

Other problems manifest themselves over time. There are more than 30 studies that show a correlation between abortion and breast cancer. Women also face increased risks of cervical, ovarian and liver cancer. The risks of these four cancers are linked to the unnatural disruption of hormonal changes accompanying pregnancy.

Then there are the costs to society of so many missing children: financial costs for the procedures, follow-up visits, and treatments for associated problems such as infertility, psychiatric instability, and drug/alcohol abuse; social costs such as a declining workforce and empty classrooms; and professional costs such as harassment and firing of medical professionals opposed to abortion, and screening out of pro-life applicants to medical schools.

But the greatest cost imposed on a society that permits abortion is the devaluing of human life. Abortion opens a Pandora’s box of other immoral and dehumanizing actions, such as euthanasia and cloning.


Further steps in 1988

Abortion has also corrupted the political process. In 1988, the Supreme Court threw out the minimal restrictions still in the criminal code, and ordered parliament to write a new abortion law. The Mulroney government twice introduced legislation to address the abortion issue, but the so-called limits were once again giant loopholes that would not have restricted abortion, and the process failed. Since then, abortion has been permitted within the vacuum created by the absence of a law.

Today, we have a Prime Minister who claims to be a Christian and pro-life; yet he has outright said that he will not open the abortion debate under his tenure. Our national leader refuses to do anything that would protect ALL Canadian people.

So this is why the annual March for Life takes place: to call attention in our nation to this great sin and to call for justice and protection for the unborn, for women, and for all Canadians. The March through Ottawa was a great success. It was a great pleasure to be on Parliament Hill that 12th day of May.

I hope you can make it next year.

For information on next year’s March for Life you can turn to www.CampaignLifeCoalition.com (though they may not have material on 2012 for a while yet). Sources for this article included “The cost and consequences of abortion” The Interim, May 2009 and “How Trudeau imposed abortion on the nation” The Interim, October 1983. 

The language of poetry

If you don't already love poetry, here's why you should

by Michael Flinn

Poetry and Words

Poetry (and this is true of all literature) makes use of words. If there were no words, there would be no poetry. The reason why there are words is because God himself is the Word (John 1:1). To use a title from one of Francis Schaeffer's books, *He is There and He is not Silent*, God speaks. In Genesis 1:3ff we read that God created the world by speaking words.

Of course, God's ability to create something out of nothing merely by speaking words is something that is unique to him. As human beings, we cannot create in this way. But this is not the only way in which God uses words. As Schaeffer indicates in his book, God reveals both himself and his plan of redemption for the world by speaking to his image bearers in language that can be understood by them.¹

Because we human beings are created in the image of the One who made us, we also possess the ability to communicate with others by means of words. God has made us with the ability to express thoughts in language. We can articulate emotions, instincts, concerns and needs. We can speak of beliefs and aspirations and we can express theories and viewpoints. We can express with words not only what is happening in our lives, or what the world is like, but we can also explore *why* it is happening or why the world is the way that it is and how we feel about the answers we have given to these questions.

In the following article, we'll explore some of the ways in which poetry uses words.

Poetry and word choice

In a novel or even a short story, the author has more time to develop his or her ideas or to "paint a picture" using words. By contrast, in poetry, there is a premium on words. Words are chosen very carefully by the poet. They often evoke or picture something that the reader is expected to think about and "fill in" rather than describe or express something in great detail, leaving nothing at all to the imagination.

As an example, have a look at this well-known sonnet by Percy Shelley, called *Ozymandias of Egypt*:

*I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;*

And on the pedestal those words appear:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty and despair!"

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Ozymandias is another name for Ramses the Great, Pharaoh of the nineteenth dynasty of ancient Egypt. The central theme of the poem is the inevitable decline of human empires and dictators no matter how intimidating, perpetual, and enduring they might appear when at the height of their power. Ramses the Great had a monument built to his own greatness. Calling himself "king of kings," a title reserved for Christ in the Scriptures, he wanted all other great men to look with wonder and awe at his works, knowing with despair that they could never compete with him.

Notice the way in which Shelley describes the scene and the words that he chooses. Egypt is not an ancient land, but an *antique* land. Antiques are ancient things of rarity and value. The "antique" that is presented in the poem is the monument that was constructed in order to perpetuate the memory of this ancient king and his greatness. But this monument, once a thing of splendour and greatness, is now a "shattered visage," "lifeless," a "colossal wreck." It is a thing of death and decay, broken and worthless. Notice also that what remains upon the statue, etched in the stone itself, is the attitude and demeanor of the king. His "frown and wrinkled lip" and his "sneer of cold command" have been carved in stone by the sculptors who "well those passions read." These are the things that *survive*, on the "half sunk" and "shattered visage." In this way, it is not the king's greatness that is commemorated in the broken statue, but his futile human pride and the disdain he showed for others. Now the king and his empire are no more. And the only "companion" that the statue has is the "lone and level sands" that "stretch far away," "boundless and bare." The sand has survived unchanged across the centuries; the monument, however, is a lonely, pathetic and broken relic.

With his careful choice of words and his graphic word pictures Shelley has expressed in 14 lines of poetry what historians, philosophers and theologians might take chapters or even volumes to describe and discuss. His poem asks us to think carefully about the ideas that it expresses and to interact with them.

Words are also carefully chosen in biblical poetry. As an interesting contrast to *Ozymandias of Egypt* take, for example, Psalm 102:3,10. Here the psalmist writes:

For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers. . . My days are like the evening shadow; I wither like grass.

The reader is being asked to think about these verbal pictures: smoke vanishing quickly in the breeze of the day; shadows lengthening as the sun goes down in the evening; glowing embers gradually flickering and dying down; grass withering in the hot sun – and then apply these pictures to the psalmist’s awareness of his life and the passage of time. These verbal pictures are much more evocative and beautiful than a simple description using prose, which might go something like this: “I am not happy. I am discouraged and depressed. There is nothing in the day to interest me. I feel old. I am sick. I feel sad, weak and small.”

Interestingly, even in the midst of his sadness and distressing circumstances, the psalmist can still express himself and his feelings in beautiful poetic language, which in itself is a positive and edifying thing. Ultimately, however, the psalmist’s comfort is in God and in his perfect plan for his people. For this reason, the psalm moves away from contemplation of self to focus instead on the Lord (vs. 12ff). This is the biblical answer to the problem posed by Shelley in his poem. Man’s comfort and consolation in the face of his transience and finitude lies not in self-glorification, but in the eternal Lord and in his sovereign purposes.

Poetry and word art

We have already seen how words are carefully chosen in poetry in order to express ideas and evoke (sometimes very beautiful) images in the mind. Further to this, poets often use words, and even carefully place words in a sentence, in order to express their ideas clearly and powerfully. I like to call this word art. For some examples let’s look first at these lines from S.T. Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

*The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!*

These lines are part of a long poem describing the experiences of a sailor after he shot an albatross at sea. Notice how the words have an accent and rhythm that carries the reader along: “The ICE was here, the ICE was there, the ICE was all AROUND. . . Notice also the way in which some of the words chosen *sound* like what is being described. “Cracked” and “growled,” “roared” and “howled” all sound, when spoken, like the sounds made by the ice as it shifts. This is a literary device called onomatopoeia. Finally, notice the rhyming scheme. In every stanza the last word of the second line rhymes with the last line of the fourth. This explains in part why the word “swound” was chosen. It’s an archaic word for “swoon” or “faint.”



This is 7.25 ton colossal bust of Ramses II is thought to have been the inspiration for Percy Shelley’s poem Ozymandias of Egypt.

Photo by Mujtaba Chohan and licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

In Hebrew poems, although there are some examples of word play in which the word is chosen for its sound, much more prominent is the use of parallelisms to express ideas. That is: an idea will be stated in a line of poetry, and then restated in the next line in order to show either a similarity of idea or a contrast. Here are a couple of examples:

*The cords of death entangled me;
The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.
The cords of the grave coiled around me;
The snares of death confronted me. (Ps. 18:4, 5)*

Notice how line 3 expresses a very similar idea to line 1 and the same is true for lines 2 and 4. This is an example of what is called synonymous parallelism.

*The wicked borrow and do not repay,
But the righteous give generously. (Ps. 37:21)*

Here the lines express a contrast. The wicked do one thing; the righteous, by contrast, do the opposite. This is an example of what is called antithetic parallelism.²

Derek Kidner makes the interesting point that this type of poetry is more readily “transposed” into other languages than other types that require an exact correspondence of rhythm and form in order to retain the poetic element.

“It is the striking fact that this type of poetry loses less than perhaps any other in the process of translation. In many literatures the appeal of a poem lies chiefly in verbal felicities and associations, or in metrical subtleties, which tend to fail of their effect even in a related language. The programme notes of any Lied recital are enough to prove the point! But the poetry of the Psalms

has a broad simplicity of rhythm and imagery which survives transplanting into almost any soil. Above all, the fact that its parallelisms are those of sense rather than of sound allows it to reproduce its chief effects with very little loss of either force or beauty. It is well fitted by God's providence to invite 'all the earth' to 'sing the glory of his name'.³

Ultimately, we can understand and appreciate this *word art* because we are made in the image of God, who is the great Creator and "Artificer" of this world.

Poetry and words of the soul

More than any other form of literature, poetry often puts into words the thoughts and feelings that are experienced at the level of the heart or the soul. Take a look at this typical selective list of categories in this anthology called the *Library of World Poetry* (edited by William Cullen Bryant):

Poems of the Affections
Friendship
Compliment and Admiration
Love
Marriage
Home
Filial and Fraternal Love
Parting
Absence
Disappointment and Estrangement
Bereavement and Death
Poems of Sorrow and Adversity
Poems of Sentiment and Reflection
Poems of Fancy
Personal Poems
Humorous Poems

This anthology runs to nearly 800 pages!

The Hebrew poems in Scripture also depict and express a vast array of emotions including joy, sorrow, fear, longing, anger, reflection, praise, etc. These poems, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, clearly and powerfully express what the poet was thinking and feeling at the time:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, and am not silent. . . (Ps. 22:1, 2)*

How many of us, going through some difficult or challenging experience, have found great comfort by turning to the psalms? The psalms put into words exactly what we are thinking and feeling, in both a beautiful and compelling way. Moreover, the psalms take us *through* the challenging experience and help us to refocus our thoughts on the Lord and to find peace and comfort in him:

*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,*

*for dominion belongs to the Lord
and he rules over the nations (Ps. 22:27, 28)*

Precisely for this reason, the psalms are a veritable goldmine for those seeking to offer pastoral comfort and encouragement to others.

Conclusion:

In good poetry, words are never wasted. The poet thinks long and hard about which word to choose, and even where to place it in the line or sentence in order to express his ideas and the beauty of his art. This is true of poetry in every language, including the Hebrew poems that are found in Scripture. Poetry is also the language of the soul, often expressing in a few words, and in a very telling way, feelings and experiences that others can readily understand and identify with. I hope this article has inspired you to read more poems, especially the poems in Scripture, with a new appreciation, and maybe even have a go at writing some poems for yourself.

Endnotes

¹ This last sentence needs an important qualification. Although God's words to man are clear and true, and able to be understood in and of themselves, man has chosen to deny and suppress God's clear revelation of himself (cf. Romans 1:20, 21). The sinful mind is hostile to God and does not (in fact: *cannot*) submit to God's laws (Romans 8:7) and it cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God without the Spirit's enlightenment (1 Corinthians 2:14).

² Antithetic parallelisms are very common in the Proverbs that express a contrast between the behaviour of the wise person on the one hand and that of the fool on the other, or the righteous on the one hand and the wicked on the other.

³ Kidner, Derek. *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

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Of Head Coverings and Fish

by Christine Farenhorst

*The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
for promised joy!**

So wrote Robert Burns and although Arnold Venema had neither read nor heard of Robert Burns, he morosely contemplated the truth of this maxim as he mowed his back lawn. It was late June. Both rain and heat had made the grass grow thick and fast. Arnold stopped the mower and took out his handkerchief. Sweat made his glasses slide down his rather long and bony nose. He took them off and wiped both his forehead and the rest of his face. Then he put his glasses back on and with a hard pull started the motor again.

Every year Arnold looked forward, to the point of counting down the days, to his vacation; every year he waited impatiently for those special, earmarked first two weeks of July. And then suddenly, a Fred Smit phone call from B.C. "Can I come for a visit?" he had asked. Not, mind you, that he hadn't been happy to hear from the man. It had been twenty years since they'd seen one another. But with such a long time span between, why couldn't Fred have asked if he could visit in June or in August? Why did he have to single out the first two weeks of July?

Betty had taken the call. He'd been out for a walk. When she had told him of Fred's intention, he had been really upset. As a matter of fact, he'd almost phoned back to say that the time didn't quite suit. But Betty had not allowed it. It was too bad, Arnold thought, as he pushed the Lawnboy along the edge of the rose bed, that his wife had such an excess of Calvinistic conscience.

"He's an old friend," she said, "and has no children. On top of that he just remarried and wants us to meet his wife. Remember how he helped you during the war. It's only right that we should make them feel welcome."

"But the fishing. . ." he mumbled, even as he mumbled the words now under his breath.

A stone flew out from under the mower and landed some six feet in front of him.

*Robert Burns wrote in 18th century English, with a Scottish accent, which can make him difficult to understand. Here's a Modern English "translation" of the Burns' original:

*The best laid schemes of mice and men
Go often askew,
And leave us nothing but grief and pain,
For promised joy!*

"Arnold!! Yoo-hoo!! Tea!!" Above the noise of the machine he could hear his wife's shrill call as she stood on the deck. He turned off the mower and trudged towards the house.

Neither the speculaas nor the boter koek, both of which Betty baked mouth-wateringly well, tempted Arnold's spirits to rise from the depths of despair. He sighed as he sipped his tea and thoughtlessly brushed fat cookie crumbs off the tablecloth instead of carefully picking them up and licking them off his fingers as he usually did.

"You know, honey," Betty ventured as she watched him, "there is an easy solution to the problem."

"You mean tell Fred to take his wife to Hawaii and visit us next month?" Arnold looked up at his wife, glad that she at last seemed to have become more sensible to his depression.

"No! No!" Betty clucked disapprovingly as she stood up to carry the cookie tray back to the kitchen. "The answer is that we take them with us to Scarp Lake."

She disappeared into the kitchen, leaving Arnold by himself in the livingroom. He pondered her words, found them as incompatible to his digestion as the boter koek and speculaas had been, and responded with rather loud incredulity. "Take them with us? You can't be serious!"

Betty didn't answer. Arnold gazed deeply into his teacup and, over the rim of his glasses, saw a twenty pound pike, a five pound bass and schools of pickerel swimming around in the red liquid.

"Take them with us?" This time his voice was an incredulous whisper – a whisper that held just a smidgin of hope.



Arnold and Betty Venema lived in Sunset, Ontario. Sunset was not a big town. Its population was only twenty-one thousand, a number it had steadily held for the last thirty years. Comfortable and sprawling, it lay in a valley.

Arnold was fifty-five and had been married for thirty-five years. His children were grown and out of the house. A life insurance salesman, fishing was his once-a-year, passionate hobby. Betty gave him lures for his birthday and his tackle box had already been cleaned and sorted out three times for this year's vacation. The choice between taking Fred and his bride to the local Sunset sites, or taking them along to his northern get-a-way, was relatively easy for Arnold. When it came right down to it, he'd rather angle with pretty well anyone than not angle at all. He borrowed two extra fishing poles from a friend, made sure he had lots of jigs and lures and began to feel just a trifle better.

And so it was that, bright and early the following Saturday, Arnold and Betty drove to Pearson Airport to pick up their guests.

* * * * *

Arnold hated driving on the big highways. He was, and always had been, a small-town man. Tending to concentrate too hard on changing lanes, he sweated over turns and gripped the steering wheel until the veins stood out on his hands. Betty was his pilot and had the map. All the glory of Toronto's busy roads lay unfolded on her lap and she laboriously spelled out which intersection was next and how soon they would need to make either a right or a left. The whole trip actually transpired without any problems and safely ensconced within the bowels of airport parking, Arnold turned sideways to Betty with somewhat of a triumphant grin.

"You did well, honey," she said, smiling at him as they both got out and stretched their legs. He locked the car with just a bit of a swagger. Bring on Fred and his wife – with fishermanly optimism, he felt he could land just about anything at this point.

The screen listing incoming flights showed that the Smits' plane had arrived early. The Venema's barely had time to read and absorb this news or to think about where to go to wait for their company when Arnold was slapped on the back.

"Venema! Good to see you!"

He turned and was surprised at the emotion that swept over him before he was enveloped in a six-foot-two bear hug.

"Fred." It was all he could manage.

Vaguely, behind the man, he was aware of a short woman wearing a solid black hat sporting a broad rim and a fake cherry. Fred released him and turned. "This is Tina," he said, "my bride."

Arnold put out his hand. The hat was rather formidable. He felt intimidated by it. The rim was broad, so broad that he felt that if he got too close to the wearer it could possibly knock his glasses off. He therefore pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose before he reached out his hand.

"How do you do," he said.

Betty was less formal. She stepped out from her spot behind Arnold and gave the hat a hug. It amazed Arnold that

it stayed on. Then Betty hugged Fred. He smiled at her and then they all smiled.

"You haven't changed a bit, Betty," said Fred, "and it's so good to see you both."

Everyone smiled again and Arnold asked about luggage. The Smits had already collected it. There were only two suitcases and Arnold and Fred both carried one as they began their trek back to the car.

Arnold found his way out of the airport terminal after only a few minor wrong turns. Betty once more had the map stretched out on her lap and patted his knee at intervals to encourage him. Behind them Fred and Tina sat side by side. They were holding hands. Arnold could see it in his rearview mirror. He smiled to himself and then braced for an oncoming turn. Traffic whizzed by and he began to sweat again, revving up the gas and edging in as a huge Mack truck passed him in another lane. He despised Toronto driving with every fiber of his being. A minute later, as part of the never-ending rush, he permitted himself a small sigh of relief.

"You're doing fine, honey."

Betty spoke softly but Fred heard her. "Don't like driving here much, do you, Arnold?"

Arnold shook his head to indicate that he'd heard but did not allow himself the luxury of small talk. Fred didn't pursue the topic and left off speaking.

A few minutes later Betty shifted about. She faced the backseat and asked if they were tired after their flight.

Tina smiled and nodded but then immediately whispered something to Fred. He whispered back into Tina's ear. Betty felt a bit discomfited by the private exchange and almost turned back to the front when Fred announced in a rather brusque voice that Tina had to go to the bathroom.

"Oh."

Betty looked at Arnold, whose glasses were sliding down his nose again. She took out her hanky, wiped his forehead, and pushed the glasses back up before she spoke.

"Tina has to. . ." She didn't get finished.

"I heard. I heard." Arnold's voice was more brusque than he had intended it to be. He contemplated the situation. If he turned off somewhere, he was convinced he would never find his way back. The roads were so convoluted around here. He knew he should never have let Betty talk him into picking them up. They should have invested in a taxi. He shifted his position slightly and felt his pants sticking to the upholstery.

"Are you sure you can't hold it?" He vividly remembered saying that to his kids when they were little. Again his voice came out louder and more dogmatic than he intended and there was a severe silence from the back. Betty turned her head again and saw that Tina was once again whispering into Fred's ear. He had his head bent double under her black hat.

"You know. . ." Betty began, but Fred interrupted her.

"No, she can't hold it. She has a very weak bladder. That's all there is to it."

"Oh." Betty looked at Arnold. He held himself stiffly and his eyes were glued to the highway. "It'll be about ten minutes or so before we come to our next cut-off," she offered.

An ambulance roared by, its siren high and nerve-shattering. In contrast, the next seven or eight minutes were relatively quiet. Betty felt herself begin to sweat as well. She reflected that it might have been wise to take Fred and Tina for a donut or something at the airport. There were lots of washrooms at the airport. But that was all water under the bridge now, or, and she grimaced to herself, water under the car.

"Are we almost there?" It was Tina. Her voice was low. She probably sang contralto, Arnold thought, as a U-haul suddenly swerved in front of him.

"Almost where?"

"At the cut-off."

"A few more minutes," Arnold answered, "and maybe I can get to a gas station after that."

"Maybe? What do you mean, maybe?" Fred's voice was gruff, a hair from angry. Suddenly Arnold remembered the war years and how very physical Fred had been with anyone who had disagreed with him.

"I'll try my best," he said, but he couldn't help it that his voice had developed a tinny sound, a squeak almost.

"Of course, he will," Betty added, "don't you worry for a minute." She turned again and saw that a panic-stricken look had now registered on Tina's face. "Think of something else, Tina," she said. "I know what. We should sing a song, that'll take your mind off things. What shall we sing?"

All the songs that came to Arnold's mind were wet, so to speak. "Row, row, row, your boat," "Shall we gather at the river" as well as "Roll, Jordan, roll," frolicked around in his mind. He dared not trust himself to speak because he had a sudden inane desire to laugh.

"Well," Betty repeated, "I really think we should sing a song. Come on, Arnold, help me to get started."

He nodded but kept his mouth firmly closed.

"Twinkle, twinkle," Betty began, but stopped as a sob erupted from the back.

"It's all right, dear, you don't have to sing." Fred's voice was solicitous.

"I can't. . . I can't," Tina sobbed, "I just can't hold it in."

"Oh, don't cry, Tina," Betty said, scrunching up the map in her lap, "crying only makes things worse."

A cupboard full of classic children's books

To be taken out of the library or bought for home libraries for continued enjoyment

by Christine Farenhorst

The Children's Homer

by Padraic Colum

MacMillan Publishing, 1918

Padraic Colum lived from 1881-1972 and has, in this particular volume retold the story of the Trojan War and the wanderings of Odysseus based on Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. Written in simple language, with fine illustrations, this volume will introduce children to Greek mythology. *The Golden Fleece*, also by Padraic Colum, follows the adventures of the famous Jason and his four companions, the Argonauts.

Recommended for ages 10 and up.

With This Ring

by Marian Wells

Bethany House Publishing, 1982, 1984

Wells grew up in Utah and her mother was brought up as a Mormon. She documented these two books on Mormon life with much research. Tracing the life of a girl who left with the group of Latter-Day Saints to travel to Salt Lake City, these two books will teach teenage readers much about the false doctrines regarding Mormonism. These will appeal more to young women than to young men.

Irish Red

by Jim Kjelgaard

Bantam Books, 1951

Kjelgaard grew up in a mountainous country area which he loved. This love is evident in his writing and his series on dogs are especially popular with children. Other books in his series are *Big Red*, *Desert Dog*, *Haunt Fox*, *Lion Hound*, *A Nose for Trouble*, *Outlaw Red*, *Snow Dog*, *Stormy*, and *Wild Trek*.

Recommended for grades 4 and up.

The Wedding Dress

The Boyhood of Ranald Bannerman

The Genius of Willie MacMichael

The Wanderings of Clare Skymer

by George MacDonald, edited by Dan Hamilton

Victor Books, 1987

George MacDonald (1824-1905) was a Scottish preacher, novelist and poet. He wrote more than fifty books, including a number of children's classics, the most well-known of which is *At The Back of the North Wind*. The three books mentioned above were edited for easier reading in 1987 and are enjoyable books with moral virtues depicted throughout.

Recommended for ages 8 and up.

Tina began sobbing louder. However, necessity being the mother of invention, or father, as the case may be, Fred suddenly had a luminous idea.

"Tina, take off your hat," he said in a deadpan voice, "Quickly, take it off. Now just use it as a . . . as a potty. Yes, that's right. Take it off. It's only a hat after all and a pretty sturdy one at that."

Betty put her hand on Arnold's knee. He patted it for an instant and then resolutely put his own back onto the steering wheel. He kept his eyes away from the rear view mirror. Noises of a delicate nature crept in. Cloth moved about. Arnold thought of his clean upholstery and wondered if he and Betty should move their seats up. Then he began to turn red with the effort of trying to think of something besides the situation they were in.

"Twinkle, twinkle little star, . . ." Betty began again, but she was interrupted by a trickle sound, a sound which quickly increased in volume.

"How I wonder what you are," she bravely continued, voluntarily finishing crumpling up the map as she finished the song solo.

"Arnold," she said a moment later in the quiet that now pervaded the car, "Arnold, we're just about at the cut-off. Just two more kilometers or so. It's a clover-leaf, if I remember correctly."

No one commented. The discreet and muffled sounds from the back seat had faded into silence again. Tina sighed heavily. The intersection loomed ahead and Arnold leaned over the steering wheel. He had to be in the right lane and that was tricky.

"Arnold, the hat is beginning to leak." Fred spoke slowly but urgently. Arnold had just managed to enter the lane to his right and was concentrating on another much more severe right turn. It was the clover-leaf. He didn't answer.

"Arnold, I tell you, man, the hat is starting to leak."

"A newspaper," Betty said, without turning her head to look, "put a newspaper under it."

"I don't have a newspaper."

Arnold shivered slightly and gripped the steering wheel as hard as he could.

"Arnold?" Betty's voice was slightly cracked and this surprised Arnold. Usually Betty was the one who had it all-

Child of the Silent Night

by Edith Fisher Hunter
Houghton Mifflin, 1963

The story of Laura Bridgman, a deaf and blind American girl who lived before the time of Helen Keller and before Braille was an accepted method in teaching handicapped children. Recommended for grades 3 and 4.

Where the River Begins

by Patricia St. John
Moody Press, 1980

A lonely and troubled boy is taken in by a Christian family. St. John's other books are also worth looking at. Some suggested titles - *Rainbow Garden*, *The Secret at Pheasant Cottage*, *The Tanglewood's Secret*, and *Star of Light*. Recommended for ages 9-14.

The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood

by Howard Pyle
Dover, 1968

A book that will appeal to girls as well as to boys, Robin's adventures are told emphasizing courage and idealism. This version is recommended for ages 10-13.

The Lord of the Rings

by J.R.R. Tolkien
Houghton Mifflin, 1967

A trilogy consisting of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*, these books are beautifully written.

Tolkien created a different world in this fantasy where eventually good triumphs over evil. If children have enjoyed C.S. Lewis' Narnia chronicles, they may well be ready for Tolkien's work. Recommended for ages 14 and up.

Caddie Woodlawn

by Carol Ryrie Brink
Macmillan, 1935

Story of a small, red-haired tom-boy growing up in the 1860s in the pioneer woods of Wisconsin. Winner of a Newbery Award when it was written back in 1935, it's still enjoyed today. Recommended for ages 10 and up.

The Yearling

by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
Scribner's, 1938

A classic in children's literature and one read to all our children before bedtime, this book is sure to bring much pleasure to both parents and listeners. The main character, Jody, is a twelve-year-old farmboy who finds a baby deer which his father permits him to keep. Excellent reading for ages 8 and up.

The Wheel on the School

by Meindert DeJong
Harper and Brothers, 1954

Set in a small Dutch school, an entire community tries to search for a wheel to place on a roof so that storks will once more visit their town. Other books by De Jong which might be worthwhile reading are *Shadrach* and *The House of Sixty Fathers*. Recommended for ages 8-12.



together. She was the one who had never fainted when the kids had cut themselves or broken an arm or a leg.

"Arnold?" Her voice came again, small and pathetic. A surge of headship and creativity flooded over Arnold.

"Open the window," he commanded in a strong voice that surprised even himself.

"The window?"

"No, no, not the front window," he added as Betty had begun to roll down her window as if her life depended on it, "but the back window. Roll down the back window, Fred."

Fred obliged, almost as quickly as Betty had done. And all the while the car was turning and turning the sharp right of the clover-leaf.

"Now toss the hat."

"Toss it?"

"Yes, throw it out onto the shoulder. Or onto the grass if you can. Get a good grip on the brim and go for it."

In the next second, through the outside rearview mirror, Arnold saw a black object sail from the window with frisbee like animation. It flew with graceful speed over the shoulder and landed with eloquence amid a patch of purple clover. The fake red cherry looked out of place. Fred rolled up the window.

"Well," he said, "That's that, isn't it."

Cautiously Betty peeked over her shoulder. Tina grinned at her and she grinned back. Then Fred began to laugh and suddenly they were all roaring with laughter. And Arnold, who had by this time, maneuvered them onto the next highway, thought that perhaps the next few weeks together wouldn't be so bad after all.

A few days later they were on their way to Scarp Lake.

It was a fact that Arnold, who had nightmares about driving to and from Toronto and other major metropolises, relaxed the instant he knew that he was traveling up north. The cedars, oaks and limestone cliffs straddling the road, embraced him with the air of a long-lost friend; the cares and stresses of work fell off him more with each kilometer; and he lost no time in pointing out any interesting flora or fauna to his passengers.

Fred and Tina had been quite excited about the prospect of seeing some of northern Ontario. Their excitement somewhat dissipated the rancor Arnold had felt at sharing his precious holiday time. The great sweeps of sky and water that greeted him at every turn of the road, made him increasingly good-humored and loquacious.

Fred turned out to be, much to Arnold's surprise and delight, an avid fisherman as well. In the car they immediately began to outdo one another in information swapping. Fred maintained that B.C.'s salmon were the boldest and most fun of all fish to catch, whereas Arnold asserted that northern Ontario's pike and bass were more exciting fighting fish by far. Betty sat in the back with Tina, who now sported a green hat which had a bunch of fake blueberries tacked onto it. As the women chattered away about various things, oblivious to gills and hooks and other important things, Arnold and Fred discussed the more weighty matters of life.

"The salmon," Fred observed, "sometimes goes for minnow, but I've found they like worms the best. And they go for a special kind of worm, did you know that, Arnold? I bet you don't know what kind, Arnold, do you?" Fred had a bad habit of repeating Arnold's name in almost every sentence he spoke.

"What kind of worm?" Arnold asked even though he didn't want to. Fred smiled to himself.

"Well Arnold, I knew that you wouldn't know. It's a secret passed on to me by an Indian guide and it really works. But I'll tell you, Arnold."

"So what kind of worm?"

Tina patted Fred on the shoulder. He turned and gave her a smile.

"How's my girl?"

Tina was pretty, Arnold had to concede. She had dimples and big, blue eyes and aside from the fact that they had to make frequent stops with the car, she was a pleasant woman.

"Fine. I'm fine. How are you?"

They smiled at each other and Arnold was reminded of the fact that they had only been married for two months and still in the somewhat silly stage of marriage.

"So what kind of worm?" he repeated.

"Worm?" Fred said, "Oh yes, worm. Well, you're not going to believe this, Arnold. But it's one that has been kept for seven or eight days in moss. If you keep worms in moss, Arnold, before you fish, you've got a ninety percent chance of a bite."

"I've never heard of it. Ontario pike go for minnows or frogs," Arnold responded, "and that's what I usually use as live bait."

"I'll tell you another thing, Arnold," Fred said, who had now warmed to his subject and was obviously not interested in pike, "a little trick I read about somewhere and it works. I know it works because I tried it. If you take your worm, Arnold, and let it exercise a bit before you use it as bait, you'll catch more fish. Now that's a fact."

Arnold smirked and Fred put his hand on the steering wheel.

"I kid you not, Arnold. Don't laugh at me. This is serious business. Now I'll tell you something else I don't share with

everyone. If you not only let your worms crawl about a bit before hooking them on, but mind where you let them crawl, then you've got yourself winner bait, Arnold."

"Where," Arnold asked, in spite of himself, "would you advise that worms crawl?"

Fred leaned over and in a confidential voice whispered, "In ivy, Arnold."

"Ivy?" Arnold whispered back and then felt ridiculous.

"Right, Arnold." Fred leaned back again, a satisfied look on his face.

"Pike," Arnold began once more, wanting to change the subject to his kind of fishing, "are vicious. They fight you pretty hard. As a matter of fact, I've heard the pike called the grizzly of the water."

Fred did not respond.

"There's a story," Arnold went on, "about a miller. This is a long time ago mind you, but anyhow, this miller walked to a pond to water his mule. As the mule bent over the water to drink, a pike came up and bit the mule on the lip. He hung on so tightly that when the mule, in great pain, stood up, the pike dangled down long and big. And so the miller's mule caught his master a fine fish dinner."

Arnold noted that Fred appeared slightly interested. "One of the local Indian guides up at Scarp Lake told me," he went on with an animated voice, "that he saw a huge pike fight an otter for a fish. The otter was bringing it out of the water and the pike went for the otter's throat."

"Don't believe a word of it, Arnold," Fred responded.

Tina tapped him the shoulder. He smiled at her again. "I think it's time we stopped for a break, Arnold. What say you ladies back there to having an ice-cream cone?"

* * * * *

Scarp Lake was located some fifty kilometers northeast of Wawa, Ontario and the tiny village of Nepawa lay on its shores. The cottage the Venema's rented each year was small but comfortable. Accessible only by boat, which they rented from their landlord, it lay hidden between a clump of cedar trees. A small beach with a long dock, was at the front. There was no backyard, only a wilderness of brush and forest. The cottage had a pump providing lake water, which had to be boiled; the fridge and stove were run on propane; and an out-house was the crowning luxury of the premises.

Tina walked about a bit uncertainly at first but soon fell to unpacking the two suitcases. After that she joined Betty in the kitchen to help put away the groceries.

"It's a bit out of the way here, isn't it?"

"That why we like it," Betty rejoined. "It's good for Arnold to get away from everything. Look at him out there by the boat. He's in his glory."

"Do you go fishing?"

"Sometimes. I like to sleep a bit later and Arnold likes to go out around 4 in the morning. That's a bit early for me. How about you? Do you like fishing?"

"Well, I'm not a fanatic but I like it now and then. I always went with my first husband. He was a fishing enthusiast as well."

"How did he? . . . How did your first husband. . . ? ."

"Cancer. Same as Fred's wife. Actually we met in the hospital. It was a hard time for both of us."

"I see. I'm sorry."

"Well, it's strange how God has your life in His hand. When you think you'll never be happy again, suddenly you are. It's not the same, but it's still good."

"Well, I'm glad for you and I'm glad for Fred." She impulsively hugged Tina. A distant rumble of thunder warned them that bad weather was in the offing. Betty scanned the horizon.

"I hope they don't go out any more tonight. We're probably in for a bit of a storm."

"I don't mind," Tina said, "it's actually quite cozy here and I see you've brought lots of books and games."

They spent the evening talking, reading and playing cribbage. The storm didn't quite materialize but the wind picked up and there were lots of whitecaps on the lake. Arnold was itching to go fishing but deferred his plans when he saw that Betty would worry. The next morning however, he and Fred left at the crack of dawn. It was unusually cold out for July. Betty had wisely packed two pairs of long johns and Arnold offered Fred the use of one of them. But no matter what weed beds the two men searched out, no matter which rock bars they tried, not matter what lily pads they covered, or what lures they used, they were skunked. By ten o'clock they were back at the dock only to report that no fish had been caught.

"Maybe we can go out this afternoon," Tina suggested over the pancake brunch.

"Fish generally don't bite well in the afternoon." Arnold reply was a bit short.

"Well," Tina responded, "maybe we can just go for a boat ride." And then she dimpled at Fred.

* * * * *

As it turned out, no one went fishing for the next three days. It began to rain that afternoon – a rain which lasted and lasted. Arnold's temper began to suffer, especially when he and Betty lost 12 consecutive games of cribbage to Fred and Tina.

"Tomorrow," he said, staring out the cottage window, "even if it pours, I'm going to go fishing."



But the next day it stopped raining after breakfast. The sun shone and a bald eagle perched on the dead branch of a tree near the cottage. Betty could discern the feathers down to its talons when she looked through the binoculars.

"We see him every year," she told Tina, "I think he's waiting for Arnold to catch a fish, clean it and throw out the leftovers."

"Well, he must be pretty hungry by now, Arnold" Fred said, "Come on, let's go out."

Fred and Arnold trolled, still-fished, jitterbugged and then they trolled some more. But the fact of the matter remained that even though there were some promising strikes, no fish was caught.

"Let's take the girls out this evening, Arnold," Fred said after about five hours of frustration. "I know that Tina would really like to try some fishing."

"Betty hasn't got the patience," Arnold said, "but sure, I'm game."

It was a beautiful evening. The water was calm, even though sudden gusts of wind rippled the surface, and the air was balmy. After an early supper, they all boarded the small fiberglass boat. Betty and Tina sat on their life jackets and Arnold and Fred discussed where to go. They eventually agreed to anchor along a piece of shore that held both weed beds and rock.

"Should catch something here," Arnold said as he got Betty's rod ready. "D'you want a minnow or a worm, honey?"

"A worm," she said.

Fred didn't have to help Tina. She put on her own jitterbug and cast out close to shore.

"Get to the log lying there," she whispered to Betty, "I bet there's a bass hiding there."

But the next hour only provided nibbles and nothing really materialized. Arnold was about to suggest moving to another place when a gust of wind took Tina's hat and carried it about fifty feet behind the boat away from the shoreline.

"My hat," wailed Tina.

"I bet I can hook it before you can, Arnold," Fred said and immediately cast out to the green headpiece.

His cast fell short and Arnold cast in after him. It became a contest and no matter how many times Betty pointed out that the blueberry contraption was rapidly sinking, the men continually responded with 'just one more cast.' Not until Tina stood up and said that she could only just see the rim, did Fred say that they should lift the anchor. They reached the hat just in time, and scooped it up with the net. Tina was visibly upset.

"Sorry, sweetie," Fred said as he handed the dripping headpiece back to her, "we'll get you a fishing cap next time we're in town."

"I don't want a fishing cap," she said, "I want this hat. I got it a long time ago. . . ."

She stopped, sniffed and then went on. "I have to go. . . you know. . . . Can you stop and drop me off at the shore somewhere?"

"Sure," Arnold said.

He felt a little silly now that the hat was retrieved. Tina put it back on, not seeming to care that it was wet. The blueberries looked shiny and gleamed in the fading sunlight.

"The pickerel will start biting soon," he said, "they always do at dusk."

They steered the boat around the corner to where a small sandy beach lay neatly packaged between some huge boulders.

"Do you want me to come with you, sweetie?" Fred said as they beached the boat.

"No," Tina said. She was still a little miffed at him. Taking off her sandals, she slung the small purse which she carried with her everywhere, over her shoulder and stepped into ankle-deep water.

"You guys just go back around the corner and come back in five minutes or so. I'll manage fine in the bushes here."

"Would you like me to. . ." Betty began but Tina shook her head.

"I'll be fine. Honest, Betty. Don't worry about me."

She waved at them from the beach, as she put her sandals back on. They waved back and Arnold took the canoe paddles and pushed the boat back into deeper water. Then he started the motor and they disappeared around the corner.

Tina decided that, although the lake was deserted and nothing remotely human could be seen on the whole of Scarp Lake, she would play it safe and just push her way into the bushes a bit. A bird sang overhead and she smiled. Her hat dribbled lake water into her neck and she set it on top of a small birch to dry while she trekked just a bit further. It was difficult to find a spot that had a bit of clearing so she pushed in farther than she actually intended. The wind shook the trees and she discovered a huge blueberry patch with a few ripe berries.

"Good place," she whispered, "just right for an out-house."

It was only after she was done that she heard movements in the bushes behind her which seemed to be a slight level louder than wind rustling. She studied the trees around her intently and then began to walk back towards the beach. The noise grew louder. There was a bit of a grunt sound to it. In her nervousness she did not quite follow the trail she had made while coming into the bush.

"Tina!!"

It was Fred's voice. But Tina dared not answer him for fear of alerting whatever it was that was behind her in the brush.

"Tina!!"

There was an air of anxiety about the call. She tripped as she stumbled over an exposed root but quickly stood up again. She could see the beach now and broke through the bushes quickly. The boat was in the same spot where they had dropped her off, but she had come through some forty feet to the left. She could see her green hat still perched jauntily on top of the birch just where she had left it.

"Are you coming, sweetie?"

Tina began walking towards both the hat and the boat but before she had taken five steps, she saw a black bear slowly appear from between the alders, crunching underbrush as he did so. There was no noise from the boat. Tina froze. Out

of the corner of her eye she saw Arnold and Fred pick up the paddles. The bear had stopped moving. It was unclear as to what he was looking at. He stood next to the birch and his black fur shimmered in the fading sunlight. Fred gestured to Tina that she should take off her shoes. But she remained frozen. The bear moved his head up and down. The green hat was only feet away from his head. He suddenly took a swipe at it and it fell down onto the sand. He sniffed it and the fake blueberries disappeared into his mouth.

It was at this moment that Betty began screaming. She hollered and yelled so loud that the blood curdled in Tina's veins. And suddenly she found that she was screaming and yelling as well. And then she passed out. The next thing she knew, she was lying flat in the boat and Fred's face was bent over hers so closely that she could see the hairs in his nose.

"Did you get my hat back?"

"Your hat?"

She closed her eyes again for a moment and then opened them wide. "Is the bear gone?"

"He ran," Fred assured her, "as soon as Betty and you started making all that racket. Disappeared into the brush like a scared puppy."

"Oh." It was all she could manage but a minute later again asked if they had managed to retrieve her hat.

"I think he ate part of it. We left it on the beach." This time it was Betty who answered.

"Do you want to do some more fishing?"

"Arnold!!" Betty's voice held reproof.

Tina laughed and was amazed that she could laugh. "I'm OK guys. And," she went on as she sat up, "I really wouldn't mind if you did some more fishing."

Arnold smiled at her. "You're a good sport, Tina."

Fred kissed her on her nose and then began to rummage about in the tackle box. Tina stared at the shore for a bit. She could just make out the form of her torn, green hat lying on the beach. Then she took a small paperback out of her purse and began reading while the others commenced fishing again. Her own line, complete with jitterbug, hung next to her, low enough so that it touched the edge of the water.

* * * * *

Within some forty-five minutes of the bear episode it began getting dark.

"Well, folks," Arnold said, disappointment in his voice "I'm afraid we have to pack it in for another day. Skunked again. But there's always tomorrow."

There was quiet for a few minutes as Fred, Betty, and Arnold tried a few more casts before pulling up anchor. Suddenly an enormous splash hit the side of the boat. Tina's rod fell over with a clatter and she grabbed it. The hook was not set and her line took off without breaking water.

"You've got a bite, Tina! You've got a bite!!" Betty's voice was jubilant. Tina's book lay on the bottom of the boat and Arnold could see the title. It was 'The Idiot' by Dostoyevsky.



Tina now stood up straight in the back of the boat where she had been resting. Her small frame became one with the rod. For a person who was only five foot two, she set the hook with an amazing, powerful upward sweep. Arnold was both mesmerized and jealous.

"That's right, sweetie!" Fred called out excitedly, "That's it! You get that old fish!!"

The fish sought refuge under an old fallen tree trunk near the shore but Tina expertly worked it out into the open. Breaking water, it splashed madly. Arnold could see that it was a bass – a big one. Tina's face was concentrated and after a few minutes managed to get the fish alongside the boat. Huge rock slabs glinted beneath the surface in the dying sunlight. Fred slipped the net underneath the fish, easing it slowly and carefully into the boat.

"That's six pounds, for sure," Arnold breathed. "Amazing."

"Yup." That was all Tina said.

Fred kissed her cheek. "You're wonderful, sweetie!"

Without a word, Tina knelt down and extricated the jitterbug from the largemouth. Then she picked him up by his lower lip with the thumb and index finger of her right hand.

"What are you going to do, Tina?" Arnold's voice was less than enthusiastic. With trepidation he watched Tina walk over to the edge of the boat, lean over, and slip the trophy fish back into the water.


"She's a catch and release person, Arnold," Fred said, "I forgot to tell you."

"Oh."

The fish twisted, turned and slipped away, oblivious of its impact on Arnold. Betty put her hand on Arnold's shoulder. "Oh well, honey," she said, "at least we know there are fish. Right?"

Arnold eyed the water with morose eyes.

"Fish and hats," he answered, "fish and hats."

"Angling may be said to be so like the mathematics that it can never be fully learnt," said Izaak Walton back in the 1600s. But Arnold had never read nor heard of Walton. 

Alfie – a very likeable little chap

This picture book series is remarkable

by Janet Faber

I love children! I love books! And I love it when the two come together! It is indeed a rare treasure to find books that portray the world of children in an accurate and endearing way and the *Alfie* books by Shirley Hughes are such books.

Alfie is a four-and-a-half-year-old, chubby-cheeked toddler who has two hardworking parents and a little sister named Annie Rose, who toddles around with him. This likeable little chap has little things happen to him that are big things in his world: things like building sandcastles, going alone to a friend's house for the first time and the disappointment of not winning a coveted prize.

She knows how children are

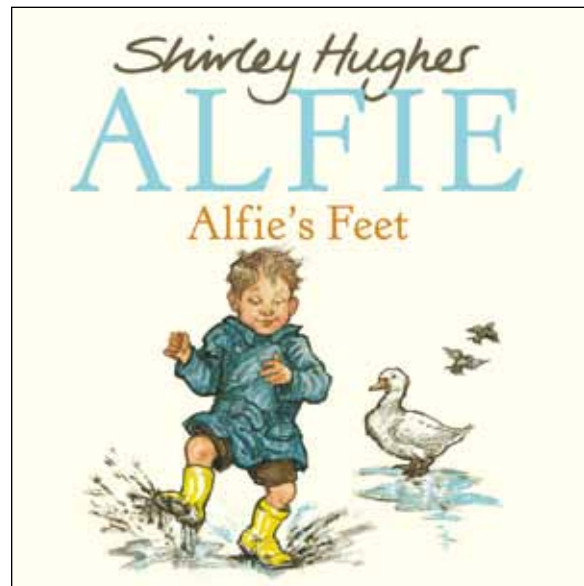
British-born Shirley Hughes published her first book in 1981 and since then has published over 11.5 million copies of her books worldwide. Many have earned prestigious awards and recognitions. Commenting about her writing Hughes has said, "It is the most wonderful job. I can't believe that anyone would pay me for what I love to do."

Wherever Shirley Hughes goes she takes a notebook and a drawing pad and she watches the antics and drama of small children. This gives her material to illustrate and write her books. Hughes has a way of capturing the way children grapple with the wonders and woes of growing up.

A world little children understand

One reading strategy that helps children comprehend what they are reading or hearing is the ability to make connections from what is in the book to what they already know – the ability to relate to what is being read. The books by Shirley Hughes helps children use this strategy, because they deal with the things that are so common in a child's world. How many children have not struggled with putting boots on the right feet as Alfie does in the book *Alfie's Feet*?

In this story Alfie, a true to life boy, shows sheer delight stomping through puddles with his shoes on. But wet shoes, socks and feet are not pleasant. Alfie gets a new pair of yellow boots that are perfect for stamping through puddles. But, Alfie's boots don't quite feel right. What could be making his boots feel so uncomfortable? Children will delight in discovering with Alfie what the trouble is. It soon dawns on Alfie that, of course, he has put his boots on the wrong feet. Alfie's mother has an ingenious way of solving this problem and she paints a large "L" on the left boot and a large "R" on the right boot.



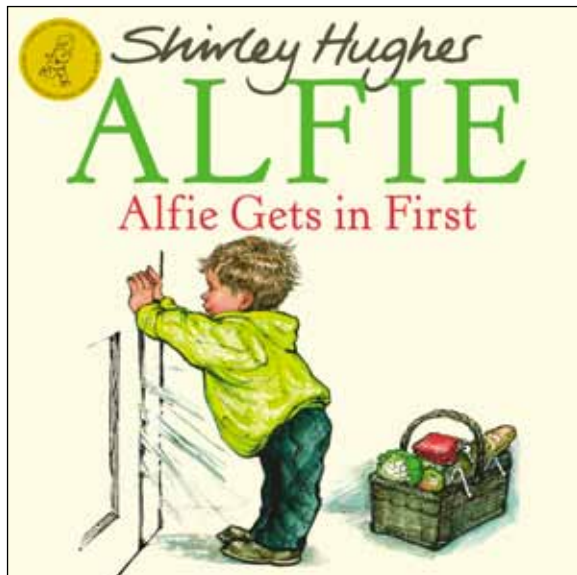
I especially love the picture where Hughes has captured the body language of Alfie splashing in the puddles with his body bent forward, his arms held away from his sides and a look of utter pleasure on his face.

Children are enthralled by this series because they can scrutinize the drawings on every page with great attention and make connections to their own world while they are being read to.

So often children's books portray home as with just parent, or a place where children are disrespectful to their parents or where the Lord's commandments are easily broken. We know from the Bible that God has given parents the role of being the primary influence in the life of a young child. Therefore the books we read to our children should keep the family in high regard. In her books Hughes creates warm, loving and yet real parents for Alfie and his younger sister. Hughes does know that it can be a trial raising two active toddlers. The interior of Alfie's home is a clutter of discarded shoes, toys, umbrellas, folded strollers, pictures painted by small hands, the baby in the high chair is busy smearing food all over, and Mom is somewhat rumped – the fingerprints of life with small children.

A role model for parents too!

Parents are given a patient and loving role model in Alfie's stay-at-home mom in the book *Alfie Gets in First*. One day Alfie, his mom and little sister were coming home from



getting the groceries. Alfie, so typical of a youngster, runs ahead because he wants to be first. He runs into the house and shuts and locks the door while his mom and little sister are still on the outside. Alfie's expressive face shows a beaming triumphant little boy. However, Alfie is locked in the house with the keys. Mom is locked out on the outside and Alfie is unable to open the door from the inside!

From that point on we can watch the action from both sides of the door because the spine of the book is drawn in as the door. Children are thrilled by the fact that they can see what Alfie is doing inside while his mother hasn't a clue. Mom tries asking Alfie to reach the door handle, or put the keys through the letterbox, but Alfie can't reach either one. Soon the neighbors come out to help and give suggestions on how to rescue Alfie. In the end Alfie is the hero and the story ends happily ever after with a pot of tea that is shared with the neighbors.

It is delightful to watch the expressions on the face of Alfie change from one of bravado to despair and finally humble relief. We can also see Alfie's mother becoming more and more harried as time goes on and her embarrassment in front of her neighbors as she admits her son is locked in the house. *Alfie Gets in First*, and all of the Alfie books, exemplifies the security of a loving family that can laugh at the humor of life's little problems.

Little lessons

Hughes worries that the pace of life means that children are losing the habit of reading. She has said:

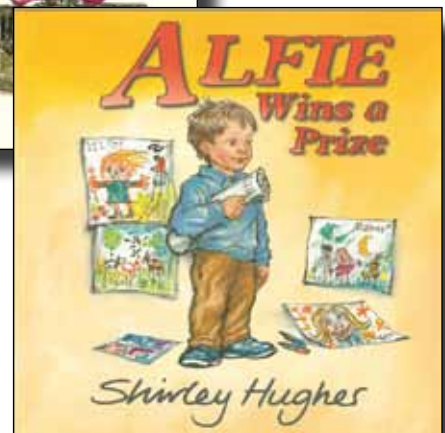
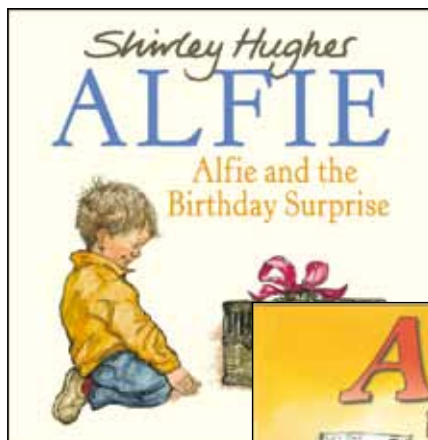
"These days children are saturated with electronic imagery. The danger is that they don't look for the sake of looking. It is so important that they slow down to inhabit a picture, and discover things for themselves."

A beautiful book to help your children enjoy the habit of reading or being read to is Hughes' book *Alfie Gives a Hand*.

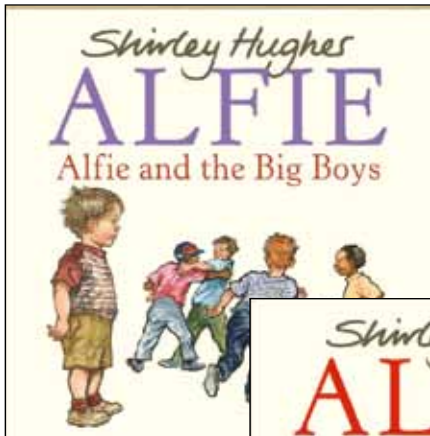
Alfie has been invited to his friend's home for a birthday party. He prepares by getting himself cleaned up and putting on his new clothes. His mother explains to him what happens at a birthday party and also that he will be going to the party alone. This is a totally new experience for him. This experience may seem minor to adults but it is of enormous importance to little people. In order to make himself feel more secure Alfie takes along his "Old bit of blanket."

At the party the boisterous birthday boy, Bernard, who also appears in other Alfie books, is overwhelmed with the attention and becomes ill-mannered, rude and misbehaves. Bernard frightens a small shy party guest. Alfie helps out the frightened girl and in doing so he is able to let go of his blanket. Alfie learns to put the needs of others before his own – a good lesson in appropriate social interaction. Shirley Hughes accurate observations of party incidents ring all too true in this book.

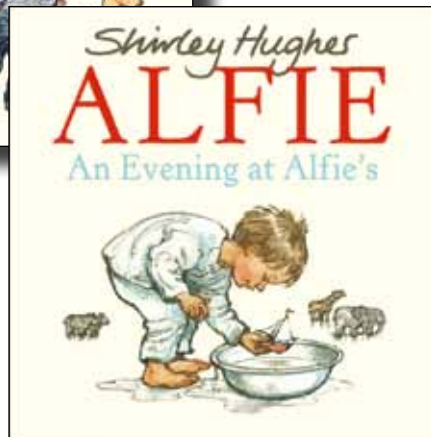
Alfie Gives a Hand does have a lot of text on each page, probably more than most books for children in the four to eight years range. However, a listener will feel like he is there with Alfie at the party and seeing things through his eyes. The simplicity of the story and the details in the pictures – often double-page spreads – make it easy for young children to understand and follow.



Some of Alfie's other adventures



To learn more about
Alfie and his different books
you can visit his website
www.AlfieBooks.co.uk.



Highly recommended!

There are over a dozen Alfie books. Many of the books come in the form of collection of stories. If you know anyone near Alfie's age, they need to get to know this little boy. Children will love to read about the antics of Alfie and will soon be asking for another Alfie story. His books should be on every child's shelf. The world of Alfie is one that young children and parents will love to return to time and again.



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What else *RP* writers are writing

by Jon Dykstra

Reformed Perspective's writers are a productive bunch: three of them have recently come out with a total of six books!

Christine Farenhorst

Last year Christine Farenhorst published two short story collections. The first is called *Afterwards I Knew*, and is comprised of stories about people who lived through the First and Second World War. Because it was previously reviewed, in the November 2010 issue, I won't talk about it further, other than to note that the very first story, about a German grampa, who was a soldier in World War Two, is so good I would have bought the book just for it. This is a story that can be used to teach children the deeper meaning of the words "beauty" and "grace."

Now the downside to any really good book is that at some point it has to end, so after I gobbled my way through *Afterwards I Knew* I was relieved to learn that Christine had also published a second short story collection. *The Merciful Eye* features four stories (one of which was printed in *RP*) set in the Middle Ages.

Though I enjoyed every story, I was, once again, struck by a particular story. The fourth "And How Shall You Meet Your Maker?" is about a country gentleman living through persecution war and imprisonment who, though slow to act, knows the value of a good woman. The other three are about:

- A French printer who wants only to master his craft. . . and perhaps cheer up his wife.
- A hunch-backed boy whose father wants little to do with him but whose Father clearly has plans for him.
- A rich young lady who loses what she spent great effort and money obtaining but who then finds something much better.

This is Christine at her very best. These are stories that will make readers think, and question "What would I be willing

to risk and sacrifice to serve the Lord, if I live in those perilous times?"

Both books can be found at almost any online bookstore including GoDutch.com.

Michael Wagner

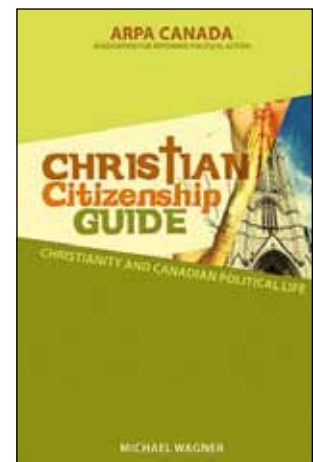
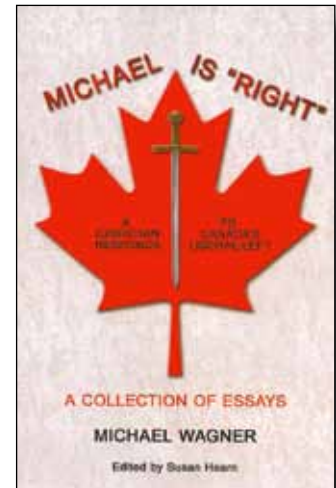
Michael Wagner has recently had three books published.

The first, *The Anglosphere's Broken Covenant*, makes that case that the nations of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States are still under the obligations of a covenant made with God. The "Solemn League and Covenant" was sworn to by representatives of the English, Irish and Scottish governments in 1643 and Dr. Wagner argues that because a covenant made with God cannot be annulled, these countries – and those that sprung from them – are still obligated by the promises made in it.

And what are those promises? Well, one of the more significant is a promise that the citizens of these three nations will seek to either preserve the "reformed religion" as it has already been established in their country (Scotland), or to reform their churches until they too are reformed (England and Ireland).

Now does this mostly-forgotten covenant still apply today, and to Canada and the US too? Michael Wagner makes a good case that it does indeed, and while he acknowledges that his slim 67-page volume is not the final word on this topic, it is certainly a good introduction to it. You can purchase a copy at GCPublications.com

His second book is one I've wished someone would make: it is a collection of his best articles. The book is called *Michael is "Right"* and, in a fun aside, was published by Marnick Press which is owned by Martin VanWoudenberg who wrote a review in the November 2010 issue on the Internet accountability software Covenant Eyes.

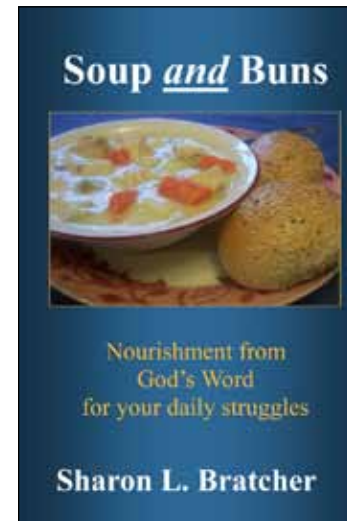




But back to the book – about 100 of the 180 pages are articles that were first published in *RP*, with most of the rest from other publications, and a few written just for this book. We know what to expect from Michael – he has for the last ten years introduced us to either to secular professors, writers and scientists whose research has backed up the Bible, or to pivotal secular types who have attacked the Bible, but whose faulty logic he has then exposed. The books 29 essays are collected in 6 chapters addressing:

1. Canada’s Christian heritage
2. Charter rights vs. Human rights
3. The Sexual Revolution
4. The Government’s attempts to be Big Parent
5. Christian political activism
6. Responses to liberal libels of God’s Truth

This title would make a great gift for almost anyone, but it is an absolute must-read for any highschool graduate heading off to university. For them it would serve as an effective vaccination against the odd, and perverse ideas they will be exposed to on campus. It can be purchased online at MarnickPress.com.



Book number three is called a *Christian Citizenship Guide*, and it covers much of the same ground but in roughly a third of the space. It makes sense that *CCG* was published by ARPA Canada because its content perfectly meshes with their goal to “educate and equip. . . Reformed Christians to political action.” The first three sections, on Canada’s Christian past, on the Canadian Charter, and on the country’s human rights commissions will certainly educate readers on where we

BUILDING ON SAND: Human Dignity in Canadian Law & Society

by Mark Penninga

Premier Publishing, 2009, 131 pages;
Paperback; \$10 Can.

reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

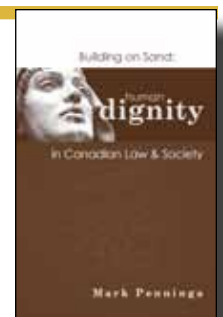
The vast majority of socio-political issues that concern Christians boil down to the question of how one understands the nature and place of human beings. Whether abortion, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, pornography, polygamy, and many more – they all have to do with what one thinks about humanity. Mark Penninga’s first book, *Building on Sand*, is therefore a strategic and important contribution for those called to socio-political engagement.

Penninga is becoming a well-known figure because of his role as the director of the Association for Reformed Political Action. Travelling far and wide across the country, he is passionate about promoting the involvement of Reformed believers in the political scene. This book is partly based on a thesis that he did for a Master’s degree in Political Science at the University of Lethbridge.

The first chapter consists of an overview of how human dignity has been handled in Canadian constitutional law. While most of this chapter is descriptive, Penninga also lays out the implications and logical consequences of these positions. In his second chapter, he traces how these perspectives on human dignity were developed. He gives special attention here to philosopher Immanuel Kant. The third chapter develops a Christian account of human

dignity, particularly building on insights from Reformed theology. In chapter four, Penninga applies that account to three important issues: abortion, euthanasia and equality rights. His concluding chapter explores how the Christian account of human dignity might be advocated and integrated into Canadian law.

Not being a political scientist, it is difficult for me to assess that aspect of this book. As a “lay-person” in that area, all I can say is that it makes for interesting and informative reading. I appreciate Penninga’s efforts to make a careful critique of the ideologies that guide our legal system and the history behind it.



are as a country, and how we got here. And the final section serves as a how-to-guide that will equip Christians to political action.

I would recommend the more comprehensive *Michael is "Right"* to anyone who regularly reads and to those already interested in politics, and recommend the much slimmer, and thus more accessible *Christian Citizenship Guide* to everyone else. You can get the CCG at ARPACanada.ca.

Sharon Bratcher

Sharon Bratcher first started her Soup and Buns column back in 2005 and she has now put 35 of those articles, along with another ten feature articles, together in *Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God's Word for your daily struggles*.

Reading these articles again, a few at a time, it struck me anew just how much common sense Sharon has to share. She has that wisdom – the discernment – that comes only with life experience and a lifetime of daily Scripture reading. What we have here are a mix

of reflections and practical lessons on everything from teaching your children how to take sermon notes to learning contentment, whether rich or poor. Other topics tackled include:

- suffering
- what it means to love our actual, non-hypothetical, non-theoretical, next door neighbor
- respecting children
- teaching the Bible to children
- Titus 2 men and women
- being kind to the unkindly
- dressing modestly

What we have here is a collection of fortifying food – mostly meat, with some fun “milk-ish” morsels interspersed. Or as Sharon would put it, buns and soup. While there is material here to help and challenge everyone, it would make a particularly good gift for young couples just starting to have children, who might be a little overwhelmed and most in need of Sharon’s mix of advice and encouragement.

You can find out how to get your copy by contacting Sharon at sharoncopy@gmail.com.



As mentioned, the book also tries to apply the insights of Reformed theology to the development of an account of human dignity. Here Penninga works especially with the notion of human beings as the “image of God.” While there is some imprecision here and there, for the most part this is a satisfying and helpful discussion.

I did put a question mark at one place in the discussion on the definition of a person. Penninga quotes Gilbert Meilaender, “A person is someone who has a history, not something that has certain properties.” I wonder if a definition such as that might run into problems with the unborn. Do unborn human beings have a history? A case can be made that they do, but I can see that there would be those who would vehemently deny it. Furthermore, the use of the word “someone” in the definition is preju-

dicial, because it is synonymous with “person.” Finally, the definition could be strengthened by the addition of a relational aspect. Persons are individuals with whom one can be in a relationship. This is also evident in the persons of the Trinity – we call them persons also because we may relate to them and they to us.

Very few books like Penninga’s have been published in our community – ever. It’s not a light and easy read, but a thoughtful and careful analysis of an important issue. We can be thankful that we have people like him who are thinking deeply about the issues and making efforts to provide leadership. As mentioned, this is the author’s first book. I hope that we see many more from his keyboard.

For more information, or to buy *Building on Sand*, go to: www.buildingonsand.ca.



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My journey with books

by Helen Tangelder

It has been a long journey of books for me.

I grew up with books, and as a child read from *The Book of Knowledge* encyclopedia, the *Bobbsey Twins* series and Grace Livingston Hill's books. It was my own love for books which had me keep my nursing and my Bible College textbooks.

But it was not until I met John that I really discovered what it was to have books in the house – here was a man who loved books! On our very first date, when I mentioned that I had Berkoff's *Systematic Theology*. John asked if maybe he could borrow it some time. I thought to myself, "There is no way he is going to get that textbook – I'll never see it again!"

For our first 3 months of marriage we lived with John's parents in Oshawa, Ontario before we went to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where John was to study at Calvin Seminary. During those 3 months, I decided to straighten out John's bookcases. That meant I put the books all in neat rows according to height and size – I was tired of look at those messy shelves.

John was not a happy camper when he came home and found out that his books were not in subject order. Oh well, live and learn, in those early marriage days.

More and more books

Throughout his ministry, the supply of books increased. John mostly bought books at garage sales, library sales, or people would kindly give him books from their collections – he would never say no to that.

But then we would need more bookshelves and more space.

In all our moves the books came with us. From Vernon, BC to Wellandport, ON they came by train in the deep of winter. None were lost. He took about 400 books with us to the Philippines – ones he needed for



Rev. Tangelder in the 1960s, along with a picture that shows just a part of his library.

teaching at the seminary. It was a challenge to sort and choose. He took some Dutch books as well, only to find that the bok-bok worm liked the glue in his Dutch books (but they had no interest in his cheap paperbacks).

In all our pastorates John has his study in the house, taking up a bedroom for his books. In Wellandport the church built a special addition on to the parsonage for his study. That was much needed – our family of six needed the room.

And the quantity of books continued to grow.

All sorts

John was happiest when he had a book and pen in his hand to make his own personal notes and scribbles – he did not use a highlighter for his markings. And he was quite an eclec-

tic reader, his reading ranging from *The Communist Manifesto* to Francis Schaeffer's writings. One of his favorite books to read again and again was Augustine's *Confessions*. Right up there among his favorites were C.S. Lewis, Chuck Colson, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and A. Kuyper. There was no end of his favorite special writers.

I could tell when John was tired – that's when he would pull out a good Dutch novel. Though he was a serious reader, John enjoyed a good mystery, the likes of Agatha Christie or G.K. Chesterton.

Tools in his toolbox

John was often asked if he had read them all. Yes, he would say. Mind you, some of them were strictly reference material for his sermons or articles.

Did he keep every book he got from day one when he started his ministry? Believe it or not, he gave away a good number to future seminarians and threw out others that were no longer relevant or falling apart. Did it make a dent on the shelf? Hardly. At one point I had to put my foot down and say I did not want bookshelves in our bedroom or kitchen.

Looking after all these books was a challenge, especially when it came to dusting and straightening up the shelves. Books are real dust collectors so every year around Christmas or New Years I would take them down, shelf by shelf, and give them all a good dusting. I would find pieces of paper stuck in a book, along with clippings, articles, and any other kind of paper for his notes.

Yes books were part and parcel of John's ministry and our married life. Books were his tools, just like that of a carpenter or painter. They had to be accessible somewhere, even if that meant a pile on the floor by his chair and not in a box in the cupboard.

Passing on the tools

The time came in John's last 2 months when he could not hold a pen or a book, let alone have the stamina to read. That was a blow to give up something he loved dearly all his life. One of my hardest times was to go into his study where I saw piles of books he had gathered for his

AND BOOKS BECAME ARTICLES

For 13 years Johan Tangelder – John – wrote articles for *Reformed Perspective*. You can find many of those articles, and much more, on his website www.ReformedReflections.ca.

articles, his pens his notes and the discarded scraps of paper in his wastebasket. . . all just where he left it to the point of no return.

A year later I sorted out John's Dutch books, computer filed each title and author, boxed 1,300 of them and took them to the Canadian Reformed Seminary in Hamilton. I did the same with his English books, computer filed each title, and author, boxed 3,600 books, and took them to Redeemer Christian College University in Ancaster, Ontario. A few books went to family and to several of John's colleagues. That was John's wish and prayer – that his books would be used for God's glory and His Kingdom.

So this is my journey with books – from a few boxes when we arrived in Vernon, BC in 1966 to our life in London, ON where I took out over 200 boxes of books. The journey has been long and good and I certainly have no regrets living surrounded by books!

Praise and thanks to God, our Heavenly Father for John's life and ministry.



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Tidbit relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

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Why is so much Christian fiction bad?

In the June 30, 2007 issue of *WORLD* magazine, Marvin Olasky “interviewed” the long departed novelist Flannery O’Connor by asking her questions he then answered with excerpts from O’Connor’s book *Mystery and Manners*. Most interesting was O’Connor’s thoughts on Christian fiction:

OLASKY: Why do you call lots of religious novels “sorry”?

O’CONNOR: The sorry religious novel comes about when the writer supposes that because of his belief, he is somehow dispensed from the obligation to penetrate concrete reality. He will think that the eyes of the Church or of the Bible or of his particular theology have already done the seeing for him, and that his business is to rearrange this essential vision into satisfying patterns . . . by beginning with Christian principles and finding the life that will illustrate them. . . . The result is another addition to that large body of pious trash for which we have so long been famous.

.....
The Genevan Strasbourg tunes

by David Kruyswijk

Ever wonder where the melodies of the Genevan tunes originated? It didn’t start in Geneva, but Strasbourg! That’s where Calvin stayed after he was banished by the Genevan City Council for proposing that Psalms be sung by the entire congregation. Here Calvin, with the help of Clement Marot (court poet to King Francis I), wrote 19 Psalms that were set to melodies by a composer called Mathias Greiter. Admittedly only one of these Strasboug tunes (Ps 68) still remains in the Canadian and American Reformed *Book of Praise* but that is where the work was first begun.

Calvin was later called back to Geneva, and over the next 22 years the remainder of the Psalms were written by both Clement Marot and Theodorus Beza, while the remainder of the melodies were largely composed by cantors Louis Bourgeois and Maitre Pierre. Cantors were employed by many early churches to lead the choir, and in early Jewish Synagogues to lead the congregation in prayer of which music played a large part.

In 1562, two years before Calvin’s death, the complete *Genevan Psalter* was published, so next year will mark its 450th anniversary.

SOURCE: “The Origin of our Psalm Melodies” by Dr. K.Deddens, *Clarion* Vol. 36, No. 5, 6, 7, and 8 (1987) Spindlenworks.com/library/deddens/psalmOrigins.htm

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Who knew movie reviews could be so profound?

While reviewing *Water for Elephants*, WorldNetDaily.com’s Drew Zahn exposed the flaw underlying most Hollywood fare.

Zahn noted that for “more than a century now four very distinct worldviews have been competing to answer one critical question: ‘What is truth, and how can you know it?’” The four worldviews include the one right one, and three that deny God is the source of all truth. From first to worst they are:

1. *Truth is from God*: “Reality is revealed by Divine Truth (John 14:6)” so it is through God’s Word that we may know Truth
2. *Truth is defined by our reason*: “The idea that God would define truth was eventually challenged by another notion, that man – in all his scientific, progressive wisdom – could determine truth on his own. This gave rise to the second competitor, rationalism, which argues that what we reason to be true must be true.”

3. *Truth is what you feel*: “Yet a third worldview agreed that man defines truth, but insists it is a matter of the heart, not the mind. Sometimes called romanticism, this worldview argues what we feel to be true is true.”

4. *There is no truth*: Finally we have the notion of Relativism – that there is no truth at all.

Zahn notes that while the various worldviews have been debated among philosophers and theologians, “average Joes” all subscribe to the same one:

“When push comes to shove, most folks eventually do what. . . feels right (romanticism). What we really, really want to be true, we usually insist is true, then stretch all bounds of reason and theology to prove it is true. In the end, romanticism usually wins.”

In *Water for Elephants* this romanticism is evident in the central plot, when a young man connects with an older married woman, and the audience is expected to cheer this illicit affair because, well, the two of them just seem so right for each other! But if *Water* isn’t any better than typical Hollywood fare, one good thing can still be said about this film: it spawned Zahn’s insightful review!

SOURCE: “The art of stealing another man’s wife” www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=291093#ixzz1Kk21Jk1g

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Joke of the month

Dentist: It’s a very good thing you came to see me. You’ve got the biggest cavity I’ve ever seen – the biggest cavity I’ve ever seen!

Patient: I can hear you Doc, no need to repeat it!

Dentist: I didn’t – that was an echo!

SOURCE: *A joke a day keeps the doctor away* by Bob Phillips

Fallible or infallible?

Creationists and evolutionists both do origins science, both propose and test theories and both require faith. But only one of these groups builds their work on infallible eye-witness testimony.

by Miep von-Lindheim Westerink

The theory of evolution, we are told, is a scientifically established, absolutely proven fact. But is that really so? In three previous articles (in the April, May and June issues) it was argued that this theory is far from proven: on the contrary, it is extremely speculative.

So creation scientists, in addition to showing the flaws in evolutionary theory, are formulating their own origin theories and their own reconstructions of the past, while taking into account the biblical data about the history of the earth.

But isn't this approach a dangerous one? If we take this creationist approach, aren't we getting a little too fundamentalist, a little too woodenly literalist? I mean, instead of doing good science, aren't we then just trying to prove that "the Bible is right after all"? And what if, later on, whatever theory we have formulated is proven to be wrong? Aren't we liable to shake people's faith?

Presuppositions

These questions presume that creationism is on very shaky ground, and that secular science and its claims are established on firmer stuff. But both secular and biblical origins science require faith. Secular science takes it, as a matter of faith, that God and the Bible can play no role in our explanation of the world and its origin. Christians also rely on faith but have a very different starting point: we know that God's revelation gives us reliable knowledge – more reliable than whatever results we can arrive at via our reasoning – because God himself was an eyewitness to the origin of our world.

The contradiction between a Christian and a non-Christian is not, therefore, between faith and science, but rather between faith and faith.

The different starting positions of secular and biblical origins science are called presuppositions. These presuppositions function as a type of lens through which we look at the hard facts (the fossilized remains, and other evidence of events from the past) and these presuppositions impact how we look at the data, and what theories we hypothesize.

Out of his biblical "presuppositions" a Christian will look very differently at the past of our planet than will a secular scientist, and his reconstructions of its origin will look very different too.

So what we have here is not a fight between religion and science, but *between one scientific model over against another scientific model.*

Creationism

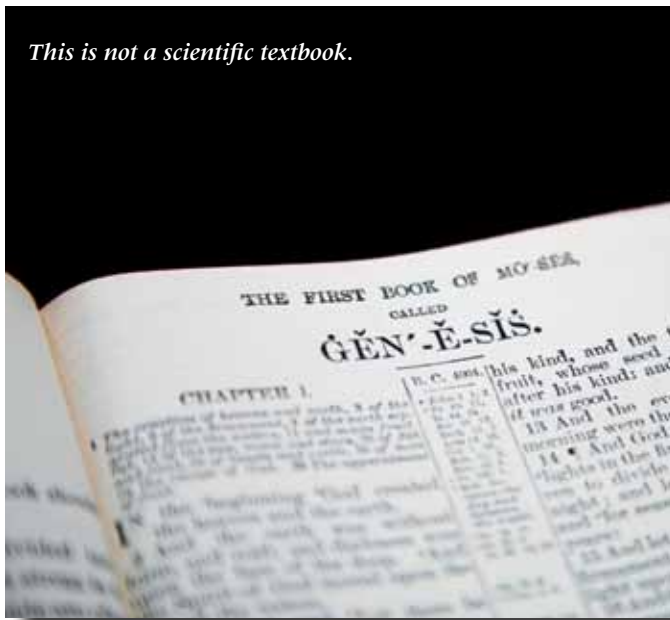
Now if we believe that the biblical account of our origins is true, it will lead to two convictions.

In the first place, it leads to the conviction that the strata on the continents did not originate over the course of millions of years. In the second place, it leads to the conviction that the fossil do not give evidence of molecule-to-man (or macro) evolution. These two convictions prompt an immediate question: then what story do the strata and fossils tell? Is it possible to explain the fossil record within the short biblical chronology?

Answering these questions will take us into the realm of creation science.

Now among Christians, even Reformed Christians, there has been a reluctance regarding creationism: some seem very hesitant to embrace it. There are good reasons for this hesitancy as some in the creationist camp have taken a woodenly literalist approach to Scripture that we should want no part of. Not that long ago a Rev. Van der Jagt summarized the issue in this way: some Christians will read the biblical texts as if the focus and intent of the passages are to answer all sorts of scientific questions.¹ Texts are taken out of their context, and their meaning lost – instead of Scripture being understood as God revealing His plan of salvation, this sort of creationist treats it as if it is a scientific textbook.

However, noting that there is a wrong way to use the Bible in the area of science is hardly a reason to stop looking for the right way to do it. We need to answer the question: what is a biblically sound way of dealing with this historical data from the Scriptures when doing our scientific research?



This is not a scientific textbook.

Creationism and the Bible

So what sort of criteria must we use to ensure that we approach Scripture properly, when we do scientific origins research and formulate our hypotheses?

1. First and foremost the purpose of God's Scripture must be understood as being to reveal God and his plan of salvation – his redemptive history – and not on the providing of scientific data. This is the context in which each text needs to be understood and its meaning discerned.
2. We need to note that the Bible does not speak in scientific language, but in the descriptive language of everyday conversation. In the days of Galileo this was overlooked by the church. For example, when the Bible says: "Sun, stand still" (Joshua 10:12), this is not scientific language from which we can assume how the sun normally moves, and it is certainly not an example of bad scientific communication. It is an example of conversational language, describing things in the way that we see them, must as we do today in speaking about the "Sun setting."²
3. We can quite rightly say that the Bible is not a scientific textbook – it doesn't provide answers to today's scientific questions. But while the Bible does not supply exhaustive information about nature, natural history and science, it does give trustworthy information. This also applies when it comes to descriptions of past events, including those described in Genesis 1-11. Though it is often indirect, or incidental, the Bible does indeed offer factual details of the history of the earth, of mankind and of nature.
4. With these criteria in place, we can now determine what "basic data" about the history of the earth and of humanity can be gleaned from the Bible. This information will then serve as a biblical framework – as pre-scientific presuppositions – for our scientific investigations.

At this point a clear line must be drawn. Up to this point we have been talking about presuppositions – our starting posi-

tion, based on our faith in the Bible and the certain knowledge that it supplies us. This knowledge is not open for discussion.

After this begins the scientific work: the analyzing and interpretation of natural history, fossils, strata, and other origins data, within a framework of this biblical knowledge.

Creationism is science

When we start to investigate our origins, even when we have our presuppositions – our biblical framework – in place, many questions will still remain.

For example, some Scripture texts are not as clear as others; there are some that cannot be conclusively exegeted and this already begins with the first two verses of Genesis. And there are topics about which the Bible says little or nothing, or it only addresses them indirectly or vaguely. Moreover it is also possible that not all the events relevant to the geological history of the world are mentioned in the Bible.

So even with the Bible as our firm foundation, and the eye-witness testimony it provides about our prehistory, there is a lot we don't know, and therefore a lot of leeway to allow us to set up different theories and models.

For example, creationists have a number of different theories about the cause of the flood and about how life after the flood continued to develop. We read in Genesis 7:11 that the Flood started when "all the fountains of the great deep burst open." This descriptive language tells us that the water came up forcefully from the depths and it gives a room for a number of different scientific theories:

- Does this refer to actions caused by underwater volcanoes?
- Did the seabed rise up?
- Did underground reservoirs break open?
- Or was this a cause of supernatural intervention from God?

To find answers scientists must do their normal field work: they have to go to the mountains and examine evidence (the rocks and strata), then propose theories and hypotheses, and finally test them in as many ways as they can think up.

This scientific work is, of course, the work of fallible people. Theories that are posed will be revised, rejected and replaced by others. And, as mentioned earlier, there is nothing wrong with that! Through such processes scientific insight can develop.

But such a theory must of course not be seen as the exegesis of a text or even as an interpretation of the Bible. This is not exegesis, but merely – no more and no less – a scientific theory.

Now one may ask: why should we speculate about topics like the cause of the Flood? Does it really matter for our faith? This is a good point, as indeed, it is not necessary for our faith: God's Word tells us all that we need for our salvation, and with this certain knowledge we have enough.

But this kind of scientific research is important in the context of our cultural commission: to explore and develop

and earth, and grow in knowledge about God, by learning about his creation (Genesis 1:28).

In addition, this research can have an apologetic value. A biblical theory can show that evolution is not the only possible explanation for the origin of our world, and show that the Bible fits with what we observe. In this way, this research can be an encouragement to Christians. However, the apologetic value is limited: our belief in the Bible must not depend on our ability to provide acceptable scientific explanations for events mentioned in the Bible.

When one explicitly keeps the limits of science in mind, then a number of frequently mentioned objections to creationism are easily answered. Creationists are *not* then trying to prove that “the Bible is right after all.” On the contrary, we accept from the start that the Bible is right. Now there are some scientific questions that creationists can’t yet answer, but even then the truth of the Bible remains our undisputed starting point.

And if some creationist theory or another is proven to be incorrect, this should not shake our faith in the Bible. On the contrary, in science it is a very common occurrence for theories, in the light of new data, to be adjusted and adapted. There is nothing wrong with that; this is how science works. And having a creationist theory proven wrong does not affect the truth of biblical account of our origins.

A creationist approach to the Flood and the geological strata

Finally, I want to, very briefly, explain how creationists go about interpreting the earth’s strata and the fossils within



When the Bible says Joshua said: “Sun, stand still” (Joshua 10:12), this is not scientific language from which we can assume how the sun normally moves, and it is certainly not an example of bad scientific communication. It is an example of conversational language, describing things in the way that we see them, must as we do today in speaking about the “sun setting.”

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THIS MADE INTO A BOOK?

Over the last 4 issues we have published four articles by Dr. Miep von Lindheim-Westerink on the subject of Creation, Evolution, the Age of the Earth, and the role of Faith in Science. It has been suggested that together these four articles would make a valuable and accessible book. We’d like to hear from you – would you be interested in buying this book, if it were priced at around \$10?



Give us your feedback at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

a biblical context. Now these are not the sort of theories that are scrawled down on the back of a napkin - on the contrary, creationists have produced well-researched theories that rely on a large number of geological data and the results of their own field work.

Now the lowest fossil-bearing strata are called Paleozoic. These were evidently all formed in a sea or ocean setting, because the only fossils found in these layers are marine animals. These layers consist of thick (now petrified) beds of gravel, sand, clay and lime, that, while once underwater, were deposited over the land masses. According to geologists, all the continents were covered with ocean water at that time. Moreover, a large amount of data indicates that these layers were formed under catastrophic conditions, and thus were deposited with great force and speed on the continents. For these reasons, creationists ascribe this Paleozoic strata to the flood.

In and just below the Paleozoic Rock layer many signs of meteorite impacts are evident. This points to the possibility that the Flood may have been started by violent cosmic impacts that tore up and ruptured the seabed. These impacts, coupled with towering tidal waves created by “the fountains of the great deep” being “burst open” (Gen.7:11) would have, with unbridled violence, dragged along everything on earth, and swept it clean away to disappear into the deep rifts and reefs of the separated continents. All the land animals would have been swept away.

The strata layers above the Paleozoic are called Mesozoic. These layers show clear indications of a dried out earth. According to geologists this is when the sea level was at its lowest level ever, while on the continents massive inland lakes could be found, leftovers from the Flood water. In addition, on every continent we can find wind-blown sand dunes, called redbeds, because of their rusty brown color. This sand contained iron from the Flood’s seawater that, once exposed to the air, became rusty. In these redbeds there are almost no fossils. This makes sense since, after all, all the land animals had been killed by the Flood.

Higher up in the strata of the Mesozoic fossils of dinosaurs are found – not just bones but also numerous walking tracks and nests, including eggs and hatched young. They lived in the marshy areas near the oceans and lakes, which were very special habitats: during the Flood the ruptured seabed would have released molten magma, so after the Flood the seas and oceans would have still be very hot and turbulent. This ongoing turbulence would have resulted in the rapid laying down of new deposits containing fossils. The dinosaurs lived in these hot tropical areas. The heat allowed them to multiply quickly, but the ocean turbulence meant that their habitat was flooded repeatedly. This is why, in some places we can find multiple layers of dinosaur “nests,” one above the other.

It is notable that the very oldest dinosaurs – the ones in the lowest layers – were vegetarians or scavengers. This might indicate that before and just after the Flood, no aggressive predators existed.³

It also appears that all dinosaur fossils can be classified into five distinct family groups. These five families are each consider a *baramin*, which is a unique, basic “kind” (Genesis 1:21-25) of animal.⁴ The fossil record also shows that, after the Flood, a huge amount of variation in anatomical form and food preference developed within these five basic groups.⁵

There is ample evidence that people knew about dinosaurs after the Flood. All over the world images of dragons have been depicted that show an amazing likeness to dinosaurs. And in the Bible in Job 40 a Behemoth is described that must be a dinosaur. The word for this animal is sometimes translated as “hippo” but it cannot be hippo because of its “tail like a cedar” (verse 17). This description is strongly reminiscent of a dinosaur species, such as the herbivorous Diplodocus.

But if people after the Flood did know of dinosaurs, why do you never discover fossils of dinosaurs together with the remains of humans and mammals? It’s because they lived in different habitats. The marshy lowland areas where the dinosaurs thrived was unlivable for people and mammals. Not only was the climate much too hot, the vegetation was made up of toxic plants and herbs. Moreover, as we read in the Bible, the people initially lived together in Babylon. And even when they were dispersed afterwards, they would have avoided the flood-stricken inhospitable tropical areas of the world.

In the higher strata of the Mesozoic we see that the dinosaurs gradually disappeared and died out. Regular flooding, and the cooling of the seawater destroyed their habitat. The cooling seas calmed, and once the dinosaurs disappeared from the scene this lowland areas changed into a suitable habitat for mammals and humans.

This set of events explains why it is only in the highest strata of the geological column – the Cenozoic – that we find fossils of mammals and people.⁶



If humans and dinosaurs lived at the same time, how come we don't find their fossilized remains together?

Conclusion

Current theories about the age of the earth, and the theory of evolution are often presented as established facts. Instead the theory of evolution is built on a whole series of assumptions and presuppositions. This theory is far from proven; it is highly speculative and tainted by atheist prejudice.

Standing in opposition is science established on a foundation of belief in the historical reliability of the biblical revelation about our origins. In the Bible we are told the world was created and made habitable in six “ordinary” solar days.

It also teaches us that the history of the earth has been quite short. Starting with are biblical presuppositions created a challenge for us to find a harmony between the biblical data and the hard scientific facts about the earth's history.

Creationist scientists made considerable progress in the last few decades in meeting this challenge by formulating testable alternative models and theories. We must pray that Christian scientists will continue to take on this challenge, and that the public will become more familiar with the new creationist insights. Then they will learn that there is no contradiction between the hard scientific facts about our origins, and the biblical data. Then they will know that there is a biblically-based alternative to the evolutionary and old-earth theories.

Endnotes:

¹ *Nader Bekeken*, Volume 16 No. 6, June 2009, Page 166 "Much has not been revealed. This should not tempt us to presume that creation was different than as it *has been* revealed. . . . By its nature, [the Word of God] is not exhaustive. But it is reliable." J.W. van der Jagt

² Editor's Note: Those that wish to make too much of Galileo's "correction" of the church's understanding of Scripture should note that all motion is described relatively, ie. a man walking northward on a train is moving northward, relative to the train. But if the train is also in motion, traveling southward at a good clip, then the man, relative to the ground, will be traveling southward. In our Solar System we have chosen to describe all motion relative to the Sun. While it would be unusual, it would not be inaccurate, or unscientific, to decide to describe all motion relative to the Earth, in which case the Sun would indeed be, properly described, as revolving around the Earth. For more on this, see Dr. John Byl's "Another Look at Galileo". *Christian Renewal*, May 13, 1993 (and on the web at <http://GalileoJohnByl.notlong.com>).

³ For more on this see my second article (in the May issue): "And lo, it was very good."

⁴ Baramin is another word for the created "kinds" described in Genesis 1. God created the capacity for great adaptability and variety among each of the baramin, so that each "kind" could develop into a variety of different species. For example, some creationists think that all the various dog species we see today may have come from just one dog kind, or baramin.

⁵ See my third article (in the June issue) on differential gene expression.

⁶ For more see the recently published (Dutch) book by H. Hoogerduijn and J.R. deWit Azn, *Zoeken Naar de zondvloed*. (Search for the flood). It includes exhaustive scientific footnotes.

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



He is Faithful

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lorinda Verhelst



Soup & Buns

“Consistently Superior”

by Sharon L. Bratcher

“Must be able to cook consistently superior meals.”

That’s what the newspaper ad for a housekeeper/cook said. I pondered those words as I laid down the paper and rose to make our dinner. “Consistently superior.” Wow. I evaluated the meals that I put on the table for our bunch three times a day, seven days a week. I can do superior. But consistently? That was a real challenge.

Initially, I was surprised by his request. Then again, if one is paying for the services, of course one wants the quality to be superb. And, of course I know the old adage “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” We all enjoy good food, and so whoever has the job of cooking will bring the most amount of pleasure by serving the best possible meals in their circumstances. In more homes than not, the job belongs to the wife.

The phrase from this ad has stuck in my head since I read it over 25 years ago.

Canned soup and refrigerator buns

On the one hand, I have found myself pointing out all the reasons for *not* doing a “consistently superior” job. There’s lack of income, of course, and the fact that a mother of several toddlers has a lot more to think about and do than just making awesome meals. When I was in my third and fourth pregnancies, twice a week we had “soup and poppin’ fresh” night: two cans of store-brand soup and one package of refrigerator biscuits. The toddlers thought it was wonderful and my wonderful husband didn’t complain. Other days I would manage more elaborate meals. There were times when hastily made sandwiches and splitting some apples met the need just fine, and times of illness when any food put out was fair enough. Gone were the days when I insisted on piping hot food: now there were days when I was just glad to find time to eat!

When the kids got older, there were piano lessons and catechism classes and T-ball and baseball and school board meetings to run to a couple of nights a week. I would sometimes think that it would be quite nice to hire someone to cook those marvelous meals. Let me concentrate on the children, and someone else could do the chores!

An intriguing goal

On the other hand, I was intrigued by the goal of “consistently superior” meals. Sometimes the difference between

a ho-hum meal and something special is only a matter of thought and a few extra minutes or items. One holiday Monday our family took a picnic lunch to a local park to enjoy the outdoors and the playground. Being thrifty-to-a-fault at times, I packed bologna sandwiches, which were a typical lunch meal. Part way through I realized that for only a little more money, we could have had ham and cheese and it would have been more special. A little extra thought and planning is all that it would have taken.

More recently, I invited my married children over for a chicken dinner. Because I had the items in the house and knew that they liked them, I put on stuffing and applesauce and cranberry sauce and cottage cheese and peaches as well as the potatoes and gravy and chicken and veggies. They said, “Wow – it seems like Thanksgiving!”

Time spent: less than five minutes. Reaction: priceless.


Conclusion

The idea of “consistently superior” resonates with the idea of “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (Eccl 9:10), and “be not weary in well doing” (Gal 6:9). We read about the good wife in Proverbs 31:27 that “She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.” These are words of fortitude and encouragement, and are not intended to promote guilt or inferiority.

There are times when we need to be reminded that we might lean towards selfish or lazy. These words in Proverbs 31 are like a coach yelling to his hockey team to get in there and give it 100%!

But of course, life is not all about cooking and eating, either. So when our 100% is taken up with potty training and weeding a garden or hanging laundry and reading to little ones and intervening in at least 6 squabbles a day, yes, meals may be almost an afterthought. On those days we strive to be consistently superior at *those* tasks instead. No one can be awesome at every thing every day, and no one needs to feel guilty that she should have been.

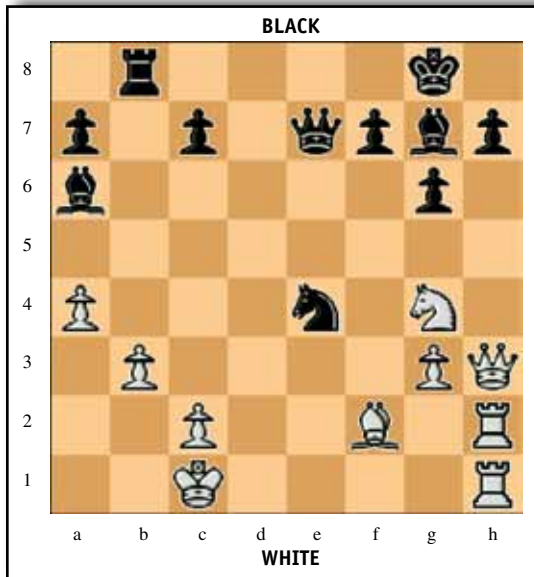
Essentially, with God’s strength and grace, we should do our best each day.

45 of Sharon’s articles are in *Soup and Buns: Nourishment from God’s Word for Your Daily Struggles*. \$10 (US)/book plus shipping. Contact sharoncopy@gmail.com. 

ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

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

Chess Puzzle # 179



White to Mate in 4
Or, if it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 2**

NEW PUZZLES

Riddle for Punsters #179 – “Another bunny is not funny!”

What did the farmer say after years of failed attempts to chase rabbits away from his property?

“I guess those furry animals are h ___ to stay. If I give this farm to one of my sons, he will in- ____-it them as well!”

Problem to Ponder #179 – “Hot Dog Stand at the Beach”

With the onset of warm, sunny days many people head to the beach for fun and relaxation and even a tan. Eventually children playing in the water or building sand castles get hungry. Jessica has three children and gives each child a \$5 bill to take to the hot dog stand. Including taxes, a hot dog costs \$1.35, an order of french fries \$1.55 and a milkshake \$2.50 at the hot dog stand. How much change will be left from the \$15.00 if each child has a dog, a shake and SOME fries?

If, instead of a milkshake, each child buys a bottled fruit juice for \$1.70, a) how much change will be left after each child also buys a dog and order of fries?

b) altogether how many dogs and fries would have to be bought in order to get back as little change as possible?

SOLUTIONS TO THE (JUNE) PUZZLE PAGE

Answers to Riddles for Punsters #178 – “Dog-tired”

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

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

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

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

Number of dandelions in 6 days = 20 + 44 + 68 + 92 + 116 + 140 = 480.
Total mass = 480 x 50 grams = 24000 grams = **24 kilograms** of dandelions that Joe would collect by the evening of the sixth day.

In the neighbour’s lawn, which has area 9 x 25 = 225 m², the number of dandelions is 225 plants/m² x 225 m² = 50625 plants. Their mass is 50625 plants x 0.125 kg/plant = **6328.125 kilograms!**

SOLUTION TO Chess Puzzle # 178

White to Mate in 3 Descriptive Notation

1. B-R6 ch K-N1
2. N-Q7 ch K-R1
3. Q-B6 mate

White wins sooner if:

1. B-R6 ch K-Q1
2. Q-Q7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Be2-a6 Kc8-b8
2. Ne5-d7 + Kb8-a8
3. Qa4-c6 ++

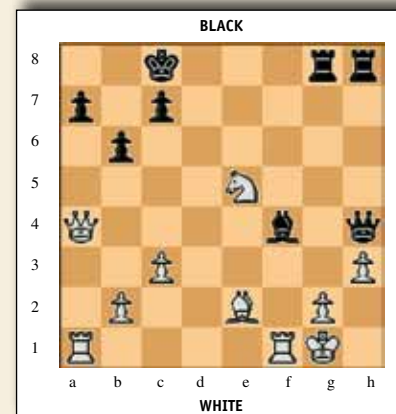
White wins sooner if:

1. Be2-a6 + Kc8-d8
2. Qa4-d7 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3 Descriptive Notation

1. _____ B-K6 ch
2. K-R1 QxP ch
3. PxQ RxP mate

[An effective “Queen Sacrifice”]



OR

1. _____ B-K6 ch
2. R-B2 QxR ch
3. K-R1(or-R2) QxP mate

Algebraic Notation

1. _____ Bf4-e3 +
2. Kg1-h1 Qh4xh3 +
3. g2xh3 Rh8xh3 ++

[An effective “Queen Sacrifice”]

OR

1. _____ Bf4-e3 +
2. Rf1-f2 Qh4xf2 +
3. Kg1-h1(or-h2) Qf2xg2 ++

Crossword Puzzle

Series 18 No 6

Last Month's solution
Series 18 No 5

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14					15				16			
17					18				19			
	20				21	22			23	24		
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28	29	30		31			32					
33			34		35				36	37	38	39
40								41				
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51	52	53					54		55			
56				57			58	59		60	61	
62			63		64			65		66		67
68					69				70			
71					72				73			

1	P	O	S	E	D		O	R	H	A	N		I	C	E						
	A					11	T	E	12	A		13	E	A	S	E	14	L	S		A
15	S	A	17	C	R	E	D		18	D	R	I	V	E	R						S
		19	B	I	E	R	E		20	A	S	A		21	V	A	22	S	E		
23	C	O	R		24	E	P	O	25	C	H		26	P	E	E	K	S			
27	O	D	R	A		28		29	T	A	T		30	E	A	R	L	Y			
31	D	E	U	C		32			R		33	J	E	G					34	E	
35	E	S	S	E	N		36	C	E		37	P	L	E	38	A	39	S	40	E	D
	S						41	T	A	D			I		42	T	E	E	N	S	
		43	C	A	44	T	E	S		46	O	R	E		48	I	N	D	E		
49	S	A	V	E	R			50	A	L	E	R	T		51	T	S	A	L		
53	W	R	A	P			54	R	N	D		55	A	R	56	I	E	L			
E			57	T	58	R	A	D	E		59	S	I	M	I	L	60	E			
E			61	A	D	A	G	E	S		62	E	A	P							R
63	T	O	R			64	P	E	S	T	S		65	D	I	A	N	A			

ACROSS:

1. Fence holders
6. Elevation abbreviations
10. Test used to identify carcinogens
14. One way to say farewell
15. Another way to say luxurious
16. Faithful daughter-in-law
17. Clan emblem
18. Aka ozokerite, kind of wax
19. Designed for use in gr. 1-12
20. Card game
22. Sour and biting
24. Unit of volume
25. Session, for short
27. Employ, or use, in Britain
28. Exist
31. Musical exhibition of skill
33. Challenge to combat for a knight
35. Ancient alphabet characters
36. Bright night light
40. Raging
41. Summer attraction
42. Get up
43. Outdoor activity
47. Common currency in Europe
48. Feeling
50. Spread hay for drying
51. Orator
54. Fall in drops of liquid
56. Hello, in Norway
57. Has breakfast
59. Show emotion
62. Auto pioneer and manufacturer
64. Fixed charge per unit
66. Distend with air
68. Disagreeable odor
69. Inner selves
70. Ancient Sumerian city in S. Iraq
71. Spooky
72. Department abbr.
73. Seagulls

DOWN:

1. Tap lightly
2. Aroma
3. In _____ (Latin)
4. Abounds with
5. Season
6. Eng. Lang. Arts
7. Aka Dalian, Chinese city
8. Carry out, accomplish
9. Truth (Latin)
10. Old unit of area
11. Comb. Form meaning many
12. Character of a group
13. Gleam
21. French river that flows into the North Sea
23. Dilute (abbr.)
26. Special care unit (abbr.)
28. Seaweed gel
29. Rajah's wife
30. Chicken products
32. Mold in which metal is cast
34. Before, poetically speaking
36. Observe
37. Tight
38. Land measurement
39. Red (comb. Form)
43. Spread jam on toast
44. Half of the famous Winnipeg intersection
45. Clear out
46. Ripped
48. _____ out, make a living
49. Agile
51. Land's edge
52. Southernmost point of Canada
53. Very downy duck
55. Type of bear
58. Put an end to
60. Ripped, or undecided
61. Freedom from pain
63. Air above us
65. French direction
67. British thank-yous

Joyce