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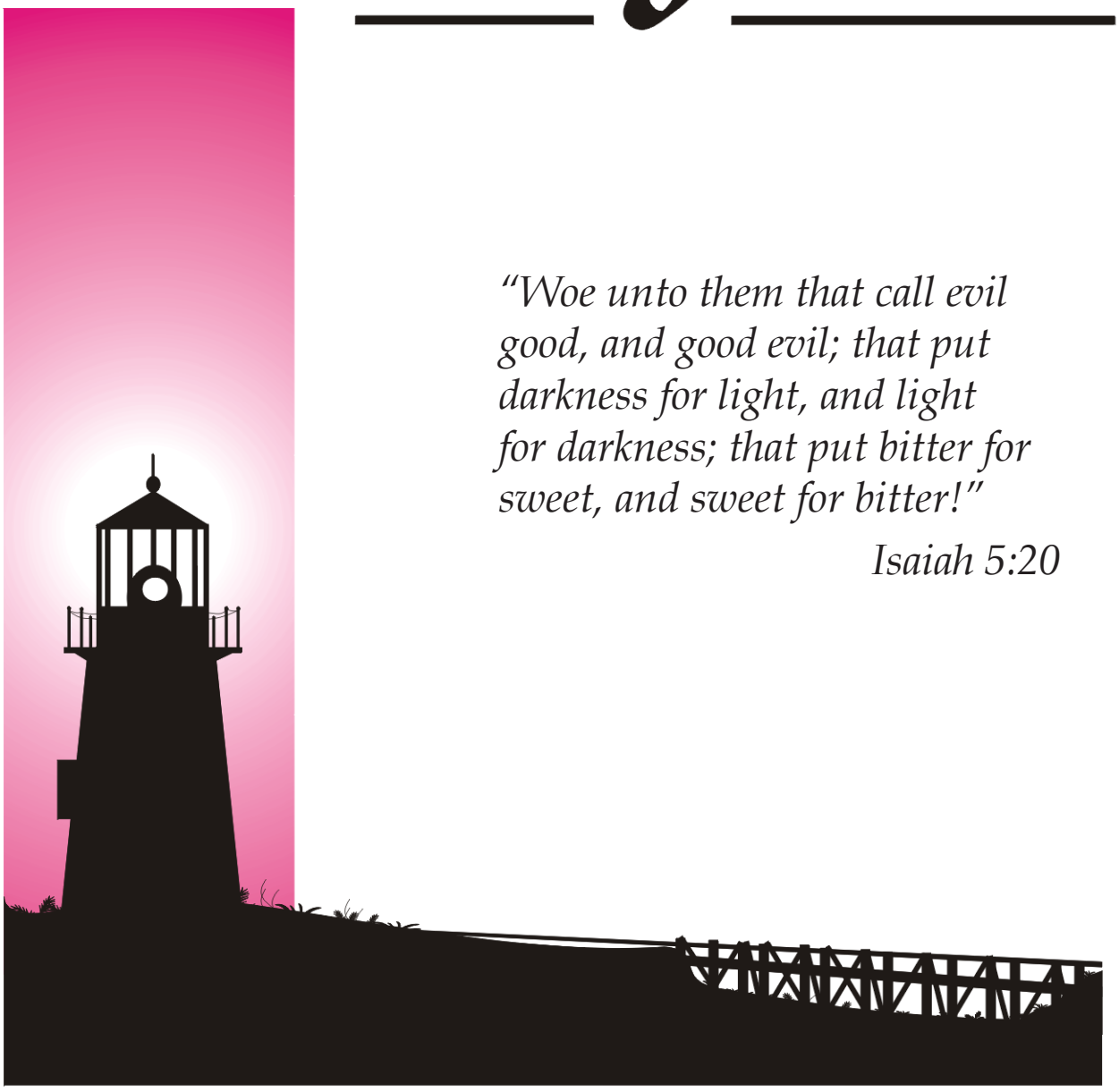

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Isaiah 5:20

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Better Than Sacrifice

by John Huizenga

Sacrifice has long been an activity of God's people that testified of their faith in God. "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Gen 4:4). God commanded Noah to make special provisions of extra animals in the ark so that he would be able to offer a burnt offering after the ark came to rest on dry ground. And this sacrifice was to God a "sweet savor" (Gen. 8:21). To this we can add the sacrifices of all the patriarchs, and the countless sacrifices of God's people at the tabernacle and temple of God. All these bloody sacrifices pointed to Christ who offered himself once on the cross.

To sacrifice is to devote and consecrate something wholly to God. What is given is something that we could use and enjoy for ourselves, but instead, it is given to another. God demanded a bloody sacrifice of the Old Testament saints to point to the only sacrifice that could redeem us and make satisfaction for God's judgment upon our sin: the very life and blood of Christ. Christ gave his life so that we might have eternal life. Today we are called as God's people to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). We consecrate our life unto God, and in doing so, we also give of our life to fellow believers. We don't use our gifts, abilities, and resources for ourselves, but serve others to show our thankfulness to God for salvation.

We consecrate our life unto God, and in doing so, we also give of our life to fellow believers.

A life of presenting ourselves a living sacrifice is a beautiful thing. It is a characteristic of the child of God who has learned something of denying himself and taking up his cross to follow Christ. Doing so takes humility, spiritual maturity, and discipline. For the rich man who claimed to have obeyed all the commands of God, it was the last hurdle to attaining full spiritual maturity. Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21).

Not all sacrifice, however is pleasing to God. Cain brought a sacrifice to God, but he was not pleased with his sacrifice of the fruit of the land. The unbeliever may give things up to others, but if it is not done out of faith and out of thankfulness to God, it is not pleasing to God. Deep down is the hope that in giving, there will be some kind of return, even if it is only a good feeling of doing something "good." Even as Christians our concept of sacrifice can be very weak and selfish at bottom.

A life of godly and humble sacrifice is an indication of spiritual maturity, but there is still more for the Christian to learn. Our life is a life of growing in faith, working out our salvation, and striving to enjoy that freedom from the bondage of sin that Christ has given to us. Even as we grow, however, our eyes are opened more and more to the fact that sin clings to even our best works. Nevertheless, we grow, and we cling to Christ, and keep our eyes fixed on something that Christ learned to do perfectly: obey.

God says of obedience, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22). We obey when our will is the same as God's will. If our will does not conform to God's, then our sacrifice is vain. When Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane to pray, his heart and flesh cried out in agony. Nothing could be more horrible and further from what our flesh desires than the suffering which Christ faced. Yet, it was God's will

that his only begotten Son endure that suffering and perform that sacrifice, and Christ willingly obeyed. This is the obedience God demands: a heart that truly desires "Thy will be done." When God leads us through the valleys, we walk without trying to scramble out, but humbly submit, trusting that this is the way to higher ground with God.

God reveals to us the amazing and profound fact that Christ learned this obedience. God shows us the relationship between sacrifice and obedience in Hebrews 5:6-7 where we read of Christ, "As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedec" (Heb. 5:6-10). Notice that not only did he learn obedience, but the purpose and goal is the salvation of all them that obey him. This kind of obedience must be found in us! It is found in us because we are united to Christ by faith, and our union with Christ by faith begins to work a harmony between our will and God's.

It is our nature that we will what gives us ease, pleasure and glory. Our will is to fulfill our own desires and serve our corrupt and sinful flesh. At the heart of our sinful nature is our belief in the lie "ye shalt be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). Our sinful nature puts others down to bring personal glory; it directs lots of time and energy to the achievement of our personal goals; it would rather not love our enemies and esteem others better than ourselves. God's love for us demanded that his will be obeyed by Christ - restored covenant fellowship and love with his people meant suffering and sacrifice. We must learn to do the same in our life. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"(1 John 5:3). When our will is God's will, then we won't grieve and complain or look for loopholes when he calls us to walk in his commandments.

Obeying our parents is easy compared to obeying the commands of God.

Obedience is a very difficult thing to learn. Godly parents strive diligently to plant the seed of understanding in their children when they as servants of God, with authority from God, demand obedience from them. As young people, we need to examine our hearts to assess how well we have learned the lessons of obedience. If we fight tooth and nail with our parents, how can we expect to live in obedience to God? Obeying our parents is easy compared to obeying the commands of God. If a child of God has not learned the lessons of obedience very well within the home in which God has placed him or her, it is only that much more difficult to learn these lessons later.

The lessons God places before children in the home may be such things as a command to take out the garbage, clean your room, and wash the car. Of course there are other things you would rather do. Not only that, just the idea of doing it simply because someone else tells you to do it is grating upon our nature. Love for God and our parents destroys those wicked desires, but often because of that sin that clings to us, we still often need a threat to motivate us. So you set out to do the chores. You take out the garbage and wash the car ever so nicely. Your room is a complete disaster, but another idea comes to mind as you wash the car. The garage could use some tidying. My parents would be thrilled to see the garage back in shape; it would be much easier than cleaning my room, and besides, my room is my own space and I really don't mind sleeping in a pig sty. You are convinced that your parents should be pleased, but they are not, and neither is God. Saul tried the same thing, but God said "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). He and you failed the lesson. Your will was not in harmony with your parents.

Really, the work of cleaning your room is far easier than our calling to love our neighbor. If we can't overcome the urgings of our own will to do what we want and avoid some work, we won't even come

close to humbling ourselves before others and living in love with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. The work of growing in faith is difficult, and often discouraging. But we must remember that it is the way to knowing God, his love, and his mercy so that we can live with him forever in covenant fellowship. The reward is marvelous beyond comprehension as we read in Isaiah 64:4: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." So have courage. Drink often of the means of grace, cultivate an active devotional life, and learn obedience.

"*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isa. 55:6-9). ❖

Gem of the Month

Christmas

Christ was born on Christmas Day
He came to live on earth
Because it was the Father's Will,
He bore a lowly birth.

There was no room within the Inn
To make the Babe a bed.
This Little One, who now is King
Was born within a cattle shed.

Although He bore a lowly birth,
Did not the angels sing?
Did not they tell the shepherds
Of Jesus Christ, our King?

Did not the wisemen travel
From a land that was afar
With a guidance as they traveled
The brightness of a Star?

Did not this Babe soon suffer
To save both you and me?
Did not He die upon "the Tree"
To set His people free?

And yet when Christmas comes each year
Its meaning's put to naught
For little think of Jesus and
Salvation that He brought....

But rather dream of presents
That lie beneath a tree....
Wonder which belongs to me.
What could the present be?"

Christ was born on Christmas Day
So many years ago
And this must be remembered
As each Christmas comes and goes.

For this Christ of long ago
Will come for you and I
And take us Home to Heaven to
Our Father's Home on High.

—Sherry Van Beek
reprinted from Beacon Lights *December, 1977*

Living With Cerebral Palsy

by Kris Moelker

Psalm 27:1 "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid." I remember learning this Psalm for Sunday School merit work as a seven-year-old little girl and its first verse is my favorite text. What a comfort to be taught the Scriptures and to be able to recall many wonderful texts which have been a source of encouragement as I live with Cerebral Palsy (CP).

Some adults, young people and children have special needs because of how God directed their development in their mother's womb. In some instances, God worked in such a way that he caused some babies to suffer a significant injury shortly before, during or shortly after birth. Other fellow believers may have suffered injuries or illnesses as a child, young person or adult through which their heavenly Father is pleased to give them special needs until he brings them to their heavenly home.

On March 31, 1972, my life's journey as a special member of the body of Christ began. In his infinite wisdom, my heavenly Father's hand created me with an abnormally short umbilical cord which wrapped around my neck and cut off my oxygen supply at birth. It was his will to use the doctor's hands to preserve my life on this Good Friday morning. As a result of this lack of oxygen, my brain was significantly injured. My heavenly Father had determined that all the muscles of my body would be affected to one degree or another by my brain injury. In faith, trusting his wisdom, my parents brought me, their firstborn, home and lovingly cared for and instructed me to the best of their ability. Over time, they learned that my brain injury was called Cerebral Palsy and it was God's will for me to be afflicted with this disability for my entire life upon earth,

For the first ten years of my life, it was God's will for me to receive therapy and my education through the public school system. Home visits by therapists and nurses and regular group therapy sessions helped my parents carefully teach their tiny infant skills that "normal" babies learn easily on their own. Then my mother had to put her little toddler on a bus and entrust her care to bus drivers, teachers, aides, physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists on a daily basis. Soon this toddler was a little girl, learning the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, and also working hard to learn how to control her muscles to the best of her ability to use a wheelchair, walk with a walker, speak as clearly as possible and do her schoolwork on a typewriter with a special guard placed over the keys to keep her hands and fingers from striking too many keys at once.

Mainstreaming from a special education classroom to a regular classroom was just beginning when my parents mainstreamed me to Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. Teaching a special needs child in a regular classroom setting was a brand new concept for our Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Even in the public school setting, special needs students were just starting to mingle with, and join the regular education students for various activities in the classroom. My classroom teacher was unable to teach me as much as she felt I could handle because of the various special needs of the rest of the students in her classroom. When the Lord led my parents to discuss with my teacher the possibility of mainstreaming me to Hope School, she was very supportive and in fact had been prepared to talk to my parents about exploring this possibility.

I had attended Sunday School since Pre-Kindergarten and catechism since kindergarten with the children at Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan who were my age. I advanced through each year of Sunday School and Catechism with the same class of kids but when I was mainstreamed, I was enrolled in Hope School's 4th grade class when I was 10½. The 4th grade class at Hope School was a small class of 19 students and my knowledge and skills were at the 4th grade level. Thanks be to God for the faithful labors of Miss Winifred Koole who was my first teacher at Hope School! Being the first special needs student to be mainstreamed to Hope School was a blessed experience for me, my parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives, teachers, fellow students and all my fellow saints.

Beginning in sixth grade, I spent many late nights and Saturdays, at my typewriter and later at my computer, finishing assignments. I worked hard and spent hours in my bedroom finishing assignments, reviewing material for tests and final exams. My studies were far from easy for me, but after six years of hard work, I was able to graduate from 9th grade with 13 classmates. My class was

smaller than when I was first enrolled in Hope School because we lost students when Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, Michigan opened.

After graduating from Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, by God's grace I was enrolled in Covenant Christian High School. Because my ninth grade year had been a more difficult year for me mentally and emotionally due to the increased complexity of the workload, my sophomore year was carefully planned for me. I was enrolled in five courses and two study halls each of my three years at Covenant. Since science classes were difficult for me, I was exempted from Biology and would fulfill my science requirement by taking Earth Space Science during my senior year. Eating my lunch during 4th hour study hall my sophomore and junior years enabled me to fellowship with the student body and watch intramurals during lunch break.

As I look back over my nine years of Christian education, I am so thankful for the fellowship I enjoyed with the students and teachers. I would not have been able to experience such fellowship if I had remained in the public school system. What a blessing that we fellow saints can, for the most part, learn and grow up together from infancy until we graduate from high school. This fellowship has indeed made my experience as a member of the body of Christ joyful. I had felt the love of Christ through the care and concern of my fellow saints through my entire life. Many have also seen Christ's love and compassion as they have observed me working hard at learning and just living my life even outside the Christian school setting. For example, a fellow member of my congregation recently remarked that he remembered how the young people who knew me at the young people's conventions I attended would encourage the young people who weren't from the Grand Rapids area to listen while I spoke during discussion groups or wait patiently for me when I participated in an activity.

What a blessing to have had Christian School teachers who assisted my parents in teaching me how to use my talents to the best of my ability. My graduation from Covenant Christian High School was a momentous event for me, my parents, my classmates, family and all my fellow saints who knew and loved me. It indeed was a time for us to celebrate the completion of many years of hard work, of nine years of Protestant Reformed Christian education in which God had indeed given me much grace through the patience and assistance of my loving parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers and classmates to serve him by completing the work he had given me to do.

After graduation, my heavenly Father led me to continue my education and study accounting at Davenport College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Just before I started college, I began to use a power wheelchair which helped me get around campus and my community independently. No more did I have close friends available to help me during the day as I had in junior high and high school. With the help of Student Services at the college, I was able to get all the assistance I needed during the day. A second cousin attended Davenport College and her class schedule allowed her to help me get acclimated to campus, assist me during my free time, bring my computer (which was attached to a desk on wheels) to most of my classes my first term of college. I started college as a full time student, but I soon realized it was the Lord's will for me to be a part time student. I had to make time to travel by GO!BUS (a door-to-door public transportation service for the disabled) and depending on their schedule I could spend a lot of time waiting for my ride and traveling between home and school. This cut into my study time.

After three years at Davenport College, I received an Associate Degree. Then I waited on the Lord for his will concerning a job. During this time, I volunteered doing data entry at Davenport College's Placement Department, and helped my dad's auto body shop business with their Accounts Payable. It took over a year of waiting on the Lord before I started volunteering at Hope Network. Eventually, I became an employee of Hope Network. Last February, I began my 15th year of employment at Hope Network. I have had positions in Billing and Accounts Payable. The majority of the time I have been responsible for data entry of the daily pay data of many of the special needs people we provide paid work to in our sheltered workshops or in various companies in the community.

As I reflect on my life, I am also thankful for the many good gifts that I have been able to use as I serve the Lord in every aspect of my life in this world as a child of God. Even the actions and laws of the world have been used by God to provide for my daily needs. I have in mind the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Yes, it is a law written by ungodly men, but it is one of God's gifts to his people. When you go about your daily activities in the community, look at all the ramps, elevators, spacious restrooms, lower sinks and drinking fountains, wide aisles, wheelchair accessible store counters, more merchandise and exhibits at the eye level of a person using a wheelchair, special seating for those using mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and canes. Think about the kindness shown to you and your loved ones by the medical community. These conveniences make life easier for the person with

special needs in the church and in the community.

Throughout the thirty-nine years of my life, the Lord has been with me and my family, upholding us in the joys and sorrows his loving hand has sent us. My family, church family and other fellow believers have been such a blessing to me. Truly, I have experienced the blessedness of the communion of saints. It means so much to me when a family member or other fellow believer will take the time to stop and engage or try to engage in a conversation with me. In a crowded church narthex, or busy family gathering, it can take more effort to understand my speech; but with some patience and careful listening, most of the time I can be understood. I am so thankful for the group of adults and young adults in the Grand Rapids area who take the time to organize activities for those who have special needs to fellowship with one another and for others who are interested in being close friends.

Parents and young people, please help the young children in your family feel comfortable around special needs people. Answer your family's questions truthfully. If you have questions, do some research so you and your family are made more aware of the possible needs of the brother or sister in Christ who holds a very special place in the church. Take time to discuss with your family how each of God's children is uniquely created in his image and has a special place in Christ's church. Point out that God makes no mistakes and there really are no "accidents" because he determines and directs each life according to his will. I feel that it is alright to ask questions. That is how we learn about the life struggles of our fellow saints and how our heavenly Father bestows boundless grace upon them to be content.

I am thankful God has blessed me with this grace each day to live my life. I need his grace and strength to awake early and to take about two hours to prepare for the day with my mother's assistance. I need grace to use the GO!BUS to go to and from my job. I need his grace to carry me through when I am weaker and more tired. I need grace to remain patient throughout each day because each task and activity is more difficult and takes more energy for me to do than it would for a "normal" person. I am so thankful that God's grace is sufficient for my every need.

Clinging to his promises, I know that he will continue to give me the grace to trust him to provide for all my needs as he leads me down my life's path. This path will lead me one day to my eternal home where he will make my soul and body perfect. All my sins, my physical limitations and all my struggles will be for ever gone! Sing with me Psalter 203 stanzas 2 and 4:

Thy counsel through my earthly way
Shall guide me and control,
And then to glory afterward
Thou wilt receive my soul.

Tho' flesh and heart should faint and fail,
The Lord will ever be
The strength and portion of my heart,
My God eternally. ❖

Kris is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

Starlight and Time

by Rev. John Marcus

If Satan can get us to doubt one portion of God's word, he will have a much easier time planting seeds of doubt concerning other sections of Scripture. If he can get us to doubt the creation account on the basis of science falsely so-called, what is to keep us from doubting the resurrection account? If one portion of Scripture can be dismissed as mythical history, why not another?

One way Satan attacks the truth of Genesis and the rest of Scripture is by casting doubt upon Scripture's clear teaching concerning the age of the earth. Using data such as the genealogies presented in Genesis and elsewhere, it's not difficult to arrive at six thousand years as the age of the earth. However, if Satan can convince us that the universe is much older than six thousand years, say on the order of billions of years, the truth of Scripture is immediately called into question.

One particular argument, which many unbelievers use to supposedly "prove" that the universe is billions of years old concerns light from distant stars. The reasoning goes like this: Some star formations have been estimated

to be billions of light years away; that is to say, they are so far away, it would take light from those stars billions of years to reach the earth. If we can see the light from those stars, it must have been traveling through space for billions of years. Therefore, the universe must be billions of years old.

This is an example of a lie cloaked in scientific language. It is a lie because it directly contradicts God's very own word that he created sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day of creation, some six thousand years ago. The lie is cloaked in language that sounds logical. But, it is a lie just the same.

When faith is confronted with such lies we must cling to the clear teachings of God's word. We don't have to understand all the intricacies of the arguments we hear. We don't have to understand how scientists figured out that the stars are billions of light years away. We don't have to understand how they figured out the speed of light, etc. It may be helpful to understand these things; but such understanding must not be the basis of our faith.

Unbelieving scientists may scoff and call us ignorant simpletons; but, that's nothing new. The gospel, and God's word that reveals it, have always been scoffed at by unbelievers. We need to understand that God's word is sure. If Scripture reveals the earth and the universe to be six thousand years old, that's all we need to know before we reject the lie that the universe is billions of years old. By faith we believe God's word and reject the lie (cf. Hebrews 11:3: "Through faith we understand…").

Faith is not a blind leap into darkness that closes our eyes to understanding. Faith should not be defined as believing those things that make no sense. Far from it, faith uses the spectacles of Scripture to make sense of things. It is helpful therefore, to know that there are explanations for starlight reaching us from such distant places in the universe.

One explanation for the fact that we can see such light from distant stars is that God could simply have created the light that stretches between them and the earth. The same God who created light in an instant on the first day of creation is surely able to create the billion-year light streams that stretch between the stars and us. God could have created the stars and light in transit that make it appear as though they existed for billions of years. This is a valid explanation in that it logically explains how a star that is billions of light years away could be visible even thought the universe has only been in existence for six thousand years. It is also a valid explanation because it has its starting point in the truth of God's inspired infallible word.

One criticism of this explanation, however, concerns light streams from stars that never existed and from events that never happened. For example, if the "light-created-in-transit" explanation is correct, then the explosion of a supernova located a billion light years away, which explosion we observe today, never actually happened. All that would have existed in this case would have been a light stream that had been traveling towards earth for six thousand years with the mere appearance of an exploding supernova at the end of that light stream. The reason we would have to say the supernova never actually existed and the explosion never actually occurred is that we know the universe is only six thousand years old. Assuming that the speed of light has always been the same, there would not have been enough time for the light to reach us from one billion light years away, where the supernova explosion apparently occurred. In other words, if we are seeing an event from one billion light years away there are seemingly only two possibilities. The first possibility is that at least one billion light years have passed by since that event happened; this, of course, would be inconsistent with a six thousand year old universe. The second possibility is that God simply created a light stream six thousand years long with the appearance of an exploding supernova at the end of it.

God could certainly do this. But, some wonder whether the light-created-in-transit theory may contradict Scripture, which seems to indicate that God created not just light streams, but heavenly bodies themselves, which he set in the firmament to give light. Genesis 1:16-18: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

In recent years, another explanation has been brewing among creation scientists. The chief proponent of this new explanation is Dr. Russell Humphreys. Dr. Russell Humphreys, and more recently, Dr. Larry Vardiman, have used Einstein's theory of relativity to develop an explanation that makes sense of light from distant stars.[1] Although Einstein's theory is often associated with the evolutionary Big Bang hypothesis, this is more a result

1 See "A New Creationist Cosmology: In No Time At All," a series of articles by Larry Vardiman and Russell Humphreys, on the internet at http://www.icr.org/article/new-creationist-cosmology-no-time-at/ (accessed 8:10/2011).

of unbelieving assumptions that are fed into Einstein's theory.

A refreshing aspect of Humphreys' and Vardiman's explanation is that they take Scripture seriously. They do not attempt to explain away the clear teachings of Scripture in the light of apparent contradictions with science. Rather, they seek to make their science fit Scripture. Says Humphreys,

> In contrast to the way some scientists promote their theories, I don't expect people to take mine as gospel. For example, many people may prefer the mature creation of starlight, a venerable creationist theory I commented on in appendix A of my book. Even if you like my theory, please try to keep open to the possibility that a better one may come along. I myself remain open, and anticipate my tenure at ICR, with increased attention and time focused on this vital question, to bear much fruit.
>
> Cosmic phenomena are so complex and beyond our ken that it would be especially arrogant to assume God couldn't do what he said he did simply because we can't imagine how. Our imaginations are very limited, but God's is not. Even in cosmology, all things are possible with God (Matthew 19:26). Every human theory needs to conform to the knowledge the word of God gives us. Regardless of the complexities of cosmology, we can know that the world is young because of clear Scripture in clear context, such as Exodus 20:11, "*For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth…*" Our privilege, our mandate, is to try to discern his methods and thoughts, and to give him all praise and glory throughout.[2]

Humphreys' explanation uses the effect called "gravitational time dilation" to explain how light could reach the earth without billions of years having passed on the earth. Gravitational time dilation is a term used to describe the effect of gravity on the passing of time. This effect has been proven using atomic clocks, one placed at sea level and another atop a mountain. Since the atomic clock at sea level is subject to greater gravitational forces, it runs more slowly when compared to the atomic clock place further away from the earth's center of gravity. This is a striking effect that shows how time and matter in the creation are intimately connected and that time itself is a creature having been created by God in the beginning.

Another significant aspect of this new creationist cosmology is that it does justice to many Scripture passages, which seem to indicate that space is actually a solid material (even though we cannot see or feel it). One such Scripture, Isaiah 40:22, describes how God "stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." Sixteen other verses in Scripture contain similar language. These verses indicate that space is like a stretchable cloth. Similarly, Genesis 1:7 speaks of the firmament (Hebrew *raqiya*), which word suggests that space is a solid material that can be spread out, like bronze plates that have been spread out by hammer (cf. Numbers 16:38, "broad plates" using the same Hebrew root word as used in Genesis 1:7 for "firmament").

According to Humphreys' solution to Einstein's gravity equations, the way in which mass is distributed throughout the universe affects the stretching of the fabric of space, which stretching controls the speed of light, which in turn controls the passing of time.

Humphreys' argument relies on the effect of gravity upon time. The more gravity, the slower the passage of time. Today, the effect on earth is so small that it cannot be noticed unless we look for it using highly accurate atomic clocks. However, in the vast universe, at the beginning of creation, the effect could have been very great. According to calculations, given enough gravity at the center of the universe, time could come to a complete stand-still. Humphreys believes this effect could have taken place and again subsided on day four of creation. While time stood still on earth, processes toward the edge of the universe would continue. This would allow plenty of time for light to travel from distant stars. (Space prohibits us from going into more detail; but the interested reader is referred to the articles by Vardiman and Humphreys in footnote 1.)

It is important to realize that the use of time dilation does not make the universe more than six thousand years old. The truth still remains that God created the original mass of the universe six thousand years ago. Therefore, this explanation does not capitulate to unbelieving evolutionists. To them, it will no doubt be foolishness.

Is this the correct explanation? Perhaps. Our faith, however, should never stand upon our ability to provide an explanation for phenomena in the creation. Whether or not we can explain starlight from distant stars, God's word must stand as the rule for all truth. "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). ❖

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2 http://www.genesisfiles.com/Guest_Articles/Seven%20Years%20of%20Starlight%20and%20Time%20-%20Russell%20Humphreys.htm (accessed 8/10/2011).

Our Children's Education: (6)
The Spiritual Blessings of a Covenant Education

by Aaron Lim

Rev. Ronald Hanko properly defines Christian education:

> Christian education is education that is completely and consistently Christian. It is education that is Christ-centered and Bible-based. It is education that is controlled not by the civil government but by Christian parents (Christian Education, article).

Because covenant parents have the high calling to raise up children for the LORD, they must desire the highest quality of covenant education. They may not be satisfied simply with a Christian education. They must insist on a uniquely Reformed education, one that imparts to them the powerful truths of Scripture as the basis for all knowledge. It must be an education that is according to the distinctive "aforesaid doctrine" of the church, as the Baptism Form puts it. An education of this nature must rely on the church's confessions.

Again Prof. Engelsma writes:

> …we insist that the creeds must be retained as authoritative for Christian education. To let them go would be to lose Reformed, covenant education. The confessions are not an authority alongside Scripture, but they are the authoritative interpretation of Scripture for the Reformed faith...they are the truth for the redeemed, Reformed believer's entire life (pg 30, *Reformed Education*).

We cannot begin to list all the benefits of a covenant education, but they may be broadly categorized into these few headings. Scripture demonstrates numerous of these blessings to us. It is important to note that the blessings are always spiritual in nature. We are not pursuing material blessings in covenant education.

1. The Vanity of this Life

Contrary to public education which sinfully promotes the pleasures of this life, a covenant education strives to teach covenant children the vanity of this life. We teach them that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15). We teach them that all of life is vanity without God (Eccl. 2:11). We teach them that riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death (Prov. 11:4). We teach them to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord (Phil. 3:8). For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Matt. 16:26). Knowing this, covenant children confess, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am (Ps. 39:4).

Because all of life is vain without God, we rear covenant seed so that they find their hope and strength in God (Ex. 15:2). Like the psalmist who knew the Lord from his youth, our covenant children declare, For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth (Ps. 71:5). The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps 27:1).

2. Preparation for the End Times

What makes public education so spiritually dangerous for covenant children is that it sinfully disregards the day of final judgment where the world shall come to an end. While the world promotes a life of merry-making and sinful pleasures, Jehovah's children must be taught that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (2 Pet. 3:10), where he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil (Eccl. 12:14).

For this reason we must teach our children to be sober, to watch and pray for the Lord's return where persecution will increase. Covenant education must prepare our children to "suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (Gal. 6:12). They are not in this world to enjoy its pleasures, but to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow after Christ (Mark 8:34). They must learn to walk the narrow way where very few will tread (Matt. 7:14). They must learn that they will be hated of all men

for the sake of Christ; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Matt. 10:22).

Covenant education functions like a camp that trains young soldiers to fight their spiritual warfare in life. Covenant parents know only too well that the spiritual battles in this life are fierce and unending. They are wrestling "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). Hence they must equip their covenant young to the best of their ability with the spiritual armory necessary to fight this intense spiritual warfare.

With an adequate spiritual preparation, our covenant young will not be caught unaware when persecution comes upon them as the day of the Lord draws nearer. They will stand up unashamedly for Christ according to all that they have been taught and trained for. Even if death should threaten them, they will resist the mark of the beast, for they fear God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

3. Preparation for Eternity

Because the church is the only institution on earth that will abide for eternity, we must educate our children to love this eternal institution. God and his church must be central in their lives. God's people must be their closest companions in this life, for it is they with whom our children will spend eternity with. Our children must say, I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts (Ps. 119:63).

We teach our children, in the beautiful words of the puritan Matthew Henry, "that a holy heavenly life spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is, without doubt, the most pleasant and comfortable life any man can live in this world" (The Pleasantness of a Religious Life).

In covenant education our children will learn to look forward to the day of our Lord's coming with "a most ardent desire," as our Belgic Confession puts it (Art. 37). Their suffering in this life will not be in vain. Their choice to suffer afflictions rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin will be vindicated. The Lord will wipe away their tears when he returns (Rev. 21:4). He will give them a crown of righteousness because they love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). Then they shall reign with him forevermore in the new heavens and new earth.

In view of all these blessings, we trust that we and our covenant seed will be counted amongst those to whom the Lord shall say, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34).

VII. The Church's Responsibility

Our church fathers wisely understood that the church had an important role to play in the education our children receive. Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordrecht reads,

> The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

In explaining the fourth commandment to keep the Lord's Day holy, the writers of the catechism instructed that the "schools be maintained" (LD 38, Q&A103).

Although CERC does not have a Christian school presently, there is much that the church can do. Office-bearers, to whom Christ entrusted the welfare of his flock, can and must point out the sinfulness of public education to covenant parents. They must demonstrate precisely from Scripture the sinful and spiritually devastating consequences public education has for covenant seed. Scripture is not silent about the subject. Because they are his children, God has much to speak about the rearing of covenant seed in his Word.

When the church establishes a clear and distinctive spiritual vision for covenant education, God's people will not perish. Covenant parents will be convicted of their high calling to rear covenant seed. They will see the need for a solid covenant education that has God's Word as its central focus. Any knowledge gained apart from Scripture is meaningless. They will understand that covenant children must be raised covenantally.

While the establishment of a Reformed school may only be a long-term goal for now, CERC can give much needed support to her parents by offering its premises for this cause. Is it not better for our covenant seed to study, interact and fellowship with each other rather than with wicked, ungodly peers whose influence will destroy their covenant identity?

The present and growing number of parents in CERC who home-school their children ought not to be alone in their cause. The church can give much needed support, direction and instruction to them. The church is our spiritual mother that showers us with care and love.

The church that truly loves the Reformed faith will do all in her power to give her children a covenant education. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

December 9 Read Leviticus 15

As we continue through the ceremonial laws that God commanded Israel to keep, we come to a set of laws that concern the normal bodily functions of a man. In these functions Israel was pointed to their need for cleansing from sin. Christ fulfilled this need for us on the cross. But yet we must see how sin stains our daily lives. Even though Christ has paid for our sins, we must strive to live lives of sanctification in thanksgiving for that ultimate sacrifice. We must live lives that show the antithesis in all of our daily activities. Let us pray for the grace to do just that. Sing Psalter 140.

December 10 Read Leviticus 16

There is probably no other ceremony that pointed more to the death of Christ, than the rite of the day of the atonement. As you read through the chapter, did you notice all the details that were to be followed on this special solemn day? Our worship, too, must point to the work of Christ for our salvation. We do not focus on his death and sacrifice, but rather we focus on the result of that sacrifice, our salvation. We have a solemn duty to worship each Lord's Day. We also have the solemn command of Christ to worship in spirit and in truth. Is this our desire? Is it your desire, young people? Sing Psalter 109.

December 11 Read Leviticus 17

Not only did Israel have to show in their worship that their God was Jehovah, they had to do that in their daily lives as well. This is the first of several chapters that points this out. Here they were given ordinances that governed their eating of meat. They had to offer of it to the Lord, and they were not to eat of its blood. In this way they showed that they were different than the heathens who lived around them. What about us? While we have no ordinances that govern us as Israel did, we must still show that we live the life of the antithesis in our daily lives. May we ever seek God alone as we live day by day. Sing Psalter 311.

December 12 Read Leviticus 18

We might blush as we read these ordinances aloud. But then we should read them again. Notice first of all how practical they are. If we would use these verses to guide our relationships with other, we would find it easy to live in the way of Jehovah. Sins that are common today are condemned in these verses. All kinds of abuse must be avoided. We are taught how we must bring up our children in Jehovah's ways. Finally the sin of homosexuality is condemned as it stands. This is the way we must believe, people of God. This is the way we must live. Sing Psalter 278.

December 13 Read Leviticus 19

Here we have a whole collection of laws concerning our love for our neighbors. Do we need laws for us to love our parents, feed the hungry, or seek the neighbors' good? Should not we do this out of thankfulness for our salvation? As we live our lives on this earth looking for our eternal life in heaven, we can begin, in our care for those around us, to practice a small bit of that heavenly life. When it is in our power to do good for someone, we must do it. It is not a choice but a requirement of living a life of sanctification. Why must we do this? Because, as the chapter says, Jehovah is the Lord! Sing Psalter 24.

December 14 Read Leviticus 20

The practices of the heathen or the unbelievers are vile. This we see as we read through this chapter which repeats some of the laws that were given in the previous chapters. But notice that the punishment for walking in those wicked ways is repeated over and over again. That punishment is death. It was physical death for Israel of old; it is spiritual death for all those who walk in that way at any time. The chapter then ends with the promise for Israel of a peaceful life in the promised land: Canaan. That promise is for us as well. We have the promise of a peaceful life in the new Canaan: heaven. Let us live the antithetical life now as we look ahead for the glorious day of our entrance in the Promised Land. Sing Psalter 308.

December 15 Read Leviticus 21

Every day that Israel went to the tabernacle and later the temple to worship Jehovah, they were reminded that they must be holy even as God is holy. They were reminded of this as they saw the priests and knew of the lives of those priests. Those priests had to live a life that was more holy than even the people did. Yes, those priests were sinners. They, too, had to offer the sacrifice of the sin offerings before they began their work each day. But yet, those priests and their lives reminded Israel of the necessity of living a holy life. We, too, must be holy. Our officebearers, while they are not bound by the Old Testament ceremonial laws, must live an exemplary holy life, and we must follow them. In this way God will be glorified as he commands. Sing Psalter 223.

December 16 Read Leviticus 22

Sometimes we wonder why we must go to church each week, or why the Church Order must be kept. The answer for us is as the answer for Israel of old. God must be glorified

in the manner of our worship. To glorify him in the best way possible is to obey the ordinances that he has ordained for us in his Holy Word. Israel was bound by the ceremonial laws that God gave on Mt. Sinai. We are bound by the regulative principle of worship as it is found in the Bible. By living in that principle we find the freedom to worship God in the way that he has commanded. In this way we find peace on this earth and eventually in heaven. Sing Psalter 137.

December 17 Read Leviticus 23

Throughout the year Israel was reminded of God's goodness as he kept the various feasts ordained by Jehovah. Each of those feasts showed to him some aspect of God's grace to him. They had to keep those outward feasts every year until the deliverer, Christ, the Son of God, came to earth and offered himself for his people. Christ fulfilled each one of those feasts so that we do not have to keep them. In fact, we may not keep them. We may and must learn from them, but we must not keep them as they have been fulfilled in Christ. Let us be thankful for the grace given to us as it was given to Israel of old. Sing Psalter 251.

December 18 Read Leviticus 24

In the middle of this account of the way Israel must worship God, a man is found who has blasphemed the name of the most holy God. Israel was commanded that this man who had profaned God's name, be stoned. Do we learn from this that our God is a jealous God and that his name must be treated with utmost respect? Do we respect that name in our worship? Do we respect it in our daily lives? Do we rebuke those around us who cause us to hear Jehovah's name blasphemed? We must or we must risk the ultimate penalty as signified in what was done to the cursing mongrel of this chapter. Sing Psalter 352.

December 19 Read Leviticus 25

God gave to Israel laws that were looking ahead to its possessing the land of Canaan. Those laws also were rich in symbolism. First of all there was the law concerning the rest of the land every seven years. God wanted Israel to see the necessity of keeping the Sabbath Day. They had to see this every day on the seventh year as they were prohibited from going out and tilling their land. God cared for his people physically during that seventh year, but he was also providing and caring for them spiritually. One of the reasons given for the captivity was that they had not given the land her Sabbaths. This was not man's reason but God's. The other ordinances given in this chapter like this one were that so Israel might know that God was God. Is this our confession? Sing Psalter 256

December 20 Read Leviticus 26

In this chapter God reminds Israel of many of the laws which were given to them previously. He does this in order that they remember those beautiful covenant promises that he made with their fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He also warns them what will happen when they fall into sin. We, too, need such reminders. That is why we read the law from week to week. That law is also our schoolmaster that leads us to Christ. In keeping that law we show our thankfulness for the salvation given to us by God. Let us not weary in the reading of the law; let us welcome it and desire it each week of the year. In this way we will remember that God loves us and will keep us until the end. Sing Psalter 241.

December 21 Read Leviticus 27

God had given to Israel many riches when they left Egypt. He promised to give to them earthly possession when they reached Canaan. He has also given to us much as well. Do we see the need to give to him of what he has given to us? Do we see the need to give to him tithes from those earthly possessions as a way of showing our thanksgiving? Israel needed many rules to guide them. We, who have a fuller understanding of his goodness, do not need the rules, but the idea is the same. We must vow and pay to Jehovah for his goodness. We would have nothing either earthly or spiritually without his fatherly hand. Do we remember that daily? Sing Psalter Sing Psalter 313.

December 22 Read Numbers 1

Israel continued to encamp around Mt. Sinai waiting for God, through the use of the Shechinah cloud, to order them to move. Moses was commanded to make an accounting of the number of the Israelites by tribes excepting Levi, which was devoted to the service of the Lord. We may notice that this numbering shows to us that God has a specific number of people in his church. At any time during the history of this world, you can add those members in glory (church triumphant), those members fighting the fight of faith (church militant), and those yet to be born (church latent) and come up with the same number. Those who are elect are a specific number. This is a comfort as our place in God's number will never be taken from us. Sing Psalter 50.

December 23 Read Numbers 2

We continue on with the numbering and ordering of Israel. Our God is a God of order and requires that his church be orderly as well. He gave to Israel specific commandments, and he gives to us specific commandments how to keep order in his church. Israel did not just need this for their journey across the wilderness; they also needed it to reflect the glory of their God. We, too, must, as Paul states, do all in the church in "decency and in order." Sing Psalter 348.

December 24 Read Numbers 3

After the others were given their place in Israel's society, then God turned his attention to Levi. They were separated for a special work; that of serving God in the tabernacle and later in the temple. Those who were directly in the line of Aaron would be the priests until the "high priest" came to this earth. The others were given work to do for the service of Jehovah in his worship. God has given to his church today

work to do. We all have the office of believer to fulfill in the church. To some he has given the work of the special offices of minister, elder, and deacon. Let us carry out our work using all of our abilities in the service of the most holy God. Sing Psalter 144.

December 25 Read Numbers 4

We might read this chapter and believe that the work of the Lord is not for the very young confessing member or for the old. There is some truth to that as a man must reach a measure of spiritual maturity before he takes up labors in the church. There also comes a point in a man's life that God tells him that his work in the church is over. As we live in the church of the New Dispensation, there are no hard and fast ages. Some less than twenty may be able to serve and may be needed to serve. Many over fifty are valuable members in the service of God in the church. Let us serve as God has called us, and let us never shirk the duties that he may place before us. Sing Psalter 320.

December 26 Read Numbers 5

There are basically two situations discussed in this chapter but basically they deal with the same idea. Israel's life must be conducted to show that God is holy. First of all there was a reiteration of some of the laws that in keeping them Israel would show this fact. Secondly, there are ordinances which show that marriage must be holy and all life in marriage must be a holy life. When we do not walk in holiness in marriage, God's name is desecrated. Israel had to bring certain offerings for such sins. We must walk a walk of forgiveness so that our walk not blaspheme God's name. Sing Psalter 360.

December 27 Read Numbers 6

As we have seen in the past few chapters the priesthood was a constant reminder to God's people that they were to live holy lives. We see that again in this chapter. There were those men whose lives were set aside before God to portray holiness to the church. Men like Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist are some of those that are named in the Bible. These men in their daily lives showed all of God's people the idea of the antithesis and living the antithetical walk. This is the life and walk that we must live. We must be separate from the world around us in walk. We do not separate ourselves from the world, just worldly life. When we live in that manner we can be assured that the beautiful blessing mentioned in the end of the chapter will be given to us. Sing Psalter 1.

December 28 Read Numbers 7

If we scan this chapter too quickly, we would miss that significant verse at the end of it. After Moses set up the whole tabernacle, and it must have been beautiful; and after the various tribes brought offerings to be used in God's service, a voice spoke to him from the mercy seat. We do not know if this is the same voice speaking as in the next chapter, but it is clearly speaking of acceptance for the offerings. The work was done. It was time to put the tabernacle and its furniture into the service of God. We, like Israel, are spoken to by God. We hear him in his Word and in the preaching. Do we listen? We must listen to him daily and especially on the Lord's Day. In that way we will receive the blessing of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 260.

December 29 Read Numbers 8

God's Word is a light upon our path and a light unto our feet. Jesus is the light of the world. The Old Testament church could not see that as clearly as we can. Therefore, they needed the knowledge of the candlestick burning in the tabernacle to remind them of that fact. They needed the consecrated priest to offer for them their sacrifices of thanksgiving to God. We can and must learn from these facts and ceremonies. But by faith we must walk in the light of the Word and in Christ. May God give to us the strength to do this every day. Sing Psalter 71.

December 30 Read Numbers 9

God cares for his people. Of that there is no doubt. We have evidence of that fact in this chapter. First of all those who were prevented from celebrating Passover due to an uncleanness were given permission to celebrate at a different time. Secondly, the Shechinah cloud led them through the wilderness in a very visible way. We have few ceremonies and no clouds, but God still leads us by his Word and Spirit. May we give heed to them in our walk in this life. Sing Psalter 53.

December 31 Read Numbers 10

Can you imagine the excitement in the camp that morning in which the cloud moved from over the tabernacle to the place that showed them where they were going? Can you imagine the hustle and bustle as they took care of the final details before this huge company of people moved? Even though Moses used the means of trumpets and the able scouting abilities of his wife's relatives, it was God who led them as is evident by the words of Moses as they broke camp and as they set it up once more. God leads us today by his shepherd hand; for this we must pay heed to God and give thanks as we walk through the wilderness of this world. Sing Psalter 222.

January 1 Read Numbers 11

Israel complained, and God chastised them. That could be the headline for chapter 11. They had not gone very far from Sinai, and were only just over a year removed from Egypt when they complained about not having the best of food. Remember, this was the people whom God fed every morning with manna. Manna supplied all of their nutritional needs for the long arduous journey. But they were not satisfied. Even when God gave them quail, they forgot him. It appears that they did not take time to ask his blessing upon their food. And so, he punished them with death for the second time at this place. Did they learn? Do we learn

not to complain with the way God leads us in this life? He is our faithful heavenly Father. Let us put our trust in him. Sing Psalter 213.

January 2 Read Numbers 12

Here we have an account of more complaining. This time it is from his own family that Moses, the meekest man to live, has to endure reproach. Miriam was not satisfied with the place God had given to her. So she puts Aaron up to the sin of going against Moses. God showed once more that he was angry at their sin. Miriam was struck with leprosy, the disease that was the living death. Moses once again becomes mediator and pleads to God for her health. God hears his prayer, and Miriam is healed. We would hope that Miriam, Aaron, and Israel would learn the lesson of not envying the position of those whom God has placed in authority. Do we know that lesson? Do we hold in high esteem our officebearers as the ministers of God? Let us give God thanks for such men who serve as watchmen on the walls of Zion and lead us to that heavenly Canaan. Sing Psalter 213.

January 3 Read Numbers 13

From yesterday's camping spot we are suddenly brought to the door of Canaan. Once again we see that Israel, as a nation, has learned nothing. Even when Caleb and Joshua bring a report of faith, they despair of God's mercy and complain. Even when they see the beautiful produce the land of promise would bring forth, they find something to complain about. Look at the mercies God has given to us. Do we see the mercies of Christ or do we see only hardships in this life? Let us be careful in condemning Israel. Let us pull the beam out of our eyes before we try to pull the mote out of theirs. Sing Psalter 290.

January 4 Read Numbers 14

Once again we read a chapter that reminds us of our actions. Like Israel, we rebel at God's word. We sometimes ignore the good counsel of those whom he has placed in authority over us. Then we say we are obeying, but we must learn the lesson that "slow obedience is no obedience." As we look at this chapter we see Christ. Moses as the type of Christ interceded for a people who did not deserve intercession. We are like that quite often. We ignore God's good way and go our own way. When we do that, we deserve to be punished. Through the gracious work of Christ on the cross we are able to cross Jordan into the heavenly Canaan. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift! Sing Psalter 291.

January 5 Read Numbers 15

After being condemned to spend the next forty years in wandering in the wilderness, God showed to them that he would keep his promise to bring Israel into Canaan. He did this by reiterating some of the laws that he had given before. He also showed how these laws would be carried out when they entered the promised land. In this chapter we get one of those hints that Gentiles would be brought into the covenant. The stranger that would abide with them would also be commanded to keep these laws. Israel was also given a visible reminder of those laws in the fringe spoken of in the last part of the chapter. The chapter ends with the declaration that Jehovah was their God that brought them out of Egypt. This God is our God and he will be our guide even unto death! Sing Psalter 25.

January 6 Read Numbers 16

It did not take long after its condemnation to the forty years of wandering for another rebellion to break out in Israel. This time it came from the Levites and other rulers. They wanted to show that they should have as much power as Moses and Aaron. They were really striking at God for what he had done. This rebellion was put down in a very telling fashion. Some were destroyed by being swallowed up in the earth, some by fire, and when the rebellion persisted, some by a quick-acting plague. Close to fifteen thousand people died in a very short time, and had it not been for the intercession of Moses and Aaron many more would have perished. Israel had to learn that God was God, and that was the message of the new cover that was on the altar after that day. Sing Psalter 214.

January 7 Read Numbers 17

There are times in the life of the church that God must show whom he has appointed as leaders. No, he does not do that in such a picturesque way as he did in the wilderness. But he does it still the same. Those rods, dead sticks as they were, were pictures of us by nature. Only through the grace of God can we bring forth the fruit of repentance. Only by God's grace does he give to us leaders who help us by the rod of God's Word through this life which is a valley of the shadow of death. As we read these chapters, let us see that it is really we that were traveling through the wilderness. And it is only by grace that we are redeemed and able to enter heaven. Sing Psalter 216.

January 8 Read Numbers 18

After showing Israel and the house of Aaron in a very graphic way that he had chosen them to be his priests, God reminds Aaron's house and Israel that Israel was to care for the priesthood through their offerings. This has impact for us today. We must care for those whom God has placed in authority over us. We must care for them in the honor and respect that we give to them, and, in the case of the minister, we care for his earthly needs. Officebearers must see the high calling that is placed before them, and really see that they are standing as God's ministers for his people. Let us all learn from these chapters how we must honor and respect those men whom God has seen fit to place over us. Sing Psalter 349.

Homosexuality

by David Warner

Earlier this year, the Presbyterian Church (USA) decided to alter its constitution in order to allow openly-active gays into positions of ministers, elders, and deacons. After more than 30 years of debate on this issue, the PC(USA) joins the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Episcopal Church as mainline Protestant churches that accept gay clergy members and leaders. The measure changes the church's constitution by removing a 1997 amendment that said that those ordained were required to live "either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman" or in "chastity in singleness." The Rev. Heidi Vardeman, senior minister of Macalaster Plymouth United Church in St. Paul and a spokeswoman for a pro-gay church group called More Light Presbyterians, said in an interview, "Finally, the denomination has seen the error of its ways and it will repent, which means, literally, to turn around." Yes, you read that correctly; the PC(USA) is basically saying that they were sinning in formerly prohibiting homosexual office bearers! The homosexuality issue is not over yet, however, because gay advocates are likely to try to pass an amendment at the church's next General Assembly in 2012 calling for the church to bless same-sex marriages and unions. It should be noted that the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a smaller and more conservative denomination, still holds (as of today) to prohibition of women officers and openly gay clergy and leaders.[1]

the PC(USA) is basically saying that they were sinning in formerly prohibiting homosexual office bearers!

In Canada, a similar movement was seen in 2002. It was then that the First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto opened church leadership positions to practicing homosexuals, even though the denomination itself prohibited it at the time. First CRC's pastor, Nick Overduin, said that this positive move would make First CRC a more inclusive congregation. Pastors in nearby CRC congregations, such as Hendrik Bruinsma of Maranatha CRC, stated that his "deepest concern is that the very salvation of people is at stake, because people will be misled about the basics of a new life in Christ and the nature of sin, repentance, and salvation."[2]

The Acceptance of Homosexuality

So how did homosexuality begin getting a stronghold in society, and get a foot in the door of so many churches? The past two decades have shown the "gay agenda" spreading through social engineering. In their book *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90's*, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen argue that gays must portray themselves in a positive way to straight America, and that the main aim of making homosexuality acceptable could be achieved by getting Americans to think that it is just another thing, with a shrug of their shoulders. Then their battle for legal and social rights is virtually won. Kirk, a researcher in neuropsychiatry, and Madsen, a public relations consultant called for homosexuals to repackage themselves as mainstream citizens demanding equal treatment, rather than as a promiscuous sexual minority seeking greater opportunity and influence. Kirk and Madsen laid out several steps within this "gay manifesto" for success. They advised homosexuals to argue that they were born that way (a position that has recently been blasted from the radio into the ears of millions of young Americans thanks to Lady Gaga), even though the authors themselves state that "sexual orientation, for most humans, seems to be the product of a complex interaction between innate predispositions and environmental factors during childhood and early adolescence." The gays needed to convince the public that homosexuality is natural for some people, and that sin and seduction have nothing to do with it. If not, religious groups would claim that homosexuality is a moral choice of sin. Gays needed to identify themselves as victims in order to make straights feel uncomfortable and ashamed. With the explosion of AIDS over the last few decades, homosexuals have used the disease as their chance to appear as a victimized minority needing and deserving special care and protection by the rest of America. Gays also tried to look good by "revealing" that

certain historical (Abe Lincoln, King James I) and even biblical (King David and Jonathan) figures were actually homosexuals still in the closet. Another piece of advice to gays given by Kirk and Madsen was to overcome the obstacle of Christianity by "muddying the moral waters," in which they could get support from moderate churches to gain theological objections to conservative Biblical teachings. This meant portraying the religious groups as those full of hatred that was inconsistent with their doctrines, antiquated and not up with the times in science, psychology and culture.[3] Whether you realize it or not, the tactics laid out in this book are working. The homosexual movement is creeping in to every crevice of society, including religion. We need to be wary and watchful.

The homosexual movement is creeping in to every crevice of society, including religion.

Our Response

So how do we properly answer to the PC(USA)'s vote to allow homosexuals into office? First, let's look at what church leaders are called to do. Verses two and three of I Peter 5 say that the elders are to feed the flock of God, taking oversight willingly, leading the flock by their own exemplary lives. Those who practice homosexuality are continuing in sin and unrepentant, disobeying God and thus are teaching the church by example that they, too, can disobey God.

Secondly, let's see what qualifications leaders in the church should have. Both passages of I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:4-9 say that a man who desires to be an elder desires an honorable thing because he must be a man whose life cannot be spoken against. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exhibit self-control, be able to teach, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must not be a drunkard, pugnacious, or greedy, but rather a patient man that manages his own house with faithful children. The requirements for deacons, in I Timothy 3:8ff, are similar. Based on these passages, practicing homosexuals cannot be leaders in the church. In remaining homosexuals, they purposely and willfully disobey God. Their lives of unrepentant sins can be spoken against, and they will not have a good report by others. Gay men do not have the wife and children that are clearly stated as requirements in Scripture.[4]

The Bible is very clear about homosexuality being against God's will—something we should not practice. After God created Adam and Eve, he gave them the command to "Be fruitful, and multiply." The woman is the help that is fit for the man. This same command was given to Noah and his family in Genesis 9:1. Those who are in homosexual relationships cannot be fruitful and bring forth children, and are again disobeying a command of the Lord. Genesis 19 records the story of the great sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the punishment they received for their homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 says "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." I Corinthians 6:9-10 reaffirms the sin of homosexuality when it says that fornicators, adulterers, the effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind—among other unrighteous people—will not inherit the kingdom of God. Romans 1:21-27 shows the foolishness of these ungodly men. This passage says that, even though God has made himself known so that they are without excuse, these men claim to be wise by changing the glory of the incorruptible God into that of a corruptible man, changing their filthy sins into something worth bragging about. They put themselves above God, and were unrepentant, so that God gave them over to their uncleanness and they continued to dishonor their bodies between themselves with vile affections. Women practiced lesbianism and men lusted after other men. Verse 32 of the same chapter states that these homosexuals know the judgment of God, and that they realize they deserve death; yet they continue in their own sin and take pleasure in others that partake in those sins. II Thessalonians 2:11-12 agrees, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Even those that merely have "homosexual tendencies or desires" but do not actually carry out the physical act of homosexuality are included, when Matthew 5:28 is applied. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Objections Brought Up

Gay advocates try to say that God is continuing to reveal new things to us through our culture, so if homosexuality is culturally acceptable, it must be acceptable to God as well. We know, however, that God communicates with us through the Bible, not culture. Culture is formed by people. If God *was* communicating to us through culture, we would have to say that the American culture and those that accept homosexuality

are the true cultures blessed by God. More importantly, this would imply that God changes based on what people want (which changes frequently!). If God can change, we cannot be sure of anything. The uncertainty of what is right or wrong, what God loves and hates, or how we can be saved would leave us as lost souls. However, we find comfort and assurance when Malachi 3:6 reveals that God does not change.

Several more objections are brought up concerning our position against homosexuality. One of them states that if homosexuality is wrong based on Old Testament laws, then all of the laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy must still be upheld. However, we know that the civil laws recorded were for the Jewish theocracy, of which we are not a part today. The priestly laws contained in these books dealt with the Levitical and Aaronic priesthoods representing the High Priest Jesus, who has fulfilled the laws so that they no longer apply to us. The third group of laws, the moral laws, was not abolished in the sacrifice of Christ because these laws were based upon the unchanging character of God. These moral laws were re-established in the New Testament, and that is why homosexuality is still condemned as a sin. A second objection states that a loving, committed homosexual relationship is acceptable to God. However, this is never supported in the Bible, and goes against the order that God created. It is unnatural and defies God's command to fill the earth. Homosexuals are trying to say that they have no sin—but they are deceiving themselves, and the truth is not in them (I John 1:8). A third argument is that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 was really the sin of not being hospitable to the "visitors" who were really angels. This has no validity, as the men of Sodom told Lot they wanted to have relations with the men, and refused to fulfill their lusts with Lot's daughters when he offered them instead. Genesis 18:20 tells us that the sin of Sodom was "very grievous"—a description that fits homosexuality rather than lack of hospitality.[5]

Our fight against homosexuality will not get easier. We are told in II Timothy 3:13, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." Let us be thankful of the stance that the Protestant Reformed Churches take and pray that we continue on in the truth of Scripture regarding this matter. ❖

Endnotes

1. L. Goodstein, Presbyterians Approve Ordination of Gay People (The New York Times, May 10, 2011).

2 S. Guthrie and C. Lowes, Homosexuality: Reformed church in Toronto welcomes active gay leaders (www.christianitytoday.com, December 9, 2002).

3 Dr. R.A. Mohler, Jr., After the Ball—Why the Homosexual Movement has Won (www.freerepublic.com, June 3, 2004).

4 http://www.evangelical.us/homosexuality/church-leadership.html

5 M. Slick, Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (http://carm.org/christianity-and-homosexuality)

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From the Pastor's Study

And the Tongue Is a Fire...

by Rev. Miersma

"*And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell*" (James 3:6).

As we have heard many times in church when the minister preaches on the Heidelberg Catechism, we are to use our tongue in love for the neighbor for the sake of God. If we love God, then we will love the neighbor. So a test whether or not we love God is to

ask ourselves whether we use our tongue in love to the neighbor. The tongue is just a small member of our body, but it can do great things. Let us see.

James compares the tongue, a little member, to several things. First, to a bit in the mouth of a horse. A horse is a rather large animal, but we can turn it in whatever direction we want because of that bit in its mouth. Second, to a helm on a ship which is a very large vessel sailing upon the water. One can turn this very large ship with the helm. A helm is the wheel which the captain turns just like the steering wheel in a car. Thirdly, to a spark which is a tiny bit of fire. This little spark can start a whole forest or prairie on fire.

So it is with the tongue. It certainly is not very large when compared to other members in the body. We use the tongue for speaking. But the idea of the tongue includes more than just our speech of the mouth. It refers to all ways in which we communicate with others. It would also include what we write in books and letters and the songs that we sing. Let us not forget that this would also include the newer forms of communication such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and the like.

God created the tongue good. When God made man He made man perfect, which included the tongue of man. Man could use his tongue to speak to God and praise Him. Man could also use his tongue to speak to other men. Man was able to see all that God had made and then glorify God with his speech. We read that God and man were able to walk and talk in the garden of Eden. What a wonderful gift God had given to man.

Man, however, fell into sin. The devil used his tongue to lie to Eve about God. She listened, gave to her husband, he did eat, and all mankind was plunged into sin. Now instead of praising God man curses God and uses His name in vain. He does the same thing to his neighbor.

In vss. 7 & 8 James writes, "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." That is quite an indictment against the tongue; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. As we see in our text the tongue is like a fire, set on fire of hell. In other words, the devil sets it on fire. One uses his tongue in the service of Satan. God created it to be used in His service, to praise Him, but now man uses it to sin.

Think of all the trouble that one can start with the tongue. That is why it is likened to a spark starting a great big fire, a conflagration. The tongue does that too. Using our tongue in an evil way shows that we are friends of the devil. We were created to have fellowship with God and to be friends with God. But after the fall we are under the continual influence of the devil.

The first target of our tongue is God Himself. We curse and swear, thus taking God's name in vain, and pray in a thoughtless way. Then we direct our tongue against our neighbor. We tell a lie about someone. You can imagine how hurt someone is when you tell a lie about him. People then will think badly about that person. We lie when we make things worse than they really are, by stretching the truth. We must always speak the truth. Backbiting is another sinful use of the tongue. Here we can actually tell the truth, but still sin. If someone has sinned, we must not spread that fact to others. We hurt them by doing that. One can also speak hateful words to each other by calling names, mocking or poking fun of others, or laughing behind someone's back.

That is why it is so important to be careful in how one uses Facebook and the like. As long as we are not face to face with someone it seems so easy to just type those hurtful words and then push the "send" button. That is the spark which starts the wildfire which spreads far and wide very quickly. So prevalent is this evil that I have learned that in some churches the elders have begun to monitor Facebook in order to curb this evil. It is a shame that this has to be the case. It blackens the name of our churches and the name of Jesus Christ. If one can not speak well and unto the welfare of his neighbor, he should not speak at all about him.

A further evil is talking back to our parents and to our teachers. You are to respect them, for they have been given authority over you by God himself. To use your tongue against them is to use it against God and for the devil. As long as the tongue is on fire it will continue to spread fire. The tongue under sin can not be tamed. So it will go here and there starting and spreading fire wherever it goes, just as the foxes which Samson set fire to and released in the grain fields of the Philistines.

What can be done to put out this fire from hell? The cures of the world simply will not work. None of the world's cures work because they do not touch the cause. The source must be cut off. Behind the tongue lies the heart filled with evil. Behind the heart lies hell and spiritual communion with the devil. Therefore, the supply from hell must be cut off. So how can this possibly be done?

Christ is the One who cuts the connection to hell. He did that by paying the price of redemption, saving us from our sins. He delivers us from the power of the devil by the power of His grace. He establishes a new connection. He is the truth and the life. He connects and

unites us to Himself. For this grace we need to partake of the means of God's grace as provided in the preaching of the Word both in church and in the catechism room.

An evil tongue is a bad sign. It suggests that you have fellowship with the devil. So we must fight against this sin of which we are all guilty. An evil tongue must not walk among us. We must speak the truth in love. We must walk in faith. James tells us that we can show our faith by our works. A good tongue will show that we have faith. If we love God and each other, then we will keep God's commandments which tell us that we may not bear false witness against our neighbor, but will always speak to his good. ❖

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Defending the Authority of Scripture in the Face of Evolution

by Ryan Kregel

The Issue

We believe in the authority of Scripture. That is, through the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we stand on the foundation of God's inspired, infallible Word, as the only rule for our faith and life. As children of God, young and old, we are relentlessly attacked from all sides. How do we defend our faith? Most importantly, we need to start with a firm foundation: the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God. For some in this late age, that solid ground is disappearing. Sadly, more and more, this is the road believers are taking. They are walking through life, carrying not the inspired and infallible Holy Bible anymore, but a book of their own making, the holey bible. This book is tattered to shreds, missing passages here and there; in the case of Genesis, missing entire chapters. As they walk through life, the biting wind of secular science, false doctrine, and the appeal of worldly living is blowing pages out of their Bibles, and they don't seem to notice or even put up a fight. Our focus, in this article, is to defend the authority of Scripture in the face of one of the greatest lies in the history of the Church: evolution. By defending the authority of Scripture, we can then defend our faith, which is based on this authority.

It's easy enough for us to say we believe in a six day literal creation by God alone, but can we defend this statement? We need to have a strong understanding of Scripture, and be able to boldly fight the lie. The Bible, Genesis to be precise, along with many other passages, is clear and simple: God created the universe and all that is contained therein, including earth, in six literal 24 hour days. Exodus 20:11, where God commands Sabbath day observance, lays out six day creation very clearly, "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

It's easy enough for us to say we believe in a six day literal creation by God alone, but can we defend this statement?

Psalm 19:1 states: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." John Calvin does a wonderful job, in his work on the Psalms, of describing the heavens as preachers of his glory, and the power of God in creation as the supreme architect.

> There is certainly nothing so obscure or contemptible, even in the smallest corners of the earth, in which some marks of the power and wisdom of God may not be seen; but as a more distinct image of him is engraven on the heavens, David has particularly selected them for contemplation, that their splendor might lead us to contemplate all parts of the world. When a man, from beholding and contemplating the heavens, has been brought to acknowledge God, he will learn also to reflect upon and to admire his

wisdom and power as displayed on the face of the earth, not only in general, but even in the minutest plants. In the first verse, the Psalmist repeats one thing twice, according to his usual manner. He introduces the heavens as witnesses and preachers of the glory of God, attributing to the dumb creature a quality which, strictly speaking, does not belong to it, in order the more severely to upbraid men for their ingratitude, if they should pass over so clear a testimony with unheeding ears. This manner of speaking more powerfully moves and affects us than if he had said, the heavens show or manifest the glory of God. It is indeed a great thing, that in the splendor of the heavens there is presented to our view a lively image of God; but, as the living voice has a greater effect in exciting our attention, or at least teaches us more surely and with greater profit than simple beholding, to which no oral instruction is added, we ought to mark the force of the figure which the Psalmist uses when he says, that the heavens by their preaching declare the glory of God.

"…As soon as we acknowledge God to be the supreme Architect, who has erected the beauteous fabric of the universe, our minds must necessarily be ravished with wonder at his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power."

The repetition which he makes in the second clause is merely an explanation of the first. David shows how it is that the heavens proclaim to us the glory of God, namely, by openly bearing testimony that they have not been put together by chance, but were wonderfully created by the supreme Architect. When we behold the heavens, we cannot but be elevated, by the contemplation of them, to Him who is their great Creator; and the beautiful arrangement and wonderful variety which distinguish the courses and station of the heavenly bodies, together with the beauty and splendor which are manifest in them, cannot but furnish us with an evident proof of his providence. Scripture, indeed, makes known to us the time and manner of the creation; but the heavens themselves, although God should say nothing on the subject, proclaim loudly and distinctly enough that they have been fashioned by his hands: and this of itself abundantly suffices to bear testimony to men of his glory. As soon as we acknowledge God to be the supreme Architect, who has erected the beauteous fabric of the universe, our minds must necessarily be ravished with wonder at his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power."[1]

So clearly is God's power displayed (preached!) in his creation, that he inspired the Apostle Paul to write in Romans 1:20-23: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." In his foolish pride, man has attacked God; whether it be the billions of years of full-fledged evolution, or the rearranging of Scripture by theistic evolutionists to fit the theory of evolution into the creation account. But, so clearly is God's power as creator and sustainer of earth displayed, that man is left without excuse, and will have to answer to the same God he is denying. God will then "add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18), and "shall take away his part out of the book of life" (Rev. 22:19).

Secular scientists accuse six day creationists of being "anti-science." This is a ridiculous notion, because the whole theory of evolution is exactly that: a theory. The whole machine of evolution is based on the fallible assumptions of man, who needs to keep making more assumptions to "make things work." Man, in his pride, denies God's sovereign, creating, and providential hand in creation. I believe a quote from Charles Spurgeon sums up well the audacity of evolutionists: "It takes much more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a believer."

Some Findings

It doesn't seem to matter where you attend college anymore. Christian or secular schools alike are teaching evolution. At secular universities, it is unashamedly taught, violently undermining God's sovereign power as the Creator. At other times, as is sadly the case with most Christian colleges of late, it is 'fit in' with Scripture as theistic evolution.

1 *Calvin's Commentaries on the Psalms* pp. 308, 309

There are many blatant inconsistencies in the views of theistic evolutionists; foremost is their view of Scripture. Many times, they do not even know what they believe concerning Scripture. As you will see, they have different definitions of terms such as the authority, infallibility, and literalness of Scripture.

Answers in Genesis (AiG) is a non-profit organization founded to uphold and strengthen the principles of the Christian faith. AiG focuses on defending truth in Scripture, particularly the book of Genesis. AiG, which also operates the Creation Museum in northern Kentucky, recently ran a survey of Christian colleges on their views of creation versus evolution, and of Scripture in general. Their findings are displayed in the book Already Compromised, written by the founder of AiG, Ken Ham, and Greg Hall, president of Warner University. Here is a quote by Ken Ham in the book on one of the questions they posed:

> What is truth? That depends on who you ask and their particular viewpoint or interpretations of the Scripture… note virtually all young-earth believers, 93.9% believe the Bible is literally true. It is surprising this number is not higher. Also, nearly four in five who adhere to an old-earth theory believe the Bible is literally true. Keep in mind these two concepts are polar opposites. These findings quickly reveal the large number of Christian leaders who are mistaken and hold a biblical position important to understand because once a Christian accepts a non-biblical view, they must then accept other non-biblical ideas to fulfill the logic of their error.
>
> The so-called gap theory is a great example of this. Many great Christian leaders of the past 200 years have been gap theorists. They thought fitting the millions of years into a supposed gap in Genesis 1 was a way of dealing with the issue… Theistic evolutionists, day-agers, advocates of the framework hypothesis, etc., are reinterpreting the clear teaching of Scripture to fit millions of years, and often Darwinian-type evolution, into the Bible (be it geological, astronomical, or biological evolution).
>
> I say that the gap theory does (in spite of contrary intentions of godly men) "unlock a door" to allow a "crack" to undermine Scripture and thus even great men… were inconsistent in this area. If one allows a crack in the door (as we would see the gap theory doing), then the next generation will open it further. It usually doesn't get shut by the next generation."[2]

It is extremely disappointing, some of the inconsistencies that were found. For example: AiG surveyed several religion departments, and found out that only 72% believed in a literal interpretation of Genesis 1-2. While this percentage in itself is sad, the sadder part is that in a different question that asked the same thing, 55.6% of the same religion departments agreed that they do not believe in six literal days! What is even more interesting is that it was found that, when surveyed, the science departments were consistently more biblical in their views than the religion departments.

Young people (either attending college or planning to in the near future) need to be aware of what they will be taught.

Christian Colleges and Evolution

Young people (either attending college or planning to in the near future) need to be aware of what they will be taught. It's like the picture of a comic book school cafeteria; the food is slopped on your plate. Like it or not, it's what you are going to get. Likewise, at most schools, evolution will be integrated into your education. You are going to have to digest it the right way. Part of this 'awareness' of what you will be taught should include familiarizing yourselves with the school's view on creation and evolution. Public universities boldly teach outright evolution, so the young person can easily see what is coming. Christian colleges can be a little harder for the young person to prepare against. Christian colleges, like Calvin College for example, are subtle, but yet bold in their teachings if you dig a little deeper:

> As Christian biologists we oppose any use of scientific theories that attempt to deny the Creator God. Science is a human activity that describes and investigates the functions, processes, and history of the physical world. We believe that questions concerning the meaning, purpose, and governance of the cosmos cannot be fully explained by the natural sciences alone. Evolutionary biology does not undermine faith in an everlasting, all-powerful, yet personal Creator God upon whom the very existence of the creation depends. Those who elevate any scientific theory to this level of explanatory

2 *Already Compromised*, Ken Ham, p34

> power, we believe, are overstepping the limits of scientific inquiry.[3]

After a quick glance, this statement seems to do a nice job of paying tribute to God. It describes him as everlasting, all-powerful, and personal. The statement even describes God as the Creator. Calvin claims it opposes *"any use of scientific theories that attempt to deny the Creator God."* What is this supposed to mean? Some people claim that evolution is a scientific theory, while others assert that it is unscientific. Readers of this statement are left to their own confused conclusions. The statement goes on to say, "*Evolutionary biology does not undermine faith in an everlasting, all-powerful, yet personal Creator God upon whom the very existence of the creation depends."* That's a bold statement. Evolution undermines the very foundation of a Christian's faith! At the very heart of faith is trust in the sovereign power of God. We dishonor God if we say we have faith in him, but deny him of his power in all things. John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, states: *"If faith cannot support itself in the view of this power* (of God, *RJK*), *it never will give Him the honor which is due."*[4] In essence, Calvin College's statement strips the aforementioned *"all-powerful"* God of all his power.

All this is said not to scare young people from attending Christian colleges. But, it is a warning to be on guard, properly preparing yourself for what you will be taught.

The BioLogos Forum

BioLogos is an online forum, led by a group of people, holding a position on the origins of life which harmonizes science and Scripture. John UpChurch, a contributor to the Answers in Genesis website, described BioLogos in the October-December 2011 issue of *Answers Magazine*.[5] "Since it was founded in 2007, BioLogos has risen to international prominence as the leading advocate of theistic ("God-directed") evolution. Its primary goal is to convince evangelical Christians to embrace evolution and an old earth, claiming that they have no impact on the gospel and can be harmonized with "the belief that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God." BioLogos is a tremendously compelling danger to Christians who are weak in the faith. BioLogos feeds on those who are struggling with their belief of how the world came to be. Is the Bible the outright authority on the creation of the universe, or did the universe and all it contains take billions of years to evolve into what it is today? BioLogos says you don't need to choose! There is no conflict! Confronting this issue only divides the church; so why struggle with it? Read on how BioLogos describes the principles on which it stands:

> We stand with a long tradition of Christians for whom faith and science are mutually hospitable, and we see no necessary conflict between the Bible and the findings of science. We have found that the methods of the natural sciences provide the most reliable guide to understanding the material world, and the current evidence from science indicates that the diversity of life is best explained as a result of an evolutionary process. Thus we affirm that evolution is a means by which God providentially achieves His purposes.[6]

"We see no necessary conflict between the Bible and the findings of science." However, Christ said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Though some theistic evolutionists may have "good intentions" (if you can even call it that), in the end they will always view Scripture through the spectacles of science rather than science through the spectacles of Scripture. Also in Isaiah 5:20, God directly addresses the wrong of weaving good with evil. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Perusing further through BioLogos' description of itself, we read this:

> Foundational to the BioLogos vision is the belief that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God. The Bible is a living document through which God, by his Spirit, continues to speak to the church today.[7]

Notice that BioLogos even has the audacity to claim it believes the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God! Also notice, it says nothing about the infallibility of Scripture. We have a serious contradiction here. If BioLogos truly stands on the foundation that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God, it must

3 Calvin College Biology Department, Perspectives on Evolution, http://www.calvin.edu/academic/biology/why/evolution-statement10May2010.pdf

4 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin, p. 375

5 The full article, The Danger of BioLogos, can be viewed at http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am

6 http://biologos.org/about

7 http://biologos.org/about

also logically agree that the revelation of God is also infallible, correct? Apparently not! One cannot say the Almighty God inspired men to write the one rule for our faith and life as a fallible document. Read on:

> The Bible is not a scientific text and should not be read that way. Scientific literature is a relatively recent and highly specialized form of communication. Reading the Bible as a literal, scientific text leads to inconsistencies between the revealed word of God and the scientifically derived history of the world. However, when scripture is read in a proper context, these inconsistencies do not come up. One, therefore, can safely accept scripture as God's revealed word, even though it does not address the specifics of many scientific questions and often refers to the natural world using the understandings of the time in which it was written.[8]

We can agree with BioLogos here that the Bible is not a scientific text. It is, however, literal. There are many truths in the Bible that have been confirmed by science. "When scripture is read in a proper context, these inconsistencies do not come up." Their idea of reading in the proper context is using their own worldviews of naturalism and uniformitarianism. Man is incredibly stuck on these theories, claiming that natural processes occur in the universe as they always have and as they will always continue to do. Man denies the supernatural, that is, the creation account of Genesis along with the worldwide flood.

Many of these people were brought up creationists but fell into the pit of evolution. It all starts with a low view of Scripture.

There is no riding the fence when it comes to this issue. There is a clear dividing line between creation and evolution, but man tries to bridge the gap between the two, and meet somewhere in the middle. Why? Many of these people were brought up creationists but fell into the pit of evolution. It all starts with a low view of Scripture.

Involved also, is man in his pride, trying to take credit for himself, and discrediting God. Man says, look what I found! I discovered how the world came to be: through billions of years of evolutionary processes, not by the spoken word of God did the world appear! We read in Psalm 10:4, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." John Calvin says of this verse, "Did they truly believe that there is a God, the fear of the judgment to come would restrain them. Not that they plainly and distinctly deny the existence of a God, but then they strip him of his power."[9] The second sentence of this quote of Calvin is a defining characteristic of a theistic evolutionist. Man may try to undermine the sovereign power of the creator, but in doing so, he earns for himself eternal condemnation in the fires of hell.

Looking Forward

If you cut out Genesis, you essentially lose the whole of Scripture. By undermining God's authority as the sovereign creator of all, he is portrayed as just a god of Deuteronomy 4:28, "the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell." We cannot defend our faith with a fallible Bible given to us by a powerless god!

But, we as Reformed Christians have so much to be thankful for. We have the almighty and sovereign creator God as our Father. As our Father, he has given us the wonderful and perspicuous testimony of Scripture. He has created the universe so that we, as sinful specks of dust in this vast universe, may glorify him in it. The Bible is beautifully clear. God created the universe and all it contains, namely earth, in six literal 24 hour days. Any man who tries to undermine his power and right to be glorified will have to answer before the creator himself. As confident Christians and children of God, what better way can we end, than right at the beginning—Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." ❖

Ryan is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

8 http://biologos.org/questions/scientific-and-scriptural-truth

9 *Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms*, p139

Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Act 2:39

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Kyla Fayeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Carl Kalsbeek—Faith, MI

Paige Alexa, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Troy Karsemeyer—Faith, MI

Regan Paul, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian VanTil—Faith, MI

Emmett David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tyler Schimmel—Grandville, MI

Walter Harry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Langerak—Hope, MI

Jace Logan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Hoksbergen—Hull, IA

Zoe Adison, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Uittenbogaard—Loveland, CO

Adrianna Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Pipe—Loveland, CO

Kaiya Christine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dustin Hoffman—Redlands, CA

Maci Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jed Pipe—Southeast, MI

Charlotte Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Lathrop—Spokane, WA

Mallory Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Travis VanBemmel—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Proverbs 4:26

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Elizabeth Birkett—Crete, IL

Danielle Zandstra—Crete, IL

Brandon Daling—Faith, MI

Kristen Elzinga—Faith, MI

Rachael Crater—Faith, MI

Benjamin Noordermeer—Faith, MI

Alex Dykstra—Georgetown, MI

Amanda Zwak—Georgetown, MI

Matthew Engelsma—Hope, MI

Jessalyn Engelsma—Hope, MI

Brad Gritters—Hudsonville, MI

Bryan Westra—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Chad Nienhuis and Miss Mary Regnerus—Crete, IL

Mr. Kurt DeJong and Miss Valen VanEgdom—Doon, IA

Mr. Jared VanBaren and Miss Rachel Warner—Hope, MI

Mr. Derek Griess and Miss Ginelle Koops—Loveland, CO

Mr. Jason Butler and Miss Alyssa Rowe—Southwest, MI

Snowballs

"Hey, David, you better watch out!" Kenton yelled as David's snowball whipped past his ear. "My next snowball will be bigger than yours!" Kenton patted more snow onto the growing, icy cold lump in his hands.

David paid no attention as he started to roll another ball of his own, but Kenton's aim was better. David felt a cold mass of snow break over his back.

"No, you better watch out!" David shouted as he stood up and threw his ball at Kenton. He missed again. The two boys laughed and chased each other with more snowballs. They didn't notice the sky getting grayer and the snow starting to fall more and more.

Kenton's mother called from the house. "Kenton and David, why don't you come inside? You must be getting cold."

"Aw, we're not cold. We're having fun!" Kenton called back. He forgot that he hadn't been able to feel his toes in his boots for a long time. Come to think of it, his fingers were pretty cold too, now that his gloves were soaked through. "Are you cold, David?"

David looked down at his soggy mittens. "Well, maybe a little," he said.

Kenton's mother opened the door once more and held a tray. "Here's some hot chocolate. You can drink it on the porch if you want to stay outside a while yet."

"Thanks, Mom!" Kenton ran to the porch. David was close behind. They took off their gloves and mittens and held the steamy hot mugs with their red numbed fingers. They sat on the porch steps together.

David said, "Hey, it's really snowing big snowflakes. Look at that one—and that one."

"Yeah. Look at the one that fell on my arm. It's huge." Kenton looked at it closer. "It's got a really neat design."

"Well, it's just like all the rest," said David.

"No it's not," Kenton argued. He took another sip of his chocolate. "Snowflakes are all different."

"No they're not," David countered. "They all have six sides."

"Yes, but they're all different."

"How do you know?" David asked. "How many snowflakes have you ever looked at?"

"Well, um, I heard that before. God makes every snowflake different."

"With six sides, " David insisted.

Snowflakes kept falling and the boys kept trying to look at them closely.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

"See, they're all different," Kenton said as he gulped the last of his hot chocolate.

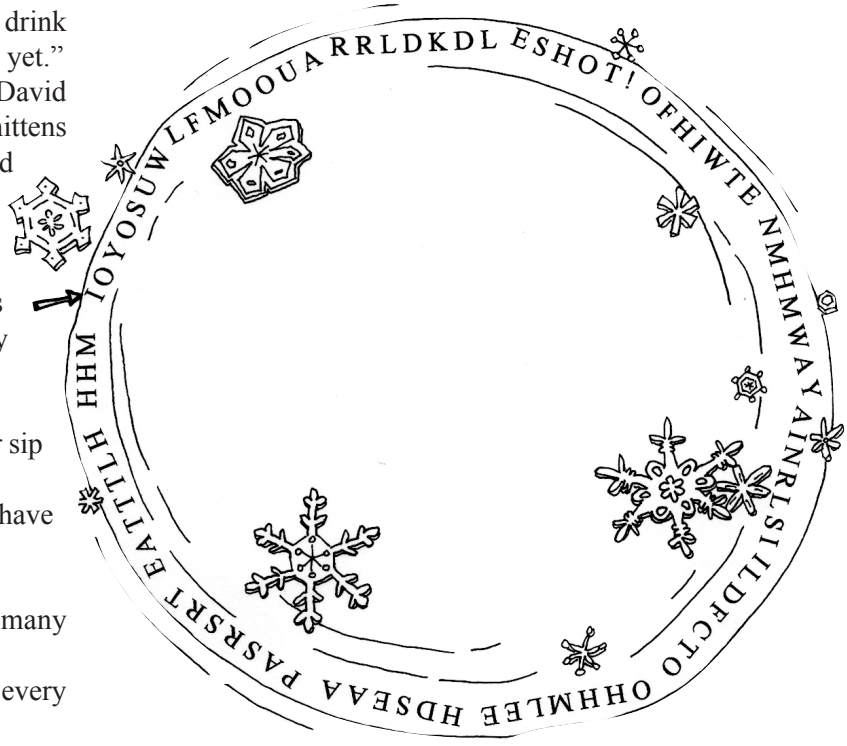
"With six sides, " David said as he put his empty mug down.

Kenton ran from the porch and started to pack some more snow into shape. "And I think every snowball is probably different, too!" he said as he took aim at David with it.

David laughed as it missed him. "And so is every aim!"

Discover the verse by writing down every fourth letter. Start counting at the arrow. Cross off each letter as you write it down, until all the letters have been used.

" _ ____' ___ ________ ___ ___ ______ __ ______ ____ ____ ____ ____ ___: ___ _____ __ ____ __ ___ ______." _____ 104: 24



Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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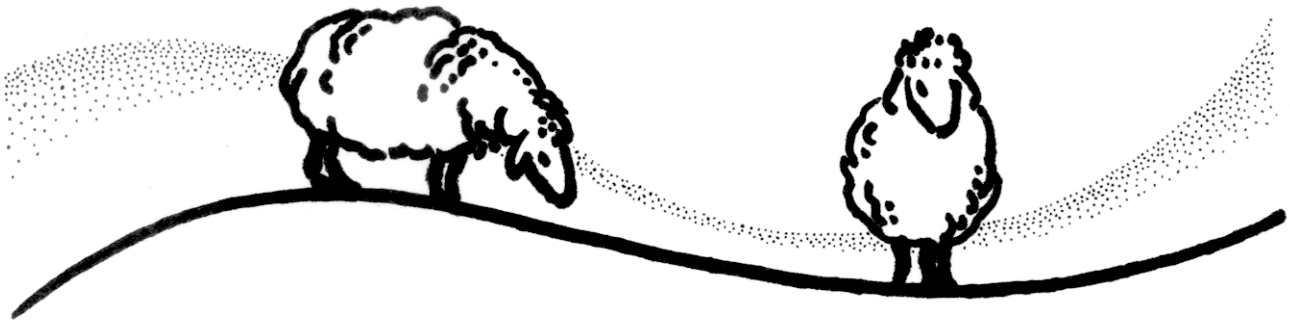

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 2012 PRYP Convention!

To be held at the
Michindoh Conference Center
in Hillsdale, Michigan
www.campmichindoh.org

August 13-17, 2012

Hosted by Hope PRC in Walker, Michigan