

REVIEW: C. John Collins's *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* by Chad E. Bond

# New Horizons

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Adam

## MAN *or* MYTH?



*Articles by*

RICHARD B. GAFFIN, JR. Ⓒ VERN S. POYTHRESS Ⓒ BRYAN E. ESTELLE

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Also: **CHRISTIANITY AND EVOLUTION** by *Danny E. Olinger*

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## NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Some of the presbyters of the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York are consulting with one another during a lull in their meeting on January 28 at Franklin Square, N.Y. Pictured here from the front row back, and from the left to the right of each row, are: Loren Markel (deacon, Mt. Vernon, N.Y.), Dan Osborne (pastor, Mt. Vernon), Ira Rubin (ruling elder, Mt. Vernon), Jim Hubbard (ruling elder, Hamden, Conn.), Bill Bacon (ruling elder, Hamden), Carl Smith (evangelist for Connecticut) standing, Jon Holst (pastor, Hamden), Fouad Sayegh (ruling elder, Bohemia, N.Y.), Meindert Ploegman (pastor, Bohemia), and Bill Stellwagen (deacon in training, Bohemia).



RICHARD B. GAFFIN, JR.

# “All Mankind, Descending from Him ...”?

**T**he title above, as many readers will recognize, is from answer 16 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism (and Larger Catechism 22). It expresses a central truth of Scripture and reflects the universal confession of the church about Adam.

Why then the added question mark? Not because non-Christians widely reject this truth, as they have for a long time, but because more recently it has been increasingly called into question by scientists, biblical scholars, and others who consider themselves evangelical or even Reformed Christians. Moreover, they are persuaded that their doubts about this truth should be accepted as compatible with their Christian commitment.

Every Christian who is truly submitted to the Bible’s authority needs to be alert to this recent development and clear about the consequences of these doubts and denials. No matter how well intended, they undermine the gospel and will lead to its eventual loss. If it is not true that all human beings descend from Adam, then the entire history of redemption, as taught in Scripture, unravels. The result is no redemptive *history* in any credible or coherent sense, and so the loss of *redemptive history* in any meaningful sense.

The reasons given for this recent questioning of the church’s historic confession concerning the origin and descent of humanity are of two sorts: scientific and exegetical. Accumulating results in several fields—primarily paleontology, archaeology, anthropology, and, especially in the past couple of decades, genetics—allegedly make it virtually certain that all human beings have not descended from an original pair. The claim that everyone living today has the same “first parents” is deemed no longer credible.

These scientific findings, in turn, have prompted reconsideration of Scripture, principally Genesis 2–4. Science is perceived as forcing us to acknowledge that, on a literal reading of this passage, some details simply do not cohere with the view that all human beings descend from Adam and Eve. For

example, often cited is the long-recognized problem of where wives for Adam’s sons came from.

The rest of this article will not deal directly with these scientific claims, but rather with the biblical and theological views usually associated with them, including implications and conclusions drawn for interpreting Scripture. This focus doesn’t mean to suggest that these claims can be easily dismissed or simply ignored. But evaluating them in a scientifically responsible fashion is beyond my competence, as it is for most Christians. I highly regard those who are knowledgeable and have expertise in scientific areas like those mentioned above. And there is an urgent need, as never before, for Christians qualified in these and other fields.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE

Where I am confident is that the biblical and theological considerations sketched here briefly are mandatory for any constructive Christian interest or direct involvement in scientific inquiry into matters like the origin of humanity. Those with the doubts we are considering often plead for a cooperative effort between scientists and theologians in honestly considering the available scientific evidence in a way that also maintains requisite biblical doctrine. That is surely a laudable goal. But when I ask myself what such collaboration looks like for theologians, I’m left with the answer that I make not only my best, but also my necessary, contribution by being resolutely insistent on the comments that follow, subject of course to being corrected where I may be in error. I’m also bound to ask these scientists whether they shouldn’t reconsider at least aspects of the divinely guided (“theistic”) macroevolutionary model of human origins to which most, if not all, of them

appear to be committed.

The view that questions whether Adam is the first human being from whom all others descend is itself questionable in its general approach to Scripture in at least two respects. Both reflect adversely on the clarity of Scripture. First, scientific findings are being given priority in the sense that they are seen as necessitating a rejection and consequent reinterpretation of what has heretofore been considered certain, as well as basic, biblical teaching. In that regard, let's not suppose that we are faced here with yet one more "Galileo moment," where Christians need to adjust their thinking and get on board with science. Plainly at issue here is not an aspect of our ever-changing understanding of the physical workings of our environment and the universe at large, but perennial and unchanging matters that are basic to who we are as human beings—what it means to be created in God's image and the kind of relationship with him that that entails.

Certainly, God's saving revelation culminating in Christ, sufficiently and authoritatively inscripturated for us, cannot be understood by itself, apart from his self-revelation in nature. Both creation, "a most beautiful book" (Belgic Confession, article 2), and Scripture are necessary for knowing and living before God and with others. But the reciprocal relationship that marks these two "books" and their study is asymmetrical. Scripture, not nature, always has priority in the sense that in it God reveals himself, as the Belgic Confession also says, "more clearly and openly," particularly on matters basic to our identity as human beings and our relationship to him.

As Calvin has memorably put it, Scripture provides the "spectacles" that enable human beings to read aright the whole of created reality, including themselves as his image-bearers, as a self-revelation of God. As a general rule, then, human scientific disciplines, in their study of general revelation, must always defer to inscripturated special revelation. The view that holds that we can no longer confess that Scripture teaches the descent of all human beings from Adam has effectively reversed this rule. Scripture is being made to yield to science.

This leads, secondly, to the observation that this view is also defective because it maintains that Scripture is unclear and less than certain about the origin and descent of humanity. To focus primarily on problems in Genesis 2–4 is myopic. Since Scripture is self-interpreting, this passage, like any other, is to be understood in light of the Bible as a whole, and any passage with difficulties, like this one, is to be interpreted in light of other passages that speak more clearly (WCF 1.9).

As a general rule, within the unfolding history of God's special revelation consummated in Christ and recorded for the church in the completed canon of Scripture, the Old Testament is to be read in light of the New. Every passage is to be read from the vantage point of God's speaking "by his Son" in "these last days" (Heb. 1:2). Specifically, in the overall profile

of biblical revelation, it has been given to Paul, as an apostle of Christ, to speak about the origin of humanity in a way that has a clear and decisive bearing on the matters we are considering. That happens principally in two places: Romans 5:12–19 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49.

### ADAM AS THE "FIRST" MAN, AND CHRIST AS THE "SECOND"

The central interest of both passages is plainly the person and work of Christ. Equally plain in both passages are (1) the sweeping *historical* outlook on Christ and the salvation he has accomplished and (2) within this historical outlook and fundamental to it, a contrast with Adam. In 1 Corinthians 15:44b–49, this perspective is the most comprehensive possible, covering nothing less than the whole of human history from its beginning to its end, from the original creation to its consummation. Accordingly, in verse 45, Adam as he was by virtue of his creation and before the Fall (Adam in Genesis 2) is contrasted with Christ, "the last Adam," as he is by virtue of his resurrection. In Romans 5 and the earlier verses in 1 Corinthians 15, the scope of the historical outlook is only slightly less comprehensive; on the one side, Adam is in view as he was after the Fall, as a sinner (Adam in Genesis 3). For Paul, redemptive history has its clear and consummate ending with Christ only as it has a definite and identifiable beginning with Adam.

In both passages, Adam and Christ are clearly in view as individual persons. But as individuals they no less clearly have a significance that is more than individual. They are contrasted as each represents others, as each is a head in a way that is decisive for those "in him." This union-based contrast exhibits the representative or federal principle that is at the root of the Bible's covenant theology taught, for instance, in the Westminster standards. This teaching may be summarized like this: as Adam by his disobedience has brought sin with all its consequences into the originally good creation for himself and all those "in him," so Christ by his obedience has brought salvation from sin and all its consequences for those "in him."

The significance of the identifying terms in the contrast must not be missed. Christ in his saving work is "second" and "last"; Adam is "first" (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). The uniquely pivotal place of each in the unfolding of redemptive history, at its beginning and end, is such that no one else "counts." Only Adam, in his representative role in union or solidarity with "all," is the "type of the one who was to come" (Rom. 5:14). As Christ is the omega-point of redemptive history, so Adam is its alpha-point.

It cannot be stressed too emphatically that these passages teach that essential to Christ's work of saving sinful human beings is his full solidarity with them, personal sin excepted, as he is "second" and "last," and that he has, and can only have, this identity as Adam is "first." If Adam was not the first man,



who fell into sin, then the work of Christ loses its meaning. Without the “first” man, Adam, there is no place for Christ as either “second” or “last.” The integrity and coherence of redemptive history in its entirety depends on this contrast. It is simply not true, as some claim, that whether or not Adam was the first human being is a question that leaves the gospel unaffected, at least if we accept the clear teaching of these passages. Paul is elsewhere similarly clear: Christ’s resurrection, the final judgment, and the attendant call for all people everywhere to repent, all stand or fall with the fact that God has made from one man every nation of mankind (Acts 17:26–30).

## OTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF ADAM

How do those who deny that all human beings descend from Adam and yet wish to remain committed to the authority of Scripture as in some sense God’s word, understand the references to Adam in these passage (and others, like Luke 3:38, 1 Timothy 2:13–14, and Jude 14)? It appears that two approaches are being taken: one denies the historicity of Adam; the other affirms his historicity, but denies that he was the first human being and father of the entire human race.

On the former view, Paul, like the other New Testament writers, may well have believed that Adam was a real, historical person, but that belief is immaterial for his teaching and can be jettisoned without detriment to the gospel or faith in Christ. In our passages, “Adam” is supposedly a personification either of humanity in general or of Israel as nation for all humanity; Adam is everyone. He serves Paul’s purposes as a “teaching model,” as it has been put, to highlight the universality of human sinfulness. Suffice it here to note that this view flatly contradicts the sustained emphasis in Romans 5 on Adam’s sin as the one sin of the one man, *distinct from* the sinning of “many” or “all.” To conclude that the historicity of Adam is irrelevant for Paul is in fact to make responsible exegesis irrelevant.

Another view affirms Adam’s historicity, but denies that he is the first human being. At least some who take this view assert that Adam is “first” in the sense that at some point in human history God set him apart as a representative from among a considerable number of already existing human beings for the dealings with humanity that he initiated at that point. But this view is faced with an insuperable difficulty: Adam is not simply the “first”; he is the “first” in relation to those who “have borne [his] image” (1 Cor. 15:49). People can hardly be described as image-bearers of Adam if they either existed before him or subsequently have not descended from him. Adam is the representative of *all* who, by descending from him, are in natural union or solidarity with him, and he represents *only* them. It is not enough today for Christians simply to affirm the historicity of Adam.

This is not a minor point. Paul is clear in verse 49. Believ-

ers will bear Christ’s heavenly image, the redeemed and glorified image of God, as they have borne Adam’s earthly image, the original image of God subsequently defaced by sin. It is quite foreign to this passage, especially given its comprehensive outlook noted above, to suppose that some who do not bear the image of Adam will bear the glory-image of Christ. There is no hope of salvation for sinners who do not bear the image of Adam by ordinary generation. Christ cannot and does not redeem what he has not assumed, and what he has assumed is the nature of those who bear the image of Adam, and as they do so by natural descent.

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF DENYING ADAM’S PRIORITY

By now it should be clear that questioning or denying the descent of all humanity from Adam as the first human being has far-reaching implications for the Christian faith. It radically alters the understanding of *sin*, particularly concerning the origin and nature of human depravity, with the corresponding abandonment of any meaningful notion of the *guilt* of sin. It radically alters the understanding of *salvation*, especially in eclipsing or even denying Christ’s death as a substitutionary atonement that propitiates God’s just and holy wrath against sin. And it radically alters the understanding of the *Savior*, by stressing his humanity, especially the exemplary aspects of his person and work, to the extent of minimizing or even denying his deity.

I don’t have room here to detail these implications, so instead I commend the following more extensive treatments, among others, as particularly helpful: *Is Adam a “Teaching Model” in the New Testament?* by J. P. Versteeg; Robert B. Strimple’s chapter, “Was Adam Historical?” in *Confident of Better Things*; and Michael Reeves’s chapter, “Adam and Eve,” in *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?* I conclude with the closing words of Versteeg’s study:

As the first historical man and head of humanity, Adam is not mentioned merely in passing in the New Testament. The redemptive-historical correlation between Adam and Christ determines the framework in which—particularly for Paul—the redemptive work of Christ has its place. That work of redemption can no longer be confessed according to the meaning of Scripture, if it is divorced from the framework in which it stands there. Whoever divorces the work of redemption from the framework in which it stands in Scripture no longer allows the Word to function as the norm that determines everything. There has been no temptation down through the centuries that theology has been more exposed to than this temptation. There is no danger that theology has more to fear than this danger. □

*The author, an OP minister, is a professor emeritus at Westminster Theological Seminary. He quotes the ESV.*



VERN S. POYTHRESS

# Evaluating the Claims of Scientists

**N**ews media report confident claims about human origins. Science, it is said, has shown that the human race had a gradual, evolutionary origin—not a single ancestor, Adam. If we are followers of Christ, how do we treat such claims?

The world around us largely follows the way of human autonomy. It says, “Think for yourself.” It regards the Bible as an ancient, merely human book, with primitive ideas. So it advises us that we should just accept what scientists tell us.

It is ironic, then, to find autonomous thinking described in the biblical account of the Fall. The serpent casts doubts on God’s word (“You will not surely die,” Gen. 3:4) and advocates making up one’s mind independently of God’s instruction. That is, the serpent advocates autonomy. Genesis 3 shows that Adam’s and Eve’s choice to be autonomous leads to death, spiritually and then physically. The stakes are high.

Christ teaches us that the Old Testament is the very word of God (John 10:35; Matt. 5:17–18; 19:4–5). If we follow him, we should have an outlook different from that of the world. Other articles in this issue directly address the Bible’s teaching about Adam and human origins. But in addition, our Christian outlook should encompass our attitude toward science more broadly.

Science is a human endeavor, and human beings are sinners. So we need to be careful. Human beings are still made in the image of God, so we should respect and value human achievements. But sin generates distortions in human thinking, distortions that God overcomes by Christ’s redemption. And Christ’s redemptive provision for us includes the words in the Bible, which have God’s authority and lead us into the path of godly thinking and godly action (Ps. 119:105).

## SCIENTIFIC LAW

So what does the Bible have to say? It indicates that God created the world by speaking: “And God *said*, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). God also governs the

world providentially by speaking: “He sends out *his word*, and melts them [snow and ice]” (Ps. 147:18). God’s word determines both exceptional, miraculous events (such as Jesus’ miracles, often accomplished by speaking) and the regularities: “And God *said*, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years’” (Gen. 1:14).

The law governing the world is God’s speech. God’s speech expresses his personal power and wisdom; it is not an impersonal mechanism. Modern science, in seeking to understand “the laws of nature,” is really seeking to understand how the word of God governs the world.

But many modern scientists have strayed from the truth. They think of law as an impersonal mechanism. This kind of thinking is a form of idolatry, conforming to the Bible’s description in Romans 1:22–23: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and *exchanged* the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man. . . .” In ancient times, people made physical statues to represent false gods. Now, people often exchange God for a substitute in the form of an allegedly impersonal, mechanical law. This kind of substitution is still a form of idolatry.

Idolatry involves foolishness (Rom. 1:21–22), and foolishness leads to misjudgments. We must therefore be prepared to sift pronouncements made in the name of science, rather than merely submitting to them.

Does it really make a difference whether we believe that the laws of the universe are God’s speech rather than an impersonal mechanism? It does. The regularities that modern scientists discover approximate God’s word or God’s law governing the present providential order of things. But the Bible

distinguishes the present providential order from the way things were during the time when God created the world, as described in Genesis 1–2. So God may have acted differently during that time. Indeed, he may still act differently later on in history, when he responds personally to the personal needs of his people. He can work miracles, as he did with Noah’s flood and with the plagues in Egypt. God is not restricted in his actions by allegedly impersonal, natural law.

When Christ returns, the present order of the universe will be transformed (Rom. 8:21–22; 2 Pet. 3:10–13). Hence, we know that the present order will not last forever. By contrast, non-Christian scientists extrapolate the present order to an infinite future, because they believe in an impersonal law.

Christian and non-Christian scientists can to some extent work together on many modern scientific projects, because they both live in God’s world and they both rely on God’s providential control. But non-Christian scientists do not acknowledge God. They rely on him, but they suppress the truth about him (Rom. 1:18). And in our time many Christians are also partly compromised by the same idolatry, because the prevailing atmosphere in the practice of science is that of impersonal law. The differences come to the fore the most when we deal with miracles, which may involve exceptions to the normal pattern of God’s providential rule.

## BIOLOGICAL ORIGINS

We can illustrate this by considering the issue of biological descent. God’s present providential order, established by his word in Genesis 1, includes the pattern that trees and plants reproduce according to their kinds (Gen. 1:11–12) and animals likewise (Gen. 1:21–22, 24–25). Israelite herdsman relied on God’s faithfulness when they kept sheep and goats, and we rely on him today when we breed dogs. Human beings also reproduce according to their kind (Gen. 5:1–3).

Scientists who believe in an impersonal law extrapolate what they see today into the past, with no room for any exceptional activity of God. Mindless, purposeless evolution—the dominant Darwinist view—is the inevitable result. And this result *must*, by a relentless logic, extend to human beings, who are allegedly subject to the same impersonal laws as the rest of life. Given these assumptions, the conclusion follows: human beings originated by gradual evolution. The evidence has to be fitted into this overall picture, because there is no real alternative, once one accepts the fundamental presupposition that law is impersonal.

A biblically grounded view is quite different: God could create Adam and Eve by miraculous action. There is no impersonal law. There is only God’s personal control over all things, both the regularities and the exceptions. God could also have originated the very first life and the major groups of plants and animals by miraculous acts of creation.

## DNA MATCHES

When scientists first compared the DNA sequence in human chromosomes to the sequence for chimpanzees, they announced that the sequences were 98 percent identical. Similarities of this kind extend through the entire realm of living things. With minor variations, DNA in all living things uses a common code. Similar proteins are found in different species, as are similar DNA codings for the proteins. To Darwinists, these similarities confirm the common ancestry of all living things and the Darwinian model of gradualistic, unguided evolution. How else would we account scientifically for this impressive array of evidence?

But, in this reasoning, Darwinists rely on several assumptions. (1) Not evidence, but rather a philosophical presupposition, has excluded God from the process. Genesis 1 indicates that God’s speech has specified the pattern in which animals and plants reproduce according to their kinds. God is the source. Up to this day, every single new animal or plant comes into being through his action: “When you [God] send forth your Spirit, they [new individual animals] are created, and you renew the face of the ground [with new plants]” (Ps. 104:30). (2) Standard Darwinian thinking assumes a picture of *impersonal* law that can admit no exceptions. But God may have acted in exceptional ways in the creation of new kinds. (3) Darwinism does not consider alternative explanations involving personal divine purposes.

Might there be some alternative explanations for the striking similarities? The term “intelligent design” belongs to an approach that stresses that similarities between living things may be due to common design features. For instance, it is no wonder that proteins manufactured by distinct kinds of animals would be alike, if the proteins are designed to perform similar chemical and physiological functions within the cells of the animals.

The Bible does not enter into technical details about cells or proteins. God did not write it for that purpose. But the Bible indicates on the level of ordinary observation that human beings, animals, and plants all have reproductive processes. God created mankind, male and female (Gen. 1:27). Larger animals are also male and female (Gen. 6:19). Starting from these fundamental observations, even ancient people could observe many striking similarities.

## IMAGING AND ANALOGY

Behind the obvious similarities lies a more fundamental theme, namely the theme of imaging. God created man in his image (Gen. 1:26–27). Adam fathered a son Seth in his image: “When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after *his image*, and named him Seth” (Gen. 5:3). We also know that Christ is the original image of God: “Christ,

who is the *image of God*” (2 Cor. 4:4; compare Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). God is the original Father in relation to his eternal Son. Adam is a derivative father. And human fatherhood includes an imaging relationship between father and son. Animals and plants are not made in the image of God, and yet they do reproduce according to their kinds. So we can infer that they dimly reflect or image the pattern with Adam, a pattern that originates in God’s Trinitarian nature. Animal reproduction is therefore analogous to human reproduction, according to God’s design. And the analogy originates with God himself, in the relation of God the Father to God the Son. The Father loves the Son, so it should not be surprising that, in honor of the Son, the Father as Creator designs many analogies within the created order.

Seth is an image of Adam, an analogy to him, because Adam fathered him. This father-son relationship included a biological aspect and even a chemical aspect, as we can confirm today by comparing DNA between biological fathers and sons. Yet there is also an imaging relation or analogical relation between God and Adam that is the product of God’s creative will. So when we see analogies between human beings and chimpanzees, the presence of analogies does not tell us what generated them. An analogy can originate either from biological descent, as it does when Seth is born, or from direct divine will, as with the creation of Adam in the image of God.

So the analogies between different kinds of animals have two possible explanations, not just one. Standard Darwinian theory allows for only one, namely a materialistic one, because it leaves out of its account the character of God as the personal ruler of the world.

We have always known that we look somewhat like monkeys. Now we know that our DNA is like monkeys’ DNA. So what? Quantitatively, we have much more evidence of a relationship. But we still have the same fundamental question, namely, what *kind* of relationship is evidenced? The evidence has to be interpreted. And the interpretation always takes place within a framework of many assumptions about the nature of the world and the nature of scientific investigation. If a scientist assumes a Darwinist framework of impersonal law, he is going to infer confidently that humans and monkeys have a common ancestor and that gradualistic, purposeless evolution is the explanation for the analogies. But a Christian not already committed to such a framework should contemplate another possibility, namely, that all of life reflects not only common design from God, the supernatural Designer, but also a pattern of analogies reflecting on earth the original pattern of God the Son as the image of the Father.

## WHAT SCIENTISTS OBSERVE

Science focuses on the quantitative analysis of material composition. So it becomes natural to focus on DNA. But

people are personal, not merely material. Quantitative analysis of DNA can never capture what is unique about being in the image of God.

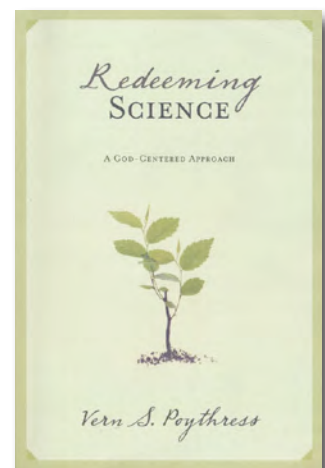
We should also recognize that news reports have emphasized evidence that fits expectations. Early reports about DNA matches of more than 98 percent between humans and chimpanzees compared only those regions of DNA that code for proteins, because at the time those regions were thought to be the most significant. But these regions account for only about 2 percent of the total DNA. The rest was termed “junk,” and Darwinists explained it as an evolutionary accumulation of broken pieces. However, further investigation is revealing more and more positive functions involving this “junk.” Some of it regulates the expression of protein-coding DNA. When human DNA and chimpanzee DNA are compared in these regions, the extent of the match goes down to about 90 percent, or even as low as 70 percent, if we include regions where no firm correlations have yet been established. Scientists have found some regions in human DNA that apparently do not correspond to any known region in another primate. Where did these regions come from? This kind of information tends to be underreported in major media, because it is still largely a puzzle for Darwinists.

In fact, the sheer amount of information about DNA continues to increase, and much remains to be sifted. Christians would be well advised to wait patiently. We should believe that God, who gave us the Scriptures, is the same God who rules over the biological world. Scripture is in harmony with the facts of biology, but it may or may not be easy to obtain a full understanding of the complexity of this harmony.

## CONCLUSION

The world around us tells us to accept the latest scientific pronouncements as the product of experts who know much better than we do. As Christians, we must not overestimate our knowledge or our expertise. But we have in the Bible a divine message that we can trust. We ought to use its guidance. The Bible criticizes modern science for its idolatry. Assumptions about the nature of law and assumptions about what counts as an explanation or what counts as relevant evidence play a major role in science. □

*The author, a PCA teaching elder, teaches at Westminster Theological Seminary and is the author of Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach (Crossway, 2006). He quotes the ESV.*







BRYAN D. ESTELLE

# Should We Still Believe in a Historical Adam?

**M**y thesis is simple: by questioning the historicity of Adam, one must revise the doctrine of original sin with serious modifications. Even recent purveyors of theistic evolution, who question the historicity of Adam, recognize this to be the case.<sup>1</sup> In fact, one Christian scholar goes so far as to say, “Once the doctrine of original sin is reformulated, the doctrine of the atonement may likewise be deepened.”<sup>2</sup>

Such serious modifications will carry entailments for other areas of theology as well. Here I want to take up the question of history and Old Testament exegesis.

## THE “PROBLEM” OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

A complex question that keeps emerging in the debates about historiography in the past couple of centuries is whether “external” history exists outside the mind of the historian. Can past events be observed and described apart from the literary or religious interests or presuppositions of the historical researcher? Some have approached this question along the lines of “remembered history”—what is being called “mnemo-history” in scholarly discussions. Some insights can be gained from this approach. Others assert that many significant literary motifs in the Bible communicate essential meaning about a situation or theme, but nothing about the actual situation being described. In other words, the Bible in its treatment of important themes communicates a message, often expressed as the essential cultural message, but not factual information about the event or person being described.

Undoubtedly, the issue of the Bible and historical reference is very complex; however, the nagging question, “What really happened?” is of vital importance to the person in the pew. When we talk about understanding the historicity of Adam in the Bible, we are talking about at least three things: Israel’s objective history, the people writing the history, and even our own history as readers, since no one comes to any

text with complete neutrality. This recognition saves us from the criticism of only being concerned with a simplistic view of history. Nevertheless, what needs to be argued in the present debate about the historicity of Adam is that there is something that really happened to an “external” person in history, that is, Adam. It is important to recognize that our record of this history occurs in a scriptural text shaped by the literary and theological concerns of the divinely inspired human authors; however, that does not erase the fact that this literarily and theologically shaped text refers to an external historical reality outside the mind and imagination of the writing author.

## THE DIRECTION OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Biblical authors, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, often build upon, allude to, cite from, and even adapt earlier portions of Scripture in their writing. Enter the problem of intertextuality. “The interpretation of the Bible begins with the Bible itself,” asserts Benjamin D. Sommer.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, intertextuality is “how the Bible relates itself in its own system of cross-reference. . . . It has to do with the way in which parts of the Bible and finally the two Testaments themselves relate to one another.”<sup>4</sup>

There are two major trends in intertextual studies: a synchronic approach, which is not interested in which texts precede other texts, and a diachronic approach, which is concerned about which text is earlier and therefore provides a

[Continued on page 20]

# Training Ministers in Japan

STEWART E. "WOODY" LAUER

In March 2007, the Lauer family moved from the campus of Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary to the parsonage of Kita Numazu Reformed Church of the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ). Woody had completed nine years of service as professor of biblical studies, teaching Hebrew and various Old and New Testament courses while serving as a member of the faculty. He had accepted a call from the RCJ's Eastern Presbytery to work as the missionary-evangelist of its chapel in the city of Numazu, Shizuoka Prefecture. This move represented a return to the evangelistic work that Woody did in Sendai during his first two terms on the mission field in Japan.

Following a ten-month furlough (2007), the Lauers returned to Numazu to serve at the young congregation of the RCJ, but also to allow Woody to continue teaching biblical studies. Since arriving in Numazu, he has been traveling regularly to Kobe, usually once or twice per quarter, to teach eight-hour blocks of intensive evening courses to the students of Kobe Theological Hall, a seminary of the Japan Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Students at Kobe Hall receive credit for their work at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. Two Kobe Hall students have graduated recently and returned to Japan to seek calls and ordination.

Woody's responsibility at Kobe Hall has been to teach New Testament Introduction, a course that deals with such issues as authorship, date, and the circumstances surrounding the writing of each New Testament book. He teaches the whole course over a two-year period



New Testament Introduction class at Kobe Theological Hall

and then begins teaching the class again in the third year. Like B. F. Westcott and J. Gresham Machen in the two previous centuries, Woody teaches that the similarities and differences of the Synoptic Gospels do not reflect direct borrowing by later writers from earlier ones, but primarily the influence of a common apostolic tradition.

In December 2010, Woody's Ph.D. dissertation, "Traces of a Gospel Writing in 1 Corinthians: Rediscovery and Development of Origen's Understanding of 1 Corinthians 4:6b," was approved by internal and external readers at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. The thesis sustained is that Paul's cryptic reference in 1 Corinthians 4:6 to "what is written" (NIV: "Do not go beyond what is written") refers to the first extant gospel—probably Matthew. This would date Matthew prior to A.D. 49, much earlier than most modern scholars have dated it.

Formal university-level recogni-

tion of this thesis means that Woody is now able to incorporate the fruits of this research into his teaching at Kobe Theological Hall. The naturalistic, evolutionary view of the formation of gospel traditions fostered by two hundred years of higher critical scholarship and popularized in recent decades by the so-called Jesus Project, requires three to four decades of time between the cross of Christ and the writing of the first gospel. Thus, an exegetical demonstration that the first canonical gospel was in circulation less than twenty years after the resurrection leaves liberal scholarship unable plausibly to contend that the Gospels reflect evolved legends rather than eyewitness testimony. The thesis not only tends to undermine liberalism, but also supports the view of the Gospels taught consistently by the early Church Fathers and advocated by Machen.

Having completed his doctorate, Woody has begun additional work

Old Testament Survey class at Kobe Seminary



Old Testament Canon class at Kobe Seminary



training ministers. Since April 2011, he has been teaching courses at his former school, Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary. He began teaching Old Testament Survey, a subject he taught formerly, and Old Testament Exegesis, training future ministers of the RCJ how to read and interpret passages of Scripture. This term, he began teaching what is for him another new class, Old Testament Canon. The class deals with how and why the books that comprise our Old Testament came to be recognized as such.

While regular classes are in session from September to June, Woody travels to Kobe from Numazu (about three hours by *Shinkansen* [bullet train]), usually twice monthly, and spends two days on the campus, living in the dorm and eating with

the students, while teaching five hours of classes. Last term, he also had the privilege of preaching three times at Kobe Seminary's chapel services.

While his primary responsibility continues to be evangelism and church planting in Numazu, he has enjoyed helping to train ministers for two of the sister churches of the OPC: the Reformed Church in Japan and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Japan. At both seminaries, nearly all of the regular students (all male) go on to become ministers in their seminaries' sponsoring denominations. Thus, through this teaching the OPC's Mission in Japan helps to prepare Bible-believing ministers for two sister denominations, leaving a lasting imprint upon the Reformed churches in Japan.

*The author has been an OP minister*

Old Testament Exegesis class at Kobe Seminary



*since 1985, laboring as an evangelist and seminary teacher in Japan.*

## WHAT'S NEW

### APPOINTMENTS

• **Miss Heather E. Foss** (Calvary OPC, Tallahassee, Fla.) has been appointed to an eight-month term as a missionary associate in Karamoja, Uganda, where she will be laboring as a nurse at Akisyon a Yesu Presbyterian Clinic. She arrived in Uganda on February 23.

### COMINGS/GOINGS

- **Rev. and Mrs. Benjamin K. Hopp**, having concluded their nine-month furlough, are scheduled to return to Haiti at the beginning of March.
- **Mr. and Mrs. Mark A. (LeAnn) Isenhoff** (Spencer Mills OPC, Gowen, Mich.) concluded their service as missionary associates in China and returned to the U.S. in January.
- **Dr. and Mrs. James D. (Jenny) Knox** are scheduled to return to the U.S. at the end of March to begin a seven-month furlough.

## Telenews

Call 215/830-9424, ext. \*833, for the latest Foreign Missions news and prayer requests. New editions: **March 2, 16, 30.**



# Christianity and Evolution

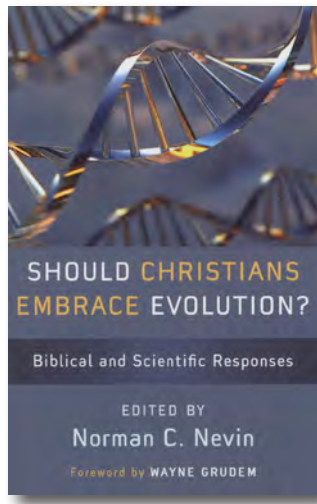
DANNY E. OLINGER

**P**&R Publishing is to be commended for bringing to print in North America a stellar collection of essays by British evangelicals. Edited by Norman C. Nevin, the book is entitled *Should Christians Embrace Evolution? Biblical and Scientific Responses*. The thesis of the volume is that Christians cannot accept modern evolutionary theory without compromising the teachings of the Bible. Modern evolutionary theory—specifically, neo-Darwinian mechanisms of mutation and natural selection, and the common ancestry of all living things—allows one to explain life and human origins without reference to God. However, the Bible from its opening words proclaims that life can only be explained with reference to God.

The essays, by both theologians and scientists, cover a wide range of issues, but there are two basic questions: (1) Is evolution compatible with Christianity? (2) Must Christians abandon their belief in the historical priority of Adam and Eve in the human race, in the light of modern genetic research? According to the authors, positive answers to these questions have gained traction among Christians in recent years through the publication of such books as Denis Alexander's *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?*

Although he affirms the authority of Scripture, Alexander insists that modern science has established evolutionary theory beyond dispute. The proof is in DNA testing. The record of humankind's evolutionary past is indelibly inscribed on its DNA, which makes people the equivalents of walking genetic fossil museums. In regard to the first question above, Alexander believes that evolution

is more than compatible with Christianity. It is demanded. Concerning the second question, Alexander believes that DNA research has also shown undeniably that the earth was populated with human beings prior to the appearance of Adam and Eve, and that humans and chimpanzees



have descended from common hominid ancestors.

The writers of this set of essays disagree with Alexander and collectively answer both questions in the negative. They believe that the Bible teaches, and that Christianity demands, that God created all things out of nothing by the word of his power, not through an evolutionary process. They also argue that Adam was not one man among many, but the first man from whom the entire human race has sprung.

## IS EVOLUTIONARY THEORY COMPATIBLE WITH CHRISTIANITY?

Regarding the compatibility of evolutionary theory and biblical teaching, David Anderson argues in his chapter, "Creation, Redemption and Eschatology,"

that evolutionary theory and the teaching of the Bible are package deals—and separate packages. Each tells a story about the critical space-time events in the history of humanity. That these stories deeply conflict can be seen in their respective understandings of Adam's fall into sin. In standing with the evolutionary position, Denis Alexander maintains that the Fall did not affect the physical world. He argues that pain, suffering, and death not only preceded the arrival of Adam and Eve, but also were an essential part of the struggle for limited resources that gave rise to our species, including Adam and Eve. Anderson counters that the Bible teaches the exact opposite position. The Fall affected the physical world. Pain, suffering, and death came into the world through sin. Anderson concludes that the two positions cannot be reconciled. Modern evolutionary theory sees death as part of the created order that God deemed good; biblical Christianity views death as an enemy of creation that is destroyed through the coming and work of Jesus Christ.

R. T. Kendall's "Faith and Creation" is even more to the point on why evolutionary theory and the Bible cannot be mixed and matched. Evolution takes as axiomatic that what is now seen has evolved to its present state from what was here earlier. But the writer of Hebrews declares that what is seen at the level of nature was not made out of what is visible or now exists: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible" (Heb. 11:3). Kendall writes, "This is the essence of creation 'out of nothing.' Through faith



we understand that time, space, and all matter were brought into being by the word—command—of God, so that things which are *there* were *put there* from *nothing* by the voice of God” (p. 114). He adds, “If the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews had seen civilization 1,900 years in advance and wished to make a statement that would categorically refute any view of evolution, he could not have worded it better” (p. 115).

### WAS ADAM THE FIRST MAN?

Michael Reeves argues in “Adam and Eve” that severe theological consequences follow if we deny the biblical teaching that Adam was a historical person who fathered the entire human race. Most modern geneticists, as a result of their research, believe that there was no single head at the start of humanity. In light of these scientific conclusions, Alexander proposes that Adam was not the first man created, but rather the first to recognize the need to worship God alone. He also says that Eve did not come from Adam’s rib, but from her parents. Reeves rightly counters that if this is the case, then sin and death did not come from one man’s disobedience in history, and the words of Paul in Romans 5 make no sense. Paul would be comparing that which is historical (Christ and his redeeming work) with that which is mythical (Adam and the Fall). Reeves writes, “His logic

would fall apart if he was comparing a historical man (Christ) to a mythical or symbolic one (Adam). If Adam and his sin were mere symbols, then there would be no need for a historical atonement; a mythical atonement would be necessary to undo a mythical fall” (p. 45).

### DO CHRISTIANS OPPOSE SCIENCE?

The later chapters in the book refute the accusation that Christians who do not embrace evolution are opposed to science. The book’s editor, Norman Nevin, emeritus professor of medical genetics at Queen’s University in Belfast, writes that the truth is the opposite of the perception. Christians have a high view of science, and several authors writing in this volume are scientists. They do not duck the tough questions raised by modern science. The essays include “Homology,” “The Nature of the Fossil Record,” “Chromosomal Fusion and Common Ancestry,” “Information and Thermodynamics,” and “Does the Genome Provide Evidence for Common Ancestry?”

The question is whether scientific data must be interpreted in only one way, namely, according to modern evolutionary theory. In this volume, scientists argue that the supposed evidence for evolution, including that of genetics, can be reasonably interpreted in a nonevolutionary manner.

Further, who determines the standards for evaluation? The interpretation placed on the creation account by certain theistic evolutionists, such as Alexander, is determined by the felt need to fit

Scripture in with the belief that science discovers absolutely objective facts. The reliability of the biblical account in Genesis may be questioned, they think, but not the latest findings of science. It is the unquestioned authority in the modern world. However, science is an evolving social activity in which the participants are fallible people. Hence, there are no absolutely objective facts with science. The assumption that nature is an infallible guide is also problematic when the reality is that nature is cursed.

To this reviewer, the writers have proven their point. Taken as a whole, modern evolutionary theory, with its Darwinian commitment to mutations and natural selection and its belief in common ancestry, inverts the Creator-creature distinction and gives attributes to nature that belong to God alone, including the power to create. This is no harmless transfer. The teachings of Scripture are connected. How one understands the world’s beginning, the origin and historicity of the first man, affects doctrines other than that of creation. The biblical doctrines of sin, of redemption, and of the Redeemer also come into view. This is the testimony of the apostle Paul: “If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17).

*The author is the general secretary for the Committee on Christian Education and the editor of New Horizons magazine.*

## Congratulations

**The Shorter Catechism has been recited by:**

- Maria Canfield (Bethel OPC in Wheaton, Ill.)
- Caleb Nolan (Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.)

**The Children’s Catechism has been recited by:**

- Kevin Davenport
  - Nathan Davenport
  - Anna Lise McGowan
  - Nathaniel McGowan
- (all four from Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.)

## Out of the Mouth ...

Our daughter-in-law introduced our three-year-old grandson, Joshua, to the catechism question, “Why did God make you and all things?” She taught him the answer, “For his own glory,” and then repeated the question.

Joshua recited the answer he had learned: “God made me and brother and all things for his jewelry.”

—Richard and Virginia Moore  
Round Rock, Tex.

*Note: If you have an example of the humorous “wisdom” that can come from children, please send it to the editor.*

# The Church Planter Training Conference

**T**welve men were called and sent to home missions fields as organizing pastors in 2011. The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension seeks to help equip these men for their labors. So each January it sponsors a Church Planter Training Conference for the organizing pastors who began their labors in the previous year. A few others who are involved in the broader work of home missions are also invited to attend.

Eight men who began their ministries in 2011 and four others gathered in early January at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Phoenix, Arizona. They came from Utah, Ohio, Illinois, Florida, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Arizona, Michigan, North Carolina, Alberta, and New York. All are engaged in the work of developing a new Orthodox Presbyterian church.

CHMCE staff members Ross Graham and Dick Gerber led sessions on various topics flowing out of the manual *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. David Haney presented a session on structuring the finances of a mission work and stewardship. George Knight, representing the Committee, encouraged the men in their ministries.

The men engaged in several extended periods of prayer, and had ample opportunity to build relationships with one another. The goal of seeing them build relationships with one another seemed to be met. One participant was overheard saying, "We need to plan a reunion." Reunions may only be possible as men reconnect at general assemblies, but pray that they may be able to stay in touch by e-mail, phone, and social media to encourage one another in their ministries and to share ideas.

Participants at the 2012 Church Planter Training Conference in Phoenix



Opportunities to get better acquainted with the Worldwide Outreach ministry of the OPC are also built into the conference. Douglas Clawson presented the ministry of OP foreign missions; Danny Olinger reviewed Christian education; Tom Patete presented the great materials offered by Great Commission Publications; David Nakhla spoke about short-term missions opportunities.

A number of the mission works need new or better facilities. Reformation Presbyterian Church in Queens, New York City, is staring at the prospect of eviction from their public school meeting facility after February 12. This is due to a court ruling affecting over sixty congregations in New York City.

Redeemer OPC in Airdrie, Alberta, is meeting increasing resistance from the church from whom they rent space for evening worship. Redeemer meets in a different facility in the morning, and would like to find one location that could

be used morning and evening and would allow for fellowship meals.

Sacha Walicord was present from Mount Vernon, Ohio. He is teaching at a university and is the teacher at Providence Presbyterian Church in Pataskala. He had been teaching a Bible study in Mount Vernon over the previous several months. The first worship service of the group was held on the Sunday prior to the conference. Sixty-one people attended. This new group is in discussions with a congregation about sharing its facilities.

Sovereign Grace OPC of Quad Cities in Moline, Illinois, is seeking to lease a vacant church building that is for sale.

Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Crystal Lake, Illinois, has been using a very inadequate facility. After an extended search, it seems that the congregation is seeing God's provision on the horizon.

Redeemer OP Mission in Wilkesburg (Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania, meets in

Sacha Walicord, who is developing a group in Mount Vernon, Ohio



Brandon Wilkins from Crystal Lake, Illinois



a building that was formerly a Christian Science facility. It is being sold to the town, which wants to use the lower level as a library annex. The seller has included in the sales contract a provision for Redeemer to be allowed to use the building for at least one year after the sale. The town had not yet indicated its willingness to accept that clause.

These needs were taken to the throne of grace by the gathering.

Michael Elliott was present from Utah. He is nearing licensure by the Presbytery of the Dakotas. Michael and his family are part of Christ Presbyterian Church in Salt Lake City. He is seeking to gather a group in Provo, the home of Brigham Young University. Despite personal and ministry-related discouragements and obstacles, he presses ahead with a cheerful spirit and dependence on the Lord.

Charlie Perkins of Prescott Presbyterian Church in Prescott, Arizona, was present. The Lord used him to gather the

initial group in Cottonwood, and then for an extended period of time he led worship in both communities each Sunday morning. Cottonwood and Prescott are an hour apart. With organizing pastor Brian Chang now in Cottonwood, the Lord has opened a door for Charlie to lead worship weekly for students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott. This is in addition to the regular services at Prescott Presbyterian Church.

Charlie keeps track of all the Reformed Christians he meets or hears about in Arizona. In this way, he can introduce people to one another. Recently, Chaplain Tim Power began a Bible study in Yuma. People that Charlie and others knew were informed. Ten families are now involved.

The three days together in Phoenix for the training conference were a great time for the OPC's newest organizing pastors to interact with each other and with CHMCE staff. The men thoughtfully considered how to go about laboring to establish faithful OP churches. They learned about resources available to them and about the broader work of the OPC at home and around the world.

God is richly blessing the ministry of home missions in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Your prayers and gifts to Worldwide Outreach are currently helping to support forty-nine people who are laboring to plant and extend Orthodox Presbyterian congregations.

If you want to pray more specifically for OPC home missions ministries, check out Home Missions Today at [chmce.org](http://chmce.org) or request the biweekly prayer newsletter by e-mailing [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).

Michael Elliott, who is laboring in Provo, Utah



## Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).  
New editions: **March 14, 28.**



# Sharing Grief



**To:** JuneMcrea@ustel.com

**From:** rose@hotfone.com

Dear Sis,

I am so sad. Do you remember me telling you I hosted a baby shower last month for Erika, the young woman in our church who was expecting her first child? This morning I got a call saying Erika had gone into labor during the night, but the baby, a little girl, was stillborn. This is such a shock.

What should I do? I know I need to see Erika, but I have no idea what to say. Maybe you don't know either. If you have any thoughts, please send them.

Love,

Rose

**To:** rose@hotfone.com

**From:** JuneMcrea@ustel.com

Dear Rose,

Do you remember Jane, my roommate between college and marriage? People used to call us "Janie and Junie." We lost contact a few years back, but we reconnected on Facebook.

Jane's first child, Faith, was born prematurely and lived only a few hours. Jane and her husband later had four more children. I decided to forward your message to Jane. Here's what she wrote back:

Not a day goes by when I don't think about Faith, but it doesn't hurt anymore. Don't get me wrong—that was a hard time. It took five years before I felt totally normal. But the Lord gradually replaces pain with peace. Your sister's friend will one day have joy that her daughter is in heaven.

People grieve differently, so I can't predict everything your sister's friend will feel. But I learned a few things that I think transcend our feelings.

First, she needs to stay in the Word. This may be hard at first. I guess the medical term for it would be shock, but I remember worrying that I was literally going crazy. One day I asked my sister a question, and she looked at me quizzically and said, "Jane, don't you remember? We just talked about that yesterday." When I opened my Bible, I would read the same sentence fifteen times and not comprehend it. But eventually the mind recovers. Many of the suggested verses for funeral services in *The Book of Church Order* were passages that I found most comforting.

Also, your sister's friend must keep going to church, whether she feels like it or not. The Lord tells us not to forsake the assembly because that's where he meets with us in a special way.

When your sister visits her friend, I would suggest a minimalist approach. Now is not the time to present theological treatises. That may come later, but for now, "I don't know what to say" is a good thing to say!

Tell your sister to keep visiting her friend and praying for her after the funeral. That's when everybody else goes back to normal life, and her friend will not have a normal life to go back to. Also, people sometimes forget that men grieve just as much, though differently. Your sister's husband or the other men in the church should be checking on the husband, too. The couple may need counseling.

If your sister wants to give her friend any reading material, urge her to vet it first. Many "grief books" say it's OK to get mad at God. But God's Son died too, and God even ordained it so we would be eternally blessed. How can we justify being angry toward him? If we are angry, I think we should confess

it in humility.

I'd be similarly cautious about support groups. They can help if you find a good one, but they can also stir up bitterness, jealousy, and rage. Our true "support group" is the church. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3–4). Those are not idle words.

I love knowing that our covenant child is face-to-face with Jesus, and that we will see her again. Our children grew up knowing they have a sister in heaven, and that has made heaven more real to them.

Jane gave you a lot to chew on, so I'm not going to add any more. Let me know how your visit with Erika goes.

Love,

June

**To:** JuneMcrea@ustel.com

**From:** rose@hotfone.com

Dear Sis,

I visited Erika on Thursday, the day after I got your message. She seemed spent, so I kept it brief. The next day was the funeral; it was good that every single family in the church had at least one member in attendance. Erika and her husband were in church yesterday, and I saw that she plucked one of the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation brochures from the literature rack. These are good signs that she is seeking support in the right places. I'll visit her again this week. Thanks for your prayers.

Love,

Rose



# March

1. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for political and economic stability in Haiti. / Pray for Home Missions general secretary **Ross Graham** as he prepares for the Readiness for Ministry in the OPC seminar to be presented in Philadelphia, Pa., on March 2–3. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
2. Pray for Home Missions associate general secretary **Dick Gerber** at the Readiness for Ministry in the OPC seminar in Philadelphia, Pa. / **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. F. as he begins a new term of teaching in a delicate situation. / Pray for short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla** as he helps churches plan their short-term mission trips for this summer.
3. **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Ask God to use them as they begin a new ministry in another city. / **William and Deddeh Joe**, Philadelphia, Pa. Pray for the continued growth and spiritual development of the Liberian congregation of Grace OPC. / **Andrew (and Rebekah) Miller**, yearlong intern at Bethel Reformed Presbyterian Church in Fredericksburg, Va.
4. **Roberto and Marieta Laranjo**, Lowell, Mass. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Igreja Presbiteriana Brasileira. / Missionary associates in Asia. Pray that the students with whom they come into contact will come to faith in Christ.
5. Pray for the labors of our new missionary associates in a large country in Asia. / **Douglas L. and Sue Watson**, Honolulu, Hawaii. Pray for the Reformed faith to spread in Hawaii through the efforts of Redeemer OPC and the few other Reformed churches there.
6. **Matthew and Jessica Figura**, Cookeville, Tenn. Pray that God would provide officers for Faith Presbyterian Church. / Missionary associates in Asia. Pray that they will be an encouragement to their students.
7. Missionary associates in Asia. Pray for a good term of teaching at their universities. / **Gene and Cynthia Crow**, Redding, Calif. Pray for the continued growth of Redding Reformed Fellowship. / **Greg Reynolds**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.
8. **Carlos and Diana Cruz**, San Juan, P.R. Pray that God's elect will be brought in to Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada. / Pray for wisdom for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he counsels with and advises our missionaries. / Pray for stated clerk **George Cottenden** as he begins preparing for the 79th General Assembly.
9. Pray that Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** will have good health as he pursues a busy schedule. / **Stephen and Catalina Payson**, Mifflinburg, Pa. Pray that God would bless Providence OPC with more families.
10. **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray for Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church as they look for a new meeting location. / Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Janet Birkmann**. / **Jonathan (and Lauryn) Shishko**, yearlong intern at Reformation Presbyterian Church in Queens, N.Y.
11. Pray for **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda, as they prepare to return to the U.S. for furlough. / **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Long Island, N.Y. Pray for continued unity, enthusiasm, effective evangelistic outreach, and visitors at Trinity Church. / Army chaplain **Kyle (and Laurel) Brown**.
12. **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray that the Lord would bring growth to Verde Valley Reformed Chapel. / **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for unsaved family members of believers attending worship



Pastor Bill Welzien has preached the gospel weekly in the open air at Mallory Square in Key West, Florida, since 1986. Pictured here are Bill Welzien (right), Keys Presbyterian Church member Marshann Fruth (center), and Home Missions general secretary Ross Graham (left), who presented Bill with a plaque honoring his quarter century of faithful and effective street preaching. The plaque reads in part: "Enduring the indignities of men and the harshness of the elements, he has stood in the gap, week in and week out, and told the truth to all who would listen, as the sun sets in this beautiful and needy place."

services in Nakaale.

13. Missionary associates **Heather Foss** and **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Clinic ministries in outlying villages. / **Brad Hertzog**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that leaders will be raised up and brought to Reformation Presbyterian Church. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator.
14. **David and Rashel Robbins**, Huntington, W.Va. Pray that God would convert sinners through the preaching and outreach of Trinity Presbyterian Church. / Pray for **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they continue to establish relationships with the Karimojong.
15. **Barry and Anne James**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for their ministry to the students at Knox Theological College. / **Chuck and Kristie Muether**, Pella, Iowa. Pray that visiting families will be encouraged to join Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church. / Pray for **Pat Clawson**, Christian Education office secretary, as she prepares for the Christian Education committee meeting next week.
16. **Mark and Michele Winder**, Collierville, Tenn. Pray that God would add new families to Wolf River Presbyterian Church. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would give them health and strength for their labors. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he prepares for the Christian Education committee meeting next week.
17. Pray that missionary associates **Heather Baumgardner**, **Erika Bulthuis**, and **Emily Pihl**, Nakaale, Uganda, will be a great help and encouragement to the Uganda Mission. / Home Missions administrative assistant **Vickie Swann**. / Navy chaplain **Bryan (and Shelly) Weaver**.
18. **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. Pray that God would strengthen and add to the congregation of Gospel Life Presbyterian Church. / **Steve and Linda Larson**, Uruguay. Ask the Lord to bless Steve as he works with young people in the local churches. / **Ryan (and Jennifer) Stoddard**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
19. **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Uruguay. Pray for significant progress in their language studies. / **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Moline, Ill. Pray that the Lord would bless the evangelistic efforts of Sovereign Grace OPC and bring in more visitors and core families. / **Tom Patete**, executive director of Great Commission Publications.
20. **Tim and Joanne Beauchamp**, Bridgton, Maine. Pray for Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church as they seek to bring people under the ministry of the Word. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for St-Marc Church's ministry to students at Laval University. / Pray for **the Christian Education Committee** as they review the Psalter selections for the proposed Psalter-Hymnal.
21. Missionary associate **Debra Blair**, Quebec, Canada. Pray that she will have opportunities in everyday conversations to bear witness to the gospel. / **Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray for Bob Buchner, an elder-elect at Omega OPC.
22. **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Mayfield Village, Ohio. Praise God for his gift of grace, his providential care, and the progress at Lake OPC. / **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church**. Pray for the spiritual growth of the church's covenant children. / **Jan Giandomenico**, office manager and assistant to the director of finance.
23. **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray for Woody as he assists in training young men for Christian service. / **Kent and Laurie Harding**, Doniphan, Mo. Pray that the people of Sovereign Grace OPC will firmly trust the Lord to build his church. / Air Force chaplain **Cornelius (and Deidre) Johnson**.
24. **Doug and Kristi Bylsma**, Beamsville, Ont. Praise God for the generous spirit of prayer and financial support from within and outside the ministry of Living Hope Presbyterian Church. / **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for their witness to university students. / **Cris (and Margaret) Simpson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
25. **Kaz and Katie Yaegashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray for seekers struggling to understand their need for Christ. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray for Keys Presbyterian Church as they seek to bring people under the Word. / **Joshua (and Jessica) Lyon**, yearlong intern at Branch of Hope OPC in Torrance, Calif.
26. **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray that people will be edified through the preaching of the Word at Hillsdale OPC. / Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Urayasu, Japan. Pray for their work with the new church plant. / **Jim Scott**, publications coordinator for Christian Education and managing editor of *New Horizons*.
27. Pray for the health and well-being of retired missionaries **Betty Andrews**, **Greet Rietkerk**, **Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. / **Vern and Olena Picknally**, Fremont, Mich. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Fremont OPC. / Pray that young men will benefit from participating in **the Timothy Conference** at Escondido OPC in Escondido, Calif., on March 28–31.
28. **Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Cedarburg, Wis. Give thanks for the ordination and installation of a second deacon at Mercy OPC. / Pray for **the Christians** in the Horn of Africa who are facing trials as they witness for Christ. / **Jason (and Amanda) Kirklin**, yearlong intern at Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio.
29. Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray that they will have opportunities to witness in the community. / **Terry and Karen Thole**, Fargo, N.Dak. Pray for God's spirit to direct and empower Grace OPC's gospel witness. / **Alan (and Carrie) Dueck**, yearlong intern at Church of the Covenant in Hackettstown, NJ.
30. **Joe and Jennifer Troutman**, Bedford, Tex. Pray that Mid Cities Presbyterian Church's men's and women's monthly fellowship meetings will support and promote the worship of God. / **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for the students preparing for the gospel ministry.
31. **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for Heero's continuing work on sermon preparation and delivery in Ukrainian. / **John and Lois Hilbelink**, Rockford, Ill. Pray that contacts through members and friends of Providence OPC will bear fruit. / **Austin (and Rebecca) Britton**, yearlong intern at Grace OPC in Mount Vernon, Wash.

# God's Gift of Himself in His Son

MARK A. GARCIA

**C**hristian stewards give because they love. They love Christ and his church, and in their love they give not just money or time or possessions, but also themselves. In an earlier meditation on stewardship, we considered God's identity as Creator and gift-giver and what it looks like to live well in our Father's world. This month we ask a related question: what does faithful stewardship have to do with the Father's gift of himself in his Son?

Paul's words to the Corinthians suggest a way of thinking about that relationship. For Paul, Macedonian generosity is, on its own, a glowing testimony to the glory of the gospel. In fact, the apostle calls it God's grace given among them (2 Cor. 8:1). More specifically, he explains how God's grace was visibly active in their giving, despite much affliction. It was a spiritual response of their love for the recipients of their sacrifices (vv. 2–5).

Reading the passage carefully, we

discover how each high note of Paul's praise of these brethren recalls a feature of Christ's gracious, sacrificial gift of himself to us. As the Son gave himself in loving submission to the Father's will, so the Macedonians gave themselves "first to the Lord" and only after this, and because of this, to the brethren (v. 5). Their sacrificial giving was the overflow of their devotion to their God. And yet, as Christ's self-giving far exceeded the narrow notion of simply doing one's duty, so the Macedonians gave not only up to their ability, but beyond it, so effusive was their love (v. 3)!

Similarly, Paul encourages us to give not out of compulsion but freely, with the cheer of a devoted heart (2 Cor. 9:7), inasmuch as it is the indescribable gift of Christ—of himself, and of the Father—that is glorified in any real Christian giving. Because our love for God pulls us away from a too-tight grasp of this life, our sacrificial giving goes beyond mere

dutifulness to the generosity of a loving heart, for it is an echo of the Father's gift of his Son, and thus of his love. This reminds us of something the great Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck once said: "The goodness of God appears as love when it not only conveys certain benefits but God himself."

*The author is pastor of Immanuel OPC in Coraopolis, Pa.*

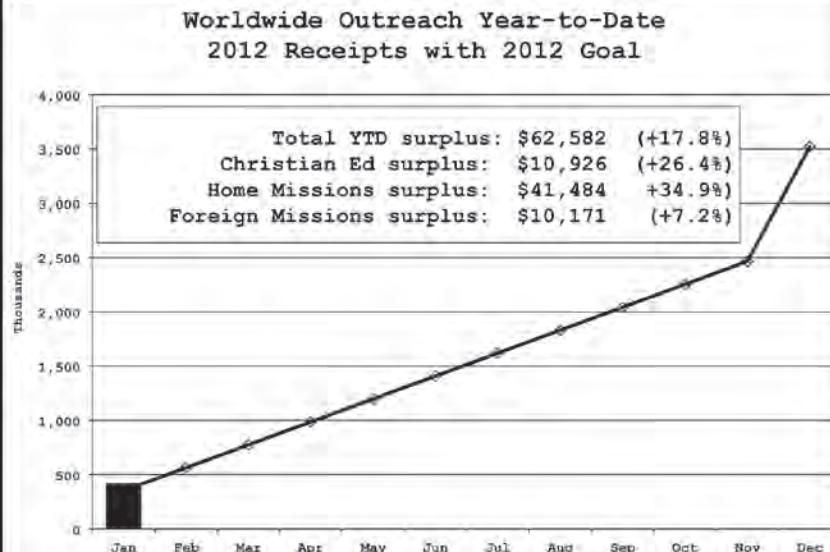
## Thank Offering Goal Exceeded!

By the end of December 2011, \$715,803 was received for the 2010 Thank Offering. Additional receipts of \$126,180 in January 2012 brought the total to \$841,983. This exceeded our goal of \$800,000. Still more may be received in February and beyond. This gives Worldwide Outreach a good boost as it starts 2012.

In view of these results, as well as the church's meeting of the 2011 budget for Worldwide Outreach, the Committee on Coordination rejoices in God's goodness in the giving of his people. We thank the members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for supporting our denominational missionary and educational efforts so generously in these troubling economic times.

The program committees are committed to using these funds wisely to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

WORLDWIDE OUTREACH





## SHOULD WE STILL BELIEVE ... ?

[Continued from page 9]

precedent for a later text. The synchronic approach is worthy of consideration; however, because of space constraints and the fact that the synchronic approach can be escapist, actually abdicating critical rigor on the part of an interpreter, I will only discuss the diachronic approach here.

The diachronic approach is concerned with “the affiliative relations between past and present literary texts and/or their authors,” says Sommer, quoting Louis Renza. “Influence-study generally entailed the practice of tracing a text’s generic and thematic lineage... [Studies of influence focused] on the ways literary works necessarily comprise revision or updating of their textual antecedents.”<sup>5</sup>

The issues arising from the diachronic approach are manifold and complex. For example, there is the issue of dating the composition of texts. Sometimes we can confidently date biblical texts and identify the authors of those compositions. At other times, we are less sure. Another issue is the problem of hermeneutical horizon. As previously mentioned, we need to consider the author of any given text, the text’s original horizon, and the horizon of the reader and subsequent readers as well.

### THE THEOLOGICAL ENTAILMENTS

Let me connect the dots for the reader between what I have said regarding history and intertextuality and how this relates to the topic under consideration: the historicity of Adam. In their recent book on the relationship between science and the Christian faith, Giberson and Collins devote a chapter to the subject of “Evolution and Human Beings.”<sup>6</sup> They ask, “Can a literalist reading [of Genesis] be reconciled with science?” They assert, “Literalist readings of Genesis imply that God *specialy* created Adam and Eve, and that all humans are descended from these original parents.”<sup>7</sup> After some discussion of this question (to which they think the obvious answer is “No!”), they ask a similar question about nonliteral interpretations and science. At this point, they discuss the “everyman reading” of Adam and Old Testament scholar Peter Enns’s recent discussions of the historicity of Adam.

The everyman reading is basically the view that the “Fall was not a historical event but a statement of the common human condition that everyone agrees is deeply flawed and sinful.”<sup>8</sup> Then they discuss Enns’s views. Enns has recently been noting a number of similarities between Israel in Canaan and Adam in the Garden of Eden on his blog post with Biologos. The authors quote Enns as making the following statement: “Israel’s history happened first, and the Adam story was written to reflect that history. In other words, the Adam story is really an Israel story placed in primeval time. *It is not a story of*

*human origins but of Israel’s origins.*”<sup>9</sup> After a little commentary, they quote Enns again as saying that “the ‘Adam is Israel’ angle is ... a much better angle than seeing Adam as the first human and all humans are descended from him. Genesis does not support that reading.”<sup>10</sup>

It should be clear from this brief discussion that the views surveyed above reject openly the historicity of Adam and reverse the direction of intertextuality regarding who came first, Adam or Israel. I applaud Enns for noticing significant connections between Adam and Israel and between the Garden of Eden and Canaan; however, to remove any real historical reference from the Scripture’s description of Adam and the early chapters of Genesis and to reverse completely the direction of intertextual connections within the Scriptures is problematic for a number of reasons. It raises some significant theological questions.

For example, if Adam is not the responsible agent for casting the human race into a condition of sin and misery, then at whose feet should we place the blame for our human predicament? Does it not follow, if one removes the historicity of Adam from the equation and if our historical forefather Adam is not responsible for our condition of sin and misery, that someone else must bear that responsibility? It seems to this author that the necessary consequence is to make God responsible for the evil we observe in the world. A careful reading of Harlow’s article, which was previously referenced, will demonstrate that this is the case. These recent suggestions that Adam is merely a literary construct, without any external historical reference to real situations, are not without serious consequences for our theology. □

*The author, an OP minister, teaches at Westminster Seminary California.*

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Daniel C. Harlow, “After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 62.3 (September, 2010): 179–95, especially 191–92.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, “Inner-biblical Interpretation,” *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1829.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 228.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Karl W. Giberson and Francis S. Collins, *The Language of Science and Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 197–214.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 211 (emphasis original).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.



## UPDATE

## Churches

• On January 20, the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario recognized the closing of **Grace OPC** in Shedden, Ontario; the mission work held its last worship service on January 1.

## Ministers

- **James T. Lim**, formerly associate pastor at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, Fla., was installed as pastor of Faith OPC in Long Beach, Calif., on January 22.
- **Mark R. Wheat**, formerly associate pastor of Tyler Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Tex., was installed as pastor of Sovereign Grace Community Church in Hughson, Calif., on January 6.

## LETTERS

## APPRECIATING CHARISMATICS

Editor:

I was disappointed in the articles on the “charismatic challenge” in the February issue. The good points of the charismatics weren’t covered at all, only their problems (from our perspective). Would we want a charismatic magazine to cover us that way?

I do not have a detailed knowledge of the charismatic movement, but I will mention three of its strong points:

1. The average charismatic pastor reportedly spends much more time in prayer than the average noncharismatic pastor. Let our pastors follow their excellent example.

2. I give charismatics in general high marks for endeavoring to labor in the power of the Holy Spirit and not in their own strength. We must also admit that we can do nothing in ministry without Jesus.

3. Robert Churchill said that Jesus’ ordination exam to Peter was, “Do you love me?” (John 21). It is often easier to see this love of Jesus in the charismatics.

I have heard it said, “God strikes

many a mighty blow with a crooked stick.” Most sticks are bent theologically. Most are also bent morally. Thank God for the mighty blows he is striking today with charismatic sticks!

Ann Smith  
Ipswich, Mass.

## THE CHURCH AND POLITICS

Editor:

I would like to commend *New Horizons* for its discussion of “The Church & Politics” in the February issue. The church should not assimilate the hatred and contempt that is so evident on both sides of today’s partisan politics. Our convictions and beliefs should always be communicated in love and humility, rather than with jujitsu knives.

Either God is sovereign or he is not. If we believe that God is the “blessed controller of all things” (1 Tim. 6:15, Phillips), then we acknowledge his guidance of human history, past and present. An understanding of this should lead to civil discourse, not incendiary rhetoric.

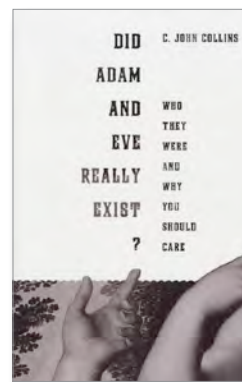
It is indeed important for the church to stand on principles and to be a light to this dark world. However, as we seek to do God’s will in the realm of secular politics, we must remember that we are not infallible. No one has a monopoly on truth or discernment, nor is immune to error in the interpretation of Scripture. With that in mind, we should always temper our dogmatism and let our good actions speak louder than our harsh words.

Brian W. Tilton  
Warrington, Pa.

## REVIEWS

*Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care*, by C. John Collins. Published by Crossway, 2011. Paperback, 192 pages, list price \$15.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Chad E. Bond.

C. John Collins has already published several studies on the interpretation of



Genesis and the relationship between science and theology. His goal in this book is to demonstrate that the traditional understanding of Adam and

Eve is worthy of our confidence and to show why it must be retained.

We know that Adam and Eve really did exist, because the Bible tells us so. But next time someone tells you he could never be a Christian because Genesis 1–3 poses a serious intellectual stumbling block, will you be prepared to make a defense? Next time someone attacks your belief in a literal Adam and Eve with sophisticated scientific counterclaims, will your confidence be shaken? *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in reflecting further upon this important subject.

Collins painstakingly expounds passages in Scripture that speak of Adam and Eve, demonstrating that the traditional understanding of our first parents is the view articulated or presupposed in Genesis, by Paul, and above all by Jesus in the Gospels. These texts *require* a historical Adam and Eve for their “truth value.” Collins also shows how these texts are part of the overarching, worldview-shaping story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. It is necessary, Collins insists, to appreciate the way in which the traditional understanding of Adam and Eve is an “irremovable” part of the Bible, underlying and controlling the entire story line from Genesis to Revelation.

Collins goes on to show how the traditional understanding of Adam and Eve provides a meaningful explanation for everyday moral and religious experience (e.g., the recognition of human uniqueness and dignity, the sense that something is wrong with us, the yearning for justice, and the hunger for things to be better).

The only satisfying explanation is the one given in the Bible, which enables believers to affirm and understand these intuitions.

Finally, how should we think about Genesis and science? What about current theories on the origin of the human race? Collins deals with these and related questions in chapter 5. His tone is tentative and latitudinarian. His proposed “bounds of sound thinking” are broad and inclusive. In the end, we are left with “many uncertainties.” But these uncertainties, Collins reassures us, “in no way undermine our right to hold fast to the Biblical story line with full confidence.”

In sum, current scientific evidence does not require us to abandon a historical Adam and Eve. Making sense of the world and human experience requires a historical Adam and Eve. And, above all, making sense of the biblical narrative requires a historical Adam and Eve. Collins presents a compelling case for these conclusions. At particular points along the way, readers are likely to find room for disagreement with his argument. I certainly did. But, as Bunyan once wrote, “None throws away the apple for the core.” Therefore, to the extent that this scholarly study inspires confidence in the traditional understanding of Adam and Eve, we owe Collins a debt of gratitude.

\* \* \*

***Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy*, by Charles E. Hill. Published by Oxford University Press, 2010. Hardback, 295 pages, list price \$27.95. Reviewed by OP pastor James J. Cassidy.**



Professor Hill (of Reformed Seminary in Orlando) sets the record straight about the church’s recognition of the four Gospels. He exposes the

false views of the formation of the New

Testament popularized by such men as Dan Brown and Bart Ehrman.

Hill begins by addressing Ehrman’s argument that there was no orthodoxy before the fourth century. Hill notes that an excavated Egyptian garbage heap contained many early fragments of the Gospels. He wonders why orthodox documents wound up in the dump, if it was the Orthodox who were sinisterly suppressing the Gnostic writings (p. 23). This puts the kibosh on Dan Brown’s conspiracy theory of the sneering, power-hungry bishops!

In chapters 2 and 3, Hill examines the writings of Irenaeus. His comments about the four Gospels show that they were already received in the early church (pp. 37–41).

Chapter 4 shows that Irenaeus is not alone in his witness. He is joined by Clement of Alexandria, among others. Some critics have brought Clement’s testimony into question because he also cites noncanonical sources. Hill has much to say about this, but concludes by asking why this should call Clement’s testimony into question. After all, preachers commonly cited extrabiblical sources.

What about the witnesses of the harmonies of the Gospels in the early church, such as Tatian’s *Diatessaron*? Some scholars have tried to discredit this work, but Hill demonstrates in chapter 5 that there was a four-gospel canon standing behind it (p. 107).

Chapters 6 and 7 are well worth the read, but we will move on for the sake of space. In chapter 8, Hill studies three texts that date from before 150. While this evidence is less clear than that found in later sources, it does show that these writers were knowledgeable of the canonical four.

Chapter 9 examines the Apostolic Fathers’ allusions to the New Testament. He concludes rather boldly: “The rightful location and transmission of religious authority which made the reception of the four Gospels ... possible ... was in place already in the late first century” (p. 204).

In chapter 10, Hill traces an endorsement of the Gospels from a very early source, written between 110 and 130. It mentions that the apostle John “received” the truth of the other three gospels. Hill concludes that “this would make the aged apostle John the earliest ‘chooser,’ endorser, or ‘canonizer’ of the four Gospels” (p. 224). Hill concludes that the Gospels “imposed” themselves on the church. That is, the church *recognized* the canon, rather than *formed* it. In other words, the Gospels are self-authenticating.

In conclusion, Hill has provided us with a well-researched work that provides a much better perspective on the evidence than that provided by skeptics. Has God really said? Charles Hill stands up and cries out aloud, not being ashamed of the Gospels, “Yes, God has really said!” This book comes highly recommended.

\* \* \*

***The Marrow Controversy and the Seceder Tradition: Atonement, Saving Faith, and the Gospel Offer in Scotland (1718–1799)*, by William VanDoodewaard. Published by Reformation Heritage Books, 2011. Paperback, 313 pages, list price \$25.00. Reviewed by OP minister Jeffrey C. Waddington.**

The eighteenth-century Marrow controversy was a significant Scottish Reformed debate. But it was and is much more than that. There are some issues that always seem to need reconsideration and reaffirmation, and the doctrines in dispute in the Marrow controversy are just such doctrines. That is why we are fortunate to have this offering from William VanDoodewaard, associate professor of church history at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and a minister in

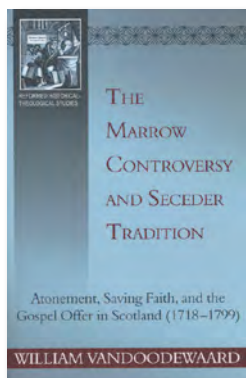
## On the Go?

*New Horizons* is now available in digital formats. Look in the *New Horizons* box on the home page of

[www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org)

## Summer Interns Available

Mid-America Reformed Seminary encourages churches to request a seminary intern for the summer months. Such experience helps train a man for the gospel ministry. Church sessions should contact Rev. Mark Vander Hart, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 229 Seminary Drive, Dyer, IN 46311-1069. Contact him at [mvanderhart@midamerica.edu](mailto:mvanderhart@midamerica.edu); tel. 219/864-2400, ext. 108; fax 219/864-2410.



the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. This book is not just about the original conflict in Scottish Presbyterianism, but also about its lingering

influence in the Seceder tradition (the Associate Presbytery and the Associate Synod) and its ongoing significance today.

The original Marrow controversy arose in the early eighteenth century, when an English theology text by Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, was republished in Scotland. Condemned by several Scottish General Assemblies, the book and its supporters (known as “the Marrow Men,” who included Thomas Boston and James Hog) stressed definite atonement, the inextricable connection between saving faith and assurance of salvation, and the universal offer of the gospel. Each of these doctrines was challenged in the Church of Scotland at the time. The controversy indicated that there was a rift in the church that was not likely to get papered over. And it didn’t.

The author’s primary contribution to Marrow scholarship is his demonstration of the ongoing significance of Marrow theology in the thinking of ministers in the Seceder tradition. While the “straw that broke the camel’s back” was not Marrow theology per se (that straw was the

right of congregations to call their own pastors, rather than have the local laird appoint him), VanDoodewaard amply demonstrates that ministers in the Seceder tradition were sympathetic to the Marrow theology. Unfortunately, as is all too common in the life of the church as a whole, this significant commitment to the sound and sane Marrow theology appears to have dissipated over time.

This book reminds us of what we already know. What is affirmed in the first generation tends to be assumed in the second and then can often be denied in the third. In Scotland, there appears to have been a downgrade from Reformational gospel-centeredness to moralism, which eventually slid into liberalism. Scotland, as we know, is not unique in this regard. We must be ever vigilant to guard our life and our doctrine. Dr. VanDoodewaard has reminded us what is at stake.

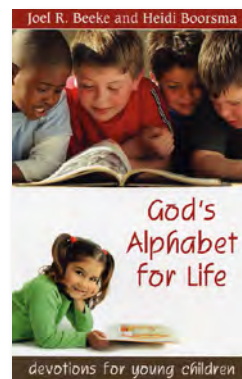
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***God’s Alphabet for Life*, by Joel R. Beeke and Heidi Boorsma. Published by Reformation Heritage Books, 2009. Paperback, 80 pages, list price \$8.00. Reviewed by Cara Reynolds, a member of Park Hill OPC in Denver, Colo.**

While God’s Word is the best devotional reading, it is helpful to supplement the Bible with devotionals like *God’s Alphabet for Life*, by Joel R. Beeke and Heidi Boorsma. This book, subtitled “Devotions for Young Children,” is easy and fun to read, either for family devotions or for an

## Mid-Atlantic Men’s Retreat

The Mid-Atlantic OPC Men’s Retreat will be held April 20–22 at Camp Haluwasa in Hammonton, N.J. Rev. James Cassidy from the Ringoes (N.J.) church will speak on “The Spirit of Prayer.” Sponsored by the Bellmawr and Medford (N.J.) churches, the retreat will include great food and fellowship, fishing and skeet shooting contests, softball, and more for \$130. For more details or to register, visit [immanuelonline.org/events/announcements](http://immanuelonline.org/events/announcements).



elementary-aged reader. The chapters are generally short, suitable for the shorter attention span of young children. Many of the chapters are excellent for

sparkling family discussions about God and his work of salvation through Jesus Christ and the impact that has on our daily lives.

The authors have done a wonderful job of explaining complex ideas. Their use of elementary analogies is also helpful. For example, they compare trying to see yourself in a mirror in a dark room versus in a lighted room, in order to compare the dark, unconverted heart to the new heart enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Occasionally the authors take a surprising turn to explain a Bible verse. For example, in “Even a child is known by his doings,” the authors use King Solomon’s response to God’s command, “Ask what I shall give thee,” to flesh out the meaning of the verse. In only one place did we struggle with the KJV: for the verse “Quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). Even though the authors rewrote the verse in modern English, we compared a couple of different translations.

Our family enjoyed and benefitted from *God’s Alphabet for Life*. We recommend it to families with young children.





# Diaconal Summit II

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Dr. Philip Graham Ryken is the eighth president of Wheaton College and former pastor at Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church, where he preached for 15 years.



### MR. STEVE CORBETT

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