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**Why is marriage  
so important?**

*THE REFORMATION IN POLAND  
A CRITIQUE OF THEISTIC EVOLUTION*

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

In our third issue of the volume, our magazine begins with Rev. Matthew VanLuik's editorial, "Love and Sexuality in a New Era." Here he lays out society's approach to love and sexuality; Rev. VanLuik hopes to write on God's perspective and design in his next editorial.

There is the second of a four part series from Dr. Arjan de Visser on Redemptive Historical Preaching, an article entitled "The Reformation in Poland," by Dr. Ted Van Raalte, and a book review.

Regular columns in Issue 3 include Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, and *Clarion Kids*.

Laura Veenendaal

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# Love and Sexuality in a New Era

## *How did society get here?*

We live in confusing times when it comes to love and sexuality. People still have romantic notions of love, as they dream about finding Prince Charming and living happily ever after. The question today is how the old romantic notions of love are compatible with the new view about sexuality. In the past love and sexuality belonged together, but experiencing sexuality outside of a romantic relationship today is thought to be perfectly acceptable. In the past a sexual relationship outside of marriage was considered wrong, but today it has become, to use a modern term, normalized. Youth are taught that since they are sexual beings, it is okay to explore their sexuality outside of any love relationship and there is no valid reason to preserve it for marriage. In the past love and sexuality were closely related to one another; today they have become separated so that sexuality has become the pursuit of self-pleasure, which is now considered to be the highest good. It is a movement away from serving God to serving oneself, the very definition of sin and idolatry.

### **A permissive society**

The church is often reluctant to deal with the topic of sexuality, while society tends to be quite open about it. The sexual revolution has opened the way for a more permissive society, so that infidelity has become common and the use of pornography has largely become socially acceptable. Youth are encouraged to explore their sexuality in whatever form they desire. The result is that sex for many has now become a recreational activity. Moving on from open sexuality, society has now begun to blur the lines between genders so that everyone is encouraged to choose the gender that best fits their own feelings and it in turn leads to the promotion of many alternate sexual lifestyles.

These attitude changes have a long history, but recently have rapidly become more acceptable. When sexual morality changes so quickly, we can expect much confusion about what is proper sexual conduct towards one another. Many today seem to be caught off guard as revelations of sexual abuse begin to surface. Men in places of power and prestige have fallen because of allegations of sexual abuse. Victims of abuse are not only women, but young girls and boys as well. Not only men; women also are perpetrators of such abuse. Society is now attempting to write new rules to accommodate the changing morality.

### **New attitudes lead to difficulties**

This leads us to ask, “How did society get here?” How did it get to the point that people no longer accept any kind of sexual morality and are now confused about proper conduct towards others? In the past, people had clear sexual boundaries, and it was generally accepted that sexual activity outside of marriage was unethical. Today many no longer appear to understand that they have crossed a clear ethical boundary when they touch, kiss, or grope others. Psychologists speak about the need to maintain clear boundaries in our relationships, but it seems that people are no longer sure where those boundaries should be.

The clear line of demarcation that confines all sexual relations to marriage is no longer accepted. The new standard says it is okay to have sexual relations with anyone you desire, as long as you ask for permission and obtain consent. Since sexual relations have essentially become a recreational activity, people feel it is legitimate to pursue others for their own personal pleasure. The only caveat is that you seek permission. When you enter a consensual relationship, it now becomes morally acceptable. This leads to

new problems. In the first place, it leads to unwanted advances that are inappropriate and make people uncomfortable. At the same time, people who are propositioned may feel compelled to acquiesce since they are told everyone else does it. If youth are encouraged to explore their sexuality, they no longer have a healthy sense of where they should draw the boundary in their personal relations.

This new standard also leads to problems when there is what is called a power equation. If someone has the power to give you an advance or to provide you a favour, it becomes difficult to refuse, for it can be held against you. Today many women who seem to have been in a consensual relationship are coming forward saying that it was not real consent – that they felt pressure to agree because of the consequences. This means that consent itself cannot lead to a clear and safe boundary. It only makes navigating intimate relationships much more treacherous.

### What is truth?

Society did not fall into such a quagmire overnight, but we can trace it back to philosophical changes in society over a long period of time. The central issue revolves around the age-old question: “What is truth?” The biblical perspective says that God gives us the truth in his holy Word and that there is no truth outside of what God reveals to us. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom.” But secular society seeks truth outside of God’s Word.

With the dawn of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, there developed a general undermining of the Word of God as the standard for truth. Also known as the age of reason, people now thought that through the appli-

cation of reason and of the scientific method, they could determine the truth and solve the problems of this world. Right up to the modern period in the twentieth century, there was much optimism in human ability to determine the truth and set ethical

standards. Today society has moved on to what is generally described as the Post-Modern Era. As the name suggests, there is no longer the same optimism in the abilities of reason and science; the Modern Era has not provided answers for difficult questions, nor has it resolved the serious problems faced by humanity.

***The new attitude is that since truth cannot be found, truth must be made***

Since the sentiment now is that there is no objective truth, neither is there any real interest to discover what one can know about truth. The new attitude is that since truth cannot be found, truth must be made. The result is that moral positions can change as easily as one changes one’s shirt. Therefore, the highest good today is not to find any objective truth, but to pursue one’s own pleasure. Whatever gives pleasure must be true.<sup>1</sup>

Determining the truth for oneself stands in sharp contrast to the biblical truths given by God. Since society rejects the objective truths from God, they despise and mock the will of God and often feel great hostility against Christians who uphold the truth given by our Almighty God. The corrupt heart refuses to deny its own will; sinners seek the freedom to pursue whatever pleasure they feel will make them happy.

### The society in which we live

In our Christian communities, we are sheltered from what is really happening in our society, for the reality is that in major urban centres, sex is a commodity to be sold and bought by both men and women. As Christians, we will increasingly come into contact with fellow workers who are openly engaging in such activities. In many social circles, such as the movie industry, politics, and corporate life, it has become known that people pursue sexual pleasures at the expense of others. They face the question, “How does one avoid falling into the risk of being accused of using or abusing others?”

When their deeds are exposed, society finds itself in a conundrum. They now need to solve the problem of where to draw the line on proper and improper behaviour; but is it even possible to draw new lines? When is a sexual relationship appropriate and when is it okay to proposition someone for sexual favours? When do sexual jokes, innuendo, and suggestive language, as well as sexting, cross the line? When are they considered to be abusive towards others?

### Human autonomy or dependence on God?

Also in the area of sexuality, the new wisdom teaches that everyone can determine for themselves with what gender they will identify, for if human beings are autonomous (independent from God), then each person has the right to choose their own gender. But it raises new questions. Is it proper for a male who identifies as a female to be given the same courtesy and access to places such as washrooms and other events that are usually only reserved for women? And if women refuse to give such



access, are they guilty of hatred because they feel their privacy or personal well-being is invaded? And should we not accept alternate sexual relationships as being good and wholesome? Is it even possible for society to argue that certain kinds of alternate relationships are inappropriate, such as polygamy or bestiality? When truth is made because (it is thought) truth cannot be found, it leads to greater and greater uncertainty about what is appropriate, good, and wholesome. It leads to the conflicting mess we now find in our society that will lead to its own destruction.

We can understand why in the area of sexuality, there is now such a great conflict between our society and orthodox Christianity. While society wants to be open to every form of sexuality, the people of God affirm there is a standard of right and wrong, there is truth and falsehood, there is corruption and wholesomeness. Society thinks about humans as sexual creatures so that our whole identity revolves around our sexuality. Scripture teaches that mankind is created in the image of God and therefore we must find our identity in the Lord God. When he created us, he gave us the gift of sexuality, a gift that we are called to use appropriately according to his will. When used as God intended it, it is experienced as the greatest blessing, but when it is misused, it leads to much misery.

## Sexuality and Scripture

In the beginning, God made very clear that sexuality is to be experienced within the bond of marriage, and outside of that bond it is corrupted and devalued. It is a beautiful gift from God, a gift in which Adam delighted when he spoke about his desire for the woman, Eve, whom God gave to him as a suitable helper (Gen 2:18). After expressing his love for her, they became one flesh. The Lord has given safe parameters in which his gift of sexuality can be enjoyed and experienced as a rich blessing.

Many today ask, "Why is marriage so important? Is it not enough that a couple just love one another?" That is God's point: "It is not enough." God understands that the only safe environment in which to enjoy sexuality is a committed relationship. The Lord follows the same principle when he enters into a relationship with us. God does not just say that he loves us; he enters into a covenant bond with us, to guarantee his faithfulness and love for us. And so also in marriage, a husband and wife make a vow to each other, in which they make a life time commitment to honour, love, and respect one another.

In the Song of Songs (2:6) there is this tender moment when the woman describes her total security in the arms

of her beloved. "His left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me." She describes an intimate moment with the one she loves, but it comes after she describes how she feels totally secure in the presence of her beloved. She delights to sit in his shade and his fruit is sweet to her taste. In other words, she loves to sit under his protective care because he takes care of her and he treasures her for he publicly displays his banner of love over her. This is a man she completely trusts and therefore she longs for the intimate comfort of his arms.

No one can find a secure environment in which to enjoy their sexuality in a casual relationship, for there is no lasting commitment to honour and protect each other. When sexuality becomes a recreational activity, people use one another to satisfy their own sexual desires. We live in a consumer age that tells us that the greatest good is to seek your own pleasure. Without God, the only thing we have left to pursue is the selfish desires of our own sinful heart. To fulfil those desires, we need to use others. But the gospel message is radically different. As Christ denied himself by offering his life on the cross to give us life, we are now called to deny ourselves to honour God and to care for our neighbour. In a proper marriage relationship, husband and wife are committed to a lifetime of service to one another. In our marriage vows we promise to deny ourselves in order to assist and help and protect one another.

## Conclusion

In a safe and secure relationship, a husband and wife will experience a safe and secure environment in which they may enjoy their sexuality. That also means that husbands and wives need to be faithful to their vows, that you also need to work your whole life at creating a safe environment in which you can live together joyfully. Sexuality cannot flourish in an environment where there is hostility, where there is bitterness and resentment. Men, the Lord calls you to create a safe environment for your wife, one in which her greatest joy is to live in your protective shade and be encouraged by the care you provide for her. The Lord has given you the wonderful task of creating an atmosphere in which your wife loves to feel the embrace of your arms because there she feels completely safe and secure. It is a reflection of the safe and secure arms of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, in whom we experience our eternal security.

*Next time: God's design for love and sexuality*

<sup>1</sup> For a brief overview of Post-Modernism see: Richard B. Ramsay, *The Certainty of Faith*, P&R Publishing 2007, pgs. 55-59.





# Jesus Spits and Begins a New Creation

***"He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes." John 9:6***

The disciples are in a bit of a gossipy mood. They see a blind man and recognize him as the one who has been blind from birth. "Rabbi," they asked, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus replied that he was born blind for this very moment, for God's glory was about to be displayed in him. Having said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with his spit. Then he smeared the mud on to the man's eyes. The ESV says that Jesus "anointed the man's eyes" – to sort of sanitize the action. The fact is, if anyone else did this, you'd be grossed out because it is usually bad to put mud in your eyes. When people asked him later how he was healed, he seems totally amazed, not just at the fact that he was healed but how it happened: "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see" (vs. 11 and 15).

When we read John's account, signals go out from this story back to the very first story in the Bible – to Genesis 2: God took some dirt, made some mud and shaped it into a human being, and then, bending over the body,

he breathed life into it and it became a living being. God created the first human being from mud and breath.

So, Jesus begins to recreate a human being from mud. God the Father had worked six days to create the world. Jesus must work while it is day (v. 4) because soon the night will come when he will not be able to work anymore. It is like he has only one day to recreate what has been ruined.

John indisputably presents Jesus here as God come to earth, to redeem his creation. We should not miss the fact that Jesus heals the man's eyes so that he can see. That is especially relevant because Jesus says here, "So long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (v. 5). If he is blind, he cannot possibly see. So, the blind must be made to see.

As the story continues to unfold, it is clear that John wants the reader to ask himself, "Am I blind too?" That is precisely the question which the Pharisee asks in verse 40. "Are we blind too?" Yes, we are, but Jesus came to heal, so that we might see by Jesus' light that we need to be rescued and

that Jesus is the only Saviour. To restore our sight is the most important healing that I need so that I might put my faith in him.

When Jesus later meets the man again, he asks him, "Do you believe in the son of man?"

"And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked.

"You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." You have seen him because your eyes have been healed. Jesus is the recreator, and he has recreated this man's eyes. What he really wants, however, is to recreate his broken spirit so that he believes in him. So he did.

"Lord, I believe," the man said, and he worshipped him. That's what it is all about. Our Saviour is our God. Our God created the world, but it got broken, so he came back to save it. Only he could restore it without making a terrible mess of it. He will restore it to become something beautiful. For if a man makes mud from spit, smeared it on the eye of a blind man to heal him, then he can restore my sight and make me see, too.



## For Reflection

He is the creator. He could just make you believe. But he invites you to make a decision: "Do you believe?" (v. 35). Tell him you'd like to see him, and he will heal your eyes and you will see.



# Redemptive-Historical Preaching Today (Part 2)

In the previous article we described how the redemptive-historical preaching movement in The Netherlands emerged as a reaction against so-called exemplaric preaching. We also summarized the main characteristics of each approach to preaching. In the present article we will discuss how redemptive-historical preaching developed further and how it was evaluated by following generations of preachers.

During the late 1930s and the early 1940s there were vehement debates between defenders of the exemplaric preaching approach and the redemptive-historical preaching approach. Unfortunately, the Liberation of 1944 signalled the end of a discussion that might otherwise have developed fruitfully. The two camps that had participated in the discussion found themselves divided and separated in two federations: Those who favoured the redemptive-historical preaching method went with the Liberation of 1944. The others remained in the “synodical” Reformed churches.

While the two sides continued to defend their particular view of preaching to their own supporters, they were not talking to each other anymore, although they were still shooting at one another. By way of illustration, between 1949 and 1951 Ph.J. Huyser published a series of articles on exemplaric preaching in a theological magazine.<sup>1</sup> He acknowledged the value of the redemptive-historical perspective but accused Schilder and friends of taking things to the extreme. He attempted to show that the Bible itself uses examples in order to exhort readers to faith. Although he used the term “exemplaric” preaching, he placed it between quotation marks, as he did not think the term was accurate. Instead, he preferred to use the phrase “deductive salvation-historical exemplification.”<sup>2</sup> This illustrates how he tried to combine the exemplaric and the redemptive-historical perspectives.

From the redemptive-historical side, such attempts to combine the good elements of both approaches were not taken seriously. Holwerda stated that the two approaches

are contradictory, and therefore they cannot be combined. He thought that trying to combine the two approaches would lead to a kind of dualism in preaching, with the exegesis being redemptive-historical and the application being exemplaric.<sup>3</sup> In other words, in theory one might want to combine the two approaches, but in practice the end result would be: exclusive exemplaric application.

## Theocentric

After 1944, a preaching tradition developed in the Reformed Churches (Liberated) that focussed on what text reveals about the history of redemption. When preaching on Old Testament passages, preachers would try to show how God was preparing the way for the coming of Christ into the world. When preaching on New Testament passages, they would show how Christ continued to work out God’s plan of salvation. In other words, they always emphasized what *God* was doing during the course of history. Their messages were theocentric and Christ-centred.

What about application for the congregation? Redemptive-historical preachers were convinced that if we start by asking the question what *God* was doing in a particular event, we will soon find the message for believers today because this God is still the same God today, even though historical circumstances may be different. The connection between believers back then and believers today was often found by focussing on the calling of believers – more specifically, the threefold office of prophet, priest and king.

For more than forty years redemptive-historical preaching was the dominant approach to preaching in the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in The Netherlands. The same applies to “daughter churches” in Canada, Australia, and South Africa. While the method as such was appreciated, there was an awareness that redemptive-historical preaching was not always done *well*. Dr. Herman J. Schilder, nephew of Dr. Klaas Schilder and professor of Old Testament studies in Kampen, warned against redemptive-

*historicism* and he observed that redemptive-historical preachers were too afraid to use biblical examples in their sermons. Exemplarism as a method is problematic, he said, but there is nothing wrong with using examples from biblical narratives.<sup>4</sup>

## Trimp

In 1986 there was a major development when Dr. Cornelis Trimp published his book *Preaching and the History of Salvation: Continuing an Unfinished Discussion*.<sup>5</sup> The unfinished discussion mentioned in the subtitle is a reference to the discussion in the 1940s that came to an abrupt end with the Liberation of 1944. Trimp felt that it was time to reassess the value of the redemptive-historical preaching method.

The abiding value of the redemptive-historical preaching method, according to Trimp, is that it “teaches the congregation of Christ to understand God’s imposing work in Christ, and learn to read the Bible with an eye for that work.”<sup>6</sup> This helps protect us from numerous mistakes, such as superficial typology that uses details in the story to draw lines to “fulfillment” in Christ. It also helps to avoid moralistic application whereby the good and the bad characteristics of biblical figures become “lessons” for believers today. Over against such misunderstandings, Trimp said, “we show respect for the Bible and its Author when we examine the redemptive-historical context of a particular story, and force ourselves to relate it to God’s self-revelation in His Son Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

But Trimp also identified a number of pitfalls of the redemptive-historical approach. He listed seven (!) elements of criticism. The most important ones are the following. First, Trimp lamented the fact that Holwerda chose the term “exemplaric” to refer to the kind of preaching he objected to, and that he tried to disqualify that approach by stating that the New Testament does not use Old Testament persons and events as “examples” for us to learn from but rather as “prefigurations” of events that were to happen later. Trimp judged that Holwerda’s argument was questionable. More importantly, the unfortunate result was that preachers became very hesitant to use examples taken from biblical narratives in their sermons. Nobody wanted to be called an exemplaric preacher! Trimp concluded that we will have to reclaim and consider again the “example” function of biblical narrative.

## Hebrews 11

In this connection Trimp also criticized Holwerda’s interpretation of Hebrews 11. Holwerda had stated that the Old Testament believers who are mentioned in Hebrews

serve as illustrations for the doctrine that is proclaimed (the doctrine of faith). If you preach on Hebrews 11 you may use Abraham and Moses as examples. But if you preach on the life of Abraham or Moses from Old Testament passages, it would be wrong to use those passages as stepping stones to talk about faith. Trimp said: this is too narrow and restrictive an approach. “If you preach about Noah, Abraham or Moses, it is impermissible and impossible to ignore the instruction of Hebrews 11.”<sup>8</sup>

Another pitfall of the redemptive-historical approach identified by Trimp is that it tends to focus a lot on the progress which the Lord made in executing his plan of redemption but – in an effort to avoid man-centredness – it tends to ignore the work of God in the lives of Old Testament and New Testament believers. Another way of saying the same thing would be that redemptive-historical preachers focussed more on the work of Christ than on the work of the Spirit. Quote: “People were paying close attention to God’s work in the (coming) Christ, but they were ignoring the work of the Holy Spirit in the events narrated for us in the Bible.”<sup>9</sup> Trimp felt that men like Holwerda and Van ‘t Veer were so afraid of psychologizing that they overreacted and ignored what the

**He is also dealing with actual people who have emotions and fears, who experience ups and downs, and who are learning to live by faith.**

Scriptures reveal about the inner, spiritual struggles and victories of believers. In the history of salvation the Lord is not just interested in carrying out his plan of redemption. He is also dealing with actual people who have emotions and fears, who experience ups and downs, and who are learning to live by faith. As much as the Scriptures tell us about God’s work in the hearts and minds of believers of the Old and New Testament, we need to pay attention and learn from it.

We mention one more pitfall of the redemptive-historical as identified by Trimp: the danger of schematism. The early proponents of the redemptive-historical approach believed that God moved in a straight line from the promise given in Genesis 3:15 to the fulfillment of that promise in the coming of Christ into the world. The assumption was that with every consecutive historical event God was mak-



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## CHURCH NEWS

ing progress and getting closer to his goal. But this whole idea was rather speculative. In fact, it was based on an evolutionary understanding of the history of redemption. Trimp formulated his objections as follows: "A later stage in history is not inherently 'richer' than an earlier one. We must not make salvation history something *linear*. Seen from the point of view of God's plan, this history certainly looks like a straight line, but seen from the point of view of the particular biblical story, that history is not moving towards us in a straight line at all. This history contains many exercises of repetition, punishment expeditions, return marches and human failures."<sup>10</sup>

### Waning interest?

Trimp's evaluation of redemptive-historical preaching was accepted as a fair and honest treatment of the matter. In the Reformed Churches (Liberated) nobody really challenged his conclusions. Trimp's successors have echoed his sentiments. In a recent publication coming out of the Theological University in Kampen, professors Gert Kwakkel and Kees de Ruijter show appreciation for the redemptive-historical approach but also repeat the critical assessment of Trimp.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that one of the most positive evaluations of redemptive-historical preaching in recent years has come from the pen of Dr. Arie Baars, emeritus-professor of practical theology at the Theological University of Apeldoorn.<sup>12</sup>

It appears that the appreciation for the redemptive-historical approach is waning in the very church federation where the approach was once dominant. In his recent dissertation *The Drama of Preaching*, Eric B. Watkins observes that "many, even within the GKv, treat the RH preaching model with the respectful sentiment that one would show to their grandparents."<sup>13</sup> Watkins adds that while the interest in redemptive-historical preaching has waned in The Netherlands, the opposite has happened in North America. This will be the subject of our next article.

<sup>1</sup> Ph.J. Huyser, "'Exemplarische' prediking." *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 49 (1949): 232-249; 50 (1950): 163-182, 205-219; 51 (1951): 1-18.

<sup>2</sup> Huyser, GTT 49 (1949), 246.

<sup>3</sup> Holwerda, *Begonnen hebbende van Mozes*, (Terneuzen: Littooij, 1953), 86

<sup>4</sup> H.J. Schilder, "Hoe lezen wij het Oude Testament" [lecture 1957], in: *Het schrift dat niet verslijt. Opstellen over het Oude Testament*. Kampen: Van den Berg, 1983, p. 1-37 (esp. p. 15-19)

<sup>5</sup> Trimp, C. *Preaching and the History of Salvation. Continuing an Unfinished Discussion* (translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman). Distributed by Westminster Discount Book Service, Scarsdale, NY, 1996. Translation of *Heilsgeschiedenis en prediking. Hervatting van een onvoltooid gesprek*. Kampen: Van den Berg, 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Trimp, *Preaching*, p. 93

<sup>7</sup> Trimp, *Preaching*, p. 94


<sup>8</sup> Trimp, *Preaching*, p. 117

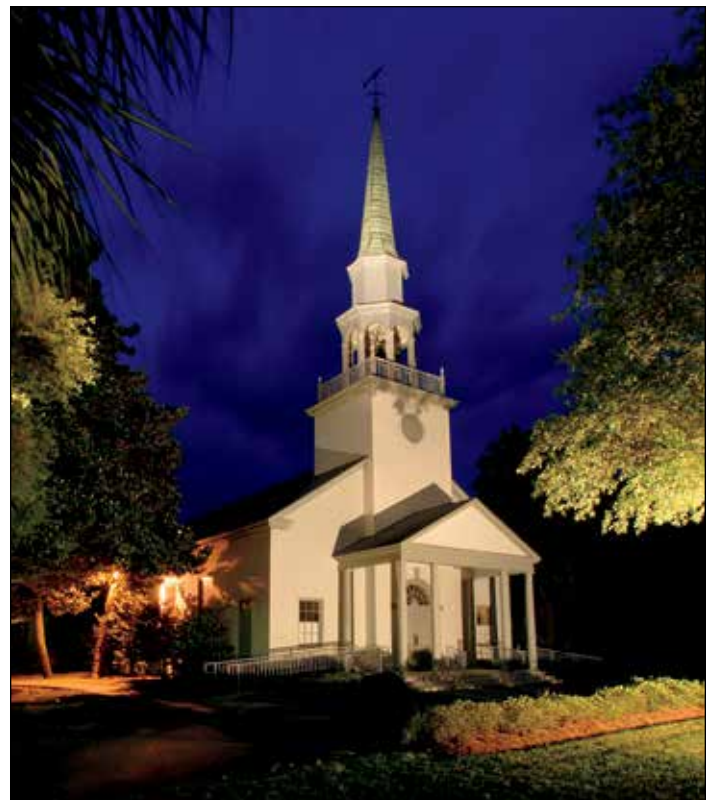
<sup>9</sup> Trimp, *Preaching*, p. 124

<sup>10</sup> Trimp, *Preaching*, p. 128

<sup>11</sup> In Ad de Bruijne & Hans Burger, *Gereformeerde hermeneutiek vandaag*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> A. Baars, "Heilshistorische prediking in deze tijd." In *Nader Bekeken* Vol. 18, Nr. 1 (2011), 10-15.

<sup>13</sup> Eric B. Watkins, *The Drama of Preaching: Participating with God in the History of Redemption*. (Wipf & Stock, 2017), 7. GKV means: Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt (Reformed Churches liberated). 





# Jerusalem, Capital of Israel

On December 6, 2017, President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. "Today we finally acknowledge the obvious. That Jerusalem is Israel's capital. This is nothing more or less than a recognition of reality. It is also the right thing to do. It's something that has to be done." Much protest erupted and fifteen days later the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly voted to declare the American recognition null and void, a largely symbolic action which will not undo Trump's announcement. How are we to consider this issue?


Canadian Muslim, commentator, and journalist, Tarek Fatah, noted in a December 13 article that "For over 15 years American presidents, both Democrats and Republicans, have declared they believe Jerusalem is Israel's capital and promised to move the U.S. embassy to the city, but stepped back when confronted by possible repercussions to their supposedly principled stand." In 1992, Bill Clinton said: "Jerusalem is still the capital of Israel and must remain an undivided city accessible to all." George W. Bush expressed similar sentiments in 2000 when he promised that as soon as he become president "I will begin the process of moving the United States Ambassador to the city Israel has chosen as its capital (Jerusalem)." In 2008, Obama emphasized that "Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and must remain undivided."

Apart from these political statements, there is the reality on the ground that needs to be recognized. For one, Israel's historic enemies continue to refuse to recognize the Jewish state and Jerusalem as its capital. They will do everything in their power to eliminate Israel from the face of the earth. When the British Mandate expired, Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948. Israel's existence was immediately challenged and Arab armies invaded. The result of Israel's war of independence was that Israel took control of the western half of Jerusalem and established its capital there. The Arabs controlled the eastern city, including the

Old City and the Temple Mount. During the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel seized East Jerusalem and the West Bank. After the Yom Kippur War (1973), Egypt's Anwar Sadat implicitly recognized Israel and agreed to peace in 1979. This war did not affect Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem.

The ongoing refusal of Arab nations to recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel and its capital Jerusalem as well as their refusal to accept the results of their wars against Israel lie at the heart of the ongoing failure of a negotiated peace. In that context Raymond de Souza correctly noted in *Convivium* that war does change things and the results have to be accepted. He mentioned the horrors of earlier wars. Their consequences, whether nations liked them or not, had to be accepted. Life goes on. "In the Israeli-Arab conflict though, almost uniquely, there has not been an attempt to deal in peace with what war has settled, but rather to see if peace can reverse what was wrought by war. That has brought neither peace, nor an absence of subsequent war."

Wars have consequences and nations have to accept reality. As De Souza noted, "recognizing those consequences also can prepare the ground for peace." From that perspective, Trump's long overdue recognition of reality in declaring American recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel is conducive to peace. That is simply a fact that cannot and will not be undone by peace negotiations. To avoid raising hopes to turn back the clock on Jerusalem, it is best to affirm the obvious reality. Furthermore, as Tarek Fatah detailed in his *Toronto Sun* article, Muslims should stop being hypocritical and playing the victim because Jerusalem was historically not a high priority for them. Muslims have no religious justification to rule Jerusalem.

Sources: Tarek Fatah, "Long History of Hypocrisy About Jerusalem," *Toronto Sun* December 13, 2017; Raymond J. De Souza, "Jerusalem and Peace" at [www.convivium.ca](http://www.convivium.ca). 



# The Reformation in Poland

True reformation is taking place in Poland today, and our Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary has been allowed to make a small contribution to this work of the Lord by training a student for work in Poland and by giving lectures there. In this article I would like to acquaint our readers with this story and commend the work for your prayers.

## Poland today

Poland is an interesting country. Its current government considers Poland to be a Christian country, which in Poland means Roman Catholic. Over 90% of Poles identify as Roman Catholic, and the famous Pope John Paul II was Polish. While other European countries endorse LGBTQ lifestyles and their churches liberalize, Poland prohibits nearly all abortion, and its government just passed legislation to reduce Sunday shopping. In part, the country is reacting

against the communism of the past, which ended starting in 1989, by strongly supporting religion. This religion, sadly, is filled with worship of the virgin Mary, superstition, and pro forma religion.

Poland also keeps a close eye on Russia. Poland is one of NATO's eastern-most countries, and Putin's moves to take back certain eastern-bloc countries make Poles nervous. Past political changes have frequently left Poland as a pawn between more powerful nations; both WWII and the era of Communism that followed were very hard on the people. Lately their conservative government has been targeting corrupt officials of the past who have never had to give account for their conduct, including the landlord of the missionaries I will introduce below. On the other hand, Poland is quite ethnically homogenous and very safe. Certainly, Poland is quite unique.

## Poland in the Reformation

In the time of the Reformation, Reformed teaching reached Poland as well. Several famous Reformed teachers in Europe were from Poland, such as Johannes a Lasco and Johannes Maccovius. One of their most powerful aristocrats became Reformed, and in 1571 the Confession of Sandomir was adopted. Around the year 1600 there were 500 Reformed churches, but sadly, anti-Trinitarian teachings had also arisen among them and split the churches. In the following centuries Poland suffered wars and a Counter-Reformation backlash. Today Poland has only about 3000 people belonging to the old Reformed church, and, because its teachings are liberal, Roman Catholics identify Protestantism as the source of many bad practices. This is a challenge for mission work in Poland.





## Associate Reformed Presbyterian mission in Poland

Enter Dr. Dariusz Bryćko and his wife Brooke, with their three children Levi, Eva, and Anselm. God had been preparing Dr. Bryćko for work in Poland for many years. Born and raised in Poland, he completed a seminary education in North America, including a Ph.D. under Dr. Richard Muller at Calvin Theological Seminary. Through various providential circumstances, the Lord led the Bryćkos to First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, South Carolina, where Dr. Sinclair Ferguson was pastor. This large congregation had joined the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP) starting in 1983, and its many missionaries work with the ARP's mission organization called World Witness.

Before serving on the pastoral staff of First Presbyterian for two and half years, Dr. Bryćko had taught in Lithuania for two years. Mission work there was continued by Rev. Frank Van Dalen, also of the ARP. After being ordained and serving at First Presbyterian, the Bryćkos began work in Poland in 2015. This work began with a Reformation Study Centre and now includes also a church. I will first describe the study centre, which belongs to an institute named Tolle Lege, and then the church that is coming into being.

### Tolle Lege Institute

Tolle Lege was begun by Dariusz in 2007 in the USA to deepen knowledge of the Reformed tradition, particularly of its confessions of faith.<sup>1</sup> It sponsored translation of Reformed works into Polish, and drew up a vision for lectures, workshops, conferences, and a study centre in order to reach Poland with the gospel. A six-member board oversees this institute.

In 2016 Tolle Lege opened a Reformation Study Centre in Warsaw.<sup>2</sup> I worked in this beautiful facility from December 6-8, 2017, preceding some lectures I gave there. Its clean and modern look, combined with high ceilings and tall, two-story windows, gives the centre just the right open, bright, and yet homey feeling. The ladder on a track, used for access to the higher shelves, is particularly quaint. Coffee is always available, with a small kitchen at the back. Upstairs the director has an office with a glass wall that lets him look down and notice any guests who might enter. The book collection provides excellent resources for anyone who wishes to study anything Reformed; the bookstore makes key Reformed works in Polish available for purchase; and the iMac that runs the premium Logos Bible program as well as the scanner and copier shows that it is a place where any serious inquirer can find a lot of information not available elsewhere



*Dr. Dariusz Bryćko and  
Dr. Ted Van Raalte*

in Poland. The centre purposefully presents itself as a non-partisan organization.

Very remarkable to me was the number of times that the city buses stop in front of the study centre – my guess is well over 100 stops per day (three routes). This means that every day hundreds of people waiting for a bus or disembarking see the name “Tolle Lege Institute” and its symbol on each of the four windows. The location is also near to some university centres, making it ideal.

Recently the Reformed Study Centre of our sister churches in South Africa reached out to Tolle Lege as well, to see whether they could form a partnership in order to help pastors and teachers in Poland who are seeking Reformed resources. Interestingly, CRTS has recently begun to work much more closely with the churches in South Africa. It's a small world!

### The local church

Alongside the work of Tolle Lege, the Bryćkos have sought to gather a church.<sup>3</sup> At first it met in their living room, but currently the Reformation Study Centre is the place where the church meets. The church is not particularized, that is, it does not yet have a session (consistory), so the missionary is responsible for decisions, with the counsel of an ARP steering committee of five ordained men. But already the Lord has gathered to the church several families and young men. The father in one family was an elder in his previous church; of the young men, one is a seminary student at CRTS, another a student about to enroll in seminary. Other hard-working, accomplished, and promising persons have joined, with about fifteen to twenty people worshipping on each Sunday. The Lord has thus far richly blessed the work. From a human



perspective, every church is very fragile, but the Lord seals his own and we have good reason to be optimistic about the good start in Poland.

## Seminary students

The seminary student in this congregation was accepted into the M.Div. program at CRTS two and a half years ago. His name is Filip Sylwestrowicz. Filip is a humble and gentle character who grew up with significant challenges, one of which is his hearing. But he is not to be underestimated. He excels in all subjects and will almost certainly complete a doctoral degree in the near future, Lord willing. He has already participated in special programs at Tyndale House in Cambridge, studying ancient copies of the New Testament. At the same time, he has gifts for preaching in a clear and comforting manner. We are praying that he will be used by the Lord for much good in Poland. The other Polish student applying to seminary is married. He and his wife want to be missionaries in Japan. They strongly feel that they want to remain in Poland during his seminary training, and so are applying to a seminary that hopefully can accommodate this desire by way of distance education. For me it is highly remarkable that the Lord was preparing these men already before the Bryćkos arrived, and has brought them together in this way.

## Genevan Psalter

There are several other small Reformed churches in Poland, which belong to the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC). There are good reasons why the new ARP church plant does not have fellowship with these churches, but there is a bright spot here: the CREC churches



*New members being accepted into the congregation*

have been working on setting the Psalms to the music of the Genevan Psalter.<sup>4</sup> They have now completed fifty Psalms, which the ARP plant is also using. Plans are in place to complete all 150 Psalms. If you were to visit, you could at least hum along.

## Lectures and preaching

I was invited to deliver lectures about the Reformation – a fitting thing for 2017. On the Friday evening I delivered the first longer lecture, regarding what the Reformation was. On Saturday morning I spoke about how the Reformation occurred, and then gave two shorter lectures on the nuts and bolts of the Reformation in Geneva from about 1524–1542. Since Poles are much more likely to hear about Martin Luther, these lectures were appreciated. Since all those attending understood English, no translator was used. On Sunday morning, for the adult Sunday School, I completed the lectures by speaking about the Reformation and mission. After this I was invited to preach for the morning service (my first time ever wearing a Genevan gown). The sermon was ably translated by Mateusz, the congregation's intern, mentioned above, who desires to become a missionary to Japan. The congregation very kindly gave me gifts of beautiful Polish pottery and a coffee table book. I also enjoyed very fine hospitality at the Bryćko home. My time there was a blessing for me, and I pray that it was a blessing for them.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we should be deeply thankful to the Lord that, at long last, we may see reformation renewed in Poland. Let us pray that the Lord will keep in place the conditions for the growth of his church in this place. May he grant that we as seminary and churches will continue to be able to give support to this work of the Lord, as well as such work in other countries. And, above all, may this work have its place in speeding the return of our Lord Jesus on the clouds of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> “Tolle lege” is Latin for “Take, read!” These words were made famous by the church father Augustine. To read about the Institute online, see <http://instytuttollelege.org/en/>.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://worldwitness.org/studycenter/>.

<sup>3</sup> See their blog at <http://bryckosinpoland.com/>. Email [dbrycko@worldwitness.org](mailto:dbrycko@worldwitness.org) if you would like the password for viewing the blog.

<sup>4</sup> Go online to [www.psalterz.pl](http://www.psalterz.pl) for the website regarding this Psalter project. You can purchase copies via the website, and also listen to simple renditions of the Psalms, accompanied by a single guitar. For beautiful settings on Youtube, find TheCitharaSanctorum channel. Highly recommended!



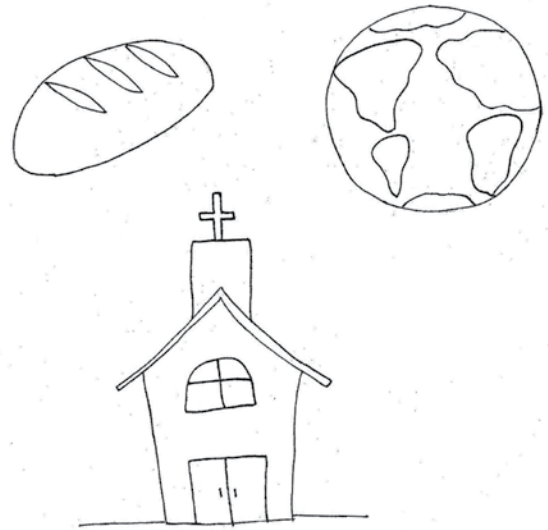
# Clarion Kids

## Jesus Tempted

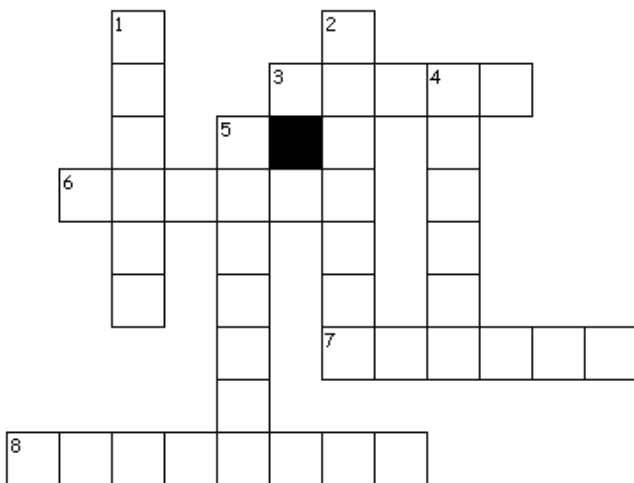
Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13

Before Jesus started his ministry, he went into the desert. He didn't eat for 40 days, so he was very hungry. Satan told him he should tell the stones to become bread. Jesus said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Satan took him to the top of the temple and told him that the angels would catch him if he fell. But Jesus said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." Finally, Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said he would give them to Jesus if Jesus worshipped him. But Jesus knew that he could only worship God. Then Satan left and Jesus began his preaching.

Go to [www.clarionmagazine.ca](http://www.clarionmagazine.ca) to print and colour this picture!



### Crossword Puzzle



#### Across

3. How many days Jesus went without food.
6. Satan said the \_\_\_\_\_ would catch Jesus if he fell.
7. After he was tempted Jesus began to \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Satan showed Jesus all the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world.

#### Down

1. Satan told Jesus to turn \_\_\_\_\_ into bread.
2. Satan wanted Jesus to \_\_\_\_\_ him.
4. Satan took Jesus to the top of the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Jesus went into the desert to be \_\_\_\_\_.

by Emily Nijenhuis



# A Critique of Theistic Evolution

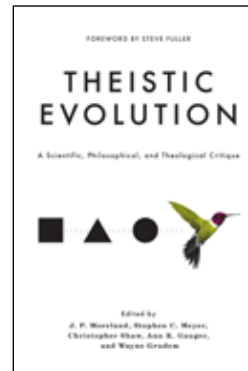
**J.P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem, editors, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique***

**Crossway, 2017, hardcover, 1007 pages**

We live in a time when concerted efforts are being made to convince Christians that they should embrace evolution as an unassailable scientific fact. BioLogos, a well-funded organization, pushes evolution with missionary zeal. The opening page of their website “invites the church and the world to see the harmony between science and biblical faith as we present an evolutionary understanding of God’s creation.” Part of their strategy included publishing a book with InterVarsity Press (the first in a series) with the title *How I Changed My Mind About Evolution* (2016), in which prominent evangelicals share their conversion to accepting evolution hoping to persuade especially students to their newfound convictions.

In this atmosphere of an ongoing assault that Christians must accept evolution, it is most timely that Crossway has produced this wonderful volume chock-full of first class essays against theistic evolution by twenty-five acknowledged specialists in their fields.

Seeing that this book was published in the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation, Steve Fuller’s foreword appropriately notes that the Reformation made it possible for the people to read the Bible and so to judge for themselves whether the practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church were biblical or not. Today when science enjoys an unprecedented authority, people are often discouraged to test the claims of science by considering the evidence for themselves. Fuller notes that people “are meant to defer to the authority of academic experts, who function as secular clergy. . . . I commend this book as providing an unprecedented opportunity for educated nonscientists to revisit the spirit of the Reformation by judging for themselves what they make of the evidence that seems to have led theistic evolutionists to privilege contemporary scientific



authority above their own avowed faith.” This book is indeed a rich resource to empower Christians to question theistic evolution and to reaffirm their faith in the Bible’s teaching on creation.

What exactly is the theory of theistic evolution? Stephen Meyer explains that its central claim is that “God used the evolutionary process to create the diversity of life on Earth.” In other words, “God

as Creator employed the processes of random variation and natural selection to cause plants, animals, and indeed every living thing, to come to be” (p. 106).

The topic of evolution and Scripture is huge. It is therefore understandable that this book has a relatively narrow focus. That means, as Wayne Grudem notes his introductory essay, that “this book is not about the age of the earth,” while acknowledging “many sincere Christians” who hold that Scripture teaches a young earth. Although the book officially takes no position on that issue and does not discuss the age of the earth as such, Grudem does admit that the science chapters argue against Darwinianism “within the commonly assumed chronological framework of hundreds of millions of years” (p. 62). It is unfortunate that the opportunity was not taken to provide some balance in the discussion of the fossil record by also including those who would argue for a young earth since this is in my view the most obvious and convincing understanding of Scripture on the age of the earth. Grudem does however make it very clear, somewhat paradoxically, that this book understands Genesis 1-3 “as a *historical narrative in the sense of reporting events that the author wants readers to believe actually happened*” (p. 63-64, the italics are in the original text). This stance takes direct aim at BioLogos, which promotes theistic evolution at the cost of the historicity of the opening chapters of Genesis. Grudem provides a useful overview of teachings found with BioLogos.

This volume is very well organized. After two general introductions, there are three sections: the first is the scientific critique of theistic evolution with two subsections, the failure of neo-Darwinianism and the case against universal common descent and for a unique human origin; the second section gives philosophical critiques; and the third offers biblical and theological critiques of theistic evolution. There are a total of thirty-one essays with seventeen of them giving scientific critique. In view of space limitations, I will briefly mention some of the chapters from each major sections of the book.

In response to the constant refrain that theistic evolution is the best solution because of so many converging lines of evidence, the science chapters tell a rather different story which leads to the general conclusion that “no biblical scholars should feel ‘compelled by the scientific evidence’ to interpret Genesis in a way that presupposes the truth of neo-Darwinian (or other contemporary versions of) macro-evolutionary theory” (p. 62). Stephen Meyer concludes his essay of biological form and information by saying that: “theists who think that they must affirm the neo-Darwinian mechanism as God’s means of creation are badly mistaken – and for *scientific reasons*. . . . The mechanism of natural selection and random mutation does not provide a remotely plausible account of how novel biological form and information might have arisen” (p. 137). Essay after essay on a variety of biological topics, including on DNA, design, and embryology, underline this basic conclusion.

Essays on the fossil record and human origins come with the same basic message. For example, Casey Luskin’s critique of universal common descent concludes that there’s not much left of the “congruence” argument that was supposed to validate this theory. “Even mainstream evolutionary scientists are becoming increasingly skeptical” (p. 400). With respect to the claim that our genetic similarity with chimps indicates that we share common ancestry, the conclusion (after checking all the scientific evidence) is that this theory is “deeply flawed” (p. 435) and “our genetic differences are far greater than have been commonly reported” (p. 502).

Christopher Shaw (p. 523-543) highlights the fact that pressure to conform to evolutionary expectations leads to bias in science which is not as objective as many are led to believe. Many of the fundamental dogmas of evolutionary science are neither firm nor testable and are speculative and held by faith. However, in order to get promotions career scientists have to be careful not to challenge establishment dogma and “toe the party line.” This situation has a stifling effect on science and discourages innovation and challenging the “high priests” of the evolutionary status quo.

The essays on philosophy target, among others, methodological naturalism which asserts that “to qualify as scientific, a theory must explain by strictly physical or material – that is, non-intelligent or non-purposive – causes” (p. 562). Stephen

Meyer and Paul Nelson conclude that “there is strong affirmative reason *to reject* methodological naturalism; namely that it hinders the truth-seeking function of science by forcing scientists to reject the possibility that a creative intelligence played a discernible role in the origin and history of life. . . . Methodological naturalism gives nothing to scientists but intellectual bondage and limited options” (p. 591).

J.P. Moreland argues that theistic evolution weakens the rational authority of Scripture and robs Christians of confidence that the Bible is a source of knowledge. As a result, fewer and fewer people take the Bible seriously (chapter 21).

Colin Reeves in his essay, “Bringing Home the Bacon: the Interaction of Science and Scripture Today” (p. 705-729), shows that scientific theory and “truth” has unjustly trumped the plain biblical truth of Scripture. He rightly affirmed that although Scripture is not a scientific textbook, it does set out boundaries for scientific theories. He also showed that embracing theistic evolution can lead to the destruction of one’s faith, since theistic evolution challenges historic Christianity at many points.

In the final section of essays, which focusses on biblical and theological critiques (p. 783-972), Wayne Grudem underlines the faith-destroying capacity of theistic evolution by showing, as the title of his essay indicates, that “Theistic Evolution Undermines Twelve Creation Events and Several Crucial Christian Doctrines.” Three detailed chapters, respectively by John Currid, Guy Prentiss Waters, and Gregg Allison, show how theistic evolution is incompatible with the teachings of the Old and New Testament, as well as with historical Christian doctrine. The last essay in the book is an interesting historical study by Fred Zaspel on the famous Princeton dogmatician B. B. Warfield, whose views on evolution are often used to justify theistic evolution. Zaspel, however, shows from Warfield’s writings that Warfield was not a theistic evolutionist as it is understood and advocated today. He was open to the possibility of evolution *if* it could be established with scientific certainty, but he was also very critical of evolution. To use Warfield in the current discussion as one in favour of theistic evolution goes both beyond and against the evidence.

This is a very worthwhile collection of essays. Each chapter begins with a helpful summary. The discussion are relatively full and critics are answered point by point. The book is well-indexed, both by a general index as well as a biblical one.

I regret that there is no scientific contribution arguing from a young earth position, since theistic evolution and an earth billions of years old go together and are indeed inseparable. Having said that, I do recommend this book as a valuable resource, perhaps especially for students in the sciences and theology, but the contents are accessible to all those interested in this topic.

