



*Volume 9 Issue 6*

# *West Suffolk Epistle West Suffolk Baptist Church*



*June 2022*

*Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant*

## *Monkeying with the Meaning*

At this moment in history, even though most of modern society is already fully committed to an evolutionary and naturalistic world view, our society still benefits from the collective memory of a biblical world-view. People in general still believe human life is special. They still hold remnants of biblical morality, such as the notion that love is the greatest virtue (1 Corinthians 13:13); service to one another is better than fighting for personal dominion (Matthew 20:25-27); and humility and submission are superior to arrogance and rebellion (1 Peter 5:5).

But to whatever degree secular society still holds those virtues in esteem, it does so entirely without any philosophical foundation. Having already rejected the God revealed in Scripture and embraced instead pure naturalistic materialism, the modern mind has no grounds whatsoever for holding to any ethical standard; no reason whatsoever for esteeming "virtue" over "vice"; and no justification whatsoever for regarding human life as more valuable than any other form of life. Modern society has already abandoned its moral foundation.

As humanity enters the twenty-first century, an even more frightening prospect looms. Now even the church seems to be losing the will to defend what Scripture teaches about human origins. Many in the church are too intimidated or too embarrassed to affirm the literal truth of the biblical account of creation. They are confused by a chorus of authoritative-sounding voices who insist that it is possible—and even pragmatically necessary—to reconcile Scripture with the latest theories of the naturalists.

Of course, theological liberals have long espoused theistic evolution. They have never been reluctant to deny the literal truth of Scripture on any issue. But the new trend is different, comprising evangelicals who contend that it is possible to harmonize Genesis 1-3 with the theories of modern naturalism without doing violence to any essential doctrine of Christianity. They affirm evangelical statements of faith. They teach in evangelical institutions. They insist they believe the Bible is inerrant and authoritative. But they are willing to reinterpret Genesis to accommodate evolutionary theory. They express shock and surprise that anyone would question their approach to Scripture. And they sometimes employ the same sort of ridicule and intimidation religious liberals and atheistic skeptics have always leveled against believers: "You don't seriously think the universe is less than a billion years old, do you?"

The result is that over the past couple of decades, large numbers of evangelicals have shown a surprising willingness to take a completely non-evangelical approach to interpreting the early chapters of Genesis. More and more are embracing the view known as "old-earth creationism," which blends some of the principles of biblical creationism with naturalistic and evolutionary theories, seeking to reconcile two opposing world-views. And in order to accomplish this, old-earth creationists end up explaining away rather than honestly exegeting the biblical creation account.

A handful of scientists who profess Christianity are among those who have led the way in this revisionism—most of them lacking any skill whatsoever in biblical interpretation. But they are setting forth a major reinterpretation of Genesis 1-3 designed specifically to accommodate the current trends of naturalist theory. In their view, the six days of creation in Genesis 1 are long ages, the chronological order of creation is flexible, and most of the details about creation given in Scripture can be written off as poetic or symbolic figures of speech.



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## *Monkeying with the Meaning* *Continued from Page 1*

Many who should know better—pastors and Christian leaders who defend the faith against false teachings all the time—have been tempted to give up the battle for the opening chapters of Genesis.

An evangelical pastor recently approached me after I preached. He was confused and intimidated by several books he had read—all written by ostensibly evangelical authors—yet all arguing that the earth is billions of years old. These authors treat most of the evolutionists' theories as indisputable scientific fact. And in some cases they wield scientific or academic credentials that intimidate readers into thinking their views are the result of superior expertise, rather than naturalistic presuppositions they have brought to the biblical text. This pastor asked if I believed it possible that the first three chapters of Genesis might really be just a series of literary devices—a poetic saga giving the "spiritual" meaning of what actually occurred through billions of years of evolution.

I answered unapologetically: No, I do not. I am convinced that Genesis 1-3 ought to be taken at face value—as the divinely revealed history of creation. Nothing about the Genesis text itself suggests that the biblical creation account is merely symbolic, poetic, allegorical, or mythical. The main thrust of the passage simply cannot be reconciled with the notion that "creation" occurred via natural evolutionary processes over long periods of time. And I don't believe a faithful handling of the biblical text, by any acceptable principles of hermeneutics, can possibly reconcile those chapters with the theory of evolution or any of the other allegedly scientific theories about the origin of the universe.

Furthermore, much like the philosophical and moral chaos that results from naturalism, all sorts of theological mischief ensues when we reject or compromise the literal truth of the biblical account of creation and the fall of Adam. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*

## *Causing Little One's to Stumble*

Our little ones watch us and listen to us. They are quick to notice inconsistencies in speech and behavior. Have they ever heard their parents, pastor, or other Christian adults say one thing to them about the kind of behavior and speech God requires, only to witness these same adults contradicting what they claim to believe in their own speech and behavior? Is our speech and behavior breeding in our own children disillusionment and doubt in the veracity of Christianity?

According to numerous polls, many children of believers in Europe and North America are leaving the church once they reach young adulthood. Older Christians do not need polls to tell them this. It is evident in the pews. When we think about the reasons why, we often start by pointing outward—to the influences of the world on our children. It's Hollywood's fault. It's the schools' fault. It's his fault. It's her fault. Many external things certainly are contributing factors, but how often do we stop pointing at others and look at ourselves to ask whether we have said and done things that have caused these little ones to stumble? Is any of it our fault?

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## *Causing Little One's to Stumble* *Continued from Page 2*

Is our speech and behavior breeding in our own children disillusionment and doubt in the veracity of Christianity?

What about when our little ones go online? We know there is all manner of toxic and sinful material being produced by non-Christians online, and we warn about the danger of children being exposed to those things. But do we ever consider the danger of young Christians being exposed to the behavior of other Christians online? What happens when they witness hypocritical behavior there? How often do these little ones observe online the Christian adults they respect engaging in slander, gossip, backbiting, dishonesty, cursing, lying, grumbling, and mocking?

Additionally, what do our little ones think when they witness behavior that would indicate to any rational observer that we are passionate about everything but Jesus? What are we communicating to our little ones when we are willing to go on and on about our favorite sports team, our favorite political candidate, our favorite singer, movie, television show, video game, etc. and yet say hardly a word to anyone about Jesus? What does that tell these little ones about what we truly love with all of our heart, soul, and mind? Does it suggest to them that deep down we do not really believe what we say we believe and what we say we want them to believe?

Perhaps one reason so many children of believers are no longer following Christ is that they are simply following in our footsteps. ~ *Dr. Keith Mathison*

## *The Moment of Truth: Its Rejection*

Today, it is often said, "I have my truth, and you have your truth." Our generation likes to deny absolute truth, saying that something can be true for one person but not true for someone else. This view is not new. In John 18, our Lord stood trial before Pilate. It was the day before His crucifixion, and He would soon be sentenced to death. But before Pilate gives the final verdict, we read this conversation:

*Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" (John 18:36–38a)*

Pilate, standing before the Lord Jesus Christ, who is truth incarnate, voices an age-old question. But it is not an honest question from one searching to know the truth. Rather, it is a defiant denunciation of the truth. It is spoken with a tone of derision. It is dismissive. It is spoken with contempt. This response is asserted mockingly by Pilate. It is a disparaging chide, dripping with sarcasm. It is a caustic rebuttal, intended to belittle the notion that there is any such thing in this world as a truth claim. This is a barbed jab by Pilate into the ribs of the Lord Jesus Christ, meant to deflate Him and denigrate any notion that Jesus could claim to know and speak the truth. Pilate objects to the very idea of an exclusive truth claim.



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## *The Moment of Truth: Its Rejection* *Continued from Page 3*

This question has echoed down the centuries and corridors of time, and it is growing louder and louder today. In this very generation in which we live, we hear this malignant mantra: “What is truth?”

The spirit of Pilate lives in our day. The spirit of Pilate is alive and well on college campuses. It sits in the halls of our government and legislates our moral code. It reigns in our media. It teaches in many of our seminaries. It stands in pulpits today. We live in a culture that is defiant of any notion of truth. We live in a day that not only denies truth, but is against truth. This is an age that is tolerant of anything and anyone except one who claims to know the truth.

### **What Is Truth?**

We are surrounded on every side in this culture by the question “What is truth?” This is really the mother of all sins. It is a deliberate setting aside and an intentional rejection of the truth of God.

This is the way it was in the very beginning. In Genesis 3, Satan the serpent slithered on to the pages of human history, and he came to launch an attack on the truth. He said, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” Satan knew very well what God had said, but he came to call God’s words into question—to dismiss the truth of God. The original sin was a rejection of the truth—a rejection of God’s way. Man chose to go his own way, to decide for himself what is true, to make his own choices in defiance of the truth.

Romans 1:18 says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Every generation—and every person—suppresses the truth about God, apart from being born of the truth. This tendency is inherent within man, part of the radical corruption and total depravity in human nature. A few verses later, in Romans 1:25, we read how people exchange the truth of God for a lie. That is the hour in which we live. We live in a culture that has exchanged the truth of God for a lie and has suppressed the truth. This is the demise of any life, it is the departure of any denomination, it is the destruction of any nation, and the disintegration of any society—it begins with the rejection of truth.

Nowhere is this more clearly seen than with our college students, who attend universities that, in many cases, intend to undermine the truth. A recent survey bears this out. Of those surveyed, sixty-four percent of adults age thirty-six and over said there are no moral absolutes. And only twenty-two percent said there are any moral absolutes. But among respondents who are 18-25 years old, the percentage of those who reject moral absolutes increased to 75%. They have no moral compass because they have rejected the truth. And then when the survey was conducted with teenagers, the number jumped again. Eighty-three percent of teenagers said morality and truth depend upon one’s individual preference and upon the circumstances. The younger you are, the more you embrace the statement that there is no absolute truth today.

Men and women of our day are increasingly given to this idea: the only absolute is that there are no absolutes—the only truth is that there is no truth. The only intolerance is the intolerance of intolerance. All this gives popularity today to the approval of such things as abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, pornography, and all kinds of lewd behavior. It is all traced back to this point of departure: the rejection of the truth.





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## *The Moment of Truth: Its Rejection*

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We see it everywhere today. Humanism says man is the truth; pragmatism says whatever works is the truth; pluralism says everyone has a piece of the truth; relativism says each situation determines the truth; mysticism says intuition is the truth; skepticism says no one can know the truth; hedonism says whatever feels good is the truth; existentialism says self-determination is the truth; secularism says this present world is the truth; positivism says whatever man confesses is the truth. This is the world in which we live: the rejection of the truth. ~ *Dr. Steven J. Lawson*

## *The Means of Persevering Grace*

Until the Arminian controversy in the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century, Calvinism did not have five points. Calvinism summarized itself in its great confessions and catechisms and never thought to reduce itself to five points. The Arminians, however, had five attacks on Reformed teaching, which they summarized in 1610. On the fifth point they wrote, in part:

But whether they [those incorporated into Jesus Christ] can through negligence fall away from the first principle of their life in Christ, again embrace the present world, depart from the pure doctrine once given to them, lose the good conscience, and neglect grace, must first be more carefully determined from the Holy Scriptures. The Arminians in 1610 were uncertain about the doctrine of perseverance. But in the years that followed they increasingly taught that the truly regenerate could fall from grace and be lost.

Clearly the Arminians feared that the doctrine of perseverance would make Christians negligent, lazy, and self-indulgent. They saw the teaching as mechanical and automatic. They seemed to imagine that the Reformed taught that the Christian life was like a train running downhill. Just get it started, and it will easily run on its own momentum without any further effort. (Their fears may seem to be substantiated by the unreformed teaching of some today that Christians are in a state of “once saved, always saved”—no matter what they do.)

The great Synod of Dort (1618–1619) answered the Arminian doubts and fears clearly and helpfully. It reminded all Christians that God does indeed so preserve His own that they will not fall from grace. But He preserves them through the means that He has appointed, and, by His Spirit, He ensures that they make good use of those means.

The Canons of the Synod of Dort take up the subject of perseverance in their fifth head of doctrine. In fifteen articles, the fifth head of doctrine presents a remarkable biblical and pastoral statement of the Reformed teaching. It begins by recognizing that sin remains a problem in the life of regenerate Christians. Since sin is a daily problem and affects even our best works, we must daily turn to God anew:



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## *The Means of Persevering Grace*

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These [sins] are to them [Christians] a perpetual reason to humiliate themselves before God and to flee for refuge to Christ crucified; to mortify the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and to press forward to the goal of perfection, until at length, delivered from this body of death, they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven. (Article 2) Here is clearly no mechanical, or automatic, sense of preservation. Human responsibility and active turning to God are upheld as the fruit of the grace of God.

We see here, right at the opening of the fifth head of doctrine, how important means are to persevering in the faith. The Canons mention here first the cultivation of humility and faith in the Christian life. We dare not be a proud people, as if we had accomplished much by our own strength. But we must recognize our weaknesses and look away from ourselves to Christ. One of the key means of cultivating humility is prayer. In prayer, we acknowledge that God is the source of all strength and hope in our lives. Article 2 also encourages “holy exercises of piety” in addition to prayer. Here the stress falls on reading the Bible and engaging faithfully in worship with fellow believers.

The Canons recognize that even the regenerate, left to themselves and their own strength, would not persevere. Only the faithful, persevering grace of God can uphold the regenerate as they face the temptations of sin.

The Canons go on to recognize that God’s saints can fall into terrible sins of which David, the adulterer and murderer, and Peter, the denier of Christ, are very clear examples. Such terrible sins bring with them some terrible consequences:

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God’s favor, until, when they change their course by serious repentance, the light of God’s fatherly countenance again shines upon them. (Article 5) Here again we see how very personal is the relationship between the believer and his God in true Reformed theology. This article also shows that the doctrine of perseverance in no way encourages an indifference to sin. The commitment to the serious pursuit of holiness is a central tenet of Reformed Christianity. A key verse historically for the Reformed is Ephesians 5:15: “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise.”

Article 7 explains something of the way in which God operates in preserving His own:

By His Word and Spirit He certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Here the Canons emphasize that God the Holy Spirit works through and with His Word to create and sustain repentance and faith in His people. Repentance and faith are the foundations of Christian living. Faith trusts in Christ for justification and the foundation of sanctification. Faith for sanctification leads to repentance and a whole new life lived out in Christ.



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## *The Means of Persevering Grace*

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Next, the Canons discuss in some detail the assurance Christians may have that they will persevere in faith by the grace of God and the great blessing that such assurance affords. Again, responding to the fears of the Arminians that such assurance will produce spiritual laziness and indifference, article 12 states:

The certainty of perseverance is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God. Here we see the sturdy realism of Calvinism about the Christian life. Life has its great joys, but it also has its many sorrows, some resulting from the consequences of our personal sins and some resulting from the misery of this fallen world. But God strengthens us in patience and constancy in every circumstance.

Article 14 turns even more pointedly to the subject of the means of perseverance in the Christian life than was done in the earlier articles.

And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments.

The focus in this article is on the Word of the God and the sacraments. The Word of God helps to preserve us in the faith as we hear it preached, as we read it in church and privately, and as we meditate upon it. The article highlights what we will find in the Scriptures when we hear, read, and meditate on them. *First*, we will find exhortations. The Bible calls us to live the faithful Christian life and instructs us in the character of that life. *Second*, we will find threatenings. Even though God will surely preserve us in grace, we need to hear the warnings of God as one of the means He uses to confront us with our sin and draw us to repentance. *Third*, we find promises. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is full of promises and comfort. Every Christian needs to be nourished regularly with the Gospel as the true foundation and best motivation to Christian living.

The article also directs us to the sacraments. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are presentations of the Gospel in visible form. God strengthens us in His promises with the promise of sin washed away in Jesus and the promise that the salvation accomplished in His body and blood are the food of eternal life for us.

The fifth head of doctrine ends (article 15) on a sober but triumphal note. Although many reject the doctrine of perseverance, it is of great comfort to the Christian:

The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His name and consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of believers. Satan abhors it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocritical abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. But the bride of Christ has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her so to continue to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen. ~ **Dr. W. Robert Godfrey**



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If you have a June birthday or anniversary that is not posted here or is listed in error, please e-mail Walt at [gwlcf10415@gmail.com](mailto:gwlcf10415@gmail.com).

## *Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner June 2022*

### *Birthdays*

*Gene A. (6)  
Mike P. (27)*

### *Anniversaries*

*Brian and Muriel R. (7)  
Ben and Carrie P. (23)  
Scott and Ruth T. (25)*

## *How Significant is the Flood in the Overall Biblical History?*

The Bible treats the Flood as a worldwide event directly brought by God as a judgment on the sin of humanity. The Flood hangs like a warning cloud over all of subsequent history. Fortunately, that cloud also holds a rainbow of God's promised grace.

The Flood illustrates several important aspects of God's character and God's relationship with His creation: (1) God retains ultimate control of world events; (2) God can and will judge sin; (3) God can and does exercise grace even in judgment; (4) an even more universal and final judgment will be carried out on the world based on God's timetable.



*West Suffolk Baptist Church  
Leadership*

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