

Et Cetera

The paper of the Regent College Student Association

* Three Books You Need to Deconstruct Your faith Without Losing It

I have, from voices whispered in the halls, overheard that Regent is a place where one's faith is deconstructed. For some reason, this is often regarded as a negative thing. I disagree. Deconstruction is one of the best experiences an earnest, thinking Christian can go through. Interrogating one's inherited beliefs can be a beautiful way one makes faith "one's own," enabling one to stand firmly in convictions one truly believes, and wholeheartedly.

I know for myself, deconstructing my faith—pursuing the questions raised by radical doubt—has made space to rebuild my beliefs into a structure that actually coheres with my lived experience, instead of enduring near constant cognitive dissonance between professed doctrines and real life.

Where deconstruction receives its bad rap, I think, is from bad "deconstruction guides," authors that revel in destroying naïve faith instead of thoughtfully pursuing truth. To that end, I hope to share five "guides" which I found extremely helpful in keeping me on the path through the sometimes dark forest of finding faith.

GUIDE NO. 1 - N. T. WRIGHT, JESUS AND THE VICTORY OF GOD

I grew up believing that having faith in Jesus meant that penal substitutionary atonement was the only atonement theory out there, and that when I died my spirit would simply fly off to the heavenly nether realms to sing Good Good Father forever and ever, amen. The problem with this anorexic view of Christianity is that it makes Jesus' actual life basically meaningless; all that matters is that he was perfect and that he died so you don't have to. What's more, if we mix a bit of predestination into this problematic understanding, we quickly realize that life itself is a pointless exercise in a world destined to burn.

What Wright showed me was that the Kingdom of God is about transforming this world; that the incarnation affirms that this world is good; that eternal life is about living in a new heavens and new earth; and that penal substitution must be taught alongside Christus Victor, lest God turn into a tyrant who hates, rather than loves, human beings. In short, Wright brought me hope. I finally could long to follow Christ because the vision he casted two thousand years ago was good

and desirable, not simply because I was afraid of hell.

GUIDE NO. 2 - PETER ENNS, THE EVOLUTION OF ADAM: WHAT THE BIBLE DOES AND DOESN'T SAY ABOUT HUMAN ORIGINS

While this debate has become a thing of the past in Christian communities in larger cities, I grew up in a smaller town where confessing one believed the theory of evolution was the same as confessing that one worshiped Satan. To even entertain such an obviously satanic lie meant one doubted the inerrancy of Scripture and the truthfulness and power of God. So, as a good Christian boy, I toed the line for years, smugly making fun of my high school biology teachers and rehearsing all the embarrassing arguments from Answers In Genesis. Yet, as many of you well know, after a while this was simply no longer tenable. Evolution as a theory has mountains of evidence behind it, and I feared I would have to commit intellectual suicide in order to hold to my faith.

Enter Pete Enns and his controversial-at-the-time book reconciling the Genesis creation story with evolution. While I think Enns is perpetually stuck in a deconstruction phase, this book was instrumental in showing me that evolution can (and arguably should) be held alongside the creation stories in Scripture. Enns helped me see that the stories of the first humans, in their context, are much richer when read as theological poetry—as myths—and should not be expected to answer our very modern questions on the empirical details of creation ex nihilo.

(However, see James K. A. Smith's review on Enns' book as a helpful corrective in Enns' tendency to do all his theology from the "bottom up.")

GUIDE NO. 3 - JAMES KUGEL, HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

For any Christian hoping to get a grasp on biblical criticism without becoming a radical skeptic, Kugel's book is indispensable. What Kugel manages to do is, instead of turning a blind eye to the mountain of evidence that shows that the Bible was not dictated word for word by God but rather compiled (at times rather messily) by human authors with human intentions, find a way to reconcile this reality with faith in God. By not shying away from the challenges of scholars, he redeems biblical criticism, showing that it can lead us to a deeper understanding of what the Bible is indeed for, and that, done well, biblical criticism can enrich rather than destroy our reverence for the Word of God.

-TYLER LOEWEN

THE BACK 40

"Just in time for lent..."

The Bunyan

New Professor of Theology and the Arts

//March 20, 2064

Today Regent College was proud to announce that the school has finally (finally) found a professor for the Eugene and Jan Peterson Chair in Theology and the Arts, vacated since Iwan Russell-Jones stepped down in 2020. In order to fulfill the chair, the College has been forced to rely upon a novel solution.

Through tears of both utter weariness and gratitude, President Franz Bibfeldt said, "Finding a professor-practitioner of theology and the arts has proven a tiring, daunting task. But," he continued, gesturing to a frail, grey-haired old woman next to him, "With the help of the Witch of Endor we have finally found just the person we are looking for."

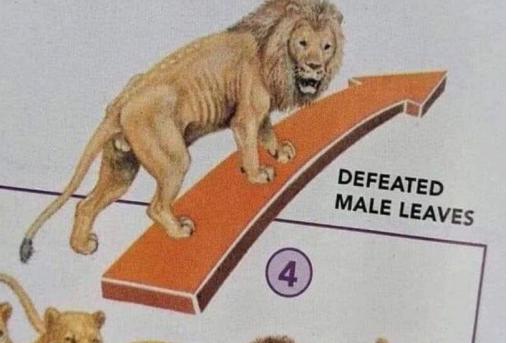
"Whenever there is an ARTS class or if a student needs consultation for an IPIAT, the Witch of Endor will summon up the spirit of our new Professor of Theology and the Arts – Thomas Kinkade. His saccharine paintings are just what we need to quiet the rampant cynicism of this generation."

When it was pointed out that Kinkade was not exactly considered an artistic savant in his field, President Bibfeldt shrewdly pointed out, "Well, I don't think that's a much of a problem. One of the effects of COVID is loss of taste."



Memes submitted via instagram by @dank_regent_memes

**@dank_regent_memes is not affiliated with or endorsed by EtCetera or the RCSA



Dad Joke of the Week

What do you call a fish without eyes?

A fsh.

It's very easy to be featured in EtCetera.

EtCetera accepts all forms of written or visual creativity. Written works must be under 1000 words.

All work is subject to minor edits.

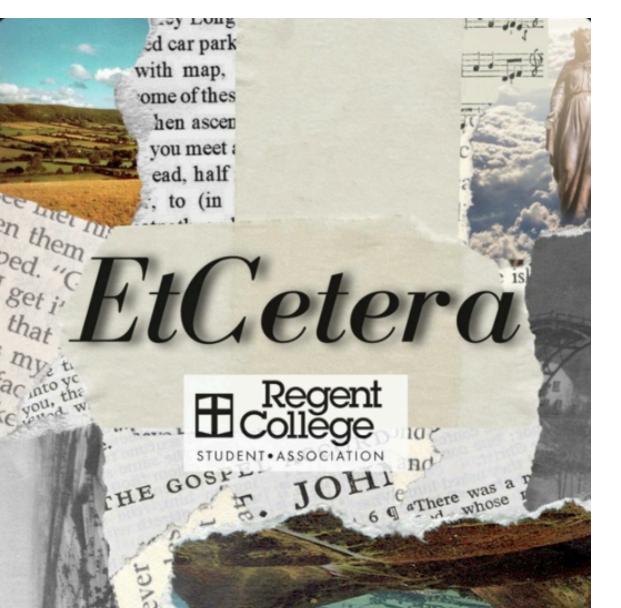
Anonymous submissions are considered on a case-by-case basis.

All submissions must be sent to: etcetera@regent-college.edu

The EtCetera team is:

Dryden Demchuk - Senior Editor

Abigail Germain - Associate Editor



Latest Podcast Episode // Rikk Watts

Rikk Watts served as Professor of New Testament at Regent College from 1996 to 2016. His areas of speciality include the Gospels, the book of Isaiah, and the way the New Testament uses the Old Testament. Rikk joined me today to talk about his journey from Aeronautical Engineer to Biblical Scholar, and to promote his upcoming summer course on the Gospel of Mark. Rikk explains why Mark is worth studying, what it means to follow Jesus as Lord in today's world, and how the gospel has shaped and continues to shape western culture.



HAVE A DAY

There are good days

And bad days

But mostly everything in between.

There are days with alarms beeping far too early

And big beautiful breakfasts

And full body workouts

And afternoon strolls

And evening scrolls

through the social media app

you said you were quitting

There are days you read thought-provoking prose

And cathartic poetry

And overcooked the frozen nuggets

because you tossed out the bag

Without reading the three instructions.

Most days are not good or bad.

They are 'and'.

-MO HICKMAN

•• HUMANS OF REGENT ••

Laurel Ackerman

I'm from Holland, Michigan, in the United States, and I currently live in Grand Rapids, Michigan. If you're familiar with Michigan, the west side was colonized, starting in the mid-1800's, by Dutch refugees who were fleeing religious persecution. I am married to Luke, and we've been married for seven years. We have a dog; her name is Chupa (meaning "to lick" in Costa Rican Spanish). She's a pure-bred boxer and was a rescue. She's the sweetest thing in the world and is turning six this summer. My background is in human resources and business operations. Most recently I've worked as an HR consultant. For a period of time, my husband and I lived in Latin America. We thought we were going to live there for a much longer period of time than we did.

My greatest struggle at Regent relates to the fact that I'm a distant education student. Because of this, my studies have been very lonely. Everyone around me is working a normal 8am-5pm job and because I'm on the east coast I'm three hours ahead of Vancouver time. That means this semester I have two night courses, so every Wednesday and Thursday night I'm busy. That then affects my availability for small groups, church, dinner plans, and that sort of thing. There's also no one to go to and do school work with because they are working when you are free or when you are supposed to be studying. So, distance education requires a lot of personal motivation and I am much more relationally motivated.

However, because both my husband and I were working for the majority of last year, we were blessed with the finances to budget for one trip to Regent per semester. I came to Vancouver in the fall of 2022 and just last week (February 2023). Being able to meet the professors and classmates in person really helps when you are learning from a distance. You build some relationships and you have people to text when you are confused about an assignment, are really unmotivated to write a paper, or you just want to burn your textbook. Having those relational connections has been really really important and has come out of the in-person trips to Regent. I feel like God has really met me through these trips, especially for this last trip. He paved the way for the trips in terms of logistics, and relationally through people who were available and through conversations that I needed to have that I didn't know I needed to have.

⊕ The Greensheet is Dead ⊕

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek The Greensheet! I seek The Greensheet!"—As many of those who did not believe in The Greensheet were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. "Has it got lost?" asked one. "Did it lose its way like a child?" asked another. "Or is it hiding?" Is it afraid of us? Has it gone on a voyage? emigrated?"—Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Where is The Greensheet?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying The Greensheet? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Greensheets, too, decompose. The Greensheet is dead.

The Greensheet remains dead. And we have killed it.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become greensheets simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto."

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars and yet they have done it themselves."

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his requiem aeternam deo. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchres of The Greensheet?"

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Greensheet was once necessary. In a dark age dominated by the analog it was required that the community maintained a regular form of physical communication in which it would be possible to post classifieds, advertisements, events, and missed connections (I am not actually sure that there was ever a "missed connections" section but in theory it would have been possible). This is an age in which we no longer live.

The internet has rendered the Greensheet irrelevant. This is the blunt truth. The many facebook groups to which the average Regent student belongs, together with Regent's regular announcement emails, now fill the role that the Greensheet once filled. The Greensheet is without purpose.

We do not announce the death of the Greensheet without mourning. The Greensheet existed as part of EtCetera for many years, and served a valuable purpose for much of its history. We do not send it off without recognizing it as a time-honoured Regent tradition.

I will allow you to reflect on the parallels between this technology-induced death and Nietzsche's parable of the madman on your own time. For now, here is what you need to know:

- If you have an announcement that needs to be made to the entire Regent community, you might consider submitting it to be part of Regent's weekly announcements instead.
- The minutes from RCSA meetings, which were previously published in the Greensheet, will still be published by EtCetera when RCSA meetings occur.
- If you have content which would previously have been submitted to the Greensheet but does not feel suitable to Regent's regular announcements, feel free to submit it to EtCetera directly. Publication is not guaranteed, but information that is directly relevant or of interest to the Regent community will be considered.

"for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice..."