

14th October 2021

Inventions

**“God hath made man upright;
but they have sought out many inventions.”**

Bible, Ecclesiastes 8:8

Not being a Hebrew scholar, I don't know whether the word “upright” in the verse above refers to *walking* upright or *being* upright by living in a God-fearing way. Either way, it might be the basis for a future two-part sermon. We shall see. But today I'm more interested in the second half of the verse, though it, too, raises questions. Is it the case that *because* we can walk upright we need to continually invent things to make our lives better – starting from the wheel and going on from there? Or is the word “but” the significant turning point of the verse? God has made us upright in our character *but* we still seek many inventions because we think we can improve on what God has given. Mmmm ... Worth discussing, I think.

When I was eighteen, I was invited to be part of a “celebrity panel” (though what celebrity status *I* had defeats me ...). It was a kind of light-hearted equivalent of the BBC's *Question Time*, and though some serious topics were touched on, we had a lot of fun too. One of the questions from the audience was: “What do you consider the most important invention we have?” The motorcar, someone suggested. Disposable nappies, said another. I think I might have suggested Association Football, though I don't remember. But the final panellist floored us all by saying: “The most important thing *ever* invented is the SAFETY-PIN,” and went on to expound on the wonders of this invention. For the audience, it was clearly the highlight of the evening – and it's certainly stuck in my mind!

What would your answer be now? The microchip? The internet? The skateboard? Zoom? Would the humble safety-pin have a place someone on your list? A new game for your next family gathering, perhaps ...

But ponder this while you're having fun. While inventions can and should make our lives more comfortable, are we not equipped with the “uprightness” that needs *no* new invention to make it better? The ability to love, to wonder, to learn, to grow, to build relationships, to enjoy and care for our world? Will *any* invention top that?

A prayer for today

Love? I don't need to reinvent the wheel when what I have is the best there can be.

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