

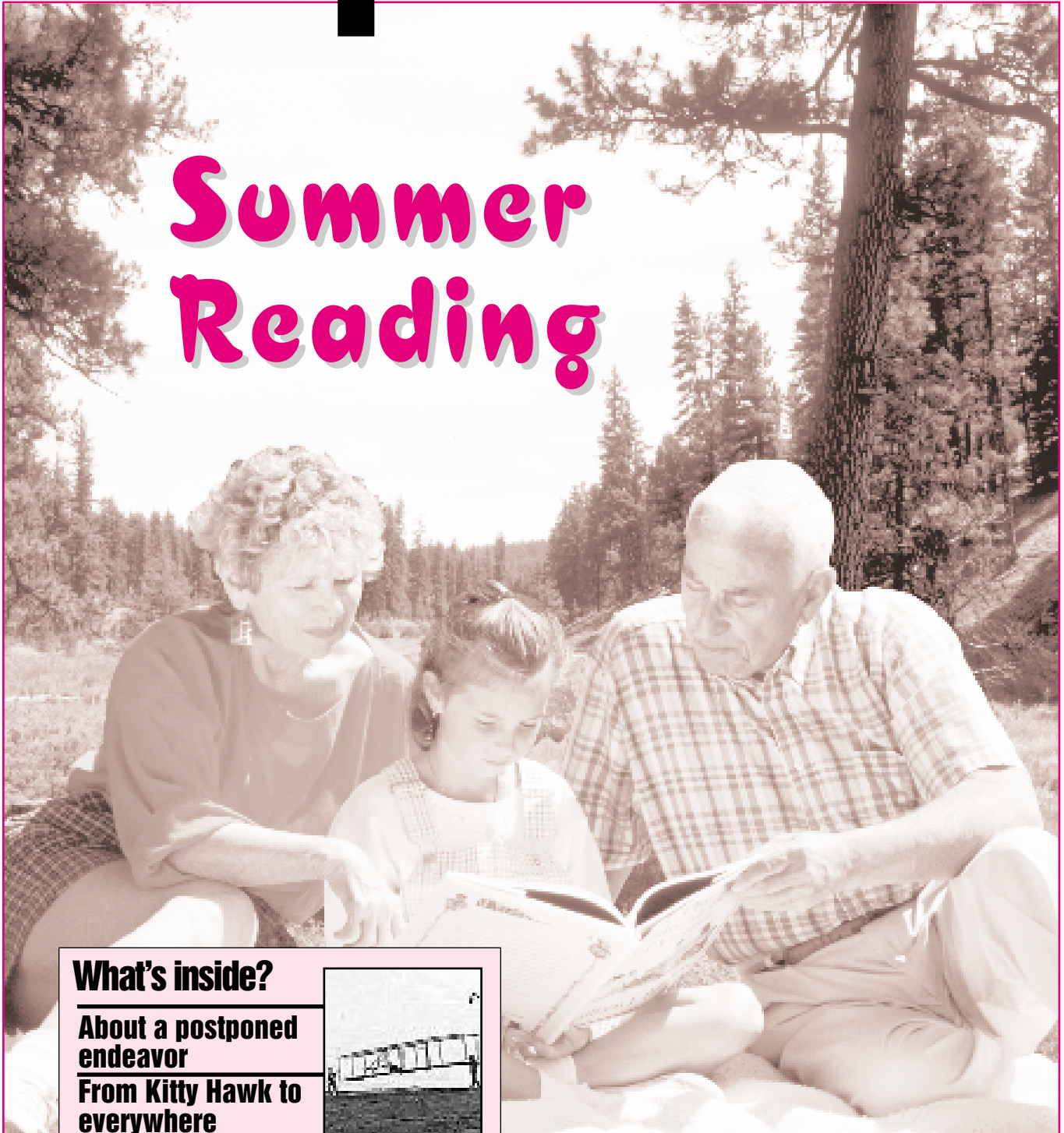
Volume 20 Number 9/10 July/August 2001

REFORMED

Perspective

A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

Summer Reading

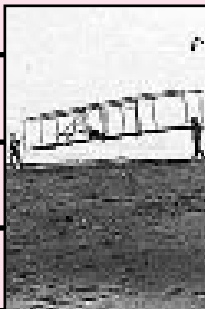


What's inside?

About a postponed
endeavor

From Kitty Hawk to
everywhere

Beauty – more than
skin deep



Editorial

by Jon Dykstra



Got Milk?

Heathens are an entirely uncooperative group – they never ask the questions they’re supposed to. Sure they’re willing to talk about religion and the Bible, but will they ever ask what the five points of Calvinism are? Nooooo!

I spent several years of my life memorizing the answers to the 129 questions in the Heidelberg Catechism. Do you think any of those questions ever come up? Nope. 129 questions and *none of them ever come up*. What are the odds? It almost has me convinced that infidels and their ilk read this confession just to know what questions not to ask. “Pssst . . . here comes Jon. Now remember, whatever you do, don’t ask him what his only comfort in life and death is.”

To make it worse, while they don’t ask the questions they’re supposed to ask, they do ask questions they’re not supposed to ask. They ask real stumpers, questions I’ve never encountered before – not in my 13 years of Christian schooling, or my 7 years of confession classes, or my 29 years of Church attendance. They ask questions I’m totally unprepared for. They ask, “Why are you a Christian?”

Um . . . ah . . . well, you see . . .

The first time a pagan person asked me this question I was sitting at a Reformed outreach table at the local university. We actually wanted people to stop and ask us questions, but not questions this tough.

I know what you’re thinking; the question doesn’t sound that difficult. But it is, for the unprepared. If you don’t believe me, try answering it yourself. Stop reading and take a moment to answer it . . . out loud. So how are you doing? Do you have an answer on the tip of your tongue? Is it a good answer?

My own pathetic reply prompted me to ask other Christians for their responses. I’ve asked 30+ people so far and have gotten a lot of blank stares, stammering starts, and stuttered attempts. Only a handful of people were able to come up with a quick meaningful answer. Given enough time, the others usually came up with some sort of response (but

even then it wasn’t always a good one – I got a couple versions of, “because my parents are Christian”). When I was in a particularly ornery mood I would hit people with a follow-up question: “Can you tell me a bit about this Jesus?” That would get the stammering and stuttering started all over again.

Incidentally, there were two basic types of good answers to the first question, “Why are you a Christian?” One was, “I’m a Christian because it is true, all of it.” This is a simple, clear declaration and my own favorite reply. But its very brevity almost guarantees that you’ll be asked a follow-up question. The second response was something along the lines of, “I’m a Christian because Jesus died for my sins and saved me.” It is a more experiential response, and often a more emotional one. The emotional edge to this one, made it compelling. The answers to the second question, “Can you tell me a bit about Jesus?” didn’t fall into set categories.



We’re going to have to know how to present the gospel to unbelievers.



What, why and how

I’m not a dummy, and the people I was quizzing weren’t dumb either. We all knew *what* we believed, and most of us knew *why* we believed it. We just didn’t know how to present those beliefs in a straightforward simple manner.

1 Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 5 both speak of feeding the spiritually immature with milk, rather than with solid food. When we’re approached by non-Christians with questions, we can’t feed them the answers we’ve been fed for so much of our lives. The Catechism, the confessions, the sermons we hear each

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Sunday – that’s solid food. It’s appropriate for us because we’ve been instructed in the Bible our whole lives, but it isn’t appropriate for “pagans.” They need milk.

But do we have milk? Do the members of our churches know how to feed adults who aren’t ready for solid food?

I don’t really know how to, and most of the 30+ people I quizzed didn’t seem to know how to either. We’ve all had years of Christian education, but it seems that education has only been for our own benefit and our own needs. The subject of how to clearly present the Christian gospel to others never seems to have come up.

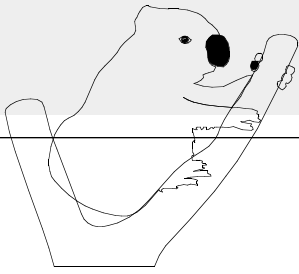
It has to come up. If we’re going to fulfill the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .” we’re going to have to know how to present the gospel to unbelievers. Fortunately we already have a number of resources in place that could be used for this type of education. Study groups, confession classes and school Bible classes could all be used to meet this need. *Reformed Perspective* could be used to pass on successful approaches and techniques. Young People’s study weekends could tackle this subject as well.

In the meantime you can always give your friends and family a little impromptu practice by asking them, “Why are you a Christian?”

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INDONESIA

is still a
basket case



by Rene Vermeulen

By the time you read this there is every likelihood that President Wahid will no longer be in charge of Indonesia. Whether he was in charge during the last few months is a question in itself. There is every indication that the Army, and that includes the Police, has far more say than is good for any country. President Wahid is being accused of corruption but if reports from Indonesia are to be believed there are other powers who are much more corrupt than this blind and far from well President.

To predict who will be President if and when Wahid is deposed is anyone's guess. While it might be the current Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri, nothing is certain. As Michael Maher, the Australian ABC's Asia Pacific Editor, wrote recently: "... good government in Indonesia has been held hostage to the corruption, filibustering and scheming of a venal political elite."

There is little that would indicate any of the current personalities are better than President Wahid. We should expect Indonesia to be in a fair amount of turmoil for many years yet.

New Zealand – avoiding responsibility

The New Zealand government under Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark has

further moved to reduce its defense forces. Recently the Prime Minister announced that New Zealand will reduce its air force to a transport force only. These may be used in peacekeeping operations. Its fighters will no longer feature in the defense of New Zealand. Australian defense planners will be far from happy with this decision. For some time now their counterparts across the Tasman Sea have progressively taken what might be called, a pacifist stance. For some years now, warships of their allies the United States and Great Britain have been denied entrance to New Zealand ports if they were nuclear powered.

A further dismantling of its forces might be popular with the left wing of the Labour Party and some of its extremist friends but will do nothing for the trans Tasman alliance between it and Australia. Erstwhile cooperation between the two powers is becoming a thing of the past.

New Zealand argues that there is no threat in its part of the world. An attractive argument when Australia is always there to take action as it did in East Timor. The instability in Indonesia is of little concern to New Zealand.

Papua New Guinea

It has just been announced that the United States Peace Corps has decided to pull its people out of Papua New Guinea (PNG). The reason given is the lawlessness so prevalent in many parts of this country. According to a Peace Corps director, its volunteers were being subjected to aggravated robberies, car thefts and assaults while working with local volunteer aid workers. The response from PNG was predictable. PNG Tourism Promotion Authority chairman Sir Peter Barter complained that potential American tourists to PNG were canceling their travel plans as a result. "None of our clients has been robbed, raped, mugged or even addressed badly," he said.

On a different note, the Australian Associated Press has reported that poker machines are likely to be banned in Papua New Guinea, after a seven-year experiment with the machines destroyed families and created millionaire operators. Sir Mekere Morauta, the Prime Minister, has indicated that he will ask Cabinet to abolish the industry. "I am acutely aware of the devilish affect of this industry on families throughout Papua New Guinea," Sir Mekere said.

When is genocide indeed genocide?

Some years ago Sir Ronald Wilson, a former judge of Australia's highest court, authored a report called *Bringing them home* which dealt with the Aboriginal children taken from their parents and placed in the homes of white people or into institutions. This report spoke of the "stolen generation" and of "genocide." Some months ago one of the Aboriginal people, Lowitja O'Donoghue, who herself was taken from her people, questioned the term "stolen generation." She argued that many were not stolen but removed for various legitimate reasons. In some instances they were removed because leaving them with their Aboriginal relations could have caused them to be killed. It is well known that full blood tribal aboriginals would kill children who had been born from the relationship between an aboriginal woman and a white man. These "half castes" were not accepted by their full-blooded relations. Others were removed because authorities considered these children at risk if left with their parents.

Admittedly some of these children were indeed "stolen" because the authorities believed that by placing them in institutions they would make "white" Australians of them with a black skin. The argument for this removal was based on evolutionary thinking, although today only Christians would raise this point (see the May 2000 *Report from Australia* for more on this thought).

But the worst claim in the report was that Australian authorities had committed "genocide" against the Aboriginal people.


Genocide is described by the *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* as: "the Extermination of a race" and by the *World Book Dictionary* as: "Systematic measures for the extermination of a national, political, cultural, religious, or racial group." The *Oxford Dictionary* describes Extermination as: "Destroy utterly, root out (species, race, etc.)"

Few people have difficulty with this term when applied to the Nazi holocaust

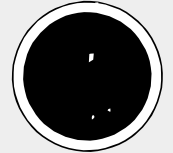
or the wholesale murder of Tutsis in Rwanda. But it is wrong to apply this term to the actions of Australian authorities. As wrong as some of these actions were, they were hardly genocide. There was a belief that the Aboriginal population would eventually disappear. The basis for this belief is the above mentioned evolutionary thinking. That Australian authorities thought that by some of their actions they could hasten the process – there is little doubt about that. But that cannot be called genocide. There never was a desire to exterminate a race of people in Australia.

In a recent article in *The Bulletin*, Sir Ronald Wilson, the eminent jurist, admitted that, "With hindsight, I think it was a mistake to use the word 'genocide.'" This is an unbelievable admission. How is it possible that a jurist, and a former head of the Uniting Church of Australia could have used a word which to even the most simple ear speaks of terrible hurt inflicted on a people with full malice. Sir Ronald would have known of the many people in his own Uniting Church who gave almost their whole life to working with Aboriginal people in the various missions around Australia. Admittedly many of these people were Arminian, followed modern theology, and as a consequence, brought a gospel other than that given to us in the Bible. But there were also others who sought to bring the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is true that many of them supported the government's policies, wrongly in some instances, and thereby caused much hurt and hardship to Aboriginal people. But even Sir Ronald would be hard pressed to bring forward the names of any who with malice aforethought sought the extermination of these people.

But in the meantime this report will have been shown to the various authorities of the United Nations. There these words of an eminent Australian jurist will be used to condemn Australia. It is unbelievable that any man so well steeped in the traditions of British law could now say: "With hindsight, I think it was a mistake to use the word 'genocide.'" 

Readers' Response



Dear Editor,

Regarding the article, "The Spanking Debate and Scientific Research" (March 2001): has anyone ever considered the rod as a means to guide (with gentleness)? "Your rod and your staff comfort me" (Psalm 23:4b).

So often we take the rod in the quote: "He who spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (Prov 13:24) to mean to punish physically only. We would like to suggest that it has other purposes that could lessen the need for spanking considerably. Perhaps the debate in the courts over whether to legislate "no spanking" would then be less worrisome to those of us who want to remain faithful to God's Word.

Jack and Frances Vandermeulen
Roseisle, Manitoba

Editor's response:

Psalm 23:4 reads in its entirety: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." In the context of the dangers of the "valley of the shadow of death" it seems the rod here is not a means of gentle guidance, but rather may be an instrument used to beat away attackers.

REACHING OUT TO A World of Hurt

by Liz DeVries

Anna sat across from me, no expression on her face. She is pregnant, two months along. This is already her 8th pregnancy, nothing new for her. Three children have been taken from her and four have been aborted. Her eyes appear dead.*

The Winnipeg Crisis Pregnancy Centre (CPC) is a member agency of the Christian Association of Pregnancy Support Services (CAPSS). CAPSS is a national organization serving the needs of Christian Pregnancy Support ministries coast to coast.

“CAPSS is committed to coordinating, regulating, equipping and supporting member organizations. The goal is to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ through programs and services designed to provide alleviation from the physical, medical, emotional, economic and social problems associated with crisis pregnancies. A major focus is equipping members for the effective communication of the life-changing message of the Gospel” (Source CAPSS volunteer training manual).

Here is an overview of the services the Winnipeg Crisis Pregnancy Centre offers:

- Free pregnancy tests
- Information about pregnancy, abortion, and all the alternatives
- Adoption information and referral
- Emotional support
- Personal peer counseling
- Clothing for client's and their children
- Diapers and baby food
- 24-hour crisis phone line
- Referral for other help needed
- Post abortion counseling
- Grief counseling (infant loss including miscarriage)

Our centre in Winnipeg supports a national crisis line (1-800-665-0570) that handles calls from across Canada. This is a 24-hour crisis line staffed by volunteer crisis counselors in Winnipeg. Callers can be referred to their local CPC. Appointments can also be made at our center and clients can be connected to their counselors by calling this number.

One of the hardest calls that I personally handled was one in which a young Christian man called me from a Toronto hospital where his girlfriend was in the process of aborting their child. His heart breaking, this young man asked me to pray for him, his girlfriend and their baby.



***The fact that we are all
in need of God's grace
puts us beside our
clients instead of
above them.***



Referring clients to seek further help than what a peer counselor can provide is also another part of the job. Examples include: doctor appointments, employment assistance, sexual, substance and physical abuse counseling, depression and other mental illness counseling, housing programs, job search programs, education and high school diploma programs, nutrition and parenting programs, relationship counseling, post abortion counseling, and Alpha Bible study.

Post Abortion Counseling

What is Post Abortion stress? It is the chronic inability to:

- Process the painful thoughts and emotions about a crisis pregnancy and subsequent abortion, (the guilt, the anger and the grief).
- Identify (much less grieve) the loss that occurred.
- Come to peace with God, herself (or himself) and others.

Abortion is a childbearing loss. With any childbearing loss there is a natural grieving process that brings healing. When that grieving process is denied, healing is denied. Delayed abortion grief results in a collection of symptoms known as “Post Abortion Stress.”

The psychological symptoms of post abortion stress include:

- Distress when reading or seeing abortion related articles or programs
- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Depression and thoughts of suicide
- Anniversary syndrome
- Psychological “numbing”
- Preoccupation with becoming pregnant again
- Preoccupation with the aborted child
- Anxiety over fertility and childbearing issues.
- Interruption of the bonding process with present or future children
- Development of eating disorders
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Nightmares and flashbacks.
- Self-punishing or self-degrading behavior
- Troubled relationships

Spiritual aspects

Most clients believe that God does not approve of abortion and therefore He will not want anything to do with them. It is important to help the client understand the basic information of what God’s Word says about the sanctity of human life. They also need to know and be reassured of God’s love for them and His forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Anna is an alcoholic. Her three children have been taken by Child and Family Services. Why bother carry this baby to term, it will just be taken away. It will be damaged by the alcohol . . . worthless. So Anna is planning to abort this one, which would make five abortions. Her eyes are filled with shame.

A great need

In 1995, 106,658 abortions were performed in Canada! (Statistics Canada, Therapeutic Abortions 1995) The number of abortions in North America in the past 25 years is over 37 million (Allan Guttmacher Institute “Induced Abortion” 1998). World-wide it is estimated that 50 million abortions are performed each year.

The Bible encourages us to, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute, speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Prov 31:8-9). We are to, “Rescue those being led away to death; hold those staggering towards slaughter. If you say ‘But we knew nothing about this’ does not He who guards your life know it? Will He not repay each person according to what he has done?” (Prov 24:11-12).

Qualifications

Perhaps you’re wondering what sort of qualifications someone needs to work in this environment?

Before volunteering at CPC I had to sign an Evangelical Statement of Faith. Included in this statement of faith was the acknowledgement of everyone’s need for God’s grace. We cannot earn our salvation



by good works. The idea that we are totally depraved and cannot earn our salvation is extremely important for two primary reasons:

1. If we think that we can earn our salvation, then our motives are not based out of love for our clients and God. It also diminishes the necessity of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore does not glorify Him.
2. The fact that we are all in need of God’s grace puts us beside our clients instead of above them. “There but for the grace of God go I.”

According to the volunteer training manual there are four general qualities that enable helpers to develop good relationships with their clients: empathy, genuineness, unconditional love, and humility.

1. *Empathy*: A Biblical comparison can be made with the word “compassion.” “And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col 3:12). The Bible teaches us that biblical compassion motivates people to help others; e.g. the Good Samaritan. Also in James 2:15-17 we read: “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food, if one says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead.”
2. *Genuineness*: is the quality of being the same in actual character as in outward



Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

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The theology of dirty jokes

In his book, *I Was Just Wondering*, Philip Yancy recounts one of C.S. Lewis' most interesting arguments for God's existence. Lewis claimed that only a theistic worldview could explain the existence of dirty jokes.

The argument was pretty simple. If you observe the animal world, things like excretion and reproduction are rather mundane affairs. These functions certainly don't cause animals to become either bashful or embarrassed. But though we share them with animals, we humans have always treated these two functions as something out of the ordinary. With juvenile smirks, whoopee cushions and double entendre jokes we treat these functions as different.

But why?

Evolutionists don't have any rationale for this different treatment. Are we supposed to believe that dirty jokes help perpetuate the species? In fact, there is no natural reason to treat either of these functions as anything other than routine. And if there is no reason to treat these functions as different, then there is no reason to tell dirty jokes about them. We don't tell jokes about common ordinary events.

The Christian rationale for this different treatment is much clearer. Excretion is not a natural act in our worldview. It is a pungent reminder of sin and our fallen state, and so we blush. Reproduction too, is different, because God has set it apart from normal human activity and guarded it with rules and requirements. And even while society ignores those rules they still can't help but recognize that reproduction is something special. They don't want to honor the rules God has set out, so they mock them with dirty jokes.

.....

Duh!

Some things are so obvious they shouldn't need to be said. But here are two obvious things that bear repeating over and over again:

1. *Abortions are not medically necessary!* Canada's federal government has repeatedly claimed that abortions are medically necessary. Since provincial governments have to pay for any medical service that is medically necessary the argument was then made that the provinces had to pay for abortions. But when Canadian Alliance MP Gary Breitkreuz asked the government to provide documents proving abortions were medically necessary the feds were forced to admit they didn't have any evidence.
2. *Homosexuals can change!* The latest study to speak on the issue says that some highly motivated homosexuals can indeed change their sexual orientation. This shouldn't be surprising to Christians, since we recognize that we are all sinful, and that certain temptations will affect some more than others (1 Cor 6:9-11). At the same time we know that in Jesus we can find the strength to fight these temptations.

Sources: *Campaign Life Coalition National News* May 2001; *World* May 19, 2001; *Edmonton Journal* May 9, 2001

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Analysis paralysis

I recently diagnosed myself with a case of analysis paralysis. Whenever an opportunity for evangelism came up, I spent so much time thinking about exactly what I should say I missed the opportunity to actually say it – my thinking kept me from acting.

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A Lutheran friend had a simple solution to this problem. Quoting Martin Luther he told me that when I was unsure of what to say, I should "sin boldly." It didn't sound like the best advice until he went into the Greek root of the word "sin." It means, "to miss the mark." He noted that without God's help we would always miss the mark anyway, so rather than stop trying, we should let fly boldly and ask God to bless our efforts as sinful and inadequate as they might be.

It is important to be both tactful and clear when presenting the gospel, so thought should definitely be involved, but too much thought can lead to too little action.

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Joke of the month

An elderly man who had been fitted with a hearing aid a week earlier returned to his doctor's office for a checkup.

"How do you like the hearing aid?" the doctor asked.

"Fine," the patient replied.

"How does the family like it?" the doctor inquired.

"Oh, I haven't told them yet," the patient answered, "but I've changed my will three times."

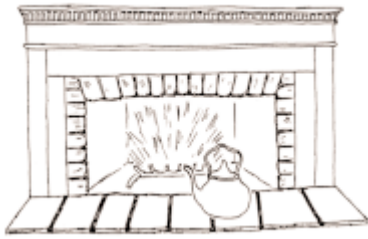
Source: Michael Hodgin's *1001 More Humorous Illustrations*

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Quote of the month

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go."

Abraham Lincoln



HOMEFRONT

Raising a God-fearing child

by Jane DeGlint

When I was a child, I had no idea that I was being raised. To be sure, I was very aware of my parents' ongoing concern for me. As a matter of fact, it often felt that my life was completely under parental control. My parents seemed to know my every move and reacted accordingly. They caught me reading in bed and took my book away. They found me in my after-dinner hideout and ordered me to help with the dishes. Moreover, they unilaterally determined my diet and my dress code. Yet I had no idea that there was any method to their educational words and correctional actions.

Not until I overheard a conversation between my mother and my aunt. These capable women raised large families in small houses. It was a thing I considered natural to them. Women who can bear children, can certainly raise them too. But apparently it was not quite so simple. My ears perked at the frank exchange of thoughts between the two most sensible child-rearers in my life.

"When you have so many, you sometimes don't know what to do."

"At those turbulent moments my Dad used to say, 'I wish I could hit you all at once!'"

"But they are all so different. The one only listens to spankings, while the other is crushed for days when you barely strike her a gentle blow."

"Are you ever right?"

"And you know what makes it all the worse? Sometimes you have the feeling that your husband undoes all your efforts. He can be worse than a child."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I feel totally defeated when I get angry with the children, and he says, 'What is the big deal?'"

"O, dear, yes, that is difficult."

My world shook. All certainties tumbled. A husband who is like a child?

Unimaginable. Fortunately, it was my aunt who said that. Had it been my father who was thus described, I would have been devastated. Still, the extent of the shock effect reached far past the dethroning of husbands. I suddenly had to come to grips with the unexpected reality of frustrated parents and double standards.

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Isn't there anything that can guide us through the difficulties of childrearing?

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In the process I came to the realization that childrearing is not done automatically, like breathing. It takes deliberate action to raise a child. Parents must take charge of this task and consciously execute it. However, they make mistakes. To make it even more complicated, not all children are the same. Different children need different approaches, even within one family. And last, but definitely not least, parents sometimes do not even agree between themselves how the childrearing ought to be done. It apparently even happens that one parent opposes the other. This lack of understanding between parents aggravates the problem and can even undermine a wife's respect for her husband.

After this catastrophic discovery my world was never the same again. From that moment on I looked at my uncle with different eyes. How can it be that this man gives his wife a hard time as if he were a child? My attitude toward my own father had changed as well. Would he also have that occasional urge to hit us all at once? Was forceful peacekeeping a common male trait? But it was my sense of justice which

suffered the most severe blow. Up till that time I had supposed that one particular transgression led to one particular punishment. Whether my brother or I failed to clear the table should make no difference for the corrective measure. Alas, this appeared not to be so.

Remarkably, I am still faced with the same issues, be they placed in a far wider perspective. Observing other parents and being a parent myself, I know now that these matters are part of the complex pattern of life. On the one hand childrearing takes place deliberately and systematically; on the other hand it is applied with consideration and intuition. On the one hand parents draw one line, on the other hand they sometimes represent two opposing views on childrearing. On the one hand the father would go through fire for his children, on the other hand he indeed sometimes has to fight the urge to hit them all at once.

One thing rises as a beacon above these flows and directions, above these inclinations and tendencies, above these customs and expectations. Believing parents have to lead their children to spiritual maturity. Fathers and mothers prepare their offspring for a life of service to the Lord by teaching the young ones how to fear God and obey His commandments. This does not change. We are accountable to our covenant Lord, who promises to bless us. As part of this blessing we receive the ability to walk in His ways. This wholesome way of life must be taught from generation to generation. That is the Lord's will for His people.

Yet, there are a variety of ways in which the goal of raising God-fearing children can be achieved. There are cultural differences – the family of a missionary in Irian Jaya has a different set of rules than a family who lives in downtown Burlington. There are historical differences – in

the Middle Ages a child had to be trained for a society which differs greatly from ours. There are social differences – the routines and chores for a child who grows up on a farm stand in contrast to the concerns of a youngster who is raised in a family where both parents are physicians.

Initially it may appear confusing. So many ways! Isn't there anything that can guide us through the difficulties of child-rearing? And indeed, there is a constant. The theme has stayed the same throughout the many variations in time, place and condition.

This theme is the shaping of the will. This process is started by the parents, and continues throughout the child's entire life. Parents usually relax when they realize that they have been able to bring their child to the point that he or she has his or her will under control. All other aspects of child-rearing, such as teaching skills and instilling moral values, are dependent upon a pliable will.

Before parents are able to shape the will of their child, they must master their own will. Parents must be able to control themselves, not only in the way they deal with their child, but also in the way they deal with each other. When there is a disagreement concerning a course of action, it is important that the parents have themselves well in hand. Acting on their emotions will not help. They must be able to force themselves to come to a reasonable solution, which is pleasing to the Lord. Their own methods or reference may have to recede to the background.

An example may help. A father may always have dreamed of reasoning with his children about what is right and wrong, and why it is so. However, his wife is more straightforward and wants immediate obedience. When one of their children fails to obey, the mother usually spansks the transgressor without delay. Rules cannot be broken. The child must learn to adjust his will. The father, on the other hand, would like to know why the child did not do what was expected of him. Once that is understood, he will explain to his son or daughter that certain things ought to be done a certain way, and that anarchy is a miserable condition, and that from now on the child must obey.

The question of right and wrong between these two parents is not completely



predictable. The mother will teach her children to listen without protesting, but she may unwittingly train them to obey outwardly, without the heart. As a result her child may go his or her own way once the teenage years of beginning independence have been reached. However, the father's method is not fool proof either. He may try to reach his child's heart, but he does not teach him or her that in many circumstances only unconditional obedience will do.



Before parents are able to shape the will of their child, they must master their own will.



Parents do not resolve this issue by downplaying each other's approach. The what-is-the-big-deal attitude (to quote my uncle) is not very beneficial or respectful. Rather, it is frustrating at best and marriage-undermining at worst. An open discussion is much more helpful. Parents who want to reach a common approach, will find one. Certain situations need immediate justice; others call for an elaborate analysis. Each parent must appreciate the judgment of the other, and not question his/her partner's chosen procedure publicly. When a child sees that his parents have their own will under control also in this respect, he will in turn be better prepared to subdue his will to that of his parents, and ultimately to that of his Lord.

The strength of the parental will is connected to the shaping of the child's will

in another way as well. In childrearing much depends on the keeping of one's word. A child is expected to do what he promises, but he learns from his parents how that is done. If a parent offers to take his children to the park, he must do so, whether he still feels like it or not. Likewise, if a parent says he will punish his son, he must do so, whether he still feels like it or not. That way a child learns to obey at a deeper level. He learns that one must even keep those promises which will bring pain, that way showing righteousness as described in Psalm 15.

The complete picture has one more dimension. We must still see the place of grace in childrearing. There are times when a parent by right and obligation ought to punish a child. But having considered the child's character, the complex situation, the potential repercussions of the punishment and the possible benefit of lenience, the parent may decide not to proceed with the corrective measure. This does not mean that the crime is overlooked, but that grace was shown. When grace is applied wisely, it teaches the remorseful child how the power of gratitude leads to good works.

There are many ways to raise a God-fearing child. But all these different approaches converge at the beginning and at the end. They start on the same foundation and lead to the same destiny. Childrearing is subject to the will of God and must have as goal a life of service to the Lord of the covenant. May the Lord bless all educational efforts which are done in His name to His glory. And may our children grow up in the knowledge that their parents lead them on the path of righteousness.

Popular, but are they any good?

The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life

by Bruce H. Wilkinson
Multnomah Publishers, 2001.
93 pages; Hardcover; \$15.99 Can

The Secrets of the Vine: Breaking Through to Abundance

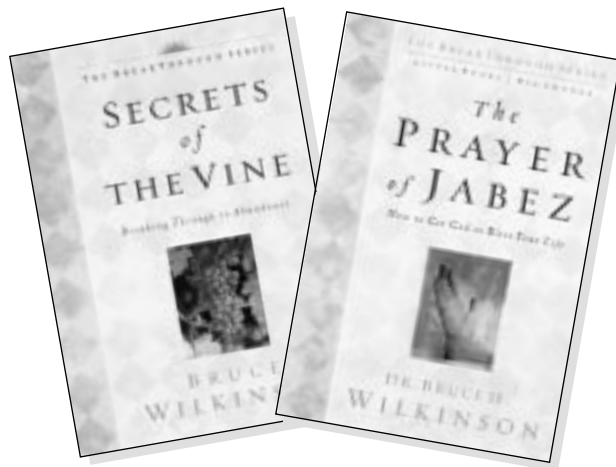
by Bruce H. Wilkinson
Multnomah Publishers, 2001.
126 pages; Hardcover; \$15.99 Can.

Reviewed by Johan D. Tangelder

Why has a religious tract-like booklet sold 3 to 4 million copies and counting? Why are pastors buying it by the carton and giving it away to their congregations? Until Bruce H. Wilkinson, founder of “Walk Thru the Bible Ministries,” wrote *The Prayer of Jabez*, few people had ever heard of Jabez, an obscure character who appears in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, a chapter of fragments which seem to have little or no connection with one another. Yet Wilkinson manages to write a best seller on a man of whom we know nothing beyond what is communicated in these two Bible verses. All we know is that Jabez’s life became a contradiction to his name; the son of sorrows having been freed from the pain in life, attained a greater happiness and reputation than his brothers.

Wilkinson has been praying the prayer of Jabez daily since 1972 when he was a senior student at Dallas Theological Seminary. And for years he has given a four point “sermon” of this prayer at conferences:

1. *We should seek God’s Blessing.* “When we seek God’s blessing as the ultimate value in life, we are throwing ourselves entirely into the river of His will and power and purposes for us.” Wilkinson adds, “Let me tell you a guaranteed by-product of sincerely seeking His blessing: Your life will become marked by miracles.” And he says, “What counts is



1 Chronicles 4:9,10

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain.” Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that thou wouldst bless me and enlarge my border, and that thy hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from harm so that it might not hurt me!” And God granted what he asked.

knowing who you want to be and asking for it. Through a simple, believing prayer, you can change your future. You can change what happens one minute from now.”

2. *We should seek to enlarge our territory.* Jabez wanted more influence, more responsibility, and more opportunity to make a mark for the God of Israel. What does this mean for us? “If you’re doing your business God’s way, it’s not only right to ask for more, but He is waiting for you to ask.”
3. *We should depend on the strong hand of God.* When we depend on God and ask for His mighty presence, we will see tremendous results that can be explained only as from the hand of God. For the Christian dependence on God is just another word for power. How do we get this power? “God is watching and waiting for you to ask.”
4. *We should flee from evil.* “Do you believe that a supernatural God is going to show up to keep you from evil and protect your spiritual investment? Jabez did believe, and he acted on his belief. Thereafter his life was spared from grief and pain that evil brings.” Through Christ we can live the victorious life – “not in temptation or defeat.”

In other words, Wilkerson does not afflict the comfortable or comfort the afflicted. He explains and expands on Jabez’s prayer using carefully chosen themes for the encouragement and comfort of the Christians’ privatized faith. When I read about the boundless optimism and emphasis on well being and wealth throughout the booklet, I thought of our impoverished friends we met and worked with in the Philippines. Its opening sentence immediately focuses on the immense value of the individual: “This little book you’re holding is about what happens when ordinary Christians decide to reach for an extraordinary life – which, as it turns out, is exactly the kind God promises.” There is no mention of difficult and time-consuming tasks, such as counseling a troubled couple for years. While Wilkinson was on the island of Patmos as a tourist, he had a brief talk with a man whose marriage was on the rocks. When his cruise ship was about to depart, a young couple came running towards it. When they got close enough to see Wilkinson, they started yelling, “We’re together.” This is just one of his numerous quick encounters with a happy ending. In short, Wilkerson fast-food spirituality is short on the meaning of perseverance in the midst of trials,

persecution, or Christians suffering from prolonged severe illness. His understanding of the Christian faith vastly differs from the early church fathers! Cyprian (ca. 200-258), the Bishop of Carthage, wrote to the people of Thibarisa a letter exhorting them to martyrdom. "For there comes the time, beloved brethren, which our Lord long ago foretold and taught us was approaching, saying, 'The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.'"

We all know far too well what devilish thoughts and desires must be like.

Secrets of the Vine is an exposition of John 15:1, 2, 5, 8. Wilkinson reminds Christians of what they can do for the Lord, encouraging them to be innovative and visionary when it comes to helping others. The booklet overflows with exuberant optimism. God seems to be at the beck and call of Christians. Wilkerson says, "The secrets of the vine that I will show you . . . are our Father's amazing plan to keep His children flourishing – physically, emotionally, and spiritually." For example, he claims that most Christians fail to connect troubling circumstances with God's purposeful intervention because of sin; "sadness, because of the unnecessary pain and turmoil they've endured, sometimes for years." He also claims that God does not apply pain when a more pleasant method would do just as well. Such statements can lead to grave misunderstandings and emotional anguish. If I don't get healed is God continually disciplining me because of some sin? Wilkinson's simplistic and shallow explanation of Scripture leaves much to be desired!

Where can you get these books?

Some of the books we reviewed are harder to get than others. Here's how you can track down all the books in this issue.

A Journey in Grace

Copies can be ordered at www.richbarrypress.com. You can also call 1-803-750-0408. This publishing company is based in the US and offers a 40% discount for orders of ten books or more. You might want to order at least ten copies. I ordered 20 Journey in Grace books and now have only one copy left.

The Covenant of Love

You can e-mail Premier Publishing at premier@premier.mb.ca or write to them at One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R2J 3X5. In Australia this book is available at the Pro Ecclesia Bookshop, PO Box 189, Kelmscott W. Australia 6111.

Journey Through the Night

You can e-mail Inheritance Publications at inhpubl@telusplanet.net or call them at 1-800-563-3594. You can also check out their website at www.telusplanet.net/public/inhpubl/webip/ip.htm. Good luck typing that all in correctly!

Standing on the Promises

Your local Christian bookstore should be able to order this book. If not, it is available on their website www.canonpress.org.

Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church

This is again a book Christian bookstores should be able to order. If not, you can either call the Reformed Free Publishing Association at 1-616-224-1518 or check out their website at www.rfpa.org.

The rest of the books reviewed in this issue should either be readily available at your local Christian bookstore (if they don't have them in stock they should be able to order them) or at your local secular bookstore. If you want to order them online a good website is www.amazon.com. This is the biggest online bookstore in the world, and it is based in the US. A Canadian equivalent, that isn't quite as large, is www.chapters.ca. Unfortunately Australia doesn't seem to have any large bookstores online.



Calvinism by story: a novel approach

A Journey in Grace: A Theological Novel

by Richard P. Belcher
Richbarry Press
154 pages; Softcover; \$8.95 US

Reviewed by Rev. P. H. Holtvluwer

A Theological Novel. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. That's what it said, alright – *A Theological Novel*. I was familiar with the historical novel, the autobiographical novel, and even the science-fiction novel. But a theological novel? Never heard of it!

Be that as it may, I was in for a very pleasant surprise. For what Dr. Richard P. Belcher succeeds in doing in this “novel” approach is to teach the reader the five points of Calvinism by way of a compelling narrative – no easy feat, I can assure you! All too often, discussions of TULIP¹ or of the *Canons of Dort* take place in a sterilized classroom setting, removed from the grind of daily life. Catechism students regularly have trouble seeing the relationship between God's election and their own life, which only makes it more difficult for them to grasp the full significance of TULIP. Dr. Belcher's book goes a long way in bringing what often appears to be abstract theology into the concrete reality of day-to-day life.

In the first chapter we are immediately introduced to the main character, young seminary student Ira Fife Pointer. It is with Ira that the reader goes on “a journey in grace,” as he seeks the answer to a question he was never asked before, “Young man – are you a Calvinist?” Growing up in an Arminian Baptist setting, Ira doesn't know what to say and this starts him off on his quest for insight into Calvinism. The plot centers around this search for knowledge

and the reader experiences the scales falling from Ira's eyes as he consults professors and digs into the Bible to seek answers to all the hard questions concerning depravity, election, atonement, grace, and perseverance.

The story line, however, is far from a mere intellectual exercise, for the very theology Ira learns impacts his approach to the unfolding events of his life. The story is propelled by various sub-plots and tensions that make it hard to put the book down. There is the excitement of taking his first charge in a small rural church and the trepidation of meeting the love of his life, Terry. It is together with his girlfriend that Ira asks the hard questions about TULIP that we all might have asked – *isn't God unfair by not electing everyone to eternal life? Doesn't the Bible say that Christ died for the sins of the whole world?* The way these questions (and many others) are answered is one of the most helpful and compelling aspects of the book.

But in addition to these positive events, Ira also experiences dramatic con-

frontation with an anti-Calvinistic professor and an irate former pastor. He undergoes a personal struggle with an old friend over his changing views, and faces the daunting challenge of a new call to a spiritually weak parish. It is in these difficult moments of struggling and searching that Ira experiences the comfort of God's sovereignty, grace and plan of election. Dr. Belcher succeeds in weaving the tapestry of characters and events together in a gripping narrative that will satisfy both your love for a good story and your thirst for answers to pressing questions.

Dr. Richard P. Belcher will undoubtedly be a new author to most of our readers, and the reason for this is that he is writing in a different church context. Dr. Belcher was born and raised in the fold of the Southern Baptist church of the USA, a church which historically has strong Calvinistic roots. In the larger Baptist church two streams of theology co-exist: Arminianism and Calvinism. This co-existence is often not peaceful, just as the theologies themselves are antithetical. One of



**EDITOR'S CHOICE –
BOOK OF THE YEAR**

the fascinating things about Dr. Belcher is that he grew up in the Arminian stream but, through various influences and much Bible study, he became convinced of the truth of Calvinism.² Thus he is now in the same tradition as the likes of the well-known C.H. Spurgeon and A.W. Pink. His work today as author and senior faculty member of Columbia International University is performed with the goal of bringing the Southern Baptist church back to its Calvinistic roots.³

As Reformed people we can only applaud this effort of Dr. Belcher. Bringing the light of the Reformation to modern Baptist circles can only be beneficial. His books are selling well in Baptist circles and there are encouraging signs that at least the Southern Baptists are moving back toward a Calvinistic stand on God's sovereignty.⁴ When Arminianism is debunked and God's sovereign grace championed, we have cause for rejoicing. In fact, we should encourage the professor to go further in his own "journey" and write a theological novel on the covenant of grace and its connection to infant baptism. Who knows? Maybe the Lord will work another Reformation to bring Baptists back into the fold they once left.

In the meantime, however, I am convinced that this novel can be a useful tool for our ministers/elders to instruct the senior Catechism students in the five points of Calvinism. The book can readily be used in conjunction with a study on the *Canons of Dort*. The writing style is easy to follow, the chapters short and clearly marked for content, and the story captivating. Students will want to keep reading and learning, a happy experience for the teacher as well. More than ever, our youth, growing up in a post-modern culture, need clear biblical answers to their difficult questions since less and less does this generation simply take the word of the previous one. Pat answers or even quotes from the Confessions are not enough for the mind which wishes to find things out for itself. Teachers need to meet the challenge by

taking students back to the origin of the Confessions, showing them how and why the church confesses these teachings. Dr. Belcher's novel enables students to see for themselves the biblical truths long-taught by the *Canons of Dort* and thus provides a valuable service for us today.

.....

***I am recommending
this novel for use in the
Catechism setting or
the like. I would not
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general reading by
young people as the
theology is quite
weighty.***

.....

Because the story is written from a Baptist perspective, certain points of theology, though peripheral to the story, do arise and will need to be carefully explained to the students. For example, "seeking the will of God" for one's life is a strong undercurrent in Ira's life (e.g. p. 95, 150). What is meant is looking for that inner guidance of the Holy Spirit for making key decisions in one's life. The Spirit will actually lead you to say with confidence: "*this is the will of God for my life.*" Without wishing to diminish the role of prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit, this line of thinking tends toward subjectivism. The decision as to what God's will is rests on an inner conviction rather than an outer authority. Further, such thinking can even plague a Christian who later realizes that what he had *thought* was the Lord's will for his life turned out to be a big mistake. The will of God for our lives is to be sought in the Scriptures, not in an inner feeling.

Other caveats could be mentioned, such as the concept of the "invisible"

church which underlies the author's references to the body of Christ. Further, there is a strong stress on a specific moment of conversion in a Christian's life, rather than on a life-long conversion process. These points run in a different direction than the line of Reformed thinking and need to be taken into account. However, instead of being a detriment, these divergences should be seen as golden opportunities to teach the senior students about these different theological views.

As will be clear by now, I am recommending this novel for use in the Catechism setting or the like, where these finer points can be explained. I would not recommend it for general reading by young people as the theology is quite weighty. However, for those with some experience in these doctrines and who wish to study them more in-depth, this novel should prove to be refreshingly helpful, and not at all a problem for our Reformed faith. In fact, with some diligent study, it should serve to sharpen our Reformed sensitivities. You will both enjoy the novel and learn a great deal in the process.

¹TULIP is a well-known acronym for the five points of Calvinism: **T**otal depravity, **U**nconditional election, **L**imited atonement, **I**nvincible grace, and **P**erseverance of the Saints.

²In fact, this first novel of his is, in some respects, auto-biographical.

³I gleaned this information from personal e-mail correspondence with the author.

⁴With Professor Belcher as a leading figure, there is a group within the Convention of Southern Baptists that is trying to persuade the Convention to return to its historic position as captured in their Calvinistic Confessions, namely the Second London Confession of Faith (1688), later adopted in America as the Philadelphia Confession. These Confessions are largely reproductions of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), with modifications made, predictably, in the areas of infant baptism and church polity.

TEN BOOKS

ministers would like their congregations to read

by Jon Dykstra

Ministers read more than the average member of their congregation, so it just seemed natural to ask them for their recommendations. But instead of asking them for their personal favorites they were asked to choose up to five books they wish their congregations would read. These are, after all, men who instruct us each Sunday – who better to ask for enlightening reading material?

So the message went out over e-mail and less technological means to conservative reformed ministers all over the world (ok, maybe it was just Canada and Australia). Twelve ministers graciously responded with their top choices. As it might be expected, the ministers ended up nominating a number of the same books. In fact, the first three books were nominated by as many as half the ministers.

After that the consensus wasn't as clear. The final seven selections were named by only one or two ministers but were all very intriguing selections. Hopefully you'll find some of them intriguing too.

The Covenant of Love:

Exploring our relationship with God

by Clarence Stam

Premier Publishing, 1999
208 pages; softcover;
\$11.75 Can.



The Covenant of Love was recommended by more ministers than any other book on this list. If you've been born into a covenantal church, but don't know what that means, read this book. As one minister put it, "North American evangelism, by and large, does not understand the covenant or draw comfort from it. Our members need to know their covenant theology. Here it is!" Once you understand the covenant you'll

be better able to understand just how the Reformed view of the Bible differs from other denominations. Even as they recommended this book, a couple of ministers noted that it was not an easy book to get into, but that the "persevering reader will be rewarded."

The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life

by J. Douma

P&R Publishing, 1996
410 pages; hardcover;
\$38.95 Can.



This book on ethics was another very popular selection. It is, "an explanation of the ten commandments that interacts with many ethical concerns in our time." It discusses the Ten Commandments but those discussions expand to things like abortion, civil disobedience and other controversial topics.

Institutes of the Christian Religion

by John Calvin

William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995
703 pages; paperback;
\$51.99 Can.



At 703 pages you should be sure to pick this book up with your knees, not your back. But it's huge in other ways too. One minister described the *Institutes* as "a jewel of inestimable value that has served the church well for centuries, and will undoubtedly continue to do so. They set forth the doctrine of Holy Scripture as we confess

it, in a comprehensive, and yet a sufficiently simple way that the average member in the congregation who sincerely wishes to learn, can understand." Another minister suggested these books should be read several times throughout a person's lifetime.

I've only just started reading the *Institutes* but in my brief skimming I've already found answers to questions asked by Mormons, Catholics and Pentecostals. The version I'm reading (available online at <http://www.reformed.org/books/institutes/>) is an older translation but it's readable in small doses.

Knowing God

by J.I. Packer

Intervarsity Press, 1993
286 pages; paperback;
\$12.99 US



This may be the best selling book on the list. James Packer "undergirds his arguments with Scripture and avoids offering simplistic answers to complex questions." The book is "a popular Reformed explanation of who God is." In chapter after chapter it describes God's attributes. The title sums up what this book is about.

Deadline

by Randy Alcorn

Multnomah Publishers, 2000
432 pages; paperback;
\$21.99



This was the only fiction book to receive more than one nomination. It tells the story of three close friends, a Christian, an atheist, and one man who isn't too sure of what he is. When the Christian and the atheist are murdered, the one remaining

friend investigates the crime. But the dead Christian's story is also told, even as he enters heaven.

The book was described as an "edifying use of leisure time." Another minister attached a caution to his recommendation, noting that the book's view of heaven goes beyond what is revealed in Scripture, so it is important to read the book's "afterword" as well. A longer review of this book can be found in last year's Summer Reading issue, July/August, 2000. We also review another of Alcorn's books, *Lord Foulgrin's Letters*, in this issue.

How Now Shall We Live?

by Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey
 Tyndale House Publishers, 1999
 574 pages Hardcover;
 \$36.99 Can.



Colson is one of my favorite authors. Someone once tried to insult me by telling me I wrote like Colson. I don't know how that could be an insult!

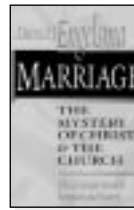
This book's size might make it intimidating, but it is a thoroughly readable book. The frequent use of illustrations and stories make the book's theological points easy to understand. It was recommended because, "the authors show that Christianity is more than a private belief, more than personal salvation. They boldly proclaim that the Christian world and life view is the one and only hope for a dying world." If you don't really understand exactly what a worldview is, or what people mean when they talk about relativism and post-modernism and other "ism's," this book will make it all understandable.

A longer review of this book can be found in the October 2000 issue of *Reformed Perspective*.

Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church

The Covenant-Bond in Scripture and History

by David J. Engelsma
 Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1998
 239 pages; hardcover; \$24.95 US



I had this book on my shelf for over a year and never opened it. The lengthy title just turned me off. But after a minister nominated it I decided to take a look. It turns out this is a fascinating book, whether you are married or not (though it obviously has bit more application to it if you are married). As one minister described it, "this book provides clear biblical instruction . . . concerning sex, children, divorce and remarriage. It is a powerful defense of a life-long unbreakable marriage bond." It's a deep book that is still a very enjoyable read. That's hard to do with theology!

The Cost of Discipleship

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
 Simon and Schuster, 1995
 316 pages; paperback;
 \$19.00 Can.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran minister in Germany during World War II who died for his faith. In *The Cost of Discipleship* he, "explains various scripture passages and holds out a real challenge to take our discipleship seriously. He's great at showing the corners we so often like to cut." A long excerpt of this book is available online at www.amazon.com. When you find the book just look to the left and click on "read an excerpt."

Standing on the Promises:

A Handbook of Biblical Childrearing

by Douglas Wilson
 Canon Press, 1997
 168 pages; paperback; \$14.95 Can.



Douglas Wilson was mentioned by several ministers but this is the only one of his books to receive two nominations. It is a book on covenantal childrearing, "very relevant to Christians who live in a time where discipline is pitted against compassion, rather than being an outflow of it." Be warned though! "Douglas Wilson isn't politically correct, and he doesn't skirt the issues . . . he gets us thinking. More importantly, he gets us acting, hopefully." Wilson is also a major force behind the magazine *Credenda Agenda* so you can take a peak at his writing online at www.credenda.org.

Outgrowing the Ingrown Church

by C. John Miller
 Zondervan Publishing House, 1986
 176 pages; paperback;
 \$12.99 US



Outgrowing the Ingrown Church is an evangelism book. If you think you have an "ingrown" church (is it 90 per cent Dutch by any chance?) this might be a very useful book. Though only one minister nominated it, the theme of outreach and evangelism was very common among all the ministers' lists. C. John Miller was a Presbyterian pastor and professor who became concerned with the way his church regarded evangelism. Though they still supported missionaries, personal evangelism was almost nonexistent. Again, this sounds pretty familiar. He wrote his book to address this crisis.

KIDS BOOKS

Journey Through The Night

by Anne De Vries

Inheritance Publications, 2001
372 pages; Softcover; \$19.95 Can.

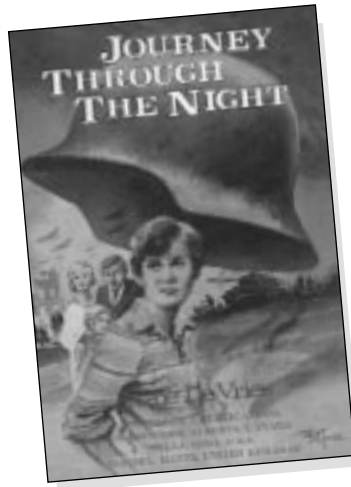
Reviewed by Ike Van Dyke

Christian writers these days just don't know subtlety. They write about "miraculous" stories where the miraculous occurs with a regularity that robs it of all wonder. Instead of pitting the Christian character against worldly temptations, they have the hero wrestling actual demons, or even Satan himself.

These writers, they just don't know! But back when I was a kid, now *those* people were writers! Authors like Piet Prins, and Anne De Vries wrote stories that could have actually happened in the real world. Though no actual demons made an appearance in their books, the demonic presence was felt in a much more powerful way, through the actions of human underlings.

Yup, those were the days . . .

Fortunately for us, the people at Inheritance Publications have also realized what a treasure trove this older fiction is, and they are reissuing some of it. *Journey Through The Night* is their latest offering. It tells the story of John De Boer, and his family as they live through the Second World War and the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. As German persecution increases, John and his father are compelled by their conscience into helping Jews and others wanted by the authorities. They enter into their work for the Dutch underground in an almost grudging manner, but they do the work because they know it is what God wants them to do. I read this part of the book quite differently as an adult. As a child I wondered why they weren't eager to jump into the work, into the adventure! As an adult I wonder whether I would have had the same courage, and wonder if I might be forced into finding out, what with the way things are regressing in our own country.



That is one of the strengths of this book, I think. It tells a story about the bravery of our fathers, and grandfathers, as they fought against an evil that we too might face one day. Of course it won't be the Nazis in our case, but it seems likely we will be similarly tested in one way or another. We can draw courage reading about how God was with his people in this war, whether they were caught by the Nazis, or survived until the Liberation.

This story is particularly compelling for teenagers since it focuses on the life of sixteen-year-old John, and his adventures among older soldiers and underground members. But I also know a number of adults who have reread this story and enjoyed it immensely, so I would recommend it for anyone 10 years old and up. As C.S. Lewis said, if a children's book isn't worth rereading as an adult, it isn't much of a book at all.

Old folks like myself, might remember that *Journey Through The Night* was originally a four book series. This new version includes all four books in one sturdy soft-covered edition. Kids probably aren't going to ask for these books themselves so maybe parents and grandparents out there should consider giving this one as a gift. Who knows, maybe you'll even be asked to read it out loud to your little descendents.

You Are Special

by Max Lucado

Crossway Books, 1997
31 pages; Hardcover; \$25.00 Can.

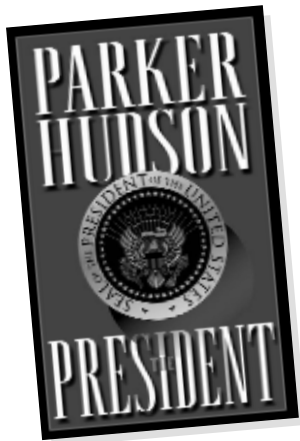
Reviewed by Jeanette Dykstra

This is not the usual sugary "you are special" kind of book. It is an interesting little story about a small village peopled by wooden puppets. They have *all* been made by the woodcarver who lives in a small hut above the village. Each one of the puppets has a bunch of gold stars and gray dots which they put on each other throughout the day. Popular, good-looking, athletic and smart puppets get a lot of gold stars, whereas the shy, average-looking, clumsy and ordinary puppets get mostly gray dots. Punchinello is in this last group and he doesn't think much of himself. The more gray dots he gets the worse he feels. Until he meets his maker.



It is an especially good book to read with small children (ages 5-7) who are not in the "in" group. It gives these children a different way of coping with their lack of popularity and their clumsiness. Their "maker" values them as His unique creation and He loves them. With this reminder, the awkward child can cope better.

ADULT BOOKS



The President

by Parker Hudson

Multnomah Books, 1998
500 pages; paperback; \$14.79 US

Reviewed by Ike Van Dyke

This is an adult book dealing with adult situations. No, the book isn't obscene, but it does deal with obscene situations we are already confronting and others we may have to confront soon.

The setting is the near future and William Harrison is the president of the United States. Under his administration abortion has become federally funded through all nine months of pregnancy, homosexuals and women have been integrated into combat roles in the military and sexual education in schools has taken a giant leap. The President is proud of these policies . . . until his family starts paying the price for them. His sister Rebecca, a nurse, has uncovered a scheme where women are deliberately getting pregnant and then selling the aborted fetuses. His brother, a navy officer, is on one of the first integrated combat ships, and is finding it hard to stay faithful to his wife when he has to spend six months in cramped quarters with other women. Another sister, Mary, doesn't quite know what to do when her daughter's school introduces virtual reality into the sex-ed classes.

But even while his family is telling him about their problems William is having troubles of his own. His government is in a gridlock, his marriage is not what it once was, and God is making it increasingly harder for William to ignore Him.

This is an educational book while also being a great read; I ended up finishing it in two days. Anyone interested in learning more about how religion and politics should interact, or who wants to know what to expect in the near future, will enjoy this book. It is a scary book, but only because it hits far too close to the mark. I highly recommend it.

The Screwtape Letters

by C.S. Lewis

Harper San Francisco, 2001
209 pages; Paperback; \$12.50 Can.

Lord Foulgrin's Letters

by Randy Alcorn

Multnomah Publishers Inc., 2000
302 pages; Trade paperback; \$22.99 Can.

Reviewed by Jeff Dykstra

Normally, we don't appreciate people going through our personal correspondence. However, from the 1600s on, people have been fascinated by other people's letters, whether real or fictional. In *Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis used the device of the correspondence between two devils to make his own points about the kind of temptations faced by human beings, temptations that may well have been orchestrated by hell itself. (See the description of the tongue in James 3!) More recently, Randy Alcorn, who admits his debt to Lewis, has created his own more involved version of the same story, titled *Lord Foulgrin's Letters*. If you are considering reading either of these books, you may have two questions ringing alarm bells in your head.

One is essentially negative: Does anyone have any business looking that deeply into the nature of evil, especially demonic evil? The other is skeptical, but basically positive: What can a look at the topsy-turvy perspective of the Evil One tell us about the way life should be?

So, first, is it dangerous to look at evil too closely? The apostle Paul certainly implies that we should not focus on evil, but on good, when he commands us to "think about... things" that are "noble, . . . right, . . . pure, . . . lovely. . . admirable, . . . anything . . . excellent or praiseworthy" (Phil 4:8, NIV). Paul also tells the Ephesians "it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret" (Eph 5:12).



One might well ask why C. S. Lewis and Randy Alcorn did not write more about angels instead of focusing on demons. Lewis himself felt that it was impossible for him to write authentically about angels, since he, as a sinful man, could not well portray the absolute submission of angels to God's will, while (sadly) we all

know far too well what devilish thoughts and desires must be like, since by nature we are also in rebellion against God. Alcorn, on the other hand, does include a letter from one of God's angels in his book, but you'll have to read the book to find out whether or not this "works."

Lewis's words do give us an idea of why looking at devils might be useful for a Christian. To realize that temptation often has a demonic source may help us take our own sin and misery more seriously, something the Heidelberg Catechism points out is all-important knowledge (Lord's Day 2). And while it may be shameful to self-righteously focus on others' sins (see Matt 7:1-5), we must be aware of our own sinful weaknesses, lest we fall prey to them. Lewis and Alcorn's books echo the great truth of Ephesians 6:12, that we are in the midst of a "struggle . . . against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

The Screwtape Letters and *Lord Foulgrin's Letters* may even be seen as obeying the command of Philippians 4:8 when we realize that Lewis's and Alcorn's devils cannot help speaking about "whatever is noble, . . . right . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . admirable, . . . excellent or praiseworthy." Of course, they speak in enmity rather than awe, but as long as we accept whatever they reject, we can learn much from their malicious advice.

Alcorn's book is particularly interesting, because it carries Lewis's premise just a little further. Whereas Lewis sticks to letters written by a senior devil to his protege during World War II, Alcorn alternates letters with chapters of narrative about the family targeted by Foulgrin, and sets the story in our own time, with references to e-mail and teenage despair. Even more importantly, while Lewis's account takes us up to the moment of conversion of a non-Christian, Alcorn deals with the demons' reaction to the conversion of the central human character, especially their attempt to make him an ineffective Christian.

What this means is that Alcorn deals with two issues that Reformed Christians also struggle with now: how to react to the "world," and how to respond to God in our

spiritual life. For instance, at the same time as Foulgrin extols the danger of pornography on the web, of broken families, of consumerism and materialism, he also rages against the "sludgebags" whom God gives physical bodies. Through Foulgrin's words and the narrative chapters, we see both the temptations of worldly pleasures and the true beauty of the pleasures God gives us in this physical life: the taste of a fine meal, the touch of a loving



***We all know far too well
what devilish thoughts
and desires must be
like.***



husband in a foot massage for his pregnant wife, the sight of a sunset, and the smell of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Alcorn thus attacks both the attitude of Christians who mistrust enjoyment in life and the foolishness of those who think that we can experience the world on the world's terms, and not be influenced by that world. Foulgrin gleefully mocks the stupidity of Christians who know that viewing someone else's nudity and sexual intimacy is wrong, but do not flinch from seeing the same in a movie. He is, of course, immensely pleased also by parents who keep poisonous household products on the top shelf to protect their children, but who pay no attention to the toxic ideas their children ingest through the Internet and the music they listen to.

Alcorn also uses Foulgrin's warnings to his student Squaltaint to show what the demons shudder at in the Christian life. Foulgrin advises Squaltaint to keep his human charge Jordan Fletcher away from "the forbidden Book" (the Bible) and "the forbidden squadron" (the communion of saints in the local congregation). He warns Squaltaint not to let Fletcher draw close to God in prayer, not to let Fletcher read good

Christian fiction, not to let Fletcher think of his life (his time, his thoughts and emotions, his money) as belonging to God rather than himself.

Are there still problems with reading about life from a demonic perspective? Any concerns with this way of writing about the spiritual and moral life of a Christian may be allayed by the fact that both Lewis and Alcorn show their demonic title characters losing in the ultimate sense. The only other problem that Reformed Christians might have with both these books is that they seem to imply that conversion is a matter of man's free will – the error of Arminianism. Whether this Arminian tendency is simply the devils' mistaken understanding is not clear, but Lewis at least seemed to be Arminian in his other writing (even while demonstrating that his own conversion was a result of God's persistence rather than his own search!). Despite this quibble, I would recommend both these books to any Christian who is open to considering just how effective and consistent his or her own Christian walk is, and in what areas he or she needs to plead for God's Spirit to work "against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

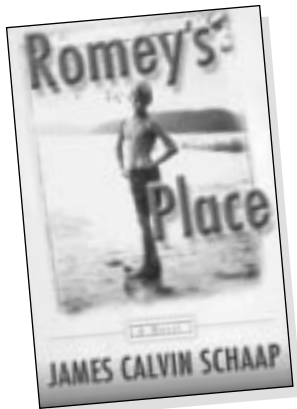
Romey's Place

by James Calvin Schaap
Baker Book House, 1999
288 pages; Paperback; \$ 23.99 Can.

Reviewed by Marya van Beelen

It's the late fifties and Lowell Prins and Romey Guttner are living in Easton, Wisconsin. Lowell's family is a pious one where church and Sunday school are an integrated part of life. His friend Romey lives in an abusive environment with a short-tempered father who has no fear of God. Consequently, Romey grows up without biblical principles and with many tough questions. But still, his life is mostly a lark. There are memorable events, like bible camp, the blossoming of puppy love, romping through the fields with Lowell, setting traplines and picking beans.

A LITTLE MORE SERIOUS



Despite the memorable events, life changes that summer. A Japanese bayonet is taken from a cupboard and Romey's angry father, dead-set against faith, sets the boys' adolescent friendship on edge. It appears the world's a mess when you don't believe.

This coming of age story actually unfolds in retrospect, as forty years later, Lowell sifts through the memories of his youth. He comes to terms with the bayonet's disappearance, the way events tragically unfolded long ago, as well as his parents' reaction to it. There is no judgment. Sometimes it takes a lifetime to discover that. But God is patient.

We recognize biblical references and phrases, and feel connected somehow with this close-knit and staunch community permeated with Dutch names. With empathy and perception Schaap describes adolescence, faith, and the friendship between Romey and Lowell in detail.

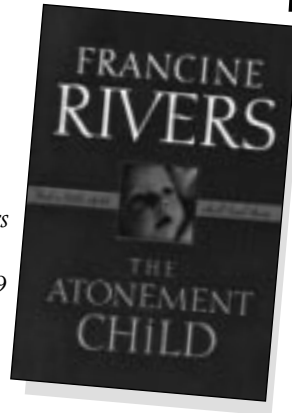
However, the elaborate descriptions sometimes make for tedious reading. The essence still comes through but it can get a little confusing.

Even though one teacher told me he discusses this novel in Grade 8, its theme serves any reader who considers him or herself blessed with faith but is at the same time intrigued by the greater scope of God's grace. James Schaap wrote a sensitive novel, rich in faith and conflict, and the courage to believe. One cannot but grow with him.

The Atonement Child

by Francine Rivers

Tyndale House Publishers, 1999
374 pages;
Paperback;
\$19.99 Can.



Reviewed by Jon Dykstra

I don't read "girl books" – if it makes you cry I'm not interested in it. But two friends forced this book on me. Any time I mentioned the "P" word, Pro-life, they would ask me if I'd read *The Atonement Child* yet. They brought it up repeatedly, and very enthusiastically. Finally I thought I would get it over with and actually read the thing.

Whoa!

This is hard hitting book, a powerful book. It tells the tale of Dynah Carey, a girl who has it all. She comes from a solid Christian family, is dating a sincere young man who's training to be a pastor, and she's attending a Christian college.

Then she's raped, and becomes pregnant.

The rape, thankfully, is never described, and is done with by page 18 of this 374-page book. The real story is about how Dynah and the people close to her react to her pregnancy. The unthinkable choice of abortion becomes more and more of a consideration to Dynah as her pregnancy causes her perfect world to crumble. Dynah ends up questioning her faith and God. Why did God let this happen to her?

Though the logical argument against abortion is dealt with briefly, this is primarily an emotional appeal against abortion. It is also a very effective appeal – this book makes people pro-life.

The rape makes this an adult book, but parents might want to give it to older teens and discuss the issues involved. It is informative and well written, and I'm just glad I was forced to read it.

Canadian History for Dummies

by Will Ferguson

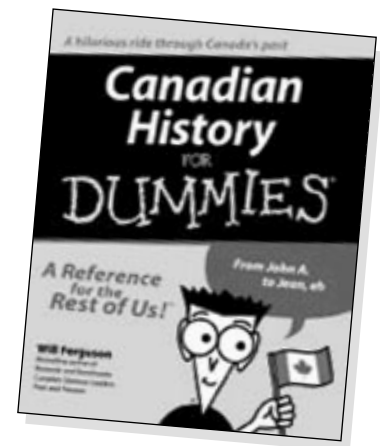
CDG Books, 2000.

481 pages; Paperback; \$27.99 Can.

Reviewed by James Dykstra

Since the bright yellow "Dummies" books already cover spirituality, golf, and HTML, it was only a matter of time until they tackled Canadian history. Like most of the Dummies books, if you want a solid introduction to the topic, this is a really good choice.

This book starts where all good history does, at the beginning. From the time of "first contact" between natives and Europeans, clear through to Canada's place in the League of Nations, and even the creation of Nunavut in 1999, you'll find it all in here somewhere.



While this book retails for eight dollars more than the very good *Complete Idiot's Guide to Canadian History*, you may find it worth the extra money. The Dummies version of Canadian history includes nine cartoons gleaned from Canadian newspaper editorial pages from more than the past 100 years. Part IX of the book, "The Part of Tens," is made up of five chapters composed of top ten lists that include quotations, political firsts for women, and the top ten prime ministers. A "cheat sheet" at the very front of the book gives a brief timeline

of Canadian history, a list of all the prime ministers, the monarchs – both French and English – who ruled Canada, and a list of when the various provinces and territories were formed.

While the book covers pretty much everything and yet remains remarkably readable, it still has a problem or two. The single biggest one is how the author, Will Ferguson, analyzes events in Canadian history. At times he's very hard hitting. Discussing flip flops in Jean Chretien's positions on GST and free trade, Ferguson has titled the section "Lyn' Jean?" He lets you know what he thinks and lets the evidence that convicts Chretien be clearly seen. On free trade, Ferguson is not nearly as good. While he points out that it was soon after NAFTA came into effect that American-based Walmart bought up Woolco, showing this as an American company suddenly leaping into Canada is really pretty silly. Woolco was American, and it was purchased by an American company, a fact Ferguson overlooks. Ferguson also ignores that K-Mart, an American company, was bought by The Bay. What could be more Canadian than the Hudson's Bay Company?

Canadian History for Dummies definitely has its flaws, but for a good, light-hearted, easy-to-read look at our national history there's few books to rival it.

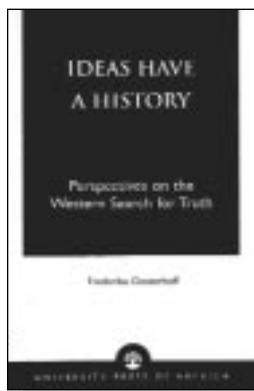
Ideas Have a History: Perspectives on the Western Search for Truth

by Frederika Oosterhoff

University Press of America, 2001
376 pages; paperback; \$44.00 US

Reviewed by Kirsten Sloots

One commonly held perception regarding Christians is that we are people who refuse to think logically. Blindly clinging to outdated traditions, we resist progress, science and the rational thinkers of the world.



At least this is how secular media like to portray us, but maybe with good cause. As our society becomes more and more secular, Christians easily retreat away from the world of the intellect into a religious practice that is more about emotion than reason. Some of us fear that too much exposure to worldly knowledge will lead to loss of faith. Indeed, many people in modern times have left the church completely, or discarded elements of its doctrine, because they were faced with seemingly insurmountable evidence or rational arguments that challenged the foundations of their belief.

As a teacher, lecturer, and author, Frederika Oosterhoff has worked tirelessly in the Reformed community, encouraging fellow Christians to use their minds, and training them to grapple with complex ideas. Her contributions are clearly rooted in a desire to help others along on their walk in faith. She starts out with the conviction that looking at history will help us to understand where we are in the present, and direct us in setting priorities for the future.

In a series of lectures, published in 1999 as *Postmodernism: A Christian Appraisal* (Premier Publishing), Dr. Oosterhoff described the spirit of our times and outlined a practical Christian response. In *Ideas Have a History* she continues in the same direction, but with a wider scope and much more historic detail. The specific purpose of this new book is to introduce the reader to the concept of epistemology, or theory of knowledge, and in particular to show the rise and the decline of the epistemology that affects us most today – the modernist one.

In simple terms, an epistemology is a set of assumptions about knowledge. Every society has answers, mostly assumed and unspoken, to certain basic questions: what can we know? how do we know what we know? how sure is our knowledge? Most of us can carry on with our lives on a day-to-day basis without worrying too much about such questions, yet the answers we unconsciously assume will affect everything we do. Where you start out determines where you end up. If you, like many modern thinkers, are convinced that the only sure knowledge available to mankind is what can be gained from the senses, what can be logically understood, and what can be scientifically verified, then you will certainly question a Christian who tells you he knows God personally from the testimony of His Word and the working of His Holy Spirit.

Dr. Oosterhoff scans philosophical, religious and scientific developments of more than 2000 years of history, starting with ancient Greeks and medieval Christians, to show how and why theories of knowledge have changed through the ages, and with what effect. The reader is left with a vivid impression of ideas layering and meshing through time, culminating in the theories of knowledge commonly held today. Focusing in on the 19th and 20th centuries – with insightful commentary on the theories of Darwin, Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, among others – Dr. Oosterhoff reveals how alarming trends toward secularism and skepticism are the direct results of modernist thought taken to the extreme.

The "western search for truth," as described by Dr. Oosterhoff, has taken our civilization far from its Christian roots. We might like to imagine the struggle of faith against secularism, past, present and future, to be a simple matter, a drama which clearly pits the good against the bad. But the history of ideas reveals it to be more complex. Sometimes it is religious people, seeking fervently to defend one particular aspect of faith, who in the process undermine other equally important aspects of

Christianity. Sometimes secular thinkers steer society in the right direction, while Christians fail to live up to the challenges of their time.

In our own lives, as much as possible, we should strive to be aware and active. Lest we despair, Dr. Oosterhoff reminds us that it is not up to us to create a perfect society on earth by our own efforts. That was the modernist agenda, and it self-destructed. The Bible teaches us to do good simply because God desires us to love Him and show His love to the world.

More encouragement comes in the final chapters of *Ideas Have a History*, which introduce the ideas of some late 20th century postmodern philosophers. Looking for a replacement for the modernist epistemology, they have come up with theories of knowledge that are more in agreement with biblical teaching about human reason, both its limitations and its usefulness.

It's particularly interesting to read how some of these ideas were anticipated years earlier by a Dutch Reformed critic of modernism, Abraham Kuyper. What that tells us is that now, more than ever, Christians should be at the forefront of philosophical discussions. Let's not let secularists deceive us into thinking that our faith is out of date. We should be fighting the current trend in the world and the church toward apathy and relativism. In the breadth and depth of *Ideas Have a History*, Dr. Oosterhoff has given us a great stimulus to Christian thought.

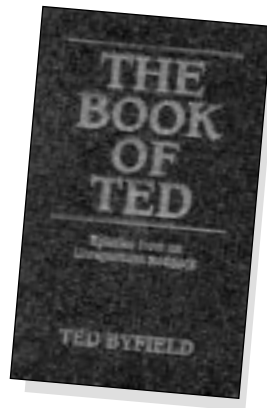
The Book of Ted

by Ted Byfield

Keystone Press Inc., 1998.
269 pages; Hardcover; \$34.95

Reviewed by Michael Wagner

Ted Byfield has been a well-known media personality in Alberta for a number of years due to the magazine he published, *Alberta Report*. Two other magazines, spawned by *Alberta Report* in the 1980s, *Western Report* and *BC Report*, gave Byfield a presence in the other three Western



provinces as well. Now, with the consolidation of these magazines into one national magazine, *The Report*, Byfield is sure to become familiar to many more Canadians from coast to coast.

One of the most popular features of Byfield's magazine has been the editorials that he himself contributes to each issue. They present unabashedly conservative views on contemporary social, political, and religious controversies. *The Book of Ted* is a compilation of a number of these pieces, organized topically into such categories as "Crime and Punishment," "Sex and Its Consequences," "God and the Godless," etc. In spite of the topical arrangement, however, there is no real "flow" to the book since each article was written to stand alone.

To the degree that there is a common theme to the articles in this book, it is that the great social changes that have taken place since the 1960s, in Western society in general, and Canada in particular, have been very negative. Whether in education, social morality, criminal justice, or federal-provincial relations, Canada has been on a downward slide since the 1960s. Byfield advocates traditional conservative solutions for each of the problems he describes. Generally speaking, the diagnoses he makes, and the solutions he proposes, are in accord with conservative Christianity.

Byfield noted the decline of the family as an institution, and the severe consequences thereof for society, many years ago. He summarizes the point this way in a piece he wrote in 1982: "While the causes of our malaise are many, most can be traced to one, notably the seeming failure of the family unit. It in turn is directly at-

tributable to the modern instability of marriage. When the marriage fails, the home breaks up. However 'civilized' the divorce (and many are not in the least civilized), the resulting trauma to both parents and children creates many of the other statistics. To solve the problem therefore we must somehow re-establish permanence in the marital partnership (p. 17)."

Indeed, the *Report* group of magazines has always taken a strong pro-family stance. Byfield and the other writers have consistently defended unpopular causes such as opposition to abortion and opposition to the homosexual rights movement. As one would expect, this has led to angry responses from leftists. "Our own magazines, for instance, are repeatedly accused of 'disseminating hatred' because we preserve and assert the historic principle that the practice of homosexuality is morally reprehensible. This means, say the rights people, that we must hate homosexuals. Actually it means nothing of the sort. It means that we believe this is the way some human beings go wrong (p. 201)."

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Ted Byfield's columns are as good as it gets.

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Ted Byfield is a conservative Christian, but not a Reformed Christian, and therefore Reformed Christians will correctly disagree with Byfield at certain points.

However, there is not much social and political commentary written in Canada from a conservative Christian perspective, and Ted Byfield's columns are as good as it gets.

Byfield has used his media pulpit to defend Christian schools, the traditional family, the unborn, and other Christian causes. He swims against the current of the Canadian media establishment, and has presented the case for conservative positions that have virtually no other public voice. For this he surely deserves our gratitude.



I Kissed Dating Goodbye: A New Attitude Towards Romance and Relationships

by Joshua Harris

Multnomah Publishers, 1997
235 pages; Paperback; \$17.50 Can.

Reviewed by Sheldon C. Kok

This book is really written for teens, but the parents of teens and the up'n'comers will also find this book a great teaching tool and a nice addition to their library. Finally a different way to find a lifemate with much less heartache and temptation. Joshua Harris is very sincere in the way he writes because he had tried the dating game and it gave him a lot of trouble. Instead of saying "Oh well" he asked God to show him the way to find a life partner. He is very down to earth and really challenges you to try to prove him wrong without really saying it. With all his scripture proof it is hard to find fault with this new old-fashioned method called "courtship." The facts really put things into perspective.

We need only to look at the divorce rates of the last 50 years, which have skyrocketed. Coincidentally, the current method we call "Dating" really only began after World War II and really gained momentum in the 1950s. When our parents and grandparents went about looking for a partner, chances are they were courting. Chances are their parents were very involved in the choices that were made and their children had a strong desire to have them involved.

This book gives the reader a very clear idea as to what courtship is. And Josh really tells it like it is; we must rely on God in all areas of our life, including our relation-

ships, and put our trust in Him. He also really hammers home the concept of "redeeming the time." So many teens, including myself when I was a teen, had a lot of free time on their hands. Harris gives excellent advice as to how to make the most of your time when you are single and to see this also as a gift from God. He also gives the reader a real biblical definition of love, love based on biblical principles and not worldly desires of the flesh. The chapter titled "What matters at fifty" is especially helpful. In this chapter he deals with what to look for in a life partner.

This is an outstanding book for parents to read, and to teach their children these values at a very early age. Have your teenagers read this near the beginning of their young adulthood; I am sure they will be very encouraged by it. This is a book that is desperately needed in this day and age. Worldly attitudes have slowly crept into the church and it will only get worse, unless parents and their teens take a hard look at the path that the Bible has laid out for them, concerning finding a spouse. This book can give you the start that you need.

Boy meets girl: Say hello to courtship

by Joshua and Shannon Harris

Multnomah Publishers, 2000
227 pages;
paperback;
\$16.99 Can.



So you've kissed dating goodbye but still want to get married some day? For Joshua Harris the answer is to say hello to courtship. The author of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* eventually met and married Shannon, and this, his second book, tells how he thinks relationships should be handled.

Courtship is first of all, a way to discover whether you and a prospective spouse

would be suitable for marriage. This makes it, right from the very beginning, a really serious thing. The casual easy-handedness of dating is gone. If you're already starting to freak out because this is getting way too serious in a relationship way too fast, that's not what Harris is after. He repeats over and over that courting is a way to discover the other person, and to learn what makes her or him tick. That takes time, and that's not something that can be rushed. He points out it is a slow process and that people who have pushed too hard and too fast usually end up regretting it.

So does this mean I should ask a girl out to coffee, tell her I've prayerfully considered it, and would like to start courting with the idea we learn if we're suitable marriage partners? Crazy as it sounds, that's what Harris proposes. Don't forget, before I go and ask a girl to meet me for that fateful cup of java, I have to prayerfully consider what I'm getting into. Before she replies, she should also prayerfully consider what's happening. Only if we both believe this is where God wants us should we start a relationship. At the very beginning, God is in the center.

For Harris, God must be in the middle and the community must surround the courting couple. While they should learn about each other, they need to rely on the wisdom of friends, pastors, teachers, and especially parents to help them to develop their love for each other and to keep that love in the Lord. A relationship occurs in a community, and not in isolation. That's a blessing from God.

Is this book a complete answer to all your questions about relationships? No, of course not. However, if you're thinking of "asking someone out," if you've got a child who's "dating," a friend in a relationship – or maybe it's your students or parishioners who are dating – you should read this book. It's a good place to start thinking about what it means to be men and women before God and how we relate to each other as sexual beings. It won't provide all the answers, but *Boy meets girl: Say hello to courtship* can help start the very necessary Christian thinking.

About a postponed endeavor

by Rienk Koat

In what now seems like a blurring past, some 35 years ago I took a 4th year German lit course ("German Literature since Goethe") with a gentle, gray-haired Swiss professor of German who inspired us every lecture to meet his demanding scholastic standards. One lecture dealt with a countryman of his, the Swiss poet Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825-1898), a typical representative of late Romanticism.

Born in a patrician family, a lifelong resident of Zürich, he appeared to be destined to become a jurist, as his father was. Unfortunately, at the impressionable age of fifteen Conrad lost his father. But worse was to come as his pietistic but hysterically inclined mother insisted that he should take his father's place with all the responsibilities that went with this position. His mother completely controlled him and curtailed his freedom wherever she could, crippling his self-respect and self-confidence at every stage of his adolescent psychological development.

Introduced to Jean Calvin

Although he enrolled as a student of law, his heart was elsewhere since he wanted to become a poet of renown. He was fluent in both French and German and felt at home with the great Romantics of the past. Self-induced aloofness from his family turned him into a recluse who left his room only at night for risky hikes and swimming escapades. For eight years he lived this dismal life, locked up in his own imagination. He spent two months in a psychiatric ward after which he was pronounced completely cured. Historian Louis Vuillemin took pity on the obviously talented young man, and set him the task of translating famous French authors. And thus he was introduced to Jean Calvin and

Blaise Pascal, who were instrumental in turning his life to God. From that time on, his conversion prompted him to pursue his literary interests and ambition in a proper frame of mind.

His previous dream-like life was the catalyst that helped shape his developing artistic and literary mind. As time went by, the experiences of his youth crystallized into mature poetic forms. In his prose as well as in his poetry one finds characteristic themes of faith, death, control, maturation, justice, pride, guilt, atonement, and trust in divine guidance.

.....

***I emotionally shuddered
because of the grim
atmosphere of horror
and gloom.***

.....

When his mother died (1856) in a fit of acute depression, he finally gained the freedom he had so longed for, ever since he was a boy. Soon thereafter a relative's legacy made him financially independent. He traveled extensively in Germany, France, Italy; and the Alps of his native country restored his body and braced his mind. Finally the wellspring of his talents broke through unhindered.

In his prose writings he uncovered the ruthlessness of unscrupulous men and women, edged on by uncontrollable urges to harm their fellow men. These inveterate wrongdoers he contrasts with those who embrace truth and righteousness in their daily lives. In fact, we can-

not properly evaluate Conrad Meyer's work if we fail to discover a characteristic trait that recurs in all his mature writing. This trait is the antithesis between godliness and godlessness, good and evil, justice and injustice, conscience and heartlessness, strength and weakness, innocence and corruption, mercy and revenge, Christian charity and selfishness.

Meyer also used dramatic monologue, reminiscent of his English contemporary Robert Browning (1812-1889). This technique enables the reader, narrator, and poet to be removed a distance from each other. At certain times we are able to overhear what saints and villains say or think, and thus the poet pretends not to reveal himself explicitly. Conrad Meyer's (shorter) lyrical poems have a crystalline lucidity.

A Huguenot poem

And this brings us back to the introduction. As an avid reader, driven by curiosity, I overshot the perimeter set by the generous reading assignment and was soon captivated by the gothic moods of Conrad Meyer's *Die FüÙe im Feuer*.¹

I emotionally shuddered because of the grim atmosphere of horror and gloom. This almost visceral sensation continued to tweak me whenever I ran into the word 'Huguenot'. Earlier in life we had heard in school how savage persecution sought to eliminate the French Protestant movement during the middle of the 16th century. The first martyrs were burned at the stake. The heinous edict of January 29, 1535 ordered the extermination of the Huguenot heretics and resulted in mass emigration. One who escaped France was John Calvin, who fled first to Basle, where he is believed to have written his *Institutio christianae religionis*.

For years I toyed with the idea of translating *Die FüÙe im Feuer*, which deals with a dramatic episode during those frightful days of persecution. At long last I took the plunge in March of last year and hope that the vivid imagery will stir the readers with compassion, as I was moved the first time I read it.

.....

***A word of caution:
this poem is not
namby-pamby stuff.***

.....

Fortunately (for me, that is), the poem has no rhyme scheme in German so I did not have to hunt for suitable rhymes. Yet it observes a strict, dominant iambic meter,² which I have attempted to sustain throughout the translation process. Though this poem does not follow the convention of English four-line ballad stanzas, it features nonetheless the characteristics typical of most ballads:

1. The introduction is abrupt.
 2. The language is uncomplicated.
 3. The story is told through action and dialogue.
 4. The theme is often tragic.
 5. It usually deals with a single episode.
 6. The events leading to the crisis unfold rapidly.
 7. A strong dramatic element prevails
- All these elements can be found in this narrative poem, which may be classified as a literary ballad.

¹German Literature Since Goethe, ed. Ernst Feise and Harry Steinbauer (Boston, 1958), pp. 279-280.

² See *Reformed Perspective*, April 1999, p. 17 in case this term needs clarification.

Two feet

The bolts of lightning fiercely flash. A castle looms in lurid light,
while crashing thunder roars. A rider struggles with his horse,
dismounts, knocks on the gate and shouts. His coat
flaps in the wind. With rein he curbs the skittish steed.
A narrow latticed window gleams with golden glow,
and then a nobleman opens the creaking door.

“I am a servant of the king, as envoy was dispatched
to Nîmes. I look for shelter. Do you respect a dignitary’s frock?”
“A frightful storm. You are my guest, regardless of your coat.

Come in, get warm. I’ll feed your horse myself.”
The horseman struts into the dim ancestral hall,
now faintly lit by distant fireplace. In fitful, flick’ring light
peers down the portrait of a harnessed Huguenot,
and there a woman, a stately gentlewoman, gazed
from gilded frame. The guest plunged in a chair
before the fire and stares into the leaping flames. He frets
and gawks . . . His neck hair slowly bristles as he recalls the hearth,
the hissing flames. Two twitching feet in glowing coals . . .

A silent matron tiptoes in to set the dinner board,
lays out the hail-white cloth. The landgrave’s daughter helps.
Her brother brings a pitcher wine. Both children’s eyes are filled
with dread. They cringe at guest ensconced before the hearth...
The hissing flames; two feet that twitch in glowing coals...
The man chokes back a curse: “The coat of arms; the selfsame hall!
Three years ago...while hunting down the Huguenots . . .
A graceful, stubborn lady . . . “Where is the landgrave? Speak!”
She did not speak. “Confess!” She did not speak. “Where is he now?”
Still did not speak. I was enraged. Her headstrong arrogance!
I dragged the woman...grasped her feet and thrust them down
into the glowing coals . . . “Now speak, or else . . . !” She did not speak.
She writhed and squirmed . . . “Why scanned you not the coat of arms
aloft the gate? Why did you seek out shelter here, confounded fool!
And should my host still have one drop of manly blood,
he’ll strangle me this night” . . . The landgrave enters and
draws near . . . “You lost yourself in reverie. Now join our supper, guest.”

in the fire

Three mutely sit in sober black; the place of honor for the guest.
The youngsters, not intoning words of grace, do watch him
saucer-eyed . . . He fills his beaker to the brim and spills the wine,
jumps up and says: "My lord, just show me where I'll sleep!
I'm spent and weary, tired as a dog." A servant lights him by,
but at the door he quickly glances back and sees the boy speak
softly in his father's ear . . . He shambles closely after servant
up the winding staircase to the garret in the tower.

Securely he locks the door, then tests his pistol and the sword.
Shrill squeals the storm. The floorboards jar beneath a groaning roof.
The staircase creaks . . . Could that be stepping feet? Or stealthy boots?
His ear plays tricks. The midnight hours glide slowly by.
The members of his body feel like lead, and drowsily he falls in bed.
Outside no let up of the ceaseless rain that clatters on the window pane . . .

He dreams. "Now tell the truth!" She does not speak. "Tell where he is."
She does not speak. He scuffles with the woman. Two feet twitching
in the glowing coals. In a flash he sees the wrathful jets of fire leap out
from flaming lake that threatens to engulf him... "Wake up!
You should have left these quarters long ago. The daylight breaks."
The Arras tapestry that hides the door departs and in the chamber
stands before his bed the castle's lord, turned gray,
whose copious curly locks were brown the day before . . .

They trot through woodlands; no gust of wind stirs up the quiet air.
A crush of splintered, broken branches bestrews the winding trail.
Softly, dreamlike, twitters here and there the halting song of birds.
Gentle clouds sail slowly through the limpid sky, like angels going
home that have kept watch by night. The clods of soil breathe out
sweet earthly scents. Now widens out the plain. A plow cuts furrows
in a field. The horseman, from the corner of his eyes, shiftily squints:
"My lord, you are a prudent man, most generous and kind. You know
that I with heart and soul do serve my lord and king. I bid farewell,
and may our paths at no time cross again!" And then the other speaks:
"In truth, it is as you just said, we must obey our sovereign Lord and King!
His service was for me last night a grievous yoke . . . For it was you
who in demonic fury murdered my dear and precious wife!
Yet you're still alive! Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

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Without Clothes

by Christine Farenhorst

Once upon a time in the town of Odense, on the island of Fyn in Denmark, there lived a poor shoemaker by the name of Hans. Although that sentence sounded very much like the opening line of a fairy tale, the facts in this story are no figments of anyone’s imagination and they begin in the early 1800s.

Hans, the poor shoemaker, married a girl by the name of Anne-Marie Andersdatter in February of 1805. She was a robust thirty-year-old washerwoman, superstitious by nature and a hard worker. Hans himself was slight of build, nurtured a melancholy nature and was seven years her junior. Their child was born two months after the nuptials. He was a blond baby – a thin, long baby – and a baby who was duly christened Hans Christian Andersen.

The newlyweds set up housekeeping in a small house on a cobbled street in the back mews of Odense. It was a dingy street which harbored a great many poor artisans, laborers and beggars. The Andersen’s domicile consisted of only one room. Crowded to capacity, it held a cobbler’s bench, a bed and a chest of drawers. The bed was actually the wooden frame that had been used to hold the coffin of a Count. Pieces of black mourning cloth still clung to its somber sides. In the far corner of the room was a ladder to the roof. In the roof gutter between the Andersen’s house and the next, was a box of earth in which Anne-Marie grew chives and parsley. It was all the garden they had.

Hans senior was a dreamer. When he was not making shoes, he created toys for his young son. He cut out pictures that could be manipulated by strings and made a toy theater in which he enacted plays. He also read to Hans Christian before he could speak. The child heard Holberg, La

Fontaine, the Bible and the stories out of Arabian nights declaimed daily from his father’s lips as his mother went out to the river to wash other people’s clothes.

Pancake batter

Odense was a city of some five thousand inhabitants. It was an old city with its own castle, court, governor and nobility. A city steeped in mythology, it held Nordic gods alongside Christianity. Demons and saints were mixed as readily as pancake batter and young Hans Christian grew up swallowing a great deal of pancakes.



A city steeped in mythology, it held Nordic gods alongside Christianity.



Father Hans was not a very good shoemaker and, consequently, he never made much money. There was little to eat and the clothes young Hans Christian wore were threadbare. It did not help matters any that young Hans, thin and long-legged like a stork, grew so fast that his clothes never fit well for any great length of time. Exceptionally tall for his age, his large hands and feet gave the young child the appearance of being grotesque. His manner, although clumsy, was so naive and disarming, that he often gave the impression of being overly emotional. Once when he was gleaning with his mother in the outlying fields of Odense, an ill-tempered bailiff walked by. Most of the gleaners, afraid of the man’s expertise with his whip, fled.

Hans, hampered by the fact that his wooden shoes had fallen off his big feet, was left alone in the field facing the bailiff who brandished his whip. Eyes wide open, he asked the Danish Simon Legree, “How can you dare to strike me when God can see you?” The bailiff dropped his whip, patted Hans’ head and gave him some money.

There were no free schools in Denmark at this time. Poor children usually learned a trade, becoming apprenticed to carpenters, tailors or some other tradesmen, without ever seeing the inside of a classroom. Hans senior and Anne-Marie wanted their son to have the rudiments of education, however, and sent him to a school of sorts. There was an old woman who kept an infant school, teaching the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic. As Hans Christian was subject to seizures, his mother stipulated to the old woman that he should never be struck. When she did strike him one day, Hans Christian came home devastated and was not sent back. Thus ended his elementary school years.

No Devil?

At night, as he lay in his small trundle bed, Hans Christian listened drowsily as his father read aloud to his mother by the light of a single candle. Sometimes his father read the Bible and one night Hans Christian heard him say, “Christ was a man like ourselves, but He was an extraordinary man.” His mother was appalled and called her husband a blasphemer. Hans Christian shivered in his small bed and expected the roof to fall in on them, but nothing happened. His father’s words stayed with him, as a father’s words will often stay with a child, the rest of his life. On another occasion he heard his father say, “There is no devil save the one we have in our own

hearts." This so shocked Anne-Marie that she pulled Hans Christian out of his bed and ran with him to the woodshed. There she threw her apron over his head and softly said, "It was the devil who was talking like that in our cottage, Hans Christian, not your father, and you must forget what he said." But Hans Christian was his father's child and did not forget. Although he developed a childlike faith in God, it was a God of his father's making.

Hans Christian was eight when his father died. Hans senior had been a poor cobbler with a thin face and a thin body – but for all his thinness he had little chance of passing through the narrow gate. The child and his mother were left quite alone. Sent to work at a mill, Hans Christian sang while he worked, much to the delight of the men and boys who worked there. His voice was pure and they put the ungainly eight-year-old on a table to entertain them while they worked. He recited passages from Shakespeare in between songs and was fairly content until one of the men suggested that with such a pure voice he must

be a girl. They pulled down his pants and humiliated him. Outraged he ran home and was allowed to stay there.

In 1818 Anne-Marie remarried another poor shoemaker. Hans Christian was thirteen – a boy with hair so white he seemed an albino and with such small, half-closed eyes that he appeared blind. His stepfather neither disliked nor loved the boy, a strange child who loved to cut out clothes for his puppets, sang like an angel and read every book he could get his hands on. But he did insist that the boy learn a trade; that he be apprenticed to a tailor.



"How can you dare to strike me when God can see you?"



Hans Christian had no desire to learn a trade. He only had dreams of seeking his fortune; he had grandiose thoughts of be-

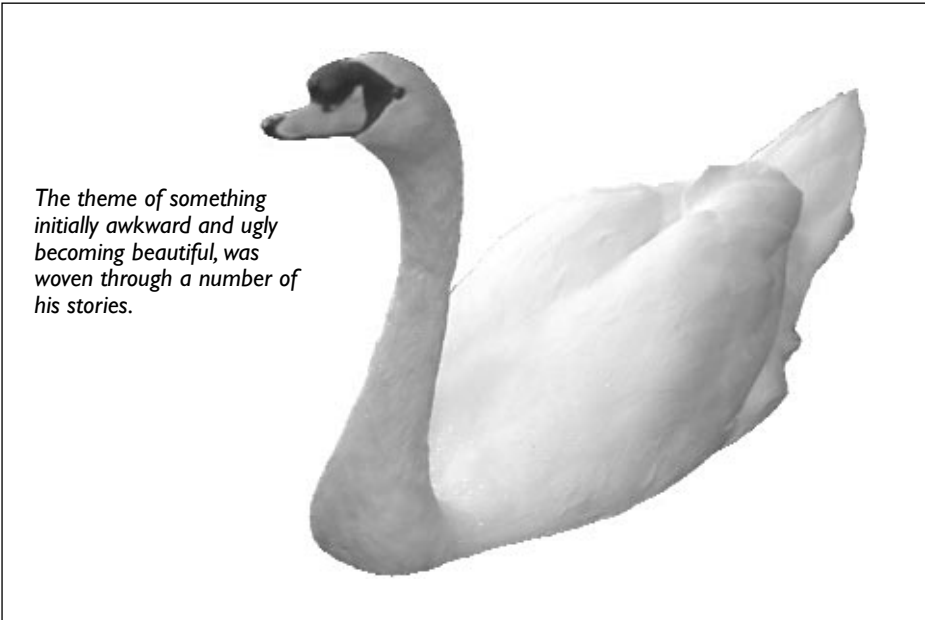
coming an actor. At the tender age of fourteen he left Fyn and, leaving a weeping mother behind, boarded the ferry to the Danish mainland. All he owned besides a strong faith in his destiny, was a small bundle of clothes, his puppet theater and some bread. Dressed in an old suit that had belonged to his father, sporting a hat that hid his small eyes, he arrived in Copenhagen dressed much like a scarecrow.

Determined to be an actor, Hans Christian, with childlike naivete, knocked on doors, begged for audiences, prayed for God's help and somehow managed. One of the doors he knocked on was the home of the director of the Royal Singing Academy in Copenhagen. Taken with the boy's voice, the director promised to train his voice free of charge as well as give Hans Christian meals.

Hans's big break

Surviving lean years, always gawky and ill-dressed, the child Hans Christian grew. When he was seventeen, he submitted a play to the directors of the Copenhagen Theater. Full of grammatical and spelling errors, it merited little praise. But somehow, through all the hodgepodge of words and ideas, the directors sensed a small glimmer of talent. Denmark had a fund for artists and writers. Promising people were given money on which to live and their studies were paid for. The King of Denmark, on the recommendation of the directors, approved Hans Christian Andersen's name for this fund. And so it came about that at the sensitive age of seventeen and a half, Hans Christian was put into the second grade of a grammar school in Slagelse, a small town about fifty miles southwest of Copenhagen.

The four and a half ensuing years were something of a nightmare for the boy. Tall and lanky to begin with, he towered over his much younger classmates. The rector of the school, Simon Meisling, took an instant dislike to the boy and constantly



The theme of something initially awkward and ugly becoming beautiful, was woven through a number of his stories.

made fun of him. The subjects of Latin and Greek, which were taught by Meisling himself, were frightening experiences for Hans Christian – experiences of which he still had recurring dreams when he was an old man. Working as hard as he could to overcome his lack of schooling, there seemed to be nothing he could do to overcome Meisling’s hatred of him. In the end a visiting friend reported Meisling’s cruelty to the Board of Directors and they promptly took Hans Christian away from the school, securing a private tutor for him to continue his studies.



Hans Christian Andersen's name became a bedtime favorite.



The tutor’s name was Muller – a gifted linguist and a serious theological student. A fine tutor, not just in grammar and Latin, he held the Bible to be the infallible word of God and did not fail to point this out to his charge. He helped Hans Christian prepare for his university examination, giving him encouragement and friendship. They debated religion. When Hans Christian argued, as his father had argued before him, that Jesus was only a good man and not God, Muller made no bones about the fact that Hans Christian was in danger of hellfire. Hans Christian was not upset. He did not believe in hellfire, contentedly settling in the belief that God was love and that He rewarded people for living good lives.

A tearful protégé

The university examination went without a hitch and the Copenhagen sponsors were proud of their protégé. Given a small pension by the King, Hans Christian was full of confidence. Renting a room, he

began writing in earnest – poems, plays, opera stories and travel books. His first book, a small volume of poetry, published when he was twenty-five, was immediately successful. Gentle and very emotional, Hans Christian loved to hear praise about his work. On the other hand, if someone criticized him, he was apt to burst into tears.

From gangly youth he had grown into an even ganglier man. Still unusually tall and thin, his arms and legs seemed to fly in all directions when he moved. His feet were so big that it was a standing joke that his shoes would never be stolen. His nose, disproportionately large, dominated his face, whereas in contrast his eyes were small and pale, half hidden behind low eyelids. Very conscious of his appearance, he thought himself very ugly and the theme of something initially awkward and ugly becoming beautiful, was woven through a number of his stories.

Three times Hans Christian Andersen fell in love and three times he was rebuffed. To deal with the depression resulting from unrequited love, he traveled abroad. In 1834 he wrote a book called *The Improvisator* – a traveling guide. It contained much of his own life and he felt sure this book would be a success. Being a little short of money he also, at this time, wrote some small tales and left them with his publisher. The first story began:

A soldier came marching down the high road – one, two! one, two! He had his knapsack on his back and his sword at his side as he came home from the wars . . .

It was entitled *The Tinder Box*. A second he named *Little Claus and Big Claus* and the third in this initial effort was *The Princess and the Pea*. These tales were published when he was thirty years old. Initially few people recognized the uniqueness of these tales. The brothers Grimm had been collecting folk tales for

some time in Germany. But Andersen did more than use old material; he invented new folk and fairy tales – some very beautiful and full of humor. The first little booklet of tales sold well; it sold so well in fact that his publisher encouraged him to write more. Other countries translated these stories and in a very short period of time Hans Christian Andersen’s name became a bedtime favorite.



Andersen rarely attended a church service and thus rarely heard the word of God explained.



Andersen’s personal feelings were reflected in his writing. When all was said and done, he was a lonely bachelor. He desired to be married but considered himself too ugly to be attractive to the opposite sex. He never had a home of his own but always stayed in hotels or apartments that friends had made ready for him. Even though these friends were close to him, they were not family. His mother had become a hopeless alcoholic, a fact which grieved him bitterly. The greatest pity of all was that he was removed from the Savior of the world. Although he confessed to believe in God, it was a god of his own making. It was not the triune God. He continued to believe, as his father had instilled in him, that Jesus was only a good man – a man whose simplicity and love in living was an example to all. Nature was the universal church and Andersen rarely attended a church service and thus rarely heard the word of God explained. And this is where he might have been enlightened to knowledge of God and comforted in loneliness.

Autobiographical tales

Much of Hans Christian Andersen's writing is about himself. He is the soldier in *The Tinder Box*; he is the sensitive princess who can feel the pea underneath heaps of mattresses; he is the mermaid who is never accepted in the new world into which she moved; and he is the ugly duckling. In 1843 the words "told for children" were deliberately deleted from the title page of a fairy tale book. Andersen wanted to indicate that his stories were meant to be read at two levels; by children who would simply like the story and by grownups who would be able to understand underlying themes.

Andersen's genius in storytelling lay in his ability to make inanimate objects come to life. He endowed them with human characteristics and human logic and used them in pointing out human weakness, frailty and virtue in well-chosen dialogue. *His Steadfast Tin Soldier* is an admirable work extolling selflessness and doing one's duty.

In one of his strangest stories, Hans Christian Andersen tells the legend of the ostrich. "All the ostriches had once been very beautiful, with big, strong wings. Then one evening the largest birds in the wood said to the ostrich: 'Brother, mightn't we, God willing, fly tomorrow to the river and drink?' And the ostrich answered: 'I'm willing!' So at dawn they flew off; at first high in the air towards the sun, God's eye; all the time higher and higher, with the ostrich flying on far ahead of all the others. Proudly it flew towards the light, trusting in its own strength and not in Him who gave it; the ostrich wouldn't say 'God willing.' Then the avenging angel drew aside the veil from the blazing sun, so that the bird's wings were burnt up in a flash, and it sank miserably to earth. Ever since then no ostriches have been able to rise into the air. They stampede in a panic, rush wildly about, but can never leave the ground. It

is a warning to all of us, whatever we think or do, to say, 'God willing'." Andersen's philosophy of life "God is good and He rewards those who are good," was reflected in many of his stories.

The bells toll

Hans Christian loved and was devoted to the Swedish singer and nightingale, Jenny Lind. He was thirty-eight at the time. He secretly entertained hopes of marrying her but when she professed to love him only as a brother, he finally and forever gave up all thought of marriage. One of the results of this passion was the fairy tale *The Nightingale* – a very beautiful and moving story – a story which depicts true art over against artificiality – a story which contrasts ordinary people with those living in a palace.

There were the times in his old age that Hans Christian dined with the King of Denmark and with members of other royal houses of Europe. He was a popular guest in numerous homes, a friend of the



Andersen knew why the ostrich couldn't fly.

poet Heine, the composers Liszt and Mendelssohn, and writers such as the German Grimm brothers, the English Dickens, and the French Dumas and Hugo. It was a far cry from being a poor, unschooled boy from Odense who had lived in a cramped one-room house. Grey-haired, he was still thin and tall with huge arms and feet, but he had become a beloved storyteller to many people.

In 1875, at the age of seventy, Hans Christian Andersen died in his sleep. A few days before his death he is recorded as having said: "If I am to die, may it happen quickly – I cannot wait, I cannot lie and crumble up like a withered leaf," and later, "How happy I am! How beautiful the world is! Life is so beautiful. It is as if I were sailing to a land far away, where there is no pain, no sorrow," and as an afterthought to a friend, "I have never wished to do evil. I have always loved what is good, though I know very well that I have often been ill-tempered, bitter and absurd."

All the bells in Copenhagen rang the day that Andersen was buried. The church the service was conducted in could not contain even one tenth of the mourners. For days afterwards his grave in the Assistens Cemetery was surrounded by crowds who were overcome with grief by his death. Even today, more than one hundred and twenty-five years later, his grave is never without flowers, his stories are read everywhere and his birthplace is a museum. It is, without a doubt, true that people remember him. But the long-term question is not whether people will remember Hans Christian Andersen. The question is, will God remember him? The question is, was he wearing wedding clothes?

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Beauty – more than skin-deep

by Sarah Vandergugten

On March 27th 2001, Juliana Borges was named Miss Brazil. She is a beautiful young woman. But she had some help. She had plastic surgery four times and underwent nineteen smaller procedures. “Plastic surgery made me more beautiful and gave me confidence in myself and the perfect measurements that won me this title,” stated the statuesque brunette.

Borges, 22, had liposuction (surgical removal of fat), fixed her chin, nose and ears, and of course, had her bust augmented. Apparently one-third of the 27 finalists at the pageant went under the scalpel after rules were changed in the 1990s permitting plastic surgery, colored contact lenses and hair extensions and dye.

It starts early

“It’s war out there and all of the beauty tools that can be used are valid,” said Boarnerges Gaeta, organizer of the Miss Brazil pageant (*Vancouver Sun*, March 28, 2001, A 17). Miss Brazil has taken extreme measures to make herself more “beautiful.” Although most young women do not resort to plastic surgery, many of them have fallen victim to a no less pervasive discontent about their bodies. Take Cayenne. She played soccer and didn’t worry much about her appearance, until she reached junior high. When her body changed with puberty, she became convinced that her hips and thighs were flabby. Her hair was the wrong color. Her clothes were no good. She was self-conscious with boys and thought that every other girl in her grade was prettier than she was (Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, p.30-34).

.....
***She had plastic surgery
 four times and nineteen
 smaller procedures.***

By age thirteen, more than half of girls are unhappy with their bodies. By age seventeen, four out of five dislike their bodies. Women, regardless of age, are more likely than men to rate themselves as physically unattractive. Slender models complain about their “thunder thighs.” “I’m so fat.



Women are more likely to be unhappy with their looks.

I’m so ugly,” girls write in their diaries. “I’m a pimply whale,” fifteen-year-old Monica said about herself; “when I walk down the halls I feel like a monster” (Mary Ruth Murdoch, *Raising a Christian Daughter in an MTV World*, p. 168).

The body is at the heart of the crisis of confidence that hits girls during the junior high years. As their bodies change in size, shape and hormonal balance, adolescent girls become preoccupied, and even obsessed with how they look. They compare themselves with actresses in movies and models in magazines. They hate what they see in their mirrors.

Really early

What’s at the root of this hatred? The answers are complex, physical, cultural and spiritual and the roots of all these factors go back to the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Genesis 3:1-6 tells us that as soon as Eve and Adam ate the fruit of the forbidden tree an immediate result was that they were ashamed of their bodies. They were no longer comfortable with each other, or with God (vv. 7-10). Their bodies began to show the effects of sin and death (vv. 16, 19). There would now be pain, sweat and death. “To dust you will return.”

Envy, discontent and shame are still at the root of teen dissatisfaction with their bodies. Girls look at photos in their favorite magazines, and dream about being as pretty, as slim, as tall as the young women portrayed there. In our culture, a “normal” body has lengthened but simultaneously decreased in weight. In 1950, an ideal young woman was 5’4” and 140 pounds. In the 1990s, a 5’7” beauty contestant had

to lose fourteen pounds in order to have a hope of winning (Murdoch, p. 170). Teenage girls strive for similarly "perfect" bodies, but since The Fall the only perfect bodies are those airbrushed photos on the cover of *Seventeen* or *Teen Magazine*.

What kind of advice and encouragement can we give to a teenage girl to counteract the tendency of being overly self-absorbed about her body? The Bible teaches that the body is like a clay jar, containing a treasure (2 Cor 4:7). God is the Potter who gives each one of us our body. To be content with her body, she needs to acknowledge that her sovereign Creator made her. He does not make mistakes.

.....

***Eve and Adam were
ashamed of their
bodies.***

.....

Her body serves an important purpose, but her real value comes from what is inside. Character is of more value than appearance. Her body enables her to think, work, pray and relate to God. Although her body is "dust" it contains a soul that will last forever (Gen 2:7; Eccl 12:7). Her soul, not her body, should be her primary project.

Although sin in her heart and cultural influences explain why a girl hates her own body, Jesus reverses the effects of sin in the lives of his children. He is the one who gives a teen a new heart. He makes her body his dwelling place, a temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in her heart and gives new life (1 Cor 6:19 and Rom 8:10-11). By living in her, God gives glory, dignity and splendor to her body.

An important link

Most girls have normal bodies, but they don't feel normal to them. However,

it's not how a teen looks but how she thinks of herself that determines whether she feels normal or not. Murdoch states that girls who don't like their own bodies often make bad choices about what and how much they eat, how they act around their peers, and what they are willing to do to be popular (p. 175). There is a connection between how girls feel about their bodies and what they do with them. Learning to like their own bodies, will help them make better choices and become more effective members of God's kingdom.

A teen's body is not the most important part of her, but it *is* part of her. It is not possible to ignore that, but rather

some practical advice would be beneficial. This will help her be content with the body God has given her so that she can serve and glorify him in her body (1 Cor 6:19, 20). She must be a good steward of her body, since it is the only one she gets in this life. The recipe is simple and well known: a balanced diet, regular exercise and realistic standards about what is "good-looking." In the end, belief in God is the most important ingredient. He reverses the effects of sin and gives confidence, contentment and hope. He renews her mind and heart and produces the character that makes her truly beautiful. The girls in Brazil had it all wrong, after all.

DRUMMING UP SUPPORT

In the past few months the Board of *Reformed Perspective* has been trying to garner much needed support through a subscription campaign via your local correspondents.

We have seen some results of that campaign.

However, we are looking for more assistance to keep *Reformed Perspective* coming to your doorstep. We are asking your help in bringing us more subscribers and/or donating funds to a worthy cause. As we have indicated before, we need upwards of \$20,000 per year in donations to keep the magazine financially healthy. At the same time the magazine must remain affordable for all to gain maximum readership. Yes, that means we are counting on some big hearts to donate a substantial amount of money to help us out. Whether it is \$100, \$500 or \$1000 it would all be well appreciated.

As Board we aim to publish a Christian magazine for the family. Your financial generosity makes the publication of *Reformed Perspective* possible. As a charitable organization we will send you a tax-deductible receipt on your gift.

Please consider what part you can play in continuing to provide a Reformed perspective on what happens in the world around us.

We appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Reformed Perspective
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5



FROM KITTY HAWK TO EVERYWHERE

by Margaret Helder

As stories go, this one sounds as if it comes from *Through the Looking Glass*: and what Alice found there, the classic story by Lewis Carroll where everything is backward. That is how this plot goes: amateur technologists succeed with a few dollars of their own money while big science, with a big budget, fails. And the improbable scenario continues. Even when the amateurs succeed, establishment science and the national media refuse to acknowledge that fact. They don't want it to be true, so it isn't. Then, when belatedly everyone knows that the amateurs have indeed achieved what they have long claimed, the government honors the scientist who failed! This isn't a nihilist plot by Franz Kafka, this is history. These events have much to tell us about the impact of vested interests on scientific research and public honors.

Bernoulli's Principle

In hindsight it is obvious that the time was ripe for a breakthrough in heavier-than-air flight. During the mid eighteenth century Swiss mathematician Daniel Bernoulli had developed equations to describe the flow of fluids. Since air currents flow in the same fashion as fluids, similar equations apply. Thus it was as easy to study the flow of air over an object as it was to study the flow of water. In both instances, as the speed of flow increases, the pressure decreases. If a current moves over an object with a curved upper and a flat lower surface, then the

flow above the object moves faster than the flow below. As a consequence the pressure exerted on the upper surface is less than on the lower surface. With reduced pressure above, the object will move upward. Such theory, towards the end of the nineteenth century, provided the basis for the new science of aerodynamics. The object with the curved upper surface was an airfoil or wing, and this was the structure that would carry heavier-than-air flight into reality.

.....
***They refused, however,
to pursue any research
or work on Sunday.***
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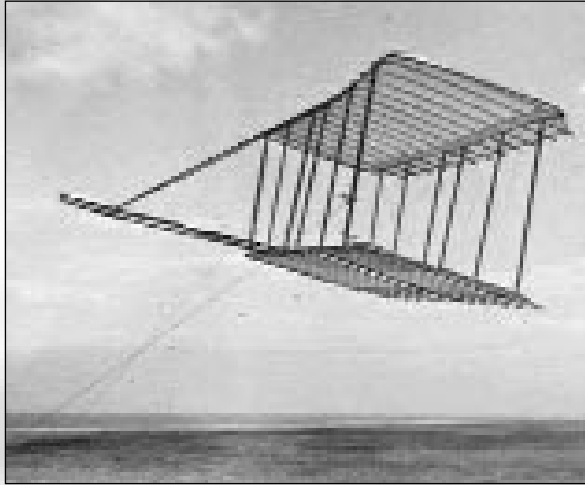
Some scientists at the time insisted that such a phenomenon was impossible. There were others however, like Samuel Pierpont Langley (1834-1906), who were actively involved in aerodynamic research. Indeed, this American astronomer and physicist had published a treatise in 1891 entitled *Experiments in Aerodynamics*. Five years later he designed and successfully flew a steam-powered model airplane. The machine flew 0.8 km (0.5 mile) in one and a half minutes. Based on this success, he applied for, and received, a grant of \$50,000 to scale up his model to passenger-carrying size. That grant represented a

huge fortune. Obviously there were influential people in government and science who believed that heavier-than-air flight was possible.

Some bachelor entrepreneurs in Ohio also knew that heavier-than-air flight was possible. They had observed buzzards, and other feathered flight success stories (birds), and they decided that it might be fun to try their hand at this project. Wilbur and Orville Wright (born 1867 and 1871 respectively) were the third and fourth sons of Bishop Milton Wright of the United Brethren Church. Their Christian commitment translated into a joyous and lively curiosity about nature. They refused, however, to pursue any research or work on Sunday. Although bright, these men never actually graduated from high school. Nevertheless they loved a mental challenge. Their main source of income during the late 1890s was as bicycle shop owners. Not only did they sell machines, they also manufactured them. This business was somewhat seasonal in nature which left plenty of time during the off-season for the brothers to pursue other interests. Moreover, the tools and know-how from bicycle manufacture would prove useful for developing another technology.

Kitty Hawk

Interest of the Wright brothers in heavier-than-air flight was piqued in 1896 when German, Otto Lilienthal was killed



Glider flying as a kite, Kitty Hawk, 1900.

in the crash of one of his gliders. Since 1891 this man had experimented with various glider designs and everyone recognized that he had significantly advanced the science of aerodynamics. Lilienthal was the first person to ride an airborne glider and he had about 2500 flights to his credit. By the summer of 1899 the Wright brothers had researched the topic and they understood what problems needed to be solved for success to be achieved. Next, upon inquiry, they discovered that the coastal sand dunes near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, were a promising place to fly gliders. This identification was based on the unusually strong winds which were typical of that area. Kill Devil Hills near Kitty Hawk thus became the site of their early experiments.

The Wrights set out, first of all, to find a glider design that was stable and reliable in the air. Balancing a “flyer” seemed easy but wasn’t. When the center of gravity (the passenger) was located far below the wings, the device oscillated in a most unsatisfactory manner. When the wings were arranged in a V pattern with the passenger at the lowest point, the system performed adequately in calm air but it oscillated in wind. Alternatively when the center of gravity was located in front of the wings, there was constant undulation. In view of these already identified problems, the Wrights determined to build a glider which would

require the operator to restore balance. They thus set out to design wings which could be manually warped. Their objective was to obtain from the wind, the forces needed to restore balance. When they tried out their design at Kitty Hawk in October 1900, they discovered that the device did not have enough lift to carry a man. These trials did however suggest that they were on the right track as far as balance was concerned.

.....

***“What at first seemed
a simple problem
became
more complex the
longer we
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.....

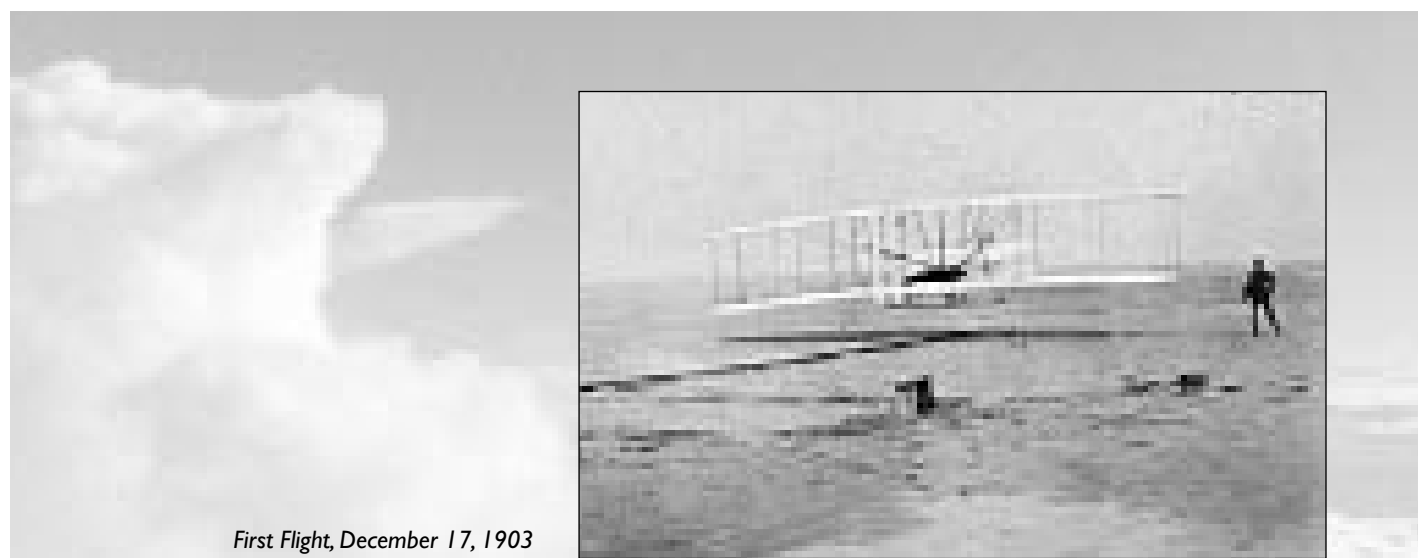
The brothers returned to Kitty Hawk during July of 1901. They now used a wing shape that Lilienthal had developed. This design performed much worse than their previous year’s model. They rebuilt the glider and still it insisted on spinning. After further modifications the balance was improved but the lifting capacity was still most disappointing. The Wrights realized that “the calculations upon which all flying-machines had been

based were unreliable and that all were simply groping in the dark.” Even Langley’s data they concluded was “little better than guess-work.” (All quotes are from an article by Orville and Wilbur Wright. September 1908 in *Century Magazine*. See www.wam.umd.edu/~stwright/WrBr/Century.html.)

World’s first wind tunnel

The Wrights returned home to Ohio, determined to generate their own data. To this end, they devised the world’s first wind tunnel. This was a contraption six feet long that they set up in their bicycle shop. The brothers had taken up aeronautics “as a sport.” Now they reluctantly undertook real research. Soon they found the work so fascinating they were “drawn deeper and deeper into the project.” Using the wind tunnel, they made systematic measurements of standard surfaces “so varied in design as to bring out the underlying causes of differences noted in their pressures. Measurements were tabulated on nearly fifty of these at all angles from zero to 45 degrees, at intervals of 2.5 degrees.” Based on these new data, they ran successful trials of a new glider during the fall of 1902. With a stable device, and with accurate data on lift, they were now ready to build a power-flyer. The two hurdles yet to overcome were propeller design and a suitable engine.

Early in 1903 they turned their attention to propeller design. It wasn’t as easy



First Flight, December 17, 1903

as they had expected. As they later reported: “What at first seemed a simple problem became more complex the longer we studied it. With a machine moving forward, the air flying backward, the propellers turning sidewise, and nothing standing still, it seemed impossible to find a starting point from which to trace the simultaneous reactions.” After much agonizing, they apparently sorted out the problems. The result of their calculations was highly satisfactory propellers. The last requirement was a small internal combustion engine. This they built in their bicycle shop. The cost of the entire flying machine was about \$1000. It featured the propellers behind the wings, the rudder in front, and wings covered with “Pride of the West” muslin, a cotton fabric manufactured especially for ladies’ underwear.

The fateful day

In October 7, 1903 Langley’s scaled up airplane design crashed. He asked for, and received more government funds to try again, but on December 8 his device crashed again. Then on December 17 at Kitty Hawk, Orville Wright made the first successful powered flight. Five people witnessed the event. The flight lasted 12 seconds and extended only 120 feet. Later in the day a flight of 852 feet was achieved. Heavier-than-air flight was now a reality and modern life would never be the same.

The almost universal response of their fellow Americans was to deny that anything had happened. The media refused to take any notice of this achievement. By the fall of 1905 the Wrights were now airborne for one half hour at a time. They practiced flying in Ohio, above a large field with public roads and a railroad nearby.



Scientific American insisted in print that the story of flight was a hoax since no newspapers had reported it.



Thousands of eyewitnesses testified to the reality of this success story. Reporters refused to believe first hand accounts nor even to investigate for themselves. In January 1906, *Scientific American* insisted in print that the story of flight was a hoax since no newspapers had reported it. Finally in 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt ordered flight trials at Fort Myers. As a result the brothers signed a contract to deliver airplanes to the US Army. However, public acclaim only came after Wilbur carried out a “public” flight in France on August 8, 1908. Now the age of flight had really dawned. Within less than

a year, on July 25, 1909, Louis Bleriot became the first person to fly across the English Channel.

Wright Air Force Base?

The relationship of the Wrights with the American scientific establishment was never cordial. After a dispute with the Smithsonian Institute in 1928, the only model of the original flyer was sent to England for display. There it remained until 1948, the year Orville Wright died. His older brother had died many years earlier. Meanwhile significant honors were accorded Langley rather than the Wrights. Langley Air Force Base was established in 1916 to honor this “American air pioneer.” From 1931 to 1995 the world’s most prestigious wind tunnel operated at the Langley base. This site is also famous for its NASA research laboratory located there. In addition, the nation’s first aircraft carrier was also named after Langley.

The world nevertheless remains deeply indebted to these two Christian bachelors who used their God given talents for the benefit of their fellow man. Their objective was not fame and fortune, but rather the joy of discovery of God’s creation. Thus as the one hundredth anniversary of their success approaches, Christians can give special thanks for the testimony afforded by the lives of these interesting men.

Flipped Stones

by John Siebenga

A Tsunami of Grace



The Pacific Seashore can be a dangerous place. Signs as you enter the beach warn that no one should turn their back to the ocean. Sneaker waves can catch one unaware and cause a soaker at best or loss of life at worst. Riptides can be especially strong at high tide as waves rush ashore and the receding waves slide underneath the incoming waves. The unwary wader can be pulled in and dragged under the water before he has a chance to call for help. Then there are tsunamis that can strike at anytime along the Pacific coast. San Andreas Fault runs a hundred or so kilometers from the Oregon and California coastline. Any movement in this fault translates into an earthquake and a tsunami. Therefore don't turn your back on the ocean; you could get swamped. We did a couple of times. The first time is always the one that creates a memory and instills a cautious and respectful association with the ocean. My sister and my two daughters had waded into the water a short ways. The water was ice cold so I was not into this wading stuff. Instead I lazed on the warm sand, allowing the sun, the wind and the mist to enthrall me. I carried my sister's camera, one of these fancy ones that need to be focused. I focused on the three of them as they ventured in up to mid-calf. I hollered at them when I got the camera focused, and they dutifully turned and waved at me, hollering in return. As I clicked the shutter a wave that was quite a bit bigger than all the rest caught them unawares and before they knew it they were in water up to their mid-thigh. They laughed and tried to run for shore but the wave kept getting higher and higher and prevented them from hurrying like they wished. From my

vantage point on the dry shore, I waited anxiously to see if I would need to wade into the surf and pull one of them out. Thankfully they made it and tumbled laughing and panting on the beach beside me. A little wetter; a little wiser.

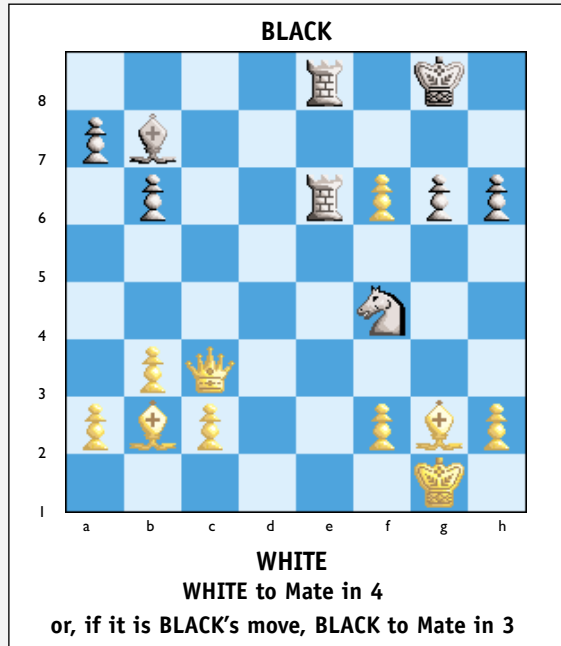
There was another time that caused even more concern. It was the first time our family ever set eyes on the heaving, pulsing Pacific Ocean. Taking Highway #4 across Vancouver Island in 1986, we rounded the last curve of the road, and lying suddenly before us was the blue expanse of the Pacific. It looked so like a lake, so calm and serene. We parked in the first parking area we could find and tumbled from the car. We ran down to the water and, with our rubber boots on, began to wade in the water. We did not know about every seventh wave being a big one. We had not been at the beach more than five minutes when a wave swept in that was much bigger than the others. It soon was up to my older daughters' knees – so much for their rubber boots. I grabbed them both by their coats and began to drag them to shore. The younger of the two tripped and fell into the rising swell. Fifteen minutes later we were looking for a motel in Ucluelet to dry and wash our clothes. Thus began our love affair with the ocean. Thus began a growing respect for its incredible power.

Why do I relate this story? It occurred to me again the other day when I watched a broken substance abuser turn his life back to the only God. The grace of the Lord had overwhelmed him and bowled him when he had his back to the Lord. Don't ever turn your back on the Lord.

PUZZLE PAGE ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

SEND PUZZLES, SOLUTIONS, IDEAS to Puzzle Page, 43 Summerhill Pl., Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 OR robgleach@aol.com

Chess Puzzle #69



NEW PUZZLES

Riddle for Rhyming Punsters #69

If a plump feline is a *fat cat*, what would you call hunting dog noises?

What would you call a black bird performance?

A -----

A porker's dance? A -----

Problem to Ponder #60 - "Really Rigorously Regulated Route Rates"

Sam and Samantha took 8 hours to travel from home, at an average speed of 60 km/h, to their grandparents' farm. They left the farm at the same time. Sam took 6 hours to drive home in his car.

If Samantha arrived home 24 minutes later than Sam, on average how much slower than Sam did she drive home?



SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (JUNE) PUZZLE PAGE

Solutions to Problem to Ponder #59 - "Party Prizes Probability"

Professor I. Luvmath threw a birthday party for his son. He provided six boxes numbered 1 to 6. Box 1 had prizes worth 1 dime, box 2 prizes worth 2 dimes, up to prizes worth 6 dimes in box 6. Each child at the party could spin a spinner that would point to numbers 1,2,3,4,5 or 6, then could choose a gift from the box whose number was indicated. If each child spun the spinner **3 times** by the end of the party, what is the probability that any given child would take home prizes worth a total of **a) 3 dimes b) 6 dimes c) 18 dimes d) 15 dimes or more?** Also, what is the *likely value* of **all prizes given out** if a total of 10 children attended the party?

a) Prizes worth 3 dimes means the spinner results were 1 then 1 then 1
The probability is $P(1,1,1) = (1/6)(1/6)(1/6) = 1/216$

b) If 3 spins result in prizes worth a total of 6 dimes, this could happen **10 ways** (namely by spinning 1,1,4 or 1,2,3 or 1,3,2 or 1,4,1 or 2,1,3 or 2,2,2 or 2,3,1 or 3,1,2 or 3,2,1 or 4,1,1) out of a total of $6 \times 6 \times 6 = 216$ possible outcomes, so **the probability is $10/216 = 5/108$**

c) Prizes worth 18 dimes means the spinner results were 6 then 6 then 6
The probability is $P(6,6,6) = (1/6)(1/6)(1/6) = 1/216$ again

d) Prizes worth 15 dimes or more could happen **18 ways** (namely 4,5,6 or 4,6,5 or 4,6,6 or 5,4,6 or 5,5,5 or 5,5,6 or 5,6,4 or 5,6,5 or 5,6,6 or 6,4,5 or 6,4,6 or 6,5,4 or 6,5,5 or 6,5,6 or 6,6,3 or 6,6,4 or 6,6,5 or 6,6,6) out of a total of $6 \times 6 \times 6 = 216$ possible outcomes, so **the probability is $18/216 = 1/12$**

e) The 10 children would spin the spinner 30 times altogether. Each of the numbers 1 to 6 should show up $1/6$ of the 30 spins, so 5 times each. Thus, the likely prizes given are 5 worth 1 dime, 5 worth 2 dimes, up to 5 worth 6 dimes.

The total value is $5(10+20+30+40+50+60) = 1050$ cents = \$10.50
Reasonably frugal by today's standards!

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 68

WHITE to Mate in 7 Descriptive Notation

- BxP ch KxP
- R-R3 ch K-N3
- R-N3 ch K-R2
- R-B7 ch K-R3
- R-R3 ch K-N3
- R-N7 ch K-B4
- R-R5 mate

Algebraic Notation

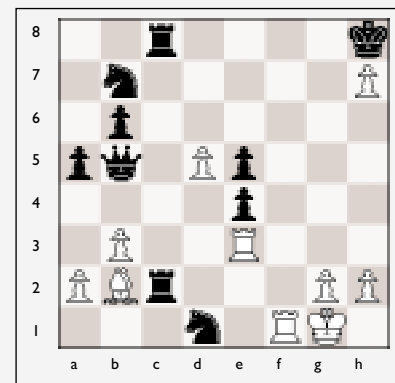
- Bb2xe5+ Kh8xh7
- Re3-h3+ Kh7-g6
- Rh3-g3+ Kg6-h7
- Rf1-f7+ Kh7-h6
- Rg3-h3+ Kh6-g6
- Rf7-g7+ Kg6-f5
- Rh3-h5++

OR, if it is BLACK's move,

BLACK to Mate in 5

Descriptive Notation

- _____ QxR ch
 - KxQ NxR ch
 - K-N1 RxP ch
 - K-R1 RxB
 - P-KR3* R-B8 mate
- [*or any other White move]



NOTE: Black loses faster if:

- K-K1 RxB
- [Any move] R-B8 mate

Algebraic Notation

- _____ Qb5xf1+
 - Kg1xf1 Nd1xe3+
 - Kf1-g1 Rc2xg2+
 - Kg1-h1 Rg2xb2
 - h2-h3* Rc8-c1++
- [*or any other White move]

NOTE: Black loses faster if:

- Kf1-e1 Rc2xb2
- [Any move] Rc8-c1++

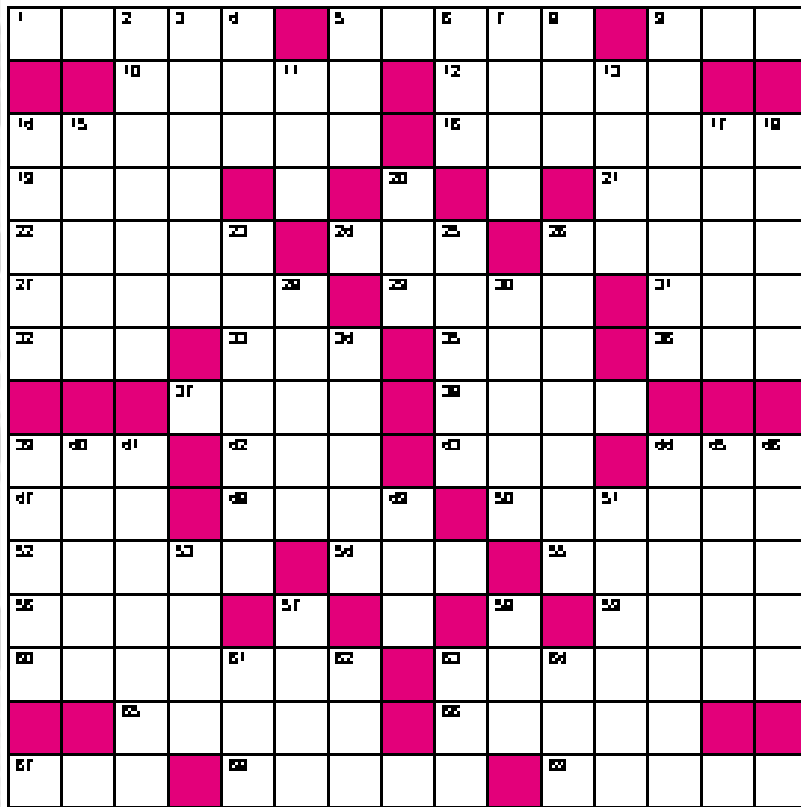
Answer to Riddle for Punsters #68

What do you call a wild cat that can make sounds like a pigeon?

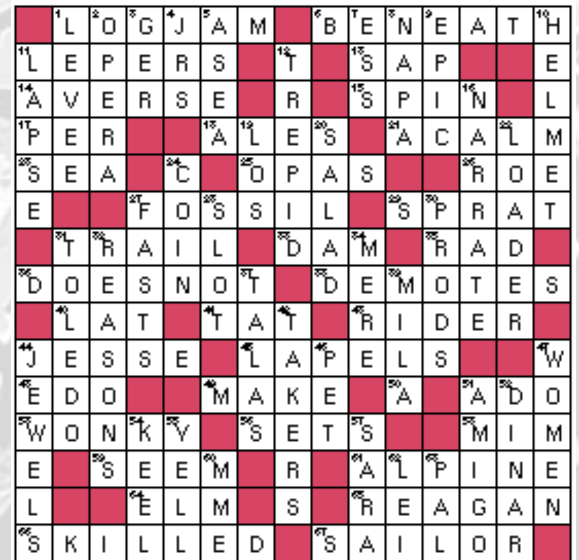
A c o u g a r.

Crossword Puzzle

Series 9, No. 7



Last month's solution Series 9, no. 6



Jape

ACROSS:

1. Rough copy
5. Formerly "Navigators" islands
9. Bird product
10. Not tied up
12. Put more on
14. Leg adornments
16. Reprieve
19. Peruse
21. Article
22. Certain circle
24. Something to walk on
26. _____ facias = judicial writ
27. Implement for planting
29. Field product
31. Famous hockey player
32. Abbr. found on letterheads
33. Obtain
35. Ancient greeting
36. Negative reply
37. Out of danger
38. Valley
39. Likely to
42. Number
43. Building extension
44. Ecclesiastical vestment
47. Make a mistake
48. Corner an animal
50. Waiter
52. Lariat
54. Attempt
55. Pass through a hole
56. All (comb. form)
59. An oak is one
60. Isolate
63. Quoted
65. Roof edge
66. Love
67. Owns
68. A good thing to have
69. Child's stuffed toy

DOWN:

2. European plant
3. Did the laundry
4. Foot digit
5. Socioeconomic states (abbr.)
6. Disfigure
7. Poems
8. Newspaper items
9. Printed copy
11. Pig pen
13. Heroic
14. Get up
15. Hawaiian birds
17. _____ firma
18. Filing board
20. Animal pouch
23. Sailing race
25. Barter
26. Exercise book
28. Direct attention to
30. Certain shapes
34. Belief
39. Popular chocolate bars
40. Prepare for painting
41. Dreamlike states
44. Avoided, turned away
45. Pier
46. Class of animals
49. Unit of force
51. Stop working
53. Spanish = lime-tree
57. Summer drinks
58. Primary colour
61. Harmful sun ray
62. Road curve shape
63. Rodent
64. Temporary bed