

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

JAN/FEB 2017  
Volume 36 Issue No. 2

# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS

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"I'M GAY."**

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# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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**For Subscriptions or to Change your address, contact:**

Joanna deBoer - Reformed Perspective Administration,  
Box 1328, 230 2nd AVE NW, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0  
[subscribe@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:subscribe@reformedperspective.ca)  
1-855-527-1366

**For Letters to the Editor, Advertising and Submissions, contact:**

E-mail: [editor@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:editor@reformedperspective.ca)

**Editor:** Jon Dykstra

**Regular Contributors:** Sharon Bratcher, Christine Farenhorst, Margaret Helder, Rob Slane, Michael Wagner

**Board of Directors:** Bruce DeBoer (Chairman); Henry Stel (Managing Editor and Secretary); Chris deBoer (Treasurer); Mark Penninga; Aren Vreugdenhil

**Template Design:** Compass Creative Studio Inc. [compasscreative.ca](http://compasscreative.ca)

**Art Direction, Design and Layout:** Annelies Veurink  
[www.facebook.com/FreshDesignByAnnelies](http://www.facebook.com/FreshDesignByAnnelies)

**Contact Address for Australia:**

Pro Ecclesia Publishers, PO Box 189, Kelmscott, W. Australia 6111

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# HERE'S THE PROBLEM WITH JUST CLOSING YOUR EYES DURING THE SEX SCENES

by Cap Stewart

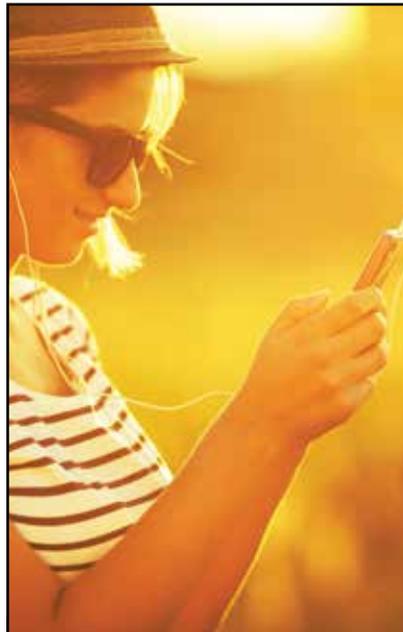
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# NOW YOU ARE THE MEDIA

## So what do you think the public needs to hear, read and see?

by Jon Dykstra

If you had your own media outlet what sort of news would you pass on to the public? If you weren't concerned with turning a profit, what would you want to put in front of their noses?

### PUBLISHERS ONE AND ALL

Don't mistake this for a hypothetical question. You *do* own a media outlet – we all do. In an age of Facebook, and Instagram, and Twitter, each of us is serving up the news to anywhere from a few dozen to a few hundred followers and friends.

Some of those are close friends and family who think just like we do. But you probably have some college friends, or some neighbors, or even family members who most definitely don't think like you do. And their only exposure to your kind of thinking might be your social media feed.

So what do you want to share with them? What do you think they most need to hear?

Another cute cat video? Pictures from your latest camping trip? Those might be appreciated. Those have their place. But there is so much more we can do with our media outlet.

Remember that teammate from your high school volleyball squad, the one who now says there is no God? What if your social media feed – your own news outlet – included a video highlighting some of God's creative genius? And how about that co-worker who asked to be your Facebook friend, and who seems to have no interest in talking about God? What if you could deliver them some well-thought out, well-written articles about how the world only makes sense when viewed through biblical lenses?

Maybe they'll see it. Maybe they'll read it.

But even if they don't, by regularly sharing (i.e. publishing) high-quality, God-honoring materials you can have an enormous impact on how many others will see this material. The way Facebook works, the more likes or shares an article gets, the greater the number of people who will have that article show up in their feed.

### TOGETHER WE ARE BETTER

This is one of the reasons why, two months back, *Reformed Perspective* decided to make a big change. We went from an 11-times-a-year publishing

schedule that was built around a print magazine and subscriptions, to a 5-days-a-week/250-times-a-year publishing schedule built on a mix of media platforms, including social media. And all of it is free, funded by donations.

Now there are no restrictions on how many we can impact. Or, rather, there are only two. The first is the quality of our resources – they're only useful if they're excellent. The second? When they are excellent, we can only have a big impact if *RP* supporters are eager to share our resources with others online.

### HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER

Right now our main online distribution is via Facebook where *Facebook.com/ReformedPerspectiveMagazine* has about 1,150 followers (which is up 300 from just a couple months ago). We post articles to the website each day, but if that's all we do, then through the day only a few dozen will read them. But if we share the article on the *RP* Facebook page then we will get hundreds and even thousands of reads, as word spreads.

This is where *RP* readers can have an enormous impact. If you like our resources then please "Like" our Facebook page. That will ensure that our posts will, now and again, show up in your own feed so you can see them. But to make sure you never miss a post, you'll need to go one step further and after liking the *RP* Facebook page, click

*One Share seems to have the same  
impact as roughly 10 Likes...*



on the “Following” button, and select “See First.” That tells Facebook that you are making *RP* a priority – you’re not just *kind of* liking us, but you really do want to see our posts regularly.

Then please Like each individual *RP* post that you...well...like. When a lot of people Like a post, Facebook automatically starts feeding that into more *RP* followers’ feeds. Because of you, word starts getting out.

To have an even bigger impact, “Share” the post on your own page. This is a highly unscientific guesstimate, but in my experience so far one Share seems to have the same impact as roughly 10 Likes – it is far more helpful.

“Comments” also help, and while they don’t have quite the impact of Shares, they have a bigger impact than Likes.

The most popular article in the last couple of months – Cap Stewart’s “Here’s the problem with just closing your eyes during the sex scenes” – was read by 3,000 people online in just the first few days. That’s far more than the 1,150 followers we have on Facebook, so the other two thousands readers must have been made up of *RP* supporters’ Facebook friends. Together we reached thousands who otherwise might never have known about this excellent article.

## OTHER METHODS

Facebook isn’t our only method of delivery. Starting in January we have had an e-newsletter. *The Weekly Roundup* comes out each Saturday and is delivered to your email inbox (pictured to the right is the fifth edition, from February 11). If you make regular use of email, this is a fantastic way to make sure you never miss an *RP* article – just sign up at [Tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter](http://Tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter). And it’s very easy to forward on the newsletter to anyone or everyone you know.

## OLD SCHOOL

Even as we embrace the new media, we’re not abandoning the tried and true methods of getting the word out. Print remains effective. If Oma and Opa have *RP* copies lying around their coffee table, or if parents put it outside the bathroom door, those remain good ways

to get this material read.

But even there, we’re changing things up. The magazine is coming out 6 times a year but it’s bigger. And now it’s free. So if you know someone who should be getting it, you can send us a note with their address to get them signed up. Of course, while this is free, it does cost money to print and mail the magazine (and while the Internet makes distribution cheaper there are costs there too) so we’ll only be able to keep this up if we also get your generous support via donations. The most helpful way to do that is via a monthly Pre-Authorized Debit form, which you can find in the middle of this magazine (or online under the “Donate” tab at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca)).

Another “old school” method is speaking tours. This spring we’ll be bringing Dr. E. Calvin Beisner to Alberta and Ontario to speak on the hot topic of biblical stewardship and environmentalism. As this becomes an ever greater concern, Christians need to be a light here too. But before we can speak the truth, we need to know it, and we’re so thankful that Dr. Beisner is willing and eager to come north and speak to us and this issue (you can find out more about the Spring Tour via the ad this issue on page 26).

## CONCLUSION

Whether via old methods, or new, it’s by working together that we can reach far more than we ever could separately. Here at *RP*, we’ll continue to do our best to keep producing and passing along challenging, edifying materials that help clarify God’s thoughts on the most important issues of our day. We’ll do our best to provide material you’ll want your friends, neighbors and family to read.

But whether it’s sharing our materials, or sharing a great article from [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org), or [AnswersInGenesis.org](http://AnswersInGenesis.org), or [OneChristianDad.com](http://OneChristianDad.com), or [Challies.com](http://Challies.com), we all need to embrace our roles as media outlets. It’s such an opportunity...and one we should seize for all it’s worth! **RP**

# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

The most read and most commented [column this week was on the divorce politician, Donald Trump](#). That polarization came out in the comments too, where some saw the article as an endorsement of, and others, an attack on, the new American President's professed Christianity. But the thrust of the article was that we don't need to be so polarized. Our pro-life, and pro-LGBT president is neither all bad, nor all good. So instead of being all in for him, or all against him, we should offer qualified approval when it is warranted, and also qualified disapproval when that is warranted.

This is how we should not only view President Trump, but with any politician. A Member of Parliament from Reformist circles, Arnold Varcoe shared on Facebook how his grandfather is holding him accountable to do something about the carbon tax. That's funny, but also awesome. While we can be sure that his grandfather is proud of him, his grandfather also has expectations - his support is still qualified. That is how it should be. We know we are not to be of Paul, or Aquila, (1 Cor. 3), but it is just as true that we should not be of Stephen Harper, or Jason Kenney, or Brad Trott, or Arnold Varcoe, or Donald J. Trump. When we find our identity in Christ alone, then we can be the most effective witness for Him, declaring what is good in His eyes, and feeling free then, to also condemn what is wrong...no matter who is doing it.

Do you know anyone else who might be interested in this newsletter? Please pass it along, and let them know they can sign up for it at the bottom of the [RP Newsletter](#).



**Here's the problem with just closing your eyes during the sex scenes**

"It doesn't matter if you avert your eyes during sex scenes - at the end of the day, studios care about profit margins. That being the case, prudes and perverts give equal support for a film when they buy a movie ticket or purchase a DVD."

[READ NOW](#)



**How should Christians celebrate the good Donald Trump has done?**

When it comes to the unborn, we're getting much more than we expected from Donald Trump - it's been an amazing couple of weeks!

But does that mean he's our guy?

[READ NOW](#)



**Why doesn't the OT say more about what happens after death?**

Why doesn't God say more about Heaven, and the New Earth? Maybe because, while we have eternity before us, we've got some work to do here and now.

[READ NOW](#)



**Joss Whedon Calls Ivanka Trump a Dog, Jared Kushner 'Voldemort in Training'**

"Whedon" didn't feel alone. Here are friends at the dispiriting attack.

**Someone, somewhere, said something stupid today**

There's a lot to be outraged about in the world today. And there's even more out to be outraged about.

[READ NOW](#)



# NOTA BENE

News worth noting

## CONTROVERSY FOR FUN'S SAKE: AUSSIES HAVE THE MOST!

BY JON DYKSTRA



**N**ot that it's a competition or anything, but on the Reformed sermon site [www.TheSeed.info](http://www.TheSeed.info), the Free Reformed Church of Australia (FRCA) pastors have way more sermons online than anyone else. Here's the breakdown by country:

1 – SCOTLAND  
84 – NEW ZEALAND  
135\* – USA  
420\* – CANADA  
769 – AUSTRALIA

*Whaaaaaat?!?*

This is surprising, and if one were into clickbait-ish manufactured controversies, one might even say this was *downright shocking!* This growing website is Canadian-based, and collects the sermons of the Canadian Reformed churches and their sister-church denominations. So wouldn't you expect there to be way more Canadian sermons than any others?

But whether from Canadians, Australians, or any others, it is such a blessing that so many quality sermons can be found in this one place. If you go to a Canadian Reformed church, or one of their sister denominations, please encourage your pastor to contribute to [www.TheSeed.info](http://www.TheSeed.info). As more and more pastors do, it becomes an ever more useful and edifying and comprehensive site, able to bless God's people around the world.

*\* While the URC and OPC are primarily American denominations, they do have a strong Canadian presence as well. Their Canadian pastors were counted to the Canadian total and subtracted from the American total.*

## CONSCIENCE PROTECTION – MAYBE NOW THE LEFT WILL UNDERSTAND

BY JON DYKSTRA



**N**ormally it can be quite a coup to design a dress for the US First Lady, but in the weeks leading up to the inauguration, designer Sophie Theallet, who had previously dressed Michelle Obama, asked her fellow designers to boycott the next First Lady, Melania Trump. Theallet issued an open letter in which she said:

I will not participate in dressing or associating in any way with the next First Lady. The rhetoric of racism, sexism, and xenophobia unleashed by her husband's presidential campaign are incompatible with the shared values we live by. I

encourage my fellow designers to do the same.

Designers Tom Ford and Marc Jacobs joined her boycott. Most media outlets reported these boycotts either without commentary, or with a generally positive slant.

Any who believe in freedom of conscience should support these designers' right to deny their services to Melania. They oppose Trump, so they don't want to have any role in making him, or his wife, look good.

Here then is something we can agree on – ideally no one should be forced against their conscience to participate in something they think is evil. But now the Left has to remember to treat others as it wants to be treated. If designers shouldn't be forced into participating in Donald Trump's inauguration, then why should Christian bakers have to violate their consciences and participate in same-sex weddings they oppose.

## HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE THE GOOD DONALD TRUMP HAS DONE?

BY JON DYKSTRA



**W**ithin the first two weeks of being inaugurated, President Donald Trump has:

- Signed off on the “Mexico City Policy” which bans federal funds from going to any groups that facilitate abortions overseas.
- Questioned the mainstream media as to why they don’t cover the annual and *massive* March for Life, which then embarrassed the media into covering the March this year.
- Sent his Vice President to speak at the March for Life, who also, the night before, hosted a reception for 40 pro-lifers leaders in the White House. Trump’s campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, also spoke at the March where she declared the right to life “is a right, it is not a privilege, it’s not a choice. It is God-given.”
- Tweeted “The #MarchForLife is so important. To all of you marching --- you have my full support!”
- Nominated a Supreme Court justice that seems conservative (the judge, Neils Gorsuch, co-authored a book on euthanasia in which he wrote

“all human beings are intrinsically valuable and the intentional taking of human life by private persons is always wrong”).

So what are Christians to make of the new President of the United States? This is night and day from what we could have expected with a President Hilary Clinton!

And yet this is the same man who has show himself to be:

- *Petty* – a favorite pastime is coming up with silly insulting names for his opponents, like “Lyin Ted” and “Little Marco.”
- *Vulgar* – with appearances in *Playboy*, and on the Howard Stern show, and a recording of him talking about sexually assaulting women.
- *A Proud Adulterer* – in his autobiography he brags about the married women he has bedded.

So can we celebrate the good he does? Or, in the eyes of the world, is that going to too closely align us with him, and mar our Christian witness when he ends up doing something petty, vulgar, or faithless?

To know how to act we need to recognize Trump for who he is. As Pastor Douglas Wilson has noted, the best biblical comparison is Jehu (2 Kings 9-10) who was used by God to punish Jezebel and Ahab’s house:

[Jehu] was an instrument in the hand of God...At the same time, all was not entirely well. “But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam

the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin – that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan (2 Kings 10:29).”

In the same way, Donald Trump, in these actions for the unborn, has most certainly been an *instrument* of the Lord. But that doesn’t mean he is a *follower*. And it doesn’t mean we have to go all in for him. Pastor Wilson writes:

Political factions want everything to be a simple binary choice on the human level. You either are all in for Jezebel or all in for Jehu. What Scripture invites us to is qualified support, or perhaps qualified disapproval. So and so was a good king, but did not remove the high places. Jehu removed much that needed to be removed, but God brought judgment on him later because he did not do all that needed to be done. Our foundational allegiance is to God and His ways, and is not to be wholly given over to any man.

There has been a lot to celebrate in the opening two weeks of Donald Trump’s presidency, so celebrate we should. But rather than focus on the man, let’s focus on *what God has done* through this man. When we give God the glory, no one will be confused about where our loyalties lie.

SOURCES: Pete Bakinski’s “VP Mike Pence hosted pro-life leaders at White House on eve of March for Life” and Patrick B. Craine’s “President Trump tweets to March for Life: ‘You have my full support!’” posted to LifeSiteNews.com on Jan 27, 2017; Douglas Wilson’s “Trump takes Jezreel” posted to DougWils.com on Jan 16, 2017

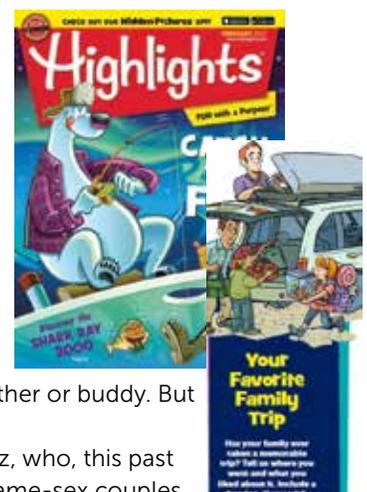
## HIGHLIGHTS MAGAZINE TO FEATURE SAME-SEX COUPLES

BY JON DYKSTRA

**F**or the first time, the popular children’s magazine *Highlights* will feature a same-sex set of parents in an issue. This is a magazine that can seemingly be found everywhere, and is popular among beginning readers for its short stories and activities, and with not-yet-reading children who love the many colorful pictures.

The cartoon same-sex couple illustration appear in the February issue, and show two kids and two adults men packing up a station wagon for camping. No mention is made in the magazine that these men are a couple, so kids could just assume it is a dad and maybe his brother or buddy. But the magazine informed the press that it is indeed a same-sex couple.

The couple’s appearance is a response to pressure from a homosexual activist, Kristina Wertz, who, this past October, in a widely shared Facebook post, asked why the magazine hadn’t already featured same-sex couples.



## TOP 2016 NEWS: MARVELS OF HUMAN DESIGN

BY BRIAN THOMAS



**J**ust when we thought we knew all the basics about the human body, anatomists made three surprising discoveries in 2016. The newfound human body complexity borders on science fiction.

The first find: Special cells transport germs from a mother's gut to her baby's gut system through the mother's milk.<sup>1</sup> The germs, or intestinal microbes, help both mother and baby digest food. The transport system includes elaborate cross-checks. It's like going through customs during international travel. The microbes get chaperoned through the mother's

blood stream into mammary tissues to become incorporated in mother's milk. Not only that, a healthy mother's body also selects the right germs to help her baby digest the particular nutrients the mother's milk will be supplying that day. Obviously a super-genius was at work when He designed this real-time mother-baby interactive biology.

The second find: A separate team discovered that a unique class of cells transport signals from the guts to the brain to enhance learning.<sup>2</sup> Healthy mammals have unique cells that communicate between the digestive, immune, and nervous systems. Mice with sterilized intestines underperformed in learning tests, but those with normal intestinal flora learn and remember more efficiently. There's every reason to suspect the human body also transports unique information from gut to brain.

The third find: Researchers already determined a few years ago that the human visual system is optimized to channel the most photons of the right

wavelength to the appropriate light-sensor cells embedded in the retina. In 2016, a team was stunned to learn that the human eye can sense an individual photon.<sup>3</sup> The most sensitive man-made photon detectors only approach that level of resolution using sub-freezing and dry conditions that reduce signal noise. Nobody knows what microscopic marvels enable the human visual system to detect single photons and carry their signals all the way to consciousness in the warm and wet environment inside our human heads.

These three 2016 discoveries of stunning human body design clearly imply an even more stunning Designer, and the God of the Bible fits that bill perfectly.

### ENDNOTES

1 Thomas, B. Mother's Milk Could Save a Million Lives. *Creation Science Update*. Posted on ICR.org February 17, 2016, accessed November 29, 2016.

2 Thomas, B. Special Cells Help Brain and Gut Communicate. *Creation Science Update*. Posted on ICR.org June 16, 2016, accessed November 29, 2016.

3 Thomas, B. Human Vision Can Sense a Single Photon. *Creation Science Update*. Posted on ICR.org August 8, 2016, accessed November 29, 2016.

Thomas, B. Top 2016 News: Marvels of Human Design. *Creation Science Update*. Posted on icr.org December 29, 2016. Copyright © 2016 Institute for Creation Research, www.icr.org. Used by permission.

## MANITOBA MLA SHARES A GOOD REASON FOR THE TOOTH FAIRY TO BE GENEROUS

BY JON DYKSTRA

**I**n our house, like many others, the Tooth Fairy has made some appearances.

It's always a cause for excitement, though our girls know that, strangely enough, the "Tooth Fairy" looks a lot like "Saint Nick" (knowing the truth doesn't make the pretending any less fun!). Once or twice she's shown up a day late but her disposal services are always appreciated. After all, who else is going to pay a buck for something that came out of your mouth?

But recently I found out that there could be a good reason for the

Tooth Fairy to be even more generous. In a Nov. 21 piece in *The Lance*, Winnipeg MLA James Teitsma shared:

"When the Tooth Fairy comes to visit the Teitsma home, our children find three loonies under their pillows in the morning. We use this opportunity to teach our children some of the basics of financial literacy: One loonie is saved in their piggy bank, one loonie is donated to a charitable cause of their choice and



the last loonie is for buying a toy at the dollar store. My wife and I believe this sets a good blueprint for money management. It teaches them to save for the future, to give charitably every day and to limit discretionary spending."

## SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE, SAID SOMETHING STUPID TODAY

BY JON DYKSTRA

Earlier today someone, somewhere, said something stupid. People saying stupid things isn't all that unusual, so one might question this story's newsworthiness, but this particular someone made a guest appearance on the *Lone Ranger* back in the 1960s. So this was a *celebrity* someone!

Celebrities saying something stupid isn't unusual either, but this was a left or right wing celebrity, which made this a *political event*, so, of course, the right or left wing media had to cover it!

In addition, today's event is just the latest in a *trend* which makes it doubly newsworthy. Observers aren't sure when making big of small started, but

some trace it to 1992, when a Vice President made international news for adding a "e" to the end of "potato." Historians say it goes further back still, with literary references to "making much ado about nothing" appearing as long ago as 1598 or 1599.

Whatever its origin, the trend has only grown in recent years with Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter dramatically increasing celebrities' opportunities for making public



mistakes. In addition, social media allows regular folk to join hands with the media in broadcasting these minor matters. It is only by sharing and reposting and really working together that we can alert the world to whenever someone somewhere says something stupid.

Or...we can focus our energies and our outrage on issues that actually matter.

## SAM OOSTERHOFF WINS ONTARIO RIDING

BY NATHAN ZEKVELD

Sam Oosterhoff is a social conservative, homeschooled, 19 years old, and Canadian Reformed. Exactly the opposite of who you might expect to be appointed as an MPP to replace the former leader of the PC party in Ontario in his riding. Just recently, he became the youngest Member of Provincial Parliament to sit in Queen's Park. This is an impressive achievement for a young man.

As a 19 year old who has just stepped into the public eye, people have their various criticisms, and he has had various men and women attack his credibility and character as a social conservative. As the spirit of our age dictates, the regular social media rage ensued upon his election to a position as MPP. There were comments ranging from a desire to punch him in the face, to seeing him getting hit by a greyhound bus. Welcome to the social media!

How did he beat out the other nominees to take over Tim Hudak's position? And how did he manage it as

a principled pro-lifer and all-around social conservative? The *Toronto Star's* political columnist speculated:

"That's the reality of democracy. A party is...

hijacked by outside interests... Federal Liberal ridings have also been captured by pro-lifers from time to time..."

But maybe there is a deeper reality to this. Alissa Golob describes Oosterhoff's opponent Rick Dykstra as "one of those 'personally pro-life but...' politicians." Sam Oosterhoff simply stepped up to bat, as Christina Blizzard put it, as "a 19 year-old, homeschooled, unapologetic social



*The CBC's "comedy" show This Hour has 22 Minutes managed to come up with the weirdest threat directed Sam Oosterhoff's way. This women, Agnes, said if Oosterhoff took women's reproductive rights away she would boil his "bones into a fine stew."*

conservative". This is who the Niagara riding elected as their representative with 54% of the popular vote.

Has Sam hijacked the party with outside interests? From the high percentage he won of the popular vote, one might think that he has only brought inside interests to light.

SOURCES: Lianne Laurence's "19-year-old homeschooled pro-lifer wins Ontario election by landslide" posted to LifeSiteNews.com Nov 18, 2016; Robert Benzie's "19-year-old student wins Niagara PC nomination" posted to TheStar.com Oct. 23, 2016; Alissa Golob's "How Sam Oosterhoff won the by-election" posted to Alissagolob.com on Nov. 18, 2016; Jonathon Van Maren's "What the liberal response to Sam Oosterhoff's election tells us about hateful rhetoric in politics" posted to TheBridgehead.ca on Nov. 18, 2016



# Q&A:

## Why doesn't the Old Testament say more about what happens after death?

by Jon Dykstra

Questions are powerful things: absolutely vital for anyone who wants to be wise, but also a way for the foolish to try to tear down.

So let's pretend, for a moment, that this was a hostile question. "We're going to live again after we die?" the mocker asks, "Then *why* doesn't God didn't tell anyone in the Old Testament about the afterlife?"

A good rule of thumb, when faced with someone trying to tear down the Bible, is to question his query. We shouldn't assume that a fool is going to fight fair. So before we try to find and answer to his *why* we should back up, and first see if his accusation is true: was God silent about the afterlife in the Old Testament?

And, as is often the case when someone is trying to take down the Bible, things aren't quite as they've presented them. While God doesn't give the same detail as in the New Testament, we do find in the Old Testament too, that God is repeatedly pointing to a future hope – one that will occur after the hearer's death. Some examples include:

- The promise to bruise the serpent's head in Genesis 3.
- The conclusion of the book of Ecclesiastes which points to coming justice: "For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil."
- Daniel 12:2 echoes this thought: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."
- Job speaks of seeing his coming Redeemer in chapter 19: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."
- In Psalm 16 David speaks of knowing that the Lord "will not abandon my soul to Sheol" (Sheol being the realm of death).

- Psalm 110 speaks of a future judgment – the day of wrath – in which the Lord will execute judgment among the nations (and this "day of wrath" pops up in many other places too).
- Hosea 13:14 speaks of God being able to take the sting from death.

There are others texts, and maybe even some clearer than these. But there was enough in the Old Testament for most of the Jews of Jesus' time to know that there was going to be a resurrection. The Sadducees denied it, in part because they held only to the first five books (the Pentateuch) of the Bible. However, Jesus pointed out that even they should have known better because in the Pentateuch God describes himself as "the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Gen. 28:13, Ex. 3:6, 4:5) repeatedly. Jesus continues: "He is not the God of the dead but of the living" so if He remains the God of these men, though they died long ago, then they must have experienced a resurrection from the dead. If we're paying attention there are more than hints in the OT.

Now let's return to our question: why didn't God tell the Old Testament saints more about what comes after death? No certain answer is available to us – God doesn't spell it out in his Word – but here's one possibility.

Even though God gave us more information in the New Testament, that hasn't been enough to quell Christians thirst for more and more detail. Books about supposed visits to Heaven (and even visits to Hell) are bestsellers, and one has even been made into a major motion picture. Many Christians are already far too obsessed with Heaven, so perhaps God has been sparse on the details to keep our focus on what's going on in this life here on Earth. You've heard the saying "Don't be so heaven-minded that you are of no earthly good." Well, God has given us a planet, and everything on it, to have dominion over, to care for, and develop to His honor. We have stuff to do – children to raise, poor to feed, orphans and widows to

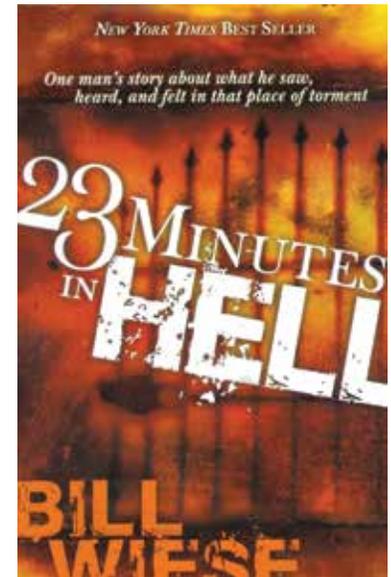
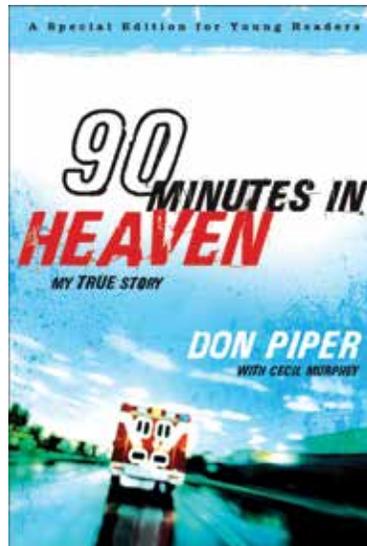
You've heard the saying  
"Don't be so heaven-minded  
that you are of no earthly  
good."

care for, friends to encourage, and talents to develop – down here! But wait, you might say, doesn't God warn us against being too Earth-focused? True – we are supposed to build up treasures in Heaven, rather than here on Earth (Matthew 6:19-20). But even passages like this point us back to what we are to be busy doing here on Earth. Storing up treasure is out, but loving the Lord your God and showing that by loving your neighbor as yourself? That is definitely in.

More importantly still, the Bible reveals what *God* was planning for right here on this Earth – the Bible is His story, His grand narrative, His rescue plan.

So perhaps the reason God didn't tell the OT saints, and even us today, more about what comes after death, is because that isn't nearly as important as what He is up to, and what we should be up to, here on Earth. **RP**

*RP used to have a Q&A column, where we'd track down someone to answer questions that were sent in. Might there be interest in having one again? If so, let the editor know and send in your questions at [editor@ReformedPerspective.ca](mailto:editor@ReformedPerspective.ca).*



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# IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE NUTSHELL

BY JON DYKSTRA

favoritism to the rich or poor (Leviticus 19:15, Ex. 23:3, Deut. 16:19, James 2:9) or partiality to any (Deut. 1:16-17, Proverbs 28:21, and etc.).

## BE LIKE THE REFORMERS – LIKE SOMETHING GOOD ON FACEBOOK!

Over at the Sheologians Facebook page, a tip on how we can be like the Reformers.

“The Reformation could not have happened without the creation of the printing press and the revolution of mass communication. Social media is our printing press. Like things. Share them. Be the Reformers...”

If you like something on the *RP* website or Facebook page, please like and share those articles and posts. We all have our own printing presses, and working together we can get the truth out to more people, quicker than ever before.

SOURCE: A January 2, 2017 post on Facebook.com/Sheologians/

## SUCCINCT, ON SPANKING

“The child is regarded, indeed is described in law, as ‘a dependent.’ Because children are deemed unable to realistically foresee the consequences of what they’re doing...they are denied the rights to such things as tobacco, drugs, sex, credit cards, automobiles and freedom from education. Therefore the child is seen to be ‘dependent’ on its parents. Should the parents shirk this responsibility the law holds them culpable. But another ancient principle of justice applies here. Society must not confer a responsibility without conferring sufficient authority to carry it out. You cannot expect a man or woman to do something unless they have the power to do it. That’s why the Criminal Code recognizes this right of parents, teachers and legal guardians to physically discipline children.”

- Ted Byfield, as quoted in Michael Wagner’s *True Right: Genuine Conservative Leaders of Western Canada*

## ON WHAT BASIS DO WE HAVE HUMAN RIGHTS?

As Christians we understand that our rights come from God. For example, our right to life comes from God’s prohibition against murder – no one has a right to kill me. Our right to equality – to fair treatment – comes from our understanding that we are all made in God’s image (in what other sense are we equal?) and also from God’s call not show

But the secular world also speaks of rights. So on what basis do they make their claims to there being universal human rights? R. Albert Mohler, in a 2014 address at BYU, explained that the secular case for human rights can only stand so long as no one asks that question.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, fresh after the horrors of World War II. It was adopted in a spirit of hope and desperation. The French intellectual Jacques Maritain, one of the leading Roman Catholic philosophers of the century, was one of the drafters of the statement. That Declaration is now cited as the definitive statement of the modern affirmation of human rights. The Declaration affirms that all humans possess “inherent dignity” and states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

That is an eloquent statement indeed, but upon what does it rest? Maritain saw the problem. In his words, “We agree upon these rights, providing we are not asked why. With the ‘why’ the dispute begins.”

And the dispute has never ended.... If we are biological accidents – just another primate – why should any individual human life matter? And why should we respect an abstraction called human rights? ....There is no secular ground that can support and defend human rights.

## THE WIT AND WISDOM OF GEORGE HEBERT

George Hebert was best known as a Christian poet, but he published a collection of proverbs he collected over his lifetime. Here are a half dozen of the best.

- *The scalded dog fears cold water* – experiences can teach the wrong lesson.
- *Who gives to all, denies all* – saying yes to every person who ask for your time is sure to shortchanges everyone.



- *A dwarf on a giant's shoulders see farther of the two* – even those with amazing parents should aim to do better than them, since you get to build on their work.
- *Were there no hearers there would be no backbiters* – it takes two to gossip; don't listen.
- *Good and quickly seldom meet* – most often it is one or the other
- *Better suffer ill than do ill* – better to be bullied, than be a bully.

## C.S. LEWIS ON DEMOCRACY

"I am a democrat because I believe in the Fall of Man. I think most people are democrats for the opposite reason. A great deal of democratic enthusiasm descends from the ideas of people like Rousseau, who believed in democracy because they thought mankind so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in the government. The danger of defending democracy on those grounds is that they're not true. And whenever their weakness is exposed, the people who prefer tyranny make capital out of the exposure... The real reason for democracy is just the reverse. Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows. Aristotle said that some people were only fit to be slaves. I do not contradict him. But I reject slavery because I see no men fit to be masters."

– C.S. Lewis

## KNOCK, KNOCK

"Knock, knock."  
 "Who's there?"  
 "To."  
 "To who?"  
 "No, to *whom*."

SOURCE: Andy Simmons' "Department of Wit: 25 Jokes that make you sound like a genius" in the Sept. 21/04 Reader's Digest

## AND SPEAKING OF GRAMMAR NAZIS....

Nazi: "Sir, we're mining too many useless pyrite nuggets."  
 Hitler: "Then mine less of them."  
 Grammar Nazi: "Mine FEWER!"  
 Hitler: "Yes?"

SOURCE: slightly modified from a joke making its way around the Internet

## THE DIRECTION CANADA HAS CHOSEN

"What happens to a society that discourages new life, kills vulnerable life, surgically alters healthy bodies to conform to unhealthy minds, puts the greatest taxes on those who are the most economically productive, and treats a basic building block of life (carbon) as if it were a pollutant? That society is committing suicide."

– Mark Penninga (in the *Vancouver Sun*, June 9)

## WHAT PARENT WOULDN'T LOVE THIS PRESENT?

One of the biggest, most expensive presents we will ever give our children is Christian schooling. But do our children understand the real value of this gift they've been given?

Some do. A friend, Sharon Bratcher, recently rediscovered this 30-year-old certificate that she and her sibling gave her parents

way back when. Reading it, I couldn't help getting a bit misty-eyed; this is a present every parent would treasure.

Whereas [our parents] Marvin C. and Helen A. Osborne have unselfishly deprived themselves of some of the material goods and financial security which could have been theirs, in order to provide a high quality Christian education for each of their four children during the past 18 years, We do now, on the date of the final graduation ceremony, this 6th day of June in the year of our Lord 1985, join together to express to them our deepest love, and gratitude for the sacrifices which they have made and the love which they have expressed this way. Thank-you Dad and Mom. May God bless and reward you.



## GALILEO: THE CHURCH'S REAL MISTAKE

"Keep in mind that the battle between Galileo and the church was *not* a battle between science and mindless fundamentalism. It was a battle between new science and old science, and the error of the church had been that of getting into bed with the best science of the day. And we all know, as Max Planck put it, science advances funeral by funeral." – Douglas Wilson (in *Writers to Read*)

## GOSSIP VS. FLATTERY

Blogger Annie Kate Aarnouste (AnnieKatesHomeSchoolReviews.com) recently passed along the difference between gossip and flattery. The quote is from *Disciplines of a Godly Woman*.

"Gossip is saying behind a person's back what you would never say to her face. Flattery is saying to a person's face what you would never say behind her back."

## CHESTERTON ON MIRACLES

In their book, *How Should Christians Approach Origins?*, professors John Byl and Tom Goss note that atheistic science is often based on assumptions, rather than evidence. For example, our physical laws are assumed to be "valid universally throughout time and space." Yet, we can only observe a very small portion of the universe, so we are simply assuming everything acts the same everywhere else. And then, when someone comes across something extraordinary – something miraculous that seems to violate those laws – it will be rejected based on this assumption. And here Goss and Byl include a wonderful quote from G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*.

Somehow or other an extraordinary idea has arisen that the disbelievers in miracles consider them coldly and fairly, while believers in miracles accept them only in connection with some dogma. The fact is quite the other way. The believers in miracles accept them (rightly or wrongly) because they have evidence for them. The disbelievers in miracles deny them (rightly or wrongly) because they have a doctrine against them.

# WHEN THEY SAY, "I'M GAY."

A new DVD resource can help with what comes next

reviewed by Jan DeGelder

The powerful, aggressive, LGBTQ lobby has been very successful in its efforts to normalize the homosexual lifestyle in our society. In our Reformed circles we read and hear about these efforts, but for most of us homosexuality is still an issue “out there,” that’s not all that relevant to us or anyone we know. We associate the gay lifestyle with gay bars and the many annual pride parades that take place around the country. So we know, for example, that the city of Toronto hosts one of the largest gay pride parades in the world, and that on a day in early July it is best to avoid the downtown core of Toronto if you don’t want to be stuck in the middle of what’s happening there.

That’s easily done, which is why, for most of us, homosexuality is far removed from our daily lives. We’d also like to keep it that way, preferring to avoid the confrontation.

This avoidance approach can work for a time...right up until your child, or one of your siblings, or a parent, or a close friend comes to you and says, “I’m gay.”

## WHAT HE’S BEEN GOING THROUGH

All of a sudden your world changes. Now homosexuality is right here – in your face, in your life. You can’t avoid this issue any longer. What do you say? How do you react? What do you actually know about this?

It’s all very confusing. You love this person deeply, but how do you deal with this?

One of the problems that can easily frustrate the conversation is that this

is an all-of-a-sudden experience for you. The same is not true for the other person. By the time he<sup>1</sup> is ready to tell you “I’m gay,” he has already struggled with many conflicting emotions and questions, and has come to some answers for himself. But you are just at the very beginning of this process.

If this is someone from our Reformed churches, then it is likely he has quietly wrestled with same-sex attraction for quite a while already, feeling desperately confused and insecure. He will have tried to ignore or deny the feelings he knows he is not supposed to give in to, and tried to resist attractions he does not want to have. It is such a lonely journey. The fear of rejection is strong. He may think he knows how his family, his friends and the church community are going to respond, because he’s often heard the casual, and sometimes disparaging remarks they’ve made about homosexuals.

## HOW TO BEGIN

When he’s ready to share the outcome of his struggle, he may well follow his declaration with a question: “How do you like me now?”

But this is just one of the questions running through your head. There are so many unknowns, and you want to know more. Where can you search for answers? Which books? What articles? And who can you talk to about this? Are there others in our churches who have gone through this before? Or are you the only ones?

Your child (or sibling, or parent, or

friend) has already gone through his struggles, and he may already be settled in his thinking. He might tell you, “I am finally ready to accept myself as I am.” He has come to conclusions that he is (more or less) okay with: “I am gay. This is who I am. I know what you think and feel, but I expect you to accept this.”

That is a rough conversation starter. How should you respond?

The worst thing you can say at that moment is something like, “Oh, don’t worry too much, dear. We can fix this. We will find you a good Christian counselor who can help you to get out of this.”

Don’t worry? This approach isn’t comforting, but dismissive – he has been worrying about these confusing emotions *for years now!* Start the conversation this way and it may end quickly – “You just don’t get it, mom.”

A better beginning would be to give him a big hug. Hold him tight, tell him you love him, and that you will *always* love him.

Yes – you will have to make clear that you do not agree with his sinful choices. But there is a time for everything, and right then and there, it is a time for long, tight hugs.

## HOMOSEXUALITY IS A TEMPTATION IN THE CHURCH TOO

It will never be easy when a person you love dearly tells you, “I am gay.” But I’m convinced that in the Church we are well past the time that we can comfortably ignore this topic, or think that a one-line wholesale condemnation is enough.

The LGBTQ community has become mainstream in virtually all aspects of our culture. It's everywhere today – in arts and entertainment, politics, sports, education, business, commercials, the media<sup>2</sup> and even in some churches. This prominent visibility all around us is going to have an impact on us as well, on our families, and our young people. And those who struggle with same-sex attraction will feel the pressure from this permissive culture more and more, and at an ever younger age.

So there is an urgent need to talk with one another about homosexuality. How can we help each other? How can we educate ourselves to have those conversations?

We could go to Google. Type in some keywords and do a search: it's easy enough. But, without any guidance, this is not the most helpful way, and can easily leave you overwhelmed and confused.

It is too much for this review article to analyze relevant Bible passages, like Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:21-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-11. But it is beyond dispute that nowhere the Bible has anything positive to say about same-sex relations.<sup>3</sup>

But how exactly can we explain to our son or daughter that, while we disapprove of their choices, we continue to love them? And, how do we then put this our words into practice?

## A GREAT RESOURCE

One good source for answers to these questions can be found on a DVD titled *How Do You Like Me Now?* The subtitle introduces the content: "When a child, parent, spouse or sibling says they're gay."

This DVD includes a number of interviews with parents, spouses, siblings and children of someone who has declared themselves gay. The cover of the DVD

says that Joe Dallas leads the discussion. But this is not a "discussion" in the sense of a debate, and I think that is a good thing. A debate would distract from the impact of the testimonies of the interviewees. Dallas does act as discussion leader in the background. He appears between the interviews and provides the connecting lines as he summarizes and comments on what is being said in each interviews.

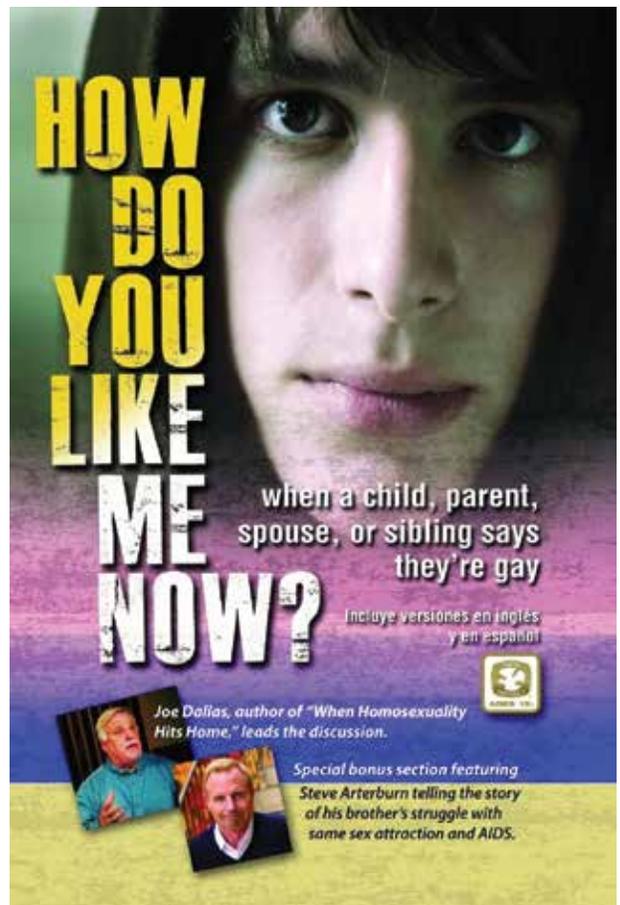
Some might wonder about the lack of any homosexuals being interviewed – wouldn't it be good to hear from them about their struggles, and about their experiences with their families and their church communities? Yes, we do need to hear their voices too. It is crucial that we listen to them in our families and our churches, and that we do so carefully and lovingly. Thankfully there is also material out there that can help us to do so.<sup>4</sup>

But here the focus is on the family and friends who are impacted when someone says, "I am gay." It is good and helpful for us to hear about the role of their Christian faith as these parents, and others, struggle to come to grips with the homosexuality of a loved one.

If you have gone through this yourself, you will be able to relate to the experiences and emotions these parents, siblings, spouses and children are sharing: the initial shock, the confusion and pain, and often the utter helplessness or even the tendency to blame oneself: *What did I miss? Did we do something wrong?*

The DVD's purpose is to help friends and family find a way forward. As someone said, "I wish we would have

*The DVD's purpose is to help friends and family find a way forward.*



## HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW? WHEN A CHILD, PARENT, SPOUSE, OR SIBLING SAYS THEY'RE GAY

90 MINUTES / 2016

PRODUCED BY MASTERING LIFE MINISTRIES  
AND PURE PASSION MEDIA

had the opportunity to watch this earlier, before we had our own struggles with one of our children."

Now, when you interview a significant number of people you are going to get a variety of responses. Reactions are, of course, very personal. This means different viewers will find different interviews stronger and more compelling than others. That only makes sense. And it certainly doesn't take away from the value of watching this. On the contrary! What connects these testimonies is that they come from the hearts of people who have struggled to understand their straying loved one. This leads to some moving moments, which is understandable when you are asked to talk about someone who is so close to you and whom you love so deeply.

A father or mother, a brother or sister, a husband or wife, a son or daughter will all have their own, unique relationship with the person who comes out as gay or lesbian. And thus each one will seek the best way to deal with this in his or her life. But though they all have very different things to say, all express their enduring love for their same-sex attracted family member or friend.

## NO FALSE GUARANTEES

A few of the interviewees suggest that there must be a link between the homosexuality of their loved one and traumatic experiences in his youth, like sexual abuse or growing up in a dysfunctional family. But this suggestion does not dominate the conversation, and it is not the message of the DVD.

I am grateful for this, because I believe we should be careful here. Perhaps traumatic childhood experiences may have led some to feel same-sex attraction and self-identify as gay or lesbian. But it is not a given. And one can definitely not turn it around and conclude that every gay or lesbian must have had a horrible youth.

We should keep something similar in mind when it comes to the view that proper counseling and professional therapy can change someone's sexual orientation. Joe Dallas, the discussion leader in the background, whose comments connect the interviews, is actively involved in what is called "reparative therapy" or Christian "conversion therapy." He is also the author of a number of books on this topic.

But again – although there are hints – this opinion does not dominate the discourse at all, and it is definitely not the message of the DVD. And here, too, I am grateful for this because I believe we should be careful here.

Is it possible for someone's same-sex attraction to completely change and disappear? Yes, it has happened. Can proper counseling and professional therapy help to bring about change? Possibly. God's children know that God can work miracles – He can do things we do not expect or find hard to imagine. But there are also reports that "reparative therapy" is often ineffective. Despite much



...there is a time for everything, and right then and there, it is a time for hugs.

counseling, and intense prayer, many Christians do not feel any lessening in their same-sex attraction.

Several of the people that are interviewed emphasize how important it is to repent from sinful and harmful choices, and to turn to Jesus Christ. However, such repentance does not come with a promise or guarantee that feelings of same-sex

attraction will then disappear. That's why I appreciate that the DVD does not really get involved in this discussion.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

Much more important than a change in sexual attraction is a turning to Jesus Christ as Savior, so that our true identity is more and more in Him alone. Then it is

no longer my sexuality, or whatever else, that determines my self-identification. Then Jesus Christ alone rules my life. He determines who I am, what my priorities are, and what my choices ought to be. He determines what I am to do with my life, which includes my sexual life. This is true not only for the homosexual but also for the heterosexual. It is true for each and every one of us.

One of the best parts of the DVD is the special feature: an interview with Stephen Arterburn. Arterburn is the founder of New Life Ministries, a host of counseling talkshows on radio and TV, a public speaker, and the author of a number of books on (among other topics) sexual issues, such as *Every Man's Battle*.

In the interview on this DVD he shares the story of his brother, who lived the gay lifestyle. At some point Stephen says to him, "I don't agree with what you do, but I love you without judging who you are." This is basically the whole message of this DVD in one sentence: reject someone's choice for the homosexual lifestyle, but make it very clear that you do not deny the way he feels, or the same-sex attraction he experiences, and that these things do not stop you from loving him.

Later on his brother turned to Christ and broke with the gay life. But this repentance did not change his brother's homosexual feelings. He continued to struggle with same-sex attraction, but regretted the bad choices he made, and now wants to warn others about the destructive consequences of living the gay life.

## CONCLUSION

To sum it all up, in these interviews we meet a good number of people. They are all different, of course, and so are their circumstances. That's why you can expect that some viewers will relate more to one person or one scenario than to another. This also means that you will not get answers to all the questions you may be struggling with.

But that should not stop anyone. The whole DVD is worth watching for everyone. And don't hesitate to include your young teens. It may make a good conversation starter between you and your

10 or 12 years old. You might think that he is too young for this. But remember: the LGBTQ groups don't think he is too young for their propaganda!

I recommend this DVD as a helpful tool for those who are having their own struggles with a child, a sibling, a spouse or a parent who has come out to tell that she is lesbian.

Actually... I hope that it will also end up in the hands of people, also young people, who have not (or not yet...) experienced the issues this DVD deals with. Watch it before you are confronted with this in your own family, or among your friends, or in your church.

For one day you probably will be. 

*Rev. Jan DeGelder is the pastor of the Flamborough Canadian Reformed Church*

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Throughout this article I will use the pronoun "he" in place of "he or she." It makes for tiresome reading to see constantly he/she or herself/himself. But it is good to remember that this issue affect males and females alike.*

<sup>2</sup> *Recently a Reformed Christian was elected as MPP for the Conservatives in Ontario. When the journalists came out, one would expect them to ask this rooky MPP a range of questions to find out where he stands on the political issues of the day. However, never mind the great variety of topics parliamentarians are supposed to be busy with, the most important question was apparently: "Do you believe that homosexuality is a sin?" It was asked time and again, and made all the newspaper headlines.*

<sup>3</sup> *For reliable study material about homosexuality and the Bible, see the website of Dr. Robert Gagnon, Associate Professor of NT at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, [www.robagnon.net](http://www.robagnon.net). See also: DeYoung, Kevin, *What does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality*, Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2015.*

<sup>4</sup> *Recommended reading: Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, Pittsburgh, Pa: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012, and Hill, Wesley, *Washed and Waiting*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.*



### The Board of Covenant Canadian Reformed School

invites applications for the 2017/2018 school year for the following full-time positions:

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Covenant Canadian Reformed School (CCRS) is a vibrant K-12 school community with a current student population of 242. We are situated 3 km from the hamlet of Neerlandia and approximately 25 km north of the Town of Barrhead. Between these two locations there are three Canadian Reformed congregations and one United Reformed congregation. CCRS is located about an hour and a half north of the cities of Edmonton and St. Albert. We anticipate growth over the next number of years and are currently planning for future expansion.

We encourage energetic, qualified (or soon to be qualified) educators, committed to Reformed education, to apply. Under our Father's blessing of a broad, highly supportive membership base and current levels of government funding in Alberta, we are able to offer a very attractive wage and benefit package. All interested individuals can apply by submitting a resume, a statement of faith, a philosophy of education, and references.

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Applications can be sent in writing to  
3030 TWP RD 615A  
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**Mrs. Karen Breukelman:**  
[secretary@covenantschool.ca](mailto:secretary@covenantschool.ca)

If you would like further information about the school and the area please contact the Board chairman:

**Mr. Wes Werkman** – 780-674-2814  
[chairman@covenantschool.ca](mailto:chairman@covenantschool.ca)  
or the principal:

**Mr. Mike Nederveen** – 780-674-4774 (school)  
[principal@covenantschool.ca](mailto:principal@covenantschool.ca)



# SUGAR VS. MEAT

## Two very different sorts of Christian Contemporary music

by Jim Witteveen

I've loved music all my life, so when I was approached to write about music, I was happy to oblige. I grew up listening to music at home, from classical music, to the marches of John Philip Sousa, to Buddy Holly and the Beach Boys, and finally to some of the giants of country music like Johnny Cash, Jimmy Rodgers, and Hank Snow. Those are some of the names I remember from my dad's record collection.

My taste in music has broadened over the years; while I've largely abandoned the world of popular music (which more than occasionally offends my Christian sensibilities, but almost always bores me), over the years I've found myself exploring the vast musical treasures that can be found in the worlds of jazz, classical, blues, world music, and elsewhere.

But when it comes to popular Christian music, Black Gospel music from the 1950s and 60s used to be about as contemporary as I would get. Up until very recently, I've found myself repeatedly disappointed, and to be frank, disturbed, by the quality of the music that you'll hear on Christian Contemporary radio.

Why?

Well, whereas from the 1930s to about the 1960s it was the music of the church that had a profound influence on the secular music industry, in the 1970s the trend was reversed. The music of the church once exerted a profound influence on

the world. But in the past three decades, Christian music has done little more than imitate trends in popular music, rather than shaping them.

### WHERE'S THE MEAT?

The content of a lot of Christian Contemporary music is highly individualistic and largely divorced from the greater context of Scripture, and this poses a major problem when it comes to singing about the Lord Jesus.

On a corporate level – as the body, the Church – we know and confess that the Lord Jesus has taken the Church to be His bride. The Church is the beloved of the Lord, and as a body, we live in this relationship of love with Him. He is the ultimate Husband, who gives His life for His Bride (Ephesians 5:25).

The problem comes about when the corporate aspects of this relationship are forgotten, when the message becomes all about *me*, and *my* relationship with Jesus. What happens when Christian musicians do this? They go from praising the Lord Jesus, the Husband of His church, to singing a sanctified love song to Jesus, the greatest boyfriend you could ever imagine.

Here's a recent example, by Jamie Grace, called "Hold me":

Oo, I love the way you hold me,  
 By my side you'll always be  
 You take each and every day,  
 Make it special in some way.  
 I love the way you hold me,  
 In your arms I'll always be  
 You take each and every day,  
 Make it special in some way  
 I love you more than the words in my brain can express.  
 I can't imagine even loving you less.  
 Lord, I love the way you hold me.

There are a couple of problems with songs like this one, but the most serious one is this: apart from the word “Lord” in the final line of the chorus, the lyrics to this song are virtually indistinguishable from any other love song ever recorded.

The song has little in the way of actual content; it's solely about a feeling of being loved – but there's so much missing! What's the basis of this love? What's the content of this love? What's the context of this love? What kind of love is this anyway?

As I mentioned earlier, until recently I have pretty much ignored Christian Contemporary music. Musically I find much of it boring, lacking in originality, pre-packaged, mass-marketed, appealing to the lowest common denominator. Lyrically, even where there isn't overt false teaching, the messages are often shallow, effeminate, and cringe-inducing, to say the least.

There are some gems out there, if you're willing to look diligently enough. But like all “art” that's produced to appeal to a mass market, there is all too often a tendency to tread worn paths, to follow trends, to “dumb it down.” In short, the motto that rules Contemporary Christian music too often seems to be, “Do what works,” and not necessarily, “Do what's right.”

## A CHANGE IS HAPPENING

But over the past year, a couple of young men in my congregation have introduced me to another type of Contemporary Christian music; I hadn't realized that this genre of music even existed, but when it was introduced to me, I found myself devouring it. And that music came from a surprising source – the American hip-hop culture.

I was introduced to the music of men like Lecrae, Shai Linne, Tedashii, Timothy Brindle, Trip Lee, and Sho Baraka. And the more I listened to their songs, the more impressed I became. I had avoided Hip-hop and Rap music, since, as a genre, so much of its message is totally opposed to the Christian faith. When I thought of Rap music, I thought of musicians who reveled in wickedness,

boasted of evil, and extolled the virtues of a godless lifestyle. But imagine my surprise when I heard songs like this one, “All-Consuming Fire,” from Shai Linne's latest album, *The Attributes of God*:

*The Lord is speaking through His prophecies and all of His commands  
 Unequaled in His qualities, He's awesome and He's grand  
 He's regal and His policies are gloriously planned  
 He's peeping the idolatry that's all over the land  
 How people in society ignore the Son of Man  
 By seeking their autonomy, they are caught in a trance  
 But He will put a stop to the evil and apostasy  
 The devious hypocrisy, the fallenness of man  
 We're teaching you theology so y'all can understand  
 According to His plans: the slaughter of the damned  
 Unspeakable reality to fall into His hands  
 No sequels, it's finality and awful is the span  
 No weeping or apologies, no sneakiness or bribery  
 will keep the Lord from honoring His law and its demands  
 We're pieces of His pottery – He causes us to stand  
 His people see Him properly – exalted is the Lamb!*

That's just one example, but it's indicative of Shai Linne's lyrical output. It's God-centered. It's honest. It doesn't shy away from the “hard truths” that the Christian message is filled with. It's unashamedly theological, it's got real depth to it, and it speaks prophetically to a world that needs to hear this message.

Simply put, I would not hesitate to recommend any one of Shai Linne's albums to Reformed, Christian people, young or old. Musically speaking, the style may not be your cup of tea; but there's no denying the quality of the production, the originality of the musical accompaniment, and the centrality of God's glory to the message of the lyrics. This is music that glorifies God and edifies His people. 

*This first appeared on ReformedOutfitters.com (and is reprinted here with permission) under the title “Some thoughts on Contemporary Christian Music (Part 1)”*



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# And Behold, I Come Quickly

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. (Rev. 22:11-12)

*by Christine Farenhorst*

**M**any people harbor the delusion that when they will die, they will simply continue in the state they are in. They exhibit no visible doubt, no terror, about the passage from this brief life to eternity.

## NEARING THE END

In the fall of 2015, during the course of a sunny morning, my husband, daughter, and daughter-in-law were beginning to slaughter fourteen meatbirds by our chicken coop. They were skinning and gutting with gusto, each heartily

approaching their respective jobs, when the dog began to bark and bark. He generally only barks when people approach. As it was my job to wash and bag the birds, and as none were ready yet, I took it upon myself to investigate. Following the sound of the barking, I walked past the side of our house towards the driveway. There was a small car parked at the very end of the driveway, close to the road. My first thought was that it was the mailman who sometimes personally delivers packages. As I began to approach the car, thinking

the man might be a little worried about encountering our still barking canine, a voice spoke behind me.

"Hello there."

Turning, I saw an older fellow emerge from our garage. He rather startled me. Very well-dressed in a grey suit, it occurred to me immediately that our mailman had changed, had grown older, and had discarded his usual tee shirt. But it was not the mailman. I observed this in the second instant as I noted the Bible and a Watchtower tract clasped in the gentleman's veined hands. He smiled,

## Here was a feeble, old man, possibly 90 plus, with one foot in the grave, willfully denying the Savior.

exhibiting wonderfully white dentures, reminding me strongly of a friend we had a long time ago – a Dutch gentleman who has since died. It's strange how many thoughts can pass through your mind in the space of a few seconds.

The old fellow extended his hand and I shook it, admonishing Spurgeon, our faithful watchdog, to stop barking. (But the truth was that he was being a faithful Spurgeon.)

"You are a Jehovah's Witness," I said.

He nodded in agreement.

Perhaps I should have given him time to get into his spiel but thinking of the chickens to which I had to return, I immediately followed with, "I'm sorry, but you and I are going to disagree on a very basic truth - the truth that Jesus Christ is God."

He nodded happily and enthusiastically in apparent total agreement.

"Jesus was a good man," he smiled, "and a god."

There is a certain amount of sadness about disagreeing with pleasant people. It is much easier to disagree with nasty

people. Here was a feeble, old man, possibly 90 plus, with one foot in the grave, willfully denying the Savior. There is nothing more dismal.

"Yes", I replied, "I know that you believe that He is a good man, but He is also God. I do respect your zeal in going door to door, but your zeal is not based on the right knowledge."

"The doctor has only given me a year to live," he responded, "I have cancer."

I was totally caught off guard and shocked at this revelation and asked what kind of cancer he had. He told me it was bone cancer and prostate cancer.

"I've stopped taking the radiation and chemo treatments," he said, "and feel so much better since I have stopped. And now I spend time doing this."

I told him he had done well to stop the treatments and passed on some information about natural treatments he could look into. I also asked him over for supper some time in the future as he lived in a town not too far from our home. And, guess what? He was Dutch. He said he'd check it out with his wife who was waiting in the car. He was,

humanly speaking, such a very nice gentleman.

I patted his arm, gave him our name, and said, "Before you leave I have to tell you once more that Jesus is the only way. He is truly God and our only Savior."

And there he went, smiling affably, thin as a rail, cheerfully on his way to hell unless God opened his eyes.

### UNSURE OF THE END

The next day there was another strange encounter as I was waiting in the line-up at the TD bank. It was raining outside and leaves were swirling around on the sidewalk. The sixty-plus lady waiting in front of me turned around. She was very talkative.

"You look happy," she said to me, "Why is that?"

Not waiting to hear an answer, she went on to conduct a diatribe against the weather. I interposed by saying it was rather cozy and that when she went home, she could turn on the lights and curl up in a comfy chair with a good book. She thought this was a good idea but then, jumping from one thought to another, said she was sorry she was getting older.

"Well," I replied, "you wouldn't want to not get older."

"Yes, I would," she said, "I don't like getting older."

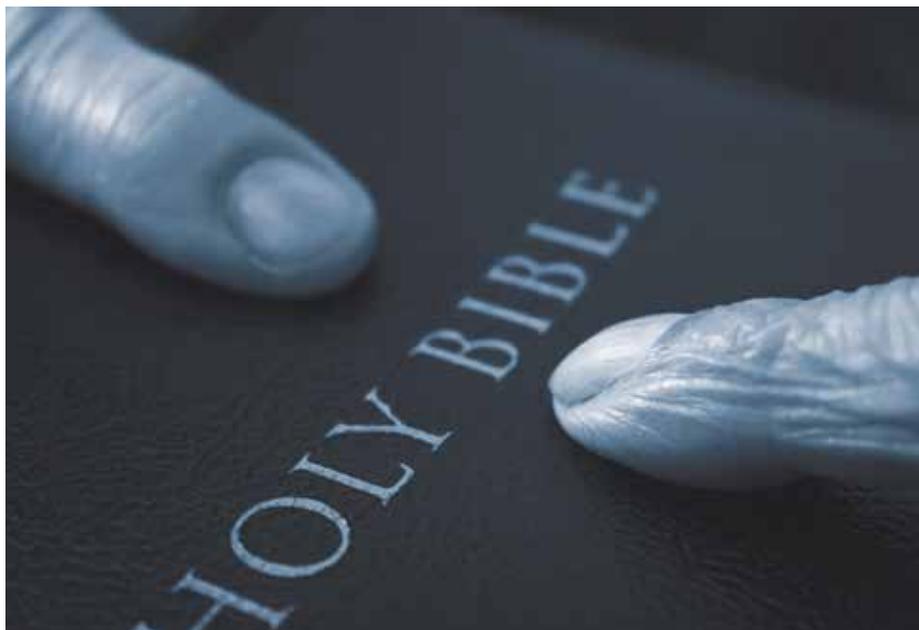
She was a well-groomed woman, a trifle shorter than I was, with an immaculate hairdo and tailored clothes, and she repeated emphatically, "I don't want to get older."

"Well," I countered, "you know what the alternative is."

For a minute she gazed at me, wide-eyed, and then I asked her if she was a Christian. The immediate response was "Yes."

"Well, in that case," I smiled, "you know where you are going in the long run."

She broke up laughing at this statement, as if I had told her a joke.



"I noted the Bible...clasped in the gentleman's veined hands."

"Heaven or hell," she chortled.

I nodded and then, again changing the subject, she asked if I didn't just love the pope? Wasn't it marvelous how he identified with the poor, and wasn't he a wonderful example? I responded by saying that we should all be examples, but that we couldn't be unless our hearts were changed. She eyed me a little warily now, and I added that I would like to hear the pope say that people's hearts should be changed instead of hearing him speak about climate change. She pondered this, clearly at a loss for words for a moment, but then was called to the bank wicket.

"Nice chatting," she said.

What a strange bank visit!

\*\*\*

We did visit the Jehovah Witness gentleman and his wife several times. We were received graciously. He died several

months later, confident that he had no need of Jesus as God at all.

### IN PURSUIT OF EXCEPTIONS

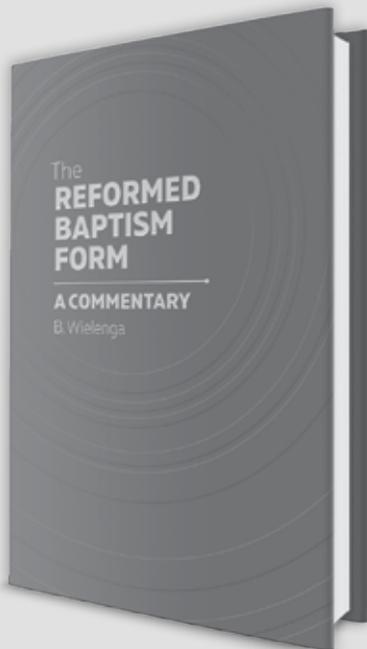
It is a sobering thought, as Octavius Winslow, (1808-1878), pointed out in one of his devotions, that human character

...which time has been shaping for years, yields to the demands of eternity in the precise mold in which it was formed. Death hands over the soul to the scrutiny and the decision of the judgment exactly as life relinquished it. [Death], the "king of terrors," has received no commission and possesses no power to effect a moral change in the transit of the spirit to the God who gave it. Its office is to unlock the cell and conduct the prisoner into court. It can furnish no plea, it can suggest no argument, it can correct no error, it can whisper no hope to the pale and trembling being on his way to the bar.

The warden must present the criminal to the Judge precisely as the officer delivered him to the warden, with all the marks and evidences of criminality and guilt clinging to him as at the moment of arrest.... Do not men die mostly as they have lived? The infidel dies in infidelity, the profligate dies in profligacy, atheists die in atheism, the careless die in indifference, and the formalist dies in formality. There are exceptions..."

We will, all of us, have encounters each day with neighbors and strangers, on driveways and in shopping malls, encounters in which possibly we might be allowed to address that exception. 

*Christine Farenhort's new devotional The Sweet Taste of Providence is available in Canada at [www.Sola-Scriptura.ca/store/shop](http://www.Sola-Scriptura.ca/store/shop) and can be ordered by phone 1-800-563-3529.*



## THE REFORMED BAPTISM FORM

### A COMMENTARY

Brought into English for the first time is this commentary on the Reformed baptism form by Bastiaan Wielenga, a prominent minister of the word in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) in the early to mid 1900s. This commentary sets forth, defends, and applies the creedal Reformed faith concerning the covenant of grace—the foundation of baptism. This commentary will be especially helpful to Reformed churches, ministers, and other members in its explanation of the baptism form's authoritative treatment of covenant and election in relation to the baptism of infants. The faith of every believer concerning the sacrament of baptism will be expanded and enriched by the commentary.

From the author's preface: "The ardent desire of my heart is that by the publication of this writing many people reading this work learn to regard baptism more purely, appreciate it more warmly, and more zealously plead the covenantal promises on behalf of believers and their children, before the throne of him who calls himself I Am That I Am."



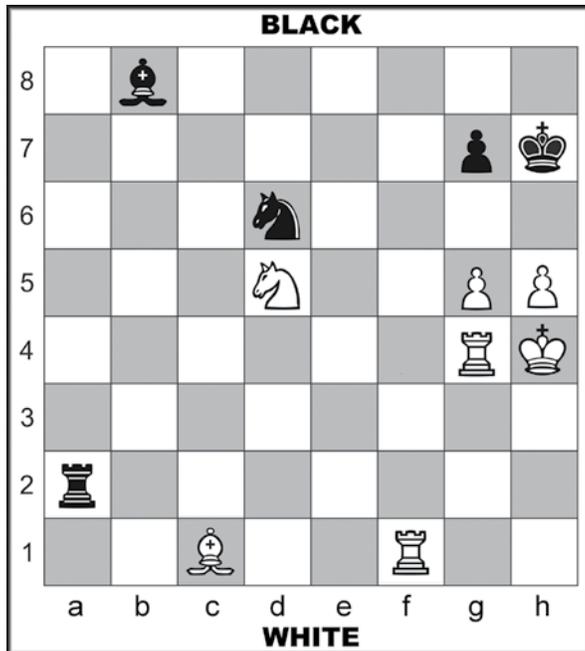
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# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



## Chess Puzzle #238



**WHITE to Mate in 3**  
Or, If it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 2**

## Riddle for Punsters #238

### "Where is the Starting Line?"

What do politicians need to do to get elected in a political race?  
They first need to \_\_\_\_\_ for office.

## Problem to Ponder #238

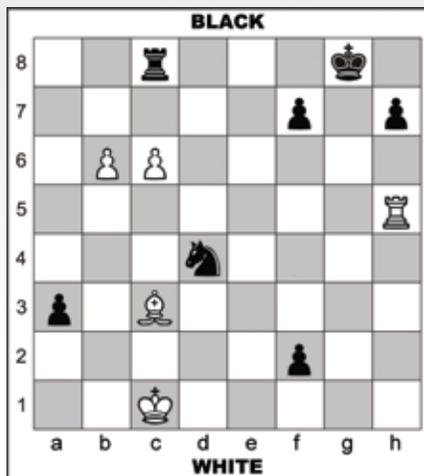
### "Reindeer Accountability?"

Tommy, watching reindeer in a snowy park, saw a total of four one afternoon. His mother saw three times as many, which was one and a half times as many as his father who saw half as many as Tommy's big sister. Tommy's grandmother saw one fifth as many as the total number of reindeer seen by the whole family (including the ones she saw). How many reindeer did that grandmother see that afternoon in the park?

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page,  
43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 or robgleach@gmail.com

## Last Month's Solutions

### Solution to Chess Puzzle #237



### WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation		Algebraic Notation	
1. R-KN5 ch	K-R1	1. Rh5-g5 +	Kg8-h8
2. BxN ch	P-B3	2. Bc3xd4 +	f7-f6
3. BxP mate		3. Bd4xf6 ++	
or		or	
1. R-KN5 ch	K-B1	1. Rh5-g5 +	Kg8-f8
2. B-N4 ch	K-K1	2. Bc3-b4 +	Kf8-e8
3. R-N8 mate		3. Rg5-g8 ++	

### Answer to Riddle for Punsters #237 - "Striving for Flying"

Why did the raven do poorly on the flight school written tests?  
Instead of studying for each test, he would always try to wing it. On the other hand, the raven had top marks for gliding which always made the eagle students soar.

### Answer to Problem to Ponder #237 - "WORD SCRAMBLE"

Unscramble the words related to the season we are now experiencing, namely "laft" (fall).

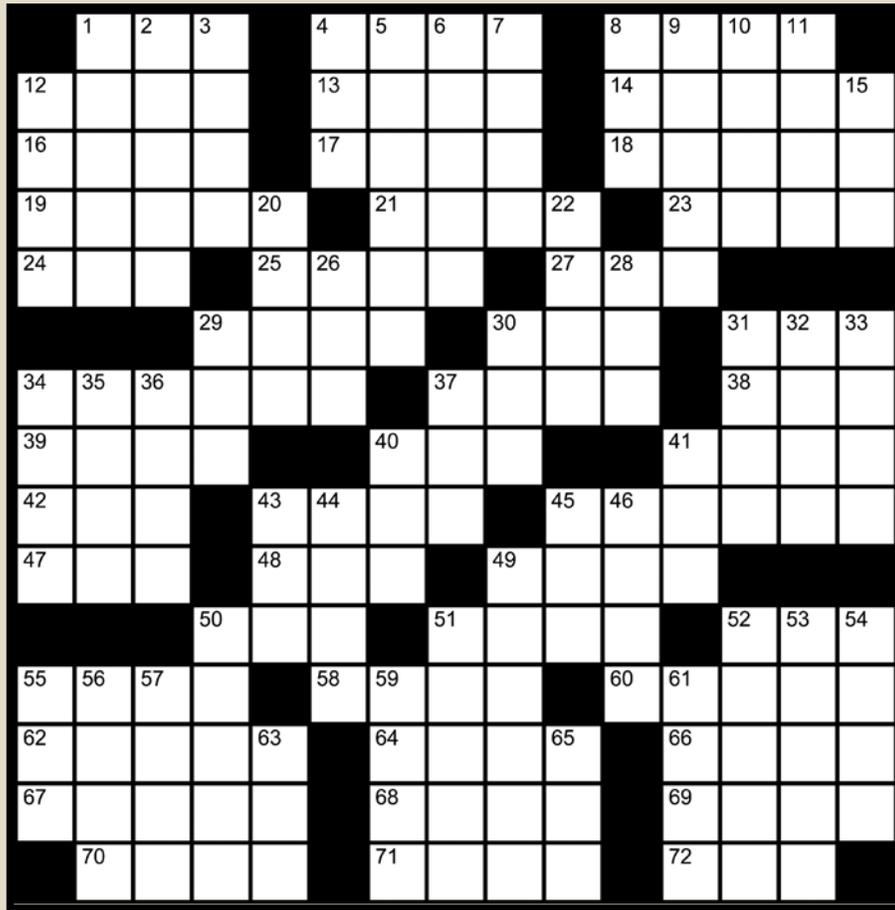
manutu	<b>autumn</b>	hitionnareb	<b>hibernation</b>
cloufflour selave	<b>colourful leaves</b>	flea-nrstew	<b>leaf-strewn</b>
ingramiot	<b>migration</b>	skinmupp	<b>pumpkins</b>
lordec	<b>colder</b>	nakrig	<b>raking</b>
torsher yads	<b>shorter days</b>	rebzey	<b>breezy</b>
restvah	<b>harvest</b>	giltwin	<b>wilting</b>

### BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation		Algebraic Notation	
1. -----	P-B8=Q ch	1. -----	f2-f1=Q +
2. K-Q2	Q-K7 ch	2. Kc1-d2	Qf1-e2 +
3. K-B1	Q-QB7 mate	3. Kd2-c1	Qe2-c2 ++

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



## SERIES 3-4

### PUZZLE CLUES

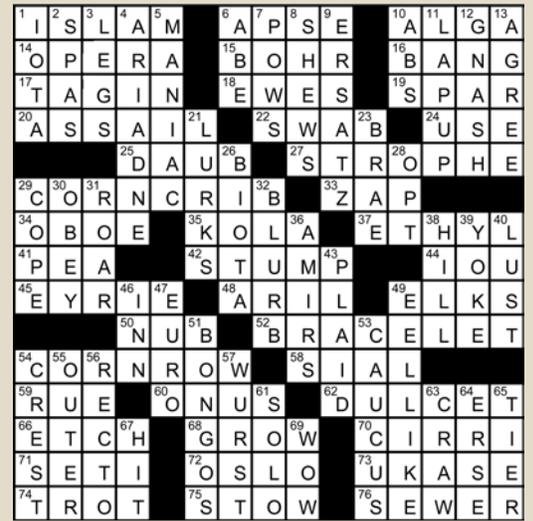
#### ACROSS

1. Energy (a dash of *pepper*?)
4. What electric guitars need
8. At the peak of (wearing \_ \_ \_ \_ hat?)
12. Adore; fawn over; lavish affection on
13. Vegetable composed partly of *tasty root*
14. Toothed wheel; just a cog in the machine
16. River and region in Western Germany
17. First name of children's author (*backwards* - to sup)
18. Enlist; sign up (in a backwards way, *Lorne*?)
19. "a pleasing \_\_\_\_\_ to the LORD." (Lev. 1)
21. Difficulty; what a project may run into
23. See (a T.V. network's award?) from afar
24. Abbr. for manuscripts
25. Sharpen (an appetite or knife)
27. Choose (to or for) from *options* available
29. "took them in his \_\_\_\_\_ and..." (Mark 10)
30. Degree to master administration of business
31. "I said of laughter, 'It is \_\_\_\_\_'" (Eccl. 2)
34. Assumed or false name
37. Travelling VIA this doesn't need 30 Down
38. Beer brewed using warm fermentation
39. Slang abbreviation for *steroid*
40. (Pleasantly) noisy form of dance
41. What a braggart may have to eat
42. A fish that may somewhat be *elongated*
43. Grand event in a baseball game
45. Reserved (hyphenated or two words)
47. Lou Gehrig's Disease (abbreviation)
48. Rocky pinnacle (found in *Toronto*?)

*Toronto*?)

49. One per \_\_\_\_\_ of a dollar
50. Lecrae Moore's musical medium
51. "they neither \_\_\_\_\_ nor spin" (Luke 12)
52. French for *step* (the one belonging to Dad?)
55. Part of ear often adorned with jewelry
58. Currency of more than half of *Europe*
60. Microorganism used in bread-making
62. Extra (tire or battery)
64. Unpleasant, disgusting (to *live* all mixed up?)
66. Operatic solo (heard in a *wide area*?)
67. Find and resolve software defects
68. Barely earned enough (\_\_\_\_\_ out a living)
69. "those who dwell in houses of \_\_\_\_\_" (Job 4)
70. Prefix meaning *one-billionth*
71. Streamlined (prefix or short slang form)
72. Egg-layer; rooster's mate

## LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



## SERIES 3-3

#### DOWN

1. Splashes; lets flow
2. Typical spirit of a culture or area
3. Wavy (almost half *permanent*) hairdo
4. "they... \_\_\_\_\_ some food themselves" (Acts 27)
5. Houses for ministers (almost like *mansions*?)
6. Reproduction of (and partly like) a painting
7. Soft drink (partly *soft*, partly *dazzling*)
8. "be buried in a good old \_\_\_\_\_" (Gen. 15)
9. Article of faith or doctrine
10. Don't be up a creek without them!
11. What an actor can handle on stage
12. Small amount of whisky
15. Sneaky; cunning
20. (Gone) wrong or amok or askew
22. Large desert region in China and Mongolia
26. Sound of thoughtful pause
28. Buddy; chum
29. "\_\_\_\_\_ another thing!"
30. Like an atlas, only smaller (and foldable)
31. "\_\_\_\_\_ the cousin of Barnabas" (Col. 4)
32. Vera finds this plant genus very soothing.
33. *Do we* sound like a \_\_\_\_\_ morning (all wet?)?
34. "an \_\_\_\_\_ 5,000 cubits broad" (Eze. 45)
35. Word from Old French for *Christmas*
36. "anoint... with the finest \_\_\_\_\_" (Amos 6)
37. "Hezron the father of \_\_\_\_\_" (Matt. 1)
40. Substance good for paving, bad for lungs
41. Abbreviation for 100 pounds
43. Where train *stays* (partly) to get passengers
44. The gait of an *antelope* (at its end?)
45. This hangs around visitors entering Hawaii.
46. "every intention... was \_\_\_\_\_ evil" (Gen. 6)
49. Where you keep your food while camping
50. Repeat television episode
51. Sounds like *tyke* would *like* this transport
52. Archaic Shakespearean form of *parley*
53. Relating to the largest continent
54. "asked him to \_\_\_\_\_ with them" (John 4)
55. Abbreviation for dangerous illegal drug
56. "the land shall be \_\_\_\_\_ to you." (Gen. 34)
57. "Ali \_\_\_\_\_ and the Forty Thieves"
59. Pigmented layer of the eye
61. "one part for \_\_\_\_\_ soldier" (John 19)
63. Alter \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. Dr. Jekyll's Mr. Hyde)
65. Former name of Tokyo



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**Dr. E. Calvin Beisner** is spokesman for the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation and is also an author and speaker on the application of the Biblical worldview to economics, government, and environmental policy. He has published ten books and hundreds of articles, contributed to, or edited, many other books, and been a guest on television and radio programs.

**Jon Dykstra** has been the editor of *Reformed Perspective* for the last eighteen years. He blogs on books at *ReallyGoodReads.com*, reviews movies at *ReelConservative.com*, and is a contributor at *CreationWithoutCompromise.com*.





# Is Cleanliness Next To Godliness?

by Sharon Bratcher

I do not believe that “cleanliness is next to godliness,” although it is one of its outworkings. When John Wesley penned that famous line, he was encouraging people to remember to bathe and to wash their clothing before they came to worship the Lord on Sundays. Well, *that’s* a standard I can easily maintain.

I think women are constantly looking for balance in our housekeeping. As Shirley Conran notes in her book *Superwoman*: “Housework expands to however much time you have to do it, plus fifteen minutes.” That’s why I have a sign in my kitchen that states: “A house should be clean enough to be healthy, and messy enough to be happy.”

But who decides what is “enough?”

## NO EXTRA TIME

One would think that with all of our time-saving devices, that a homemaker’s job would be much easier than it used to be... and to some extent it is. But some historians have suggested that vacuum cleaners and washing machines did not diminish our “time spent” on household chores. Rather, the standards of cleanliness increased so that *frequency* replaced *difficulty* in these chores.

For example, instead of carrying a rug outside to beat it twice a year, and living with a bit of dirt in-between, one could just vacuum it. Since vacuuming was so much easier, it was possible to keep the rug looking perfect all the time by simply vacuuming every single day!

Instead of washing once a week, the washer made it easy and possible to do

more loads more often. Instead of having a standard of “fairly clean,” we moved up to a standard of “perfection” wherein any deviation from the best became cause for embarrassment.

Cleanliness is important, of course. Keeping the level of germs down in one’s bathroom and kitchen can generally lead to better health. But we need to be careful that we don’t get caught up in the cycle of pride, embarrassment and frenzy that causes homemakers to worry constantly about what others are going to think about our level of housekeeping. For most women, receiving visitors is “report card time.” There is a tendency to fear failure, sometimes accompanied by anger at those who mess up “our” household. It’s as though someone scribbled on our research paper on the day that it was due.

There is also a tendency to become so occupied with one’s household maintenance that more important things in life get by-passed.

I read about some missionaries who took their usual habits of cleanliness to Africa when they served there. The local Christians were appalled at the amount of time these westerners spent caring for their material possessions – why, it seemed that they treated them like idols! The missionaries were always washing their belongings and their vehicles, and it was quite a concern to the church members. They were concerned that all of this caretaking might eat into the many hours that should be spent in fellowship, in Bible study, and in visiting the sick and reaching out to

others with the gospel. What about Mary and Martha, anyway? Maybe the Apostle Paul’s words “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6) apply to over-maintenance as well!

## BALANCE

On the one hand I think we need to cut each other a break and not judge anyone else’s housekeeping. After all, we’re not visiting the house, we’re visiting the people. And we need to cut ourselves a break by realizing that, as Conran says, “The real purpose of maintaining a home is to provide a pleasant environment for living – so live!”

And here’s where the balance comes in. A house isn’t supposed to look like a magazine ad, but it would be best if everyone didn’t trip over piles of stuff. You need never apologize for a project-related mess that you or your children are in the midst of creating, but keeping materials orderly in between projects will prevent wasted time and frustration from searching for them later. Good stewardship includes taking care of our possessions. But either extreme can result in our being weighed down by our material possessions and being less useful to God’s kingdom.

If possessions become a weight, either way, that hold us back from the activities that God is most pleased with, then it is worth reconsidering how much time we spend on our “maintenance” and why. As we ponder what is “enough,” we might analyze how much of our cleanliness is godliness. RP

# Euthanasia: Safeguards Are Failing Around The World

by Debra Vermeer



**T**he practice of euthanasia and assisted suicide overseas has been a disaster, with so-called safeguards failing and doctor-assisted killing on the rise, and not just for the terminally ill, says world-renowned ethicist Professor Margaret Somerville.

“It’s a mess, and a growing mess,” she says.

Professor Somerville, who spent 40 years living and working in Canada, and most recently held two professorships at McGill University, in the faculties of Law and Medicine, has recently returned home to Australia to take up the position of Professor of Bioethics in the School of Medicine at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney.

Her return coincides with the Victorian government flagging its intention to introduce legislation for assisted suicide later this year and reports that the NSW Parliament will also debate a euthanasia bill before

year’s end. This follows the narrow defeat of similar legislation in the South Australian Parliament last November.

Professor Somerville was a prominent anti-euthanasia voice in the Canadian debate leading up to the introduction of “assisted dying” (physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia) laws there last year, following a Supreme Court of Canada decision which found it was unconstitutional not to allow euthanasia.

She says claims by Australian pro-euthanasia advocates, including media personality Andrew Denton, that euthanasia and assisted suicide is working safely overseas don’t stand up to basic scrutiny.

“Wherever it has been legislated there are very serious problems,” she says.

In Quebec, Canada, where doctor assisted suicide has been legal since December 2015, a recent report on the first seven months of the law’s operation found that 262 people died by “Medical

Aid in Dying” – almost three times the number of deaths previously predicted by the Province’s Health Minister.

In 21 of those 262 deaths, or eight per cent of cases, the doctors had not complied with the law. Eighteen of the cases did not have the opinion of a second, independent doctor; in two cases it was found that the person might not have been terminally ill; and in one case it was not clear that the person even had a serious illness.

“Now when the law is brand new and you still can’t get doctors to comply with it, what hope have you got once complacency sets in?” Professor Somerville says.

“And one of the things that pro-euthanasia people argue is that euthanasia or assisted suicide will be rare. Well, 262 cases in just seven months is not rare.

“Officially, around four per cent of all deaths in Belgium and the

Netherlands are euthanasia or assisted suicide. Now if we translated that rate to the population of Australia, we'd have about 6000 deaths by euthanasia or assisted suicide a year. I don't call that rare."

## BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS

Professor Theo Boer has also expressed concerns about the explosion in numbers of people accessing euthanasia in Belgium and the Netherlands, and the growing variety of reasons other than terminal illness for which people are seeking euthanasia.

Professor Boer is a Dutch professor of ethics, who supported the legalization of doctor-assisted dying, and was appointed to one of the five regional review committees set up by the Dutch government as a watchdog over the euthanasia laws when they were enacted in 2002.

He says that from 2005 to 2014 he reviewed close to 4,000 cases of assisted dying on behalf of the Netherlands Ministries of Health and Justice and believed it was working well.

"But that conclusion has become harder and harder for me to support," he wrote in the *Christian Century* journal recently.

"For no apparent reason, beginning in 2007, the numbers of assisted dying cases started going up by 15 per cent each year. In 2014, the number of cases stood at 5,306 - nearly three times the 2002 figure."

Today, one in 25 deaths in the Netherlands is the consequence of "assisted dying." On top of those voluntary deaths there are about 300 non-voluntary deaths annually, where

the patient is not judged competent.

"Furthermore, contrary to claims made by many, the Dutch law did not bring down the number of suicides; instead suicides went up by 35 per cent over the last six years," he wrote.

Professor Boer also noted a shift in the type of patients who were seeking euthanasia. Both in the Netherlands and Belgium, patients need only be experiencing unbearable suffering with no prospect of improvement to access euthanasia. There is no requirement that the condition be terminal.

In the first years of the Dutch laws being enacted, about 95 per cent of patients accessing euthanasia or assisted suicide were in the last days or weeks of a terminal illness, but an increasing number of patients now seek assisted dying because of dementia, psychiatric illnesses, and accumulated age-related complaints, with terminal cancer now accounting for fewer than 75 per cent of cases.

"In some reported cases, the suffering largely consists of being old, lonely or bereaved," he said.

Professor Boer believes that raising awareness about advances in palliative care is crucial to combatting the drive towards euthanasia, especially for people who have been scarred by poor palliative care of loved ones in the past.

"For a considerable number of Dutch citizens, euthanasia is fast becoming the preferred, if not the only acceptable mode of dying for cancer patients," he said via email.

"Although the law treats assisted dying as an exception, public opinion is

beginning to interpret it as a right, with a corresponding duty for doctors to become involved in these deaths."

If doctors refuse a patient euthanasia or don't wish to be involved, there are now mobile euthanasia units in the Netherlands who will visit patients in their homes or nursing homes to administer the lethal drugs.

The situation in Belgium is similar, where the figures for 2015, show a 41 per cent increase in euthanasia/assisted suicide deaths over the last four years.

In 2014-2015, nearly 4000 people underwent euthanasia in Belgium, of which 124 cases were justified on the basis of behavioral, mental or psychological disorders, rather than a terminal illness. Among the reasons given for euthanasia is that elderly patients were "tired of life."

Last year, the first child was euthanized in Belgium after the law was amended to allow for this. In the Netherlands, some babies born with Spina Bifida had been euthanized.

Leading Australian anti-euthanasia advocate Paul Russell says that the soaring numbers of euthanasia and assisted suicide cases in the Netherlands and Belgium and the expansion of the type of patient requesting euthanasia shows that those societies have grown used to the laws and no safeguards will be effective in controlling it.

"What I think this tells us is that the notion of a 'slippery slope' or 'incremental extension' is not just about later amendment of the original statute; even though that is also likely

Today, one in 25 deaths in the Netherlands is the consequence of "assisted dying."



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and the possibility of that is inherent in the enabling act. But it is also about interpretation and the reality that black-letter law is never going to be able to keep any legislation so tightly interpreted as to always reflect the original intentions,” he says.

## OREGON

One of the jurisdictions most often cited by pro-euthanasia advocates is Oregon in the United States.

Oregon’s Death with Dignity Act (DWDA), enacted in late 1997, allows terminally ill adult Oregonians to obtain and use prescriptions from their physicians for self-administered, lethal doses of medications. The Oregon Public Health Division is required

by the Act to collect information on compliance and to issue an annual report.

But Professor Aaron Kheriaty, associate professor of psychiatry and director of the Medical Ethics Program at UC Irvine School of Medicine, says that there are serious problems with the laws in Oregon and many documented cases of abuse.

“I have evaluated and treated thousands of patients who wanted to end their life,” he wrote in an opinion piece which appeared in California’s *The Mercury News*.

“A request to die is nearly always a cry for help. Among terminally ill individuals, it is associated with depression in 59 per cent of cases. Yet, alarmingly, in Oregon, less than five per cent of individuals who have died by assisted suicide were ever referred for psychiatric consultation to rule out

the most common causes of suicidal thinking.”

Professor Kheriaty also identified the problem of “doctor shopping,” where if patients are refused access to assisted suicide by their doctor, they are in some cases directed by their managed care insurance company to another doctor who will prescribe the lethal drug.

“In Oregon, a small number of physicians write a disproportionately large number of the prescriptions,” he wrote.

“Despite the inadequate system of monitoring and reporting in Oregon, the data we have paints a distressing picture. After suicide rates had declined in the 1990s, they rose dramatically in Oregon between 2000 and 2010, in the years following the legalization of assisted suicide in 1997. By 2010, suicide rates were 35 per cent higher in Oregon than the national average.”



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## CONCLUSION

Returning to Canada recently to give a public address in the wake of the legalization of “assisted dying” there, Professor Somerville warned that a fundamental line had been crossed.

“The case for euthanasia has been made by making it seem harmless, that it’s just a very small step along an end-of-life-care path we’ve already taken and accept as ethical,” she said. “The intentional infliction of death has been trivialized in order to persuade Canadians to accept euthanasia, and many of them seem to have sleep-walked into doing so, that is, without understanding the full consequences of legalization, for instance, the harm to important societal values and risks to vulnerable people.

“Legalizing euthanasia is not just an approval of another medical intervention, it’s a radical and seismic shift in foundational societal values, in particular, what is required if, as both individuals and a society, we are to continue to respect human life.” 

*Debra Vermeer writes from Sydney.*

*This article was originally published on Mercatornet.com on Jan 16, under the title “Experts warn Australians against following overseas experience with euthanasia” and is reprinted here with permission.*



The Canadian Reformed School Society of Edmonton, operating Parkland Immanuel Christian School, invites applications for the 2017-2018 school year for the following full-time positions:

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Mr. Ken Leffers  
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kleffers@parklandimmanuel.ca

Applications should be directed to:  
Mr. Wayne de Leeuw  
Chair of Personnel Committee  
c/o Parkland Immanuel Christian School  
21304 35 Ave, NW Edmonton, AB  
T6M 2P6  
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Streetlight Ministries of Hamilton, Ontario is currently seeking a

### YOUTH WORKER

for a permanent full time role. The Youth Worker is responsible for building relationships with youth in downtown Hamilton in order to share the Gospel, connect them to Streetlight, and disciple youth that attend Streetlight.

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Candidates are asked to send a letter of application and resume to Sharon Hofsink at [shofsink@gmail.com](mailto:shofsink@gmail.com) by March 24, 2017.

# WHAT TO DO

## when you don't know what to do

by Jay Adams



What do you do when you don't know what to do?

*Are you serious, or are you presenting me with a conundrum?*

No. I'm dead serious. I have a decision to make as to whether or not to do something. I'd like to do it but I don't know whether it's something that the Lord would approve of.

*Ah. I see.*

And it's been bugging me for days. I can't tell you what it is, either. I have to keep the matter quiet until I decide. Without any data, do you think you can help?

*Possibly. Let's consider the matter abstractly – strictly from the side of the principle involved.*

You mean, in something like whether or not I feel a prompting in my spirit or not. Or whether I feel peace about the matter? Both of those ideas have been suggested. But the problem is, I don't feel anything but confused,"

*Good!*

Good? What do you mean good? Do you approve of me

being confused?

*Certainly – I'm glad you haven't had any feelings that you interpreted as God's direction. Those ideas are never taught in the Bible, and have led many people into serious trouble. To try to follow feelings as a guide is like trying to catch a wave. They're never the same. Feelings are up one day and down the next with the weather, or what you sate for lunch. Even apart from not being a Bible instruction, it's on its foolish when you think about it.*

It didn't feel right, I'll admit.

*Didn't feel right? There you go – depending on feelings anyway!*

What I meant is it didn't seem right.

*A bit better. But what if you had said, "I considered the matter, and I didn't find any biblical basis for proceeding with it?" Don't you think that a statement something like that – where you are looking for an objective answer from God's Standard would have been better? Of course, you would have had to do so to be honest.*

Well, I did look at the Bible, and I couldn't find anything to help.

*There is a biblical principle that may fit your case.*

Tell me about it.

*It's found in Romans 14.*

I thought that book was all about theology, and stuff like that.

*Well, there's certainly a lot of theology in Romans, for sure, but that's not all that's there. Some very practical matters are there which – rightly so – are based on theological principles.*

Oh. Well tell me about Romans 14.

*O.K. Here's what he writes in verse 23: "But whosoever doubts is condemned if he eats, because he doesn't eat in faith; and whatsoever isn't done in faith is sin."*

But my problem has nothing to do with eating.

*I didn't think that it would.*

Well, then, why bring it up?

*I told you we were going to examine a principle that might help you. The principle is "whatsoever isn't done in faith is sin."*

How does that help?

*Just this way. There were Romans who didn't know whether or not they should eat certain foods – we needn't go into that here – because they thought that doing so might be sin. Paul says, until you are sure that it isn't sinful to do so, don't. It's that simple. I like to call it the "Holding principle." You put the matter on hold until you can determine biblically whether or not it is or isn't sin to do something.*

Hmmm I think I see it now: to move ahead in this matter would be sin if suspect it might be. But what if it isn't sin?

*At this point, that doesn't matter. Until you determine from the Bible (not from feelings) that it isn't sin, you should take no further action. Of course, if you determine it is, that settles the matter. But if you're not sure, you shouldn't go ahead because if you do, you are doing something that you think might be sin, can you do that in God's sight? Of course not! To do what you think might be sin (even if it really isn't) is sin on your part because of your attitude..."*

What do you mean my attitude?

*Simply this, you would be willing to do something that you thought might be sin – that is a sinful attitude. So even if the act – whatever it is – isn't sin; your attitude in doing it is sin.*

Got it! I put it on hold until I'm sure, biblically, that it's OK to move ahead.

*That's right.*

Blessings! 

*Dr. Jay Adams blogs at Nouthetic.org. This article, originally titled "What to do about it" is reprinted with permission.*

## TAKING IT FURTHER: What do we do when we have to do something?

by Jon Dykstra

Today Christians face ethical dilemmas our grandparents never imagined. What should we think of full-face transplants, snowflake adoptions, medical marijuana, and gender dysphoria?

Sometimes a dilemma can be clarified with study. We know, for example, that abortion is immoral. We also know that in those rare circumstances where the mother will die if she continues with the pregnancy, then abortion is allowed. Why? Because, even as we acknowledge the baby is fully human, when two lives are at risk and we can only save one, then we should act to save that one.

But what of the ethical dilemmas in which the line is blurry? What about, for example, a situation in which the mother's life is in danger, but only to a degree? Just how deadly a risk does it need to be before abortion is a moral option? No sharp line can be drawn here.

So what should we do when we don't know what to do?

As Jay Adams shows in this article, God has provided us guidance: Don't do it if you are worried it might be a sin.

Now, like much of what God teaches in the Bible, this rule can be taken too far - this rule could lead to incapacitating introspection, where a Christian does nothing because they are so worried that whatever they do might be sinful. Then it is important to remember that in some cases (like considering abortion to save the life of the mother) *not acting* is also a decision. In these circumstances it is simply impossible and immoral to defer our decision, so we must ask God for wisdom and make the best decision we can.

But in situations where inaction is safe/moral, and we are worried that our contemplated action might not be, we shouldn't proceed until we are sure this action is indeed pleasing to God.



**W**hen the public misunderstands a court ruling, the consequences can be huge. For good or for evil.

### FOR GOOD

Back in 1772, the ruling in *Somerset v. Stewart*, to free one Black slave in England, was misinterpreted by the public as freeing all 15,000 slaves in England, even though the ruling was narrow and technical.

Somerset, a Black slave, was brought from Virginia to England in 1769, by his master, Charles Stewart. Two years later he escaped. He was then captured and put on a ship to be transported to Jamaica, there to be sold. Somerset's Christian godparents applied to the court for Somerset's release. The case

attracted a great deal of attention in the press. Somerset's lawyers argued that while colonial laws might permit slavery, neither the common law of England nor any law of Parliament recognized the existence of slavery, and slavery was therefore unlawful.

Stewart's lawyers argued that property was paramount, and that it would be dangerous to free all Blacks in England. Members of the public donated monies to support the lawyers for both sides of the argument.

Guided in part by the maxim *fiat justitia, ruat coelum* ("Let justice be done though the heavens fall"), Lord Mansfield ruled that since England's written laws did not clearly permit or establish slavery, Stewart had no legal right to force Somerset to go to Jamaica:

"...no master ever was allowed here to take a slave by force to be sold abroad because he had deserted from his service, or for any other reason whatever."

Lord Mansfield's narrow and technical ruling merely stated that British slave owners in England could not force their slaves to be forcibly taken to the colonies. But this judgment was actually silent about the status of slaves in England.

However, Lord Mansfield's judgment had a profound effect on slaves. Many of them misunderstood the ruling to mean that slaves were emancipated in Britain. Despite Lord Mansfield's best efforts, the case was reported in the press, and internationally, as ending

# Why pro-lifers should publicize, not mourn, the Morgentaler decision

by John Carpay



slavery in England.

After the ruling, numerous newspaper advertisements of the time show that Black slaves continued to be bought and sold in England. Nevertheless, this court ruling proved to be a boon for the anti-slavery movement. The perception of there being an “anti-slavery” court ruling, while inaccurate, helped turn public opinion against slavery. In 1807 Parliament abolished the slave trade, and by 1838 slavery in British colonies was also abolished.

## FOR BAD

In 21st Century Canada, there is much public confusion about the 1988 Supreme Court of Canada ruling in *R. v. Morgentaler*, rendered 29 years ago

this January 28. In *Morgentaler*, five of seven Justices struck down section 251 of the *Criminal Code*, which allowed abortions only if approved by a Therapeutic Abortion Committee.

Abortion supporters – and many pro-life Christians too – have characterized the *Morgentaler* ruling as a Canadian version of *Roe v. Wade*, by which the U.S. Supreme Court did, in fact, create a constitutional right to abortion. For example, some student unions have claimed that pro-life speech should be banned at universities “because abortion is a constitutional right.” Leaving aside the fact that a free society allows its citizens to criticize and disagree with the constitution, this claim completely mischaracterizes the *Morgentaler* decision.

Justices Dickson and Lamer held that section 251 was arbitrary and unfair, and did not provide a clear exemption from the criminal law. *Nowhere do they state that there is a constitutional right to abortion.*

Justices Beetz and Estey recognized society’s interest in the protection of the unborn child, ruling that Parliament is justified in requiring a reliable, independent and medically sound opinion as to the “life or health” of the pregnant woman in order to protect the state interest in a fetus.

Justice Wilson held that protecting an unborn child is a “*perfectly valid legislative objective*,” especially during the latter stages of pregnancy, but not in the early stages of pregnancy.

Justices McIntyre and La Forest ruled that, “*no right of abortion can be found in Canadian law, custom or tradition*” or in “the language, structure or history of the constitutional text ...or in the history, traditions or

underlying philosophies of our society.” These two Justices also recognized the public interest in the protection of the unborn, and stated that courts must refrain from imposing or creating rights with no identifiable base in the Charter.

In short, the Supreme Court in *Morgentaler* recognized expressly that Parliament has the right to pass legislation to protect the unborn, with five of seven Justices striking down Section 251 as the wrong way to achieve that legitimate goal.

This muddled and incoherent decision was certainly not a victory for pro-lifers. However, with the Court inviting Parliament to draft different legislation, this ruling is certainly no victory for pro-choicers.

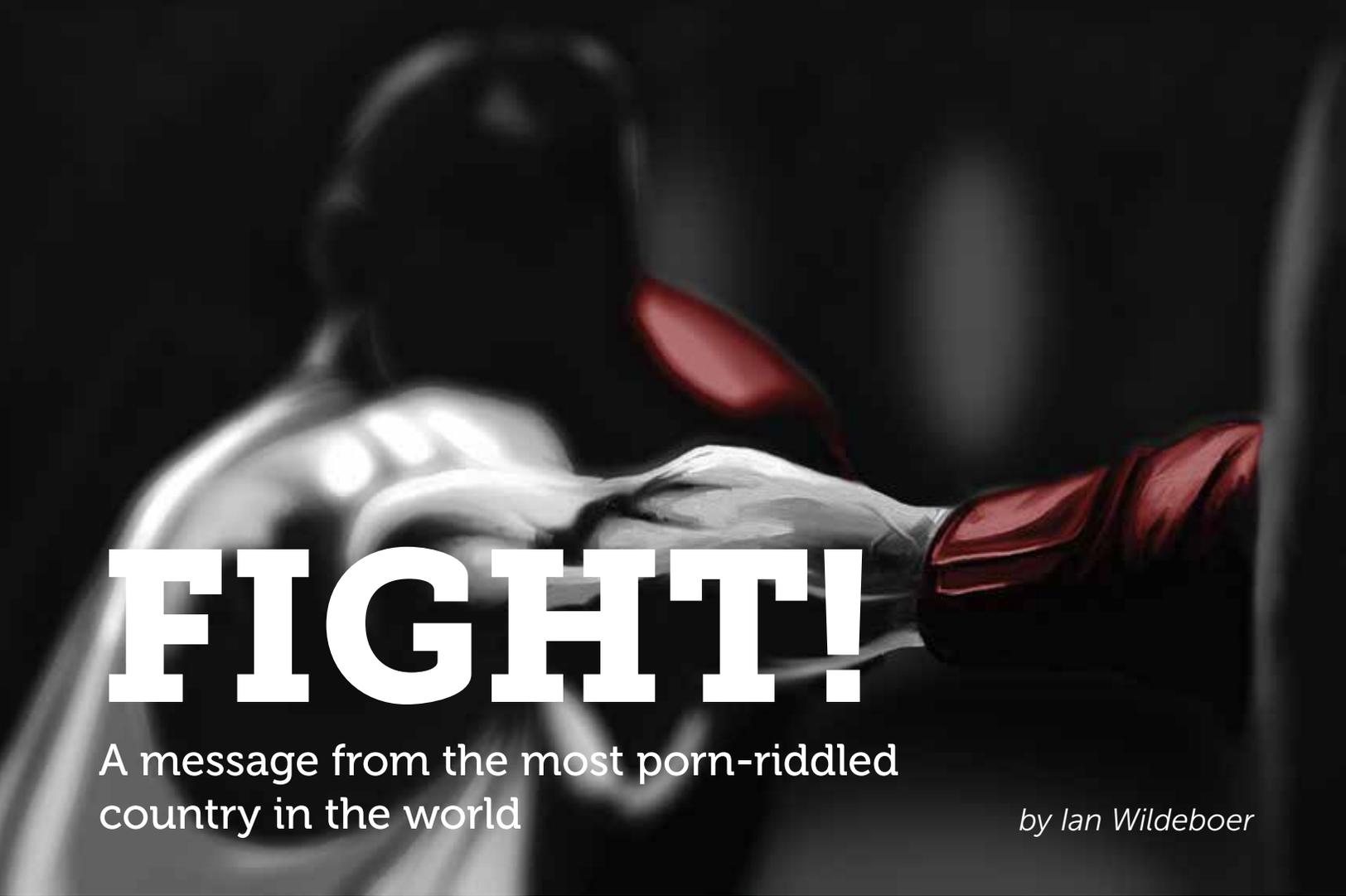
## CONCLUSION

The false notion that *R. v. Morgentaler* established a constitutional right to abortion can have a very powerful and negative impact in shaping public policy. If the Canadian public perceives the *Morgentaler* ruling as a pro-choice victory, this will influence public opinion in favor of abortion being legal.

Those who want to see Parliament pass a law to protect the unborn should not mourn the *Morgentaler* decision as a victory for their pro-choice opponents. Doing so helps the pro-choice side.

Instead, pro-lifers should point out that in *Morgentaler*, the Supreme Court invited Parliament to pass legislation to protect the unborn. RP

*Calgary lawyer John Carpay practices constitutional law.*



# FIGHT!

A message from the most porn-riddled country in the world

by Ian Wildeboer

In 2016, Google pronounced Papua New Guinea (PNG) the most porn-riddled country. This “fact” was established by the number of times the word “porn” or “pornography” had been typed into their search engine. However, I know the Western world is not any better off; they merely search under more perverse words, which cover the full orb of sexual perversions known to mankind.

What saddens me more is that those who claim allegiance to Christ are not free from this perversion. A recent study from Barna Group revealed that in America 77 per cent of self-attested Christian men (with a growing number of women) between the ages of 18-30 view porn at least monthly. And 77 per cent of men from the ages of 31-49 view it at least every three months, while over 20 per cent are addicted.

This is huge. If you view porn weekly, monthly or bi-monthly or whatever the interval of time between viewings might be, there are serious signs of addiction prevalent in your life. And you will

feel the impact: viewing porn throws one’s faith into question, one’s life into a constant cycle of guilt and shame, and can throw the sacred institution of marriage into jeopardy.

## DO YOUR DEEDS MATCH WHAT YOU PROFESS?

We can talk about being justified by faith. We can boldly proclaim that, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). We can say, “I am a sinner saved by grace”, and say it a thousand times a day, but if we are living to gratify the flesh then the fact is we are not pleasing God! Further, it may evidence that we may not even belong to Christ.

As we read Romans 8:7-8:

“...the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

The word *hostile* here in Romans 8:8 may be better translated as *enmity*. That means you cannot look at porn websites, or read trashy, porn-riddled novels like *Fifty Shades of Grey*, or watch nudity in films or in online games or on apps (and etc. and etc.), and have peace with God. You are creating enmity between you and God.

But not only is there enmity between you and God, this also moves on a horizontal level. Hostility grows, especially between spouses and family members, at the cost of this perversity. The fact is, you cannot look at porn and be at peace with or be a blessing to your spouse – present or future – or your family, your friends, or anyone else.

One cannot do both. You cannot feed the flesh and feed the vertical or horizontal relationships with love and truth. To feed the one is to starve the other. And if we feed the flesh, satisfying its insatiable hunger for more, we leave those we love with all the pain of a relationship starved of the attributes that sustain its healthy growth.

## HOPE

Is there hope? Yes. The Gospel still rings with the clarion call of reconciliation between us and God, in Christ. And through that restored relationship, we can also find hope for reconciliation between us and those around us. There is hope because it is still true that "...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Amen. There is grace for the wretched man or woman, like you and me, who daily confesses their sins and addiction and seeks God's grace! Grace upon grace.

However, this is the point of our salvation: the new birth in Christ by God's Spirit creates a radically new lifestyle! As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come." And if you are found in Christ you do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who living

according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5).

There is another clarion call in this Gospel of grace and that is that we need to fight! Fight the flesh. Make it our slave. Make it obedient to Christ (cf 1 Corinthians 9:27). In short, we need to take up spiritual arms.

## MAKE WAR!

"No more murmuring about our imperfections," as Pastor John Piper has said, rather: "make war." Make war with all the artillery and armament of heaven: the sword of the Spirit; the belt of truth; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; the feet fitted with the Gospel of peace; the breastplate of righteousness and prayer. (Ephesians 6:13ff).

Fight with all the resources at your disposal:

- accountability with spiritual friends or mentors
- transparency with those close to you
- seek counsel from your pastor or elder

- filters on everything (eg. use Safe Eyes, or Covenant Eyes, or others)
- if your smartphone enslaves you, throw it out
- pray and meditate upon the Gospel promises daily as you trust in Christ's righteousness

And do not surrender. The cost of surrendering to the flesh is too high.

I live in a country where fights are sparked at the drop of a hat. But I assure you that the fight worth fighting is this one. And know that the blessed value of winning this fight daily, in the grace given us from above, is indescribable peace and a clear conscience! That is a precious gift! May this Gospel of grace and truth flow through this porn riddled land we call PNG, and no less every country in this world lost in deep sexual perversion. 

*Pastor Ian Wildeboer is a missionary from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia serving in Papua New Guinea. A version of this article first appeared in the June 2016 issue of Tulait Magazine and is reprinted here with permission.*

# ANTHEM: Strategies for fighting lust

by John Piper

These are six tested and proven strategies for fighting lust.

I have in mind men and women. For men it's obvious. The need for warfare against the bombardment of visual temptation to fixate on sexual images is urgent. For women it is less obvious, but just as great if we broaden the scope of temptation to food or figure or relational fantasies. When I say "lust" I mean the realm of thought, imagination, and desire that leads to sexual misconduct. So here is one set of strategies in the war against wrong desires. I put it in the form of an acronym, **ANTHEM**.

**A**void as much as is possible and reasonable the sights and situations that arouse unfitting desire.

I say "possible and reasonable" because some exposure to temptation is inevitable. And I say "unfitting desire" because not all desires for sex, food, and family are bad. We know when they are unfitting and unhelpful and on their way to becoming enslaving. We know our weaknesses and what triggers them.

"Avoiding" is a biblical strategy. "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness" (2 Tim. 2:22). "Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires" (Romans 13:14).

## Say **No** to every lustful thought within five seconds.

And say it with the authority of Jesus Christ. "In the name of Jesus, NO!" You don't have much more than five seconds. Give it more unopposed time than that, and it will lodge itself with such force as to be almost immovable.

Say it out loud if you dare. Be tough and warlike. As John Owen said, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you." Strike fast and strike hard. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

## **T**urn the mind forcefully toward Christ as a superior satisfaction.

Saying "no" will not suffice. You must move from defense to offense. Fight fire with fire. Attack the promises of sin with the promises of Christ.

The Bible calls lusts "deceitful desires" (Eph. 4:22). They lie. They promise more than they can deliver. The Bible calls them "passions of your former ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:14). Only fools yield. "All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter" (Prov. 7:22). Deceit is defeated by truth. Ignorance is defeated by knowledge. It must be glorious truth and beautiful knowledge. This is why I wrote *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*. We must stock our minds with the superior promises and pleasures of Jesus. Then we must turn to them immediately after saying, "NO!"

## **H**old the promise and the pleasure of Christ firmly in your mind until it pushes the other images out.

Fix your eyes on Jesus (see Heb. 12:2). Here is where

many fail. They give in too soon. They say, "I tried to push it out, and it didn't work." I ask, "How long did you try? How hard did you exert your mind?"

The mind is a muscle. You can flex it with vehemence. Take the kingdom violently (Matt. 11:12). Be brutal. Hold the promise of Christ before your eyes. Hold it. Hold it! Don't let it go! Keep holding it! How long? As long as it takes. Fight! For Christ's sake, fight till you win! If an electric garage door were about to crush your child, you would hold it up with all your might and holler for help, and hold it and hold it and hold it and hold it.

## **E**njoy a superior satisfaction.

Cultivate the capacities for pleasure in Christ. One reason lust reigns in so many is that Christ has so little appeal. We default to deceit because we have little delight in Christ.

Don't say, "That's just not me." What steps have you taken to waken affection for Jesus? Have you fought for joy? Don't be fatalistic. You were created to treasure Christ with all your heart — more than you treasure sex or sugar. If you have

little taste for Jesus, competing pleasures will triumph. Plead with God for the satisfaction you don't have: "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Ps. 90:14). Then look, look, and look at the most magnificent Person in the universe until you see him the way he is

## **M**ove into a useful activity away from idleness and other vulnerable behaviors.

Lust grows fast in the garden of leisure. Find a good work to do, and do it with all your might. "Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Abound in work. Get up and do something. Sweep a room. Hammer a nail. Write a letter. Fix a faucet. And do it for Jesus's sake. You were made to manage and create. Christ died to make you "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14). Displace deceitful lusts with a passion for good deeds.

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**Your Reformed voice  
in Ottawa**

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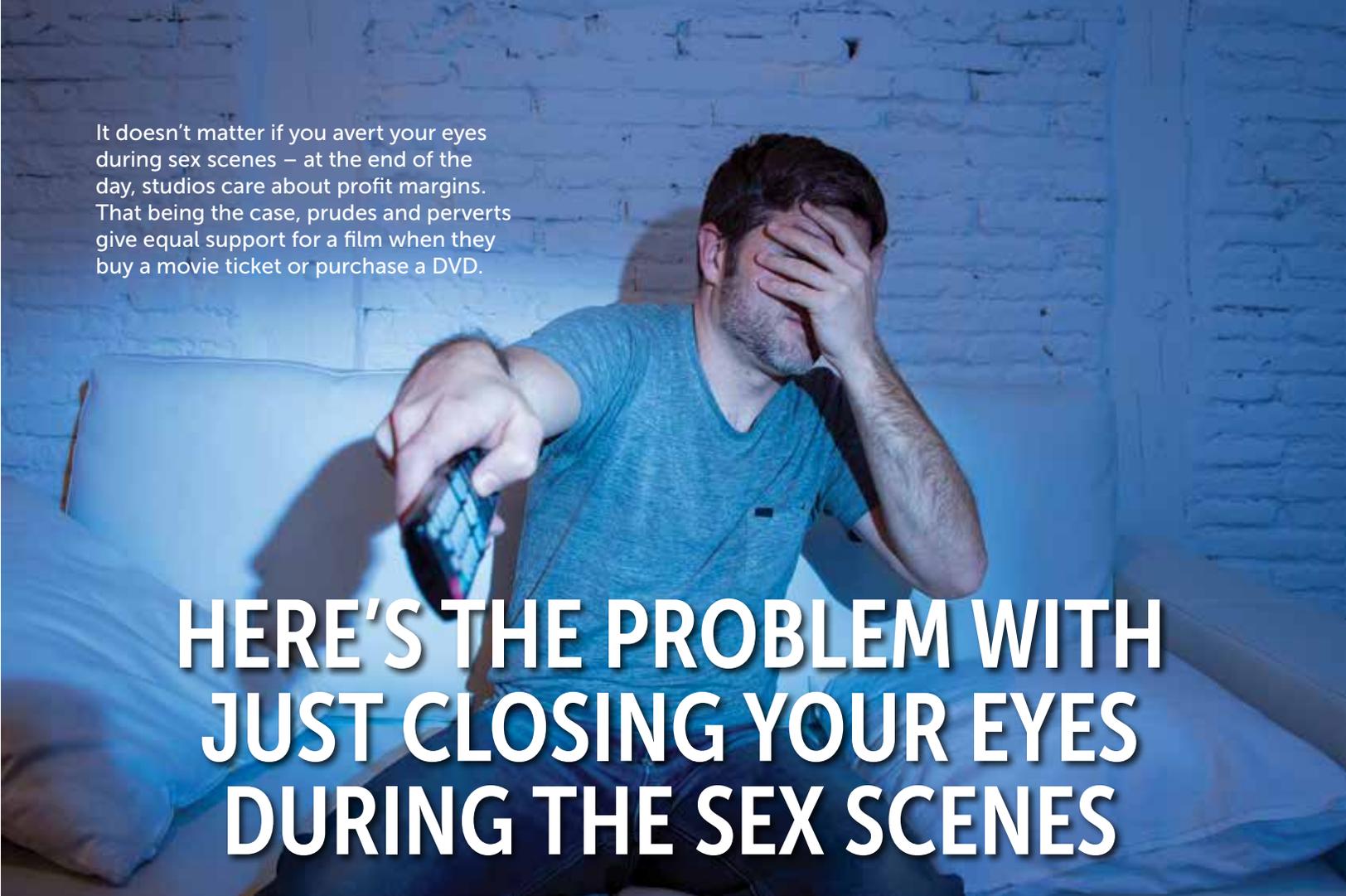
1.800.667.8450  
780.305.0340

arnold.viersen@parl.gc.ca  
www.mparnold.ca

f mparnoldviersen  
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**Planning a trip to Ottawa? Stop in for a visit.**

It doesn't matter if you avert your eyes during sex scenes – at the end of the day, studios care about profit margins. That being the case, prudes and perverts give equal support for a film when they buy a movie ticket or purchase a DVD.



# HERE'S THE PROBLEM WITH JUST CLOSING YOUR EYES DURING THE SEX SCENES

by Cap Stewart

Several years ago, Kate Beckinsale was conned into signing a movie contract that required nudity—something she didn't want to do. With her acting career in jeopardy, she found herself browbeaten by the director. At long last, she gave in to intimidation and performed the nude scene, which made her feel, as she put it, “violated and horrible.” Afterwards, she secretly urinated in the director's thermos in revenge.<sup>1</sup>

In more recent history, Jennifer Lawrence wrestled with inner turmoil while filming her first sex scene (for the sci-fi movie *Passengers*). During an actress roundtable” for *The Hollywood Reporter*, Lawrence described the experience:

I got really, really drunk. But then that led to more anxiety when I got home because I was like, “What have I done? I don't know.” And he was married. And it was going to be my first time kissing a married man, and guilt is the worst

feeling in your stomach. And I knew it was my job, but I couldn't tell my stomach that. So I called my mom, and I was like, “Will you just tell me it's OK?”<sup>2</sup>

Notice three sobering facts about Lawrence's experience. First, she battled anxiety before and after filming the scene. Second, she felt intense guilt for sexually acting out with a married man. Third, she tried several coping mechanisms to eliminate her distress: alcohol (which only made things worse), telling herself everything was okay, and asking for consolation.<sup>3</sup>

Would you believe me if I told you that stories like these are numerous? Sadly, it's true. The amount of pressure and intimidation Hollywood places on actors – especially women – to undress and sexually act out for the camera is commonplace. When asked about sex scenes, celebrities often reply with something like, “We're actors; it's a part of the job.” Indeed, those who want to make

it as an actor won't be taken seriously if they have qualms about nudity and bed scenes.

The movers and shakers in Hollywood have acquired what seems to be an almost limitless amount of power to enforce the sexualization of actors. To cite one more example (this time from the world of television): director Neil Marshall once commented on how he was pressured by an HBO executive to put more sex and nudity in an episode of *Game of Thrones*:

...one of the exec producers...took me to one side and said, “Look, I represent the pervert side of the audience, okay? Everybody else is the serious drama side – I represent the perv side of the audience, and I'm saying I want full frontal nudity in this scene. So you go ahead and do it.”<sup>4</sup>

Notice the implicit acknowledgement that the nudity had nothing to do with art – that it was designed solely for the

satisfaction of a perverted audience base. The producer pushed his weight around, and the director (and everyone else) acquiesced. All of this to appeal to the lowest common denominator.

## FOLLOW THE MONEY

What gives entertainment executives the authority to force others into such compromising situations? What gives a producer the power to manipulate a director into catering to perverse fantasies? What gives a director the right to coerce an actress into agreeing to do more than she meant to?

If this page was a mirror, you would be looking at the answer.

You see, when average folks like you and me support films and TV shows like these, we are perpetuating the sexualized culture we say we deplore. My guess is that, because it's often hard to see how "A" eventually leads to "X," we think little of doing "A," even if we abhor "X." We may complain about the objectification of women (and men) in our culture. We may complain about how movies are ruined by sex scenes and gratuitous nudity. But if we then turn around and financially support that culture, something is askew.

It doesn't matter if you avert your eyes during sex scenes – at the end of the day, studios care about profit margins. That being the case, prudes and perverts give equal support for a film when they buy a movie ticket or purchase a DVD. The truth is, if people stopped financially supporting the abuse of actors, the industry would change. But producers follow the money,

*They do not subscribe to a Christian sexual ethic. Still, their consciences bother them when it comes to nudity and sex scenes.*

and there's money to be made through the objectification of entertainers. As one acquaintance of mine with ties to Hollywood once put it in a Facebook discussion:

I know how many of the women in these scenes (and probably men too, you just don't hear from them) have talked about throwing up in the bathroom between scenes, crying, stressing out constantly, etc. So basically, I'm paying for that person to do that for me? .... There are perhaps no handcuffs involved with these performers, but social constraints/expectations/demands/culture can be equally, if not more, powerful. And that's the problem. I've lived in Hollywood. I've worked with prostitutes one on one. The line between the two worlds is thin. I know no other culture more willing to use people and throw them away.

Consider also that plenty of actors in the entertainment industry are not professing believers. They do not subscribe to a Christian sexual ethic. Still, their consciences bother them when it comes to nudity and sex scenes. Yet most

moviegoers, including many professing believers, say their consciences are clear when they watch the consciences of others be violated – for entertainment, no less. They pay for actors to be abused or debased and experience no qualms about it.

In contrast, Paul calls Christians to give up their rights if it means hurting the conscience of others (see 1 Corinthians 9 and Romans 14). We have it backwards: we participate in the violation of others' dignity so we can benefit from their moral and emotional compromises. Granted, the context of Paul's teaching on this matter is the relationship between members of the church, but I don't think that gives us an excuse to disregard the wellbeing of unbelievers.

As patrons of Hollywood, our pursuit of personal freedom has hijacked our ability to consider the needs of others. We have adopted a consumeristic mindset that disregards most every other factor in favor of us having a positive, cathartic experience. If the story is interesting enough, and if it "demands" the objectification and dehumanization of actors, then the needs of the story win out.

Brothers and sisters, this should not be!

**I've lived in Hollywood. I've worked with prostitutes one on one. The line between the two worlds is thin.**





To get ready for her sex scene in *Passenger* Jennifer Lawrence “got really, really drunk.” And that still didn’t ease her anxiety. And she explained, “I was like, ‘What have I done? I don’t know.’ And he was married. And it was going to be my first time kissing a married man, and guilt is the worst feeling in your stomach...”

### WHAT ABOUT ACTORS WHO UNDRESS WILLINGLY

Now, it is true that some actors do sex and/or nude scenes willingly, with little or no manipulation involved. Even so, that shouldn’t be of supreme importance to people of faith. Not if we take seriously God’s command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

With this command in mind, whether or not actors agree with the nudity and sex acts required of them is actually beside the point. Why? Because it doesn’t negate the fact that they are being objectified and degraded as human beings in what is essentially a pornographic act.<sup>5</sup> It is unloving of us as Christians to support such actions, even when they are free from coercion.

We see this principle at work in Romans 13, which says loving your neighbor includes avoiding adultery. The point is not that all adultery is rape. Some adultery

– much of it, in fact– takes place by mutual consent. Does that suddenly make the adultery excusable? Not according to Scripture. By its nature, sexual perversion is sin, even if it takes place between consenting adults.

All forms of immorality are inherently unloving. That’s the Bible’s stance. That *should* be the Christian’s stance. In contrast to this, the film industry has created a socially acceptable ménage à trois: two actors commit sexually intimate acts, and audiences sit in on the proceedings with complete approval.

### THE LAW OF LOVE

What finally opened my eyes to this culture of sexual abuse was Wayne A. Wilson’s book *Worldly Amusements*. Wilson himself became aware of the issue after watching a movie in which the director had his own daughter perform sex acts on screen.

The fact that a director would sacrifice his child’s dignity for the sake of a movie changed Wilson’s perspective. He now

implements what he calls the “law of love” in his movie watching habits: he refuses to support films that sexually objectify or degrade actors. He now asks himself, “Would I approve if my sister [or wife or daughter] were asked to behave or expose herself in any way that undermined her purity?”

It is a question we would do well to ask ourselves. This law of love exhorts us to consider the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of men and women in front of the camera. Is that restricting for a movie-going audience? I suppose so. It has definitely kept me from visiting the theater on several occasions where I otherwise would have willingly and excitedly done so.

### NOT A RESTRICTION

But this law of love is not “restricting” in a lastingly negative sense any more than

monogamy is a negative restriction for married couples. It’s a law that protects, not harms. It’s a law that governs for good, not evil. It’s a law that helps one cultivate the greatest motive known to humankind. In the end, what is truly more freeing: living a self-centered or an others-centered life? The Bible’s answer is the latter.

Think about the implications here. How would it affect you if you put the law of love into practice? What if you refused to financially support movies that objectified actors because you wanted to treat them with the humanity they deserve? Would you not start viewing the actors you encounter in the movies as real people and not just potential sources of eye candy or gratification? Would the law of love not help you fight sexual lust even more effectively with gospel power? Would it not help you keep from focusing on yourself (which is what lust does) and instead focus on the needs of others (which is what a healthy, Biblically-informed sexuality is all about)? Would that not be a gloriously countercultural way to demonstrate God’s love to your fellow human beings?

I think it would. In fact, my personal experience has been that it does. I dare you (in the most positive sense possible) to prove me wrong. <sup>RP</sup>

### END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Amy Reiter’s “It’s rough on the outside” posted to Salon.com Mar 28, 2001

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Galloway’s “Jennifer Lawrence, Cate Blanchett and Six More Top Actresses on Pay Gap, Sex Scenes and the Price of Speaking Frankly: ‘There Is Always a Backlash’” posted to HollywoodReporter.com on Nov 18, 2015

<sup>3</sup> For a more in-depth treatment, see “A Tale of Two Sexual Assaults on Jennifer Lawrence” at CapStewart.com

<sup>4</sup> “Blackwater” Director Neil Marshall on Nudity and Creating the Battle” posted to WinterIsComing.net on June 1, 2012

<sup>5</sup> This argument is fleshed out in my article “Promoting Porn for the Glory of God?” at CovenantEyes.com, and in the “Sex Scenes = Porn” blog series at CapStewart.com

*Cap Stewart blogs about movies and the arts at CapStewart.com*



# ON THE ORIGIN OF ARTICLES

## You thought this magazine was designed? How unscientific of you!

by Jason Lisle

**Y**ou might think that someone wrote this article. But of course, you would be mistaken. Articles are not written by people. They are the result of chance. Every intelligent person knows it.

There might be some people who want you to think that articles are written by people. But this view is totally unscientific. After all, we cannot see the person who allegedly wrote the article. We cannot detect him or her in any way.

The claim that this article has an author cannot be empirically verified, and therefore it must be rejected. All we have is the article itself, and we must find a *scientific* explanation for its origin.

### IT JUST SEEMS DESIGNED

Since no intelligent source can be empirically detected within this article, empirical science must look to the chance processes of nature for its formation. In other words, we must

not allow ourselves to think that this article came about from a mind; for this would be unscientific. Since it is not the result of a mind, it follows logically that this article is the result of chance. The article has not been designed – it is not the result of some unseen conscious forethought.

Naysayers might suggest that this article bears evidence of design. They might point out that it has a logical flow, that its sentences are coherent, and



that it contains creative information. True enough. But this is only evidence of *apparent* design at best. We must certainly grant that many articles *appear* designed, as if they had been planned by a mind and written with creative forethought. But to assume that the design came from some unseen, undetectable author would be unscientific.

### ALL THIS GENIUS IS JUST GLITCHES

What then is the true origin of articles? We know that articles can be copied. Articles on paper can be duplicated using a Xerox machine, and electronic articles can be copied from one computer to another. We also know that errors can occur in this duplication process. A simple glitch in the computer can result in a letter being changed, or a

sentence or paragraph being duplicated or removed.

Most of these random changes would make the article less readable than the original. But such variations would not be copied. (Who would bother to Xerox a bad article?) And so eventually they would be lost.

We must assume that occasionally, very rarely, a mistake in the copy would actually improve the quality of the article – making it more readable and more interesting. In such cases, the improved article would be much more likely to be copied than the original. In this fashion, articles gradually improve, often growing in length, complexity, and interest. It stands to reason, therefore, that all articles started out as a simple word, or perhaps even a single letter, which was gradually changed as it was duplicated due to errors in the duplication process and selection of the more readable variations.

### COMMON ORIGINAL ARTICLE

It is also sensible to conclude that all articles have diverged from a common original article which itself consisted of nothing more than a single word. This is obvious by virtue of the fact that all articles have certain things in common. For example, all articles use words. And in all cases these words are organized into sentences. Many of the words used in many articles are exactly the same! For example, the word “the” appears very commonly in almost all articles. Are we to believe that this is just a coincidence? Clearly not. It is evidence that these articles share a common source. They have each diverged from a common article in the distant past.

Naysayers argue that articles are written by people. But would people use the very same words in different articles? The common words, common grammar, and common sentence structure clearly point to a common origin for articles. It is reasonable to conclude that articles which share more common words and

sentences are more closely related than those that have fewer common words and sentences. Clearly this extends to larger works of literature – books for example. Books are the most advanced form of literary diversification, and so they must also be the most recent.

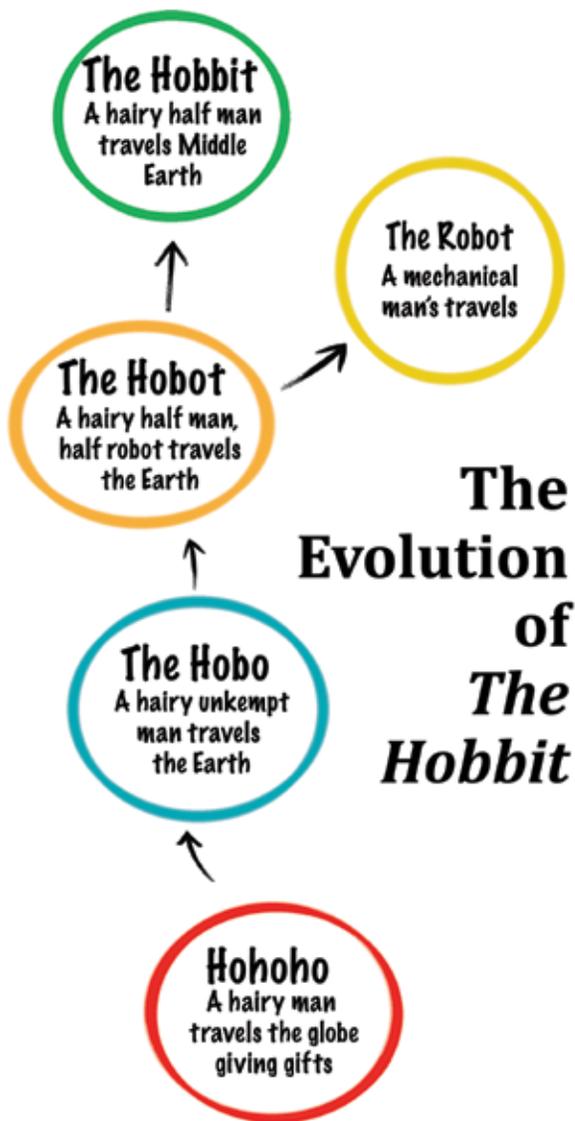
### WE HAVEN'T SEEN IT HAPPEN BUT...

Critics of our position (“authorists”) might object that we have never seen one article transform into a completely different article. In other words, all observed changes have been only minor transformations.

But is this really surprising? After all, it would take a very long time for an article to have accumulated enough changes to be classified as a completely different article. And people simply don't live long enough for this to happen within our lifetime. But the fact that all articles share common words is positive evidence that it has happened, even though the process is too slow to see it in its entirety today. We do see minor transformations today. And it is reasonable to conclude that these minor changes will add up to major changes over long periods of time.

Some readers might be bothered by the fact that we do not have a complete record of how the simpler articles diversified into the wide variety of complex articles in our present world. But this does not in any way disqualify our basic thesis that articles do share a common original source. After all, considering the trillions of variations that must have existed and been destroyed in the vast time necessary for this process, we would expect that the record of links in the chain would be fragmentary at best. And we do know of some links. For example, there are several minor variations of the book *The Hobbit*. These are known to exist, and it is obvious they stem from a common original. So it is perfectly reasonable to conclude that *all* works of literature share a common source.

“... these articles share a common source. They have each diverged from a common article in the distant past.”



articles contain a degree of “irreducible complexity.” This is to say that even a minor change of any kind would make the sentence unclear or unreadable. However, this notion fails to consider that multiple simultaneous changes – though rare – can occur in the process of time.

The fact that we cannot conceptualize an intermediate sentence does not actually prove that no such intermediate is possible. The process by which articles diversify from a common source is still being studied, and so we do not have the answers to every detail yet. But this does not mean that such answers will not be forthcoming in the process of time. The formation and diversification of articles from a common source is a scientific fact and well supported by the evidence even though some of the details are not yet understood.

such a process of nature has resulted in so many wonderful works of literature! Such literature is not the result of some mysterious, unseen, undetectable “author.” It is simply the inevitable result of the mindless duplication process working over unimaginable periods of time. <sup>RP</sup>

*This article was first published on JasonLisle.com and is reprinted here with the permission of Dr. Jason Lisle.*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do you go about telling the difference between an object formed by chance and one that has been designed? What distinguishes the designed object? How can you know this article was designed?
2. Do we seem like the sum total of countless copying errors over millions of years? Or do we seem “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14)? Why might even non-Christians agree?
3. Evolutionists see common elements of design – like the fact that many animals have four limbs (or like the word “the” that appears in this article and many others) – as evidence of a common origin. How would a creationist respond?
4. Creationists and evolutionists both agree that “copying errors” (mutations) can cause changes within a species. But if we agree that mutations can cause minor variations, why don’t we believe they can, over millions of years, turn molecules into Man?
5. What is irreducible complexity and why is it a problem for evolution?
6. Is it more reasonable to think this article was designed, or crafted by chance? Which position requires blind faith?

### THIS WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME

Given the slowness of the diversification of articles, it is reasonable to conclude that articles are far older than “authorists” assume. The process of an article becoming longer and more interesting likely takes millions of years – perhaps even hundreds of millions of years. It may even happen in spurts, rapid diversification followed by long periods of relative stasis. This may account for the fact that we find so few intermediate forms in ancient libraries.

### NO IRREDUCIBLE SENTENCES

One objection to our position is the idea that some sentences in some

### BELIEVING IN AN AUTHOR IS BLIND FAITH

To assume that articles have an author is a faith position. It is a belief in something that cannot be perceived with the senses. As such, it is unscientific and should be rejected. If some people feel that they must believe in an author, that’s okay, but please remember that your view is religious and not scientific. Please don’t force it on others or teach it in school.

Just think about it. This very article which you are now reading is the result of countless copying errors which gradually increased its length and complexity over time. How amazing that

*How amazing that such a process of nature has resulted in so many wonderful works of literature!*

# A CROWD CAN MAKE YOU CRAZY

by Ed Welch

Crowds are scary. Many of the stupid, foolish and sinful things we do involve a crowd, even if the crowd is just one or two other people. Examples:

- Anytime I was in a car going way too fast, there were “other people” in the car too.
- The old college streaking phenomena – don’t ask.
- Hazing, the cruel things that inductees are subjected to, would never be done apart from a group.
- Angry youths throw rocks at police, which none of them would do if they were by themselves.
- All early use of drugs or alcohol is crowd-induced.
- Soldiers desecrate the dead body of an enemy combatant. Alone, it would have never happened, but together it did – and it was caught on film and they will be court-marshaled.

“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent” (Pro.1:10).

It is as if sin and foolishness need only the slightest encouragement to break loose. Psychology 101 calls it the “risky shift,” in which individual opinions

move in a more polarized and risky direction when in a group. It’s probably what lies at the heart of the housing market collapse. Somebody said, “The housing market is sure thing. Let’s make even more money by offering home loans to people who can’t really afford it. What could happen?...” And soon others followed... “Hey, *they* are doing it, it must be okay.”

We are not very good at imagining consequences to begin with. Now add another voice that accents the present thrill or gain and ignores what could happen next, and all of a sudden you are like a football team, hooting and hollering with excitement before the big game, totally in the moment and *only* in the moment.

So, when the behavior is exposed, and the question is asked, “What were you thinking?!” The answer is rightly, “I don’t know.”

If there is more going on in the mind, it might be a simple formula: the larger the crowd, the less the blame. If I make a foolish decision and get caught, I am to blame. But if I am with four friends, I only share in 20% of the blame, if 99, then only 1% of the blame. This is the kind of formula that can lead to

crucifixions.

Yes, this is familiar ground. Peer-pressure revisited. Every wise person should be alert to it.

Three questions:

- Are we alert to this human tendency, and can we find illustrations of it in our own lives? When we can’t see it, we are more vulnerable.
- Do we consider consequences to our actions? And do we ask others to help us gauge consequences? Take a look at Proverbs. So many of the sayings invite us to look into the future and anticipate deleterious results.
- Do we know that we appear before the Lord individually, not as part of a group? Share-the-blame is a myth. We live as if the spotlight were on us. We live as if everything we do were public. <sup>RP</sup>

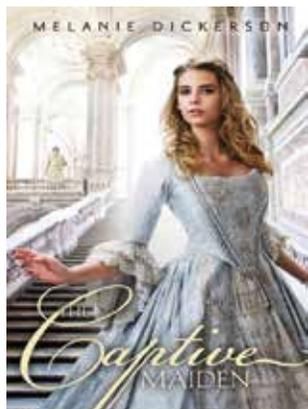
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By Jon Dykstra

### THE CAPTIVE MAIDEN

BY MELANIE DICKERSON  
2013 / 304 PAGES



It's Cinderella reimagined, with all the famous bits: it has the carriage (but it was never a pumpkin), the slipper (but not made of glass), the ball, (but now it's more of a jousting tournament), and the fairy godmother role (though she not a fairy or a godmother). Author Melanie Dickerson gives new life to the story by taking the magic out of it, bringing in an additional villain, and making the key characters sincere Christians.

My only reservation would be one I have for all romance literature: they celebrate just the one stage of love – the beginning – to the exclusion of all that comes afterwards. But “afterwards” is very important, and so if a teen girl ingests too many books about ball-attending, sword-fighting, head-turning Prince Charming, they may well overlook that fellow right in front of them – the Bible-believing, hard-working, diaper-changing ordinary Joe. So these aren't the sort of books that should be ingested one after another.

Dickerson does a good job of keeping us wondering what new twists and turns she is going to add to this familiar tale. It is definitely aimed at teen girls with a little too much angst for anyone over 18. But adults could enjoy this as a nice light read too.

### THE RISE AND FALL OF MOUNT MAJESTIC

BY JENNIFER TRAFTON  
340 PAGES / 2011



*Mount Majestic* is a fun romp, with all sorts of inventive ingredients:

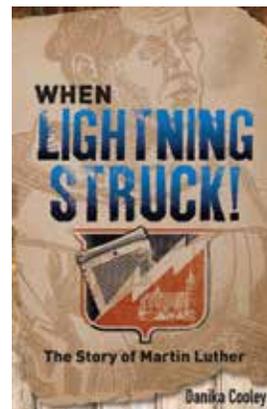
- Piles of poison-tongued jumping turtles
- A castle built on top of a mountain that rises and falls once each day.
- A tyrant twelve-year-old pepper-hording king
- A terrible, life-changing, island-threatening 1,000 year old secret

Books with good girl heroes are hard to find. Most often the heroine is decidedly boyish (or at the very least tomboy-ish): armor-wearing, sword-swinging, that sort of thing. But Persimmony Smudge is a different sort. She dreams of battles, yes, but when it comes down to it, it's her brain and her bravery, and not her battle skills, that save the day.

While I suspect the author is Christian there is no mention made of God. The only “supernatural” elements are a prophetic Lyre-That-Never-Lies, and clay pots that give the recipient what they *need* (and not what they might *want*). When the question is asked about who it is that puts the gifts in the pots, and puts “words of truth into the strings of a Lyre” the only answer we get is, “I have no idea.” So *Mount Majestic* is simply a fun read, without any spiritual depth – that dimension is left unexplored. Highly recommended, for girls in Grade 3 through early teens.

### WHEN LIGHTNING STRUCK! THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER

BY DANIKA COOLEY  
2015 / 231 PAGES



This year marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg and I can't think of a more enjoyable way to learn about the man than grabbing a copy of *When Lightning Struck!*

The target audience is teens, but like any fantastic book, adults are sure to enjoy it too. This is fiction which means means parts of this are made up, including lots of the day-to-day dialogue, but the key events are all true.

It didn't take much to make Luther's life exciting: as doubt-filled as he was early on, the Reformer was even more bombastic after he understood the importance that forgiveness is a gift given, not earned. This is a man who:

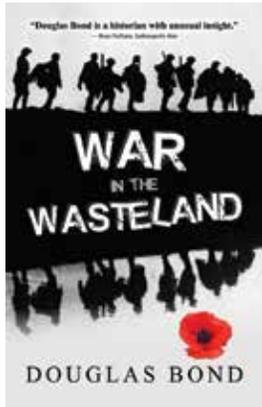
- was condemned by the pope as a heretic
- had 200 knights pledge to protect him
- didn't want to marry lest he quickly leave his wife a widow
- was kidnapped
- masqueraded as a knight
- helped formulate the German language
- cared for Plague victims
- ended up marrying a nun

And it would be easy to go on and on. Put the story of such a man into the hands of a talented writer and what you're left with is a book anyone will just tear through.

## WAR IN THE WASTELAND

BY DOUGLAS BOND

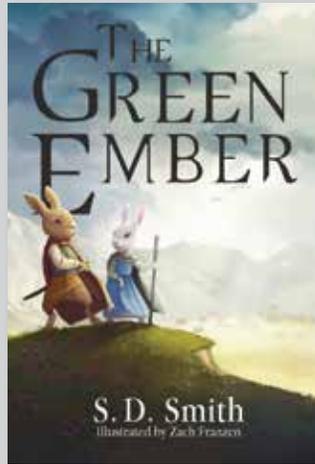
273 PAGES / 2016



"Second Lieutenant C.S. Lewis in the trenches of WWI" – if that doesn't grab you, I don't know what will. *War in the Wasteland* is a novel about teenage Lewis's time on the front lines of the First World War. At this point in his life, at just 19, Lewis is an atheist, and his hellish surroundings seem to confirm for him that there is no God.

When men are hunkered down in their trenches waiting through another enemy artillery barrage, there is a motivation to talk about life's most important matters. Lewis's fellow junior officer is a good debater, and won't let Lewis's atheistic thinking go unchallenged. Their dialogue is imagined – this is a *fictionalized* account – but the author pulls the points and counterpoints of their back and forth argument straight out of the books Lewis wrote after he turned from atheism and became one of the best known Christian apologists on the planet.

*War in the Wasteland* comes to a solid and satisfying conclusion, which is a neat trick, consider that Lewis's story of conversion is, at this point, very much incomplete. This would be great for older teens and adults who have an interest in history, World War I, apologetics, or C.S. Lewis. Bond has crafted something remarkable here.



## THE GREEN EMBER

BY S.D. SMITH

2015 PAGES / 365 PAGES

"Rabbits with swords" – it's an irresistible combination, and all I had to say to get my two oldest daughters to beg me to start reading.

As you might expect of a sword epic, this has a feudal feel, with rabbit lords and ladies, and noble rabbit knights and, of course, villainous wolves. This is children's fiction, intended for preteens and

early teens, so naturally the heroes are children too. The story begins with siblings Pickett and Heather being torn from the only home they've known, pursued by wolves, and separated from their parents and baby brother. It's this last detail that might warrant some caution as to how appropriate this would be for the very young. It isn't clear if mom, dad and baby Jack are dead...but it seems like that might well be, and that could be a bit much for the very young (I'm planning on skipping over that bit when I get to it with my preschool daughters). They escape to a community that is hidden away from the ravaging wolves, made up of exiles, rabbits that once lived in the Great Wood. Their former and peaceful realm fell to the wolves after it was betrayed from within, so now these rabbits in exile look forward to a time when the Great Wood will be restored. Or as one of the wisest of these rabbits puts it,

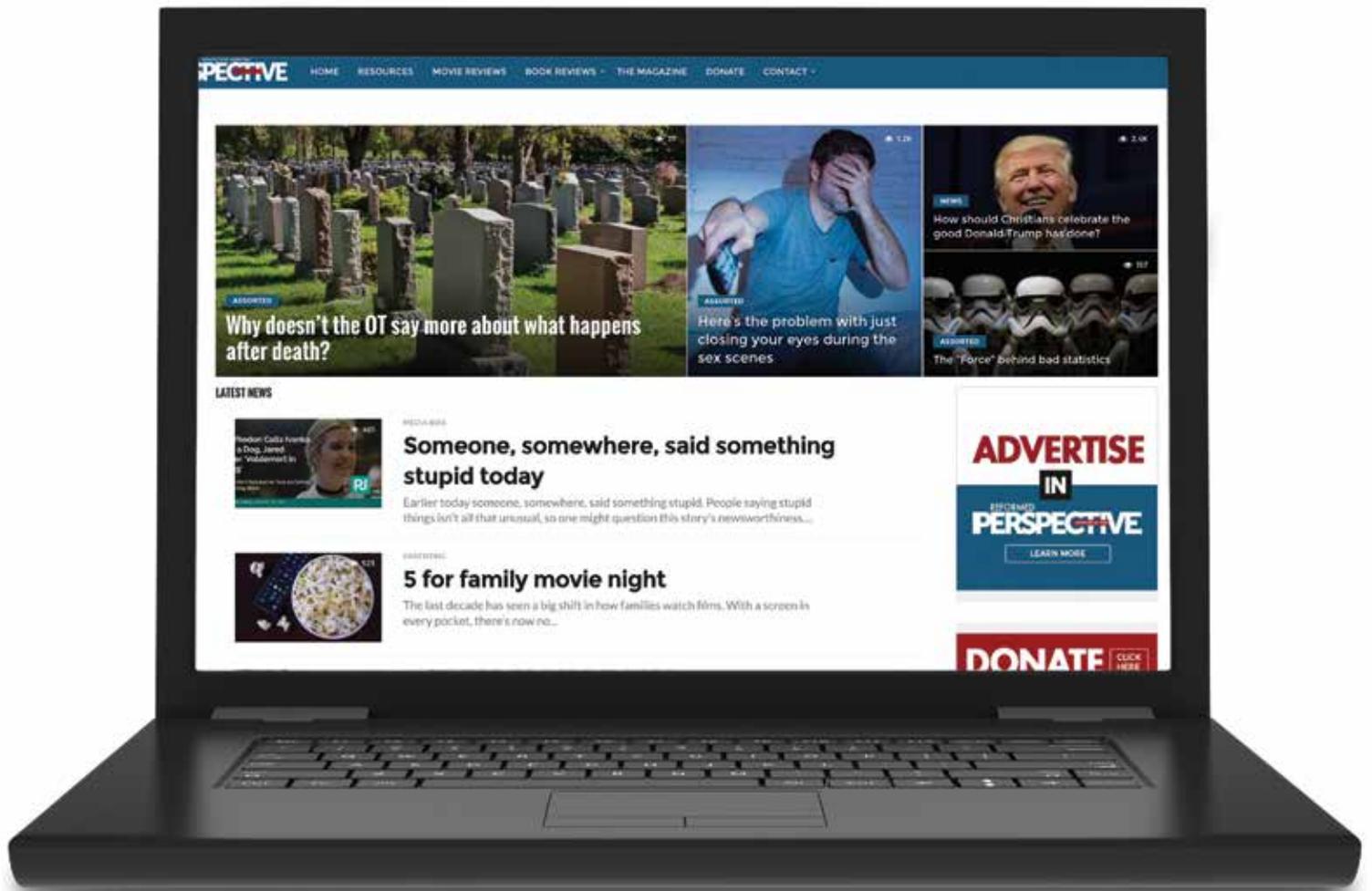
...we anticipate the Mended Wood, the Great Wood healed.... We sing about it. We paint it. We make crutches and soups and have gardens and weddings and babies. This is a place out of time. A window into the past and the future world.

Though God is never mentioned, and the rabbits have no religious observance of any kind, author S.D. Smith's Christian worldview comes through in passages like this, that parallel the way we can recall a perfect past, and look forward to a perfected future. It's this depth that makes this more than just a rollicking tale of rabbits in peril.

There is prequel, *The Black Star of Kingston*, and a sequel *Ember Falls*, which are both very good, but this is the book to start with.

So, my overall take is two very enthusiastic thumbs up for anyone ten and up.

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