

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

MAY/JUNE 2017

Volume 36 Issue No. 4

# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS



**WE NEED TO  
TALK ABOUT  
SEX MORE**

P. 38-44

## IS PORN MORE LIKE DRUGS, OR DRIVING?

P.38-39



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# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Published monthly by the Foundation for the publication of a Reformed Social-Political Magazine (Reformed Perspective Foundation).

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[www.facebook.com/FreshDesignByAnnelies](http://www.facebook.com/FreshDesignByAnnelies)

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

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**Registration:** ISSN 0714-8208  
**Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act**  
**Registration No. 118929272RR0001**

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# IS PORN MORE LIKE DRUGS, OR DRIVING?

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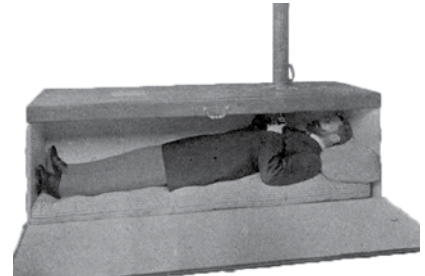
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by Jon Dykstra

# Canada's Conspiracy-Proof Elections

Controversy over Scheer's leadership win highlights just how blessed we are to have our unimpeachable federal electoral system

Days after Andrew Scheer won a close, final-ballot victory for the leadership of Canada's Conservatives, questions were raised about the vote total. The Conservative Party reported that 141,362 ballots were counted, but in a list sent out to the different leadership candidates' campaigns, it showed only 133,896 votes. Some from second-place finisher Maxime Bernier's camp wanted to know, why the big difference? They were troubled because the two vote totals differed by 7,466, which was greater than the 7,049 votes that separated Scheer from Bernier.

Then came news that party director Dustin van Vugt has ordered, right after the votes were tallied, that all ballots be destroyed. It was becoming the stuff of conspiracy theories.

Fortunately, the answers that were demanded came quickly. Yes, the ballots had been destroyed, but a snapshot of each one still existed. The lower total on

the list sent out to the campaigns was due, in part, to a block of about 3,000 votes from polls around Toronto not being entered into the Party database. The remaining difference, of about 4,000, was attributed to human error, as volunteers had to process 140,000 ballots in a very short time.

While these answers satisfied most, the Party's reliance on an electronic record – retaining only a digital snapshot of each ballot instead of keeping the paper ballot itself – was a problem to some. As *iPolitics* columnist Michael Harris noted,

"Have you ever photo-shopped a snapshot? Let's just say digital images aren't necessarily the last word in reality."

Harris doesn't seem to like the Conservative Party, so he may well be looking for ways to cast doubt on the results. But it's important to note, it's

the Conservative's reliance on electronic records that allowed Harris to stir up trouble.

## THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

On June 6, Maxime Bernier tweeted his "unconditional" support for "our new leader Andrew Scheer," which seems to have quieted the questions. But this controversy highlights how important it is for voters to be able to trust the reported results. An electoral system needs to be as transparent and accountable as possible. Why? Because, everyone, even unbelievers, know that Man is fallen, prone not only to sin, but also to make mistakes. Therefore, how very dangerous it would be to leave the vote counting up to a select unaccountable few. To protect from fraud, and from mistakes, *there needs to be accountability.*

Now, one reason questions about the Conservative leadership election came up is because the party used a

complicated means of running the election – their ballot included 14 names. With that complexity came more opportunities for human error. The use of voting machines to count the ballots also raises questions as to transparency – how do we know the machines were working right?

One reason some of the questions were quickly answered was because the Conservatives *tried* to make their system accountable. They involved scrutineers – representatives from all of the campaigns – to monitor the ballot count. That's why, while there were some questions from the Bernier camp, other losing candidates were quick to say they had no such doubts.

### ELECTRONIC VOTING REQUIRES US TO TRUST BLINDLY

This incident also highlights the strength of Canada's federal electoral system. Some want to change it, and move to online voting, or electronic voting machines, because these methods are supposed to be easier and faster. But these counting computers also come with a lack of transparency. Did the computer count your ballot the right way? Or might there have been some sort of bug or error? How can anyone know?

While we can't be certain as to *how many errors* occur, we do know errors

happen. In the US, where these machines are put to regular use, it's easy to find stories of voters who cast a ballot for one candidate but saw it being recorded for the other. There's also the famous example of a precinct in the 2000 election that gave Al Gore a *negative 16,022 vote total*. This was caught, quickly, but what of the errors that aren't so obvious?

A vote total is only as accurate as the counter, but these electronic counting machines are not open to scrutiny – their computer code is a proprietary secret. So when we make use of them we have to accept, on the basis of trust, that the programmers are both honest and completely error-free.


### CANADA'S SYSTEM DOESN'T REQUIRE TRUST

Contrast that with our federal, incredibly simple, entirely transparent, system. No need for trust because everyone is held accountable. You arrive at the poll, you mark your ballot in secret, cast it in front of two witnesses, and then know that it will be counted in front of scrutineers from the competing parties. With that simplicity comes the confidence that your ballot, as it was cast, has been counted.

Our system allows us to do what few other countries can: we can verify the official government vote count

independently. Because each ballot is counted by hand, in front of scrutineers from the Conservatives, Liberals, and often times the NDP too, that leaves us with as many as four different counts for each riding: the official one, and one from each party. And should there be any notable discrepancy between a party's total and the government total, we can be sure they will let us know!

Around the world elections are plagued with accusations of ballot tampering and other shenanigans. Before the latest US presidential election Donald Trump was complaining that the system was rigged. The Democratic Party was accused of rigging their presidential nomination in favor of Hillary Clinton (and against second place finisher Bernie Sanders). It doesn't matter if accusations are justified or completely unfounded – voters' trust will be undermined if there is no way of *proving* the results reliable. We can see that in the Conservative leadership campaign too; despite all their efforts at transparency, they *still* had questions raised about the totals.

What a blessing it is, then, for Canada to have a federal electoral system that it is so simple, transparent, and accountable, that such accusations are simply unthinkable. 

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# NOTA BENE

News worth noting

marriage were speaking of “gay marriage” as if it were a real, possible, thing, which was the very point in dispute.

What’s notable in the *Fox News* article is how this new terminology takes things one step further. “Sex change” and “gender confirmation” both presume that it is possible to surgically alter what God has irrevocably assigned (Matt. 19:4). So both are lies. But the latter also asserts that what is happening is not so much a choice, as simply a “confirmation” of what needed to be done.

That’s why you can expect to hear this change in vocabulary much more moving forward.

As servants of the Truth, we need to think through the terminology we are going to use – there is a need for accuracy, but considerations also for being winsome (Col. 4:6). So, for example, in LGBT discussions, truth is why we might use “homosexual” rather than “gay” and winsome is why we might use “homosexual” rather than “sodomite.”

And when it comes to the climate, it is more accurate and yet still winsome to describe the debate as being about “cataclysmic global warming” rather than “climate change” or even “global warming” because it is primarily whether the warming will be cataclysmic that is the real point of contention.

However, when it comes to these surgeries, the most accurate description would be “genital mutilation”....but those are fighting words! Perhaps we could go with Johns Hopkins Hospital’s Paul McHugh who described it as “surgically amputating normal organs.” Still accurate, and a *little* less contentious...but probably too long for general use.

So is there anything we can use that is accurate *and* winsome? It would be good to try, though I think in this case it may not be possible. When it comes to this genital mutilation it would seem the truth is unavoidably brutal.

## “GENDER CONFIRMATION”? WHY WORDS MATTER

BY JON DYKSTRA

**I**n a May article *FoxNews.com* used a new term for what it has to this point commonly called “sex change operations.” In reporting on a 20% American increase for such surgeries from 2015 to 2016, they described them as “gender confirmation surgeries.”

Why is this notable?

Because the terms used in a debate can have a big impact on how the public perceives it.

The liberal media understands this when they label us as “anti-abortion” rather than “pro-life” because, after all, who wants to be anti? And while “homosexuality” is still in use, the term is clinical, cold, thus the adoption of “gay” with its much more innocent vibe. The switch from “global warming” to “climate change” means that should the planetary warming stop, the doom and gloom doesn’t need to because

“change” is a catch-all phrase that can be applied to any sort of weather. We lost the marriage debate when it was commonly accepted as being between those for and against “gay marriage.” Then even those defending traditional



## DID MTV ACCIDENTALLY DO SOMETHING SENSIBLE?

BY JON DYKSTRA



**A**t this year's MTV Movie and TV Awards, actress Emma Watson was the proud recipient of what she called the "first acting award in history that doesn't separate nominees based on their sex." Instead of the usual best actor and best actress divisions, MTV decided to have one mixed-gender category. This seemed to be a response to the actions of actress Asia Kate Dillon, who self-identifies as

"non-binary" – she claims to be neither male nor female. She made headlines when she was considered for an Emmy award, and didn't want to be placed in either the actress or actor category... though she eventually settled on actor, noting that "actor" can mean male or female. When MTV decided to do away with their own gendered acting categories, they asked Asia Kate Dillon to make the award presentation for their new, more inclusive award.

Her presence on stage underscored that MTV's change was done for the wrong reasons – this was intended as a fist, shaken at God and his binary creation. But just as no one is perfect, not even MTV can manage to always be wrong. Even in the midst of their rebellion they've hit on something sensible.

Christians know God created us male and female, and there are real

and notable differences between the two genders. But we also know that there are real similarities as well, the most notable that we are both made in God's image. Physical differences mean that women wouldn't fare well against men in most athletics. But what relevant differences are there to necessitate separate categories for actors and actresses?

Of course, in the past the separate categories have meant that there were an equal number of male and female winners each year. What if that didn't happen going forward? The Oscars have already long had a mixed gender category – best director. But of the 92 best director winners, just one has been a woman. If the first winner of this new "best acting" award had been a man, rather than Miss Watson, would it have still been seen as a triumph of inclusivity?

## CRASS PRO-CHOICE COMEDIAN CHALLENGES HIS ALLIES... AND PRO-LIFERS TOO.

BY JON DYKSTRA



**L**ouis C.K. is a vulgar, blasphemous and very pro-abortion comedian whose latest comedy special is certain to have upset many of his pro-abortion allies. He opened the show with ten minutes about how abortion was either like "defecating" (i.e. an unimportant removal of something from the body) or "murdering a baby." He mocked that complete lack of logic behind Hillary Clinton's "safe, legal, and rare" abortion stance.

"Why rare if it should be legal?

If it should be legal, it's... [not important]... [But] If it should be rare, it's murdering babies."

To finish the segment he gave two arguments for why, while abortion is "100% killing a baby" it should still be allowed:

- "I don't think life is important."
- "abortion is the last line of defense against [lousy] people in the species."

Both arguments don't dispute the humanity of the unborn; both simply devalue all life – if these justify abortion, they justify killing *anyone*. From the laughs it was clear his audience wasn't shocked. Of course, abortion advocates couldn't have been pleased. They don't want abortion presented so plainly; they want to hide what this "choice" really involves.

Interestingly C.K both defended and

challenged pro-lifers, arguing that if someone thinks abortion is killing a baby that "means you should be holding a sign in front of the place." He told his audience:

"People hate abortion protesters. 'Oh, they're so shrill and awful.' They think *babies* are being *murdered* – what are they supposed to be like? 'Uh, that's not cool. I don't wanna be a [jerk] about it, though. I don't want to ruin their day as they murder several babies all the time.'"

Now, we could question why isn't C.K. – who acknowledges abortion is "totally the killing of a baby" – out protesting in front of Planned Parenthood? But we shouldn't be surprised when the world isn't consistent.

The better question is, what about us?

## PORN AND SMARTPHONES: PARENTS *SHOULD* BE FREAKING OUT

BY JON DYKSTRA



**I**n a May 2 piece in the *American Conservative*, journalist Rod Dreher said that when he goes to speak at *Christian* colleges, the professors, staffers and campus ministers he's talks with tell him that "pornography is a massive problem." How massive?

"A campus minister who works with young undergraduates headed for professional ministry told me that *every single one* of the men he mentors has a porn addiction. Every. Single. One."

Parents who grew up with the Internet might think they understand the temptation their kids face. But this,

the smartphone generation, is facing something new. While their parents could put their desktop computer in a public place, our children now have a portal, in their jeans pockets, that allows them access to porn *everywhere and always*.

Dreher's solution? It's not as simple as any one thing. But he doesn't like smartphones.

What concerns me most of all right now is the horrifying complicity of conservative, even conservative Christian, parents in the spiritual, moral, and emotional ruin of their children and of their moral ecology because they, the parents, are too... afraid to say *no, my kids will not have a smartphone, I don't care what they and society think of me*.

Now Dreher isn't advocating an anti-technology lifestyle. He knows we can't just bubble-wrap our kids and ban them from the Internet for the first 18 years of their life. If we did, then, when they move out and get their first smartphone,

it won't be much better for them than if we just handed one to them at age 10.

So no bubble-wrap, and no technology bans. But we also shouldn't hand our children tools without first figuring out if they have the character and knowledge to use them properly. We wouldn't hand our son or daughter a chainsaw without some lessons and precautions and it isn't hyperbole to say an equal or greater caution should be involved before handing them a smartphone. After all, the chainsaw can only hurt or kill them; pornography can enslave them.

To conclude his piece Dreher shared a conversation he had with a two readers who lead a Christian school. He told these men about how, in the article he was writing, he wanted to help parents understand just how "serious this situation is regarding kids, porn and smartphones" but that he didn't "want to freak them out."

"Freak them out," he was told, "They need to be freaked out."

SOURCE: Rod Dreher's "When Even A Porn Star Feels Guilty..." posted to TheAmericanConservative.com, May 2, 2017

## PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME IN "CIVILIZED" DENMARK ALMOST ALL EXTERMINATED

BY ROB SLANE



**H**ere's one of those moral dilemmas. There are three people in a room. They all have the same medical condition and are in fact the last people alive who have it. It is by no means life-threatening, nor is it contagious, and its main symptoms are physical growth delays and varying degrees of intellectual disability. There

is, however, currently no cure for it.

Someone enters the room and tells you that they have found a cure, which they are going to give you. They hand you a gun. All you have to do, they tell you, is pull the trigger three times and you will have completely eradicated the condition from planet Earth. What would you do?

Not hard, is it? Yet imagine someone carrying out the killing and then triumphantly proclaiming that they had indeed eradicated the condition. You'd be appalled at the Hitlerian cruelty. Appalled at the callous disregard for a fellow creature made in the *Imago Dei*. But perhaps even more than that, you'd surely be sick to the stomach to hear them acting like they had found a cure, rather than having simply killed

three human beings to achieve their ends. You don't cure disease by killing people, do you?

Apparently you do. A few years back Iceland became the first "civilized Western" country to become a Down Syndrome-free zone, and Denmark is close to becoming the second. Back in 2015, *CPH Post* (formerly *The Copenhagen Post*), Denmark's only English-language newspaper, ran a piece with the headline:

"Down Syndrome heading for extinction in Denmark."

This must rank as one of the most misleading headlines in history. If you didn't know better, you'd think that Denmark's doctors had found a



## REFORMED PRO-LIFE ARTISTS PROVE A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

BY JON DYKSTRA

Last issue I missed an opportunity to give credit where it is due. In Raymond Kobes' news article about trigger warnings that the University of Fraser Valley (UFV) required for the UFV pro-life club's art display, I included pictures of three of the paintings that caused all the fuss. But I didn't include the artists' names!

It turned out the three artists are also members of Reformed churches. Deanna Huttema's painting built on Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, with a baby in the womb substituting for Adam. Cassidy Van Delft's *Value of Life* depicted a pregnant woman, against a background of green, her hands delicately encircling her pregnant belly. I hope to share more on these two artists, and their paintings in the next issue.

Sheila Van Delft's painting, *Untitled*, of a pregnant woman, with white rectangles obscuring her identity, is, as the artist shared, "the story of a girl who defied her family's culture to save the life of her child." Instead of

choosing abortion, this girl gave her child up for adoption, and in doing so gave her child life, but also became anonymous, unknown. The painting also represents the anonymity of all the women who "acknowledge the value of their unborn child in the face of pressure and courageously choose life for them in the arms of another family." Sheila Van Delft shared a very fun detail: the ultrasound in the painting was collaged from an ultrasound of the artist's own granddaughter!

These artists and their works were part of a large display that had UFV officials quite bothered and worried. They insisted on a trigger warning that said, in part:

Right to life and or prolife messages and imagery are some of the topics included within this event. If you feel triggered, please know that there are resources to support you.

Were they worried because of the gory details the artists included? Were there

pictures of aborted fetuses?

No, there was no gore – this was a celebration of unborn life, and courageous women. This was beauty on display. So why the worry?

Because a picture, in the hands of a talented artist, really is worth a thousand words. These paintings communicated a powerful pro-life message that could very well trigger anyone who had a functioning conscience.



cure for Down Syndrome. Except they haven't. What they have in fact done is not made Down Syndrome almost extinct, but rather *people* with Down Syndrome. The headline should have read: "People with Down Syndrome heading for extinction in Denmark". Doesn't sound quite as medical, does it, unless you mean in the Josef Mengele sense of the word!

Yet this drive to eradicate Down Syndrome by eradicating people with Down Syndrome is apparently going down rather well in Denmark. According to the article, 98% of pregnant women who were revealed to be carrying an unborn child with Down Syndrome had him or her aborted, and 60% of Danes see it as a "positive development" that there are considerably fewer Down Syndrome children being born. Positive development? Ridding Denmark of

Down Syndrome by curing it might be considered a positive development. But ridding Denmark of Down Syndrome by killing those with the condition? That's a positive development???

Here's what Britain's biggest funder of abortions, the NHS, says about people with Down Syndrome:

"People with Down syndrome can have a good quality of life. With support from their family and others, many people are able to get jobs and live fairly independently."

So 60% of Danes believe that the eradication from their country of "people who can have a good quality of life...can get jobs and live fairly independently" by killing them is a good thing? Have they ever seen the joy Down Syndrome people bring to those

around them? Do they care? Have they any heart?

Not so long ago, Down Syndrome could not be detected in the womb. Now that it can, 98% of Down Syndrome children are aborted in Denmark, over 90% in Britain, and – most shockingly – every single Down Syndrome child in Iceland. The real test of the character of any civilization is how it treats its weakest and most helpless members. If it loves them and seeks to help them, it should be praised. If it seeks cures to treat their conditions, great. But if it seeks to extinguish the people who have the condition from its midst, and then pats itself on the back at having eradicated the condition, what grounds do we have for calling it civilized?

## EUROPE'S LEADERS, LIKE ITS CITIZENS, ARE INCREASINGLY CHILDLESS

BY JON DYKSTRA



**W**hen Emmanuel Macron became the French president in May, he put a new wrinkle on a childless trend among Europe's political heads.

Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, is single, with no children. Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven's wife had two adult children when they married, but he has none of his own. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has no children. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has no children of her own, though her second and current spouse has two adult sons. The next Prime Minister of Ireland, Leo Varadkar, is gay, with no children.

The new French president also has no children of his own, but, like Lofven and Merkel, he does have stepchildren. The new wrinkle? Two of his three stepchildren are older than him.

As the Gatestone Institute's Giulio Meotti has noted, the lack of children among these political heads mirrors what is going on in their own countries. In the 28 countries making up the European Union, the birth rate has been dropping – there were nearly 3 million more babies born in 1965 than in 2015. Health advances boosted the continent's life expectancy up roughly 20 years in that same time span, so the population continued to grow but *because less people were dying*. But life expectancy can only be boosted so far, and if births are in decline, eventually population will start to fall. That's why, in 2015, the European Union saw, for the first, the number of deaths outnumbered births. While Europe's population still grew, it is now due only to immigration.

## TIM HORTONS PROMOTING HOMOSEXUALITY

BY SIERRA SCHRIEMER

**I**n late February Canada's Tim Hortons restaurant chain released a new ad promoting its "Perfect Pairing," a soup and sandwich combination. To show how their food is a perfect pair, the commercial features a series of couples and best friends as "perfect pairs." Throughout the advertisement the friends and couples talk about how much Tim Hortons has helped their relationships, as a favorite meeting place.

Twenty-five seconds into the ad we meet a homosexual couple – two young men. Tim Hortons portrays them as just another "perfect pair." As Gwen Landolt of the pro-family



organization REAL Women of Canada notes, Tim Hortons is trying to be politically correct, portraying homosexual's relationships as something worth celebrating.

But God says otherwise. In featuring this couple, the company is promoting something God says is evil, and which we then know is bad for this couple, and any who imitate them. How are we supposed to view our regular coffee runs when we know that "Timmy's" is promoting something that should be opposed?

## NEW ANNE TV SERIES OFFERS UP CRUDE HUMOR

BY KELSEY WERKMAN

**I**n March, CBC Television debuted a new TV series based on Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. The show, titled *Anne*, received rave reviews from some quarters, getting a remarkable 8.3/10 on the movie database site IMDb.com

But many parents are not so enthused. The series has unwanted adult fare, such as in Episode 3, when Anne Shirley delivers sex education to her classmates, explaining that fellow student Prissy Andrews and the teacher, Mr. Phillips, are having "intimate relations," and therefore, "must be making a baby." She goes on to further educate her classmates, saying that all men have "a pet mouse in the front pocket of their pants," and that "when the woman has made the mouse's acquaintance and pets it, babies are made."

Clearly CBC is attempting to incorporate some humor into the TV series, but parents are upset with the



questions their children are raising because of this episode. Considering that the original *Anne of Green Gables* book is clean and suitable for young children, as is the original movie, one would expect that this remake would be the same. But no. Later on in the same episode Anne is described as someone who should be pitied for knowing what no child should have to know. On Facebook one parent offered up on an ironic thank-you to CBC for "telling my children something no child should have to know."

What CBC should've known is something Christians have known for centuries: "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place" (Ephesians 5:4a).





# Don't Argue the Exceptions:

## Beating bad arguments for Abortion and Transgenderism

by John Stonestreet

**“B**ut what about the . . . ?” Has a rare exception ever stumped you when making the case for life or anything else? Here’s how to respond with grace and truth.

### 10 FINGERS AND TOES

“Humans have ten fingers and ten toes.” Now that shouldn’t strike anyone as a controversial statement, since almost every person ever born has had twenty digits. But what if someone argued in response that, because there are exceptions to this – people who because of injury or genetic defect lack a digit or two – we ought not describe ten fingers and ten toes as normal or descriptive of being human?

We’d rightly think that a silly argument, of course. So why do we tolerate this same kind of reasoning in modern social debates?

Take abortion. Perhaps you’ve heard someone challenge the pro-life view with this exception: “Well what about rape and incest, or the life of the mother?” Or take gender. Folks ask me all the time, “But what about those born with ambiguous genitalia?”

These objections stop a lot of Christians in their tracks. But they shouldn’t.

When pro-choice activists insist that we can’t outlaw abortion because some pregnancies result from rape and incest, or endanger the life of the mother, they’re ignoring the fact that in nearly all abortions none of these considerations are factors at all. Rather, healthy babies are killed simply because they’re inconvenient.

Now don’t get me wrong. I don’t support the intentional taking of unborn life under any circumstance. As Live Action President Lila Rose often points out, the unborn are human beings no matter what the circumstances of their conception. Rape and other sexual crimes are monstrous, but abortion doesn’t undo those wrongs, it only creates another victim.

Arguing about exceptions like these only muddies the waters. And sometimes, that’s exactly what the pro-choice side wants.

### FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT...

The same thing happens when someone brings up ambiguous genitalia in the transgender debate. This condition is tragic, and the subject requires great care. But it’s also extremely rare — by most estimates, in fact, occurring in just one in twenty-two thousand births. In other words, when we allow this tiny fraction of a percent to control the entire debate, we obscure the overwhelming reality.

And so, for the sake of discussion, instead of arguing about the exceptions, why not just grant them? When someone challenges you about extreme cases for abortion, try replying this way: “Okay, let’s say we keep abortion legal in these rare cases. What about the other ninety-six percent of abortions that are elective? Can we end those?”

Nine times out of ten, you’ll hear crickets.

Likewise, when it comes to gender, grant that in cases of ambiguous genitalia, there *really* is a biological basis for

doubt and that we must rethink medical practices that too quickly label someone male or female if the physical evidence isn’t clear.

By granting the exceptions, we force the other person to face the real questions, or admit they’re using rare cases as wedges for their real agenda.

### EXCEPTIONS PROVE THE PRINCIPLE

But more importantly, these exceptions actually prove the principles we believe in. Here’s what I mean: If someone says, “if a baby was conceived in a crime, we have the right to kill her,” that person is appealing to the circumstances under which the baby was conceived. To then argue that abortion should be legal in all cases is to admit that circumstances don’t in fact matter. That my friend, is called a contradiction.

Same thing is true with transgenderism. To argue that biology matters in the case of ambiguous genitalia and then argue that biology doesn’t matter with clearly defined genitalia is nonsense. Our response should be: Biology matters or it doesn’t. Pick one.

Look, rare cases are tough and complicated. But that doesn’t mean that all or even most of the other cases are. So the next time someone argues for abortion or gender fluidity from an exception, grant it and then confront them with the vast majority of cases. And if they refuse, just ask them how many fingers and toes they have. <sup>RP</sup>

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*But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead. But He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised. But if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ we are to be pitied more than all men  
(1 Cor. 15:12-19).*

# If Only For this Life We Have Hope in Christ...

by Christine Farenhorst

**M**y husband and I have already attended a few funerals this year of our Lord 2017. They were peaceful funerals – funerals of saints who lived in the hope of Christ and saints who are now rejoicing in heaven with our Lord. There were tears at these funerals, to be sure, but they were tears that were spilled into the cup of the new covenant established by Jesus' blood.

The truth is that we live on a slope. That truth is that all life tilts towards the grave. Human beings – from the very first moment of conception, slide towards death.

Most people are afraid of burial. There are many who quip: "I'm not planning to die" and then they laugh. To be put into a coffin, into a small confined space, and to have a lid closed over your face – that is not a pleasant thought. For people who have not spent much time contemplating a Savior, it is an experience they would rather avoid.

## WHERE THE SCARY STORIES BEGAN?

Stories abound about people having been buried alive throughout history. There is the tale of Alice Davies. In 1656, Alice married a man by the name of William Blunden of Basingstoke. The Blundens were a well-established family who ran a flourishing business. Alice could consequently be congratulated on her very fine match. William was a

maltster, that is to say, he was a brewer of malt. The malting process converts raw grain into malt. Malt is used mainly for brewing or whiskey making, although it can also be used to make malt vinegar. William Blunden seems to have brought his work home with him. Both Alice and William often enjoyed downing a glass of ale. It is not surprising therefore that an old text describes Alice as "a fat, gross woman who had accustomed herself many times to drink brandy."

Perhaps Alice was, for some unknown reason, deeply unhappy and tried to drown whatever it was that discomfited her. She did have two children and was not in any material want. Besides brandy she also regularly imbibed poppy-tea. Poppy-tea is an herbal infusion brewed from poppy seeds. The dried pods contain opiate alkaloids, primarily consisting of morphine. The tea is consumed for its narcotic effect, and in small amounts was used as a sedative. Alone one evening, her husband having traveled to London on business, Alice, drank a sizable quantity of this tea. Afterwards she fell into a deep sleep – a sleep from which she could not be wakened. The household servants called the local Basingstoke apothecary. After checking her, the apothecary concluded that Alice had died.

Alice was, as stated previously, a very heavy woman. Although husband William had sent instructions that the

funeral be deferred until he returned from London, other relatives deemed it necessary that the body be interred as quickly as possible. Old manuscripts spell out that "the season of the year being hot, and the corpse fat, it would be impossible to keep her." They did not heed William's request to wait and Alice was buried without any delay.

A few days later some boys, playing a game near the cemetery, heard a voice calling out. It is not recorded what the voice said. In panic they ran home and told their parents. Initially no one believed these boys, but then the same voice was heard by others passing the graveyard. Following the sound of the voice, they arrived at poor Alice's grave. Upon opening the coffin, they discovered her body to be most "lamentably beaten." It was concluded that Alice appeared to have regained consciousness in the coffin and had tried very hard to escape. No one could detect any signs of life in the woman at this point and so the lid was put back on and the coffin lowered into the earth once more. A coroner was sent for to examine the body the next day. Great was everyone's consternation, however, when upon opening the coffin for the second time, the body was found to have "torn off a great part of the winding sheet, scratched herself in several places and beaten her mouth until the blood ran." The coroner, upon examining the body very carefully, did

pronounce Alice Blunden finally dead. She was reinterred once more. Those responsible for her initial burial were summoned to court, but although they were fined for neglect of duties, no one was ever convicted. A fairly gruesome tale, to be sure.

## SO VERY FEARFUL

There is another story of a man by the name of Robert Robinson who lived in the mid 1700s. In his youth Robert attended the dissenting seminary at Plasterer's Hall – an academy which trained young Christian men for the ministry and a school which had teachers who were devoted to Calvinism. Robert abandoned Calvinism, however, while at the academy, and began leaning heavily towards Unitarianism. After graduating, he served several parishes, but resigned amidst controversy in 1777.

Uncomfortable with the thought of dying and worried about being buried alive, Robert Robinson made preparations for his interment. When he died one day in December of 1791, his coffin was placed in a square, red-brick building which had been built on his property. At his instructions a movable glass pane was inserted into the coffin, and his little mausoleum also had an inspection door. A watchman was instructed to pass along daily after Robert's death to see if there were signs of breath on the glass pane. His relatives, as well, were requested to visit his grave periodically and to check for signs of life.

These are interesting stories, telling stories and stories which reveal a great deal about human nature. The truth is that if people rely on their own reasoning and philosophy, they have no hope at all.

The fear of being buried alive is called *taphophobia* (Greek for *grave* + *fear*). In the early 1900s this rather widespread fear led to the creation of so-called safety coffins. These coffins had some sort of mechanism installed in them for communicating with the living – mechanisms such pulleys and ropes which were attached to bells above ground. Hence the term “saved by the bell.”

Hans Christian Anderson, the fairy-

tale writer, was petrified of being buried alive. A note on the table next to his bed read, “I only appear to be dead” and when he was not sleeping he wore the note around his neck. Frederic Chopin wrote to someone: “The earth is suffocating. Swear to make them cut me open so that I won't be buried alive.” President George Washington requested of his secretary: “Have me decently buried; and do not let my body be put into a vault in less than three days after I am dead.”

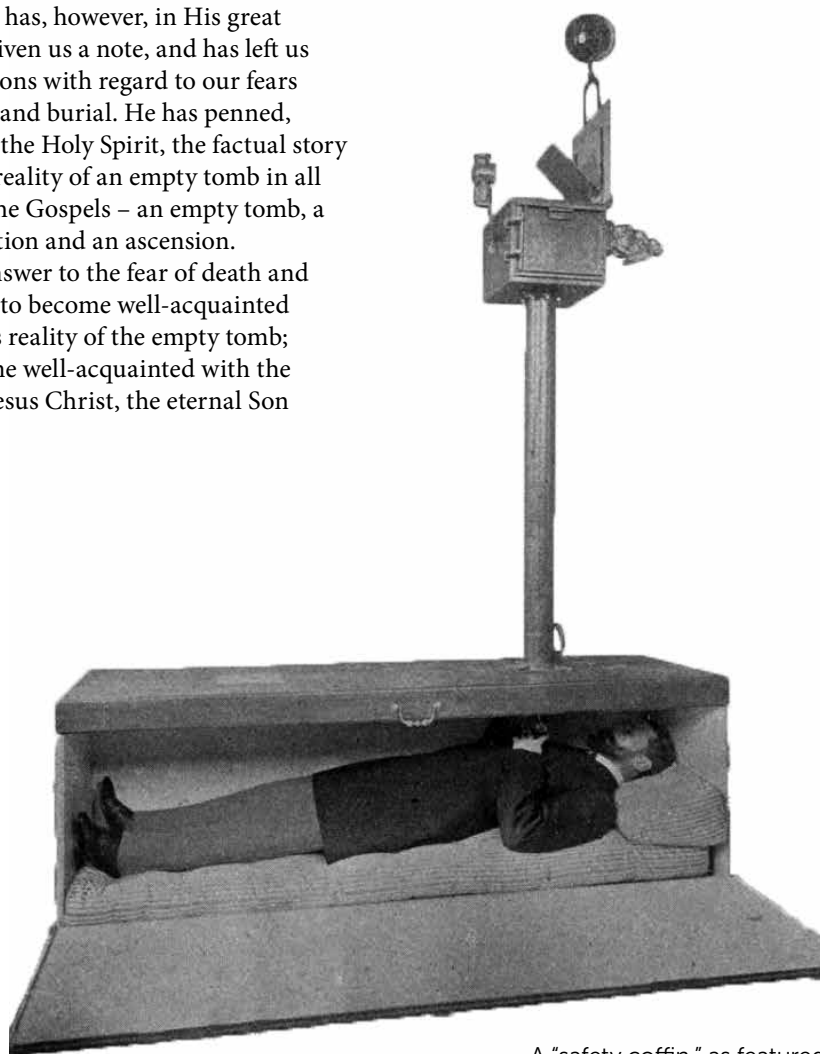
## THE ANSWER TO FEAR

Most people are afraid to die, let alone be buried in a coffin. Most people are afraid of what happens after they die. God has, however, in His great mercy, given us a note, and has left us instructions with regard to our fears of death and burial. He has penned, through the Holy Spirit, the factual story and the reality of an empty tomb in all four of the Gospels – an empty tomb, a resurrection and an ascension.

The answer to the fear of death and burial is to become well-acquainted with this reality of the empty tomb; to become well-acquainted with the Savior, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son

of God. He teaches that although our earthly sojourn will end one day, and that physical death will end our earthly life, it is but our doorway into eternal fellowship with Him. The tomb did not hold Jesus. “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (I Cor. 15:20), and it will not hold anyone who believes in Him. “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable” (I Cor. 15:42b).

*“...thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57).* RP



A “safety coffin,” as featured in the January 1, 1901 *Medical Art and Indianapolis Medical Journal: Volume 4*. The fellow inside demonstrates how he can ring a bell, raise a small ball high up in the air to alert passersby, and also open a passageway for air.

# NOT ALL HUMILITY IS HUMBLE

by Jim Witteveen

## The Templeton Foundation is spending millions/year to convince Christians to be “humble” about the Bible, and to look to Science for direction

Sir John Marks Templeton (1912-2008) is best known as the creator of the Templeton Growth Fund, an investment fund established in 1954, which made him a very wealthy man. Two years before his death in 2008, Templeton found himself in 129th place on the *Sunday Times*’ “Rich List” of the wealthiest Brits.

But Templeton was not only an investor and moneymaker; he was also well-known as a philanthropist, through the work of his charitable organization, the Templeton Foundation.

Established in 1987, the Templeton Foundation offers over seventy million dollars’ worth of research grants each year. The Foundation is currently headed by Templeton’s granddaughter, Heather Templeton Dill, and it is an important source of funding for organizations that include the BioLogos Foundation and the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation.

One of the Templeton Foundation’s purposes is to advance what Templeton called “humility-in-theology.” This was the subject of his book, published in 2000, *Possibilities For Over One Hundredfold More Spiritual Information: The Humble Approach in Theology and Science*.

### TEMPLETON’S HUMILITY

How would this 100-fold increase in spiritual knowledge happen? He thought we would get it:

“...every two centuries...by encouraging people of all religions to become enthusiastic (rather than resistant) to new additional spiritual information, especially through science research, to supplement the wonderful ancient scriptures” (p. 180).

“Humility” was an important word for Sir John Templeton, as can be seen from the title of this book, as well as throughout its pages. Templeton’s philosophy of humility, and the way it shaped his thinking and his philanthropically efforts, is exemplified in the following extended quotations. In order to present these quotations in context, and in an effort to avoid misrepresentation of Templeton’s message, I present this (rather lengthy) representative sample of his thoughts (I must note that throughout his writings, Templeton writes the word “god” without capitalizing the G, so this is not an error in transcription, and likely reflects Templeton’s philosophy):

#### 1. Man isn’t that special

“Although we seem to be the most sophisticated species at present on our

planet, perhaps we should not think of our place as the end of cosmogenesis. Should we resist the pride that might tempt us to think that we are the final goal of creation? Possibly, we can become servants of creation or even helpers in divine creativity. Possibly, we are a new beginning, the first creatures in the history of life on earth to participate consciously in the ongoing creative process” (p. 41).

#### 2. Creeds restrict progress

“Do theologians need to be humble and open-minded? Leaders may be tempted to think that conformity and control are required for the orderliness of religion and for faithfulness. Most religions have developed creeds, doctrines, dogmas, liturgy and hierarchies of laypeople and clergy. Order and tradition of course do help groups to live as an organization of people whose ideals are compatible and link together the generations in mutual ideals. However, because of a lack of humility, have we observed throughout the history of most religions a tendency for dogma or hierarchy to stifle progress? If the members and clergy become more humble, could they reform dogma in a more open-minded and inquiring way as a beginning point for continual improvements?” (p. 41).



### 3. We should humor theologian and rely on the sciences

"Let none of us have any quarrel with any theologian. Let us happily admit that his or her concepts and doctrines may be right. But let us listen most carefully to any theologian who is humble enough to admit also that he may be wrong - or at least that the door to great insights by others is not closed. Let us seek to learn from each other. Let us try to use sciences to help verify or falsify new concepts. Let us always keep trying many methods to discover over 100 fold more about divinity" (p.50).

### 4. We can be wrong, so we should be humble about everything

"Egotism has been a major cause of many mistaken notions in the past. Egotism caused men to think that the stars and the sun revolved around them... that mankind was as old as the universe. Egotism is still our worst enemy. In fact, things are still not what they seem. Only by becoming humble can we learn more... Are those who believe only what they see pitifully self-centred and lacking in humility?" (p. 59).

### HUMBLE TO THE POINT OF HERESY

So where did this understanding of "humility" lead Sir John Templeton? To ideas such as these:

"Many religious concepts come directly or indirectly from ancient scriptures. An unavoidable limitation

of utilizing such texts as a total basis for contemporary faith is that they were written within a context which may no longer be appropriate for ours today. Recent sciences reveal a universe billions of times larger and older and more complex than the one conceived by the ancients. The creative challenge is to enrich understanding and appreciation for the old with a welcoming of concepts and perspectives which may represent truly new insights and creative improvements, which can leverage the power of the past into a forward-looking adventure of learning more and more about the wonders of god and his purposes through ongoing creativity. Can it be an inspiring challenge to read the Bible in this way, which can help each generation of god's people to search for far more of divine realities than can ever be contained in the language and thought patterns of any age? Should we not be able to give a fuller and wider interpretation of divine revelation today, now that the range of our understanding of the universe has been so vastly enlarged? Why should we often try to express spiritual truths using obsolete words, limited concepts and ancient thought patterns? If some scholars think that Jesus himself wrote nothing, could this suggest that what he had to teach should not be frozen into words, even in his own age? Thus, he did not limit for future generations their range of spiritual concepts and research" (p. 47-48).

Ideas have consequences. While Templeton was an elder in a Presbyterian congregation (Presbyterian Church - USA), and even sat on the Board of Princeton Theological Seminary, he did not "limit" himself to the doctrines of orthodox Christianity. His "humble approach" led him to declare, "I have no quarrel with what I learned in the Presbyterian Church. I am still an enthusiastic Christian," and then to ask,

"But why shouldn't I try to learn more? Why shouldn't I go to Hindu services? Why shouldn't I go to Muslim services? If you are not egotistical, you will welcome the opportunity to learn more."\*

The sad fact is, however much one claims to be "an enthusiastic Christian," believing that the teachings of religions that deny Christ can be positively appropriated by a Christian makes one, for all intents and purposes, anything but.

And this unfortunate truth is also clearly revealed in Templeton's book. While Templeton denied being a pantheist (one who believes that the universe is God, and God is the universe), his understanding of the nature of God can only be described as a form of panentheism, which declares that God and the universe are distinct, but that the world is "in" God. Or as Templeton wrote:

"Traditional pantheism can serve a useful purpose in suggesting the co-terminacy of spirit and matter and





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a personal relationship between the creator and creation. But it may not be compatible with the Christian concept of a personal god vastly greater than material things and who loves all of us and numbers the hairs of our heads. Profound mutual indwelling between man and divinity may be better stated by the Unity School of Christianity, 'God is all of me: and I am a little part of him.' Such a notion implies an inseparable relationship between god and us. As even 'a little part of him,' we may realize the mutual unity of god and his creation. We may conceive that our own divinity may arise from something more profound than merely being 'god's children' or being 'made in his image'" (p. 86).

### TRUE HUMILITY IS SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WORD

At this point, it must be said that, for all his self-proclaimed "humility," Templeton's foundational beliefs are, in Christian perspective, anything but humble. True humility is expressed in Psalm 8:

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens... When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man, that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps. 8:1,3, ESV).

True humility is expressed in humble submission to the LORD, the Creator, who has revealed himself clearly and completely in his Word - those "ancient Scriptures" which we humans have not outgrown, or surpassed, with all of our scientific understanding.

True humility is acknowledging our origins as the direct creation of God, acknowledging the reality of the Fall into sin, and its enduring impact on humanity and all of creation, God's provision of a Way of salvation, and the fact that we can do nothing in ourselves to merit that salvation. We are created in God's image. That image has been badly marred by sin. But in Christ, that image is being restored among God's people.

True humility is submitting ourselves to Jesus Christ, who declared that he, and only he, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Templeton's "humility" is, at bottom, and however unwittingly, the height of human arrogance and pride in disguise. In refusing to submit to God's perfect Word, Templeton set a man on the throne in God's place. And now, through the work of his Foundation, Templeton's utopian vision for human society, based in anything but the Word of God, is continuing to be spread.

### TEMPLETON'S VISION LOOKS TO SCIENCE TO SHOW THE WAY

Templeton foresaw a "glorious" future, and thanks to his great financial savvy, his legacy lives on. His Foundation has

three billion dollars in its reserve fund, and that money is being spent to promote that legacy, with a very definite, and very long-term, goal in mind. Templeton's vision of the future is summed up in two citations in his book. He first cites Marceline Bradford:

"...Millions of intellectuals the world over have become disenchanted with backward-looking religious institutions... In order to recapture the great thinking minds of the world, the clergy must turn their heads 180 degrees from past to future. With feet planted squarely in the present and eyes directed to the future, leaders can find factual bases in science for viable,

*In refusing to submit to God's perfect Word, Templeton set a man on the throne in God's place.*

solid, dynamic doctrines. For science and rationality are enemies not of religion - only of dogmatism" (p. 47).

Next, he cites Ralph Wendell Burhoe, who was awarded the Templeton Prize in 1980:

"It is still my bet that at several points in the next few years and decades the traditional theological and religious communities will find the scientific revelations a gold mine, and that by early in the third millennium A.D. a fantastic revitalization and universalization of religion will sweep the world. The ecumenical power will come from a universalized and credible theology and related religious practices, not from the politics of dying institutions seeking strength in pooling their weaknesses. I cannot imagine a more important bonanza for

theologians and the future of religion than the information lode revealed by the scientific community... It provides us with a clear connection between human values, including our highest religious values, and the cosmic scheme of things. My prophecy, then, is that God talk, talk about the supreme determiner of human destiny, will in the next century increasingly be fostered by the scientific community" (p. 103).

## HIS FAVORITE CHARITIES

In the conclusion of his book, Templeton lists a number of the "founder's favorite charities," which also provides real insight into Templeton's agenda.

Some we might find agreeable. He is interested in the promotion of entrepreneurship, and the enhancement of individual freedom and free markets. Others included supporting research and publications in genetics; supporting education and other help in voluntary family planning; supporting character development research, and also:

"Supporting the publication and dissemination throughout the world of the religious teachings of the Unity School of Christianity of Unity Village, the Association of Unity Churches and of closely similar organizations, provided that major support for such organizations shall continue only so long as the Trustees of the

Foundation... determine that such organizations adhere to the concepts of:

1. usually pioneering in religion and theology with little restrictive creed,
2. usually teaching that god may be all of reality and man only a tiny part of god and
3. generally accentuating the positive ideas and attitudes and avoiding the negative" (p. 183).

## WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Such were the goals of Sir John Marks Templeton, and such are the goals of his foundation. A serious examination of Templeton's guiding philosophy, and the philosophy of the Templeton Foundation, in the light of Scriptural principles, should lead us to a sense of genuine concern about any organization that the Foundation chooses to support financially. And it should lead us to question the ultimate motivation behind this support, and the fruits that this foundation is bearing in the numerous organizations that receive its funding.

"The Humble Approach" of Sir John Marks Templeton has absolutely nothing in common with the genuinely humble approach of the Lord Jesus Christ. Templeton's utopian vision has nothing in common with the eschatological vision of God's Word.

## FOLLOW THE MONEY

Now, those who receive large amounts of financial support from the Templeton

Foundation may do so "with no strings attached," and perhaps some recipients may be unaware of the totality of the Foundation's founder's spiritual vision.

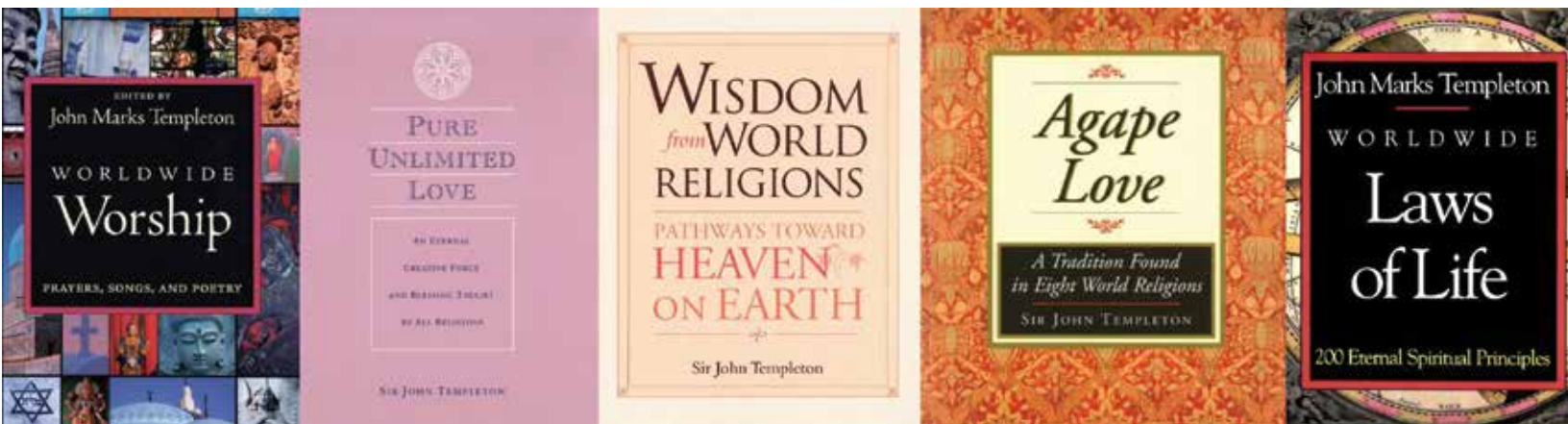
But could it be that they are unwitting victims of a larger, and more nefarious, agenda, which has at its base a desire to proclaim a different gospel, by denying the explicit teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and his exclusive claims? We are warned against keeping company with the wicked (1 Cor. 15:44, Psalm 1:1, Prov. 13:20) and it doesn't seem that much of an extension to think how this applies to accepting funding from a group with a wicked agenda.

## SCIENCE, SCIENCE, AND MORE SCIENCE

A little research shows the incredible reach that the Foundation's money has. And an examination of the nature of the grants that the Foundation provides, as well as the purpose behind these grants, is telling indeed. One of the Foundation's main funding areas is "public engagement," and a representative sample of grants (ranging from tens of thousands to millions of dollars) clearly shows the Foundation's goals. Here is a small sample of grants that have been made over the past three years:

- Vatican Observatory Foundation - "Building a bridge between faith and astronomy"
- John Carroll University - "Integrating science into college and pre-theology

*To John Templeton, Christianity was just one among many religions worth exploring, as his book titles evidence.*





programs in U.S. Roman Catholic seminaries"

- Union Theological Seminary - "Project to develop a spiritual worldview compatible with and informed by science"
- Cambridge Muslim College - "Developing religious leaders with scientific awareness"
- American Association for the Advancement of Science - "Engaging scientists in the science and religion dialogue"
- Luther Seminary - "Science for youth ministry: The plausibility of transcendence"
- Christianity Today - "Building an audience for science and faith"

Other grants have been made to train Roman Catholic teachers and preachers to engage the dialogue between science and religion, to promote science engagement in rabbinic training, and to measure science engagement in Roman Catholic high schools and seminaries.

Further investigation in the nature and purpose of these grants reveals a common thread. For example, La Jolla Presbyterian Church received a grant from the Templeton Foundation for a program that "seeks to engage young adults (college and post-graduate) in a discussion of science and faith with leading scientists who are Christians."

The McGrath Institute for Church Life at Notre Dame University received a \$1.675 million grant for their Science and Religion Initiative, which "seeks to frame science education within the broader context of Catholic theology." According to the Institute's director,

"The perceived conflict between science and religion is one of the main reasons young people say they leave the Catholic church... this grant allows us to address this misperceptions and help high school teachers create pedagogues that show that science and religion - far from being incompatible - are partners in the search for truth."

Multnomah Biblical Seminary has received a Templeton grant (as well as a

grant from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, itself supported by the Templeton Foundation), to "equip pastoral studies majors to become more effective in engaging our scientific age."

Among a number of other Christian theologians, Niels Henrik Gregersen, professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Copenhagen, received a Templeton research grant for his work on the constructive interface between science and religion.

Another recent recipient of the Templeton Foundation's largesse is Regent College in Vancouver, which this year received a grant funding a program called "Re-faithing Science at Regent College." The program will seek, over the next two years, to address this question:

"How can the relationship between Christian faith and scientific endeavour be conceptualized and communicated in a way that effectively engages diverse audiences?"

The detailed description of this particular grant on the Templeton Foundation website is insightful:

"Sir John Templeton recognized that science and spirituality should be neither sealed in separate boxes nor positioned at opposite ends of a battlefield, yet even a cursory glance at contemporary culture reveals that the supposed incompatibility and even hostility between faith and science is something of a truism in much of Western society. Regent College believes that this widespread perception is a significant threat to the development of theology and science alike, as well as to the spiritual and intellectual flourishing of countless individuals."

So, utilizing Templeton's funds, Regent College's project team will "propose an alternative model for the relationship between faith and science: mutual coinherence, or existence within one another." Their goal is to communicate this proposal "in an accessible form" that will encourage and enable further exploration

of science, theology, and their interaction, using academic publications, public lectures, graduate-level courses, and an online presence, to:

"target different audiences with the same basic narrative, a story of one world, created by one God, who can be known and worshipped through both theology and science - and who is best known and best worshipped when theology and science work together."

## SCIENCE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

What can we learn from all of this? If we were unaware of the foundational principles behind the Templeton Foundation, perhaps all of this would appear to be somewhat innocuous. After all, who could argue against Christians being involved in the sciences? Why oppose efforts aimed at developing "scientific awareness"? Certainly we shouldn't want to bury our heads in the sand, and ignore what the sciences have to offer, as if science were somehow "off-limits" to the faithful Christian, should we?

But remember this important fact: the Templeton Foundation has a very clear agenda – a utopian, panentheistic philosophy that has an ecumenical goal of uniting the religions of the world around a synthesis of "science" and religion, with "science" seated firmly in the driver's seat in this relationship. This agenda is being promoted by the lavish dispersal of funds to Islamic, Roman Catholic, Jewish, and other religious organizations, including, sadly, many evangelical Christian groups, many of which are making their influence felt in Reformed churches as well.

## STANDING IN TEMPLETON'S WAY

Two popular sayings come to mind: "Follow the money," and "He who pays the piper calls the tune." The money trail leads us to Sir John Marks Templeton. And clearly, Templeton's agenda is making

*On occasion the Templeton Foundation awards money to people we might admire, like Charles Colson and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. But this \$3 billion Foundation uses its money for less admirable ends, funding groups (like BioLogos) which encourage Christians to accept evolution.*



# JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

headway in many places, although it is also clear that this agenda faces many obstacles.

## 1. Reluctance among religious leaders

First of all, there is reluctance to accept the premises of this movement among religious organizations, as can be seen from the numerous grants being made to support efforts to decrease the resistance of religious leaders and members of religious groups, including evangelical Christians, to this religious/scientific paradigm.

But that reluctance is being overcome, as the Templeton agenda makes inroads through a judicious use of funding. Efforts to reach youth, and those who teach the young, are effective means of dissemination for any propaganda effort, whether political, cultural, or religious in nature. Young people are more easily influenced, and they are most definitely being targeted, in a well-funded, concerted effort.

## 2. Reluctance among unbelieving scientists

But there is also resistance from the other side - from unbelieving scientists who reject all religion, any idea of transcendence, and the idea that anything exists beyond the physical. This group is also being addressed by the outreach efforts of the Templeton Foundation, as it works toward fulfilling its long-term goals.

## CONCLUSION

A spiritual war is being waged against God's people, using that ancient question, "Has God really said?" This is not novel; every generation of Christians faces this reality, in different ways at different times in history. The battle is being played out in a world in which money talks, and a lot of money talks loudly. We cannot afford to be naive on this issue.

That's why we need to be on our guard against the influence of the Templeton Foundation's money, even if it's being spent by organizations that may have been respected among us. That money is being spent to promote an agenda that is radically different from the agenda of God's kingdom. Our allegiance to the One True God must lead us to reject alliances with organizations like the Templeton Foundation, whose agenda is completely incompatible with that of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Endnote

\* *Benedicata Cipolla and Daniel Burke's*  
"Philanthropist Sir John Templeton Dies at 95"  
posted to *ChristianityToday.com* on July 9, 2008.  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/julyweb-only/128-31.0.html>

BIOLOGOS

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Faith in Scholarship





# { IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE } NUTSHELLS

BY JON DYKSTRA

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN ON TRANSGENDERISM?

How's this for an illustration for the transgender debate?

Abraham Lincoln once told the story of a boy who was asked, "how many legs would a calf have if we called its tail a leg?" The boy replied, "it must be five." But he was corrected, because, after all, simply *calling* a tail a leg, doesn't *make* it a leg.

So it would seem that Lincoln understood that no matter what words we might use, they can't change the nature of a thing – a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet, and a man by any other name remains still what he always was.

But here's the problem – Lincoln told this story in the context of considering whether he could, simply by Executive Order, free the slaves in the South. Seems people wanted him to, and his response was, in effect, "Guys, Executive Orders don't have that power, and you can't just make them have that power by saying that they do."

And then, shortly afterward, we all know what happened. He issued an Executive Order called the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves. And it *worked*.

This, then, is one of those great illustrations that, on closer examination, seems to make almost the opposite point. You *can* change the nature of some things just by saying so. If you just declare an Executive Order can free slaves – and people listen – then it can do just that.

But does that mean men can become women? Nope. It just shows that *some* things are changeable. Just as Lincoln's Proclamation did actually free the slaves just because he declared the Order to have that power, so too I can (sometimes) change a dour mood by declaring my happiness with as much gusto as I can muster. I've become happy just because I've said it is should be so.

This clarifies one point in the gender debate – we were never trying to say that *all* things are fixed and unchangeable. We were only arguing that gender is not one of those changeable things. And roses too. Roses are still roses, and smell just as sweet, even if you call them limburger cheese.

Lincoln's quip about the 5-legged calf does still highlight that some things are fixed. But as there are no shortage of good illustrations for that point, this one may be best left tucked away in the history books.

SOURCE: Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by distinguished men of his time collected and edited by Allen Thorndike Rice

## AM I A FANATIC?

In 1957 Billy Graham came to a crowd of 3,000, in Urbana, Illinois with a rebuke. These young people had come from all over to attend an InterVarsity conference so these were engaged, interested young Christians. But it was precisely their interest and engagement that Graham was questioning. They served the one true God. Their Savior triumphed over death, and had secured for them eternal life. They had every reason to be zealous, to be fanatics.

But were they?

In 2 Samuel 12 the prophet Nathan tells a story to King David about a heartless rich man, and reveals to David at the end, "You are that man!" At the conference Billy Graham read an excerpt from a letter – a letter by a true fanatic – to highlight to his listeners, that, in effect, "You are *not* this man." It was by a young convert to communism, who was explaining to his fiancée why he was breaking off their engagement.

*We Communists don't have the time or the money for many movies, or concerts, or T-bone steaks, or decent homes and new cars. We've been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor, the struggle for world communism.*

*We Communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty, personal selves into a great movement of humanity, and if our personal lives seem hard, or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind. There is one thing in which I am in dead earnest and that is the Communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas, and actions according to how they affect the Communist cause and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideas and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad.*

This zealot worshipped a false god. In comparison, our God in infinitely greater – the one true God who made all of reality: the Earth, the stars, the animals, everything. And He sent his very own Son to die for us. This, then, is a God worthy of all honor!

Yet, are we willing to make everything – our ego, our ambitions, our business, and our relationships – secondary to Him? Do we love Him like that? How do we compare to this young zealot?

In Revelation 2, God congratulates the Church at Ephesus for their toil, their perseverance, and their discernment. But there was a problem: "I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first..." The Christians in Ephesus had a lot going for them *but they had stopped being fanatical*.

After what God has done for us – He made us, and He saved us – He deserves so much better than a lukewarm love.

So here's a question for us all: am I a fanatic? Would anyone say that about *me*?

Or do I need to *repent*?

SOURCE: Mike Bickle's 7 Commitments for Spiritual Growth.



## WEST COAST WHINE

Sue arrived in BC on a rainy day. When she woke up the next day, it was raining. It also rained the day after that, and the day after that. And the day after that. Going out to lunch, she saw a young boy jumping in the puddles, and out of despair she asked, "Hey kid! Does it ever stop raining around here?"

The boy replied, "How should I know? I'm only 8."

SOURCE: This is modified version of a joke floating around the Internet

## FUTURECASTING

Dr. Kathy Koch has a saying that reflects the biblical thought Paul express in 1 Cor.15:33. She notes, "Show me your friends, and I will show you your future."

## ALL MARRIAGES ARE MISTAKES

"Only a very wise man at the end of his life could make a sound judgment concerning whom, amongst the total chances, he ought most profitably to have married! Nearly all marriages, even happy ones, are mistakes: in the sense that almost certainly (in a more perfect world, or even with a little more care in this very imperfect one) both partners might have found more suitable mates. But the 'real soul-mate' is the one you are actually married to."

– JRR Tolkien, *The Letters of JRR Tolkien* (hat tip to Nicholas McDonald)

## MORE FROM LINCOLN, ON ABORTION

The American slave trade supporters of the 19th century tried justifying the practice any number of ways. And Abraham Lincoln was very good at tearing those justifications apart. The technique he uses should be of interest to all pro-lifers.

If A can prove, however conclusively, that he may, of right, enslave B why may not B snatch the same argument, and prove equally, that he may enslave A?

You say A is white and B is black. It is *color*, then; the lighter, having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with a fairer skin than your own.

You do not mean color exactly? You mean the whites are *intellectually* the superiors of the blacks, and, therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with an intellect superior to your own.

But, say you, it is a question of [self] interest; and, if you can make it your [self] interest, you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his [self] interest, he has the right to enslave you.

Lincoln turned people's justifications back on them, arguing that if it is good for you, then you shouldn't object if this same reason is used by someone else to justify enslaving you. If we were to apply this with abortion, then we might note that if you think the unborn can be killed because they are smaller than us, then, as Lincoln might have put it, "Take care. By this rule you could be killed by the first man

you meet who is bigger than you."

Or if it comes down to some ability, then watch out when you meet someone who is more able than you.

Self-interest? This is a major justification for abortion – a child would interfere with our lifestyle. But, "take care again – by this rule you may be killed by any who can show it is in their self-interest for you to be dead."

Lincoln might never have spoken on abortion, but his defense of the poor slave also serves as a good defense of the poor unborn child.

## ONE OF GOD'S FAVORITE VERSES IN THE BIBLE?

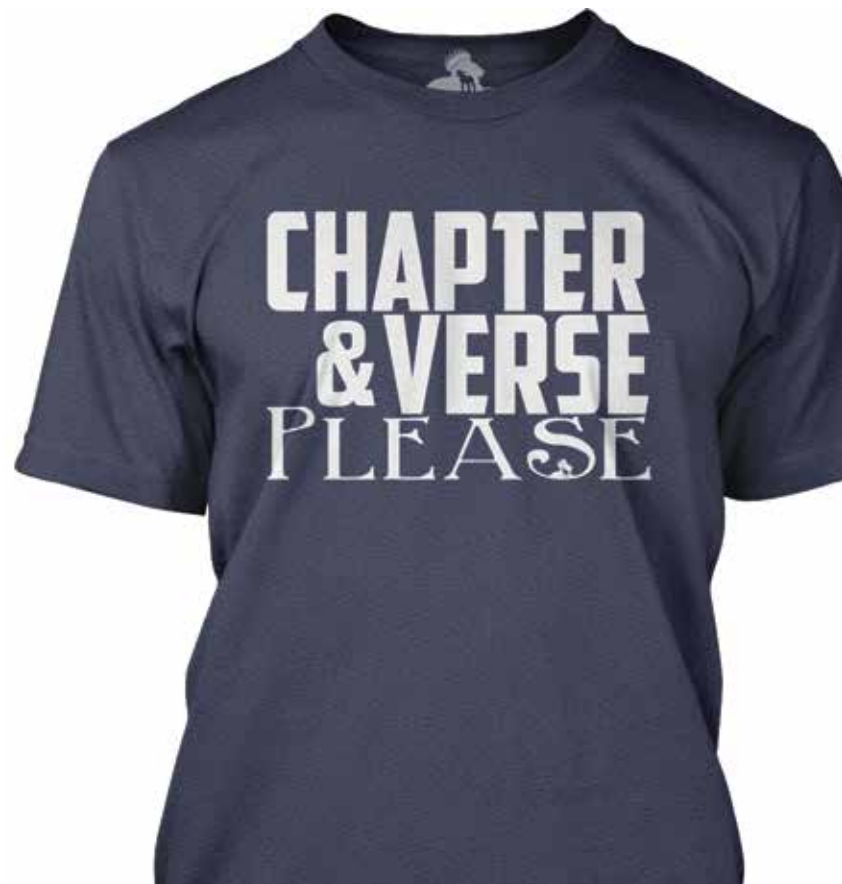
We all have our own favorite verses in the Bible, many of them comforting passages. The world's favorite verse is probably Matthew 7:1a "Do not judge." The verse that is share with the world most often might be John 3:16, written up large on poster board and displayed at football and baseball stadiums around North America.

But Baptist pastor Jeff Durbin suggests that one of God's favorite bible verses strikes a very different tone. Psalm 110:1 is the Old Testament verse that is most cited in the New Testament, and it proclaims Jesus' sovereignty.

The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

## BEING BEREAN

The folks at WrathAndGrace.com have come up with a T-shirt (see below) that's a challenge to fellow Christians. We have lots of beliefs, we have lots of opinions, lots of positions, but have we searched the Scriptures to find out if they match up with what God says?



## WHY THE END DOESN'T JUSTIFY THE MEANS

"What have you and I to do with maintaining our influence and position at the expense of truth? It is never right to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good... Your duty is to do the right: consequences are with God."

– John MacArthur, as cited in Iain Murray's *John MacArthur*

## SATIRE'S KING KNEW A GOOD JOKE WHEN HE MET ONE

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) showed generations how to do satire right and it seems his comic genius came from an ability to spot humor wherever it was to be found. A story is told of him trudging through a field, when he spotted a boy leaning lazily against a fence post. Swift asked the boy for direction to the nearby town to which

the boy's only reply was to shift his boot slightly, pointing the way with his toe. Swift laughed, and offered the boy a shilling if he could manage anything any lazier than what he had just done. The boy replied, "Put the shilling in my pocket."

SOURCE: Fintan O'Toole's "The Genius of Creative Destruction" in the Dec. 19, 2013 edition of *The New York Review*

## ON PRAISING EFFORT, NOT TALENT

Luke Gilkerson is best known for his expertise in helping parents protect their children from online dangers. But in his book *Parenting the Internet Generation*, he shows he's got wisdom to share on all aspects of parenting.

Resist the urge to praise your children in a way that labels them. Statements like "You're so smart," "You're so kind," "You're my little Picasso" do our children very little

good. Research shows when we praise children like this, labeling them as "smart" or "good," this does not give them confidence. Instead they become highly sensitive to failure. Rather focus on praising the effort they put forth. If they show kindness to their sibling, tell them you're glad they are working on paying attention to the needs of others. If they get an A on an exam, instead of telling they must be the smartest kid in class, ask them how they studied for the test and commend them for their work. Instead of giving our children an identity as "good" or "smart," commend them for using their God-given talents and energy wisely.

*Parenting the Internet Generation* can be downloaded for free at [CovenantEyes.com/parenting-the-internet-generation](http://CovenantEyes.com/parenting-the-internet-generation).



## GOSPEL TRUTH OF JUSTIFICATION PROCLAIMED, DEFENDED, DEVELOPED

DAVID J. ENGELSMA

AD 2017 marks the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation of the church of Jesus Christ. In 1517 the Reformer Martin Luther affixed the ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, the act by which Jesus Christ began his reformation of his church. Essential to this Reformation was the gospel-truth of justification by faith alone. This book on justification is intended by the Reformed Free Publishing Association and the author to celebrate that glorious work of Christ.

But the purpose is more than a celebration of the beginning of the Reformation. It is to maintain, defend, and promote the Reformation in the perilous times for the church at present. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is so fundamental to the gospel of grace that an exposition and defense of this truth are in order always. The true church of Christ in the world simply cannot keep silent about this doctrine. To keep silent about justification by faith alone would be to silence the gospel.



REFORMED  
FREE PUBLISHING  
ASSOCIATION

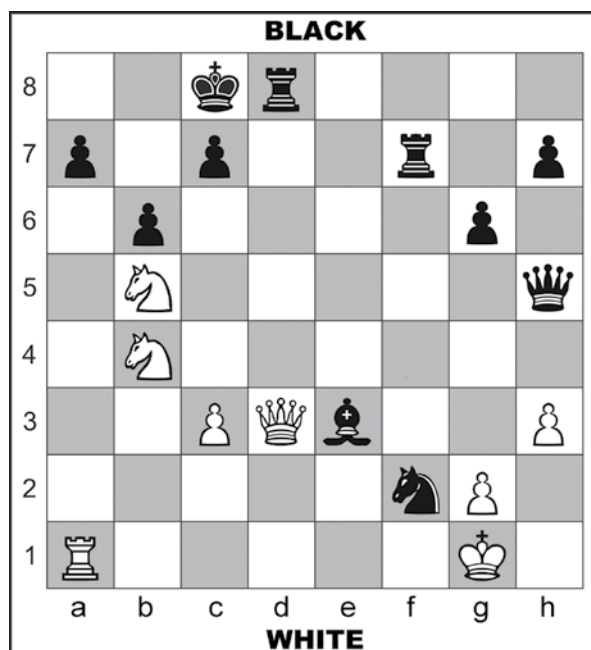
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# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



## Chess Puzzle #240



**WHITE to Mate in 3**

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

## Riddle for Punsters #240

### "Current Events?"

*What shocking news did the electrician receive?*

His nephew was currently g \_\_\_\_\_ ed for putting up a l \_\_\_\_ d of res \_\_\_\_\_ ce to their instructions and rev \_\_\_\_\_ ng against their house rules.

## Problem to Ponder #240

### "Neighbors with Shovels, Lending a Helping Hand"

It is time to do yardwork! Isaac and his neighbour Ishmael can shovel garden soil at the same rate and each can shovel (and spread) 1.5 times more soil than Isaac's wife Rebecca can. It took Isaac and Rebecca, working together, two hours to shovel a large pile of rich, black top soil and spread it on their lawn and garden.

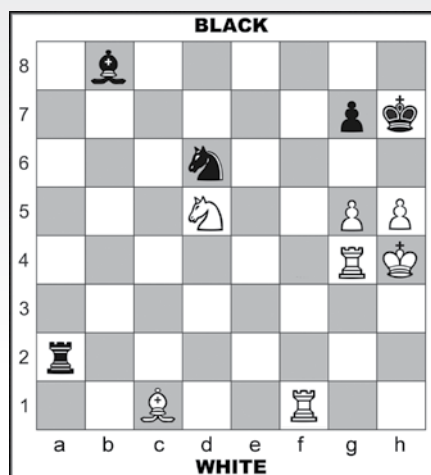
- How long would it take Ishmael, without help, to shovel (and spread) his pile of top soil (which is the same size and has the same amount of soil as Isaac's)?
- If, however, Ishmael is helped by Isaac and Rebecca, how long should it take the three of them to shovel and spread out Isaac's pile of top soil?

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 #239



**WHITE TO MATE IN 4**

Descriptive Notation	Algebraic Notation
1. RxP ch	KxR
2. Q-K7 ch	K-N1
3. Q-B8 ch	K-R2
4. R-K7 mate	
or	
1. RxP ch	K-R3
2. Q-R5 ch	PxQ
3. R-K6 ch	K-N4
4. B-K7 mate	
	1. Rf4xf7 +
	2. Qe2-e7 +
	3. Qe7-f8 +
	4. Re1-e7 ++
	or
	1. Rf4xf7 +
	2. Qe2-h5 +
	3. Re1-e6 +
	4. Ba3-e7 ++

## Answer to Riddle for Punsters

### #239 – "Troubled Visionaries?"

*Why did the two brother who owned an eyeglasses store often have heated arguments?*

They just could not see eye-to-eye on some minor issues and could not stay focussed on the matters about which they agreed, such as the need to increase the number of their business contacts.

## Answer to Problem to Ponder

### #239 – "Financial Considerations"

Isaiah is planning to buy a nifty present for a classmate whose name he drew for a gift exchange. If he buys the item on a "tax-free" day at the store, he will be spending **less than** the \$8.00 limit by **double the amount that he will be over** the limit if he has to pay 10% tax on the item.

- How much does the item cost without and with tax?
- How much does he pay (including tax) on a day when the item is on sale at 10 % off? (NOTE: The 10% discount and the 10% tax do NOT cancel each other!)
- Let x dollars be the price of the gift (before tax). The price with 10% tax will be  $x + 0.10x = 1.10x$  and so  $8 - x = 2(1.10x - 8)$  so  $8 - x = 2.2x - 16$  so  $24 = 3.2x$  so  $7.5 = x$ . The gift's **pre-tax selling price is \$7.50** therefore **the price with 10% tax is  $\$7.50 + 0.10(\$7.50) = \$7.50 + \$0.75 = \$8.25$**  confirming that the pre-tax price is 50 cents below the \$8.00 limit which is double the 25 cents the tax-included price is above the limit.
- On a day the gift is on sale for 10% off, **the sale price is  $\$7.50 - 0.10(\$7.50) = \$7.50 - \$0.75 = \$6.75$**  and so **the tax-included price is now  $\$6.75 + 0.10(\$6.75) = \$6.75 + \$0.675 = \$7.43$**  (well below the \$8.00 limit.)

### BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation	Algebraic Notation
1. -----	QxB ch
2. K-N1	QxP ch
3. K-B1	P-N7 mate
or	
3. K-B1	Q-R8 mate
	1. -----
	2. Kc1-b1
	3. Kb1-c1
	or
	3. Kb1-c1
	Qa2-a1 ++



# What we can do, because of you

by Jon Dykstra

Dr. Beisner speaking at the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church in Fergus Ontario.

In May *Reformed Perspective* started off its very first speaking tour, hitting Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta. And we were thankful for the many people who came out, even when the timing was less than ideal (our talk in Edmonton was given the same night the Oilers were playing the Anaheim Ducks in Game 7). Dr. E. Calvin Beisner spoke on biblical stewardship vs. climate alarmism, while I shared with audiences some of what *Reformed Perspective* has been doing ever since we've expanded our mission in the new year. I also took the opportunity to answer the question "Do we really need *Reformed Perspective*?" and I'd like to share my answer here.

This is a good question. After all, there is a lot of good Reformed material readily available online.

But there is also such a hunger for, and such a pressing need, for *more*!

## THE HUGE NEED

This need exists in our Reformed circles. We saw it when *RP* published an article on the Birth Control Pill, and we heard from many who had never known that the pill had three separate actions, and that one of these acts after conception – they never knew the pill can cause abortions. We saw that need when we published an article on what to do when your son or daughter, husband, wife, father or mother tells you they are gay. It would be hard in our Reformed circles to be facing this temptation. So we need to be talking, and listening and considering and

learning and what it means to speak God's love on this struggle. We see the need, too, when college students get smacked upside the head by professors who tell them only a fool would believe in Adam and Eve.

There is also such a need outside the Reformed churches. God has blessed us with a biblical understanding of some key issues. We understand we are valuable from conception onward. We recognize that God made us male and female. We know that there is no reason to believe all religions are peaceful. We believe that a husband is a *servant* head. These are truths that need to be shared!

## THE INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY

When the magazine began back in 1982, subscriptions made sense. But that business model meant that, even as we were producing articles that could benefit Christians around the world, they were only reaching our 2,000 subscribers.

Today, the Internet allows content to be delivered around the globe for next to nothing. That's why at the start of 2017 we made the switch. Now *Reformed Perspective* is no longer a subscriber-funded magazine. We are now a print publication, a website, a weekly email newsletter, a growing Facebook presence, and the organizer of speaking tours like this one. And all of it is free!

Why free? So we can reach the world!

## GROWING IMPACT


In the six months since we've started

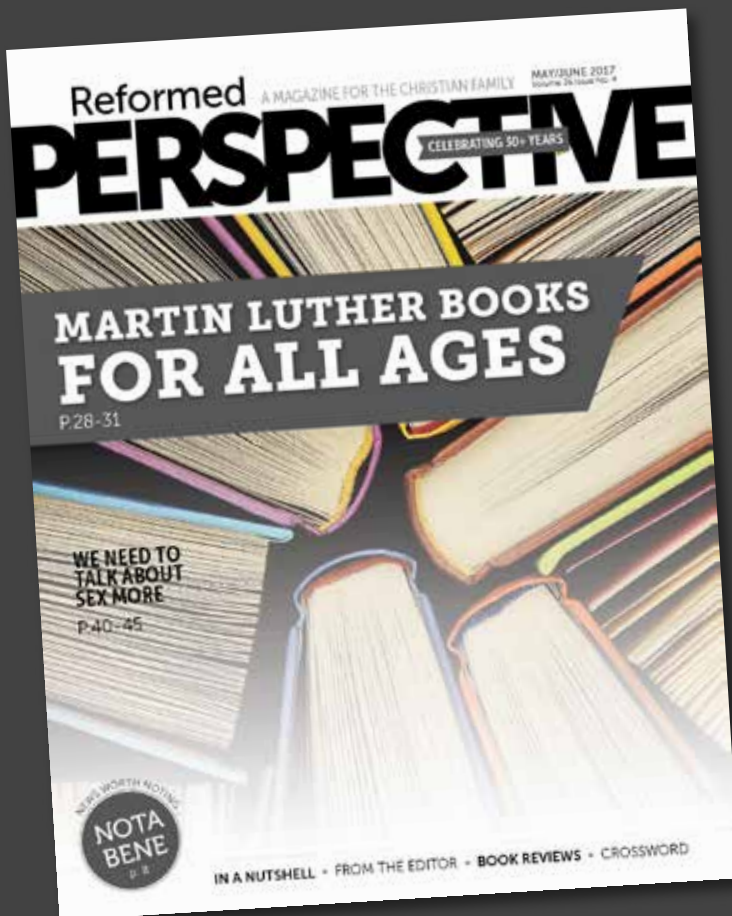
delivering all our materials for free we've seen:

- articles go viral – one has already reached more than 10,000
- our email newsletter (sign up at [tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter](http://tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter)) grow from nothing to now reach 400+ each week
- our Facebook presence double
- website traffic go from hundreds of visitors/week to thousands
- Our 1st speaking tour reach 2,000 people, over 12 days in 10 schools, 9 churches, and 3 provinces
- articles reprinted in Dutch and Portuguese and Afrikaans

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are three big ways you can support these efforts.

- 1) Prayer – ask God to bless our efforts to reach further and help more.
- 2) Share our articles. If you like one of our articles, and think more people should see a piece, then make sure they do. Post it to your own Facebook page, or send a link to your friends via email or Twitter.
- 3) Finally, we ask for your financial support. On the facing page is a "PAD" form. This is a means by which you can give ongoing monthly donations of any size. All donations are gratefully received but this is the most helpful way to support us, as it provides a steady, reliable source of income, which allows us to plan for the future. 



# I want to share my Reformed perspective with the world!

By filling out the form below, and becoming a monthly contributor, you give the *RP* Foundation the steady support that will enable us to reach many, many more with a thoughtful, thought-provoking and thoroughly Reformed perspective on every sphere of life.

## PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT:

I want to support the mission of the *Reformed Perspective* Foundation through monthly contributions. As a registered Canadian charity, Canadian donations will get a tax receipt.

Please debit my bank account: (attach VOID cheque for banking information)

☐ \$10   ☐ \$20   ☐ \$50   ☐ \$100   Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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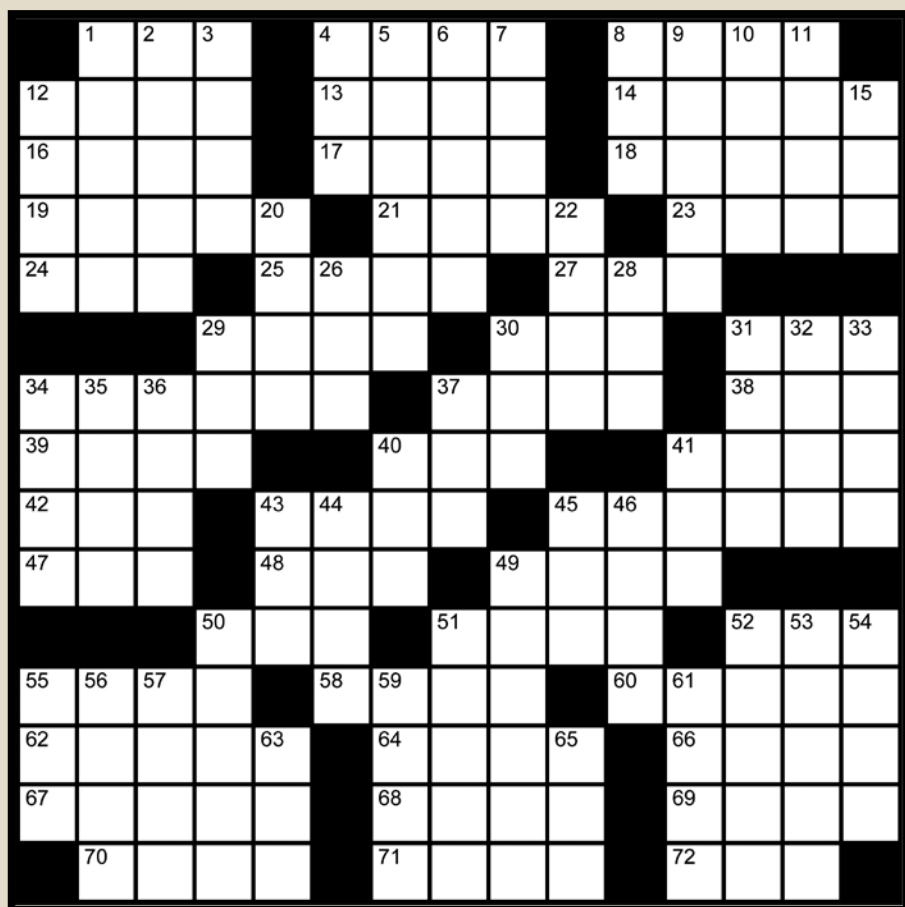
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**Thank you for standing with us as we together proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all spheres of life!**

Completed forms, along with void cheques, can be mailed to: *Reformed Perspective*, **Box 1328, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0.**

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



## SERIES 3-6

## PUZZLE CLUES

### ACROSS

1. Abbreviation for speed (in U.S.)
4. On the summit
8. Carve (a text or design) on a surface
12. Country with Timbuktu in the middle of it
13. List of foods or computing options
14. Flesh-eating monster
16. Force for United States in the air
21. Sacred ceremony
23. "no \_\_\_\_ of sun or moon...." (Revelation 21)
24. Institutes in charge of U.S.'s National Health
25. Leader in charge of USSR before it was USSR
27. Strangely, a *non*-pugnacious dog breed
29. Chinese currency
30. Date for a musical performer

31. "A little \_\_\_\_ 'll do ya" (old Brylcream ad)
34. Start over; go back to the blackboard
37. "A pinch to grow an \_\_\_\_" (birthday wish)
38. Lo-o-ong time (poetically speaking)
39. Out of control (but still "running"!)
40. Swiss mountain
41. Fictional race in Wells' *The Time Machine*
42. Nada; zilch; zip
43. What you can do to wine, or after drinking it
45. What you do for a soldier or to a bomb
47. Some of the *fire* coming from lost temper
48. "took \_\_\_\_ of his ribs and...." (Genesis 2)
49. "101 \_\_\_\_ for..." – typical home hints title
50. "do \_\_\_\_ imitate evil" (3 John)

51. French WWI fighter biplane
52. Garland worn partly in Hawaiian *isle*
55. Couch; chesterfield
58. Noise made on Old MacDonald's farm
60. Sounds like they *stayed* respectable
62. "her \_\_\_\_ might shall... end" (Ezekiel 33)
64. Stand for a coffin
66. "...not arrogant or \_\_\_\_." (1 Corinthians 13)
67. "To Build \_\_\_\_": Jack London short story
68. "This \_\_\_\_ pleased Haman," (Esther 5)
69. Ancient Greek god of war
70. Mess-up; mistake; error
71. Abbreviation for, oddly, *not* the 7th month
72. "\_\_\_\_ for the course" – the usual expectation

## LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



## SERIES 3-5

### DOWN

1. Tribe well known for raising cattle
2. Water-slapping sound (part *flash*, part *dash*)
3. Really good quality sound
4. Device for getting 3 Down - loudly
5. Capital of Iran
6. Currently showing
7. End of a golf hole
8. "if he asks for an \_\_\_\_, will give...?" (Luke 11)
9. Narrow strip of leather or other material
10. What's left after you eat an apple
11. Humongous; gigantic; enormous
12. Subatomic particle
15. "the LORD has \_\_\_\_ me... to...." (Genesis 24)
20. Stuff found on top of a pond (not lily pads!)
22. Long poem recounting a nation's legends
26. Typical comic book sound effect
28. Noise of somewhat *huge* disgust
29. Type of "chatter" found in Himalayas
30. Abbreviation for gross product of a nation
31. Source of "half-delicate" meat sandwiches
32. L-o-ong time (but only part of *afternoon*?)
33. Ship's prison (or a whole ship)
34. Hindu princess (all mixed up in the *rain*?)
35. Muslim ruler (all mixed up in the *mire*?)
36. Partly like *moles*, it makes holes.
37. "he was \_\_\_\_, near to death." (Philippians 2)
40. What a pub serves
41. Every M&M's™ package has two of them.
43. Noise made jumping "over the moon"?
44. "For \_\_\_\_ you is born this day...." (Luke 2)
45. Abbreviation for medical name for aspirin
46. Film title's colorful term for Communists
49. Maintenance to keep up good image
50. Tiny island nation near Papua New Guinea
51. Sarcastic; sneering (describes remarks)
52. War of 1812 heroine Secord's first name
53. I'm down with this kind of duck!
54. Julius Caesar's least favorite time in March
55. This *space* is partly meant to relieve tension.
56. Developmental approach to teaching music
57. Fencing sword (made of tin?)
59. Wading, long-billed bird
61. "a snare and a \_\_\_\_ for you" (Joshua 23)
63. She has a ball when you first meet her.
65. "mole \_\_\_\_" (unclean rodent of Leviticus 11)



# For new couples ...and old

by Wes Bredenhof

Over my years in the ministry, I've taught many marriage preparation classes. From time to time, I've also counseled couples with marriage problems. In my preaching, I've had many opportunities to speak about marriage. Besides all that, I've been married myself for what's going on to 23 years.

All these things give me a vested interest in good books about marriage. I've read a few. Almost all of them have something worthwhile, but there are some that really stand out. Here are my top three, in order of importance, first to third.

**WHEN SINNERS SAY "I DO"**  
*Discovering the power of the gospel for marriage*  
BY DAVE HARVEY  
190 PAGES / 2007

This one tops the list because of the author's relentless focus on the gospel. Written in a warm, personal style, Dave Harvey helps couples come to terms with the biggest problem that all marriages face and the solution to this problem. Along with some of the other topics one would expect in a marriage book, he also discusses one you don't often encounter: death. If you're going to read just one book about marriage, make it this one.

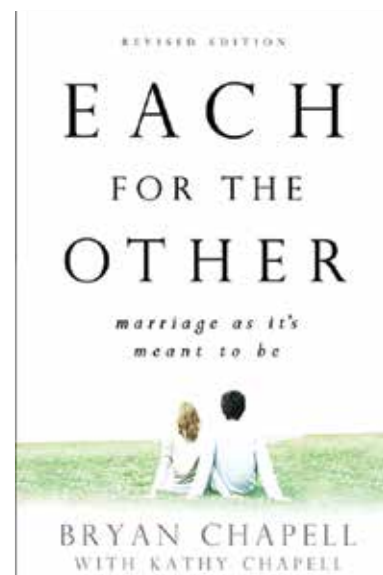
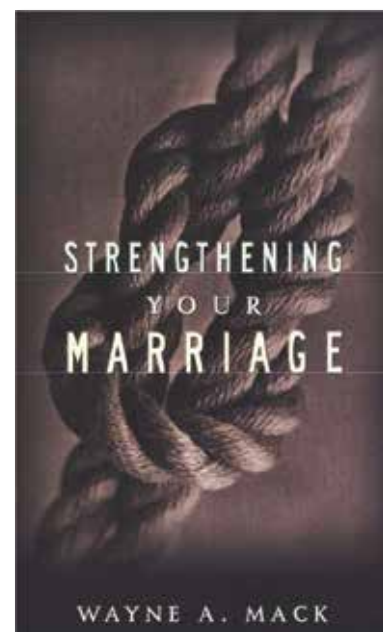
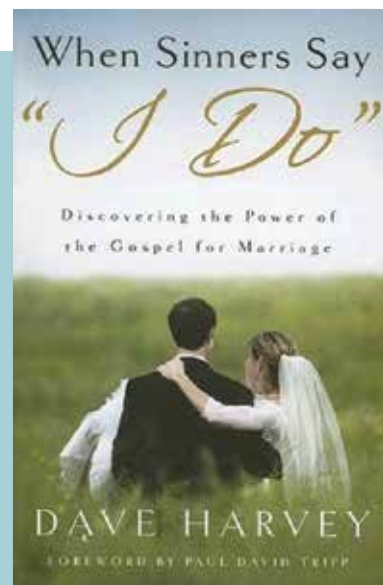
**STRENGTHENING YOUR MARRIAGE**  
BY WAYNE MACK  
208 PAGES / 1999

Are you ready to get to work on your marriage? Then this is the book you're looking for. It's not just a review of biblical teaching about marriage, but a very practical workbook. It contains a variety of exercises for husbands and wives to complete. The idea is that they would be done with a pastor or counselor, but certainly couples could benefit from doing them on their own too. I use Wayne Mack's book *Preparing for Marriage God's Way* for my marriage preparation classes and I appreciate his biblical approach.

**EACH FOR THE OTHER**  
*Marriage As It's Meant To Be*  
BY BRYAN & KATHY CHAPELL  
224 PAGES / 2006

I really like this one for three reasons. One is that it includes the perspective of a woman. Another is that it has great stories and illustrations to drive home the points of the authors. Finally, I value the clear explanations and applications of biblical submission and headship. This book also includes discussion questions to go with each chapter.

*Dr. Wes Bredenhof is pastor of the Free Reformed Church at Launceston, Tasmania. He blogs at Yinkahdinay, where this post first appeared.*





# THE BIBLE AND PLURALISM

How should Christians operate in the political realm? Should they push/promote a Christian agenda? Or should they concede that the public square is secular?

by Cornelis Van Dam

*Pluralism is the belief that people of different cultures and beliefs can live together in harmony. But when their different values inevitably clash how do these differences get resolved?*

*In this excerpt from Dr. Van Dam's God and Government he outlines a specifically Christian form of pluralism that allows for believers and unbelievers to live in peace together, because it recognizes that God and his law are supreme.*

When God gathered his chosen people, his demands were clear. They had to be completely dedicated to his service. However, God recognized that within his kingdom of Israel, there was not only his holy nation, the church, but, as noted earlier, there were also others who did not really belong to the assembly of God's people. They nevertheless lived within the kingdom of God on earth as established in Israel. To these people the Lord showed great forbearance. They were not forced to become worshippers of the God of Israel nor did God give any command to that effect to Israel's rulers. However, they were expected to obey the

prohibitive commands of God's moral law. They could not, for example, indulge in sexual sin (Lev. 18:24-30), blaspheme God's name (Lev 24:15) or sacrifice their children to the false god Molech. (Lev 20:2). The people in whose midst they lived, as well as the land, was holy and they had to respect that. Indeed, God had expressly commanded that all the idolatrous nations living in Canaan had to be wiped out for the land was to be holy (Deut 7; cf. Ps. 78:54; Zec. 2:12). There was, however, no such command for territories outside Canaan that were later conquered to be under Israel's rule.

It is noteworthy that after David defeated Moab, the Aramaean kingdoms of Hadadezer (Damascus and Maacah), Edom, and the Ammonites, there is no hint anywhere in Scripture that he worked to remove all idolatry and false worship. Also no special attempt was made to compel these people to become worshippers of the true God. Since David's office as a godly king over these gentile peoples roughly parallels the office of government today, this tolerance points to a principle that can apply to government today.

## TOLERANCE OF FALSE RELIGION

Indeed, state tolerance of false religion is not in disagreement with Scripture. God is long-suffering and patient. "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45). He allows the good grain as well as the weeds to grow together, until the time of harvest. Then God himself will separate the two in the final Day of Judgment (Matt 13:36-43). Government can tolerate what the church cannot endure. Each has its own office and calling. In a modern pluralistic society, the following words of Christ are relevant: "do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt 7:12). If one asks freedom of worship for oneself, then it should also be granted to others.

As head of the church, Christ tolerates no ungodliness and sin. The church on earth must act accordingly. As head and ruler of his kingdom Christ is patient and bears with the weakness of the sinful human heart. His servants, the civil governments, must do likewise even as they are obligated to seek true righteousness and justice for the country entrusted to their rule.

## STATE IS NOT THE CHURCH

Besides the principle of toleration, there is the related principle of the civil authority being distinct from the religious authority in Israel. Even though church and state were very closely related, they were not identical. Each had its own jurisdiction. This has important implications. Even in Israel, which was a theocracy, there were clear limitations to what the king as civil ruler could do. Although the theocratic king had priestly and prophetic aspects to his office, he nevertheless remained in the first place the civil ruler in charge of the judicial and political affairs of the nation. Although the priests were vital in the theocracy, Israel as a theocracy was not a priest state as found in other ancient near Eastern countries such as Egypt. Priestly authority was limited to all things related to the administration of the sacrificial service of reconciliation, including instruction in the ways of the Lord. And so there were clear distinctions. Religious matters were in the province of the priests and the civil ones were the responsibility of the king. Accordingly, in the time of King Jehoshaphat the civil courts were organized specifically along the lines of religious and civil matters (2 Chron 19:11; cf. 1 Chron 26:30, 32).

We need to value the biblical principle that is involved here. Scripture gives no justification for a modern theocratic state such as we find in some Islamic jurisdictions. The Bible indicates that there is to be a clear separation of what we today call church and state, or spiritual authority and civil authority. Christ's teaching affirmed this when he said "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36). Such thinking is completely contrary to, for example, the Muslim idea of a jihad or holy war that is necessary to establish their kingdom in the here and now.

All of this underlines the fact that the state is not given the duty to force people to love God and to worship him. The state is permitted to tolerate things that the church cannot tolerate. There is, however, more to this larger issue.

## RULE OF LAW

Another important principle in considering the relation of church and state is the rule of law. The Davidic king was not to be autocratic and self-seeking, thinking himself to be more worthy than those around him. He was God's

## GOD AND GOVERNMENT Biblical Principles for Today: An Introduction and Resource

BY CORNELIS VAN DAM

330 PAGES / 2014

REVIEWED BY JEFF DYKSTRA

Any Christian who wants to be involved in politics, or any politician who wants to understand Christians who are involved in politics, needs to read this book. Dr. Van Dam explores the two great foundations of Canadian politics – Christianity and humanism – and the nature of the conflict between them.

Then, after outlining the conflict, Dr. Van Dam makes clear how Christian principles can function in a world dominated by humanistic ideals.

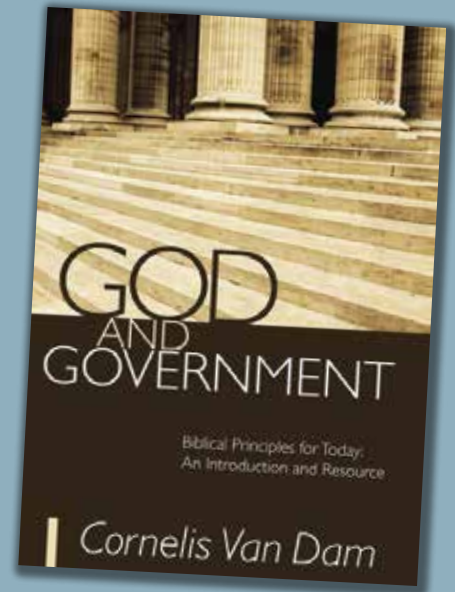
Christians and humanists have very different views of the origin and task of government, the relationship of church and state, and the concepts of human rights and toleration – but, as Van Dam shows from both Biblical and historical evidence, the Christian understandings of these concepts leads to both greater stability and freedom for society.

That same general form of looking at the fruit of the two worldviews leads to enlightening discussions of the differences an approach guided by the Bible could make in areas like the abortion and euthanasia debates, the issue of capital punishment, the need for traditional marriage, the balance of productive work and necessary weekly rest, the stewardship of creation, and immigration policy.

By this point in my reading, my renewed commitment to see Biblical values reaffirmed in our politics had me primed for the last section – "Working for Change" – which first describes the Biblical reasons for getting involved in the government of the country, and ends with a look at the many excellent organizations that are doing just that.

The study questions and bibliography at the end make this an excellent resource for starting some political activism of your own, with both insightful Biblical application and plenty of written and online works, as well as the groups mentioned above, to help you (and me) and like-minded Christians to get going (or to keep going, only with a little better grounding in basic principles).

Of course, this conflict isn't limited to Canada – humanism and Christianity are also battling it out in the US, in Australia, and in most other Western nations – so this would be a great book for Reformed Christians in all those counties. To get a print copy of *God and Government*, email [info@ARPACanada.ca](mailto:info@ARPACanada.ca) for information – they have a suggested donation is \$10. Or you can get a Kindle version at [Amazon.ca](http://Amazon.ca) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).



*This review was first published on ReallyGoodReads.com.*



representative in the theocracy, sitting on God's throne (1 Chron 29:23) and therefore a servant of God who needed to submit to God's law. The Lord even stipulated that when the king assumed the throne of the kingdom then he,

"is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left" (Deut 17:18–20).

In this way God's will would be done for his chosen nation in his kingdom. With all the plurality that may have existed in Israelite society, above it all was the law of God. It needed to be heeded for the well-being of the people.

Israel's rulers were not the only ones who were accountable to God. Pagan ones were as well. For example, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that God had put him in power (Dan 2:37–38) and so God warned the monarch through Daniel that unless he acknowledged God's supreme place and repented of his sins in ruling, he would be driven from the throne to live with the wild animals (Dan 4:24–27). There was accountability that had to be acknowledged.

Today, rulers are to be servants of God in the first place and as such also have an obligation to heed the abiding principles of God's Word for the good of society. Thus, when government makes decisions pertaining to morals and issues on which the Word of God gives clear direction, it should not set itself above the norms which God has revealed. It is the duty of government to restrain sin and evil (Prov 14:33; Rom 13:4). How does the calling of the church factor into this obligation of the government?

## CHURCH IS NOT THE STATE

Clearly the task of the church is to preach the gospel and administer the reconciliation that God offers to humankind. The church's "job

*The state is permitted to tolerate things that the church cannot tolerate.*

description" was given by the risen Christ prior to his ascension when he said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18–20).


The church is to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation and gather God's people together. The state must give the church the freedom and opportunity to do its calling of spreading the gospel. That gospel includes the proclamation of Christ's kingship, a message the state must hear from the church or its members so that it understands its servant role.

The church's task with respect to the state is not to make official pronouncements about the political issues of the day and to get involved in crafting government policy. The church as an institution has neither the charge nor expertise to do so. It is also not the task of the church to try to rule over the government (the Roman Catholic ideal). The state has its own God-given responsibilities. However, the church does have the duty to train and equip its members so that they can function meaningfully in today's secular society as citizens of Christ's kingdom and so influence also politics. Scripture is certainly relevant for the affairs of the state, but it is not the calling of the church as a corporate body to interfere in the political process and attempt to apply the biblical principles to the government agenda. That is the responsibility of Christians in all walks of life, also those involved in politics.

All of this does not mean that the church should always remain silent. There

can be unusual circumstances when the church needs to speak up by means of the pulpit or otherwise in order to protect its God-given mission to preach the gospel and condemn sin where sin needs to be condemned. There can also be occasions when the government invites input from interested parties on new legislation which is of great interest to the church. Churches should then participate and make a case for the application of biblical principles on the issues of the day.

In summary, the church's duty is to preach and safeguard the gospel and seek the spiritual well-being of its members. The resources and gifts of the church should focus on these central concerns. With respect to its task over against the government, the church must also lead the way in instructing its members to be good citizens and to be obedient to those in authority over them. Furthermore, the church is called to pray for those who rule over them (1 Tim 2:1–4). Such prayer includes the petition that the state may continue to protect the freedom and ministry of the church so that the gospel can continue to be proclaimed. When that proclamation is blessed, it will eventually have a salutary effect on society and government.

In our current age of secularization, it is easy for the people of God to grow weary in seeking the best for those who rule over them. But, one must realize that there are usually no quick fixes to the dilemmas of evil and sin in society and often incremental change is all that is possible. But the church need never become despondent. It has every reason to be encouraged for an important truth is that God is supreme ruler over everything already. In a broad sense his kingdom encompasses the entire universe. The battle against evil has been won (Col 1:13–20; 2:15). One day God's kingdom will arrive in full perfection when all will recognize him as Lord and Master. 

# WHAT IS PRINCIPLED PLURALISM?

-BY CORNELIS VAN DAM

Principled pluralism recognizes the pluralism of contemporary society but contends that biblical norms need to be recognized and applied in order for government and society to function according to God's will. When this is done, society benefits for God established the norms for humans to live together peacefully and for the benefit of each other.

Principled pluralism has the following distinctive basic principles.

## 1) NO NEUTRAL "NON-RELIGIOUS" GROUND

There is no morally neutral ground. All of life is religious in nature and both Christians and non-Christians have religious presuppositions which they bring into the public square. Also secularism and the denial of God's relevance for public life is a religious system. It is, therefore, impossible to restrict religion to the private personal sphere of home and church and to insist that the public square is without religious convictions.

Principled pluralism opposes a secularized public square which bans religious voices and practices except its own. Christians have the obligation to influence the public discourse in a biblical direction. Principles derived from Scripture need to be part of the debate in the public square so that arguments can be made for a public policy according to the overriding norms of God's Word.

## 2) ALL KNOW GOD'S LAW

Although God's special revelation in the Bible is normative for all of life, God has revealed enough of his eternal power and divine nature in creation and in the nature of things to render all people without excuse. He has written his law in their conscience (Rom 1:18–21; 2:14–15). In this way God has a claim on all creation, including the civil authorities. Before his throne they are without excuse if they suppress the truth and refuse to see the light of

God's gracious demands and promote sin (Rom 1:18–19).

## 3) GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IS TO MAINTAIN JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

The civil government is God's servant to maintain justice and righteousness (Rom 13:1–5). To understand this mandate properly, one must realize that God gave each person an office or offices in life, be it as a parent, a church member, a plumber, a husband, or whatever. If a government is to maintain justice, it must see to it that these offices can be exercised.

Or as Gordon J. Spykman put it:

"The state should safeguard the freedom, rights, and responsibilities of citizens in the exercise of their offices within their various life-spheres according to their respective religious convictions. The government is obliged to respect, safeguard, preserve or, where lost, to restore, and to promote the free and responsible exercise of these other societal offices. That is what God commands the state to do to fulfill the biblical idea of public justice."

## 4) GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY IS LIMITED

Principled pluralism affirms that a government's authority is limited because God has ordered society in such a way that different structures make up the whole. These structures, such as civil government, the family, church, and the market place, each have their own sphere of authority which should not be transgressed by another societal structure or sphere.

Government has the duty to



recognize this diverse reality and to promote the well being of the different spheres of authority found within society by safeguarding their existence and ensuring their continued health.

## 5) GOVERNMENT DOESN'T OVERSEE THE CHURCH

Principled pluralism also recognizes that civil government does not have the authority to decide what constitutes true religion. For that reason, government cannot favor one religion over another or enforce, for example, the religion of secularism in society. Within certain limits, such as the need to restrain evil, all religions must be treated alike and be given the same freedom and opportunities.

*These two excerpt from Dr. Van Dam's book "God and Government" are reprinted here with permission. To get a copy of "God and Government" email [info@ARPACanada.ca](mailto:info@ARPACanada.ca) for information (the suggested donation is \$10). Or you can get a Kindle version at [Amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.com) or [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).*

# Review: The Case for Christ

## A Tale Of Two Cynics

by Alwyn Terpstra



On a Saturday morning in May, I found myself in an unusual place: seated in the Hoyts cinema, awaiting the start of a film

Now I must say I never bought into the argument that movies could not be compatible with Christian life. It seemed to me that it depended on what sort of film was being screened. Having said that, I am thankful that, when it came to movies and theaters, I grew up with a sense of restraint. After all, wholesome cinematic presentations are few and far between, and the movie industry has been responsible for much social change that just doesn't accord with God's Word and God's law. That's why when it came to my own children I told them: "Don't decide to go to the cinema and then see what's on offer. Rather, if there's something that you are confident about that it is wholesome, *then* make the decision to go to the theater."

I reflected on those discussions – ones with my own children, and others with my parents when I was a youth – as I quietly waited for *The Case for Christ* to begin.

### A RELUCTANT CONVERT

*The Case for Christ* is based on a book by the same name, telling the true story of a man, Lee Strobel, his wife and family, who lived and worked in the city of

Chicago in the 1980s. The Strobels were a happy family, consisting of a Dad, a Mum, a daughter, and in the course of the film, a son was born to them.

Early in the story whilst out at dinner, the daughter almost chokes to death on a large sweet; it's the resolute intervention of a black Christian woman that saves the child's life. Lee's wife, Leslie, maintains contact with the lady who saved her child's life and is inspired by the woman's faith in Jesus Christ. In time Leslie, too, becomes a Christian, much to the chagrin of her atheist husband.

As a journalist committed to the ideal of exposing the truth, Lee decides that the only way to convince his wife that she is throwing her life away is to disprove the fundamental tenets of Christianity. A colleague at work puts him on the right track and astutely suggests that he start by researching the resurrection of Christ.

Armed with this information, Lee sets out to disprove this central teaching of Christianity. He consults colleagues and friends first, then he turns to theologians and historians, psychologists, and

eventually a medical doctor. The more he looks, and the deeper he goes, the more he finds to *support* the resurrection of Christ, rather than disprove it.

The frustration that accompanies this voyage of discovery is interesting and instructive to behold. In the end Lee admits, "OK God, you win!" and it is this that turns him to God in true repentance for his obstinate refusal to accept what was staring him in the face for so long.

### AUTHENTIC BECAUSE IT IS TRUE

I couldn't help but enjoy the story. It was honest, it was real, it was moving, and it was genuine, maybe because it had really happened. It was wholesome too. I appreciated the search revolving around the resurrection of Christ. It resonated beautifully with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:13-14:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

*Lee decides that the only way to convince his wife that she is throwing her life away is to disprove...Christianity.*



◀ When Lee Strobel's wife turned to Christ, he wanted to prove God was dead. But God had other plans.

I was impressed by the truth uncovered by the research, and by the excellent profound insights afforded by the different characters in the film. These days it's hard to find movies where the language is not marred by blasphemy and where there is not some sexual overtone; it was wonderful to watch something where this did not – at least not that I noticed – feature.

I also enjoyed the literary qualities of the film. The characters were real and the story was compelling. A second, parallel story, running through the film – Lee's investigation into the shooting of a cop – provides some excellent symbolism in relation to Lee's spiritual journey. When Lee stands at the side of the hospital bed of the innocent victim of a miscarriage of justice and apologizes for not seeing what should have been obvious, the man mutters in response, "You didn't see it because you didn't want to see." That was a poignant moment.

### SOME NITS THAT COULD BE PICKED

A Reformed critic might argue that the expression used in the film about "inviting Jesus into your life" is an Arminian sentiment, and I would be hard pressed to argue against that. Unless, of course, we see it as an expression of the believer's response to the work of the Holy Spirit, causing and working faith in Jesus Christ.

It can also be argued that faith shouldn't be dependent on outside proofs (doesn't God's Word testify to its own authenticity?) and that the way to faith Lee Strobel pursues seems to elevate the authority of archeology and experts above the Bible. There's truth in that criticism too.

But from what we can learn about Lee Strobel, subsequent to the events in the film, it is clear that however his faith began, it has grown to a deep and caring connection with his God. This is a true story, so even if the producers intend it as an account of *what we should do*, we can choose instead to enjoy it as a record of what *God did do*.

Still, I couldn't help but appreciate that in an age where evidence and reason are so central, the facts of the Bible will

stand up to rigorous scrutiny; even the rationalist, who might shrink back from a way of faith, is left without excuse.

Summing up about *The Case for Christ*, I feel comfortable recommending it. With us in the theatre were families with younger children, some teenage youth and a smattering of older people, and it really had appeal for all.

### TWO CYNICS

I'm not sure why, but my mind couldn't help but compare Strobel's story to another that I had read about, some years before, one that filled me with deep sorrow and wonder. In an interview with *Nederlands Dagblad*, the ninety-year-old Harry Kuitert, emeritus professor of systematic theology from the Free University of Amsterdam, stated:

I have sought God, but I have not found him.

Harry Kuitert's story sees him seeking the evidence that God is real, that God gives sense and meaning to life, and that there is life after death, but slowly and surely he comes to the conclusion that none of it stacks up and

none of it is true. *Nederlands Dagblad* quotes Kuitert in the interview as saying:

You cannot conclude that there is a God. ... He exists only in your head, he is the product of your thoughts, and outside of your head he doesn't exist. ... Every believer makes his own religion. That's doesn't make it true. You believe because you choose to, maybe because you need to or because you are afraid, or lonely.

If you read the different biographies of Harry Kuitert, you can't help but stand amazed that a man who started out as being a minister of the Word and later a professor in theology slowly but surely lets go of the foundational tenets of the Christian faith. Throughout his life he reveled in different aspects of theology, but his book titles tell the story of a diminishing faith.

In 1989 he wrote a book titled, *The Universally Doubted Christian Faith*, a title that served as a parody to what we often confess in church in relation to the Apostles' Creed, "our undoubted Christian faith."

In 2000 he wrote a book called *About*

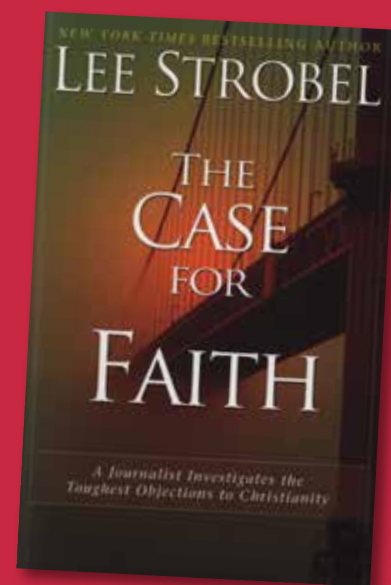
## A word of warning

- by Jon Dykstra

If *The Case for Christ* film inspires you to track down more by Lee Strobel, it's important to understand that Strobel is *not* Reformed. That doesn't come up much in *The Case for Christ*, because the topic is one all Christians believe – Calvinists and Arminians agree that Christ rose.

But in *The Case for Faith* Strobel turns his investigative skills to the topic of faith, and the result is a book that could have been called *The Arminian Case for Faith*. In it he repeatedly rejects the Reformed understanding and presents a specifically Arminian answer to questions.

So while the film could be a nice evening's entertainment for you and your family, Strobel shouldn't be a go-to resource for matters of faith and doctrine.



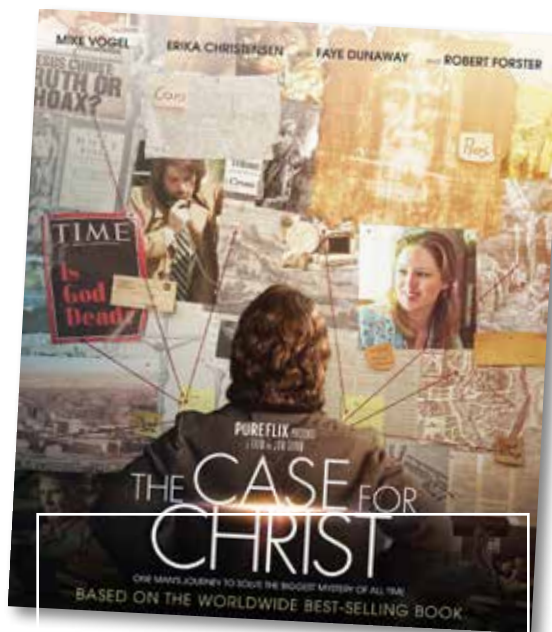
Religion, about which *Nederlands Dagblad* said:

Till now, for Kuitert God had still been the force or the person behind people's searching and speaking. In this book, however, God has become the product of man's imagination. Unabashed Kuitert writes: "I am finished with God as a person, as a being that exists in himself and for himself and that can be invoked through prayer."

And then, in 2014, he wrote *The Church, a Construction Mistake*, about which he stated: "Why doesn't it honestly proclaim that it's all made up?"

Speaking about Kuitert, *Nederlands Dagblad* reported:

In the Christian part of the Netherlands Kuitert became a phenomenon: Harry Kuitert, who peeled away the layers of faith, one



after the other, until there was nothing left.\*

Here then is the tale of two cynics (with apologies to Charles Dickens), one who started out refusing to believe

but who was confounded by the evidence, and the other who believed and lost his faith because he couldn't find the evidence that it could be true. You have to wonder how come.

Is this just the outworking of God's election? No doubt that's part of the story, but it just won't do to stop there. For mixed in with God's election is also our human responsibility and ownership of the truth. What else got in the way of Kuitert? Was it intellectual arrogance, was it human pride – maybe even unwittingly – getting in the way of truth? I wished he could meet the liberated and innocent convict in the hospital who muttered to Strobel, "You didn't see it because you didn't want to see it." May God's Spirit as yet rip away the self-imposed spiritual blindfold that leaves him an empty and lonely cynic. RP

#### Endnote

\* D. Bruins & G. Schinkelshoek's "Alone at the End," posted to [www.nd.nl](http://www.nd.nl) on Feb 28, 2015

# Think you can change the world *from the stage?*

# We do.

**CHANGE** can be big, like winning an Oscar big. Or it can be small, like behind the scenes small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go. That changes everything. Including you.



A degree you can believe in.







# A Hill To Die On

by Jonathon Van Maren

A couple of weeks ago, I attended a public lecture by Dr. Jordan Peterson at the University of Western Ontario. For those of you who don't know, Dr. Peterson has found himself the target of transgender activists, some of whom actually claim that his refusal to use recently-invented "transgender pronouns" constituted violence. Labeling someone a perpetrator of violence for refusing to use the words you just made up, of course, also allows you to begin perpetrating *real* violence in response, and this has resulted in Peterson's lectures being shut down by angry mobs.

After the lecture, one student asked Peterson an interesting question.

You've articulated at great length the dangers of post-modernism and political correctness, the student pointed out. But why this issue? Why choose transgender pronouns as the proverbial hill to die on?

Peterson's response was striking. "Why not?" he replied.

When you're fighting a war, there's very rarely a compelling reason to die for the next yard of soil – but that's

how wars are won, and that is how the line is held – yard by yard. You have to pick something, and this is what I chose.

His response reminded me of something I wrote about at length in my own book *The Culture War*: the tendency of Christians to count the cost and decide to opt out of fighting.

Secular progressives are willing to fight a bloody war of attrition for every crimson inch of soil, from prayers at city council meetings to nativity scenes in public to launching cyber-lynch mobs on little old ladies who don't want to bake cakes for gay weddings.

Christians, on the other hand, often cave at the first sign of pressure. Douglas Wilson commented wryly on this habit on his blog in 2015:

Whenever we get to that elusive and ever-receding "hill to die on," we will discover, upon our arrival there, that it only looked like a hill to die on from a distance. Up close, when the possible dying is also up close, it kind of looks like every other hill. All of a sudden it looks like a hill to stay alive on, covered over with topsoil that looks suspiciously like common ground. So

it turns out that surrendering hills is not the best way to train for defending the most important ones. Retreat is habit-forming.

Now granted, as I've written before, Christians are often too busy raising their families and trying to live their lives to take a stand in the culture wars. For every baker or florist who gets targeted by gay rights activists, you can bet there are hundreds of others who quietly knuckled under to avoid becoming the center of a noisy lawsuit. But we need more men like Dr. Jordan Peterson. He may not be a Christian, but he is, as one writer so eloquently put it, "the frog that wouldn't boil." Each yard of ground we give up without a fight is another step closer to being backed into a corner. Dr. Peterson was willing to take a stand. He was willing to stop, look around, and say "Here. This is where I fight."

Each of us will have to make that decision sometime in the near future. And better now than later – it is easier to defend territory than it is to reclaim it. RP

*Jonathon Van Maren is the author of The Culture War and blogs at TheBridgehead.ca*





# Gentleness: A Gift To Your Family

by Jay Younts

**D**o you want your children to see you as someone they can trust?

Do you want your spouse to take comfort in just being with you?

Are you easy to talk to?

Is your family hesitant to talk to you when they are hurting?

If someone in your family messes up or is in trouble are you the person that helps him feel secure and safe, the person that she knows will help make things right?

You want to be able to answer yes to these questions. In fact, you sometimes get angry and hurt when those close to you don't seek your help. Ironic, isn't it?

Here is a biblical quality that can help you become the go-to person for those whom you love.

That quality is gentleness.

- Gentleness requires great courage.
- It is not for the faint of heart.
- Gentleness is the opposite of weakness.
- Gentleness is part of the Spirit's fruit.
- Gentleness is the exercise of the Spirit's power. Your anger is the exercise of your own self-centeredness.

## GENTLENESS DEFINED

Gentleness uses only the strength or force that is necessary for any given situation. Gentleness is showing Christ to those

you love. God wants you to associate gentleness with power not weakness.

Why?


Because Christ is gentle. If you want to be Christ-like ask Him for the strength to follow his example. Christ does not treat you as your sins deserve.

## CONCLUSION

Ask Him for the power to love your family as He loves you. Ask Him to help you say and mean these words:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

What would your family think if you said these words to them?

Give your family the Spirit's powerful gift of gentleness. 

*Jay Younts is the author of "Everyday Talk: Talking freely and Naturally about God with Your Children" and "Everyday Talk about Sex & Marriage." He blogs at ShepherdPress.com, where this article (reprinted with permission) first appeared.*

# — East vs West —

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# CONTEST

*“Let your light shine  
before others, so  
that they may see  
your good works  
and give glory to  
your Father who  
is in Heaven.”*

—MATTHEW 5:16

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- Best letter in a community paper (city up to 200,000 population)
- Best letter by someone under age 20
- Most letters published & submitted to contest
- One letter picked at random from all entries

### CONTEST RULES

- Letters must be on a topic that relates in some way to ARPA's mission (ie it must have something to do with bringing a Christian perspective to the public square).
  - Send either a link to your letter, or a picture of a published letter, to **INFO@ARPACANADA.ca**.
- Or mail it to **ARPA Canada,**  
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# IS PORN MORE LIKE HEROIN, OR DRIVING A CAR?

Explaining the problem of porn, and why  
our society's answer to it can never work

by Rob Slane

**I**n recent weeks, I've come across what seems like a multitude of articles on the subject of pornography, especially articles focused on the fact that more and more teenagers and children are now viewing pornography on a regular basis. The latest piece to catch my eye came from Rod Dreher on *The American Conservative* website. At one point, Mr. Dreher writes a

paragraph in which you can almost hear him weep in sorrow as you read it:

"This society has a death wish. I wish I had some idea how it could be saved. What concerns me most of all right now is the horrifying complicity of conservative, even conservative Christian, parents in the spiritual, moral, and emotional ruin of their

children and of their moral ecology because they, the parents, are too d--n afraid to say no, my kids will not have a smartphone, I don't care what they and society think of me."

I hope that readers will share his sorrow, and that it might induce parents who have perhaps been blasé to take a long, hard look at their situation and



take whatever action they can to protect their children's innocence.

The issue of pornography is a difficult one to even talk about, but we must. I want to consider the societal phenomenon, addressing what I believe is one major way we are being deceived, and how we can communicate the nature of that deception to our non-Christian friends and neighbors.

## NOT JUST A PROBLEM FOR CHILDREN

I would assume that all Christians reading this know instinctively that pornography is wrong. At the same time, I am also aware that we can often fall into the world's way of thinking on issues, and that this can mean that we accept its solutions to problems, and fail to see the real issue. One of the ways we are doing this around pornography is increasingly seeing the major problem as being its spread to children, rather than pornography itself. Of course the spread to children is a massive problem, but it is not *the* problem.

Here's an example: an article by Conor Friedersdorf in *The Atlantic* quotes one of the world's biggest "porn stars" expressing concern that we're not doing enough to stop pornography getting in front of children. Yet the same article states that "accessing hard core porn is (*properly*) legal." This now seems to be the default position: pornography is fine for adults, but we just need to keep it from children.

Of course, it is true that pornography filtering down to children is a very great evil. Young minds are more susceptible to habit-forming from new stimuli in ways which adult minds are perhaps not. Nevertheless, if we concentrate all our efforts on simply stopping pornography getting into the hands of children, we miss the point completely. For the problem is not primarily that pornography is falling into the hands of children, but rather that as a society we have opened the floodgates to allow porn in and normalized it.

It is absurd to think that it is possible to normalize something like this, and

*....or is it like heroin; something that no sane parent would ever want their children to get into, no matter how old?*

for it not to filter down to children. Children, by their very nature, want to grow up to be adults, and they often want to do adult things before their time. So if we have largely normalized pornography amongst adults – and we have – then no amount of paywalls and banning of smartphones or anything else is going to make much difference. We have become a pornographic society, and children, who aspire to do what adults do, will generally find ways of getting their hands on it by hook or by crook (though, of course, responsible parents will take as much action as they can to prevent their children coming into contact with it).

## DRUGS? OR DRIVING?

Look at it like this. There are two types of activity that adults seek to protect children from.

First, there are perfectly good activities that we want them to grow up into, but for which they need to come of age before we allow it. For instance, driving a car.

Then there are activities which are bad in and of themselves, and which we try to protect them from, not just because they aren't old enough to do them, but because we don't *ever* want our children doing them. Taking heroin would fall into this category.

So which category does porn fit into? Is it like driving? Or is it like heroin? Is it something a child should one day be able to do, only not just now? Or is it like heroin; something that no sane parent would ever want their children to get into, no matter how old? If our culture puts it in the same category as driving a car, something to be avoided as a child, but something that is perfectly normal once you turn a certain age, then it can be safely said that we have lost all moral compass and are quite sick. If, on the other hand, we see

it in the same category as heroin, then at least we would be acknowledging it as a problem to be dealt with.

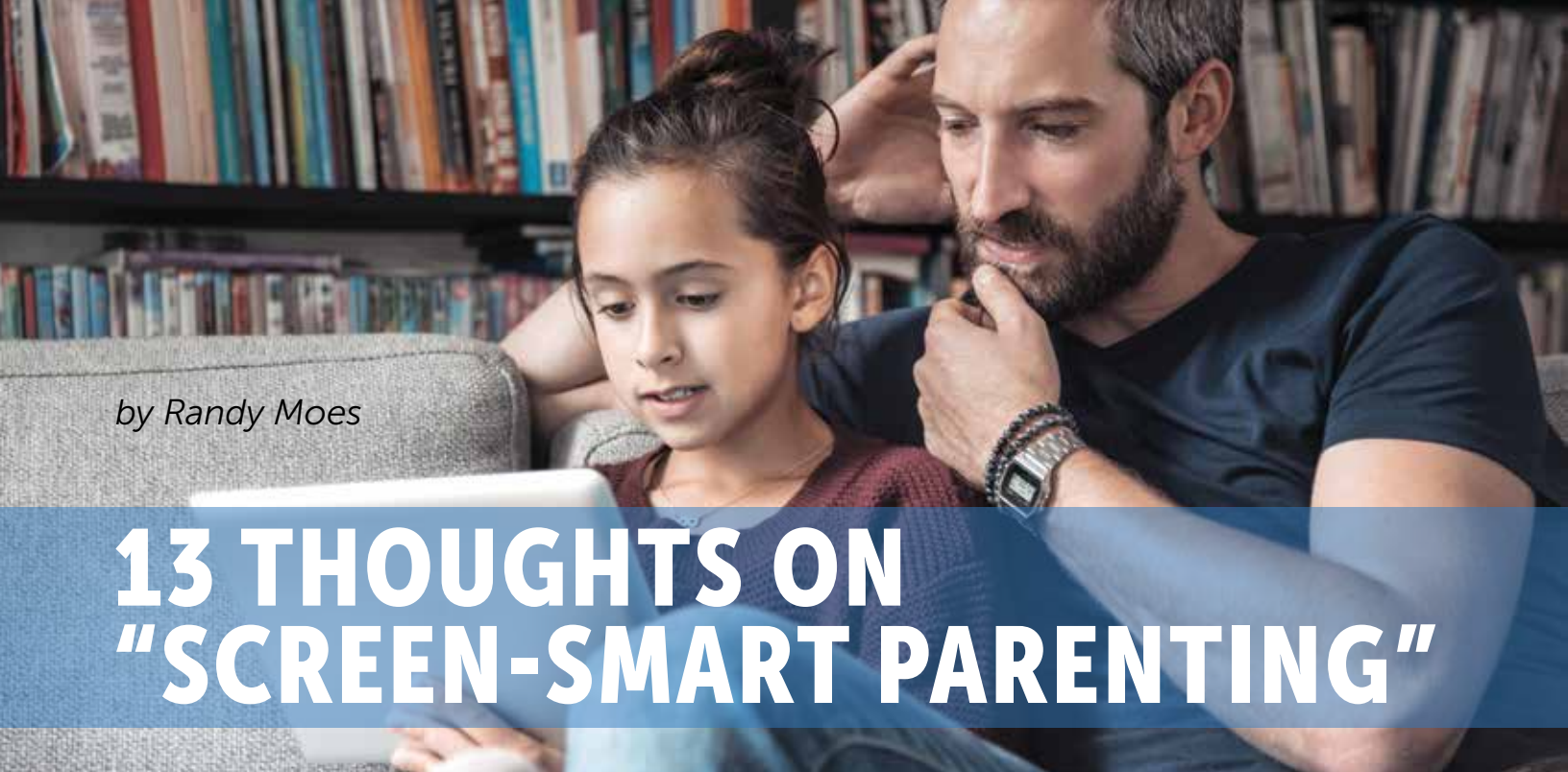
## BUT WHY DON'T WE WANT KIDS SEEING IT?

Sadly, I would say that we have moved in the last ten years from treating it in the "heroin category," to now placing it in the "driving category."

"We don't want you to touch it now, but of course there will come a time when it becomes your right to consume as much of it as you like," is essentially the message. And yet the schizophrenic nature of this is obvious when you think about why it is we don't want children seeing it. Isn't it because we know it pollutes their minds? Isn't it because we instinctively know that it demeans and degrades them? Isn't it because we are well aware that it will give them a terribly unhealthy and warped view of the opposite sex? Of course it is, but are we really naïve enough to think that it doesn't have the same sorts of effects on adults?

But they're adults, and we can't stop their rights, can we? And, of course, if we did enact a law that bans it all, such a law, at the point we currently find ourselves at, would be as effective as King Canute commanding the sea to go back. What I am suggesting is that our culture urgently needs to stop looking at the main problem as being one of trying to prevent pornography falling into the hands of children. That is only a byproduct of the much larger problem society needs to acknowledge: the normalization of pornography among adults. RP

*Rob Slane is the author of "A Christian and Unbeliever Discuss: Life, the Universe and Everything." A version of this article first appeared on SamaritanMinistries.org and is reprinted here with the author's permission.*



by Randy Moes

# 13 THOUGHTS ON "SCREEN-SMART PARENTING"

Parenting is \_\_\_\_\_. You fill in the blank. It is so many things. It is an adventure with no shortage of ups and downs. I am sure all of us have, at times, felt proud and accomplished, and then just as quickly, felt embarrassed and insecure. These beautiful children God has entrusted to our care lead lives that are also filled with adventure and with healthy doses of curiosity.

## SCREEN TIME: LESS IS MORE

This year, we have been reading *Screen-Smart Parenting* in our homes and coming together to discuss its content together as parents. Our children have access to so much now, and the book is encouraging us to be good gatekeepers so that our children do not develop unhealthy habits and behaviors that the Devil longs to exploit. The digital devices in our homes and that many of our children possess provide opportunities for growth, learning and connection. Here are some tips that the book gives for healthy homes and habits:

1. No TV in the bedroom.
2. No background TV in the home.
3. Turn off devices at least 30 minutes prior to bedtime.
4. Teach your children to ask permission to use technology. Make technology a privilege, not a right.
5. Download/buy games and apps yourself, don't let children do so.

6. Oversee YouTube. Tell your children to report any inappropriate games/sites/social networks to you.
7. Keep family computers/devices in as public a space as possible.
8. Don't permit technology use during meals.
9. Designate screen-free times for the entire family.

## SMARTPHONES: YOU NEED COMPLETE ACCESS

Our children need help with time management online and offline. They need protected study and sleep time. They need coaching on how to use good judgment online, and how to deal with sticky and uncomfortable situations online.

If your child has a smartphone:

10. Parents, you should know all their passwords.
11. Start with having all texts come to your devices.
12. Hold the phone when your child is sleeping (set up a nighttime charging station in a common room).
13. Encourage selfies in moderation.

Most of all, our children need for us as their parents to be good digital role models for them. Model that we can be engaged and present with our children without digital technology.

We are now reading the last section


of the book, Part 3. In it, the author Dr. Jodi Gold walks readers through the development of a Family Digital Technology Agreement. Each will look different but it will help shape the healthy practices you commit to as a family. I am really looking forward to completing this for our own home!

## TECHNOLOGY: THE DEVIL WANTS IT FOR HIS ENDS

Ultimately, we understand that this world is God's and He made it good. We believe that there is not one square inch of God's world that doesn't have his mark and stamp as creator, and ultimate redeemer. Satan is not a creator. He is merely creative in how he has distorted and twisted what God has made.

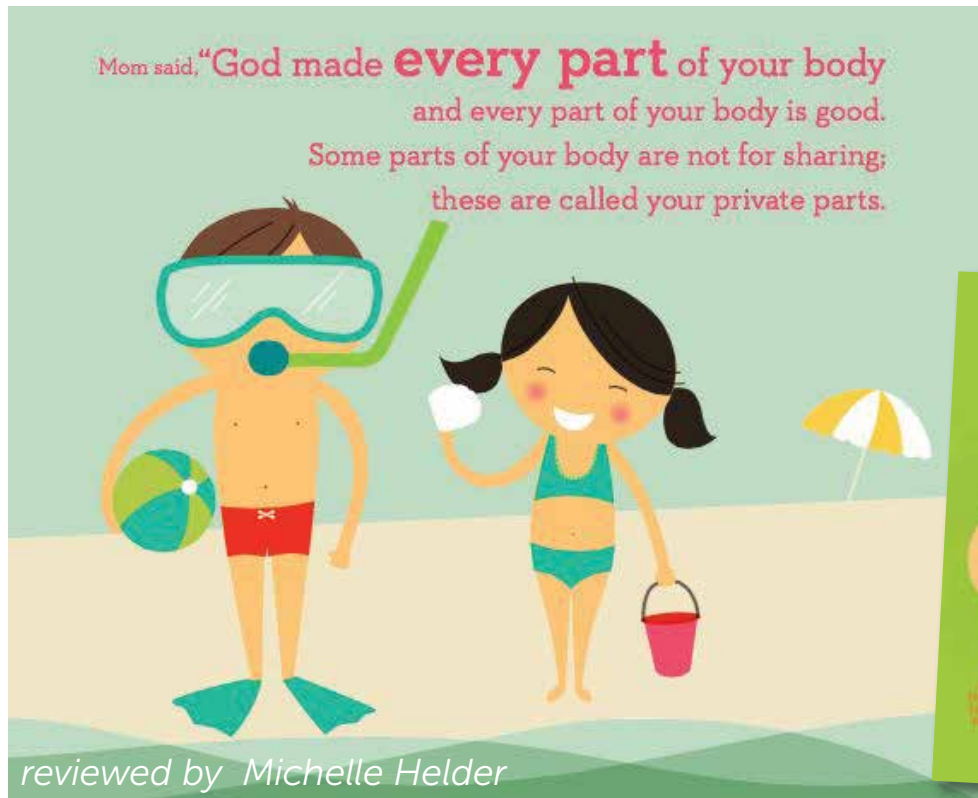
Technology is a gift. It is good - and we see and experience its benefits all around us. But it is also something that needs boundaries and limits in order for us not to fall into traps of unhealthy habits and behaviors that the Devil has set up to exploit.

This is good, hard work, parents. But it is important. And you are not alone!

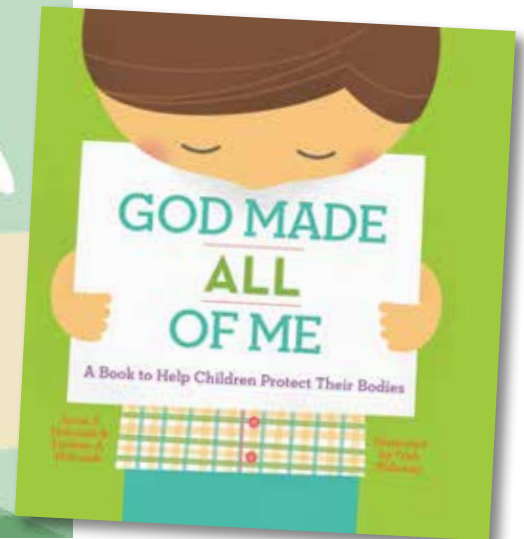
May God continue to give us courage and grace and wisdom as we raise up a generation of young people to know, love, and serve Him. To His glory! 

*Randy Moes is a high school principal at Calvin Christian School in South Holland, Illinois*

# A BOOK FOR CHILDREN, TO HELP PREVENT SEX ABUSE



**GOD MADE ALL OF ME:  
A Book to Help Children  
Protect Their Bodies**  
BY JUSTIN S. & LINDSEY A. HOLCOMB  
32 PAGES / 2015



**G**od Made All of Me is a picture book written for young children to teach them about their bodies, and Who made them, and how to protect their bodies from sexual abuse.

It's a parents' book as well. Right at the front, before the children's section begins, there is a page that is directed to parents where the authors state their goals and their reasons for writing this book. And it also ends with a couple pages for parents/caregivers with 9 ways to protect our children from sexual abuse.

The bulk of the book happens between these notes for parents. It is a story of a family with young children, and it starts off with quoting Genesis 1:31 "God saw everything He had made. And it was very good." This quote is the springboard for the conversation that happens between the children and the parents

in the book in regards to the children's bodies. The book also quotes from Ps. 139 and Ps. 28. Using this dialogue between the children and parents, the book goes through different scenarios the children may find themselves in and gives ways for the children to respond in such circumstances, all with the premise that God made their bodies special so no one is allowed to touch them.

I highly recommend this book for young children aged 8 and under. It deals with a topic that, as parents, we don't always know how to talk to our children about, yet it is so, so important that we do. In fact, I find this book so valuable that I now include it as a recommendation every time I train people in how to prevent child sexual abuse. What a blessing then that God has used these authors to write this book to help us out. I love that the whole book

is based on God, His creation of us, and His Word. I also think it very wise of the authors to have it written the way they do: a dialogue between parents and their children, including different situations children may find themselves in. Although I found some of it a bit repetitive, my children did not. But then again, what child doesn't like a book repeated?! If you have young children, I encourage you to get this book. You will not regret it.

*Michelle Helder has done presentations in Southern Ontario on what parents can do to prevent sexual abuse. In a 3-hour workshop, she facilitates and leads discussions, using the Stewards of Children video and an interactive workbook. If you are interested in this very valuable workshop, you may contact her at [michelle.helder@gmail.com](mailto:michelle.helder@gmail.com).*



# MONEY, SEX, AND POWER

## 3 Challenges and 3 Opportunities

by Reuben Bredenhof

If someone sees you reading John Piper's latest book, they might raise an eyebrow at the title: *Money, Sex, and Power*? Sounds like it has all the makings of a sleazy novel about some political scandal. But the title has an important opening: *Living in the Light*. John Piper wants to show us, from Scripture, how Christians can steward the gifts of *money*, *sex*, and *power* in a God-honoring way. How do we let God's light shine onto these three areas of life?

### THEY CAN BE ABUSED ...OR PROPERLY USED

Of course these three areas can cause great problems, which might leave us suspicious of all three.

- We hear *money* and we think *greed* and *materialism*.
- We hear *sex* and we think *porn* and *affairs*.
- We hear *power* and we think *pride* or *hierarchy*.

In conversations and preaching and

*God did not create  
money, sex, and  
power to be  
snares for us*

articles we're accustomed to hearing about all the temptations and harms and abuses. After a while we might despair that they can be used for anything good.

But God did not create money, sex, and power to be snares for us – He had holy purposes in mind. With them we can glorify God, and with them we can serve our neighbor.

### THEY SHOW WHO, OR WHAT, WE WORSHIP

Using Romans 1 as his central text, Piper shows how these three gifts – and in fact all created things – began as God's good blessings to humanity. They have only become loaded with danger because humans have chosen to exchange the glory of God for images. In the ultimate foolishness, we would rather worship a creature than the Creator.

In that sense, the gifts of money, sex, and power, are fundamentally the same: they are means for worship. Through the way that we choose to use these three things, we display what is supreme in our life. Is God supreme? Or is it our fine house and our foreign holidays? To me, is the most important thing the reputation and influence that I have with others? Do I worship at the digital altar of sexual pleasure? If so, then I have exchanged the glory of God for images.

### SEX AS A GOD SUBSTITUTE

Getting back to the book's title, some definitions are probably helpful. When Piper talks about *money*, he means money as a cultural symbol by which we show what is valued.

By *sex* he means the experience of erotic stimulation, where we seek to get the experience or to give it.

And *power* is the capacity to get what you want, whether through physical strength, or attractiveness, the use of resources, or a position of authority.

Each of these gifts, Piper rightly insists, is neutral. For instance, power can be turned to a good purpose (when we use our position to teach and influence someone) or to an evil purpose (when we do things in order to win praise and recognition). Power becomes a moral issue because of the rightness or wrongness for which you use it. It's like handling a live wire: that electricity can be used for your benefit, or it can electrocute you.

The devil also employs each of these gifts, but only to tell us poisonous lies. God gave us a uniquely beautiful gift in sexual pleasure, and in this pleasure a husband and wife can taste a little something of the Lord's goodness. But the lie we hear constantly is that erotic stimulation is actually to be preferred to God; this relationship, or this rush of pleasure, is able to satisfy us and give true fulfillment. Piper argues that the

world's view of sexuality is so disordered exactly because our relationship with God is so disordered. When God is no longer our greatest joy and we're not living in his light, it's little wonder that our search for satisfaction leads to such dark places.

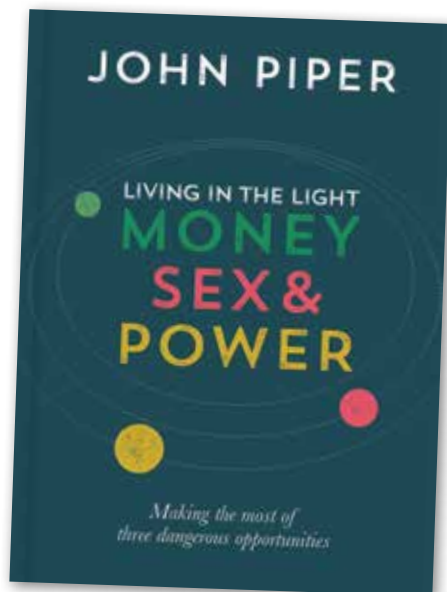
## RESTORING THESE GIFTS

The devil and the world have stolen what belongs to God. But if money, sex, and power began as God's good gifts, they can also be restored to their proper place.

To be sure, the Bible isn't a self-help book about maximizing our potential in these three areas. The Bible is about our fall into blindness and folly, and how God has intervened to rescue us through Christ his Son. Only when we have received God's grace do we begin to understand that He is to be desired far more than money, sex, or power. We also start to see how these same gifts can be deployed positively, that these three challenges can be opportunities to glorify God.

If you have read any of John Piper's other books, then in this one you will hear a clear echo of what has been the central theme in his preaching and writing for decades: God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. In this book too, Piper shows that when God is exalted as the supreme value in the human heart, then money, sex, and power start to find their proper place in orbit around the LORD.

A book (or a sermon) about these three topics can quickly become moralistic, where the message basically consists of warnings against all the things that we should not do, or encouragements about all the things that we need to do: "Don't visit this kind of website. Don't be greedy. Give more money to the church. Be humble." While a reader might wish that Piper had offered a few more examples of how to deploy these gifts positively, he has avoided moralism – and its first cousin legalism – by pointing us to the glory of the Triune God. The LORD has saved us from the misery of sin, and He has allowed us to have communion with him. This is the greatest pleasure, the




BY JOHN PIPER

162 PAGES, 2016

FREE AT: [WWW.DESIRINGGOD.ORG/BOOKS](http://WWW.DESIRINGGOD.ORG/BOOKS)

greatest treasure, and our truest identity. In a direct way, this book asks us to consider where the centrality of God is not holding sway. Are there ways in which money, sex, or power have moved to the center of your life? Then it's time to discover again the greatness of the Triune God.

In a sense, Piper seems to offer what is a simple solution to the complicated problems surrounding money, sex, and power. It certainly doesn't set out to answer the tough questions that Christians and churches deal with, whether about sex addictions, debt management, marriage reconciliation, or whatever else. But it does put these challenges in the right context: money, sex, and power are not nothing, but they're not everything either. "When we learn to enjoy God in and above them all, these gifts will find their fullest goodness, and they will shine for his greatest glory."

You can get the print edition online or at your local Christian bookstore, while the e-book version can be had for free at [www.desiringgod.org/books](http://www.desiringgod.org/books). 

*Reuben Bredenhof is the pastor of Mount Nasura Free Reformed Church of Australia.*



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A church cross somewhere in the middle of Seoul, South Korea.

Picture credit: Shutterstock.com

# WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN KOREA

## The remarkable growth & suffering of Christianity in 20th century Korea

by Michael Wagner

Christianity is originally an Asian religion. It can seem strange to think of Christianity that way now because currently, Christianity has less presence in Asia than perhaps any other continent. That's largely because Islam violently expunged most Christians from Asia hundreds of years ago.

However, in one part of Asia, Christianity has been growing since the beginning of the twentieth century. South Korea probably has the strongest presence of Protestant Christianity of any Asian country.

Yet life for Christians in Korea has not always been easy as is clear from its numerous martyrs during the twentieth century. Their sure confidence in God, even in the face of death, is an example to us.

### 1832 – PROTESTANTISM ARRIVES IN KOREA

While there may have been a Roman Catholic presence in Korea from as early as the 1500s, it wasn't until 1832 that the first Protestant missionary, a German, came to visit Korea. However, he was in the country only briefly. It was thirty-three years before another Protestant missionary arrived.

In 1865, Rev. Robert Thomas, a Welshman, boarded an American ship, *The General Sherman*, to take gospel tracts and Bibles from China to Korea. However, many Koreans were suspicious and fearful of the intentions of those on that ship, and therefore set it on fire. As crewmembers swam ashore, the Koreans killed them. Rev. Thomas made



it to shore with some of his Christian literature, but he was killed as well.

Years later, in 1893, American missionaries of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches established permanent residences in Pyongyang, Korea. The following year, as a result of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895, in which China and Japan fought over the Korean Peninsula) Christians in that city fled into the countryside. They shared the gospel with others, and by the war's end, many Koreans had become Christians. As missionary William Blair put it,

“God’s Spirit had been using those days of war and peril to make men welcome the message of his love and the comfort of the gospel.”

### 1901 – WILLIAM BLAIR ARRIVES

The missionaries visited each new group of Christians. However, there were too few missionaries to keep up with all the work because of the large number of new converts. Additional help was requested from America. William Blair was a young missionary who responded to this call and went to Korea. He arrived in 1901 under the auspices of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

Blair later put pen to paper to record his experiences in Korea, and he is one of the two authors of the recently republished *The Korean Pentecost and the Sufferings Which Followed*. His first-hand account of what God did in those early years make up the first part of the book. (The second half, by his son-in-law Bruce Hunt, covers the period of Japanese persecution and then the post-World War II Communist persecution of the Christians in North Korea.)

Upon his arrival, Blair’s first task was to learn the Korean language. Then he began his missionary work in earnest.

Interestingly, he found that the fact that Jesus was not an American made Christianity more appealing to Koreans. In his words, “It makes a world of difference to an Oriental to know that Jesus was born in Asia.”

Blair and the other Presbyterian missionaries carried on their regular tasks

of evangelism, Bible study, catechizing, baptizing, etc. year after year. The success of their efforts led them to set up an autonomous Korean Presbyterian Church in 1907. However, Korea was under Japanese occupation, and a strong anti-Japanese and anti-foreigner nationalism was taking hold in Korea. Even Korean Christians were caught up in this nationalism. Some of the anti-foreigner sentiment was directed towards the American missionaries by Korean Christians.

### 1907 - THE KOREAN REVIVAL

It was during this time of crisis that a large, days-long Bible study class for men was held in a Presbyterian church in Pyongyang, early in January 1907. American missionaries and Korean pastors took part in leading the meetings. About 1,500 men attended in the evenings.

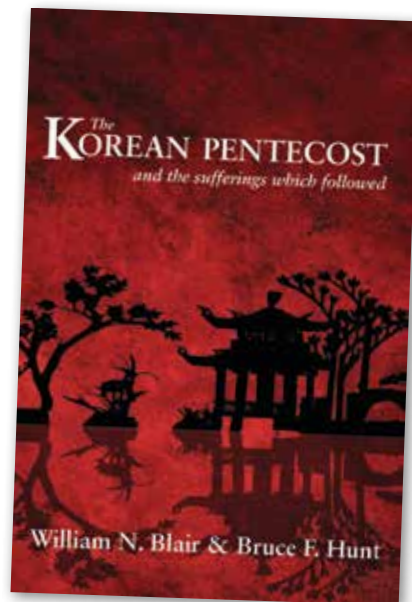
On the second night of these meetings, Blair writes, “a sense of God’s nearness, impossible of description” was felt. A Korean pastor called upon the men to pray. According to Blair:

“As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping.”

The following night was even more unusual. Early on, one of the Korean elders publicly confessed to the sin of personally hating William Blair. He then asked Blair to forgive him and to pray for him. As Blair began to pray,

“It seemed as if the roof was lifted from the building and the Spirit of God came down from heaven in a mighty avalanche of power upon us.”

Men throughout the meeting began to pray aloud, some lying prostrate on the floor, others standing with their arms outstretched towards Heaven. The missionaries had been praying for an outpouring of God’s Spirit upon the people and they realized their prayers



### THE KOREAN PENTECOST AND THE SUFFERINGS WHICH FOLLOWED

BY WILLIAM BLAIR AND BRUCE HUNT  
BANNER OF TRUTH, 1977  
PAPERBACK, 208 PAGES

were being answered. Many of those praying felt a need to publicly confess their sins and the missionaries gave them an opportunity to do so.

### PUBLIC CONFESSION OF SIN

As Blair relates:

“Every sin a human being can commit was publicly confessed that night. Pale and trembling with emotion, in agony of mind and body, guilty souls, standing in the white light of that judgment, saw themselves as God saw them. Their sins rose up in all their vileness, till shame and grief and self-loathing took complete possession; pride was driven out, the face of men forgotten.”

This was an unusual way to conduct a meeting and Blair knew that. But he notes,

“We may have our theories of the desirability or undesirability of public confession of sin. I have had mine; but I know now that when the Spirit of God falls upon guilty souls, there will be confession, and no power on earth can stop it.”

After this series of meetings, the men

returned home with a new enthusiasm and a special closeness to God.

“Everywhere the story was told the same Spirit flamed forth and spread till practically every church, not only in North Korea, but throughout the entire peninsula had received its share of the blessing.”

Those were exciting times for Christians in Korea. Unfortunately, as Bruce Hunt relates in his portion of *The Korean Pentecost*, severe hardship and persecution were just around the corner.

### JAPANESE OPPRESSION

As mentioned, Korea was under Japanese occupation. The Japanese hated Christianity because they saw it as a threat to their authority. Some Christians were arrested and tortured.

The situation became worse shortly after the end of World War One. With President Woodrow Wilson advocating for the self-determination of small nations, many Koreans felt a need to speak out on behalf of their own country's independence. Hunt writes:

“A Declaration of Independence was secretly drawn up and signed by thirty-three prominent leaders in Korea. Fifteen of the signers, including the Rev Kil Sunjoo, a nationally beloved evangelist and Bible teacher, were Christians.”

The Japanese reacted violently to that declaration, wounding and killing many Korean nationalists. Because Christians were prominent among the nationalist leaders, Christians in general were singled out by the Japanese for punishment. Many of them were killed.

A major conflict erupted over education. The Japanese authorities demanded that all schools be registered with the government and use government-approved curriculum. Religious – in other words, Christian – instruction was forbidden. Later, the Japanese partially relented and allowed some Christian instruction, but frequently the Christian teachers were not acceptable to Japanese

## *All public meetings, including Presbytery and General Assembly meetings of the Presbyterian Church, had to be opened with Shinto bowing.*

authorities and therefore not allowed to teach.

### COMPULSORY IDOLATRY

Things got even worse when the authorities began requiring all teachers and students to regularly bow before Shinto shrines to demonstrate that they were loyal subjects. Shinto is a religion in which the Japanese Emperor is considered to be a deity. Bowing to a shrine shows loyalty and submission. This is analogous to Roman times when Christians were expected to offer incense to the Roman Emperor, who was also considered divine.

At first, Christians knew they could not participate in idolatry by bowing to the shrines. Gradually, however, compromise set in and some rationalized the activity.

Eventually the Japanese decided they wanted all subjects to bow to Shinto shrines regularly. All public meetings, including Presbytery and General Assembly meetings of the Presbyterian Church, had to be opened with Shinto bowing. Many Christians broke under the strain and went along with this idolatry. The church became divided between a majority who compromised with Japanese demands and a minority who determined to remain faithful to God.

The Presbyterian General Assembly itself compromised and declared (under heavy government pressure) that shrine worship was not idolatry. As a result, faithful Christians withdrew from the Korean Presbyterian Church to worship separately. Hunt writes:

“Following the example of the Scottish Covenanters, a statement was drawn up, pointing out the biblical teaching on shrine worship and the necessity of breaking completely from those who condoned idolatry. From then on, no one was baptized who did not give

consent to this document, and no one was allowed to lead services who had not subscribed to it.”

Those that remained faithful were persecuted, often imprisoned and even killed. According to Hunt, no one knows how many Christians were killed for refusing to participate in Shinto worship.

### 1939 – A COURAGEOUS TESTIMONY IN JAPAN

In 1939, Elder Pak Kwanjoon made an especially courageous testimony against Japan's persecution of Korean Christians. He traveled to Japan with two other Christians to protest directly to the government. On March 21, all three went into the Japanese Parliament, which is known as the National Diet, with leaflets hidden in their clothing. They took places in the gallery above the four hundred Diet members.

When Pak gave the signal, all three threw their leaflets onto the members of the Diet. Hunt writes:

“Elder Pak's leaflet urged the Japanese government to cease from its rebellion against God in forcing shrine worship on its people, lest the wrath of God fall upon the country. Pak's leaflet

- 1) urged that Christianity be made the national religion of Japan, and
- 2) warned that if Japan continued to persecute Christianity, she would be destroyed”

It may be worth noting that six years later Japan surrendered to the Allies after being devastated by two atomic bombs. Could that be a fulfillment of Elder Pak's words? He was arrested and sent back to Korea where he died in prison shortly before the end of WWII.

## 1945 – FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE

Of course, with the end of World War Two in 1945, Korea was freed from Japanese oppression. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union occupied the northern part of the country and imposed Communism. Hunt notes that from the Communist perspective:

“Christianity was interpreted as a political crime, an act of vilest rebellion against the state, ‘the people,’ and therefore deserving of the severest punishment, even death.”

Korea’s northern Christians went from the frying pan into the fire.

Before the end of 1945, Christians in North Korea were being imprisoned. This was just the beginning, for as Hunt writes:

“After the Communists came into power in the northern half of Korea, thousands of Christians in that area, especially Christian ministers, church officers and leaders, were killed by them.”

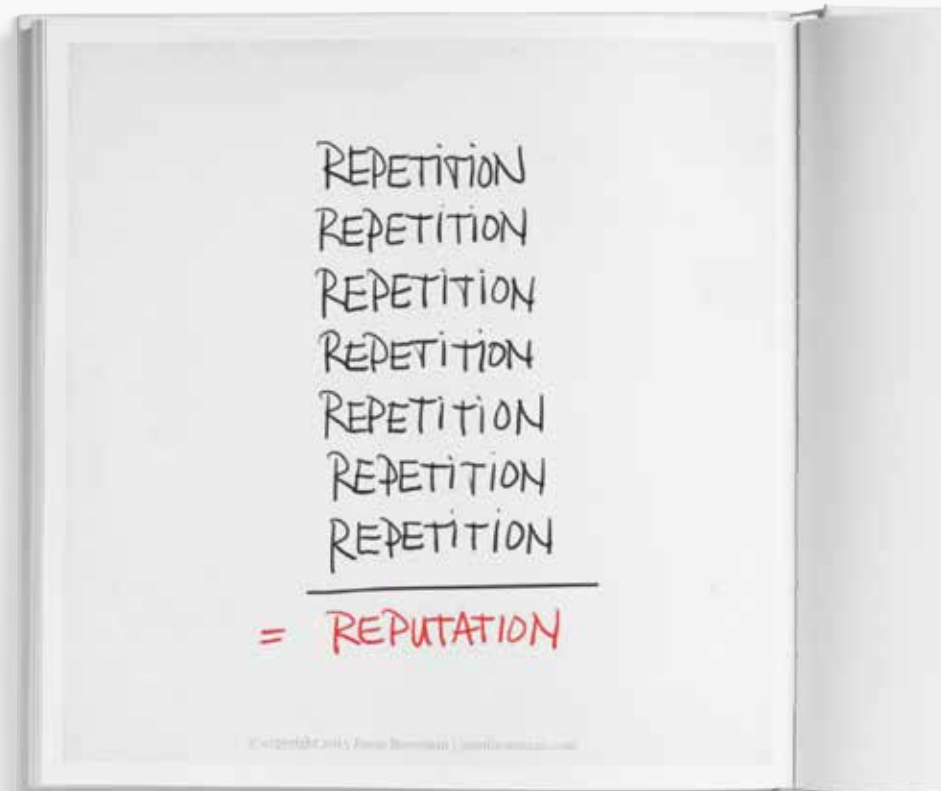
The few remaining North Korean Christians continue to suffer persecution to this very day.

## CONCLUSION

Christianity is commonly seen as a European or Western religion but that is not true. Most of the events in the Bible occurred in Asia or Africa, and Jesus Himself was an Asian. The “Holy Land” is in Asia, not Europe.

Currently, Christianity has little presence in most Asian countries. But since the late nineteenth century it has been growing successfully in Korea. The Korean Revival of 1907 is widely recognized as having had a great influence on the spread of Christianity in that nation. And the faithful testimony of Korean martyrs in the twentieth century should be better known in the West. The Korean Christians have suffered much for the faith but stood strong, assured that God remained with them. We can learn much from their example.

RP



*He who can't be trusted with little  
cannot be trusted with much.*

People do not automatically owe you their trust. Reputations are earned, the hard way, over time... Sometimes a very long time.

A reputation is built with a thousand little “choices.” Therefore some will say, “You are what you repeatedly do.” This is not true. We are not what we do. We are who God says we are. And He says we are His children. God is trustworthy. So as His child and image bearer be someone you can trust. Practice doing the right thing. All the time. Even when, maybe especially when, no one is watching. Don't do this because you need to prove yourself to God or to others, but do it as a testimony that you believe what God says about you. And do it because as an ambassador of Christ you do not want the name of your trustworthy God to be dishonoured on account of your untrustworthiness.

LOOK UP: Romans 8 | 1 John 3 | Luke 16:10

*Excerpt from the new book*



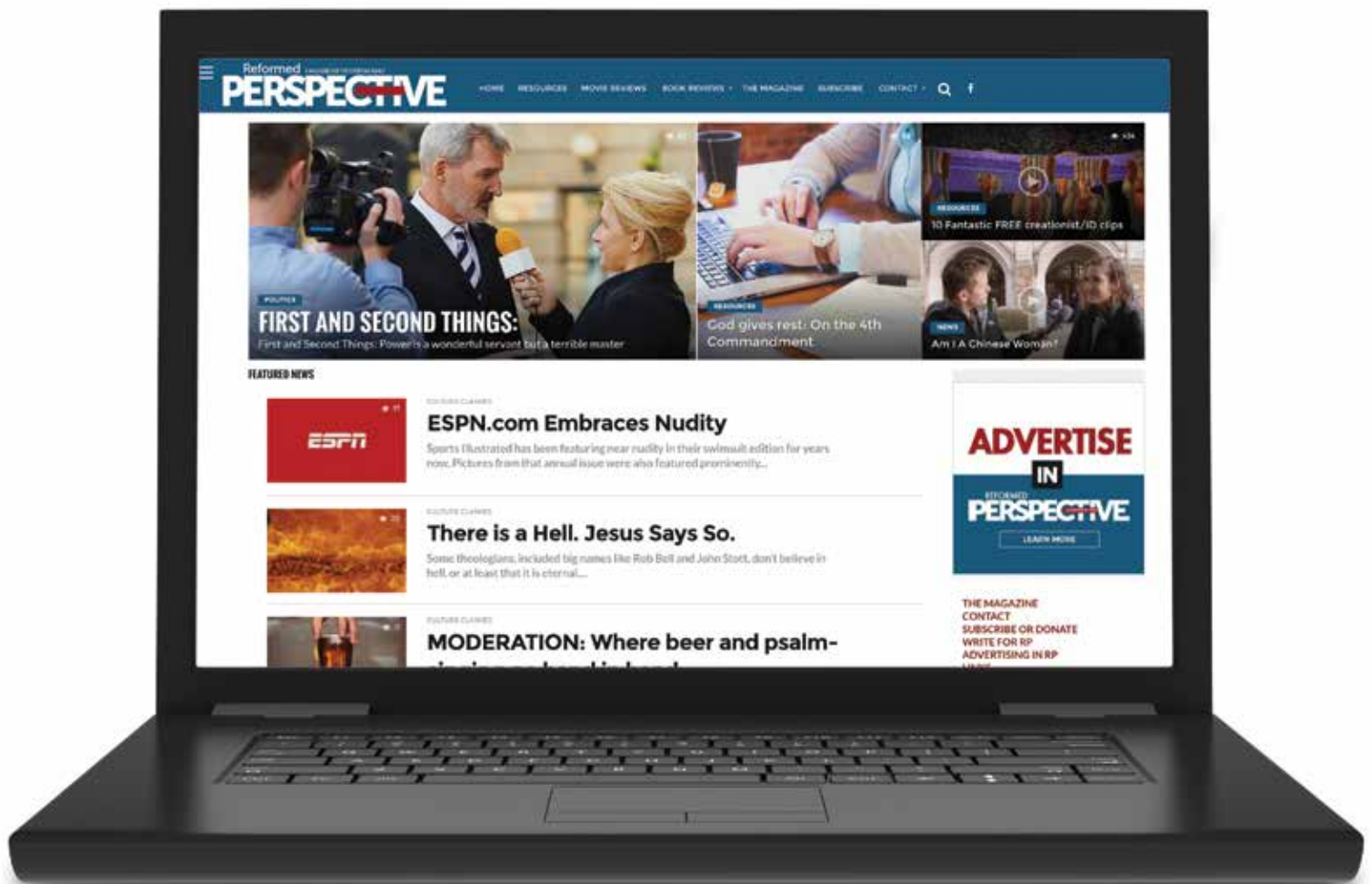
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