

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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PERSPECTIVE

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ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

P.37



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Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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Is Recreational Marijuana sinful?

Scriptural
principles for
parents &
children
to discuss



by Jon Dykstra

God says we should honor the governing authorities (Romans 13:1-6) in as far as they don't require us to violate God's law. So, as of 2017, one big reason that Canadian Christians should not smoke marijuana is because it is illegal.

But if all goes as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau plans, come next summer, recreational marijuana use will become legal throughout the country. So does that change things for Christians? If it stops being illegal, does that mean it also stops being sinful? And if Romans 13:1-6 doesn't apply anymore, are there are other biblical principles we can look to for guidance?

There are indeed. While the Bible never speaks directly about marijuana, God has guidance to give.

1. God calls us to honor our father and mother

We can begin with the Fifth Commandment. In speaking about cigarette smoking, Pastor Douglas Wilson made a simple argument that is just as applicable to marijuana:

- The Fifth Commandment (Ex. 20:12) tells children to honor their parents.
- No parent wants their children smoking cigarettes (or cannabis)
- Therefore, to honor mom and dad, children shouldn't smoke

As Wilson writes: "in all my years of being a pastor I've never met a kid who took up smoking because he was really eager to honor his father and mother."

2. God calls us to self-control

It's no great leap to extend God's condemnations of drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18, Proverbs 23:20-21, etc.), to anything that impacts our self-control (1 Peter 4:7).

3. God calls us to discern the world as it really is

We've compared marijuana usage to cigarette smoking and drinking. In

Jeff Lacine's article "Marijuana to the Glory of God" at *DesiringGod.org* he makes another comparison: to drinking coffee. He notes that while there are similarities between cannabis, and alcohol, cigarettes, and coffee – all have psychoactive compounds – there are notable differences too.

As Christians, our goal is knowing and experiencing the full and undistorted reality of the glory of God in our resurrected physical bodies (1 Cor. 15:12-49; Phil 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 13:12). This is our trajectory as Christians. This is our aim.... We want to see things as they really are.

The Christian use of any kind of psychoactive substance should always align with this gospel goal of looking to see things clearer. We do not want our vision of reality distorted.

Consider this principle in terms of a psychoactive substance most American adults use every day: caffeine. Why do people drink coffee in the morning? To help them to see things as they really are, rather than through the fog of grogginess. The right and proper use of this God-given substance helps us see things as they really are.

He goes on to note this is why people drink at weddings but not funerals – at weddings "moderate lubrication...can be in keeping with reality" since it is a time to celebrate. In this setting "proper and moderate use of alcohol can be a clarifier and not a distorter," whereas at a funeral alcohol use might well be obscuring reality.

But what then of weed? Lacine argues, "both from research and personal experience" that cannabis use distorts and numbs a person's perception of reality. We might expect a regular user to argue that it doesn't numb their thinking but, as Lacine notes, if marijuana is numbing their thinking, that's going to also impact their ability to perceive its impact on their thinking.

There is a reason that marijuana

has long been associated with the couch, a bag of chips, and a television remote. Put another way, marijuana has never been associated with engaged parenting.... studies have shown a high correlation between regular cannabis use and the clinical diagnosis of Amotivational Syndrome.

4. God calls us to ask a better question

Perhaps the most important biblical principle is found in Hebrews 12:1. There we read:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

In a 1997 sermon titled "Running with the Witnesses" John Piper explained that this verse calls us to do better than ask, "Is it a sin?"

In verse 1 there are a couple of things said here as a means to running. It says, "Lay aside every encumbrance and sin which so easily entangles us." Now I remember as a boy the effect a sermon on this verse had on me. And the only thing I remember was the distinction that the preacher made between – he was preaching from the King James at the time – weights (translated encumbrances here) and sins. And he looked out on us and he said, "Not just sins. Don't just lay aside sins to run this race. Lay aside every other weight that gets in your way."

As a boy, it had a revolutionary effect on me. Because what it said to me was – and I speak it now especially for young people – kids, if you can get this, but especially young teenagers and teenagers, though it applies to everybody – what this says is: Don't just ask, "What is wrong with it in life?"

Don't just say about your music,



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about your movies, about your
parties, about your habits, about your
computer games, don't just say, "Well,
what is wrong with it?" Don't just ask,
"Is it a sin?" That is about the lowest
question you can ask in life.

"I am going to do it if it is not a sin.
So tell me, is it a sin to do this?"

"Well, not exactly."

"Okay, that is all I wanted to know.
I am off to do it."

And the preacher said – and I am
the preacher now saying it – this text
says, "Look to Jesus and lay aside sins
for sure and lots of other stuff, too."
Now that is a different way to live.

Well, preacher, as a 13-year-old or
14-year-old what question should I
ask if it is not, "Is it a sin?" And the
answer is, "Does it help me run?"
That is the answer. "Does it get in
my way when I am trying to become
more patient, more kind, more gentle,
more loving, more holy, more pure,
more self-controlled? Does it get in
my way or does it help me run?" That
is the question to ask.

Ask the maximal righteousness
question, not the minimal
righteousness question. That was the
difference it made in my life.

And I have been asking it this
way ever since then, though I didn't
always live up to it. I am not making
any claim that from age 12 on I did
some great spiritual thing. But oh,
I had a trajectory that was so much
better than the minimalist ethic that
merely asks, "Well, what is wrong
with it? What is wrong with it?" I
don't even want to talk about what is
wrong with it. Let's ask, "Does it help
me run?"

You know why that question isn't
very often asked? Because we are
not passionate runners. We don't
want to run. We don't get up in the
morning saying, "What is the course
today? What is the course of purity?
What is the course of holiness? What
is the course of humility? What is
the course of justice? What is the
course of righteousness? What is the
course of love? What is the course of
self-control? What is the course of

courage? O God, I want to maximize
my running today."

If you have that mentality about
your life, then you will ask, not,
"How many sins can I avoid?" but,
"How many weights can I lay down
so that I am fleet-footed in the race
of righteousness?"

Conclusion

Come July 2018, when recreational
marijuana usage becomes legal across
Canada, there may be Christian young
people looking for guidance on this
issue. If they're asking, "Is marijuana
use sinful?" then the answer is, "It
certainly can be. It can be a violation
of the Fifth Commandment, or God's
prohibition against drunkenness."

But Pastor Piper's point is the
more important one. If we are God's
children then our concern isn't simply
with obeying Him, but loving Him.
Then the right question isn't "Is it
sinful?" but rather, "Does this bring
me closer to God, or push me further
away?" and "Is it helpful?"

Those are better questions, and
maybe more uncomfortable questions.
As John Piper says, we are not always
passionate runners. Whether it's the
shows we watch, the music we listen
to, the friends we hang out with, the
career we pursue, the people we date,
or the psychoactive compounds we
ingest, there may be favorite "weights"
we just don't want to throw off. If so,
let's pray then that God will so change
our hearts that we want to make our
whole lives pleasing to Him. RP

The excerpt from John Piper's sermon
is used with permission and the whole
sermon, "Running with the Witnesses"
can be found at DesiringGod.org. The
Douglas Wilson article "Why Cigarette

Smoking is Not a Sin for

Others. Just a Sin for
You." can be found at
DougWils.com.

Jon Dykstra can be
reached at editor@reformedperspective.ca.



NOTA BENE

News worth noting

The children were abruptly removed from their home, even after the Baars attempted to negotiate an acceptable alternative. It is unclear when their case will be decided, but the Baars have insisted that the caseworkers viewed them as poor candidates because of their religious convictions.

It's important to acknowledge, as Dominic Verticchio, executive director of the Hamilton Children's Aid Society, did, that there are two sides to every story and in both of these cases we've only heard one. That said, when asked if the Easter Bunny was real, Verticchio replied, "It depends who you ask."

Time will tell if these high-profile cases having an impact on the future of adoption and foster parenting in Canada. It's worth noting that using a faith-based adoption agency may not help head off these kind of confrontations – the Alberta couple went through Catholic Social Services. However, if legal roadblocks do occur, one option may be to contact the Calgary-based Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, which is representing both couples. Their website is www.jccf.ca.

As discouraging as these stories can be, Christians must never let them have a chilling effect on their interest in taking in children. There is an acknowledged need for parents willing to adopt and foster, and the secular dogma that committed Christians aren't up to the task must never be dignified. Rather,

Christians should focus their concern on loving children who so often get forgotten in the smoke of social and political correctness.

SOURCE: John Colter's "Canadian couples may have had adoption/fostering nixed because of their Christianity" posted to CBC.ca on Nov. 7, 2017; Matthew Cullinan Hoffman's "Catholic agency denies adoption to couple who hold Christian view of sexuality" posted to LifeSiteNews.com Nov. 10, 2017; Adrian Humphreys' "Christian couple says child welfare removed foster children because they refused to say Easter Bunny is real" posted to NationalPost.com April 12, 2017

CANADIAN COUPLES MAY HAVE HAD ADOPTION/FOSTERING NIXED BECAUSE OF THEIR CHRISTIANITY

BY MARK REIMERS

An Alberta couple filed a lawsuit in November, accusing provincial authorities of discrimination after their application to adopt a child was rejected. The suit claims that Alberta Child and Family Services disqualified the couple based on their personal belief that homosexuality is wrong. According to the filing documents "The casework supervisor explained that our religious beliefs regarding sexuality were incompatible with the adoption process.... The casework supervisor said this stance was the 'official position of the Alberta government.'" The case, is expected to be heard in Fall 2018

This isn't the first Christian couple to make the news this year after running into trouble with

Canadian child welfare authorities. In April, Derek and Frances Baars filed a lawsuit against the Hamilton Children's Aid Society. The Baars, in their suit, claimed a child support worker demanded the couple tell two girls in their care, aged three and four, that the Easter Bunny was real, despite the couple's belief that lying is wrong.



BIOMIMICRY RECOGNIZES GENIUS (BUT NOT *THE* GENIUS) BEHIND THE WONDERS OF CREATION

BY SHARON L. BRATCHER



This past November Vox media reported on the discipline of biomimicry, which encourages engineering teams to include a biologist to help them solve problems by seeing what already works well in the natural world. It's a return to copying designs that the Creator put into place thousands of years ago.

In Christophe Hawbursin's Vox article "The man-made world is horribly designed. But copying nature helps," the illustration he gives of how biomimicry helps is the Japanese Shinkansen Bullet Train. At 170 mph, whenever it exited a tunnel, it caused a sonic boom that annoyed people up to 400 meters away. To get a quieter, faster, and more efficient train, an engineering team was created, headed by Ejii Nakatsu, who was also an avid birdwatcher.

It turns out, that bird connection was key – the team based components of the redesigned bullet train on characteristics of three different birds:

1. The kingfisher: the kingfisher's unique no-splash beak was copied for the front of the engine
2. The owl: the pantograph – the rig that connects the train to the electric wires above – was modeled after the owl's feathers, reducing noise by using similar serrations and curvature
3. The Adelie penguin: the penguin's smooth body inspired the pantograph's supporting shaft to provide lower wind resistance

By copying designs from creation, the new train became 10% faster, 15% more efficient, and the decibel level was significantly lowered.

Other examples of biomimicry include studying sharkskin to learn to repel bacteria, and studying the self-organization of ants to enable

autonomous cars to communicate with one another. Biomimicry also studies the eco-system to create a circular economy where there are no wasteful byproducts. And recently, scientists have begun a website – AskNature.org – where people all over the world can match problems with solutions advised by "nature."

There is an irony in how Janine Benyus, the author who popularized the term biomimicry, recognizes that the design found in Creation far exceeds that of Mankind's best minds. And yet she doesn't see a better Mind behind any of it, choosing instead to credit these wonders to mindless evolution working over the last 3.8 billion years. As the apostle Paul might put it, she worships and serves "created things rather the Creator" (Rom. 1:25). But how wonderful it is to be reminded of just how much humans can learn from the genius of our God who declared all the creatures He made "good."

SOURCE: Christophe Hawbursin's "The man-made world is horribly designed. But copying nature helps," posted to Vox. com on Nov. 9, 2017

SURVEY: THE USA IS A NATION OF HERETICS

BY MARK REIMERS

A survey conducted last year by LifeWay Research and commissioned by Ligonier Ministries has found that most core Christian beliefs are lost on Americans in general. The survey of 3,000 Americans found that the belief in the Trinity and in the dual nature of Christ (divine and human) were the only basic

doctrines that clear majorities still affirm. The rest, according to a compilation from LifeWay writer Bob Smietana, is abysmal:

- More than half believe Jesus is "the first and greatest being created by God."
- 64% believe God accepts the worship of all religions
 - 65% say that though everyone sins a little, most people are good by nature
 - 74% believe the "smallest sins" don't earn eternal damnation

- 60% believe that "everyone eventually goes to heaven"...although half of those still affirm that belief in Jesus is the only means of salvation

Things weren't much better among evangelical Christians. The survey identified is evangelical only those who affirmed that the Bible as their highest authority, personal evangelism is important, and trusting in Jesus' death on the cross is the only way of salvation. Nearly half of this group still believes that God accepts the worship of all religions. Evangelicals are also more likely than others to say heaven is a place where all people will ultimately be reunited with their loved ones.

Shane Morris analyzed the results at *TheFederalist.com* and concluded that the leavening power of the Christian faith is all but gone when the specifics of its claims are rejected or no longer known.



PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE: WOULD IT BE WRONG TO REFER?

BY JON DYKSTRA

Even before euthanasia was legalized in Canada, Christian and other pro-life medical professionals were being pressured to go along. The final report of the Expert Advisory Group on Physician-Assisted Dying asked that all healthcare providers be required to:

- inform patients of all end-of-life options, including physician-assisted dying, regardless of their personal beliefs.
- either provide a referral or a direct transfer of care to another health care provider or to contact a third party and transfer the patient's record.

These demands aren't going away. As ARPA Canada's Colin Postma has noted:

"the policy in Ontario requires doctors to provide someone who requests euthanasia or assisted suicide with an effective referral to another doctor, if they refuse to carry out the killing themselves."

"Jesus told us knowing the truth sets us free. Believing lies enslaves people....Christ also told us the greatest commandment includes loving God with our minds. That means dusting off grandpa's Bible, and revisiting a catechism or confession."

Morris is correct. The de-emphasis on pure doctrine and the preaching and authority of Scripture will, over the course of a few generations, lead to overt paganism. One or two generations may still retain all of the language and forms of their cultural faith. But inevitably, a succeeding generation will view the empty forms of religion and ask "why?"

Then the answer will be a deafening silence.

SOURCE: Bob Smietana's "Americans Love God and the Bible, Are Fuzzy on the Details" posted to LifeWayResearch.com on Sept. 27, 2016; G Shane Morris's "Survey finds most American Christians are actually heretics" posted to TheFederalist.com Oct. 10, 2016

It's because we're going to continue to hear these demands that we need to have a ready response to them. So should Christian doctors and nurses be willing to advise patients about all their "end of life options"? And may Christian doctors and nurses who would never help patients kill themselves refer patients to other doctors who will? Or would that make them partially responsible for the evil that is then done? We need clarity for our own sakes – if Christian doctors and nurses are going to take a stand against even referring they need to know this is what God requires of them.

So would it be wrong to refer? Sean Murphy of the Protection of Conscience Project says yes, and as simple as his argument is, it's also compelling. In a piece at Mercatornet.com he noted that before Canada's Supreme Court legalized assisted suicide, if a physician had made arrangements of any sort to have someone kill their patient they:

"...would be exposed to criminal prosecution as a party to the offense of first degree murder or assisted suicide, or conspiracy to commit first degree murder or assisted suicide."

In other words, when Canada still recognized assisted suicide as murder, it also recognized that referring for it should be a criminal offense too. Referring meant becoming part of a "conspiracy to commit first degree murder or assisted suicide."

Now that Canada no longer condemns assisted suicide, it also doesn't condemn referring. But we know better. We still understand that assisted suicide is murder. So for us it is still clear that even the act of referring is a step too far.

The Devil wants to sow confusion on this point, because where there is confusion, it is hard to take a stand – who among us wants to risk our career on something we're not sure of? But if we know we are doing what God wants, then the apostle Peter's encouragement in 1 Peter 3:14-17 can give us the courage to stand strong:



"But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.' But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

It's when we are clear in our own minds, that we can make a clear stand to the world. We can share that we think this murder and want no part in it. We can make a compelling case that the government shouldn't force doctors and nurses to do what it would have prosecuted them for just a few years ago. And we can point out that asking doctors to violate their conscience is only going to lead to doctors without consciences.... and who would think that a good development?

Standing with God may bring suffering. But we've also seen how He can use such a stand to bring relief to Christian doctors and nurses. In Manitoba, earlier this month, the provincial government passed Bill 34, which offers conscience protection to medical personnel who don't want to refer.

So let's continue to pray and work. May God give Christian doctors and nurses the freedom to continue their life-saving work, and may He give us all the courage and clarity to speak his Truth to a lost and confused world that so desperately needs to hear it.

SOURCE: Sean Murphy's "Canadian euthanasia raises weighty conscience issues for doctors" posted to Mercatornet.com on Feb 1, 2016

ALWAYS OUTRAGED: WHY CHRISTIANS CAN'T BE

BY JON DYKSTRA



When the weekend edition of the *Daily Mail* reported that British schools were swapping out BC and AD

for BCE and CE to avoid offending non-Christians, other papers quickly followed their lead. As the stories explained, BC stands for "before Christ" and AD is an abbreviation of "anno Domini," Latin for "year of the Lord." BCE and CE cover the exact same time periods, but BCE (before Common Era) and CE (Common Era) deliberately avoid mention of Christ. So this seemed another deliberate rejection of Britain's Christian heritage.

Some of the headlines read:

- *Daily Star*: "Schools scrap 'BC' and 'AD' to avoid offending non-Christians"
- *Express*: "PC gone mad: Schools scrap BC and AD to avoid offending non-Christians"
- *Telegraph*: "To BCE or not to BCE? Common era of BC and AD appears to be over"

Soon after, Christian and conservative new sites like *TheChristians.com*, *The Christian Post*, *Premier.org* and *The Daily Wire* also picked up the story.

But in midst of all this hullabaloo there was a problem. The story that started it all – the *Daily Mail* piece that the other newspapers and blogs referenced (if they had references at all) – didn't have a lot of substance to it.

The headline made it sound like this was happening everywhere:

Now schools are ditching AD and BC in RE lessons to avoid offending non-Christians... but critics blast the 'capitulation to political correctness'

But when it came to specifics, only three (out of 48) English counties were mentioned. And only one was said to have made a change to their syllabus, while the other two had, to this point, only been "urged" by "local authority committees" to make the change – it's not clear if any actual change had been made.

In other words, a small percentage of English schools – anywhere from 2 to 6 percent – may be considering changing from BC to BCE. Is that the sort of story that should get picked up by one newspaper after another, and make its way to North America too?

No, not really.

So why did it?

Because, as the *Daily Mail* and the many media outlets that followed their lead understand, there is an appetite for outrage. So the Mail crafted a story out of very little and, to the unwary reader, it seemed a much bigger thing.

Christians need to guard against



swallowing and sharing this sort of fake news for two reasons.

First, on a gut level, we all understand "whiners aren't winners." Whatever the sport, isn't it the losing side that always gripes to the ref about all the ticky-tack fouls and missed calls? Thus, when we whine, we're misrepresenting our side. If God's people really believe what we say we believe – if we're sure of God's victory – then we won't get stressed when this or that doesn't go our way. Then we won't act defeated, because we know Christ has already won.

Second, if we jump in and also make big of little, it has the effect of belittling what's big. There are real outrages occurring; Christians are being threatened with loss of livelihood and even loss of life. If we're busy getting upset about schools switching up from one set of term that acknowledges Christ as the pivot point of history, to another set of term that, in sticking with the same time periods, unavoidably still acknowledges Christ's birth, then we're wasting our outrage. That's something to keep in mind this month, when we see articles about the annual "War on Christmas." We need to understand God isn't threatened by it, and his sense of humor is even evident in it, as it turns out the term "Xmas" is Christian shorthand for Christmas. Instead of frustration, we can enjoy events like this, marveling at how very often God will arrange things so, even in the midst of their rebellion, the other side can't help but acknowledge Him.

SOURCES: Jonathan Petre and Chris Hastings' "Now schools are ditching AD and BC in RE lessons to avoid offending non-Christians...but critics blast capitulation to political correctness" posted to DailyMail.com on Sept. 30, 2017



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WIKIPEDIA: READER BEWARE

BY WES BREDENHOF



I recently assigned a group of Grade 7-10 church history students a research project. I observed them as they began their work on their personal computers and for many their first stop was *Wikipedia*. On an average day, I would probably check something on *Wikipedia* myself at least two or three times. But who can guarantee that all the information on *Wikipedia* is accurate and unbiased? As it turns out, bias is

also a problem on this website. And that's particularly evident in the realm of controversial subjects like creationism and Intelligent Design (ID).

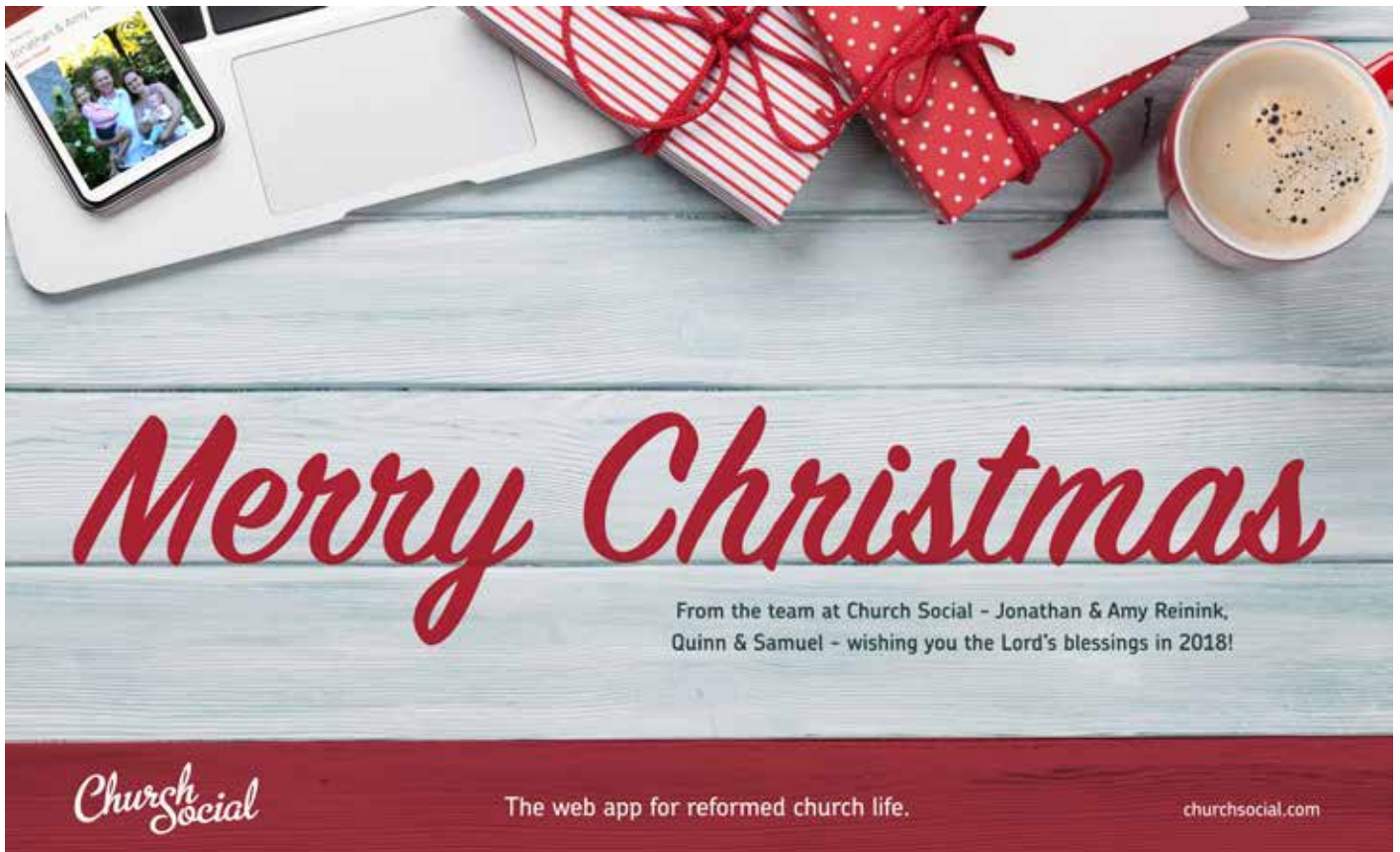
A recent example involved Dr. Günter Bechly, a paleontologist and entomologist affiliated with the Discovery Institute, an organization promoting ID. He is notable for his groundbreaking research on fossil insects. *Wikipedia* used to include an article about Dr. Bechly. However, it was deleted after prejudiced pro-Darwin editors decided he was not notable enough to be included anymore. *Wikipedia* is unreliable in terms of what it withholds from the public eye.

It's also unreliable in terms of how it presents the material that it does include on ID. For example, the main article on ID (as of Nov. 13) asserts in the opening paragraph that ID is a "pseudoscience" and "a religious argument for the existence of God." So *Wikipedia* prejudicially discounts any

scientific basis for ID. Though pro-ID contributors have tried to edit the article (as anyone can normally do), the volunteer *Wiki* editors always switch it back or lock the article down.

Wikipedia can be helpful for checking basic facts like dates. But once one gets into areas of controversy or opinion, its usefulness and objectivity begin to diminish. The problem is that human beings edit it. And human beings all have that heart condition: notoriously prone to deceive and be deceived. While editors of the print encyclopedias of the past were not immune to this condition, because there was a monetary incentive involved there were more checks and balances. Today, more than ever, we have to do our own checking. Apply the wisdom of Proverbs 18:17, "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." Just because you read it on *Wikipedia* doesn't make it true!

SOURCE: David Klinghoffer's "Meet the cast of characters who edit Wikipedia's page on Intelligent Design" posted to EvolutionNews.org on Nov. 3, 2107



PAUL TRIPP'S *PARENTING*

a book summary

by Reuben Bredenhof

What's the best passage in the Bible about parenting? Maybe some will say Ephesians 6:1-4. Others will point to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Paul Tripp has his own suggestion about a helpful parenting passage. But he also wants us to realise that the Bible isn't meant as a topical resource to consult when we have specific questions or difficulties. We probably sometimes wish that that's how the Bible was organized: if you're angry, turn to this text; if you're lonely, read this one. And if you want good advice about raising your strong-willed kids, read this.

The Bible isn't written as a topical study, addressing the daily issues which concern us. From beginning to end it's a story, where God is telling us about His great work of salvation through his Son. And so nearly every text in the Bible reveals something about God, or about ourselves, or about sin, or grace through Christ, or life in this world, or our calling. This broad scope means that almost every passage in the Bible has something to say that relates to the many diverse areas of your life, including your job as a parent.

This is the kind of "big picture" perspective that Tripp teaches in his book *Parenting*. He doesn't provide ten practical steps for raising nicer kids. He doesn't share how-to strategies for the challenges of boundaries and discipline. Instead, he wants to reorient the very way that we look at parenting. What are we really trying to do in our homes? What are our chief goals? And what's the one foundational thing that parents and children need, so much more than good manners, civilized dinner times, and open communication?

THE WAY OF GRACE

The subtitle of Tripp's book says a lot about his approach: "The 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family." He argues that the better way of parenting – the only way – is the "way of grace," or the way of the gospel of Christ.

That sounds vague, but then follow fourteen chapters exploring principles of how God's grace is worked out in the parenting task. For example, Principle 1 is, "Nothing is more important in your life than being one of God's tools to form a human soul."

Or Principle 5, "If you are not resting as a parent in your identity in Christ, you will look for identity in your children."

And Principle 11, "You are parenting a worshiper, so it's important to remember that what rules your child's heart will control his behaviour."

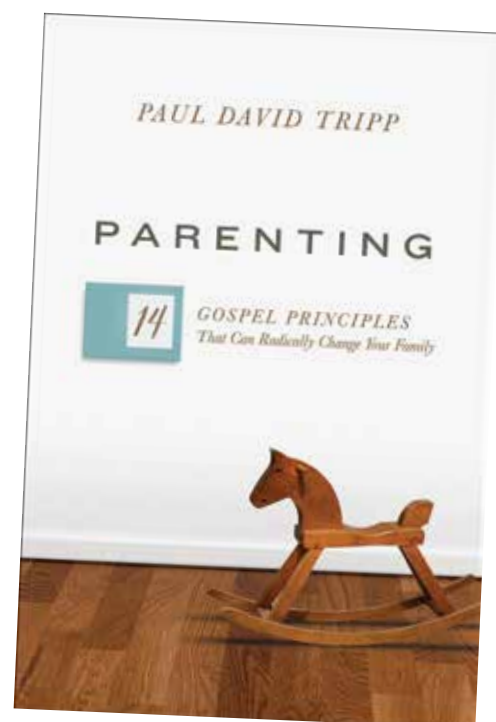
These powerful principles give a flavour of the kind of book that Tripp has written. For each of these norms he shows that the core of parenting resides in the human heart: not just the hearts of our children, but our own hearts as dads and mums. Both their and our hearts need to be changed by the salvation that is granted through the work of Jesus Christ.

TWO DANGEROUS AND DESTRUCTIVE LIES

Our children need transformation because they all believe two dangerous and destructive lies.

First, a child reckons that he's autonomous, a completely independent human being with the right to live his life however he chooses, and to worship whomever he wants.

Second, a child believes that he is self-sufficient, that within himself he has



"Tripp wants to encourage. He says that parents who finally admit that they're inadequate and run to God for help actually make the best parents."

everything that he needs.

If you pay a bit of attention, you can see these lies getting worked out in the conduct of our children, right from those aggravating moments of trying to spoon mushy peas into their mouth, to the frustrations of getting the silent treatment from your teenage daughter. Born in sin, our children desperately need help. God has placed them in our life so that we can help them, with wisdom, compassion and hope.

MAKING PARENTS SQUIRM

As a parent, reading parts of this book made me uncomfortable. This is because Tripp seems to know parents and our weaknesses so well. He knows that we often focus on changing our children's outward behaviours (use of technology, clean language, respect for curfew, etc.), without targeting the heart behind the actions.

He knows that we tend to "lay down the law" when there's been a household infraction, instead of showing grace. He knows that in the heat of the moment we can get sinfully angry and say cruel things

to our children, and then spend the rest of the evening telling ourselves that what we did was totally fair and completely justified.

Uncomfortable, because it's true.

Still, Tripp wants to encourage. He says that parents who finally admit that they're inadequate and run to God for help actually make the best parents. When your weakness is again so painfully evident, "Know that God hasn't left you to the limits of your righteousness, wisdom, and strength" (189), but that He is with you, and He is almighty and gracious. Tripp insists that successful parenting isn't about us achieving our own goals or upholding our own values (e.g., producing punctual, responsible, hard-working children), but it's about us being usable and faithful tools in the hands of God. After all, God is the only one who can produce good things in our children, and He's the only one who can bring them to faith in Christ. As parents, we are unfinished people ourselves, being used by God as agents of change in the lives of unfinished people.

CONCLUSION

Tripp doesn't pretend that it's going to be easy. I love his line on page 208, "Parenting is about the willingness to live a life of long-term, intentional repetition." Our task as parents means that we'll need to do the same thing, over and over. We'll need to say the same things, over and over. That's fine, for God is pleased to use our humble prayers and efforts and energies for the good—and even for the salvation – of the children He's entrusted to us.

This is an excellent book. It's a book to savour: read a chapter, and then let it simmer. Talk about it with your partner in parenting, or talk about it with other parents (whether more or less experienced). You'll be challenged and encouraged.

This article first appeared in the Oct 7, 2017 issue of Una Sancta, a magazine of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is reprinted here with permission.

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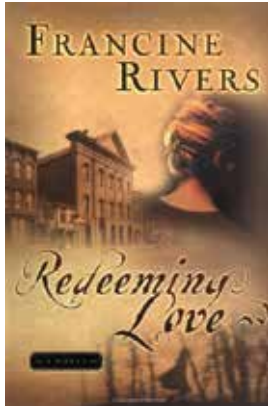
REVIEWS

FOUR GREAT CHRISTIAN NOVELS

By Jon Dykstra

REDEEMING LOVE

BY FRANCINE RIVERS
464 PAGES / 1997



A powerful, poignant, even brilliant novel, it tells the story of Michael Hosea, a settler in the California of 1850. The story is inspired by the biblical book of Hosea, and the true power of the story is in how it forces the reader back to the Bible to reexamine a small prophetic book many have overlooked. You can't help but study the book of Hosea after reading this novel.

If you are well acquainted with Hosea you'll understand why this novel comes with a "PG-13" rating. The prophet Hosea, after all, marries a prostitute, and Francine Rivers closely parallels those facts in her account. So some disturbing subject matter is dealt with that probably isn't suitable for young teens.

Now, I'm always leery of books that purport to be fictionalized retellings of biblical stories, and with good reason. I remember one novel about the apostle Paul that left readers with the impression that he and James actually disagreed as to the importance of works, which is entirely untrue.

But this is inspired by, rather than purporting to be, the book of Hosea – it would be hard to confuse this with the original source material. And yet, it is an insightful parallel of Hosea that might make this somewhat mystifying Bible book a little more understandable for some readers. And it is simply a really good read!

FLAGS OUT FRONT

BY DOUGLAS WILSON
196 PAGES / 2017



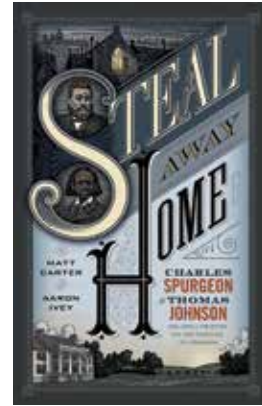
Douglas Wilson has crafted a novel that fits with this year's Reformation 500 celebrations even though it's set in modern day. *Flags out Front* asks, what if a Christian leader took a stand on principle and, no matter what pressure came, just would not back down? What might happen if, instead of wilting under that pressure, he fought back fearlessly?

Now, like Luther, Tom Collins didn't set out to cause a fuss. This "mild mannered president of a dwindling southern" Bible college arrives on campus one day to find a prankster has swapped a couple of the flags at the campus entrance. Instead of the American flag flying above all, the Christian flag now waves from on high, with the Stars and Stripes just below. Collins doesn't know quite what to think. But, upon reflection, he concludes the change is a good one and leaves it.

Then the phone calls start coming. Conservative, patriotic sorts, wonder why the American flag is not in its central place. And he hears from the other side too, from those who'd be happy enough to burn the flag, but don't want to see it waving below a Christian flag. Protests to the right, threats from the left, and Collins quietly stand his ground. *Flags out Front* is great fun, and encouraging too.

STEAL AWAY HOME

BY MATT CARTER & AARON IVEY
290 PAGES / 2017



Two biographies in one, this is about the little known relationship between the "Prince of Preachers," Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and a former slave, Thomas Johnson.

The men couldn't have grown up in more different circumstances. Spurgeon was in the UK establishing his reputation as "the Prince of Preacher" while Thomas Johnson was still a slave in the American South. Johnson's first heard Spurgeon's name when the preacher's books were being burnt by slavery-defenders who didn't like the strong and biblical way that Spurgeon had denounced slavery.

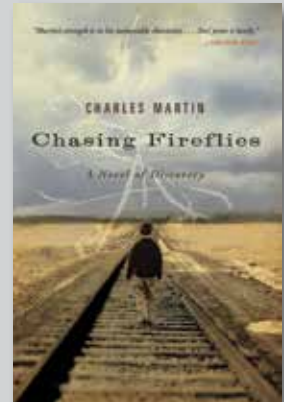
And when Emancipation came, and Johnson was finally free, he too, became a preacher. With his heart inclined to the mission field in Africa, he eventually ends up at Spurgeon's College where the two meet and become friends. Perhaps one reason they became friends was because Spurgeon struggled throughout his life with depression, and Johnson knew something of that too, borne out of his despair as a slave. As true Christians brothers, they are a help and a companion to one each other.

While these two men are both real, I should note this is a fictionalized account. That means that while the broad details are all true, and much of the dialogue is taken from the men's works, this novel should be enjoyed for the general impression, not the specific details, it provides.

CHASING FIREFLIES

BY CHARLES MARTIN

340 PAGES / 2007



This is part murder mystery, part adoption story (times two), and part...well, super hero epic.

The murder mystery is an old one, and the person trying to solve is Chase Walker, journalist, and formerly a foster kid who bounced around from one house to another until he arrived on the doorstep of "Unc" and that's where he stayed. The murder victims are Unc's father and first wife, and while the police think the case is settled, Chase is not so sure.

The adoption-story-times-two involves Chase, adopted by Unc, and a nameless boy who was so badly abused his vocal chords have been damaged, leaving him mute. With Chase all grown up, Unc has space in his heart, and in his home, for another boy in need.

The super-hero of the story is Unc himself, a man so good as to be a bit unreal. That's the story's weakness, but also a lot of its charm. Unc is the father figure that us fathers want to be. He most often knows just the right thing to do or say. When Chase, as a boy, gets it into his head that his father is finally coming to get him, Unc does what he can to sooth the boy's disappointment.

Unc walked up next to me and hung his arms across the fence railing. In his hands he held an empty mason jar with holes punched in the lid. He stood there a long time turning the jar. Inside, a single lightning bug fluttered off the sides of the glass. Every five or six seconds, he'd light his lantern. Unc turned the jar in his hand. "Scientists say that these things evolved this way over million of years." He shook his head. "That's a bunch of bunk. I don't think an animal can just all-of-a-sudden decide it wants to make light grow out its butt. What kind of nonsense is that? Animals don't make light." He pointed to the stars. "God does that. I don't know why or how, but I am pretty sure it's not chance. It's not some haphazard thing He does in His spare time."

He looked at me, and his expression changed from one of wonder to seriousness, to absolute conviction. "Chase, I don't believe in chance." He held up the jar. "This is not chance, neither are the stars."

He tapped me gently in the chest. "And neither are you. So, if your mind is telling you that God slipped up and might have made one giant mistake when it comes to you, you remember the firefly's butt."

Maybe Unc is a bit too wise, too patient and too good, but I was okay with that. That's in part because the author is good at his craft and pulls it off. It's also because there is something genuine about Unc – this is fatherhood as we want to practice it, this is sacrificial love the way it should be, and this filling up a kid the way he ought to be. There is truth here.

Finally, while Unc may not be entirely realistic, the world he inhabits is.

Cautions

There is some grit here. First off, several people are murdered. Also, one of the people Unc helps is an abused girl who later ran away to become an adult porn star. In addition, the physical abuse the mute boy has suffered is detailed and it included someone pinching and ripping his skin with pliers. That is about as descriptive as it gets, but these elements mean this is a book only for adults and older teens.

Another caution would be about the hero's faith. While God is made mention of throughout the book, Unc doesn't attend church, though that is in part because he wouldn't be welcome. He also has a seemingly superstitious understanding of baptism, going to extreme lengths to get someone baptized shortly before their death. But those will be minor matters to Christians with discernment.

Conclusion

Chasing Fireflies will likely make you cry, so if you don't like sentimental books, don't start it. On the other hand this is so much better than the average tearjerker because Martin's writing is simply remarkable.

{ IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE. } NUTSHELL

BY JON DYKSTRA

WE CAN'T COUNT ON ANY BIBLICAL LITERACY

It used to be, not so long ago, that even unbelievers knew a little bit about the Bible. Ours was a culture with Judeo-Christian roots so it only made sense, even for the most ardent atheist, to read and study the Bible.

I was struck by how much that has changed when a friend told me about an exchange she'd had with a co-worker. The co-worker knew this friend went to a nearby church, so when that church posted a text on the display in front of their building that this coworker found confusing, she knew just who to ask. "I don't mean to be rude or anything, but that message your church put up, well, it just kind of seems racist. Why did you guys post that?" What was the message? The church had posted Psalm 51:7b:

"Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

The phrase, "whiter than snow" is what caught the co-worker's attention. In a world where the phrase "it was a matter of black and white" is being banned from some government departments due to its perceived racial insensitivity, it's important to understand how even the Bible's least offensive parts can be misconstrued and seen as offensive.

My friend was able to clarify things with her coworker. But what about all those who read this and didn't have a friend to explain it? Is that a reason not to post such verses? Or is it a reason to go out into the community to be there for those who have questions and need answers?

CIVILITY 101: DON'T PICK NITS – STICK TO THE POINT

"Today, I said, 'Guys. This classroom is out of control, and we're only thirty

minutes into class.' Inevitably, a student quipped, 'Thirty-one minutes.' I am often having my lesson plans corrected, my lectures scrutinized, and my opinions met with a chorus of 'well actually...' We're supposed to grow out of that impulse to nitpick and into the habit of patiently listening and then critiquing well-formed thoughts. Part of what I'm teaching my students is to put their opponents' arguments in the most compassionate terms possible... not to rip their opponent to shreds over a single ambiguous phrase. A lot of us haven't outgrown it."

- Blogger and ninth-grade teacher
Jasmine L Holmes (jasminelholmes.com)

ON EUPHEMISMS

Christians know words have power. We read in God's Word, that it was through words that Creation came to be (Ps. 33:9) and that Jesus is, Himself, the Word become flesh (John 1:14).

The Devil also knows words have power, which is why he spends so much time trying to manipulate and twist language. The muddy distinction between *gender* and *biological sex* is his work. So too is the push for gay "marriage." This battle was never over legal status (or it would have been over with the securing of civil unions). The goal was to continue obscuring the true meaning of marriage (the devil had previously used divorce, adultery and premarital sex to already get things quite confused), so that the term could be used to grant an aura of legitimacy to sinful same-sex unions.

These euphemisms obscure the truth in all sorts of ways. Consider how the debate might be shaped if, instead of talking about "physician-assisted *dying*," we used the more accurate term "physician-assisted *killing*." And consider, the point that

IntellectualTakeout.org's Jon Miltimore recently made about how we glamorize pornography in the terms we used to describe it. We speak of "porn stars" but in what sense are they stars? Wouldn't "pornographic actress" be more to the point? And instead of "adult entertainment industry" how about the less alluring term: "pornographic movie business"?

Christians then, should be careful in how we use language. We must not go along with attempts to use language to obscure the truth. That's why Pastor Douglas Wilson consistently refers to gay "marriage" as *gay mirage* (and why I make use of quotations marks, which, as my children know, means "not really"). It is why, while we might call a boy named Sue "Sue," we should not call him a girl. Words matter, whether to obscure the truth, as in an Orwellian doublespeak, or as Christians must do, to clarify and reveal God's truth.

SOURCE: Jon Miltimore's "'Porn star': why we should probably lose the term" posted to *Intellectualtakeout.org* on Oct. 26, 2017

GOD'S SENSE OF HUMOR

In Roland Bainton's *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* he shares the amusing story of how William Tyndale found someone to fund his translation work.

A curious tale is related of how he contrived to turn the devices of his foes to advantage. The Archbishop of Canterbury was buying up his translations for burning and commissioned a certain [man named] Packington to scour the continent for more. The man went straight to Tyndale himself and informed him that he had discovered a merchant who would clean out his stock.

"Who is this merchant?" said Tyndale.

"The bishop of London," said Packington.

"Oh, that is because he will burn them," said Tyndale.

"Yea, marry," quoth Packington.

"I am the gladder," said Tyndale, "for these two benefits will come of it: I shall get money from him for these

books and bring myself out of debt, and the whole world shall cry out on the burning of God's Word, and the overplus of the money shall make me more studious to correct the said New Testament, and so newly to imprint the same once again; and I trust the second will much better like you that ever did the first."

And the account concludes: "And so forward went the bargain: the bishop had the books, Packington had the thanks, and Tyndale had the money."

SOURCE: H/T to Dr. Joel McDurmon

ON CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM, AND SPLITTING THE DIFFERENCE

"Some try to split the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism. They say something like, 'I want to be 75% Calvinist and 25% Arminian.' If they mean that literally, then they are 100% Arminian since giving any determinative place to human will is Arminian. Usually they mean that they want to stress the grace of God and human responsibility. If that is what they mean, then they can be 100% Calvinist for Calvinism does teach both that God's grace is entirely the cause of salvation and that man is responsible before God to hear and heed the call to repentance and faith."

- **W. Robert Godfrey**

ON ONE-ISSUE CANDIDATES

"Never voting for a pro-abortion candidate makes you a one-issue voter, as never marrying a serial killer makes you a one-issue fiancé."

- **John Piper**, Sept 17, 2017, Facebook post

WHAT IS TRUE FREEDOM?

In his new book *True Right: Genuine Conservative Leaders of Western Canada*, Michael Wagner explains the difference between what many today understand as freedom and what true freedom really entails.

Link [Byfield] provides a brief description of how the meaning of the word

"freedom" has changed since the 1960s. Freedom [today] means doing what we want rather than doing what we should. He explains the older conservative view this way:

A synonym for freedom is "self-government." If we are self-governed, we can say we are free. It means that we have control over ourselves. And it also means that if we have lost control over ourselves, we have lost our freedom. We descend either to a state of slavery or to a state of anarchy; in our case, the latter.

The idea of freedom as "self-government" is important for understanding the difference between classical and modern conceptions of freedom.

Take, for example, the case of a man who is in a position to view pornography without anyone finding out. He is strongly tempted and is faced with the choice of giving in to the temptation, or turning away from it. In the modern view, true freedom means doing what he really desires, so he views the pornography. This is what he feels he wants, so he does it. He is "free" to fulfill his base desires.

In the classical view, however, true freedom means he forces himself to turn away from the pornography and ignore it. How can this be called "freedom"? Because his mind overrules his passions so that he could do what is

right. He is in control of himself rather than being controlled by biological urges.

When a man gives in to his physical desires he is not free, he is controlled by his physical desires. Every animal gives in to its desires, so in following this path the man who views the pornography is actually a slave to his animal desires. He is controlled by his passions and therefore cannot be considered "free."

You can buy *True Right* by visiting Merchantship.generationalfamilies.net

TREAT ANIMALS LIKE PEOPLE ISN'T ELEVATING ANIMALS

"The fact is that people who think that animals should be treated with all the respect and tenderness due to human beings will end up treating human beings like animals."

- **Michael Cook**

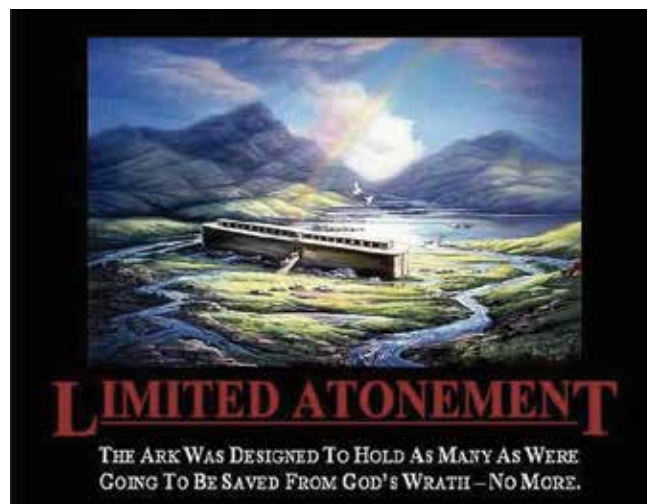
FUNNY CAUSE IT'S TRUE

The Sept 2008 *Reader's Digest* included this true story about the Schmidts, who rushed their four-year-old son Ben to the emergency room after he developed "a terrible cough, high fever and vomiting." As the doctor was examining him he asked the little guy what was bothering him the most. "After thinking it over, Ben said hoarsely, 'I would have to say my little sister.'"

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR REP? DON'T BE

"Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be. If he charges you falsely on some point, yet be satisfied, for if he knew you better he might change the accusation, and you would be no gainer by the correction. If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few blacker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth."

- **Charles Spurgeon**



"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away." – John 6:37

The Gift

An allegory of sorts

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST

We are all creatures with finite memories. As a matter of fact, we often remember things the way we want to remember them and not at all the way they actually happened.

So it was in His wisdom that God told Joshua to take twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan and to raise them up as a memorial. This was so that His people would remember and would not forget that God had chosen them, had gathered them, and had led them into Canaan.

"Why do you always have that small string wrapped around the top button of your sweater, father?"

The father smiled at his son.

"Have I never told you?" he replied.

"No, sir."

The father fingered the small, grey string thoughtfully. It was almost hidden within the confines of the thick wool of his sweater. Then he sat down, held out his arms to the child and took him onto his lap.

"Once," he began, "Once..."

CHAPTER 1

The Eagle awakes

At precisely six thirty, when the sun had already risen, Arend heard the alarm rattle in Cousin Janie's bedroom. He had woken up to it every morning for the past six months. The urgent shrillness traveled insistently and angrily through the thin walls of one of the little houses on Tooker's Road, rudely tweaking Arend's earlobes, making him pull the blanket over his head.

Tooker's Road was not really a road, but a small lane. About twenty-five homes stood next to and across from one another along both sides of a gravel path. The adjoining land had once belonged to a farmer by the name of Tooker. In need of a little money, he'd sold off twenty-five parcels of two-acre lots for four hundred dollars a piece. That's how the houses had been born. Small homes they might be, but they were homes boasting a bit of acreage. Although narrow and barely qualifying as thoroughfare, cars did use Tooker's Road enough so that when you crossed over to the other side you had to keep an eye out.

Arend lay quite still under his blanket, waiting for Cousin Janie to wake up, waiting to hear her trudge across the linoleum tiles of her bedroom towards the bathroom. He had listened for her sleepy footfall every morning this past half year and he continued to be perplexed as to how Cousin Janie could not want to wake up. He was constantly amazed that she would not want to peek out the window to see if the grass was still green; that she would not want to ascertain whether the sky was still as vast and magnificent as it had been the day before; and that her blood was not throbbing with the desire to embrace the very air around her.

Pushing the blanket back down, Arend folded his thin, little arms under his head and stared up at the cracks in the ceiling. One of the cracks ran all the way from the light bulb in the center of the ceiling down to the right corner. It was a crack that split off into other smaller cracks. A fat fly crawled over the naked bulb and buzzed down to the floor. There were many such flies who called this room their home. When the sun shone into Arend's bedroom in the late afternoon, they all vibrated and spun around on the floor simultaneously. Cousin Janie called it their death dance. She vacuumed them up

every chance she got, but Arend rather liked the sound of the buzzing.

The tap stammered water in the bathroom. The yellow faucet only produced thin trickles of water at intervals. It was enough though, to fill cupped hands so that you could splash wetness onto your face and sputter into a towel. He could imagine Cousin Janie standing on the bathmat in front of the oval sink, shivering in her blue nightie. Grinning, he sat up, turned around onto his knees and stuck his head under the green curtains which hung just behind the iron headboard of his bed. There was a robin on the lawn. It was pulling hard at a worm.

Arend itched to go out. He didn't really know what it was he desired to do. Just to go out would be enough. He ached to hear the birds singing their cheerful, early songs in the tree tops; he wanted to feel the dew wet his feet; and he yearned to feel the smooth blades of the lilac bush leaves between his fingers. Sighing deeply, he leaned his chin on the palm of his right hand. Cousin Janie's car stood on the driveway. It was an old, blue Pontiac and rust had eaten away a great deal of the body. Sometimes she had trouble starting it and then she would grumble because the bus was the only other recourse to get to work. The problem was that she had to walk a half mile towards the city bus stop and in Cousin Janie's high heels, that was no picnic.

The tap stopped running. A few minutes later the toilet flushed. Arend lay back down. It was only a matter of a few minutes now before Cousin Janie would pass his bedroom, calling as she passed to tell him that there were corn flakes on the counter and could he please clean up afterwards and could he remember to peel potatoes for supper tonight? Yes, he nodded to himself, for had he not always remembered these things in the time that he had lived here? Always was a very long word. There was a time, he pondered, as he folded the thin arms under his head again, a time before always. Cousin Janie was not really and truly his cousin. She was his mother's cousin and actually she had not really known his mother that well. And his father... well, he did not like to think of his father.

"Arend," Cousin Janie's voice startled him, even though he had been waiting for it, "Arend, the cornflakes are on the counter. Please remember to clean up after you eat and please remember to peel the potatoes for supper tonight."



"Yes, Cousin Janie."

Arend grinned at the cracks in the ceiling. A few minutes later the side door opened and closed, the screen slammed shut, and he could hear Cousin Janie's footsteps patter down the steps and crunch on the gravel as they headed for the car. Then the car door opened and closed, and a minute later, after a bit of coughing, the car started. Sighing in relief, Arend resisted the temptation to peek out the window again.

It was truly the beginning of his day now. Lithely he swung his feet over the edge of the bed even as the car wheels ground over the fine stones of the driveway. Sitting up, he took off his pajama top. Reaching for his shirt, socks and pants, he scooted off to the bathroom. The blue linoleum was cold under his bare feet, but that was no matter. After he had splashed himself in the face and dried off with a clean but hard hand towel, he pulled on his cotton tee shirt. It was a black tee shirt and underneath the crew neck a picture of Davy Crockett, gun in hand, stared out courageously from his small chest. He loved that tee shirt and Cousin Janie literally had to sneak it off his bedside chair for washing when he was asleep or he would wear it all the time. He'd seen the movie "Davy Crockett, Indian Scout" at school the last day before the Christmas holidays, just before he'd moved in with Cousin Janie. And ever since he'd seen it, he'd had a keen desire to be an Indian scout himself.

School was finished for the year now and there would be no bus to pick him up today. He was his own master and could truly do what he liked. Cousin Janie had been insistent that he stay within distance of the house while she was at work. He had faithfully promised her that he would, clearly envisioning within his mind that he could walk a long, long way into the field behind the house and still see the house, and that there was a great deal of exploring he could do while keeping that promise.

CHAPTER 2

Petrus & peanut butter

He cleaned up as tidily as he could after eating breakfast. Diligently wiping the counter clean after he washed his plate and spoon and cup, he even swept the floor with the broom. Surveying the kitchen afterwards, he nodded, quite pleased with himself. Why Cousin Janie complained about housekeeping was a mystery to him. There was nothing to it.

He would leave the potato peeling until later. First he had to get out and see if there were any tracks in the field. It had rained last night and surely if deer had come around, there would be tracks. He had marked their hoof prints before, indented large as life between the wide and growing rows of corn. But today, on this first day of his holidays, he would be able to follow those tracks, follow them to wherever they led.

Making himself a peanut butter sandwich, he scouted

around the cupboards for something in which to wrap his lunch. Finding nothing, he decided the sandwich would have to fit into his back pocket.

Then he was off, the screen door slamming shut behind him.

The next few hours were blissfully wrapped up in the knowledge that freedom was his: freedom to catch tadpoles in the small creek between Cousin Janie's house and the farmer's field; freedom to climb an oak tree and scan the horizon for Indians; freedom to lie down between the corn stalks watching their green leaves gently sway in the breeze; and freedom to lazily observe black beetles lumber past dew puddles on the ground. And then, strangely enough, Arend fell asleep.

"Hey, boy! Hey, boy, what are you doing here?"

Arend groggily opened his eyes. He thought he was waking up in his bedroom and tried to decipher the cracks in the ceiling. But all he saw were the cracks in a face, an old, old face.

"Hey, boy!" the voice repeated, "Wake up!" Then the face smiled and one of the eyes in the face winked at him. "Are you running away from someone and hiding?"

Still lying down, Arend shook his head even as he began the process of sitting up. "No," he said.

"Well then, what are you doing here?"

"School's over and I'm exploring," Arend explained.

"Exploring?" He was a tall, a very tall man. His bony jaw jutted out and his eyes, although one of them had just winked cheerfully, were a piercing dark blue. "So you're not running away?"

"No, I'm not," Arend answered again, and then, because he had been told by Cousin Janie over and over to speak with two words, he added, "Sir."

"Well, I am." The old man promptly sat down next to him, put a finger on his lips and motioned that Arend should keep quiet. The boy was not afraid but rather fascinated. "She'll be shouting in a minute. Don't say anything, mind."

Arend nodded and sure enough, a few moments later a woman's voice rang through the air. "Petrus! Petrus, where are you?"

The man poked Arend with his elbow and gleefully whispered, "Didn't I tell you she'd shout?"

"Petrus, come out this very minute. I'm getting angry!"

"Sometimes Cora gets so angry," the man confided softly to Arend's left ear, "that she turns redder than a tomato. Sometimes I think she might explode."

This so amused him that he began to chuckle and had to clap his hand over his mouth to stifle his laughter. Arend couldn't help it, but he began to grin. They sat in silence for a few minutes while the woman's voice kept on calling and calling. Finally a screen door slammed shut. Arend presumed Cora had given up and gone inside.

"The only thing is," the man went on, sobering up, "I'm so hungry. I think lunch time is soon and Cora does make a good lunch." As he spoke, his face fell.

Arend turned onto his knees and put his hand into his back pocket. The peanut butter sandwich was still there. It had stretched out flat, like a square pancake. He extracted it and held it in front of the old man. "Peanut butter," he whispered, "and you can have half if you like." To show that he meant what he said, he tore the sandwich in two and held out one half to the man.

A smile twinkling in his eyes again, Petrus regarded Arend with joviality and readily accepted the half proffered to him. "You are my friend, and friends give their names. What is yours?"

"Arend."

"Mine is Petrus." Contentedly Petrus took a bite from the bread and began to chew. Suddenly a look of apprehension crossed his face. Taking the half-chewed bread out of his mouth, he put it on his lap.

"I forgot to pray," he said.

"Pray?" Arend repeated.

"Yes, don't you pray?" Petrus didn't wait for an answer, but folded his hands and respectfully recited, "Lord, bless this food for Jesus' sake, Amen."

Satisfied, he popped the bread back into his mouth and resumed chewing. But he regarded Arend carefully as he chewed. "Don't you pray for your food?" he asked, his mouth full.

"I don't know how," Arend truthfully replied.

"Well, you fold your hands and ask God to bless your food. Unless, of course," Petrus added, as he took another bite, "you are going to bed. In that case, you ask Him to take care of you during the night and," he went on as he took another big mouthful, "you also ask Him to forgive your sins for Jesus' sake."

"Oh," Arend said, not understanding exactly but rather taking it all in as if the teacher at school were explaining the new sound in a word.

"So you try it," Petrus encouraged, "Just fold your hands and I'll help you."

"Cousin Janie doesn't pray," Arend whispered, beginning to feel a little uncomfortable, "and I don't know God."

Petrus' eyes opened wide at this revelation and the grooves in his forehead deepened. He said nothing, but took another bite. It was his last bite. "Well," he finally commented, swallowing the oddment, "if you're not going to pray for your food, you may as well give me your half of the sandwich. It's better, I think, for me to eat it because I prayed, and you didn't."

"Does it taste better when you pray?" Arend ventured to ask.

"Yes," Petrus confidentially answered as he took the other half out of Arend's hand, "much better."

They sat for a while in silence, Petrus chewing and swallowing assiduously. Then Arend asked, "Is Cora your mother?"



This set Petrus off into gales of laughter, almost choking on the peanut butter. "My mother?" he finally managed to gasp, "My mother?"

"Yes," Arend replied, "isn't that why she is looking for you?"

"If she was my mother," Petrus explained, savoring his last bite, "I'd have to do what she said. I'd have to come. But she is my sister, so I don't have to do what she says." They sat for another long while in silence, Arend stealing glances at his companion, wondering who he was and why he did not want to go and see his sister.

"Don't you pray for your food?" he asked, his mouth full.

"You know," Petrus eventually spoke, licking his lips, "I'm still hungry. I think I'll go now." He stood up. His tall frame was twice that of the growing corn. Without any further ado, he took several strides through the cornfield towards the ditch. Reaching that, he crossed a small bridge leading to a grass backyard. Then he stopped, turned around, and called back to Arend. "Do you want to come, Arend? Do you want to come to my house and have some lunch too?"

The boy had stood up as well. He was quite famished, his sandwich was gone and, more importantly, he was suddenly lonely. He could see Cousin Janie's house clearly outlined to the far left. He was definitely still within the bounds of the promise he had made her. "All right," he answered Petrus, walking toward him, "I'll come to your house for lunch."

CHAPTER 3

Beginnings

It was a small house - white with black shingles on the roof and black shutters on the window. Situated just a bit farther down the road than he traveled on the school bus, Arend hadn't been aware of it. Jumping the ditch rather than using the miniscule bridge, he landed on the grass with a thud before running to catch up with Petrus. "Won't Cora mind that I come for lunch?" he asked, a bit anxious about the voice that had called so insistently for Petrus to appear.

"No, she won't."

"Will she still be angry that you didn't come?"

Petrus stopped dead in his tracks and looked at Arend. "She never gets angry in front of company - and you are company."

He grinned and held out his right hand to Arend. Arend was about to take it when the old man suddenly bent down and, putting his hands under Arend's shoulders, lifted the boy onto his neck. "Now I am really tall." Petrus pranced around on the gravel stones of the driveway. Arend clung to the grey head, half afraid, half excited.

"Petrus, put that boy down!" Both looked towards the door of the house. It was open and a small woman stood in its frame. "Put that boy down right now and come in, Petrus!"

Arend supposed that the woman must be Cora. He felt Petrus' hands reach up for him and gently lift him down to the ground. Then one of those hands took his own and pulled him along towards the door. "This is Arend, Cora. I found him in the field."

The same piercing blue eyes that graced Petrus' face, were in Cora's - only hers were a lighter blue. "Hello, Arend."

"He's hungry, Cora. I ate his lunch."

"Well then, he'd better come in for a bite to eat, hadn't he?"

There was soup, cornbread and a cup of milk. And if that was not enough to make a belly stuffed, there was also a jelly donut on a stone plate for dessert. Petrus had explained in a rather matter-of-fact way that Arend did not know how to pray and Cora had not said anything about it. But after the meal, when Petrus yawned, appearing rather drowsy with the weight of a double lunch in his stomach, she had taken out a book.

"Are you going to read a Bible story, Cora?" Petrus asked.

"Yes, I am. Why don't you lay down on the couch for a snooze and I'll read out loud. You can listen with your eyes closed."

Petrus obeyed with alacrity and Cora sat down at the kitchen table next to Arend. "Have you ever read from the Bible before, Arend?" He shook his head and Cora smiled. "Well, then it's about time you heard about the very beginning of all time."

She opened the Bible and Arend heard, heard for the first time in his life, the words, "In the beginning God..."

Now there is within every soul on earth the knowledge of eternity - and so this knowledge was also lodged deep within Arend's soul. But when the window of one's soul has been covered over with the dirt of birth for years, this is hidden. But the breath of the Word can blow away that dirt. As Arend listened, the words "In the beginning God..." were blown so violently across his heart that he caught a glimpse, a glimpse of eternity.

"What is the beginning?"

Petrus had begun snoring lightly and Cora absently smiled in the direction of the couch where her brother lay sprawled out. "The beginning," she repeated, "Well, Arend, the beginning is when God was and we were not."

"Where were we then?" And, after a moment he added, "And Who is God?"

If Cora was surprised at his naked ignorance, she did not show it. She merely answered, "God is the One Who made you and me and Petrus."

"And Cousin Janie?"

"Everyone, Arend. God made everyone."

"How did He do it?"

"By speaking."

"By speaking? You mean by talking?"

"Yes."

Arend was silent. He had never heard this before; he had never thought of this before; he had never contemplated the fact that he came from somewhere and that someone had made him. His mind briefly wandered to his mother and father. "Is God still alive?" he asked.

"Yes," Cora answered quietly, "He surely is. He was always alive. He is alive now and He will always be alive."

Arend thought about this for a moment before responding. "My father and mother died."

"Did they?"

"Yes."

Cora said nothing else but waited patiently. There was quiet for another minute before Arend went on. "My Mom, she died when I was born. I didn't know her, but Cousin Janie says she was nice as far as she can remember. And my Dad, he had an accident. He was riding his bike on the road on his way to work and a truck went by and a piece of his coat got caught in the wheel of the truck or something like that. And he was dragged and then he died."

"I'm sorry."

Arend's words had come out in a rush. He didn't know why he had told Cora these things. He had not even spoken to Cousin Janie about what had happened to his Mom and Dad.

"You must miss your Dad."

Arend stared past her to where Petrus was peacefully splayed out on the couch. He did not really miss his Dad. What he did miss was the sense of belonging to someone. His Dad had never spoken much with him and had often gone

out at night, but his Dad had been the person with whom he had lived. There had been foster homes, a lot of foster homes, in the last two years. And he had never stayed anywhere longer than a few months.

Cora put the Bible down. She stroked Arend's head. "I'm glad you met Petrus," she said, "because Petrus needs a friend. I hope you can come over often."

"Petrus is old," Arend said, looking up at Cora and pulling away from under her hand.

"Yes," she answered with a smile, "but I think you will still find him a friend."

"Why does he ...?" Arend stopped, unsure of how he could ask why Petrus was different, was rather odd in the way he spoke and behaved. But Cora anticipated his questions.

"Petrus had an accident a few years ago. He was a farmer and a good farmer. He knew everything there was to know about farming. But a loose beam from the barn gave way and fell on his head. It knocked him unconscious. We thought he might die. But eventually he did wake up and he woke up the way that he is now. He woke up like a child, but a child whose knowledge and faith often puts others to shame."

Arend did not comprehend everything Cora told him and reacted only to the obvious. "What happened to his farm?" he wanted to know.

"Well, my son, who was working for him at the time, took it over. He runs it now."

"What is his name?"

"Andrew Peter."

"Why don't you and Petrus live at the farm with Andrew Peter?"

"Because sometimes Petrus doesn't see danger and runs after the tractor or goes into the bull pen by himself. He has forgotten many things about farming."

Arend nodded. He understood that part. He settled back in the chair as Cora returned to the Bible reading. "In the beginning God.... created the heavens and the earth," and, "Then God said: 'Let there be light.'"

And Arend listened.

CHAPTER 4

A good deal

That evening after supper, the child related the events of his day to Cousin Janie as she was sitting on the couch with her feet up. It was tiring work, she said, standing up as a teller at the bank all day and her feet desperately needed a rest. Cousin Janie was a cheerful, very direct person, a person who generally said what she thought.

"Well, Arend, little cousin," she remarked, her hands cupped around a mug of coffee, "I gather from what you are saying, that I might not have to worry about you being alone all day after all." And that was the truth. She had worried

...eventually he did wake up and he woke up the way that he is now. He woke up like a child, but a child whose knowledge and faith often puts others to shame."

about Arend being home alone all day.

"Cora's going to teach me how to play checkers and parcheesi," Arend further informed her, "and read to me. She has a Davey Crockett book too. And Petrus is going to show me how to shuck corn and hoe the garden and he might even help me raise chickens or rabbits."

Cousin Janie sat up, setting her empty mug on the coffee table. She regarded Arend thoughtfully. "It sounds like a busy summer for you, little guy. But I think I'd better go over there and make sure that you won't be a nuisance - that you haven't misunderstood."

"Cousin Janie," he said, ignoring her statement for the moment, as he watched her stretch her arms over her head preparing to stand up. "Cousin Janie, did you know that God was in the very beginning? And that He made us?"

She did not answer but looked at him rather strangely, her arms dropping down to the couch.

"And I wouldn't be a nuisance," Arend went on, going back to her previous caution, "I really wouldn't." The last words came out rather vehemently.

"I know," Cousin Janie responded soothingly, "but just in case you misunderstood, I think I'll pay them a call. Why don't you get ready for bed and I'll be back in a jiffy to tuck you in."

Arend sighed. What if Cora and Petrus didn't like Cousin Janie? What if she spoiled things for him? But when she came back some twenty minutes later and sat on the edge of his bed, she had a smile on her face. "It looks like it's a deal, little cousin of mine," she said, "Cora's happy to have you come for lunch every day and to have you spend as much time as you like over at her place."

Arend wiggled his toes under the covers and yawned simultaneously. He felt good - the kind of good you feel when it's your birthday the next day and you know there's a present for you in the living room. Once, three years ago, his Dad had actually remembered that he was going to turn four. He had set a present, elaborately wrapped, on the couch. Although Arend had barely dared surmise that the present was for him, he could not imagine who else it could be. His Dad had nodded almost imperceptibly when he had asked. From that time until bedtime that day, he had felt as if there was another person in the living room. It had been that big! He had woken up in the middle of the night. The temptation

to get up and look at the present had eventually forced his feet out of bed. The moon shone in through the apartment window and had guided his steps into the living room. He had stood in front of the couch and stared. Then he had reached out and touched the wrapping - touched it ever so gingerly.

"What are you doing out of bed!"

Startled he had turned around.

"I go to the trouble of buying you a present for your birthday and you, you sneak out of bed."

"No, Dad!" Hands now dangling dejectedly at his sides, he had begun to walk backwards towards the door of his bedroom. As he lay shivering under the covers, he heard his Dad pick up the present. The paper crackled. Then his father's door closed. The next morning the present was gone and to this day he did not know what it had been; to this day he did not know if there had actually been something inside the wrappings. Perhaps there had been nothing.

"So even though I know you don't intend to make a nuisance of yourself," Cousin Janie's voice broke into his thoughts, "be sure to help whenever you can. Offer to sweep, do dishes or just ask what Cora would like you to do. And never touch anything that doesn't belong to you."

He shook his head vigorously. "I won't, Cousin Janie. I would never...." and then he stopped.

It was a good summer, a great summer and, comparatively speaking for Arend, the best summer he'd ever had. He learned how to play checkers, parcheesi and horseshoes; he was instructed on the intricacies of weeding, hoeing and podding peas; and Cora unwrapped Bible stories for him each day. Together with Petrus he fashioned two wooden cages, and when they were finished, Andrew Peter, Cora's son, brought over three rabbits and five chickens, animals which he had bought at the local market.

"Now you be sure to help my Mom in the garden all summer," Andrew Peter sternly admonished when he dropped the animals off, "and I'll consider that payment. Is it a deal?" But he had not admonished so sternly that his eyes had not smiled. Andrew Peter and Arend had shaken on it. Andrew Peter was a tall fellow, not unlike his uncle. In his thirties, he was blond, lanky and clean-shaven. And his face held the same pale blue eyes that his mother had.

"He's a good farmer," Petrus said to Arend once, "I wish he were family."

"He is your family, Petrus," Arend replied, "Don't you



remember? He's your nephew."

"What's a nephew?"

"Well, a nephew is ... is ... family."

"Are you family to me, Arend?"

"Well, no." The boy shook his head as they spoke.

"Are you family to anyone?"

"Well, to Cousin Janie, sort of. She was my Mom's second cousin?"

"Well maybe you can try to become a first cousin. Do you have to study for that?"

Arend grinned. Petrus grinned too. "Was that funny, Arend?"

Arend didn't answer.

"I hope you stay my friend, Arend." The old man patted him on the back as he spoke. They were cleaning out the rabbit cage.

"I will, Petrus," Arend promised, "but in September I have to go to school and then I won't be able to visit as much."

"I'm so glad that I found you in the field. I think that you were a present to me hidden in the corn."

"Yes," Arend answered, "I'm glad too, but Petrus, in a few weeks I will have to go to school."

Petrus now stopped pushing the grass through the wire enclosure and turned his face toward Arend.

"School?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Well, because you have to go to grade two when you're seven and I'm seven."

"Well, maybe I can come and visit you at school? I'm

seventy and it's my birthday in October."

Arend envisioned Petrus cramped into a small desk in his classroom and grimaced. He looked at the old man doubtfully.

"Do you want to go to school?" Petrus went on.

"No!"

"Well, then don't go. Stay here with me."

Arend tugged at some straw and wrinkles appeared in his smooth forehead.

"They make fun of my name in school, Petrus. At least they did last year when I was in grade one."

"Fun of your name?" Petrus was incredulous and clapped his hands together in surprise. Pieces of straw left his sleeves and danced through the air. "You have a fine name. Arend is a good name!"

"Maybe it is," Arend replied slowly, "But the kids said, 'Arend. Aren't you here? Aren't you there? Arend isn't anywhere'. And then they all laughed."

Petrus clapped his hands together again as if to reprove the teasing children. His tall frame backed away from the rabbit coop and then he spread his arms out wide. "Arend means eagle. Have you never seen an eagle?"

"No."

"They are great birds - really big birds. And eagles are in the Bible too."

"In the Bible?"

"Ask Cora." Petrus' attention was diverted by the big doe. She was heavily pregnant and he carefully bent down to peer at her nest, stuffing some more grass into the enclosure, stuffing it right next to the would-be mother. "Soon we'll have baby rabbits, Arend."

CHAPTER 5

Friends indeed

Arend wished a few weeks later as he lay in bed, that his name had been that of another bird - a bird such as Hawk, or Robin, as in "Robin Hood," or something like that. But there had been a grandfather in Holland on his mother's side - a grandfather for whom he had been named. But Arend did mean eagle. Petrus had said so and Cora had confirmed that it was true.

Tomorrow school started. Cousin Janie had surprised him with a lunchbox sporting the picture of Davey Crockett. Last year he had carried his lunch in a paper bag. Cousin Janie had also taken him to the store and had bought him two new shirts and a pair of pants. Cora had knitted him a thick blue sweater and Petrus, not to be outdone, had whittled an eagle out of a piece of wood. "It fits into your pocket," he'd said, "and the teacher won't know it's in there."

"Petrus," Cora had chided, "Arend isn't to hide anything in school."

"That's true," Petrus had answered, his eyes twinkling,

"and that's why I'm going to keep it in my pocket. Now I have an eagle in my pocket. I have you in my pocket, Arend. And you're going to stay there. I just thought you'd like to know."

He'd emptied his pocket on the living room floor displaying a stone, a small, oddly-shaped stick, a blue jay feather and a dried-out dandelion. The eagle lay between these things. Arend smiled in the dark. It was, in a strange way, good to know that he was in Petrus' pocket.

Things at school went much better the next day than Arend had expected. Although he found himself rather lost in the good-sized class of twenty-five rambunctious grade two, three and four students, he was not as scared as he had thought he would be. The teacher, Miss Wilcox, was pretty and she had each new grade two student take a turn to introduce him or herself.

"I'm Billy Barber and my dad is a farmer," the boy in the desk next to Arend's spoke up forcefully.

"What kind of farm does he have?" Miss Wilcox asked.

"A pig farm."

"A very fine thing to have," she smiled, "because ham is delicious to eat. You must be proud of your Dad, Billy."

Billy sat down grinning. The next child was a girl. She stood up but her head was down. Her name was Isabel, she told the class with a shaking voice, and she had seven brothers and sisters. She sat down again and blushed. Miss Wilcox replied that she hoped she might meet them sometime. It was now time for Arend to stand. Isabel's evident nervousness had calmed him. He had rehearsed his introduction a few times inside his head as other children took their turns. He rose, leaning on his desk with his right hand.

"My name is Arend," he enunciated in a clear voice, "It means eagle and this name is in the Bible."

Miss Wilcox was taken aback for a moment, but then responded. "Arend is an unusual name. What country does that it originate from?"

"Holland."

"Indeed? Thank you for sharing that with us, Arend."

Billy glanced at him from across the aisle. "Want to come to my house sometime, eagle?"

At recess, as if by prior agreement, the boys gathered at one end of the schoolyard and the girls at another. The grade four boys started a baseball game and allowed the younger grades to be part of the teams. Arend was picked to be a leftfielder. He enjoyed it especially when Henry, one of the older boys, commented that he ran pretty fast for a grade two-er.

A month and a half after school started, Cousin Janie slipped on the porch as she left for work in the early morning.

She had called out the usual admonitions to Arend and he heard the screen door slam shut as she left for work. Her

initial steps down the porch sounded normal. Then her heel slipped on a thin layer of frost coating one of the cracks on the wooden steps. October had begun chilly and the nights were below zero.

Arend heard the noise of the fall. Still in bed and contemplating whether he would be allowed to bring one of his rabbits to "show and tell," he immediately sat up, turned onto his knees and put his head between the curtains. Cousin Janie lay sprawled out in front of the stairs, half of her body stretched out on the gravel driveway. She was not moving. Arend jumped out of bed, raced through the house and catapulted out the front door in a flash.

"Cousin Janie!" There was no answer even though he called her name so loudly that the syllables seemed to echo across the lane. He called again. "Cousin Janie!"

Then he pelted, in his pajamas and on his bare feet, down the road to Cora's and Petrus' house. Banging on the door, totally out of breath and gasping for air, he brokenly told them what had happened. Petrus, wearing only his housecoat and slippers, as quickly as his old legs could carry him, immediately went back with Arend to where Cousin Janie lay on the driveway. He took a little mirror out of his housecoat pocket, bent down and held it in front of her mouth. "Look, Arend," he called out, "Look, there's mist on the mirror. She's breathing! That means she's alive!"

Arend began to cry. Sitting down on the gravel next to his cousin, he softly stroked one of her limp hands. "Please

"Arend had never before heard an organ and started violently when the first rich tones swelled past him."

don't die, Cousin Janie."

Petrus sat down on the steps just above them, looking on. His blue eyes were grave. Then he took off his housecoat, bent over and tucked it around Cousin Janie.

"We should pray, Arend," he said, "We should ask God to help." As Petrus' voice sincerely began to invoke God's help, Arend closed his eyes, all the while not letting go of Cousin Janie's hand. At the "Amen," Cora appeared, fully dressed.

"I've phoned for the ambulance," she said, "Arend, go and stand by the road so you can flag it down when it comes, but first go inside and put on your coat and your boots."

Arend obeyed her woodenly. Letting go of Cousin Janie's hand, he got up, scarcely feeling where the gravel



FOR God SO Loved



Christmas Blessings from the staff, faculty
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had indented his legs. He walked up the stairs past Petrus, opened the door and found his coat and boots. Putting them on, he came out again and descended the steps. He walked backwards down the driveway, his eyes never leaving the still form of his cousin. Cora then went inside, procured a blanket from one of the beds and came out again. Telling Petrus to put his housecoat back on, she covered Cousin Janie's figure with the blanket. Arend stood at the end of the driveway, and peered down the road for what seemed like an eternity, constantly checking over his shoulder to where Cora and Petrus were bending down. He loved Cousin Janie. Sobs welled up inside him bursting out in a howl of misery. The next instant Petrus appeared at his side and took his hand.

"It's all right, Arend. I'm here."

Arend snuggled into Petrus' side and then two hands lifted him up, not to the old man's shoulders, but to his heart. A car drove up from the opposite direction. It was Andrew Peter. He parked his car at the side of the road, turned off the motor and got out. Passing Arend and Petrus, he smiled gently and walked over to where his mother was hovering over Cousin Janie. He knelt down next to her, feeling Cousin Janie's pulse.

"Arend," Andrew Peter called a moment later, "Arend, come here."

Arend slid down from Petrus' arms and ran, scattering gravel in all directions. He could see that his cousin's eyes were now open.

"Cousin Janie," he whispered, leaning over Andrew Peter's shoulder, "Cousin Janie, are you awake?"

"Yes, and I'm OK," she whispered back, "Don't worry, little cousin." Carefully she moved her head to find Cora. "Please watch out for him today," she went on.

Cora nodded, even as Andrew Peter took Cousin Janie's right hand and began to pray. "Dear Heavenly Father," he said, in a very normal voice, "Janie's had a fall and needs Your help. Please strengthen her, Lord."

"The ambulance is coming!" Petrus called out through the prayer, "I see it coming!"

"For Jesus sake, Father," Andrew Peter went on, unperturbed, "let Janie put her trust in You so that she might live forever."

Cousin Janie's eyes were wide open now and riveted on Andrew Peter's face. "Tell me," she slurred with difficulty, and then her eyes closed.

The ambulance turned into the driveway.

"Let me go with her in the ambulance." Andrew Peter spoke up softly but clearly. Cora agreed, and stood up rather stiffly. She took Arend's right hand and pulled him away from where he was leaning on Andrew Peter to stand next to her. Petrus, who had come back from his vigil at the end of the driveway, took Arend's left hand. Together they watched as Cousin Janie was lifted into the ambulance. Andrew Peter got in as well and took a seat next to the stretcher. After the white car drove off, it was very quiet.

"What happened, Dad?" the little boy impatiently tugged at his father's sweater, "What happened? Was Cousin Janie all right? Did she get better?"

The father smiled and shifted his position on the couch. "Yes, son. Let me just get my bearings here."

CHAPTER 6

A Father figure

Arend stayed with Cora and Petrus while Cousin Janie was in the hospital. She'd suffered a concussion, a heavy concussion. Andrew Peter phoned from the hospital that she was to stay there for observation for a few days before she would be allowed to go home. That Sunday Arend went to church for the first time in his life. Cousin Janie had not permitted him to attend previously. "You visit Cora and Petrus a lot during the week," she'd said, and said it firmly, "I'll not have you overstaying your welcome. So on Sundays I want you home with me."

Arend had not minded really. Because in her tone he'd heard that she actually liked and wanted his company and that made him feel good. He'd taught Cousin Janie how to play checkers and sometimes they hiked in the park or visited some of her friends.

Arend felt a bit awkward at first. Sitting in the wooden pew, feet dangling, hair wetted down and neatly combed by Cora, he breathed as quietly as possible. He feared that if he were to make a sound, it would reverberate from the rafters and everyone would be sure to guess that he was new, that he had never been to church before.

He was wedged into the corner spot and Petrus sat on his right. It was Petrus' birthday and there would be cake this afternoon at teatime. Cora sat next to Petrus. They were early and slowly people began to dribble in through the aisles - families with children, couples and single people. Then the organ began to play. Arend had never before heard an organ and started violently when the first rich tones swelled past him. Turning his head to see where the music came from, he spotted Billy Barber a few pews behind them. Billy waved. Arend turned his gaze away quickly, quite sure it was not proper to wave in church. Petrus nudged him and showed him a roll of peppermints in his pocket.

"You can have one later," he mouthed and grinned.

A tall boy from grade four sat down directly in front of them. He was the boy who had praised Arend for running fast, and his name was Henry Beenstra but all the kids called him "Beanstalk" because he was so skinny and tall. He flashed a look at Arend before he sat down with his parents, eyebrows raised in surprise. His eyes jumped from Arend to Petrus and then back to Arend again. There was something

troubling in his glance and Arend felt uncomfortable. He knew it had to do with Petrus but was not quite sure what it entailed. Petrus nudged him again and bringing out the small carved eagle in his pocket. Arend smiled. Whatever it was that bothered Henry "Beanstalk" about Petrus, it didn't matter.

The minister, a middle-aged man, welcomed everyone and smiled. It was a good smile and reached Arend's pew. There was singing and more singing and prayer. It was a very long prayer and from time to time Arend peeked to make sure everyone else was still praying. At one such peek, he caught Henry, face turned back towards them, staring straight at him. He quickly shut his eyes again, but not before he'd seen a smirk on Henry's face. He leaned into the pew corner and tried to relax.

Avoiding eye contact with Henry during the entire ensuing service, he tried to listen – to listen carefully – so that he could tell Cousin Janie all about it later. It was a good story that the minister told – a story about a father with two sons. The younger one was tired of staying at home and wanted to go away. From everything the minister said it sounded as if the boy's home was a good home and Arend could not fathom wanting to leave your home if it was good. That younger boy was stupid. Imagine having a kind father who loved you and wanting to leave that love. He turned his face back towards the minister. The father gave the boy a lot of money and allowed him to leave and the father was very sad to see him leave. The boy traveled to a far away country and spent all his money. Arend had never had any money. He guessed that Cousin Janie giving him milk money for a carton of milk at school each day didn't really count. And he wasn't allowed to spend that money on anything else but milk. After the boy had spent all his money, he got a job feeding pigs. It would have been a dirty job, Arend imagined, and not at all like feeding his rabbits or his chickens. And the boy was so hungry that he wanted to eat the pig food. What would the pigs have been eating? Slop, the minister said and if it tasted like it sounded, then it would have tasted terrible. While he was in the pig pen, the boy remembered his father.

Arend remembered his own father. His father had not really wanted him at home; had never given him money; had not even given him birthday presents. If he was living with pigs right now and his father was alive, would he go to him? It was a hard question and Arend began to dangle his feet back and forth, kicking the pew in front of him. He instinctively felt that his father would not have been happy to see him. Petrus put a hand on his knees to stop the kicking motion and Arend's feet became quiet.

The boy went back home to say that he was sorry he had left, and when he was still far away from his old house, his father saw him coming down the road.

Arend remembered standing at the end of the driveway watching down Tooker's Lane for the ambulance. It had been difficult to see very far because there had been a bit of a mist. He recalled straining his eyes. The boy's father must have had

very good eyesight. Maybe he could see like an eagle. And then the father began running towards the boy because he so very much wanted the boy to come home; and when they met, the father hugged the boy.

Arend's father had never hugged him. But Petrus had hugged him.

The father then dressed the boy in a beautiful robe and he gave him a ring for his finger too. Arend stretched his right hand in front of him. Would it be sissy to wear a ring? And then a lot of food was made ready for a party and everyone celebrated because the boy had come home. Maybe cake was served – maybe cake like they would have this afternoon because it was Petrus' birthday. It was because the boy was sorry, the minister insisted, that the father was so happy and took him back; and it was because the boy knew that he was lost, that he was accepted back home.

Arend reflected on that. It was easy to understand that if you were sorry, sorry about something you had done wrong, that this was a good thing. But to know that you were lost, that was more difficult to understand. How could you know that you were lost? Was he lost because he didn't really have a proper home? And how could he... ? His thoughts stopped.

After church, Billy Barber and some other boys came up to him. Cora, with a backward glance over her shoulder, presumed that Arend would be fine with his friends.

"Want to come over to my house, Arend? My Dad will bring you back this afternoon. I'll show you the piglets and we have puppies right now too." Billy was insistent and Arend felt flattered.

"I'll have to ask Cora," he said, and together the boys looked for her but she said "no." "It's Petrus' birthday. Did you forget?"

Then seeing the downcast faces in front of her, she relented somewhat. "Why don't you come to our house instead, Billy," she suggested, "and have your Dad pick you up later today?"

As Billy disappeared into the crowd of churchgoers around them in the foyer to ask permission, Henry "Beanstalk" walked over. "Hey, squirt," he said, "how's the number one runner doing?"

"Fine," Arend answered carefully, a little apprehensive to be singled out by Henry and recalling vividly how Henry had looked at himself and Petrus during the service.

"Want to play some baseball this afternoon with some of the guys?"

"I can't," Arend replied, "it's Petrus' birthday and we're... well, we're having some cake and stuff. You know."

Billy came running back. "My Mom says it's OK. I can come to your house, Arend."

"Oh," Henry's face took on a look of mock hurt, "so you can play with Billy, but not with me."

Arend didn't know what to say. He ground the toe of his shoe into the carpet. Henry turned around.

"Well, see you guys."

"Then what happened, Dad? Was there cake?"

His father nodded.

"Yes, there was, son. But not until the afternoon. And it was a lovely chocolate cake, the kind that Petrus loved."

"Tell me," the boy, insisted leaning back against his father.

And the father continued.

CHAPTER 7

Carried home

After Sunday soup, fresh bread and a hard-boiled egg, Arend and Billy helped Cora dry the dishes. Petrus was already on the couch half-asleep.

"Now you boys play outside until tea time," Cora said, "and then we'll have a piece of that birthday cake."

Arend showed Billy the rabbits and the chickens as well as Cousin Janie's house. Then they looked for deer tracks and rabbit tracks out in the field. Arend was about to get a container so they could catch some tadpoles in the little creek, when he saw Henry standing in the driveway. There was another boy with him. They were standing next to their bikes. "Hey, squirt," Henry yelled, "we came over to say 'happy birthday' to your friend."

Arend didn't know what to say.

"Well, aren't you going to ask us in?"

"I can't," Arend said, "Cora and Petrus are sleeping."

Henry turned the handlebar of his bike and fastened his gaze on Arend. "Well, eagle-boy," he returned, "I sure would like a piece of that birthday cake and it would be a shame if we came for nothing."

"Can't you give them a piece," Billy, who had come to stand next to him, whispered advice into his ear, "and then they'll go away."

Uncertain, Arend slowly walked towards and up the steps. He carefully opened the door, making sure he turned the handle just right so that there was no squeaking. It opened into the kitchen and the cake smiled at him on the counter. Cora had put a knife next to the cake. Also, neatly lined up, were four plates and four forks. He tip-toed inside, swallowed deeply, took hold of the knife and cut into the chocolate cake. He'd never done such a thing

before. The knife stuck. He pulled it out and tried again. This time he was more successful. Eventually he managed to get two pieces of cake onto two of the plates. Balancing them carefully in his hands, he retraced his steps and went back outside. Henry applauded and laid his bike down on the driveway.

"Great going, squirt," he said, "I'd knew you'd pull through."

He walked toward the backyard and his friend followed. Billy and Arend followed as well, Arend still carrying the plates with the cake. They all sat down on the grass and Arend handed the boys a plate each.

"It'd be a waste if old drool mouth had this all to himself," Henry commented, "and how come you're staying with him, squirt?"

Arend blushed.

"Well, how come you're staying here," Henry persisted, his mouth full of chocolate cake.

"My Cousin Janie's in the hospital and ... well, Cora and Petrus are neighbors."

"Well, that's unfortunate, isn't it? Having a neighbor that isn't right in the head!"

Arend looked down at the grass. He didn't know what to say. That is, he did know what to say, but he didn't dare say it.

"I bet you're sorry your staying here, aren't you, squirt?"

Arend didn't answer, but Henry repeated his remark.

"I bet you're sorry Petrus is your neighbor, right, squirt?"

He stood up as he spoke, leaving his empty plate in the grass. The plate was stained with brown crumbs. The other boys stood up as well. Henry walked over to Arend, linking





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arms with him, pulling him back across the grass towards the driveway.

"I bet you'd much rather stay with me than with silly, old Petrus, squirt."

Henry's voice was loud and invasive. It crept under his Arend's skin and slithered down the road. Arend wanted to pull away from the voice, but he couldn't. His arm was locked in Henry's grip. Nevertheless, he began to pull.

"If you say, 'Petrus is a silly, old man,' I'll let you go," Henry promised and squeezed Arend's arm so hard it brought tears to his eyes.

"Petrus is a silly, old man," the words burst out of Arend's mouth before he knew it. Henry suddenly let go of Arend's arm and Arend fell backwards onto the driveway. Henry laughed, laughed so hard he doubled over. Then he and his friend got on their bikes and rode off, tearing through the gravel of the driveway. Arend stood up, brushed himself off and glanced over at the still open door. Petrus was standing on the landing and he was staring right into Arend's eyes.

Farmer Tooker's grandson, who owned all the property in and around Tooker's Lane, never harvested his corn until late in the season. As a matter of fact, sometimes he did not even harvest until the following year. Other farmers commented on it and said it was a shame to see a crop go to waste. After staring into Petrus' eyes for a moment, Arend took off towards the field, losing himself between the tall, dry cornstalks.

Billy did not follow him and he was glad of it. He ran until the breath had totally drained from his lungs and he was forced to stop. Falling down onto the dirt, he curled himself into a tight ball and lay still.

How long he remained there he didn't know. The late October ground was unrelentingly hard. It did not possess the dignity and support of a mattress, and yet the boy slept

a dreamless sort of sleep. It had not been a sunny day to begin with and when Arend finally came to himself, he was numb with cold. Slowly he remembered what had happened and sick with shame, he sat up. His good pants had a grass stain and he wondered what Cora would have to say about that. But she would probably not say anything because he could not possibly go back. For surely after Cora heard what Arend had said about Petrus, she would not want him in her house again. And when Cousin Janie heard what he had done, she would never

want to see him again either. He couldn't blame either of them.

A lark flew overhead and in the distance he heard a mourning dove coo. He picked an ear of corn off the nearest stalk, peeling off its dried leaves. Shriveled and tiny, the kernels were uninviting and unappetizing. Perhaps he'd have to stay here all winter and eat hard, uncooked corn. His stomach both rebelled and rumbled. Billy had probably gotten a piece of chocolate cake and Billy's Dad had, without a doubt, already picked him up and taken him home. He wondered if the coyotes in the field ate people. He sometimes heard them howling at night. Petrus said there were packs of them about. Cora was making fried potatoes tonight and there was going to be egg salad too. These were some of Petrus' favorite dishes. He hadn't even given Petrus a birthday present. He did not have money and Cousin Janie was in the hospital. But he had made him a card. It said: "Happy birthday, Petrus - from your best friend, Arend, the eagle you found in the field." The card was under his pillow.

Was he like the boy in the minister's story? Had he squandered what had been given to him so freely? Were dried ears of corn like slop? The only thing missing here were the pigs. Billy had pigs. Maybe he could stay with Billy's family and live in the pigpen. The boy in the story had been sorry. In that way he was like the boy. He was so terribly sorry that he had said that Petrus was a silly, old man. Petrus' eyes had been so sad, as if they could not understand that Arend would say such a thing about him.

"I hope you stay my friend, Arend." "I will, Petrus." That's what he had said a few weeks ago and it had been a lie.

He picked up a clod of earth and threw it into the air. It landed with a small thud and broke into pieces. The strange thing was that the dirt, broken and black, was still part of the earth. You could not tell now that he had thrown it into the air, that it had been somewhere else but a few moments ago.

Not so with himself. He had been tossed up by fear and he had landed flat on his face. Unlike that clod of earth, he was now part of nothing. His past was gone. There was no place for him anywhere. He was lost. He did not know where he was or where to go.

He shivered miserably. Even if he went to Cora and Petrus and said that he was sorry, he would not belong to them anymore. They would always mistrust him and would never love him again. What if he said that they could punish him? What if he said that he would work for them and they didn't have to pay him ever?


Unconsciously he stood up and his feet began to move through the rows and rows of corn towards the little white house in the distance. It was dusk now and the first stars were beginning to appear. The corn stalks crackled as he walked on, head down, towards the afternoon's disgrace. He could hear an owl hoot somewhere in the bush behind the field. Bats flew by in the air hunting insects. He lifted his head for a brief moment to stare at them as they darted through the sky like ashes scattered to the wind. Instinctively his eyes moved toward the horizon, moved toward the house. It was glowing with light. Cora must have turned the lamps on in the kitchen and in the living room. His gaze fastened on the glow and he wished with all his might that he were there and that it was yesterday.

Then he stopped short for he suddenly perceived the figure of a person, a tall person, moving through the corn field just beyond the little bridge, moving toward himself. It was Petrus. He knew for a fact that it was Petrus – knew it within the pit of his being. Petrus had seen him too because at that moment the tall, spindly frame began to run, crushing plants as he did so. Without being able to stop himself, Arend began to run also – to run as fast as his legs could carry him. And when he reached the old man, he felt himself being lifted high, as high as the stars, and then he was carried home.

"What about the string, father. You said it was a story about the string." The child was impatient and tugged at his father's sleeve, fingering the string.

"Yes, I did."

"Well?"

"Petrus had tied a string around one of the eagle's wings. He said he had done this so that the eagle would not fall out of his pocket. He gave me the string that night because he said I needed to know that I would never fall out of his pocket." 





Finding the right words

Comfort others with the words with which you've been comforted

by Sharon L. Bratcher

During the Spring of 2004 my husband Dennis lay in the Intensive Care Unit at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia. Surgery had led to his inclusion in “the 10% who develop complications,” leaving me both bewildered and overwhelmed. As day followed day with little improvement, I thought, “what if I lose him?”

I prayed. I read my Bible. And others shared God's words of comfort.

An assignment

Each time a brother or sister in the Lord called or sent a card with a verse on it, it became a blessed assignment for my day. These were the verses that I meditated on day and night. I probably could have found them myself – I have often been the one who shared verses with others – but my emotions were raw, my body was worn out with weeping and my mind

was occasionally confused. The blessed assignment for the day directed my soul to a specific passage of Scripture which the Holy Spirit then used to comfort me. It employed my mind, leaving no idle room for despair. It assured me that we were not alone, for others cared about us. All of this infused me with strength.

My mother searched for a suitable card and sent one to me that included her “favorite” Psalm 46. It arrived during a difficult time and I carried it around with me for several days. When worry began, I read it. When despair appeared, I read it. When fear tried to strangle, I read it. God *was* my refuge and strength, a very present help in my trouble. I was comforted and I lost the fear. When it returned again, I prayed Psalm 46 once again.

During the 29 days that he was hospitalized, I met others who came quite

frequently to the ICU waiting room. Three women feared for the lives of their sons. Two men were there often to visit their wives, Betty and Nina. I didn't know anyone's background or beliefs, but at times I offered to read my card to them and to pray. God's Word does not go out in vain, and the Holy Spirit used those instances as He would. One evening I read Psalm 46 with Betty's family as she lay dying in the next room. Nina's husband invited me to come daily to read the Bible, pray, and sing to her. Nina had been in ICU for over 3 months, and she was eager to know the Lord. We both enjoyed the 15-20 minute visits. As it says in 2 Cor. 1:3-4, our Lord is:

the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction,

with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Never before were these words so clear to me. I was weak and gained strength and then shared that strength with others.

Calvin concludes

Many people wonder what to do to encourage someone in difficult times. Some hesitate, afraid to err, or certain that “others have it covered.” Sometimes we are just so busy with our own schedules and goals that we don’t make the time to encourage. John Calvin says in his excellent *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*:

We should seek the good of other believers. How extremely difficult it is for you dutifully to seek the advantage of your neighbor, unless you quit all selfish considerations and almost forget yourself. How can you perform the


duties which Paul teaches to be works of love, unless you renounce yourself and devote yourself wholly to others? (see 1 Cor. 13).

If this be all that is demanded, that we do not seek our own, yet we must not exert little pressure on our own nature which is so strongly inclined to love self exclusively and does not easily permit us to neglect self and our own affairs. Let us rather seek the profit of others, and even voluntarily give up our rights for the sake of others.

Scripture urges and warns us that whatever favors we may have obtained from the Lord we have received them as a trust on condition that they should be applied to the common benefit of the church.”

Who do you know in your church or family or neighborhood that is undergoing trials right now? Calvin continues:

Let this be our rule for goodwill and helpfulness that whenever we are able to assist others we should behave as stewards who must some day give an account of ourselves.... For we must not first of all try to promote the good of others by seeking our own, but we must prefer the profit of others.

With just a few minutes of time, some paper and ink and perhaps a stamp, you will be, as an old prayer states, “an instrument of God’s peace.” Let us go and “comfort with the comfort with which we have been comforted by God.” 

This article first appeared in the October 2005 issue. Sharon L. Bratcher’s “Soup and Buns” book includes 45 of her RP articles. For information contact sharoncopy@gmail.com.

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One week in...

facebook isn't for everyone

by Grace Pitman



It's been nearly a full week since I deleted my Facebook account. My thoughts so far? Why didn't I do this before?!?

I made my decision to exit social media circles carefully. I first joined Facebook when I turned 15, and have slowly become more and more dependent on it and other social media outlets since then. Facebook, Instagram, and in a lesser way, Snapchat have caused too much damage in my mind and heart for me to justify continued use.

Not for me

Let me be clear: I do not believe they are evil creations! It is simply that I am not meant for social arenas.

The Apostle Paul tells us that all things may be lawful, but they may not be helpful; he urges us to do all things in moderation, and herein is where I think the evil in social media might be found: the temptation to addiction. I don't presume to

tell you that social media is good or bad for you. But I do want to challenge you to ask that question for yourself. Are you able to use it in moderation? It is certainly lawful, but is it helpful for you?

Like many others, I am a person with intense convictions, feelings, hopes, dreams, desires, sorrows, and fears. When I see beauty I experience joy, and when I see ugliness I feel sadness, anger, and if not treated carefully, that sadness and anger can begin to cross into the murky waters of depression and hatred. In the early Facebook days there was much more to enjoy on Facebook, and it was much more personal. These days most of my newsfeed isn't even posts from my friends. Usually it's posts from my friends of friends, from ads, and from viral strings (which are usually filled with hateful interactions between people who don't even know each other!)

I have found that being addicted to scrolling social medias is not just

a mindless thing. It's very mindful. I see hateful social justice posts regarding racism, sexism, classism, religion, or politics, and my head seethes with frustration at the world I live in. From the ignorance and folly, to the intentional hatred and violence, I find that the personality and heart that God built into me can't handle such a constant diet of that well. Some people can! And I am grateful for their ability to present goodness in that world. But it's not me. I'm not called to that. A diet of such negativity has brought more and more worry to my heart, and less and less joy.

How did I get here to this choice? I did not want to make a rash decision to leave social media circles, just to re-enter them a week later, so I have spent months in prayer, bringing my symptoms of depression, frustration, and cynicism to Him and asking Him to show me the true source. I felt sure the root was in social me-

dia, but I didn't want to rule out other possibilities, which is why I took my time. I found my answer one morning when I felt the Spirit calling me to come be with Him. I opened my bible unintentionally to Psalm 37; as I read through it I found each next verse convicting me more deeply that I had to give up this addiction of social media completely in order to restore the joy in life and the control over my daily habits.

"Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in Yahweh, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness" (vs. 1-2).

There are a couple of things in this Psalm that addressed so poignantly the decision I was facing, and the effect that social media was having on my life.

First, I find that whether I'm dealing with stupid drivers on the road, or observing hatred via social media viral strings, I get angry. I see ignorance, stupidity, folly, and evil and I feel worried, anxious, joyless, and sometimes even hatred. The very first verse in Psalm 37 says: "Fret not yourself because of evildoers."

And second, I find that the complicated busyness of life, feeling spread thin from being aware of hundreds of people's lives via social media, and having an appalling amount of useless information running around in my head makes me feel worn out emotionally all the time. The second verse in Psalm 37 spoke to me of the beauty of a simple and quiet life, saying: "Trust in Yahweh, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness."

From negative to positive

After reading that Psalm I made the final decision to go cold turkey on

the addiction that social media had become, and immediately felt such abounding peace in my heart. Peace and joy like I haven't felt in a long time. I deleted (not just deactivated) my social media accounts, and discovered more wholesome and thoughtful ways of communicating with friends and family, by way of iCloud Photo Sharing, and Blogging.

So why do I ask "Why didn't I do this before?"

It's been a week filled with so much beauty, creativity, and positivity. Something I've learned to value highly through the ups and downs of life is to surround yourself with positivity. Or, as my favorite band Switchfoot puts it:

"Is this the world you want? Is this the world you want? You're making it, every day you're alive. You start to look like what you believe... What you say is your religion; How you say it's your religion; Who you love is your religion; How you love is your religion; All your science, your religion; All your hatred, your religion; All your wars are your religion; Every breath is your religion, yea! Is this the world you want? Is this the world you want? You're making it, every day you're alive."

For years I surrounded myself with the voices of negativity and with the feelings of failure and worthlessness that comes with addiction to screens and social media. It marred how I lived, how I loved, how I spoke, how I thought, even how I felt. When I removed myself from the chronic negativity spawned by so many of the voices on social media, I found

"It marred how I lived, how I loved, how I spoke, how I thought, even how I felt."

that I no longer had a confusing veil of shadow keeping me from appreciating the good things in life. Exiting social media tore down that veil; it was as though I saw real sunshine for the first time in years.

Time to spare

Without having my time eaten up by the pointless pursuits of the internet, I've found that my days are far longer, with far more potential. Instead of putting off every errand, chore, or project till the last possible moment, it's been myriads of happy busyness. The week began with some thoughts in my mind of a project of redoing our guest room. Up until now it's been a workout/study/guest room containing a loft bed for the occasional guest; underneath it, a desk and a dresser of drawers for workspace and storage; and a workout tower for my husband. My goal was to transform it into a real guest room, suitable for putting real guests up in, while keeping some room available for my husband's workspace. I did some cleaning, organizing, and preparatory errands during this week, utilizing all my coupons and rewards points to obtain what I needed to put together a good-looking, color coordinated guest room and bathroom. It was a week-long project with hard work, but the final result is just beautiful.

My husband saw a new side of me today. I was geeking out over the excitement of being able to decorate beautifully, and take a messy



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We are all designed to be kingdom builders.
We should all be busy building. But the question is:

Whose kingdom are we building?


Understanding full well that in God's Kingdom God has called some to be apostles and some teachers and some businessmen, and some farmers, and some... The question isn't, "Who can be a kingdom builder?" or "Can I become a kingdom builder?" The question is: "How are you building the kingdom right where you are? At your place of work? At school? At home?"

Too often, it seems, we go to work with the goal of making money so that we can fund "kingdom work" but miss all the opportunities that are right in front of us which would be more apparent if we would only bring a different perspective to our daily vocation.

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.
Let's get busy! Right here. Right now.

unkempt place where we didn't like to be, and turn it into a soothing, warm, and comfy room. What I love about the day we had today, was that instead of quite literally wasting a day of our lives by instead living the lives of the characters on TV, was that we created. We worked, we sweated, and we created. We lived today to the fullest, by being and doing exactly what God created us to do: to be like Him! Our work today was a story of His work - taking something unlovely and useless, and redeeming it through His own hard work into something beautiful and worthy! Joy comes in many ways, but in my life, joy comes most in the creation of something beautiful. A little excursion to Bibles for China Thrift Store with a ton of loft bed hardware bungee corded down and sticking halfway out of my trunk turned into a fun and sunny adventure with my husband, enjoying the open windows, the fresh cool air, and the blue skies. (And a new all time low, driving down the road to the dumpster holding an old ratty twin mattress to the top of my car with our arms extended up out of the windows... but we don't talk about that.)

So a week in and here's what I'm thankful for: I'm thankful for more time to do fulfilling work and errands; I'm thankful for more time to relate to friends on a deeper level than a "like" on a post; I'm thankful for time to read books, and do constructive crafts; I'm thankful for time to think: I've had a lot of thoughts and ideas and arguments brewing in my mind, and I've enjoyed the quiet luxury of focused thought. I'm thankful for beauty from ashes.

And now I'm excited to go to the House of the Lord in the morning and worship with the beautiful community that Jesus has been so kindly building around us. 

Grace Pitman blogs at thepitman-corner.com where a version of this article first appeared.

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On the shoulders of giants:

Knowing our Church history helps us see further

by Johan Tangelder

Czeslaw Milosz, winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize for Literature, remarked in his acceptance speech in Stockholm that our age is characterized by a “refusal to remember.” I think it is more than that. I believe it is indifference rather than an outright refusal to remember the past. And because we don’t know our past, we have become a rootless society.

In his provocative book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil

Postman argued that the television rendered the previous generation unfit to remember. Television’s focus on the immediate deprived us of a historical experience. So many know so much about the happenings of the last 24 hours, but very little of bygone centuries or even the last 60 years.

No wonder that youth show little affinity with the past. Today’s generation lives even more in “a perpetual present,” without depth,

definition, or secure identity. Many think the study of history is a dull and irrelevant exercise.

GATHERED WISDOM

The lack of historical awareness has also affected the Church. Too many evangelical and Reformed Christians jump from the early Church of the Apostles right to the present. They seem to forget that men and women lived the Christian life before them.



"WE ARE LIKE DWARFS SITTING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS. WE SEE MORE THINGS THAN THEM...BECAUSE THEY RAISE US UP, AND ADD THEIR STATURE TO OURS."

But there is this great "cloud of witnesses" who have wrestled with doctrinal and moral issues, and contemporary Christians can learn from them. Because they are unaware of the profound doctrinal debates of the Church fathers, of the Reformers, and even of the recent history of their own denominations and all the momentous implications, they deprive themselves of the gathered wisdom of the ages.

For example, as a student of Church history, I am deeply impressed by the outstanding theological works produced by the 17th century Puritan spiritual giants. They greatly surpass the generally weak and shallow theology and spirituality of the present.

The creeds and confessions are also a vital link with the past. They show how throughout the centuries the Holy Spirit has been at work in forming, maintaining and renewing the Church. The Three Forms of Unity express the heart of the apostolic and also of the Reformed faith, the faith which has been accepted as true for generations. The confessions remind us of the communal nature of the

Church. They also tell us that we are not the first generation that has read the Bible. The confessions show us a particular way of understanding Scripture which the Christian Church has recognized as responsible and trustworthy.

A church which no longer pays attention to her creeds and confessions denies her heritage. Only when we remain in fellowship with the faithful who have gone before us are we able to travel into the future. We must know where we come from so that we may know where we are going. Dr. J. I. Packer rightly observed, "Knowing the family history is one way of avoiding past errors and preparing to face the future."

INSPIRATION

The study of Church history is also important for the development of our spiritual life. Without a reflection on the past, Christians are prone to become spiritually anemic. The story of the Christian martyrs, who sacrificed their all for the cause of Christ, is inspirational.

A moving testimony from the early Church is the martyrdom of Polycarp (c. 70-155), faithful pastor and champion of apostolic tradition. After his capture by his persecutors, infuriated Jews and Gentiles gathered wood for the stake. Polycarp stood by it, asking not to be fastened to it, and prayed:

O Lord, Almighty God, the Father of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received knowledge of Thee... I thank Thee that Thou hast thought me worthy, this day and this hour, to share the cup of Thy Christ among the number of Thy witnesses.

And I think of the martyrdom in China of John and Betty Stam, missionaries with the China Inland Mission. Betty, a gifted poet, had been raised in China by Presbyte-

rian parents, and felt God's call to return there. John, of Dutch immigrant ancestry from New Jersey, was also drawn to China where, as he said, "a million a month pass into Christless graves." Their missionary work was short-lived. In 1934 they were captured by the communists and executed. Their martyrdom made a great impact and led many to volunteer for missions.

The most publicized martyrdom in recent history is no doubt the January 1956 massacre of five young missionaries by the Auca Indians in Ecuador. The story of their lives has been well told by Elisabeth Elliot, the widow of one of the martyrs. But their deaths have not been in vain. There is now a church among the Auca Indians. The stories of the martyrs give a feeling of fellowship with those who have carried the torch before and an appreciation of the priceless heritage which is ours in Christ.

SEEING FURTHER

We can learn from the wisdom and the examples of godly men and women of the past. We can also learn from their mistakes and follies. Here is how John of Salisbury, a 12th-century British author, described the importance of studying history:

We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more things than they, and things that are farther away – not because we can see better than they, or because we are taller than they are, but because they raise us up, and add their stature to ours.

RP

A version of this article first appeared in the April 1999 issue of Reformed Perspective under the title "Inspired by Past." Many of Rev. Johan D. Tangelder's (1936-2009) articles can be found at his blog ReformedReflections.ca

Princeton Scientists Discover "Sex Chromosome"

by Rob Slane

Earlier this month, scientists at Princeton University published findings which could forever change the way we think about biological sex. Until now, it had been assumed that the sex of a person was determined by how a person felt. But now researchers believe that may not be so.

According to the scientist leading the research, Professor Duncan Forth, the unexpected discovery came after months of painstaking work studying human cells:

"We had been looking into the chromosomal structure of cells, when – quite by accident – we realized that there was a difference between one of the pairs. In some of the cells we were studying, both chromosomes were shaped like an 'X', but in others, only one of the pairs was shaped like this. The second chromosome was much smaller. We decided to label it 'Y.'"

The research became controversial when to Professor Forth's surprise, one link became immediately apparent:

"When we ran various tests to see which characteristics the 'XX' or 'XY' combinations correlated with, we were all amazed to see that again and again where there was an 'XX,' the person from which it was taken was a female, and where there was an 'XY,' the cells had been taken from a male."

Aware of the ramifications of the discovery, the professor nervously explained how the findings, if veri-

fied, could completely alter the way we think about biological sex and the terms male and female:

"The implications would seem to be that a person is either 'born female' or 'born male,' and that their feelings actually have little or no impact. But I really can't stress highly enough that our sample size was small, and further research could show that there is no hard and fast correlation across the population as a whole."

However, further research may not even be possible, as both the students and the university administration are expressing concerns about how the study was ever given funding in the first place. As one 2nd year biology student put it:

"This place is supposed to be a place of tolerance and respect. Yet they're funding research which is causing a lot of people pain and hurt. A lot of pain and hurt."

Others broke down in tears as they talked about what this research could mean for them if allowed to continue. One particularly distraught post-graduate sociology student wept as they opened up:

"All my life I've been told that I can do what I want to do and be who I want to be. And that nobody has the right to deny me my rights. I truly do believe that. It's up to me to decide whether I want to be male or female, or neither, or both. And no hate-filled pseudo-scientist or their so-called chromosomal research will


ever change that."

The university's antifascist movement has threatened to take action unless the research is stopped, the scientists sacked, and a statement issued repudiating the findings. The group's leader was interviewed in the University Safe Space, where he was taking a break between lectures to browse through a baseball equipment catalogue. Wearing a black balaclava to protect his identity, he said the group would not tolerate the situation any longer:

"There's no way we're going to sit by and let them get away with this vile hate in the name of science. This kind of genetic determinism is scarily like what the Nazis thought. And if they think we're going to tolerate Nazism in our university in 2017, they've got another think coming."

The controversy has also gone well beyond the university itself, with social media users lining up to condemn what they're calling "hate research." A barrage of criticism has been unleashed on Twitter, including:

Haters@Princeton: How dare you try to force objective reality over my feelings!!! #NoToChromosomes

@Princeton bigots dare 2 tell us we can't be who we want 2 be. #Chromofascists 

No actual scientists were harmed in the making of this satire

Science politicized

Democracy is good...but science is better?

by Margaret Helder

In the West most citizens take pride in their democratic institutions, pointing to how it's through democracy that change can be peacefully pursued. Of course, not all change is positive. As Christians we understand that getting the government we deserve – the government that most of us have voted for – is not always a good thing. Why? Quite simply, the majority can be wrong. But that's an insight available to us because we have an absolute standard – God's Word – by which we can evaluate the "will of the people."

But for the secular West, which has rejected God and his Word as their ultimate standard, democracy has been the ideal. Government gets its legitimacy from being supported by the largest number of voters. So it is with some interest, then, that we can see the idea that the best governments are democratically selected has come under serious scrutiny from some in the international community of scientists, and a new ultimate standard is proposed.

Scientists vs. democracy?

For the last couple of years the influential scientific journal *Nature* has touched on this topic repeatedly. In editorials and other articles it has been suggested that some voter choices are more legitimate than others. In other words, not all votes are equally valid.

The new assertive stance of many scientists became evident during the April 22, 2017 "March for Science," when tens of thousands of scientists marched in Washington and in at least 600 other cities around the world. A news item in *Nature* (April 27, 2017) said this event "may have been one of the largest-ever demonstrations in support of scientific research and evidence-based policymaking."

These objectives may sound quite harmless, but the rationale was that the scientific agenda is under threat and needs to be more forcefully promoted in the political arena. These

people apparently believe that the recommendations of scientists are not making it into policy choices nearly often enough. Thus an editorial in *Nature* on May 11, 2017 declared:

"...fears are increasing that anti-science forces are on the march. Indeed, on last month's March for Science, a 'war on science' was frequently invoked as a reason for researchers to mobilize."

Obviously the conflict cited is not overt such as with guns and other weapons, but it is a power struggle and the scientists want to make sure that they win. So who are the others involved in this conflict? Commentary in *Nature* labels the other side as "idiots" (December 1, 2016) or "dissenters, doubters and right-wing jackals" (January 5, 2017). Those are strong words to describe political adversaries. But this battle is intense.

Globalism vs. democracy?

The scientific view, at least as it is articulated by activists, includes a desire for governments to move further towards international, or even global control. This would involve taking it out of the hands of democratically-elected representatives. For example, a trio of advocates declared that countries need to put scientifically-advocated programs and ideals ahead of national priorities. (October 6/16 p. 29)

But what does this mean?

Consider the case of the province of Ontario. A news item in the *Edmonton Journal* (November 21/17 p. NP5) reported that electrical power exports from sources with nearly zero carbon emissions (for example solar and wind energy) resulted in a loss to the province of Ontario of between \$732 million and \$1.25 billion over a period of 21 months. This is happening at a time when consumers

in Ontario are suffering from exceptionally high electricity costs. This is an example of placing international priorities for climate control ahead of local interests.

The scientific community keeps promoting international agendas in other ways too. For example, a Belgian microbiologist declared in *Nature* (February 16, 2017):

"To prevent further breakdown of the EU, scientists must shout from the rooftops that many of our problems today can be solved only at a European, or even a global, level. We must challenge time and again the current populist view that countries are better off trying to address the most pressing problems on their own."

Similarly, a Dutch sociologist from Utrecht declared that:

"Academics also have a moral obligation to protect liberal democracy. By promoting social and political pluralism, the system produces the circumstances under which researchers can do their jobs and science can flourish" (*Nature*, December 15, 2016).

The people who favor policies which protect the interests of the voters, are considered to be right wing, according to the scientific press. These people are also much less interested in "racial, gender and sexual identity politics" (*Nature*, December 1, 2016) than are many in science and academia. An editorial in *Nature* (same date) declares that scientists and academics are rightly worried about allowing political discussion to include conservative and religious viewpoints. The scientists consider that this latter initiative would lead to "unacceptably broadening the limits of acceptable discourse – and freeing and normalizing people's worst



picture credit: Shutterstock

base instincts and a rhetoric of hate.” This editorial admits however that academics are often “tolerant,” but only of their own point of view.

Liberal democracy vs. populist democracy?

With recent electoral results that are the opposite of what left wing interests had hoped for, some scientists are warning about an increasing tension between populism and liberal democracy. Thus Matthijs Rooduijn, a Dutch sociologist, declared that there are two types of voters: those that support “liberal democracy” and those who support “populism” (*Nature*, December 15, 2016).

Obviously liberal democracy sounds very appealing, but what about populism? This latter term is what many scientists have suddenly adopted as a way to portray in an unfavorable light the opinions they do not like. Thus voters who make political choices that many scientists do not like are described as populists.

So what are populists? The implication seems to be that populists represent an ignorant mob (such as in the French revolution.) Alternatively a sympathetic definition in an editorial in the *Edmonton Journal* (November 10, 2017) stated:

“A populist political culture is one that includes a widespread belief in the moral and intellectual capacities of the ‘common people’ and thus a strong reluctance to defer

control over decision-making to the state or other elites.”

Dutch sociologist Rooduijn elaborated on this point: “populists not only attack political and economic elites; they also target ‘snobby intellectuals’ in academia” (*Nature*, December 15, 2016). Well, fair enough. The Dutch sociologist nevertheless declares: “Academics also have a moral obligation to protect liberal democracy.”

A lead editorial in *Nature* on April 20, 2017 echoed the above sentiments:

“Social scientists rightly see this co-opting of far-right policies by mainstream parties as being as dangerous to liberal democracy as populist far-right parties themselves...”

It should be noted that some people succumb to the temptation to label anything with which they disagree as “far-right.”

Media and academic elites vs. democracy?

It is evident that scientists applaud some voter preferences but suggest that others are to be discouraged. Matthijs Rooduijn rejected the idea that voter preferences (as declared in the ballot box) should in general be translated into government policy. Thus he declares:

“Right wing politicians in the crop currently making headlines are populists in

that they want the will of the people to be the point of departure for political decision-making. This ‘general will’ should, according to their populist message, be translated as directly as possible into actual political decisions” (*Nature*, December 15, 2016)

But the scientific view is to reject such an approach. There are many reasons such as climate change considerations or human rights that might discourage implementation of voter preferences.

Liberal democracy, according to views expressed recently in the scientific press, apparently promotes whatever the scientific community prefers: pluralism (many cultures all equal), internationalism, human rights that take priority over religious values, and a climate change agenda.

Populism apparently represents the opposite.

Sensible people, informed people, one hopes will not be discouraged by unflattering terms. Let the voters make their own choices without intimidation from the media and academic elites. Let us all be aware that “Science is only one of many factors and interests that a thoughtful politician needs to weigh when choosing a position on a complex topic” (*Nature* editorial May 11, 2017). Indeed that editorial ends on a high note, and so will we: “Name-calling and portraying the current political climate as a war between facts and ignorance simply sows division.”

RP

“Did God **actually** say...?”

Self-assessment time: How well are our churches dealing with **theistic evolution**?

BY

In Genesis 3:1 we read the first challenge made to God’s Word: “[The serpent] said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And what follows is the first example of man falling for the temptation of seeking autonomy for himself. In his book *Always Ready* Dr. Greg Bahnsen outlined the devil’s two-step strategy here:

Even in the garden Man was responsible to submit without question to God’s revelation given by special word to him. Satan’s strategy then (as now) was to work toward undermining Man’s...sub-mission to this authoritative word from God. [The Devil] began by calling the word into question (v. 1) and then contradicting it openly (v. 4).

That strategy continues today. On issues like creation, women in office, and homosexuality we’ve seen God’s Word first called into question, and then, not so long after, openly contradicted. And these attacks on the authority of Scripture are originating in the Church itself.

HOW ARE OUR “BRAKES”?

When we see other denominations undermining the authority of Scripture – think of the recent

decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) to include women in office – we should consider how we ourselves are doing. Continuing to speed down a freeway just after seeing a car crash in front of us is very foolish, especially if we haven’t checked our own brakes recently. So how are our churches “driving” in relation to the way we view the authority and inerrancy of Scripture?

The recent decision of the RCN to allow women in office did not arise out of the blue. Concerns have been raised regarding the RCN’s interpretation of Scripture on a number of occasions.

One of the key issues has been how the early chapters of Genesis are to be interpreted. In 2009, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia’s (FRCA) Synod Legana instructed deputies to discuss with the RCN the need “to uphold the plain meaning of Scripture regarding Genesis 1-11”.

In 2012, the FRCA’s Synod Armadale, in its letter of admonition to the RCN, questioned the “...willingness of the RCN to fully uphold the truth of Scripture” and gave examples of where a literal view of the creation account was being compromised. For example, a lecturer at RCN’s seminary, Dr. S. Paas, stated in his dissertation *Creation and Judgment: Creation Texts in Some Eighth*

Century Prophets that he considers “creation to be a myth, along with much of Genesis 1 – 11.”

At a presentation given at a 2015 office bearer’s conference, the Canadian Reformed Churches’ Dr. Cornelius van Dam spoke about the 2008 appointment of Dr. Paas as a lecturer at the Theological College of Kampen. Dr. van Dam noted this appointment, done despite Paas not accepting the historicity of the biblical account of creation, was “the first time that unbiblical views were officially tolerated in Kampen.”

CREATION IS KEY

It should not surprise us that the doctrine of creation is a pressure point for the church. We live in a world that has embraced “science” as the answer to everything. God has been rejected and the theory of evolution is presented as the explanation of origins. The church is not immune from attack; some people compromise their faith by accommodating the theory of evolution. This compromise has been termed “theistic evolution,” which is the belief that God used evolution to “create” all living things, including us.

One way the Canadian Reformed churches tried dealing with the issue of theistic evolution was via a confessional amendment. In 2015 a proposal was advanced to amend

the Belgic Confession to make it clear that man did not evolve from apes or pond slime, but was rather created directly by God. While this proposal was adopted by a local church and its classis, it did not meet with approval at Regional Synod.

For many years, Dr. John Byl has also been warning about the danger of reinterpreting Genesis via his blog *Bylogos* (bylogos.blogspot.com). Another website called *CreationWithoutCompromise.com* has been set up by:

"Reformed Christians concerned about the issue of origins in our midst ... who ... believe that a failure to maintain the orthodox position not only attacks biblical truth in general, but the gospel of Jesus Christ in particular"

These two websites are fantastic

resources for anyone wanting to know more about this important issue.

PRIDEFUL VS. GENUINE QUESTIONS

These developments should serve as a warning to us to be on the look-out for the heresy of theistic evolution in our own churches. It begins when people ask the question "Did God actually say that the days were literal, 24 hour periods?" I've heard variations of this question, at times from someone genuinely struggling in their faith, and at other times from people armed with a barrage of so-called "evidence" from science.

Understanding the motivation of the person asking the question is important, as is finding out where they are seeking answers. Do the questions come from spiritual pride, from man's incessant drive for autonomy? Renowned atheist Richard Dawkins

"Does the Board ensure that teachers and staff (particularly those that teach Science) have a high view of Scripture on this matter?"

famously stated that, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." When we try to compromise with science, are we seeking to be intellectually fulfilled theists?

But rejecting the truth of Genesis opens the way for rejecting the



Bible's teachings on other matters, as the compromise will never end there.

ARE WE SLIDING TOO?

So how are our churches doing on the matter of theistic evolution? Thankfully we've seen many Reformed churches take a stand upholding a literal view of creation – some of the interactions with the RCN mentioned earlier are good examples.

But what about as individual church members? I've had quite a few discussions with others on this matter, and thankfully most share an automatic, faithful response in keeping with Scripture.

However, some have denied a literal view of the creation account in Genesis, either by saying the days were not normal 24-hour days, or by posing questions that cast doubt. Usually these don't start with "did God actually say?" but they may as well have. Anyone who denies that the false teaching of theistic evolution

is not an issue at all in our Reformed churches should start discussing the issue more widely and see what views are held by others in the pews. Hopefully in most cases we will be greatly encouraged and pleasantly surprised. But perhaps we need to "check our brakes" on this issue.

These questions could serve as a starting point:

- Is a literal view of the Genesis creation account being preached from your pulpit, with false teaching being exposed?
- What views are held by your fellow church members when it comes to theistic evolution? Do you faithfully attend bible studies so that you can be involved with "teaching and admonishing one another" also on this matter, as per Colossians 3:16?
- What do your office bearers believe about the Creation account? When you nominate

office bearers, do you know their view of the inerrancy of Scripture, or are you just making assumptions?

- What do you know about what our children are being taught at school in relation to Creation? Does the Board ensure that teachers and staff (particularly those that teach Science) have a high view of Scripture on this matter?
- Are you taking personal responsibility in ensuring that your children are being equipped with the armor required (Ephesians 6) to discern the truth and to speak it boldly when it comes to the theory of evolution as applied to Origins – both inside the church and outside (1 Peter 3:15)?

Let's encourage one another to maintain the truth of God's Word. We can be sure of two things: Satan will continue to ask 'Did God actually say?' But the 'Word of our God will stand forever' (Isaiah 40:8). **RP**

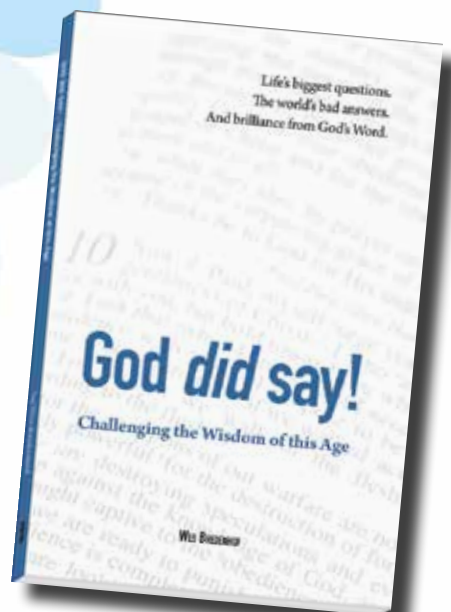
Consider the difference between these two questions:

- "What did God say?"
- "Did God *really* say?"

The first one is about finding clarity. The second seems like the first, but when the Serpent asked it of Eve in the Garden his intent wasn't to confirm what God had said, but rather to *challenge* it. He was asking this question to raise doubt. The same is true today. Some in the Church are questioning, but not to find out what God said, but instead to undermine what He said.

In his new book Dr. Bredenhof wants us to understand that there is no need for uncertainty, because God *did* say!

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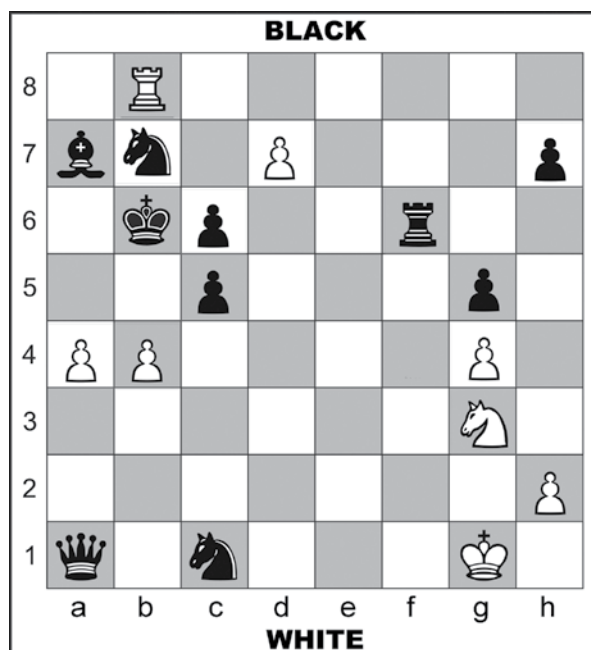
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ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #243



Riddle for Punsters #243

"Riddles for Kid Punsters #243 - "Dessert going Bananas?"

Why did the banana split? Being in a bowl with cold ice cream no longer had a _____ for the banana.

Why did the milk shake? If you had to go into a mixer with _____ ring blades and cold ice cream you would _____ too!

Problem to Ponder #243

"The True Meaning of Christmas Jumbled Words"

Unscramble the words, most of which are anagrams. They will produce words (esp. words found in the gospels) related to Jesus Christ's birth. For example, A MIG = MAGI. Two blanks means two word answers.

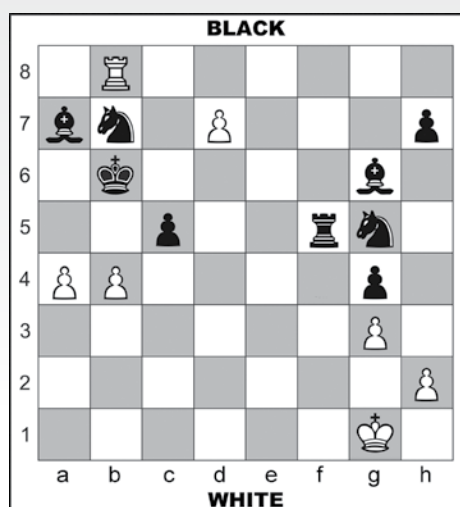
BE THE HELM _____	SHE AIMS _____
OUR VISA _____	FENCE RANK SIN _____
HD SPHERES _____	AN ICON TRAIN _____
RAG MEN _____	GRAY MINI RV _____
GLEANS _____	DOG HER INK _____

WHITE to Mate in 4

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

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #242



WHITE TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

1. P-Q8=Q ch K-R3
2. P-N5 mate

OR

1. P-Q8=Q ch K-B3
2. P-N5 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. d7-d8=Q + Kb6-a6
2. b4-b ++

OR

1. d7-d8=Q + Kb6-c6
2. b4-b5 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- N-R6 ch
2. K-N2 R-B7 ch
3. K-R1 B-K5 mate

OR

1. ----- N-R6 ch
2. K-R1 R-B8 ch
3. K-N2 R-KN8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Ng5-h3 +

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#242 - "A French Delicacy for Supper - Legs of a Croaker"

A dead rabbit was laying in a field. The next day its body was gone. This confirms the adage, "Hare today, gone tomorrow."

A frog was merrily hopping around a campfire but suddenly found itself landing in a pot of quite warm water above the fire, confirming the adage, "Look before you leap." The frog considered leaping out right away but did not do so, wanting to enjoy the warm water a bit longer. The increasing warmth put the frog to sleep and eventually the frog truly "croaked". The camper had frog's legs for supper, confirming the adage, "He who hesitates is lost. It appears that any plans the frog had for the future had truly "gone to pot".

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#242 - "The Baker, the Banker and the Blacksmith"

For the following three statements, **one is true and the other two are false**. Determine the name of the baker, the banker and the blacksmith.

1. Jeremiah is a blacksmith.
2. John is not a baker.
3. James is a banker or blacksmith.

Assume that #1 is true so Jeremiah is a blacksmith. #2 is false so John is a baker. #3 is also false so James is not a banker or blacksmith so must be a baker. John and James cannot both be the baker so **#1 is not true**.

Assume that #2 is true so John is not a baker.

#1 is false so Jeremiah is not a blacksmith.

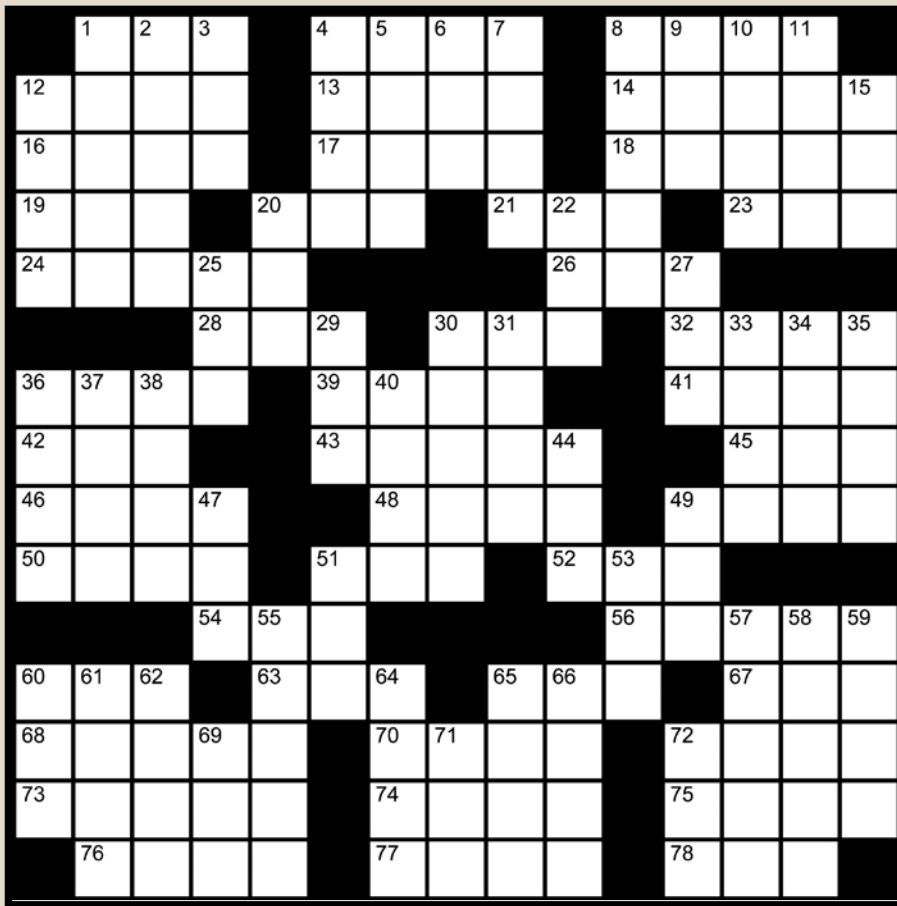
#3 is also false so James is not a banker or blacksmith so James must be a baker. John would have to be a blacksmith and Jeremiah is a banker.

Assume that #3 is true so James is a banker or blacksmith. #2 is false so John must be a baker. #1 is also false so Jeremiah is not a blacksmith and must therefore be a banker. James is left to be the blacksmith.

[Note that if the true statement is #2 or it is #3, then Jeremiah is a banker.]

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 3-9

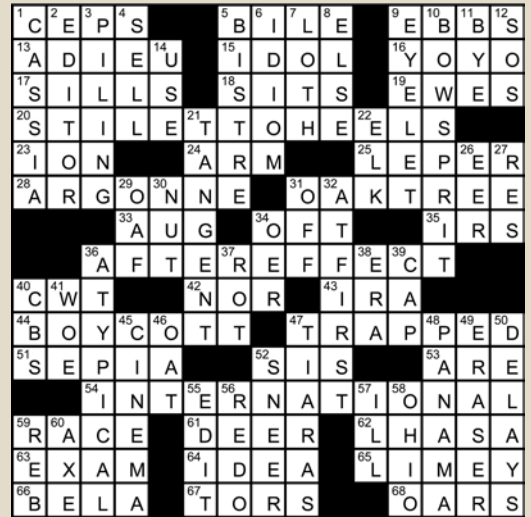
PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

1. Flawed hero with *Great Expectations*
4. Arrogantly overconfident
8. Organization to "come over and help" Russia
12. _____ over (= ponder, think about)
13. Top rating
14. "the waters _____ the expanse" (Gen. 1)
16. "the _____ God, our Saviour" (Jude)
17. "make a small _____ on the roof" (2 Kings 4)
18. "A Jury of Her _____" (Susan Glaspell story)
19. A tennis player may keep one up his sleeve
20. Brit-_____ (possibly illuminating course?)
21. "_____ with you?" (mealtime question?)
23. "and _____ as the scribes." (Mark 1)
24. "...will deny me _____
26. "Jotham _____ away and fled..." (Judges 9)
28. "_____ toe of his right foot" (Lev. 14)
30. "Joshua the son of _____" (Numbers 14)
32. One in a list
36. Let the cat out of the bag
39. "carrying out their _____." (Acts 27)
41. Lay down asphalt or concrete
42. Positively or negatively charged particle
43. Lush spot in the desert
45. "They set a _____ for my steps" (Ps. 57)
46. Something cursed by Jesus (Mark 11)
48. See you later! Toodle-oo!
49. Cornish friend of "The Selfish Giant"
50. "No one _____ unshrunk cloth on" (Mark 2)
51. It can have an electric

- effect on fishermen
52. Single frame in older animated movies
54. Pull behind
56. Skillful; adroit
60. Abbreviation for chemical name of aspirin
63. "_____ his feet with her tears" (Luke 7)
65. "from the birds of the _____" (Job 28)
67. " ' not _____ to man, but to God.' " (Acts 5)
68. Group meeting for discussion
70. "let them down by a _____" (Joshua 2)
72. Beth-_____ (= house of idols - Hos. 4, 5)
73. Books and noblemen have them
74. Where you sleep (archaically speaking)
75. "a large _____ of pigs was feeding" (Luke 8)
76. "Can you _____ up your voice to...?" (Job 38)
77. Young daughter of a mister
78. There are 168 in a week

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 3-8

DOWN

1. It's thrown in fights
2. More unhealthy (variant form)
3. Layer (of pressed wood or facial tissue)
4. Draped garment for women in India
5. Debatable; open to dispute
6. Card game with specially printed deck
7. Precious stones
8. _____ joe (one way to start your day)
9. "Blessed is the _____ who..." (Rev. 1)
10. Port city in Yemen
11. One of the "good guys"; or Leander's love
12. Ditch around a castle that's all wet
15. Three consecutive letters in the alphabet
20. Garland of Hawaiian flowers
22. "golden _____ holding... manna" (Heb. 9)
25. "...nature ...is _____ and flow" (Nikola Tesla)
27. _____ and tuck (= very close competition)
29. Abbreviation for past British postal system
30. Relating to the nose
31. Single part of a greater whole
33. Fruit-flavored drink brand
34. "No one has _____ seen God" (John 1)
35. Deal (out); allot
36. "_____ into the mouths of
- horses" (James 3)
37. Body of knowledge or stories on a subject
38. "there arose _____ king over..." (Ex. 1)
40. " 'and the hour is now _____.' " (Mark 6)
44. Part of animal or plant holding liquid or air
47. Superlative ending; or east of Paris
49. "was said to those of _____" (Matt. 5)
51. "I love _____" (said by romantic ram)
53. "lobe of Aaron's right _____" (Lev. 8)
55. Nocturnal bird's offspring
57. Offspring of 51 across
58. Harbor structures
59. "He said to him, '_____ my sheep.'" (John 21)
60. "To make an _____ answer is..." (Prov. 15)
61. "set _____ for Syria" (Acts 18, 20)
62. Prefix meaning against or opposed to
64. Vehicle in city street rail system
65. Planet of the _____ (Pierre Boulle novel)
66. Homemade roadside bombs (abbreviation)
69. Noble Tolkien creature (found in far north?)
71. Broad sash
72. Pleased sound in the hot tub

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY
s editor, yours truly, had an opportunity to chat with Al Siebring on this week's edition of
house News. He wanted to discuss last month's editorial "What if opposing tickets were
tickets?" and you can [tune in to our conversation here](#).
ould your friends be getting this newsletter? Let them know they can sign up for free [here](#).



Too certain by half

"Rigid! Inflexible! Narrow-minded!" Those aren't meant as compliments. But in today's waffling world an immovable Christian can honor God with his sheer stubbornness.

However, there's many a time when that stubbornness is not so God-honoring.

[READ NOW](#)



4 reasons to pray: William Philip's "Why We Pray"

"Does prayer intimidate you rather than refresh you? Do you wonder whether your heart is really in it? If so, then you'll be interested in William Philip's *Why We Pray*, a brief, easy-to-read, and often humorous response to these and other questions that many of us have about prayer."

[READ NOW](#)



God wants young men to be brave, not crazy

If a young man is willing to ski, dive, or bike off a cliff, but doesn't dare ask out that girl, he needs to learn the difference between brave and crazy.

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