

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

MAY / JUNE 2019

Volume 38 Issue No. 4

# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

## WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER FOSTERING

P.19

**MENTAL ILLNESS:  
RESPONSIBILITY  
AND RESPONSE**

P.11

**A PAGE  
FROM  
HELL'S  
PLAYBOOK**

P.44

**NOTA  
BENE**

p. 6

IN A NUTSHELL • FROM THE EDITOR • BOOK REVIEWS • CROSSWORD



## ADVERTISE IN REFORMED PERSPECTIVE

We have several thousand readers and no idea if they want to buy your product. What we are sure of is that your ad dollars will support a thoroughly Reformed magazine. To find out about our advertising rates, ad sizes and more information see [ReformedPerspective.ca/advertise](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/advertise)

# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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

**For print magazine requests or to change your address, contact:**

*Sherri Harsevoort - Reformed Perspective Administration,  
Box 1039, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0  
[admin@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:admin@reformedperspective.ca)  
1-204-751-0613*

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

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

**Editor:** Jon Dykstra

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

**Board of Directors:** Bruce DeBoer (Chairman); Marty VanDriel (Treasurer); Chris deBoer (Executive Director); Aren Vreugdenhil; Aubrey Vandergaag; Sharon de Boer (Secretary)

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

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

**Contact Address for Australia:**

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

**Copyright statement:** Copyright in letters, articles, cartoons and any other material submitted to Reformed Perspective and accepted for publication remains with the author, but RP and its reciprocal organizations may freely reproduce them in print, electronic or other forms.

*This periodical is owned and operated by the Foundation for the publication of a Reformed Social-Political Magazine, a nonprofit organization, whose purpose is described in Article 2 of its constitution: "to publish periodically a magazine promoting Reformed principles in all spheres of life, especially the social, political and economic realms." In carrying out its objectives, the society is bound by the Bible, God's infallible Word, as it is summarized and confessed in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort (Article 3 of the constitution).*

*If you are interested in the work of Reformed Perspective Foundation and in the promotion of Reformed principles in all spheres of life, especially in your local area, and you need help, contact our editor at [editor@ReformedPerspective.ca](mailto:editor@ReformedPerspective.ca).*

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

**RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:**

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

[reformedperspective.ca](http://reformedperspective.ca)





# WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER FOSTERING

by Alyssa Brown

P.19



**ON THE PROPER ROLE OF  
GOVERNMENT**

- Wes Bredenhof

P.42



**A PAGE FROM HELL'S PLAYBOOK:**

by Thaddeus Williams

P.44



**RAHAB THE WHORE...MOTHER OF  
CHRIST** P.27

- John de Vos

**GUEST EDITORIAL** P.4

- Rob Schouten

**NOTA BENE** P.6

**IN A NUTSHELL** P.40

**THE ORDINARY IS  
EXTRAORDINARY!** P.38

- Margaret Helder

A man in a dark suit is seen from behind, holding a blue eraser and erasing the word "IMPOSSIBLE" which is written in large, textured, chalk-like letters on a dark chalkboard. The word is being erased from left to right, with the first few letters already partially removed.

# IMPOSSIBLE

## PROVIDENCE & POLITICS

5 ways God's providence  
should impact how we  
approach politics

by Rob Schouten

God is in control. It's a simple enough truth, but if we understood it, *really* understood it, I think it would change the way we approach politics. So I want to look now at government through the lens of God's *providence*.

God's providence means that He governs and upholds his creation, all of it, from little rocks to whole galaxies, and plants and animals too. His providence also encompasses the flow of history and the decisions of individual human hearts. In short, God's providence means that God *rules*, and that because He rules nothing comes about by chance. Nothing happens apart from God's will. Nothing

surprises God or ever presents God with an unsolvable problem. Nothing is ever beyond his control. At some level, everything happens because God wants it to happen in fulfillment of his good and perfect plan.

That means when a nation is blessed with good government, we know this is by the will of God. Good governments don't arise by chance. They don't come from nowhere. Instead they come to us as a gift of God's goodness and mercy. They are from the *hand* of the Lord.

At the same time, when a nation endures a period of poor government or when the Christian Church endures oppression at the hands of government,

this, too, is from the *hand* of God. Also in such times, God is in charge. In all the adversity experienced by the Church, the Lord is still advancing his own good purpose to eventually unite all things under one Head, even Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10).

So let's consider now how working with the doctrine of God's providence will have some blessed effects for those engaged as Christians in the work of politics.

### 1. Reflecting on God's providence would lighten our mood!

When governments do foolish things or act in ways that diminish our

freedom and make life more difficult for us, that can be very discouraging.

However, when we remember that God is sovereign over everything and that even Satan can do nothing apart from the will of Christ, we get a different feeling about difficult political realities. The world is not spiralling out of control; God is still in control! What's happening is part of his plan and his plan involves working out everything for the glory of his Name and for the good of those who trust him.

## 2. God's providence should increase our patience

God's providence is connected to God's ultimate purpose and we know that this is a long-term project; our Father in heaven is playing the long-game. Knowing this enables us to continue in hope even as the going gets rough.

## 3. God's providence should increase our hope for change

We read in Proverbs 21 that the:

"king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wills."

The imagery here probably comes from agricultural practices of the ancient world. In parts of the ancient world, there was the practice of digging canals and smaller waterways that could be controlled by a series of large valves. If a farmer wanted to channel water to a particular part of his land, he would simply close one valve and open another. It wasn't difficult to do and the effects were quite dramatic.

Just as easily as a farmer redirects water in a channel, so easily God redirects the heart of a king; He turns it wherever He wills. Even when the king imagines that he is acting with complete autonomy and sovereign power, it's actually God who is directing his decisions.

Notice that God's sovereignty extends

not just to the actions of the king but to his heart, that is, to his inner self, the place of his thoughts, desires and wishes. For God to influence a ruler in this deeply personal matter is not difficult.

For this reason, even in the most trying of times, we can expect positive change. Even when the trajectory doesn't look good, God can make things happen. *Walls can come down quickly*. Closed doors can be opened when we no longer really expected it. Events can happen that totally change the political landscape – and we didn't see them coming!

## 4. God's providence should increase our courage

I would say that this is true because knowing God's providence decreases the feelings of intimidation which we may experience. When government and the media seem large, overwhelming, and irresistible, we are not afraid. I'm reminded of what Jesus said to Pontius Pilate: "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11).

The fear of the LORD who rules the world in his providence takes away the fear of people. Fear paralyzes us but living confidently in the light of God's all-encompassing providence motivates us and encourages us to speak and act according to our convictions.

## 5. God's providence encourages us to engage in politics

Saying this may seem counter-intuitive. Wouldn't the confession that God sovereignly turns the hearts of kings wherever He wills make Christians *passive*? Wouldn't the doctrine of providence encourage us to simply *wait* for God's next move?


I would say that the opposite is true. The more we reflect on God's sovereignty, the more we think about his providential control over the world, the more we will be motivated toward political engagement. God's work of providence encourages us to work in

*...when you know  
that God wins...  
then you can feel a  
surge of energy.*

our sphere and responsibility. After all, in his providence, God uses the work of human beings. He uses our prayers, words and our political witness to accomplish his work of providence. Yes, of course God can and frequently does act *directly* upon his world but in many cases, God works *indirectly* and through the actions of people.

Ephesians 1 says that God has a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. By God's providence, this plan is coming to fulfillment. However, this fulfillment involves human prayer, human actions, words and witness. The fulfillment of God's plan involves each one of us working with our own gifts and opportunities for the glory of God.

Imagine that you didn't know there was a plan. Imagine that you didn't believe God was firmly in control. Imagine that you didn't know that in the end God wins and his Kingdom is established in righteousness forever. Imagine that life was a crapshoot so that you just didn't know where it would end. Would that motivate you to action? I don't think so.

But when you know that God wins and that everything is somehow part of the pathway to final victory, then you can feel a surge of energy. Something good is coming. God's victory is coming and you can be part of the process. 

*Rev. Schouten is the pastor of the Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church. This is an edited version of a devotional given at an ARPA Canada "God and Government Conference," May 4, 2019, in Aldergrove, BC.*



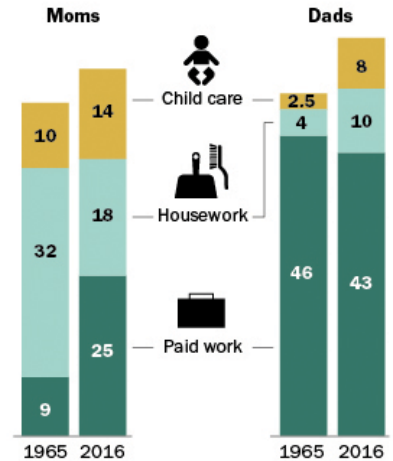
# NOTA BENE

News worth noting

BY JON DYKSTRA

## For both moms and dads, more time spent on child care

Average number of hours per week spent on ...



Note: Paid work includes commute time.

Source: 1965 data from table 5A.1-2, Bianchi, S.M. et al., "Changing Rhythms of American Family Life" (2006). 2016 data from Pew Research Center analysis of American Time Use Survey (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## NEW YORK TIMES TAKES DADS TO TASK ABOUT HOUSEWORK



When will men stop shirking their share of the housework? That was the question a recent *New York Times* article asked and the answer it

gave was, some time between 75 years from now and never. According to the author, Dr. Darcy Lockman:

The amount of child care men performed rose throughout the

1980s and '90s, but then began to level off without ever reaching parity. Mothers still shoulder 65 percent of child-care work.

While the rest of the article explored why this inequity still exists, *FEE.org's* Jon Miltimore pointed out an answer it missed: maybe men are doing less at home because they are doing more outside it.

According to the Pew Research Center, women do more inside the home – 32 hours, compared to men's 18 – but dads average more hours of work overall. When child care, housework, and paid work is all added up, dads spend 61 hours each week working, while moms average 57. It turns out that moms and dads don't split *any* of the work exactly 50/50.

The same Pew data showed that dads in 1965 used to spend just 2.5 hours a week caring for their kids. By 2016 that had increased to 8 hours, and we can be thankful for the change. Nothing in marriage and parenting is ever going to be 50/50 because God made men and women with different roles, interests, abilities and weaknesses too. Then He told us to pair up so we could compliment – *not duplicate* – one another. Christians can echo the French with a rousing "Vive la différence!" but we should never forget that our kids need both their mom and their dad.

SOURCE: Darcy Lockman's "What 'good' dads get away with" posted to NYTimes.com on May 4, 2019; Jon Miltimore's "The NYT says dads aren't pulling their weight. Are they right?" posted to FEE.org on May 10, 2019; AW Geiger, Gretchen Livingston, and Kristen Bialik's "6 facts about U.S. moms" posted to PewResearch.org on May 8, 2019

## SI'S SWIMSUIT EDITION: FROM BARELY-THERE TO BURKINIS

**T**he annual *Sports Illustrated* (SI) swimsuit edition is best known for the next-to-nothing that models wear.

So why would this year's issue feature a model who's covered up from head to ankles?

It doesn't seem to fit the swimsuit issue's long history. Most of the year SI is a magazine that could be found without controversy on the coffee table of a sports-minded pastor. But in a bid to boost sales it has been featuring an annual swimsuit issue since 1964. Each year again editors try to figure out how they can display as much skin as possible, while still giving its mostly male readership some means of denying that what they have in their hands is mere smut. That's why the models almost always wear something, though it's the sort of something that leaves nothing to the imagination – body paint, fishnets, strategically placed hands, floss.

Again, why has an annual issue devoted to ogling decided to include a model wearing a swimsuit that has more material than everyone else's combined? Halima Aden is Muslim, and the swimsuit she wears is a "burkini" – an ankle-to-wrist wetsuit combined with a head-covering hijab, its name a combination of "bikini" and "burqa." As SI shared and hundreds of mainstream media outlets passed along, this was a "historic first" – the very first time SI has featured a burkini-wearing model in its pages.

The magazine has touted other "historic firsts" in the past: the first African American to be featured on the cover, the first plus-size (ie. regular-size) model, and the first amputee. But while they might have been innovations, a barely clad black, or disabled, or regular-sized woman remains a barely-clad woman, and all fit with the issue's objectifying theme.

A covered up woman doesn't. So what's going on this year? SI editor MJ Day offered an explanation of sorts,



saying that her and model Halima Aden:

"both believe the ideal of beauty is so vast and subjective....Whether you feel your most beautiful and confident in a burkini or a bikini, YOU ARE WORTHY."

But what if you aren't wild about either sort of swimsuit? SI has embraced these two choices, but their issue won't show any others. If this was really about diversity then SI would get inspired by and follow through on *Babylon Bee's* satiric headline:

"Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue Features First-Ever Baptist Model In Floor-Length Denim Skirt"

It's clear then that this was more publicity stunt than anything else.

From a Christian perspective what's interesting is how both Aden's burkinis and everyone else's buck-nakedness share something in common. They might be polar opposites but both are rejections of God's standards.

The one type of rebellion is obvious: you only have to get three chapters into the Bible to know God doesn't want fallen woman and man displaying all He gave us for any and all to see. God's design for sexuality



involves modesty. SI's swimsuit issue does not.

The problem with the burkini is that in addition to modesty and charity, God also calls us to self-control (Prov. 25:28, Titus 2:6). The burkini – and the burqa it is based on – cover up women in a way that no man is required to dress, because this style of dress presumes women have self-control and men really don't. Thus women have to cover up to save us males from acting on our animalistic instincts. Sadly this man-as-a-Cro-Magnon view is echoed in some Christian circles when lustful thoughts are excused as the unavoidable offshoot of fashion that trends towards tighter and curvier. But make no mistake men, we are called to control ourselves and there is no putting off that responsibility on others.

From a worldly perspective the latest SI swimsuit issue doesn't make sense. It's an incoherent muddle, celebrating both brazen *and* repressed sexuality. But the incomprehensible becomes understandable when we view it through a Christian lens. When we know there is a God-given Truth, and there is an Adversary trying frantically to undermine it, then it's no surprise when we see him, in desperation, launching attacks from two opposite directions at once.

## MOVIE INDUSTRY HOSTILITY TO *UNPLANNED* HELPS GET ITS MESSAGE OUT



**U***nplanned* tells the true story of how Abby Johnson, a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic director, changed her mind and now fights for the unborn. Her story hit cinema screens in late March and had already made \$18 million, or three times what the film cost to make.

But that success has been hard won.

First, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) announced they were giving *Unplanned* a restricted or "R rating" which meant the trailer could only run before other R-rated films and anyone under 17 would need to be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian to see it. That put a big dent into its potential audience. The rating

was a controversial one because the film received no cautions for profanity, nudity, or sex. While the MPAA's listed caution is for "disturbing/bloody images," the only such scenes involve abortion.

The film's writers/directors Cary Solomon and Chuck Konzelman shared with *MovieGuide.org* how "ironically, the MPAA seems to be indirectly endorsing the pro-life position: namely that abortion is an act of violence." The *Washington Post's* Mark Thiessen echoed that thought: "They would not give it an 'R' if it depicted a tonsillectomy."

Solomon and Konzelman went on to detail how the R rating was doubly ironic.

"...many teenage women in this country who can legally obtain an actual abortion without parental permission will be prohibited from going to see our film containing simulated images of abortion, without obtaining parental permission."

A different sort of roadblock was used in Canada, where both major movie chains, Cineplex Odeon and Landmark, are refusing to show it. However, there is demand for the film, as was evident in mid-May when the film had a successful private showing in Edmonton for a crowd of almost 3,000.

A third irony? Even as the movie industry seems intent on preventing people from seeing *Unplanned*, their efforts are aiding in its publicity. Articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Fortune*, *Hollywood Reporter*, and *Glamour* (not to mention countless conservative and Christian sites) and they touch on more than just the controversial rating – many of them raise, and attempt to rebut, what the film says happens behind Planned Parenthood clinic doors.

Hollywood may have stopped some people from seeing this film but God is using their efforts to get many more *talking* and *learning* about what abortion does to the unborn.

## PRESIDENT TRUMP, THE PRO-LIFE RABBLE-ROUSER?



**I**n April the president of the United States made headlines for a movie he didn't watch, and didn't comment on. So what was all the fuss about? He let an "anti-abortion" film be shown in his home.

In the days leading up to the April 12 screening, mainstream media on both sides of the Atlantic let their readership

know that *Gosnell*, was going to be shown at the White House. *Gosnell* is the true-life story of Kermit Gosnell, a Philadelphia abortionist who in 2013 was found guilty of three counts of first-degree murder for babies he killed after they were born.

At the time both the prosecutor and the mainstream media emphasized that the case wasn't about abortion, but about the murder of *born* babies. But what makes the film a powerful pro-life argument is the defense offered by Gosnell's attorney: he argued that what Gosnell did to these babies *after* birth was not significantly different from what other abortionists were, with the law's blessing, doing to babies *before* birth. It wasn't enough

to get his client off, but the argument is sound, and for any of the undecided in the viewing audience his reasoning could be convicting.

President Trump didn't watch the film, but in the lead-up to the screening he received a lot of criticism. So why did he let *Gosnell* be shown in the White House? The cynic might say this was a mostly-pain-free way to appease his conservative base – it excited them, and even though it got widespread negative coverage in the mainstream media, that negative coverage was over quite quickly.

But there is another plausible explanation: maybe the former pro-choice Democrat has taken a genuine pro-life turn. If so, then this screening



## F.R.E.E.D. – AN ACRONYM TO HELP US DEFEND, AND USE, OUR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



**I**f you're pro-life, you know the value of a good acronym. For years S.L.E.D. has helped us remember there are just four differences between the unborn and us, and none of them would justify killing the unborn.

- **Size** – They *are* smaller but smaller people are not less human.
- **Level of development** – The unborn are less developed than adults, but so are prepubescent children. Why would that make either of them less human?
- **Environment** – The unborn are in a different environment but since when does *where we are* determine *who we are*?
- **Degree of dependency** – They are highly dependent, but so are people

who need dialysis and that doesn't make them any less human.

For years John Stonestreet has wished there was a similarly useful acronym to help Christians remember what to say when it comes to defending our religious freedom. In his May 16 *Breakpoint.org* column he shared how his colleague Shane Morris has done just that with the acronym F.R.E.E. with each letter representing one point in a compelling argument for religious freedom.

- **Forcing** – Many in the world still recognize that “forcing people to go against their beliefs for no good reason is a bad thing.”
- **Reason** – “Is there a good reason to force a religious person to go against his or her belief in the case you're discussing? And are there less burdensome alternatives to squashing this freedom, like using a bakery down the street or an adoption agency across town?”
- **Examples** – Offer examples that make your point. “Should a Muslim

t-shirt designer be forced to create shirts mocking the prophet Muhammad? Should an Orthodox Jewish club at a university be forced to admit Christians as officers?”

- **Equality** – Complete the argument by asking, why shouldn't Christians get the same freedoms we'd give to the Muslim t-shirt maker, or the Orthodox Jewish club?

It's a helpful tool, made even better with one addition.

Underpinning these four points is the idea that we should do to others as we would want done to us. That's from the Bible (Matt. 7:12) and that worth noting because, as much as defending our freedom of religion is important, it's even more important to actually *use it*. So let's give God the glory with a fifth point that we can call “D, as in Divine.” That'll be a reminder for us to show how the core of our argument rests on a solid biblical principle. And in explaining that this is not our insight, but God's, we can point our listeners to Him.

was the president making the deliberate choice to take some heat so an important film could get some much-needed publicity.

To bolster the case, consider two other examples of presidential pro-life agitation from earlier this year. In January he once again spoke, via video, to the tens of thousands attending the Washington DC March for Life. Then in February, in his State of the Union address, he responded pointedly to a just-passed New York abortion bill. He told the millions watching:

There could be no greater contrast to the beautiful image of a mother holding her infant child than the chilling displays our Nation saw in recent days. Lawmakers in New York cheered with delight upon the passage of legislation that would

allow a baby to be ripped from the mother's womb moments from birth. These are living, feeling, beautiful babies who will never get the chance to share their love and dreams with the world. And then, we had the case of the Governor of Virginia where he stated he would execute a baby after birth. To defend the dignity of every person, I am asking the Congress to pass legislation to prohibit the late-term abortion of children who can feel pain in the mother's womb. Let us work together to build a culture that cherishes innocent life. And let us reaffirm a fundamental truth: all children — born and unborn — are made in the holy image of God.

This last line remarkable — it gets at the very core of where our value comes from, and why our worth doesn't differ,

no matter our size, location, or level of development. Our worth doesn't come from what we can *do*, but from *in Whose Image we are made*. Though this is *the* issue in the abortion debate, it's almost never heard.

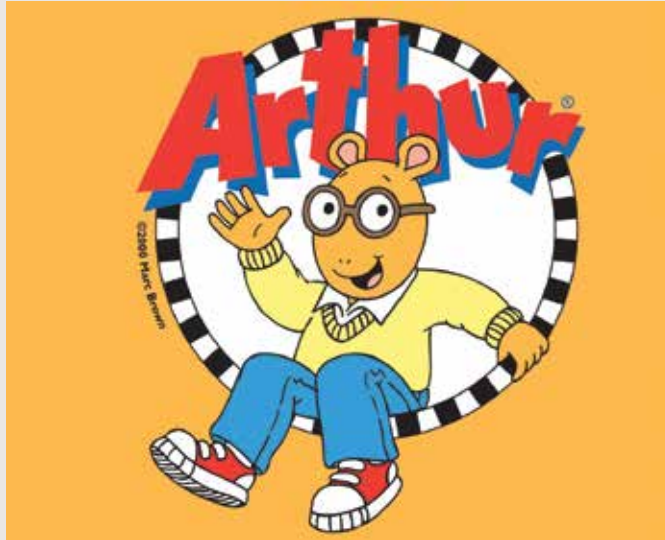
Sadly, the president has, since the *Gosnell* screening and his State of the Union address, tweeted in favor of allowing abortion in cases of rape and incest. You said *all* children are made in God's image, Mr. President, so why doesn't that include these children too?

So is he pro-life or isn't he? Well, we don't need to be convinced Trump is pro-life to see how his provocative, and occasionally downright insightful, advocacy for the unborn is an example well worth imitating. For whatever reason, he has been loud on their behalf. May we be so too.

## ARTHUR'S TEACHER, MR. RATBURN, GETS "MARRIED"

**T**he world's most famous aardvark, Arthur Timothy Read, has been around 43 years now, and his 27 books have made him a favorite with First Graders and preschoolers too. Christian parents have also appreciated him, because aside from the sometimes-bratty antics of Arthur's little sister D.W., there's nothing all that objectionable to Arthur and his friends.

That changed in May, when the 22nd season of the Arthur TV series aired its season debut. In this episode Arthur's teacher Mr. Ratburn is getting married, and Arthur and his gang figure they need to find out more.



So, as *Variety*'s Daniel Nissen wrote:

"The team snoops around in search of who they think is the bride to be. In a twist, the children learn the bride is actually another groom..."

That's yet another reason not to use the TV as an unsupervised babysitter. And it's also a reason to talk with kids, sooner than later, about issues like homosexuality, gender, and abortion, so their thinking is shaped by God's Word,

and not the local librarian or PBS outlet.

# Think you can change the world from a stage?

# We do.

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

That changes everything.

Starting with you.

**redeemer.ca**



**REDEEMER**  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

*A degree you can believe in.*

# MENTAL ILLNESS: RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSE

by Reuben Bredenhof

Back in Grade 6 my twin daughters came home talking about that day's lesson in Health class. They were learning about something called "the blame game," and why it's not an appropriate response to the difficult situations in which we find ourselves.

## THE BLAME GAME

Probably we all know how to play the blame game. We are criticised by our supervisor at work, and we're quick to point to the circumstances that led to our poor performance. Or I'm in a tough conversation with my wife, and she's making some accusations, but I'm throwing them back with some of my own.

Sometimes the blame game is played in the church too. A person blames his lazy attitude on the way that he was raised as a child. Someone blames his lack of church contributions on his high load of debt. I suspect that we don't usually have patience with this kind of blame-shifting, and we want to hold people to account.

But what about some other scenarios? Can we excuse certain sinful behaviours because of the presence of a mental illness? Should we make allowances and exceptions because of how a person is afflicted in his or her mind? What is the balance of a person's responsibility and their illness? As fellow members in Christ, how can we respond in a way that will not only help the person, but also honour the holy God?

## TWO SCENARIOS

Ponder a couple of scenarios so that you can understand what I mean, and so that you can also appreciate the challenge of sorting out a fitting response.

- 1) There is a sister in your congregation who is only very rarely in church on Sundays – maybe once per month, sometimes less. It comes to light that she has an intense anxiety about coming to church. She fears almost everything about it: being surrounded by other people, having to speak with other people, being in an enclosed space for more than an hour. She agrees that God wants her to gather with his people, and that it's important for her faith, but she can't do it. Is she breaking the fourth commandment, and should she be under discipline? Or does her illness – this extreme phobia – excuse her lack of attendance?
- 2) There is a brother who is struggling with addiction to pornography. He has admitted that for the last five years he has viewed pornography on an almost daily basis. Some accountability has helped, but the brother admits that he still finds ways to access sexually explicit material. As the months go by, he seems to be growing more entrenched in his sin, and he is less open to the guidance of fellow members. He recently said that the fault for his sin is in his brain, that his addiction to sex means that he is incapable of resisting. Is this a clear cut case of unrepentant sin against the seventh commandment?

Many more scenarios can be described. But the critical question is this: Are there times when, because of my brain, I am not responsible for my behaviour before the Lord?

## ENCOUNTERING MENTAL ILLNESS

We're speaking about mental illness, but it's good to back up for a moment and offer a definition and then list a few examples. First, a loose definition: A mental illness is a clinically significant health problem that affects how a person feels, thinks, behaves, and interacts with other people.

Second, in our life together as believers, what mental illnesses are we likely to encounter? There is depression, dementia, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, panic disorder, attention deficit disorder, anorexia, bulimia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and various extreme phobias. We might also encounter mental health difficulties that arise because of addictions to drugs and alcohol.

## BLAME THE BRAIN?

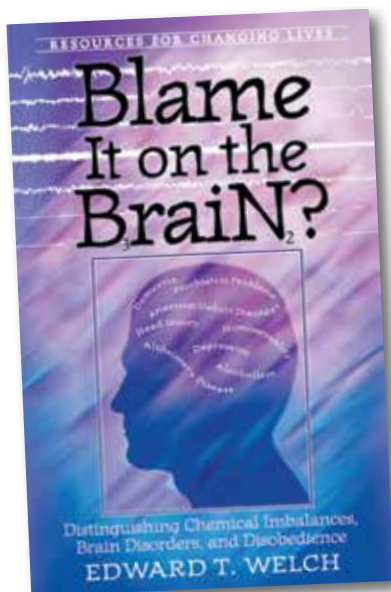
So here's the question: How much can we blame the brain?

Now, if you're hoping for black-and-white, binary approach, you won't read it here. If you're looking for a formula or equation that you can use in these kind of situations, you'll have to look elsewhere. And there surely *isn't* one!

As already noted, this is a complex area to navigate. No two situations are the same because of the individuals involved, their predispositions to developing mental illness, the particular illness, and the history and context of each situation. Still, we can take into account some important considerations. I want to acknowledge that I'm relying on many of the insights from the book called *Blame it on the Brain?* by Ed Welch.

Welch explains that there is a view today that almost everything begins in the brain. All our behaviours are caused by brain





## BLAME IT ON THE BRAIN?

BY EDWARD WELCH

1998, 204 PAGES

chemistry and physics: “My brain made me do it.” As a consequence of viewing the problem as strictly physical, the *answer* is often strictly physical too, as in: “I have a chemical imbalance in my brain, so how can I level that out?” Or, “My child is being hyperactive at school and disrupting the class, so what medication can he take to help him behave?”

## SOLUTIONS IN SCIENCE?

Sometimes it’s very tempting to conclude that it is “all upstairs,” a matter of the brain. For example, when someone is in the darkness of depression, we can talk to them at length; we pray with them; we read Scripture to them. There are months of intensive spiritual effort, and nothing seems to work. Despite our best efforts, the person’s faith is struggling mightily. They say that they feel “dead” inside, and miles away from God.

Then they go to a psychiatrist... he prescribes some medication, and in weeks the depression starts to lift! The person begins to talk about church in a more positive way, and to read the Bible again, even enthusiastically. So was it all in the brain? Did a dose of medication really solve it? Does the brain – a biological entity – really have so much influence on our spiritual life?

The same thinking is applied to other areas of behaviour. Some people argue for a biological basis of homosexuality. They also argue for a biological basis for anger, and disobedience to parents, and worry, drug abuse, and stealing. These are all brain problems, they say, not sin problems. Sometimes they can even point to evidence which suggests, for example, that the brains of pathological liars are actually physically different from the brains of “normal people,” people who are wired to (usually) tell the truth.

As Christians, we have to sort through this. We acknowledge that science can help by teaching us something about how the brain works. Yet science is not just raw data. It is data that has been interpreted by fallible humans, people who have their own worldviews and weaknesses. Science too must be made subject to the Bible.

## WHO WE ARE

So to help us, we need to consider what the Bible says about who we are. The LORD created us as complex beings, as a natural organism that is at the same time being indwelt by a supernatural spirit. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, for instance, Paul describes us as spiritual beings who are clothed in an earthly tent. This two-fold composition is seen throughout the Bible, and we notice it particularly at death, when the soul or spirit goes to the Lord and the body stays behind and is buried in the ground.

Despite the separation that happens at death, when we’re living we are *one person*, an intimate unity of spirit and body. So how do spirit and body relate? How do these two substances function together? At minimum, we can say that they are mutually interdependent.

We know this from experience: the way that your body feels very much affects your spirit; the activities that your spirit chooses are worked out in the body, both good and bad.

Ultimately, though, the spirit or the heart is the moral captain, the “wellspring” of our life (Prov 4:23). It’s the heart that empowers, initiates and directs. And the problem is that our heart is inclined to evil.

## DIRECTED BY THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

So when it comes to questions of responsibility and response, the Bible’s teaching about sin is essential. Our position on this doctrine will affect everything that follows, and it will shape the answers that we give to these tough questions.

I understand that mentioning sin in the context of mental illness can make people uneasy. You’ve probably heard the horror stories about people telling those who are struggling with depression, “You just have to pray more. Try to read the Bible more.” That’s a response which essentially says, “You’re feeling so miserable because you haven’t done something that you need to – it’s because you’ve sinned.” I certainly don’t advise that approach, in general.

Yet it’s true that sin is a reality, and it’s our deepest problem, one that affects absolutely every aspect of our life. The Scriptures teach that all human beings are born as sons and daughters of Adam. Without the Holy Spirit’s intervention, we are dead in trespasses and sins, without any inclination to seek God or do what is good. It’s not that we don’t understand right and wrong, it’s that we *choose* not to live according to God’s truth.

So if sin is a deeply rooted problem, if it’s as deep as our very nature as human beings, we need to conclude that the brain itself is unable to make a person sin or to prevent a person from following Christ. The Scriptures teach us to say that any behaviour which does not conform to God’s commands or any thought which transgresses his prohibitions, is something that proceeds from the sinful heart. And it is sin.

## CREATED AS RESPONSIBLE

That’s not how God made us, of course. When God created us in the beginning, He made us in his image. Part of that means that we were created with the ability to make moral decisions. Consequently, as God’s creatures we are responsible for our behaviour – whatever that behaviour is, and whatever the circumstances.

This idea of our responsibility before the LORD is seen, for example, in the laws of Leviticus. There it says that even if a

person sinned unintentionally, without meaning to, they needed to present a sacrifice of atonement (Lev 5:17). They weren't excused because of a lack of intent, but they were held to account.

Upholding this sense of responsibility actually shows respect for a person. Holding them to account is something that recognizes their dignity as human beings, made in the image of God. As an example, say you have a son who continually breaks your household rules. Because you're a nice person, you always excuse him, and you find reasons not to punish him: he's young, he's immature, he has a lot of pressures at school. It feels like you're being merciful. But ultimately, you're not treating your son with respect for his dignity as one created in God's image. You're implying that he's too weak to handle the consequences, or too dumb to figure out a better alternative. You're not helping him to grow in his sense of responsibility, while the loving thing would be to let him experience consequences.

In the same way, we are responsible before God our Father. He doesn't give us a free pass for any sin, because He made us to serve and obey him in all things.

Next we'll see how this truth relates to the way that we try to help our brothers and sisters who are struggling with mental illness.

## THE LIMITS OF THE BRAIN

To this point, we've said that the brain itself is unable to prevent a person from

following Christ. The Scriptures teach that any behaviour that does not conform to God's commands, any thought that transgresses his prohibitions, is something that proceeds from the sinful heart. God created us as responsible beings but through our own fault we have been deeply affected by sin.

Yet there is more that must be said. An over-simplified answer doesn't help us. In his book *Blame it on the Brain?* Ed Welch speaks about three categories:

### 1) When the brain *can* be blamed:

There can be mental illness that affects brain functioning in a way that leads to sin. For example, people who are suffering from dementia might say and do very hurtful things. A person with dementia might make sexually suggestive comments to women, or she might be sinfully demanding toward family members. We are right to be immensely patient in these cases because of the obvious illness and impairment of the brain.

Having said that, we know that brain problems can expose heart problems. The damaged brain is not generating sin. It's simply taking the cover off things that were previously hidden in the heart, like a poor attitude toward women, or a demanding spirit.

### 2) When the brain *might* be blamed:

A physical change in the chemical levels of our brain can lead to certain conditions, such as depression or ADD.

This is why medications that address the imbalance can have such an effect on behaviour.

Even so, while psychiatric problems can have this physical cause, there can be a spiritual element too. Most mental illnesses are hybrids, a combination of physical and spiritual problems. For instance, an anxiety disorder can arise from factors that are outside a person, such as living in a world that is fallen and under the curse, or dealing with a very difficult work situation and many demands at home. Combine that with a biological predisposition to anxiety, and you'd say a person is almost destined to suffer with it.

Conversely, a depressive disorder can also be a consequence of sinful choices that the person has made. A person might be living in the misery of unconfessed sin, living far from God. In a sense, we shouldn't be surprised that they have no rest (see Psalm 32 or 38). This is a heart problem that is manifesting itself in the brain.

### 3) When the brain *cannot* be blamed:

There are behaviours that are physical, and they definitely have a mental component, but they cannot be blamed on the brain. Take homosexuality as an example, which some will say is biologically determined. This is unclear, but even if there was evidence for the gay gene, we must respond in a biblical way. And that is to say that homosexual activity is forbidden by





the Lord. We can be influenced by our genes, but that's much different than being determined by them. At most, our biology is like a friend who tempts us into sin. Such a friend might be bothersome, but he can be resisted. We don't have to go along with him. Alcoholism is another example. It's called a disease, and in the secular setting it's often spoken of in those terms. Sometimes an alcoholic will say, "That's the disease talking." There could even be a genetic predisposition towards alcoholism, yet the Bible states that drunkenness is a sin, and in the end we also have to treat it as such.



## WHAT ABOUT ADDICTIONS?

"Addictions" is a much-used term today. The difficulty is that it is a very elastic and ambiguous category, and it covers everything from frivolous activities (being addicted to certain shows on Netflix) to far more serious (being addicted to drugs). While the term is misused, it is true that an addict can feel that he is trapped and out of control.

While the Bible doesn't directly mention addictions, it does talk about our motivations and desires. It recognizes that there are forces so powerful they can overtake our lives.

Yet our addictions are more than self-destructive behaviours; they are violations of God's law. An addiction is about our relationship with God much more than about our biology. When we see the spiritual realities that are behind our addictive behaviours, we find that all people serve what they love: either our idols, or God.

As for the question of responsibility, we must be clear that an addiction begins with a choice. Idols exist in our lives because we invite them in and love them. Once they find a home in us, they resist leaving. They change from being servants of our desires, to being masters. Like James writes in his first chapter, "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (1:14-15).

When we repeatedly choose to do evil,

Alcoholism is...called a disease, and in the secular setting it's often spoken of in those terms. Sometimes an alcoholic will say, "That's the disease talking." There could even be a genetic predisposition towards alcoholism, yet the Bible states that drunkenness is a sin, and in the end we also have to treat it as such.

these decisions can also be accompanied by changes in brain activity. It doesn't mean that the brain has caused the decision, but the brain renders the desires of the heart in a physical medium. Welch says that "it's as if the heart leaves its footprints on the brain."

That helps us to understand the research which suggests that the brain of an addict is different from the brain of a "normal" person. What has been going on in the heart, month after month, year after year, is being represented physically, with changes in the way the brain operates. This doesn't prove that the brain caused the thoughts and actions; rather, brain changes can be caused by these behaviours. Once again, it started with sin.

## AN APPROACH FOR HELPING

It's time to draw some of this together in an approach to the question of responsibility and response. Bear in mind that every situation is different, and there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. But I hope that some of these guides can be helpful.

### 1) Distinguish between symptoms:

When there is mental illness, there can be a host of symptoms. And it's important to distinguish between spiritual and physical symptoms

and to consider whether the Bible commands or prohibits this behaviour.

For example, with depression the spiritual symptoms are feelings of worthlessness, guilt, anger, unbelief, and thanklessness. These are heart issues which need to be addressed with Scripture and prayer. But depression also has physical symptoms, such as feelings of pain, sleep problems, weight changes, fatigue, problems with concentration. This set of difficulties requires a different response, but they do need a response.

- 2) **We are not our genes:** There are genetic problems, and even genetic predispositions toward things that are sinful. But we are not our genes. The Scriptures teach that we are born as sinners, and that sin arises naturally in our heart. We enter the world as slaves of sin, but we are still blameworthy for surrendering to sin. So even if it were discovered that we are predisposed to certain sinful behaviours like alcoholism or homosexuality, this would not eliminate our responsibility for such sinful actions. Our individual makeup and background provide *context* for sin, and may fuel the *craving* for sin, but these things



don't take away the accountability for our sin.

3) **Don't rush to medicate:** We mentioned earlier that psychiatric disorders sometimes respond to medication. There can be a real benefit, so this becomes our reflex response: we assume a prescription will fix the situation, and we advise a visit to the local psychiatrist. Yet we shouldn't rush to medicate. It can be effective with some people, not all. There can be adverse effects to almost every tablet, and there can be a danger of over-medication. More to the point, we have to remember that medication cannot change the heart; it cannot remove our tendency toward sin, revive our faith, or make us more obedient.

4) **Maintain a sense of responsibility:** God created us as responsible beings, for we were made in his image. This means that He holds us to account for what we do. We diminish a person's God-given dignity by looking at them and seeing only their infirmity, and not their responsibility. If we write people off because they have depression, it doesn't help. The person concludes, "This is what the church thinks of me – I'm a screw-up, I'm damaged goods, and I'm not going to get better."

Scripture directs us to this principle of responsibility too. Think of Jesus' words in Luke 12:48, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." We can almost always require of people that they give an account of their conduct. The same text teaches us that not everyone is the same. Some have received more blessing, others less. One person's situation in life is far more difficult than another's. It doesn't mean they aren't responsible, but it means we have to weigh their responsibility in the light of everything else we know about them.

5) **Be patient:** Trying to help people with mental illness can be frustrating. If we


haven't experienced anything like it ourselves or among those who are close to us, it is hard to relate. We might get exasperated with their constant struggles, their ups and downs, and behaviours that seem inexplicable. Sometimes we want to give up, but we need to be patient.

Think of what David says in Psalm 103:14. He says, "The LORD knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." That's a mark of loving and attentive parents: they know their kids, "they will know their frame" – what they're made of. Parents can see pretty quickly when their kids are tired, or when they've had a rough day at school. And so parents will try hard to fight against their own impatience, and try to cut the kids a little slack. God is a Father who sees the weaknesses of his children from a mile away. He knows our frame: the Father knows exactly where we're come from in life, and He knows the good and the bad that we've gone through. The LORD also understands what we're made of, and that no matter how we seem on the outside, we're weak: physically, emotionally, spiritually weak. We don't have it together, so He is patient with us.

That teaches us about our own response toward those who suffer with

mental illness. We should treat them as responsible, while we also remember their frame. We know that not everyone has a strong mind, or a stable outlook, or the mental and spiritual resources to get through the dark times of life. God has been immensely patient with us, so as we help our members, we ought to be patient with them.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let's be reminded of our goal as fellow members of the church: we want to care for each other in a Christ-like way (Phil 2:1-4). Our desire is to see our fellow members enjoy life in God's grace and service. Helping them effectively requires us to take into account the full picture of who they are, including when there is the presence of mental illness. We don't let them blame it, and we don't ignore it, but we try to help them be faithful to the Lord even in the midst of their struggles of spirit and body. 

*Dr. Reuben Bredenhof is pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura, Western Australia. This article first appeared in two parts in Una Sancta (frca.org.au/unasancta) the denominational magazine of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia*



**YOUR NIAGARA HOME TEAM**  
For All Your Real Estate Needs

Bill Brouwer	Randy Mulder	Lisa Vrolijk	Ron Mulder	John Meerveld
Sales Representative	Sales Representative	Administrator	Sales Representative	Broker
905-341-4400	905-359-9411	905-641-1110	905-327-4544	905-531-0093

**YOUR NIAGARA • YOUR HOME • YOUR TEAM** **RE/MAX** GARDEN CITY REALTY INC., BROKERAGE  
each office independently owned & operated



## James Higginbotham: one of the last of the alchemists

They say that the optimist sees the glass half full, the pessimist sees the glass half empty, and that the alchemist sees the glass completely full – half in liquid state and half in vapor state.

So what is alchemy? The dictionary defines alchemy as the medieval forerunner of chemistry, based on the supposed transformation of matter. It was a preoccupation with transmuting a common substance, one of little value, into a substance of great value.

Alchemy was accepted from the Middle Ages on, until some time in the 1600s. It was based on the belief that all metals, indeed all matter, contained one common element, of which the purest and most perfect form on earth was gold. Wealthy patrons often hired alchemists to conduct research on their behalf, or better put, to make money for them. The fact that they never saw returns on their investment, did not stop their inborn desire to obtain something for nothing. Perhaps it was like buying a ticket to the lottery today with the hope that maybe, just maybe, your “lucky” number will come up.

In 1463 Edward the Fourth of England granted a Sir Henry Grey of Codnor in Derbyshire authority to labor for the transmutation of metals. This permission for research was given at Sir Henry Grey's own cost provided that he answer to the king if there was any profit. The ensuing years showed no profit at all. The king, however, must have desired to make some money because thirteen years later he again granted a license to two other men, a David Beaupée and a John Merchant, to “practice for four years the natural science of the generation of gold and silver from mercury.”

There are other records of such dealings or authorizations. Presumably, the need for such license was based on a royal claim to mines and other precious metals. But regardless of royal license, all experiments led to nothing.



# COME, LET US REASON TOGETHER

by Christine Farenhorst

## LAST OF THE ALCHEMISTS

James Higginbotham was one of the last alchemists. Born in London, England in 1752, his surname was changed to Price following the wishes of a relative who bequeathed him some money. And perhaps, in the long run, this new surname proved rather apt for him. Attending Oxford University, James Price seemed to be a bright young man. He obtained his M.A. at the age of 25, was made a doctor of medicine a year or so later, and became a member of the Royal Society when he was 29.

James Price was an able, but amateur, chemist and certainly not an adventurer looking for wealth or power. A rich man in his own right, he had a family and possessed a good name. His portrait shows the face of a rather serious, handsome young man, perhaps somewhat introspective, wearing a well-groomed wig. As a member of the Royal Society, James had already distinguished himself as being reputable in the field of chemistry. He loved science, and according to records, was an amiable, well-respected man and one with no skeletons in his closet.

In the year 1781, James Price believed he had succeeded in compounding a wondrous powder, a powder capable of converting mercury and other inferior metals into gold and silver. He wavered before making his “discovery” public. However, he could not help but speak of it with a few friends and they had animated discussions together. At long length, Price decided to conduct some experiments in front of a select group of men – men of rank, science and public renown. This he did from the 6th of May, 1782 to the 25th of May, 1782 – a duration time of almost three weeks.

There were seven experiments in all and these were witnessed by peers, baronets, clergy, lawyers, and chemists.

All the experiments resulted in gold and silver, in great and small quantities, and were apparently produced from mercury. Some of this “resulting gold” was presented to George III who received the gift graciously. The University of Oxford, where Price had been a student at Oriel College, bestowed the degree of M.D. on him; and his work, containing an account of his experiments, ran through two editions in a few months.

The general public, reading of these experiments, was enthusiastic. People saw them as the beginning of an era of prosperity for England. This discovery would surely wipe out poverty; introduce a wonderful economy, and usher in a society of peace. There were those who doubted and were sure that Price was mistaken. Conflict ensued between various groups of Englishmen.

## DO IT AGAIN

At this point, the Royal Society, of which Price was a member, felt bound to intervene. They asked James to prove to his fellow Society members the truth of his transmutations and to repeat the experiment in their presence.

Price, who had initially been very positive about his work, was evasive in responding. He remonstrated that he did not want to repeat the experiments on the grounds that the preparations had been difficult and harmful to his health. Besides, had he not already demonstrated the veracity of his work in the presence of other witnesses, and should that not be enough? Arguing that the result of the experiments had not been financial gain, (though

the public supposed it was so), Price went on to say that it had cost about seventeen pounds of sterling to make one ounce of gold.

The questions about repeating the experiments went on for some time. Price would not agree to meet with the Royal Society. Yet the honor of this first scientific body in the world seemed to be implicated. It had been founded in 1660, granted a charter by Charles II, and named the Royal Society. It was the oldest national scientific institution in the world – promoting science, recognizing excellence in science and providing scientific advice. They more or less insisted that he repeat his work. Price was hurt. “Would you treat me evilly and not believe me?” he said. “My wealth, reputation, and position in society should free me from suspicion.”

At long last James Price agreed to make another powder and satisfy the Royal Society. In January of 1783 he left for his laboratory in Guildford, promising to return in a month’s time. Upon his arrival, he distilled a quantity of laurel water – a quick and deadly poison also known as prussic acid. Then he wrote up his will beginning: “...believing that I am on the point of departing from this world....” After this, he commenced working on the powder. Six months later, he reappeared in London and formally invited as many members of the Royal Society as wanted to meet him at Guildford on August 3rd of 1783.

There had been a change in public acclaim. Whereas before people had expressed great faith in James Price and his transmutation of base

*Price went on to say that it had cost about seventeen pounds of sterling to make one ounce of gold.*



metals into gold, they now were no longer supportive or interested. Only three members of the Royal Society arrived at the laboratory on August 3. Price received them warmly but could not have helped but feel their air of skepticism. Excusing himself and stepping aside for a moment, he swallowed a vial of the laurel-water he had prepared. The three men who had come into his laboratory immediately noted a change in his appearance. The man suddenly appeared very ill. They did not guess why and called for a doctor. But within minutes James Price was dead. He was only thirty-one years old.

There have been many speculations as to why James Price would take his life! Had he deceived both himself and his spectators with his first experiment? Had he been willfully ignorant of

this deception? Had he discovered an error? Had he been unable to bear the consequences of mocking? Did he not have the moral courage to confess or own up to a mistake? After his suicide, the Royal Society refused to carry out any further investigations into Price's claims. It is a mystery and upon reading of it we can only speculate.

### GETTING RICH, FOR REAL

People crave quick wealth. In the US approximately 183 million people play a lottery at least one time each year. In England, James Price's homeland, 70% of the population takes part in a lottery on a regular basis (Lottery Demographics, April 2018). It seems that most people think a change in their lives from perceived hardship to wealth is the answer to their troubles.

Thoughts travel on. There *is* Someone

Who can transform base materials into gold. There is One who can transform red into white. Not many people, however, walk into His laboratory to behold the truth of His claim.

Strange that the One Who can transform dirt, that is to say, sin, into the golden crown of eternal life, was admired one day and much sought after, and killed the next.

His laboratory was Golgotha, and Isaiah 1:18 invites many to come, believe and be transformed:

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." RP



*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Prov.1:7*

## TEACHING VACANCY – NEW ZEALAND

The Reformed Christian School Association in Upper Hutt, New Zealand is seeking a teacher to teach lower primary levels at our Christian School. Our aim is to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students based on the Reformed faith.

Applicants should be committed to the Reformed faith and to Christian education. This is an exciting opportunity to be part of a small covenant school, and we look forward to your application. If you have any questions or would like more information please do not hesitate to contact us. Please forward your C.V. or any questions you may have to: [board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz](mailto:board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz)



# Why You Should Consider Fostering

by Alyssa Brown

**H**ave you ever considered whether foster care is something you could and should do?

Our road into foster care wasn't an overnight, or easy, decision. For years we had concerns and questions about it, and convinced ourselves it was *not* something we could do. Foster care was something that *other* people did, and good for them, but *we* could never do that.

However, over time God worked in our hearts and opened our eyes to the huge need. We also got answers to our questions/concerns (or, at least most of them) and at the end of the day we really didn't know why we *wouldn't* move forward into foster care. We truly believe foster care is something everyone *should* consider (though I understand it is not something everyone is in the right stage to do). Why should everyone consider it? Because God is concerned about the fatherless and orphaned.

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction..." – James 1:27a

"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing." – Deut. 10:18

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families..." – Psalm 68:5-6a

As the church, can't we do *better* than what we are currently doing?

So is fear of the unknown the only thing holding you back? Then let me share some of our experiences. We have now been licensed for 5 months and have welcomed 2 baby boys, a 15-month-old girl, and a 7-year-old girl into our home. It's been hard, it's been awesome, it's been every single emotion possible, but through it we have seen the goodness of our awesome Father. It is for His glory that we welcome these orphans into our home and show them an outpouring of love, as He has so generously loved us!

We've also felt the communion of saints come around us, both in prayer and practicality. We are so grateful for the baby items, clothes, and meals that have been given to us.

Perhaps something we were not prepared for was learning that not only do you welcome a child into your home, but a whole team of people: social workers, child advocates, doctors, and our wonderful foster care agency.

In what follows I list some of the fears that we had, and that I now hear from

*It's been hard, it's been awesome, it's been every single emotion possible...*

others. I would love to debunk these to help clear the path for you to move forward in faith on the road towards orphan care.

## **"I WOULD GET TOO ATTACHED."**

Absolutely! You will! And what a beautiful thing that will be for a child who, potentially, has never felt an attachment, or who is going through a tumultuous, trauma-filled life-changing event of being removed from their home. It is a blessing to be able to give that gift to a child, and if you are someone who's worried about getting too attached, then you're probably someone who *should* go into foster care. As *Reframing Foster Care* author Jason Johnson has said:

"Foster care means choosing the pain of a great loss if it means a child has received the gain of a great love."

Isn't that right there the beautiful gospel message?



"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." - 1 John 3:16-17

### **"IT WILL AFFECT MY BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN."**

Absolutely! It will! Foster care will teach them things about sin, the world, the brokenness of humanity in such a way that they will learn compassion, kindness and hospitality. They will open their hearts to a child, they will learn flexibility and their hearts will be broken in a way that brings them to their knees. They will see that time heals, that God is in control and even if a child has left our home we can pray for them forever.

These are life long lessons that will, Lord willing, travel with them into adulthood.

### **"I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SPACE."**

Did you know you don't need separate rooms for foster kids? The rules might be more flexible than you think. (We live in Washington State and licensing rules might be different where you are).

Depending on ages there are some

restrictions for who can share with who, but don't let the space issue hold you back! Last weekend, we had 3 girls in one room. Kids don't need a big house, or a lot of space - they need love, safety, comfort and someone who will provide that their needs are met. What a gift to be able to provide that to a child in need, in the same way our Heavenly Father provides those things for us, his people!

### **"I COULDN'T TAKE A \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR-OLD INTO MY HOUSE."**

You have a say as to what age the children will be who you are comfortable with welcoming into your home! If you think you could only handle a child under the age of 2, you can say that! If you only would like to take in teens, you can do that! As time goes on, what you're comfortable with will change, and you can change your preferences. There are so many children in need!

### **"RIGHT NOW IS NOT THE RIGHT TIME."**

I agree, there are times in life that could be a bad time for your family to take on foster care. (Examples such as financial trouble/hardship, family or marriage hardship, illness). That said, I implore you to dig really deep to discover your motives in waiting for the "right time." Did Jesus wait for "the right time" to heal those that needed healing? No! We can always look for reasons or excuses to put off doing the right thing. It's our human nature.

I was there. I get it. Approaching this question of "the right time" with prayer and humility is the only way. We are not meant to feel "comfortable" on this earth! We have a heavenly goal and must press on towards it in faith! (Phil. 3:14)

### **CONCLUSION**

In Washington State where I live there are approximately 10,000 children in foster care and the need is great everywhere else too. Even if it's just one child's life you touch, what a gift you're giving to them!! I ask you to please pray and consider. Read the book Reframing Foster Care by Jason Johnson. It's a short, easy, read and well worth it. And if you aren't led to go into foster care, please consider how you can be a support to those that are.

I'll end with a convicting quote from Jason Johnson. To God be the glory, and it is my prayer that you readers will soon be starting your own foster care journey, with Him as your guide!

"You may not see it now – you may not ever see it fully in this lifetime – but what you're doing is of eternal significance. Fix your eyes there – on eternity – but be faithful here, today... and tomorrow, and then next week, trusting God with the outcome as you experience the beauty and pain and struggle and wonder of walking with Him along the journey. Daily, faithfully keep walking, keep making deposits into their lives, and keep trusting that what's completely out of your control is absolutely in His. His sovereignty is our sanity ... and our faithfulness is enough." RP



# NOT READY TO FOSTER? OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP

by Alyssa Brown

So you're not able or ready to plunge into foster care? That doesn't mean you can't still be involved! Here are some practice ideas for how to help out a current foster family.

## EDUCATE YOURSELF

Educate yourself on the local foster care system. Educate yourself on trauma and how it affects children. Educate yourself on what "reunification" means, and why we need to have a heart of forgiveness and compassion.

## EDUCATE OTHERS

The Church can play a big role in supporting the foster care system in your community. Find your local (Christian) foster care and adoption agencies and give freely, both financially and with your time.

In our local church we did a special service offering at Christmas for a local foster care agency. Locally we also have a volunteer-run short-term "House" that is a place where children entering into foster care can spend their first few days before being placed...instead of in a hotel or social worker's office. Get involved there!

Search in your community for worthy organizations that are striving to repair the foster care system, and are Christian-based. Share with others, and pull together as a church to support them!

## MEALS

If you know a family that is fostering, chances are they have a houseful of children already, and have a lot of mouths to feed. Whether they've taken in a new placement or not, showing support by bringing a meal (or even some snacks to stock up the cupboards) goes a long way.

They are likely spending a lot of time communicating with the team of people involved with their child, or helping the child work through trauma, or something along those lines. That's why food is so appreciated!

## ITEMS

Foster parents in Washington State receive a monthly stipend from the state to cover costs but as you can imagine, the costs involved with becoming licensed, as well as ongoing costs incurred can, at times, exceed the stipend.

Sometimes a child comes with nothing but the clothes on their back and suddenly the foster parent is making a trip to the store to get formula, diapers, PJs, toothbrush, shoes, underwear – you name it! In our case, we are licensed for ages 0-10, boys and girls. As you can imagine, it's impossible to store clothes and items for each age group and gender. Also, as we were becoming licensed, we were required to have certain items available in our home (medicine cabinets that could lock, fire



escape ladders, emergency food supplies for 8 people for a full week, as well as a bed available for each age of child, etc. etc.). This did become quite costly, so every little bit we got donated to us really helped. If you know of someone going through the licensing process, ask them what they are in need of, maybe you happen to have it lying around!

## CHILDCARE

Whether it's offering to take their biological children for a time, or the foster child, it might just be exactly what they need. A date night? Groceries kid-free? Or maybe their foster child has yet another appointment (here in Washington State they've required what seems to be an over abundance of doctor and dentist appointments) and they'd love to not take along their other children.

Whatever it may be, offer! Sometimes it's hard to ask for help, but if it's offered it might just be what they need right at that moment.


## HOUSE, YARD, AND TRANSPORTATION HELP

This can be so helpful, especially around the time of a new placement entering a home. That's when all the house and yard work gets moved to the bottom of the importance pile. The family needs time to bond, organize, and have a lot of communication with the new team of people that are now in their life. They need to spend that first critical week loving on that child, attaching and adjusting.

Offer to come fold a load of laundry, or weed their gardens, or clean a toilet. Or, maybe they'd love you to run an errand or two for them, or pick their kids up from school, or bring a child to their lessons or practice. Just ask!

## PRAYER

Please lift these families, as well as the children they are fostering, up in prayer! Ask them if there are specifics to pray for.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. – Eph. 6:18 



# Truth in a Truthless Age



**Tim Challies, W. Robert Godfrey, Steven Lawson,  
Albert Mohler, and Stephen Nichols**

**November 8-9,  
2019**

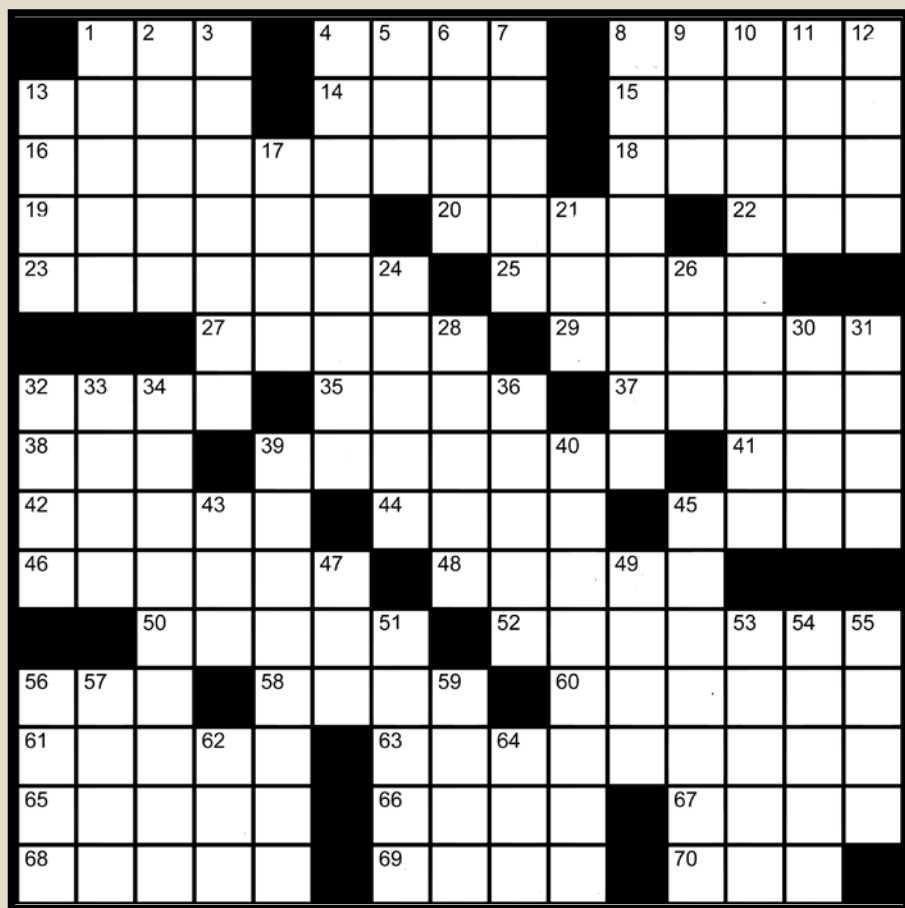
# SOUTHERN ONTARIO

**Register Now and Save \$20  
Early-Bird Discount Ends August 19, 2019**

Regional Conference  
[Ligonier.org/southernontario](http://Ligonier.org/southernontario)  
800-435-4343

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 4-6

## PUZZLE CLUES

### ACROSS

1. "Good 'Ol \_\_\_\_" (patriotic American song)
4. \_\_\_\_ rat: unclean animal in Levi. 11
8. Terrible
13. Map drawn to scale showing property lines
14. "A revolution is not \_\_\_\_ of roses." (Castro)
15. Complain unhelpfully
16. Unfastening (especially of a rope)
18. Main artery coming from the heart
19. Spanish dish served in large shallow pan
20. "He has come up to \_\_\_\_ Israel." (1 Sam. 17)
22. "Jesus Christ the Father's \_\_\_\_" (2 John 1)
23. Moveable clothes cabinet (with armor in it?)
25. "driven away from your \_\_\_\_" (Jonah 2)
27. Beatles drummer Ringo

29. Thick-trunked African tree with edible pulp
32. "out of the Nile seven \_\_\_\_" (Gen. 41)
35. World War II army vehicle
37. Soft, dry, and crumbly (relating to food)
38. Blood type system
38. Broad, heavy knife used to cut sugarcane
41. "every eye will \_\_\_\_ him" (Rev. 1)
42. Excellence in art (variant of common word)
44. Burger shop owner in Archie comics, Pop \_\_\_\_
45. Plural of 30 Down
46. Finally, or two-word title of Etta James' signature song
48. Singers with bass voices
50. Relating to duke or dukedom
52. Temporary; ad hoc; jury-rigged
56. Informal British short form

for bathroom

58. \_\_\_\_ nitrite: medicine for heart patients
60. Name of constellation and British sub
61. T. S. or George \_\_\_\_ (British writer)
63. Playing down (a problem) (hyphenated)
65. Volume unit equal to one cubic meter
66. Capital of Norway
67. Cutting tool with right-angled arched edge
68. What Jesus washed feet with (John 13)
69. Shakespearean king with three daughters
70. Colorant; pigment; tint

### DOWN

1. Relating to the lower forearm
2. Melchizedek's city (Gen. 14)
3. Confused; bewildered (3 words)
4. Hindu prince (above a raja)
5. Sash for a komono

### LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTION



SERIES 4-5

6. "Even sinners \_\_\_\_ to sinners" (Luke 6)
7. "a sword with two \_\_\_\_" (Judges 3)
8. What a team plays on the road (2 words)
9. "\_\_\_\_ was and \_\_\_\_ is to come" (Rev. 1)
10. Where a single gets you (2 words)
11. "\_\_\_\_ you is born this day" (Luke 2)
12. "fat sheep and... \_\_\_\_ sheep" (Ez. 34)
13. What's in a cocoon
17. Cut; incision
21. Lie (something FBI unscrambles?)
24. "was about to \_\_\_\_ the tent" (Heb. 8)
26. "that used to be hoed with a \_\_\_\_" (Is. 7)
28. Course of treatment for substance addiction
30. What a fellow entertainer tells you to break
31. Farewells (short form)
32. Vena \_\_\_\_ (opposite of 18 Across)
33. Final notice (short form)

34. *Reformed Perspective* shows a Biblical one.
36. \_\_\_\_'s 34 Down is not a Biblical one. (abbr.)
39. Grape used to make sweet wines or raisins
40. One who has made a will or given a legacy
43. Greek letter *T*
45. Understand by watching someone's mouth
47. Scottish cap
49. "Stone \_\_\_\_" (folk tale about sharing)
51. Bathroom deodorant and cleanser brand
53. Lightheadedly or dizzily excited
54. In the act of gazing
55. "all faces grow \_\_\_\_." (Joel 2, Nahum 2)
56. "\_\_\_\_ we forget" (war veterans' reminder)
57. Singing range above tenor
59. "I ask you not to \_\_\_\_ heart" (Eph. 3)
62. "copper is smelted from the \_\_\_\_." (Job 28)
64. Abbreviation for state on Gulf of Mexico



# Stay on message

by Jon Dykstra

Step 1. Figure out what you're really trying to say

Step 2. Don't let anyone or anything distract you from saying it

Scott Klusendorf is a full-time pro-life apologist, which means he gets screamed at a lot. One of the more common squawks goes something like this:

"You aren't pro-life; you're just pro-birth! You want to tell women what they can do with their bodies, and don't give a rip what happens to the kid after it's born!"

How would you respond? God tells us that sometimes silence is the best response. He warns us that trying to be heard over a red-faced, spittle-spewing, murder-marketer's screams will only make us look just as foolish (Prov. 26:4).

But what about when the accuser really wants a response? What about when there is a listening audience gathered round? How should we answer then?

We could point to the pro-lifers we know who donate to, or volunteer at, pregnancy centers. We could list everyone we know who've adopted or fostered children. And for good measure we might mention the way our churches care for the elderly and the sick, and the unemployed, and just generally show love for our born neighbors too. If we're feeling feisty, we might even go on the offensive and ask, "How much time and money do *you* donate to care for others?" knowing that the typical critic is doing nothing or next to it.

That's an answer that might shut them up.

But it's not the answer Scott Klusendorf gives.

He goes a different direction because he understands the abortion debate is largely one of truth versus, not simply lies, but *evasion*. The other side doesn't want to debate whether the unborn are precious human beings like you and I; instead they sidetrack the discussion to any other topic. They'll talk about how poor some mothers are, and how unwanted some babies are. They'll attack men for daring to speak on the issue. In the latest pro-abortion stunt, groups of women will parade around in red dresses patterned after victims' attire in a dystopian novel about political leaders who get away with ritual rape. The accusation that loving unborn babies is akin to rape is as bizarre as it is repugnant.

But as much as insults hurt, they don't do the same damage as suction machines. That's why our focus has to be on the unborn, and sharing where their worth comes from. As much as abortion advocates want to sidetrack the issue, we can't let them divert us from highlighting how our country's smallest citizens are being murdered.

How do we stay on message? By absorbing the insult. If they want to argue that pro-lifers don't give a rip about

children once they are born, we can grant their point and play a game of "what if..." Klusendorf's response to attacks goes something like this:


"What if I was the cold-hearted jerk you're making me out to be? What if I was the worst human being in the world? How does me being a jerk have any impact on the humanity of the unborn?"

When Kristan Hawkins, president of the Students for Life of America, was asked why pro-lifers weren't offering solutions for the foster-care crisis she played the "what if" game too. What if the accusation was true? What if pro-lifers were only concerned with the unborn? She asked her accuser: "Are you upset that the American Diabetes Association doesn't fight cancer?" She continued:

"There is no other act of violence that kills more people every single day in America and across the world, than abortion. There's nothing wrong with me fighting, and spending 100% of my time doing it. Just like there's nothing wrong with the American Diabetes Association putting 100% of their money, their research and time behind curing Juvenile Diabetes.... The reality is, you don't really care what I do. That I support children in third world countries. Or that I might be volunteering in a soup kitchen.... It's just an argument to stop the actual discussion from happening, which is that abortion is a moral wrong and it should be stopped."

There's an old joke about a pastor who, in his sermon's margins, wrote: "Point weak here; thump pulpit harder." The world has no strong points, so they have to pound the podium till they bleed, shrieking their insults to try to drown out the Truth. They don't want to have the debate.

We can't let them distract us from it.

As the Westminster Shorter Catechism explains, we're on Earth to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. When we make His glory our first concern, we won't sweat it when someone attacks *our* name – that won't stop us from talking about God's Truth. When we're enjoying His love we won't worry about having the world's approval – they can't stop us from defending unborn children made in His image. And when we recognize the world only hates us because they hated Him first (John 15:18) we will rejoice in the good company we are keeping. 



# Spread that message to the world!

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

## PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT:

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

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

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

Withdrawn on the \_\_\_\_\_ (1,2, or 28) day of each month

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

This payment is made on behalf of ☐ an Individual ☐ a Business

I may revoke my authorization at any time, subject to providing notice of 30 days. I can obtain a sample cancellation form, or further information on my right to cancel a PAD Agreement, at my financial institution or by visiting [www.cdnpay.ca](http://www.cdnpay.ca). I have certain recourse rights if any debit does not comply with this agreement. For example, I have the right to receive reimbursement for any debit that is not authorized or is not consistent with this PAD Agreement. To obtain more information on my recourse rights, I may contact my financial institution or visit [www.cdnpay.ca](http://www.cdnpay.ca).

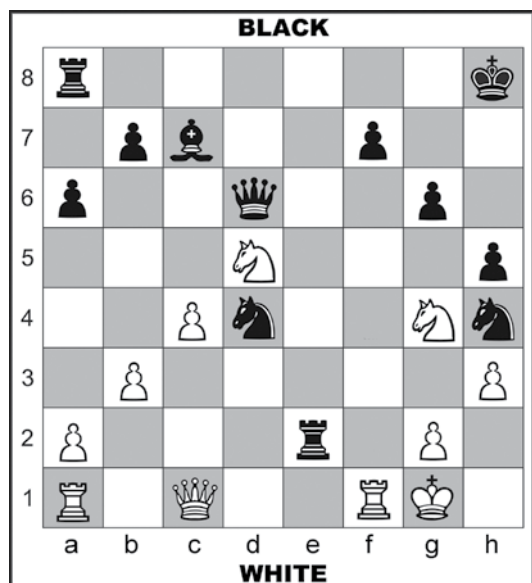
Thank you for standing with us as we together proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all spheres of life!

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

# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



## Chess Puzzle #252



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

## Riddle for Punsters

### #252 – “Flowery Language?”

Why did the greenhouse owner like to grow tulips as well as roses?  
They reminded him of his beloved wife's face with its t \_ \_ l \_ \_ s and  
\_ \_ \_ \_ y ch \_ \_ \_ s.

## Problem to Ponder

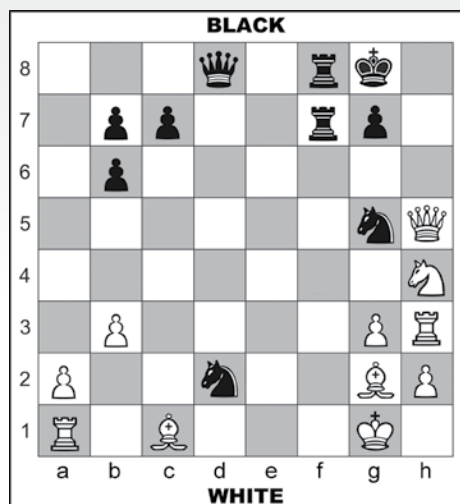
### #252 – “April Showers Bring May Flowers?”

Now that spring has come, Heidi plans to plant flowers in her backyard. She will spread new planting soil only over as much area as is needed. Each large bag of nutrient-enriched planting soil costs \$12.20 and will cover exactly one square metre of garden to the depth Heidi wants. If Heidi plants 60 begonias (in 6 rows by 10 rows), she wants to have them 30 cm apart and 30 cm from the edge of the rectangular garden on each side. Otherwise, if Heidi plants 50 lily plants (in 5 rows by 10 rows) she wants to have them 20 cm apart and 20 cm from the garden edge on each side. Boxed begonias will cost her \$23 for six plants whereas lily plants will cost \$5.50 each. Which will cost Heidi more to plant, begonias or lilies?

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

## Last Issue's Solutions

### Solution to Chess Puzzle #251



#### WHITE TO MATE IN 3

**Descriptive Notation**  
1. Q-R8 ch KxQ  
2. N-N6 ch K-N1  
3. R-R8 mate

**Algebraic Notation**  
1. Qh5-h8 + Kg8xh8  
2. Nh4-g6 + Kh8-g8  
3. Rh3-h8 +

#### BLACK TO MATE IN 4

**Descriptive Notation**  
1. ----- Q-Q5 ch  
2. K-R1 R-B8 ch  
3. BxR RxB ch  
4. K-N2 Q-B7 mate

**Algebraic Notation**  
1. ----- Qd8-d4 +  
2. Kg1-h1 Rf7-f1 +  
3. Bg2xf1 Rf8xf1 +  
4. Kh1-g2 Qd4-f2 ++

## Answer to Riddle for Punsters

### #251 – “Political motivations?”

Why did the carpenter decide to go into politics?  
He was hoping that someday he could become a **cabinet** minister.

Why did the janitor go into politics?  
He was hoping that the party would make **sweeping** changes across the country.

## Answer to Problem to Ponder

### #251 – “Expecting a wet spring?”

The melting of “wet” settled snow can produce an average of 1 cm depth of water from a 5 cm depth of snow. Chantal's back yard measures 10 m by 25 m. The average depth of snow in her yard is 75 cm or 0.75 m. Find the equivalent depth of water produced when that snow melts. The density of water is 1 gram/cubic centimeter or 1000 kg/m<sup>3</sup>. Also determine the mass (in kg) of the water produced by the melting of that snow.

The resulting water depth is 1/5 of the snow depth so 1/5 of 75 cm = 15 cm = **0.15 m of water.**  
The resulting water volume is length x width x height = 25 m x 10 m x 0.15 m = **37.5 m<sup>3</sup> of water.**  
That water's mass = density x volume = 1000 kg/m<sup>3</sup> x 37.5 m<sup>3</sup> = **37500 kg (or 82,500 pounds).**



by John de Vos



# RAHAB THE WHORE... MOTHER OF CHRIST

*"...the LORD your God is He who is God in heaven above and on earth beneath..." - Joshua 2:11*

**I**n the house where one pays for love there arrived two young customers who had a different kind of business on their minds. They were engaged in espionage, nothing less: covert activities which required circumspect movements; activities that disguised their real intent, that even lead to the pretense of tourism, accentuated by a trip to the establishment of the local prostitute.

They had been sent out by the master of strategy, Joshua the son of Nun, one of the two survivors of an earlier spy mission some forty years ago. At that time the *economic* intelligence gathering yielded interesting results, but the *military* intelligence had been devastating for an unbelieving generation. It took forty years to purge the nation of that element of destructive disbelief: they were all buried in the sands of the desert.

Forty years of grave digging, forty years of sighing about "the wind passing over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more," (Ps. 103:16) as one of their offspring, David, would later sing. Then, at last, even Moses died; the LORD Himself took care of the funeral arrangements.

## SOME SAFE HOUSE!

But now a next generation had come forth, the covenant had been renewed, and with it came a new willingness to serve, as these young men demonstrated, arrayed in their disguises. They were in the business of gathering information, and for information, they searched.

This woman they met was ready to give answers to questions that had not even been raised. And so, notwithstanding the surroundings of ill repute, they had come to the right address; this too was of the Lord. Maybe they did not realize it, but they ended up in what the spy industry calls a "safe house."

"Some safe house," one might mutter; hardly had they bedded down then the local constabulary arrived for their arrest! Had the woman ratted on them? They were instructed "to view the land, especially Jericho" (Josh. 2:1). Had they been too obvious in their observations of the land, even in their disguises? Were their questions reported?

## THINKING FAST

What do you do when soldiers come with their raucous order: "Open up in the name of the law!"? How do you respond to the gruff demand: "Hand them over, those enemy agents that we know came to your house!"? What do you do? Do you panic? Do you deny the obvious?

In times of war and threats of war, house searches are not always conducted under the sanction of a warrant, the validity of which one could politely argue so as to gain some time to contemplate one's next move.

But here was a woman who did not panic, who did not need to stall for time. Had her trade made her skillful in leading men astray? She surely knew how to forestall a house search! She was, likely, more than a little coy when she assured them that, *indeed, these men had come to her, you know these things happen in an establishment like mine, and they left not so long after they arrived, and that is not unusual in my*



After pointing the soldiers the wrong way, Rahab helps the spies escape.

*profession either. And you tell me they were spies? Wow!*

Then, in a conspiring manner, she might have whispered, "They can't have gone far; they went that-a-way. Run after them and you'll be sure to catch up with them."

The path she pointed out to the soldiers seemed to be clear route towards promotion in rank, and maybe even a decoration.

The gates were opened for them and the gates were shut again after them, and the pursuers of Israel's heroes chased after wind.

## THE "WHITE LIE"

Through the years much has been theorized and debated about the possibility of "white lies." It seems that up until World War II most commentators agreed that a deception like the one performed by Rahab was still, in itself, a sinful act.

But during the war many persons of great integrity suddenly faced Nazi soldiers and their loud demand:

*Aufmachen, Polizei!!* "Open up, it's the police!" Since then the condemnation has not been so outspoken any more. Those who managed to lead the authorities down the garden path showed no remorse when later they admitted to have given their deceptive testimony. In fact, they were rather gleeful to report how several Jews were saved, the consequence of a gullible interrogator. There are some amusing anecdotes about those days.

The scene in the book of Joshua is not without humor either, enhanced by this preposterous elaboration: "so the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan, as far as the crossing points..." (Josh 2:7). You could almost hear the eager conversations between then: how pleased the captain would be when they brought the spies in, and how proud their wives would be when their men would have their medals pinned on them. And then, gradually, the conversation slowed until finally they muttered: *Where on earth are those fellows?*



But the readers of Joshua know where those fellows were all along: right there, hidden under the flax on the roof! Yet, "the men pursued them," Joshua said seriously. What a joke!

## PROSTITUTE AND NOW TRAITOR?

All this may seem somewhat goofy, worthy of an occasional chuck, but yet... couldn't we say that Rahab the whore had now added to the abominable character of her profession the sordid crime of high treason? She had joined in with the enemy camp! If we think back to World War II again, who would have anything to do with someone who stooped that low?

However, is that verdict fair? Should she be displayed in the marketplace, shaven, shorn, and tarred, to have all the passersby spit on her?

"The love of country is inborn in every citizen," it is said. We know all about that. During wars opposing armies claim: "We have God on our side." How convincing are the speeches of the leaders! How strong the conviction of their followers! "With honor and valor we fight for our cause, with God on our side." It has been repeated over and over at wreath-laying ceremonies.

But inside this woman something had changed. Was she aware of Noah's curse over Canaan? Who were those gods that were supposedly on their side? Wasn't it to demons that they offered their sons and daughters? The cruelty of those evil forces! Then, in total contrast, there were the stories of this large nation trekking through the desert, the children of Abraham. There was a cloud to guide them by day and a fire by night, she was told.

Those were the manifestations of an entirely different God – One who loved His people, who was like fire around them to protect them, who rained bread from heaven to feed them, and who let them drink from the rock. True, He punished them for their evil doings, but He still upheld them and destroyed their enemies before them. Who knows, but that some wandering minstrel might have come by with

fragments of the song of Moses "...the Lord will vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants..." (Deut. 32:36).

This God was not like the demons who belong to the netherworld. He was the God in heaven above and on the earth beneath.

But in His holy nation, would there be a place for her, daughter of the accursed Canaan, a woman who had availed herself of the profits of fornication?

## FROM REBEL TO CHILD OF GOD

But then this wonder took place, as miraculous as creation itself: according to His decree, God softened her heart and inclined her to believe. At the same time the crisis of possible detection having been forestalled, she ran up the stairs and blurted out her confession: "I know that the LORD your God is He who is God in heaven and on earth beneath."

Would a critical onlooker find that confession a bit meager? It is probably fair to say that she wouldn't have passed an exam in systematic theology. All we know is that in that confessed faith she bargained with the two representatives of God's holy nation: their safety for her and her family. They made a deal and it was confirmed by oath. The last words reportedly from her mouth were: "Amen, so be it" (Josh 2:21).

Of these actions, undoubtedly recited through the ages, James, the leader of the church at Jerusalem, would later make honorable mention, listing them in one breath with the great works of

faith by father Abraham (James 2:23-25).

So it was that the first major strategic undertaking of Joshua, the son of Nun, seemed to have been upset by the tardiness of the spies. What kind of secret agent accomplishment was that, to bed down in a house of ill repute, to sneak through a window, to hide three days in the caves? Not a very good start, was it?

Yes, true, it did not seem like much, but out ways are not God's ways. Just look at the valuable intelligence they received out of the hands of a woman chosen by God: "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands; and moreover, all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of us" (Josh 2:24).

## GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT MAN'S WAYS

The preparations for the battle of Jericho, seen from a military point of view, seemed to be directed towards a total disaster. When the first encounter with a fortified city is to take place, what military exercises come up front? Stamina-building drills? A mock attack? Special wall-climbing exercises?

None of that happened. Instead, the sign of the covenant was administered (Josh. 5:2-9). All the army was circumcised. The effect of adult circumcision was that the army was sapped of its military strength for days. If the enemies were to find out...

But thus it pleased the LORD to fulfill all righteousness. And stranger yet, a patch of ground within view of Jericho was declared holy territory, where the military leader of Israel met the commander of the mighty host of the LORD (Josh. 5:13-15). Joshua, the son of Nun, was in this very peculiar way made ready for battle: he had to take off his shoes.

Now Jericho, known for its mighty men of valor, was sealed up tight ready to defend itself behind its fortified walls with whatever strength still remained within its armed forces. So, we would say: "Time for action. Get on with it! Let the battle start..."

But then again the events took a

*Joshua, the son of Nun, was in this very peculiar way made ready for battle: he had to take off his shoes.*



weird turn. Instead of an attack, there was a solemn procession around the city: seven priests blowing horns, followed by the Ark of the Covenant, and after that, the army detachments. No shouting, no banging of drums, no belligerent songs. Only the mournful sound of the seven rams' horns. The army followed silently; it was an uncanny show. Once this was accomplished, everybody headed back to their own camp and the deathly silence returned. The following days it happened again, and the next day again, and again. And every time the procession came by the house of Rahab the whore the people saw the scarlet cord hanging out of the window. And every time Rahab the whore looked out of the window and saw this strange procession going by, her heart beat wildly in anticipation. The battle of the Lord was taking shape and she had taken His side, or rather, He had taken her on His side. Now it was going to happen: the Hour Zero approached rapidly. The tension was building to an unbearable level.

Finally, on the last day the procession around the city was repeated seven times over, till the final trip was made and the horn blowing ended. There was a short moment of utter silence. Then the trumpets sounded their dramatic long blast, and the whole scene erupted into turmoil. The entire army gave off a loud shout, a howl of derision for the enemies of God. After that a rumbling came up, as bricks and mortar split apart, as boulders cracked and rolled away, and in their course felling and crushing the hapless defenders. Then the walls of the city fell upon them, and the ruins of the structures covered them. And through the clouds of dust, over the rubble, clambered the victorious armies of God, in endless waves, to fulfill the command of total destruction.

Total destruction? Yes, the city was devoted to the LORD for destruction. Nothing was to be spared. Nothing except...

The war correspondent in Joshua 6 first passes on the direct order as it was

## *In the hall of fame of the heroes of faith, there is a long wall lined with portraits.*

given: destroy everything. Everything, except the house of Rahab the whore. Reason for the exception? She hid the spies.

Then follows the narrative: as instructed by General Joshua, the young spies went into the one remaining structure of the ring-wall. It was marked with the crimson cord. Spitting out the gritty dust of the ground granite that formed a film on their lips, they egged on the occupants: "hurry, hurry, quick this way to safety!"

Finally comes the recap, the summing up of the total victory: the city was burned with fire. The vessels of bronze and iron were put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

End of report?

No!

Again it is stated, and now with greater emphasis yet, that Rahab the whore and her father's household, and all who belong to her were saved alive. "And," concludes the report, "she dwelt in Israel to this day."

Why?

"Because she hid the messengers, whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho," that's why.

### **IN THE HALL OF FAME**

In the hall of fame of the heroes of faith, there is a long wall lined with portraits. Hebrews 11 leads us through it. There is Abel, all scarred up, but still speaking through his faith. And look, there is Noah, that ridiculous shipbuilder on dry ground, but therefore heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. See Sarah there, laughing, because at age ninety she still conceived, and God had made laughter for her...

And then...yes, indeed there she is. Rahab the whore. Even now the title of her terrible profession is still etched on the copper plate that carries her

name. But her features seem familiar. Haven't we seen her somewhere before? Yes, of course, the evangelist Matthew listed her in the genealogy as a not-so-immaculate mother of Christ! The company some people keep!

Look at the strange smile on her face. After all those centuries, does she still think that sending those poor soldiers on a wild good chase was rather funny? Frankly speaking, it really was funny, but it seems that the smile is not about that. No, this is a fond smile, a smile caused by amazement and expressing great love. How could she, daughter of the cursed Canaan, and practicing prostitute, how could she possibly have ended up here, among these great ones in the kingdom of Christ?

Indeed, there is every reason for amazement. Here was one woman who came in last, totally unworthy, not even qualifying for the crumbs of the dogs, and yet she was given a seat of honor up front by her Great Son, the Christ, through the eternal love with which He loved her before the foundation of the world.

If that does not make you smile, what else would? **RP**

\*\*\*\*\*

*In this reflection the author wants to direct us back to the text to look at it with new eyes – an oh-so-familiar story startles us once again when viewed under this different light. But like any commentary on Scripture, it shouldn't be read instead of the text itself. Read on its own, it could become confusing as to what are the author's thoughts, and what the text actually says. So an important follow-up then is to read Joshua 2-6. This is a slightly edited version of an article that first appeared in the December 1993 issue. John de Vos was the very first editor of Reformed Perspective.*

# REMEMBERING

## The Head Nurse And Other People

*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works;  
I consider the work of Your hands.*

- PSALM 143:5

by Christine Farenhorst

Hope deferred, Proverbs 13:12 says, makes the heart sick. There are none who know this better than those who have hoped for a child month after month, only to be disappointed again and again. It is a sad thing to see young couples, when first married, opting for time to get settled, opting for the “security” of two jobs, opting for the “want” of more things, before they finally think they can opt for a family. Sometimes this family does not happen – the timeline they have posited is not the timeline which has been designated by God.

The second half of Proverbs 13:12 tells us that “a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” No one understands this second part better than a Hannah, a woman who has prayed for a little one and who finds out

one day that she is indeed to be a mother.

We had been married for two years when our desire was fulfilled. Suspecting for a week or two that this was perhaps the case, but having been disappointed before, we did not really think that the rabbit test would prove to have joyous results.

For those unfamiliar with the term, a “rabbit test” was a pregnancy test that would surely be strenuously objected to by the extremist PETA-type people today. It was a test in which a female rabbit was injected with a woman’s urine. If the woman was pregnant, her urine would cause the rabbit’s ovaries to develop temporary tissue structures. A doctor, or lab technician, could check this out after the rabbit was euthanized.

We were visiting my Dad and Mom

in Fruitland, Ontario, at the time of the rabbit’s demise. It was December 1971. My husband was outside shoveling snow from the small sidewalk before tackling the long parsonage driveway. I was inside, doing some dusting for my Mom. She was in the kitchen. My father was in the study. It’s strange how some details stick in your mind. The phone rang and since I was standing right next to it, I picked up the receiver. It was the nurse from our doctor’s office in Guelph. My husband and I had been half expecting the call, half not expecting it.

“Could I speak with Christine,” she said.

“Speaking,” I answered, beginning to sweat.

“Your test has come back positive,” she went on, and then stopped speaking.

Positive, I thought, and the word appeared as a foreign language to me. I dared not hope that positive meant pregnant. So I merely repeated the word, adding a question mark.

“Positive?”

I stroked the colorful runner on top of the dresser next to the phone. My Mom had made the runner and it felt warm underneath my fingers.

“Yes, positive. And the doctor would like to see you for a check-up sometime in January.”

“You mean I’m...” I let the sentence dangle unfinished.

“Yes, you are pregnant. There’s no doubt about it.”

“Are you sure? I mean....” Again I could not finish the sentence.

“Yes.”



For those unfamiliar with the term, a ‘rabbit test’ was a pregnancy test that would surely be strenuously objected to by the PETA people today



Thank you." I half-croaked the words, meaning to say "Thank you for the phone call," but the sentence would not come out in its entirety because of the thickness in my throat.

Her answer was short. No doubt she had more work to do, possibly more phone calls to make.

"Thank you." I half-croaked the words, meaning to say "Thank you for the phone call," but the sentence would not come out in its entirety because of the thickness in my throat. And oh, there are hardly words to describe the thanks I felt welling up inside me to God. Tears coursed down my cheeks.

### SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO GOD'S CHARACTER

The truth is that God has allowed mothers a special glimpse of His character, of His all-encompassing love, in permitting them and giving them the capacity to bear children. "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you," the Lord says to His people in Isaiah 66:12. There is a well of love which springs up naturally within a woman; there is a depth of nurture which was always there, as woman was in the beginning made to be the "mother of all living." It is a sense which is good and true. That is not to say that this innate sense cannot be suppressed. Indeed, many women do suppress it, to their own detriment. Like the miser who died in penury while his money was buried unused in his backyard, these women will die in poverty while

their motherhood lies buried underneath abortion, careers, self-fulfillment, day-care centers, nannies, TV babysitters, computer games, and multitudes of outside-of-the-home programs.

Walking over to the window, I tapped on the pane. The tears were still running down my cheeks. Anco turned around at the sound, leaning on the snow shovel. He looked at me and raised his eyebrows in a questioning glance. I nodded and sobbed. His eyebrows went down and he smiled. My mother came out of the kitchen and I told her that the doctor's office had just called and we were going to have a baby.

She called my father out of the study and he stood in the livingroom doorway and just looked at me. All he could say was "Well, well!!!" and again, "Well, well!!!" Then he disappeared into the study only to reappear shortly afterwards with a Dutch book entitled *Moeder en Kind*, that is to say, *Mother and Child*. He put it on my lap, as I was at this point sitting in a chair in the livingroom drinking a cup of tea with my mother. Anco had come in, had hugged and kissed me and had gone back out to shovel snow.

"This book," my father explained, "greatly helped your mother when she was expecting you and your brothers and sisters."

"Oh, Louis," my mother smiled, "that's a

really old book. They have different books now with a great deal more information."

I laughed and thanked my Dad. The book became a treasured part of my library and I read it carefully.

### BEER BARREL BASSINET

It was a providential thing that there was no morning sickness. The only "abnormality" I developed was a strong craving for peanut butter and banana sandwiches, as well as a constant desire for hard-boiled eggs. Also, if I stood for an indeterminate amount of time in one spot, a lightheadedness took over. Nevertheless, I was quite able to continue my job as secretary in the Political Studies Department of the University of Guelph until two weeks prior to the baby's birth. Anco was, at this time, a second-year student in the Veterinary program at the University and carried a full slate of subjects which often required cramming late into the night. In spite of that, he was able to craft a cradle - a cradle fashioned out of an old beer barrel which we salvaged from someone's garage. It turned out to be a most beautiful piece of work until he inadvertently took off one of the iron bands around the barrel nearly causing all the pieces of wood to spill off. Angie Traplin, our seventy plus landlady, was most gracious in that she permitted us the use of her garage as a woodworking shop, and she and her bachelor brother, John, followed the progress of the cradle with great interest. They had no children in their lives and shared in the excitement we so obviously exhibited.

People are unconditionally kind to you when you are pregnant. They often offer you their chairs, thinking your condition requires you to sit down all the time, and frequently ask if there is something which you would like to have. Neither Reformed nor unReformed, being pregnant is, in a sense, like having a "get-out-of-jail free card." If you land in a ticklish situation, it is possible to use your "condition" to get you out of this situation. For example, no matter at what hour you are tired, you will be allowed to take a nap; if you don't want to play charades, you will be excused; if you don't want to eat your spinach, that will be tolerated. And the list goes on.



## A MODEL STUDENT

In Holland, my mother had born all her children at home and my father had always been right there by her side, (except one time when she had delivered the baby all by herself while he was still running for the doctor).

During the early 1970s in Canada, however, husbands were reckoned taboo in the delivery room. But Anco stood a chance of being permitted in to see our child born if he attended pre-natal classes. So we enrolled together in one of these classes. There were approximately ten other couples in the class. Companionably we watched a film on childbirth, oohing and aahing at all the right spots; and together we received pep-talks on exercise, nutrition and relaxation. Into the third class we were told to select music that we really enjoyed and to use it as we were practicing simulated labor pangs. Lying flat down on the floor on a blanket, as Vivaldi's *Winter* or Beethoven's third piano concerto played, Anco, sitting next to me on the floor, would squeeze my right arm softly, indicating the onset of a simulated pain. I would then have to take a deep, cleansing breath and begin to relax my whole body. The woman who ran the pre-natal class, would come along checking each prostrate couple to see if the mother-to-be was thoroughly relaxed. Legs, knees and arms would need to be floppy enough to fall right down again if she lifted them. As Anco squeezed my arm tighter and tighter, my breathing was to become shallower and shallower, using only the diaphragm, and my whole body was supposed to become as relaxed as a bowl of jello. This was difficult and though I don't think I ever totally reached the jello state, I did achieve a sort of pudding-like easement before our final class. This class included a tour of the hospital as well.

In the class we were also taught how to walk and not "waddle," in the words of the instructor. We were shown how to pick things up properly, not bending over double but bending down through the knees. We were also told how to stand properly – belly tucked in, back straight.

"You. Yes, you, Mrs. Farenhorst. Can

you step to the front of the class, please."

It was not a question. So I stepped out of the group line and walked towards the front.

"This class," the instructor said as I stood next to her, "is a perfect example.... (I think I began to smile proudly here, until she continued) ...a perfect example of how *not* to stand."

## FATHERLY ADVICE

As the months crept on, much advice was proffered on what to eat and what not to eat. My father-in-law constantly told me not to use salt, whereas my own father told me to eat more and brought me pieces of Gouda cheese, hard-boiled eggs and fish. And while I grew in girth, Nixon became president of the United States, Trudeau continued on in Canada, my mother sent for reliable cloth diapers from Holland, and God reigned supreme.

That summer of 1972, Anco obtained a job with the Grounds Department of the University of Guelph. This was a wonderful blessing because we could continue to travel in to work together as well as eat lunch together. We often sat in the shade of the campus trees at noon or we would walk over to our little blue Datsun and eat lunch in it after which I would have a small nap. There was an active mother kildeer on the parking lot. She had built a nest somewhere on the gravel. Feigning a broken wing, the bird would try to lead us away from the nest, emitting a shrill, wailing *killdeer*,

*killdeer* sound. Although it would only take twenty-four to twenty-eight days for her eggs to hatch compared to my nine months, I felt a great affinity with the protective mother as she ran helter-skelter across the parking lot.

It was a warm summer. I had begun knitting that previous December. As the little stack of booties, sweaters, and blankets grew, so did my stomach. Gaining between forty-five and fifty pounds, I felt there was much more to me than met the eye. Although I spoke to the baby continually, and she kicked fiercely in response, it was still difficult to imagine that a little flesh-and-blood baby would actually occupy the beer barrel before too long.

## BEYOND AMAZING

But on Sunday, August the fifteenth, we definitely knew that something was up, or rather down. We were also extremely thankful that it was a weekend. After all, Anco was home and what a relief that was to me! But aside from a heavy, low backache, and intermittent pains, nothing happened – even though we stayed up all night, nothing happened! The doctor told us, the next morning, that we ought to check into the hospital by supper time and that I ought to eat nothing for supper. Anco went to his landscaping job, poor fellow, with rings under his eyes. And that evening we checked into the hospital.

After registration and an enema, (from the last two letters in that miserable



People are unconditionally kind to you when you are pregnant.

word, I have surmised that an enema is a Frisian procedure), a nurse confirmed that I was, without any doubt, in labor. At this point I had somehow begun to doubt that I was actually pregnant, so I was quite happy to hear her confirm the fact. After being installed in a room, Anco was finally allowed to join me. He looked a little nervous. I assured him that I was fine and so I was for the rest of that evening. We had brought along a book entitled *The Joys of Yiddish*, and Anco read me jokes, talked to me and we had a relatively peaceful time of it. As a matter of fact, the obstetrics nurse who was in and out of our room, joked that I might be one of those unusual mothers who give birth with relative ease.

Our doctor came in to check me around midnight and Anco was asked to leave the room. The doctor was a tall, thin man with a pale complexion and a wispy smattering of reddish hair. Blue-eyed, as well as slightly cross-eyed, he peered at me from the foot of the bed after he had examined me. The nurse, who had become an exceptionally close friend by this time, had held my hand throughout the procedure.

"Well, Christine," the doctor informed me, "I'm going to break your water."

The nurse squeezed my hand very hard but said nothing. The doctor then produced a mile-long needle out of nowhere and without wasting any more words, proceeded to break my water. As he was leaving the room, he commented to the nurse, "This one will be an all-nighter."

It was a very uncomfortable thing to say and to hear, but I did not have much time to reflect on it. The next eight hours plus were hard work. It was what my mother had told me when I had asked her what labor was like. "It's hard work, Christine. Just plain hard work and you have to roll up your sleeves and do it."

Well, I couldn't really roll up my sleeves. The hospital pajamas were too short. But I did remember the breathing exercises and together with Anco's help became as relaxed as I could. My poor husband was so weary. It was the second night straight that he was not getting any sleep. Yet the words "Weeping may tarry for the night,

but joy comes with the morning" (Ps. 30:5) flowed around us and rang true for at approximately 8:20 the next morning, when little Emberlee Kristin lustily cried her way into the arms of her smiling father and mother.

From the labor and delivery room I was wheeled into a ward – a ward which three other mothers already occupied. Snug in a corner, I considered myself blessed to be next to a window. I had seen and held the baby for a moment, but had not really studied her closely as yet. When a nurse brought her in to me a bit later, I was absolutely amazed.

Actually, *amazed* is too small a word. I had the feeling that, through God's help, I had achieved something which nobody else in the whole world had achieved before. This baby was incredibly beautiful! And although I thoroughly believed the doctrine of "conceived and born in sin," I was convinced that she was perfect. Anco totally agreed with me before he went home to sleep. Then the nurse took the baby to the nursery and I also drifted off to sleep – a wonderful sleep, a sleep in which I conquered both Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Everest and had energy to spare.

#### FOUR AT A TIME

The head nurse of the obstetrics department, a woman whose name escapes me but whose militant figure will always remain embedded in my brain,

was a dragon. A short lady with grey, tightly curled, hair and glasses perched on the end of her nose, she breathed fire on any mother who did not explicitly follow the rules of her ward. When it was time to feed the babies, she would carry them in – all four at the same time, two under each arm. We were always fearful that she would drop one, but she never did. Depositing the babies on the beds like so many loads of diapers, she would bark: "Make sure you begin on the side you finished on at the last feeding. Time yourselves carefully! And remember, not a minute longer than designated!"

The afternoon of the day I had the baby, the head nurse came in to inquire if I had as yet showered. When I shook my head, she regarded me balefully and clapped her hands.

"Up, up then, Mrs. Farenhorst! No shilly-shallying mind you! Up you go! The shower is just around the corner down the hall."

I was a trifle lightheaded and actually had the gumption to tell her so. She clucked at me disapprovingly. "Come, come! Don't be a baby. I'll be back shortly to check whether or not you've had the shower."

There was nothing for it but to get up, put on my bathrobe and take a towel from the adjacent bathroom I shared with the three other women. Walking down the hall, holding on to the wooden railing



When it was time to feed the babies, this fire-breathing nurse would carry them in – all four at the same time, two under each arm.

attached to the side, I could feel that I was not quite up to the stroll. Then everything went black and the next thing I knew was that I was lying flat on the linoleum and a nurse was bending over me. "Are you all right?"

Perhaps it was this small episode that earned me demerit marks in the eyes of the head nurse. In any case, she had me pegged as a failure.

## NO EXCEPTIONS!

Visiting hours were strictly adhered to. My parents were in Holland and Anco's parents were in Australia that August, so visiting hours were poorly attended. But my oldest brother and his family drove down all the way from Collingwood to Guelph, a good hour and a half away, to visit me. They did not, however, arrive during the specified hours allocated to visitors. Sneaking up the back stairs, all five of them peeked around the corner of my room and grinned at me, lifting my spirits. "Hi, Christine", and "Hi, Tante Christine".

Immediately after the greeting my spirits sank again and terror struck me with the thought that the head nurse would see my brother, his wife and their three children and proceed to pulverize them. I fleetingly thought of hiding them all in the bathroom, but they had stepped into the room and were around my bed before you could recite the proverbial phrase "Jack Robinson." The hugging and kissing prevented me from properly formulating a plan. And then the dragon appeared behind them.

"What are you doing here?" If there was one thing about the head nurse, it was that she kept a sharp eye out and hardly anything went by her unnoticed.

"Er.... this is my brother and his family."

My brother, ever the chivalrous gentleman, walked up to the dragon without any trace of fear, and extended his hand. "How do you do?"

She totally ignored the hand and wagged a finger at me. "You know the rules. No one is to visit during the day!! No one!!"

"But they drove all the way from...."

She did not let me finish. "Visiting hours are in the evening."

"That's all right. We'll leave," my brother soothed, "but perhaps we could see the baby?"

The dragon, however, had turned around and left, muttering to herself as she went, and his question remained unanswered.

"The nursery is just down the hall," I said, "and Emberlee is lying on the left side right in front of the window. If you walk out that way, you can see her."

They kissed me again and waved goodbye. I accompanied them to the door of my room and watched them pace away down the hall eager to admire the baby. But the dragon had preceded my brother and his entourage and, just as they reached the nursery window, she closed the curtains. They turned around to wave to me again, shrugging as they did so, and left.

Close to tears, I was about to get back into bed, when the head nurse made another appearance. "Do you realize, Mrs. Farenhorst," she remarked, hands on her hips, face right in front of me, "how many germs you are now carrying because you kissed your relatives?"

It was an interesting question, but one to which she did not really want an answer. "And you will pass," she went on shrilly, "all these germs on to your baby."

"Oh," I said, rather lamely.

Then she was gone. The other mothers comforted me and when Emberlee was brought in for her afternoon feeding, together with my germs I held her tightly.

## CONCLUSION

Years later I found out that this particular head nurse's retirement, which had taken place not too long after the birth of our first baby, had been lauded by the entire obstetrics staff. No one had mourned her leaving. And she had died alone, in relative obscurity, a few years later. What a sad life hers must have been!! "The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down", Proverbs 14:1 tells us. Was there some bitterness, some sadness, some secret anger that this woman had harbored in her heart which I might have sweetened with some kindness? God knows. There is time to keep silent and a time to speak, and perhaps I ought to have spoken.

These things all happened many years ago. Our little first-born Emberlee is now a godly mother with seven children of her own. RP

*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I consider the work of Your hands. (Psalm 143:5)*

NEW PUBLICATIONS  
BY THE STUDY



 <p><b>Solus Christus</b> <i>W. Bredenhof</i></p> <p>Though many affirm Christ as Saviour, Christ as the only Redeemer is harder to accept. Rev. Bredenhof deftly helps the reader understand what <i>Solus Christus</i> means, why it is important, and how to respond to those who deny it or undermine it. <i>Includes discussion questions.</i></p> <p><b>\$8.00</b> <small>ePub \$4.00</small></p>	 <p><b>Revelation (Study Guide)</b> <i>L. Selles</i> (2-in-1 book)</p> <p>Rev. Selles helps the reader see that the Revelation to John is not a puzzle, but an unveiled mystery in this chapter-by-chapter investigation of the book. <i>Each chapter includes questions for review and discussion.</i></p> <p><b>\$17.00</b> <small>ePub \$6.00</small></p>	 <p><b>Messiah</b> <i>Cl. Stam</i></p> <p>In this chapter-by-chapter look at the book of Luke, Rev. Stam shows from Christ's words and deeds that he truly is the Messiah, our perfect Redeemer. <i>24 chapters, each with discussion questions.</i></p> <p><b>\$21.00</b> <small>ePub \$6.00</small></p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Order at [www.thestudy-books.com](http://www.thestudy-books.com) or [thestudy.sales@gmail.com](mailto:thestudy.sales@gmail.com)



**The Study**  
(Formerly Inter-League Publication Board)  
Publishers of Reformed Study Material



**These titles are also available in ePub Format.**



By Jon Dykstra

### THE LONG GOODBYE

DOCUMENTARY

88 MIN / 2019

RATING: 10/10



When Kara Tippetts started *Mundane Faithfulness* she intended it as a "mommy blog" that would encourage moms to just love their littles. But it became something very different when the young mother of four and pastor's wife was diagnosed with breast cancer.

The blog went viral as Kara, bluntly and beautifully, explained her treatments, shared her doubts, and showed how their family was trying to treasure every moment. In posts that were read by tens of thousands, she explained:

"I want to be able to share this story that suffering isn't a mistake, and it isn't the absence of God's goodness... because He's present in pain."

"Cancer was this gift that exposed to us what is important and what is valuable. Parenting with kindness. Loving your husband. Living well."

Then, over the course of the next two years as it became increasingly clear that a cure wasn't likely, Kara showed the world what it looks like to die to God's glory.

The only caution I would offer is if you watch this with friends distribute Kleenex boxes generously, and know that your tear-stained face won't stand out from anyone else's in the group.

### THE FOOL

DOCUMENTARY

66 MINUTES / 2019

RATING: 8/10



This is the true story of how evangelist Ray Comfort was mocked and ridiculed by atheists the world over for a silly joke he made that fell flat. But even as Ray was brought low, God was using Ray's humiliation (Philippians 1:12): these same atheists started inviting Ray onto their shows, podcasts, and stages, *and then they let him say anything he wanted*. They asked him on only to make fun of him. However, their no-holds-barred invitations allowed him to use these forums to share the Gospel with hundreds of thousands of atheists at a time, most of whom he would never have had a chance to reach otherwise.

Then atheists started taking Ray's books and began reading through them on their own YouTube channels, all in an attempt to mock Ray. But the end result was that now atheists themselves were sharing the Gospel with their listeners. As Ray asks, "Who but God could take atheists and not only have them listen to the Gospel, but have them proclaim it?"

This is documentary is a lot like its subject: frequently funny, always engaging, and focused throughout on spreading the Gospel by confronting sinners with their need for the Savior. You can watch it for free online at [BananaManStory.com](http://BananaManStory.com).

### THE PURSUIT

DOCUMENTARY

77 MINUTES / 2019

RATING: 7/10



*The Pursuit* could be described as a defense of capitalism, but it would be better understood as one man's search for the best way to lift the world's poorest out of their poverty.

So why would Arthur Brooks, a Buddhist/Catholic former French horn player, make a good guide for Christians interested in learning about the benefits of the free market? It's because Brooks' case for free trade is built on principles that line right up with Scripture. His foundation is the Second Greatest Commandment (Matt. 22:36-40) – *a love for his neighbor*. He appreciates capitalism precisely because it was the driver behind an economic miracle: "from 1970 until today the percentage of people living at starvation's door has decreased by 80%. Two billion people have been pulled out of starvation-level poverty!"

*The Pursuit* does require discernment because as much as Brooks is motivated by the Second Greatest Commandment, he's also stuck there; he never brings us to the First. So he can highlight how money makes for a lousy idol, but he can't point us to the one true God who is worthy of our worship.

That said, I highly recommend *Pursuit* for the practical case it makes that socialism isn't caring because it doesn't work. Rent it at [iTunes.apple.com](https://itunes.apple.com).

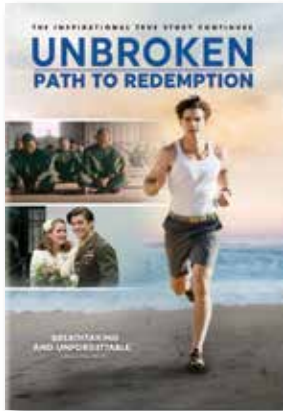
Longer versions of these reviews can be found at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca).

## UNBROKEN: PATH TO REDEMPTION

DRAMA / CHRISTIAN

98 MINUTES / 2018

RATING: 8/10



The 2014 *Unbroken* was a major motion picture about Louis Zamperini's life that shared how he survived getting shot down in World War II, only to be rescued by the Japanese who imprisoned him in a camp staffed by sadistic guards. But the Hollywood production told only half his story.

This film gives us that second half, and works well as either a sequel or a standalone film. It focuses on what happened *after* the war when Zamperini returned home, got married, and had to wrestle with nightmares, unemployment, marital troubles, and alcohol addiction.

One caution to share concerns Louis' nightmares. A recurring one is about his Japanese torturer, and while it isn't gory, it is intense and would scare children under 10. Also if you're watching this with teens, mention that this is not a how-to on dating, as it shows a good Christian lass letting herself be unequally yoked to the lapsed Catholic Louis.

While Hollywood didn't know what to do with an unbreakable man who gets shattered, this Christian production does. How was Louis able to survive it all? Only because God was there, every step of the way, protecting, pursuing, and forgiving. I loved this film!



## GOSNELL

DRAMA

2018 / 93 MINUTES

RATING: 8/10

*"Are you going to be the first prosecutor in American history to charge an abortion doctor with murder?"*

There are some great lines in *Gosnell*. But it was a film I almost didn't watch. I knew it was the true-life story of Dr. Kermit Gosnell, a Philadelphia abortionist who in 2013 was convicted of killing three

babies *after* they were born. I'd thought it an important story to get out into the public eye, so a few years ago I'd been one of the 30,000 who'd contributed more than \$2 million to its Indiegogo campaign. But now, with the DVD in hand, I found myself thinking, "I'm already pro-life so do I really need to sit through a 90-minute film detailing the horrors of abortion?"

I'm glad I did, for two reasons.

First, the film wasn't the unrelentingly depressing drama I had expected. This feels more like a *Law and Order* episode, with a mystery that needs solving, and dedicated men and women trying to deliver whatever justice they can. There were some talented people involved in the production, from director Nick Pearcey, who also stars as the defense attorney, to the *Daily Wire's* Andrew Klaven who had a hand in writing the script. There's no clear star in this ensemble cast, but it might be Dean Cain (*Lois and Clark*) who is his regular personable self in the role of Detective James Wood, the man who first uncovered what was going on behind the closed doors of Gosnell's clinic.

Second, the film is a much better pro-life tool than I ever expected.

Gosnell killed thousands so this could have been as hard to watch as *Schindler's List* (*Schindler* is in everyone's top 100 list, but has anyone watched it twice?). But by hiding almost all of the gore, and by keeping a quick pace, not lingering in the clinic too long, audiences aren't confronted with the full horror of what Dr. Gosnell did. That makes this a film that can be shared with the undecided; if they can handle network TV, then there's nothing here that'll be too graphic for them.

Now, there is a method behind the muted visuals. A gory film would have undecideds walking out or staying away. But the producers didn't intend to pull any punches – they've just been clever enough to lay out their argument in a way that'll be the most likely to reach and sway their intended audience. When Gosnell was being tried, both the prosecutor and the mainstream media emphasized that the case wasn't about abortion – this was about the murder of *already born* babies. But in his defense, Gosnell's attorney shows that what Gosnell did to these babies *after* birth was not significantly different from what other abortionists were – with the law's blessing – doing to babies *before* birth.

His reasoning was sound, even if it wasn't enough to get his client off. And seeing an abortion defender make the case that killing an unborn baby differs not a whit from killing a newborn baby is an argument that is sure to hit viewers right between the eyes.





# THE ORDINARY IS *EXTRAORDINARY!*

Dr. Gordon Wilson at  
Creation Weekend 2018

by Margaret Helder

*During the Creation Science Association of Alberta's Creation Weekend 2018, Dr. Gordon Wilson was the feature speaker, giving three lectures. This is an account of his second presentation.*

*...in the spring,  
when things start  
melting, the heart  
starts up again*

While Dr. Gordon Wilson had entitled his presentation “The Magnificence of the Mundane” he wanted us to note that the words in the title are actually contradictory. While the world “magnificence” communicates excitement, the term “mundane” suggests that something is boring or dull.

But what he wanted to share with us is that God’s “ordinary” work in creation is amazing, displaying God’s wisdom and finesse (Ps. 104:24). And in this context, we are told that King Solomon – full of wisdom – spoke about trees, herbaceous plants, beasts, birds, reptiles and fish (1 Kings 4:33).

It is evident, declared Dr. Wilson, that one place to observe God’s wisdom is in nature. Similarly if one wants to be an expert on the Renaissance artist Michelangelo, one will endeavor to study his creative works in addition to any of his writings. Thus, said our speaker, biology is part of theology. It is the study of who God is, as an artist, engineer, and sculptor. In this context, Dr. Wilson discussed several organisms

that might seem mundane or ordinary, but which are actually quite amazing.

## THE “NORMAL” EASTERN BOX TURTLE

The eastern box turtle lives in the eastern half of the United States. This animal may look quite ordinary (as turtle appearances go), but it has an amazing capacity to survive cold winters. As fall gives way to winter, this reptile builds up high levels of glucose in its blood. This acts as a sort-of antifreeze which prevents ice crystals from forming in its cells (ice is allowed to build up in the turtle’s body cavity, but not in its cells where ice crystals would poke and rupture the membranes). With all this chill, the heart can even stop. But then, in the spring, when things start melting, the heart starts up again and the turtle goes about his normal life activities.

## ORDINARY HOUSEFLY

In keeping with Dr. Wilson’s theme of looking at everyday creatures, what could be more ordinary than houseflies? It turns out, however, that these

organisms have quite an interesting way to escape from the confining walls of their pupal stage.

It so happens that there is a trapdoor of sorts fashioned in the skin on the face of the developing fly. Muscles in the abdomen push blood vigorously into the head. This blood fills an inflatable bag, which in turn pushes open the trapdoor and then bulges out from the face. This bag, called the *ptilinum*, exerts pressure on the *puparium* – the cocoon-like structure formed from the maggot skin which houses the pupa as it develops into the now-emerging adult. The *puparium* also has a weakened seam that cracks under pressure from the *ptilinum*. The now-adult-fly pushes out through the opened seam, and afterwards the blood-filled *ptilinum* empties, and retreats back into the body, and the trapdoor in the fly’s head closes back up.



Then, behold, we see a normal fly descending on our hamburgers!

## LASO-SWINGING SPIDERS

More showy are the hunting habits of the Bolas spiders. These creatures, which look like bird droppings (for purposes of camouflage), share many characteristics with ordinary orb weaver spiders, and can be found throughout the eastern United States down to Chile. At night these spiders – looking every bit like cowboys swinging a lasso – hang from a leaf and swing their “bolas,” a thread with a glob of sticky glue attached to the end.

This amazing spider secretes a very special organic molecule: the scent of a particular female moth. This compound, called a pheromone, acts like a perfume to attract male moths of the same species. The spider deftly swings its bolas and hits the incoming male moth, penetrating his scales. The spider then hauls in her pretty and wraps it up in silk. This spider is even able to vary the chemical composition of the pheromones in order to catch another moth species. The ability of the spider to imitate such elaborate pheromone designs demonstrates that

these spiders possess remarkable synthetic abilities that could never have developed by trial and error. Magnificent indeed! And certainly not mundane.


## FUN FUNGUS

Dr. Wilson also discussed spore dispersal in ferns, mosses, and in a fascinating little fungus called *Pilobolus*. This little fungus grows on the dung of animals like horses and cows. The entire fungus is only about 1 centimeter tall, but it consists of a short stalk with a bulging balloon-like area above, topped by a black cap which shelters many fungus spores. The bulgy area focuses light onto carotenoid pigments in its base. The bulge, with cap on top, grows straight sideways towards the incoming morning light. Pressure builds up in the bulge so that the cap is shot off at high pressure. Full of spores the cap lands and clings to grass about 2 meters away from the manure. Along comes a grazing animal. The fresh grass looks good enough to eat and, once inside the animal, the spores proceed through the digestion system without germinating. Once deposited outside in another

dump of manure, more miniature *Pilobolus* specimens grow to start the process all over again.

## CONCLUSION

These examples demonstrate wonderful design and fascinating ingenuity. Yet there are taken from everyday life. The “ordinary” around us is extraordinary!

Dr. Wilson concluded with the admonition that we should observe Creation and ponder that God made it. God did not give us all the answers. He wants us to explore. As we read in Proverbs 25:2 “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.” 

*Dr. Margaret Helder is the author of “No Christian Silence on Science.” Dr. Gordon Wilson has recently completed a nature documentary called “The Riot and the Dance.”*



Dr. Wilson sharing some extraordinary features among God’s “ordinary” creatures, speaking at the CSAA’s Creation Weekend 2018 in Edmonton, Alberta.

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

## AS SEEN ON A T-SHIRT

We live in an emoticon, headline-reading, 280-character tweet, fly-by-level-of-engagement world. But short doesn't always mean shallow, and to demonstrate here's a collection of clever but concise slogans, as found on t-shirts. Short and sweet might be just what's needed to get a long conversation started!

- Capitalism makes; Socialism takes
- Chapter and verse please!
- Sure, you can trust the government. Just ask the Native Americans.
- Preach the Gospel at all times. Always use words.
- Free Speech: more important than your feelings
- Former fetus
- The NSA: Listening to all your crazy conspiracy theories when nobody else will
- You can love your country without having to love your government.
- Make Orwell fiction again.
- Life starts at conception, not perception

## DOUBT YOUR DOUBTS...

"We don't just need answers for people's difficult questions. We need questions for people's easy answers."  
– Andrew Wilson (as seen at Challies.com)

## ROBERT CONQUEST'S SECOND LAW OF POLITICS

It's not clear whether Robert Conquest (1917-2015) ever stated the "Three Laws of Politics" commonly attributed to him. But whether he did or didn't, someone should have because there's insight here worth sharing, particularly in his second law:

2. Any organization not explicitly conservative will, sooner or later, become liberal.

That's quite the claim, but history bears it out. How many of our universities were founded by godly men, but how welcome are Christians on these campuses today? Hospitals begun by churches now kill their patients upon request. Amnesty International went from being an advocate for political prisoners to advocating for legalized abortion. Closer to home, Reformed denominations that stopped teaching their confessions have started ignoring and opposing them.

But why do things flow in just the one direction? Why don't we ever see an abortion-loving, man-hating feminist organization drift from their founders' feelings and decide that, hey, unborn babies and men aren't so bad after all? Why couldn't they take a conservative or even Christian turn? It doesn't ever happen like that, *but why doesn't it?*

It comes down to this: getting things wrong is always easier than getting them right. There's no end of ways to raise our children wrong, or do our taxes wrong, or assemble IKEA furniture wrong, but there's only one Truth, and only a narrow path to it.

This has implications. Unless we are actively heading in the right direction, we are heading in the wrong direction. That's true in politics, certainly, but it's just as true when we are charting the direction for other organizations in our circles. Business leaders, school board, pastors and church consistories can't let themselves drift. We mustn't be quiet about what we know and believe. If we don't actively hang on to God's Truth, both energetically and loudly, then drift is inevitable. Or, as Jesus described in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matt. 7:24-27) if we don't build on a solid foundation, we will be swept away.

That sounds scary and it would be if we had to chart the right course on our own. But God has given us His Word. Now all we need is the courage to follow Him both loudly and proudly...and we can ask Him for that.

## PATRICIA POLACCO GETS WOKE

In my idyllic and very Christian small town I keep forgetting that even here there's a spiritual war going on. This weekend I got a reminder in amongst the books we borrowed from the public library where two titles were pushing the same agenda.

The first was by well-loved children's author Patricia Polacco about a family with two moms. God's view of marriage – as being between a man and woman – was represented in the story by a snarling, glaring neighbor.

The second was a chapter book about a girl competing in TV game show, Junior Ninja Champions, who had two dads.

While we parents should know what our kids are reading, if you have a child who reads a lot this becomes harder and harder to keep up with as they get older. But as the Adversary knows, you are what you eat. And if he can sneak in a diet of "homosexuality is normal," he can win our kids over before parents even know a battle is happening.

So, what's the answer? Should we monitor our children's book intake closer? That's part of it. Should we rely on Christian school libraries more (if you have access to one)? That seems a good idea. Would it be wise to invest in a high quality personal home library – only fantastic (and not simply safe) books? That's a great idea!

But, as our kids get older, it's going to come down to talking through this propaganda to equip them to see through it. It will mean explaining to them that we oppose homosexuality because God does, and that even in prohibiting homosexuality God shows his goodness. As Cal Thomas put it:

"God designed norms for behavior that are in our best interests. When we act outside those norms – such as for premarital sex, adultery, or homosexual sex – we cause physical, emotional, and spiritual damage to ourselves and to our wider culture. The unpleasant consequences of divorce and sexually transmitted diseases are not the result of intolerant bigots seeking to denigrate others. They are the results of violating God's standard, which were made for our benefit."

We have to share with our children that our Maker knows what is best for us and this ain't it. Like many an idol (money, sex, family, career, drugs) it might even bring happiness for a time, but, like every other idol, it doesn't bring lasting joy, it won't save us, and it will distance us from the God who can.

### SOMETIMES I'VE BELIEVED AS MANY AS SIX IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEFORE BREAKFAST.

"Gender is a social construct but I am woman hear me roar but anyone can be a woman but not uterus no opinion but transwomen are women but I demand women's rights but men are women but men are scum but drag queens are beautiful but appropriation is evil."

– Matt Walsh in a May 14 tweet demonstrating secular ideology's foundations of sand



### 4 THINGS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE BIBLE

- How big is the Bible? At almost one million words, it is as long as 10 typical thrillers, or 15 mystery novels.
- The word *Bible* comes from *biblia*, which is Greek for "books." *Biblia*, in turn, was probably derived from the name of the Lebanese port of Byblos, where the Greeks got their paper supply
- The 1229 Synod of Toulouse forbade anyone but priests from having the Scriptures.
- The Bible didn't come with the chapter and verse divisions we have today. Stephen Langton (c.1150-1228) is credited with dividing the Bible into the chapters our Bibles have now. Jewish Rabbi Isaac Nathan ben Kalonymus might have been the one who came up with Old Testament versification, back in 1440, while a French printer (Robert Estienne (1503-1559) is credited with creating the verse divisions we use for the New Testament.

SOURCE: These facts were gathered from Jerry MacGregor and Marie Prys' 1001 Surprising things you should know about the Bible.

### THE WIT AND WISDOM OF G.K. CHESTERTON

A story is told of how *The Times* asked various famous people to submit essays as to "What's wrong with the world?" Chesterton is said to have replied: "Dear sirs, I am. Sincerely yours, G.K. Chesterton."

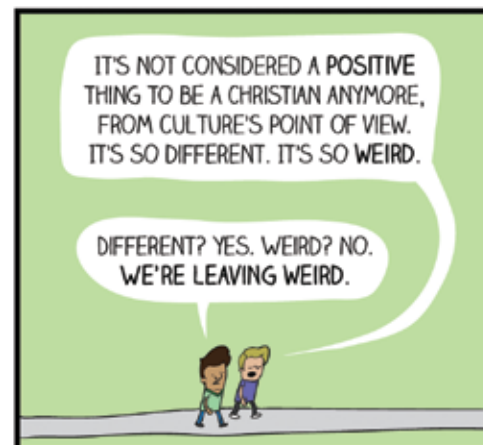
It's a great story, showing a man humbly aware of the evil that exists in his

own heart. But as well-known as it is, and as well as it fits the man it is attributed to, no original source for can be found leaving us with good reason to doubt Chesterton actually said it. There's no doubt, however, about whether he said the quips and quotes that follow.

- "Idolatry is committed, not merely by setting up false gods, but also by setting up false devils; by making men afraid of war or alcohol, or economic law, when they should be afraid of spiritual corruption and cowardice."
- "Art, like morality, consists of drawing the line somewhere."
- "The reformer is always right about what is wrong. He is generally wrong about what is right."
- "The aim of good prose words is to mean what they say. The aim of good poetical words is to mean what they do not say."
- "It is assumed that the sceptic has no bias; whereas he has a very obvious bias in favour of scepticism."
- "The average businessman began to be agnostic, not so much because he did not know where he was, as because he wanted to forget. Many of the rich took to scepticism exactly as the poor took to drink; because it was a way out."

### POLITICAL UPGRADE?

"Could one start a Stagnation Party—which at General Elections would boast that during its term of office no event of the least importance had taken place?"  
– C.S. Lewis writing to his brother in 1940







by Wes Bredenhof

# ON THE PROPER ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

(and the footnoted Belgic Confession article 36)

## A REVIEW OF P.J. HOEDEMAEKER'S

### *"Article 36 of the Belgic Confession Vindicated Against Dr. Abraham Kuyper"*

Anyone who has ever studied the Belgic Confession, even on a superficial level, is aware of an oddity in article 36. This is the only place in the Three Forms of Unity where we find a footnote in most versions of the Confession. Whether it is the United Reformed, Canadian Reformed, or Protestant Reformed Churches in North America, or the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, all have an additional footnote.

Article 36 is titled "The Civil Government" or sometimes "Of Magistrates" and addresses what we confess about the role of the government. The relevant text in the body of the confession reads:

[The government's] task of restraining [evil] and sustaining [good] is not limited to the public order but includes the protection of the church and its ministry in order that *all idolatry and false worship may be removed and prevented, the kingdom of antichrist may be destroyed*, the kingdom of Christ may come, the Word of the gospel may be preached everywhere,

and God may be honoured and served by everyone, as he requires in his Word. (*Italics added*)

But the clauses above that I've italicized were moved from the body and relegated to footnote status a century ago. Here's how it is explained in the Canadian Reformed edition:

\* The following words were deleted here by the General Synod 1905 of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*): all idolatry and false worship may be removed and prevented, the kingdom of antichrist may be destroyed.

I've been a pastor in both the Canadian Reformed Churches, and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and to my knowledge, neither federation has ever made an official decision about the status of this footnote. Do we confess this or not? It is an odd ambiguity in our Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort).

#### FOOTNOTE'S BACKGROUND

That's why it was with great interest that I began reading a small book, recently translated, on this very topic. *Article 36...vindicated against Dr. Abraham Kuyper* comes from the controversy which led to the words being deleted in 1905. It provides some of the historical background, illustrating that the deletion was not without its opponents. This book also provides an occasion to reflect on whether it may be time to revisit the matter in an official, ecclesiastical way.

The author, Philippus Jacobus Hoedemaker (1839-1910), was a curious figure. While he grew up in a family with roots in the 1834 Secession (in which a number of congregations split from the Dutch national church) he himself became a minister in the Dutch national church. However, unlike so many others in the State church, Hoedemaker was a conservative, and confessionally Reformed.

This book is a response to a series of articles written by Dutch theologian and journalist (and future Dutch prime minister) Abraham Kuyper in his

newspaper *The Herald* in 1899-1900. In these articles, Kuyper argued against the original wording of article 36 – he did not agree with the civil government being called on to address idolatry, false worship, and the kingdom of the antichrist.

In 1896, Kuyper went a step further. Together with other notable theologians in his denomination (the *Gereformeerde Kerken* or Reformed Churches), including Herman Bavinck, Kuyper put forward a gravamen against article 36. A “gravamen” is an official objection to a point of doctrine.

These eight ministers alleged that article 36 did not conform to the Word of God and they asked the Synod of 1896 to make a judgment on the matter. The Synod decided to appoint a committee to study the matter, a committee which bizarrely included Bavinck and Kuyper (!). It was the work of this committee which would later result in Synod 1905 deleting the allegedly unbiblical words.

## GOING BACK TO THE ORIGINAL?

In his book, Hoedemaker argues for the original form of article 36. Or, more accurately, he argues against Kuyper’s objections to the original form of article 36. He maintains that Kuyper was inconsistent. On the one hand, Kuyper wanted to honour King Jesus as the Lord of *all* of life. But on the other hand, Kuyper was arguing that King Jesus has no crown rights over the responsibility of the civil government with regard to idolatry, false worship, and the kingdom of antichrist.

Hoedemaker alleged that this inconsistency was owing to political expediency. Abraham Kuyper was getting into politics and article 36 was an embarrassment in trying to build bridges with Roman Catholic politicians.

Early on Hoedemaker makes a point I find especially compelling. He alleges that the discovery of “the fatal defect” in article 36 is “not the result of the ongoing investigation of the Scripture; but exclusively causes which lie in the times, and in apostasy from the living God.”

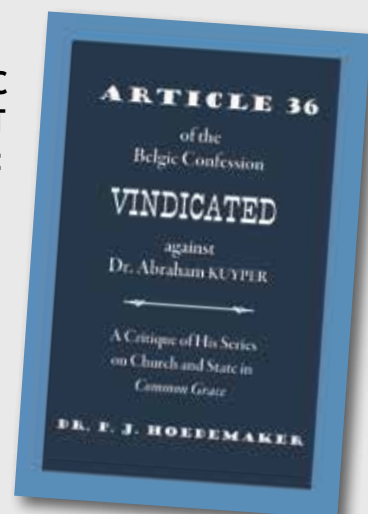
He states repeatedly that Kuyper and

## ARTICLE 36 OF THE BELGIC CONFESSION VINDICATED AGAINST DR. ABRAHAM KUYPER: A CRITIQUE OF HIS SERIES ON CHURCH AND STATE IN COMMON GRACE

BY DR. P.J. HOEDEMAEKER

TRANSLATED BY RUBEN ALVARADO

2019 / 170 PAGES



## INTERESTING TRANSLATION CHOICES

Let me make a few comments about the translation. There are a few idiosyncrasies that readers should be aware of. When Hoedemaker refers to “Lord’s Days” in the Heidelberg Catechism the translator literally renders them “Sundays” instead. And instead of the Secession of 1834 (*Afscheiding*), he uses the term “Separation.” Elsewhere he uses the term “Nonconformity,” and I believe he is translating the term “Doleantie.” Aside from those sorts of minor things, the book reads quite well in English.

others were not arguing from *exegesis*, but from *pragmatic* considerations and false inferences. The pragmatic considerations had to do with Dutch politics. The false inferences were along the lines of the Confession requiring the civil magistrate to persecute unbelievers and false believers. Hoedemaker is especially persuasive in addressing that notion.

## CONCLUSION

I should note that this book is not exclusively about Belgic Confession article 36 – it also serves as something of a polemic against the 1886 Doleantie (another church split). Hoedemaker writes, “The first step on the road to Reformation is the recovery of the normal relations of church and state.” But in wanting to undo the 1886 Doleantie, he’s arguing that all Reformed believers should have gone back to the national church despite its waywardness!

So who should read this book? I would especially commend it to those with an interest in politics. When we have so little in our Three Forms of

Unity about politics, what little there is should get our attention. Is it time to revisit the formulation of article 36? This is where I believe office bearers and especially ministers would do well to give this book a read too. Perhaps we need a proposal to a synod to clarify the status of the footnote and perhaps even to restore it. Note well: we are not talking about changing the Confession or adding something to the Confession that was never there to begin with. This is something completely different. In a 1979 article for *Clarion*, the Canadian Reformed Churches’ Dr. J. Faber argued for completely rewriting that part of article 36. That is a possibility. But if the footnote can be re-examined from a biblical standpoint, perhaps it would be as simple as cutting and pasting the text back into place. <sup>RP</sup>

*Dr. Bredenhof blogs at yinkahdinay.wordpress.com where a slightly longer version of this review is available. He is the pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania.*





# A PAGE FROM HELL'S PLAYBOOK: The Subterranean Origins Of Certain *Equality And Justice* Doctrines

If I were the devil – which some of you may believe after reading on – if my sworn mission was to devour the Christian faith from the inside out, then here is what I would *not* do.

I would not slither into a Sunday service, breathing blasphemy and dragon fire, bragging about my triumphs at Auschwitz, commanding the congregation, “Deny that God is God!” I would not be an idiot.

## IF I WAS THE DEVIL...

I would dress up to look like justice, compassion, or equity, or some other ideal Christians would be quick to “Amen!” I would sink my teeth and suck the true, biblical content from those words – not that many of the Enemy’s people know the true, biblical content of those words to begin with – and then inject it with the venom of new meaning, a meaning that is antithetical to the Enemy’s definition of such silly words.

Then I could get nearly every faithful

Tom, Dick, and Sally to deny the Godhood of God while they think they are merely being more just and compassionate. I could get them to deny the Gospel itself while they think they are merely caring for the oppressed. Even better, I will include in that injection certain policies that are almost certain to further hurt the oppressed, the same policies I’ve used over and over to crush image-bearers.

It’s the perfect evil trifecta I try to achieve in all my ploys. Rob worship from the Enemy, dupe the Enemy’s church, and inflict even more oppression on as much of that despicable race who bears the Enemy’s obnoxious image as possible.

## THE OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK

Consider “equity,” one of my favorite words. The ideologues use it often, but I’ve smuggled it into the average person’s mind under the common objection, “That’s not fair!”

It’s literally the oldest trick in my book. When the first of the Enemy’s image-bearers stood at the tree, I convinced them that God and God alone knowing good and evil wasn’t fair. Why shouldn’t there be equity between Creator and creature? I like to think that I did my job so well that when they took the first bite they believed they were doing justice, righting some cosmic inequity by trying to equalize the powerful Have from the powerless Have Nots.

It was the same trick I pulled with great success in Germany several millennia later. “Why should all the Jews be doing so well? Of course it’s because of their sinister plot to keep you Germans down. Wipe out their race and equity and justice will return to your beloved Deutschland.”

And they fell for it, the damned fools, to the destruction of millions of Jewish souls. I robbed God of worship as they worshipped their Fuhrer, I duped much



of the German church, and I inflicted even more carnage and misery on the Enemy's image-bearers. And all under the guise of equity and justice.

Those three powerful words: *It's-not-fair*. I had the Soviet's repeat it like liturgy about the Kulaks in Ukraine, "Why should they be such lucrative farmers while we scrounge?"

I had the French revolutionaries singing hymns about equality, sowing the word *egalite* into their protest banners, while their guillotines fell and their Age of Equality became my Reign of Terror.

And what was Marxism but a rallying cry for equality between the rich and poor, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat? I managed to turn the 20th century cry for economic inequality into state worship and obliterate over 100 million of the Enemy's image-bearers in less

than a hundred years. A million-plus per year, one of my finest centuries.

## HISTORY REPEATS

And here we are in the 21st century, and, I can hardly believe it, they seem to be falling for the same old trick all over again. Wrap the Anthrax in something shiny, conceal the poison in an apple, dress the monster up like an angel, use words like "justice" and "equity" and "compassion" to describe tyranny, and the Enemy's image-bearers will almost always take the fruit, open the anthrax, embrace the monster, and help me usher in tyranny every time.

Fools. They deserve the ruin I relish bringing them. Yes, there have been a few – Douglass and Tubman in America, Dostoyevsky, Solzhenitsyn, and Havel in Eastern Europe, the Scholl siblings and Bonhoeffer's resistance in Germany, to

name a few from that loathsome cadre – who have exposed my plot. But few listen to them. And the Enemy's image-bearers have such lousy memories and so few good historians, that I can roll out the same devious plot within a generation and no one is the wiser. I've got the majority on my side and the majority would kiss a snake, club a grandma, or crush a baby if I told them it was for "justice." RP

*Dr. Thaddeus Williams serves as Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Biola University. This article is an excerpt from his upcoming book "21 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice" and is reprinted with permission from the publisher.*

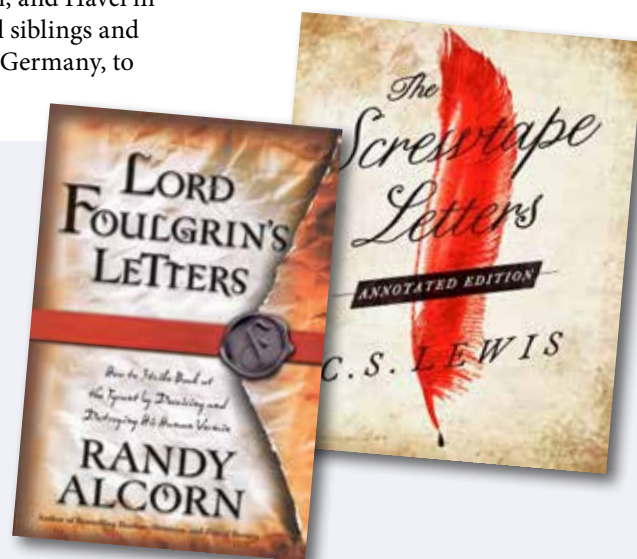
## DEVILISH CORRESPONDENCE: LORD FOULGRIN'S AND SCREWTAPE'S LETTERS

Some 75 years ago, as C. S. Lewis reports it, he intercepted correspondence between two devils, the one a senior demon and the other his student being taught how best to tempt and attack Man.

While Lewis refused to share how he'd come by these letters, the published correspondence was eye-opening, giving insight into how the Devil can twist not only our weaknesses, but even our strengths, to his devilish ends. So, for example, we get to listen in as the experienced tempter Screwtape teaches his charge, Wormwood to sidetrack prayer, either by making it perfunctory – perhaps done regularly, but with little to no thought – or by making it feelings, rather than God, focused. Either diversion will do.

While Lewis wrote (or discovered) *The Screwtape Letters* during World War II, it remains as insightful and as helpful as ever. But it was also a book worthy of imitation, and nearly 60 years later Randy Alcorn did just that, with his *Lord Foulgrin's Letters*. However, while Lewis stuck strictly to devilish correspondence, Alcorn alternates between letters and story chapters – it is half mail, and half narrative. The narrative sections make Alcorn's book a little more accessible for a teen audience, while, on the other hand, Lewis' is the more insightful, which also makes it the most satisfying of the two for adults. But both are excellent.

One caution: both books have an Arminian flavor, and, as my brother Jeff pointed out, "whether this Arminian tendency is simply the devil's mistaken understanding is not clear, but



Lewis at least seemed to be Arminian in his other writing." That means, while both books can serve as a warning of the devil's many means of attack, there's at least a few that are overlooked.

I understand that some might find the devilish focus of both books disturbing. It might seem wrong since Christians don't normally want their children reading books about demons. What makes Alcorn's and Lewis' books different from the devilish taint that exists in so much of today's entertainment (*Hellboy*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, *DC Legends of Tomorrow*, etc.) is that Lewis and Alcorn expose, but don't celebrate, the darkness. They are equipping readers to be aware of the Devil, not asking them to join him.

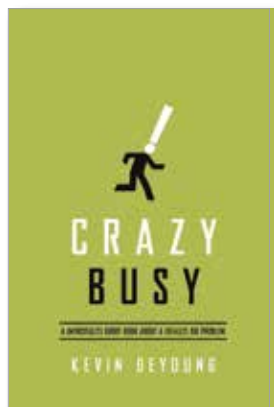
That's quite the difference indeed.

- Jon Dykstra

### CRAZY BUSY

BY KEVIN DEYOUNG

128 PAGES / 2013



In ten short chapters DeYoung writes how many of us are crazy busy. And he diagnoses our main problem as Pride, thinking that we have to do everything, including things that God does not expect us to do. We can't say "no" to being asked to do things for the church and its many committees. We enroll our children in all kinds of activities. And we scroll mindlessly on our screens in our spare moments.

DeYoung writes with humour but underneath is a strong current of seriousness showing from Scripture what we really need to do. Jesus Christ, when He was on earth in his human form, was also very busy and could not heal everyone, and while He sometimes needed a break from the press of the crowds, He always took time to pray and commune with his Father.

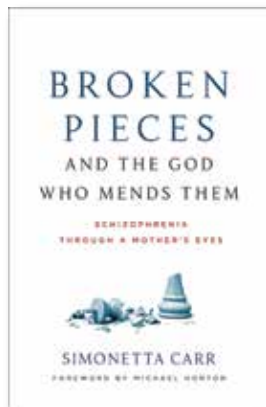
Our lives need rhythm: Sunday for worship, daily worship and devotions with the family, leaving work at the workplace, etc. We need healthy routines that include sleep and we need to trust in the providence of God. Even though we know all this, it's good to read a book that again reminds us of what is really important.

- JOANNA VANDERPOL

### BROKEN PIECES AND THE GOD WHO MENDS THEM: SCHIZOPHRENIA THROUGH A MOTHER'S EYES

BY SIMONETTA CARR

368 PAGES / 2019



Simonetta Carr, a well-known author, United Reformed Church member, and a mother of eight, tells her heartbreaking story about her son Jonathan, who, around age 18 slipped into paranoid schizophrenia and, two years later, committed suicide.

In the foreword Rev. Michael Horton says that the church is often ill-prepared to handle mental illness. It cannot be solved by "pulling up our spiritual socks" but needs professional treatment and much spiritual solace from the church. Jonathan was a brilliant boy who was on the road to study medicine and who also wrote poetry. He had a deep faith, and at a young age enjoyed the depth of the preaching and catechism lessons in his church. As Jonathan slipped deeper and deeper into depression and schizophrenia, his mother fought for him on many fronts. She depended heavily on her Saviour but so often despaired. She writes: "...most Christian parents want to 'be the Holy Spirit' for their children, to enter their minds and direct their thoughts..." especially when they see their children straying from God. But as the Spirit was moving over the waters at Creation, so we have to believe that He also works in our straying Covenantal children who are afflicted with a mental illness.

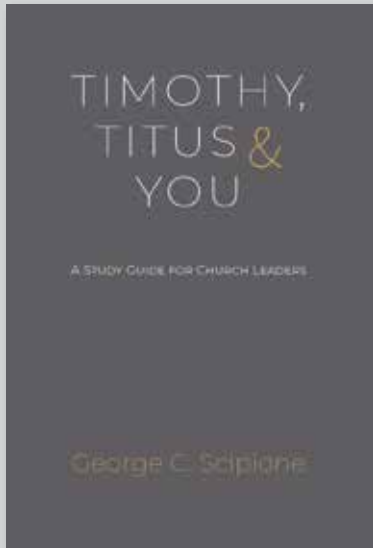
Simonetta experienced many bureaucratic difficulties along the way. Because Jonathan was considered an adult, he had to make decisions himself without his mother's input. But because of his mental condition he was not able to, and so he didn't always get the care he needed.

As her son's primary caregiver, Simonetta's life revolved around her son. At one point she wondered whether she was making her son into an idol. The balance, she believed lay in accepting what God has placed in her path, while trying to make things easier for her son and for her family. Throughout the first part of the story we experience Simonetta's pain and her struggles but also her struggle to accept this out of the Saviour's hand, finding comfort in His word.

The second part of the book is a support for caregivers. As Christians we sometimes say that mental illness is caused by demon possession but that is not so because Lord's Day 1 clearly says that we are Christ's. We need to comfort them with the Good News of the Saviour. The Gospel is not a form of therapy but "is a balm for our souls." Schizophrenia often starts in the later teenage years as parents look forward to their child going to university or leaving the nest. Instead, the parents and siblings have to coexist with a stranger who is puzzling and sometimes even scary. As a church community we need to walk with these families and "weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15.)

This book would be very encouraging and comforting for those who struggle with a schizophrenic family member or even for those who have rebellious children. Simonetta's book is soundly based on the Bible and reaches the heart of the reader.

- JOANNA VANDERPOL



## **TIMOTHY, TITUS & YOU: A STUDY GUIDE FOR CHURCH LEADERS**

BY GEORGE C. SCIPIONE.

55 PAGES / 2018 (ORIGINALLY 1975)

CROWN AND COVENANT PUBLICATIONS

# **This Bible study guide is a very good leadership book**

Many Bible study books are full of questions. Questions can be good. Questions are the backbone of serious Bible study. But questions, once answered, often get forgotten. Having sat through a few Young Peoples' bible study meetings in at least two different Canadian provinces I have seen this firsthand. The book is opened. The first question is asked. It is answered. The second question is asked. It is answered. And so on. I have even seen good discussion cut short because 'we need to get through the questions.'

This Bible study book is also full of questions. However, its target audience is not Young Peoples' Societies, but Church leaders. Specifically, the author envisions this study guide to be used by elders and potential elders both in their leadership role in the church and as they prepare for such a role.

Designed to be used over a nine-month period, the guide has four major goals for the reader in each lesson:

- 1. To gain knowledge of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus** – Questions get readers thinking about each assigned Biblical passage, and about its application to their lives.
- 2. To examine himself** – Learning about God moves us to learning about ourselves and learning about the role of church leader.
- 3. To grow in self-discipline** – Prompts and assignments encourage readers to transform their lives.
- 4. To consider how to lead others** – Self-discipline is the beginning, but leadership involves learning how to disciple others.

### **POSITIVES**

Given that this study guide is intended for those in or aspiring to leadership in the church, the questions are well focused and most likely to be taken seriously. Drawing their inspiration from the passage of Timothy or Titus, the questions seek to apply the lessons learned to the leadership and life of the reader. Some are deep, probing questions that get at motivations and attitudes. Some are questions that get at behaviors and actions. All the questions are clearly connected to the Biblical passage at hand.

Taken seriously, and done thoroughly, this guide could be a good way for an elder or someone who aspires to be an elder to grow both in personal holiness and their role in the church.

### **NEGATIVES**

Having read through this guide, I don't really know much more about Timothy and Titus than I did before. This is because the guide is heavy on personal and leadership application, but short on actual Biblical exposition. Even in the "Knowledge of the Word Study Questions" section in each chapter, the questions are exclusively "you" focused. The author leaps over original context, intended meaning of the author, and application to the first audience, and lands squarely on what the text means for me now.

This is why I am a little hesitant about contemporary study guides. Too many of them are heavy on questions that are of more interest to the reader (or user) of the guide, and light on questions that get at the meaning and original application of the text itself. Issues of context, definitions, and even themes are absent in this study guide, issues which could have strengthened the application questions and made them more meaningful.

### **CONCLUSION**

This, then, was a good leadership book, but not a great bible study book. The author truly wishes to encourage and assist his readers in their role as leaders in the church. The questions and exercises are serious, probing, and show faithfulness to Scripture and its authority. However, the fact that there is little exposition, and the questions focus too heavily on application to the reader is unfortunate. While useful as a means for elders and those aspiring to this office to grow and prepare, it is not quite a "study guide" in the traditional sense of reading and learning about the Biblical text itself.

So use this study guide with a group of leadership-minded men to focus and assist discussion. But have a commentary on Timothy and Titus on hand as well to study the text itself.

- Stuart Harsevoort



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY  
checked out the *RP* Instagram page? You can, [right here](#). And if you know  
who should be getting this newsletter, let them know they can subscribe right



### **F.R.E.E.D - an acronym to help us defend and use our religious freedom**

Our religious freedom is under regular attack and Christians have to know how to  
defend it...and make good use of it.

So here are 4 easy-to-remember points in defense of religious liberty...plus 1 more.

[READ NOW](#)



### **FREE FILM: How to answer the fool**

In this free documentary, we learn what presuppositional apologetics is, and get to see it in  
action on a university campus. This is a must-see for every Christian!

[READ NOW](#)



### **Little white lies and why we tell them**

... discovers some flowers in the kitchen and thanks you with a hug and a big  
... brought the flowers for your secretary in

## GET IT IN YOUR INBOX!

Want to get *Reformed Perspective* delivered to you every week? Then sign up for our *RP Roundup* email newsletter and you'll get the week's 5-6 articles delivered to your inbox each and every Saturday morning.

And be sure to tell your family and friends about the *RP Roundup* newsletter too!

You can sign up at [Tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter](https://tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter)

