

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

DECEMBER 2014

Volume 34 Issue No. 2

# PERSPECTIVE

THE HUMOR ISSUE !!!!



# A TIME TO LAUGH!

....AND A TIME  
TO CONTEMPLATE  
AND CRITIQUE

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HUMOR AND THE  
LIFE OF FAITH P.11

COMEDY AS A CALLING P.16

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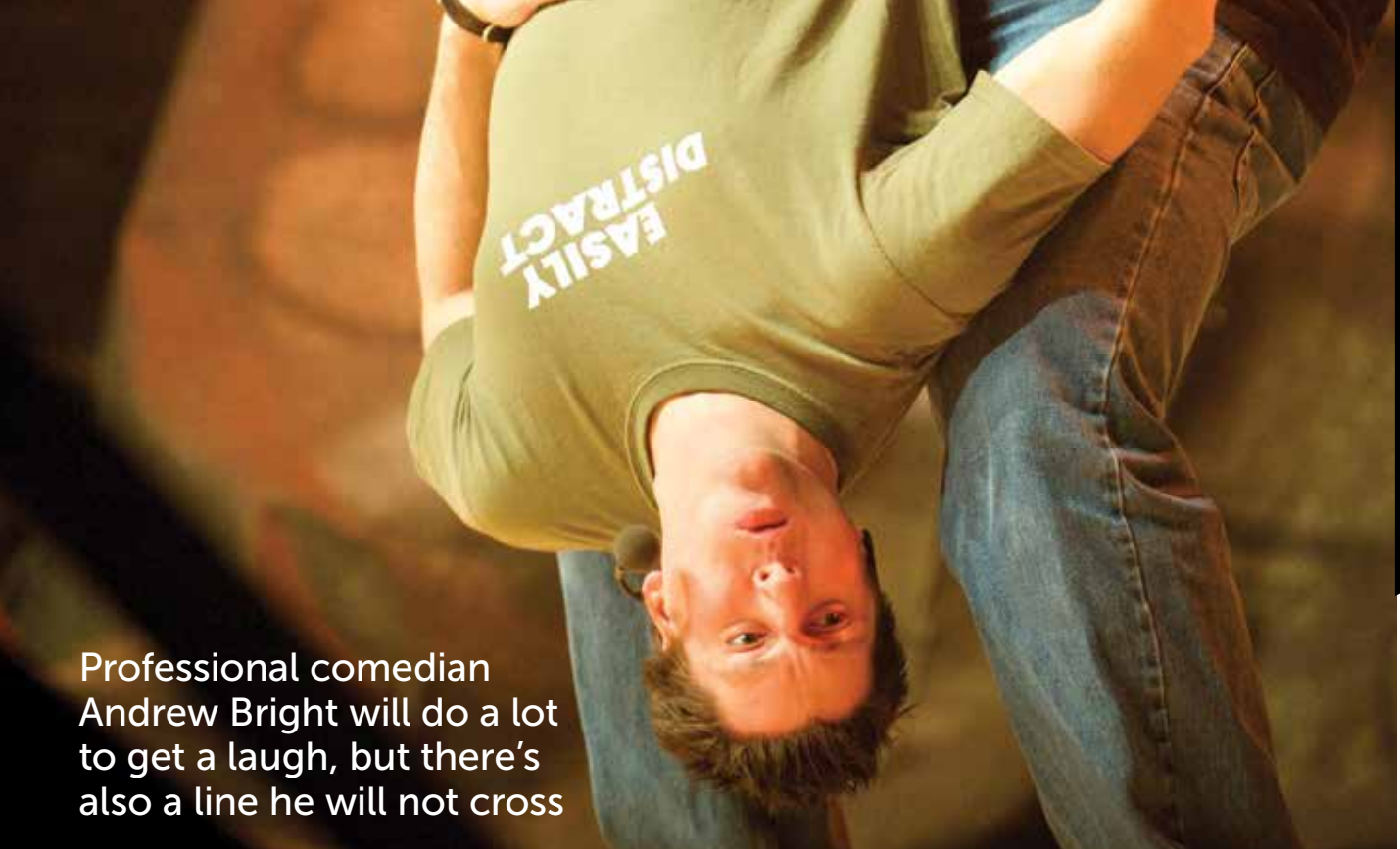
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Professional comedian Andrew Bright will do a lot to get a laugh, but there's also a line he will not cross

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# Use Words

I hadn't expected to meet a witch on the bus, what with their alternative form of transportation. Yet there she was, not a wart to be seen, sitting across the aisle. She had started the ride buried in a book, but her head came up when my friend and I discussed a particular point of theology in a slightly louder than normal fashion. This friend was on his way to becoming a minister, and theological topics always had the effect of cranking up his volume. I suspected that this was a conscious decision, rather than just an outburst of enthusiasm, since he always talked about how Christians had to be more of a light to the world. And he was a light: a roaring, exploding bonfire of light that could not be ignored by anyone within earshot. Whether we were sitting in a steam room, or hanging out at a coffee house, or sitting on the bus, he provoked obviously unchristian people into talking with us.

a fabrication. That admission left both me and my conversationally-endowed buddy at a loss for words; we just couldn't understand how someone could knowingly choose a delusion over a real, caring, and powerful God.

So we asked.

The question surprised her. "You guys have to understand," she blurted, "You pray and that makes you feel better, right? So what's the difference between what you do and what I do?"

The basic fact she didn't understand, the thing no one had told her before, was that we Christians serve the one real God. This woman had never heard that before. Her Wiccan experience with religion was an openly delusional one, so she, quite logically, assumed that all other religions were similarly based.

I found her ignorance surprising, but since then I've found it isn't unusual. In fact, I had a similar sort of encounter

else would we even care?"

Well, that just didn't fit with what she had been told, "I thought you religious types were just using this issue to try to control women." Her friend nodded in agreement. They didn't understand – they were utterly ignorant.

I've always wanted to believe that evangelism was as simple as living a good Christian life. I wanted to believe I didn't actually have to talk about God as long as people could see His presence in my life. Actions are louder than words, right? The problem is, in this post-Christian age people don't have the background – they don't know the basics of Christianity – to understand our actions. A Christian who doesn't work on Sunday is just a guy who gets the day off. No sex before marriage becomes the rational act of someone who's scared of sexually transmitted diseases. Action against abortion is understood as a power grab against women, and even prayer can be explained away as nothing more than a type of mediation or some psychological self-talk exercise.

Actions only speak louder than words when the reasons for the actions are understood. And the world doesn't have a clue anymore. So, as John MacArthur once put it, we need to "Preach the Gospel and always use words." The world doesn't understand so we all have to start talking and explaining. If you already are, you may have to start talking a little louder. And if you're uncomfortable with cranking up the volume maybe you can just hang out with a friend who isn't.

I've always wanted to believe that evangelism was as simple as living a good Christian life.

This time around it was the witch. A few minutes into the ride she interrupted us to ask us what religion we followed. My friend was happy to explain, and then asked her what church she went to.

"Oh, I don't go to a church," she said, "I worship my personal goddess at home."

The way she explained it, witches (or Wiccans) sounded a lot like New Agers. They did try and cast the occasional spell, but only love spells, and the central tenet of their religion was a respect for all of nature. It was just mumbo jumbo, nothing shocking or new for me, until she started talking about her personal goddess. After listing all sorts of benefits that came from having a goddess on call, she admitted it was nothing but

less than a month. This time my friend and I were making our semi-regular pilgrimage to a display sponsored by our university's pro-choice club. I always went to pick up as many free brochures as possible, which, once I was out of sight, I would gleefully destroy. It was a small thing – a very small thing – but I thought it was at least as good an approach as the one my friend tried time and time again. He always debated with the pro-choicers.

But what was usually a waste of breath turned out a differently that day. After a heated five-minute exchange one of the young ladies at the table asked for clarification, "Do you mean you really, honestly think it's a baby?"

"Of course," my friend replied, "Why



Jon Dykstra can be reached by email at [editor@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:editor@reformedperspective.ca).

# NOTA BENE

News  
worth  
noting

is when they are using their wealth and power to oppress. However, when we hear people complaining about income inequality these complaints have nothing to do with how a billionaire might misuse their money. It's all about how much they have. That is exactly what the 10th commandment forbids: how much someone has – no matter how very super uber rich they might be – is simply not our concern.

SOURCE: Breeanna Hare's "Charles Barkley" 'Brainwashed' blacks hold up success" posted to CNN.com on Oct. 28, 2014; "Charles Barkley: 'When you're black, you have to deal with so much crap in your life from other black people,'" posted to Philadelphia.cbslocal.com on Oct. 27, 2014; Picture credit: Bruce Yeung / Shutterstock.com



## GIRLS TO COMPETE WITH BOYS IN BOBSLED... AS DRIVERS

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

**T**he International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation has announced that women will now be eligible to compete in four-man bobsled events. This includes co-ed teams as well as women's-only teams. Kaillie Humphries, a two-time Olympic gold medalist for Canada in two-woman bobsled, is determined to compete with the men as soon as possible. She hopes women will eventually have their own four-woman bobsled competition, but for now this will suffice.

This will be one of the only Olympic sports (or any sport) where men and women both compete on an equal footing. However, the excited female bobsledders only have plans to sit in the driver's seat – it seems the work of pushing will be left to the men. It is always interesting to see new ways in which women insist on being just like men, yet we cannot ignore the biological physical differences that exist.

SOURCE "Kaillie Humphries gets her wish: Four-man bobsled is now open to women," posted to NationalPost.com on Sept. 25, 2014; Picture by Perspectives - Jeff Smith / Shutterstock.com

## CHRISTIANS MUST NOT BE CRABS

BY JON DYKSTRA



**W**hen retired NBA basketball player Charles Barkley talked this past October about what it was like to be black in America, what he had to say was relevant for Canadians and white folks too.

Barkley was being interviewed on a sports talk radio show about a report that some Seattle Seahawk football players were criticizing their quarterback for not being "black enough." Barkley likened it to "crabs in a barrel," a reference to how crabs in a barrel could easily climb out, but don't because the

moment one starts to get up, the others underneath will pull him down. Barkley argued that,

...it's a dirty dark secret in the black community, one reason we're never going to be successful as a whole is because of other black people. There are a lot of black people who are unintelligent, who don't have success. It's best to knock a successful black person down because they're intelligent, they speak well, they do well in school, and they're successful. It's crabs in a barrel.

While this might seem a race issue, at its core this is all about the 10th commandment – when people criticize others simply for being successful, that is covetousness. Among Canadians this covetousness shows up a little differently, but it's here too: the media, our politicians, our young people, and socially-conscience Christians will express concerns about "income equality."

God does condemn the rich at times in the Bible, but not for being rich – it

## ONTARIO GOV'T SOLVES NON-EXISTENT PROBLEM

BY JON DYKSTRA



**I**n proposed legislation the Ontario Liberal government plans to “clarify that only school buses can be painted chrome yellow.” Opposition MP Randy Hillier had some fun on his Facebook page asking his supporters, “Can you tell the difference between a yellow car and a school bus?”

This is funny, certainly, but it’s also an example of government micromanagement, banning something for no good reason at all.

## DOLLY PARTON JUDGES CHRISTIANS FOR JUDGING

BY JON DYKSTRA



**D**olly Parton, the 68-year-old country music star, made some headlines recently when, in a *Billboard* magazine interview, she spoke about Christians’ response to homosexuality. The magazine noted that Parton, who is a professing Christian, has a large gay fan.

I think I have a lot of gay fans because they know that I completely love and accept them, as I do all people.... But as far as the Christians, if people want to pass judgment, they’re already sinning. The sin of judging is just as bad as any other

sin they might say somebody else is committing.

Jesus does warn against judging in Matthew 7:1, but it isn’t the blanket condemnation that Dolly Parton makes it out to be. If it were, then Ms. Parton would be crossing this same line when she judged Christians in error for judging. If we can’t condemn homosexuality, because that is judgmental, then on what basis does Ms. Parton get to condemn us for our condemnation?

Ms. Parton standard is nonsensical... but Jesus’ is not. When we read the next verse we see He is warning us against judging others by a standard we would not want applied to ourselves. “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (7:2). Hypocritical judgments are condemned. So we need to be clear that homosexuality is sinful, and just as clear that it isn’t uniquely sinful.

SOURCE: Deborah Evans Price’s “Dolly Parton Q&A: The Country Legend on 50 Years in Nashville and Why She Supports Her Gay Fans” posted to *Billboard.com* on Oct. 24, 2014; Photo credit: DFree / Shutterstock.com

## PHIL ROBERTSON GETS IN TROUBLE FOR SAYING THE OBVIOUS

BY ANNA NIENHUIS



**D**uck Dynasty star Phil Robertson has made headlines again, this time for his declaration that sexually transmitted diseases cannot be transmitted through “biblically correct” sex. Though not an ordained minister, Robertson did, however, deliver a sermon in Los Angeles that addressed the topic.

In 2013 Robertson was suspended from his role in the *Duck Dynasty*

show following comments about homosexual relations being biblically wrong, but he was quickly reinstated following a backlash against the A&E television network. He is standing up for Biblical truths again with his focus on the value of monogamous sex within marriage, and, while we may not agree with his approach or the words he chooses, we can’t disagree with his content. What is amazing is the fact that this makes news, as though people had forgotten about, or are surprised by the benefits of having sex with only your spouse.

SOURCE: Samantha Sobolewski’s “STDs cannot be spread through ‘biblically correct’ sex,” *Duck Dynasty* head Phil Robertson says,” posted to *NationalPost.com* on Oct 8, 2014



## UMBILICAL CORD BLOOD CAN BE DONATED

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

**C**anadian Blood Services now has a National Public Cord Blood Bank where umbilical cord and placental blood can be donated to help save lives. Although collection of the blood is only available so far at a few hospitals – in Brampton, Edmonton, and Vancouver – it is hoped that the bank will grow and people will be willing to donate this blood following delivery of their baby. This stem-cell rich blood can help treat many who are suffering from diseases such as leukemia, lymphoma and anemia.

Currently, private cord blood banks allow you to save the blood for your own or family use, but these private services are pricey. Having a national cord blood bank offers hope to far more people and is a beautiful way to give something valuable that is often simply discarded. To learn more visit [www.blood.ca/cord-blood](http://www.blood.ca/cord-blood).





# Ring *in the* New Year

by Paul Tripp

It's that time of year again - time to ring in the New Year with dramatic resolutions fueled by the hope of immediate and significant personal life change.

## MOMENTOUS MOMENT?

Let's be honest. The reality is that few smokers actually quit because of a single moment of resolve. Few obese people become slim and healthy because of one dramatic moment of commitment. Few people deeply in debt change their financial lifestyle because they resolve to do so as the old year gives way to the new. Few marriages change by the means of one dramatic resolution.

Is change important? Yes, it is for all of us in some way. Is commitment essential? Of course! There's a way in which all our lives are shaped by the commitments we make. But biblical Christianity - which has the gospel of Jesus Christ at its heart - simply doesn't rest its hope in big, dramatic moments of change.

The fact of the matter is that the transforming work of grace is more of a mundane process than it is a series of a few dramatic events. Personal heart and life change is always a process. And where does that process take place? It takes place where you and I live everyday. And where do we live? We all have the same address - the utterly mundane.

Most of us won't be written up in history books. Most of us only make three or four momentous decisions in our lives, and several decades after we die, the people we leave behind will struggle to remember the events of our lives. You and I live in little moments, and if God doesn't rule our little moments and doesn't work to re-create us in the middle of them, then there's no hope for us, because that's where you and I live.

This is where I think "Big Drama Christianity" gets us into trouble. It can cause us to devalue the significance of the little moments of life and the "small change" grace that meets us there.

Because we devalue the little moments where we live, we don't tend to notice the sin that gets exposed there and we fail to seek the grace that's offered to us.

## 10,000 LITTLE MOMENTS

I don't want to discourage you from making a resolution or tell you to throw away what you've already written, but I do want to challenge your way of thinking. You see, the character of your life won't be established in two or three dramatic moments, but in 10,000 little moments. Your legacy will be shaped more by the 10,000 little decisions you make in 2015 rather than the last-minute resolution you're about to make.

How can you establish a godly character and lasting legacy in 2015?

- With 10,000 moments of personal insight and conviction.
- With 10,000 moments of humble submission.



- With 10,000 moments of foolishness exposed and wisdom gained.
- With 10,000 moments of sin confessed and sin forsaken.
- With 10,000 moments of courageous faith.
- With 10,000 choice points of obedience.
- With 10,000 times of forsaking the kingdom of self and running toward the kingdom of God.
- With 10,000 moments where we abandon worship of the creation and give ourselves to worship of the Creator.

That's a lot of moments. Too many, in fact, to accomplish successfully on our way. No wonder we settle for one big resolution instead of a day-by-day resolutions. But here's what makes 10,000 little resolutions possible -

Your legacy will be shaped more by the 10,000 little decisions you make in 2015 rather than the last-minute resolution you're about to make.

GRACE. Relentless, transforming, little-moment grace.

You see, Jesus is Emmanuel not just because he came to earth, but because he makes you the place where he dwells. This means he is present and active in all the mundane moments of your daily life. In these small moments he is delivering every redemptive promise he has made to you. In these unremarkable moments, he is working to rescue you from you and transform you into his likeness.

By sovereign grace he places you in daily little moments that are designed to take you beyond your character, wisdom and grace so that you'll seek the help and hope that can only be found in him. In a lifelong process of change, he is undoing

you and rebuilding you again - exactly what each one of us needs!

Yes, you and I need to be committed to change in 2015, but not in a way that hopes for a big event of transformation, but in a way that finds joy in and is faithful to a day-by-day, step-by-step process of insight, confession, repentance and faith.

As 2014 gives way to 2015, wake up each day committed to live in the 10,000 little moments of your daily life with open eyes and humbly expectant hearts.

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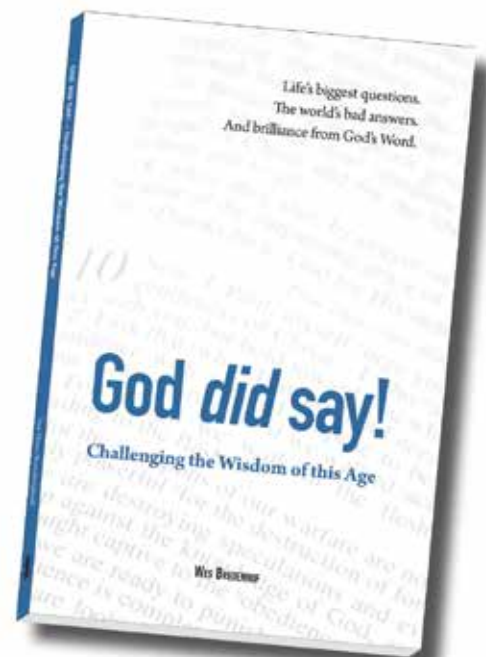
## from Reformed Perspective Books

Consider the difference between these two questions:

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

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

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# { IN A NUTSHELL }

BY JON DYKSTRA

## LIGHTBULB MOMENT

I was in my 4th year neurophysiology course, learning about the brain, when the professor used a curious word: “think.” As in, this is how science “thinks” things might work in our brain. What struck me was how tentative the professor had just become, and I wasn’t the only student surprised to hear this modest word. A classmate popped up his hand and asked something to the effect of, “What do you mean ‘think’? Don’t we know how the brain works?”

This got a definitive response from the prof. No, he explained, we don’t have a clue how the brain works: all our theories are just guesses and don’t begin to account for how much information is stored in our brains and how we access it. We even know our theories must be wrong – because they don’t offer a sufficient explanation – but until something better is found, this is the best we have.

His admission was an eye-opener for the class who had all, to this point, assumed we were learning something far more substantial than theories that were known to be deficient.

The fact is, the human brain is a wonder, and even the smartest brains among us don’t have a clue as to what is all going on. And to propose it was random chance that brought such a wonder into being, well, that shows some folks aren’t using the wonder they’ve been given.

## TV TRIVIA

Fred Rogers, of the children’s show *Mister Roger’s Neighborhood*, was a seminary classmate of R.C. Sproul.

## ARGUING FOR INFANT BAPTISM

In Jay Adams’ book *Greg Dawson and the Psychology Class*, the author poses an intriguing argument for infant baptism. One of the characters in the book, Brian, is trying to convince his girlfriend that infant baptism is biblical, and shares with her this scenario:

“It’s the day before Pentecost. Andrew, a pious Jewish father, has just had his child circumcised. He is happy because he now knows that little Simeon is a part of the covenant community – the visible church. The next day, he hears Peter preach and believes the Gospel. Now, according to Baptist thought, his child is no longer in the visible church. In for one day and out the next.”

While there is no explicit example of a child being baptized in the New Testament (nor is there any example of children being excluded or forbidden from being baptized) there seems a clear parallel to circumcision, made even more clear by this scenario.

## THE THEOLOGY OF DIRTY JOKES

In his book, *I Was Just Wondering*, Philip Yancy recounts one of C.S. Lewis’ most interesting arguments for God’s

existence. Lewis claimed that only a theistic worldview could explain the existence of dirty jokes.

The argument was pretty simple. If you observe the animal world, reproduction is a rather mundane affair: animals certainly don’t get bashful or embarrassed about it. But we humans, with juvenile smirks and double entendre jokes have always treated it as something out of the ordinary.

But why?

Evolutionists don’t have any rationale for this different treatment. Are we supposed to believe that dirty jokes help perpetuate the species? In fact, there is no *natural* reason to treat sex as anything other than routine. And if there is no reason to see as something special, then there is no reason to tell dirty jokes about it. We don’t tell jokes about common ordinary events.

The Christian rationale for this different treatment is much clearer. Reproduction is something special because God has set it apart from normal human activity and guarded it with rules and requirements. And even while society ignores those rules they still can’t help but recognize that reproduction is something special. They don’t want to honor the rules God has set out, but they can’t help but acknowledge His rules when they set out to mock them with dirty jokes.

## WORDS ARE NOT OPTIONAL

“Preach the Gospel. If necessary rebuke anyone who says ‘If necessary, use words.’” - RC Sproul Jr.

## WHEN HE’S GOOD HE’S VERY GOOD!

Tim Keller gets stuff wrong (he’s a theistic evolutionist) but when he also gets stuff right, he’s gets them really right, like this, from his November 7, 2014 Facebook status update:

When I am loving to my wife when I don’t feel loving to my wife I am more loving to my wife than when I am loving to my wife when I feel loving to my wife.

## REFORMED HUMOR

What do Martin Luther and birds have in common? A: diet of worms!

SOURCE: Just another bit of something making its way around the Internet

# HUMOR AND THE LIFE OF FAITH

by Conrad van Dyk

*"And I knew there could be laughter  
On the secret face of God"*

– G. K. Chesterton



Nothing is quite so ironic as to talk seriously about humor. Yet it would be perverse to treat the subject of *Christian* humor with irreverence or anything approaching vulgarity. And by Christian humor I do not mean those harmless puns and riddles that are often classified as Bible jokes. Who is the shortest person in the Bible? Who is the only person in the Bible who doesn't have any parents?<sup>1</sup> If Christian humor ended there, then we might feel slightly cheated. There must be more. And indeed, humor is more than an occasional joke; it is indicative of a broader attitude to life.

We see this most clearly in the word "comedy." In literature, the term means simply a story with a happy ending – it doesn't even have to be funny. You might say that the story of salvation is a divine comedy, for it promises a life happily ever after. Of course, to unbelievers this faith in the afterlife is itself a joke. To some extent, then, the question is who will have the last laugh. So let's take a closer look at this comedy of salvation. Does the biblical narrative include any humor, and what role should laughter play in our life of faith?

## HUMOR IN THE BIBLE

When I was still growing up – a process that may not have ended – my father sometimes liked to refer to "humor in the Bible." But looking back I had no recollection of what he actually meant by that. Was he referring to some of those funny names in the Bible, like the ones the prophets gave to their kids? Was he

thinking of Joshua, the son of Nun? I wasn't sure, and so I figured that writing this article would be like discovering a forgotten corner of my childhood.

Childhood is, of course, an appropriate metaphor for thinking about humor. Those who have studied humor in the Bible suggest, for instance, that the sober attitude of grown-ups obscures the comic aspects of Christ's rhetoric. Elton Trueblood, in *The Humor of Christ*, tells how his son burst out laughing at Bible reading over the idea that someone might be so concerned about seeing a speck in someone else's eye that he failed to notice the beam in his own eye.<sup>2</sup> The child has not yet become accustomed to all that is at first glance merely preposterous or grotesque.

Trueblood – whose views we'll focus on here – believes that Jesus is not only a Man of Sorrows, but also a Man of Joys. Jesus's humor comes from the incongruity of his sayings (particularly in his many paradoxes) and from his sense of irony. Surely, says Trueblood, there is an aspect of comedy in the blind leading the blind, in the notion of "saving by losing," in the thought that a camel should go through the eye of a needle, in giving Peter the nickname "Rocky." It is frequently the contrast between the literal and the figurative moment that provides a space for laughter, or at least for a smile. When Christ asks "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed?" our trained inclination is to answer "No, because then no one can see the lamp." A child might respond, "That would be funny, because then the bed might catch on fire."

The examples can be multiplied – at least according to Trueblood. They show Christ not merely as an ascetic and acerbic preacher – as we sometimes imagine John the Baptist – but as a man who drank wine in genial conviviality and spoke in surprising and shocking language. Whatever reservations we may have about this slightly irreverent view of the Savior, the resulting picture actually fits surprisingly well with the general Reformed worldview, which sees Christ as restoring and renewing life and culture. We all know of Luther's hearty humor and his penchant for beer.

## WHAT IS HUMOR?

There are of course problems as well. If humor encompasses everything from outright jokes to fine shades of irony, then where do we draw the line? In addition, humor is fiendishly difficult to trace in written documents, for so much depends on tone and context. Take, for instance, Trueblood's explanation of the following words of Jesus from Luke 12:58:

As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

Trueblood is surely right that Jesus treats miscarriages of justice with a touch of sarcasm, but he pushes the argument too far when he tries to find the passage humorous: "What Christ seems to be advocating is a clever deal or a bribe. . . . Translated into our language,

... how can you purposefully live a life of laughter and joy?

*Marty and John* by Nathan Ketchen





‘It may prove to be cheaper to pay the officer than to pay the court, so why not try?’ . . . If this be humor, it is humor with an acid touch.”<sup>3</sup>

It seems more likely, though, that the adversary is not an officer of the law at all, but is rather a fellow citizen; what Jesus advocates is what we would call an “out of court settlement” – a common practice in ancient societies – and represents prudence, not humor.

### IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are two other sources of humor that require some attention. The first is, of course, the Old Testament. There are a number of places where God is said to laugh (Ps. 2:4, 37:13, 59:8; Prov. 1:26). This is the laughter of poetic justice: God laughs at the wicked. Surprisingly, the Psalms also suggest that the proper response to God’s laughing judgment should be joy: “Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth” (Ps. 98:8-9; cf. Ps. 96). Judgment is no laughing matter, we instinctively feel. However, as the Philistines found out when they placed the ark of God in the temple of Dagon, God will have the last laugh: “When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord!” (1 Sam. 5:3).

The man most famed for wisdom in the Old Testament also had a wry sense of humor, something that is often missed. Consider the following ironic passages from Ecclesiastes, that book that we take such pains to explain away:

The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” (1:1-2).

All things are wearisome more than one can say (1:8).

Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body (12:12).

Who writes a book to explain that everything is meaningless? The Teacher sounds tired before he even begins. In fact, in an amusing turn of phrase, he explains that he is too weary to explain weariness. Perhaps the appropriate response when faced with such irony is laughter.

There is a bad sort of biblical humor

But there is also a negative type of humor. There are hints of it in the nervous laughter of Sarah. This is the laughter of those who sit in the seat of scoffers.

The man who suffered most from such mockery was Jesus. All those involved in crucifying him try to turn him into a joke. And the joke is always the same: how can a crucified man be king? The soldiers dress him up in a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns before they torture him. Pilate practices his own version of the laughter of judgment by placing a placard above his head that reads: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:37). The joke then gets passed on to the chief priests and the teachers of the law, who focus on the final paradox of Christ’s ministry: “‘He saved others,’ they said, ‘but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him’” (27:42).

The laughter of the cross is the

...there is also a negative type of humor. There are hints of it in the nervous laughter of Sarah. This is the laughter of those who sit in the seat of scoffers.

laughter of Sarah magnified; it is the laughter of skepticism, and it is at heart a nervous defense against the laughter of faith and judgment. As Paul realized, the Christian faith is foolishness to the world, because doubt manifests itself through mockery and laughter. Laughter and tears, comedy and tragedy – the two poles are actually not as far removed from each other as we sometimes think. Since laughter lives on the border with terror and tragedy, it is not surprising that we also find it at the cross.

### TRUE JOY

What does this all mean for our life of faith? An elder of mine once pointed out that one of the great gifts of the Christian religion is the joy it provides. And this joy is not simply confined to a kind of internal spiritual peace, although it is that too. The writer G. K. Chesterton suggests that, compared to the Christian, the secular man is generally happier as he approaches earth, but sadder and sadder as he approaches the heavens.<sup>4</sup> True – but the happiness of the Christian also extends downwards – to the earth renewed in Christ.

There remains one obstacle, however. Franz Kafka once said – in a comment about Christianity – that “a forced gaiety is much sadder than an openly acknowledged sorrow.”<sup>5</sup> I think this is exactly the problem we face as Christians



today. How can we demonstrate the happiness that comes with the good news in a spontaneous way? Laughter is something that you shouldn't force. So, how can you *purposefully* live a life of laughter and joy? I think it has to start with something further down in your heart; it has to start with faith and hope. If you start here, then laughter will inevitably come bubbling up. And this is

not a nervous laughter, like the laughter of Sarah or the mocking of scoffers – this is a wholesome and healthy laughter. This is the joy of Christ. (RP)

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In case you haven't heard these groaners: Bildad the Shuhite (i.e. shoe-height) & Joshua, son of Nun (i.e. none).

<sup>2</sup> Elton Trueblood, *The Humor of Christ* (New

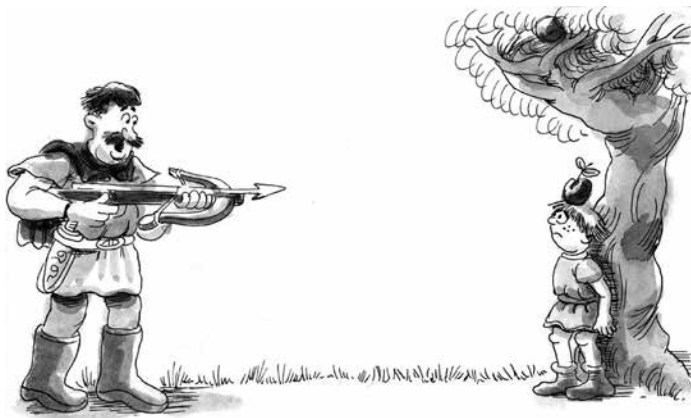
York: HarperCollins, 1964).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>4</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, in *Basic Chesterton* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1984), 127.

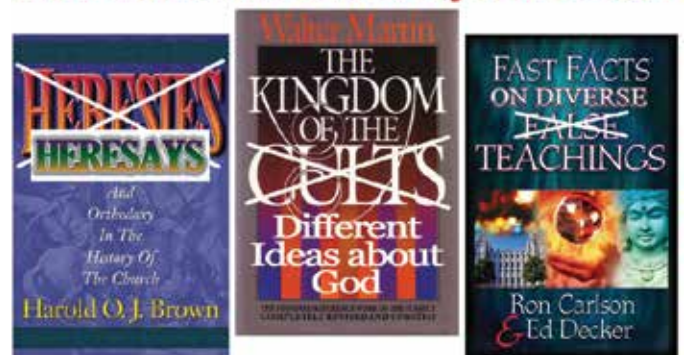
<sup>5</sup> Quoted by John F. Maguire, "Chesterton and Kafka," *The Chesterton Review* 3.1 (1976-77): 161.

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"Don't move, there's a pesticide coated apple on your head."

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Completely revised and updated books for today's user-friendly, warm as a puppy kind of defense. Remember...we put the apology back in apologetics!







# COMEDY as a CALLING

An interview with  
the Panic Squad's

Andrew Bright

by Jon Dykstra

Andrew Bright is a professional comedian and a professing Christian, and while that's not as rare as the albino spotted zebra, comedic Christians are hard to come by. His improv comedy troupe, the Panic Squad ([www.PanicSquad.com](http://www.PanicSquad.com)) is well-loved across the US and Canada, and known for their hilarious and clearly clean comedy. What follows is an edited version of our interview.

### **DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO BE A COMEDIAN?**

While I loved making others laugh from a young age, I never imagined becoming a professional comedian. I guess it seemed so out of reach, something other people did. In junior high and high school I was searching for a way to fit in. I wasn't super good looking or exceptionally smart, wasn't athletic. But I was funny. I used humor as a way to be noticed and make friends, and defensively, as a way to deflect insults and mask the pain I experienced. I enjoyed the fact that I could always make my friends laugh, but never imagined a use for my wit and humor beyond just that.

### **WHEN DID YOU FIRST TRY DOING IMPROVISATIONAL COMEDY?**

The first time I saw improv comedy was at Trinity Western University in BC. I was blown away. Here were guys and girls on stage getting suggestions from the audience, making up scenes and jokes off the top of their heads, and getting big laughs. It looked like so much fun, I wondered, "Can I could do that?" When I tried out for TWU's improv comedy league, "11:07" I discovered I had a real knack for improv comedy and was affecting others in a positive way. I had always loved acting, and making others laugh, and here was a venue created for just that. I thrived in this environment, the way anyone does when we discover God's purpose for us. God wires us all differently, to be good at some things and not so good in others. It's an amazing thing when we begin to operate in a role that fits with the unique way God created us.

### **HOW DID YOU TURN THIS INTO A FULL-TIME JOB?**

Though improv comedy was a highlight of my years at TWU, I didn't see it as a career option – it was my fun hobby. So along with some other TWU grads and students, we started putting the word out and would take anything we would get our hands on. If a youth group was willing to give us some gas money, we'd come and perform. We also began promoting some regular performances at a Christian coffee house in New Westminster, BC. Our first show had an audience numbering 6 people (and two of them were parents of a group member!). A humble beginning for sure! A few months later, however, we were breaking fire codes with over 500 people packing the place out.

While the Panic Squad was started as a hobby in 1996, God

blessed our work and three of us quit our day jobs to make it a full time career in 2001. At the time I had been married for just a year, and left a job in public relations in Bellingham, WA. That first year was very lean, my wife teaching second grade at a small Christian school and me trying to grow a career in comedy. It was an incredible year of fear, trust and surprises. At times it still doesn't feel real. I just celebrated my 15th anniversary with my wonderful wife, have four amazing kids, and get to perform comedy across the United States and Canada for a living. We've learned some hard lessons along the way, been blessed with opportunities and shaken by disappointments, but it's been a great journey. I feel like I am living Ephesians 3:20-21.

### **SOMEONE WATCHING ONE OF YOUR SHOWS WOULD SEE YOU GUYS ARE DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT. WHAT MAKES YOUR BRAND OF COMEDY DIFFERENT, NOT ONLY FROM THE TYPICAL SECULAR COMEDY, BUT EVEN FROM MOST OTHER CHRISTIAN COMEDY?**

We hope the first thing people notice when they watch our show is that we're funny, real funny. As comedians, that's our job and we take being funny seriously. The second thing you'll notice is that our comedy is squeaky clean. Not clean by comparison to dirty comics, not clean enough for most venues, but simply clean. All the time, for any venue. That's also very important to us. Clean is clean. You shouldn't have to define or qualify it.

I think where excellence meets standards is what sets us apart. There are very funny, talented comedians who choose to perform material that is offensive. We're out to prove that you can be committed to standards and still be successful. We perform clean comedy, and we put on a great show.

There are also comedians who market themselves as clean, or Christian, but they're simply not funny. They have standards but no talent. Would you trust your home to a Christian electrician who knows nothing about electricity? Excellence gives you a credible platform. No matter your message, if your life or work is in opposition to what you're saying, no one will listen. Our work is comedy, so we had better put on a funny show.


### **ON YOUR FIRST DVD YOUR TITLE HERE YOUR TEAMMATE CLIFF PRANG TALKED ABOUT HOW PERFORMING YOUR BEST REQUIRES A REAL UNSELFISHNESS. HE DESCRIBED IMPROV AS "SETTING EACH OTHER UP FOR SUCCESS, WORKING TOGETHER, LISTENING TO EACH OTHER, YIELDING TO EACH OTHER." IMPROV SOUNDS LIKE QUITE THE APPROPRIATE MEDIUM FOR CHRISTIANS, ONE IN WHICH YOU SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE (GAL. 5:13) TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN ALL OF YOU. WHAT ELSE DO YOU LOVE ABOUT IMPROV?**

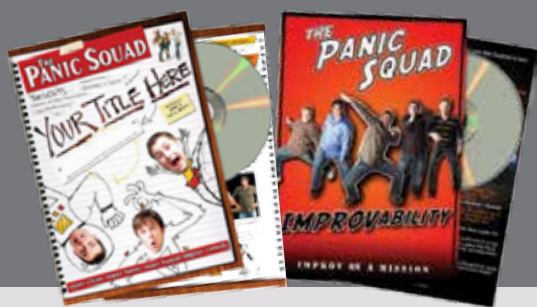
Improv is unlike stand-up comedy, or sketch comedy, where the audience sits and watches. With improv, the audience is a part of the show. It's all about relationship. There is a genuineness or humanness to improv. I love the fact that we

can't do this alone – we need the audience in order to do well. I love that I have no idea what will happen next in a scene. I love that there is grace in improv. There is transparency, for better or worse. The audience knows we are making it up as we go, and when something fails miserably, it can be just as funny, because it's real. Improv is such an incredible metaphor of life. I think that's one reason improv is so attractive to audiences.

**IT'S CLEAR DURING THE SHOW THAT YOU REALLY ENJOY INTERACTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE. AT THE SHOWS I'VE ATTENDED THAT INTERACTION CONTINUES AFTERWARDS TOO – IS THAT COMMON?**

It is. I think our off-stage personas set us apart from a lot

of other acts. We have never been under that impression that we're a big deal. I've never understood people who see themselves that way. Our identity is in Christ. He's the big deal. We genuinely like people, too. We're not the type of act that does the show and then disappears backstage until we can get to our hotel room. One of my favorite things is getting to know the people at our shows. Improv being so relationship driven helps, too. At the end of a show you can't help but feel like you know us, and we know you, a bit more. I love it when someone comes up and tells me, "I'm the one who shouted out, 'radio-active chicken livers,' when you asked for something you'd find in a high school lab." Let's me know I'm hanging with my kind of people. 



## PANIC SQUAD ON DVD

A REVIEW BY JON DYKSTRA

If you can't make it out to a Panic Squad improv show, the next best thing is to bring the fellows home on DVD. While nothing is scripted, and nothing is planned, everything they do is downright funny and sure to entertain.

Both DVDs are primarily live show recording, with some spliced in bits in between the various skits. For example, in *Your Title Here* the live skits are broken up by short previously film bits where the Squad head down to Stanley Park to offer up their skills to unsuspecting passersby for some "Ambush Improv."

What I most appreciate is just how hard these guys work to make this funny without anything cringe-inducing. At the beginning of the show in *Your Title Here* they set the tone by explaining to the audience what they are looking for, and what they aren't look for:

What we want you to do is throw suggestions at us. Dig deep, deep down in your brain... pick it out and throw it in our direction... As you're reaching in there some of you may go far and deep in the recesses of your mind and find maybe some dark and scary things. Keep those things there.

About 40 minutes in the fellows are tested when one audience suggestion involves the line "You cheated on me with him!" But Andrew Bright quickly takes this not so family-friendly line, and turns it in a G-rated direction, accusing his skit-mate of cheating on Monopoly with that other fellow. It is quickly done, and will be greatly appreciated by moms and dads I am sure. It is these fellows' dedication to keeping it

clean that makes their comic genius a guilt-free laugh. It's just great.

### CAUTIONS

- **SOUND:** The hearing impaired might prefer *Improvability* for its better sound quality. In *Your Title Here* when the fellows get louder, their mikes aren't always up to the challenge.
- **LANGUAGE:** "Gosh" pops up a couple or so times on both DVDs, and on *Improvability* someone lets slip with "Bugger."
- **A TEXT WITHOUT CONTEXT:** Near the end of *Improvability* Andrew Bright does a 3-minute gospel presentation in which he quotes Jeremiah 29:11 out of context: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" By itself this verse makes it sound like God is promising us prosperity, but in its context, in which we see that God's plans include 70 years of exile for Israel first, we can understand that God's plans for us in the short term might not be pretty... thought they will still be for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28).

### CONCLUSION

Both shows are very funny, and family-friendly, and highly recommended. If I had to pick one I would say *Your Title Here* is probably the funniest of the two, so long as no one in the intended audience has hearing difficulties.





# IMPROV RULES!

## RULE #1

# NO BLOCKING!

ACCEPT OFFERS AND  
KEEP THE ACTION GOING

HI ELIJAH. WANT  
TO GO BOWLING?



YES!!!  
AND I'LL BE ONE  
OF THE PINS.



HI ELIJAH. WANT  
TO GO BOWLING?

NO!!!



C'MON, STRIKE!



! O.O.



I BROUGHT YOU

THAT COULD BE  
INTERESTING...



## RULE #2

# NO WIMPING!

DON'T BE AFRAID TO  
MAKE SPECIFIC CHOICES

HELLO

FUN-LOVING  
BROTHER  
DAVE!

HELLO MISCHIEVOUS  
BROTHER ANDREW!

I BROUGHT YOU A BOX  
OF RABID GOPHERS  
FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY!

GLADIATOR  
GOPHERS!  
GREAT IDEA!

THANKS! WE CAN PUT THEM  
IN THE LEGO COLOSSEUM  
I JUST FINISHED!

OKAY.  
I'LL PUT IT OVER  
THERE, IN THAT.

THIS.

HI THERE.

HI YOU.

INTERESTING  
MAYBE.

## RULE #3

# HAVE FUN!



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I Have A Sonne  
Seven Years Old;  
He is to me  
full deere...

---

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST



## CHAPTER 1

# The Teacher



Perhaps it is true that one's conscience is like a songbird warbling high up in a tree. Though you cannot detect its form, its notes are clear and touch your soul with their pureness and you cannot walk by for weeping.

September of 1953 was a hot month in the city of Toronto. In fact, the second day of the month was the hottest day of the year, with the thermometer reaching 98 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat on that Labor Day weekend had me thinking that it did not seem to be a very auspicious time to open school doors or an auspicious moment to be a first-time teacher.

I had graduated from the Toronto Normal School earlier that same year. As far back as I could remember I had always loved the idea of becoming a teacher, of being with children and imparting to them knowledge, truth and fine ideals. But when I faced my mixed class of seventh and eighth graders that first week – a medley of twenty-seven faces, all wilting with heat in the muggy, crowded classroom – my courage and commitment somehow deteriorated into nervous tension. There were names to memorize, characters to unravel, and temperaments to discern. Not that the children were rowdy or disobedient; it was just that there were so many of them and so few of me.

Consequently, at the end of that initial week, I stood in front of the half-open classroom window gazing out at the silent playground after the students had been dismissed. Tired and not a little discouraged, I contemplated whether I should have opted for another vocation such as mechanic or traveling salesman. Drumming my fingers on the sill, and staring off into the horizon, I recalled the respect I'd had for teachers who had made an impact on my formative years. Mr. Kunstenaar, my history teacher, stood out in my memory. How that man had been able to tell stories!

Absently, I wiped beading drops of sweat off my upper lip.

Some boys had appeared on the playground. Though the weather was still hot and humid, they were running and yelling. There were four of them and the first was much younger than the rest. As they tore past, it became obvious that the boy in the lead was being pursued by the rest. The child was a good runner, but his small legs did not stand a chance against the longer legs of his opponents. By some providential quirk, if there is such a thing, the boy zigzagged back towards my window and, upon reaching it, turned, standing with his back against it. The boys stopped their chase and picked up clumps of dirt from the ground where they stood. They then began to pelt the boy with the dirt, one soft clump striking the top of his head and breaking into a hundred small grains of black on his crown.

Pity flooded my heart. Stepping forward to make myself clearly visible, I stood tall behind the boy. Though I did not think he saw me, his pursuers certainly did. Neither gesturing, nor saying one word, I just stood quietly. And one by one the three boys opened their fists, dropped their missiles, and disappeared. I don't know what the child thought of his attackers leaving. The back of his head pressed hard against my window. The hair I could almost touch was blond – very blond – a blond mixed with black. I had a déjà vu moment but could not place it. Then the boy turned and he smiled at me. It was a warm and radiant smile and in that instant I knew I had made the right decision about becoming a teacher.



The following Monday morning the principal asked if I could spare a moment to talk. "I'd like to take advantage of your bilingualism," he said, by way of beginning the conversation, "of your ability to speak Dutch."

"Oh?"

"This year there are three children, children of Dutch immigrants," he continued, "who are attending our school. They need help with their English. It occurred to me that you might be just the man to encourage them. Can I ask for your help in tutoring some of these students for a few hours each week if I provide some extra help in your classroom during that time?"

"I have no experience in tutoring," I said.

"It's just to see them through an initial awkward and difficult period," he went on, almost as if he had not heard my objection, "You see, because of their lack of ability to speak English, they have been put back a year in school, and if they are able to become more proficient in English, perhaps they can be moved up to the grade level they should be in."

To a certain degree I felt cheated. It was clear to me that tutoring was something a teacher's aide should be doing; it certainly did not seem to be work for someone like myself

I well remember the day  
that Mr. Kunstenaar told  
the story of William Tell

who had just studied hard to earn a degree. Besides that, wasn't it obvious that these children would pick up English quickly enough by themselves, immersed as they were in the mainstream of school life?

The principal, sensing my hesitation, stood up and patted me on the shoulder. "Mr. Anders," he said, "I assure you it would definitely help these children a great deal and it's just a few hours every week."





["The ruler] placed his hat on a pole in the center of the Altdorf square and announced that anyone passing this hat would have to bow to it, on pain of death."





So, beginning immediately, every Tuesday and Thursday morning were set aside for instructing three children. From nine until recess, two sisters – eleven-year-old twins Tina and Tonnie DeGroot – were taught the rudiments of English. Following recess, the boy with the blond hair came in, the boy who had smiled at me.

Providence is a mixture of the wonderful, strange, and fearful. A truth wrapped up in seemingly discordant notes fell onto my heart when the child told me his name. “Ik heet Nico,” he said, “Nico Goudswaard, and ik ben zeven jaar oud.” (My name is Nico - Nico Goudswaard, and I am seven years old.)

Another vague déjà vu moment occurred. “Nico,” I repeated slowly, and again, “Nico.”

“Ja,” the boy replied.

I sat down rather weakly and he came and sat down opposite me.

“What is your name?” he asked.

I did not answer his query instead asking him another question: “Who is your father, Nico?”

“Well,” the boy said, his clear eyes shining at me across the table, “that is a hard question to answer.” He looked down at the table for a moment as if thinking deeply. Then he looked up and smiled again. “I do have a father though.”

I did not know what to say to that and waited, for clearly the child was not finished. After thinking long and hard for another minute, hands folded on the brown tabletop, he finally added quietly, “Do you have to know who my father is to help me with English?”

I shook my head and grinned at him. “No, but I would really like to know. Can’t you tell me?”

“Well, you can’t see my father. Not the way that other children can see theirs.”

“Oh?” I said.

“Fathers are good,” he continued, “When I ran to the window last week, then I pretended that you were my father. I only pretended for a minute,” he quickly added, “because mother says that I must not do that – pretend that other people are my father.”

“But you said that you did have a father, ... or don’t you?”

“Well, mother says that my father is God in heaven and that He will look out for me always, no matter where I am. I almost forgot that He was there when those boys were teasing me, but then I saw you and thought that...”

He stopped abruptly.

“How is your mother?” Any adult would have looked at me strangely for asking such a personal question on such short acquaintance. But no one alive could have understood the absurdity of this present-day providence – even I did not understand it – this providence of me sitting here with the child of a girl I had once known when I was a young boy.

“She is fine.” Nico had no trouble answering familiarities.

“Do you live close to the school?”

He nodded. “Yes, I do. It only takes me fifteen minutes to walk to school.”

Our whole conversation had taken place in Dutch. I took out a reader at this point and had him sound out simple words to ascertain his command of the English language. His English was actually better than that of the twin girls. But my mind wandered continually as Nico was sounding out his words – wandered back to days long gone by. And when Nico left at lunch hour, I stayed behind in the small study room and thought – indeed, could not stop thinking – about the past.

There is no accusation that tastes as bitter as self-reproach. Others can accuse – often unjustly and unfairly – and, in those cases, the accused can rest in knowing they are innocent. But people who recognize the secret dealings of their own hearts repeatedly cringe in shame and regret. And so it was with me and I began remembering.

## CHAPTER 2

# The Student



“*The White Book of Sarnen* contains the earliest surviving record of the William Tell story.” The speaker was Jaap Kunstenaar, and I was among the children he was addressing.

We were in school, if you could call it school, for there was no bell, no principal, no heat, no recess, and certainly no list of subjects that we had to follow. There were only some thirty children or so huddled in desks, students so skinny that ribs protruded and elbows jutted out of our sweaters. We varied in age from eight to fifteen, with myself, 16-year-old Nico Anders, the oldest boy there. It was spring, 1945, following on the heels of a cold, cold winter. Jaap Kunstenaar was a retired teacher and nearing three score and ten years of age. He had offered to feed some history to the youth of our town two afternoons a week. We came not because our parents forced us to come, but because there was not much else to do, and because, somehow, listening to Jaap Kunstenaar talk helped us forget the hunger pains in our bellies as we lived the heroic tales of the past.

I well remember the day that Mr. Kunstenaar told the story of William Tell for it was a day that marked a changing point in my life.

“*The Book of Sarnen* was accidentally discovered in 1856, and is believed to be a copy of a much older manuscript written in 1426.” Mr. Kunstenaar rubbed his thin and blueing hands together. The color of his hands indicated both the coldness of the room, in which the pot-bellied stove had neither wood to burn nor warmth to throw, and his venerable age. Perhaps that’s why he told history so well, because he himself was



almost a part of it.

"More than 700 years ago," Mr. Kunstenaar began, and we all listened, already fascinated because of the intensity of his baritone voice.

"More than 700 years ago," he repeated, "a local farmer and well-known hunter hailing from the canton of Uri, strode through the market square of Altdorf. A crossbow hung over his shoulder. In all of the surrounding cantons there was no one who could climb mountains as sure-footed and as quickly as could this man, William Tell, and there was no one as skilled in the use of a crossbow."

The mention of a bow made me even more attentive. I knew how to use a bow and arrow myself. My father had taught me how to aim carefully, and how to unfailingly hit the mark, from the time I was old enough to hold a bow. "My father taught me and I teach you," he told me. "And, God willing," he added with a twinkle in his eyes, "you will someday teach your son." We hunted rabbits and quail together, my father and I, and grandfather had shown me how to skin the rabbits and how to pluck the quail.

Mr. Kunstenaar continued: "Altdorf was one of the many small settlements in the area which we now call Switzerland. Its market square was no doubt very similar to the market square we have in town here. People strolled through it, they conducted business there, and they sat on the benches erected along its sides. But the freedom of walking through the square had been curtailed. This was because the town of Altdorf, as well as the surrounding cantons, was occupied at that time, even as we are occupied today, by an enemy. For Switzerland at the time of William Tell in the early 1300s, the enemy was Austria. Today, for Holland in this year of our Lord, 1945, it is Germany."

He paused dramatically and we all breathed deeply, anticipating action before he continued. And why shouldn't we have? Stories that paralleled our situation were stories that most gripped our hearts. These were stories with which we could empathize. For example, tales about the Spaniards occupying our country during the Reformation times fascinated us, and episodes of heroism encouraged us. Mr. Jaap Kunstenaar was a wonderful well of information, and we leaned forward in our desks listening eagerly, forgetting for a while our worries, aches and trials.

"The enemy agent for the Hapsburg Duke of Austria was a bailiff by the name of Hermann Gessler. He was the Austrian Duke's henchman. Strangely enough, Hermann Gessler sounds ominously like Hermann Goering, who, as you all know, is Hitler's henchman."

We all nodded vigorously for we were very familiar with the name of Hermann Goering, a top Nazi, and a hater of the Jews.

"Gessler was a proud man, a cruel man, and one who sadistically punished the Swiss people without reason. One day, overcome with pride, he placed his hat on a pole in the center of the Altdorf square and announced that anyone passing this hat would have to bow to it, on pain of death. Shortly after this

announcement, William Tell, a patriotic Swiss man and one not easily frightened, strode through the square. He refused to obey Gessler's ridiculous command, nonchalantly passing by the cap, totally ignoring it. And he passed by it walking upright, holding the hand of his young son, Walter."

We all laughed, the younger as well as the older children. We were enormously pleased that William Tell had not saluted the cap, for it seemed so obvious that to salute a hat was extremely foolish. Who would do such a thing? Our laughter was shrill, almost as if we had forgotten how to do it, but we were hungry you see, and our voices had grown weak because of the severe lack of food. I remember thinking that the red ribbon in the hair of the orphan girl Nienke Jongsma in front of me looked good enough to eat. And I remember thinking at the same time of the potatoes in Friesland, where Nienke had come from, potatoes which lay rotting but which were not allowed to be sent from that province to the other western provinces desperately in need of food. All the while, during that thought, Tom Jansen sitting next to me shook with mirth. And Ina De Wit in front of Tom put her hand in front of her mouth to hide squeaky giggles. And fifteen-year-old Lieneke, my good friend Lieneke, with the beautiful blond braids, whom I loved with all the innocent passion of my teenage heart, had a wide grin on her face, showing all her pretty white teeth. Strange that such a sweet and pretty girl was the daughter of a suspected Nazi sympathizer.

"these cigarettes may  
very well be the saving  
of our lives..."

Mr. Kunstenaar waited until we settled down before he continued.

"Loitering nearby in the center of the square were several guardsmen. When these guardsmen noticed that William Tell had not saluted Gessler's hat, they immediately arrested him. Shortly afterwards Gessler himself rode into the square surrounded by his hunting party. 'Why is this man in custody? And who is he?' Gessler demanded from the great height of his white stallion. 'He refused to salute your cap,' the soldiers answered, 'and his name is William Tell, a fellow who by all accounts, seems to be a remarkable marksman – one who can shoot a straight arrow at a great distance and not miss his target.' Gessler remained quiet and thoughtful for a few moments. Small Walter, Tell's son and proud of it, began to boast and his words rang through the square, stopping in front of Gessler on his high horse. 'My father,' he called out in his childish voice, interpreting the soldiers' claim in his own

words, ‘can shoot an apple from a tree at a hundred yards!’ Gessler sneered, sneered from his high perch on the horse, sneered at the boy, and sneered at all the bystanders. ‘Can he indeed?’ he scoffed, ‘Well then he shall prove his skill to us here. Place an apple on the boy’s head. And we shall see if he never misses.’”

The mention of an apple brought saliva to my dry mouth – I almost drooled. If I had been in the place of Walter Tell, with the apple placed on my head, I would have taken it off and crunched into it for one bite, just one bite. I could almost taste it – a far better taste than that of the sugar beets that the town council was beginning to ration out sparingly to the families in town. We had heard of food packages being dropped out of planes flying over Amsterdam, but we had received no such luxuries.

“Walter was led to a tree at the far end of the square, and an apple was placed on his head. Quite a crowd had gathered in the square by this time. Everyone was horrified. Outwardly calm, William Tell took the crossbow from his shoulder and fitted an arrow to his bow. Walter stood very still and appeared not to be afraid. The child had unconditional faith in his father’s skill. William Tell took careful aim. The arrow left the shaft, and whistled through the air, finding its mark in the center of the apple splitting it into two parts.”

We all sighed. And then Mr. Kunstenaar quoted an old Northumbrian English ballad. He quoted it with great emotion and I remember it still.

I have a sonne seven years old;  
He is to me full deere;  
I will tye him to a stake -  
All shall see him that bee here -  
And lay an apple upon his head,  
And go six paces him froe.  
And I myself with a broad arrowe  
Shall cleave the apple in towe.

For a moment afterwards it was quiet – the class all picturing the cleft apple lying on the ground in front of the boy Walter, who, no doubt, had a huge grin on his face.

“William Tell sprinted towards his son, and as he did so a second arrow fell from his coat. Gessler, puzzled, asked him why this second arrow was necessary. And Tell replied: ‘That second arrow was for you, if the first had wounded my boy.’”

We were all delighted with Tell’s bravery and gleefully visualized the look of helpless anger on Gessler’s face.

Jaap Kunstenaar went on: “A conversation reported between a Swiss diplomat and a German in 1939 at the onset of the Second World War, went thus. The German said, ‘You Swiss are so proud of your 500,000 men militia. But what will you do if a 1,000,000 man German army comes marching across your border?’ The Swiss diplomat calmly replied, ‘That’s easy. Each of us will shoot twice and go home.’”

We roared with laughter, at which point Nienke Jongsma fainted and Mr. Kunstenaar and some of the older girls did everything they could to revive her. It took some time, but after she was sitting up again, pale and hollow-eyed (as indeed we all were), Mr. Kunstenaar decided that it was time to go home.

“What happened to William Tell after that?” Jan Bezem asked as we filed out into the hall and from there into the street.

“He led a rebellion against the invaders.”

“Did he win?”

“Yes,” Mr. Kunstenaar smiled and patted Jan on the head, “and I’ll tell you about that some other time.”

### CHAPTER 3

# The Pilot



While the other students went straight home, I only passed by our house long enough to pick up an old baby carriage from our shed. My father, who would visit us once a week or less and always under the cover of darkness, had instructed me to walk to Farmer Dikkens after four o’clock. It was already close to four when I picked up the carriage. Inside it, hidden in a false bottom, were two packages of cigarettes and two chocolate bars, placed there by my father to be used in bargaining for some wheat and potatoes. Farmers didn’t take kindly to people coming any more. There wasn’t much left of anything for people to barter with. But father had said that Farmer Dikkens would be expecting me. So I went, albeit reluctantly, because I knew that my bargaining powers were less than spectacular.

We lived on the east edge of town. I lived there with my father, when he was home, and with my grandfather. My mother had died the first year of the war and I had no siblings. There were just the three of us. We had no other living relatives as both my father and mother had been only children. At this time we also had living with us a Canadian pilot who had shown up a few weeks earlier with a bad burn to his right arm, as well as a cut in his right leg. We doctored him as best we could. His mother was from Holland, so he spoke a decent amount of Dutch, and consequently our communication was good. Sometimes he stayed with father in his hiding place, and sometimes he came to the house. He was the one who had given us the cigarettes and the chocolate.

“Nico,” father had said, “these cigarettes may very well be the saving of our lives; God-given they are.”

So I prayed before I came to the farm. “Dear God,” I said, not out loud but within my heart, “please let Farmer Dikkens be generous so that I can come home with some food for grandfather.”

It was quiet outside. The fields were bare and during my half





"Walter stood very still and appeared not to be afraid. The child had unconditional faith in his father's skill. William Tell took careful aim."



hour or so of walking, I saw only one German soldier and he paid no heed to me, a skinny boy pushing a baby carriage. The Germans, very edgy now that the end of the war was coming, had dug holes the size of small rooms by the side of the road. In case of an air attack, they would have somewhere to hide. These holes appeared like graves to me, although had a plane appeared overhead I would have jumped into one without any hesitation. My walk that late afternoon was a lonely trek and I felt the atmosphere heavy with danger.

Miraculously, Farmer Dickens, a big man with a pot-belly and large jowls, was agreeable. An admiring smile on his small lips, he held the cigarette packages in his hand, turning them over and over, in his fleshy hands.

"What do you want for them?"

"What are you willing to give?" I inwardly congratulated myself on this answer.

"Fifteen pounds of wheat."

"I think not," I answered, "there are others who will..."

He did not let me finish. "All right, then, twenty-five pounds and that's my final offer."

Sliding my hand into one of my pockets, I produced one of the chocolate bars and put it on top of the cigarette packages in his hands, saying nothing. He studied me with piercing eyes, suddenly wary. "You're not in cahoots with the Germans, are you?"

"You know my father," I answered, "how can you ask such a thing."

In the end he gave me thirty pounds of wheat and fifteen pounds of potatoes. His wife, it turned out, had been addicted to chocolate before the war and would be very pleased with the treat.

I walked back home as quickly as I could. It was a going against the wind and the carriage wheels, which had no rubber rims, kept digging into the many ruts in the road. There was a gnawing worry within me. Grandfather had been so tired lately. And so very thin. He rarely got up out of his chair anymore although sometimes he surprised me.

Pushing the carriage past an abandoned house, I noticed some scrap pieces of wood by its door. Our woodstove had not been burning this last month. Wood was very scarce. One night, months ago, people had cut down many of the trees lining the center road in town. I'd heard that one man who had no axe had fanatically hugged a tree tearfully claiming it as his own, until a neighbor had lent him an axe with the promise that he might share some of its wood. Others had hung on low-lying branches, breaking them off, pulling the branches behind them to their homes. There was no brushwood left close to the town. Out in the country there were still woods. But few dared to go for these trees because the Germans had issued an order after that night, saying that anyone caught cutting down any more lumber would be arrested.

Leaving the carriage on the road, I ran up to the entrance of the abandoned house. Picking up the scrap pieces, I decided there was just enough wood for one good fire – a fire that

'You Swiss are so proud of your 500,000 men militia. But what will you do if a 1,000,000 man German army comes marching across your border?'

would surely cheer grandfather's bones tonight. As well, I thought I would be able to concoct a meal that would taste better than the pancakes I had been making out of mashed tulip bulbs and other bits of leftover food. And the remaining chocolate bar still stashed in my pocket could be our dessert.

In rather high spirits, I pushed the carriage back into our shed. Who knew but that the war would be over next week. I prayed again, quietly inside my heart, "Thank you, Lord, for this food. Thank you, Lord, for this bit of wood."

Leaving the wood in the shed, I carried the potatoes under one arm and the bag of wheat under the other. When I pushed open the front door, it creaked horribly. One of the first things I would do after the war was oil its hinges. No familiar call of welcome hailed me from the livingroom. Perhaps grandfather

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was sleeping. He slept much and sometimes, or actually very often, was rather befuddled about the situation we were in. I could see his head resting sideways against the back of the chair. It faced the east window where he could look out on the fields.

"Grandfather," I called, but there was no answer.

I walked through to the kitchen and deposited my bargaining trophies on the counter. Then I walked back into the livingroom, approaching to the edge of the chair.

"Napping, are we?" I joked, "Sleeping while your favorite grandson is bringing you not only a good supper but also a warm-bellied stove for the evening."

Moortje, our black cat, was sitting on his lap. We never fed him anymore as there was no food. Although thin, the animal was wiry and did an admirable job catching mice and rats on his nightly raids. Moortje was inordinately fond of grandfather. No wonder, for the black creature received innumerable scratches behind his ears, under his jaw and along his furry back.

As I came closer, Moortje stood up and began to meow, at the same time licking the top of grandfather's hand – a hand, I now noted, that hung slack over the edge of the chair. Suddenly afraid, I pushed the cat onto the floor and nudged the still figure. But even as I put out my hand, I knew. I knew that my grandfather had died before I could make the room warm, before I could boil the potatoes, and before I could make some sort of pancakes out of the wheat. Undeterred by my gesture, the cat jumped back onto grandfather's lap and began butting his black head against the unmoving chest. I knelt down on the floor in front of the chair, resting my head on the still lap. The cat half-sat on my head and began purring. I vaguely took in the familiar smell of grandfather's pipe, for even though it had been years since he had last smoked the odor of it permeated his clothes. I did not weep, but was overcome with weariness so great that all my limbs felt as if they had turned to jelly.

I sat there for an hour or more - I don't know quite how long. But eventually I heard the front door creak open. Then there were footsteps and Paul came into the room. Paul was the Canadian pilot.

"Nico?" His voice showed his surprise at seeing me on my knees with my head in grandfather's lap.

I stirred but very slightly. "Yes," I answered softly.

"Nico," he repeated, and there was something in his voice that made me raise my head and look at him.

"What is it?"

"Your father," he answered, and then there was a catch in his voice that gripped my heart with fear.

"My father?" Standing up I repeated his words mechanically. The cat jumped to the ground and ran past Paul's legs. A minute later we could hear the door creak – Moortje had the uncanny ability to somehow paw it open on her own. All the while Paul stood still and I knew again, for the second time within a few hours, that something devastating was going to occur.

"Is your grandfather sleeping?" Paul asked.

"Yes," I answered, reasoning to myself that he was asleep, for weren't the dead asleep according to the Bible?

"Somehow," our Canadian pilot continued, beckoning me over to the kitchen where he was heading, "somehow the Nazis became aware of your father's hiding place in the woods."

I trailed him to the kitchen, not able to say anything.

He continued, speaking more slowly, leaning his left arm on the counter next to the potatoes and the wheat, his voice low and showing no emotion, "This afternoon they raided it and your father..."

"My father," I regurgitated, feeling surreal and hearing my words as if someone else had said them.

"He was killed, Nico."

"No one knew where he was hiding," I protested then, "no one at all. There was just grandfather and myself who knew."

But within me I was aware that there was another person. And my heart pounded with the knowledge that I had confided in one other person where my father was hiding and that person was Lieneke Goudswaard - Lieneke with the blond, honey-colored braids. I stared at Paul. His eyes were full of compassion.

"We'll not wake your grandfather," he said, "not yet, anyway."

"But he," I stuttered, "he is dead too, Paul. He is dead too." A half-scream, half-groan erupted from my heart and from my belly and Paul's arms closed around me until I stopped. I was quiet afterward but could speak no words; neither could I weep. A great weariness overtook me again as I gazed at grandfather sitting in his chair, head tilted to one side while the potatoes and the wheat stood upright on the kitchen counter. And then things went black.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Judge



I awoke on my bed later that evening, and I awoke because the door creaked. My head was fuzzy and it was hard to immediately remember what had happened. But the realization of death, loneliness and betrayal returned full force as soon as I sat up. Candlelight shone in from the livingroom. Swinging my feet over the edge of the bed, I peered through the small hall. I could just make out the figures of three men standing in the livingroom, one of them holding a candle, standing around grandfather's chair. They were Piet Winter, Hugo Enkel and Klaas Boks – all part of father's team, all part of the underground. I must have made some sort of noise, because all three simultaneously turned to find me looking at them.

"Ah, Nico," said Piet, "I'm sorry, son. I'm deeply sorry about

your father and,” he added, “your grandfather.”

The others murmured agreement and I nodded, not trusting myself to speak.

“We’re going to bury your father tonight,” Piet went on, “and we thought perhaps it might be a good thing if we buried your grandfather and your father next to one another.”

I nodded again. Klaas, a big man, lifted grandfather’s body out of the chair and began carrying it towards the front door. It could not have been a difficult task for him because grandfather was light as air, so thin he had become.

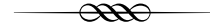
“Where,” I asked, “will you bury them?”

“In the church cemetery, next to your mother,” Piet said, “we’ve already had some men dig the holes. We can’t wait, Nico, because the liberation is coming closer each day and the Germans are getting so nervous that we’re not sure what they’ll do. But we’re pretty certain they won’t take the time to dig up graves. Do you want to come?”

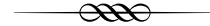
I walked towards him rather unsteadily. “Let me come with you afterwards too, Piet,” I pleaded, “I’ve got nothing left here.”

He said nothing, but held out his hand and I took it – me, a grown boy of sixteen years, hanging on to someone as if I were a toddler.

When we reached the churchyard several people emerged from their hiding places behind some of the larger tombstones. One of them was the *dominee*. No one spoke. As one body, we all moved forward silently towards the west side of the church. This was where my mother was buried. Wasn’t it just last week that I had visited her grave with my father? And now, in the moonlight, I could see that two yawning hollows had been dug next to it. I watched silently as my father’s body and my grandfather’s body were lowered into those black mouths.



Paul came to the house some time later. He always came and went; I did not know the full extent of how involved he was with the underground. As I lay in bed, feigning sleep, I could feel him bend over my still form. He whispered my name but I didn’t answer. Then he went to my grandfather’s room and I knew he would sleep there for the night. But I did not sleep.



Even before the morning light touched the horizon, I was up and into my clothes. My bow and arrows were stashed away in the shed under an old wheelbarrow. I checked them carefully before I headed in the direction of Lienneke’s house. It had rained during the night. Puddles lined the road but there was a sweet south wind – a warm wind – and I thought of how grandfather would have enjoyed this day. He might even have sat behind the house if the sun proved to be warm enough.

No one was about. Certainly a year ago, or even a half a year ago, I couldn’t have walked out as freely as I did now or as I had done yesterday on my way to farmer Dikkens. The Germans badly needed manpower so they had been randomly conscripting men and young boys off the street. But the war was almost over now. Or so it was said, and Germans could be seen leaving town. Every day we saw small groups of soldiers walking through our streets, heading northeast. No matter though, during this particular pre-morning hour there was quiet and not a soul was about.

Lienneke lived on the opposite edge of the town and upon

I saw only one German soldier and he paid no heed to me, a skinny boy pushing a baby carriage.

There had been no wood for coffins for a long time now. “*There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say enough! The grave...*” Like arrows from the bow of a hunter, the words from Proverbs found their mark straight into my heart and a great anger overcame me so that I turned away from the small group bunched around the gravesite and ran blindly away between the markers. Reaching the metal gate, I lifted the latch eventually finding my way home. And all the while I was thinking about what I would do next, all the while I was scheming how I could avenge...and I did not leave the end up to God.

reaching her home I stood for a long moment under the window that I knew held her bedroom. Then, taking the few pebbles I had collected from the roadside, I began to toss them gently and steadily, hitting her pane with a soft ping each time. It would not do to waken her father who would not take kindly to seeing me. Before long the curtains parted slightly to silhouette Lienneke’s form. She opened the window and whispered. “Is that you, Nico?”

“Yes,” I answered, making my voice bland, giving away none of the emotion that roiled around inside me.

“What is it?”





"Tell replied: 'This second arrow was for you, if the first had wounded my boy.'"



"I'm going for a walk. Will you come?"

She was silent, and for a few moments I was afraid that she would not come. We had often gone on walks together, she and I, and had been able to talk about many things. What these things were, I can't recall now – only that our rapport had been excellent. The reality of the bow and arrow under the wheelbarrow in the shed lay heavy on my heart. I heard birds begin to sing, only just now starting to wake.

"I'll be there in a minute, Nico. Wait by the road."

I breathed in deeply. She would come then. Slowly I sauntered back to the road. Spring, though late, had come and almost gone. I could smell it. Ragged robins, marjoram, and wild balsam flowered, flowered while people died.

"Here I am, Nico." She had come up behind me so softly that I was startled.

"Lieneke."

"Where shall we go for a walk?"

I did not answer but began to lead the way back in the direction of my house.

"I'm sorry about your father and grandfather, Nico."

There was something within me, something that pushed all other emotions away except for an overriding sense of ... of something I did not know how to define. Lieneke's hand gently stole into mine. It was a very thin hand and I could feel the bones.

"I am truly sorry, Nico," she repeated.

No response found its way to my lips and my right hand roughly pushed her hand away. She did not seem overly hurt by the gesture, supposing that my bereavement entitled me to rudeness. Blackbirds whistled their songs in fields, mingling their voices with those of finches. A lark rose up high above our heads, strong and proud, flying straight up to heaven. It was almost morning – almost. We walked without speaking for a long while, and eventually came to my house. I turned in, walking towards the shed.

"What are we going to do, Nico?"

I said nothing, simply holding the door open for her. She slipped into the semi-darkness of the interior and sat down on a broken chair propped up against the east wall. The earliest sunrays faintly fell through the cracks in the wall, shining on her blond braids. I noticed that she had not taken the time to comb her hair. It was slightly disheveled, with strands escaping from the thick plaits. But it did not look unkempt to me, rather it gave her an aura of being totally caught up in my welfare. I was not happy with that thought and forced myself to visualize my father being lowered into his grave. I sat down as well, on the dirt floor straight across from her, and took a deep breath.

"Someone," I began in a neutral voice, "betrayed my father. Someone informed the police where my father was hiding."

She nodded, her blue eyes fixed steadfastly on my face.

"There was no one," I continued, "no one except myself, my grandfather and you, who knew where he was hiding."

Her eyes became clouded, as tears formed. I could see them

"Nico, we have to make a run for it. Those Germans will shoot us on sight."

pooling, then overflowing, and finally falling down her cheeks.

"Oh, Nico," she whispered, "you don't think that I..."

"It is a fact," I said, "that there is no one else who knew."

She said nothing but just looked at me. Tears ran down her face. I wanted a denial, a strong denial, and hot anger flooded my being.

"You," I pushed out vehemently, "You're a traitor, just like your father! You wicked girl!"

I stood up then, balling my hands into fists. Backing out through the shed door, I knelt down on the wet ground and picked up a pile of dirt. Packing it into a ball, I stomped back in. Lieneke still sat in the same spot. She hadn't moved. It was as if she were frozen. I hesitated but only for a moment. Slowly coming up to her, never taking my eyes of her face, I heavily deposited the huge clump of dirt on top of her head. Part of it oozed down, down past the honey-colored hair, onto her cheeks, mingling with the tears; but most of it stayed on top of the blond pile of hair. Walking backwards, I took my bow and arrow from under the overturned wheelbarrow. Fitting the arrow into the shaft, I aimed at the apple of dirt on Lieneke's head.

"Why did you tell them?" I cried the words in agony.

My fingers trembled. She did not contradict me but sat so still that she could have been a painting. The sound of loud, raucous laughter coming down the road startled me – startled me so that my fingers let go of the arrow. It whistled and struck Lieneke's left cheek, narrowly missing her eye. She flinched and her hands flew up to her face at the same time as the door behind me opened revealing Paul.

"Nico! What are you doing?"

I could not answer. For suddenly it was as if the dam of grief within me had burst its bounds and the waters swept me away so that I no longer had any control over my body. Paul was at Lieneke's side in an instant, speaking as he moved.

"There is a German patrol coming down the road. I do believe they're totally tipsy. But neither of us had better be here if they decide to check on the house, or search this shed."

"Run! You must run!" The words were Lieneke's and woodenly through my tears I saw that she had stood up. Blood trickled down her left cheek even as she spoke. What had I done?



"I think you're all right," Paul said, addressing Lieneke, and then coming for me, he added, "Nico, we have to make a run for it. Those Germans will shoot us on sight."

"But what about...?" My words slurred and I could not stop looking at the blood running down Lieneke's face.

"I will be fine." She spoke the words almost formally, the wet dirt on her head continuing to seep downwards to mingle with the blood on her left cheek. "As you know, most of the Germans in town are acquainted with my father."

She lifted one of her hands in a mock salute, a hand wet with her own blood as she added, "So you need not worry about me at all."

Rooted in my spot, Paul had to push me alongside him towards the shed door, talking to Lieneke as he did so.

"Go to the house and wash that wound," he instructed, looking at her over his shoulder, "Don't let any of that dirt infect it."

Opening the door, and peering around the corner, he next pulled me out with him and we began our escape. Our house was built on a slope and the field behind it curved downwards towards a small stream. Even now I remember the shouting, the loud voices calling us to halt. We did not halt. Miraculously the shots that were fired missed us. Slipping and sliding, we reached the water, and all the while Paul dragged me behind himself. He dragged me until I lost consciousness. It was then that he carried me.



When I awoke, I was lying on a cot in a small room. Paul was sitting at a table, as were some other men. I recognized Piet Winter and Klaas Boks, but there were others I did not know. Shifting slightly, the movement alerted them to the fact that I was awake. Paul stood up and sat on the edge of the cot.

"So how do you feel?"

"Where am I?"

"That doesn't matter. What matters is that you're safe."

"How long have I been here?"

"Well, you've been sleeping for about two days now."

"Two days!"

He nodded and smiled. I was struggling to remember everything that had happened and closed my eyes at the immensity of the memories that hit me. My father and grandfather were gone. There was no one at all now except for Lieneke and she...

"How is...?" But I could not bring myself to say her name out loud, and repeated, "How is...?"

"First I want to tell you that we know who it was who told the police where your father was," Paul said in a low voice.

"Who was it?"

"It was your grandfather." Paul uttered the sentence softly. He knew the words would hurt. The men at the table had gone back to playing cards, to speaking quietly among themselves.

"How could he? How could grandfather?"

"He didn't mean to. The Gestapo came to your house that afternoon. Only they were not dressed like officers. They were dressed like ordinary folks. They questioned your grandfather and led him to believe that they were loyal Dutch citizens and

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# The Substitute



that they were friends. They promised to bring some food for your grandfather and you if he would only tell them where his son was. They said they had an urgent message for your father from the queen.”

“The queen?”

“Yes, and your grandfather believed it, and was more than willing to point them in the direction of your father’s hiding spot.” Paul stopped for a moment and eyed me compassionately before he continued. “You’re grandfather was suffering from aging, Nico, and did not quite know what he was doing or saying the last while. Surely you know that.”

I did know it. I had seen him talk out loud to the cat as if she was my mother. And I also recalled that he had told me only a week ago that Prime Minister Gerbrandy had come to call, asking for his help in fighting the Nazis.

“Go to the house and wash that wound,” he instructed, looking at her over his shoulder, “Don’t let any of that dirt infect it.”

“How do you know for a fact that he really told them?” I asked the question with a sigh and moved my feet under the thin blanket covering my form.

“Because one of the German officers told Hendrik Jansen. The officer thought it was a huge joke. Hendrik is one of our men, but the officer didn’t know that.”

I knew Hendrik Jansen. He was Tom’s father and I’d gone to school with Tom for a long time.

“So it was not Lieneke?”

Paul shook his head. “No, Nico, it wasn’t her at all.

“How is she? Is she hurt very badly?”

He replied rather indirectly, and I vaguely sensed that he was keeping something back. “The wound on her cheek was not very bad, just a scratch really.”

I sighed again, partly in relief this time, but when I wanted to get up, dizziness overtook me. Paul pushed me down. “Sleep, Nico. Sleep.”

Two weeks later the war was over. So was my life as I had known it. Our house had been burned down to the ground. There was nothing left. There were only the three graves in the cemetery and I could not bed down there for the rest of my life. But I had no other family except for those three. It was Paul who provided me with a solution of what I ought to do.

“Come back to Canada with me, Nico.”

“Come back with you?”

“Yes,” he said with a warm smile on his face, “my mother and father would love you. After all, it was your family, your father and grandfather and yourself, who saved my life.”

I talked with the dominee, and with Jaap Kunstenaar, both of whom encouraged me to accept Paul’s offer and go with him to Canada. I tried very hard to see Lieneke, but every time I knocked on the door of her home, no one answered. The windows had been boarded up and the property appeared untended, unkept. The neighbors raised their eyebrows when I asked them about Lieneke and would tell me nothing. Neither was dominee or Jaap Kunstenaar able to relate anything to me as to the whereabouts of the family Goudswaard. I was ashamed to tell anyone what I had done to Lieneke the day after my father and my grandfather had died – Paul was the only one who knew. For all intents and purposes then, it was as if that whole episode, together with the Goudswaard family, had disappeared from the face of the earth. And so I left my village without saying goodbye to someone who had never shown me anything but kindness.

But now here was the mystery. Lieneke was in Canada – not only that – but she was in Canada with a child. That child was seven years old, born the year after the war was over, so he had been conceived during the war. Echoing, loud laughter in the hallway reminded me keenly of the loud, raucous, crowing laughter of the drunk soldiers coming down the road – coming down the road that morning when the birds had just begun to sing. And it came to me that Lieneke had offered herself as a substitute – offered herself so that Paul and I could live. I groaned out loud.

Someone knocked at the door. Still absorbed in the past, I stood up and opened it. Little Nico Goudswaard faced me, or was it Lieneke? His grin sang at me. “I came back because you forgot to tell me your name.”

“Nico,” I answered, “my name is Nico, just like yours. And,” I added, “I think that I would like to ask your mother...”

I didn’t finish the sentence. I couldn’t because I was weeping.



# Do leaves die?

Was there death  
before the Fall  
into Sin?

It all depends on what you  
mean by "death"

BY MICHAEL TODHUNTER



F

all in America and throughout much of the Northern Hemisphere is a beautiful time of year. Bright reds, oranges, and yellows rustle in the trees and then blanket the ground as warm weather gives way to winter cold. Many are awed at God's handiwork as the leaves float to the ground like Heaven's confetti. But fall may also make us wonder, "Did Adam and Eve ever see such brilliant colors in the Garden of Eden?"

Realizing that these plants wither at the end of the growing season may also raise the question, "Did plants die before the Fall of mankind?"<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

Before we can answer this question, we must consider the definition of *die*. We commonly use the word *die* to describe when plants, animals, or humans no longer function biologically. However, this is not the definition of the word *die* or death in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word for *die* (or *death*), *mût* (or *mavet*), is used only in relation to the death of man or animals with the breath of life, not regarding plants.<sup>5</sup> This usage indicates that plants are viewed differently from animals and humans.

## PLANTS, ANIMALS, AND MAN – ALL DIFFERENT

What is the difference between plants and animals or man? For the answer we need to look at the phrase *nephesh chayyah*.<sup>2</sup> *Nephesh chayyah* is used in the Bible to describe:

- sea creatures (Genesis 1:20–21)
- land animals (Genesis 1:24)
- birds (Genesis 1:30)
- and man (Genesis 2:7).<sup>3</sup>

But *Nephesh* is never used to refer to plants. Man specifically is denoted as *nephesh chayyah*, a living soul, after God breathed into him the breath of life. This contrasts with God telling the earth on Day 3 to bring forth plants (Genesis 1:11). The science of taxonomy, the study of scientific classification, makes the same distinction between plants and animals.

Since God gave only plants (including their fruits and seeds) as food for man and animals, then Adam, Eve, and all animals and birds were originally vegetarian (Genesis 1:29–30). Plants were to be a resource of the earth that God provided for the benefit of *nephesh chayyah* creatures – both animals and man. Plants did not “die,” as in *mût*; they were clearly consumed as food. Scripture describes plants as *withering* (Hebrew *yabesh*), which means “to dry up.”<sup>2</sup> This term is more descriptive of a plant or plant part ceasing to function biologically.

## A “VERY GOOD” BIOLOGICAL CYCLE

When plants wither or shed leaves, various organisms, including bacteria and fungi, play an active part in recycling plant matter and thus in providing food for man and animals. These decay agents do not appear to be *nephesh chayyah* and would also have a life cycle as nutrients are reclaimed through this “very good” biological cycle. As the plant withers, it may produce vibrant colors because, as a leaf ceases to function, the

chlorophyll degrades, revealing the colors of previously hidden pigments.

Since decay involves the breakdown of complex sugars and carbohydrates into simpler nutrients, we see evidence for the Second Law of Thermodynamics *before* the Fall of mankind.<sup>6</sup> But in the pre-Fall world this process would have been a perfect system, which God described as “very good.”

## A CREATION THAT GROANS

It is conceivable that God withdrew some of His sustaining (restraining) power at the Fall when He said, “Cursed is the ground” (Genesis 3:17), and the augmented Second Law of Thermodynamics resulted in a creation that groans and suffers (Romans 8:22).

Although plants are not the same as man or animals, God used them to be food and a support system for recycling nutrients and providing oxygen. They also play a role in mankind's choosing life or death. In the Garden were two trees – the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The fruit of the first was allowed for food, the other forbidden. In their rebellion Adam and Eve sinned and ate the forbidden fruit, and death entered the world (Romans 5:12).

...we see evidence for the Second Law of Thermodynamics before the Fall of mankind.

Furthermore, because of this sin, all of creation, including *nephesh chayyah*, suffers (Romans 8:19–23). We are born into this death as descendants of Adam, but we find our hope in Christ. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). As you look at the “dead” leaves of fall and remember that the nutrients will be reclaimed into new life, recognize that we too can be reclaimed from death through Christ's death and resurrection. **RP**

## Endnotes

1. See a refutation of unbiblical teaching about plant death at [www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/2005/0221plant\\_death.asp](http://www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/2005/0221plant_death.asp).
2. *Strong's Concordance, Online Bible*, Online Bible Foundation, Ontario, Canada, 2006.
3. Many creation scientists do not include invertebrates as *nephesh chayyah* creatures.
4. Sarfati, Jonathan, *The Second Law of Thermodynamics*, Answers to Critics, [www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/370.asp](http://www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/370.asp).
5. See a refutation of unbiblical teaching about plant death at [www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/2005/0221plant\\_death.asp](http://www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/2005/0221plant_death.asp).
6. Sarfati, Jonathan, *The Second Law of Thermodynamics*, Answers to Critics, [www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/370.asp](http://www.AnswersInGenesis.org/docs/370.asp).

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# THE BEST

## TERRIFIC TITLES FROM 2014

BY JON DYKSTRA

### BLUE

DOCUMENTARY  
2014 / 58 MINUTES



*Blue* is about an alternative – a Christian alternative – to the Green movement. Whereas the secular environmental movement too often sees man as a problem for the Earth, the Blue movement would start with the biblical understanding that Man is the pinnacle of God's creation, and has been entrusted with the stewardship of the Earth.

The strength of the film is King's unabashedly one-sided presentation: 100% of the film is spent talking to like-minded Christians, politicians and scientists, including some pretty big names like E. Calvin Beisner, Lord Christopher Monckton and Vishal Mangal Wadi (if you aren't familiar with these names, please google them – they have a lot of worthwhile things to say about the environment and the Green movement). But the weakness of the film is this same one-sided presentation: the environmental movement is actually as bad as King portrays but because he never lets the Greens speak for themselves, it is understandable that a skeptical listener wouldn't just take King's word for it.

If you like documentaries, you'll like this one. Overall I'd say it would be a great one for Christians, to help us better understand the difference between biblical stewardship and the environmentalist approach, but it probably isn't a good one to give to your environmentalist friends.

### WAIT TILL IT'S FREE

DOCUMENTARY  
2014 / 82 MINUTES



Why would Canadians be interested in watching a Scotsman take a look at the American healthcare system? Because this examination, of how capitalism and socialism impact healthcare, will open our eyes too.

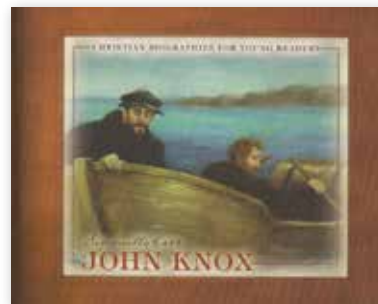
The film's director and producer, Colin Gunn, is Presbyterian and consequently a capitalist. We Reformed folks know that the heart of man is wicked, so we are well aware that if an economic system needs men to be angels – as socialism does, requiring us to labor for no personal benefit – then that is a unworkable economic system. Gunn's main argument is that a good dose of capitalism would be good for what ails socialistic healthcare systems, including the American one. To make the case he travels the world consulting experts, and he contrast the problems of the socialized system of his Scottish homeland with the problems in the increasingly socialized American system.

This is a brilliant presentation, by a Christian filmmaker who has perfected his craft. The content is superb and the presentation is even better: there are fun little animated bits, and great narration, and a wonderful story arc – this is packaged up nicely, and tied up at the end with a bow.

Who should see it? Anyone who thinks socialism is the answer to our healthcare needs. I can't imagine anyone thinking that after viewing *Wait Till It's Free*.

### JOHN KNOX

BY SIMONETTA CARR  
60 PAGES / 2014



Like her seven other children's Church history books, Simonetta Carr's *John Knox* is a gorgeous production. The full-color picture book includes 42 illustrations in its 60 pages, including a dozen full-page paintings created just for this volume. And the hardcover and quality binding mean this is strong enough to bear up to children's use and still be passed on to the next generation.

John Knox, sometimes known as the Scottish John Calvin, is a fascinating subject starting his Reformed journey as a bodyguard, then getting sent to the galleys to row as a slave, and finally becoming a minister to a king and a thorn in the side to queens.

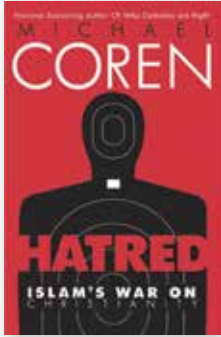
Carr does a solid job of telling Knox's story, but this is an educational resource more than a book that a child would want to read on their own. I wouldn't recommend this as a present from the grandparents...unless they intend to read it to their obliging grandchildren. But for anyone intent on teaching Church history, whether Mom or Dad, or in a school setting, this would be a great purchase.

It is a gorgeous book, and if doesn't quite make learning Church history entertaining, it certainly will make it pain free. It is intended for Grades 2 to 6.

Longer reviews of these books and DVDs can be found on [www.ReallyGoodReads.com](http://www.ReallyGoodReads.com) and [www.ReelConservative.com](http://www.ReelConservative.com).

## **HATRED: ISLAM'S WAR ON CHRISTIANITY**

BY MICHAEL COREN  
183 PAGES / 2014



If you want know about how Islam interacts with Christianity around the world, then you need to pick up Michael Coren's *Hatred*. Here, in black and white, is a recounting of consistent, constant persecution.

Coren devotes individual chapters to different predominantly Muslim countries, including Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, and then all of Africa, and finally everywhere else. Wherever Muslims are in power, Christians face persecution, sometimes simply of the social and economic kind, but in many other occasions of the murderous sort.

Coren is a pretty level-headed fellow, so it's doubly valuable to have such a book from him. This is no nutbar, no crazy conservative telling us that:

A victim and a perpetrator cannot meet in some imaginary middle, a person who is being beaten cannot compromise with the person doing the beating. Christian forgiveness is vital in all this but the new equation has to begin with the cessation by Muslims throughout the world of their hateful campaign against innocent Christians.

Repetitious recounting of murder after murder makes this book depressing, but also makes it irrefutable that Islam is not a religion of peace (yes, *many* Muslims are peaceful, but the murderous sort are no small fringe minority). Anyone who thinks differently needs to read this book.



## **EVOLUTION'S ACHILLES' HEELS**

DOCUMENTARY  
2014 / 96 MINUTES

I've watched this at least 5 times now, and many sections many more times than that. This is the best, most succinct, most content-dense, anti-evolution presentation I've ever seen.

That said, my first go-through didn't leave me all that impressed. I was watching it while doing some paperwork, not giving it my full attention, and what I saw just seemed to be a bunch of interviews, lots of talking heads. It didn't seem all that interesting.

But when I gave it another go and actually paid attention.... Whoah!

What the folks at Creation Ministries International have done here is, in one hour and a half presentation, boiled down all their very best arguments into the shortest possible form. That's why I've watched it so many times already – I had to keep stopping, rewinding, and then listening to sections again, because so much of what these interviewees say in just a sentence or two is something that others have written articles and even whole books on.

For example, here's a line from Dr. Donald Batten: "The survival of the fittest does not explain the arrival of the fittest."

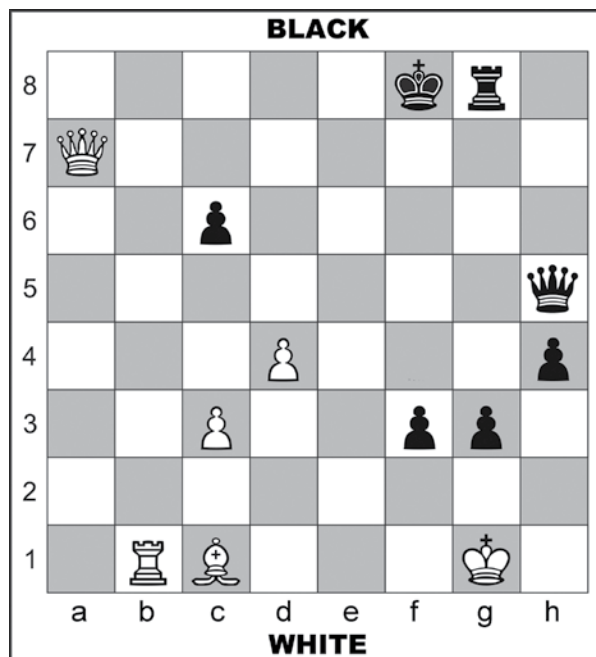
At first listen, this struck me as a great turn of a phrase, and it certainly is. But let's hit the pause button and just think about all that's being said here in just this one line. Survival of the fittest (AKA natural selection) is supposed to explain how species adapt and change: those with advantageous mutations will prosper, while those without will eventually die off. But survival of the fittest is a selective process – it picks the best out of the group. How then, does it work before there is a group to pick the best and brightest from? Natural selection is a key mechanism for evolution, but it doesn't offer any explanation for how animals come to be in the first place! This one, short, ever so quotable line, points out a gigantic problem with evolutionary theory!

In addition to Dr. Batten, the documentary features 14 other PhD scientists, and together they highlight, as the title puts it, *Evolution's Achilles' Heels*. They cover a wide range of problems, grouped under categories like the Fossil Record, Genetics, Natural Selection, Cosmology and Radiometric Dating. I really can't say enough nice things about it: from beginning to end this is brilliant, and as good an introduction to the problems with Evolutionary theory as you will ever find. The Dove foundation said, "If we could award *Evolution's Achilles' Heels* more than five Doves, our best rating, we would!" and I echo the sentiment.



# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

## Chess Puzzle #216



## Riddle for Punsters #216

"Feeling Semi-fatigued!"

Why did the heavily loaded transport truck have trouble getting up a steep hill? It was already quite \_ \_ \_ \_ d before going up the hill.

Why were the diesel fumes given off by the semi not able to travel far up the hill? They were already very \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ e d.

Why was it hard for the truck windshield to get up the hill after there had been a rainstorm? Already at the bottom it felt totally \_ \_ \_ \_ d.

## Problem to Ponder #216

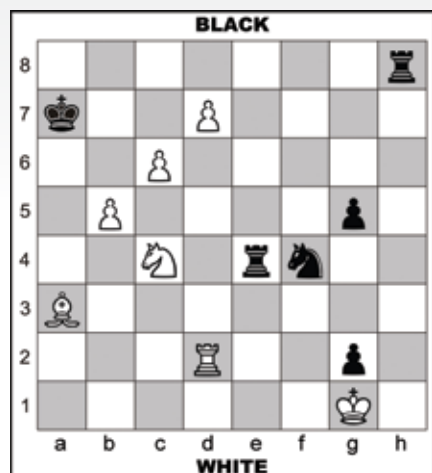
"Travelling by Goose Air-lines"

A flock of geese flew for 8 hours at a fairly fast speed. The next day the geese flew for 10 hours at an average speed  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the first day average speed. The next day the geese flew for 5 hours at an average speed 10% faster than that of the first day. Finally, on the fourth day the geese flew for 4 hours at the same average speed as the first day then at a speed 20% less for 5 hours. A) If the geese travelled 2320 km in the 4 days, what was the first day average speed? B) How long (in hours) will it take the geese to travel 2175 km more to reach their destination if they (helped by a tail wind) travel that distance at an average speed  $\frac{6}{5}$  of the average for the first 4 days?

**WHITE to Mate in 3 Or, If it is BLACK's Move, BLACK to Mate in 1**

## Last Month's Solutions

### Solution to Chess Puzzle #215



### WHITE to Mate in 3

#### Descriptive Notation

1. B-B5 ch K-N1
2. B-Q6 ch K-R2 or K-R1
3. R-R2 mate

OR

1. B-B5 ch K-R1
2. R-R2 ch K-N1
3. B-Q6 mate

#### Algebraic Notation

1. B-B5 ch K-N1
2. B-Q6 ch K-R2 or K-R1
3. R-R2 mate

OR

1. B-B5 ch K-R1
2. R-R2 ch K-N1
3. B-Q6 mate

### BLACK to Mate in 2

#### Descriptive Notation

1. ----- R-K8 ch
2. K-B2 P-N8=Q ch
3. K-B3 R-R6 mate

#### Algebraic Notation

1. ----- R-K8 ch
2. K-B2 P-N8=Q ch
3. K-B3 R-R6 mate

## Answers to Riddle for Punsters

### #215 - "Lets not Harp on this Topic"

What did the farmer say when his don suggested that they begin planting a new crop? Let's proceed to do so!

## Answers to Problem to Ponder

### #215 - "Many Routes Leading to the Same Destination"

The following towns are joined by roads in the province of Alphabetica.

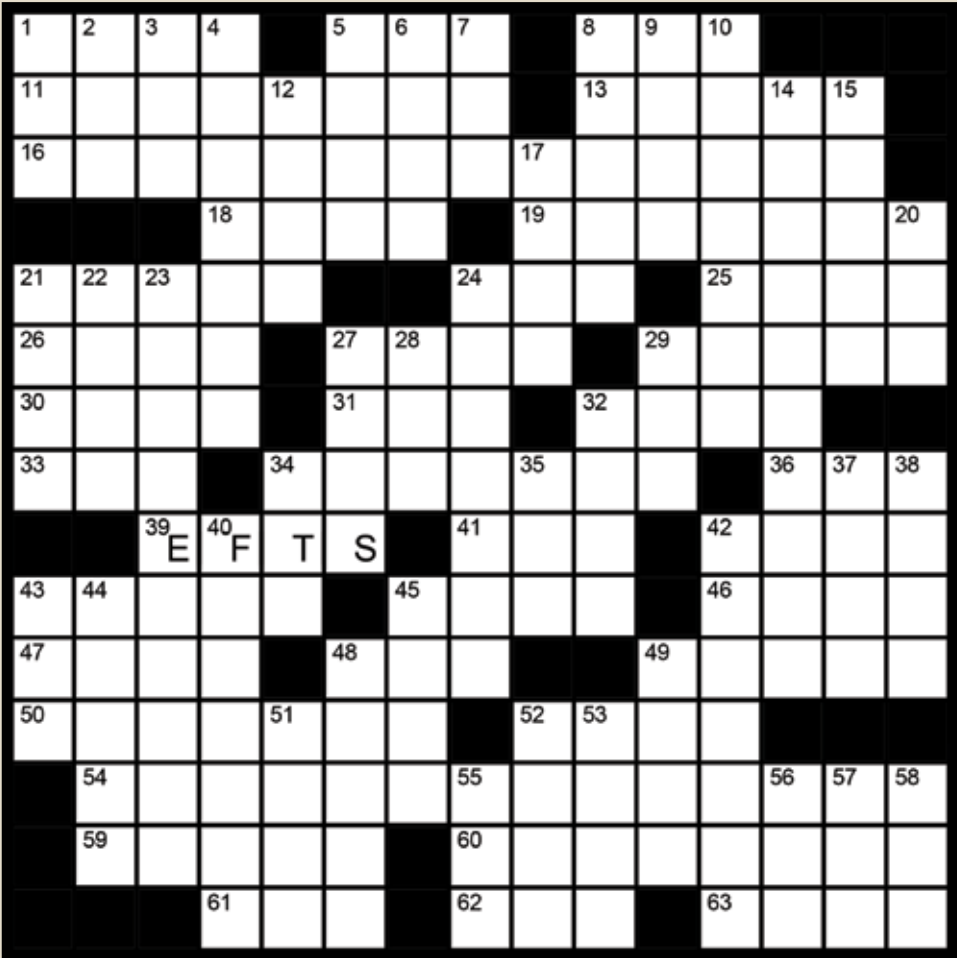
One can travel from HOME to A or B, from A to C or D or E, from B to E or F, from C to G or H, from D to H or I or K, from E to H or I, from F to I only, from G to J or K, from H to K or L, from I to K only, from J to L only, AND from K to L only. By how many different routes can one travel from HOME (hometown) to the town L? NO BACKTRACKING to a town earlier in the alphabet is allowed.

(HINT: Drawing a diagram first may be very helpful!)

There are 16 routes possible, starting from HOMETOWN. They are ACGJL, ACGKL, ACHKL, ACHL, ADHL, ADHKL, ADKL, ADIKL, AEHL, AEHLK, AEIKL, BEHL, BEHLK, BEIKL, BFIKL, BFJL.

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

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SERIES 1-1

## PUZZLE CLUES

- ACROSS**
1. \_\_\_\_ of Man: island in Irish sea  
5. Deoxyribonucleic acid: the gene molecule  
8. Association for services to grad students (abbr.)  
11. "Beauty is only \_\_\_\_."  
13. Brand name for spandex  
16. Put forward a false view of one's motives  
18. "...I will throw her \_\_\_\_ a sickbed" (Rev. 2)  
19. New World monkey  
21. Range (e.g. of emotions, from love to hate)  
24. Dad's favorite gal  
25. In \_\_\_\_: how Dutch people shop for groceries  
26. "...the love of money is a \_\_\_\_ of..." (1 Tim. 6)  
27. 1970s carpet type, special vacuum setting  
29. Best of the best  
30. \_\_\_\_ Frank: forced to hide from the Nazis  
31. Month between Jul. and Sept.  
32. "The swift cannot \_\_\_\_ away..." (Jeremiah 46)

33. "...and God \_\_\_\_ Balaam." (Numbers 23)  
34. Yiddish for easily duped person  
36. Early reggae music; spelled almost like 2 Down  
39. Newts when they're not in the water  
41. Short for Anastasia  
42. You like your Coffee Crisp; I like my \_\_\_\_ tea!  
43. "...a faithful \_\_\_\_ brings healing." (Prov. 13)  
45. Embryonic \_\_\_\_ cell research is morally wrong.  
46. Brand of auto parts, or famous valley  
47. "You give your mouth free \_\_\_\_." (Psalm 50)  
48. A cup of \_\_\_\_, or generic name for G.I.  
49. Coffee often needs \_ \_\_\_\_ stick.  
50. City south of Edmonton, Alberta  
52. \_\_\_\_ to his own. OR \_\_\_\_ one teach one.  
54. Biblical documents first discovered in 1946  
59. Song of \_\_\_\_ - something Solo-mon wrote.

60. What things are made of, or type of witness  
61. Where golfers start, or type of shirt  
62. Yucky stuff coming from a cut  
63. Small whirlpool, or brand of matches

- DOWN**
1. Suffix for set of beliefs, or "\_\_\_\_ after L?"  
2. You can do it downhill or cross-country.  
3. List missing the final item, or short for Lisa  
4. On the way (especially to Paris, n'est-ce pas?)  
5. Short form for what a faculty or store has  
6. Ruled during time of the apostles; no hero  
7. Imitate mockingly, or what a chimpanzee is  
8. "The chariots... \_\_\_\_ like torches..." (Nahum 2)  
9. Friends are in \_\_\_\_ - on the same wavelength.  
10. Suitable for acting  
12. Small ding in car costing a large amount to fix

14. \_\_\_\_ in pace = Latin for "Rest in peace"  
15. Grownup  
17. Deadly urban combination of smoke and fog  
20. \_\_\_\_ out a living (barely getting by)  
21. 1/28 of an ounce, or short form for Grandma  
22. Top-rated by both letter and number  
23. Capital and largest city of Uruguay  
24. An iron \_\_\_\_ got rich from selling magnets.  
27. Yolk \_\_\_\_, egg \_\_\_\_: both help in reproduction.  
28. "...\_\_, what was that?" - U.S. form of Eh?  
29. Wapiti, or very large species of deer  
32. "...its waters roar and \_\_\_\_" (Psalm 46)  
34. Pig dwelling (no straw, sticks, or bricks used)  
35. "Hear, O Israel, the LORD... is \_\_\_\_." (Deut. 6)  
37. Military cap with flat circular top  
38. Month in Jewish calendar around Feb.-March  
40. Very loving insect, or type of icing

42. Close to the coast, or heading that way  
43. "To \_\_\_\_ is human; to forgive, divine" (Pope)  
44. "...say, 'The Lord \_\_\_\_ them....'" (Matt. 21:3)  
45. 'Don't be a \_\_\_\_ head if I bump your forehead.'  
48. Father of King David  
49. City occupied by Crusaders, or measure of land  
51. Cutting \_\_\_\_, or leading \_\_\_\_  
52. Son of Isaac and Rebekah, brother of Jacob  
53. Second book written by Luke (Luke's in it!)  
55. To make louder, to \_\_\_\_ up  
56. Top of jar that 24 across may ask for help with  
57. Every \_\_\_\_ thinks that he can open the jar!  
58. Jar-opening needs strength, not \_\_\_\_ cunning.

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 3 #2



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