

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

NOV/DEC 2019  
Volume 39 Issue No. 1

# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

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# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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*Correction: In the previous print issue Bloody Mary was said to be Mary, Queen of Scots. While both were known as Mary I, Bloody Mary was actually England's Mary I (1516-1558), and Mary, Queen of Scots was Scotland's Mary I (1542-1587).*



# BIG BROTHER



## IS WATCHING YOU

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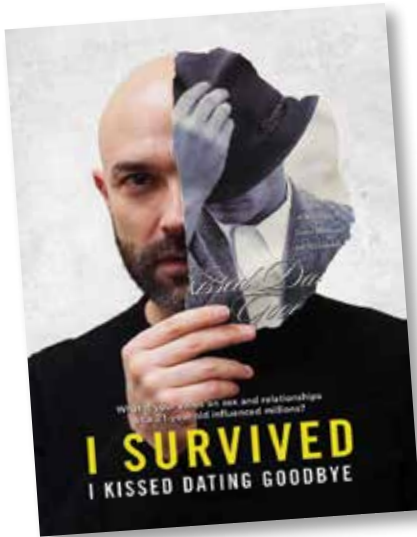
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A DIFFERENT KIND OF  
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# 8 FREE FILMS FOR YOUR STUDY GROUP

I was asked this past month if I had any recommendations of free online films that might be good material for a study group. Well, there are certainly some great ones to choose from! What follows are a number of films that will give viewers plenty to discuss. With one exception they are all one hour or shorter, to leave plenty of time for discussion. And perhaps the two shortest videos – just 15 minutes each – could be paired together to foster two smaller discussions.

All of these are freely available online, so you can probably search and find them easily enough. But if you go to [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca), the online version of this article includes links to all the films as well as to longer reviews that either include discussion questions, or, in most cases, include enough information for you to create your own.



## I SURVIVED "I KISSED DATING GOODBYE"

78 MIN. / 2018

Josh Harris has been in the news lately for publicly turning his back on God. But before he kissed his wife, and his God goodbye, he was best known for his book *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. This documentary, made shortly last year (before Harris' apostasy) takes a look at the impact of his book, the purity culture it was a part of

it, and the question of what it looks like to date like a Christian.

## REVOLUTIONARY

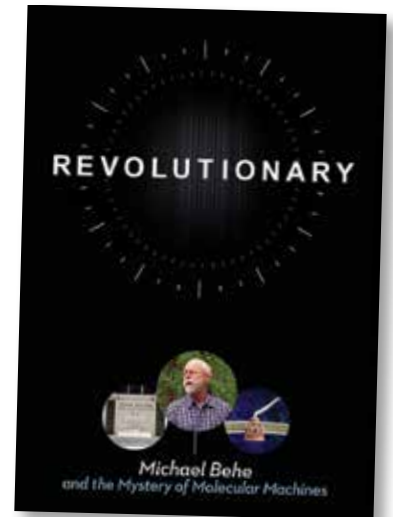
60 MIN. / 2016

The mild-mannered Michael Behe doesn't seem like a "revolutionary." But his idea of "irreducible complexity" – that there are some cellular machines that could not come about by the step-by-step process that evolution assumes – has driven evolutionists batty. And in telling his story, this documentary tells us the history of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement he helped start.

Now, the ID movement isn't specifically Christian. They are focused on making the case for *an* Intelligent Designer

and don't get into who that Designer is, which means they never give God the credit He is due. But they have done some good work poking holes in evolutionary theory. So if you want to learn more about ID, there is no better, no more succinct introduction than this one.

But as well done as it is, I will add this is would need a crowd interested in the topic matter. If you don't have an interest in creation vs. evolution then this won't grab you.



## EUTHANASIA DOCUMENTARY

15 MIN. / 2016

This is an important film, showing how euthanasia has been executed in Belgium, where it has been legal since 2002. But the documentary is fundamentally flawed in that it is an entirely secular presentation. What that means is that, as good as it is at pointing out problems, it can't ever get at the root cause. The problem here is that once you deny that our lives are not our own, but Gods, then life is going to be devalued. If we are not made in the very Image of God, then why is every human being's life precious? So this could make great discussion fodder for how avoiding any mention of God is not simply cowardly, but ineffective.



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## CRESCENDO

15 MIN. / 2014

This is an incredibly well done pro-life drama that makes the point that Beethoven's mother had every earthly reason to abort him. And then it asks us to imagine what the world would have lost if she had. But, like the film above, there is a fundamental flaw in this argument worth understanding. Our worth does not come from our potential. What if Beethoven had been disabled, and could never have made any of his music? Is the film saying that then aborting him would have been okay?

This is another example of what happens when we try to ground on arguments on anything other than God's Truth. We end up saying things that just aren't true. Better to stand on the Bible, because, regardless of whether we win or lose in the short term, we know we are standing on Truth.

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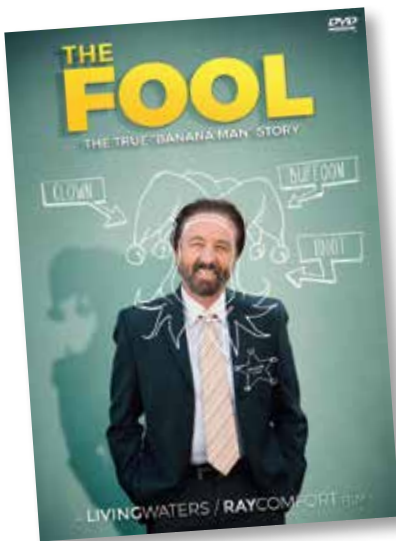
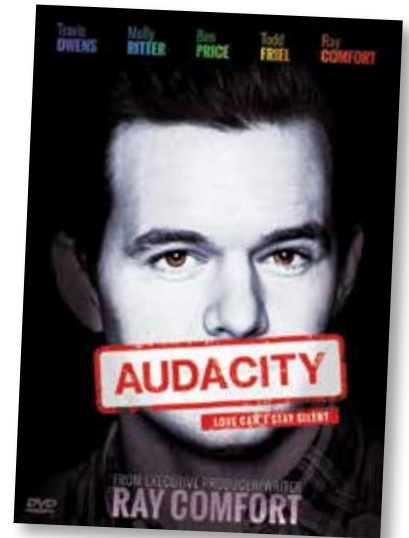
## AUDACITY: LOVE CAN'T STAY SILENT

50 MIN. / 2015

This is a Christian drama about homosexuality that has decent but admittedly not great acting. But the message it preaches is one we have to wrestle with: what does it mean to love our homosexual neighbor? That God clearly condemns homosexuality has got to be one of the hottest of hot-button topics today. So how can a Christian, on the one hand, be winsome, and on the other, speak God's truth on this topic too?

This question can be extended quite naturally to, what does it mean to love my non-Christian neighbor?

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## THE FOOL - THE TRUE "BANANA MAN" STORY

60 MIN. / 2019

This is the true story of evangelist Ray Comfort and how he was mocked by atheists the world over for a silly joke he made that fell flat. But even as Ray was brought low, God was using Ray's humiliation for His own purposes: these same atheists started inviting Ray onto their shows, podcasts,

and stages and they let


him say anything he wanted. It's a sometimes funny, pretty intriguing story about how God can use even fools like us.

---

## 2081

27 MIN. / 2009

This is a dystopian film setting 2081 when everyone is now, finally, equal, thanks to the work of the Handicapper General. She, along with her agents, ensure that strong folks are burdened with weights, smart people are burdened with headphones that repeatedly blast sounds to disrupt their thinking, and beautiful people are forced to wear ugly masks. And thus, now, everyone is finally equal.

This would be a great one to watch and consider questions about the problem of poverty as opposed to the problem of income inequality, what it means to be covetousness, what sort of equality the world is after, and what sort of equality God requires. 



*The online version of this article - with clickable links to the free films - can be found at [ReformedPerspective.ca/8-free-films](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/8-free-films).*

# NOTA BENE

News worth noting

## JAGMEET SINGH'S POPULAR BUT COMPLETELY ILLOGICAL PRO-CHOICE ARGUMENT

BY HENDRIK VAN DER BREGGEN

The topic of abortion came up at the October 7 Canadian federal leaders' debate and logic took a beating. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh stated the following:

"A man has no place in a discussion around a woman's right to choose. Let's be very clear on that."

Apparently, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau and Green leader Elizabeth May agreed with Singh, whereas Conservative leader Andrew Scheer didn't. Because of the poor format of the debate – and poor moderation – I didn't get a clear insight on what the other leaders thought.

So let's (at least) be very clear on Mr. Singh's claim. There are two logical problems – serious logical problems.

### PROBLEM 1: THE AD HOMINEM FALLACY

Mr. Singh commits the ad hominem fallacy, the mistake in reasoning which occurs when an arguer is attacked

instead of his/her arguments. Some instances of the ad hominem fallacy are easy to spot. Consider the following:

- "Einstein is Jewish, therefore his theory of relativity should be rejected."
- "Your doctor is a woman, therefore don't believe what she says about prostate cancer."

Clearly, in the above arguments, the premise (i.e., the bit before "therefore") is not relevant to the conclusion (the bit after "therefore").



But some instances of the ad hominem fallacy are not so easy to spot. Consider (again) Mr. Singh's claim: "A man has no place in a discussion around a woman's right to choose [abortion]."

Significantly, Singh is dismissing as illegitimate all arguments that men might present on the topic of abortion merely because the arguer is a man. That is, Singh is dismissing a view because of a characteristic of the arguer (i.e., his sex) rather than via a careful examination of the arguer's argument (i.e., its merits or lack thereof). But this is to attack the messenger instead of the message, which is a logical sin – the ad hominem fallacy.

### PROBLEM #2: SELF-REFUTING

Mr. Singh's claim is also self-refuting. A self-refuting claim includes itself in its field of reference but fails to satisfy its own criteria of truthfulness or rational acceptability. Here is an example: "There are no truths." Hmmm. If it's true, then it's not true. It self-refutes. Another example (spoken by me): "I cannot speak a word of English." Get the picture?

Back to our NDP leader. According to Mr. Singh, "A man has no place in a discussion around a woman's right to choose [abortion]."

Let's think: a man is saying that a man's voice doesn't count on an issue, i.e., the issue he is talking about. Well, if this is true, then Mr. Singh – a man – has no place in this discussion, and so his claim should be dismissed.

I like Mr. Singh and I intend no disrespect to him. Nevertheless, I think his claim is deeply problematic from the perspective of logic – and I hope that my pointing this out will help elevate the quality of reasoning in the public discussion about abortion.

*Hendrik van der Breggen, PhD, is a retired philosophy professor (Providence University College) who lives in Steinbach, Manitoba. This post is taken from his blog [apologiabyhendrikvanderbreggen.blogspot.com](http://apologiabyhendrikvanderbreggen.blogspot.com) and reprinted here with permission. Picture credit: Art Babych / Shutterstock.com*



## THE BERLIN WALL 30 YEARS LATER: TEARING DOWN TYRANNY, ONE JOKE AT A TIME

BY JON DYKSTRA

**N**ovember 9 marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which, for 28 years, divided socialist East Germany from the free West. To mark the anniversary some old East German jokes gained new life. What sort of jokes? Jokes that mocked the State for its incompetence and vindictive pettiness. Jokes that could get an East German arrested back then if the police found out he'd shared them.

But if jokes could land you in jail, why did people risk telling them? Because every punch line was an act of resistance. A government that couldn't take a joke was a government that had overstepped its bounds and this became a small way of pushing back. So to mark the anniversary here are a few of the more popular jests from 30 years ago.

- Why do Stasi (East German secret police) officers make such good taxi drivers? – You get in the car and they already know your name and where you live.
- The five rules of socialism:
  1. Don't think.
  2. If you think, don't speak.
  3. If you think and speak, don't write.
  4. If you think, speak and write, don't sign it.
  5. If you think, speak, write and sign it, don't be surprised.
- What would happen if the desert became a socialist country? Sand would become scarce.
- Three East German political prisoners were sharing the same cell and got to talking about what they were in for. The first explained, "My watch always ran ahead, and I would always arrive at work early, so they said I must be spying." The second fellow shared, "My watch always ran slow, so I was always late for work, so they said I was guilty of sabotage." Then the third fellow said, "I was always exactly on time for work so they said my watch must be from the West."

### HOW COULD IT HAPPEN HERE?

We mark this anniversary as a tribute to those brave and wise souls who fought tyranny in the past. But we also mark it so we can learn from the past to hopefully avoid the same sort of mistakes going forward. When we see the trouble Big Brother brought the East Germans, we'll be motivated to pre-empt the same sort of government over-reach here... before it gets to the point where we're arrested for telling jokes.

With that in mind, here are a couple jokes worth telling while we still can.

- Three Americans businessmen were sharing the same cell and got to talking about what they were in for. The first explained, "I charged more for my goods than anyone else. So they convicted me of price gouging." The second fellow shared, "I charged less than anyone else for my product, so they convicted me of anti-competitive dumping." Then the third fellow said, "I charged the same for my product as everyone else, so they convicted me of price-fixing."
- Here's a switch worth making: let's treat convicted murderers like we treat unborn babies – we'll let them

be executed. And we'll treat unborn babies like we treat convicted murderers – we'll give them life.

- A cheap Albertan fellow heard that women drivers get better insurance rates so he phoned up his insurance company and asked, "If I identify as a safer driver, can I get this cheaper rate too?" "I'm sorry sir," the insurance rep replied, "You can't simply identify as a safer driver and expect us to take that seriously." "Okay," he said, "but what if I identify as a woman – can I get the better rate then?" To which the insurance rep replied, "Of course ma'am. What do you think we are – a bunch of transphobic bigots?"

### WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIAN THINK OF MOCKING HUMOR?

Some Christians argue that humor, and particularly biting humor, has no place in Christian dialogue. Passages will be cited such as 1 Peter 3:15 and Proverbs 15:1:

"...give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..."



"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

But this "absolutely no mocking" understanding overlooks that God Himself mocks foolishness, with one of the funnier examples occurring in Isaiah 44:14b-17:

"He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, 'Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!' And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, 'Deliver me, for you are my god!'"

During His time on Earth, Christ had a biting way with words as evidenced repeatedly in Matt. 23 in thrusts like these:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean" (vs. 27).

"Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (vs. 24).

Ah, you might say, it's one thing for God to do something and quite another for us to do the same. There is truth to that, but let's also remember that we are called to be imitators of God (Eph. 5:1, 1 Cor. 11:1, 1 Peter 2:21). And let's remember, too, how others in the Bible have used humor or in other ways shown approval for mockery. For example, Luke evidenced a dry wit in Acts 17:21, poking fun at the Athenians:

"Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new."

Solomon wasn't pulling any punches when he compared beautiful women without discretion as being "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout" (Prov. 11:22). Then there was Elijah on Mount Carmel taking it to the 450 prophets of Baal who were dancing up a storm and cutting themselves "until the blood gushed" but getting no response from their god. So Elijah ever so helpfully suggested they cry louder because :

"Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened" (1 Kings 18:27).

David, in Ps. 52:6-7, spoke of how the "righteous will...laugh at" the foolish fellow who "trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others." More texts could be cited, but this last one is a must – in 2 Cor 10:5 we are told to "tear down arguments, and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God."

It takes wisdom to know when to tear down arguments and when to answer more gently, but one general (and certainly not absolute) rule is that the broader the audience, the more pointed we can be. And vice versa. So if one of our coworkers is bald, bearded, and loves wearing his summer dress even into the depths of fall, we won't want to start a conversation by making fun of his fashion sense.

But when politicians and judges and celebrities start insisting that men should be allowed to compete as women, that is an idea that must be mocked – to treat it as anything less than insane is to give it too much credit (Prov 26:4).

So as we mark the Berlin Wall's demise some 30 years ago, we can remember that humor has been used as a weapon for a lot longer than that, by both God and man.

*To learn more about the godly use of pointed humor, a great small book on the subject is Douglas Wilson's "A Serrated Edge."*

## DID YOUTUBE BAN A VIDEO BECAUSE OF THIS ONE SENTENCE?

BY JON DYKSTRA



couple of years ago *The Daily Signal* (dailysignal.com) published a video by Dr. Michelle Cretella on transgenderism. It was titled "I'm a Pediatrician. Here's What I Did When a Little Boy Patient Said He Was a Girl."

While the video was successfully posted to YouTube, some months ago Daily Signal discovered the video had been removed for violating YouTube policies. In a November 5 article, editor-in-chief Katrina Trinko reported that they discussed the matter with YouTube and learned the tech giant took issue with one specific sentence, labeling it as "hate speech." Dr. Cretella stated:

"...if you want to cut off a leg or an arm you're mentally ill, but if you want to cut off healthy breasts or a penis, you're transgender..."

We're only hearing from *The Daily Signal's* side of the story here, and maybe YouTube has a very different take (I did reach out to them but haven't heard back from them and don't know when or whether I should expect to). But if they're banning videos for factual statements, we need to evaluate how dependent we are on YouTube for keeping us informed.

Fortunately there's more than one way to get a message out – this same video has been viewed on Facebook more than 70 million times.







## LOTS OF SCREEN TIME FOR TEENS AND TWEENS

BY JON DYKSTRA

**I**n 2015 and then again in 2019 Common Sense Media surveyed media usage by American teens and tweens. Some of the key findings they shared included a rise in smartphone ownership. Four years ago just one in ten 8-year-olds had their own smartphone, but four years later that has almost doubled, from 11% then to 19% today. Meanwhile

only ten percent of 18-year-olds today don't have their own smartphone. In 2015 almost a quarter still didn't.

Teens (or even 8-year-olds) without their own phone might think these numbers could be used to convince their parents to reconsider. "But everyone else has got one, mom!"

But there was another set of numbers that might well have all parents thinking

about how to get our kids separated from their screens. The average daily amount of screen use – not including that done for school or homework – was 284 minutes for tweens (nearly 5 hours) and 442 minutes for teens (more than 7 hours)!

SOURCE: Common Sense Media's "Media Use by Tweens and Teens 2019" ([www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org)).

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# Santa Claus at Nicea

by Douglas Wilson



As we continue to celebrate Advent, we need to deal with a competing story. But it would probably be more accurate to say that we have to deal with a godly story that has been encrusted with many layers of foolishness. But let us take away those layers, and ask – who was the original Santa Claus?

St. Nicholas of Myra (a city in modern-day Turkey) was a fourth century bishop. He was renowned for his kindness to the needy and to children. He inherited a large fortune which he gave away, establishing orphanages, hospitals, and hostels for the mentally infirm. Legends spread concerning his generosity, which included him delivering gifts secretly by night. During his day, the famous Council of Nicea was held and, according to one legend, the orthodox Nicholas slapped Arius in the face for his blasphemy. Following the legend, Nicholas was then defrocked for this breach of decorum, but was later reinstated as the result of a vision. It should be obvious to

us Protestants that some of the medieval follies concerning veneration of saints were already at work here.

The man became a bishop, the bishop became a saint (in the medieval sense), and stories spread concerning his ability to continue on with his generosity, even though he had long been with the Lord. The stories all had many variations, but generosity was at the heart of all of them. These different European stories came to America from many directions, and they all went into our famous melting pot.

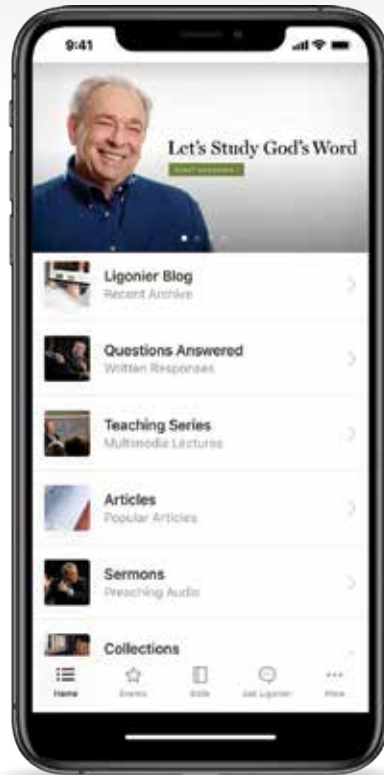
The Scandinavians brought their conception of him as an elf. The Dutch brought their name for him (Sinterklaas). In 1808 Washington Irving wrote a story of him as a jolly Dutchman. In 1822, a poet named Moore gave us the Night before Christmas getting rid of Irving's horses and wagon, and subbing in reindeer and sleigh. Then in 1863 the famous cartoonist Thomas Nast gave us the popular conception we see all

around us today.

The issue for us is not stockings by chimney, or other harmless customs. But we must learn from this that if we do not tell our stories faithfully, they will gradually change over time until they become quite unrecognizable. With a story like this – one that has in the minds of many supplanted the story of the Christ child – we have to remember that St. Nicholas probably would have slugged somebody over it. RP

*Pastor Douglas Wilson's "God rest ye Merry: Why Christmas is the Foundation for Everything" is a curious book that not only explains how Santa once punched a guy in the face, but "why nativity sets should have Herod's soldiers." What it does most of all is reignite the excitement we should have, every year again, to celebrate our Savior's birth with an uproarious celebration. This excerpt is reprinted here with permission.*





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# A Multi-Level Warning About Multi-Level Marketing

by Steve M. Schlissel

**M**ulti-level marketing's end is nowhere in sight. Years ago, my personal ministry was. Yours truly accepted the invitation of another minister to jump into the multi-level pool. I stayed just long enough to nearly drown.

During that time (and the drying off period which followed), I've done much thinking about the nature of multi-level marketing ("MLM"), with particular concern as to whether it is compatible with a lifestyle of devout obedience to the Christ of the Scriptures.

My conclusion? There is a way that MLM is commonly done that conflicts at many points with Biblical values. So in what follows I submit several cautions – several lessons I've learned – for you to consider if you are involved in or thinking about joining one of these

organizations. These points could be summed up as *how we don't want to do multi-level marketing*.

## 1. COMPETING WITH THE CHURCH

The first and deepest caution concerns multi-level marketing's competition with the Church. From this one grand problem flow many others.

This competition is undeclared but it is quite real. Consider, for example, how MLM literature is often liturgical in form. It contains *praises* for the company and/or its leaders, *thanksgiving* for its products, *testimonies* to the greatness of both, *confessions* of doubts, and even songs of adoration (no kidding). "Church" can meet in small groups (devotionals?) or large auditoriums. In the latter the atmosphere is truly reminiscent of tent revivals in both

program and intensity. Of course, you are urged to bring anyone you can. Every day is "Friend Day" in MLM.

Furthermore, their agenda includes fantastic goals which, if truly representative of the organizations' objectives, are frightening. They are out to "change the world." Having made a "covenant with life" they are seeking to "infuse...lives with some measure of grace and beauty and purpose and joy." MLMers are told that they are the "comfort and hope, promise and dream" of the world. Despite attacks or setbacks, these organizations will "survive and prevail(!)" Their enthusiasm is positively postmillennial in intensity.

MLMers will often call each other "family." They are urged to make a 100% commitment to the organization (something God alone can demand).



They are encouraged to believe that the more they devote themselves to the plan, the closer they will be to tapping into “a life force of unlimited power.” People claim to have been “born-again,” either through the use of the company’s products or through participation in the multi-level program. They have been “set-free,” made “brand new,” delivered from fears, and are no longer able to hide their joy. Small wonder they can’t resist “sharing the good news”!

The list could go on, but this tiny sampling of MLM rhetoric is sufficient to show the Messianic self-consciousness of many of these organizations. They are out to save the world. The problem, though, is that in their view salvation is primarily economic. People are unfulfilled or repressed or depressed because they haven’t got enough money. And this MLM organization will show you how to get it! Their method is (allegedly) guaranteed...but if you don’t get saved, it’s your fault.

The impression is certainly given that the method is faultless. When I confronted one MLMer with the fact that he seemed to be saying that his organization was perfect, he quickly retorted, “Oh, no.” But in *hours* of talking, he yielded no ground. He could not (would not?) see *any* drawback or downside to his company. The Church should only fare as well when scrutinized by even her most loving critics!

To review our first point, Christians need to be wary of MLM organizations that set themselves in competition with the Church by claiming the same mission (they are out to change the world – cf. Mark 16:15), by borrowing heavily from Biblical evangelical terminology (grace, born again, set free, covenant, joy, hope, comfort, sharing the good news, etc.), by pushing an economically-based soteriology (another gospel, my friends – Galatians 1:9), and by presumptuously arrogating to themselves invincibility (“we will prevail” – cf. Matthew 16:18) and possession of the keys to omnipotence (“a life force of unlimited power” – cf. Ephesians 1:18-23).

It might be said that the organizations don’t really mean these things, that this

is just the kind of hyperbole required to be competitive. But if they don’t mean these things, they should not say them (and they say them over and over and over again). If they do mean what they say, it necessarily makes it exceedingly difficult for Christians involved with the organizations to distinguish between things that differ. Sharing so much vocabulary necessarily cheapens the meaning of the words. When we remember that it is by means of some of these words that we are saved and sanctified, the precarious position of the Christian in such an MLM group becomes clearer.

## 2. USING FRIENDS AND FAMILY

A second concern for Christians involves how MLM can impact the way we view our social relationships. There would be little or no problem with the simple retailing of the products offered by these companies. They are usually as good, or better (though more expensive) than comparable items available in ordinary retail outlets.

But, as you’re quick to find out, retail ain’t where the money is. No, the pyramid is climbed primarily through recruiting. You see, in MLM you get a cut of the sales of those recruited by you, and potentially of those recruited by them, and so on, *ad pyramidium*. Needless to say, you are at least as concerned to bring in the salesmen, as you are to bring in the sales. One Christian MLMer told me it was “just like making disciples” (there we go again).

So the danger, then, is, that we start viewing everyone as potential timber with which we can build our little empire. Family members and close friends become the prime targets for you to “bring in under you.” Friends you have not called for 10 years, and casual acquaintances, who have to be reminded how they know you, come next. In MLM, propinquity = profit.

But, by grace, the Christian MLMer will know he is in *real* trouble when, upon making *new* acquaintances, he doesn’t know which gospel he should seek to share first. If the company’s

“support system” has indoctrinated him properly, he will consistently choose to first tell them about his new life in MLM. He hopes that it might lead to an opportunity to share God’s good news sometime in the future. The rationalizations one offers one’s self for this infidelity to God are myriad: “I feel led to share MLM first” / “If this person is among the elect he’ll be saved anyway” / “I’m going to use the money I make for God’s glory” (that was my favorite) / “If we share a business interest I’ll have more opportunities to witness,” etc. A prostitute can be very creative when comforting her conscience (see Proverbs 30:20).

To review: MLM is bad news when:

- 1) it seeks to usurp the role of the Church
- 2) relationships become exploitation-ships.

## 3. THE GOD OF MAMMON

Greed is can be a temptation in any business venture, but in MLM the amount of money you could make is mentioned again and again. That means covetousness is a real danger (see Proverbs 21:6, 16:8, Mark 4:19, Luke 12:15, 1 John 2:15). It is rather remarkable how few MLMers will be frank about this (though some are).

The money can be significant, though – even astronomical, (for a few) – and it is possible to build a profitable business rather quickly. This is because MLM, when the people “under you” make money, you make money. The more they make, the more you make. Everyone is constantly “encouraging” everyone else to go for it.

Of course, the difference between greed and simple financial success is not in the amount of dollars amassed, but in what one has exchanged for those dollars. One MLM convention or large rally would reveal what some poor souls have lost to gain what they now, temporarily, have. Superstars in MLM are often unabashedly ostentatious self-aggrandizers. Many of them, sorrowfully, have given up, or reprioritized (which is, after all, the same thing – Ex. 20:3) their first love, for the

love of baubles, trinkets and the way of death. It is very sad.

#### 4. COMPETING WITH THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

A fourth concern is that MLM devotees are drawn into an independent subculture. For Christians, MLM involvement is, in some respects, akin to membership in a lodge. MLM is intrinsically and increasingly esoteric. The fellowship of the saints is usually seen as inadequate. A new club is formed and the password is not the blood of Jesus but the name of your MLM organization.

Man is ever finding new ways to put asunder that which God has joined together.

#### CONCLUSION

There is a solemn warning in 1 Timothy that tore at my conscience the whole time I was involved in MLM. I actually avoided looking at this passage because it got too close, penetrating my soul, judging the thoughts and attitudes of my heart. Rather than submit to this passage, I was considering leaving the ministry! Oh brothers, listen to the Word of God. Don't give heed to the siren song, no matter how sweet, if its lyrics contain an invitation to disobey the tiniest commandment of God. The devil is seeking to devour us, but God has given us His Word for our good and for our protection. Obedience to God's Word is life!

"If we have food and clothing we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness" (1 Tim. 6:8-11).

Beware of giving heed to the voice of

#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. This article presumes Christians want to talk about God with whomever we meet. But is that accurate – are we eager to talk about God? What stops us from talking about God?
2. How are the article's four cautions applicable to other business ventures?
3. Pastor Schlissel says we should be wary of messianic, save-the-world language because it competes with the real Messiah, and the real Savior. So how should we respond when we hear it elsewhere? Like presidential debates? Or discussions about plastic straw usage? Where else do we hear this kind of language?
4. How would a Christian involved in MLM do it differently than non-Christians? What would that look like?
5. In a report posted to the US Federal Trade Commission website, Jon M. Taylor detailed how, in the 350 leading MLMs he'd looked at, 99% of sales consultants lost money. Taylor suggests that before you join any particular MLM you ask them for:

"the average amount of money paid by the company in commissions and bonuses to participants at the various levels in the compensation plan."


If the organization won't provide this information he suggests, "you should consider that a red flag." While this isn't a question, it is worth considering.

seducing spirits. God has called us to peace, which is found in the pursuit of Himself – not gold.

By all means, work hard. By all means, bless Jehovah for the increase He grants the labor of your hands. But never make money your chief pursuit, or you're dead. Abraham Kuyper was certainly correct when he said, "If you are truly subject to God, money will be subject to you and will not harm you." But Kuyper demonstrated his balance and wisdom when he added,

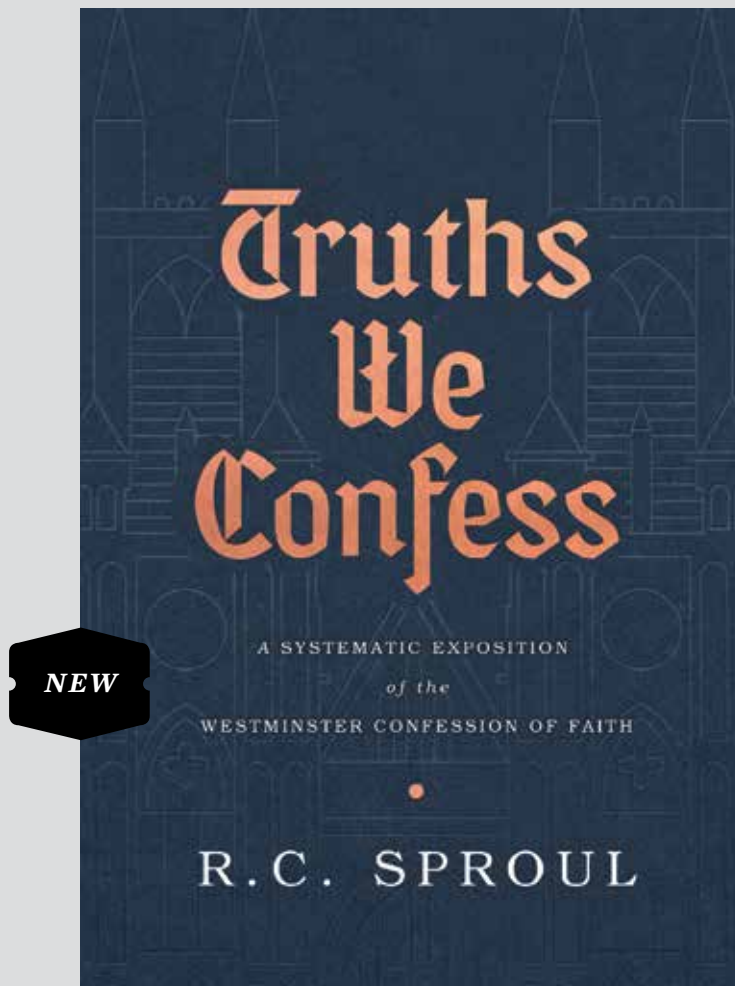
"If, on the other hand, you undertake to defend yourself against the fatal influence of...money and its seductive power, you are lost before you know it, and deeming that you are your own master, you have found your master in the money-power."

If you or someone you know is considering entering the world of MLM, wait. Before committing yourself to such

a lifestyle (for that is what it is), take your time and pray. Consider the points made in this article. If they were made too strongly, modify them, but be sober and judge with right judgment. Look beyond surface claims; look for truth in the inwards parts. MLM organizations usually offer excellent products and most operate with a great degree of internal integrity. But product and corporate reliability, while important, are not the only factors which a child of the Living God should consider before biting at a ten-tiered carrot. If you're not very careful, you may bite off more than you can chew. 

*A version of this article first appeared in "Messiah's Mandate: UPDATE, Volume 2, Number 2," and is reprinted here with permission of the author.*

*Rev. Steve M. Schlissel is the pastor of Messiah's Covenant Community Church (MessiahNYC.org) in Brooklyn, New York.*



## WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

church to dismiss unbelievers before communion was served. But it has little meaning any more – it's just an abbreviated ending. Get it?"

"Think so. Uh . . . Merry Xmas"  
"Merry Xmas!"

SOURCE: Reprinted with permission from nouthetic.org/blog

## ON BREAKING YOUR TV HABIT

Want to cut down on your TV watching but find it a battle? Gary North has an idea he put in place more than 40 years ago: "Put a price on your time." He suggests putting a piggy bank next to your couch and whenever you watch a show you have to put in \$1 for a half-hour show, and \$2 for an hour show. If someone else is already watching something (and has already paid the price) you can join in for free (TV watching together is a step up from watching by yourself). Then at year's end you count up all the money and send a check for that amount to your favorite charity.

"In short, put a price on your time. Pay the price. Economics teaches: 'When the price rises, less is demanded.' You will cut your TV habit by 50%. If not, make it \$3."

SOURCE: Gary North's *Tip of the Week*, January 3, 2015

## MERRY X-MAS?

by Jay Adams

"Why in the world would you write that?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Obviously, that X in Christmas."

"What wrong with that?"

"You don't know?"

"Nope. Tell me."

"Well, X stands for an unknown quantity. That's no way to talk about our Lord!"

"Whoa! You don't have the facts straight!"

"What do you mean?"

"That's no X, it's..."

"Looks like an X to me."

"Listen, the New Testament was written in Greek—which everyone wrote at that time."

"Yeah? So what?"

"Here's what ° that supposed 'X' in Xmas isn't an English letter at all. It's..."

"Sure looks like one."

"Yes. But it is really a Greek letter standing for 'Ch,' the first two letters in 'Christ.' The expression Xmas is an abbreviation – that's all."

"Oh!"

"If I were objecting to anything, and I'm not, it would be the 'mas' at the end of the word."

"Hmmm. You'd better explain that one too!"

"Well, it's a shortening of the word 'mass.'"

"A Roman Catholic word?"

"Sorta. You see, Xmas is a 'mule word' – half Greek, half Latin."

"Hmmm..."

"The latter part, mas, came from the Latin *mitto* which means 'to dismiss' or 'send off.' It was used in the early

## THE WIT AND WISDOM OF WINSTON CHURCHILL

Churchill had a way with words, inspiring his island nation in their darkest hours with just the right turn of a phrase. His most famous speech was given on June 4, 1940, after the British had been forced to flee the mainland. This was a massive defeat, but an even bigger miracle. More than 300,000 Allied troops were able to evade what seemed certain capture when, with the help of hundreds of private watercraft owned and operated by British citizens, they were able to retreat across the Channel to England. It was then that Churchill rallied his nation promising that should the Nazis come:

"...we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

And that's far from the only memorable sound-bite the man uttered. Here's ten of his very best quotes:

- A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.
- Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.
- A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject.
- If you have ten thousand regulations you destroy all respect for the law.
- A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.
- Some regard private enterprise as if it were a predatory tiger to be shot. Others look upon it as a cow that they can milk. Only a handful see it for what it really is - the strong horse that pulls the whole cart.
- The truth is incontrovertible, malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end; there it is.
- Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.
- My most brilliant achievement was my ability to be able to persuade my wife to marry me.

## FACTOIDS ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS SONGS

Did you know...

- The text (though not the tune) of *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* has roots that could go as far back as the 6th century
- Isaac Watts based *Joy to the World* on the second half of

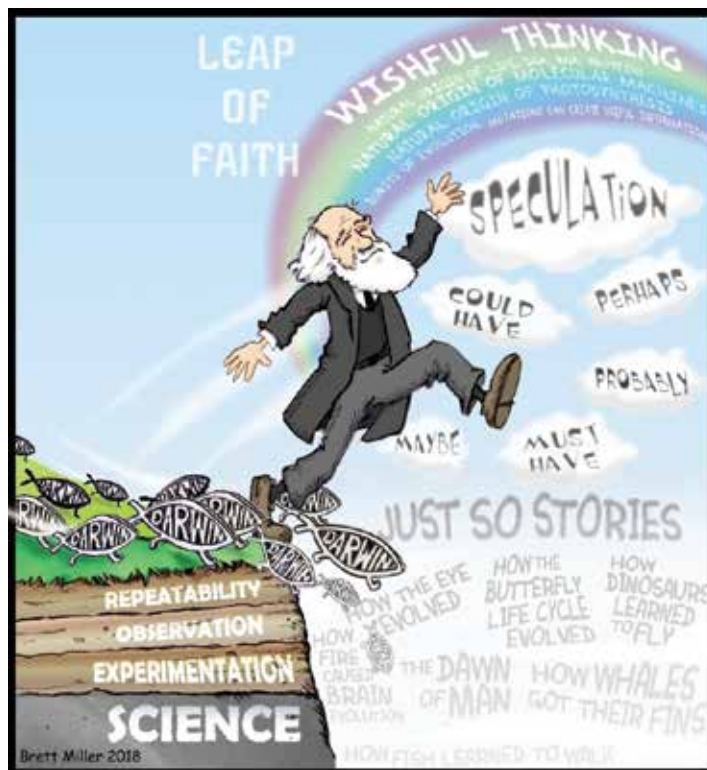
- *Jingle Bells* was not originally intended as a Christmas song, but was probably written for Thanksgiving celebrations.
- Charles Wesley wrote *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* in 1739, but the tune we sing with it was written 101 years later.
- In 1700 *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks by Night* became one of the very first hymns authorized to be sung by the Anglican Church (before 1700 only Psalms could be sung).

Brett Miller is a cartoonist for the website Creation-Evolution Headlines (CrEv.info) and while his other cartooning efforts are great, this one, to the right titled “Leap of Faith” which he’s graciously shared with us, is my favorite. He’s packed so much in here, with the rainbow made up of key explanations that evolution is missing, and directly underneath all the “weasel words” that evolutionary accounts so often employ. And then, further down, a reference to how evolutionary accounts resemble a particular type of fiction.

## FOR SALE, CHEAP: NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK COLLECTION

Other music is more like CorningWare – it isn't quite as refined but might be more popular and it can be passed on from one generation to the next. Wilson thought this was like folk music.

So one of the easiest questions to ask when evaluating music



## A TRICKY TRICK QUESTION

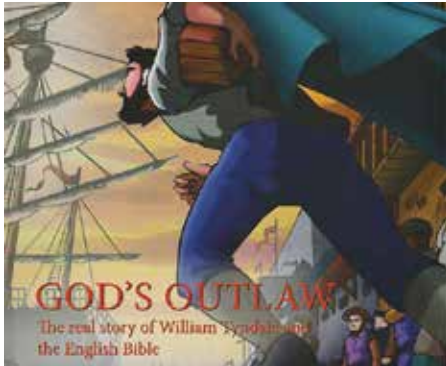
Now you might be thinking that as trick questions go, this one isn't tricky at all: everyone knows Moses *didn't* enter the Promised Land. God told him to speak to the rock at Meribah (Numbers 20) to get water to come out, but instead Moses struck the rock twice. And for this disobedience God told Moses he would not lead Israel across the Jordan. Moses saw the Promised Land from high atop Mount Nebo (Deut. 34:4-5) and then died, without stepping foot in it.

But as trick questions go, the answer to this one isn't as clear as we might like, because it's not certain that this mountain (which isn't named in the Scriptures) was actually in the Promised Land. Two hypothesized locations (and there are others) are Mount Tabor, which is within the boundaries, and Mount Hermon, which is not.

REFORMED PERSPECTIVE / 17

### GOD'S OUTLAW : THE REAL STORY OF WILLIAM TYNDALE AND THE ENGLISH BIBLE

BY THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS | 40 PAGES / 2007



We all have many Bibles in our homes, something we take for granted. But there was a time when no one had that wonderful gift. William Tyndale (1494) was a very learned scholar and the reading of the Bible in the original languages was a life-changing experience for him which he wanted to share with all people "even a ploughman." Against the wishes of the Church and King Henry VIII, he began this task. But soon he had to flee to Germany and it was from there his pamphlets found their way into the hands of the common people in England. The Church responded by imprisoning and killing many of them.

In 1535 Tyndale was betrayed, refused to bow the knee before the church leaders and was burnt at the stake. Just before he died he prayed "Lord Jesus! Open the King of England's eyes!" Two years later King Henry VIII decreed that the Bible should be available to all people.

The book ends with some thoughts and questions for reflection. The pictures are bright and descriptive edging towards the graphic novel style. This is a good book for Primary school teachers to read to their class. It is available at [Christianbooks.com](http://Christianbooks.com).

- JOANNA VANDERPOL

### SOPHIE AND THE HEIDELBERG CAT

BY ANDREW WILSON & HELENE PEREZ GARCIA

32 PAGES / 2019



If you've got fond memories of Choose-Your-Own-Adventure books you'll really enjoy this adult update. This time it's a journey to discover our own worldview and, like the kids' books, we keep coming to forks in the road. So, early on, we either agree there is objective truth and then go to page 22 or we say there isn't and then go to page 91. A Christian reader flipping to page 22 will be asked to consider, "Is it possible to *know* the Truth?" The author James Anderson lays out the case for both options, after which we again have to choose which way we want to go.

After a dozen or so steps, readers will eventually arrive at the worldview that matches their professed beliefs. Anderson is a Christian and his biases are acknowledged up front. So, even as he has challenging questions for anyone who lands on one of the other 20 worldviews, he also raises the problem of evil for Christians. He wants everyone to follow God, but he refuses to pretend Christians have it all figured out.

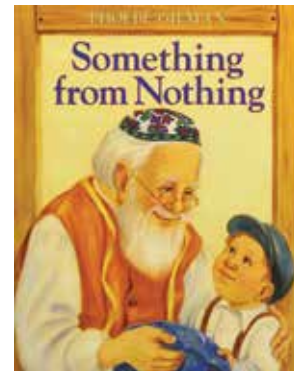
The strength of the book is its really fun format and its conciseness – there is just so much packed in such a little space.

- JOANNA VANDERPOL

### SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

BY PHOEBE GILMAN

32 PAGES / 1993



This children's book, winner of the Ruth Schwartz Award, has become my favourite book to read out loud to my grandchildren. It is adapted from a Jewish folktale and in wonderful, rhythmic language tells the story of Grandpa who lovingly sews a blanket for his newborn grandson to "keep him warm and to chase away bad dreams." As the boy grows up, the blanket wears out and is altered into a jacket, which is altered into a vest, etc.

The pictures are so delightful and add to the story. For instance, we see that mom is pregnant and then a few pages later a little sister appears in the story. A second wordless story takes place along the bottom of each page. Father and mother mouse set up house and as the little mice appear, use the scraps of material from the blanket that fall between the floorboards and make them into clothes for their family and also into blankets and curtains for the wee mouse house.

This is a type of story where you want to take your little dear one onto your lap and just warmly snuggle and read, explore the pictures and find lovely little treasures

- JOANNA VANDERPOL



## JULIA GONZAGA

BY SIMONETTA CARR

64 PAGES / 2018



These are the adventures of an amazing globetrotting fallacy hunter, the amazing Dr. Ransom. And by following him along on his hunts, we, too, will learn how to track down (and on occasion, kill) fallacies in our own interactions with them and the people who love them.

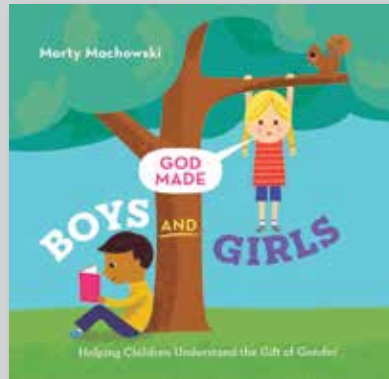
Ransom deals with 50 fallacies in the following four categories: fallacies of distraction, of ambiguity, and of form; and millennial fallacies. Each of the fifty chapters

- defines the fallacy and its dangers (showing it as a cuddly but vicious animal);
- explains how we, like Ransom, can defeat it; and
- provides discussion questions and exercises in recognizing fallacious and logical arguments.

What makes the book fun is that both Ransom's adventures in confronting fallacies and the examples given are presented with satirical wit. I have never enjoyed reading about and puzzling out fallacies more.

I will note one caution: on occasion the Wilsons, arguably, step over the line of good taste in the description of Dr. Ransom's confrontation with fallacious fools (always a peril in satire). But despite this consideration, I would love to see this as a textbook for my high school English courses.

- JOANNA VANDERPOL



## GOD MADE BOYS AND GIRLS

BY MARTY MACHOWSKI

32 PAGES / 2019

My not even six-year-old already knows that some people think girls can marry girls. And she knows God says that isn't so. We haven't had to talk – yet – about folks who think that girls can become boys, but when that

time comes, this book will be a help.

The story begins with a fast little girl, Maya, outrunning the boys... so one of them teases her that this means she's going to become a boy. And that gets her worried. Fortunately this little girl has a great instructor, Mr. Ramirez, who teaches the class that gender is a "good gift from God." He shares how, if you are a boy, then you are a boy right down to your DNA. And the same is true for girls too. Mr. Ramirez then brings things back to the very first boy and girl, Adam and Eve, and how their Fall into Sin happened because they wanted to do things their own way instead of God's good way. Today some want to try their own way – not God's way – when it comes to their gender too. One of the many things I appreciated about this book was how clearly kids were taught what's right, and then encouraged to act kindly to those who are confused.

Finishing up the book are a couple of pages intended for parents, which, in small print, pack a lot of information on how to talk through gender with our kids.

One caution: there is one depiction of Jesus, as a baby and with no real detail given, on a page noting that God the Son became a tiny speck inside a girl, Mary, and became a man. I don't think this a violation of the Second Commandment, but maybe someone else might. The only other caution is in regards to what isn't tackled in this story: gender roles. God made us different, and He also gave the genders some different roles and also gave us some different general tendencies. So yes, as the book notes, some boys do like dancing, and some girls like car repair...but that's not the general trend. And because the general trend is never noted in the book, this absence could, if left undiscussed, leave young readers with the impression that no such trends exist. Then they would fall for a different one of the world's gender-related lies: that other than sexual biology, men and women aren't different at all.

This is not a picture book you are going to read over and over with your children because it is more of a conversation starter than a story. But it is a wonderful help for parents in discussing an issue that none of us ever confronted when we were kids. It is a different world today, and we want to be the first to broach these topics with our kids. Reading and discussing a book with your little one is a fantastic way to do it.

- JON DYSTRKA



# That morning I listened to Kanye West

by Wes Bredenhof

I've never been a Kanye West fan. About a year ago, I was flipping through the radio channels while driving. I came across a station playing one of his songs. It was one of the most vile, misogynistic songs I've ever heard. As we were eating our dinner, I told our kids about what I'd heard earlier in the day. Knowing Kanye better than I did, they weren't surprised.

But they sure were surprised to hear their dad listening to Kanye West last Saturday morning. I was rather surprised too. His new album had just dropped and the title led me to listen. *Jesus is King* blew me off my feet. How could it happen that the same man responsible for that horrible song could produce an entire album in praise of the Saviour?

## WHO IS/WAS KANYE WEST?

Kanye West is an American recording artist who's mostly worked in the hip-hop/rap genre. He's been hugely popular and is one of the most successful musicians of all time. *Jesus is King* is his ninth studio album. The previous eight each went platinum. Moreover, he's been awarded 21 Grammy awards since the beginning of his recording career in 2003.

As far as his personal life goes, West was raised middle-class by his mother, an English professor. He briefly attended university, but decided to chase a music career instead. He was involved in several romantic relationships over the years. He married reality-TV star Kim

Kardashian in 2014 and they have four children together.

His first album *College Dropout* included the song "Jesus Walks." This song already indicated some spiritual inclinations. The song speaks of spiritual struggles, but also features the profanity found in so many of his songs. Over the years, he's claimed to believe in God, and in 2014 he even claimed to be a Christian. However, in the meantime he continued making music putting those claims in question. For example, his 2013 album *Yeezus* included a blasphemous song entitled "I Am a God."

In short, while there have been spiritual themes in some of his past work, much of what Kanye West has produced

up till now has been profane, wicked, and even sacrilegious. He's represented the dregs of what hip-hop has to offer.

## WHAT HAPPENED?

Early in 2019, West began a new musical endeavour known as Sunday Service. Every Sunday, he and a number of others would get together to perform gospel music. While it began as an event for family and friends, eventually it turned into something bigger and Sunday Service began touring around American cities. That was the first sign something seemed to be changing with West.

Through the end of 2018, it was well-known that West was working on a new album entitled Yandhi. It wasn't going to be a gospel album – in fact, it wasn't going to have any notable spiritual emphasis. However, in August 2019, West's wife Kim Kardashian announced that the direction of the new album had changed and it would now be entitled Jesus is King.

Around the same time, West began attending Placerita Bible Church in Newhall, California. This church is a non-denominational congregation. Besides what it says about baptism and eschatology, their doctrinal statement is mostly sound. The pastor, Adam Tyson, is a graduate of The Master's Seminary, an institution founded by John MacArthur. Like MacArthur, Tyson's doctrine of salvation is biblical/Calvinistic.

According to Tyson (in an interview with Apologia Studios), West began attending the church and then asked to meet with him for instruction. West gave a sound Christian testimony and indicated a good understanding of the basics of salvation through the gospel. What he really wanted from Pastor Adam Tyson was instruction about how to begin living as a Christian. Tyson has been instrumental in guiding Kanye West's spiritual journey.

In the last while, Adam Tyson was invited to preach at several Sunday Service events. I watched a video of him preaching at a Sunday Service in Detroit. Using Isaiah 6:1-5 as his text, he gave a faithful and unambiguous presentation of the gospel to at least several hundred

people. Kanye West provided a platform so the gospel could be preached.

Tyson was also involved in the final production of the Jesus is King album. West told Tyson that he was finished with rap and hip-hop and didn't want to do it anymore. But Tyson encouraged him to use his gifts in this genre to advance the cause of the gospel. Moreover, he helped him ensure the final product would be free of any serious theological errors.

## JESUS IS KING

Having listened to his Jesus is King album a number of times now, let me make a few comments.

Musically speaking, not everything here is going to be to everyone's taste. In other words, there are hip-hop and rap elements. Yet it has a different feel to his previous work. I first listened to the album through Spotify, but since I don't have the premium account, the stream would periodically circle back to his previous work. The difference was noticeable, not only in comparison with his previously foul lyrics, but also with the music. Even though I can't put my finger on it, something has changed in the sound of the music.

One of my Facebook friends noted she's never listed to Kanye West and never will. I urged her to just listen to the first track on the album. "Every Hour" features lively African-American gospel choir singing – no hip-hop or rap at all. The last song of the album "Jesus is Lord" also breaks the stereotype. This short track features West singing of Christ's Lordship accompanied by tuba, trombone, trumpet, saxophone, French horn, and euphonium.

The lyrics are mostly solid. Check out these rhymes from "Closed on Sunday":

*When you got daughters,  
always keep em' safe  
Watch out for vipers,  
don't let them indoctrinate ...  
Raise our sons,  
train them in the faith  
Through temptations,  
make sure they're wide awake  
Follow Jesus,*

*listen and obey  
No more livin' for culture,  
we nobody's slave  
Stand up for my home  
Even if I take this walk alone  
I bow down to the King  
upon the throne  
My life is His,  
I'm no longer my own.*

The last bit echoes the biblical teaching of Lord's Day 1, doesn't it?

Nevertheless, there's some immaturity and imprecision in various tracks. Assuming he's become a Christian, he's just a young Christian and so we can't expect the accuracy or theological profundity of Shai Linne and Timothy Brindle. Moreover, while the album is mostly clean in terms of language, there is one use of the word "damn." It occurs in "God is":

*I know Christ is the fountain  
that filled my cup  
I know God is alive,  
yeah He has opened up my vision  
Giving me a revelation  
This ain't 'bout a damn religion  
Jesus brought a revolution*

Could that be a legitimate use of the word? I'd like to be charitable. After all, there is religion that is damned – the religion of self-salvation and works righteousness.\*

## WHAT SHALL WE SAY ABOUT THESE THINGS?

For many people, their first inclination is to be sceptical. Me too. After all, how many "Christian" celebrities have we seen over the years? How many proved to be genuine followers of Christ for the long haul? The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9) reminds us that there are those who hear the Word, show some promise, but are either seed sown on rocky soil or the seed choked by thorns. Kanye West anticipates this response on the album. In "Hands On" he predicts that many Christians aren't going to believe he's the real deal. Despite that, he asks listeners to pray for him. Even as we have might have reservations,



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that's a request we can enthusiastically embrace.

One of the big questions people are asking is: what happens to all the old music West produced? He was asked this directly in an interview with BigBoyTV. His reply was that no one goes to an Apple iStore to ask for an iPhone 4. Apple doesn't offer the inferior product. He says his old stuff is behind him and he won't be performing it anymore. From now on he claims he'll only be performing gospel music to the glory of God. True, for the moment, his old music is still available for sale -- though, to be fair, when it comes to music sales there are more players involved than just the artist.

There are indeed still inconsistencies and troubling things about Kanye West. Just in the last month, he boasted in an interview with Zane Lowe on Apple Music's Beats 1 that he's "unquestionably, undoubtedly, the greatest human artist of all time." While he's attended Adam Tyson's church in California, he lives in Wyoming and isn't currently known to be a member of any church. He's a public figure and, unlike many other fledgling disciples, his life is on display for everyone to dissect and analyse. There's a lot of pressure on him and one can only hope that influences like Adam Tyson will prevail.

Why should we care? Simply because God can do amazing things, even with the vulgar and profane. Let's watch and see what happens. Whatever the case may be, we shouldn't look up to Kanye West as a Christian leader -- he's untested. Finally, if nothing else comes from this, even if West proves to be a false disciple, at least the truth about Jesus Christ was broadcast by him and others for a time: Jesus is King! So, "whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice" (Phil. 1:18). RP

\* The word "damn" has, in the newest version, been changed. The line now says "this ain't 'bout a *dead* religion."

*Dr. Bredenhof blogs at [yinkahdinay.wordpress.com](http://yinkahdinay.wordpress.com) Kanye West picture is from Shutterstock.com.*



# Why haven't we heard from ET?

by Jon Dykstra

Some 70 years ago physicist Enrico Fermi looked up at the stars and wondered where everyone was at. With billions of galaxies, each with billions of stars, it seemed inconceivable to him that ours would be the only planet to evolve life. So where was everyone?

## FERMI'S PARADOX

His query is now called Fermi's Paradox, and earlier this year a group of about 60 scientists met in Paris to share their latest theories as to why we haven't heard from any of our galactic neighbors. *Live Science's* Mindy Weisberger shared some of their creative ideas:

- The "zoo hypothesis" – Earth is like a galactic animal reserve where aliens are leaving us alone to be observed in our natural habitat.
- We've been quarantined – aliens know about us, but don't like us.
- Aliens are trapped by their super-planets' intense gravity and they can't come out to meet us.

- Aliens have come and gone, dying off before we had a chance to connect with them.

Three days after the Paris conference *Cosmos* dug deeper into Fermi's Paradox with an even more vexing question: where are all the "von Neumann probes"?

## VON NEWMANN PROBES

What's a von Neumann probe, you ask? Well, back in the 1960s, mathematician John von Neumann argued that a sufficiently advanced civilization would be able to build a space probe that could mine raw materials on other planets and use those to make replicas of itself. These replicas would, in turn, build other copies. And as the process repeated, the number and spread of these self-replicating "von Neumann probes" would expand exponentially until, as *Cosmos'* Lauren Fuge put it, "in a relatively short space of time – perhaps as little as 10 million years – the galaxy would be teeming with these exploratory machines."

But there are no hordes, teeming or otherwise. So, again, where is everyone?

The *Cosmos* article offered, as a possible explanation, astrophysicist Duncan Forgan's "predator-prey hypothesis," soon to be published in an upcoming issue of the *International Journal of Astrobiology*. Forgan argues that "self-replication could result in encoding errors" and that maybe some of these coding errors could lead to some of these probes taking a predatory turn. If they did, then perhaps the reason we don't see these teeming hordes is because the predatory probes are hunting down and destroying the other probes. Hmmm....

While these various hypotheses make for incredibly creative speculation, they all share one thing in common: there are no facts to back them up. In fact, the only "evidence" for any of these theories is that aliens *haven't* contacted us.

So why did scientists bother meeting to swap what amounts to untestable, unverifiable, just-so stories?

Why did *Live Science* and other media outlets bother covering the Paris event? And why did *Cosmos* think Forgan's theory worth sharing?

They covered them because these stories – to the undiscerning – seem to offer an explanation to Fermi's Paradox and the problem it presents to evolutionary theory. But they're just stories. And what does it say about the theory if its defenders are willing to hype stories that the public will mistake for scientific, factual, or evidence-based?

### IF LUCK COULD DO IT, WHY CAN'T THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST?

Here's a different sort of hypothesis to consider: what if ET just isn't out there? What if life, instead of being easy to come by, only happens via miraculous means? And God only did so here on Earth?

It's worth noting that there is nothing in the Bible that speaks against

the possibility of life being on other planets. It would be hard to reconcile *intelligent* life with the Bible – here on Earth all Mankind fell through Adam, and Jesus became Man to save us, so how could intelligent aliens have any part of that? But there wouldn't seem a biblical problem with *microscopic* or even *animal* life existing elsewhere in

*If, as evolutionists contend, life can come about via chance and time, then shouldn't there be a lot of it out there among the stars?*

the universe.

But while the Bible allows for life on other planets, evolution would seem to demand it – if life can just happen, then someone else should be out there. It's only when life is miraculous that it's understandable that it might be rare.

Now here's a question for our evolutionary friends: if we suppose that dumb, unplanned, undirected luck can create life, why can't the world's most brilliant minds, using available blueprints (from living creatures), and working with quadrillions-of-calculations-per-second supercomputers, in laboratories staffed with every device and chemical they could possibly want, manage to make even a single living cell? If living things can come about by *chance*, why hasn't anyone created them on *purpose*?

Looking at evolutionists' still-lifeless labs we can't help but ask again: where is everyone? RP

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Then the Lord God said,  
"It is not good for the man to be  
alone; I will make him a helper  
suitable for him." Genesis 2:18

**A Dating Venue for Reformed Christian Singles**





# The Pros And Cons Of Online Dating

## There's a reason to choose a specifically Reformed site

by Peter Riemersma

I first wrote on online dating more than a dozen years ago, back when the Internet was still young, and people still called it the “information highway.” A lot has changed since then – Facebook groups, smartphones, and apps, have increased the number of online dating options. But it's still strangers trying to get to know each other via long distance communication so a lot remains the same.

When I started out, being rather new to computers, I had to be taught the basics of how to get online. Through this cyberspace navigating I came across various ads for “Christian” dating websites. I paid my fee and began to browse many profiles with a particular Christian service. Over time I discovered many familiar faces I knew from various locations. I also discovered some of the pros and cons of online dating.

### WATCH OUT FOR WEEDS!

Over time I soon noticed that many on this site who claimed to be Christian were not necessarily so, and that there was a real need to test the spirits (1 John 4:1).

That might seem a given. After all, God

says there are weeds mixed in with the wheat in the Church (Matt. 13:24-30). But it took me time to realize that, and after I did, I had a lot of online correspondence with people on the site trying to warn them to be careful and not trust every site or person who claimed to be “Christian.”

### GOD CAN USE THE “FRIEND-ZONE”

During my first paid term on the site I met a dear sister in the Lord. After a while of encouraging one another by writing on the site we began encouraging one another with email exchanges using our personal email addresses (all the while still cautiously using our aliases, rather than giving our real names at this point).

From that, more trust began and in time the next step was undertaken and we exchanged telephone numbers and snail mail addresses, and new correspondence again was initiated.

Over time the limitations caused by our distance from one another became obvious and an in-person meet-and-greet was arranged. This was somewhat nerve-wracking – I certainly made a point of being on time for our “date”! We met,

spent a few days together, and in parting ways both of us agreed to remain as friends.

While our relationship didn't go any further, our correspondence and encouragement continued until one day she informed me that the Lord had led her to a godly man she had begun to court. They soon got engaged too, and shortly after I opened my snail mail to find a wedding invitation. This was to be a Reformed wedding, as their relationship had become one built on the Reformed faith. They have built their marriage on this and the promises of God's infallible word. This was the doing of the Lord, and she credits me for being the one used by the Lord to introduce her to the riches of the Reformed faith. And how rich they are!

### A NEED FOR MORE THAN GENERIC “CHRISTIAN”

At this same time the Lord had begun to stir an interest in someone I'd soon get to know. This brother in the Lord saw the need to create not only a truly Christian online singles website, but a *specifically*

*Reformed Christian online singles website.* And it came to him as he was on a fishing trip!

So in 2005, Dean Scott had SovereignGraceSingles.com (SGS) up and running. Once it was, many friends who had been on the previously mentioned "Christian" website were alerted about this new Reformed website – a site that would be specifically for us who were *different* in our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ than those in mainline churches.

I prayerfully decided to try it out. I'm very thankful for the sister in the Lord who led me, and many others, to it, as I soon realized this site was indeed legitimate. It was a great environment in which to meet godly sisters and brothers in the Lord.

#### TRY AND TRY AGAIN

It was then that I met a sister on the site who, at one point, I thought was to be my life partner. But that's not how things went.

After this second "failed" online relationship, I began to get rather

disillusioned with online dating. And in response to this disappointment I reminded myself, as I have various times through my life, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." But I took this passage more seriously than perhaps I had ever done before in my life. Recalling someone's wise advice, I considered how I was to surrender all of my desires to the Lord and delight in Him, "and He will give you the desires

noticed the profile of someone new. I did not know it then, but the Lord had also placed it on her heart to wait on the Lord and let "His will be done," as well as to give "cyberspace relationships" one more try.

When I came across her profile I prayed once again "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" and I initiated contact with her. Not expecting anything from it, I once

*... the only way to use a secular, or generically Christian site, is if you are willing to ask tough questions right away*

of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). I knew I needed to make the Lord's priorities my own. Instead of impatience, I would be content, knowing He was in charge.

So I went back to my computer, but with a very different mindset, and heart. In browsing the SGS website I

again was put to the test, and called upon to practice the gifts of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Two days later, upon revisiting SGS's website, I noticed there was a message in my mailbox from her (we did not know one another other than our aliases). And we both, having

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sought God's will, began encouraging one another.

Our communication became more regular, and we began to focus on really getting to know one another exclusively. Praise God! Today as a married couple we are united as one in Christ. "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

### ASK, ASK, ASK

In addition to my gratitude to God, I will always be grateful to Dean Scott and for SGS, for how they helped bring my wife I together.

But am I trying to say that you shouldn't use any other "Christian" or singles websites? Not quite. But the problem that comes with these other sites is the constant temptation to compromise your faith – compromise your relationship with God – because most of the people you meet are not going to be a spiritual match with you. And God should never be second. So I've seen people become willing to compromise, and they have either left the Reformed faith, or been misled by not fully understanding their mate by not watching for red flags.


So, the only way to use a secular, or generically Christian site, is if you are willing to ask tough questions right away, and ruthlessly weed out anyone who does not love the Lord as you do.

Even on a Reformed site, you need to be cautious. Much grief can be avoided by observing potential life partners very carefully in their natural habitat and immediate surroundings in meet and greets. Also, never presume something – when in doubt, ask! You should also get to know his/her pastor, elders, or deacons. Ask them for a character reference or referral, and take time to get to know your suitors' family, closest friends, and congregation.

When appropriate ask about how they handle their finances. And most of all - ask *yourself* serious questions. If it is a long distance relationship, ask, am I prepared for long intervals apart? Am I prepared to be faithful, both mentally and physically?

### CONCLUSION

So...are you considering looking for a mate online?

If so, the very first thing to do is get your relationship with God right. Spend time praying and in His Word. Enjoy time with and serve your local Body of Christ. Do the work the Lord has given you for employment or vocation with all your heart. And pray. Wait on Him and ask for healthy relationships. One of them – whether online or not – may just turn out to be a lifelong love, blessed by God and truly joyful. 

*A version of this article first appeared in Christian Renewal back in February 2009.*



### AS SEEN FROM THE OTHER SIDE

*by Robin Riemersma*

I was skeptical about the whole online thing...until I saw that this [SGS website] was a smaller, more close knit and "safer" community and would be good to try even to just make friends. Then, Peter from *Canada* (yikes - it seemed so far at the time) wrote me and I wondered what to do.

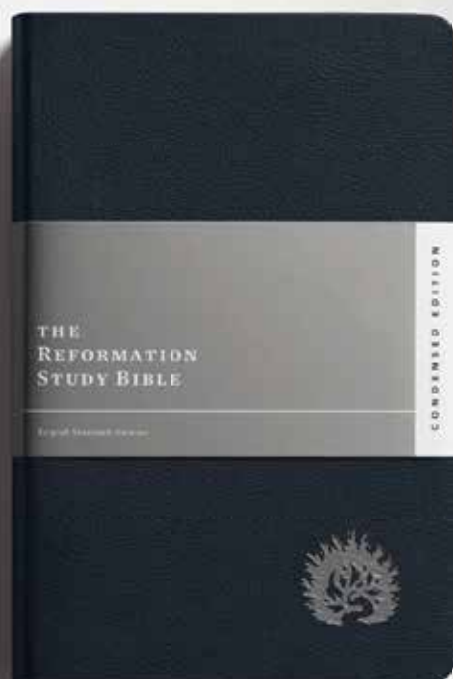
So I prayed about it, and thought to myself (with nudges from the Holy Spirit I'm sure)...is anything impossible for God? Maybe He wants me to go through this type of courting, rather than the type I had always imagined. I always thought someone would just be "sent" to my local vicinity and we could spend time in groups together and get to know one another over a long period. The Lord had something quite different in store for me!

Something about Peter was different. I wasn't afraid, though I was very cautious at first, and we just naturally corresponded even despite the distance. And we both enjoyed doing so. With the proper prayer and caution, I don't think distance should prevent a relationship.

But it is very difficult, at the same time. Being apart between visits was hard, yet at the same time it forced us to really get to know one another through *talking*, and not just going to movies together and sitting there like zombies, or getting too physically involved (in fact Peter and I chose not to even kiss until our wedding day). We had to pray for one another remotely, and trust God to work out the immigration details as well. It was a lot to handle...but I wouldn't trade the whole experience, or having Peter as my husband now, for the world. I see how God led us through everything step by step.

Step by step - I guess that's the key thing. Try not to feel rushed - and if a gentleman is rushing you, slow down and see if he'll wait or cool it a bit. That's what I did with Peter for a time, too. We both knew it was right when we felt the same after this "test."





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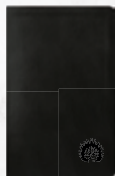
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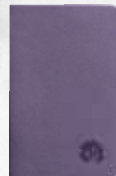
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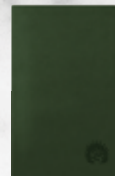
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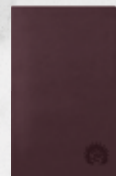
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# A DIFFERENT KIND OF CONVERSION

## What is conversion therapy and why does it matter?

by Levi Minderhoud

When Christians think of conversion, we generally think of a religious conversion experience or “the dying of the old nature and the coming to life of the new” (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 88). However, conversion therapy refers to a very different kind of conversion.

Conversion therapy is any attempt to change someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. An example of conversion therapy would be trying to make a gay person heterosexual. People generally seek conversion therapy when they have an undesired sexual orientation or are confused about their gender identity. They are struggling with something that they do not want, and they are looking for guidance.

Today, this therapy is intended to uncover or understand the root causes of gender confusion, to help people cope with their gender dysphoria, or to assist people in managing their undesired same-sex attraction.

### WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT CONVERSION THERAPY?

This topic has been recently broached at the provincial and municipal level in Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia. Most of these jurisdictions prohibit – or propose to prohibit – healthcare professionals, “persons of trust or authority,” or for-profit businesses

from providing conversion therapy to minors under the age of nineteen. Supporters of such bans claim that conversion therapy is always harmful, and tantamount to the persecution of sexual minorities and gender non-conforming individuals.

Conversion therapy also arose as a federal election issue in Canada. The Liberal party promised in their election platform to amend the Criminal Code to ban conversion therapy. The NDP has also committed to banning conversion therapy. Both commitments build upon a 2019 Senate bill that proposed Criminal Code amendments to restrict conversion therapy. While the Conservative party has not released any official position on conversion therapy, party leader Andrew Scheer expressed opposition only to coercive or involuntary conversion therapy.

### A BIBLICAL VIEW OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

A biblical perspective on conversion therapy requires a biblical understanding of the underlying nature of gender and sexuality. Throughout Scripture, but particularly in the story of creation, God outlines His plan for humanity. He created humanity to be male and female (Genesis 1:27) and gave specific roles to men and women based on their biology (Genesis 3:16-19). He

also created marriage and intimacy to be between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24). Taken altogether, the Bible teaches that our biological sex should determine our sexuality and gender.

Scripture also affirms the importance of our physical bodies in connection with our souls. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). The ultimate recognition of the importance of our physical bodies was the incarnation of Christ, His bodily resurrection, and His physical ascension into heaven.

### THE SECULAR VIEW OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The secular world, however, denies all these realities. Biological sex is not considered immutable, but as something assigned at birth by doctors. Gender roles are seen as oppressive and should be thrown out the window. Virtually any sexual behavior is acceptable between consenting adults.

While Scripture affirms the importance of our physical bodies, the secular world prioritizes our self-perception and downplays or even disregards our bodies. This is why our modern culture accepts same-sex marriage and transgenderism. Both phenomena elevate our subjective self-identity above our objective bodies.



## CONVERSION THERAPY: A CASE STUDY OF THESE TWO WORLDVIEWS

These two differing viewpoints affect our responses to conversion therapy. Many people struggle with an unwanted sexual orientation or gender dysphoria and seek some form of help to manage these tensions. Bans on conversion therapy prohibit health care practitioners, counsellors or parents from affirming that a child's objective biological body should be the basis for their subjective gender identity and sexual orientation.

On the other hand, conversion therapy bans do not ban "gender-confirming" treatments that attempt to change a child's objective body to align with their subjective identities. These treatments include the regular injection of cross-sex hormones or an irreversible sex change operation.

In other words, conversion therapy bans may prohibit simple conversations about a biblical view of sexuality and gender between a parent and a child or a pastor and his congregant, but it gives a green light for children and adolescents to make irreversible decisions about their body. Most hormonal or surgical attempts to convert a child's sex will leave the child infertile by adulthood, to name just one of the many irreversible effects.

It borders on the unbelievable that this legislation banning conversion therapy aims to forbid the "conversion" of some-

one's subjective sexual orientation or gender identity through counselling but allows the "conversion" of someone's objective biological sex through surgery and medication. The latter is the truly harmful practice that should be banned.

### FURTHERMORE...

Another major flaw of conversion therapy bans is that they lump together beneficial counselling with harmful conversion therapy.

Harmful forms of conversion therapy – electric shock therapy, medication, even lobotomies in some cases – were practiced in the mid-1900s to try to "cure" same-sex attraction. These coercive and aversive forms of conversion therapy have rightly been rejected by medical practitioners.

The modern approach to helping people with an undesired sexual attraction or gender dysphoria is body-affirming counselling. Body-affirming counselling includes religious, behavioral, and psychological counselling that emphasizes that sexual orientation and gender identity are normatively linked to biological sex. This counselling is voluntary and uses words and reason, not invasive procedures, to help a struggling person.

This body-affirming counselling is worlds apart from the outdated forms of conversion therapy mentioned earlier. But, most legislative definitions of conver-


sion therapy encompass both the older, harmful forms of conversion therapy as well as the modern, beneficial forms of counselling.

Such bans on conversion therapy may prohibit parents from reinforcing to their gender-confused daughter that she is, in fact, a girl. It may also prevent pastors and elders from guiding and assisting a member of their congregation in managing an undesired same-sex attraction. The effect, if not the goal, of such conversion therapy bans is to normalize homosexuality and transgenderism and prevent anyone from questioning these subjective identities.

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

Talk to your representatives at all levels of government – municipal, provincial, and federal – and talk to your fellow neighbours. Explain to them the biblical truth about gender and sexuality and tell them that body-affirming counselling should never be prohibited by general bans on conversion therapy. This counselling is indispensable for persons suffering from gender dysphoria or an unwanted same-sex attraction. Rather, attempts to convert someone's biological sex should be recognized as the truly harmful forms of conversion therapy that need to be abandoned.

We must also show great patience and love to those within our own communities who are struggling with their sense of gender or their sexual attractions. This confusion contributes to all manners of social and mental challenges for young people. As peers, parents, and pastors, we must gently outline and exemplify the biblical truth around gender and sexuality while affirming our love for these young people.

In all circumstances, we need to continue to speak for a biblical view of sexuality, a view which values and honours God's good design and seeks the good of our neighbours. 

*Levi Minderhoud is the BC Manager of ARPA Canada. For more information on this issue, visit [ARPACanada.ca](http://ARPACanada.ca) to read our new policy report on conversion therapy.*

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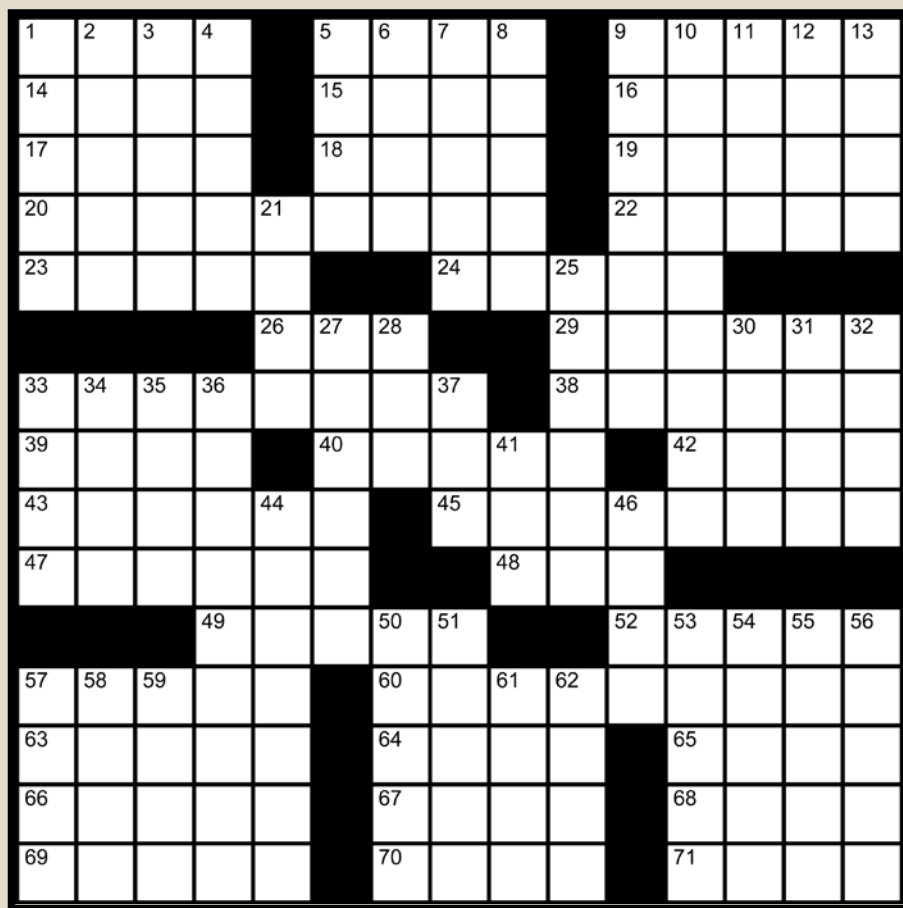
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# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 5-3

## PUZZLE CLUES

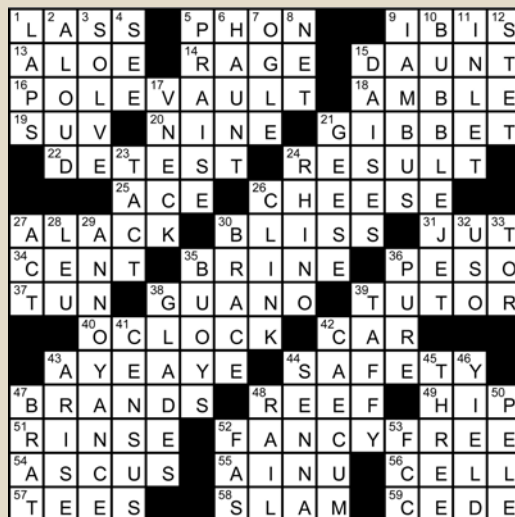
### ACROSS

1. "came into the banqueting \_\_\_\_" (Dan. 5)
5. "Wail, \_\_\_\_ of Bashan..." (Zech. 11)
9. "Get \_ \_\_\_\_ of yourself!"
14. "\_\_\_\_ of influence" (2 Cor. 10)
15. What an actor holds on stage
16. I love all \_\_\_\_ sports..." (Mario Andretti)
17. People can \_\_\_\_ books – or other people.
18. Light beige or fawn
19. \_ \_\_\_\_, to drink your soda \_\_\_\_!
20. Transportation to and in the ambulance
22. Scatter seed a second time
23. This is to dye for (skin or hair).
24. What Christmas would first do to Scrooge

26. Flirtatiously shy (at least in some company?)
29. Ships protecting a trade convoy
33. Installment of television or radio series
38. Storage chests for camping food or drink
39. "\_\_\_\_ out my transgressions." (Ps. 51)
40. Immature rodent-hunter
42. "Vengeance is \_\_\_\_" (Rom. 13)
43. Flat-bottomed boat used in fur trade
45. Graduate's place for autographs
47. One who traps animals
48. "a day of... battle \_\_\_\_" (Zeph. 1)
49. Deliberately setting fires
52. Standard English course assignment
57. \_\_\_\_ Arabia (borders 56 Down)

60. Focus of Elon Musk's SpaceX company
63. Administrative body of the Vatican
64. Body part that gets (bad) splints
65. Powder used in pickling recipes
66. Of an area; singular homophone of 44 Down
67. \_\_\_\_ Stanley Gardner: Perry Mason creator
68. December 25: the \_\_\_\_ of Christmas
69. Traditional Asian flatbreads
70. Takes to court; seeks damages
71. First garden; scene of first sin

### LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTION



SERIES 5-2

### DOWN

1. This kind of treatment is part of hardship.
2. Sharp mountain ridge
3. "as he could not \_\_\_\_ the facts" (Acts 21)
4. "those who... are heavy \_\_\_\_" (Matt. 11)
5. Org. of Petroleum Exporting Countries
6. Basic structure of architecture
7. Ref. churches in South; dictatorship in North
8. "Will the LORD \_\_\_\_ forever...?" (Ps. 77)
9. In a loving, tender manner (musical direction)
10. "drippings of the \_\_\_\_" (Ps. 19)
11. \_\_\_\_ Elevator Company
12. Slang for crazy
13. "As I... \_\_\_\_ near to Damascus," (Acts 22)
21. Talk o' Mexican cuisine – you said it!
25. "Your lips drip \_\_\_\_" (Song of Solomon 4)
27. O dour smells! Do you see what I mean?
28. Sounds like you wood use this for a longbow
30. Miscellaneous collection or variety act
31. DIY work in your home (short form)

32. Epic overland migration (by Star?)
33. "knowledge \_\_\_\_ and flows" (James Rollins)
34. "they do not understand his \_\_\_\_" (Micah 4)
35. Smallest Greek letter; tiny amount
36. Unit of solid angle, like *radian* in 2-D
37. As cunning as a fox
41. European Economic Community
44. Antennas; specific skiing maneuvers
46. Cereal grass used for whisky and bread
50. Refreshing gathering places in desert
51. First prime minister of India
53. Dashiell Hammett detective Sam \_\_\_\_
54. Dish served before main course
55. Opposite of obtuse
56. Country bordered by Oman and 57 Across
57. Examine intently; determine poetic meter
58. Distinctive atmosphere around a person
59. Crystalline compound found in urine
61. Get all stirred (up); irk
62. "O foolish \_\_\_\_," (Luke 24)

# USING THIS TOOL

Big whoppers aren't all that compelling the first time they're heard. But even absolute craziness can start sounding normal if repeated often enough. Cutting off key bits can make a him a her? That's nuts, we say...the first few hundred times. But the longer the lie persists, the more likely we start questioning: "Is all the world gone batty...or might it just be me?"

Then a timely article can be the we-are-with-you encouragement that Solomon touts in Eccl 4:12:

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

## ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

*Reformed Perspective* is here to be an encouragement, but it is also a tool our readership can use to be an encouragement to others (1 Thess. 5:11).

How so?

Do you know some students struggling with what their sociology professor is telling them about white privilege? Are your 25-year-old's friends telling him that smoking marijuana is no big deal? Is an older acquaintance feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of parenting her parents? We've tackled these topics and many more. They're all easy to find via the search engine on the top right of

ReformedPerspective.ca, and easy to share via a link on Facebook, or a tweet, or even an old-fashioned email. You can offer friends and family an article that speaks to these issues with advice from God's Word. You can be an encouragement by sharing what encouraged you.

## THE WORLD NEEDS TO HEAR THIS


And even as the print magazine goes out to like-minded brother and sisters, the online edition regularly reaches folks who don't agree, and who've never even been exposed to solid biblical thinking.

We might not learn how exactly a fellow in Nigeria found an article on Abraham Kuyper's sphere sovereignty. But other times it's quite clear that a friend shared a link on their own Facebook page. And sometimes that link is then shared by yet others.

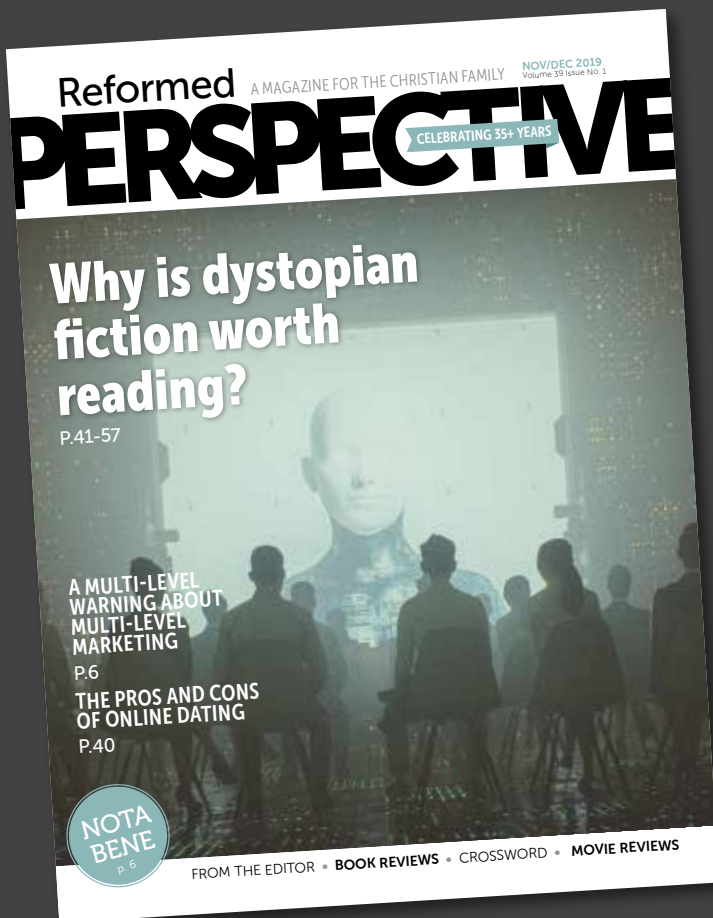
So, you don't know exactly what to say to a coworker about when life begins and what makes the unborn valuable? Maybe you want to explain to a neighbor how science isn't as infallible as it is sometimes made to seem? Or do you want to show anyone who'll listen that media bias impacts the news we get to hear? We can help with that. We're a tool at the ready, and there's any number of ways to use us.

You can send an email with an article link and a question or two to get the conversation going. Or you can post that article to Facebook or Twitter, again,

with a question or comment to get things going. Think a steady stream of articles could be helpful for someone? You can tell them that signing up for our email newsletter is as easy as heading to [Tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter](http://Tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter).

Whether you use us to encourage your brothers and sisters, or you use us to start a ruckus amongst your friends and family who don't yet know the Lord, we are here to be a trusty (and trustworthy) tool you can rely on. Please put us to use! 





# Monthly donors are helping us reach the world!

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

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

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

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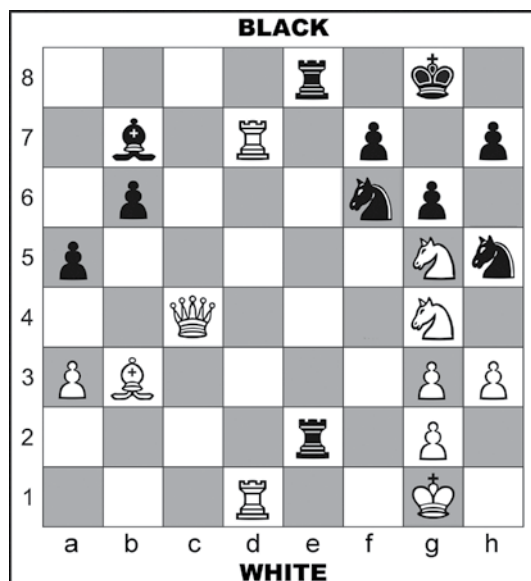
Thank you for standing with us as we together proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all spheres of life!

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



# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

## Chess Puzzle #255



## Riddles for Punsters #255 - "How would You Frame the Situation?"

Why did Jim not like getting a door prize he was given for being the hundredth visitor at the handyman convention?

Jim was a Christian as well as a carpenter and did not know how to h\_\_\_\_\_e door prizes based on random chance and felt rather un\_\_\_\_\_ed by the whole situation.

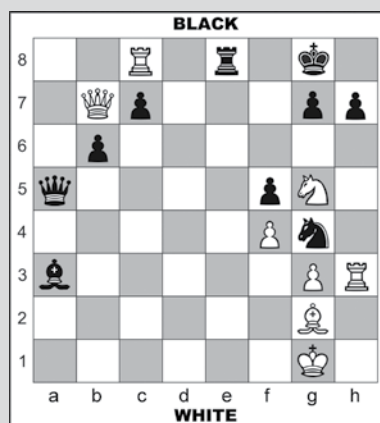
## Problem to Ponder # 255 - "Adding Up the Points on Games Night?"

Diana and Elizabeth and Patricia played several games of dominoes. The player with the least number of points overall would win the competition. In the first game Diana had 32 points and Elizabeth three more than half as many as Diana. In the second game Patricia had twice as many points as Diana and the average of their points that game was 15. In the third game Patricia had one third as many points as Elizabeth and the total of their points that game was 36. In the fourth game Patricia had three times as many points as Diana and the difference in their number of points that game was 18. Who won the dominoes competition?

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

## Last Issue's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #254



### WHITE TO MATE IN 3

NOTE: If White starts with RxB1, black plays B-B1 and 3 more moves are needed for mate

#### Descriptive Notation

1. B-Q5 ch K-B1
2. NxP ch K-K2
3. QxBP mate

#### OR

1. B-Q5 ch QxB
2. QxQ ch K-R1
3. KRxcP mate

#### IF

1. B-Q5 ch K-R1
2. KRxcP mate wins sooner

#### Algebraic Notation

1. Bg2-d5 + Kg8-f8
2. Ng5xh7 + Kf8-e7
3. Qb7xc7 ++

#### OR

1. Bg2-d5 + Qa5xd5
2. Qb7xd5 + Kg8-h8

3. Rh3xh7 ++

#### IF

1. Bg2-d5 + Kg8-h8
2. Rh3xh7 ++ wins sooner

### BLACK TO MATE IN 3

#### Descriptive Notation

1. ----- Q-B4 ch
2. K-R1 Q-B8 ch
3. B-B1 QxB mate

#### IF

1. ----- Q-B4 ch
2. K-B1 Q-KB7 or QB8 mate

#### OR

1. ----- B-B4 ch
2. K-R1 Q-R8 ch
3. B-B1 QxB mate

#### IF

1. ----- B-B4 ch
2. K-B1 Q- K8 or N4 mate

#### OR

1. ----- Q-K8 ch
2. B-B1 Q-B7 ch
3. K-R1 QxB mate

#### Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Qa5-c5 +

2. Kg1-h1 Qc5-c1 +
3. Bg2-f1 Qc1xf1 ++

#### IF

1. ----- Qa5-c5 +
2. Kg1-f1 Qc5-c1 or f2 ++

#### OR

1. ----- Ba3-c5 +
2. Kg1-h1 Qa5-a1 +
3. Bg2-f1 Qa1xf1 ++

#### IF

1. ----- Ba3-c5 +
2. Kg1-f1 Qa5-e1 or b5 ++

#### OR

1. ----- Qa5-e1+
2. Bg2-f1 Qe1-f2 +
3. Kg1-h1 Qf2xf1 ++

## Answers: Problem to Ponder

### #254 - "After Picking those Vegetables You Can Sit and Veg!"

Four boys, namely Jim, Abdul, Hans and Ivan, helped their mom pick vegetables from their garden on a Saturday. There were red potatoes, purple beets, yellow onions and orange carrots. Each boy picked a different type of vegetable and each had a different size of reusable bag (made of recycled materials), namely small, medium, large or extra large. The boys' ages increase when their names are written in alphabetical order with the exception of Abdul. Jim is the second oldest. The older a boy, the larger the collection bag he

uses. Abdul picked a vegetable that is not purple and Hans picked a vegetable that is neither purple nor orange. The color of the vegetable that Ivan picked starts with a letter that sometimes is used as a vowel. Which type of vegetable did Abdul pick and what size of bag did Ivan use?

Hans (the youngest) picked red potatoes with a small bag, Ivan (the second youngest) picked yellow onions using a medium bag, Jim (the second oldest) picked purple beets using a large bag and Abdul (the oldest) picked orange carrots using an extra large bag. Thus, **Abdul picked orange carrots and Ivan used a medium size bag.**

## Answers: Riddle for Punsters

### #254 - "If you know business, go into show business?"

Why did the pig farmer become an actor? He liked to act like a real **ham** when on stage.

Why did the baker become an actor? He like to do **role** playing.

Why did the boxer become a comedian on stage? When telling a joke he was good at giving the **punch** line.

# WHOSE AM I?

Are you your job?  
Does your gender define  
who you are? Or your  
ethnicity? Your feelings?

Or is your identity  
found in a truth far  
more substantial  
and stable...and controversial?

by Chris deBoer

*Crazy, out-dated, offensive...*

These are a few of the words we could expect to hear if, in the midst of our culture's identity debates, we offered up this answer: "I am not my own..."

This is the first line of the very first answer in the Heidelberg Catechism and it'll seem all the more absurd when we share the question that prompts it: "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" It's common enough for people to struggle with their purpose in life, and to want to know what happens after death, so the world can appreciate a *question* like this one. But the *answer*? That'll strike most as incredibly out of line with 21st Century thinking!

I couldn't agree more.

## A STUMBLING BLOCK...

The first question and answer in the Heidelberg Catechism is more relevant and more revolutionary today than when it was first penned. Here is Lord's Day 1 in full:

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.

The confession that "I belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ" may be a stumbling block for many. My body is not my own? My life is not my own to do with as I please? What do you mean, "Christ has fully paid for all my sins...?" He bought you and He set you free? How does that work? Doesn't His purchase of you, make you His? If you are His, are you really free? Isn't it hyperbole to suggest that, "without the will of your heavenly Father not a hair can fall from your head?"

Why would God care about such minute details? If God controls all these things, are you experiencing true freedom?

These are real objections that people utter when they consider what it means to become a Christian. They find the instruction of Christ in Luke 9: 23- 24 too much:

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

While Christians understand that their identity is in Christ, others cannot fathom giving up their autonomy, denying themselves, or submitting their entire being to Him. They would rather create their own sense of identity, and they might even consider adding a slice of religion to their life...but only a slice. Christians confess Christ as Lord of their whole life but the world says, "I am my own god. They put *self* at the centre, and rank everything else by how relevant it is to the all-important *me*. Whether it is my



The Board of **Covenant Canadian Reformed School** invites applications for:

### **HIGH SCHOOL MATH/SCIENCE TEACHER**

Covenant Canadian Reformed School (CCRS) is a vibrant K-12 school community with a current student population of around 260. We are situated 3 km east of the hamlet of Neerlandia and approximately 25 km north of the Town of Barrhead.

Between these two locations there are three Canadian Reformed congregations and one United Reformed congregation. CCRS is located about an hour and a half north of the cities of Edmonton and St. Albert.

We anticipate growth over the next number of years and are currently planning for future expansion.

Under our Father's blessing of a broad, highly supportive membership base and current levels of government funding in Alberta, we are able to offer a very attractive wage and benefits package.

We encourage energetic, qualified (or soon to be qualified) educators, committed to Reformed Christian education, to apply.

All interested individuals can apply by submitting a resume, a statement of faith, a philosophy of education, and references.

***We would love to arrange for you to visit our school and surrounding community and would be more than happy to provide flights and accommodations to make this possible!***

Please visit our school's website at [www.covenantschool.ca](http://www.covenantschool.ca)

Applications can be sent in writing to

3030 TWP RD 615A  
County of Barrhead, AB T0G 1R2

or to the Board secretary:

**Mrs. Tara Tiggelaar** - [secretary@covenantschool.ca](mailto:secretary@covenantschool.ca)

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

**Mr. Jordan Tiggelaar** – 780-307-8449  
[chairman@covenantschool.ca](mailto:chairman@covenantschool.ca)

or the principal:

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

job, my sexual orientation, my race, my religion or lack thereof, my children, my spouse, etc., these are just aspects that contribute to my self-made identity.

### **WHEN WE ARE CHRIST'S IT CHANGES EVERYTHING**

When we die to sin and self, and have Christ as Lord of our life, it's then that we find our true identity. As a result, it is not my job, my spouse, my children, or my race that give me my meaning. It is belonging to Christ, living by the power of the Holy Spirit, and being a child of the Father, that sets me free!

The implications of this are profound!

This changes how I view my wife, a fellow believer and saint belonging to Christ. She is not simply a spouse; she is a sister-in-Christ, with whom I have a very special relationship. She is a gift of God and I must treat her as Christ treats the church. I must do all that I can to husband her and to cause her to flourish.

This has implications for me as a dad. I do not just have children; I have covenant children. My wife and I must work in harmony with God's Word and Spirit, together, to train and instruct our children in the way that they should go. When they grow older, this training will not leave them (Prov. 22:6). I need to disciple my children and care for them as a representative of the Father's perfect love for us.


It impacts my work. I am not simply a teacher – I am a teacher of God's truth, and I need to work hard to ensure that this is what students receive. I am a teacher of God's covenant children and need to assist parents in training the youth of the church in godliness, training them to fulfill the calling they have as children of God.

This also has implications for how I treat my physical self. My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, the living God! My body, heart, soul, and mind belong to him! I need to be intentional in what I let my body and my mind ingest. I have to treat my body as God so desires and that means being faithful to my wife, even prior to marriage. I have to be careful with my heart, fighting against covetousness and discontent. That means waking up every day with an attitude of gratitude – this day provides me another opportunity to serve Him; may all my efforts be directed rightly!

### **CONCLUSION**

The list could go on and on, couldn't it? There is not a single corner of my life that is not under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The way I spend money, time, and other resources, the kinds of friends I keep, the movies I watch, the attention I give to my Winnipeg Jets – all of this is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

This is truly a marvel: I am not my own, I belong to Jesus Christ; He paid for me and He set me free! He set me free to serve Him, to find my identity in Him. My life, my entire life is hidden in Christ! I am free indeed!

If this freedom eludes you, reach out to those you know who have this joy. It is not frivolous, meaningless, or constant. This joy ebbs and flows with the challenges of every day life. But it is deeply rooted and gives true meaning and purpose to life. This joy and freedom lets us live in joy under our King, Jesus Christ. I am not my own, I belong to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ. To Him alone belongs all glory! 



*“If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scripture than thou dost.” – William Tyndale*



# The Boy that Drove the Plow

by Christine Farenhorst

## CHAPTER 1

The Severn burbled alongside its banks. Longer than the Thames, and famous for its tidal bore, the river's source lay in the moorlands of mid-Wales and its murky depths flowed past the city of Gloucester in three separate channels. There was the western channel; the easternmost channel, also known as the Little Severn; and the formidable middle channel, the one carrying the greatest volume of water, known as the Great Severn. The middle channel was spanned by Westgate Bridge, the longest bridge in England and one much prized by all Gloucester citizens, for it brought much business to the area. It was the route over which much merchandise passed – merchandise such as wood, salt, cloth, corn, wine and cattle. It was also one of the pathways over which new thoughts and ideas crept into the city.

It was 1537. Thomas Drourie, a cattleman, reflected on these matters one early October morning as he guided his herd of cows along the crossover. Dark currents swirled below him. Drourie was a tall man, and for that reason was considered

prosperous. The height of most men in Gloucester averaged five and a half feet. Thomas' over six-foot stature was imposing. Yet when he smiled, the measure of his towering frame radiated friendliness. Dark of hair and swarthy of face, he was a lean, strong fellow, one who embodied hard work and resilience.

The hoofbeats of the cows echoed hollowly on the thick wooden slats. Trekking between his cattle, Thomas bellowed out a noisy, tuneless ditty. He'd noted his animals enjoyed music, for when he hummed or sang during milking the full udders spouted a greater amount of milk into his pails.

The bridge groaned and creaked with the collective weight of the party. Storms and flooding often wreaked damage on its timber anatomy. Almost a citizen itself, the Westgate was considered so dear to Gloucester that often folks would leave a bequest for its upkeep and repair.

"Thomas!"

Startled, he stopped his singing. Turning sideways, he peered down into the face of a Franciscan priest who had managed to

edge in next to him between the cattle. The man flanked Thomas, although his plump form in its loose-flapping, wide-sleeved, cassock barely reached the height of the farmer's shoulders. This man, Thomas thought to himself as he always did when he saw the cleric, was afflicted with belly-cheer, afflicted with gluttony. "I haven't seen you at Mass for a while, Thomas." The words were calmly but loudly spoken, as need be, for the commotion of the cattle made soft talk impossible.

Thomas gave no answer, but calmly continued walking, steering his animals towards the Northgate Street. He knew that Father Serly, for this was the name of the priest, would turn towards Westgate Street, where St. Nicholas' Church stood at its far end and where he and a number of other friars resided.

"Thomas!" Father Serly's voice was more intense now and no longer neutral.

"It's been busy." It was the only answer Thomas voiced before turning onto Northgate.

There were four main roads leading in and out of Gloucester, all meeting at a main

intersection where the town's high cross stood. All were named from the gates by which they entered town. Thus there were the Eastgate, Northgate, Southgate and Westgate streets. Northgate led to London; Southgate to Bristol; Eastgate to Oxford; and Westgate to Wales. People walked, rode in carts, and journeyed by horse on these unpaved roads. Some four thousand citizens made their home in Gloucester.

Passing the town hall, Thomas longingly eyed the nearby New Inn. Its strong, massive external galleries and courtyards attracted pilgrims and visitors alike. How he yearned to go into the public house and drink some of its frothing ale for he was thirsty after his long morning walk. But with these newly bought cows as his companions, he was forced to amble past the gabled and timbered structure, well aware that the priest probably still stood at the crossroad, eyeing his retreating form suspiciously.

The truth was that Thomas held no high opinion of the local priests, or of any priests for that matter, and only occasionally attended Mass. A devoted cattleman, he spent much time on his farm, waxing poetic to anyone who would listen about the state of his cows, calves, and steers. Praising their rich, dark brown color, he often remarked with a twinkle in his eyes that the color resembled the tint of Dory's hair. And wasn't she a beauty? Dory was his wife. The bulls in his herd, on the other hand, hued a blue-black shade, and while showing them off he would point to his own hair and grin. All of the Drourie cattle sported white bellies and were finch-backed. That is to say, they all had a white finching stripe along their spine, a stripe which continued on over the tail. Well-developed horns with black tips crowned their heads. Thomas Drourie was inordinately proud of his livestock. Noted for providing strong and docile draught oxen, the beasts also proved

to be tender beef when roasted on the spit. As well, they were valued for the richness of their milk. The fat in that milk made a full, hard cheese – cheese with a buttery, mellow, nutty taste. Thomas sold it at the Gloucester market on Westgate Street. Aged for four months, double Gloucester cheese was popular throughout the region.

Lizzie Drourie was born later that same day. Arriving home, Thomas learned that Janey, the midwife, had been closeted in the bedroom with Dory all night. A tinge of fear shivered through his stomach. By his calculations, it was a trifle early for the child to be born.

"We had to send for her about an hour after you left yesterday to pick up the cows at Noent, master. But it's over now," Nelly, the kitchen maid, assured him. "Janey just came down before you came home to say all's well and that you were free to come up."



"The Severn burbled alongside its banks. Longer than the Thames, and famous for its tidal bore, the river's source lay in the moorlands of mid-Wales and its murky depths flowed past the city of Gloucester..."

Indeed, it was all well, and he relaxed moments later at the bedside of his Dory, his long legs sprawled out under the great bed. She looked weary, mounds of her dark brown hair spread across the pillow. But though her face was exhausted, it was also contented and he was lost in admiration of her.

"It's a girl, Thomas," she whispered, "a bonny girl, and I'd like to name her Elizabeth."

He was of a mind to let her have whatever she wanted and nodded in agreement. "Lizzie, then," he answered softly.

Janey tutted as she bustled about, carrying the swaddled newborn. A moment later, Thomas curiously peered into the tightly bound bundle she laid into his arms and he suddenly recalled with some alarm that it had been this very day a year ago that William Tyndale had been burned at the stake. He said as much even as he was overcome by the dark eyes of his firstborn daughter. But the memory of Tyndale somehow clouded the joy. "It's a bad omen for the child," he added after contemplating Lizzie.

"Oh, tush," responded Janey, who had little ken of such as Tyndale, "the child is beautiful, your wife is doing well, and you're just a bit daft not to note it."

Dory smiled, and Thomas grudgingly had to admit that all seemed exceptionally propitious with both mother and child. So after sitting a while, stroking his wife's hand and intermittently peering into the cradle where Lizzie had been laid, he left the birthing room for the stable where there was ample room to stretch his legs. And as the door shut behind him, Janey commented disdainfully that recalling the death of someone they had not even known, was ridiculous.

"But," Dory protested weakly, her mind mostly on the fact that she had just born her first child, "Master Tyndale was, after all, a Gloucester man, Janey. He was from our area. It seems clear to me that all he wanted to do was give the English people the Bible to read. And although I have not read it for myself, I cannot help but think that such a gift had no evil intent. They say that Queen Anne," she added a moment later, "the poor lass who was executed last year, had a small Bible, a richly ornament-

ed one, and that she wrote the words 'Anna Regina Angliae' around its edges."

It was a long sentence, a bit of a ramble, and she yawned towards the end.

"We've no need to read the Bible, lass," the midwife cheerfully responded, "Why we've got the pope, haven't we, to tell us what we need to know?"

"Yes, but," Dory rejoined, her thoughts becoming fuzzier, "now that King Henry has made himself the head of the church, we haven't got the pope any more, have we? Besides that, I once saw master Tyndale here in Gloucester. He was giving alms to a beggar, and seemed to me to be a most kind and gentle man."

After these words, totally drained of her physical energy, she fell asleep. For a brief minute before she continued her cleaning up, Janey stood at the foot of the bed, smiling tender-heartedly at the sight of the spent, young woman. Then she continued her tasks, muttering softly to herself that King Henry was not really interested in being the head of the Church and surely everyone in England knew it. Was it not obvious that the man was only interested in power? And that which mostly occupied his waking days was passing that power on to a male heir. His third wife, Queen Jane, was about to give birth shortly and hadn't English people like herself been instructed to pray for the child to be a son? Wouldn't it be something to be the midwife in Hampton Court palace this month? Oh, well, Janey philosophized, even as she tucked a woolen coverlet around the newborn Lizzie, it really wasn't any of her concern. Then she smiled into Lizzie's wide-open, dark eyes.

"I stand to benefit from your birth, little one," she whispered to the baby, "and isn't that the truth of it! I'll be needed for a goodly while as your mother regains her strength, and the extra income is most welcome to me. I've six moppets at home and their appetite is as large as your father is tall."

Lizzie blinked and Janey smiled again.

## CHAPTER 2

In those days the meadowlands embracing Gloucester were dotted with farms. One of these was the Drourie farm. Comprising two hundred acres, more



The Canadian Reformed School Society of Edmonton, operating Parkland Immanuel Christian School, invites applications for the following teaching positions:

### 2020-2021 School Year ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL in ELEMENTARY

PICS is a Reformed K-12 school community that offers a vibrant, positive, exciting atmosphere, including competitive wages and a collaborative, professional environment that encourages and supports excellence in teaching. The school has a population of 440 students and is experiencing a time of significant increase in enrollment.

Applicants must be a professed member in good standing of a Canadian Reformed, United Reformed, or sister church, and must have the necessary post-secondary qualifications to teach in Alberta.

Closing Date: January 17, 2020

For further information please contact the Principal,

Mr. Ken Leffers  
Phone: (780) 444-6443 (school)  
(780) 297-8841 (home)  
[kleffers@parklandimmanuel.ca](mailto:kleffers@parklandimmanuel.ca)

OR

Mr. Wayne de Leeuw  
Chair of Personnel Committee  
[vicepresident@parklandimmanuel.ca](mailto:vicepresident@parklandimmanuel.ca)





Cornerstone Christian School  
in Lynden, Washington invites  
applications for a full time opening  
for the 2020/21 school year for:

## HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER

Our school has approximately 120 students in grades 1-12, excellent staff relations, a beautiful and functional facility, and a high level of community support. The Lynden area is an idyllic one, with access to a virtual cornucopia of outdoor leisure and recreational activities, and yet is within ninety minutes drive of the major urban centers of Vancouver, British Columbia, and Seattle, Washington.

Interested parties who are committed to serving in the field of Reformed Christian Education and who submit to Scripture as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity are encouraged to contact either:

Principal, Mr. Darryn Kleyn  
[dkleyn@cornerstoneschool.us](mailto:dkleyn@cornerstoneschool.us)  
(360) 318-0663

or

Chairman, Mr. Tim Faber  
[timfaber.us@gmail.com](mailto:timfaber.us@gmail.com)  
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Complete applications consisting of a résumé summarizing university and teaching qualifications, contact information for three references, and a statement of educational philosophy can be sent electronically to either of the above email addresses.

than half of it was arable, quite suitable for growing crops. Most of the remaining land was meadow with some woodland included. Thomas grew enough produce to feed his cattle. He also bred fine animals, made cheese, and sold what he did not need at market. It was a good way to live, he reflected, as he stroked the finching stripe of one of the cows. Feeling rather emotional because of Lizzie's birth, he preached softly to the animal. "There is a time to be born," he murmured, "and a time to die. This is Lizzie's time to live."

The cow lowed softly in response and Thomas ground his foot into the hay reflecting that it was perhaps not wise to think beyond what one could know. This daughter, this brand new Lizzie, might live a long, long life, and he fervently hoped that she would, but he should not presume. She might also be followed by more children. Perhaps he would have a son in the years to come, a strong son who would take over the farm when he himself became too old. Lizzie as well, when she grew older, could help around the house and Dory could teach her to become proficient in the cheese making. He smiled to himself, and Albert, the young stable hand, watched his master aimlessly fork some hay into the loft. Albert was only twelve, but a strong, strapping lad.

It was an inheritance that had conferred on Thomas the small but handsome, granite farmhouse. Endowed with demesne, land attached and retained for the owner's use, the two-storied home had a large kitchen, a bower room, and several side rooms. The projecting porch even boasted a parvise – an enclosed area surrounded by colonnades. The porch also led into a fine hall where the family ate. There were mulioned windows, oak-panelled walls and a sizeable fireplace. The premises suited Thomas and Dory very well, and they employed five servants, all of whom loved and respected them.

The district surrounding Gloucester was not only dotted with farms, it was also dotted with Articles – six articles, to be exact. Written by the king, these specific rules reminded the English who was in charge: not the Pope who lived in Italy, but Henry VIII who lived in England. Still a Catholic at heart, however, Henry's first article in-

sisted that his subjects continue to holding to transubstantiation – the belief that the bread at Mass was converted into the actual body and blood of Christ. The penalty for not believing this was death by burning at the stake.

Thomas Drourie sometimes pondered transubstantiation as he took care of his cattle. The word was as long as a cow's tail. Why the king should care that he, Thomas Drourie, should believe this, was a mystery to him. One way or the other, would he not be the same English farmer? Stroking the side of a cow, he grimaced at the thought of church attendance. He liked not the priests that served the Eucharist and avoided going to Mass.

Besides that, there were new ideas coming to the fore in Gloucester, Protestant ideas. Thomas and his fellow citizens were well aware of them. Many deep, and often heated, discussions took place in the New, the Boatman, the Ram, the Bull, the Swan, and other inns in Gloucester. There was open dissension along the English countryside and in the city. Lately a local weaver attending St. Mary de Crypt church on Southgate Street had denied the doctrine of purgatory because he believed that the Bible did not teach it.

Irritably Thomas slapped the cow's buttocks and the animal turned its head, fixing its great eyes on her master. Thomas paid no heed. His thoughts wandered on. Although he had no stomach for dissension, he liked neither the church's nor the king's ways. Was it not so that the king also had a child named Lizzie, a little maid all of four years old? And did this child not wander around all alone in the royal palace because her mother had been first divorced and then beheaded? Ah, his own small Lizzie, although not a princess, was much more blessed. Did she not have a Dory to care for her?

Lizzie Drourie was an only child for the first five years of her life. Strangely enough, the year after her birth, King Henry issued a royal license that the Bible might openly be sold to and read by all English people without any danger of recrimination. Another royal order was issued as well, appointing a copy of the Bible to be placed in every parish church. It was to be raised



"I believe the bull is bellowing in a B flat and I shall try to outdo him," Philip answered and proceeded to draw his bow across the strings."

upon a desk so that everyone might come and read it.

Overnight Gloucester Abbey became Gloucester Cathedral. Clergy replaced the monks not just in Gloucester, but in all the monasteries and convents throughout England, Wales and Ireland. Disbanded, their incomes were appropriated for the crown. Any resistance was viewed as treasonable. Under heavy threats almost all of the religious houses joined the new English church, swearing to uphold the King's divorce and remarriage.

Gloucester Cathedral acquired a Bible also. John Wakeman, the first Bishop of Gloucester, made sure it was placed in an accessible spot and soon citizens cautiously dropped by for a look. Thomas and Dory came as well. Those who were able bought the book from printers, book sellers, or traveling tinkers. If they could not read, and many could not, they persuaded others to read Scripture to them. How different, Thomas and Dory pondered, had been the years before Lizzie's birth. At that time

anyone wishing to read the Bible had to do so secretly.

It was not until just before their second child was born, that Thomas and Dory also purchased a Bible from a traveling tinker. They'd known Philip for a long time, for he was wont to stop by their farm once or twice every year. A versatile man, his cart was filled with all manner of things. Carrying a pocketful of news about current events, he was also well-versed in languages, music, and Scripture.

Thomas, who could read, was much taken with his Bible. Sitting Lizzie upon his knees, in the evenings he read out loud to the child and to Dory. He did not understand all he read, but he felt privileged to be reading. Dory listened attentively from her easy chair by the fire and rubbed her swollen stomach. Another Drourie child grew large within her belly. She wondered if the baby could hear any of the beautiful words that Thomas read. Leaning back, she smiled contentedly. They had never before heard the Bible in their own language.

On the day Dory went into labor, Thomas sent Albert, who was now almost seventeen, for Janey and gave instructions to the dairymaid to take Lizzie to the bower room and keep her occupied, away from her mother. Janey, arriving shortly afterwards, first made sure all the doors were unlocked. She explained that it was an old custom and aided childbirth. Thomas was in two minds about this, but Janey insisted. And indeed, it proved to be an easy birth. The boy child, although tiny, appeared healthy. Janey bathed the little, red body before an ash wood fire. Afterwards she had him suckle on a cloth dipped in cinder tea, water into which a coal had been dropped. When she saw Thomas staring, she explained good-naturedly that all knew this drove Satan away.

"I don't recall you doing that when Lizzie was born," Thomas commented as he watched her, rather uneasy about the matter as it smacked of superstition.

"But you weren't there all the time, now were you, Master Thomas," she replied



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calmly, "and haven't things been well with that lass?"

Speaking to himself in an undertone, Thomas strode over and lifted the newborn out of Janey's arms, pulling the cloth out of the baby's mouth. "Enough now," he said, "there are other things you can find to do. And one of them is to tell Albert to distribute bread, cheese and ale to the poor of Gloucester. Go on with you and I'll stay with Dory and the babe."

His son whimpered in his arms. The face was red and wrinkled, reminding Thomas of his old deceased father. Sitting down by the bed, he studied his wife. Two children she had now born him. He was a rich man indeed. Dory was almost asleep but she opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"We'll name him Thomas for you. But it must be Little Thomas, for you are so much bigger."

And that is how the boy became known throughout Gloucester.

## CHAPTER 3

During his first year, Little Thomas drank sporadically and was prone to mewling. Excessive crying caused discoloration around his eyes. Janey concocted a solution of nightshade sap, soaked a clean rag in it and laid it on the baby's eyes.

"Perhaps he has cramps," Dory ventured to guess, "I've heard that laying babies down flat and pulling their legs straight can help them belch?"

But Janey only smiled at her.

Lizzie proved to be a most helpful and patient sister, child that she herself was. Rocking her brother for hours on end, she often changed his clout, sang to him and kissed him.

"She is a better mother than I am," Dory confided to Thomas, "and has the patience of a saint. I heard her say the other day 'Little Thomas, I won't ever leave you, even if you cry for a year.'"

Thomas smiled. "He will grow out of this crying and this colic, Dory," he promised, "Just wait and see."

It was true. By the time Little Thomas turned toddler, he was thriving; and when the child turned six, although still small, he was so full of mischief that the scullery maid was in fear of him. Intensely curious,

he was also a naïve boy. Once, after cook had wrung the necks of several pigeons in preparation for squab pie, leaving them in the kitchen on the table, she came back to find the boy holding onto one of the dead birds. Blood all over his hands, shirt and breeches, she asked what he thought he was doing.

"I thought perhaps," he answered with a child's logic, "that if you wrung the neck the other way, the pigeon might come back to life."

Then he proceeded to do just that. Shocked, the cook took the bird out of his hands. "Growing chuff-headed, are you? Away with you," she retorted, "or I'll put you into the pie as well."

Little Thomas loved Philip the tinker and often followed him about the farm when he came to call. Because Philip was kind, exemplary of character, and learned, Thomas and Dory did not mind in the least. They hoped the tinker would nuzzle little Thomas in piety. The truth was that Philip was a highly educated man. Able to read and write, as well as play the viol, Thomas and Dory eventually asked him to become their son's tutor.

Just prior to Little Thomas' birth, Henry VIII had founded a school in Gloucester. Previously there had been a school in the Abbey of St. Peter, but because all monasteries had been closed, that school no longer functioned. The headmaster of the new school was a solemn man and one who exacted strict obedience.

But because of his impishness, misdemeanours and disregard for authority, Little Thomas was not a favorite student. The boy was, in fact, not fitting in very well at all, and was frequently in trouble with the headmaster. This pained Thomas and Dory greatly, for little Thomas was a gifted child. His almost photographic memory enabled him not only to read well, but also to quote Latin and Scripture texts at will. The boy's greatest offence had been climbing the bell tower with some friends, and swinging the clapper loudly during a service, thus bringing shame on himself and his family. He had capped that escapade by putting a duck egg under the cover of the headmaster's bed and by hanging the man's slippers from the branch of a tree a week later. The headmaster did not want to see him back



for at least a year, or until, as he had gravely said to Dory and Thomas, such a time as the boy had learned to unquestioningly obey rules and regulations.

Thomas, who had let his son feel the backside of his hand on more than one occasion, was at his wits end. Several times neighbors had suggested that little Thomas was heading towards a wicked end and that his parents must see to it that he was disciplined or he would turn into a ne'er-do-well. It was at precisely this time that Dory and Thomas asked Philip if he would stay and tutor the child. After some careful consideration Philip agreed to do this for a time, thus becoming a permanent resident of the Drourie farm.

Change was blowing through England during the children's early formative years. In 1547 King Henry VIII died and was carried to his grave in pomp and splendour. Edward VI, Henry's son, was crowned in his place. Although only nine years old, Edward had been instructed by Protestant teachers and his youthful heart was warmly turned towards the Reformation. He was a child used by God and one of the first things young Edward did was to overturn his father's Six Articles.

A few years after Edward's ascent to the throne, little Thomas turned both eleven and more intractable. The boy, who attended church regularly with his father, mother, Lizzie and Philip, heard Dr. Williams preach in one of the churches in Gloucester. Dr. Williams was the city's chancellor. A recent convert to Protestantism, Williams had publicly chosen the Protestant faith over the Catholic faith.

It is strange how God uses men's words to change hearts, even very young hearts. And so it was on the day on which Dr. Williams preached, that Little Thomas, for so he was still known, was transformed.

"The sacrament," so Dr. Williams echoed solemnly forth from the fine pulpit as he spoke of the Mass, "is to be received spiritually by faith. It is not to be received carnally as the papists have heretofore taught."

Now these were difficult words, and yet Little Thomas repeated them verbatim to Philip, his new teacher, as they were out

walking together. "What think you, Master Philip," he asked, "that these words mean?"

The tinker did not respond immediately. But after some thirty or so steps, he finally spoke. "First of all, I think that we must never in our thoughts or words, pity the Lord Jesus for dying on the cross."

The child looked up at him questioning. He did not understand. "To pity someone," the tinker went on, "is to place yourself on a higher level. Our Savior Jesus Christ, is Lord over all and never on a lower level than we are. What think you? That we can make Him bread and kill Him again and again? He died once, child, and that willingly, of His own accord."

Overhead a lark, nondescript and brown, sang an extravagant melody. "I think," Philip went on, "that it might help you to call to mind the time that Jesus was eating bread with His disciples in the Upper Room. Do you recall it?"

Little Thomas nodded.

"Picture in your mind then, their gathering around a wooden table, a table such as we eat from together in the great hall. Hear in your heart what Jesus said to them, and says to us now, as He broke the bread: 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'"

As they were walking, the pair were traipsing through one of the fields adjoining the farm. Philip carried his viol case for the idea was that there was to be a music lesson out in the quiet of a pastureland. There were cattle grazing some distance away.

"Jesus did not mean that



"Father Serly...had survived Edward's reign by outwardly conforming to Protestantism. However, as soon as Mary ascended the throne and papist rules were back, he emerged ready to wage war on anyone who was not attending Mass."

He was actually present in the bread, Thomas. What Jesus meant was that whenever people would eat the bread in the future, they were to recollect, to remember, that He offered up His body. This He did on the cross shortly after that supper, Little Thomas. And we are to remember this and to believe it."

Again, a melodious jumble of clear notes and trills rang through the sky overhead. The boy tilted his head up to gaze after the lark. The bird sang as it flew. Little Thomas stared up at the creature. He appeared to be not listening.

"To remember and believe that Christ died for you," the tinker went on, making his words simpler, even as he stood next to the child, "is to know that you have eternal life. And then you can joyfully sing even as yonder lark."

As the boy still remained quiet, he went on slowly, probing the heart. "You are getting too old to be known as Little Thomas. I think I will call you Tom from now on. Do you believe what I have just told you, Tom?"

The child nodded and followed up the nodding with a question. "Can we have a music lesson now, Master Philip?"

Now it was so, that Philip was proficient in viol playing and, at Thomas' and Dory's

request, he was beginning to pass this skill on to their son. A distant relative of the violin, the viol was a bowed instrument with frets. Flat-backed, it was played while set on the ground between a player's legs. Its tone was quiet but had a distinct, low quality. A gentleman's instrument, it was played in salons, whereas violins were more often played on streets to accompany dances or to lead in wedding processions. The Drouries hoped the learning of the viol might calm their child and stand him to good advantage.

Philip concurred with Tom's wish. "Fine, child. Let us sit ourselves down on this log."

They had come to a small copse. A field lay in front of them and a forest behind them.

Philip took the viol out of its bag, and both seated themselves on an old, fallen horse chestnut tree trunk lying in front of the thicket. It was quiet, except for the lowing of some distant cattle.

"Hold the bow," Philip instructed his pupil, propping up the instrument between the child's legs, "betwixt the end of your thumb and the two foremost fingers of your right hand." Tom eagerly reached for the convex stick. He loved the music Philip often made in the front room as they sat evenings by the fireplace. The viol's body

was light and the six strings seemed to him to be magical.

"Now fasten the thumb and first finger of your left hand on the stalk." Philip knelt down in front of the boy. His hands instructed the much smaller hands – hands which worked fearfully hard at contorting fingers to meet the requirements. It was difficult and awkward, because this was the first lesson. Through his concentration, Tom thought he heard a snorting sound. Looking up over Philip's shoulder, his hands froze. One of his father's bulls, massive and terrifying, the black tips of its white horns aimed directly at them, was galloping through the meadow in their direction.

"Master Philip!" he gasped, "Look yonder."

Philip turned his head and immediately stood up. Taking the viol away from Tom, he commanded the lad to stand behind him and then to quickly walk backwards towards the nearby woodland. He himself sat down on the tree trunk, calmly placing the viol downwards between his legs. Glancing over his shoulder he saw that Thomas was moving, moving slowly and woodenly.

"Obey me immediately," he ordered again, "Walk faster, Tom, walk faster, child. And find a tree behind which you can stand."

"What.... what about you?" the boy stuttered, tripping over both his words and his feet.

"I believe the bull is bellowing in a B flat and I shall try to outdo him," Philip answered and proceeded to draw his bow across the strings.

The low, quiet hum of the viol resonated across the field. It met the bull's wheezing midair. Though Tom was only some thirty feet away by this time, he stopped walking backwards at the same moment that he saw the bull stop charging. To his great amazement the boy beheld the animal shake its bulky head a few times and then peaceably turn and amble away.

"Well now, you have learned two rather unique and wonderful things, Thomas," Philip said, when the boy was back at his side. He kept playing as he spoke, sliding the bow over the strings, harmonious notes spilling onto the grass around and beyond

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like heavy raindrops.

"What?" the boy asked, his heart still thumping as he watched the backside of the massive bovine saunter away.

"Firstly that bulls do not like the key of B flat," smiled his teacher.

Tom grinned, although tremulously. "And what is the second," he demanded a moment later.

"That Almighty God keeps an eye on those who call out to Him in trouble."

"Oh," replied Tom, "and did you call out?"

"Yes," accorded his teacher.

The boy stared off into the field. The bull was still in retreat and seemed to not even remember their existence. He sighed heavily and then grinned again, high spirits returning.

"I am sorry for one thing," he joked, "and that is that Lizzie was not here to see it, for she will never believe me when I tell her what happened."

## CHAPTER 4

That very evening Tom fell ill of a high fever. It charged at him even as the bull had run at them with lowered horns through the field. He thrashed about so much that he woke Lizzie who slept in a room next to his, and she, in turn, woke her parents.

In spite of the fact that prayers were raised and many herbal remedies applied, Tom was long in recuperating. His eyes seemed affected and discharged pus. Oozing continually, the boy could not open them. Though the fever had abated after a few days, the infection lingered. Dory, Lizzie, and Philip took turns in sitting with the lad during the day. His father, although often looking in on his son, sat with the boy at night. It became apparent to all of them, after a week or two, that the boy would not regain his sight.

"I have just received a small booklet, Tom."

The boy was sitting up in bed. Philip, who came and went at will, regarded the boy with affection.

"What is it?"

"It is a catechism written by a man named Alberus, Erasmus Alberus. He wrote it in German and he wrote it for his children. I know that you are rapidly ap-

proaching manhood, Tom, but I thought you might like to learn its questions and answers if I repeat them to you."

Tom nodded.

"Alberus wrote the booklet so that the important parts of Scripture might be learned by rote."

"Please let me learn also." Startled, Philip turned and faced Thomas Drourie who stood in the doorway.

"I was not raised with Bible knowledge and often when I read I do not understand what I am reading. Perhaps I can learn with you and we can speak of these matters." It was a humble confession and Philip was moved. Thomas came in and sat on the edge of the bed. Philip smiled at him.

"Well, it would be fine for us to read and memorize together and I have added some questions and answers myself."

So they proceeded with simple but very direct dialogues.

*Do you love Jesus?*

*Yes.*

*Who is the Lord Jesus?*

*God and Mary's son.*

*How is His dear mother called?*

*Mary.*

*Why do you love Jesus? What has He done to make you love Him?*

*He has shed His blood for me.*

*Has he shed His blood only once or more than once as the Mass teaches?*

*Jesus has shed his blood only once on the cross at Calvary.*

*Could you be saved if He had not shed His blood for you?*

*Oh, no.*

*What would then have happened?*

*We would all be damned.*

*Is God's only begotten son, the son of the living God, your brother?*

*Yes.*

*So you are for sure a great and powerful king in heaven because Christ in heaven is your brother?*

*That I am, praise God.*

*How blessed you are! For the Lord has done a great thing for you.*

*Yes, He has. For He saves a poor, damned child from the Devil's kingdom*

*and gave me eternal life.*

The Drouries all benefited from these and other questions and answers that Philip taught them, and from the many conversations that took place around the bedside of the sick boy.

"Lizzie, Lizzie, I still can't see."

"I know. Hush, and lay down. If you move about too much, you will just get sicker again, Tom."

"Why are you calling me Tom, Lizzie?"

"Well, Master Philip says you are not Little Thomas any longer. You have grown so. And I have heard Master Philip call you Tom, and mother and father call you that too now. So I think I will call you Tom."

"Will I never see again, Lizzie?" The question was uttered in so plaintive a tone that Lizzie sighed.

"I hope you shall but I do not know."

"You are just being kind, are you not, Lizzie?"

She reached over and kissed her brother.

"I shall always be there to be your eyes, Tom. I shall tell you everything I see."

"It won't be the same."

She knew that he was right but was not sure how to respond. "I heard a new pastor preach in the cathedral, Tom. His name is John Hooper."

"He is not new, Lizzie," the boy replied, half-sitting up against the pillow, "he has been here for more than a year already."

"Oh," his sister said, disappointed that she could not tell him something he did not know, "and how would you have ken of that?"

"Master Philip has told me. He said John Hooper was called to preach before King Edward himself and that the king, who is only four years older than I am, Lizzie, very much liked him and then made him Bishop of our city of Gloucester."

"Oh," Lizzie repeated.

"John Hooper," Tom went on, his hands fidgeting with the blanket, "is an honorable man and one who does not like to wear the rich garments that priests and other clergy wear. He says a man should dress humbly, even as your heart should be humble. So you will not see him clad in a chimere and rochet, such as other bishops wear, Lizzie."

She smiled at her brother and reached





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

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over, patting his hand. "You are all about clothing now, are you, Tom?"

He grinned for a minute and then teased her. "And you are not? I have seen, when I could still see, how you constantly preen, Lizzie. And I know you do it for Albert. Only I do not know if father will allow you to marry him. He is after all, the hired hand."

Lizzie blushed and was glad for a moment that Tom could not see.

"But Albert is strong and a good lad," Tom continued, "And.... and I will not be able to help father plough now that I am.... now that I am.... well, now that I might be blind."

"Hush, Tom." It was all Lizzie could say, for tears welled up in her eyes.

"Master Philip says that John Hooper, for all that he is the high and revered bishop of Gloucester, is a very good man."

It was quiet for a spell. Lizzie's thoughts turned to Albert, who was such a dependable young man – a hard-working man, one on whom her father could count. Indeed, she did love him and admired him more than all the young men she knew. But father might object to a marriage, that Tom had indeed said rightly.

"Master Hooper," Tom's voice interrupted her contemplations, "has a wife and children, just like our father. His children, Master Philip says, are well mannered. It shames me, Lizzie, now that I lay here on this bed, to think of all the tricks and mischief I set about just a short while ago."

"Oh, you mustn't," began his sister, but he interrupted her.

"Why ever not, Lizzie," Tom responded, "for ...." And then he stopped and turned his face to the wall. He did remember with great shame the sorrow he had caused his parents who had been so eager for him to go to school. If his eyes had not been painfully oozing, he might well have wept like a child, for he felt so miserable.

"Tom," Lizzie's voice was soft. "Tom, you have been such a good brother to me always."

Tom swallowed audibly.

"John Hooper," he went on, his voice shaking a trifle, "is such a man as I would like to be. Perhaps I shall be a preacher, Lizzie. For surely people can be blind and still preach."

The girl smiled. Although she had great sympathy for her brother, she could not for the life of her picture him as a preacher.

"I know you are smiling," the boy said, "I can sense it, you minx of a sister! But I mean it. I have done with wasting time. I will ask Master Philip to school me more and more in Bible knowledge. And I also want to go and hear John Hooper preach. Master Philip has told me that at his home there is a table spread in the common hall with a good store of meat. It is daily beset of beggars and poor folk. Every day John Hooper eats with a certain number of poor folk, Lizzie. Is that not a great thing to do?"

The girl nodded, but then remembering that her brother could not hear a nod, spoke. "Yes, Tom."

"He also questions the poor folk at his table as to whether they know the Lord's prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and what they believe. And after this he sits down with them and eats."

"He sounds like a good man, Tom."

"Yes," her brother agreed, repeating, "and when I am better, Lizzie, you shall take me to hear him preach. I think he preaches in the cathedral and also betimes on the street."

It took the greater part of a year for Tom to fully recuperate. Afterwards he walked about with a cane – tapping out the space before him

– amazing himself that he was able to recall the steps, the ruts, the holes, the sights and sounds of the farm and thus ascertain where he was. After a few weeks, he ventured into Gloucester. At first Lizzie guided him. Later his mother accompanied him into town, or he would venture with Philip for a stroll into the country.

The lessons continued. The boy had grown in wisdom as he lay on his sickbed, drinking in the tinker's instruction with a great thirst. "Why did you not become a preacher, Master Philip?" he questioned his tutor one day as they were strolling.

"I don't know," the man answered honestly, "but I do think that God has used me to sell Bibles and to explain certain matters about Scripture to all sorts of country folk as I traveled the roads. These were good things to do and I think that God required it of me. God has tasked me with various matters over the years and right now, methinks, he has tasked me with you, Tom."

"Well, I am glad," the boy replied, and then, switching the topic, "I have heard tell in town that King Edward is ill with a fever. Have you heard this also, Master Philip?"

"Yes, I have," the tinker answered gravely, "and I fear it is common knowledge that our young and good monarch is dying. It is also said that there is a plot afoot to put his eldest sister Mary on the throne to succeed him."

"Mary?"

"Yes, and I fear that she would return the country to papistry."

"What would that mean, Master Philip?"

"You know what that would mean, Tom. It would mean that all the things I have taught you over the past year would be condemned as heresy."

The boy stood still. He seemed dazed. "Tell me more."

The tinker saw that the lad's face was serious. "Well, Tom, images and relics would come back; people would be encouraged to kneel to a piece of bread at Mass; and they would be told to confess their sins to a priest rather than to God Himself."

Phlox were blooming alongside the path. Its perfume was a sugary, sweet scent and Tom recognized it. The smell vividly brought to mind the memory of the pink they were. Alongside their smell, he could detect the faint odor of carrot and knew

that, white and delicate, queen Anne's lace, could not be too far off. Queen Anne's lace was more commonly called bishop's weed. Perhaps, Tom thought, if Bishop Hooper had been a plant, he might not have minded wearing queen Anne's lace. And then he grinned to himself.

## CHAPTER 5

In the year that followed, Thomas grew more and more accustomed to walking the roads. History surrounded him as he walked and tapped the cane in front of him. Edward VI died and the brief ten-day reign of Lady Jane Grey followed. Then Parliament, having restored her right of succession, aided Mary to the throne. The Six Articles were reinstated and the citizens of Gloucester learned that their beloved Bishop Hooper had been imprisoned by the new queen. But just before this occurred, to the dismay and horror of the

entire Drourie family, Tom was taken into custody. He was thirteen years of age.

Thomas' arrest happened quite suddenly. Walking across Westgate Bridge one early morning, carefully tapping out his steps, he met Father Serly. Father Serly, still short and stout had survived Edward's reign by outwardly conforming to Protestantism. However, as soon as Mary ascended the throne and papist rules were back, he emerged ready to wage war on anyone who was not attending Mass.

"Thomas Drourie," he called out, as the blind boy was about to pass by him.

Thomas stopped, recognized the priest's voice, but answered nothing.

"I have not seen you at Mass of late," Father Serly went on, using the very same words he had spoken to the boy's father more than a decade past.

"No," Tom agreed.

"Have you been ill? Has there been no



Overnight Gloucester Abbey became Gloucester Cathedral. Clergy replaced the monks not just in Gloucester, but in all the monasteries and convents throughout England, Wales and Ireland.





But Tom stood quiet again, and there was no sound but the water of the Big Severn rushing underneath the bridge.

one who could guide you?" The words were friendly enough, but there was underlying threat. Tom perceived it. His father made no secret of the fact that he disliked Father Serly and a great many of the other priests. He was also fully aware that the Cathedral had reverted back to papistry and that many Protestant Englishmen had fled England.

"Well, Tom?" As the boy still did not answer, the priest assumed that perhaps the lad did not know it was a priest he was speaking with.

"I am your Father," he said, somewhat loftily.

"I have only one Father," Tom then replied, "and He is in heaven."

"Are you being rude, young sir?"

But Tom stood quiet again, and there was no sound but the water of the Big Severn rushing underneath the bridge. Deciding not to continue in conversation with the priest, he began tapping out his steps again, walking forward as he did so. The stout cleric blocked his path.

"I asked you a question, young Thomas Drourie."

The boy laughed and pushed at the black robes preventing his leaving. He was young and blind, but he was strong and his shove

succeeded in thrusting the priest against the side of the bridge. Not only that, but the motion caused the friar to fall down on the slats amid the laughter of some local folk crossing over from the other side. Humiliated, the priest complained to the town's guard and the result was that Tom was taken into custody for an overnight imprisonment. His father had to pay a hefty fine the next morning to have the boy released.

"You must not be so bold, Tom" Lizzie was sitting on a bale of hay next to her brother. "You could get father and mother into trouble by such behavior. You would not want that."

Her brother shook his head. "No, of course I would not."

"Well, then, you must stay at home and if you want something, either I or Albert will go with you into town."

"Philip has told me that Master Hooper was arrested, Lizzie. He is being kept in Fleet Prison in London."

"Yes, that is true." The girl spoke softly, knowing that Tom looked up to the man, admired him and would feel badly about the news.

"He probably," Tom went on, "has no

family who can set bail for him as I have heard that his wife and children have left England. The queen, Philip said, wants him dead."

"Oh." It was all that Lizzie could think of to say. She was seventeen now and a beauty with long brown hair, just like her mother. She and Albert now had an agreement between the two of them. He had of late, spoken with her father. For a moment she forgot the young brother sitting next to her on a bale of hay. Albert was almost thirty now and she knew that during the conversation he'd had with father he had not been refused. Father would have to weigh the facts and these were that Tom would never be able to run the farm on his own; that Albert was an honest man who truly loved Lizzie; and that Albert also cared for Tom. She glanced at the boy sitting next to her. He was staring straight ahead. But surely it must be at something within himself, for his eyes saw nothing in the barn. Albert took him ploughing in the fields, had him walk by his side, explained what he was doing, always included him in conversations about planting, harvesting, and caring for the cattle. Could they not all live in harmony – father, mother, Albert and herself – caring for Tom and for the farm?



"They say," Tom interrupted her thoughts, and speaking vehemently, "that those who put Bishop Hooper in prison accuse him of owing the queen money. But it is not true. They are lying about him."

"Hush, Tom! Do not take on so." Lizzie put her right arm about Tom's shoulder as she spoke.

But Tom went on, his hands striking the air in anger. "The real reason, Lizzie, is that they want him dead. They want him dead because he is a Protestant just like we are."

She was slightly alarmed at his words.

"The heresy acts have been revived," Tom continued, his voice somber now.

"We just have to stay on the farm, Tom," Lizzie answered, "We won't get involved. Father and mother don't go into Gloucester very much any more and we have all we need right here."

"There is a rumor, but I think it is the truth," the boy went on, "that Bishop Hooper will be transferred to Gloucester at some point. When he is, I want you to take me to his place of confinement, Lizzie. Will you promise me that you will?"

Lizzie did not answer.

"Well, if you will not take me, then I shall ask Master Philip or Albert."

"No, not Albert." Lizzie's answer was swift now.

"Well, then?"

"Yes, Tom. If and when Master Hooper comes back to Gloucester, I shall take you to see him, if that is possible."

Satisfied, the boy leaned into her shoulder. "You are a good sister, Lizzie."

Approximately two months later, in February of 1555, word came to the citizens of Gloucester that their former bishop, John Hooper, would be taken, under heavy escort, to Gloucester. It was Philip the tinker who recounted this to the Drouries at noon.

"Actually," he went on, glancing at Tom's white face as he spoke, "he was taken to Gloucester today. Although the news of his coming was kept secret, it leaked out. A mile outside town, I saw crowds assembled – men and women all crying and lamenting Hooper's sorry state as he passed."

"You were there? You saw him?" Tom asked.

"Yes, I did, Tom. I watched as one of the queen's guards, and there were six of them for the one man, rode into Gloucester to ask for the aid of the mayor and sheriffs.

These namby-pamby guards were worried that Hooper would be rescued by the people standing at the side of the road. I saw a great many officers armed with weapons come to the North Gate. They ordered the people to go home and to stay home and then conducted John Hooper to a place where he will be kept until.... " He left off and it was quiet.

"Until what?" Tom finally threw out.

"Until his burning at the stake tomorrow."

There was quiet around the table. Lizzie, who sat across from Tom, felt his foot kick her shin. She winced slightly, but she knew what it meant.

## CHAPTER 6

They managed to leave the farm together under the pretext of visiting one of Lizzie's friends.

"I don't know where to take you, Tom, for Philip did not say where they lodged the bishop."

"You must take me to the Cathedral, Lizzie. For at that place they will know of a certainty where he has been taken."

"Even so, Tom, why should they tell you?"

"Because they will."

"Well, I will take you. But you must promise me to be careful."

The boy did not answer and they walked along in silence, the boy tapping his path all the while, his cane in his right hand and Lizzie holding his left.

When they arrived at the Cathedral, the Gloucester streets lay still. The people had been ordered to stay indoors.

"Take me to a side door, Lizzie, and I will knock. You need not stay. But do not go too far either." His sister brought him to a lower door and the boy began knocking almost before she had time to find her way around a corner. Tom knocked loudly and persistently and at the beginning no one came to answer. But he continued in fervor, scraping his knuckles on the wood. At length a guard opened the door.

"What do you want, boy?" His voice was not unfriendly and Tom took heart.

"I want to see Bishop Hooper."

The guard was taken aback for he could see that Tom was blind.

"Please sir," Tom repeated, "can I speak with the Bishop to hear his last words to me before he goes to the stake?"

"Are you family?"

"Yes, he is to me as a father."

The guard, who was not a bad fellow, relented upon hearing the earnestness in the boy's plea. "Very well, then, come along."





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"You must give me your hand, sir." Thomas reached out and the guard took his hand, pulling him inside the building.

"Come along then and tell me your name."

"Tom Drourie, sir."

The guard walked along a corridor, talking the whole while. "My name is Edmund Wells, Tom, and it is a sad business, this whole thing, is it not? But your name sounds familiar. Was there not a boy named Tom arrested a short time ago for..."

He stopped, scratched his head, and then smiled. "Yes, now I remember. It had to do with Father Serly, a man I care little about. If I recall correctly, it was because this certain Tom had pushed him."

"Yes, sir," Tom answered softly, hoping the conversation would not cost him his chance to see Bishop Hooper.

"Well, Tom, if that was you, I would not take it to heart. Father Serly is.... well, he is not overly truthful and he is much concerned about himself. But be careful what you say, boy, for these are treacherous times."

Tom nodded and the guard talked on.

"Bishop Hooper will be taken to Robert Ingram's house later today. He's not to stay in a common gaol, that good man, but in a home where they respect him. So that is a blessing. And now we have come to his cell. I must let go of your hand to open the door with a key. There's a good lad. Just stand here."

Thus speaking, the guard opened the door before returning to Tom. Reaching for his hand, he propelled him inside a small room.

"Here's a young lad come to bid you good day, Master Hooper. Says his name is Tom - Tom Drourie. I believe Tom was arrested a while back as well for speaking disrespectfully to a priest. I'll collect him by and by."

With that he shut the door and Tom was alone with the bishop.

It was a small room. Tom could feel the walls close and the ceiling low. He stepped forward hesitantly, tapping his cane carefully. "Good afternoon, sir," he finally said, his voice small and thin.

"Good afternoon, Tom," he was an-

swered by a friendly and low voice, "and what brings you to visit me here in this sad place?"

"I wished to say...." Tom began, "I wished to say that I will pray for you, sir. It must be dreadfully.... dreadfully...." He could not go on and a moment later felt a hand on his shoulder.

"There, lad," both Bishop Hooper's voice and hand guided him along, "Here's a chair. Sit yourself down and we shall have a talk, you and I, and find out what is in your heart."

Tom breathed in deeply, ashamed that he was blubbering like a child again. "Thank you, sir," he managed.

"Well, Tom," the bishop continued, putting him at his ease, "I've a lad just like you at home. Only he's left England and I don't get to see him any more. I miss him very much and so appreciate your visit for that reason alone. If I had my lad here, I would counsel him to hold fast to the faith."

"Yes, sir," Tom responded, his blind eyes fixed upon the direction of the voice.

"Do you believe in the Lord Jesus, son?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Do you confess His one sacrifice on the cross and deny the popish idolatry in the Mass?"

"Oh, yes, sir," Tom breathed out again.

"Well, lad, then there will not be a goodbye between us once the guard comes to take you back. For of a verity, we will see one another in heaven."

"Do you think I shall see?" Tom ventured, "in heaven."

"Yes, Tom, you certainly shall."

There was a long quiet, but it was not awkward. The bishop had taken the boy's hand into his own. After a while he spoke again. "Ah, Thomas! Ah, poor boy! God has taken from you your outward sight, for what consideration He best knows. But He has given you another sight much more precious, for He has induced your soul with the eye of knowledge and faith. God give you grace continually to pray to Him that you lose not that sight, for then you should be blind both in body and soul."

Tom nodded, his eyes again filling with tears. At that moment the door opened with a groan of heaviness and disuse.

"Tom, time to go." It was Edmund and Tom stood up.

The bishop clapped him on the shoulder. "Son, may God bless you and keep you and let His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you."

Taking Tom's hand, the guard steered him towards the hall and all the while Tom was mindful of the lark in the field where he had been with Philip. And he recalled with great clarity how the bull had charged and how Philip had played the viol.

Walking back towards the entrance, Tom begged Edmund for permission to hear Bishop Hooper speak prior to his being burned at the stake. For so it was that condemned men were allowed to address the crowd prior to being martyred. Without a word, the man took the boy through to another anteroom, one that led into the cathedral. Although Tom could not see it, this was the place in which Dr. Williams, the Chancellor of Gloucester, was sitting behind a desk. The registrar sat next to him and they were concentrating over some paperwork. Without waiting for permission, the guard spoke.

"This boy wants permission to hear the bishop speak tomorrow before his martyrdom."

"Martyrdom, Wells?"

"Whatever it pleases your Honour to call it," the man answered, before he turned, leaving Tom in the sanctuary.

Dr. Williams, who was a heavy-set man, turned from the paperwork to peer at Tom. "What is your name, boy?"

"Thomas Drourie, sir."

"And you wish to see Bishop Hooper die?"

"Not die, sir, but live."

"Are you a good Christian, Tom?"

"I try to be, sir."

"Hmmh," the chancellor said, and glancing at the registrar added, "Well, suppose we ask you some questions as to ascertain that."

Tom stood in front of him, cane in hand, eyes fixed on where the chancellor's voice came from.

"Do you believe," the chancellor began, "that after the words of the priest's consecration, that the very body of Christ is in the bread?"

Tom responded strongly with a very loud, "No, that I do not!"

Dr. Williams looked keenly at the dis-

abled boy in front of him. "Then you are a heretic, Thomas Drourie. Do you know that for this reason you can be burned? Who taught you this heresy?"

Tom, the eyes of his heart bright, even though his outward sight was dull, answered clearly, "You, Mr. Chancellor."

Dr. Williams sat up straight. "Where, I pray you?" The words echoed hollowly through the sanctuary.

Tom replied softly but clearly, pointing with his cane towards the place where he supposed the pulpit was, "In yonder place."

Dr. Williams was aghast. "When did I teach you so?"

Tom, now looking straight at where the chancellor's voice was coming from, replied plainly and distinctly: "When you preached a sermon to all men, as well as to me, upon the sacrament. You said the sacrament was to be received spiritually by faith, and not carnally and really as the papists have heretofore taught."

Dr. Williams looked down at the papers in front of him. He felt a certain shame in his heart. Nevertheless his voice boomed out and resounded in the aisles. "Then do as I have done, and you shall live as I do

and escape burning."

Aware that the bull was charging, but hearing the viol, Tom answered calmly and firmly: "Though you have easily dispensed with your own self and mock God, the world, and your conscience, I will not do so."

Dr. Williams was vexed, vexed in his soul. Although he tried for some time to convince the boy otherwise and threatening him plenty, there was no recantation. Finally he bellowed: "Then God have mercy upon you, Tom, for I will read you your condemnatory sentence."

Tom answered, "God's will be fulfilled."

At this moment the registrar nudged Dr. Williams. "For shame, man! Will you read the sentence and condemn yourself? Away with you! At least substitute someone else to give sentence and judgment."

But Dr. Williams would not change his mind. "Mr. Registrar!" he barked out, "I will obey the law and give sentence myself according to my office." After this he read Tom his death sentence, albeit with a shamed tongue and a twisted conscience.

"Wells," he then cried out, for the guard was present once again, "take this boy to a

cell."

"Sir, I beg you," a small voice cried out in the back of the sanctuary, "have mercy on my brother." It was Lizzie who had been let in by the kindhearted Edmund.

"Do you wish to be arrested alongside your brother?"

"Sir, I would feign take his place if it would help his case."

Tom felt love well up in his heart for his sister. Often she had kept him from wrongdoing in the past; often she had nursed scraped elbows and bruises; and often she had comforted him after he had been lonely. She was like a second mother. Ah, his mother! Tears sprung to his eyes. He had not thought of his parents this whole time. Lizzie slowly lifted one foot in front of the other, as if she were gathering courage in those unhurried steps, and approached the front, standing right before Dr. Williams.

"He is but a lad, your honor," she haltingly began, "and his mother ...."

Then she wept. Tom was at her side in an instant. "Don't cry, Lizzie," he pleaded, "please don't cry."

"How can I help it Tom?"

"You will see me again, Lizzie."

She lifted her tearstained face towards him, doubtful and hopeful at the same time.

"Tell mother and father that I shall be home shortly, Lizzie. And tell them that I look forward to that homecoming more than anything else."

Then Edmund Wells took the boy's hand in his own and led him away.

\*\*\*\*\*

*A true story, flavored with fiction, the blind boy Thomas Drourie (together with a bricklayer by the name of Thomas Croker) was burned at the stake on May 5, 1556. This was three months after Bishop Hooper was burned. Three years later, during the early years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Chancellor Williams poisoned himself, thus adding suicide to his previous crimes. For Thomas Drourie, Bishop Hooper and other faithful believers, there was the light of God's countenance; for Chancellor Williams, what shall we say?* **RP**



"...the citizens of Gloucester learned that their beloved Bishop Hooper had been imprisoned by the new queen."





# WHY DYSTOPIAN FICTION IS WORTH READING

by Jon Dykstra

In dystopian fiction we get a glimpse at some sort of looming, foreboding future: maybe it's humans devolving into separate castes (H.G. Wells' *Time Machine*), mass infertility threatening the end of mankind (P.D. James's *The Children of Men*), a domineering government repressing all but the elite (Glenn Beck's *Agenda 21*), or maybe killer robots overrunning the planet (*Terminator*).

The word *dystopia* is coined from Ancient Greek and means simply "bad place." What makes this a genre worth considering is because the best dystopian fiction is prophetic in nature, warning us of the dangers of a particular ideology (or practice) by showing us the "bad place" we will end up at if we adopt it. Thus there are as many sorts of dystopian novels as there are ideologies.

But not all of the warnings given are... credible.

## FAR FROM PROPHETIC

The Canadian "classic" novel and current Netflix hit *The Handmaid's Tale* warns of a world in which the government uses the trappings of the Christian religion to sexually enslave women. That is so far from where we are, or could conceivably head, that the book isn't useful – the author is completely wrong and there are no insights to gain from her. (That hasn't stopped the Left from embracing the novel, pretending

that Trump's presidency is its very fulfillment.)

That lack of credible threat is a problem with many of the teen fiction dystopian series (*The Maze Runner*, *Divergent*, and *The Hunger Games*) that have appeared over the last decade. They might be entertaining, but they aren't prophetic. If we look hard enough we might be able to find *something*, like *The Hunger Games* and its warning against folks killing and getting killed for the entertainment of the masses. That has relevance in a world in which brutal MMA fights are now watched by millions (including ones in which women pummel women) and the NFL remains must-see TV even though it leaves most participants crippled in one way or another. But does that make *The Hunger Games* worth reading? No. Most teens aren't likely to make that connection. More importantly, the books present a dilemma that's likely to confuse its teen audience – the "hero" seems like she will have to either murder others or be murdered herself. Mature Christians will understand that it is better to suffer evil than to commit it, but will younger readers?

## TWO THAT ARE EACH HALF RIGHT

So what books do warn of credible threats? The top two would have to be:

- **1984** - Author George Orwell warns

of the State using authoritarian power to so totally subjugate us that, if they insist, we'll say that 2+2 is 5. If the idea of the State reconditioning people to spout obvious lies sounds too extreme to be believable, just consider what's happening to people today who say there are only two genders, and there's no switching from one to the other, and you need one of each for marriage. Obvious truths, one and all, but if you say them – and we *must* – Big Brother will want to have words! And if it's like that now, how might things look in ten years time?

- **Brave New World** - Aldous Huxley warns of the State enslaving us not by force but by pleasure. Pain is taken away via the drug *soma* leaving the population in a generally happy stupor. Some clear parallels can be made to our meek, sheep-like society. Our cradle-to-grave State care leaves us dependent on the government to run more and more of our lives and that's how we like it. And our smartphones, *Netflix* accounts, opioids, and Twitter feeds leave many citizens in a *soma*-like stupor – celebrity-aware but politically-illiterate.

These two books cover both sides of how we're being hit today – the carrot and the stick. As Neil Postman put it:

What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one.

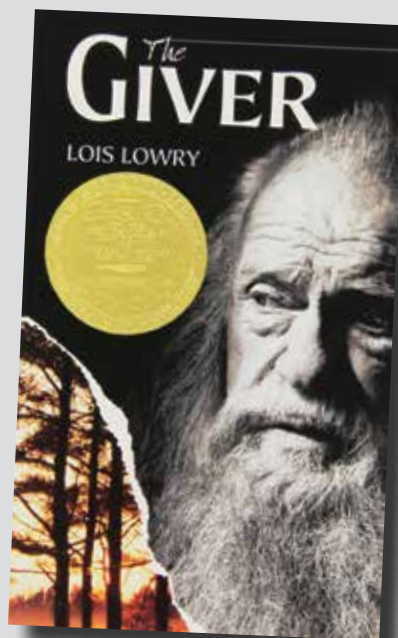
Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egotism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy.

As Huxley remarked in *Brave New World Revisited*, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny “failed to take into account man’s almost infinite appetite for distractions.” In 1984, Orwell added, people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that our fear will ruin us. Huxley feared that our desire will ruin us.

The credible threat here isn’t from one approach or the other, but from both together.

While both books have sexual content, in 1984 it is shorter and boring – there isn’t much pleasure taken in it. (And that’s the point; the government doesn’t want sexual ties creating divided loyalties, so they’ve done what they can to make it boring). A great G-rated 1954 film-version does away with the sexual content, so it could be shared with older teens with little worry, while the book might require more maturity.

*Brave New World*, with its focus on the enticements of pleasure, has more sexual content, and while it’s still not explicit, it might be something that a hormone-riddled teen boy could struggle with. The rating site Common Sense Media (family-friendly, but not specifically Christian) suggests that 1984 is for 16 and up, and *Brave New World* would be for 14 and up, but I would reverse those and maybe even hold off *Brave New World* for



## THE GIVER

by Lois Lowry  
208 pages / 1993

reviewed by Jeff Dykstra

*The Giver* is a book that is not specifically Christian, but has been studied in Christian schools and is stocked in our Christian school library. Why?

Lois Lowry’s novel is a brilliant dystopia. What makes it so brilliant is that in the brief space of a children’s novel, Lowry shows, as dystopian novels always do, how the desire to make a *utopia* leads to disaster.

The original *Utopia* (which literally means “no-place”), by Thomas More (an English Catholic writing around the time of the Reformation), is a vision of an ideal, perfectly regulated society, where people live their lives and the wealth is fairly shared among all. All

with leisure and work balanced, these features are appealing, but given human nature, any attempt to build society through regulation will result in the stomping out of individuality and the oppressive power of whatever authority we trust to organize everything. Basically, there is a kind of idolatry of human systems and power. Of course, we know that idols always disappoint, and idols always demand horrible sacrifices.

That’s what’s going on in *The Giver*. Lowry builds up a picture of an ideal, well-organized society where everyone has his or her specific role set by the age of 12 years old. All the angst of adolescence in our society has been taken care of through this selection of each person’s career by the community, as well as by the suppression of the disruptive disturbance of teenage hormones. The result is a village in which there is no significant crime; in which each person is given a specific role and, in return, has all his or her needs are met from cradle to grave by the community; and in which both the physical storms and emotional storms have been subdued by technology.

This “sameness,” as the narrator calls it, has been maintained for generations. Even the memory of the relative chaos of our own society has been wiped out, but the elders of the village have ensured that the past is not entirely lost, so that in the event of crisis, the elders can learn from it. This is where the main character, Jonas, comes in. At twelve years old, he is given the unique role of the Receiver of the community. What does he receive? The memories of the village before the “sameness” – from the Giver.

Jonas’s unique knowledge enables him to see what a terrible place our own world is – with war and other suffering – but also what emotional ties like family and romantic love were lost with the oncoming of the “sameness.” His own crisis comes when he sees what sacrifices his seemingly utopian village demands to keep its stability.

Why would Christians want to read this? *The Giver* shows us both the beauty and the cost of human emotion and desire, but also the foolishness of playing God in trying to wipe both out by human power. What we need is not liberation from our own humanness, but liberation from the sin which has corrupted our humanness, by the death of Christ, and the redirection of our emotions and desire, through the work of the Spirit. Lowry may not explicitly put us before God’s throne, but she does a fine job of knocking down one of the idols that serve as a stumbling block blocking our view of His glory.

college-age and up. (Interestingly, the kid's reviews on Common Sense Media also rates *Brave New World* as more problematic than *1984*).

## WARNINGS WORTH HEARING


In the other books, and films, that fill out this genre, the most common threat is probably killer robots (*2001: A Space Odyssey*; *Prey*; *Terminator*; *The Matrix*; etc.). Technological advances mean there's a legitimate reason for concern here, but it still shouldn't be our principal concern. We differ from the world in that we understand that we should not fear "them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. 10:28). Our true battle is:

not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12)

What Paul means here by "flesh and blood" is Man and all his deadly weapons, including killer robots. But if that's not where the real battle is at, then where should we focus our attention? Our concern is the Devil and all the means he uses – including false ideologies and philosophies – to confuse our understanding of God, or pressure us to reject Him, or try to keep us from learning about Him.

With that in mind some credible threats worth considering include:

- **Lord of the Flies** - William Golding warns us not to be naive about our sinful nature; Man, left to his own devices is no angel.
- **The Giver** - Lois Lowry warns against enforcing sameness in the name of equality (it is aimed at young readers, but adults can enjoy and be challenged by it too)
- **Time Will Run Back** - Henry Hazlitt warns against Communism specifically, but socialism in general. This would be for older teens, not because of problematic content (this is far "safer" than *Brave New World* or *1984*) but simply because of the depth and breadth of the ideas therein. This is my own favorite dystopian novel because I found it by far the most educational.
- **Fahrenheit 451** - Ray Bradbury warns of censorship, though I wonder if the type of censorship he warns us about is far less likely than the creeping political correctness we actually face. There is content here too problematic for younger readers to handle.
- **Winterflight** – Joseph Bayly takes us to a not-so-distant future in which abortion for disabled children is mandatory, euthanasia is compulsory soon after 75, and Christians are so confused about Romans 13 they think God wants them to submit to even these demands (the Christian confusion in this book is almost too spot on to take).
- **Fatherless, Childless, Godless** - James Dobson's 3-book series warns against abortion's results - a shrinking population. (One thing that bothers me about this series is how it occasionally takes God's name in vain. That happens in other books listed here too, but they aren't by Christian authors, and I expect more from Dr. Dobson.)

This is a genre well worth exploring...with care and caution. It's like a big blank canvas that insightful writers can use to paint pictures of futures that they hope – by giving their early warning – may never come to be. 

# TIME WILL RUN BACK

by Henry Hazlitt  
368 pages / 1951

In *Time Will Run Back* Henry Hazlitt envisions a future in which the communists won and have been in power for more than 100 years.

## Like 1984...

Hazlitt acknowledged his novel bore some similarities to *1984* (published two years earlier) as both take place in a dystopian future in which the government manages every aspect of citizens' lives. As Hazlitt noted authors like Orwell, Aldous Huxley (and his *Brave New World*) and himself were:

plagiarizing from the actual nightmare created by Lenin, Hitler and Stalin....All the writers had done was to add a few logical extensions not yet generally foreseen.

In Hazlitt's envisioned future the government has not only taken over the capitalist West, but they've wiped away any memory of capitalism, even editing Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* so that no one could deduce from it what sort of economic system Marx was writing against.

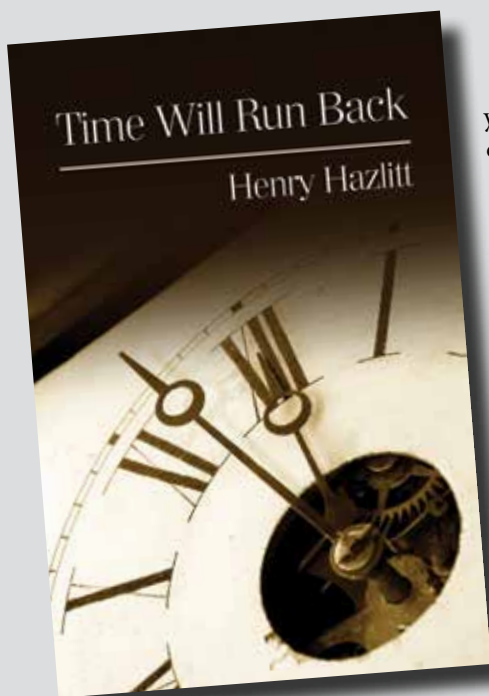
Into this setting Hazlitt places the ultimate outsider. The world dictator's son, Peter Uldanov, has grown up far away from his father, isolated on one of the Bahamas Islands, and he's not been taught anything about history, politics or economics. So when the world dictator calls his now adult son to Moscow and informs Peter that he is to succeed his father as dictator, father first has to bring son up to speed in these three key areas.

Peter's education takes up the first third of the book, though there is some palace-intrigue as well: the second-ranking member of the ruling Politburo is eager to see Peter dead, but doesn't want to be caught doing the deed.

## ...Screwtape Letters...

This first third bears more than a passing resemblance to C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, with Peter's teacher filling the role of the elder Screwtape explaining to his





younger devilish charge why they do things the way they do them. For example, at one point, Politburo member Adams, and Orlov, the editor of the world's state-approved and only remaining newspaper, explain to Peter how what is carried in the paper has nothing to do with the truth, but instead has to do with what is useful for

the masses to hear. It

turns out "what is useful" can be hard to determine.

"It is for the Politburo to decide, for example, whether we shall say that the production record is very bad, in order to exhort and sting everyone to greater output; or whether we shall say that it is very good, in order to show how well the regime is doing and to emphasize the blessing of living under it."

"These decisions are sometimes very difficult," Adams put in. "We often find that a zigzag course is best. For example, if goods are shoddy and fall apart, or if too many size nine shoes are made and not enough size eight, or if people cannot get enough to eat, there may be grumbling and complaints – or silent dissatisfaction. We must make sure that this unrest does not turn against the regime itself."

"Therefore," said Orlov, "we must *lead* the complaints. We must ourselves pick scapegoats to denounce and punish."

### ...& Wealth of Nations

In the middle third of the novel Peter takes on the role of the ultimate benevolent dictator. He wants to help his citizens, so he tries desperately to figure out ways to make socialism work. He has the help of his country's greatest minds, and near absolute power, so he is in the best sort of situation to make it work. But try as he might, they can't make it work.

The biggest trouble Peter keeps running into is trying to figure out the value of what they are making. They have no money (since no one buys anything, but is instead given what they need) so they can't use price to calculate how valuable one product might be compared to another. And if they can't calculate value, then they also can't determine if the country is producing more overall this year vs. the last. Sheer tonnage is one proposed measure – they could use that to compare how much grain they grew from one year to the next. But even this falls short, because grain can come in different qualities. How then should they evaluate things if one year

more grain is produced but of a lower quality, and in another year there is less but of a higher quality? Which was the better year?

After ruling out tonnage as a helpful means of measuring output, one alternative after another is proposed only to have the shortcomings of each then exposed. The alert reader will see where this is leading: what this socialistic economy lacks are *markets* in which the value of a product is assessed by consumers as a whole.

In the final third of the book, Peter gets more desperate and radical in his efforts to make real improvements and give citizens real freedom. As a result, he ends up discovering some economic principles that really help: open competition, property ownership, and the rigorous prosecution of cheats and swindlers – to help his citizens he is forced to invent capitalism!

### Conclusion

Though the book is most obviously about communism, the warning Hazlitt offers here – that freedom and prosperity cannot co-exist with an economic system that prioritizes equality of distribution – is directly applicable to communism's democratic twin, socialism.

Overall this is not just readable, but is engaging and entertaining, able to stand up to comparisons with *1984* and *Brave New World*. Hazlitt makes a strong and compelling case for the free market. And you can get the e-book for free at [Mises.org](http://Mises.org).

- Jon Dykstra

## 1984 and Brave New World vs. Time will Run Back

### A note to Teachers

Though *1984* and *Brave New World* are important books, they both have sexual content (*Brave New World* more so) that make them problematic to discuss even in the high school setting.

Sex is also discussed in *Time Will Run Back* but in a way that parents and teachers may find more palatable: brief mention is made of how the government manages even citizens' sex lives, mandating that no one can pair up for longer than a month, lest they form familial bonds that compete with the bonds they should have to the state. But this is sex at its most boring - nothing titillating here.

I believe you'll find Hazlitt's offering a worthy substitution for either of these other two - just as engaging, as insightful, as thought-provoking, and without the sexual content.



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