

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

MAY/JUNE 2020
Volume 39 Issue No. 4

PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

**BLACK LIVES MATTER
ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT
BLACK LIVES**

P.7

**WHEN C.S. LEWIS
WAS AN ATHEIST**

P.30

**SOLOMON ON
SMARTPHONES
AND THE PULL OF
PORNOGRAPHY**

P.22

NOTA
BENE
p. 6

FROM THE EDITOR • BOOK REVIEWS • CROSSWORD • MOVIE REVIEWS



ADVERTISE IN REFORMED PERSPECTIVE

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

Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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

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

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

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

E-mail: editor@reformedperspective.ca

Editor: Jon Dykstra

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

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

Template Design: Compass Creative Studio Inc. compasscreative.ca

Art Direction, Design and Layout: Annelies Veurink
www.facebook.com/FreshDesignByAnnelies

Contact Address for Australia:

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

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

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

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

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

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

reformedperspective.ca

SOLOMON ON SMARTPHONES – Ryan deJonge AND THE PULL OF PORNOGRAPHY P.24



THE GOOD HANOVERIAN
- Christine Farenhorst **P.10**



**WHY I'M RELIGIOUS, NOT
JUST SPIRITUAL**
- Jim Witteveen **P.16**



**IS IT REAL CORPORATE
WORSHIP? - A PARABLE** **P.20**
- Ken Wieske

FROM THE EDITOR **P.4**
- Jon Dykstra

NOTA BENE **P.6**
IN A NUTSHELL **P.12**

**THE DARKNESS HAS NOT
OVERCOME IT** **P.35**
- Wes Bredenhof

RACISM IS WRONG... **P.40**
- Chris DeBoer

Christianity explains everything... even Reincarnation



by Jon Dykstra

How would you react if a Hindu told you that reincarnation was true? That isn't something that would unsettle or anger you, is it? The man is wrong, and if the situation allows you might try and convince him of his error, but his claim wouldn't upset you.

Would you react differently if a Christian told you that the evidence for reincarnation couldn't just be dismissed? And what if instead of one Christian telling you, it was two, and both were well respected philosophy professors?

At this point some of us might start getting a little perturbed. We don't know how this could possibly fit with our Christian worldview, and we're getting...uncomfortable. We might be annoyed, even a little angry.

The problem with this defensive reaction is that it has us acting like God and His Word can't stand up to

challenges. At some point most of us have reacted this way, though the trigger might have been sickness, or money troubles, or maybe the challenge of evolution. Whatever it is, we get scared, and start doubting whether God can provide the answers we need.

Hunkering down behind our church pew doesn't help though. Even when we find ourselves having doubts, God's people can and should proceed in trust, knowing that *our* doubts don't actually impact *His* faithfulness. Our doubts won't make Him disappear, so we can tackle our questions, instead of hiding from them. We can turn to Him, asking for help and the answers we need.

Now, Hindus don't come around door-knocking like the Jehovah's Witnesses, so the evidence for reincarnation isn't a challenge many of are going to have to face. But it is a fun example of how proceeding in trust can help us dig out unexpected truths and

better understand the world as God has really made it. So let's take a closer look.

THE EVIDENCE

J.P. Moreland and Gary Habermas are two Christians philosophers. Separately they have authored or edited such orthodox titles as: *In Defense of Miracles; Love Your God With All Your Mind* and *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*. These guys are not New Age wing nuts. They're not crazy. Though what they're saying seems crazy.

In their collaborative effort *Beyond Death* they devote a chapter to reincarnation and present some interesting evidence.

A case they call typical involved a four-year-old boy named Prakesh who suddenly started telling his parents his actual name was Nirmal and that his home was in a different village. He told them many details about his "real" family including the names of friends and

relatives and what business his father was in. He repeatedly tried to run away to this “former” home. Five years later things got really interesting when:

“...Nirmal’s ‘real’ father visited Prakesh’s village and Prakesh recognized him. It was discovered that Nirmal was actually the name of the man’s son, who had died prior to Prakesh’s birth. Prakesh wanted to return ‘home,’ and subsequently was reunited more than once with those whom he claimed to have known in his previous existence. He recognized those he said were his former relatives and friends, greeted them with appropriate emotions, and provided precise details concerning the furnishings of his earlier home. Yet he was puzzled by the changes that had occurred in the intervening ten years.”

ANOTHER EXPLANATION?

This story is pretty compelling and it is easy to see why it and others like it are viewed as good evidence of reincarnation.

But reincarnation does not fit with the Christian worldview; in the Bible we are told we live once, die and then are raised to a new life in a different, perfect state. We die once, and are raised once, not again and again and again as the reincarnation model states.

So reincarnation is not true. But the evidence for it seems to be. What is a Christian to think? Is there another explanation that will fit the evidence? A better explanation?

Yes. We need to look at the evidence a bit more deeply but by doing so we get a clearer picture of what is really going on.

In a bit of an ironic twist Moreland and Habermas turn to a reincarnation advocate to find the information they need to undermine the reincarnation position. Ian Stevenson presents a number of cases in which a child claimed to be the reincarnation of someone who was still alive when the child was born. But how can that be possible? Reincarnation is supposed to involve the passing on of a soul from a dead body to a new one, not the passing on of a soul from a living body to another body.

So I cannot be a reincarnation of my brother Jeff, since my brother is still alive and still very much in possession of his soul – he cannot pass it on to a new body until his old body is done with it. But in the cases Stevenson cites the reincarnated individual was born before the “earlier incarnation” had died. In one case in India “the deceased individual died when the second person was three and a half years old.”

THE SPIRITUAL REALM

Reincarnation has no explanation for such events...but the Bible does.

In Scripture we learn that evil spirits can take possession of a person and control both what they say and what they do (see, for example, Mark 5:1-15). Scripture also tells us that these evil spirits have been living on earth for millennia. In the course of their time here they have undoubtedly seen a lot and had the chance to learn many facts and details about the lives of people long dead. They would know this information because they were actually there!

So the evidence for reincarnation can be explained just as easily, and indeed better, as evidence of demonic possession. These people are not reincarnated versions of some former person – they are possessed by demons who have memories of events from long ago.

Additionally Habermas and Moreland note that many of these “reincarnation cases” occur in cultures that have very occultic religions. They quote one former Hindu guru who described his religion this way: “My world was filled with spirits and gods and occult powers, and my obligation from childhood was to give each its due.”

Perhaps the reason “reincarnation” is more common in these cultures is because they openly worship evil spirits. It doesn’t seem too far a stretch to suppose that in a culture that prays to evil spirits, possession by these spirits might be more common.

CONCLUSION

The secular cynic dismisses anything supernatural because he can’t touch, taste, hear, or see it. But, consequently he

has no answer for the evidence we’ve just encountered.

Christians can sometimes act quite similar, dismissing evidence that doesn’t easily fit in with our worldview. But we don’t have to act so fearfully. While the secular sort can only maintain his worldview by ignoring all that conflicts with it, the Christian can be confident that *nothing* conflicts with it.

Hindus probably aren’t going to be knocking on your door any time soon. But you may get asked an uncomfortable question today. Whether it’s your own kids asking questions about the birds and the bees, or a coworker asking about God and your faith, we’re all going to get hit with questions we aren’t ready to answer. That might leave us tempted to shy away from the challenge, and change the conversation to something about the weather or sports. But then our fear will have muted our witness.

It’s when we understand that what God has told us – about Himself, about ourselves, and about the world – is trustworthy, that we’ll be able to seek out that truth boldly. Then what might seem uncomfortable questions can be recognized as opportunities to find out more about God. We might not always get a full answer – humility is also important, as only God is omniscient – but there *are* answers. Then, when we are bold we’ll be able to share how Christianity explains not only reincarnation but everything else too! RP



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

NOTA BENE

News worth noting
BY JON DYKSTRA

that because anyone can make videos, every bit of juvenile humor ever known to boykind, has now been captured in video form. Yes, YouTube has lots of crass stuff too, but whereas 13-year-old Tommy probably wouldn't go to the effort of uploading his fart joke to YouTube, he can now capture and share it on TikTok with only minimal effort. Another difference: even at its best, TikTok is trivial. Its shorter video length can capture the cute or the crude, the clever and also the crass, but it doesn't really allow for the educational, or anything profound.

Troublesome *content* is one concern, but parents need to be wary from a *production* perspective too. Because anyone can create videos, your children can too. If your daughter has had problems fitting in or getting bullied at school, imagine the problems that could occur if she put herself out there on TikTok for the masses to evaluate. What could that sort of peer pressure prompt her to do? And how would your son respond if he posted an attention-seeking video and instead the trolls came after him?

If this topic has you intimidated and you don't know how you'll get up to speed on TikTok, one great place to go is Axis.org. The folks at Axis understand that teen culture is hard to keep up with, so they've crafted all sorts of short "cheat sheets" to help parents out, explaining not just social media apps, but also giving the low down on hit TV shows, the latest bands and books and more.

Axis is Christian and conservative, though not specifically Reformed, and the half dozen resources I've purchased I've been very happy with. Like their other materials, their 15-page "A parent's guide to TikTok" is concise, but also has plenty of helpful links to allow for deeper digging. And at just \$4 it is very affordable. You can check them out at Axis.org. RP

TIKTOK PASSES 2 BILLION DOWNLOADS

The social media app TikTok has exploded in popularity. Sensor Tower analytics reports that since the start of 2019 the app has doubled its downloads, from one to two billion on the App Store and Google Play. Some of the growth seems due to the global pandemic, with Sensor Tower reporting the 315 million downloads last quarter were the most "for any app ever in a quarter."

While TikTok is right up there with Instagram and Snapchat for the under 21 crowd, it is far less popular with those over 30. That means many parents, including those with teens already using it, may not be familiar with the app.

So what is TikTok? One way to understand it might be by way of comparison: what Twitter is to

Facebook, TikTok is to YouTube – a slimmed-down version. Like YouTube, TikTok is a video site, but TikTok specializes in shorter clips, with many just 15 seconds, and the vast majority at 60 seconds or less. Aside from the shorter video length, what sets TikTok apart is the ease with which content can be created. A built-in editor allows TikTok's young users to create their own homemade dance videos, lip-syncs, prank clips, challenges, fails, and other comedic bits.

What parents need to understand is



"BLACK LIVES MATTER" ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT BLACK LIVES



n May 25 a Minneapolis black man, George Floyd, died in handcuffs

while three police officers knelt on him, including one, Derek Chauvin, who was kneeling on his neck. In the weeks that followed protests erupted in cities across the US and the world, and protesters also made their feelings known on social media, many using the *#blacklivesmatter* hashtag.

Christians nodded their agreement, but some wondered at the emphasis on blacks. After all, we know that all of us are just one race, and wouldn't furthering that understanding be the best way to counter racism? So, many well-meaning Christians noted that "all lives matter" because, of course, they do. But what this overlooked is the specific charge being made: protesters are saying that many black lives are *not* being treated like they matter. One clarifying analogy shared around social media about the "all lives matter" slogan told of a husband speaking at his wife's funeral about how much she mattered to him only to have someone take the mike and share that "all wives' lives matter." This is an entirely true statement, but at this time and place, would be understood as entirely missing the point.

So let's be done with "all lives matter." Does that mean we should embrace the "black lives matter" (BLM) slogan? The problem with doing so is that there is more to BLM than just the slogan; there is also a Black Lives Matter *movement*. While the movement is loosely knit, some of its key leaders are as interested in promoting homosexuality and transgenderism as they are in fighting racism. In a 2015 interview with *MSNBC*, one of the founders, Patrisse



Cullors, noted that the hashtag *#blacklivesmatter*

"was created by two black queer women, myself and Alicia, and one Nigerian-American woman, Opal Tometi..."

It doesn't take much digging to find abortion-promoting work as well. So the slogan speaks to one matter, but the organization is taking on many more, much of it in direct opposition to God's will.

There have been a couple of suggestions on how Christians might modify the BLM slogan to, on the one hand, acknowledge the grievance being made, and, on the other, distance us from the BLM organization. "All black lives matter" is a pro-life suggestion, meant to highlight how blacks are disproportionately victims of abortion. But, unfortunately, the BLM organization is already using this slogan, with the "all," in their case, referring to transgender, gay, and lesbian blacks.

Another possibility: "Black lives matter too." This acknowledges the

grievance, but in a way that is more unifying, and less an *us vs. them* statement. And it also takes us a step away from anything the BLM organization is doing.

Whatever slogan we use, what's most significantly missing here is God's perspective. The biggest contribution God's people can make to this discussion might be to add just a few select *biblical* words. We can note that George Floyd, an *image-bearer of God* (Gen. 1:27), was killed. When we put his death in that context then it becomes clear what needs to be done and what should not be done. By making it about God, and His standards, then we understand Floyd's life was precious for the very same reason that our lives are. We'll know that justice needs to be done. It will also be clear that our calls for justice can't be accompanied by evil. How can we demand God's justice for one image-bearer, even as we throw rocks and bricks at other such image bearers?

#ImagebearerOfGod might not make for an effective hashtag, but it is the beginning of an explicitly Christian, God-acknowledging message, which is what our world most needs to hear. RP

POLL: MORE CANADIANS CONDEMN PLASTIC STRAWS THAN ABORTION



An Angus Reid poll, conducted in January of this year, asked 1,528 Canadians for their moral

perspectives on a wide variety of issues. Among the findings: while 46% thought that sharing someone's streaming account without paying is always or usually morally wrong, only 20% thought the same of "doctor-assisted dying" and just 26% for abortion.

Canadians are rejecting God's Law and like the Pharisees of old, they are creating their own substitutes in an attempt to justify themselves (Luke 18:9-14). *Sure, I may have just had my elderly mother euthanized, and had my unborn baby aborted, but I'm a good person because I always use a bamboo, not plastic, straw. I'm doing my part!* What are some of Canada's replacement commandments? In varying percentages, Canadians think it always or usually wrong to:

- eat meat: 7%
- fly for recreation: 11%, or business: 12%
- buy a gas-guzzling SUV: 41%
- use single-use plastics like straws and cutlery: 51%

- have a Death Penalty: 57%
- spank a child: 60%
- do scientific testing on animals: 64%

Almost half of Canadians think watching pornography is always or usually morally acceptable (45%) even as 47% say having a handgun in the house isn't. 44% disapprove of buying a fur coat, but just 19% condemn gambling. In a twist, a few real sins are recognized as such. A majority of respondents still thought it always or usually wrong to buy sex (59%), not declare income to avoid paying taxes (84%), or have an affair (89%).

The overall lawless trend this poll reveals presents Christians with a curious opportunity: if we're up for it, God's people have the opportunity to contrast the sandy underpinnings of the world's moral code with the Solid Rock (Ps. 18:2) undergirding our own.


However, to seize this opportunity we have to make sure our feet are firmly planted. We can't fall for our culture's manufactured morals. That means, when a vegan friend looks down their nose at our steak, we shouldn't feel guilty. We can be confident about eating meat,

no matter what our friend thinks, because we know God permits it (Gen 9:3) and that settles it. Likewise, even when 99% tell us otherwise, we can be confident it is still a sin to covet our billionaire neighbor's goods. How do we know? Because God forbids it in the 10th Commandment (Ex. 20:17).

To seize this opportunity we also have to be fearless. A poll like this might tempt us to despair, *what is our country coming to?* But if we're confident that Christ has *already* won, then we should be able to say with David, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear; what can Man do to me?" (Ps. 27:1, Heb. 13:5-6). With that assurance, we can step into the fray and challenge the world's misplaced convictions.

So, for example, we can challenge them on the conviction that doing scientific research on animals is wrong. Is that so? Our secular culture says Man is just one more product of evolution, and if so why should any moral code apply to us? What other creature is condemned for its conduct? When a lion eats a gazelle, do we wag a disapproving finger? Or do we instead think it unremarkable when one animal takes advantage of another? Why should Man be treated any differently?

Once we've exposed the empty space supporting their conviction, we can explain our own. Christians know that Man is indeed different, special because we alone are made in God's Image (Gen. 1:27, 9:6). And because we are special, it is much better to first test a drug on a rat, or a pig, or a dog, before we would ever test it on a boy.

God's Law vs. the world's manufactured morals – has the contrast ever been clearer? May God's people take full advantage of this time and opportunity, and may God bless our efforts, using us to bring many to Him! 

SOURCE: "Modern morality: For Canadians, stealing streaming services generates more of a moral conundrum than assisted dying" posted to AngusReid.org on April 15, 2020 – the poll claims a margin of error of +/- 2.5% 19 times out of 20.



DUTCH SCIENTISTS FIND GOUDA, EDAM MAY HELP FIGHT COVID-19



This is the sort of headline to have you checking whether it isn't April 1 today. But the report is genuine. As *The Guardian's* Daniel Boffey reported:

"Patients who have died or been admitted to intensive care with COVID-19 have been found to be deficient in a vitamin found in spinach, eggs, and hard and blue cheese..."

The study took place at a hospital in Nijmegen, and the missing vitamin is K. Vitamin K is crucial for the production of proteins regulating blood clotting, and the hope is that intake of K may help combat the problems COVID-19 causes with blood clotting.

So far no clinical trials have been run, so it wouldn't be at all surprising if subsequent findings conflict with these early reports. In the meantime one of the project researchers, Dr. Rob Janssen, advised Vitamin K supplements because whether it helps with COVID or not, "it is good for your blood vessels [and] bones..."

The vitamin K1 can be found in blueberries and green vegetables, but, according to Dr. Janssen, it is K2 that "is better absorbed by the body." Where can K2 be found? "It is in Dutch cheese, I have to say, and French cheese as well."

RP

SOURCE: Daniel Boffey's "Vitamin K found in some cheeses could help fight Covid-19, study suggests" posted to TheGuardian.com on June 5, 2020



River's Edge Haven of Hope is a recently established charity situated just outside of Dunnville, Ontario on the banks of the Grand River. We are seeking to offer a unique natural environment for people of all ages and walks of life to discover and grow in their journey with Jesus Christ through authentic mentoring relationships.

GENERAL MANAGER (FULL-TIME)

You must be an energetic leader who is passionate about building others up through the love of Christ in a farm-based environment. With a committed board of directors supporting you, this exciting opportunity will allow you to shape the implementation and future of this organization. We are looking to fill this position as soon as possible.

The main objectives of the General Manager will be:

1. To monitor the support and care for attendees of River's Edge
2. To provide leadership for all staff working for River's Edge
3. To represent River's Edge in a positive manner at all times
4. To ensure that the organization meets legal requirements
5. To develop policies consistent with the organization's mission and values
6. To provide care and leadership in developing and teaching horsemanship skills

Qualifications

- Must lead an exemplary life holding fast to the Christian faith. Must be an active member and in good standing with a church that adheres to reformed biblical principles.
- Extensive experience and knowledge required in working and caring for horses.
- A Bachelor's or College degree, preferably in Health, Social Services, Management, Education and Leadership or other related field of study.
- A minimum of three years working experience in the social services or a related field.
- A profound interest and a desire to work with youth, disadvantaged, and the developmentally disabled.
- Exceptional organizational and computer skills and ability to work under pressure and manage multiple tasks and deadlines are required.
- Passionate about sharing the hope of the gospel with all members of the community.

Please email your application to info@riversedge.ca.

Your application should include the following:

1. Resume
2. Cover Letter
3. Statement of Faith
4. References

For more information please visit us at www.riversedge.ca or email the Chairman at bruce@riversedge.ca.

THE GOOD HANOVERIAN

A side of King George III that many an American doesn't know

by Christine Farenhorst

There is a remarkable anecdote about George III of England, that king with whom most people are acquainted through the 1994 movie *The Madness of King George*. There was more to George, however, than the declining mental health from which he suffered during his later years.

George, who lived from 1739-1820 (ruling Britain from 1760-1820), was a man of principle. He tried to apply Biblical precepts to his daily life, a life of family and politics. Deeply convinced of divine providence, he mentioned it in his letters to family and politicians. He was devoted to his wife, Charlotte of Mecklinburg-Strelitz, whom he saw for the first time on their wedding day. God blessed them. By all accounts they had a sturdy marriage and were given fifteen children, thirteen of whom reached adulthood.

On to the anecdote...

THE SECOND GREATEST COMMANDMENT

King George III enjoyed hunting and was out one day with a party of several men stalking some deer in the Forest of Windsor. Led by dogs, they were in hot pursuit of a stag when they were forced to halt by the edge of the river Thames. The stag managed to cross. The river, however, was exceptionally deep at that particular spot and the hounds could not follow. So the hunting party trotted along the edge of the streaming water looking for a location shallow enough for all to be able to safely reach the other side. The ground was rocky; the grass high; and the many thickets quickly separated the riders from one another.

The king's horse was weary. George knew it and he resolved to stop and give the beast a rest. Consequently he parted ways with the hunters and moved onto a

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:29-37

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

clearing where some oaks stood. Fatigued himself, he enjoyed the wind swaying the branches of the trees and the singing of the birds. Suddenly, shaken out of his reveries, he sat bolt upright for he fancied he heard someone weeping nearby. Spurring his horse on towards the sound, he became increasingly aware that it was a cry of distress. The closer he came, the more he could make out the words.

"Oh, my mother! My poor, dear mother!!"

It was quiet for a moment and then again a repetition. "May God have pity on my dear mother!"

The king rode on, intensely intrigued and moved by the words. He reached a small glade with a sizable plot of grass. On that grass and under an oak stood a crude, makeshift bed covered with a small amount of straw. Over this pallet hung a bit of tent material. A slip of a girl knelt in close proximity to the bed. Dark-haired, tears running down her cheeks, she was the picture of desolation. Some packs, as well as a basket or two, lay nearby.

George spoke. He was a father as well as a king, and not unmoved by such a scene. It pained him to see a child in such heartbreaking anxiety.

"Why are you crying, little one?" he enquired.

As she looked up at him, startled at his sudden appearance, he went on in a compassionate tone. "And what is it you are praying for?"

The little girl, about eight years of age, rose and pointed to a still figure stretched out on the pallet. She answered, sobbing as she spoke. "Oh, sir, my mother is dying."

George dismounted, tethered his horse to one of the low-lying branches of the oak and walked towards the child. She took him to the little mound of straw upon which her mother was laying. As

he came closer, he could see that the prostrate figure was a gypsy woman. He also perceived that she was indeed close to death. The woman turned her eyes towards him but did not speak. It seem that her power of speech ebbed away and that the Grim Reaper was patiently waiting for her breath to stop as well. The child had begun to weep once more and left George's side to once more kneel down by the woman. She began to wipe her mother's face with her hands, hands wet with tears.

"What is your name, child? Are there others here who are your family? How long has your mother been ill?"

Before the child had a chance to answer any of these questions, another girl, one bearing much resemblance to the child, emerged from the trees. This girl was a few years older and as she became aware of George's presence, curtsied and also knelt down by the dying woman. Kissing her, she began to weep as well.

"Dear children," George said, "do not cry. What can be done for you? Indeed, how can I help you?"

"Oh, sir," replied the older girl, "early this morning I ran all the way to Windsor and looked about the streets trying to find a minister. I did find one and then another, but neither would come back with me to pray with my mother."

The woman, the dying mother, could understand every word her daughter spoke. It could be seen in her eyes. These were fixed upon her child and they changed from sadness to fear. It was plain to George that this was so. The children were kneeling on the left side of their mother. George picked up one of the packs laying on the grass, carried it over to the woman's right side and sat down on it. He then took her right hand and spoke softly.

"I am a minister," he whispered, "and God has sent me here to help you."

The woman's eyes turned away from her girls towards him. There was a question in her eyes. George went on to speak of the fall of humankind into sin, afterwards voicing the need for a Savior. And then he gladly told her of the Redeemer Who had been born, Jesus Christ. The woman's eyes never left his



face. They became, as George spoke, more animated and then, peaceful. Then they left his face and focused beyond the king. And then suddenly, she smiled. Because her expression had become so happy and peaceful, a few moments passed before George and the children realized that she had died.

When George's attendants came onto the scene a little later, they found George comforting the gypsy children as if they were his own children. He rose up as they rode into the glade, simultaneously pressing some gold coins into the hands of the orphans speaking as he did so.

"You have my protection," he said. Remounting his horse, he addressed

his attendants, even as he pointed to the children.

"Who do you think is neighbor to these?"

George's faith seemed to be part of a piety that permeated his being and his daily life. In his last years, physical as well as mental powers deserted him and he became blind. He died at Windsor Castle on January 29, 1820, after a reign of almost sixty years. RP

Christine Farenhorst's newest short story collection "Hidden: Stories of War and Peace," is available from both Amazon.com and Amazon.ca.

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

INSPIRED BY MY NEIGHBOR'S CAT...

LITTLE GIRL: "Look auntie, this is our new kitten Pepper!"

AUNT: "So is your other kitten named Salt?"

LITTLE GIRL: "No Auntie, that wouldn't make sense, because Pepper is actually short for Peppermint."

AUNT: "So what is your other kitten's name?"

LITTLE GIRL: "Double Salt!"

RAVI ZACHARIAS (1946-2020)

The well-known apologist Ravi Zacharias passed away on May 19 of cancer at the age of 74. While his family was Anglican, he didn't believe until, at age 17, an attempt at suicide landed him in a hospital and while there someone brought his mother a Bible and told her to read John 14 to him. Zacharias said God used verse 19 to turn him: "Because I live, you will also live." Later, in his book *Jesus among other Gods*, he summed up that conversion experience this way:

"I came to Him because I did not know which way to turn. I remained with Him because there is no other way I wish to turn. I came to Him longing for

something I did not have. I remain with Him because I have something I will not trade. I came to Him as a stranger. I remain with Him in the most intimate of friendships. I came to Him unsure about the future. I remain with Him certain about my destiny."

RAVI ON HOW EVERYONE KNOWS THERE ARE ABSOLUTES

Ravi Zacharias has a favorite story he tells about an encounter with a deconstructionist/post-modern building. As he describes it, "...inside you encounter stairways that go nowhere, pillars that hang from the ceiling without purpose, and angled surfaces configured to create a sense of vertigo."

What's the point? Zacharias explained that "when the architect was asked, 'Why?' he said, 'If life itself is capricious, why should our buildings have any design and any meaning?'"

But as Zacharias went on to show, this post-modern building, with its dead ends and useless pillars was still very well designed – even as the designer pretended to flout all the rules of design, he had to acknowledge them and submit to them. As Zacharias put it:

"When the rationale was explained to me, I had just one question: Did he do the same with the foundation?"

"The laughter in response to my question unmasked the double standard [atheists] espouse. And that is precisely the double standard of atheism! It is possible to dress up and romanticize our bizarre experiments in social restructuring while disavowing truth or absolutes. But one dares not play such deadly games with the foundations of good thinking."

SOMETIMES I WONDER...

Sometimes I wonder, My Lord, why
Did you create us with our eye?
Unlike the worm or mole made blind
Who labour in earth's soil, yet find
Their tasks both noble, right and true
In ink-black solitude, praise You.

Eyes prove the window of our soul
But, do they help us see Truth's goal?
Did, what Eve saw corrupt her heart?
Can we keep wrong from right apart?
Was Achan not by wealth impressed?
Eyes, led him to sin, he confessed.

And David? Whom the Lord loved so?
That sordid tale! So we might know,
Our eyes are to our soul, the key,
What does that mean for you and me?
Were it not better, we were maimed
And blessed with blindness, than be shamed?

Are we not given to despise?
Job covenanted both his eyes
Not, to be overcome with lust,
But in these things in God to trust,
For, does our God not see our ways?
Lord, shield our eyes, yes, all our days.

– Aart Blokhuis Feb. 29/20

EXEGETING GOD'S OTHER BOOK

"Imagine if we'd let atheists translate all our Bibles? Imagine if we did that, and so the Bible now says, 'There is no God' 'Everything is chaotic and meaningless' and 'You are just a piece of shrapnel' and yet we keep using them. And then we're shocked that we lose people?[Well] we've let natural revelation be exegeted, extrapolated, and taught and all the 'catechisms' are made by people who hate



it, and hate the One who made it. And they hate the people who love the One who made it.”

– N.D. Wilson, on why there is a pressing need for Christians to make nature documentaries

CALLED TO BUSINESS

Even in Reformed circles there can be the feeling that ministry is a calling and business is not. But can we glorify God in providing for our families, in creating jobs that allow others to do the same, and in supporting ministries that, without such support, simply couldn't exist? Yes, ministers and missionaries are vital, but as the Rev. Dick Lucas noted, to reach the ends of the earth with God's Word we also need those who make it possible for them to do their work:

“You have to have a generation of people raised up to proclaim the Gospel but you also have to have a generation who are prepared to support the Gospel to a sacrificial extent.”

RED AND YELLOW, BLACK AND WHITE...

Creationist Ken Ham has a solution to the problem of racism. We have to help people understand their true origins:

“[The Bible] says all people are descendants of one man and one woman, Adam and Eve. That means there's only one race of people... I remember after talking on this once a man told me, ‘When I filled out my census form and it said, ‘What race are you?’ I wrote down ‘Adam’s.’”

SOURCE: "Genesis: The Key to Reclaiming the Culture" DVD

TRADEOFFS VS. SOLUTIONS

In a June 2 Facebook live discussion with fellow Conservative MP Garnett Genius, Arnold Viersen outlined two very different ways that politicians tend to approach problems.

“One of my friends points out that the progressive vote thinks in terms of solutions, and the conservative thinks in terms of tradeoffs. And you can see that even in the COVID response. The progressives: ‘We have got to stop the spread of COVID!’ The conservative will much more think: ‘We have to trade off one health concern for another health concern.’ For example, in Alberta we've had, I think, just about 150 deaths from COVID. But in the same time period we've had 37 deaths from a lack of heart surgeries. And that's a tradeoff that we've made. It's not necessarily talked about. But that is the tradeoff.”

That's a fantastic point. And while Viersen framed it as a conservative vs. a progressive way of thinking, it might be framed as a Christian vs. secular way of thinking. It is the Christian, after all, who knows *why* we should be acknowledging that our best efforts will always be trade-offs, rather than solutions for all. It comes down to our more accurate understanding of the world and of our own capabilities.

For the secularist, G.K. Chesterton noted, “abolish God, and the government becomes God.” Refusing to turn upwards, the secularist is forced to look sideways for a savior, landing on the government because there is no more powerful human institution. But fallible, fallen, limited Man isn't savior material, no matter what level of power he attains. So the secularist can only continue



SEEDTIME & HARVEST
— WEALTH COUNSEL —
STEWARDS THROUGH ALL LIFE'S SEASONS

Biblically-based financial life planning with a focus on retirement planning, charitable giving, business succession planning and legacy planning.

seedtimeandharvestwc.ca



faith 
FINANCE

A Biblically-based, Reformed financial information hub with a community platform and the home of The Good Steward Podcast.

faithandfinance.ca




VIRTUOUS
INVESTING

The Canadian leader in Biblically Responsible Investing offering fiduciary portfolio management from a Reformed perspective & private investment solutions.

investvirtuously.ca

NOW OFFERING

A custom financial solution for \$6,000*/year + HST regardless of the amount invested

bhilt@investvirtuously.ca | 519.357.8944

*To be adjusted every two years for inflation. Does not include embedded costs of investments (i.e. mutual funds or ETFs) which may be utilized.

FOR THE FIRST
15 NEW CLIENTS

Financial planning, life insurance, and all non-securities related advice is offered via Seedtime & Harvest Wealth Counsel, a trade name of Seedtime & Harvest Financial Inc. Faith & Finance is an information hub provided by Seedtime & Harvest Wealth Counsel and does not offer any financial advice. Virtuous Investing is a trade name of Brian Hill used for securities related business. Brian Hill is registered with Huxton Black Ltd., a registered Portfolio Manager and Exempt Market Dealer in Ontario, Alberta, and B.C. The Ontario Securities Commission is the principal regulator of Huxton Black Ltd.

placing their hope in government by disregarding the limited nature of Man's capabilities and character. Then they look for solutions rather than trade-offs because it has become their habit to overestimate what Man can do.

The Christian, on the other hand, has no need to gloss over Man's limitations. We also understand that time, money, and every other resource, are limited too, such that we need to count the cost before setting out on an endeavor (Luke 14:25-34). And, finally, we know that in this sin-stained world perfection is impossible. That's why anything we do will always be a tradeoff, with one of the most common being that resources used for one purpose, can't then be used to some other end.

As Viersen pointed out, when most governments first proposed the lockdowns, we didn't hear about the other health costs that would come along with doing so. Overall the situation was presented as being *lives vs. money*, and given that sort of tradeoff, then the choice was clear. And even as an economic tradeoff was noted, the government had their "solution" to that too – they were going to hand out money and lots of it, and we didn't hear of any downside to doing that.

However, it wasn't just *lives vs. money*. The reality was that it was *lives vs. other lives*. There was a predictable, but overlooked cost that would come from heart surgeries, and other vital medical treatments, that were cancelled or delayed due to our COVID-19 response. There was also the physical and mental health concerns that come with unemployment on such a massive scale. Those weren't widely acknowledged tradeoffs.

Going forward, one hard-earned lesson we can take from this strange spring is to question whatever "solutions" we are offered (Prov. 18:17). As Christians, we can apply our God-given insights about the nature of Man, and our world, and help those around us by posing the important questions that spring from our better understanding. We can gently yet firmly ask: "What is the trade-off?" and "What are the costs you haven't yet mentioned?"

Because there will be such costs. In this finite, fallen world every proposal will always involve tradeoffs.

DID HE SEE THE TRANSGENDER DEBATE COMING?

"Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions."

– G.K. Chesterton, in the *Illustrated London News*

ON PRIORITIES

It is no coincidence that a society that ignores all God's commandments will create their own, easier to obey, moral code. They might take God's name in vain, violate the Sabbath, covet their rich neighbor's good, teach kids how to fornicate, and even proclaim the murder of the unborn a right, but because they use paper, rather than plastic, straws they can still feel righteous. As one quote, purportedly from a Winifred Egan, put it:

"What an irony that a society confronted with plastic bags filled with the remains of aborted babies should be more concerned about the problem of recycling the plastic."

TRANSLATION THAT BUSTS A GUT

"During my time of study in Amsterdam several decades ago, I personally experienced this challenge of translation. One day I walked downstairs and happened to meet the landlady. She looked at me quizzically, as if to ask what I was doing. 'I'm taking a break from my studies,' I tried to say in Dutch. Unfortunately, 'taking a break' does not translate well, so I changed the word for 'break' to *paus*. And, apparently, I didn't pronounce it well. What I actually said to my Dutch friend was, 'The pope has a hernia.' A big fan of the pontiff, she was very concerned."

– R.C. Sproul (in *What's in the Bible*)

↙ IS THIS FAITH? ↘



HARD TO TELL. SURE, IT MIGHT BE.

BUT TALK IS CHEAP AND OH-SO PLENTIFUL.

ANYONE CAN CLAIM TO HAVE FAITH IN ANYTHING.

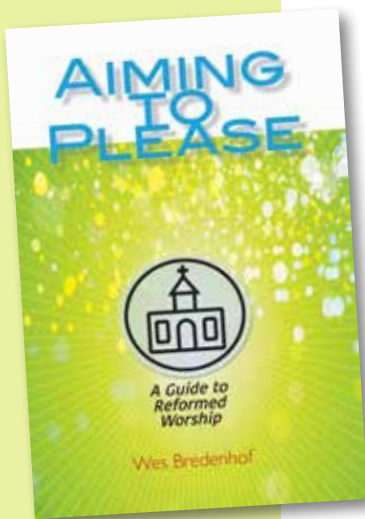
IT'S EASY TO FOOL OTHERS.

IT'S EASY TO FOOL OURSELVES.

SO IS THAT FAITH? MAYBE. MAYBE NOT.

↙ BUT THIS SURE IS. ↘





"The Reformed church is heir to a very rich doctrinal and liturgical inheritance. *Aiming to Please* serves as a vivid reminder of the beautiful gift that was rediscovered by the Church in the days of the Protestant Reformation. Dr. Bredenhof reminds us that what we do in our corporate worship is meaningful, and that each element of our liturgy is there for a very important reason. When we forget why we do the things we do, our actions become little more than mere tradition. That's why books like this one are so important, as they help a new generation of God's people to rediscover the riches and importance of Biblical, Reformed worship."

- Rev. Jim Witteveen

Missionary for the Canadian Reformed Churches, working in Brazil

"Wes Bredenhof's new book, *Aiming to Please: A Guide to Reformed Worship*, helps readers appreciate that his care in preaching, prayers, and liturgy grows out of his love of God's Word. He writes in a very uncomplicated way for the average member of the church, showing what each part of the worship service means, and how the minister and the members can most glorify God through these elements of worship."

- Dr. Ted Van Raalte

Professor of Ecclesiology at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

THE BOOK IS AVAILABLE IN CANADA AT THESTUDY-BOOKS.COM
AND INTERNATIONALLY VIA AMAZON

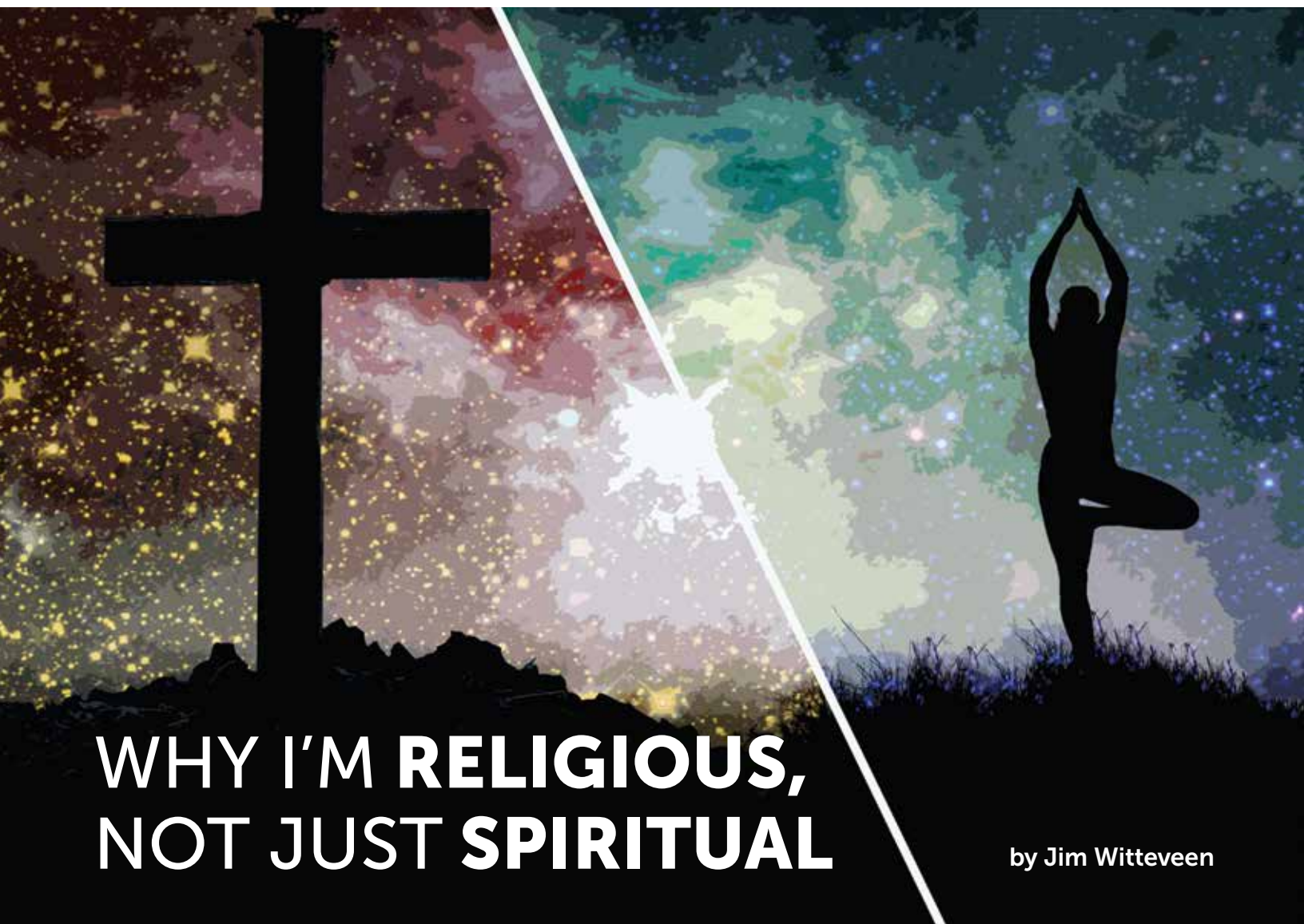
TulipSingles.com

Love...
Devotion...
Commitment

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





WHY I'M RELIGIOUS, NOT JUST SPIRITUAL

by Jim Witteveen

I was sitting in the sauna at the local aquatic centre the other day when I struck up a conversation with the man sitting opposite me. When you're a missionary, it's easy to turn conversations toward matters of faith, and that's the direction this particular conversation quickly took. It wasn't long before the man told me something about himself that I've heard before, many times. It's a statement that, to be honest, makes me cringe:

"I consider myself to be more spiritual than religious."

What does that mean? Well, it turns out that to this man it meant that he believed in a "higher power" of some sort, that he didn't attend church, and didn't have any appreciation for "organized religion," and that he tried to

live, in his words, a "moral life."

And judging from our brief conversation, he certainly did appear to be, on the surface at least, a "good person." He looked more than a little rough around the edges – he had full tattoo sleeves on both arms, long hair and piercings, but he expressed respect for my position and the work I do, he spoke with affection about his wife and his kids, and he told me how he worked hard to take care of his family and live a good life.

So why did his statement make me cringe? Why do I find myself reacting negatively whenever I hear people speaking ill of "religion," while speaking positively about "spirituality"?

SPIRITUALITY'S SELF-MADE GOD

In this case, and others like it, my reaction has much to do with the fact

that a person like this is essentially fooling himself. He believes that he can be a good person (and, in the world's eyes, he is), and he believes that "God" (whoever or whatever he, she, or it is) will accept him on that basis. When it comes right down to it, he believes that he'll be okay with God because he has, in his mind, created a god that he can feel comfortable with – a god that doesn't demand too much, a god that doesn't ask for things that will take him out of his comfort zone, a god who won't judge him.

Let me put it like this by way of example: on a Sunday morning at 8:00, when you're enjoying that pleasant drowsiness that marks the end of a good sleep after a hard week of work, when you hear the kids beginning to wind themselves up in preparation for another day of rambunctious activity, it's a whole

lot easier to be “spiritual” than it is to be “religious.”

Why?

Because the “spiritual” person isn’t going to have to get the kids washed, dressed, fed, and into the vehicle before the Sunday morning service. He’s not going to have to keep those same kids under control for an hour of formal worship. He’s not going to have to spend time talking to people that he may not have much in common with, people who may annoy him or get on his nerves. He’s not going to have to listen to a preacher telling him things that he may not be interested in hearing; he’s not going to have his conscience pricked by calls to repentance.

But most importantly, he’s not going to hear the gospel – the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, salvation that comes to people because of God’s pure and beautiful grace, if only they trust in Him. And because of that, regardless of how good a person he is, if he continues on his “spiritual journey,” while avoiding the trappings of what is now known as “religion,” he will not be saved.

When I hear a non-Christian tell me that he or she is “spiritual,” and not “religious,” it frightens me...

So when I hear a non-Christian tell me that he or she is “spiritual,” and not “religious,” it frightens me. And in the faith landscape of North America, this kind of self-definition is becoming more and more common. Prejudice against organized religion, individualistic thinking, and lack of respect for any kind of authority, whether religious or otherwise, has led to this unfortunate development in our recent history.

TRUE RELIGION IS MORE THAN RITUAL

Now, seemingly in response to this shift in our culture, many Christians have begun to distance themselves from any association with “religion,” and have begun to define themselves in terms of “spirituality.”

One phrase, in particular, keeps on rearing its (ugly) head: “Christianity is a relationship, not a religion.” “Religion,” we’re told, is a negative concept, and it has to do with outward observance of rituals and behaviors, rather than the relationship that we should have with Jesus.

It sounds great because we should all agree that the Christian faith isn’t simply about following the right rules. Being a true Christian means much more than going to church, making the requisite donations, attending Bible study or youth group or whatever church functions may have been organized. It is about living in a right relationship with God. The prophets of the Old Testament knew this, and they would write things like this:

“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”
– Hosea 6:6

So why should we be bothered by the phrase, “Christianity is not a religion, it’s a relationship,” if the person saying it simply means that Christianity is about more than ritual and formality and outward obedience to the moral code of the Christian community? Isn’t this just an argument over semantics?

But when I hear that Christianity is not a religion, I think of James 1:26-27. James says this:

“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

James does not say that religion is wrong. He doesn’t say that it’s superior to be “spiritual” rather than “religious.” The goal is true religion, not the absence of religion. True religion means bridling your tongue. It means visiting orphans and widows in their affliction. It means keeping oneself unstained from the world. So true religion is about much more than going through the motions; that’s clear in both the Old and New Testaments. True religion must be a religion of the heart.

TRUE RELIGION IS LIVED OUT

But the fact is, it must not stop at the heart! True religion is not simply something that happens within the person. A faithful life is not a life that’s spent contemplating the right things, having the correct feeling in one’s heart. That attitude of the heart must show itself in outward observance – in seeking to live a holy life, in serving others, in speaking in a way that comports with God’s demand for pure speech. And it must show itself even in the observance of (gasp!) ritual!

Sometimes people will speak of a divide that exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament, as if the Old Testament was all about ritual and observance of rules and regulations, about offering the right sacrifices in the right way at the right time, and the New Testament is all about the interior life of the person – what goes on in the heart. And so people see the Old Testament people of God as being “religious,” while New Testament Christians are called to be “spiritual.”

But this is a false dichotomy. The Old Testament was never about the external divorced from the internal; the verse I quoted from Hosea proves that. And what’s more, the New Testament isn’t about the internal falsely separated from the external. As Christians, we still have rituals – repeated practices, done the same way again and again, that conform to a set standard. We have been given new rituals – the Lord’s Supper, and baptism – the sacraments. But we also participate in the old rituals – gathering together every week as a set pattern for



"So that's why I think of myself as not really religious, but more spiritual..."

corporate worship is a central religious ritual that we are called to honor.

Ritual unexamined and done in an unthinking manner is surely a negative thing; but that doesn't mean that ritual, the stuff that people now think of as "religious," is negative in and of itself. Far from it! In fact, the Bible repeatedly speaks positively about these sorts of activities, and strongly encourages Christians to participate in them!

TRUE RELIGION IS COMMUNAL

And that brings me to my final concern about the religion/spirituality divide. As Christians, we are people who are called to live in community. As Reformed Christians, we speak about God's covenant, and we speak of ourselves as God's covenant people.

One of my greatest concerns with pitting "religion" against "spirituality" is the individualistic focus of spirituality. "Spirituality" so often seems to be about my personal relationship with God, while "religion" is often associated with activities that involve corporate relationships – groups of people, doing the same things at the same time, together. In focusing on personal spirituality, as contrasted with organized religion, it often seems that the individual, and his or her needs and desires, becomes paramount, while the corporate aspect of our faith, which should be so central, is lost.

CONCLUSION

Our religion is not just about a personal relationship with Jesus; it is about that, to be sure, but it's so much richer than that, so much more! John puts it this way, in the introduction to his first letter: "

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

True religion is about the vertical (our relationship with God), but it also includes the horizontal (our relationships with one another). That is what we must strive for – not a vague, individualistic "spirituality," but a true religion, a religion that defines all activities in our life, a religion that works itself out in love for our neighbor, especially in love for our brothers and sisters in the covenant community, based in our love for the Lord.

So maybe we could work out a new motto. Say, something like this: "Christianity: not just a relationship, but a religion made up of relationships – beautiful (and challenging) relationships – with our fellow believers, based in a renewed relationship with God, through His Son Jesus Christ."

It may not be catchy, but it's true. So let's reclaim "religion" – a Biblical word that has been much maligned – and rejoice in it, and everything that it stands for. RP

Rev. Witteveen is a missionary who has served the Church in Canada and now Brazil. He also blogs at CreationWithoutCompromise.com.

Career Opportunity

With much thankfulness, we, a growing steel service centre, are in need of a **Truck Driver** at Plant 3, located in **Hawkesville, ON**. This plant is an easy commute to many churches in the Guelph, Elora, Fergus and Listowel area.

We offer competitive wages, an RRSP plan, profit sharing and generous benefits. Our drivers work Mon-Fri and are home every night. An AZ license is required and experience hauling steel is a definite asset.

For more information, or to submit your resume, please email:

careers@jancosteel.com

www.jancosteel.com



exceeding

the standard in quality and service



IT'S A WONDERFUL LOAF

Why Free Enterprise Makes Bread In Abundance

by Jon Dykstra

In his poem *The Wonderful Loaf*, author Russ Roberts shows how the free enterprise system – with supposedly no one in control – can deliver bread in a great variety, and more cheaply than a socialist system. He writes:

Knowing nobody's in charge,
it looks like all is left to chance,
Yet in New York, or London
as well as Paris, France.
No one's worried the shelves will be empty,
we take supply for granted
But it's a marvel, it's a miracle,
the world's somehow enchanted....

The key to the process is prices
and the freedom to shop where you want,
Competition among all the bakers,
makes sure that they rise before dawn,
To make sure the bread's near perfection,
to make sure that the buyer's content.
You don't have to know economics
to know when your money's well-spent.

Roberts then contrasts how it might be if someone were in charge making the decisions. A socialist system would have some "bread czar" making decisions about what sort, and how much, bread would be made, but then he'd also have to decide how much rye or wheat would have to be planted, and also what other crops would have to be curtailed to make room for the wheat crops. To keep everyone happy – from the rye lover to the white bread aficionado and the gluten intolerant chap – the number of decisions this bread czar would have to make would be beyond the ability of any single human being, or government department, to manage competently.

While *The Wonderful Loaf* is insightful (and well worth a

read in full at wonderfulloaf.org) it's also missing something vital – *the author doesn't see the Christian connection*.

Roberts says that the ability of the free enterprise system to deliver hot, fresh, affordable bread in an abundance of varieties each and every day is something "no one intends" and:

"...no one has to orchestrate it. It's the product of our actions but no single mind's designed it."

The truth is different. No *human* mind designed it, but the foundational principles of the free market system – what makes it work – are *Christian* principles given by God.

1. **Do not worship other gods** – Whereas the 1st Commandment (Ex. 20:3) teaches us not to turn to other gods, Socialism is dependent on someone at the top being near-omnipotent, knowing all the right moves to make for the betterment of everyone.
2. **Don't steal** – The 8th Commandment (Ex. 20:15) make clear God's intent for us to be able to own property, while Socialism takes away property rights.
3. **Don't covet** – Socialism wants to know what everyone makes while the 10th Commandment (Ex. 20:17) forbids us from looking over the fence to see what our neighbor has got. This commandment frees us to develop what God has given us (Matt 25:14-30) instead of minding our neighbor's business.

Other biblical texts could be highlighted and explored but the point is, the reason the free market works as well as it does is that, in these commandments and more, it better lines up with what God commands. And when we obey these commands, then His is the "invisible hand" guiding farmers, mills, bakers, and consumers to arrive at this wonderful loaf. RP

by Ken Wieske

IS IT REAL CORPORATE WORSHIP?

- a parable

In this time of pandemic, Christians are carrying on a vigorous discussion about the character of corporate worship. When many if not most of the congregation members are watching online, can we really say that we are gathered as the Body of Christ, worshipping Him in corporate worship?

I've read many of the arguments for and against, and I tend to agree with all of them. My position is basically this: yes, we are gathered for corporate worship. At the same time, it is only a pale imitation of how corporate worship should be.

Some speak quite forcefully against calling a live-streamed service real corporate worship, calling it only a "pale imitation."

Others argue quite forcefully that live-streaming is real, corporate worship; the congregation is gathered together in the building and over the internet, and together the Body comes into the presence of the Lord and worships. It may be pale (less than desirable), but it's not an imitation: it is real worship.

A REAL IMITATION

As I said, in a sense I side with both.

I would like to insist on maintaining the word "imitation." The word "imitation," derived from a Latin root, conveys the idea

of "copy." I think of what the letter to the Hebrews says about the temple and the sacrificial system. They were "copies" of the real thing. The real Holy of Holies is in heaven. The temple was a pale imitation of the real thing. But it was the best that was available until Jesus came, died, rose, and ascended, opening up for us a new and living way beyond the veil, past the very real cherubim (not the gold pale imitations), into the very throne room of God. I would argue that something can be a pale imitation, but can at the same time be real, in the sense that it is the best we have available at the moment.

So how can live-streamed worship be real, and at the same time a pale imitation? Let me tell you a parable which might convey how these two things might be true at the same time.

THE PARABLE OF THE PACKED AND POLLINATED COUNTRY WEDDING

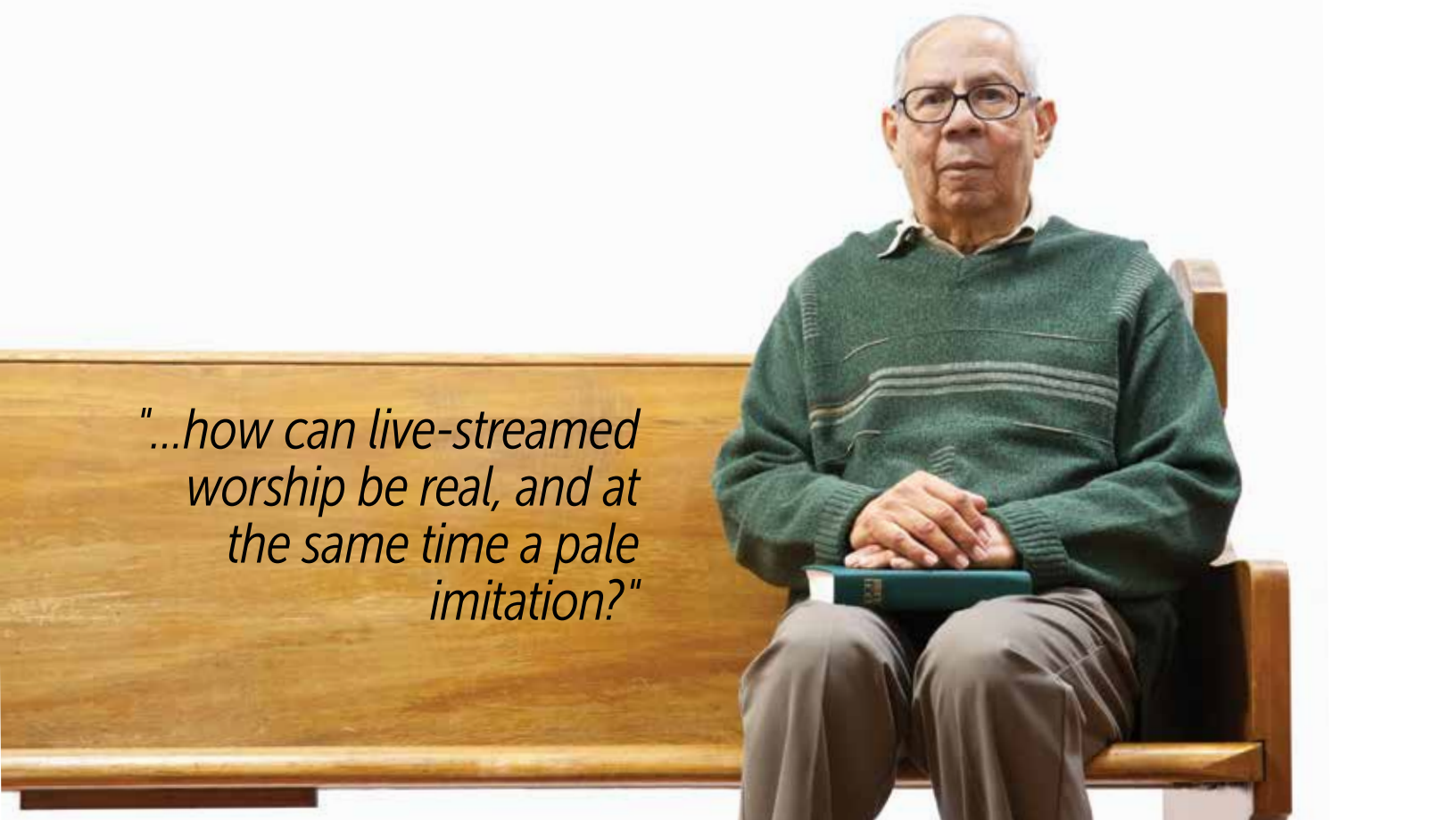
Imagine a wedding going on in a country church. The bride's cousin has unfortunately come down with a bad case of allergies, and is sneezing a lot. The church auditorium is very small and the cousin doesn't want to sit amongst the guests and sneeze on them continuously, nor does she want to ruin the video with the sounds of her sneezes. So she stands

in a separate room, with the door slightly ajar, and she can more or less see the wedding ceremony from a safe distance.

She's thankful to be there, and to witness the marriage. But it doesn't feel quite right: she doesn't sense that she's participating fully in the event, because she's alone in a separate room. She has trouble hearing everything and she has a hard time joining in with the singing.

Meanwhile, the bride's brother has a large family. Their flight was delayed and their rental car took quite a bit longer to arrange than they had thought. They arrived at the church building only to discover that all of the seats are already filled. It's a beautiful, sunny day, so they find themselves obliged to stand outside the building by an open window and try to participate as best as they can. (They had considered standing in a separate room, but there was a lady in there sneezing away). This family has to crowd around the little window, and, in fact, take turns peeking in to see the ceremony which they can more or less hear. It's certainly not what they had imagined when they planned their trip to see the wedding of their sister and aunty.

Is the cousin really at the wedding? Are the brother and his wife and children really at the wedding? Yes, they are. They



"...how can live-streamed worship be real, and at the same time a pale imitation?"

are there, they are witnessing the vows, they are participating in the event, they are trying their best to sing along.

At the same time, their experience is really a pale imitation of what being at a wedding should be. They are there, but they're not there. They feel one with the gathered group of family, friends, and fellow believers, but at the same time they feel separate.

Now, is this a real wedding? It certainly is!

Is it only a real wedding for the people sitting in the pews? Certainly not!

The cousin in the separate room, and the brother and his family standing outside by the window, are witnessing and participating in a real wedding.

REAL BUT NOT OPTIMAL

I would suggest that when in our Sunday worship, the Bride comes into the holy presence of the Bridegroom, and their vows of covenant love are renewed and celebrated, this is a real Wedding. It is real worship. It is real for the people who are physically there, and it is real for the people who are straining to participate through "a door ajar, or an open window," or, in other words, through an online connection. It's real participation in real worship.

But it is certainly not optimal. For those

obliged to "look through the window," it is a pale imitation of the experience they long to have: to be physically present in the gathered assembly of God's people, singing and participating physically as the Bride communes with the Bridegroom.

ADDRESSING ONE CONCERN

Some are concerned that if we say participation via live-stream is considered real participation in real worship, then once the pandemic restrictions are lifted, some people will say it doesn't matter if they stay home and watch the church service instead. I believe this concern is unwarranted.

Think again of those in the wedding parable, and the one obliged to participate from a distance because of a health condition. God knows the heart. There is no negligence or lack of commitment when a child of God is obliged to watch the live stream because they have to stay home for a lawful reason.

Think of the family watching through the window. They are forced to do so by the circumstances. Everyone will understand this. If, however, there are lots of pews open in the building, but the brother and his family insist on standing outside and looking through the window, this would be at the very least rather

strange, if not offensive.

The same goes for participating in worship via livestream. We do this reluctantly because we are obliged by the circumstances, namely the restrictions imposed because of the pandemic. In a normal state of affairs, however, someone staying home to "watch" church of their own volition, when this is not imposed on them as a necessity, would constitute "despising the Word and the sacraments" and reveal a heart not committed to the Lord, His people, and His worship.

CONCLUSION

Is participating in public worship via livestream really worship? Are we really worshipping God together as a gathered church? The answer, during this pandemic, is "certainly!"

It may be a pale imitation of the type of gathered congregational worship we are used to, but given the circumstances, it is the very best we can do. And because it is the very best we can do, given the restrictions, we can be certain that in Christ the gathered congregation is certainly meeting with God in real corporate worship. RP

Rev. Ken Wieske is the pastor of the St. Albert Canadian Reformed Church.

LOVE THAT DOG

BY SHARON CREECH

2001/ 86 PAGES



As I started reading the very first page of this book, I thought it was dumb. I've never been a fan of poetry, particularly if it was the type of poetry that didn't even rhyme. And that's what was in this book. But I kept reading and found out, on that very first page, that the "author" agreed with me!

The book is by Jack, a boy in elementary school, who, each day, writes a journal entry for his teacher Miss Stretchberry. And there on the very first page, in his first entry, he tells her his thoughts on the poem they have just read in school. He writes:

*If that is a poem
about the red wheelbarrow
and the white chickens
then any words
can be a poem.
You've just got to
make
short
lines.*

It was a book of poetry, by a boy poet, who didn't like poetry!

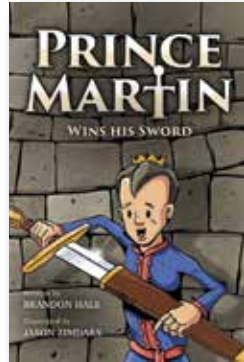
So I kept reading and I started learning, along with Jack, that poetry doesn't always have to rhyme, or even have a set rhythm. And it can be powerful. And it can make you cry.

Love that book.

PRINCE MARTIN WINS HIS SWORD

BY BRANDON HALE

52 PAGES / 2018



At bedtime, my dad reads a lot of books to us – me and my two sisters. One night he read a rhyming book called *Prince Martin Wins His Sword*, and we all liked it. Prince Martin is a boy who wants to prove to his father the king that he is brave, loyal, and true. So he decides to explore the unknown forest, and while he was there he found four evil hogs who were bullying a baby deer. And there was a dog there too, protecting the fawn. And the dog was a knight, named Sir Ray! Prince Martin was scared, but then he dove right in, fighting side by side with Sir Ray.

The rhymes in the book are like this:

*Should he help or go home,
the boy had to decide.
And just how much help,
could a mere kid provide?*

It has lots of good pictures, but even without the pictures, the book is super good (I didn't see the pictures the first time because I was in bed). Also, my little six-year-old sister doesn't really like tension, and while this one was scary it wasn't too scary.

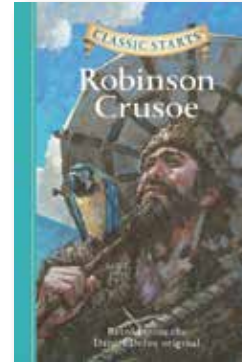
I think this would be great for kids ages five through ten.

—SOPHIA DYKSTRA

CLASSIC STARTS: ROBINSON CRUSOE

BY DEANNA MCFADDEN & DANIEL DEFOE

143 PAGES / 2008



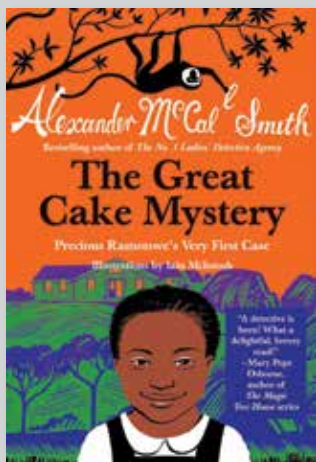
If you were to compare this Classic Starts retelling to the original *Robinson Crusoe* published in 1719, there are a number of ways where the retelling falls short:

- At maybe a quarter the size, some of the story has been cut.
- Historically inaccurate political-correctness has snuck in, with Robinson's native servant, Friday, now simply his native friend.
- The general Christian worldview of the original is largely absent.

So why recommend it? Because the original *Crusoe* would be too much for my 4-8 year olds. And it's so much better than anything else I can find at my local library.

The "Classic Starts" series is put out by Sterling Children Books and as you might expect of a secular company, their retellings aren't going to be particularly careful about preserving an author's Christian worldview. But because this author did indeed have a Christian worldview, even when retold this is still good clean fun for the whole family.

So, let's look at this *Crusoe* retelling and focus on the highlights. It is a really good read because at one quarter the size, it is a story that 4-year-olds can enjoy. And dad enjoys it too. And there are still hints of the Christian worldview here. This could be a gateway to the original because kids like to hear the same stories more than once.



THE GREAT CAKE MYSTERY

BY ALEXANDER MCCALL SMITH

73 PAGES / 2012

Precious Ramotswe must rank up there with some of the best-loved fictional detectives of all time, rubbing elbows with Hercule Poirot, Cadfael, and Father Brown. But as beloved as she is among adults, did you know that the star of Alexander McCall Smith's *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* is also popular among children? McCall Smith has written a series of mysteries for children, featuring Precious when she was just eight years old.

For those who don't already know, Precious lives in Botswana. In *The Great Cake Mystery* Precious doesn't think of herself as a detective yet, but her dad thinks she has it in her. So when a classmate is accused - without any proof - of eating someone else's sandwich, she is upset. Precious, you see, is a kind girl who wants to help others. In this case helping means setting a trap to catch the *real* snack stealer.

SPOILER ALERT: Precious bakes a cake full of glue, covers the whole thing with icing, and places the cake outside the classroom "on the shelf where the children left their bags." And not too long afterwards the whole class hears the howling cries of the little thieves - monkeys! Precious has saved her friend from the mean accusations of their classmates. And, this being a old-fashioned sort of book, those classmates are truly sorry for what they thought and said.

This is a charming book, made all the more so by the folksy illustrations throughout, at least one on every two-page spread. McCall has written four other children's mysteries starring the young Precious, with *The Great Cake Mystery* billed as "Precious Ramotswe's very first case." (In a confusing twist, that same billing is shared with at least one edition of another book in the series, *Precious and the Monkeys*. Whether *The Great Cake Mystery* is the first or not, it serves as wonderful introduction to the young detective-to-be.)

CAUTIONS

We've read two other "young Precious" mysteries so far, and our daughters have loved both *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill* and *The Mystery of the Missing Lion*. I had a slightly different take. While I loved the former, I thought the latter was marred by an insertion at the end where they treat a lion as if he were a person. Precious ends up giving a brief lecture about how all lions should live free, including the missing tame lion they'd just recovered. And all the adults side with the child.

It is, on the one hand, no big deal - it is only a few pages in an otherwise enjoyable story. But it rankled me because this childish "feel-good-ism" is rampant in our culture, and I don't think we need to be feeding any of it to our undiscerning children. The fact is, a tame lion would most likely die in the wild and a well-treated tame lion is not an oppressed lion. So what Precious proposes is both completely unnecessary, and quite likely very harmful to the very lion she wants to help. We're taught that good intentions are what really matters, but God says otherwise (Prov. 27:14) - if our well-meaning efforts cause damage, then we need to stop doing this well-meant damage!

CONCLUSION

My wife and I didn't know about this brief lecture until we came across it in the audiobook with the kids listening along. It wasn't objectionable enough to stop listening to a book we were already three-quarters of the way through, but if I was buying this series for a Christian school library I would get *The Great Cake Mystery* and *The Mystery of Meerkat Hill*, but give *The Mystery of the Missing Lion* a pass. There are two others in the series but we have yet to read (or listen to) them.

I should note that the audiobook versions are truly remarkable, with the reader delivering all sorts of wonderful accented voices.

Oh, and if your kids like this series, they might also enjoy a five-book series McCall Smith wrote about Akimbo, a boy who lives on a game reserve in Africa. We also review those on ReformedPerspective.ca.

All, in all, these are books that children even as young as 5 may really enjoy listening to, and 9 year-olds and up could really enjoy reading. Our whole family was thoroughly charmed.



Solomon on Smartphones And the Pull Of Pornography

PROVERBS 7, WISDOM'S WARNING, AND THE ADULTERESS'S SIREN CALL

by Ryan deJonge

The book of Proverbs is a book about two ways to live, the paths of wisdom and folly. The way of wisdom is the way of the righteous, the way of blessing, and the way of life. The way of folly is the way of the fool, the way of curse, and ultimately the way of death. Along each path sits a guide who calls out to pilgrims on the road, urging them to join their path. They are both women and they both address the simple. They both sound enticing and they both promise great things.

But only one delivers on her promises. And the result of embracing the wrong woman is death.

The issue that I want to explore in this article is adultery, especially for young, unmarried, modern, tech-savvy Christians. The issue of adultery has

always been about embracing the wrong woman, and so it is easy to see why Solomon would spend so much time addressing his son on this topic at the beginning of Proverbs.

Adultery is still a real and present danger. It comes in a slightly different package than it would have in Solomon's day, but the Adulteress is still alive and well, and I would be so bold as to say that many of the young, unmarried, modern, tech-savvy Christians know her well.

In the days of Solomon, people walked on paths a lot. People walked a lot, period. Since they didn't have cars, their roads were a lot different than the roads we have today. So if adultery is a path, what does it look like today? Should we expect that it looks like a dusty, uneven,

meandering footpath? Probably not. Today we travel on concrete and asphalt. We travel fast and we travel often. And we have a path that is taking over more and more of our lives. It used to be called, "the information superhighway." You might call it the superhighway to death, because that is where it is currently taking a lot of people. The path of adultery for many young, modern, tech-savvy Christians is the Internet. And the woman along that path who is calling your name, looking for youths who lack judgment, leading the way to death, is Internet pornography.

Proverbs 7 is where Solomon speaks most extensively about the person of the adulteress. His words are strikingly fitting our modern epidemic of internet pornography.

THE YOUTH WHO LACKS JUDGMENT

Solomon communicates the dangers of adultery to his son by telling him a parable. This is how it begins.

At the window of my house
I looked out through the lattice.
I saw among the simple,
I noticed among the young men,
a youth who lacked judgment.
He was going down the street near her corner,
walking along in the direction of her house
at twilight, as the day was fading,
as the dark of night set in.
– Proverbs 7:6–9 (NIV84)

The main character of this parable is the youth who lacks judgment. Perhaps you know someone like this. The thing about this youth who lacks judgment is that you can pick him out in a crowd. Solomon says that he looked out his window and he saw him immediately. He could just tell that this guy was in for some trouble.

For Solomon this is just an observation, but for someone with evil intentions, this guy is easy prey. He is the weak and slow antelope that gets picked out, pounced upon, and devoured by the lion.

Notice that this young man walks into his trap: “He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house.” Path, anyone?

What does this look like today? Today the youth who lacks judgment can probably not be observed by looking out your window onto the street. A modern youth who lacks judgment sequesters himself indoors, finds himself or herself on their phone late at night after everyone has gone to bed, or has a computer in their room. There was a time when having a computer or phone in your room was relatively safe – that time is long gone. Now the youth without judgment is the 16-year-old with a smartphone, or tablet, or whatever other personal pleasure machine they have in their pocket that

allows them to be polluted with porn whenever they please.

Where does the problem start with this young man? It is not with his parents, as Solomon doesn’t mention them. Neither is it his friends, for he leaves their company. His problem is not his environment or even the adulteress herself. This young man’s problem is himself. He lacks judgment; he heads down the path of foolishness, and straight into the trap. His adultery problem is a problem of the heart.

This remains the biggest issue for users of pornography today. The problem with porn is not porn. It is us. It is men and women who use it. In an interview for *CovenantEyes.com*, Rick Thomas was asked why kids get into porn today. What do you suppose was his answer? They have raging hormones? The porn is so good?

His answer is none of the above. Rather, the reason guys get into porn is that they lack judgment:

1. They are *lazy* – they spend too much time doing nothing.
2. They are *disobedient* – they don’t listen to their parents and others’ warnings.
3. They *lie* – they lie to others about what they are doing and to themselves about the nature and effect of pornography.
4. They are *self-righteous* – they suppose that porn is their right, and that those images are offered for their viewing pleasure.
5. They are *self-centered* – they have sexual desires, so why not fulfill them?
6. And they are *ignorant* – they don’t realize the danger they are getting themselves into with internet porn.¹

As you will be able to deduce from

There was a time when having a computer or phone in your room was relatively safe – that time is long gone.

this list, porn is not only attractive to teens. Laziness, disobedience, self-righteousness, self-centeredness, and ignorance are no respecters of age. Do you know what the problem is with Internet porn? It is you and me. This is why when Paul addresses the Thessalonians about sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:3-8), he doesn’t say, “You need to leave that sinful city!” or “You need to have accountability groups!” or “You need to campaign against temple prostitution!” or anything like that. What he says is that you need to be sanctified. You need the Holy Spirit to change your heart. The problem is with our hearts.

Our own hearts are what lead us to sin, as Jesus taught when he said: “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person” (Mark 7:21). Commenting on this passage, Mark Driscoll wrote

“Sexual sins are not 'out there' in the media, strip clubs, a gal with low-rise jeans and high-rise thong. Truly the problem is 'in you.' It is from the sinfulness of your heart that lust and sin proceed like sewage from a culvert. This is the painful, unvarnished truth.”²

THE ADULTERESS

The next character in Solomon’s parable is the inevitable destination of this judgment-lacking youth, the adulteress.

Then out came a woman to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute and with
crafty intent.
(She is loud and defiant,

her feet never stay at home;
now in the street, now in the squares,
at every corner she lurks.)
She took hold of him and kissed him
and with a brazen face she said:

“I have fellowship offerings at home;
today I fulfilled my vows.
So I came out to meet you;
I looked for you and have found you!
I have covered my bed
with colored linens from Egypt.
I have perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
Come, let’s drink deep of love till
morning;
let’s enjoy ourselves with love!
My husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.
He took his purse filled with money
and will not be home till full moon.”
– Proverbs 7:10–20 (NIV84)

Within his description of this
shady lady, Solomon highlights four
characteristics of the adulteress:

1. She is **devious** – She moves, according to verse 10, with “crafty intent.”
2. She is **restless** – As verse 11 tells us, “her feet never stay at home.”
3. She is **brazen** – She flaunts her sexuality and availability, as in verse 13: “She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows, so I came out to meet you.”
4. She is **one-dimensional** – This woman is about one thing, and she makes that clear. She is completely sexualized. She communicates nothing else. She tells the young man about her sacrifices because in Canaanite worship, sacrifices were to be accompanied by sex (vs. 14). She gives a lengthy description of her bed (vs. 16), but not because she thinks this guy looks tired. She propositions him with love (vs. 18), but she really means sex.

Do these characteristics not represent very well the ways and means of Internet

porn, the adulteress of our time?

1. Pornography is **devious**. Porn promises sexual fulfillment, an outlet for lust and sexual desires. It invites you to enter into its dream world of fantasy and fulfillment. It calls out for those who lack judgment to come along and step into its trap.
2. Pornography is **restless**. The porn industry is a multibillion-dollar industry, even though 80-90% of porn that is consumed on the Internet is available for free. So pornography is a multibillion-dollar industry and only 10-20% of those who use it are paying. How much porn is out there?
3. Pornography is **brazen**. It flaunts its stuff. It finds a way to get to you through advertisements, spam, popups, hyperlinks, etc. It invites you to come, to taste, and to see for yourself. We need to realize that the people who promote pornography are master marketers – they know how to get you in, and they know how to keep you in.
4. Pornography is completely **one-dimensional**. Pornography promises one thing: the fulfillment of your sexual desires. Porn tells you that there is one thing that matters to you right now and it has everything that you need to meet that desire. Isn’t this what that woman (or that man) on the screen is telling you: “Come, let’s drink deep of love till morning; let’s enjoy ourselves with love” (vs. 18)? Click, click, click. And you are lost in a dream world of fantasy, gratification, and self-centered sexual fulfillment.

Internet
pornography,
however, is a
classic case of
bait and switch

THE PATH TO DEATH

Internet pornography, however, is a classic case of bait and switch. You go in looking for one thing, but come away with something completely different. Solomon explains the process as he continues.

With persuasive words she led him
astray;
she seduced him with her smooth
talk.
All at once he followed her
like an ox going to the slaughter,
like a deer stepping into a noose
till an arrow pierces his liver,
like a bird darting into a snare,
little knowing it will cost him his life.
– Proverbs 7:21–23 (NIV84)

With the adulteress, you start in a dream world, but very quickly you find yourself in a nightmare. Notice the progression that verses 21-23 describe: first you are lead astray, then you are trapped, and then slowly, unknowingly even, you head to your death. You don’t die right away. You only start dying. But just like a deer in a noose, your doom is certainly coming.

This is precisely what happens with pornography. You get into it because you have a desire to fulfill or a fantasy to explore, but very quickly it starts to unravel and destroy you. The negative effects of pornography use on especially the male mind are well documented. Here are just a few.

1. Pornography use contributes to social and psychological problems. Studies show a correlation between increased use of porn and increased neglect of work, social isolation, and even depression.
2. It rewires the brain. Just like a path in the woods is formed by frequent use, so are the neural pathways in the brain. Frequent use of porn changes the footpaths in that part of the brain that is used in relating to women, and so it becomes more and more difficult to relate with them in a God-glorifying, pure, and loving manner.



“He lacks judgment; he heads down the path of foolishness, and straight into the trap.”

3. It feeds selfishness, because it is profoundly selfish.
4. It leads to premarital sex or, more frequently, masturbation. In both cases the result of pornography use is not sex as God intended it, namely between a male and a female in the relationally safe and secure confines of marriage.
5. It leads men to demean and objectify women. When you turn women on a page or a screen into sexual objects, very quickly the women in your life will become no more than sexual objects.
6. It distorts the beauty of the God-made female body. Tragically, some Christian males suppose that pornography is good because it highlights the beauty of the female body which was, after all, created by God. But porn in no way represents the beautiful diversity with which God has created females, nor does it seek to promote this beauty to God's glory, nor does it reckon with the fact that God himself provided clothing for the man and woman after the fall into sin.
7. It distorts reality, especially in the context of marriage. Think about

the effects of porn use for a man engaged to be married. Porn feeds supersized expectations about sex and diminished emotions about women. Can you spell disaster? Many guys say that they hope that marriage will fix their pornography problem. Marriage is not a fix for a pornography problem; repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is. What porn will do for your marriage is destroy it.

8. It makes gender and sexuality one-dimensional. Both women and men are far more than merely sexual objects, but porn promotes this popular idea that women are for giving sexual fulfillment and men are for taking it. Please don't buy that perverse distortion of God-created gender. And sex itself is about far more than simply a fulfillment of your physical desires – it is a deeply emotional, mental, physical, and even a spiritual activity, one that is to be enjoyed.³

The above only begin to scratch the surface of the negative effects of porn. Porn kills. Perhaps you have heard of the infamous serial killer Ted Bundy.

Ted Bundy was executed in the electric chair in 1989, after he confessed to killing 30 young women whom he had kidnapped, raped, and killed, and sometimes raped again after they were dead. On the day before he walked the last mile, Ted Bundy was interviewed by James Dobson and he had one message that he wanted to communicate to the world. The single most significant factor in his sexual crimes, in his opinion, was his habitual viewing of pornography.

Not convinced that porn kills? What about the other partner in that selfish embrace, the woman on the screen? Where does she come from? What is her life like? What does she gain from being on your screen? The reality is that for so many of these girls – yes, many are girls – life is no life at all. It is death. Pornography is directly tied with the global sex trade, where women and girls are kidnapped or promised a great modeling career, only to be reduced to sex slaves, gang-raped, hooked on drugs, and held under the thumbs of their abusive pimps and managers. There may be a few stories of a "working girl" who works a regular job, has a family, and does X-rated films for some

extra money. But for each one of these, there are certainly hundreds of stories of lives that are utterly destroyed by the industry that feeds youths who lack judgment, staring at their computer screen in the middle of the night.

Adultery is death. Internet pornography is an ongoing massacre.

THE CALL

But Solomon, and the Spirit of God working through him, does not desire that we should take this road, and so his message is clear: get off that path and on to the right one! The difference is life and death.

Now then, my sons, listen to me;
pay attention to what I say.
Do not let your heart turn to her ways
or stray into her paths.
Many are the victims she has brought
down;
her slain are a mighty throng.
Her house is a highway to the grave,
leading down to the chambers of
death.
– Proverbs 7:24–27 (NIV84)

STEP ONE: REPENT

What do we do against the depravity of our heart and the wiles of pornography? Solomon says, “Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say” urging us to hear his voice, and turn from adultery.

I mentioned all the relationships that porn destroys, but I didn’t mention yet the most important one, the one that we have with Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ, with our Heavenly Father. Losing or ruining our relationships with women, with friends, with family might be painful and tragic for us, but ruining or losing our relationship with Jesus Christ is absolutely devastating.

In 1 Corinthians 5, when urging the Corinthians to avoid sexual immorality, Paul says, “Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!” You cannot be united both to Christ and to the adulteress. You must leave one to pursue the other. You cannot be on the path of folly and of wisdom – you must

leave one and follow the other.

To lose that relationship, that unity, with Jesus Christ would be devastating. Why? Because you have so much to lose. Only in Christ are you God’s child, justified, sanctified, glorified, redeemed from sin, saved from judgment, renewed in love, protected from Satan, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and God’s workmanship, created for good works. Are you ready to give that up?

If you are currently pursuing pornography but want to remain in Christ, what do you do? Repent. Repent from your sins. Turn from your temptations. Reject those lustful desires and repent. We must recognize sin for what it is and follow the course of action that God lays out for us. We cannot tread the path of adultery and the path of discipleship at the same time. To get off the path of adultery recognize the sin, confess it the Lord, seek forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ, and ask God to renew your desires.

STEP TWO: GET WISDOM

The next step brings us to the first verses of chapter seven. Everything that Solomon writes about adultery is in the context of this greater command: Get wisdom.

“Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister’ and call understanding your kinsman; they will keep you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words” (vs. 4-5).

To overcome sin you don’t need to just turn from sin, you need to cast yourself, your whole self, heart, soul, mind, upon God. Yes, you need a new heart; but you also need to live a new life. This too is the work of Jesus Christ, the way of wisdom, and the path of life. Solomon does not outline all the ways that this can be done, but here are a few route markers on the path of wisdom:

1. Listen.

First of all, listen to God’s Word. Wisdom speaks the Word of God. The

Word of God is the Bible. The Word of God is preached to you every Sunday. Through the Word of God you gain access to wisdom, and through wisdom, you come face to face with Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of your faith. God’s Word is where you will expose the deceitfulness of sin, where you discover the atonement through Christ’s sacrifice, and where you learn to live a new life of love.

Second, listen to those who have learned this lesson already. Sin, and especially sexual sin, with its accompanying isolation, loneliness, and shame makes you feel like you are the only one who has struggled with the sin and that no one else would understand what you are going through. It can be liberating just to hear accounts of how other men and women have fought this battle. You are not alone in your struggle against sin. Hear the supportive voices of others who offer their help in the name of the Lord.

2. Talk about it.

Satan feeds off of embarrassment and shame. Darkness creates secrecy, shame, lies, and embarrassment. But the light brings them into the open. Bringing your sins into the light with trusted friends, elders, pastors, and parents allows the light to begin to work on it. You don’t need fight this battle alone.

Talk to your friends. My good, godly friends were indispensable in helping to deal with my struggles with sexual sins. Being a good, godly friend to others allowed me the privilege of praying for and helping them when they were struggling. For about four years I would meet with two or three close friends for accountability sessions every 3 or 4 weeks on a Saturday morning over breakfast. As we all broke from the grip of sexual temptations we all joined in the powerful grip of godly friendship.

3. Inform yourself.

The best way to expose the lies of the seductress is to know the truth. Again, immerse yourself in God’s word every day. I recently heard a well-informed

pastor say that he has never heard of a pastor who fell into deep sin who had a regular, daily time with God in Bible reading and prayer. Some might cast this off as a pietistic approach, and certainly the Christian's strength does not come from a mere devotional exercise. And yet it hard to imagine engaging in regular, daily, significant pornography use alongside regular, daily, significant devotion time.

In addition to God's Word, get good, godly information on sex, sexuality, lust and pornography. Here are a few resources that are particularly accessible for youths who desire judgment:

- *Sexual Detox* by Tim Challies. This is a short, very readable, and very helpful book by a well-known and respected Christian blogger. You can read it as posts at Challies.com if you search for "Sexual Detox."

- *Undefined* and other resources by Harry Schaumburg. *Undefined* is probably the most popularly recommended book about sexual purity for Reformed folks. I don't have a copy yet, so I can't say for sure, but I've ordered my copy. Perhaps you'll consider doing the same.
- Websites: The Internet might be the home of pornographers, but it is also the home of many great resources to help you fight porn, like *CovenantEyes.com* and *SettingCaptivesFree.com*. What better way to stick it to the Adulteress of the Internet than to use the Internet in a good, up-building, God-glorifying way?

This article has covered a lot of ground. I hope that you will cover a lot more ground on the path of wisdom. If you are immersed in a fight, do not lose hope. We always have hope, because we

have a Savior who is far more powerful than our sin, far more beautiful than our temptation, and far more loving than we can even comprehend. RP

Rev. Ryan deJonge is a missionary in Lae, Papua New Guinea. A version of this article was first published under the title "Get Wisdom! Adultery and young tech-savvy Christians" back in 2012.

¹ Rick Thomas's "You Just Caught Your Child Looking at Porn. What do you Do?" posted to CovenantEyes back in 2012.

² Mark Driscoll's *Porn Again Christian*

³ This is a modified list of those found at B.J. Stockman's article "7 Negative Effects of Porn" which was posted to *TheResurgence.com* back in 2011, a website that is no longer available.

WE SERVE OUR CLIENTS, OUR COMMUNITY & OUR LORD



Rachel VANDYK
Administrator
Rachel@yourniagarahome.com



Randy MULDER
sales representative
905-359-9411



Bill BROUWER
sales representative
905-341-4400



Ron MULDER
sales representative
905-327-4564



John MEERVELD
Broker
905-531-0093



Lisa VROLIJK
Administrator
Lisa@yourniagarahome.com



YOUR NIAGARA HOME TEAM
For All Your Real Estate Needs

each office independently owned & operated



RE/MAX GARDEN CITY
realty inc., brokerage
2390 South Service Road, Jordan

WHEN C.S. LEWIS WAS AN ATHEIST

An excerpt from Douglas Bond's novel *War in the Wasteland*

Editor's note: This excerpt takes place during a prolonged Germany artillery barrage that has the British hunkering deep down in their trenches. Private Nigel Hopkins ends up deep underground with his two of his Company's junior officers, 2nd Lieutenant Johnson and 2nd Lieutenant C.S. Lewis.

With nothing to do but wait the two officers restart a conversation they began some days before about the meaning of it all. Lewis, at this point in his life, was an atheist, and, in some ways, a thoughtful one. But in this exchange (in which we come mid-way) Johnson exposes how Lewis's argument against God is not, as Lewis seemed to suppose, a matter of cold logic but rather emotion.

For several moments, listening to the continuing barrage, sitting in total darkness, no one said anything.

Lewis broke the silence, his tone sober, brooding, almost simmering: "My mother was a rock, the fortress of our existence. When she died our fortress crumbled."

"I am so terribly sorry," said Johnson softly. "You were how old?"

"Nine. Almost ten."

"Tender age," said Johnson. "Such a pity. How did you cope?"

"I became an atheist."

"Why an atheist?"

"Why not? I had prayed – nobody could have prayed more earnestly than I. She died, my praying notwithstanding. God did not answer."

"I am truly sorry for you," said Johnson.

"You need not be," said Lewis. "It's just the facts. Facing them is the same as growing up, leaving childish ways behind."

"God did not answer, you say," said

Johnson, picking his way cautiously, so it seemed to Nigel. "Ergo, He does not exist? It sounds to me as if you do believe in God, but want Him on a leash, dutifully at your side, a tame lion, coming when you call, doing your bidding."

"Balderdash," said Lewis.

"Facing the facts,' as you call it," continued Johnson. "I'm rather fond of facts myself. Enlighten me. Did you decide not to believe in God because you had grappled with the evidence and had concluded that no such divine being existed? Or did you – I mean no offense, mind you – did you decide not to believe in such a being because you were angry with Him for not healing your mother? Put simply, was your unbelief in God to spite Him?"

"That's more balderdash. It was –" Lewis broke off, saved by a rapid staccato of exploding ordinance above them.

After another uncomfortable silence, Johnson cleared his throat and began again. "One wonders if it makes rational sense to organize one's metaphysics around the notion that by simply choosing not to believe in someone that that someone, thereby, no longer exists. If that actually worked, I'd commence not believing in the Kaiser – *Poof!* Away with him. *Poof!* Away with the [Germans] firing their ordinance at us right now. *Poof!* Away with the whole dashed war."

"All right, all right. Perhaps, strictly speaking," said Lewis. "Perhaps, I did not become an atheist. I do not know."

"I used to think I was one," said Johnson, striking a match. "But at the end of the day, Jack, atheism is too simple, wholly inadequate to explain the complexities of life, a boy's philosophy. That's what it is."



Lewis, mesmerized by the flickering match light, sat brooding, seeming not to hear him. "Perhaps I had become something worse." As he proceeded his voice was a strained monotone, each word coming like a lash. "Perhaps it was then that I began to think of God, if He exists at all, as malevolent, a cosmic sadist, inflicting pain on his creatures for sport. Or an eternal vivisector, toying with his human rats merely for curiosity or amusement."

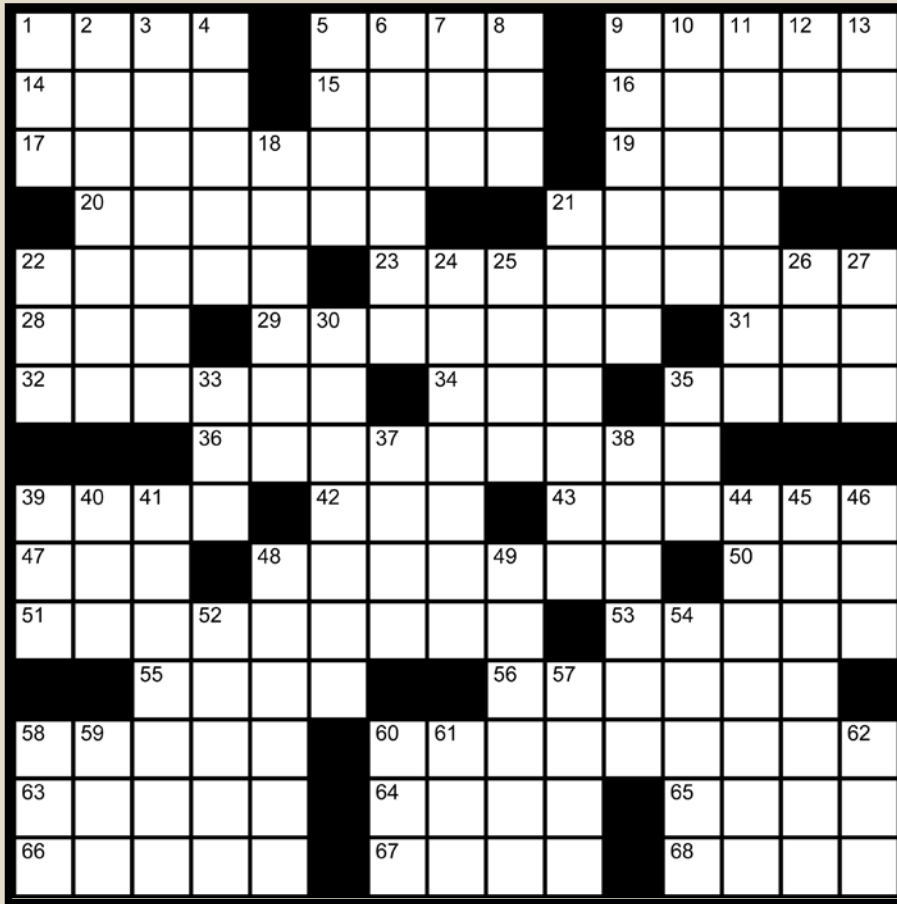
It was pitch dark again. Listening to the exploding artillery rounds above them, no one said anything for several minutes. Nigel concluded that, furious as it yet was, clearly the main force of the bombardment was winding down. He wondered if one of the German howitzers had jammed, or if the British counterbattery fire had managed to take out some of the enemy's big guns.

It was Lieutenant Lewis who broke the silence. His voice was barely audible in the dark. "I wish I could remember her face." RP

If you've enjoyed this excerpt, be sure to pick up a copy of Douglas Bond's novel "War in the Wasteland" which can be found at any online retailer. And you may also like "The Resistance," a sequel of sorts, which takes place during World War II.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 5-5

PUZZLE CLUES

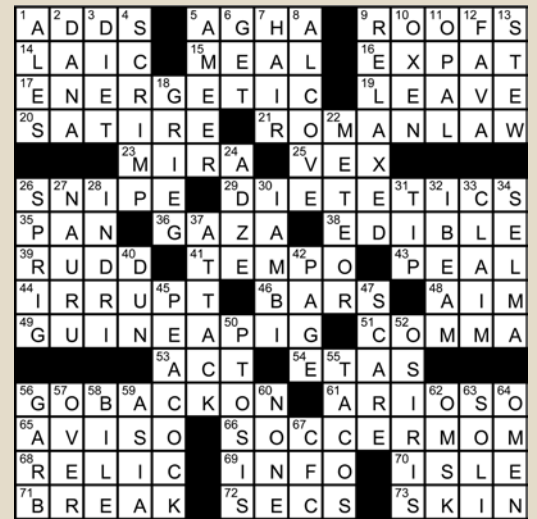
ACROSS

1. Israeli airline
5. Petri dish substance
9. Fragrant shrub
14. Famous island with an abbey
15. "offer wheat for ____" (Amos 8)
16. Spanish for (female) *friend*
17. Waste from making pecan pie
19. Lively dance (6 Down minus one letter)
20. Part of AV
21. How a quiche tastes
22. What Christ is to His church
23. Less tactful phrase for seniors
28. Short period of time (to sip a dry wine)
29. "Honor the ____." (1 Pet. 2)

31. "____ bitter words like arrows" (Ps. 64)
32. "All ____ that's going ____!"
34. Example of 20 Across (short form)
35. "Beware the ____ of March!" (*Julius Caesar*)
36. Occurring in two distinct forms
39. "saw what Paul had ____" (Acts 14)
42. Short form for male sibling
43. ____ acid (ingredient in vinegar)
47. "copper smelted from the ____" (Job 28)
48. Type of precancerous polyp
50. Genetic molecule (abbreviation)
51. Textiles with 'corded' texture

53. Genus of flowering plants (loved by bees?)
55. Competes (for)
56. Wisest
58. What divides a circle, or joins notes
60. Rain hat protecting from sou'west wind
63. Khmer ____ (genocidal Cambodian gov't)
64. Assert; affirm
65. Starchy root crop with edible leaves
66. A few of these in a row will get you a sale.
67. ____ Cooper (star of *High Noon*)
68. Upper-class and proud of it

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTION



SERIES 5-4

DOWN

1. One in German
2. Window blinds (British variant spelling)
3. "they sent Barnabas to ____" (Acts 11)
4. What a cowhand uses
5. Opposite of 32 Across
6. Horse's gait
7. "Have we not ____ one Father?" (Malachi 2)
8. Abbreviation on application form
9. Someone who lags behind
10. Man was created as the ____ Dei.
11. Where a frog sits
12. "long ____ I broke your yoke" (Jeremiah 2)
13. Headgear for baseball players and hunters
18. 'Funnybone' (plural)
21. History-making, starting a new era
22. Graduate Students' Association
24. Disease cured by Jesus
25. "the mountains shall ____ wine" (Amos 9)
26. "no ____ is of the truth" (1 John 2)
27. Emergency Medical Services
30. "____ of his household" (Gen. 36)

33. ____ to My Father (South Korean film)
35. "crystals of ____ like crumbs" (Ps. 147)
37. "Just give me a minute ____"
38. Climatic era after the Flood
39. True film (about a physician?) (short form)
40. Spanish for *gold*
41. Specific organ system (belonging to Nellie?)
44. ____ und *Isolde* (Richard Wagner opera)
45. Where unborn children grow (Latin phrase)
46. Short form for *camera*
48. Fuzzy leathers used in shoes and gloves
49. Supplier or distributor (e.g. of credit)
52. "sang a ____, ...you did not weep." (Luke 7)
54. Target of pesticides
57. Askew, asymmetrical
58. "break forth and ____ aloud" (Gal. 4)
59. Outdoor tool for the summer
60. Sink; subside
61. Eggs from ovaries
62. "do you ____ temples?" (Rom. 2)

Truth Spread at the Speed of Light

There is a saying, sometimes attributed to Spurgeon, about how, “A lie will go round the world even while truth is still pulling its boots on.” This refers to how fast gossip can spread, but we can also see it in how quickly incredibly biased, and even outright false “fake news” can be spread around the globe.

And when corrections come, they never get the same coverage. So, for example, many still believe that overpopulation is a problem (and still push abortion as the solution) even though, decades ago, the alarmists’ dire predictions were exposed as being completely wrong. Yet, the lie persists despite the fact that many nations now face *declining populations*.

Lies can spread quickly via social media, and can persist because no matter how many times a lie might be rebutted, the rebuttal rarely gets the same coverage as the original claim. That’s why some still believe that a journey down the birth canal magically turns the non-person fetus into a human person. And some think that, because the word “contraceptive” has now

been redefined to also mean “prevents implantation” that the birth control pill can’t cause abortions. Increasing numbers will vigorously defend the notion that some men can menstruate too. And, though scientists can’t craft it with all their expensive lab equipment, and vast brain and massive computing


That’s the idea behind *Reformed Perspective’s* website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, and Instagram page too. We’re trying to publish solid resources that you can use to get loud. We’re sharing all our articles for free so that, at a click of the mouse, or a tap of your screen, you can share any of them with

your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

That’s the intent. But, of course, it takes a team. We won’t have an impact if our resources aren’t shared. We can’t do anything without you.

So what do you think of this issue? Do you feel challenged, or better equipped after reading the articles in this print edition? Are you finding material you think others could benefit from too?

If so, then please use us to challenge others. Go to our website, look up the article, and share it with your friends via social media. Use us to help you speak up.

Lies spread quickly, but today we have a God-given opportunity to spread the truth just as quickly. Let’s take full advantage. 



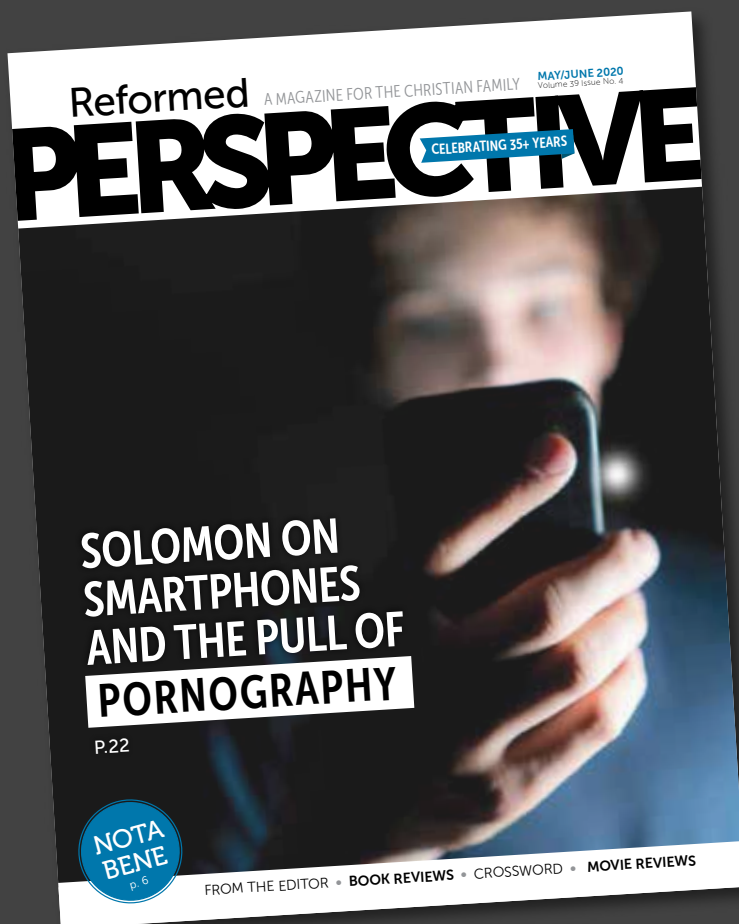
resources, they will still insist that life can come about without any guidance, on its own, completely accidentally.

There are some crazy lies circulating!

So how do we get God’s truth heard?

We do it together. The Internet presents us the opportunity to get the truth out quicker than ever, and to every corner of the world.

To sign up for RP’s weekly newsletter, go to tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter. To get RP’s daily Facebook posts, go to www.facebook.com/ReformedPerspectiveMagazine and then hit the “Like” and “Follow – See First” buttons. Or you can go directly to www.ReformedPerspective.ca to see daily posts, and our archive of more than 1,000 articles. And if you are able, please consider becoming a regular monthly supporter by filling in the form on the other side of this page.



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.

PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT:

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

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

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

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

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

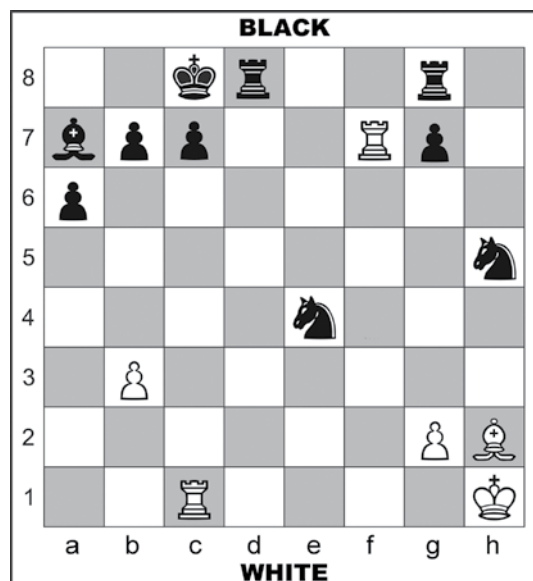
Thank you for standing with us as we together proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all spheres of life!

Completed forms, along with a void cheque, can be mailed to: *Reformed Perspective*, Box 1039z, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0.

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #258



WHITE to Mate in 2

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

Riddle for Punsters

#258 – “Social Distancing at the Library?”

Why was the library book unwilling to share its cover with any of the other books that had been placed on a table? It was a very _____ish book. Why did the library book not want any other books but itself in a photo to it was taking? It was _____ - centered and wanted to take a _____ie.

Problem to Ponder

#258 – “Are they ‘decked out’ in fine clothing?”

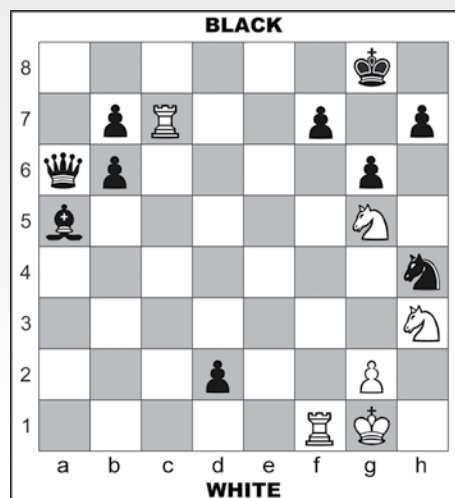
It may be useful to know from the start that John’s female parent is affectionately called “mom” by her four children. “Mom” likes to play bridge while the “dad” designs bridges. The youngest child, Jack, is 10 years old. His only sister, Queen, is 12 years old. The next oldest child, King, is 14 years old. The oldest child’s age is **three times the difference in age between the oldest and the youngest**. What is the name of the oldest child and what is his age? Also, if the mother’s age, nine years after King was born, was five times Queen’s age at that time, how old is “mom” **now**?

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to Puzzle Page,

43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 or robgleach@gmail.com

Last Month’s Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #257



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. R-B8 ch K-N2
2. RxP ch K-R3
3. RxRP mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Rc7-c8 + Kg8-g7
2. Rf1xf7 + Kg7-h6
3. Rf7xh7 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 3

(A worthwhile queen sacrifice!)

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- QxR ch
2. KxQ P-Q8=Q ch
3. K-B2 Q-K8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Qa6xf1 +
2. Kg1xf1 d2-d1=Q +
3. Kf1-f2 Qd1-e1 ++

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#257 – “No need to **DRONE ON** with instructions?”

When Boris purchased a drone for his technology-knowledgeable son he knew that the chances of his son causing it to crash were quite **remote**.

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#257 – “Taking the wrong tunnel would really ‘bite’?”

There are two brothers, Harry and Larry. One always tells the truth but the other (who has anger issues) always lies. There are two dark tunnels known to the brothers. One tunnel is perfectly safe but the other has many poisonous snakes in it. Jen wants to explore the safe tunnel. How can she determine which tunnel is safe to explore by asking one of the brothers one question? Will she then know which brother is Harry? Explain your answers.

Jen asks **either** brother, “Which tunnel would your brother say is the safe one?” Suppose tunnel A is safe and B has the snakes. If she is speaking to the truthful one, he will honestly say that his (always lying) brother will say that B is safe. If she is speaking to the liar, he will falsely say that his (always truthful) brother will say that B is safe. Jen should therefore **explore the other tunnel than the one declared safe in the answer given by either brother**, so tunnel A. However, Jen has no way of knowing yet which brother is Harry. For that, she must ask either brother a second question, “Which tunnel is the safe one?” Harry will truthfully say tunnel A and if his lying brother is asked, he will say B.



by James Dykstra

The Defenestration, 1618
by Václav Brožík (c. 1890)

DEFENESTRATION OF PRAGUE

Today we're going to look at a small event that had big consequences. This was the Defenestration of Prague.

It was May 23, 1618, and Catholic representatives of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II arrived at the Bohemian Chancellery in Prague bright and early at 8:30 am. To understand why this visit mattered, you have to know a little bit of the background.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN DISPUTE

In 1555, the Peace of Augsburg had settled religious tensions in the Holy Roman Empire by allowing the local ruler to determine the state religion of the region rather than the Emperor himself. Back in that time, if you were

Catholic and the ruler was Protestant, or you were Protestant and the ruler was Catholic, you had to put up with discrimination, or else you had to move to a different principality.

By our 21st century standards, that sounds awful, but it was quite a change and a change for the better. Before the Peace of Augsburg, the official faith of the entire empire had been decided by the emperor, who was generally Catholic. That meant that Protestants either had to accept persecution and discrimination or leave the empire, an area bigger than modern Germany. Compared to that, moving to a nearby town was a breeze.

With a new ruler, a Catholic, being appointed over Bohemia, the

Protestants were nervous. They thought their religious freedom was being threatened, And just in case they thought they were being paranoid about that, the Roman Catholic Church started to demand that no further Protestant churches be built in Bohemia. The church said the land was Catholic, but the Protestants said the decision about religion belonged to the local ruler.

So, back to that meeting on May 23, 1618. Things seem to have gotten out of hand very quickly, and the representatives of the emperor were put on trial for trying to restrict freedom of religion in Bohemia. The verdict was probably a foregone conclusion, and apparently the sentence was

Those Catholic nobles took a tumble, falling 16 meters to the ground, yet were physically unharmed



death because it wasn't long before the Protestants were attempting to defenestrate the Catholics, which is to say *throw them out the window*.

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

Those Catholic nobles took a tumble, falling 16 meters to the ground, yet were physically unharmed... though their pride had certainly taken a beating. The Catholics said the men had landed without incident because they were carried down on the wings of angels. The Protestants were quick to counter that the men had actually had their fall cushioned by a giant dung heap.

And while you might say the whole event stinks, the consequences of this single, ridiculous event were tragic. This defenestration – *throwing people out the windows* – acted as the trigger event to the Thirty Years War. France, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, and a whole lot of the German states

"Death of Jezebel" by Gustave Dore has also been called the "Defenestration of Jezebel" because her eunuch attendants killed her by throwing her out an upper story window (2 Kings 9:30-37).

were eventually pulled into this war, with estimates ranging from 5 to 11 million killed. It ultimately ended in 1648 in the Peace of Westphalia, which, ironically, re-established the right of the local ruler to determine the official religion of his region.

SEMI-REGULAR EVENT

One of the oddest things about the Defenestration of Prague is that this was actually the *second* Defenestration of Prague. The first occurred 199 years earlier, in 1419, when a protest by Hussites, an early group of Protestant Reformers, was hit by a rock thrown from a window in the town hall. The enraged Hussites ran into the town hall and threw several town councilors out the window.

As well, in 1948 Soviet government

agents were in Prague with the mission of intimidating local officials. Jan Masaryk, the Czech foreign minister, was found dead in the courtyard of the Foreign Ministry, just below the bathroom of the suite he occupied. The official explanation was that he had jumped to his death. Foul play by Soviet agents with a remarkable sense of history was widely suspected by those who knew Masaryk.

Unfortunately for those in the last two examples, this time there were no dung heaps close by. RP

This article is taken from an episode of James Dykstra's History.icu podcast, "where history is never boring." You can check out other episodes at History.icu or on Spotify, Google podcasts, or wherever you find your podcasts.

THE DARKNESS HAS NOT OVERCOME IT

A 4 p.m. English class and the Problem of Evil

by Wes Bredenhof

“All right, so this passage shows Jesus’ lordship and control over all creation.”

Bill glanced at his watch. It was already 3:45 and his class started at 4:00. It was at least a 10-minute walk across the campus. “Are there any questions?” Bill hoped that the passage was clear enough to Victor, the only visitor at the Bible study. The group of four sat in silence staring at their Bibles briefly.

Then Peter spoke up, “Well, there aren’t any questions, I guess we can close in prayer. Steve, could you close with us?” During the prayer, Bill felt his stomach tighten. The next two hours were going to be rough. As Steve finished, Bill added a few extra words asking God to strengthen him for what was coming.

“Well, I’d love to stick around and talk, but I really gotta get going. My class starts in 10 minutes. See ya!” Bill walked briskly into the cold October air. The darkening dusk added to the tension in Bill’s body.

He quickly ran through in his mind the topic for the Intellectual History seminar. He thought of whether he should just keep his mouth shut. “Maybe,” he thought, “maybe I should just go home and skip.” But then he remembered how many classes he’d already missed. It wasn’t an option.

In the seminar room, the prof and most of the students were already seated. The professor, Dr. Hamowy, was a short man, but he compensated for his stature

with an antagonistic personality and sharp tongue. He gloried in debate and loved the thrill of the attack.

Bill took his place at the end of the long table, opposite Hamowy. With two minutes left, Bill quickly reviewed the book to be discussed. A couple more students drifted in – it was time.

“Okay, today we’re looking at Dostoevsky. You guys’ll like this. Always creates a good debate. Who’s giving the introduction? Miss Hogan? All right, go ahead.”

Hogan launched into it. Bill had heard her talking with some of the other students and she mentioned something about going to a Lutheran church. Could she be a Christian? Bill listened intently. Not a word about Dostoevsky and Christianity.

“Thanks, Miss Hogan, but that was rather superficial. I’m wondering, why didn’t you mention anything about Dostoevsky and Christianity?”

Hogan’s face bleached. “Umm...I just didn’t think it was that important.”

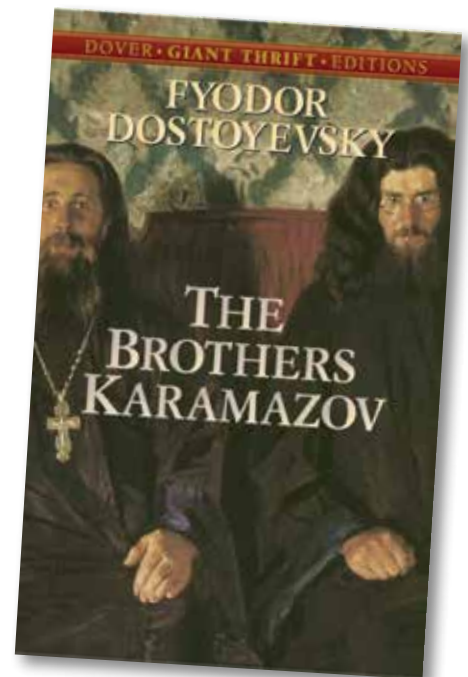
“Miss Hogan, did you even read the book?”

“Sure, but I didn’t really see anything religious.”

“Miss Hogan, next time you better do a closer reading of the book. If you’d thought about it or even done some research, you’d see we can’t understand this thinker apart from religion. Come on guys, get your act together.”

The first part of the class was over. It was now completely dark outside. “Okay, let’s get the discussion going here. We’re especially interested in what Dostoevsky has to say about the problem of evil.

You’ve read the book, so you should know that Dostoevsky approaches the problem religiously. Open your books to page 240 and we’ll start reading that second paragraph and go to the end of the following page. Mr. Kosinski, could you read it for us?”



Bill opened his copy of *The Brothers Karamazov* and followed along. Ivan was complaining to his brother Alyosha:

“People sometimes talk of bestial cruelty, but that’s a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel. I’ve collected a great deal about



How could anybody believe in God when there's so much evil in the world?

Russian children, Alyosha. There was a little girl of five who was hated by her father and mother..."

Ivan went on to describe how this little girl had been horribly abused by her parents. He concluded by asking Alyosha if he would design the world in such a way that little children suffer so terribly.

Kosinski stopped reading and looked up. Hamowy started the discussion. "Okay, what'd you guys think of this?" Silence.

"Come on, somebody must be thinking in this room!"

More silence. Bill felt his stomach tighten more. He leaned against the table and slightly pulsated back and forth with the rhythm of his thumping heart. One of the other students raised his hand.

"Good, Mr. Bosley. You'd like to comment?"

"Yeah, this book pretty much nails it right on. How could anybody believe in God when there's so much evil in the world? Think of the Holocaust, all those Jews dying, where was God then? How

could anyone believe in a powerful good God who could control all this evil, but doesn't?"

"Thank you, Mr. Bosley. Anyone else? Surely you don't all agree with Mr. Bosley?"

It was time for Bill to strike. He slowly raised up his hand, but Evans beat him to it.

"Okay, Miss Evans, enlighten us."

"I agree. Believing in a good God in a world where there's suffering is completely illogical. I don't get all these god-freaks. Are they even thinking with their brains? We aren't going to get anywhere in dealing with evil as long as those brain-dead ideas are around. We'd be better off with something like when we're all god and we all work together."

"All right, thanks Miss Evans. There seems to be a consensus developing. What's wrong with you guys? Mr. Gordon, I saw your hand. What do you think?"

Finally, Bill had his opportunity. "It intrigues me that everyone agrees

there's such a thing as evil and wickedness." Bill's heart beat faster and harder and his voice trembled. "I'd like to just ask a question to all of you: can we all agree that sexually abusing children is absolutely immoral?"

Most students nodded their head in agreement. Only Bagchee didn't.

"Mr. Bagchee, you disagree with Gordon? Why?"

"Well, there may be some societies where adults having sex with children is completely normal. In my country, in some of the cultures, it was at one time custom to make mothers sleep with their boys. In other cultures, teenage girls must be deflowered by tribal leaders to prepare for their arranged marriage."

Hogan couldn't restrain herself. "I think that's completely disgusting! Sexual abuse is wrong no matter what!"

Dr. Hamowy smiled as the class finally heated up. "Miss Evans, you have something to add?"

"Yeah, Subhash you can say that about your country or other cultures, but what if part of their culture was to smash their children's head against rocks while sexually abusing them, would that be okay too? And what if it was *you* or *your* child?"

Bagchee shrugged.

"Mr. Gordon, where'd you want to go with this?"

"Well, pretty much everyone agrees there's an absolute moral rightness or wrongness to certain things, like sexually abusing children or brutally murdering them." Bill's voice was quivering again. "But when you ask how can there be a God with so much evil in the world, you've missed the hidden assumption in your question – that there is such a thing as evil.

And the fact that you get upset about evil in the world shows that in your hearts you know there *is* such a thing as absolute good and evil. But when you deny the God of Christianity, you deny the possibility of there even being absolute right and wrong. Apart from God, morality is an individual or cultural matter, and like Subhash's examples, sexually abusing children

could conceivably be acceptable. But we've agreed that it's absolutely not. When you ask the question, you're stuck. You've betrayed yourself and the real nature of your problem with Christianity."

"Umm, thanks Mr. Gordon. Okay, what'd the rest of you think of those comments?"

Kosinski leapt in again. "Yeah, I think Bill's wrong. You've got a contradiction in your idea here. You say God is good. You say God is powerful, right?" Bill nodded. "But you say evil exists! You've got a contradiction, 'cause if God was all-good and all-powerful, there'd be no bad stuff. So, ya see, Christianity isn't so true after all."

Bill thought carefully for a moment. "Joe, you just said God is all-good and I completely agree with that – it's found in the Bible. His character defines right and wrong. God is all-good and because I'm a Christian, I look at everything in the light of that. And so when I see evil, I can be consistent by inferring God has a morally good reason for the

evil we see around us. Any evil we see must somehow fit with God's goodness. Look at Jesus for example. Jesus was crucified. It was an act of evil – he was 100% innocent. But the cross fit in with God's good plans to rescue those who'd believe in him. God therefore has a good reason for the wickedness in the world and there's no contradiction. It all fits."

Bill took a long deep breath and carried on. "But within the non-Christian way of looking at the world, you can't justify your contradiction between having absolute moral standards and not having an absolute source for those standards. If all we are is ooze, what difference does it make if one glob of ooze sexually abuses another glob of ooze? Who cares? Only with Christianity can absolute standards of good and evil have any meaning. And I think that was the point Dostoevsky was trying to make too."

"Okay, thanks Mr. Gordon. Anyone have anything to say? Mr. Bosley?"

"Yeah, this is stupid. What about the

influence of Dostoevsky on feminist scholarship?"

The rest of the seminar rambled in inanities. Bill's heart rate and blood pressure were still coming down 20 minutes later when the class ended. As he got up to leave, he tried to make eye contact with some of the other students. He made his way out and walked down the hall of the history department. Hogan came up behind him and stopped him. "Bill, I really liked all those things you said. That was really good." "Thanks."

Bill walked away wondering why no one ever spoke up in class to support him. As he stepped out into the chilly darkness, he still felt the aching of his chest and the tightness in his stomach. The only thing not bothering him was his conscience. RP

Dr. Bredenhof blogs at yinkahdinay.wordpress.com where this first appeared.

Think you can change the world with a melody? We do.

CHANGE can be big, like symphony orchestra big. Or it can be small, like living room jam session small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go.

That changes everything.

Starting with you.

redeemer.ca



REDEEMER
UNIVERSITY

A degree you can believe in.

Racism: the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races.



RACISM IS WRONG...

by Chris deBoer

Racism is wrong. The Minneapolis police officer, holding his knee on George Floyd's neck for a lengthy period of time, may have been motivated racially, or by pride, or by hatred, etc. I do not know. If the police officers involved behave as racists or as "judge, jury, and executioner," they deserve to be punished. We can empathize with protests demanding justice in this way; some may even participate. Christians in Minnesota should be writing to their newspapers, political leaders, and law enforcement personnel, encouraging everyone to fight for justice, but to do so in a godly way. Action can be taken throughout our various countries, but our action needs to be in step with who we are as Christians and it must respect the dignity of all others.

Racism is wrong. And the root cause of racism is sin.

...BECAUSE WE ARE ALL MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

Racism is wrong. Anyone holding to a solid biblical worldview cannot help but arrive at that conclusion.

We know that all people are

created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27). Originally, being created in God's image, man:

"was adorned in his mind with true and wholesome knowledge of his Creator and of all spiritual things; his will was upright, all his affections pure, and therefore man was completely holy."

– *Canons of Dort*, Chapter 3/4, Art. 1

However, man fell from this glorious state of being as we rebelled against God in paradise. Nevertheless, we confess that man's fall did not make him like the animals, but that a light of nature remains in mankind after the fall:

"whereby he retains some notions about God, about natural things, and about the difference between what is honorable and shameful, and show some regard for virtue and outward order. But so far is he from arriving at the saving knowledge of God and true conversion through this light of nature that he does not even

use it properly in natural and civil matters... man wholly pollutes it in various ways and suppresses it by his wickedness."

– *Canons of Dort*, Chapter 3/4, Art. 4

All of mankind share in this new fallen state of being. There is no alternative until the Holy Spirit changes our hearts and minds, making us alive again in Christ, and the image of God is being renewed in us.

...BECAUSE DIVERSITY WAS ALWAYS GOD'S INTENTION

Racism is wrong. We are reminded of the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. This story tells us of one united nation that did not want to fulfill the cultural mandate of Genesis 1 in filling the earth. Man's rebellion against God increases exponentially when there is a united purpose against him and his revealed plan for mankind. At the Tower of Babel God decides to create new cultures through confusing the languages of the people there. This confusion drives the people apart and the earth begins to be filled. Physical,

racial, and cultural diversity develops. This mosaic of diversity is a result of sin, but is not sin in itself – God wanted mankind to develop culturally and spread throughout the earth and He will not let his plans be manipulated.

...BECAUSE THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL

Racism is wrong. When Abram was addressed by God to leave his home country he was encouraged by the promise that God would make of him a great nation and that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). God develops a nation through Abraham, a special distinct nation in all the earth, as he works out his plan of salvation for his people from all tribes, languages, and nations.

Racism is wrong. When our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross he fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament, also the promises to Abraham. Christ gives his disciples the Great Commission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Racism is wrong. Anyone holding to a solid biblical worldview cannot help but arrive at that conclusion.

Much of the New Testament scriptures are about taking the gospel of Jesus Christ and spreading that message indiscriminately among the nations! There is no room for racism in Christianity. Where racism is evident, together with any and all examples of injustice, Christians should be engaged in various Godly activities to provide a witness to the truth and to fight the injustices as they are able.

...BECAUSE IT IS WHAT'S INSIDE THAT COUNTS

Racism is wrong. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” Racism looks at the color of one’s skin and makes a judgment ignorant of the content of that person’s character. Racists look at the outside of a person, make an unjust judgment, and so reveal the depravity of their own hearts and minds. Those who love and defend the just cause of their neighbor because God has loved them reveal a heart that is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, while those who hate their neighbor, who judge them falsely or on the basis of skin color, still live in darkness and delusion.

...BUT NOT ALL DISAGREEMENT IS RACISM


Racism is wrong. But not all that is called racism is racism. In this context we can think of disagreements between the worldview of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Christians who argue that the Islamic religion is false and dangerous, are not behaving in a racist fashion. Although most Muslims are from the Middle East, this does not mean that Christians are racist against Middle Eastern citizens

cultural or racist superiority rooted in idolatry, but in a love for our neighbors, fellow image bearers who also need the gospel of Jesus Christ in order to be saved from meaninglessness in this life and eternal punishment in the life to come.

...BUT RIOTS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

Racism is wrong. Christians need to fight against this form of injustice wherever it rears its ugly head. But Christians do not riot. The evil evident in the riots over the past weeks demonstrate an unchristian worldview bearing fruit. Evil begets evil. These riots are not being indiscriminately condemned: a number of actors are contributing to a “protester bail fund,” including Steve Carrell, Janelle Monae, Seth Rogen, Ben Schwartz, and Halsey. Justin Timberlake is also encouraging people to donate to the Minnesota Freedom Fund, which is raising funds to bail out protesters. But which protesters? In the larger cities, many among the protesters are not fighting against injustice; they are perpetrating it! Stores and much property of black citizens, and others, are being destroyed by “protesters.” The violence and damage will do nothing to address injustice or racism. It is an unchristian and an inhumane response. Love is not the overriding principle, idolatry is. Unbelievers are developing (or have created) a worldview that has no foundation and the idol of self is at the center. Justice for George Floyd is not the goal of those rioting – it is the excuse for open “acceptable” rebellion.

...AND THE GOSPEL IS THE ANSWER

Racism is wrong. The solution, despite opinion to the contrary, is the gospel rightly understood and applied. May the Lord, the king over all the earth, so work by his word and spirit so that justice is restored in this world. In the meantime, we are busy fighting for justice in a godly way. We are also praying that the Lord will usher in his kingdom in all its glory so that his people from all tribes, tongues, races, and languages can be gathered together in one united kingdom to praise our King! 

when we express the implications of the cultural battles that exist between these two significantly different worldviews. When Christians tell Judaists and Muslims that the promise given to father Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, we are not making a racist comment but the very opposite – we are inviting them to accept Christ as Savior and so be our brothers and sisters in Christ! Godly mission work directed towards individuals of other faiths or those who profess no faith is not driven by a

REVIEWS

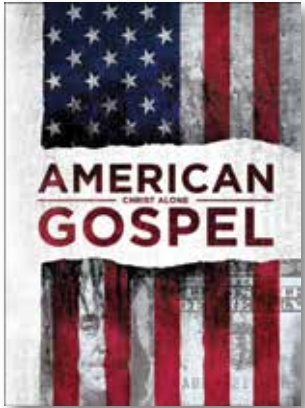
FREE... AND MOSTLY SO

By Jon Dykstra

AMERICAN GOSPEL: CHRIST ALONE

DOCUMENTARY

2018 / 139 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



American Gospel is a fantastic dismantling of one of the more pernicious lies in North American Christianity – that if we serve God right, He will give us the American Dream. Reformed Christians don't generally fall for this "prosperity doctrine" straight up, but we can fall for "lite" versions. As one of the interviewees noted:

"You can grow up in a church, hear a gospel about freedom, and still work your tail off trying to maintain the image that you're a good person."

That's our prosperity doctrine: works done, not out of gratitude for what God has already done for us, but out of fear of what others might think. Or, the hardworking sort that we are, our heart feels some sense of entitlement. We'd never say out loud that God owes us anything, but if we did right by our family, helped at the Church and school, and put in the hours at the office then... shouldn't God *want* to reward us? That's why we can also benefit from this false gospel takedown.

Familiar names include: Matt Chandler, Ray Comfort, John MacArthur, Michael Horton, and John Piper. The full film can be bought or rented at AmericanGospelFilm.com, but if you want to try before you buy, you can watch a 40-minute excerpt in our review on ReformedPerspective.ca.

DUDE PERFECT: BACKSTAGE PASS

DOCUMENTARY

84 MINUTES / 2020 **RATING: 8/10**



"Dude Perfect" are a group of five friends, so named because in the trick shot videos that made them famous they sink every basket, whether it's a blindfolded half-court shot, or one taken out of the Goodyear Blimp. Every time, perfect.

In this documentary the Dudes give fans a peek backstage at their 2019 live tour. We also get the backstory on the ten years that preceded it: how the Dudes first met, why they all clicked, and even how they almost stopped before they really got going. Tyler, Garret, Cody, Coby, and Cory are all professing Christians and it comes out clearly in *Backstage Pass*. One example: as the Dudes are about to head out on tour their family and friends come together to pray for them.

The caution I'll share concerns the "Rage Monster" character Tyler plays briefly during the live event. The joke is how juvenile and out of control Tyler can be, breaking a (break-away) guitar over his friend. But if younger kids don't understand it is all an act, they'll see someone throwing a tantrum. So mom and dad will need to do some explaining.

This is something the whole family will enjoy. And best of all, it's free to see. You can find it, along with a longer review, on ReformedPerspective.ca.

BABIES ARE STILL MURDERED HERE

DOCUMENTARY

2019 / 102 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



Overall the film makes three points:

1. Pro-lifers need to call out abortion for what it is – murder – because we do nobody any favors by minimizing the wickedness of sin.
2. Christian pro-lifers need to fight abortion as Christians. No more of these secular, scientific, supposedly "neutral" arguments.
3. Pro-lifers can get so caught up in strategy that they'll work *against* other pro-lifers.

If this third point strikes you as incredible, the film gives a few different examples. Ohio Right to Life opposed a heartbeat bill in the name of being strategic. So yes, pro-life strategizing can go very, very wrong.

But it is by understanding how and why it can go wrong that we can head it off from doing so. It comes down to keeping our first priorities our first priorities. God's people save babies as a means by which we can glorify God. But when we make saving babies our ultimate goal, then it becomes an idol, and in service to that idol, we might find ourselves opposing or undermining God's Truth. We can then, in the name of effective strategy, downplay what abortion is and downplay what our own end goals are.

You can watch the whole film for free at ReformedPerspective.ca

DRAGNET SEASON 1

TV SHOW

1951 / 26 MIN EACH **RATING: 7/10**



In the 1950s, *Dragnet* was so popular fans could not only watch it on TV, but listen to it on the radio, and even buy tickets to watch it in theaters. In every one of these iterations, it followed Los Angeles police detective Joe Friday and his partner as they put in the hard work to catch and convict the bad guys.

The series' pacing is slower than what we're used to today, and the action briefer. But the appeal is the decency of the main characters. These are good cops trying to do their best – old-fashioned heroes, winning the battle by putting in the effort and hours.

Sex, violence, and language warnings don't really apply here – there's nothing offensive on display. But even as it isn't gory, the topic matter can be. Friday and his partners investigate murders, suicides, kidnappings, and drug rings, so while *Dragnet* is incredibly tame by today's standards, that doesn't make it all-ages family viewing. Every kid is different, but I won't be showing this to my own girls until they are at least 12.

Roughly half the episodes in the 1951-59 TV version of the series are in the public domain, making it possible to post four of the 1951 season's best episodes to ReformedPerspective.ca.



ORDINARY COMMISSION

DOCUMENTARY

22 MINUTES / 2019

REVIEWED BY DICK WYNIA

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven," and Paul instructed slaves in Titus 2:10, that they ought to behave in such a way that they "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." These words suggest that we are to make the gospel known by living our day to day lives as believers where people can see us, and get to know what makes us tick, namely, the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

This is what two young filmmakers from southern Ontario, Jacob Valk and John-Michael Bout, call the "Ordinary Commission." In an effort to learn how "ordinary believers" can personally fulfil the great commission, Jacob and John-Michael customized a 1977 Dodge van and travelled to mission conferences in Florida and Texas. They chronicled their journey and their findings in a 22-minute documentary called *Ordinary Commission*. At the conferences, they encountered two organizations – "Christian Surfers" and "Love Thy Nerd" – that were established to provide ordinary Christians an opportunity to reach their communities with the gospel. The communities in question are made up of people who have hobbies in common: surfers, and video gamers.

CAUTIONS

Hobbies can come with question marks. For example, what should we think about the content and the character of some of the most popular video games? And what of the inordinate amount of time gamers spend alone or in a virtual community?

No one disputes that surfers and gamers need the gospel, or that Jesus associated with people considered undesirable by the religious community. There are also "respectable" hobbies that can consume an inordinate amount of our time and money.

In other words, Christians need to consider the implications and possible complications of their hobbies. How do we handle ourselves in clubs or groups that have questionable priorities, such as a community hockey or softball team that has a "win at all costs" ethic? What are some of the ethical barriers that could stand in the way for believers to become involved in community activities -- for example, Sunday games or meetings?

It would be helpful if the "Workshop" (i.e. leader's guide and questions for group discussion) included some questions that would encourage participants to reflect on the challenge of being "in the world, but not of the world" (cf. II Corinthians 6:14-7:1) as we involve ourselves in various hobbies and activities.

CONCLUSION

Jacob and John-Michael's purpose is not to endorse these particular organizations or hobbies, but to use them as illustrations of how believers can fulfill the "ordinary commission." That's the basic message of the documentary: we should look at the various communities in which we are involved as mission fields. The principle illustrated by organizations such as Christian Surfers and Love Thy Nerd can be applied to all kinds of communities, such as neighbourhoods and workplaces.

The point is that we all have neighbours in one context or another. Some live next door, down the hall, or down the road; some play hockey or bridge with us, or belong to the knitting club; some work or study at the same place we do. The documentary makes it clear that our involvement in these communities gives us the opportunity to take up the "ordinary commission," and bring the gospel to our neighbours.

Highly recommended for small groups, and for study societies, you can watch *Ordinary Commission* at EphTwoEight.com (you will have to give your name and email address).

SPIRIT & TRUTH: HOW DOES GOD WANT TO BE WORSHIPPED?

DOCUMENTARY

2019 / 87 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**

REVIEWED BY WES BREDENHOF

How should we worship God? It's one of the most important questions a Christian can ask. We often think that the Reformation was about important doctrines like justification by faith alone. It certainly was, but it wasn't just about that. In fact, one of the most central issues of the Reformation was the manner in which God should be worshipped.

Some believed that if God did not forbid something, then it was permissible. Others argued that the church had the authority to formulate Christian worship as it saw fit. The Reformed churches, however, applied *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone) to worship – only God, through his Word, can decide how God is to be worshipped. This fundamental principle came to expression in Lord's Day 35 of the Heidelberg Catechism and its explanation of the second commandment: "We are not to make an image of God in any way, nor to worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word."

That idea is known as the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW). This documentary, by Les Lanphere, is about the Regulative Principle of Worship and Reformed worship. It's about how this principle is biblical, how it's needed for our day, what it looks like in practice, and why it matters supremely.

GREAT CONTENT, WITH PACKAGING TO MATCH

Documentaries can sometimes be as inspiring as a grammar handbook. Les Lanphere's are decidedly not. If you've seen his 2017 *Calvinist*, you know he has a gift for making films that grab you by the collar and pull you right in. While it starts off a bit slow, *Spirit and Truth* rises to that same standard. I loved it, not only for the content, but also for the production qualities.

The film features interviews with numerous pastors and theologians. Some of the more familiar faces would be Tim Challies, W. Robert Godfrey (URCNA), John Bouwers (URCNA), and Kevin DeYoung. These interviews put meat on the bones of what Reformed worship is all about.

THREE FACETS

There are several facets to *Spirit and Truth* that I really appreciate.

The film is not only about the outward externals of worshipping God properly. It also speaks of the heart – the "spirit" of "worship in spirit and truth." One can go through the motions of worshipping God to the letter, but without heart-engagement it's all meaningless.

While *Spirit and Truth* is a faithful explanation of Reformed worship in general, it carefully treads around some of the finer details about which some Reformed and Presbyterian

believers may disagree. For example, there are some Presbyterians (and Reformed too) who are convinced that we ought only to sing Psalms. *Spirit and Truth* leaves that issue alone. However, it does emphasize the thing we all agree on: at the very least, Scripture *does* command us to sing Psalms. That's something often neglected in contemporary Christian worship.

Finally, there's sometimes a perception that Reformed worship (as we know it) is merely a white, western, Euro-centric practice. If that's true, that has implications for worship in cross-cultural contexts, both in our own country and abroad. However, *Spirit and Truth* includes interviews with non-western or non-caucasian Christians in various contexts to illustrate that Reformed worship, following the RPW, transcends cultures. It does so because it's biblical and God's Word transcends cultures.

CONCLUSION

I sometimes wonder whether we hold on to our Reformed worship practices just because they're *our* practices or because they're traditional. *Spirit and Truth* persuasively argues that we ought to hold on to Reformed worship because it's biblical. And because it's biblical, it honors God, it puts Christ and the gospel in the center, and it will serve for our blessing.

There are a lot of pressures to modify worship in our churches to make it more like what we see in the broader ecclesiastical context. But if *Spirit and Truth* can help convince us that we have to hold on to distinctively Reformed worship for the right reasons, those pressures will be easily resisted. This one is highly recommended for Bible or catechism classes, Bible study groups, and office bearer retreats.

You can rent it online at the director's website: LesLanphere.com.



Dr. Wes Bredenhof is the author of "Aiming to Please: A Guide to Reformed Worship."

THE TRIANGLE CURVATURE INCLUSION BILL

ALMOST CRAZY ENOUGH TO BE TRUE

by Rob Slane

A controversial bill to redefine triangles was presented in the British Parliament this past month. Debate was opened by the Culture Secretary, Valerie Brimble, who began by setting out the case for expanding what she sees as an oppressively restrictive definition.

“Times change,” she began, “old customs and habits which may have served society well in the past need to be constantly reviewed. It is my contention that the traditional view of triangles, as having three straight sides, joining at three corners and forming three internal angles which aggregate to 180 degrees must urgently be reviewed. There is no reason why this configuration need remain, and a modern society ought not to be hidebound by antiquated customs.”

Unusually for a Commons debate, she then whipped out a visual aid from under the dispatch box in order to demonstrate her proposals.

Figure 1, she told a packed House, was an example of how triangles have been traditionally defined.



Figure 1

She then went on to explain that this traditional definition of triangles could no longer be tolerated in a modern, diverse and inclusive society. “If we are to be a compassionate people, then we must include shapes that we’ve previously pushed to the margins.”

She then sought to reassure some of her more traditionalist colleagues that what the government was proposing was merely a change to allow just one of the sides of the triangle to be redefined, to allow for the introduction of a wiggly line. Figure 2 was then presented to her fellow MPs, which depicted a “triangle” with this wiggly short side.



Figure 2

As she sat down after her opening remarks, Mrs. Brimble faced a barrage of criticism from opponents of the bill. It was pointed out to her that once you redefine triangles to include one wiggly line, it was only a matter of time until other self-interest groups demanded their right to add a second or even a third bendy line.

Mrs. Brimble responded by reassuring the House that the government had no plans to allow any further redefinitions. “We are only, I repeat, only, legislating to allow either one of the two shorter lines to be redefined,” she said. “We are not, I repeat, we are not legislating for the redefinition of the hypotenuse.”

However, this failed to satisfy her opponents who one by one got up to denounce the redefinition. One of the most vocal said this: “Can my Right Honourable friend tell the house this: once she has redefined the triangle to include a wiggly line, what reason can she give to those who then want to redefine it to include four straight lines, or multiple bendy lines, or even as many lines, bendy or otherwise, that they choose?”



Figure 3

Not to be outdone by Mrs. Brimble, he then whipped out his own visual aid and showed the House what could well happen to the triangle if this legislation passes.

“Oh come off it,” scoffed a clearly exasperated Mrs. Brimble. “Don’t be ridiculous. They don’t look anything like triangles. Even a fool can see that.”

RP



REPENTANCE

What does it look like?

by Clarence Bouwman

It's embarrassing but true: all around us we see people seriously messing up, ourselves included.

It happened to people in the Bible too. If Noah could get drunk and lie naked, if Abraham could lie about his wife being his sister, if Moses could kill the Egyptian, if David could commit adultery with Bathsheba and then kill her husband to cover his tracks, if Peter could deny the Lord three times in a row, then on what grounds would we think we are above similar sins? We too yield to the lusts of the flesh; murder (abortion or suicide), drunkenness (think also of drug abuse), adultery, consumerism, hedonism, wasting one's time or talents or resources, and so many more sins appear among godly people who regularly attend church.

EFFECT OF SIN

The effect of sin is devastating. As children of God, unconfessed sin has a way of getting inside our hearts so that we feel guilty – thankfully. But

not every child of God immediately admits their sin in repentance. Then it becomes difficult to pray, and the desire to open the Bible evaporates, and they end up going to church and to the Lord's Table because you don't want to draw attention to themselves, and God seems so far away – until they return to the right way through sincere repentance. (See David's experience of the effect of sin after his affair with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 & 12.)

For that's the gospel of the perseverance of the saints: even when His people fall into terrible sins, God will not desert His own! Rather, He works upon them through His Holy Spirit so that repentance comes about – eventually. That's our God: He does not forsake the work His hand has begun.

DYING OF THE OLD NATURE

What, though, does repentance actually look like?

Scripture speaks often about repentance. It consists of two parts, the

dying of the old nature and the coming to life of the new. The dying of the old nature in turn is built on three aspects. It is:

1. to *grieve* with heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God by our sin, and
2. more and more to *hate* sin and
3. *flee* from it.

David speaks of his repentance from his affair with Bathsheba in Psalm 51:

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.” – Ps. 51:3-4

And:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence,

and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” – Ps. 51:10-12

1. Grief

The grief we’re talking about here is not a sense of “oops.” Rather, it’s anguish of the heart: “heartfelt sorrow” that we’ve offended our holy God. Peter “went outside and wept bitterly” (Mt 26:75) – and that’s obviously grief from a broken and contrite heart. His sin bothered him: deep inside he felt absolutely rotten.

2. Hate

Sorrow for the sin one has committed comes coupled with a sense of hate. No, it’s not hatred for the neighbor, but hatred of the sin and all that led to the sin. It’s a loathing of self too in the sense that one is far from proud of one’s accomplishments and abilities. The hate leads to a deep sense of humiliation. It’s what the psalmist called a “broken and contrite heart” (Ps. 51).

3. Flee

The result, in turn, is that one flees, gets away from the proximity to whatever led to the sin – for he doesn’t want to fall again into the snare of the devil or the world, or succumb to the weaknesses of his own flesh. Yet it’s not just a fleeing *from*; it’s also a fleeing *to* – to Christ in whose blood there is abundant forgiveness.

Actually, it takes quite a man to flee. One can assume that any true man will stand his ground and conquer his opponent. Yet any General out to win the war knows that there comes the moment when he has to retreat – and that’s not an admission of failure but a display of prudence. The child of God knows he has no chance against enemies such as the devil, the world, and his own flesh, and so flees to Christ who has defeated the devil and the world, and has poured out His Holy Spirit so that the fight against the flesh is possible. To stand and fight on our own in this instance is actually a display of pride – and the taller one’s pride the harder one’s fall shall be.

THE COMING TO LIFE OF THE NEW NATURE

Repentance is more than the dying of the old nature; the other side of the coin is that a new nature is increasingly made alive. This coming to life of the new nature has two aspects:

1. a heartfelt *joy* in God through Christ, and
2. a love and delight to *live* according to the will of God in all good works.

1. Joy

Fleeing to Christ brings one into the arms of the Savior who conquered sin and Satan, and reconciled sinners to God. His good news is that my atrocious sin is washed away like gravy off a plate – irretrievably gone.

Holy God, then, does not look upon me as the murderer or adulterer or thief or drunkard I am, but sees me as washed clean in Jesus’ blood. Instead of anger and judgment, there is mercy and grace. That reality cannot leave the heart untouched, but fills it with grateful joy and songs of thanksgiving.

2. Live

That sense of gratitude for deliverance from the righteous judgment of God results in a renewed determination to live for God in all I do. Instead of the environment that led to the sin, the repentant child of God actively pursues a different environment, one that promotes a lifestyle pleasing to the Lord God. He surrounds himself with friends and activities that encourage praise for the Redeemer and discourage another relapse.

Repentant people grieve from the heart with a godly sorrow for the sins they have committed; they seek and obtain through faith with a contrite heart forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator; they again experience the favor of a reconciled God and adore His mercies and faithfulness. And from now on they more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

IMPORTANT?


Is the doctrine of repentance worth repeating for general consumption? I’d argue that the answer is Yes, simply because our culture does not know what repentance is. One “apologizes,” one says “sorry,” but the grief and the hate and the fleeing and the joy and the delighting to live God’s way is a rare thing in our country’s public and not so public life.

To cry buckets of tears is not the same as repentance, and an expression of remorse is not the same as repentance either. Judas Iscariot “was seized with remorse” when he saw that Jesus was condemned, and “returned the 30 silver coins to the chief priests”, and even admitted that “I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood” (Mt 27:3,4). But his remorse and his admission did not amount to repentance; for he did not flee to the Christ he betrayed and pursue a life

Repentance is so much more than saying sorry...

of godliness. Similarly, Esau’s tears at missing out on the first-born blessing did not amount to repentance (Hebrews 12:17).

Repentance is so much more than saying “sorry,” for it involves the heart. Repentance goes beyond remorse, for it involves a changed lifestyle. Repentance is not shallow, for it involves a deep awareness that none less than holy God has been offended. Repentance fills one with joy, because God’s declaration of *forgiveness-for-Jesus’sake* heals and thrills the heart broken on account of sin.

How merciful my God: He restores the undeserving! 

Rev. Clarence Bouwman is a pastor in the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church.

Reformed A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY
PERSPECTIVE

Have you seen our [movie review page](#)? We have more than 200 movies to recommend - something for everyone, including more than 100 dozen that you can watch for free.

Share this newsletter by forwarding it on and letting folks know they can subscribe [here](#).



Black Lives Matters isn't always about black lives...

The BLM organization has goals that go beyond saving black lives.

[READ NOW](#)

GET *RP* IN YOUR INBOX!

Every Saturday we send out the *RP Roundup* to more than 2,000 subscribers. This email newsletter contains links to the 5-7 posts we've done that week, delivered right to your inbox for your ease of clicking.

If that sounds like something you'd be interested in, you can sign up (and your friends can too) at **[Tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter](https://tinyurl.com/RPweeklynewsletter)**.

Then, after you've given your name and email, you can look forward to edifying, challenging, *Reformed*, content coming your way every week. And, maybe more importantly, sharing great articles with families and friends is as easy as hitting the forward button.

So sign up today!



Dutch scientists find Dutch Cheese may help fight COVID-19

Too gooda to be true? Or maybe they're in the employ of "Big Cheese"?

[READ NOW](#)

Racism: the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races.



Focal Point - Episode 3 - Racism is wrong

In this episode of the *Focal Point* podcast, host Chris deBoer weighs in on why God, and His people, hate racism.

[READ NOW](#)

