

Reformed

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# PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 35+ YEARS

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# ON LOCKDOWNS AND LIVESTREAMING

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# READER RESPONSE



## DEAR EDITOR,

Thank you for Wes Bredenhof's article on the apologetics of C.S. Lewis in the Sept/Oct 2020 issue. I share his appreciation for the imagination and literary style of Lewis, as well as some of his concerns.

However, I don't think Bredenhof has given a fair assessment of *Mere Christianity* or of Lewis's apologetic approach. He writes that Lewis, "allowed man to judge God," and that he "gave him a position of authority over God." This is a misunderstanding. Lewis certainly invites the unbeliever to *make judgments* about the nature of reality and the existence of God. But this is not at all the same as *judging God* or, in the words of Lewis, putting "God in the dock." Every apologetic method, including presuppositionalism, asks the unbeliever to make judgments. To use the words of Bredenhof, every apologetic method asks "readers to independently judge the existence of God on the basis of the arguments presented." Otherwise, what would the point of writing be? Proponents of different approaches can be equally dependent on the Spirit of God to open hearts.

As Lewis himself acknowledges (although I can no longer find the reference – perhaps a reader can help me out), while apologetics cannot bring anyone to Christ, it can remove some intellectual difficulties. This has been the case in my own life, and for that I have Lewis to thank, at least in part.

TIM SCHOUTEN  
PRINCE GEORGE, BC

## EDITOR'S RESPONSE

Your letter is much appreciated for the charitable attention given to Wes Bredenhof's article, and the opportunity it presents to explore the issue of apologetics further. Two sentences in your letter seem to sum up the point of disagreement:

"...every apologetic method asks 'readers to independently judge the existence of God on the basis of the arguments presented.' Otherwise what would the point of writing be?"

Presuppositionalists would differ with your first line here, arguing that their apologetic method does *not* ask the hearer to make such a judgment. In Romans 1:18-23 Paul tells us that everyone already knows God exists, and to then treat it as a debatable point – as other apologists do – is to obscure what's really going on. As Jeff Durbin has put it, "the problem isn't a lack of evidence; it is a suppression of truth." In other words, it isn't a knowledge problem; it is a sin problem.

But if everyone already knows God exists, what then is the point of apologetic writing? It would be to *proclaim what is*, more than *debate what might be*.

What is the difference between the two? Let's look to transgenderism to serve as an illustration. What is most needed here is not evidence that 50% of the population has

quite different genitalia than the other half; everyone already knows that. What is needed is the courage to proclaim the already-known but increasingly-suppressed truth that God made us male and female. Which should then be followed with a call to repentance.

Does Paul's message in Romans 1 mean that doubters are lying about their confusion? No and yes. For any who struggle with doubt it can seem as if God doesn't exist. But that's not because our newborn's wriggly chubby toes, or the Sun's rising and setting, aren't still shouting out the truth of God's existence. God is still obvious, just as Paul says. But for one reason or another we are shutting our eyes. So, again as Durbin says, the problem isn't a lack of evidence but a suppression of the truth.

Now, the different forms of apologetics can come to resemble one another so long as the glorification of God is their primary goal. An evidentialist who *argues* that the inner workings of a dolphin's echolocation speak to the genius of its Designer is going to sound a lot like a presuppositionalist who *proclaims* that same point. That's why Lewis is so brilliant so often: because he is sharing the wonder that he received, to the glory of his God. But in making God's existence a point of debate, Lewis does also do what he warns other not to: putting "God in the dock."

## DEAR EDITOR,

I'm writing in response to Dr. Bredenhof's article in the Sept/Oct issue, "I believe in 'theistic evolution.'" The question addressed there is, *Are evolutionary science and Christian faith compatible?*

I don't believe that our answers to this question necessarily say much about personal integrity or faith commitment. What our answers do reveal is our understanding of the nature of truth.

Christians confess that Truth has been embodied in a person – Jesus Christ. We believe that this ultimate Truth is also alive in us through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, our cultural setting lies somewhere between the philosophical forces of modernism and postmodernism, which have very different understandings of truth. We may be more familiar with critiques of postmodernity, but both of these forces have a deep impact on our understanding of faith and science.

While postmodern thought sees truth as a matter of personal experience, modern thought understands truth as a matter of having accurate information. A modernist understanding of truth leads Christians to reduce a living faith to a dead Biblicism – simply possessing information about God. At the same time, modern philosophy also raises the human activity of science to the level of absolute truth.

The consequence of a modern understanding of truth is that man's scientific theories and God's revelation through scripture are set on the same playing field, as equals. The only question in this context is which source provides better information.

Setting scripture and science head to head like this is a no-win situation. This will either result in scripture being dismissed as an old superstition when it fails to conform to current scientific thought or in mainstream science being dismissed when it fails to comply with the facts provided by the Bible. Either result seriously undermines our Christian witness.

I believe we have a mandate to explore and explain the world around us. In Christ, we can recognize and rejoice that every step of our exploration truly reveals God.

JIM FLUIT  
HAMILTON, ON

## EDITOR'S RESPONSE

*Reformed Perspective* holds to a recent six-day creation, but we don't believe that is pitting Scripture vs. science. We believe that science, humbly done, is a helpful tool to uncover God's creative genius.

But when mainstream scientists hold as their *a priori* assumption that only naturalistic explanations are valid, they're the ones picking a fight. After all, Romans 1 and Ps. 19 affirm (as do our own eyes) that all of creation testifies to its Supernatural origins. And that's not where the Scripture/secular science conflict ends. Genesis 1:27 declares "male and female He created them" but the medical and psychological experts won't stand for such binary bigotry. The Bible says children are a blessing but that, too, is disputed by experts lamenting each new addition's carbon



footprint. While God presents life-long monogamy as best, mainstream science says it simply isn't natural...though homosexuality is. Yes, this is science – of a sort – pitted against Scripture, but the conflict isn't of our doing. If we are troublemakers it is only because, standing as we are on the firm foundation of God's Word, we refuse to be moved.

As Douglas Wilson put it: "The Bible teaches that Adam produced death. The opposing view has to say that in some manner death produced Adam." Those are the two sides, and there is no reconciling them. We who follow a God/man who died and rose, can't avoid a fight with any and all who say dead men don't rise and the supernatural isn't. That's the fight to be had. So let's rise to it!



# A conversation on authority

It was the type of conversation that, in other circumstances, the two friends might have had at a quiet pub, over a couple of beers. But with the pub closed, and travel restricted, Zach and Owen were making do: beers from the fridge, a couple of comfortable office chairs, and a Skype call to bridge the distance between them.

Zach was the one who had suggested the chat. One of his go-to verses, Proverbs 27:17, spoke of how, like iron sharpens iron, one man sharpens another, so he was grateful that Owen had been up for it.

After some opening *how's-the-weather* small talk, Owen got them right to the topic at hand: “Okay Zach, how about you start us off by defining the two sides of the debate as you see them?”

## THE TWO SIDES?

“Sure, I can give that a go. There are all sorts of related issues, but I’m most concerned with the government-ordered church lockdowns. I think we’d agree that we don’t like them – the government shouldn’t be treating the church as “non-essential” or, as is happening in some places, closing churches while leaving bars and strip clubs open. But the real question is, how should we respond to that order? The two stands I’m hearing are:

1. Churches should listen because we should submit to the government.

2. Churches should not listen because the government doesn’t have the authority to close churches.

“I think I fall in with the first group, and from what you’ve been posting on social media, you seem to be in the second.”

“I do probably fall on a different side of this than you,” Owen agreed, “but I’d define the two sides differently. I think a lot of people are framing it just the way you did, but defining the sides that way also defines away any possibility of common ground: either a person is for listening, or he’s against it. What if it wasn’t two entirely *opposing sides*, but instead was two *different emphases*?”

1. God calls his people to submit to authority.
2. Not every order is an authoritative order.

“Like you, I believe we are called to submission. And when I argue against church lockdowns, I’m not rejecting God’s call to submission – that’s not where we differ. What I’m arguing is that the order isn’t legitimate. If *my* son ignores what *you* order him to do, that isn’t a rejection of parental authority. He just doesn’t believe that your orders have parental authority for him. I think this is the same type of thing.”

## TWO REASONS TO OBEY: SUBMISSION AND AGREEMENT

Zach nodded slowly: “I appreciate that clarification. Your approach – seeking out the common ground – makes me want to take a step back and see where else we might agree.”

“Sounds good. Why don’t you start us off with why we should submit?”

Zach clicked on his mouse to pull up a document he’d written earlier: “The big reason has to be because in passages like Romans 13:1-6, 1 Peter 2:11-20, Titus 3:1, and Deut. 5:16, God makes it a command. He’s telling us to submit to the authorities that He has put in place, so children should submit to parents; a wife to her husband; the congregation to the elders; slaves to their masters; and citizens should submit to their rulers.”

“Right, and let me offer a second reason: *agreement*. This might seem to go without saying, but Christians who don’t believe we *have to* submit to a lockdown order might still *want to* suspend their church services if members come down with COVID. I don’t think the government has the authority to issue that order, but I wouldn’t want my congregation to ignore it just for the sake of ignoring it. Listening might be the sensible thing to do.”

## ONE REASON TO DISOBEY: OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MAN

“Okay, Owen, we basically agree on those points, but now we’re back to when

and why it would ever be right to defy a government order. I can start us off with one 'reason to defy,' but I'll add I don't think it applies to these lockdowns."

"Okay, go ahead Zach."

"In Acts 4-5, Peter and John are commanded by the authorities to stop talking about Jesus, and their response is, 'we must obey God rather than Man.' I guess this would be related to what you were saying about not every order being authoritative. All authority comes from God, so if some lower authority issues orders that conflict with God's own orders, then we should listen to God, and can, in good conscience, ignore the orders from Man."

"Can you give me an example outside the Bible of that happening?"

Zach smiled: "I'm not going to say the church lockdown but..."

"Go on."

"Well, I've heard some people

pointing to church closures in China.

The government there is ordering some churches to close permanently, and when members defy those orders and continue meeting in secret, I think that's a case of obeying God rather than Man. But I don't think you can link that to what's happening here in the West. China's church closures are because the State there is deliberately attacking the Church. Our church closures are in response to a health crisis. And our closures are temporary – however long that temporary had been – or only partial, and we can still hear the preaching of the Word via technological means."

"Can you think of that kind of *obeying-God-rather-than-man* situation happening closer to home?" Owen asked.

Zach considered the question for a few moments before shaking his head. "No.

But it seems like you've got something."

"I do. It's actually what's happening on the home front that has me almost happy about these hard conversations that we've been forced to have right now. It's stressful, and it's been divisive, but the silver lining – one of the ways I can see God turning this to our good (Rom. 8:28) – is that these are conversations churches and Christians in the West *need* to have. In the past, submission was our unthinking default. And, I guess, it should still be our default now – I heard one pastor put it this way: when the Church does have to defy the government, our reputation for honoring and respecting the authorities should be such that the government's response is 'What? *You guys?*' But trouble is coming, and we need to understand the limits of our governments' authority if we're going to be ready for it."



Zach leaned forward: "Okay, you've got my attention."

"The most recent example," Owen continued, "of a government order that runs right up against God's commands is the conversion therapy ban that's been passed in different Canadian municipalities. The gist of it is that pastors and Christian counselors could get in legal trouble for pointing homosexuals and transsexuals to God and trying to help them turn away from their sinful lifestyles. This ban looks like it'll pass federally too. The government would be telling us to leave these troubled individuals alone. But we'd have to defy that order because our Greater Authority has told us to love our neighbors. Another example might be the Canadian government's ban on corporal punishment for children under two. God has specifically given us a tool for nurturing and disciplining

our children, and the government has specifically said that we can't use it for the first two years."

"You want to spank newborns?"

Owen put both of his hands up, and though he was smiling, his voice took on an insistent edge: "I'm not saying that, and I don't remember when we first spanked our kids. But I am certain that at, say, 18 months, they sure benefited from it. But now, following God's instructions on this point, we would risk having the State take our kids. That's scary!"

"Okay, good point. And bad joke on my part. I don't have kids yet, so I haven't really thought through spanking, but I think I'm mostly on board with what you're saying here. I've answered a few of your questions, so let me ask you one: do you think there are other reasons we can disobey the government?"

## ANOTHER REASON: THE AUTHORITY ISN'T IN AUTHORITY

"I do," Owen said, "I gave the example before that it isn't insubordinate for *my* son to ignore orders from *you*. He has to listen to orders from his parents, but that doesn't mean he has to listen to orders from any and every parent. It'd be the same sort of situation if the Premier of Alberta started ordering around folks in Newfoundland. They wouldn't listen, not because they are rebelling, but simply because the Premier of Alberta has no authority over them. Sometimes an authority isn't actually in a position of authority...no matter what they might be claiming."

Zach nodded: "Okay, I'm with you so far."

"So let me ask you a question: in what ways is a government's authority limited?"

"Well, with your Premier of Alberta example, you're showing that their authority can be limited by *geography* – it doesn't go beyond their boundaries."

"Anything else?" Owen asked.

"Well, I guess their authority is also limited by things like constitutions and Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I've been reading about how John Carpay's Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms is appealing to the Charter to argue that the Alberta government exceeded its authority in their latest round of COVID restrictions. In the US, some churches are appealing to their country's constitution to argue governors don't have the authority to shut down church services. But while they're winning some of those cases, they're losing others."

"Sure," Owen agreed, "but for our purposes here, what's relevant is that Man's authority can be limited by Man himself. We can write up laws that restrict what the government can do. And I don't think it's a coincidence that the countries that put the tightest restrictions on their government are ones with a Christian heritage. We remember Samuel's warning about kings (1 Sam 8:10-22)."

## SEEKING A PASTOR

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## SPHERES VS. CHAIN OF COMMAND

"But," he continued, "there's another sort of restriction on government authority that we haven't talked about yet. A Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper, called it *Sphere Sovereignty*, and it's the idea that God gave authority, not just to government, but to the family, and to the Church too. When John MacArthur's church started meeting regularly again, in defiance of California Governor Gavin Newsom's closure orders, the church issued a statement that appealed to this divvied-up notion of authority. Let me read you something from that statement:

Insofar as government authorities do not attempt to assert ecclesiastical authority or issue orders that forbid our obedience to God's law, their authority is to be obeyed whether we agree with their rulings or not. In other words, Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 still bind the consciences of individual Christians. We are to obey our civil authorities as powers that God Himself has ordained.

However, while civil government is invested with divine authority to rule the state, neither of those texts (nor any other) grants civic rulers jurisdiction over the church. God has established three institutions within human society: the family, the state, and the church. Each institution has a sphere of authority with jurisdictional limits that must be respected. A father's authority is limited to his own family. Church leaders' authority (which is delegated to them by Christ) is limited to church matters. And government is specifically tasked with the oversight and protection of civic peace and well-being within the boundaries of a nation or community. God has not granted civic rulers authority over the doctrine, practice, or polity of the church. The biblical framework limits the authority of each institution to its specific jurisdiction. The church does not have the right to meddle in the affairs of individual families and ignore parental authority. Parents do not have authority to manage civil matters

while circumventing government officials. And similarly, government officials have no right to interfere in ecclesiastical matters in a way that undermines or disregards the God-given authority of pastors and elders.

When any one of the three institutions exceeds the bounds of its jurisdiction it is the duty of the other institutions to curtail that overreach. Therefore, when any government official issues orders regulating worship (such as bans on singing, caps on attendance, or prohibitions against gatherings and services), he steps outside the legitimate bounds of his God-ordained authority... (Matthew 16:18-19; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2)."

"That's a lot to take in," Zach commented.

"It is. But the gist of it is that the Grace Community Church was saying they weren't actually defying the governor. They were arguing that whether the church opens or closes is under Church, and not State, authority."

"I think I get it," Zach said. "They were saying that the authority that comes from God isn't a chain of command with the State at the top and the Church and family somewhere underneath."

"Right. And while I think Grace Community is right, I'll add that the Bible doesn't make clear where exactly one sphere of authority ends and another begins. I think we'd both agree the State

shouldn't be dictating doctrine to a church, but do they have an interest in public health? And if so, would that give them the authority to close a church in pandemic circumstances? That's what muddies things: these spheres of authority overlap. To give a different sort of example, it's a family's business to raise and educate their children, but if they were to abuse any of those children, then the State's responsibility over justice would give them authority to intervene."


## CHARITY

Zach gave one last long draw on his beer before continuing. "I appreciate our conversation, but I'm not sure if it clarified or complicated things for me. So, let me put it to you plain: does a church have the authority to keep its doors open when the State orders them shut?"

Owen gave a tug on his chin. "Would you be satisfied with an 'I think so'?"

"I guess I'll have to be. But maybe I can finish us off with something I am sure about, and which I know we can both agree on?"

When Owen gave a nod, Zach continued. "In all of this, we want to honor God, and if we're less certain about how to do that in some ways, we know exactly how to do it in others. We know what God meant when He commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to do unto others as we would want done to us. In our COVID/lockdown discussions, it means working at producing more light than heat by assuming the best of, and listening carefully and charitably to, brothers and sisters we might disagree with, just like we're hoping to get the same back from them. That's how we can have fruitful 'sharpening' discussions. 'Doing unto others' also means having patience with the authorities. Most don't have God's Word as their guide, so on the one hand, it's no wonder they're acting fearfully, and on the other, that might even be a reason for more, and not less charity towards them...even when they are overreaching."

To that, all Owen could add was a heartfelt, "Amen!" 

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

## FOR MORE ON COVID-19 AND THE CHURCH...

"More birds than believers in church"  
- Jason Van Vliet, July/August issue

"Is it real corporate worship? - A parable"  
- Ken Wieske, May/June issue

"Calvinism in the time of coronavirus"  
- Geoff Robson, March/April issue

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# NOTA BENE

News  
worth  
noting

## CALVIN STUDENT PRESIDENT IS OPENLY GAY

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

**F**or over 100 years, Reformed Christian parents have scrimped and saved for their children to study at Calvin College (now Calvin University), praying that these students' post secondary learning would happen in an environment with Christian teachers and classmates. Many students, of course, paid their own way, including my own Uncle John VanHemert, who left Holland Marsh in Ontario to study for the ministry at this Christian Reformed (CRC) institution back in the 1960s.

But much has changed at Calvin. In October, Claire Murashima announced, via an op-ed in the *Calvin Chimes* student newspaper, that she is the school's first openly gay student body president. "It's beyond time that the LGBTQ community is represented in the highest student leadership position at Calvin," wrote Murashima. She went on to suggest that, "Calvin's hetero-normative and relationship-focused culture can leave us feeling excluded... Not seeing anyone who loves like us makes us feel like we don't fully belong at Calvin."

Miss Murashima's words are not

aligned with the university's official policy. Calvin University has adopted a stance on homosexuality which states that while homosexual attraction is not in itself sinful, sexual relations have "their proper place in a marriage relationship between a man and a woman." The Bible clearly calls homosexuality sin, in both the Old and New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul identifies homosexuals along with fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, revilers and extortioners as those who will not inherit

the Kingdom of God. In the letter of Jude verse 7, the writer reminds us that, "Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."

It's worth asking then, why we would call anyone a "gay Christian"? To do so is to identify them with an adjective that describes their sinful condition. All Christians are sinful, and each of us is subject to different temptations to sin but we wouldn't call someone a "murdering Christian," or a "thieving Christian," or a "fornicating Christian," would we?

In earlier generations, Calvin College took a leading role in advocating for evolution (remember Dr. Howard Van Till?) and for women in office. That infamous pedigree was referenced in the comment section for Miss Murashima's article. One reader wrote, "Thank you Claire for your courage and leadership! It gives me hope that your example will help change the CRC official position on homosexuality. When I was at Calvin, we fought for women in leadership - which was just as heated, biblically justified, and now seems ridiculous. Hoping that Calvin and the CRC will stop being judgmental gatekeepers and instead embrace all people with open arms."

How very sad it is that an institution like Calvin University, closely identified with a Reformed theologian and a Reformed church federation, has become a place of danger for Christian students. **RP**



## DUTCH MAYOR THREATENS CHURCH'S RENTED SPACE OVER "CONVERSION THERAPY"

BY EMMA FREIRE

**M**any churches around the world rent a space for their weekly worship services. But are rented spaces going to become a new front in persecution of Christians? A disturbing recent event in the Netherlands suggests this is where we are heading.

In September, the Mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema, proposed having a "serious conversation" with the landlord of the local Hillsong Church congregation based on unsubstantiated claims that the church engaged in "gay conversion therapy." Mayor Halsema had not discussed the issue with the church's leadership directly and she also did not initially indicate any interest in doing so. Gay conversion therapy is currently not illegal in the Netherlands. Thus, Mayor Halsema was proposing using her office to strip a church of its rented building for something that – *if they did it* – would be entirely legal.

Hillsong Church, which originated in Australia, is best known for holding rock-concert style services and for attracting celebrity members like Justin Bieber. Within the Christian world, Hillsong's theology is not regarded as particularly orthodox. However, it appears that any association with Christianity is grounds for suspicion.

The Mayor's comments came during a city council meeting September 17 to discuss recent incidents of violence against LGBTQ residents of Amsterdam. The role of churches in promoting the "inequality" of gays came up in the course of the meeting. Mayor Halsema said:

"If there are any signs that churches are preaching or offering gay healing, we get in touch to let them know that we don't like it. We state that we have no powers, but that does not prevent us from having a serious conversation, for example with the landlord of Hillsong."

Hillsong Church NL rents its worship



space from a large theatre. The theatre is also currently hosting a musical called *Anne* about the life of Anne Frank, the Jewish girl who kept a diary of her life in hiding from the Nazis and subsequently died in the Holocaust. Mayor Halsema stated in the council meeting that it would be a "tragic irony" if the same stage where *Anne* is performed was also used to promote intolerance.

Mayor Halsema's comments sparked a backlash though, unfortunately, most of it was focused on the fact that Hillsong does not engage in gay conversion therapy. That is not really the point; Mayor Halsema's tactics should be the primary concern. Hillsong Church NL's leadership sent an open letter to the Mayor which did note "This is an attack on freedom of religion and freedom of speech" but most of the letter was devoted to refuting the allegation:

"We are troubled that this false accusation has been disseminated by various media outlets and that the good name of our church, our leadership and the thousands of members of our congregation has been maligned"

In response to the outcry, Mayor Halsema finally had a phone call with Hillsong Church NL's leadership. They reassured her that they do not engage in gay conversion therapy. However, she did not apologize for her initial comments. Moreover, she says that during the phone call "we agreed the church would enter into dialogue with representatives of the rainbow community to remove any possible

concern in this area." In other words, even though Hillsong has done nothing wrong, they need to make atonement. She also wrote, "The city council has put representatives of the rainbow community in touch with the landlord." Thus, the threat of losing their weekly worship space has not fully passed.

Hillsong Church NL is a large congregation with significant resources. They were able to rally popular support to stand up to Mayor Halsema. But how would smaller, less famous congregations fare if they were the ones to be targeted? That question should be deeply troubling to all churches, particularly those that rent a building. RP

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## DUTCH MAKE IT EASIER TO KILL PATIENTS WITH ADVANCED DEMENTIA

BY EMMA FREIRE



**L**ike many countries around the world, the Netherlands has been imposing shut-downs to slow the spread of COVID-19, a virus that is particularly dangerous to the elderly. Thus, it is ironic that the Dutch have simultaneously issued new euthanasia guidelines making it much easier to kill the elderly.

Last year, Dutch doctor Marinou Arends was prosecuted for giving euthanasia to a 74-year-old woman in 2016. The patient's Alzheimers had become so advanced that she no longer recognized her own face in the mirror. One of the aspects of the case that attracted the most criticism was the fact that Arends began by secretly adding a sedative to the woman's coffee. Thus, the woman had no idea she was about to be put to death. However, she awakened when the lethal drugs were added to her IV and began to struggle. Her husband and daughter restrained her so Arends could finish. The Dutch media nicknamed the case "the coffee euthanization." Arends was found "not guilty" of breaking the euthanasia law and we are now seeing the impact of that verdict.

The Dutch committee that oversees the practice of euthanasia has issued new guidelines for dementia patients in line with the verdict. And it is basically anything goes – the committee has given explicit permission to doctors to secretly administer sedatives ahead of a lethal injection if they believe the patient may become restless or aggressive.

A person can write a legal declaration requesting euthanasia should they develop advanced dementia in the future. Under the old guidelines, even if a patient had a legal declaration, a doctor had to get a final verbal affirma-

tion that the patient still wished to die. Arends had failed to obtain this from the patient she euthanized, and that is part of the reason why she was prosecuted. The committee's new guidelines allow doctors to skip the verbal affirmation if a dementia patient is no longer able to give it.

The new guidelines also give doctors more room to interpret a legal declaration. In the Arends case, the patient had written that she wanted to die "when I am still somewhat mentally competent and I decide the time is right." Arends had not honored this part of the legal declaration because the patient was no longer mentally competent when she was put to death. Because Arends was acquitted, doctors will now be permitted to ignore these types of stipulations.

Under Dutch law, even if a patient has a legal declaration requesting euthanasia, a doctor must determine the patient is "suffering unbearably with no prospect of improvement" before administering a lethal injection. In its new guidelines, the oversight committee indicates it will never question any doctor's determination that a dementia patient is suffering unbearably.

Jacob Kohnstamm, chairman of the committees that oversee euthanasia, explained the new standard in an interview with Dutch media:

"The doctor does not have to worry about us as oversight committee and the court should stay at arm's length on the question of unbearable suffering with no prospect of improvement. This is a medical-professional judgment by the doctor. The court and the oversight committee cannot stand in the place of the doctor. The question is: has this doctor acted reasonably in this situation?"

Up to now, euthanasia for dementia patients had been extremely rare in the Netherlands, and it was very controversial. Even some euthanasia supporters were opposed because advanced

dementia patients are unable to give consent. In 2018, ethicist Berna van Baarsen resigned from her position on the oversight committee over this issue. "That's my boundary, based on ten years of reflection and reading dossiers," she said at the time.

The new guidelines brush aside those concerns. Euthanasia for advanced dementia is likely to become much more common now that it is much easier to obtain. Perhaps euthanasia supporters like van Baarsen will stop and ask, "Where does this end?" RP



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## JAY ADAMS, FATHER OF MODERN BIBLICAL COUNSELING MOVEMENT, DIES

BY JON DYKSTRA

**D**r. Jay Edward Adams (1929–2020) died on Nov. 14 at the age of 91. For those who don't already know his name, Adams could be described as the “Martin Luther of biblical counseling” for the reformation he started in that movement.

In 1963, as a new instructor at Westminster Theological Seminary, one of his assigned courses involved a component on pastoral counseling. With only limited counseling experience himself, he ended up teaching the unit using the notes left him by the previous instructor. But as Donn Arms writes:

He found no theological substance in what he had been handed and determined to study and do better before he would have to teach the course again the next year. As he studied, however, he found nothing to help him. He pored over everything he could find written from a Christian perspective and found only Freudian and Rogerian dogma.

What Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers, B.F. Skinner and other secular psychologists were doing was based on their ideas of what Man's nature amounted to. But their ideas about who we are, and what we are really like, didn't line up with the fallen, yet accountable image-bearer of God that we are described as in Scripture. What Adams discovered is that while some Christians were trying to integrate these secular theories with the Bible, what they were doing was little more than sprinkling biblical texts on top of deeply unbiblical ideas.

One example was the self-love movement – still big today but even more so in the 70s and 80s – that proposed one of Man's biggest problems was low self-esteem. Christian counselors took hold of this idea, and then “baptized” it with Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31). After integrating the two they concluded Jesus wants us to focus on loving ourselves, because

how else can we love our neighbor as ourselves? In his book *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-*

*Love, and Self-Image*, Adams pointed out that this turned Jesus' command on its head, from being outward-focused to now focusing on the self. The problem, he argued was that even when Christian counselors were consulting God's Word, it was only after they'd relied on secular counseling theories to set the course.

So Adams called Christians pastors and counselors back to the Bible because it is there we find out who we are, and what our biggest problem is, and what God has done for us to fix that problem.

Adams had his Christian critics, including those who critiqued his insights by testing them against God's Word. But, significantly, it was because of Adams' pioneering, reforming work that such a

group – Christians testing counseling ideas against God's Word – even existed. He had a leading role in the creation of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (BiblicalCounseling.com), the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF.org), and the Institute for Nouthetic Studies (Nouthetic.org). God used Adams as the spark to start this particular reformation, and like Luther before him, Adams' key insights were then tested, refined, and built upon by the next generation. Counselors like Ed Welch, Heath Lambert, Wayne Mack, Paul Tripp, and David Powlison all stand on Adams' shoulders. RP

*Pictures courtesy of Donn Arms..*



### SOME OF THE BEST OF JAY ADAMS 100+ BOOKS

While the Church has lost a giant, God has so arranged things that in recent years most of Adams' 100+ books have been put back in print. We can still benefit from this man's godly wisdom via his written output, available at Amazon and INSbookstore.com.

While his best-known book is his first, *Competent to Counsel*, his three most accessible have to be *Greg Dawson and the Psychology Class*, *Together for Good*, and *The Case of the “Hopeless Marriage.”* At roughly 150 pages each, they are short, and what makes them so intriguing is they are counseling textbooks disguised as novels. Adams wrote these as fiction so he could use protagonist/pastor/counselor Greg Dawson to “show rather than tell” what biblical counseling is all about.

The one to start with would be *Greg Dawson and the Psychology Class*, where the pastor meets students from a Christian university who are taking an essentially secular psychology course. Their conversations give Adams the opportunity to compare and contrast his approach with that of Christian counselor's “baptized” secular counseling.

In addition to these three, Adams has a wonderful devotional, *Day by Day Along the Way*. Among his 100+ titles, he also tackles aging (which my father-in-law appreciated) eschatology, and even how to listen to a sermon. My personal favorite is his commentary on Proverbs, which, unfortunately, is not yet back in print.

## 29-YEAR-OLD MOM GIVES BIRTH TO 27-YEAR-OLD BABY

BY JON DYKSTRA

**I**t's a headline that seems better suited to *National Enquirer*, but it gets crazier still. The 29-year-old mother, Tina Gibson, doesn't have just one baby almost as old as her, but two!

The story starts back in 2016, when Tina's father told her about a news story he'd seen on snowflake adoption – adopting, and implanting an abandoned embryo that has been left in cold storage since being conceived. After months of investigation and prayer, Tina

and her husband Ben went forward – Tina was implanted with an embryo that had been frozen since 1992. Then, in November 2017, the Gibsons were able to welcome their daughter Emma Wren to the world.

Now, three years later, Tina and Ben have another little girl to take care of, Emma's biological sister, Molly. She had been frozen at the same time as Emma, and was born in late October, 27 years later.

While secular news has covered this

as an amusing, sweet story, *LifeSite-News.com* shared the damage done to children when they are frozen: 25% don't survive the unfreezing process, and those that do have a higher risk of genetic abnormalities. Babies should never be frozen.

But some parents have inflicted this on their children, to the point that there are hundreds of thousands of frozen babies. That's a tragedy. But just like God's adoption of us, "snowflake adoption" is a rescue plan. So what a joy it is that Tina and Ben can reflect our Heavenly Father in bringing these two little girls into their family! RP

## A GREAT GRANDMA 100 TIMES OVER...AND COUNTING

BY JON DYKSTRA

**I**n mid October 92-year-old Elizabeth Vreugdenhil got to meet her namesake Elizabeth Grim – this newborn was her 100th great grandchild!

Getting to hold her Canadian great granddaughter was a challenge though, with great grandma just over the border in Washington State, and the US/ Canadian border closed due to COVID restrictions. So if the baby couldn't crossover into the US, and grandma couldn't come into Canada, well, then, there was just one thing to do: meet halfway! Just like thousands of others whose families have been split apart by the border shutdown, Canadians and Americans brought their camping chairs along and set them up right along both sides of that borderline. Some umbrellas were also brought along, Grandma Vreugdenhil was comfortably seated, and then the sleeping baby was tucked into her arms for a wonderful photo session. Even the local paper, *The Lynden Tribune*, came to get some pictures that they later shared on their front page.

Psalms 128 speaks of it being a blessing to see our children's children, so what a blessing it is then to see your children's children's children...and one hundred times over! Blessings upon blessings upon blessings! Whether you

know this grand lady or not, God's people can share in her joy!

Baby Elizabeth was responsible for evening things up among the great grandchildren, making it exactly 50 girls, to match the 50 boys, but since then the girls have taken the lead with

great grandchild #101! Another fun statistic: Grandma Vreugdenhil has been averaging 5 new great grandchildren a year since she was gifted with her first one just 20 years ago. And adding to the wonderful family history, baby Elizabeth was baptized in a dress that has been used for 4 generations now, and, as her dad put it, the dress "has 'seen' the sign and seal for over 100 years." RP



Photo provided by Bryan Grim



## EQUALITY FOUND IN THE BIBLE, NOT ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD

BY JON DYKSTRA

**A**fter COVID quarantines eliminated their other kickers, the Vanderbilt Commodores football team turned to Sarah Fuller. The starting goalkeeper for the university's women's soccer team, Fuller was already used to kicking a ball pretty far. But when she came on the field in the second half of the Nov. 28 competition against the Missouri Tigers, the coach didn't ask her to blast it. Instead, the designed play was for her to hit a squib – a low bouncing kick that is hard to return. And that's what happened: she booted it 30-yards, and the receiver fell on it for a return of zero yards. That was Fuller's only action, with the punting handled by a teammate, and Vanderbilt never getting close enough for her to attempt a field goal. While a handful of women have kicked for other lower-level college teams, Fuller became the first woman to officially take the field in a major conference football game.

That is an understandable reason for interest, but from the play-by-play announcers on up to major media networks, this was treated as a cause for celebration. One of the game's announcers described it this way, as Fuller was lining up the kick:

History is on the field in Columbia, Missouri, as Sarah Fuller is about to put her right foot into a football, speaking volumes to women around the world.

Fuller's appearance won her the SEC "special teams co-player of the week" honors. That she had just the one kick – solid but not amazing – meant this wasn't about athletic prowess. An ESPN headline framed it as: "Vanderbilt kicker breaks barriers..." But what sort of barrier was it that the Vanderbilt kicker broke?

This was treated as if it was a blow for women's equality. However, if anything, it was the opposite. Why? Well, there are two very different grounds

for women's and men's equality. The first is the declaration in Genesis 1:27 that "God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." It is in this sense that male and female (as well as every ethnic group, the unborn and children and adults too) are the same – we are all made in the Image of God.

But for a culture that rejects God, another grounding for equality is needed, and another "sameness" needs to be found. The best the world has been able to do is an anything-you-can-do-I-can-do-too basis of equality. It's on this basis that Fuller is being celebrated: because she showed that just like men, women can play football too.

But that an exceptional woman athlete can fill in, in a non-contact appearance, for a COVID-devastated, winless football team in a meaningless game that they lost 41-0 doesn't prove women can do football just like the boys. Under ordinary circumstances, Fuller would never have taken the field.

It's here that things take a nasty turn: if we stick with the world's anything-you-can-co-I-can-do-too basis for

equality, then if women can't play football that would mean they aren't men's equals. While biblical headship is often blamed for chauvinism, this abilities-focused basis for equality is the true culprit. As hard as the world tries to obscure them, the physical differences between men and women are obvious to all. So if our worth is determined by what we can do, then a man who sees he can lift twice what a woman can will come to a chauvinist conclusion. And this issue is bigger than women's rights, impacting both the unborn and aged too. That the unborn can't do much yet is why they can be killed. That the elderly and the disabled can't do all that we can do is why euthanasia is offered to them. They are deemed as being worth less because they can do less.

To counter that argument, we don't need to show how much the unborn, or the elderly, or the disabled can do. We don't need to show that women can play football too. And we don't need to point to jobs and tasks that women are able to do better than men. To fight chauvinism, and abortion, and euthanasia, we need to acquaint people with the true basis for our worth and our equality: our Maker, who made us all in His very Image. **RP**



# PRO-LIFERS AREN'T HELPING PEOPLE AFTER THEY'RE BORN?

by Hendrik van der Breggen

**W**hen it comes to the topic of abortion, I often hear the claim that pro-lifers aren't helping people after they're born. The idea/objection is that pro-lifers are hypocritical and thus shouldn't speak out against abortion.

Is this a good objection? I don't think so, for two reasons.

## REASON 1: IT ISN'T TRUE

First, is it true that pro-lifers aren't helping people after they're born? Well, maybe some aren't. But many are.

Witness the proliferation of crisis pregnancy centers/ pregnancy care centers. According to the Charlotte Lozier Institute, in the U.S. in 2017 there were 2752 such centers, providing much help to women and their children.

Also, witness the fantastic response gotten from a newspaper editor who asked via Twitter (disparagingly and dismissively, expecting no good answers) what pro-life people have done personally to help lower-income single moms. It turns out this editor received 13,000 responses indicating that pro-life people in fact do a lot!

Permit me to speak from personal experience. My wife Carla is deeply pro-life. But she is also humble and doesn't talk much about the good things she does. She sees such talk as morally inappropriate – as bragging. So I will brag on her behalf!

When Carla and I were dating and during our first years of marriage, Carla worked in a group home caring for – helping – children who were severely handicapped physically and mentally.

Later (while I was completing my PhD and beginning to teach philosophy courses) we lived for eleven years in a low-income, high crime neighborhood.



During this time Carla (along with a couple of her friends) began a community center to help our needy neighbors. This community center was supported by one church initially, then two, then three, then seven – and more.

Carla also tutored some of our neighbors' kids. She also taught single parents how to make inexpensive but nutritious meals (Carla even took the time to become certified by our local health department to do this). She also helped organize a weekly food distribution. She also helped a neighbor (a low-income single mom with five kids) learn to drive, obtain a driver's license, and find some part-time employment (subsequently Carla often loaned our car to this mom for grocery shopping). Carla also helped a young woman deal with her abusive husband. Carla also

used her nurse training to help injured neighbors as well as neighbors with young children, including a home birth. Carla also was instrumental in having our family provide ongoing financial support for an orphanage in Bolivia begun by a young couple at our church. And there's much more, but space doesn't permit.

(She also homeschooled our two sons during this time!)

You get the picture: Pro-life people (like my wife) are against abortion and they often do lots of good stuff – which we tend not to hear about.

## REASON 2: EVEN IF IT WAS TRUE, SO WHAT?

Second, an important logical point should be made: Even if pro-lifers weren't (contrary to fact) helping people

after they're born, this would not make the killing of unborn children morally correct or permissible. And it wouldn't mean pro-lifers shouldn't speak out against abortion. Pro-lifers hold the view that abortion is the killing of an innocent unborn child – and is wrong, period.

Maybe the following parable from Scott Klusendorf will help:

Joe found the young girl unconscious in her upstairs closet. By the time he got there, the structure was a raging inferno. No one else dared go inside. Scooping up the girl, he took his only exit, straight out the second-story window and into the bushes below. The girl lived. Joe sustained three cuts and two sprained ankles – and an avalanche of questions.

The media wanted to know how he planned to pay for the girl's food, clothing, and health care now that he'd rescued her. A pastor asked if time spent saving the girl from temporal flames might be better spent

saving people from eternal ones. The social justice coordinator at a local parish insisted that if Joe truly cared about saving lives, he'd care about all life and spend equal time rescuing poor workers from rich corporations. The local Congressman asked if Joe supported tax hikes aimed at reducing fire risk. Joe just kept looking at the girl.

The above story is contrived, but it's played out in the real world every day. Only the issue is abortion. The minute you state your pro-life convictions, foes attack.

Or think of it this way: I believe that killing kittens by suctioning off their legs (via a high-powered suction machine) is wrong, period. Objecting to my view because I don't volunteer at my local animal shelter is beside the point. (Oh, by the way, our cat Rupert came from our local animal shelter.)


The critics' objection is beside the point, too.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the objection that pro-lifers aren't helping people after they're born is often false and it's not relevant to whether or not a pro-lifer should speak out against the killing of innocent human beings via abortion.

Hopefully, pro-choicers are helping people after they're born, too, to provide a *real* choice, and thus not merely advocating for the right to kill unborn children.

## P.S.

Permit me to brag about my wife once more. Carla donates blood regularly. At time of writing, she once again donated blood – for the 73rd time! Seventy-three blood donations. SEVENTY-THREE. Pro-lifers aren't helping people after they're born. Yeah, right. 

*Hendrik van der Breggen, PhD, is a retired philosophy professor and author of "Untangling Popular Pro-Choice Arguments: Critical Thinking about Abortion," now available at Amazon.com and Amazon.ca.*



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# HELPING OUR CHILDREN LISTEN WELL

Idol-making hearts will plug up ears

by Darryn Kleyn



**I**t will not come as a shock that in Christian schools too, students will be inattentive. Teachers, coaches, pastors, volunteers, and community instructors notice and experience that some students are quick to interrupt and slow to listen and pay attention. As the instruction begins, it does not take long before a student has turned to their neighbor to have their own private conversation. One such conversation quickly becomes two, and before you know it, the instructor has to call a whole group of students back to attention.

Now, as teachers learn through experience, you often “get what you put up with.” So teachers have the respon-

sibility to be clear with their classroom expectations and have the fortitude to follow through with consequences that have been clearly outlined before instruction has even taken place. Teachers need to demonstrate patience and the like, but they also need to consistently apply discipline to ensure that every student has the most conducive environment to learn in. In other words, teachers need to make sure that one segment of the student population does not “get away with” dragging the whole learning environment down.

That’s what the teacher can do.

But what of the student?

I’d like to draw your attention to an

issue that would be helpful to discuss around our dinner tables and with our children individually. And not so much as a once-off topic of discussion, but more as an ongoing conversation, similar to the common reminder that we all grew up with from mom and dad: “Did you remember to say thank-you?” This issue at its root, when you dig down into the human heart, has to do with *idolatry* manifesting itself as disrespectful behavior towards adults. It has to do with what heart attitude our children bring to the classroom, gym, workshop, catechism room, and the like. Allow me to explain.



## Regular conversation...can make a big difference for all the instructors that show up in our children's lives.

and prone to thinking that their short life experiences teach them enough to make up their own mind on how things should go. *I am my own boss; I choose when I get to speak and I'll choose when I wish to be quiet and listen. I serve myself and my own needs...rather than God and the authority figures God has placed in my life.*

Now, maybe that seems to be going too deep. Our children are not likely to say, "Oh yes, my speaking out of turn or interrupting my adult instructor... yep, that's clearly idolatry. I should stop setting up myself as the little god in my life."

Nevertheless, the Bible is clear; that's what's happening. And that's where we, as parents, need to go when our children demonstrate a lack of respect for their adult instructors. Otherwise, we just end up putting a Band-Aid on the "sore." Going to the "heart of the matter" is the only way to bring lasting change.

### BIG IMPACT, FOR GOOD OR ILL

I would also add this thought: as our children get older, they end up in learning situations that go beyond the regular school classroom. In our communities we "leverage" adults who are not qualified teachers. These include coaches, bakers, artists, woodworkers, driving instructors, 4H leaders, horticulturalists, runners, bosses...you name it. When you add up the number of adults that are instructing our youth from middle school onwards, the list is actually quite long.

How much more reason to train our children that interrupting adult instructors by blurting, having our own private conversations, rolling the eyes, a disparaging look, a bored countenance, etc., is not only unacceptable as a child of the Lord but it also becomes very *wearisome* on those that are doing the teaching, who, in many cases, are giving their time as a gift to the school. Any experienced


teacher will tell you that having students that lack the self-control to actively listen to 5-10 minutes of instruction can really drag down the learning environment and also leads to distracting the attention of others.

### GETTING THE CONVERSATIONS STARTED

So, is this issue something new? No, not really. Wherever you have a group of excited students together, the inclination and temptation to be distracted is always there. At the same time, I think this issue probably sits in our parental "blind spot" at times and I do think it needs our attention.

Regular conversation and a checking in with our children can make a big difference for all the instructors that show up in our children's lives. We can ask them a question like:

- "How was your focus and attention in class today?"
- "What strategies are you using to eliminate distractions?"
- "Are you standing or sitting away from friends that you know will lead you to disrupt the class?"
- "Do you take the time to apologize to your teacher when you are disciplined for disrupting classroom instruction (or for any other misbehavior for that matter)?"
- "Do you show respect to the adults (and peers) in your life with your words, body language, and written communications?"

This is worth making a regular topic of conversation at home, and not so that our kids can be "good kids." What we really want is to help them learn to think Christianly about their attitude towards authority, and in particular, how they *listen* to instruction. 

### LISTEN MY SON...

In the book of Proverbs, Solomon repeatedly reminds his son to listen, such as in chapter 4:1: "*Listen*, my son, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding" (see also Prov. 1:8, 4:10, etc.). He urges listening because He knows that God uses parents, and other authority figures, in the lives of children to point them to know Christ. Children learn God's ways through their parents, and through the other Christian adults that He places into their lives.

Solomon is also aware that children (and adults too!) have little idol factories going on in their hearts. Their inclination is to be king on their own little thrones

# TWICE A SUNDAY NEEDS TO HAPPEN

With the battle raging, we may not neglect coming together

by Chris deBoer

Churches face many challenges, and some are more significant than COVID's potential impact on our *physical* health. There is a *spiritual* battle going on and the devil has no qualms with using any and all means available to try and deceive and attack the Body of Christ. And he can even use COVID. The devil has, long ago, learned that the Church can actually grow via the spilt blood of martyrs. So, rather than stir up passions via persecution, he will sometimes try the very opposite tactic, lulling the church into complacency and apathy.

## BEYOND TEMPORARY

During the initial uncertainty of COVID, many churches were mandated by the government to stop gathering together. After a few weeks, permissions were granted to have maybe five or six people in the building, and that made it possible for congregations to watch their pastors lead a service via livestream. Other congregations were encouraged to watch other church services online. Then, as restrictions were loosened, a group of fifty, or groups of fifty in different cohorts, could gather in the building for worship – some had restrictions on singing, others could sing with full voice!

While these temporary restrictions to formal gatherings for worship might have been an acceptable measure while COVID was novel, now, months into it, we must ask, how long we can practice these temporary measures? Is it time to start making plans for the longer-term so that we can ably equip the saints for the battles we must wage?

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near”  
– Hebrews 10:24-25

One of the greatest training grounds for preparing saints for spiritual warfare is the formal worship services held on a weekly basis. In the Church Order of many continental Reformed churches we express the importance of formal worship services:

“The consistory shall call the congregation together for worship twice on the LORD's Day. The consistory shall ensure that, as a rule, once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed” (Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Article 52).

The reason why at least one service focuses on the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is to ensure that the congregation knows core doctrines well. Such knowledge equips the saints for the battles raging.

In Canada, many of our church mem-

bers were managing to worship in their buildings with about half the congregation once per Sunday. While this is better than not meeting, it does not meet the normative standard set out by the Church Order, to meet twice per Sunday. Worship with the communion of saints is special. Church attendance promotes fellowship and encouragement (cf. Act. 2:42; Heb. 10:24, 25). As the Psalmist says, “we used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng” (Psalm 55:14). The Holy Spirit works through the preaching of the Word (1 Cor. 2:4, 13; 1 Thess. 1:5) for the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). This weapon of offense, this Word, is powerful. Hebrews 4:12 teaches us that the “word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword...” The Word, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, is effective for changing lives. The preaching of that word is crucial for the saints, as they seek to maintain their engagement with each other and with the world around them.

Formal worship services are centred around the preaching of the Word. But of course, formal worship is more than just a listening exercise; indeed, if that is all we needed to consider, then virtual worship would be virtually the same as corporate worship. We can hear great speeches, sermons, and elucidations on God's Word anytime online. But Christians are not just concerned about an academic learning, but about developing and nurturing both their vertical relationship with God (the greatest





commandment), and also the horizontal relationships (the second commandment to love one another). A worship service includes hearing the promises of God's blessing, singing praises to God with the saints, active listening to the living preaching of God's Word to a specific congregation of the Lord, etc. A worship service truly addresses both aspects of our walk of faith in a congregationally specific manner

### WHERE THERE IS A WILL, THERE IS A WAY

It is time to refocus our efforts to worshipping together twice per Sunday. The principled position articulated in the Church Order needs to be reignited before apathy sets in, if it hasn't already. It is apathy that the devil uses to infiltrate a laziness in the church. He sows the seeds of doubt through apathy when we start to wonder: do we really need to go to church twice? Why can't we just stay home this morning? I think we'll take a nap this afternoon and catch the service via livestream, etc. We must not let the devil get a foothold in the churches of Christ. We need to get back to corporate worship again! If we take the threat of

the devil seriously, we will do all that we can to combat his attacks by any biblical means available.

Practically speaking, this means that the consistory could call each half of the congregation to worship twice per Sunday. Yes, that means four services in the building. Some churches would need to have the elders lead one or two of the services per Sunday. It might be wise to have the same half meet together consistently for a period of time. This would allow that half of the congregation to get to know each other better and to increasingly function as a body of believers, encouraging each other to love and good works.

However it happens, the normative practice of gathering in worship twice on Sunday needs to be restored as soon as possible. People have started feeling guilty coming to church twice because the one time was not technically their turn. Others have stopped feeling guilty altogether when they choose to skip going to church, or even skip watching the service online.

Because we love the Lord and His saints, we need to reinstate the call to worship twice every Lord's Day. In so

*"...we must ask,  
how long we  
can practice these  
temporary  
measures?"*

doing, the Holy Spirit will continue to work mightily in the lives of God's people so that we are increasingly equipped to fight the good fight of faith and to live according to God's commands to love him with our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbour as ourself. RP

*Since originally writing this article, further worship restrictions have been implemented in many regions. Brothers and sisters, let us do all that we can to gather together as often and willingly as possible. Formal worship is essential to the life of the local congregation – let us ensure we do what we can to keep the congregation alive and active before it may need to go on life support.*



# The Regulative Principle and church lockdowns

Returning to gathered worship is of vital importance

by Colin Postma

*“All of Manitoba moves to CRITICAL (RED) on #restartMB pandemic response system”*

So declares a press statement from the Government of Manitoba. With those twelve words, Christians in Manitoba are once again being plunged into the murky realm of “virtual worship.” For several months in early 2020 a full lockdown was mandated in the province and churches there were forbidden to open their doors. Now, once again, “religious and cultural gatherings must close or be provided virtually only,” states the government release. The dark, cold months of winter promise only a long, exhausting lockdown for our fellow believers in that province. British Columbia even more recently followed suit, with their provincial health officer declaring: “In-person religious gatherings and worship services are suspended under the order.” By every

indication, the rest of the country may not be far behind.

The COVID-19 crisis has created a tension between principles. We know we are called to love our neighbour and submit to the government on the one hand, but on the other, we know that we are also called to gather together for worship, and called to provide spiritual, physical, and mental care for our neighbour. I can’t think of a recent issue affecting the Church that has brought such polarized responses from within the Reformed community, and within individual congregations themselves.

Christians raise their children on stories of the brave martyrs who gave their lives to worship the one true God. Were the State to say, “you may not hold services because of your religious beliefs,” Christians would be unanimous in agreeing that we should disobey such a regulation – it would be unjust and unbiblical.

Were the State to raise up a golden calf and call on us to bow down, we would be similarly clear and decisive.

How then should we live in a time of pandemic? What is the relationship between the Church and the State in a time of pandemic? The answer doesn’t seem to be as simple today.

## QUESTIONS WE NEED ANSWERED

Theological issues and questions raised only in church history class have now become everyday considerations. Manitoba’s “Critical Red” stage is forcing churches to close. British Columbia has now enacted policies curbing social interaction outside of households and suspended in-person worship services. Each provincial government, and even every municipal government, has different regulations: mask bylaws, maximum church gathering limits, bans on singing in church, restrictions on the sacraments,



restrictions on the life of the church and its work through catechism classes, youth groups, men's and women's societies, Bible studies, ministries to the poor, to the elderly and more. Never in my lifetime has the hand of the State reached so far into the life of the Church.

So where can we look for guidance? Admittedly, things get rather fuzzy when we face lockdown. Principles we have held to in the past are less convincing when faced with potential conflict. Questions of Church and State, popes and kings, synods and legislatures have raged for centuries. Instead of focussing on these questions or trying to decipher the limits of authority it is better to first understand what God desires of us. This we can find in His Word and expounded in the historical confessions of the Church. Armed with this truth we have a foundation upon which the Church can stand with certainty.

## THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

In the face of the COVID-19 lockdowns many have chosen to hold corporate worship via some sort of online live streaming video. In most provinces, this means a skeleton crew is present in the church. This might include the pastor, a sound and video technician, and either someone playing music or a recording to facilitate singing. The rest of the congregation is at home, either alone, or with their family watching this service.

So what should we think of this form of worship service? To best answer that question we should look back at what, historically, we have understood worship to be.

Along with some other Protestant denominations, Reformed churches have held to some form of the "Regulative Principle of Worship." That principle extends from an interpretation of the second commandment and it stipulates that *only those things prescribed in God's Word are to be part of worship*. The Bible explicitly calls Christians to worship and to gather physically for worship services (Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 3:16; Acts 2:1; Acts 4:31; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians

5:4; 1 Corinthians 11:18-34). Worship is to include singing, the reading of the Word of God, sacraments, the preaching of the gospel and corporate prayers. The principle also stipulates that *things not prescribed are not permitted*. This is distinct from the way many other denominations worship, both Catholic and many mainline Protestant churches. For them, anything that has not been forbidden in Scripture may be permissible, particularly as it relates to church tradition.

This Regulative Principle extends from the following statements of faith:

*Belgic Confession*: "... we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever. Therefore, we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God" (Art. 32).

*Heidelberg Catechism*: "Q: What does God require in the second commandment? A: That we in no wise make any image of God, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded us in his Word." (Q&A 96)

*Westminster Confession*: "But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited to his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture" (21.1).

The Reformed understanding of Scripture has historically been opposed to worship services that include an aspect of "performance." In response to the Reformation and the "priesthood of all believers," Reformed denominations have tended to resist musical presentations, choirs, bands, and more. The focus has always been on facilitating worship for the corporate body. The congregation is there to partake, to engage in all the acts of worship, not just to sit by and observe.

In fact, Reformed liturgy is commonly laid out in the form of a conversation between God and His people. God gives a blessing, the people respond with singing, God's Word is read, the people respond in prayer, the offering is taken, and so on.

## TWO POSSIBLE RESPONSES

So, if we consider the Regulative Principle, how should we evaluate COVID-caused online worship? The response from Reformed churches, so far, seems to fall into two camps: those who see virtual worship services as an acceptable replacement for corporate worship, and those who do not.

### *Response 1: Virtual worship is valid corporate worship*

One could argue that live-streaming is better than nothing. Due to the emergency lockdown, it is simply not possible to hold corporate worship, and the believers cannot gather together and yet via live-streaming we are praying and hearing the Word of God preached. We can gather as families and sing at the same time as the many other families in our congregation. We can give our offerings via email transfer.

Many Reformed churches have provided church telephone and live-stream accessibility options for decades. Those beloved members who are subject to disability or the impact of old age can still join us in hearing the Word preached, and partake in aspects of the service they would otherwise have no access to. These technologies are a blessing that the church hasn't had before, and we should be thankful.

### *Response 2: Live-streams are not the same as corporate worship*

While this technology is a blessing to those who are unable to attend church, as well as a means to provide excellent content online, there are reasons why joining church via livestream was never considered the same as attending in person. Those reasons remain even in the midst of a pandemic. Worshiping in this manner allows believers to avoid the sometimes-messy reality of church family: the





essary and meaningless, and person-to-person contact where believers are gathered in Christ's name would become optional for Christians.

I fear that, in readily accepting the validity of virtual worship, we are releasing hold on a central tenet of the Christian faith. The idea of eternal disembodied spirits living forever is not unique. The Romans, Greeks, Chinese, Arabs, Midianites, Cushites – in fact almost every people group throughout history – has shared this belief. The Egyptians built their massive pyramids thousands of years ago based on this belief.

What is stunningly radical about the Christian faith is the embodied, physical resurrection of Christ from the tomb. This is the wonder, and the counter cultural nature of our faith. We worship our risen Lord each Sunday morning! We do not worship a disembodied soul. Crucially then, we are not called to worship as disembodied congregations – no, we worship Him in body and in spirit! And we will for eternity.

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures... Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection from the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” – 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 12-14

Practically, this has implications for the liturgy and sacraments of worship. The direct result of misunderstanding this biblical truth by choosing to not be physically present means we cannot partake in the Lord's supper, baptism, offering of tithes, the ordination of elders and deacons and more. Disembodied “virtual worship” must not be viewed as a valid replacement for in-person corporate worship.

coming together of people of all ages and types, in a shared bond of faith in Christ. It also removes the accountability of membership. And it raises all sorts of questions. What message does virtual worship give our church members about the value of being present in person? Couldn't members join from a vacation spot in the future, or from home if they don't want to drive in to church? Can someone be part of the worship service by watching it three hours later? Or is it only in watching simultaneously? What if there's a 30-second lag, and each individual device buffers differently as there is? We're certainly not all singing together in unison! Can someone in Europe join our services weekly by livestream? If so, can they become a member of the church?

The Regulative Principle that teaches us puppet shows are not a substitute for opening the Word also teaches us that virtual services are no substitute for corporate worship.

## THE IN-PERSON (EMBODIED) NATURE OF WORSHIP

The passage at the heart of many of the COVID-19 related discussions is Hebrews 10:24-25.

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not

neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Being “together” is the essential element of the author's directive here. Stirring one another up to love and good works and encouraging one another is an aspect of being together.

The physical gathering of the church together is connected to the doctrine of the resurrection. Around the time I first drafted this article in April, the Ezra Institute released an excellent article that raised this point that I want to quote here:

It is an unscriptural theology of creation and incarnation that believes the body of Christ can exist and function equally well in an abstract digital world, reducing the Lord's Table to relative unimportance, and the preached Word to a “talk” just as effectively delivered digitally via pre-recorded video or live feed. Such an idea is a modern form of Docetism, the heretical belief that Christ merely took on the appearance of humanity, and that his human form was an illusion. If these things were even partially true, Jesus' suffering, death, and bodily resurrection would be unnec-

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL ACTION

There are more questions for us to consider. If we cannot return to church for months, what happens to the congregation in the meantime? Can the church remain intact after a long period apart? How does the church leadership maintain the faithfulness of the body if corporate worship is banned?

The central concern I am trying to raise is this: in becoming comfortable with the technological means, have we been giving too much leeway to the State to dictate what may or may not be done in worship? Through the months of lockdown, here in Ontario, we became used to livestream services. We watched our pastor on a flat screen, and he couldn't see back. Indeed, the statistics show that many churches became so comfortable they have never returned from virtual services even when restrictions eased – their buildings remain closed and empty.

*We need to act to show that we will not sit by when it comes to the restriction of embodied worship of our risen, embodied Saviour.*

If instead we believe that total lockdown means the end of corporate worship, how would that change our response? If we recognize that corporate worship cannot be done virtually, there will be a higher urgency to our interaction with the State. Could we then continue complying without concern? I believe that if total lockdowns return our way, as they are in Manitoba and BC, then political action in response to our government is necessary.

The time has come for us to engage with our governments. We need to act to show that we will not sit by when it comes to the restriction of embodied

worship of our risen, embodied Saviour. If we view our gathering together as essential to corporate worship, then it is not a matter of convenience where technology can substitute at any time. Corporate worship is essential. We can't expect our secular governments to understand that – we are the ones who must tell them. And, like the widow of Luke 18:1-8 we must do so insistently. RP

*“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together.”  
Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)*

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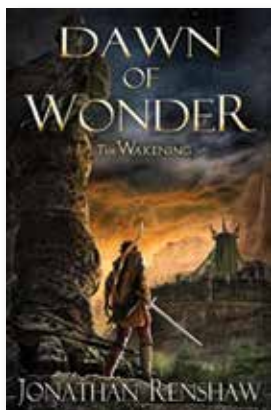
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### DAWN OF WONDER

BY JONATHAN RENSHAW  
708 PAGES / 2015



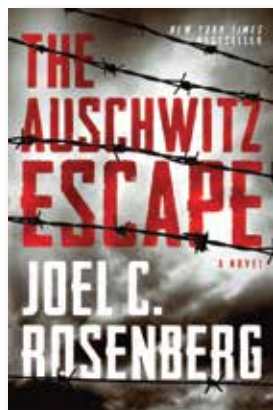
This might, at first glance, seem to be your typical boy-meets-girl, boy-dares-girl-to-jump-off-of-a-thousand-foot-high-bridge-into-the-icy-cold-stream-below-and-girl-shows-him-up-by-actually-doing-it, story. And, as many a fantasy tale contains, there are swords, courageous heroes, battles to be fought (and sometimes with large, very toothy creatures), and evil not yet here, but lurking ominously.

The book's size is *not* so typical – the 700-page first-of-the-series would make for a good doorstep. And not just any story would get my nephew recommending this to all his brothers and sisters, and any friend within earshot too. It is special in that it accomplished what no other book has managed: it made me look forward to running. I only let myself listen to the fantastic audiobook reading when I was out running, and at 30 hours long, it got me out the door roughly 60 times. It is special, too, in that it is Christian, but not obviously so. He's content to let the deeper tale – the moral of this story – come out gradually. I should add, I don't *know* the author is Christian but like the best bits of Narnia, or Lord of the Rings, this book is simply too good, and too true, not to be rooted in the Word.

The only downside? Book 2 still seems to be a ways out.

### THE AUSCHWITZ ESCAPE

BY JOEL C. ROSENBERG  
461 PAGES / 2014



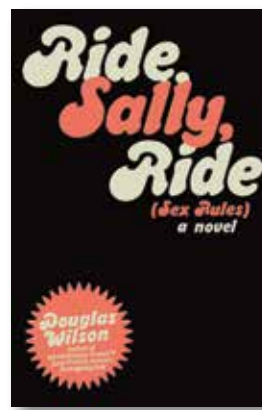
Joel Rosenberg is a fantastic writer, a *New York Times* best seller, but his political thrillers are based in large part on premillennial views that I don't share, and that does take away some of the fun. But in *The Auschwitz Escape*, he's having a go at *historical* fiction, so his end-times eschatology doesn't factor in, even as his mad story-telling skills still do.

Jacob Weisz is a seventeen-year-old Jew in Germany in 1938. His parents are passive, hoping that if they just stay the course, eventually it will turn out all right. His uncle is a member of a Jewish resistance group that knows things will only get worse unless people start fighting to make it better. Jacob isn't as naive as his parents, but he does respect them. But when the Nazis come for his family, Jacob escapes and begins to fight alongside his uncle...for a time. As the title indicates, soon enough he gets caught and sent to Auschwitz. There he meets a Protestant pastor, sent there for helping the Jews, and Jacob can't understand why the man was willing to risk his life when he could have stayed safe. Jacob has a hard time trusting a man whose motivations are so hard for him to understand.

I really enjoyed this and recommend it for older teens and up.

### RIDE SALLY, RIDE

BY DOUGLAS WILSON  
294 PAGES / 2020



In the USA of 20 years hence a Supreme Court ruling has overturned *Roe vs. Wade* and the interior states are banning abortion once again. That has Americans en masse "reshuffling to states more conducive to their values." With Christians heading inland and liberals fleeing to the coasts, the country's outer edges have doubled down on sexual license. Our hero, Ace, lives in a state where speech is monitored, and orthodox Christian books are available only on the dark web.

The arrival of a new neighbor has Ace's father, Benson, making the welcome wagon ready. Cookies are baked, and Ace and Benson head over to help bring in the heavy furniture, because that's what good Christians should do. But what should good Christians do when your new neighbor introduces you to his life-size doll "wife"? Benson thinks he should invite "them" over for dinner because, after all, "they" need Jesus. Son Ace grants the point that someone sure needs Jesus, but wants to know why his dad keeps talking about *them*.

One thing leads to another – we're still in the first chapter here – and Ace ends up trash compacting his neighbor's doll, and instead of getting charged with destruction of property, the woke prosecutor charges him with murder, because their neighbor had clearly *identified* the doll as his wife.

It only gets crazier from there, and in a far too believable but enjoyable way.



## THE NEWEST FROM *RP'S* FRIENDS

### THE LEGACY OF 25 SCRIPTURE VERSES ON PARLIAMENT HILL

BY LYNETTE BLOEDOW  
68 PAGES / 2020

Perched atop my “to be read” pile, this caught the eye of a visitor who sat down, and started reading. A booklet about bible verses on the walls and windows of Canada’s Parliament managed to get my *American* guest’s two thumbs up!



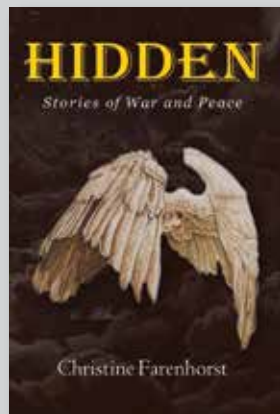
Architect John A. Pearson covered the Peace Tower with all sorts of symbolism and lots of bible verses, including citations from Canada’s national psalm, Ps. 72, and references to the armor of God, from Ephesians 6. Page after page of gorgeous pictures showcase the building’s stain glass windows, each of which has a story behind it. The Tower is currently shut down due to renovations that might take as long as 10 years, but even if you could visit, you wouldn’t get a tour like this one. Much of the tower’s “biblical legacy” is not mentioned by guides. The purpose of this booklet is to revive the truth emblazoned on the Tower’s walls that it is only in our “Ruler Supreme” that Canadians, as individuals and as a country, can find their hope. *Legacy* would make for a great coffee table book in any Canadian household. To order, go to [ChristianRootsCanada.org](http://ChristianRootsCanada.org).

### HIDDEN: STORIES OF WAR AND PEACE

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST  
303 PAGES / 2020

“I was a Stranger” is reason enough to pick up Christine Farenhorst’s new short story collection *Hidden*. The hero of this WWII story isn’t a resistance fighter or a soldier, and the bravery involved isn’t big or bold – this is a young woman saving a baby, no matter the shame she has to bear. So, quiet heroics, but heroics still – what Christine has crafted here is a story to inspire all of us called to everyday on-going faithfulness.

There are eight other tales with the events all happening in and around the two World Wars. I initially read this, with my girls in mind, but this is a book for adults too. But if you are reading it to your kids, since this is more drama than car chase, I think it better suited to the sort that enjoy historical fiction like *Little House on the Prairie*. It would also make for a great read-aloud book for that summer road trip. So, kick back in the passenger seat, shut off any competing screens, and share with your spouse and kids what life was like during and just after the Great Wars.

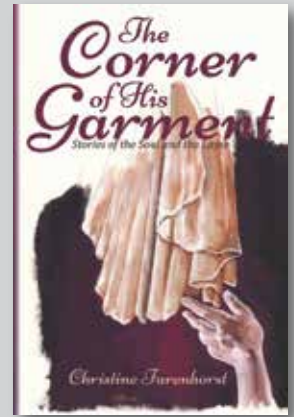


### THE CORNER OF HIS GARMENT: STORIES OF THE SOUL AND THE LAMB

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST  
250 PAGES / 2020

If *Hidden* has you wondering what could be better than a new Farenhorst book, the best answer is, two new books! Her second offering of 2020 is a collection of short stories that focus on the years around the Reformation, and on both sides of the English Channel. In *The Corner of His Garment*, Christine shares with us the Good News rediscovered but met with resistance in Strasbourg and England too, as the Roman Catholic Church tried to retain their power and influence. In our time of COVID it is eye-opening to read of the Plague and the sort of responses and fear it prompted.

Both collections can be had at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [Amazon.ca](http://Amazon.ca).



### WONDERFUL & BIZARRE LIFE FORMS IN CREATION

BY JERRY BERGMAN  
144 PAGES / 2020

Dr. Bergman’s book isn’t perfect, but I really rather suspect this will still be on a shelf somewhere on the New Earth. Why? Because, in spending a chapter each on 23 of God’s amazing creatures, this book does what Man was created to do: it sings the Creator’s praises.

So what are some of the creatures Dr. Bergman showcases?

- Archer Fish – with a blast of water, they can shoot a bug right off its perch
- Woodpeckers – can slam into a tree with concussive force and not get a concussion
- Penguins – awkwardly cute on land, but the most graceful of athletes in the water
- Kiwi – lays an egg almost as big as they are

Each chapter highlights the featured creature’s most unusual abilities, and also digs into how evolution can’t begin to explain how such a creature could come to be. While the book’s pictures caught the attention of elementary-aged kids this is best suited to a teen or adult audience. Dr. Bergman is not writing for other scientists, but also isn’t aiming this at children either: his intended audience will remember at least a little science from back in their school days.

You can order it at [Create.ab.ca](http://Create.ab.ca).





# THE ACCOMPANIST AS PROPHET?

*The following is an excerpt from Dr. Wes Bredenhof's new book "Aiming to Please: A Guide to Reformed Worship."*

\*\*\*\*\*

If we have accompaniment, the accompanist has an important role in our worship service. .... We want our accompanists to aim to please the LORD along with the entire congregation. There has to be a pursuit of excellence in the craft of accompaniment. When this is done, we should be thankful and encourage our accompanists.

Regrettably, in our tradition there has sometimes been inordinate language when it comes to accompanists, and especially organists. Sometimes the organist has been described as a "prophet" and his playing as "prophesying from the organ bench."

It seems that this rhetoric traces back to the famous Dutch organist Jan Zwart. According to Deddens, Zwart spoke of "prophesying during the worship service, before and after the sermon, in

a language the people can understand." Reformed theologian Klaas Schilder took over this language in describing Zwart posthumously: "His life's work was to prophesy from the organ bench, and when we say that we give true expression to what motivated this man." Deddens appreciated this rhetoric and took it over as well.

## PROPHECY IS ABOUT WORDS

The major problem with this description of the accompanist is that it does not stand up to biblical scrutiny. In the Bible, prophecy is almost always about words. A prophet without words is unheard of. There are instances where prophets performed prophetic acts, but these were exceptional, and even these acts never occurred in isolation from their words. Both in the Old Testa-

ment and the New Testament, prophecy is verbal. When Lord's Day 12 of the Catechism says we are anointed to be prophets who confess the name of Christ, it is referring to a verbal activity. During and after the Reformation, preaching was sometimes called "prophesying" – because it had to do with words. The idea of a musical instrument being a means of prophecy is unheard of, biblically and historically.

While certainly appreciating the work of accompanists (more on that in a moment), let us also be modest about what they are doing. If one wants to employ the language of the three-fold office of all believers to describe accompanists, then it would be better to refer to them in *priestly terms*. With their accompaniment, they are offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving with the rest of the congregation. That is something which can be done both with and without words.

## PROPER HONOR FOR ACCOMPANISTS


If an accompanist takes his or her work seriously, there can be quite a bit of preparation involved with each service. Moreover, a serious accompanist might even be a professional musician with years of training. A lot of time and money may have been invested

*... it would be better to refer to them in priestly terms.*

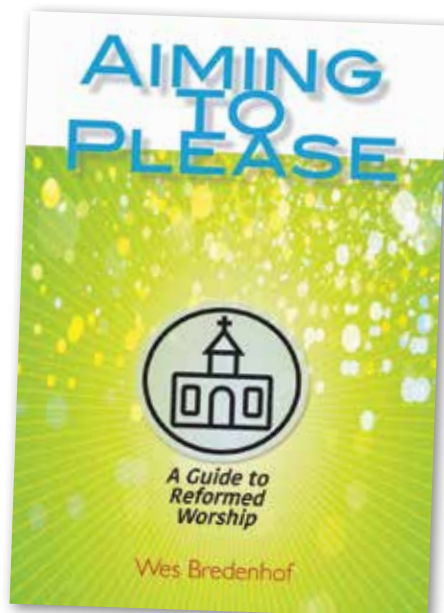
in honing their musical craft. This ought to be honored and recognized.

That can be done in different ways, of course. One way would be for the pastor regularly to pray for the accompanist(s) in his congregation. Another would be for there to be occasional acknowledgement of the accompanist in the church bulletin or perhaps at a congregational meeting. Still another way would be to ask the accompanist to help the congregation in understanding music in worship. Accompanists have the musical understanding and skills that many of us do not, and asking them to share their insights also shows respect for them and their craft. Let them teach us.

It is also appropriate to show our gratitude to our accompanists with an honorarium. This recognizes the time, energy, and financial commitment they have made to pursue excellence in accompanying our singing. Churches that do not offer an honorarium to their accompanists can sometimes struggle to find accompaniment, especially if there are other churches nearby which do offer honorariums.

Now someone might object and say, "A lot of us do volunteer work in the church and we don't get paid for it. So why should the accompanist get paid?" There are two things to say in response. First, the accompanist is not being "paid" for their labors. He or she is not an employee of the church, at least not typically. The accompanist is a volunteer, offering his or her services for the glory of God. Second, unlike most other volunteer work in the church, the accompanist has spent a lot of his or her time, energy, and money on learning to play well. Continuing to play well also requires investments, including the purchase of sheet music. Accompaniment is different than the other volunteer work done in the church. A modest honorarium recognizes this. 

*Dr. Wes Bredenhof's "Aiming to Please: A Guide to Reformed Worship" is available at Amazon.com, Amazon.ca and other online retailers.*



The Board of Cornerstone Christian School in Lynden, Washington invites applications for a full time opening for the 2021/22 school year for:

#### **PRINCIPAL**

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

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The following selection criteria will be addressed throughout the selection process.

- Ability to foster an atmosphere that will characterize the school as a distinctly Reformed Christian School.
- Be a visionary thinker with the ability to implement the vision and educational goals of the society.
- Experience in teaching and administrative leadership in Reformed education.
- Ability to lead and develop staff to be an effective and high performing team of professionals.
- Have as minimum, an undergraduate degree and recognized teaching diploma.
- Have excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to foster relationships with staff and parents.
- Willingness and ability to build healthy relationships within the greater school and church community in Lynden.

The successful candidate must be a confessing member in good standing of an American, Canadian Reformed Church, or sister church. Those committed to serving in the field of Reformed Christian Education and who submit to Scripture as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity are encouraged to apply.

For a list of application requirements and a full position description of this opportunity please contact:

Tim Faber, Chairman of the Board  
**chairman@cornerstoneschool.us**  
(360) 201-3418  
[www.cornerstoneschool.us](http://www.cornerstoneschool.us)



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

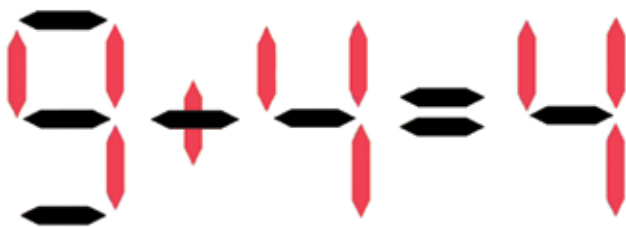
BY JON DYKSTRA

## FAMOUS PHRASES FROM THE BIBLE

The influence of God's Word on our culture is such that even those who have never cracked open a Bible aren't likely to name their kids Jezebel, Judas, or Cain. There are, however, some common phrases that even believers might not know have biblical origins.

- **A drop in the bucket** – Isaiah 40:15 says, "Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust."
- **The writing is on the wall** – In Daniel 5, King Belshazzar sees "the fingers of a human hand" appear and write a message on his wall which he then gets Daniel to interpret...and it isn't good news for the king who is killed that very night.
- **Rise and shine** – This morning wake-up call, common to mothers the world over, may come from the call for God's people to "Arise, shine" in Isaiah 60:1.
- **Seeing eye to eye** – Isaiah 52:8, in some translations, about watchmen on the city walls being in agreement..
- **Go the extra mile** – Jesus urges us to this in Matthew 5:41
- **Reading between the lines** – This doesn't come from any specific chapter or verse, but from a translating practice done to some Latin Bibles, where another language would be written directly above the Latin text.

## MOVE JUST ONE STICK TO FIX THE EQUATION



I thought there were three right answers, but after posting a version of this to Facebook, friends helped uncover more. So there are at least 6...but 3 of them include what could be considered "cheats" (that's a hint). You can find the answers on page 2 (h/t to Martha DeGelder).

## ASKED AND ANSWERED

It's a question we've all heard: *how much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?* But does anyone know the answer? It turns out some researchers at Cornell University discovered that if you provide woodchucks with chunks of 2 by 4s, then they *can* chuck wood...even if they normally choose not to.

"Chucking" of a sort does occur when they dig out their bur-

rows, though this involves dirt, not wood. Naturalist Richard Thomas estimated that a woodchuck burrow is about 35 cubic meters. Making a bit of a leap of logic he then presumed, if they can throw that much dirt, then they should be able to throw just as much wood, right? And a pile of wood with that volume would weigh, around 700 pounds. So there you have it!

SOURCE *Uncle John's Bathroom Reader Plunges into the Universe*, pages 445-446

## ADVANCED MATH

"There are no words to express the abyss between isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the mathematician that four is twice two. But two is not twice one; two is two thousand times one."

– G. K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*

## DID THEY OR DIDN'T THEY?

The best quotes aren't always by the people they are supposed to be by. Sometimes they are altered, improved, and essentially abbreviated versions of something they really did say. Other times, it might be something they said, but no one can find a source to prove it. Regardless some are really worth repeating. Here's a collection of great quotes with the person who is popularly, but probably incorrectly, credited with saying them.

- "Why do bad things happen to good people? That only happened once and He volunteered." – RC Sproul
- "Love is a game two can play and both can win." – Eva Gabor
- "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the Word of God except precisely that little point which the world and the Devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing him. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battle front besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point." – Martin Luther
- "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." – Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- "When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing—they believe in anything." – G.K. Chesterton

## "TELEPHONE" WITH A TWIST

In the game "telephone" one friend whispers a sentence to a friend, and the message gets passed along the line quietly one by one. By the time it gets to the end of the line the message, through repeated "mishears" has been altered, sometimes to an unrecognizable extent, and to the great amusement of all.

In a version of the game called "Predicament and Remedies" the first person shares some kind of "predicament" and their neighbor passes along, not that predicament, but a one sentence, fairly detailed, remedy for it. The person who hears



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the remedy then has to pass along a one-sentence, detailed predicament that remedy might solve, and so on and so on.

So, for example, if we start with “My scuba airhose is leaking” the next in line might whisper “Wrap duct tape around the hose” to which the next in line might say “my vacuum hose has a hole in it.” The trick here is to leave some room for ambiguity, but not too much. “Buy a new one” wouldn’t be a good fix for any remedy because it is too general and a match for too many things, but something like “learn how to read upside down” would be great fun. The more creative the predicament or remedy, the funnier the result.

## STEWARDSHIP AT THE GAS PUMP

For years now the site GasBuddy.com has been helping thrifty folks in Canada, the US, and Australia find the best local prices for filling up their vehicles.

## SCIENCE'S "SLIDING SCARE OF TRUST"

“Science” is often brought into discussions to end them. Whether we’re talking about overpopulation, or global warming, or evolution, or now the efficacy of masks and lockdowns, science will be invoked to declare that this or that is so, and that only “deniers” would say otherwise.

What this mike-drop trades on is the reputation science has garnered via some of its greatest hits: cars, smartphones, heat pumps, microwaves, flat screen TVs, laser-eye surgery, gluten-free pizza, and so much more. The great and glorious “science” has given us much, so who would be foolish enough to question it?

But wait just one moment: there’s science and then there’s science. In the Creation/Evolution debate a useful distinction is made between *operational science* and *historical science*. Discovering a good gluten-free pizza is all about the former: endless experimentation, and then, when one proves successful, duplicating that same experiment time after time. That’s where the reliability comes in: it is based on repeated experimentation – repeated checks – that can verify whether something is right or not. In contrast historical science is about events that can’t be repeated, like the origins of the universe, or the Earth, or Man. So, this sort of science is very different...and doesn’t deserve the same sort of respect.

What Paul Price and Robert Carter call science’s “sliding scale of trust” is also relevant in modeling big events going forward too. It’s one thing to say we’ve discovered a good gluten-free pizza dough (and really, have we even achieved that yet?) and quite another to say we understand what the weather will be like one hundred, or even ten year hence. To explain just how uncertain such conclusions really are, Price and Carter quote from Michael Crichton’s book *Jurassic Park* where a key character, mathematician and philosopher Ian Malcolm illustrates that uncertainty:

“Chaos theory says two things. First, that complex systems like weather have an underlying order. Second, the reverse of that—that simple systems can produce complex behav-

ior. For example, pool balls. You hit a pool ball, and it starts to carom off the sides of the table. In theory, that’s a fairly simple system, almost a Newtonian system.

“Since you can know the force imparted to the ball, and the mass of the ball, and you can calculate the angles at which it will strike the walls, you can predict the future behavior of the ball. In theory, you could predict the behavior of the ball far into the future, as it keeps bouncing from side to side. You could predict where it will end up three hours from now, in theory...

“But in fact ... it turns out you can’t predict more than a few seconds into the future. Because almost immediately very small effects—imperfections in the surface of the ball, tiny indentations in the wood of the table—start to make a difference. And it doesn’t take long before they overpower your careful calculations. So it turns out that this simple system of a pool ball on a table has unpredictable behavior.”

If we have to be humble about where the pool balls will land, then we should know that even more humility is in order when dealing with systems or situations that are far more complex.

SOURCE: Paul Price and Robert Carter’s *Creation.com* article: “Historical Science, Chaos Theory, and the sliding scale of trust” posted Oct. 1, 2020

## SOUNDS TO SOOTHE BABY’S CRIES

When a baby would wake in the middle of the night, and nothing seemed capable of soothing her, I had one go-to trick that would. I’d boot up my computer and head to SimplyNoise.com, a site that offered different sorts of soothing noises that, when paired with a soothing backrub from dad, would send the little one off to sleep.

That site used to be free and while it is no longer, I ran across another that is: Noises.online offers the sounds of crackling fires, calm rainstorms, babbling conversation, straight white noise, and many more that you can even combine with one another. If you have a kid just cracking their first tooth, I highly recommend it!

## ENGLISH IS A WEIRD LANGUAGE

If you’ve ever wondered why English is thought to be one of the harder languages to learn, contronyms are a clue: these are words *that mean their own opposite*. These examples should have us commiserating with our immigrant parents or grandparents who had to somehow make sense of them all:

- Apology: repenting from an action, or defending it
- Bolt: to keep from moving, or to run away
- Clip: to attach something on, or cut it off
- Dust: to remove fine particulate matter, or to add it.
- Fast: describing something stuck firmly, or moving quickly
- Literally: factually, or metaphorically
- Left: still here, or already gone
- Resign: only a contronym in writing, where it means either to quit, or to sign up again
- Transparent: being invisible, or being obvious
- Weather: to be worn away by, or to stand up to, the elements



# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

SERIES 6-3

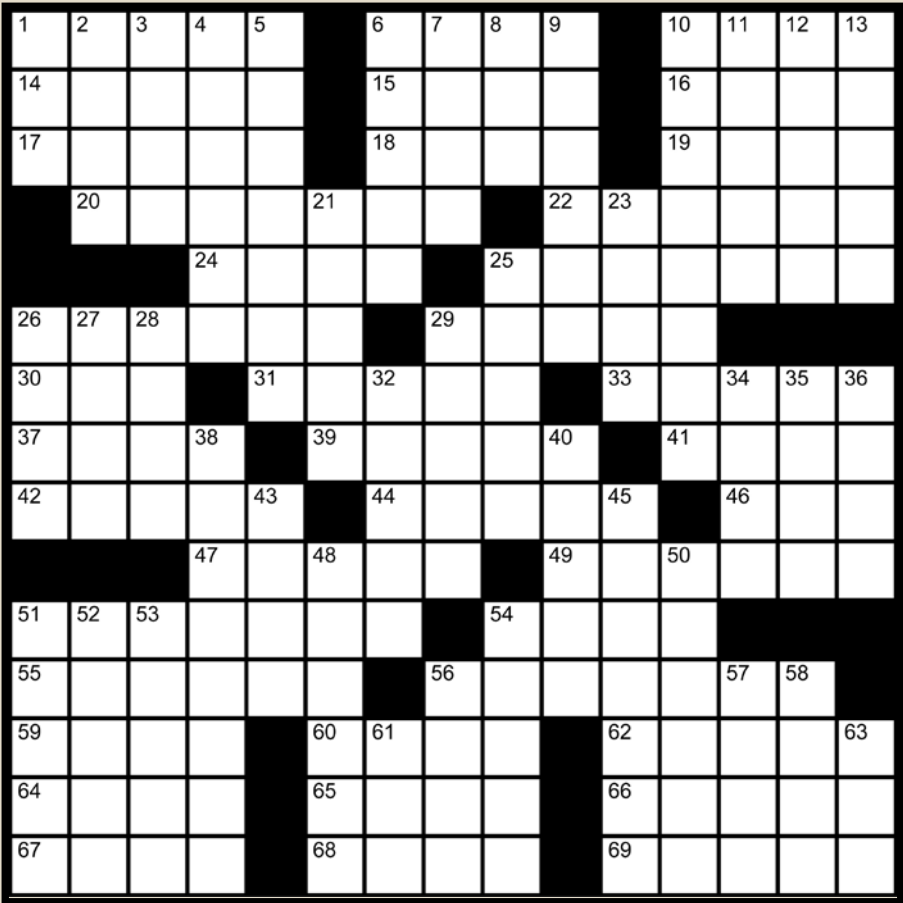
## PUZZLE CLUES

**ACROSS**

- 1. Horse or person from New South Wales
- 6. This kind of nose in monkeys & revolvers
- 10. Additions to house, or beginnings of lists
- 14. Jung's "feminine side"
- 15. Men & women wore it, in Middle Ages.
- 16. Moderate tide
- 17. Shoot, this uses up tons of clay targets!
- 18. "These also \_\_\_\_\_ with wine" (Is. 28)
- 19. Only a "\_\_\_\_\_" would use "\_\_\_\_\_."
- 20. Malicious, mean
- 22. "\_\_\_\_\_" (song title - "don't ya think?")
- 24. Distinctive clothing (archaic)
- 25. The woman who gets the inheritance
- 26. Natural mineral form of lead sulfide
- 29. Mist (up), like glasses or understanding
- 30. High or low card in suit (or up a sleeve)
- 31. Tangle (like hair) or react to tangle
- 33. Spanish appetizer or snack
- 37. "...swift to \_\_\_\_\_ blood...." (Rom. 3)
- 39. "Let... deep darkness \_\_\_\_\_ it" (Job 3)
- 41. "\_\_\_\_\_ of the rest dared join...." (Acts 5)
- 42. Units of Mexican currency
- 44. Remember the Alamo? It's here.
- 46. Compass point
- 47. "a refuge in \_\_\_\_\_ of trouble" (Nah. 1)
- 49. Agreeable guys (too agreeable?)
- 51. Snake out West (who gives fair warning)
- 54. Where ships ties up, and on which side
- 55. Type of herons, seen mostly with regret
- 56. Soldier in the IDF
- 59. "Let your heart \_\_\_\_\_" (A. W. Tozer)
- 60. So, Dad... you partly want a fizzy drink?
- 62. What comes out of a tree at the sawmill
- 64. It sounds like a spooky Great Lake.
- 65. He sounds like a real Metis leader.
- 66. "Make \_\_\_\_\_ and get out...." (Acts 22)
- 67. It's a \_\_\_\_\_ order to believe a \_\_\_\_\_ tale.
- 68. It's a grand event at the ballgame.
- 69. "what was \_\_\_\_\_ your table" (Job 36)

**DOWN**

- 1. "who is and who \_\_\_\_\_" (Rev. 1)
- 2. Hieroglyphic symbol for life
- 3. "Send money order in \_\_\_\_\_ of cash."



- 4. Come out from, like out of a cocoon
- 5. Palms used for making furniture material, or a (two word) melan-in adjustments for rodents
- 6. "...a \_\_\_\_\_ in the desert" (Jer. 17)
- 7. French for *Christmas*
- 8. "I will not \_\_\_\_ flattery...." (Job 32)
- 9. Trust, faith, confidence
- 10. The organ targeted by a drug (two words)
- 11. Sierra \_\_\_\_\_: founded by black Loyalists
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_ lazuli - blue semi-precious stone
- 13. Details of blueprint/product (short form)
- 21. Old French and Swiss currency
- 23. Disturbance in Ephesus (Acts 19)
- 25. Double \_\_\_\_\_: DNA's surprise twist
- 26. "...I will \_\_\_\_\_ and pant." (Is. 42)
- 27. Affliction of head, heart, and stomach
- 28. Dregs; what's at the bottom of the vat
- 29. Hillsides, in Bobby Burns's poems
- 32. Change; transform; tailor
- 34. One of Bobby Burns' works
- 35. She lived at Green Gables.
- 36. "...have \_\_\_\_\_ with our eyes" (1 John 1)
- 38. Small plover breeding in tundra
- 40. The one who holds the key to the city
- 43. Sediment deposited by a river
- 45. Winged creatures
- 48. Plural of *Mr.*
- 50. Stone slabs with inscriptions
- 51. Start over; put in new settings (partly)
- 52. Greek for *marketplace*
- 53. It can be blazed or followed.
- 54. The 23rd is perhaps the best known.
- 56. "This \_\_\_\_\_ pleased Haman," (Esther 5)
- 57. "The \_\_\_\_\_ shall be first..." (Matt. 20)
- 58. "Will enter \_\_\_\_\_ judgment" (Joel 3)
- 61. "anointing him with \_\_\_\_" (James 5)
- 63. Past Montreal Canadiens goalie \_\_\_\_\_ Dryden

**Find this issue's solution on page 2!**

# WHAT *DOESN'T* GET IN IS JUST AS IMPORTANT



Serious effort goes into the production of this magazine. Some of that is readily evident: a flip through the pages and the various articles, pictures, and layout are there to be seen by all. What isn't as obvious is the effort that goes into what *doesn't* get in the magazine.

You won't for example, see that we were considering doing an article on the Pope's latest comments on gay marriage. Back in October mainstream media outlets featured headlines like: "Francis becomes 1st pope to endorse same-sex civil unions."

The pope's supposed radical turn was articulated in a new documentary about him. While the articles featured on ABC, NBC, PBS, and elsewhere had mostly different titles, many were, in fact, the very same Associated Press article. That meant it wasn't countless sources independently confirming the facts, but rather many organizations basing their coverage on this single account. There was another reason for skepticism: this pope has regularly made comments that could be interpreted a number of different ways, only to have the Vatican PR office later clarify things. That's what happened this time again. Two weeks after the initial furor, the Vatican said the Pope's comments were taken out of context and, contrary to what the film's director had claimed, weren't part of a new interview, but had been spliced together from old footage. Even as some media outlets had us questioning whether

the pope was Catholic, the controversy was overblown. Is Francis liberal? He keeps giving that impression, which means he's either (cautiously) pushing a liberal agenda or incredibly naïve about how his words could be understood. Whatever he might be doing, it isn't as glaringly obvious as the initial stories keep making it out to be.

So, we didn't post a story on the pope's latest kerfuffle, but only after research had been done, and an assessment had been made that the facts of the matter were still very unclear. It took time and effort to *not* write that story.

Sometimes it's a lot simpler. A recent Winston Churchill biography recounts how he wanted to be with the troops on D-Day. While his staff tried to dissuade him, what with the obvious risk involved, he was prime minister, so who was going to tell him no? Well, there was one man who could: King George. In an inspired move he informed Churchill that his royal majesty wanted to go too. When Churchill pointed out how dangerous it was for the King to go, his objection highlighted how it was every bit as crazy to have the prime minister there. Thus Churchill was shamed into backing down from his own D-Day plans and forced to stay home.

Great story, but the details in the biography were sparse, and while online accounts echoed it, they didn't add any additional information. Then further


digging uncovered a letter, written four days before D-Day, from King George to Churchill, which put things in a different light.

My Dear Winston,

I want to make one more appeal to you not to go to sea on D day. Please consider my own position. I am a younger man than you, I am a sailor, & as king I am the head of all three services. There is nothing I would like better than to go to sea but I have agreed to stay at home; is it fair that you should then do exactly what I should have liked to do myself?...

The gist is the same – Churchill and the King both want to go and the King changes Churchill's mind – but in real life there is no Prophet Nathan-like use of a man's own words to convict him – just a plea for Churchill to come to his senses. A great story has been ruined by the facts.

It isn't *Reformed Perspective's* mission to ruin stories; we exist to explore and expound on the Greatest Story Ever Told. But what makes God's story so great is that it is true! So it is in service to the truth that we spend a good amount of time on what gets in the magazine...and on what does not.

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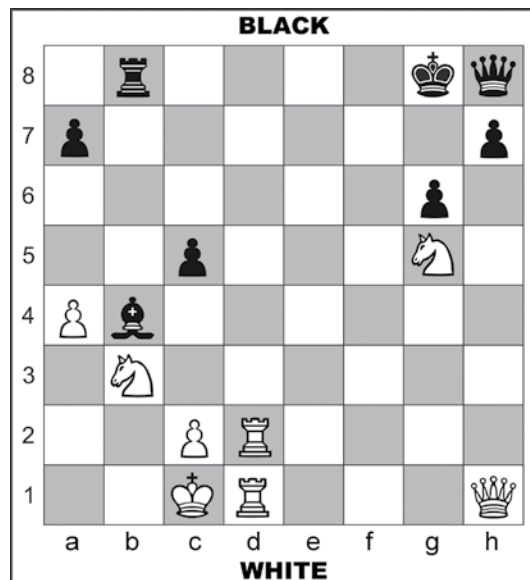
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# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



## Chess Puzzle #261



**WHITE TO MATE IN 4**  
Or, If it is BLACK's Move,

**BLACK TO MATE IN 2**  
(Find 2 answers)

## Riddle for Punsters

### #261 – "Feeling Right at Home?"

Why did the prince live in a palace that had no doorbell?

It was because he had always belonged to the \_\_\_\_\_ ity.

Why did the politician run his campaign for election from a house with glass walls.

It was c \_\_\_\_\_ ly because his campaign placed such an emphasis on tr \_\_\_\_\_ y.

Why did the rich kid who lived in a mansion and had many servants like to have a turtle as a pet?

It was because they both lived such \_\_\_\_\_ tered lives.

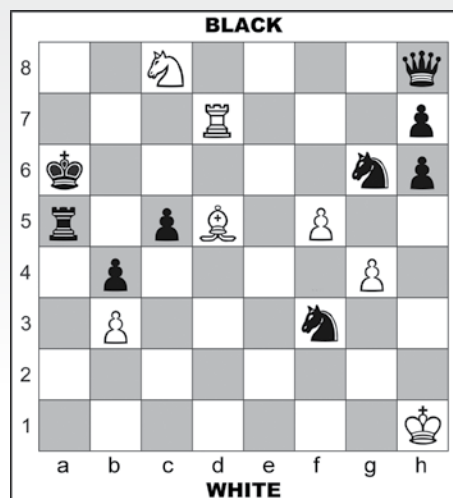
## Problem to Ponder

### #261 – "Do not get "psyched out" by the exam!"

Jasmine wrote the final exam for her child psychology course. The exam consisted entirely of multiple choice questions. Jasmine got three quarters of the questions correct. If she had gotten 6 more questions correct, her mark on the exam would have been 85%. What was the number of questions on the exam and how many of those did she get wrong?

## LAST MONTH'S SOLUTIONS

### Solution to Chess Puzzle #260



**WHITE TO MATE IN 2**

#### Descriptive Notation

1. R-Q6 ch K-N4
  2. B-B4 mate
- or R-N6 mate

#### Algebraic Notation

1. Rd7-d6 + Ka6-b5
  2. Bd5-c4 ++
- or Rd6-b6 ++

**BLACK TO MATE IN 4**

#### Descriptive Notation

1. ----- Q-R8 ch
  2. K-N2 R-R7 ch
  3. KxN Q-B6 ch
  4. K-K4 R-K7 mate
- or
3. K-N3 Q-K4 ch
  4. KxN N-R5 mate
- or
3. K-R3 Q-R8 ch
  4. K-N3 Q-N7 mate

#### Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Qh8-a1 +
  2. Kh1-g2 Ra5-a2 +
  3. Kg2xf3 Qa1-c3 +
  4. Kf3-e4 Ra2-e2 ++
- or
3. Kg2-g3 Qa1-e5 +
  4. Kg3xf3 Ng6-h4 ++
- or
3. Kg2-h3 Qa1-h1 +
  4. Kh3-g3 Qh1-g2 ++

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# THE HEALING TOUCH

by Christine Farenhorst

*Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.  
It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. – Prov. 3:7-8*

## CHAPTER 1

It was a warm day, and Meggy adjusted her close-fitting cap with a sigh. Its whiteness covered thick, dark braids wound tightly across a high-held head, and enfolded the sides of a well-sculpted face. Meggy felt like itching her scalp but knew that a few steps behind them Hawys, who always walked to church with father and herself, would comment on it. Capitulating to the older woman's unspoken influence, she refrained, and merely adjusted her waistcoat with a shrug of her small shoulders.

"Do not move about so much, child. It is the Lord's Day after all." Hawys' correction came swiftly. Father glanced at Meggy with a sidelong look, and smiled an apologetic smile. He was not one for arguments although she was sure he sympathized. They both knew Hawys did not mean ill and besides that, they were staying in her house, living partly on her charity.

"I can hear the Sanctus Bell." Hawys, picking up both speed and her long,

dark blue skirt, swept past them.

Meggy automatically increased her steps as well. "Come, Father," she whispered, as she tried to pull him along, "it will not do to irritate Hawys."

Undisturbed, he calmly answered, "Surely the bell ringer has only just begun and we have time to spare." Not multiplying his measured paces, he ambled on, all the while tranquilly regarding their surroundings.

Meggy was unsure. Should she stay with father, or should she shadow Hawys? In the end it was the sense of father's words that convinced her. St. Mary's Church was but some ten minutes or so from where they were, and surely the sexton would not shut the doors against them?

"Have you perhaps knowledge that the Archbishop himself is attending today? Is that why you and Hawys are in such a hurry, Child?" Father was teasing her. Slowing down, she affectionately squeezed his arm.

"It would be wonderful," he continued, "to hear actual instruction

from the pulpit. But I confess that I have not much hope for it."

Meggy did not answer. Her eyes were still fixed on Hawys who, glancing back over her shoulder every now and then, was gaining great ground. "We might walk a trifle faster, Father," she suggested, but he seemed not to hear.

"Your mother, although a mite argumentative, was fond of a good sermon, Meggy," he went on, "and I vow that in the long run she would not be in favor of us continuing to attend St. Mary's."

Meggy could see the flint and ironstone makings of the church building coming up ahead. It was a beautiful structure and she loved it. The graveyard at the rear where mother was buried was very peaceful. Betimes she walked there and marveled at the monuments and admired the many stained glass windows that laughed at her from the grey church walls. There was one special window she favored – one with green diamond-shaped panes between its lead outlines. She often

stared at that window during services. Sometimes she felt as if staring at something beautiful might reflect into her own heart and consequently make it beautiful. Is that how one was saved?

"Meggy, Child, we are here."

Indeed, they were. To her relief, Meggy saw that there were many folks still entering the rounded-off-at-the-top double oak doors. After quickly looking up at the top of the tower, as she always did before entering the church, she espied the signal beacon, part of an ancient series of signal beacons. "Look Father, the beacon."

She sped up her steps even as she spoke but Father pulled her back. "Easy, Child. The building will not run away." He was forever chaffing her. "Know you that the church was probably built in the 1200s, and rebuilt in 1494?"

She nodded. Yes, she did know that.

"Well, Meggy, now the year is 1672, and that makes this building some four hundred years old. All that time it has stood there and it will very likely outlive us."

"Yes, Father."

Meggy lifted her skirts and crossed over the church threshold. Her father followed close behind. The foyer was cool and quite empty. Meggy immediately walked through and on into the church proper. Standing in its wide doorway with the entrance behind her, she searched for the familiar figure of Hawys who was wont to sit in the back on the right. About to enter, a voice made her turn. It was a voice addressing Father.

"Good to see you, James Burnet."

It was a low, male voice. She did not recognize it immediately. But as she turned and moved back into the foyer, she saw that it belonged to Timothy Newham, a haberdasher, who lived close to Whitehall. She had never before seen him in their church or, for that matter, at a conventicle. In all probability he was not a religious man.

"Hello, Timothy." Father answered the haberdasher's greeting courteously.

"I had been hoping that you would come by my shop this past week, James."

Father shrugged. Meggy walked



"It had been only four years since Cromwell, the Lord Protector, had died. During his time greater religious freedom had come about for the Protestants."

back to stand by his side. There was something sad about that shrug and she sensed he needed her.

"You owe me some money, James Burnet, and I am here to obtain it."

"My dear fellow," the reply came softly and courteously, "perhaps you could come by my shop later this week. It seems unfitting to discuss this matter here in church."

"I have waited all of a month already, James, and have seen neither hide nor hair of you."

Meggy could feel the eyes of fellow churchgoers pry into her back. She put her arm through father's. "Let's go on into the sanctuary, Father," she

whispered.

"Is this your daughter?"

"Yes, I am," Meggy answered for him, "and I beg you, Sir, do not make a scene here in the Lord's house, for that is not proper."

"Is it proper then to withhold five pounds owing me? Five pounds that have been loaned out for more than three months even though the understanding was that it would be paid back in two months time?"

Meggy took note of the fact that father's breathing was becoming uneven and rapid. And she minded the times of late that he had been tired.

"I have followed you to church, James



Burnet," Timothy Newham went on, "and I will follow you inside the church sanctuary if need be, and demand in front of all these people that you give me my money. Perhaps shame will make you pay me back." At the last words, he raised his voice threateningly and it seemed to Meggy that it reverberated off the foyer's high ceiling.

"Come, Father," she repeated gently, "maybe we should go home and we will sort it all out when we get there."

"There is nothing to sort out," Timothy Newham insisted, "Your father owes me five pounds, a tidy sum when you are a poor man such as I am, and I'll wager that he has that amount hidden some place here or there in his shop."

"Not so, Sir," Meggy replied, "and I would ask you to do us the kindness of leaving. Please call at our home at the noon hour tomorrow and we shall receive you properly. You have our word on it."

Timothy gazed at her thoughtfully, gazed long and hard. It made her uncomfortable. He was an older man, and it did not seem fitting. "Very well then," he eventually retorted, "tomorrow it is at about twelve of the hour." He swung about and disappeared through the heavy oak door before a reply could be made.

## CHAPTER 2

It had been only four years since Cromwell, the Lord Protector, had died. During his time greater religious freedom had come about for the Protestants. However, then "the Restoration" had planted a new ruler on the English throne, a ruler who did not know Cromwell. He was of the house of Stuart and his name was Charles II. Although only a youthful thirty years of age, he was well versed in the vices of the world and his skill in these vices had spilled over into the country.

Countries are labeled - labeled as republics, monarchies, dictatorships or otherwise. But should they be labeled thus? He who sits in the heavens laughs, and holds nations in derision. He has all things under His control and what He

desires comes to pass. England breathed laboriously while Charles II ruled and was in great need of a physician.

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James Burnet and his daughter stood in the church foyer for a few moments after Timothy Newham had left. Then, as if by common consent, they turned and departed the church building. No words were spoken on the way home. The streets lay silent for the church bells had stopped ringing. Meggy clung hard to her father's arm. James stopped walking every twenty steps or so and reflected on the fact that he had not been able to do as much work lately as he was wont to do. By his side, Meggy wished for the hundredth time that she had been born a boy and that her mother was still alive instead of lying in the burial ground back of the church. How they would both help father. She knew that they would.

James Burnet was a pewterer. Although only a trifler in the trade, there was much call for the items he fashioned, items such as inkwells, mugs, badges, and candlesticks. He was not a wealthy man but small pewter utensils were popular and he sold of his wares to traveling tinsmiths who hawked them in the countryside. The Burnet family had been able to manage. James had taught his daughter much as she was growing into a young woman. Even now as they passed through the silent streets, Meggy could hear his instruction. "Pewter into which no water has come, becomes more white and like to silver, and less flexible," and "Nine parts or more of tin with one of regulus of antimony compose pewter," and "Pewter is called *etaïn* in French."

The Worshipful Company of Pewterers in Oat Lane near the London Wall, stipulated that marriage to a member of the pewter guild conferred upon a woman the rights and privileges of the business. Mother, when she was married to father, had been put in charge of the financial side of the business and she had received the payments for all the work father had

done. Her receipt to buyers had always been valid. One should not speak ill of the dead, but James' wife, although a hard worker, had clearly not enjoyed the trade and had made her husband's life rather miserable because of it. But she had been capable, and Meggy sorely missed the independence their little family had enjoyed.

The Great Fire of London had come in 1666 hot on the heels of the bubonic plague, which had hit in 1665. Destroying 13,200 houses, 87 parish churches, and St. Paul's Cathedral, the Fire had also burned both Margaret Burnet and her home. The Pewterers' Hall on Oat Lane had been destroyed as well, but it was being rebuilt. James Burnet had not had the money to rebuild his home. For a short while Charles II was blamed for these disasters. Some said his wicked lifestyle had brought about God's punishment on the city; others whispered that the king himself might have instigated the fire to punish the people of London for executing his father.

Although James Burnet had been able to salvage some of his tools, the truth was that he and his daughter were left homeless. Hawys, a distant relative on mother's side, had kindly offered them living quarters. Her son Roger, a great big hulk of a lad, had from the beginning of their moving in, shown great interest in helping his relations. It had become a tacit agreement of sorts that he was working an apprenticeship. But nothing had been verbally agreed upon or signed. James, who was of a very cheerful and carefree disposition, had been glad of the young man's help. Irrationally, seventeen-year-old Meggy had not much liking for Roger and avoided him. Five years her senior, he displayed affection for father and her father returned it. Perhaps she was jealous. If father were to marry Hawys, the trade would eventually revert to her and later, to Roger. And it was a fact that Father was not well. He had of late been fatigued, unable to work much. Also, Meggy had noted that her father had a small, red swelling in his neck. Was he afflicted with a disease? She

"The Great Fire of London had come in 1666, hot on the heels of the bubonic plague.... destroying 13,200 houses, 87 parish churches, and St. Paul's Cathedral..."



shrugged her small shoulders again. She did not like to think of such things, but the fears that crept into her mind and the raising of her small shoulders did not push the thoughts away.

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Hawys asked no questions when she came home from church but simply laid out the Sunday meal on the kitchen table. Being discreet was a virtue, Meggy mulled, as she helped put the plates and ale on the board, admitting to herself that they were blessed to have such a relative. Although always adamant that they be in church on time, on the whole Hawys was a sweet-tempered woman and a good housekeeper. Father was determined that Meggy obey her in all matters. And rightly so, for did not the household run smoothly under her guidance and were they not clean and well fed? Hawys truly seemed to care for Father and for herself. Was she not even now fixing potions for his ailments, making sure he ate enough and did she not mend his clothes?

### CHAPTER 3

It was Lent. *Now is the healing time decreed, for sins of heart and word and deed, when we in humble fear record, the wrong that we have done the Lord.* So rang an old Latin rhyme and Meggy had heard father recite it often.

Truthfully, Meggy was not aware that she had ever wronged the Lord. After all, she was quite careful to do all that was right. She obeyed father, loved him and worked hard at the chores Hawys gave her each day. So what was a healing time? She went to sleep thinking about it.

But she had forgotten the words upon opening her eyes the next morning because the early air was filled with the sound of her father's coughing. Turning over uneasily, she listened as the grating noise crept under her bed and agitated the coverlet.

Next to the bed, on a chair, she eyed her stay. She only wore it each Sunday and it had been mother's. Disliking its stiffness against her body underneath her gown, Meggy was glad it was Monday so that she could safely tuck the corset away into her dresser drawer.

The coughing stopped and, breathing easier, Meggy turned onto her back. Her truckle bed stood at the foot of Hawys' fine feather bed. Hawys always rose at the crack of dawn and Meggy could now hear her rather shrill and drawn-out singing in the kitchen. Father slept with Roger in a side-room off the kitchen. He maintained that the kitchen was too cluttered and busy for him although Hawys was sure that sleeping on a cot in the kitchen would be a great deal warmer for him than the side-room. The kitchen was a room full of pewter, kettles, and skillets, with Hawys' spinning wheel round and annular in a nooked corner. The older woman had been trying to teach Meggy the intricacies and wonders of spinning, but the girl's hands stubbornly refused to convert fibers into yarn.

Stretching her fingers, Meggy sighed and sat up, swinging her feet over the edge of the small bed. It might be a very fine day indeed were it not for the dismal fact that Timothy Newham was coming to see father. Sighing again, she stood up slowly and walked over to the washbasin atop the dresser next to the

larger bed. Scrubbing her face hard to wash out the sleep, she pulled on a week dress overtop of her white shift.

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“Good morning, Meggy,” Hawys stopped singing to greet the girl’s entry into the kitchen. A large wooden spoon in her hand, she stood stirring the porridge in a kettle hanging over the hearth. She followed her salutation with “How silently you enter this day, Child.”

“I am not a child,” Meggy responded petulantly.

“I know. I know,” Hawys replied soothingly, “but I do want to braid your hair, big as you are, so come along and stand by the table after you fetch the comb from the side drawer.

Meggy obeyed. She fetched the comb and stood quietly by the table as she watched the smoke from the fire on the hearth channel up the chimney. By and by Hawys came over and began to plait Meggy’s hair.

“You are truly silent,” Hawys said once more as she put the finishing touch on the second braid, “and now that your hair is done, I would have you wash the front steps before breakfast.”

“Think you truly, Hawys,” Meggy answered as she stood twirling the left braid with her right hand, “that Father might be ill and that he might... that he might perhaps have the scrofula?”

“He has of late complained of a sore throat,” Hawys answered.

“But he could simply just have a sore throat for a while and then it will be gone. That has often been the case with me and with Roger. And I know that you have given him a tonic, and such complaints are common, are they not?”

“As well, there is a small red swelling in his neck,” Hawys said softly, hands on her aproned hips as she contemplated Meggy, “but that also is not uncommon. Indeed it could simply be a sting or some such thing. You as well as I know....”

Her discourse was interrupted by her son Roger who burst into the kitchen from the side door. Tall and gangly, he was red in the face from some sort of excitement. “I can obtain a part-time position at the

Palace of Whitehall,” he broke in on his mother’s words. “They are in need of gentleman ushers, seeing that Lent is here and that the king will begin audiences to touch the ill.”

“And what about your work for my father,” Meggy demanded, letting her braid fall down, even as she emphasized the word *my*.

“Oh, but I can do both,” the young man answered, surprised at her vehemence, “for this work at the palace is only during the healing ceremonies this Lent. I simply help usher the poor into the king’s presence and sprinkle rose water in the aisle to offset the stench these people carry. There are a number of young men who will do so. There will be a lot of people attending the ceremonies - from as far away as Russia, it is said. Besides that the work will pay.”

Meggy was not listening any longer. Her thoughts had wandered back to her father. “Father needs help all the time, Roger! You cannot be coming and going to ceremonies at the palace. You should constantly be with father and make sure he does not overwork.”

Roger looked surprised. His loose-fitting shirt was open at the neck and his collarbone protruded. “What ails you, Meggy? I am always helping him.”

“We were speaking of the scrofula,” Hawys helped him out, “for Master Burnet has a red spot in his neck....” Again she was interrupted.

“A red spot that could easily be the bite of an insect.” Meggy’s voice was shrill now and both Roger and Hawys eyed her uneasily. “An insect bite is quite likely,” Meggy repeated loudly, “and is it not so, Roger, that you ought to be in the workshop with him right now, at this very moment.”

There was a lull in the conversation. Then Roger spoke on. His voice was calm and meant to put Meggy’s fears at rest. “It is true that scrofula is called the Evil by many. It is a swollen and ulcerous condition and most pitiful to the eye. I have seen many people with it. Even now the ill are gathering in the streets awaiting the time when they will be allowed into the palace. But it is also said, and I know it to be true, that the scrofula, as well as other ills like it, often disappear of their own accord.”

“Well, father does not have it.” Meggy stamped her foot on Roger’s words as she spoke and then turned, walking past him out of the side door to her task of scrubbing the front steps.

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During the next half hour, braids swinging back and forth as she scoured the stone steps, Meggy reflected again that Hawys and Roger were both actually very kind and that she had been rude. It was Roger who irritated Meggy. He was always so sure of himself, both in his demeanor and in his words and there was no doubt that father respected his opinion. She also had to admit, as the suds flew about the steps, that Roger was a fine help to father and seemed to be learning the trade. Perhaps, she pondered on as she swabbed and brushed, she truly was jealous. But jealousy was, as preacher Baxter had often pointed out in his sermons, a foothold for the devil to come into one's heart.

Meggy and her father, as well as Hawys and Roger, divided their worship time between attending the Church of England and patronizing conventicles, even though conventicles were forbidden by law. Only five people, the law said, were allowed to meet together outside of the state church. Any larger number gathering for another church service was deemed illegal. Sometimes conventicles were held in the house of someone they knew, and at other times they were held in open fields.

Meggy paused, wringing out the scrub cloth with her hands. Even though she admired St. Mary's Church, she also liked meeting out in open spaces, hearing pastors fervently extol God's goodness, and singing in the fields with only the sky for a ceiling. Watching the water drip down the steps, she wished that worries would run away as easily as the water, for there seemed to be so many of them. The worst of them was the fear that Father might have the scrofula, but hard on its heels was the fretting, the worry that had the name of Timothy Newham, the haberdasher, attached to its label.

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After breakfast, Meggy was called into her father's workshop. "I owe Timothy Newham," he began, stopping rather abruptly and averting his face from her

anxious gaze, before continuing, "I owe Timothy Newham," he started again, "some money, Meggy. I'm sorry, but there's the truth of it."

He bent his head in such a way that she could clearly see the small red swelling in his neck. "What are we to do, Father?"

"Well," her father answered softly, thoughtfully turning over a little pewter salt-shaker in his hands, "Hawys has graciously offered to pay the sum I owe and I would like you to deliver it to him. I would rather he did not come here, Meggy."

"You want me to deliver the money to Timothy, Father?"

"Yes, Child."

"But how are we ever to repay Hawys, Father?"

"I am going to marry her, Megs."

Father only called her Megs when he was very moved and she intuitively felt she ought not to say anything which could trigger more emotions in him.

"Hawys is good to us, is she not?" she managed, "But five pounds is but a little to build a marriage on surely?" He nodded and emboldened she went on, "Do you love her, Father? Do you love her like you did mother?"

Actually Meggy was not sure whether or not her father had loved her mother. There had been many arguments between them. And the truth of it was that she had never yet heard him arguing with Hawys. But how had it come about that father owed Timothy Newham money? Timothy was a haberdasher and dealt in thread, tape, ribbons and other such things as a milliner also uses. His wares were in demand. She had been by his shop on occasion, sent by Hawys for something or other, and she had seen that the counter and the shelves in the haberdashery were crowded untidily with many things – things such as drinking horns, knives, scissors, combs, chess men, knee spurs and even girdles. Her mind had been turned topsy-turvy with the disorder in his store. There were so many items lying about that one's eyes became confused.

"Why do you owe him money,

Father?"

"He had bought some tin in Cornwall, Megs, and he sold it to me for what seemed like a decent price at the time and I just have not been able to repay what he lent me for it."

"Oh."

Roger walked into the shop right into Meggy's "oh." After looking at them for a moment, he began oiling the pewterer's wheel. The conversation fell silent. Father handed Meggy a small linen bag.

"Go, Child," he concluded their discussion and then, turning to Roger, "I have some items for you to carry to Lion's Inn."

## CHAPTER 4

It was a fine morning and Meggy enjoyed walking. Timothy Newham's haberdashery was a good stretching of the legs away but she was young and relished the long stroll using the time to both look about and to think.

Father's calling was to be a pewterer. Timothy's, on the other hand, was to be a haberdasher. *Haberdasher* – she repeated the word in her mind. It was a strange word but it was Timothy Newham's calling. And what was a calling? Calling was using one's voice but it was also something else – actually two other things.

"There is a general calling," father's voice plainly rang in her head, "for everyone. And that is a calling to conversion and holiness. Are you being called, Meggy? Are you God's child?" Father had asked her this question several times and always she had nodded in response, answering, "Yes, to be sure, Father." But father must not have been satisfied with her sincerity, because he touched on the subject again and again. Was she converted? Was she holy?

Even now as she walked the road, she pondered on the question. Truly, she did all things required of her, did she not? And did this not make her holy? She heard father's words again. "All those who come to church and sit in pews, Meggy, are not necessarily converted. To sit in a church does not mean you

have been touched by the Spirit of God, Child.”

Meggy lifted her skirts to avoid the blackish droppings of a horse straight on her path. Although she stayed close to the buildings, the filth of the streets was difficult to avoid. She was a little nervous too about the rats that scurried through the muck and grime. Of a certainty, father had told her often enough, the accumulation of waste had helped cause the Plague. If everyone

would scrub their steps, as Hawys made her clean their steps most mornings, surely the problem would be less. She lifted her skirts again. It was hard work to live and maintain a family in London.

She fell back to contemplating. “There is also a particular calling,” father’s voice continued on in her head, “for every person, Meggy. And that calling consists of the specific tasks and occupations that God places before a person in the course of his daily living. It might be

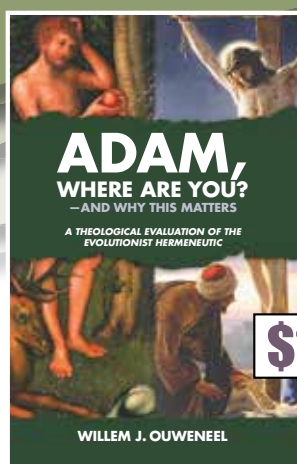
the work a person does for a living. For me that would be the work or calling of pewterer.”

“And what do you think the particular calling is for me, Father?” she had countered, leaning cozily against him as they had sat talking in front of the hearth.

He had stroked her hair as he replied, “It might be that of cooking, cleaning, listening to someone’s troubles, or smiling.”

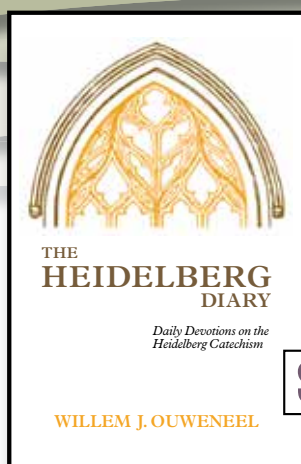
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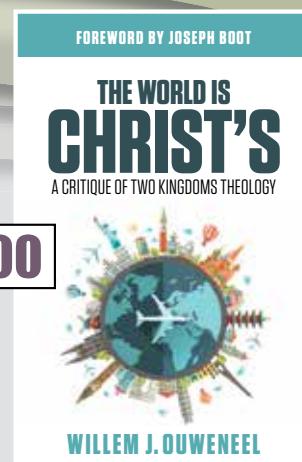
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"Smiling?" she had interrupted sitting up straight, almost laughing at the silliness of the suggestion. "Shall I stand at a booth, Father, selling smiles for ha'pennies to passersby? How could that be?"

Father had laughed as well. "You see, Daughter," he had explained, "you are good at smiling. Quite good, truth be told and God has given you smiles to bestow as a gift to others. Pastor Baxter, whom you have often heard at the conventicles," he went on, "says there is a difference between washing dishes, scrubbing steps and preaching God's Word; but as it touches on pleasing God, there is no difference at all. Do you understand this, Meggy?"

She had nodded.

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"Hello, Meggy."

All the while thinking and walking, she had almost bumped into Timothy, the haberdasher, who was standing in front of his shop window. Timothy's particular vocation, Meggy pondered on for a moment, was being a haberdasher. Of course he was also called to holiness, called to be a child of God? But he never....

"Are you dream-walking, girl?" Timothy spoke in jest as he looked approvingly at the blossoming young

girl standing in front of him. Indeed, Meggy was pleasing to the eye. Red-cheeked, shining black braids bouncing on her shoulders, clear, bright blue eyes warmly embracing her surroundings, she was a picture of health and self-assertion. Yet, at the same time, there was a shyness about her that appealed to the much older man.

"I've brought you your money, Sir," she responded hesitantly after staring at him for a moment, reaching into the deep pocket of her skirt. Pulling up the small linen bag with the five pounds, she added, "Here is the money which father owes you."

"Well, I was ready to walk to your house, but will not deny that I am happy you came here. It saves me both time and effort. Will you not come in for a minute while I make sure that all is accounted for?"

He opened the door to his shop and extended an arm downward in welcome. Although she did not want to enter, she considered that the matter ought to be settled. Passing in front of him, she entered the haberdashery. Again, as before, the cluttered mayhem of his store overwhelmed her sense of orderliness.

"Please sit for a moment," Timothy said, following her into his shop and, wiping the dust off a wooden stool.

He indicated that she should make use of it. Lifting her skirts once more, she obliged. "It's a bit messy, I own," he continued, "and I warrant, it could use the touch of a decent woman."

He eyed her for a moment before emptying the money into his right hand. Counting it, under his breath, he quickly ascertained that the coins added up to the right sum. "Do you want a receipt?" he went on to ask, "and might I also inquire if you left your father in good health this morning?"

"He's a bit poorly," she responded, before calling to mind that surely Timothy did not really care about her father's health, for if he had she would not be here now with the linen bag containing the money that he had demanded so crudely in the church foyer yesterday. "Yet he is well enough," she hastily appended.

"I've just had a consignment of lace come in," Timothy volunteered the information slowly, regarding the girl as she sat on the stool, "and I'm thinking that a bit of lace would look fetching on your dress, Meggy."

He spoke familiarly and it made her uncomfortable so that she gazed down at her hands without responding to his words.

"Well then, you must be worried about your father," he went on, "for I call to mind that it is as you say, he did look a bit unwell the last few times I saw him.

"He is well enough, Sir," Meggy defended, albeit in a flat tone, eyeing both the floor and the nearby door, hoping that the receipt would be forthcoming soon.

"I expect that you've heard that the king will be coming to Whitehall later this week."

"Yes, I have."

"Indeed, he's come for the healing ceremony during this Lent. I am glad that you have heard of it." Timothy's eyes rested so long on Meggy that she nodded and he spoke on. "I'm surprised you're not more animated by this. The practice of healing by a reigning monarch such as King Charles II assuredly is common

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knowledge and I've no doubt you'll be wanting to take your father."

"No, Sir."

But Meggy's voice was unsure and Timothy was quick to latch onto it. He went on capturing her imagination with his words. "The practice of the 'healing touch' was first recorded centuries ago by the historian William of Malmesbury, who related the story of a barren wife. This wife, whose back was covered with ulcers, dreamt she was commanded to go to King Edward for a cure. So she traveled to court. The king, who much desired to help the poor woman, touched her back with water and her ulcers began to heal within a week's time. Not only that, but upon returning home, she was delivered of twins within that same year."

Timothy stopped his narrative and considered Meggy's face. During the short discourse, he noted that she had become fascinated hanging onto his every word. Pleased and flattered, he continued, his voice lowered as if confiding a secret. "There have been other tales as well, including one in which King Edward carried a beggar on his back. The beggar was a cripple. The king carried him into St. Peter's church at Westminster after which the beggar was cured."

"Is this true?" Meggy asked, eyes round, "I have always been taught that only God can effect a change in disease, so is it not false to say that earthly kings are able to effect cures?"

Toffee-nosed, Timothy smiled down at her. "These ceremonies are extremely religious in nature. God gives kings this gift of healing as proof positive that they are chosen by Him to rule. So you need not worry about doing something that is wrong. Now if you are worried about your father's health..." He left the sentence unfinished and seeing her face become eager with hope, he continued in a scholarly tone, "Well then, I would advise you to look into going to Whitehall tomorrow."

"Whitehall? Me?"

"You speak, Meggy, as if you could not go there. But you could, you know. There are many who will go there."



"James Burnet was a pewterer. Although only a trifter in the trade, there was much call for the items he fashioned, items such as inkwells, mugs, badges, and candlesticks."

"But Father is not ... and I'm sure he wouldn't go. Besides I don't even know how I could get in." She stopped and shook her head before going on. "And I don't even know if what you are saying, Timothy Newham, is true. It could all be false and you could be telling me a tale."

"There were years, it is true, that kings did not touch anyone. And that is probably why you, being some years younger than I am, are not as familiar with it as I am. During the time of Oliver Cromwell the practice was not in vogue at all. But now that a true king rules England once again, the touching

ceremony has come back as indeed it should. Parish registers are kept and miracles have been recorded. My uncle is one as who keeps such registers. That is how I know."

"I do not know if I ought to believe you or not." Meggy's voice was unsure.

"Well," Timothy responded, looking with pleasure at the roses appearing on Meggy's cheeks in her agitation, "all I can tell you is that I can let you have a ticket so that you can enter Whitehall to listen to the ceremonies that will take place tomorrow. If you like what you hear, perhaps the day thereafter..." He left the sentence dangling.

"How is it that you can get such a ticket?"

"I told you that my uncle, Robert Newham, is a registrar and he is one who gives out tickets and he has permitted me to sell them to such as are in need of healing."

"Tickets?" Meggy responded, "and pray tell how much do these said tickets cost? And the truth of it is that I myself am not in need of healing."

"It would not cost you anything, for I will gladly give you such a ticket."

"You would?"

"It makes me glad to see a daughter care so much for her father as you do for yours, Meggy."

"He is not really ill, you know," Meggy responded rather feebly, "but it would do no harm...." She stopped before she added softly, "He would not go though. I know he would not."

"Perhaps," Timothy suggested softly, "you might attend with me tomorrow, might attend the first ceremony at Whitehall to see for yourself what happens. Then, I am sure you would be persuaded of the reality of the cures effected by the king's touch. And being persuaded, you could easily convince your father to go the second day."

"He is not convinced easily," Meggy responded, all the time seeing the swelling in her father's neck grow.

"But you could go with me," Timothy let the words dangle like a carrot in front of her, before he went on "and see for yourself what happens."

Meggy did not respond.

"It is not an evil thing, Meggy. Gentlemen Ushers prepare the banqueting hall over which the king will preside. These ushers usually spray a perfume of sorts so that the stench of the ill will not overcome either him or bystanders. Next the Yeomen of the Guard bring in the sick, one by one, and they stand in the aisle before the king's place of sitting. It is after this that the king enters and sits down on a chair of state. His personal confessor, the Clerk of the Closet, will be standing at his side. The Prayer Book is placed on a cushion close by. You see, Meggy, it is all very religious and honors God."

The girl said nothing, but her eyes were brimful of curiosity and wonder.

"The Clerk's assistant," Timothy went on, "has gold medals or 'touch-pieces' hanging on ribbons on his arm. There are also two royal surgeons nearby waiting to escort the sick from the aisle right up to his majesty so that he can touch them. He strokes their necks, you see, in a loving way as they kneel in front of him, prior to their being healed." He stopped his oration and Meggy was torn. The words sounded so very good, so very real and so very loving.

"I will go," she suddenly spoke decisively, "I will go with you, Timothy Newham, if you will be so good as to take me so that I can see and hear this firsthand. But I must hide this from Father and Hawys for surely they would think it nonsense. They are not overfond of the king, as you must know, but they do think that prayer...."

She stopped and looked at the cluttered counter. So indeed was her heart cluttered, for there were so many things in there that she could not quite see straight. There was something askew with what Timothy was saying, but she could not manage to put her finger on it. "Whether you are well or sick, Meggy," she could hear father say, "'tis the Great God Who brings your state about. He is the One Who prevents sickness or brings it." She nodded to herself. Yes, here was a bit of uncluttering. Again she heard her father say "Sometimes we are made ill, or someone we know is made ill, to test our faith and patience, Meggy."

"Well, Meggy," Timothy's voice interrupted her thoughts, "if you are of a mind to go with me to Whitehall you must be here at about one of the clock tomorrow. And perhaps the next day you can persuade your father to come with you. Be here promptly and I will be glad to be of service to you and your father. What can it hurt, after all, just to go and have a look?"

This was true. Just looking and listening. Where could be the harm in that? She slowly slid down from the stool and stood directly in front

of Timothy. He could possibly be an instrument in the hands of God to give her opportunity to help make father better. "I will be here at one of the clock tomorrow," she returned, walking past him out of the shop, not noting that the corners of Timothy's mouth had turned up, exposing square, yellow teeth in a half-smile - a triumphant smile.

## CHAPTER 5

Meggy had to tell an untruth at the evening meal in order to be able to leave the house the next afternoon. Allyson, the chandler's daughter, she mentioned to Hawys, her mouth full of pottage, had asked her help in making soap because her mother was ill with theague.

Roger stared at her in a strange way, a sad way almost. It made her feel rather awkward and she swallowed her mouthful with difficulty, because it seemed as if Roger knew that she was lying and that he was disappointed in her. But father smiled a broad smile and commented that this was most kind of her and of course she should go and help her friend.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bells marked the one o'clock just as Meggy rounded the corner of the haberdasher's street the next day. Timothy, who was just closing the door of his shop, saw her coming. A smug look appeared on his face. Turning, he offered her his arm. She stopped short, confused by the gesture.

"Come, come," he said, "you are young and must be escorted. I promise I shall take good care of you."

When she still made no motion to take his arm, he scratched his head with his left hand. She marked the dirty fingernails on it. Then he remarked that he had forgotten something of import in his shop which she might find appealing. Stepping back, he unlocked the door of his store.

"What have you forgotten?" she asked.

"Oh, something you might find interesting," he replied, "Come in and I'll show you."

A tad uncomfortable, but curiosity overcoming her sense of acceptable behavior, Meggy crossed over the threshold once more stepping towards the counter. Timothy closed the door behind them. The click of the latch and the rather musty smell of the place straight away awoke her to the impropriety of the situation. Timothy moved a few paces into the shop. Then he sidled back and stood in front of the door. Particles of dust settled down on the counter. Suddenly extremely anxious, she stood stock still, wishing with all her heart that she had stayed outside. Timothy inched a bit closer.

"You know," he mouthed, "you're a very pretty young lady."

Meggy stepped sideways. Even though he was still some four feet away, she could smell his sour breath.

"So what I forgot to collect was a reward for helping you get into Whitehall," he went on in a rough whisper, "and that reward is just one little kiss."

"No!" she whimpered. Her voice

had lost its ability to speak loudly, her heart pounded and her hands had turned clammy with fear. She continued pathetically, "Open the door and let me out. I don't want you to...." She did not finish for he had moved forward, had put his hands around her waist and was pulling her towards himself. It was at this point that her voice regained its strength and a high-pitched piercing sound shook the objects on the counter. It flew through the cracks in the wall out into the street. Straightaway the hinges of the door almost flew off their frame as it was flung open. Roger's lanky frame stood tall and forceful in the opening and Meggy had never been so happy to see him.

"What's going on here?" he yelled, shoving Timothy into the counter, knocking bows, ribbons, pins, needles and lace onto the ground.

The girl immediately slipped past the men, and ran down the street. Her cap was askew and her cheeks were crimson. She did not know where she was going and she did not care. All she knew was

that she had to get away. What had she been thinking? What had she done!? Passersby stared. She neither noted nor cared. Finally, out of breath and underneath the overhang of some roofs, she stopped. What a ninny she had been! And what should she do now? She trembled with the horror at the thought of what might have happened. A few minutes later Roger caught up with her.

"Meggy!! It's all right. Timothy Newham won't be bothering you again."

Without looking up, she began to cry. Roger's arms folded around her and her head leaned heavily against his bony shoulder. "He's a beast," she sobbed, "He's horrible. He ...."

"I know," Roger soothed, "but you ought not to have gone in there, Meggy. It's a good thing I was due to go to Whitehall and happened to pass the shop. To tell you the truth, I followed you. Both Mother and I were worried. We knew that Allyson's mother was not ill. So we wondered..."

She pulled away, her tear-stained face angry. "But I went to Timothy Newham

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for father, Roger. He was going to take me to the ceremony. I thought that if the king was giving out the 'healing touch' about which Timothy seemed to know so much, then I ought to find out as much as I could about it. I thought that father ought to... ought to have a chance to... and Timothy said he had tickets."

Roger's face became grim. "Surely you didn't believe that chicanery. Timothy Newham is a deceitful man, Meggy. As well, he and the king are both lechers. The king wants to be popular with the people. He wants them to like him. They call him the 'Merry Monarch' but he wants to hide the fact that he is... is...." Roger almost choked on his words, incredulous that she would fall for the jiggery-pokery of such a fraudulent royal ceremony.

"But you," Meggy countered, wiping her face with the back of her hand as she spoke, "would work at Whitehall at this ceremony and would thereby help people enter deceit, if what you say is

true."

"Yes," Roger conceded, "to make some money to help your father and yourself and, of course, my mother. But maybe you are right and I ought not to have such a job." He stood for a moment, gazing down at her, and then repeating, "Yes, I ought not to have taken the job. I was wrong. Nevertheless, I think I will take you to the palace so that you can see for yourself what it is about."

"You would take me there?"

"Not so that you could take your father there, but so that you can see that you ought not to trust in men, Meggy."

She was silent and hung her head. Taking pity on her, Roger went on a little less vehement.

"You have heard good preachers often enough, Megs. Remember, their message. We, all of us, are diseased and full of infirmities. This is not such a strange thing here in this world. If your father is indeed ill, and God forbid that it is so, we will use such means as He

provides for healing. But God does not use the wiles of such men as Charles II to heal folks. The ill vagabonds that flock to him, wretched creatures such as I see in the streets, only come because Charles provides them with a coin, a 'touch piece.' That is what they call such a coin. Most sell this coin as soon as they leave the palace and use it to buy food or who knows what. Some perhaps really and truly believe that Charles is sent by God to heal them. But would God use black to make white? I think not! Oh, Megs, wake up and trust God!"

Roger had unconsciously used her father's pet name for her and she blushed. He continued with a last admonition. "And do you really think that your father would go with you to such a ceremony as would belie his faith?"

## CHAPTER 6

There were many beggars lined up by the gate at Whitehall. A host of them



"Hawys' spinning wheel, round and annular, was tucked away in a nooked corner."

had swellings and lesions in their necks. Meggy tried not to stare and pressed close to Roger as they walked past them. Surely Father, she thought, was not as badly off as these people. Actually, he was not like them at all. She came close to rubbing shoulders with one ill wretch who had yellowish fluid oozing down the side of his legs. Her stomach turned.

"Come, Meggy," Roger said, "don't stop and don't look so scared."

"I'm not scared," she answered in a small voice, even as she eyed an emaciated woman with an ulcerated mass just above her shoulders. Next to the woman, a young boy lay convulsed on the ground, his mother desperately trying to pick him up. A blind man stood behind them.

"Come on, Meggy," Roger repeated, "walk quicker."

The disfigured disabled her feet. Was the king, she wondered, really such a wonder-worker as to be able to perform miracles? Such a wonder-worker as to heal these unfortunates? Did he have such a closeness to God as to cure these desolates and weebegones? Was father a such a one?

"We are nearing the Banqueting Hall," Roger said, "and that is the place where the king will come to touch. One by one these poor creatures will be brought before him. They will kneel before the king and he will stroke their necks."

Meggy shuddered. She knew not whether it was the thought of the king actually touching the misery around her that caused her to shudder, or whether it was the thought that it seemed blasphemous on the king's part to think that he had power over illness.

They had reached the entrance to the palace and Roger pulled her off to the side. The queue, of which they were not a part, lay both behind and next to them. It was filled with crutches, bandages and disfigured persons. All of them were holding certificates verifying that they would be allowed into the king's banqueting hall.

A man hobbled by to the right of them. He was disfigured in an appalling way. Growths of a most horrible kind hung from his neck, dripping both

*James Burnet was a pewterer. Although only a trifler in the trade, there was much call for the items he fashioned...*

greenish pus and blood. In his dirty hands he clutched a crumpled ticket of admission. The ticket had been, if what Timothy had told her was true, signed and sealed by a minister or church warden declaring that he had never before been "touched" by the king. Despite her revulsion, Meggy ached for the man. He appeared so very ill. Yet there was hope in the very manner he put his feet down, put them down steadily towards the entrance of the palace. Mesmerized, she could not take her eyes of him. It was almost his turn to be admitted. A Yeoman of the King's guard, one who conducted all the ill to a line attended by the surgeon, was also watching him and Meggy read loathing on the guard's face for this particular man. But the man himself noted nothing. His whole being was simply fixed on entering the banqueting hall.

"Hey, you! Let me see your certificate." The Yeoman's voice was loud enough so that Meggy could hear each word. Startled, the deformed man handed over his paper to the guard who, after scanning it, threw it to the ground.

"It's forged," he announced in a gruff voice, "and I can tell because of the blood on it. You think that you can enter by smearing blood on a piece of paper and not be caught?! You were a fool to think it! Away with you!"

Meggy heard a sob catch the man's throat as he watched his paper flutter to the earth. His face ruckled and his eyes, sunken in their sockets, produced tears. What a poor wretch he was!!

And it suddenly came to her that she was such a wretch too. And it came to her also that surely this was not the way it should be and not the way it was. Had she not but recently heard pastor Baxter say that you could not let yourself in at the gate of heaven, and that you

could not pay your own way into the banqueting hall of Jesus? She had not really understood the words at the time but she understood them now. Pastor Baxter's voice rang clearly in her head as she continued to behold the spurned man. And she beheld herself. "Take heed to yourself," she heard pastor Baxter say, "for you have a depraved nature. You have sinful inclinations, Meggy! You are verily ugly in nature. And think you that you can come into heaven by your own strength?"

Meggy sighed a deep sigh. She recalled her jealousy; she knew that this very day she had lied to her father and to Hawys; and she remembered that her curiosity had almost caused her bodily harm but less than one hour back. Indeed, she was a wretch! Of a certainty, at this very moment she had lost her desire to enter Whitehall and kneel before Charles II. But she did have a deep desire to worship. Indeed, her heart was bowed low within her. It all depended, she thought, whom the king was. To be sure, was it not so that no one needed a certificate to come into the true King's presence. All that was needed was the blood of the Lamb of God. "Therefore, ... we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus ..." Was that not what pastor Baxter had spoken on the last time she heard him at a conventicle?

Roger poked at her arm. "Meggy, what are you staring at? Have you seen enough, girl?"

She smiled at him. It was a tremulous smile. It was a contented smile. It was the smile God had bestowed on her as a particular calling.

"I have Roger." 

# Surprising Similarities:

## SHRUBS AND WHALES, TREES AND SNAILS

by Margaret Helder

In his fabulous nonsense poem, *The Walrus and the Carpenter* (1871), Lewis Carroll groups cabbages and kings together. Upon reflection, we might ask what cabbages and kings have in common. Probably nothing.

Nevertheless, there are some cases in nature where similar groupings might call for a different answer. Let me riddle you this: what do marine cone snails have in common with a tall tree growing in tropical Australia? And what do sperm whales have in common with a desert shrub?

Don't be quick to confidently reply "nothing"! The true answer is, "You would be surprised!"

### TOXIC TREE AND SAVAGE SNAIL

The tree in question is the Australian stinging tree *Dendrocnide excelsa* which grows 35 m (115 ft) tall. Its stems and leaves are covered with longish hairs a quarter inch long in a layer so thick it looks like velvet. But looks can be deceiving. These hairs are actually hollow tapering tubes with a small bulb at the tip. If anyone or anything happens to brush one or more of these trichomes/hairs, the victim receives an excruciatingly painful sting which can cause symptoms that last for days or even weeks.

There are two features of this event that interest us, the delivery of the sting, and the nature of the poison.

The sting mechanism is certainly interesting. According to a recent article, the needle-shaped hairs

(trichomes) "act as hypodermic needles that, upon contact with skin, inject specific pharmacological mediators contained within the trichome fluid..."<sup>1</sup>

A leaf that injects? That might seem a bit far-fetched. After all, how can a hollow tube inject anything? To answer that, a different study points out that it all comes from the complex design of the trichome (hair).

Except for a flexible base, the rest of the hair is a hollow tube whose walls are made very stiff with calcium carbonate and silica. The interior of the hollow tube is filled with a cocktail of nasty

compounds. The scene is set for the following event:

"The stinging cells are essentially hollow from the base to the bulbous tip and break off with the slightest touch. Breakage creates a sharp edge connected to a large liquid reservoir similar to a hypodermic needle. Pressure applied to the trichome [the hair] will compress the bladder-like base and eject the irritant fluid from the tip in an action analogous to the plunger in a hypodermic syringe."<sup>2</sup>



Its stems and leaves are covered with longish hairs a quarter inch long in a layer so thick it looks like velvet.

Picture by Norbert Fischer and used under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.



Concerning that process, the authors of that paper declare: “Stinging hairs – even as mechanical structures – are not simple cells with mineralized walls, but stunning examples of unique plant microengineering.”<sup>3</sup> That certainly sounds like design!

The Australian stinging tree is classified in the same plant family as common stinging nettles. The nettle characteristics are very similar to the tree except for size (nettles are much smaller), and the nature of the irritant, which is not dangerous in the case of the nettles.

### SINISTER SIMILARITY

But finally getting back to our riddle, we now discover that the mode of delivery of the nasty chemicals in the tree (and the nettles) is very similar to what we see in some animals such as poisonous spiders and marine cone snails. Cone snails are dangerous predators that we see in tropical seas. Up to 22 cm or 9 inches long, these creatures hunt worms, other mollusks or fish. Some of the 500 species exhibit toxin so potent that it can kill people. Interestingly, these nasty cone snails inject the poison into their victims by a syringe-like action similar to that of the stinging tree.

However, it is in the appearance and action of the poisons that the similarity between stinging trees and cone snails becomes particularly clear. As a recent article declares:

“Our results provide an intriguing example of inter-kingdom convergent evolution of animal and plant venoms with shared modes of delivery [as we have seen], molecular structure, and pharmacology.”<sup>4</sup>

Translating this into ordinary English, they are telling us that the poisons produced by the stinging tree and the cone snail are very similar to each other. The term “convergence” communicates the idea that these highly unusual products come from totally different sources. How the tree and the marine snail might have obtained these products through an evolutionary process, is unknown. Hence the term convergence suggests that or-



The poisons produced by the stinging tree and the marine cone snail are very similar to each other.

ganisms converged on the same obscure choice for unknown reasons by unknown processes. Despite the obscurity of the explanation, most scientists are sure that there must be an evolutionary explanation.

The most remarkable aspect of the unexpected similarity between a tree and a marine snail is in the nature of the poisons that they produce. From the variety of compounds in the venomous liquids, the team found that the most effective products in the tree were “mini proteins” of only 36 amino acids long. Despite the fact that the molecule is so short, the order of amino acids is unlike any other protein known in any other organism. Because the molecules are so unique to the stinging tree, the scientists called them gympietides (after the name for this tree in the local Gubbi Gubbi language).

Despite the fact that the mini protein is unique, its weird folding pattern or shape is similar to toxins found in some spiders and in cone snails. Another term for this molecular shape is “inhibitor cystine knot” (or aptly ICK or knottin). Apparently, the amino acid chain folds in on itself a couple of times and sulphur atoms in one amino acid link up with another amino acid to hold the structure

in a tight knot.<sup>5</sup>

The action of the gympietides (the knot) involves its victim’s nerves. If you recall your high school biology you’ll remember that the transmission of a signal along a nerve involves sodium ion gates that open in the nerve cell membrane allowing sodium to rush into the nerve cell. As the signal proceeds down the nerve cell, the previously opened gates slam shut so that the cell can return to its former condition in preparation for receiving a new signal.

What the gympietide poison does is open the sodium gates *and then doesn’t allow them to close or recover*. Thus the scientific team reports that:

“The intense pain sensations and [nerve cell] reflex flare observed after [poisoning] by *Dendrocnide* species are consistent with the potent activity of the gympietides at [sodium voltage] channels [in the nerve cell membrane].”<sup>6</sup>

While the order of amino acids in the protein chain from the stinging tree’s toxin has not been observed anywhere else, nevertheless the folding pattern confers on the molecule an effect similar to some spider and cone snail toxins.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the study authors conclude concerning the gympietides:

“Their structural similarity and a delivery mode identifiable as envenomation exemplify cross-kingdom convergence of venoms.”<sup>8</sup>

The scientists can scarcely contain their surprise when they reflect that these close similarities in design are found between members of different kingdoms. Of course, plants and animals could scarcely be more different from each other in appearance, capabilities and lifestyle needs. Whatever could lead to evolutionary processes which start so far apart but end up with a product so similar?

As to whether there could be an evolutionary reason for a plant to produce animal venoms, the scientists declare that the issue remains “unclear.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed it seems obvious that an evolutionary answer will never be found. Rather, the explanation is clearly that these were choices made by God. In our fallen world there are many agents of death and disease. That is not how it was supposed to be. Nevertheless, these agents demonstrate the same intricate characteristics as the rest of the Creation.

## WHALE AND SHRUB

If similar compounds produced by a tropical tree and a marine snail are difficult to explain from an evolutionary point of view, how about liquid waxes from a whale and a desert shrub?

According to an article from *University of Washington Magazine*, up to 1972 when the Endangered Species Act was passed in the United States, in North America alone up to 55 million pounds of sperm whale oil were used to protect automobile transmissions. According to the article, thanks to protection from whale oil, prior to 1972, car transmissions seldom failed. Within three years of the moratorium on whale killings, the rate of car transmission failures in the US increased 800%. Thus, the article declares: “Because the automatic transmission is the second-most expensive component in a car and the most complex to



repair, total sales for transmission shops exceeded \$50 billion by the 1990s.”<sup>10</sup> The problem is that the sperm whale liquid wax was just the right product to provide for excellent lubrication in car transmissions and there was no other similar product available.

The oil of the sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* is a liquid wax. The characteristics which made this product so perfect for lubrication included the following. For a start and most uniquely, this wax is liquid at room temperatures. Also it is viscous (much thicker than water) but slippery and not sticky. And most importantly, this viscosity does not change much with greatly increased temperature and pressure such as we see in running motors. For example, if you were expecting a product to lubricate your engine, but the product became much more fluid with increasing temperature and pressure, your engine would soon seize up. Also helpful are the facts that liquid wax does not readily oxidize (breakdown) and it flows in cold weather rather than congealing.

Deeply concerned that they had lost an exclusive and useful product, the automobile industry began desperately to search for alternatives. And they soon

found one in seeds of a desert shrub, the *Simmondsia chinensis*, or jojoba. A professional oil chemists’ journal in 1979 declared: “The protected but still endangered sperm whale and desert-grown nuts from jojoba are the only major sources of liquid waxes.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, an article declared in 2009: “Jojoba oil is very similar to that of spermaceti for which it is an excellent substitute.”<sup>12</sup> Later in 2017 scientists writing in *Biological Research* describe jojoba oil as a “high-viscosity liquid-oil that differs from any other oil produced by plants”<sup>13</sup> so that “The jojoba oil plant is a promising alternative to threatened sperm whale oil.”<sup>14</sup> So, the world did an about-face and focused their attention on the desert instead of the sea.

## SLICK SIMILARITY

So why are these oils, from two such different sources, so similar and otherwise so unusual? The secret of these oils is their chemical identity as *liquid waxes*. Without embarking on a crash course in organic chemistry, we find that most organic oils are fats. Fats involve long chain fatty acids linking up with a glycerol molecule. Glycerol has only three carbon atoms, but each of them is usually con-


*The intriguing issue is why two such different organisms happen to exhibit this highly unusual chemistry...*

nected with a long chain fatty acid. This makes quite a complicated molecule, like a glove with three very long fingers.

Liquid waxes are totally different. A moderately short chain fatty acid links with a similar molecule which ends with an alcohol grouping instead of an acid. So, we just have one straight chain of carbons in a liquid wax. For whale oil liquid waxes, we generally see 28 to 32 carbons.<sup>15</sup> As organic compounds go, these are small molecules. For jojoba, the liquid waxes are a little longer, from 38 carbons to 46 carbons.<sup>16</sup>

The commercial exploitation of jojoba liquid waxes is not totally straightforward. The oil is found in the seeds (up to 50% by weight), but less than half of the shrubs actually produce seeds. For some reason there seems to be a bias to grow more male plants than female plants and one cannot identify the female plants until they flower, several years after germination. Although the plants tolerate quite terrible desert growing conditions, the flowers don't always set seed well. Altogether jojoba liquid is very expensive to produce. Nowadays we see mostly synthetic products of jojoba oil for automotive uses.

The intriguing issue is why two such different organisms happen to exhibit this highly unusual chemistry. Evolutionists would say that this capability came about by chance. Since no other organisms display this capability, it is obvious that these choices were not a case of the organisms needing these waxes for survival. It appears that the liquid wax does enhance germination of the jojoba seeds. Of course, whales don't care about that. Several explanations have been proposed to explain the large amount of liquid wax in sperm whale heads. There certainly was no common condition encouraging the development of an unusual chemical product in these two creatures.

We see rather God's whimsical choices in conferring this valuable product on two such different creatures. At this point it seems appropriate to give thanks for the fascinating beauty that we see among living creatures of all types. We also see that diversity and unexpected complexity confer a richness on the Creation which never ceases to comfort us that God is in control. 

*Dr. Margaret Helder is the President of the Creation Science Association of Alberta which has just published an intriguing new book called "Wonderful and Bizarre Life Forms in Creation" which you can learn more about at [Create.ab.ca](http://Create.ab.ca).*

## ENDNOTES

1. Edward K. Gilding *et al.* 2020. Neurotoxic peptides from the venom of the giant Australian stinging tree. *Science Advances* 6: September 16 pp. 1-9. See p. 1.
2. Adeel Mustafa *et al.* 2018. Stinging hair morphology and wall biomineralization across five plant families. *American Journal of Botany* 105 (7): 1109-1122. See p. 1115.
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5. For people who like chemistry, the amino acid cysteine ends in a sulphur atom. And the cystine is formed from 2 cysteine residues joined end to end through the sulphur atoms (disulphide bond). Cystine is formed by linking cysteine residues through their sulphur atoms across different parts of the loop. In a knot, there are two cystine molecules connecting different parts of the chain and another in a different direction which ensures that the knot does not fall apart.]
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# CHRISTIANS AND SAME-SEX ATTRACTION

by Chris deBoer

I am a Christian.  
I am still a sinner.

We could add a whole host of other sentences to describe me, too, but these two would encapsulate the others, I think. For example, I am a Christian and sinful dad; I am a Christian and sinful husband; I am a Christian and sinful employee, etc. I am a Christian, by God's grace; I am a sinner, in need of a Saviour.

But if I have been redeemed, if I am Christ's, why then does sin still cling to me? In the Heidelberg Catechism we confess we are "freed from the power of the devil" (Lord's Day 13) and our old nature is dead and buried so that sin no longer reigns in us, (Lord's Day 16). So why then am I still a sinner? Why do I still do the things that I do not want to do?

There are two realities working in our lives at the same time (Lord's Day 21):

1. The reality that God, because of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins nor my sinful nature against which I have to struggle all my life

2. He will graciously grant me the righteousness of Christ that I may never come into condemnation

This is true of all true Christians. We will struggle against our sinful nature all of our lives. There is no escaping it until we pass away.

This, then, must also be true for those who struggle with same-sex attraction: being tempted to sin in this way belongs to our sinful nature and can be a life-long struggle for many Christians.

## MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANITY'S POISONOUS RESPONSE

So if this struggle with sin has been a constant through all time, why is it now that the struggle with same-sex attraction has taken on a life of its own within Christendom? Isn't it because it has taken on such a significant position in the world? Over the past 150 years, sexuality has become increasingly part of individual identity.

So how is Christendom contending with this issue? How are we explain-

ing to the world, God's thoughts on our sexuality and our identity? As you might expect compromising churches are doing what compromising churches do. I will begin by outlining two of their responses.

### 1. Qchristian

There are a number of so-called ministries teaching that Christians can fully embrace an LGBTQ lifestyle and remain faithful Christians. One such ministry is Qchristian, and in a confessional-type document they ask and answer a number of questions that give a summary of some of their main positions:

- Does God affirm LGBTQ+ identities and gender-expansive identities?

Yes

- Does God affirm same-gender sexual relationships?

Yes

# There are a number of so-called ministries teaching that Christians can fully embrace an LGBTQ lifestyle and remain faithful Christians.

- Who are members of our “Side A” community?

*LGBTQ+ Christians who affirm both LGBTQ+ identity and same-gender sex for various personal and/or theological reasons*

- Who are members of our “Side B” community?

*LGBTQ+ Christians who affirm LGBTQ+ identity and who also are committed to refraining from same-gender sex for various personal and/or theological reasons.*

- What is “Side X” or “Ex-Gay” theology?

*This is dangerous and disproven theology that alleges that LGBTQ+ identity can and/or should be changed by God. Q Christian counters this theology...*

These questions and answers help us understand some of the main issues at stake. The claims they make are quite outrageous.

To begin, the insistence that God affirms any sexual identities other than male and female, is very difficult to align with Scripture. In fact, there is some evidence that in Christ the only real identifier we need to consider is that we belong to Him (Gal. 3:28). Either we are followers of Christ, or we are not.

When we first learn about marriage, we are taught that a “man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). There is nothing in Scripture that changes this concept of marriage. Throughout Scripture, Israel is described as the Bride of God (Is. 54:5, Ez. 16:8-14, Jer. 31:32);

the church as the Bride of Christ (John 3:29, 2 Cor. 1:2, Rev. 19:7-9). Male and female again and again.

Familiar as we are with the ways Scriptures can be twisted, we can perhaps imagine how, through theological gymnastics, some would argue that God does not *forbid* same-sex physical relationships, which Matthew Vine does in his book *God and the Gay Christian*. But they are going even further here, insisting that God *affirms* these relationships, and it really is hard to fathom how, no matter how extensive the squinting or editing they might do to Scripture, they can find any examples of that.

We are introduced here to the *Side A* and *Side B* groups that both affirm Christian sexual identity. Many orthodox Christians would not identify a Christian by his temptations, weaknesses, or sins but that is exactly what both *Side A* and *Side B* Christians do. The *Side B* Christians, however, would agree with us that the practice of same-sex physical relationships is forbidden by Scripture. Unfortunately, holding to the *Side B* position seems to lead to an eventual affirmation of *Side A*; at a conference in Chicago where these two sides were to meet together, *Side A* had over 1100 representatives while *Side B* only had about 46.

Most of our readers would be considered “Side X” by the *Qchristian* community. Of course, our position is that temptation for same-sex physical relationships has similarities to the temptation for opposite-sex physical relationships. Single people who desire opposite-sex physical intimacy have the same calling to purity as those struggling with same-sex attraction. “God’s grace is sufficient” (2 Cor. 12:9) is not a band-aid solution to help our struggling brothers and sisters, but it is a promise from our faithful Father: despite our struggle, God’s grace is our sure

confidence. So, even though we cannot be certain that sexual temptation and desires of any kind will be changed by God in this life, we can know that such sexual temptation does not define us. Our identity is not our sin; we belong to Christ!

## 2. Reformation Project

Another organization is even more dangerous in its approach. Since *Qchristian* is “progressive” it may not have much direct impact or reach into conservative Christian churches. However, that cannot be said of the *Reformation Project*.

This organization, led by Matthew Vines (mentioned earlier), seeks to reform evangelical, conservative churches. They suggest that their work is similar to the work of Luther and other Reformers. The irony is sharp. When one reads Vines’ book, quotations from John Calvin, C.S. Lewis, John Chrysostom, and others are sprinkled throughout.

But Vines pulls threads through his book that do not tie together. As just one example, the chapter on celibacy is quite strong even as its application is quite wrong. We would agree with Vines that celibacy is not commanded or even, generally, considered the better way, but we would vehemently disagree with him that such a conclusion opens the way for those struggling with same-sex attraction to participate in marriage. This approach to Scripture is very dangerous because it sounds so pious but is so blasphemous.

The *Reformation Project* outlines a *Brief Biblical Case for LGBTQ Inclusion*. The 10 principles are examples of pious sounding dangerously blasphemous teaching. For the purposes of time and space I’ll share and respond only to the first of them.

1. Experience of sound Christian teaching should show good fruit, not bad fruit

“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is

cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them” – Matt. 7:16-20.

Further on into their site they then list the fruit they think results from opposition to same-sex intimacy:

....Condemnation of same-sex relationship have created crushing burden of shame on countless LGBTQ Christians’ lives, fostering alienation from God, the church, and family. According to a landmark 2009 study, when families reject their LGBTQ children, their children are 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide, 5.9 times more likely to have high levels of depression, and 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs than LGBTQ children who have supportive families.

A 2018 study found that while religiosity helped to protect against suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among heterosexual youth, it was associated with significantly higher rates of suicidal thought and suicide attempts among gay, lesbian, and questioning youth. Suicide rates are highest among transgender people; 41% of transgender adults in the United States have attempted suicide in their lifetime, compared to only 1.6% of the overall population.

Do we see the logic used? They quote Matt. 7:16-20, but it is when we add verse 15 that the irony becomes all the more clear: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” Matthew Vines dresses in sheep’s clothing, imitating the bleating of sheep, but serves as a ravenous wolf. He wants to serve as a shepherd to Christians struggling with sexual identity, but true sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd, and His voice is not being echoed by Vines.

When we read the above description and statistics we can see how *The Reformation Project* determines good fruit and bad fruit – if we do not affirm the sexual identity and orientation of Christians in their struggles the fruit is bad, that is, greater rates of suicide and self-harm. If we do affirm them, the fruit is better with far fewer episodes of attempted suicide and self-harm. Of course, logically if we affirm any sin, the

sinner may feel better about him/herself... but then they would never echo the words of King David in Psalms 32:

“For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.”

As long as the sinner does not acknowledge his sinfulness but rather delights in it, and has others delight in it, too, there will be no repentance. *The Reformation Project* perverts Scripture to permit LGBTQ lifestyles which God hates. It is so similar to the temptation of the devil in the Garden of Eden; Vines and his supporters are asking Christians, “Did God really say...” and suggesting that faithful churches have had it completely wrong from the beginning.

*The Reformation Project* and *QChristian* are providing false compassion and comfort to brothers and sisters struggling with same-sex attraction. There has to be a better biblical way.

### A BETTER WAY

The church of Christ is filled with sinning saints. Every day each one of us needs the Holy Spirit’s powerful work of sanctification in our life because apart from the redeeming work of Christ and the powerful work of the Spirit, we would all be dead in our sins. This is true for those of us who are struggling with pornography, greed, covetousness, same-sex attraction, gambling, excessive drinking, or whatever it might be.

At the same time, we recognize that society’s insistence on identifying us by our sexual desires has taken root and developed fruit in the secular world and that makes sexual sins and temptations all the more challenging. The powerful sexual urges that well up in a person as they are growing up will no doubt be of considerable struggle for those with same-sex attraction, as it is for others. Nevertheless, just as single Christians who experience opposite-sex attraction must remain pure and abide by the word of God, so also those who struggle with same-sex physical attraction must resist the temptation. Nevertheless, having no hope to fulfill

*We need to ensure that our criticism and critique of sinful lifestyles is seasoned with salt, garnered in grace.*

those urges can remain a true and real disappointment and loss for those with same-sex attraction.

Therefore, the church also needs to be gracious and compassionate with each other, as members of the Body of Christ. We need to be living out Philippians 2:3, “Do nothing from selfish ambition, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” Christians have no stones to throw at others who are struggling to resist sin and temptations. We have no stones to throw at those who have fallen into temptation and repented from their sin. We need to help each other, trust each other, be vulnerable with each other, etc. We are so fearful of one another’s judgments that many of us do not “confess your sins to another and pray for one another...” (James 5:16). We do not trust others because of harmful ways that many in our churches speak about being gay, about homosexuality, and about gender dysphoria. We need to ensure that our criticism and critique of sinful lifestyles is seasoned with salt, garnered in grace. We can offer friendship to those struggling with same-sex attraction, offering to pray with them, visit with them, and letting them experience the blessing of belonging to the communion of saints despite their temptations.

Christians struggling with same-sex attraction ought not to be identified as gay or homosexual but as brothers and sisters in Christ. The command to love God and our neighbour are the two greatest commandments given to us by Christ. Let us strive to do this with humility and love to the benefit of all those who belong to our Lord, who are members of His Bride, the Church. RP



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# GIRAFFE: NATURE'S GENTLE GIANTS

by Jerry Bergman

**G**iraffes, the tallest living terrestrial animals on earth, are often called nature's gentle giants due to their nonaggressive persona. Their most well-known trait is their long neck, longer than that of any living animal. Their 6-foot (1.8-meter) neck weighs about 600 pounds, more than the entire body of most animals. Their total height often reaches 20 feet and their weight 4,250 pounds. They are *enormous* animals.

Their legs alone are taller than many humans, about 6 feet. They can run as fast as 35 miles per hour (mph) over short distances, or trot at 10 mph for longer distances. Giraffes are favorite animals in many cultures, both ancient and modern, and are often featured in books, paintings, and even cartoons. This is not only due to its long neck but also to its very distinctive coat patterns. It looks like the paint called "crackled" that shrinks as it dries, leaving distinct patterns of cracks spread throughout the animal's body.

For most young people, the giraffe is one of the most intriguing and exotic of all animals. It is so unusual, and in such contrast to other animals, that many people typically are more interested in it than many other fascinating creatures. In fact, the word "giraffe" is derived from the Arabic *zerafa*, a poetic variant of *zarafa*, meaning

"lovely one" or "charming."<sup>1</sup> As one author noted, viewing a giraffe is one of humankind's greatest visual experiences.<sup>2</sup>

## THE GIRAFFE'S INTELLIGENT DESIGN

The giraffe's entire body – both its anatomy and physiology – is tightly intertwined as a single functional unit.<sup>3</sup> The giraffe is an excellent example of intelligent design that demonstrates special creation. Its neck alone is a wonder of enormously complex design that requires all necessary parts to be in their proper places before its neck structure is functional. As Charles Darwin said, it is a beautiful animal with "an admirably coordinated structure" of many parts in its neck.

Of interest, in *The Origin of Species* Darwin did not mention the giraffe's neck as an example of evolution until the sixth edition, and then only in response to a critical review of his book by creationist St. George Mivart.<sup>4</sup> In this work, it is clear that Darwin never regarded the giraffe's long neck as central evidence of natural selection like biology textbooks that discuss evolution often imply today.

Another major problem with the standard textbook story is that Darwin accepted Lamarckianism later in his life. Lamarckian theory of acquired characteristics explained giraffe neck evolution

by arguing that constant stretching slowly elongated their necks, and they then passed on their beneficial longer neck trait to their offspring.<sup>5</sup> Darwin resorted to the idea that evolution occurs by use and disuse of body parts because he was unable to come up with a plausible theory that explained the origin of genetic variety that Natural Selection could select.<sup>6</sup> Darwin knew that without a viable source of genetic variety, no evolution can occur and his theory was dead.

To produce a 6-foot-long neck from a short-necked animal (like evolution requires) necessitates hundreds or thousands of simultaneous, or nearly simultaneous, mutations – a set of events that has a probability of zero. It cannot just become longer, but requires a very different design than the less-than-one-foot neck that is common in most mammals.

The late Harvard professor Stephen Jay Gould said, "the long neck must be associated with modifications in nearly every part of the body – long legs to accentuate the effect, and a variety of supporting structures (bones, muscles, and ligaments) to hold up the neck."<sup>7</sup>

The giraffe's head and neck are held up by large powerful muscles strengthened by nuchal ligaments anchored by long dorsal spines on the anterior thoracic vertebrae.





The giraffe's neck vertebrae use an atlas-axis joint that allows the animal to tilt its head vertically and reach more branches with its tongue to obtain food. Giraffes require not only long necks to reach tall trees, but also long legs and even long faces and tongues (their tongues are over a foot long) to reach the high growing acacia leaves they favor.

One major problem for Darwinists is how natural selection simultaneously altered necks, legs, tongues, prehensile lips, knee joints, muscles, and complex nervous system and blood-flow control systems to control the pressure necessary to pump blood from the heart up to the giraffe's distant brain. The common explanation of the giraffe's long neck is that it was not produced by gradual evolution but instead mistakes called *mutations* produced it.<sup>8</sup>

To eat grass or drink water, because they are the tallest animals in the world, giraffes must move their heads to a point seven feet below their heart and, when upright, to a point about eleven feet above it. When the giraffe puts its neck down to drink, one would expect blood to rush into its head. Then when he raised his head after drinking, the blood flowing away from its head should cause it to faint.

But a system of ingeniously designed reservoirs and valves inside its arteries prevents this from occurring. Its strong heart

beats 150 times per minute. A spongy tissue mass below the brain helps to regulate blood flowing to the brain to ensure that rapid pressure changes are blunted.<sup>9</sup> When water is available, giraffes drink regularly from ponds and streams. But during a drought, they can survive very well without water for several weeks at a time because they can satisfactorily obtain their needs from plants.<sup>10</sup>

## GIRAFFES ARE AN ICON OF EVOLUTION

One of the more common icons almost universally presented as proof of evolution is giraffe evolution. It is used in high school and college biology, anthropology, and evolution texts. Science "has made giraffes the very symbol of evolutionary progress."<sup>11</sup> So important was this icon that Francis Hitching titled his critique of Darwinism "The Neck of the Giraffe" (1983). A survey of all major high school biology textbooks found "every single one – no exceptions – begins its chapter on evolution by first discussing Lamarck's theory of the inheritance of acquired characters," then presenting Darwin's theory of natural selection as the correct alternative to Lamarck's theory.<sup>12</sup>

As a result, the "classic textbook illustration of our preferences for Darwinian evolution...[is] an entrenched and ubiquitous example based on an assumed weight of historical tradition that simply does not exist."<sup>13</sup> Thus, this example teaches evolution by use of "a false theory," and thus is a false icon.<sup>14</sup> A typical explanation for the evolution of the giraffe's long neck is that some giraffes, purely by chance,

were born with fortuitously slightly longer necks, and that this conferred upon them a selective advantage enabling them to reach higher branches in times of famine and drought, which greatly improved their chances of surviving and leaving offspring similarly endowed with longer necks. Such a process repeated over many generations would inevitably lead to the long neck of the modern giraffe.<sup>15</sup>

The giraffe's neck is used to illustrate how natural selection gives more variety

within a population. In any group of giraffes, there always exists variation in neck length, as is true of any trait. Consequently, the theory postulates when their food supply is adequate, the animals do quite well, but when food is inadequate,

giraffes with longer necks have an advantage. They can feed off the higher branches. If this feeding advantage permits longer-necked giraffes to survive and reproduce even slightly more effectively than shorter-necked ones, the trait will be favored by natural selection. The giraffes with longer necks will be more likely to transmit their genetic material to future generations than will giraffes with shorter necks.<sup>16</sup>

The problem with this theory is that it is not just a matter of stretching the neck. Rather, giraffes require an entirely new design.

## LONG NECK ESSENTIAL FOR ITS LIFESTYLE

The giraffes' long necks are critical in allowing these long-legged animals to rise from a lying position. They use their neck to shift their weight, allowing them to stand on their long legs. It is also critical in climbing and running, which involve snake-like, slithery movements that propels their entire body forward. The long, thin giraffe neck provides a great deal of surface area, which is also important for effective body cooling. For this reason giraffes – in contrast to many other large mammals that live in warm temperate areas – can remain in the hot sun for long periods of time.

Darwinists give reasons why giraffes evolved their long necks which include for mating, for defense, for thermoregulation, to facilitate their fast-forward travel (up to 30 mph), or for one of many other reasons, but it is a poor icon for their theory. They propose that the giraffes' long necks evolved for all of these reasons – or none of them. As Gould concludes, "The giraffe's neck cannot provide a proof for any adaptive scenario, Darwinian or otherwise."<sup>17</sup> The giraffe's neck is far more useful as an example of the many problems with Darwinism.



## COMMON CLAIMS OF GIRAFFE NECK EVOLUTION FAIL

The typical textbook story is that giraffes evolved long necks to reach the leaves located “at the tops of acacia trees, thereby winning access to a steady source of food available to no other mammal.”<sup>18</sup> Some question why the trees did not evolve to become taller to prevent the giraffes from consuming their leaves.

Although now an icon for Lamarck’s mechanism of evolution, Lamarck presented no evidence for this interpretation but rather only “a few lines of speculation.”<sup>19</sup> His reference to giraffes in his classic work consists of only one paragraph based on zero data.<sup>20</sup> Lamarck also wrongly claimed that the animal’s forelegs evolved to become longer than its hind legs, indicating that Lamarck was not familiar with the literature on this animal.<sup>21</sup>

## WHY GIRAFFES ARE USED TO SUPPORT DARWINISM

A major reason that the giraffe example is used to support evolution is because it

is an easy illustration of Darwinism by artwork or photographs.<sup>22</sup> Virtually all textbooks picture giraffes eating from acacia trees, incorrectly implying that its leaves are the main staple of their diet. So “appealing is this hypothesis that students of giraffe behavior and evolutionary biologists alike accept it.”<sup>23</sup>

Although the tall acacia tree leaves may be a preferred food source, giraffes will graze on many other tree and bush types. Plentiful foliage exists at the lower-levels of the tree, and giraffes also commonly consume grass and low bushes and many kinds of ground-growing plants.<sup>24</sup> Female giraffes are, on average, about a meter shorter in height than males – and they survive quite well.

If leaves at higher levels are a large unexploited niche, then why have not many other animals, such as antelopes, also evolved the same long neck as giraffes have?<sup>25</sup> One could argue that giraffes with shorter necks could thrive better because most of the foliage in the part of Africa where they live is near the ground, and

it would be a decided survival advantage to be closer to the more plentiful ground vegetation compared to the comparatively rarer acacia tree leaves.<sup>26</sup> All young giraffes feed on grass and bushes until their neck has grown long enough to reach the trees, usually at 3 to 4 years of age. The females spend over half their time feeding with their necks horizontal, indicating that their neck’s length may actually be a handicap.

The giraffe diet is extremely varied. Generally, they are browsers, feeding by plucking leaves with their 17-inch tongue. Or they will grab a tree branch, put it into their mouth, and pull off leaves by twisting their heads. The over 100 plant species in the giraffe’s diet include

flowers, vines, herbs, along with an occasional weaver-bird nest. If there are chicks in the nest, the giraffe eats them too, gaining some extra minerals from their bones. Giraffes also get minerals by gnawing on the bones of animals killed and left by hyenas and other predators.<sup>27</sup>

## OTHER PROBLEMS WITH THE DARWINIST TEXTBOOK STORY

One common theory is that the long neck evolved to aid in mating. The chief adaptive reason for evolving long necks could be sexual success “with a much-vaunted browsing of leaves as a distinctly secondary consequence.”<sup>28</sup> The longer neck enables males to perform their ritual dominant battles called “necking.”<sup>29</sup> The intrasexual competition theory assumes that “necking” behavior evolved first, then the neck length evolved due to sexual selection.

Other evolutionists suggest that giraffes’ long necks evolved to function as look-out towers to spot potential predators. This, coupled with giraffe’s excellent vision, enables them to spot a lion as much as a mile away. The problem with this theory is giraffe’s have virtually no enemies – lions are the only wild animal that usually attacks them, but only when desperate.<sup>30</sup> A lion is little match for a 2,000 to 4,000-pound giraffe. A giraffe hoof can kill a lion with a single blow.

The giraffes’ best defense is not their necks, but it is their long legs and heavy



## WHAT IS LAMARCKIANISM?

*Lamarckism* or *Lamarckianism* is a theory of evolution named after Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. He believed that characteristics that an animal organism acquired during its lifetime could be passed on to its offspring. It’s the idea that if a man started working out and getting huge muscles, his offspring would have bigger than normal muscles too, even without working out. It is also the idea that if a giraffe managed to stretch out its neck by reaching for those leaves on those tallest branches, its offspring would be born with longer necks.

hooves that are deadly to enemies. They defend themselves primarily by kicking. This theory may explain their long legs, but not why they evolved long necks. The legs could have evolved first to allow them to run from carnivores, then the neck grew so that the giraffe could stretch down to eat grass and drink water. The problem with this scenario is long legs do not always give the giraffe an advantage to outrun predators. Many of the fastest animals have legs far shorter than a modern giraffe's.

## FOSSIL EVIDENCE FOR GIRAFFE EVOLUTION LACKING

Much controversy exists about giraffe evolution, partly because no empirical evidence of giraffe evolution exists. Without any evidentiary constraints, scientists are free to speculate. As a result, they have tried to link giraffes to a variety of often very dissimilar animals.<sup>31</sup> About a dozen giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) types are recognized. They are plentiful in the fossil record, and their bones have not changed much, if at all, in shape or size since giraffes first appeared in the record. The extant fossil record evidence leads to the conclusion that giraffes have been unchanged, by evolutionary reckoning, for about two million years.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the fossil evidence that does exist "provides no insight into how the long-necked modern species arose."<sup>33</sup>

Except that they are greatly elongated, the seven giraffe cervical vertebrae and leg bones are about the same number and are very similar to those of virtually all mammals.<sup>34</sup> If giraffe neck and leg elongation occurred in evolution, then this should be obvious in the fossil bones. Yet no fossils supporting their neck evolution have ever been discovered. Savage and Long conclude that the origin of all three of the main pecorans (giraffes, deer, and cattle) lineages "remains obscure" due to the total absence of relevant fossil evidence.<sup>35</sup>

Although some estimate that there exist approximately 50 extinct giraffe species, all are known from fossils extending back to the Miocene, estimated by evolutionists to be 17 million years ago. In spite of considerable effort, none of these show evidence for giraffe evolution.

After unearthing millions of fossil bones, paleontologists have not located evidence for giraffe neck elongation, or any transitional stages. As Danowitz documents "the giraffe neck has been adequately researched" which has confirmed that "osteological demonstration of the fossils and evolutionary transformation of the neck is lacking."<sup>36</sup>

## SUMMARY

In conclusion, we agree with Gould that the standard giraffe evolution story "in fact, is both fatuous and unsupported," and the existence "of maximal mammalian height for browsing acacia leaves does not prove that the neck evolved for such a function."<sup>37</sup> Gould's major concern about this case is, "If we choose a weak and foolish speculation as a primary textbook illustration (falsely assuming that the tale possesses a weight of history and a sanction in evidence), then we are in for trouble – as critics properly nail the particular weakness, and then assume that the whole theory must be in danger if supporters choose such a fatuous case as a primary illustration."<sup>38</sup> We critics have nailed, not only this major weakness in Darwinism, but also its many other weaknesses and outright incorrect conclusions. RP

*This is Chapter 7 from Dr. Jerry Bergman's new book "Wonderful and Bizarre Life Forms" in Creation which you can order at [Create.ab.ca](http://Create.ab.ca).*

*Dr. Jerry Bergman has taught biology, genetics, chemistry, biochemistry, anthropology, geology, and microbiology at Northwest State College in Archbold, Ohio for over 25 years. He has 9 degrees, including 7 graduate degrees and is the author of many books including "The Dark Side of Charles Darwin," "Fossil Forensics," and "Evolution's blunders, frauds and forgeries."*

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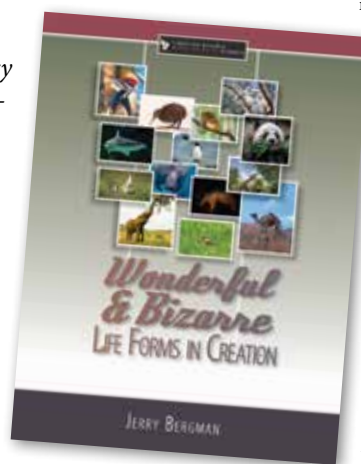
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- <sup>36</sup> Mammal evolution. NY: Natural History Museum, p. 228.

- <sup>37</sup> Danowitz, M. et al. 2015. Fossil evidence and stages of elongation of the *Giraffa camelopardalis* neck. Royal Society Open Science 2: 150393. See also Danowitz, M., R. Domalski, N. Solounias. 2015. The cervical anatomy of *Samotherium*, an intermediate-necked giraffid. Royal Society Open Science. 2: 150521.

- <sup>38</sup> Gould, ref. 6, p. 318.

- <sup>39</sup> Gould, ref. 6, p. 314.

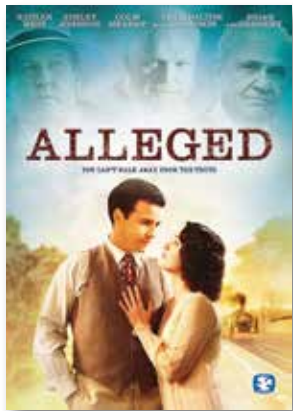


By Jon Dykstra

### ALLEGED

DRAMA

2011 / 93 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



The year is 1925, and Charlie Anderson's goal is to quit his job, leave his hometown of Dayton, Tennessee and work for legendary *Baltimore Sun* editor H.L. Mencken. When a legal battle in the town's one-room courthouse garners attention from the national media, Charlie thinks he may have just the news story he needs to grab Mencken's attention. Teacher John Scopes is going on trial for telling his students that man evolved!

This is a charming romance/drama, and though it is a Christian production the acting is great – most roles have been filled with actors you're likely to recognize. It is also a rebuttal of sorts to a 1960 film, *Inherit the Wind*, which also portrayed this "Scopes Monkey Trial" but ignored the facts to portray the creationist side as a lunatic mob.

Some cautions: Charlie is drunk in one scene, though his fiancée's disappointment makes this an object lesson in the folly of drunkenness. Because the film teaches about the implication of Darwinian thought, there is a subplot that deals with eugenics, which may be a disturbing topic for a younger audience.

*Alleged* is educational, informative, and also fun, romantic, generally light, and quite well acted. Highly recommended for older teens and adults. And right now you can watch it for free at Tubitv.com.

### THE SONG

DRAMA

2014 / 116 MINUTES **RATING: 9/10**



*The Song* destroys all the expectations we have for Christian films. It has great acting, a great script, an even better soundtrack...and also infidelity, abortion, suicide, and drugs. It's far better than any Christian film you've seen, and also much grittier.

It is based on, but does not pretend to be, the lives of King David and Solomon. The setting is, instead, Nashville, with Jed King an aspiring country singer, who hasn't yet measured up to the status of his superstar father. But he also hasn't fallen into any of his excesses either. When he meets Rose, the manager of a winery, he writes a special song for her that turns into his first major hit. From there we see him rise to spectacular heights. Like Solomon before him, he has it all. And like Solomon (and his superstar father) before him, that isn't enough for him – he falls to temptation, in his case involving the lead singer of his opening act.

Two things make *The Song* remarkable. The first is pairing of the Solomonic texts – Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and the Song of Solomon – with day-to-day struggles. Jed is learning some hard lessons, and he shares them, using these texts. Remarkable too, is the music. It's another fantastic pairing, this time of story and song: the musical performances are worth the price of admission!

### WOODLAWN

DRAMA

2015 / 123 MINUTES **RATING 8/10**



Directors of movies about sports sometimes get carried away with their art – swelling orchestral music as mud spatters over our athletic hero. Sprinkle in a few losses and some team disunity that must be overcome and you've got a pretty typical Hollywood sports movie. *Woodlawn* does contain a few of these clichés, but surprisingly most of them are not fantasies – they're real and historic.

As high schools become racially integrated in Alabama in the early 1970s, tensions run high at predominantly white Woodlawn High School. Parents aren't happy with the coaching staff when black students earn starting positions on the football team. When Christian sports chaplain Hank Erwin asks permission to speak to the football team after a riot at the school, Coach Tandy Gerelds reluctantly agrees. He's stunned when each and every player on the team, black and white, respond to Erwin's altar call and dedicate or re-dedicate their lives to Christ. In time, the team decides that devoting their season to the Lord is more important than winning or losing, and – what do you know! – they find athletic success along the way.

Most details in the movie, even the ones that seem too convenient or unlikely to have happened, are based on real events: *Woodlawn* is a morality tale with great lessons that just happens to be true.

– MARTY VANDRIEL



# ENTERTAINING, EDUCATIONAL, AND FREE



## LOVE GOV: FROM FIRST DATE TO MANDATE

COMEDY

2015 / 28 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**

Here's something new: an economic argument for small government presented as a comedic drama. *Love Gov* is a romance too: Alexis was thinking of quitting college to start her own business, but then she meets the strangely charming Scott Govinsky (known as "Gov" to his friends). To compliment her ideas, ambitions, and drive, Gov is so very caring and supportive. And eager to help. And he never seems to run out of advice. Perfect material for a boyfriend? Alexis thinks so...at first. The problem is, Gov's advice isn't nearly as helpful as it seems.

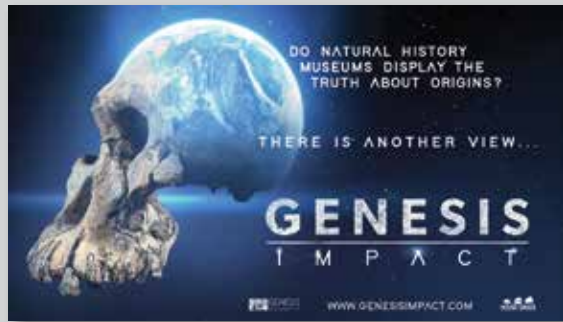
If you haven't figured it out yet, Alexis' boyfriend Gov is a stand-in for our government, which wants to mind our business because it cares for us so deeply. But as much as the politicians and bureaucrats might mean well, that doesn't mean they are doing well...which is what *Love Gov* tries to show.

The overall argument being pitched is for smaller government. While the group pitching it isn't Christian, there's a lot here for Christians to love, since we should also support limited, and thus smaller, government.

Why?

Because God has given different responsibilities to different types of "government." The "governments" we're talking about here are not of the municipal, provincial, or federal sort but rather family government, Church government, and yes, State government too. We can throw in self-government as well. These types of government are all appointed by God to take on different roles, and while who should have exactly what role can sometimes be difficult to discern, one type of government can only gain more power and influence at the expense of the others.

You can find all 5 episodes at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca).



## GENESIS IMPACT

DOCUDRAMA

2020 / 68 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**

This is a very good...*something*. The topic matter is plain enough – human origins – but what's less clear is whether this is a documentary or drama.

The beginning is standard documentary: apologist Ray Comfort, just off camera, interviewing college students about their views on evolution. But when the camera pulls back we discover these interviews are actually a smartphone's 3-D holographic projections being viewed by a teen boy sitting on the edge of his couch (presumably a decade or two into the future seeing as there's no app for that quite yet). When mom wanders by, putting away the groceries, he shares his doubts about whether God really did create in just six days. "What if they're right, and we're wrong?" he asks, "I mean, the scientific evidence for evolution is pretty overwhelming. What if God... used evolution?"

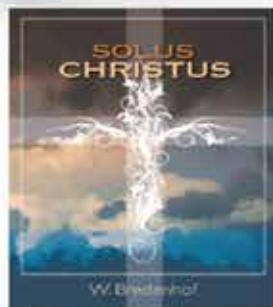
To answer his questions, mom takes us through another scene change, shifting back 20 years to modern day when she was still in school, listening to an origins lecture at a Natural History museum. When the speaker concludes and most of the other students leave the auditorium, the young mom-to-be stays behind to question, and eventually debate, the scientist/lecturer. That's where we stay, along with a few student stragglers, listening to a well-reasoned critique of the lecturer's evolutionary presentation. While *Genesis Impact* hardly has a plot, it still has plenty of drama as evolution and creationist go head-to-head over the next hour.

*Genesis Impact* shouldn't be evaluated as a drama though. The acting is fine – solid enough not to get in the way, and better than many a Christian drama – but the young lady is far too knowledgeable, and the evolutionist lecturer far too reasonable (readily conceding her every good point) to be realistic. Fortunately, the filmmakers' goal isn't realism. They wanted to present a challenging, highly educational lecture on a pivotal topic, and they wanted to deliver it in a really unique and entertaining manner. Mission accomplished!

*Genesis Impact* is best suited for bible-believing Christians who are interested in, or troubled by, evolutionary accounts. It'll be an encouragement and could serve as a leap-off point for further study. The depth means this is for college-age and up.

Watch it for free at [GenesisApologetics.com/Impact/](http://GenesisApologetics.com/Impact/).

# NEW PUBLICATIONS BY THE STUDY

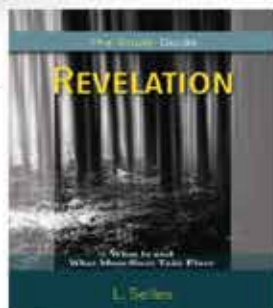


## Solus Christus W. Bredenhof

Though many affirm Christ as Saviour, Christ as the only Redeemer is harder to accept. Rev. Bredenhof deftly helps the reader understand what *Solus Christus* means, why it is important, and how to respond to those who deny it or undermine it. *Includes discussion questions.*

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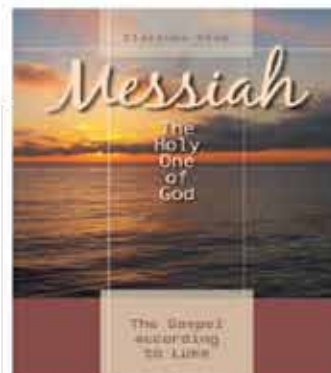
## Revelation (Study Guide) L. Selles (2-in-1 book)

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In this chapter-by-chapter look at the book of Luke, Rev. Stam shows from Christ's words and deeds that he truly is the Messiah, our perfect Redeemer.

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