

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

JAN/FEB 2021  
Volume 40 Issue No. 2

# PERSPECTIVE

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PROVERBS

31:10-31



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# Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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

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# PROCLAIM IT: JESUS IS KING!

God's "favorite" Bible verse puts things in perspective



We all have our own favorite books, chapters, and verses in the Bible. I love the last 5 chapters of Job, where God answers Job and his friends. Whenever I don't understand what God is doing, I can turn to this passage to be reminded that as confused as I might be, God isn't. And because I know He is in control, I leave things with Him. My grandfather loved Ps. 23 for similar reasons: the comfort of being reminded that our loving Shepherd was taking care of us.

Other passages are popular for different reasons. Not so long ago, a verse that would make frequent appearances was John 3:16, written up large on poster board and displayed at football, baseball and soccer stadiums around the globe. In 2019 it was even the year's most read verse on BibleGateway.com.

That's a favorite among Christians, but our secular culture has a favorite verse too. While I don't have any polls to prove it, I think you'll agree it has to be Matthew 7:1a: "Do not judge." Of course, the world doesn't want it in context – half a verse is more than enough Bible for them.

## GOD'S FAVORITE VERSES?

But what might God's favorite Bible verse? Some years back, Dr. Joel McDurmon noted that according to the number of times it is quoted in the New Testament, the clear second-place finisher is the latter part of Leviticus 19:18:

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

McDurmon wrote: "This shows up in seven different places in the NT [while] the vast majority of other verses quoted appear a couple times, or only once." Of course, it may not be quite right to think of this as God's favorite – it might be better to think of this as a passage He knows we really need to hear over and over again.

So if that's second, what's first? Reformed Baptist pastor Jeff Durbin suggests it must be Psalm 110:1:

"The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

## ...the difference between our favorites and God's "favorite" is instructive.

This passage is cited or referenced nearly two dozen times in the New Testament, or three times as often as Leviticus 19:18.

### A VERY DIFFERENT FOCUS

What we read in this verse is a proclamation of Jesus' sovereignty – *the focus is on His reign*. But when you google "favorite verses" the passages that often come up have a different focus. One list I came across with, from BibleGateway.com had these familiar verses in spots 2 through 4:

- "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." - Romans 8:28
- "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." - Philippians 4:13

Like my grandfather's favorite, and my own, these passages are a source of comfort to many (though the Jeremiah and Philippians passages are often misapplied). While they do speak of God, the focus isn't so much on Him, as on what He can do for us – *the focus is largely on us*.

### CONCLUSION

Our loving Father knows what we need, which is why He provides us with text after text that assure us of His goodness and power and love. It's no wonder these are among our favorites – they are a gift from Him. But the difference between our favorites and God's "favorite" is instructive. God wants us to understand that Jesus has triumphed. He wants us to realize that Jesus has won every battle, beaten every enemy, and rules over all. And because this

is so important for us to understand, God tells it to us again and again and again.

Are we listening? And do we believe it?

As the Westminster Shorter Catechism explains in its first question and answer, our purpose – our reason for being – "is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." He should be our focus.

But does He seem our focus? Aren't we so often scared and too timid to even mention His Name? How can we glorify Someone we don't dare name?

God wants to embolden us, telling us that Jesus *already* reigns. When we are intimidated by our professors, boss, coworkers, classmates, or political caucus, we can be assured that Jesus is King. He is Lord of our university classroom. He rules the business world and our job site too. And while government might seem to be spirally ever downward we can rest secure in the knowledge that God appoints both Prime Ministers and opposition leaders. His domain extends to *everywhere* and *everything*.

"The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

Whether we're looking for courage or comfort, this is – *He is* – our reassurance! RP



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

# NOTA BENE

News worth noting  
BY JON DYKSTRA

- When Parler went offline, the Christian satire site *Babylon Bee* lost access to their 1.2 million Parler followers
- Twitter suspended one of Focus on the Family's accounts after they tweeted that the new Assistant Education Secretary, "Dr. Levine is a transgender woman, that is, a man who believes he is a woman."
- Actor and professing Christian Kevin Sorbo reported that Facebook had deleted his account without explanation. He had over 500,000 followers.
- The conservative news outlet *Epoch Times* was demonetized by YouTube, probably for running stories that disputed the results of the US election. *Prager U* has also had YouTube videos demonetized.

So what can we do to counter Big Tech's influence and power?

By no longer relying on them as we do! This can even involve old school tactics – in mid-January this headline popped up on a popular Christian satire site:

"To Avoid Tech censorship The Babylon Bee Announces Innovative New Print Edition."

What *Babylon Bee* proposed in jest is what *Reformed Perspective* is doing in earnest. We've started delivering our print magazine in bulk subscriptions to churches, tripling our print numbers in the last year. And as the *Bee* noted in their article, it is "a technology and distribution method that Big Tech can't touch."

We're also migrating to other social media sites like MeWe, where there seems to be an already growing conservative Reformed presence. We might try Gab and perhaps Parler too. It seems it's not a matter of if but only when we get kicked off Facebook and today's other social media favorites. To be prepared we need to build up our own alternatives.

## WHEN BIG TECH COMES AFTER EVERYONE

**I**n early January, when Facebook and Twitter suspended Donald Trump's accounts it might not have worried most Christians. Yes, these "Big Tech" companies had just cut off a sitting president's access to the more than 120 million followers who had sought him out on these social media sites. French and German leaders were concerned, with Steffen Seibert, chief spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, arguing that while the right to free speech is not unlimited, those limits should be imposed "by law and within the framework defined by the legislature – not according to a corporate decision."

Still, Big Tech was doing this to a man who'd often been rude and rash on his social media misadventures, so his suspensions didn't have implications for the reasonable, responsible rest of us...did it?

It turned out Trump's deletion was the start of something. Over the course of the next weeks:

- YouTube shut down a pro-life news channel with its 300,000 followers. *LifeSiteNews.com* had built up their audience slowly over the last 10 years.
- Amazon Web Services announced it would no longer host the social media site Parler, effectively booting it off the Internet for a month until Parler could find someone else to host them. This came after Google and Apple had already banned Parler from their app stores, making it much more difficult for people to sign up to this social media competitor.





## UK HOSPITAL TO GET MORE "GENDER INCLUSIVE"



**P**op quiz: if you heard that a hospital was offering "gender inclusion" mid-wifery, what would you expect that to involve? The problem here has to be the gendered mid-wifery term, right? So are the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals planning on swapping that out for "mid-spousery"? Or maybe they're adding an option for "mid-husbandry." Of course, husbandry deals with crop and animal care, so that might create some confusion...but who cares about a lack of clarity when we're fighting for sensitivity?

It turns out that the gender inclusion had nothing to do with renaming mid-wifery, but instead had to do with offering pregnant "trans men" – i.e. pregnant women pretending to be men – the option of having their breasts called chests. Why? Because breasts are female body-parts, and that's a truth that some would desperately like to obscure. To do so they're embracing a craziness that's comparable to calling a man's "testes" his "ovaries," if that's what he'd prefer.

*The Times* reported that the new "trans-friendly" terms were going to replace the originals.

"Midwives have been told to say 'chestfeeding' instead of 'breastfeeding'.... Staff have been instructed that 'breastmilk' should be replaced with the phrases 'human milk,' 'breast/chestmilk' or 'milk from the feeding mother or parent.'"

While that got even some liberal reporters outraged – Piers Morgan called it "nonsense" – these trans terms aren't actually replacements. They are additions, to be used only with individuals who prefer them. Had Morgan known that, he couldn't have objected, since he's previously conceded that men can "transition" to women. That's nonsense too, but nonsense he's agreed to spout, so on what basis could he object to a "breast to chest" transition, so long as it's optional?

That means we can't expect help from the mainstream media; it's going to be up to Christians to take a lonely stand for sanity. We should do so as Christians, boldly proclaiming that God, and not us, decides our gender. We can follow up by highlighting where denying God's truth leads: to nonsense like pretending breasts can become chests. Or testes can become ovaries. At this stage, if your conversational partner has gone to just the right sort of public school, he'll start scratching his chin, seriously considering whether testes can become ovaries. If that happens, borrow a page from *The Babylon Bee* and demand he start using your "preferred adjectives."

"Here are the adjectives I identify with... 'cool, witty, handsome, innovative, fun.' Please use one of these adjectives when describing me."

He'll either have to concede that a man's preferences can't turn him into what he ain't, or he'll have to start using your adjectives. It's really a no-lose situation... which is as we'd prefer it!



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# Parenting

## Many different approaches One set of guiding principles

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Empty threats – that's what they are called – and some are more ridiculous than others. I once overheard an employee at Target, a young mother, telling her co-worker:

"He keeps hitting [his brother] Steven all the time. So the next time he punches Steven in the face, I'm gonna say, 'Robert, next time you punch Steven in the face, I'm going to punch YOU in the face.' ...Of course, you can't really punch a 4 year old in the face, so I never would."

That's extreme, but then there are also the more common variety that we're likely to hear at church, or at school, or coming out of our own mouths:

- "If you don't get into the car right now, I'm going to leave without you."
- "You'd better stop crying. This restaurant doesn't allow any crying, so if you cry they're going to kick us out of here."
- "If you don't stop fighting back there I am turning this car around and we are not going anywhere."

Empty threats can seem effective, at least in the short-term. But is "effective" the measure by which we evaluate our parenting approach?

### WE ALL NEED PARENTING HELP

There are strong differences of opinion regarding the discipline of children, and not all techniques work for all kids, even in the same family. We do have to consider the different ages and personalities of

different children, so what works with one child may not be a good approach for another.

But we also know that all approaches are not equal. That's because some techniques and methods align with what God has revealed in his Word, and some run at right angles to what God has said. So we need to seek out the scriptural principles of discipline, and we need to hear what God says about love and kindness, and then make this foundational for all of our interactions with these small brothers and sisters in Christ.

And, in addition to these scriptural principles, we can also seek out tried and tested methods from older, godly parents. God puts us in a community so we can learn from one another (Prov. 15:22).

Finally, there are excellent Christian books on the topic of parenting. We need to read such books because of our own sinfulness, which we too often overlook when we are frustrated with our disobedient children. It is way too easy to justify our own behavior, and prayerfully reading through these books will help us analyze where and when we are a part of the cause.

For instance, if we scream in anger because our children have gotten angry with one another for the tenth time in the day, we teach them that screaming in anger is the proper response to a frustrating situation, even though that is not our intention. If we force them to endure a shopping trip without regard for their hunger, thirst, fatigue, and need for movement, we are more to blame for their meltdown than they are. We must plan wisely for delays and not expect them to

have more patience than we do. If we fail to educate them as to what they will soon encounter and the specific behavior that is expected (because they do not know good behavior by instinct) then we are not helping them to behave properly.

Most children love their parents and feel grateful whether they say it out loud or not. They need our love and acceptance and they struggle with the constant tension between wanting to please us and, like all of us, wanting to follow their own sinful nature. They are sinners and they will behave badly. Sometimes we forget to apply our Bible beliefs to the situation and realize that "There is none who does good, there is not even one" (Romans 3:12). Or, as it says in the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 2, "[We] have a natural tendency to hate God and [our] neighbor."

### IN COMMUNION

One of the very best of the books available is *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Ted Tripp.

Tripp explains that there is a "circle of God's favor." When a child is, from love and gratitude to God, being obedient, he or she is in this circle. When a child strays outside of this "circle of favor" the parents' job is to pull the child back inside. If he lies, we must teach him not to lie. If he throws a selfish tantrum or punches his brother in the face, we must teach him that this is not acceptable behavior. We may not abuse him, but we must find an effective way to influence him to end that behavior.

When discipline is needed, Tripp says we should start with a statement giving the reason for the punishment, then give



the punishment, and then remind them why they were punished (preferably when everyone is calm). Then comes repentance. Their “Sorry, dad” may or may not be sincere, but the pattern will be established. Last of all, there must be forgiveness and restoration, just as our Lord gives to us. This usually includes a hug and a statement, but most importantly: the freedom from having the sin mentioned again (Psalm 103:12: “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us”). Here we must squelch our own anger rather than sin by constantly bringing up their wrongs, or humiliating them by relating the deeds to other people, especially within their hearing. We ruin our child’s good name when we tell about his sins, and if we tell the child he is a “brat” or a bad boy, even jokingly, we reinforce to him that we do not have higher expectations.

As far as specific punishment methods go, some use a careful spanking (a slap on the hand or thigh for a toddler – their bottom has too many layers to feel the sting! – or a few spanks on the bottom for someone already potty-trained). Others use a time-out location, which, to be effective, requires a timer and constant monitoring by the parent, especially when it is first being established. But to be effective it must be a true punishment to the child. For example, if they think time-outs are no big deal, then something that is a big deal to them must be substituted.

## ANTICIPATION

Parents should, with experience, be able to steer their children clear of situations that might otherwise lead to the need for discipline. For example, inexperienced parents tend to overestimate the amount of noise stimulation that a young child can handle, even for “fun” times like DisneyWorld or an overcrowded family get-together. As we learn how much our children can handle, we can, when we see them being overwhelmed, remove them from these situations. (Ephesians 6:4 is relevant here; these are both examples of parents heeding the instruction for “fathers [to] not provoke your children to anger...”)

Another example: we can take a

suggestion from Dr. Raymond Moore of *Home Grown Kids* who always used this rule of thumb for birthday parties – the number of guests at the party should not exceed the child’s age. Adults tend to think more is better, but a young child will do better to have a couple of play dates than one big bash.

## ONLY TRUTH

Empty threats should never, ever be made. They are ineffective when smart children realize their parents are not serious. These threats may even cause a rebellious child to disobey just to see whether we really meant what we said. They can also be counter-productive to the fellowship goals of your family. Would you really cancel Christmas or attendance at a friend’s birthday party because of a child’s disobedient behavior? That would punish people outside of your family as well. Should you frighten your children, as some have, with abandonment at an orphanage, leading them to experience fear and lack of assurance of your love and acceptance, and therefore desperate to please you? Children take our words very literally. Our goal is to teach them about sin and repentance and forgiveness by modeling it, not to beat them physically or emotionally into subjection to us.

## AN AWESOME AND BRIEF TASK

It is important to plan our system of discipline ahead of time so that mom and dad will both know what they are going to do when their kids behave badly. You need a plan, and a backup plan and perhaps even a third plan for the stubborn. Don’t let disobedience surprise you. Don’t let it make you angry as though it were a direct attack on you. God has called us to teach our children to do what is right, and that task exceeds any housework or leisure goals that we might have had for the day. Pray for patience, because your effective plan may need a hundred applications!

I overheard a conversation at 11 pm in a restaurant parking lot between a father and his sobbing three-year-old. He yelled at her to “Stop crying and behave” inside the restaurant. It was tempting to intervene and point out that he was being selfish – caring more for his social goals than he did for the welfare of his little girl, who pretty obviously needed to be home in bed.

“Children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward” (Psalm 127:3). Though it feels like we will always be raising and disciplining them, it is less than a third of our lifetime that we have this privilege.

Something to keep in mind. **RP**





# REPENT THEREFORE, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts 3:19)

by Christine Farenhorst

**N**ew Year's resolutions - we all make them and then we all break them. Perhaps praying the first part of the Proverbs 30:8 prayer is a great reminder as we move into 2021: *Remove far from me falsehood and lying...*

\*\*\*\*\*

*I can't lie; my bed is broken.*

This small one-liner has you thinking twice, and is designed to create a smile in those who hear it. The underlying sad truth, however, is not really funny because all of us can, and do, lie. Every day we lie, again and again. We are surrounded by lies. We only have to turn on the daily news to be overwhelmed by the untruthfulness of the world around us. The voter fraud that has gone on in the presidential election of the US, (and many other countries), is only a small example of continual lying.

There is nothing in the world so abysmally sad as to catch someone we love and admire in lies. The October 2020 edition of *WORLD* magazine ran an article by Emily Belz on Christian apologist, Ravi Zacharias. Sexual misconduct

claims on this well-known figure were investigated. Accusations were addressed in which a number of women, who provided regular massage therapy to Zacharias at spas he owned, claimed he had touched them without their consent. A nasty business and one which dishonors our Lord! Zacharias died in May of 2020 of cancer. While alive, he steadfastly denied all these accusations.

## REFUGE FOR THOSE WHO SEEK

We've all had to deal with lies, disappointments, and broken promises. We all live in a world tainted by sin. As such we need help, we need a place to which we can run, a place in which to hide, a place which has comforting truth.

There are stories of hiding, especially stories dealing with Jews during the Second World War when they were so brutally hunted down by the Nazi regime. There is the accounting of a husband and wife, a Jewish couple, who were hidden in a church in Rotterdam, a church situated on Breeplein. They had three daughters who were taken care of by way of foster homes throughout the duration of the war, but they themselves were hidden by the pastor of that church

in an area behind the organ. One of the granddaughters, Daphne Geismar, later wrote:

"Access to the attic hiding place was by a retractable ladder, through a trapdoor, which was covered with a cloth when closed. The attic sat below a steeply pitched roof, its brick and cement walls were windowless, and there was no floor—only joists, forcing one to step from beam to beam to avoid falling through the ceiling below. It was frigid in winter and suffocating in summer."

Her grandparents thankfully made it to the end of the war and thought themselves "lucky" to have done so. This despite the fact that each Sunday, they must have been privy to preaching, to the proclamation of God's Word; this despite the fact that hopefully the pastor would have testified to them by his words and actions of Jesus Christ. This truly might have been their hiding place in a deceitful and perfidious situation. But as far as we know, they did not avail themselves of it.

In his *The Treasury of David*, a

commentary on the Psalms, Charles Spurgeon writes a note on Psalm 32:7. He says:

“Suppose a traveler upon a bleak and exposed heath to be alarmed by the approach of a storm. He looks out for shelter. But if his eyes discern a place to hide him from the storm, does he stand still and say, ‘I see there is a shelter, and therefore I may remain where I am’? Does he not betake himself to it? Does he not run in order to escape the stormy wind and tempest? It was a ‘hiding-place’ before; but it was his hiding-place only when he ran into it and was safe. Had he not gone into it, though it might have been a protection to a thousand other travelers who resorted there, to him it would have been as if no such place existed.”

It is a good thing to remember that the Judge of all the earth is merciful and kind, not holding us accountable for our sinful lies if we go to Him, confess our sins to Him, and repent before the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. But that is only if we, as the Prodigal Son did, run to Him. If liars, if sinners, do not do this, then it is vital to know that the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.

## AN ALLEGORY

There is an allegory, and I’m not sure where it came from but I will recount what I remember of it. There was a man who had been heavily involved in the hunting down of Jews during the Second World War. He was a fellow whose days had been filled with murder and bloodshed. He had personally been responsible for the killing of thousands during the Holocaust. Cruel and willful, he had no thought of repentance to either man or God, but he was afraid. To the outward eye, to his post-war neighbors, he appeared a gentle and successful businessman, but inside his mind and heart he continually relived his war days. His fear, a fear which ate him up every day, was of being caught by earthly authorities and earthly judges. Sadly, instead

of turning to Jesus Christ and pleading forgiveness for his heinous past, he tried to devise a means of escape on his own.


This man, we’ll call him Esau for the sake of clarity, concocted a strange plan to escape his feared earthly judgment. He loved paintings. Each week he would spend hours in the museum gazing at masterpieces. One painting which he loved above all other paintings was an idyllic nature scene. Visible peace oozed from the canvas. In the center of the painting was a small boat. A man sat in that boat, a fishing rod in his hand. Mountains lined the background and the sky above was vast and still. There was a bench in front of that painting and Esau often sat on that bench drinking in and contemplating the peace and the quiet of that scene. He coveted it. There were times that he was almost transported, almost becoming the man in the boat. He then fancied that one day he would be able to relocate himself into the vessel and literally sit in the boat. It became a fixation for him and he was sure that he could become that man, and thus be freed from all his worries.

Inevitably the day arrived when Esau’s wicked past came to light and the police began to investigate and search him out. Esau became aware that they were about to arrest him and he panicked. Leaving his house in the dead of night, he drove

straight to the museum. Able somehow to enter, he made his way through the dark corridors of the building and came to the room where the painting he so admired hung. But it was very dark and his steps were unsure. He knelt in front of where he thought the picture was hung and tried harder than he ever had before, to transfer his entire being into that painting. He felt himself succeeding.

A few hours later the police finally traced Esau to the museum. Eventually they too came to the room where the painting Esau had so admired hung. “Nice painting,” one commented and another agreed with him. They both failed to notice that next to the peaceful, pastoral scene hung another painting, a painting depicting pain and the crucifixion of criminals. They also both failed to notice that the contorted face of one of those criminals was eerily like the man whom they were seeking.

“But I have stripped Esau bare; I have uncovered his hiding places, and he is not able to conceal himself. His children are destroyed, and his brothers, and his neighbors; and he is no more” (Jeremiah 49:10).

We enter 2021. Who knows what the year will hold? Oh, Lord, remove from us falsehood and lying. 

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

BY JON DYKSTRA

## THE SIN OF OMISSION

If Margaret E. Sangster's (1838-1912) poem is in need of an addendum it would be only this: when we repent Jesus can wash us clean of this sin too.

## A FEARSOME PUN

Three creatures – a hawk, lion, and skunk - were arguing about which was the most feared. The hawk insisted that his ability to swoop in suddenly, from above, had everyone scared of him. The lion said his loud roar and scary teeth were far more frightening. The skunk made the case that his spray could keep anything and everything at bay, so he must be the most feared.

But as the three were arguing a grizzly bear showed up and, with just one bite, swallowed them, hawk, lion and stinker.

SOURCE: Adapted from Art. Moger's *The Complete Pun Book*

## IT WON'T EVER HAPPEN, BUT WHEN IT DOES...

Back in 2013 commentator Rod Dreher coined the “law of merited impossibility” (LMI) to describe what was going to happen with gay “marriage.” He defined his law thusly:

“It is best summed up by the phrase, ‘It’s a complete absurdity to believe that Christians will suffer a single thing from the expansion of gay rights, and boy, do they deserve what they’re going to get.’”

So it is that the very same folk who asked then “How does letting gays marry hurt you?” now want to fine photographers, and bakers who don’t want to celebrate these “nuptials.”

In our current context it’s not hard to see the LMI’s application to conversion therapy bans: *it is impossible that Christians would ever be fined for speaking the gospel to homosexuals...but if they are, it’s because they have it coming!*

The transgender debate too: *“Me being transgender has no impact on you, but if you won’t use my new pronouns you deserve to get fired.”*

Dreher’s Law of Merited Impossibility is a helpful warning. Those who reject God’s Word aren’t going to abide with Romans 12:18 either and live peaceably with others in as far as it is possible for them. They are after capitulation. So how exactly is that helpful to know? Well, if you’ve ever been tempted to compromise your Christian convictions for the sake of keeping the peace, keeping friends, or keeping your career, then it is a peculiar and emboldening blessing to know that such peace can’t be had. God is making it all the easier for us to take up the battle, by eliminating any options for retreat.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the word “incorrectly” is spelled incorrectly in every single English dictionary? It’s true! Thankfully at least the word “correctly” is spelled correctly.

It isn’t the thing you do, dear,  
It’s the thing you leave undone  
That gives you a bit of a heartache  
At setting of the sun.  
The tender work forgotten,  
The letter you did not write,  
The flowers you did not send, dear,  
Are your haunting ghosts at night.

The stone you might have lifted  
Out of a brother’s way;  
The bit of heartsome counsel  
You were hurried too much to say;  
The loving touch of the hand, dear,  
The gentle, winning tone  
Which you had no time nor thought for  
With troubles enough of your own.

Those little acts of kindness  
So easily out of mind,  
Those chances to be angels  
Which we poor mortals find -  
They come in night and silence,  
Each sad, reproachful wraith,  
When hope is faint and flagging,  
And a chill has fallen on faith.

For life is all too short, dear,  
And sorrow is all to great,  
To suffer our slow compassion  
That tarries until too late:  
And it isn’t the thing you do, dear,  
It’s the thing you leave undone  
Which gives you a bit of heartache  
At the setting of the sun.

## SIGN SEEN ON A...

Whatever your business, there’s a pun for you. Here’s some that probably never were but so definitely should be...

- IRS building: “It’s better to give than deceive!”
- Lumberyard fence: “Come see. Come saw.”
- Locksmith shop: “Let me help you out...or in”
- Electric company van: “Power to the People!”
- Blood bank: “Don’t let us be caught with our pints down!”
- Home security store: “Been burglarized? Get alarmed!”
- High-rise condominium elevator wall: “Do under others as you would have them do under you.”

SOURCE: Collected from Art. Moger's *The Complete Pun Book*

## THE LEADERS WE SHOULD LOOK FOR

"We are perpetually being told that what is wanted is a strong man who will do things. What is really wanted is a strong man who will undo things; and that will be the real test of strength.... We do not need to get good laws to restrain bad people. We need to get good people to restrain us from bad laws."

- G.K. Chesterton

## NO DOCTOR IN THIS HOUSE

A young theologian named Fiddle  
Refused to accept his degree.  
He said, "It's bad enough being Fiddle,  
Without being 'Fiddle D.D.'"

SOURCE: From Art. Moger's *The Complete Pun Book*

## GOD COMES TO US

"...if we are really to know anything about God it will probably be because God has chosen to tell it to us. Many persons seem to go on a very different assumption. They seem to think that if they are to know anything about God they must discover God for themselves.

"That assumption seems to me to be extremely unlikely. Just supposing for the sake of the argument that there is a being of such a kind as that He may with any propriety be called "God," it does seem antecedently very improbable that weak and limited creatures of a day, such as we are, should discover Him by our own efforts without any will on His part to make Himself known to us. At least, I think we can say that a god who could be discovered in that way would hardly be worth discovering. A mere passive subject of human investigation is certainly not a living God who can satisfy the longing of our souls.

"A divine being that could be discovered by my efforts, apart from His gracious will to reveal Himself to me and to others, would be either a mere name for a certain aspect of man's own nature, a God that we could find within us, or else at best a mere passive thing that would be subject to investigation like the substances that are analyzed in a laboratory.

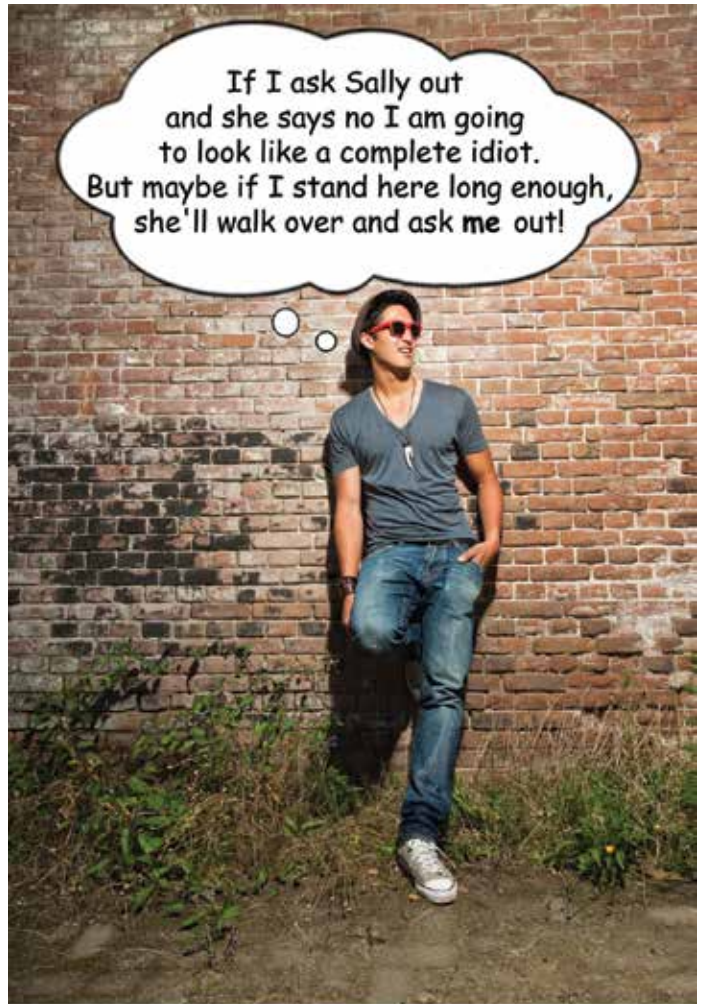
"I think we ought to stick to that principle rather firmly. I think we ought to be rather sure that we cannot know God unless God has been pleased to reveal Himself to us."

- J Gresham Machen, *Is the Bible Inspired?*

## FLIES' EYES

Flies don't have eyelids but they *do* still need something to help keep the dirt and water away from their peepers. So God has given some the equivalent of a Teflon non-stick coating for their eyeballs, to repel the water. This anti-adhesive coating has gotten scientists' and engineers' attention because, as Dr. Margaret Helder notes in the Winter 2020 *Creation Science Dialogue* (Create.ab.ca), it is "highly versatile, stable and eco-friendly" which are improvements on the industrial coatings we currently have.

Looking to nature for design inspiration is a field of study called biomimcry, and other examples include investigating how geckos defy gravity while climbing across ceilings, and, going years back, turning to birds to figure out how to fly.



**Boys let things happen,  
but the Bible tells us *men* take initiative.**

There's another lesson to be learned here. When creatures exhibit design that is more fantastic than the best Man can produce, even using the smartest brains, biggest labs, and most powerful computers, is a clear indicator that an even greater Designer is at work here.

## NOW THAT'S PUNNY!

Is a minister rehearsing his sermon practicing what he preaches?

SOURCE: From Art. Moger's *The Complete Pun Book*

## "YOU ARE THAT MAN..."

I once heard RC Sproul Jr. lay out a useful, but unusual tool to help a reader better understand the point of a Scripture passage. The key, as he explained it, was that when you're reading the Bible and you come across someone doing something very stupid, you should *not* say "How could *they* be so dumb?!" Instead you should ask, "How am *I* doing something stupid just like that?"

Or, as the prophet Nathan put it to David in 2 Samuel 12, "You are that man!"





# WHO'S AFRAID OF PROVERBS 31?

by Harma-Mae Smit

I can still see the cartoon in my memory – she was robed in white, her nose in the air, gracing a marble pedestal under which lesser women cowered. Inscribed on the pedestal were the words, “The Proverbs 31 woman.”

It was illustrating a comedic piece in a Christian women’s magazine, describing exactly what the author felt when faced with such a perfect, perfect woman. My mother lifted the magazine out of my hands. “Don’t read that nonsense,” she said.

“Why not?” I wanted to know.

She thought a moment. “People like to mock her. It’s easy to make fun of her. But I don’t like it.”

Lots of women do feel intimidated by Proverbs 31. We feel if we were to meet her in real life, we would only meet with judgment. We react to her as if she is a standard that points out all our inadequacies. And authors who write about her know this – they feel compelled to include an apologetic paragraph somewhere near the beginning of their article:

*Don’t worry, everyone comes from a different life situation. Don’t worry, this woman appears to be rich, and you might not be. Don’t worry, everyone is unique, and not everyone needs to live up to this passage in the same way.*

A recent article I read started off with, “Reading Proverbs 31 can be discouraging! Who can live up to such expectations?” The first reaction to her is to downplay her a little, and make her more approachable.

The assumption is that an unsoftened look at the woman in Proverbs 31 will lead to discouragement. The assumption is that the first emotions this passage will raise in us will be negative emotions, and that these negative emotions will need to be navigated and managed before we can get anything useful out of the passage.

I don’t deny that this is often the case,



that often these are the emotions stirred up by this passage. But I don't think this needs to be the case. It should be possible to re-frame the passage as a whole, from discouraging and disheartening to uplifting and inspiring. Maybe the Proverbs 31 woman can be encouraging without being softened.

Actually, I know it is possible. I have often read this passage with a sense of excitement, a sense of possibility. In contrast to many human writings, it does not downplay the capabilities of woman, and it acknowledges and appreciates them (and urges the rest of society to do so). It is not a passage that needs to be clarified with the sentence, "oh, this applies to women too," but it is directly applicable. However, this woman can clearly inspire either excitement

or discouragement in many women. What causes the difference? Can she be inspiring to everyone?

minister? We don't believe any politicians could ever be ideal. Our cynicism is unavoidable – we are much more comfortable speaking about the way our current society is not just and equal, than speaking of what a just and equal society would actually look like. Human realities have led us to give up on utopias, and create lists of our problems instead.

But maybe we should take our eyes off our lists of problems, and learn to feel inspired once again. We can draw fresh enthusiasm from working towards a vision of the good.

When presented with an ideal, we feel like ideals force conformity on us, tell us to be all the same, and can only make us feel bad about ourselves. But instead, the power of ideals is that they can open

lived.

Yes, visions of *what could be* are intimidating. But to erase them is to limit ourselves only to what exists right now.

## AN IDEAL WOMAN

And this is the way I think the woman in Proverbs 31 can function. She can demonstrate the power of a virtuous woman, and lead us in turn to feel enthusiasm about what is possible for us in our femininity.

After all, it does not take much for us to feel ground down in our femininity – we're confronted daily by negative portrayals of silly women, clingy women, bullying women, or passively helpless women in media, online, or just mentioned in general conversation. We can feel hormonal and wonder if our genetic makeup is a curse. We can struggle to perform heavy labor and feel dependent on others as a result of who we are. We can hesitate to speak up and make our voice heard, and feel held back. And when others reject us and label us or neglect to appreciate us, and we become vulnerable to harmful images of femininity.

When we turn to our Bible to counteract this, we find the Bible itself does not shy away from portrayals of the shortcomings of women (just as it does not shy away from the shortcomings of men). Women can be gullible (2 Tim. 3:6), weak, (1 Pet. 3:7), or just unpleasant (see elsewhere in Proverbs itself, such as Prov. 21: 9).

Faced with all this, how does one remain hopeful about womanhood? Is there any vision of a woman being a woman in a positive way? Yes, there is.

When we need a picture of a woman exercising female traits and positively affecting the world around her as a result of being a woman, we can look to Proverbs 31. We can look to Proverbs 31 and begin to heal from our doubts and worries about womanhood. There are many things a woman can do, even a very "traditional" woman such as this woman.

She can be strong, both physically and mentally, even though we're tempted by negative images to believe we're doomed

*...children look to their parents to see what it is like to be a person who can accomplish more than what their childish limbs can manage.*

our eyes to a better way of living. In that way they are not limiting, but rather are a demonstration of opportunities we would never have imagined in our current circumstances.

After all, children look to their parents to see what it is like to be a person who can accomplish more than what their childish limbs can manage. They can't do what their parents do, but they can imagine growing into a future where they will be able to do more. When they look to their parents they can see an example of how to live a life they have never yet experienced – an adult life.

And Christians are inspired by Christian role models too. Paul the apostle advises the Corinthians to imitate him as a model in their Christian life, as an example of a more mature Christian (1 Cor. 11:1). Having examples can be freeing rather than limiting, because we see how different lives than ours can be

## THE VALUE OF IDEALS

One problem is that we tend to think of ideals in the wrong way. The woman in Proverbs 31 is an ideal, and ideals are judges. Ideals are meant to draw our attention to the gap between them and us. They do give a verdict on our conduct by demonstrating the ways we fall short of them. But ideals are meant to be a vision of what could be, of what we can strive for, rather than a standard that is meant to crush and punish us. They aren't there to push us to quit, but instead give us a vision of a different way to live.

Our modern world doesn't like ideals very much. In the past, people did frequently talk about the ideal country or ideal city or ideal king. But nowadays, who talks about the ideal prime

to be fragile and unstable. She can be effective, even though we're afraid we'll only be passive and ineffective. And she can be courageous, even though we're worried and anxious. In this way she is purely encouraging. We are not fated to be that taunting caricature of ourselves that may live in our imagination. When we need to insist our womanhood is a gift God has given us and the world, she is on our side.

"A heroic poem which recounts the exploits of a hero," is how one commentator classes this passage. Another calls it, "an ode to a champion." What women do is not only worthy of being recorded, it is worthy of being applauded in exactly the same way as a warrior who slew a lion. But she girds her loins and takes up the heroic role in a very different setting.

We can feel confident in this picture that we receive in Proverbs 31. This is not like the argument over whether Cinderella is a good role model for girls or not; we can take it as a given that this woman is a good role model. And if she is, what opportunities does that present to us? She brings so much to the discussion that I cannot begin to include everything in a single article, so

*... strength is not typically the first female trait that comes to mind.*

I'll have to limit myself to the examples of her strength.

Strength is not the first word I associate with women, but it is the first association brought out here, in the very first line: "A woman of strength, who can find?" She draws our eyes to the quality of female strength specifically.

### LOOKING FOR A STRONG FEMALE CHARACTER

What is a strong woman? On one hand, we have many talking heads in media calling for more "strong female characters" in entertainment. On the other hand, strength is not typically the first female trait that comes to mind. If asked to come up with a list of feminine qualities, and you weren't too afraid of

going with the honest associations that came into your mind, you might come up with words like *delicate*, *soft*, *gentle*, *meek*.

Asking for strong female characters is seen as one way to counteract this, to create new stereotypes that counteract the old. But too often "strong females" are interpreted as physically strong, as demonstrated by the number of "kick-ass" female characters who keep up with, surpass, or beat up men. But this kind of knee-jerk, opposing reaction to the stereotype of a weak female often glosses over the reality that women actually live.

Women live their lives under the awareness that they will never be as strong as men. There is a limit to what we can physically do, and aside from a few exceptional women, most of us will burn out measuring our strength against men's. Because of this, some of us can conclude it is not worthwhile to develop our own strength and capacity. Or others may choose to highlight only these exceptionally strong women as a defense against perceptions of weakness, in a way that makes regular women feel inadequate.

Another way we do not feel strong is in our awareness of our vulnerability—we live knowing we can be overpowered and harmed by others with more strength. We structure our lives because of our awareness of our vulnerability, not walking alone in the dark, or holding our keys in our fists when we feel threatened. So no, I don't believe that physically strong female characters in media are enough by themselves to encourage and inspire us in our regular lives.

### STRONG AND WEAK STEREOTYPES

However, it does not follow that in order to be a woman, we must emphasize our weakness. There has been a growing awareness through time that strength in women is a benefit and not a drawback, starting with the nineteenth-century encouragement to throw off tight-laced corsets and be physically active.

Nowadays, the capacity of women is recognized on a society-wide level, and

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women are encouraged to develop and use their abilities to accomplish what they set their hand to do. And Proverbs 31 gives no support to ideas that weakness, fragility or delicacy are defining characteristics of womanhood.

It is at this intersection between “kickass” female stereotypes and the experiences of regular women that the woman in Proverbs 31 stands. Remember, this passage is “a heroic poem which recounts the exploits of a hero,” or, “an ode to a champion.” In this way, she stands alongside Achilles and Beowulf.

And yet she is not unreachable or alien to us in our everyday life. In fact, one thing many commentators notice about her is the mundane normalcy of what she is described as doing, even as the passage uses phrases such as “girds her loins” as she does these things. We might expect a woman who does “great things for God” would have more in common with female superheroes than with us. But we can relate to the

strength needed to consider a field and buy it – or, in more modern terms, decide to launch a business, or plant and harvest a garden, or challenge ourselves with an activity we have never tried before.

Let’s take it a step further and compare the Proverbs 31 woman with some older female stereotypes – she may be rich and of high status, but she does not spend her days in the cool shade of her porch, being fanned by servants. She has not retreated from the world to seek the safety of a carefully ordered life, buffered from anything that might jolt her poor nerves – an image of femininity that would be unreachable to most of us, even if we did desire such a life. Instead, her strength is demonstrated by taking up the task of living, including the hard things, and by working with her own hands.

In other words, she demonstrates that strength is a non-gendered Christian quality. It is not men with strength, and women with fragility. But both draw on

God’s strength to use their full capacity.

Christianity has never been about strong men and weak women. Christianity has always been about strong men and strong women.

## A WOMAN OF STRENGTH

We’re not used to hearing the first verse of this passage quoted as, “a woman of strength, who can find?” It is more recognizably quoted as, “a wife of noble character.” The description is translated in various ways: a wife of noble character, an excellent wife, a virtuous woman. Literally, it is a woman of valor, and the description is the same description given to Gideon (“The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor”) and Ruth (“I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman”). When we read it translated as “virtuous woman” we might not quite get all the overtones of power, competency and initiative this word carries. But it would be misguided to read this chapter and come away





thinking this woman is not empowered (she is a woman of power), or that she is a passive housewife experiencing a lack of control over her life.

And it doesn't really matter if the power this woman possesses does not come through in every translation, because further verses in the passage underscore it: "She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong," and "Strength and dignity are her clothing." If there exists any strong female character, it is this female character! She is the purest demonstration that strength and women can, in fact, go together.

It is clear that while she is described with power, capacity and strength, this is not reduced to the physical ability to bench-press heavy weights. It is not an ability to defend her home from intruders, or protect herself through hand-to-

hand combat. The various translations demonstrate the meaning of this word is much broader. Her strength is her competency at what she does, and her capacity to consider a plan and complete it. Strength in this passage is not only physical strength (though a certain amount of physical strength would be necessary for her to accomplish all the things she does), but also includes competency and strength of character. And when we talk about "strengths" we tend to use this term in a broad way as well.

Strength of character in particular is important, as she is "a woman who fears the Lord." When we think of that other "worthy woman," Ruth, we understand it was her character that brought her notice, and not only her unflagging energy while gleaning for grain.

Lastly, don't forget that this passage is directed to a man – a king, instructing him on what kind of wife to look for. A strong woman will not be a drawback for him. "She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life."

### STRENGTH IN ACTION

There is, then, such a thing as female strength, in that woman can develop and exercise their strength. There are some aspects of this that are uniquely female, such as the ability to bear a

child, but in a more general way it is women intentionally developing their capacity, skills and character. Developing one's individual capacity is something everyone can do, regardless of what your starting point is.

Sometimes women don't realize how strong they are. They may hesitate to do things by themselves, or to take initiative to develop an idea of theirs, or to build on their skills and talents. There is nothing wrong with depending on other people, as humans are made to interconnect and rely on the strength of each other. But sometimes, if we habitually rely on others, we forget what we ourselves can do.

In Proverbs 31, it does not mention her consultations with her husband over her initiatives, such as buying a field or planting a vineyard – this is not to say that she did not consult her husband (and I would argue most likely she did, and it says he trusts in her completely and her plans always brings him good). But it does demonstrate that the emphasis in this passage is that this woman can have an idea and carry it through. She knows her strength, and does not shrink away from taking action. She makes plans, and then puts in the grunt work necessary to bring her vision into reality.

This is especially true when it comes to our own faith life – we all need spiritual leaders to follow, but we also need to be able to study, learn, grow, tell truth from error, and so on, even when not directed by someone else. When many sections of Christian publishing target fluffy, easy, devotional reads to women, we can get a glimpse at what some marketing bodies think of the readers of these books. But we can also counteract these stereotypes by growing in our own faith.

Strength can be used wrongly, of course. Strength can be used to bully. Strength can be used to overwhelm

*In your  
circumstances,  
what can she  
inspire you to do?*

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others. This is true of female strength too, and there can even be extremes such as female-on-male abuse. However, strength and gentleness are not contradictory. After all, 1 Peter 3:4 still applies: “let your adorning be... the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.” If you can think of strong men who are gentle, you will know strong women can be as well.

## AM I A STRONG FEMALE CHARACTER?

There are two responses to this idea of strength. The first is to glorify the strength of women as if this strength did not come first from God. To elevate the strength of women to the point where we almost require women to attain the same level of strength as men, or to speak as if female strength always surpassed men's. We are afraid we'd be betraying our gender by speaking of our fragility.

A broader understanding of strength is a good defense against this.

The other response is to feel intimidated because we personally feel so very beaten down and weak. There are many of us who hate hearing about how strong women are because we don't feel able to take even another step.

Can you tell I relate more to the second? I have never considered myself the strongest, and because of health reasons I've spent the past couple years feeling very weak. I was weak to the point where, when certain types of men have expressed the idea that women are inconveniences, I felt like I agreed, in that I wasn't sure I could help anyone much. It is a modern cliché – “the strong, female hero” – but I tend to notice all the ways I am not strong, physically and otherwise. And then I am reminded of verses like 1 Peter 3:7: “live with your wives in an understand-

ing way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel,” and I feel like a weaker vessel. “A woman of strength, who can find?”

In this regard, it's worthwhile to remember that weakness is not a gendered characteristic either. What does Paul say about weakness? “For when I am weak, then I am strong,” he says, because as he says elsewhere, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” He knows his weakness points him to the power of Christ. We all know what it is to be weak, and we all need to know where to turn to be strong.

The modern female hero can feel intimidating and unreachable and alien, in a way the woman in Proverbs 31 is not. Female superheroes might be fun to watch, but they do not change how I live. But Proverbs 31 is different. Proverbs 31 inspires me, because she is both like me and better. She challenges me to reach higher, through Christ who strengthens me.

## THE GREATEST IDEAL

Let me conclude with a question: what do you do if you don't feel this way? What do you do if, instead of being inspired, you feel ground down by

Proverbs 31 and don't feel enthusiastic about its picture of opportunities for women?

First, you need to recall there is another ideal that is very familiar to Christians, and that is the ideal of Jesus Christ himself. All Christians are called to conform themselves to Christ. And all Christians are aware of where we fall short in this. Do we look to Christ to feel bad? Of course, the woman in Proverbs 31 is not an ideal in the same way Christ is. We are not required to live up to the ideal of Proverbs 31 in the same way we are commanded to put on Christ-likeness. But while pursuing Christ we can see the examples of other Christian role models, who give us ideas about how to apply Christ's work in our own lives. The Bible has not neglected women – rather, it speaks right to us.

Second, there is an undeniable cultural context here. It's not wrong to point out that this woman is set in a specific place and time, and this affects the way she is described. She acts in the way a wife of a rich, high-standing husband would act. And since this passage is advice given to a king by his mother (see Prov. 31:1), it is, in a sense, an ideal woman viewed through the eyes






of a man who will need to find a wife someday, which does explain why some features are emphasized more than others. After all, Jesus Christ himself put on human flesh in a specific place and time, and we still understand that the universal application of his example is not tied to being an unmarried carpenter. It is correct to say she's rich and you're not, but not as a way of downplaying her achievements or making her easier to stomach, but rather as a way of re-contextualizing your response to her. In your circumstances, what can she inspire you to do?

Therefore, the third point is that we can see her as an example of a different way to live, rather than a standard meant to intimidate us. We are not doomed to some of the repeated negative stereotypes about females that are spread around: neurotic, weak, anxious, gullible. None of this is our destiny. It is not encoded in our genes, a sentence given by God at birth. No, we can draw enthusiasm about our femininity from this picture presented here.

The woman in Proverbs 31 does many things. As Wikipedia sums it up, she is "an industrious housewife, a shrewd businesswoman, an enterprising trader, a generous benefactor (verse 20) and a wise teacher (verse 26)." You can look at all that and think, oh *wow I have to do all that?* Or you can think, wow, I could be a business woman. I could be a trader. I could be a benefactor. Look at all the things I could do and be.

And that sense of possibility is a good place to start. Don't be afraid of her. Remember, she comes to you with words of kindness on her tongue. 

*Author Harma-Mae Smit loves theology and loves the Lord. If you want more articles like this, you'll be interested to learn she has started a monthly newsletter (where this article first appeared) as an antidote to the shallow and negative stories that tend to get shared online. Join her by signing up at [books.harmamaesmit.com](http://books.harmamaesmit.com) to get a new issue every month, and engage in discussion.*

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Applications may be sent to Chair of Personnel Committee:

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## SEEKING A PASTOR

Fellowship Church in Burlington, Ontario (a church in the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches) is actively seeking a Pastor whom God has chosen to lead us into the future. Fellowship Church is a family-oriented, multi-generational congregation of about 250 people. We hope to make an impact in the community of Aldershot with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our motivated and enthusiastic congregation needs a dynamic Pastor to lead us in living out our vision statement:



"A vibrant church bringing glory to God through Christ centred worship and energised by the Holy Spirit to reach out in service to our neighbours."

We desire a candidate who through prayer and reliance on God's word, can lead, equip, exhort and provide dynamic, practical and relevant preaching and teaching, to our congregation. If you are feeling God's nudging to consider this opportunity, we would love to hear from you. For more information about Fellowship, please visit our website, [www.fellowshipchurch.ca](http://www.fellowshipchurch.ca). Please send your questions/resume to: Pastor Search Committee [PSC@fellowshipchurch.ca](mailto:PSC@fellowshipchurch.ca). All correspondence will be treated confidentially.

# ARCHER FISH: A Wonder Of Creation

by Jerry Bergman

The archer fish (*Toxotes jaculatrix*, from ejaculator fish) – named for its expert archery skills – is one of the most amazing fish known to humans.<sup>1</sup> When first researched by scientists in the 1920s, researchers “could hardly believe their eyes” at its shooting ability.<sup>2</sup> The existence of the fish was actually first reported by explorers as early as 1764, but for years scholars could not accept the reports of this amazing fish.<sup>3</sup>

This seven-inch long fish is well-known for accurately knocking insect prey out of overhanging vegetation with a jet of water six times more powerful than its muscles. To achieve this feat, the archer positions itself in the water with its snout just breaking the water’s surface, and its eyes just below the surface. Then it aims its jet spray using superbly designed binocular vision to accurately determine its prey’s location.

If one eye is damaged, their aiming skill is lost. Archer fish modulate their water jet’s velocity to create a single large water droplet that strikes their prey with enormous force. This design avoids the requirement for specially designed internal structures to store large amounts of energy.

## HOW ITS WATER GUN WORKS

The water shot is produced by the fish compressing its hard-bony tongue against the roof of its mouth, forcing water out the gun-barrel-like groove in the archer fish’s mouth roof by rapidly snapping its gill covers shut.<sup>4</sup> It accurately strikes its target usually on the first attempt at distances of up to 2 to 3 feet! To position itself to hit its target, the fish can swim

up, down, and even backwards to enable its vision to line up with its prey.

So complex is its design, that the mechanism the archer fish uses to produce its water jet has been researched for decades. Only in 2011 were scientists finally able to understand how it works.<sup>5</sup> Alberto Vailati and his University of Milan colleagues provided the first scientific explanation for how archer fish are able to generate such powerful jets to capture their prey. To study the mechanics of the water jet, the authors used high-speed

video recordings of archer fish knocking insects out of plants.

Scientists now know that a large amplification of the fishes’ muscular power occurs outside of the fish to cause a powerful impact of the water jet against the prey. The archer fish generates this power externally using water dynamics rather than specialized internal organs. Some animals, such as chameleons and salamanders, store energy in their body’s collagen fibers and abruptly release their stored energy to project their tongues outward at high speeds. Previous research on archer fish has ruled out the use of these specialized organs as the source behind their powerful water jets.

Excellent vision in its typical muddy water environment is also critical to hit its target. To achieve this vision, the archer’s eye retina is far more complex than that of most fish. The cones for daytime vision number only 8 or 9, but the archers’ rods for vision in muddy water, where they normally live, number a whopping 217. The archer fish can extinguish cigarettes with their water jet in total darkness! The archer fish must also solve the refraction problem, the bending of light rays that occurs as the light rays enter the water, causing objects to appear where they are not. It achieves this feat with remarkable accuracy.<sup>6</sup>



This is Chapter 1 from Dr. Jerry Bergman’s *Wonderful and Bizarre Life Forms in Creation*. Each of the 23 chapters examines a different animal or creature. So if you liked this excerpt, be sure to order the book at [Create.ab.ca](http://Create.ab.ca).

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

As the young fish develop, they begin practicing on targets above the water in their natural habitat.<sup>7</sup> The tiny fish first succeed in squirting their jet only a few inches high. As they mature, they learn to shoot a stream of water as far as fifteen



feet! Adult archer fish normally shoot down their insect prey at a range of less than a meter.

To strike its moving target, the fish must compensate for the insect's speed and the changing angle between the fish and its target to determine the refracted level (how much the light is bent at the air-water boundary). They also must compensate for the effect of gravity on both the fish and the water stream.<sup>8</sup>

These variables require computing a set of calculations that must be done by human mathematicians using calculus. Research has also determined that archer fish learn to make these calculations by observing other skilled fish practice their art. All of this is achieved by a "primitive cerebrum" which researchers have discovered is not primitive at all!<sup>9</sup>

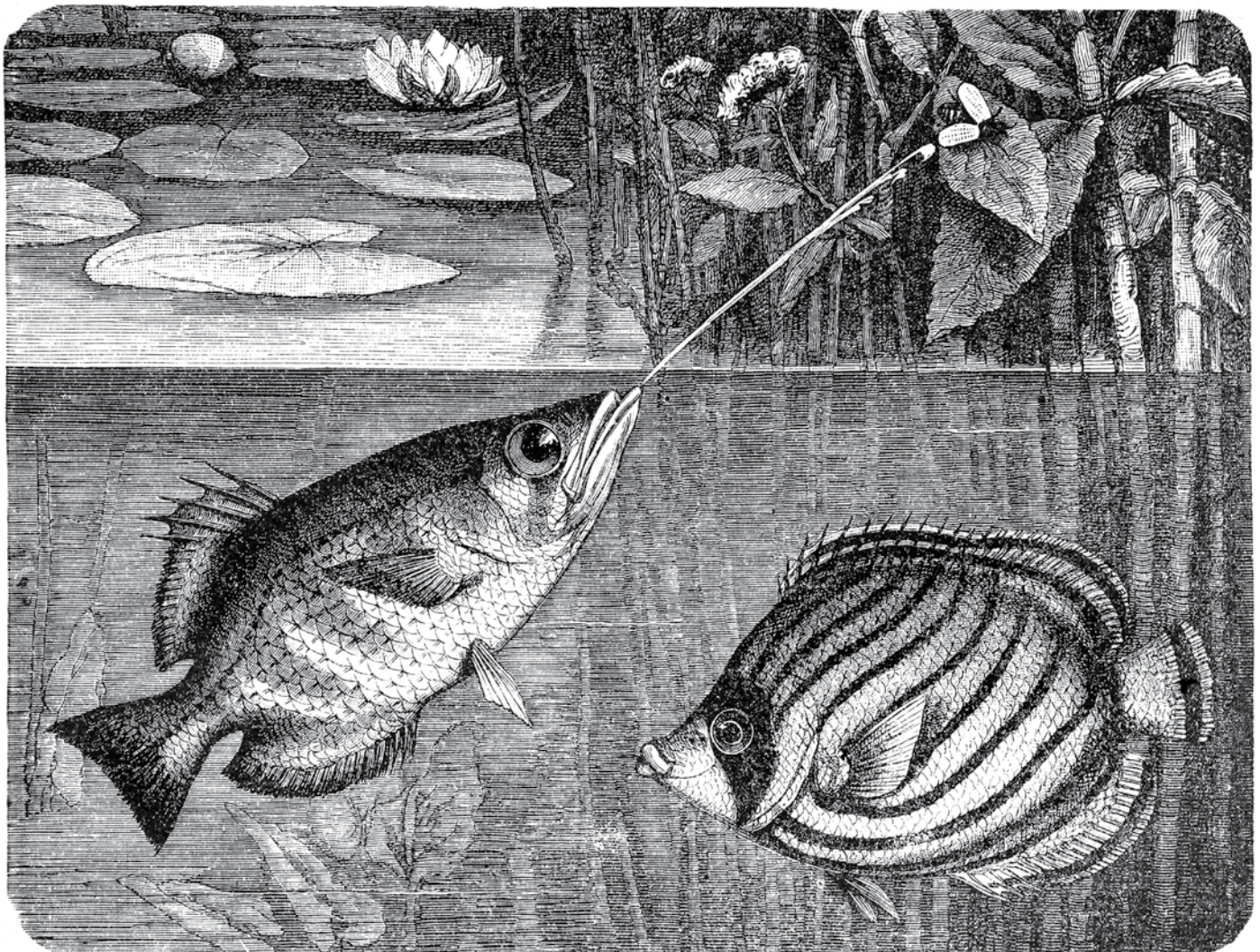
*... the mechanism the archer fish uses to produce its water jet has been researched for decades.*

#### **EVOLUTION FAILS TO EXPLAIN ARCHER FISH ORIGINS**

Evolution cannot explain archer fish because evolution postulates that it gradually evolved its remarkable ability, and must have done so because it significantly helped their survival. No other fish has this ability. Nor are any intermediates between the archer fish and all other fish known. Fish either possess the complete set of biological

systems to shoot insects out of the air, or lack the entire set.

Another major problem with an evolutionary explanation is that archer fish most often feed on insects it finds on, or just below, the water surface. It can even jump above the surface to take insects on the wing. It can also feed on insects that sink a few inches into the water.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, it does not need to shoot insects out of the air to survive, and can survive quite well without ever





doing so. In fact, most of its food is usually obtained without ever using its water gun. It appears its archery ability is exercised mostly for sport or variety! Archer fish expert, Professor Lüling, recognized this problem, writing:

*Toxotes depends largely on food it finds on or below the [water's] surface. It prefers insects that have fallen to the surface, but it will also take food that has sunk a few inches into the water. This raises an interesting question for evolutionary theory: Spouting, if it is so unimportant, can hardly have been a significant factor in the survival of the species or in selection and differentiation within the species.<sup>11</sup>*

Consequently, natural selection cannot account for their amazing ability. Nor can evolution account for the unique ability of this marvelous little fish! Although normally existing in the waters

of Australia and Southeast Asia, because of their unusual skill they are popular attractions in aquariums throughout the world. <sup>RP</sup>

*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," "Evolution's blunders, frauds and forgeries" as well as the book this extract came from, "Wonderful and Bizarre Life Forms in Creation" which can be ordered at [Create.ab.ca](http://Create.ab.ca).*

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By Jon Dykstra

### FREIHEIT! THE WHITE ROSE GRAPHIC NOVEL

BY ANDREA GROSSO CIPONTE  
110 PAGES / 2020



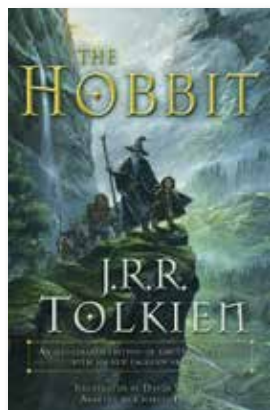
I grew up reading about the Dutch resistance during World War II, and it was only years later that I realized the Germans had their own committed dissenters. *Freiheit!* is the story of one such group, "The White Rose." These university students wrote pamphlets urging Germans to rise up and actively resist their government. The problem, they said, was not that everyone *supported* Hitler, but that too few *opposed* him. "We are your guilty conscience," their pamphlets declared, as the group tried to prod their fellow Germans to oppose Hitler, not just in thought, but in deed.

Today that willingness to stand up to wicked leaders, no matter the cost, continues to inspire. That's the appeal of this graphic novel – this is good food for our own young men and women. The White Rose's pamphlets, translated and printed in the back of this graphic novel, make it clear that there were some Christian underpinnings to what they were doing.

The story is a bit jumpy, so this isn't a graphic novel for pre-teens. It requires some work from the reader because the author isn't holding our hand, explaining every last thing. So I'd recommend this for 16 and up, not because of any content cautions, but only because of the effort it requires. If *Freiheit!* is of interest, you may also enjoy *The Faithful Spy*, about German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer and a plot to kill Hitler.

### THE HOBBIT: AN ILLUSTRATED EDITION OF THE FANTASY CLASSIC

BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN, ADAPTED BY CHARLES DIXON  
1990 / 133 PAGES



We all know the book is always better than the movie, and the movie better than the graphic novel adaptation. But this otherwise unfailing rule does have an exception here, with this comic being *so much better* than the movie.

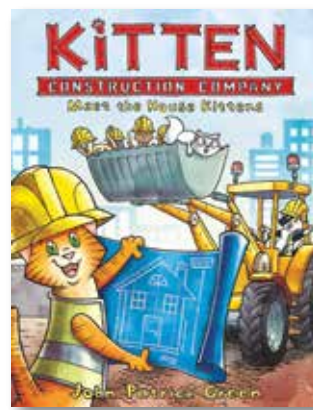
For those unfamiliar with the epic tale, this is the story of Bilbo Baggins, the titular hobbit, which is basically a human-like creature though half the size, and with twice the hair on their feet. Hobbits are homebodies so Bilbo isn't exactly sure how he joined a dwarfish expedition to steal back their treasure from an enormous talking dragon. Small and retiring though he might be, Bilbo is big in character, and while he doesn't think himself brave, in meeting up with trolls, goblins, giant spiders, and the even more gigantic dragon, he ends up doing many a brave thing. This is an old fashioned epic tale with good eventually triumphing over evil...but not without paying a price.

That's the original book, and the 133 pages of this graphic novel adaptation give this the space to capture it all. And illustrator David Wenzel has given this a classic look for this classic tale – there's a reason that in the 30 years since this first came out, no artist has attempted to improve on it.

Size and depth means this isn't for the casual comic fan, but for fantasy fans 14 and up, this will be such a treat!

### KITTEN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY: MEET THE HOUSE KITTENS

BY JOHN PATRICK GREEN  
70 PAGES / 2018



The author of *Hippopotamister* is back with another charming treat for early readers. Marmalade is a brilliant architect, but he's also a cute kitten... and that's a problem. No one will take him seriously. When Marmalade loses a design job and goes off to drown his sorrows in a saucer of warm milk, he meets another kitten dealing with the very same problem. The two decide that maybe they can team up. And that's how the Kitten Construction Company is born!

While most of the book's intended audience won't realize it, the author is tackling discrimination. He's making the lesson gentle, by making the source of discrimination "cuteness" rather than skin color or gender but what comes through is that treating people based on how they look rather than what they can do is ridiculous. He's also not hammering kids over the head with the lesson, feeling free to divert from the lesson to bring in some funny cat jokes.

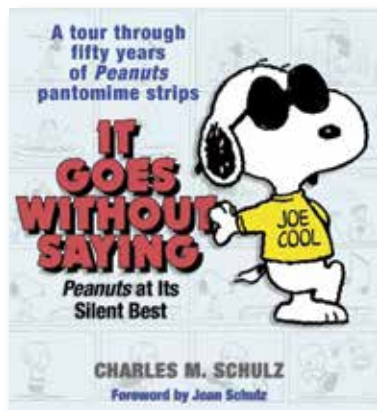
The sequel deals with a similar anti-discrimination theme when the kittens get the call to design and build a bridge. As everyone knows, cats don't like water, so they'll need some help with this job. And standing ready are... the Demo Doggos.

Dogs? Marmalade isn't sure. Will that be, as the title asks, *A Bridge Too Fur*?



## IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING: PEANUTS AT ITS SILENT BEST

BY CHARLES SCHULTZ  
2005 / 160 PAGES



There seems something almost wrong about using a multitude of words to recommend a wordless book so let me hit just a few highlights and be done. The brilliance in this "tour through fifty years of *Peanuts* pantomime strips" manifests in at least three different ways.

1. This is *all* ages. With no words to struggle over, my 6-year-old, still-learning-to-read daughter enjoyed this just as much as me. Might this be a gem for a reluctant reader?
2. This is unique. We're all used to the regular puns that populate the newspaper comics page and know what to expect, but the sight gags here are humor of a whole different sort, and that curveball is sure fun.
3. This is art. Schultz does a lot with a little - not just wordless, but his artistic style is also sparse, and it is amazing to see what he can communicate with just a few lines here and there.

I'll only add that if you enjoy *It Goes Without Saying*, you might be interested in *Garfield Left Speechless*. It doesn't have the same charm - Garfield is sometimes meanspirited in a way that Snoopy never is - but it does have some of the same slapstick creativity.

## THE BUG ZAPPER: THE ANT ARRIVES!

BY TOM EATON  
2018 / 108 PAGES

*Bug Zapper* is a superhero that fights a bevy of bug-themed villains like Mean Mosquito, Butterfly Bob, and the Black Ant. His powers are the ability to jump really far - I think he's jumping and not flying - and, like his namesake, a nasty jolt of electricity that stops bug villains in their tracks.

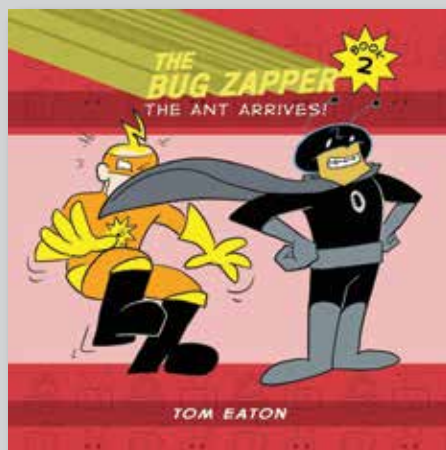
This is more of a gentle spoof of the superhero genre than a genuine batman or spiderman-type comic. Yes, villains do get zapped, but no one gets really hurt. Artist and author Tom Eaton makes good use of bright colors and simple lines - the drawings strike me as a little *Peanut*-esque - to create a comic book that'll draw kids in. It's hard to walk by this without picking it up for a peek.

There are two books so far - *Bug Zapper* and *Bug Zapper: The Ant Arrives!* - and both my Grade Three daughter and I thought the second was the better of the two with just a bit more action and humor.

But the first has the Bug Zapper's origin story, which every Bug Zapper fan will want to know.

And the first also has an interesting plotline about bias in reporting. Robert, an elementary student who would love to be the Bug Zapper's sidekick, also writes about him for the school newspaper. Amber, the daughter of one of Bug Zapper's archnemeses, also goes to the school and accuses Robert of being biased for writing such a nice piece about a hero while saying nothing nice about villains. Then the teacher gives Robert an assignment to write his next article about a supervillain! But does being unbiased means saying nice things about both sides? That's what Amber thinks. But Robert knows that good journalism is more about being fair, trying to share the truth as accurately as he can. That's some pretty weighty material for a comic that's otherwise just lighthearted fun! And Tom Eaton pulls it off well.

I would think this best for Grades One to Three, but there is a video version on the author's website that will let you gauge how it matches up with your children. You can also find coloring sheets at [bugzappercomics.com](http://bugzappercomics.com).



# DAVID MACAULAY: Architect & Artist

by Jon Dykstra

**D**avid Macaulay (1946-) is a children's author who loves to investigate how things are made and how they work. He covers everything from architecture (skyscrapers, bridges, etc.) to machines (computers, inclined planes), and even biology (cells, the human body). Macaulay is first an artist and then an author, so even though he writes for all ages, his books are always picture books.

His first, *Cathedral: the story of its construction* (1973), set the template for much that would follow. It was filled with detailed, full-page illustrations showing the whole construction process, right from the decision to build in 1252, all the way to the church's completion more than a hundred years later. It isn't the history of any real, specific cathedral, so, to give added color, Macaulay included a fictitious back-story. While this narrative is interesting, it's also quite bare-bones – we learn the architect's name and hear about some of the monetary troubles involved in paying for the cathedral, but not much more than that. Most of the "story" details the construction challenges these ancient builders faced, and the ingenious solutions they came up with to solve them. Many people are mentioned, but the story is more a biography of the building than its creators. A combination of detailed text, and big pictures, gives *Cathedral* a cross-age appeal. Younger, elementary-aged children can flip through it (maybe with some help from mom or dad), while teens and adults will likely read it front to back.

*Cathedral* was followed by others of a similar sort, exploring how pyramids, jet planes, inclined planes, and even toilets work. Then, in more recent years, Macaulay has delved into the way our bodies work.

## RECOMMENDED

So what Macaulay books would be great to check out of your local library? Or might be good purchases for your home or Christian school library? The following list isn't exhaustive – Macaulay's output is impressive, so I haven't gotten to them all yet – but what follows are my recommendations, grouped by age group.

### Kindergarten to Grade 4

While many Macaulay books are oversized, these are more typically sized, just right for the younger reader to hold and flip through. But mom and dad will also enjoy reading these to their kidlets.

#### TOILET: HOW IT WORKS - 32 PAGES / 2013

A great one to start boys on. Considering the topic matter, it is quite remarkable that this is free of any potty humor.

#### JET PLANE: HOW IT WORKS - 32 PAGES / 2012

#### EYE: HOW IT WORKS - 32 PAGES / 2013

A very fun look at just how amazing the eye is.

#### CASTLE: HOW IT WORKS - 32 PAGES / 2012

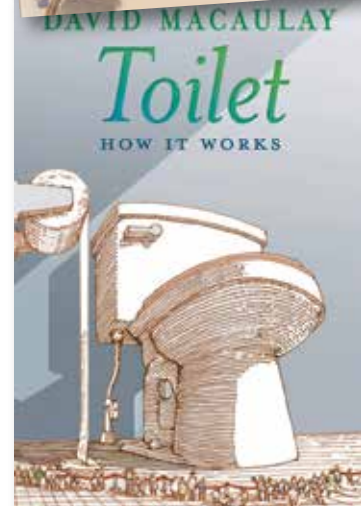
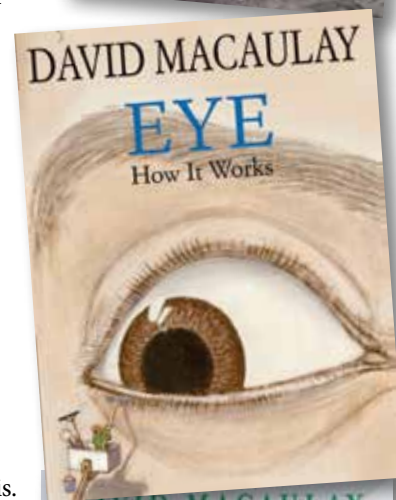
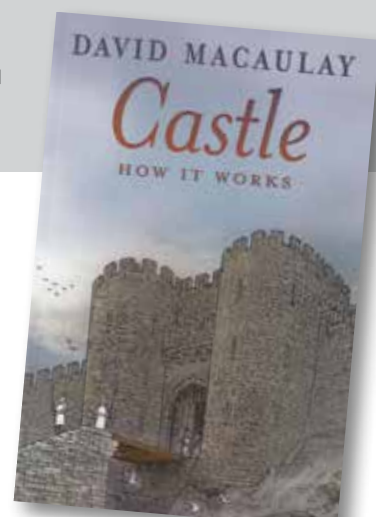
A much simpler version of his earlier *Castle* (1977) book, it might create interest in that bigger volume.

#### SHORTCUT - 64 PAGES / 1995

This is a creative mesh of several seemingly unrelated storylines, and the fun for kids is to figure out how they are all interconnected. This brightly colored picture book is a departure from any other Macaulay book, being more a mystery than anything architectural.

#### BLACK AND WHITE - 32 PAGES / 1990

A Caldecott winner, this unique book has 4 stories being told simultaneously on each two-





page spread. Or is it all just one story? Very fun, but not for the impatient, as the answer reveals itself slowly.

### Grades 3 to adult – bigger books

These architectural books are all big, but not too big to scare away the elementary reader. I've grouped them in order of preference, leading with the very best. But if a child loves any one of these, they'll likely enjoy them all.

#### **CASTLE** - 80 PAGES / 1977/2010

A Caldecott Award winner, it tells the detailed, historically-accurate (though fictitious) story of how an English castle was constructed in the late 1200s. Be sure to get the 2010 version, which has all the full-page pictures in full color. Castles are the coolest, so if you were to get just one Macaulay book, this should be it. It won a Caldecott award.

#### **CATHEDRAL** - 80 PAGES / 1973/2013

The one that started it all. Its oversized pages showcase in words and wonderful, detailed pictures how a medieval people, lacking all our modern construction tools, could build something that would marvel us still today. The black and white original was redone in color in 2013, and the added vibrancy is wonderful.

#### **CITY** - 112 PAGES / 1974

Describes how the Roman Empire would plan and build their cities.

#### **PYRAMID** - 80 PAGES / 1975

As you might imagine, there is some mention made about the ancient Egyptians' pagan beliefs, but nothing that the target audience, Grade 3 and up, shouldn't be able to see through. But they might not realize that Macaulay is including some guesswork in amongst the facts since there are several theories about how exactly the pyramids were made.

### Grade 6 and up – huge tomes

#### **BUILDING BIG** - 192 PAGES / 2000

This might be my favorite of all Macaulay's books, with short treatments of various historic bridges, tunnels, dams, domes, and skyscrapers. More than 30 structures are covered, going as far back as the Pantheon, all the way to today's skyscrapers. It's a treat to see just how creative engineers have been in build-

ing bigger, higher, and deeper, even as they used less and cheaper materials. I'll own up to not understanding even half of what Macaulay explains, but that didn't detract from the enjoyment.

#### **CROSSING ON TIME** - 128 PAGES / 2019

This is part autobiography, sharing the author's trip across the Atlantic Ocean when he was only a young boy and his family immigrated from Great Britain to America. But it is, even more, a story about the development of the steam engine, passenger ships in general, and the *SS United States* specifically. As always, detailed pictures provide lots for the viewer to explore.

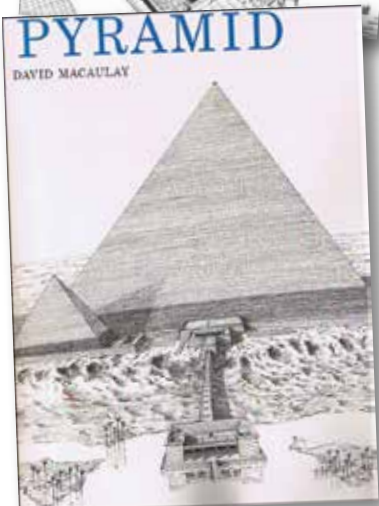
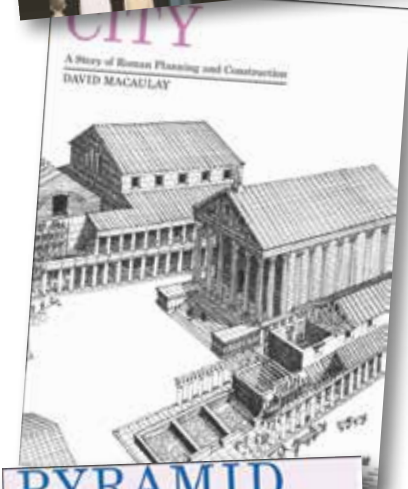
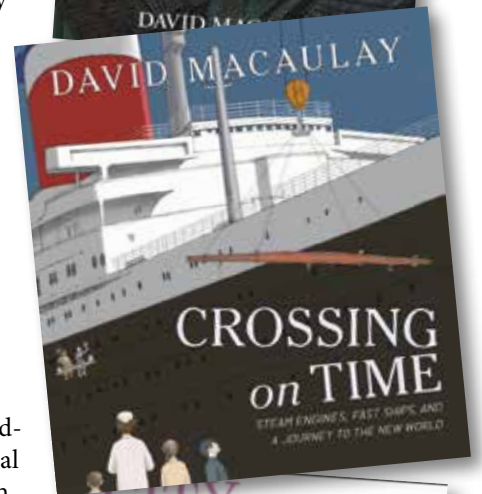
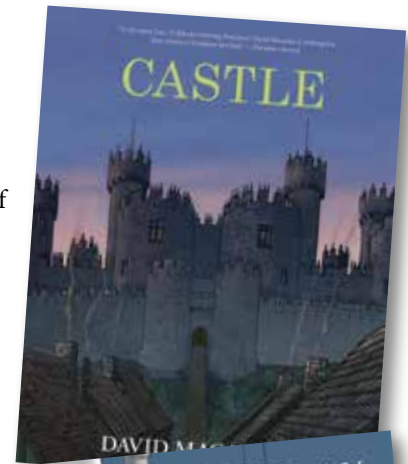
### TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

#### **MOSQUE**

Another big book about how a building gets built, and while there is no real reason to avoid it – it treats Islam with deference, but doesn't actually promote it, as this is about a building rather than the religion – there is also no pressing reason to get it either. I know it wouldn't have interested me as a boy, especially when compared to his book on castles.

#### **THE WAY WE WORK**

In this enormous tome (300+ pages), Macaulay explores how amazingly well-designed we are (though he doesn't put it quite like that). He details it from the atomic level on up to cells, eyes, and even our reproduction system. It is the brief section on sex that makes this a take-it-or-leave-it book. It is quite restrained and comparatively tame to what else is out there, but this isn't a topic that kids should tackle without adult supervision, making this a questionable book for a school library. And while parents could conceivably use it to introduce and discuss this topic with their kids, there are better, specifically Christian, books available. So I'd only recommend this for an age group who already knows the basics about sex since for them this could be a fascinating overview of the whole body (and the sex section isn't remotely titillating). I'll also





note the passing mention made, 2 or 3 times, of ancient ancestors or of evolution. However, the more important worldview implication is the glaring omission of any mention of God, even as His handiwork is explored and praised. The creation is praised rather than the Creator, and kids may miss the significance of that misdirection, so parents will need to make that plain.

### THE WAY THINGS WORK NOW

Macaulay uses cute mammoths to explain everything from how basic machines like screws and inclined planes work, to the inner workings of computers and jets. There is the very occasional mention of millions of years, and, on a few pages, some tiny angel-like creatures appear to help illustrate how a machine works. It's a mystery why he uses them there instead of the mammoths that are everywhere else.

### MAMMOTH SCIENCE

Mammoths are used to illustrate and introduce scientific topics as varied as light, molecules, density, bacteria, pressure, hydraulics, and magnetism. But evolution is a minor theme, popping up at least a half dozen times, including a couple of pages devoted specifically to it.

### ANGELO

This is the story of Angelo, who cleans and restores ancient architecture, and the pigeon he saves. It is a charming and different perspective on these ancient buildings, but Angelo dies at the end and that made my girls cry. So, at least in our house, two thumbs down.

## DON'T BOTHER

### BAAA

Strange dystopian picture book in which humans have disappeared due to overpopulation, and then sheep follow in their footsteps. A Malthusian/overpopulation allegory. Simply nonsense.

### UNDERGROUND

This is not a bad book, but it isn't a good one. It details what is found underneath a downtown city street, but the book is dry and dusty because there is no story element.

### GREAT MOMENTS IN ARCHITECTURE

This is an attempt at humor, with various strange works of impossible, fanciful architecture shown, but it ends up being odd and weird, not funny.

## TV SERIES

While this review is about Macaulay's books, I'll briefly mention a video series based on one of them. *The Way Things Work* is 26-episodes long and utterly fantastic, and while the \$200+ price tag is too expensive for parents to buy, many public libraries carry it. To learn more, see my review at [ReelConservative.com](http://ReelConservative.com).

## CAUTIONS

There aren't many worldview conflicts to be found. It comes out that Macaulay does think people are really something, which, of course, we do too, though likely for a different reason. We know our worth comes from outside ourselves – it comes from being made in the very Image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) – whereas Macaulay seems to believe that what makes us special comes from what we can do. In the preface to his updated *Cathedral* (2013), he writes:

“Whatever magical or superhuman notions these buildings may stir, castles and cathedrals are tangible reminders of human potential. Understanding how they came to be is just the first step in recognizing that potential in each of us.”

If you were to ask, “Who or what is the ‘god’ of Macaulay’s books? Who or what is the object of worship?” this would be the answer: human ability and human potential. In the same book, he also offers a seemingly cynical take on medieval Christianity:

“For hundreds of years the people were taught by the church that God was the most important force in their lives. If they prospered, they thanked God for his kindness. If they suffered, they begged for God’s mercy, for surely He was punishing them.”


Of course, as children of the Reformation, we know there was a good deal about the medieval Church to be cynical about, so maybe there is no fault to find here.

A clearer problem lies in the one or two dozen mentions Macaulay makes about evolution and millions of years. But these mentions are spread out over his many books, such that in a book of 300+ pages it might happen twice or thrice, and in his shorter books, not at all.

The most overt worldview conflict I’ve found is in his strange dystopian *Baaa* (1985), in which humans have overpopulated themselves out of existence, only to have sheep take their place and then repeat their mistake. The overpopulation lesson preached here is in opposition to God’s command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28).

## CONCLUSION

If you have a budding engineer in your family, they’ll love David Macaulay. He has books for all ages, and sometimes two books on the same subject, with one for a younger age group and the other for a couple or so years older. Because so many of these books are about engineering marvels, they might be categorized as “boy books” but my girls were interested too. I think they could also be a way to hook a reluctant reader into working through a very big book – they might open the book for the illustrations, but then curiosity will get them to start reading this page and that.

There’s certainly good reason that David Macaulay remains a favorite of so many, even 50 years after his first book! 

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

SERIES 6-4

## PUZZLE CLUES

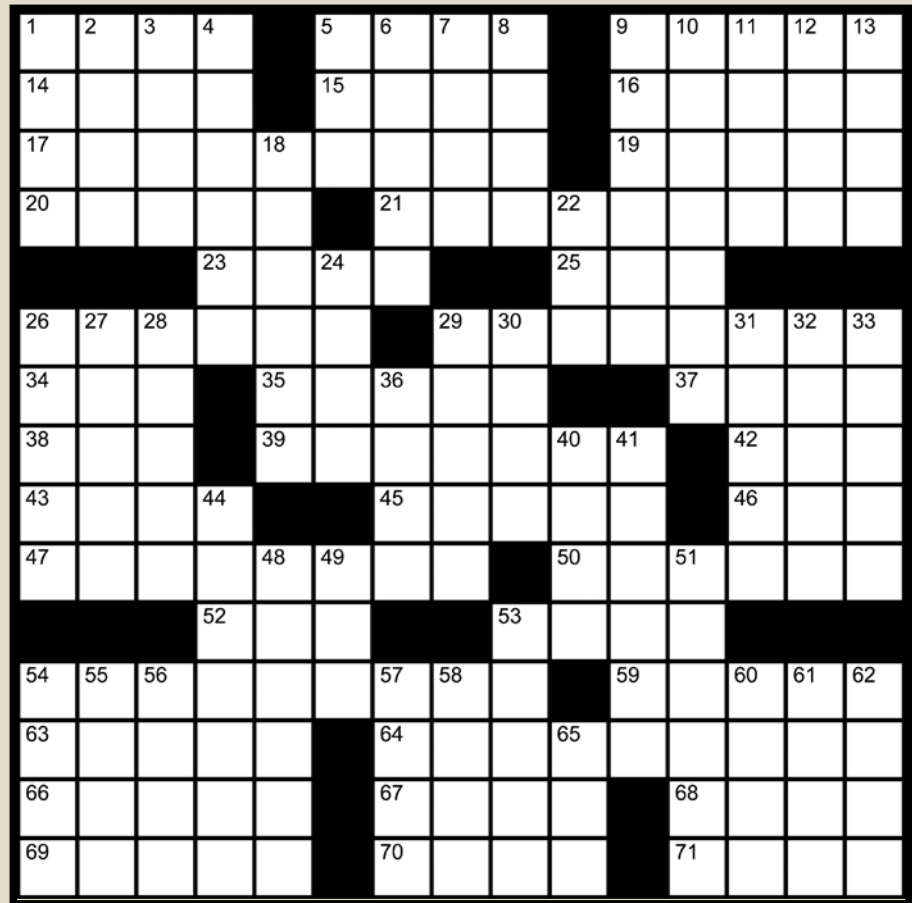
Find this issue's solution on page 2!

### ACROSS

1. In wildlife, no \_\_\_\_\_ are not good news.
5. Associate of the Royal College of Organists
9. "love no \_\_\_\_\_ oath" (Zech. 8)
14. Classic Hasbro war game
15. Utterly defeat, speaking slangily
16. Erosion took \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Sincerely, with real feeling (two words)
19. I will \_\_\_\_\_ no pollution of the \_\_\_\_\_.
20. This Northern kind of frost lasts all year.
21. They come in between the downstrokes.
23. Perhaps a prude is too \_\_\_\_\_ and proper.
25. Tombstone abbreviation
26. Riskier, less likely
29. Intimidate, as in competition (two words)
34. Do, re, mi, ... (a sunny little syllable)
35. Fine cotton thread used in stockings; also the last name of creationist Jason \_\_\_\_\_
37. Lock or university
38. \_\_\_\_\_ Ivanovic (retired Serbian tennis pro)
39. Shaped like a specific capital letter
42. Single-stranded genetic molecule
43. Entrance to a mine
45. *Juste \_\_\_\_\_ nous* = just between us
46. "cut off his right \_\_\_\_\_" (John 18)
47. Panaceas; supposed remedies for all ills (two words)
50. Not use a towel on your hair
52. The night before Christmas or New Year
53. Cancer Treatment Centers of America
54. These boots keep their soles longer.
59. Basic spirit and ideals of a culture
63. WWII German submarine
64. Sterilize food without heat
66. Polynesia archipelago kingdom
67. I'm all \_\_\_\_\_ to see the new zoo animals!
68. Relating to 46 Across
69. Jewish name for a Passover meal
70. It wasn't built in a day, so they say.
71. Eagle's home (Job 39)

### DOWN

1. Under stress, you may lose yours.
2. "\_\_\_\_\_ out of ten..." (Neh. 11)
3. *RP's* website is \_\_\_\_\_-friendly.



4. Scampi (shrimp dish - Croatian style)
5. Bristle or beard of certain plants (that could, perhaps, be used to make awnings?)
6. Watery fluid dripping from nose or eyes
7. Older teens are on the \_\_\_\_\_ of adulthood.
8. Chooses, selects
9. Textiles
10. What unused muscles do
11. "do not \_\_\_\_\_ gloomy" (Matt. 6)
12. Blackthorn berry used for a kind of gin
13. Group that meets in lodges
18. Not often is meat cooked like this.
22. If at first you don't succeed, \_\_\_\_\_
24. You use this to see this flower.
26. His name = "He laughs." (Gen. 21)
27. Ballet move (sounds like melted cheese)
28. Panache; style; natural aptitude
29. What you find on the blueprint
30. Beginning of school yr. in N.A.
31. Equipped for rowing
32. Relating to a bone in the forearm
33. Prone to crying
36. \_\_\_\_\_ Silverstein, U.S. children's poet
40. *Quod \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrandum*, (Latin); or, backward, an earthly companion to wheat
41. What they did to plane wings in winter
44. Adolescence: mostly the \_\_\_\_\_ years
48. Your identity in a video game
49. Greeting gift in Oahu
51. K-\_\_\_\_\_: WWII daily eats for soldiers
53. \_\_\_\_\_: early computer input medium
54. Primitive dwellings (for quarter-backs?)
55. Double reed woodwind instrument
56. "the \_\_\_\_\_ of the covenant." (Ez. 20)
57. How Jesus describes the devil (John 8)
58. Cogito, \_\_\_\_\_ sum (Latin for *therefore*)
60. "\_\_\_\_\_ evil, and love good" (Amos 5)
61. \_\_\_\_\_ Spunkmeyer: cookie fundraiser co.
62. Breakaway religious group
65. "Ask him; he is of \_\_\_\_\_" (John 9)

# PRINT IS YOUR PREFERENCE?

You *still* need to check us out at  
ReformedPerspective.ca!



Over the last 4 years, we've had a million articles viewed on ReformedPerspective.ca. Or, rather, we've had the 2,000+ articles posted there viewed an average of 500+ times each, which, if I've added on my zeros correctly, gets us to the million+ mentioned.

But why am I telling you, the purveyor of our print edition, what is going on at our digital domain? Because even those of us who prefer the feel of paper in our hands have good reason to check out RP's new and always improving website.

Let me give you just two.

## 1. LOTS TO LOVE

At this point we have about 5 years of the magazine up online, and we're adding more all the time. So whatever section you might like best in each print issue, there's a lot more of it online.

### Resources

If you have questions on a specific topic our Resources page has articles grouped by categories like: Apologetics 101, Church history, Dating, Economics, Parenting, People we should know, and more.

### Daily devotionals

One thing the website has that the magazine doesn't is our daily devotional which is linked to the relevant Scripture text. It's a great way to start your day!

### Book recommendations

This issue we have some rather unique graphic novels to recommend, and if those are to your liking, the website has another half dozen on offer.

Are those too kiddish? Well we have adult biographies (16), fiction (20+) and non-fiction (70+) recommendations galore.

We've got teens covered too, with 20+ fiction offerings, and almost as many in non-fiction.

For the littlest kids, we have the most recommendations, whether it's via articles like Janet Faber's article "46 children's books to foster the love of reading and learning" or Jon Dykstra's "20 read-aloud suggestions..." or the dozens of other picture book and chapter book reviews, we're hoping this ever growing section of the website will become a valuable resource when you're reserving book from your local public library.

### Movie recommendations


The cornerstone of this section is the article "200+ movies King David might watch." No matter your tastes, there's going to be something of interest for you there. And while not every title mentioned there links to a full review, we keep posting more and more reviews. There are now on offer reviews of: 18 animated and 38 family films or videos, 22 dramas, 48 documentaries, and more than 40 free films you can watch online.

### Magazine back issues

The six years worth of issues are all available as free pdf downloads, which means if you liked an article or an issue, you can share the digital version easily and quickly with just the click of a mouse.

## 2. EASY TO SHARE

And that the perfect segue to the second and maybe most important reason to visit the website: if you like what you're reading in the print magazine, the website makes it so easy to share your joy. It used to be that the only way you could share an RP article was by fax or photocopy, but now all the articles are up on the website. Sharing is as simple as a quick search to find the right article, and then you can copy and paste the article link into an email, your Twitter feed, a Facebook/MeWe/Gab post, or social media of whatever kind. It's that simple to share with your friends, adult children, parents, co-workers, or whoever else you think could really benefit from that particular article that you've enjoyed yourself.

And while you're checking out our digital edition, there's also a big "Give" on the top right that'll allow you to support our work. Of course, if print is your preference for giving too, then supporting us is as simple as filling in the form to the right of this page. If you like what we do, we'd love your help to do more of it! 





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

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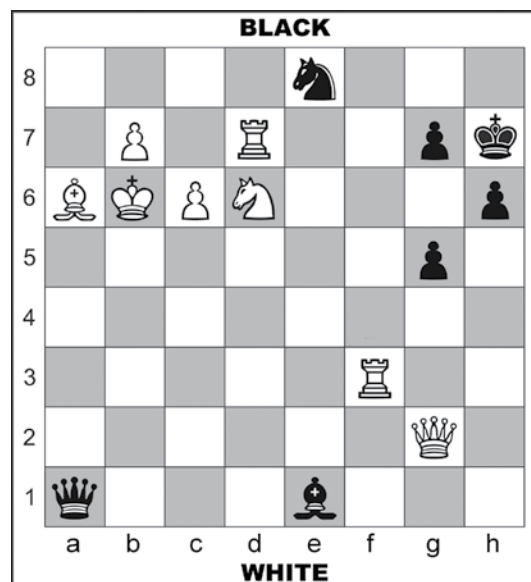
Thank you for standing with us as we together proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all spheres of life!

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

# ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



## Chess Puzzle #262



**WHITE TO MATE IN 3**  
Or, If it is BLACK's Move,  
**BLACK TO MATE IN 2**

## Riddle for Punsters

### #262 – “Not a pleasant way to travel?”

Why was the two-wheeled trailer so exhausted?

- a) If you were continually pulled through fumes behind the vehicle towing you, you would be \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ed too.
- b) The trailer was built in such a way that it is wh \_ \_ ly always two-t \_ \_ d to be otherwise.

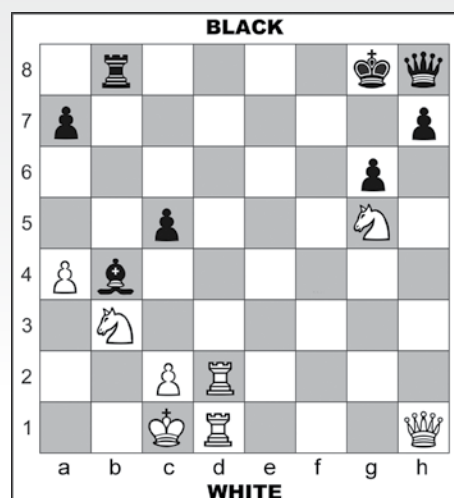
## Problem to Ponder

### #262 – “Catching the Cookie Caper Culprit”

Mr. and Mrs. Cinder-Ella have been blessed with four children who sometimes get into mischief. One rainy day one of them ate all the cookies in the cookie jar. Wanting to ensure that the culprit would get his “just desserts”, the parents questioned their children. Jeremy claimed that Gregory was guilty. Eve said that Jeremy ate the cookies. Gregory said that Jeremy’s accusation of Gregory was false. Simon insisted that one of his siblings was the culprit. If all of the children except one spoke falsely, who ate the cookies?

## LAST MONTH’S SOLUTIONS

### Solution to Chess Puzzle #261



**WHITE TO MATE IN 4**

| Descriptive Notation | Algebraic Notation |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Q-Q5 ch K-N2      | 1. Qh1-d5 + Kg8-g7 |
| 2. Q-B7 ch K-R3      | 2. Qd5-f7 + Kg7-h6 |
| 3. R-R1 ch KxN       | 3. Rd1-h1 + Kh6xg5 |
| 4. R-N2 mate         | 4. Rd2-g2 ++       |

**BLACK TO MATE IN 2**  
(FIND 2 ANSWERS)

| Descriptive Notation | or                | Algebraic Notation  | or                  |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. ---- Q-R8 ch      | 1. ---- B-R6 ch   | 1. ---- Qh8-a1 +    | 1. ---- Bb4-a3 +    |
| 2. NxQ B-R6 mate     | 2. K-N1 Q-N7 mate | 2. Nb3xa1 Bb4-a3 ++ | 2. Kc1-b1 Qh8-b2 ++ |

## Answer to 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 **nobel**ity.

Why did the politician run his campaign for election from a house with glass walls. It was **clear**ly because his campaign placed such an emphasis on **transparenc**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 **shel**tered lives.

## Answer to Problem to Ponder

### #260 – “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?

Let x represent the number of questions on the exam.

If  $(3/4)x + 6$  are correct, then 85% of x are correct.

So  $0.75x + 6 = 0.85x$

Mult. both sides by 100 to get  $75x + 600 = 85x$

Subt.  $75x$  from both sides, get  $600 = 10x$

Divide both sides by 10, get  $60 = x$

**Therefore the exam consisted of 60 multiple choice questions.**

Jasmine thus had  $(3/4)60 = 45$  questions correct and so  $60 - 45 = 15$  questions wrong.



# THE GREAT RESET: DON'T LET A CRISIS GO TO WASTE

by Levi Minderhoud

Over the past several months, the phrase *The Great Reset* has swirled around media headlines and social media. Many Christians are asking, should we support The Great Reset?

But a better question would be *which* Great Reset should we support? We should also consider why any great reset is needed in the first place, and why now might be the time for it.

## SO, WHY NOW?

So why is there a push for big changes right now? To answer that we can turn to a quote, often attributed to Winston Churchill, which argues we should: “Never waste a good crisis.”

Democratic governments normally change course gradually. Since humans are slow to change their minds and admit that they’d been wrong, the political views of an entire population of a country tend to change slowly rather than very quickly. Thus governments’ policies will also tend towards incremental rather than revolutionary change. Thus, during regular times, the window of opportunity for policy change is open only a crack.

But a crisis swings this window wide open. When the perspectives of an entire citizenry change rapidly, the revolutionary becomes ordinary.

We see this in our country’s response to COVID-10. In the eyes of most Canadian citizens, journalists, and politicians, COVID-19 has triggered a crisis. This social, economic, and health crisis – and

the fear that it provoked – have enabled the federal and provincial governments to do the previously unthinkable in an incredibly short time:

- prohibit international travel
- restrict religious worship services
- shutter businesses
- spend hundreds of billions of dollars

And this isn’t just the preferred response of politicians and scientific experts foisted on an unwilling public. Public opinion polling throughout the pandemic consistently reports that a significant majority of Canadians support these measures.

COVID-19 has thrown the policy window wide open for change. The question is, what sort of change, what sort of great reset, will take advantage of this opportunity before it closes?

## THE GREAT LIBERAL RESET

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has one proposal to seize this opportunity. The WEF is an international organization aimed at improving partnerships between governments, corporations, and non-profit organizations. With governments unshackled from normal budgetary and policy constraints, the WEF proposed that government use this opportunity to tackle current public policy issues in new ways. The World Economic Forum calls this general plan *The Great Reset*.

The Great Reset was the theme of

the Forum’s annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, which took place in the last week of January. On their website, the World Economic Forum describes The Great Reset:

“The Covid-19 crisis, and the political, economic and social disruptions it has caused, is fundamentally changing the traditional context for decision-making. The inconsistencies, inadequacies, and contradictions of multiple systems – from health and financial to energy and education – are more exposed than ever amidst a global context of concern for lives, livelihoods and the planet. Leaders find themselves at a historic crossroads, managing short-term pressures against medium- and long-term uncertainties.

As we enter a unique window of opportunity to shape the recovery, this initiative will offer insights to help inform all those determining the future state of global relations, the direction of national economies, the priorities of societies, the nature of business models and the management of a global commons. Drawing from the vision and vast expertise of the leaders engaged across the Forum’s communities, the Great Reset initiative has a set of dimensions to build a new social contract that honours the dignity of every human being.”

More concretely, The Great Reset focuses on strengthening environmental





*... are we bringing the gospel to our neighbors who need it now more than ever, using both our words and our deeds?*

protection against pollution and climate change; encouraging private companies to do more to care for their workers, their communities, and the environment; fostering multilateral cooperation; and promoting a rather left-leaning interpretation of inclusion, justice, and equality. So, let's call this The Great Liberal Reset.

To be clear, this is *not* a conspiracy by a secret elite. No, this is all out in the open. This is about world leaders (politicians, businessmen, activists, the wealthy) who share a common idea of how the world could be a better place trying to implement their vision through conventional channels – government policy, business decisions, grassroots advocacy, and targeted private investments. They are using the policy window opened by COVID-19 to advance their vision.

While there are aspects of this vision we might be able to support, Christians should be cautious about supporting this Great Liberal Reset as it also includes policies that Christians should oppose. More fundamentally, The Great Reset misdiagnoses what ails the world. That ailment is not COVID-19.

### THE GREAT MORAL RESET?

Christians know that sin, not COVID-19, ails the world. Rather than reshaping the world according to a liberal vision (or conservative, or socialist, or libertarian agenda for that matter), we should seek to shape the world according to God's Word. Christians should support

a "Great Moral Reset" of sorts, one in which our government's policies would be aligned with the morality of God's Word.

COVID-19 has opened the possibility for this sort of change. Our society has gone to extraordinary lengths to protect the lives of those vulnerable to COVID-19. Now we should go to even greater lengths to protect lives vulnerable to abortion and euthanasia, and provide better care for our elders.

Many provinces have closed schools or moved classes online in their monolithic education system in their response to COVID-19. Promoting educational diversity, including supporting independent schools, homeschooling, and distributed learning in a decentralized education system where parents are ultimately responsible for the education of their children, should be the new priority of provincial governments.

The federal government has poured hundreds of billions of dollars into supporting families and businesses through the pandemic. It should continue to defend the vitality of families by upholding a biblical understanding of marriage, gender, and sexuality and uphold the dignity of work.

But a Great Moral Reset isn't enough.

### THE GREAT SPIRITUAL RESET

Ultimately, Canada and the world does not need a Great Liberal Reset or even a Great Moral Reset. It is useless for our country to be a whitewashed tomb on the outside but full of dead bones on the inside. Our society needs a Great Spiritual Reset like the Great Awakenings spurred by George Whitefield, John

and Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and Dwight L. Moody. This spiritual reset isn't the task of governments, businesses, or general non-profit organizations. This spiritual reset is the responsibility of the Church.

COVID-19 has swung the window wide open for evangelism. With millions of fellow Canadians searching for hope, worrying about their employment stability, struggling with their mental and physical health, and mourning the passing of loved ones, many more people may be receptive to the Good News right now. As Jesus testifies, the gospel isn't for those who are healthy and those who think that they have life figured out. The gospel is for those who have realized their brokenness and their need for a Physician.

Are all our efforts directed to defending our personal freedoms (even if they are unjustly infringed upon)? Or are we bringing the gospel to our neighbors who need it now more than ever, using both our words and our deeds?

Jesus calls us to be the salt and the light of the world, two metaphors that ARPA Canada often draws upon. Christians have taken more seriously their calling to be a salt and a light in the realm of politics and public policy through the COVID-19 pandemic and the infringements on our freedom to worship. Let's not miss the opportunity to also speak the gospel of life to a suffering world.

Let's not waste this crisis. RP

*Levi Minderhoud is the BC Manager for ARPA Canada (ARPACanada.ca). For more on The Great Reset, be sure to check out the "Focal Point with Chris deBoer" podcast episode on the same topic, available at FocalPointRP.podbean.com.*

# FREEDOM VOTE 2020

If you don't care about your future, the future of your family, including your children, grand children or even your great grand children, then stop right here; you need not read further. But if you are a Christian and do care, read on! Let us reason together and consider the following: never have so many known so little about so much!

What should Christians consider when voting for a political party in Canada? On what should we base this choice? We have the legal right of choosing any party candidate, but is that enough? As Christians our choice should always prayerfully be based on Scripture and on the influence of the Holy Spirit to guide us. Then we can vote for the political party that has their platform based on Life, Family, Freedom and Justice.

- Canada does not have capital punishment for capital crimes. The world says it seems too violent and cruel! But the Bible states the government bears the sword of justice (Ex. 20:5).

- In Canada over 100,000 preborn children are murdered each year by being ripped cruelly from their mother's womb. They are allowed no trial, no appeal, and no justice and cannot defend themselves. What about this cruel violence? All secular levels of government of all parties do nothing to stop this. Meanwhile the Bible says that you shall not sacrifice your children to any idols.
- The mainstream political parties all support LGBT and Gay Pride parades. The Bible informs us that this is an abomination to the Lord (Eph. 5:5).
- Both the federal and provincial leaders give themselves unrestricted power that they legally do not possess. Both the federal and the provincial leaders have removed members from the party when they did not agree with them. Where is the freedom of speech and the freedom to choose or vote?

The ongoing scandals could fill several pages, but

these are just a few examples.

Christians across this nation, as a whole, can be compared to an awakening giant by our sheer numbers. Let us not be like the Israelites when they, about to enter the land of Canaan, said *the inhabitants were giants and we are like grasshoppers and we can not possibly win*. Yes, the other political parties may seem large and we as Christians seem so small, but we have God on our side! (Phil. 4:13). And they do not. As Christians we could choose to support and promote Christian candidates in all areas of the country and vote for them. And after the election Christians would then have a strong voice in Parliament, and a voice that everyone can thank God for and rejoice in with praises.

If we neglect this opportunity, why should our efforts be blessed by God? (Prov. 16:3, Col. 3:23-24, Ps. 128:2).

"For God and country, Freedom or Death!" This is a reality that all Christians may face sooner than we think!!

## What's YOUR Vision for Canada?



### Erin O'Toole supports:

- Abortion-on-demand
- Gay marriage
- Pride parades
- Conversion therapy ban
- Transgender access to women's shelters

By manningcentre - Flickr: Manning Centre party 2014 1115, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63839850>

### Rod Taylor and the CHP support:

- Protection of innocent human life at all stages
- Traditional marriage between one man and one woman
- Access to therapy for the gender-confused
- Privacy and security for women and girls



Join the Christian Heritage Party and help us fight for  
**LIFE • FAMILY • FREEDOM**

I agree with the following: There is one Creator God—the God of the Bible. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms acknowledges the Supremacy of God and the Rule of Law. All innocent human life must be protected by law from conception until natural death. Marriage is the exclusive union of one man and one woman. Parents are the primary authority for the care and education of their children. Canadian laws must reflect biblical moral standards.

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mr \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ Ms \_\_\_\_\_ First-Time \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ PO Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Check one: 1-yr: \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ 3-yr: \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ 3-yr Family membership: \$40 \_\_\_\_\_  
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# MUSIC FROM THE EYES

Jamie Soles on what turned him into a songwriter

**G**rowing up, my oldest brother Dave had a record player in the room he shared with my other brother Stephen. Dave was gone a lot of the time, so I spent many hours in that room, playing record after record, or, if I really liked it, the same one over and over. I think I learned every word of Randy Stonehill's *Welcome To Paradise* and *Equator*, Larry Norman's *In Another Land*, Phil Keaggy's *What A Day*, *Love Broke Thru*, and *Ph'lip Side*, all the Keith Green ones and Don Francisco ones, and several others. These got many a play from me when I was 12-15 years old. This music was life-shaping for me. I wanted to do what they were doing; to make music that would bless people, that would glorify God, and honor Jesus, and sound cool at the same

time.

My guitar-playing skills developed a lot in those days, as I learned how to listen to the music, and to hear what was in it. I learned how to identify chords when I heard them in the music, and started to develop the ability to understand what chords went with what chords, and how to anticipate what might be coming next. I found that I could play along (roughly) with Randy Stonehill or Don Francisco, but was sensible enough to put my guitar away when listening to Phil Keaggy, who I could tell was a long way above my pay grade.

## STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART?

As I acquired my skills on guitar, it also became apparent to me that I was

going to need to learn how to write songs if I was ever going to make it in the music business. But I had no idea where to begin. When I would try to think of lyrics, everything I came up with sounded too stupid to sing out loud.

I learned somewhere that songwriters were supposed to sing from the heart, from what was inside them. Turn the stuff inside you into a song. This, I could see already at that age, was bad counsel. For I knew the Bible well enough to remember what it said about the heart; that it was "deceitful above all things and desperately sick and wicked, and who could understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). And I am supposed to write songs from there? It did not add up, but I did not know what to do about it.

## BACKWOODS AND BACKWARDS

I tried to write a song for two years, from my 13th year to my 15th year, and everything I wrote seemed foolish even to me, and how much more foolish it would seem if I sang such schlock for anyone? I kept silent and tried again. And again. I could not seem to think about what I should write about. All the songs on the radio seemed to be love

*... it was when I looked outside myself, when I looked at God and his creation, that my tongue was unlocked to sing his praises in a way that blessed people*



songs; maybe that is what I should write about! But I was a backwoods, backwards farm boy with no shower at hand, and I had no experience in that field.

During the summer of 1981, I went to work as a Junior Counselor at Camp Sagitawa on Moberly Lake. I was there to be the second man in a cabin full of boys, week after week, all summer. But I was one of the main music people because I was quite good at guitar by then. So I spent that summer with my guitar in one hand, and Christian teaching about the glory of God in the other.

### THE KEY

One day I was admiring the beauty of creation there at camp, and I decided to try and write a song about that. Lo and behold, it worked! I wrote a sensible song! I sang it for people that night at the campfire, and everybody loved it. I was so inspired; I sat down and wrote

another, and another. I spent the rest of that summer writing songs because I had discovered the key:

*Do not write what is in your heart.  
Write what is in your eyes.*

The Disney version of life is not correct. You are not going to find good things, things of which you can make sense, in your heart. For me, it was when I looked outside myself, when I looked at God and his creation, that my tongue was unlocked to sing his praises in a way that blessed people. This is the way the world works. It is not about you, not about your thoughts, not about your feelings. But it is about Jesus, and about what he has done.

Sing that.

– Jamie Soles 

## A NEW WAY TO SUPPORT CHRISTIAN MUSIC

I was with a fellow musician the other day, and we were lamenting our current predicament as musicians. “We are deeply invested in doing good work and creating a product people will love. But the market has changed. Our music is worth nothing anymore, financially speaking.”

This is truly the case, as you can probably attest in your own home; have you bought a CD this year? These days music is delivered to the masses via streaming services, which pay artists very little (even though my music is being streamed upwards of 200,000 times this year). Then COVID and the panic it has engendered greatly curtailed my ability to get out and do concerts. I have done two concerts this year, instead of the 30+ I had planned.

So, out with the old business model, and here is the new: please consider becoming a patron to my art, a regular monthly supporter. If, in the old days, you might have purchased one CD a year from me, you might use that as a guideline and support me at \$2.00 a month on Patreon. You would not be buying my music for cheap since it is already virtually free on streaming services. You would be supporting Jamie Soles, the artist, at whatever amount you are willing to give on a monthly basis. A side benefit would be free access to all my music, but the real benefit is knowing that I am still making music for the world. You can find out more by clicking here: [patreon.com/join/2034697](https://patreon.com/join/2034697).

And if you still like CDs, well, you can still get those at my website: [SolMusic.ca](https://SolMusic.ca). Blessings to you, my friend!

– Jamie Soles



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# WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DOES JAMIE SOLES MAKE?

by Jon Dykstra

Jamie Soles likes to play in a variety of musical genres, so what best characterizes his music might not be the sound, but the lyrical depth and biblical faithfulness. I still remember the first time I heard his song “Jael”:

She sent her hand to the tent peg  
Her right hand to the workman’s mallet  
She struck Sisera, she crushed his head  
She shattered and pierced his temple...

This is on a children’s album, mind you, and as I listened my kids were singing along. If that strikes you as too much information too soon for little ones, well, I’ll just say the Bible is meant to be a Parental Guidance, or PG-rated book. So yes, this song might prompt a needed conversation about God’s justice and holiness, Jael’s courage, and Barak’s cowardice. And isn’t that fantastic!

Soles does much more than children’s music, and with 20 albums so far he’s explored a lot of different sounds. We can’t give you a listen, but we can share a couple examples of his lyrics, to showcase just how unique an artist Jamie Soles is.

**“FEEL MY HANDS”**  
from the album *Supplanter*  
(GEN. 27:8-27)  
©NOV. 12/2016 JAMIE SOLES

I have got some serious misgivings,  
Mother dear, Mother dear,  
I might procure a curse and not  
a blessing, this I fear, this I fear.  
And I know we’re in a tight spot,  
no mistaking,  
After all these years it all comes  
down to this...  
So I’ll put on the best garments of my brother,  
My Mother, I’ll do this.

Here are those two goats for which you asked me,  
Skin them here, skin them here,  
Prepare the food and make it good, my Mother.  
“Never fear,” you tell me, “never fear.”  
I am troubled that my smooth skin will betray me,  
But I thank the Lord that Esau’s like a goat...  
May the skin upon my hands serve to save me,  
Conceal me with a coat.

I am Esau, your firstborn, here I am, here I am,  
I am Esau, your firstborn, here I am.  
I am here for your blessing, I have waited all these years;

Feel my hands, feel my hands...  
You ask me how I made it back so quickly;  
Now the Lord your God has granted me success.  
You’re concerned today I seem to sound like Jacob;  
Huh. Feel my hands, don’t distress.  
I can’t tell you how I hate so to deceive you,  
But you wouldn’t have it any other way.  
I’ll come near to you and kiss you my father and hear the words  
you say.

I am Esau, your firstborn, here I am, here I am,  
I am Esau, your firstborn, here I am.  
I am here for your blessing, I have waited all these years;  
Feel my hands, feel my hands...

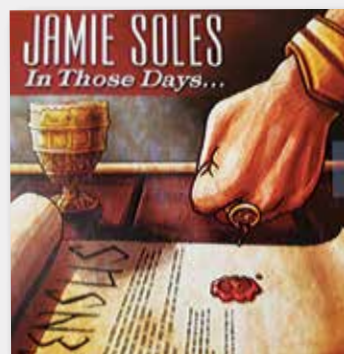
**“TIME TO RUN”**  
from the album *In Those Days*  
(MT. 2: 13-15),  
©JAN. 6/2014 JAMIE SOLES

Mary, wake up, the night is dark and deep  
That angel came again, and I dare not return to sleep  
He said to take this child, and his mother too, with me.  
It’s time to run.

Mary, wake up; take only what we need  
To Egypt we are bound, by promises until we’re freed  
So bind me up with Jesus, what we need right now is speed...  
We’ve got to run

Bring those gifts the wise men gave to Jesus just the other day  
And think about their trip, by moon and starlight all the way...  
Like ours today  
Herod will come, with murder in his mind  
He’s heard about our Jesus, this Son that he must never find  
So let us take our leave while his dragon eyes are blind  
Let’s make a run

Egypt before us, Pharaoh behind us, see what has been done  
To fulfil what God has spoken; “Out of Egypt I called  
My Son”  
Out of Egypt I called My  
Son...  
Mary wake up; it’s time to run  
Mary wake up; it’s time to run  
Mary wake up; it’s time to run





# A more generous ministry of mercy?

by Chris deBoer

**T**he Lord loves his church and gave her the gift of the ministry of mercy. But is this blessed ministry as active as it can or should be within the communion of saints? Let's consider the following scenarios and the possibilities they present.

## 1. After a miscarriage

*A sister has had a miscarriage or stillborn child. Initial visits by the elder and/or minister have taken place. There is concern that it will take some significant time before the sister will have the energy and emotional strength to take on the regular management of the household. The husband has a good paying job so doesn't think to ask the deacons for help. A few sisters have dropped off meals, and this has been a godsend. Nevertheless, laundry is piling up, the kids are not bathed, the house is not getting cleaned. The sister knows that this is not the way it should be, but that only makes her feel more guilty and incapable of taking next steps. Her husband has tried to take on more responsibilities, but now he is also starting to feel overwhelmed and is afraid of coming across as insensitive. They need more help!*

Do the deacons know that there is a problem? Maybe not, but perhaps it should be expected that they inquire again two or three weeks after the loss of the child, to see how things are going. If the deacons were to follow up with the brother and sister, and to inquire how

things are going, they might find that while there isn't any help need financially, the family does need to experience the love of the communion of saints in other tangible ways.

## 2. In the face of cancer

*A brother has been diagnosed with cancer. He is sixty years old. The news is shared with the congregation and the minister/elder come to make a visit. After the initial shock is over, the couple decides that it is best that they move out of their large home and into a smaller place. They have children all over the country but who here in town can help them move?*

Members of the congregation can get together, but the deacons can also take a lead here. They can ensure that this couple, under their care, has the physical help they need. And, of course, the deacons will want to ensure this couple has adequate financial means after the cancer diagnosis led to the brother's necessary decision to stop working.

## 3. An unplanned trip

*A brother in Ontario has a father deathly ill in British Columbia. The deacons or close friends in the congregation know that this family does not have a lot of financial resources. The brother takes his wife and three children to BC to make a visit. He can afford this trip because he has a line of credit, and feels such a trip justifies the expense. Who would disagree?*

This brother would not be likely to ask for assistance from the deacons because he has a full-time job. But might it be good if the deacons (or other church members) made a visit? Could they, or other members, inquire as to the cost and conceivably gift the family with a signed cheque to help cover some of these unexpected costs? Was this family in dire straits? No. Could they use the help? Absolutely!

\*\*\*\*

I am sure we can come up with a plethora of other examples in which the minister of mercy, led by the deacons, can be administered within congregational life. Nevertheless, let's return to the question we began with: is this blessed ministry as active as it can or should be within the communion of saints? My hope is that this article causes all of us to reflect on God's Word to determine the answer to the question: Is the ministry of mercy equipping all the saints to live in the joy of being redeemed?

## LOVING AND CARING AS GOD DOES

The New Testament church of our Lord Jesus Christ is blessed to have a formal ministry of mercy as ministered by men serving in the office of deacon. As Dr. C. Van Dam notes in *The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy*, seven men were originally chosen in Acts 6 with the task "to see to it that there were no needy so that



everyone could rejoice and celebrate the salvation and freedom given in Christ.”

As the number of followers was increasing, there seemed to arise a tension between the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) and Hebrews because the Hellenist widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. In order to ensure that the ministry of the Word was not hindered, brothers were appointed to an additional office to begin exercising the ministry of mercy. These men were “set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:6). And so the ministry of mercy is initiated.

How does this office function today? In the first place, this ministry of mercy proceeds from the love of our God and

*“no one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness, and poverty.”*

Saviour. While he was on earth, Christ fed the hungry, healed the sick, and showed compassion to the afflicted. And while the formal ministry of mercy was not initiated in the Old Testament, the loving covenant God provided numerous laws to ensure that the poor and afflicted were cared for in generous ways (e.g., gleaning, labor, and marriage laws). God loves and cares for his people. That is a consistent characteristic of our covenant God throughout scripture.

In Matthew 26:34-40, Christ teaches that on judgment day:

“the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

“The Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons” used in many continental Reformed

churches summarizes Matthew 26 with the conviction that “no one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness, and poverty.” Living uncomforted is not an option for the Christian community; rather, we should be living in the joy and comfort of our freedom in Christ. And so, the Form explains, it is for the sake of this service of love, that Christ has given deacons to his church.

Diaconal work is made possible by the congregation sharing their resources, monetary and other gifts, with these office-bearers, for distribution in one’s home congregation and beyond. Sharing resources is rooted in our love for each other. We love each other because Christ first loved us. Scripture also teaches that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). And it remains an important principle that collections are done in such a way that members can give in secret, without sounding the trumpet and making a public show of their generosity (Matt 6:1-4). When we give generously, there is no need for brothers and sisters in the Lord to experience the burden of poverty or the suffering of want.

### NOT WAITING TO BE ASKED

However, while there is no need for poverty and suffering of want in Christ’s church, for some of us, it is a challenge to ask for help, especially financial help. When we lose our job, become seriously ill, or struggle with frailty, we are often not prepared to ask for help. In *The Deacon*, Dr. Van Dam suggests (insists) that deacons should be visiting the members under their care in order “to give those he visits the opportunity to feel comfortable with him.” The idea is to build *mutual* trust. The deacons can learn a lot about family life when they make

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a visit, and can quickly learn to trust a member in their ward when they have the courage and humility to ask for help. Likewise, when a member trusts the deacon, confident that neither an audit or interrogation will take place, he can ask for help without shame or fear. In addition to building this trust, deacons can also ascertain

“whether church members have any needs, financial or otherwise, that are not being met... [and] ideally can see or anticipate needs and offer to help rather than waiting for those in need to come to them.”


Love is the greatest command within the congregation of Christ. We love, because he first loved us. It remains important that office-bearers practice servant-leadership as they serve the congregation in which they are appointed. Love requires a servant's attitude. This means that when they hear someone has lost their job, deacons make a visit and offer help; when a member is diagnosed with a serious illness, deacons should make a visit; when a baby

is born and requires a lengthy stay in the hospital, the deacons should ensure the parents have sufficient kinds of help during that challenging time. Deacons do not wait to be asked for help, they need to take the initiative to offer help to the members.

### DEACONS NEED HELP TOO

At the same time, deacons do not always know when there are needs. Communication is a two-way street, and the members can also take initiative. When we lose our jobs, we confess that this is under God's providence. There is no shame in asking the communion of saints for help. This can be done by asking members directly, if a solid relationship of trust has already been established. There is no rule that suggests that members should not help each other directly, rather it should be encouraged. Nevertheless, the ministry of mercy is there to provide for the financial and physical needs of those in need. A relationship with deacons helps members ask for such assistance.

The ministry of mercy is a gift – it bears repeating. Do we make good use

of this gift? And, yes, like all good gifts, we can abuse them, but let's leave that for another article. Let's first commit to making good use of this godly gift of our Lord for His children. 

*I strongly recommend Dr. Van Dam's book "The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy" available on Amazon and other online book retailers.*

#### A REQUEST

If there are any deacons, or recipients of deaconry help, who have wisdom to share on how the ministry of mercy can or ought to function, please submit anecdotes, articles, or resources to [chris@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:chris@reformedperspective.ca). Of course, this is true of any of our readers on any relevant topic, but I would like to publish a few regular pieces on the ministry of mercy if possible. Thanks for all your help, interest, and encouragement.

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# Haggai and the call to rebuild the temple:

## A case study in Church/State relations

by Colin Postma

Canadians find themselves beginning 2021 under varying levels of lockdown. Across our country churches are wrestling with how to respond. The Bible seems to contain few practical examples of believers facing something comparable to our current scenario. However, over the Christmas break, I stumbled across an article about the story of Haggai and its connection to the book of Ezra. The story struck me as having particular relevance, or at least uncanny parallels, for the church in Canada today. I offer this reflection not to recommend a particular way forward for churches in Canada as it relates to restrictions on corporate worship, but to at least help some Christians better understand the decisions of some church leaders who have made the decision to continue worshipping corporately despite (near) total prohibitions in their province.

In the May 2020 edition of *The Messenger* (a denominational magazine of the Free Reformed Churches), the late Pastor Gerald Hamstra published a meditation about the rebuilding of

the temple in the post-exile period. Though the books are spaced far from each other in the Old Testament canon, the events of Haggai and parts of Ezra occur simultaneously.

Many of us are familiar with the narrative of Haggai, where the prophet calls on the people of Israel to rebuild the temple:

This is what the Lord Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house.’”

Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” – Haggai 1:2-6

It appears, on first reading, that the people of Israel were selfishly caring only for themselves and their own houses and ignoring the worship of the Lord without a thought for the temple in ruins. However, that is not the whole picture. In the book of Ezra, we find the rest of the story.

### WHY HAD THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE CEASED?

King Cyrus had issued a decree permitting the Jews to return from Babylon to Jerusalem and charging them to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:2-5). But the Jews, soon after their return, faced many challenges and obstructions from those living in the region and even from the local civil magistrates (Ezra 4:1-5). Eventually, these opponents, with malicious lies, convince a subsequent king, King Artaxerxes, to stop the building of the temple entirely. Having been persuaded by the reports of the local magistrates in Judea, the king concludes that the temple-building efforts are a threat to the security of his kingdom and decrees that the temple work must cease.

As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum, and Shimshai the secretary, and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop. Thus, the work on the house of God in Jerusalem





came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. – Ezra 4:23-24

For some sixteen years, the temple lay in ruins because of the king's edict. Over the course of those years, the crops began to fail and the people were struggling. They were not flourishing following their return from Babylonian exile.

Pastor Hamstra, reflecting on this story, explains:

“[The Jews'] interest in the temple and the worship of God was waning. *They erroneously viewed the encountered opposition as a divine indication that the work on the temple should be discontinued.*” (emphasis mine)

It is worth noting that the order from King Artaxerxes for the Jews to cease building the temple was not a form of direct persecution. The king was not operating with anti-Semitic animus or anti-religious prejudice. He had been convinced by his officials that there was a threat to the safety and security of his realm. So, he ordered the project to cease. Questions of safety and security are under the proper authority (or “sphere”) of the king. So, the Jews submitted to the civil government, ceasing work on the temple.

But in this case, the people of God

*God's people can appeal to, and be vindicated by, the higher laws and decrees of civil governments.*

had mistakenly viewed the challenges to building the temple and the intervention of the local authorities as an indication from God that the temple work must stop. God sends Haggai to call the people to repent, to return to building the temple, and to observe the corporate worship of the Lord in the way He prescribed. Haggai makes it clear that the worship of God is to be held in the highest regard, and that King Artaxerxes had been wrong to stop the building of the temple for the worship of God.

### **IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION, THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO REBUILD**

God's people respond in faith to the call of the prophet. They recognize the punishment for their disobedience, and the suffering they were enduring because of it. Just a few weeks after Haggai delivers his message and encouragement from the Lord, the Jews restart the temple building project.

In Ezra 5 we read that the local magistrates came to the building site to see why the people had begun building again in apparent defiance of the king's orders:

At that time Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates went to them and asked, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and to finish it?” They also asked, “What are the names of those who are constructing this building?” But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received. – Ezra 5:3-5

Though the local rulers questioned them, the Jews continue to rebuild the temple. The call from Haggai was to obey God, regardless of what the earthly king or the local magistrates declared or forbade. They obey God unquestioningly.

Interestingly, as the Jews resume their work, the local governor Tattenai sends another report to the Persian king, King Darius, about how the Jews were rebuilding the temple contrary to the decree of the previous king, Artaxerxes. In that report, Tattenai lists the Jews' legal defence: that King



Cyrus had decreed that they should build the temple (Ezra 5:6-15). King Darius orders a search of the archives and confirms the truth of the matter. He orders the local governors and their associates to “keep away” and to “let the work on this house of God alone.” (Ezra 6:6, 7). The Jews are vindicated!

### ARE THERE LESSONS HERE FOR TODAY?

The parallels to today are striking. In this Old Testament story, we see conflicting government decrees, human opposition to corporate worship, the disdain of the people of God by some levels of civil government, and hasty orders by rulers motivated by fear for safety. We also see commands from God and confusion on the part of His people as to the right way forward.


We also see God giving direction, and redirection, patient with His people while unwavering in His call to worship. We see His mighty hand turning the hearts of leaders for His glory and the good of His people.

Some lessons in this story for the people of God today include how God’s people can appeal to, and be vindicated by, the higher laws and decrees of civil governments. Perhaps appealing to the original decree of Cyrus (where he first granted permission to the Jews to build the temple), is comparable to church leaders appealing to a constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion and freedom of assembly. Perhaps the Jews’ refusal to abide by the second decree of Artaxerxes while their appeal makes its way to the court of Darius is comparable to the path chosen by some church leaders to resume corporately worshipping God while challenging the legality or constitutionality of overly broad public health orders through the court system. Though I don’t think this story is prescriptive of the way forward for churches in Canada today, the story of the rebuilding of the temple does provide some insight for the 21st-century church to ponder in light of significant restrictions by the civil government on corporate worship. Even

if you don’t agree with the decisions made by some churches to continue worshipping, that decision should at least be understandable in light of the Ezra and Haggai story.

One thing we can remain confident in is that God rules over the nation of Canada today, just as He has over the nations and empires of the past. He is faithful to those who put their trust in Him. It is our daily duty to pray, work and worship to the glory of His name!

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.

–Jeremiah 17:7-8 

*Colin Postma is the Federal Issues Manager for ARPA Canada (ARPACanada.ca.)*



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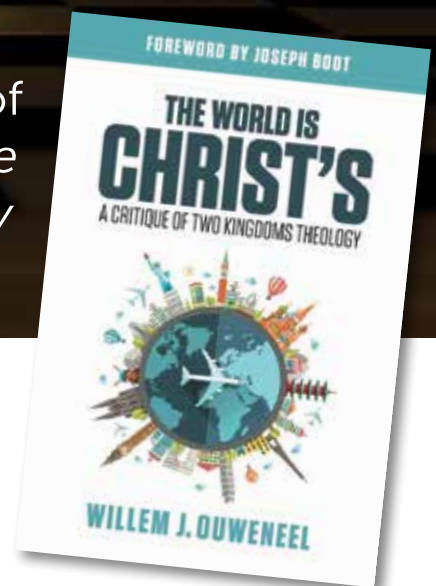




# 2K is not OK

A review and discussion of  
*The World is Christ's: A Critique  
of Two Kingdoms Theology*

by Michael Wagner



A tour a few years back by ARPA Canada prominently featured a famous statement by Abraham Kuyper:

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”

Many Christians undoubtedly agree that Christ is king over every aspect of human life. However, there is a relatively new theological movement within conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America that stands in direct opposition to Kuyper’s view.

This new movement draws a sharp distinction between the kingdom of God and a secular “common kingdom” that is not directly under the rule of Christ. Hence the movement is often referred to as “Two Kingdoms” or 2K theology. Sometimes it is known by the acronym NL2K which stands for “Natural Law Two Kingdoms” theology. This is because it teaches that most institutions in society (e.g. schools, businesses, civil governments, etc.) are to be governed by “natural law” (or the law that we can deduce, not from the Bible, but from the “natural” world around us. And the reason these institutions are to be governed by natural law, rather than the Bible, is because schools, business, the civil government and more, are said to be in that secular “common kingdom.”

Two Kingdom’s growing popularity in some Reformed circles has prompted Dutch scholar Willem J. Ouwenel (who holds PhDs in Biology, Philosophy, and Theology) to write an

extended analysis called *The World is Christ's: A Critique of Two Kingdoms Theology* (Ezra Press, 2017). This book demonstrates that 2K is highly problematic from a confessional and biblical perspective.

## NEW, BUT NOT SO NEW

It is legitimate to label 2K as “new” because it has only appeared within the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the last decade. However, there is a sense in which it can be considered to be the return of an old error. According to Ouwenel, 2K is deeply rooted in medieval scholasticism which has a

*All talk about a so-called ‘common kingdom’ means in the end that we allow the kingdom of Satan to prevail in the public square.”*

dualistic perspective that divides human activities into the sacred realm and the secular realm.

For 2K, the authority of the Bible is restricted to the church and the life of individual Christians. It is not to be used as a guide for politics, economics, science, literature, etc. because those fields are part of the “common kingdom” governed by natural law.

Ouweneel’s simple summary of scholasticism also functions as a summary of the basic 2K perspective:

“there is a spiritual (sacred, Christ-ruled) domain and a natural (secular, common, neutral) domain, which have to be carefully kept apart. There is a domain under the authority of God’s Word and a domain that is supposedly governed by the God-given ‘natural law’ . . . There is a domain under the kingship of Christ and a ‘neutral’ domain (which is at best a domain that falls under God’s general providence)”

## 2K VERSUS THE EARLY REFORMERS

However, 2K advocates claim that their view is the original Reformed position. They believe Abraham Kuyper’s “not one square inch” perspective added a new twist that conflicts with the teachings of the Reformers.

The confessions indicate otherwise. The confessions formally summarize the essential theology of the Reformers, and their statements on civil government demonstrate 2K to be in error. The original wording of the Belgic Confession on civil magistrates included this statement:

“Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted.”

The Belgic Confession (at least in its original form) saw an active role for the civil magistrate in advancing the kingdom of God. He was not outside the authority of the Bible. Modern Christians may not agree with that statement in the Belgic Confession, but it is clearly in conflict with 2K.

The original Westminster Confession contains similar statements about the civil magistrate. For example:

“it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed.”

Ouweneel summarizes the confessional point this way: “it would have been unthinkable for the divines who wrote the Belgic Confession (Guido de Brès, d. 1567) and the Westminster Confession to accept the idea that the “secular” state falls outside the kingdom of God.” Therefore, if we use the confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the standards for determining early Reformed and Presbyterian theology, 2K cannot be said to represent the original position.

## 2K VERSUS CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Many Reformed Christians send their children to Christian schools because they want their children taught from a Christian perspective. Each of the subjects in such schools is rooted in a Christian approach.



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For more information, please contact:

Principal: Mr. Nathan Kok, 204-745-2278,  
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Chairman: Mr. Anton Borst, 204-745-8935,  
[chairman@dufferinchristian.ca](mailto:chairman@dufferinchristian.ca)

However, according to Ouweneel:

“This is the very reason why many NL2K advocates object to Christian schools: they do not believe in the possibility of a Christian approach to all these disciplines. In their view, both the school and the disciplines taught there belong to the ‘common realm,’ which is neutral and secular. So why should we need Christian schools?”

If there is no distinctively Christian perspective for subjects like English, science and history, then there is no need for Christian schools. This is a consequence of the NL2K theology.

## NEUTRAL HISTORY?

Ouweneel asks, “Can you imagine studying history from a ‘neutral’ perspective?” How is that even possible? How do we determine whether particular historical events or people are good or bad without a biblical perspective?

Someone may argue that a figure like Adolf Hitler is widely regarded by almost all people, Christian and non-Christian alike, to be evil. Therefore that demonstrates the existence of a common “natural law” standard for judging historical figures.

But wait just a minute. In the 1930s there was no consensus that Hitler was evil. In fact, he was supported by millions of people in Germany and he had numerous admirers in other countries as well. It was only after he lost the war that he was

regarded everywhere as being evil. If he had won the war, Hitler would have likely remained popular, at least in Germany.

From a biblical perspective, Hitler was evil right from the start. But from a “natural law” perspective (whatever that means), things aren’t so obvious. As Ouweneel writes: “If a person is a radical Christian, let him look for an equally radical Muslim or Hindu, and try to find out how much ‘natural law’ the two have in common!”

Natural law does not provide a clear and objective standard for determining right and wrong. But the Bible does.

Ouweneel describes 2K’s usage of natural law as follows:

“Such a Scripture-independent natural law is nothing but a loincloth, a fig leaf, to hide the shame of refusing to acknowledge Christian philosophy, Christian political science, a Christian view of the state, etc.”

## TWO KINGDOMS IN THE BIBLE

Now, the Bible *does* teach that there are two kingdoms. However, they are not the kingdom of God and a “common kingdom,” but the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:25-28).

According to Ouweneel, every societal relationship (e.g. family, school, business, political party, etc.) is either a part of the kingdom of God or a part of the kingdom of Satan. As he puts it:

“in every societal relationship, the kingdom of God can be, and is, manifested if this community is, in faith, brought under the rule of King Christ Jesus and under the authority of God’s Word.”

This means that a political community where the citizens and government have placed themselves under the authority of the Bible manifests the kingdom of God. There are historical examples of such communities:

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“The kingdom of Christ did indeed clearly come to light in various German lands and European countries (Scotland, England, the Netherlands) in which Protestant convictions dominated public life (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries).”

Clearly, the early Protestants did not believe 2K theology. And as Ouwenel asks,

“Can you imagine John Calvin telling the city council of Geneva that they had to be ‘neutral,’ and that for their rule it did not matter whether they were Christians as long as they were good rulers?”

## THE KEY ISSUE


Ouwenel sees the dispute over 2K coming down to one key point: “This is the issue: either God’s Word has full authority over the entire cosmic reality, or only over a limited part of it: the church.” For 2K, the Bible is authoritative only over the church. It does not have authority over politics and government or the other spheres of the “common kingdom.”

The real-life consequences of 2K are serious. As mentioned, it undermines the rationale for Christian schools. Another effect is to remove all Christian influence from political life. As Ouwenel points out, 2K plays

“...into the hands of all the atheists and agnostics who propagate the neutral, secularized state and wish to restrict religion to the church and to the private religious lives of people. The growing number of non-Christians in North America should be thanking their new gods for the support they are receiving from NL2K advocates with their commitment to a secular state.”

## CONCLUSION

The consequences of embracing 2K theology would be devastating to Christian influence in politics and society. Public policy in Canada, the United States and other Western countries has been moving in an increasingly anti-Christian direction for years. If Christians were to abandon their distinctively Christian efforts to influence government, that trend would only get worse. Yet that is what 2K theologians essentially advocate.

Abraham Kuyper was certainly correct that Christ is sovereign over every square inch “in the whole domain of our human existence.” Excluding the Bible from certain spheres of society is a recipe for accelerated decline and ultimate disaster. As Ouwenel puts it, “All talk about a so-called ‘common kingdom’ means in the end that we allow the kingdom of Satan to prevail in the public square.” 

*Michael Wagner is the author of “Leaving God Behind: The Charter of Rights and Canada’s Official Rejection of Christianity,” available at Merchantship.ca.*



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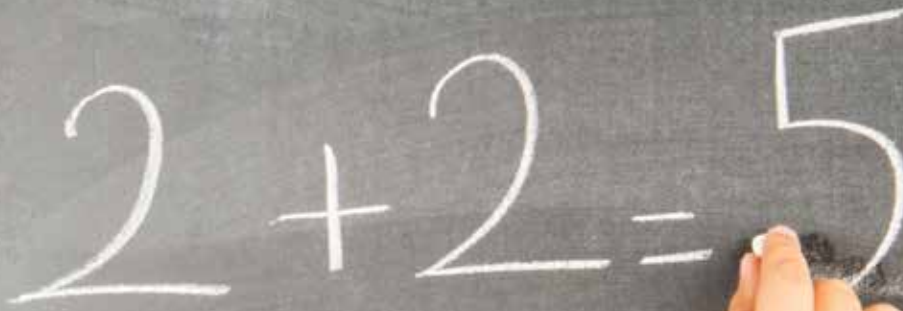
#### Mr. Richard Hoeksema, Principal

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519.787.1955 (home)  
principal@mcsfergus.ca

#### Mr. John Penninga, Education Committee Chairman

519-501-8882  
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Mailing Address:  
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c/o Education Committee  
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by Jim Witteveen


$$2 + 2 = 5$$

# Rod Dreher's *Live Not By Lies*

## A REVIEW AND A DISCUSSION

I recently spent several months leading a Facebook group discussion of Rod Dreher's *Live Not By Lies*. Each week I would post a summary of a chapter, and the members of the group would discuss it. That experience led me to do a closer reading of Dreher's book than I would normally do. And it also led me to appreciate all the more the importance of the message of this book for God's people.

The genesis of the book began back in 2015 when Dreher began to speak with Christians who had once lived under communism in the former Soviet-bloc countries. They told him they believed America was drifting toward some sort of totalitarianism, and they were upset that their fellow Americans weren't recognizing what is happening. Building on these interviews, and first-person accounts of those who survived life under anti-Christian, totalitarian rule, Dreher lays

out what he sees happening in the United States (and throughout the Western world), and his conclusions as to how Christians can effectively deal with it.

### REALISM, NOT PESSIMISM

Some reviewers have said that Dreher is overly pessimistic. Totalitarianism? Really? Dreher says the reason many can't see it, is because what's happening here is different from what we see in China and saw in the USSR. That's the old "hard totalitarianism," while Dreher says what we're facing could be described as "soft totalitarianism."

What others have characterized as his

"pessimism," I would call "realism." Dreher understands what is happening in the Western world, and what he sees rightly concerns him.

So what is this "soft totalitarianism" that Dreher is talking about? There are many ways in which our freedom to express ourselves honestly is being taken from us, and we are being pressured to conform to the world's narrative. Recently, Focus on the Family had one of its Twitter accounts suspended for "violating [Twitter] rules against hateful conduct." They will not be allowed access to their account until they delete the offending comment, which said only:

*...Dreher says what we're facing could be described as "soft totalitarianism."*

“On Tuesday, President-elect Joe Biden announced that he had chosen Dr. Rachel Levine to serve as Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of HHS. Dr. Levine is a transgender woman, that is, a man who believes he is a woman.”

Social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram police “hate speech” – and it is those who define “hate” who make the decisions about who can stay and participate, and who must be excluded. Christians who have expressed “unacceptable” opinions on Facebook have been forced to participate in “sensitivity training” sessions in their workplace, after their posts were reported to management and deemed unacceptable. The private sector and government work together to expand surveillance and data collection, whether for the purposes of public safety and “homeland security,” or for public health and “biosecurity,” or to combat the most recent threat to be uncovered, that of “far-

right domestic terrorism.” Increasingly repressive measures are being enacted to stifle the ministry of the Church, as bills are passed that ban activities like “conversion therapy,” which seek to help those who are struggling with their gender identity. Speaking out against sin is defined as “bullying” (regardless of whether it is done compassionately and lovingly or not), and events like Pink Shirt Day, anti-bullying initiatives, and government-mandated school clubs all have a chilling effect on the free exchange of ideas, especially those that are no longer accepted by the mainstream.

When Biblical teaching is defined as “hate speech,” and those who dare to publicly contradict mainstream orthodoxy on subjects like sexuality and gender ideology can be silenced and excluded from public discourse, we are well on our way toward this state of soft totalitarianism. This isn’t the hard totalitarianism of the old Soviet Union; but in the end, the results of Soft Totalitarianism are the same. Outward conformity

to the prevailing ideology is demanded, inappropriate use of language is censored, those who express the wrong kinds of ideas are branded as intolerant, hateful, and dangerous to society.

## WE’RE DOING IT TO OURSELVES

What is particularly concerning about this move toward soft totalitarianism is the fact that it is being done with the largely unquestioning acceptance of the populace. We have willingly given up our privacy and control over our own data for the sake of convenience, to remain connected through social networks, and to have “free” access to entertainment and consumer goods. And as we have done that, often unthinkingly, we have opened ourselves up to the growing influence of corporations like Facebook, Twitter, and Google, and their policy-makers who are using these tools to shape public discourse, control what can be communicated publicly, and influence the way we think.

## 7 QUOTES

by Jon Dykstra

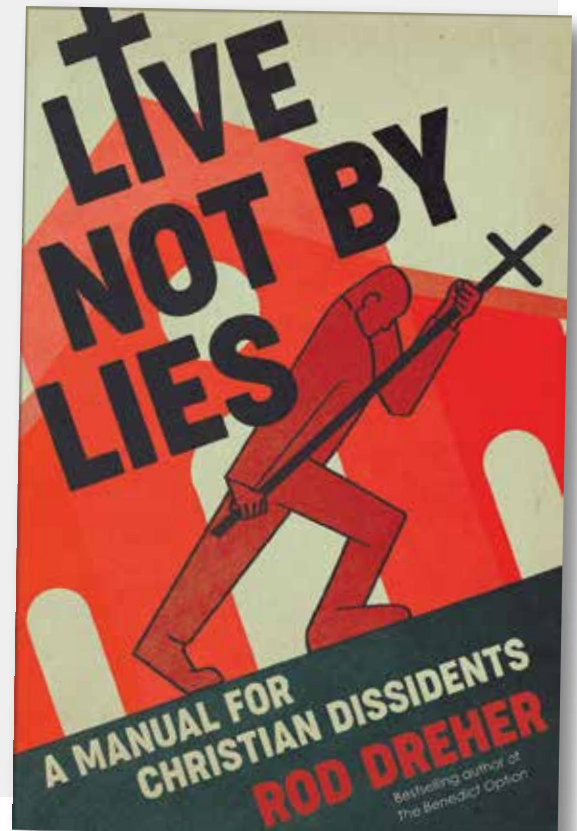
In *Live Not by Lies*, Rod Dreher shares the warning he’s hearing from former emigrants from the Soviet Union and other Iron Curtain countries. They lived through totalitarianism and fled from it, and they told Dreher they are seeing signs of a “soft” totalitarianism now showing up in the West. This soft sort is less about the State imposing its will, though conversion therapy bans, and requiring a BC hospice center to provide euthanasia, show that is happening too. But the soft totalitarianism is more about a culture that will cancel Parler, demonize *The Epoch Times*, and keep conservative speakers off university campuses. This soft sort also evidences itself when people, out in public, start feeling the need to whisper their opinions, afraid others will hear that they still think boys can’t be girls, abortion is murder, homosexuality a sin, and Donald Trump was actually the lesser of two evils.

Dreher wants Christians to hear these former Soviets’ warnings so we can be prepared for what they think is coming. What does being prepared mean? Dreher’s particular focus is to have us ready to face persecution.

To give you a feel for Dreher’s argument, and a flavor of his writing, here are seven quotes from *Live Not by Lies*.

### Silence can be a stand

“Our way must be: *Never knowingly support lies!* You may not have the strength to stand up in public and say what you really believe, but you can at least refuse to affirm what you do *not* believe....If we must live under the dictatorship of lies, [Solzhenitsyn] said, then our response must be: ‘Let their rule hold *not through me!*’”





## WHAT CAN WE DO? LIVE NOT BY LIES!

Dreher's realism also leads him to recommend steps that Christians can take to remain faithful in the face of ever-increasing pressure. This is where the rubber hits the road for the Christian reader. I often hear this question in response to my writing on current events: "What can we do to stop this?" And realism leads me to say that, humanly speaking, there is very little that we as individuals can do to halt a process which has been gathering steam for decades. The combined forces behind soft totalitarianism appear, on the surface, to be unstoppable. But that does not mean that the situation is hopeless, and that there is nothing we can do as individuals, each within our own sphere of influence.

The first thing that we need to do is live according to the injunction of the book's title, which itself was taken from the title of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's essay "Live not by lies!" Solzhenitsyn wrote that we

as individuals may not have the strength to stand up in public and say what we really believe, but we can at least refuse to affirm what we do not believe. We may not be able to overthrow totalitarianism, but we can, individually and as a community, find the means to live in "the dignity of truth."

So that's the first important step we need to take. In a world that is demanding more and more that everyone affirm ideals that are inherently non-Christian, and in fact anti-Christian, we need to live in the truth.

What does it look like to live in the truth? It means refusing to take over the language that the world uses, and refusing to use it as our own. There is a reason so much emphasis is put on policing speech and policing the way in which certain words and expressions are used – it's because controlling language is the first step in influencing and controlling thought. Over time, the words we use shape the way we think. We can see this

happening with the transformation in the use of the word "gender." In the past, "gender" was a grammatical concept. In languages like Spanish and Portuguese, nouns are either masculine or feminine, and while English is not a gendered language, there are still a few examples of gendered words; for example, ships have often been referred to as "she." But the meaning of the word "gender" has shifted, largely under pressure from activists who would like to believe that gender is a fluid concept, a kind of sliding scale between masculine and feminine. So now, instead of "sex" with its binary male or female biological reality, we have "gender" and a world of multiple options, based on personal choice and identification. So how can we "live not by lies" in this area? We can, in our speech, show that we do not buy into the idea of a shifting scale of "gender," by maintaining the distinction that reflects reality, and not the ideology of the activists who have taken control of public discourse. Does this mean we have

### Free to say all that Google and Twitter will allow

"Today's totalitarianism demands allegiance to a set of progressive beliefs, many of which are incompatible with logic – and certainly with Christianity. Compliance is forced less by the state than by elites who form public opinion, and by private corporations that, thanks to technology, control our lives far more than we would like to admit."

### Don't bat for the other team

"What did it mean to live by lies? It meant, Solzhenitsyn writes, accepting without protest all the falsehoods and propaganda that the state compelled its citizens to affirm – or at least not to oppose – to get along peaceably under totalitarianism. Everybody says that they have no choice but to conform, says Solzhenitsyn, and to accept powerlessness. But that is the lie that gives all the other lies their malign force. The ordinary man may not be able to overturn the kingdom of lies, but he can at least say that he is not going to be its loyal subject."

### Demanding you call him "her"

"According to Hannah Arendt, the foremost scholar of totalitarianism, a totalitarian society is one in which an ideology seeks to displace all prior traditions and institutions, with the goal of bringing all aspects of society under control of that ideology. A totalitarian state is one that aspires to nothing less than defining and controlling reality. Truth is whatever the rulers decide it is."

### Judged by our group, not our character

"In classic Marxism, the bourgeoisie are the oppressor and the proletariat are the oppressed. In the [today's] cult of social justice, the oppressors are generally white, male, heterosexual, and Christian. The oppressed are racial minorities, women, sexual minorities and religious minorities. (Curiously, the poor are relatively low on the hierarchy of oppression. For example, a white Pentecostal man living on disability in a trailer park is an oppressor; a black lesbian Ivy League professor is oppressed.)"

### It's about standing with or against God

"Consider that the civil rights movement of the 1960's was led by black preachers who articulated the plight of their people in biblical language and stories. Those days are over, and we will not be able to take the measure of the long struggle ahead if we don't understand the essential nature of the opposition. It regards Christians as the most significant remaining obstacle, bearers of the cruel and outdated beliefs that keep the people from being free and happy."

### Government that cares for you cradle to grave

"The term totalitarianism was first used by supporters of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, who defined totalitarianism concisely: "Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state."

to correct people every time we hear the word “transgender” being used instead of “transsexual”? No. But it does mean maintaining the created distinction between male and female by the way we ourselves use words, and the way that we teach our children.

But there is more that we can and must do. In the second half of the book, Dreher closes each chapter with a section with the heading, “See, Judge, Act.” In this section, he provides the reader with practical advice gleaned from his interviews with Christians who lived under hard totalitarian regimes and kept the faith. While Dreher was raised Methodist and is now an Eastern Orthodox Christian, I think his vision of how Christians can counteract soft totalitarianism has much in common with Reformed thinking, and specifically the distinctly Reformed emphasis on the doctrine of the covenant. Dreher doesn’t use the term, but we could summarize his practical steps under the heading of “covenant living.”

- So in our families, we must

deliberately focus on teaching our children, reminding them of who they are, and of the realities of history in world in which history is being rewritten or even erased.

- In our churches, we need to continue to use the means of grace faithfully and passionately. Dreher recommends the gathering of small groups for teaching and discussion, with believers encouraging and instructing one another about how to “live not by lies.”

In a world in which social units are fracturing and social connections disintegrating, we need to make the effort to not only preach covenant theology, but to live out the covenant theology that we confess!

## CONCLUSION

I highly recommend *Live Not By Lies*, and believe that its message is vitally important for God’s people today. The first step that we need to take to remain faithful to our calling as followers of

Christ is to recognize that we are in a battle, and understand that battle. Dreher does a commendable job of revealing the reality of our current situation, as he seeks to open the eyes of those who may not recognize the seriousness of what is currently happening in our society. He also provides realistic counsel to Christians, based on the experiences of those who have lived through totalitarianism themselves.

History is in the Lord’s hands. He is directing all things according to his purpose, and he is in absolute control. For us, that is the greatest encouragement of all, and internalizing this truth is how we’ll steer clear of pessimism and hopelessness. At the same time, we must be realists, and not live in denial about what is happening. The forces united against Christ and his Church are becoming stronger, and we need to recognize that there is a battle, we need to know who the enemy is, and we need to be prepared to fight the good fight of faith in confidence. *Live Not By Lies* will help you to do just that. RP

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# LET'S MEET IN THE MIDDLE!

## The Con In Compromising

by Kevin Bratcher



A new administration has taken over in the US, and President Joe Biden and friends are using a lot of conciliatory talk about unity, and working together. This same sentiment made an appearance during Superbowl LV, where the viewing audience of millions was treated to a sermon from Jeep and Bruce Springsteen about “meeting in the middle” as Americans.

But the middle of what?

“We should meet in the middle” is:

- **a charitable statement** if you and your friend live an hour away, have relatively equal means, and want to get dinner at a central location.
- **a terrible idea** if there’s a yawning chasm between the two of you.

Without fixed goalposts, you really don’t know where you’ll end up when you aim for the middle. Republicans in the States would agree that meeting in the middle with former Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, an outspoken moderate Democrat, is a very different thing from meeting in the middle with Sen. Bernie Sanders. And Democrats would agree that meeting in the middle with Mitt Romney, a moderate Republican, is a very different thing than meeting in the middle with Donald Trump. If you’re negotiating the price of a house, there’s a great difference between meeting in the middle on a price with someone who starts the bid at \$1, and someone who starts the bid at \$100,000.

### A TACTIC

Often in negotiations the term functions in a similar manner to the word “fair.” Nobody wants to be thought of as unfair, so by leading off as the “fair one” you can cast your opponent as the other, unfair side. The same tactic is sometimes stated as “finding the common ground.” When your opponent in the negotiation is not budging, or more often, before they even know what direction you want them to budge in, you establish that you are, in point of fact,



aiming for “the middle.” It sounds so agreeable, but just as soon as a political actor says, “We hope to meet in the middle” he is maneuvering to make his opponent look like the stubborn and unreasonable one. The effect and often the intent is to weaponize people’s sense of neighborliness and appeasement to push a point of view. In short, it’s not negotiation, but manipulation.

## **WE CAN’T COMPROMISE WITH EVIL**

This middle-ground appeal is both caused by and a symptom of the general lack of conviction of our society. If there is no absolute truth, it’d make sense for everything to be negotiable, right?

In fact, meeting in the middle may be entirely sensible on how the last \$10 million of the budget should be allocated between 3 worthy projects.

But meeting in the middle about whether a panel should decide who lives or dies by euthanasia is impossible. There is a fixed right response to euthanasia as an idea, because the government is tasked with punishing evil and murder is evil.

Because believer and unbeliever alike know of the Truth (Rom. 1:18-22), and especially because those of us who have the Spirit have had our eyes opened to see and understand it, we must reject “meeting in the middle” on morality. We must reject “compromise” and “fair-mindedness” whenever it is proposed on principles that cannot be compromised. Right and wrong cannot be bargained, and the man on TV telling you they can is manipulating you.

## **NEED FOR UNCOMPROMISED TRUTH**

As Christians, we understand the need for showing love to our neighbors and seeking the peace of our community. But we also heed the warnings of David in Psalm 28, who pleads with God to “Not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.” This ought to lead us to recall the words of Christ in sending his disciples out, saying “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (Matt. 10:16)

And as Christians, we are called to seek the peace of the country God places us in, and to love our neighbors. But these commands find their grounding in the first and greatest commandment, to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matt. 22:36-40)

This calls us to exercise wisdom in identifying where there is common ground to stand on, and where the only ground to stand on is the solid Rock that is Christ. In so doing we will ensure that we are no more:

“tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:14-15).

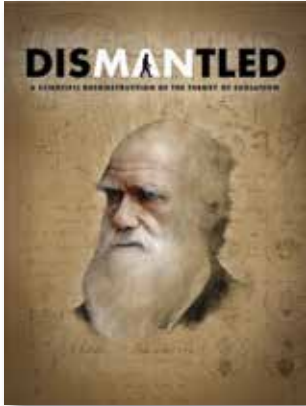
*Right and wrong cannot be bargained,  
and the man on TV telling you they  
can is manipulating you.*



### DISMANTLED

DOCUMENTARY

2020 / 93 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



The Creation vs. Evolution debate is sometimes portrayed as being the Bible vs. Science, but *Dismantled* wants us to know that while creationists certainly stand on the Bible, they aren't conceding on Science. Flipping the script, the documentary begins by asking if *evolution* should be considered scientific. From there we go on a 70-minute tour of all sorts of topics including:

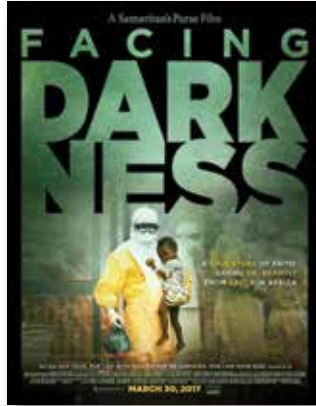
- **the micro = macro fallacy** which assumes, without evidence, that small changes can add up to bigger ones
- **genetics** including the limits of supposed "beneficial mutations," and the problem of genetic entropy – that we as a species are breaking down faster than natural selection could ever build us up – and the supposed genetic similarity between man and apes
- **the fossil record** including Man's supposed ape-like ancestors, and the humanity of Neanderthals
- **radiometric dating** and its problems

*Dismantled* is slick – the visuals are fantastic! – but its strength is in the scientists consulted. Jason Lisle, John Sandford, Georgia Purdom, Rob Carter, Andrew Snelling, Nathaniel Jeanson (PhDs one and all): they know how to explain big ideas in understandable ways. That said, I would recommend this for no younger than high school because there is a lot to chew on. Buy it at [Creation.com](http://Creation.com).

### FACING DARKNESS

DOCUMENTARY

2017 / 99 MINUTES **RATING 8/10**



In 2014, when West Africa was faced with an Ebola outbreak, the Christian organization, Samaritan's Purse, led the way in helping the stricken, despite the considerable risk. They kept helping, even when one, and then two, of their own staff became infected. As Samaritan's Purse President Franklin Graham detailed, when he first got the news, it was devastating:

"My phone rang...and Ken Isaac said, 'Franklin, one of our doctors, Kent Bradley has ebola.' I didn't even know how to pray. I just kept saying, 'Lord, why? We were there to save life. We are there in your name. Why?'"

And, of course, they weren't the only ones impacted by the outbreak. The film begins with a young man sharing the names of his aunts, uncles, his mother, brother, sister, nephews, and other relatives, who were all taken by Ebola. It is heartbreaking to hear!

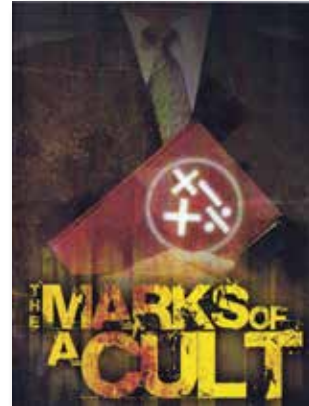
So why should anyone see this film? Why would anyone *want* to? Because, at a time when the world is overwhelmed with fear, here are Christians who were certain God was with them, and trusted He would provide for them even in the face of deadly illness. That makes this such a hope-filled film– it is wonderful!

*Facing Darkness* can be rented and streamed at many sites online.

### THE MARKS OF A CULT

DOCUMENTARY

2005 / 115 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



The cults tackled here have some connections to biblical Christianity, but have departed so far from it, that they are worshipping another God – we're talking about groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Host Eric Holmberg's objective is to give Christians an easily understandable way of spotting those departures using the four math symbols (+ – x ÷) to make things memorable. So a group is a cult when they:

1. **Add** to the 66 books of the Bible
2. **Subtract** from the Trinity, either denying the personhood or the deity of one or more members of the Godhead
3. **Multiply** works necessary to be saved
4. **Divide** followers from God

*Marks of a Cult* is a lot of things, but what it is not, is a film you'd push on your cult-following friend. This isn't for him, but is, instead, a primer for Christians, giving us a history of the biggest cults, a rebuttal to some of their aberrant theology, and a introduction to the beliefs that Christianity holds in common, and it is all told from a Reformed perspective.

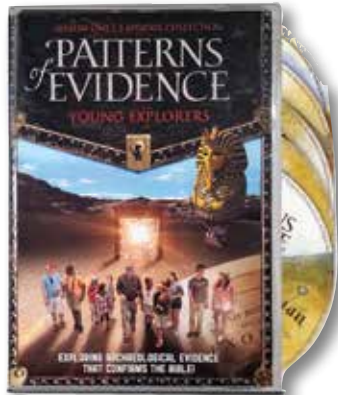
You can watch *Marks of the a Cult* for free at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca) by heading to our movie review page.

LONGER VERSIONS OF THESE  
REVIEWS CAN BE FOUND AT  
REFORMEDPERSPECTIVE.CA

## PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE: YOUNG EXPLORERS

DOCUDRAMA

2020 / 190 MINUTES **RATING 7/10**



This 5-episode series is based on filmmaker Timothy Mahoney's full-length documentary *Patterns of Evidence* about his search for evidence of Israel's captivity in Egypt. The original was part mystery, part biblical history and an added element here is a whole gang of kids helping Mahoney investigate. This is now not simply a documentary, but a docu-drama, with fact and fiction, education and entertainment, all mixed together.

While there is a bit of a "cheese factor," what with the many kid actors, there's lots to love in the five episodes:

1. The adventures begins when the kids hear about Timothy Mahoney's work and are eager to help
2. They learn that we may know where Joseph lived in Egypt
3. The team searches for signs of captive Israel's population explosion
4. The Young Explorers go search for signs of the 10 plagues
5. The search continues on into Israel, where the team now investigates the fall of the walls of Jericho

One highlight is worth special mention: the "Exploration Chamber," a fictitious holodeck that the group can enter to see and explore Egypt as it once was. Very cool!

Find *Young Explorers* at [ChristianCinema.com](http://ChristianCinema.com) and [PatternsOfEvidence.com](http://PatternsOfEvidence.com).

## FREE FILM: IN HIS IMAGE

DOCUMENTARY

2020 / 104 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**

One of the most serious challenges that the Christian church is currently facing is in the area of gender and sexuality. When the church holds fast to the Biblical teaching that God created us male and female, that God is the one who defines our gender, and that marriage is a sacred, lifelong bond between one man and one woman, then we are placing ourselves distinctly outside of the mainstream of our society. What's more, the challenge to the Bible's teaching on gender and sexuality comes not only from outside of the church, but also from within.

Because of the importance of this issue, it is essential that Christians be prepared.

- First of all, we must understand what God's Word teaches about sexuality and human relationships, in order to personally stand firm on that solid foundation and not be led astray by the latest cultural trends.
- Secondly, we must be prepared to lovingly stand up for that teaching, in the face of often virulent opposition.
- Finally, we must be ready to serve, help, and love those who are struggling in this area. In a world in which abuse and disorder have affected the lives of so many, the church needs to be ready and willing to serve as a beacon of hope, a place where the healing truth of the gospel can be found. The church is where that life-giving and hope-giving message must not only be proclaimed, but also lived out!

### A RESOURCE THAT CAN HELP

*In His Image: Delighting in God's Plan for Gender and Sexuality* is a valuable resource for Christians who need to be equipped to understand and apply the truth of Scripture in their personal lives, in their relationships, and in their interaction with our culture. This documentary was released in 2020 by the American Family Association, and is available online as well as in a DVD set, for use as a group study resource. As a full-length film, this is not a shallow treatment of the issues, and it would be a worthwhile resource for several weeks' worth of small group study and discussion.

The documentary features a number of personal stories, including that of Walt Heyer, who lived for eight years as a woman before having his "sex change" reversed. A number of pastors and theologians also contributed to the film, including Kevin deYoung, Sean McDowell, and James R. White.

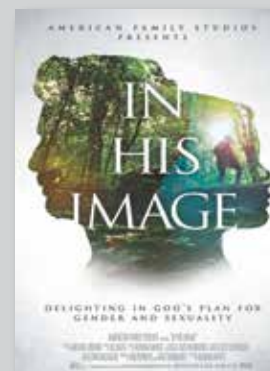
### IT STARTS WITH THE BIBLE

*In His Image* begins with a discussion of that foundational Biblical teaching, that every human being is created in the image of God. Beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve in God's image, the documentary bases everything that follows on the teaching of Scripture, emphasizing the sufficiency and the authority of God's Word.

From those very important starting points, the film goes on to address other means of addressing the issues. As Robert Gagnon, Professor of New Testament Theology at Houston Baptist University, emphasizes, we begin with Scripture, we make use of philosophical reasoning and scientific evidence, and finally, we turn to personal experience. Sadly, the tendency in our culture is for personal experience to take precedence over everything else. *In His Image*, while using a number of personal stories that really make an impact, gets things right by focusing first and foremost on the Word of God as the ultimate source of wisdom.

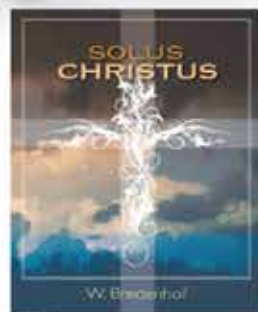
I highly recommend *In His Image* as a very powerful and useful resource that will help to strengthen Christians in their commitment to God's Word in the face of ever-increasing pressure to conform our thinking with that of the world. The message of Scripture is proclaimed boldly and without compromise. But importantly, this is done in a way that emphasizes the Good News of Jesus Christ, and how we can show genuine love for our neighbor by proclaiming, and living, that truth.

You can see the film for free at [InHisImage.movie](http://InHisImage.movie). – JIM WITTEVEEN





# 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.*

**\$8.00**

ePub  
**\$4.00**



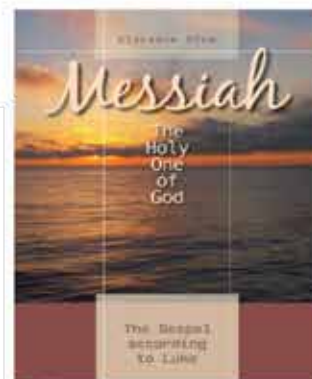
**Revelation (Study Guide)** L. Selles  
(2-in-1 book)

Rev. Selles helps the reader see that the Revelation to John is not a puzzle, but an unveiled mystery in this chapter-by-chapter investigation of the book.

*Each chapter includes questions for review and discussion.*

**\$20.00**

ePub  
**\$6.00**



**Messiah**  
Cl. Stam

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.

*24 chapters, each with discussion questions.*

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