

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

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EVANGELIZE AND
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PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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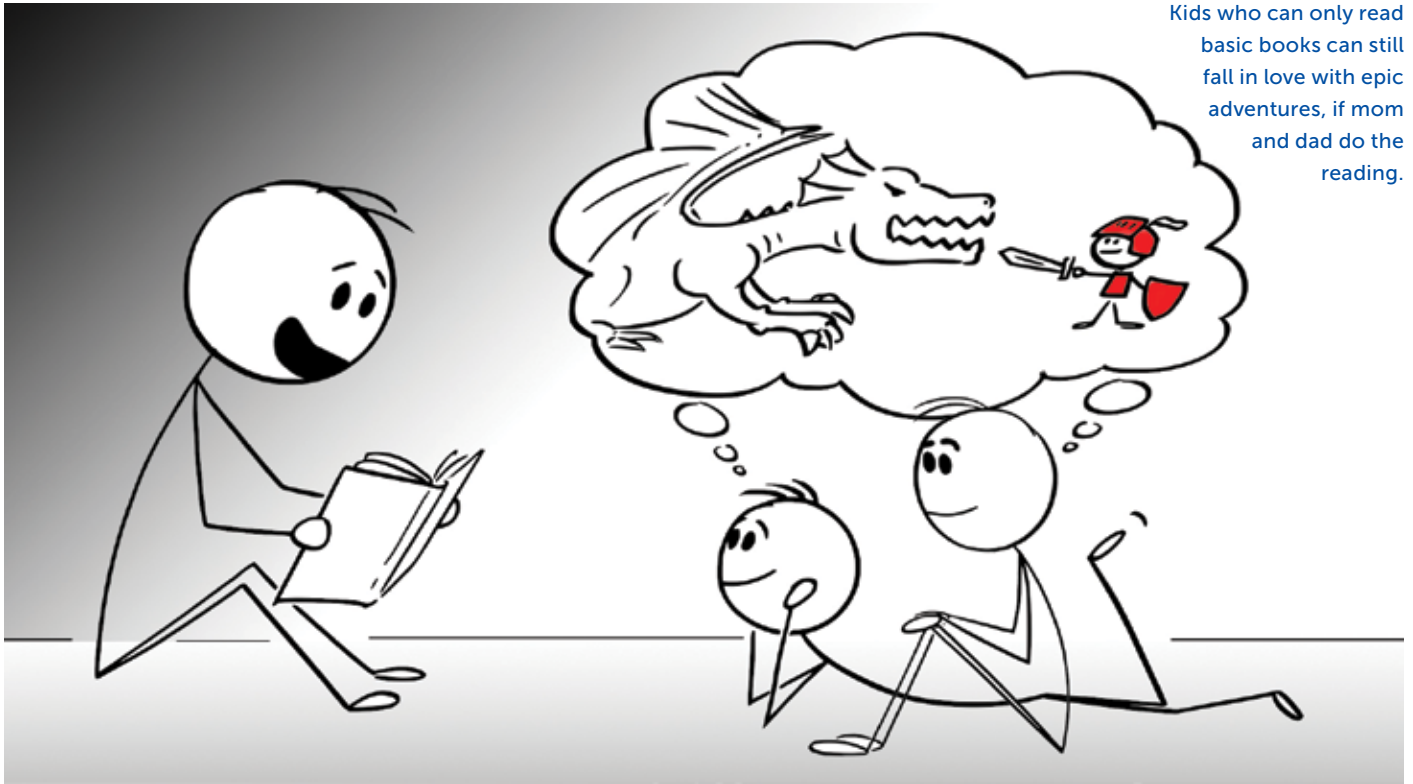
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Kids who can only read basic books can still fall in love with epic adventures, if mom and dad do the reading.



Why You Should Keep Reading To Your Kids

Parents read to their pre-school kids on a pretty regular basis – it's a great way to snuggle up for some one-on-one time with mom or dad. But once school starts, and especially after Grade One, those times reading together begin to peter out. It might be because your little one isn't asking you as often, or maybe it's because you've stopped suggesting it. After all, why would you keep on reading together when Junior is ready and rarin' to read on his own?

Well, before you close the book on that part of your life, here's a few reasons why you'll want to keep on reading with your kids for as long as you can.

1. IT'LL KEEP THEM INTERESTED

A First Grader is going to be excited to read about how "Ike and Mike both got a bike." But it won't be long before they start noticing there's something missing here.

Ike and Mike are fine fellows, but there's no real tension, no suspense, no conflict to overcome in their story. So if all your child gets to hear are *Cat in the Hat* and books like that – only the stories that he's able to read on his own – it'll be no wonder if he gets bored with books. There's no payoff: the reading takes lots of effort, and the reward is a downright boring story.

But if mom is still snuggling up with them on the couch to tackle *In Grandma's Attic*, or dad is sharing his favorite Piet Prins book at night, then your young reader can still grow in his love for great stories, even as he might be a few years from tackling these bigger books on his own. We parents can whet their appetite for the future, by feeding our kids great books now. One reason to keep reading to your children even after Grade One is to show them what there is to look forward to.

2. IT'S A WAY TO SHAPE THEIR TASTES

Just as many kids prefer candy to vegetables, their literary tastes would gravitate to empty calories like *Captain Underpants* and *Magic Kittens* if it were only up to them. You can impact what they read by going on library runs with (or without) them, or by developing a decent home library. But even when you're picking out the selections, you're likely to find them heading straight to whichever of those books are the most candy-like. So another way you can help them develop a taste for more substantial, meatier fare is by reading it to them yourself.

We've been doing a bedtime story for almost ten years now, and while we've read lots of their requests – I don't know how many times I've tackled *Elephant & Piggy*, *Fancy Nancy*, and the *Little Critter* series – we've also fed them the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *Winnie the Pooh*, and *The Big Goose*

and the Little White Duck, none of which they would have picked up on their own.

I've done most of the bedtime reading, but my wife will read when I have meetings, or have to catch up on some work in the evenings. That has allowed both of us to share our own favorites. So my wife likes *Little House on the Prairie* and I like great Christian fantasy like Jonathan Rogers' *The Wilderking Trilogy*, and between the two of us, we now have girls who like both.

3. A TIME TO CONNECT

Reading together is about more than just words on paper; it's a time to connect, maybe cuddle side by side on the couch, and just spend time together. That's one reason why many a kid will keep asking, "Can you read this mom?" even after they can tackle a book on their own.

I sometimes find life is just too busy, with many evenings filled with work. But because we've made a commitment to always end our day with story time, that means that, at the very least, I have this time to talk with my girls. We end the days with prayers, and then a story. With the story comes questions (not too many, but there's always time for a good one), and that's when I get the best measure of how my girls are doing. My wife is with them more than I am, so she can get the measure of things other ways too. But for me, this nightly ritual is a time for me to not only read, but hear and help.

4. LEARNING FROM OTHER'S LIVES

Our kids can learn from us, and whereas we'd like them to learn from our example, we can also pass along the hard won lessons we've learned from our own mistakes. But their lessons don't need to stop with just us – they can learn from fictional lives too.

They will need some parental guidance to get the benefit, otherwise our elementary-age kids could miss the point of a story entirely, or even learn the wrong lesson. That's because some of them are reading too fast to really chew on anything. But when dad is reading, and they are forced to slow down to his speed, they really start hearing the story. Other kids might miss the lesson because they didn't understand parts. It's only when mom is reading, and

they have her there to answer questions, that they can figure out what's going on.

We can also help them understand by asking our own questions. Something as simple as *The Three Little Pigs* can be fodder for a great discussion if parents ask their kids to pause and consider: "What do you think this story is trying to tell us?" We can even "riff" off of what's on the page, asking questions that might not even have clear answers in the story like: "Do you think it was just luck that Pig 3 got the strongest building material? Or was he looking for something like that?"

When parents read, that makes it possible to go beyond picture books and on to bigger books and their deeper lessons. One example is Sigmund Brouwer's *Innocent Heroes*, about the many animals that helped the Allied soldiers in World War I. Each chapter "stars" a different animal, but the deeper story is about the Canadian soldiers that cared for them. When the group's one native soldier returns home to his reserve we learn that Canadian natives at this time weren't allowed to leave the reserve without getting approval from the local Indian agent. My girls were angry that this returning soldier was getting treated as a second-class citizen, even after fighting for his country. That was a great opportunity for me to talk not simply about racism, but also about governmental paternalism, and ways to (and ways not to) stick up for your friends. I don't know when I would have discussed

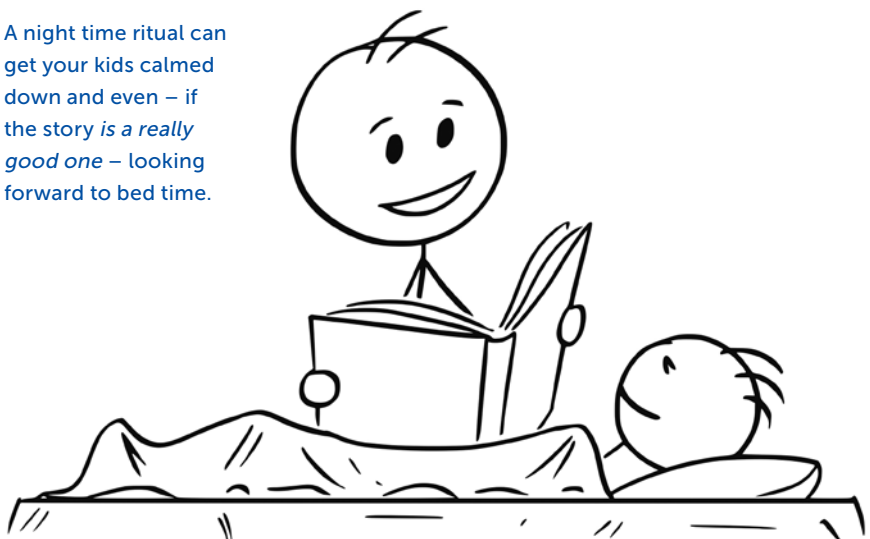
these topics with my girls if not for us all reading this rich book together.

Of course, not every book has to lead to a long discussion (especially if you're reading to them for bedtime and actually need them to go to sleep). Kids will benefit from and be inspired by the determination and Christian faith of a *Robinson Crusoe*. *In Grandma's Attic* offers all sorts of lessons, but the biggest is simply that some older people, like grandmas, are wise, so it's smart to listen to them. The lessons learned don't have to be complicated to be good.

Sometimes I vary how deep we're going to go by how tired I might be feeling. If I were reading Anne DeVries' fantastic *Journey Through the Night* series about the Dutch Resistance in World War II, I might limit my commentary to highlighting that this was *ordinary* people doing these extraordinary things. I'd want my girls to understand that their courageous example is the type of courage God calls all his people to, in the face of evil. But on another night, maybe when I'm sufficiently caffeinated and if one of my girls wants to know, I might talk about how the Dutch Resistance is an example of what godly civil disobedience looks like.

It doesn't matter whether any particular discussions are big or long or on important topics; if you keep reading to your kids, then over the years you'll have *lots* of these discussions and with that volume will come opportunities to address the important topics you might not get to any other way.

A night time ritual can get your kids calmed down and even – if the story is a really good one – looking forward to bed time.



5. FOSTERING DISCERNMENT

There's a moral to every story, and a lot of the time what's being pitched at our kids is something we wouldn't want them to swallow whole. So another reason to keep reading with your kids is help them learn to discern what messages and morals they are encountering.

Sometimes the moral is simply silly: I was reading an abridged version of *King Arthur* to my girls and after the teenage Arthur pulls the sword out of the stone, the chapter concludes that, just like Arthur, if we want something strongly enough, then we'll be able to get what we want. This is the moral of our age: that believing makes it so. But in addition to being nonsense, this moral also ran in direct opposition to the events of the chapter, in which dozens of dukes, earls, and other nobles had tugged at the sword with all of their might – they had all strongly wanted to be king. Yet despite their passion and desire none of them had been able to pull it loose. The girls didn't spot the contradiction at first, but they sure appreciated the irony afterward: believing does *not* make it so.

Other times even the tamest, most G-rated of stories can still teach a moral that runs right up against what parents are trying to teach. A couple of weeks ago my wife

was reading a book about talking kittens – kittens! – with our youngest, and one of the cats asked the little girl in the story to promise to keep a secret from her mom. That was quite the request, but the kitten had a very good reason: if anyone found out that she was a talking kitten she would be in danger! So, on the one hand, our daughters have all been told that if anyone ever wants them to keep a secret from their parents then they should go straight to us and tell us the secret, since only bad guys would make such a request. But on the other hand, this kitten was clearly not a bad guy. So our soft-hearted little girl decided that in this case it would be good to keep the secret from the mother. That was not what we were hoping she would say. But because my wife was reading along, this became an opportunity to reiterate what we'd want her to do, and explain it more clearly. What would have been the wrong lesson learned if our daughter had been reading this alone, turned into another teaching opportunity because mother and daughter were reading it together.

I'm currently reading a series with my oldest daughter that is also as G-rated as you could ever expect a secular series to be: the tiniest bit of flirtation, and minimal violence. But to deal with guilt, the creatures in this story would methodically suppress and deny it, lest it drive them crazy. This is a book for teens, and my oldest isn't yet, so I wasn't surprised that she didn't spot that this response to guilt was problematic. And because I was reading right along with her, it just became another opportunity for a good discussion. It'll be when she can spot these elements herself and bring them to my attention that I'll know I can start backing off and not being so protective. But until then, it's just more fodder for a good discussion.

To spur on some of those discussions the most common question I ask is, "Who or what is the 'god' in this story?" What is the story presenting as the ultimate good, or the ideal we should pursue? It's quite the question for kids to answer, and it's very interesting to see how

perceptive they can sometimes be.

6. IT'S FAMILY FUN

Reading together is just fun. Whether it's at bedtime, or on a road trip, the family that reads together ends up having the same great books as a common experience.

Now, I'll admit that on nights when I'm just barely chugging along, the idea of reading a bedtime story doesn't always excite me. But even that can have its amusements: I've discovered that I can actually read out loud, in my sleep (is that my superpower?). My daughters say that sometimes I'm barely understandable, but I do keep reading. The unfortunate thing is, when I resume the next day, I'm a chapter behind everyone else.

When I'm awake, it's something I absolutely love. Your kids, especially if you start reading to them early, are going to be a very good audience. They'll be up for your bad pirate accent, and your even worse grandmotherly voice. And you can try it all with them, even if you'd never do so in public.

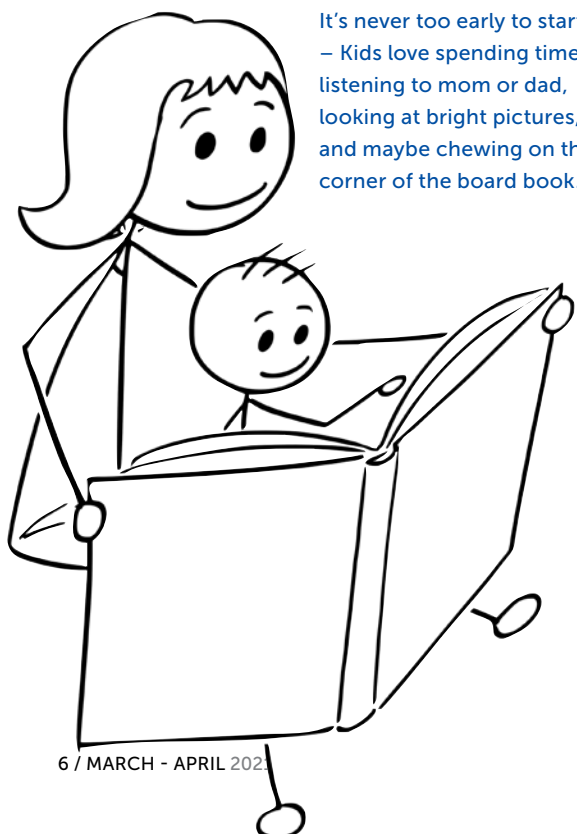
Reading together is also fun because a good book, read with the whole family, is a shared experience and it becomes part of a shared vocabulary. So if we'd recently been reading *Winnie the Pooh*, and a child is down but not sick, we might talk about how they are feeling like "Eeyore" right now. Or if we'd recently read *Pollyanna* we might try to apply her "glad game" (finding the silver lining to every ill).

THE LOGISTICS

That's the *why* for reading to your kids as long as you can, but what about the logistics? What's the best way to actually do it?

It's all about finding good books, and finding a good time. In our family, bedtime is best. But I know some people use that time to read the Bible with their children (in our house we read the Bible at meal times). Other families will create a regular time, maybe every day, or once a week, with everyone sitting around the living room, and parents and children taking turns doing the reading. Another opportunity is any time your family is out driving. Whether you're heading out on a 20-minute drive to Costco or a 16-hour trip to

It's never too early to start – Kids love spending time listening to mom or dad, looking at bright pictures, and maybe chewing on the corner of the board book.



grandma and grandpa's, those are perfect times to read or listen to an audiobook. One family takes the time after Sunday services to read though some wonderful classics with their grown kids. Regularity is more important than the specific time.

For us, reading at bedtime is a bit of a motivator: the sooner to bed, the sooner the story starts. One problem with bedtime stories is that it isn't the best time to read anything remotely scary. One option is save those bits for the trip to Costco. Another workaround is to either read the scary bit in as unexciting a voice as you can, or quickly read ahead and then give an abbreviated summary of that section before continuing on to the next chapter.

Logistics can be even more challenging if you're reading to more than one child. All three of my girls are in the same room, so that makes it simple. But bigger groups can still get it done. One father, whose girls are in one room and boys in another, alternates the room he's going to read in. When he reads in the girls' room, the boys bring their pillows and a blanket to curl up and listen on the floor. And vice versa when he reads in the boys' room. However you work out the logistics, it'll be worth the juggling.

The final ingredient is good books. You can find all sorts of recommendations online, but our family's favorites can be found in the sidebar.

I'll wrap up here with Albert Mohler, from the March 4 edition of his *The Briefing* podcast:

We need to read to our children....

There is something that is expressed in tangible love when parents read to their children. Choose well, read well, read carefully to your children, but yes, read to your children. You're shaping hearts and minds, and furthermore, expressing love to your children in a way you might not think of as a hug.

And one of the axioms of our time that wouldn't make sense to most previous generations, but certainly makes sense with urgency now: put down the smartphone, turn off the television, get disconnected from anything that requires a power cord, other than a reading light. Put a child in your lap and read that child a good book. **RP**

SOME FAMILY READ ALOUD FAVORITES

For years now I've also been on the hunt for that next great book to read to my daughters, so I've been talking to others and searching their bookshelves to find out what their favorites are and what they might recommend. The list of 35+ titles below is the result. Most of these are parts of book series, so the total number of books amounts to well over 100, and all of them fantastic!

Great read alouds

These are arranged by age, with the ones at the top intended for a younger audience, and the later books intended for preteens and older. But when dad (or mom) is doing the reading, intended age isn't nearly as important because he can explain any of the confusing bits (we've read all but the last two of these to our 7-year-old).

- *Alfie series* by Shirley Hughes
- *Charlie the Ranch Dog* by Ree Drummond
- *Elephant and Piggy series* by Mo Willems
- *Mr. Putter and Tabby series* by Cynthia Rylant
- *A camping spree with Mr. Magee* by Chris Van Dusen
- *Stories Children Love* by W.G. Van de Hulst
- *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne
- *James Herriot's Treasury for Children*
- *Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* by Betty MacDonald
- *In Grandma's Attic* by Arleta Richardson
- *Encyclopedia Brown* by Donald J. Sobol
- *Pollyanna* by Eleanor H. Porter
- *Prince Martin wins his sword* by Brandon Hale
- *The Big Goose and the Little White Duck* by Meindert DeJong
- *Little House on the Prairie series* by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- *The Last Archer* by S.D. Smith
- *Farmer Giles of Ham*

by J.R.R. Tolkien

- *Sir Lancelot the Great* by Gerald Morris
- *The Bell Mountain series* by Lee Duigon
- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Wilderking Trilogy* by Jonathan Rogers
- *The Rise and Fall of Mount Majestic* by Jennifer Trafton
- *Innocent Heroes* by Sigmund Brouwer
- *The Wingfeather Saga* by Andrew Peterson
- *Brave Ollie Possum* by Ethan Nicolle

Great audio productions

Half of these are multi-voice with great sound effects, but even the three that are simply being read are spectacularly well done. They are great for long car rides, and would be appreciated by all ages groups, though I've arranged them here by target audience, youngest to oldest.

- *The Great Cake Mystery* by Alexander McCall Smith
- *Sir Malcolm and the Missing Prince* – Lamplighter Theatre
- *Teddy's Button* – Lamplighter Theatre
- *Rush Revere and the Brave Pilgrims* by Rush Limbaugh
- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis (as done by Focus on the Family theater)
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen – the LifeHouse Theater production is just 97 minutes, but a great first exposure to this classic for young and old alike
- *Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery (as done by Focus on the Family theater)
- *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan (and read by Glenn Close)

NOTA BENE

News worth noting

WAR ON GENDER LEAVES BC FATHER IN JAIL

BY PETER VOGEL



Once upon a time there was a little girl. She had a mommy and a daddy who unfortunately divorced. She lived with her mom, but her dad had contact with her and still loved her. In high school, the girl had emotional difficulties, as many teens do. She was taught BC's radical sex education, SOGI 123. She was not happy with her life; she wanted change. At age 14, she decided that she wanted to change her gender. People at her school tried to help her, but not by counseling her to be at peace with her existence and gender. Instead, they "helped" her to begin the process of change, including puberty-blockers.

When her dad found out, he was alarmed. He wanted the process to be stopped, believing that his daughter was not old enough to make such a life-altering decision. He tried his best and did

everything he legally could to truly help his daughter, whom he loved dearly.

Unfortunately, this is a true story and it does not have a "happily ever after" ending. Neither is it over. But the father, when he ran out of legal options, decided that he would have to break court orders and speak out about this situation to raise public awareness. Now, he has gone to jail.

Normally, an account like this would give more exact details, background, and links to articles and other sources for the points we are trying to make. For the details around this case, we have to be very careful because both *Reformed Perspective* and my organization, the Christian Heritage Party, being Canadian, are not allowed to publish the father's name or the name of the doctor who is doing the body-altering surgery on the daughter. The daughter, who now considers herself male, is a minor, so we would not want to publish her name, even if we knew it, but the publication ban on the father's name is more questionable. You can easily find articles about this (including the father's and doctor's names) online using your favorite search engine by entering search terms such as "dad of trans teen breaks

court order." (The publications that use the actual names of the father and doctor are not Canadian-based, and thus not constrained by the court order.)

This is an extremely sad account of where our society is at, both morally and legally. On the moral side, our culture has accepted the lie that advising someone not to attempt to change their gender is immoral and unloving; this could be codified in law if Bill C-6 passes.

On the legal side, we now have judges and laws that don't allow a father to truly help his teen in her emotionally difficult teen years. Instead, the easily-influenced and changeable wishes of an immature and inexperienced teen are taken to be better than the wisdom of his/her parent(s).

The father, who has gone to jail in BC for his actions, is mourning – less for his own fate than for that of his daughter. She might (and probably will, as others have) come to regret her decision and find out far too late what damage she, with the "help" of "doctors," has done to her body and future.

Many, possibly most, Canadians would be horrified by the depths to which our courts and medical profession have fallen. Due to the publication ban, most Canadians will never know the details of this case. Even without any publication bans, it's likely Canada's mainstream news outlets would probably have just buried this story. They are, for the most part, friendly towards the anti-morality of those who are waging a war on gender and trying to "normalize" transgenderism.

Time Magazine recently featured a celebrity actress on their cover who had herself surgically altered so as to present and think of herself as male. Earlier, Bruce Jenner had himself altered to appear to be female. These people are given several moments of glowing fame. But afterwards, they are left with their decision. Their war on their gender is a war on themselves, and they – and many impressionable youths – are damaged and hurt by this battle against reality.

Reality is not always easy. It is not always fair. The burdens that many have to bear are unspeakably difficult. We cannot deny that the struggles young people

are facing today – especially in this age of sexual perversion – are more complex and insidious than many previous generations have faced. But that reality should drive us to care for and support them in the difficulties.

Children and teens are not helped when their delusions are accepted as reality and acted upon. Believing that you can fly by flapping your arms does not make it possible, no matter what height you jump from. “Helping” someone who thinks he/she can fly to jump from a

higher height is not truly helping him/her at all. “Helping” people who think they would be happier as the opposite gender to try to change their gender is not really helping them at all. All the hormones a person may take do not change his/her DNA, and more importantly, they cannot give true satisfaction or meaning to life.

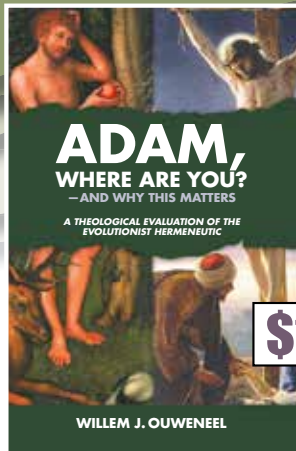
A father in BC has gone to jail because he really wants to help his daughter. The war against gender is getting more real. When will it end, and how many lives will it ruin? Even one is a tragedy. Far

more will follow if people of goodwill and common-sense don’t speak up and stand for truth. So please take a stand for God-given truth and against the war on gender by speaking up and getting involved. **RP**

Peter Vogel is the Deputy Leader of the Christian Heritage Party. A version of this article first appeared as a “CHP Communique” on March 23rd which you can find at CHP.ca.

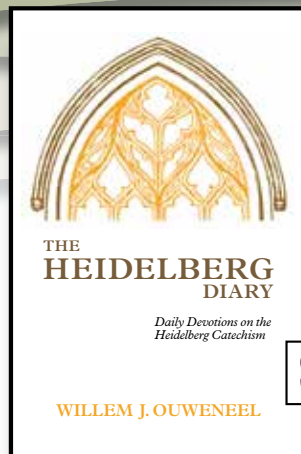
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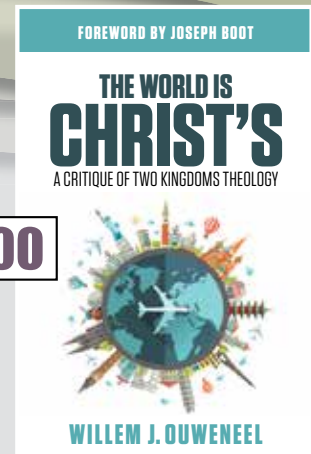
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DOES CANADA'S BILL C-7 IGNORE A DARK LESSON FROM HISTORY?

BY HENDRIK VAN DER BREGGEN

Lebensunwertes leben is German for “life unworthy of life.” As a justification for killing, this idea led to the Holocaust.

Alarming, there is growing acceptance in Canada of *lebensunwertes leben*. Think of Canada’s Bill C-7 and its expansion of “medical assistance in dying” (a euphemism for physician-assisted suicide, i.e. killing done by doctors). Instead of first helping vulnerable people by providing much-needed medical and social supports – such as top-notch palliative and hospice care for all – the Canadian federal government is pushing Bill C-7, which promotes death.

Of course, medical assistance in dying is advertised as a “choice.” But a choice isn’t much of a choice if there are few or no good alternatives. In fact, top-notch palliative and hospice care is not available for most Canadians.

Moreover, via this “choice,” C-7 promotes ableism. Ableism is the view that able-bodied people are superior – more worthy of life. C-7 presumes that living with a disability or with a chronic or terminal illness amounts to a life that is less worthy, so assistance in death should be available. And, if Canada’s government has its way, C-7 will offer death to persons suffering solely from mental illnesses. In other words, Bill C-7

encourages death – a “final solution” – for people who are ... inferior.

Have Canadians become dullards? Have Canadians not learned a dark lesson from 20th-century history? Consider the following observations from Dr. Leo Alexander, a medical advisor at the Nuremberg Trials, trials in which representative Nazis were convicted of crimes against humanity (this passage is from *New England Journal of Medicine*, July 4, 1949):

“Whatever proportions these crimes finally assumed, it became evident to all who investigated them that they had started from small beginnings. The beginnings at first were merely a subtle shift in emphasis in the basic attitude of the physicians. It started with the acceptance of the attitude, basic in the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as life not worthy to be lived.”

(Yes, pause and notice that phrase: “life not worthy to be lived.” Reminder: In German, it’s *lebensunwertes leben* – and it led to the Holocaust.) Alexander continues:

“This attitude in its early stages concerned itself merely with the severely and chronically sick. Gradually the sphere of those to be included in the category was enlarged to encompass the socially unproductive, the ideologically unwanted, the racially unwanted, and finally all non-Germans.”

Dr. Alexander adds:

“But it is important to realize that the infinitely small wedged-in lever from which this entire trend of mind received its impetus was the attitude toward the nonrehabilitatable sick.”

Let. That. Sink. In.

I don’t believe that there is a Nazi Party on Canada’s horizon. But there might be something as dark, or darker. What former Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) called the “culture of death” is becoming normal in Canada. Indeed, Bill C-7 “solves” medical and psychological problems by doling out death—and a majority of Canada’s Members of Parliament (mostly Liberal and Bloc Quebecois) approve.

Canadians should resist. How?

An important first step would be to remind politicians that medical and psychological problems require medical and psychological solutions, not killing. RP

Hendrik van der Breggen, PhD, is a retired philosophy professor who lives in Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada. Hendrik’s parents survived the Nazi occupation of The Netherlands. He is the author of “Untangling Popular Pro-Choice Arguments: Critical Thinking about Abortion” which can be found on Amazon.com and Amazon.ca.

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CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TO REPLACE PLAQUE THAT CALLS MURDERERS "SAVAGE"

BY JON DYKSTRA

Wheaton College, a US evangelical liberal arts college, has taken down a plaque "dedicated to the glory of God" and "in loving memory of" two martyred alumni, because it used the adjective "savage" to describe their murderers.

The plaque was erected in 1957, exactly one year after five missionaries, including the two Wheaton alumni, were killed by the tribe they were trying to reach with the Gospel. But now the plaque is down, with plans to have it reworded and replaced. Wheaton's president Philip Ryken explained in an email:

"Recently, students, faculty, and staff have expressed concern about language on the plaque that is now recognized as offensive. Specifically, the word 'savage' is regarded as pejorative and has been used historically to dehumanize and mistreat indigenous peoples around the world..."

But is this a problem of word choice? Did the Class of '49, who erected the plaque 64 years ago, use a word that they shouldn't have? Here is the problem passage, in context, with "savage" highlighted in bold so you can spot it:

Because of the Great Commission Ed and Jim, together with Nathanael Saint, Roger Youderian, and Peter Fleming, went to the mission field, willing for "Anything – anywhere regardless of cost."

They chose the jungles of Ecuador – inhabited by the Auca Indians. For generations all strangers were killed by these **savage** Indians. After many days of patient preparation and devout prayer the missionaries made the first friendly contact known to history with the Aucas.

On January 8, 1956 the five missionaries were brutally slain – martyrs for the love of God.

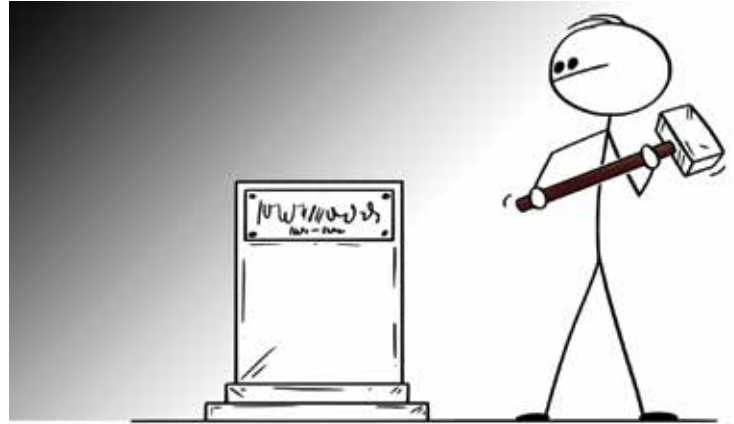
The story of Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Nathanael Saint, Roger Youderian, and Peter Fleming might be best known today for what happened afterwards. Two years after their murders, Rachel Saint, sister of Nathanael, and Elisabeth Elliot wife of Jim, went to live with this same tribe, to evangelize to them. What they did was remarkable, because they were not going to a peace-loving tribe. And the miracle God worked in many tribesmen's hearts was all the more remarkable precisely because of how savage they had been before – six of the very men who murdered the missionaries later turned to the Lord.

So is it wrong to call murderers "savage"? To answer that question we must first establish *by what standard* are we going to assess what is "offensive" and "pejorative."

Christians should, of course, turn to the Bible for our standard. In the world, many today think feelings – and *their* feelings in particular – are the measure of all things. Before we roll our eyes and be done with this nonsense, let's remember there is a biblical command that takes feelings into consideration.

Jesus said, "Do unto others as you would want done unto you" (Matt. 7:12). And since we wouldn't want to be called savage, we shouldn't call others savage. Case closed...right? Well, no. This "Golden Rule" applies to our own actions: what we should or should not do. Thus if you find "savage" a "pejorative" and needlessly "offensive" word, then you really shouldn't use it on any plaque *you* might be planning to erect.

But how do we assess the actions of *another*? By what standard should we judge the actions and word usage of a



previous generation? In Matthew 7, just a few verses earlier, Jesus shows us the way here too:

"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get" (7:1-2).

So the question we should ask is, how would we want a generation, 64 years from now, to evaluate the words we say today? If there is no offense expressed and no offense intended when we first say them – if there was no sin at the start – would we want them to read in a sin six decades hence? Would we want our bronzed words taken down because they offended the ever-changing sensibilities of college students and professors? The fact is "savage" is a very good adjective for murderers – these weren't the peaceful Indians they were going to. If God's people find this language too offensive to read, let alone use, it's hard to imagine how we'll have the courage to speak to the world frankly about sins like homosexuality, adultery, transgenderism, and abortion.

This plaque was erected to remember how these five missionaries were willing to risk everything to bring God's good news to a savage people desperately in need of it. Instead of finding fault where none exists, we should be looking to these missionaries' example, asking, "What are we willing to risk to present His Word to our own savage culture?" **RP**



WOVEN TOGETHER

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:15-16)

It was a rather warm, early afternoon, if I recall properly, a long-ago day in April of 1978. Our oldest daughter was in grade one, our second daughter was attending kindergarten and the two younger ones were napping soundly. I was cleaning up after lunch and rather contemplating a nap myself when the telephone rang. Picking it up, the voice of an old acquaintance came through. “Christine? This is Anna Piller.”

“Yes, how are you Anna? Good to hear your voice. I haven’t heard from you for quite a while.”

“I’m fine.” There was a silence and I heard the clock ticking through it.

“How are your girls?” I recalled that Anna had four daughters. She had taught at the local Christian school for a while, but had left to move south to the London area.

“They are fine.” There was another silence. Then Anna continued, continued rather hesitantly. “Actually, they’re not fine. That is to say, Rachel is...”

I tried to help her: “Is something wrong with Rachel, Anna?”

“She’s pregnant, Christine. And here’s

the thing. I wonder if she can stay with you for a while? If you would take her into your home.” Rachel was the second of Anna’s daughters. Anna was a divorcee. Her husband had committed adultery, had not repented and had left her and the girls a number of years prior to her teaching at our school.

“Is the father of the baby,” I began softly, but was interrupted.

“There’s not going to be any wedding, Christine.”

“Oh,” I answered, and then went on, “and you want Rachel to stay with us?”

“You have such a nice family,” Anna rushed on, “and I would feel so good to know that she is with you.”

When someone tells you that you have a nice family, pride oozes through your veins. You instantly feel good about yourself and when Anna complimented our household, there was no doubt in my mind that I wanted to help. “How far along is she?”

“She’s only two months and she feels sick as a dog every morning.”

I was expecting our fifth and not sick in the least. But I felt instant empathy

for Rachel. No husband to help her, she was probably worried about what the community would say and she was so very young. I ventured to guess she was only seventeen or so. Compassion filled me. “I’d have to speak with my husband, Anna, but I think that we could make room for Rachel.”

“There’s something else, Christine. Rachel is going to abort the baby before coming to your house.”

I was knocked for a loop and honestly did not know what to say for the next minute or so. “Oh, Anna.”

“Yes, I know.” There was a long drawn-out sigh and the clock on the wall kept ticking.

“You know this is not right. Why would she...”

“I’ve spoken with her, Christine. I’ve tried to persuade her to keep the baby but she won’t listen to me. There are counselors.... and they say.... I just think that after the abortion she’s going to feel pretty low and that she won’t feel good about being here and being with you might just raise her spirits and be a good influence on her. Again Anna’s sentence stopped midair.

Unconsciously I had put my hand on my belly, as if to shut out the influence of the secular world from my unborn, and very much wanted, fifth child. I took a deep breath. "I'll drive down to where you live, Anna, and speak with Rachel myself. I'd like to try and change her mind. You see we are also expecting another baby and maybe I could...."

In the end, after discussing it at length, my husband and I decided that Rachel would be welcomed into our home with open arms if she chose to keep the baby, if she chose to stay pregnant. We would help her, encourage her, pay for what she needed and love her. But if she chose to abort prior to coming to our home, she would have to make other arrangements.

I drove to the London/Woodstock area shortly after that and had two long conversations - one with Anna and another with Rachel. Rachel almost agreed to come home with me, but in the end she changed her mind and opted for abortion. Anna, the grandmother of the little unborn, was sorry about the situation but it was obvious that she would have found it most convenient to board out her daughter. I drove home sorrowful and have never found out what happened. Both my husband and I were convinced that God would provide for Rachel through ourselves if she chose life. Perhaps, in the end, she did and we were never apprised of the fact. We pray that she did.

Mark Jones, pastor of the Faith Reformed Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, Canada, has recently (2019) written a book entitled *If I Could Speak - Letters from the Womb*. In it are fifteen chapters. Each chapter is a letter written from the womb by a tiny fetus named Zoe. Zoe begins each of her letters with a statement - statements such as "I can hear your voice," and "You and daddy put me here," or "I'd rather be adopted than

aborted."

The letters are obviously beyond the capacity of a little fetus. The reader is asked to overlook that and to indulge pastor Jones who in this touching and straightforward manner is arguing for life. He's making the case that abortion stops a human being from being able to laugh; from being able to give love; from being able to graduate from school; from caring for parents; and so on. He is, in effect, making the case that abortion is murder.

(There is one troubling aspect in chapter 11 of this little tome in which pastor Jones begins by having the fetus say "I wish I were a baby eagle." Going on to laud the parental virtues of the eagle family, he suggests that scientists would be aghast if eagles, or other animals, would poison their offspring. He says: "*We would even say a mutation has happened in the so-called 'evolutionary' process. I mean, as far as evolution is concerned, one of the main goals of animals is to leave offspring (DNA) behind in order that the stronger may survive. So to kill one's offspring is a fundamental reversal of the evolutionary process.*" A bit of a suspect paragraph that. Does pastor Jones believe in evolution? Just be forewarned. Evolution denies God's existence and in doing so negates the intrinsic value of human beings.)

In these days when new laws are being enacted and abortion in Canada is legal at all stages of pregnancy, (funded in part by the Canada Health Act), it is good to make this a matter of much prayer. Canada is the only nation with absolutely no specific legal restrictions on abortion. Human life is sacred because we, all of us, have been made in the "image of God." God alone has authority over life because He alone is its Author. ^{RP}

Christine Farenhorst is the author of many short story collections including "Hidden: Stories of War and Peace" which you can find on Amazon.com and Amazon.ca.



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

READY FOR BIGGER THINGS?

While Covid has closed schools, that hasn't squelched some kids' creativity. On January 25 @ChrisArnoldInc tweeted:

"My wife is a teacher and apparently one kid has been changing his name to 'Reconnecting' during the Zoom lessons so that he doesn't get asked any questions. Been doing it for weeks. The lad doesn't need to worry about his education, he's already a bona fide genius."

IS GOD A GENTLEMAN?

If you've ever discussed God's sovereignty and Man's free will with an Arminian friend, you'll likely have heard them say: "God is a gentleman, so He would never force Himself on us."

How should we answer this claim?

First, it's good to note that your friend may think this a positive portrayal of God – after all, when has being called a gentleman ever been an insult? But there is a problem: if the debate is framed this way, then the Calvinist understanding of God is truly horrific because if God were not to act the part of a gentleman, if He was to "force Himself on us," then what is God being likened to? However, unintended, this treats the Calvinist position on God's sovereignty as *God the rapist*.

How, then, can we answer this charge?

By going to Scripture. Do we find God as a gentleman there? No. He reveals Himself as a parent – God is our *Father*. As a parent myself, I know that sometimes my love is expressed by forcing my will on a child: they will go to bed, eat their vegetables, do their homework, and more, whether they want to or not.

My dad tells a story about when he was a kid out biking in the Netherlands with his own father. They were on the top of a hill with a major road below and my dad pointed his bike down the hill and started pedaling when, suddenly, his chain fell off. On this kind of bike that was the only brake so now he was flying faster and faster towards a major highway with no way to stop – he was heading towards certain death. My grandfather yelled at him to tip his bike to wipe out because as much as that would hurt it was better than getting killed. But he was just a kid and not thinking logically, so he wouldn't do it. My grandfather raced after him, caught up to him just in time, and then pitched both of their bikes over just short of the highway. It hurt a lot but saved his life. My grandfather forced his will on his child...because he loved him.

God is not a gentleman; He is our *Father* and He will turn His children back towards Him.

WHY DIDN'T SAMSON GET SICK?

Most guys hold to the 5-second rule: should I drop food on the ground but pick it up before 5 seconds pass, it is safe to eat. The rule has some wrinkles: for something truly delicious

there are provisions for an extension of even 3 or 4 seconds more. Some criticize this rule, pointing to studies that say bacteria can latch onto fallen food in an instant. But while such studies have done little to dissuade dads from brushing the grass off a fallen hotdog or hamburger

patty, we know there are limits. Even the manliest man isn't going to pick something up off of the slaughterhouse floor.

So what was Samson thinking when he ate honey out of a *rotting lion carcass*? This wasn't after just 5 seconds either, so why didn't he get sick?

The answer lies in the amazing properties of honey. Pots of it have been found in Egyptian tombs, thousands of years old and still unspoiled. How many other foods can do that? What gives it not only this long life but the sort of anti-bacterial properties that allowed Samson to eat it out of a carcass? There are a few things, including a lack of water, and a degree of acidity (with a pH of 3 to 4.5), but the secret ingredient is... bee spit! Their stomach acid breaks down the nectar they ingest, creating a by-product of hydrogen peroxide. That isn't something we'd normally want to ingest, but it is tiny and just enough to help prevent spoilage. It is also just enough to give honey medicinal properties that benefit us too, like being a low-cost, readily available treatment for burns – it reduces scarring and even offers some pain relief. While we prefer to get our honey from non-carcass sources, this is why Samson could chow down, and share it with his parents, without any digestive consequences. Because even honey is fearfully and wonderfully made!

SOURCE: Natasha Geilings' "The Science Behind Honey's Eternal Shelf life" posted to Smithsonianmag.com Aug 22, 2013; "Put some of this on that wound, Honey" posted to EvolutionNews.org on Feb 12, 2021

GOOD INTENTIONS DON'T MAKE MINIMUM WAGE GOOD

President Biden's administration seems intent on more than doubling the US federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour. The intent of this minimum wage hike (and minimum wage laws generally) is to help the country's poorest, by giving an instant boost to their income. But what the late **Walter Williams** (1936-2020) wanted to know was, what will happen to the worker who doesn't already have the skills to produce at least \$15 an hour worth of value to their employer?

"A lot of people will say, 'The minimum wage is an anti-poverty device.' That is utter nonsense. For kids who grew up in broken homes, who've gone to rotten schools ... if they're going to learn anything that will make them a more valuable worker in the future, they're not going to learn it in their neighborhoods, they're not going to learn it in their schools. So they have to learn it on the job. And what the minimum wage law does, it nixes that learning."

THE WIT AND WISDOM OF C.H. SPURGEON

- "...idle men tempt the devil to tempt them."
- "...they are always talking about their rights; I wish they would give an eye to their own wrongs..."

- “If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.”
- “Is there nothing to sing about today? Then borrow a song from tomorrow; sing of what is yet to be. Is this world dreary? Then think of the next.”
- “You say, ‘If I had a little more, I should be very satisfied.’ You make a mistake. If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.”

SAY IT OUT LOUD

An Albertan, a Quebecer, a Spaniard, and a German were all on a Zoom call with their boss, who asked, “Can everyone see me?” to which they responded “Yup,” “Oui,” “Si,” “Ja.”

(h/t to Al Siebring)

A CHRISTIAN CASE FOR FREE SPEECH

The Christian case for freedom of speech is based on knowing:

1. Truth is real
2. Man is fallen

That there is a Truth to be found gives Christians a reason to permit even very offensive speech, to allow truth and lies to battle it out under the bright lights. We wouldn’t want an atheist banned

from questioning God’s existence, because to do so is going to make it impossible for him to get answers.

But Christian support for free speech is not absolute. We *should* censor some sorts of “speech” – pornography, slander, yelling “fire” in a crowded theater – because of the great harm these lies cause. But the fallen nature of Man is why we would only restrain speech in the most extreme circumstances, as Douglas Wilson explains:

“The foundational reason for insisting on free speech has to do with the Christian doctrine of the nature of man. Every restriction that is placed on men is a restriction that must be enforced by men. And the men who enforce are almost always a greater hazard to our liberties than the man in the street who wants to pop off about something. The men who enforce any restrictions on free speech have the same problem of sin that the general populace does, and in their case this sinfulness is combined with political power. This means that if you grant the authorities the power to punish the one who would yell ‘Fire!’ in a crowded theater, which they need to have, they will be tempted to use that power to punish citizens who are critical of them.... I do not want to defend free speech because each of us is so wise that we all must be given our chance to contribute our wisdom. No. Rather, I maintain that we are a fallen race, and cannot be trusted to police certain things. To the extent that the authorities have any power to regulate speech, that power must be carefully balanced and held in check...”

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Love your emotions by making them obey Jesus

Emotional control is a wonderful thing, but it is also much misunderstood. Whenever I say something like the quote included here in the picture beside, women rush to assume that I am saying emotions (in and of themselves) are a bad thing. Or that a godly life is a life where you stoically don't feel or express anything. Neither of these things are accurate – and there really is another way to live with your emotions that is not indulgence *or* suppression.

OFF LEASH

Imagine a person with dogs in their house who are entirely untrained and untended – tearing up the couches, relieving themselves in the house, biting people who come to the door, and fighting with each other.

Compare that to a dog owner whose dogs are well behaved, getting exercised well, fed well, trained well, and like to sleep by the fire on their monogrammed dog beds.

Which owner actually appreciates and enjoys dogs? Which can truly be said to love dogs? Which owner understands the value and gifts of dogs?

Clearly the second! The first is a style of ownership which we would not be wrong to call abusive. It is unkind and actually hateful. The second is characterized by love.

To refuse to discipline your emotions is not loving them, but rather hating them. It is to have a *worse* emotional life. When we require obedience of emotions, we are actually appreciating and loving them.


There are times when your emotions want to do what is right – that's like when we take our dog on a walk and she



joyfully runs off in the fields looking for pheasants, doing exactly what she was made to do. It is a delight. But there are also times when our emotions want to do what they may not – like when our dog wants to go kill one of the neighbor's chickens. To love her is to restrain her. To appreciate her is to not allow her to do whatever she wants. Sometimes she has really terrible wants – just like us!

A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Self-control is a good thing – it is a fruit of the Spirit! If you have been

living a life where your emotions are tearing apart the couches and destroying your peace and all those around you, you need to ask the Lord to intervene and help you learn to control them. *He will.* 

Rachel Jankovic is the author of "Loving the Little Years: Motherhood in the Trenches," "Fit to Burst: Abundance, Mayhem, and the Joys of Motherhood," and "You Who? Why you matter and how to deal with it," which was reviewed in the July/Aug 2019 issue.



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BOOKS

THE ORIGINS DEBATE FOR DIFFERENT AGES

By Jon Dykstra

ECHOES OF ARAFAT

BY NICK LIGUORI
2021 / 300 PAGES



Why are there Flood myths all over the world? Christians can point back to Noah – every last tribe and nation can trace their origin back to the small family that lived through this cataclysmic worldwide deluge.

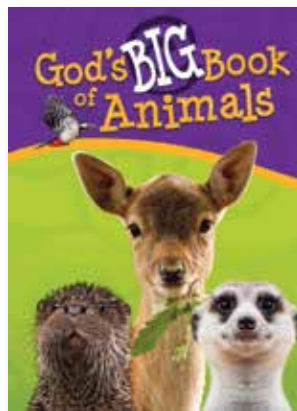
But how can skeptics explain it? If it was just one or two stories, maybe they could attribute it to coincidence. But confronted with the 300-some accounts in *Echoes of Arafat*, the case for coincidence just isn't plausible. And these are just from North and South America – Charles Martin has more from around the world in his book *Flood Legends*.

By way of example, one of the stories Nick Liguori shares is one told by the Caddo tribe to a group of explorers who were mapping the Arkansas/Texas Red River in 1806. Space doesn't allow but for the summary: the Supreme Being Enicco is displeased and destroys the world with a flood but for one family who hid out in cave which also contains two of every animals. They then send out a bird who returns with a straw, and eventually they go out on a raft to find land.

The parallels are obvious, and there's lots more to explore. This would be a great resource for any church or school library!

GOD'S BIG BOOK OF ANIMALS

EDITED BY SHIRLEY RASH
248 PAGES / 2019



Did you know that baby elephants drink three gallons of milk each day? Or that "woodcock" means "roosters of the forest"? And did you know female great white sharks are actually larger than the males?

God's Big Book of Animals is GIGANTIC - it's bigger than any other book I've read. It is filled with amazing information about intricate animals – like the great white shark! – all created by God. Each of the 60 animals are given 4 bright, beautiful pages full of descriptions, fun facts and pictures. Plus each animal has their own 14x10 inch full-page photo.

More fun facts include:

- "Turtles do not have teeth. They have strong, jagged jaws that help them take bites."
- "Komodo dragons are also called monitor lizards."
- "Elephant... trunks are heavy, and can weigh over 300 pounds!"
- "A group of butterflies is called a kaleidoscope of butterflies, a swarm of butterflies, or a rabble of butterflies."
- "Baby octopuses can hatch in different colors. They can be orange, red, yellow, or different shades of blue."

I think kids 7 and up would love this! But even kids younger would like the many pictures inside.

REPLACING DARWIN MADE SIMPLE

BY NATHANIEL T. JEANSON
85 PAGES / 2019

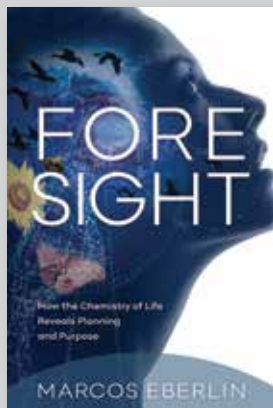


How's this for an intriguing thesis for a *creationist* book: Darwin got it right.

What exactly is the "it" Darwin got right? Author Dr. Nathaniel Jeanson argues that in *On the Origin of Species* Darwin's scientific argument/approach did successfully poke holes in creationism... *but the 1859 version* which held that species were created exactly as they are and remain unchanged. And that isn't based on anything in the Bible.

Jeanson not only gives Darwin credit for highlighting the problems with a "fixity of species," he wants today's scientists to question like Darwin. Jeanson argues that if they used this same scientific critical approach it would back today's creationism and tear down today's evolution. Then scientists would find creationism has explanations for some of the same observations evolution is said to explain. And they would also find that evolution has problems that creationism does not when it comes to sexual procreation, rapid speciation, mitochondrial "clocks," and more.

Made Simple is actually a much shorter version of Jeanson's 2017 *Replacing Darwin: The New Origin of Species*, which clocks in at 335 pages. This big version is for the skeptic who have lots of questions, while *Made Simple* is the Cliff Notes version for Christians.



FORESIGHT: HOW THE CHEMISTRY OF LIFE REVEALS PLANNING AND PURPOSE

BY MARCOS EBERLIN

2019 / 147 PAGES

Back in 1996 "Irreducible complexity" was Michael Behe's contribution to the origins debate: he argued that some biological structures couldn't possibly have evolved because there is no way they could have come about by evolution's step-by-step process – the complexity of micro-machines like a bacteria's flagellum motor was *irreducible*.

Now Marcos Eberlin is making a similar point, but bringing a new piece of rhetorical ammunition to the fight with *Foresight*. He argues the deeper we delve into the biological world the more we discover "artful solutions to major engineering challenges." These solutions, he explains, look to "require something that matter alone lacks.... – foresight."

With this term "foresight," Eberlin is arguing some biological abilities couldn't have come about as a *response*, but had to be the result of *anticipation*. So, for example, cells, right from the beginning, had to anticipate the problems that would come with using oxygen:

"The oxygen (O₂) molecule is essential to life, but only a life form that can efficiently wrap and transport the devil O₂ exactly to a place where it can be used as an energy source would benefit from its angel side. Otherwise, O₂ becomes life's greatest enemy.

Rupture the membrane of a living cell, exposing it to the air, and you will see the great damage O₂ and a myriad of other chemical invaders can do to a perforated cell. Death would be swift and sure. From an engineering standpoint, then, it was essential that a way is found to protect the cell, life's most basic unit. The solution was clever: The cell was surrounded by a strong chemical shield, from the very beginning.

"It is often said that a solution always brings with it two additional problems, and a cellular membrane shield is no exception. A simple shield could indeed protect the cell interior from deadly invaders, but such a barrier would also prevent cell nutrients from reaching the inside of the cell, and it would trap cellular waste within. Small neutral molecules could pass through the membrane, but not larger and normally electrically charged biomolecules. A simple shield would be a recipe for swift, sure death. For early cells to survive and reproduce, something more sophisticated was needed. Selective channels through these early cell membranes had to be in place right from the start. Cells today come with just such doorways...

".....a gradual step-by-step evolutionary process over many generations seems to have no chance of building such wonders since there apparently can't be many generations of a cell, or even one generation until these channels are up and running. No channels, no cellular life. So then, the key question is: How could the first cells acquire proper membranes and co-evolve the protein channels needed to overcome the permeability problem? Even some committed evolutionists have confessed the great difficulty here. As Sheref Mansy and his colleagues put it in the journal *Nature*, 'The strong barrier function of membranes has made it difficult to understand the origin of cellular life.'"

So Eberlin concludes: "There would be no hope for a cell to become viable if it had to tinker around with mutations over thousands of generations in search of a functional membrane. It's anticipate or die."

This is but his first example – Eberlin is arguing that wherever we look at life, "the evidence of foresight is abundant." That's true in the fine-tuning of the universe, where gravity had to be just so, Earth had to be just the right distance from the Sun, and had to have enough water, and water needed to have certain specific properties. Oh, and the planet needed to have just the right amount of lightning too.

That foresight is also evident in the structure of our DNA - which has to be stable – and RNA - which has to be malleable.

He goes on, diving into these examples, and showing how brilliantly problems have been anticipated and solved. But by who? Well Eberlin doesn't really get into that until the final chapter, and it is in the book's very last line that he gives credit where it is due: "Great are the works of the Lord."

I loved this whole book, but will confess to only understanding about two-thirds of it clearly. But even when it got more technical, the gist I did catch was still utterly fascinating. I'd recommend it to anyone with an interest and at least some high school science.



MISSION IN MEXICO

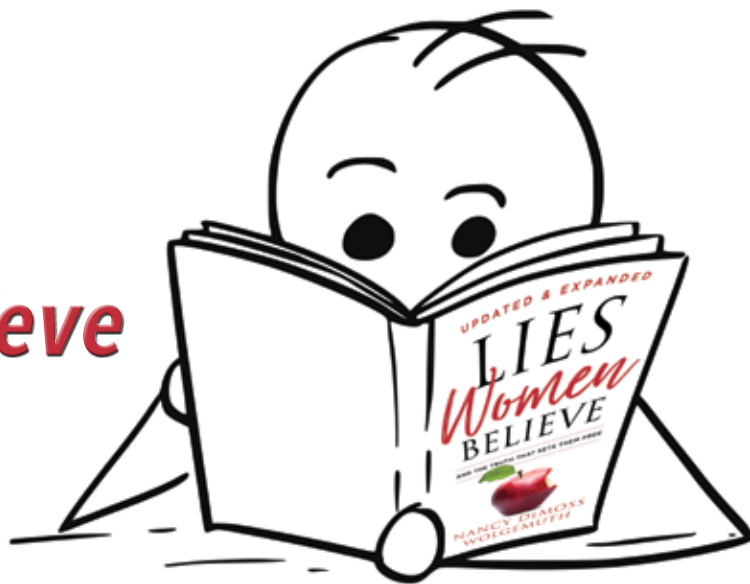
operating in Querétaro, Mexico is prayerfully seeking a missionary to serve alongside a mission worker already working in the mission field. The mission in Querétaro is new with many opportunities. If you have a heart to spread the Word to those in need of the gospel, are an ordained minister of the Word, and of the Reformed faith, prayerfully consider our request.

Fluency in Spanish is an asset.

Interest or questions can confidentially be emailed to tdboeve@gmail.com.

A HUSBAND READS *Lies Women Believe*

by Chris deBoer



Have you ever read a book specifically written for the opposite gender? I've just finished *Lies Women Believe: and the Truth That Sets Them Free* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss and boy, what a read!

As an elder in our local church, I have the opportunity to speak with sisters in Christ about various challenges, and I appreciate their willingness to share. I try to be careful with my words in all visits, and I pray for wisdom when pastoring to the specific needs of these beloved sisters. One of the books that I have encouraged some to read is DeMoss's. While I'd previously perused it, I was making this recommendation based on my wife's, and other's, high praise. But as I started to recommend it, I became convinced that I really ought to read it myself. I'm glad I did.

Before I continue, I'm going to express a word of caution. If you think you are such a "good husband" with an "unappreciative wife," this book is *not* for you. If your marriage is going through a rough patch, this might be a very good book for a wife, but not for the husband. DeMoss is honest in her assessment, and strives to be thoroughly biblical, but in the context of a challenging marriage, a bitter husband could use this book to point out the flaws and lies that his wife is perpetuating, even subconsciously. And he could then use this as ammunition against her, and this would be grossly inappropriate.

But if you are a husband who loves his wife, an elder who loves his sisters in Christ, or a dad who loves his growing

and maturing daughter, then this is a good book for you to read to better understand how you can help, and not hinder, your sisters in seeing through these lies, and learn how you can stop feeding these lies yourself.

LOTS OF LIES

Throughout the book, DeMoss addresses forty lies that women believe, and she addresses them under eight different areas. These include lies women believe about:

- a. God
- b. themselves
- c. sin
- d. priorities
- e. marriage
- f. children
- g. emotions
- h. circumstances

This list isn't exclusive to women, of course, but DeMoss's target audience is clearly women. She starts each chapter with ideas that Eve might have struggled with, and includes engaging real anecdotes from some women's experiences, and discusses the lies specifically as women might grapple with them.

What made it so interesting to me, as a dad, husband, elder, and Christian man, is that it made me reflect on how I might perpetuate the lies to the women in my own life – how men might feed the lie, as it were. While I strongly recommend the book in its entirety, in this article, we'll limit the focus to the lies women believe about marriage, and we'll explore how men might believe similar lies, or even feed the lie.

1. HE'LL COMPLETE ME

The first lie is, "I have to have a husband to be happy." As men, we might believe that "I have to have a wife to be happy."

Of course, our happiness or blessedness has to be rooted in Christ. He taught that the blessed ones were the poor in spirit, peacemakers, those who mourn, etc. (cf. Matt. 5:1-12). James teaches us that, "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (1:17). If we are married, that is a good gift for us, and if we are not married, what the Lord has given is also good for us – we are blessed because it comes from the Lord. This does not mean that it is easy to accept God's plans over our own. Neither is it wrong to desire marriage in the Lord. But our happiness and contentment needs to be rooted in Christ and the blessings of belonging to him.

In this respect, I think of my daughter and other single sisters in the Lord. I wonder how we might perpetuate the lie to these women and young girls that marriage is needed for happiness.

- Do we repeatedly ask single women why they are single? We ought not.
- Do we repeatedly tell them of some single men who are really nice? If we thought two people would be a good match, we could carefully and prayerfully introduce them to each other and then wait to see what the Lord has in store. But it is important that we do not try to play matchmaker flippantly.
- Do we ever ask them what they would like, or how they feel about their cur-

rent state of singleness? Perhaps they enjoy the freedom to serve the Lord and their neighbour in various capacities and places.

- Do we invite them to be a living member of our family so that they can experience the blessedness of being an integral part of a family? Belonging to the church family is not something single people, or anyone, should only experience on Sundays.
- Do we really believe and accept what we read in Proverbs 16:9, that we may make our plans, but that the Lord determines our steps? Our married state is not by chance but is under God's fatherly providence and love. Whether we are in a hard marriage, great marriage, single, or dating, today is from the Lord, and He has determined our steps.

Instead of trying to "solve a problem" we should work hard at not perpetuating the lie that one has to be married to be happy.

2. I WILL CHANGE HIM

A second lie about marriage that we might believe is that "it is my responsibility to change my mate." In her commentary on this lie, DeMoss writes, "I sometimes wonder how many husbands God would change if their wives were willing to let God take over the process" (p. 140). Interesting point, and such a crucial discussion to have *before* marriage. I wonder if we spend enough time with young dating couples, having serious conversations with them. Are moms and dads, elders, or other couples challenging the couple's compatibility, especially when there is evidence that the couple is not a good fit? Or do we simply "mind our own business"? Are ministers the only ones who are having somewhat serious conversations with a couple, and only after they are engaged? This is a lie that needs to be addressed before a couple gets married, to be sure.

But what about when a couple *is* married? What happens when the initial euphoria of marriage has passed? Or what happens when our spouse doesn't live up to our expectations? Can we just tell our spouse to change, tell them their

faults, how to be better, and why we're in the right? DeMoss suggests that "a godly life and prayer are a wife's two greatest means of influencing her husband's life" (cf. James 5:16; 1 Peter 3:1-4; p. 162).

That can, of course, be said of husbands, too. Do we regularly pray for our spouse? Do we thank the Lord for our spouse? Do we see our spouse as an image-bearer and fellow believer? Do we wonder if our marriage expectations are biblical, and if they are, do we have patience with our spouse's weaknesses and recognize our own?

This second lie about marriage can be tied into the first one. If we keep repeating that we have to be married to be happy, then we might manipulate someone into getting married to an unsuitable spouse. That could lead to more grief and pain than we might ever anticipate. Have you ever told a young woman who doubted if she ought to get married to a particular man, that marriage would make things better? Have you told a man that if he didn't marry a particular woman, that he could well end up single his entire life? We need to be careful that we do not perpetuate the lie.

3. HE'S SUPPOSED TO SERVE ME

A third lie is that "my husband is supposed to serve me," and in this case it might be more likely that a husband believes the lie that "my wife is supposed to serve me."

A husband ought to be chivalrous towards his wife and daughters, and to teach his sons to be likewise. However, DeMoss points to Scripture in explaining how the woman is created to be a help-meet to her husband. But she makes the linchpin point for both spouses when she writes,

"The Truth is that we are never more like Jesus than when we are serving Him or others. There is no higher calling than to be servant."

Indeed, that is what being Christ-like or being imitators of Christ looks like. Both spouses need to model Christ-like service as the normative act of love within the family, both the immediate and church families.

4. SUBMISSION IS MISERABLE

Connected with this is the fourth lie that "if I submit to my husband, I'll be miserable." This is a lie that is repeatedly echoed throughout the secular world in which we live. It reminds us of the desire for autonomy or self-rule. The world around us views marriage as a contract between two independent individuals who agree to cohabitate, share some responsibilities, but remain independent. And if things do not work out, then we can mutually agree to terminate the contract.

Of course, this independence is a lie right from the start. No one is truly independent or autonomous. We all serve God, or Satan and many other idols of the heart. It is possible that Christians have bought into the lie that submission implies inferiority, silence, or cowardice. We all need to submit to the Lordship of Christ as we seek to serve him in the various roles given to us.

This once again reminds me, as a husband and father, how I might perpetuate the lie. Do I make my wife miserable by being over-bearing, proud, and inflexible? Do I honor her, and do I love her as Christ loves his bride? Am I miserable when I don't get my way? Do I say one thing with my words and something else with my actions? My daughter is quite young, but if she starts dating, I'll be looking out for her and wondering if her boyfriend is treating her in a godly way. It reminds me, too, to train my sons to honor their wives, should they get married. I am setting an example in my home in how I love and honor my wife – the question is if it is a godly example.

5. I SHOULD TAKE THE REINS

The fifth lie is "if my husband is passive, I've got to take the initiative or nothing will get done." Immediately, as a husband, I reflect on if I am being too passive or becoming too dependent on my wife's initiative and becoming lazy. A wife is not meant to take on the role of her husband because he is unfaithful in fulfilling his tasks, but we can understand why that might happen.

Now, it is possible that when a husband does make an effort to do something helpful, that his wife tells him it isn't good

enough, isn't done rightly, or it would be better if he just left it to her to do. DeMoss writes:

"I can't help but wonder to what extent we women have demotivated and emasculated the men around us by our quickness to take the reins rather than waiting on the Lord to move men to action. We can so easily strip men of the motivation to rise to the challenge and provide the necessary leadership. To make matters worse, when they do take the action, the women they look to for encouragement and affirmation correct them or tell them how they could have done it better."

Once again, as a husband and father, do I model a sense of laziness in my family? Do



I show proper initiative? Am I balanced, patient, kind, loving, and self-controlled? Do I come home, expect the beer or coffee to be served, expect supper to be ready, house to be cleaned, bills to be paid, children to be quiet, etc., all because I spent eight hours out of the home? Am I obedient to the Lord in how I lead my family, or have I given up because of a few hurtful comments in the past? Do I argue for peace instead of for what is right? My children need an honorable dad, a father figure and role model, not a deadbeat dad. My wife needs a leader who loves her rightly and serves as a head in our marriage and family – there's no room for being passive or lazy.

6. DIVORCE IS GOOD

The last lie about marriage that I think both men and women might struggle with is that "sometimes divorce is a better option than staying in a bad marriage." To be clear, DeMoss doesn't delve into the permissible reasons given in Scripture for divorce. Her focus is more on other things that make marriage more challenging – bad situations, but the sort which have not been understood to be grounds for divorce for Christians.

I can't help but wonder if this is becoming a harder situation today. The church has always echoed Scriptures teaching that "God hates divorce." When Christ was asked by the Pharisees if it were lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause, he replied:

Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate... Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so...' (Matt. 19:1-9)

This article doesn't have room to go through the challenges of divorce and remarriage. Nevertheless, as an elder in the church, I find myself struggling with giving sound counsel and wisdom in

various circumstances. Strength comes from speaking the Word of God to married couples as they struggle through some challenges. But finding the wisdom to rightly apply God's Word in every nuanced circumstance is hard and requires humility and love. I probably get it wrong a lot of the time because I would be relying too much on man's wisdom.

Divorce is never a commandment, and in rare cases it is permitted. This is an important starting point in Christian marriage. We can't just "give it a shot" and see what sticks. We can't treat marriage as a contract between two people, but we must treat it as a vow that both spouses make, and to the Lord in the first place. It is not that I promised my wife that I would love, cherish, and care for her, as much as that I made those promises to the Lord. He is the Lord of my marriage, and if I strive to be faithful to him, I must be faithful to my wife.

CONCLUSION

The edition of the book that I have includes a very helpful summary of each chapter, summarizing the truths that should be understood in response to the lies.

My hope in writing this article was two-fold. First, I hope I demonstrated how DeMoss grapples with some real and challenging issues that women (and men) struggle with.

Secondly, I hope that I was able to show how this book has much to commend it to both women and men. While most men would probably skip over a book with this title, we do so to our detriment. As we love our wives, daughters, sisters-in-Christ, and even as we love our sons, we can make good use of this book as it draws us to Scripture's teaching on how we ought to live as citizens of God's kingdom. RP

Now that I've finished "Lies Women Believe," I am looking forward to reading "Lies Men Believe: and the Truth that Sets Them Free" by Robert Wolgemuth (2018) who married Nancy Leigh DeMoss in 2015. Perhaps I'll be able to recommend that book as strongly as I recommend DeMoss' book.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

SERIES 6-5

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 2!

ACROSS

1. Sir ____ (King Arthur's brother)
4. What someone did at the loom
8. The second gospel
12. Rat's best friend (in the famous novel)
13. Opponent of Allies (in WWII)
14. "A gift _____ the way" (Proverbs 18)
16. Operatic solo
17. "[Reality] is not _____" (C. S. Lewis)
18. "What is this all _____?" said the Scot.
19. "young men will ____ visions." (Joel 2)
20. "he was met by ____ lepers" (Luke 17)
21. A long time, or a Hyundai model
23. It's in between Nor. and Fin.
24. Voyageur's choice for his voyage
26. Insufficient funds (abbreviation)
28. Arrival gift for tourist in Hawaii
30. Choose (for), elect (to)
32. Substance used in bacterial culture
36. Unite two pieces under extreme heat
39. It's used in sandwich or salad.
41. Ranters also usually do this.
42. Pie ____ mode
43. The earth does this on its axis.
45. ____ Aviv, Israel
46. "this song will be _____" (Isaiah 26)
48. Ancient Roman garment
49. A lofty eagle nest (sounds like airy refuge)
50. Guilty or not guilty
51. "He is the ____ of God." (Acts 9)
52. "____ your morsel in the wine." (Ruth 2)
54. Opposite of haw in steering a horse
56. Narcotic derived from poppies
60. Japanese sash (worn by a Jedi?)
63. 40 winks in the afternoon
65. "...write with ____ and ink." (3 John)
67. Genetic molecule
68. _____ Bill (fictional Texas hero)
70. "Seek good, and not _____" (Amos 5)
72. One way we keep our rule over horses
73. Confused or chaotic state; a little snag
74. Espies; witnesses; perceives
75. _____ the Great: fictional child detective
76. "_____ that barge, lift that bale"
77. Man-eating man-like monster
78. Ginger ____

DOWN

1. Theater of war, 1950-1953
2. "do no wrong to the _____" (Jeremiah 22)
3. Positive answer (archaic)
4. Weaken or diminish in size
5. The pair that pull the plow
6. By way of (especially by train in Canada)
7. East (in Spain), or a town in Italy
8. What the ocean or the wind does
9. All Points Bulletin (police abbreviation)
10. Motorcars produced 1905-1931
11. "also all who _____ the truth." (2 John)
12. Opposite of fem.
15. French female saint (abbreviation)
20. A shirt that fits to a ____
22. It's in between Man. and Que.
25. "as in the days of ____" (Malachi 3)
27. "were not ____ from the land" (John 21)
29. Belonging to it
30. Multi-layered vegetable
31. Sudden sharp pain
33. "establish justice in the _____" (Amos 5)
34. Insist, state, assert
35. Depend
36. It really stings (repeatedly).
37. Jewish month (in August-September)
38. The muffin man "lived on Drury _____"
40. "What are you ____?" – parent's query
44. "they stood still, looking _____" (Luke 24)
47. It keeps you quiet or gets you laughing.
49. Application for a smartphone (abbreviation)
51. "the waves of the ____" (Job 9)
53. Atom with a little extra something

55. Occur as a result
57. ____ in Danger (1966 spy film – two words)
58. Join; bring together
59. The main feature of the king of cats
60. Black ____ (covert operations)
61. "Jesus _____ down and wrote" (John 8)
62. International Civil Aviation Organization
64. Basic monetary unit of Mexico
65. Dock; wharf
66. "...and there is none _____" (Joel 2)
69. "And I ____ have heard defended...."
71. Indulge in passive entertainment (slang)
72. The other genetic molecule

BOOKS WE'RE WORKING ON

"The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true" – Eccl. 12:10

The text above serves as a guiding principle of sorts as Reformed Perspective takes on books. We got into book publishing only a few years ago, when *Reformed Perspective* took over management of *The Study* (previously known as the Inter-league Publication Board or ILPB).

THE STUDY TheStudy-books.com

The first works published under this new arrangement were Dr. Wes Bredenhof's *Seven Wondrous Words* and *Aiming to Please*. Now, just a few weeks ago, we released *The View from Above: An Exposition of God's Revelation to John* by Rev. Jan DeGelder. This is a very encouraging read, especially during these challenging times. DeGelder discusses a few interpretative challenges in the introduction, but the chapters are simple, clear explanations of the text. An elder could even use a chapter as a reading sermon by adding the formal liturgical aspects, which Rev. DeGelder has suggestions for in an appendix. Discussions questions are included for each chapter as well, making it suitable for individual and group Bible study.

Other publishing plans include publishing *The Service of Women in the Church* by Dr. Deddens, and a handbook/commentary on *Genesis* by Rev. VanRietschoten.

RPPRESS Press.ReformedPerspective.ca

RPPress is our other imprint, and our first publication under this brand was

Christ's Psalms Our Psalms: Study Resource. Rev. Holtvluwer worked hard to edit this series, and we are privileged to have been involved in its publication. It is available at Christian booksellers or from Press.ReformedPerspective.ca.

In the future we are planning to publish a biography of Rev. Jules Van Popta entitled *Man of the First Hour: A Son's Story* by Rev. George Van Popta. It is a great biography and will interest anyone interested in church history too. I laughed out loud as I read it, and then, further on, found myself with tears in my eyes as I grew in understanding of some of the trials of yesteryear.

We also hope to co-publish a book by ARPA Canada: *Let Truth and Righteousness Prevail*. This is a collection of meditations / sermons that were written for various Reformed prayer services prior to the March for Life in different places. This book comes with discussion questions, too.

I've just finished reading Dr. Van Dam's latest book, *Worship Matters* which will be co-published with Lucerna Press, the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary's publishing brand. Dr. Van Dam writes very cogently and engagingly on matters of worship. He discusses the significance of the resurrection and ascension on worship – very encouraging! He also discusses the use of psalms and hymns, instruments, and Sunday dress. One of Dr. Van Dam's greatest strengths in writing is his thorough use of Scripture, and secondary sources – his work is well-researched! One area that he highlights – the so-called juvenilization of worship – is cause for church self-examination, to be sure.

Another book we have in our hopper is Antoon Breen's *Story of Christ on*


Earth which is a great study resource on the life of Christ when going through the Gospels in chronological order. Breen's commentary is accessible and would be readily useable in high school classrooms and bible study groups.

We are also working with ministers who would like to republish some of their previously published books. We'll let you know when the republishing takes place!

New technologies, new opportunities

Our newest publications are being published using print-on-demand opportunities. This approach creates a book only after it has been ordered, and does it almost instantly. This allows us to have them readily available through online booksellers like Barnes and Noble or Amazon, even as we don't have to store an inventory somewhere. It also makes these books easier to access around the world. To be sure, brick and mortar booksellers can still purchase the books at a reduced rate to ensure they can have them available when you walk into their establishment. We continue to want to support local booksellers.

We believe that there are many good books, solid content, and sound wisdom within our Reformed circles that can be shared to a larger, broader audience.

We continue to depend on your donations to help ensure that we can cover our costs in publishing high quality books, while still producing a solid magazine, podcast episodes, and speaking tours and events. Will you please consider helping us in our endeavours? 

– CHRIS DEBOER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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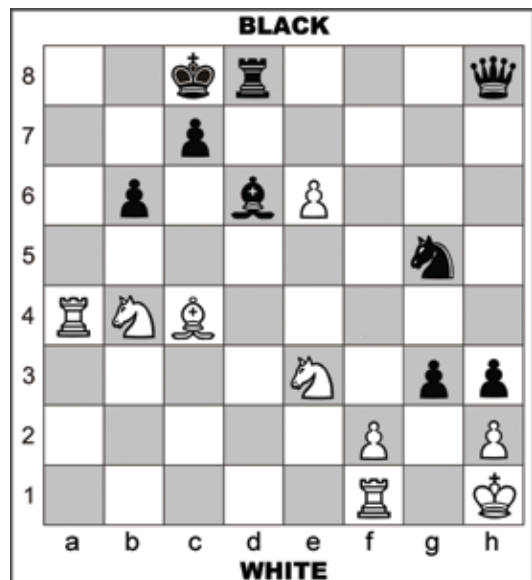
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ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #263



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

Riddle for Punsters

#263 – “Not Catty Enough?”

Why did the **leopard** movie star have trouble avoiding fans?

It seemed that wherever he went he was s ____ ed. He tried to avoid being seen by walking behind some **fans** but they would just t ____ a ____ nd.

Problem to Ponder

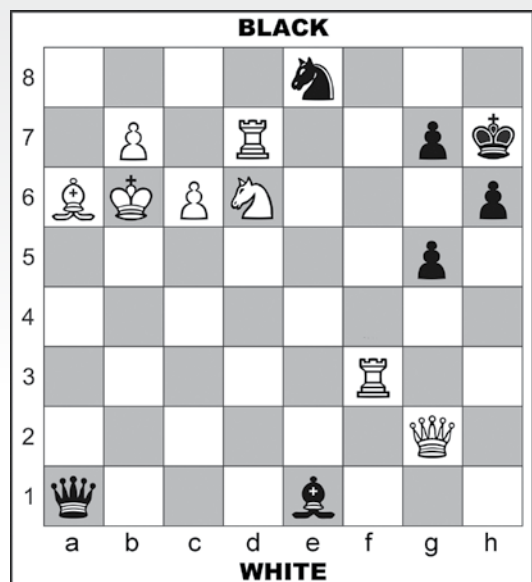
#263 – “Buying His Sister a Gift for (a) Change?”

Leonardo had 17 coins in his pocket this morning, namely nickels, dimes and quarters (at least 4 of each). He then spent most of the money on a gift for his sister at the local 7-11 store. Now he has only 3 nickels left after spending \$2.30 on the gift. How many nickels, dimes and quarters did he have before the purchase?

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

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTIONS

Solution to Chess Puzzle #262



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation

1. Q-QB2 ch K-N1
2. B-B4 ch K-R1
3. R-B8 mate

White wins sooner if

1. Q-QB2 ch K-R1
2. R-B8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Qg2-c2 + Kh7-g8
2. Ba6-c4 + Kg8-h8
3. Rf3-f8 ++

White wins sooner if

1. Qg2-c2 + Kh7-h8
2. Rf3-f8 ++

Answer to 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 **exhausted** too.
- b) The trailer was built in such a way that it is wheely always two-**tired** to be otherwise.

Answer to 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?

Only one child spoke the truth. If Jeremy is guilty, Eve and Gregory and Simon spoke the truth. If Eve is guilty, both Gregory and Simon spoke the truth. If Gregory is guilty, both Jeremy and Simon spoke the truth. If Simon is guilty, only Gregory spoke the truth. Therefore, **Simon took the cookies**, with only Gregory being a role model for his siblings that day by his honesty, albeit he simply said that he was falsely accused by Jeremy.

BLACK TO MATE IN 2

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- Q-Q5ch
2. K-N5 Q-QN5 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Qa1-d4 +
2. Kb6-b5 Qd4-b4 ++

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THE \$15 MINIMUM WAGE

- GOOD INTENTIONS ARE NOT ENOUGH

In the US, the latest COVID-19 relief package has re-awakened the debate on minimum wage increases, and that policy conversation is spilling over into Canada, Australia, and much of the Western world too.

Often policy proposals put Christians in difficult territory. The Bible was not written during a time where every person would be personally accountable for participating in the governing of a nation. There's very little in the way of advice to voters on specific policies. However, this doesn't mean Christians can't form educated opinions about policies like the minimum wage. To do so, believers can evaluate the fruits of the policy.

GOOD INTENTIONS

One way to evaluate whether the minimum wage increase would be a good thing is to see if the intended fruits of the policy are good and analyze whether the actual fruits will match the good intentions. Supporters of the minimum wage increase are ostensibly trying to help lower the level of poverty. Higher wages for the lowest wage workers could give them a chance at a better life.

This intended fruit appears to be good. Lowering poverty seems to be unambiguously good. And a reasonable interpretation of Matthew 22:20-22 ("Render to Caesar...") could claim it's within the state's right to take money from business profits and give it to workers. Combining this logic with verses like Psalm 41:1 – "*Blessed is the one who considers the poor*" – and it could make a powerful case for this proposal.

A Christian might be tempted to stop thinking here. Perhaps the increased cost to businesses is worth the poverty alleviation. However, even if someone does accept this trade-off, the biggest problem with increasing the minimum wage lies more in the results than intentions.

BAD RESULTS

Good intentions are not enough to eliminate poverty, as evidenced by the American "war on poverty," now entering its 58th year. The minimum wage law does not guarantee every person a job at \$15/hour. In actuality, what the minimum wage law does is make it illegal to gainfully employ any worker whose skills don't bring in \$15 of hourly revenue. Economists refer to the revenue an additional worker brings in as "marginal revenue product." For any worker with a marginal revenue product less than the minimum wage, employing them would either mean making a net loss on the hire or breaking the minimum wage law.

for a wage of \$7.50, the company finds hiring him to be worthwhile. However, a company that pays a salesman who sells \$8 worth of products per hour a wage of \$15 is losing \$7/hour. Companies that hire this way will be outcompeted by those who don't.

So, what is the result of a minimum wage? Workers who don't make their companies enough to warrant getting paid the minimum wage are fired. Economic theory suggests this, and a recent working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research surveys studies on the topic and shows the research overwhelmingly finds that unemployment results from the minimum wage. Not



A largely automated company would love to have its competitor forced to pay more for their labor force.

Businesses must make a profit. If a business fails to do so, it will eventually have no option other than shutting its doors. If businesses fall behind competitors in making a profit, they also run the risk of being driven out of business. As such, hiring decisions in business are based on whether they generate profit. If a salesman, for example, sells \$8 worth of products an hour, and he gets an offer

only do some workers not have their poverty alleviated, but the workers with the least opportunity are more impoverished. In fact, evidence suggests this unemployment is imposed on minority groups and women disproportionately.

The problems don't stop there. Unemployment increases, but some workers who previously made a minimum wage will keep their jobs. Aren't these work-

ers made better off? Not necessarily. If a worker was previously willing to work a job for \$8 (as evidenced by the fact that they accepted the job), but now the same worker is being paid \$15, this doesn't mean they are \$7 better off. Why? Well, since the employer is mandated to pay a higher wage, they are going to try to get the most work out of the worker possible. Workers might find that these new expectations and pressures make the job less enjoyable than if they were paid an \$8 wage. Also, if you're getting paid more than you would have needed to accept a job, and there are a lot of unemployed replacements waiting, you're going to be willing to accept a less pleasant job to keep that high-paying job. A higher minimum wage gives workers less bargaining power and, as such, will lead to workers taking on jobs with bosses who don't need to offer them as much dignity. This is not to say all bosses will take advantage of this position, but it seems unrealistic to assume none will.

In sum, if we judge a policy by its fruits, a \$15 minimum wage will increase the poverty of those with the lowest opportunity, and it carries the possibility of work becoming less dignified for those lucky enough to keep their jobs. Despite potentially good intentions, the results speak for themselves. Instead of giving more dignity to work and lifting people out of poverty, the minimum wage exacerbates both problems.

BOOTLEGGERS, BAPTISTS, AND BAD INTENTIONS

For argument's sake, I've assumed good intentions on the part of minimum wage policy advocates to this point. However, it's important to point out that the minimum wage is utilized as a tactic by racists and labor unions to cut out the competition. Stanford economist Thomas Sowell has chronicled how a Canadian minimum wage had racist roots. Sowell argues:

"In 1925, a minimum-wage law was passed in the Canadian province of British Columbia, with the intent and effect of pricing Japanese immigrants out of jobs in the lumbering industry."

The results of the Australian minimum wage were similar. Sowell points out:

"A Harvard professor of that era referred approvingly to Australia's minimum wage law as a means to 'protect the white Australian's standard of living from the invidious competition of the colored races, particularly of the Chinese' who were willing to work for less."

Whenever Christians support policy, they should take care to avoid contributing to the "Bootleggers and Baptists" phenomena. This phrase describes how, when the US passed alcohol prohibition, the two major groups who supported it were Baptists who opposed alcohol and illegal alcohol bootleggers who stood to profit if legal alcohol distributors were closed. In supporting prohibition, Baptists supported the profits of bootleggers with bad intentions.

In the cases Sowell cited, the "bootleggers" were racist who wanted to eliminate minority labor competition. Today, bootleggers can come in the form of a business like Amazon, which, as a largely online company, doesn't rely on laborers who make less than \$15 per hour. Since Amazon already pays its warehouse workers \$15/hour, an

increase in the minimum wage would do little to impact their costs, but it would raise the costs to one of Amazon's biggest competitors – Walmart. Bootleggers could also be skilled labor unions that lobby for the minimum wage to limit the competition from unskilled, but lower cost, labor. In these cases, the special interest groups intend the policy to prevent less fortunate low-skill laborers from having jobs.

To make a positive difference in the world, Christians must consider more than their intentions behind policies. Instead, it is part of our responsibility, given the form of government God has allowed us to participate in, to be educated about the results of policy. In the case of raising the minimum wage, the results are in. Christians need to do better if we want to help the suffering of "the least of these." RP

Peter Jacobsen is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Ottawa University and the Gwartney Professor of Economic Education and Research at the Gwartney Institute (Ottawa.edu/gwartney-institute).

He has previously written for both the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE.org) and the Institute for Faith, Works, and Economics (tifwe.org).

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WHY WE DON'T EVANGELIZE & WHY WE MUST

If there is a time to be silent, there is also a time to speak (Eccl. 3:7). If the gospel is the Good News entrusted to us, we heap upon ourselves guilt if we neglect to pass it on. In his book *Our Guilty Silence*, Dr. John Stott lists four major causes for our silence. He said, "Either:

- we have no compelling incentive even to try to speak,
- or we do not know what to say,
- or we are not convinced that it is our job,
- or we do not believe we shall do any good, because we have forgotten the source of power."

And we can add a few causes of our own. Some have identified evangelism as an outgrowth of American activism – they think of it as just a bag of clever tricks and techniques to gain church members.

Other are caught up in the tension between evangelism and preserving the purity of the church. They struggle with the question: What comes first, preserving the truth of the gospel and restoring the church through a Reformation or evangelism and missions?

But the Bible does not allow us to emphasize the purity of doctrine at the expense of evangelism. Of course, we must stress purity of doctrine and contend for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3). But a church which keeps her doors closed out of fear that the world

may enter is not faithful to the Gospel. A church which does not evangelize can be compared to a crew of a lifeboat anxious to save the souls of her own members. She certainly does not resemble a rescue brigade out to reach our fellow men, who are perishing without the Savior. When we live the Gospel, the tension between maintaining purity of doctrine and outreach into the community and world will not exist. We will spend our time and energy on both.

So in this article I will point to six reasons why we must be active in congregational outreach.

1 - THE GLORY OF GOD

First, we must evangelize because we are zealous for the glory of God. As Reformed Christians we must always have the glory of God as our motive for action. That's why Reformed Christians have been instrumental in establishing Christian schools, a Christian labor movement, a Christian businessmen's organization, and we are involved in Christian politics and in a host of other Christian activities. And rightly so. These very activities attracted me to the Reformed faith.

But we must not only strive to win all things for Christ, but also all people for Christ. The ultimate goal of all things is the glorification of God. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11:36). Our Savior Himself regarded the salvation of man as a means to bring

glory to God. In His high priestly prayer He prayed, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." (John 17:4). Therefore, through evangelism we bring glory to God's name.

2 - OBEDIENCE TO GOD

Second, we evangelize because our Lord commanded it. Evangelism is not an option, but a sacred duty and a high calling. We evangelize because we are commanded to as part of the all-inclusive task of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Our Lord's assignment is to proclaim the Gospel, bring new converts into the church, lead them to the sacrament of baptism and disciple them.

Evangelism, then, is the work of the church in obedience to her Lord to make known the Gospel to those who are estranged from it or who have never heard it before and to call them to repentance, faith and conversion.

3 - LOVE FOR GOD

Thirdly, love for God should motivate us to do evangelism. R.B. Kuiper called it, "The motive for evangelism, embracing and excelling all other worthy motives." If the love for God does not compel us, what will?

Yet in much current literature on evangelism this love motive is rarely mentioned. The emphasis is more on the felt needs of the non-Christians and on outreach techniques rather than on the force that should drive us to proclaim the

Gospel - the love for God. "God is love" (1 John 4: 8,16). He has shown His love to us by sending His only Son into the world for our salvation (John 3:16). When we know why we are Christians and what we are saved from, we want others to share the same privilege. We cannot even begin to love people, if we have no love for God. John says, "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The greatest command is, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). As God has freely loved us, so we love Him.

R.B. Kuiper comments:

"Love for God and His Christ guarantees on the part of the believer loving, hence genuine and devoted, in distinction from external and legalistic, obedience to the divine command to evangelize the nations. And this love for God will keep us going even in the face of disappointment, lack of immediate results and discouragements."

I, too, am convinced that we must focus on God's love. We love God for His own sake. And when we love Him we will be affected by His love. The love for God will enable and encourage us to witness boldly for Christ.

4 - LOVE FOR OUR FELLOW MAN

Fourthly, we evangelize because we love our fellowman. Yes, we must love God for His own sake, yet love for God must find its expression in our love for our neighbor. Jesus said that the first and greatest command is to love God. And He added, "the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). And I know no greater expression of love for God and our neighbor than to bring the Gospel to him and in this way bring glory to God.

If we believe that our non-Christian neighbor is eternally lost unless he hears the gospel and responds to it, how can we remain silent? There is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned. Hell has not frozen over. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). This is as true today as it was back in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve's fall into sin.

Jesus spoke of eternal punishment for the wicked, but for the righteous, eternal life (Matt. 25:46). Those who are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). Shouldn't we ask, when we are honest with ourselves, "Don't we suffer from the sin of omission?"

God does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9). He finds the salvation of one sinner so important that the angels in heaven rejoice every time a sinner repents of his sin and trusts Jesus as His Savior and Lord (Luke 15:10). But how can sinners put their trust in Him if they have never heard of Him? How can they hear unless someone preaches the Gospel to them? God will save many of

the lost in the world, but He will do it only through men and women willing to go into the world with the Gospel (Rom.10). How can we, who subscribe to the truth that all who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved and all others are bound for hell, neglect to persuade them to turn from the road of destruction upon which they are walking? If we still believe in the reality of hell, evangelism will be indeed seen as a sacred duty. And we will say then with the apostle Paul, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:20).

The late Rev. J. Overduin, a well-

The converted atheist said that one thing he could not understand was that he had been living in a neighborhood where church people lived, but not a single one had ever told him the Gospel.

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known Dutch author, pastor and evangelist, told the story of an atheist who had come to Christ and had become filled with love for Him. The converted atheist said that one thing he could not understand was that he had been living in a neighborhood where church people lived, but not a single one had ever told him the Gospel. I wonder how often this story can be repeated in our own neighborhoods.

5 - LOVE FOR THE CHURCH

Fifthly, we evangelize because we love the church and long for her expansion in the world. By and large, today's church gets bad press. But the church is still the bride and the body of Christ (Eph. 5:22ff; 1 Cor. 12). In His great commission, our Lord commanded His church not only to make disciples of all nations, but also to baptize them (Matt. 28:19). Evangelism, therefore, is not completed until the convert has joined the church. Professor Lindeboom aptly said:

"Evangelism is not only a sign of health of the church, it also keeps her healthy. It is for every church a question of life and death. Through evangelism the church is concerned about her own well being."

6 - ADVANCE THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Sixthly, we evangelize to advance the Kingdom of God. The Gospel which Jesus preached is described as "the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). Our Lord also said that He will not return until the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all the world for a witness to all nations (Matt. 24:14). Our Lord taught us to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is heaven." Lord's Day 48 confesses that this petition means:

"Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way that more and more we submit to you. Keep your church strong, and add to it. Destroy the devil's work; destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your Word. Do this until

your Kingdom is so complete and perfect that in it you are all in all."

The Gospel of the Kingdom focuses on the whole person: the hungry, the naked, the afflicted, the mourning, the despairing, the exploited. Our world must be confronted with the claims of Christ. All who receive Him should honor Him as Lord. He is Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17:14). The aim of evangelism, therefore, is to bring the world to the recognition of Christ's Kingship. As a hymn writer put it:


"Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe, and crown Him Lord of all."

CONCLUSION

Since evangelism is imperative, I focused on the motives for reaching the lost for Christ. When we are rightly motivated, evangelism will be spontaneous. No packaged programs, no gimmicks, no marketing techniques will succeed in making permanent waves for evangelism. Only when the church is excited about the Gospel and Biblically motivated, will we see spontaneous evangelism.

And this Biblical approach requires patience, understanding and empathy. As we reach the lost for Christ in obedience to the Great Commission, driven by our love for God and for our fellow man, we should remember what our primary calling is - not that we should be necessarily successful but faithful.

In conclusion, consider the apostle Paul's word of encouragement to the church in Corinth, which was troubled, yet engaged in evangelism:

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (1 Cor. 3:6). 

A version of this article first appeared in the February 2001 issue under the title "Our guilty silence." Rev. Johan Tangelder (1936-2009) wrote for Reformed Perspective for 13 years.



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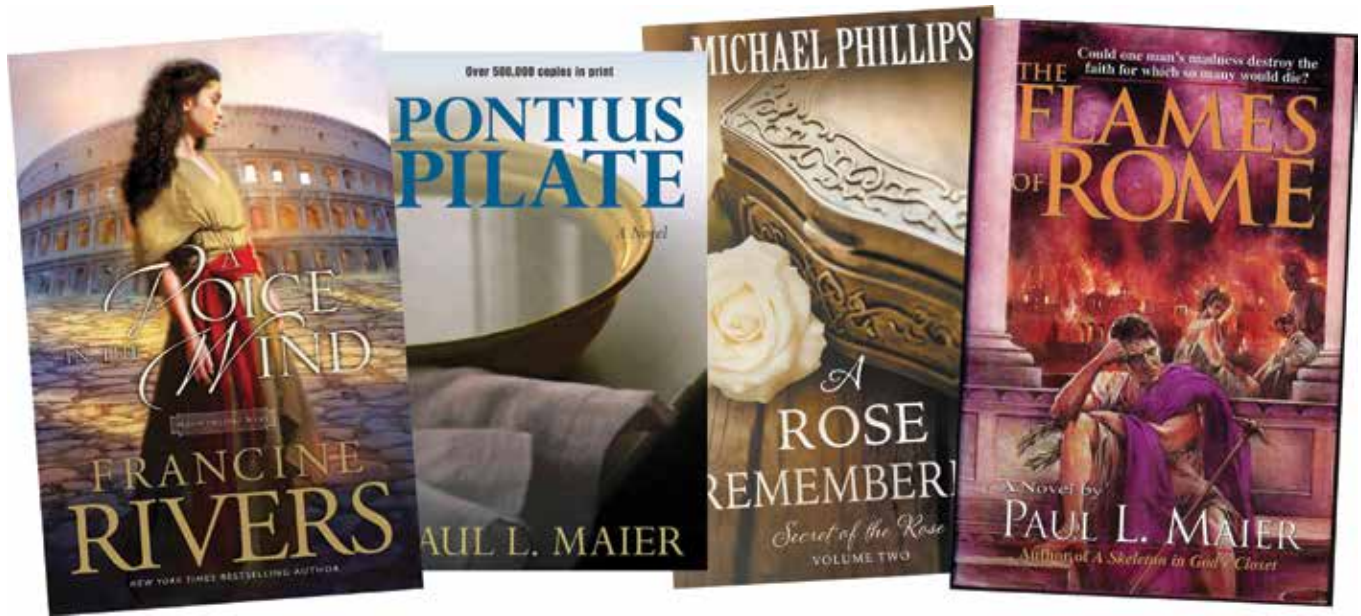
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A BETTER BRAND OF CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL FICTION

As a history buff, historical fiction has long been one of my favorite genres. Unfortunately, I rarely read fiction anymore, as much of modern historical fiction is so rife with sexually explicit scenes and blasphemous language that it should be avoided by the discerning reader. I've tossed several in the garbage over the past few years despite incredible writing and riveting plotlines for these very reasons.

Another key issue with much historical fiction is the inability of modern authors to actually infiltrate the mindset of those they are attempting to bring to life. Too often, the sentiments of historical characters end up resembling those of the late 20th century or the 21st. Especially when it comes to the treatment of religious belief, authors frequently prefer to portray faith as feigned and religious practice as cynical. One of the best authors of historical fiction writing today, Conn Iggulden, fell into this trap in *Dunstan*:

One Man. Seven Kings. England's Bloody Throne, a fictional rendering of the great Archbishop of Canterbury. While Iggulden's *Wars of Roses* series is excellent, he portrays Dunstan as a Machiavellian figure, taking pains to explain away anything spiritual or miraculous. The result is deeply unsatisfying.

The Christian fiction industry, however, is plagued by its own problems. Many authors appear to have a single good idea, write one or two good books, and then settle down to replicate variations of the same story over and over again. The cottage industry of Amish romance is a good example; Christian romance in general is a tired genre in which the reader faithfully plods the worn and weary path to the inevitable conclusion (often some variation of: non-Christian falls in love with Christian; they agonize over this and part ways; the miracle occurs and they live happily ever after.) You get what you pay for, and it isn't literature. This also

applies to the hundreds of cookie cutter historical novels that are often laughably short on research and simply place the same plot in a different time period.

In short: Just because it's "Christian" doesn't mean it's any good. Badly-researched historical novels are painful pabulum and generally, in my view, a waste of time.

But there are some magnificent examples of historical fiction by Christian authors that easily rival some of the best works by non-Christian writers. This list could be much longer, but I'll highlight just a few.

PAUL MAIER

Paul Maier is a historian and writer born in 1930, and formerly served as the Russell H. Seibert Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University, where he still retains the title of professor emeritus in the Department of History. He's written many books, but his two

“historical documentary” novels, *Pontius Pilate* (1968) and *The Flames of Rome* (1981) are outstanding.

Drawing from all available historical sources, Maier renders the ancient world in vivid color. *Pontius Pilate* follows the career of the Roman Empire’s most famous provincial official while detailing the politics in painstaking detail. The *Flames of Rome* follows the family of Flavius Sabinus, the mayor of Rome under Nero, covering the Great Fire of Rome and the religious clashes that defined Christianity’s early beginnings. I’ve read both several times and learned more with each reading.

FRANCINE RIVERS’ *THE MARK OF THE LION TRILOGY*

Also set in the first century is the Francine Rivers’ magnificent *Mark of the Lion* series, which begins with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and follows the life of a Jewish slave girl, a young Roman aristocrat, and a Germanic barbarian captured in battle and trained as a gladiator. The decadence of Rome is detailed with both bluntness and prudence: promiscuity, abortion, materialism, and the ugly spectacles of public blood sports are all present, and the world Rivers’ renders bears eerie similarities to our own.

I should note here that the distinctly evangelical Arminianism throughout the series is unfortunate, but the trilogy is still a brilliant achievement.

BROCK AND BODIE THOENE’S HISTORICAL FICTION

The Thoenes are a ferociously productive writing team (more than 65 books), and not everything they’ve produced is of the same quality. But the five-book series *The Zion Chronicles*, detailing the lead up to the State of Israel’s War of Independence in 1948, is one of the best historical works on this period ever written (easily matching Leon Uris’s *Exodus*, but without the objectionable material). Their prelude series, *The Zion Covenant*, which covers the run-up to the Second World War up to the Blitz, is also rich with historical detail, well-rounded characters, and riveting plotlines. Along with the *Shiloh Legacy* series, which

covers some of the same characters during the Great Depression, these books alone place the Thoenes in the top tier of historical fiction writers. Bodie was a journalist before she was an author, and it shows.

Some of their other works – the *AD Chronicles*, for example – do not possess the same level of detail, historical research, or character development. To be honest, the shift in quality from the *Zion* and *Shiloh* books to some of the others (including the short-lived and apparently discontinued series the *Zion Diaries*) is somewhat jarring. These books are still quite good – I’ve read them all – but I’ll admit I was somewhat disappointed after having the standard set so high by their first historical works, which I’ve re-read multiple times.

DAVIS BUNN’S PRICELESS COLLECTION

Davis Bunn’s *Priceless* trilogy follows a young American business executive who leaves the rat race to join an antique shop in London. Mentored by an older relative, Jeffery Sinclair pursues exquisite treasures behind the Iron Curtain during the lead up to the collapse of Communism, and the totalitarianism and suffering he witnesses are derived from scores of interviews the author conducted with eyewitnesses.

Bunn only wrote three books in this series – *Florian’s Gate*, *The Amber Room*, and *The Winter Palace* – and I wish he’d written more. He captures life in the Warsaw Pact; the antiques trade; and the suffocating soulless-

ness of both Western materialism and Communism in a fashion reminiscent of Solzhenitsyn’s *Warning to the West*. The detail, however, doesn’t suffocate his characters, and even the somewhat stereotypical romantic subplot flows seamlessly.

MICHAEL PHILLIPS’ *SECRET OF THE ROSE TRILOGY*

In this masterful set, Michael Phillips traces a family through wartime Nazi Germany into East Germany under Communism. They’re thick novels – Phillips is a fan of the historical fiction master James Michener – but riveting nonetheless. Many novels set during this period use historical events as mere backdrop (generally for romance), but Phillips takes his time setting the scene and the result is well worth your time. RP

Jonathon Van Maren blogs on life and cultural issues at TheBridgehead.ca where this first appeared. It is reprinted here with permission.



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THE WACKY WOMBAT



Wombat's squarish poop

Back when I was a missionary in British Columbia, we had a friend visit from Australia. I asked him, “Have you ever seen a bear in the wild?” He hadn’t. “Would you like to see one?” He certainly did, but expressed his doubts whether I could just conjure up a wild bear for him. We drove for about 15 minutes north and arrived at the fish-counting weir on the Babine River. And sure enough, as always at that time of year, there were grizzly bears about, fishing for spawning salmon. Our Aussie friend was duly impressed.

Now if you were to visit our part of Australia today, I’d ask you, “Have you ever seen a wombat in the wild?” The wombat is as close as we get to a bear here in Tasmania. We’d have to drive a little bit, but there are some spots here where I can guarantee you’d see one — places like Maria Island, Cradle Mountain, or Narawntapu. And there are plenty of other places where, even if we didn’t see an actual wombat, we could definitely see evidence of them.

The main evidence you’d find would be their droppings. They’re rather

distinctive. Wombat droppings are cubic, you see. Yep, they’re the only animals in the world that poop cubes. How does a wombat manage this feat? According to a recent study of wombat intestines, rather than being consistent like most animals, wombats have areas of varying thickness and stiffness. The droppings go through grooved tissues and irregular contractions and this produces cubes. Now not all wombat droppings are perfect cubes, but apparently the more cubic they are, the healthier the wombat.

When most people think of marsupials, they think kangaroos. However, wombats are marsupials too. The wombat’s pouch faces backwards between its legs. So you could very well see a momma wombat wandering away with a baby wombat peeking out from the pouch.

Wombats are also renowned road kill in Tasmania and elsewhere. Adult wombats can be a meter long and weigh in at 35 kg or 77 lbs. They *are* like little

bears. If you hit one with your vehicle, you’re going to feel it and it’s going to do some damage. This is because a wombat is not only large and heavy, but also built tough. Wombats may look soft and cuddly, but they’ve been designed like a tank. It’s especially their backsides that present a formidable wall – they have four fused bony plates. They use their backsides for defense and mating. When they’re in their burrows and an animal threatens to invade, they’ll just stick their bony butts out. They’ve been known to crush their enemies with their ample derrieres. Male and female wombats bite each other in their solid back ends as part of their mating rituals – and are none the worse for it.

Other wacky wombat facts:

- Baby wombats hiccup when they’re stressed.

- Wombat digestive processes include fermentation, a process which lasts weeks.
- Some early European arrivals mistook the wombat for a badger. Hence Tasmania has a “Badger Beach” on its north coast.
- Wombats create lengthy and complex burrow systems. In 1960, a 15 year old Australian schoolboy began exploring wombat burrows by crawling through them. Peter Nicholson’s research is still used today.
- There are three species of wombats: the common, the northern hairy-nosed, and the southern hairy-nosed. All are only found in Australia (in the south and east).
- The Latin name of the common wombat is *vombatus ursinus* – literally, “wombat bear.” If you know your Heidelberg Catechism history, Zacharias Ursinus’ original German surname was Baer (=Bear).

God has certainly put fascinating creatures on this earth. Wombats are among them, animals that illustrate our Maker’s creative genius. Here we have an animal that looks a little bear, but could hardly be more different than a bear. I can’t help but exclaim with the psalmist, “O LORD, how manifold your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (Psalm 104:24). RP



A baby peeking out from its mother's rear-facing pouch.

Dr. Bredenhof blogs at CreationWithoutCompromise.com where this first appeared, and it is reprinted here with permission.

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REPORT OF A MEETING WHICH WAS NEVER HELD OR, THE BIRTH OF THE GOSPEL

What I am going to tell you is pure fantasy, but it might be useful to pause a moment because it can teach us something.

It was some years after our Lord and Savior had risen from the dead, and the congregation of Jerusalem had already become quite large. One evening there was a meeting, held with the elders of the congregation, and as was usual, also the apostles who were resident in Jerusalem. Even though it was a dangerous time, and the enemies were keeping a sharp lookout, the brothers had gathered from all parts of the city. No one was absent when the chairman, James, the brother of the Lord, opened the meeting.

The matter to be discussed that evening was of vital importance, hence the full attendance. In those days none of the four gospels, as we know them, had yet been written, but various accounts of events that had occurred during the Master's time on earth had been recorded. These included accounts of miracles He had performed, accounts of discussions He had held with the young men and accounts also of some of His speeches both at Jerusalem as well as in Galilee. At that time, they were still short, loose notes; they had not yet been put together into one book. It stands to

reason that these written accounts were extremely valuable to the congregation. They were eagerly read by the members in the city and they were even beginning to be distributed outside Jerusalem. They were also starting to be used during the worship service, here and there.

Well, the issue, the question that was before the meeting of the elders and apostles this evening, concerned these loose notes. The question was, should these bundles of loose notes be accepted as trustworthy reports of what had taken place and could they be recommended for use in the worship services.

All present appreciated the importance of the decision that had to be made. If these accounts were officially accepted and openly used then they would spread far and wide, and give direction to the life of the congregations.

After the chairman opened the meeting with prayer, he outlined the great importance of the decision that had to be made and then asked if any of the elders or apostles had any objection to the written accounts in circulation. They were all amazed that it was Philip who requested the floor first of all.

"If you ask me if I have objections," he said, "then I can only say that the notes

before us are totally trustworthy. I have not found anything in them that has not really happened.

ISN'T SOME OF IT BETTER LEFT OUT?

"Another question to ask, though, is whether it is desirable to use them in this form. Is it really necessary, brothers, that in these writings there is such extensive attention paid to how Peter, more than once, did deeply grieve the Master? I think of the occurrence, also related in these writings, when they were going to Caesarea Philippi. The Master turned round and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan!'"

"I know that is what happened. I was there myself and I heard what was said, but I have to ask, is it really wise to air this happening for all and sundry? I think of that terrible night when Jesus was condemned and how Peter denied Him three times. It is true, it did happen, but again I ask myself is it really necessary to air these things openly? We here in Jerusalem, we know Peter and have a high regard for him, but if these papers spread to other countries where they have never seen Peter, wouldn't this give an entirely wrong impression of Peter? Aren't these really matters of an intimate nature, which concern only Peter in his relationship with the Savior? Consid-

ering how well everything has turned out, shouldn't we just forget what happened in the past?"

When Phillip finished speaking those present couldn't help but look in the direction of Peter. They expected Peter to jump to his feet and say something. But that didn't happen. Peter sat silent, frowning and looking at the table, and not saying a word. The sides of his mouth trembled, and from the way he held his hands, with his white knuckles showing, it was clear that he was extremely moved and was involved in a severe internal struggle. For some moments everyone in the meeting was absolutely silent. Not one of the apostles spoke.

In the end it was one of the elders of the congregation who broke the silence. "I am entirely in agreement," he said, "with the previous speaker. I would like to go even further. I have noticed in all the writings the apostles really play a rather sad role. It repeatedly says that they did not understand the Master. It is told once, when they came back from the north to Capernaum, that they had a serious tiff between themselves about who was the greatest among them. It is written that, even in the Passover room, when the Master instituted the Holy Supper, the apostles were at loggerheads about who should take the place of honor. The story is also told of how three of the apostles, our beloved Peter, James and John, were asleep in that terrible moment when our Savior fought His most bitter struggle in Gethsemane.

"Is all this necessary, do we really want to broadcast this throughout the world?"

"Won't this cause a lack of respect, which we all owe, to our office bearers? Can we really expect that the people who will read this, who will see how the first disciples often didn't act as faithful servants of the Master, can we really expect that they will have great reverence for the founders of the Church? Is it not rather to be feared that such stories will lead to damage in the congregations? I ask myself would it not be wiser if we kept all such stories to ourselves and didn't pass them on to others."

Again it was one of the apostles who now began to speak. He also judged that there was a dangerous aspect to such

stories. He reminded his listeners that one of the accounts related that the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him and that they were even at enmity with Him. "Is it right," he asked, "to broadcast this story? We all know that the chairman of this meeting, James, the brother of the Lord, also belonged to them, but that after the resurrection he repented. Does his dark past have to be revealed to all eyes? Might that not lead, in time, to a deterioration of the relationships within the congregation?"

When this third speaker had finished

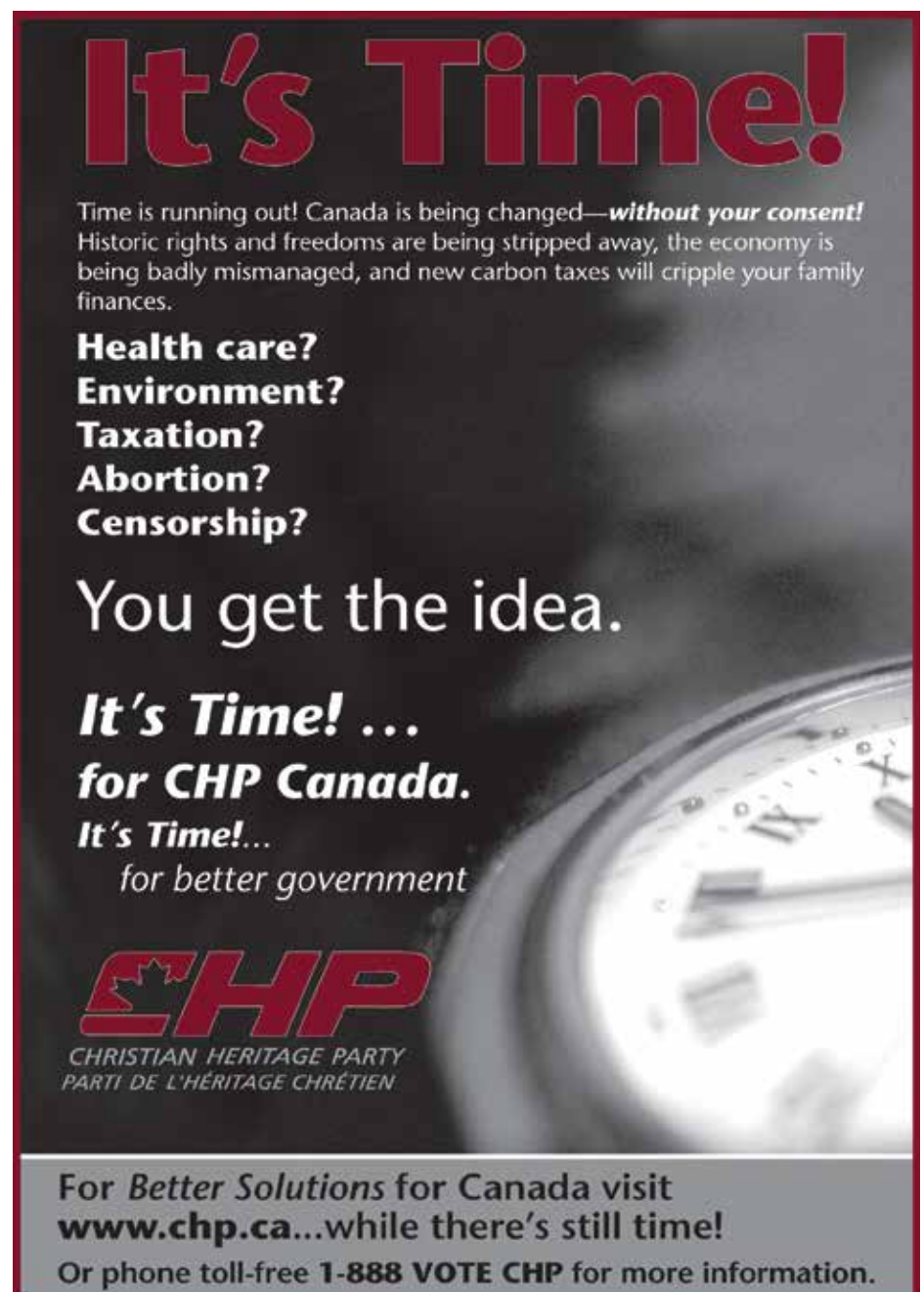
there was a painful silence in the meeting. One could feel that most of those present labored under a great strain.

The chairman who otherwise was quick to encourage the members to deal speedily with the matters at hand now sat silent. It was obvious that he also had a struggle within himself.

The silence lasted for some minutes.

PETER STANDS UP

It came as a great relief when finally Peter stood up and started speaking. It was



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clear he was extremely moved; while he spoke he time and again had to hold the table, as if he needed its support. The words that he spoke came as if pushed from the deepest part of his heart.

"Brothers," he spoke, "humanly speaking I am thankful for all that has been said this evening, but I also realize, that these words are at the same time a dangerous temptation for me. It is true that years ago the Master once said to me, 'Get behind me, Satan.' I, therefore, feel that tonight I must say it myself, 'Get behind me, Satan.' How could I ever make my Master great if I am not prepared to make myself thoroughly small? How could we apostles ever proclaim the glory of Jesus Christ throughout the world, if we did not at the same time tell of all our foolishness and cowardice and all our egotistical and self-seeking deeds and thoughts with which we made the suffering of the Master so much heavier? Only in that way can our message become the Gospel, the happy tidings for the people of all nations and of all ages. Then they will see that we, the young men of the Master, are just as weak, dumb and self-seeking as they are themselves, and

that we are only what we are today because He with His love surrounded us.

"You ask me, if by these stories the respect for the office will not suffer? That could well be so, if the respect for the office depended on our status as great men. But the glory of the office does not lie therein that we are great, but that the Master, who had mercy over us, is so great.

"When I remember how the Savior told us that this Gospel should be preached to all people, then I know that gospel should also include how I with my self-conceit often deeply hurt my Lord. It should include how we, young men, often argued among ourselves as little children about the place of honor, that we slept when He struggled His fight to the death, and that I, in a terrible way, three times denied Him. That should all be included, but this one thing more should also be included that the Master said: 'On this petra I will build My church, tend my sheep.'"

"Though there is nothing nice to say about us, nevertheless we may do something, we may serve in God's Church, and that is only because He never for a moment abandoned us and prayed for us right to

the end. Brothers, let us not hesitate for a moment, but let this Gospel, as it lies before us be distributed throughout the ages to all the people in this world. Then we diminish, but He is made all the greater."

When Peter had finished speaking a deep holy peace descended on the whole meeting. The chairman, who for the whole time had just stared straight ahead, looked up. "Brothers," he asked, "shall we act as proposed?"

And although not one of those present answered aloud, it was more than clear that this word was agreeable to all.

And so these loose papers were distributed, later they became the Gospels as we have them today. RP

Dr. J.H. Bavinck (1895-1964) was a Dutch minister, missionary, and theologian. This article first appeared in the October 1999 issue of Reformed Perspective under the title "The birth of the Gospel." It has been translated by Rene Vermeulen and is reprinted with permission from 15 Paasverhalen, no 18 Zaklantaarnserie, published by Voorhoeve/Kok, Kampen, The Netherlands.



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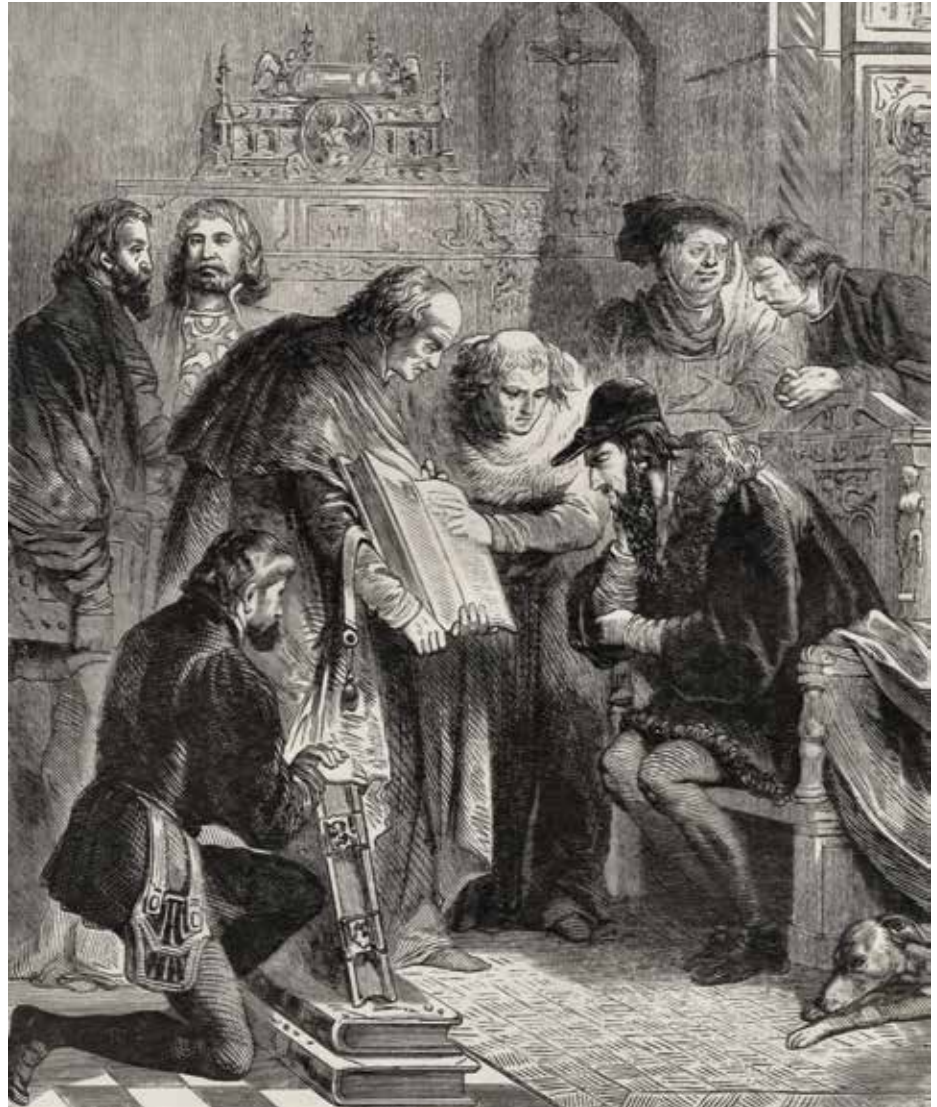
The Necessity of Creeds and Confessions

Many years ago, ten Christian men got together and decided to start a church. For several weeks they met together every evening to discuss what they believed to be the essentials of the Christian faith. As they charitably reflected and discussed these matters, they discovered that everyone had a slightly different view on what constituted the essentials. They began to despair as they realized that their deliberations were not yielding any fruit.

Out of frustration, Mr. Unity asked a simple yet profound question, “Brethren, on what basis will we come together as a church? What exactly is it that we believe concerning God and the Gospel of Christ Jesus, our Lord?”

Mr. Calvin, the leading thinker of the group, pondered the question for some time as he gently tugged at his beard with his eyes closed. Suddenly, Mr. Calvin responded, “Yes. That’s it! We must put in writing what we believe the Scriptures teach concerning God and the Gospel of Christ Jesus, our Lord! What is it that we can all agree upon? What is it that we all believe the Holy Scriptures teach? What is it that we together confess with heart and mouth? Of course, there will be more work to be done. We will need to write a few procedures on how we will deal with conflict, choose leaders, worship, but for now, let us put in writing exactly what, as a church, we believe. Let us put in writing our official position on those issues that will form the basis of our life together as a Christian church.”

Mr. Luther, the man who struggled with his salvation – “How can God love a wretched sinner like me?” – immediately responded to Mr. Calvin’s suggestion. “Mr. Calvin,” said he, “Your proposal is great. Is it acceptable to you and to you, my dear friends, if we begin with the existential question, *What is*



Mr. Calvin, the leading thinker of the group, pondered the question for some time as he gently tugged at his beard with his eyes closed.

your only comfort in life and in death?”

Mr. Luther continued, “As you know, I often struggle with comfort and I need to be reminded daily of the greatness of my Savior.” Mr. Calvin and the others agreed, and so the hard work of writing a confession began.

Mr. Ursinus was the first to speak. He opened his Bible and turned to Romans 8:35-39 and said, “Brothers, I believe that our greatest comfort is that we belong to Jesus Christ. Therefore, I propose the following answer, *My only comfort in life and in death is that I am not my own*

but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.” Everyone agreed.

Mr. Olevianus spoke next. He said, “My dear brother, what you say is true, but more can be said.” With his already opened Bible he turned to 1 Peter 1:18-19, which he read aloud and then said, “We need to add the following, ‘He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood.’”

Before he could finish, Mr. Unity interjected, saying, “I like the sound of it. ‘My only comfort in life and death is that I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with this precious blood.’ I really like the sound of that. Deep. Rich. Biblical.” Several others in the group nodded their heads approvingly and said, “Yes,” or “Amen.”

Then Mr. Trent spoke up. “Hmmm... I like where we are going with this statement, but we need some more precision. We all agree that the devil is in the details and I’m worried that we might be giving the wrong impression. I fear that some of the weaker brethren

might conclude that since Jesus has done everything for us, they might not be concerned about living a faithful life. Why don’t we make a slight change, an ever-so-slight change? How about this? ‘My only comfort in life and death is that I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has paid for my sins with this precious blood.’ By eliminating the words ‘fully’ and ‘all’ we can affirm the necessity of works and merit. To have comfort in this life, we must not only trust in Jesus: we also need to have confidence in our works and the work of the saints.” Much discussion ensued, but Mr. Trent was unable to convince anyone of the merits of his position.

The group was almost ready to vote on the final wording:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. My only comfort in life and in death is that I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He

has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood.

However, Mr. Arius, the gentle, kind, and soft-spoken grey-haired man, stood up and pleaded with the brethren. He said, “Dear brothers, I am concerned that we are giving too much weight to our interpretation of Scripture and not enough consideration to Scripture itself. The Bible says that Jesus is the son of God. Hence, he is not God himself, but the son of God. Therefore, we must say, with the Apostle Paul that our only comfort is in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:3). Please, brothers, let us not divide over man’s words. Let us be content with Scripture itself, which clearly teaches us that Jesus is not God and not our greatest comfort.” Though Mr. Arius spoke with sincerity, compassion and pastoral sensitivity, the group could not adopt Mr. Arius’ interpretation of Scripture. Not even Mr. Trent could agree with him.

When the time came for the ten brothers to vote, they voted on the following motion:

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Whereas the following question and answer reflects our interpretation of Holy Scripture, which is our highest and only infallible rule for faith and life:


Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. My only comfort in life and in death is that I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood.

RESOLVED:

This question and answer is our official understanding of Scripture. It is our confession of faith; it is our position paper on comfort; it is our doctrine; it is part of the "pattern of sound words" that Paul calls us to follow;

All pastors, elders and deacons in our church must sincerely receive and adopt this confession as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.

The motion passed 8-2, with Mr. Trent and Mr. Arius voting in the negative. Mr. Trent decided to join a church that regarded Scripture and Tradition as co-equal authorities, denying *Sola Scriptura* and Mr. Arius joined a local cult that denied the deity of Christ. 

Rev. Garry Vanderveen blogs at "Show, Don't Tell" (GarryVanderveen.com) where a version of this first appeared. It is reprinted here with permission.

FAQ

ABOUT CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

Do confessions undermine the authority of Scripture?

No. Confessions are a common/shared interpretation of Scripture, which is the highest and only infallible rule for faith and life.

Can confessions undermine the authority of Scripture and create dead orthodoxy?

Yes. The ungodly suppress the truth in all kinds of ways, so it is entirely possible that one masters the Confessions and the Scriptures, yet hates Christ.

Can confessions create lazy Christians, Christians who love God but do not study his Word?

Yes. I have experienced the following exchange several times.

Me: Why must we obey the commands of God?

Other: Because God has saved us we must obey his commands as an expression of gratitude.

Me: Are there any other reasons?

Other: No. This is the reason the Heidelberg Catechism gives.

Although the Heidelberg Catechism provides a biblical answer, it is not the only biblical answer. The Bible says that

since we are united to Christ, we must live his life (Rom. 6:10-11; Gal. 2:20). Since Christ obeys the commands of God, we who are united to Christ must obey them because this is who we are.

Can one have a saving relationship with Christ and reject confessions?

Perhaps. However, as soon as someone summarizes the Bible on any given matter, he is offering a "confession" of sorts. Unless someone recites the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation in response to a question about the Bible, one is involved in confessional activity.

Should the church embrace old confessions?

Yes. Absolutely. Without a doubt. The truth of God's Word is not new, nor is the Spirit's work of opening our eyes to the truth of his Word a recent occurrence. God's Word endures throughout all of history – it never changes (Isaiah 40:8); and, the Holy Spirit continues to sanctify his church into that unchanging truth (John 17).

Should the church write new confessions?

Yes. Every age has its particular challenges and questions, and the church must address them.

How should a church write a new confession?

Since a confession is an official interpretation of Scripture by the church, confessional writing should involve many churches.

What happens when a church doesn't subscribe to a written confession?

In such cases, the church usually succumbs to the tyranny of the loudest, most powerful, and persuasive member(s). When there is no objective confession that the church embraces, someone will rise to the top and impose his or her confession upon everyone else.

YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

...and social media isn't helping

David Foster Wallace was an American thinker and writer, best known for his novel *Infinite Jest*. He passed away in 2008, which is a loss to all of us because we could desperately benefit from his thinking right now. In 2005, just a few years before his death, he gave a commencement speech at Kenyon College that has become known as the “This Is Water” speech.

Much of Wallace’s speech is focused on how the liberal arts are designed to teach us how to think differently and maybe get a bit outside of ourselves so that we may have a bit more critical awareness of ourselves, to realize, “a huge percentage of the stuff that I tend to be automatically certain of is, it turns out, totally wrong and deluded.”

He goes into one such example here (bolding mine, italics his):

Everything in my own immediate experience supports my deep belief that **I am the absolute center of the universe, the realest, most vivid and important person in existence.**

We rarely think about this sort of natural, basic self-centeredness, because it’s so socially repulsive, but it’s pretty much the same for all of us, deep down.

It is our **default setting**, hardwired into our boards at birth. Think about it: **There is no experience you’ve had that you were not at the absolute center of.**

The world as you experience it is there in front of you, or behind you,



It’s really just natural to see yourself as the center of the universe, even apart from the sinfulness of it...

to the left or right of you, on your TV, or your monitor, or whatever. Other people’s thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, *real*.

You get the idea.

First, the comment about our self-centeredness being our “default setting” struck me as soon as I read it because when I talk to the students in our youth

ministry about original sin, I use the “default setting” language and they get it.

But isn’t this posture true of all of us, not just Wallace? It’s really just natural to see yourself as the center of the universe, even apart from the sinfulness of it, because you see the entire experience of life from *your* perspective. As close as you are to your spouse or your children or your church family, it is impossible for you to literally

experience life as they do. No amount of time or investment of social energy can lead us to truly live life through the eyes of others.

How easy is it, then, for everyone in our lives to become characters in a movie all about us? Our spouse is the love interest of the main character. Our boss is the curmudgeonly-but-lovable villain who means well but is too old fashioned for his own good. Our kids are the comic relief and the way we learn about our own selfishness. Everyone else is just extras on our movie set.

Wallace is right: our default setting is to see the entire world in relation to ourselves. We never think about the fact that we are actually a supporting actor in *someone else's* movie.

The connection to social media and the broader age of the social internet ought to be clear, right?

Social media perpetuates the idea that we are the main character in our own story. It allows us to take our personal

movie to market and share it with the world. It's no fun being the star of your own movie if no one else can experience it. But now, with the innovation of social media, we can take our performance on the road and show everyone that we are the stars of our own lives.

The Christian implications of this phenomenon are many. Perhaps we are best off seeing ourselves as supporting actors or even extras in God's story at which Jesus Christ is the star. God is the star of the human experience.

If you've ever wondered about or maybe been skeptical about social media perpetuating self-centeredness, this should ease your skepticism and confirm your wonderings.

The idea that social media is a neutral tool equally possible to be used for good or bad is genuinely foolish. I used to believe this, so I'm not being critical of anyone in particular here. I am a convert from this wrong-headed idea.

As you tap and swipe and scroll,

consider how your favorite social media platforms may be training you to see yourself as the center of your universe, and perhaps as the center of others' universes. How does this change how you view other people? Perhaps it makes you see them as less important and their needs as unfortunate consequences of not being the main character of the story.

The pings and red dots and notifications and hearts and thumbs-ups on all of our manicured content feigning authenticity reinforces the reality that "there is no experience that you were not at the absolute center of." ^{RP}

This originally appeared in Chris Martin's "Terms of Service" Feb. 26, 2021 newsletter and is reprinted with permission. "Terms of Service" looks at the social internet from a Christian perspective and comes in both a free and paid subscription, either of which you can sign up for at www.termsofservice.social.



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BABES IN TOYLAND

FAMILY / MUSICAL

1961 / 105 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**



Babes in Toyland stars all your nursery rhyme favorites: Jack and Jill, Little Bo Peep and, of course, Mother Goose herself. Our story begins with preparations for a wedding. Tom the Piper's son and Mary (only sometimes contrary) are going to get married and the whole village is so excited they just have to dance and sing!

There has to be a villain, and the black-hatted, black-caped, black-elevator-shoe-clad Barnaby Barnacle is such an over-the-top meanie that only the youngest of children might be scared by him. He knows something Mary doesn't – that when Mary is married, she's going to inherit a large sum, so Barnaby wants to marry Mary, instead of Tom! To that end, he hires two henchmen – the very large Gonzorgo, and the entirely silent Roderigo – to kidnap Tom and throw him into the sea. Of course Tom doesn't drown, but upon returning, Barnaby hits him with a shrink ray. That leads to an epic showdown between the full-sized Barnaby and a pint-sized Tom who is leading a toy army.

One caution: some talking trees might be a bit creepy for some children...but it'll help to let them know they aren't actually bad guys.

While the target audience is clearly children, there's so much energy and action that older kids and parents can enjoy it too.

HANS BRINKER, OR THE SILVER SKATES

FAMILY 90 MIN / 1962 **RATING: 8/10**



When Hans' father is hurt repairing a dike, young Hans drops out of school to take care of his family. But the Netherlands in the 1860's were a hard place to find work and try as he might Hans can't find enough work to pay for both his family's food and the medicine his father needs.

He is fast though, and when he hears that the prize for the annual 26-mile skating race is 300 guilders, both he and his sister Gretel enter in the hopes of winning the money his family and father so desperately need.

Like the book that it is based on, this is a non-Dutch look at the Netherlands, and that comes out most noticeably in the accents, which are Scandinavian rather than Dutch. (The book's American author Mary Mapes Dodge did her research, but mistakenly gave her characters German-sounding names rather than Dutch).

But overall, this is a great family film, showing how we should love our neighbors in need. It's also a wonderful sports movie without the typical sports movie ending. But be sure you get the 1962 film, as there is also a shorter, black and white, 1958 version that it is often confused with.

THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD

DRAMA/ACTION

101 MIN; 1938 **RATING 8/10**



Aside from a little medieval Roman Catholicism in the character of Friar Tuck (for instance, asking a woman to swear by "Our Lady" that what she is saying is true), you'll never find a better version of the Robin Hood legend. Why? Four reasons.

The first is respect for authority. The movie makes it clear that the villain, Prince John, is conspiring against the regent placed in charge by the absent King Richard, his brother, so that Robin Hood's apparent rebellion actually upholds the true authority of the rightful king.

The second reason is Robin Hood's courage in standing against tyranny. Robin Hood and his band demonstrate bravado in taking on Prince John's minions with a quip and a quiver, and with grim determination, thwarting those who would assassinate King Richard.

Then there is what particularly impresses Maid Marian about Robin Hood: the manly compassion and protection he offers to those oppressed by Prince John, which is the third appealing feature of this film.

Finally, in his treatment of Maid Marian and other female characters, Robin Hood exemplifies respect for women.

All in all, an engaging portrait, for boys and boys at heart, of hearty, healthy masculinity.

– JEFF DYKSTRA

THE SIGN OF ZORRO

FAMILY / DRAMA

1958 / 90 MINUTES **RATING: 8/10**



Is Zorro a Spanish version of Robin Hood? The Spanish California of the 1800s stands in for medieval Sherwood Forest, with both men frustrating the local tyrannical authorities even as they remain loyal subjects to their king.

Diego has been away in Spain for three years, studying at university. Now he's on his way home, summoned by his father because a new Commandant is making life miserable. It's on the long sea-voyage back that Diego decides to play the part of absent-minded egghead. He commits to the charade, staying in character even when meeting his own father, who is disappointed to find that the son he'd summoned is no man of action, but a foppish fool! Only Diego's loyal manservant Bernardo knows different.

The cautions: there is violence (swordfights!) but it is of the bloodless sort; also, a Spanish dancer swishes around her skirt so violently that we see a few flashes of her underwear.

Overall, there is a lot going on: we have a mute pretending to be deaf, a hero pretending to be a fool, a villain impersonating the hero, and a tyrannical commandant who might be despicable, but he isn't stupid. Enough twists and turns for two films makes this a good one for the whole family.



JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

CHILDREN'S

1952 / 83 MINUTES **RATING: 7/10**

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello star in their own version of this classic tale. The story begins with the desperate-for-work pair signing up for a night's work as last-minute babysitters. We get to the fairy-tale part when Costello asks the boy they are sitting to read him a story. Then, when we shift from the real world to the fairy tale, the film switches over from a sepia-toned black and

white to full color, like happens in *The Wizard of Oz*. And also like *Oz*, the people populating this fairyland look awfully familiar.

While the story continues on in the usual way, there are some wrinkles, including Jack (Costello) getting a buddy to come along for the adventure – Abbott is the village butcher who wants to retrieve his stolen cow. A princess and prince are two more additions, both of them kidnapped by the giant and held for ransom. This is the romantic angle, the two of them starting as strangers, unable to see each other in their adjoining cells, but falling in love as they talk and sing to one another through the bars.

When we meet the villain of the piece, parents might be surprised to see that he's only 7 or 8 feet tall – big, sure, but are we calling that a *giant*? But that only shows this is intended for children. Sure, mom and dad can come along for the ride, and they'll like lots of bits of it too, but this is meant for the undiscerning younger viewer who isn't going to find fault with a short giant, a singing harp whose lips don't move, or duels done with bending rubber swords. They'll laugh the first, second, and third time that Jack trips or gets bonked on the head, even as mom and dad will get their main enjoyment vicariously, watching their kids.

I should mention one joke that parents will have to explain. At one point Costello inadvertently mixes some gunpowder into the chicken feed, and while I won't give away what happens, kids who have never seen a powder horn will have to be clued into what just happened if they are going to get the joke.

A minor caution would be that the boy they are babysitting is uppity... but mom and dad can point that out.

The main caution is with the physical humor. The fights with the giant are all played to comic effect, and I think today's kids will get that. But less comic is a slap Abbott directs at Costello for sleeping on the job. Costello seems to feel no ill effects, but I mention it only because it happens in the conclusion, in the black and white "real" world and isn't the kind of thing you'd see in today's children's films – this is the slap in slapstick, and it struck me as simply mean, not funny.

This is a good film for the kids, but it needs some parental guidance because of the slapstick. For the parents it will be a little slow, and a little too silly, but enjoyable overall.



MAY 9-15, 2021

PARLIAMENT HILL & ONLINE

2021 SCHEDULE

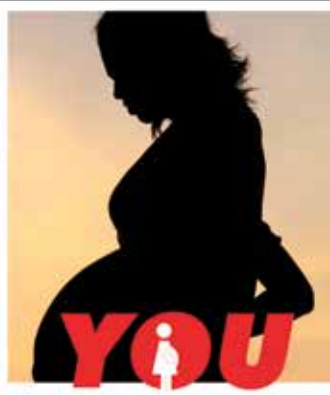


ARE NOT ALONE

**LIFE ON FILM
MOVIE NIGHTS
8:00 PM EDT**

April 18: Roe v. Wade (\$15 ticket & fundraiser)
April 25: Euthanasia Deception
May 2: Obsessed: Canada's Coercive Diplomacy
May 9: Divided Hearts of America (Canadian Premiere)
May 10: Breaking down Gosnell: A Conversation
May 11: Hush
May 15: Blood Money

**CANDLELIGHT VIGIL -
I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS
WEDNESDAY, MAY 12
(ONLINE) 8:00 PM EDT**
Featuring prayers, testimonials and music.



ARE NOT ALONE

**MASSES FOR LIFE &
PRAYER SERVICES
(ONLINE)**

May 13: National Mass for Life from Notre Dame Cathedral (airing on EWTN)
More Masses and Prayer Services listed at marchforlife.ca

**MARCH FOR LIFE & RALLY
MAY 13 AT 12:30 PM EDT
(OTTAWA & ONLINE)**

12:30 PM: Rally on Parliament Hill & March through downtown Ottawa (airing on EWTN)
If you can't make it know that CLC will be on the Hill on your behalf.



ARE NOT ALONE

**ROSE DINNER
MAY 13 AT 7:30 PM EDT
(ONLINE - \$25)**

Includes your private event link and a digital copy of the 2021 NMFL Souvenir Book.

The Rose Dinner will feature a panel discussion on the

**PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT
IN A CANCEL CULTURE**
including many guest appearances from pro-life, religious and political leaders.

PANEL INCLUDES:



KRISTAN HAWKINS
President of Students for Life of America



ARE NOT ALONE



**REV. DR. ANDREW
P.W. BENNETT**
Former Canadian Ambassador for Religious Freedom



**TANYA GRANIC
ALLEN**
TV host and political commentator

**YOUTH CONFERENCE
FRIDAY, MAY 14 FROM
3-8 PM EDT (ONLINE)**

WITH SPEAKERS:

TONI MCFADDEN
Relationships Matter
JOSEPH BACKHOLM
Family Research Council
JAY WATTS
Merely Human Ministries
WILL WITT
PragerU

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