

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

NOVEMBER 2014

Volume 34 Issue No. 1

PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING?

OUR CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH **P.16**

CORNELIUS VAN TIL -
HIS LIFE AND IMPACT

P.10

WATCHING OVER
OUR MARRIAGE

P.30



IN A NUTSHELL • FROM THE EDITOR • BOOK REVIEWS • CROSSWORD

Is this not
your copy of
Reformed
Perspective?



Enjoy Reformed Perspective all year long. Receive freshly designed monthly issues with articles pertinent to Reformed living.

CDN \$50/year

USA \$55/year

Int'l \$69/year

**SUBSCRIBE
TODAY**

Call **888.773.7780**

Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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

For Subscriptions or to Change your address, contact:

Joanna deBoer - Reformed Perspective Administration,
Box 1328, 230 2nd AV NW, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0
subscribe@reformedperspective.ca
1-855-527-1366

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

E-mail: editor@reformedperspective.ca

Editor: Jon Dykstra

Regular Contributors: Sharon Bratcher, Christine Farenhorst, Margaret Helder,
Anna Nienhuis, Michael Wagner

Board of Directors: John Voorhorst (Chairman); Henry Stel (Managing
Editor); James Teitsma (Secretary/Treasurer); Chris deBoer; Bob Lodder

Secretarial Address (Board Matters): James Teitsma

8 Granite Cove, East St. Paul, MB, Canada, R2E 0L6

Art Direction, Design and Layout: Compass Creative Studio Inc.
compasscreative.ca

Contact Address for South Africa:

Arie Roos, Box 584, Kuilsrivier, 7580 Republic of South Africa

Contact Address for Australia:

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

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

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

*If you are interested in the work of Reformed Perspective Foundation and in the promotion of
Reformed principles in all spheres of life, especially in your local area, and you need help, call
John Voorhorst at 1 (403) 328-9114 (days), and 1 (403) 345-2904 (evenings).*

Annual Subscription Rates:

Canadian Funds – 1 year \$50.00, 2 years \$93.00, 3 years \$137.00*

Canada Airmail \$73.00,* U.S. Airmail (U.S. Funds) \$80.00

U.S. Funds – 1 year \$55.00, 2 years \$100.00, 3 years \$145.00,

International Surface Mail – \$69.00 (2 years \$125.00, 3 years \$184.00)

International Airmail \$115.00

***including 5% G.S.T. – G.S.T. No. R118929272RT0001**

*We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada,
through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.*

Canada

Cancellation Agreement

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to
subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Registration: ISSN 0714-8208

Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act

Registration No. 118929272RR0001

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

reformedperspective.ca

Christians can still sometimes do a remarkable job of portraying Christianity as a largely joyless religion.

WHY ARE THEY WALKING AWAY? p.16

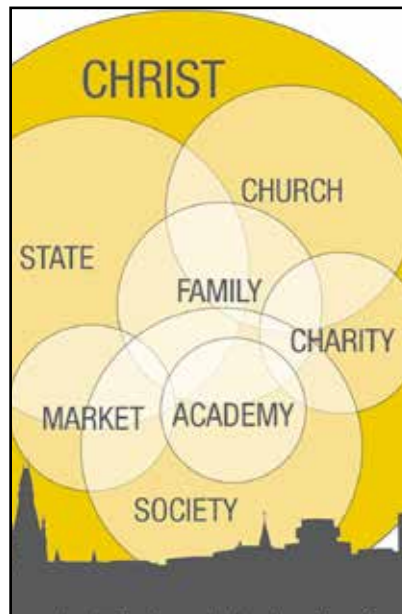
by Rob Slane



CORNELIUS VAN TIL - HIS LIFE AND IMPACT

– Dr. Greg Bahnsen

p.10



WHOM DO YOU SERVE?

– André Schutten

p.20



WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS JOHN CALVIN? p.26

– Rene Vermeulen

FROM THE EDITOR p.4

– Jon Dykstra

NOTA BENE p.6

IN A NUTSHELL p.13

WEALTH-WISE, EVEN THE "GOOD OL' DAYS" WEREN'T AS GOOD AS TODAY p.24

– Michael Wagner

Stay on message

A lesson from the Chilliwack flag display

When a politician gets ready to do a television interview he'll have his staff prepare "talking points." These are brief one or two line summaries of the points the politician most wants to discuss. They need to be short and sweet so they will be easy to remember, and so the politician can stay focused on them.

Then, if a reporter wants to ask about a government scandal, the politician will try to turn the conversation to these talking points: "Linda, that's not what Canadians are concerned with. But they do care whether they have a job which is why our government has..."

PRO-LIFE TALKING POINT

In the abortion debate we have one core talking point:

From conception onward the unborn are precious little human beings like you and me. And they deserve the same protection under the law.

That's it. There are other aspects of the abortion debate – other sub-issues – but this is the big one, the central truth that we want to advance. This is the talking point we want to bring up in every conversation we have about the unborn.

Why is it so important to keep this talking point in mind? Because the other side wants to get us sidetracked. Sometimes the other side will argue that the unborn aren't really human, but that's not a discussion they can win – the facts are all against them. And the longer we talk about the humanity of the unborn, the more certain it is that the truth will come out.

So, because they can't counter the truth, they want to get the discussion moved to more winnable ground. They want to get us off topic.

WE WANT TO DEFEND WHO NOT HOW

That's what we saw happen in early November, right after the Fraser Valley

East ARPA set up a 10,000 flag display on the grounds around the Chilliwack war memorial. Half the flags were pink, the other half blue, and each one represented 10 children who had been killed by abortion in the last year in Canada. It was an eye-catching display.

However, both local newspapers denounced it as a "stunt." According to their editorial and articles, the protest shouldn't have been set up so near the war memorial or so close to Remembrance Day. And they didn't like the way the ARPA group had gone about getting permission for the display, with one paper going as far as accusing the organizers of lying.

They were offended because of *how* it was done, *when* it was done and *where* it was done. What they were studiously avoiding was a discussion of *who* the display was about.

In the face of this type of outrage it is easy to become defensive, and apologetic, even when we've done nothing wrong. But we need to understand this hostility for what it is: they said it was about the *how*, *when* and *where*, but that simply wasn't true. If someone set up an similar display under identical circumstances, but each flag had represented someone who died from cancer, instead of denouncing it, the papers would have treated us to articles about courageous cancer survivors. The truth about cancer isn't offensive, so it doesn't need to be evaded.

However, since this was about the



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

unborn, they wanted to move the discussion to more winnable ground. Instead of debating the humanity of the unborn, they wanted us to debate the timing of our event. Instead of discussing when life begins, they wanted us talking about appropriate locations. But none of this was genuine – it was all about distraction and evasion.

So we need to keep our focus on just where they don't want it to be. No matter what they say, we need to steer the conversation back to the unborn.

So how might that look in real life? Here are a few possibilities.

ARGUE BY ANALOGY

The abortion debate hinges on the humanity of the unborn, and that's what we want to discuss. One way to get there is by pointing out how people would act if this was about 100,000 people who were already born. They'll say "That's different!" And that, right there, is our opening to investigate with them whether it really is different.

"How could you do this so near Remembrance Day?"

"Abortion kills more than 100,000 children each year, and that's bigger than the whole population of Chilliwack. If each and every year somewhere in Canada a Chilliwack-sized city was wiped off the face of the map, would you worry about the timing of the protest? Or would any time and all the time be the appropriate time?"

"But that's different. The population of Chilliwack is made up of human beings, and the unborn aren't human yet."

"Ah, now we're getting to the real issue here – are the unborn different than you and me? What don't we take a look at the facts..."

QUESTION THE INSULT

In debate, when someone throws an accusation at you, one of the more effective counters is to simply ask the person to explain their accusation and why it is valid. Their accusation isn't valid, so they won't be able to do it, and we can return the focus to where it should be.

"Why did you have to do it next to the War Memorial?"

"Abortion kills 100,000 children each year, so can you tell me why exactly it is wrong to tell people about them next to a war memorial?"

"Because it dishonors the service of these soldiers."

"Telling people that 1 in 4 children in Canada are being killed each year dishonors our honored dead? How so?"

"Because it distracts from what they did!"

"I'll ask again, how so? They fought for our rights, and there is no more fundamental right than the right to life. So what more appropriate place could we speak up for the 100,000 unborn children who are being denied that right?"

KEEP IT SIMPLE

And sometimes our response can be very short and to the point (so long as that point is our talking point!).

"How dare you!"

"When 100,000 children are being killed each year in Canada, how could we stay silent?"

"I'm outraged!"

"1 in 4 children in Canada are murdered before they are born. If we want to get outraged, how about we get outraged about that?"

CONCLUSION

We can say things any number of ways, but what's vital is that we stick to our talking point and don't let ourselves get distracted. The unborn need us to stay focused and stay on message. RP

From VISION... ...to REALITY

Our vision of a Christian retirement community within York Region is now becoming a reality. Construction is anticipated to start soon and an excellent choice of suites is still available. We expect suites will sell out once the building process commences.

We eagerly look forward to our Spring 2016 anticipated occupancy.

To become part of our exciting new community, contact us at 905 591-3491 or visit our website.
See how you too, can become part of 'The Meadows':


York Region Christian Senior Homes Inc.
15600 Leslie Street, Aurora, Ontario L4G 7C4

www.themeadowsofaurora.com
info@themeadowsofaurora.com 905 591-3491

The Meadows of Aurora

A Christian Seniors Lifestyle Community


JPC Chartered Professional Accountants offer a total tax and accounting service with a specialization in privately owned businesses. Thinking of when it's right to incorporate? Or how you can income split? How to sell your business? Or how to pass it on to your children tax efficiently? Or do you require professionally prepared corporate or personal income tax returns and financial statements? With a professional accounting designation and a Masters in Tax equivalent come explore the opportunities for you and your business with us here at JPC.



JOEL D JAGT
(HONS)B.COMM, CPA, CGA
PARTNER
joel@jpcprofessionals.ca
1 (905) 870 0137

HONEST. TIMELY. THOROUGH.

*Contact us to set up a free 1/2 hour strategic tax and accounting consultation
Serving the greater Burlington, Hamilton and Niagara Region*



JPC
Chartered Professional Accountants

NOTA BENE

News
worth
noting

MANUFACTURING OUTRAGE

BY JON DYKSTRA

Soon after a comedian gave a TV performance to an audience of 16 million viewers six people use Twitter to call the performance racist. Does that seem newsworthy? It did to the folks down at the British newspaper *The Independent*. The Emmys' tribute to the late Robin Williams included a short clip of him using an audience member's scarf to cover his face so he could play the part of an Iranian Muslim woman. A day after *The Independent* ran a story with the title:

Robin Williams Emmys tribute led by Billy Crystal criticized for including "racist" joke about Muslim woman

Who was doing the criticizing? The story cited only a half dozen tweets, all of them from otherwise unknown people. This was a manufactured story. What's newsworthy about a half dozen people thinking something is stupid?

But then things got more interesting. Dozens of conservative news and opinion sites linked to the article and

decided it as an example of political correctness gone wild. They crafted their own story, but their story, too, was manufactured - it was outrage based on the tweets of a half dozen unknown people. If we're going to go crazy every time a half dozen people say something crazy, when will we ever be able to stop screaming?

Soon after, *Calgary Herald* columnist Licia Corbella crafted her own tempest from the twittersphere with an article titled, "Albertans' anti-Christian bigotry is shocking"

Who was being bigoted? It turns out that after Alberta Premier Jim Prentice appointed a known Christian to the post of Education Minister, four or five people, and maybe as many as six said something bad about him. Here was another story based on just a half dozen tweets, but this time they were entirely anonymous - Corbella didn't even include the tweeters' names. Again, conservative news sites connected to her article, and got us all riled up. But was this really a story? Is it surprising that somewhere in the province six Albertans don't

like Christians and don't want one appointed as Education Minister?

Manufactured outrage like this is hard to spot. One trick to help see through it is to retitle an article after we've read it, with as detailed and accurate a headline as possible. So, for example, a more specific detailed headline for Corbella's story would have read, "Tweets reveal that at least 5 Albertans don't like Christians." And the headline for *The Independent*'s Robin Williams article would run something like this: "At least 6 out of 16 million viewers thought the Robin Williams clip was racist." Retitling it as accurately as we can makes it clear there is no story.

In this age of Facebook, and Twitter, and social media of all types, we've all become media outlets of sorts for our friends and connections. They read the stories we share. So we need to take care about what stories we will share. Let's not cry wolf, when there is no wolf.

SOURCE: www.independent.co.uk/news/people/billy-crystal-leads-robin-williams-emmys-tribute-awards-show-criticised-for-choosing-racist-joke-about-iranian-woman-9690355.html, www.calgaryherald.com/opinion/op-ed/Corbella+Albertans+anti+Christian+bigotry+shocking/10206317/story.html



IRONY ALERT: SOCIALISTS WON'T FOLLOW THEIR OWN POLICY

BY JON DYKSTRA

Should we increase the minimum wage? The Freedom Socialist Party certainly thinks so. According to their 2012 platform, this small American political party wants to “raise the minimum wage to \$20.” However in early October the group posted a job opening for a web developer with an offer of just \$13 an hour!

The listing quickly went viral, and the Huffington Post, CBS and National Review Online all had a good laugh. The socialists soon changed their ad, not to up the compensation, but to take away any mention at all of what the hourly rate would be. They weren't going to stop be hypocrites; they just didn't want to be so public about it.

The whole episode was hilarious, but also unbelievably arrogant: they want to force others to do what they themselves won't even do voluntarily.

When contacted by the Huffington Post, the party's national secretary Doug Barnes explained that the group relies on donations from low-wage workers, so they couldn't afford to pay much. He said that if the minimum wage was forced up, then their supporters would have more money to donate and the party could then afford to pay more.

Meanwhile, in the face of a 5% drop in revenues, McDonalds, one of the country's biggest low-wage job providers, announced it will be introducing new technology in some markets “to make it easier for customers to order and pay for food digitally.” It's being touted as a way of increasing service to the customer, allowing them to better customize their meal. But it is also a way of reducing the need for front counter staff. That's what happens when the minimum wage is raised: it makes it more attractive for companies to turn to automation as a way of managing rising costs. Doug Barnes says if the

minimum wage goes up then they will finally be able to practice what they preach and pay \$20 an hour because their supporters will now have more money to donate to them. But the truth is, a higher minimum wage is likely to turn many of their low-wage supporters into no-wage supporters, as their jobs are taken over by machines that will help companies deal with the rising labor costs.

SOURCE: reason.com/blog/2014/10/16/socialists-push-for-20-minimum-wage-but; <http://online.wsj.com/articles/minimum-wage-backfire-1413934569>; http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/18/socialist-13-hour_n_6008432.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular



SHOULD COMPANIES BE ALLOWED TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST CHRISTIANS?

BY JON DYKSTRA



When Trinity Western University (TWU) graduate Bethany Paquette applied for a position as a wilderness guide for the Amaruk Wilderness Corporation, the company told her she was unqualified. But they didn't leave it at just that. In his email response, company manager Olaf Amundsen noted he didn't appreciate the values taught in her Christian university:

...unlike Trinity Western University, we embrace diversity, and the right of people to sleep with or marry whoever they want.... we are not a Christian organization, and most of us actually see Christianity as having destroyed our culture, tradition and way of life.

Paquette saw this as pretty clear discrimination based on her religious beliefs and, at the encouragement of Trinity Western University, she decided to retain a lawyer and take her case to the B.C.'s Human Rights Tribunal.

But should we hope she wins? The answer to that question is less obvious than it might seem. Clearly we don't want companies to discriminate against Christians. But if this company is forced to hire Paquette (or be fined for not hiring her), what of the reverse situation? If Paquette is going to argue that someone's religious beliefs shouldn't be a factor in an employment

opportunity, that cuts both ways: then a Christian company should have to hire someone irreligious, someone like this aggressively anti-Christian Olaf Amundsen.

I don't want to go there.

Companies should be allowed to hire whomever they wish, for whatever reasons they want.... and if they are jerks about it, then we can boycott them. But we don't want tribunals involved in making hiring decisions for employers. It was great this young lady took this to the media – that's a great venue in which to battle this out – but she should not be taking this to the Human Rights Tribunal. We have a good reason to worry that such tribunals will force – and, in fact, they already have – Christian companies to hiring anti-Christian employees. If we don't want them to do that, we should hardly be asking them to force anti-Christian companies to hire Christians.

WELFARE FOR THE VERY RICHEST?

BY JON DYKSTRA



Earlier this year an American group called Open The Books released a report that found companies in the Fortune 100 received more than \$21 billion in the form of grants, direct payments, loans, farm subsidies or insurance payments over the years 2000-2012. In other words, 100 companies that *Fortune* magazine cites as being the biggest revenue makers in the country received billions of taxpayer dollars in "corporate welfare."

This \$21 billion figure is in addition to the hundreds of billions of dollars the government spent in bailouts for the housing, banking and auto industries. *National Review* columnist Stephen Moore noted that it also "doesn't include... indirect subsidies such as the ethanol mandate... or special tax breaks for wind and solar manufacturers." And it doesn't include the \$1.2 trillion these same companies received via government contracts. This \$21 billion is just the tip of the iceberg and doesn't include the many other ways that these Fortune 100 companies have their hands in the government coffers.

Both the right and left should be able to find some common ground here: we don't need to give billions of taxpayer dollars to our richest companies.

SOURCE: Stephen Moore's "Corporate Welfare Queens," posted to National Review Online March 27, 2014; Joel McDurmon's "Food stamps for facists," posted to AmericanVision.org on Sept. 17, 2014; "Federal Transfer Report - Fortune 100 Companies," posted to www.openthebooks.com on March 13, 2014



WINSOME, COURAGEOUS, AND HILARIOUS

BY JON DYKSTRA

In late August a 15-year-old American lass named Camille French decided to take matters into her own hands. Her local Books-A-Million outlet in Spring Hill, Tennessee had a display of the popular but pornographic novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* that was surrounded by books the store was recommending as great material for "after *Fifty Shades*."

Miss French proceeded to replace these similar titles with a book that would serve *Fifty Shade* readers far better: the Bible.

SOURCE: Picture credit is to Nancy French; Nancy French's "How my daughter sabotaged a Books-a-million *Fifty Shades of Grey* display," posted to Patheos.com on August 30, 2014.

Providing financial planning services to Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario

For over 20 years!



C.V. BENEFITS INC.

734 – 13 Street North
Lethbridge, AB T1H 2T1

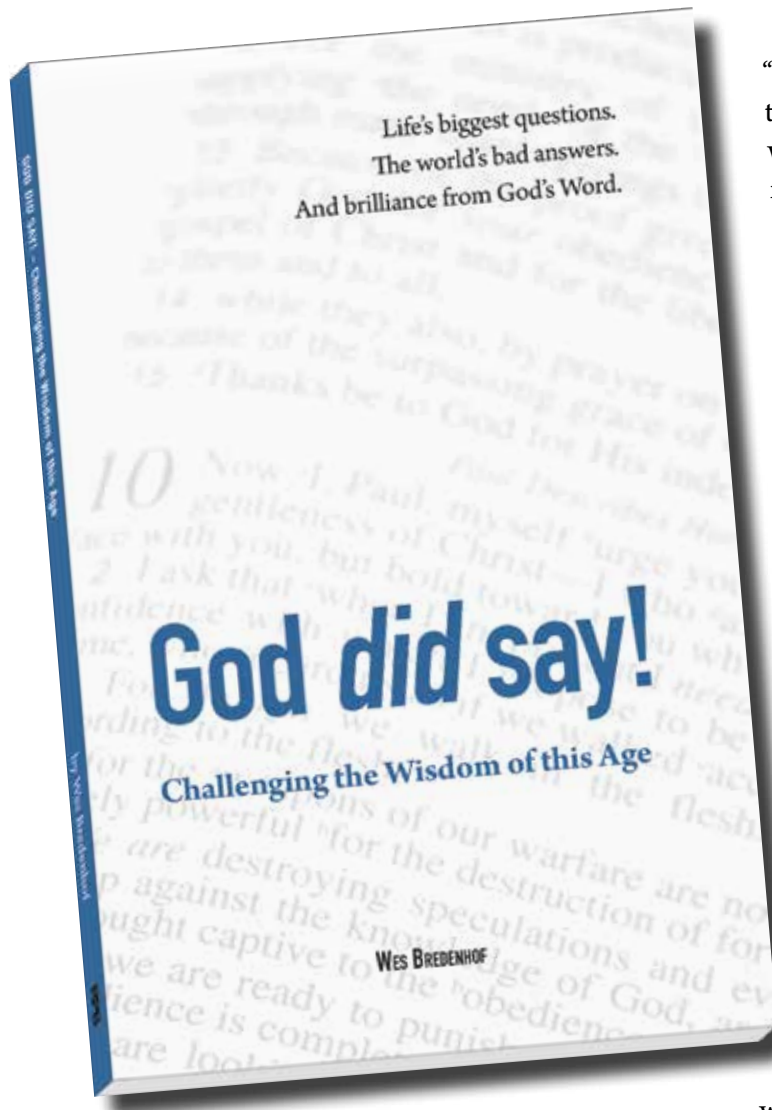
Phone: 403-328-9114
Toll Free: 800-565-4434
Fax: 403-328-9122

Email: info@cvbenefits.com
www.cvbenefits.com

-RRSPs -Annuities -Life Insurance -Disability Insurance -Tax Planning -Estate Planning -Group Benefits

Your Budgeting Specialists

Reformed Perspective Books *presents*



120 pages
E-book (pdf) **\$5**
Paperback **\$16**
(\$10 + \$6 shipping)

“Did God really say?” It’s the first question in the Bible, and a very modest one it seems. But what enormous trouble it caused! To Eve it may have seemed the Serpent was trying to clarify what God had said, but his purpose was something else entirely. This, here, was a *challenge* to God’s Truth; this was the Devil trying to raise doubt.

Today some within the Church are asking this same question for the same reason: though they profess God’s Name, these are people who have embraced a worldly form of wisdom. They ask this question not to seek Truth, but to *obscure* the wisdom of God’s Word.

In *God did say!* Dr. Bredenhof clears away the confusion by taking us straight to Scripture. He lays out the answers God has given to Life’s biggest questions, like: “What is truth?” “What is right and wrong?” and “How did we come to be?” He explains what the Bible says about sin, about Satan, and about the Bible itself. And he exposes the foolishness of the world’s wisdom by contrasting it with the wisdom of God’s Word.

So while some within the Church want to encourage doubts and questions about even the most foundational of doctrines, Dr. Bredenhof wants us to understand that there is no need for uncertainty, because God *did* say!

Order at www.tinyurl.com/GodDidSay

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



We sometimes don't appreciate our own, but Cornelius Van Til was renowned enough to make the cover of Christianity Today.

PEOPLE WE SHOULD KNOW BETTER

Cornelius Van Til

His Life And Impact by Dr. Greg Bahnsen

Cornelius Van Til may not have seemed a likely candidate to accomplish a “Reformation of Christian Apologetics,” but God is in the habit of utilizing unlikely candidates to mount great victories for His kingdom. Van Til “wanted to be a farmer.... Instead he became one of the foremost Christian apologists of our time,” to use the words of David Kucharsky in *Christianity Today* (Dec. 30, 1977, p. 18).

EARLY LIFE

Van Til was born May 3, 1895, in Grootevast, Holland, as the sixth of eight children to a devout dairyman-farmer. At the age of ten his family sailed to America and settled in Indiana. Cornelius enjoyed the soil and animals, but his evident intellectual strengths got him sent to Calvin Preparatory School in 1914.

He worked his way through as a part-time janitor and wholly loved the study of philosophy. By the time he enrolled in Calvin Seminary in 1921, he was already familiar with the works of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck and had added a knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin to his Dutch and English! He studied systematic theology under Louis Berkhof and Christian philosophy under W. H. Jellema. During his first year of seminary J. Gresham Machen – the man who stood head and shoulders above others as presenting a Christian faith worthy of scholarly defense – published *The Origin of Paul's Religion*.

The next year Van Til transferred to Princeton where he could study with Machen as well as at the philosophy department of Princeton University (under the Scottish personalist, A. A. Bowman). At the seminary Van Til managed the student dining club, and lived on the same floor in Alexander Hall with “Das” Machen, who was busy publishing numerous apologetical studies (including his monumental *Christianity and Liberalism* [1923]). Van Til's seminary adviser, C. W. Hodge Jr., was a grandson of Charles Hodge and the successor to B. B. Warfield. Van Til profited from the solid Biblical instruction of men like Hodge, Robert Dick Wilson, William Park Armstrong, and Oswald T. Allis,

but the professor closest to his heart was Geerhardus Vos, the respected Dutch scholar who championed the method of “Biblical theology.”

Van Til won the prize-winning student papers for both 1923 (on evil and theodicy) and 1924 (on the will and its theological relations). The seminary granted him a Th.M. in systematic theology in 1925, after which he married his long-time sweetheart, Rena Klooster. At the university, Van Til's prowess in metaphysical analysis and mastery of Hegel's philosophy had gained high praise from A. A. Bowman, who offered him a graduate fellowship.

In 1927 the university granted him the Ph.D. in philosophy for a dissertation on “God and the Absolute.” In the same year his first published piece (a review of A. N. Whitehead's *Religion in the Making*) clearly exhibited the salient lines of presuppositional analysis:

- a) locating an opponent's crucial presuppositions
- b) criticizing the autonomous attitude which arises from a failure to honor the Creator-creature distinction
- c) exposing the internal and destructive philosophical tensions which attend autonomy, and then
- d) setting forth the only viable alternative, Biblical Christianity.

When J. Gresham Machen declined the chair of apologetics at Princeton Seminary, deciding to remain in the New Testament department, the Board of the seminary was encouraged by William Brenton Greene (1854-1928), the retired professor of apologetics, to invite Van Til to lecture in the department for the 1928-1929 academic year. Following the reception of his doctorate and his first visit back to the Netherlands (1927), Van Til had accepted the pastorate of the Christian Reformed Church in Spring Lake, Michigan. Although installed for only a year, he took a leave of absence from the congregation and taught apologetics at Princeton, impressing everyone so favorably (even though the youngest instructor there) that at the end of only one year the Board elected him

to assume the Stuart Chair of apologetics and ethics.

THE DECLINE OF PCUSA AND THE BEGINNING OF THE OPC

However, within weeks the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. reorganized Princeton Seminary in such a way that control of the once conservative bastion of Reformed orthodoxy was turned over to men who desired to see many different viewpoints represented at Princeton and who favored a “broad church.” Machen resigned and immediately started work to establish Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Van Til likewise resigned and returned to Michigan.

In the meantime, Machen handpicked Van Til to teach apologetics in the new seminary, even traveling with Ned B. Stonehouse to Michigan in August to plead for Van Til's acceptance of the position – after a previous visit from O. T. Allis had not secured it. After declining at first, Van Til took up teaching duties at Westminster Seminary in the fall of 1929, where he continued in that ministry until retiring more than forty years later. When Machen was unjustly forced out of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1936, Van Til supported him in the founding of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, where he came to have a decided influence for

Van Til's insight, a brilliant and apologetically powerful one, was that antitheism actually presupposes theism.

years to come, both as a scholar and as a powerful pulpit preacher.

PRESUPPOSITIONAL PUBLISHING

From the outset of his teaching career, Van Til sought to develop a distinctively, consistently Christian

philosophical outlook. He wanted to see everything in terms of a Biblical world-and-life-view. The first major syllabus produced by Van Til at Westminster Seminary, (now titled *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*) came out in 1933. In it he traced through history

various epistemological positions, noting the bearing of metaphysical convictions upon them, and advanced the necessity of a transcendental, presuppositional method of argumentation.

He insisted that Christians must reason with unbelievers, seeking to reduce the non-Christian worldview (whatever form it takes) to absurdity, by exposing it to be epistemologically and morally self-contradictory. Van Til's insight, a brilliant and apologetically powerful one, was that antitheism actually presupposes theism. To reason at all, the unbeliever must operate on assumptions which actually contradict his *espoused* presuppositions – assumptions which comport only with the Christian worldview.

Van Til's presuppositional approach has been a powerful impetus for reform in Christian thinking. *Outwardly*, it directs a transcendental challenge to all philosophies which fall short of a Biblical theory of knowledge, demonstrating that their worldviews do not provide the philosophical preconditions needed for the intelligible use of logic, science, or ethics. *Inwardly*, it calls for self-examination by Christian scholars and apologists to see if their own theories of knowledge have been self-consciously developed in subordination to the Word of God which they wish to vindicate or apply. It has likewise cut a *wide* swath through a large number of relevant areas of interest, requiring that every area of life be governed by the inscripturated word of God.

CONCLUSION

Those who knew Dr. Van Til personally will testify that he was not only a man of principle and conviction, a towering intellectual, but equally a man of warmth, humor, and compassion. On April 17, 1987, he joined all the saints who from their labors rest.

This article was first published in the May, 1995 issue of Penpoint (Vol. VI:5) and is reprinted with permission of Covenant Media Foundation, which hosts and sells many other Dr. Bahnsen resources on their website www.cmfnw.com/

Cornerstone Christian School, located in beautiful Lynden, Washington seeks candidates to fill potential teaching openings (elementary and high school) for the 2015-16 school year.

Our school has approximately 120 students in grades 1-12, thirteen full or part time teachers, excellent staff relations, a beautiful and functional facility, and experiences a high level of community support. Lynden enjoys a thriving church and school community, and is nestled right between the Cascade Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. While rural in character, Lynden is also conveniently close to the thriving metropolitan areas of Seattle, WA and Vancouver, B.C.

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

Mr. Darryn Kleyn
email: dkleyn@cornerstoneschool.us
phone: 360.318-0663



How can purchasing a casket be "PRO-LIFE"?

Purchase one of our Classic Pine Box caskets and all the proceeds go to the REFUGE Crisis Pregnancy Centre. (see our website for more details)



\$1950 +HST
plus shipping

Caskets are locally made from locally grown trees and are eco-friendly.

For more information or to place an order
Phone 519.380.5497
Website www.NewLifeCaskets.ca



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

BY JON DYKSTRA

OF MICE AND MEN

Depending on who you talk to, humans share anywhere from 70% to 98% of our DNA with chimpanzees. The high end of the scale, the 98% figure, is the one you most hear touted in the newspapers, but it's the least credible: even ardent evolutionists will admit that number is inflated. For example, an article from the July 2013 *National Geographic* pegged the figure at a more modest 90%.

Whatever the percentage, the reason we hear about our genetic similarity so often is because chimps also bear a passing resemblance to us. However the same *National Geographic* article noted that mice share 88% of our DNA. If the 90% figure is supposed to prove that we are close relatives to chimps, what does the 88% say of mice and men? We don't look anything like mice. And yet our genes say we are nearly identical!

Or maybe we should ask: is that really what our genes are telling us?

We're supposed to share 73% of our DNA with the zebra-fish, 47% with the fruit fly, and 24% of our DNA with simple wine grapes. We all know better than to think we are 3/4 zebra fish, 1/2 fruit fly or 1/4 grape, so why do so many fall for the line that we are 9/10 chimp, just because we may share 90% of our DNA?

Yes, we do have some genetic similarities with other creatures. God

crafted us all - we all have the same Designer - so it's hardly surprising that there are some common design features.

But what this *National Geographic* article shows is that we are not defined by our DNA. Even folks who want to believe they are only 10 percentage points removed from being chimps know that the gulf between mice and men far exceeds the 12% difference we find in our DNA.

SOURCE "Carl Zimmer's 'Genes are Us. And Them' in the July, 2013 National Geographic, ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/07/125-explore/shared-genes

ARE OUR CHILDREN LEADERS?

In a lecture series Douglas Wilson is teaching on Christian education, he recounted a story about a group of teenage boys that his son Nate had met with for an optional Bible study. These were the sort of young men who were interested in digging into the Bible on their lunch break even after they had a Bible class in the morning: good kids.

Nate asked them what current movie was being talked about in their class. The title was forgettable, but it was typical Hollywood fare - Wilson labeled it "Stupid Movie 3." Nate then asked the boys why they thought everyone was talking about Stupid Movie 3. Some of the students suggested it was because their classmates didn't have very good discernment or taste.

"No," Nate said, "It's because you guys aren't leaders."

How's that for raising expectations! These were the good kids, the sort who would never get in trouble, and isn't that what every parent hopes for? But how were they helping their classmates? How were they having a positive impact on the world around them?

They weren't. They were sitting quietly, letting others set the course for their class.

Glorifying God can be a risky thing, even in a Christian school setting. But if we want our kids to be leaders, we have to encourage them to be risk takers, not safety seekers.

A TECH TIME-SAVING TIP

In a TEDTalk last year Tech writer Dave Pogue offered this time-saving tip: don't use the mouse to scroll down web pages; hit the space bar instead to scroll down one full page. Hit Shift+Space to scroll up. It works in all browsers and all computers. Depending on how much time you spend on the web, this one tip could well save you minutes of time over the course of your life!

SUCH A SOFTY

A Dutchman and his wife walk past a restaurant. "Oh, that smell is marvelous" says the wife. Being a kind-hearted Dutchman, the husband thought, "She enjoyed that so much and I love her so very much, so, why not? I'm going to treat my lovely lady"

So, they walked past again.

SOURCE: David C. Innes passed along a Scottish version of this joke on Facebook

FINDING THE PERFECT CHURCH

"The day we find the perfect church, it becomes imperfect the moment we join it." - Charles H. Spurgeon

{ APPROVED CHRISTIAN PICK-UP LINE }
"Hey baby, wanna come back to my place? My parents are home."
SOURCE: the Internet...somewhere



LET US THEREFORE...

As we ready ourselves to celebrate a birthday, let us remember death defeated

by Christine Farenhorst

We are presently in that time of the year when we are beginning to be inundated with, as they say, the sights and sounds of the holiday season. Salvation Army officers ring bells and ask for donations at the doors of supermarkets and street corners, houses are brightly decorated with lights, myriad sales are promoted as special pre-Christmas deals, and Christmas songs fill the aisles as we shop. Marketing takes advantage of a time when people tend to be less Scrooge-like and more Cratchett-like in their attitude.

We have great cause to celebrate – and not just life in general but death in particular and its defeat.

We also presently live in a time in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to pick up a newspaper or listen to news on the radio and television without feeling slightly nauseous at the horrendous defiance of all of God's laws. Mass murder here, euthanasia there, material corruption in high and low places, sexual immorality running rampant, and evolution touted in secular as well as Christian institutions, to name but a few things. And then there are the beheadings...

DEATH COMES

In the last few months the names of James Foley, 40, Steven Sotloff, 31, and David Cawthorne Haines, 44, have come to the forefront. A short year ago no one knew who these men were and now the whole world, it seems, has become aware of their ... no, not their lives but their deaths. They were men, journalists, in the prime of their lives,

planning, no doubt, to do a lot more writing and living.

James Foley was from New Hampshire and was covering the Syrian War. He was captured by Islamic militants almost two years ago and beheaded on or around August 19. Steven Sotloff was a practicing Jew and a native of Florida. Writing for *TIME* and for the *Christian Science Monitor*, his desire, oddly enough, was to cover the suffering of Muslims at the hands of tyrants. He disappeared almost a year ago and was beheaded on or around September 2. David Cawthorne Haines was a British aid worker employed by a Paris-based humanitarian agency. Captured by militants approximately a year and a half ago, he was beheaded on or around September 20.

Besides the fact that these men were all beheaded, they had one other thing in common: they all left grieving, hopeless family behind. Foley's mother tirelessly petitioned the US government on behalf of her son while he was in prison. Presently she is angry and embittered about his death. Sotloff's mother directly petitioned ISIS through a video, begging them to spare her son. She is heartbroken at their response. Haines' family tried to reach out to his captors through the British Foreign Office. The resulting death has made them feel totally bereft.

Jumping back now a few centuries to 1756. In that year a letter was received by the Anglican preacher John Wesley. The letter was from a father – a father who had a son in the York jail. The son had committed crimes worthy of death and he, after being sentenced, was executed. The father wrote to Wesley

It pleased God not to cut my child off in his sins. He gave him time to repent; and not only so, but a heart to repent. His peace increased daily, till on Saturday, the day he was to die, he came out of the condemned room, clothed in his shroud, and went into the cart. As he went on, the cheerfulness and composure of his countenance were amazing to all the spectators.

And now back to 2014.

French journalist, Didier Francois, also once held captive by ISIS, explained why there was an apparent calmness in the men recently beheaded by ISIS on the videos recorded just prior to their deaths. Was it because they, knowing death was coming, had prepared themselves for it? Had they reconciled with their Maker? That is certainly our hope and prayer, though Francois suggested the calmness was due to another cruelty that ISIS had inflicted on the men: he suggested that the captives had been put through numerous mock executions and were consequently not aware that this time was the real thing, that they had no idea that they were about to die.

DEATH DEFEATED

Death will surprise most of us; very few are told the time and day they will die. But we need not fear it, and we can be prepared for it; Christians are not like those who have no hope.

We who are still living in this year of 2014 have great cause to celebrate – and not just because we have homes and families, food and clothes, and entertainment galore at the onset of yet another season of sleigh bells and church bells and coniferous greenery. The sentence bears repeating. We have great cause to celebrate – and not just in this season but every day. Let's dwell on that thought. We have great cause to celebrate – and not just life in general but death in particular and its defeat.

Our holiday focus, therefore, should be tinged with the shadow of a death tree cast from a cradle; it should be surrounded by the cry of a child Who knew He would die; and it should be kept with eyes and ears on heaven keenly listening for the archangel's call and for the sound of the trumpet of God. For it is then that the dead in Christ will rise and that they will be caught up with those dead in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air to be always with Him.

Let us therefore comfort one another with these words. RP



OUR CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

WHY ARE THEY WALKING AWAY & WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

by Rob Slane

A few years ago both the Barna Group and *USA Today* unearthed the same statistic which, although in many ways shocking, strangely came as little surprise to anyone who had been paying attention: three out of every four children from Christian homes in America walk away from the faith soon after they leave high school.

The biggest cause of this turning away from the faith was said to be intellectual skepticism. A child grows up learning and accepting something of the Christian faith within their family and church, only to ditch it when confronted by the juggernaut of secularism in the media and the universities a few years later. Given this chief reason, it is perhaps not surprising that a quick search of the internet for responses to this statistic tend to emphasize sound Bible teaching and in particular good apologetics as the remedy.

However, though good Bible teaching and apologetics ought to form part

of any cure, I think it is a mistake to assume that they are necessarily the most important. There are a host of other reasons that lie behind the façade of intellectual skepticism, and what I want to do is to engage some of these reasons from two angles. We will begin with a somewhat negative approach, addressing some of the reasons why the Christian faith is just not surviving from generation to generation. And we will conclude on a positive note, suggesting some practical ways that this can be tackled.

Before continuing, it is necessary to clear up one misconception. The Barna and *USA Today* findings were alarming, but it must be stressed that they were only reflecting what is going on in America and perhaps the rest of the West. We Western Civilizationists often fall into the trap of looking only as far as our immediate surroundings and concluding falsely that Christianity is in terminal decline. But this is not the case.

The message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried and resurrected has lost none of its potency, and in many parts of the world Christianity is thriving with the most powerful message the world has ever seen still at work transforming lives and communities.

WHY THEY ARE LEAVING

Nevertheless, in the West the faith is undoubtedly in decline and we must ask why this is. A whole list of reasons could be given, but I want to hone in on just five.

1. We're presenting a subjective Gospel

I recently asked a Christian friend to explain in a sentence or two what he understood by the Gospel, and he responded by saying that it is "repentance towards God and accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior." Of course this is just one person's answer, yet having spoken to many Christians

over the years, I think this is probably fairly representative.

However, the answer given is *not* the Gospel, but is rather what our *response* to the Gospel should be. This statement is subjective, whereas the Gospel itself is an entirely objective series of historical events, summarized in the Nicene Creed as follows:

[Jesus Christ] was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father.

Much of modern, western Christianity emphasizes, to an unhealthy degree, our subjective response to the Gospel, treating this as if it *were* the Gospel. And furthermore emotions and experience often seem to hold a higher place in the minds of many than the objective truth. One of the many examples of this type of thinking is the practice of giving testimonies – “how Jesus helped me” – as a means of evangelism.

Yet without wishing to disregard emotions or testimonies, all this has done is sideline the objective message of the Gospel: Christ the God/Man was really crucified and was really raised from the dead at a real point in history. In this objective truth’s place the idea has been sown in the minds of the young generation that Christianity is an entirely personal and relativistic belief. It is not difficult to then see why multitudes have turned away.

2. Children’s Church

I recently did a quick survey of churches in my area and found that almost all of them had “Children’s Church” or Sunday School during the worship service. This practice is so embedded in modern Christianity that multitudes of children of believers go through their entire childhood without ever worshipping God in the congregation. Yet this is far from the norm presented in Scripture. Just to take two examples:

And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives and their children (2 Chronicles 20:13).

Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts (Joel 2:16).

In other words, when the people of God gathered for worship and to hear the Word of God, the children were present. This is because the corporate worship of God is meant to be the highest thing we do, and also the thing that drives the rest of what we do. It is therefore for all ages, from the youngest to the

The question is not whether God is sovereign over our children, but rather how this sovereignty and grace actually works.

oldest. Sending children out of worship serves only to sow the seeds in their minds that the worship of God is largely irrelevant. It is then not a great leap from there to concluding that God must be irrelevant too.

3. We’re failing to show our children how Christianity applies to all of life

Many Christian children grow up hearing a message of “how to get to Heaven,” and then when they go into the “real world” they discover that there is a huge mess that requires solutions. In the minds of many, Christianity becomes associated with escapism, while tackling

real issues appears to be what the secularists are all about.

All of which is a travesty, firstly because secularist “solutions” cannot do anything but lead us into an even bigger mess, but also because it ignores massive chunks of Scripture and indeed the whole sweep of redemptive history. Yes, the Bible is concerned to let us know that this life is not all there is and that there is an eternity to come, but it is also concerned with the way we live now, containing the basic blueprint, laws and ideas that should help humanity to deal with any and every situation that might arise.

Failure to see this worldview throughout the Bible and to pass it to our children is a sure way of teaching our children that God doesn’t much care about this world. In turn, this leads them into the arms of the secularists who apparently do care.

4. Parent don’t show repentance

There is nothing so geared to repulse our children than if we are constantly admonishing and rebuking them, telling them of their duties, their sinfulness, their faults, and their need for repentance, whilst steadfastly refusing to hold ourselves to a similar level of scrutiny and saying sorry to them when we mess up. Conversely, there is nothing so likely to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers as when those fathers humbly apologize to their children when they mess up, seeking their forgiveness as well as God’s.

If we have hurt someone in our sin, and we repent to God but refuse to seek the forgiveness of the neighbor we have hurt, this is not true repentance (Matthew 5:23,24). However, it is a great temptation to think that this sort of thing just doesn’t apply to our four-year-old that we just yelled at. Yet it does. They are our neighbors and if we have wronged them we need to put things right with them, regardless of their age or our authority over them.

There is nothing more likely to convince a child that we really do believe in the power of God to forgive

our sins, than if we not only humble ourselves before God and confess what we have done to Him, but also confess to wrong we have done to them. Failure to do this year after year is one of the surest ways of storing up resentment in a child's heart – a resentment which many take as a reason later on to reject Christianity, seeing it as a religion consisting of nothing more than mere hypocrisy.

5. We're failing to love our children for who they are

Of all the reasons why the next generation is falling away, this may well be the biggest single factor. I came across a couple of testimonies recently of young women who had turned away from the faith, despite having been brought up in seemingly solid Christian families. Both families were hot on biblical teaching and apologetics and to all appearances seemed to be the archetypal well-ordered Christian families. But in both cases the fathers forgot to love their children. They tried to fit their children into their grand cause – whether it was the cause of the “well-ordered” family, the Quiverfull, the apologetics, the evangelism or whatever else – and failed to love them as human beings in their own right.

For every twenty-something that walks away and cites intellectual skepticism as the reason, it is this that probably lies at the heart of it all. The Gospel of Jesus Christ requires that we turn away from our sins, but it does not require that we lose our character. One of the biggest temptations as a parent is to try and mold our children's characters into ways which please us, but which are not required by God and which just exasperate the children.

The consequence of this failing is children who go through their whole childhood feeling that their parents do not truly love them for who they are, but rather for what they think they can turn them into. But for the grace of God, it is almost inevitable that such children will reject Christianity especially if they later on find a person or a group of people that does accept

them for who they are.

If we have offended our children in these ways and more, we need to repent.

WHAT WE CAN DO TO TURN OUR CHILDREN'S HEARTS TO GOD

In this next section, we will turn our attention to what we can do – through God's grace – to get our children to not only love the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but to desire to pass it on to their children in their turn. I have to admit to writing this with a sense of fear and trembling. My children are all still pretty young and so I am not for one moment claiming any great experience or wisdom. Yet it seems to me that there are a few general things that I ought to be doing in order to pass on the faith to my children so that they might walk in it all the days of their lives. I hope that these things might be of help to you too.

Before continuing, some might question the idea that there is anything we can do to ensure our children do imbibe the Christian faith and walk in it all the days of their lives. Doesn't this come down to the sovereignty and grace of God? I have in fact heard people whose children have walked away from the faith use precisely this reason: that it is all to do with the sovereignty of God and so there was nothing they could have done to prevent it.

In response, I would say that while it *does* come down to the sovereignty and the grace of God, and while we cannot guarantee that our children will walk in the faith, the idea that there is nothing we can do is not Christianity but rather fatalism. The question is not whether God is sovereign over our children, but rather how this sovereignty and grace actually works. Does it work like a magic wand that God capriciously waves about towards some children of believers and not others, regardless of how those believers are with their children? Well sometimes it might appear that way, when parents who consistently mess up still end up with faithful children. But normatively, the sovereignty and grace of God works *through people*.

So when the Apostle Paul exhorts fathers to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, he is of course not suggesting that parents are the bestowers of grace upon their children, but neither is he asking us to do something that is irrelevant because ultimately the question of whether we have faithful children is entirely down to God's sovereignty. Rather, he is acknowledging that fathers are *instruments* of grace to their children. As it says in the Westminster Confession of Faith,

Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he orders them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently (WCF 5:2).

In other words, yes it is the grace and the sovereignty of God, but He uses you – the parent – as an instrument in bringing His sovereign and gracious purposes to bear.

It of course goes without saying that we ought to be praying for our children, praying with our children, and teaching them regularly from the Bible. But what else is important? This is a vast subject, but here are just a few of the things which seem to me to be most crucial:

1. We need to make our Christianity and our homes joyful

You may well be familiar with the description of Laura Ingalls' grandfather's Sabbath Day in *Little House in the Big Woods*, where laughing, joking and even smiling was banned. We are probably pretty far removed from that type of thing these days, yet we Christians can still sometimes do a remarkable job of portraying Christianity as a largely joyless religion which frowns heavily on anything that might look like anybody was having a good time.

Yet the Gospel is described in Isaiah not as something resembling a funeral but rather as a feast: “And in this

...children often spend years morbidly and introspectively examining themselves, wondering whether they are Christians or why they don't seem to have a certain type of "experience."

mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isaiah 25:6). Rightly understood, the Gospel is joy, laughter and liberty, not mealy-mouthed, grudging legalism. It ought to look like life and health in our homes, and so it should be the aim of every Christian parent to make the very idea of continuing in the faith a no-brainer in our children's minds, by which I mean that they should so come to love the atmosphere and fragrance of joy and hope that resonates through the home and their lives, that the thought of exchanging those blessings for the cheap thrills of Vanity Fair leaves them frigid.

2. We must give our children a sense of purpose for their gifts

I have come across instances where children who have a particular aptitude for what is a perfectly lawful pursuit have been discouraged by their parents from pursuing it because it was not considered "spiritual" – by which they meant it was not a "church activity" or evangelism. At the other end of the spectrum, I have come across instances where children who have an aptitude or gift have been encouraged in it, but they have not had the gift set within a Christian worldview and so have come to see it as something outside of their Christian life. In both instances, it often winds up with a teenager going out into the world and finding out that where Christianity apparently looked down on their God-given gifts or just wasn't interested in them, the world does in fact recognize their gifts and talents. And so the world gets the kudos in their eyes.

Both attitudes fail to recognize that all lawful gifts and talents are given to us by God and are therefore part of His sovereign purposes. Sure, lawful gifts can be abused and overused. But it is our job as parents to spot the gifts and talents

that our children have, nurture them and channel them in the right direction, teaching them how to use their gifts to glorify God. Failure to do so can leave children quite bitter, and may very well be one of the many ways we can provoke our children to anger (Ephesians 6:4).

3. We really need to talk to our children

This might seem like a statement of the obvious, but it is surprising how many Christian parents really don't do this. While we need to be careful not to become too buddy-buddy so they end up losing respect for us and the authority God has given us, and while we need to be careful to speak to them in a manner fitting for their age, nonetheless we should seek to be friends with our children so that they feel free to come and talk to us about anything.

If they are having doubts about something in the Bible talk to them about it. If they are having problems with understanding why your family does certain things talk to them about it. If they are acting in odd ways which cause concern talk to them. Whatever it is, we should be prepared to talk to our children, listen to our children, and to show ourselves as best friends to them. If they can't come and talk to us about what is bothering them, rest assured they will go and talk to somebody else.

4. We need to encourage our children and give them assurance

This comes back to the point made in the first piece about the subjective Gospel. If the Gospel is presented subjectively, our children will react subjectively to it. Where this happens, children often spend years morbidly and introspectively examining themselves, wondering whether they are Christians or why they don't seem to have a certain type of "experience."


Part of our job is to get them to look

objectively to Christ, not to themselves. Assurance does not come from looking at our hearts, but rather simple faith that this is true: "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." (Romans 8:34). So encourage them to believe in Christ; encourage them to repent and seek forgiveness when they sin; and encourage them in the progress they are making as disciples of Christ. In short, don't lead them into Doubting Castle, where they are led to question themselves, but rather lead them to the Delectable Mountain where they are fed and nourished and grow up in the faith.

5. We must give ourselves to our children

This perhaps encapsulates everything I have tried to say previously, plus a whole lot more. It can be really easy to go through days, weeks and even months without realizing that you have been so wrapped up in your "adult stuff" that you have hardly even noticed these little ones around you. And then you suddenly realize that they have been seeking your attention all that time, but you have been too busy or too selfish to give them the time of day.

The remedy to this is repentance and then resolution to give yourselves to your children. So go play with them. Get down to their level. Cuddle them. Assure them of your love. Treat them as real people with feelings and hopes. Be interested in them. Seek their forgiveness when you fail them or when you lose your temper with them. In short, give yourselves to them and repent when you fail.

I fully believe that sincere attempts to give ourselves to our children, along with true repentance when we fail, will be blessed by God, and will once more see the faith being passed from generation to generation. 

Whom do you serve?

Sphere sovereignty and the need for limits on power

by André Schutten

illustrations by Lynn VanEerden

Children are often told to obey many different folks. Listen to your mom and dad. Listen to the policeman. Listen to your teacher. Listen to the pastor. Adults too are encouraged to obey various authority figures. Which raises a question: what happens when demands of the State and demands of other authorities clash? Whom do we obey?

The Dutch philosopher, theologian and prime minister Abraham Kuyper developed a system of thought to assist in understanding the authority structures in the world. The system is called “sphere sovereignty” and it helps answer the question, “Who do we obey when various demands on us and our behavior clash?”

GOD OVER ALL

Kuyper argued and demonstrated from the Bible that God has created in society a number of different institutions or spheres, each with their own respective roles and responsibilities. Three of the most important institutions created by God are:

- the CHURCH – starting with Adam, and continuing through Noah, Abraham, the people of Israel and the new Testament church
- the STATE – whose role is set out in various places including Psalm 72 and Romans 13
- the FAMILY – begun with Adam and Eve

In the Bible, God gives each of these spheres a distinct task and role. So,

for example, the sphere of State is sovereign in matters properly within its jurisdiction as given and defined by God. Some of those matters would include criminal law, national defense, and maintaining a fair and impartial justice system.

The sphere of Church is sovereign over areas within its jurisdiction: theology and doctrine and church discipline and membership.

And within the sphere of family lies responsibility for issues of child education and discipline, religious instruction, sexual ethics, moral development, etc.

In the graphic accompanying this article, you’ll notice other spheres: a larger sphere of Society and smaller spheres which are each sovereign in their own right: the market, the academy, charities and the individual. Academics will argue over how many separate spheres there might be, but while the number and boundaries of the smaller spheres is a source of debate, there is agreement about the obvious biblical basis for the first three. God has instituted the Church, the State and the Family and invests each with its own specific sphere of authority.

There is, of course, some overlap from sphere to sphere. Fraud can’t be limited to the market sphere; it requires the State criminal law power to protect the consumer. Physical assault of a child can’t be limited to the family sphere; it requires the State criminal law power to protect the child. Restorative justice can’t be limited to the State sphere; it requires the family sphere and the church sphere to mend broken

relationships.

However, there are also boundaries between the spheres. These boundaries are critical. History has taught us that great harm can be done when one sphere takes over the role of another. For example, problems abound when the State interferes in church doctrine issues. This was the greatest problem during the bloody Reformation era. The State used the sword to enforce church doctrine, which was a total abuse of its power, and a violation of the principles of sphere sovereignty. A modern example would be the Ontario human rights tribunal ordering a Roman Catholic bishop to explain himself to the Tribunal for not allowing an openly gay man to serve as an altar boy (this occurred in Peterborough, Ontario in September 2009). A similar violation of the boundaries between the spheres happened when the Ontario Minister of Education, standing outside the Ontario Legislature, declared that Christian schools could not teach that abortion is wrong, since such a teaching was “one of the most misogynistic actions that one could take.” (That statement was made by Minister Broten in October, 2012.) And in the not too distant past, churches and families tried to keep certain criminal acts (child abuse, for example) quiet and internal, when it ought to have been reported immediately to the State.

Having shown the boundaries that exist between these spheres, we need to turn our attention to the key of Kuyperian sphere sovereignty: over each and every sphere reigns Christ as sovereign. Kuyper’s famous saying

applies here: “There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”

As a Christian country, we once recognized this, and it wasn’t even that long ago. The preamble to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (added to our Constitution in 1982) still states, “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law...” Recognizing the supremacy of God is necessary in public policy because, when we fail to do so, someone or something else will take God’s place as supreme authority.

THE STATE/LAW OVER ALL

For example, take a look at the

concept of sphere sovereignty through the eyes of our Chief Justice, the Right Honorable Beverley McLachlin. We can see in some of her statements a recognition that there are some spheres in life which are distinct: the sphere of society, spheres of religious communities and families and the sphere of the State. But we should take careful note of where, in her mind, the State sits in relation to the other spheres. In a speech delivered in October 2002, Her Honor stated that

the rule of law exerts an authoritative claim upon all aspects of selfhood and experience in a liberal democratic state... influenc[ing] local, community, and familial structures. The authority claimed by law touches

When the State learns restraint, we can and do enjoy freedom.

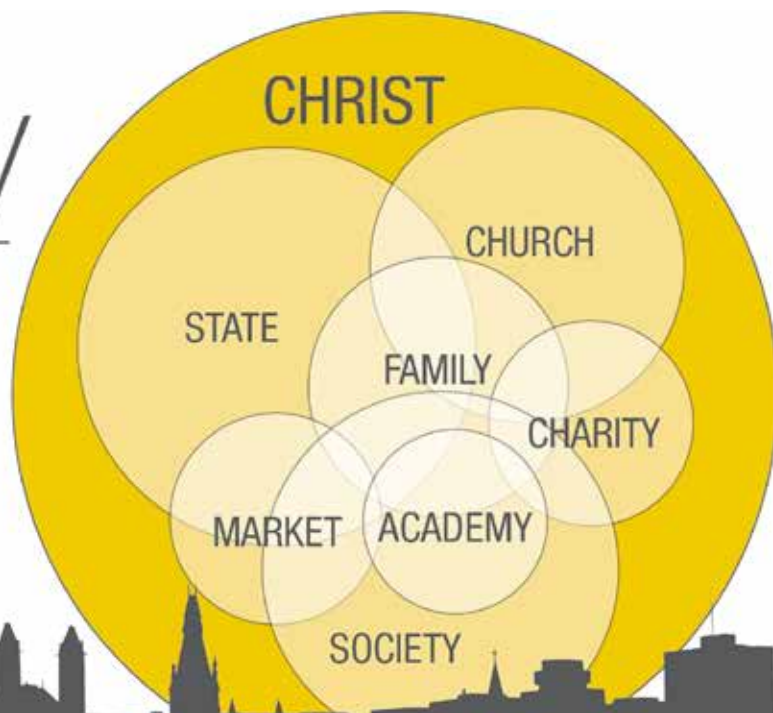
upon all aspects of human life and citizenship... It makes total claims upon the self and leaves little of human experience untouched.

These “total claims” on us as legal subjects, she said, “flow from a conception of authority rooted in the sovereign [State].”

SPHERE sovereignty

We’re all under an ultimate authority. The question is which one?

Christ...



“There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘**Mine!**’” —ABRAHAM KUYPER

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

While sphere sovereignty is a helpful tool, like any other tool it has limitations. For example, while the first three “spheres” of Church, State and Family are quite clearly instituted by God, we could have endless debates about just how many other spheres there might be. We could list the federal government as one sphere, and the provincial governments as another, but what about cities? Is Academia a sphere? What about the Market?

Also, while the spheres are a helpful concept, defining the exact borders between each of them is hard to do. So the author wants to emphasize that this is not meant to be the Reformed paradigm through which Christians ought to view the world, and he welcomes feedback on the ideas expressed here.

1. What's helpful about this model? How might it be improved?
2. Andre talks about the sphere of the Church as separate from Family and State. Where does a mosque or synagogue fit in? God instituted the State, the Church, and the Family, but did He institute the mosque? The State shouldn't interfere with mosques or synagogues so they do seem to exist in a separate sphere apart from the State, but is that separate sphere grouped with the Church, or is it under the Family? Or something else entirely?
3. In the West it's the State that is trying to take Christ's supreme position. What might the interloper be in countries like Saudi Arabia or Iran?
4. And who would a libertarian put in the place of Christ?
5. Is this an idea we can explain to our neighbor? How would we go about doing so?

Invoking Kuyper, one could paraphrase what the Chief Justice said in this way: “There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which *the Law*, which is sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”

Admittedly, Her Honor does believe that Law must carve out space for religious communities to live according to their particularities. However, it's Law (and the State, as the authors of the Law) who makes space and accommodations for religion. For our chief justice, law remains the supreme authority. So there remains a tension between the Law of the State and religious precepts, familial obligations, and individual responsibilities.

THE ROAD TO TYRANNY

Without something (or, more properly, Someone) over all spheres, tension breaks out between the spheres, and a struggle ensures to see which sphere will reign as supreme.

Now, of all of the spheres (the State, the Church, the Family, the Market, etc.) which has the most power? Quite obviously, the State does. As the Apostle Paul once wrote, it “bears the sword.” It has unlimited financial resources, it has coercive powers, it writes the laws, and it has lethal force. So, if God is removed as sovereign, who becomes sovereign? The State does. This is absolutely evident in every officially atheist country from the last century: the USSR, China, North Korea, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy.

When the State raises itself above God, then God becomes a problem for the State. And know this: as the State replaces God, or makes itself god, then it naturally also begins to compete with the family, substituting itself for the family. (It's no coincidence that the leader of North Korea is referred to as “father.”) And when we, free citizens in a free country, begin to think that the State will provide everything for us, not just national defense or a fair justice system (as it ought to) but also total healthcare, education, food, clothing and shelter, unemployment wages, settlement of petty disputes with our landlords and employers, and on and on, then we are

looking to the State not just as god, but also as savior.

Lord Acton once wrote, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” That dictum is true for all of mankind because of our innate sinfulness and our covetous lust for more. This may be why the LORD never allowed all three offices of the Old Testament to be vested in a single person, though there were exceptional cases where a single person was both a prophet and a priest. Think, for example, of the punishment of King Uzziah when he tried to act as priest and burn incense before the Lord (2 Chronicles 26). Applying this anecdotal evidence for division of power to our civil government, we see a three-fold division of power there too, between the judiciary, legislature, and executive. The Canadian Constitution holds all three branches of government in check – each has power to limit the powers of the other. But if that balance is ever upset, such that one person (or one small group of people) becomes lawmaker and law interpreter and law enforcer, we will have tyranny.

Expanding out from the Biblical offices and expanding out from civil government, we see that there is a natural protection against tyranny in the dispersion of power. Lord Acton also wrote, “Liberty consists in the division of power. Absolutism, in concentration of power.” So we see that for mankind's good, God gives some power to the church, some power to families, and some power to the State. But if the ultimate power concentrates (as it is tending to do these days) in one of these spheres, we also have tyranny. One example would be in the realm of education: God gives authority over education of children to parents, with the church historically assisting parents in that calling. But in the last century, the State took over, first from the church, and now more and more from parents, such that even the most intimate and personal educational material is being taught by State bureaucrats, often without parents knowing (think of some of the graphic sex education curriculum for grade 3 and 4).

REMINDING OUR NEIGHBORS OF GOD'S PLACE

One of our responsibilities as Christian citizens in a free country is to keep the State in its proper place, and to remind fellow citizens of what their responsibilities are apart from the State. This is where you come in. Use the graphics in this article to show your friends and colleagues that we all must be under some ultimate authority. The question is simply, which one? Are we willing to submit ourselves fully to the State? Isn't the Lordship of Christ infinitely better?

We must remind our fellow citizens of what their responsibilities are apart from the State, and explain to them the effect of subjecting everything to the ultimate authority of the State – it means losing the freedom to live as we

ought to live. Failure to understand this important concept means subjecting our institutions, our businesses, our families, our churches, subjecting even our very selves to the sovereign will, not of God, but of the State.

So, to answer the question I posed at the beginning of this philosophical discussion – who do we obey when demands of the State and demands of parents or pastors or professors conflict? The answer is: it depends. It depends on whether the parents or the professors or the pastors or the State are authoritative in the sphere in which they are making the demands.

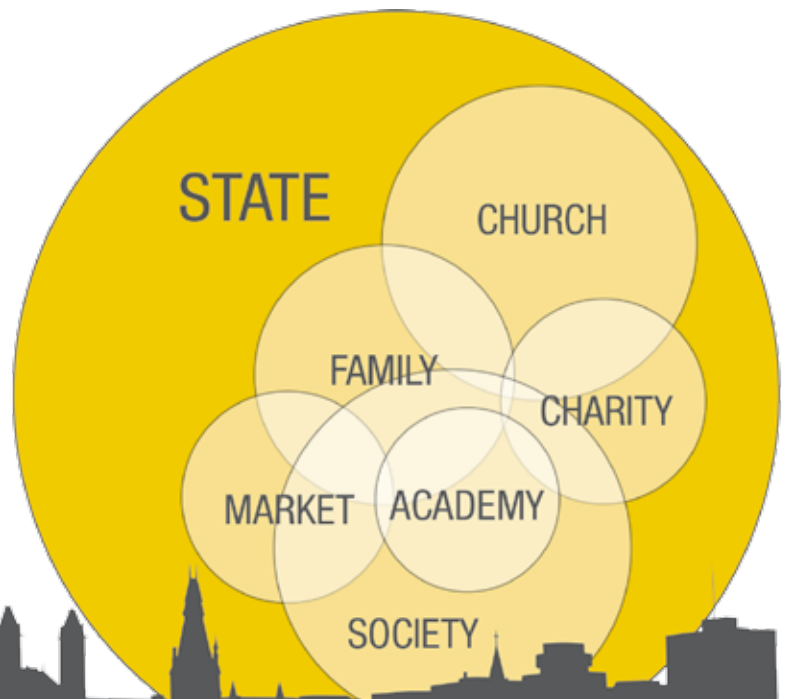
This approach to understanding the very limited authority of the State should not be interpreted as a proposal for anarchy. I once swore an oath of allegiance to the country I love, my Canada, an oath which I stand by to

this day. I pray for her leaders every day. I strive to obey all her laws.

But here's the rub: when those in power begin to legislate in areas over which they have no jurisdiction, my trust in the government plummets. And when those in power dare to legislate in such a way that I must either obey the State's law or violate my conscience, then I say loudly with the Apostle Peter, "I must obey God, rather than men."

One key to a free, prosperous, democratic society is for the State to back off from taking authority unto itself that was not its to begin with, to not arrogate unto itself powers which are not its own. When the State learns restraint, we can and do enjoy freedom. When our society and culture recognizes a sovereign high above the State, as we once did, then we certainly will enjoy freedom. RP

...or the State?

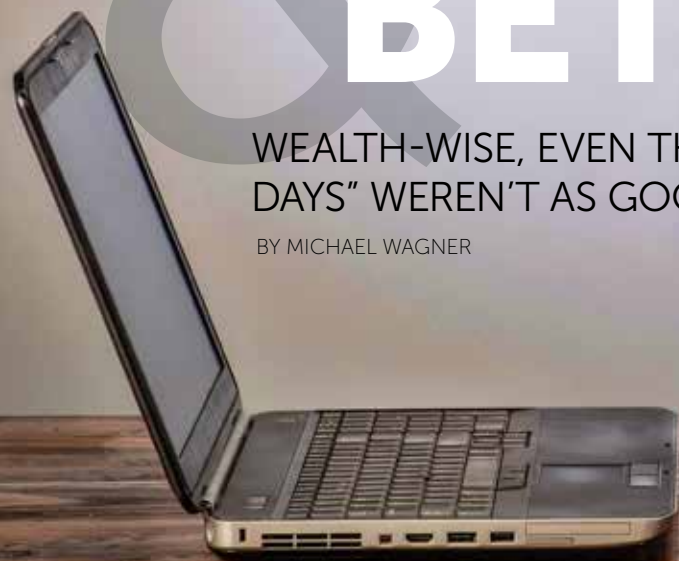


"The authority claimed by (state-written) law touches upon all aspects of human life and citizenship... (and) leaves no aspect of human experience unaffected by its claim to authority." —CHIEF JUSTICE BEVERLEY MCLAUCHLIN

BETTER & BETTER!

WEALTH-WISE, EVEN THE "GOOD OL' DAYS" WEREN'T AS GOOD AS TODAY

BY MICHAEL WAGNER



With all the bad news we read and hear about each day, it's easy to miss the good news. The good news is that Mankind's material well-being has increased rapidly in recent decades, and that's alleviating poverty and lengthening life-spans for billions of people.

In terms of daily living, things are generally getting better and better. In fact, the twentieth century witnessed the greatest improvement in living standards in the history of the world. People today live better and longer than at any time in history. This is the theme of a book by economists Stephen Moore and Julian Simon entitled *It's Getting Better All the Time: 100 Greatest Trends of the Last 100 Years*.

The main purpose of this book is to demonstrate that by every material measure, human life has dramatically improved since the early twentieth century. The secondary purpose is to explain why this occurred, namely, the drive for innovation that results from free enterprise capitalism.

GETTING BETTER AND BETTER

Moore and Simon focus primarily on statistics from the United States. Partly

this is because they are Americans, but the other reason is that the United States has been at the center of innovation and technological development. The United States has led the world in improving the living conditions of mankind because of its entrepreneurial, free enterprise economy.

One of the most significant improvements of the twentieth century was in the field of healthcare. "The health of Americans improved in ways during the 20th century that can only be described as miraculous. Death and infant mortality rates plunged; life expectancy rose by 64 percent." Many diseases were almost wiped out. Cancer rates have increased, of course, but that is because people are living longer. Decades ago people generally died younger and therefore didn't live long enough to get cancer.

Today food is incredibly plentiful and inexpensive. "Never before in history and in no other society has the common working man been able to afford such a bountiful basket of tasty foods to put on the kitchen table as Americans can today." Historically, one of the greatest challenges that most people faced was avoiding starvation. Now, in North America, one

of the greatest challenges is avoiding obesity!

Similarly, wealth is more plentiful. "It is amazing but true that more financial wealth has been generated in the United States over the past 50 years than was created in all the rest of the world in all the centuries before 1950." As a result, even the poorest Americans often own a car and a color TV, not to mention other conveniences. Another effect of the wealth is that Americans "spend more on recreation and entertainment than any other society in history."

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND RESOURCE DEPLETION

All of this progress has come at a tremendous cost, right? We all know the environment was polluted and ruined in the rush to create wealth.

Actually, that's not true. Moore and Simon state: "The fact is that one of the greatest trends of the past 100 years has been the astonishing rate of progress in reducing almost every form of pollution." Air pollution in the United States has decreased steadily since the 1970s. Water pollution in lakes, streams and rivers has also decreased substantially during the same period.

Americans have been criticized for using a disproportionate amount of the world's natural resources. With only about 5 percent of the world's population, the USA consumes between 20 and 40 percent of the earth's resources. But through technological improvements, the USA has been making ever-greater amounts of natural resources available for use. Resource scarcity is less of a problem now than ever before. As Moore and Simon put it, "The essential point is that Americans are not resource destroyers but resource creators, who will leave future generations with a greater abundance of nature's bounty."

FREE ENTERPRISE LEADS TO PROSPERITY

The dramatic improvement in living standards during the twentieth century demands an explanation. It would also be good to know why the majority of these improvements began in the USA. The answer to both of these queries is rather simple, according to Moore and Simon:

Why did so much of the progress of the past 100 years originate in the United States? Our shorthand answer is, Freedom works. The unique American formula of individual liberty and free enterprise has cultivated risk taking, experimentation, innovation, and scientific exploration on a grand scale that has never occurred anywhere before.

During the twentieth century other countries also had capitalistic economies, such as Canada and Australia. But the USA had somewhat greater economic freedom leading to greater economic growth. "America got rich at such a faster pace than other nations in the 20th century quite simply because no other place on earth cultivates the entrepreneurial, inventive spirit of human beings more than the United States does."

Of course, many people think that capitalism is evil and that prosperity will result from government direction through socialism. But the empirical evidence demonstrates that socialism does not lead to economic prosperity for the average

citizen (although it may lead to financial prosperity for the socialist government's officials). According to Moore and Simon, the historical record shows that "Nations that have tried to use central planning as a formula for creating prosperity have been miserable failures."

This means that as governments get bigger and bigger, such as in Barak Obama's USA, economic prosperity is threatened. In other words, "when government gets too big and intrusive, it can kill the goose of private enterprise that lays the golden eggs."

THE BAD SIDE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Of course, the twentieth century also saw some terrible events that led to the deaths of millions of people. Does this contradict the Moore-Simon thesis? No. Those great tragedies were mostly caused by governments. National Socialism in Europe, and international socialism (i.e., communism) in Europe and Asia, account for the bulk of human slaughter in the twentieth century through wars and attempts to transform society. Socialism is dangerous and harmful. Mr. President, please pay attention.

In this respect the bad side of the twentieth century does not contradict the optimistic view of innovation and progress offered by Moore and Simon. It was not free enterprise capitalist countries that caused those great tragedies; it was socialist countries. This bolsters their case: "The enduring lesson of the 20th century is that the only real restraint on progress is a government that smothers the human spirit."

TROUBLING TRENDS

Moore and Simon also acknowledge that there are some troubling trends that put a damper on their enthusiasm. Interestingly, although they don't realize it, most of the problematic trends they identify are related to the decline of Christianity in the United States: the increase in taxes and the size of government, the decline of the traditional family, the decline in educational quality, the increase in violent crime, and the increase in suicide. These trends all

occurred during the twentieth century at the same time as material conditions for human living were improving, and they are mostly cultural rather than economic.


It is worth noting that God warned Israel in Deuteronomy that material prosperity can lead to apostasy. He promised to make them prosperous and then stated,

Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God (Deut. 8:11-14).

The USA (along with the other Western countries) has become tremendously prosperous, and in its prosperity it has turned away from God. Christianity is no longer the powerful cultural force over American society it once was. Affluence, in other words, can have a downside by making people feel self-sufficient and no longer dependent on God.

CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, the dramatic improvement in living standards that occurred during the twentieth century is clearly a good thing. There is less poverty, less starvation, and less suffering. Who would want to return to the bad old days?

The innovation and technological development that results from free enterprise capitalism increases human wellbeing over time. There are bad things happening every day, for sure. But there are also good developments that should be recognized and celebrated. These kinds of improvements will likely continue as long as governments don't get in their way through excessive taxation and regulation. Economic freedom is a necessary condition for the material progress that reduces poverty and raises the standard of living for people around the world. 

A detailed oil painting of John Calvin, showing him from the chest up. He has a long, dark beard and mustache, and is wearing a black cap and a dark garment with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right with a serious expression.

WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS JOHN CALVIN?

WE CAN GET A FEEL FOR HIM FROM HIS LETTERS

BY RENE VERMEULEN

We were discussing various matters, and then the subject of John Calvin came up. I was absolutely flabbergasted when my interlocutor said that Calvin was a hard man – someone who would not have been very nice to know.

Dumbfounded, I dropped the subject because I really didn't have a defense. I had never heard such an accusation before, and had been brought up to think that Calvin belonged on a pedestal right next to Augustine, Luther and other church fathers. Did that mean I considered Calvin a saint? No, of course not. Calvin was a man like us, who had to daily contend with a sinful nature. But he was also a great man, specially gifted by God, so I was flabbergasted as to where this negative view of Calvin had come from. So when the next opportunity arrived I searched and found in my library a booklet which answered my questions.

WHY SO NEGATIVE?

My first question dealt with where my interlocutor had gotten his negative view of Calvin. What I didn't realize is that there are umpteen books published that attack Calvin, and I'm not even talking about the books that attack his theology – the umpteen I mention here are just the books that attack Calvin *the person!*

This is what I learned after opening a book that had long been in my library but was still unread. You know the type – it was one of those books purchased because it might come in handy one day. Well it became handy indeed.

The book, or rather booklet (it is just 96 pages), is called the *The Humanness of John Calvin* and was written by a Richard Stauffer. This Swiss pastor shows that he is well acquainted with the writings of both Calvin and his critics. Early in the book Stauffer, especially in the footnotes, gives extensive quotes from those who were no friends of Calvin. In the introduction Stauffer remarks:

Luther, by his spontaneity and his exuberant spirit,succeeded in

awakening sympathy from his very opponents, and Zwingli commanded respect as a lucid patriot and a courageous soldier in the very ones who would contest his theology, but the French reformer not only has suffered calumny from his enemies, he has also been misunderstood and misinterpreted by his great-grand children.

In a footnote he cites Emile Doumergue, who correctly noted: "In relation to repugnance and hatred, one finds that Protestants rivaled Catholics." However, a little further on he also gives an example of a Catholic who slandered Calvin:

In 1577, a Carmelite who had been converted to evangelical ideas, Jerome-Hermes Bolsec, after having returned to the Roman Church, published a biography of the Reformer which was no more than a vile tract. Calvin was accused in it with being ambitious, presumptuous, arrogant, cruel, evil, vindictive, and above all, ignorant. Also he was described as an avaricious and greedy man, as an imposter who claimed he could resurrect the dead, as a lover of rich fare, worst yet: as a gadabout and a Sodomite, who, for his infamous habits, had been sentenced in the city of his birth, Noyon, to be branded with a red-hot iron.

Stauffer continues over the next couple of pages quoting mainly Roman Catholic but also Protestant writers who have done their utmost to picture the Reformer as a thoroughly evil man.

JEALOUSY PROMPTED HATRED

From the Roman Catholic perspective this is understandable because Calvin more than any other was able to show the evil of Roman doctrine, which enslaved people to men rather than make them servants of the living Savior.

But where does this hatred – for that is what it is – of Calvin come from in the Protestant camp? I think we must seek the answer in the way that Calvin,

**Calvin was
accused in it with
being ambitious,
presumptuous,
arrogant, cruel,
evil, vindictive,
and above all,
ignorant.**

more than anyone, sought to give all honor for our salvation to Jesus Christ. He opposed all forms of what later would be called Arminianism. It is not our own efforts that save us but only the completed sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who didn't bow their knee, as he did, were shown up by Calvin's humility, and that likely made him enemies.

Another reason for the hatred toward Calvin is, without doubt, that he labored without ceasing to help the spread of the Reformed doctrine. He was a giant, and so he was a target. While giving a write-up on the book *Letters of John Calvin*, one reviewer noted Calvin

...regularly lectured to theological students, preached on average five times a week and authored enough material to fill forty-eight enormous volumes. [Such a busy man] could scarcely be expected to show enthusiasm for correspondence. Yet the *Complete Works of John Calvin* include another eleven volumes of his correspondence.

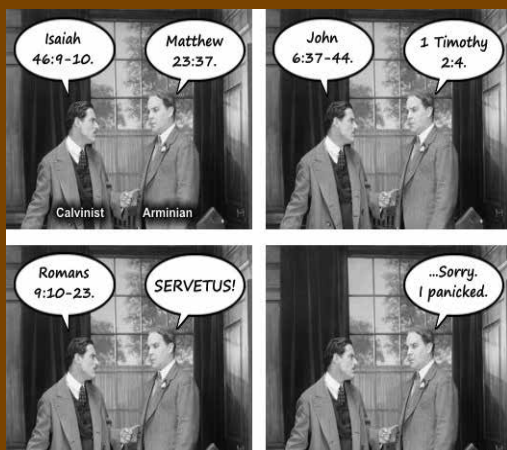
HIS LETTERS SHOW HIS NATURE

Calvin's many, many letters reveal a humble, caring man. In one, penned in honor of his teacher of Latin, one Mathurin Cordier, (whose Latin grammar textbook was still being

Calvin and Servetus

The most common continuing attack on the character of Calvin is, without doubt, that he was responsible for the burning at the stake of Michael Servetus. But what is the truth of this matter? Rev P. K. Keizer sheds some light on this in his book *Church History* (published by Inheritance Publications) which says the following on page 107:

The events surrounding the controversial figure of Michael Servetus are still used to heap abuse on Calvin. This Spanish physician had been condemned to death by the Inquisition. He managed to escape, unfortunately, to Geneva. Calvin had been involved with him before, and the two were fierce opponents. Servetus strongly attacked Calvin's *Institutes* by publishing his own *Restitutio Christianismi*. His attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity were utterly blasphemous.... This man, then, arrived in Geneva. The city magistrates (with a Libertine majority) ordered his arrest. Although Calvin requested clemency, Servetus was burnt to death as a heretic on October 27, 1553. Both Roman Catholics and Protestants agreed with the judgment and sentence.



used in the 19th century) this is what Calvin wrote:

.... it was under your guidance that I entered on a course of studies, and made progress at least to the extent of being of some benefit to the Church of God. When my father sent me as a boy to Paris I had done only the rudiments of Latin. For a short time, however, you were an instructor sent to me by God to teach me the true method of learning, so that I might afterwards be a little more proficient.... for me it was a singular kindness of God that I happened to have a propitious beginning to my studies.... It was my desire to testify to posterity that, if they derive any profit from my writings, they should know that to some extent you are responsible for them.

Reader, do you here recognize the description given by Jerome-Hermes Bolsec? I know I do not.

Here is another, this one addressed to John Knox, in which Calvin expresses his joy at the advance of the Gospel in Scotland. Remember John Knox had studied under Calvin in Geneva. At the same time he uses the opportunity to express his sympathy to John Knox who had just lost his wife. Calvin wrote:

Your distress for the loss of your wife justly commands my deepest sympathy. Persons of her merit are not often to be met with. But as you have learned from what source consolation for your sorrow is to be sought, I doubt not but you endure with patience this calamity. You will salute very courteously all your pious brethren. My colleagues also beg me to present to you their best respects.

At the time of Calvin's death in 1564, Farel who years before had persuaded Calvin that his task lay in Geneva, wrote that he wished he could

Shortly before his death Calvin wrote to Farel and, though Calvin was dying, his concern was for Farel.

have died instead:

Oh, why was I not taken away in his stead, and preserved to the church which he has so well served, and in combats harder than death? He has done more and with greater promptitude than any one, surpassing not only the others by himself. Oh, how happy he has run a noble race! May the Lord grant that we run like him, and according to the measure of grace that has been dealt out to us.

Shortly before his death Calvin wrote to Farel and, though Calvin was dying, his concern was for Farel. He told Farel, an old man at this time, that there was no need to rush to Calvin's deathbed:

Farewell, my most excellent and upright brother; and since it is the will of God that you should survive me in the world, live mindful of our intimacy, which, as it was useful to the church of God, so the fruits of it await us in heaven. I am unwilling that you should fatigue yourself for my sake. I draw my breath with difficulty, and every moment I am in expectation of breathing my last. It is enough that I live and die for Christ, who is to all his followers a gain both in life and death. Again I bid you and your brethren farewell.

CONCLUSION


Let me finish this article by quoting once again from the booklet *The Humanness of John Calvin*. The author concludes with words written by Nicolas des Gallars, who was one of Calvin's colleagues in Geneva for several years:

What labors, what sleeplessness and worry he bore, with what keenness and finesse he foresaw dangers, with what zeal he guarded against them, what fidelity and understanding he showed in everything, what a kind and obliging spirit he had toward those who came to him, how quickly and frankly he answered those who asked him even the most serious question, with what wisdom he settled both privately and publicly the difficulties and problems which were posed for him to settle, with what sensitivity he comforted those who grieved and lifted up the broken and discouraged, how resolutely he opposed the enemies, how ardently he attacked the prideful and the obstinate, with what grandeur of spirit he endured misfortune, with what restraint he behaved in prosperity, and finally with what dexterity and élan he discharged all the duties and responsibilities of a true and faithful servant of God, I could certainly not be able to convey fully by the use of any words.

I have quoted only a few excerpts by or about Calvin and would direct any one interested in finding out more to investigate either *The Humanness of Calvin*, or his letters (which can be found on the Internet). It will certainly close the door upon some of the slander which passes for serious study in some quarters.

A version of this article was first published in the July/August 2002 issue. Rene Vermeulen published more than 150 articles in the pages of Reformed Perspective from 1984-2010.

RP



HELP THE EAGLES BUILD THEIR HOME

Prayerfully seeking your support


Contact Info:
KEVIN HUTCHINSON
519.766.2525

Donate Online:
PROJECTNEST.CA


Mail Donations to:
ECHS
c/o PROJECT
EAGLE'S NEST
8037 WELLINGTON
ROAD 19
FERGUS, ONTARIO
N1M 2W4

Emmanuel Christian High School (ECHS) is located in Fergus, Ontario and offers Reformed education to students from Guelph, Elora, Fergus, Grand Valley, Listowel, Orangeville and Owen Sound. ECHS has been richly blessed and has outgrown their current location. They have recently purchased their own building that will need extensive renovations but will serve the needs of the community for decades.

Please prayerfully consider donating so that the ECHS Eagles can have a new nest from which they can spread their wings.



Our goal is to raise \$4.7 million before the doors of the school open DV in September 2016.



Aart Blokhuis has been writing poetry for more than 20 years. His latest compilation, *Come Hear My Song*, includes musings on:

- God Revealed in Nature
- Poems for Children
- Rhymes and Fairytales
- Joy or Sorrow
- Our Shortcomings
- and much more...

You'll find humor, sorrow, introspection and keen observation, all in one collection. This would make a great Christmas gift, providing hours of enjoyable reading.

180 pages/\$15.99 Can. Order it at www.tinyurl.com/ComeHearMySong



Watching over our marriage

BY LISA JACOBSON

Please don't misunderstand. I trust my husband. Implicitly. Quite honestly, he's never given me any reason to doubt him. So you can see why it caught him off-guard when I voiced my concern.

I told him I was uneasy about the lunch plans he had for that day. He was meeting one of his clients at The Gallery where they serve up some of the best fajitas in our small town. It was the usual kind of appointment, nothing special. As a literary agent, he often meets with authors to go over their books and contracts. It's all part of the job.

Except this particular client happened to be a woman – an intelligent and attractive woman – and it felt a bit funny to me.

I'm not saying I was downright jealous....merely *uncomfortable* with the plan.

Then he reminded me that the lunch was taking place in a public restaurant. That he was in no way attracted to this woman. That he would always and forever be faithful to me.

And I believed him. But it didn't change how I felt about it.

Now maybe you're wondering if I've watched too many movies (*perhaps*). Or you suspect I have certain trust issues (*not that I know of?*). Or maybe – just maybe – it's that I've observed a number of marital tragedies around us over the years. So have grown slightly paranoid. That's another distinct possibility.

Well, in any case, I sure didn't like it. Here's how I put it to him:

"Okay, let's go with the fact that you and I are happily married. But what about her? What if she isn't so-happily-married? What if she finds you rather

Keep an "open door" policy. I've easy access to his computer, his emails, and his voicemail. His passwords are all known to me. And vice versa.

attractive? Strong and sensitive? Hmm...(*trying not to get too emotional*). That would be a bad thing too, wouldn't it??

"Then what if nothing 'happens'? How about what other people might say who noticed the two of you dining

together? Those who watched her throw back her head and laugh at your witty jokes? What rumors would start then...?"

Yes, what then.

So we talked about it for a long time. A very long time. And in the end, we came up with a policy that we both agreed on. Establishing not so much rules, as principles, on how we would protect our marriage.

THINGS WE WOULD DO

- *Listen carefully to the other's concerns.* Even if the situation or person seemed "safe" in our eyes.
- *Make sure our own relationship is closely maintained.* The more we look after what is on the inside, the safer we are from harm from the outside.
- *Keep an "open door" policy.* I've easy access to his computer, his emails, and his voicemail. His passwords are all known to me. And vice versa.
- *Communicate to one another* - generally where we're going and what we're doing. Keep in touch with each other throughout the day with a quick phone call or text message.
- *Think and speak with others in terms of "we" more than "I."* We try not to leave doubt in anyone's mind that we are a committed couple who enjoy a strong and faithful love.

AND THINGS WE WOULD NOT DO

- *We would not consider ourselves invulnerable to temptation.* That would be a big mistake.
- *We would never keep secrets.* If there's nothing hidden, there's little room for anything to grow.
- *We would not develop close, personal relationships with the opposite sex – apart from each other.* We approach those friendships as a couple, not as if we were separate entities (because we're not).
- *Never lie to each other.* Always truthful – all the time.
- *Not privately counsel anyone of the opposite sex.* If a woman is struggling in her personal life, he immediately pulls me into the discussion. The same goes for me, when the roles are reversed.

CONCLUSION

So whatever happened at The Gallery that day? Actually, I got to hear about it from our son...who was invited at the last minute by his dad to join him and Ms. Attractive Author for lunch. He reported that she was a very nice lady and that the fajitas were as fabulous as ever.

All of which made me smile. Reassured we were watching over our marriage. Because Always-and-Forever-Faithful doesn't just happen – it's a loving commitment we make together.

This topic can be found throughout Scripture (especially in the book of Proverbs!), but here are a couple verses to consider:

- *Abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).*
- *Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways. Do not stray into her paths (Prov. 7:25).*

Your marriage is a beautiful gift to treasure and protect.

Lisa is the happily-ever-after wife of Matt Jacobson and together they enjoy raising 8 children. This is reprinted with permission from her blog at Club31Women.com

RP

PROTECTING MARRIAGE and preventing gossip IN THE WORKPLACE

by Jon Dykstra

What if you're a good guy who is madly and deeply in love with your wife? Why would *you* need to worry about protecting your marriage?

Why? Because the Devil is prowling, looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). It doesn't matter the state of your marriage, the Devil is looking to attack you. So you should mount defenses.

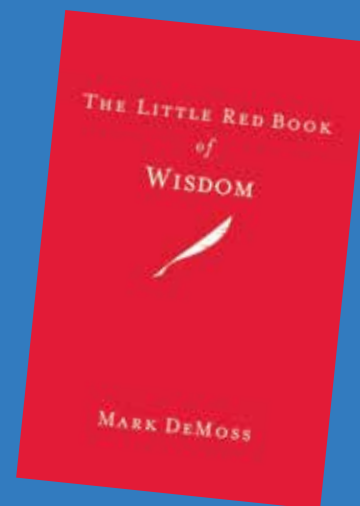
And, as Mark DeMoss puts it in his *Little Red Book of Wisdom*, "The best defense... is a good defense." Or to restate that in biblical terms, the best way to flee temptation is to actually flee temptation.

What does that look like in a business setting? In his own company DeMoss has made it a policy that he will never meet with a woman in his office with the door closed. As his company was expanding, and they hired their first woman executive he crafted a policy, and explained it to her:

We will never meet alone with the door closed. If at the end of a day we are the last two in the office suite, one of us goes home. No lunches or dinners alone together. No shared rides to the airport, and no sitting together on the flight (forfeiting valuable pre-meeting time). When renting cars out of town...we'll rent two.

These arrangements can frequently be inconvenient, so not everybody loved the policy at the start. But, DeMoss notes, "no one has ever questioned its wisdom." In the policy's defense DeMoss writes

Having seen too many marriages, families, businesses, even churches and charities destroyed by once-preventable passion I offer this simple



observation: it is impossible to be physically involved with someone with whom we are never alone.

Does this strike you as over the top, maybe puritanical, or legalistic? In our day and age it is simply wise. This prevents not only temptation, but misunderstandings too. And it protects your reputation. In his book DeMoss shares the story of a friend who was the CEO of a large non-profit. To save money this CEO would try to ride-share to the airport whenever he could with whatever employees were going that way. But one day the only other person in the car was a female employee who afterwards accused the CEO of inappropriate conduct. DeMoss is convinced his friend did nothing wrong, and the accusation was false. But his friend's reputation had been tarnished. "One thing is certain," DeMoss writes, "until he climbed into a car to ride alone with a woman who was not his wife, he was safe from her slander."

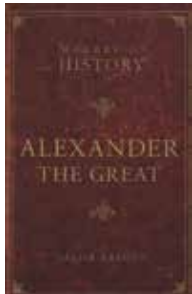
So protect your marriage. Give your wife the assurance of knowing you aren't ever alone with any woman at work. Mount a good defense and avoid giving the Devil any opening.

REVIEWS

A BATCH OF BIOGRAPHIES

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

BY JACOB ABBOTT
196 PAGES / 2009



Alexander the Great is such a prominent historical figure that we should all know at least a little about him. He lived only 33 years, but in the space of just 13 he crafted an empire that extended from India to Egypt. It was short-lived, collapsing soon after his early death, but its influence lived on in the spread of Greek culture.

The attraction of this Alexander biography over any other is that the author, Jacob Abbott (1803-1879), is a great writer and an insightful Christian. We can see a bit of both in his frank assessment of the man. Abbott readily agrees that the moniker "great" was well earned, but concludes:

He was simply a robber, but yet a robber on so vast a scale that mankind, in contemplating his career, has generally lost sight of the wickedness of his crimes in their admiration of the enormous magnitude of the scale on which they were perpetrated.

First published in 1849, Canon Press has reissued the book in an updated edition that modernizes a few words here and there to ensure Abbott's writing remains as engaging as ever. I would highly recommend it for teens and adults as an engaging introduction to a man they have heard of many times but who they don't otherwise know much about.

The Canon Press edition is available at Christianbooks.com.

- JON DYKSTRA

DANCING UNDER A RED STAR

BY KARL TOBIEN
368 PAGES / 2006



In 1932 Carl and Elisabeth Werner and their young daughter Margaret moved to the Soviet Union. Carl took a supervisory job at an automobile plant that the Ford Motor Company was helping to start there. Things went well for the family for several years, until Carl was accused of treason – Elisabeth and Margaret never heard from him again. The two women survived through WWII under very tough conditions but then, in 1945, Margaret was also arrested and sentenced to ten years in the Gulag, the Soviet Union's labor camps.

The first half of *Dancing* is about the family's experience in Russia and the second part about the Gulag, Margaret's release, and her marriage. This is also a story about Margaret's journey of faith as she recognizes God's hand in keeping her safe.

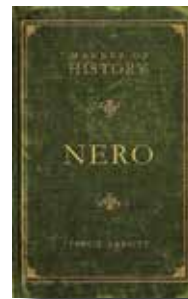
A caution: one event might be too much for young teens. When a girl in Margaret's prison barrack becomes pregnant she chooses, against the advice of Margaret and others, to abort her baby by drinking a mixture that will cause contractions. The five-month baby is born alive and is smothered. The episode underscores the brutality of the camp, but it is described in somewhat detached, clinical terms, so it shouldn't dissuade older readers.

Dancing Under a Red Star will make you realize the blessing we have living when and where we do.

- JOANNA VANDERPOL

NERO

BY JACOB ABBOTT
202 PAGES / 2009



How do you make history come alive for teens? Sometimes it means turning to an author long dead.

Jacob Abbott died 125 years ago, but a quick read through this volume explains why his books endure. The original 1853 edition of *Nero* is available for free in many places online, and is well worth downloading to your Kindle. But it does benefit from the updating that publisher Canon Press has done to their version. Some longer 70-word sentences have been broken up and editor Lucy Zoe Jones has also replaced a few obscure words like "declivities," "salubrity," and "preternatural." Little else was required.

Nero's life might not seem like appropriate material for a biography aimed at teens – this Roman emperor indulged in every sort of immorality. However Abbott is both a tactful and talented writer. He doesn't delve into the salacious details, so younger readers will only encounter a broad overview of Nero's wickedness. But Abbott does tuck in a bit more information in between the lines there to be read and understood by older, less naive readers. It's an impressive feat.

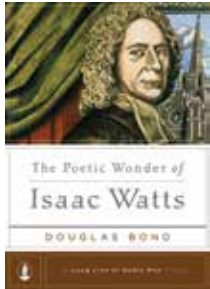
Like many good teen books, adults will enjoy this as well – it is an engaging introduction to a key figure in both Church and Western history.

This edition is available at Christianbook.com.

- JON DYKSTRA

THE POETIC WONDER OF ISAAC WATTS

BY DOUGLAS BOND
163 PAGES / 2013



Isaac Watts was born in 1674 when the Psalms sung in the English Church were stiff and difficult to sing. As a young man Watts began to wonder, "Why may we no longer sing of Christ as God? When Christ makes all things new, why must our praises remain in the Old Covenant?"

We who love to sing the Psalms know that is Christ portrayed and foreshadowed in the Psalms. What Watts wanted to do was bring Christ into every hymn he wrote. He believed in redemptive-historical preaching, and wanted to apply this to the Church's songs too, so he began to interpret and paraphrase the Psalms in a new form, showing how they pointed to Christ.

His most famous hymn is "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." To us today some of his hymns might seem frivolous but there are also many that we love that have found their way into the hymn section of our Book of Praise: "Jesus Shall Reign Where ever the Sun" (Hymn 80, based on Psalm 136), "O God Our Help In Ages Past" (Hy. 54/Ps. 90), "Give to Our God Immortal Praise" (Hy. 80/Ps. 136), to name but a few. And, another, "Joy to the World" (Ps. 98), is also well known to us.

This short biography would be very suitable for any high school or church library.

- JOANNA VANDERPOL



FROZEN TEARS

A HORROR STORY OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IN AN ARAB-CANADIAN
HOME

BY LINA AZIZ
364 PAGES / 2013

The word "horror" in the subtitle of this book is no overstatement. Lina Aziz (her pen name for reasons of security) was born in 1963 in Iraq, and later lived in Jordan, Dubai and the U.S. Though she was a Christian, she married a Muslim with whom she had five children. Such a mixed marriage in the Middle Eastern culture is fraught with dangers, which soon became obvious.

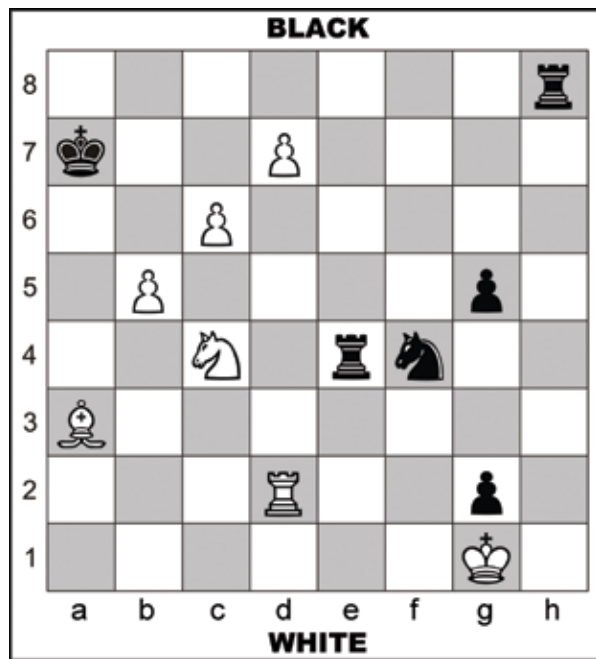
Her husband Sabri was steeped in the Muslim tradition of male superiority, while women are expected to please their husbands in everything, including (and especially) the sexual. Lina worked hard to fill that role faithfully, but Sabri did everything to make her feel inadequate and unworthy. He would call her a slut, and worse even, in front of their children; he also threatened to kill her and often viciously beat her and the children. She lost all sense of self-worth, and felt guilt for having denied her Christian faith. She led a life of perpetual fear and contemplated suicide, but was prevented from that by her mother's instinct to protect her children.

After the family emigrated to Canada, settling in Lethbridge, Alberta in 2004, she decided to appeal to the Children's Aid Society for help. The staff did a magnificent job in sheltering the family while the police and other support organizations also did excellent work. She divorced her husband who was denied access to the children. During this extremely difficult time she started to attend church again where, to her surprise, she met nothing but acceptance and love. Her testimony about her return to her Lord and Savior is moving and heart-warming, all the more so since most of this book is (often graphically) about sexual violation, cruelty and heartbreak. This book is first of all a testimony to the unfailing love of God, and secondly to the amazing strength and wisdom of a loving mother. It can be ordered at christiangovernance.com/store.

- HARRY ANTONIDES

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #215



Riddle for Punsters #215

"Lets not Harp on this Topic"

Why do tense people tend to play harps off key? It is because they are too high - _ _ _ _ n g.

Why do con artists make good harpists? They like to _ _ _ _ n g people along.

Why do brave go-getters play harps well?

They have a lot of _ _ _ _ k.

Problem to Ponder #215

"Many Routes Leading to the Same Destination"

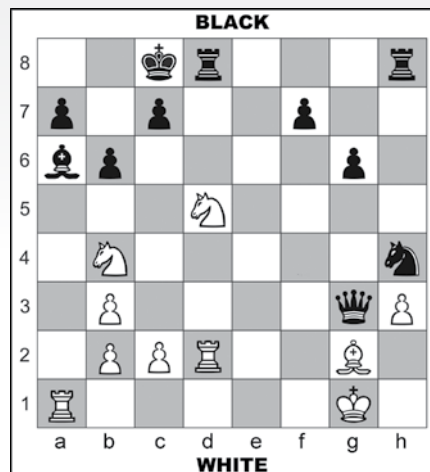
The following towns are joined by roads in the province of Alphabetica. One can travel from HOME to A or B, from A to C or D or E, from B to E or F, from C to G or H, from D to H or I or K, from E to H or I, from F to I only, from G to J or K, from H to K or L, from I to K only, from J to L only, AND from K to L only. By how many different routes can one travel from HOME (hometown) to the town L? NO BACKTRACKING to a town earlier in the alphabet is allowed.

(HINT: Drawing a diagram first may be very helpful!)

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

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #214



WHITE to Mate in 2

Descriptive Notation

1. N-K7 ch K-N1
2. NxB mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Nd5-e7 + Kc8-b8
2. Nb4xa6 ++

BLACK to Mate in 2

Descriptive Notation

1. ---- N-B6 ch
2. K-R1 Q-R7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ---- Nh4-f3 +
2. Kg1-h1 Qg3-h2 ++

Answers to Riddle for Punsters

#214 - "An Idea Planted in his Mind?"

What did the farmer say when his son suggested that they begin planting a new crop? "Let's proseed to do so!"

Answers to Problem to Ponder

#214 - "Mathematics is Just Up his Alley"

Jimbo decided to take Anabelle bowling. In the first game she scored 12 points higher than Jimbo, in the second game they tied and in the third game Jimbo had 21 points higher than Anabelle.

a) How much higher was Jimbo's average score compared to Anabelle's?

Overall Jimbo has $21 - 12 = 9$ more points than Anabelle over the 3 games, so PER GAME Jimbo's average score was $9/3 = 3$ points higher than Anabelle's average.

b) Jimbo scored 120 then 130 in the first two games. Anabelle's average score for the three games was 134. What was Jimbo's score in the third game?

In game 1 Jimbo scored 120 so Anabelle scored $120+12=132$.

In game 2 Jimbo scored 130 so Anabelle scored 130.

In game 3 LET Anabelle's score be A.

Her average was $134 = (132+130+A) / 3$ so $3(134) = 132+130+A$ so $402 = 262 + A$ so $140 = A$. Therefore Anabelle scored 140 in game 3 and so Jimbo scored $140 + 21 = 161$ in game 3.

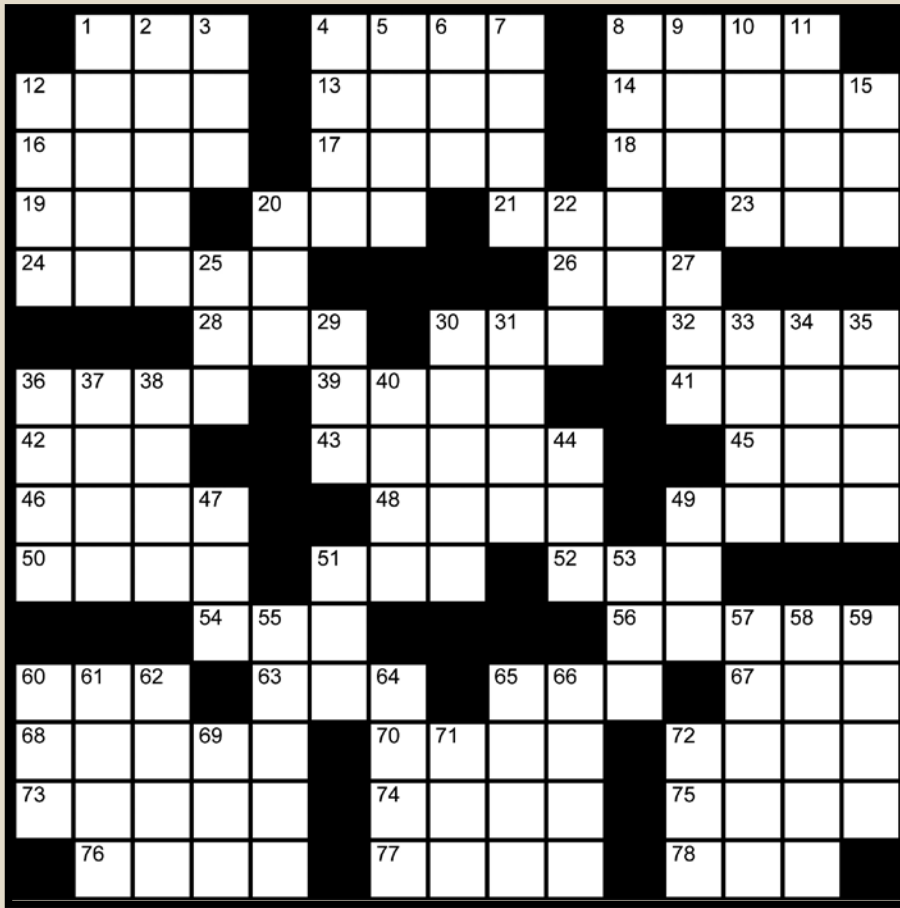
or

From (a) Jimbo's average score was 3 points higher so Jimbo's average was $134 + 3 = 137$. Therefore, if we let J be Jimbo's third game score, $137 = (120+130+J) / 3$ so $411 = 250 + J$ and $161 = J$. Therefore Jimbo scored 161 in the third game.

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

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA



SERIES 1-3

ACROSS

1. What the cat did on the mat
4. What you might call someone stronger than you
8. "My flesh... may _____, but..." (Psalm 73)
12. "They shall keep my _____" (Ezekiel 44)
13. By any other name, it smells the same
14. One who aims
16. On the peak, or a spinning toy
17. Flair or style
18. The "_____ Dei" is why humans matter.
19. Milk-giving Tibetan animal
20. Not the ground
21. Informal word for skin markings
23. Cut the grass
24. Sly, or move slyly
26. The definite article – the only one
28. All wrongdoing is ____
30. ____ uses the Hers towels.

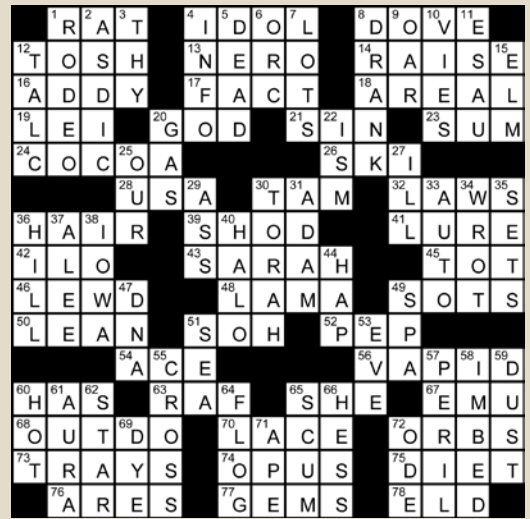
32. "...they _____ the dry ground" (Job 30)
36. Writer of the shortest Gospel
39. One section of a choir
41. You have _____ too far
42. "...copper... from the _____" (Job 28)
43. Don't do this to a grudge.
45. Abbreviation for a very special guest
46. "They sank like _____" (Exodus 15)
48. Chicken _____ - a capital dish in the Ukraine
49. Not slow
50. Make money
51. ____ rally
52. Don't let this get too inflated!
54. "They still bear fruit in old _____" (Psalm 92)
56. Make a speech, speak loftily
60. Used to have
63. Uncooked
65. Tribe in northern Israel

67. Give an engine gas, put the pedal down
68. "_____ Oe" – Hawaiian song for guests
70. Ever and _____, archaic form of soon
72. Short form for city-related service or organization
73. Soothes the savage breast
74. "...you will find a _____ tied..." (Mark 11)
75. His blood cried out to the Lord.
76. _____ out justice or punishment
77. Strangely, sometimes these are even!
78. Don't just stand ____ with ____ answers!

DOWN

1. "How can _____ cast out _____?" (Mark 3)
2. He _____ from his sleep
3. Abbreviation for a cooking measure

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



SERIES 1-2

4. The Great _____ (event in South Africa's history)
5. "_____, _____, _____ is the LORD..." (Isaiah 6)
6. In short, America
7. In short, a proper Englishman
8. "By _____ we understand that..." (Hebrews 11)
9. Goal, target – William Tell had a clear one.
10. Leader of a Muslim mosque
11. More popular toy than 16 ACROSS
12. Often confused with "lies"
15. "_____, _____, _____ Your Boat"
20. What you do at Lake Tahoe or the Alps
22. "The people... _____ the manna..." (Exodus 16)
25. "_____, and it will be given..." (Matthew 7)
27. Which came first, the chicken or the _____?
29. One of the Bobbsey twins
30. What you do to old paint
31. Item good for a garden, a yard or a pair of legs
33. Old car, or explosion of old star
34. Male Arabic name, or New World tropical bird
35. "Jesus _____" (John 11:35)
36. Water Rat's friend in *The Wind in the Willows*
37. Calculation needed for painting, tiling, etc.
38. "...God... will be your _____ guard..." (Isaiah 52)

40. Wrote his Gospel to Theophilus
44. Celebrated more than New Year's Day itself!
47. Abbreviation for what makes you you
49. Anti the anti- side in a debate
51. Will a pod cast this out for us to eat?
53. Only one true One, but many false ones
55. "Amazing _____, how sweet the sound..."
57. Island in the southern Caribbean Sea
58. Article of faith, principle of doctrine
59. "Repay no one _____ for _____" (Romans 12)
60. One of Noah's sons, father of African nations
61. Substance of concern in many deodorants
62. A small _____ of 61 DOWN may not matter.
64. Site of 1993 siege by American authorities
65. "...Abram was... rich in... _____" (Genesis 13)
66. the _____ are a people not strong (Prov. 30:25)
69. Strike or smack.
71. "Cain... settled in... _____" (Genesis 4)
72. Gives directions, but not on how to refold it!

DESIGN, BUILD & MAINTAIN YOUR OWN WEBSITE ONLY \$27/month INCLUDES HOSTING



**SIGN UP
NOW!**

*Don't pay until
you publish!*

**Super Easy
to Use!**

**Incredibly
Affordable!**

**Built Specifically
for Contractors!**

WORKSITES.net

THE WEBSITE BUILDER FOR GUYS WHO BUILD STUFF