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A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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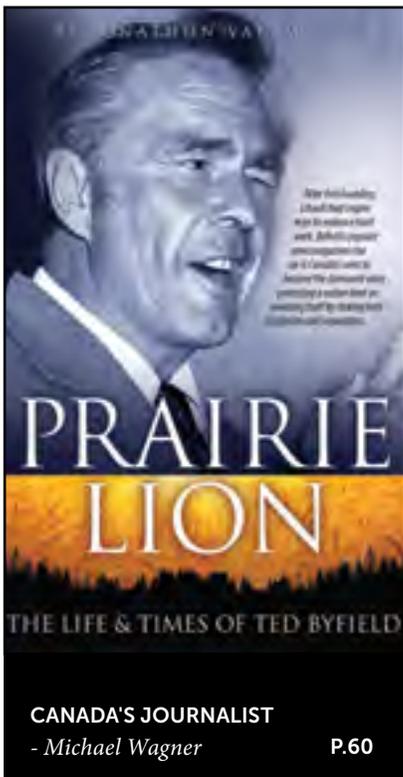


A VALLEY OF CONQUERORS

God's work in one Reformed community to set prisoners free from their bondage to sexual sin

by Mark Penninga

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Why the Right Always Drifts Left



“O’Sullivan’s First Law” states:

“All organizations that are not actually right-wing will, over time, become left-wing.”

Coined by journalist John O’Sullivan back in 1989, it described the leftward tilt that we see happen among politicians, parties, and organizations of all sorts whenever they refuse to loudly and clearly establish their conservative bona fides.

A recent example happened in the last Canadian election, when Conservative leader Erin O’Toole led his party so far leftward they shared the Liberal Party’s positions on abortion, euthanasia, and all things LGBT. Then, once the campaign started, O’Toole also flipped his position on conscience protection, again adopting the Liberal Party position.

However, as insightful as O’Sullivan’s First Law is in its diagnosis, it doesn’t point us to a cure. He might have thought he did: actually be right-wing!

But O’Sullivan first wrote his Law in *National Review*, a magazine as firmly rooted as any right-wing organization could expect to be (it was, at one point, described as “the bible of American conservatism”). Yet today the publisher is a man “married” to another man. They drifted too.

The fact is, stopping the drift requires a firmer foundation than mere “conservatism.”

THE NEED FOR A FIRM FOOTING

The weakness of conservatism is that it isn’t even a foundation to stand on. At best it’s an anchor that can be thrown out to slow down our rate of descent. O’Sullivan is partly right that the more energy a group expends in defining their brand of conservatism, the more weighty the anchor, and the longer they may be able to hold out. But to actually make headway back up the slope again requires a firm foundation to push off from, and that’s something that mere conservatism doesn’t offer. Conservatism is rooted only in human thought. A firm footing can only be found in God’s thought, and in His Word. Conservatism is moveable; only God is not.

So, O’Sullivan got us off to a good start, but we can take things further by riffing off of Matt. 12:30: “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” The result is “O’Dykstra’s First Law”:

“Those who are not unabashedly Christian, will over time – along with the organizations they make up – become unabashedly anti-Christian.”

The diagnosis is once again well established. Universities (Harvard and Yale), mainline denominations (the United Church of Canada), and charities (Bethany Christian Services), that were founded to spread God’s Word, got embarrassed by parts of it, got quiet about those parts, and are now actively opposing God and His law.

So how about us? Are we embarrassed by God’s Word? How often do you hear Christians – not simply politicians, but anyone at all – speaking in the public square and unashamedly presenting God’s thoughts on an issue as *God’s thoughts*?

CONSERVATIVE ARGUMENTS HAVE NO FOUNDATION

That doesn’t really happen. Instead:

- When Christians defend the unborn they’ll most often do so without any mention of the biblical principles involved, as they’re found in Ex. 20:13, Gen. 1:27, and elsewhere. Instead, we’ll focus on how the fetus can feel pain, or on when its heartbeat begins.
- We’ll oppose euthanasia without mention made that our lives are not our own to dispose of as we wish. We’ll instead point to the potential euthanasia laws have for abuse.
- We’ll combat pornography, but not because it violates God’s plan for sex, but because of its linkage to mental health issues like depression.

We use these godless arguments because our target audience is a godless culture. We do it in the name of strategy, effectiveness, and common sense but, in an ironic twist, it is none of those things. Consider the arguments we just made, and how easy it is to rebut them.

- Abortion is wrong because the fetus feels pain? Implicit in this objection is

the approval of abortion for children who don't yet feel pain. Did we mean to do that? The world says our value comes from what we can do, and they justify abortion because the unborn can't do much. We'll adopt the very same "able-ism" ideology to tout what the unborn can *do*. But the same argument protecting a 21-day-old unborn child because his heart has just now begun beating out its rhythm, is the same argument that condemns a 20-day-old who can't do it yet.

- If euthanasia is wrong because it can be abused, that's only an argument for more safeguards. It's, at best, just an anchor slowing the decline, with no effort directed at an actual reversal of direction.
- Pornography is bad because it causes mental health issues? Well, that all depends on what we mean by "mental health." Some among the LGBT lobby have touted pornography for its mental health *benefits* since those who partake are more open to their "alternative" lifestyles.

STANDING UNMOVED

Why is it so easy to rebut these conservative arguments? It's because they have no foundations.

Abortion is wrong, not because the unborn can do this or that, but because the unborn are made in the very Image of their Creator, just like you and me. It's only when we offer up God's own Truth that we get to the heart of the matter. It's only then that we're actually countering the lie with Truth. It's only then that we're standing with feet firmly planted.

Will the world listen? That's not in our control. But by setting our own feet firmly on God's Word, *we can stop our own drift*. When we profess His Name, and find our confidence in the victory He has *already* won, then the world won't be able to move us.

And who knows how God might make use of our faithfulness? RP

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

WHAT'S INSIDE

A very big welcome to the 4,000 new homes receiving RP this issue! By God's grace and through the generosity of His people, we are now able to provide complimentary copies to all NAPARC-affiliated churches in Canada.

Our hope is that this print magazine, and all of *RP's* resources, can encourage you in your walk with the LORD, particularly by applying the light of His word to the day-to-day issues we face in culture and society. For this particular issue, we are focussing on pornography, which Satan is using to hold so many Christians in bondage. And the Reformed community is no exception. But we aren't left on our own to fight. Be encouraged by the examples we share of churches, communities, and young Reformed men who are conquering this sin through the power of the Holy Spirit.

A huge "thank you" to so many of you who contributed your beautiful and inspiring pictures to our summer photo contest. You can find the winners in this issue but be sure to check out all of the 68 entries on our website. Don't miss the new contest we have advertised in this issue! It could be a perfect challenge for teachers to give to your students in advance of Reformation Day.

We also extend a big welcome to a new member of our team, Marty VanDriel. Marty has been serving as a volunteer on the board already but recently joined the staff as a part-time Assistant Editor. He brings with him a wealth of experience as the CEO of a truck manufacturing facility but also as a regular writer for *WORLD* magazine. Marty will be assisting our editor Jon Dykstra as we tackle an ambitious new two-year strategic plan, with a goal of professionalizing this magazine, adding writers, and making it accessible to a broader audience. RP



RP's new Assistant Editor
(and doting grampa)
Marty VanDriel

NOTA BENE

News worth noting

got just 11%. Only 1 in 10 of the ballot-casting members of the Conservative Party believed the unborn should be a priority.

While we might wish things were otherwise, we need to put to rest any notion that there might yet be “hidden pro-lifers” in the party. Couldn’t there have been some pro-lifers who voted for Poilievre because they were worried that otherwise Charest might win? No. Under the ranked ballot used in this race, there was simply no reason for a pro-lifer not to support the only pro-life candidate. If Lewis had gotten eliminated early on, and a second ballot was still required, then any who’d voted for her could still have had their ballot count against Charest by listing Poilievre as their *second* choice. There was no strategic reason to do anything other than vote pro-life if you cared for the unborn; Lewis’ 11% is an accurate representation of the sum total of the Conservative’s pro-life membership. That’s it, and that’s all.

The temptation here is to despair. The only major party open to pro-lifers is stacked against us 9 to 1? But there is something we can thank God for, even in this defeat. Hasn’t He freed us from a very different temptation, the temptation to silence? We can know for certain now that the politicians and major parties aren’t going to try changing any hearts and minds about abortion. So, if the unborn are going to have defenders, it’s going to have to be God’s Church, and God’s people. Instead of succumbing to despair, we can thank God for this clarity. And we can ask Him to give us the courage to:

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

– Prov 31:8-9

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PRO-LIFE LESLYN LEWIS COMES THIRD IN CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP RACE

BY JON DYKSTRA

On September 10, Canada’s Conservative Party announced that their new leader would be Pierre Poilievre, taking 71% of the votes cast on the first ballot. It wasn’t a surprise that he won, though the margin of his victory – 59 percentage points better than the second-place finisher – was stunning. His total percentage was better than any Conservative leadership candidate before him.

But what of the only pro-life

candidate in the race? How did Leslyn Lewis do? She finished third, a placing that was celebrated by some social conservatives. She was neck-and-neck with runner-up Jean Charest, finishing less than 2,000 votes behind with 11.1% of the votes compared to his 11.6%. She could also celebrate increasing her vote total from the 2020 leadership race – she got 3,000 more first ballot votes this time around.

But even as Lewis did better, things got much worse for the unborn. The Conservative Party has shifted enormously since the 2020 leadership race, where the two pro-life candidates, Lewis and Derek Sloan, combined to receive 40% of the first-round votes. Two years later, Lewis, now the lone pro-life candidate,



LORIE SMITH: ANOTHER CHRISTIAN FIGHTING TO PRESERVE A FREEDOM WE ALL NEED TO USE MORE OFTEN

BY JON DYKSTRA

Lorie Smith is a Colorado website designer and graphic artist who wants to expand her business to include wedding clients. While she's worked with homosexual clients in the past, that hadn't involved weddings, and she knew that she wouldn't want to design wedding websites for same-sex "marriages." The Colorado government has declared that her stand amounts to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Smith's pastor suggested that she contact the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), the same legal team that represented Jack Philips, another Coloradan who got in trouble for refusing to design wedding cakes for same-sex "marriages." While he eventually won his case in front of the Supreme Court, the ADF confirmed that the Colorado officials would still come after Smith. So Smith decided to challenge the law with the help of the ADF. Since she first began her challenge 6 years ago, she's had to endure rape and death threats against her and her family and she's lost both clients and friends. Through it all, she could take comfort knowing that what she was doing was for God and to His glory. And now, this fall, she will have a hearing before the Supreme Court.

Hers is only one of many cases this year involving compelled speech. In the UK earlier this year, a small bakery finally won their case. Their journey started in 2014, when British LGBT activist Gareth Lee ordered a cake from the Belfast shop, requesting a picture of Sesame Street characters Ernie and Bert, and the slogan "Support Gay Marriage." His order was taken and the cake paid for, but a few days later Ashers Bakery called him to explain they couldn't make the cake because of the slogan, and that his money would be refunded. He took them to court for discrimination, and won initially before losing in UK's Supreme Court, which said it was the message and not the man, that was at issue, and Ashers Bakery had the right

not to create messages they disagreed with. But Lee wasn't finished, and took the case to the European Court of Human Rights. Fortunately, in January the bakers won again, though on a technicality that leaves the door open for Lee to file further appeals. So it's good news, for now. Interestingly the bakery got support from an unexpected source. Another LGBT activist, Peter Tatchell, pointed out that:

"If the judgement had gone the other way, a gay baker could have been forced by law to accede to requests to decorate cakes with messages opposing LGBT+ equality."

What Tatchell was echoing here (however unintentional) was Jesus' warning against judging others by standards we wouldn't want applied to ourselves (Matt. 7:1-2). That might even be the message a Christian should get "cake-printed" from their nearest gay bakery: "Do not judge... for in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

As with Lorie Smith's battle, this was been defended as a matter of *free speech*. It is that, most certainly. But



what has largely been lost is how the decision affirmed Ashers Bakery's right *not to harm others*. That's the more important battle, in part because it is the fight we'll be fighting alone.

Even an LGBT activist may, in his own self-interest, defend a Christian's right to free speech. But what only Christians will defend is God's Truth that gay "marriage" is harmful, and, thus, so too is its celebration. It's one thing to fight for a right to free speech, and quite another to exercise that freedom to explain that the reason we don't want to bake the cake, or make the website, is *because we don't want to hurt homosexuals by promoting a sinful lifestyle that separates them from their Savior*. That's a message no LGBT activist is ever going to speak. But is a message that desperately needs to be heard more often, and more clearly. It's also a message that'll require even more courage. **RP**

LIFE RENEWAL

Life Renewal offers a community where we share, pray, and encourage each other, via a 28 week program. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, people are transformed to freedom, living in a right relationship with God and others. Life Renewal adheres to the Reformed faith and seeks to come alongside R & P churches in Canada to provide a Biblical support program for its members. We train coordinators and facilitators with the skills to lead groups of participants through the program. For more information and to enrol in the program commencing September, 2022, please visit our website at www.liferenewal.ca or email admin@liferenewal.ca

SCRIPTURAL TEACHING. SAFE ENVIRONMENT. SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY.

CANADIANS RETIRING IN RECORD NUMBERS

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

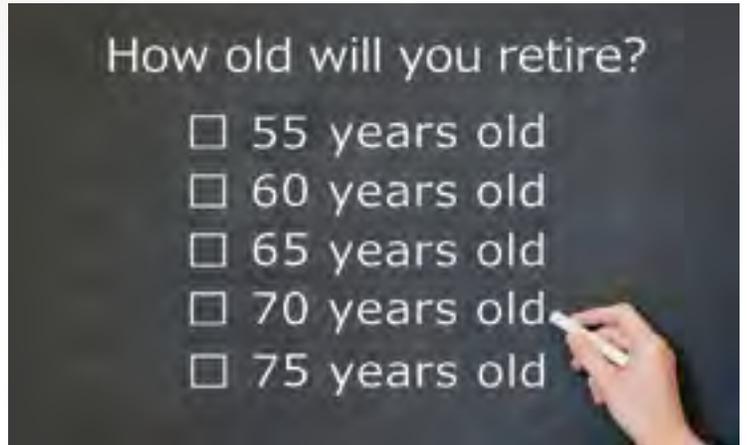
Statistics Canada recently reported that Canadians have retired in huge numbers over the past twelve months: 306,000 citizens retired from full-time work from September to August of 2022. That's 70,000 more than the corresponding period ending August 2021.

The increase is particularly marked among those ages 55 to 64: 155,000 in the past twelve months, versus just over 100,000 the year earlier, and *that's 10,000 more than those aged 65 or older.*

Among all the G7 countries, Canada has the largest percentage of its citizens actively working, but with one in five workers over the age of 55, and many of these retiring, the nation's workforce may be shrinking. As *Reuters'* Julie Gordon put it,

"More than a year after the Great Resignation took hold in the United States, Canada is grappling with its own greyer version: The Great Retirement."

As has been discussed in the days since her death, Queen Elizabeth II set quite a different example: for over 70 years, well past what we would call "retirement age," she performed her duties as monarch without public complaint. In fact, just



two days before her passing, she was able to officially appoint Liz Truss as her Prime Minister for the nation of England

Christians must have this different perspective on work and retirement. While what we do on a daily basis may change as we age, the Lord requires that, as members of His church, each of us "use (our) gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members" (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55). What a joy it is when the "silver-haired" among us share their wisdom and experience with those who are younger, and continue to be actively involved "doing good to all men, especially those of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). **RP**

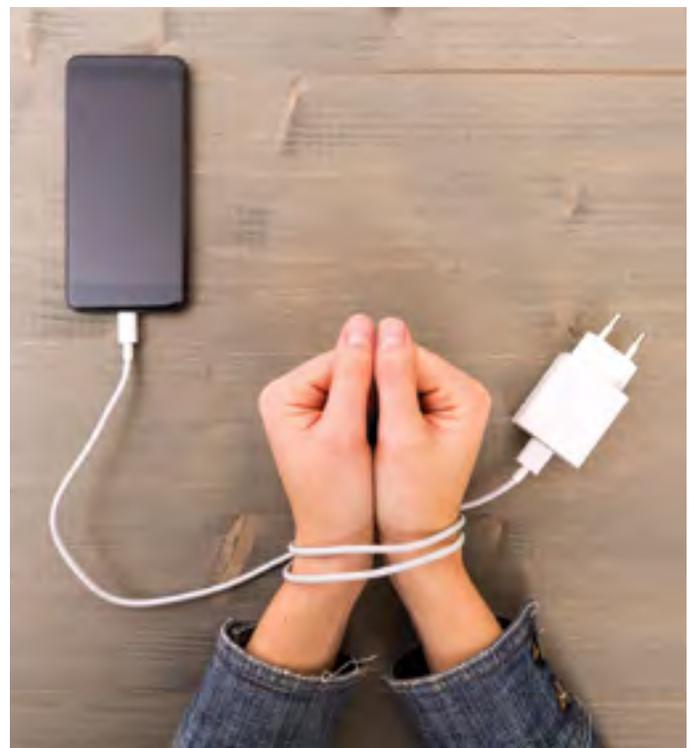
POLL SHOWS THAT NEARLY HALF OF TEENS CONSTANTLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

Teens in the western world are spending more time on social media than ever. The Pew Research Center recently reported that 46% of 1,316 U.S. teens polled reported that they were continually connected to at least one social media site, with YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat being the most popular platforms. This rate of usage is nearly double the 24% who reported similar usage patterns in 2014-2015.

Many parents and grandparents might be more familiar with Facebook, but this poll shows that only about 1/3 of the teenagers who were questioned check that site daily, or less than half of the rate of use reported eight years ago.

While polls are inexact, and this one did not seek out Canadian teens, they can help show broad trends in the general population. We would hope that Christian youth are less continually connected than their compatriots: perhaps we can ask the teens in our lives how they use social media. And, of course, adults are not immune from what could become an addiction to social media. All Christians who find themselves spending too much time on these sites might ask themselves: how well do we know God's Word? And might it be better to stop using social media altogether if it gets in the way of knowing and glorifying Him? **RP**



PEPPA PIG PROPAGANDIZES PRESCHOOLERS

BY JON DYKSTRA

During the COVID lockdowns, some North American children began developing a British accent, and started using words like “mummy” and “water closet.” This development was tied to watching *Peppa Pig*, a popular British animated children’s show about a 4-year-old piglet. Too much TV isn’t a good thing, but if ever your children were going to overdose on a TV show, this was one of the better options. Peppa is occasionally bratty, but more often kind, and her dad is a bit too bumbling, but he is also very loving, and overall the show is gentle but not inane. For 18 years now, Peppa has been a peaceful pig, but not a bore. In fact, the most controversy the show has previously garnered was for having a stay-at-home mummy – that was seen as misogynist.

However, on the Sept. 6 episode, the show decided to begin promoting homosexuality to their young viewers. The



scene involves Peppa’s classmate, a polar bear named Penny, explaining, “I live with my mummy and my other mummy. One mummy is a doctor, and one mummy cooks spaghetti.” Peppa is only the latest of many children’s shows to bow the knee to the LGBT lobby. *Arthur* has featured a teacher having a same-sex “marriage,” and a few years back *Muppet Babies* had baby Gonzo put on a dress and heels to become princess “Gonzorella.” And last year Nickelodeon’s *Blue’s Clues and You* featured an animated drag queen leading an animated gay pride parade to celebrate “Pride Month.”

Some conservative commentators have criticized this “woke” turn, but with

one arm tied behind their back. For example, Matt Walsh described princess Gonzo as “silly,” “ridiculous,” and “creepy.” But because the Catholic Walsh studiously avoids basing any of his objections on what God says in His Word, he can’t go much beyond name calling. What could Walsh offer, if he was asked why a children’s show featuring a boy in a dress is silly? What Walsh doesn’t address is the real reason it is creepy: that it is rebellion against God, and against His plan for men and women and for marriage. That rebellion has consequences, which can include separation from God, emotional turmoil, radical disfiguring surgeries, the inherent instability of same-sex coupling, and the impact on a child of not having a father in their life. That’s something a lot more substantial than mere creepiness.

So what can we do about it? Should we start a petition? Maybe we can develop our own children’s programming? Not bad ideas. But the easiest and quickest response is simply to tell our kids to turn off the TV, shut the laptop, and go outside and play. **RP**

GOOD NEWS: CRC SYNOD REAFFIRMS HOMOSEXUAL SEX IS SIN

BY MARTY VANDRIEL

At their annual synod this earlier year, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) took a stand for biblical sexuality. They officially accepted – by a majority vote of about 70% – a 2020 report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. *The Human Sexuality Report* affirmed the traditional Biblical teaching that homosexual sex is sinful and clearly forbidden by Scripture.

The report also recommended that Synod 2022 declare that this traditional stance already has confessional status within the CRC. In other words, the committee’s report stated that the Three Forms of Unity currently declare homosexual sex (along with all other forms of unchastity such as premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, pornography, and polyamory) to be sinful and against God’s Word. In a separate vote the next

day, Synod 2022 accepted this recommendation with just slightly less support: about 69% of delegates voted in favor.

This decision by a relatively small (in North American terms) denomination received much attention within and outside the CRC. More liberal-leaning CRC members – including a large group of Calvin University professors who had signed a petition urging non-acceptance of the report – expressed dismay at the decision. Some publicly stated that this may be the impetus for them to leave the federation or their current role at Calvin.

Outside the CRC, orthodox Christians rejoiced that sound Biblical teaching was upheld, and that the Bible was used



as the main authority by which to arrive at thoughtful conclusions. Writing for “World Opinions,” Steven Wedgeworth, an Anglican rector from Indiana, called the decision “a valiant stand... The CRC has defended moral orthodoxy.” Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, also lauded the decision:

“All those who have a Biblical understanding of sexuality (should be) celebrating what the CRC has done! It has taken the bold and convictional step of confessionalizing what it knows the Bible to teach on homosexuality.”

Many readers are familiar with past CRC Synod’s decisions that went against traditional interpretations of Scripture. My own family left a CRC in the 1980s when Synod allowed women to serve as ministers, elders, and deacons. We pray that this may be a sign of an increasingly faithful view of Scripture and the Confessions in the CRC. **RP**

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THE COMING BATTLES OVER CHURCH PROPERTY

by Albertos Polizogopoulos



Same-sex “marriage” and sexual morality were hot topics in evangelicalism in the late-90s and early 2000s. Since the legalization of same-sex “marriage” in 2005, the issue appeared to have been resolved within the church: the affirming and orthodox churches had staked out their respective positions.

However, the issue has recently resurfaced in several denominations and will likely lead to further schisms in those communities.

DENOMINATIONAL SCHISMS

Perhaps the most prominent of these recent examples is in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (“CRC”) whose Synod, at a meeting in June of this year, affirmed the orthodox biblical view of marriage and sexual morality. It raised the issue to the status of an explicit confession stating that “The church must warn its members that those who refuse to repent of these sins – as well as of idolatry, greed, and other such sins – will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The consensus is that many congregations will split from the CRC over this issue. Several CRC churches have, over the years, admitted individuals who are married to their same-sex partners or otherwise openly and unrepentantly living a homosexual lifestyle into church membership and even church leadership. How can these churches remain in the CRC? Will they warn their membership of the consequences of engaging in these sins, while some of their leadership does so? That is unlikely, and thus a schism will develop within this denomination.

And the CRC is not the only denomination facing this challenge. There are other denominations where particular congre-

gations are no longer operating within the theological parameters of their denomination. The CRC is simply more front-and-center right now, given the publicity generated by their June Synod.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Many complex legal issues arise when churches split from their denominations or associations. Churches whose names include “Christian Reformed” will likely need to amend their legal names and any trademarks they may hold. CRC-affiliated educational institutions which have adopted an affirming stance on same-sex “marriage” and sexual morality, like Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, may need to re-apply for government accreditation under their new identity. Perhaps the most difficult and important issue they will face is related to church properties.

Over the last decade, church property disputes arose after splits relating to beliefs over same-sex “marriage” in both Anglican and Episcopal churches in Canada and the USA. The schism resulted in protracted litigation over the proper ownership of church buildings and lands in both examples.

We will likely see similar litigation here in Canada, perhaps in the CRC, or perhaps in other denominations or in non-denominational churches. Different churches have different property ownership and governance structures. There could be a variety of legal cases and outcomes.

Who owns the church building or the private school? Some may be owned by the congregation. Some congregations may be incorporated while others are not. Some may be owned by the original

trustees who founded the congregation. Some may have been bequeathed by an estate for specific use by the CRC. Some may have been purchased by an existing congregation.

The issues are complex and case-specific. Some congregations’ membership or leadership may disagree on whether to split from the denomination. Divisions may arise not only within denominations but within individual congregations and councils. In the past, we’ve seen such schisms divide communities and families. Churches need to brace for controversies that may be coming – theologically, relationally, and legally.

BE CLEAR, EARLY

I write this as a Christian first and a lawyer second. I am deeply concerned about churches caving to cultural pressures and denying Scriptural truths. I am also concerned about such practical costs as I see in my line of work – legal disputes that are financially and relationally costly. Denominations need to prepare themselves for potential battles ahead and should be consulting legal counsel pre-emptively to examine their risks and responsibilities. Ask yourself: is it clear where your church stands on certain controversial issues? Are you prepared legally to address divisions over such issues within your church? 

Albertos Polizogopoulos is co-founder of the Acacia Group and a constitutional litigation lawyer who specializes in freedom of religion. The Acacia Group (AcaciaGroup.ca) is Canada’s only openly Christian law firm devoted to offering legal and crisis communications services to churches, organizations, individuals, and businesses.

AN ABUNDANCE MENTALITY IN BUSINESS

Christian entrepreneurs may be positioned to help the next generation become entrepreneurs too

by Marty VanDriel

Christian business owners often speak about an “abundance mentality”: the idea that God, in blessing their companies richly, has allowed them to be a blessing to others, providing a stable place of work for their employees while at the same time taking great care of their customers. And God’s generosity enables them to practice generosity to all sorts of good causes too.

I recently had the privilege of speaking with a few Reformed Christian business owners, and I was struck by an additional characteristic of this mindset they shared. These men had a desire to see their valued employees become business owners themselves.

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RyzerBuilt.com

Bellingham, WA

Ryan VanDelft initially started his company without any business partners. He set up Ryzer Construction Services after moving across the border from British Columbia to Washington State, and they’ve been installing and supplying windows, doors, and other materials to builders of higher-end homes since 2015.

After some years of slow but steady growth, Ryan decided it was time to expand what the company offered its clients, and to give more responsibility to the growing team of employees he had developed. And as anyone familiar with Ryan knows (we go to the same church), one of Ryan’s passions is mentoring the young people who work for him – he’s eager to invest in their skill development, and coach them in the soft skills that will enable them to be successful in business, even while he’ll take time to help them outside of work.

A walk around the Ryzer warehouse and board room shows a commitment to sharing the company’s statement of purpose, its values and strategies, and its mission statement – they are proudly displayed on banners for all to see. The last line of Ryzer’s statement of purpose reads “Grow profitably, and enjoy the process,” and references Psalm 127:1 – “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

Ryan also refers regularly with his team to “the Four E’s” – his shorthand for the mission statement to “Empower people. Embrace Craftsmanship. Enrich Lifestyles. Enjoy work.”

VanDelft has taken on a partner, Dave

Hommes, a fellow believer whose skills in finance and organization complemented his colleague’s gifts. Ryan’s long-term plan is to bring in additional partners who have shown promise as employees, helping them to share in the risk and reward of business ownership. He talks about “making the pie bigger.” While some might see additional partners as a potential drain on a fixed profits number, Ryan hopes that enlarging the business as opportunities allow, while growing the talent pool of employees and associates, will result in a larger number of satisfied clients, and a larger “pie” to share with his partners.

BRUCE DEBOER

Ontario Metal Products

OntarioMetalProducts.com

Dunnville, ON

Bruce DeBoer joined partner Brad Schutten in Ontario Outbuildings, and Ontario Metal Products just a few months before COVID came calling. Their company supplies metal roofing panels, siding, and accessories to local builders, priding itself on good pricing with excellent service. Despite the current challenging supply chain environment,

Bruce and Brad have been able to grow their sales volume substantially.

The whole team of about twenty associates begins their week with a staff meeting, that includes Bible reading and prayer, before launching into the goals and plans for the work week. DeBoer takes a keen interest in his associates, providing a listening ear in times of stress, and trying to understand what are the most important things in their lives.

“We’ve switched to an employee market. Life is different than it was twenty years ago. Most families are double income now, so what they need is different. A husband might have to stay home when a child is sick, where years ago, that would have been the wife’s role.”

DeBoer advises that in a low unemployment environment, it is wise to find what benefits and other intangibles might be important for your colleagues, and it’s not always about hourly wages or salary.

DeBoer and Schutten have taken an innovative approach in helping employees become business owners. While it might be simpler and more profitable to continue with an owner-employee relationship, the business partners have encour-

aged those associates who show promise to form companies with DeBoer and Schutten: continuing to do the same work of installing or building, but enjoying a portion of the fruits of their labors as owners. The new companies take advantage of the all the economies of scale of a larger company – sharing bookkeeping systems, quoting software, and administrative expertise together. This makes the process of becoming self-employed less daunting than it might otherwise be for a young entrepreneur. The author of Ecclesiastes recognized the value of teams and partnerships:

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow... a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Eccl. 4:9-12)

When asked what advice he would give anyone looking to advance their career or become a business owner, DeBoer did not hesitate: “Find a mentor!”

That’s good advice, and it doesn’t need to be complicated. Find someone with experience and ask them out for a coffee.

Most business veterans are eager to share what they know, and more than willing to help someone avoid the same mistakes they may have made or seen. King Solomon agreed that finding a mentor is a good path: “Listen to advice, and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.” (Proverbs 19:20) “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” (Proverbs 18:1)

It was wonderful to hear about how the Lord has blessed these business owners in their decisions to help their employees also grow and prosper. Both VanDelft and DeBoer emphasized that their workplace mindset is not all about financial gain, and that part of their joy in their daily work is seeing others achieve more than they would have thought possible. 

Marty VanDriel is a writer and Assistant Editor for Reformed Perspective, a TV and film critic for WORLD magazine, and a Christian entrepreneur himself as the CEO of TriVan Truck Body (TriVan.com).



What does mentoring the next generation of entrepreneurs involve? Here’s one example: these Ryzer employees are enjoying a team-building whitewater rafting trip.

IN A NUTSHELL

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY JON DYKSTRA

GREAT COMMUNICATOR ON COMMUNICATION

Ronald Reagan was nicknamed “The Great Communicator” for his ability to connect with his listening audience. But that wasn’t something he was just born with – he thought a lot about it, as evidenced in this joke he told.

I’ve always thought of the importance of communication and how much a part it plays in what you and I and what all of us are trying to do. One day...a sports announcer, Danny Villanueva, told me about communication. He said he’d been having dinner over at the home of a young ball player with the Dodgers. The young wife was bustling about getting the dinner ready, they were talking sports, and the baby started to cry. Over her shoulder his busy wife said to the ball player, “Change the baby.”

Well, he was a young fellow, and he was embarrassed in front of Danny. He said, “What do you mean change the baby? I’m a ballplayer; that’s not my line of work.”

Well, she turned around, put her hands on her hips and she *communicated*.

She said, “Look buster, you lay the diaper out like a diamond, you put second base on home plate, you put the baby’s bottom on the pitcher’s mound, you hook up first and third, slide home underneath. And if it starts to rain, the game ain’t called; you just start all over!”

THE JOURNALIST

In the past, he had to “pay dues”
And develop “a nose for the news.”

Well, he still has a nose,
But, my, how it grows

When the facts must conform to his views.

– F.R. Duplantier (*used with permission*)

FORGIVING VS. EXCUSING

“I find that when I think I am asking God to forgive me I am often in reality...asking Him not to forgive me but to excuse me. But there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing. Forgiveness says ‘Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology. I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before.’ But excusing says ‘I see that you couldn’t help it or didn’t mean it; you weren’t really to blame.’ If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense, forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites....When it comes to a question of our forgiving other people, it is partly the same and partly different. It is the same because, here also, forgiving does not mean excusing. Many people seem to think it does. They think that if you ask them to forgive someone

who has cheated or bullied them you are trying to make out that there was really no cheating or no bullying. But if that were so, there would be nothing to forgive. They keep on replying, “But I tell you the man broke a most solemn promise.” Exactly: that is precisely what

you have to forgive. (This doesn’t mean that you must necessarily believe his next promise. It does mean that you must make every effort to kill every taste of resentment in your own heart – every wish to humiliate or hurt him or to pay him out.) The difference between this situation and the one in which you are asking God’s forgiveness is this. In our own case we accept excuses too easily; in other people’s we do not accept them easily enough.”

– C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory*

10 REASONS ENGLISH IS A SILLY LANGUAGE

Homophones – words that sound alike but have different meanings – are unique to the English language, but we have an awful lot of them. In looking at the examples below, I felt like I almost saw the thread of a story moving from one sentence to the next. If an aspiring student wants to try to make a coherent story using as many of these homophones as possible, please send it on in. You can reach the editor via our contact form at ReformedPerspective.ca

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 4) A weak spring means I have wind my wind gauge once a week.
- 5) When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- 6) Excuse me but there’s no excuse for this.
- 7) I need to read what I read again.
- 8) Wait just a minute – that’s making a mountain of something minute!
- 9) I object to that object and I’m not content with this content.
- 10) As there’s no time like the present, they’re going to present their present.

SOURCE: *here and there on the Internet*

MARRIAGE MATTERS MATERIALLY

“What do you think distinguishes the high and low poverty populations? The only statistical distinction in both the Black and White populations is marriage. There is far less poverty in married-couple families, where presumably at least one of the spouses is employed.”

– Economist Walter Williams (1936-2020)

SOMEONE WANTS YOU TO TALK

Many a famous quote can’t be traced back to the person who was supposed to have said it. Here’s three of just that sort, the first two likely *not* said by who there are attributed to, while the third remains a maybe. So why pass them on?

Well, after reading these three, on the problem with silence, you're going to feel challenged to speak... even if you don't know who exactly issued the challenge.

- “If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.” – attributed, probably falsely, to Martin Luther
- Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. – attributed to, but probably not by, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- “When principles that run against your deepest convictions begin to win the day, then battle is your calling, and peace has become your sin; you must, at the price of dearest peace, lay your convictions bare before friend and enemy, with all the fire of your faith.” – credited to Abraham Kuyper (and it may be so)

A LAW EVEN A LIBERTARIAN COULD LOVE

“Even many of us who believe in free enterprise have fallen into the habit of saying when something goes wrong: ‘There ought to be a law.’ Sometimes I think there ought to be a law against saying there ought to be a law.

– Ronald Reagan

GOD CAN USE EVEN A STOLEN BOOK

A former homosexual, Rachel Gilson, recently explained how God turned her around. The author of *Born Again This Way: Coming Out, Coming to Faith, and What Comes Next*, shared that it began with her girlfriend dumping her for a guy who was basically homeless, living in his van. Then at an acquaintance's house, a non-practicing Catholic, she noticed a bookshelf.

“...and one of my favorite hobbies is to look at people's bookshelves and judge them, you know? So, I'm checking it out, looking up and down. And there was a copy – there was a book on this shelf. The spine read *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, and so I thought, ‘Oh, I really want to read that book,’ but I was too embarrassed to ask my friend for it. So, I just stole the book because, again, I had no moral code, right?... So, I was sitting in the library soon after that, reading *Mere Christianity*, and while I was reading it one day, I was just overwhelmed with the realization that God exists.... I was just overwhelmed with the reality of God. And not like a store brand, you know, like Zeus or something, but the God who made me and who made everything



This is an excerpt from Jason Bouwman's unique devotional, *Still Thinking*, which Canadians can buy at StillThinkingBook.com

and who was perfect. It was like I could sense God's holiness even though I didn't know that vocabulary and the only thing I felt was fear. I'm arrogant. I'm cruel. I'm sexually immoral. I lie. I cheat. I'm reading a stolen book. It's clear all of the chips are in the guilty category, right? I had no confusion at that moment either, but really quickly with that I also understood that part of the reason Jesus had come was to place Himself as a barrier between God's wrath and me. And that the only way to be safe was to run towards Him, not away from Him.

SOURCE: John Stonestreet's "On being saved from confusion" the testimony of Rachel Gilson" posted to Breakpoint.org on June 10, 2022.

GRATITUDE LURKING

In his autobiography, G.K. Chesterton expressed how even in the depths of despair, a man might not be so far from optimism. Though there is a chasm between the two, the bridge over is that of amazement, leading to gratitude.

“No man knows how much he is an optimist, even when he calls himself a pessimist, because he has not really measured the depths of his debt to whatever created him and enabled him to call himself anything. At the back of our brains, so to speak, there [is] a forgotten blaze or burst of astonishment at our own existence. The object of the artistic and spiritual life [is] to dig for this submerged sunrise of wonder; so that a man sitting in a chair might suddenly understand that he [is] actually alive, and be happy.”

ENJOYING GOD!

RP's summer photo contest winners

Whether it was on a road trip, or closer to home, RP's readers show they know how to experience joy in the Lord.

This summer we asked you to send in photos showing you enjoying your Creator, and we got a fantastic response back. We got dozens of entries!

What follows are the best of the best, broken up into two categories: **Adult (18 and up)** and **Youth (under 18)**, with the winner in each category getting a \$100 gift card, and the runner up getting \$75. So take a look and enjoy their enjoyment of who our God is, and what He has done! While space only allowed us to share a selection of the entries here, you can find them all online at ReformedPerspective.ca/EnjoyingGod

ADULT (18 and up)



"This photo was taken in one of the fields of the farm my husband has managed for 34 years. We started leaving patches of milkweed till the end of September so the butterflies could use them. A simple thing to do for a beautiful species."

– Carrie Jonker

RUNNER-UP



"I took this photo on a hot day at Stepping Stones Bible Camp. It is a Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*) sipping nectar with its proboscis from some purple phlox. In Psalm 104 we are reminded that God lovingly cares for the creatures He has made. 'These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When You give it to them, they gather it up; when You open Your hand, they are filled with good things.' If He so cares for the butterflies of the field, He will also surely keep us in His Fatherly hand."

– Burke Vanderhorst

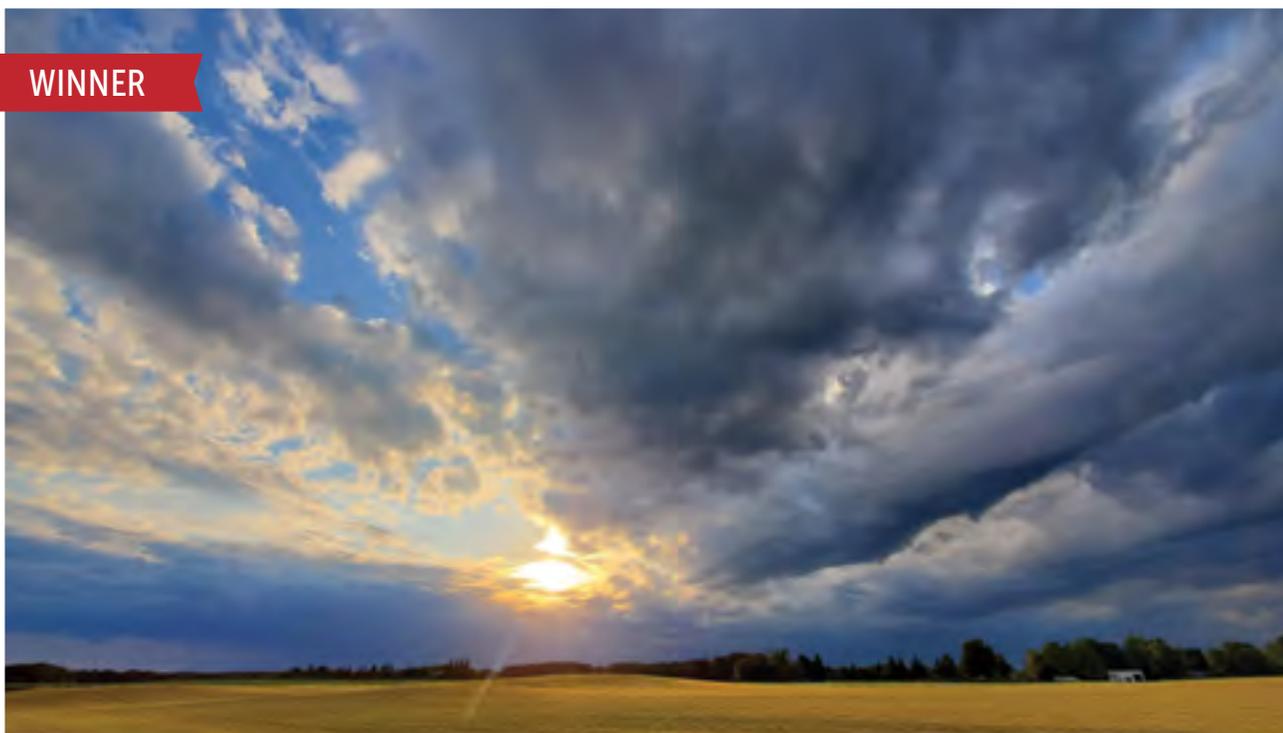


GOD'S POWER AND FAITHFULNESS

"I have always been fascinated by God's power in a storm. The ever-changing dark clouds are a majestic scene. They unleash its fury of wind and torrents of rain driven to the ground. Soon afterward a beautiful rainbow adorns the sky reminding us of God's promise of long ago that still speaks to us today."

– John Verbinnen

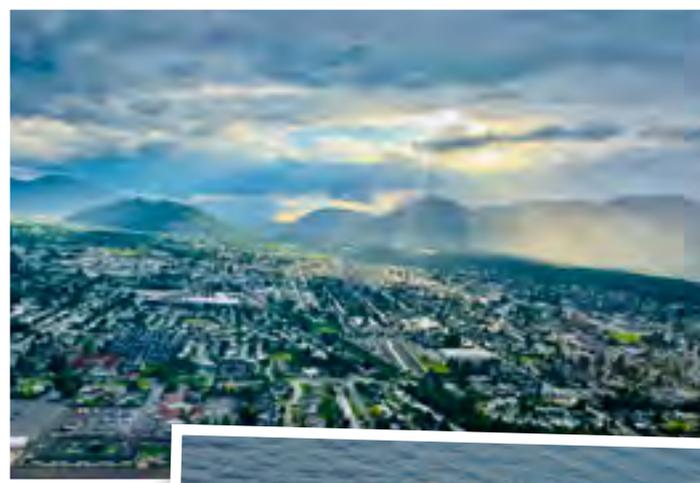
WINNER



ENDLESS SKY

"Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds" (Ps 36:5)

– Rachel Vander Deen



"The sun is going down as I fly over the Fraser Valley in a small Cessna Airplane. How amazing is God's handiwork."

– Jason Krul



"White Elegance"

– Hans Steensma



GOLDEN HOUR

"It was the day of my sister-in-law's wedding and we were on our way home from the reception, reflecting on the day and the union we had witnessed. Had to capture this - God's latest painting."

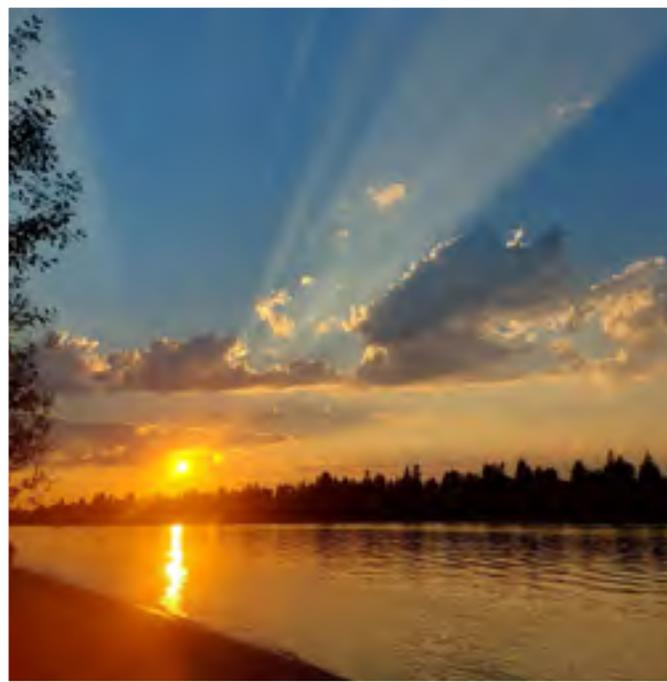
– Arianne Devries



ENJOYING GOD IN LETCHWORTH STATE PARK

"Renowned as the 'Grand Canyon of the East,' we could see evidence of the Genesis Flood through the same sedimentary layers as we had previously found in canyons in Arizona and quarries in Ontario. Not only did we find evidence of this great judgement, but also how God brings life out of death through the beautiful scenery and the 3 waterfalls. Our God is a God of Life!"

– Andre Timmermans, with Maelle (7), Ashton (9), Sawyer (5), and Abel (3)



SUNSET AT EDGEWATER BAR IN LANGLEY, BC

"The heavens declare the glory of God."

– Cathy Kieneker

YOUTH

(under 18)



QUIET REFLECTION

"Every relationship for a Christian is an opportunity to love another person like God has loved us."

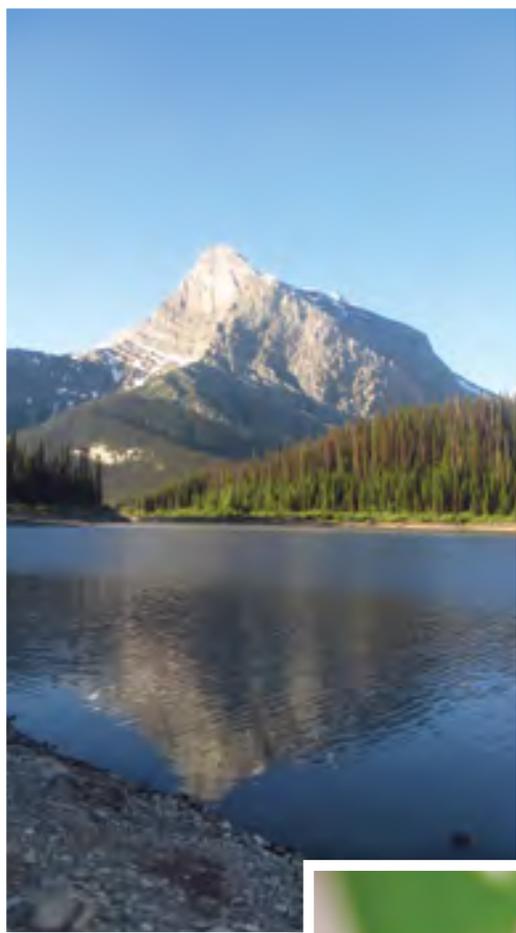
– Krista D., age 12



DRAGON FLY

"Seeing the world close up and admiring the intricate things God has made."

– Seth B., age 14



BACKPACKING IN KANANASKIS COUNTRY

"We went backpacking and me and my friend were sitting there just thinking about how great it is that we can enjoy this awesome creation that God has made. It is absolutely beautiful to look at all his creation!"

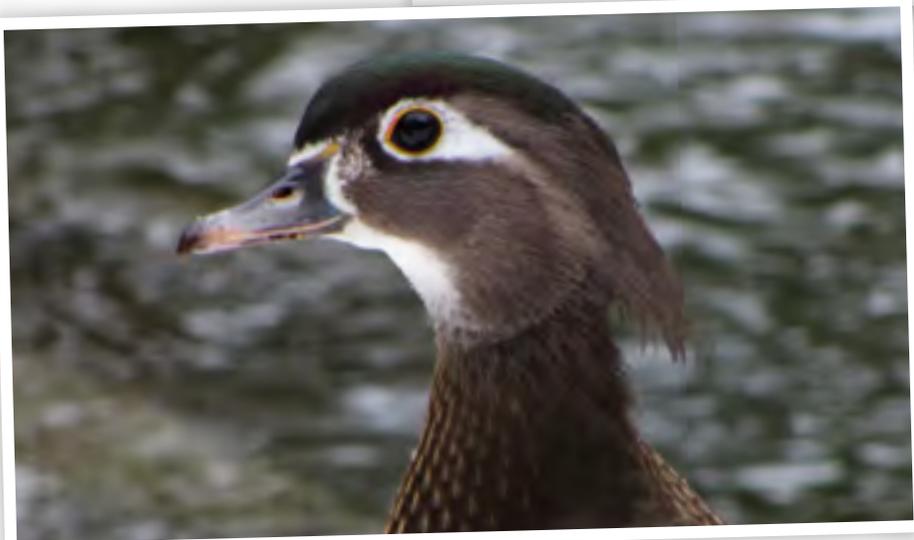
– Abby B., age 13



RUFOUS IN THE CROCOSMIA

"I enjoy God's world by spending time watching Rufous Hummingbirds dart from flower to flower pollinating."

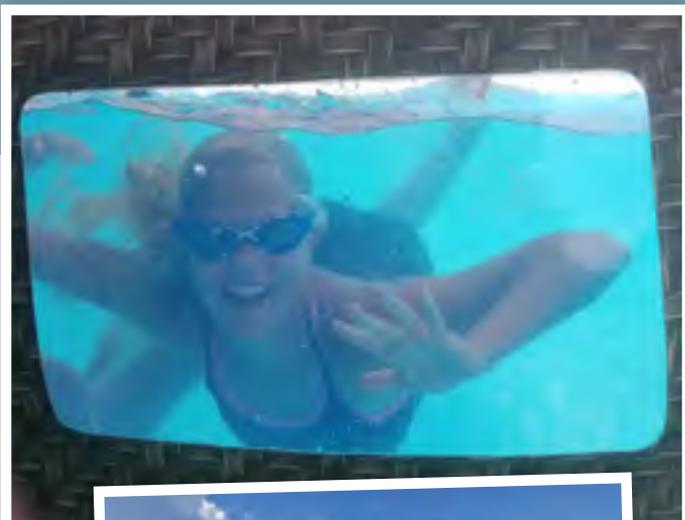
– Josiah C., age 10



WOOD DUCK PORTRAIT

"I enjoy how God created all the details in the feathers of a Wood Duck."

– Josiah C., age 10

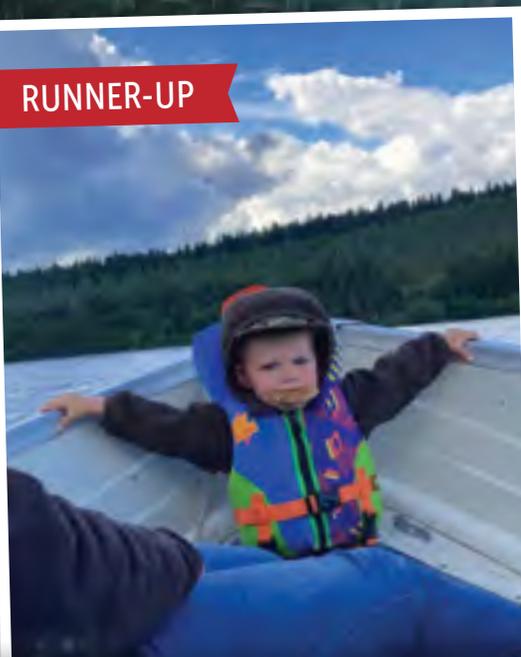


SPLASH ZONE

"This is a photo of my sister having a fun day in the pool during a hot summer day. I like the sister that God made and the water that God also made."

– Leah P., age 9

RUNNER-UP



TOO GOOD TO LET GO

"The boat's going too fast for my nephew, and his Dad told him to hang on, so what's he supposed to do with his cookie? He enjoyed God as he fished with his family and is now heading back to the campsite. He is also now enjoying the God-given talents of his Oma's baking abilities."

– Deborah D., age 12

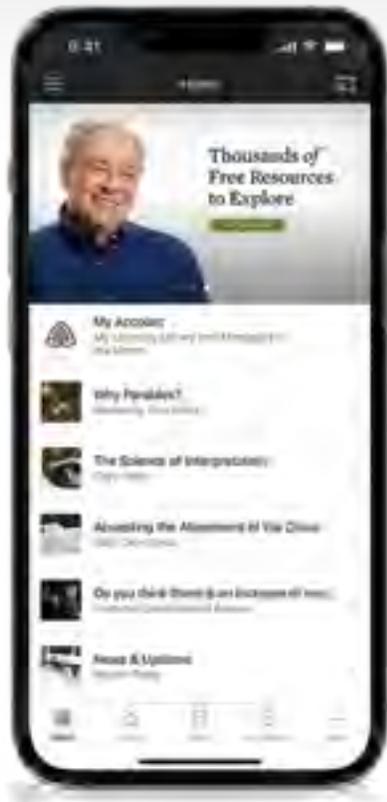


AMAZING LIGHTNING

"We enjoyed God's creation by watching a thunderstorm in the distance. It's amazing to see the power God displays through storms."

– Jordan L., age 13

WINNER



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WHY BIBLICAL POETRY MATTERS



by Conrad Van Dyk

Skim through any modern Bible and you will notice something peculiar: many pages are laid out as poetry, with appropriate spacing and indents. But have you ever wondered what makes these verses poetic?

For most people, this subject remains an enigma, and some will wonder why they should even care. Poetry seems like the wrapping around a present, or the envelope for a card — superfluous and largely decorative. It is the message that is important, and paying attention to the form may be a distraction.

Of course, for a believer that should be a flimsy argument. Surely God loves beauty and complexity (Gen 1:31, Psalm 139:14), and although beauty is fleeting (Prov. 31:30), that is no excuse to ignore it.¹ It does not make sense when

Christians stand in awe of a gorgeous sunset, or we all hang the same poem about footprints on our walls, but we cannot be bothered to learn how the Psalms were composed.

BEAUTIFUL IN ANY LANGUAGE

The astonishing thing about biblical poetry is that it generally translates into any language. The principal technique is not a matter of meter or rhyme: it has to do with the structure of the lines. In most cases, two or more lines run parallel to each other. Consider Psalm 122:7:

May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.

You can see that the terms run parallel. Peace and security mirror each other, as do the walls and citadels. The name for this type of poetry is Hebrew Parallelism. In what follows, we'll explore how this poetic technique works and why it matters.

ROBERT LOWTH'S REDISCOVERY OF PARALLELISM

It was the Anglican Bishop Robert Lowth who in the 18th century rediscovered Hebrew Parallelism. For centuries, Christians had been confused about how best to describe biblical poetics. According to Lowth, Hebrew parallelism typically follows one of three patterns:

1. Synonymous
2. Antithetic
3. Synthetic.²

Let's take a closer look at each of these.

The example we just looked at is a form of **synonymous** parallelism. In such cases, the same idea is repeated in similar language. One of the more famous examples of consistent synonymous parallelism is Psalm 114:

¹ When Israel came out of Egypt,
Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,

² Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

³ The sea looked and fled,
the Jordan turned back;

⁴ the mountains leaped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

⁵ Why was it, sea, that you fled?
Why, Jordan, did you turn back?

⁶ Why, mountains, did you leap like rams,
you hills, like lambs?

⁷ Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

⁸ who turned the rock into a pool,
the hard rock into springs of water.

In this psalm, every verse consists of a mirroring of terms. Lowth felt that parallelism might be compared to the way two choirs can sing back and forth — a type of chant known as *antiphony*. Lowth speculated that the Jews might have incorporated something similar in their worship. Think of Psalm 136, where the refrain "His love endures forever" is a repeated response.

Lowth's second type, **antithetic** parallelism, involves a sharp contrast. It is particularly common in the book of Proverbs:

A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. (Prov. 17:22)

The poor plead for mercy,

but the rich answer harshly.
(Prov. 18:23)

The idea is that when we reflect on such contrasts, we can grow in wisdom.

Finally, Lowth used **synthetic** parallelism as a catch-all category for anything that is not synonymous or antithetic. Synthetic parallelism typically involves a progression of ideas, so that one thing follows another. Take this passage from Psalm 84:

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

⁷ They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.

While the end of verse 6 may contain an element of synonymous parallelism, these verses are more about developing an idea. In keeping with the focus on pilgrimage, the emphasis is on movement.

Two of Lowth's examples of synthetic parallelism eventually came to have their own names. The first is now usually called **staircase** or **climactic** parallelism. Psalm 93:3-4 provides a dramatic example:

³ The seas have lifted up, Lord,
the seas have lifted up their voice;
the seas have lifted up their pounding waves.

⁴ Mightier than the thunder of the great waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea—
the Lord on high is mighty.

The repetition of phrases (like a staircase) creates a crescendo that builds to a climax. In this passage, we can imagine the waves growing in size!

Another type of synthetic parallelism is commonly called **numerical** parallelism. This is a poetic use of counting, something that is used to great effect in Amos 1:

³ For three sins of Damascus,
even for four, I will not relent.

The same device occurs four more times in the rest of the chapter.

THE SHARPENING THEORY

Robert Lowth established the basics of Hebrew Parallelism, yet his simple categories were not beyond criticism. Scholars objected that the synthetic category was ill-defined, that the term *parallelism* may imply too much similarity between the lines, and that parallel structures are not exclusive to poetry, but can be found elsewhere in the Bible as well.

The most forceful critique came from James Kugel, the author of *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (1981).³ Kugel developed what we might call the “Sharpening Theory” of Hebrew Parallelism. To understand what he meant, it is good to reflect on the nature of proverbs.

Proverbs are a bit like riddles. When someone says, “the apple does not fall far from the tree,” it takes us a moment to figure out what that really means. A proverb makes us stop and think. James Kugel points out that in the Bible this quality is sometimes described as a certain sharpness. A proverb pricks our conscience and makes us reflect on the proper way to act. Unfortunately, the fool feels the prick, but does not benefit from it:

Like a thornbush in a drunkard’s hand
is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. (Proverbs 26:9)

If we take these observations about proverbs and apply them to Hebrew Parallelism, then we see that the parallel lines also force us to slow down and consider their relationship. At first, we might observe mostly repetition, but a closer look reveals that there is more to the picture. The unique features of each line stand out in sharp relief. This makes reading the Bible exciting. The following verse provides a good example:

Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for;
through the fear of the Lord evil is avoided. (Proverbs 16:6)

Is the same thought expressed twice? Not really. Not only do the lines mention different, yet related actions (love and faithfulness; the fear of the Lord), but the verse makes us contemplate the connection between atonement and avoidance of sin. Atonement might make up for *past* transgressions, whereas avoidance is about *future* temptations. In this way, the proverb creates a complex picture that encourages the righteous to live wisely.

MIDRASH

James Kugel further pointed out that Jewish rabbis who interpreted the Bible preferred to focus on the differences between parallel lines.

In the Jewish tradition, the word *Talmud* refers to a variety of rabbinic texts that came to supplement the Old Testament books. After the return from exile in Babylon (6th century BC), the Jews increasingly developed an oral tradition that interpreted the Torah (the five books of Moses) and added further regulations and customs. Written compilations of the Talmud stem from as early as the third century AD. The act of interpreting the Talmud and the Bible came to be known as *Midrash*. This word refers to both rabbinic interpretation and an actual written collection of such interpretations.

Rabbis who practiced Midrash (especially during medieval times) often came up with ingenious ways to contrast poetic lines that seemed to say the same thing. Let’s look at a couple

of examples that Kugel provides. First, we read in Genesis 21:1:

Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised [or spoken].

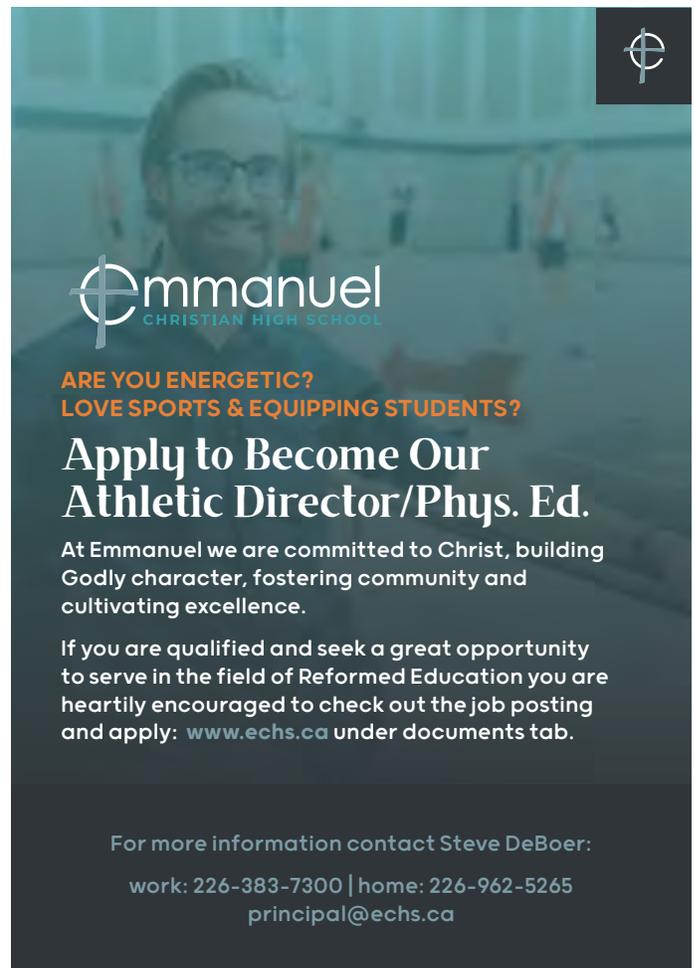
Sounds the same. But at least one commentator suggested that the last “he” might refer to Abraham. A couple of verses earlier (Gen. 20:17), Abraham had prayed on behalf of Abimelek:

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again.

Taking this line into consideration, Gen. 21:1 might be interpreted to mean:

Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he, *Abraham*, had spoken to God about in his prayer, namely to provide fertility.

Suddenly the two lines become quite different in meaning.



The advertisement features a teal background with a blurred image of a man in a suit. In the top right corner, there is a small black square containing a white cross symbol. The text is as follows:

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principal@echs.ca

The astonishing thing about biblical poetry is that it generally translates into any language.



The second pronoun he now refers to Abraham. Here is another example, from the instructions for Passover celebrations:

Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread. (Deuteronomy 16:3)

A midrashic reading might note that these are two different commandments—a negative and a positive one. Not only must bread with yeast not be eaten, but unleavened bread must be eaten.

It is in part because medieval rabbis were so focused on the differences that a full understanding of Hebrew Parallelism was lost during this time and had to be recovered by scholars such as Robert Lowth. At the same time, the Midrash does remind us not to assume that parallelism is always about exact similarity. The differences are important!

A DYNAMIC MOVEMENT

Kugel's Sharpening Theory has us examine each set of parallel lines on its own terms. Instead of reducing parallelism to a few main types, we look for a wide variety of features. For each verse, the question is, how does the second line (B) extend the first (A)? To use Kugel's wording, it's not "A=B" but "A, and what's more, B." Instead of Lowth's three main categories, we can now have any number of relationships between A and B. It is up to each reader to meditate carefully on the subtle similarities and differences between the lines.

The scholar Robert Alter, expanding on the work of James Kugel, provides a great description of this relationship between A and B. He talks about a "dynamic movement."⁴ The second line should never seem predictable or merely repetitive. There's something captivating about the way the thought is extended. For Alter, the second line often includes an intensification or focusing of the first thought. You can compare it to seeing something and then getting out the binoculars or microscope to take a closer look. The tricolon (a triple parallelism) in Psalm 100:3 provides a great example:

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Each line zooms in a little. Each line makes the thought more specific. This dynamic movement between the lines requires our participation. As readers, we are drawn into the text.

If that sounds like a lot of work, then recall that Hebrew Parallelism is also quite slow-moving and unhurried. Each idea is expressed in multiple ways. The effect is somewhat like hearing a choir sing in a cathedral, repeating phrases and letting their voices echo through the cavernous space. This is not to say that an Old Testament psalm is like a Bach aria, but that in both cases the speed and cadence is measured and controlled. Important phrases and ideas come back in new form, so that we do not only listen for individual lines, but we also gradually gain a sense of the whole piece.

THE BIG PICTURE

Speaking of the composition as a whole, the final step is to put it all together. It is one thing to spot parallel structures, but it requires more practice to discern how the lines work together.

For example, Psalm 133 has quite a neat and tidy structure, with two similes (verses 2 and 3a) framed by an opening statement (1) and a conclusion (3b):

- ¹ How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!
- ² It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.
- ³ It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

Verse 2 is a great example of what Robert Lowth called staircase parallelism. This technique is all about movement and intensification. Just as the oil runs down the high-priest's beard, so the lines flow on and on. The liquid imagery is extended in the comparison to dew. Clearly, the author of Psalm 133 thought carefully about best to match the form of the poem to the content. The poetry helps to express the message. In other words, not only should brothers live in harmony, but the psalm itself has to have a sense of "unity."

CONCLUSION

In addition to Hebrew Parallelism (the main feature of biblical poetry), God's Word displays many other poetic techniques (personification, chiasmus, etc.). For a long time, Christians have been content to ignore these features, whereas in reality

the beauty of the Bible provides an incredible appeal. Why is a passage such as Isaiah 53 so moving? Why do we memorize Psalm 23 or 103? The poetry in these passages does not detract from the truth of scripture, but makes it resonate in our hearts. I imagine many conversion stories also include an element of awe at the sublimity of Holy Scripture. Mission work is enhanced by bringing out those qualities that make the Bible the Great Book.

I would therefore encourage Christian parents and educators to know the basics of biblical poetry, not only for their own appreciation, but also so they can teach children to marvel at the beauty of the Bible. Psalm 19 describes how the heavens “pour forth speech” (verse 3), before adding, paradoxically, “They have no speech, they use no words; / no sound is heard from them.” Creation can speak of the glory of God, without using actual words. Indeed, we teach children that Nature displays God’s goodness and faithfulness. But Psalm 19 points out that God’s Word (the “law”) is likewise worth meditating on, and it does contain words and speech. The “precepts of the Lord” are “sweeter than honey” and give “light to the eyes.” The fact that the Psalmist used paradoxes, metaphors, and parallelism to describe his delight in the Word can only mean that biblical poetry is an equally nourishing and eye-opening experience. So, take the time to study and appreciate the poetry of the Bible, not just to know why some lines are indented on the page, but to truly savour the divine artistry of the Word. 

Dr. Conrad van Dyk is Professor of English at Concordia University of Edmonton, where he teaches everything from medieval literature to children’s classics. Recently he has started creating online literary courses from a Christian perspective (and for a reasonable price). The very first course is a detailed introduction to biblical poetry which you can find at LitCompanion.com. Portions of this course have been used in this article. He attends Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Quotations from the Bible are from the NIV, with one exception. For Psalm 133, I have reintroduced the word “brothers.”
- ² I have used G. Gregory’s English translation (1753) of Robert Lowth’s *On the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, which is freely available online.
- ³ See James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Yale UP, 1981). The examples of Midrash are taken from Kugel, pp. 98-106; the discussion of how A and B relate can be found on p. 8. Kugel’s ideas were developed by S. E. Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford UP, 1994), who suggests that we tend to see three patterns of parallelism, i.e., A=B (comparison and contrast), A>B (the second line is subordinated to the first), and A<B (where the second line develops the first, for example through intensification or comparison). A summary of Gillingham’s approach can be found in William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction*

to Biblical Interpretation (Thomas Nelson, 2004), p. 289ff. Personally, I prefer Kugel’s less formulaic approach, where each set of lines is treated on its own terms.

- ⁴ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (Basic Books, 1985), p. 10.



The Free Reformed School Association (Tas) Inc. invites applications for the following positions:

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For more information, contact the Principal, Mr Daniel Coote

- E-mail: cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au

THE WORDS A FATHER SPEAKS

The words a father speaks to his children in the privacy of the home are not overheard at the time, but, as in the whispering galleries, they will be clearly heard at the end and by posterity.

– Richter

by Christine Farenhorst

One of the earliest recollections I have of my father, Louis Praamsma, is seeing him stand with his face full of shaving lather in front of the bedroom sink and mirror. My crib was in my parents' bedroom and inevitably he would turn away from the small sink, grimace and pretend that he was coming towards me to chase me. It made me squeal with a mixture of delight and horror.

When my own children were very small, this scene was repeated. Opa often chased them down the hall, imparting a shaving lather kiss to those he caught. The boys, fascinated by the ritual of shaving, had a great desire to copy – to do what their grandfather did and what their father also did. The truth is that parents, fathers and mothers, play a tremendously big role in our development.

In 2014 a research group reported that many young children watched an average of three hours of television a day. Today screen time would likely be longer. There are families that turn the television on when they get up and do not turn it off until they go to bed. The study concluded



that with as little as twenty seconds of television watching, children just over a year old were able to repeat actions seen during twenty seconds of time. The conclusion being that little ones will copy what they see going on around them.

I have another wonderful and early recollection – the recollection of my father kneeling in front of his big, four poster bed – kneeling in his striped pajamas, head down on the rumped blanket. Every morning, as I passed my parents' master bedroom on the way to the bathroom, I beheld him through the half open door, kneeling and praying. And it filled me with a sense of quietness and awe that I should see my father prostrate in this way – so very vulnerable and submissive to Jesus his

Lord.

The biggest memory I have of my father, however, has the title of a hymn. That hymn is *The Church's One Foundation*. It is said that he who sings, prays twice. *The Church's One Foundation* was one of my father's favorite songs and, as such, I would like to write a little about why and when it was written.

The Church's One Foundation is based on Ephesians 5:23b which reads: "Christ is the head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Savior." That text was the cornerstone which my father endeavored during his whole life to pass on to his children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, acquaintances and congregations.

It has been necessary, from time to time, for the church to be defended against heresy. It's certainly true that she needs to be defended against heresies today. *The Church's One Foundation* was written as a defense. The author, Samuel Stone, was also a minister, and he lived during a time in which there was quite a bit of turmoil within the church – his denomination be-

ing Anglican or the Church of England.

The year was 1866. The first five books of the Bible were being criticized. There were men who doubted; men in the Church of England who openly criticized the historicity of these books. It became a theological debate involving the whole Church of England.

Now pastor Samuel Stone, (1839-1900), loved the church. He desired nothing more than to impart the Gospel to the people in his congregation. In the pastorate he served in London, England, he was affectionately known as the "poor man's pastor." In the slums it was said of him that "he created a beautiful place of worship for the humble folk, and made it a center of light in the dark places." He was a gentle, loving man. His personal faith in the inspired Bible, however, made him a fighter when he realized that his faith was being attacked. He loved the Lord and refused to compromise with the Biblical criticism and evolutionary philosophies that were becoming so popular.

Consequently Rev. Stone wrote. As a matter of fact, he wrote a collection of hymns. This collection was called *Lyra Fidelium* or "Lyra of the Faithful," and contained twelve creedal hymns based on the *Apostles' Creed*. They were written to combat the attacks of modern scholars on the Bible attacks which Samuel Stone felt would split up the church.

In the preface of the little hymnbook, he wrote:

"Most clergymen are aware how many of their parishioners, among the poor especially, say the *Creed* in their private prayers. And they cannot but feel how this excellent use, as also its utterance in public worship, is too often accompanied by a very meager comprehension of the breadth and depth of meaning contained in each Article of the Confession of Faith. Such a feeling first suggested to the Author the probable usefulness of a simple and attractive explanation of the *Creed* in the popular form of a series of Hymns, such as might be sung or said in private devotion, at family prayer, or in public worship."

The hymn, *The Church's One Foundation*, is based on that part of the *Apostles' Creed* which reads "I believe in a Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints." Samuel Stone felt very strongly that the oneness of the Church rests, not on man's interpretation of the Bible, but on the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The words of this hymn are very meaningful for believers. It is a song which is also tremendously comforting. Below is the first stanza:

*The church's one foundation,
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.*

Samuel Stone based the words of the first stanza on:

- "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." – 1 Cor. 3:11
- "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." – John 3:3
- "Even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it." – Eph. 5:25
- "The Church of God which He purchased with His Own Blood." – Acts 20:28

As previously mentioned, this was one of my father's favorite hymns and he sang it with nasal gusto and a deep rooted faith.

Before he died, my father wrote: "When I think of the approaching day of my death, I have only one foundation on which I can stand: the free grace of God."

To his grandchildren he left this message.

"My grandchildren, I love you all. God has something in store for you: a heritage in heaven (I Peter 1:4). Never be afraid to confess the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE NEW HAS COME

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST

2022 / 262 PAGES



I've seen another reviewer suggest that this might be Christine Farenhorst's best book yet, and I think I might agree.

Linnet is a five-year-old Dutch girl who, we discover, knows absolutely nothing about God. Her ignorance is so profound that when the Nazis invade, and an occupying soldier tells little Linnet about the wonderful family that "God has given" him, she wonders, *Who is this God he is talking about?* and *Is God German?* For our own children, who may take always knowing God for granted, it will be eye-opening to follow what it's like, and how wonderful it is, for someone to be introduced to God for the first time.

Linnet has the same wonders any kid might have, but her wartime experiences also have her asking deeper questions, including a child's version of "God are you really there?"

I had to figure to what age category to share this review, and picked "Children's Fiction," but *The New Has Come* is that rare sort that has appeal for all ages. The World War II setting and charming protagonist will grab your children; moms and dads will appreciate Linnet's questions and the opportunities they present to talk about God with our kids, and grandparents will get more than a little misty-eyed at just how beautifully this tale is told. I could not recommend it more highly!

– JON DYKSTRA

In that way you will never have any reason to be afraid. If God gives me the opportunity, I will continue to pray for you; the time is short and by His grace we will see each other again.

“My grandchildren you often have heard the word 'covenant' which means that God is faithful and gracious to us from generation to generation.

“I remember my own two grandfathers – the one was a cabinet maker (he owned a small factory where furniture was made), and the other was the principal of a Christian school. The one lost money because he trusted his neighbors too much; the other was always underpaid because the Christian schools were poor. Both served the Lord with a clear conscience.

“My father and my father in law were both Christian teachers, sacrificing for the sake of the Lord 'the treasures of Egypt.' One of the greatest gifts of the Lord in my life and in that of your grandmother has been that our children chose to profess the name of the Lord. “That is the heritage that comes to you – God gave to each of you His special gifts. The greatest gift is that He has promised to be your Father for Christ's sake. Trust Him, trust His Word, trust His promises, and you will experience, even if worst should come to worst, that He is good.”

Thank God for the Samuel Stones in this world! Thank God for Louis Praamsmas! Thank God for all those fathers and mothers who are not afraid to confess their faith each day before their children! Read again the small noteworthy saying by Richter and ponder it.

“The words a father speaks to his children in the privacy of the home are not overheard at the time, but, as in the whispering galleries, they will be clearly heard at the end and by posterity.” 

Christine Farenhorst has a new novel “The New Has Come” which can be found at most any online retailer.



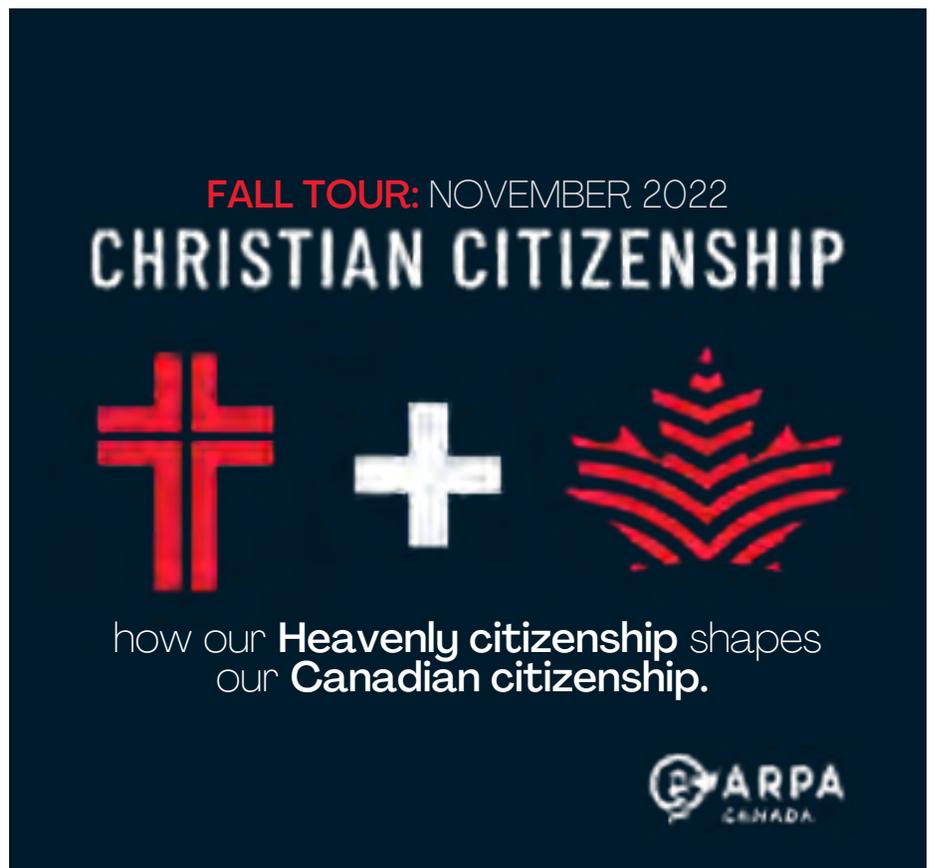
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CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

how our **Heavenly citizenship** shapes our **Canadian citizenship**.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

7-5

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 2!

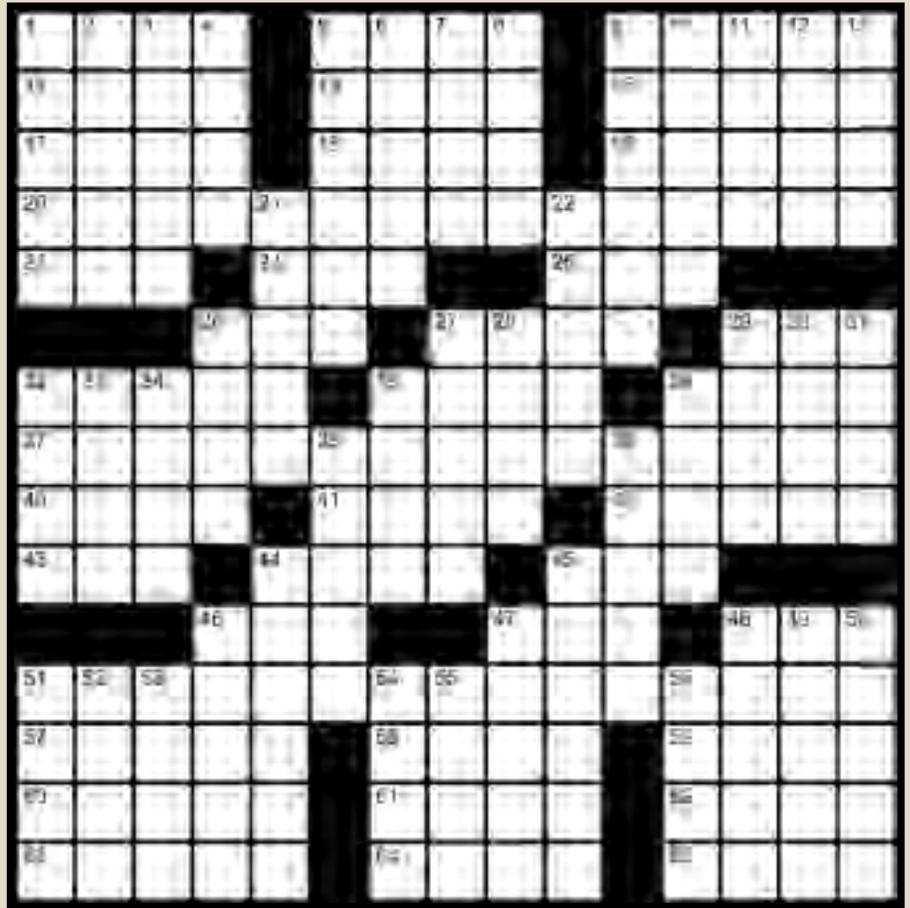
ACROSS

1. "Does a ____ fall in a snare...?" (Amos 3)
5. Do they eat ____ in ____?
9. En _____ = in a group, all together
14. Small berry that's been called a superfood
15. Multiple authors in "Works Cited" (abbr.)
16. Organic compound
17. Brooklyn basketball, rhymes with 12 Down
18. Make (someone) annoyed or irritated
19. Backhands or one-timers
20. Infection of trees in Netherlands?
23. "sent to ____ out the land" (Num. 13)
24. "the voice of ____ crying" (Matt. 3)
25. "Abner the son of ____" (1 Sam. 14)
26. "I can't believe we ____ the whole turkey!"
27. Originally Soviet tactical ballistic missile
29. Sphere (might be found in orbit?)
32. "let me not be put to _____" (Ps. 25)
35. "do not oppress... the _____" (Zech. 7)
36. "_____ of influence" (2 Cor. 10)

37. Quality praised in Kipling's poem "If"
40. "How did he _____ your eyes?" (John 9)
41. Shrek is one
42. "a tree... that sends out... _____" (Jer. 17)
43. One thing that a turkey can be roasted in
44. "He shall _____ through the sea" (Zech. 10)
45. "Gunga ____" (Kipling poem, later a movie)
46. "he sent out ____ fathers" (Acts 7)
47. "Life isn't all... ____ pie." (C.S. Lewis)
48. Mediocre passing mark on your report card
51. Rhymes with *dilly-dallying*; similar meaning
57. Clear and present danger
58. Type of chute or medic
59. Bacteria culture medium from seaweed
60. "Make _ _____, eh!" "No, it's your turn."
61. One who helps you (will partly rally to you?)
62. One kind of unclean bird (Lev. 11, Deut. 14)
63. "Keep... free... from love of _____" (Heb. 13)
64. Playthings
65. Editing command to leave it in, not delete it

DOWN

1. The big ones worked under Miller and Count Basie.
2. Defrost windshields when they _____.
3. Nickname for Mole's best friend
4. A compact one might hold music.
5. Peaceful; tranquil
6. Useful; practical
7. Soothing and aromatic ointment
8. Pro-life acronym – going downhill?
9. "I _____ up; I should have asked you first."
10. One of the twelve tribes
11. Greek word for Stoics' meeting place
12. "if the Son _____ you free" (John 8)
13. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language
21. Where you pay to stay
22. Accustom (someone) to something
26. "Let all the people say, ' _____'" (Ps. 106)
27. Takes wing, goes aloft
28. Morse or (in Canada) the Criminal
29. Layered cookie
30. "...and I will give you _____" (Matt. 11)
31. Lowest adult male singing voice
32. What you put in the pig trough
33. Type of air filter
34. Beth-_____ = "house of sin" (Hos. 5)
35. Used to secure a tent
36. Unknown author (abbr)
38. "The _____ head is a crown" (Prov. 16, KJV)
39. "Abandon ship. This is not a _____!"
44. Fixed, movable, or block and tackle
45. " _____ have dangerous ends." (Henry VI)
46. "by nature a wild _____ tree" (Rom. 11)
47. "God... has given the _____ rain" (Joel 2)
48. Ten years is old: first double-_____ birthday.
49. Describing ancestry through the female line
50. Long-legged wading bird, also called a heron
51. Annoying mass emails or canned meat
52. Prefix referring to blood, e.g. _____globin
53. Essential element for red blood cells
54. Petty feud, or what might have led to it
55. Circle of light showing holiness
56. Shoots the breeze; doesn't stop talking



by Marty VanDriel



A FILM ABOUT FIGHTING

Into the Light is an upcoming documentary that will equip God's people to fight the pull of pornography



This is an overview of an episode of Lucas Holvliuwer and Tyler Vanderwoude's Real Talk podcast. Real Talk is a podcast of Reformed Perspective featuring great conversations on everything from propaganda to mental health, and if you haven't checked it out already, you really should. And you really can, at www.RealTalkPodcast.ca.

On this their 50th episode, Real Talk's Lucas and Tyler invited filmmakers Jake Valk and John-Michael Bout to talk about pornography, its devastating effects on Christians, and how the Lord's people can fight against this terrible pervasive sin.

Bout began by describing in a very real and personal way his own decade-long struggle with pornography – the feelings of guilt at what he knew was sinful, difficulties with anger brought on by his own hypocrisy, and his gradual drift away from the Lord with a conscience made dull over time. Bout described how grateful he is that God led other Christians on his path who had turned away from porn by the

Lord's grace, and dedicated themselves to helping others with this pervasive, insidious sin.

A PROVIDENTIAL CONVERSATION

So what made the two of them think about creating a documentary? Jake Valk shared a story of having coffee with Christian author Tim Challies, whose book *Sexual Detox* was of great help. Not (yet) knowing that Valk was a filmmaker, Challies wondered if books were the best means to address the problem of pornography: wouldn't video be a better medium to reach those caught up in that cycle?

This suggestion fanned a spark into a flame: why not make a documentary that

would inspire people to take the steps to get out of the grip of pornography? And that is just what Valk and Bout did. Their new film, to be called *Into the Light* introduces six speakers with expertise in Christian responses to porn, not just in understanding that porn is sinful and wrong, but with real and practical suggestions for how to stop sinful habits, from the perspective of both those struggling with the sin, and those trying to help "the struggler."

Valk explained:

"(One of our speakers) is Deepak Reju; he wrote the book *Rescue Plan*. He and Jonathan Holmes wrote a pair of

books that are really good. One of the things he talks about is the philosophy of locking down a phone: how to cut off all access, and he walks you through that process from the vantage point of someone who is struggling with porn, but also if you're helping someone who is struggling, and understand how they would be tempted to get out of the full lockdown of a phone, and so you can be extra alert to make sure that you really are shutting down a device for all it's worth. So you can kind of take everything that our speakers talk about in the film from two different angles – the struggler, and the (one helping the struggler).”

Valk and Bout want the film to be made available for no cost to churches, organizations, and individuals, to be a resource to as many people as possible. To make this work, they've been fundraising through a Christian crowdfunding site with a target of \$85,000 (you can find out how to donate at their page GiveSendGo.com/IntoTheLight).

IT'S NOT ABOUT STOPPING THE BAD, BUT EMBRACING THE ONE WHO IS GOOD

Bout emphasized that freeing people from porn is not the end goal: the real goal is to help people find Jesus Christ, and to have Him be the foundation of their new life.

“There are other methods to get free from pornography that don't involve God – there are many secular programs... but if you get free of porn and still lose your soul, what's the point?”

Valk stated emphatically that a documentary can never take the place of a program like Life Renewal, with accountability, personal connections, and a thorough teaching program.

“Life Renewal is way better than what we can make. 100 percent! Life Renewal is so thorough; they really walk through the process and do it over a year. That's way better than this!”

But there's also a place for a film like *Into the Light* to help get conversations started, and to push a struggling sinner to seek help through a program like Life Renewal and other Christian resources.

“If you find this film, and you're uncovering sin, and you're bringing it into the light, and you're really building your relationship with God, and you want to go to something like Life Renewal which will take you way, way deeper, please do! They do a phenomenal job.”

FIRST, STOP THE BLEEDING

So what else is in the film? Bout summarized a section that deals with “triage”

“Deepak Reju gets into the radical practical measures of cutting off access (to porn)... if you walked into a hospital with an open wound, you're not going to be getting asked ‘oh, so what are your symptoms, what are some things you need?’ The first thing they do is they take you in and stitch up the gaping bleeding wound so that they can have the healing take place, and to use that analogy, when you're dealing with pornography it's not legalism to say we have to start by cutting off access... cutting off total access.”

Valk remembered asking one of the speakers, Heath Lambert, when it was OK to introduce the internet or social media back into someone's life.

“Heath gave a really thoughtful response to that, a large part of it being that you're not necessarily the best person to make that choice, so having good community in your life saying, hey brother, you know it's been two months since you last fell into pornography, you're displaying good devotional habits, you're really walking with the Lord, I can see that in your life. If you enjoy Instagram, I think it's reasonable you can have it back, let's see how that goes... So other people in your life can give you an opportunity to have a better perspective.”

Bout followed up on his own story:

“There are a lot of things that I cut out, and there's (just) a couple of things I've reintroduced back. I never had to go as radical as going to a flip phone – actually that may have been a good thing to do; I really respect people who do that. So for myself, I've actually kept most of the (guards) that I put in place, and just because I know I would so much rather live with the inconvenience than deal with the temptation or the potential relapse.”

WHAT ABOUT RELAPSE?

Speaker Ellen Mary Dykas is highlighted in one of the chapters in the film called “Endurance,” dealing with the reality of sinners struggling with a relapse, or a step backwards. Bout stated that it is very rare that one is able to “change instantly, although that is not beyond the Lord's power. Your inadequacies, your failures do not mean that God is not able or willing to change you.” Valk summarized some of what Dykas taught:

“Your identity is not your track record. You are not your success last week, your success yesterday, the pattern of sin... even if you do really well, that's still not your identity. Your identity has to be as a Christian, as a loved, cherished child of God, because that's where you find your root in fighting in the first place.”

The last section of the film is presented by Garrett Kell, and reminds viewers of the hope that we have in Jesus' saving work. Valk summarized: No matter what our sinful tendencies are today,

“one day all of this sin, that darkness, like what you did last night, all that's going to be gone if you're a Christian... God's going to do away with this sin nature that we have, and that's going to be incredible, and then there's going to be (forever) of being porn free... I won't have to shed another tear, an angry, frustrated tear (at my sins)... There is hope beyond this (life) where there are no tears anymore!” 

For more information on “*Into the Light*,” go to IntoTheLightDocumentary.com.



Rena Schild / Shutterstock.com

NO PLACE FOR PRO-LIFE CYNICISM

by Tabitha Ewert

Roe’s reversal shows us what God can accomplish for and through His people.

“In the days when the idea of a surprise pregnancy was only an abstraction, I had never suspected that I could feel fierce love for an embryo. I wanted to discuss my mixed-up feelings with Jon, but I didn’t know how, especially since it was clear that his mind was already made up.... Whatever else I might be able to do for our child, I knew I could never force Jon to love it. Of all the pains that await us in this world, I most desired to protect it from feeling unwanted.”

This is how Jess explains her rationale for why she had an abortion. The embryo was loved but unwanted; protected from future emotional pain, but killed.

Jess’ story captures so well our culture’s cognitive dissonance regarding life in the womb. We know full well that a pregnant woman has a growing, devel-

oping human being in her womb. But we legally allow that human being to be dismembered or poisoned for any reason the mother chooses. Here in Canada, we allow that fate right up to birth. The pro-life movement exists because we see this tragedy, we seek to expose the cognitive dissonance, and we strive to save lives.

There are those who are deeply cynical of pro-life work. I’ve had many express to me how futile they think pro-life activism is in a pro-choice culture like Canada. Why the skepticism? *Should we really believe that things will only get worse when it comes to abortion laws?*

That opinion certainly isn’t based on historical trends. Legal slavery was ended, we don’t legally subjugate women anymore, and many oppressive regimes have been defeated. Just because a mountain is difficult to climb, and we can’t see

every part of the path from where we stand, doesn’t mean that the mountain is insurmountable.

Look south of the border and ask, how many thought *Roe v Wade* would be overturned in our lifetime? Yet, that happened in June 2022 when the U.S. Supreme Court released their *Dobbs* decision which found:

*“The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion; *Roe* and *Casey* are overruled; and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives [at the state level].”*

This incredibly huge win means that now individual states are free to enact near-total bans of abortion! Examining how this came to be and recognizing the

power of God's hand in human political affairs, is an encouragement and call to action for Canadians who also want to see pre-born children in Canada protected in our lifetime.

THE STATE OF AFFAIRS PRE-ROE

Unlike Canada, where criminal law is passed federally, in the U.S. criminal laws are passed by the individual states. Alongside Canada and many European countries, there was a growing trend in the U.S. toward legalizing more abortions that started in the 1960s and continued in the 1970s. What I didn't know until reading the *Dobbs* decision was how slowly that movement was happening in the U.S. In fact, in 1973 when *Roe* was decided, *30 states still prohibited abortion at all stages*. Well over half the country banned abortion, regardless of the age of the pre-born child. With one fell swoop from the U.S. Supreme Court that all changed, requiring states to allow abortions before the pre-born child was viable – a standard that was preserved and modified in the 1992 *Casey* decision.

Now, in 2022, that decision has been reversed. The pro-life movement in the U.S. has exemplified tireless work toward this day, always striving to produce quality legal literature, educate the public, and continue to work one step at a time.

Of course, it wasn't just the effort of the pro-life movement that brought us to this point. Had Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg retired during President Obama's tenure, President Trump would not have had the opportunity to appoint three Supreme Court Justices. Those three justices were needed to overturn *Roe*. We can praise God for granting growth and in His providence providing favorable circumstances for this huge victory. It clearly was God's blessing, along with the faithful labor of many, that resulted in this success.

But we don't immediately go back to where we were. We don't see 30 states banning abortion at all stages. Ground was lost in the decades since *Roe*, not to mention millions of lives. All to say, this ruling is a victory, but it still comes with mixed emotions. There is still so much more that needs to be done. Yet, as Cana-

dians we can take encouragement from the victory and take note of the work yet to do resulting from the *Dobbs* decision.

DOBBS AND FREEDOM

What did *Dobbs* decide? If you believe one of my law school classmates, "The decision also opens the door to forced abortions. Either way, your uterus belongs to the state now." How could someone as intelligent as this guy come to such a strange conclusion? It comes from a very deliberate framing of the abortion issue by abortion proponents.

We've known this for quite a while – we call ourselves pro-life because we want to emphasize that unjustifiably taking a human life is wrong. Abortion advocates call themselves pro-choice because they want to emphasize that mothers ought to be free to make choices. This was described in another abortion case in the United States, this one from 1992 and referred to as *Casey*. Incidentally, *Casey* was also overturned by the new *Dobbs* decision. In *Casey*, Justice Kennedy said, "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." The awful extension of having this liberty to define the mystery of human life is that mothers have had the freedom to define pre-born human beings out of existence, therefore making them discardable.

The *Dobbs* decision addresses Justice Kennedy's definition of liberty head-on by trying to clarify that it is a good thing when, at times, there are limits on liberty. Such a definition of liberty cannot plausibly be absolute, the justices say in *Dobbs*, because "while individuals are certainly free to *think* and to *say* what they wish about 'existences,' 'meaning,' the 'universe,' and 'the mystery of human life,' they are not always free to *act* in accordance with those thoughts." Liberty with such an individual source cannot be absolute. The state has a role in limiting it.

Was my classmate right then? If the State can infringe liberty, does this mean that states are now able to force abortions? Certainly not by the logic in *Dobbs*. Liberty is important and does

require a justification to be impinged. The justification is present here because according to *Dobbs*, "Abortion destroys what those decisions call 'potential life' and what the law at issue in this case regards as the life of an 'unborn human being.'"

That is, you have the freedom to do so much, but you don't have the freedom to take a life. It's quite something to see the U.S. Supreme Court say this regarding abortion.

FORCED MOTHERHOOD

The pro-abortion side is insistent that this is an unjustifiable limitation on women's freedom, sometimes utilizing the term "forced motherhood." The idea is that abortion restrictions are forcing women to become mothers by not allowing them to end a pregnancy.

Early feminists were also concerned about forced motherhood, but they had



An abortion supporter carrying sign created by the abortion rights lobby group NARAL, that is inadvertently pro-life, sharing a message we desperately want the other side to understand.

a very different concept of what that meant. In their view, the motherhood was forced if the sex was forced. The problem was never the child who resulted from the sex – the problem was the man who did not respect the woman. And certainly, the child should not forfeit their life to alleviate the parents from the consequences of their actions.

So much of the language has been twisted when it comes to discussing abortion. When a woman chooses whether to give birth or whether to have an abortion, the choice is not whether or not to become a mother. Once pregnant, the freedom to choose to be a mother is, in the words of C.S. Lewis, “Free, as a man is free to drink while he is drinking. He is not free still to be dry.”

Once pregnant, a woman is a mother – she cannot choose otherwise. It isn’t the law that forces that choice, it’s biology. She can end her pregnancy by ending the life of her child, but that does not rewind the clock back to before she became a mother. Sex comes with the potential for procreation. Once procreation has occurred you can kill the resulting life, but that just makes you the mother of a dead child.

Are women doomed then? It turns out, the answer is no. In fact, when women are denied the choice to end the life of their child, they don’t generally view motherhood as forced. In The Turnaway Study, researchers looked at women who went to an abortion clinic but were denied having one because they were past the gestational limit in that state. They found that women’s choices changed. Within a week after being denied an abortion only 65% of women surveyed still wanted one. By the child’s first birthday this was down to 7% and five years later it was only 4%. Remember, these are women who chose abortion. These aren’t women who just thought about abortion, these are women who made it to the abortion clinic, despite travel expenses and the logistics of actually getting there. The wanted or unwanted response to the pregnancy faded. The bond between parent and child persisted.

CHILDREN ARE A GIFT

No one is suggesting that pregnancy and raising children are easy. But it must be admitted that our abortion culture has fixated on the difficulties. Legal scholar Erika Bachiochi sums it up this way:

“Pregnancy, with all its risks and demands, is seen primarily as a burden when viewed from the perspective of the unencumbered, autonomous male. Seen from the perspective of most women, and the men who love them, childbearing is a great gift.”

Throughout all human history, mankind – men and women – have viewed the risk and hardship of pregnancy to be worth it.

For those of us who believe what God tells us in the Bible, we understand that this great gift is one that comes from our loving, sovereign Savior (Psalm 127:3). Children are entrusted to the education and care of parents but



Another abortion supporter carrying an inadvertently pro-life sign, and one that explains well how a culture that embrace abortion will also see death as an answer for aging and disability.

are not property to be disposed of at will (Ephesians 6:4). All parents fail to some extent, but the further promise for us and for the countless pre-born children at risk of losing their lives to abortion is that even if “my father and my mother have forsaken, but the LORD will take me in.” (Psalm 27:10).

That is the ethic the pro-life movement continues to exhibit and teach to our abortion minded culture. The *Dobbs* decision demonstrates it, and it’s up to us to continue that work here in Canada. There is no place in this work for cynicism or for giving up when we serve a God who works great and mighty wonders for and through his people. **RP**

Tabitha Ewert is We Need a Law’s (WeNeedaLaw.ca) Legal Counsel and a member of ARPA Canada’s (ARPACanada.ca) Law and Policy team in Ottawa.

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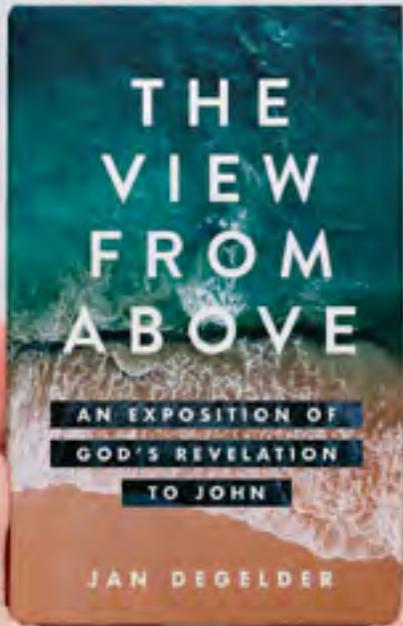


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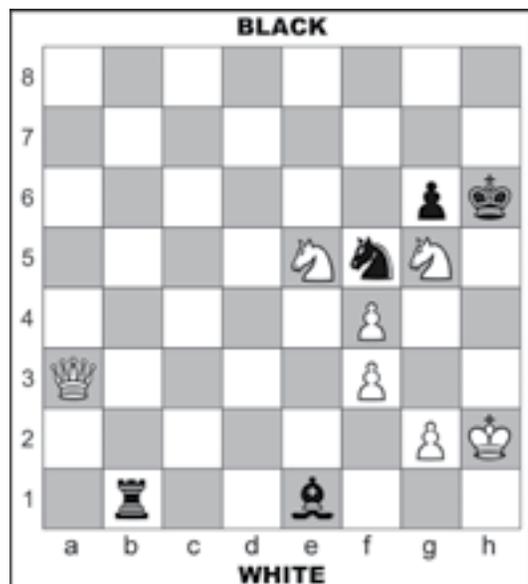
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ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES



Chess Puzzle #270



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

Riddle for Punsters

#270 - "Can you _____ re him in jail?"

Why was the art thief sad? He was in a depressed fr _____ of mind because he had just had a serious br _____ with the law for ca _____ ing on behalf of a crooked election candidate and the trial judge did not p _____ t a rosy future for the thief even though the thief maintained that he had been _____ ed.

Problem to Ponder

#270 - "Memorable, and costly, holidays!"

Travis' family spent a week on holidays at a mountain lake resort in the forests of B.C. He and his wife and their 2 children each paid \$245.20 for round trip airline tickets on sale. The resort cost was \$1850 (incl. taxes) and included free continental breakfasts each day. They averaged \$135 per day for the family's other meals during the week. Travis paid \$790 at the airport for a one week car rental. They spent \$355 on gas during their trip, including driving to and from the closest Reformed church on Sunday, and spent \$83.55 on souvenirs.

Tertullian's family also travelled to that B.C. forest but he rented, for \$180 per day, a motor-home for his family to stay in for 7 days at the forest's trailer park. They spent 2 days travelling each way and each time spent one night in a trailer park for \$45. They spent a total of \$560 on groceries and supplies. The motor home travelled 5 km per L of gasoline, for which the average price was \$2.25/L, and they travelled 2150 km each way. Rental insurance for the motor-home was \$230. Which family's holiday cost less? By how much?

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTIONS

Solution to Chess Puzzle #269

"Again sacrifices bring success!"



WHITE TO MATE IN 3

Descriptive Notation	Algebraic Notation
1. R-KR4 ch	BxR
2. B-B8 ch	K-N4
3. QxP mate	3. Qb6xe3++

BLACK TO MATE IN 4

Descriptive Notation	Algebraic Notation
1. -----	N-B6 ch
2. PxN	P-Q8=Q dis ch
3. N-K2	RxN ch
4. K-N3	Q-KN8 mate

Answer to Riddle for Punsters

#269 - "Gas guzzlers for sale?"

Anyone who goes to Smooth-talking Wally's Car Lot and buys a used car with a V-8 engine and a sign on the car that says "All **gas**oline companies recommend buying this model of car" would be making a **fuel**ish mistake (especially at gas prices nowadays, resulting in most people being "down in the dumps" when they are down at the **p**umps).

Answer to Problem to Ponder

#269 - "Many Empty Student Desks?"

A high school (grades 9-12) has four classes, one for each grade. Each grade has four fewer students than the grade below it (so grade 12 has 4 fewer students than grade 11, and so on). One day, due to a severe rainstorm, each grade had 4 students absent, except for grade 9 which had 5 students absent. As a result, only 79 students were present at the school that day.

a) How many students are enrolled in the grade 11 class?

On the stormy day $5 + 4 + 4 + 4 = 17$ were absent, 79 were present thus there

are $17 + 79 = 96$ students in total. Let x be the number of grade 11 students, thus grade 9 has $x+8$, grade 10 has $x+4$ and grade 12 has $x-4$ students. Therefore the total number of students is $96 = (x+8) + (x+4) + x + (x-4)$ so $96 = 4x+8$ so $88 = 4x$ so $22 = x$. Thus there are **22 students enrolled in grade 11.**

b) How many students are at the school on a day when 25% are home sick and 1/8 of the students are gone on a field trip?

25% of 96 = $0.25 \times 96 = 24$ sick and 1/8 of 96 = 12 are on the trip so $96 - 36 = 60$ students are present that day.

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DOLPHINS: TRIBES OF THE SEA

DOCUMENTARY
2006 / 41 MINUTES
RATING: 7/10



Did you know dolphins can use their echolocation – their own version of sonar – to tell what's inside a sealed wooden box? They use this echolocation to not just find fish, but they might even use it to stun them! This documentary dives down deep with these speedy swimmers but we also get to visit with them in the research pool and learn how their trainers are able to communicate back and forth using sign language. It comes out clearly; these are brilliant animals!

One oddity is that while the film's producers are Christians, this is not a Christian presentation – God is never acknowledged. But if the documentary is sadly shy about naming our Creator and Designer, it is thankfully free of any inserted evolutionary assumptions. There's no nod to millions of years, or chance, as an explanation for how dolphins got so clever. That absence is so unusual, it almost had me bump this from a 7 to an 8 – it's just so nice to learn about a cool animal without someone trying to propagandize you.

If you and your family enjoy this wonder, there are other episodes in this *Explore the Wild Kingdom* series that can also be watched for free. Find links to them all at ReformedPerspective.ca.

THE MASTER DESIGNER: THE SONG

DOCUMENTARY
2014 / 76 MINUTES
RATING: 8/10



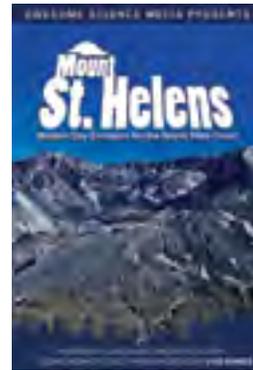
What I most appreciated about *The Master Designer* was this nature documentary's patience, showing us just a half dozen animals, which allowed the time to explore each one in some depth. As the title indicates, this is a Christian production, and all about marveling at what the Master Designer has crafted.

It begins with the bee and its amazing ability to make honey: "It takes 556 bees flying a total of 55,000 miles to gather nectar from an astounding 2 million flowers to make a single pound of honey." Though it has a brain the size of a seed, it's a brilliant architect, with a hive's hexagonal honeycomb structure maximizing storage capacity. Weirder and more wonderful, the bee communicates through the language of dance – yes, really! – wiggling this way and that to tell the other bees where the nectar is to be found. And we shouldn't forget that honey itself is amazing in that it never spoils!

After the bees, five other animals each get this in-depth treatment – wolves, bison, camels, elk, and crickets – and all are a treat. This is a great film the whole family will enjoy. Watch it for free at ReformedPerspective.ca.

MOUNT ST. HELENS: MODERN DAY EVIDENCE FOR THE WORLD WIDE FLOOD

DOCUMENTARY
2012 / 36 MINUTES
RATING: 7/10



Thirty-four years ago, Washington State's Mount St. Helens blew its top. The May 18, 1980 eruption knocked 1,300 feet off the mountain's top, sending a massive landslide down its slope, clearing out a forest of trees, and washing out the lake at its base. For nine straight hours it put out the energy equivalent of *one Hiroshima-type atomic bomb every second*.

This event is of particular interest to creation scientists. The eruption scoured the area clean, but also laid down layers of rock strata from the volcanic ash. It caused the creation of deep, new, instantaneous canyons, that – if we didn't know better – looked to be many thousands of years old. The Mount St. Helens eruption showed that catastrophic events can rapidly create huge geological features. Dr. Steve Austin shows how this has implications for the Flood, showing how it too could have rapidly laid down many layers of rock strata, and carved out even huge features, like the Grand Canyon.

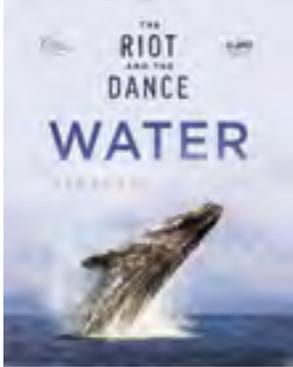
While the video's visuals are pretty tame – no computer graphics and no footage of the actual eruption – if you're interested in the subject matter, this will be fascinating. Watch it for free at ReformedPerspective.ca.

THE RIOT AND THE DANCE: THE TV SERIES

TV SERIES

2022 / 30 MINUTES

RATING: 9/10



Here's God's creation accompanied by a classical/rap soundtrack, and viewed through the eyes of a poet and an adventurer. The narrator, Dr. Gordon Wilson, shares that while he teaches a marine biology class, he "needed to go back to school for this film – scuba school!" Why? "I don't want to just sit back and narrate over some pretty pictures. I wanted to get as close as I can to as many divinely crafted underwater miracles as possible." So down they dive into shark-infested waters, and with no cage to protect him or his crew. Isn't that crazy? "The thing is they're amazing.... We need to stop being so distracted at how frightened you're supposed to be, open your eyes and look intently and see their amazing design!"

Many a Christian nature film will focus more on rebutting evolution than celebrating creation. Or they'll celebrate the creation but fail to mention the Creator. *Riot and the Dance* gets it right on both counts, with nary a mention of evolution, but all sorts of admiration expressed for the God Almighty who can make these marvels.

This is only a half-hour show, but the first of what they hope will be many. And I do too.

Watch this pilot episode for free at ReformedPerspective.ca

LIFE'S STORY: THE ONE THAT HASN'T BEEN TOLD

DOCUMENTARY

2004 / 58 MINUTES RATING: 7/10

This is a gorgeous investigation of how Creation evidences its Creator. *Life's Story* was filmed in more than ten countries and it takes us under the ocean waters too. We're introduced to lions, parrotfish, dolphins, giraffes and so many more critters, exploring the genius apparent not only in their bodies, but in their instincts, and even in their relationship with other animals.

So, for example, we learn how the parrotfish feeds on the algae that grow on coral formations – this fish needs the coral to serve as its shelter and food source. But the coral also needs the parrotfish to clear away the algae, which otherwise might grow unchecked, and choke off the coral. This symbiosis – two creatures needing each other in order to survive – is a testament to God's intertwined design. It's also a problem for evolutionists to explain, because if each needs the other, then which evolved first, the coral or the parrotfish?

God's genius is showcased with one illustration after another, even delving into the creative ways different animal babies are born. Did you know a giraffe baby is born with its mother still standing up, and the afterbirth functioning as a kind of elastic cord to slow the baby's 6-foot descent to the ground? How cool is that? And there's loads of knowledge bombs like that spread throughout.

CAUTION

At one point early on the narrator declares the "debate over the origins of life has raged for 150 years, but now, finally, the debate is over." Though he states it quietly, and his British accent adds some gravitas to it, this is hyperbolic. Evolutionists still exist, so the debate continues, even if it really shouldn't (Rom. 1:20). Other overstatements like this mean that as fun as this could be to watch with your family (while pointing out the hyperbole to the kids), it is not the film you'd show your college classmate who's skeptical about the case against evolution. They'd be better off watching *Evolution's Achilles' Heels* and *Dismantled* instead.

CONCLUSION

A handful of overstatements are what demote this down to being a good, not great, documentary. In its favor it has impressive footage – we're getting close enough to count the lion's teeth, and diving down deep into an underwater world we'd otherwise never see. Viewers will also love all the insights into the intricacies of these critters which are sprinkled liberally throughout. The narrator's calm voice is at times almost sleep-inducing, but the stunning visuals will wake you back up.

And if you enjoy this one, there is a sequel, *Life Story 2: the reason for the journey*, that's almost as good. Both can be watched for free at ReformedPerspective.ca.



A VALLEY OF CONQUERORS

God's work in one Reformed community to set prisoners free from their bondage to sexual sin

by Mark Penninga

The fire crackled in a massive stone fireplace behind us as we talked and sipped coffee. The handcrafted log home that surrounded us was almost finished, after seven years of construction. It was sitting at about 4,000 feet elevation, built on the side of Hudson Bay Mountain, in northwest British Columbia. I was meeting with the home's builder, Bill DeVries, to learn about how God has brought hope to many men and women in the Bulkley Valley whose lives have been impacted by pornography and other forms of sexual bondage. While DeVries was building this stunning home for his clients, God has been working through him and others in this community to rebuild lives.

Unlike the mansion on the mountainside, this work is being used by God to result in something much more valuable – transformed hearts, revitalized families, and captives set free.

When it comes to the hold that Satan has on many in the world through pornography, this story is an exception, not the norm. But just as a spark has been fanned into a flame in one community, the hope is that it sets a fire across this land. For “nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

STEPPING UP WITH TREPIDATION

Reflecting on what started it all, DeVries was upfront with his own story. “I saw the lingering effects of porn use when I was young. The effect is still here. Seeing the impact it had on my own family, I wanted to find a way to break this.”

He can see now how the LORD had been preparing himself and a number of other men in the local





Shortly after the first time it was run, a group of 11 dads introduced the series to their sons in Grade 11 and 12. “The guys that led, led by being open about their own struggles. That opened the door for others to do the same.”

church community to bring leadership to this problem already back in the winter of 2017. A friend had shared with DeVries how he took part in a DVD program called the *Conquer Series* at a local church and was interested in sharing it with others, including the Reformed church community. God stirred the hearts of DeVries and a few other men to step out of their comfort zone and bring this program to the local churches, in particular the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches.

DeVries explained how the program goes to the root of the issue, while always doing so in the context of grace through Christ. “It helps men to understand how a sin problem becomes a brain problem, and why it is so difficult to break free. It leads us to apply Scripture to get away from our shame identity, helping us to see grace, and our identity in Christ. It takes men into a

daily, deep immersion in the Word.” The title takes itself from Romans 8:37: “In Christ we are more than conquerors.”

“I went into it with a lot of trepidation,” DeVries recalled. He knew that dealing with pornography was not something to be done lightly and could impact marriages and lives in a big way.

“We put out a bulletin notice. It was straightforward, describing how 60-70 percent of men struggle with pornography.” Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the ads struck a chord.

180 MEN LEAD THE CHARGE

The first session was held in March of 2018, and 47 men courageously answered the call and showed up. DeVries and the other organizers were ready, with ten men prepared to lead small groups. They shared their own stories of their struggle with sexual sin, setting an example for vulnerability and creating a

spirit of trust.

The *Conquer Series* is much more than a 10-part DVD series. “It’s demanding. You get a half hour of work every day, and then three phone calls to different guys in their group every week.” But not only did those men carry on through the program, it has been run again in the Bulkley Valley many times since then, and to a variety of groups including teens and women.

Shortly after the first time it was run, a group of 11 dads introduced the series to their sons in Grade 11 and 12. “The guys that led, led by being open about their own struggles. That opened the door for others to do the same.” It takes courage to be vulnerable with other men. It takes even more courage to talk about this with their sons. But DeVries shared that he had already come to a place of surrender. “I had nothing left for me to defend so it wasn’t that hard

for me to speak into it.”

The impact was immediate and others noticed. That September, another 49 men signed up to do the series. Since 2018 it has been run at least four times, though the group has become smaller each time since so many had already gone through it. In total it has reached about 180 men in the area, a couple dozen of whom have done it twice.

It didn't take long for local women and youth to follow the men's lead. The organization behind the *Conquer Series* has also produced a number of other programs that have been run locally.

EXPERIENCING VICTORY

With so many men, women, and children having gone through these programs, the impact on the entire community has been both quiet and profound.

Pastor James Slaa was the minister of the Smithers Canadian Reformed Church

while the *Conquer Series* was run locally. Not only did he intentionally incorporate the issue in his preaching, he also took part in the series himself, something that requires an extra degree of vulnerability for a pastor. The fruit was evident quickly. “The exercise of immediately being able to confess our sins to others is something that rarely happened before, and *Conquer Series* provided that place for the men to come clean in just a matter of days” he shared. “Occurring on Saturday nights, there was something very special to be able to gather together for church the next day and partake fully in the gospel message of salvation and worship our great and loving God and Father.”

Pastor Slaa could see the impact it was having on the entire church community. “I was also humbled and moved to tears at times to hear the testimonies of others and of their wives, seeing how God was working mightily” he shared. “In my last

years in Smithers I was overwhelmed by God's work among us. *The war against evil was on, and God was winning handily and soundly.*” [You can find his full testimony in the accompanying article.]

I also reached out to a young father who was one of the first to go through the program. He asked to remain confidential but shared with me that “The Lord used it in an instrumental way to change the direction of my family and my career.” He has been exposed to other means to deal with the issue since, but none as effective. “It is the Lord who does the work, but good tools help,” he added. “This is a good tool.”

DeVries understands the connection between tackling pornography and our spiritual health generally. “The impact has been really big. One of the biggest things is teaching us to be intentional. If you are intentional, you are in a way better position to not lose faith. Guys are testifying

PASTOR JAMES SLAA ON THE CONQUER SERIES

I remember the time when *Conquer Series* began. I heard that a group of men were getting together at an undisclosed location to deal with the matter of pornography. That was good news to me! I didn't get too involved at that time, other than talk with organizers and get a broad understanding of the program.

The next year organizers wanted to run the program again, due to its success, and I was encouraged by one brother to attend, if only to provide support and encouragement. Having heard so many good things about it by now, I did. The program was running on Saturday evenings, from 7:00 to 10:00, which can be an important time for a pastor. It's time to go over the sermons for the next day. Also, traditionally it was the evening to catch some *Hockey Night in Canada*. And finally, it's a time to spend with family after a busy week. So, it took some sacrifice to commit. But since other men were committing to take the 10-week program every Saturday night, which was for them also usually a family night, and a time to relax, I felt I had no real excuse. Imagine my surprise when seeing over 60 men having registered!

I had some amazing first impressions. I remember the excitement in the air, which I eventually understood was really a large group of men who were expressing real hope. I also remember my initial reaction to the media presentation, which was professional and high quality. I recall the commitment of the program to be Biblical and Christian. I fondly remember how eventually nobody cared about keeping secret the undisclosed location and what was going on – there was such an excitement and joy over the next weeks that not only the men spoke openly about attending, but many wives were noting the substantial transformations of their husbands, and could not contain their exuberance! Besides, when people drive by a parking lot full of cars on a Saturday night, they naturally want to know what's going on.



"It is the Lord who does the work, but good tools help.... This is a good tool."

to how it has changed how they walk with the LORD and with their family."

He proceeded to share a couple of examples.

"One of the guys asked what have I been up to. I told him about taking part in *Conquers* and my story. He looked at me and was just about bawling. 'You struggle with that? I do too. This gives me hope.' And then I saw him walk into serious victory in the battle."

"A young guy, from Grade 11 or 12, did

the *Conquer Series* and then when it was done he came to me and said 'Thanks man. This has given me hope when I thought I would never escape.' He has gone on and been leading other groups since."

"A guy five years older than me did it and testified 'It is the first time in my life that I have hope that I can gain the victory from this.'"

DeVries shared that an indirect result is that there is more communication between husbands and wives. "If people are hiding something, the sexual relationship is affected, which affects a lot of life."

"There is more openness among women and they are more vulnerable with each other. That is something with my parent's generation that was far more difficult. Most women have two or three people that they can be open with. That is probably a spin-off from the men taking the lead." This also made DeVries think of

the text found in Judges 5:2:

"When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves – praise the LORD!"

DeVries believes that the program may even have indirectly resulted in the steady, deliberate, and firm leadership of the local churches through Covid. "People were charitable with each other. Relationships were maintained in a very difficult time. There was a willingness to listen and be vulnerable with others."

Amidst all of the reports of success, it was also evident that there is one demographic that DeVries remains particularly concerned about – older men. "There is a generation that seems to have given up." He later explained, "it is a bit harder to break through to the older ones who think they have a lot more to lose if they come clean on this stuff."

Personally, I received a lot of feedback from the attendees. They also commented on how much it meant to them that I too was attending and participating. I started to include material in the sermons and even preached on key Bible verses. This was very well received. Many strong bonds were forged amongst the men; I too built strong and lasting relationships on account of my attendance. We were a band of brothers, fighting the great evil and enemy of our time.

But I also knew that participating in the *Conquer Series* meant I too would be confronted by Scripture concerning my own life, thoughts, and actions. *Conquer Series* doesn't merely address the sin and addiction of pornography but goes deeper into how the mind works and the brain functions. I greatly benefitted in weeding out a lot of junk in my own life. I grew in personal Bible devotions. I sought accountability in my life and on my devices. I remember how sitting in my small group for the first time that I was resisting opening up, but that over time, witnessing my fellow brothers confessing their sins, and seeing the Holy Spirit working, I too eventually opened up and expressed my own struggles, anger, frustrations, and stresses in my life. There was real joy and liberation in doing that and finding forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

At week six the idea is that there is full disclosure to your small group, and for me to know that was coming in my small group seemed inconceivable, but it is amazing how by the time you get to that week, you are led by the Holy Spirit and prepared to be open and honest, confessing your sins to one another, seeking prayers from each other, and experiencing freedom and liberation from the power of sin, and knowing assuredly the forgiveness of sins. Knowing as well that there will be falls and relapses, still, the exercise of immediately being able to confess our sins to others is something that rarely happened before, and *Conquer Series* provided that place for the men to come clean in just a matter of days. Occurring on Saturday nights, there was something very special to be able to gather together for church the next day and partake fully in the gospel message of salvation and worship our great and loving God and Father.

I was also humbled and moved to tears at times to hear the testimonies of others and of their wives, seeing how God was working mightily. In my last years in Smithers I was overwhelmed by God's work among us. The war against evil was on, and God was winning handily and soundly.

I knew there were some concerns about whether this program is Biblically sound. Personally, I found nothing significant that was an attack on the Reformed faith and thus of the evil one. Satan was being slammed down, and that was evidence enough to me that this is a Biblical and Christian program that advanced truth and freedom. I look back with fondness on that special time with my brothers in the Lord and how through God's grace and power we experienced real victory, a taste of what is to come!

...there is one demographic that DeVries remains particularly concerned about – older men.

One challenge with leading change, especially with problems that run deep, is maintaining a good trajectory and not falling back into old routines and sin. I asked if those who have gone through the program have been able to continue to walk in freedom. DeVries affirmed that has been the case, but that it requires intentionality. That is why many who have gone through it went on to lead other groups. They have also maintained accountability phone calls.

HUMILITY NEEDED

I also asked DeVries whether there is anything unique about the Reformed community that there was such interest in these programs. “From what I understand now, it is that we don’t know how to deal with trauma. If we look through our past seventy years, we see World War Two, a church split, immigration, settling into a new community, a new language, and a lot of hardship. A lot of trauma happened.” At the same time, families

weren’t well prepared to deal with the brokenness. “Dad is busy just getting food on the table. Everyone is kind of living in a suppression. Amidst that, there is physical and sexual abuse. Moms and Grandmas are giving everything except themselves. I have noticed this as an elder through the years. A lot of people couldn’t open up during a home visit, especially the older generation.”

Although the *Conquer Series* has blessed more than two million people worldwide, it isn’t known by most Reformed communities. But the impact it has had in the Bulkley Valley has caused others to hear of it and ask for more information. DeVries has fielded interest from Reformed Christians in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and the Fraser Valley. Some have testified to how there is a lot of resistance to doing something similar in the local Reformed churches in their area.

I reached out to one Reformed Christian in a different part of Canada, who has devoted much effort in the past decade to seeing his church community address the same issue and who asked to remain anonymous because of the negative experience he has had. Unlike DeVries, he was exasperated and deeply disappointed, especially by the church leadership. His assessment was blunt. “There are way too many people involved [in pornography] and they don’t want to deal with it.”

“The problem is so big,” he shared, “that I don’t know a young man who isn’t involved.”

But when he tried to bring leadership to the issue by bringing in speakers

and resources, he was frustrated by the response from his church community. “[They] find everything that they don’t like” he shared. “80 percent of the time was spent on what we disagreed with.”

Yet he continues to speak about the issue one-on-one because “I have seen the joy that transpires when people are set free.”

IT STARTS WITH STARTING

There is indeed a longstanding suspicion from many in the Reformed community towards utilizing resources that don’t originate from within. There’s often good reason for these concerns, as we’re warned that many who profess to be Christian are actually wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). So practicing discernment (1 John 4:1), and exercising caution is admirable. But paralysis is not. When faced with a pressing issue like pornography we can’t be so worried about making a misstep that we don’t take any steps at all. This would be akin to the servant in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) who fearfully hid his talent, rather than risk misinvesting it.

When asked what advice he has for others who may want to consider running the program, DeVries was quick to offer “Keep it simple and just do it. Don’t make it too big. Don’t force people. Just start it and let the yeast do its work.”

DeVries credits the success of the program to the fact that it aligns with God’s Word, including the call to each of us in James 5:16 to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed...” 

You are invited:

If you would like to meet Bill DeVries to learn more, ask questions, and discuss the issue with others, join us for a special video conversation from the comfort of your own home.

How: Go to www.ReformedPerspective.ca/conversation or email admin@ReformedPerspective.ca to register. All you need is a phone, tablet, or computer to connect to the conversation.

When: Likely late October. If you register, we will update you with the date and time.

Cost: Free

Please spread the word and invite family, friends, or church members to this important 60-90 minute conversation.

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Help us share a Reformed perspective with the world!**

RP'S YOUTH PAGES

This edition of RP's Youth Pages was created and designed by four cousins – Julia B. (15), Miriam P. (14), Hannah P. (12), and Summer B. (12).

We're interested in more such submissions, which can be sent to editor@ReformedPerspective.ca. If we use your submissions we'll send you an Amazon gift card as a token of thanks.

Thanksgiving

by Summer, Hannah, and Miriam

Z F K G B B P I M P R F Y V D
E H A R V E S T E F A E S T M
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FIND THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

PRAYER
AUTUMN
CORN
FAMILY
FEAST
GOODNESS
GAB
GRAIN
HARVEST
LEAVES
LOVE
THANKFULNESS
PLENTY
SEASON

An idea for entertaining visitors

by Summer and Julia

Hey kids, do your parents ever invite a family over on Sunday and you need to play with their kids for a few hours? Sometimes you have never met them before, or maybe there are a few kids that are older or younger than you, or of a different gender, and you are not sure what to do. If you have a good idea, please send in a note to kids@ReformedPerspective.ca and maybe your idea will be featured in the next issue!

A good game to play is *Buttons*. It is fun to play with all different ages (6 and up). Make it ahead of time so you are prepared!



BUTTONS

SETUP

You will need:

- **Strings & buttons** - one each for each player (a few extra are a good idea in case one breaks!) You can probably find an assortment of buttons in your mom's sewing drawer or at a thrift store. Cut a piece of twine about 30 inches or so and then tie a button to the end. Repeat several times so you have about 20 strings with buttons attached.
- **A pan lid** (medium or large) - You might find a good one at a thrift store also (needs to have a rim around the bottom, not a flat lid)
- **A board scrap, or piece of cardboard** that you use to make a circle using a sharpie on it the same size as the pan lid
- **Two dice**

HOW TO PLAY

1. Place the board or cardboard piece with the circle on it on a table with some space around on all sides. Each player takes a string with a button tied to it and places the button end in the circle and then holds on to the string on the end.
2. Each player takes a turn holding the pan lid and rolling the dice. When it is your turn to hold the pan lid, you leave your button on the side. The player with the pan lid holds the pan lid flat on the table with one hand, and then rolls the dice with their other hand. When the dice adds up to 7, or is a double, the person with the pan lid slams in onto the circle, trying to catch as many buttons as possible, while all the other players have to yank their buttons out of the circle before they get caught. If a player's button is caught under the lid, they get a penalty letter (can spell the word buttons, and then you're out, or you can pick another shorter word if time is short). If the person with the pan lid doesn't catch anyone's button, that person gets a penalty letter and then the lid is passed on to the next player. The person with the lid keeps rolling until a 7 or double is rolled. They are allowed to fake that they are going to slam down the lid but not actually do it, if another number is rolled besides a 7 or double, and if any player yanks their button out of the circle on a fake, that player gets a penalty letter.
3. Each player takes a turn with the pan lid, and then passes it around. When a player has the full penalty letters to spell the word (for eg. Buttons), then they are out. The players keep playing till there is a winner.
4. Caution, watch that your fingers don't get stuck under the lid!

THANKING GOD IN HARD TIMES

by Miriam

Thump, thump, thump. Danika deked, then went up for the layup. *Swish.*

"Nice one!" Janelle jogged up to her and fist-bumped her.

"That's twenty-two to thirteen!" Dani smirked as the two best friends' competitors groaned. Her and Janelle's cousin, Scott, and his friend, Ryan, were their common go-to's for a quick after-supper scrimmage.

It was late September, the air was crisp and the leaves were turning brilliant oranges, reds, and yellows.

The two cousins were getting as much practice as they could, because their school basketball team, the Eagles, had made it to playoffs this year.

"See ya tomorrow," Janelle yelled back to the boys as they headed home, then whispered into Dani's ear: "So we can crush you for the fourth time in a row."

Danika and Janelle laughed together, and then the cousins went their own separate ways. As she was walking home, Dani thought of how thankful she was for Janelle. She knew it was rare to have such a great friend who was so much like herself.

It started with a strange growth on her knee. It

didn't seem like too much until she started to limp. Her leg seemed to start swelling up. She was taken to the doctor, who did lots of tests, and then hit her with news that no young girl should ever have to hear. Thirteen-year-old Janelle Ridge had been diagnosed with bone cancer.

When Danika heard the tragic news,

she was devastated. Thanksgiving was coming up. Did God really expect her to be thankful right now? Soon Janelle's legs would be swollen and she would be stuck in a wheelchair. No more basketball games, hikes, or fishing trips.

Dani and Janelle prayed together a lot, and yet there was no sign of things getting better.

The Eagles first playoff game was happening the next day. Janelle was unable to play. She came to watch



and cheer Dani on anyway. During the warm-up, all Dani could think about was Janelle, sitting in the hard bleachers. She had Scott's company, but Dani knew Janelle would much rather be down there on the court, sinking baskets with the rest of the team. *Why would God do this to her? Didn't he care about Janelle?* It made Danika angry and frustrated.

"Dani, you're up next!" her coach called out. She realized it was her turn for a layup. She missed. And missed. And missed. She missed everything. She knew she couldn't play like this. She knew she couldn't play without Janelle.

"Coach, I can't play today," she said through tears.

Her coach looked at her with soft brown eyes. "I understand," she answered, and scratched Dani's name off her clipboard.

After pulling on her warmup jacket again, Dani walked over to Janelle and Scott. "I can't play without you," she whispered to Janelle.

"Let's go for a walk," Janelle answered.

"Really? Won't that hurt your leg too much?" Dani asked with surprise.

"I'll be fine, you are the one that needs help right now."

Dani knew it was the truth, so she wrapped an arm around Janelle and helped her limp to the exit.

Outside the air was cool and crisp. Leaves crunched under their feet. Frost covered the trees. The girls sat down on a park bench. The library across from them had a sign in the window. It read: *"What are you thankful for?"*

Dani was surprised when she heard Janelle say, "I am thankful for a God who loves me and is always watching over me."

"How do you do that? How can you give thanks right now?" Dani burst out. "I am having a hard time believing God is watching over us right now and I don't even have cancer!"

The girls were both in tears, and for a long moment, neither could speak.

When she could talk again Janelle pointed out across the street, "Look at that sign in the church window next to the library."

Dani read the white-lettered sign out loud: *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

"God has a purpose in everything," Janelle explained, "He didn't accidentally give me cancer. I know I can trust in him. He works all things together for good."

For another long moment the two sat together quietly.

"You are right... like always," Dani admitted with a sad smile. "I need to trust God more. I need to trust that He is in control. I do know He gives us a lot of things to be thankful for.... Now let's get back to that basketball game. We can probably make it before the third quarter starts."

"That's the Dani I know," Janelle grinned, and they made their way to the gym.

God doesn't give us answers for everything, but He has given us reason to trust that He loves us. As John 3:16 explains,

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Nothing He does is a mistake. He has a plan for everything. He loves you and would never leave you alone; He will be with you in whatever you do. Look outside at the bright colorful leaves, the diamond frost covering branches. Our God gives us so much to be thankful for.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; his love endures forever.

– Psalm 118:1 



GINGER SNAP COOKIES

by Miriam and Hannah

A perfect autumn snack. They are a perfect combination of sweet and spicy.

INGREDIENTS:

- o 1 ½ cups margarine
- o 2 eggs
- o 2 cups sugar
- o ½ cup molasses
- o 4 cups flour
- o 4 tsp baking soda
- o 1 tsp ginger
- o 1 tsp nutmeg
- o 1 tsp cloves
- o 1 tsp salt

DIRECTIONS:

Cream sugar and margarine in a medium bowl.

Add eggs and molasses. Beat well.

Then mix in dry ingredients.

Roll into 1" balls and roll in sugar. Place on a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Bake for 10 - 12 minutes at 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Let cool.

Optional: Try rolling out the dough and make fall leaf shaped cookies and then sprinkle sugar on top.



RP'S 52 IN 22 CHALLENGE: PART III

3 gents, 1 book a week, for 1 year

It was January 1st, 11:59, and three men – a lawyer, a pastor, and an editor – were lined up in front of a set of steel double doors, counting down the seconds to high noon. “57... 58... 59...” Then with a collective shout of “It’s on!” the three surged forward into the bookstore. And that is how RP’s “52 in 2022 Challenge” started. (Or, at least, that’s how it’ll play in the film version.)

It has been eight months now since André Schutten, Jim Witteveen, and Jon Dykstra agreed to a goal of reading 52 books in 2022. And as year end approaches the rush is on, because they’ve all also agreed that anyone who didn’t reach 52 would have to donate \$20 to a charity of their choosing for every book he fell short.

While space doesn’t permit us to share all their book reviews here, you can find every single one at ReformedPerspective.ca/52 as well as on RP’s social media channels – [MeWe](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Gab](#) – under the hashtag #RP52in22. Our hope is that this challenge will inspire many others to take up a good book. And we offer here some titles for your consideration.

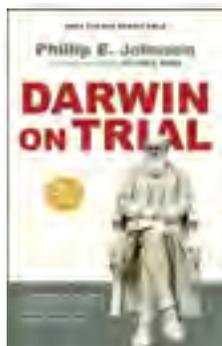
THE TALLY TO DATE

The lawyer – André Schutten: **30**

The minister – Jim Witteveen: **31**

The editor – Jon Dykstra: **37**

THE LAWYER – ANDRÉ SCHUTTEN



I enjoyed making my way bit-by-bit through *Darwin on Trial* by law professor Phillip E. Johnson (the 2010 20th anniversary edition, 247 pages). I’ve followed the evolution/creation debate since my undergraduate years with interest and have

always felt that the evolutionary position rests on many unproven assumptions. This book proves that hunch correct. Johnson is no amateur when it comes to testing evidence to see if it holds up to scrutiny. He taught law and evidence at a prestigious American law school for decades and approaches the claims of Darwinism with courtroom rigor. Though it is a bit technical at times when discussing

some scientific concepts, it’s still a highly recommended read, especially for any Christian science students and teachers.

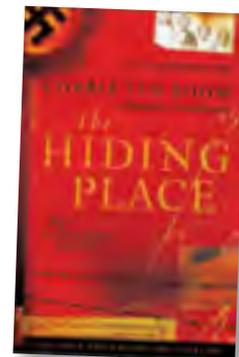
Over the last couple weeks, I read Lois Lowry’s *Number the Stars* (1989, 137 pages) to my eight-year-old son. Lowry’s short novel is set in Denmark during World War II. It tells of two friends, Annemarie and Ellen, aged 10. The narrative is told from Annemarie’s perspective, and is built around trying to protect Ellen, who is Jewish, from the Nazi soldiers looking for her. A theme in the book provides great fodder for discussion with an 8 to 12 year-old: truth-telling versus preservation of life (Annemarie must lie to a German officer to protect her friend, for example). While this book does not have nearly as many explicit Christian or biblical references as Dutch children’s stories set in World War II might have (see Piet Prins’ books, for example), the story is



still highly recommended for Christian children aged eight and higher.

At the midpoint of my reading challenge, I read the best book on my list yet, *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom (1971, 272 pages). Though an autobiography, it is nevertheless a page-turner. It tells the true story of a Dutch 50-year-old spinster, her sister Betsy, and her 80-year-old clockmaker father and how they came to hide Jews from the Nazis in their home during World War II. Eventually their work is discovered, though the Jews they are hiding are not. Corrie and her sister and father are arrested and interned in a concentration camp, where both Corrie’s father and sister Betsy eventually die.

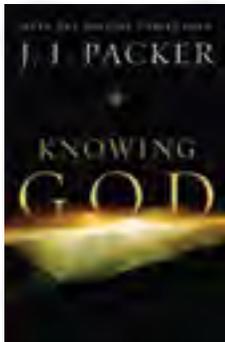
What moved me most profoundly, and multiple times throughout the book, was the total and complete faith of these three in the sovereign goodness of God despite the horrific evil all around



them, and also their humble service to Him by loving their Jewish neighbors, their commitment to persevere in faith and to love even their enemies, and how God sustained them through his Word and Spirit (and not a few miracles!). If you or someone you know thinks life is too hard, that God is not being fair to you, that you are more a victim than anything else, read this book! Let Corrie tell you how she could count it all joy to suffer for the sake of the gospel. To rejoice and give thanks for a flea-infested hut in a concentration camp, to love and forgive a Nazi officer, or to share incredibly scarce food and vitamins with others, as Corrie and her sister do over and over again, is a reminder of just how radical the call to love your neighbor as yourself is, and how rewarding it can be.

This summer I tackled a modern classic Christian book that has been highly recommended to me by a few Christian friends over the years. And *Knowing God*, by J.I. Packer (1973, 286 pages), was, in my opinion, worthy of its high accolades. The book is theologically rich, and intellectually engaging. But if that's all you walk away with, you've completely missed the point. Packer is a pastor first and he wants his Christian readers to not just know about God, but to truly know Him. And the best way to know God is to know his Word which reveals God's character. I found the book's culmination particularly beautiful. Packer makes the case for why adoption is the best paradigm or illustration for understanding God's love for us and our response to Him (his explanation on this point also gave me a fresh and compelling way of understanding the relationship between law and grace), and his concluding chapter on the book of Romans is absolutely magnificent. I plan to re-read it within a year or two.

If you're looking for some meatier Christian fiction, I recommend the



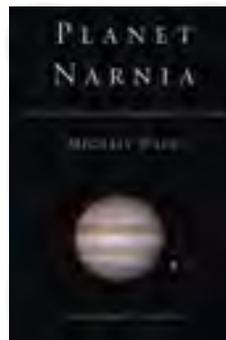
novel *Fatherless*, by Dr. James Dobson and Kurt Bruner (2013, 448 pages). Dr. Dobson is the founder of Focus on the Family, and as such he is a natural fit to co-write a dystopian novel (the first



of a trilogy) on what the future looks like if our social and political trends continue. The setting is 2042, and the elderly outnumber the young, leading to massive economic disruption. Eu-

thanasia (called "transitions" in the novel) is applauded as heroic by policy-makers and the public, while women who have more than one child are derisively referred to "breeders," and children with disabilities are routinely terminated in utero. Sexual liberation has allowed men to take very little responsibility, leading to mass fatherlessness. The plot is engrossing, making the book a page-turner. It is also well worth reading for how it animates important policy issues (demographics, euthanasia, selective abortion, economics, the role of the press, and more), showing the true human cost if Christians remain ignorant or apathetic around issues of public importance.

For decades, critics of C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* (including J.R.R. Tolkien) have argued they are disorganized or lack coherence. In *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (2008, 400 pages), Michael Ward makes a very convincing case that the unifying theme to the seven books of the *Chronicles* is medieval cosmology. Ward shows that each of the seven books corresponds to the seven medieval planets: Jupiter, Mars, Sol (the sun), Luna (the moon), Mercury, Venus, and Saturn. Each of these

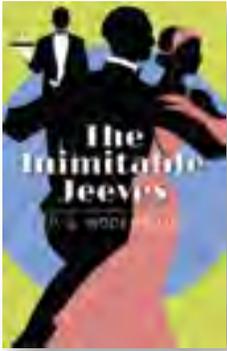


planets have characteristics and symbols which play out in each book's plot, in various ornamental details, and in how Aslan (the Christ figure) is portrayed. I won't give the direct connections away here, because the joy of reading about which planet corresponds to which book, is like unwrapping seven presents. There were moments reading this where I wondered if Lewis was dabbling with syncretism but, on further consideration, I think the concern has little merit. Having finished it, I'm now eager to revisit the *Chronicles* to see it with new eyes.

For anyone looking for a relatively short, and yet comprehensive, Reformed Christian articulation on the role of the civil government, I highly recommend *Ruler of Kings: Toward a Christian Vision of Government*, by Joseph Boot (2022, 211 pages). The book is both a necessary critique of the government's encroachment into areas of life where it ought not to, as well as a positive vision of what the civil government ought to be, as an entity instituted by God, under the lordship of King Jesus. I found Boot's historical approach to the philosophies behind the expansive state helpful for understanding how we got to where we are today. He is rigorous in his defense of the absolute authority of Jesus and what that means practically for government and society. I also found his discussion about the difference between the kingdom of God and the church as institute very helpful and clarifying and, once grasped, it does away with the straw man argument from fellow Christians that too readily dismisses his thesis as "theocracy." I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to better understand what a reformational view of the place of the state in society is.

If you're looking for an easy, fun summer read for the campfire, beach, or cottage, let me recommend *The Inimitable Jeeves*, by P.G. Wodehouse (1923, 224





pages). The book is a collection of mini-escapades centered on Bertie, a clueless aristocrat in British society, and his clever butler Jeeves. If you enjoy British humor, a clever turn of phrase,

some right rummy characters, and poking playful fun at the pomposity of the upper class in early 1900s Britain, this book will have you chuckling in no time. A benefit of reading older books is that they are in the public domain: a free version is available at Gutenberg.org.

THE MINISTER – JIM WITTEVEEN

The authors of this book understand that their role as Christian mothers is to protect their children from spiritual harm, just as the mama bear protects

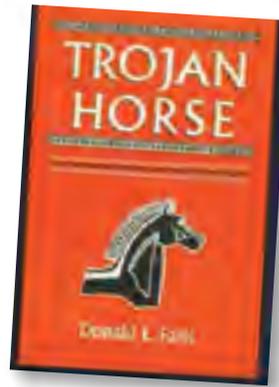


her cubs. Their goal is to prepare mothers to “learn how to raise kids who think critically, love biblically, and stand firm against the cultural tide.” In *Mama Bear Apologetics* (2019, 287 pages), they address the issues of self-helpism, naturalism, skepticism,

postmodernism, moral relativism, emotionalism, pluralism, the “new spirituality,” Marxism, feminism, and progressive Christianity, covering almost all of the bases when it comes to the numerous “isms” that seek to lead our children astray. On the whole I found that the book addresses the ideological challenges that confront our young people in a way that is helpful and encouraging. At times I found myself wishing that the authors were a bit less gentle and a little more “mama bear-ish,” but the end result of their work is a book that will certainly serve to equip

mothers (and fathers!) to understand the spirit of the age, and lead their children along the way of truth.

Consulting a book written by a minister of the United Church of Canada (UCC) on the subject of “homosexuality and the church” may seem to be odd. But in 1989, the UCC was only taking its first steps down the path of officially affirming sexual behavior and lifestyles that had been universally rejected by the Christian church throughout history. There were still voices of resistance within the United Church, like that of Rev. Donald L. Faris, whose *Trojan Horse: The Homosexual Ideology and the Christian Church* (1989, 80 pages) is a little book well worth reading. Faris lays out solid Biblical, psychological, and factual arguments against the church’s acceptance of homosexuality in the name of “social justice,” “acceptance,” and a skewed definition of “love.” While Donald Faris’s call to faithful obedience to God and his Word was not heeded by his own denomination, his work remains a valuable and useful resource for 21st Century Christians seeking to defend the truth.



In the “imprecatory psalms” the psalmist expresses a strong desire that God’s vengeance be unleashed against those who persist in doing evil. The question arises again and again: can we as Christians make words like those found in Psalm 137:9 our own in our

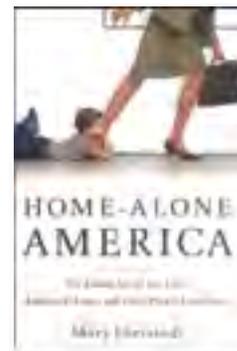


prayers and in our worship? Can we say, “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock,” or is this sentiment unworthy of a New Covenant believer? In his book *Crying For Justice: What the Psalms Teach Us*

About Mercy and Vengeance in an Age of Terrorism (2005, 199 pages), John N. Day argues that the imprecatory psalms must continue to be used by Christians today, and he explains why people like

C.S. Lewis (who believed that the imprecatory psalms are “sub-Christian” expressions of a sinful desire for revenge) are wrong in rejecting them. I highly recommend this book, especially for anyone who has struggled with the idea that these psalms should be prayed and sung by Christians today.

In *Home-Along America: the Hidden Toll of Day Care, Behavioral Drugs, and Other Parent Substitutes* (2004, 218 pages), Mary Eberstadt seeks to answer a series of what she called “obvious, if necessarily blunt” questions: Why are millions of

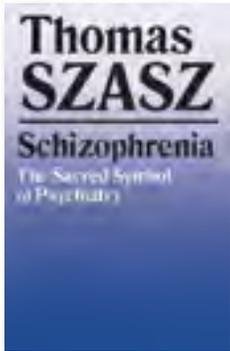


children being prescribed drugs to change their behavior? Why are depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders becoming more and more common among young people? Why has childhood

obesity become an epidemic in America? And what is behind the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases among American teenagers? Eberstadt’s thesis is that there is a definite connection between decreased parental presence in children’s lives and the severity of the problems that children face. Eberstadt presents a solid and compelling case for the vital role that parents have in the lives of their children, and for the necessity of self-sacrifice on the part of parents. While this book is now nearly twenty years old, it speaks loudly and clearly in a culture that has continued to follow the same destructive path, and is very much worth reading.

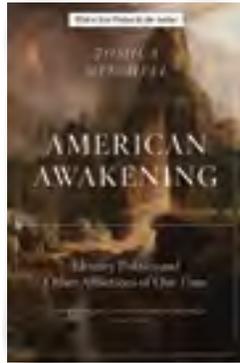
Having worked in the mental health field for several years prior to entering the ministry as well as having personal experience with members of my ex-

tended family who were diagnosed with mental illnesses, the subject of mental illness and psychiatry has long interested me. This interest (and a desire to explore the trends of the past century which have shaped our modern culture) recently led me to explore several of the works of American psychiatrist Thomas Szasz. Throughout his life and work in the field of psychiatry, Thomas Szasz was one of the discipline's most controversial (and outspoken) critics. His best-known work, *The Myth of Mental Illness*, was published in 1961, and from its publication until his death in 2012, Szasz continued to do battle with the psychiatric establishment, with limited success. While Szasz may be accused of overstating his case, and thus alienating his opponents, many of the arguments that he made throughout his career have proven to be prescient, as the scope of mental illness has grown to such an extent that nearly all of us can be described as “mentally ill” in some way. In *Schizophrenia: The Sacred Symbol of Psychiatry* (first published in 1976 and updated in 1988, 237 pages), Szasz returns to many of the same themes that he addressed in his earlier works: the abuses of the involuntary institutionalization of people diagnosed with mental illnesses, the use of psychiatry as a means of social control, the dangers of the “therapeutic state,” and the religious nature of psychiatry itself. Szasz’s work is challenging and thought-provoking, and his argumentation is supremely logical. However, as a professed atheist, his most serious shortcoming is his failure to acknowledge the role that people’s spiritual lives play in dealing with the mental health challenges that they face. That being said, I can only echo one of Szasz’s reviewers, who put it very well when he described Szasz as “a valuable critic and agent provocateur,” someone who “has much to say which requires



answering.”

Joshua Mitchell’s *American Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions of Our Time* (2020, 255 pages) is the twentieth book that I’ve reviewed for RP’s “52 in ’22” challenge this year. And I have

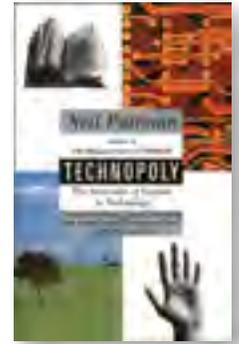


to say that one of those next 32 books will have to be truly exceptional to dislodge this book from my “Best book of the year” category. Mitchell makes the argument

that the ascendancy of identity politics in the United States (and the West in general) is the result of a new religious movement that is supplanting Protestant Christianity as a dominant force in society. He describes identity politics as a kind of Christian heresy that distorts Biblical concepts of sin, judgment, substitutionary atonement, and salvation in an attempt to achieve a twisted version of “justice” in this world. According to identity politics, an individual is either a transgressor or an innocent; the ultimate transgressor is the white heterosexual male, while the category of “innocent” is more flexible. People are defined by their identity with a homogeneous group, and their assumed level of “purity” depends on the nature of the group with which they identify. The transgressor becomes the scapegoat, the source of all ills, and the purpose of politics (which comes to encompass all of life) is to purge society of his stain. *American Awakening* is a profound examination of one of the defining issues of our time, theologically and culturally astute and very well written. While it may not be an easy read, the effort required to digest everything that Mitchell has to offer will certainly pay off in the end.

If you’ve heard Neil Postman’s name, it was probably in connection with his best-known (and excellent) book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, published in 1985. Postman, who

passed away in 2003, was known as an insightful social critic, and his work continues to be cited by Christian theologians and authors, despite the fact that Postman himself was not a Christian. Upon his death, one commentator argued that the reason for Postman’s popularity among Christians (especially confessional Reformed believers) is the fact that “he knew a golden calf when he saw one.” In *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1992, 222 pages), Postman takes on one of the most influential golden calves of the modern age, technology. He begins with his outline of the historical developments that have led to our becoming a technopoly, a society in which technology is no longer a tool to be used, but a master to be served. In his chapter on scientism, which in my view is particularly important, Postman examines the claims of the social sciences, which have themselves become another of the most influential idols of our age. Postman was not “anti-technology,” and does not argue that technological advancements are inherently negative. However, he rightly concluded that modern society has not given sufficient attention to the inevitable downsides that accompany every technological development. This is an eye-opener, and well worth reading.



In his book *Day Care Deception: What the Child Care Establishment Isn’t Telling Us* (2003, 222 pages), Brian C.

Robertson explains the forces that are at work behind the decades-long push for universal, government-subsidized child care, and why this movement is so destructive to families and society in general. Robertson describes the



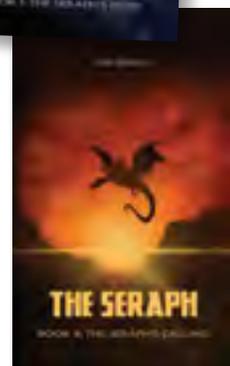
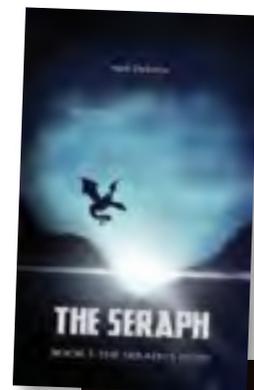
coalition of interests that are hard at work promoting the institutionalized care of children, and what their motivation is. He argues that the impetus behind the universal day-care movement comes from corporations (which serve to benefit from having more women in the workforce), governments (which benefit politically and also financially via the taxes paid by working mothers and growth in GDP), social scientists (whose ideology devalues the importance of stay-at-home moms and the “traditional” family structure), the day-care industry, and professionals in all of these fields who are seeking to justify their own choice to subject their children to institutionalized care. Forces which emphasize economics have united with ideologues to pressure women to enter the workforce and “contract out” the care of their children, and, Robertson argues, the resulting trends have been disastrous. *Day Care Deception* presents a

detailed, well-supported case for abandoning the “social experiment” that has brought so many mothers into the workforce at the expense of their children’s well-being.

THE EDITOR – JON DYKSTRA

In his Christian fantasy novels *The Seraph’s Path* (2019, 476 pages) and *The Seraph’s Calling* (2020, 729 pages) Neil Dykstra has shaped a world with not only exotic creatures and nations to discover, but layer upon layer of legend and history shaping the events. This is mostly the story of Dyrk, a young horse trainer who can’t please his family, so he sets out to make his own fortune. Through courage and luck he wins a combat competition – the last man standing – and gains entrance into the king’s military college. But his career gets stolen from him when he’s kicked

out of the school without explanation. To Dyrk it seems he’s at the whim of the fates. Or is it the Seraphs? In this world the god Arren is served by seven Seraphs, and each night Dyrk sends up his prayers via these Seraphs because, so he has been told, Arren is too holy for common man to approach directly. If that strikes you as Roman Catholic, I think you’re on to something. The author is Reformed (and despite sharing



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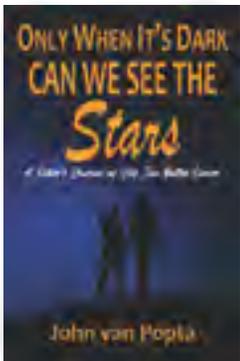
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a last name, not related to me) and this sort of prayer life is one of the many reasons that Dyrk feels distant from his Maker. And, as noted, the other reason Dyrk feels abandoned is that for every good thing he experiences, bad soon follows. As with all good fantasy fiction, the author is using his made-up world to teach us a little something about our own – Dyrk is wrestling with why bad things happen to good people. Who would like this book? Well, if you never made it through *The Lord of the Rings*, this 1,200 page series might be too intense for you. But if you're looking for something you'll ponder as you read, and for weeks afterward, you should check it out.

“Why Lord?” That’s the question 12-year-old Julian van Popta, his parents, and his siblings had to contend with when this young man was diagnosed with leukemia. *Only When It’s Dark Can We See the Stars: a father’s journal as his son battles*



cancer (2022, 194 pages) is an account of the four years that followed, as written by his father, Pastor John van Popta. The chapters are made up of the regular updates

Rev. van Popta sent out to friends and family during the rounds of Julian’s treatment. What’s striking, and what makes this such a valuable read, is the trust the author demonstrates in God, even as the van Poptas struggled with why God would bring such sickness. As the author shares, it is one thing to face cancer as a pastor comforting parishioners, and another thing to do so as a parent seeing their child too weak even to eat. The question “Why Lord?” is made all the more urgent when, during Julian’s repeated hospital stays, they meet other children also battling cancer, and the van Poptas share in these families’

hopes and their losses – Julian does eventually recover, but many others do not. While this is a deeply personal account, the struggle to trust God in the face of death is one that we’ll all have to face, and this then is an example of how to struggle well. It is a father writing, but there’s no missing this is also a pastor who wants to feed the sheep with what he knows we need: to understand that my only comfort is that I am not my own but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. That truth, powerfully delivered, makes this not simply a good book, but an important one.

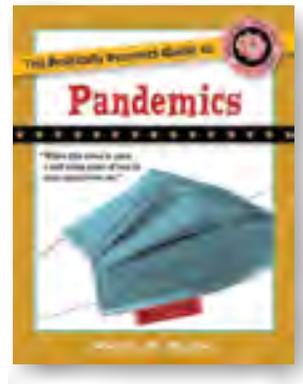
After finishing my second time through Rebekah Merkle’s *Eve in Exile, and the restoration of femininity* (2016, 205 pages) my copy might now have more sections highlighted than clear. The bare bones? *Eve in Exile* is a feminism takedown with its idea that men and women are identical, and women should

be evaluated by how well they match up against the men. It is also an exploration of what it means for a woman to be both her husband’s equal and his helpmeet. And it corrects the notion that freedom is found only outside the home, and it does so, not with the 1950s caricature of womanhood, but with the Proverbs 31 sort. Finally, it is a celebration of childraising. As Merkle writes: “...a woman raising her children is not only shaping the next generation, she is also shaping little humans who are going to live forever. The souls she gave birth to are immortal. Immortal. And somehow, our culture looks at a woman who treats that as if it might be an important task and says, ‘It’s a shame she’s wasting herself. She could be doing something important – like



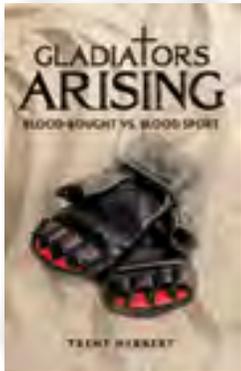
filing paperwork for insurance claims.” Merkle pairs wit with insight in a book that’s so encouraging you’ll want to buy extra copies to hand out.

The first half of Steven W. Mosher’s *Politically Incorrect Guide to Pandemics* (2022, 343 pages) is an overview of pandemics of the past – the Black Death, bubonic plague, the Spanish Flu, the Swine Flu, etc. – and the various responses to them. Mosher shares how the Church’s response to the outbreaks – believers risking death to help the sick even as doctors were fleeing – was a powerful witness to Christians’ security in God.



The chapter on “The Great Swine-Flu Hoax of 1976” had me consulting the Internet to see if it was actually true 45 million Americans had been vaccinated for a flu that only infected 4 people. Might Mosher’s obvious bias – he opposed the COVID lockdowns – have led him to make an overstated claim here? It turns out, it did happen. Some reports put it at 200 soldiers initially coming down with the flu, but others note that only 2 of these were found to have this unique new strain. Whatever the exact number, a vaccine rollout happened without an outbreak to prompt it. The second half of the book is devoted just to COVID-19, and particularly criticisms of governmental responses.

In *Gladiators Arising: Blood-Bought vs. Blood Sport* (2022, 138 pages) Trent Herbert begins with a look at how Christians opposed the Roman gladiator games. Whether it was Christians or slaves being forced to fight, or even willing combatants, Christians were against it, eventually helping put an end to these games because of the abuse done to these Image-bearers of God. With that point made, Herbert then



draws parallels to modern-day Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), boxing, and even football. This extensively footnoted, yet still slim volume, has got lots of stats and stories about the

damage these sports do. One example: “American footballers sustain a blow to the head equivalent to a severe car crash in every game.” This forcefully makes what Herbert calls a “pro-life case” that “Christians should... not be supportive of any sports that intentionally attack the image of God.”

John Piper packs a lot in this slim volume: *Preparing for Marriage: Help for Christian Couples* (2018, 86 pages). In 6 chapters and 2 appendices, he covers headship and submission, hospitality,

sex, making the most of our engagement, weddings that don't break the bank, and how our spouse should be second, though only to God. While the target audience is couples intending to marry, the first appendix includes 50+ questions that'd be of great use to a young man or woman still evaluating whether or not their beau is marriage material. Find it for free at Desiring-God.org/books.

Concerns with In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) include the fact that the children created in these laboratory settings are routinely killed, some because they have (or seem to have) defects, and others because the parents simply no longer want them. Many are frozen, which comes with its own harms, but

also leaves them in an indeterminate state, facing eventual death. But what if a couple was willing to adopt and rescue one of these babies? This involves the implantation of the fetus in the adoptive mother's womb, giving the child a chance to be brought to term. But Christians aware of the death-dealing nature of the IVF industry might wonder if they should have anything to do with it. Justina Van Manen and Jonathon Van Maren have written *Life Under Glass: the ethics of embryo adoption* (2022, 80 pages) to ease these concerns, making it clear that it is completely different to get involved in a rescue than it is to make such a rescue necessary. These children already are, and while they should never have been frozen, it is most certainly an act of God-glorifying grace to adopt these tiny orphans.



I love the first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Cat-

echism (“What is the chief end of Man? ...to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever”) but didn't know anything about the assembly that crafted it, the Larger Catechism, and the Westminster Confession of Faith. I have a Dutch Reformed heritage, whereas these were birthed by the English Reformation. That's why I was happy to discover that United Reformed pastor William Boekestein had teamed up with Heritage Reformed professor Joel R. Beeke to give us *Contending for the Faith: the story of the Westminster Assembly* (2022, 40 pages). It's for kids, but a great presentation for adults who want to know a little, but aren't interesting in diving all that deep. This Assembly is worth at least a dip, to get an understanding of all God wrought in the lives of kings and queens, and pastors and persecutors that resulted in these documents. **RP**

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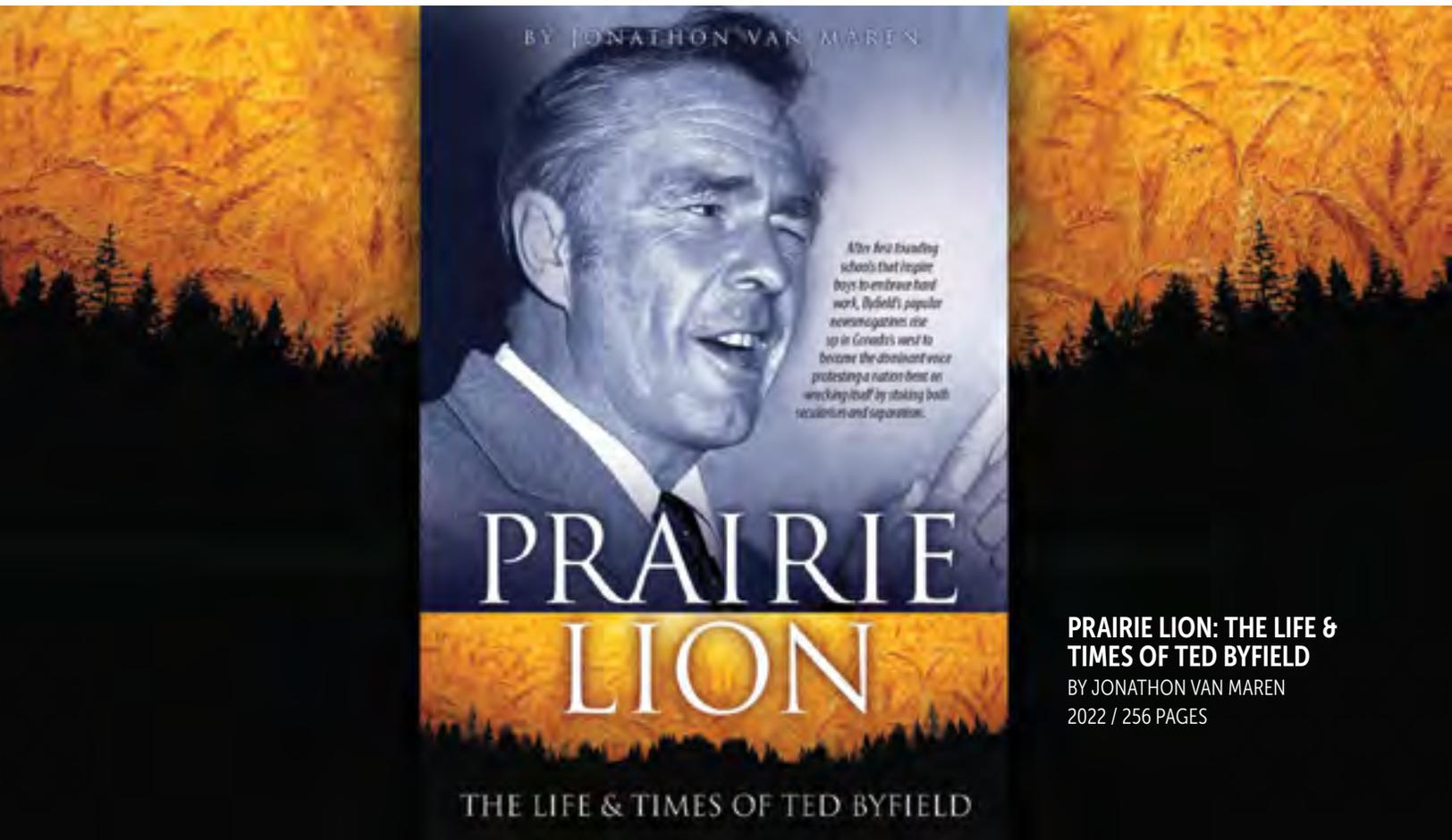
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PRAIRIE LION: THE LIFE & TIMES OF TED BYFIELD

BY JONATHON VAN MAREN
2022 / 256 PAGES

Author, activist, catalyst, iconic, irritant, publisher, educator, rhetorician, historian, conservative, Christian, Ted Byfield was:

CANADA'S JOURNALIST

by Michael Wagner

God works in history through people, some of whom have a particularly significant impact. In Canada, one such person was Ted Byfield. Although best known as the founder and editor of *Alberta Report* magazine, there is much more to his life and accomplishments than that.

This book is an impressive biography of Byfield, written by Jonathon Van Maren who is no stranger to readers of *Reformed Perspective*. The foreword is by Preston Manning, founding leader of the Reform Party of Canada. The book does a wonderful job of outlining the major events of Byfield's life and explaining the impact he had.

NEWSPRINT IN HIS BLOOD

Ted Byfield was born and raised in Toronto. One of his uncles, Tommy Church, was mayor of Toronto and later a Conservative MP. His father was a respected newspaper reporter, but also an alcoholic. That vice led to his parents' divorce, which had a profoundly negative impact on young Ted.

Like his father, Ted became a reporter. He moved to Winnipeg in 1952 to work for the *Winnipeg Free Press* where he was incredibly successful, including winning the National Newspaper Award in 1957.

One of his new Winnipeg friends was a devout Anglican who eagerly evangelized him. Through reading books by

...best known as the founder and editor of Alberta Report magazine

major Christian apologists, especially C.S. Lewis, Byfield and his wife became committed Christians. Subsequently, he co-founded the Company of the Cross, an Anglican lay organization that would operate three private Christian schools (the St. John's Schools in Manitoba, Alberta, and Ontario).

In 1965, Byfield became something of an apologist himself. That year, legendary Canadian writer Pierre Berton released a book entitled *The Comfortable Pew: A Critical Look at Christianity and the Religious Establishment in the New Age* criticizing Christianity from a secular, leftist perspective.

In response, Byfield wrote a defense of historic Christianity called *Just Think, Mr. Berton (A Little Harder)*, published by the Company of the Cross. Van Maren notes that it "easily constituted the most effective response to both liberalization within the Church and those urging liberalization from outside it." Like Berton's book, Byfield's became a bestseller.

THE MAN BEHIND THAT MAGAZINE

In 1973, Byfield began using the St. John's School of Alberta as a base for producing a weekly newsmagazine called the *St. John's Edmonton Report*. In 1977, a Calgary edition was added and these two magazines combined to become *Alberta Report* in 1979.

Other editions of the magazine (*Western Report*, *BC Report*) appeared later in the 1980s. It was through the magazines that Byfield had his greatest impact. *The Report* magazines were not overtly religious, but their fundamental purpose was to convey the news from an underlying Christian perspective. As Van Maren explains:

"The *Report* magazines became known as championing two primary causes: Christian values and the Canadian West. The primary enemy of both could be found in the personage of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the man responsible for decriminalizing abortion, ushering in the sexual revolution, and – at least as Ted and legions of like-minded Canadians saw it – declaring war on the West."

With the magazines as a platform, Byfield played a major role in the formation of the Reform Party of Canada in the late 1980s, which subsequently had a profound impact on Canadian politics.

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE COMING CHRISTIAN AGE

Ted turned over the major duties of the magazine to his son Link, and spent the next twenty years or more creating two multi-volume history book projects. First was the 12-volume *Alberta in the 20th Century* series (completed in 2003),

and secondly came the 12-volume *The Christians: Their First Two Thousand Years* (completed in 2013). Needless to say, the second set was history from an explicitly pro-Christian perspective.

Of course, throughout Byfield's lifetime, conservative Christianity was losing cultural and political influence in Canada. Nevertheless, he was optimistic about the future, and, as Van Maren explains, he "remained convinced that the post-Christian era was merely a pre-Christian era, and that a new dawn might be just around the corner."

Byfield was, of course, correct to see fighting the culture wars as worthwhile despite the losses, and as his son Link put it, "Think how much worse it would be if we had not fought the fights we fought."

This book is definitely worth getting. For those interested in political and cultural matters in Canada, it is essential. For others, it can be an encouragement to see how one person's dedication to Christianity made a profound difference in the country.

Prairie Lion: The Life & Times of Ted Byfield is published by SEARCH (Society to Explore and Record Christian History) and is available from the publisher's website at TheChristians.com/product/PrairieLion. 



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RP is growing — — against the grain

If you are like me, in recent months you have likely been on a constant lookout for ways to cut back on costs and purchases as prices have risen. Way to make your Opa proud!

In what is likely a surprising contrast, *Reformed Perspective* is expanding rather than shrinking. That is true of the size of each magazine (now averaging 60 pages), but it is particularly true of our reach. With this issue the circulation of our print magazine has increased from 6,000 to 10,000 copies. That is a whopping 67% increase since the last issue, and a 566% increase from the 1,500 copies we were at a few years ago.

But wait a minute. Why is *RP* growing at a time like this? Opa's brow is likely furrowing about now.

Inflation hit the print industry in Canada particularly hard in 2022, due to shortages of paper and big increases in shipping costs. In 2021 our cost to simply print and ship one issue was about \$10,000. The cost of our last issue climbed to over \$15,000. Ouch! And that doesn't take into consideration the costs of staffing and running an organization. If it wasn't for hundreds of millions of dollars of government funding, not many print newspapers and magazines would stay afloat.

Reformed Perspective decided not to pursue government funding and we also give the magazine away at no cost. Ads cover a small fraction of our expenses. So, are we fools to grow against the grain?

Although we understand the risk involved, and it does weigh on us at times, we also take to heart the Teacher's wisdom from Ecclesiastes 11:4: "Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap."

As is true for you, there is no shortage of threatening clouds that are brewing around us. Inflation is a more obvious example, but it is also somewhat

superficial. It comes alongside something that runs deep and has eternal consequences - increasing godlessness and secularism in the West, also in homes and churches.

God calls us to be people who plant and reap in His kingdom with a confidence that comes from faith in a sovereign God who put us in this time and place intentionally. Although we can always find reasons to hold off and wait, He desires that we take steps of faith today, trusting that He will fill our mouths if we open them wide (Psalm 81:10).

I started with *Reformed Perspective* in March of this year and worked with the board of directors to finalize a strategic plan in June. The plan is relatively simple, but also ambitious. Among other things, we desire to professionalize the print magazine, add writers, begin to incorporate journalism slowly and steadily, and increase the readership. We would love *RP* to become a well-known and trusted source of news and analysis, similar to what the Colson Center and *WORLD Magazine* are in the US.

By God's grace, in recent months, 148 of you came alongside us in a big way with one-time or recurring donations. That included a charitable foundation that shares a passion for this mission and provided funding that allows us to scale the magazine to so many more readers for two years. To all of you who gave this way, thank you so much for taking your own steps of faith!

Over the past five years we invested significantly in bringing *RP* to the digital world by sharing much of our content freely online, with an app, a weekly e-newsletter, social media, podcast and a popular app. We now get over a million visits a year through these means. These are great ways to stay plugged in to *RP*'s content between each issue of the magazine, plus



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to share it with others.

But as valuable as digital may be, we are convinced that print can accomplish things that digital never can. Our hope is to see *RP* be a means through which Christ's church is unified rather than divided. We also desire to hold fast to the truth of God's Word and not rely on secular gatekeepers who have the power to cancel us for beliefs that they find objectionable. In an age of a sea of information, we want to do what we can to make quality reading stand out from the trivial. Print does that. And it may also reach people who would never have chosen it themselves.

If you are excited to see a robustly Reformed publication growing in reach and impact, we would be thrilled if you could help us out. We are looking for writers, people to share

the magazine with others, and investors (all Canadian donations receive a charitable tax receipt).

And if you are one of 4,000 other families receiving this for the first time, welcome aboard! We would love to get to know you. Don't be a stranger!

Although there is wisdom in cutting back on our family's fuel consumption and groceries, I'm grateful to be a part of a team that doesn't want to cut back on the sowing in God's kingdom. Please join us in praying that this growth reaps a bountiful harvest to God's glory. 

Mark Penninga is the new(ish) Executive Director of Reformed Perspective.



"What needs reforming today?"

CONTEST!

505 years ago, Martin Luther courageously nailed 95 revolutionary opinions onto the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

As children of the Reformation, we recognize our natural inclination to drift away from the LORD, requiring continual reformation in our hearts, families, schools, churches, and society.

Our challenge to you is to make the case for something that needs reforming in 2022. It could be how we manage creation, farm, observe the Sunday, invest our money, use smartphones, take part in Young People's Bible studies, or something entirely different. Here is your opportunity to nail your own thesis!

Teachers, this could be a great project for your students.

And we aren't just looking for essays (though they are welcome too). We welcome contributions of art, cartoons, satire, and any medium that you desire to make your point.

CATEGORIES:

- Youth (under 18)
- Adults (18+)

RULES:

- Maximum two entries per person
- Work must be faithful to God's Word, also as preserved in the great Reformation
- Must be an original work
- No minimum length. Maximum 1,500 words or two pages
- Submitting your work requires giving permission to RP to publish it online and/or in print if selected by the editor

PRIZES:

- \$100 gift card to Christianbooks.com and \$50 for the runner-up for both categories
- Winners may be published in Reformed Perspective

DETAILS:

- Send your submissions to admin@reformedperspective.ca **before December 10, 2022;**
- For youth submissions please include age, and permission from parents for the article to be used by RP

