

REFORMED

Perspective

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FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

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RP'S letter writing contest -

so
many
reasons
to write

Editorial

by Jon Dykstra

Holding on to wisdom

What would a younger you tell you to do?

I've written on marriage and headship in the past but when a friend asked me for my "expert take" on a marital matter he had concocted I had to tell him that as a newly married man, I'm no longer an expert on marriage. But, I added, as I haven't yet had any kids I was still in a position to offer him some great expertise on parenting.

It was a joke, of course. But there is something to developing a well thought out "take" on marriage and parenting, and other big issues in life, long before we are ever in those situations. I wrote on headship and marriage before I had any personal experience so what I wrote was simplistic, and even wildly naïve in parts. However, I did tackle the subject biblically, so though as a bachelor I might have had little insight into how marriages *do* work, by going to Scripture I did have some idea about how marriages *should* work. And as a bachelor I was able to write on the matter in a way that no married man could – fearlessly. I could preach without worry of anyone evaluating my practice.

Now that I am married I'm sure those written words are going to be hard to live up to. Should my wife ever come across those old columns she'll notice I am already not (or perhaps I should say, "not yet") measuring up to the standards I outlined. So my earlier writings might just end up haunting me.

A firm grip

But I think that is a very good thing.

In family devotions we've been tackling the book of Proverbs and though we are only a dozen chapters in, one theme is becoming quite: God wants us to not only seek after wisdom, but to clench on to it and never let it go (7:2-3). Wisdom is something that once found can be lost. We might know God's will for a given situation but unless we bind this bit of wisdom to our heart, and tie it around our neck (6:21), we will soon forget it. That's how, for example, a Christian young man who knows he should not be "unequally yoked" can still, if he doesn't constantly keep this in mind, find himself increasingly attracted to an unbelieving young lass.

There is a real value then in wrestling with big issues like dating, marriage and parenting long before we're ever in those situations, and even writing down whatever Scriptural wisdom we think we've discovered on these topics.

Some years ago I bought a copy of a book called *All About Me*. It was, as the title suggests, a rather narcissistic tome, asking the book's purchaser to record in the provided blanks their favorite color, movies, food, sports team, pop star and clothing store. But the part that interested me was a chapter in the back where bigger questions were asked: What are your thoughts on abortion? Do you believe in spanking? What are your thoughts on God? What would you do if you were given a million dollars? The chapter included dozens more of these big questions, and asked for explanations – it wasn't enough to say you were against abortion; you had to explain why. The only way a person could complete this whole chapter was if they took the time to develop, and then record answer by answer, some sort of comprehensive worldview.

What an intriguing idea – just imagine if something similar existed that had been adapted for Christian use. The questions might include: While dating, what limits do you think are appropriate when it comes to physical intimacy? How much should you tithe? What does headship mean to you? What factors would determine who you vote for? (List them, in order of importance, and explain your list and its order.) What are your thoughts on organ donation? How are men and women different, and how do their roles differ? How many times should we attend church each Sunday and why? Why are you a member of your church and not another? How do you think God has gifted you? What qualities are you looking for in a spouse? And if you were given a million dollars, what would you do with the money?

Some of the questions would be fun, others would require a lot of study to answer in any sort of intelligent, biblical manner, but the end result would be nothing less than a booklet-sized personal profession of faith that could be kept, and referred back to repeatedly.

The value

This book doesn't actually exist. But if it did, what would be the value of such a book?

It wouldn't be in any of the specific answers – a young person tackling these questions for the first time is probably going to give some superficial and maybe even some silly answers. When we are young we are only beginning to grow in wisdom and haven't got much of it yet.

The value would come in establishing a baseline to measure our thoughts against later. Take the million dollar question as an example. A dozen years ago I know just how I would have answered that question – I would have taken the million dollars and started my own provincial political party. Today I have family responsibilities and consequently a new perspective. But I can't just dismiss my earlier thoughts – as a young man I learned the importance of defending God, and His Law, in the public realm, and because I've captured that bit of wisdom down on paper I'm not liable to lose it.

By tackling big questions early we're putting down an anchor – one that might still be pulled up and placed elsewhere, but which still provides us some stability now, so that we aren't swayed every which way. Our thinking on many of these important issues will change as we study Scripture further, but if we've taken the time to think through our initial answers, and even written them down, we'll be forced to evaluate our new thinking against our old. Then if a change is made we'll have to provide good, solid, biblical reasons to rebut our earlier self.

Conclusion

Tackling the big questions early is then, a way to hold onto the wisdom God reveals to us in our youth, when life is simpler, and we aren't plagued with being able to see so very many shades of gray. But holding onto wisdom is not just a task for the young. As we age, and study the Scriptures we may grow in wisdom, but as God makes clear repeatedly in Proverbs, we have to hold fast to wisdom (3:18) and guard it (4:13) closely, or we will lose it. So big questions then, are worth asking, early, often, and repeatedly.



What's Inside

This month we unveil our letter writing contest. The purpose of our contest is simple: to challenge and inspire people to speak out more often, using this medium. To that end we've rounded up a couple of qualified judges – Mark Penninga, the head of ARPA Canada, and Tristan Emmanuel, the head of the ECP – as well as yours truly, Jon Dykstra, the editor of this magazine. We've also rounded up a bit of a prize package for the top three letters and provided a couple of relevant articles and example letters. The first article is by Jaclyn Penninga outlining how filling in a comment card, and writing a letter allowed her to be heard at the highest levels of a large national company. The challenge she ends with is one for us all – if she could have this sort of impact on her own, just imagine what might happen if more of us took up this task. The second is a very different sort of article and a very different sort of letter – we wanted to include diverse examples – from a CHP candidate responding to a hostile letter writer. It would have been easy to ignore the abusive man who initiated this dialogue, but there was an opportunity there too, to tell the truth to someone who may never have heard it before. Ed Spronk seized the opportunity.

We hope these articles and this contest will inspire you to reach out, by writing. We also hope you'll submit a copy of your letters to our contest, and then we'll print the three best to further inspire others. For more contest details, turn to the center section.

Finally, we have a fantastic follow-up to our Summer issue's theme on Canada's Human Rights Commissions. *Kangaroo Canada* is an insider's perspective written to explain the craziness of these commissions to those living outside of Canada – it is by a Canadian but first appeared in the American publication *First Things*. Since these commissions are confusing even to those of us living in the Great White North, this article is sure to be an eye-opening experience to everyone.

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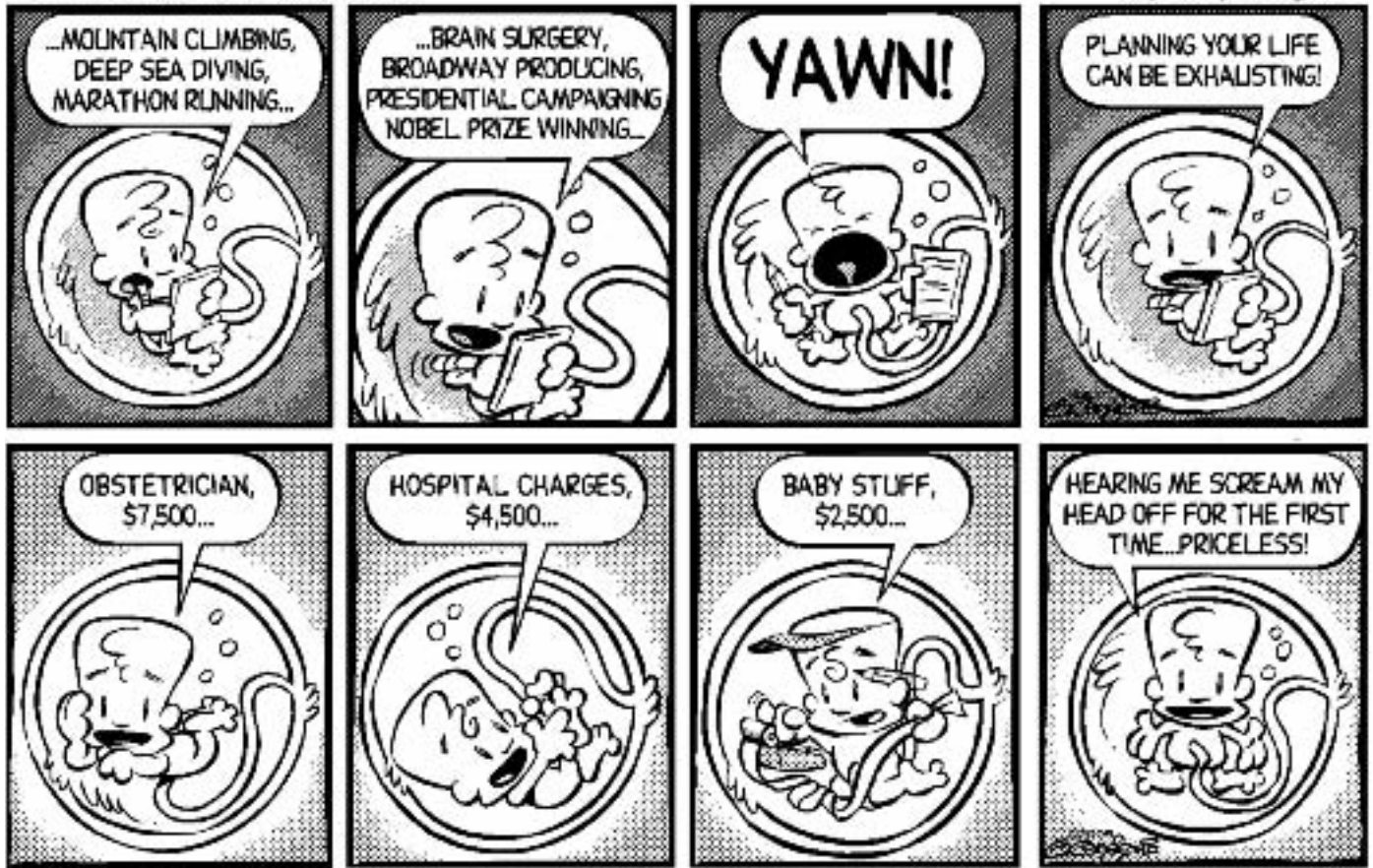
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Umbert the Unborn

by Gary Cangemi



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Nota Bene

News worth noting

by Sarah Meerstra



Canadian politicians show their "Pride"

Numerous Canadian politicians showed support for the homosexual movement by participating in this summer's Gay Pride Parade in Toronto. Some of the politicians in attendance were open homosexuals themselves or strong sympathizers, but most simply wanted to show their support of a group that has

tremendous clout in Canadian society and politics.

Among the participants were Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty (allegedly a Roman Catholic), federal Liberal leadership candidates Bob Rae and Michael Ignatieff, Green Party leader Elizabeth May, liberal MP Belinda Stronach, and NDP leader Jack Layton and his wife.

Source: Lifesite News, July 18, 2008

Archaeology backs up the Bible yet again

Archaeologists have discovered the royal seal of Gedaliah, son of Pashur, a royal prince from the time of King Zedekiah. Gedaliah, as Jeremiah 38:1-6 recounts, petitioned for the execution of the prophet Jeremiah.

The seal was discovered by Dr. Eilat Mazar, one of Israel's foremost archaeologists, and was buried under more than 2,000 years of rubble about 600 meters from the Temple Mount. The seal of another of Jeremiah's accusers, Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, mentioned twice in the book of Jeremiah, was found in the same vicinity about 3 years ago. "It's not often," Mazar said, "that such discoveries happen in which real figures of the past shake off the dust of history and so vividly revive the stories of the Bible."

Source: www.thetrumpet.com, July 31, 2008



Cleaner fuel – at what cost?

More and more concerned voices are pointing out that the diversion of massive amounts of the North American grain crop into ethanol for bio-fuel is causing serious problems around the world. With worldwide grain supplies already at historical lows, North America's bio-fuel initiatives are taking grain away from hungry people. The UN says it takes 232 kilograms of corn to fill a 50-litre gas tank with ethanol. That is enough to feed a child for a year. Last month the UN predicted "massacres" unless the bio-fuel policy is halted.



"The reality is that people are dying already," said Jacques Diouf, of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "Naturally people won't be sitting dying of starvation, they will react," he said. There have already been riots and unrest due to food shortages around the world, and the FAO predicts that this will only worsen.

Source: The Daily Telegraph

Unborn on the ballot in Colorado!!!!

When voters in Colorado come to the polls in November, they will have the opportunity to vote on an amendment to the state constitution that would acknowledge the unborn, from the moment of fertilization onward, as being legally recognized "persons." In other words, it would give to the unborn all the same rights as the already born!

An initiative of Colorado for Equal Rights, the amendment has been officially supported by at least 70 physicians in the state.

Source: Personhood Colorado, July 28, 2008

Charges dropped against Ezra Levant, but. . .

The Alberta Human Rights Commission has dropped all charges against Ezra Levant, publisher of the no-longer-in-circulation *Western Standard* magazine. Levant has been involved in a long and drawn-out legal battle over the past two years, after the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities brought a complaint of illegal “discrimination” against him for republishing the Danish cartoons of Mohammad in 2006.

Despite his acquittal Levant is still, in effect, being “fined” \$100,000. That’s the cost of the legal fees he had to pay over the course of the trial. Says Levant of the commission’s inquiry: “the process is the punishment.” His “victory” is a victory in name only, he argues. According to the rules of the Canadian Human Rights Commissions the legal fees of the complainant are covered by the state, while the defendant must cover his own legal fees.

“If I had been a defendant in a civil court, the judge would now order the losing parties to pay my legal bills. Instead, the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities won’t have to pay me a dime.”

“The process I was put through was a punishment in itself – and a warning to any other journalists who would defy radical Islam.”

Source: Lifesite News, August 7, 2008



Terrorist leader’s son converts to Christianity

Masab Yousuf, son of popular Palestinian Hamas terrorist leader Sheik Hassan Yousef, has reportedly converted to Christianity.

In an interview with Israel’s *Haaretz* newspaper, Yousuf spoke out against Hamas and said that he hoped his father would come to accept Christianity. “I know that I’m endangering my life and am even liable to lose my father, but I hope that he’ll understand this and that God will give him and my family patience and willingness to open their eyes to Jesus and to Christianity. Maybe one day I’ll be able to return to Palestine and to Ramallah with Jesus, in the Kingdom of God,” he said. He criticized Palestinian society as “an entire society [that] sanctifies death and the suicide terrorists. In Palestinian culture a suicide terrorist becomes a hero, a martyr. Sheiks tell their students about the ‘heroism of the shaheeds.’”

Source: WorldNetDaily, July 31, 2008

A “culture of promiscuity” in Britain

Promiscuity and risky sexual activity have become “the norm” for young people in Britain, reports the *Daily Mail*. And the result has been record numbers of new cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), with nearly 400,000 new cases in 2007.

The Family Planning Association (FPA), Britain’s leading promoters of contraception and “free sex,” said the solution is more sex education for children. This is in a country that already has nearly unmatched levels of sex education in its schools.

This leads others to argue that sex education is the ultimate cause of the

No more “maiden names” in the Netherlands

The Dutch civil service has announced that the term “maiden name” is no longer an appropriate legal term given the legal status of homosexual marriage in that country. The term will instead be changed to “birth name,” to accommodate homosexual men who may wish to take the surname of the other man they are “marrying.”

The move is saddening, but perhaps not all that surprising in a country where recent polls show that over 80% of the population support homosexual marriage.

Source: LifeSite News, July 18, 2008



problem since it teaches young people that there is nothing wrong with promiscuous sex.

Norman Wells of *Family and Youth Concern* said, “The answer does not lie in yet more sex education and contraceptive schemes, but in honestly telling young people the only sure way to avoid being infected with an STD is to keep sexual intimacy within the context of a lifelong, mutually faithful relationship with an uninfected partner.”

All this education and access to contraception has also not lowered rates of abortion among teenaged girls. On the contrary, the abortion rate for girls under the age of 14 rose an incredible 21 per cent in 2007.

Source: The Daily Mail, July 16, 2008





A very busy winter

**Global warming, abortion,
and the growth of Islam
all made the news this month**

by Rene Vermeulen

I am sitting at my computer during one of the most beautiful days this winter. Outside the temperature is something like 18°C. There is not a cloud in the sky and the barometer is very high and doesn't want to move. You will probably say that this is a good thing; what more could I want, except to be outside?

Well, there are a number of arguments that I could use. First of all we need rain; it is the middle of winter in Australia, after all. And second, my editor still wants an article. So there is nothing for it but to continue sitting by my computer.

Much, after all, has happened in Australia during the last month or so.

Global warming?

Our prime minister, Kevin Rudd, has launched a campaign to fight global warming. I read the following in one of my magazines:

"While the Rudd Labor Government, through Climate Change Minister Senator Penny Wong, is committed to implementing Professor Ross Garnaut's elaborate scheme to force business to pay for greenhouse gas emissions, other countries are baulking at the huge additional cost involved, while mounting scientific evidence shows that it is a dangerous waste of time and money."

The article then goes on to question if the whole argument for global warming is really valid. Some scientists have pointed out that, over the past 40 years, global temperature has risen slightly, but not at the level which can be attributed to human activity.

It further argues that extreme weather events in the US are no more common or frequent than in the late 19th century. So if these arguments prove to be right then the changes the Australian government is making will be expensive, harmful to the Australian economy, and pointless when it comes to saving us from global warming.

In the meantime countries such as China and India are increasing their emissions of greenhouse gasses as their economies are growing at a great rate. So what difference is the small cut to Australian emissions going to make?

Abortion

Abortion is in the news once again. Australian women are having about one in every three pregnancies terminated. That amounts to some 90,000 deaths per year. The matter is coming before the Federal Parliament again in September when Senator Guy Barnett, a Liberal, will move to disallow Medicare funding for second trimester abortions (14-26 weeks gestation). It will be debated and voted on in the Senate on September 17. So by the time you read this we'll probably know the outcome.

While all of us will agree that the motion goes only part of the way toward stopping abortions it is better than nothing.

I recently read of a 16-year-old girl who became pregnant after being raped. Her father was all for her having an abortion but then she had an ultrasound done. This convinced her that the child growing in her womb was real and she refused the abortion. This lady is now 19 years old and her child is three years old. As she indicated: "if I had had the abortion there would have been two victims as a result of the rape, myself and my daughter."

Islam can't be critiqued

Two Australian services are primarily responsible for national security; they are the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). The ASIO's main role is to gather information and produce intelligence that will enable it to warn the government about activities or situations that might endanger Australia's national security. The ASIO Act defines "security" as the protection of Australia and its people from espionage, sabotage, politically

motivated violence, the promotion of communal violence, attacks on Australia’s defense system, and acts of foreign interference. So this is clearly an important group.

But the ASIO and other elements of Australia’s security services are concerned that they always seem to be targeted for suspicion when they point out possible security concerns regarding the growth of Islam in Australia. When our security services (and others) point out some notable differences between Australia and some of the practices of the Muslims coming to the country – that, for example, Australia does not allow for polygamy – they are accused of fostering discrimination based on race.



So in Australia it seems that Islam is almost beyond criticism



“Experts” at our universities are also joining in, and accusing ordinary men and women, who are just doing their job, of racial bias when they are doing nothing more than warning about extremist elements among the Islamic people.

So in Australia it seems that Islam is almost beyond criticism. In the United Kingdom this type of blanket approval of anything Islamic led to the Lord Chief Justice telling an audience in one of the largest mosques in London that there is a place in Britain for Muslim “Sharia law.” The Archbishop of Canterbury not long ago was of the same opinion.

However, it turns out that not all Europeans take so easily to creeping Islamization. Apparently in Switzerland, in the city of Geneva one mosque already exists. But when the city’s Muslims asked permission to build a second the city council told them that a second would only be allowed once Christians were allowed their first church in Saudi Arabia.



Summing up

The leaders in our Western society have lost all sense of direction. They offer respect for Islam’s Sharia law, but little enough respect for any of our laws that are based on the Word of God.

Yesterday we heard a sermon dealing with Proverbs 1:7-8: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother.”

When even church leaders do not show a fear for the Lord and often make statements that show that they despise wisdom and instruction it is sad indeed. But we know the Truth. This means we have the responsibility to remind ourselves and others around us that God’s Word is wholesome and best for our society.



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by Douglas Farrow

Mark Steyn is the author of the bestselling *America Alone*, a witty tirade against the decline of the West, a portion of which appeared in the Canadian magazine *Maclean's*. Ezra Levant was the publisher of a journal called the *Western Standard*, which in 2006 reprinted cartoons depicting Muhammad from a Danish newspaper. Steyn and Levant have now been hauled before Canada's human rights commissions to answer to charges of hate speech.

These commissions (HRCs, for short) were set up in the 1960s and 1970s with the aim of combating discrimination on a practical level. In recent times, however, they have transmogrified into mechanisms for enforcing politically correct ideologies and silencing dissent. "It never occurred to us," remarks Alan Borovoy, one of the originators of the HRCs, "that this instrument, which we intended to deal with discrimination in housing, employment and the provision of goods and services, would be used to muzzle the expression of opinion."

Don't you dare hurt my feelings!

That is exactly what has happened, through the mechanism of Section 13 of the Human Rights Act, which prohibits hate messages. Under Canada's criminal code, the incitement of hatred is already counted a crime – but against that charge, truth and good faith are viable defenses, and the burden of proof lies with the accuser. Not so with the Human Rights Act. As James Allan, a law professor in Queensland, marvels: "To be in breach of these hate-speech provisions, you don't have to counsel violence; you don't have to urge discrimination; you don't have to express hatred; you don't even have to have said or written something that did, in fact, subject some group to hatred or contempt. All that is needed is that your comments, in the view of the sort of people chosen to staff these tribunals,

are 'likely' to expose someone or some group to contempt or hatred."

Allan, like many other bemused observers, refers to the HRCs as kangaroo courts. Their proceedings display a bouncy ineptitude and, simultaneously, a sinister level of collusion. Take, for example, Richard Warman, a former investigator for the national commission who decided that it was more fun to be the aggrieved victim of a human rights violation. He has filed twenty-six complaints so far, including more than half of Section 13 complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC). What's more, he has a perfect 100 per cent conviction rate for these complaints.

**THE INFAMOUS
SECTION 13
OF
CANADA'S HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

"It is a discriminatory practice for a person or a group of persons acting in concert to communicate. . . any matter that is likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt by reason of the fact that person or those persons are identifiable on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination."

These quasi-judicial bodies are staffed by political appointees who have neither the qualifications nor the independence of regular judges. Their ad hoc procedures provide no firm rules for evidence; bigoted comments, posted by strangers to websites in foreign jurisdictions, have been judged admissible, for example. No actual proof of harm is required in order to obtain a conviction. Investigations and deliberations are driven by far-reaching, utopian mandates to “reduce discrimination and promote social change.”

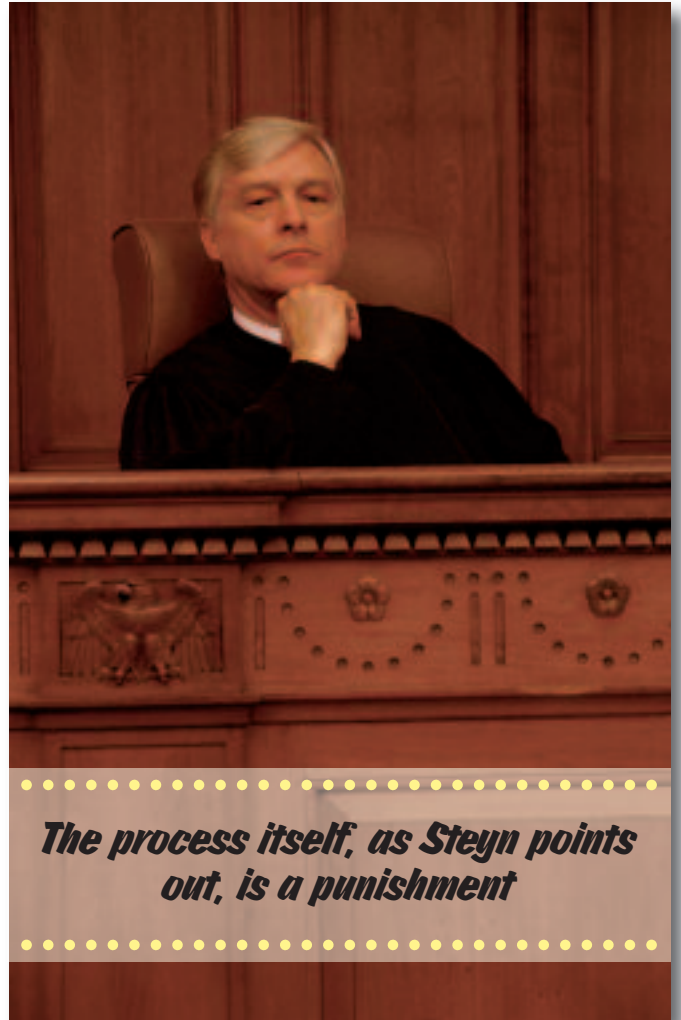
The growing train of hate-speech prosecutions might have been derailed as long ago as 1990, when an appeal brought Section 13 under review by the Supreme Court in *Taylor v. Canada*. The court found, however, that the Charter’s guarantee of freedom of expression “is not unduly impaired.” Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Dickson opined that, “as long as human rights tribunals continue to be well aware of the purpose” of Section 13, “there is little danger that subjective opinion as to offensiveness will supplant the proper meaning of the section.”

That view now appears rather naive. Allegations have been made that agents or former agents of the CHRC have themselves posted hate messages online under pseudonyms, and even by way of Internet identity theft, and that their activities in manufacturing offenses have been covered up by evidence and transcript tampering.

We won’t tolerant intolerance!

Meanwhile, for evidence that “subjective opinion as to offensiveness” is getting the upper hand, one need look no further than the recent judgment against Stephen Boissoin. A Protestant pastor, Boissoin was brought before the Alberta commission for a letter to his local newspaper in which he issued a “war cry” against “the aggressive propagation of homo and bisexuality” and articulated some decidedly countercultural opinions, asserting that “where homosexuality flourishes, all manner of wickedness abounds.”

The commissioner who heard the complaint – which was brought by a heterosexual, an activist named Darren Lund – might well have noted that political orientation, unlike sexual orientation, is not a protected category. Neither, for that matter, is moral orientation. From which it follows that the coercive power of the state ought not to be used to settle the agenda wars of private citizens. Instead, Commissioner Lori Andreachuk – with the support of the Alberta attorney general, whose office intervened on Lund’s side – decided that Boissoin’s views could not be tolerated. “In this case,” she wrote, “the publication’s exposure of homosexuals to hatred and contempt trumps the freedom of speech afforded in the Charter.”



In the absence of any particular victim, Andreachuk determined that Boissoin should pay Lund \$5,000 for his personal sacrifice in lodging the complaint and should also provide him with a written apology. But here is the kicker, which highlights the naiveté of the Supreme Court’s view that Section 13 is “sufficiently precise and narrow.” The commissioner also ordered Boissoin and his organization to “cease publishing in newspapers, by email, on the radio, in public speeches, or on the Internet, in future, disparaging remarks about gays and homosexuals.” She further prohibited them “from making disparaging remarks in the future about Dr. Lund or Dr. Lund’s witnesses,” and directed that “all disparaging remarks versus homosexuals . . . be removed from current web sites and publications of Mr. Boissoin.” In short, she served up a comprehensive lifetime ban that prohibits Pastor Boissoin from ever saying anything that someone like Darren Lund might find offensive.

Win or lose, we'll still make you pay!

Boissoin can appeal, but many appeals are not heard and many others are never made for the simple reason that the appellant cannot afford it. And in the absence of a successful appeal, the remedies of the kangaroo courts are enforceable by the criminal courts, and the prospect of jail awaits anyone who refuses to comply. Nor do those who escape conviction escape punishment. The process itself, as Steyn points out, is a punishment. The complainant is liable for nothing, not even the cost of a lawyer, while the accused is liable for everything. "Even if I was eventually acquitted," says Levant, "I would still lose – hundreds of hours, and tens of thousands of dollars in legal bills. That's not an accident; that's one of the tools of these commissions. Every journalist in the country has been taught a lesson: Censor yourself now, or be put through a costly wringer."

The erosion of Canada's Charter liberties – especially freedom of expression and freedom of conscience and religion – is evident in any number of other cases. The journal *Catholic Insight* is under investigation for reproducing in its pages biblical and magisterial teaching about homosexuality. The Protestant charity Christian Horizons has just been fined, and its leadership ordered to undergo reeducation, for the crime of having a Christian code of conduct to which its employees must adhere. The Christian Heritage Party reports that three complaints have been filed against it, "alleging 'hatred' and 'contempt' in the party's twenty-year-old policy of opposing special rights for homosexuals."

But the complaint against Steyn and *Maclean's* offers a particularly poignant illustration of how bad things have become. Even before proceedings got under way in another jurisdiction, the Ontario Human Rights Commission issued a news release lamenting its own lack of competence to hear the case. Without benefit of evidence or deliberation, its leader (former Toronto mayor Barbara Hall) left no doubt as to what she thought the outcome should be: "The dissemination of destructive, xenophobic opinions" must somehow be stopped.

Freedom of speech? Bah!

Asked under oath what value he attached to freedom of speech, Dean Steacy, a CHRC investigator, replied: "Freedom of speech is an American concept, so I don't give it any value." American onlookers might be forgiven for turning aside with a shrug, but they would do well to consider a remark by the irrepressible Ezra Levant: "What happens in Canada today often happens in the United States tomorrow. We're like a political laboratory for bad experiments."

How Canada became such a laboratory is an interesting question. But a more important question is how the whole idea

of rights has been transformed into a cover for monstrosities like the HRCs – for an intellectual, moral, and juridical violence that has turned rights into the enemy, rather than the friend, of basic human freedoms. That question has an answer too long to attempt here. Even to raise it, however, is to bump up against a curious fact: The mainstream media, for the most part, has turned a blind eye to this violence, even where it threatens (as in the Levant and Steyn cases) the freedom of the press.



***A society with a bad conscience,
we may be sure, will always find
ways to police speech***



The explanation for that, I think, lies in the myth that the concept of human rights is entirely a modern invention – and an invention that defines the morality of our own secular age. The thought that the very foundations of our morality should prove so flimsy is more than we can bear. Are we not the great generation of rights? The truth is, of course, that authentic human rights discourse belongs to a tradition that the West has now largely abandoned, and that what passes for that discourse today is something else.

The threat that this something else poses can scarcely be overestimated. Those in Canada who think repealing Section 13 will solve the problem are mistaken (though that would be a good first step); likewise those in America who think it will be enough if the creation of HRCs, which some states are considering, is prevented. A society with a bad conscience, we may be sure, will always find ways to police speech and pursue thought crimes.

And we do have a bad conscience. Not merely because we have broken with the past but because we have committed ourselves to the obvious absurdity of claiming that pluralism is our only norm, multiculturalism our only cultural foundation, diversity our only basis for unity, and tolerance our highest virtue.

Tolerance the highest virtue. That goes a long way to account for the spectacle of intolerance that Canada has been offering the world.

Douglas Farrow is associate professor of Christian Thought at McGill University and author of several books, including "Ascension" and "Ecclesia" and "Nation of Bastards." This article was first printed in the August/September 2008 issue of "First Things." It is reprinted here with permission.



Getting whacked by the anti-spankers

They'll use the state's sword to stop the parents' rod

by Michael Wagner

One of the most controversial issues in child raising is corporal punishment. Spanking a misbehaving child is seen as a despicable act to people today. There are politicians in Canada who would even like to make it illegal.

One of the arguments used to discredit spanking is that it teaches children that violence is okay. "Mommy and Daddy use violence against me when I'm bad, so it's okay for me to use violence to get what I want too." That's what the anti-spankers claim anyway. The anti-spankers are against violence and since spanking is violence it is obviously bad.

Against only some violence

Hmmm. Are the anti-spankers really against violence? Let's look at this a little closer. Suppose the anti-spankers get their way and corporal punishment of children is criminalized. A Christian parent is struggling with a child throwing a tantrum, and thus spanks the child on the bottom to bring the child under control.

Assuming this scene was viewed by an anti-spanker, what comes next? The anti-spanker calls the authorities, and some people in uniforms carrying guns show up to deal with the Christian parent. Perhaps the uniformed people want to take the parent or child into custody. If you look closely you will see the very real implied threat of violence against the parent. He or she must abide by the dictates of the uniformed people. . . or else. They don't carry guns just to look macho.

The point is that the anti-spankers are against violence only when it involves a parent spanking a child. They are not against violence that involves government agents preventing a parent from spanking his or her child. The rhetoric of opposing the modeling of violence by parents is a ruse. If a parent spanking a child models violence and aggression, what does the sight of uniformed officers with guns hauling away a Christian parent model? Peacefulness and tranquility? Certainly not.

In fact, moving from a situation of a parent spanking a child on the bottom, to a situation of armed police officers taking away the parent for administering the spanking, is actually a substantial escalation in the level of violence.

The question is not whether or not there will be some form of violence; the question is who will the violence be used

against?
a swat on the
arrested by armed
ministering corporal

Should disobedient children receive
behind? Or should parents be
officers of the state for ad-
punishment?

The sword and rod

The Bible is clear that sometimes children need a spanking. It's not pleasant, but it is occasionally necessary. This is because all human beings have a sinful nature.

The Bible grants parents the authority to use the "rod" to discipline their children (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15). The Bible also authorizes the state to use the "sword" to maintain order and defend citizens from outside invaders (Romans 13: 4). So parents and civil authorities are granted permission by God to use "violence" in certain circumstances. This is because people have sinful natures, and at times sinful behavior can only be restrained by force.

From a Biblical Christian perspective, removing the parents' right to use the rod makes as much sense as removing the state's right to use the sword. In a world of sinless human beings, neither the rod nor the sword would be necessary. But we don't live in a world of sinless human beings.

The crux of the matter

The anti-spankers obviously don't believe the Christian view that children are sinful and will occasionally need to receive a swat on the behind. They have a different view of human nature. This is where the rubber really meets the road: in many cases, the differing views on corporal punishment are rooted in different conceptions of human nature. If all people are sinful by nature, corporal punishment is necessary at times. But if the idea of a sinful nature is just a fairy tale from the past, then corporal punishment always constitutes the physical abuse of children and must be prohibited by force.

Strangely, however, the anti-spankers never see the need to prohibit the state's use of force. In fact, their efforts to criminalize spanking increases the number of situations where the state should use force, namely, against Christian parents who believe what the Bible teaches about raising children.

Do not turn away

We need to learn about what is happening in Darfur

by Harold Ludwig

Once in a while you come across a story that is so compelling that you can't help but get caught up in it. Such is *The Translator*, by Daoud Hari (David to his friends).

I first came across this story while watching a program on the CBC about it (yes, there are actually some worthwhile things there on occasion). It was an interview with the author and I was sufficiently intrigued to go out and buy the book on my next visit to the local bookstore. I was not disappointed.

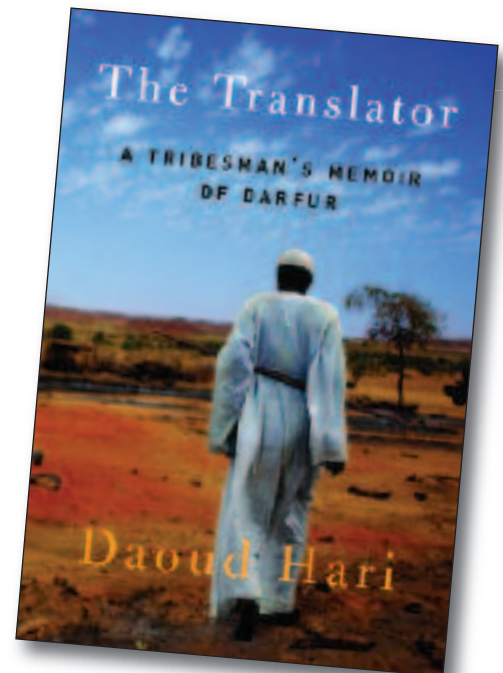
It's difficult at the best of times to get people's attention for any story related to Africa and many of its endemic problems. We've heard and seen them so many times – riots, rapes and rampages in a faraway place that's hard to find on a map. Difficult names, confusing details that can be too easily dismissed as not relevant to our daily existence. Such is the lot of many stories related to Africa – we feel a momentary sadness, shake our heads at seemingly insoluble problems and go on with our crossword puzzles.

But if you were to pick up this book you'd find that this is a very compelling story of one man's experiences living through what's often called the "genocide in Darfur."

A mess of competing interests

Darfur is a part of Sudan and about the size of France or Texas. In a helpful appendix to the book, the author gives an explanation of the origins of the conflict in the Sudan going back to the days in 1956 when the British left. The post-colonial period is one of strife: violent overthrow of governments, different interests competing for the country's oil riches, and the introduction of sharia law (imposed even on the non-Muslim parts of the country).

In the late 1980s the relatively moderate government of Sadiq al-Mahdi was overthrown and replaced by military strongman, General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir. You may remember at least the last part of his name since it was fairly prominent on the news recently in connection with his indictment by the International Criminal Court for crimes related to the "genocide in Darfur." Indeed that's what it appears to be – the killing of about 400,000 people and the displacement of 2.5 million people from their homeland to other places, though mainly to Chad, a country which is unable to cope with the ad-



The Translator A tribesman's memoir of Darfur

by Daoud Hari
DoubleDay, 2008

224 pages; Hardcover; \$28 Can.

The first chapter can be read online at www.TheTranslator.notlong.com

ditional influx of people. The extent of the suffering imposed upon such large numbers has been well documented by UN and private organizations such as Human Rights Watch.

The whole tragic situation in this country is exacerbated by the complications of geopolitical interests on the part of China (which was allowed to take control of the oilfields), Russia, the United States and Europe. Due to the establishment of friendly relations with Osama Bin Laden, Sudan became a training ground for terrorists, thus making this a part of the wider global terrorist network. The introduction of the most lethal firearms available only made the disputes between various rebel groups and the "government" forces more deadly and volatile.



Telling his story to the world

All of this information is fairly well established, and can be confirmed by looking at a variety of sources.

A mere recitation of these sad facts, however, does not begin to have the impact that a reading of the memoir by Daoud Hari has. Here was a young man whose life was shattered when in 2003 his village was attacked by militia groups backed by the Sudanese government. Many members of his family were killed; the rest fled, and Hari himself escaped.

Unlike many other young men his age, who joined in the violence, Hari decided to use his knowledge of languages learned in high school to serve as a translator and guide to international aid workers and journalists when they started to arrive. The book relates the stories of that harrowing journey in the company of these outsiders. With their help, the story of one young man's encounters with genocide have been preserved for the world to read and understand. It puts a human face on an otherwise too easy to dismiss tragic story of African problems remote from our own comfortable existence.

The story itself has many descriptions of horrific acts performed by men (more often boys) upon their fellow citizens. The bigger story, however, is in the actions (or inaction) of the

big players: China, Russia, Europe, the United States and the United Nations. There is plenty of blame to share.

I do not have the space to go into detail on who did what and why nothing seems to happen to try to save millions of people from such a tragic end. So you need to read this book, or for up to date information on this conflict you can also visit SaveDarfur.org. But here is the situation in brief – as the author himself says in the appendix, “The non-Arab traditional Africans of Darfur are being systematically murdered and displaced by Bashir’s government of Sudan as part of a program to remove political dissent, remove challenges to power, make way for unobstructed resource development, and turn an Arab minority into an Arab majority.”

The author challenges his readers with a profound and rhetorical question, namely, can such a program of deliberate killing as a political solution still work in the 21st century? If it happens here, what’s to prevent it from happening elsewhere again? Can we as citizens of this world and as Christians stay silent in the face of such a question? To ask it is to answer it!

Harold Ludwig is a retired businessman and former educator who lives in Abbotsford, BC. He’s currently serving as President of the BC wing of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada.





Old-man tremor and grey-haired splendor

by Jane deGlint

A fictional story of a man's life

Usually I do not talk much about my life. But as my breath becomes weaker (as you can hear) and my grey hair sparser (as you can see), I want to give a testimony of the Lord's wondrous ways with me.

Both my parents came from very poor families. Countless times they talked about their move from the country to the city. Because my mother's family had lived very close to the city, they were able to visit their relatives for weddings and funerals. But my father's family had come from out of province. They had to keep the picture of their birthplace alive by telling stories. With vivid strokes they sketched their great aunts and grocers against the backdrop of the bogs, fields and rivers of their beloved province.

By the time my parents met they were in their late twenties. Today single people in their late twenties usually have established a level of financial independence. Not so my parents. They both still lived at their parental home and handed all their earnings over to their mother.

My father told me that he first noticed my mother during a performance of the local band in a small urban park. True to character he did not make any advances till he was sure that she was a member of his church. After he had spotted her during a worship service he planned his next move. Managing to accompany her on her way home after church one Sunday, he boldly enquired whether she had a boyfriend. Her negative answer removed all hurdles for the finale. He confessed that he was absolutely smitten with her appearance and deportment. They married five years later, in the early nineteen twenties, and made their modest home on a floor of a tall, narrow house in the inner city.

My father worked very hard. His hands stood taut with calluses from his work in the harbors. It was his job to clean the large holds of cargo ships after they had been unloaded. Not only did this imply that he always worked nights, it was also a dirty job. Even though he washed up at work before he came home, he always smelled like a strange mixture of brackish water and sour sweat.

But no matter how hard my father worked, he always made time to read. He did not own many books, but those in his possession took turns coming off the shelves to be restudied

or reread. Among the collection was a large Bible, heavy with footnotes, a dictionary, several theological works, a few regional novels and two poetry anthologies. There was also a hardbound notebook, which he used for writing a novel about his birthplace. He also perused two prominent church magazines.

Even though my father gained great insight from his passionate reading, he never elevated himself above our significantly less educated neighbors. To think he did would be far from the truth. Very aware that he lived before the face of his holy God, he felt very unworthy. Often he was deeply burdened with his ongoing struggle against what he called his "stubborn old man." His preoccupation with his shortcomings led to a very lively awareness of the devil and his deceptive assistants. My father would not hesitate to warn publicly against the wiles of the evil one. The contrast between his outburst of zeal and his inner struggles made him a remarkable man. On the one hand he would pronounce strong curses on those who obviously walked in darkness, while on the other hand he could sob like a child from deep regret over an outburst of his temper.

Naturally my father put the fear of God into his children, and in hindsight I see that he did so into my mother as well. We trembled when he vented his anger about an infraction of the family rules. My reticent mother raised her two sons and two daughters, of which I was the oldest, completely along the directives of my father. My father put his foot down; she nurtured. My father made theological pronouncements; she agreed. My father wanted warm yogurt; she heated it for him.

I grew up in my father's shadow. I inherited his somber outlook, without his fortitude and aggression. I realized that I would never accomplish his status of spiritual authority that he had unwittingly acquired.

But something happened that gave me, again in hindsight, a status of my own. Shortly before I was to finish my elementary education the principal of the school came to see my parents. He strongly recommended that I continue my education. Even though my father knew the importance of reading, he was not immediately convinced. Young boys ought to contribute to the family income when they turn thirteen. But the principal insisted. My mother might have objected because she was not ready to see her oldest son leave her comfort zone. But the principal must have reassured her. I went on to receive secondary education. I was the only one in our family who did.



Just before I graduated from high school the German army invaded our country. The Second World War became an unavoidable reality when the centre of our city was bombed into complete destruction. With my friends, I made my way to the roof of our housing complex. Awestruck we gazed at the billowing pillars of smoke which rose up from the city centre. Schools were closed and my father did not go to work. It goes without saying that my father was uninhibited in pronouncing the most severe forms of God's wrath on the Germans.

After the war a large international company hired me for their accounting department. I worked there till my retirement, upgrading my qualifications as the need arose. I held several posts, from accounts receivable to investments to social law as it applied to the employees. My work was my passion.

But I had more passions. In hindsight, once again, I did everything with a passion. Maybe I did not recognize it as such, because my passion was not a wild, uncontrollable drive. It was more a quiet force that kept me going.

My family life was another such passion. I met my wife after the war, around the time that I started to work for the international company. My wife tells me that she was introduced to me by her girlfriend at a church function, but her recollections of that event are much more vivid than mine. Even if I had taken an immediate liking to her, I would not have pursued such feelings, since she was from a middle-class family.

To my surprise it became clear to me that the Lord had meant her to become my wife. It was a natural courtship, maybe partly because she took a variety of little initiatives for unexpected encounters. The fact that she worked at an office building close to mine became an inexhaustible asset. She enriched my life in many ways. Meeting up with her married siblings was an unexpected adventure. Her cheerfulness and curiosity became the light of my life. The relationship between her aging parents was strangely relaxed and based on an amazing sense of equality.

The trouble was introducing her to my family. My mother did not mind her, but my father was highly suspicious of her middle-class background. He associated middle-class with socialism. Many non-Christian members of his class welcomed socialism as their ticket for an easier life, but he considered it an accursed philosophy. The constant need to defend his point of view had made him adamant about the matter. On the other hand, her family was highly respected in our church. By his own standards he could not reject her. At the time of our wedding the relationship was still somewhat uncomfortable, though fortunately it did not lead to an estrangement. However, my choice of spouse did confirm my emerging status as the educated, bourgeois member of the family. I could not help it.

The Lord blessed our marriage with many children, who all became a source of humble pride to me. My steadily increasing salary made it possible to rent a larger house in a different neighborhood. At our new location we found ourselves close neighbors with a doctor and an architect.

Woven together with my passions for family and work is my passion for the church. Being involved in the church was part of my upbringing. During my young adult years I participated in youth work and outreach. It was around the birth of our third child that I became an elder for the first time. With great trepidation I accepted the task. More experienced elders taught me by example how to conduct meaningful pastoral conversations. I learned to talk with the old and with the young, with the educated and with the laborers, with the sick and with the dying, with the celebrating and with the depressed.

Frequently I served as vice-chairman or chairman. The increased responsibility of such functions oppressed me at times. The most difficult issues were the discipline cases, whether they dealt with misconduct or wrong doctrine. Initially I took a rather legalistic approach to such matters. Steeped in my father's approach of righteous condemnation I judged the issues by the standards of confession and church order.

But as I grew older I started to question my emphasis on rigid rules. It became clear to me that certain issues escape rigid rules. Only a close walk with the Lord will provide the spiritual insight to judge wisely.

Now I am old. It is about two decades ago that I retired from my work after more than forty years of employment. Thankfully I still have my spirited wife beside me. We love our children and their spouses, and our grandchildren. We have concerns about some of our dear ones, as we do about certain trends in the church. But after each spiritual struggle we find our rest in the Lord's faithfulness. He is our strength and salvation.

*"The glory of young men is their strength,
Grey hair the splendor of the old."*

Proverbs 20:29 

ONE COMMENT CARD AND ONE EMAIL

Sometimes all it takes to be heard is a willingness to speak

by Jaclyn Penninga

If you are waiting in-line at a grocery store you are guaranteed to be bombarded by flashy magazines. I shop at Save-On-Foods (a big grocery chain in Western Canada) but I have not heard of a grocery store that abstains from this practice. These magazines are often, if not always, an assault on the senses. They are visually disturbing with pictures of scantily clad women and men. Not only that, the headlines and featured articles promote gossip and obsession about sex, weight-loss, image and power (unfortunately those topics all seem to go hand in hand).

It is interesting that these magazines are a temptation for women. On a first glance you would think that it would only be visually tempting for men (which they are). However I admit, and know many other females that would concur, that each time again I have to choose to refuse to look at or read the covers of these magazines. They are there for a reason. And it is not uncommon to see women spontaneously buy the latest glossy bit of smut. In fact, that is the very reason they are displayed there. To add to the problem, women who are grocery shopping are often accompanied by their small children.

Enough is enough

As a family living in Lethbridge (at that time) we witnessed this onslaught of images and ideas each time we shopped. It often bothered me that this was practiced by companies that received so much business from Christian families like ours, who did not want to see these magazines at all.

One particular day my husband was shopping at the Lethbridge Save-On-Foods. He saw a young boy (maybe seven or eight years old) waiting in line with a parent. This child happened to be at eye-level with a *Cosmopolitan* magazine and out of sheer curiosity was staring at it. The cover featured a woman pulling her shirt wide open to reveal herself wearing only a white lacy bra. Now we all know the power of images and how hard they are to purge from your mind. And we all know the vulnerability of a young school-aged mind. And so when he told me about it I felt physically sick. I had had enough.

The next time I was in the store I went from the checkout to the customer service counter and filled out a comment card. I briefly described what had been seen and suggested that they also would probably not care for their eight-year-old to see these

images. I requested that the magazines be removed. If that was for some reason impossible I asked that they provide a family-friendly checkout that did not have the magazines.

Quite a response

It was very encouraging to receive a personal phone-call from the local store's manager a few days later. He said that he agreed with me but then apologized that he could not change the store's layout. Apparently every Save-On-Foods across Canada follows the same design and this layout is dictated from the head office. However he provided me with the email for the national customer service centre and offered to also contact them to add his support to my suggestions.

Soon after, I sent an email to the head office with my concerns, suggestions and contact information. I then forwarded the email I had just sent to friends and family so that they could also send a similar email. After all, the more response that Save-On-Foods would receive the better. Right?

THINGS WE LEARNED FROM THIS

1. **Follow up, follow up, follow up.** Keep the contact information of every person you spoke with in the issue so that you can speak to the same person again. Be sure to let them know in your email or phone call that you plan to contact them again.
2. **Set a date.** Write on your calendar when you are going to contact them again. Life is busy so it's easy to forget how much time has gone by.
3. **Get more people involved.** A message is always stronger if it is spoken by more people. The decision makers need to know that they are serving more people by changing the status quo.
4. **Offer your assistance.** Ask how you can continue to help with this so that the decision makers don't feel it's all placed on their shoulders. They are also busy and they may feel more disposed to help you if you are also helping them.

A few weeks later a manager from the Overwaitea/Save-On-Foods head office phoned our home. He spoke with my husband and (at that time) agreed that something should be done. He offered to initially contact some of the magazine companies to see if the covers could be improved. If this wasn't possible then he would look into cascading them or removing all or some of them from the checkouts. He let us know that it would likely be a few months before we would see any changes in the stores. It was once again a very encouraging response. We were looking forward to seeing what changes would take place.

Quiet response

Unfortunately, since then we have not noticed any significant change. The store in Lethbridge did provide one checkout aisle where they put a plastic cover in front of just one of the magazines (*Cosmopolitan*) so that only the cover was showing. However, this was the only change and on one's first glance for a free checkout it was impossible to notice this. We waited for a few months like the manager had suggested but we did not see any other improvements.

After that waiting period I sent a follow up email to see if anything was going to be done but I did not receive a response. My husband called again two months after that and was able to speak with the same manager. Unfortunately he was no longer so helpful. It was very disappointing to hear that they have no plans to standardize the idea of family friendly checkouts. According to him, the store is "not in the business of censoring." They believe that most customers are not upset by the magazines being there and that they are serving their customers. He also reported that one of the stores in Abbotsford, B.C. does provide family friendly checkouts but he refused to provide any suggestions on how or if they could be implemented at other stores.

Not the end?

I suppose the reason is obvious. When it comes to consumerism, the almighty dollar writes the rules. The magazines are there because they rely on impulse buyers. The customer service team simply has not felt enough pressure to change. So the next logical step is for more customers to step forward. After all, how do you feel when you notice an innocent eight-year old staring at the cover of *Cosmopolitan*? If one comment card and one email could create a stir like this just think what could happen if more of us step up to the plate!

What follows is the email sent to the Customer Service Team:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I am a resident of Lethbridge, Alberta after moving here from Langley, B.C. and I work as a physiotherapist in the local area. I have been a long time shopper at Save-On-Foods in Langley and now here in Lethbridge and I have been very happy with most of the service.


However I have always been disturbed by the magazine displays at the checkout aisles. There are always glossy magazines with full front cover stories that include pictures of very scantily clad women. If they are not in a very tiny bathing suit that shows most of the breast, they are in a dress that reveals almost as much. Recently there was even a full cover picture of a woman pulling her shirt open and holding it open to display her breasts barely covered by a lacy bra.

Now I have no need to see these, what I would consider pornographic, pictures. I realize that as an adult I can choose to turn my head away, which I do, but it becomes even more of a concern to me when I see a small child of 7-8 years old peering at the cover of *Cosmopolitan* which has been put right at his eye level. Would you want your child perusing the cover of *Cosmopolitan*? How confusing for our kids to be taught about people's privacy at home and then to be bombarded by these images at the local grocery store.

As a leading business group in Canada I would highly encourage you to rectify this situation, to make a moral stand and refuse to have those magazine covers take over your checkout aisles. Customers know where to find them in the magazine section. There is no reason to have them at every aisle. It is a disgrace to an upstanding business such as yours. Why sponsor this industry?

If somehow the increased magazine sales trumps that decision, I also have a few suggestions: You could opt to display the magazines in a cascading order so that only the title is visible as opposed to the entire cover. Alternatively you could offer "family friendly" checkout aisles which do not have the magazine displays.

I can not express how grateful I would be to see the change occur. Please take the time to consider these suggestions. I appreciate hearing back from you regarding this email.

Sincerely,
Jaelyn Penninga 

Dear Mr. Turner,

A LETTER TO AN IRATE, INQUISITIVE VOTER

*The encounter with Mr. Turner was an unusual one.
While many voters contacted our campaign office just to vent,
Mr. Turner's email went beyond simple belligerence.
He wanted to vent, but he also wanted to dialogue.
He had questions and he was willing to listen to our answers.
What an opportunity!*

Dear Mr. Turner,

On the one hand you say you are open-minded, and on the other hand you end your letter with a threat, so I really don't know what to think. Still, since you asked some questions, I will answer. I pray you are indeed open-minded enough to read them.

While people often bring up many side issues, the main issue in the abortion debate is this – is the unborn a human being? If it is, then it should be protected as all others human beings are. So with that thought in mind let's look at your questions.

1. "How many people has YOUR religion killed in the past?"

The short answer to this is, who cares? I could tell you that atheism (Hitler, Stalin and Mao) has killed more people in this past century than all religious wars ever fought, but that has nothing to do with whether abortion is the killing of a human being or not.

2. "How many trees have you destroyed printing this hate mail?"

I think you will agree people are more important than trees. So if the unborn are precious human beings then cutting down a few trees and printing a brochure in order to save the unborn is clearly the right thing to do.

3. "How many of YOUR dollars go to support unwanted children that

are born every year by mothers that have no interest in having them?"

I could be the biggest miser and jerk in the world, and that still wouldn't affect whether the unborn are human or not. Look at it this way: if a mother told you she wanted to kill her two year old because she didn't want him, are you only allowed to stop her if you are willing to adopt the two-year-old? Of course not. Killing the two year old is wrong regardless of how charitable or uncharitable you are. And the same is true for the unborn – if they are human beings, like two-year-old children, then the unborn should be protected whether they are wanted or not.

4. "A fetus in scientific terms are nothing more than parasites living off of a host."

This is hardly a scientific description of a fetus. If you want to call the fetus a parasite because it lives off of its mother, why not say the same thing about a one-year-old who breastfeeds? It too is living off of its "host." This is not a parasite/host relationship, but rather a mother/child relationship.

5. "If I am not mistaken in Canada people have the Freedom of Choice, the choice to practice/follow a religion being one of them, In your religion it

(abortion) may be frowned on but in others it may not."

People have many freedoms in Canada, and many choices. But there are also many choices they are not permitted: to drive drunk, to carry knives on planes, to smoke in most restaurants. And they are also not permitted to kill other Canadians. So again the question comes down to this: are the unborn human beings? If they are, then they deserve the same protection all Canadians get, no matter what their religion.

6. "If this is all your party thinks about...that is a truly lame and pathetic basis for your party's campaign."

This is not "all our party thinks about." We also have positions on health-care, gay marriage, gun control, election financing, the environment and more (see www.CHP.ca for more details).

However, if the unborn are human beings – and I think our brochure shows clearly that they are – then the fact that 100,000 of them are being killed is a huge issue. That is a population bigger than St. Albert being killed each year! No wonder we give it our highest priority.

In His service,
Ed Spronk

This article originally appeared in the July/August 2004 issue.



Reasons to write

by Jon Dykstra

I recently learned an interesting phrase: Popeye moment. It is, I was told, that exact second when what was once tolerable becomes unacceptable, when it so upsets you that you can't help but respond. It is, as Popeye the sailor man puts it, that moment in time when you say, "I've had all I can standz and I can't standz it no more!"

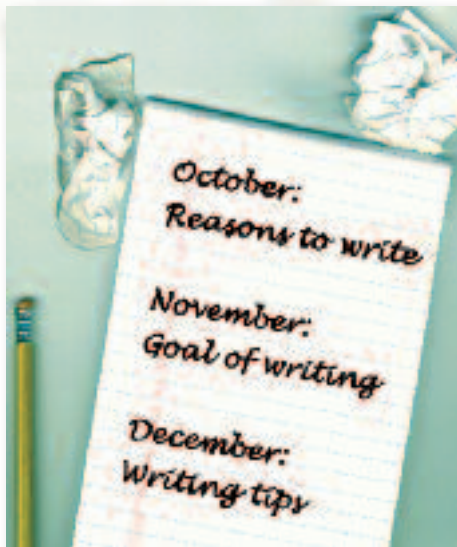
This is an interesting concept and too important, I think, to be named after a cartoon character. So let's rename it! This being a Reformed periodical, it is clear who we would want to honor by naming this after him – none other than the man who after seeing the abuses of the Roman Catholic church was forced by his love of God to oppose them and declare: "Here I stand; I can do no other." So we'll call them "Martin moments."

Here at *Reformed Perspective* one of our goals is to provoke readers to more of these "moments" because we know that the only reasons Christians wouldn't already be having one Martin moment after another is because they either don't know what is going on, or don't know what to do about it.

Educate and arm

So every month we try to keep readers informed about what new way God, His Law, or His Word are being attacked. All around us there is the disagreeable and the downright disgusting going on, so we who are in the world, but not of it, should be experiencing what Billy Hybel calls, "holy discontent." Things are not as they should be; we should be upset!

But there is more to Martin moments than simply being discontent. When God is attacked the question that should be first in our mind is, "What can



I do to defend my Lord?" It's not enough to be annoyed then – we must be angered into action.

That action can take many forms – anything from a businessman closing his doors on Sunday, to chatting with a neighbor over the back fence about the important issues the day – but in the next few months we are going to focus specifically on letter writing, and equip readers to use this medium to speak out and honor our God in the public square.

Why letters?

Now the obvious question is, why should we all learn to write letters? There are several reasons:

- **TIME:** Letter writing allows us to take all the time we need to get our thoughts down coherently and clearly. It can be hard to know just what to say in the moment, but letter writing allows us to take many moments. We can ask a friend for some editing help, find that great quote that we remember but don't have on the tip of our tongue, and even consult some outside expertise, whether

that might be a book on the subject or perhaps a brother or sister in the congregation who has done some study on the issue we're tackling.

- **DO-ABLE:** We might not all be gifted speakers, but all of us can be effective writers. It doesn't matter whether you are a gifted writer or not, if we keep our letters short, address only one point at a time, and perhaps even use point form, we can all communicate effectively with letters.
- **IMPACT:** Few take the time to write letters anymore, so when we do, we'll get noticed. Emails are good, but letters dropped in the post will have an even bigger impact.
- **REACH:** There are a number of people we might never be able to talk to in person – either living too far away, or being "too important" to talk to us, or perhaps being too intimidating for us to want to talk to them – but we can reach many of these same people with letters.

Conclusion

So over the next months we hope to educate, arm, and even inspire you to write to someone about any important issue of our day. And over the next few months we'll be running a letter writing contest in which we hope to garner entries that will further inspire the rest of us to write. This contest has judges and even prizes, but in a way it's not really a contest at all – we're not looking for a few winning entries so much as looking to share inspiring efforts. We want people to share the results of their Martin moments with us, so we can share them with others to better equip us all to write to God's glory.

WRITE RIGHT NOW

RP's letter writing contest

(Deadline for entries: January 31, 2009)

We have judges – *Reformed Perspective's* editor, Jon Dykstra, ARPA Canada's director, Mark Penninga, and the head of Equipping Christians for the Public square, Tristan Emmanuel.

And we have three prize packs – each includes \$50 cash, a copy of the award winning documentary *Shakytown* (which chronicles how Christians in San Fransisco banded together to speak out against gay marriage – see www.shakytown.com for more info) and an Abort73.com t-shirt that winners can choose from the vast selection on their amazing pro-life website, www.Abort73.com.

And we even have a deadline (January 31) and judging criteria (see below). But in a very real way *Reformed Perspective's* letter writing contest isn't a contest at all. We don't for example, want the prizes to motivate you to write – they're just a fun extra. What we're hoping is that our contest and accompanying articles each month will encourage and enable *RP's* readers to become God-glorifying writers. So get writing, and please share your efforts with us, so we can share the best with everyone.

Requirements

- A copy of the letter, which should be no longer than 800 words.
- An explanation of between 100 and 400 words outlining:
 - a) who the letter is to
 - b) why you chose to write them

- c) what, if any, response you received
- d) anything you may cut have learned (for example, what you definitely would not do, or would do, next time)

- Entries should be sent to editor@reformedperspective.ca and include the submitter's postal address and phone number, and be dated no later than January 31, 2009.

Judging Criteria

The judges will be evaluating the letters using the following criteria:

- Brevity – Get right to the point.
- Creativity – Get your letter noticed
- Argumentation – Get your your argument clear and logical?

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Grace

by Christine Farenhorst

I am in the splatter of the rain upon
the street,

Radiant in the stillness where a
thousand rainbows meet.

I am in the thunder of a living,
breathing sky,

And in the bright-clad splendor of
the lightning flashing by.

In Bethlehem stellation,

Pointing to incarnation,

I am my Father's creation – a gift
– and cannot die.

I am in the sunlight on the branches
of the trees,

Fanciful in moon-might on the pale
and silver seas.

I am in the hollow of the earthquake
and the spring,

And in the morning follow all the
sparrows on the wing.

In minuet song reclining,

In trust my days divining,

Laughter and tears now combining,
soar as sweetly I sing.

I am in the giving of an all embracing
hand,

Contented with the living of an
undivided stand.

I am in the sealing of a promise with
a will,

And in the gentle feeling where the
lonely drink their fill.

In florulent resurrection,

With every day detection,

I am eternal election, the Scriptures
to fulfil.

I am in the growing of the hours and
the days,

The deep-embedded knowing of a
path throughout this maze.

I am past the curtain of these
moments passing on,

And give these moments certainty
what life is built upon.

Daily sanctification,

Ceaseless predestination,

I am my Father's creation – a gift
– and never gone.

Tolerating Tolle?

Eckhart Tolle and Oprah are leading millions the wrong way

by Sarah Vandergugten

Oprah Winfrey is one of the most famous and influential people in the world today. She runs a media empire worth billions. Around the globe, millions watch her daily television show and listen to her on XM Satellite Radio. *Oprah.com* attracts six million users and eighty thousand emails per month. Her shows cover such topics as fashion, fitness, finances, and relationships, but one of her main interests is spirituality and personal growth. And Oprah's Book Club endorsements guarantee that the selected novels become runaway best sellers.

In January, 2008 Oprah chose a book that was not a novel. She had been so entranced by the spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* that she decided to make this her Book Club selection. She had already interviewed Tolle about his first book, *The Power of Now*, but confessed that it was *A New Earth* that helped her realize a "shift in consciousness" as well as an "awakening process." Oprah was intent on sharing this enlightenment with her audience.

On March 3, 2008 she and Tolle led the first of ten weekly live online webcasts discussing the book, chapter by chapter. More than 500,000 people in more than 139 countries participated via email, telephone and Skype. By week five, the number of online students had risen to one million, and more than ten million copies of the previous webcasts had been downloaded.

Promoting a pluralist gospel

Such enthusiasm indicates that there is real longing to experience a better life. Even health professionals are endorsing Tolle. As I was standing in the book section at Costco, I overheard one woman say to another, "He's great! My doctor recommended his books to me."

Should Christians be concerned? Yes, we should. Oprah has tremendous influence, and together Tolle and Oprah are promoting a pluralist gospel that is quite different from the one that proclaims that Jesus is the only way of salvation. That will become clear as we examine his background and teaching and evaluate statements that Oprah herself makes about the Christian faith.

As Christians we should also have concern for our neighbor next door who may be just as taken by Tolle's teaching as Oprah. We see in them a longing for a peaceful and fulfilling life. That

may well give us a starting point for conversation. So, we need to analyze and evaluate Tolle's teaching clearly, but also love our neighbor dearly – the neighbor who is looking for peace in the wrong place.

Tolle's story

Eckhart Tolle was born in Germany in 1948, grew up in Spain, and studied literature and philosophy at Cambridge, although he never completed his studies. Until his thirtieth year, he lived in a state of almost continuous anxiety interspersed with bouts of suicidal depression. He traces his initial spiritual awakening to a night when he came dangerously close to suicide. His overriding thought "I cannot live with myself any longer" became the impetus to a new way of thinking. "If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me: the 'I' and the 'self' that 'I' cannot live with. Maybe. . . only one of them is real."

Tolle states that his mind then stopped; he had no more thoughts. He felt himself drawn into what seemed like a vortex of energy, a void. He has no recollection of what happened after that, but remembers awakening and feeling as if he had just been born into this world. While talking with John W. Parker for the book *Dialogues with Emerging Spiritual Teachers* Tolle explained it this way:

"At that moment, dis-identification happened. 'I' consciousness withdrew from its identification with the self, the mind-made fictitious entity... [which] collapsed completely as if a plug had been pulled out of an inflatable toy. What remained was a single sense of presence or 'Beingness' which is pure consciousness."

Tolle did not understand exactly what had happened to him, although he continued to feel intense peace. (In an appendix to his book *A New Earth, an Old Deception* (see sidebar), Richard Abanes suggests that Tolle may have undergone a near-death or fear-death experience.) Over the next several years he spent time studying various spiritual texts and learning from other spiritual teachers. He was intrigued by Jesus' words in the gospels, but Eastern Religious texts – the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Tao Te Ching*, and Buddhist writings, as well as various Eastern gurus and spiritual teachers – have been the most influen-

tial to his thinking. He has taken ideas from this amalgam of sources and packaged them into something coherent enough that it attracts Oprah and her audience.

Tolle argues that religions have been mostly divisive, resulting in violence and hatred instead of resulting in the realization of the fundamental oneness of all life. Religions have become ideologies and beliefs systems that people identify with to enhance their own sense of superiority over others.

Only the mystic branches of the major religions (Gnostic Christianity, Sufi Islam, Kabala Judaism, Advaita Vedanta Hinduism) retain some of the transformative power of their original teachings, but generally religions make the mistake of equating truth with thought. Tolle is thankful for the influx of ancient Eastern wisdom teachings which suggest that being spiritual has nothing to do with what you believe and everything to do with your state of consciousness. So belief is dismissed, and what one feels and senses becomes the measure of what is real and true. Of course, just stating that is actually stating a belief!

Christians enroll

Considering Oprah's broad audience base, it is not surprising that Christians have also been participants in the *New Earth* online course. Perhaps they are drawn by the fact the Tolle frequently quotes the Bible and especially Jesus. Yet, some of them have been puzzled whether and how they might integrate his teaching into their Christian thinking. They question Oprah how she, raised in the Baptist church, does this. Her reply during the March 3, 2008 online class makes clear that she has opted for a pluralist view of religion.

“. . . I was able to open my mind about the absolute indescribable hugeness of that which we call 'God.' I took God out of the box because I grew up in the Baptist church and there were rules. . . and belief systems and doctrine. . . [but] the new spirituality says that many paths lead to spiritual freedom and peace....Well, I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly more paths to God other than Christianity.”

Oprah falls into a pattern typical of pluralists. They no longer place Christ at the center, but replace him with a more abstract concept of god or god-consciousness. What this does is send Christ into orbit, circling around this god or Being along with a wide variety of other gods, such as Vishnu, Shiva or even Buddha. Jesus Christ simply becomes one means of access.

Tolle's lessons on learning to “live in the Now” is what appeals most to his followers. He argues that most people fret about the past and worry about the future. This makes them anxious and dysfunctional. Only by existing in the Now, in a state of full awareness can we find total peace. Within the *is-ness* of the Now we are released from the anxiety of the past, because we are no longer dwelling on painful experiences. We are freed



from fear of the future, because we simply refuse to contemplate what is not yet. Tolle may be accurate in describing the symptoms many exhibit, but since he makes a wrong diagnosis, his cure misses the mark. The symptoms of worry and anxiety are a consequence of sin and sinfulness, and simply cannot be cured by “living in the Now.”

Misquoting Jesus

As noted before, Tolle's favorite person to quote is Jesus; more than half the references in the endnotes of *A New Earth* are quotes from the gospels. Initially, that may be appealing to Christians, but it quickly becomes clear that Tolle uses Jesus' words to suit his own purposes. Tolle quotes from the Sermon on the Mount to support his idea of dis-identification. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs will be the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:2), is explained in *A New Earth* as follows:

“What does ‘poor in spirit’ mean? No inner baggage, no identifications. Not with things, nor with any mental concepts that have a sense of self in them. And what is the ‘kingdom of heaven’? The simple but profound joy of Being that is there when you let go of identification, and so become ‘poor in spirit.’”

Richard Abanes suggests that Tolle's most offensive interpretations of scripture involve his mangling of Christ's words. Tolle professes admiration for Jesus but does not accept his words at face value. Nor does he pay regard to the context of Jesus' time, culture or place in history. He complains that distortions of Jesus' teachings abound because people are trying to push their own spiritual agenda and try to fit Jesus into their preconceived notions, wanting to make converts. Ironically, he is guilty of exactly that himself. Jesus' words take on whatever meaning rings true for Tolle.

The apostle Paul fares similar treatment. Tolle relates accounts of people who experienced a new dimension of consciousness after tragic losses in their lives. Their initial anguish and intense fear gave way to a sacred sense of Presence, a deep peace and serenity. He suggests this phenomenon was familiar to Paul, who uses the expression “the peace of God which transcends all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). Tolle equates this peace to realizing your true identity as consciousness itself. That is a far cry from what the apostle Paul is saying. The apostle is referring to a peace which comes within a lively prayer relationship with the living God. Then God’s peace will “guard your hearts and your minds *in Christ Jesus.*” Peace is not something we realize in

ourselves. It is reserved for and given to those who are “in Christ Jesus.” Again, Tolle lifts words from scripture to support his own teaching – a great source, used in a wrong way.

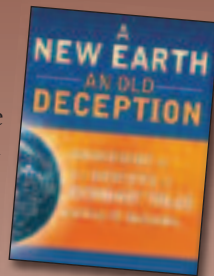
Clarity of thought

If we need clarity of thought to analyze Tolle and Oprah’s teaching about *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*, we must also display charity in our interaction with them and those who have adopted such thinking. Abanes, despite his sharp critique, believes Tolle’s motivation is heartfelt and even loving in its own way. He and Oprah both want people to live happier and more fulfilling lives. The world should be a better place for

Recommended Reading

A New Earth, an Old Deception: Awakening to the Danger of Eckhart Tolle’s #1 Best Seller

by Richard Abanes
Bethany House, 2008
190 pages; Paperback; \$14 CAN



Easy to read. A concise refutation of the Oprah-promoted bestseller, providing a biblical response to this New Age message. Topics include Tolle’s misuse of Scripture, his false teachings on God, and the Bible’s teaching on evil, *A New Earth’s* version of salvation compared to God’s plan. Would be best used in discussion with other Christians.

Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission

by Harold Netland
InterVarsity, 2001
368 pages; Paperback; \$27 US



A rigorous analysis of the pluralistic ethos that confronts Christian faith and mission, with a sustained response to philosophical and epistemological questions and implications for modern apologetics. Academically sound and strong in its rationalistic critique of other religions.

Thinking Clearly about the Uniqueness of Jesus

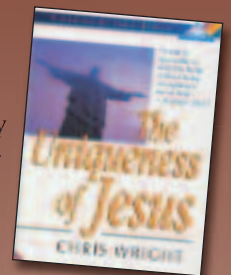
by Chris Wright
Monarch, 1997
192 pages; Paperback; \$14 US

A very readable and straight-forward defense by a western biblical scholar of the uniqueness of Christ against alternative

views which have emerged. Especially helpful for its treatment of biblical material and the simple but lucid line of argument against religious pluralism.

Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World

by Vinoth Ramachandra
InterVarsity, 1999
192 pages; Paperback; \$20 US



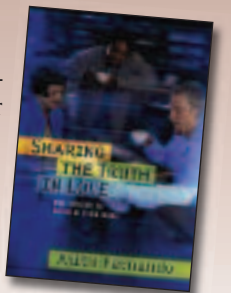
An informed description of the impact of resurgent Islam and Hinduism on the Christian West and the Christian missionary enterprise. The author rehearses with clarity the traditional case for Christ’s uniqueness combined with helpful pointers for communicating that uniqueness convincingly and sensitively.

Sharing the Truth in Love

by Ajith Fernando
Discovery, 2001
288 pages; Paperback; \$13 US



A reader-friendly treatment of issues relating to Christian encounter with other faiths, from a South Asian evangelical perspective. The uniqueness of Christ is clearly affirmed, but much attention is devoted to the need for a practical posture to other faiths that is respectful and sensitive. Of special interest is the author’s treatment of Acts 17. Included are extended helpful endnotes, references and an appendix offering brief descriptions of other faiths.



everyone, a place of less violence, hatred, war and pain. There is a genuine desire to help people escape emotional and physical suffering. This longing for peace and reconciliation, for the “peace that passes all understanding” can serve as one point of contact, a landing strip for conversation between Christians and followers of Eckhart Tolle.

We can follow no better example than the apostle Paul in Athens (Acts 17). He was distressed by the city’s idolatry, but he was courteous when he spoke to the leaders of the Areopagus. He did not say, “Well, you Athenians are being pretty ridiculous. You even have a ‘just-in-case-altar’ to some god you don’t even know about. Let me set you straight about that.” Instead, he used their obvious interest in the supernatural, an interest which included an altar to an unknown God, as a stepping stone from which he could move into an exposition of the truth about Jesus Christ.

Find the connection

Similarly, we can find at least one stepping stone, and probably more, to begin a conversation with those enamored with Tolle’s teaching. In the midst of his own suffering, Tolle found a way to psychologically and emotionally cope with what he could not have otherwise faced. He shut out the pain of his past and blocked fears about the future by learning how to live totally in the *Now*. This requires a vigilant focus on the immediate present. Every waking moment requires a concentration on remaining in the “is-ness” of this moment. The present is the only safe place to be. Losing grip of the *Now* would mean being

thrown back into the painful past or being catapulted forward into an uncertain future. Such vigilance is hard work.

Now imagine interacting with a neighbor who has been following Oprah’s online classes. She is looking for the peace that Tolle offers. You can affirm that wanting peace, being free from worry is a worthwhile goal. You can explain that you know of a way – even a better way – to gain “the peace that transcends all understanding.” You can tell her that this peace does not require keeping a tight rein on your thoughts. Instead the giver of this peace is always ready to listen to you, and to reassure you of his love. The giver of this peace can forgive what you have done in the past, thus silencing the accusing voices in your mind. You are also much more than simply a form of indestructible energy that may be absorbed into an impersonal Being. You are a real, created person, who can receive a new, perfect physical and spiritual existence. You will live on a renewed earth with others like yourself, in the presence of a loving Creator and Father. Over a period of time, you can help your neighbor discover that Jesus Christ and not Eckhart Tolle is truly the fulfillment of all the longings she has had.

Confident in the gospel!

The wonderful thing is that we can be fully confident of the gospel we bring. Our world is not really more complicated than the world the early Christians faced. In that world immersed in ancient and powerful religions and imperial realities, confident men and women proclaimed that Jesus, a crucified Galilean carpenter was God incarnate, the only true Savior of humanity, and the risen Lord of the whole universe. They persisted in that message until the whole known world knew about it and was transformed by it. In a culture no less pluralistic than we experience today, they proclaimed an historical person as the final truth and the only Savior. They had the courage to live or die for that faith.

Today, many act as if religions are a matter of personal human opinion and beliefs. “If it works for you, good. That does not mean it is true for me.” Paul would be horrified. He staked his life on the truth of Christ and him crucified. The gospel announces facts, witnessed facts of recorded history. The gospel is good news, not simply good ideas or good ideals. God has reconciled the world to himself. To proclaim such a gospel is not arrogant. We did not invent it. We only get to relay it to others. It is not true because we believe it is. It is true, because Jesus himself is Truth. He is not a concept or a religion. He is a Person.

We do, however, have a responsibility to make Jesus’ message believable. Our neighbors, also those enchanted by Tolle and Oprah, should be able to see that the gospel works. We should be like the One we follow. Thinking clearly is important, but living by loving dearly is crucial. May a troubling but poignant quote attributed to Mahatma Gandhi – “If all the Christians were to live like Jesus, India would no longer be Hindu” – spur us on to live what we believe and so be the aroma of Christ in our land.



Why the Phoenix flew to Mars

Atheistic assumptions are a driving force

by Margaret Helder

The Phoenix spacecraft has landed! In Greek mythology, the Phoenix is a bird which arises from the ashes of its parent. So the name for this craft is quite suitable as much of the hardware for it came from a previous disaster.

In 1999 the Mars Polar Lander failed to communicate with us from the red planet. A postmortem of the disaster suggested that the Polar Lander had crashed because the engines did not shut off in time for a soft landing. Whatever the problem, the spacecraft was never heard from again. This so discouraged NASA that the Polar Lander's twin spacecraft, scheduled for launch in 2001, was instead left in storage. It was this craft that another research team rehabilitated and refurbished with new equipment. Launched on August 4, 2007, the spacecraft executed the 675 million kilometer flight to Mars. Then on Sunday May 25, 2008, this spacecraft landed in the northern polar region to begin three months of chemical analysis on local sediments.

The particular objectives for the mission are to dig into the soil and scoop up samples from various depths. These will be chemically analyzed in tiny ovens for water content and for organic carbon content. The whole idea is to show that Mars might now have, or might have had in the past, simple life forms.

Carbon is key

Now everybody knows that water is essential for life, but the importance of organic carbon is not quite so obvious to many people.

A little basic chemistry reveals that carbon is an unusually versatile atom. It is like a bead which has four connecting sites for other beads. Thus one could join to the carbon bead four other smaller beads. Suppose we joined four hydrogen atoms to the carbon, one at each connector. We now have CH₄ or methane gas. Then instead, suppose we join several carbon beads in a string and add hydrogen atoms to the other open connectors. We now have a paraffin wax. Suppose alternatively we join six carbon beads in a circle. Now we have a benzene ring. Carbon is so versatile that it can form rings, loops, chains, strings and all manner of weird geometries. To the exposed connectors can be joined oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, phosphorous, sulphur and any number of other elements.

The beauty of carbon compounds is that they are very flexible and can fold into all sorts of beautiful and useful shapes. Not

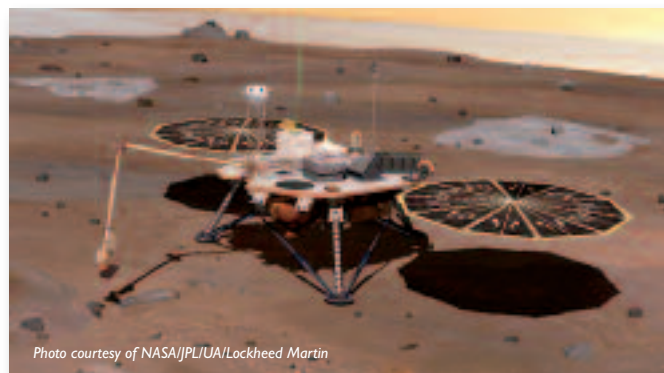


Photo courtesy of NASA/JPL/UA/Lockheed Martin

surprisingly, the components and products of living cells are, for the most part, made up of organic (carbon based) molecules. In their search for extraterrestrial life, it is understandable therefore that scientists are anxious to find organic molecules on Mars. As the saying goes: if there is no organic carbon (including all compounds of carbon except for carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide), there is no possibility for the existence of life.

But what about silicon?

Some scientists have suggested that our views of what constitutes a living creature are too much focused on what we know from earth. Astronomer Paul Davies, in a highly speculative article on alien life forms (*Scientific American*, Dec. 2007) discusses some alternative possibilities. He points out that some scientists have suggested that in some remote places a different liquid other than water might serve as the solvent in living cells. Some have suggested that organic compounds such as ethane or methane might replace water. There are no solvents however as versatile as liquid water and methane and ethane require very cold temperatures to exist in liquid form. One such place is Saturn's moon Titan. It is questionable however whether life could exist under such cold conditions.

Another radical suggestion is that there might be some places where silicon replaces carbon as the backbone of compounds in living cells. This is an interesting suggestion. It so happens that silicon is a larger atom than carbon, but it too has four connectors which allow it to join with four other atoms. John Tyler Bonner, an early expert in developmental biology, reflected on the similarity of silicon to carbon chemistry. Thus he declared:

"Both elements are found in great abundance on the surface of the earth, but why is it that carbon instead of silicon became the key element in protoplasm [material of the living

cell]? The answer is not far to see, for as Henderson points out there is greater flexibility in the types of compounds carbon makes, all sugars, amino acids, proteins and so forth, *but silicon produces only rock*" (*Morphogenesis*, 1963, p. 43, italics mine).

Obviously silicon is totally unsuitable as a basis for components of the living cell.

Evidently carbon is special and unusual just as water is special and unusual. A recent newspaper comment about the Phoenix program therefore struck me as naive to say the least. The columnist wrote about the agenda of the Phoenix mission to sample for organic carbon-based compounds since "carbon is important because it is one of a few elements that can build long and complex molecules necessary to make living organisms." (John Johnson Jr. in the *Edmonton Journal*, June 7/08). "One of a few"? The columnist is wrong; *only* carbon can build molecules suitable for living cells.

Viking results debated then. . .

Carbon based compounds or organic carbon is so essential to living cells that its absence means that no life is present or even has been present. American scientists therefore were disappointed with the results of the Viking landers on Mars in 1976. The equipment was sophisticated and the results unequivocal, there was no organic carbon detected. Scientists have squabbled about the results ever since. There is no doubt that the Phoenix mission is an attempt to reverse the earlier conclusion.

An article in *Nature* (Jan. 1982, p. 43) spoke for the majority of scientists when it concluded that, "the average martian soil is organic-poor and makes an unfavourable habitat for life forms based on carbon chemistry. There is no reason to believe that organic molecules are preferentially preserved anywhere on the planet." Others, some of them prominent astronomers, took an opposite position. Robert Jastrow declared that "although the Viking experiments have contradictory elements, they seem to indicate that life, or some process closely imitating life, exists on Mars today" (*Natural History Magazine*, Mar. 1977). Dr. Jastrow further elaborated that although the various other tests which were designed to demonstrate biological release of gases might instead have come from chemical processes, he preferred to support a biological conclusion (*Until the Sun Dies*, 1977, p. 161).

Norman H. Horowitz, who designed the experiments involving gas releases, alternatively declared that "a dispassionate examination of all the evidence (some of it not yet published) leads to the conclusion that the results are compatible with a non-biological explanation, but not with any reasonable biological one" (*Atlantic Monthly*, Aug. 1977, p. 28 italics his).

Another planetary astronomer, Richard S. Young, declared that the Viking results really didn't prove anything about life on Mars. Concerning the Viking program he wrote: "Although it has probably not detected life in the sites studied, it has not completely ruled out contemporary life elsewhere on the planet..." (*BioScience*, Aug. 1978, p. 502). His point was that two widely separated sampling points on Mars are inadequate to draw conclusions about the whole planet, so he would prefer to wait for further tests before drawing any conclusions. However an article in *TIME* on December 13, 1971 pointed out that nega-

tive results will never be taken as definitive proof that life is unique to earth. Thus the article declared: "But even the failure to discover biological activity on other planets circling the sun will not discourage the life seekers. They will then turn their attention to the stars" (p. 42).

. . .and now

A recent news feature in *Nature* (Aug. 16/07) suggests that some people still blame the scientist who designed the equipment to test for organic compounds on Mars.

Klaus Biemann was a chemistry professor at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). His specialty was analyzing the structure of protein fragments.

According to Dr. Biemann, he agreed to work on the Viking instruments as a favour to show his support for the project. While suitable laboratory equipment at the time was massive enough to fill a room, Biemann's team produced fully automated equipment that fit into 30 cubic centimeters. Not only did they achieve the miniature size, but the equipment worked perfectly with a sensitivity of parts per billion.

Now however some scientists are suggesting that there might have been plenty of organic material present which was never observed because it resisted being broken down at the temperatures used in the test. Dr. Biemann, for his part, points out that the Viking equipment was much more sophisticated than on the present Phoenix spacecraft. He declares that "a misplaced zeal to find life on Mars has driven scientists, including the Navarro-Gonzalez team, to try and prove the GC-MS results [from Viking] wrong; they want to 'get rid of that obstacle,' he said" (*Nature*, Aug. 16/07, p. 744).

It is obvious that negative results for organic compounds on Mars will never be considered conclusive for the whole planet. Scientists had actually expected some organics to have been transported to the planet by meteorite bombardment. Such material would not be the product of living organisms on Mars but of chemical processes in space. Thus even a positive test would not mean much except that it would encourage scientists to continue looking for life. They will do that anyway, of course, as long as ample funds are forthcoming.

Motivated by a flawed worldview

Some may wonder why scientists are so focused in their search for microbes on Mars and elsewhere. Who really cares?

Robert Jastrow gives us the answer: "Why should it matter whether microbes exist on Mars? The answer has a lot to do with man's place in the cosmos" (*Natural History Magazine*, Mar. 1977). He further elaborated in his book *Until the Sun Dies*: "in the scientific inquiry into the uniqueness of human existence, the stakes riding on the search for Martian life are very high." What scientists desire is a demonstration that life on earth, especially mankind, is not special. What scientists seek is support for the idea that life is a natural outcome of the laws of physics and chemistry. They will continue to pursue their atheistic dreams whatever the results of their programs. Christians, on the other hand, recognize that the atheistic conclusions have little to do with the data and much to do with the worldview of so many of these secular scientists.





Soup & Buns

Respectful language

by Sharon L. Bratcher

“Yes, Sir.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

We visited some friends down in Louisiana and were surprised and delighted to be addressed so politely by their children – not just because we were visitors, but just as a matter of course. I must confess to not having grown up with this particular habit of respect, and not having used it with my own children. Yet I enjoyed hearing it and thought that perhaps we missed out on something useful.

Military training changes young men so that they begin to speak this way. They stand straighter, and answer in a respectful manner, if somewhat monotone at times. There is no question in the military about whether one will *show* respect. Whether one truly feels it may be another matter, but it *will* be shown. My friend Robin attained a high rank for a woman in the U.S. Coast Guard, and I asked her once whether any of the men ever had a hard time giving her the respect due to her office. She looked me straight in the eye and stated, “If they ever did, it would be the last time.”

Respectful language. Using “Sir” and “Ma’am” is certainly one way to show it.

Using a tone of voice that betrays no emotions to the contrary is another. These days, just answering politely when spoken to by an adult would be appreciated.

Calling a son “Sir”

I had occasion recently to think about the flip side of this respectful language.

How do adults address their children and the children around them? Should respectful language be a two-way street?

We watched a film about John Adams, the second president of the United States. We were amazed to hear how he addressed his children as “Sir” when he spoke to them! In one scene, Adams is overwrought with the current pre-Revolutionary War tragedies, and he is discussing them with his wife and friend in their living room. Several of their children are playing quietly at first, and then a young son begins to play rather exuberantly and loudly nearby. John Adams, with great consternation, and yet a measure of respect, turns and points and shouts to his young son, “Remove yourself, Sir!” The child looks rather stunned and, of course, hurries out of the room. I was impressed.

Adams didn’t say, “Get out!” Or, “I’ve told you a hundred times. . . .” or “Stop acting immature” or “You are *so* sinful!” or “I don’t know why he acts like that” or even “You know better than that!” He simply said loudly enough for his son to hear, “Remove yourself, Sir!” No need to belabor the point, or belittle the child.

It is important not to call our children “stupid,” or “idiot,” or “dummy.” We might tell them that they have done a stupid, thoughtless act – that is not the same. It is important for them to understand that we know they can improve on their recent behavior. It is important not to refer to them as “brats” or to tell others in their presence what a rotten kid they can be at times. Which standard do we want them to live up to? And when does “gossip” relate to our children’s reputation as well?

Provocative?

In his book *The Heart of Anger*, Lou Priolo suggests that this is one of the ways in which we parents often “provoke our children to anger” (Eph 6:4). He has quite a long list of actions to consider besides that. If you are a parent or a teacher and you have a child with “anger issues” you might want to read this book which takes the parents and teachers to task *first* and then gives many biblical suggestions as to how to help the angry child.

Too often we use their sin to excuse our own. “He *made* me mad,” we say. Therefore we feel excused to belittle, berate, push around, and stay angry at a child who might be very ready to apologize. “After all, she caused it!” Did she?

Will they not learn from our example, wise or otherwise? When we handle our consternation well, we teach them more in those moments than we do by the “lessons” our words promote.

Proverbs is rich with wisdom on the use of our tongues. “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (10:19).

“He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter” (11:13). And “A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit” (15:4).

As mentioned at the beginning, respectful language is pleasant to the ear. For children and their parents or teachers, this goes both ways.



ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Send Puzzles, Solutions, Ideas to PUZZLE PAGE, 43 Summerhill Place, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4V4 OR robgleach@gmail.com

NEW PUZZLES

Riddles for Punsters #148 – “Marriage Monday?”

What day of the week is most suitable for getting married?

What month is best for having a military parade?

What year is best for holding a broad jumping competition?
_ _ _ _ year.

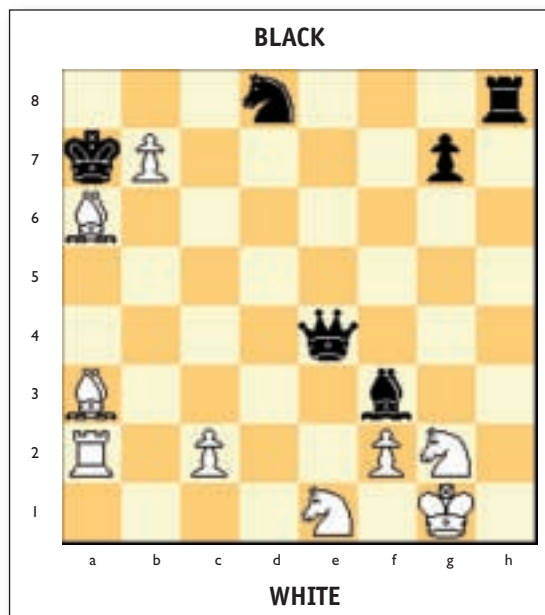
Problem to Ponder #148 – “Word to Word to Word”

Change the first word into the last word by successive changes of one letter at a time, each time making a commonly known word. Blanks are hints in some that show where a new letter has just been placed.

Examples:

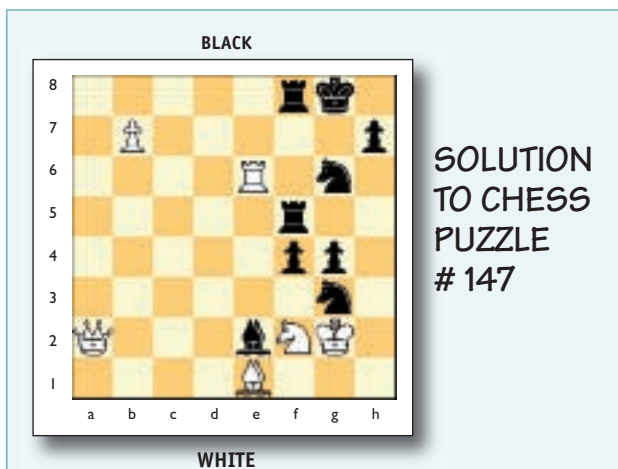
	BOG	BIG	OUR	GOAD	MICE	CRAZY
AT	<u>L</u> OG	- - -	- - -	- - - =	- - - -	- - - - =
AN	LO <u>T</u>	= - -	- - -	= - - -	- - - -	= - - - -
IN	LE <u>T</u>	S A <u>D</u>	E A <u>T</u>	- - - -	- - - -	- - - - -
				B E <u>L</u> T	R A <u>N</u> K	- - - - -
						GL I <u>D</u> E

Chess Puzzle # 148



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

SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (SEPTEMBER) PUZZLE PAGE



SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 147

White to Mate in 4

Descriptive Notation

1. RxN dbl ch K-R1
2. B-B3 ch R(at B4)-B3
3. BxR ch RxB
4. R-N8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Re6xg6 dbl+ Kg8-h8
2. Be1-c3 + Rf5-f6
3. Bc3xf6 + Rf8xf6
4. Rg6-g8 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. _____ N-R5 ch
2. K-R2 OR K-N1 N-B6 ch
3. K-N2 B-B8 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. _____ Ng6-h4 +
 2. Kg2-h2 Nh4-f3 +
 3. Kh2-g2 Be2-f1 ++
- OR
1. _____ Ng6-h4 +
 2. Kg2-g1 Nh4-f3 +
 3. Kg1-g2 Be2-f1 ++

Answer to Riddles for Punsters #147 – “Fowl tasting food (quickly)”

Why did the mother turkey have to keep telling her son to eat slowly? Otherwise he would just **g o b b l e** up his food.

Solution to Problem to Ponder #147 – “Up down up down up down up”

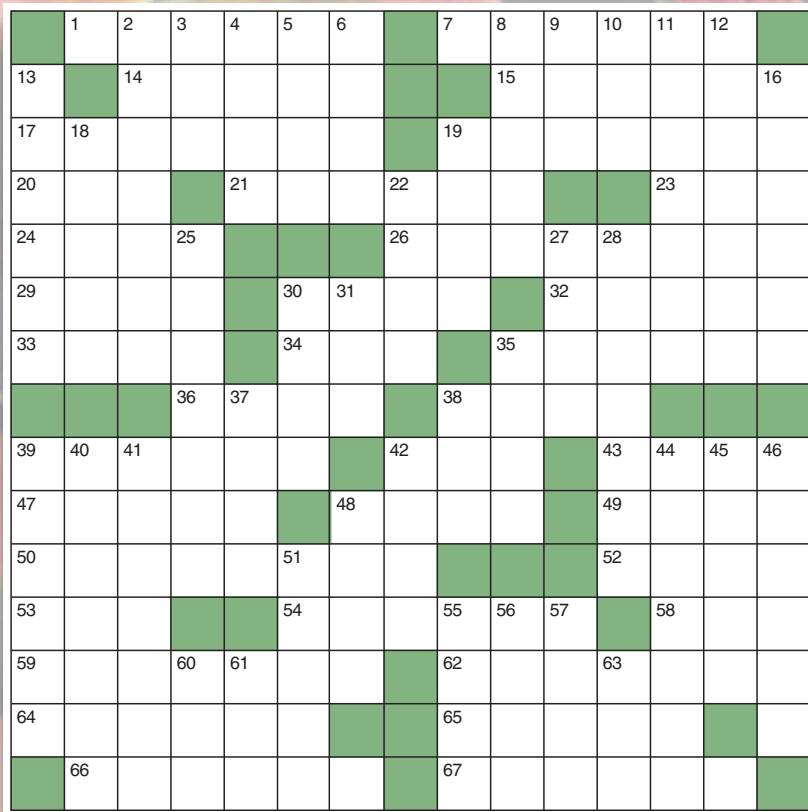
Yosef and Mari VanIsher travelled to a remote mountain chalet for their holidays. On the way there they drove for 456.5 km on a level highway, then 5.7 km on the road winding up a mountain and 5.6 km down the other side, then 4.8 km up a second mountain and 3.5 km down the other side, then 2.7 km up a third mountain and 1.4 km down the other side, then 2.4 km up a fourth mountain and so reached the chalet. Their vehicle travelled 10 km/L of gasoline on the level road, 6 km/L going uphill and 14 km/L going downhill. The average gasoline price was \$1.40 per L.

- How much did it cost the VanIshers to travel from home to the chalet in the mountains?
 - What was their vehicle's average rate of fuel efficiency (in km/L) for that trip?
- (a) On the level road, $456.5 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 10 \text{ km} = 45.65 \text{ L}$ of gas used.
On the first mountain, $5.7 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 6 \text{ km} = 0.95 \text{ L}$ going up and $5.6 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 14 \text{ km} = 0.4 \text{ L}$ going down.
On the second mountain, $4.8 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 6 \text{ km} = 0.8 \text{ L}$ going up and $3.5 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 14 \text{ km} = 0.25 \text{ L}$ going down.
On the third mountain, $2.7 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 6 \text{ km} = 0.45 \text{ L}$ going up and $1.4 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 14 \text{ km} = 0.1 \text{ L}$ going down.
On the fourth mountain, $2.4 \text{ km} \times 1 \text{ L} / 6 \text{ km} = 0.4 \text{ L}$ going up.
Thus the total amount of gas used was $45.65 + 0.95 + 0.4 + 0.8 + 0.25 + 0.45 + 0.1 + 0.4 = 49.0 \text{ L}$ at a **cost of 49.0 L x \$1.40/L = \$68.60**
[NOTE: FASTER would be to find gas used on the level and on the SUM of the uphill distances and on the SUM of the downhill distances.]
- (b) The total distance travelled to the chalet was $456.5 + 5.7 + 5.6 + 4.8 + 3.5 + 2.7 + 1.4 + 2.4 = 482.6 \text{ km}$, so **the average fuel efficiency was 482.6 km / 49.0 L = 9.85 km/L.**

Crossword Puzzle

Series 15 No 11

Last month's solution
Series 15 No 10



ACROSS:

1. Declare positively
7. Window cleaner's nemesis
14. Large Japanese dog
15. Kind of deodorant
17. Seeks to achieve a goal
19. Movie dvd bonus
20. Child's place
21. Glacier gravel deposits
23. Naval, for short
24. Prayer ending
26. Brand of petroleum jelly
29. Apple center
30. Egg shaped
32. Restaurant
33. Effortlessness
34. Man's name
(Scottish version of John)
35. Gift recipients
36. Salad herb
38. Frost
39. Fishes around
42. Affirmative
43. Tiny particle
47. Oppose authority
48. Steep in water
49. Zielona ____ (Polish city)
50. Collecting for oneself
52. ____ the Red
53. Motor Neuron Disease
54. Subtle distinction
58. Neither
59. Causing injury to
62. Spaghetti herb
64. Scythe handle
65. Equipped with feathers
66. That which belongs to them
67. Spotted leopard-like cat

John

DOWN:

2. Military demolitions specialists
3. Winter sport
4. Ireland
5. Map abbrs.
6. Job
8. Tie up
9. Decay
10. Emergency Locator Transmitters
11. A colourless amino acid
12. Kind of salmon
13. King's home
16. French city, capital of Nièvre
18. Formerly called Navigators Islands
19. Spoken
22. Man's name, Welsh form of John
25. Distributors of medicine, pointedly
27. Ancient city in O.T.
28. Line of ancestry
30. Greases
31. ____-d'Or, Canadian town
35. Thin circular object
37. Sicknesses
38. Mens ____; criminal intent
39. Treads forcibly
40. Small piece remaining
41. Hebrew prophet
42. Relaxing exercise
44. Violent wind
45. Hunter constellation
46. Computer instructions
48. Like a bug in a rug
51. Not outer
55. de ____ (Latin for "Over again/aneu")
56. Sound of a branch snapping, in Paris
57. Part of old counting rhyme: ____ meenee mainee mo
60. Not-to-exceed (abbr.)
61. Inst. for Healthcare Improvement
63. Firm up