

REFORMED

Perspective

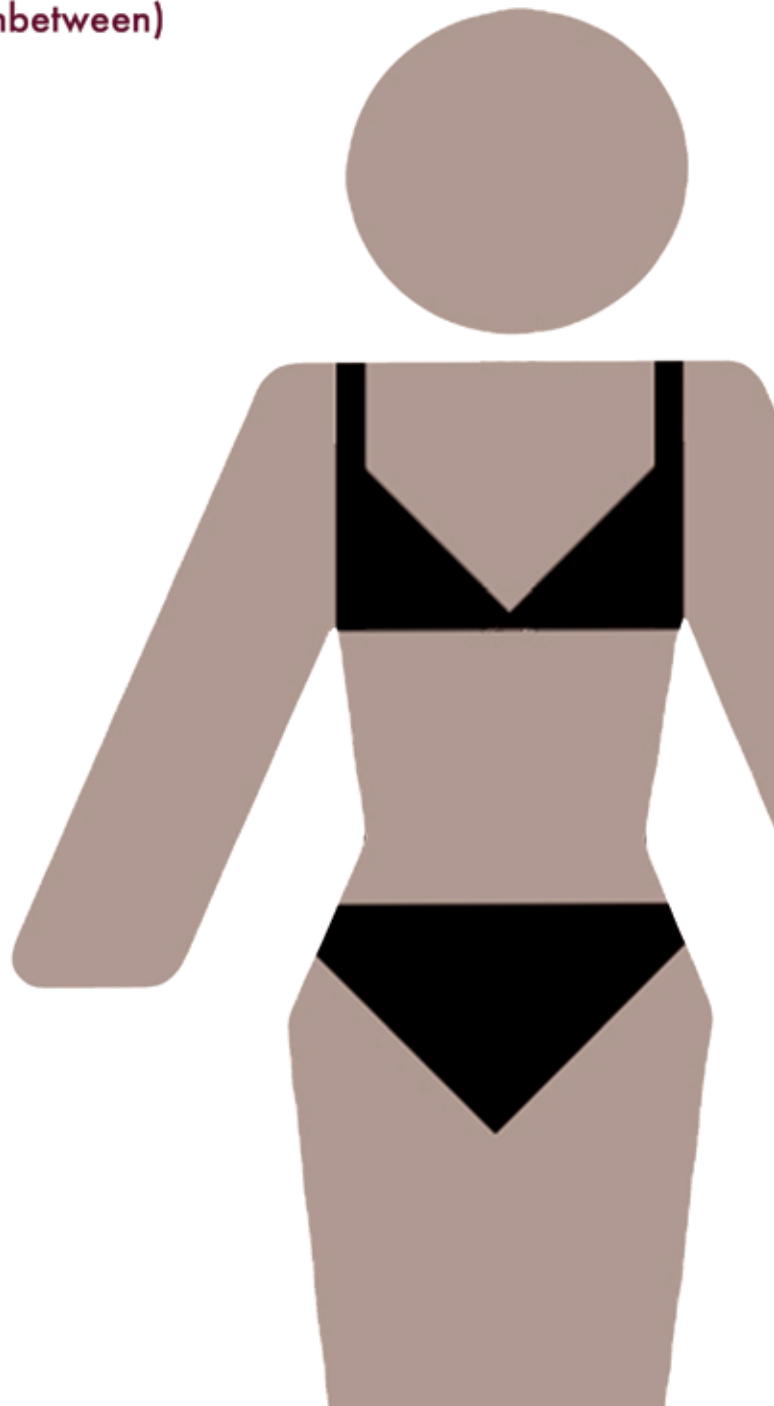
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MODESTY

(somewhere inbetween)



Overpopulation is a myth

Stanley Reitsma
& Jon Dykstra

It comes up again and again – claims are made that the world is overpopulated, and that there is a drastic need to cut our birthrate.

But is it really so? We're going to assess these claims by responding to a Letter to the Editor that appeared in a local Manitoba publication. The letter writer, a David Dawson, wrote that he is worried about a coming "peoplequake" – he believes the world is so overpopulated that we will soon see devastation comparable to an earthquake. He asserts that the world can handle only 2 billion "so we are already 5 billion over the max." And he complains that we have "too many mouths to feed," pointing to the famines happening around the world as proof.

Famine isn't caused by overpopulation

Let's consider his "proof."

As we know, famines are not occurring in the US. But there are large areas of the southern US that were, in recent years, deemed by their Department of Agriculture as having the highest and worst possible ratings for drought. The land was as parched as Somalia.

But whereas in Somalia this type of drought would have been a crisis, in the US it was just something for Americans to gripe about. They went about their business complaining about how hot it was, and grumbling when they were told, for water conservation reasons, they weren't allowed to wash their cars. The farmers were a little more stressed, fretting about whether they would get their crop insurance and recoup their losses, and wondering how they were going to pay for their air conditioning bill (because their unit was running non-stop). It was a difficult situation for some people, but hardly even newsworthy. Ho hum.

Yet in Somalia, under the same sort of heat, they starve.

Why don't Americans starve? Because in the US of A you have free enterprise, freedom of thought and inquiry, rule of law, just weights and measures, human rights established on a Christian foundation, private property rights, and freedom of religion.

Go to a famine-plagued area where there is widespread starvation, and most often you will find a brutal government, or no firmly established government at all. Instead of property rights, and the rule of law, you will find the country governed by an iron fist (think

Islam under Sharia Law, or Communism).

You are more likely to find famine in countries where there is oppression of religious minorities, where free speech is suppressed, where there is widespread confiscation of property, or the plundering of property under gunpoint. We also find that where torture is common, famine is more prevalent.

The conditions in these countries might even be favorable for agriculture, with the land ready to produce bumper crops. That is, of course, the point: harsh weather conditions can be overcome by an industrious, well-governed people, just as good growing conditions and initiative will be sabotaged by a bad government. It was not so long ago that we saw this happen before our eyes as Robert Mugabe, the dictator of Zimbabwe, turned the breadbasket of Africa into a basket case by confiscating farms.

Our planet can feed many more. We don't lack the resources. We don't have too many mouths to feed. We do often lack godly government.

Believed with religious fervor

In his letter David Dawson argued that the answer to famine is abortion and euthanasia. If we are going to get the population down from 7 billion to the 2 billion he thinks is ideal, we are going to have to abort a lot of babies, and euthanize a lot of old people. What a plan – save the planet by killing most of the people on it!

But Dawson's idea is hardly original. He is merely echoing the same "sky is falling" rhetoric of so many big name environmentalists, like Ted Turner, the billionaire



The scaremongering of the overpopulationists depicted in a frame from one of the Population Research Institute's film series (see pop.org).

who has been pushing a one-child policy to battle climate change. Dawson also advocates for a voluntary one-child limit, and does so under the guise of the leftist code word “sustainability.” But we should recognize this brand of environmentalism as nothing more than a false religion, complete with an object of worship (the Earth) and demons, too (humans).

Overpopulation overblown for centuries

Now it might seem a bit unfair to pick on one poor letter writer. However, David Dawson is representative of many more population doomsters, from Thomas Malthus of the 1790s to Paul Ehrlich of the 1960s. These days the overpopulation proponents are an incredibly wealthy and influential bunch. When billionaires David Rockefeller, Jr., George Soros, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, Michael Bloomberg, Ted Turner, and Oprah Winfrey met in May 2009 they decided that overpopulation should be their most pressing priority. (Together this group has donated more than \$70 billion to charity since 1996, according to the *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*.)

And yet the organizations and people that have been warning us about a coming population explosion have been wrong more often than the people saying the Rapture is going to happen next week.

Why are we listening to them? Their thinking is dated – it is so 1968, or even 1798. It was in 1798 that a Reverend Thomas Malthus first brought the idea of an impending overpopulation to the public’s attention in his book, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, and it was in 1968 that a professor, Paul R. Ehrlich, revived this fear with his book *Population Bomb*. In it he predicted that:

The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate...

Despite his completely inaccurate predictions, Ehrlich continues

to warn about overpopulation, and continues to argue for some form of population control. And instead of being mocked for his incompetence and the hysteria he spreads, he continues to be respected as an authority on this subject.

What is the Christian approach?

What is common among all overpopulation advocates is that they see the pie as being only so big. They see our resources as being limited; therefore we must reduce the number of people who want a share of them.

Christianity’s solution? Make a bigger pie.

God has made it plain to us that children are not merely mouths to feed. They are precious human beings, and have been given creative minds with which to solve problems, and hands with which to work. Our minds and bodies are resources that overpopulation advocates don’t properly factor in, and they are resources that only increase as the population increases. So we are not simply consumers, but are also equipped and called by God to be producers!

So we must not succumb to this overpopulation myth, like some gullible Westerners who have embraced Dawson’s view and decided not to have children. Contrast this with what God tells us in Psalm 127:

...children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!

Children are a blessing. May God give us many of them!

Three great resources on this subject are the DVDs Demographic Winter and Demographic Bomb (demographicbomb.com), and the website of the Population Research Institute (pop.org). These groups are not Christian, but they do a great job of highlighting the hype of (and the horror caused by) overpopulation advocates.



In This Issue

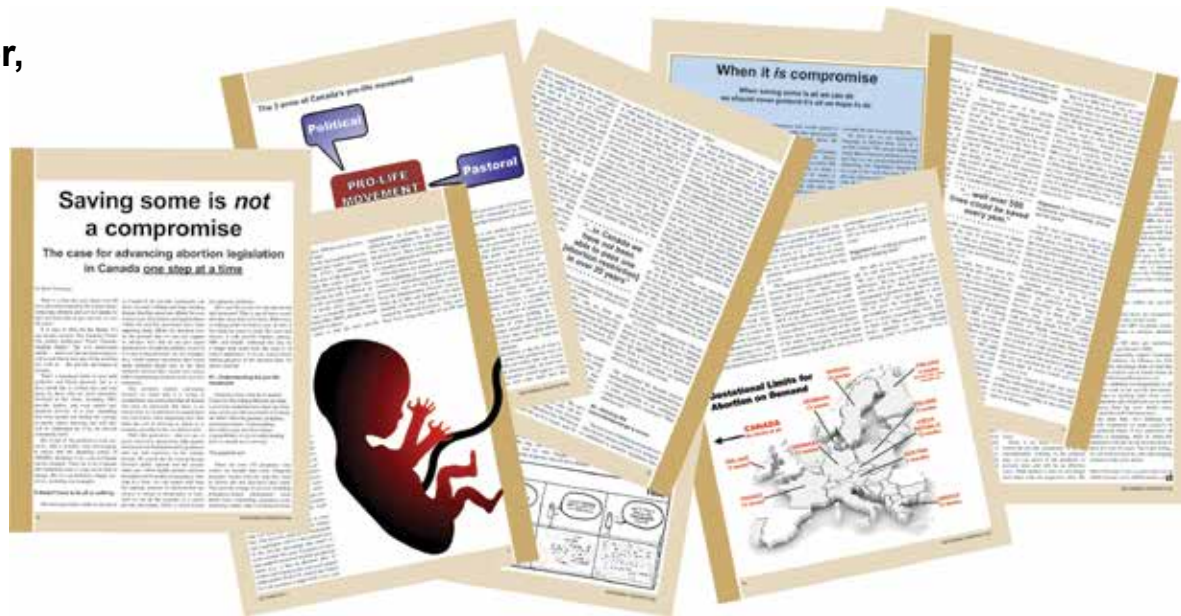
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Dear Editor,

I wanted to express my appreciation for Mark Penninga's "Saving some is *not* compromise" (October 2011) about fighting abortion one step at a time. It's great to hear that someone else is concerned not just with the emotional need to prevent needless murder, but also with the logistics of how to bring such change about.

The unfortunate fact of living in a democracy is that, as proven by the French, you cannot simply effect wholesale change on something as large as abortion overnight. In fact, many argue that the reason democracy itself was successful was due to the slow, methodical nature of the English political culture. Were someone to declare himself the King of Canada



tomorrow, banning abortion would be quite possible, but that is not the reality we live in.

I hope that after reading this article and seriously thinking about it, many more Christians will start to focus on how we *can* and *will* prevent the deaths of any – and eventually all – babies, not how we *want* to.

Kevin Bratcher
Norristown, Pennsylvania

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Nota Bene

News worth noting



New prenatal test for Down syndrome

by Anna Nienhuis

A new blood test has been developed by researchers in Hong Kong that allows pregnant women to have their blood checked to indicate whether their baby has the chromosomal abnormality that causes Down syndrome. Previous early prenatal screening for Down syndrome was quite invasive and carried the risk of miscarriage, so this test is being hailed as a “breakthrough” for pregnant women.

But is it? Testing has been done, and this procedure is now available to pregnant women in the United States. The study reports that they have about a 98% accuracy rate, with very few false positives - meaning some people are still being told their baby has Down

Syndrome when in fact it does not.

Even more significantly, this test will make women feel more comfortable about having early prenatal screening for Down syndrome, which will in turn open the way for more women to decide to abort their child should the test results be undesirable to them.

The prenatal testing field is growing rapidly, as companies work to develop blood tests to screen for a multitude of possible disorders. This is yet another example of people working hard to take matters into their own hands and be unwilling to accept what God may have planned.

Source: Susan Donaldson James' “New Down Syndrome test could cut healthy baby deaths”; abc.go.com; Jan. 12, 2011; “Down Syndrome blood test comes to US”; cbc.ca; Oct. 18, 2011

A new kind of “marriage”

by Anna Nienhuis



As traditional marriage as the only way comes under attack from various sources, another type of marriage is vying for attention and recognition. This new marriage involves an individual and the earth. Some 40 women in Australia held a wedding ceremony in October in which they pledged their devotion to and passionate love for the earth, “marrying,” for example, a mountain or other environmental feature. Far from being a joke, these “eco-sexuals” want “to shift the metaphor from ‘earth as mother’ to ‘earth as lover.’”

While valuing the environment is stewardly, this takes tree-hugging to a whole new level.

Source: Merrin Jagtman's “Green love blossoms”; thesatellite.com; Oct. 17, 2011

Athlete speaks out about faith

by Anna Nienhuis

David Booth, a newly-minted Vancouver Canuck, continues to be known for his openness about his faith in his new home. In a post-game interview in November he stated that a couple of hard hits in his hockey career had helped him remember to focus on Christ when he had been “too focused on hockey.” He later also mentioned that he enjoyed hunting, not for the thrill of the kill, but for the enjoyment of God's creation.

Like virtually all professional athletes, Booth works on Sunday. But while he does not have a proper understanding and observance of the fourth commandment, his open profession of faith and the easy way he brings God into his conversations shows Who is forefront in his mind and life. This makes him a player worth noting to young hockey fans in our households.

Source: CBC's Hockey Night in Canada post-game interview, Oct. 29, 2011

CHROMOSOMES
SHOULD NOT DETERMINE THE VALUE OF A LIFE



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No TV under three

by Anna Nienhuis

A recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under age 3 not watch any TV at all. While many parents tout the educational (and time-filling) value of TV, studies have shown that TV watching can affect children's sleep patterns, which in

turn affects many other aspects of their development and mood.

While most of us grew up watching at least some TV, and allow our children some TV time, too, it is worth considering what is really best for them at this young age.

Source: Tasha Keiriddin's "Turn off the boob tube"; nationalpost.com; Oct. 21, 2011

Canada's Liberal Prime Minister?

by Michael Wagner

Prof. Tom Flanagan of the University of Calgary is one of Canada's most prominent political scientists. For many years he was a close advisor to Stephen Harper, the leader of Canada's Conservative Party and the current Prime Minister (PM).

Apparently, Prof. Flanagan has witnessed a significant change in Harper. Whereas Harper used to be conservative on many issues, he subsequently embraced the policy agenda of the Liberal Party of Canada in order to win and hold power. In a letter to the editor printed in the November 2011 issue of the *Literary Review of Canada*, Flanagan describes the PM's current policy positions:

Harper has adopted the Liberal shibboleths of bilingualism and

multiculturalism. He has no plans to reintroduce capital punishment, criminalize abortion, repeal gay marriage or repeal the Charter. He swears allegiance to the Canada Health Act. He has enriched equalization payments for the provinces and pogeys for individuals. He has enthusiastically accepted government subsidies to business, while enlarging regional economic expansion. He now advocates Keynesian deficit spending and government bailouts of failing corporations, at least part of the time.

Despite the apparent electoral failure of the Liberal Party in the 2011 federal election, "the Liberal consensus lives on. It's just under new management."

"Homosexual" penguins spark international controversy

by Anna Nienhuis and Jon Dykstra

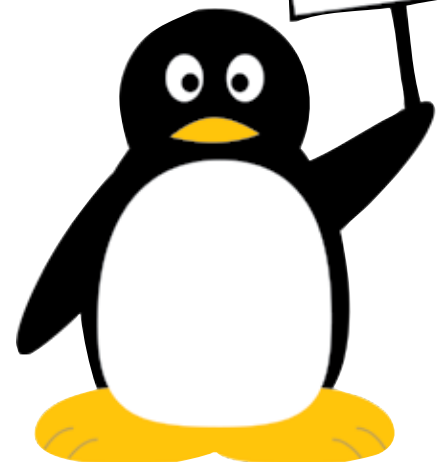
In a bizarre story from Toronto, outcry arose when zookeepers decided to separate two male penguins who had developed a close bond. Apparently, the penguins displayed classic courting behavior to each other and showed no interest in mating with female penguins. They were split up by the zoo in an attempt to breed them and maintain the zoo's penguin population. One homosexual media outlet equated this with forcing the penguins into "the patriarchal sex-trade industry." The publication seemed unaware of how degrading it was to compare prostitutes to animals.

A similar breeding plan was going to be attempted in 2005 in a German zoo, but protests from homosexual rights groups prompted the zoo's director to abandon the effort.

The chorus of disapproval that this latest incident sparked shows just how willing people are to make a fuss when they are entirely ignorant - these protestors are not penguin-breeding experts. The fact that this story made international news is a sad reference to how much of a political voice homosexual activists have in our society.

Source: Oliver Moore's "Toronto Zoo decision to separate 'gay' penguins sparks international outcry", theglobeandmail.com, Nov. 10, 2011; Allan Hall's "Zoo ditches gay penguin plan", www.theage.com.au, Feb. 17, 2005

Animal breeding is only like prostitution if animals and prostitutes are alike.



Making sense of boycotts and buycotts

by Jon Dykstra

In November several groups aligning themselves with the Occupy Wall Street movement called for a Black Friday boycott. Black Friday, the day after the American Thanksgiving, is the biggest shopping day of the year in the US. It gets its name from supposedly being the day of the year in which retailers finally start making a profit (they are finally in the black). The boycott was aimed at large corporations, with one group specifically targeting Walmart for being anti-union.

In response, a group identifying itself with the US Tea Party movement called for a “BUYcott Black Friday,” asking people to shop on Black Friday to support the economy. Previously some Tea Party groups have organized “buycotts” to ask consumers to support one business over another. For example, the St. Louis Tea Party organized a buycott for Ford, because the automaker didn’t take government bailout money.

While we shouldn’t support blanket boycotts of corporations (some may be bad, but they aren’t bad simply because they are big), this blanket “buycott” was also misguided. The BUYcott Black Friday group didn’t encourage the support of any specific business over against others. It simply encouraged spending. And spending for spending’s sake isn’t a way to support the economy – it’s how we ended up billions and trillions in debt!



Milk can save lives

by Jon Dykstra

Donated blood? Sure. But donated breast milk? The idea might seem odd, but donated milk is dubbed “liquid gold” in neonatal intensive care units, and can save the lives of preterm babies whose moms can’t produce milk themselves. “Human milk is not just best for these infants, it’s absolutely lifesaving,” a spokesperson explained. And the 1.8 million ounces of milk currently being distributed by non-profit human milk banks across the continent covers less than a quarter of the 8 million ounces needed.

There is only one human milk bank in Canada (and 10 more in the US), located in Vancouver, BC. If you are in a position to help, you can reach them by phoning 604-875-2282, and can find more information at HumanMilkBank.notlong.com

SOURCE: ABCNews.go.com Katie Moisse’s “Breast Milk Banks Struggle to Meet Demand”, Nov. 4, 2011

Reformed denomination challenged to reject evolution and reaffirm Adam’s creation

by Jon Dykstra

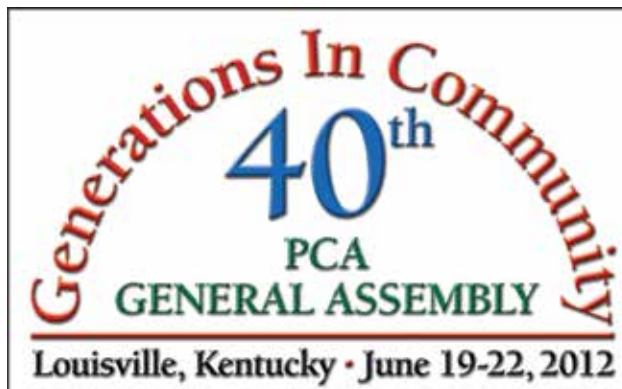
Next year, when the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) meets for their 40th General Assembly, the issue of Creation vs. Evolution will be on the agenda. Or, at least, it will be if the Session of the Northwoods Presbyterian Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming, has their way. This session recently drafted an overture, intended for the General Assembly, which challenges the denomination to reaffirm:

That Adam and Eve were created, body and soul, by immediate acts of Almighty power, thereby preserving a perfect race unity; *That Adam’s body was directly fashioned by Almighty God, without any natural animal parentage of any kind*, out of matter previously created from nothing (emphasis added).

The PCA is comprised of over 1,700 churches and 300,000 members, and has included well-known figures like Marvin

Olasky, Gary North, and the late James Kennedy.

But the denomination is not unified on the issue of Man’s origins and the meaning of Genesis 1 and 2. This division can be seen in the beliefs of the two best-known PCA pastors: R.C. Sproul and Tim Keller. While Sproul holds to a literal six-day Creation, in his bestseller *The*



Reason for God, Keller has defended a form of theistic evolution. Northwoods’ overture notes this lack of unity, and asks the denomination to take a stand on God’s Word.

The overture also notes that the PCA’s parent denomination, the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), reaffirmed Adam’s special, direct creation three times, in 1886, 1888, and 1924. It also rejected it once, in 1969, which, the overture notes, “was a sign of the apostasy of the PCUS.” Shortly after the 1969 rejection, more than 200 congregations left the PCUS, and in 1973 they came together to start the more conservative PCA.

Of course, the PCA is not the only Reformed denomination wrestling with this issue. Some prominent members in the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC) have, in recent years, been promoting a less-than-literal understanding of Genesis 1 and 2. It is worth considering, then, whether the CanRC now needs to make their own public affirmation - similar to

Northwoods’ overture – to make it clear to all how the Bible’s opening chapters must be understood.

SOURCE: “Proposed Overture: Declaration Rejecting All Evolutionary Views of Adam’s Origin” Nov. 17, 2011, The Aquila Report (theaquilareport.com)

A Reformed state church for today?

by Michael Wagner

The idea of having an established church in a nation is horrifying to most people. An established church conjures up fears of citizens being coerced into state-approved religious beliefs and practices.

State church = religious freedom?

But strange as it may seem, some of the freest countries in the world have established churches. In 2004 law professors Rex Ahdar and Ian Leigh wrote an article for the *McGill Law Journal* entitled “Is Establishment Consistent with Religious Freedom?” They answer that question with a “yes”!

Consider some of the countries that have established churches. England is one, Scotland is another. Denmark, Norway, and Finland all have established Lutheran churches. The Eastern Orthodox Church is established in Greece. These modern European nations are not known as oppressive or persecuting countries.

If experience means anything, then, having an established church is not an automatic recipe for religious persecution.

State church orthodoxy

However the fact that established churches can be amenable to religious freedom does not mean they are faithful or orthodox. Right now none of them are. The point is that established religion doesn’t inevitably lead to oppression.

During the first two centuries of the Reformation, Protestant theologians commonly believed that there should be a close relationship between faithful churches and godly magistrates. The idea of established Protestant churches was widely accepted. In fact, the idea that there should be only one true church in each nation was closely tied to the idea of one established church in each nation.

All of the established churches have become unfaithful since that time, as have most Protestant churches overall. But the existence of numerous unfaithful churches does not negate the possibility of there being faithful churches, and, in the same way, the existence of numerous unfaithful established churches does not negate the possibility of there again being faithful established churches.

Every country has a state religion

Ahdar and Leigh go further than simply vindicating the idea of established churches—they point out that every country has some form of established religion. That claim will appear to be outrageous in this day and age, but it is true.

In every country there is a philosophical position underlying the law. Laws are official enactments of ethical principles, and those principles are rooted in a worldview. In other words, every government has a conception of right and wrong, and that conception of right and wrong is the basis of the laws it upholds. There are no laws based on a “neutral” worldview because every law is declaring something to be right and something else to be wrong.

Laws against murder clearly enforce the idea that killing innocent people is wrong. Laws against theft clearly enforce the idea that stealing is wrong. Even traffic laws enforce ideas of safety and fairness that are rooted in a worldview that values safety and fairness. All laws reflect conceptions of right and wrong, that is, particular views of morality.

No such thing as neutrality

It’s common to think of modern Western nations as being religiously “neutral” in some sense, but that is a false impression. As Ahdar and Leigh state,

“For a modern state to remain entirely impartial is, we submit, an impossible feat. The idea of a purely neutral state in which there is no official endorsement of the true and ‘good’... is a mirage.”

In other words, “The state’s position and resultant public policies will reflect its conception of the good, its official worldview.” With the embrace of one worldview, other worldviews are inevitably rejected. “The established position will inevitably exclude the worldviews of some citizens.”

Not a question of whether but only which

In a broad sense, then, “There is... always an establishment or state orthodoxy.” Having a formally established church, as in England, is a more strict and explicit arrangement for the “orthodoxy.” Most Western countries, like Canada and the USA, do not have this kind of official recognition of a church or religion. But the countries without a formally established church still have what Ahdar and Leigh call a “state orthodoxy” or “official worldview.” There is no getting away from this fact because all law and government must be based upon particular conceptions of morality, and those conceptions of morality are rooted in a religion or worldview.

In this respect, the idea of an established religion should not automatically be seen as a frightening concept. Certainly there have been official churches that persecuted peaceful citizens and perhaps even tyrannized people. But there must always be a religion (or worldview, if you prefer) that underlies government and public policy. That being the case, it might as well be the true religion. In an ideal situation, therefore, Reformed Christianity would be the official religion of Canada, the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, as well as other countries.

Protests and Demonstrations

Are these legitimate Christian activities?

by André Schutten

Should Christians picket and protest? I have been asked this question many times, but only a couple of times by people who were looking for an answer. Most often the question has been asked by people who, it was clear, had their own view firmly established, and thought that answer had to be “no.”

But is it really wrong to protest? Shouldn't Christians demonstrate against injustice?

It will be helpful to give some context to the discussion and to limit the scope as well. Christian protesting in Canada usually relates to one big issue: abortion. There have been demonstrations regarding same-sex marriage and euthanasia in the past, but the topic that makes the most noise, so to speak, is abortion. So, let's stay with that one issue - can Christians protest against abortion? Are there any objections that hold water?

I'm going to start by making a case for protesting, and then follow that up by answering some of the more common objections I've heard.

Define our terms

Let's begin by defining our terms, just to make sure we are all on the same page. Many people who have objections against Christians protesting do so because when they think of protests they are thinking of hooded hooligans kicking in windows at Starbucks, burning police cars, blockading

roadways illegally, occupying Wall Street (or Bay Street or whatever other street), etc. Those against protesting think of G20 summits, Stanley Cup finals, or First Nations land disputes.

But these activities are either riots (which are completely different from protests) or demonstrations fueled by greed, self-interest, or wrong-headed ideology. Riots are completely illegal, banned by the Criminal Code. Protests which are fueled by self-interest or secular ideology are legal; however, from a Christian perspective, these, too, are activities we should avoid.

Limiting this discussion then to protests against abortion in Canada, we can note that these protests are:

1. legal
2. peaceful
3. organized
4. political action
5. a Christian obligation

Protests are...

Protests are legal

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* includes in Section 2 a list of four Fundamental Freedoms, freedoms that are fundamental to a proper functioning of a free and democratic society. Number two and number three on that list are the “freedom of expression”

and the “freedom of assembly.” It is these freedoms enshrined in the *Charter* that make activities such as the March for Life legal.

Municipalities also allow for protests. A permit can be obtained which grants the right to temporarily block a roadway for the purposes of a march or demonstration in support of something. The annual National March for Life, for example, involves a march through the downtown core of Ottawa, and includes a police escort.

Protests are peaceful

The March for Life and LifeChain are both peaceful protests. LifeChain is a silent protest with posters and pictures that encourage people to give serious consideration to the problems with abortion. The March for Life is also a peaceful protest.

Anecdotal evidence is always helpful: in May 2011 the March for Life had approximately 15,000 protesters on Parliament Hill; the number of police monitoring the protest was approximately a dozen officers.

Contrast that with the environmentalist “Day of Civil Disobedience” that took place on September 26, 2011, on Parliament Hill. For that event metal barriers were erected the night before, and some 300 police were on hand the day of. The number of protesters was



FOUR WARNING SIGNS YOUR PROTEST MIGHT BE A RIOT:

1. Crowd is made up primarily of young men...
2. with covered faces...
3. and clenched fists...
4. and the dress code largely excludes “cheery” colors

Picture is of a demonstration/riot in London, England, March 26, 2011 (Photo by 1000 Words/Shutterstock)

approximately 300. Pro-life protest: 1 officer for every 1,000 protesters. Environmentalist protest: 1 officer for every 1 protester.

Protests are organized

Unlike many riots or even spontaneous protests, the March for Life and LifeChain are well-organized events. They have mission statements, timelines with start and end times, goals and purposes, and (most importantly) each person in attendance knows why they are there. Too often unorganized protests draw rabble-rousers who can easily create havoc or actually violate municipal bylaws without proper permits or authorization. With the March for Life, there is no question for the participant what the message is, who is participating, and what the end goal of the protest is.

Protests are political action

In a free and democratic society, organized rallies and protests are part of the political process. In a nation where every citizen has a voice in electing their representative, where every citizen can contribute to the public policy debate, and where every citizen can independently lobby for change, protests play a legitimate role. Protests are not inherently anarchist or anti-government (although some can become that). When done legally, in a peaceful and organized fashion, protests are a means of engaging with the elected leadership on an issue, demonstrating to them that many citizens care deeply about this particular issue and that they expect

change.

Also, a distinction could be made between protesting for others, over protesting for our own individual interests. There is definitely a Christian obligation for the former over the latter. This is borne out in the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself, and to be our brother’s keeper. Turning the other cheek applies to personal insult and persecution, and not to persecution of others. We need to stand up for our neighbors, including the unborn ones.

Protests are a Christian obligation

Eberhard Bethge, a very close friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, once said, “We were resisting by way of confession, but we were not confessing by way of resistance.” His remark was made in relation to the German Church’s response to Nazism generally and its treatment of the Jews specifically. Many members of the German Church would confess in the safety of their church, or in their home, that the way Jews were being rounded up and sent away was bad, or awful, or wrong and immoral. But not enough lived out that confession by way of actual resistance.

Now I am not saying that Christians in our circles are silent on the issue of abortion. Far from it. I would guess that, per capita, the Reformed denominations are more outspoken on this issue than any other group. *But we can do more!* If we truly believe and understand that an unborn child is already a unique, living human being, made in the image of God, then how can we *not* protest when they are being killed at a rate of 100,000 a year? We

must speak out! If we believe that abortion is just one more way to commit murder, they why wouldn’t we all be taking part in LifeChain, sacrificing that one measly hour out of 8,760 hours in the year to say, “No, this is wrong!”?

And if our worship service happens to fall on that same hour, why wouldn’t we work to have either our own LifeChain event an hour earlier or later, or organize one ourselves the day before and attend en masse? (I would even go so far as to argue that the service time could be changed that day for such an important task, but many may be uncomfortable with that.) Brothers, sisters, protest is in our very name; it’s in our Reformed DNA. Our name, *Protestant*, testifies to the fact that we can, that we do, that we must speak out against injustice. We need to be more actively protesting such horrors, not less.

Answering objections

There are a number of different objections that I have heard regarding protesting. Some are made simply because of a misunderstanding of what protesting is. I think I’ve made it clear that there is a difference between the March for Life in Ottawa and the G20 “protests” (read: riots) in Toronto.

However, there are a few other objections that are often raised, and I hope that I can properly address them.

Objection #1: Protesting abortion involves working with Catholics – we cannot support this.

Ironically, on the issue of abortion, I would hazard a guess that the Reformed and the orthodox Catholics are the two Christian denominations in closest agreement. Despite our theological/

doctrinal differences, we can certainly work together on this issue.

Oddly, most people who put this objection to me would have no problem working with all sorts of people – we work with Catholics side by side in the workplace every day, selling products, buying equipment, stocking shelves, etc. Why then would we not be able to do something even more important with them?

It is worth noting that at the March for Life, there is a separate Reformed prayer service before the gathering on the Hill; while we do not join with the Catholics in their prayers, we do join with them and many others in their protest!

Objection #2: The “Right to Life” slogan is wrong. We have no rights; it is all a gift from God.

As with many phrases and slogans, we must understand the context and scope of the statement and its intent. Both the person who says, “I have a right to life,” and the person who says, “We have no rights,” are correct. We just need to qualify their statements.

When someone objects to the slogan, “Right to Life,” there is a common misunderstanding of what sort of right is being claimed. As Christians, we confess

and believe that we don’t have a right, *before God*, to anything. We deserve death! Life is but a free gift of God.

But because He has said, “You shall not kill,” that means no one person has a right to deprive me of my life. Therefore I can speak of a right to life, *given by God*, which I have, and which every other human life has as well, no matter how small. (For more on this point, see “The foundation of human rights” by Stephen Pidgeon, currently on the front page of ReformedPerspective.ca.)

Objection #3: *Protesting goes against Paul’s command in Romans 13 to honor, respect, and be subject to the authority of the government.*

Paul’s words are forcefully stated and leave little ambiguity. Peter echos Paul by stating,

Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good (1 Peter 2:13-14).

However, the assumption made in the objection listed

above is this: protesting is disrespectful or is an act of sedition or is some other anti-authority type of act.

But is that the case? In a democratic state, which Canada is, protests are part of the governing process. The governance of Canada by Members of Parliament necessarily includes the voice of the people. Therefore, protesting should be seen as assisting the government, shining the light of God’s Truth on our leaders. It should not be seen as an act of anarchy.

Even if one has trouble with this explanation, Paul’s words in Romans 13 should be read in the context of the words of Jesus’ other disciples. In Acts 4 and 5, Peter and John are hauled before the Sanhedrin and ordered not to speak about Jesus any longer. Their response? “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). Later, Peter proclaims, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). This is a clear affirmation of the principle that God requires his people to disobey the civil government when obedience would mean to directly disobey God.

SPOTTING A PROPER PROTEST:

1. Organizers know what a permit is
2. Children & elderly are a core component
3. Police are present - their helmets are not

(Photo of 2007 March for Life is by Ewout DeGelder, www.openphotography.ca)



Perhaps you would object here and say, "God never commands us to preach against abortion, does he? He says don't kill, so we can't have abortions, but does this mean we have to get out there and preach it to the government and the world?" Short answer: absolutely. We must. In fact, there are enough commands in the Bible that show that we ought to.

One passage in particular sticks out, actually screams out, in my mind, ordering us to protest. It states:

Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done? (Proverbs 24:11-12).

It really cannot get any more clear than this. We know exactly what abortion is and what it does. God does not merely suggest we get involved in holding back those

staggering toward death; we are *ordered* to rescue them! It's an imperative! *Do it*, or God will repay each of us according to what we have done (or not done!).

Get involved

Every year, on the second Thursday of May, thousands of Canadians (Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, non-Christian, but all *Protestants*) gather on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to call our government to action on the issue of life, to insist that our government stand up and pass a law to protect those most vulnerable, and to decry the totally legal death sentence of thousands of Canadian unborn children for the sake of convenience. Add your voice to the chorus. Make the trip to Ottawa – it's worth the effort, and the crowd grows every year. Last year it was 15,000 strong. We need it to be 100,000 strong.

The other annual event is called LifeChain. This event is easier for everyone to attend because it happens in just about every urban centre across North

America. Every year, typically on the first Sunday of October, Christians gather on a prominent street or intersection in their community for just one hour to silently witness to the harm of abortion. This witness, too, is incredibly effective, and one in which entire congregations should be involved.

The question we ask regarding this issue is not, "Could a Christian engage in such activity?" The question is, "Should a Christian engage in such activity?" The answer is a resounding yes! I pray you, too, will be convicted to add your voice to the chorus and so be a salt and a light to your community, to your countrymen, and to your leaders.

André Schutten is Ontario Director and Legal Counsel for ARPA Canada. For more information about the March for Life, LifeChain, or any other means of getting politically active, please contact him: Andre@ARPACanada.ca or 613-297-5172



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- Rev. A.A. Bezuyen, Trinity URC

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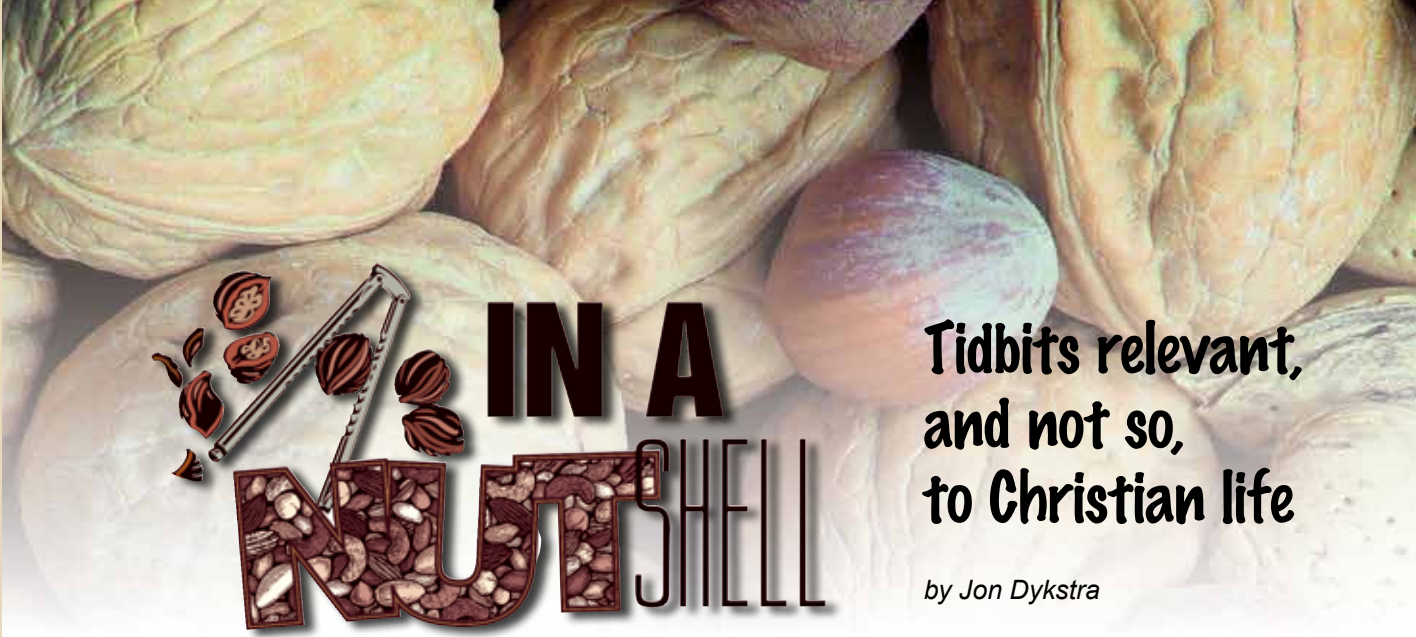
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IN A NUTSHELL

Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

One step to a balanced budget

This past summer billionaire Warren Buffet proposed a one-point plan to ensure the United States would always have a balanced budget. It was a half-serious, half-genuine, 100-per-cent-genius suggestion. And it would be equally applicable in Canada.

You just pass a law that says that any time there's a deficit of more than three percent of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for reelection. Yeah, yeah, now you've got the incentives in the right place, right? If you guys can't get it done, we'll get some other guys to get it done. The only problem: the people who would have to pass such a law are the same people who would lose their jobs.

Math to make you smile

In Craig Damrauer's *New Math*, the author takes everyday language and gives the words mathematical definitions. Sometimes the results are insightful. His definition of a Ponzi scheme makes it evident that those that fall for them are, most often, looking to get something for nothing: *Ponzi scheme* = $ROI - R - I$ (ROI stands for Return On Investment).

Other definitions are merely humorous. Here are a half dozen of the best.

MODERN ART = I could do that + yeah, but you didn't
DOG = cat + loyalty

PERSEVERANCE = if at first you don't succeed + repetition

REVENGE = do unto others – as you would have them do unto you

CHILDREN = joy – sleep

LOSING ARGUMENT = you're right + I'm sorry

REALIST = pessimist + good PR

Worst names

In a recent *Reader's Digest*, one letter writer noted that their relatives had gotten married in the Boring Baptist Church. It was a curious name. Might it have come about as a reaction to the seeker-sensitive marketing that has churches hyping their entertainment value? We have a great band, a puppet ministry for the kids, and the very best coffee bar in town!

But, no, this is simply what the folks in Boring, Oregon, called one of the local Baptist churches. A bad name, to be certain, but better than what the congregations have to deal with in Falls, Virginia. Who wants to say they go to a Falls church?

4 clues for the clueless

In keeping with our modesty theme this issue, here are four items that should be passed on as needed.

- “Sweetie, that’s a shirt, not a dress!”
- “Boxers are not underwear” (or as one helpful little sister put it: “Freddy, I can see your panties!”)
- “Leggings are not pants.”

- “If you can't sit down in it without being indecent, it isn't decent.”

Playing at religion

“It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. ‘Look out!’ we cry, ‘It’s alive!’ And therefore this is the very point at which so many draw back – I would have done so myself if I could – and proceed no further with Christianity. An ‘impersonal God’ – well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth, and goodness inside our own heads – better still. A formless lifeforce surging through us, a vast power that we can tap best of all. But God Himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the Hunter, King, Husband – that is quite another matter. There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at burglars hush suddenly: was that a real footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion (‘Man’s search for God!’) suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? We never meant it to come to that! Worse still, supposing He had found us!”

- C.S. Lewis, from *Miracles*

A bumper sticker worth 1000 words

What if you're wrong?
 Many woman who had an abortion
 say they were wrong!
 Choose life. You can't go wrong!
 1-800-665-0570
 www.bornbefore.com
 www.SteptoKnowYourness.org

Spurgeon – the rap

Shai Linne is a Reformed rapper, which might seem a contradiction in terms since rap is dominated by thugs, misogynists and, of course, misogynist thugs. However, his lyrics reveal a very different sort of rapper. Below is Verse 3 from his ode to Charles Spurgeon.

Behold the grace of God - stand to the side
The Spirit exalting the Lamb who has died
It can't be denied - this man we describe
Was simply a tool in the hand of his God
To observe this servant is extremely instructive
One word about Spurgeon is he was productive
Preached Jesus - no speakers - loudly he'd shout it
Each week packed houses of crowds in the thousands
His sermons were published - sixty-two volumes
He worked almost like he just knew he would die soon
Made mad disciples, passed on his knowledge
Established a school to train pastors in college
Sold out to the Lord Jehovah, his portion

Also he built two homes for the orphans
A monthly magazine, plus he wasn't too busy
to write books - about a hundred and fifty
God's grace in Spurgeon was manifest
But remember, the best man is a man at best
Yes, he struggled with depression - consistently sick, kid
Both he and Susannah physically afflicted
He experienced as a servant of Jesus
The power of God made perfect in weakness
Later on comes complications
His stands for orthodoxy got him shunned by his denomination
But through all the hardship and all the controversy
He never stopped relying on the sovereign God of mercy
And when he had finished pressing towards the goal
He entered into heaven at the age of fifty-seven
His life is a case of God's grace effectively
At work in sinners to leave a great legacy
The proof is many years later in your speakers
We're praising Jesus for raising up the "prince of preachers"

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

For those of you who knew our late Brother Pieter DeBoer, you will recognize the title above as words which our Brother spoke and wrote often, particularly so in the last years of his life.

This memorial is not written to heap praise on a man but to thank God from whom the church community in general, and ARPA Canada and *Reformed Perspective* in particular, received much benefit from God's work through our brother's faithful contributions.

Pieter lived his life as one of those believers who always reckoned with the fact that there is not one square inch of this world of which our LORD and Master does not say, "This is mine." Already in the 1980s Pieter was involved both as a spokesperson and organizer of the first attempts to build an organization we have come to recognize as ARPA Canada. And when ARPA Canada reorganized into its current format, Pieter was there to advise, encourage, and educate us. And he always reminded us to be true to who we were and to trust God to guide and bless us. God continues to bless

the work that Pieter was such a large part of.

Pieter also truly loved to write on all matters relating to theology, and

in particular he desired that all would have an opportunity to read well-written explanations of what it meant to be a Christian in the world today. Over the

past eight years he was a major contributor to the work that *Reformed Perspective* has been doing in this area. Often, as board of the magazine, we would find ourselves listening carefully to Pieter as he outlined why God's Word required us to always strive to clearly and concisely speak the truth of His Word on whatever subject we might be writing about.

As chairman of the board of ARPA Canada and *Reformed Perspective Magazine*, I wish to publicly thank Pieter's family, and especially his wife Rita, for allowing Pieter the time to serve both of these two organizations. Pieter always seemed to have time for our questions, and he could be counted on to provide advice any time he was asked for it.

Praise God who, on November 3, 2011, called his child Pieter DeBoer home, because his work on this earth was complete.

– John Voorhorst



Pieter DeBoer (1951-2011)

Modesty?

An article for women
(though men are welcome to read along)

by Lydia Pol

Modesty in today's world is difficult! Our culture celebrates immodesty, ridicules modesty, and makes it seem like the only choice women have is between immodesty, and wearing granny underwear, floor-length skirts, and burkas.

Still, most Christian women agree that modesty is important... though this doesn't always translate to the way that they dress. Many women don't realize how what they wear impacts the men around them and don't seem to understand exactly what immodesty and modesty entail.

So let's start with a definition then. What is modesty? It is closely linked with purity - essentially, modesty is purity expressed through dress *and* behavior (after all, a woman can be dressed modestly but still behave immodestly).

Importance

Why is modesty important?

According to the apostle Peter, modesty is a witness to the people around us. A modest woman draws attention not because she is dressed in flashy clothes, but because she has a "gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:1-5). This doesn't mean a woman can't be talkative or outgoing - the sense of these words can be understood as being meek and composed, the opposite of vain and intemperate. She is, in dress and conduct, to point people to God, rather than to herself.

In contrast, a woman who dresses immodestly is trying to draw attention to her body. This approach works; it does draw male attention, but not the right

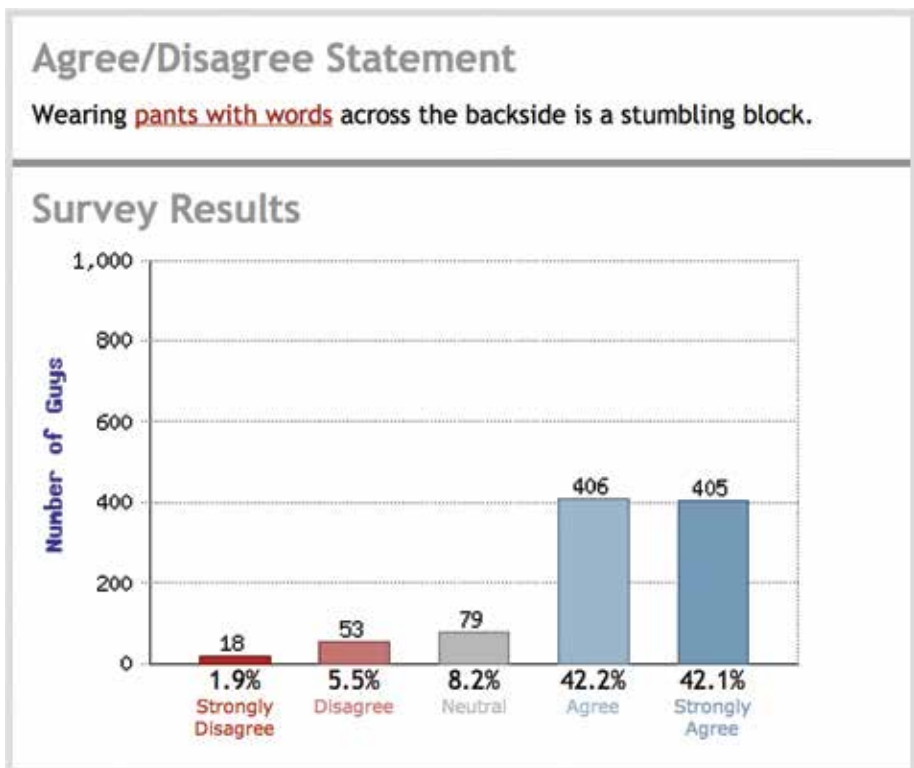
sort of attention, or from the right sort of men. They admire you for your figure, and the flesh on display, but *you are so much more than that!* As daughters of the Most High God, the way we dress and behave should reflect the value and dignity He has bestowed on us. We have worth and dignity because He values us, so much so that He sent his Son to die for us.

Now does dressing modestly mean we need to cover up from head to toe in frumpy, ugly sacks? Is this what God

requires? Let's take a look at 1 Timothy 2:9-10:

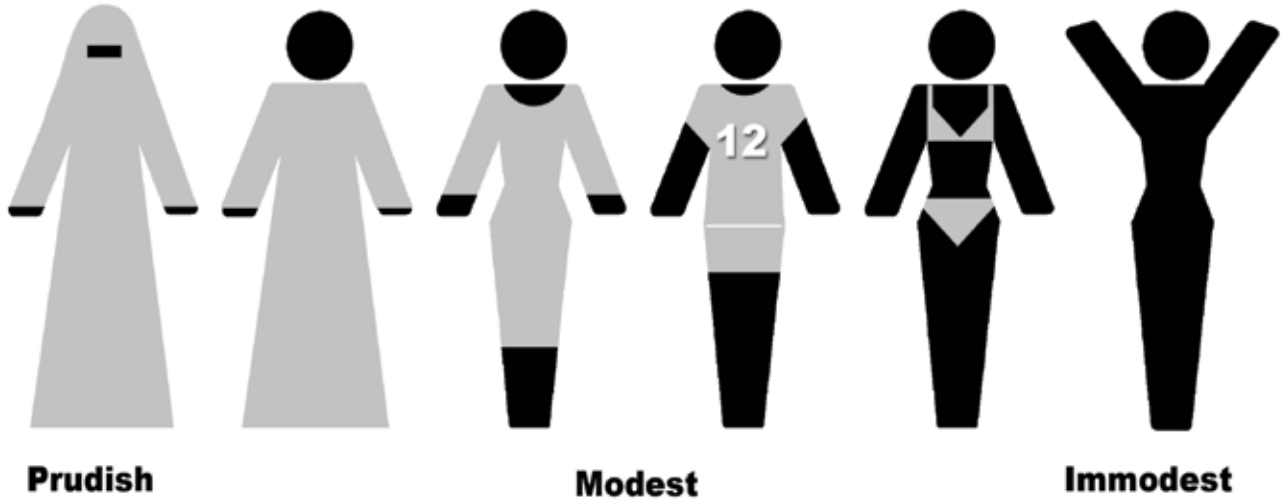
I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

Does that mean you can't braid your hair or wear nice clothes? No, this text



One question, and the response from "The Modesty Survey," a poll of 800+ Christian men (therebelution.com/modestysurvey).

The Modesty Spectrum from burka to bare naked



isn't a checklist for specifics but rather a verse that contrasts outward adornment versus "adorning" ourselves with good deeds, and makes it clear which of these two is the superior. A woman consumed with looking good simply doesn't compare to a woman who *does* good.

1 Peter 3:3-4 echoes this thought:

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

Now God did create women to be beautiful to men – the Song of Solomon

is evidence of this! – so, yes, we can wear nice clothing. However, our outward appearance is not the source of our beauty. We are daughters of the Most High God, loved and valued by Him. He commands us to dress modestly because we are precious in His sight. *That* is the source of our beauty. *That* is the reason for our modesty.

Modesty as service

Why else is modesty important? Our service to God reflects itself in how we serve the people around us. This includes our brothers in Christ. How does our service to God and our neighbor relate to the way we dress and act?

Well, as much as it is a man's responsibility to guard his thoughts, the more skin we show, the harder that will be for him to do. In preparation for this article I asked men from our church to contribute, anonymously, some of their thoughts on modesty. One of the replies explained:

When girls dress or act immodestly, it makes it really hard for me to keep a pure mind. I'm not sure that all girls realize this, but guys actually do think differently and are aroused by different things than girls are. Visual imagery is very arousing for a guy, sometimes even just the *hint* of it can be too much."

God wants us to exercise self-control and to serve each other. He wants us to model loving, healthy, serving relationships. If a man is lusting after a woman, in his thoughts or his words, he is sinning against God. However, if a woman is dressing inappropriately, *she* is sinning against God, and in addition she is not serving her brother. Often when we do not serve God first, others are hurt as well.

There are young men in our congregations – our brothers in Christ – who passionately desire to honor God. They desire to serve Him and keep their thoughts pure. They desire to honor their sisters in Christ, and in so doing, honor Christ Himself. Do men appreciate modesty? Certainly! As another church member wrote:

When I see a girl who dresses or acts suggestively, I am wary of her... I would rather be with/around a girl who

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I know respects herself and me, and desires that we both stay pure. This is the sort of girl who I would want to share my future with, whether it be in marriage or simply as good friends - the girl who does not put herself on display for everyone around her, but shares herself only with the one God gives to her in marriage.

What do we want in a man? Do we want someone who respects us and is passionate about his relationship with God? Are we willing to harm these same men in their spiritual lives in order to make ourselves feel attractive? How important is our pride to us? Is it important enough that we are unwilling to change?

A challenge to women

In Christ, we are called a family. What implications does this have for how we interact with each other? Families look out for each other. Families fight for each other, and seek to protect each other from harm. If we are not willing to *protect* our brothers from harm, is it true to say that we are *causing* them harm?

In James 2, the apostle writes:

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

This text can be applied, I think appropriately, to our discussion of modesty. We might paraphrase it to read:

Sisters..., suppose a brother is struggling with lust. If one of you says to him, "Go in peace, keep your thoughts pure and all the best with your struggle with lust," but continues to *knowingly* dress in an enticing way, what good is it?

Is it a woman's fault if a man makes rude comments or allows his lust to control him? No! This is *his* sin. However, God commands *us* to dress decently and

with propriety (1 Timothy 2:9). He knows how He made men, and how He made women. If a woman *knowingly* neglects God's command to dress decently and with propriety, is she responsible for this before God? Yes. This is *her* sin. God commands us to dress modestly in order to glorify Him.

So are burkas the way to go?

It is also important that, in an effort to dress modestly, we don't go to an opposite extreme. We don't want to talk or act as though a woman has to wear a burka to be modest!

As priceless daughters of the Most High God, how can we witness to others in the way we dress? Think of our younger sisters as well! We send a message to the people around us in the way we come across. Considering that, can *attractive*

modesty be a good witness? What does *unattractive* modesty say about Christianity?

It's not only important to dress and behave modestly. It's also important to dress and behave attractively, because we are sending a message to our culture and to our younger sisters in Christ about our God. We serve a God who loves beauty. He is not against beauty - He created it! So let's not act like there is something pious about wearing the clothing equivalent of a paper bag. Sure a burka is more modest than a bikini, but it sends entirely the wrong message.

What do guys think?

So let's be specific for a moment. It's great to talk about modesty, but without specifics many women are still left wondering what guys think, and what

Modesty, a message for men

One of the most helpful letters sent in by the men in our church was by a father who wanted to challenge women to act modestly, but also wanted men to take on their responsibilities of leadership with this issue. He wrote:

"We feel so thankful when we see (younger) women dress modestly and that they are fully confident in doing so. It is above all a sign that they recognize their identity as children of God - they need not show bare flesh to be confident in who they are because they know that they have intrinsic value - and we praise God for working this knowledge in their hearts.

"On the other hand, it is very sad to see immodest dress, most of all because it seems to suggest a lack of confidence in who God is, a lack of appreciation of how precious He finds them, a lack of courtesy for husbands and fathers and brothers and men in the church, and a measure of the influence of the world's values in their lives.

"Please do not misunderstand me - I fully appreciate the challenges for girls and women of finding appropriate clothing, and the insidious influences of the world - and I also realize that some girls and women are not even aware that their clothes bring offence to God and to their Christian neighbors. In this respect, Christian men have also often failed in their responsibility to lead and encourage their wives and daughters (I am no exception - it's tough and I fail regularly).... Let this be a call to action for men, to actively encourage, support, and appreciate the efforts to be modest. If we as men do not make it clear that we value modesty and put *real* effort and resources into it (or instead perhaps force our daughters to wear unattractive outdated sacks) we seriously fail them.

"Our older girls and women are *very* attractive when they dress modestly - older boys, brothers, husbands and fathers, and other men appreciate it, value it, in fact, treasure it and rejoice in God because of it."

troubles them. So let's hear thoughts on modesty shared by men from our churches:

... it is good to be aware that guys don't need much help in looking at places you might want to draw attention to; their attention goes there easily enough.

... when women are wearing low-cut shirts, my eyes will immediately focus on/be drawn to their breasts, ... and then it is a struggle for me to keep my eyes focused elsewhere. When talking to women wearing these shirts, I'm more concerned about keeping my eyes from wandering, and would rather finish the conversation and move on.

... when dressing for the day, women should ask themselves where they think their clothes will make guys focus and draw the most attention because that *is* where attention will be drawn.

Back in 2007 Alex and Brett Harris, the younger brothers of Joshua Harris, used their website to query over 1,600 Christian guys about their thoughts on different clothing items and accessories and various behaviors. There was often a wide spread in opinion among the men about whether a certain item of clothing on a woman amounted to being a stumbling block for them. But in some cases, for some clothing items, there was a strong consensus. Some items that men agreed were more troubling to see included tight leggings with short tops, halter tops, exposed bra straps, and pants with lettering on the bum. Certain types of female stretching were also troubling for most of the men, specifically stretches that involved a woman bending over with her backside towards a man, or arching her back and sticking out her chest.

Some of these were "no-brainers" – for example, it wasn't surprising to find that 84.9 per cent of the surveyed men thought that bikinis were immodest. Other results might surprise you, as they did me. I found their website, TheRebellion.com/modestysurvey, itself helpful, as it gave very specific input. The responses were from a wide variety of men, on a wide variety of clothing items, as well as some behaviors. I would strongly recommend the site to women who want to have a clearer idea of what may be an issue for men.

I would also recommend asking a man you know! Brothers and fathers are great for this, but keep in mind that what's an issue for one person may not be an issue for another, and vice versa.

Conclusion

If you are struggling with the issue of modesty, I want to encourage you. Keep praying about this issue in your life. Challenge yourself. Raise your standards. Be creative about modesty. Challenge *each other* to dress modestly! And out of love for God, don't give anyone a hard time if they approach you and ask you to dress more modestly.

You are daughters of God, and sisters to sons of God. Live accordingly.



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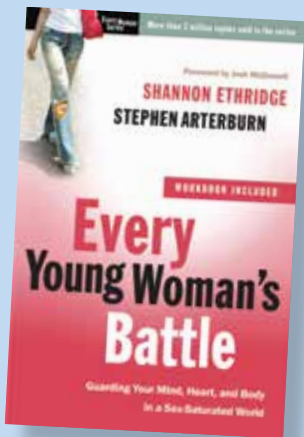
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This is for groups and individuals whose philosophy and worldview is in accord with that of *Reformed Perspective*, so we reserve the right to refuse any ad.

Resources For Further Reading



An Apology for Feminine Modesty
by Douglas Wilson
DougWilsonModesty.notlong.com

The Rebellion Modesty Survey
www.therebellion.com/modestysurvey/

Every Young Man's Battle
by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker with Mike Yorkey

Every Young Woman's Battle
by Shannon Ethridge

BEST BOOKS: Two by Jerry Bridges reviewed by Margaret VanAssen

RESPECTABLE SINS Confronting the Sins We Tolerate

We're not into drugs or pornography; we're not committing adultery or stealing or beating our children. We go to church and read the Bible at mealtimes. So we can consider ourselves good people, right?

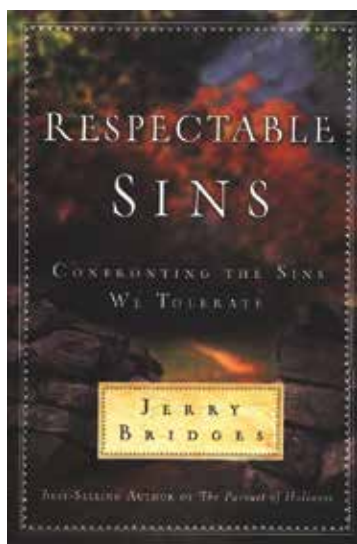
Well, no.

In *Respectable Sins*, author Jerry Bridges exposes all those subtle sins that we don't always recognize as sins - sins that we find so acceptable, especially in ourselves, like selfishness, lack of self-control, irritability, anger, or envy.

Bridges explains that as Christians we are saints set apart by God for God, and that any conduct (even thoughts) that is unbecoming a saint is sin. It is so easy to look out at the "world" and see all the sins committed by the unsaved, and forget that we are sinners, too, "but the fact still remains that the seemingly minor sins we tolerate in our lives do indeed deserve the curse of God." He goes on to explain that these sins, if they are not recognized, repented of, and fought against, will spread like a malignancy throughout our lives, especially in our families where the brunt of these sins is felt most, but also in our church and work relationships. The author completes the first part of the book by emphasizing our dependence on the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, and gives instructions on how to deal with these subtle sins, which is an effective set-up for what comes next.

When he then begins to expose in detail all our "respectable sins" the reader will begin to squirm. Is there any part of our lives in which we have made God irrelevant? Have we been anxious or worried? Have we griped about the circumstances of our lives? Have we bragged about anything lately? Felt smug? Put ourselves first? Lost our cool? Snapped at the kids or the spouse or anybody? Been sarcastic? Looked down our nose at somebody else? Coveted? Gossiped? Let worldly standards affect our decision making? By this time we're ducking our heads and slinking pretty low in our chairs. We're left with no doubt about who needs God's grace and are thankful to receive it.

Mr. Bridges finishes off with the encouraging reminder that our progressive sanctification rests on the righteousness of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. This book is a *must* read for Christians.



THE DISCIPLINE OF GRACE God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness

The title of *Discipline of Grace* seems to express a contradiction. Isn't grace a free gift, and discipline something we have to work at? How do these terms relate? Isn't he confusing faith and works?

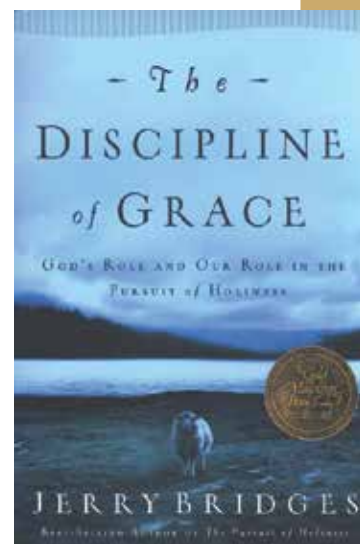
Author Jerry Bridges focuses on the terms "dependence" and "discipline" and uses the analogy of a farmer. The farmer is completely dependent on God for the miracle of germination and for favorable weather conditions. Without these things there is no crop. However, he cannot just sit around waiting for God to produce crops for him. Cultivating, planting, fertilizing, and harvesting are his responsibilities or the tasks in which he must be disciplined.

In the same way, we are all completely dependent on God's grace and the righteous work of Jesus Christ. Without this we are nothing, and not one of us can ever present God with a glowing personal report card based on our own merit or accomplishments. Understanding this eliminates all haughtiness and self-righteousness, but we must also understand that this same grace transforms and motivates us in the disciplines of holy living.

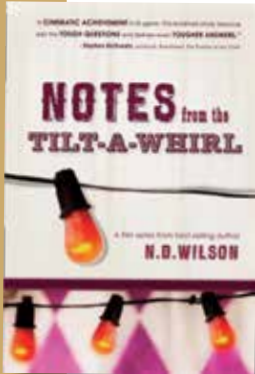
The author emphasizes several times throughout the book that we must first and continuously preach the gospel to ourselves, and we must never feel complacent in our walk of faith, must never feel that we have arrived because we go to a church with the right doctrines and do all the right things. Over and over he brings us back to our dependence on grace and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and once that is clearly established he shows how that grace enables us to live a life of gratitude and holiness.

He outlines five different kinds of discipline. The *discipline of commitment* must be to God and serving Him, not to ourselves or a set of moral values. The *discipline of convictions* explains that a conviction is something we believe so strongly that it affects the way we live. For the *discipline of choices*, he explains that, "Every day...we are disciplining ourselves in one direction or another by the choices that we make." The *discipline of watching* cautions us to always be alert to those things which could cause us to fall, and the *discipline of adversity* encourages us to accept the Lord's discipline.

I highly recommend this very biblical book that is both liberating and inspiring, and leads well into its companion book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*.



TOP FILMS: Three that make you go “hmmmm....”



NOTES FROM THE TILT-A-WHIRL

51 minutes, 2011
reviewed by
Jonathan Chase

This abbreviated presentation of a book that goes by the same name is one of the few productions coming from

a Reformed Christian worldview that is available for purchase in such well known stores as Target and Barnes & Noble. It is also, officially, the first bookumentary ever to hit the shelves, and features a cover that provides just about no hint of what the film is about (until you watch it and then, of course, it makes perfect sense).

The film tackles some of the toughest philosophical questions about the nature of life and existence, the problem of evil, and the reality of hell, all from a standpoint that is based on God’s Word. Much like a roller coaster (and intentionally so), the film carries the audience through highs (babies and kittens), and lows (child mortality and hawks), and at least once or twice leaves you wondering if you just might fall off before the ride is over. Dividing the film scenes according to the chapters of his book, fantasy novelist N.D. Wilson makes the case that the universe is essentially God’s spoken word, and our lives are part of the story that He is telling. The film points to the artistry in the little things that we never thought about since we were children: “caterpillars really do turn into butterflies, it’s not just a lie for children... though it sounds like one.”

Fun and insightful, and a bit unsettling, the film reminds us that this world is indeed magical, full of surprises and mysteries, the opus magnum of the greatest Artist and Author there ever was. This comes highly recommended for all ages, and for those who want to dig deeper it also comes with a group study guide that you can find at NotesFromTheTiltAWHirl.com.

THE NARNIA CODE

59 minutes, 2009
reviewed by Jon Dykstra

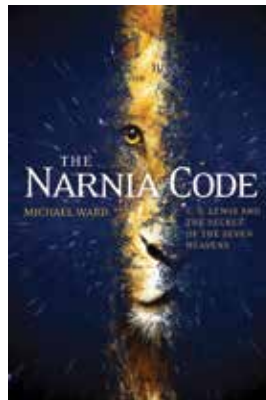
The Da Vinci Code and *The Bible Code* had me close to swearing off anything with the word “code” in the title, but this documentary made me glad I held off. It is based on a book by the same name that argues C.S. Lewis modeled the seven books of his *Narnia* series on the seven planets of the medieval cosmology.

It is an argument that has intrigued and convinced many Lewis scholars. There seems good reason to believe that Lewis did add this extra layer of meaning and artistry to the books, and that, in a bit of patient playfulness, he was content to never make mention of it, leaving it for someone – as it turned out, a certain Michael Ward – to discover 50 years later.

For a detailed look at the theory itself, viewers will need to go to the Bonus section of the DVD. The main feature focuses more on the discovery of the planetary connection, the excitement it caused, and why so many people today still get excited by what this man wrote.

This is, admittedly, a documentary that will excite only a very particular audience: *Narnia* lovers who are equally fascinated by their author. But for these folks, this brilliantly executed BBC production will have them scurrying off excitedly to their bookshelves, and paging, once again, through these old favorites.

You can see a trailer for the film and check out the book it is based on at www.NarniaCode.com.



DIVIDED

54 minutes, 2011
reviewed by Jonathan Chase

“Is modern youth ministry multiplying the church...or dividing it?” This is the question that filmmaker Philip Leclerc seeks to answer in his brand-new documentary.

Years ago, when Leclerc was participating in a fairly typical church youth program, his parents became concerned about the direction of the program, and pulled him out. Looking back on it now, Leclerc is glad they made this decision, and over the course of the documentary begins to investigate whether such youth programs, and the very idea of age segregation in Bible study, is helpful or hurtful to the church, and whether it has any Biblical foundation.

Interviews with well-known pastors and former youth pastors help LeClerc make a persuasive case that the primary reason why young people have been leaving the church in unprecedented numbers in recent years is because of the generation gap that has resulted from segregated ministry. Older Christians aren’t interacting with their churches’ youth, so they aren’t teaching or mentoring them. The film compares this youth ministry model with the age-integrated models (where Christians of all ages study together), both in terms of results and in Biblical foundation, and powerfully concludes that God’s design is wiser than man’s.

The cinematography is flashy and fast-paced, though easy enough to follow, and the film is packed full of thought-provoking interviews with pastors such as Scott Brown and Paul Washer. This is a must-watch for pastors and Bible study leaders, and a helpful warning for parents of children who take part in youth programs. You can watch the film’s trailer at DividedTheMovie.com.



“AND THE LORD TURNED AND LOOKED...” - LUKE 22:61A

LEARNING HOW TO WEEP

by Christine Farenhorst

CHAPTER 1 – EARLY LESSONS

She was not the sort of child who turned heads, the kind who solicited glances of admiration from passersby. But her square, small, rather solemn countenance endowed with large, blue eyes, was passable enough. As a matter of fact, her eyes were a redeeming feature as they often metamorphosed into violet. There was, however, little emotion in those eyes. Rarely a twinkle; rarely any crinkling laughter around their corners as if they were partner to some wonderful, childish joke.

Perhaps she was such a staid, little figure because her parents were staid. They were black-clad folk – people who were terribly correct in dress as well as manner. Somber, they appeared dignified and smooth, a couple who permitted themselves only the tiniest hint of a smile when they fondled their thick bill-fold or saw the reflection of sunlight on the smoothness of a coin.

The child, who was named Kristin, had a nursemaid who daily took her out for a stroll in the park. But Kristin was never allowed the freedom of chasing after squirrels, chasing them around the fat oak trees abounding in the park; neither was she encouraged to stoop over to pick daisies, fashioning them into colorful daisy chains. Her chains were the nursemaid’s hands, and so she toddled laboriously – toddled as if it were a duty and an unpleasant one at that.

When she was older, Kristin took pleasure in going to church. She enjoyed watching the minister climb the tall wood-carved pulpit, and seeing him stand high and straight in front of the congregation.

She peered around the taller adults in front of her, and from her privileged corner in the Lasstower family pew observed the rest of the congregation.

The child experienced a certain amount of freedom during the service. Neither of her parents called her to account during this time, and no earthly eyes made sure that she was doing what was expected. Sometimes the minister would murmur in an almost whisper-tone, and at other times his voice was loud and clear. It was difficult to sit still and not fidget, but she truly preferred the time in the pew to the rigid and onerous lifestyle of pleasing an exacting mother and father. The sermon usually went on and on, and the pastor’s hands gesticulated and waved about. Sometimes Kristin almost fell asleep; at other times the sonorous and rousing words entered her subconscious.

“But he denied it, saying, ‘I don’t know Him, woman.’”

Kristin salt bold upright. Who did not know him?

“There was a denial – three times there was a denial.”

The minister was emphatic, and his voice crashed into the ceiling rafters. Kristin surreptitiously peeked at her father. He was asleep. Leastways, he had his eyes shut. That did not always mean that he was sleeping. Her mother’s hands were folded serenely in her lap on top of her blue coat, her Sunday coat.

“In spite of all his unswerving loyalty to Jesus, promises made only a few hours prior to the arrest...”

Kristin’s attention wavered again. Loyalty was a nice word. Father used it with regard to his business. “You have to be loyal to the business,” she had heard

THE DENIAL OF ST. PETER, BY GERARD VAN HONTHORST



him tell his clerk countless times, “You have to put it first.”

To put something first, she pondered on, kicking her black-laced shoes back and forth, back and forth, meant that you loved it most. She did not quite know what it was that she loved most.

“The second time,” thundered the minister, and Kristin’s gaze was startled back up to see him flapping the black folds of his toga over the congregation, “The second time,” he repeated in a sepulchral voice, “Peter again denied his Lord. He said, ‘I’m not one of them’ – meaning he was disassociating himself with Jesus.”

Disassociating – that was another nice word – a word to roll over her tongue like a peppermint. Mother always gave her a peppermint before church. Father had no associates. He often told her that when she grew up, she would be his associate. She knew that meant partner.

“The third time,” the pastor continued, his voice in an even lower tone, but not softened any, “that Peter was asked if he was with Jesus, he began to curse. Now to curse in and of itself is evil. It is wicked.

But to lie and deny Jesus on top of that is indeed the height of wickedness.”

Someone coughed. Kristin was distracted away from thinking about lying and cursing. She herself did not like to cough in church. It echoed so, and she always felt that everyone would stare, that everyone would feel that she was a most ill-behaved little girl. Noises, unsolicited noises, were embarrassing.

“And then the rooster crowed.”

The minister had spoken those five words very slowly. Surely ten seconds had passed between every word in that sentence. Kristin was sure of it. She had just learned to tell time, and the sheer length of the silence between each word made her stop swinging her feet. The minister, it seemed, had left off speaking. He was gazing down at the congregation. He was gazing down at her father and her mother, and he was gazing down at her. She was convinced of it. She tried to look at something else – first at the wooden songboard, then at the great organ, and finally at the stained glass windows. But when her little face with the great blue,

will deny Me three times.”

There was another audible silence. It hung like a cloud over the assembly, and again time elapsed before the minister continued.

“The Lord is turning to you also, make no mistake about it. And He looks at you. He looks straight at you from His throne in the skies. Ah, my dear friends, have you denied Him also? Have you at some time or other forgotten that He was present? Have you cursed Him? Have you in your business with other fellows mocked Him? Have you been embarrassed that you knew Him?”

The pastor stopped again and then went on.

“The truth is that we have all done so, have we not?”

Kristin was trying as hard as she could to think about what she had been doing that last week. There had been lessons with mother, lessons with father, walks in the park with Sarah, the nursemaid, and ...

“It is what comes after you realize what you have done wrong that counts, brothers and sisters. It is the response to Jesus’ look that is so crucial. And we all know what Peter’s response was, don’t we?”

Kristin glanced over at her father again. He was still sleeping. She did not know how he could. The pastor had been, and still was, talking loudly. And even now, when he had toned down somewhat, there was something in his speech that seemed to enter your skin, your very marrow, itching your heart.

“He went outside and wept bitterly.”

Wept bitterly? Kristin did not like bitter. Bitter was lemon, bitter was medicine, and bitter was a feeling she had when father was not pleased with her.

“He wept bitterly,” the pastor repeated, and again, “bitterly.”

Every Sunday following the church service in the large, single-spired church in the center of town, the Lasstowers walked home together. Kristin held her father’s hand all the way down the church steps, across the road, through the park, and on to home. No one watching the trio ever saw them speak, no one every heard them exclaim over the tiny cygnets

almost violet eyes eventually found their way back to the pulpit, the minister was not looking at her anymore. He was weeping. She could literally hear wracked sobs come from the black-robed figure. It made her shiver. Only moments had passed between his last words and the ones that now came out of his mouth.

“And the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. And Peter was reminded of the words of the Lord, of how the Lord had said to him, ‘Before a rooster crows today, you

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waddling behind the resident park's swan mother and father, and they had never been seen feeding crusts of bread to either ducks or geese. Once Kristin had, in an uncharacteristic action, pulled loose of her father's hand. She had run ahead of him to pick up a coin tucked into the dirt of the park pathway. And when she had brought it back to him, he had smiled a genuine smile and had patted her on her honey-colored hair. It had been a farthing.

Thomas Lasstower was a businessman, top to bottom. Naughteden, his birthplace and town of residence, was a bustling town, a harbor town. Many ships docked there, and fishermen sold their catch on the great market square. There were hotels, taverns, barbers, butchers, and shops where you could buy dresses and hats. There was also an apothecary, a bakery, and a blacksmith shop. There was a school and a church, and most days saw scores of children passionately playing marbles, rolling their hoops, and skipping their ropes on the cobblestone streets. When the school bell rang at precisely nine of the clock during weekdays, those same streets emptied in a matter of minutes, and all that was generally left were some women scrubbing stone steps leading up to the doors of gabled houses lining the avenues.

Kristin, however, did not go to school. Her mother and father taught her at home. Her mother taught her reading, and her father drilled her in mathematics and accounting. Before she was four years old, she knew the difference between a farthing and a half-penny, a penny, a crown, and a shilling. When she was six or seven, or thereabouts, she could do debits and credits. This pleased Thomas Lasstower greatly, and he began taking her with him to the counting houses where the moneylenders sat. Kristin watched these men and unconsciously began to model them – men whose backs were stooped with bending over, and men whose brows were wrinkled with greed. Outside, on the streets of Naughteden, children played in the sunshine. But inside the office of her father's workplace, Kristin was learning how to make money.

Thomas Lasstower and his wife were very rich. They had wads of banknotes thick enough to fill a mattress thrice over. Their house was palatial. They could buy

whatever they wanted, and they usually did. But the influenza epidemic came, and with it, death. The disease came knocking when Kristin was twenty-one, and it came inevitably like the incoming tide on Naughteden's shores. It came and could not be stopped. It stretched out its insatiable hand and took hold of both Thomas and his wife. Although the doctor came and bled them profusely and spent much time at the mansion, the fever made no distinction between rich and poor. Many died. So many were the corpses that local farmers' tumbrels had to be used to carry bodies to the cemeteries. Ashes went to ashes, and dust returned to dust. After a week of doctor's calls, Thomas Lasstower and his wife, within one hour of each other, acquiesced to the call to which all men and women must acquiesce.

There were a great many people who called to pay their respects. Stoop-shouldered business associates shook hands with Kristin. They squinted at her as if they were weighing coins. Townsfolk came, most of whom she didn't really know. They also shook her hand and then, for lack of words, shook her hand again. Kristin hid her feelings. Her wide-open violet eyes gave no hint of what she was thinking or planning.

Then they were all gone, and the great mansion was empty. She wanted to weep but she did not know how. Tears had never been a part of her vocabulary. She sat down heavily in her father's plush chair and stared about the rich, ornate drawing room. It was hers now – all hers.

"Sit up straight, Kristin."

"Have you finished tallying the books, Kristin?"

The clock ticked – ticked through the voices of the past. And she shivered a little at the immense vastness of the stillness surrounding her.

There had been those among the townsfolk, she had to admit to herself, who had seemed sincere in their sympathy. But fearful of both familiarity and intentions, Kristin, at that point, made the choice to keep on living as always, to live as her parents had done, to live alone. She made the choice not to respond to the cheer and

the warmth that had been spoken by a few and written by others in friendly notes.

The candle on the table flickered, and she shaded it with her hand from the evening draft. It had been a long day. She had instructed the servants to retire, and now it was time for her to retire as well. Her shadow, distorted by the smoldering flame, singly accompanied her to bed. A strange heaviness came over her as she lay beneath the sheets – a weight that struggled to come out. And she did not know that the weight was tears – tears of loneliness and fear – tears sent by God to draw her to Himself. She did not know.

CHAPTER 2 – THE NEW CLERK

Everything went on as usual in matters of business. Kristin was as adept, if not cleverer, than her father had been in dealing with matters of finance. She grew wealthier. If in her father's time the vault had been fat, it now bulged with money.

It was spring, and the Lasstowers had been dead for three years. Kristin's senior clerk, a man just a few years older than herself, began to show her marked attention. It seemed to her that he was uncommonly bold, and yet the attention made her feel special and tender inside. Whether she liked it or not, the house was large and empty, despite the live-in servants that she employed to clean and cook and do the gardening.

One Tuesday evening, as she was about to lock up, Adam Sire, the senior clerk, knocked at her door asking if he might have a word with her. She nodded, and he came in and as he entered she noticed with a start that he had used her Christian name and that she had been pleased to hear him do so. Adam was a hard worker but not particularly handsome. As a matter of fact, there was not even one physical feature on the man that she found remotely attractive. Still, he was an honest man, something her father had understood even though he had not paid him his worth. She gave Adam no response but that nod and walked over to the chair behind her desk and sat down. He stood in front of the desk and began, began quite powerfully.

"Kristin, you are alone in the world. I know that I seem to have no right to speak to you as I do, for you must suppose that



“WE WERE TOSSED ABOUT FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.”

I have no visible means of support safe for this placement that your father and now you yourself have given to me. Yet I must speak, for my heart is drawn to you in love.”

He stopped. Kristin did not reply. It had been quite a mouthful for Adam who on other occasions did not say much except what she required of him. In spite of herself, Kristin was both fascinated and fearful by what he would say next. Nervously she began to drum her fingers on the desktop.

“Kristin,” he continued, his direct gaze making her unsure, “can you give me some word, some indication, that perhaps you might also harbor some feelings for me?”

No one had ever before spoken to her of love. Neither her father nor her mother had been prone to sweet words. Adam went on.

“I’ve only my strength to offer you, Kristin, but it is a strength wrapped up in a desire to care for you, to make you smile and to cherish you.”

There was still no refusal on her part. Kristin was tongue-tied. Adam went on, the wind of hope in his sails, becoming more avid as he continued.

“I’ve a small home, a cottage, on the edge of town. It’s not big, but it’s clean and cosy, large enough for more than two.”

He stopped, gathered some more breath and smiled. “It’s not good for you to live here alone in such a huge mansion.”

He stopped again and then finished rather abruptly, repeating himself, “I want

nothing more than to take care of you.”

“But this house,” she whispered, amazed at the turn of events in her life, while moments ago she had been at the ledgers, adding and subtracting rows upon rows of figures, rows upon rows of debits and credits, “this house is mine.”

“It’s too large, much too large,” he responded, “for you or for any children to feel loved in ...”

“Children?” she echoed, astonished once more, and again, “Children? Whatever are you speaking of now?”

“Of marriage.”

Emotion caught his voice and for a moment she was a child again with all the dull loneliness of the past and present so engulfing her that she would have run to him for the comfort he offered. Indeed, she desired it so much that there was a pain within her. And then the unique situation overwhelmed her so that she must look away from him. Slowly she turned her face, and in turning she faced the vault.

“The money,” she said, as if speaking to herself.

He answered her levelly. “I will not touch the money. Perhaps you can give it away to the church or to some institution for the poor, or to someone who has need of help. I love you, not the money, Kristin.”

Although his voice had been moderate, it seemed to her that it reverberated around the office. It seemed to her that she was the money and that she would be torn apart without it. She pulled her gaze away from the vault to look at him again and felt that what he said was true – that he did

indeed love her. But the vault possessed her and she possessed it and she knew that she could not, that is to say, she would not leave it.

“No.”

The answer was short and simple and final. He stood for a moment, his gaze not leaving her, before he replied. “You know where to find me, Kristin.”

Still he waited. But she did not speak again, turning her eyes down towards the floor. It was quiet in the office, a stifling sort of quiet. There was not the faintest movement of a breeze. Then he left, striding through the door, disappearing between the children playing on the street, his long regular steps quickly moving him down the cobblestone road. She watched him through the side window until the houses in the distance had swallowed him up. The harbor could be seen from the window as well. The wind was whipping up whiteheads on the sea.

A new clerk was hired. It had not been difficult to find one. There were many people who were looking for work and for a decent wage. The new clerk was a middle-aged balding man, a man who, by all accounts, was happily married with several children. He tipped his hat when he spoke to her, and he said, “Yes, ma’am,” and “No, ma’am” at all the right moments. The house servants continued to clean the house, keep the yard, and cook the meals while Kristin made more money.

CHAPTER 3 – TREASURE FLEET

The years passed – they rolled on like the waves of the sea, always breaking, always foaming, always disappearing, and yet forming more. And as they passed, a thirst grew in Kristin for something, for an undefinable something. The money, although she guarded it with care, was not proving to be enough. She lay awake at night, sometimes forgetting to blow out the candle. She had heard stories of faraway countries, countries where gold was buried deep within the earth’s belly – gold, of which it was said that, if you dug down deep enough, you could harvest it like crops and fill ships with it. She turned restlessly on her eiderdown bed. The candle winked and then stared at her. Its golden flame made her covet more than

mere banknotes – it made her covet an unknown wealth which would make her richer and, perhaps, more satisfied.

Captain Sintern came highly recommended. He saluted Kristin as he stood in her office, stood in the exact same spot Adam Sire had stood when he had offered her marriage. A fleet of three ships was under the captain's command. Swift ships they were – trim little beauties, tied up in the harbor of Naughteden. Did Kristin Lasstower wish to hire him and his fleet? The captain, who was straightforward in his presentation, was upfront in that he would be more than willing, for a fee, to work for her.

"I do wish to hire you, and I will pay you very well," she responded, "Twice as much, as a matter of fact, what you normally earn on a voyage I will pay you. Only you must bring me back a treasure – something unusual. You must bring me back the dearest thing you can find on the face of the earth."

"I can only promise you to do my best, Miss Lasstower," the captain answered.

He was a gruff man, an honest man, happy to have a commission. The times were poor, and there was much begging in the streets. Many went hungry.

"How long will you be gone?" Kristin asked.

"With that commission? Many months," he answered truthfully, "perhaps I will be gone more than a year. Perhaps two years."

"Sail to new countries," she proposed, adding, "sail around the world, if you like, but bring back to me the dearest thing you can find."

He nodded and went out.

Early one morning, several weeks later, after Captain Sintern's ships had been outfitted, Kristin stood at the dock, watching the three vessels sail away. Well-balanced in the water, the little ships neatly caught the wind. The friends, wives, and children of the sailors stood there also, some waving, others shouting out last farewells. There were those who wept as they would not see their husbands, sweethearts, or fathers again for a long time. But Kristin did not weep. She only

stared. In her mind's eye she saw the ships returning – returning to bring her treasures untold. Her silk skirt billowed in the wind, and her velvet cloak kept her warm as she later walked home through the narrow, cobblestone streets. A beggar's hand pulled at her.

"Alms, lady, alms for the poor!"

But she shrugged, turning her head. But the beggar was persistent, holding on to her skirt.

"Alms, lady!"

She jerked free abruptly, saying as she did so, "Go away. I do not know you." After all, she was not poor, she did not know the man, and she was not one of his kind.

Thereafter, she often stood on the dock, gazing out at the green-blue sea, the unpredictable sea. And the people in town whispered behind their hands that she was more faithful to the ships than many a wife to a husband. But never did she give even a farthing to the beggar who pulled at her cloak at each visit.

The famine which had begun prior to the ships leaving now spread throughout the countryside. There was increasing drought. Children were caught stealing bread from the bakery and fruit from the market stalls. Cemeteries filled. Cheeks hollowed out, and the great, single-spired church filled to capacity on Sundays, as men are wont to seek God's help in time of dire need.

The year lengthened and passed woefully into another. Winter winds blew and howled their icy breath through every poor man's walls. And the truth was that most men's houses were rapidly deteriorating into poor men's houses. But Kristin Lasstower saw none of the needs. The school had closed. Many children were kept in bed the entire winter day for some semblance of warmth. Shops remained closed for there was but little food to sell. Yet Kristin Lasstower, who had a well-stocked larder, was possessed only by the thought of the treasure that was very likely, even at this point, on its way to her doorstep.

Spring promised nothing. It was a thin spring, with bones on its blossoms. The farmers planted, but the lean years of Pharaoh's Egypt were in progress. Hunger continued to be written starkly on the faces of Naughteden and its surrounding countryside. And still Kristin stood gazing at the sea with no thought of anyone but herself and her phantom treasure.

Early one morning, before the first light of dawn, the ships returned. A servant sped up to Kristin's house to tell her that they were now docking at the harbor, that Captain Sintern was alive and well, and that rumor had it that all three ships were filled to the brim with cargo. Without bothering to dress properly, Kristin sped down the streets with only her cloak wrapped around her nightclothes. Faint stars shone overhead. In her haste, the silk embroidered cloak raised small clouds of dust on the road. She could just barely make out the outline of the ships – her ships – her treasure – in the harbor. Her heart beat rapidly and unevenly. And even as she reached the dock, the captain emerged from the largest of the small fleet and strode from the gangplank towards her, smiling.

Kristin, along with the large crowd that despite the early morning hour had already gathered at the pier, waited expectantly. A hush settled on the audience as Captain Sintern reached her side in the fading darkness of the early morning.

"Miss Lasstower," he began, and his voice was carried in the stillness so that all heard, "I have returned, and I thank God for it. These ships have wandered over many seas searching for treasure – for the unknown wealth that you desired to possess."

Kristin eyed the man impatiently. Gaunt people pressed about them, anxious for a diversion, hopeful for some alms from the captain, for Kristin rarely gave.

"What is it, Captain," she queried in a demanding voice, "What is the treasure you have brought me?"

"During the months we sailed," the captain went on, not paying any heed to her impatience, "we came across diamonds, spices, strange and exotic animals – but all these were not unusual – and we felt that it was not what you were searching for. Then a storm came up at sea, and we were tossed about for

several weeks. Our provisions had been eaten, our water supply had run out, when, by the grace of God, we sighted land. You cannot imagine, Miss Lasstower, with what thankfulness we prostrated ourselves on the deck when a boatload of our men came back with some provisions, and we were once again able to eat some food.”

An understanding murmur ran through the crowd, but Kristin was becoming more and more impatient.

“I am not interested in your yarns,” she said, “I wish to know what cargo you keep in your hold. I desire to know what it is that I have paid you double wages to look for.”

“Kristin,” the captain continued, using her first name earnestly, although not at all sounding disrespectful, “what can be more precious, and what, indeed, can be more of a blessing, than food itself. The cargo we have brought you, Kristin, is rich and golden indeed!”

“Rich?!” she responded avidly, choosing to ignore the reference to food, “Golden?! Oh, let me see this cargo – this precious load!”

Captain Sestern motioned to the sailors behind him on the deck and they opened the door into the hold of the first ship. Kristin could clearly see, from where she stood raised on the dock, what the cargo was. It was grain – yellow grain – golden grain set off beautifully in the dark light of the approaching morning. Collectively the people around her drew in their breath.

Still she questioned, unbelievably, “Is that grain?”

There was an edge to her voice.

“Indeed, it is grain,” the captain avowed eagerly, “What better and richer cargo can a man carry? What greater blessing comes from the hand of God than that a town can live and sell food – than that a man can feed his family?”

Kristin did not answer, but turned, her cloak flowing in the chill autumn wind. But as she strode down the dock, as she made her way through the haggard crowd, an evil impulse seized her. She stopped and over her shoulder commanded the captain who, half-heartedly, was following her.

“Empty the cargo into the harbor!”

He blanched and moved closer to her.

“Kristin Lasstower,” he said, “what of the people? They are hungry. Look at those about you. They are starving...”

“I am not with those people,” she answered, adding vehemently, “What have I to do with the people. I am not one of them.”

The ships were consequently emptied into the harbor and lay like three skeletons. The people on the shoreline watched and many wept, some even jumping into the water to try and save the coveted, golden food. Kristin did not stay to watch. She began her journey back home again. But as she stepped off the pier, a bony hand grasped her skirt.

“Lady, you have done an evil thing!”

It was the same beggar who always bothered her. She pulled free of his hand, but his voice wrapped around her like a prophet’s tongue.

“God will cause you to recall this day! You will live to repent, Kristin Lasstower!”

“I do not know what you are saying,” she replied. The evil still surged within her, and she faced the man. She faced all the hollow faces, the hungry faces, the lean faces – and she laughed at them. And at that moment a rooster crowed, announcing to the world that morning had dawned.

CHAPTER 4 – ASLEEP IN A HEDGE

From that moment on, Kristin Lasstower was more obsessed than ever with making money – and the times grew worse.

But the truth is that you cannot speak in jest of God and never feel the consequence. The following night Kristin dreamt of wheat – towering golden wheat growing thickly around her bed until it threatened to choke her. She also saw, through the stalks, the faces of the townsfolk as they muttered. Then both the faces, the hollow, starving faces, and the majestic tall stalks, disappeared beneath her bed into a black, engulfing flood of water. She tossed and turned most of the night, finally rising early, before dawn, to seek refuge in her office.

Kristin had done a great deal of business over the years. She had bought and sold, and sold and bought. Not trusting banks, her vault was full of her earthly goods – full of paper money. But paper money,

she was acutely aware at this moment, did not speak, did not offer friendship, did not offer solace during this time when other people seemed to be... To be what?

She sat on her office chair and uneasily turned a pearl ring on her finger, a ring that had been her father’s. Presently she became aware of a glow on the window. Too bright and too early for sunrise, it reflected on the walls, and she rose to see what caused it. The east section of the street across from her home was aglow with flames, and the wind, she noted immediately, was blowing her way. The ring choked her finger and caught her heart. Turning quickly, she drew the key to the vault off a chain around her neck. Walking over to the vault, she fit it into the lock and turned, pushing the handle with sweating fingers. But it would not move. No matter how hard she pushed, the handle would not turn. It had turned a thousand times before, perhaps, in her hands, and now it would not. The light of the fire continued to flicker on the walls as she struggled, five minutes, ten, fifteen... Presently voices were heard out on the street, and there was a knocking at the office door.

“Fire! Fire!”

Still her hand would not let go of the handle to the vault. It seemed to have fused into her very being, and she was unable to let it go. By this time the servants, alerted by the shouting outside, had come. Frightened, they stood in the doorway of the office until she roughly bade them begone. Looking back over their shoulders, they slowly went. Even when the flames filled the room with unbearable heat, she would not, she could not, let go of the handle. And then she remembered nothing.

Evening was falling when she opened her eyes, her sometimes violet eyes, now smudged with black. There was no warmth around her any more. Her head ached badly, and she remembered the fire. Her two hands lifted in anxiety as if there were something for them to do, but she could not remember what it was. Slowly her eyes focused on reality. There was hard dirt underneath her and stars shone overhead. Her house...

“My house,” she whispered, aghast with fear.

“It burned to the ground, my fine lady.” The voice was mocking. It did not spare her. It did not comfort her. Was it any wonder? She stared up rather helplessly, a condition foreign to her, at the faces gaping down at her. She did not know them. But they knew her. And they walked away. Half sitting up, she saw groups of people milling about the street. No one paid her any attention. Shivering, she involuntarily made as if to pull a cloak about her, but none covered her back. An acrid smell hung in the air, an unpleasant odor that stung her nostrils, and in the darkness it was not easy to assess the damage that had been done to her property.

Kristin stood up – painfully and slowly, stiff with cold and shock. As she got to her feet, something, or someone, tugged at her gown. It reminded her of the beggar’s persistent hands, and she was about to shrug loose. But who, her mind told her, would beg alms off her in her present situation? Pulling her eyes away from the spot where she knew her house had been, she peered down and beheld a child, perhaps eight years of age, a child whose hand stroked the fur-edged sleeves of her gown. Round eyes met her own, and the child smiled directly into them.

“It’s very soft,” he whispered, “like a baby chick. I love baby chicks.”

Kristin stood stock still.

“I used to see you walk down the road,” the boy continued, “your cloak blowing in the wind. It looked to be very warm.”

Kristin noted that the child’s own clothes were ragged. “Where’s your mother?” she queried.

“I’ve no mother,” the lad replied, “I came to look at the fire.”

“Where do you live?”

“At the edge of town. We’ve a cottage.” The small hand kept stroking the fur as if it were a cat. “Your house is gone now, isn’t it? Where will you sleep?” The boy stared up at her as he posed the question.

Kristin answered wearily, as if to herself. “I don’t know where I will sleep. No one will have me, of that I am sure.”

“You know there are people who sleep in hedges if they’ve no bed. There’s a hedge by our cottage. You want that I should show it to you?”

Kristin recoiled at the thought. But

then, what could she do? Tomorrow she’d find out what was left – tomorrow.

The boy held out a small hand. Kristin took it, wondering as she did so, why she took it. They began to walk, and Kristin, who had always thought she knew exactly where she was going, began to be very grateful for the sure-footed companion at her side. The truth was that once they left the cobblestone road behind them, light was at a premium, and she had no idea whatsoever where she was going. Panic struck her heart for an instant, but just as quickly left when the little fingers pressed into her own and the clear voice spoke.

“We’re almost there. The hedge isn’t as thick as it used to be. Our cow ate it instead of the grass. We didn’t have any hay left, you see. But I can still make a secret hiding place in it.”

He halted suddenly, pulling Kristin to one side. “Here it is. Our cottage.”

Kristin gazed about in the dark, but could only dimly perceive the shape of what she took to be a cottage, to her left.

“I’ll take you to a place where you can sleep.” The small hand directed her along, leading to a well-trampled spot surrounded by bushes.

“Here’s my secret hiding place. I’ve got a blanket in there, too. You can pretend it’s your cloak and have it cover you.”

Kristin sat down. The truth was that she was bone-weary. The ground was hard and cold. Darkness encompassed her

within as well as without. She sighed.

“You mustn’t sigh. Father says sighs lead you nowhere but to yourself. I bid you goodnight and good sleep.”

Something soft touched Kristin’s cheek, and she knew that she had been kissed.

For one who had spent an entire life sleeping indoors, under soft covers and on an equally soft mattress, Kristin slept fitfully in the child’s hiding place in the hedge that night. She was cold. The boy’s crumpled blanket, the size of a large towel, did nothing to alleviate her discomfort, but it did bring her a strange sense of companionship. The frost settled into her

“ALMS, LADY, ALMS FOR THE POOR!”



bones. Yet she did sleep.

But dreams assailed her – dreams of an evil sort – dreams in which she was buried in golden grain up to her neck. The grain was ice cold, numbing her completely. She wanted to cry out, but her voice was gone. She wanted to move, but her arms and legs were frozen into place and would not comply.

The night passed and dawn appeared. The sun rose. It shone on the smoldering remains of Kristin’s house. It shone on the hedge and freely gave warmth to the inert form huddled under a tiny, child’s coverlet.

Kristin opened her eyes. Her first impulse was to stretch out, but her legs were extremely stiff and cramped, and her arms seemed to have no feeling. Slowly her eyes focused on the blue sky overhead, and then she remembered that she had no money, no home, no bed, no anything. There was nothing left to her at all; and there was nothing left of her.

The numbness of her limbs crept into her heart. Without money, who was she? Painfully moving her fingers, she began rubbing her arms. Sitting up was a chore, and she moaned softly. Thirty, perhaps forty feet away, stood the child’s small cottage. Smoke curled above its thatched roof, sweetly embracing the sky. The place seemed like a paradise to her. Perhaps if she were to knock, the boy might answer the door and give her some water. There was such a thirst in her. Strangely lightheaded, she tried to stand, but her legs would not bear her weight.

The cottage door opened. A man stood in the doorway. His eyes, after some time, noted her. Perhaps she could buy... Buy? What did she have with which she could barter? Her ring? She had it on her finger. The man came towards her. She pulled the ring off and held it within her palm. He stopped within two feet of where she was lying.

“Kind sir,” she began. Her voice was dry, thick with fretful sleep and thirst. Uncombed hair tangled about her face. He said nothing, but his eyes penetrated her being. He seemed familiar somehow, but then everything went black again.

When Kristin came to, she found

herself lying on a straw-filled pallet inside the cottage. At least that is where she presumed she was. The boy sat on the mud-packed floor next to her bed. He noted immediately when Kristin opened her eyes and began to speak.

“Are you awake now?”

Kristin wished to nod. But her head would not obey. And she was desperately thirsty. It seemed to her that she had never before had such a thirst. She wanted to ask the boy for water, but could not formulate the words, much less say them. A pitcher stood on the wooden table by the window, and her eyes drank in the water she imagined to be in that pitcher. The child followed her gaze and fetched a clay bowl from the sideboard.

“Father said I was to care for you.”

He poured some water into the bowl and came back to the pallet. Holding the bowl to her lips, he watched as she drank greedily.

“They say in town that you are a most wicked lady,” he mused aloud, “and that your flesh will rot because you did not allow anyone to eat of the grain. But,” he went on, falteringly, “I don’t really believe that.”

Kristin leaned back on the straw. The boy brought the bowl back and then sat on the floor in front of the pallet. His green eyes appraised her candidly.

“Why are you crying?” he asked suddenly.

Kristin’s eyes were wet, but she knew not how, or why. Was it the homelessness, the helplessness, or this home and the help of this child?

“Are you sorry you threw the wheat into the water?” the boy asked.

But then there was the blackness again and all was gone.

But all was not gone. Suddenly there was Thomas Lasstower, her father, calling her, calling her sharply.

“Kristin! Kristin!” He was accusing her. She recalled the tone only too well.

“Why didn’t you sell the wheat? You could have made a profit. All those hungry people, they would have given anything... anything... You must always think of the profit, Kristin, the profit.” Then, just as suddenly, she was in the vault and the

money covered her. It covered her feet, her legs, her waist, and it kept on rising. And then the beggars came, and they lit her money with a torch. The flames licked up the money, and the heat was scorching. They all shouted: “Be damned, Kristin! Be damned to eternity with your money!”

CHAPTER 5 – NEVER TURNS AWAY

Later when she awoke again, much time had elapsed. She knew it was so because it was dark outside once more. The dim outline of a man’s figure silhouetted against the window – a man holding a child on his lap.

“Tell me a story, father. Please tell me a story.”

It was quiet for a while. The child did not whine but was content to be sitting on the lap, leaning against the man, waiting. After a while, the man spoke.

“Well, I cannot give you much food, so why not a story.”

He began: “Once there was a beautiful woman.”

“Did she have beautiful clothes, too, father?”

“Yes, very beautiful!”

“As beautiful as those of Kristin Lasstower, father?”

“Yes, as beautiful as those. But let me continue the story, Joshua. The woman’s heart was not as lovely as her clothes were. She did many bad things.”

“Did she not have a father to teach her? – to tell her what was good and what was not good?”

“Hush, little one. Hush now, and let me tell you the story. One day a man came to her village. He was a good man and he spoke of love and peace and of being kind to others. The people who heard him speak loved him. And the words he spoke made them feel sorry for what they had done wrong, and they tried, consequently, to change their lives. The good man was invited to have supper one night at a rich man’s house. The beautiful woman wanted to see him also. When all the rich man’s guests were in the house, she came to the door and when the servants were not paying attention, she ran in through the hall to the dining room. Now the dining room was full of very important people and when they saw this lady, they all gasped. Not because she was so beautiful,



TALL STALKS DISAPPEARED... INTO A BLACK, ENGULFING FLOOD OF WATER.

Joshua, and not because her gown was so amazingly made and sewn in with jewels, but because she was a most wicked lady and no one wanted to be in the same room with her.”

“Perhaps,” Joshua intervened, “perhaps bad people are very lonely, father.”

“Perhaps they are,” his father agreed, “Well, in any case, this lady went right up to where the guest of honor sat. She bowed down before him and broke open a jar of expensive perfume. Then she poured it out over his feet and she cried.”

“Oh, father, why did she cry?”

“Because she felt the man’s goodness and love, Joshua, and she was so sorry for the bad things she had done.”

“Was the man nice to her, father? Or did he send her away?”

“He never sends anyone away who comes to him, Joshua. Not if they are really and truly sorry for what they have

tried to speak but again, her mouth would not obey. Then, all at once, it did obey, sending forth a cry from her lips which startled the boy. Leaving his toys, he gave her all his attention.

“Are you awake again?”

“Yes,” Kristin whispered.

Not waiting to be asked, Joshua put some water in a bowl and helped her drink.

“This is water from our well,” he said, rather matter-of-factly, “and I cannot give you food. We have none.”

He was quiet for a moment and then continued. “But maybe father will bring some home tonight.”

Kristin shook her head. She could not focus properly. It was not food she wanted. Matted hair fell over her eyes. The fingers of her right hand plucked nervously at the ring on her left hand.

“Do you want me to take it off?”

Kristin nodded again, and Joshua’s

done wrong and desire to do better.”

“Oh, father, was the man’s name Jesus?”

“Yes, it was.”

Then the father lifted Joshua up off his lap and carried him into an adjoining room, presumably to bed. And Kristin was alone.

The sleep came again, or was it blackness? There were no bad dreams this time, only a dreadful uneasiness which left her choking. At times it seemed as if the pearl ring on her finger, her father’s ring, took hold of her neck, gripping the flesh, cutting off all air. But then she could feel it back on her hand – the cold metal hugging tight, almost as if it possessed her.

Morning came, and she opened her eyes to see the child, Joshua, back on the floor by the bed, building a house of sorts with some sticks. Kristin

small, warm hands began to tug away. It was a hard task as her finger was somewhat swollen, but in the end the boy pulled the ring free.

“What shall I do with it?”

“Give it to... Give it to...”

Kristin’s lips wanted to form words, but the sounds that came out were distorted and garbled. It suddenly seemed to her that she was a child again – a child sitting in a big pew in the church with the single spire.

“It is what comes after you realize what you have done wrong...”

The words echoed around the cottage. They hit the small window and bounded off the walls and went up to the thatched roof.

“It is what comes after you realize what you have done wrong...”

Kristin lifted her head as much as she was able to lift it.

“He is looking at me,” she said, her voice strangely clear, “and I do know Him.”

“Who?” Joshua was sitting in front of the bed once more, holding onto the ring, studying the pearl on it intensely.

“I am so sorry,” Kristin mouthed, her vocal strength leaving once more.

“Well, then you must tell him,” Joshua advised, standing up and falling in easily enough with her words.

But her words were now done. Verbal capacity had now fled her mind, her heart, and her soul. She could not formulate them any more. The boy stared at her, the ring in his hand. When she continued to be silent, eyes open but unseeing, he sat down again, rolling the ring like a marble in front of him. He spoke to it as if it were a person.

“Have you ever been to sea? Pearls come from sea shells. Father told me so. Have you ever been in a fish’s belly?”

And it seemed to Kristin that she herself she was adrift at sea, drowning in a violent storm, that waves buffeted her about, and that she would never reach the shore. And although she was not able to speak, she began to weep bitterly. Indeed, she wept so bitterly that the child laid the ring down, stood up, and came to stand by the bed. In that moment, the breakers lifted, and Kristin was cast onto the shore.



Topsy-turvy world of

BATS

by Margaret Helder

People have a love/hate relationship with bats. While these animals are interesting and exciting to some, the more common response is very negative, to say the least! This sharp difference of opinion also occurred in my husband's family. When he was thirteen or fourteen, he worked in the summers harvesting tomatoes in market gardens in southern Ontario. The appropriate strategy, he says, is to feel for the ripe tomatoes as well as to visually examine suitable specimens. Thus at each plant he reached from below into the foliage, feeling the bottom of each tomato. The soft ones he picked; the hard ones were left for another day. On this particular occasion he happened to feel something warm and fuzzy among the tomatoes. Further research showed that it was a snoozing bat. Since he was interested in all natural phenomena, he promptly placed the bat in his lunch bucket, shut the lid, and forgot about the incident. Once home, he placed the lunch bucket on the kitchen table. The story stops with his mother's discovery of the bat in the lunch bucket. You can well imagine the scene. She might enjoy nature, too, but not this kind of nature and not in the kitchen!

If bats were prettier to look at, we might appreciate their amazing talents more. The fact is, bats exhibit some astonishing design features that our engineers and technologists greatly envy.

Three types

Traditionally, scientists have grouped

bats according to their food preferences. There are:

- 1) fruit bats with good eyesight
- 2) insect-consuming, echolocating bats
- 3) vampire or blood-consuming bats

Further research has revealed how amazingly these animals are designed for their lifestyles. Such studies have also revealed that the old-fashioned ways of categorizing the creatures, according to lifestyle and physical appearance, do not really work. This has had some serious implications for ideas concerning whether Darwinian evolution could ever arrive at a plausible explanation for bats.

Heat-seeking vampires

The vampire bats all live in the new world (the Americas). There are only three species, each quite different. These ugly-looking creatures need blood meals to live. That means they must find a blood vessel in a victim that will allow blood to flow freely. This is not the easiest of tasks (as some nurses will attest), but vampire bats have a special design feature that allows them to find good blood sources. In their upper lip and modified noseleaf, they have special nerve endings that are much more sensitive than most nerves to body heat. These special tissues in the face allow them to find hot spots on the bodies of their victims. These hot spots are caused by blood vessels located close to the surface. The bat nips the skin with his

teeth in order to drink the flowing blood.

The whole situation is horrifying to us, but this ability of vampire bats to sense elevated body heat clearly is an interesting design feature. We may not like what the vampire bats do, but how they do it exhibits great finesse.

Apparently only some snakes and vampire bats have this ability to detect infrared radiation (heat). However, the bats do it very differently from the pit vipers, pythons, and boas. Snakes, for their part, make use of receptors on nerves that normally respond to chemical irritants or cold. In the case of these snakes, however, these receptors instead respond to the body heat of victims.

Now many animals have heat receptors all over their bodies. These receptors are designed to respond to heat that is dangerous to the health of the creature (we can sense the heat of a fire, for example). Vampire bats also have these normal heat receptors. However, in some nerves in the face of vampire bats, the nerves instead respond to a heat source which is much lower – about 30 degrees C.

This protein receptor in the heat-sensing nerves is unique to vampire bats, and the way that this new sensor works is really astonishing. There is a gene that scientists label *Trpv1*, which is found in all nerve cells sensitive to heat. This includes the normal heat receptor nerve cells all over the bodies of bats. In the case of the special nerve endings in vampire bat faces, the gene is the same. However, those cells express an alternative form of the message

derived from the gene. Into the blueprint to build the protein (i.e., the information copied from the DNA molecule), a tiny piece of genetic information, only 23 base pairs long, is spliced. That tiny insert causes the construction of the protein to end somewhat prematurely, resulting in a shorter protein that lacks the last 62 amino acids. This is a very minimal difference in a large protein molecule, but that is what allows these cells to respond to the temperature range of hot spots in a victim's body.

Even a slight difference in the order of base pairs in this 23 base pair insert would have cancelled the "stop construction!" content of its message. The special feature of these face nerves would then disappear. So this small 23 base pair insert (called a "stop codon") changes everything! Of course, the bat also needs to understand what the special nerve endings are telling him, and he also needs the mouthparts to access the blood and the digestive system to manage on this liquid diet.

In the genetic code, base pairs are like rungs along the DNA molecule's spiral length. Each rung also represents one of four choices of letter - three letters or rungs in a row, code for an amino acid. In a protein molecule there might be 1,000 amino acids or more. Thus the 23 base pair insertion in the case of the vampire bat protein would only code for 7 amino acids. Yet this tiny insertion changes the whole character of the protein, and this change allows for a whole different lifestyle for the creature. Moreover, this changed expression of the protein happens only in the appropriate nerve cells in the bat's face, not anywhere else in the body.

Since the ability by bats to detect infrared radiation (heat) is so different from snakes, scientists consider that there

is no evolutionary connection between the two designs. Either each appeared as a spontaneous or novel feature, however complicated, or each was separately designed in its entirety.

Echolocation is a marvel

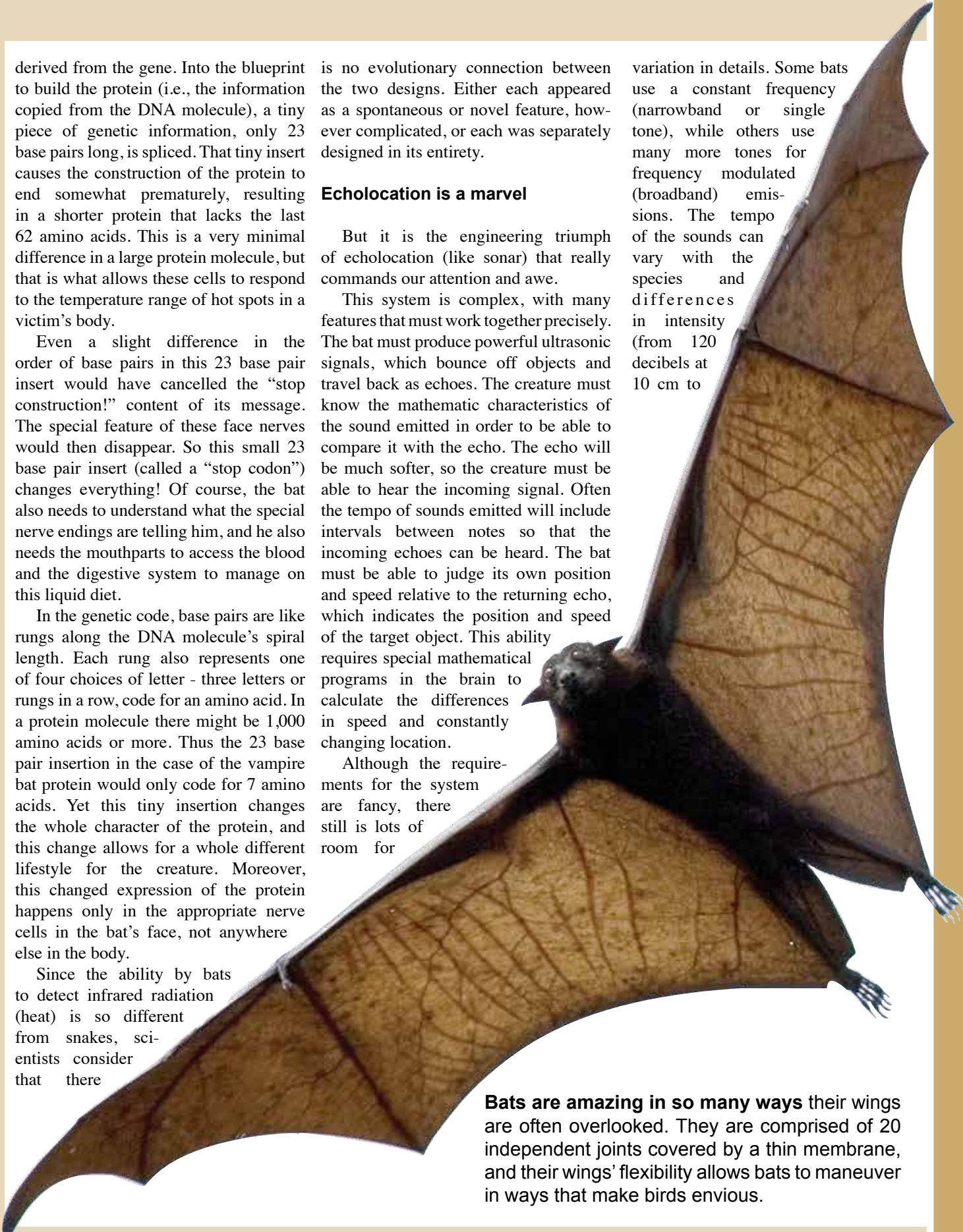
But it is the engineering triumph of echolocation (like sonar) that really commands our attention and awe.

This system is complex, with many features that must work together precisely. The bat must produce powerful ultrasonic signals, which bounce off objects and travel back as echoes. The creature must know the mathematic characteristics of the sound emitted in order to be able to compare it with the echo. The echo will be much softer, so the creature must be able to hear the incoming signal. Often the tempo of sounds emitted will include intervals between notes so that the incoming echoes can be heard. The bat must be able to judge its own position and speed relative to the returning echo, which indicates the position and speed of the target object. This ability requires special mathematical programs in the brain to calculate the differences in speed and constantly changing location.

Although the requirements for the system are fancy, there still is lots of room for

variation in details. Some bats use a constant frequency (narrowband or single tone), while others use many more tones for frequency modulated (broadband) emissions. The tempo of the sounds can vary with the species and differences in intensity (from 120 decibels at 10 cm to

Bats are amazing in so many ways their wings are often overlooked. They are comprised of 20 independent joints covered by a thin membrane, and their wings' flexibility allows bats to maneuver in ways that make birds envious.



80 decibels at 10 cm) are possible. Many bats make sounds with their larynx, but one species uses tongue clicks.

One might imagine that so fancy a sonar system would be found only in a closely related cluster of organisms, if descent with modification (evolution) had taken place. However, we see similar fancy systems in whales, bats, shrews, tenrecs (hedgehog-like mammals, native to Madagascar) as well as in oilbirds and cave swiftlets (another bird). Obviously these creatures did not descend from a closely related common ancestor, so either these organisms were designed, or spontaneous processes produced these fancy systems on a number of occasions.

As far as the bats themselves are concerned, one might imagine that the echolocating bats would represent a cluster of creatures with other features

in common. Even when the echolocating system is similar, however, there are bats that seem closer in their genetics to fruit bats than to other echolocating bats.

In addition, one fruit bat echolocates by means of tongue clicks instead of noise from the larynx. Does this represent a separate group, too?

Bats are cousins to... cows?

Altogether, bats represent a fascinating example of evolution theory gone wrong. During the past century, for example, scientists considered that bats were related to organisms like lemurs, which display similar arm bones used for flight. Such anatomical similarities to lemurs caused scientists to classify bats with monkeys, flying lemurs, and rodents.

Now, however, on the basis of more

obscure biochemical details that come from the genetic code, bats are grouped with horses, dogs, cows, moles, and dolphins. The physical and behavioral similarities to these latter creatures are obscure to say the least. Nevertheless scientists now say this latter group is evolutionarily related through descent from a common ancestor.

When one considers echolocation, scientists now declare that this complex capability arose spontaneously at least seven or eight times. And the ability to detect infrared radiation arose, scientists now declare, twice independently in snakes and once independently in bats.

Scientists use the word "convergence" to cover situations where descent with modification is not a convincing explanation for the source of the feature. Thus convergence means separate



Evolution, and other fairy tales: Why a cow picture in an article on bats? Because scientists now say their genetic code shows bats should be grouped together with dogs, moles, dolphins, *and cows*. So that's how the cow made it over the moon - he's bat-like!

appearance for no obvious cause. The alternative explanation for these situations is, of course, separate designs. God used his toolkit of wonderful design features as He saw fit, conferring them on similar or very different creatures for our interest and delight.

Many scientists claim that biochemical details from DNA sequencing confirm ideas about “descent with modification” which were developed over many years from anatomical comparisons. Such declarations, however, are far out of date. The molecular details have turned upside down ideas about evolutionary relationships (descent with modification) such as we saw in the case of bat skeletons and lemur skeletons. Nowadays we constantly hear about “convergence” or separate appearance of highly complicated features. It was not convincing when the argument was for the spontaneous appearance of a complex system on one occasion, but to suggest that it could happen multiple times really strains credulity! What these amazing designs really demonstrate is the action of a mind, creative intelligence, and choice.

Only scratching the surface!

We have barely scratched the surface of the wonderful design features in bats.

Recently scientists have discovered that the ability of bats to sense their environment is even more sensitive than previously imagined. In 2010, a team of scientists reported that some echolocating bats can control the width of the ultrasonic beam which they emit. The subject of this study involved bats that release sounds from their larynx, which is by far the most common method. More recently, another team investigated whether the tongue-clicking Egyptian fruit bats are similarly versatile in their ability to respond to variation in the environment. This team found that Egyptian fruit bats simultaneously direct one beam of sound to the left and another to the right. They do this by aiming consecutive clicks in opposite directions. As the environment becomes more cluttered with objects, the angle between the two beams of sound becomes wider (and the beam thus broader). This enables the animal to focus

on a particular object while paying less attention to other distracting structures in the environment. Also, as the bat closes in on his target, the beam becomes broader and the sound more intense. This degree of sophistication in this echolocating system is a surprise to everyone.

Another interesting characteristic of bats is their wonderful wings. Bats can carry up to 50% of their weight (as we see in pregnant bats), and they execute maneuvers that would cause a bird or plane to crash. Unlike birds, bats have wings that are thin and flexible. This flexibility

.....
 “...some bats can control the width of the ultrasonic beam which they emit.”

is the result of more than 20 independent joints in the structure, covered by a thin flexible membrane. Bats can curve their wings, too, thereby providing for greater lift, which consumes less energy. What is more, bat wings are covered with tiny sensory hairs that provide information to the bat on flight speed and airflow.

As one commentator on bats remarked: “The perceptual world of bats undoubtedly has many more intriguing secrets yet to be discovered” (*Nature* August 4/11 p. 41). The large number of precision machines or systems in bats that enable them to live challenging lifestyles surely proclaims the work of God, the creator of all things. Maybe you still don’t love these interesting creatures, but we can certainly marvel at them. However, it seems unlikely that, no matter how much we may respect them, bats will ever be welcome in the home!

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PLoS Biology 9 (9) Sept. 13/11



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Spiritual Nausea

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. James 1:6-8

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Recently, I heard Dr. David Garner of Westminster Seminary give an explanation of what “he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does” means.

First of all, he talked about the necessity of learning to see our own history through the eyes of the Lord. God is sovereign, and He is working out His plans through the various blessings and trials that come our way, and that exist in our countries. He has His overall plans that take into consideration *every* aspect, not just what goes on in our personal lives. When we look at something that is frustrating or annoying or devastating and begin to see it through His eyes, then we will see it correctly.

He told about going on a boat trip from Vancouver when there were 10 to 12-foot waves rocking the boat. It was a three-hour trip that, unfortunately, he and his wife did not enjoy very much. But he said that he will always remember the feeling that he had of stepping off that boat and onto firm, dry land. *That*, he said, is how one feels when one moves from looking at the circumstances of life through our own eyes to looking at them through God’s eyes. Reflect on this and imagine the peace and calm. Consider the difference!

Why he can’t see it

When James talks about the double-minded man, he means here a person who goes back and forth and back and forth again:

- “My way.”
- “God’s way.”
- “My way.”
- “God’s way.”
- “My way.”

“God’s way.”

This can produce a spiritual nausea. Just like when Peter was walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-33): when he kept his eyes on Christ, he did fine. When he looked at the possibilities of perishing, he sank. How much clearer could our Lord have made it?

We must trust God in order to see life and current history from His perspective.

Dr. Garner also gave an illustration of a person who wears glasses because his vision is very blurry. He took off his glasses and said that he could not see the congregation very well. But when he put them on, he could. He pointed out that the world sees everything as the blurry-eyed man does, and they are not able to make accurate sense of it. Only those who know the Lord as their Savior can see that God is moving in His own mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. Only those who trust Him can know that His tests come to us for our good, to bring us closer to Him.



Using accurate information

If I wanted some accurate information that would help me to make a decision about buying a house or a car, I would choose my sources carefully. Since the world cannot see clearly as to what is really happening, why is it that we so often follow their advice on how we should live?

Does the world have the best advice about finding our happiness in acquiring more and more money, or about viewing sex as a recreational activity, or about worrying all the time about every little thing? Does the world speak the truth when it tells us that females should dress in sexually provocative ways so they won’t be accused of being ashamed of their bodies? How about when it says your happiness should be the prime concern of your life, no matter what?

Here, and in so many other areas, the world is looking through blurry eyes.

The Apostle Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16), but upon reflection we may find that we really do act ashamed of the holy life that God has called us to live. We get mocked, and we immediately shrink back. We want what we want, and set God’s way aside.

We who know the Lord are the ones who see clearly, when we look through the lens of God’s perspective. When we are not double-minded, we can revel in the peace and comfort that comes from knowing Almighty God closely as our Father.

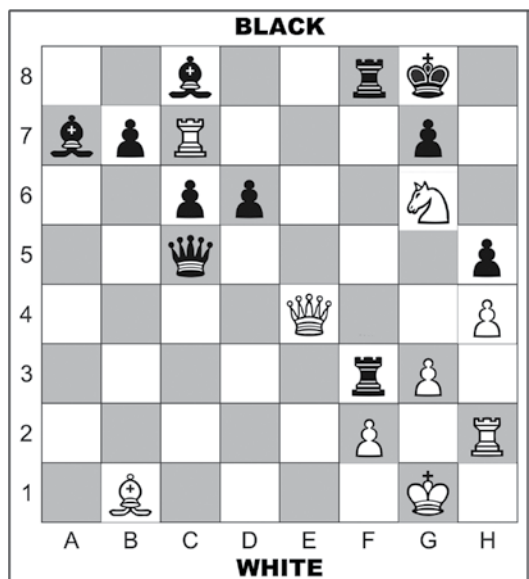
The Creator knows what He’s doing, and that makes us stable in all our ways.



ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

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CHESS PUZZLE # 183



WHITE to mate in 2
Or, If it is BLACK's Move,
BLACK to mate in 3

NEW PUZZLES

Riddle for Punsters #183 – “Humor that is All Wet”

When Rudolph saw his neighbour Nick, eyes closed, doing his pre-winter power-washing of the house windows he asked, “W__e r you doing?” Nick replied, “I knew that you were not capable of __y humour.”

Problem to Ponder #183 – “Lots for Sale – Dry and Wet”

Earth’s population is presently about 6,974,000,000 and should be 7 billion soon. The surface area of planet earth is about 510 million square kilometres, of which 149 million sq. km. (about 29%) is land and the rest is water.

- Determine the average population density (number of people per sq. km.) if all 7 billion people live on the land part of earth’s surface.
- Determine what the average human population density would be if everyone lived on boats on the water part (leaving all habitable land for farms.)
- What fraction of the land surface area would be needed if everyone lived in high rise buildings that were 100 metres wide and 100 m long and each held 10,000 people?

SOLUTIONS TO THE NOVEMBER PUZZLE PAGE

Answers to Riddles for Punsters #182 – “Civil War is not very Civil”

Why did the peasants keep ringing bells as they fought against the army of the dictator who had driven out their lawful government? Because they were **rebell**ing against his dictatorship.

Why did the peasants use spears and swords but not clubs? Because, unlike spears and swords, clubs would have been **point**less.

Answers to Problem to Ponder #182 – “Frozen or Melted, It’s Precipitation!”

In some places snow has already fallen. Imagine large snow flakes coming down and melting right away on the ground, producing 1.0 ml of water for every 20 snowflakes that melt. Suppose that it snows steadily for 3 hours and during that time an average of 2 snowflakes per minute land on each square centimetre of a 100 m by 200 m rectangular parking lot.

- How many snowflakes would land in the parking lot in the 3 hours?
 - What volume of water would result from the melted snowflakes?
 - What would the depth of the water be if spread over the paved surface of the parking lot?
- a) Parking lot area = 100 m x 200 m = 10,000 cm x 20,000 cm = 200,000,000 cm². Over 3 hours = 180 minutes, 180 min. x 2 snowflakes/min. = 360 snowflakes land on each cm², so in the 3 hours 360 x 200,000,000 = **72,000,000,000 (72 billion) snowflakes would land on the parking lot.**
- b) 20 melted snowflakes produce 1.0 ml of water so 72 billion flakes produce 72 billion/20 = **3.6 billion ml of water which is 3.6 million litres of water.**
- c) 1 ml = 1 centimetre³ so if kept to the parking lot surface **the water depth would be volume/area = 3,600,000,000 cm³ / 200,000,000 cm² = 18 cm.**

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 182

WHITE to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

- Q-B7 ch K-R1
- BxP ch BxB
- QxB mate

Algebraic Notation

- Qf1-f7 + Kg8-h8
- Bf8xg7 + Bh6xg7
- Qf7xg7 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

- Q-R8 ch
- K-B2 RxP ch
- PxR RxP mate

OR

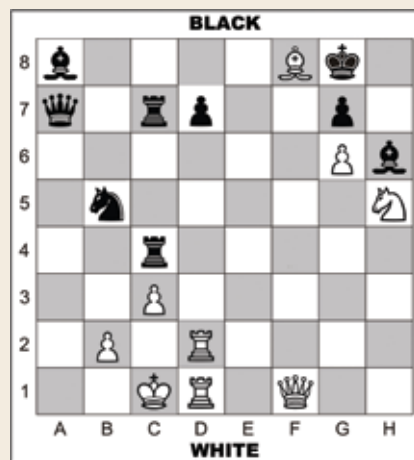
- Q-R8 ch
- K-B2 B-K5 ch
- R-Q3 N-Q5 mate

Algebraic Notation

- Qa7-a1 +
- Kc1-c2 Rc4xc3 +
- b2xc3 Rc7xc3 ++

OR

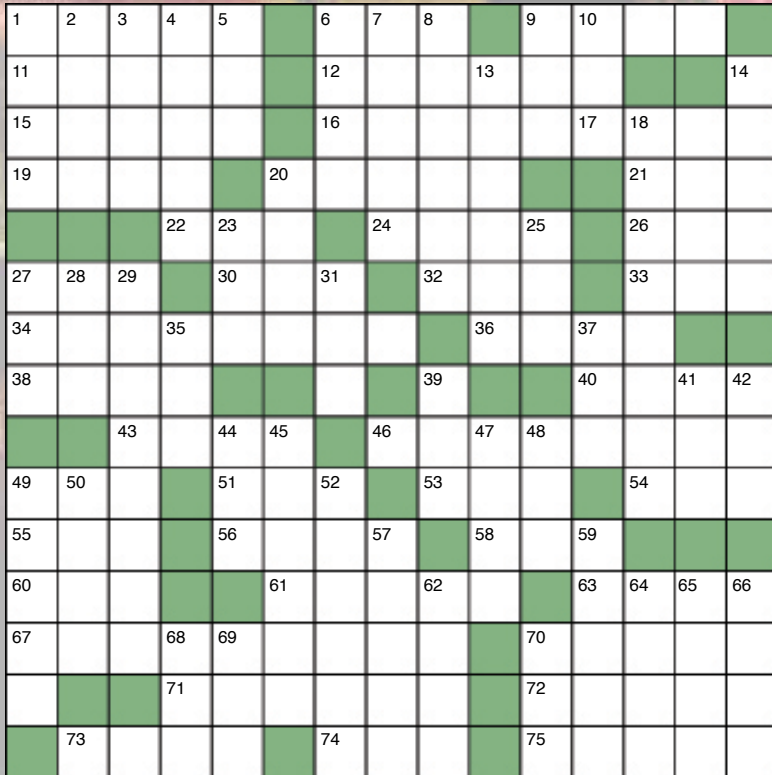
- Qa7-a1 +
- Kc1-c2 Ba8-e4 +
- Rd2-d3 Nb5-d4 ++



Crossword Puzzle

Series 18 No 10

Last Month's solution
Series 18 No 9



ACROSS:

1. Backbone
6. African evergreen shrub
9. Secondhand
11. Assistants
12. Extraterrestrial creatures
15. Puts cargo away
16. Bands of tissues
19. Robust and hearty
20. Even
21. Switzerland canton by Lake Lucerne
22. Louis, to his friends
24. Man's name
26. Calendar day
28. Instant messages
30. Frying fuel
32. Type of variant DNA sequence
33. Bach. Of Textile Engineering
34. Inclined to silence
36. A very strong wind
38. Area of London known for its restaurants
40. Periods of time
43. Hebrew for raven; prince of Midian
46. Contrite; repentant

DOWN:

1. Long ribbon used for belt
2. "Pocket" bread
3. Something worshipped
4. Stair part
5. Curvy shape
6. Healthy green veggie
7. Not deceased
8. Striped animals
9. U. of New Mexico
10. Direction
13. Borough of greater London, England
14. Ancient town of Greece, on gulf of Argolis
17. Marked or distinguished by numbers
18. Horse gait
20. Hawaiian feast
23. Frequently, to a poet
25. Accountant abbr.
27. Possessive word
28. Monoamine oxidase
29. Kind of sea vessel
31. Attempt
35. Suffix of comparatives
37. Allow
39. Attention getter
41. Collection of miscellaneous info
42. Pig pen
44. Direction in Paris
45. Nautical lines for gathering in the sails
47. Armstrong's first name
48. Business abbr.
49. Abrade by rubbing
50. Type of Caribbean unleavened bread
52. Perfume ingredient
57. One who sews
59. Vietnam capital
62. Cape fox
64. Frolic boisterously
65. Ancient Roman calendar days
66. Ethereal
68. Head part
69. Fruit center
70. Play part

Joyce