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A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

DECEMBER 2013
Volume 33 Issue No. 2

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FEATURING

Lena in the Hand

BY CHRISTINE FARENHORST



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

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Annual Subscription Rates:

Canadian Funds – 1 year \$50.00, 2 years \$93.00, 3 years \$137.00*
Canada Airmail \$73.00,* U.S. Airmail (U.S. Funds) \$80.00
U.S. Funds – 1 year \$55.00, 2 years \$100.00, 3 years \$145.00,
International Surface Mail \$69.00 (2 years \$125.00, 3 years \$184.00)

International Airmail \$115.00

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

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



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Registration: ISSN 0714-8208

Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act

Registration No. 118929272RR0001

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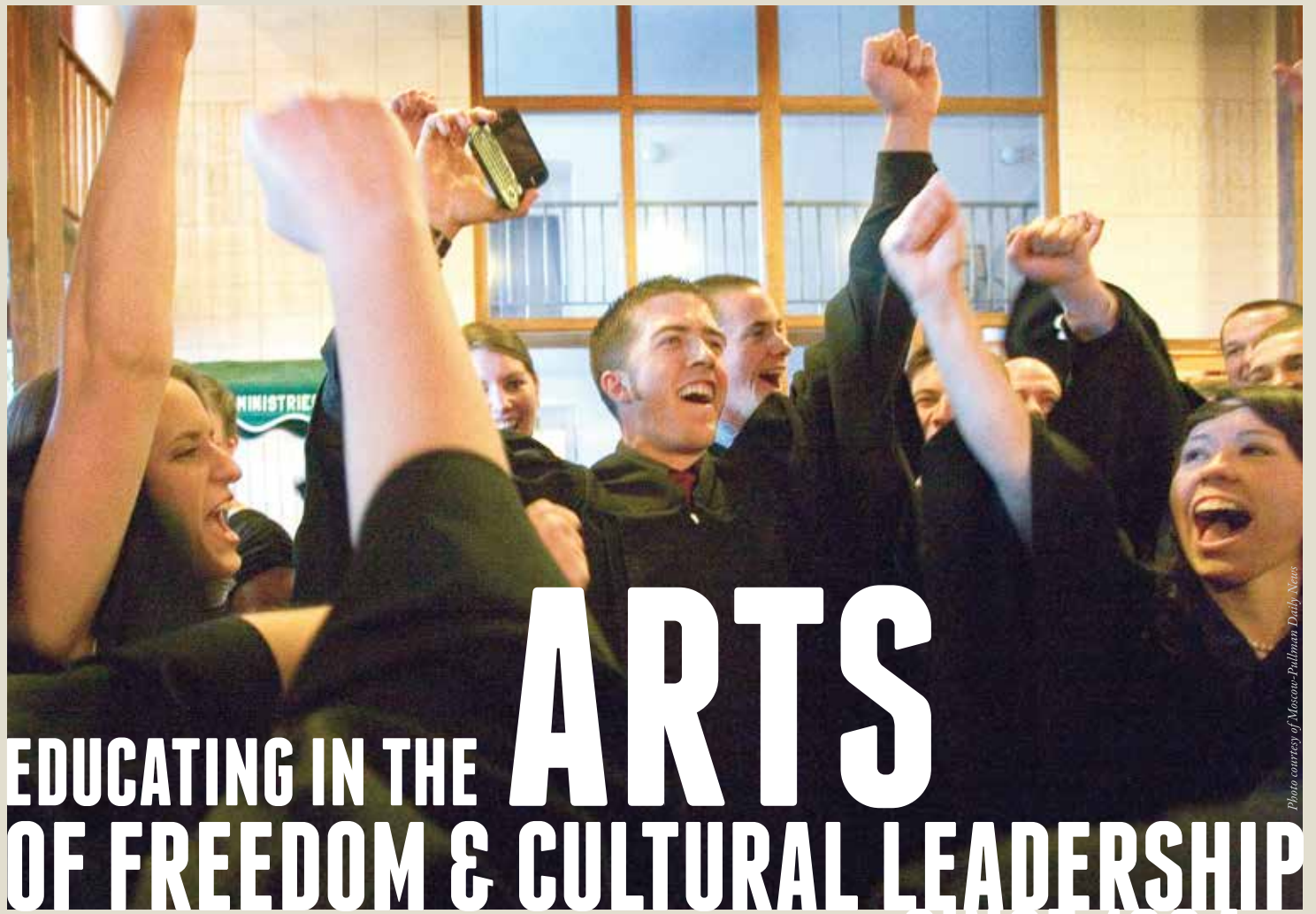


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FROM THE EDITOR

Ho Ho Ho Virginia!

In 1897, *The Sun* newspaper was asked a doozy of a question. Eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon wanted to know: "is there a Santa Claus?"

The little girl had first asked her papa and he, like a skilled matador, neatly sidestepped the question, telling her to write a letter to the editor. "If you see it in *The Sun*," he told her, "it's so."

You can imagine the tension that must have enveloped the newsroom when this letter arrived. On the one hand, the journalistic integrity of the paper was at stake; how could they do anything but tell the truth? And on the other... well, only a grinch would want to kill Santa Claus, so how could they possibly tell her the truth?

Here, in part, is what editorialist Francis Pharcellus wrote:

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy.... Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.

Thanks to Pharcellus, Santa lived on for this little girl. At least for another year.

Today it seems like we have the same two options facing us: to share the fun of Santa with our children, or to tell the truth about Him. We can either be liars or killjoys.

Honest killjoys?

The strength of the killjoy option is readily apparent. God loves truth, and hates lies. We teach our children to love truth and hate lies. So we as parents should be truthful and not tell lies.

More worrisome is how similar the mythical Santa is to the real God. Both can't be seen, both know when we've been

bad or good, and both administer justice. So when we tell our kids that both are real, but later admit that, yes, that Santa guy actually isn't, we've given our kids good reason to doubt what we've told them about God. That's big. That's huge!

Fun

So does that mean we have to give up on the fun of Santa?

Nope. There is third option that Francis Pharcellus knew nothing about.

In our family photo album one of the picture is of a kid, 5 or 6, who has just been given a Sesame Street Ernie puppet. In the photo we can see Ernie talking, and the expression on this boy's face is of wide-eyed, mouth gaping, jumping up on his tiptoes, kind of joy – he could not be more excited! And yet, this is no dumb kid. He can surely tell that where Ernie's legs should have been, there was his brother's arm instead. And the voice he was hearing couldn't have sounded much like Ernie's. The boy knew this wasn't really Ernie... but it sure was fun to pretend!

The third option is telling our kids the truth, and then playing make-believe.

Keeping the good

If our kids know this Santa guy is just a story, then we can keep what's good, and ditch whatever we don't like. We can reimagine the story, skip the crass commercialization, and keep the generosity. We can pick the Saint over the Santa, and connect the Saint to his Savior. We can pick the 6th, or do our Dutch heritage proud and exchange gifts after Boxing Day. Zwarte Piet can make an appearance, or not... but if he does show up, he's going to be less scary, and a lot more fun because the kids will be in on the joke. We can put out the glass of milk, and make sure that whatever cookies we place on the plate are dad's favorites. Children can still get their



pictures taken with Santa, or skip it if the line is too long – no stress, no worries, because hey, he's just a guy playing dress-up after all.

And if the line is too long, maybe dad will have to get out the ol' beard and pillow for some photos at home. Because it sure is fun to pretend. Pretending is awesome.

But *lying* to little Victoria?

Ho, ho ho, well, that's sure to land you on Santa's naughty list!



Jon Dykstra is worried he might not need the pillow. He can be reached at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

DEAR EDITOR,

I'm writing in response to Jon Dykstra's September editorial "Why our Churches Should be Full of Adopted Children." I disagree with his arguments. Mr. Dykstra does not believe that the low amount of adopted children in our congregations is due to practical reasons, such as cost. But I do see one very practical reason: we are having our own children.

Mr. Dykstra argues that adopting children is not only for couples who struggle with infertility. That is true, in principle, but it is more difficult in practice. In the three years that my husband and I have been married, we have been blessed with two children. It is impossible for us to adopt. Adoption agencies have rules: in some provinces, a couple must be married for at least two years before they may adopt. If God grants them a pregnancy during the adoption process, the adoption is off. Also, any previous children must be at least two years old before the couple can bring another child into their family.

I look around at the couples in my home congregation, and I see few that meet this criteria.

Mr. Dykstra's article gives me the impression that, since we are adopted by God, adopting children is somehow more holy than having our own. Nowhere in Scripture does God indicate this. Are we to prevent pregnancies in order to adopt? There are many ways to help orphans. Sponsoring a child, fostering, or praying for and donating to programs that do these things are possible options for many of us.

Don't get me wrong; I am for adoption. It is a wonderful way to give a child a family and bless those who desire to be parents. But for those who can have their own kids, it is not necessarily possible.

Leanne Baron
Carman, MB

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

I don't think we disagree all that much.

When I praise my eldest daughter, my youngest should not be insulted. In the same way, praise for adopting should not be understood as saying anything negative about "begetting."

We encourage our young men to consider the ministry. They are encouraged to consider the ministry, not because being a pastor is somehow more holy than being a plumber, but rather because there is a pressing need for ministers, and because it is a particularly intimidating job that many young men might not consider unless they were encouraged to do so. So, too, with adoption. We need to encourage the adopting of children not because it "is somehow more holy" than begetting them, but rather because there is a need - there are orphans! And there are couples equipped to take up this godly task who might not consider it unless they are first encouraged to do so.

So let us be encouraging.

DEAR EDITOR,

Thank you for including Jonathan Chase's wonderful article "Ten thoughts on Mark Driscoll" in the September issue. It was very informative and concise. Mr. Chase carefully informed us of both the good and the not-so-good, and he did so with facts, while keeping personal bias out.

That being said, would it be possible to have a similar article written on R.C. Sproul? I have often been told to be careful with his work, but no one has ever been able to pinpoint anything that was wrong. It would be helpful to have an entire series of articles on various popular writers of this day.

Jennette Ypma
Taber, Alberta

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

This is a wonderful suggestion, and perhaps someone reading right now will take up the challenge. In the mean time, I offer this. In general Dr. Sproul is a reliable exegete and solidly Reformed. Where he is weak is on the doctrine of Creation.

In 2006, he stated: "For most of my teaching career, I considered the framework hypothesis to be a possibility. But I have now changed my mind. I now hold to a literal six-day creation." That was welcome news.

But then in 2012, at a conference put on by his group, Ligonier Ministries, he waffled on his six-day stance, telling

the audience that he didn't know how old the Earth was. It seems Dr. Sproul hold to a six-day creation, but with the possibility of there also being an old Earth. If that is his position, it means he does not properly understand the implications of an old Earth.

But overall he doesn't talk much about Creation, to the point where it is hard to figure out exactly what he believes. On other topics, where his extensive writings make it easy to tell his position, I've found him helpful and orthodox.

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NOTA BENE

News
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noting

INTERPOL'S SECRETARY GENERAL ON TERRORISM

BY JON DYKSTRA

In October terrorists killed 72 and wounded over 200 in an attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya. Afterwards, in an interview with *ABC News*, the Secretary General of Interpol, Ronald Noble, proposed a controversial way of addressing these types of acts of terrorism: arm law-abiding citizens.

He noted that there are just two paths government can go down to protect unarmed citizens from terrorists and psychopaths:

1. more armed guards, more security checkpoints, more metal detectors
2. more responsible citizens able to protect themselves

He explained that the Kenya shopping mall attack is an example of "an evolution in terrorism" where terrorist are no longer targeting the Pentagon or anywhere that is well defended. Instead they are looking to locations that have



little or no security and large crowds, like shopping malls and movie theaters.

Noble noted that this leaves law enforcement with an almost impossible preventative task. Talking about the Kenya mall shooting, he told *ABC News*:

Ask yourself: If that was Denver, Col., if that was Texas, would those guys have been able to spend hours, days, shooting people randomly?For me it's a profound question.... Where would you have wanted to be? In a city where there was gun control and no citizens armed if you're in a Westgate mall, or in a place like Denver or Texas?

SOURCE: Josh Margolin's "Exclusive: After Westgate, Interpol Chief Ponders 'Armed Citizenry'" posted on *ABCNews.go.com* Oct. 21, 2013.

ARE COPYRIGHT LAWS OVERLY STRICT?

BY ANNA NIENHUIS



If you've ever been to a restaurant that celebrates birthdays with the staff coming over and singing some cheerful, clapping song that resembles, but isn't, "Happy Birthday to You," you know exactly how far copyright laws have gone. A substitution has been made because songs like "Happy Birthday to You" (created in 1912) are covered by copyright laws and cannot be performed in public without paying a royalty. In fact, in 2008 Warner/Chappel Music, the copyright holder, was making \$5,000 a day in royalties from the song. Other old songs and characters such as Mickey Mouse (created in 1928) are similarly protected.

Meanwhile, patents are only valid for 20 years, leading some to wonder where we are placing our value as a society: on entertainment, but not on science and technology? Research funded by hundreds of thousands of dollars has much more limited protection, while a song is protected for "the life of the author plus 70 years," and longer in other cases, according to 1998 updates to copyright law in the United States. Online piracy is an especially hot-button issue in Hollywood, and movements like SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) have even attempted to make companies like Google legally responsible for their search engine results.

Certainly, inspiration and ingenuity should be protected so we can give credit where credit is due, but to what lengths are we willing to have our own creativity limited by not being able to freely build on the work of those who have gone before us?

AN ENIGMATIC LIGAMENT NO LONGER

BY JON DYKSTRA



In early November news outlets reported the discovery of a new body part: the anterolateral ligament or ALL. Two knee surgeons at University Hospitals Leuven were researching why some patients with ACL-repaired knees would still experience episodes where the knee seems to give way. They traced it to the ALL.

Mainstream media headlines characterized the result of their investigation as:

- “Scientists discover a new body part in the knee” – *Daily Mail*
- “New ligament in human knee discovered by scientists” – *Huffington Post*
- “Your knee bones connected to your... what? Scientists discover new body part” – *TIME*
- “New body part discovered” – *National Post*

But did they really discover a new body part? No, not really. The ligament wasn’t unknown, but it was an “enigma” to use the surgeons’ descriptor. In their article in the *Journal of Anatomy* they noted it had previously been given several different, confusing names

such as “(mid-third) lateral capsular ligament,” “capsulo-osseous layer of the iliotibial band” or “anterolateral ligament,” and no clear anatomical description has yet been provided.

So what they actually did was provide a clear anatomical description of a previously known but “enigmatic” body part.

Their report illustrates the limits of man’s knowledge, and the limits of the media’s expertise. Scientists are still learning new things about basic stuff, like the structure of the human knee – there is so much we don’t know. Reporters are expected to write on sports, healthcare, traffic accidents, global warming, Iran, world religions, and knee anatomy and what are their qualifications to tackle the width and breadth of human knowledge? Only that they know how to write.

In other words sometimes scientists don’t know nearly as much as we, and they, think they do, and sometimes reporters don’t have the expertise to properly understand the topics they are writing on.

So when we hear media accounts, or scientists, tell us something that contradicts the Bible, we needn’t get our knickers in a knot. We can just laugh and consider the lack of knowledge we still have about knees, and the complete trustworthiness of God’s Word.

GETTING THE GOSPEL TO NORTH KOREA

BY ANNA NIENHUIS



Known for its intense privacy, North Korea should also be known among Christians as a place of intense persecution.

In this country the late leader Kim Il Sung is “god,” and he constructed a religion around himself that mirrors many aspects of Christianity.

While owning a Bible is considered

a crime, and is punishable with imprisonment for you and your entire family, longing for the Word of God is strong. An American group called Seoul USA is addressing this desire for Bibles by launching homemade 40-foot balloons from South Korea into remote areas of North Korea. Attached to these balloons are Bibles and personal testimonials from North Korean Christians who have managed to escape.

This willingness of people to risk their lives for the living Word of God should humble those of us who have our Bibles so readily available – may they never be taken for granted and left on a shelf unopened!

SOURCE: Cristina Corbin’s “Bible drop: USA group takes to the sky to sneak gospel into North Korea,” Nov 8, 2013, *FoxNews.com*

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

November 10 was the international Day of Prayer for the Persecuted. Around the world, it is estimated more than 200 million Christians are currently experiencing persecution for their faith, and organizers this year wanted to focus especially on the persecution happening in China and Iran. How fitting that on Remembrance Day weekend we remembered not only those who gave their lives for our country, but also those who gave, and still give, their lives for the kingdom of God.

SOURCE: IDOP.ca and Craig Maccartney’s “International Day of Prayer rallies Christians to support the persecuted,” *ChristianWeek.org*; Oct. 21, 2013.

SAME-SEX PARENTS DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY ANNA NIENHUIS

Much research has been done over the past decade to investigate whether being raised by same-sex parents has an impact on children. Most of this research has concluded there are no statistical differences, and these studies have been used to push widespread policies and reforms, making it easier for same-sex couples to have children, through surrogacy, artificial insemination, and adoption.

However, recent research casts aside the majority of past studies as extremely biased, and focused on getting the results they wanted to encourage desired policy changes. Often, friends recruited each other to take part in the studies, and small sample sizes eliminated any statistical significance or generalizable findings.

In fact, new statistical analysis based on Canadian census data finds that same-sex parents do indeed make a

difference, and not for the better. Simon Fraser University's Douglas Allen recently published his controversial work on this subject, following a similar study by Mark Regnerus. Both studies find that, when looking at educational achievement, children of same-sex parents are about 65% as likely to graduate high school compared to children of heterosexual parents. These numbers drop significantly lower when you look specifically at girls in these situations.

While Allen remains objective in discussing his research, focusing solely on the numbers, in an interview with *Mercatornet.com* he was willing to speculate as to why same-sex parents may be particularly damaging for girls, especially those raised by two dads. He suggested it came down to "specialization."

It makes sense to me that fathers and mothers are not perfect substitutes. Indeed, mothers may provide some

parenting services that a father cannot provide, and fathers may provide parenting services that mothers cannot. These services may be necessary for girls but not necessary for boys.... As a father of two girls and one boy, I've often had discussions with other parents noting that with boys you just have to keep them fed and away from explosives, but with girls rearing is a little more complicated. That's a poor attempt at humor, but the bottom line is, this is an interesting question that deserves to be looked at.

He recommends further research into the differences in parenting needs from girl and boy children would further support the data indicating the positive effects of heterosexual parents.

SOURCES: Douglas Allen's "Does same-sex parenting really make no difference?", *Mercatornet.com*, Oct. 10, 2013; Steve Weatherbe's "Inconvenient truths about same-sex parenting", *thechristians.com*, Oct. 24, 2013

ALBERTA'S LEFTWARD LEAP

BY JON DYKSTRA



Alberta's Premier Alison Redford is the head of the Progressive Conservatives, but there is little conservative about her. Her budgets show she is not fiscally so, and during the 2012 campaign she outed herself as a social liberal. She characterized it as "frightening" when the province's Wildrose Party defended conscience rights, enshrining protection for marriage commissioners opposed to same-sex "weddings" and healthcare workers opposed to abortions.

But what of the Wildrose Party?

In their October convention the party dropped its support of "conscience rights." It also decided to reform,

rather than abolish the Alberta Human Rights Commission, which is best known for the lifetime ban against saying anything "disparaging" about homosexuality that it imposed on a Red Deer pastor. Wildrose remains committed to balancing the budget, but these recent policy changes will leave many Christians wondering who we can support.

Perhaps the best response is to stop supporting parties, and start supporting individuals. Christians have only a handful of parties to choose from and a limited slate of candidates we can vote for, and maybe no good choices are to be found. But we can send campaign contributions province-wide. With a whole provincial slate of candidates to choose from, the odds that a good and godly candidate can be found somewhere go up immensely. And we can be sure if such a candidate is found, perhaps halfway across the province from where we live, they can use all the help we can give them. In this increasingly left-leaning province they will certainly be facing an uphill battle.

GREAT GAME GETS EVEN BETTER

BY JON DYKSTRA

Ticket to Ride is a railway-themed board game that in 2004 won the prestigious "Spiel des Jahres," Germany's game of the year award. It has rules that can be learned in under 5 minutes, but a variety of strategies players can explore in game after game.

While the original edition uses a map of the United States and southern Canada, the popularity of the game led to versions with European maps. And now, finally, there is an expansion pack of particular appeal to RP readers: *Ticket to Ride Nederland*. You need a copy of the original game to make use of this expansion, but if you are a board game fun, and if you have parents or grandparents of Dutch descent, this will be a fun one for family game nights. You can find out more at www.daysof wonder.com/tickettoride/maps/nederland.



Wasn't It Just Yesterday?

by Sharon L. Bratcher



Somehow, back there in high school, we could envision the years of raising children. And as the children grew, and especially when they were sassy, we could imagine them moving out. But no amount of mental preparation really prepares one for the fact that **after** the kids move out; there might still be another 20-40 years of life left to live. Now what?

Watching our loved ones age can fill us with fear: fear of losing them, and fear of our own aging process. A younger friend dies, or gets cancer, and it gives us pause. It was easier to face the future when we felt strong and confident of our physical and mental selves and our earning potential. We trusted in the Lord,

but we may also have trusted a bit in our own strength as well. Facing those last 20-40 years leads to feelings of concern: what if I get sick? What if I can't provide? What if we don't have thousands-of-dollars-per-month for assisted living? What if arthritis makes it impossible for me to type? What if his knees get worse and he can't work? What if he dies?

HIS PLAN

None of this is a surprise to our loving Heavenly Father. This phase, too, is part of His plan. It has been said that not only does the Lord see the future, He is already there. God's words encourage His people: "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Even when our lives circle around, God promises to continue to work in us, to provide what we need, and to give us strength and comfort as we need it in **every** circumstance. And He continues to call us to the purpose of glorifying Him, pointing ourselves and others to the truth and blooming where we are planted, whether we are 18 or 81.

Often, we have no innate clue what to do – we have to learn, and to trust God.

In Literature classes, we learned about circular plots. The protagonists were found, for instance, sitting by a stream at the beginning, and sitting by the same stream at the end, which let the reader know that their lives had come full circle after whatever they endured in the middle 432 pages of the book.

What I didn't realize was that our lives would do this as well. Thirty-four years ago, my husband and I packed everything we owned into a 12-foot truck and a Chevette and drove eastward to the Philadelphia area. Thirty-three years later, after he earned two master's degrees and we held various types of jobs, owned three homes, and raised 6 children, we packed everything we owned into a 16-foot truck and an Elantra and drove westward to move back "home."

It's a whole new phase of life, and it's a bit odd to be in a church where the members have not seen us in our parenting roles, and they tend to ask, "Now, how many kids do you have, again?" We are back to our roles of brother and sister to siblings, and in my case, daughter to my aging parents. It leads to odd conversations wherein my mother tells me to put some socks on, or cautions me to be careful when I cross a busy street. I accept her comments as her expression of love, rather than launching into how many groups of children I have successfully raised and transported from point A to point B during the past 33 years.

SO QUICKLY

Wasn't it just yesterday that we were in high school, concerned about our popularity, and full of plans for life after graduation? Many of us hoped to fall in love, marry, bear children and create wonderful memories. And we did.

....we felt strong and confident of our physical and mental selves and our earning potential. We trusted in the Lord, but we may also have trusted a bit in our own strength as well.

We lived the roller coaster of those years: laughter, crying, playing, fighting. Often, we had no innate clue what to do – we had to learn, and to trust God. We endured pneumonia, and trips to the emergency room. We had deep fellowship at church, and deep heartaches. We sinned. We were sinned against. Life averaged out more good than bad, but it was never easy.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND SLAVERY

by: Michael Wagner

Earlier this year Australia politician Kevin Rudd, who was Prime Minister at the time, came out in favor of same-sex marriage after previously opposing it. During a public event, a pastor pressed him on the issue, asking, “If you call yourself a Christian, why don’t you believe the words of Jesus in the Bible?”

Rudd responded thusly,

Well mate, if I was going to have that view, the Bible also says that slavery is a natural condition. Because St Paul said in the New Testament, slaves be obedient to your masters. And therefore we should have all fought for the Confederacy in the US Civil War.

To much applause, this response supposedly put the whole Bible-based argument to rest. You don’t support slavery, do you? Then you should support “marriage equality.”

Rudd’s answer flummoxed the pastor, but it shouldn’t have. Rudd was saying nothing new, and the pastor should have realized the problem with this line of argumentation: the Bible does not say that, “slavery is a natural condition.” Nor does it provide any basis whatsoever for supporting the institution of slavery in the antebellum American South. Leftists can only get away with these falsehoods because Christians have forgotten their history.

SLAVERY AND THE BIBLE

In 1802 Alexander M’Leod, the pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in New York City, wrote a small book entitled *Negro Slavery Unjustifiable*. This book demonstrates conclusively that slavery as practiced in the South

was evil and condemned by God. It is true that some professing Christians and some churches supported slavery in the past. But historically, there have often been professing Christians spouting all kinds of unorthodox views. That does not make those views the views of “the church” nor does it mean they are supported by the Bible.

M’Leod begins his book with a discussion of Exodus 21:16: “Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death” (ESV). Kidnapping people and selling them is here condemned as a capital crime. Even someone possessing the stolen “property” was to be punished. This is a key text for exposing the evil of Southern slavery, because the Africans sold into slavery had been taken as captives in their own countries and sold to slave-traders.

The New Testament explicitly condemns the same practice. In 1 Timothy 1:10, in a list of detestable kinds of criminals, “enslavers” are listed. The ESV has a footnote for that word, saying it refers to “those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery.”

Both the Old and New Testaments explicitly condemn the practice of capturing people to sell them into slavery. This is precisely the practice that supplied slaves for the American South, and other territories of the western hemisphere. Contrary to Rudd’s smear, the Bible does not provide support for the “Confederacy in the US Civil War.” Quite to the contrary, in fact.

Besides capturing people for sale as slaves, the Bible condemns those who subsequently hold the slaves, that is, those in possession of stolen property. M’Leod writes:

According to the common principles of law, the receiver of stolen goods, if he know them to be such, is esteemed guilty as well as the thief. The slave holder never had a right to force a man into his service, or to retain him.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

M’Leod proceeds to analyze slavery in light of the Ten Commandments and concludes that it violates the fifth, sixth, eighth and tenth commandments. The fifth commandment basically calls for obedience to legitimate authority. But the slaveholder has absolutely no legitimate authority over the slave. Furthermore, the slaveholder casts aside the fifth commandment and,

in opposition to the divine law, which commands each to honor his father and mother, the child is taught, from the cradle, that his duty consists in implicit obedience to the command of his master.

The sixth commandment requires Christians to help preserve the lives of others. But in the efforts to capture slaves, the transportation of slaves, and their inhuman treatment after arriving in the US, tens of thousands (probably more) died miserable deaths.

The eighth commandment forbids taking any of our neighbor’s wealth. But the slaveholder is constantly stealing from the slave. In M’Leod’s words, the slaveholder, “robs him of the fruits of industry. He steals him from his relations. He robs him of his liberty of action. He steals him from himself.”

The tenth commandment forbids intemperate desires for worldly goods.



PRIME MINISTER KEVIN RUDD CONFIRMING THE ADAGE THAT A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE IS A DANGEROUS THING.

M’Leod points out that the “practice of the slave-holder is an evidence of his avarice. He employs servants without wages.”

Clearly, slavery (certainly the kind practiced in the pre-Civil War US) was an evil and sinful practice, condemned by explicit Bible passages and the Ten Commandments. That being the case, the United States was supporting and upholding gross immorality. M’Leod announced that such a situation would lead to God’s judgment on the USA:

The toleration of slavery is a national evil. It is the worst of robberies sanctioned by law. It is treason against Heaven – a conspiracy against the liberties of his subjects. If the Judge of all the earth shall do right, he cannot but punish the guilty.

BIBLICAL SLAVERY?

There are, of course, passages in the Bible that allow for slavery in certain very specific and narrow circumstances. An Israelite could become a slave in two instances: a criminal could become a slave to repay his victim, and an indebted

person could become a slave to repay his creditors. But as M’Leod notes, “In both cases the duration of this species of slavery was limited to six years” (p. 30).

The Israelites were also allowed to take slaves from among the conquered tribes of Canaan. These were the tribes that God commanded the Israelites to exterminate. Slavery, in this instance, can be seen as a merciful alternative. In M’Leod’s words: “Extermination was the command; but on their voluntary subjection they were only reduced into a state of servitude. The Israelites were forbidden to use them harshly.”

Importantly, Israel’s conquest of Canaan was a very specific historical circumstance that cannot be used to justify similar actions in subsequent times. Thus these verses do not provide any sort of Biblical support for slavery outside of the particular situation of Israel in the Old Testament.

Kevin Rudd appealed to the Apostle Paul in support of his view that the Bible “says that slavery is a natural condition.” But as noted above, in 1 Timothy 1:10, Paul explicitly condemned “enslavers.” Furthermore, the lack of an explicit condemnation of slavery in

the New Testament cannot legitimately be construed as any kind of *support* for slavery. As M’Leod puts it,

The immoralities practiced in the Roman Empire, under the sanction of law, were numerous and aggravated. It would be an unreasonable mode of compiling a system of ethics, to sustain as moral every ancient usage of the Grecians and Romans which are not expressly condemned in the New Testament.

In other words, it would be absurd to expect the New Testament to contain a detailed list of every single practice that Christians should condemn. The Ten Commandments provide a general moral law that Christians can use as a guide for life. As noted above, the Ten Commandments clearly condemned the institution of slavery as it was practiced in the antebellum South.

CONCLUSION

In the past, numerous Christians have allowed themselves to be influenced by their surrounding culture, and as a result, they ended up supporting something that is unbiblical. For example, many Christians in the American South supported slavery before the Civil War. Sometimes they even tried to justify their views with the Bible. But they were wrong, and other Christians told them so at the time.

Similarly, it is becoming increasingly common for professing Christians in Western countries to support same-sex marriage, now that it is fashionable to do so.

In this respect, there is a relationship between slavery and same-sex marriage. In both instances, those institutions are supported by professing Christians who allowed their surrounding culture to dictate their interpretation of the Bible. The Bible does not support either slavery or same-sex marriage. As history has shown, popular views on those institutions will change with the fashions of time. But the Biblical position has never changed and never will change. RP

PROCLAIM IT GRANDFATHER!

by Peter G. Feenstra

*O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to another generation,
your power to all those to come.*

Psalm 71:17-18 (ESV)

The following is an excerpt from Rev. Feenstra's "Unseen Footprints: Bible meditations" which is available at Amazon.ca.

When children lose their first teeth they are excited! It means they are getting older. They proudly wear their toothless smile. Birthdays are preceded by weeks of eager expectation for young boys and girls. They can't wait until they get as "big" as their dad or mom. Teenagers eagerly wait for the day they can drive or get out of the house and gain their independence.

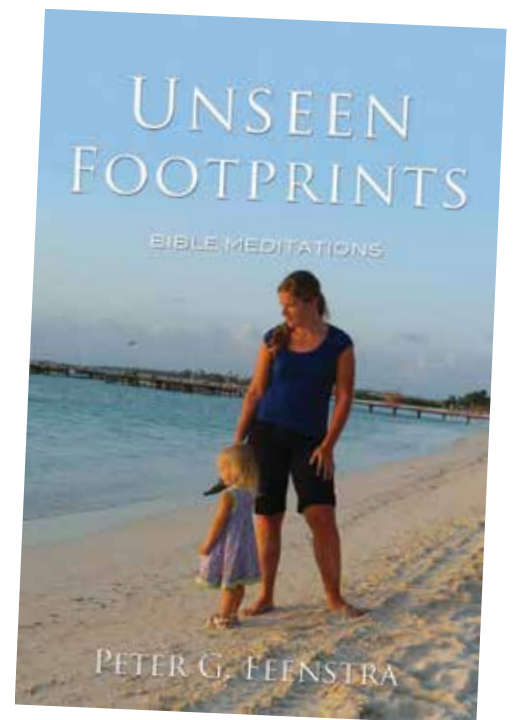
Yet by the time a person hits thirty-five he or she isn't so thrilled anymore about the thought of growing older. What woman gazes in the mirror and exuberantly exclaims, "Oh look, I just discovered my first gray hair!" The sight of it may ruin her day. Have you ever heard a woman announce with elation, "Do you know what? I'm getting wrinkles!"

Influenced by a society which idolizes youthfulness, many try to cover every indication of aging. In our Western culture the elderly are made to feel they are on their way out; they are no longer in the mainstream of life. Many men and women have a hard time finding employment if

they are over fifty-five.

It is understandable that people don't look forward to getting old and gray. Growing old has its own challenges. The circle of friends and people in your own age bracket becomes smaller and smaller. Many who were once married spend the last years of their life alone. Nevertheless, when our life is in Christ, there is great comfort in growing older. The book of Proverbs says, "The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head." (Proverbs 20:29) Psalm 92 compares senior saints to the mighty cedars of Lebanon. On the outside they show signs of having weathered many storms but on the inside they are still full of sap, bearing fruit in old age.

In Psalm 71 the Holy Spirit teaches us to seek our refuge in God all our days, and to prepare ourselves for the beautiful task given to us as senior citizens. In this prayer the psalmist recognizes what he is called to do in his old age. Pray that our reading and meditating on this psalm may help every church member to acknowledge the role of senior saints. May this psalm be an encouragement to those whose eyes grow dim. God's unseen footprints are cutting out a path for us to travel from our youth to old age.



"On the outside they show signs of having weathered many storms but on the inside they are still full of sap, bearing fruit in old age."

IN A NUTSHELL

BY JON DYKSTRA

TIDBITS RELEVANT,
AND NOT SO,
TO CHRISTIAN LIFE.

ADD A WORD, RUIN A CHRISTIAN BOOK

In October a meme circled the globe that had people tweeting famous Christian book titles with one word additions that, had they been real, would have completely ruined the book. For example, C.S. Lewis's *Surprised by Joy* became *Suprised by Joy Behar*. Other notables include:

*Till We Have **Smiley** Faces*
by C.S. Lewis

*Dave Ramsey's complete guide to money **laundering***

***Beards:** Every young man's battle*

***Returning** one thousand gifts*

*Don't Waste Your Life **Reading***

*Why We Love the **Emergent** Church*

There were also a handful of contributions that actually improved the book. Rachel Evans, a blogger best known for getting things half right (which is to say, completely wrong) is the author of *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*. In it she pretended to try to live out what God commands women to do in both the Old and New Testament but a one word addition better captures the essence of the book: *A Year of **Mocking** Biblical Womanhood*. A couple more improved book titles:

*Joel Osteen's Your Best Life **Isn't** Now*
*Hal Lindsay's The Late Great Planet **Earth 2***

SOURCE: <https://twitter.com/search?q=AddaWordRuinAChristianBook>

HENRY WOULD HAVE HATED THE HUNGER GAMES

On the night that the author of *Matthew Henry's Commentary* was robbed, he prayed a prayer that showed his understanding of just how blessed he was, and how, when it comes to harm, it is much better to receive than to give.

I thank Thee first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse they did not take my life; third, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed and not I who robbed.

SOURCE: Chris Craig's *Becoming a Person of Prayer*. There is some question if this really is a quote from Henry. Wikiquotes says no, but several other sources, including Chris Craig's book, say yes.

NOW IT ALL MAKES SENSE

Johan Gutenberg is best known as the first man to print a Bible using movable metal type. But did you know he kept his metal letters in drawers, called cases, with all the capital letters stored in an upper case, and the small letters stored in a lowercase? That is the reason that even today capitals are known as "uppercase" and small letters as "lowercase."

A TRUE CLERIHEW

by Conrad van Dyk

Henry the Eighth

Had a chauvinistic faith:

To leave his wives in the lurch

He started a church.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE?

To reject Christ because the church has sin of this sort in it is like rejecting hospitals because they are full of sick people. —Douglas Wilson

"OKAY THEN, IF YOU CROSS THIS LINE..."

Two aged orthodox Anglican priests knelt side-by-side in the trendy new diocesan cathedral, waiting for their bishop's Easter service to begin. It commenced with a lonely, eerie wisp of Tibetan bells wafting through the rafters. Then a chorus of plucked hand-harps took up the icy harmonies. After the bell ringers and harpists came a dancing troop of near naked young men in red speedos, streamers flying from their wrists. Then something new – six women in purple robes shouldering a litter which bore a larger-than-life-sized Buddha. The bishop brought up the rear, her tresses plaited with white and red ribbons hanging from the edges of her mitre, her brocaded cassock matching the thurible in her hand.

One aged priest turned to the other and said, "Just one more thing, and I'm outta here!"

SOURCE: Abbreviated version of a joke on Tim Bayly's blog baylyblog.com/blog/2013/10/silence-them

THAT SILVER LINING

Father: "Well son, with marks like these, at least we know you're not cheating"



Lena in the Heart

by Christine Farenhorst

Chapter One

The moment they were close to the city gates, Agatha took her young companion by the hand. It was early morning but not so early that the Strasbourg birds had not already begun to sing. Lena, for that was the girl's name, frequently lifted her eyes skyward, stumbling on her brown shoes as she did so, trying to make out where these birds were that sang so beautifully.

It earned her a sharp tug. Agatha was in a hurry, but even in her hurry she took the time to glance over her shoulder every few minutes, all the while muttering under her breath. "Come, Lena. Do not dawdle. If that is the way you begin your new life, you will not do well. No, you will not do well at all."

"Will you miss me, Agatha?" The words were plaintive, but there was no answer. Lena had not expected any. Agatha, although well-meaning, rarely answered queries. Caught, however, somewhere between childhood and womanhood, Lena needed assurance. She harbored a mixture of emotions that made her feel somewhat shivery inside.

Consequently, she asked once more: "Agatha, will you miss me?"

Again there was no answer for the pair had now arrived at the Cronenbourg Gate on the west side of Strasbourg, and Agatha had to stand still for a moment to assess where exactly they were. Lena knew where they were. She knew in a bittersweet way. In the past she had frequently walked through the Cronenbourg gate with her father. Swallowing audibly at the memory, she again tripped slightly as Agatha, having gotten her bearings, suddenly renewed her walk. Lena's gangly frame dismally traipsed alongside that of Agatha's tall bulk. Her father's voice accompanied them.

"Lena," he said, "let's stop and see if we can spot some birds."

"Oh, yes, father," she replied softly under her breath.

Recalling the times that they had actually done so, she smiled. On the not-so-distant past horizon, she saw a middle-aged man and his teenaged daughter abandoning with child-like glee a cart with etchings by the side

of the road; she felt them stretching flat on their backs in the lush grass contemplating the glorious blue sky; and she remembered them making out faces in the clouds as they listened to the choir of birds singing their hearts out in the trees and in the meadow.

Agatha tugged her hand again. "What ails you, Lena? Don't daydream. Walk faster. We're supposed to be at the beguinage before long."

"Yes, Agatha."

"Always mind what the Meisterin says to you and what she wants you to do, Lena. And when you get used to your surroundings, try to do things before she, or any of the sister beguines, asks you."

"Yes, Agatha."

"And be polite."

"Yes, Agatha."

"Compared to Hagenau, folks in Strasbourg are a mite more..."

Lena did not hear what Agatha's comments about the folks in Strasbourg were, for she had begun feasting her eyes on the wide scope of Strasbourg's skyline – a skyline dominated by church spires.

Looking straight up as they passed through the silent streets, she beheld houses and more houses. The gables, with their numerous attic windows, seemed to run straight into the clouds. They were all richly engrafted with wreathed work, stone carvings, leftovers of previous centuries. Agatha pulled her hand. They were now walking straight across an old suburb called Stone Street, and heading towards Bishop's Castle Gate. There must be a great many people, Lena surmised, who lived in these beautiful, stone houses. Perhaps girls just like herself often walked here with their friends on their way to the market. Or perhaps boys strode by on their way to work at the Horse Market, or a smithy, or... As if from very far away, she heard her Agatha's voice drone on and on with admonitions, and she kept nodding and saying "Yes, Agatha." On her right and very high, she espied the church spire of the Cathedral. She and father had often walked up to the Cathedral just because it was tremendous and made them feel so very small.

Father had known a lot about God. He had often listened to the traveling priests who preached the new doctrine.

"God," father had said, "lives here, Lena."

"God, father? But I thought He lived in heaven?"

"He does, child. He does. But He also has a place here."

"Are you sure? I thought the priests lived in church."

He had nodded. "They have surely tried to supplant Him. But God is everywhere, child."

Unlike the houses, the church had no gables. It was just high, very high. God was high. Was He too high for her to reach? When she was very little she had asked her father if God rang the bells in the Cathedral. She smiled now to think of it.

"Perhaps He does ring these bells, Lena. He surely calls people. I know that

He calls them," her father had answered, "just as I know that the Ammeister, the mayor, might call people to meetings."

Father had known a lot about God. He had often listened to the traveling priests who preached the new doctrine. Father had tried to explain it to her. If you believe, he had told her, then God has chosen you. When she had asked him what it meant to be chosen, he had explained that it was as if God picked you up and held you in His hand. But he had told her this just before he had died and Agatha had folded father's hands on his chest and then they had taken him away to be buried. Now she could not ask him any more.

Lena stared up at the Cathedral again as they passed. It was magnificent! Would the beguines take her inside this church? Would she be able to climb its two towers? She peered thoughtfully at the single spire - a spire known to be the tallest in all of Europe. Strasbourg was a good city to live in this year of our Lord, 1529. So Agatha had told her again and again this past week. Yet, she felt tears

sting behind her eyelids. It had been a good city when she had come here with father those times when he had conducted business with various printers. It had been a good city because father had loved her and had been there with her.

She furtively glanced sideways at Agatha. Agatha was a large woman - a midwife who knew a great many things about herbs and about birthing. Highly respected in Hagenau, she had always been a good friend to father and herself. They had boarded in her house a great many years. Agatha was capable and strong. Lena's thin hand and wrist fairly disappeared within her grasp. And Agatha truly did love her. She knew that. Once when she had wept because Agatha had punished her for daydreaming, father had told her that Agatha was

a practical person, a person who was somehow unable to stop and look at the uniqueness of things. Agatha saw, for example, father explained, the need to have onions for soup but she was not one who was able to sit back and contemplate the beauty of the vegetable. She was not moved to feel the silky softness of the onion skin and to stroke its green ears. Lena grinned to herself. Ears indeed! Onion ears! How could father have said such a thing? Or when Agatha sees a rabbit, father had continued, she immediately sees it stewing in the pot. She cannot be bothered to take the time to watch it hop, see its whiskers twitch and its little nose quiver. Often at dusk Lena had sat with father and had watched rabbits. Agatha thought it a waste of time and...

"Lena, child, where are your thoughts. Here is the beguine."

They had entered a courtyard, a courtyard surrounded by a stone gate and harboring several small buildings. Secluded from Strassbourg proper by this gate through which they had just passed, it lay quietly and peacefully in the spring sunshine. Lena could feel the stillness as if it were a garment someone had just wrapped around her.

"Now, child," Agatha said, and stopped, as if she was about to say more.

Lena looked up at her, surprised. Agatha rarely addressed her as child - she always said Lena.

"Yes, Agatha?"

Agatha's hand pulled her over to a bench under a tree in the center of the courtyard.

"I want to speak with you before you go in, before the time that I might not be able to see... that is to say, to speak with you privately as I do now."

"Yes, Agatha."

They sat down and Agatha's hands began straightening Lena's hair - hair which perpetually escaped from under her small white cap.

"You must, of course, mind what the Meisterin says," Agatha repeated for the hundredth time, but then she went on, even as her right hand continued to stroke Lena's forehead, "and I want you to be careful, Lena. Very careful?"

"Careful?" Lena repeated, lifting large,

blue eyes to stare at Agatha's face.

"Yes," Agatha said, "there are many people in the world who cannot be trusted. Mind you, I will try to visit you from time to time. For surely I promised your father I would look after you. But you are not my lawful ward. I would keep you in Hagenau with me, Lena, but I am so busy and am often gone to deliver newborn babies and..."

"I know, Agatha," Lena softly said, "and I am so grateful that you have helped me even when there was no one else except cousin Jurgen, mother's cousin, and he, of course, cannot take care of me, because he is a priest."

"Yes," Agatha answered, a trifle loudly, "cousin Jurgen. And this is what I want to say to you, Lena. Cousin Jurgen will likely come to visit some time in the future. Now I know it is as you say, he is a distant cousin of your mother, God rest her soul, but I fear he does not always have your best interest at heart."

Lena did not remember her mother who had died when she was born. And she had only met cousin Jurgen once or twice when he had come to call on father. Father had not liked him, she recalled, and had made fun of him.

"He's a trickster, Lena," he had said, "all well-wishes with his right hand, while he is looking to see what he can take from you with his left."

She nodded at Agatha. "I will be careful," she promised.

"There is something else," Agatha went on, reaching into one of the deep pockets of her kirtle, "This, child, is yours."

Lena stared at a little red leather bag, tied at the top with a long, red string.

"What is it, Agatha?"

"It is money, child," Agatha said, lowering her voice, "money your father entrusted to me for you before he died of the plague, God rest his soul. Since the day of your birth, he regularly set aside some money whenever he sold some of his etchings. He instructed me to keep it for you for a dowry. He said that if he did not give it to me, his creditors would eat it up. Now this is what I want to say to you. Somehow your cousin Jurgen has gotten the smell of your father's money, your money, in his nostrils and he sent word to me that he wants to discuss

placing you in a convent. He says that since he is a blood relative, he has the authority to do so."

"A convent?"

"Yes." Agatha left off speaking. There was no noise in the courtyard but the quiet buzzing of a bee lazily flying about some flowers at their feet.

"I do not want to go into a convent," Lena said slowly, by and by, as she stared at the bushes and the flowers surrounding them, "I did not even want to go here, but I know you cannot keep me always as I am not your own daughter."

Agatha smiled and patted Lena's hand.

"Besides," Lena went on, "father said that he was prone to the new faith, the faith that is being preached here in Strasbourg and also in

Hagenau. You know that he was. He said this faith was more plain than what the priests taught, and before he died he told me I was to listen to the new preachers should I have opportunity, even as he did."

"I know, child," Agatha said, patting Lena's hand, "But here, in this beguinage, I do believe you will presently be safer than with me in Hagenau. And I think you shall have more freedom than ever you would in a convent. Women live here in harmony. They try to serve God in various activities. Best of all, you are free to leave, if you should so desire. It is a good place for you at this moment in time, Lena, for when cousin Jurgen comes to see me, as I am sure he shall, I will be able to say you are happily settled in a beguinage. Despite his blood relationship to you, he will not be able to move you quickly from this place to a convent.



She and father had often walked up to the Cathedral just because it was tremendous and made them feel so very small.

Lena nodded, not truly understanding Agatha's words.

"Here," Agatha went on, putting the small bag into Lena's hand, closing the girl's fingers over it, "there are some fifty gold coins in it. You must hide this carefully as soon as you are settled in a room somewhere and you ought to tell no one, no one at all, that you have it."

"What about the fee the beguinage requires so that I might stay here?"

"Yes, yes," Agatha said, "that is taken care of. Don't fret about it. And now," she continued, "we must go in or the Meisterin will be thinking we fell into a well, or that robbers attacked us."

Lena laughed, for she rarely heard Agatha joke and surely this was a joke.

"Remember," Agatha repeated, falling back into her admonishings, standing up and taking hold of Lena's hand again,

“do what the Meisterin says.”

“Yes, Agatha,” she dutifully answered, even as she inserted the leather bag deep within the confines of her kirtle’s pocket with her other hand, “I will.”

They walked towards the main building, halting before the beguine door. Agatha lifted her hand to ring the bronze bell hanging on the wall

...father had told her that Agatha was a practical person.... She was not moved to feel the silky softness of the onion skin and to stroke its green ears.

next to the door. But before she did so, she glanced over her shoulder to see if anyone was behind them, if anyone was watching them over the stone wall protecting the courtyard from the street. Satisfied there was no one, she turned back towards the heavy bronze bell. Her capable hand rang loudly. Even though the sound reverberated there was no immediate answer. A few minutes elapsed. Lena looked around. The courtyard was large. Even as she was staring, her eye seemed to catch the face of someone peering at them from behind the stone wall. It was at that moment that Agatha let go of her hand and began banging on the oak with both her fists. Startled, Lena turned her face back to the door.

“They will hear that!” Agatha commented, “And perhaps they will pay more attention to such a noise than that bell. There is no need to keep us waiting, walk as we did so early.” Even as she spoke there was a commotion behind the door.

“Yes, yes, do you want to waken the dead? I heard you. I heard you.” The door was unlatched, and the face of an older woman peered through a crack.

“I am Agatha Lichtenberg come to bring my charge Lena to the Meisterin of Gotteshaus zum Wolf as a novice beguine.”

“Ah,” the woman breathed.

The great door opened wider and

revealed a hall, a hall spotless and shiny with tiles arranged in rows and rows of square clouds. Square clouds? Father would laugh at her if she told him this. Clouds are not square, child, he would have said, they are round. The thought made Lena gentle with love, until she remembered that father was gone and noted that the woman was scrutinizing

her carefully. Unconsciously her hands slid down to smooth the dark blue kirtle Agatha had bought her for the funeral. She could feel the small leather bag deep down in her pocket. Then she blushed and concentrated on her brown shoes.

“Meisterin asked that you be shown into her quarters when you arrived. Please follow me.”

Hard on the portress’ heels, they walked through the long hall, at length turning into one of the many rooms on the left. It was a bright and cheery room. There was a wonderfully spacious window facing the east and the light of the morning sun fell through it with great splendor. A woman rose from a chair and offered an outstretched hand, which Agatha took.

“Agatha Lichtenberg, I’m glad that you were able to travel safely to our home. And you,” she said, turning to Lena, “must be the young Lena whom we are to have the pleasure of housing here in Gotteshaus zum Wolf.”

Lena nodded and curtsied at the same time. She eyed the Meisterin with obvious admiration. Her gown was of a rich brown color. But the rich brown was not what made the gown so attractive. It was the gold crucifix. Off-setting the chocolate brown, glittering and dangling from her waist, it reached half-way down to the floor and gave Meisterin a serene and capable aura.

“I’m happy to meet you, young Lena.” The voice was soft and yet it was by no means weak. It was a voice that knew what it wanted; a voice that would not be brooked.

“I am happy to make your acquaintance also, Meisterin,” Lena answered softly.

She curtsied again, not because manners dictated that she do so, but because she felt she must do something to indicate that she was impressed with the room, with Meisterin and with the brightness of the window.

“Welcome, Lena,” Meisterin answered her “Indeed, welcome and I hope you will feel at home here.”

“She is used to work.” Agatha Lichtenberg, who had stood surveying the room as well, interposed in a rather sharp voice, a voice that reminded Lena she was not to trust people too readily.

“You will, like as not, miss Lena,” Meisterin responded.

It was a statement, not a question. Lena pondered it quietly as she stood looking down at her shoes without moving. She did not think it likely that Agatha would miss her. She would be too busy with her work. Many expecting mothers in Hagenau depended on Agatha. Agatha loved her work. Indeed, she had taught many of the skills of midwifery to Lena as well.

“Lena.” It was Agatha’s voice. Startled, she looked up. “Meisterin is speaking to you.”

Shifting her gaze away from Agatha, Lena’s apologetic gaze met the half-smile of Meisterin. “I beg your pardon,” she stuttered, curtsying again out of sheer embarrassment.

“I asked if you were hungry after your long walk?”

“No... that is, yes.”

“Well, just go down to the kitchen and cook will give you some bread and ale.”

Lena looked at her Agatha, who nodded slightly. Then she turned and walked towards the door through which they had just entered. Resting her hand on the wooden handle, she hesitated, turning about again.

“It’s fine, child,” Meisterin assured her, “just turn left. The kitchen is at the end of the hall. Tell cook I sent you.”



Lena stared at a little red leather bag, tied at the top with a long, red string.

Chapter Two

It took Lena only a few weeks to settle in. Her main jobs, it quickly became clear, were to scrub the hall, to help cook in the kitchen and to be sent on errands. As well, there were the regular times each day that she ate with and had devotions with all the other beguines. These devotions consisted of reading tales of martyrs, women and men who had played significant roles in the life of the church. Lena had been assigned a room with a much older woman, a Gertrude Rosslin. Sister Gertrude, as she was asked to call her, was garrulous, snored and seemed to be intensely interested in Lena's background. Bedridden a great deal of the time, she rarely left the confines of the room.

"Where are you from, child?"

"Hagenau, sister Gertrude."

"Why are you here? You are still almost a child? No young suitor?"

Lena blushed. "No, sister Gertrude."

"Where are your parents, child?"

"They are dead, sister Gertrude."

"Who paid your entry fee into Gotteshaus zum Wolf?"

This was a difficult question, a question Lena had also asked herself. Like as not, Agatha had paid it, perhaps from some of the gold coins in the little leather bag. Lena slept with the bag tied to her undergarments.

"Child, I asked you a question."

"I don't know, sister Gertrude."

"Did no one ever tell you that lying is a wicked sin, child? It will earn you years and years in purgatory."

"But I truly don't know, sister Gertrude."

"My father paid for my fee. Though I should be free to marry, he said, should

a proposal come my way, should a good man wish to make me his spouse."

"Perhaps," Lena opted, smiling at the older woman who had wisps of grey escaping her cream cap, "a good man will still come and want to marry you. I should not be surprised."

But she knew in her heart that this truly was a lie. For sister Gertrude, truth be told, was not handsome, and neither was she easy to live with. There was a wart on her chin and she had the misfortune to be slightly cross-eyed. As well, she constantly ordered Lena, and whoever else was about, to do things for her. "See if cook has a sweetmeat, child," and "Bring me a drink a water," and "Have the goodness to rinse that stain out of my pillow".

A week after her arrival at Gotteshaus zum Wolf, sister Gertrude caught Lena

carefully studying the room they shared. She was trying to ascertain whether or not there might be a hiding place somewhere – a small spot where she might stash away her little bag.

“What are you looking for, child?” Sister Gertrude had eyes like a hawk and from her corner chair it seemed that she ruled the room.

“I know that you are looking for something,” she persisted when Lena did not answer. “Come, come, child, we are roommates and roommates help one another. You have been absent-minded most of the afternoon. I noted it well. Why don’t you tell me what is bothering you.”

The words were comforting and seemed caring. Before she knew it, Lena had confided in sister Gertrude the how and why of her need for a secret place. At the end of her story, the older woman’s rheumy eyes were closed and Lena thought she might have fallen asleep. But then she spoke.

“I know where you might hide your money, a good place. I’m the only one who knows about it and no one will ever find it.”

“Where is it?”

Slowly and painfully, sister Gertrude got up from her chair and walked over to the bricked wall, the wall opposite from where she had been sitting. Counting ten layers upward from the floor and twenty sideways from the door, she fingered one of the bricks. Pushing it sideways, it gave way, revealing a small niche. A green cloth bag stood in the niche, presumably holding sister Gertrude’s valuables.

“It is my special hiding place,” sister Gertrude said rather proudly, “and I have had it for these past twenty years without anyone ever finding it.”

“Oh,” Lena replied, moving to stand next to sister Gertrude. She noted that the space was big enough to also contain her leather bag.

“Well,” sister Gertrude barked, “go ahead. Put your money next to mine.”

“You will not,” Lena began a trifle nervously, “ever tell anyone, or take any...” She stopped. Perhaps asking someone if they would steal your money was not the proper way to say things. Perhaps suggesting such a thing might just

trigger some dishonesty within a heart.

“Take any of your money?” sister Gertrude responded in a rather loud and very offended voice, “What are you saying, Lena? I have just shown you where my money is and you think that I would...”

She stopped and retraced her steps back to her chair where she sat down, her wart quivering with indignation. Lena felt ashamed.

“No, of course you wouldn’t.”

“Well, then, go ahead, put your money next to mine and then please go and get some oil from the dispensary to rub onto my sore leg.”

Lena complied. But later in bed, she worried that she ought to have kept the bag on her person. Now she had two people to worry about – sister Gertrude and cousin Jurgen.

She stopped and retraced her steps back to her chair where she sat down, her wart quivering with indignation.

The third week that Lena came to reside in Gotteshaus zum Wolf, the Meisterin summoned her and asked if she might enjoy helping to care for a child whose mother was a little weary and who was shortly to have another baby. It seemed to Lena that to leave the confines of the beguinage and the constant grumbling complaints of sister Gertrude, although she was genuinely fond of the old lady, would be wonderful.

“Oh, yes, Meisterin,” she breathed, “I would be happy to help.”

“Agatha informed me that you had skill in caring for children, and that she had instructed you in helping to care for newborns.”

“Yes.” Lena again breathed assent eagerly even as the Meisterin continued.

“Our beguinage is often asked to aid families in the community. But the money earned will be given to us, you understand.”

The words cavorted around Lena, but she scarcely heard them. She could only think of the new freedom coming her way. She had been so used to roaming about with her father, to accompanying Agatha on calls, that the beguinage had seemed stifling. This seemed heaven sent.

“There is something else, Lena.”

“Yes, Meisterin.”

“A Brother Jurgen, a cousin, he said of your mother, called here last week. Perhaps I should have spoken to you earlier. It was just at the time that you were running an errand for sister Gertrude – a rather lengthy errand. So I could not call you to meet with him. He was rather insistent that he see you and said something about you having some money that should be entrusted to him?”

Lena did not reply. She did not know what to say. Truthfully, she would never

entrust any money to cousin Jurgen. Perhaps she ought to take the bag out of the hiding place and carry it on her person again. Meisterin was watching her closely. She felt her cheeks getting red.

“What should I tell Brother Jurgen if he should call again, Lena?”

“That I have no money for him,” Lena forced out of a dry throat, “but, yes, he is a distant cousin.”

“Well, if he is a relative, there is no harm in a visit, is there? I’m sure the misunderstanding about the money can be cleared up. He seemed a pleasant enough priest. Apparently, he was recently placed in Strasbourg and enjoyed a visit with sister Gertrude. Did she not mention it to you?”

“No, Meisterin.”

“Well, no matter.”

The interview ended on that note.

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Your Budgeting Specialists

GIFTED HANDS

BY BEN CARSON
240 PAGES, 1990



If you've enjoyed the Hallmark movie of the same name, well, the book is even better. Ben Carson grew up in poverty,

with only one parent, but her prodding, his own hard work, and many God-given opportunities allowed him to become a brain surgeon.

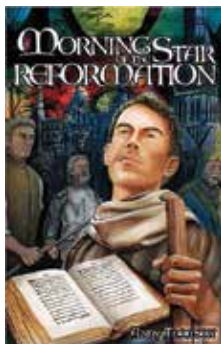
The title of the book comes from a passage where Carson explains that he chose neurosurgery because of an "acceptance of my God-given talents of eye-and-hand coordination – my gifted hands – that fitted me for this field." Carson is a charming author because, while he knows he is gifted, he also knows he is flawed. And he knows Who to give credit to for the amazing work he has accomplished.

This biography concludes in 1987 right after the operation that first garnered him national attention: the separation of conjoined twins who were connected at the head. But I read the book after seeing his appearance at the 2013 American National Prayer Breakfast, which got people talking about him as a potential presidential candidate. With President Obama just two seats away, Dr. Carson gave an outstanding speech on the perils of America's fiscal irresponsibility. It was a soft-spoken, brutally pointed, rebuke of Obama's trillion dollar deficits.

I'd recommend this to anyone fascinated by medical dramas, or inspirational true-life stories, or anyone who wants to know more about the background of this rising political figure.

MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION

BY ANDY THOMSON
134 PAGES, 1988



If Martin Luther was the "Father of the Reformation" then John Wycliffe must be its grandfather. Like Luther would one hundred years later, Wycliffe

argued for sola scriptura, translated the Bible into his own language, denounced the pope and spoke against indulgences.

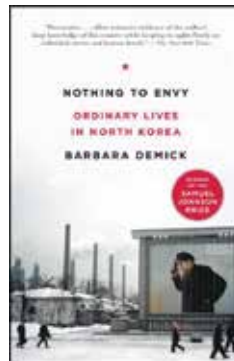
Morning Star of the Reformation is a fictionalized biography of Wycliffe that gives a fascinating feel for the time. It is intended for children 12 and up, but I think adults looking for a quick introduction to Wycliffe will enjoy it too. It is downright fun to be able to look back in history and see how God was setting the stage a century beforehand for the reforming work that Luther and Calvin would do.

It is important to note this is a fictionalized biography. This is particularly true in the first half of the book, about his young life, where most of it is made up. That isn't a big problem if readers understand which characters and events are fact and which are fiction. However the author waits until the last two pages to clarify how much of this is actually historically accurate, so my one criticism of this very enjoyable read is that the last two pages would have been much better placed at the very beginning of the book.

So my heartiest recommendation... if you read the last couple of pages first.

NOTHING TO ENVY

BY BARBARA DEMICK
316 PAGES, 2010



When my wife started reading journalist Barbara Demick's biographical account of six North Koreans who escaped to the south, I knew

I was going to have to read it after her. The snippets she shared were so bizarre they read like fiction. A few examples:

- On a visit to the capital city of North Korea the author watched soldiers in crisp uniforms approach and lay a wreath at a statue of "Eternal President" Kim Il-sung. "When they bowed low as a show of respect, their pants hitched up just enough to reveal that they weren't wearing socks." A country too impoverished to provide their soldiers with socks makes it a priority to impress foreign visitors with these sorts of military displays.
- The two most famous stores in North Korea are known as Department Store #1 and Department Store #2.
- The author gave some books to a young man who had escaped to South Korea. "His favorite was a translation of *1984*. He marveled that George Orwell could have so understood the North Korean brand of totalitarianism."

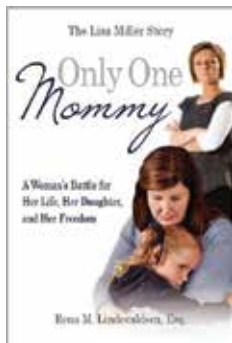
This is an eye-opening, well-written look at what's going on behind the borders of the world's most secretive country.

North Korea is a brutal, repressive regime so while the author avoids going into any vivid detail, the subject matter, and a couple crudities, makes this a book best suited for older teens and above.

Longer reviews of some of these books can be found on ReallyGoodReads.com

ONLY ONE MOMMY

BY RENA M. LINDEVALDSEN
140 PAGES, 2011



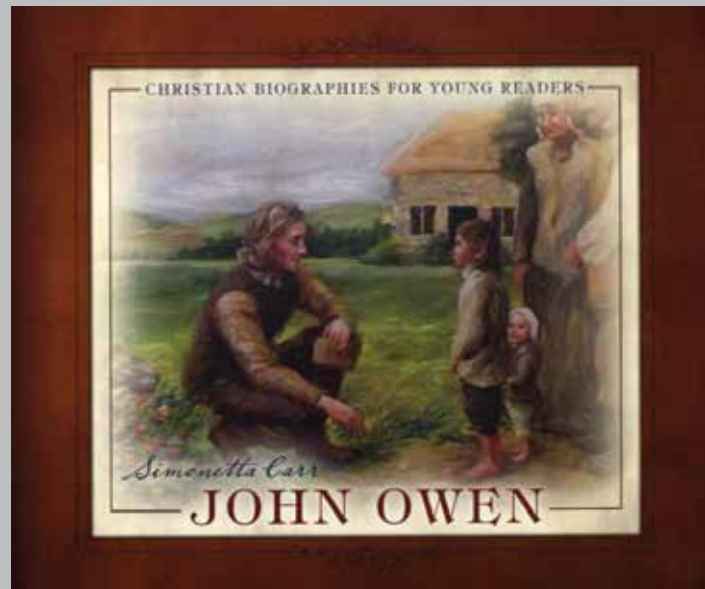
How far would you go to protect our children from government-ordered indoctrination? And would you go to jail to

protect someone else's children?

There was nothing hypothetical about these questions for Lisa Miller or the pastor she turned to for help. *Only One Mommy* is her lawyer's account of the seven-year custody battle Miller fought against her former same-sex partner. Miller conceived her daughter Isabella in 2002 via artificial insemination. Two years earlier she entered into a civil union with another woman, which they dissolved in 2004. Miller, now a professing Christian who has renounced homosexuality, tried to block her former partner's court-ordered visits with her daughter. The woman wasn't biologically related, and Miller wanted to protect her daughter from being exposed to her former partner's sinful lifestyle. After seven years Miller lost her court battle, but, instead of complying and giving her child up, she fled the country, and is now thought to be hiding in an Amish community somewhere in Central America with her daughter.

The book was published in 2011, but the story continues. In January 2013 the American Amish pastor who helped her flee, and who refused to tell authorities where she had gone, was sent to jail, then released two months later while his case is under appeal.

Quite the story, and quite the relevant book – these are issues we need to ready ourselves for so that, should the situation arise, we are prepared to go and do likewise.



JOHN OWEN

BY SIMONETTA CARR
62 PAGES, 2010

John Owen had a complicated life. He was involved in three English Civil Wars. His country went from a monarchy to a republic and back again. He was a "Nonconformist" who spoke out against his Anglican Church and still, somehow, managed to stay out of prison. He had 11 children, and buried them all. And he found time to write: Owen is renowned as one of the most influential and theologically dense English Puritan authors.

To capture this man in a way that children will be able to understand is quite a challenge, and Carr doesn't quite manage it. Her summary is too much timeline – what he did when – and too little story. We don't get a feel for who this man was.

That said, this is probably the best possible children's biography that could be written for such a complex character. Children unfamiliar with the time and place will have no difficulty understanding what is going on. That is no small feat! And Carr has peppered the book with pictures – 37 over its 62 pages – with more than a dozen of them full-page paintings. So there is lots to look at.

The book also fills a gap. Few of us keep studying Church history after leaving school, so there was a pressing need for a children's biography – if we don't get introduced to John Owen in school, we aren't likely to meet him afterwards.

This, then, is not a captivating book – a child isn't likely to pick it off the shelf himself – but it remains a very good one. With a teacher's or parent's prodding to get them started, students will find this an easy read, and very good introduction to a pivotal figure in Church history.

The next morning, after communal devotions, Lena walked a few streets north of the beguinage and began to help care for little Bernhard Gertner. Herr Gertner, his father, was a merchant and often gone from home. Bernhard was a healthy boy, save for the fact that he had a deformity, a stiffness in his neck. Frau Gertner, heavy with child, told Lena that it was because he had been swaddled wrongly by the midwife after he was born. The doctor had recently prescribed a new salve which Lena was to rub on the child's neck early each morning when she arrived at the Gertner home. Every day day Lena patiently rubbed the cream on the boy's small neck from the crucible in which it came, all the while talking to Bernhard, telling him stories – stories which she had heard from her father.

Weeks passed peaceably. Cousin Jurgen did not return to Gotteshaus Zum Wolf. Lena began to relax. She enjoyed taking care of Bernhard, and Margarethe Gertner, Bernhard's mother, grew very fond of Lena. Because Bernhard was six, he had begun formal education, and attended a Latin school. Every half past nine, with the exception of Sunday, after the salve was rubbed on, Lena and Bernhard set off from the Gertner home to walk the several blocks down to the Lehrmeister's home.

"I have to learn to write well," Bernhard confided in Lena, as he held her hand and skipped along, "so that I can help father when I am bigger."

She nodded gravely.

"Where is your father, Lena?"

He had asked this question before, but she had never answered him.

"He is dead," she now answered suddenly, even as a horse-drawn carriage passed by on the street. Some pedestrians loitered about shops, and the occasional beggar sat by the curb. Beggars were actually not allowed in Strasbourg. But what are you to do, Lena thought, if you had nothing at all?

"What is dead, Lena?"

She stopped walking and stood still. The church spire of the Cathedral overshadowed them

"What is dead, Lena?" The little boy persisted, looking up at her with his neck at an awkward angle. "Does dead mean you can't

play with your father anymore? I know that our cook had a cat that died. It got really stiff and couldn't move and then..."

"Hush," Lena answered, beginning to walk again, and pulling the child along rather too quickly for Bernhard's liking.

"Why are you cross, Lena?"

Twisting his face up again, the child perceived that tears were running down Lena's face, and not being able to conceive of any sorrow that could not be fixed by a kiss, he stopped so quickly that his hand slid out of hers. She stopped

"He was rather insistent that he see you and said something about you having some money that should be entrusted to him?"

also, wiping her cheeks with the back of her hand.

"Don't disobey, Bernhard." The words came out rather muffled.

"I'm not disobeying," the boy said, and then stepping close to her, he flung his arms around her waist, continuing, "don't worry, Lena, I won't die. I don't even know how to die."

"Dead," said Lena, "dead is gone... dead is not there..."

She halted and the tears began again. Bernhard pulled her over to the church steps. They were standing right by them and it seemed logical to him that they be used for sitting.

"I heard Mutti talking about dying. She said that when the new baby comes she might die."

He leaned heavily against Lena, his small arm about her waist.

"You might be late for school, Bernhard, if we keep talking and not walking."

"Mutti," the boy continued, not paying heed, "has an eagle stone to help her be healthy while she is carrying the baby. It is a hollow, round stone and has a rock

inside it that rattles when you shake it. She wears it round her neck on a gold chain and the baby can hear it."

He looked up at her with a smile, again painfully twisting his neck as he did so.

"Mutti wore the same stone when I was in her belly. It strengthened me, as you can see."

Lena could not help but smile down at him. "Yes, you are a strong boy."

"Well, except for my stiff neck maybe. And when it is time for the baby to be born, the stone will be tied to Mutti's right knee. It is called an eagle stone, Lena, because it fell down from an eagle in the sky."

She nodded and he was relieved to see that her tears had stopped. She smiled again, but the smile suddenly froze on her face and a look of fear appeared.

"What is it, Lena?" Bernhard carefully turned his head towards the space where his caregiver was looking. But he saw nothing unusual.

"It's nothing," the girl replied.

"Yes," Bernhard persisted, "I know you saw something that scared you."

"Well," Lena admitted nervously, "I thought I saw my cousin, a Brother Jurgen, standing in the street looking at me. He..."

She broke off and half stood up. Bernhard's arm fell down, and she took it to pull him up as well.

"He is a priest, and I have only seen him a few times, so I can't be sure."

"Let's go into the church," Bernhard suggested, shaking loose his arm and walking backwards up the steps as he scanned the street, "No one can hurt you there. Besides that, Pastor Zell might be there."

"Pastor Zell? Who is he?" Lena cautiously followed the boy up the stairs.

"He is my friend, and he is teaching me catechism."

Lena let herself be guided along up the church steps. Casting backward glances at the street, she was uneasy and her body was stiff with apprehension. What if cousin Jurgen was here? Was he searching for her? Reaching the top, Bernhard opened the great Cathedral doors. Lena followed him into the massive building. The door fell shut behind them and the echo of its closing



Single line caption here ----

reverberated with a cavernous sound throughout. The hollow noise frightened her and instinctively she reached for Bernhard's hand.

"It's all right, Lena," he whispered.

Hand in hand, they walked into the sanctuary. A scattering of people were seated in the benches, praying, heads down. Without thinking, Lena began walking on her tiptoes. Exquisite stained glass windows on both sides of the sanctuary were awesome and matchless. Holding her breath, Lena continued with Bernhard to the front of the church, turning right into a small narthex.

"This, is the chapel of Saint Lorenz," Bernhard whispered, "and that," he added, pointing to a wooden dais at

the front, "is Pastor Zell's pulpit. Some people did not, you see," he explained in a voice wise beyond his years, "want him preaching from the big pulpit in the main Cathedral."

"Why not," Lena answered automatically, even though she did not know Pastor Zell, nor who it was whose pulpit he was not allowed to use.

"Because..." Bernhard began, but cut his sentence short when he noted a man approaching them.

"Hello, Bernhard," the man said, "it is not Thursday, you know. Did you forget? Pastor Zell did preach earlier but he is not in presently."

"I thought he might be in, but that is all right," Bernhard replied.

"And who is your friend?"

The man, possibly in his mid-twenties, had a kindly face with thoughtful eyes. He very much reminded Lena of her father.

"This is Lena. She takes me to school and home again each day."

"Hello, Lena."

Because the girl seemed shy and did not reply, the man continued. "My name is Paul Josselin. I am one of the carpenters who disassembles and moves Pastor Zell's portable pulpit each time he preaches and I am surely honored to meet Bernhard's friend and keeper. He surely needs a keeper."

Lena smiled and blushed at the same time but still said nothing in reply.

"Lena thought she saw a man out..." Bernhard did not get any further. Lena's hand shot out and covered his mouth.

"Hush, Bernhard."

"Was someone bothering you?" the carpenter asked.

"She thought," Bernhard went on undeterred, as he pulled Lena's hand away from his mouth, "that this priest..."

"Priest?"

"Yes, that is what Lena said, she called him Brother Jurgen..."

Again Lena's hand shot out, and tried to cover Bernhard's mouth in another attempt at privacy. "You must hush your talk, Bernhard..."

"But Herr Josselin is strong and he will protect you. Won't you, Herr Josselin?"

After these words, Bernhard grinned at Paul Josselin, who smiled back but at the same time motioned that Lena should sit down on one of the pews and rest. Hesitantly, she took a step back and sat down.

"Please forgive my intrusion," he spoke softly as he sat down next to her, "but be assured that I mean only to help you if you face some sort of difficulty. I am well acquainted with the Gertner family who will vouch for me. You need not hesitate to trust me."

Lena blushed again, and the redness of her cheeks well became her. Paul Josselin noted it and wondered greatly how such a seemingly refined and gentle girl came to be in the company of Bernhard who had sat down on his other side. He ruffled the boy's hair.

"Were you working on the pulpit, Herr Josselin?"

"I was indeed. I just waiting for Martin Schutzer to help me store it away until the next time."

Paul Josselin continued studying Lena's face as he spoke. The girl was staring at the floor. She seemed afraid of something and he instinctively felt a need to protect her.

Content to miss school, Bernhard wedged his form between Lena and Paul. Leaning against Lena, he whispered to her. "I told you that it would be good to come in here."

"In the long run you are not in my hands, but in the hands of God our Father. And no one can harm you there."

"I'm not sure what your mother will say when she hears you missed part of your lessons," Lena whispered back, but she did not stir from her spot.

"If you wait, I will conduct you safely to the Lehrmeister's house."

Lena nodded to Paul Josselin. She felt he could be trusted and surely, anyone who was welcome in the Gertner home was a good person?

"And remember," Herr Josselin continued, as he rose and walked towards the pulpit, "in the long run you are not in my hands, but in the hands of God our Father. And no one can harm you there."

Lena studied her right hand. It was a small hand, to be sure, but callouses had formed on the fingers from her routine scrubbing of the beguinage hallway. How peculiar it was to think of a person in a hand. What a strange way to phrase something.

"If you wait a few minutes, I shall be ready." Beginning the dismantling of the pulpit, Paul Josselin uttered the words reassuringly, and Lena nodded.

On the way to the Lehrmeister's home, Paul Josselin continued to speak kindly. An able guide, he pointed out various

homes and landmarks as they walked, noting with pleasure that she appreciated his help and knowledge. She had just begun to softly question him about Pastor Zell when someone touched her shoulder from behind.

"Hello, cousin Lena."

Like a dried-up plant, the voice was spindly, but she heard the words as if they had been shouted from one of the rooftops in the gabled street. Turning ever so slightly, she saw the profile she had been dreading silhouetted against

the side wall. She answered not a word but stiffened perceptibly. Bernhard felt it instantly and twisted his crooked neck to look up at her. Lena had clenched her hands into fists and she shivered. Painfully Bernhard turned his head further and saw the priest, as did Paul Josselin.

"Lena," whispered Bernhard, "is that the man you are afraid of?"

Brother Jurgen heard the child's words clearly. "Afraid of me?" he said much louder than his greeting had been, "Afraid of her own mother's cousin? That is ridiculous!"

Paul Josselin stopped and turned to face the priest. "Hello," he said agreeably, "did you wish to speak with this young woman?"

"She is my cousin," Brother Jurgen answered stiffly, "and who might you be, sir?"

Paul Josselin did not answer, but contemplated Lena. Her hands, still clenched into fists, regarded the priest with a mixture of distaste and surprise.

"Why," asked the girl, "is it that you follow me and say that I must entrust you with my money? And," she added emphatically, "I do not want to be placed in a convent."

"A convent?" Paul Josselin interjected.

"You, nameless sir," the priest rejoined, "have nothing to do with this conversation at all. So kindly hold your tongue."

Bernhard had taken one of Lena's hands, and undoing the fist, had clasped her fingers within his own. Paul noted this out of the corner of his eye and he patted the boy on his head.

Lena was very pale now and her voice trembled as she spoke. "My father had no liking for you, cousin Jurgen, and I am quite well settled in the beguinage."

"Yes, I know this. The truth is that I have visited your roommate, sister Gertrude, to make certain that you are well situated."

He hesitated and then continued. "Sister Gertrude has assured me that you are doing well. Yes, she told me... many things."

Lena became even paler. Paul Josselin moved closer to her. "I think we might continue walking," he said in a low voice to the girl, "and you can rest assured that I shall not leave you unprotected."

She smiled at him. "Thank you, Paul."

Unconsciously and with ease, she had called him by his first name and this pleased him greatly. They turned away from Brother Jurgen, but as they continued down the street, the priest called after them.

"You are my ward, you know, Lena.

This I can prove as your mother was my second cousin. And Agatha Lichtenberg, who placed you in the beguinage, is only an acquaintance."

Lena shivered again. Bernhard and Paul flanked her, each one walking on either side. A few moments later, Bernhard painfully grinned up at Lena.

"That was exciting. I much prefer that to reciting Latin phrases."

Both Lena and Paul smiled.

"I think," Lena ventured, "that we should return to the Gertner home, for it is by this time almost the hour at which Bernhard is finished with his lessons."



“Well?” a hoarse whisper interrupted his thoughts, “are there enough coins for my prayers, priest?”

Chapter Three

The summer months passed. Lena was included in many of the Gertner family activities. Invited to attend church with them, she heard both Pastor Zell and Paston Firn preach on a regular basis. Her small knowledge of the Scriptures increased, as did her desire to know more. She also regularly saw Paul Josselin. A frequent visitor to the Gertner household, he was much loved by the entire family. Taking a keen interest in Lena, he encouraged her in all manner of things. She and Bernhard visited his workshop, admired his wood carvings and furniture, and often brought him the message that he was expected for a meal at the Gertner hearth.

It was in mid-September, two months after Frau Gertner had been delivered of a healthy baby girl, that Meisterin summoned Lena to her quarters once more.

“You are doing well in your work with the Gertners,” she began “Frau Gertner has expressed great satisfaction in your

handling of both Bernhard and the new baby. She also very much appreciates your help in the household.”

“Thank you,” Lena murmured.

“However,” Meisterin continued, taking hold of a letter which lay on her desk, “there is some matter which I must discuss with you, a matter of great import.”

“Yes?”

“I have here a document, sent to me by the prior of the Strasbourg Dominicans, which indicates that not Agatha Lichtenberg, but one born Jurgen Ostermeier, also a Dominican, is your guardian. I believe, he was the cousin who called a number of months ago.”

“Cousin, yes. But guardian he is not. Indeed, he is not,” Lena vehemently cried out, “My father liked him not, so how could he be?”

“Well, this document states that he is,” Meisterin said very matter-of-factly, “and I must act accordingly. The prior states, unequivocally, that it was your father’s wish that you enter a convent.”

“That is not true,” Lena began, “It was not at all his wish that I...”

“Yet,” Meisterin interrupted, softening her voice, “I will not act on the document immediately. I will give you a few days to inquire as to the validity of this document. But if you cannot disprove it, I have no choice but to turn you over to the care of Jurgen Ostermeier.”

Sister Gertrude heard Lena cry most of that night, but she could not get the girl to talk and it was with a heavy heart that she watched Lena set off for the Gertner’s the next day. Bernhard noted immediately that Lena was out of sorts. She rubbed the salve onto his neck with such vigor that he winced.

“You’re hurting me, Lena.”

She kissed his face and professed remorse. “I’m sorry, Bernhard.”

“What is the matter, Lena?”

“I...” she began, and repeated, “I...”

And then, much to his dismay she began to cry, not even stopping when he wrapped his arms around her and said that

after all, she had not hurt his neck very much, and she was the best friend he had ever had. Then, alarmed because her sobbing seemed to increase rather than decrease, he called his mother. It was only after a drink of water and much patting on the back that Lena calmed down.

"Can you tell me what is the matter, child?"

"I," Lena began, still hiccupping slightly after her bout of weeping, "I have to go into a convent."

"A convent?" Frau Gertner and Bernhard spoke simultaneously.

"Yes," Lena repeated, "a convent. My cousin Jurgen is with the Dominicans and they have sent a paper to the beguinage saying that I am his ward and that my father left explicit instructions that I should enter a convent."

"But is this true?" Frau Gertner asked anxiously, "Did your father leave such instructions? The Dominicans are very powerful. Although many monastic clergy have deserted their monasteries in the last few years, there are still those that have a lot of power."

"No, it is not true! My father did not want me in a convent. He instructed me to listen to the new preachers, even," she went on in a less vehement voice, "as I have been doing."

"Then how comes it about that such a document..." Frau Jurgen stopped, bewildered.

"It is likely a forged paper," Lena said, "but who am I, an orphan alone in the world, to disprove such a matter. Cousin Jurgen will, in all likelihood, be proved right and I..." She broke off and tears formed in her eyes again.

"I'm sure," Frau Gertner said softly, "that something will happen. Remember Lena that you recently professed to me your love for Jesus? Remember that you said you believed He died for you? Would such a Savior let you be sent to a convent where you would not hear His blessed words taught anymore?" Frau Gertner's gentle discourse grew louder as she spoke and she emphatically added the words, "Not if I can help it."

Overcome by misery, the girl did not answer her. Frau Gertner tried again.

"Who is Jesus, Lena?"

"He is," Lena's words were barely

audible, "...is God, Who became man so that He might come and save me. He became a little child, just as I was," her voice grew just a bit stronger, "and learned from His earthly father, Joseph and His mother, Mary. Jesus was a carpenter like His earthly father and worked with His hands. But later, He died for our sins, so that He could hold us in His hands forever."

Lena held out her hand and Frau Gertner took it.

"Indeed, well spoken. Remember that, child. He holds you in His hand always. And now I shall send word to the beguinage that you are needed here this night. Then we can speak to Herr Gertner, who will be home tonight, and perhaps he can think of something that we might do to help."

Balthazar Gertner was a large man and a kindly one. When he laughed, his belly shook, as did the table. But when he heard of the nature of Lena's problem, his face became grave.

"You haven't seen the document?" he queried Lena.

She shook her head. "It was probably most unwise of me not to ask Meisterin to see it," she replied, "But I did not."

"We can go to a lawyer," he said, "but that will cost us money."

"I have some money," Lena stated in a rather straightforward manner, "and it is that money which cousin Jurgen wants. But it is at the beguinage. I have hidden it. My father left it to me and Agatha gave it to me when she brought me to Strasbourg."

"How much money?" Herr Gertner asked.

"The money, give the priest the money, Lena... and he will say prayers for me... please, Lena."

"Fifty gold coins," she said.

"Fifty gold coins?" he repeated a trifle disbelievingly, "Are you sure?"

When she nodded, he went on, "Such a sum is more than enough to pay a lawyer. But you will have to go back to the beguinage to retrieve it. Do you want me to go with you tomorrow?"

She nodded again.

"Very well, then. We will proceed to retain a lawyer, and," he smiled at her, "we will succeed with God's help."

The next morning, Herr Gertner and Lena, with Bernhard watching from the window, set off for the beguinage. It was a blustery, dark and rainy day. Lena recalled the time she had walked towards the beguinage with Agatha some half year before. At that time, the beguinage courtyard had seemed peaceful and quiet, whereas now it was wet and cold. The flowers, dead and bedraggled in the early autumn, boded distress and Lena felt her heart hammer so hard that surely Herr Gertner must hear it. He, even as Agatha had done before, rang the bronze bell attached to the wall. When the portress, sister Adelgard, opened the door, he introduced himself as Lena's employer and asked to see Meisterin. It had been agreed upon, that while Herr Gertner saw Meisterin, Lena was to go to her room, take her money from the wall niche, and wait for Herr Gertner in the courtyard.

Sister Adelgard showed Herr Gertner, who was all compliments and smiles, to Meisterin's quarters. Consequently, the portress paid little attention to Lena who fairly flew to her own room. But when she opened the door, stepping over the threshold, she was horrified to find cousin Jurgen standing at the foot of sister Gertrude's bed. Lying open-mouthed, sister Gertrude's breathing was little more than a rattle, and her eyes were closed. Cousin Jurgen swiveled his head towards Lena when she came in.

"Well, Lena."

His voice was hoarse, gritty almost. Sister Gertrude moaned at the sound. Her closed eyes opened to half-slits. Lena took a step towards the bed.

“Is she ill? Is sister Gertrude ill?”

“She is dying. Meisterin sent a messenger early this morning asking me to come and administer the last rites. I was about to do just that.”

Sister Gertrude’s eyes suddenly opened wide. They stared at Lena with a piercing look, a look which made her uncomfortable.

“You must use the money, Lena,” sister Gertrude’s voice was very soft, but also very compelling, “You must use the money.”

Cousin Jurgen dug a thin, claw-like hand into the burse which was hanging around his neck from a cord. Taking out the pyx, he placed it on the table right next to the bed. Then he genuflected to the pyx. Next he took a container out of his cassock, a container holding water, holy water, and began sprinkling it around himself.

“Sister Gertrude?” Lena whispered.

Sister Gertrude did not open her eyes, but she did repeat, very softly but raspingly clearly, “The money, give the priest the money, Lena... and he will say prayers for me... please, Lena.”

Cousin Jurgen threw Lena a menacing look before he took his place on the right side of the bed, next to sister Gertrude.

“I have come to administer extreme unction,” he began, “Do you want to confess, daughter?”

The words rolled out smoothly and rapidly, as if he were in a hurry to administer the sacrament. Lena stood very still. The coverlet on the bed moved up and down, up and down.

“Do you want to confess to me, daughter?” cousin Jurgen repeated.

It seemed that at this point, sister Gertrude had gone beyond speaking. There was only wheezing, only labored breathing. Cousin Jurgen stared at the prostrate woman for several minutes. Then he spoke: “It would be wrong of me to put the host on her lips. I do not know if she is able to swallow at this point.”

He turned suddenly, sideways, so that his back was not to the host, for it was considered wrong, Lena knew, to turn one’s back to the host. Again glaring at Lena malevolently, he hissed words at her. “Do you not know that it is wicked to withhold money from a dying woman who wishes the church to say prayers for

her? Surely you know that anyone who commits such a wicked sin will have to pay a heavy penance.”

Lena did not respond.

“Very well, then,” cousin Jurgen went on, “I have warned you.”

Turning his back to her, he reached into his cassock, taking out a vial with liquid. Lena knew the liquid, oleum infirmorum, was a specially mixed oil for those who needed supernatural assistance in dying. Cousin Jurgen poured the thick fluid onto his right thumb as he held the tub sideways. He then leaned over and put his thumb onto sister Gertrude’s forehead.

“Through this holy anointing may the Lord in His love and mercy help You with the grace of the Holy Spirit.”

The oil dribbled down sister Gertrude’s face and Lena had an inordinate desire to wipe it. Surely it would tease and offend her skin. Cousin Jurgen poured some more oil onto his thumb and next anointed sister Gertrude’s palms.

Coins clattered out – bronze coins from sister Gertrude’s bag and gold ones from Lena’s.

“May the Lord Who frees you from your sins, save you and raise you up.”

Now he was finished. Carefully putting the vial back into his cassock, he walked towards the table. After genuflecting to it, he put the pyx back into the burse around his neck. Then he once more faced Lena.

“I think,” he began in a smooth voice, “that you and I ought to have a little talk.”

“No,” she responded, “sister Gertrude has been dealt with, and now you are free to leave so that I might spend some time with her. And if you do not leave,” she went on, “I shall call out for the other sisters.”

She walked towards the door, opened it, curtsying slightly as he made to pass her, inwardly breathing a sigh of relief that he truly was leaving.

At this point Sister Gertrude moaned and Lena glanced back towards the bed. She was horrified to see that her old roommate had her eyes wide open. Not only that, she winked at Lena, a cross-eyed wink, as she called out with a feeble,

grainy voice.

“Brother Jurgen, please come back.”

Not at all loath to do so, cousin Jurgen did an about-face from the open doorway. Smiling ingratiatingly, he sidled back up to the bed. “Yes, sister Gertrude?”

“The girl will show you,” the ancient voice rasped, “show you where the niche is where she has hidden her money and my money. If she does not...” and here sister Gertrude was overcome by a paroxysm of phlegmy coughing.

Cousin Jurgen’s smile grew in proportion to the greed in his eyes. Lena stood perplexed as the priest eyed her balefully. Behind his back sister Gertrude stopped coughing long enough to grin mawkishly at the girl. Shrugging and sighing simultaneously, Lena walked over to the wall. With her right hand she pushed the brick behind which she knew her gold to be hidden. The opening cavity revealed two bags - hers and sister Gertrude’s. The priest’s eager hands slipped past hers.

“I’ll take these.”

Carrying the bags to the table he emptied them onto the wood. Coins clattered out – bronze coins from sister Gertrude’s bag and gold ones from Lena’s. Open-mouthed the girl watched – watched and counted. Several times she counted and each time the sum came to five gold coins, not fifty. Five gold coins lay flat and mute, glittering against the brown wood of the table. Cousin Jurgen fingered the gold. Lena could see him pondering.

“Well?” a hoarse whisper interrupted his thoughts, “are there enough coins for my prayers, priest?”

“Yes, indeed,” cousin Jurgen answered slowly, lifting his gaze from the coins to the bed.

“And the girl must stay here to care for me,” the voice wheezed on, “as I shall not be long for...” Sister Gertrude’s quest trailed off, and her eyes were closed once more.

“For now,” cousin Jurgen replied, “that is well. Yes, that is well.” Making a

sweeping motion with his right hand, he cleared the table of the money, emptying the coins into the pocket of his cassock.

“And now I must go,” he went on, “but I shall be back in a few hours to see how you fare. Or,” he added, “I shall send another brother. It is no matter. We all serve the church.”

Sister Gertrude commenced moaning painfully, and Lena took a step towards the bed. The priest slipped past her again, so near that she could smell his sour breath.

“Farewell for now, cousin,” he whispered, but she did not respond.

The door closed behind him and Lena contemplated what had just occurred. She could not fathom it.

Then, just as she was trying to decide whether or not to go into the hall and look for Herr Gertner, sister Gertrude sat up, flung away the covers from her scrawny form, swung her thin legs over the edge of the bed and sat up. And all around her on the mattress lay gold pieces – gold pieces in the crumples and creases of the sheet and of her nightgown.

“Whatever...?” Lena began and stopped and then added, “How...?”

“It was simple,” sister Gertrude explained between guffaws and coughs,

“I knew I had to stop him from pestering

you. He was always here asking questions, always on the lookout how he might get his fat hands on your inheritance, so I thought if he gets a little money... just a little, it might put him off the scent.”

Lena was at her side in an instant after this explanation, putting her arms around the old lady. She kissed her, not at all minding the wart. To her surprise, the woman began to weep. “You,” she sobbed, “have been kinder to me than many, girl. Why should I not help you against that wheedling fat...”

A knock on their door stopped her short. Both women were startled into quiet. Sister Gertrude quickly tucked

her legs back under the covers, hiding the gold. Lena slowly went to answer the knock. To her relief, the caller was Herr Gertner.

“May I come in?”

“Of course,” Lena said, glancing hesitantly over her shoulder at sister Gertrude.

But sister Gertrude lay with her eyes close, seemingly dead to the world.

“Is she...?” Herr Gertner let the question dangle.

“No, no,” Lena answered quickly, “She is only sleeping.”

“Well,” Herr Gertner continued softly, “Meisterin says you might come and spend the night with us. I told her we



“...her hands were enfolded by someone else, by someone sitting across the table from her”

wanted a lawyer to look at the document and she willingly allowed me to take it with me. Only, I had to promise to return it to her tomorrow.”

Lena nodded.

“But from what I have seen of it, child,” Herr Gertner spoke very gravely now, “it certainly appears genuine. I fear we shall need some good advice to get you out of the clutches of that money-hungry cousin of yours. Were you able to get the money of which you spoke?”

At this point sister Gertrude opened her eyes and sat up. Herr Gertner was slightly taken aback. She smiled sweetly at him, cross-eyed, wart trembling, even

as she reached under the covers exposing the gold coins. For all her nervousness and anxiety, Lena began to laugh. After a moment, sister Gertrude’s cackle joined her, and then Herr Gertner’s belly-booming bass mixed in with the women’s merriment.

Later that evening, as Herr and Frau Gertner sat at table together with Lena and Herr Schatzer, the lawyer, they marveled at the events of the day.

“I have learned,” Lena spoke softly, “that God is truly One Who works in miraculous ways.”

Frau Gertner nodded and warmly smiled at her. “Yes, He is.”

“I’m afraid though,” Herr Schatzer spoke, papers in front of him, “that this document which you have brought home appears quite authentic. Brother Jurgen is clearly shown to be your sole surviving relative.”

His voice and his being oozed authority and everyone fell morosely silent. Lena stared at the tablecloth. A few moments ago, she had been full of faith, hoping against hope that all would be well. The rich fabric of the tablecloth danced in front of her eyes. Herr Schatzer cleared his voice.

“There is a loophole,” he added.

From the tablecloth, Lena peered down at the hands which lay folded in her lap.

“That loophole is...” Herr Schatzer continued slowly in a low baritone, and then stopped because at that moment there was a loud knock at the front door.

Lena’s hands tightened in her lap. Would that be cousin Jurgen come to claim his guardianship? No, it could not be. Meisterin had said they could have a few days to sort things out. Herr Gertner rose to answer. Frau Gertner reached over and patted Lena’s shoulder.

“Don’t worry, child,” she encouraged, “you are presently quite safe here.”

Lena smiled wanly. After all the events that had occurred today, shouldn't she be thankful?

It took some ten minutes before Herr Gertner came back into the room. He was followed by Paul Josselin.

"I'm really sorry to intrude. I stopped by the house to ask Herr Gertner something about a carpentry project, and then he..." Paul began, "that is to say, he told me that..." Stopping, his voice became softer as he caught Lena's eye and he went on slower and in a deeper tone. "... that you were in trouble, Lena, and I wanted to offer my help."

"Please sit down, Paul," Frau Gertner said, "we are glad you are here."

He took the chair opposite Lena, all the while holding her gaze with a gentle smile.

"Herr Schatzer was about to tell us of the possibility of a loophole," Herr Gertner posited, "which might aid Lena. Were you not, Herr Schatzer?"

"Yes, I was," the lawyer responded.

"Well," Frau Gertner said in a rather breathless voice, when Herr Schatzer did not immediately continue, "please let us know what, in your estimation, the chances are of Lena's freedom."

The lawyer smiled at her.

"It is difficult to phrase," he started, "but it comes down to this. If Lena were married, certainly a husband's right of guardianship would override that of a second cousin."

"Married?" Frau Gertner repeated.

"Married?" Lena whispered.

In agitation, her hands moved from her lap onto the table. They lay alone, did they not? There was no way out. She had feared this. In spite of the money, in spite of the help of these dear people, she would fall into the hands of... But at that moment, her hands were enfolded by someone else, by someone sitting across the table from her – by a carpenter.

"Would you be content to become my wife, Lena?" Paul Josselin spoke the words out loud, oblivious of everyone but Lena.

And she, all tears and doubts dissolving, stared at her covered hands.





"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."
John 12:21

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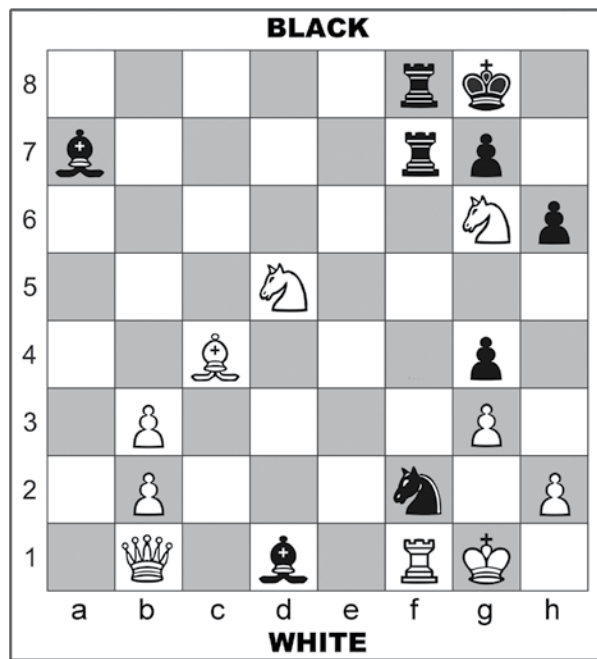
**IF OIL IS MADE FROM
DECOMPOSED DINOSAURS,
AND PLASTIC IS MADE FROM OIL**



**ARE PLASTIC DINOSAURS
MADE FROM REAL
DINOSAURS?**

ENTICING ENIGMAS & CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

Chess Puzzle #205



Riddle for Punsters #205

"Humour in a Timely Manner?"

Why did the watchmaker turn down a job at which he would receive a salary? He wanted to be paid by the _____. Why was the female clockmaker made secretary of her Bible Study Society? She was the one most familiar with m _____. What is the most appropriate place in which to buy a watch or clock? A _____ h _____ store.

Problem to Ponder #205

"Catchin' Up with the Missus"

A man is out jogging and gets 1/5 of the way across a bridge when he sees his wife at the middle of the bridge. She is walking in the same direction as he is. If they both travel at constant speeds and both reach the end of the bridge at the same time, he jogs how much faster than she walks?

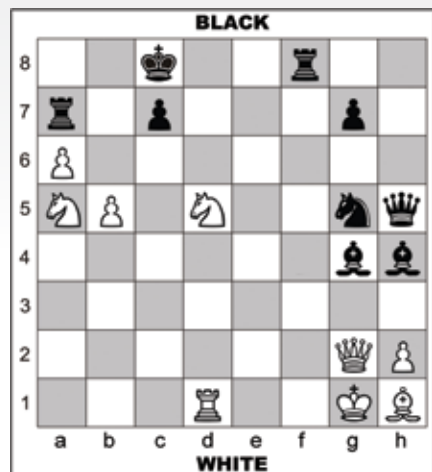
WHITE to Mate in 3

Or, If it is BLACK's Move,

BLACK to Mate in 4

Last Month's Solutions

Solution to Chess Puzzle #204



White to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. N-K7 ch K-N1
2. Q-R8 ch RxQ
3. QN-B6 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- N-R6ch
2. QxN B-B7ch
3. K-N2 BxQ mate

A beautiful queen sacrifice!

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ----- N-R6 ch
2. QxN B-B7 ch
3. K-B1 BxQ ch
4. B-N2 QxR mate

IF

1. ----- N-R6ch
2. QxN B-B7ch
3. K-N2 BxQ mate

Algebraic Notation

1. ----- Ng5-h3 +
2. Qg2xh3 Bh4-f2 +
3. Kg1-f1 Bg4xh3 +
4. Bh1-g2 Qh5xd1 ++

IF

1. ----- Ng5-h3 +
2. Qg2xh3 Bh4-f2 +
3. Kg1-g2 Bg4xh3 ++

Answers to Riddle for Punsters

#204 - "Keeping the Jets Shipshape?"

Why is it that jets moving slowly toward the runway are said to **taxi** while taxi cabs going very fast in a city just seem to **fly** by? Why is it that a ship's hold is filled with **cargo** while a courier van delivers a **shipment** of parts.

Answers to Problem to Ponder

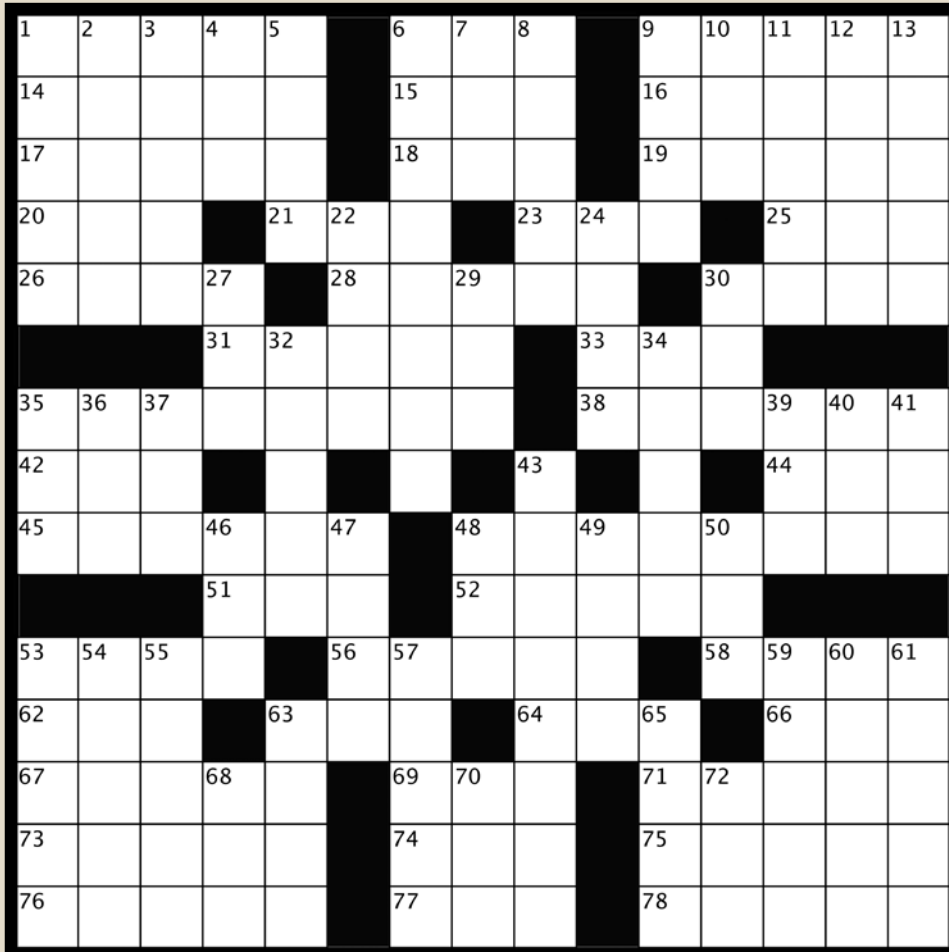
#204 - "Fowl Migration from our Nation!"

Two flocks of Canada geese are headed south to find a warmer place to spend the winter. One flock has five more geese than the other. If the larger flock was four times larger, it would have eight more geese than would be in five times the smaller flock. What is the total number of geese in the two flocks that are flying south?

Let N be the number of geese in the smaller flock, so N+5 in the larger. $4(N+5) = 5(N)+8$ so $4N+20 = 5N+8$. Subtract 4N both sides and get $20 = N+8$ so $12 = N$ (smaller flock) and so $N+5 = 12+5 = 17$ (larger flock). **Therefore the total number of geese is 12 + 17 = 29 geese.**

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

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SERIES 20 #7

PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

- 1. The second king of Israel
- 6. Farmyard sound
- 9. She hid the spies in Jericho
- 14. A licorice-flavored plant
- 15. Mischievous child
- 16. At a higher place
- 17. Troll
- 18. Took a seat
- 19. Machine part that pivots around a point
- 20. Grease
- 21. Political action committee (for short)
- 23. Face part
- 25. Unit of work
- 26. Close by
- 28. A darkened area in a painting
- 30. A branch of learning
- 31. Cold, in Paris
- 33. Play part
- 35. Reed instruments
- 38. Beach sights
- 42. A single unit
- 44. Indoleacetic acid
- 45. Looked at carefully
- 48. Contrite
- 51. A time period
- 52. Game result
- 53. French fat
- 56. Absalom's daughter
- 58. Abel's father
- 62. Color
- 63. Each
- 64. Doctor of Medical Science
- 66. Mass (suffix)

- 67. French school
- 69. Fish eggs
- 71. Even
- 73. Quick and agile, archaically speaking
- 74. Have possession of
- 75. Representative
- 76. Wean, in Scottish
- 77. Soaked
- 78. Spoken language

DOWN

- 1. Philistine god
- 2. Ms. Oakley or Orphan's first name
- 3. Four-stringed musical instrument
- 4. Distinctive doctrine
- 5. Extending far down
- 6. Vexatious action
- 7. Dutch grandparent
- 8. Chose
- 9. Lung sound
- 10. Lincoln, to his pals
- 11. Wait near at hand
- 12. To turn aside
- 13. Big ice chunks
- 22. Immediate abbreviation
- 24. Positive votes
- 27. Request for proposal (abbr.)
- 29. Balaam's mode of transportation
- 30. Had dinner
- 32. Body of water
- 34. Seat
- 35. Type of jazz
- 36. One, as of old
- 37. Horse command
- 39. Tell a fib
- 40. Local area network (computer term)
- 41. Calendar abbreviation
- 43. Self-indulgent and luxurious

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



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