

Does the Bible have anything to say about gun use and gun control?

Jon Dykstra

On July 20, 2012, a gunman in Aurora, Colorado, killed 12 and injured another 58 at a midnight showing of the film *The Dark Knight Rises*. According to media accounts the gunman used a 12-gauge shotgun, a handgun, and a semi-automatic rifle with a 100-round drum magazine.

Three days later New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, in his response to the shooting, suggested that police officers across the country “say we’re going to go on strike, we’re not going to protect you unless you, the public, through your legislature, do what’s required to keep us safe.”

Inexplicable for Canadians

He was calling for stricter gun control laws. It was a ridiculous statement, of course, but in the US the debate over guns is always heated. The vehemence with which the two sides fight is hard for Canadians to fathom. We have guns, too, but not nearly as many. A 2007 Reuters report estimated that the US had 90 guns per 100 people, while Canada had only a third of that, with just 30 per 100 people.

And it would seem, consequently, that we have far less gun violence. In 2002, the most recent year for which statistics were readily available, there were 149 murders in Canada involving a gun. In the same year the U.S. had 10,800 gun-related murders. On a per capita basis that means the US, with three times as many guns, *had eight times as many gun-related murders*.

So does less guns mean less crime? It would seem so.

But an argument can also be made that in a gun-saturated culture, like the US, stricter gun rules only restrict access for law-abiding citizens, leaving them empty-handed, while criminals with no scruples avail themselves of the many available illegal guns.

So what’s a Christian to think? Gun use and gun control are topics about which the Bible is rarely brought to bear, likely because very few passages seem to be directly applicable. But two texts do give us valuable guidance.

Another side to the issue

“The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.” - Proverbs 18:17

The Aurora theater shooting made international news, but a shooting in the city that took place two months earlier didn’t receive nearly the same press coverage. On April 22, at about 3 p.m., when the Sunday afternoon service was ending at the New Destiny Christian Center, a man drove into the church’s parking lot and shot and killed a woman who came out of the church building. An off-duty police officer at the service then went outside and shot the gunman.

It’s understandable that this didn’t receive the same coverage - the gunman shot just one person before he was stopped. But we should note what sort of bias this introduces into any debate about gun control: we read about gun massacres on the front page in big bold headlines, but when a gun is used to stop a killer, and only one person is killed, the story is a small item tucked away on page 16. This is systemic media bias - the type of bias inherent to newsgathering (that recognizes “Dog bites man” is not a story, and “Man bites dog” is). It is not intentional bias on the media’s part.

But when we only hear about guns being put to destructive use, and don’t read about the innumerable times when they are used to stop destructive people, we are definitely hearing only half the story. And, as Proverbs 18:17 teaches us, that makes it hard for us to properly evaluate this issue.

In an opinion piece in the *New York Daily News* published five days after the shooting, academic John Lott focused on another part of the story that is often overlooked. He noted that:

Friday’s horrible shooting in Colorado occurred in yet another place where guns are banned. And that’s consistent with a trend: With a single exception, every multiple-victim public shooting in the U.S. in which more than three people have been killed since



Guns don't kill people. People kill people.

at least 1950 has taken place where citizens are not allowed to carry their own firearms.

Four per cent of Colorado residents have concealed gun permits, but this mass murderer didn't have "to worry that one of his targets might be armed" because the Cinemark theater in Aurora, "like others run by the chain around the country, displayed warning signs that it was illegal to carry guns into the theater."

In a radio interview soon after, Lott noted that we would all recognize how foolish it would be to post a sign on our house that said: "There are no firearms in this home." We would likely be the first house on the block to be robbed. We shouldn't be surprised that mass murderers are gravitating to locations where their intended victims are less likely to be armed. Gun-free zones are one gun control measure that doesn't make sense.

A thief's life is precious to God

If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, the defender is guilty of bloodshed. - Exodus 22:2-3

While our first biblical passage could have us reconsidering whether gun-free zones are effective gun control measures, a second passage points us to a way in which guns should be controlled.

In the US several states have passed what's called "Castle Doctrine" laws that allow homeowners to shoot and kill someone breaking into their house. This is most often applied to instances where the homeowner has reason to fear for their safety, but some states apply this Castle Doctrine to instances of burglary.

Though it might be legal to shoot burglars in these states, this form of Castle Doctrine stands opposed to what we read in Exodus 22:2-3. There God tells us that a home invasion during the night - when it is impossible to know whether the invader is a thief or murderer - can be repelled with extreme violence, even killing. But in the daytime, when it is easier to see if our family is in immediate peril, and when we can tell it is only a thief, not a murderer, we cannot kill him, even though he is in our house, taking our stuff. God values life so highly He will not allow us to protect our property by taking a thief's life.

There are, then, legal ways in which guns can be used that we know should be made illegal.

Conclusion

The Bible doesn't speak directly as to how our governments should legislate gun usage and gun ownership but it does give us a lot to consider. It is clear that, while guns can be used to protect lives, they should not be used by private citizens to protect their property. We are also told that knee-jerk reactions to gun violence are unwise and unhelpful - in the passage in Proverbs God tells us that if we want to act with wisdom we will need to hear both sides, and do our research. Pushing for stricter gun restrictions seems an obvious response to the events in Aurora, but there are intelligent people on the other side of the issue who we need to listen to before we come to any conclusions.



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Nota Bene

News worth noting



Justifying pedophilia?

by Anna Nienhuis

This summer James Cantor, a prominent homosexual psychologist, suggested pedophilia may be a genetic pre-wiring in the brain, and thus beyond their control. He argued that long-offending pedophiles are indulging their interests wrongly, but such cases are rare, and it is more common that people with such genetic tendencies must “continuously resist...throughout their entire lives,” a struggle which merits sympathy.

While brain differences, as proven by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) studies, may indeed be evident, this public call for sympathy opens the way for excuses and a normalization of this dangerous tendency, rather than a realization that the real issue at the root of the problem is sin and a desire for each person to do what is right is his own eyes.

Chelsea Schilling's "Has the normalizing of pedophilia begun?"; wnd.com; July 5, 2012

Judge strikes down Canada's anti-euthanasia law

by Raoul Kingma

On June 15, British Columbia Justice Lynn Smith struck down the Canadian law against euthanasia as unconstitutional, opening the door for assisted suicide to be fully legalized in Canada.

In reaction, lawyer Anne McTavish penned a column for *The Province* and pointed to the situation in the Netherlands to warn Canadians about the ramifications of this ruling. In the Netherlands, too, it was the courts – a 1973 decision – that started them down the road to legalization. While strict guidelines were created to restrict when doctors could euthanize a patient, and to protect terminally ill patients who had not given their consent, the state of affairs steadily degraded. Today Dutch doctors under-report the number of assisted suicides, and also engage in *involuntary* euthanasia without significant legal ramifications. McTavish cited alarming statistics from 1990 when 4 per cent of all deaths in the Netherlands were euthanasia cases where the patient *had not consented*. Furthermore, 1,040 of these were killed not only without their consent but also without their knowledge.

Canadians can expect to follow this same descent down the slippery slope. As we read in Romans 1, when people reject God and his standards, He gives them over to their depravity and lets them wallow in the very filth and destruction they're seeking. But God's Word is potent, and He may yet change the heart of our country. Let us continue testifying to the dignity of the life of all God's image bearers, and continue defending the life of our vulnerable, sick and weak.

SOURCE: Picture by John P. Sonnen and used with permission.



Canadian courts go where Parliament voted not to go

by Anna Nienhuis

British Columbia's Supreme Court issued an opinion in June calling the ban on assisted suicide unconstitutional. Justice Lynn Smith wants the debate reopened, and wanted to allow an immediate exception for Gloria Taylor, a B.C. woman with Lou Gehrig's disease who is fighting for a "right" to die. In early August the BC Court of Appeals agreed with Justice Smith's original ruling, but in late August the federal government announced they would appeal once again.

In 2010, the Canadian Parliament soundly defeated a bill (228 to 59) legalizing assisted suicide, citing concerns regarding senior abuse, lack of access in Canada to palliative care, and the danger to people with disabilities, among other things. Now, two years later, the issue is back. Since suicide is not illegal, Justice Smith argued, assisted suicide should not be illegal, either. However, the issues that caused Parliament to vote against assisted suicide in 2010 remain, and there remain strong opponents to euthanasia gaining a legal hold in Canada.

SOURCE: Steven Ertelt's "Canada appeals decision striking law banning assisted suicide"; lifenews.com; July 13, 2012

TRINITY

*God eternally exists as three persons,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God,
and there is one God.*

THREE FOUNDATIONS

THERE IS ONLY
ONE GOD

THERE ARE
3 DIVINE PERSONS

THE PERSONS ARE
**COEQUAL
AND
COETERNAL**

THREE ERRORS



Modalism claims that there is one person who appears to us in three different forms or modes.



Subordinationism claims that the Son and Holy Spirit are subordinate to the Father in nature and being.



Tritheism denies that there is only one God and instead claims that there are three Gods.

*In the doctrine of the Trinity
beats the heart of the whole
redemption of God for the
redemption of humanity.*

KESMAN SAVINCS

Each of the three sides of the triangle is a foundational truth. When any of these truths is denied, the other two sides make an arrow that points to the resulting error.

Example: If you deny the equality of each of the three persons of the Godhead (thus removing that line from the triangle), the other two lines now point to the error of subordinationism.



BAD ILLUSTRATIONS



Three-Leaf Clover

Illustration: The Trinity is like a three-leaf clover because the clover has three parts yet remains one plant.

Error: Polytheism

Explanation: Each leaf is only part of the clover & cannot add to the whole clover. In the Trinity, each person is fully God.



Water/Ice/Steam

Illustration: The Trinity is like water because water can be ice, steam, or water and remain H₂O.

Error: Modalism

Explanation: Water is never all three forms at the same time. In the Trinity, God is always and at all times each person.



Father/Son/Husband

Illustration: The Trinity is like a man who is at the same time a father, a son and a husband. He is one man, but has three roles.

Error: Modalism

Explanation: Father, son and husband describe functions or roles of one person. In the Trinity, God is three distinct persons rather than one person in three modes or roles.

ONE GOOD ILLUSTRATION



FUNCTIONS OF THE TRINITY

God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God. Yet each of the persons of the Godhead is distinct in his primary function in relating to the world through creation and redemption: The Father plans, the Son executes, the Spirit applies.

God the Father is the great Architect of creation, redemption and consummation, who plans, decrees and sends. The Son and Holy Spirit are willingly subordinate to him in role even while equal in deity.

God the Son obeys the Father, accomplishes redemption, and with the Father sends the Holy Spirit to apply the work he has begun. In all things he glorifies the Father.

God the Holy Spirit brings to completion the work planned by the Father and begun by the Son. In all things he seeks to glorify the Son.

*The doctrine of the Trinity is the
differentiating doctrine of the Christian Faith.*

D. MARTY CLOUTIER

Resources

The Forgotten Trinity | James White
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit | Brian Walsh
Systematic Theology | Wayne Grudem



WWW.CHALLIES.COM

“Visual Theology” II by Jon Dykstra

Earlier this year Reformed blogger extraordinaire Tim Challies (Challies.com) started a series of infographics he titled “Visual Theology.” These infographics use pictures and words to give a better understanding of theological topics like the Trinity, the attributes of God and the Tabernacle. He has graciously allowed us to share some of these with *Reformed Perspective’s* readership. (The first one, on the books of the Bible, appeared in the May issue.)

This one, on the mystery of the Trinity, highlights the truth we know about God’s triune nature, and quickly explains some common errors. Fans of St. Patrick should note that the Shamrock or three-leaf clover illustration commonly associated with him doesn’t actually serve as a good illustration of the Trinity.

These graphics are also available as variously-sized posters. Anyone interested in buying a print can visit imagekind.com/challies-posters.

Short-term missions: do they work?

by Anna Nienhuis

The Gospel Coalition's Darren Carlson recently tackled the topic of short-term missions with his provocatively titled article: "Why you should consider cancelling your short-term mission trips."

Often the trip is geared around an exotic "vacation" location, with extra days for touring and relaxing built into the schedule. He cites studies showing that projects are sometimes invented to keep mission groups busy, or make them

feel useful, while in fact the building they construct, paint, or fix, is rarely used.

Often, the cost to a mission team to do the work is significantly higher than the cost of hiring locals and providing them with materials. For example, Carlson found that "U.S. missions teams who rushed to Honduras to help rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Mitch spent on average \$30,000 per home – homes locals could have built for \$3,000 each." In addition, there is the sad fact that parents will withhold food and clothing from their children, or even deliberately mutilate

them, in order to solicit more sympathy from Westerners and take home more begging profit.

All this reminds potential volunteers that careful research and reflection should be done before embarking on short-term missions trips. Westerners need to recognize that we are not superior or a "gift" to third world nations. Mutual respect and real relationships will never be developed on short-term missions that are focused on the goats.

SOURCE: Darren Carlson's "Why you should consider cancelling your short-term mission trips"; thegospelcoalition.org; June 18, 2012

Chick-Fil-A: Getting chicken (and marriage) right

by Wes Bredenhof

Back in the early 1990s, Chick-fil-A made a brief appearance in Canada. It was in a most unlikely location: a food court at the University of Alberta. Already then, the chain had a reputation for being closed on Sundays, and its owner was well-known as a Christian. However, at the U of A their reputation was based more on its free waffle-fries for students whose metabolism had not yet conspired against them.

Lately Chick-fil-A has been in the news south of the border because of some comments about marriage by its president and CEO, Dan Cathy. In an interview, Cathy affirmed his belief in the traditional (and biblical) model of marriage between one man and one woman. A firestorm soon erupted in the media. Before long the mayors of Boston and Chicago were weighing in and proclaiming that Chick-fil-A would never be welcome in their cities. Homosexual activists loudly objected to the "hate" being spewed by Cathy and his restaurant chain. Before long there was a conservative reaction to the liberal reaction. At the encouragement of former presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee, thousands of Americans celebrated "Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day" on August 1st. Chick-fil-A restaurants were packed with customers, proving that there really is no such thing as negative publicity.

This is a bizarre story in several ways.

First, as many have pointed out, a few months ago even President Obama was not on board with the idea of homosexual

marriage. Yet a Christian business owner who affirms his belief in biblical marriage is singled out as the object of scorn and protest.

Second, why should anyone care what Dan Cathy thinks? He's in the business of selling chicken, and he should be able to believe whatever he wants. He became a convenient target because he's a Christian. Moreover, as another pundit pointed out, the infuriated masses don't seem too concerned about how the Arab bosses of OPEC regard homosexuality. And the mayor of Chicago is all too eager to welcome

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, despite his oft-expressed hatred for Jews – and homosexual marriage.

We can applaud Dan Cathy for taking his bold stand. He's a man of integrity and courage, and he's tried to build his business on Christian principles. North of the border, some small Canadian business owners have taken similar stands and paid the price through human rights complaints. Who knows what the future holds? Perhaps Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day illustrates a shift in the tides, and perhaps that will be good for Canada, too.



FrancisSchaefferStudies.org's Dan Guinn created this graphic as a response to the Chick Fil-A controversy and was surprised with the reaction: "The graphic struck a nerve this weekend...our most prominent page received nearly 150,000 page views over the weekend."

Syria and South Sudan: Should we step in?

by Jeff Dykstra

Two Bashirs have been giving the powerful nations of the West ample reason to consider military action. Syria's ruler, Bashar al-Assad, has continued the brutal policies of his father by killing about 1,000 people a month over the last year and a half in response to the protests and armed resistance against his rule. And in

Sudan, Omar al-Bashir continues ethnic cleansing and genocidal attacks to gain territory (including oilfields) from his new neighbor, South Sudan.

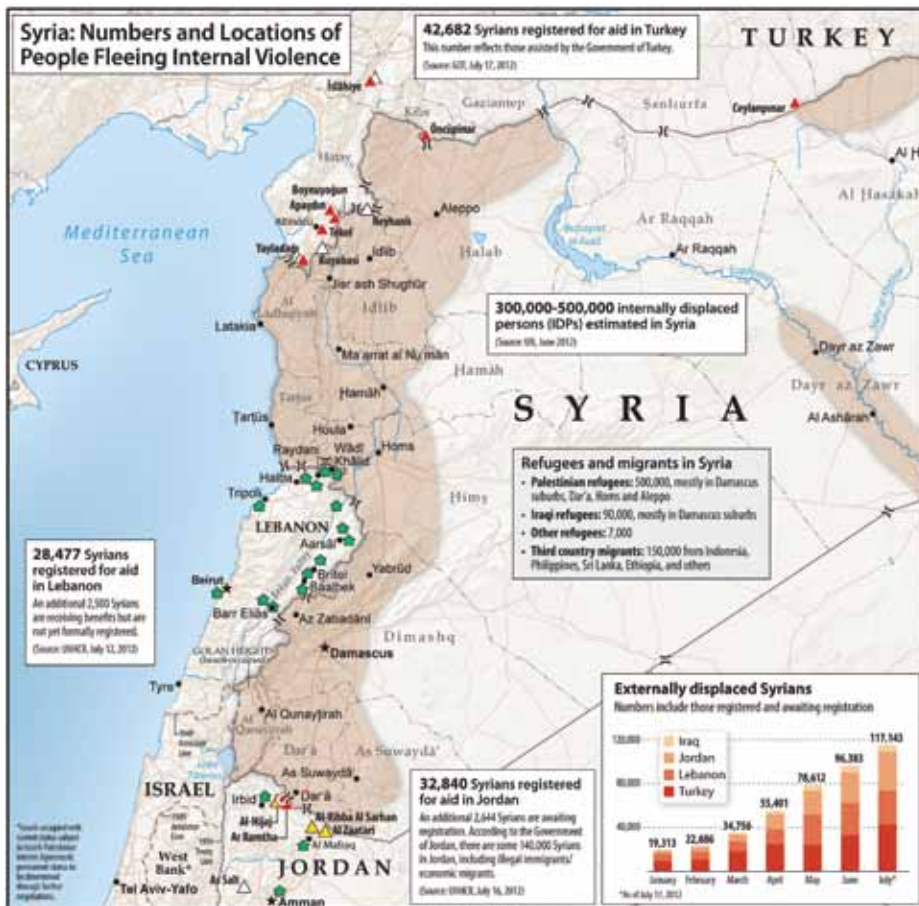
The sheer number of deaths that can be laid at the feet of these two Bashirs would seem to provide Western countries with all the reason they need to step in.

However, if stepping in means military intervention, we need instead to step back and mind our own business. Whether it is done by encouraging rebellion or by direct militaristic intervention, regime change is playing God. It is the taking on of a role He has not given to any country or government, so we must not do it.

The mess in Afghanistan and Iraq has made the idea of invading countries less appealing. However, since the Arab Spring, the idea of just "helping along" people's protests against Arab dictators has gained support, for three big reasons:

1. Western powers get to look like the good guys because we're not actually invading.
2. Most of the Arab Spring protests have involved the demand for democratic government. Since democratic governments rarely go to war against each other, replacing Arab tyrants with democracies will hopefully lead to a more peaceful world.
3. Finally, we don't have to put any "boots on the ground"; it is the people of each country who'll do the hard and dangerous work of staging a rebellion.

But that last word – *rebellion* – points to a major flaw in this strategy. Paul tells us in Romans 13 that the authorities that exist have been established by God – even the unjust and repressive authorities. Does this mean that the only judgment that tyrants will face comes after their deaths? Well, Psalm 82 hints at an answer that might give hope to the more warlike



US government map, posted online July 19, 2012
(www.humanrights.gov/2012/03/05/situation-in-syria/)

among us by detailing God's indictment and sentencing of men like this.

Overthrown by God

We read there the perfect description of a tyrant. They are described as those who "defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked" (verse 2). These dictators ignore God's commands for their rule that they should,

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless;
maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.
Rescue the weak and needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
(verses 3-4)

So what happens to these people? Verse 7 tells us: "...you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler." This at least leaves open the possibility that their death and their fall will be linked – that they will fall in the course of history, as so many already have. The historical record is one long chronicle of those who take power violently being overthrown just as violently.

Overthrown by the people?

But who does God intend to overthrow such rulers?

If a country's citizens find their ruler tyrannical, are they permitted to "judge him" and rebel against his rule? No. Romans 13 indicates that governments are to judge their people, not the other way around. Even in our democracies, where we have the blessing of being able to choose our rulers, we the people are not entitled to judge them once we have selected them; if a democratic government flagrantly abuses its authority, we have the courts as our option, not revolution. So God does not empower the people to overthrow their rulers.

As well, as the late Chuck Colson warned in February this year, whether we are assisting rebellions, or overthrowing governments ourselves, there will inevitably be unintended consequences. Just consider the recent rebellions in Egypt and Libya. Egypt's recently

elected president Mohamed Morsi is a radical Islamist and leading figure in the Muslim Brotherhood – democratically elected, but hardly the sort of ruler we were hoping for. And Libya is only just gaining an elected government now – a government in which independents will be courted by liberals and Islamists. It is hardly certain that the government that replaced Muammar Gaddafi will be an improvement.

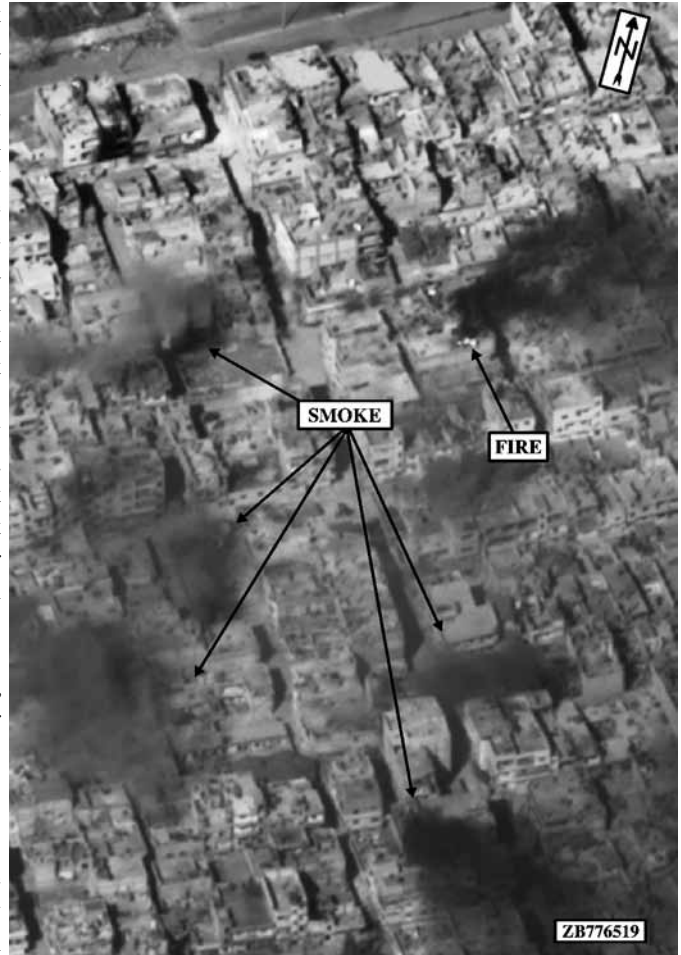
Judgment of rulers by the people is, then, neither Biblical nor effective.

Overthrown by us?

However, in the last 75 years, many rulers have been judged not by their own people, but by other governments. So how about invading these countries and overthrowing their governments ourselves?

Both Iraq and Afghanistan have proven difficult to turn into stable pro-Western countries. Again, look closely at Romans 13. Nowhere does Paul suggest that governments are to judge each other. Christian just war theory suggests that a government may invade another country to protect its own citizens, but even that does not necessarily mean overthrowing the other government. Self-defense is the intent of such an invasion.

There is also a practical reason not to overthrow other countries' governments for any but clear reasons of self-defense. An invasion done for self-defense doesn't result in the same mess as one intended to punish a government that shields terrorists (as with Afghanistan) or as a pre-emptive war (as with Iraq). World War II is a clear



US government satellite photo showing what seems to be an artillery bombardment of the city of Homs by the Syrian Army back in February.

example. Because the US did not attack until it or its allies had themselves been attacked (by Japan and Germany), it had the moral credibility to step in and rebuild its former enemies after the war. Note how much more hated and controversial the attempt to build accountable government has been in Iraq and Afghanistan, partly because the Western invasions of those countries never had the same clear justification of self-defense as the Allied invasion of Europe and the Pacific had in World War II.

Overthrown by the world?

So what if we set up a body bigger than any national government to judge governments' treatment of their own citizens, like the UN or the International Criminal Court (ICC)?

Making the world safe(r) for democracy

by Jeff Dykstra

If God doesn't want us overthrowing foreign governments, but we also know that a world with more democracies is probably safer, how can we nudge the poorest, most chaotic nations of the world in a democratic direction without becoming global policemen? Author Paul Collier offers several possible solutions to help *The Bottom Billion* – his description of these poor nations, and also the title of his first book – gain security. Here are two of them from his second book *Wars, Guns & Votes*.

Stop selling arms to dictators

One helpful approach is more consistent regulation of the trade in arms. More people are killed by conventional weapons each year than by weapons of mass destruction. Ironically, the major source for the cheapest form of gun for rebels (the AK-47) in the nations of the bottom billion is the governments of those nations. Because many of the

nations of the bottom billion have very ethnically diverse societies and presidents who love power, those presidents tend to keep a very tight rein on their countries in two main ways. One is by distributing government largesse to their own ethnic groups, and the other is by building up their militaries. Unfortunately, the poorest nations also find it difficult to pay their armies very well, so their soldiers often supplement their income by selling their own weapons, or weapons stolen from government armories, to rebels, not usually from their own countries, but from other countries.

It is certainly within the Biblical function of government to prohibit its nation's arms manufacturers from selling to nations that are likely to lose them to rebels in the region. We can stop our sales to these countries.

Might, to back up what is right

But how does a president who would

like to move toward democracy and rely *less* on his military to keep him in power cope with the fact that it is his military that is his biggest job threat? Another proposal from Collier deals with this issue in a more principled way than Western democracies' usual case-by-case decisions whether to intervene.

What Collier suggests is that some rich nation(s) make a commitment with a given poorer nation's ruler that if he is willing to have a free and fair election, then the richer nation's military will step in if the resulting elected government is ever overthrown by a coup. In the past, Britain and France have actually carried out these very limited missions, and it is much easier to restore a democratic government than to overthrow a government and set up your own.

Now there is no guarantee that a democratically elected government would necessarily be one that would lead to greater freedom for its people, or would refrain from persecuting Christians or other religious or ethnic minorities, but democratic governments since World War II do tend to be more peaceful governments. As well, any given rich nation that wants to offer this kind of commitment is entitled to pick and choose the nation to which it makes it. If the nation has a large Islamist element or smoldering ethnic hatreds, then it's just not ready for such a commitment.

Conclusion

Are these proposals specifically Christian? No; however, they do enable Christian leaders to find ways to help the weak that Psalm 82 speaks of (in this case, weak nations), using the proper authority of government, and without violating other countries' national sovereignty.



In 2000, British forces intervened in Sierra Leone's civil war (1991-2002) and helped restore a stable democratic government.

Well, the book of Revelation and the experience of the early church give us no reasons to believe that either empires or a global super-empire will necessarily make the world a better place. Lord Acton (1834–1902) reminded that while “power tends to corrupt, ...absolute power corrupts absolutely.” If such an international body became as repressive as the governments it is intended to counter, there would be no way to find a free country outside its reach. As well, there is no guarantee that the ICC would not also, for instance, consider the conduct of Canadian and American soldiers to be war crimes. And while seeing Syria’s Bashar al-Assad or Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir in court would be satisfying, the ICC’s indictment also gives these dictators no option but to fight on. If they surrender, they will be sentenced!

There is also the practical problem of what would happen next in their countries if the UN or ICC did get their hands on these dictators. Chuck Colson noted that in Syria the government is part of the Alawite minority in the country, and that the overthrow of al-Assad would likely lead to a civil war in which, just as in Iraq, no one would worry about the safety of the Christian minority.

How about in Sudan and South Sudan? A quick overview: South Sudan separated from Sudan in a democratic referendum last year and was accepted as a sovereign nation by the UN. Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan, has definitely engaged in policies of genocide and ethnic cleansing, both before and after the formation of South Sudan. There seems to be, therefore, both a clear hero and a clear villain in this situation. The problem for those who might want either Western or UN military intervention to support South Sudan against Sudan is that, as repressive as al-Bashir has been, he has conducted his purges in response to armed rebellions in his own country, and some of the forces opposing him at that time are now heavily involved in the government of South Sudan, a government that is responsible for the mysterious loss of at least \$4 billion from its own budget and that is itself sponsoring rebellions in Sudan. So while it is easy to pick out some of the villains, it is not always as clear who the heroes are.

So who helps those under threat?

Does any of this mean that we cannot help the millions displaced by the conflicts going on in the world’s trouble spots? No, but as Paul commands in Romans 12:19 just before his discussion of government,

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”

In the case of individuals, this means leaving the punishment of even something as brutal as murder to God Himself and to the authorities He has established. In the case of evil perpetrated by the authorities themselves, let us beware the temptation to play God by trying to overthrow authorities He has set up.

There are many ways to help refugees – for instance, improving the conditions of refugee camps and allowing refugees into our countries – that do not involve

seeking to overthrow a government, either by invasion or by revolt. Let us promote peaceful ways to seek peace and to help those oppressed by war, unless our governments can demonstrate that our own citizens are threatened by repressive governments. Again, listen to Paul: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18).

For more

Chuck Colson’s “Unintended Consequences: The Problem with Syria,” www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/entry/13/18842

Eric Metaxas’ “Strangers in Our Midst: Welcoming Refugees,” www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/entry/13/19836

Jeff Dykstra teaches World Issues in school, though not usually at this length.



Reformed Perspective and C.V. Benefits present:

It's all God's money!

A one-day event on practical, faithful, financial management

WHEN: November 10, 2012, 8 AM to 2 PM (lunch included)
WHO: Rev. Hank Van der Woerd, who was in the financial industry before becoming a URC pastor.
WHAT: Do you know how to honor God with your money and financial decisions? Rev. Van der Woerd will speak on this and other topics including:

***What does the Bible say about money in general?
 Why and how should Christians budget?
 Are we prepared? Estate planning, wills & insurance
 Tithing - Guidelines on giving God thanks
 Debt, and getting out from under it***

WHERE: Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church
 26655 - 24th Ave in Aldergrove, BC

*Would you like to see this event take place at a venue near you?
 We would too, and together we can make it happen! To talk about how we can bring this to your community, email the editor at Editor@ReformedPerspective.ca.*

BEST BOOKS: 3 Caldecott books *reviewed by Deborah Dykstra*

Officer Buckle and Gloria

by Peggy Rathmann

40 pages, hardcover

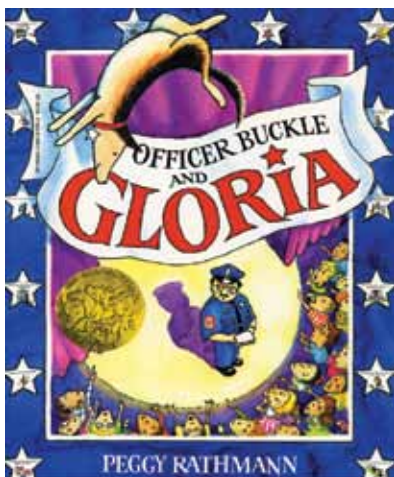
1996 Caldecott winner

Officer Buckle loves his job. His favorite part is to visit the local school and share his set of numbered safety tips with the children. Although he takes his job seriously and does his best, the children are less than enthralled and tend to snooze during his presentations. Officer Buckle needs help!

One day, he gets a new assistant - a police dog named Gloria. And while Officer Buckle does his best to underline the seriousness of following safety rules, Gloria stands just out of his line of sight and demonstrates the results of NOT following Officer Buckle's safety tips. She brings the house down! But when Officer Buckle sees a videotape of their presentation his feelings are hurt, and he needs reassurance that his part of the partnership is essential too.

This is a lighthearted story with a clear message - we are better together than apart. This is true of the book as well - the text and illustrations work together perfectly. Without the illustrations, all of the humor and meaning of the story would be missing. Children (and adults) will enjoy the amusing details, including the endpapers with Officer Buckle's illustrated safety tips.

Recommended for ages 4-10.

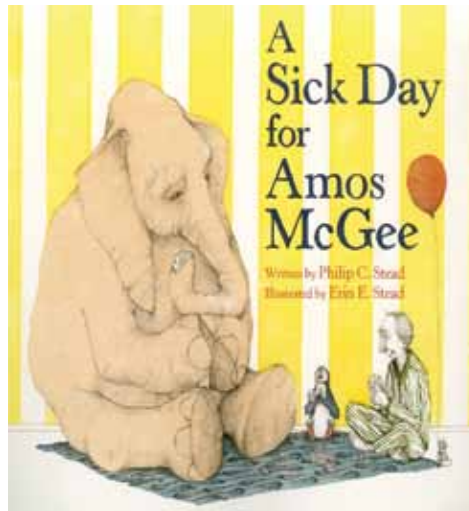


The Sick Day of Amos McGee

by Philip Stead

32 pages, hardcover

2011 Caldecott winner



Every day Amos the zookeeper sticks to his routine. He gets up early, rides the bus to work, and works hard all day. But every day he also makes time to visit his special friends. He plays chess with the elephant, sits quietly with the very shy penguin, offers a handkerchief to the rhino, and races with the turtle, who somehow always wins.

One day Amos is sick and can't go to the zoo, so after waiting and wondering for awhile, his zoo friends come to visit him. They all find ways to make him feel better, each according to their personalities and abilities.

This is a charming illustration of how friends are there for each other. Children will enjoy the details in the book's pictures, like the elephant and rhino fitting into the bus and sitting on the teeny tiny stools in Amos' house. And what child wouldn't like to have zoo animals for best friends? This is a gentle, cozy sort of book. It concludes with bedtime for Mr. McGee and his friends - perfect for sharing with little ones at the close of the day.

Recommended for ages 3-8.

The Gardener

by Sarah Stewart

40 pages, hardcover

1998 Caldecott honor book

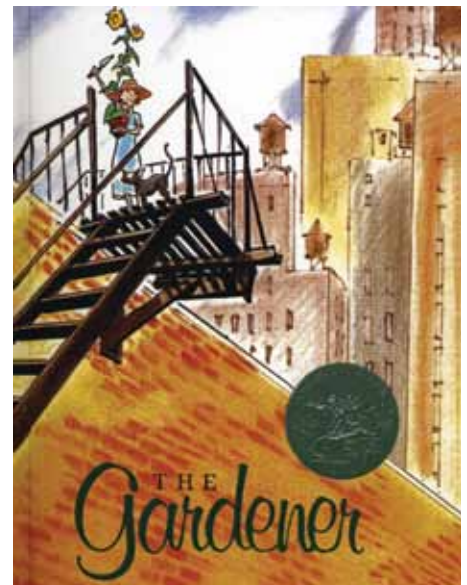
During the Great Depression, a little girl is sent to live with her uncle and to help in his bakery until things get better on the family farm. From her grandmother she has learned to love flowers and gardening, so, as well as learning to help in the bakery, she puts her green thumb to good use indoors and out. She hopes to make her uncle smile.

Both he and the neighborhood benefit from her efforts, culminating in a rooftop garden surprise and a return to her family where she can continue her apprenticeship with her grandmother.

The story is told through letters written between the two households. The illustrations show the dinginess and sadness of the Depression era, but gradually brighten as more and more flowers grow in and outside the bakery.

The Gardener reminds us that, although we might not like the changes that life brings, everyone can bloom where they are planted. Using our abilities can make a big difference to the people around us, and what we learn from others we can also pass along when we have the opportunity.

Recommended for ages 5+.



*Bury me in Kirkbride
Where the Lord's redeemed anes lie,
The auld kirkyard on the green hillside,
Under the open sky,
Under the open sky,
On the breist o' the brae so steep,
And side by side wi' the banes that lie
Streiked there in their hinmost sleep.*

(Robert Wanlock Reid)

I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live;

Yet Not I,

but Christ lives in me.

by Christine Farenhorst

The national emblem of the Scottish people is the thistle. An unusual plant to choose, perhaps? Perhaps not.

The thistle is a stubborn plant and flourishes in soil where nothing else seems to grow. Beautiful in bloom, springing up again when cut down and needing special care when grasped, it portrays not only the character of the Scot, but also that of the Kirk – the Covenant Kirk of the past.

This stubborn, persevering character is clearly illustrated in history when Charles I (born in 1600, crowned in 1625 and beheaded in 1649) insisted that religious conformity be maintained in his three kingdoms (England, Scotland and Ireland). This conformity meant an elaborate and ritualistic High Anglican form of worship.

To say that the Scottish people were upset by this policy is an understatement. Up to this time Knox's *Book of Common Order* had been in use and had never been supplanted. From small child to the venerable graybeard pew sitter in the kirk, all hearts were in turmoil that King Charles was forcing the Anglican liturgy and Laudian prayer book on the Scottish Kirk.

The spark

The year was 1637. The place was the Cathedral Kirk of St. Giles in Edinburgh, the season, summer, and the exact time July 23, between eight and nine in the morning. The church was expected to be packed. Consequently, serving maids were sent early to reserve places for their masters and mistresses. At this particular time in history, by the way, there were no seats in churches, so these maids took along their creepies, or folding stools, sitting in a certain spot until their superiors arrived.

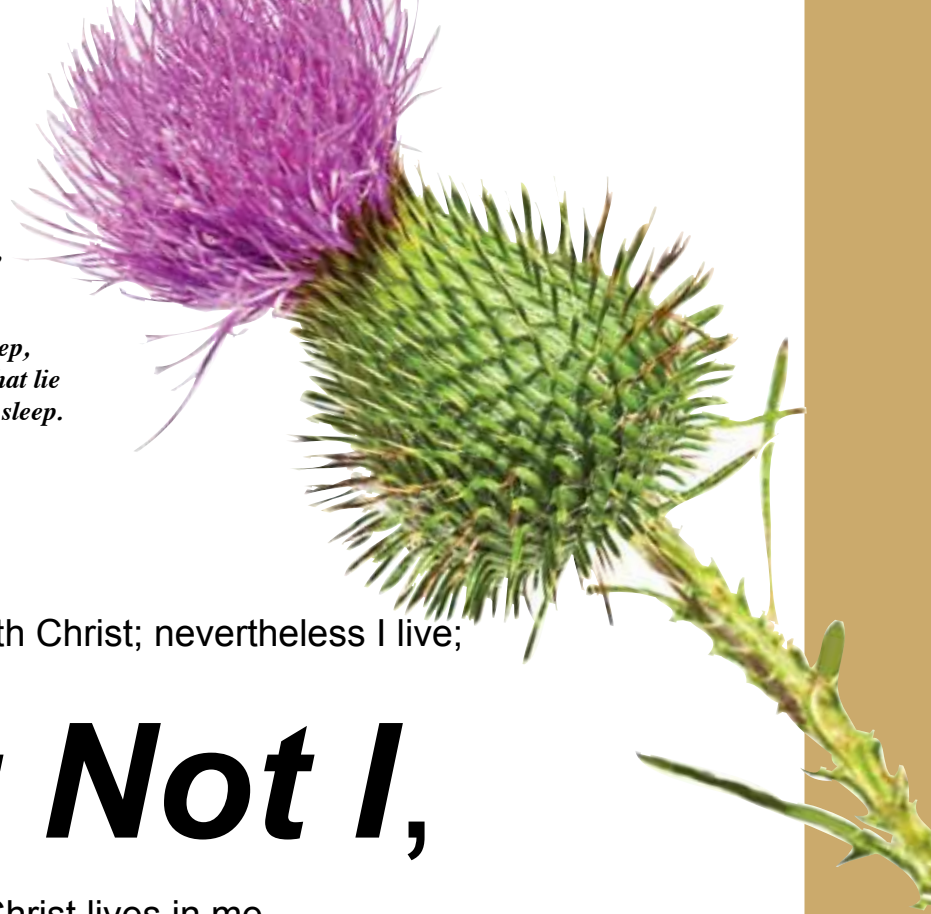
As people began to file in one by one, as they began to take their places in the church, the air was tense – tense for the common folk in their plain attire, as well as for the bewigged nobles in their grand clothes.

The usual service from the *Book of Common Order* was read. In one corner of the kirk, a historian by the name of David Calderwood sat taking notes. People were deeply aware that this would be a church service of historic proportion. The reader of the Bible made an announcement before stepping down from behind the lectern: "Adieu, my good people, for I think this is the last time of my reading prayers from this place."

As the reader turned to leave his place from behind the lectern, Dean Hannay of Edinburgh stood to take his place. The Dean was a firm believer (as was the Stuart, Charles the 1st) in the Divine Right of Kings, the concept that kings were appointed by God to rule and are accountable to no one but Him.

He was carrying a brown leather portfolio containing the hated new liturgy. Everyone eyed the portfolio. A murmur rippled through the church. At this point, some women began keening, some men began shouting and some maids started to clap their hands. Seemingly unperturbed, the Dean began to open and to read from the brown portfolio. Within seconds, however, his voice was drowned out by the pandemonium that broke loose. The Bishop of Edinburgh, who was also present, walked up to the pulpit in an effort to lend support to the Dean. It did no good.

"Traitors! Belly-gods! Deceivers! Popes!" Cries were flung at the pair of them like rotten tomatoes, and the Dean's voice was totally lost. At approximately this moment, a serving maid by the name of Jenny Geddes stood up and threw her crepie, her folding stool, at the Dean's head crying out: "Wha daur say mass



in ma lug?” – that is, “Who dares say mass in my church?”

Although the historical account of this incident has been disputed by some, it is a fact that there is a brass plate on a ledge in St. Giles in Edinburgh which reads:

Constant tradition affirms that near this spot a brave Scotswoman, Janet Geddes, on the 23rd July 1637, struck the first blow in the great struggle for the freedom of Conscience which, after a conflict of half a century, ended in the establishment of civil and religious liberty.

Possibly, after the Geddes stool incident, many other folding stools were hurled as well. It is a fact that a riot began. The entire congregation rushed the pulpit and hauled down both the Dean and the Bishop.

Magistrates, armed with halberdiers, appeared and commandeered the people out into the streets of Edinburgh. In later years, this Sunday would be dubbed “The Stony Sabbath.” Not able to contain the riotous mood of the crowd, the soldiers were at a loss as to how to prevent cobblestones from being whipped through the glass windows of the church.

And all the while the Dean, very mindful of his duty to the divinely appointed – so he thought – King Charles I, made his way back to the lectern and kept intoning from the newly appointed *Book of Prayer*. When he was done, both he and the Bishop made for the door, which was, by this time, splintered and wrecked by the barrage of stones which had been hurled at it. One Johnston of Warriston, a lawyer, recorded in his diary:

The Bishop both after the for anoone’s sermon was almost trampled underfoot, and afternoone being coatched with Rebrugh was almost stoned to dead; the Dean was forced to caige himself in the steeple.

The National Covenant

In other city churches, when the Laud Liturgy was introduced, riots also resulted. Scotland, a thistle, was prickly with anger and sent petitions to Parliament. A document was drawn up by a group of nobles, country gentlemen, ministers and burghers – a document which became known as The National Covenant (February 1638). This document asserted that popery was abhorred, Protestantism was affirmed, and new innovations were protested against. Tradition has it that it was signed in Greyfriar’s churchyard on a tombstone. Nobles, barons, lairds, ministers, burghers, and common folk came to sign it – 60,000 people in all. The signing went on all day until eight o’clock at night. Some of those who signed added “until death”; others drew their own blood and used it as ink. Duplicate copies were written and sent all over Scotland.

The vital question in the Glasgow Scottish Assembly which followed the signing was: “Who is to be the head of the Kirk, Jesus Christ or King Charles I?” When this Assembly dissolved, it had passed seventy-two acts. Among other things, the *Prayer Book* was abolished, eight bishops were excommunicated, and six deposed. A list of personal misdemeanors against them read:

...treachery to the church, wasting of benefices, tyranny, simony, bringing in innovations, extravagance, drinking, filthy dancing, swearing, gambling, adultery, and many other gross transgressions and slanders, at length expressed and already proven...

To their king the Covenanters had no objections, but to his religion they were opposed!

Persecution followed – heavy persecution. Was it worth it?

In the face of persecution

In 1661 the National Covenant was repudiated by Charles II, the son of Charles I, and the one who had been restored to the English throne in 1660. He tore up the Covenant, appointed his own bishops and curates to govern the Scottish churches and ejected those who did not conform from pulpits. Consequently, church attendance dwindled, and people began attending Protestant conventicles out in the open air, in barns and in houses. Extreme persecution followed, and it became a capital offense to attend conventicles. In spite of the threat to lives, secret conventicles were attended by thousands of people at only a few hours’ notice, with marriages performed at rock altars, and baptisms carried out at rivers. Often participants were captured on their way to, or on their way home from, a secret service. Capture meant a death sentence and was often preceded by torture.

Howatson (whose first name is not known) lived in the Sanquhar district of Scotland. A worthy man, that is to say, a man of good Protestant principles, he was wanted by soldiers and was often forced to go into hiding. His house was frequently searched, and most of his time was, sadly enough, spent away from his family.

One evening, however, because of heavy snowfall, Howatson deemed it safe to visit his wife and children. They were delighted to see him. His wife hung his wet clothes in front of the blazing fireplace, prepared him a good meal, and afterwards the whole family had devotions and then retired for the night. Yet it was precisely this night, in spite of the heavy snowfall, that the soldiers had chosen to raid Howatson’s home. The door was, for some reason, not locked and they entered softly. Providentially, Howatson’s wife awoke, and to her amazement, saw four men standing with their backs to the bed, attempting to light a candle. She grasped her husband’s arm and shook it softly. He awoke instantly, saw the four men, slipped out of the bed and stole to the door. He darted out between the two soldiers stationed at the entrance, continued running in his white nightshirt, terrified the horses, and threw everyone into a panic. Escaping unscathed, in spite of a volley of musket shots, he lived.

On another occasion, Howatson, hearing his home was again to be searched, hid in a cave close to his home. His wife had just been delivered of another child. The soldiers entered the home, and showing no decency, stabbed their swords into the bed to which she was confined. Searching everywhere, they were livid with anger that Howatson had again eluded them. Even though his wife was threatened with all manner of violence, she would

not give in and gave them composed answers.

I am alone. There are a number of you. And yet I am not alone for God is with me. I am confident that He Whom my husband and I serve will protect me. He never abandons those who trust Him.

Slightly embarrassed by her courage, the soldiers' attention was drawn to a young child, a son, who suddenly, overcome by the meanness and rudeness of the men to his mother, began to wail. Transfixed by the swords, pistols and angry faces, his loud and louder screams pierced the cottage. One of the soldiers grabbed the little boy by the arms and literally dragged him outside through the door. Mrs. Howatson, helpless with a newborn at her breast, could do no more than pray.

The other soldiers followed the first one out of doors. Together they carried the now kicking and screaming child to the brow of a nearby hill.

"We can make the child talk. He is terrified," one of them suggested while poking the point of his sword under the child's chin.

The others nodded and laughed uproariously.

"He's apt to say more than his mother, I'll wager."

Tying the boy to a tree, they all unsheathed their swords, glinting them in the sunlight, telling the boy over and over that they would hack him in pieces unless he revealed where his father was hidden. Hiccapping helplessly in his terror, the boy began to yell even louder than before. His heart-rending cries reached up into the cave where his father was hidden. Peering down, Howatson could see his son strapped to a tree. His heart was smitten within himself. His son – his dear one!! He saw the blades flash in the sunlight, could feel his child's anguish, and without contemplating the result, ran down from the cave and interposed himself between his son and the soldiers. He was instantly seized. The ruffians let the child go and tied Howatson's hands behind his back. Then they proceeded to march to Drumlanrig, the nearest town.

The road, however, took a turn through a place called Closeburn Mill. Closeburn Mill boasted a tavern, and the soldiers, feeling rather merry and thirsty now that they had captured their quarry, stopped in for a drink. They drank and kept on drinking. Howatson watched them closely, and soon all members of the party were drunk and not aware of their prisoner any longer. Stealing away from the party was not difficult and, although his hands were tied behind his back, Howatson escaped for a second time. He had been willing to sacrifice his own life for the life of his son, and God, faithful and true, had restored him his own freedom.

Howatson, history records, escaped to Ireland, where he stayed until the Revolution, that is to say, until William of Orange and his wife, Mary, ascended the English throne. At that time, Howatson returned to Scotland, and he died there in peace. He was one of the few who survived the killing years. William of Orange accepted Presbyterianism as the established church of Scotland. In 1690, the English Parliament met and passed an act which re-established Presbyterianism in Scotland.



Conclusion

On a gravestone at Kilmarnock Parish Church, Kilmarnock being southwest of Glasgow, the following words are inscribed:

*O wild traditioned Scotland, thy briery burns and braes
Are full of pleasant memories and tales of other days.
Thy story-haunted waters in music gush along,
Thy mountain glens are tragedies, thy heathy hills are song.*

*Land of the Bruce and Wallace, where patriot hearts have stood:
And for their country and their faith
like water poured their blood;
Where wives and little children were steadfast to the death,
And graves of martyred warriors are in the desert heath.*

Hebrews 11, that great faith chapter, tells us towards the end of the chapter in verse 37 and on, that martyrs persecuted for their faith went about

... in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated – of whom the world was not worthy – wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

So was it worth it? Is it worth it?

The book of Hebrews inspires us with courage, as does the history of the Covenanters in Scotland. To remember the past faith of believers is wonderful. God's arm is never shortened. His power is always infinite. The heart of reliance He gave to His people in difficult days gone by, He will give again and again. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. If we keep our eyes fixed on Him, Who, in order to win the joy that was set before Him, steadfastly endured the cross, thinking nothing of its shame, we will someday be with Him and behold Him always as He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Yes, it is worth it.



EMAILS BETWEEN THREE WOMEN ON...

Missionary dating

by Rebecca Sodergren

To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com
From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com

Dear Kelly,

Now that you're off to your dream job in the big city, I don't seem to be hearing from you anymore. I'm sure you're busy, but your old aunt would love an update.

Love, Aunt June

To: JuneMcrea@ustel.com
From: KellyTodd@linkmac.com

Dear Aunt June,

Sorry I've been out of touch. Life is crazy right now! First I had to find an apartment, and then I started my job. Work is so busy! I end up spending extra hours there, trying to learn the trade. On the good side, there are five other college graduates at work, too, which is fun and a real stress-buster! We all go out after work. I've been spending lots of time with Ryan, an Indiana State graduate. He's a total goof and keeps everybody cracking up. He and I hang out on weekends, too, so it seems like there's never a spare minute! That's all the news here.

Love, Kelly

To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com
From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com

My dear niece,

I might as well say it: I hear alarm bells. You don't sound like my levelheaded niece. Honey, I want you to enjoy your new job, coworkers, and independent life. I don't want to be a killjoy. But I am concerned that your message seems to center around "fun." Yes, you're spending extra hours at work, but you don't mention any activities besides going out with coworkers, especially Ryan.

Kelly, are you going to church? Do the people at church mean something to you, or are you forming relationships only with

coworkers? Are your coworkers Christians? If not, then you can have a wonderful impact on them, but make sure you are grounded in the church, so that you stay strong in the faith. You want to influence them, not the other way around. Proverbs 13:20 says: "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

Is Ryan a Christian? If not, then Kelly, you shouldn't spend time alone with him. We are not to be "unequally yoked" (2 Cor. 6:14).

You're probably thinking, "Oh, for Pete's sake, Aunt June, I'm not marrying him!" But you are setting yourself up to fall in love with him if you are spending time alone with him.

Love, Aunt June

To: JuneMcrea@ustel.com
From: KellyTodd@linkmac.com

Aunt June,

That sounds nice, but tell me: how am I supposed to find a Christian guy these days – somebody who actually wants a relationship? All the guys I meet want to party until they're 35. I feel like I have to give in some or I'll never meet anybody. It's not like there's some single guy at church; practically everybody is married with four kids! And if I don't join my coworkers, I'll end up sitting in the break room with a book and brown-bag lunch every day. I need some kind of a social life!

I don't mean to insult you, but you've been married with kids for years, so I don't think you know what it's like to be single anymore.

Kelly

To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com
From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com

Oh, Kelly,

Honey, you are right that it's been a long time since I was single.

Maybe I don't know what it's like. But Jesus does. Hear me on that. Your Savior, who died for you, knows what it is like to be single! He didn't have a spouse. He didn't even have a roof over his head!

The Bible tells us that Jesus, while on earth, suffered the same things we suffer: "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:17-18).

Jesus suffered your singleness! When you feel lonely, imagine how lonely he was. Even his closest friends didn't understand him until he had left them and gone to heaven. You might say, "Well, he had the fellowship of the Father." But he lost even that – gave it up willingly, for you – on the cross. There is no greater love than this. No earthly guy – no party boy from work – can ever love you enough to make it worth giving up Christ.

I am not making light of your circumstances. You are legitimately lonely. There is perhaps no more confusing time than young adulthood – trying to find your life partner, establish your career, and determine your place in this world. Please just remember that this world is not your home, and the Lord will not abandon you. Seek him.

Thank you for being honest with me, Kelly. Please write again and tell me how things are going. I love you.

Aunt June

To: JuneMcrea@ustel.com
From: rose@hotfone.com

Hi Sis,

My heart is heavy. I know Kelly has already told you she's dating an unbeliever, Ryan. Maybe we should have encouraged her to stay home longer and stick with the part-time jobs. I feel like we've failed her somehow.

What should I do? She doesn't even want to listen to me.

Love, Rose

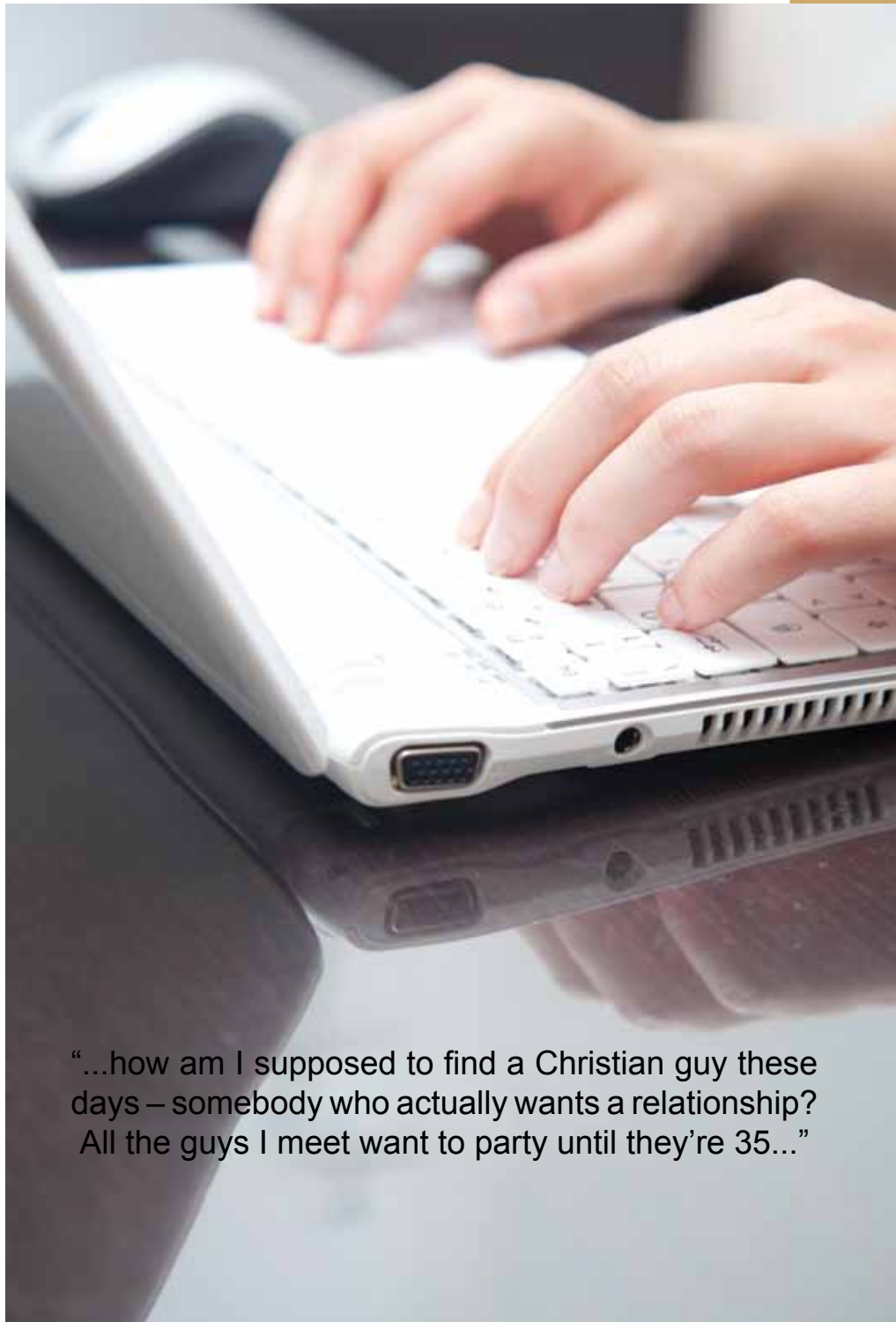
SEPTEMBER 2011

To: rose@hotfone.com
From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com

Dear Rose,

Pray, pray, pray! Get those knees on the floor. Our first instinct as moms is to "do" something, but for now, just pray.

This is not about how you failed. All of us could have been better parents. We struggle, we try, we teach them as best we can – and



“...how am I supposed to find a Christian guy these days – somebody who actually wants a relationship? All the guys I meet want to party until they're 35...”

all along God is working both through us and in spite of us.

Pray for the Lord to protect and guide Kelly. Pray for Kelly's church to be faithful in pursuing and reaching out to her. Pray for the right words to say if you get an opening for discussion.

Praying will remind you that this is in the Lord's hands. Your faith is being shaped in this crucible; you are learning to wait on God and trust him.

Love, June

To: JuneMcrea@ustel.com
From: KellyTodd@linkmac.com

Dear Aunt June,

I guess I haven't written in a long time. I didn't know what to say. Well, Mrs. Hillston, a widow at church, stopped Ryan and me downtown on our lunch break one day. She lives downtown, and asked me over for lunch the next day.

She was really sweet. She fixed me an incredible lunch with homemade bread and told me about working as a telephone operator before she got married. But then it got awkward. Over coffee after lunch, she started asking who that boy was that she'd seen me with. She also asked why she hadn't seen me in church much lately.

So ... I've been going to church. But I'm still dating Ryan. Maybe I could lead him to Christ. It's not like we're supposed to cut ourselves off from the world; we're supposed to be salt and light, right?

Kelly

To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com
From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com

Dear Kelly,

Thank you so much for writing. You're talking about what we used to call "missionary dating," and it's dangerous business, hon. Yes, there are times when it works out. But often it doesn't. Three women in our church attend alone, or with only their children, because they married men who did not love the Lord and have never changed. The trials they face are fierce: pressure from their husbands, questions from their children about why church is so important if Daddy doesn't go. I'm convinced that people can be lonely in such marriages.

And it would be even worse if you left the church yourself. It

doesn't necessarily happen overnight. It can happen through continual compromises over time, as you drift further and further from the Lord. You already know how easy it is to stop attending for a time.

True, the Bible tells us to be salt and light. But there's a difference between influencing the world and joining forces with it. The Lord warns us not to be "unequally yoked" because he *loves* us!

Love, Aunt June

To: JuneMcrea@ustel.com
From: KellyTodd@linkmac.com

Dear Aunt June,

Well, the joke's on me. After all that, *Ryan* broke up with *me*! I know you'll be happy, anyway. Half of me is so mad I can't stand to look at him. But I'll admit that I had my ears open in church yesterday in a different way. God does love us better than some loser of a guy.

Kelly

To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com
From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com

Dear Kelly,

Oh, sweetie, I'm sorry. I know it hurts you to go through this. Please don't grow bitter. Have you considered that you might find solace for your loneliness in your church, even though almost everyone, as you once told me, is "married with four kids"? Why don't you start attending the women's group? As you develop friendships, and your own relationship with God grows, some of the women might be able to introduce you to godly young men. Give it time. See what the Lord has in store for you.

Your note was short, but I was encouraged to hear that the Lord opened your ears in church. Call out to him! I am praying for you daily. Write or call anytime. I love you, and more than that, the Lord loves you. He never forsakes us. That's more real than anything you will ever pursue in this world.

Love, Aunt June

This article, a fictionalized email exchange between three women, first appeared in two parts in the June and July issues of New Horizons (OPC.org/nh.html) and is reprinted here with permission.



Alberta's oil sands: The Christian connection

by Michael Wagner

One of the preeminent economic issues facing Canada for the next few years is the development of the Alberta oil sands. The Alberta oil sands contain one of the largest oil deposits in the world, and this oil is essential for Canada's future. However, the process of recovering the oil damages northern Alberta's environment to a certain degree, therefore many people want the development to be reduced or perhaps eliminated altogether. Besides this, it is still unclear how much of the oil can be transported out of landlocked Alberta to energy-hungry markets.

There's a kind of Reformed angle to this story: the man most responsible for the initial commercial development of the Alberta oil sands was a prominent conservative Presbyterian, John Howard Pew (1882-1971). J. Howard Pew was the president of Sun Oil (later known as Sunoco), a company co-founded by his father Joseph Newton Pew in 1886. In 1975 Grove City College published a biography of J. Howard Pew called *Faith and Freedom: A Biographical Sketch of a Great American, John Howard Pew*, written by Mary Sennholz.

J. Howard Pew was born in Pennsylvania in 1882 to a devout Presbyterian family. His father was a pioneer in the petroleum industry. After completing college, Howard entered the family's oil business. At the death of his father in 1912, he was made president of the company.

Unleashing the oil sands wealth

People have known about the existence of the Alberta oil sands for more than a

century, and over that period various attempts were made to find a way to extract the oil. None of them were successful until J. Howard Pew pushed his Sun Oil people to undertake commercial oil sands production in the mid-twentieth century.

Biographer Mary Sennholz describes Pew's motivation for involvement in the oil sands this way:

Observing the steady tightening of the noose by Federal and state taxation, restrictions, and controls, together with a growing American dependence on foreign oil, he launched the first large-scale extraction of oil from Alberta's tar sands by a new Sun subsidiary, Great Canadian Oil Sands, Ltd.

The Great Canadian Oil Sands plant was opened north of Fort McMurray, Alberta, in 1967.

That J. Howard Pew was the man most responsible for the initial commercial development of Alberta's oil sands is confirmed by University of Alberta political science professor Larry Pratt, in his 1976 book, *The tar sands: Syncrude and the politics of oil* (Hurtig Publishers). The idea of attempting to develop the oil sands looked expensive and unfeasible, even to people in Sun Oil. According to Pratt, it was believed that Pew "had taken the decision by himself, overriding the objections of his board and threatening to finance tar sands development with his personal fortune." Thus without the initiative in this effort by Pew himself, the wealth of the oil sands would have remained locked up for many more years.

Pew was a personal friend of Alberta

Premier Ernest Manning, who was also an evangelical Christian. Pratt, writing from a leftwing perspective, notes that:

They were a perfect match — Pew and Ernest Manning: two patricians of corporate and political power, both deeply conservative, religious and paternalistic, launching the Athabasca tar sands into the global struggle against Godless Communism on the side of right, free enterprise and the North American Way of Life.

Pew liked Manning very much. In fact, Sennholz writes that in 1965 he said that Premier Manning had delivered one "of the greatest sermons" he had ever heard.

The use of personal wealth for the Kingdom of God

Pew was rather wealthy, as one would expect. But he didn't hoard all of his money for himself. He financially supported numerous organizations and publications that promoted free enterprise economics as well as organizations and publications that supported conservative Protestant views. He was a political and religious conservative, and he wanted to use his money to further conservative and Biblical causes. Sennholz writes:

To J. Howard Pew, true religion shows its influence in every part of man's conduct. With his great wealth and entrepreneurial ability he, therefore, sought to promote Christian education and training.

In 1948, together with his siblings, Pew created the Pew Memorial Foundation for charitable work. Over the years this Foundation provided financial assistance to numerous causes including hospitals and medical research initiatives, children's organizations, and college education for African-Americans. It also supported conservative Protestant seminaries and Bible colleges, Billy Graham crusades, Youth for Christ, *Christianity Today* magazine, a free enterprise think tank called the Foundation for Economic Education, as well as other organizations.

Pew was, in fact, a major force behind *Christianity Today* magazine. Sennholz says that Pew was one of its three founders in 1956, along with Billy Graham, and Dr. Nelson Bell, a prominent Presbyterian missionary. "It was to defend and uphold the Protestant principle of Biblical authority, that is, that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." Furthermore,

Standing in conscious opposition to liberal humanism, *Christianity Today* hopefully was to become not only the vocal organ of theological

conservatism, but also the most influential religious journal in America today.

However, *Christianity Today* did not live up to Pew's ideal in defending conservative theology, so he resigned from its board of directors in 1964. Then in 1967 he launched another publication, *The Presbyterian Layman*, to support theological conservatism in the Presbyterian church.

Pew died in 1971, having spent his life building his family's oil business, as well as contributing considerable time, effort and money to the cause of conservative Protestantism.

Conclusion

The cultural mandate directs mankind to develop the earth's resources for the benefit of human beings. After all, the Lord placed resources here to support human life. In this respect the development of the oil sands can be seen (in a general sense) as the fulfillment of a Biblical command.

That doesn't mean that everything that's done in the name of exploiting the

oil sands has Biblical warrant (such as unnecessary environmental degradation). But the resources are here for a purpose — God did not put them here just to look pretty. J. Howard Pew was fulfilling the cultural mandate when he initiated the development of Alberta's oil sands. As long as that development respects the rights of the people who live in the area, and does not cause permanent environmental destruction, Christians should probably be supportive of this important economic endeavor. From a Biblical perspective, it's hard to see how sacrificing the economic well-being of countless citizens could be justified on the altar of environmentalism.

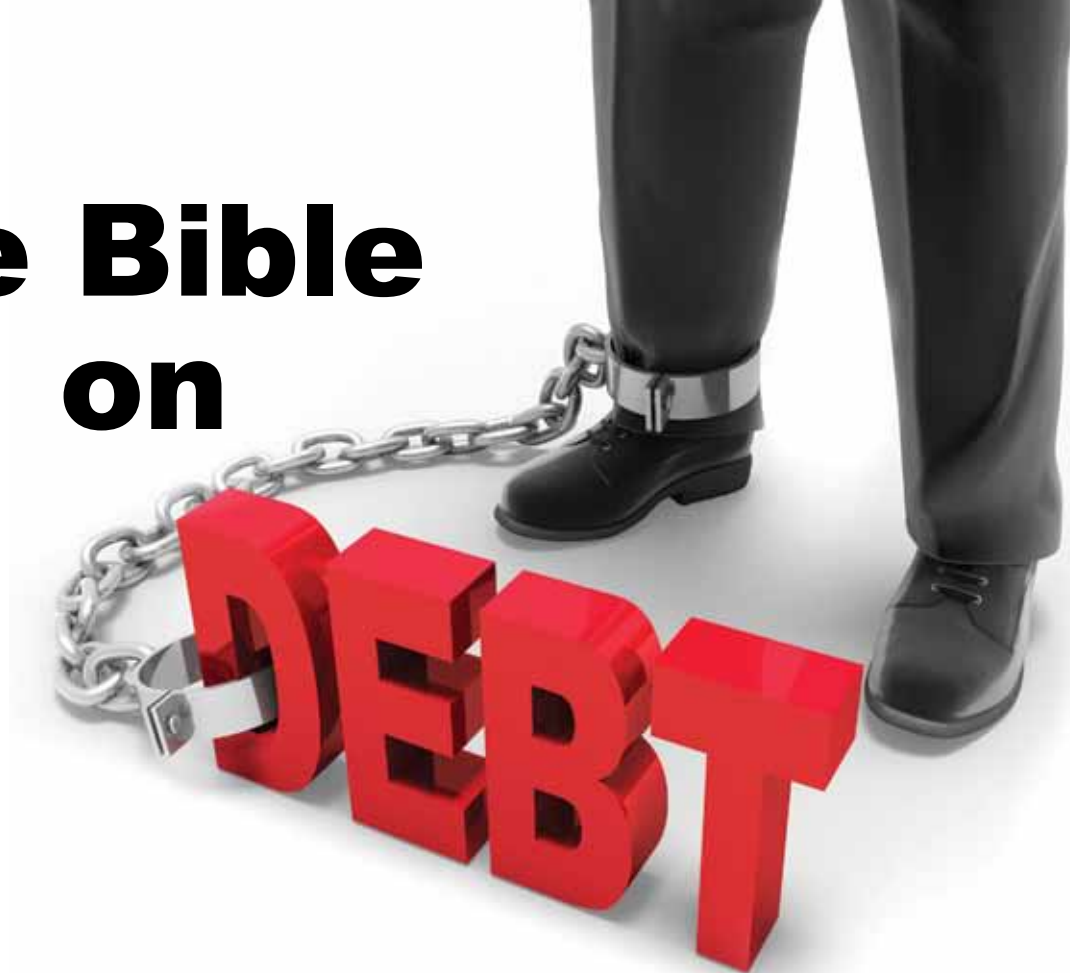
Pew was a dedicated Christian who served the Lord through supplying people with the energy supplies necessary to living their lives. Creating the technology that could unlock the wealth of the oil sands was an important part of fulfilling his life's work.

Michael Wagner's latest book, Leaving God Behind, about Canada's Christian roots, can be purchased at MichaelWagner.notlong.com.



One of the mammoth machines working in the Alberta oil sands.

The Bible on



Scripture likens debt to slavery so shouldn't the Church be doing more to avoid it?

by Hank Van der Woerd

While it is a harder to get a loan than it was five or ten years ago, borrowing possibilities are still numerous. In our credit card culture we can own virtually anything we want, if we're willing to go into debt for it. But how willing should we be to go into debt?

To try to answer that question let's turn to Scripture to see what it says about financial debt, and to learn how we can honor God with our decision-making in this area.

The Scriptures on debt

Starting in Genesis, we can already see glimpses of God's plan for His people as it relates to debt.

Old Testament

His material blessings to the patriarchs were impressive. He supplied them with

flocks and herds and servants. We know Abraham did not wish to be indebted to the sons of Heth at the time of the death of Sarah (Gen. 23:7-20). Jacob extricated himself from his indebtedness to Laban and in that process assembled much property (Gen. 31).

Moses explicitly commanded the people before they entered the land of Canaan that they were not to borrow from the nations, as Israel was under the blessing of God (Deut. 15:6). A few chapters later this injunction was repeated, this time in the context of God's providence as their supplier for all their needs as long as they obeyed Him. The Israelites were also warned that they would be cursed with debt if they disobeyed (Deut 28:43-44). Psalms, Proverbs and the prophets provide us with additional material, which at the very least cast debt into a negative light, by equating it with servitude or slavery. This was to be avoided if possible (Ps.

37:21; Prov. 22:7).

In cases where people weren't able to avoid debt, Scripture provided a solution for relief. The community was to practice Jubilee, a system of returning to previous owners that which had been borrowed or used as security. Assets were to be redistributed at certain times, reverting back to original ownership as governed by tribal inheritance rights (Lev. 25:11-55). This practice was established to avoid God's people from reverting back to the status of slavery.

We also know that after the return from exile to Babylon, many in Israel mortgaged their property out of desperation (Neh. 5:1-6). Given Nehemiah's consternation when they complained to him, we may conclude this was a less than acceptable situation due in part to the usury exacted, but also because of the transfer or loss of ownership involved in the transaction.

New Testament

The New Testament develops debt principles still further. The Lord understands that there will be both borrowers and lenders (Matt. 5:42). In His parables He uses concepts of debt to illustrate His point on more than one occasion (Matt. 18:23-35; Luke 7:40-43). A very brief mention by Paul to the Romans that they are to owe nothing to anyone has been understood by some as a prohibition against debt (Rom. 13:8) though others understand this verse as concerning spiritual, rather than financial matters.

Is going into debt a sin?

Our brief scriptural review appears to indicate that although there is no specific command prohibiting Christians from taking out loans and going into debt, it certainly isn't a recommended practice.

Is incurring debt a sin? We can conclude it is not. And therefore freedom may be exercised concerning whether or not we enter into it.

However, Scripture does cast debt in a negative light. It also presents principles for financial freedom that are based on the premise that:

- a) God's provision for His people is sufficient.
- b) Christians should learn to exercise self-control in the face of the temptation to spend beyond our means.
- c) Finally, it compares debt to slavery.

For those who would disagree that slavery is at all an issue, recall the last time you paid off any sizeable debt, and remember the relief you experienced. Elements of slavery *are* inherent in the borrowing process even today.

Debt today

The explosion of personal debt over the past few decades seems to have no precedent in history. Our ability to borrow has given us the illusion of heightened prosperity. The Christian and non-Christian alike are subjected to marketing

that advocates "pay later" plans and which fosters a *want* rather than *need* mentality. Anything a person wants is available based on repayment in the future. Debt is the instrument of choice for acquisition.

One well-known Christian financial advisor, the late Larry Burkett, claimed that a person's financial life is a reflection or barometer of the faith life of the heart. This view finds its root in Matt. 6:19-21:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A heart more concerned with earthly riches than with the eternal can be exposed if that person's financial life is carefully examined.

What testimony does debt give?

It follows, then, that Christians need to see being in debt as an important testimony to the world. While placing oneself into slavery is permissible (Deut. 15:16-17), and one is free to incur debt, this may come at the expense of Christian opportunity when one is yoked to a lender. In effect, a person may be compromised to the extent that they are forced to serve a lender at the expense of serving God. How can we donate generously, volunteer our time, or give of ourselves to the Church, if we are forced to work long hours to pay off our debts?

Another testimony is to be found in credit reporting where information is available to creditors concerning payment habits. The Christian witness risks being impaired where there is inability or unwillingness to repay debt as per agreement.

Is debt a blessing?

Does God use money to bless? Yes! This is apparent from the many accounts in Scripture where material possessions are evidence of His favor. Still, money itself is neutral. It is a commodity to facilitate

the exchange of goods and services. While the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10), this text is often misused to condemn riches, when it in fact addresses an affection of the heart.

Does God use debt to bless? We can't find that anywhere in Scripture. Rather we find that He might use it to chastise, and bring low the haughty and those who have ceased to depend on Him. He sets them up for the fall, or may make them ripe for the picking by creditors.

His intention, then, is that His people would be free of debt, out of bondage, and be lenders who have power over borrowers rather than the other way around.

Debt and the Image of God

Scripture teaches us that the Lord Jesus paid taxes. He paid His debts. His followers are to do likewise. We have a responsibility to reflect carefully as to how we may emulate our Saviour in all our activity and behavior, including all our habits and our largely automatic responses of thought, feeling and action.

For many, incurring debt is done without much thought or careful deliberation. It has become an automatic response of the consumer in the marketplace, who, with senses dulled from prolonged marketing stimulus, puts into action something that arises from feeling.

These are bad habits that must be replaced with new responses that flow from the teachings of Scripture. John Calvin's treatment of the 10th commandment includes a warning against the "deliberate consent of the will where lust subjects the heart." In other words, someone who has their eyes set on material goods stands in danger of violating the command not to covet.

Additionally Calvin warned of a potential violation of the 8th commandment against stealing if someone defrauded a neighbor of his goods and failed in his obligation to him. This is a frequent occurrence in the marketplace, where collection agencies are commonplace, and the courts are rife with lawsuits concerning unpaid loans. Christians and non-Christians alike have entered bankruptcy protection as final recourse to escape the relentless pursuit of creditors. While in

some cases such drastic action may be compared to Jubilee in the sense of it being an instrument of mercy, it is difficult to imagine that Jubilee was instituted to protect those who indulge themselves with debt to satisfy their cravings. If debt mars the image bearer in his witness to the world, or results in a drifting apart from God due to the greed that may accompany it, then one would be better off without it.

Implications for the Church

Church congregations will often borrow large sums of money to get their building projects started. Should they? Well, how we regard debt in relationship to the Church will depend on how the Church herself is viewed.

The State views the Church as little more than a corporation, or a society consisting of members with a common interest or purpose. It generally has the status of a legal person, with rights and responsibilities that are similar to a human citizen, and has the power to enter into debt arrangements, buy property and receive or accumulate assets.

But is that how *we* should view the Church? Should we think of the Church as a person? No. Whereas the individual is identified in the Scriptures as being created in the image of God, the Church is described as the Body of Christ, The Bride of Christ. The former is contained in the latter, but it cannot be said that they are the same.

Therefore it does not necessarily follow that since people borrow all the time therefore the Church ought to be able to as well.

Building projects in the Bible

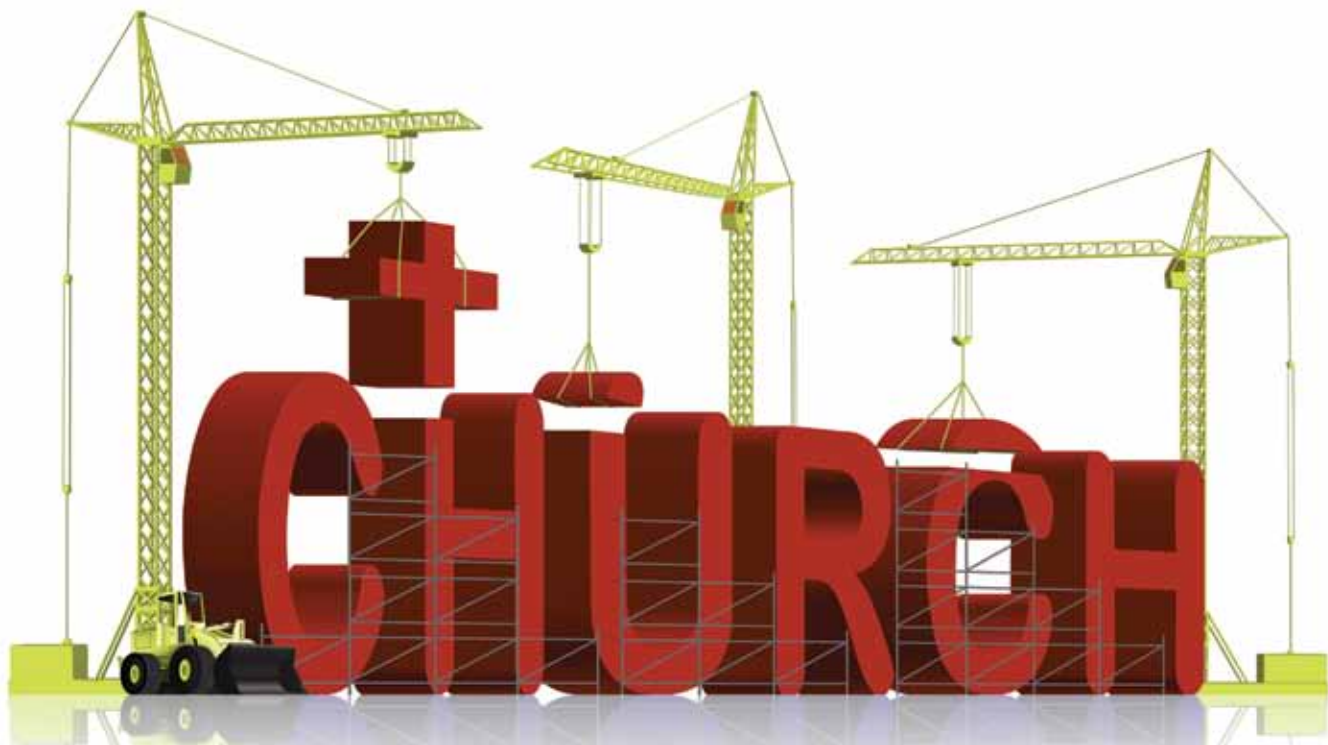
Since the Church debt is most often associated with a building or major asset acquisition of some kind, it will be helpful to review instances where these kinds of activities took place in biblical Israel.

In the Old Testament we can read about how the Church as a body participated in efforts to acquire assets for the use of the whole community, including the building of the tabernacle in the desert, and later the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Neither event involved a loan

arrangement. From this we may learn how to assemble assets and plan projects even now.

The construction of the tabernacle was organized in the desert under the direction of Moses (Ex. 35:1-36:7). The resources were gifts of God's people as their hearts were stirred for this cause. Many of these riches had been received as parting plunder from the Egyptians while Israel exited the land under the providence of God. Regardless, the valuables were given for the service of the Lord. So numerous and generous were these gifts, that Moses had to command the people stop giving at the point where there was more than enough to complete the project.

Another instance involves the construction of the temple in Jerusalem by king Solomon. This project was, in part, planned by the previous generation, as his father David assembled much in the way of gold and silver for this purpose (1 Chron. 22). Three times the text mentions that the people also gave willingly (vs. 6, 9 & 17). Additionally, many skilled craftsmen were at work far in advance of the actual construction.



CHURCHES IN THE RED? The Bible speaks negatively about debt so consistently that it would seem to bear considering whether the Church should enter into debt for their building projects.



John Calvin on DEBT

John Calvin differentiated between a loan advanced on the basis of need, where presumably no interest would be charged, and loans obtained to assist the borrower with acquiring profit.

The latter, according to Calvin, could command interest, which was to be set within the context of fairness as set by society and connected to a framework of brotherly love. One could not require more interest than the lender himself was prepared to pay. Mercy was to play a role in the transaction to the extent that the borrower was not to come to ruin because of the transaction.

Subsequent repairs of the temple were also made possible by means of the gifts of God's people (2 Chron. 24:8-14). The priests collected sufficient offerings from the people to repair the structure and to manufacture new articles for the Lord's service. After the return from exile the people also gave willingly for the repairs of the temple (Ezra 1:5-6; 2:68-69; 7:16).

This illustrates how the work of building and maintaining God's house was accomplished through the activity of a providential God. He supplied His people; they in turn gave back to Him.

Of course, it is dangerous to make direct comparisons of the building of the tabernacle and temple with the building of churches in modern times. We need to acknowledge that there are significant differences. The tabernacle and temple were important symbols that demonstrated the presence of God amongst His people. They were replaced in the New Testament as God took up residence in the human heart (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:5).

It would also appear that the New Testament Church did not at first have buildings of worship, but sought out synagogues, and also worshipped in the homes of the faithful, or lecture halls,

riversides and any other suitable location. The only direct reference in the New Testament to a construction project are from Jesus concerning the calculation of the cost before one starts and the foolishness of not being able to finish (Luke 14:28-30).

Practical considerations for the Church in the present

What this all shows us is that, although the Bible does not set out specific regulations for the Church concerning debt, certain principles *are* revealed. And these principles may be important for congregations to consider when they are planning a major building project. What follows are some considerations that may help Church officers in their decision-making process:

1. Who is going into debt?

In view debt having been likened to slavery, one needs to ask if the Church is permitted to enter into this state, and who may authorize this. There are no scriptural markers that allow for this authority to be vested specifically in any of the offices.

It is not uncommon for Church officers

to provide guarantees to a lender that may even extend beyond the assets of the church and encompass their own personal assets. This may conflict with Prov. 11:15 and 17:18 concerning the pledging of surety for another.

2. Are we sure we won't default?

Some time ago, I asked a commercial lender why they excluded Church property from their lending portfolio. His reply was: "We don't like the covenant." He was attempting to communicate that their past experience with churches was less than stellar due to default.

When a congregation borrows, there can be an implied guarantee that goes beyond the usual assurances to repay. There are two ways in which this may be seen. Firstly, as the visible body of Christ, the congregation bears the responsibility to reflect attributes of holiness and trustworthiness. Sometimes, instead of considering how they are publicly representing Christ and instead being extra cautious, Church authorities can become involved in *higher* risk loans, because they think they are somehow better than the average risk and they have financial strength in their membership. Secondly, there can at times be reasoning that seems to go something along the lines of: "We are good risks because we are Christian. We depend on Christ, therefore we are good borrowers." This line of reasoning connects Christ to the borrowing, implying His guarantee, which does not exist. In the event of default, dishonor will be brought to His Name.

3. Do we understand how the debt will impact what else we want to do?

It has been argued that without borrowing the Church would not be able to maximize its potential. However, it is a rare occasion when a congregation will calculate and budget for the *real* cost of the interest over the time of the loan. This will be at least twice more the original amount borrowed.

Often, the interest expense strips the ability of the congregation to make funds available for other ministry efforts. Many churches spend more on debt than they do

on missions and do not seriously consider Christ's warning as recorded in Luke 14:28-30.

4. Are we borrowing from our children?

Borrowing defers dependence on God from the present into the future. It banks on a future providence of God in order to acquire assets in the present. This actually turns the biblical model backwards, as churches fail to save for the future in favor of borrowing to bring the future closer to the present, reflecting a "we need it now" and perhaps even an impulse mentality. If churches would think in terms of the next generation and save for future possibilities, the Church of the next century would be the stronger for it.

5. With whom are we placing our trust?

Borrowing can deflect the trust that should be directed towards God. Instead our trust may be directed at a worldly moneylender who can make the project a reality by throwing money at it.

Closely connected to this is the actual identity of the lender who enters into a form of partnership with the church. The financial partner generally has no motive other than profit. They are as likely to finance facilities that accommodate abortion as they are church property.

6. Is this leaving us exposed?

Not unlike the economy that swings like a pendulum from good to bad times and back again, churches also often face both periods of blessing and hardship. If a congregation takes on debt, she can become vulnerable to outside forces who are not very sympathetic when hardship occurs. Securitized property stands at risk to the lender who may hinder ministry, or even wipe it out.

Alternative options for churches to consider

But if a church is going to build, and doesn't want to go into debt, what are the alternatives?

1. Waiting

By allowing the people of the congregation sufficient time to assemble the resources and avoid debt, one is able to follow the biblical model most closely. This puts the onus on the membership to seriously reflect on the importance of the project, their participation in it, and consider all that God has given them. The tension of waiting together may also give rise to prudent cost cutting of unneeded items that would otherwise simply get structured into the loan (as so often happens).

2. Taking a long-term approach.

Many congregations have been so affected by the impulse-buying mentality of the current marketplace that the thought of not being able to have something sooner rather than later is almost too much to bear. By taking a longer-term view of asset acquisition, churches can learn to plan for the future by putting aside incrementally.

This may require vision that spans more than one generation.

3. Survey the available resources

Church leaders can often be unaware of the wealth that dwells within their congregation. A quick walk through the parking lot after the worship service will quickly demonstrate the capacity of their congregation. The inability to proceed with a building project may have more to do with the inconvenience of teaching the congregation to part with a portion of her wealth than it does with the availability thereof.

4. Alternatives borrowing strategies

Sometimes a congregation has given all that it can reasonably give, and the project still can't proceed, even when there is a pressing need. Alternative financing options must be explored.

These might include low or no interest loans from the membership who have funds saved for retirement or investment. Borrowing in this way can be very technical and specialized. While this type of arrangement does violence to the "no

debt whatsoever" argument, we also need to realize that there are different ways in which the membership can participate. Given that guarantees and other banking commitments are often not necessary in these types of arrangements, this may be a compromise where considerable saving accrues to the congregation.

5. Consult outside of the congregation

The Church is wider than the local congregation. Resources may be available elsewhere, from other Christians or organizations interested in the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

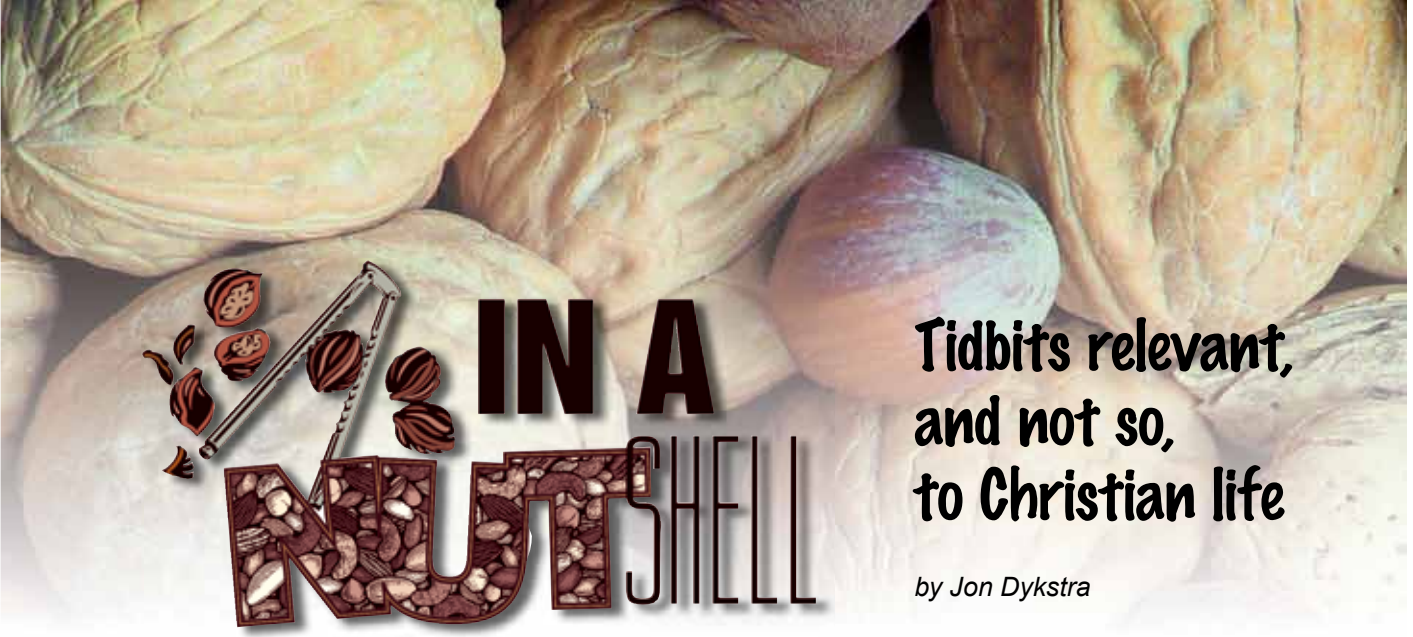
How the Church views debt will depend mostly on her understanding of her identity and task in the world. As the possessor of the promise of God, and looking forwards to an imperishable inheritance, she must not get caught into thinking the way the world does.

One of the prevalent market principles states: "If it works, and there is no law against it, it must be right." Often this principle is deployed by congregations who argue along similar lines. If there is no specific injunction against what they are doing, it must be right, and acceptable in the sight of God.

However, the church must look to the provision of God in the present as sufficient to accomplish her task. She may also look with expectation to a debt-free future as part of her testimony to the world. Although many will claim that debt has little connection with bondage this may be more of an excuse than a reality. Freedom from debt becomes empowerment to serve. A faithful recovery of precious biblical truths concerning debt by both Christians individually and the Church corporate in the marketplace will be a noticeable and powerful testimony to a watching world.

Rev. Hank Van der Woerd (Trinity United Reformed Church in Lethbridge, AB) worked in the financial industry as a mortgage broker for 20 years before becoming a pastor.





IN A NUTSHELL

Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

We are all religious

“Religion has no place in the schools,” secularists declare, so they certainly won’t admit to being religious themselves. But this is only smoke and mirrors - as Bob Dylan famously sung, all of us are “gonna have to serve somebody.” We are all religious.

In his new book, *Leaving God Behind*, Michael Wagner notes that back in 1963 political philosopher George Grant made this point in as clear a manner as had been done when he discussed the definition of “religion”:

The origin of the word is, of course, shrouded in uncertainty, but the most likely account is that it arises from the Latin “to bind together.” It is in this sense that I intend to use it. That is, as that system of belief (whether true or false) which binds together the life of individuals and gives to those lives whatever consistency of purpose they may have. Such use implies that I would describe liberal humanists or Marxists as religious people; indeed that I would say that all persons (in so far as they are rational beings) are religious.... It will, of course, seem unfair to the exponents of secularism that I have called what they advocate a religion.... [But the truth remains] all men are inevitably religious....

Indeed the present controversy is not concerned with whether religion should be taught in the schools, but rather with what should be the content of the religion that is so taught. It is perfectly

clear that in all North American state schools religion is already taught in the form of what may best be called “the religion of democracy.” That the teaching about the virtues of democracy is religion and not political philosophy is clearly seen from the fact that the young people are expected to accept this on faith and cannot possibly at their age be able to prove the superiority of democracy to other forms of government (if indeed this can be done). The fact that those liberals who most object to any teaching about the deity are generally most insistent that the virtues of democracy be taught, should make us aware that what is at issue is not religion in general, but the content of the religion to be taught.

There is no such thing as being non-religious. Our schools will teach students to worship so the only question is, *who* will be worshipped? When we understand this truth we will recognize that the secularists’ attempt to push “religion” out of the schools is really only an attempt to install their own gods in place of the one true God.

Five words which *should* exist

- Arghument* – assertions backed by vehemence, not evidence
- Chick-fil-A’d* – to be cut to pieces for all the right reasons
- Heil’d* – Damned with faint praise, particularly by noting that he/she *probably* isn’t a Nazi

Question – someone in search of their next cause

Squarcle – a square circle, synonym to “gay marriage”

Headline haiku

He didn’t see it,
the melting mutt’s drooping tail.
Thus, “HOT DOG BITES MAN”

**Commas:
more important than you knew!**

**Let’s eat grandpa.
Let’s eat, grandpa.**

**Correct punctuation can
save a person’s life!**

SOURCE: a joke circulating the Internet

No such thing as an Arminian prayer

Douglas Wilson recently passed along a great quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon on the subject of Arminian prayer. Spurgeon said:

You have heard a great many Arminian sermons, I dare say; but you never heard an Arminian prayer – for the saints in prayer appear as one in word, and deed and mind. An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free-will: there is no room for it.



T. rex is not coming back!

by Margaret Helder

The prospect of a Tyrannosaurus rex peeking over the trees in your neighborhood, and smashing his way into your yard, both fascinates and terrifies some people. Is it within the realm of possibility that scientists could engineer such a scheme? The realization that soft tissue from some dinosaurs has recently been discovered makes the prospect of recovering dinosaur DNA seem entirely possible. And if there is DNA, can a reconstituted version of T. rex (and other species) be far behind?

The short answer is “No,” but most people will want to consider the various aspects of the case in more detail.

Flu virus not so simple to replicate

The recent achievements of some scientists in manipulating DNA may convey the impression that scientists can achieve anything they like once they are in possession of a suitable piece of DNA. Consider, for example, the case of the Spanish flu virus which killed so many people in 1918 (at least 50 million!). Scientists managed to isolate various pieces of the DNA from the preserved lungs of some American soldiers who died of the flu and also from the body of a victim in Alaska whose body had been preserved since then in the permafrost. Scientists then used a chemical reaction in the laboratory to copy these small pieces of DNA and so vastly amplify their supply of this specific molecule. (The name of the process is “polymerase chain reaction,” or PCR.)

Next they ran these fragments of DNA through a computerized machine which documented the order of the information-bearing components of the molecule.

Since viruses cannot live on their own, but depend upon living cells for all their life processes, the amount of information in the virus molecule is comparatively small – only enough to redirect the activities of the host cell into producing more virus. In the case of the influenza virus, the fragments obtained were only 77 to 138 nucleotides or base pairs long. These sequences occurred in various fragments, which typically overlapped with adjacent fragments, so the computer was able to piece the whole molecule together to reveal the true order of all the letters. The total number of nucleotides sequenced was only about 7,000 base pairs long.* That is an extremely small number compared to most organisms.

The scientists then took an intact influenza virus and, one by one, they cut out each existing gene and replaced it with a similar stretch of DNA from the sequence of the 1918 influenza

virus. Thus the initial genes in the virus were replaced by newly sequenced ones. Eventually the scientists obtained a complete string of DNA representing the 1918 virus information. This was then injected into a tissue culture of human kidney cells, and tens of thousands of virus particles were produced. The particles consisted of a protein coat with RNA (an information bearing molecule that matches the information on the DNA which was originally produced).

Notice that the scientists used an *existing* influenza virus to act as a template in order to piece together the new string of information, and they needed living host cells for the virus components to be produced and assembled into finished form.

One important part of this process is the purchase of commercially produced sequences of DNA which are made to order. Anyone can order any sequence of DNA that they like.



The Board of the Christian Counselling Centre is inviting applications and/or inquiries for the full-time position of Executive Director. The successful candidate must be in full agreement with our basis of faith. He/she must be able to oversee the administrative and fiscal monitoring functions of the organization and preside over fundraising initiatives. He/she will engage in regular communication with community groups and businesses, and build and maintain relationships with churches of Reformed denominations. The successful candidate must be able to work effectively with CCC counsellors and staff. While not a requirement, a counselling degree may be beneficial. Application deadline is September 15, 2012. Direct applications to:

Christian Counselling Centre
Attention: Aileen Pennings, Administrator
7038 Longwoods Rd.
P.O. Box 503, Lambeth Station
London, ON N6P 1R1
or to: ccclambeth@bellnet.ca

There are no governmental controls. (However, some companies now screen their orders to possibly eliminate any orders for sequences from known pathogens, i.e., agents of disease).

So it was that in 2005 scientists managed to reconstitute a virus, but remember, a virus contains only a relatively small amount of information. Notice, too, that the virus DNA which was recovered and which provided the critical information was less than 100 years old, and it came from samples preserved by cold or chemical preservatives. No dinosaur DNA is likely to have been preserved in similarly ideal conditions.

Poor polio virus managed

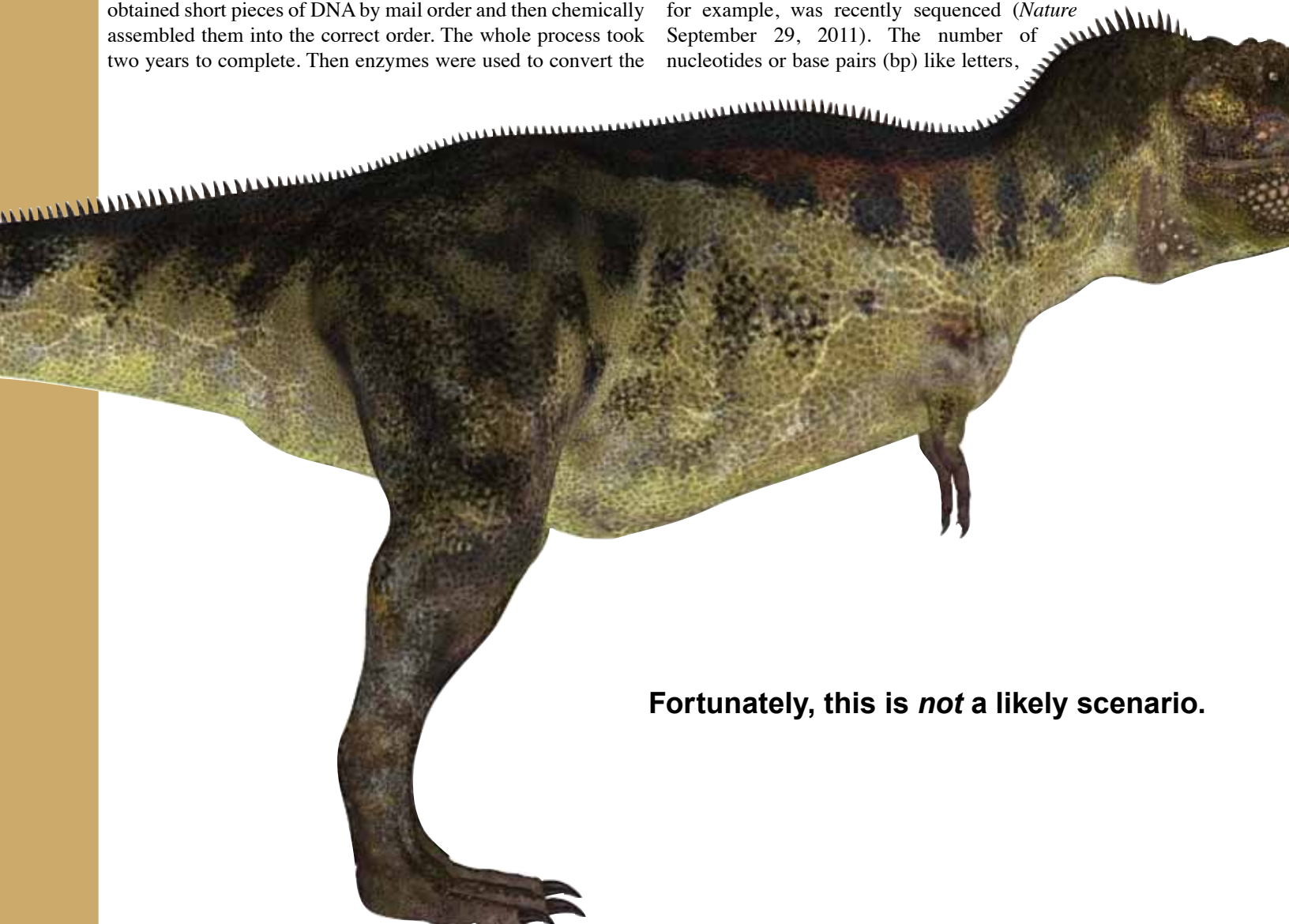
An even more startling achievement had occurred in 2002. In that year, scientists put together a polio virus from its chemical components without any existing template. They already knew the appropriate order of the nucleic information in the virus, 7,741 nucleotides of base pairs (like letters) long. So they obtained short pieces of DNA by mail order and then chemically assembled them into the correct order. The whole process took two years to complete. Then enzymes were used to convert the

DNA into RNA (similar to DNA). More enzymes were then used to produce proteins from the information in the RNA. These new proteins acted as functional virus particles. When injected into mice, the synthetic virus did multiply and cause disease, but at a level 1,000 to 10,000 times less than the naturally-produced virus.

From this study we see that it is possible to string information together to form a virus, as long as the information is already known in advance. However, viruses, by their nature, depend on already living cells to express the information contained in the virus nucleic acid chain (either RNA or DNA). And the amount of information involved is comparatively very small indeed.

Dinosaurs *much* more complicated

The question now arises as to how much nucleic acid (information) might we expect to have existed in dinosaur cells? The genome (total genetic information) of a green anole lizard, for example, was recently sequenced (*Nature* September 29, 2011). The number of nucleotides or base pairs (bp) like letters,



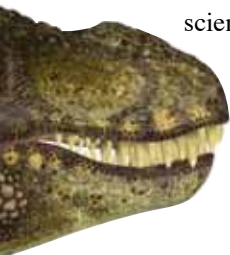
Fortunately, this is *not* a likely scenario.

was reported to be 1.7 billion bp.

Compare this to various birds, which have between 900 million and 1.3 billion bp and to mammals which range from 2 billion to 3.6 billion bp. So in general terms, we may surmise that a dinosaur might have contained large DNA molecules of about 1 billion or more bp, compared to viruses which often contain fewer than 10,000 bp. The difficulty of reproducing that amount of information in the form of DNA is obviously overwhelming.

Conclusion

That is not the only difficulty with bringing dinosaurs back to life. Even if we were in possession of the entire sequence of DNA, we could achieve nothing. The DNA would need an appropriate cell to read and act on the information and that we do not have. The difficulties that scientists have encountered with cloning attempts are a case in point. The scientists may have suitable genetic material, and cell material that is indeed from the same species, but there are special features required of a cell that is going to produce a new individual, and so far scientists have not figured it out even when the cell and



nucleic material match. So dinosaur DNA, however intact, will not work in some other creature's cells.

Lastly we should consider whether scientists have obtained or are likely to obtain even any small fragments of dinosaur DNA. An article in the online scientific journal *PLoS one* in April, 2011, examines the nature of proteins in mosasaur fossil bone. In this article the scientists present the results of a broad array of biochemical and molecular analyses, all of which suggest that the preserved proteins are from fibrous bone tissues which are, by their very nature, more resistant to decay than what we find with most proteins.

Another article in *PLoS one* (June, 2011), published by a different team of scientists, considers the nature of protein residues extracted from T. rex fossil bone. They declare that:

The molecular structure of collagen favors preservation. The triple-helical arrangement and intra- and intermolecular cross-links (connections between molecules and within them) confer stability on this ubiquitous structural molecule (James San Antonio et al.).

They also obtained similar results from extracts from a duckbill dinosaur. The conclusion of this team was that structural proteins in dinosaur bones were much more resistant to decay than are most other organic molecules. DNA, by comparison, is a very delicate molecule that would decay far more rapidly than fibrous collagen molecules or other more delicate proteins. Therefore, we do not expect to find any useful DNA in dinosaur remains.

Thus, science fiction notwithstanding, there is no way dinosaurs will be brought back to life other than with robotic models, which are the product of the artist's ideas about what they were like. Fashions in dinosaur appearances have certainly changed over the years. Whereas a couple of generations ago they were displayed with dragging tails, now we imagine them running in perky fashion with their tails held high in the air. Now, also, artists provide very colorful exteriors to these creatures, and in some cases they even clothe them in feathers. Some of these ideas are based on reasonable inferences, and some not. And no doubt ideas about their appearance will continue to change as scientists revise their theories.

While it is fun to dream about a T. rex chasing your best enemies, in the final analysis cold hard reality must dampen any such speculations. Let us rather concentrate on the application of new tools to solve old problems such as diseases of food crops. There is so much to interest us that we don't need science fiction!

* One way to think of this is to understand the 7,000 ordered base pairs as if it was a sentence made up of base pair "letters." The fragments would then be partial words – just a few letters – and because there is some overlap we can re-form the fragments into the original whole sentence. For example, if one fragment was "fragm" and another was "agment" the overlap allows us to see that these form the word "fragment".





Poise, a.k.a. self-control

“When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.” - Proverbs 10:19

by Sharon L. Bratcher

The lights inside the large sanctuary dimmed, and I sang the first two stanzas of my memorized solo. Suddenly, my mind went blank. Blank! Panic rose, as there were no lyrics available to me. But I had learned during voice lessons that poise should be the immediate reaction to a problem. I stood in position quietly, praying “Help!” Thankfully, my experienced pianist kept on playing, spoke the phrase that I had missed, and followed me when I resumed singing.

After the concert, my cheeks flushed with embarrassment as I faced everyone. But the Chorale members empathized, and my friend in the audience said, in surprise, “Oh, I thought you were just pausing for effect!”

Dictionary.com defines poise as: “a dignified, self-confident manner or bearing; composure; self-possession.” Perhaps we could also think of it as a type of self-control. I chose not to act on my strong, surging emotions, in order to achieve a higher purpose: in this case, not ruining the concert nor embarrassing myself.

Another example occurred years later.

I drove our son David to Baltimore for an overnight college visit during which our six-year-old Amy and I would visit with friends about 90 minutes past there. The two-hour drive developed into a seven-hour ordeal due to an overturned HazMat truck on I-95. We survived the situation with acceptance and good humor until after we dropped David off at midnight. I ran out of poise then as fatigue overwhelmed me. With no fortitude to drive another 90 minutes, I phoned my

friends that we would stay at a motel and come in the morning.

The night clerk at the motel refused to take a check, and I had not taken a credit card with me – \$57 cash, period. In my exhaustion, I shouted at her, a counterproductive move, indeed. Then I looked at Amy. To this day I can remember her little face, eyes wide, mouth open, beginning to be frightened by my actions. I stopped my words and stood there quietly, praying. The poise that characterized me from then on did not reflect the tumult inside of me, but it subdued Amy’s fear, and brought the clerk back to the counter. Thankfully, I found some school fundraiser change in the depths of my purse, which I borrowed for this emergency. The clerk *slowly* counted each nickel and dime, testing my self-control for endless minutes until we reached \$57. Never was I so happy to climb into bed!

These are two examples of reasons for practicing self-control. But I admit to finding it easier to control emotions in these situations than when my temper is flaring or my goals are being thwarted. Then the task has always been much more difficult.

It doesn’t help that our culture emphasizes “being real” and “expressing oneself” by always saying exactly what is on our mind. Thus, too often, we feel entitled to act and react in whatever manner we decide, especially when someone has infringed on our happiness. “Consideration” seems to be a lost art.

The fact is that we are all sinners, prone to do what pops first into our heads and

what feels best to us at the moment. As the song, *Thank you, Lord*, states:

*But it goes against the way I am to put my human nature down,
And let the Spirit take control of all I do;
‘Cause when those trials come, my human nature shouts the thing to do,
And God’s soft prompting can be easily ignored.*

Honest emotions need to be expressed, but the time, manner and place must be carefully considered. More often than not, our first thought derives from our self-centered hearts; therefore we fall into anger, impatient behaviors, and gossip. Jeremiah 17:9 states that “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” We must take care not to absolve ourselves too easily! Developing poise – a moment, or ten, to stand quietly and think and pray despite the hurricane-force emotions within us – *is* our responsibility of love to God and others, and, thankfully, self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Self-control means stopping to consider more aspects of the situation than were visible to us in the initial moment, including the feelings of others. Let’s practice poise when we are surprised or overwhelmed, and stand quietly from the outset; we will surely find help in our time of need.

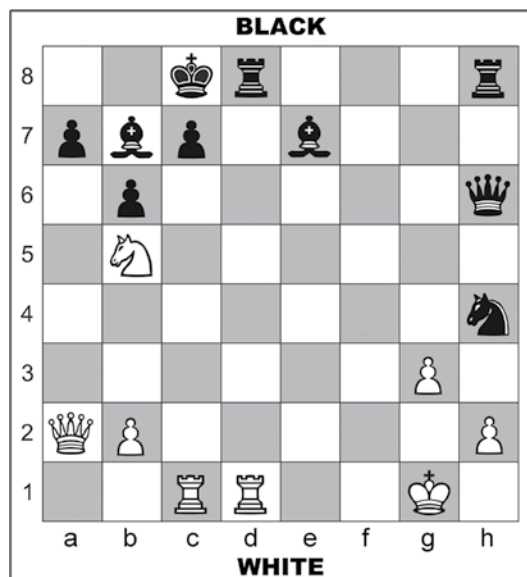
*“He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.”
- Proverbs 21:23*



ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

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

Chess Puzzle # 191



WHITE to Mate in 2
Or, if it is BLACK's Move,
BLACK to Mate in 2

NEW PUZZLES

Riddle for Punsters #191 – "Putting it Bluntly!"

Fred was becoming g_____ with envy that Barney's golf score was always much better than Fred's. Finally Fred asked Barney for some im____tial suggestions on how to improve. Barney replied: "F__e many years your swing has been, on the h____, too wild. If you could i____ out this difficulty, your score w____ improve greatly!"

Problem to Ponder #191 – "Wave to the Passengers in the Other Jet!"

Two jets took off, at the same time, from two different airports. Airport A is 1,800 km north of Airport B. A Westjet jet left from A and reached B in 4 hours whereas an Air Canada jet took off from B and traveled to A in 3 hours. Neither flight was affected by wind.

- On average, how much faster was the Air Canada jet flying compared to the Westjet one?
- At what location, south of airport A, did the two jets pass each other?
- Compared to the Westjet jet, how many more round trips could the Air Canada jet make in a 24-hour period, assuming that it takes half an hour after each trip for the transfer of passengers and luggage (and for refuelling - very important!).

SOLUTIONS TO THE JULY/AUGUST PUZZLE PAGE

Answers to Riddles for Punsters #190 – "Fowled up Play!"

One spunky little duck
was once playing in the muck
but then got quite stuck
and lamented out loud "Yuck!"
until pulled out by a tow truck
From under its wheels the wet clay
did indeed start to spray
but once freed on that day
"Thanks!" and a big "Hurray!"
were all the duck could say.

Answers to Problem to Ponder #190 – "FORE!midable scores"

It is golf season! On his favorite 18-hole course, Dave had an initial score of 92 shots. On 4 subsequent days, each day his score was better than the previous day's score. In fact, the reduction in shots taken, compared to the previous day, was always an increasingly large odd number of shots. If his 5-day average score was 2 shots less than his score on the middle (third) day, what was his score on each of the four days after his score of 92 on the first day?

Scores of 92, 91, 88, 83 and 76 (based on decreases of -1,-3,-5,-7) total 430 so their average is 86 which is 2 less than the middle day score. **Scores of 92, 89, 84, 77 and 68** (based on decreases of -3,-5,-7,-9) have an average of 82 which works. **Scores of 92, 87, 80, 71 and 60** (based on decreases of -5,-7,-9,-11) have an average of 82 which also works.

Scores of 92, 85, 76, 65 and 52 (based on decreases of -5,-7,-9,-11) have an average of 74 which works mathematically. However, since the lowest 18-hole score ever recorded is 54, **this solution should be discarded, unless Dave happened to break the world record that day!**

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 190

WHITE TO MATE IN 4

Descriptive Notation

- Q-K6 ch K-R1
- R-B8 ch RxR
- RxR ch B-N1
- QxB mate

Algebraic Notation

- Qg4-e6 + Kg8-h8
- Rf4-f8 + Rc8xf8
- Rf1xf8 + Bh7-g8
- Qe6xg8 ++

BLACK TO MATE IN 3 (OR 4)

Descriptive Notation

- QxP ch
- K-R1 RxP ch
- PxR Q-R7 mate

OR

- Q-R7 ch
- K-B1 RxP ch
- K-Q1 Q-N8 ch
- N-B1 QxN mate

Algebraic Notation

- Qc4xc2 +
- Kb1-a1 Ra5xa3 +
- b2xa3 Qc2-a2 ++

OR

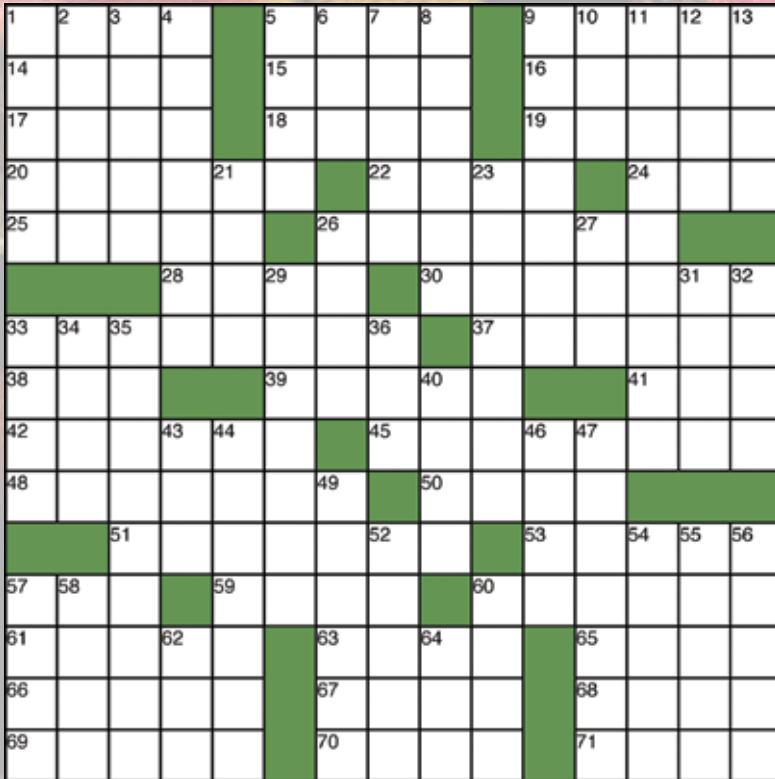
- Qc4-a2 +
- Kb1-c1 Rc8xc2 +
- Kc1-d1 Qa2-b1 +
- Nd3-c1 Qb1xc1 ++



Crossword Puzzle

Series 18 No 7

Last Month's solution
Series 18 No 6



ACROSS:

1. Body parts formed by pelvis and femur
5. Freshwater Eurasian fish
9. Bela's son (1 Chr. 8:3)
14. City in Norway
15. Peel a potato
16. People of a religious faith
17. The first king of Israel
18. Get acquainted
19. Bridal path, in a church
20. A once world-famous Toronto department store
22. Any other current business (abbr.)
24. 16th letter of the Greek alphabet
25. Oldest continuously inhabited community in US
26. Imitate
28. Ruth's son
30. Scrapings, or shavings
33. Form of worship sung in the evening
37. Very strong judge of Israel
38. Like this, in prescription abbr.
39. Isaac's mom

DOWN:

41. Before, poetically speaking
42. Title of reverence for God, or Yahweh
45. The man who was entrusted with the ark of the covenant for 3 months
48. Delivering by mail
50. First man
51. Lead ore minerals
53. Harvests
57. AKA "wallaba" wood, used in tropical S. America
59. A program by which a corporation's employees acquire its stock
60. Having skill and cleverness
61. What runs a car
63. Waiter's extra income
65. Mastery, or superiority, in Scotland
66. A skin irritation
67. At this location
68. To be, in Paris
69. Tree sap
70. Original thought
71. Datapoint's Advanced System language, for short

DOWN:

1. O.T. prophet and book
2. Jacob's dad
3. Demoted dwarf planet
4. David's son
5. Revolutions per minute (abbr.)
6. United Arab Emirates (abbr.)
7. Night vision, perhaps?
8. Route around
9. American state
10. Ao ____ = traditional Vietnamese tunic
11. Dealt out in portions
12. King of the Huns
13. Hardy grasses
21. Captures
23. Came into conflict
26. Female given name, meaning "rebirth" in Hebrew
27. Transmission Electron Microscope (abbr.)
29. Fluorescent red dyes
31. A bull
32. A Levitical city in the tribe of Issachar (1 Chron. 6)
33. 7th letter of the Greek alphabet
34. To fade or vanish, poetically

- speaking as of old
35. Extends the length of
36. Gross, for short
40. Camel hair garments
43. Non-disclosure agreement (abbr.)
44. Airplane part
46. A language spoken in Kashmir or member of someone who speaks it
47. Came forth into view
49. ____ seauton = know thyself
52. On foot in France
54. Heart part
55. Harbour docks
56. Commercial iron
57. Kind of maple tree found in Asia
58. Skin opening
60. Seaward
62. ____ et amo = I hate and I love
64. Prefix meaning "before"

Joyce