

REFORMED

Perspective

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A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

The Best Books

*and some
bad ones
too*

When you aren't looking

What our writers are up to when they're not writing for RP

Editorial

by Jon Dykstra

I discovered this past month that one of *Reformed Perspective's* regular writers had written a book I knew nothing about, a very good book. That got me wondering what the rest of our writers were up to when they weren't busy working on their articles for *RP*. They're writers, so might they be writing? The answer I found is, yes.

Sharon Bratcher

No need for Story Bibles

Back in March 2006 Sharon Bratcher wrote an article on the topic of "Teaching the Bible to Tiny Covenant Creatures." In the article Bratcher made it clear that she isn't a fan of Story Bibles, and argued these baby Bibles too often embellish the story "to the point of inaccuracy or even heresy." She knew from experience that, "with some planning, we can teach young children right from the Bible" and described how, with a friend's help, she had taught a group of three and four-year-olds a two-year program covering the entire Bible.

It was a good article but one, I suspect, that left parents wondering how they could reproduce what Bratcher had done. Sure, *she* taught a group of three and four-year-olds straight out of the Bible, but that doesn't mean we can, right?

Well, what if we had a little help? Soon after the article was published an RCUS church in California contacted Bratcher asking if she could put together the sort of curriculum she described in the article. So she did. *The Bible Overview for Young Children* has 104 weekly Old Testament lessons, with 52 written for the two to six-year-old level, and another 52 written for children six to nine. It outlines how children are to be led in prayer, given short verses to memorize, read a short story from the Bible and



led in a discussion of it. Younger children are given crafts to do, and older children are often given question sheets. The only negative I'd mention is that the curriculum was developed for RCUS churches and makes use of their *Trinity Hymnal* rather than the *Book of Praise* so Canadian Reformed parents will have to adapt the singing that's part of each lesson. That's a bit of bother, but worth dealing with – this is an impressive resource. If you're interested or want to see some sample pages, contact the author at sharoncopy@gmail.com.

The Old Testament *Bible Overview* is available on CD for \$52 and Bratcher hopes to complete a year's worth of New Testament lessons this fall. In her spare time she's also creating a collection of the best of her columns for a Soup and Buns book. Look for that in the fall as well.

Christine Farenhorst

Never underestimate the value of a good question

RP reader are well-acquainted with Christine Farenhorst's storytelling abilities but some may know nothing of her talent for asking the right sort of questions. In her two recent short story collections – *The Great Escape: 40 Faith-Building Lessons from History and Amazing Stories from Times*

Past: Devotions for Children and Families – she ends each tale with questions that simply cannot be answered with a quick yes or no. Thought-provoking stories, paired with conversation-starting questions – it's a combination that parents, and their children, will love. Both books are available at GoDutch.com for \$11.50 Can.



Margaret Helder

Saving a spectacular museum from itself

Drumheller’s Royal Tyrrell Museum is one of Alberta’s top tourist locations, a must-see if your children love dinosaurs. But while the museum has one of the most impressive arrays of dinosaur fossils you’ll ever find, parents are liable to leave the Tyrrell depressed. Children might miss it, but adults can’t fail to see that this is a shrine to a false god. Darwin rules here, with evolution tainting every display. The fact that it is an “ooh” and “aah” inducing shrine only makes it that much more depressing.

Fortunately Margaret Helder has rescued the museum from itself by creating a guide that offers a Christian perspective on the displays. Her *Royal Tyrrell Museum Guide* shifts the spotlight off of Darwin and shines it squarely on the wonders that our God has wrought. The *Guide*, newly updated and revised, can be had for only \$6 at www.create.ab.ca.



Michael Wagner

There is no such thing as a secular State



It’s amazing what you can find on the Internet when you’re searching for something else. Case in point: after finding a cartoon version of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* I started investigating what other Reformed cartoons there were to be found (if there was a comic of *Calvin’s Institutes* I wanted to know!). But instead of cartoons I happened upon a lesser-known work by RP’s very own Michael Wagner. *National Religion: A Presbyterian Political Manifesto* was first published way back in 1995, and repackaged in 2007 as a small booklet (available at Amazon.ca for \$8.14).

In it Wagner makes a convincing argument that a secular State is neither advisable nor even possible. Yes, there should be a separation of Church and State – God has assigned different roles and responsibilities to each – but, Wagner argues, there can never be a separation of Religion and State. If we try to ex-

clude Christianity and God from the public square we’re not left with some sort of neutral secular State. Instead we are left with a government devoted to a false religion, a religion that proclaims the irrelevance of God, and denies His dominion over all spheres of life. There is no neutrality.

This is a slim volume at only 48 pages, but Wagner packs a lot into it. After calling for the establishment of Reformed (or more specifically, Presbyterian) Christianity as our national religion, he tackles the question of just how this would end up working. How should this Reformed government treat non-Christians? To what degree would we tolerate the errors of other denominations? How far would Christian liberty extend?

Politically-minded Christians may not agree with all Wagner’s conclusions, but they owe it to themselves to at least consider his arguments.



What’s Inside

There are so many mediocre books out there, it’s only the rarest of them that warrants reviewing. With that in mind *The Shack* and *Remember Creation* should feel it a perverse honor to be panned in this issue. But bad books, even those that are in some way remarkably so, have never been the focus of the Summer Reading issue. And so it remains. We’ve scoured the globe, and our own backyard, to discover a dozen books that are worth buying for your church, home or school library.

This month also features an announcement of a contest jointly sponsored by ARPA Canada, *Reformed Perspective* and CV Benefits. The Salt n’ Light YouTube Contest asks readers to create short videos that have a moral or political message, and upload them to YouTube. The best two videos will receive \$250 each. For more details see the announcement on page 21.

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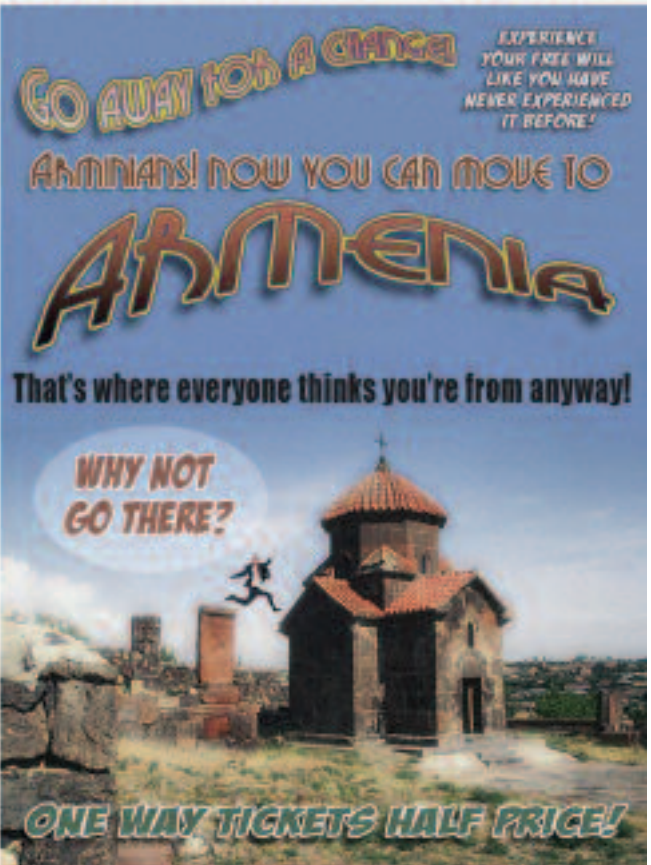
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CALVINIST CARTOONS by EDDIE EDDINGS



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Readers' Response



Dear Editor,

I write regarding Margaret Van Dyk's letter to the editor in the May issue and the listing she gave of charities that were said to support Embryonic Stem Cell research (ESCR). I have a number of questions. How does a charity get on or off this list and what is the criteria for inclusion on it? What is meant by support? Does this mean the funds collected go to Embryonic Stem Cell research directly, or does it mean the organizations have stated, at some time, that they support this type of research but in fact do not fund this research themselves?

If we shop, drive a car or pay taxes we inadvertently or knowingly support activities that are wrong and in today's complex sin laden world it is impossible to avoid this.

My wife has had ALS for a number of years and we have supported and have encouraged others to support the ALS Society of Ontario with fundraising and continue to do so. Some of the money raised by ALS Ontario is forwarded to the ALS Society of Canada for research – the balance goes to patient support services. There is very little funding available for research into ALS thus we, as we are directly affected, felt motivated to help in this area.

At the outset we did not think about the details of how the money was to be spent and what kind of research was being done. Over the last few years the issue of using ESC has made headlines therefore I spoke with the Director of Research for ALS Canada last year to inquire about the possibility that ALS Canada was doing research using ESC. She told me ALS Canada was not doing research using ECS nor would they be doing any work with this type of stem cell but were working with induced pluripotent "adult" stem cells in some of their research.

It seems that the Lord in His mercy has directed stem cell research toward using the more effective "adult" stem cells greatly reducing the use of ESCs.

Gary Aikema
Flamborough, Ontario

Editor's Response:

The list that Margaret Van Dyk passed on in her May letter was compiled by LifeSiteNews.com. ALS Canada was added to the list because in 2003 through 2004 they were one of three medical charities (the others being Muscular Dystrophy Canada and the Parkinson Society Canada) that pushed the government to legalize embryonic stem cell research (ESCR). When Bill C-13 (subsequently renamed C-6) was being debated ALS Canada was, as the group noted, "on the forefront of advocacy to support the Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) Bill" (*Coast to Coast* Dec 2003 edition).

However, as was made evident in your conversation with the ALS Canada Director of Research, the group is not currently funding ESCR. An email exchange with Director of Communications Bobbi Greenberg, made it clear that in the past as well, "the ALS Society of Canada has not funded any embryonic stem cell research."

But while this is good news, the group was instrumental in legalizing ESCR in Canada (and, in some small ways at least, does continue to advocate for it – see their "Primer on Stem Cells" at als.ca/stemcell/primer.aspx).

I find this terribly discouraging – you did your research, asked the right questions, and found out for certain that this group was not funding ESCR. And then it turns out that even though they aren't funding it, they were heavily involved in promoting it!

I wonder then, if there is a way we can fund ALS research more directly, so that we need not entrust our monies to a problematic group like ALS Canada. The same sort of problem exists in Cancer research, where even the Terry Fox Run is indirectly (though definitively) tied to funding ESCR. Is it time for a Reformed medical charity?



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Nota Bene

News worth noting

by Sarah Meerstra



MP wants to protect the “transgendered”

On May 15th, British Columbia NDP MP Bill Siksay tabled a private members’ bill that would add “gender identity” and “gender expression” as categories protected against discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. The bill also proposes to add these two terms to the Criminal Code to be taken into consideration at sentencing for “hate crimes.”

“It’s a stretch to get it all the way through the House and the Senate in a minority Parliament, and that’s generally

a stretch anyway for most private members’ legislation,” Siksay says. “I’m hopeful that we’ll at least have a chance to debate it. . . .”

“I believe that enshrining explicit protections for transgender and transsexual people in our human rights legislation and our Criminal Code will go a long way towards full equality and acceptance for transgender and transsexuals people,” said Siksay. “This will ensure that transphobic violence is clearly identified as a hate crime, and judges will be able to determine sentences accordingly.”

Source: LifeSiteNews.com, May 20, 2009

Fireproof – surprise hit of 2008



Despite some potentially heavy competition, the explicitly faith-based movie *Fireproof* beat out several other big names to become the highest-grossing independent film of 2008. Released in September 2008 after being produced with an almost unheard-of budget of just \$500,000, the film grossed \$33 million in the box offices that year.

The success of this movie caused quite a buzz, and an ABC News segment on it referred to the emergence of “God-lywood.”

What’s next for the Christian film industry? A soon-to-be-released film called “The Secrets of Jonathan Sperry,” a film about a 75-year-old man who motivates three young boys to fend off a bully by following the Lord. “The church normally plays defense,” says Rich Christiano, the film’s director. “Hollywood does something we don’t like and we react to it. I say forget about that. Quit complaining and let’s go on the offense.”

Source: ABC News, June 6, 2009; Newsbusters, June 8, 2009-07-03



Homosexuals highlight dangers of lifestyle

The Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition – a homosexual group – has filed a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Coalition against Health Canada. They argue that, because Health Canada does not allocate specific funding to deal with “those health issues where gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) communities are disproportionately affected,” it is guilty of discrimination and homophobia.

The complaint goes on to provide numerous statistics that prove the high-risk nature of the homosexual lifestyle, including substantially elevated rates of smoking, suicide, alcoholism, drug use, depression, HIV/ AIDS, abuse, and certain types of cancer.

Ironically, those opposed to homosexuality have been presenting these statistics for years in an effort to bring attention to the negative consequences of this lifestyle. Now the gay community is trying to use these statistics to further their cause and gain even greater rights.

Source: LifeSiteNews.com, May 14, 2009

Tax Freedom Day

The Fraser Institute declared June 6 of this year to be Tax Freedom Day. This means that if the average Canadian family had to pay all the taxes levied against them by all levels of government up front, every penny of what they earned from January 1 until June 6 would have gone to the government. Only from June 6 on would they be working to earn money for themselves.

According to their calculations, Tax Freedom Day came three days earlier this year than it did in 2008, due to some tax relief initiatives by the government.

Source: The Fraser Institute, June 5, 2009-07-03

Photo courtesy of *The Interim*.

A throng of pro-lifers descended on Ottawa on May 14.



Abortion – the good and bad

First the good news. A recent Gallup poll has found that 51% of Americans now identify themselves as pro-life. This is the first time in the 15 years that the pollsters have asked this question that a majority have answered this way, and it is a substantial change from just last year, when only 44% identified as pro-life.

The findings echoed a recent national survey by the Pew Research Center, which reported a sharp decline since last August in those saying abortion should be legal in all or most cases – dropping from 54 per cent to 46 per cent.

* * * *

More good news – in an overwhelming vote of 40-5 the Nebraska Legislature has passed a bill that requires doctors who perform abortions to make an ultrasound of the unborn child available to a woman seeking an abortion. The bill also requires that any and all detailed information about the child that can be derived from an analysis of the ultrasound must be given.

Supporters say that this bill will help women to make a more informed decision. “Ultrasound technology has made tremendous advancements and provides a window to the womb that allows mothers

to see their unborn children in real time,” said Mary Spaulding Balch, J.D., National Right to Life State Legislative Director. “

* * * *

Outside of the United States, however, there is less good abortion news to report. In Sweden health authorities have ruled that gender-motivated abortions are not illegal according to current laws and therefore cannot be prevented or disallowed.

* * * *

In our own nation, Canadian Liberal Party leader Michael Ignatieff recently

made his position on abortion very clear. He issued a blunt response to Canadians who emailed him in the lead-up to the 40th anniversary of legalized abortion in Canada: “It is the longstanding view of the Liberal Party of Canada that women must have the right to choose, and this party will take no step that limits, or opens the door to limiting, access to safe medical services for women across Canada.”

Sources: LifeSiteNews.com, May 29, 2009, May 25, 2009; *The Daily Telegraph*, May 16 2009; *The Local*, May 12, 2009

In Alberta common sense is controversial

In May the Alberta government formally recognized parents have the right to control what their children are taught. The term “parental rights” was introduced into province’s human rights legislation to make it clear parents can withdraw their children from instruction on religion, sexuality and sexual orientation that they think is likely to conflict with their own beliefs.

What’s surprising is the vehement response that this has elicited.

“It makes us look as if we are some Southern US state, trying to enshrine some sort of religious dogma into our governing apparatus,” political scientist Keith Brownsey told the *National Post*. The *Edmonton Journal*’s Paula Simons deplored that “what Christian right-wing activists couldn’t accomplish, even in George W. Bush’s America, they’re about to pull off here.” NDP Leader Brian Mason thinks it’s like the Scopes Monkey Trial case, which resulted in the teaching of evolution becoming unlawful in Tennessee public schools. And the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) worries teachers may end up in front of a human rights commission. “These are the types of discussions you want to

have with kids in school,” ATA president Frank Bruseker told the *Calgary Herald*. “If parents want to talk about their differing viewpoints (on some teachings), they can do that at home.”

But common sense was not without its defenders. Says Nigel Hannaford of the *Calgary Herald*, “If parents don’t have such a right, who do you trust with the moral and legal right to decide what students must learn? Ottawa? The province? School boards? The Alberta Teachers’ Association? The gay-activist couple British Columbia contracted to write gay-friendly curriculum for use in its public schools?”

“Whether a parent’s fears are reasonable, or their opinions offend today’s self-proclaimed progressives, is not the point. What matters is that some decisions belong to parents, among them what their children are taught where fundamental beliefs about the world and morality often collide. Children belong to parents, not the state, by right. Now, if we could just get more parents to accept their parallel responsibility to guide, inform and instruct. . . . At least Alberta has offered a tool, however small, to those who are willing to do so.”

Source: The *Calgary Herald*, May 30, 2009

WHEN THE RIGHT IS WRONG

CHRISTIANS MIGHT BE RIGHT-WING BUT THEY AREN'T THE ONLY ONES

by Michael Wagner

Political labels can be confusing, especially when the good guys and some of the bad guys are described by the same terms. The term “right-wing” is one such label. Christians who oppose abortion and sexual immorality are commonly described as right-wing. However, certain anti-Christian groups, such as racist organizations, are also called right-wing. So sometimes the Right is right, and sometimes the Right is wrong – it depends on the issues being considered.

A few years ago a Baptist pastor in Indiana named Donald Boys wrote a book entitled *Is God a Right-Winger?* His answer is that, yes, God is a right-winger. Boys looks at a number of important issues (abortion, homosexuality, pornography, education, etc.), and notes that the Biblical position on each one is currently described as right-wing. At one point he states, “Yes, Christ is a Conservative and God is a right-winger because it is the right position.” Perhaps that’s putting too fine a point on it, but the main idea is correct. Biblically-based political positions are considered to be right-wing, at least in the developed English-speaking countries.

Right of another sort

However, there are also right-wing movements and ideas that are harmful and anti-Christian. A good example of this would be a contemporary intellectual movement in Europe known as the “European New Right.” This group is considered to be right-wing because it opposes liberalism, socialism, and communism. But it is also stridently anti-Christian. A Croatian diplomat and sympathetic observer, Tomislav Sunic, has written about this in *Against Democracy and Equality: The European New Right*.

According to the proponents of the European New Right, Christianity is the ultimate source of Europe’s contemporary political problems, especially the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century. In their view, the pagan religions of pre-Christian Europe must be revitalized if Europe is to be saved. As Sunic puts it, “the New Right sees the origins of totalitarianism in biblical monotheism; by contrast, it is in a return to the Indo-European pagan cosmogony that the New Right sees the only possible remedy to liberal and communist mass societies.”

How could Christianity be the root of totalitarianism? According to the European New Right, totalitarianism is the result of the Christian belief that there is only one God and only

one Truth. “The consequence of Christian belief in ontological oneness, i.e., that there is only one God and therefore only one truth, results in an effort to obliterate or down play all other possible ‘truths’ and values.” In this view, it is basically the rejection of relativism by Christianity that leads to totalitarianism. “In Judeo-Christian belief, there cannot exist a relative truth, or a different and contradictory truth, since Judeo-Christianity excludes everything that is not compatible with the division between the concept of good and evil.”

In short, Christianity’s rejection of relativism and adherence to the idea of a single truth leads it to intolerance, opposing and persecuting all other views. And this intolerant mindset has led, over time, to the development of totalitarianism. A short, concise, but historically inaccurate line of reasoning. The truth is that the Christian view of God being above the state, expecting the state to follow and obey His law, is a leading bulwark against totalitarianism. The idea that God is in authority over the state, and that His law limits the power and jurisdiction of the state, is an insuperable barrier to totalitarianism.

As Sunic puts it, the European New Right’s solution to the problems caused by Christianity “is its advocacy of ancient European paganism and polytheism.” Proponents of this view believe that “if Europe is to stave off spiritual chaos, it needs to replace the monotheistic vision of the world with the polytheistic vision of the world – which alone can guarantee the ‘return of Gods’ and the plurality of *all* values.” Whereas secular humanists root their relativism in atheism or agnosticism, the European New Right also wants relativism, but one rooted in ancient polytheism. A religious perspective that allows for many different gods can apparently also accommodate many different truths, while avoiding the pitfalls of atheism. Christianity is unable to accept various gods and various truths.

Right not always our friends

So biblical Christians are necessarily political right-wingers, but political right-wingers are not necessarily Christians. In fact, right-wingers can be virulent anti-Christians in some contexts. It’s probably hard to get more anti-Christian than the idea of replacing Christianity with ancient European paganism. Yet after all that God has done for Europe, that is a central component of the agenda of the European New Right.



A free press, of sorts

Twitter in Iran

by James Dykstra

During the recent unrest following the Iranian elections, the first source to break the story was not *CNN* but *Twitter*. *CNN*, like most of the major media outlets, had the activities of its reporters restricted by the Iranian government. If, however, you knew who to follow in Iran, you could get immediate and reliable information from *Twitter* when the TV news reporters were being thrown out of the country. *Twitter* was unstoppable.

Why simple is good

How did *Twitter* get through when *CNN* couldn't? *Twitter* is a website where people post short updates about what they're doing – not more than 140 characters at a time. On *Twitter* there's no fancy pictures, movies or games to play. There's only real time status updates posted from your computer or your cell phone.

That simplicity is what allowed *Twitter* to work. Though the Iranian government restricted their citizens' access to the Internet by cutting bandwidth (how fast you can upload to and download from the Internet) when you post from *Twitter* you're sending only 140 characters which takes almost no bandwidth to upload. The restricted bandwidth interfered with the upload of photos and videos of the protests, and stopped Iranians from accessing fancier sites like *Facebook*, but *Twitter* soldiered on. Iranian protesters could continue to send out short, but real-time, updates about what was happening on their cities' streets.

Alternate routes galore!

In fairness, the protesters couldn't have accessed *Twitter* without a little help. The government was aware of what the protesters were doing and cut direct access to the *Twitter* site. To get around this, individuals outside Iran set up "proxy servers" which acted as alternate routes or detours for people trying to access *Twitter*. As the government discovered these proxy servers and cut access to them one by one from inside



Trashed computers and Internet terminals, purportedly in Iran (though there is no way to verify the facts about these photos as they were uploaded to the Internet anonymously).

Iran, people kept setting up new proxy servers, giving Iranian citizens new ways to detour around the government blockages and still access *Twitter*.

The good and bad of proxy servers


Though this was a different use for them, proxy servers are commonly used by almost anyone who has used a networked computer at home, school, or at the public library. The practical effect of a proxy server is it preserves anonymity – individual users on a particular network can't be identified. So proxy servers can help protect a person's privacy.

Because proxy servers are easy to set up and because of the way they reroute traffic they can also allow someone to get around content filters that a network might have in place. So whether that's at the national level in Iran or the local level at your neighborhood Christian school a proxy server can help you access a site that someone else might be trying to keep you away from. This can help protesters in repressive countries in their struggles, or aid students at school access questionable material that the school has blocked.

However, the protesters in Iran had help that went beyond the proxy servers. The people at *Twitter* itself aided the effort. At the height of the protests in Iran, *Twitter* was due to be taken offline for needed upgrades. Seeing the role they were playing in the protest, *Twitter* moved their upgrades to mid-afternoon of the next day which was prime usage time for their core North American market. Though they annoyed users in Canada and the United States, *Twitter* started their upgrades at 1 AM in Iran, when all the protests would have concluded for the night. Americans were inconvenienced but protesters a world away were helped out.

A free press of sorts

Even though reporters were kicked out, and the Internet was restricted, the protesters' story was still told. For those who have an important message to get out to the world, Internet sites like *Twitter* offer a way to have their voice heard that seems almost unstoppable. Much on the Internet may be inane, seedy, or simply immature but as the Iranian protesters showed, some websites can serve as a voice for those who would otherwise be silenced.

Christians should be inspired. No, we don't all need to sign on to *Twitter* and start "tweeting." However, we do have a message the world needs to hear, that they won't hear via the mainstream media – we've been cut off! So perhaps we too need to decide to speak up by whichever and whatever means we can. Even if that means is limited to just 140 characters at a shot. 

Canada's civil war

Our courts have usurped control of our country – but we can take it back

by Ron Gray

Who makes Canada's laws?

Parliament is the obvious, and was once the only, answer. But as Mark Penninga noted in his excellent article "Legalized polygamy on our doorstep" (May/2009) ". . . the Charter of Rights and Freedoms trumps all democratic authority, including our Parliament."

Canada's courts have used the Charter to usurp Parliament's legislative role. But this is only so because our Parliamentarians have failed to see the whole picture in perspective.

What once was

The heritage of our democratic parliamentary system divides the authority and power of government into three balancing segments:

- Legislative – the elected Parliament makes the laws;
- Executive – the Cabinet, through the civil service, administers the laws;
- Judicial – the courts settle disputes according to the law as they find it written.

That division of powers is important to prevent any branch from becoming too powerful and becoming dictatorial.

And the three-fold division is actually part of our Constitution; in a 1980 reference question by then-PM Pierre Trudeau, the Supreme Court ruled that Canada's Constitution actually consists of two equally-important parts: the written document, and a body of tradition that goes back to Magna Carta in 1215. That body of tradition incorporates "checks and balances" to preclude the Crown (or any branch of government) from becoming an autocracy.

What is

But since Parliament's approval of the Charter in 1982, the courts have had the potential authority to strike down laws or amend them without reference to Parliament. The judges then in office were very restrained in their exercise of that power. But subsequent courts have become aggressive in acting as the ultimate authority – even unconstitutionally amending Canada's Constitution, the highest law in the land.

That illegal amendment took place in 1995, when the Supreme Court of Canada inserted the phrase "sexual orientation" into Section 15 of the Charter, the "equality rights" section.

Since the Charter is part of the Constitution, amending it is actually changing the Constitution. But Canada's Constitution includes a formula for its own amendment – and the courts are no part of it. A minor change requires the approval of Parliament plus seven of the ten provincial legislatures, representing more than 50 per cent of the population of Canada; a major change requires the unanimous consent of all 11 legislatures.

Not only was the insertion of "sexual orientation" into Section 15 illegal, it was bad law; for the term "sexual orientation" has no legal definition. Indeed, in 1981, when the Charter was being drafted, then-MP Jean Chrétien told Parliament, "That phrase doesn't belong in any law, because no one knows what it means!" A committee of psychologists has drawn up a list of 55 possible definitions of the phrase.

When one of the three branches of government invades the jurisdiction of another, how can it be restrained? We cannot take judges before the courts, because they are the courts.

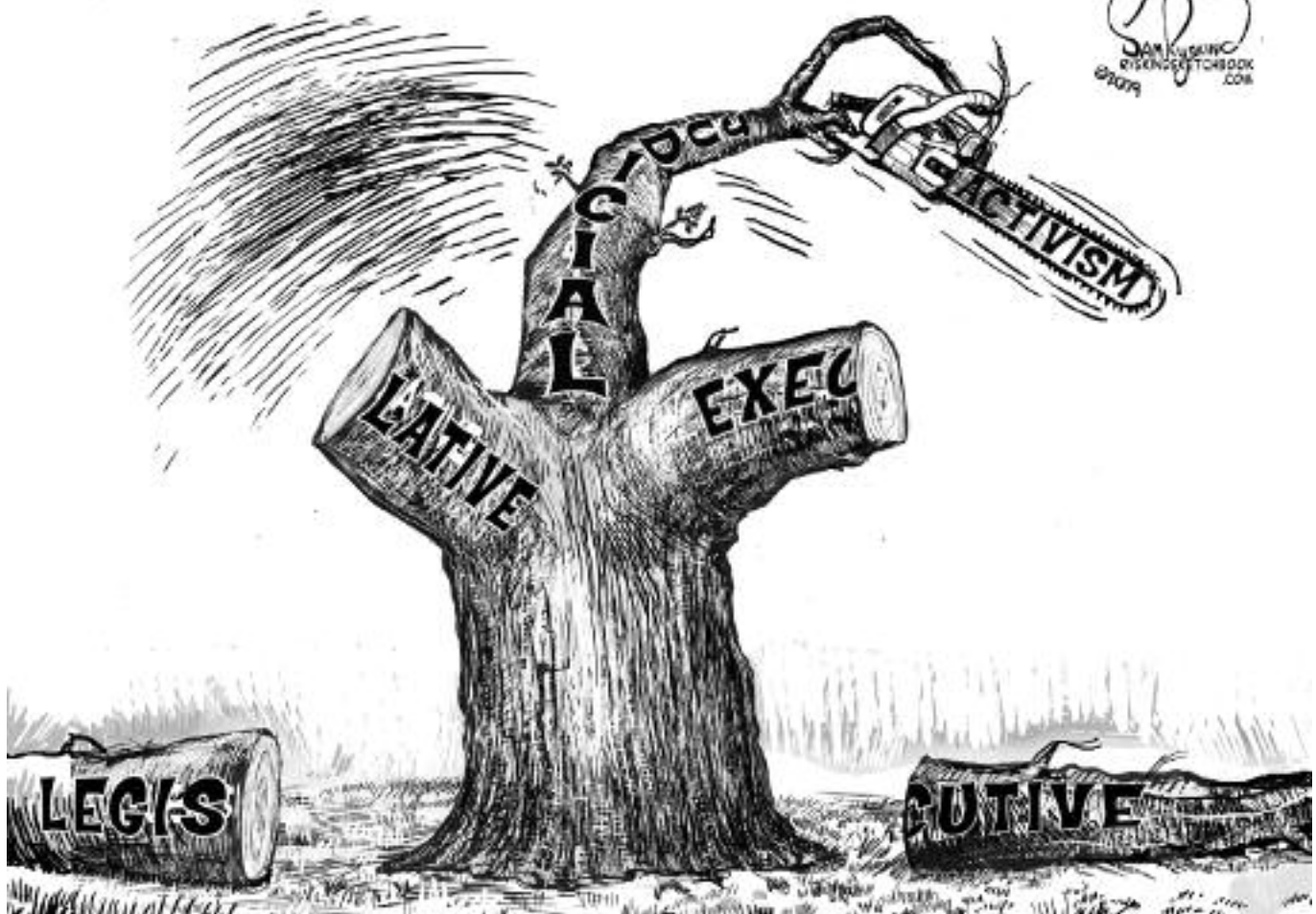
When the courts exceed their constitutional authority, they are actually invading the jurisdiction that properly belong exclusively to the elected legislature. When that happens, a state of virtual civil war exists.

Ours is a typically Canadian "civil war," with no visible bloodshed in the streets; but the social activists who have been pushing the "war" have slaughtered more than three million so far: pre-born children who were killed in the womb. And now other activists are using the courts to push their agenda for normalization of sexual perversions – including homosexuality, polygamy, polyandry and polyamory; so the list of victims is already being expanded to include about ten million schoolchildren, who are being indoctrinated to "appreciate" and even "celebrate" perversion.

What can be done

So how can Canadians defend the constitutionality of their government?

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The answer is that ultimate authority still rests in the hands of our elected representatives, because only they can approve the allocation of funds.

When MPs recognize that the courts have exceeded their jurisdiction by usurping the law-making and amending authority that properly belongs only to our elected representatives – or when the people begin to elect candidates whose party already recognizes that a constitutional problem exists (read: the CHP) – Parliament can then draw a line in the sand and tell the courts, “Your authority ends here; go no further!”

Of course, such an ultimatum requires an “or else” to complete it. And the completion of the sentence is: “Or else we will cut off your funding; your salaries will end; and we will create a new jurisprudence that will stay within its constitutional bounds!”

Does that seem extreme? Of course it is. But so is willful violation of our Constitution by the courts.

As with any civil war, the ultimate question is: do the people of the nation have the will to defend the historic foundations of their democracy? Or will they supinely bow to “political correctness,” and let democracy die?

Past battles for responsible government have always depended upon the willingness of a few to see beyond their own short-term interests, and risk everything so that succeeding generations can inherit a form of government which conforms to the biblical mandate: “For it (the government) is a minister (i.e., servant) of God to you for good” (Romans 13:4).

When any government ceases to conform to that job description, it’s time for the people, if they are God-fearing, to replace it... peacefully (by the ballot) if possible; by offering their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor in a bid to compel change, if no other option is available.

Bismarck wrote, “Those who will not be ruled by the Bible will be ruled by the bayonet.” Indeed, the only form of government that allows us to live at peace is one that recognizes the dictum of legal scholar William Blackstone: “No enactment of man can be regarded as a law unless it conforms to the Law of God.”

Ron Gray is the former leader of Canada’s Christian Heritage Party



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Budgeting Basics

Everyone needs to budget – here's how

by John Voorhorst

“Deficit budget” is a term we’ve heard quite a lot the last few months. Mr. Harper has presented a deficit budget of \$50 billion and Mr. Obama has lead the charge for a deficit budget of \$1.7 trillion in 2009 and \$1.1 trillion in 2010.

But what about your household budget? Is it also a deficit budget? Or do you even have a budget?

If not, why not? Every household must have a budget, and actually, every single person, even if he or she lives at home while attending university or college, needs a budget. Perhaps you are rolling your eyes as you read this and thinking: Yah right! A budget?! Why would I need a budget? I barely have enough money to make it from paycheck to paycheck. Budgets are okay for people with real money, but me?

Yes, even you need a budget. Let me ask you a question to make my point. Do you know how much money you spend every week at Tim Horton’s? Many of us spend a lot more money on a double-double every day than we realize. Even if you only buy a cup a couple of times a week it amounts to more than \$200 a year just on coffee. That’s “real money” flying out of your hands unnoticed. So yes, even you should create a budget.

First steps

Building a budget is a process. And that process does entail a little work. Living within the budget is the hard part. It takes discipline, self-discipline. But let’s start with the process.

The first step is gathering information. Find the last two or three months of statements from your bank, the various utility companies you deal with and your pay stubs. If you do not pay your utilities on the budgeted plan but pay as you go, be sure to find at least one statement from the previous winter. Either the January or February statement would give you an idea about the winter costs. Also write down on a piece of paper what you have been contributing to church and also what your school fees are. (Yes, I realize that this is a little backwards. What you give to church and school should be based on your pay stub, rather than simply on what you’ve paid in the past, but we will address that later).

That should give us all the history we need. Next, sit down and estimate how much money you require for clothing, food and other household expenses, and write that down on a piece of paper.

Joe’s budget

Perhaps the most helpful approach would be to demonstrate the budgeting process with the help of an imaginary friend – let’s call him Joe. As we work through Joe’s budget you can work through your own by going to www.reformedperspective.ca and downloading the blank budget form you can find there linked to this article. You can print that off and plug in your own numbers as we fill in the numbers for Joe.

Our friend Joe is married and he and his wife Mary have three children. Joe works for T and F Plumbing. He has been there for 8 years. Mary spends her days at home managing the household, but is able to earn a little “pin” money by selling some home cleaning supplies. They have two sons and a daughter.

OK, enough of this building of an imaginary friend. Let’s get to work.

When I build a budget I like to start with the income. Joe earns \$28 per hour, so at 2,080 hours per year his annual salary is \$58,240, which works out to \$4,850 per month. Last year Mary earned \$3,000, which averages out to \$250 as a monthly amount for budget purposes. So, the household income is \$5,100 per month. So far so good.

Now a little work is required. Let’s start with the three obvious expenses: church, school and the Canada Revenue Agency, better known as the tax man.

ONLINE RESOURCES

This article is also available online at www.reformedperspective.ca on the website’s front page. The online version includes links to two Excel documents: Joe and Mary’s sample budget, and a blank budget that can serve as a helpful template for creating your own budget. When you use the template, you will notice that you only need to enter the dollars into the first month of the budget. The template will fill in the rest of the year. If you have large one-time expenses that need to be included, they can be entered into the month as required. We added a line marked “one time expenses” at the bottom.

First, church. This can be a little contentious, but let me use \$450 per month as our friends' budgeted contribution to the church. That is a little less than the tithe spoken of in the Bible but when I add the \$425 per month that our friends pay to have their eldest child educated in the local Christian school then we have a total of \$875 which falls within the guidelines that I believe can be used for this.

Next, taxes, Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance. That will be about \$1,225 per month. Now some hard work.

Joe and Mary live in Lethbridge, Alberta, and they're currently paying \$885 per month for their mortgage. Utilities average \$300 per month.

They also spend \$40 for their Internet and an additional \$38 for their cable TV. They each have a cell phone with a combined cost of \$85 per month. And they also have a landline that costs them \$35 per month. The line on the budget we will use combines those items. They total \$198.

They spend \$600 per month on groceries. Groceries includes things like cleaning supplies, toiletries, etc.

Auto insurance is \$145 per month for two older vehicles and their home insurance cost them \$55 per month with auto fuel and maintenance coming to \$150 per month.

Now we come to a few discretionary items, things like clothing and entertainment. Here is where we need a little discipline because it is in these two items that we often spend a lot of money that is not being tracked. So, for clothes, we'll give Joe and Mary \$100 per month and for entertainment we'll assume \$50 per month.

Because Mary is saving for some additional furniture we are putting \$100 per month into that column.

Joe's job provides him with a complete health and dental benefits plan and he pays \$25 per month for the disability portion of that plan. That goes in the disability column. Periodically Mary does pay for some of the dental expenses that are not insured and we average that out to \$20 per month. They subscribe to *Reformed Perspective*, *Clarion* and a local newspaper at \$20 per month. Maintenance for the house is budgeted at \$100 per month and life insurance costs \$35 dollars.

That looks after just about everything, with the exception of a small retirement plan. Joe is depositing \$75 per month into an RSP. And they are also putting aside \$75 per month for travel and recreation. That is so they can go camping two weeks in the summer.

The budget form we have online has a few extra lines. Because Joe and Mary have no debt, besides their mortgage, we'll put zeros in the lines for credit cards and in the line for auto loans. Finally we have the miscellaneous line, which really should NOT be a permitted line item, as it is too easy to allot large unaccounted sums in this column, but for those of you who insist, it is there.

Mysterious shortfall?

So, if we didn't miss anything, we have gross income of \$5,100 per month, and total expenses including church, school and taxes totaling \$5,033. That leaves a small surplus each month.

But Joe and Mary are much like most Canadians in that they cannot believe that there is any *extra* money left because they actually end each month a little *short* of cash. How can that be happening?

Well, we have marked everything down into our budget so now we can compare what we budgeted for with what we actually spend.

Tracking expenses

I hope each one of you will take the time to build a budget. But don't stop there. For at least the next twelve months you should keep a record of all your expenses. So, when you go to Tim's for coffee, ask for a receipt and put it into a jar above the kitchen stove. Every bill you pay between the first of the month to the end of the month should be kept and then early next month you (or for couples, the two of you) should sit down and compare the actual expenses to the budget. Where you have gone over the budget you must make a conscious effort to reduce that expense next month. So, if you put \$100 into entertainment but you spent \$125 at Tim's or Starbucks, you need to stop and consider whether that is really a prudent use of your money.

Get your own house in order

Remember, it's a little bit hypocritical if we complain about the government running deficits if we are not prepared to balance our personal household budget. And just in case you think there is nothing left at all, remember that when Joe and Mary file their taxes next March they will receive a substantial tax refund. Their donations and RSP contributions all add up to a refund of approximately \$6,000 (I say approximately, because the refund is dependent on what portion of the school fees are a donation). The refund should probably be put away for maintenance on the house or, if you are so inclined, you could pay the mortgage down with at least half that amount.

It is also good to remember that the Bible speaks of this budget process in a few places. In Luke 14:24 we read "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?" And in case you are tempted to place your trust in the money you have been given or in your ability to manage, it may be good to also reflect on what we read in Proverbs 15:27: "A *greedy* man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live."

So budget – prudent use of what God gives us is a must – but don't obsess about money. It is in God that we must place our trust.



A Life and Death Issue:

Speaking to a society already sympathetic towards euthanasia and assisted suicide

by Mark Penninga



Who has authority to take away a human life? In the cloud of emotion and deception that encircles the euthanasia debate, that one question lies at the bottom. It is a question that may have to be answered by our country this year. On May 13, 2009 Bloc Quebecois MP Francine Lalonde introduced a private member's bill (C-384) to our Canadian Parliament that proposes to legalize assisted suicide and euthanasia. It is scheduled for its first debate in the House of Commons, and a subsequent vote, at the end of September.

Canada has to understand the dangerous reality of this legislation.

Context

Assisted suicide involves intentionally killing oneself with the help of another. Euthanasia takes it a step further by intentionally killing someone with the purpose of relieving their suffering. Bill C-384, as it is currently written, would legalize both assisted suicide and euthanasia. And it doesn't limit its scope to the terminally ill. Rather its scope includes people with depression or other chronic mental conditions.

If this bill passes in its current state, we would be one of the most liberal countries in the world in this regard, joined only by the Netherlands. A few other countries, along with the states of Oregon and Washington, have already legalized assisted suicide.

According to recent polls, a majority of Canadians (as high as 71 per cent) support the legalization of assisted suicide. Interestingly, those numbers drop significantly (as low as 45 per cent) when there are also questions asked about the effects of this on the disabled and other vulnerable members of society.

The point is that there are many Canadians who don't really understand the issue. Even Christians fall for misleading talk of "compassion" and "dignity." If we don't engage in public discussions about these issues we shouldn't be surprised when our culture shifts from its Christian roots to the now-dominant postmodern religion of secular humanism.

Here are some common challenges and possible answers to help you respond to this issue as you engage in discussion with your colleagues, friends, Member of Parliament, and oth-

ers who may not share your concerns or faith. (If you are looking for information about the bigger philosophical and legal questions associated with this issue, check out the articles "Euthanasia on the Horizon" and "Dying with Dignity" available at www.arpacanada.ca.)

Reverse onus

Who is it going to hurt?

Euthanasia advocates claim that legalizing assisted-suicide will only impact a small number of people so, "Why shouldn't I be allowed to end my life when I determine? It doesn't affect you or anyone else."

Our response

Legalizing assisted suicide or euthanasia has effects that go far beyond the people who choose to end their lives.

Under Canadian law today, all born humans can be assured that their lives are intrinsically valuable. This value isn't based on what we own or what position we might hold. We aren't recognized as valuable for what we can do, but simply for what we are – precious human beings. Nobody needs to justify their existence. We don't have to "measure-up" to somebody else's standards if we want to continue to live. On the contrary, we all have equal protection under the law, regardless of our age, sex, race, or ability.

That would change if euthanasia is legalized. We would shift from being protected by the law to having to prove we were not a burden. We would be evaluated on the basis of what we could still do – we would have to justify our continued existence.

Already now the elderly and disabled can struggle with feelings of being a burden to their families or on society in general. If euthanasia or assisted suicide is legal, the law then forces them to justify their lives at a time when they feel least valuable.

Combine this with an aging population, increasingly broken families, and a strained healthcare system, and it is of little surprise that euthanasia and assisted suicide will be sold as an ethical way for people to "die with dignity." How convenient for our selfish society.

Love and care vs. death

Death is a viable answer?

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are requested or administered because someone decides that life is no longer worth living – either for themselves, or someone else under their guardianship – because of mental or physical suffering or disability.

Our response

We need to ask two questions. First, death may be an answer but is it the right answer? Second, whose interests are being cared for if death is considered the solution?

If death is chosen when other options will address the problem, it is a very sad testament to our society's indifference towards human life and our hypocritical double-standard when we talk of human rights.

There are other options. As just one example, palliative care involves physically, emotionally, and spiritually caring for dying people by alleviating suffering as much as possible. Dr. Margaret Cottle is a palliative care physician and a clinical care instructor at the University of British Columbia. In an interview on the topic of assisted suicide for the Spring/Summer 2006 issue of the *IMFC Review* she makes the astute comment that:

It's a real privilege, when someone is at a place where his or her body is not all that beautiful anymore and they don't have anything to contribute from a worldly standard, to be able to say, "It's not your job to feel significant; it's our job to impart that significance to you." There is something very healing for the person who receives that and also for the person who gives that.

Dr. Cottle also noted that in studies done about the biggest fears that dying people have and the reason why they would want to die earlier, physical pain is a small concern. She notes:

Their big fears are fear of being a burden and fear of being abandoned. As a community, we need to realize that it may be a burden for one person or family to give care. But it doesn't have to be a burden if all of us get involved and help out.

That is exactly the point that policymakers and judges need to keep in mind. The root of the problem which is leading to a call for physician assisted suicide is not something that can be solved by getting rid of laws that keep people from committing suicide or receiving help in doing so. Looking to legalized suicide as an answer does not satisfy the thing that dying people need most – love and care. It is society's duty to provide this. When we say that death is the best option, is it because it is the most convenient option for a selfish and aging society?

Summary arguments

WE OPPOSE LEGISLATION THAT WOULD LEGALIZE EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE BECAUSE:

- It violates the fundamental principle that all human life must be protected and cared for regardless of ability or age.
- Once this principle is struck down, there is no way to objectively draw a line at which point some humans may live and others should die. The basic right to life becomes subjective to the powerful in society.
- It violates the patient-doctor trust that is essential to healthcare.
- It forces the most vulnerable people in society to have to justify their existence in the face of a law that would allow them to be killed without any justification beyond their illness or disability.
- It results in giving up on those who need care most, rather than providing physical and emotional support to assist them through difficult times.
- It ignores the reality that a life with disabilities can still be valuable and enriching both to the person with the disabilities and to the rest of society.

Letting die vs. killing

Fearful of extreme measures

Some people support assisted suicide simply because they are fearful of being kept alive artificially and spending their last days, months, and even years in submission to life-sustaining machines.

Our response

Being against assisted suicide and euthanasia does not mean that we make every effort to extend life as long as it is technologically possible. Just because human life itself is inviolable does not mean that we have to extend life at all costs, making life unbearable for those who are dying.

A common problem in this debate is confusion between letting someone die and making someone die. The most compassionate thing to do in some cases may be to let a loved one die. But that is very different from actively ending their life. With the increasing powers of technology comes the responsibility to use it wisely. This applies just as much to whether we choose to use technology or to turn it off.

The slippery slope

Slippery slope arguments are just fear-mongering

In the speech that Lalonde gave when introducing this bill, she stated that those who in the past have argued a bill like this would lead to a slippery slope (that results in the devaluing of all human life) have been proven wrong.

Our response

Is that really true? Consider what Licia Corbella wrote about this in the *Calgary Herald* (May 16/09): “The Netherlands has been practicing the killing of patients for about 30 years. It was made legal on April 1, 2002. Euthanasia in the Netherlands started out as ‘mercy killing’ only for terminally ill, elderly people with full mental faculty who repeatedly ask for death. Now in the Netherlands, anyone over the age of 16, suffering from mental anguish, can seek physician-assisted suicide. What’s more, now mildly deformed infants are being killed in the Netherlands. In a March 2005 *New England Journal of Medicine* report called The Groningen Protocol, it is revealed that babies born with spina bifida, cleft palate and other abnormalities are being killed by Dutch physicians.”

Conclusion

In 1949 Dr. Alexander, one of the investigators in the Nuremberg Trials that prosecuted the Nazi’s for their heinous crimes, wrote an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* where he revealed some telling observations from the trials:

Whatever proportions these crimes finally assumed, it became evident to all who investigated them that they started from small beginnings. The beginnings at first were merely a subtle shift in emphasis in the basic attitudes of physicians. It started with the acceptance of the attitude, basic to the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as a life not worthy to be lived. This attitude in its early stages concerned itself merely with the severely and chronically sick. Gradually the sphere of those to be included in this category was enlarged to encompass the socially unproductive, the ideologically unwanted, the racially unwanted, and finally all non-Germans.

Wake up Canadians. Learn from those who went before us and speak out against this legislation. Go to www.ARPCanada.ca for a list of action items to consider. The number one action item is to pray about this matter. Then, follow that up by going with some friends, church members, or your local ARPA group and visit your MP to discuss this. Be sure to call or email ARPA Canada (1-866-691-2772 or info@arpacanada.ca) if you need help. Also, make use of the information package from the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (1-877-439-3348).

Mark Penninga’s previous article on euthanasia, “Dying with Dignity” (Oct 2007) is available online at www.reformedperspective.ca in the Pro-life 101 section of our resource articles



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“Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh”

by Jane deGlint

Glimpses of the Mystery

The two-oneness that defines man and woman has been a mystery from the very beginning. Man was fundamentally incomplete without woman. His desire went out to her before he knew that she would exist. When, at the chosen moment, she came to meet him, he was immediately attracted to her. This was awesome! She exceeded his wildest dreams. She was the perfect match. With her he shared the same soul, yet her body was mysteriously different. This combination of sameness and difference sent a glorious rush through his whole being. “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh! She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:23).

The mystery of man’s two-oneness gains an even more breathtaking dimension when it is placed against the oneness of our triune God. Together husband and wife reflect the complete harmony and perfect interaction of their Lord and Creator. The divine three-oneness is projected in the human two-oneness.

This two-dimensional mystery of man to woman on the one hand, and man-with-woman to the triune God on the other, is enriched by an amazing development. The incarnate Christ takes up his dwelling in his people. Each believer becomes a temple of the Spirit. This union between Christ and his people is still imperfect, but at the final day the Spirit will present the risen King with a perfect bride.

The mystery is so deep, so profound, and so spiritual, that it cannot be fully revealed to fallen man. Though the veil that protects the holiness of the mystery is in principal removed, it still covers the elementary parts of the image. Yet, the veil has been lifted sufficiently to keep awake the deep-rooted longing of the church to be united with her Lord. We discover a mirror image effect. The longing returned, but it switched from the man to the woman. Before the fall Adam longed for the mother of all living before he had seen her. After the redemption the Bride, our barren Mother who by the strength of the Spirit gave birth to us (Galatians 4:26-27), longs for her husband even though she is not sure exactly when he will appear and how great his glory will be.

The relationship between husband and wife lies embedded in this multi-dimensional mystery. On the one hand the first Adam is revealed as the prototype of the second Adam, but on the other hand as the father of all believers he foreshadowed the image of the bride. On the dark side Eve’s curse touches all women in the core of their feminine qualities, but on the bright side we see that it was within a woman that the Spirit ignited the blessing of divine life among men. The images are so intriguing and the mystery is so deep, that in this life we will only understand a beginning of it, and that with often failing grades.

Our darkened eyes are drawn to the order between man and woman, primarily as it is manifested between husband and wife. Enlightened by the Spirit we understand that this is a created order. Man was created first; as such he is the head. Woman was formed out of man; gracefully she takes her place and accepts his outstretched hand. As man naturally takes on the responsibility for the wellbeing of the marriage, woman feels purposeful and secure. This created order between man and woman in fact elevated the corresponding order that already existed in the animal kingdom to a spiritual level. Headship implies a spiritual dimension, from which animals are excluded. Adam and Even were not merely mates, but foremost soul-mates.

The concept of headship takes shape within the bond of husband and wife. Man was appointed as the Lord’s vice-royal, whereas woman was created to assist him in his task and to bring forth children. But the mystery of marriage rests firmly on the balance between headship and companionship. Together man and woman received God’s blessing as well as the divine mandate to fill the earth and subdue it.

This ever-wonderful balance between headship and companionship becomes immediately apparent from the way Man received Woman. “This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh! Her name is Woman, for she came forth from Man!” The very fact of the created order (Woman came from Man) is the reason why Man and Woman are one in bone and flesh, in body and soul.



The metaphor bone and flesh is not restricted to the marriage relationship. In Laban's expression of joy about meeting his relative Jacob we detect an echo of Adam's first song: "You are my own flesh and blood!" (Genesis 29:14). The joy of wholesome companionship is a foundational part of marriage, but it is not restricted to it. It comes through within our family, and it extends to our relationships within the household of faith. The flesh and bone metaphor is striking on account of its spiritual dimension.

True oneness is not defined by physical union, but by having the same Spirit. As such this spiritual oneness is an image of a truth that outdistances human understanding. There is a spiritual union between God and man. Through the Spirit, Christ lives in his people. "We know that we live in him, and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). Paul's call to sexual purity brings home this glorious truth: "

Do you not know that our bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:15-17).

Even though our Lord Jesus has ascended to be with his Father, he is our flesh and blood, and his is one with us.

This reassuring knowledge has comforted believers for many centuries. As such it found a place in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, nicely tucked away in the section that describes the wonderful comfort of the Lord's Supper, the Holy Communion:

Therefore, although Christ is in heaven and we are on earth, yet we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones, and we are forever governed by one Spirit, as the members of our body are by one soul (Answer 76).

The referral to the Lord's Supper as token and proof of oneness with the Lord is described in detail in John 6:47-58. Whoever

spiritually consumes the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, accepts the Savior's sacrifice and will have eternal life. But the signs and seals are one. The Holy Washing precedes the Holy Supper. It is the sacrament of Baptism that sets the tone for the glorious togetherness within the church, the body of Christ. "For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Since all believers are one with Christ through the Spirit, they are in fact each other's flesh and blood.

But there is order within the union. Jesus is not only one with us, he is also our head. He is the Son of God and the first of all creation. In this capacity he looked with compassion on his sin-stained bride. Out of unconditional love he gave her the greatest sacrifice of all. He lay down his life for her. He identified with her curse. He was cut off from the togetherness with his Father. God accepted the sacrifice and raised his Son up from the dead. Harmony was restored. The curse of woman was turned into a blessing. The Spirit gave her new life, which spread throughout all tribes and nations to the ends of the earth.

It is this self-denying passion that Paul describes as an integral part of headship. It brings life and healing to the household of a believing man. The glory and kingship of Christ himself will be reflected through him. He will be a worthy image of his Lord. It will give him peace and confidence. For ultimately husbands do not need the respect of woman or fellow man, but of their own Lord and Master.

Blessed is the woman who lives under such headship. In everything she does she will know herself connected to her head. Her unique qualities and accomplishments enhance her husband. Each individual marriage between a man and woman is one marvelous reflection of the countless-faceted glory of Christ.

Human headship cannot be captured in a set of rules. It is of a spiritual order. It has a dimension of spiritual battle and sacrifice, of kingship and glory. As there is a great variety in gifts, so will there be a great variety in marriages. Within the diversity each individual husband will understand his responsibility, and his wife will thrive under his wise guidance.

Marriage becomes very difficult when the husband does not reflect the glory of his Savior. Many husbands obscure their reflected glory either through the abuse of their headship position, or by neglecting it. Such offense places the wife in a difficult position. But out of reverence for Christ many Christian wives have been able to restore peace to their families. Conversely, there are women who blatantly and often publicly defy their Christian husbands. Over time these decapitated men will learn to be the more connected to their Head in heaven, who comforts, guides and strengthens by his Spirit.

The believers are awestruck by the unfolding images: headship that is blended with fellowship, two-in-one that reflects three-in-one, headship of man that surrenders to headship of Christ. These foreshadowing realities will reach their final fulfillment when the battle of the spirits is over. At that time Christ, the head of man, will return the kingship to the Father.

"When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God will be all in all."
1 Corinthians 15:28



Introducing Christian Spiritual Fiction: From *The Shack* to the Coffee-shop

by Conrad van Dyk

I must admit I've always had a hard time reading contemporary Christian fiction. Because I teach the canon of English literature to university students, I've grown accustomed to certain features of classic literature that I fear I won't find in fluffy romance novels with stereotypical plots that seem to make up so much of Christian literature. In my prejudice, I've always imagined that the typical plot of a Christian novel runs something like this:

In the peaceful and tranquil farming community of Town X, State Y, Virginia Appleby has married Paul Johnson, the man of her dreams. They live happily on a farm, breeding and raising horses. But trouble looms on the horizon, and as the war [insert the war of your choice] breaks out, her husband Paul must go overseas to fight for his country. Virginia struggles to run the farm by herself, and things get worse when the hired hand [insert a slightly sinister name like Fred or Malcolm] gets addicted to the bottle and starts making advances on her. Then, Virginia receives news that Paul has gone missing in action. Faced with uncertainty and despair, Virginia's faith is severely tested. Will she be able to save and redeem Fred [or Malcolm] without compromising herself? Will she ever see Paul again? Our beloved author [insert name] weaves a tale of struggle and change, hardship and endurance. This tender novel is the first in the fifteen-part series that chronicles the story of the Appleby and Johnson families over three generations and instructs us in the homely truths of the Christian faith.

Taking into account some minor variations in setting (like the settling of the American West) and professions (e.g., the frequent substitution of school-teacher for farmer's wife) this summary may well represent the quintessential Christian fiction plot. Or rather, that is the impression I get from reading the back covers of the books my wife and her friends like to read.

So I've decided to investigate the genre of Christian fiction a little more closely. Perhaps this will allow me to become the man my wife always wished I were. More importantly, perhaps it will allow me to understand something about the evangelical Christian culture that so dominates North American life. The truth is – as readers of *Reformed Perspective* will know – that lit-



erature is inevitably an expression of ideology, and so Christian fiction teaches us not only about questions of faith, but also gives us a message about culture, politics, economics, and, more broadly, human relationships. If Reformed Christians want to be engaged culturally they should also re-examine their entertainment, and this includes the books they read.

A new *Pilgrim's Progress*?

I would therefore like to take you through the genre of Christian spiritual fiction and take a closer look at its strengths and weaknesses, its breadth and scope, its implications and assumptions. And I would like to begin with a book that certainly does not fit the usual perception of Christian fiction.

The Shack, by William Paul Young is all the rage these days, and when I ask my more religious students what they're reading it is invariably *The Shack* (or some book by Mitch Albom).

What initially drew my attention, however, was the quotation on the front cover, from Eugene Peterson, professor emeritus of Regent College. "This book," Peterson writes, "has the

potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his. It's that good!" *Pilgrim's Progress* is of course one of the most influential Christian books ever written, chronicling the allegorical journey Christian makes as he flees from the world and turns to God.

There is also a kind of journey in *The Shack*. Mackenzie (Mack) Philip's youngest daughter is killed at an abandoned shack in the Oregon wilderness. Years later, Mack receives a note from God that invites him to come to the shack for a weekend. Although suspicious and skeptical, he goes and visits with the whole Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit discuss his pain and frustrations with him and help him overcome his pre-conceptions about religion.

So is this a modern-day *Pilgrim's Progress*? Does it merit our attention? On the surface, its style is not unattractive, although sometimes the author tries too hard, as in a passage where he describes the colors of the flowers: "[There were] currant and vermillion reds, tangerine and chartreuse divided by platinum and fuchsia, as well as innumerable shades of greens and browns" (132). After the exotic color names, the mention of greens and browns is certainly bathetic. (In literary terms, *bathos* occurs when the style changes abruptly from something lofty and sublime to something banal and commonplace).

There are many rich psychological moments in this novel, and the dialogue form allows for a very natural conversation about theological topics. Yet the attempt to humanize God leads to some terribly corny moments, as when Jesus drops a bowl of batter on the ground and the Father – an African American woman for most of the novel – makes fun of him by calling him "greasy fingers over there" (107). When he cleans her batter-splattered feet, she says "Ooooh, that feels soooo good!" Many readers will find such a depiction not only slightly lame, but also blasphemous.

What is the appeal?

It will be immediately obvious to a Reformed reader, then, that this book is hardly orthodox in its doctrine. Those interested in its many heresies should consult Norman Geisler's excellent review, available online. What is not always asked by reviewers, however, is why this book appeals to so many secular people – individuals who express a belief in God but do not actively pursue their faith in an institutional setting. Nearly every celebrity under the sun has commented on what an inspiration *The Shack* has been to them. Why is that?

The reason is that its ultimate message is as follows. God is not interested in hierarchies and institutions, in laws, and rules, obligations and responsibilities. God only cares about relationships of equality, about freedom and individual experience, about uniqueness and love. At one point Mack asks Jesus about the need for churches and this is what Jesus has to say: "Mack. . . you're seeing only the institution, a man-made system. That's not what I came to build. What I see are people and their lives, a living, breathing community of all those who love me, not buildings and programs" (180). Jesus in fact detests

Delving into The Shack

If you want to know more about *The Shack*, three great reviews can be found online.

1. Norman Geisler's review of *The Shack* can be found at www.normangeisler.net/theshack.html.
2. Rev. George van Popta's review can be found in the "Bad books" section of the *Reformed Perspective* website (go to www.reformedperspective.ca) or at www.vanpopta.notlong.com.
3. The longest review is probably by Reformed blogger Tim Challies who has published a 17-page review, that can be downloaded at www.challies.com/media/The_Shack.pdf.

institutions of all kinds: "I'm not too big on religion, and not very fond of politics or economics either. . . They are the man-created trinity of terrors that ravages the earth and deceives those I care about" (181). Too often, according to Jesus, the individual is sacrificed for the sake of the system, and this is what lies behind every prejudice and every war ever held (125-26).

This shocking message is, of course, not welcome to religious leaders, but it is eagerly embraced by those who wish to be free of rituals and rules. This is the central message of *The Shack*: stop trying to find certainty in human inventions and institutions and live in unfettered relationships with your neighbors and with God.

Despite the fact that Bunyan would roll over in his grave at most of these ideas, the anti-institutional thrust ultimately does owe something to the individualistic implications of *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is significant, for instance, that the latter work is divided into two sections. In the first, Christian travels to heaven, whereas his wife and children make the journey by themselves in the second part. While there are stops in places that resemble the institutional church, the Christian's journey has a solitary aspect. Moreover, Christian's radical separation from the world precludes active participation in the affairs of the world. It was of course in America that the Puritan message influenced an entire culture, and so there is some irony in seeing it again in a distorted form in *The Shack*. In fact, it is hard to imagine where else such an anti-institutional book could have been written.

There are further ironies as well. Young's God refuses to make slaves of human beings and gives them free will, so that in their independence they may voluntarily choose for God. However, it was also Adam's desire for "independence" (a synonym for sin in the book) that created problems. There is a brief moment in the book where this conflict is briefly glanced at, when God says to Mack, "You demand your independence but then complain that I actually love you enough to give it to

you" (193). For Young, when humans assert their independence by creating institutions they offend God, but otherwise their independence is central to their existence.

The result of all of this is a world in which only the individual and those immediately around him or her really matters. This is a message that seems particularly suitable to those whose whole religion extends no further than the coffee-shop. And in fact, Young deliberately seems to reach out to the Chapters and Starbucks kind of crowd. When the Holy Spirit tries to explain how in heaven people's emotions will be visible in the form of colors that glow from their bodies, she uses an analogy: "Suppose, Mack, that you are hanging out with a friend at your local coffee shop. . ." (215). Those are the relationships that are really important.

No need to change

There is no denying that *The Shack* is a clever book. It is easy to read, has a strong narrative arc, and has a likeable main character. It tackles the problem of pain without being overly sensationalistic. Its descriptions of nature are appealing to those

who love the outdoors. In places it provides some very astute psychological and social advice.

Yet its basic message about relationships is problematic, for it fails to recognize that God is also a God of structure, or hierarchies and order, of institutions and political bodies, of ideology and doctrine. In fact, the book fails to recognize the origins of its own ideology, the North American culture in which so much of its thinking is rooted and to which its message is appealing and attractive. *The Shack* will not do for our generation what John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his because, despite the fact that it calls for a "new revolution" (250), it does not require any kind of radical conversion or change. Instead, it reflects the desires of a complacent culture to be rid of religion and worship relationships instead. And that is why all the celebrities like it.

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Salt n' Light Contest



ARPA Canada and *Reformed Perspective* magazine are joining together to sponsor a YouTube video contest. Put your creativity and love of movies to good use by making a short video that is social or political in nature and communicates our Christian worldview, and you could win a big prize!

There is no cost to enter and every entrant receives a **complementary subscription to Reformed Perspective magazine!** There will also be two grand prizes (cash) for the best video: one selected by our judges and the other selected as the most popular according to voting at www.ReformedPerspective.ca.

Details:

- 1) The contest is open to members of Reformed churches in Canada.
- 2) More than one person may make the movie, but only one RP subscription will be given per entry. A person may submit more than one entry, but will be given only one subscription.
- 3) The video clip must be original and produced for this contest.
- 4) Entries must conform with copyright laws (including the use of music).
- 5) Maximum length is 6 minutes.
- 6) Entrants are responsible for posting it on YouTube and marketing their movie to get more votes.
- 7) Viewing and voting will be done through the RP website (not YouTube).
- 8) The RP and ARPA Canada judges reserve the right to decline submissions or not award a grand prize.
- 9) Voting begins on October 1st, 2009. Late entries may be accepted but will be penalized by not having as much time to receive votes from the public.
- 10) Enter by emailing Jon Dykstra at editor@ReformedPerspective.ca and including your name and postal address (for the subscription) as well as the video's name, YouTube web address, and social or political theme.

Just for kids

SAMMY AND HIS SHEPHERD

Seeing Jesus in Psalm 23

Written by Susan Hunt; Illustrated by Cory Godbey
Reformation Trust Publishing; 2008
56 pages; Hardcover; \$21 Can

reviewed by Jessica Wildeboer

You may already have a special liking for the 23rd Psalm, but once you've read through this book you're sure to feel an even deeper appreciation for this psalm. Susan Hunt works her way through Psalm 23, verse by verse, constructing a thoughtful story about a sheep named Sammy. Children will enjoy getting to know him, and getting to know the Shepherd that takes such good care of Sammy.

In the beginning of the story, Sammy meets a new sheep who is from a different pasture than him. She has never been given a name, so he calls her "My Friend." He quickly realizes that her shepherd does not take good care of her – the contrast between the flocks is remarkable. Soon Sammy's Shepherd buys the little sheep, and gives her the new name of Precious. The Shepherd brings all of his sheep to the high mountains for food. Precious is often nervous on the journey and Sammy continually comforts her by directing her to the Shepherd. The two friends have discussions about the Shepherd's unconditional love, getting along with the other sheep in the flock, and telling others about their Shepherd. Precious' relationship with the Shepherd deepens, as does Sammy's. Both sheep acknowledge how they need their Shepherd dearly and how they would be lost without Him.



Hunt carefully divides the psalm, and story about Sammy, into 11 short chapters: children hear a Psalm 23 verse, followed by a story about Sammy and Precious, and the chapter concludes with a "talk about it" section. In this section there are also additional Bible verses that build off of the Psalm 23 verse and message – this is great for having children see the Bible's whole message of God's love and His salvation for His people. Next there are questions which help ensure the children have been listening, and it opens up opportunity for important discussions about who their Shepherd and Saviour really is. Finally, an action item gives them ideas on how to live their faith by thinking of others, praying for certain things (e.g. more trust, more thankfulness), growing in their relationship with the LORD, and sharing their faith.

Children will enjoy relating to Sammy and Precious and will be captivated by Cory Godbey's outstanding illustrations of these fun characters but Susan Hunt really enables Psalm 23 to come alive for children and adults alike. This book will leave readers with thankfulness for God's amazing love and grace, a reminder to treat others as He treats them, and a gentle prod to share the Good News with all people.

Katje the Windmill Cat

by Gretchen Woelfle

Candlewick, 2006

32 pages; Paperback; \$10 Can.

reviewed by Janet Faber

It has been said, "A book your child enjoys will lead to a child who enjoys reading." *Katje the Windmill Cat* is sure to capture this goal.

The book is based on a true story that happened in Holland in 1421. It is the story of a tricolored windmill cat, named Katje, who lives with a miller. One day the miller goes to town and comes back with a new wife. The miller's new wife chases

Katje from the house to live in the windmill. When the "Elizabeth Day Storm" breaks the dike, Katje performs a heroic feat of courage and is then welcomed back into the home.

The author, Gretchen Woelfle, has written an engaging heartwarming book that children can easily understand. Woelfle shows she knows about the Dutch people and their history. The miller's new wife's obsession with cleanliness is an example of the Dutch people's reputation for neatness. At the end of the book, the author adds more details of the flood of 1421 and the building of the new dike.

It is obvious from reading this gem of a book that the author has a close acquaintance with felines. Katje is shown to be true to the nature of cats by being loyal, stubborn and courageous. Any child or adult who has a cat will be able to identify with Katje.



Not only is the story well written, but the illustrations also add warmth and imagination. The illustrator, Nicola Bayley, uses rich colors and bright lighting in her watercolor pictures. Her style is similar to the style of famous Dutch artists. Each illustration captures the setting and excitement of the story. Every page is also edged with miniature blue and white Delft-like tiles with pictures that summarize the story line.

This team of author and illustrator expertly tell a piece of Dutch history. It is a great book, especially for grandparents to read with their grandchildren and reminisce of how life was like in “the old country.” *Katje the Windmill Cat* is definitely a snuggle up and read book for grandparents, parents, and children.

DINOSAURS UNLEASHED: The true story about Dinosaurs and Humans

by Kyle Butt and Eric Lyons

illustrated by Lewis Lavoie
Apologetics Press, Inc, 2004
84 pages; Hardcover; \$18 Can.

reviewed by Evelyn Veldkamp



Much excitement was displayed upon first seeing this book by our family – boys (we have five) and parents included. Our oldest especially loved it and read it in a day. It has become a coffee table book, so that they can all just pick it up and read.

It can be hard to find great literature addressing the topic of dinosaurs, especially their existence and extinction, from a Christian perspective. So *Dinosaurs Unleashed* is a welcome change to the many evolutionary books and movies portraying dinosaurs. The authors of this book have explained the “true story about dinosaurs and humans” in an excellent and biblical manner.

The authors dedicate a page and an illustration for each and every dinosaur known, such as the Allosaurus, Kronosaurus, and Velociraptor. They outline their physical features including what they would have eaten, what they might be famous for and where their fossils have been found. Also included is a section titled, “Dinosaurs and the Bible,” in which the Behemoth and Leviathan from Job 40 and 41 are described with their Biblical references: The authors make the case that, “Certainly, no other creature (living or extinct) fits this description better than a dinosaur.”

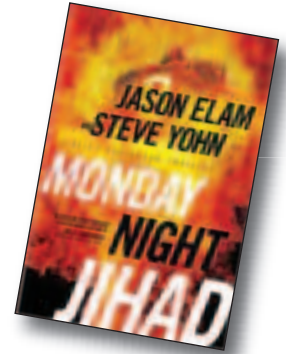
What I really like about the book is its discussion on “what really happened to the dinosaurs?” and “were dinosaurs on Noah’s ark?” It addressed many of my own questions about how dinosaurs could have become extinct and how a dinosaur could possibly fit on the ark. Readers learn that even though the word “dinosaur” is not mentioned in the Bible, “the Bible discusses dinosaurs in the same books, chapters and verses that speak of kangaroos, anteaters and platypuses. Where is that? In Exodus 20:11.” And in its section dealing with fossils, the authors deal with “how fossils are formed” stating that millions of years are not needed to have something become fossilized. They go on to explain that, “the Flood of Noah’s day could easily have created many of the fossils we see today.”

Although the book is written for young readers, if you or someone you know has some of these questions as well, this is definitely a book that will help provide some answers. In truth, I don’t have any negative things to say about this book. I find it very well written, and easy to understand. It is geared for ages 8 and up, though our younger children appreciated the pictures and smaller tidbits of relevant information. This is a book I highly recommend for every Christian school library and as a resource for home study.

A little more grown-up

Monday Night Jihad

by Jason Elam and Steve Yohn
Tyndale Fiction, 2007
368 pages; Paperback; \$17 Can.



reviewed by Marty VanDriel

I admit, my expectations were not high as I cracked the spine of this first novel from a former professional football player and his pastor. Were the publishers at Tyndale Fiction just looking to capitalize on Jason Elam's credentials as an NFL insider? What kind of thriller could an athlete write?

A few days later, I had the answers: this is a well-written, genuinely interesting, page-turner – by no means a literary masterpiece, but a well-researched, well-executed old-fashioned thriller.

Riley Covington, is an Iraqi war veteran who resumes his interrupted football career by playing professionally for the "Colorado Mustangs." Covington is the idealized, all-American, clean-living hero – a courageous leader who inspires confidence in battle, and on the football field. He is also an unabashed Christian, who lives his faith out each and every day. Despite this idealized portrait, Covington remains a believable and likable figure – with quirks, sins, and foibles like all of us. (OK, so not all of us are war heroes who can also play professional football!)

When a mysterious Muslim living in the U.S. masterminds attacks on the Mall of America, and at a professional football game, Covington is called back into service by former battalion mates now working with the CIA. For his next move the phan-

tom terrorist plots a deadly and destructive mission designed to disrupt the Super Bowl, and Covington and his colleagues old and new try desperately to stop him.

The novel features twists and turns that keep you entertained and guessing – I confess that some of the surprises caught me off guard and added to the fun. There are some fairly amazing coincidences that contrive to keep the plot moving, but what thriller doesn't have these? An insider's look at an NFL locker room and the routines of professional football players are well written and obviously the work of one who has experience in these areas.

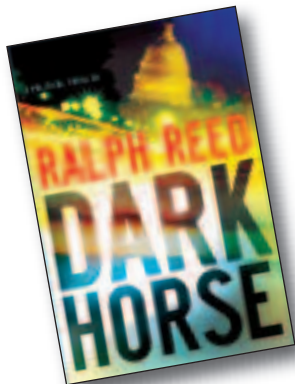
Monday Night Jihad goes deeper than your average "James Bond" novel with the Christian witness of its hero – Covington isn't perfect, but he can articulate why his faith in God is living, while his terrorist enemy's faith in Allah is a hopeless dead end. The verbal encounter between Riley and the terrorist – man to man, one on one – is a well-written clash between two different visions of why we are here on earth.

Read this book for yourself in a couple of summer or fall days, and pass it on to your teens to enjoy. I'm already looking forward to *Blown Coverage* – the next installment in the "Riley Covington" series.

Dark Horse

by Ralph Reed
Howard Books, 2008
448 pages; Hardcover \$23.50 Can.

reviewed by Jon Dykstra



During the 1992 US presidential election the Republican incumbent was bogged down by a broken promise ("Read my lips, no new taxes") and the Democratic candidate was bogged down by his inability to keep his pants zipped up. Into the void stepped Ross Perot, with his folksy charm, and his billions, and suddenly the unthinkable seemed not so unthinkable – could an independent candidate win the presidency? The answer turned out to be no. Perot mysteriously suspended his campaign for several weeks and lost all momentum before he resumed, and ending up finishing third.

But where Perot failed, could someone else succeed? Ralph Reed explores the possibilities in his political thriller *Dark Horse*.

Governor Bob Long never wanted to run as an independent – he wanted the Democratic nomination that now belongs to his rival, the ultra-liberal Senator Stanley. But then Stanley’s campaign became bogged down over an FBI investigation, and the Republicans decided to nominate a moderate who had no time or patience for the GOP’s conservative wing. With the Republican and Democrats both competing for the liberal vote and unconcerned with courting conservatives, there’s an opportunity for just the right sort of independent candidate. Into the void steps long-time liberal, but newly minted Christian, Bob Long. To win the Christian vote he needs to convince them he’s a

changed man, but can he win the Religious Right over without losing the liberal Left?

If you already know that *Dark Horse* author Ralph Reed was, in his former life, the head of the Christian Coalition (once the largest Christian lobby group in America) this is probably a novel you’ll love. If you aren’t fascinated by politics, but do like reading about how someone’s love for God will impact their everyday decisions, this could also be a book for you. But if you hate politics, hate even thinking about it, and don’t want to learn anything about it. . . well, then you of all people *have* to read this book! Politics may be nasty, complicated and even boring at times, but it’s also necessary, so we all need to know at least a bit about it. And Ralph Reed’s *Dark Horse* is certainly a fun way to learn the basics and beyond.

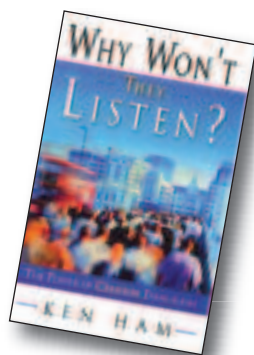
WHY WON'T THEY LISTEN? The Power of Creation Evangelism

by Ken Ham

Master Books, 2002

192 pages; Paperback \$13 Can.

reviewed by Rene Vermeulen



This book is also available, in its entirety, online at the Answers in Genesis website. You can read it at www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/WWTL/index.asp

Before I tell you something about this book, let me first explain who the author is. Ken Ham is the executive director and co-founder of Answers in Genesis, a ministry dedicated to upholding the authority of the Bible from the very first verse.

Ken is a native Australian who I first met about 25 years ago when he visited Albany to give lectures on the authority of the Bible from Genesis 1.

His companion on this tour to Western Australia stayed at our place while Ken slept at the local Baptist minister’s place a few doors down the road from our house. I had an opportunity to interview Ken when we had a meal together, served by my lovely wife, and even today I still have part of that interview on tape.

What gave me great pleasure then, and continues to please me today is how Ken and other Creation Ministry speakers emphasize the need to believe the whole Bible, including the first chapters. In a world where in many churches the truth of the Bible is no longer maintained it is good to hear these people defend what we confess in articles 3-7 of the Belgic Confession.

Today Ken Ham lives in the USA where he is the host of the daily radio program *Answers. . . with Ken Ham* which you can hear on their website answersingenesis.org.

Biblical illiteracy

In this book Ken Ham wants to help those who are in contact with and witnessing to those who do not know God or the Bible. Ham feels that very often we approach such people in the wrong way. He reminds us that there has been a change in our countries –

they might once have been Christian but are Christian no more. So whereas once we could count on at least a little Bible literacy, that is no longer so, for people have been indoctrinated by evolutionary theory which allows no place for what the Bible has to say about beginnings, about the origin of sin, and about our need for a Savior.

Ham shows how evolutionary indoctrination, and Biblical illiteracy, affects every aspect of life. As a teacher he was confronted with the fact that students were often openly disrespectful and didn’t behave themselves very well. When approached about this difficulty by some pastors who taught Scripture in government schools he responded:

Do you know what these students are being taught in most of their classes? They are being told that they’re just animals that evolved from some primeval soup millions of years ago. These young people are being indoctrinated to believe that evolution is science. Because they are growing up in a world full of wonderful technology that is an outgrowth of real science, they have great respect for what is called science. Sadly, they don’t realize that evolution is not science. But, because of the way they are being taught, to them the Bible is just an outdated religious book.

Ham shows that we must know the people who we approach with the Gospel, we must understand that they have an understanding of man’s condition based on evolutionary principles. And so he sets out to apply his findings to the way we approach and teach others who were not brought up believing in the Bible as the infallible Word of God.

Ham shows how there was a difference between the way Peter talked to Jews, who knew the Scriptures, and the way that Paul talked to Gentiles, who didn’t. Peter could make certain assumption – for example, he could assume that any Jew listening to him already knew that God had created the heavens and the earth. Paul couldn’t make the same assumptions, so when he approached his listeners in Athens (Acts 17:18-34) Paul started by introducing them to the God who created all things. Ham notes that in our modern day we need to take an evangelism approach that is more like Paul than Peter.

Conclusion

I would highly recommend this book, and perhaps it is worth noting that the late Dr. D. James Kennedy, who was the Senior Minister at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church also favored the book. He found it, “A marvelous text.”

Christ before creation

In *Remember Creation* Pastor Scott Hoezee gets it backwards, interpreting Scripture through the prism of his environmental beliefs

by Margaret Helder

.....

Hoezee doesn't explore why conservative Christians – those most serious about the Word – are suspicious of the environmental movement. Instead of examining whether it might be a result of their discernment he dismisses their suspicion as simply an oddity.

.....

Some Christians are critical of the environmental movement for reasons which go back to the late 1960s and early 1970s. They remember how the environmental movement began, springing up from a worldview that opposed what the Bible said about man's position in creation.

But opposing the environmental movement doesn't mean Christians don't value nature. On the contrary, we value it highly as a gift from God. Nobody wants to see nature exploited or destroyed. This does not mean, however, that we support the methods and objectives of many environmentalists.

Environmentalism's toxic roots

Opposing birth

The environmental movement came to public attention in North America in the 1960s. Many of the early advocates were evolutionary biologists such as Garrett Hardin. He became famous for his declaration that "injustice is preferable to total ruin" ("The Tragedy of the Commons" 1968 in *Science* v. 162 p. 1247). What he was talking about was the rapidly growing human population. He declared that we have to stop people from having as many children as they want.

Dr. Hardin, and others, strongly criticized the Roman Catholic Church because of the church's opposition to birth control and to abortion. Dr. Hardin's point was that society, in the name of survival, must force people to obey directives which go against their consciences. We began to hear about lifeboat ethics at this time too, the question of whom should society push out of lifeboat Earth. The question was how to decrease the human

population by making it more difficult for some people to reproduce or even to survive.

Favoring early death

As early as 1960, environmentalists blamed Christians for the environmental crisis. It was not exploitation of nature *per se*, they were discussing, but the success of medical missionaries in reducing the death rate in underdeveloped countries. With more babies surviving to maturity, this caused a dramatic increase in population growth. Environmentalists talked about the horrifying effects of "death control." Now we need "birth control" they said.

Soon Lynn White's seminal paper was published "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (1967 in *Science*). We need a new religion he declared with eastern ways of looking at nature as sacred. No longer would man be considered the pinnacle of creation, but just one interconnected component thereof. This view also comes from evolution theory which holds that as all creatures have come about through the same evolutionary process, all are equally valuable. If man's numbers are rising dramatically, then man is a cancer which must be controlled. (see Isaac Asimov 1970 *Weekend Magazine*).

The opinions of these men were not at the extreme end of the spectrum. These were the popular positions, widely reprinted and discussed by university classes everywhere. Hardin, White, and the even more radical (but still publicly-lauded) Paul Ehrlich, were the main spokesmen for the movement as it began.



WHY REVIEW BAD BOOKS?

Reformed Perspective rarely reviews bad books – we’ve only done a handful over the years. Why would we focus on the mediocre when we can highlight the wonderful? But we are making an exception in this case for a book that is being promoted in our circles as a resource for educators. In a recent issue of *Clarion* Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff recommends Scott Hoezee’s *Remember Creation: God’s World of Wonder and Delight* as a “helpful” and “thoroughly biblical” resource on environmentalism for our Christian school teachers. Because she makes no mention of the book’s notable flaws we thought it important to pass on our quite different perspective.

Reviews of three other bad books are featured on our website, www.reformedperspective.ca. We prefer to focus on excellence, but *The Shack*, *The Purpose Driven Life* and *Left Behind* have each sold so many millions of copies we thought it important to expose and respond to these bad bestsellers. If you have any other famous (or perhaps infamous) bad books you think we need to review, send the editor a note at editor@reformedperspective.ca.

A not so Reformed response

In the face of rising popular support for environmental issues, the Christian community has found itself divided on a suitable response. Some have rejected the environmentalist initiatives because of its conflicting worldview. Others, like Calvin College theologian Scott Hoezee in his book *Remember Creation: God’s World of Wonder and Delight* (1998), have rather elected to modify Christian doctrine.

Indeed, Rev. Hoezee, a strong supporter of environmentalism, is sharply critical of conservative Christians because they do not support the same choices. Thus he declares:

Christian congregations that show the greatest seriousness for the Bible and are the most committed to biblical inerrancy are the very same congregations that tend to be the least concerned about ecology and are least interested in the environment or in those programs or in those groups that promote its preservation. The more authority a congregation ascribes to the Bible, the less affinity that congregation tends to have for the environmentalists (p. 9).

Hoezee doesn’t explore *why* conservative Christians – those most serious about the Word – are suspicious of the environmental movement. Instead of examining whether it might be a result of their discernment he dismisses their suspicion as simply an oddity.

A quick departure from orthodoxy

Rev. Hoezee begins his reevaluation of the message of the Bible by declaring that “all theology boils down to a discussion of God, creation, and their relation.” Now, nobody could object to his point that the Bible identifies God as the creator of heaven and earth and moreover that God took great pleasure in his creation (p. 15).

But his simplification of “all theology” seems to cause him to minimize core doctrine. For example, when he discusses how in Genesis 1 God twice blesses what He has created, Hoezee overlooks that since man’s fall into sin, God has also cursed his creation (Genesis 3):

As much as anything else in Genesis 1, what is most striking is the “theology of blessing” that emerges. . . . Hovering over the creation, brooding over this world now as surely as at the dawn of time, is the spirit of God, hands raised in a divine benediction (p. 21).

Rev. Hoezee’s description of the original creation shows some dramatic departures from our traditional understanding. According to this Christian Reformed theologian, God’s work of creation involved the carving out of our cosmos from an evil chaos (p. 18). This theologian interprets the formless and empty material of Genesis 1:2 as a chaotic, dangerous place where evil runs wild, a place where demons howl (p. 16). So, he says, “it

is vital that we recognize that God is not threatened by this demonic chaos at the beginning of the Bible” (p. 17).

It appears as if this theologian conceives of evil as co-eternal with God and indeed part of His “very good” original creation. The upshot of all this, of course, for Rev. Hoezee and others like him, is to declare that the goodness of the creation is not primarily a moral quality, but rather an aesthetic one. Indeed, the term good might better be termed lovely, pleasing or beautiful, so he declares (pp 21-22).

Rev. Hoezee’s muddled theology also causes him to declare the redemption of man a vastly overemphasized doctrine! What the Rev. Hoezee emphasizes is the importance of the “doctrine of creation” as opposed to the “doctrine of redemption.” He declares that unfortunately “creation is eclipsed by redemption in a number of ways” (p. 11). He even objects to a hymn which says that Jesus shines brighter, fairer and purer than anything. “The implication,” the author says “is that redemption through Christ makes this world – if not the whole creation generally, vastly uninteresting if not unimportant” (p. 12).

Rev. Hoezee is however happy to declare that Biblical studies have turned around from the former emphasis on redemption. Indeed many theologians now declare that “the view that redemptive history. . . takes theological priority over creation cannot be defended by reference to the Hebrew Bible itself” (p. 12).

Rev. Hoezee disparages the very doctrine of the redemption of man! What we should rather emphasize, this theologian declares, is the redemption of all creation. Thus he says, “it is clear from the Bible itself that one cannot consider the theme of redemption without thinking about creation. For the creation is what is redeemed” (p. 22). He further elaborates: “it is unsurprising to discover the rest of the Bible showing God working himself literally to death to redeem creation. This universe is too good to let go” (p. 24).

Over and above

Based on verses such as Luke 12:7 (“You are of more value than many sparrows”) and Genesis 9: 1-3 (including “Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.”) conservative Christians declare that nature has been provided for man’s responsible use and sustenance.

Not so, goes the new interpretation. Rev. Hoezee quotes the late Francis Schaeffer to the effect that man and other creatures are all equal before God in that all are created beings. This is only part of what Dr. Schaeffer said. He also declared in the same context:

Man’s relationship is not basically downward but upward. Man is separated, as personal, from nature because he is in the image of God. That is, he has personality and as such he is unique in the creation, but he *is* united to all other creatures as being *created*” (*Pollution and the Death of Man: the Christian View of Ecology*. 1970 paperback edition p. 50).



Photos by Kevin DeBoer

The idea that the needs of humans are to be given priority is clearly rejected by Rev. Hoezee. He firstly declares that we must consider how God looks at nature. Thus he declares:

For Christians it is wholly proper to remember that God has his own view of the world and of its many creatures. God goes so far as to say "Look at the hippopotamus [behe-moth] *which I made along with you*. He ranks *first* among the works of God" (Job 40:15 and 19a, italics his).

He further insists: "Any discussion on animals that fails to take into account the divine gaze is dreadfully out of sync with the Bible's own revelation concerning nonhuman creatures" (p. 56).

In similar vein, Rev. Hoezee later declares that while "we may be placed in a position above the other creatures of this world – that position clearly obligates us first of all to service" (p. 66). Lastly he reflects: "For whatever Genesis's words about ruling and subduing may mean, they cannot trump the significance of God's demand that we 'keep' this world. . ." (p. 68). According to the author then: "our stance toward the creation must be Christ-like through our deferring to other creatures, serving them with the cruciform, pierced hands of Christ" (p. 72).

One might reply, on the other hand, that a village in Africa, overrun by marauding elephants, might object when we graciously elect to defer to the interests of the elephants at the expense of the villagers themselves. Should not our attitude to people in need rather be as discussed in Matthew 25?

Lord, when did we see you hungry, and fed you? Or thirsty, and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and took you in, or naked, and clothed you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison and came to you? And the King shall answer and say "Truly, I say to you, as you have done it to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me" (vs. 37-40).

If babies are dying, will we not do our best to provide medical care and food, even if this means higher population levels?

More muddling

Most Christians understand that God is the standard for all goodness and truth. There is no yardstick by which we can measure God's qualities – He is the measure of all things. Rev. Hoezee however declares that there is such a yardstick. Thus he states: "one of the deepest dimensions of the Genesis account of creation is the revelation that God is good because he delights in the existence of something other than himself" (p. 26).

It is evident that the Rev. Hoezee promotes a confused and unorthodox theology. Among other things he declares: "The fourth commandment essentially tells us 'Remember creation!' Perhaps it is high time," he says, "we Christians did just that on the Lord's day" (p. 41). Thus he recommends spending Sunday afternoons to frolic in the surf at the beach, or to tramp through the woods or to soak up the sun in the backyard" (p. 41).

It all comes down to priorities. The Bible tells us that man is God's special creation, to be protected at all costs. We are even


commanded to do good to our enemies and to those that despitefully use us. In a situation where the basic needs of people are in conflict with preservation of some aspect of nature, every effort must be made to ameliorate the situation, but the survival of the people must be given priority.

Environmentalism vs. creationism

Rev. Hoezee declares in many places in his book that the environmental debate is more important than the creation/evolution debate. In my opinion this is clearly not true.

The creation-evolution debate is intricately tied into how we will understand the early chapters of Genesis, which tell us who God is, who man is (created in God's image to worship Him) and what nature is (provided for man's responsible use). These chapters also tell us about the separate creation of the created kinds of creature and that man is the pinnacle of creation (not interconnected with all nature). Most importantly Genesis tells us about the fall of Adam and God's curse on man and all nature as a result. This is the foundation to our faith concerning our need for salvation. All interpretations of Genesis which involve evolution and/or long ages, must necessarily change key doctrines such as whether death was part of God's original very good creation (see I Cor. 15:26 "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"). The whole issue of how we understand the Bible is impacted by our treatment of the early chapters of Genesis. These are issues of such paramount importance that some people consider them worth sustained attention. The case of the environment involves no such immediate issues and that is why it is of secondary, though still important concern.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that books like *Remember Creation* promote an alternative theology that follows a liberal agenda. Although protection of the environment is something we all support, this is not a book to turn to for a Reformed, or even a generally conservative, Biblical discussion of the issue. 



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Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

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The log in our own eye

When the *London Times* asked notable personalities across Britain to write on what they thought was wrong with the world, they got this response from author G.K. Chesterton “Dear Sirs, I am. Yours truly, G.K. Chesterton.”

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Fcat or Foitcin?

An email mkanig its way ronud the Ietrnent calims:

*It deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the llt-
teers in a wrod are. The olny iprmohtnant ti-
hng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the
rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses
and you can sitll raed it woutiht a porbelm.*

*Tish is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos
not raed eervy ltteer by istelf, but the wrod
as a wohle.*

Azamnig, huh?

But is it ture? Yes and no. Lsat lltteers are irtomanpt but wehn the wdros we raed are lses flaimiar or qtiue lhtgney or rbleemse oehetr wdors it bmoeces duciflft to urnneadtsd evvn wth frsit and lsat lterets paceld ctlrcroey.

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Extreme but insightful humor

When American abortionist George Tiller was murdered May 31, pro-lifer leaders knew that whatever they said in response would be misinterpreted by the media. But while that left most too cautious to speak out, it pushed conservative columnist Ann Coulter to speak out even more boldly. In an interview with Fox News anchor Bill O'Reilly she talked about the murder using rhetoric that pro-abortionists use to justify killing the unborn.

She started by telling O'Reilly that she didn't like thinking of Tiller's death as murder, preferring instead to call it

“terminating Tiller in the 203rd trimester.” O'Reilly, misunderstanding what Coulter was doing, started to protest, which prompted Coulter to take it further, putting a twist on another well-known bit of abortion rhetoric. “I am personally opposed to shooting abortionists,” she told O'Reilly, “but I don't want to impose my moral values on others.”

When abortionists bring up issues like “privacy,” “choice,” or “imposing morality” on others, they're trying to evade the only relevant issue in the abortion debate: are the unborn human beings? If they aren't, then no one should object to abortion; if they are, then everyone should! But instead of arguing this issue, abortionists avoid the debate entirely using slogans that assume what they are trying to prove – that the unborn aren't human. Coulter exposed this evasion by showing how their slogans make no sense when applied to an acknowledged human being, even when that human being is abortionist George Tiller.

She saved her best for last, putting her own spin on a best-selling pro-abortion bumper sticker that reads, “If you don't believe in abortion, don't have an abortion.” Turning to the camera, she told viewers, “If you don't believe in shooting abortionists, then don't shoot an abortionist.”

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The parental dictionary

If words were defined just for parents:

BATHROOM: used by the entire family, believed by all except mom to be self-cleaning

FEEDBACK: what you get when your baby doesn't appreciate dinner

GRANDPARENTS: people who think your children are wonderful even though they're not sure you're raising them right.

INDEPENDENT: how we want our children to be, as long as they do everything we say.

OW: the first word spoken by children with older siblings.

PUDDLE: a small body of water that draws other small bodies, wearing dry shoes, into it.

SHOW-OFF: a child more talented than your own.

STERILIZE: what you do to your first baby's pacifier by boiling it and your last baby's pacifier by blowing on it

SWEATER: garment worn by child when its mother is feeling chilly

TOP BUNK: bed where you should never put a child wearing Superman pajamas.

SOURCE: from around the worldwide web

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Russian revolution

by James Dykstra

TheSeed.info is a website set up several years ago to make English-language Reformed sermons available to people around the world. This site, which was visited by more than 26,000 people last year and recorded about 800,000 hits, has gotten most of its traffic from the United States and secondly Canada. That's hardly surprising since most of the sermons are contributed by North American pastors so the site is best known in those countries.

Yet something has changed. Late last year Canada lost its second place ranking on *The Seed* to a country that isn't even English-speaking. What's the country? Russia! In the past few months Russian visits to the site have surpassed even those from the United States – Russians now visit *TheSeed.info* more than any other nation. What's causing this spike in traffic is not clear, but it is clear there is a real hunger there for solid Reformed literature.

As the Crow Flies

*“Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.”
So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature
that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds,
and every winged bird according to its kind.
And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying,
“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas,
and let birds multiply on the earth.”
And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.*

GENESIS 1:20-23

by Christine Farenhorst

Birds were created good. They were made perfect. God Himself says so and therefore we know that it was so. Until the time of the fall, winged creatures were absolutely perfect. But then there was the fall and then there was the flood.

The raven was the first creature which Noah let out of the window of the ark which he had made. Perhaps Noah selected this bird because God had made the raven large and had given it an appetite for almost anything edible. And we read that this large black bird went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

Birds, on the whole, are wonderful creatures, both to watch and to listen to. Our bird feeder hosts blue jays, juncos, chickadees, nuthatches, cardinals and woodpeckers. All of them flock about in relative harmony, give or take a few assertive flutters here and there, as they peck at lard and seeds.

Birds of a feather

There are many interesting stories about birds, as well as a host of rhymes, sayings and expressions. Just think of “a little bird told me,” and “a bird in the hand,” and “little robin redbreast,” to name but a few. The Bible, the Koran, Shakespeare and numerous writers have lauded many birds in their words. Aristotle wrote about bird migration, although he was a little off in his theories about birds in that regard. He surmised they hibernated during the cold season. As well, Aristotle believed certain birds transmuted – changed from one

species into another. Perhaps Darwin picked up a few misguided ideas from him?!

One fascinating anecdote travels back to 1913. In this year a monument was unveiled in Salt Lake City, Utah – a monument to seagulls. Strange as it may seem, Mormons have a certain affection for this noisy, long-winged bird with its amazing flight. Bills slightly hooked, tails square or rounded, seagulls seldom dive but plunge headfirst and are omnivorous. They gorge on marine life, plant and animal food, refuse and carrion. The story is recounted that when pioneers first settled in Utah, a plague of locusts swarmed down and began devouring the spring seed crops. Every green leaf and blade stood in danger of the flying insects’ deathly jaws. The Mormon farmers, so it is said, fell down on their knees and prayed for help. The tale continues that after this prayer, huge flocks of seagulls appeared out of nowhere. With a shrill “kuk-kuk-kuk” sound, these birds alighted in the fields and began eating the locusts. Stuffed full with the insects, they took off again, their mewing and laughing cries resounding only when none of the creatures were left, thus saving the pioneers from a year of starvation.

The Franklin Gull, the type that is said to have saved the crops, is a variety of gull which inhabits the interior of northwestern and north central America, breeding in marshes, coastal bays and ocean areas. It is not the intent here to comment on the heretical views of the Mormons, but the upshot of the matter was that, because of their legendary aid, the seagull



Photo by Keven Law, used with permission under the Creative Commons Share-alike license

is protected in Utah by law. The Salt Lake City monument depicts a ball upon which two bronze gulls, covered with gold leaf, have alighted. The inscription reads: "Seagull Monument, Erected in grateful remembrance of the Mercy of God to the Mormon Pioneers."

The stork is another unique bird. Many stories are frequently told, untrue stories actually, about the stork bringing babies. Little children, wide-eyed and innocent, are informed that this large, long-legged stiltskin with the long bill, pecked their mother's foot when it brought a baby, thus necessitating the fact that she must rest in bed for a while. The stork has been associated with marital fidelity in many fables as the sedate and slow walking birds are monogamous. Once a stork loses its mate, it never remates. Confucius recommended this bird's conduct as the perfect example towards spouses and in fourth century Greece it was a capital offense to kill a stork whose home ranges from southern America, Central and South America, Africa, Eurasia, the Eastern Indies, to Australia.

And who has not gazed at an eagle in flight without being struck by its grandeur and by the might of its Creator. Majestic and powerful, its hooked beak and claws are awesome. As a matter of fact, the powerful bill of this bird is nearly as long as its head. When it spreads its wings and soars through the sky, it is a splendid looking creature. In ancient Egypt, this bird was worshiped because it was thought it could out-stare the sun (probably because it has a third eye-lid which protects its eyes.) The Persians believed the eagle's presence safeguarded

against thunder and lightning, making it good luck to own an eagle. This thought carried through to the Greeks who, because they believed the bird to be immune from the danger of lightning, used them as lightning conductors on top of their temples. The bald eagle, with its white head and white tail and massive bill, is the national bird of the United States. It has a wing spring of seven to eight feet and feeds chiefly on dead or dying fish.

Back to the raven, or crow, the bird with which we began. Crows, black creatures that they are, have a bad reputation. They eat corn, before it makes its way to the table; they feed on carrion at the roadside; and they disturb the peaceful quiet of an early morning with coarse ejaculations. Its raucous, pushy, nasal cry has none of the delicate quality of a nightingale and its sharp eyes and beak offer no specific delight to the eyes of a birder. And yet the bird has positive merits as it destroys cutworms, grubs and other larvae.

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In Leviticus II we read that all of these birds have, since the fall, become an abomination.

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Throughout human history, the crow has often been looked upon as the harbinger of misfortune, as a sinister omen flavored with death. It is said that the day on which the Roman philosopher and politician Cicero was murdered, several crows fluttered about his head and pulled at his bedclothes. As well, the bird has a passion for thievery and has been known to steal brightly colored objects such as buttons, jewelry and beads.

From good to unclean

All of the above fifth day creatures, all of the above briefly mentioned birds, were created good. God said so Himself and who are we to quarrel? Yet in Leviticus 11 we read that all of these birds have, since the fall, become an abomination. Beginning at verse 13 of this chapter we read: And these you shall have in abomination among the birds, they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, the kite, the falcon according to its kind, every raven according to its kind, the ostrich, the nighthawk, the seagull, the hawk according to its kind, the owl, the cormorant, the ibis, the water hen, the pelican, the carrion vulture, the stork, the heron according to its kind, the hoopoe and the bat. Deuteronomy 14:14 says the same thing. In other words, the Bible, after the fall, identifies these birds as unclean.



From unclean to good

Let's continue on with the crow, or the raven. This black-feathered bird, though unclean and an abomination, was chosen by God to feed Elijah when that prophet was in want of food and when he had been sent to live by the brook Cherith. 1 Kings 17:6-7 reads:

And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

Did it bother the great prophet to take food from an ebony, unclean flock who were, no doubt, gregarious, cawing for all they were worth as they landed by the brook? Perhaps it did bother him. We are not told. But we do know that no story is placed in the Bible by chance and it is extremely interesting to note that immediately upon leaving the dried-up brook Cherith, Elijah is ordered to Zarephath. Zarephath was not in Israel. That is to say, it was in Gentile country – unclean country. And Elijah received food for the second time from an unclean hand. Was this a precursor to Peter's vision?

And then Jesus, in Luke 12:24, speaks of the raven. Indeed, He speaks of the raven with great compassion. Not as a marauding nuisance bird or an unclean piece of black feathers; no, He speaks of the ravens as the objects of mercy and care. He includes ravens in His love, even as He includes the sparrows in the same chapter in verse 6. It has always been easy for peo-

ple to see that God loves the small, delicate sparrow – of His providing the care of field and forest for these little birds. It is much more difficult to envisage His all-encompassing love for a black, annoying, loud cawer. But He says: "Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds."

Jesus goes on, in that same twelfth chapter in Luke, to speak of His care for His own in a most loving way. And who are His own? Who encompass the body of His people? Who are those whom Jesus tells not to worry about food, drink and clothing? Who were those He speaks to in such a loving way?

Were they not a common people, a people black at heart. Were they not raucous, thieving, and of bad repute; and were they not creatures carrying about death in their very nature? Did they not forage on sin at every roadside field and did they not feed at every corner at garbage dumps of vice and misery? Did they not scavenge off fellow humans and was not their voice loud, selfish, brash and harsh? Did they not beg noisily for the good things in life and did they not gang up to mob others less fortunate than themselves?

The ravens teach a lesson. Perhaps a better lesson than that of the sparrow. And if God so cares for the raven, that foraging, seemingly selfish creature. . . But He has sent His Son.

A good thing to ponder.





Soup & Buns

Sharing our soup and buns

by Sharon L. Bratcher

“Be devoted to... practicing hospitality” – Romans 12:10,13

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers...” – Hebrews 13:2

“Be hospitable to one another without complaint” – 1 Peter 4:9

“These exhortations still apply to those who are Christians today.

We can still open our homes to the lonely, those without families at hand, the ‘strangers’ among us.”

– Jean Gaffin, *How I Feed My Family of Five on \$135 a Month*

Jean Gaffin observes that the notion of hospitality has been somewhat abused in recent years. Some people open their homes only to display themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Perfect Host with big elaborate dinners. Others consider it only a duty that must be discharged, often to pay back an earlier invitation. Still others cannot consider having anyone over unless they spend the entire week in a frenzy of cleaning and cooking. Once it’s over the hostess is exhausted. With all of these, hospitality becomes less about “giving” and more about pride.

Who should we show hospitality to, and what ideas can ease our way?

We often invite family members and long time friends. It’s within our comfort zone, and often expected. But what about “intentional hospitality?” What about setting out with a plan and a purpose? Here are two ways that this can be accomplished:

Invitation by alphabet

The alphabetical plan. A dozen years ago we moved, settling in closer to our church. We opened the church list and went through alphabetically, inviting folks over for lunch or dinner. Some couldn’t come, and some could. Even the denials brought us into conversation with unknown people and began a rapport. It was a wonderful way to get to know nearly everyone over a period of time. You might tweak it a bit by inviting one well-known family and then adding an unfamiliar one, so that you can all grow closer through this fellowship.

Invitation by observation

The “lookout” plan. One family watched for visitors every week. They tapped on their shoulders and invited them to join them for a meal right then. The hostess never knew the total ahead of time, but she was ready for anything. Children’s friends, people who had just moved or had a baby – many were invited. As Jean Gaffin states,

“To converse around a dinner table with people of different backgrounds, experiences and ideas will help broaden your own horizons. It will help you reevaluate and define clearly your own way of looking at things. . . . Some of the best times our own

family has had were when a variety of ages was around the table. . . . [This] sparked lively, invigorating conversation.”

You might also prayerfully consider inviting some neighbors over as well.

3 tips

Once you have decided on your plan for “intentional hospitality,” here are three ideas to help you get ready.

First, establish an emergency shelf. Even with a tight budget, Jean kept a few items on a shelf “just in case” someone dropped in. Canned salmon, corned beef or tuna and pasta made a casserole quickly, and canned fruit or soup and crackers would enhance a meal. Freezing baked goods in a container [with a “Do not touch!” sign on them!] assured that she would have desserts to share with guests as well.

Second, organize yourself once. Once you have chosen your menu, write down a plan of action for yourself. For example, for Sunday guests, you might shop on Thursday, tidy the house on Friday, and make part of the meal on Saturday and part on Sunday morning. Jean states:

It is an amazing help to have directions – even the smallest reminder – on paper. That way you think through the situation only once and don’t have to keep rethinking and wondering if you’re forgetting something. A lot of energy gets used that way. Writing a list in a calm state of mind isn’t nearly as enervating.

As an example, she listed the following:

12:45-12:50 - put casserole in oven and serve appetizers (e.g. juice, crackers)

1:00-1:05 - heat rolls and set salad and raw veggies on table

1:10-1:15 - fill water glasses; put on butter and start coffee for the dessert

1:20 - dish up and call your guests to the table

This list also allows helpers to have an idea of what still needs to be done so that they can assist.

Keep it simple. Choose tasty but inexpensive foods (e.g. baked chicken legs) that take very little preparation. Providing a variety of flavors and colors is more important than multiple steps.

Conclusion

Next Sunday, take a look around your congregation (or neighborhood) and choose some folks you really don’t know and ask them to lunch or dinner.

Love grows when it is fed, literally.

Sharon Bratcher is currently working on an upcoming book collecting the best of her Soup and Buns columns.



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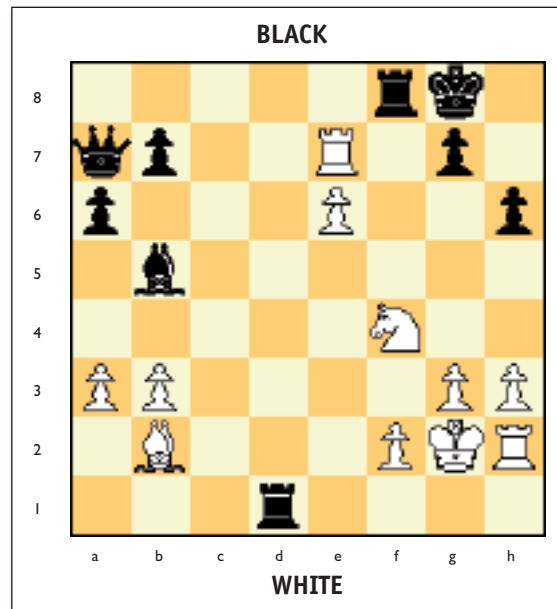
Riddles for Punsters #157 – “Mountain Memorabilia”

- Why was the mountain not allowed to drive?
Because it was told that it had t _ _ _ _ vision.
- What was the name of the mountain’s favourite movie? _ _ _ _ .
- What was the mountain’s favourite name? _ _ _ _ o r d.
- Why did the hippie mountain get arrested at a rock concert?
It was charged with being _ _ _ _ d.
- Why did the mountain like math class?
Given a list of numbers the mountain could easily s _ _ _ t.

Problem to Ponder #157 – “Enough InFOURmation?”

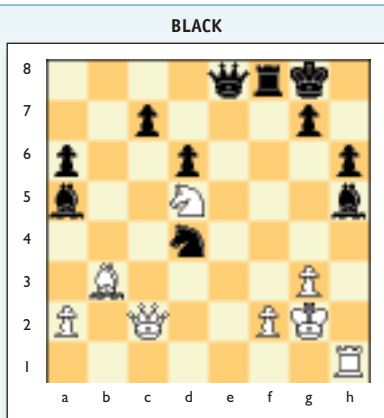
- Denise, Sandra, Jeremy and Nicholas are siblings.
Denise is 9 years older than Sandra but 3 years younger than Jeremy.
Six years from now Denise will be twice as old as Sandra.
One year ago Nick’s age was one half of what Jeremy’s age was.
How old are the four siblings now?

Chess Puzzle # 157



WHITE to Mate in 2

Or, If it is BLACK’s Move, **BLACK to Mate in 2** (2 solutions)



SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 156

WHITE to Mate in 2

Descriptive Notation

1. N-B6 dbl ch K-R1
2. Q-R7 mate

Algebraic Notation

1. Nd5-f6 dbl + Kg8-h8
2. Qc2-h7 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

1. ---- B-KB6 ch
2. K-R2 Q-R4 ch
3. K-N1 QxR mate

OR

1. ---- B-KB6 ch
2. K-N1 Q-K8 ch
3. K-R2 QxR mate

WHITE LOSES SOONER IF

1. ---- B-KB6 ch

2. K-R3

OR

1. ----
2. K-B1

Algebraic Notation

1. ---- Bh5-f3 +
2. Kg2-h2 Qe8-h5 +
3. Kh2-g1 Qh5xh1 ++

OR

1. ---- Bh5-f3 +
2. Kg2-g1 Qe8-e1 +
3. Kg1-h2 Qe1xh1 ++

WHITE LOSES SOONER IF

1. ---- Bh5-f3 +
 2. Kg2-h3 Qe8-h5 ++
- OR**
1. ---- Bh5-f3 +
 2. Kg2-f1 Qe8-e1 ++

SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (JUNE) PUZZLE PAGE

Answers to Riddles for Punsters #156 – “Soft drinks, hard puzzles?”

Why was “coke classic” produced again after the company started making a different type of coke? It was brought back by **p o p u l a r** demand.
If soft drinks could visit each other, the hosts would say to their visitors, “It was nice of you to **p o p** by.”

When the new, screw-type of cap for soft drink bottles was first introduced, many people thought it was truly a **c a p i t a l** idea.

Soft drinks, if teachers, would give lots of **p o p q u i z z e s**.

Answer to Problem to Ponder #156 – “Church Calculations”

When five young people made profession of faith recently, standing in alphabetical order by their last name, they also were standing in order from tallest to shortest. What is the probability of that happening?

There is **only 1 way** to arrange the five tallest to shortest, with the first in line alphabetically being the tallest.

However, there are **120 ways** to arrange five people in a row (5 choices for the first person, 4 for the second, 3 for the third, etc., so $5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 120$ ways). Thus, the probability of the 5 being in order tallest to shortest is **1/120, so less than 1% probability!**

Jessica earned \$300 each week during the summer for 10 weeks. The first week she gave \$30 to the church, spent \$80 and saved the rest under her mattress. The next week she gave \$30 to the church, spent \$75 and saved the rest. The third week she gave \$30 to the church, spent \$70 and saved the rest, and so on. How much money was under her mattress by the end of her summer job and how much had Jennifer spent? (Try to find a fast solution.)

Over the 10 weeks, the total of Jessica’s earnings – church donations was $(300 - 30) \times 10 = \$2700$. Of that, **she spent**
 $80+75+70+65+60+55+50+45+40+35 = (80+35)+(75+40)+ \dots +(60+55) = 5(115) = \575 during the 10 weeks.

Thus, she had a total of $\$2700 - \$575 = \$2125$ under her mattress.

Crossword Puzzle

Series 16 No 8

Last month's solution
Series 16 No 7

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20				21	22			23		24		25		
			26				27		28		29			
30	31	32		33					34					
35											36	37	38	39
40				41				42	43	44		45		
46			47				48		49					
			50	51	52		53	54				55		
56	57	58					59							
60				61		62		63				64	65	66
67			68		69		70			71	72			
73					74					75				
76					77					78				

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12											
13	S	T	E	P	S		14	M	A	D	E		15	A	H	A								
17	L	I	V	E	R		18	I	D	O	L		19	R	U	S	K							
20	A	M	A	T	A		21	A	D	E	S		22	A	M	I	E							
25	T	I	D	E		26	O			27	S	E	28	L		29	O	E	R					
30	E	D	E	R		31	C	27	28	A		29	A	30	T	N		O						
						31	S	T	A	I	R		32	W	A	G	E	S						
35	T	A	R			36	T	A	N	D	E	37	M		38	J	O	I	E					
41	E	M	U			42	A	V	A		43	N	E	44	E		45	U	R	N				
46	L	E	T			47	S		48	E	G	R	E	49	T	S		50	S	E	E			
51	E	N	A			52	C	T		53	E	D	G	E	S									
	V					54	B	I	O			55	A	E	R		56	R	57	O	58	59	T	I
60	I	N	A			62	W	A	D			63	S			64	E	L	A	N				
66	S	A	G			67	E			68	W	A	R	69	M		70	U	N	I	T	E		
72	E	V	A			73	N			74	A	R	I	A		75	S	A	V	E	R			
						76	E	S	E		77	Y	E	T	I		78	A	L	E	R	T		

ACROSS:

- Kind of American snake
- Possesses
- Creates a garment by hand
- Wash away by water and wind
- Old cheese
- Male name, meaning "height" in Hebrew
- Kind of committee
- Fix a hole in the cloth
- Mona _____
- Language of a person from N. Thailand
- Sweet potato
- Pass away
- Vietnamese New Year
- Carpenter's necessity
- Goes in the house
- Curvy letter
- Traditional knowledge
- Bind up with thread
- Kind of bike
- Finished
- ____ Baba
- Beaver's place
- Black goo
- ____-de-France
- Adam's son
- Relating to the mind
- Wee one
- Greek god of war
- All
- Chinese tree fruit
- Printer accessory
- Note of debt
- Wall decoration
- King of Judah
- Body limb
- Fairytale monster
- Raise up
- Type of media
- Famous long river
- Effortlessness
- Bird noise
- Ontario word for backwater or side-channel
- Walked on
- Detests

DOWN:

- Not fake
- Advance Research and Development Activity
- Kind of salmon
- Tokyo, once
- Reused
- Carpenter's tool
- Grow old
- Sell
- Small whirlpools
- French seasoning
- Select group
- More sage
- Chairs
- Smell
- Direction
- Unite in marriage
- Pair
- Airport abbrs.
- Store event
- Little argument
- Brief bio sketch
- Distinctive flair
- Depend on
- Prayer endings
- Investigate
- 5th letter of Hebrew alphabet
- Small pet rodent
- Meadow
- Weasel-like pet
- Sounded like a lion
- Savannah kings
- Person who practices yoga
- Not straight hair
- Rip
- Mine passage
- To laugh, in Paris
- Cleans the floor
- Widest shoe size
- Volcanic mountain in Japan
- Expression of discovery

Joyce