

REFORMED


Perspective

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A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

The ultimate GPS

A monarch butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on a purple flower. The butterfly's wings are spread, showing the characteristic orange and black pattern with white spots. The flower is purple and has several petals. The background is dark, making the butterfly and flower stand out.

Monarch
butterflies
never have to
stop to ask
for directions

When kids are seen as a curse

Our culture is committing suicide, by curtailing the next generation

Guest Editorial

Michael Wagner

Over the last 30 years, people in West have stopped having children. It's a rather curious situation, as it only takes a few moments reflection to understand that a nation without a next generation is not going to survive for very long. This is a suicidal trend for a country and a culture, and yet it's a trend that shows no signs of abating.

Career over kids

One of the biggest reasons children have become unpopular is the widespread feminist view that women should focus on their careers and their own desires, rather than bear and raise children. Careers and kids don't go well together – women who have children and stay home to raise them simply cannot advance their careers as well as those who don't have children, or who have very few but send them to daycare. And in our culture, that is reason enough to sacrifice kids and family. Putting career second to have a family is increasingly seen as an outrageous expectation.

Men too, find the childless option an attractive one as it frees them up from the cost and time involved in taking care of little kiddies. Taking care of children is going to take away from a man's other pursuits, including his recreational goals. In the West men would prefer nights out with the boys, to nights in with their boys.

And if a couple does decide to have children, most often they prefer just one or two.

Kids will want our stuff

Playing into this view is the popular received wisdom that the world is overpopulated. A tale of doom is told, of how the earth's resources are limited, so as the number of humans increases, there will be less and less available for each of us. And then, finally, the resources will be stretched beyond capacity and tragedy will result, with millions or even billions of people dying for lack of food and/or fresh water. From this perspective, having fewer children means a better life for those of us already here. This view sees children simply as consumers – insatiable mouths to feed – and little else.

These factors, and others, convince many people to believe that the fewer children there are, the better. This has become a standard component of the secular worldview – wherever the influence of Christianity wanes and that of secularism increases we see a declining birthrate.

Reap the whirlwind

Now there is a Biblical principle that you reap what you sow, and we can see in the countries where large numbers of people don't want to have children they are beginning to reap the consequences. Especially in Europe, where Christianity began to decline earlier, population growth is so low some of these countries are already beginning to experience natural population decline. This decline is going to become increasingly widespread and rapid over the next few decades.

Phillip Longman has written a book about this trend called *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity And What To Do About It*. The most interesting sections of his book explain what the trends in birth rates in various countries mean for the future. What people believe has consequences for how they live their lives, and if people in a particular society believe that it's better to have few or no children at all, that society's future is threatened.

The Christian view is that having children, even lots of children, is a good thing. The secular view is that it's basically not a good thing. If people live their lives according to their views (as they generally do), which of these two types of societies is most likely to thrive? Longman provides some interesting clues.

In order for a society to maintain its current population, each woman must bear an average of 2.1 children over the course of her life. If the average is above that amount, the population will grow. If it's below, the population will decline.

No family ties

Many countries are now well below that figure, especially in Europe. Longman points out that countries "with persistently low fertility will eventually fade away." Russia, for example, has had a fertility rate below 2.1 for many years. Already, its population is declining by about 750,000 people per year. "With deaths exceeding births by well over half, current projections show Russian population will fall by 29 percent by 2050." That is a huge decline.

Japan and China are among the countries with low fertility rates, but for the most part it is European countries whose populations currently face decline. "Together with Italy, Spain is experiencing the lowest fertility rates ever seen in recorded history." This will



If couples have just one child, in just two generations the result will be a child who has no brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles or cousins. Almost no family at all.



have many consequences, one of which is that people in the future will have few relatives.

“By mid-century, if current trends continue, Europe will be a society in which most adults have few biological relatives. In Italy, almost three-fifths of the nation’s children will have no siblings, cousins, aunts, or uncles – only parents, grandparents, or perhaps great-grandparents.”

Even creativity will decline

There will also be economic consequences. For one, so far in history, economic growth has always been associated with corresponding population growth. If the population shrinks, the market shrinks, and the economy declines. Longman suggests that Japan’s economic problems of the last two decades or so have resulted to a large degree from the results of its low fertility.

Another potential economic problem could result from a decline in the number of young adults: the economy could become less dynamic because “most technological breakthroughs and entrepreneurial activity tend to come from people in their 20s and 30s.” As this segment of the population becomes smaller, it’s reasonable to expect a corresponding decline in technological development and entrepreneurship.

God’s people as a light on a hill

Generally speaking, population decline is bad. There is a possible silver lining, however. Longman points out that conservative religious people still tend to have relatively high fertility rates. They believe God wants them to have children. As a result, they won’t decline in numbers the same way the secular humanists will. In fact, conservative religious people may benefit from the general population decline.

“The response of religious fundamentalists to these trends will, of course, be to promote traditional family life, including strict separation of gender roles, while also continuing to oppose homosexuality, premarital sex, divorce, abortion, and birth control. To the extent that religious fundamentalists practice what they preach, they and their progeny will account for an increasing share of the population, both in the United States and elsewhere.”

Though Longman makes the prediction, he isn’t happy about this prospect. He would like secularists to continue to dominate the West, but he knows they won’t unless they have children. So he proposes a number of government policies to create financial incentives for people to have children – the best he can come up with is paying people to have progeny.

It’s natural for people to live according to their beliefs. As societies, such as the secular societies of the West, live out their belief that having children is generally to be avoided, their numbers will ultimately begin to shrink. But the Christian population of these same countries will probably not shrink since Christians believe having children is a good thing. The long-range implications of these trends are potentially good from a Christian perspective.

Philip Longman’s views on population trends are featured in the documentary Demographic Winter, which was reviewed and recommended in the April 2009 issue.



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BirdBreath



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Nota Bene

News worth noting

by Sarah Meerstra



Christians need to step up in Quebec

A new educational curriculum in Quebec forces teachers in public and private schools to teach moral relativism. The curriculum prompted one group of Christian parents to take the government to court, arguing that, among other things, the course interfered “with the ability of parents to transmit their faith to their child.”

Their petition was, however, turned down. The judge ruled that parents’ freedoms are not violated because there is no obligation imposed by the curriculum for children to actually believe the religious and moral ideas the course teaches. “In light of all the evidence presented,” he wrote, “the court does not see how the . . . course limits the plaintiff’s freedom of conscience and of religion for the children when it provides an overall presentation of various religions without obliging the children to adhere to them.” The parents will appeal the case.

On the whole, however, the Christian response to this legislation has been weak and even contradictory. One Protestant group, the Protestant Partnership in Education (PPE), has even supported the legislation, because it “encourages students to talk about their

own religious experience – what they did in church on Sunday, for example – while recognizing that they are meant to be dialoguing, not proselytizing.”

Jewish groups seem to be taking a considerably stronger stand on the matter. The Council on Jewish Education in Quebec (CJEQ) has gone so far as to place ads in a major newspaper which very clearly state their position on the new curriculum and call for a religious exemption from it.

Even atheists are seeing the situation more clearly than some Christians in the province. In an article for the *National Post*, two atheist authors wrote:

“Parents do not wish to have to instruct their children – stealthily, at home – that the moral relativism they are being taught at school is wrong. They do not wish to have to undermine their children’s confidence in their schoolteachers. Nor do they wish to become hypocrites, adhering to a particular moral code themselves, but pretending – in order to spare their children the conflict of having to choose between home and school – that it’s okay for their children to accept tenets they consider immoral.”

Source: *The National Post*, Sept. 2 & 14, 2009; LifeSiteNews.com, October 1, 2009

Divorce can make you sick

The loss of a spouse, whether through divorce or death, can have a significant and long-lasting detrimental effect on a person’s health. A study conducted by researchers at the University of Chicago found that those who are divorced or widowed show worse overall health than married or never married persons.

The health benefits of marriage have been extensively documented in past studies, and appear to stem from several causes. For one, married couples tend to be better off financially than people who are unmarried. And wives, in particular, act as caretakers of a husband’s health, scheduling appointments and noticing changes that may signal a health problem. Spouses can also offer practical support, like taking care of children while the other spouse exercises.

The University of Chicago study does not prove that the loss of a marriage causes health problems, only that the two are associated. It may be that people who don’t exercise, eat poorly and can’t manage stress are also more likely to divorce. Still, researchers note that because the effect is seen in both divorced and widowed people, the data strongly suggest a causal relationship.

Source: *The New York Times*, August 3, 2009

Canadian Reformed artist designs Olympic coin

Burlington artist Jason Bouwman will soon be seeing coins of his design in circulation. The coins were commissioned to celebrate the top three Canadian winter Olympic moments of all time, as voted on by fans across the country. Twenty-two million of each three Moments coins will enter circulation this fall. Of those twenty-two million coins, however, only three million will be in color – and each one will only be found, by chance, in random rolls distributed throughout the country.

Bouwman has designed other coins in the past, but these will be the first to enter general circulation.

Source: Compass Creative



Coins with Joseph’s name found in Egypt

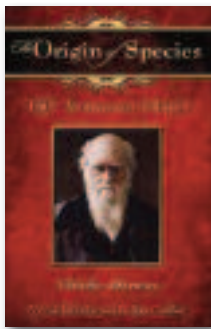
Archaeologists at the Museum of Egypt have discovered ancient coins bearing the name and image of the biblical Joseph. The coins were found among a large number of unsorted artifacts stored in boxes in the museum.

The find lends additional confirmation to the important role that Joseph played in ancient Egyptian politics. It also challenges the commonly held belief that coins were not used for currency in the Egypt of Joseph’s day, but rather that trade was conducted by barter.

Source: *The Jerusalem Post*, September 25, 2009

Christians to hand out *Origin of the Species*

Actor and Christian activist Kirk Cameron has a unique plan for “Darwin Day” on November 22. The day is meant to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Darwin’s publication of *Origin of the Species*, the book in which he lays out his theory of evolution.



In a video posted on Youtube, Cameron outlines his proposal to distribute 50,000 copies of an *altered* version of Darwin’s book to students at 50 top American universities. The altered book would include an introduction explaining “Adolf Hitler’s undeniable connection” to the theory of evolution, and highlighting “Darwin’s racism” and “his disdain for women.” Cameron’s edition also exposes the “many hoaxes” of evolutionary theory, while presenting a “balanced view of Creationism.”

The goal, says Cameron, is to provide the gospel message to America’s future leaders. Students need the information, he argues, in order to make an informed decision and to be exposed to the truth of intelligent design.

Source: *Huffington Post*, September 22, 2009

Homosexual man sues to donate blood



A Canadian homosexual man is suing Canadian Blood Services (CBS) claiming he has been discriminated against because CBS does not accept blood from any man who has engaged in homosexual sex since 1977. This precaution has been taken in an effort to screen out donors with sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV and AIDS. Relying on blood tests to screen for HIV can be risky, since the disease can take up to 3 months to show up in tests.

In addition to his homosexual history, Kyle Freeman is infected with multiple sexually transmitted diseases but has still donated blood 18 times by lying about his sexual history on his questionnaire. The court case started September 28; a decision is expected some time in 2010.

There is always a need for blood from eligible donors. If we want CBS to continue their sensible policy of excluding high-risk donors like Kyle Freeman it seems we should put our money, or rather our blood, where our mouth is, and donate generously. Contact Canadian Blood Services (www.bloodservices.ca) to find out where and when you can donate.

Source: *LifeSiteNews.com*, October 7, 2009

Hurt feelings win “Human Rights” victory

In yet another bizarre and disturbing Canadian “human rights” case, a white Toronto policeman has been found guilty of discrimination against a black postal worker because the postal worker’s feelings were hurt.

The policeman, Michael Shaw, was on patrol in an upscale Toronto neighborhood when he noticed Ronald Phipps, a black postal working zigzagging along the street delivering letters, in substitute for the routes regular postal worker. Since Shaw noticed some irregular behavior on Phipps part, he stopped him and asked him for his identification before allowing his to continue on his route.

Based on this exchange, Phipps asserted that he had been racially profiled. He filed a case with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and adjudicator Kaye Joachim agreed. He found Shaw guilty of discrimination, arguing that the fact that Phipps “was an African-Canadian in an affluent neighborhood was a factor, a significant factor, and probably the predominant factor, whether consciously or unconsciously, in Const. Shaw’s actions.”

In making his decision, Mr. Joachim completely ignored the concepts of malicious intent and reasonable doubt. While he could find no evidence that Shaw knowingly discriminated against Mr. Phipps, the adjudicator said no evidence of intent was needed. Whether “consciously or unconsciously,” the policeman had offended Mr. Phipps by his actions; he had caused the letter-carrier to feel discriminated against and that was enough.

Writes Lorne Gunter in the *National Post*, “Guilt, now, apparently is solely in the mind of the complainant. No one needs to prove you had intent to discriminate, that you had a guilty mind. The minute a rights charge is levelled, it is up to you to establish your innocence. And forget about ‘beyond a reasonable doubt.’ Mr. Joachim found that ‘on the balance of probabilities,’ Const. Shaw was guilty.”

Gunter concludes, “As this case helps demonstrate, Canada’s human-rights commissions are horribly biased – far more biased than the people they accuse of bigotry – and need to be disbanded.”

Source: *The National Post*, July 31, 2009



BEST BOOKS: THREE ON WWII IN THE NETHERLANDS

reviewed by Jon Dykstra

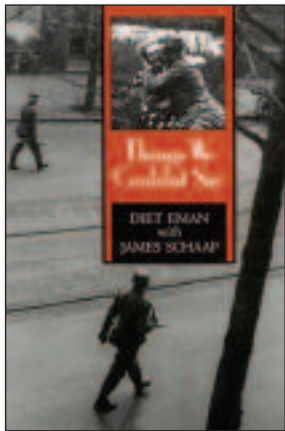
THINGS WE COULDN'T SAY

by Diet Eman with James Schaap

To survive the war, Diet Eman had to become hard. There was no time to *feel*; there were too many people depending on her. So Diet continued her work for the Dutch Resistance, even while her friends were being arrested, even after she was imprisoned, and even while her fiancé Hein was locked away in a concentration camp.

But as hard as she became, diary entries through the book testify to how Diet was sustained not by her own strength, but rather her dependence on God. She was constantly confronted with danger but carried on in the confidence that she was doing what her Father wanted her to do, that whether she lived through the war, or was killed, that she was safe in His keeping.

And as hard as she became, Diet was also a woman deeply in love with her Hein. *Things we couldn't say* consists of two parallel stories: the first is a drama, telling of how, through the courage of Diet and Hein hundreds of Dutch Jews were saved, and the second a romance, telling of the good and godly passion of these two Christian young people. A powerful biography, you can find it at GoDutch.com.



LEST WE FORGET

by Mandy R. Evans



Mandy Evans was only seven when the German tanks rolled into the Netherlands, so her first reflections on the war are the simple ones of a child being shielded by her parents from too much information. But Mandy is Jewish, so it's impossible for her parents to shield her for long. She can't help but notice when she and her siblings are banned from attending public school. When the neighborhood policeman, who used to smile at her as he biked by, grabs her rubber ball and tears it to shreds, there's no ignoring his stark change of attitude. And when she's separated from her family, and forced to hide in one home after another, there's little her parents can do to shield Mandy.

Because I got this book from the Reformed online bookstore GoDutch.com I was initially disappointed to find nary a Calvinist within: Mandy is Jewish and her rescuers are primarily Roman Catholic or humanist. But my disappointment was soon quelled – this is a great book. Though Mrs. Evans wrote it years after the fact, as an adult, there is a compelling naivety to this wartime biography because she recounts the events just as she knew them as a child. This is the Nazi occupation as seen through the eyes of a confused, questioning, Jewish young girl.

A FAMILY SECRET

by Eric Heuvel

It's Queen's Day in the Netherlands, and the celebrations include nation-wide rummage sales. So young Jeroen heads to his grandmother's house to see if she might have anything she's willing to give him to sell. And like grandmothers everywhere, she is quite obliging to her young grandson, and sends him upstairs to the attic to let him see what he can find. In his searching Jeroen discovers his grandmother's old scrapbook. . . and while paging through it uncovers a secret she has kept to herself for more than 60 years.

His grandmother then tells him the story of how World War II divided her family. She was best friends with a Jewish girl named Esther, and along with her mother and one brother didn't want anything to do with the Germans. But her father chose to work with the Nazis, and her oldest brother decided to go fight for Germany on the Russian front.

This is an amazing graphic novel, drawn in the style of *Tintin*, and published by the Ann Frank House and the Resistance Museum of Friesland. It's gripping enough for adults, but for children this is an absolutely amazing way to teach them about World War II, the Dutch Resistance and the Holocaust. Its sequel, *The Search*, which looks at the war from the perspective of grandma's Jewish friend Esther, is also excellent.





Oil idols, a plague of toads, and other happenings

by Rene Vermeulen

Usually I try to write about the whole of Australia or about those states that feature most prominently because they have the power, the population, etc. But this month I want to highlight the state of Western Australia, in part because this is where the largest number of Free Reformed people live. In size it is a very large state – 2.6 million square kilometers – but population-wise rather small when you consider it has just over 2 million residents, in a country that has more than 20 million.

But it is here that things are happening.

Resource rich with all the good and bad that brings

For some years now Western Australia has been a major supplier of iron ore and other metals to Japan, China, India and other countries close to our shores. Massive mines have been developed giving work to many, both in the mining towns as well as in the Perth metropolitan area.

And for years now it has been known that there were places that contained gas and oil. This was mainly in the seas close to Australia. Some of this oil and gas was/is being used to power our state's electricity grid. A couple of weeks ago one of these oil rigs, the Montara owned by a Thai company had a well head accident. It is thought that some 300 to 400 barrels of oil is pouring into the Timor Sea daily.

A replacement rig was brought from Singapore to stop the leak, but at the time of writing three attempts to fix things have all failed. So there is concern that this oil will do damage to wildlife for years to come.

And even as this is occurring, news came that Australia is on the verge of another resources boom that promises to dwarf the last surge. This boom is being sourced from Western Australia. The companies behind these projects are talking about \$50 billion. Our Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has placed his reliance on Gorgon (the name of the project) to help Australia through the global recession.

To give some idea what this project will entail: it is expected that some 10,000 people will be required in the construction phase of the plant and that it will provide 3,500 permanent jobs. While Australians were still coming to terms with the size of the project another even bigger project was announced. This project is forecast to be \$70 billion.

These forecasts would make Australia a major supplier of gas and provide massive royalties to both the Federal Government as well as the state government.

Other big projects are in the pipeline such as harbors and other ideas. What will all this come to? It all remains to be seen but it is clear that many are turning to these projects as their security in the times ahead. Even as the Montara accident has shown us that placing our trust in oil and gas is foolish, that is just what many are doing.

But before I get too dour, let me note that while it would be healthy if our nation turned to God rather than pursue idols of financial security, yet, it was interesting to be reminded last week, I can't remember by who, that on any given Sunday more people go to church than to the sports games that are so widely promoted. That is hopeful.



Elsewhere

Since I started writing this article much has happened around Australia. Some weeks ago there were a number of tsunamis affecting the islands to the north of Australia. At the same time there was a major earthquake on the island of Sumatra, the second largest island of Indonesia. The earthquake killed many people and according to those who are experts in this area there is a bigger earthquake in the offing. The result of all this is that thousands lost their lives, islands were flooded, and storms did untold damage.

And a completely different problem plagues those in Northern Australia, a plague of toads. There is a species of toad or frog there that is of great concern – the Cane Toad was deliberately introduced into Australia to help fight beetles that like to eat sugar cane. But after their release in 1935, their population has exploded because the frogs have no specific predators in Australia.

Now these newcomers are crowding out and killing many native Australian toads and other native animals. These pests crossed the Western Australian border from the Northern Territory only some month ago but already they are spreading much further than first expected. And so each evening groups of people go out to catch these pests. The government of Western Australia has announced a 10-year strategy for dealing with cane toads. Let us hope that the strategy is successful.



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HOMEFRONT

The last page



by Jane deGlint

Everyone's life is collection of books. Naturally, all these books are interrelated. Not only the main character, but also many members of the supporting cast remain the same. Moreover, personality traits and historical setting keep the volumes firmly bound together. It is against this continuum that the topic of each book stands out. There may be a change in backdrop. Some players may leave the scene while other characters take centre stage. It is the interplay of change and constant that captures the intricacies of a human life.

For everyone the collection opens with a book about the years of childhood. From this book all the others sprout as branches from a tree. One of the immediate sequels deals with the school years, while another zooms in on the romantic feelings that emerge during the latter part of that time. A bulky trilogy is dedicated to marriage. Participation in the workforce often receives its own volume. The collection always ends with a special edition devoted to the final years.

Of all these collections God is the author. Even though this fact is a crucial building block of the universe, many have disputed it. From of old, people have been offended that the Creator of heaven and earth would have something to say about their life. Realizing that they are not in complete control themselves either, they invented their own gods and goddesses to explain the capricious twists of their lives. These idols have continued to infiltrate people's minds for many centuries. We

still meet them today under such names as Lady Fortuna or Madam Fate.

Sometimes even believers question God's authentic authorship. Though his signature is engraved on every created thing, the writing appears indistinct to eyes that are clouded. Such temporary loss of vision can have a variety of causes. Believers may be overcome with pride. They may think that they have acquired their wealth and status through their own efforts. Unwittingly they take credit, referring often to their hard work and sound judgment.

Conversely, ongoing sorrow can cause blurred vision in believers as well. Where is God in the relentless accumulation of personal calamities? A dear friend moves away. A child becomes terminally ill, or starts using drugs, or leaves the church. All efforts to gain financial stability fail.

Yet, both pride and doubt form an integral part of the script. The Author employs sin as well as sorrow to display his character. Whether he restores us to faith or carries us through mishaps, he majestically displays both his faithfulness and his power over sin. Ably and lovingly he makes all things work together to sustain those who by grace continue in faith.

The series of our life follows a chronological sequence, but not always in a single line. There are sections where lines run parallel. A book may be hooked into an existing volume and continue after that volume has ended. It may span many volumes to

become a part of the special closing edition. The main topic of such book could be the relationship with a friend who continues to play a role in a specific part of our lives in spite of the fact that he/she moved away. In other cases it could happen that someone's participation in a church federation turns into a book that chronologically overlaps with the volumes of marriage, careers and final years.

The end of each book marks a conclusion in our lives. Usually it is clear to a believer when he comes to the final page of a book. There are signs. A diploma signals the end of an education. A promotion indicates the end of the current position. Admittedly, the signs are often much less clear, or even confusing. But eventually the believers will recognize them as they walk closely with their Lord and his people.

The article that you are now reading is an example of such a last page. For more than twelve years I have had the privilege of visiting you once a month by way of this column. My encounters with you have been a most amazing book in my life. While you listened to me, I was able to share my smiles and my sorrows, my observations and my concerns, my faith and my hard-won insights. And you were there, listening quietly as I read my book aloud.

The book presented itself in a variety of styles and dealt with a fair range of topics. Some chapters described a common problem. Others placed familiar things in a slightly different light. Sometimes I was motivated to increase our appreciation for a category of people. At other times I meditated on God's greatness as it is reflected in our sinful world. I wrote fairytales. I sketched portraits of men, women and children. Occasionally I responded to a direct request from a person or a group.



***The article that you are now reading
is an example of such
a last page***



Hardly ever was it my intention to write directly about myself, but I am not sure to what degree of success. I observed that the better I tried to hide myself, the sooner I was detected. Another interesting observation took shape: the more details I provided about a person, the more intimately people recognized themselves in the other.

But, I have arrived at the last page. Initially I was not ready to put the book down. Several unwritten chapters begged me for their page. However, the sign was clear. The editor of *Reformed Perspective*, after considering the intent and focus of the


magazine, arrived at the conclusion that the days of my column were over. This closure does not mean that my contributions to *Reformed Perspective* have come to an end. Several options are being explored.

When people come to the end of a book, they have but a brief moment to reflect. Soon they become involved in the next volume that the Lord is writing. In communion with him and in the company of his people we will all continue to follow our script, till we are called to our eternal home.

Once all the scrolls of history have been completed, the books of our lives will be taken off the shelf and opened. At that moment we will for the first time be able to read our own series without mistake. In the light of the Word we will comprehend all the details. Our vision is clear. The lines did fall in most beautiful places. In the company of all believers we were safely guided through the desert of temptation. Washed clean we entered the land of full communion.

"May the LORD bless you from Zion, all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem." – Psalm 128:5





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**What's the perfect present for any person?
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Two pulpits competing for our hearts:

The influence of secular media in Reformed homes

by Mark Penninga

The Reformed faith is challenged on many fronts. Some of these challenges we are well aware of. I'm guessing that everyone thirteen and older who attends a Reformed church has been warned many times of the danger of "Arminianism" and how we ought to be on the lookout for its ugly face in songs, books, and almost everywhere else. But other challenges we hear little about, regardless of whether they are even a greater threat to the faith. The influence of the secular media in Reformed homes is one such challenge that we are aware of but seem all too hesitant to respond to.

We are being impacted

In the spring of 2009 I was travelling with my family and a board member of ARPA Canada, holding events in Reformed churches and schools. One of those events stands out in my mind. It just so happened that a NHL playoff game was scheduled for the same night. As soon as we heard about this we knew that we might have a tough time getting a crowd. When 7:30pm came around and the event started, we were surprised to see a good turnout. But upon a closer look at the audience we made an interesting discovery. Only about half (or fewer) of the audience came from the Canadian Reformed Church where it was being held and where it was advertised. The rest came from neighbouring churches that are part of a denomination that has no ties to the CanRC and which generally stays away from functions put on by other churches. But in these particular churches there is often a strong stand taken against TVs in the home. Those who came out that night were not even aware there was a hockey game going on at the same time and were dismayed when we thanked the crowd for coming out given that the event conflicted with a playoff game.

This lone experience doesn't prove much in and of itself. But I'm afraid that it rings true to something that is happening on a much bigger scale. The secular media, be it through TV, movies, the Internet, newspapers, or magazines, preaches a very

different message than what we hear off the pulpits on Sundays. Yet we seem to be more than willing to bring the pulpit of Secular Humanism into our homes and give it plenty of time and finances so that it can evangelize us with its doctrines.

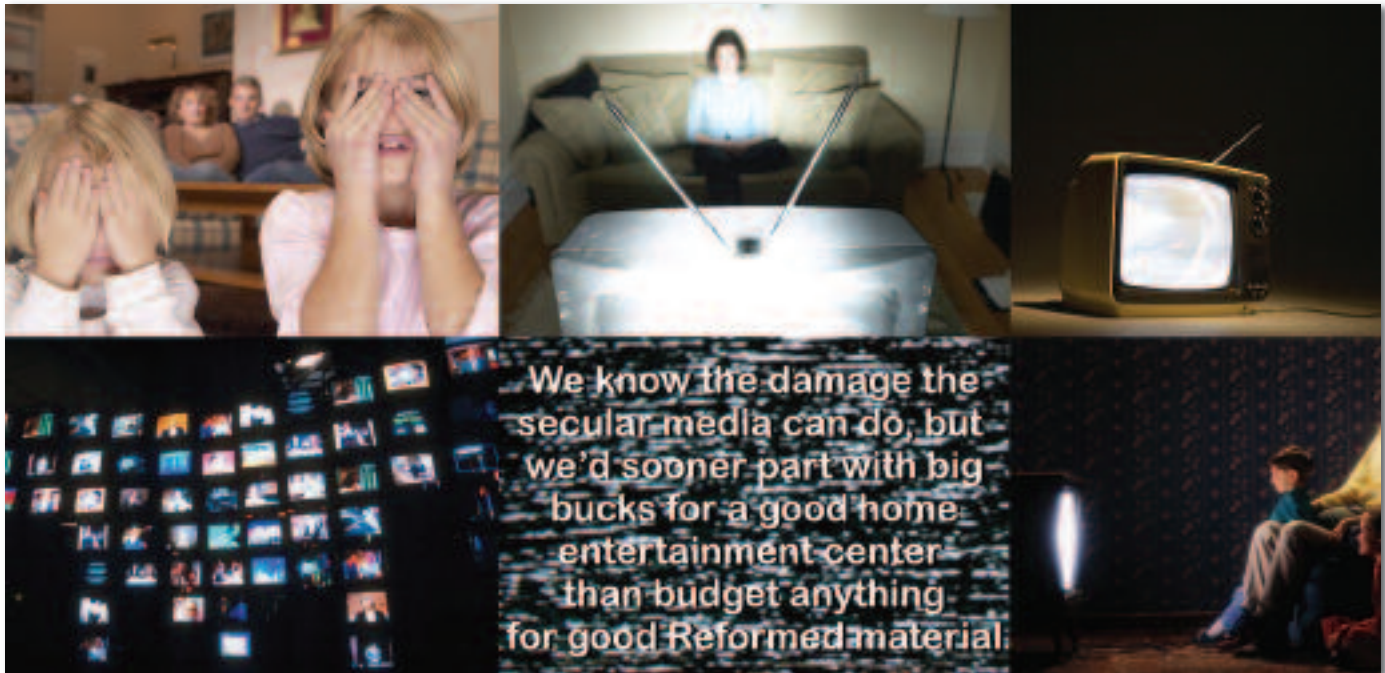
Don't mistake me – I'm not advocating that everyone despise the NHL, or throw out their TVs, DVDs, computers, newspapers, and magazines. I make use of all these things like most other people do. What I'm asking for is some reflection about how we as individuals, families, and churches are responding to the challenges that come from these sources of media. My experience with interacting with Reformed Christians about current social and political issues has convinced me that we are not nearly discerning enough when it comes to putting our time and money towards secular media and at the same time are overly discerning when it comes to investing in quality Christian resources.

A closer look at secular media

There are many studies I could point to that reveal the increasing sexualisation, violence, profanity, commercialization, and anti-Christian bias in all sources of secular media. If you are interested in some staggering statistics, check out www.commercialfreechildhood.org and click on the "issues" menu. But I'm sure we are already aware of this danger, given that it is impossible to avoid. Yet it still doesn't turn us away from these media sources. The reply we often give is that there is junk in the secular media but there are also good things that we can benefit from – we can't escape from the world so we have to discern what our families should be taking in or avoiding.

This is true, of course, but I can't help but wonder how discerning we are and how oblivious we are to the influence that the secular media is having on the church.

Our secular world likes to believe it is being neutral and "value-free." They claim to be unbiased in their "news" coverage and attempt to accomplish this by promoting "diversity" in



their hiring practices (being sure to fill their quotas of feminists, homosexuals, environmentalists and “spiritual experts”). But this “diversity” doesn’t seem to include anyone who holds strong Christian convictions, conservatives, or anyone who is willing to challenge the liberal status-quo. Is it any surprise then that the news becomes a sensationalized effort to wow our senses or reaffirm the blessings of secular humanism and the evils of traditional morals or beliefs?

If you don’t believe me, do your own study. Check out the front page of the next few issues of the leading newspaper in your area. (This would be a good project for a Social Studies or Worldview class.) What worldview is being endorsed in the selection of the stories? What bias is coming through in the content of the stories? My family subscribes to the *Vancouver Sun*. The last few issues were devoted to glowing coverage of “His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” Any articles that mention Christianity seems to be about the latest priest who was alleged to have abused children, or about the threat of “right-wing fundamentalists” imposing their faith in politics, or possibly about the United Church’s latest campaign to promote unhindered sexuality (as if it isn’t being promoted enough!). Basic biblical truth is nowhere to be found. But when the Dalai Lama comes to town, promoting compassion and diversity without any absolute moral strings attached, he gets pages and pages of coverage and praise.

Like the frog in the boiling pot, Christians slowly become desensitized to the false-neutrality of the media that is coming into our homes. We begin to believe that the RCMP’s use of tasers is a much more serious moral issue than the millions of people slaughtered in the Sudan.

Even if we are quite sure that we aren’t being desensitized, what effect is the secular media having on our *children*? I remember trying to speak with some Reformed youth about

the current “Green” movement and being baffled that many of them didn’t seem to have any problem with it (though they did recognize that the amount of attention that environmentalism is getting is a little over the top). I have a hard time being convinced that the 3 hours of instruction in church and at catechism classes that Reformed youth receive is able to protect them from the dozens of hours that they are exposed to through secular TV, Facebook, movies, music, etc. It is easy to point fingers at the youth but statistics reveal that the older generation struggles with TV usage even more than the youth (for example, Statistics Canada found that adults watch about double as much TV as teens). And in our Reformed circles too, young adults seem to be much less likely to spend time watching the tube than their parents.

The decline of the Christian worldview


Increasingly our standards are being measured according to the current expectations that come from the secular media. If some Christians go out of their way to produce a quality, clean, wholesome movie we so easily dismiss it as being “amateurish” and not that great. It is pretty hard to compete with the multi-million dollar productions that come from Hollywood if we are going to rate them based on the “wow!” factor. Likewise, when speakers (be it pastors or otherwise) try to communicate a Christian message to an audience there is an expectation that it better either be kept short (no more than half an hour) or filled with videos and other sensory-pleasing stimuli. Whether we admit it or not, this is a result of the influence of secularized media.

While our reliance on secular media seems to increase, we are at the same time pulling away from Christian resources. After all, we only have so much time and money to go around. Maybe that is what explains the fact that a magazine like

Reformed Perspective is losing subscribers and money even though the number of Reformed families is increasing and the quality of the magazine has never been better. We give up our subscriptions to Christian resources if we don't like how they address or don't address an issue that we care about. But we continue to pay for the subscription to cable TV that belches filth into our homes continually. Similarly we pride ourselves on our thrift behaviour by borrowing our Aunt Thelma's copy of *RP* after she is done with it and yet spend hundreds of dollars bringing secular media into our homes.

If the Reformed community can't sustain a magazine that covers social/political issues it isn't just the magazine that will go under. It also means that the writers won't be writing any more either. Or, if they continue writing it will likely be for non-Reformed audiences that want to benefit from their skills. Where will we go to for discussion papers, free topics, or family conversations? Likely it will be to wherever we are getting our news, opinions, and entertainment and consequently our discussions will gravitate toward whatever the secular media thinks we should be talking about.

A further consequence to the trend towards secular media is the increasing individualism and lack of accountability that accompanies it. We don't even have to go to the store to download a movie or music. It can be done wherever we want through our Internet connection. We do our research online for school papers, get our news online, and the list goes on. Although this has benefits there are also problems that come when we rely too much on this medium. For example, even if we are reading good things on the Internet, one family member isn't reading the same thing as another. There isn't discussion on a particular article because we read whatever interests us. And we wonder why discussion around the coffee table is so difficult? A Christian book or magazine is something that can be put on a living room coffee table so that it can be read by a few people in the home or church. As a result, it spurs us to talk about important issues that we need to address.

Some people might argue that I'm exaggerating this whole matter too much. I hope they are right. But I'm not seeing any evidence to support that claim. Just this past week another pro-family organization closed its doors and is no longer able to serve as a resource for Christians who want to stand up for what is good in society. Many other Christian political organizations that I know of are struggling to receive the funding, support, or interest they need to continue producing their resources or even keep their doors open. The longer we don't respond to this growing trend the more oblivious we will be to the spiritual attacks of the Devil. We seem to have this figured out when it comes to guarding against theological heresies. We need to apply the same discernment in response to the cultural, societal, and political heresies that are being introduced into our homes with our cooperation. 



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Are there any ugly people in this book?

Some musings on politics and culture in contemporary Christian romances

by Conrad van Dyk

If you ever want to make some good money, I suggest you write a Christian romance novel. I would do it myself, but first of all I'm a man, and so I lack all authority on the subject, and secondly, the whole thing would be mildly embarrassing. However, if I ever write under a pseudonym it will be as Bartholomew L. Winsome, and I will co-write with my other pseudonym, Wisteria Patterson. Our Christian romance novels will be in every Christian bookstore, and every young Christian woman will be influenced by our (that is mine) views on dating, love, and meaningful relationships. It will be glorious!

Of course, the truth is that as a man I find it very difficult to read Christian romance novels. Not only am I a fairly non-romantic fellow – despite what my wife might tell you – but I find the actual process of reading Lori Wick and her ilk painful. The experience is akin to a slow death by drowning in a chocolate fountain. Not pleasant!

Why is that? Why are men – and here I generalize based on my own perceptions – not very interested in Christian romances, whereas women gobble them up like two-bite brownies? And how might we ever agree on a way to judge the merit of these books? Are they meaningless fluff or timeless treasures? Who is to judge?

In this article I want to delve a little deeper into the ways in which contemporary Christian romances (we'll deal with the historical ones some other time) shape our emotional language, our cultural viewpoints, and even our political engagement. I want to suggest that although Christian romance often functions as escapist literature (some might say for women who don't want to do their housework, but I'm not that chauvinistic), it is never innocent. Christian romances have an incredible power in the way they mirror particular ideologies.

That doesn't mean that they don't have a positive role to play as well (we'll get to that). It just means that we have to become more discerning readers.

The romance fiction formula

As mentioned, writing Christian romance is relatively easy. Karen Kingsbury writes in her after word to *Ever After*

(one of two texts that we'll focus on) that she wrote the novel in 5 days. So how do you write 67.4 pages per day? Since I'm sure you're curious, let me give you the five key ingredients for a tasty romance novel (courtesy of Winsome and Patterson, TM):

1. Dialogue. In romance novels, everything gets talked about. Endlessly. Every little choice is analyzed to death. What present should we buy? What prom dress looks good on me (not the author of this article)? In addition, the process of falling in love involves a great deal of conversation, but I'm sure you knew that already.
2. Simple diction. If you want to obfuscate your prose with difficult words you do so at your own peril. (Never use *obfuscate*; always use *peril*)
3. Most internal thoughts and desires should be rephrased as silent speed prayers. Use italics to mark these off in the text. This shouldn't be too difficult in MS Word.
4. Create a happy ending that is totally predictable from the start. Predictability is good. You should be able to guess the outcome from the back cover.
5. Come up with one main lesson that you can weave through the book. This lesson can be about dating, the love of God, being born again. Just make sure it involves love.

Once you have successfully published your novel you can send me the royalties. I don't promise to read it.

More than a matter of personal taste

Now some readers might object, "Why does he have to make fun of my favorite books? How terribly high-brow of him!" To some extent they would be right. It doesn't really seem fair to say that all fiction should be judged by the same standards. Don't we all have different tastes? Are women and men not different when it comes to interests and choices? These are fairly typical objections, and with good reason.

Yet the question I'm interested in is less focused on aesthetic considerations and has more to do with the worldviews that these books help shape: how does Christian romance represent the world?



Karen Kingsbury wrote Ever After in 5 days, or 67.4 pages a day.

To think through this question I would like to compare two novels by two of the most popular Christian romance authors working in the field: Lori Wick and Karen Kingsbury. Both authors are extremely prolific, and both have been influential in shaping the genre over the last two decades.

Karen Kingsbury & *Ever After*

Perhaps the more overtly political is Karen Kingsbury. Most famously, in her recent novel *Ever After* (2007) she decided to share her thoughts on the US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is certainly a laudable effort, especially as most Christian romances eschew political issues. However, when Christianity and patriotism become mixed up, the results can be troublesome.

Ever After tells the story of two relationships with half the story focused on Shane Galanter and Lauren Gibbs. He works for the navy training fighter pilots; she is a writer for *TIME*. Twenty years ago they had a child together (Emily) but since then they have been estranged. After Emily grew up she hunted down her parents and brought them back together (that story is told in the prequel, *Even Now*). However, they have a few difficulties left to resolve. Shane is a conservative, Christian, military man who has practically no faults, while Lauren is a liberal anti-war writer who struggles with narrow-mindedness and a shallow faith in God. You can guess who has to change here. . . .

The other relationship involves Emily with perfect military man # 2: Justin Baker.

If you're clever now, you can probably guess what happens. It's when Lauren is in Iraq and sees perfect military man # 2 (that would be Justin) playing with kids that she changes her mind about the justice of the military effort. A little later Justin conveniently dies (yet everything that is convenient for the plot is described with the most sensationalistic relish), and the whole family can gather for the funeral. Lauren and Shane finally truly understand each other (i.e., Lauren has accepted Shane's viewpoint), and after a few years Emily goes out with Justin's buddy Joe. Everyone feels patriotic, and in love, and Christian. The end.

Iraq war the only Christian thing to do?

You can see that this is by no means an innocent romance. Kingsbury rather cleverly applies the conversion narrative to a change, not in faith, but in ideology. It is only because Lauren is born again to the ideals of American military might that she can become a good Christian. We slowly see the light dawning in her mind. We read for instance, "She'd never allowed the possibility that the stories she'd heard from soldiers and commanders might be true, that the U.S. really *was* doing a good thing for the people of Iraq, or that by dismantling terror cells, they really *were* protecting the interests of the United States." Eventually we find out that America's war is on the same level as "Joshua and the battle of Jericho, Moses leading his people from captivity in Egypt, David and Goliath." In the end, there is no longer room for debate about the merits of the war: "The war against Iraq wasn't a battle of wills, wasn't a matter of different opinions. It was the United States stepping up to the plate and taking on a form of evil that threatened to destroy anything in its way."

These are risky arguments, because they imply that Americans who might be opposed to war (for whatever reason) are ultimately not true Christians. It would be interesting to ask Kingsbury whether she still believes in the necessity of troop escalation two years down the road. Would she still hold precisely the same political views, and would she still pass them off as the only truly Christian response?

There is one more implication that should not go unnoticed. It is only when Lauren Gibbs changes her ideological views that she can give up being a full-time career woman and settle down with her husband. This is indeed the ultimate goal of every Christian romance woman. It's a worthy goal, but it can also be an obsessive one, as we'll discover next, in Lori Wick's *Sophie's Heart*.

Lori Wick & *Sophie's Heart*

When I asked around recently what one of Lori Wick's best novels was, I was told repeatedly to read *Sophie's Heart* (1995). It's so good, my female relatives told me – it's such a touching story.

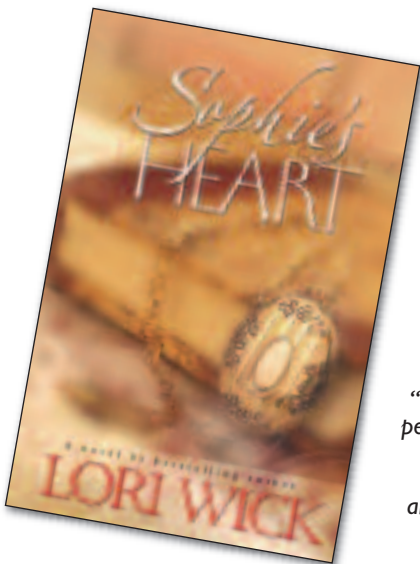
It is interesting that the response I got was generally an emotional one. There is not much academic scholarship on Christian romance novels, but what little there is emphasizes that the primary relationship women have with these novels is on the level of the heart. The readership of these novels in fact consists predominantly of white middle-class Protestant women who use these books in quite a sophisticated way to find inspiration for their daily relationships and walks of faith. Female readers are generally quite aware that these narratives are idealistic and artificial. However, Christian romance offers many positive advantages. It is not only a form of escape; it is also a model of how one might better communicate with others, and how one might overcome obstacles and love more fully (if not perfectly). It teaches a language of emotion, it provides hope and empowerment, and its optimistic endings encourage women to create their own positive life stories.

That's the rose-colored picture. Again, there are problems, and Wick's *Sophie's Heart* perfectly illustrates both what is good and bad about the genre. First of all, Wick's book is much less shallow and superficial than Kingsbury, and there are some very charming passages. It tells the story of Sophie, a woman who comes to America from her native Czechoslovakia (before the Berlin wall came a'tumbling down). She becomes housekeeper for Alec Riley and his three kids after Alec's wife dies (very conveniently of course). Can anyone guess what happens? Of course, Sophie fills the void and eventually marries Alec. Despite the predictability, the story does a good job of illustrating the grief that attends the passing of loved ones, the complicated relationships with the in-laws, and the difficulty of dating with kids.

Education isn't feminine?

And yet, there is something that really bothered me about this book, perhaps even more so than with Kingsbury. It wasn't the fact that every time it got too sappy I had to put the novel away for a few days. It was rather the very subliminal message about how a foreign woman should adapt to American culture.

You see, before Sophie comes to America she was a translator for the government and was fluent in at least four languages. However, all of her talents, and all of her European culture, has to be discarded in favor of American instincts and forms of behavior. Every second chapter she finds herself at the mall, and she gradually has to learn how to dress properly (but not too sexy or she will be vain), how to watch American TV shows like *The Price is Right*, and how to be the perfect housewife. She does the latter job so well that she puts even American women to shame. Late in the book she becomes a bit of a moral authority on the ethics of cleaning bathrooms. She tells the reader that "it is all choices and attitude. I have jobs I must do that are not my favorite. I do not love to clean the bathroom, so I can clean the bathroom with anger or I can be thankful that we have indoor plumbing and clean with peace. I have choice."



"Sophie's Heart perfectly illustrates both what is good and bad about the genre."

Perhaps all of this is inspirational to some, but it is also deeply problematic. At one point, Sophie is trying to learn how prepositions work in English (fairly natural given her linguistic interests). In response, the narrator tells us, "Alec didn't know anyone who was so thirsty for knowledge. He assumed she had spent her whole life with her head in books. Maybe this was why she didn't really see herself as a woman." In other words, education makes women forget how to be feminine. I had to read those lines again to believe it. But in fact this becomes an important theme in the book as Alec tries to "make her feel like the woman she was."

So while *Sophie's Heart* has plenty of positive qualities, it is also narrowly American and patriarchal. This is a book about the domestication of the educated foreign woman. In that sense it is as much a political statement as Kingsbury's *Ever After*. What is missing from both books is a complex understanding of non-American culture. We discover very little about Sophie's home country, her traditions, her language, her ideology. While Sophie keeps her very interesting personality, what we lose is a rich sense of cultural difference.

Critical questions

I hope that at the very least I've been able to show that contemporary Christian romance is never really meaningless escapist literature. Sophie tells us "I have choice" (somehow her broken English hardly improves), and you have a choice too when you read these books. You can ignore the cultural and political implications of their message or you can reflect on them critically. To help you do the latter I would like to end by providing you with some basic questions you might ask next time you read a Christian romance novel. I've tried to phrase them in slightly unusual ways to help you gain a fresh perspective:

1. How obsessed is the main female character about getting married?
2. Could someone resigned to being single for all of his/her life appreciate this book?
3. Do the relationships in this book create realistic expectations about what I might expect in real life?
4. How important is it to me to learn something educational from a book?
5. Are there any ugly people in this book?
6. Does reading about the love of the perfect man function as a substitute for the love of God?
7. Is the author ever guilty of sensationalism?
8. Am I aware when the author is manipulating my emotions?
9. How often do I skim the pages to get to the end? Is this significant?
10. And lastly, would I ever read a novel by the team of Bartholomew L. Winsome and Wisteria Patterson?



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Never tackled more topics

Our joy as a Reformed magazine is to delve into the widest diversity of topics, discovering God's perspective on everything from Atheism, Apologetics and Arminianism to the discovery of Zero, and the wonder of Zoo creatures – A-Z and everything in between. This year we're getting even more ambitious with plans to expand most issues by another 4 pages so we can tackle even more topics. This is our Father's world – let's go explore!

Never been more readable

Over the last year we've added a "News worth noting" column with short takes on relevant news of the past month, we've been featuring more 1 and 2 page articles, we've added more pictures, and we've just generally been working on making the magazine more attractive from the cover onwards. *RP* has always featured articles that *should* be worth reading and we continue working hard to make each article as accessible and attractive as possible, so it'll also be material we all want to read.

Never showcased more Reformed resources

A new addition to the magazine is the column "Best books" which, each issue, showcases three of the very best books on a particular theme. Upcoming editions will feature the best three Christian counseling books, the top three pro-life apologetic books, three of the best introductory books on economics, three great books for people who love *Pride and Prejudice*, and the three best books on Six-Day Creationism.

Never had a greater need

Today it's next to impossible to hide from secular influences – if we use the Internet, watch TV, listen to the radio, or read the paper, we're going to be walloped with a decidedly profane perspective. And our kids are getting hit with a double dose. But if it's impossible to hide from the profane, it is possible to prepare for it by seeking out material that teaches God's perspective on the world. And that, in a nutshell, is what *Reformed Perspective* is all about; for us, for our children, there's never been a more important time to get the gift of *Perspective*.

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We want to impact the world, and what better way is there to do that than through the World Wide Web? That's why ARPA Canada and *Reformed Perspective* are holding the Salt n' Light YouTube Contest. It's sponsored by CV Benefits (see below for more on them) who will be awarding two \$250 grand prizes for the best short video that communicates our Christian worldview to the world. One of the grand prizes will go to the best video as selected by our judges with the other being selected by popular vote on www.ReformedPerspective.ca. There is no cost to enter and **every entrant receives a complimentary 1-year subscription to *Reformed Perspective***. Further rules and details are below.

UPDATE: We are excited to announce that our winner will be shown at the "REAL LIFE Film Festival du cinéma C'EST LA VIE" in Sudbury, Ontario (April 2010). The theme for the 2010 film festival is Life and Justice, which makes it an excellent complement to our Salt n' Light contest. You are invited to attend the festival to check out this winning film along with the other films that they will be showing, in an award-winning lineup of shorts, documentaries and feature films. Find more details about the REAL LIFE Film Festival on their website www.sudburycinema.com.

Rules and Details:

1. Entries will be judged on creativity, technical merit, overall impact (the "wow!" factor) and, of course, their Christian worldview. Entries need not quote Scripture, or be explicitly Christian, but cannot conflict with the Bible, as it is summarized in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.
2. The video clip must be original and produced for this contest.
3. Entries must conform to copyright laws (including the use of music).
4. Maximum length is 6 minutes.
5. 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.
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 January 1st, 2010.** 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 church you are a member of, the video's name, YouTube (or equivalent) web address, and social or political theme.

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The ultimate GPS

Monarch butterflies never have to stop and ask for directions

by Margaret Helder

One of the new pieces of technology that many families buy before they start out on a long road trip is a global positioning system – a GPS. Though the price has now dropped, the complexity of these mapping marvels meant that the early models were very expensive indeed. It is, after all, a simple amazing instrument, designed by some of the most intelligent people on the planet using complex component (also designed) to make the system work.

Of course people can find their way without GPS, especially if they have suitable maps. However there is an amazing example from nature of an insect which unerringly navigates thousands of kilometers to a site where these individuals have never been, using neither maps, nor one of our GPS.

In fact, the feat accomplished by the Monarch butterfly is so astounding scientists still do not completely understand how they achieve it. However the parts of the story we've deciphered so far are amazing enough!

A trip that takes generations!

Spring finds about 100,000,000 Monarch butterflies sunning themselves on huge pine trees in a 150 square kilometer region in the Mexican Sierra Madre mountains. As the days grow longer and warmer, the butterflies which all winter have done little but sit, now start to fly north. Along the way these insects eat newly emerging milkweed plants and they lay eggs. The original adults soon die but the next generation emerges and continues the flight north, eating and reproducing as they go. And the next generation does the same thing. At this time of year, the adults only live about a month!

Months later the butterflies reach their summer range in the north central and eastern parts of the United States and in south central and eastern Canada. During the summer the butterflies fly aimlessly about, eating and reproducing for perhaps another two generations. These insects have no interest in traveling anywhere specific.

Then all of a sudden as the day length declines to only 12 hours of daylight or less, the newly emerging adult butterflies

exhibit a compulsion to fly southwest. They fly about 80 km per day for about two months until they reach the site in Mexico which their remote ancestors left so many months previously. The fall hatched butterflies do not reproduce nor do they die after a month. Rather they sit through the winter, waiting for spring to arrive.

A clock and compass in a brain smaller than a pea

In recent years some interesting details concerning the Monarch's navigation system have emerged.

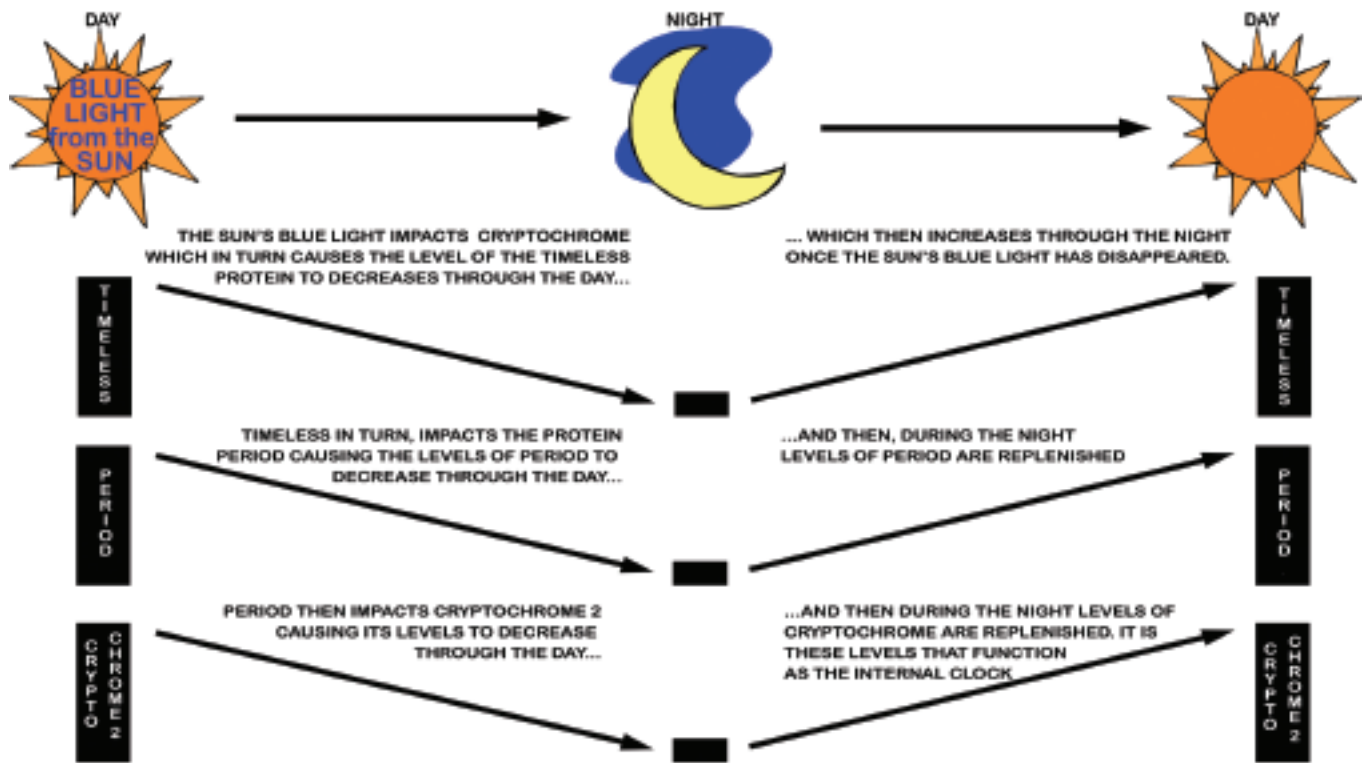
It seems that inside the tiny head of the butterfly is both a clock and a compass, which it uses to plot its migration route. While the clock is intriguing enough, it seems similar to the internal clock that most other organisms seem to possess. So the insights discovered from studies on other organisms' clocks can be compared to the Monarch butterfly so scientists are not starting from scratch. But as far as the butterfly's compass is concerned, scientists are only beginning to decipher things.

Now we all have a biological clock, though most of us probably take it for granted. Just think of how many people wake up at the same time each morning, get hungry and later sleepy at the same time each day? How many people suffer from jet lag when their biological rhythms are out of synchrony in a new time zone? These effects are all produced by a natural internal biological clock.

The inner workings of their clock

Scientists have studied such phenomena for at least fifty years, but only recently have they discovered clues to the way the clock works. Since Monarch butterflies make such obvious use of a biological clock, this is one of the systems which has been studied. The clock makes use of a daily increase and decline in levels of certain proteins in the tiny butterfly brain.

As daylight arrives, blue light from the sun impacts a light receptor called Cryptochrome (meaning hidden pigment). The light changes the shape of the Cryptochrome 1 in the central complex of the brain (four cells). This protein now has an



effect on another protein. It combines with a special protein called Timeless which then begins to decline in amount.

At the same time however, Timeless moves into a relationship with Period (also a protein). Period similarly begins to disintegrate but at the same time it moves into a relationship with Cryptochrome 2.

It is this last protein that has the really important effects. It moves into the nucleus of each of these cells and effectively stops production of the clock proteins which are called Clock/Cycle. As these Clock/Cycle proteins decline in amount through the day, the cell takes note of the passage of time. Cryptochrome 2 however has another extremely important effect. It tells the compass what time it is judging by the amount of Clock/Cycle proteins that are left.

As night falls Cryptochrome 1 stops pushing the Timeless/Period/Cryptochrome 2 process and Cryptochrome 2 then moves out of the nucleus of these brain cells. During the darkness, Clock and Cycle proteins are synthesized, increasing to maximum amounts by daybreak. The Timeless and Period and Cryptochrome 2 proteins are also synthesized at night.

The system goes round and round and it is the arrival of first light in the morning which keeps the clock synchronized with the actual day/night cycle. So scientists have some understanding of this clock part of the butterfly's navigational system. However there are plenty of other unresolved issues like the compass.

Their mysterious compass

Of course to navigate you have to know more than just the time – you have to be able to plot your route. So in addition to a clock, the Monarch has a compass.

The first part of the butterfly's compass is special cells on the upper rim of each eye. These cells are sensitive to ultra violet light. It is the sensing of these invisible rays coming from the sun, which enable the butterfly to calculate its position relative to the position of the sun in the sky. This system works in cloudy weather as well as when the sky is clear because ultraviolet rays can penetrate clouds.

The butterfly then flies consistently southwest, day after day, week after week to its destination 4,000 km away. The butterfly knows where the southwest is, based on the sun's position in the sky. But of course the sun is constantly changing its position, as it moves from east to west across the sky. This is where the biological clock becomes important. It tells the compass what time it is so that the butterfly can constantly adjust its angle of flight compared to the sun's position.

Studies with butterfly flight patterns show that the butterflies fly obliquely away from the sun (SW) in the morning when the sun is in the east, and obliquely toward the sun (SW) in the afternoon when the sun is in the west. If the butterfly's schedule is artificially manipulated so that it thinks 7 a.m. is actually 1 p.m., then the butterfly flies SE (towards the sun) instead of away from it as it should do in the morning.

It is evident that the butterfly's navigation system of clock and compass is like two gears moving in opposite directions against each other. A new study released in September 2009 however suggests that the biological clock, which interacts with the compass, is actually located in the butterfly antennae. So the insect must have two clocks!

Two very different types of Monarch

The abrupt change in behavior of the fall butterflies compared to the summer specimens, has long intrigued scientists. In its life cycle, the Monarch adult is preceded by the egg, caterpillar and chrysalis stages. It is the length of the day when an adult emerges from the chrysalis which determines how the butterfly will act. If the days are longer than 12 hours and the nights are shorter (summer), then the adults eat, fly about and reproduce. If the day is 12 hours or shorter (fall) when the adult emerges, then the butterfly turns its flight to the southwest. Moreover these adults do not mature sexually. It is obvious that the chrysalis is able to measure the length of the day. Also the new adult emerges from the chrysalis just at daybreak. As far as the butterfly is concerned, that is 7 a.m. and it accordingly plots its route compared to the sun's position starting at 7 a.m.

Recent studies on butterfly physiology have shown some significant differences between summer hatched and fall hatched adults. Apparently there are 40 proteins which show differences in amounts synthesized between the two seasons. There are 14 proteins which show higher levels of expression in the fall, and there are 15 proteins which are produced only in the fall. Twenty six proteins alternatively show higher levels of expression in the summer. These are all presumably connected with differences in physiological processes between the two groups. In addition there are 23 proteins connected to sexual maturity which are expressed mainly in summer. However even if the butterflies are so manipulated that they mature sexually in the fall, this does not prevent them compulsively flying towards Mexico.¹

Another topic that interests biologists about these insects, is the degree to which the navigational system is unique. The short answer is extremely unusual! A recent news item in *Medical News Today*² declared that scientists were "stunned and elated" to discover how unusual the Monarch butterfly biological clock is.

Previous studies on the fruit fly and mouse had led scientists to suspect that the Monarch's system would resemble that of the fruitfly (another insect). What they found however was a "novel molecular mechanism heretofore not found in any other insect or mammal." It appears that the Monarch uses a key Cryptochrome (2) protein that is much like the one described for the mouse biological clock. The honey bee and the confused flour beetle also use a similar molecule to the mouse protein. The Monarch however mix and matches things by also using Cryptochrome 1, similar to that found in fruitflies. The fact that the Monarch butterfly uses two such Cryptochromes means that it uses them in different ways from the other organisms. As the authors of the study report: "The expression of two functionally distinct crys [Cryptochromes] in monarchs suggests that the butterfly clock may use a novel clockwork mechanism that is not yet fully described in any organism."³ In addition, another clock protein (Period) also has a different function than in the fruitfly biological clock.⁴



Conclusion

Thus the Monarch biological clock seems to be highly unusual or unique among insects and all studied organisms. Scientists who might try to find evolutionary sources for this system will have a difficult time. Not only is the system highly complex but it is also very different from anything similar organisms have been found to possess. There are some proteins which other organisms also possess, but they do different things. This is no small matter. Elaborate controls are utilized by the cell in order to produce a protein for one use and not for another. It is not just the one protein which is different but a substantial collection of other molecules which control how that protein works in the cell. The situation reminds us of a designer with a kit of possible components which He puts to different uses in different organisms. The situation definitely does not sound like descent with change. Indeed elaborate and unique systems suggest that they were designed for the specific purpose for which they work.

And of course biologists have not even begun to figure out how the even more unique compass works. No doubt the uniquely designed status of the Monarch will become even more apparent as the workings of the compass are uncovered.

As we look about us at even small organisms in nature like the Monarch butterfly, let us reflect on the exquisite design of these delightful organisms. Then let us ascribe praise to God, the Creator of all things.

Footnotes

¹ See Haisun Zhu et al. Defining behavioral and molecular differences between summer and migratory monarch butterflies. *BioMed Central Biology* 2009, 7:14.

² January 9/08

³ Haisun Zhu et al. *PLoS Biology* 6 (1): p 3 of 30.

⁴ Pg 17.



Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way will fall into his own pit,

BUT THE BLAMELESS

will have a goodly inheritance.

Proverbs 28:10

by Christine Farenhorst

Part 1

Chapter 1 – Impatient grave

She wore a beret. It was no ordinary beret but one coquettishly adorned with a rose-colored feather on the left and layered with small, fine pearls along the edge. Walking around to the side of the bed, she held out her hand to him and he stretched out his own to encompass her slim white fingers. But then pain racked his body and he winced, shutting his eyes, and when he opened them again she had vanished. A moment later he was uncertain whether or not she had actually been there.

“Renata?”

The whisper was hoarse and barely discernible. How long had he been in bed?

His voice did not carry beyond the sheets covering his aching, weary body. Where was his manservant? He tried to recall why he was in bed – why he was so sore and so very tired. A bell tolled. Was it Sunday? There were steps outside in the street below. He could hear them clearly now. The steps were mingled with wailing and weeping. And then he remembered. The plague had come to the city. It had entered Ellenberg in the year of our Lord 1527 and it had visited his house.

He closed his eyes and remembered more. Many of the German noble houses in Ellenberg had been devastated and his was one of the few which had remained untouched. He had forbidden Renata, the children and the servants to leave the premises. Things were wretched outside. But they had been wretched for several months and he had been quite sure that the plague was finally abating; he had been thoroughly convinced that his household had been spared due to his forethought. He had taken many precautions. Locking up the doors and lower windows of his house had been one of them, although the horrible smoke of the plague powder, burnt in many places, could be smelled right through the walls. Sustenance for which he paid dearly, had only been brought in through baskets let down by long ropes from the upper windows. He recalled drawing up bread and beer; he could feel the tension on the cord as he reached out for the baskets. Had it been yesterday that he had last done so? Painfully his memory brought to mind how he had called out to the children that it was mealtime and he clearly

saw himself carrying that last full basket to the drawing room only to find Renata stretched out on the floor. He had dropped the basket and knelt down.

“Renata?”

She had only been able to whisper in reply. It was an apology. “I was very careful, Sebastian. I did everything you said. We received no one. I did not go out. But. . . .”

Her voice died down. There was death in her face. He had lifted her up and had carried her to a couch.

“Hush. I will send for a doctor.”

But even as he spoke, he had known that it would be next to impossible to find either a doctor or an apothecary. Many had left the city, and of the ones still available few were willing to risk their lives by coming into contact with plague victims.

“The children. . . .”

Next to death there was fear in her face and she had tried to say more but could not. He had patted her hand and had noted with great unease her pallor and the drops of sweat which stood out on her forehead. And yet only a few short hours before she had seemingly been well.

“I will go and check the children.”

Stopping by the kitchen to call Trude, one of the maids, to attend to Renata, he had found the girl in the process of packing her possessions into a bundle.

“I’ll not be staying.”

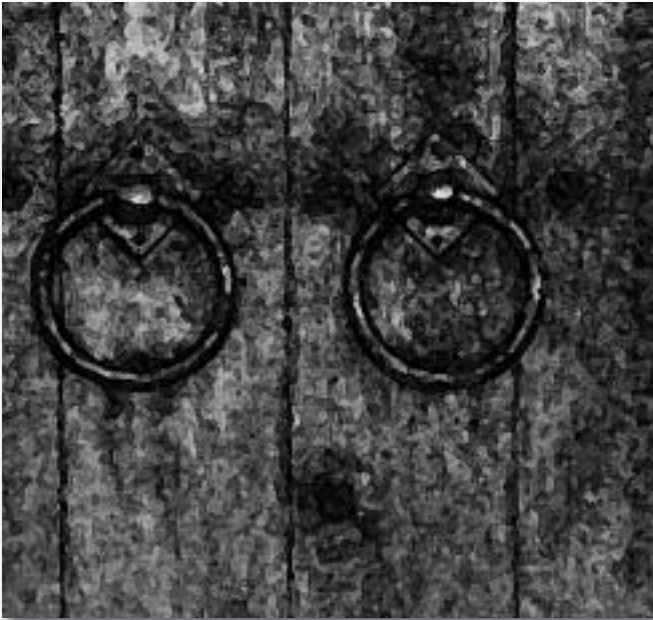
“You knew the mistress was unwell and did not call me?”

“The children also. . . .”

She did not finish, but her hands trembled visibly. Nodding a farewell, and not bothering to tie her bundle securely, she had half-run towards the outside kitchen door. Unlocking it, she had glanced back at him over her shoulder.

“Goodbye, sir. I’m only following Johann, Sophia and Hendrick who left half an hour ago.”

Then she was gone from his home – over the threshold and out into the street. The rest of the staff had left half an hour ago? What had he been doing that he had so missed the events of the day. Reading in his study? He had followed Trude over to the door, fully intending to lock it behind the girl. But he had opened it instead and had stared after her. Then he had called out loudly to the retreating figure as she sped over the



Closed doors had not kept the plague out.

cobblestones: “See if you can find and send a doctor, Trude. Or,” he had added quietly to himself, “anyone.”

It had been late afternoon when Trude left. With a sigh he had closed the kitchen door and locked it fast again. Although what for? The plague had come in and it had come in through the locked doors. Suddenly in a panic, remembering Trude’s words, and he had run up to check the children’s bedroom. But death is no respecter of persons. There is equality of all in the fact and face of death – equality for mothers, children, and babies. He had gagged at the door of the nursery. For he had been able to tell at a glance that they were gone – that both his children were gone. Four-year-old Sebastian was stretched out in his crib with his arms above his round head, eyes wide open, staring at nothing. And two-year-old Amelia was curled up next to him. Slowly, foot over foot, he had come closer. Gently he had closed Sebastian’s eyes, had fondled Amelia’s hand. They were cold, his children. He had woodenly picked up a blanket and covered them. But what for? Soon the grave-bearers would come calling. They threw sand against his windows each evening and each evening he opened the casement and called out that all was well, that they need not bother, for all inside his home were still alive and well. But he had not been able to call out that all was well that evening.

Later, he had followed the corpse-bearers, those who pushed the carts with the dead bodies in them, to the cemetery. They had cautioned him to stay at home but he could not. Like a magnet he had followed the men from a distance, and like a magnet his eyes could not pull away from the swaying bodies heaped atop one another in the carts. Then, a mile outside the city gates, they had reached the cemetery. Actually it was not really a cemetery; it was simply a trench dug out of necessity. There were not enough gravediggers to dig individual graves for the innumerable corpses, corpses like those of his Renata, his Sebastian and his Amelia. The trench, which was really a circular hole, held a lot of

bodies and they were all piled on top of one another. Leaning against a tree, he had watched from a short distance. Shovelful after shovelful of dirt were heaped on top of the dead – on his wife and on his children. There had been nothing he could do to prevent it. He had recalled a gravestone epithet he had once read when he had visited Nuremberg in the south. *“Fourteen hundred and thirty seven,” the gravestone year had read. And underneath the year, “Was that not sad and painful to relate, I died with thirteen of my house on the same date?”*

After weeping for hours there, he had fallen asleep on the cold earth. In the early morning hours he had plodded home again through the shadow streets, feeling like a shadow himself. Once home, he had begun to feel ill and presuming it to be the plague, had rifled through the closets for the death cloths he and Renata had always kept ready. Many people kept linen burial cloths in readiness for death. It was the cloth you were sewn into before being interred. He had not sewn his Renata, or his children into these cloths and felt ashamed that he had not. But an unearthly weariness had taken hold of him those awful hours. And yet he had gotten a death cloth for himself. It lay now, at the foot of his bed, and he beheld its whiteness outlined against the backdrop of the wooden bed boards.

Had this all happened yesterday? – or had it happened the day before? He could not recall. How long had he lain in bed? How long had he slept? His eyes closed again and he dozed. He dozed and dreamt that he was extremely thirsty. Consequently, he cried aloud for water: “Give me just a drop of water! Please! One drop, please!”

But no one offered him any water. And yet, for one moment he became strangely aware of some movement by the door. He vaguely saw someone outlined against the open bedroom doorway holding what seemed to be a long pole. Sebastian strained against the bed sheets, trying to lift his head to ascertain what or whom it was. He was very hot and remained extremely thirsty. He groaned out loud, raised his right hand and whispered. “Please, please help me. I am so thirsty.”

The whisper barely left the bed and he could not tell whether it reached the figure at the door. But the pole moved. It moved across the room and became suspended over the bed. He could see it clearly now. A ferule, a long-handled spoon, was attached at its end. As he looked up at it, Sebastian saw that the host, the sacrament of the church, lay within the confines of the spoon. He was vaguely discomfited by its presence. In the first place, his mind grasped the fact that someone thought he was about to die; and in the second place, he did not want the proffered bread but desired water. More than anything else he wanted something to wet his lips, to soothe his dry throat.

“Water.”

The whisper was even fainter this time. The spoon touched his cheek and moved towards his mouth. Sebastian’s right hand, in a motion of weak, forlorn anger, pushed it away. There was a gasp from the doorway.

“He has touched the host.”

Sebastian instantly recognized the voice. It was that of his stepbrother, Gunther. He had not seen Gunther for over a year. There had been anger over the inheritance that his father had left them. He, the eldest, had been given the house in Ellenberg and some of the rentable property outside the city, whereas Gunther had been given a sizable sum of money which he had, so rumor had it, quickly squandered in riotous living. What was Gunther doing here, in his house, at this time? Sebastian's head hurt and he closed his eyes. And then everything became dark, dark as the sky without a moon and stars, dark as life without Renata and the children.

When Sebastian next opened his eyes, it was light outside. Indeed, it was so bright that his eyes refused to stay open. And a stench, a terrible stench, surrounded his being. Like pungent smelling salts, it refused to let him sleep any longer. He was lying flat on his back and became aware that something was stretched out across his legs. It was heavy. Where was he? He moved his arms and tried to sit up. But it seemed that his arms as well were hampered by weight. And why was it that the ceiling of his bedroom had a hole in it through which with flickering eyelids he could see the sky. Where was he? Turning his head, he became aware that he was lying next to a corpse – a dead man whose body was spilled halfway across his own. Horror overwhelmed him and he screamed. Impelled by a force he did not know he possessed, he flung the dead man's weight off and sat up.



“Sebastian strained against the bed sheets, trying to lift his head to ascertain what or whom it was.”

“Impatient grave-diggers,” he yelled hoarsely, “and impatient grave! I do not yet come! No, I do not yet come!”

Pulling himself out of the tangle of dirt and arms and legs which seemed to be everywhere, he crawled. He crawled over scores of corpses – over patricians, peasants, bakers, tailors, maids, servants, priests and beggars. Lurid death greeted him at every motion of his crawling arms and legs, but he did not stop to speak back. He moved as quickly as he could. The flaccid, stinking bodies beneath him, many upon whom rigor mortis had already set in, did not deter him, could not stop him, and he reached the perimeter of the death circle in a few minutes time. Without glancing back, he kept crawling, kept crawling until he collapsed.

Sebastian slept. Or perhaps, as he later reflected, he lost consciousness. Partially aware before he hit the ground that he had reached the edge of a clump of trees, darkness engulfed him.

Chapter 2 – Revived and replaced

It was the smell of roasting meat and the sound of a crackling fire that awoke him. He savored the smell and did not open his eyes. Perhaps it was a dream and he wanted it to last. Then he heard someone singing. It was a very soft singing and he could barely make out the words.

*Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,
Ein gute Wehr und Waffen;*

Turning his head ever so slightly in the direction of the sound, he opened his eyes and saw a young lad of perhaps seventeen or eighteen summers, turning what looked to be a rabbit on a spit atop a healthy fire. He studied the boy for a while. He was dressed simply in a doublet of brown cloth with sleeves, and a jerkin of the same color ovetop. Dark hose was fastened by points to the doublet. All in all, it was a modest attire, so surely the boy was not wealthy. But certainly he was of a cheerful disposition. He looked kindly and alternately hummed and sang as he turned the animal round and round on the fire.

*Mit unsrer Macht is nichts getan,
Wir sind gar bald verloren;
Es steit' für uns der rechte Mann,
Den Gott hat selbst erkoren.*

Sebastian's right leg suddenly cramped and he moaned. The boy turned his head and smiled.

“So you are awake?”

He was at Sebastian's side in an instant, kneeling and looking earnestly at him. Sebastian said nothing, but only stared at the boy who loosened a flask attached to the upper rim of his waist-belt.

“I think you might be thirsty.”

And then, with the utmost care, the boy put an arm under Sebastian's head, eased it up and put the mouth of the flask to his lips. Sebastian drank slowly and it seemed to him that he

had never before tasted anything so sweet as the draught of water which the boy was now giving him to drink.

"Thank you."

The words came haltingly and Sebastian was amazed at the sound of his own voice. Then remorse shook him. Here was a boy, a boy on the verge of manhood, who was risking his life to help him.

"I've got the plague," he said, "and you will surely also die of infection if you don't leave me be. You best needs be on your way and leave me here."

"I think not," the boy replied cheerfully, "I've seen lots of people die of the plague and you've none of the symptoms. No boils, no smell, no dementia – no, I think you've had a bout of fever and bad luck perhaps. At any rate, I'm sure that in a few days you'll be feeling much better."

"Not the plague?"

"That's right," the boy said, "and how do you feel about chewing on a bit of rabbit?"

"What is your name?"

"Reinhardt Zolder. And what is yours?"

"Sebastian Eiser."

"Well, Sebastian, I am happy to make your acquaintance."

"How did you find me?"

The boy had turned back to the fire and became engaged in taking the rabbit off the spit. He glanced over his shoulder at the older man and laughed.

"It was not difficult. My horse, Old Swift, who is as good a horse as you'll ever see, almost stumbled right across you as you lay on the path we were following to Magdeburg."

"Why did you not leave me there to die?"

The look of surprise on the boy's face was obvious.

"Leave you to die? Why should I do that? I should hope that had I been in your place that someone would have helped me."

Sebastian pondered the words as he watched the boy put the rabbit on a bed of leaves before cutting it to pieces with a knife which he also took from his waist-belt.

"My wife and children died of the plague," he presently said softly, more to himself than to Reinhardt.

He suddenly lost his ravenous appetite as graphic images of the home he had tried to build in Ellenburg for Renata and the children came to his mind – an empty home now – in which he had only lived for about a half a year. He remembered his brother's sudden appearing at his bedside and wondered if Gunther had been responsible for having the gravediggers carry him to the death trenches. Gunther certainly stood to inherit much. There were no other near relatives on father's side. But what did it matter anyway? The solitude of the years to come brought nausea to his stomach and when Reinhardt brought some succulent bits of the rabbit over and sat down next to him to feed him, he turned his face away.

"Try one mouthful, Sebastian," the boy urged, "just one bite."

And because the lad had been so kind and had risked his life to take care of him, Sebastian turned his head and obedi-

ently opened his mouth as if he were a child. The brown meat was tender and moist, and in spite of himself Sebastian enjoyed the morsel.

"One more bite," the boy coaxed.

And he opened his mouth again. And so it was that Reinhardt nursed Sebastian back to health.

* * * * *

Ellenberg was a well-governed city. It had more than two hundred and fifty streets which were cobbled and which were always kept clean. Dung hills were not allowed on these streets themselves, but was permitted in certain corners. Neither was anyone allowed to throw any urine or other unclean material onto the street before ten of the clock at night. If this law was disobeyed, a fine of some 20 gulden besides possible imprisonment, was exacted. There were also rules about keeping pigs in one's backyard, and that was just until the animals were a half year old. The city was governed by a prudent Counsel of gentility and because Sebastian had only resided there for less than half a year, he was not yet acquainted with many of these men. But on the whole, he found it a very civil place to live. And he had been approved for citizenship by two members of the Counsel.

Sebastian slept much under the trees. His fever ebbed and waned and left him weak as a kitten. He pondered his situation as he was slowly regaining his strength. If indeed, Gunther had seen to it that he had been carted down to the cemetery just outside the city gates, then Gunther would now be settling into his house and establishing ownership. He would not look kindly at his, Sebastian's, return.

Sometimes Sebastian had no wish to return. At other times waves of anger overcame him at the murderous avarice of his half-sibling. At length, some ten days after being found by Reinhardt, he persuaded the youth to go for a reconnaissance visit to Ellenberg. Instructing him carefully as to where his house was located, he bade the boy to knock at the door and to ask for Sebastian Eiser. If asked why, he was to answer that he had been offered, via a letter from Meister Eyk, a man whom Sebastian knew in Brunswick and from which place Reinhardt hailed, a post with the Eisers as servant.

"It is an untruth, you know," Reinhardt said initially.

"Yes, but it is to uncover truth," Sebastian answered.

The boy shrugged, agreed to go, walked over to his horse and mounted. The last Sebastian heard was the boy singing loudly as he rode his mare down the path to Ellenberg.

*"Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel Wär
Und wollt' uns gar verschlingen,
So fürchten wir uns nicht so sehr,
Es soll uns doch gelingen."*

Reinhardt was of the new faith, as indeed many of the people in Ellenberg seemed to be. Sebastian did not think of himself as either Catholic or Protestant. Renata had leaned towards the new faith, and he had not hindered her.

It was quiet within the gates of Ellenberg but the worst of the epidemic was now over. Very few cases of plague had been reported the last week. Cautiously folks, the ones who had been left in the land of the living, were venturing back out onto the streets, and cautiously shutters were opened to let in a little sunlight. Reinhardt, who had been instructed well by Sebastian, had no trouble locating the Eiser residence in the Bonnard Straet. Tethering his horse to a post in front of the home, he climbed the stone steps and raised his hand to ring the great bronze bell that hung at the side. The ensuing noise startled him. The clanging seemed incongruous with the pervading silence of the streets.

The sound had barely died down when the door opened and a man stared him in the face. "Yes?"

"I have come," Reinhardt said, smiling at the man, "to speak with Sebastian Eiser."

"Sebastian Eiser?"

"Yes, is this not his residence?"

"Sebastian Eiser died of the plague some two weeks ago."

The man scrutinized him carefully as he spoke.

"He died?" Reinhardt repeated.

"Yes, I am his brother and know of a certainty that he died. If you had aught to say to my brother, you can also say it to me."

"Are you sure he died?" Reinhardt asked again.

"Yes, I am sure. I saw his body placed on the burial cart myself. Now what is it you wanted with him?"

It was clear that the brother was curious as to his business and Reinhardt, who had a sense of adventure as well as of truth, decided to play that curiosity in his favor.

"I have a letter," he spoke falteringly, "but was told only to put it into Sebastian Eiser's hands. It is from some of his mother's kinfolk in Brunswick who desire to name him as beneficiary in their will."

He stopped. The brother licked his lips. "Kinfolk?" he said, and added in his low and rather hoarse voice, "Will?"

"Yes," Reinhard continued, "but, of course, if you are a relative, a brother, you say, then I could perhaps. . ."

He stopped again.

"Yes, of course you could," Gunther interrupted, stretching out a thin, bony hand, "Give it me, boy. Give me the letter."

"No," Reinhardt answered, stepping back on the stone platform in front of the door, "I could not in good conscience give you this letter unless. . ."

"Unless what?"

"Well, unless you showed me proof positive that you were indeed his brother. Perhaps someone in the town Counsel could vouch for you."

"You simpleton," Gunther retorted, "See you not that I answered the door of this residence? How think you I can live here were it not for the fact that I am Sebastian's brother. Come! Give me the letter."



He opened a cupboard and took out three cups.

He placed a black foot over the threshold towards the outside and came closer to Reinhardt. But Reinhardt now backed down the steps.

"I will be back tomorrow," he said, "and if you can obtain proof positive that you are Sebastian Eiser's brother, I will hand you the letter."

Having said that, he hastily walked over to Old Swift, untied him, jumped onto his back and rode off.

Chapter 3 – A generous host

"You are dead, friend," he told Sebastian who was sitting, back against an oak, in the noon sunlight, "as dead as a leaf blown off a tree in autumn."

"Am I?" Sebastian answered with a smile, "Well, we shall see about that."

"What shall you do?"

"Well, tomorrow I will ride into Ellenberg with you and confront Gunther. If two members of Counsel are indeed with him, they will confirm that I am Sebastian and that he is not legally permitted to live in my house without permission."

"Why did you simply not come with me today? Why did you not confront him directly?"

"Because, my dear young friend, don't you see? It is obvious that Gunther wants me dead. Otherwise, why would he have placed me on the death cart? Neither would he have confessed to being there when I was placed on the death cart. He had a hand in my so-called 'death'. He tried to get rid of me by unsavory means and I think he would not hesitate to do so again. He was ever a spoiled and willful child."

Reinhardt was silent for several moments before replying.

"Should you not give him a chance? I grant you he did not make a good impression on me, but perhaps he really did think you were dead. Perhaps he had no hand in. . ."

“You are young, my friend, and very naive. And I will not hesitate to report him to the Ellenberg Counsel as a liar and a cheat and a would-be murderer.”

“I just think,” Reinhardt tried again, “that you. . . .”

But again he was interrupted.

“No, my friend. I know you mean well, but in this instance you are wrong. I owe you my life and would listen to you on a number of topics, but on this one. No!!”

While he was speaking, Sebastian suddenly stood up. He was shaking, not only with the emotions he had undergone the last two weeks, but also with the exerting of his body. The exercise caused his still weak legs to buckle under him and he was forced to hang onto the trunk of the tree under which he had been recuperating.

“You are not well yet.” Reinhardt spoke softly and solicitously. Sebastian nodded and sat down again, leaning wearily against the bark.

“One more night’s good sleep and one more good meal prepared by your hand, shall see me a great deal closer to being well.”

Cheeks flushed, he breathed heavily, closing his eyes in the process. After watching him for a lengthy while, and making sure that he had fallen asleep, Reinhardt walked over to his horse and sprang back into the saddle. It might well be possible to visit Ellenberg and be back before dark; back perhaps before Sebastian would wake.

For the second time that day, Reinhardt stood in front of Sebastian’s home and rang the great bronze bell. And for the second time that day, the door was opened. But this time it was not Gunther who faced Reinhardt but a stocky fellow, not a burgher, but a peasant judging by his attire.

“I’ve come to see Gunther Eiser.”

“What about?”

“That I will tell him when he comes to the door.”

There was a commotion in the hall behind the peasant. The man shrugged his broad shoulders.

“You will have your wish. Here he is.”

He moved aside and Reinhardt looked into the heavily lidded eyes of Sebastian’s brother once again.

“Why are you back? Did you change your mind and have you decided to give me the letter today after all?”

He smiled ingratiatingly and went on. “A wise decision, by all means, and one that will be rewarded.”

In spite of all his goodwill, Reinhardt felt a trickle of revulsion run through him. The man had something about him, something shady. Nevertheless, that did not mean he had committed murder and perhaps, upon learning that Sebastian was still living, he would be overjoyed.

“I have come back,” he began, “to tell you. . . .”

“Wait,” Gunther smiled, revealing broken teeth.

Extending a hand to Reinhardt, he continued, “Wait before you continue and step inside. You must indeed be tired and I am a bad host not to have offered you, as I ought to have done when you last came here, a draught of ale.”

Uncertainly Reinhardt took the extended hand and stepped inside over the threshold. The other man stood back in the hall way and then disappeared into the shadows of an alcove. “Just walk on, friend,” Gunther’s low, gravelly voice spoke up behind Reinhardt, “just walk on and turn to the right. We’ll sit in the kitchen, if that is to your liking, for that is where the ale is kept and that is where it is most comfortable.”

Reinhardt turned as directed and entered a large room. A great wooden table stood in the middle of the room, and two high-backed chairs straddled the long ends. Gunther sat in one of these and gestured that Reinhardt should sit in the other. He did so and the peasant who had softly walked in behind them, placed a flagon in front of Gunther. Then he opened a cupboard and took out three cups. He did not speak, but he did give Reinhardt a curious look, weighing him almost, before pouring out what seemed to be a wine, into all three of the cups. He placed one in front of Reinhardt and another in front of Gunther. The third he appropriated for himself and stood back, looking expectantly at Gunther.

“Drink up, my friend,” Gunther said as he lifted his cup, “Here’s to friendship and to health.”

“To health,” Reinhardt answered as he lifted up his cup, bringing it to his lips.

The ale was sweet, and he had been thirsty. But there was a bitter aftertaste to the drink. “Now then,” Gunther spoke as he leaned back in his chair, “what is it that you have come to tell me?”

“I have come to tell you,” Reinhardt spoke, “that Sebastian, your brother, is not dead as you suppose. He is alive and well and”

He stopped, staring at Gunther. The man had turned pale and had gotten up from his chair.

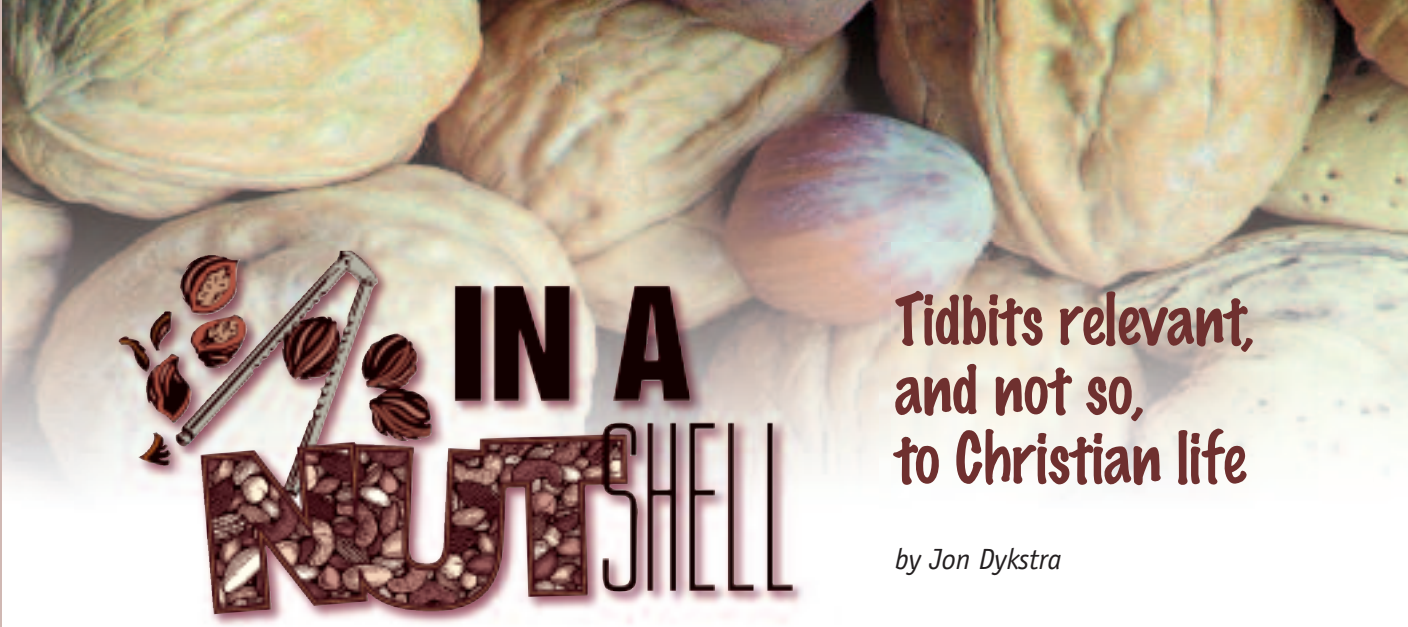
“What is it that you are saying?” he demanded as he began to stride around the table, “What lies are you spreading?”

“No lies,” Reinhardt responded, rising as well, but feeling a little unsteady as he repeated, “No lies.”

He thought it passing strange that the floor seemed to be sliding away from under his feet and that the ceiling seemed to be falling down straight on top of him. And then everything disappeared.

. . . to be concluded next issue. 

**Do your friends need some good
Reformed reading material?
Give the gift of *Perspective!***



IN A NUTSHELL

Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

.....

Spurgeon on the need for earnest preaching

“It is an ill case when the preacher:
Leaves his hearers perplex’d –
Twixt the two to determine:
‘Watch and pray, says the text,
‘Go to sleep,’ says the sermon.”

“You may depend upon it that you may make men understand the truth if you really want to do so; but if you are not in earnest, it is not likely that they will be. If a man were to knock on my door in the middle of the night, and when I put my head out of the window to see what was the matter, he should say, in a very quiet, unconcerned way, ‘There is a fire at the back part of your house,’ I should have very little thought of any fire, and should feel inclined to empty a jug of water over him.”

SOURCES: C.H. Spurgeon’s *Lectures to my Students* and *The Soul Winner*

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Lytic o’ the month

Addison Road’s *What do I know of Holy?*

I made You promises a thousand times
I tried to hear from Heaven
But I talked the whole time
I think I made You too small
I never feared You at all, No
If You touched my face would I know
You?
Looked into my eyes could I behold You?
I guess I thought that I had figured You
out
I knew all the stories and I learned to
talk about
How You were mighty to save
Those were only empty words on a page
Then I caught a glimpse of who You
might be

The slightest hint of You brought me
down to my knees

What do I know of You
Who spoke me into motion?
Where have I even stood
But the shore along Your ocean?
Are You fire? Are You fury?
Are You sacred? Are You beautiful?
What do I know? What do I know of
Holy?

What do I know of Holy?
What do I know of wounds that will heal
my shame?
And a God who gave life “its” name?
What do I know of Holy?
Of the One who the angels praise?
All creation knows Your name
On earth and heaven above
What do I know of this love?

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Fun with the ungodly

If Eddie Eddings’ name sounds a bit familiar, it is because some of his “Calvinist Cartoons” have graced the pages of *Reformed Perspective*. But his humor isn’t limited to cartoons. In a recent blog post on his site he noted how fun can be had even as we are pricking someone’s conscience:

“If you ever drive by one of those ‘Gentlemen’s Clubs’ or an X-rated video store in your city, and you see some guy making his way to or from the front door. . . honk your horn like crazy until you get his attention, then wave to him like he is your long lost friend! They will think someone they know spotted them in a place they shouldn’t be. It’s the ‘deer caught in the headlights’ technique that works extremely well with the backslidden. This will probably keep them nervous

and uneasy for three or four weeks. . . depending on their level of depravity and how much they have applied a hot iron to their conscience.”

SOURCE: <http://calvinistcartoons.blogspot.com>

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Burke’s best

At one time or another you’ve probably run across Edmund Burke’s most famous saying: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” It’s a great quote, but one that is too easy to dismiss as something others should hear – maybe good men need to get busy, but what can little ol’ me do?

Well, Burke had a response to this sort of thinking too: “No one could make a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.”

.....

Different sort of dictionary A-F

- Aibohphobia: Fear of palindromes
- Committee: A body that keeps minutes and wastes hours.
- Courage: The fear of being thought a coward. – Horace Smith.
- Dictionary: The only place where divorce comes before marriage, and success comes before work
- Esoteric: A word known only by esoteric people.
- Egotist: Someone me-deep in conversation.
- Experience: The name people give to their mistakes.
- Flashlight: A case for holding dead batteries.

SOURCE: Compiled from multiple emails circulating the Internet





Soup & Buns

Knit together in love

by Sharon L. Bratcher

If you knit, you've had a lot of time to think – the fingers fly free while the mind dwells on deeper matters. Perhaps you have thought at times about the verse in Colossians 2:2 where the Apostle Paul writes “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love” (NKJV). “Knitting” is a wonderful analogy for our Christian community.

Three strands is not quickly broken

You start with one ball of yarn. This yarn is wound in “stitches” around a long needle numerous times. A second needle is then used along with the index finger to bring up more yarn and connect it to the first set of stitches.

Believers in Christ are all “one” in Christ, and are not expected to be alone. Instead, they must work together to build something that could not be done with one alone.

One strand of yarn can be fairly strong. It's not likely to break just from a small amount of pulling. But increased stress will snap it pretty quickly. On the other hand, once the strands have been knitted together, they are much stronger and harder to break.

So it is with the church. Each of us has a storehouse of strength from the Lord that we can draw upon. But when the difficulties and tragedies of life pull on us, we are strengthened by those who have wrapped their prayers and their love around us.

Growing together

It takes a long time to knit a blanket. Even the best crafters cannot sit down in an hour or two and whip out something that has thousands of twists and turns in it. It takes time. The crafter must be dedicated to finishing the project.

Unfortunately, some people think that they ought to be able to come to a church and immediately experience this knit-together feeling. Of course, we find instant fellowship with other Christians in congregations, even in foreign countries. It's a joy to speak of our Lord and His works together when we recognize one another. But this would be similar to the beginning of the blanket, where you are a part of it, but it hasn't reached its full potential yet. It takes time to be knit together in love: time spent together in each others' presence. Members must interact with one another in order to be “knit.”

Bearing with one another

The crafter moves her hands and needles here and there, back and forth, directing the yarn. The yarn yields itself to being designed and fashioned. Occasionally it gets caught on something and balks at cooperating. Often there are mistakes. Sometimes the whole row goes wrong and has to be unraveled, adjusted and re-done.

Just so, our Creator and Savior directs our lives, desiring us to be used to His glory in His church. We go through a lot together with other church members. All this give-and-take with others gets tedious after awhile, and at times we purposely grab hold of anything that comes near us, preventing ourselves from doing what we really ought to do. We sin and have to repent and renew relationships. Thankfully, our loving Lord is more than willing to re-build and bless.

Grafted in

At times new yarn is grafted in or knotted on. All together, ready and able, so now something beautiful and strong can be created. Looking at the finished product, an admirer would not be able to see where one yarn ends and the other begins because they are now so interconnected. They are one blanket, and the crafter can say: “Look at what has been accomplished!”

And once we are “knit together in love” we will be encouraged. We will be strong with the support of others, less likely to fall for the philosophies of the world (as Col 2:4 mentions.) We will be *one*, with each “*being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, [letting] nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind [letting] each esteem others better than himself. . . [looking] out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*” (Philippians 2:2-4).

Together we will experience the “treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in the Father and in Christ” (Col 2:3). Together, we will be stronger and more useful for Him. For “by this all will know that [we] are His disciples, if [we] have love for one another” (John 13:35).

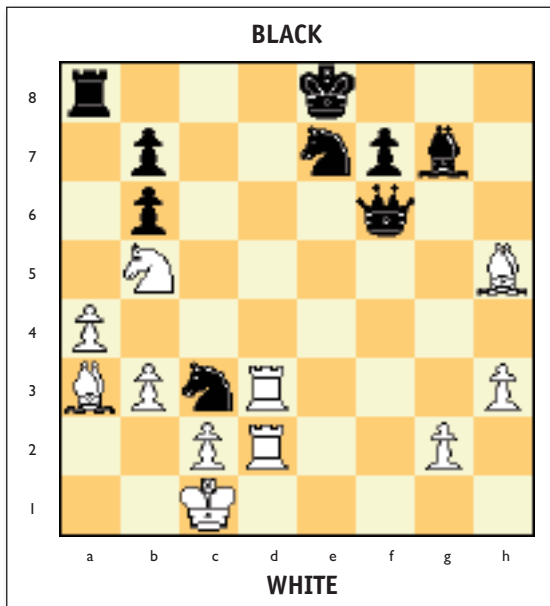
To purchase Sharon's new book *Soup and Buns*
(a collection of her columns and articles)
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Just in time for Christmas!



ENTICING ENIGMAS AND CEREBRAL CHALLENGES

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

Chess Puzzle # 160



WHITE to Mate in 3

(2 Solutions: Same moves, different order)

Or, If it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 2**
(2 Solutions)

NEW PUZZLES

Riddles for Punsters #160

What do you call a truck into which materials are dumped to be hauled away? It is a d_ _ _ truck.

What do you call a truck in which the roots and bases of cut down trees are placed to be taken away? It is a st_ _ _ truck.

What do you call a truck in which grouchy people are placed to be moved around? It is a g_ _ _ _ truck.

What do you call a truck which transports devices for pushing liquids through tubes? It is a _ _ _ _ truck.

Problem to Ponder #160 – "Skill-testing Questions"

Use BEDMAS to answer the following "Skill-testing Questions". BEDMAS tells the correct order in which arithmetic operations are to be carried out, going in order from left to right, and stands for "BRACKETS then EXPONENTS then DIVISION or MULTIPLICATION then ADDITION or SUBTRACTION."

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. $12 \div (4 + 2) + 3 \times 4 =$ | 5. $8 - (2 \times 3)^2 - 6 \div 3 =$ |
| 2. $12 \div 4 + 2 + 3 \times 4 =$ | 6. $(8 - 2) \times (3^2 - 6) \div 3 =$ |
| 3. $8 - 2 \times 3^2 - 6 \div 3 =$ | 7. $5 + 40 \div 4 \div 2 + 2 - (3 - 2) =$ |
| 4. $8 - 2 \times (3^2 - 6) \div 3 =$ | 8. $5 + 40 \div (4 \div 2) + (2 - 3) - 2 =$ |

SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (OCTOBER) PUZZLE PAGE

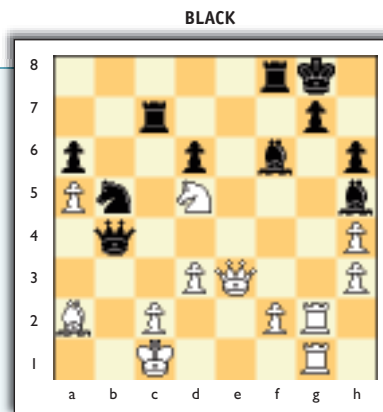
Answer to Riddles for Punsters #159

- What country would be suitable for setting up
a) a school for fish? **F i n l a n d**
b) a sleeping area for lions? **D e n m a r k**.

Answer to Problem to Ponder #159 – "Be a 'PRO', Show What You Know"

The challenge was to come up with a word, starting with the letters 'pro', that fits the clue (definition or synonym) given. The number in brackets after the clue indicated the number of letters in each 'pro' word.

- defend (7) protect
- foul, offensive (7) profane
- set into motion (6) propel
- fuel for BBQ (7) propane
- medical evaluation (9) prognosis
- order of events (7) program
- put off doing (13) procrastinate
- fruit of the land (7) produce
- extensive job, task (7) project
- show to be true (5) prove



SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 159

WHITE to Mate in 4 Descriptive Notation

- NxB dbl ch K-R1
- QxP ch PxQ
- R-N8 ch RxR
- RxR mate

Algebraic Notation

- Nd5xf6 + Kg8-h8
- Qe3xh6 + g7xh6
- Rg2-g8 + Rf8xg8
- Rg1xg8 ++

NOTE White's first move above. Moving the knight cause the bishop to put black's king in check (this is called "discovered check") AND the knight also puts the king in

WHITE

check, so the knight move here results in a "double check," a very powerful move that force the attacked king to move.

BLACK to Mate in 2

OR in 3

Descriptive Notation

- _____ B-N7 ch
- K-N1 N-R6 mate

OR

- _____ Q-N7 ch
- K-Q2 QxP ch
- K-K1 Q-Q8 mate

NOTE: BLACK can also Mate in 4

- _____ Q-R6 ch
- K-Q2 RxP ch

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| (If 2. K-N1 | Q-N7 mate) |
| 3. K-K1 | R-B8 ch |
| (If 3. KxR | Q-N7 mate) |
| 4. QxR | QxQ mate |

Algebraic Notation

- _____ Bf6-b2 +
- Kc1-b1 Nb5-a3 ++

OR

- _____ Qb4-b2 +
- Kc1-d2 Qb2xc2 +
- Kd2-e1 Qc2-d1 ++

NOTE: BLACK can also

Mate in 4

- _____ Qb4-a3 +
- Kc1-d2 Rc7xc2 +
- (If 2. Kc1-b1 Qc3-b2++)
- Kd2-e1 Rc2-c1 +
- (If 3. Kd2xc2 Qc3-b2 +)
- Qe3xc1 Qa3xc1 ++

Crossword Puzzle

Series 16 No II

Last month's solution
Series 16 No 10

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				
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45				46			47		48		49			
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52		53	54	55		56	57			58		59	60	61
62										63				
		64				65				66				
	67									68				

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13							
14	A	R	O	M	E		15	E	L	D	E	R		16	A	V	E				
17	R	A	M	E	N		18	W	A	L	E	S		19	P	E	P				
20	C	L	A	N	S			21	C	I	D		22	P	E	R	E				
				D		23	C	R	I	B		24	F	O	R	T	E				
25	V	E	S	S	E	L		D		29	O	R	D								
30	A	M	Y			31	L	E	T		33	A	N	I		34	K	I	P		
37	S	I	N			38	E	V	E		39	T	A	D		40	E	T	O		
41	E	T	C			42	C	E	E		43	E	G	G		44	P	A	N		
						45	S	T	R		46	A		47	E	E	48	R	I	L	Y
49	M	50	A	51	C	E	S		52	C	U	R	R		E						
53	A	M	O	S			54	A	R	T			55	S	T	O	56	57	58	P	
59	J	A	M			60	S	C	O	U	R		61	E	I	D	E	R			
63	O	N	E			64	A	T	O	M	S		65	P	R	I	D	E			
66	R	A	T			67	M	A	N	N	A		68	T	E	N	E	T			

ACROSS:

- Young person
- Crackers
- Math term
- Man's name, or abbreviated constellation
- Boat part
- Types of exams
- Property of space
- Birthplace of Alexander the Great
- Pat gently
- Strainer
- Son of Nathan of Zobah, and one of David's warriors (2 Sam. 23:36)
- Balaam's transportation
- Come out into view
- Little missile
- Source code control system (abbr.)
- Over, poetically speaking
- Language of Pakistan
- Path
- Lincoln, to his friends
- Smelly fruit
- Speak extravagantly or violently
- French friend
- Type of ranger
- Chooses
- Package
- Matter, in law
- Greeting, in Paris
- Vice _____
- Dog part
- Nightshade, can be deadly
- Math shapes
- Shoemaker's awl
- Self-esteem
- Township in Ontario, or Spanish gold
- Ancient massage therapy
- What whales eat
- Horse

DOWN:

- Farm finale
- Large hopping mammal
- Italics, for short
- Girl's name
- Medicine amount
- Horse accessory
- Melody
- Tree or body part
- Groups of atoms
- Head of the Sanhedrin
- A great lake
- Lonely number
- Cooked too long
- Electricity term
- Each
- Pertaining to stars (comb. form)
- A fighter
- Barely sufficient
- Bird
- Horse command
- Pre-arranged combat
- Fighter's protection
- Melodies
- Makes a lap
- Atomic mass unit (abbr.)
- Certain muscles
- Everything
- Town in the Yukon, big in the Gold Rush
- Certain trees, or older people
- Baby owl
- Venous thromboembolic event, for short
- Canadian revolutionist, 1844-85
- Long story, medieval prose
- Short form for writer who does not want to be known
- Storyline
- Of or for aircraft
- Asia, in France
- Admire
- Oklahoma city, or Sir Geraint's wife

Joyce