

Volume 26 Number 8 June 2007

A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

REFORMED perspective

*Learning how to
protect and
respect online*

What's inside?

Reading Films

Musings on
urban/rural
theology

Answering atheists



Editorial

by Andrew Nugteren

Musings on urban/rural theology

Paradise might have been a garden but . . .

Town or country?

Most people have a strong leaning one way or the other. I spent most of my growing-up years on a small farm just out of Levin, and loved it, so I suppose I'm a country boy at heart – no mega-urban sprawl for me!

But then I got thinking. What would God choose, were he given the choice? Would he prefer the wild sounds of the great outdoors, or the vibrancy of inner-city life? Depending on whom you ask, you'll probably get different answers.

It started in a garden

To some, it would be an obvious choice for God. He'd choose rural, they claim. Away from the city. Back to nature. After all, God has revealed himself and his glory in his natural creation. And rural is as close to natural as you can get these days.

Besides, look at the alternative. Our urban environments seem to be dominated by the mighty modern townhouse – an invention that comes with as much asphalt as possible, to reduce the quantity of time-consuming green stuff we used to play on. Oh, there's the odd bush, shrub or flowerbed here and there for the sake of good looks, but not really a lot of opportunity for God's glory to shine. And if that still isn't enough evidence, remember that it was on a garden that God set his stamp of approval (and called "good") when he made the world, not a city.

Be that as it may, I'm not ready to be persuaded quite yet.

But it ends in . . .

You see, while it's true that God dwelt in a garden in the beginning, that's not the end of the story. When we move forward to the time of King David, God chooses to dwell among his people in a city – in Jerusalem. Now if God wasn't into cities, I'm sure he could have had David set up the tabernacle (and later, the temple) in some suitable and secluded rural location. But no, the ark which symbolized God's presence is enthroned in a city.

Jerusalem isn't a temporary storage location, either. God isn't just grudgingly putting up with the city until Jesus returns to restore a sin-ruined creation. Rather, God even goes so far as to use the imagery of a city to picture the new creation (Revelation 21). The new Jerusalem will be pleasant to the eye, perfectly symmetrical, adorned with precious jewels; it will have streets of pure gold and will shine with the glory of God.

But what if you find yourself preferring rural, even though God is heading towards a city? Well, perhaps one of the main reasons some of us struggle to appreciate the beauty of the city is because all too often our cities lack beauty. Our building codes are littered with rule after rule, guarding us against fires and earthquakes, telling us how many car parks we need to provide, but requirements for beauty take a definite back seat. We're good at functional, not so good at beautiful – here in New Zealand, anyway. They tell me that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but, since I'm not a trendy relativist, that doesn't wash on me.



This article was reprinted with permission from Prism, a now defunct magazine, whose past issues are available online at www.prismmagazine.com.

In his trilogy *Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien does ugly cities well, as any beholder of beauty ought to acknowledge. Take Bree, the industrialised Orthanc or the occupied Shire. Cities whose soul has been reduced to progress, efficiency and the mighty dollar. But Tolkien also gives us cities of unparalleled beauty. Places that thrill the imagination, even when adapted for the big screen. The grandeur of Minas Tirith. The splendor of Lothlórien. The Shire after the cleanup has taken place. Paradise was Lost. But then Paradise is Restored.

Conclusion

And it's Paradise Restored that we see at the end of Revelation and that helps answer the question we began with. At the heart of the new city is God's throne, and flowing from that throne is the river of the water of life, with the tree of life from the original Eden flanking its banks. Creation begins with a garden, and ends in a garden city. God may start rural, but he ends urban.



REFORMED Perspective

A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

www.reformedperspective.ca

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

Address for Administrative Matters
(Subscriptions, Advertisements,
Change of Address):
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Annual Subscription Rates:

Canada \$49.00*
(2 years \$90.00, 3 years \$133.00)*
Canada Airmail \$68.00*
U.S. (U.S. Funds) \$48.00
(2 years \$89.00, 3 years \$130.00)
U.S. Airmail (U.S. Funds) \$71.00
International Surface Mail \$66.00
(2 years \$120.00, 3 years \$177.00)
International Airmail \$97.00
* including 6% G.S.T.
- G.S.T. No. R118929272RT

We acknowledge the financial support of
the Government of Canada, through the
Publication Assistance Program (PAP),
toward our mailing costs. **Canada**

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Registration: ISSN 0714-8208
Charitable Organization under
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Mandating murder

Proposed legislation would not only allow the creation of clones, it would require their deaths

Catholic bishops made some outspoken comments on this matter. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, George Pell, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia, told state lawmakers and members of his flock that human cloning and the destruction of embryos for research was a serious moral matter and their votes would have consequences for their lives in the Church. In fact he told reporters that he may deny communion to the Premier of New South Wales, Morris Lemma.

This is how we all started out.

The state parliaments in Australia are presently debating legislation that would allow embryonic stem cell research. If passed these bills would allow:

- human-animal hybrids
- the fertilizing of eggs from aborted girls with adult male sperm to form new embryos
- the mixing of genetic material of more than two persons to create embryos with 3 or more genetic parents
- human cloning
- the mandatory murder of all resulting embryos at 14 days or earlier

What this means from a layman's point of view is that these embryos, which in the normal course of things would continue developing right to adulthood, are instead used for experimentation in areas

such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and other medical conditions.

Seeing that abortion has become so commonplace in our country it is understandable that most people have no problem with this procedure, particularly because it promises healing to people who live with very debilitating conditions. However it is interesting to note that so far embryonic stem cell research has provided absolutely no medical cures, while adult stem cell research and research involving stem cells derived from umbilical cord blood have provided dozens of treatments, none of which have involved the death of any embryos.

Standing up

This whole issue became front-page news early in June when two Roman

.....

These bills would allow: human-animal hybrids.

.....

This prompted the Premier and other politicians to be outraged. How dare the Archbishop sanction them for openly rejecting Roman Catholic teachings on the sanctity of life! "He won't be dissuading me from doing what I believe is the right thing and that is supporting the bill," said a defiant Lemma who didn't believe that any parish priest would deny him communion.

Standing strong

In Western Australia, Archbishop Barry Hickey told the *West Australian* newspaper, "Catholics who vote for the cloning of embryos destined for destruction are acting against the teaching of the Church on a very serious matter and they should in conscience

not vote that way, but if they do in conscience they should not go to communion."

These words caused outrage among the public but also within the Parliament of Western Australia. The Speaker, Fred Reibeling, accused the archbishop of threatening politicians and stated that an official investigation would examine his remarks.

In a strongly worded letter tabled in the Western Australian Parliament, procedure and privileges committee chairman and Speaker Fred Reibeling told Archbishop Hickey it did not matter whether his comments on stem cell research legislation actually constituted a threat to MPs.

"In this instance at the least, that impression was created," the letter said.

Among the public many voiced their opposition on the grounds of the separation of church and state. But that argument does not hold water. The Australian Constitution has no articles making such a separation. The only provision touching on the matter is article 116, which reads: "The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth." This article, in fact, when it says the state may not go around, "prohibiting the free exercise of any religion" clearly shows that the two archbishops are on safe ground.

From our point of view we admire these men for speaking out on such an important matter and can only hope that it will have a good result.

Standing together?

At the same time the Australian Senate has a bill before it called the "Pregnancy Counselling (Truth in Advertising) Bill."

Abortion is not an option in pro-life counseling centers, and because it isn't pro-abortion parliamentarians have accused them of deception. This bill is in keeping with similar attempts in the U.S. to close

down those pregnancy centers that don't help women to have abortions but reach out to help both mother and child. Right to Life Australia, in correspondence to its many members, asks:

"What are these women afraid of? A few babies slipping through the net? Consider the big burgeoning abortion industry aborting, without question, one precious Australian child for every three born, leaving a trail of wounded women in their wake and growing rich on taxpayers' monies in the form of Medicare rebates.

The Speaker, Fred Reibeling, accused the archbishop of threatening politicians.

"Rather than hindering the work of those pregnancy counselling services which offer support to women facing a crisis pregnancy to choose an alternative to abortion we should be grateful for these community services, largely carried out by volunteers. The Commonwealth should be finding ways to foster and enhance this work, not undermine it."

We live in a world that more and more rejects the precepts of the Christian faith, so it is good to find that there are still people who will stand up for the sanctity of life.

The situation calls out for prayer for the coming again of our Lord and Savior to establish righteousness and destroy wickedness. May we all in our own place do what we can to promote God's law and show our thankfulness that we may still weekly hear the rich preaching of God's Word and live accordingly.



Tale of two Tonys

Two very different reactions to George Pell

by Jon Dykstra

When Catholic politicians in Australia were involved with a push for embryonic stem cell research their archbishop, George Pell, warned them that this might result in them being refused communion. The Roman Catholic church is against embryonic stem cell research because it can only be pursued by killing unborn children. Two prominent Australia Catholic politicians, both named Tony, had two very different reactions to Archbishop Pell's warning.

"Maybe I'll go to Hell, but if I go to Hell I'm going to do so by saving a lot of lives, because that's what this bill is about . . . We don't need a religious leader telling members of parliament what should be done."

Tony Stewart - New South Wales
Parliamentarian

"Cardinal Pell is entitled to say his piece. He is the leader of the Catholic Church here in Australia . . . What he appeared to be saying, to me, was that this was a serious matter and people need to carefully consider the traditional teaching, they should not lightly dismiss it."

Tony Abbott - Health Minister



Lust within Marriage

by Jane deGlint

Every lust that dominates a marriage has begun well before the official wedding date. Since lust is obsessed with instant self-gratification, the lustful are usually only interested in marital commitment if they need it as required sanction for their brutal drive. More often than not, lust does not last till a proper marriage can be arranged. Either the lust has lost its drive because it is intrinsically unable to endure waiting, or the drive had a chance to run its course before marriage and has already entered the rejection phase.

Yet, especially in societies or communities where marriage is held in honor, lust quite regularly ends up within the bounds of marriage. Usually these groups understand, by intuition or by instruction, that the sexual drive can only be channeled properly within the safeguards of a marriage. Only when a man and a woman are willing and able to commit themselves to a relationship that is emotionally and economically viable, can proper procreation take place. As a consequence it is considered mandatory that any sexual relations that take place before marriage must immediately and retroactively be sanctioned by a legal wedding ceremony.

In those cases lust receives a life-sentence. It is properly and officially wedlocked up. The community is relieved that the fire is contained. Case closed.

And, especially in the Church of our Lord Jesus, the self-centered passions of sexual desire can be used for good in God's providential care. The guiding power of the Spirit is well able to transform the wildfire of lust into the hearth and heart of a Christian home.

But not always. In the church there are lustful people who resist this fundamental

change. Proudly they claim to be fully entitled to the gratification of their passions. This perversion of marriage is aggravated upon the arrival of the inevitable rejection stage. At that point the lusting party starts to exercise sublime control through unilateral abstinence with the occasional sex binge. Even though these perpetrators usually make every effort to look like a good Christian, they in fact allow their passions to be their god. As a result their spiritual defense and discernment weaken. Stealthily the devils scamper in and claim their soul. Another victim! Right under the nose of the Enemy's guardians! What a catch!

Once the devils have made themselves at home in the lustful spouse, they concentrate their efforts on the partner. Craftily they switch their tactics. Whereas for the lustful spouse they capitalized on instant gratification and the need for control, they have to take a totally different approach towards the partner.

The partners are usually quite unlike their aggressive spouse, since lustful people hardly ever target confident individuals as objects for gratification. Cleverly they locate people who suffer from a sense of worthlessness, but who at the same time have a willingness to please and an ability to nurture – exactly the traits which are highly exploitable by gratification seekers.

In many instances the spouses of lustful people are completely unaware of the evil intentions of their partner. Not recognizing lust, they mistake it for love. In fact, they take the lustful advances as proof of commitment. They have no clue that they are becoming the victim of a lustful person who deliberately picked his/her prey.

It seems commonly assumed that the male represents the lustful partner,

whereas the female is the victim. After all, it is the man who has the stronger drive and the stronger build. He feels the rush and can make it happen. And in most cases of domination it is the male partner who holds the controls. But women have strength as well, be it of a subtler sort. A lustful woman knows how to charm a man. With her seductive glances and gestures she can ply him like melted wax. "For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword" (Proverbs 5:3-4 & also 7:21-23).

Whether male or female, the partner of the lustful person turns into an easy target for devils. Already victimized by their spouses, these unwitting recipients of lust are very vulnerable. Their lives focus on their selfish spouse, who constantly is dissatisfied, demanding and abusive. It is not long before their need for approval turns them into the personal slaves of their spouse. They rather obey their spouse than God. After a while they confuse the will of God with the will of their spouse. When their abusive spouse becomes unfaithful or unreasonable, they cater to him even more hoping to win him back. Fearful and exhausted, they start to become detached and disinterested. As their mind loses its flexibility, so their soul loses its sense of truth. While their discernment fades, they become partners in falsehood.

The road lies wide open to the devils. Blatantly they make their approach and rapidly they gain ground with their insidious thoughts and questions. Does the Lord really help you as he said he would? Can you really trust him? Where is God, anyway? And look at how worthless you are. There is nothing you do right. You must try



harder to please your spouse. Do not always make him/her so mad. Come on. Focus on your spouse.

All these temptations are often endured in silence. It seems inappropriate and embarrassing to bring them into the open and to discuss them with fellow-believers. Ironically, the abusive spouse benefits from the taboo. Unchecked he/she works systematically on polishing his/her image: an active member in the church, who excels in bible knowledge and who is outspoken about his/her opinions on morality.

It is clear that the suppressed spouse will be helped by the truth. The devils may seem to have gained the upper hand over him/her, but the person's conscience is not dead. They may not experience the Lord's nearness for a while, but their soul does not sell out to the evil one. Though oppressed by the lie to the point of shedding blood, they never completely lose their sense of truth. Sooner or later they will start to send out signals of distress.

Initially these stress calls may be barely audible. In certain instances the oppressed partners do not live long enough to accomplish visible change for themselves or their families. But their little infringements on the taboo are proof that in the end the Lord was near again. His presence returned. And with it came courage and peace.

Of course, the selfish spouse also needs spiritual guidance. As long as there is physical life, there is the possibility for spiritual renewal: truthful repentance, confession of sin and a holy lifestyle. Sometimes the selfish spouse tries to duck the corrective measures by attempting to fool the Spirit with a false show of remorse. But those

who are close to him or her, especially immediate relatives, would quickly detect the pretence. They would never believe the change was genuine without time-tested evidence. Their intuitive misgivings are often justified when the abuse continues. Even so, the call to repentance must go out. The Lord is able to turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19).

People who fake their faith very often betray themselves. In an unguarded moment they reveal their hidden motives, or they contradict themselves, or their actions brazenly belie their words. Pretence is never full proof. Moreover, the relatives may break the imposed code of silence. The suppressed spouse will send out stress calls, be they feeble and incidental. If there are children, they will likely drop hints, either intentionally with words or subconsciously by behavioral clues. Slowly the picture becomes clearer. At that time the spiritual care can be mobilized. Even if a whole family has lived in denial for decades, it is never too late to deal with the terrible burden.

As members of Christ's body we must be observant, without becoming overzealous. There are great differences between marriages. The division of tasks between husband and wife is not cast in stone, and there are no rules for the frequency of visits with friends. However, we need to become concerned when we realize that the husband does not function as head of the family. This is an absolute sign of trouble. Does he make real sacrifices if necessary for the well-being of his family? Does he take responsibility? Is he involved? Whether the man is the controller, or the woman, the trouble shows up in the distortion of headship.

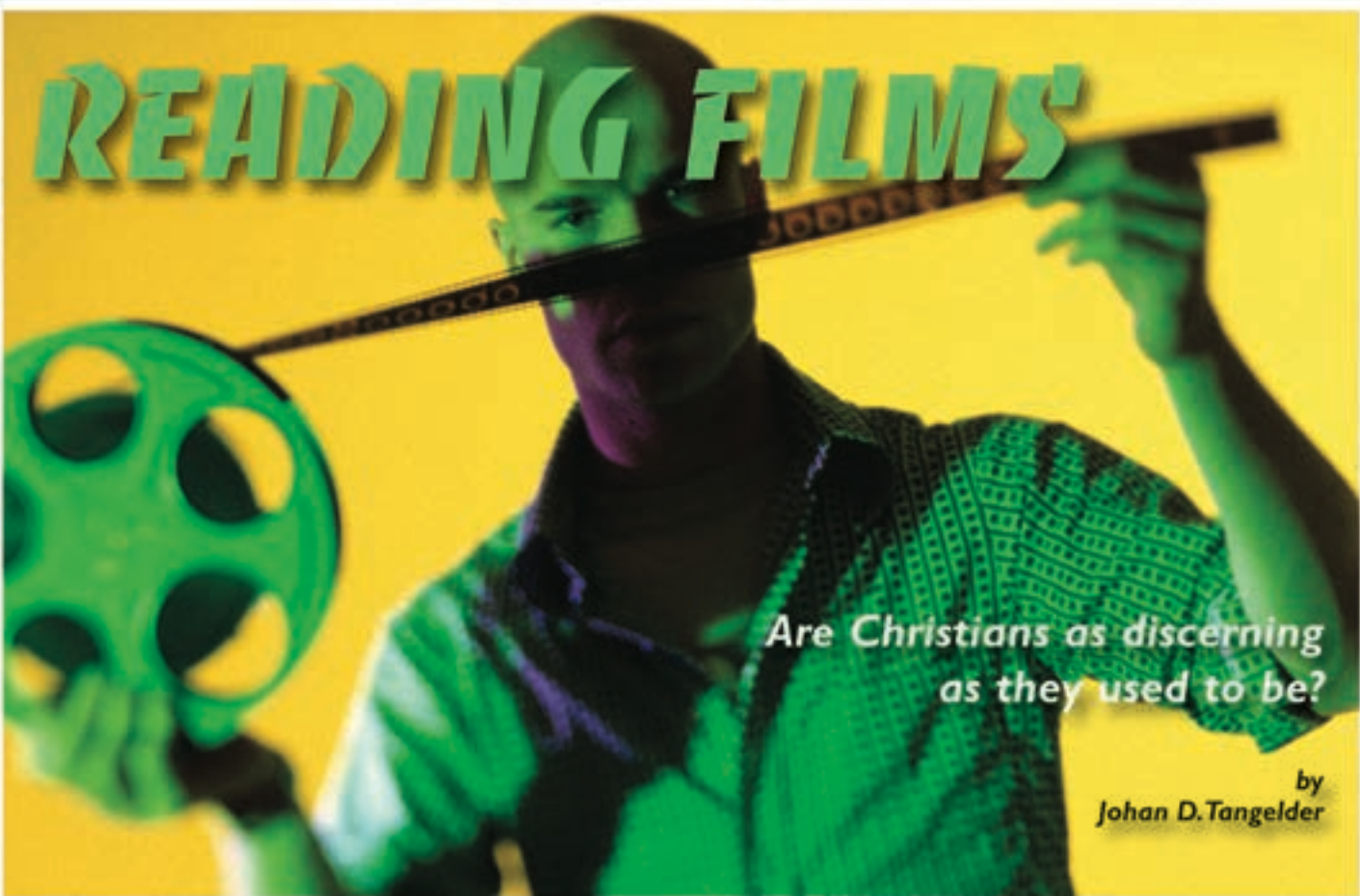
With caution and discretion we have to be spiritually alert to the marriages of our brothers and sisters in faith. This is foremost the task of the office-bearers, but their work is interwoven with the mutual care and concern between believers. As keepers of our brothers and sisters we have a responsibility towards each other. Together we are one body. If we turn a blind eye to an abuse, we obstruct the truth and surrender to the lie. Such intentional oversight could lead to spiritual decline in the whole congregation.

The task of the spiritual leaders to deal with this form of abuse is immensely complex, the more so when it has been located in the family of an elder or deacon. There is disbelief, coupled with an initial impulse for cover-up. There is confusion about the correct course of action. There is embarrassment. But in the end the direction will become clear. The emphasis must be on walking in the light. The old self, which is corrupted by deceitful desires, must be made new by a change of heart and mind. The new self must develop, as it is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (See Ephesians 4:22-23).

If there is no repentance, the task of the church leaders towards those who suffer under an abusive spouse or parent becomes pressing. If all efforts for real improvement fail, it might become necessary to break up the family ties. This is utterly painful and often has economic repercussions, but it may be necessary for the spiritual health of those who are constantly exposed to devilish thinking. To be separated from an unrepentant spouse is spiritually healthier than exposing oneself to the dangers of being controlled by an abuser.

As the members of the body join together in maintaining healthy marriages, they truly serve the head of the church. The Lord takes a special interest in the marriages of his saints, since they are a reflection of his own love for his church. His name is honored as the believers work together to take the lie out of marriage relationships. The image of selfishness may never obstruct the image of Christ with his church. **B**

"For a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the Church." Ephesians 5:31-32



READING FILMS

Are Christians as discerning
as they used to be?

by
Johan D. Tangelder

"Moving pictures" began to spread throughout North America early in the twentieth century. The earliest movie theatres were converted stores with hard wooden benches and a bed sheet for a screen. These "theatres" came to be known as nickelodeons, as the admission price was five cents. The films were short – in 1906 the average length of a film was five to ten minutes. In 1911 the earliest cinema music was played on tinkling pianos. During the silent film era, *slapstick* comedy, which depends on broad physical actions and pantomime for its effect rather than dialogue, was widely prevalent. In the 1930s *screwball* comedy became widely popular. It was laced with hyper action, was highly verbal, and noted for its wisecracks. In 1939 the first Drive-in theatre was opened on a ten-acre site at Camden, New Jersey.

Film as art

Is a film a form of art? Someone said that film is the art form of our time that pulls in huge audiences of citizens as once the ancient Athenians plays did.

But what is art? The history of the word "art" reveals a wealth of information about the structure of our civilization. It also shows continuous change. This is partially because cultures change through technology. Most people use the term *art* to describe the traditional fine arts, such as painting and sculpture, the symphony and opera. For popular music, television, we often use the term *entertainment*.

"Movies are not art," an evangelical film critic argued. "Rather, they are a form of *entertainment* which employs artistic and communicative elements." But in *How To Read A Film* James Monaco argues that on a more advanced level, film is considered a sophisticated art, possibly the most important art of the twentieth century with a rather complex form of history and practice.

The Church and the movies

Ever since movies became a form of entertainment, churches have had to deal with them. For many years Christians were warned against movie going. Many "fundamentalist" pastors forcefully ex-

horted, "When the Lord suddenly returns, would you want to meet Him in a theatre watching a worldly movie?" Reformed Christians were also exhorted not to attend movie theatres.

1. The Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

As early as 1908 the editor of the CRC denominational magazine, *The Banner*, complained, "Theatre going supports a class of people that frequently caters to the lowest taste of depraved humanity, actors and actresses and their employers." A general objection was that the movie industry as a whole tended to be "of the world," and thus against Christian values and the church... and ultimately against God's Kingdom.

The CRC 1928 *Report of the Committee on Worldly Amusements* paid close attention to the question of worldliness in relation to the movies. The Report stopped short of calling the whole movie industry anti-Christian, but still issued severe warnings against attending movies. CRC Synod 1928

News Bites



judged, "We do not hesitate to say that those who make a practice of attending the theatre and who therefore cannot avoid witnessing lewdness which it exhibits or suggests are transgressors of the seventh commandment."

In 1964 the CRC took another serious look at the movies. The CRC realized that its official stance and the practice of its members were at great variance, producing a "denominational schizophrenia and/or hypocrisy." In 1966 a major report *The Film Arts and the Church* was released. It differed substantially from the earlier studies. Film, it said, should be regarded as a legitimate means of cultural expression, so the medium of film must be claimed, and restored by Christians. The *Report* was idealistic in hoping that members of the CRC would become discriminating and educated moviegoers, reflecting on and discussing films as part of their cultural milieu.

The review of movies in *The Banner* began in 1975, but faced strong opposition. But in time the Reformed doctrine of the antithesis (we should not be just like the world) became muted in the choice of movies made by CRC members. There was little difference in what they watched, and what the world watched.

2. The Protestant Reformed Church (PRC)

The PRC was fervent in its denouncement of movies and movie attendance. The PRC considers all acting as evil, as is the watching of acting on stage, in theatres, on television, or on video. PRC minister Dale Kulper said, "Certainly the content of almost 100 per cent of dramatic productions (movies, television programs, plays, skits, operas) place these things out of bounds for the Christian."

But already in 1967 a writer noted that PRC practice did not match PRC principle: "When I was formerly an active pastor in a congregation, it was always a source of sad disappointment to me that so few of our young people could testify, when asked

In May the human rights organization Amnesty International decided that abortion was one of the "human rights" that they will lobby for – the group had previously had a neutral position, neither advocating for or against it. *AI* claims they still aren't advocating for abortion as a human right, but are merely taking the position that abortion should be decriminalized. In either case, children will die Another **CHARITY THAT MIGHT HAVE ONCE BEEN WORTH SUPPORTING** has taken a stand that changes its status. In 1985 Rick Hansen circled the world in his wheelchair raising money to find a cure for spinal cord injuries. June 2007 *Lifesitenews.com* reported that Rick Hansen's "Wheels in Motion" Fund had decided to support embryonic stem cell research, research that can only be conducted by killing embryonic human beings.

The city of Philadelphia was, for a space of seven days, an officially pro-choice city. In a 9-8 vote on June 8 the city passed a resolution suggested by the local chapter of Planned Parenthood, which declared the city pro-choice. A week later the resolution was overturned by a 13-4 vote Toronto isn't **OFFICIALLY PRO-CHOICE; IT'S OFFICIALLY GAY**. The city's tourism board has created a new slogan that reads, "Toronto: as gay as it gets". Homosexual activist Councilor Kyle Rae pushed for the slogan. He wanted it to be clear that Toronto is more than just friendly to homosexuals: "Toronto's not gay friendly – it's gay."

This past month a Roman Catholic bishop challenged Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani on his incoherent stance on abortion. In an online column Bishop Thomas J. Tobin wrote "Would we let any politician get away with the same pathetic cop-out on other issues: **I'M PERSONALLY OPPOSED** to . . . racial discrimination, sexual abuse, prostitution, drug abuse, polygamy, incest . . . but don't want to impose my beliefs on others?" Why is it that when I hear someone explaining this position, I think of the sad figure of Pontius Pilate in the Gospels, who personally found no guilt in Jesus, but for fear of the crowd, washed his hands of the whole affair and handed Jesus over to be crucified. I can just hear Pilate saying, "You know, I'm personally opposed to crucifixion but I don't want to impose my belief on others."

at confession of faith, that they had not indulged in the corruptions of the movie." And since 1969 and continuing till today, various pastors and professors have lamented that large numbers of PRC members watch movies, either in theatres, or more often on television.

3. Evangelicals

A *Barna Research Group* study shows that "born again Christians" have bought into the media technology as much as anyone.

The Billy Graham organization *Worldwide Pictures* made modest independent films to evangelize youth: *The Restless Ones* (1965), about teenage pregnancy; *A Thief in the Night* (1972), an end-times thriller; and the Nicky Cruz biopic, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (1970). A reporter dubbed them "religious tracts first, entertainment second."

More recently, evangelicals made new producing sci-fi films about the apocalypse, which critics claim are embarrassingly poor-quality – artistically flawed –

productions marketed in the name of evangelism. As examples, they refer to the three profitable *Left Behind* Movies (2000, 2002, 2005).

The *Dallas Morning News* ran a story in 1998 about the growing number of Christians who advocated going to the movies, even R-rated ones. The reason? Evangelical filmmaker Dallas Jenkins said, "Non-Christians are just as capable of producing God-honoring and spiritually uplifting products as Christians are, and I've been as equally offended by a Christian's product as I've

of a *Nation* portrays the racist assumption that white people are superior to black people. The Academy-Award winner *Rocky* (1976) is a celebration of the American dream, a rags-to-riches tale. Rocky only has to believe in himself in order to pull himself up by his proverbial bootstraps and ascend from rags to riches. A clear contemporary example is Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, which is sheer propaganda. Mr. Gore even has the gall to claim there are no credible scientists who are able to refute catastrophic man-made climate change. His apocalyptic exaggerations are even force-fed to public schools students in Canada. And all this in a postmodern age, which rejects absolute truth. How ironic!

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***Film is more than a form
of entertainment. It
propagates a worldview.***

.....

Titanic

Most films depict a world in which God is absent or non-existent. For example, there is nothing in the film *Titanic* (1997) to suggest that God is even interested in the fate of those on board the ship. Whether uncaring or impotent, God is irrelevant in the world of this film. In his book *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* William D. Romanowski comments, "Whatever outward appearances of belief dot the landscape of *Titanic*, they have little bearing on the faith of the main characters, especially when compared to the film's glorification of the human will and spirit."

In this film, Rose's fiancé, Cal Hockley, is concerned only with approval of his social set. He equates wealth and social status with worth and character. Aware of the limited lifeboat capacity, Rose says, "Half the people on the ship are going to die." The snobbish Cal responds, "Not the better half." These attitudes run against the grain of American values associated with freedom and equality. In opposition to Cal, free-spirited artist Jack is the ultimate expression of pure freedom. His character

traits, talent, and good looks easily identify him as the hero. When Rose and Jack have an illicit sexual encounter it is for Rose a declaration of independence from her fiancé and her mother's control over her. The now famous sex scene sums up many of the film's themes: Forbidden love, class differences, and individual freedom.

The Passion of the Christ

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* was highly recommended by evangelicals for its realistic portrayal of Christ's suffering and death. But how true to the Gospels is the film? Why did the director have Jesus stand up to invite more scourging by the Roman soldiers? Is the film historically accurate or is it a reflection of Gibson's theology? Co-screenwriter Mel Gibson said that he relied not only on the New Testament but also on the writings of two nuns, Mary of Agreda, a seventeenth-century aristocrat, and Anne Catherine Emmerich, an early nineteenth-century stigmatic.

The violence in the film became a matter of much debate when the film was re-



been moved by something from a non-Christian."

Evangelicals are now advocating "family friendly" movies. These movies tend to depict a world where all issues are plain and simple. Evil doers are destroyed, the virtuous rewarded, and the "good" characters have within themselves everything they need to secure their destiny.

Perspectives

A film is more than a form of entertainment. It propagates a worldview. When we watch a film, we see it only as the filmmaker wants us to see it.

Each film reflects a message. In fact, ideological propositions can make their way even in popular art works. For example, the characterization and storyline in D.W. Griffith's classic 1915 silent film *The Birth*



leased. On the one hand, the head of an evangelical youth ministry said, "This isn't violence for violence's sake. This is what really happened, what it would have been like to have been there in person to see Jesus crucified." On the other hand, many critics cringed at the level of violence in the movie. Romanowski comments, "In my

estimation, it is difficult to provide dramatic justification for some of the violence in the film."

Star Wars

One of the most controversial film series was *Star Wars*. In 1977 it hit the big screens and it was an immediate success. Legions of fans formed an eerie cult-like devotion and the box-office receipts were astronomical. It originated a new genre – the techno-splashy sci-fi soap opera.

The film has a semi-religious theme. In *From Plato to NATO* David Gress writes that the *Star Wars* film saga broadcast a popular mythology of heroism, growth, light, and dark sides, wise old men and evil tempters, all concocted by the California filmmaker George Lucas. Much of the inspiration came from the teaching of Joseph Campbell, who claimed there is truth in all mythology. Campbell wrote in 1955 that "clearly Christianity is opposed fundamentally and intrinsically to everything I am working and living for."

In a survey of several hundred college students, cited in the book *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion*, researchers discovered that "scientific media" was listed as a source of occult beliefs. They pointed to such films as *The Exorcist* and *Star Wars*.

There is also a theologian on hand who finds something redemptive in *Star Wars*. John C. McDowell, Lecturer in Systematic Theology at New College, University of Edinburgh, analyses the "classic trilogy" *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and the *Return of the Jedi* in his book *The Gospel according to Star Wars: Faith, Hope, and the Force*. He calls these films a "pop-culture phenomenon" of unprecedented stature. He says that *Star Wars* is much more than entertainment. He suggests that the films carry even "more influence among young adults than the traditional religious myths of our culture." He argues that the films possess rich resources to change and transform us as moral subjects by helping us in some measure to encounter the deep mystery of what it means to be truly human. He even claims that *Star Wars* is "a parabolic resource that reveals something of the shape of a Christian discipleship lived under the shadow of the cross." He notes that the theology of the trilogy is difficult to pin down – though the interconnectedness of all of life does seem to be the fruit of the Force in some way and



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***Most people believe
they are personally
immune to what they
see on the film screen.***

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this is therefore exalted as the movies' good. He also discovers pacifist themes. According to him, *Star Wars* at its best possesses radical potential to witness to a set of nonviolent values.

Critical assessment

Should we warn Christians about the kind of movies they are watching, whether in a theatre or on TV? Some say, "They are only movies. They won't influence us." But no film should be viewed simply for viewing sake or because there is nothing better to do. Films often exalt self-interest as the supreme value, glorify violent resolutions to problems, and promote the idea that finding the perfect mate is one's primary vocation and highest destiny. They promote a view of romantic love which is passionate and irresistible and can conquer anything, including barriers of social class, age, race and ethnicity, and personality conflicts. But the love it portrays is usually another euphemism for lust. In *Images of Man: a critique of the contemporary cinema* Donald J.

Drew observes that in contemporary films the context makes it clear that love equals sex plus nothing.

An underlying assumption in mainstream Hollywood films is that the goal in life is to become rich. And acquiring things is even supposed to make you a better person! But the values of consumerism, self-indulgence and immediate gratification can harm individuals, families, and communities. *Time* film critic Richard Corliss notes, "For decades, America has embraced a baffling contradiction. The majority of its people are churchgoing Christians, many of them evangelical. Yet its mainstream pop culture, especially film, is secular at best, often raw and irreligious."

I wonder whether the lack of critical thinking by evangelicals is the result of the tendency to privatize faith, confining religious beliefs to personal morality, family, and the local congregation, while conducting their affairs in business, politics, education, and social life, and the arts much like everyone else.

Aren't even many Christians overlooking the persistence of evil in human history? Carl F. Henry observed, it is a widespread belief "that American people are essentially good at heart in a world whose inhabitants are prone to evil." We live in a fallen world that is at once hostile to God and also in search for God. Works of art can glorify God – including film art – but they can also be instrumental in leading people away from Him. Ever since the fall, human beings have been in revolt against God, turning their gifts against the Giver. Art, along with nearly every human faculty, has been tainted by the fall. Indeed, one of the first phases of the disintegration brought by sin was the usurpation of art for the purpose of idolatry (Rom. 1:23).

Most people believe they are personally immune to what they see on the film screen or on TV. How do we grow in our faith? Not by watching and observing a steady diet of movies. We must restore the primacy and power of the Word of God. God gave us a book – the Bible – and not a movie. We should be critical in our thinking, and apply our Biblical worldview. Scripture calls us to "test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess. 5:1-22).



EVERY MOVIE HAS A MORAL ...WHETHER WE REALIZE IT OR NOT

by Jon Dykstra

In a recent online article Hollywood scriptwriter Doug Tennapel spent some time outlining what it takes to write a good movie script. The first step he outlines is a surprising one – the best way to begin, he says, is by picking a moral for your story.

"Why does it have to be moral? Because a story without a moral isn't much of a story . . . unless you're in France and you're trying to celebrate that there is no such thing as moral . . . Stories preach."

Every film has a moral, he says, and he's one who knows. But do our kids know that? Do they have the discernment to notice when a secular point of view is being preached at them through the silver screen?

Sometimes a movie's moral is so obvious anyone can catch it. For example, in *The*

CiderHouse Rules a doctor who won't perform abortions meets a poor young girl who's pregnant from incest. What moral does the audience learn by the end of the film? That abortion is good. Hardly subtle, but the presentation was compelling enough to win the film multiple Oscars.

Movie morals are not always that obvious. The kid's film *Brother Bear* was praised by many Christian movie reviewers as a gentle family-friendly treat – it was, after all, a Disney film, animated, hardly violent, and clear of objectionable language. But Tennapel summarizes the moral of *Brother Bear* this way:

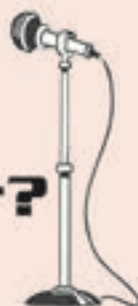
"The Indian boy chooses to be a [expletive] BEAR at the end instead of a human. You may not know it but the author is preaching to you saying that 'Indian mysticism or animism is a valid worldview.'"

In other words this film was very family-friendly film . . . except for its *moral*. The Christian reviewers focused on the films trappings, and ignored its core.

The moral is always there. Sometimes it's overt, like in the euthanasia promoting *Million Dollar Baby*, in which a paralyzed boxer asks her coach to kill her. Sometimes it is a bit more subtle, such as in the sci-fi *X-Men III* where persecuted mutants defend their minority rights by shouting out slogans borrowed directly from homosexual "rights" movement.

But either way, the moral is always there, and more often than not the moral of a film, even of a nice G-rated Disney film, is not going to be "family-friendly." May God grant us the discernment to see which films truly do, and do not, honor Him. **Ps**

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Father Costeletos' Impenitence

by Christine Farenhorst

In the late 1950's, on the island of Corfu, a Greek Orthodox priest woke up one Sunday morning after a night of troubled sleep. He woke up with a weight on his heart which seemed to crush the lust to live right out of him. The weight which he felt was guilt. The truth was that forty-five-year-old Father John Costeletos, for that was his name, had for some time been having an affair with a woman who was a member of his congregation. She was a widow and her name was Theodora Pra. The affair was well-known throughout the small village of Kyprianades of which Father Costeletos was supposed to be the spiritual head. Kyprianades was a tiny community, comprising only some two hundred and twenty people, but they were all individual souls entrusted to his care.

It was not only the people of Kyprianades who were aghast at Father Costeletos' audacity and sin – villagers and priests in neighboring areas were aware of his breach of conduct also. Sermons were preached on the sanctity and purity of marriage while at the same time the warning words *beware of those who corrupt the church with bad morals*, rang loud and clear from the rafters of many churches.

The bell tolls

On this particular Sunday morning, Father Costeletos was suddenly so weighed down by his sin, that he felt he could not continue in his current lifestyle. After he dressed, he paced back and forth in his living room for a long time. His hands clutched and unclutched, not in prayer, but the folds of his black robe. The sexton tolled the bell, reminding him that the people of Kyprianades were all assembling together in the church next door, waiting for him to come and preach to them. He sighed deeply. His life could not continue the way it was. He knew that. Women spit

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that You may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to You. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For You will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will You delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 51

on his shadow; children stopped playing and stared at him when he passed; and men avoided his eye. He walked to the front door, opened it and blinked at the sunlight. It was time. Yes, it was time.

The congregation was just settling in when the priest appeared before them. He was agitated and not a few who had remonstrated with him and who truly hoped and prayed their pastor would come to repentance, were actually glad to see the obvious distress on John Costeletos' face. He stood quietly in the front of the sanctuary and, as if on command, it became deathly quiet in the church. And then tears began to course down the priest's face. They streamed past his cheeks and fell onto his robe and he began to sob audibly. And yet, aside from the sobs, there was only the stillness in the sanctuary. And then John Costeletos stopped weeping and began to speak.

Exposed

"I have had an affair," he began rather abruptly, "and you all know I have had an affair, with Theodora Pra." He wiped his face and his black sleeve flapped about like a crow's wing.

"What you do not know," he continued, "is that she bore me a child. It was a little girl."

The mothers in the pews pulled their children closer, as if to shield them, while keeping their eyes glued on the priest's face.

"I was afraid," John Costeletos went on, "I wanted to hide . . . no, I wanted to get rid of this fruit of sin, so I . . . so I strangled the baby . . ."

There was an almost audible, communal intake of breath.

"Yes," he whispered on, but clearly so that all heard, "I strangled her with my own hands. But my hands were not strong enough."

Here he held up his hands high above his head before dropping them to his side, continuing his speech.

"So I used the belt from Theodora's cotton dress and wrapped it around the baby's neck until she was dead."

No one said a word. The whole congregation sat silent as if they had been struck dumb. They stared at the man whom they had once loved – a man who had for years been part of their village life. A hopelessness was fixed in Father Costeletos' eyes and after a few seconds he stumbled towards the door and fled outside. Sunlight once again blinded his eyes, and he felt it exposed him all the more. Running back to his own house, he went inside and disappeared. Shortly afterwards his congregation, still in shock, followed him outside and gathered around his home. Loud whispers grew into shouts of disbelief, sorrow and anger. The men huddled into a group, gesticulating and pointing at the priest's door. The women and children stood in another group.

Suddenly a window on the second floor was flung open and John Costeletos stood above them clasping a vial in his hands. He threw it down into the group and it landed on the ground, shattering into pieces – into so many pieces that it could never be glued together again.

.....
***"Take it together with
 your gossip and your
 disdain and your
 condemnation!"***



"Take it!" he cried as he stood in the window frame. "Take it together with your gossip and your disdain and your condemnation! I care not anymore. I have taken poison and am dying."

At this point, several men ran into his home, dashing up the stairs. But by the time they reached Father Costeletos, he was already unconscious and shortly afterwards, he died.

The hope of forgiveness

There is no doubt that Father John Costeletos committed a number of heinous sins. He repented only of having been found out and not at having sinned against God. He sought understanding first of all from men rather than from his heavenly Father. Would there have been forgiveness for him, had he sought God's forgiveness? John Costeletos' final and worst mistake was presuming that there was no hope and no forgiveness. His understanding and personal knowledge of Scripture must have been head knowledge and not heart knowledge. His understanding, therefore, was pitiful. Had he confessed, truly confessed his sin and guilt before God, he might have yet been a powerful witness to the truth and mercy and glory of God. 

August - Dog Lake, Ontario

WHOSE?

by Christine Farenhorst

Whose sky is this? Whose cloudy blaze
 Has caught the upward of my gaze?
 Whose infinite, eternal blue
 Has caught the landscapes masters drew?
***Indelible the thesis is -
 His signature reads genesis.***

Whose trees are these? Whose stalwart pine
 Encompasses the lakeshore line?
 Whose needled fingers reach for God
 From rocky crags and lonely sod?
***Indelible the thesis is -
 His signature reads genesis.***

Whose waters these? Who ordered wide
 And constant flow of ebb and tide?
 Whose lakes so great? Whose mighty hand
 Scooped out inverted hills of sand?
***Indelible the thesis is -
 His signature reads genesis.***

Whose songs are these? Whose uncut cry
 Of crow and raven? Whose the sigh,
 Flute-like and clear of hermit thrush,
 Liquid, ethereal to hush?
***Indelible the thesis is -
 His signature reads genesis.***

Whose days are these? Their path is strung
 Upon a necklace first begun
 When dark was set apart from light,
 And light was day and dark was night,
 And minutes lapsed and seconds sang
 And twenty-four hour days began.
 Whose brief and limited, small breath?
 Whose Adam's seed accursed by death?
 Shall the Fiat of paradise
 Not also make the dead arise
 In twinkling metamorphosis?
It was foretold in genesis.



Daughters in sports

Women and men are different, so they should play differently.

by Nancy Wilson

I promised that I would address the touchy subject of daughters playing sports, and so I guess I can't get out of it now. It is all fine and good for sons to be subjected to the discipline and competition of sports, but what about our daughters? Is it healthy for them to be competing? Here is my decided take on it: it all depends.

We are not raising our daughters to be "fighters" the same way we are with our sons. At the same time, self-discipline and godly determination are great qualities for women to have. Daughters can learn a lot from sports. They can benefit from learning to push themselves, to work hard, and to be part of a team. Besides, physical activity has benefits for everyone. Women can enjoy the thrill of the race or the game like anyone else. Still, we have to look at sports for our daughters a little differently than we do for our sons.

Women shouldn't be men, and vice versa

The goal we have in mind in raising sons is to inculcate masculinity. And we

want our daughters to embrace a godly femininity, not a worldly feminism. So when parents consider sports for their daughters, they ought to be thinking about whether her participation will help develop or hinder her.

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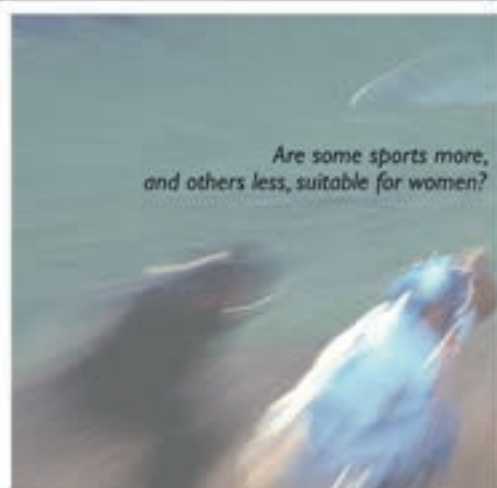
We are not raising our daughters to be "fighters" the same way we are with our sons.

.....

Some sports are so completely masculine that young women shouldn't even think about participating. These certainly include football, baseball, boxing and hockey. And it is just plain pitiful to see a woman force herself onto a male team just to cause a stink and force the boys to play with her. This is just a sad attempt for at-

tention. Once when my son played football for a government high school (while he attended a local Christian school), the other team had a girl suited up and standing on the sidelines. My husband told my son, "If she gets out on the field, don't go near her, and don't tackle her. Just stand out of her way." Tackling is no way to treat a lady, even if she is refusing to act like one.

But the next important thing to consider is what kind of program is available. For example, volleyball can be a great sport for girls. But if the program is bent on treating the girls like they are boys, and they are encouraging the girls to act like boys, then I wouldn't want my daughters participating. But if the coaches are teaching girls to play well and to play like ladies, it can be a great experience. The same is true of basketball, softball, soccer, or track. If the girls are trying to act tough and masculine, it is deadly. But if they are enjoying the game and learning to work as a team, this can be working with the grain, teaching them to be feminine and beautiful as they handle the ball or hit it over the net. When our



Are some sports more, and others less, suitable for women?

daughter played basketball for her Christian school, the team all wore blue ribbons in their hair as a feminine statement that they were not trying to act or look or play like boys. And they were good. They didn't trash talk or play dirty. They were taught to play like Christian women.

Positive character traits

So if the sport itself is not masculine in nature, and if the program is deliberately striving to promote feminine virtue, then it can be a great blessing to young girls. But there are still pitfalls. Boys need to get hit and learn to take it, but girls need security and love. When insecure girls play sports, they are more susceptible to the temptations to try to become masculine. They may be looking for attention and affirmation from the sport when they really need it from their dads and their moms. They may "feel" unfeminine, so they gravitate to sports where they don't have to be feminine. This means that wise parents will closely monitor their daughters while they participate in sports. And if they begin to show signs of becoming "macho" or unfeminine, they should consider pulling them out.

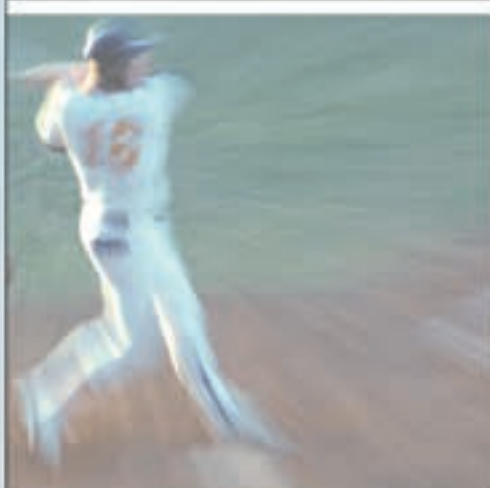
I have seen the discipline of sports teach girls to be better stewards of their time, thus causing their studies to improve. Some exposure to sports can give our daughters confidence and make them "well-rounded" in their education. My daughter especially recommends volleyball for Christian girls because it is a team sport that can include lots of people, of all ages, and is a great activity for church picnics.

And team sports are revealing when it comes to testing a daughter's character. She



Questions for discussion

1. Would non-Christians like this article? Why or why not? Should we agree with their reasons?
2. Do you think boxing, baseball, football and hockey are completely masculine sports? Are there sports women shouldn't play and are there sports men shouldn't play?
3. The author gives several other examples of how women can be feminine in sports: by choosing to play softball instead of baseball, by wearing modest clothing and perhaps ribbons in their hair, and by avoiding dirty play or trash talk. What do you think of these examples – do you agree with all of them/any of them? Can you think of ways girls can be feminine while playing sports?
4. What is the author's main point? Do you agree? God has given men and women different roles, but are the gender's different roles something that has implications for the sports field?
5. Do any of our Christian school sports encourage girls to act masculine? If so, how so, and what could be changed?



has to think fast, look out for others, follow directions, and develop skill. This is all good, and none of this is contrary to a biblical femininity.

Uniforms

Of course I have to say something about uniforms and modesty. Christians ought to insist on dressing modestly. That means we shouldn't be wearing tank tops with huge armholes and sports bras underneath. Neither should they be wearing what are called butt-huggers. It doesn't matter if the other team is wearing skimpy outfits. Christians ought to refuse to participate in a sport where they will have to compromise in this area. A girls' team can be dressed appropriately and modestly, even if it is no longer "cool" to do so. And this doesn't mean wearing knee-length culottes, (or any length culottes for that matter). Volleyball and track teams are now wearing virtual swimsuits as uniforms, and it just isn't necessary. You can't tell me that they really can play better or run faster in less clothing. It's about making the slower women's sports more interesting to watch. Male volleyball players don't seem too hampered by actual shorts.

Sports are not evil in themselves. But bad coaches can make for a miserable experience. If your daughter is in a sport, know the coaches, be at the games, and know how your daughter is doing. She certainly shouldn't be forced into playing a sport if she isn't inclined to do so. But if she wants to play, parents ought not hinder her for the wrong reasons.



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Answering Atheists and other unbelievers

by Jon Dykstra

Very few atheists read *Reformed Perspective*. It's a shame really, because there's a lot of really good material in here they could benefit from. But despite that, they just don't subscribe.

While it would be wonderful if atheists, agnostics, and other unbelievers took out *RP* subscriptions, or started seeking after the Lord in other ways, by either coming to our churches or by seeking out Christians to answer what questions they might have, it just doesn't seem to happen often. There are people out there with questions – questions we have the answers to – but they don't seem to find us, and we don't seem to bump into them.

That's in part due to the blessings God has showered on so many of us: we attend a Christian church, and either go to a Christian school or work in a Christian workplace, and when we relax we interact with Christian friends and family. Some of us hardly ever meet unbelievers.

That's why it can be quite a good idea to seek out such interactions, and there are many ways we can all do this. We can introduce ourselves to our neighbors, join the local Toastmasters, get involved in politics, volunteer at a street mission . . . the possibilities are endless.

That's *where* we can do it, but how do we do it? How do you go about talking with an atheist? Over the last few months I've been interacting with atheists, agnostics and even the occasional Christian on an Internet forum

called *Yahoo! Answers* (www.answers.yahoo.com). The forum is huge, with more than 12 million users asking and answering questions about everything from "How do I program my VCR?" to "What's the meaning of Life?" I mostly stick to the "Religion and Spirituality" section, where the questions tend toward the deeper end of things. Some questions are sincere, some are blasphemous and some are just funny – one inquirer wanted to know why so many people in the Religion and Spirituality section had a problem with people from Armenia.

Over the last few months I've found out there are some very definite do's and do not's to remember when interacting with unbelievers who have questions.

1) Do/Do not answer a fool

At first glance Proverbs 26:4 seems to contradict the verse that follows right after it:

"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."

But when it comes to interacting with atheists, these two verses make perfect sense. Atheists are people who don't just doubt God's existence, but actually insist they know there is no god. They see the world around them, and somehow manage to miss the wonder of it all – they overlook the evidence of God's creative genius. They are, in short, fools.

And on *Yahoo! Answers* they ask a lot of foolish questions. Some, like the ones that follow, obviously don't deserve a response and, as Proverbs 26:4 points out, if we even attempt to answer them, we're only going to be acting just as foolish.

*Do not answer a fool
according to his folly,
lest you be like him yourself*

Proverbs 26:4

*Answer a fool according to
his folly, lest he be wise
in his own eyes.*

Proverbs 26:5





- "What was the name of that guy who was betrayed by Judas?"
- "Does religion cause Schizophrenia?"
- "How many sins do I get to commit before I go to hell? What's the maximum?"

- "Is there a proper throwing technique for stoning people?"
- However in other cases a foolish question needs to be answered so that the foolishness of the self-congratulatory questioner

can be exposed. For example, when Ruth Graham, the wife of well-known evangelist Billy Graham, died this past month, one questioner celebrated her death because she hated Mrs. Graham's husband:

"Did you see in today's news where the wife of another huge evangelical hater died today? Ruth Graham died today, the wife of evangelist Billy Graham – a man who openly hated millions of people."

While I'm not a Billy Graham fan – as the years have gone by his preaching has become less and less orthodox – this woman was attacking Graham on those areas in which he was orthodox, including, it seemed, his stance against homosexuality. So her question prompted a return question:

"I love how you link to an article that describes Ruth Graham as 'the loveliest, kindest person ever born' and then go on to talk about how horrible her husband is. You won't get the irony of course – the Grahams may have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and comforted the sick, but as long as they think homosexuality is wrong, they are simply haters, right?"

The mistake too many Christians make on *Yahoo! Answers* is to answer insincere questions sincerely. "Christians, can you walk and chew gum at the same time?" will get earnest replies from people who want to reassure the questioner that some Christians are actually smart, and several have even been known to have advanced degrees!

These two verses in Proverbs spell out what we must do when we encounter foolish questions: either mock the mocker, or ignore him.

2) Do be ready/Don't speak unless you are

When dealing with honest enquirers, rather than fools, another two apparently

Aren't Christians supposed to avoid judging?

...and other Yahoo questions that have been answered in Reformed Perspective

A lot of the religious topics dealt with in *Yahoo! Answers* are the same sort of topics we deal with in *Reformed Perspective* (it really is too bad more atheists don't subscribe). The questions below are a few of the more common and popular questions on the site. These have all been asked in the last few months and the odds are they, or something very similar, will be asked again soon.

Hate mom and dad?

Q: "How do Christians deal with this? Jesus says this in the 'Bible: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple" Luke 14:26."

A: "'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.' Hyperbole – exaggeration for effect – is used throughout the Bible, just as we do in day-to-day life (like in the phrase above). Jesus is using hyperbole here, and his point is clear – we have to love God far more than our parents."

Sabbath rest

Q: "What logic allows good church-going people to pay for others to work for them on Sunday? What I do not understand is how some are able to justify going out to eat, going grocery shopping, and other such everyday things ON SUNDAY for is this not paying others to contradict the very religion the person on these outings holds so dear? What message is being sent here?"

A: Question pretty much makes the point.

Do not judge?

Q: "Why are Christians some of the most judgmental people in the world? I thought that was the opposite of what Jesus wanted. Didn't Jesus hang out with the sinners and the 'bad' crowd. Why are these holy rollers so anti-everything? Live and let live. Let God be the judge."

A: "What the Bible actually says is don't judge, lest you be judged by the same standard you judge others with (Matthew 7:1-2). In other words, it warns against hypocrisy – condemning someone for the very same thing that you are doing. An example would be condemning a whole group of people – Christians – for being judgmental, even while you are being judgmental about them."



contradictory verses give good direction on how we should answer. These two verses are not side-by-side: one is a very famous "apologetic" verse from the New Testament and the second is another piece of tactical advice from Proverbs.

- "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence . . ." 1 Peter 3:15
- "It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way." Proverbs 19:2

On the one hand we are called to be ready to answer anyone who wants to ask about God or about what He has done for us. On the other hand, we are told that it isn't enough just to be willing to answer – we have to actually have some knowledge to pass on.

So when, for example, someone asked a question about abortion – a topic I had written on in the past – I was very ready. The lady wanted to know:

"Christians: How much money do you contribute to the pre and post natal care for women who have unwanted kids?"

Some respondents noted that many Christians do donate. I made a different, and I think more important, point:

"Does a Christian's willingness, or unwillingness to spend cash on pre or post natal care affect whether the unborn child is a human being? No it doesn't. It is either a human being and deserves the same protection all human beings do, or it ain't and doesn't, and that has nothing to do with how Christians spend their money. There's only one relevant question in the abortion debate: is the unborn human?"

Tactical tips for answering Yahoos

Yahoo! Answers (www.answers.yahoo.com) is a unique online community of more than 10 million people worldwide who ask and answer questions from other users. If you're interested in joining the fun here are a few tactical tips that are specific to the site:

1. Answer swiftly: Most questions are answered by a dozen or more people, so if you answer quickly, your answer will be near the top of everything where it is more likely to be read. Ideally, don't take more than 5 minutes to get your answer in.

2. Answer succinctly: Most answers are only a hundred or so words. If your answer is too long, it isn't as likely to be read.

3. Answer simply: Some questioners have so many mistaken ideas about Christianity it can be tempting to try to address each and every one. But if you do your answer will be too long and too slow, and won't be read. So focus on just one pertinent point, and then ask and trust that the Lord will give you another opportunity in the future to address the other wrong ideas.

I've done some study on abortion so I had the knowledge necessary to answer this question. But quite a number of Christians on the *Yahoo! Answers* site tackle topics they know nothing about. For example, many have a zealous belief in creationism and try to expose the foolishness of evolution by asking things like: "If we evolved from apes, why are there still apes?" This is an ignorant question that evolutionists answer with ease. Why are there still apes? Because no one thinks we evolved from apes – evolutionists think we came from "ape-like" creatures that are a common ancestor to both man and ape.

Every few days this particular question, or something similar, gets asked. So every few days evolutionists get to congratulate themselves on just how smart they are and just how dumb creationists are. That's what happens when zeal is not accompanied by knowledge.

How does this work in real life?

The *Yahoo! Answers* group offers a luxury that isn't available in most other situations – a Christian can pick what questions they want to answer and ignore ones they find difficult. While a face-to-face encounter is not going to work the same way, this tactical advice is still applicable. Be ready to answer, but if you aren't, don't just plow ahead in ignorance – zeal without understanding is of no use to anyone. If you're hit with a question you don't have a ready answer to, admit as much and, if the question is sincere, ask if you can get back to them on it after you've had some time to study.

So mock the fool, or ignore him, and when faced with a sincere question, be ready, study, and honor God with your heart, but also your mind. And if you aren't ready, don't fake it.

It's not easy, but it is that simple. 

IN A NUTSHELL

Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

"Not natural" is a bad argument . . . for either side

Gay marriage is going to be discussed at the 2007 General Synod of Canada's Anglican Church. Gay marriage is wrong for any number of reasons, but one of those reasons is *not* because "homosexuality isn't natural." This is a bad argument. As homosexual activists are happy to point out, there are a lot of homosexual animals out there in nature. We shouldn't be surprised; we know we live in a fallen world and that affects even the animals.

But while this is a bad argument for Christians to make, it's also a mistake for homosexual activists to point to nature and proclaim that homosexuality is normal and natural since animals do it. That's the mistake John Thorp made when he sent a submission in favor of gay marriage to all the delegates heading to synod. Thorp is a philosophy professor at the University of Western Ontario, and that doesn't speak highly for the university.

Thorp's bad argument was soon answered with a good one, by Dr. Robert A.J. Gagnon. He noted that the fact animals do something is no reason for people to do it too. As Gagnon put it, "I never used my dear departed dog 'Cocoa' and her instinctive sexual habits as a basis for determining what is 'natural' behavior. You can find animals of various species where some part of the population at least practices incest, pedophilia, extreme polyamory, and cross-species sex, along with same-sex activity."

Many things are natural, but that hardly makes them moral.

SOURCE: see LifeSiteNews.com for more on Robert Gagnon's response.

O Canada...

In honor of Canada Day (July 1) we present some notable dates in the development of Canada's national anthem and emblem.

1860 - The maple leaf makes its first recorded appearance as a national symbol when the Prince of Wales visits Toronto.

1880 - *O Canada* is performed for the first time, in French.

1906 - Twenty-six years later, the first English version is published.

1927 - Toronto's St. Patricks hockey team changes their name to the Maple Leafs.

1965 - Canada's new flag, the "Maple Leaf," is unfurled for the first time and flown on Parliament Hill.

1980 - *O Canada* (finally) becomes Canada's official national anthem.

A difference that divides

It can sometimes seem like there isn't a whole lot of difference between the USA's two main political parties. But on some issues the divide between Democrats and Republicans is quite clear, as was evidenced April 18th, after the US Supreme Court upheld a ban on partial-birth abortion (a procedure in which the unborn child is partially delivered, and then killed). Reporters asked the two parties' leading presidential candidates for their reactions, which are listed below. The first four are from Republican candidates: Rudy Giuliani, Sam Brownback, John McCain and Mitt Romney. The next three, which stand in stark contrast, are from Democrats: Hillary Clinton, John Edwards and Barack Obama:

"I agree with it."

"This is a great step forward..."

"Today's Supreme Court ruling is a victory..."

"This decision represents a step forward..."

"It is precisely this erosion of our constitutional rights that I warned against..."

"I could not disagree more strongly..."

"I strongly disagree..."

You might be a conservative Calvinist if ...

1. You can spell ~~supralapsarian~~, ~~supralapsarian~~, ~~supralapsarian~~, ~~supralapsarian~~.
2. You think "fencing" has something to do with the Lord's Supper instead of swords.
3. When someone asks you a question about the Bible, you answer, "Well, the confession says..." or "the catechism says..."
4. You know the meaning of most or all of the following - PCA, URC, RCUS, ICRC, OPC, CanRC, CRC, ERQ, ECP, and CHP.
5. You think the guy with the long hair and John 3:16 sign in the crowd at the golf tournaments is liberal.
6. Instead of attending prophecy or end-time conferences you go to conferences on "Christ and culture" and afterwards go to the local pub to talk about philosophy over a pint of ale.
7. Charles Spurgeon is just a little too Arminian for your blood.
8. You hear "tulip" and think "total depravity, unconditional election..."
9. You think the Arminian flower is the daisy ("He loves me, He loves me not, He love me...")
10. You visit a church for the first time and the second question you're asked is, "Are you related to..."
11. Your closet is divided into work clothes and Sunday clothes.
12. You think kids who go to public school are strange.

SOURCE: Modified from a joke making its way around the Internet. 

CRUSADERS: THE THIRD IN A SERIES OF PROFILES OF NOTABLE CANADIANS

KEN CAMPBELL

AND THE BIRTH OF CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN ACTIVISM IN CANADA

by Michael Wagner

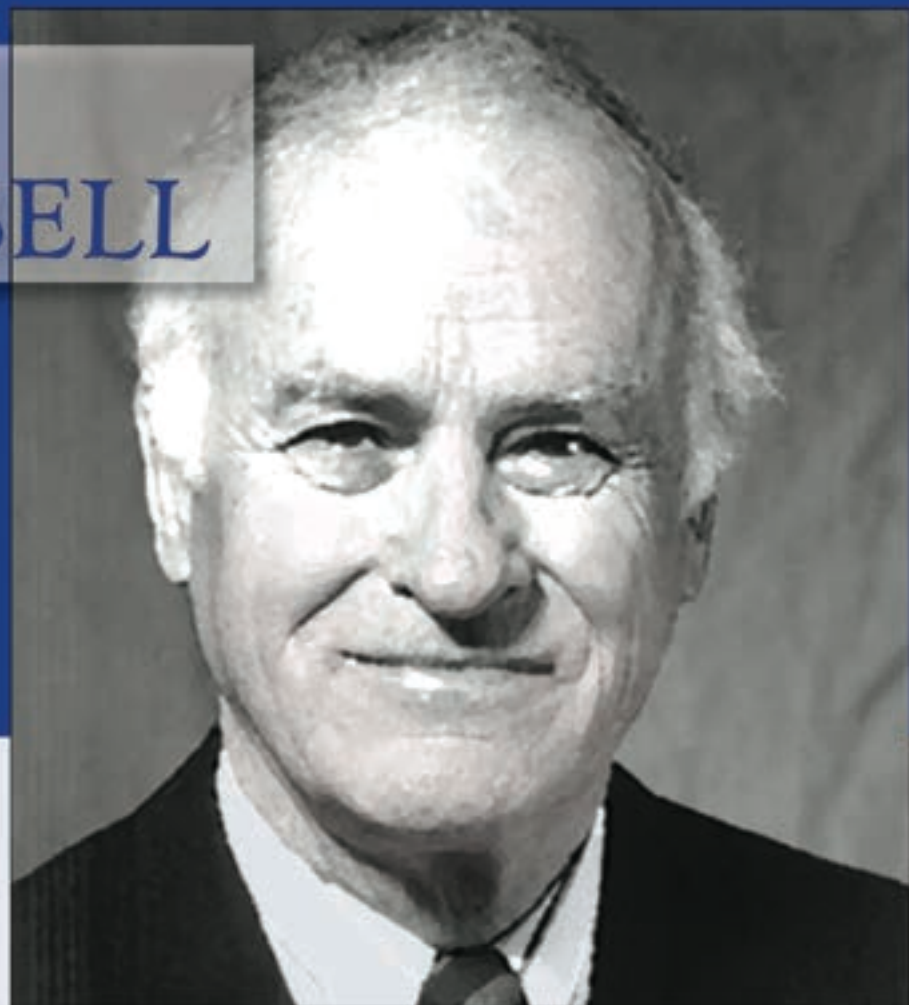


photo provided by The Intern

Rev. Ken Campbell started it all; he was the father of conservative Christian activism in Canada.

For many years he was a prominent Baptist evangelist, but in 1974 he was confronted with the liberalism that was engulfing public education – the high school some of his children were attending began including some immoral literature among its recommended reading, and homosexual rights activists were being given opportunities to promote their lifestyle to the students. The secular humanism of public education was now touching his own family.

It was at this point (as he relates in his book *Tempest in a Teapot*) that Campbell realized that for an evangelist “to evade the social implications of the Gospel which he preaches as they relate to his parental and citizen responsibilities, is to deny the Gospel which he preaches.” And this applied directly to himself: “I have no business preaching to anyone anywhere if I am unwilling to be all that a Christian father and citizen ought to be in his home and community.” Campbell therefore vowed to God that he would deal with the “edu-

cational crisis” facing his family.

To make a long story short, Campbell organized a “Renaissance” committee of local citizens in Halton, Ontario, to push for conservative-oriented changes in the local schools, and he withheld the educational portion of his property taxes as a protest against the objectionable policies. His committee and protest had a big impact on the local school board, and the board agreed to make many of the changes Campbell desired. Thus he resumed payment of his taxes.

Rather than pack up after this success, Campbell’s Renaissance Committee labored on, opposing the presence of immoral literature in public schools and compulsory sex education, while promoting educational choice. And

Campbell pulled his own five children out of the public schools and sent them to private Christian schools.

In time, Renaissance expanded into a national organization. Thus Ken Campbell’s forays into activism at a municipal level led to his launch into broader political activism.

Anita Bryant rallies

In 1978 Renaissance sponsored a cross-country speaking tour by Anita Bryant. An American celebrity, Bryant had become prominent in conservative Christian circles by actively opposing the homosexual rights movement in the USA. Campbell was impressed by her willingness to stand up for her Christian beliefs despite jeopardizing her career.

Campbell organized Anita Bryant rallies in cities across Canada. They were well attended, often attracting thousands of people. Each rally also attracted anti-Bryant protestors.

Due to Bryant's popularity in the USA, homosexual activists in Canada anticipated that her campaign against homosexual rights would come to Canada as well. Thus in 1977 the Coalition to Stop Anita Bryant was formed in Toronto. Tom Warner, a homosexual rights activist, relates the following events in his book *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*:

"When Bryant's Canadian visits finally occurred, front-page headlines and lead-story billing on television, along with sympathetic opinion columns and feature interviews, made them a huge news story. Seizing the opportunity, the Coalition to Stop Anita Bryant, on the evening before her first Toronto appearance, held a lively rally after which eight hundred people marched up Yonge Street—Canada's largest gay and lesbian rights demonstration up until that time. A second demonstration was held the next day, in front of the church at which Bryant was speaking."

The Body Politic

Shortly before Bryant's appearance in Toronto, in December 1977, the offices of the homosexual periodical, *The Body Politic*, were raided by Toronto police. Three officials of the periodical were charged with using the mail to distribute "immoral, indecent, and scurrilous" material due to an article it carried entitled "Men Loving Boys Loving Men." As one might gather from the title, it was believed the article encouraged pedophilia.

Eventually, after two trials, both of which resulted in acquittals, the case was dropped. However, in the first trial, which took place in January 1979, Ken Campbell appeared as a Crown witness. This was due to his high public profile on the homosexual rights issue. During the trial, Toronto Mayor John Sewell spoke at a rally in support of *The Body Politic*. Campbell was appalled by Sewell's open support for *The Body Politic*, and made an issue of the mayor's posi-

tion on the Christian TV program, 100 Huntley Street. The phone number of the mayor's office was given on the screen as the issue was discussed, and the mayor's office received a large number of calls, as did 100 Huntley Street.

Toronto election impact

In January 1980, Campbell held a rally at the Toronto City Hall which was attended by hundreds of people. Later that year Toronto's municipal election campaign began, with Mayor Sewell endorsing the candidacy of George Hislop, a prominent gay activist, for a seat on city council. Gay rights became a major component of the election, and both Sewell and Hislop were defeated.

... he was then able to lease an office right next to Morgentaler's abortuary.

Conservative Christians, most notably Ken Campbell himself, played a leading role in this election campaign. As Warner again relates,

"Renaissance International alone distributed 100,000 copies of a tabloid, urging the defeat of Sewell and other municipal election candidates seen as being supportive of gay and lesbian rights. The day before the election, Renaissance published a two-page advertisement in the *Toronto Sun* attacking the gay community and calling for a vote for Toronto the Good."

It was commonly reported at the time that the "gay issue" sunk Sewell's re-election campaign.

Ten days after the election, Campbell received a letter from Revenue Canada indicating that Renaissance's religious charity status would be revoked. Renaissance was a registered religious charity, but had been quite active in the election, especially in the production of the tabloid and the *Toronto Sun*

advertisement. In November 1982, after a legal fight that cost \$20,000, Renaissance's charity status was restored on procedural grounds, i.e., Campbell had not received a proper hearing.

Pro-life activism

Campbell's next major foray was into pro-life activism. In late 1984 Canada's most notorious abortionist, Henry Morgentaler, was acquitted in one of his many court cases. Campbell was very upset by the acquittal, and as a result he formed the organization Choose Life Canada, which was then able to lease an office right next to Morgentaler's abortuary in Toronto. The office was named "The Way Inn." Campbell provides considerable detail of his pro-life activities in his book *5 Years Rescuing at "The Gates of Hell"*.

After Canada's abortion law was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1988, Campbell's pro-life activism became more radical. In January 1989, he sponsored a Canadian visit by Randall Terry, the leader of Operation Rescue. Operation Rescue advocated non-violent civil disobedience in the form of having activists block the entrances to abortuaries with their bodies. Usually they would then be removed by police and arrested. Later that same month, Campbell participated in a "rescue" at the Morgentaler abortuary, and was arrested along with numerous other "rescuers."

As a result of the rescue, a court injunction was imposed forbidding pro-life protests within 500 feet of Morgentaler's facility. Thus The Way Inn was compelled to close.

Campbell continued his Christian activism until his death in August 2006. However, he was less prominent as new leaders and organizations emerged defending the pro-life and pro-family cause. But he did have a run-in with the Ontario and B.C. Human Rights Commissions beginning in 1998 (an account of this incident can be found in the article "Campbell is out of Commission," *Reformed Perspective*, November 2004). Campbell was very pleased that a new generation of conservative Christian activists, such as Tristan Emmanuel, had picked up the torch he lit 30 years earlier.





Are you cyber-savvy?

*Email and Internet safety 101
— stuff parents and kids need to know*

by Ike Van Dyke

Our kids seem to be born already knowing how to work a mouse, download files, and “log on.” But as much as our children know about computers, they aren’t yet wise... they have computer know-how but they don’t have the wisdom to always put that know-how to safe and productive use.

In other words, our children still need us – parents who may not even know how to turn on a computer – to teach them how to properly use computers. These are grand technologies, but they do have their dark side and our kids need us by their side guiding them, imparting our wisdom, and keeping them safe.

To do that, however, many of the older generation will need to get a little more computer-savvy. You don’t need to know as much about computers as your kids do, but if you’re going to act as their wise guide you will have to know a little more than just how to hit the “on” button. This article is a good beginning. We’re going to go over some basic con-

cepts, focusing on two key areas where kids need the most guidance online:

1. how kids can *Protect* themselves
2. how they should give proper *Respect* to others online

PROTECT

Kids need to know how to protect themselves, and the computer they are using. One key necessity for any computer hooked up to the Internet is either a good Internet filter (to keep children from accidentally coming across pornography) or monitoring software (to report on them to mom or dad if they purposely seek it out). I dealt with this in an earlier article, *Saving them from the Internet’s sleazy side* (May 2003), so this time we’ll deal with other, more subtle concerns.

We’ll start with some basics that your children may not completely understand, so they are worth reviewing. To properly protect your computer you need to:

- *Install a firewall and anti-virus software* – These are musts, and you shouldn’t

operate a computer until you know all about these two security features.

- *Download security patches for all your software* – To be secure your software has to be up to date.
- *Beware of any suspicious email or attachments* – Computer viruses are often transmitted via email attachments, so it’s important to use your anti-virus software to scan email attachments before opening them. Even emails from friends can be infected, without the sender being aware of it.
- *Never download software without talking to mom or dad* – Your kids’ overconfidence can kill your computer – they think they know what they are doing, but if they download a program from a website that isn’t trustworthy, they can infect your computer with spyware or viruses.
- *Back up your computer regularly* – Inevitably your children will do something that messes up things on your computer. Minimize the potential



Our kids seem to be born already knowing how to work a mouse.

damage by regularly backing up crucial files.

Protect your child's safety and privacy

Blogs, message boards, MySpace.com pages, chat rooms – they're all public places and kids may not understand that what they post up on these sites can be read by anyone. So it's important to impress on your child that they should not go public with their private information.

- *Don't share information that you wouldn't want strangers to know* – For obvious

reasons children shouldn't be posting any identifiable information like their last name, phone number, address, or school name. Kids often don't realize that posting information about their favorite sports team, hangout or local mall is the sort of information which can also be used to identify them – it's up to parents to make this clear.

- *Ask before sharing photos* – Children should always check with their parents before posting photos online. It's one thing to post a photo to a family

website but it is obviously another thing completely for your child to send a picture of themselves to someone you don't know.

- *Don't trust strangers* – People lie online – it's easy to do, because it's easy to be anonymous online. So our kids have to be warned not to believe everything they read online, or trust people they meet online, especially if that person wants to find out a whole bunch of information about them. And, this is a huge one, kids should never arrange to meet "friends" they only know from the Internet.
- *Deal with cyber-bullies* – Parents remember bullies from their younger days, but today's bully – the cyber-bully – can tease and taunt your child via email or instant messages, or even through postings in chat rooms. Malicious gossip, done with a technological twist, can now reach more people quicker than ever. Flaming – harassing someone by repeatedly sending them insulting/hateful messages – is very common, and sometimes kids can even have their online identities hijacked by a bully who finds out their password. He can then make their life miserable by posting mean message while pretending to be your son or daughter. So how do we beat

Tech Terms

Some of the terms used in this article are a bit "techy." For the rest of us, here's a short dictionary of the more important technical terms used.

Blogs:

Blogs often act as online personal journals that anyone can read. They usually get updated weekly or even daily, and the entries appear in chronological order. Also called a Weblog.

Chat room:

A place on the Internet where a person can meet and carry on a conversation with one or more people, by typing messages back and forth.

Internet filter:

This program prevents a computer from accessing certain websites that are known to have objectionable material (porn, hate, violence, etc.) – it "filters out" some of the Internet's filth. These filters are far from foolproof – some bad stuff will still

make it through, and some good stuff could be accidentally blocked – but they are still a very good way to minimize the objectionable material your children will see while surfing the Internet. Some good filters to check out are www.hedge.org, www.bsafesite.com and www.integrity.com.

Monitoring software:

This program doesn't filter out filth, but it does records all the websites a computer visits, and reports those visits to an "accountability partner" – in effect, it is a way to always be looking over your children's shoulders while they surf. A good one can be found at www.covenanteyes.com.

MySpace.com:

A "social networking" website that allows people to interact with one another by sharing their personal profiles, posting blogs, and sharing photos, music and videos with over 100 million other MySpace users worldwide. Facebook.com is another popular similar site.

Spam:

Unsolicited bulk emails, the email equivalent of junk mail.

the cyber-bullies? Our children have to be taught to:

- *Never respond or retaliate* – Bullies always want a reaction. So if someone sends you a mean or insulting email, and you never respond, they're likely to get bored and go look for more responsive targets. Don't even open messages from bullies, block his emails, and if you meet a bully in cyberspace, leave that online environment. You can't be bullied if you can't be reached. Children should also remember to tell a parent if they feel threatened.
- *Get active offline* – An active "offline" life – life in the real world – is the best defense against online bullying. An online bully can't push around a child who is busy offline skateboarding, building forts and spending time with family and friends.
- *Pick good passwords* – Picking a good password is a key to online privacy. Kids often have ridiculously easy passwords to guess: "12345" or their birthday, phone number, or nickname. Work with them to come up with something they can remember without having to write it down, but something that is a difficult-to-guess mix of letters and numbers. It's also worth spending some time impressing on your child that their password is supposed to be a secret – one they won't share even with their friends.

Protect your child's inbox

It's getting harder and harder to avoid spam these days and most of it is definitely not material we want our children reading. What follows are a few steps you can take to cut down on the spam they will get (also see <http://spam.abuse.net>).

- *Pick an unusual email address* – If your children get email addresses from any web-based email service (Hotmail, Gmail, etc.) they'll have spam in their inbox within hours of opening up their email account. Spammers take guesses at email addresses

Sobering statistics

Last May the American-based National Center for Missing & Exploited Children conducted a survey of American teens aged 13-17. The survey looked into the safety of their online behavior (www.netsmartz.org). Now hopefully our kids are a little smarter, but do we know that they are? The study found:

- 61% of 13 to 17-year-olds have a personal profile on a website.
- 50% of this group have posted pictures of themselves online.
- 33% reported that their parents know "very little" or "nothing" about what they do on the Internet.
- 22% say their parents have never discussed Internet safety with them.
- 30% considered meeting someone they've only communicated with online.
- 14% actually have
- 71% reported receiving messages online from someone they don't know.
- 40% of this group usually reply to and chat with that person.
- 45% have been asked for personal information by someone they don't know.

so ordinary ones, like jsmith@whatever.com will get loads of spam long before a more unusual address like shoe-#22-blue@whatever.com.

- *Keep your address a secret* – Obviously your children are going to want to tell their friends their email address – what's the point in having one otherwise? – but they shouldn't post it online anywhere. Spammers collect email addresses using "spambot" computer programs that visit millions of websites looking for anything with an @ symbol in it. If your children's email addresses are on a web-

site anywhere on the Internet they'll soon start getting lots of spam.

- *Use a spam filter* – Most Internet service providers have "spam filters" – these intercept spam, filter it out of your incoming emails, and then usually delete it. These filters aren't 100 per cent effective, and may sometimes filter out messages you actually want, but they are getting better and can reduce the amount of spam your children receive by 95% or more. If you want to be sure your children don't get any spam the one sure solution is to use what's called a "white-list" spam filter. Rather than "black-listing" emails that seem to be from spammers, these filters will only accept emails from people you've put on your approved list (your white-list). All other emails are eliminated, so your child will never get unsolicited emails. More and more email programs are coming with white-list filters so when you're buying an email program, check that it has this feature. Spam filters don't take much time to set up, but if you haven't heard of them before your best bet is phoning your most computer savvy friend and asking them for some help setting this up.

RESPECT

Once you've made sure your child is safe online it's important they learn proper online behavior. Parents have to teach their kids how to behave in public, and the Internet is a public place with its own special rules and etiquette.

Respect other people's feelings

Sitting at a keyboard, children (and adults too) often forget that the message they are sending off is going to a real live person, not a computer, and that person has feelings that can be hurt. So . . .

- *Think twice before you send or post anything* – Kids can be cruel, so impress on them they should never send anything while they're angry. It's important they take a moment to think before they send any emails, because the moment they hit "send" they can't

Our children still need us – parents who may not even know how to turn on a computer – to teach them how to properly use computers.

take it back. And few children understand that anything they post on the Internet is there to stay – old websites or blog entries live on in computers which are archiving the whole Internet (www.archive.org/web/web.php). So they shouldn't post or write anything on the Internet that they might someday want to take back.

- *Try to be clear* – Children don't always understand how important body language can be to understanding and so they won't understand how a joke that might be funny in person can be misinterpreted as insulting when it is emailed. We need to explain it to them and emphasize the need to be careful when they write so that they won't be misunderstood. And since it is easy to be misunderstood, children should also be taught the quickest, surest way to resolve misunderstandings – they need to be both ready to apologize and ready to forgive.

Respect other peoples' time and privacy

The Internet makes it easier to stay in contact with friends and family but it also means we can be overwhelmed with email if our friends and family don't practice a little restraint. So we need to teach our kids a little restraint. And we need to show them some ways they can help respect other people's privacy.

- *Think before forwarding emails* – Chain-letter emails abound, and most of them are fake cries for help. So if your child receives an urgent "pass this on" email, teach them to double-check it first before sending it on. Urban legend/hoax websites like Snopes.com are a good way to check whether an email is true or not (but be careful, these sites can have some risqué material). Your children should be sure they aren't passing on lies to their friends.
- *Bcc is the best* – When you're sending out a group email, remember, not



everyone on the list may want everyone else on the list to know their email address. So you can be considerate of others' feelings by always using the Bcc – blind carbon copy – option and hiding everyone's email addresses.

CONCLUSION

While it is very important to keep abreast of things, there is one thing that is even more important than knowing about email, chat rooms and blogs: we have to ensure our children know they can always come to us with their problems. Moms and dads will not be able to keep up with *all* the newest technologies, but we can keep up with how our kids are doing. Whether it's online or off, they need to know they can come to us with their concerns... and even confessions. We can't teach them much if they don't care to, or are too scared to come to us.

As the Internet develops and changes, it is going to be tough to keep up... but we do need to make the effort. We don't have to know it all, but we do need to have an inkling so we'll be able to tailor our grey-headed wisdom to the new situations our children are encountering. May God grant all parents the patience and mental flexibility they'll need to keep on learning these "new tricks."

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Anniversaries worth celebrating

Try as they might, evolutionists can't improve on the Linnaeus taxonomy

by Margaret Helder

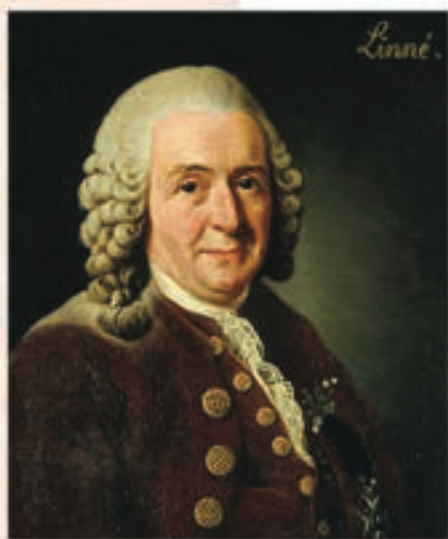
Almost every year is an anniversary of some significant event or other, but 2007 and 2008 are particularly special for biologists. This year we celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of Carl Linnaeus, and next year we celebrate the 250th anniversary of his ground breaking system for naming and categorizing plants and animals.

Prior to the time of Linnaeus, naturalists had a terrible time dealing with the creation's incredible biodiversity (variety of organisms). They even had problems trying to discover what name, if any, had been applied to a given organism. Linnaeus developed a system that eliminated the chaos. To this day, we have enjoyed the results of his efforts.

Unfortunately however, evolutionary attitudes are driving us back toward uncertainty about names and groupings of organisms. One might suppose that a system which has served us so well for so long, would be retained. Unfortunately evolutionary objectives trump practicality.

A little history

Carl Linnaeus was born on May 23, 1707 to Swedish parents. His father was a Lutheran minister and his mother, only 18 when he was born, was the daughter of a minister. Carl grew up in a family that loved plants. Indeed his father was an amateur botanist and enthusiastic gardener. Not surprisingly, the young Carl grew up not only a sincere Christian, but also with a great love for, and curiosity about nature. At age 25 he spent five months in Lapland studying the flora and fauna of the region. Three years later he went to the Netherlands to study medicine. During that time, Linnaeus had access to an impressive collection of tropical plants on the estate, near Haarlem, of George Clifford, a director of the Dutch East India Company. These travels constituted Linnaeus' exposure to the diversity of organisms.



After that he returned to Sweden to teach, raise a family, to think and to write. For information on the diversity of organisms in distant regions of the globe, he relied on correspondence with other naturalists.

Linnaeus developed a system that eliminated the chaos.

Linnaeus was curious and eager for descriptions of new organisms, particularly plants. He was a collector of information. He had a reason for this passion for information. He believed that God had created all organisms according to a plan, and if man could discern it, we would know something of God's logic in creating the living kinds.

Thus Linnaeus first set out to propose categories of organisms which would be logical and natural (true groups), reflecting God's creative plan.

Secondly Linnaeus sought to find a user-friendly system for naming organisms and for retrieving those names.

Groups inside groups

Linnaeus believed that an organism which is assigned to a group, should share a set of characteristics with other organisms in the group. For example:

- **Kingdom** – Any plant can be grouped in the kingdom "plants". We expect then that like other plants, it is rooted and photosynthesizes in sunlight to manufacture food.
- **Phylum** – Similarly we can subdivide plants into divisions such as ferns, horsetails, club mosses, gymnosperms (conifers) and flowering plants, among others.
- **Class** – We might then separate the flowering plants (which produce seeds in fruits) into classes of monocots and dicots. Monocots have flower parts usually in multiples of three, veins in leaves arranged in a parallel rather than in a branching pattern, and stems which lack any secondary (woody) thickening.
- **Order** – The class monocots can then be divided into orders such as Orchidales (orchids), Liliales (lilies), Graminales (grasses and grains), and Palmales (palms) among others.
- **Family** – Among the Liliales are families which include obvious lilies (Liliaceae), the daffodils (Amaryllidaceae), iris (Iridaceae), and rushes (Juncaceae) among others.
- **Etc.** – Among the family of obvious lilies we find lilies, crocus, trillium, asparagus and tulips, among others. Among the lilies we find such plants as *Lilium philadelphicum* var. *andinum* adopted in 1941 as the floral emblem of the province of Saskatchewan.

It was Linnaeus' achievement to declare that living creatures could be categorized into groups which could then be separated into increasingly narrow

collections of organisms. Within each grouping, at each level, the organisms exhibit features in common with others in the group and different from organisms in other groups.

Prior to Linnaeus, names of organisms included lengthy lists of descriptive adjectives. The names of all organisms, whatever their characteristics, were listed together in alphabetical order, rather than in categories with other organisms of like characteristics. It is evident that Linnaeus' publication of the huge work *Systema Naturae* (System of Nature) in 1758 was truly a monumental development in the history of biology. From this point forward, biologists had a common taxonomic framework (they had a common "filing system" to work with) and a practical retrieval system for names.

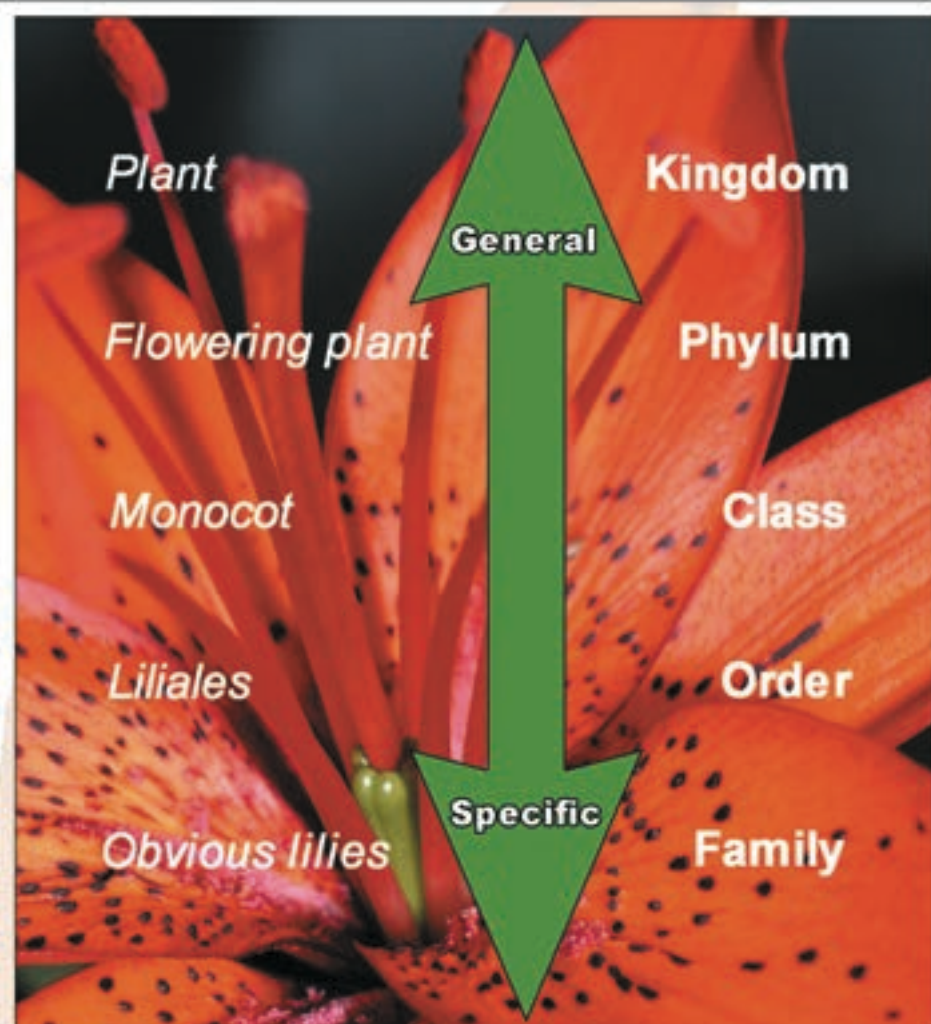
Why mess with it?

The question thus arises, why modern man would want to tamper with success?

Linnaeus' system was based on his understanding that organisms share sets of characteristics because they were designed by God to do so. Why is there so much variety? There is variety because God delights in variety on specific themes. Why can we detect a hierarchy of increasingly broad categories in which to place organisms? God designed His creation to be logical, understandable and practical.

This understanding of the creation has, however, fallen into disfavor with many scientists during the past 150 years. Most biologists today believe that evolution, not God, produced the diversity that we see. These biologists now want our categorizing of organisms to reflect an evolutionary descent.

In the same way that cousins may resemble each other more than more distant relations, so biologists believe that organisms which exhibit similar



features, probably are more recently descended from a common ancestor. In order to identify evolutionary lines of descent, biologists began to identify certain organisms as "primitive" and others as "advanced." For example, one-celled organisms would be considered primitive compared to organisms made up of many different kinds of cell. Such speculations however had little effect on the groupings of organisms since the categories were based on shape and other biological features that we can see.

New approach

A new approach was proposed in 1950 and 1966 by a German entomologist. He proposed that organisms be separated into lines of descent based on only a few characteristics. One branch would represent those possessing a certain feature, and the other branch would include the "have nots." Then these two

branches would each be separated into two further branches based on possession or lack of other characteristics. This system, called cladistics, sounded good in theory. However nature seldom cooperates to fit this system. All too often a unique characteristic shows up in organisms already separated into separate lines. In this case biologists assume the unique characteristic appeared twice by chance (convergence), or that the organisms were formerly wrongly placed in separate lines of descent. This takes away from the logical character of the categorizing because key features can then be found in any group. Furthermore, what was problematic when observable characteristics like shape were used, has become dramatically worse now that DNA sequencing (order of the chemical components along the molecule) is preferentially used to indicate

order of branching and thus relationships (categories).

Imagine the sentiments of a biologist who thinks she knows the major groups of organisms, when she comes across a term like "ecdysozoans." Obviously the term represents an important group of organisms but her recently published dictionary of biology includes no such term. A little research reveals that the term represents a new "superclade" (category equivalent to Linnaeus' phylum).

Based on some similar DNA sequences, the microscopic roundworms or nematodes are grouped with the arthropods. What??? Nematodes are tiny spindle shaped worms. Many are parasites of plants or animals. They have no distinct head, no special body cavity and often are made up of less than 1000 cells in total in their bodies. Compared to nematodes, arthropods are giants. Arthropods are creatures with an exoskeleton and jointed appendages (such as legs, wings, antennae). They include insects, crustaceans like crabs, spiders, millipedes and so on. Previously no one even remotely imagined any kind of relationship or grouping in common between nematodes and arthropods. Well they do both discard their skin in order to grow. Snakes molt too but nobody wants to place them into the ecdysozoans.

It just doesn't make sense

Prominent evolutionist Simon Conway Morris declares that molecular data have revolutionized previous views on taxonomic groupings. There have been plenty of surprises. In other words the molecular data do not fit the categories based on shape and biology. Of the ecdysozoans he declares: "in the ecdysozoans the previously unexpected link between nematodes and arthropods has not yet led to a more precisely resolved phylogeny [theory of relationships].

Nor, of course, are we any better informed as to how anything like a nematode could have evolved from any other group of ecdysozoan" (*Cell* vol. 100, Jan. 7/00 p. 8). The controversy on the placement of nematodes with arthropods continues to the present. Many organisms, in similar fashion, are shuttled back and forth from one group to another as each new batch of molecular data is obtained.

The categories of organisms are thus subject to rapid changes of position and illogical groupings. This makes life difficult for people who work with biological materials. That list includes people in agriculture, horticulture, ecology and biodiversity research. In many cases even the Latin names of organisms are changed as they are shuttled from one category to another. An article on the topic in the November 2005 *Landscape Trades* magazine was entitled "Rosa by any other name might not smell as sweet" (pp. 38-42).

More and more species

The March 15/07 issue of *Nature*, with cover story on Linnaeus, also pointed out another major problem stemming from taxonomic categories based on DNA sequences. The article, entitled "The species and the specious" (pp. 250-253) deals with the issue of "cryptic" or hidden species. It turns out that populations of organisms that look the same, may yet be designated as separate species if they differ in some part of their DNA sequence. The article recounts the story of the meadow jumping mouse which is common all over the United States. Apparently in the foothills of Colorado and Wyoming however, there is a population of meadow jumping mouse with some DNA differences from those on the rest of the continent. Advocates want the foothills population declared a separate species. Since it occurs in a limited geo-

graphical area, the mouse would then be eligible for protection under endangered species legislation. It so happens that the mouse habitat is on prime land for development.

Apparently, according to the journal *Nature*, we are seeing dramatic species inflation as biologists move to a new species concept based on evolution theory rather than biology. According to the biological definition, populations which interbreed in the wild, are from the same species. According to the evolution based definition, any diagnosable difference merits separate species designation.

The problem of species inflation is widespread in plants too. And it is apparently playing havoc with endangered species legislation which was based on the old biological definition. Now, the smaller the area with a cryptic species, the smaller the population numbers will be and the more deserving the organism will be of legal protection.

Conclusion

Carl Linnaeus, for his part, was an intellectual giant. Based on his Christian faith and his love of nature, this man developed a system of categorizing organisms which was logical and practical. His system has served us well for 250 years. In the past few years however, biologists have done their best to turn Linnaeus' system into something that is unstable (constantly changing), illogical and impossible to use for practical purposes. All this has been carried out in the name of Darwinian theory. May saner heads prevail so that we do not lose the benefits of Linnaeus' work. There is an ancient saying "Let us now praise famous men and the fathers that begat us." It seems appropriate in 2007 to praise the work of Carl Linnaeus. May we never forget why this work was so successful.





Soup & Buns

On the other side

by Sharon L. Bratcher

Recently I was working with some acquaintances on a rather large cleanup project. A woman I had just met began instructing me regarding how to sweep correctly, and how to avoid aggravating one's back while sweeping. Oh, she knew what she was talking about, she said, because she had to sweep out her barn regularly, and didn't she have a lot of back trouble over the years? At least three times she swept over near me to add further advice such as "you need to switch sides frequently!" It was quite annoying, yet instructive in an interesting way. Why? Because I found out what it feels like to be "on the other side." Ouch.

At first, I had thoughts such as, "I certainly have a lot of experience with sweeping" and "I could tell a few tales about pulled muscles in my back also." Since I was wearing a dust mask and hat, I even wondered if she thought that I was a lot younger than she was, and therefore in need of her instructions. I decided not to confront or argue, but instead just to let her go on. And I began to see myself.

Oh, my. How many times have I shared the vast wealth of my knowledge with all those around me! They didn't even need to ask. Whenever I saw a situation where something I have learned might help someone nearby, I shared it. I like to assume that's what this new acquaintance was doing.

Ouch again!

I always thought that it came from the purest of motives. God calls us to help others, to teach others, to share with others what He has taught to us. So often I

have been taught and lifted and comforted by what others have said, and I truly, truly want to help others.

I didn't hold it against this lady.

Analyzing situations with the benefit of hindsight, I can also see that sometimes I was so eager to be helpful that I rather forced myself into situations, and practically demanded to be allowed to help. Ouch again. I never understood the quiet, thoughtful responses that sometimes ensued. I figured that people were glad for what I thought I unselfishly gave to them. I shared my knowledge, and oh, by the way, I also often insisted that the best way to do a thing was the way I had learned, thank you very much! During the recent "sweeping" incident, I felt that quiet, thoughtful response come over me. And I realized that what was going through the minds of those "on the other side" was not what I had imagined. I really had not known.

And so, I didn't hold it against this lady. I felt like I knew what her intent was, and I chose to overlook the annoyance of it by changing the subject whenever possible, and eventually moving to a different room to sweep. Ouch again. Oh, my, how many times have people done that with me, and I didn't even realize it?

In need of a fruit

Growing up at the end of the "hippie" era, I absorbed a lot of talk about speaking the truth, being honest, not being hypocritical and speaking one's mind. Some of this was good, but it tended to leave out a valuable aspect of the fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23: self-control. And in order to have self-control, one must have patience, intend kindness, and learn gentleness, also sometimes known as "tact." But how does this "fruit" get put into action?

1 Corinthians 13:1 states: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." It is not enough to have the truth nor to be able to phrase it coherently. One must share it in a loving manner.

This may include beginning with the phrase, "may I share what worked for me?" instead of coming across as the know-it-all who rode in to save the day.

It might also include not interrupting someone telling a story to correct his details or grammar. Gentleness and kindness may call for a later private conversation if the matter is essential to the cause of truth. Self-control and patience will help us to wait.

It seems that the Lord brings these "on the other side" situations to me often these days. They help me to learn from mistakes of the past. They also help me to exercise love that "overlooks a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). My prayer is that I will be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" (from James 1:19).



PUZZLE PAGE 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 # 134



WHITE to Mate in 4
Or, If it is BLACK's Move, **BLACK to Mate in 2**

NEW PUZZLES

Riddles for Punsters #134

Why did Johnny Chicken-heart never play outside barefooted in the spring, summer and autumn?

He was afraid of cutting his feet on the h _ _ _ _ _ of g _ _ _ _ _

Problem to Ponder #134 - "Summer Sports"

Many youth of a certain congregation are always very involved with soccer, baseball or volleyball during the summer. Some play two, or even all three, of those sports. In total, 30 play soccer and 32 baseball and 19 volleyball. Of those, 19 play soccer and baseball, 10 soccer and volleyball, and 11 baseball and volleyball. Of those, only 7 play all three sports.

- Altogether, how many of the youth play one or more of the sports?
- How many play soccer and baseball but not volleyball?

Answer to Riddles for Punsters #133

Why do disk jockeys not like to listen to people who keep repeating themselves?
It is because those people sound like **broken records**.

Answers to Problem to Ponder #133 - "Likely Probabilities"

How many different 4-member Student Councils can be elected from 20 students, if the Council has a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer? If every student has the same likelihood of being elected, what is the probability that a) Laura will be on the Council? b) Laura will be the treasurer?

ALSO, What is the probability that the Ottawa Senators, who have already lost 2 games against the Anaheim Ducks, will win the Stanley Cup by winning 4 of the (as I type this) 5 remaining games (or win the next 4 games, in which case there will not be a fifth game)? Assume that the two teams are evenly matched so that the probability of Ottawa winning any game is 1 in 2 (so 50%).

There are $20 \times 19 \times 18 \times 17 = 116280$ ways to pick 4 people out of 20, arranged in a certain order of being picked, namely president, vice-president, etc. [NOTE: On a calculator with a nPr button, the answer is ${}_{20}P_4 = 116280$ arrangements.]

The number of possible councils with Laura on them is the number of ways Laura can have one of 4 offices times the ways the other 3 offices can be filled, so 4 (choices for an office for Laura) $\times$ 19 (students left to fill a second office) $\times$ 18 (for third office) $\times$ 17 (for last office) = 23256 councils [$4 \times {}_{19}P_3 = 23256$ on a calculator.]

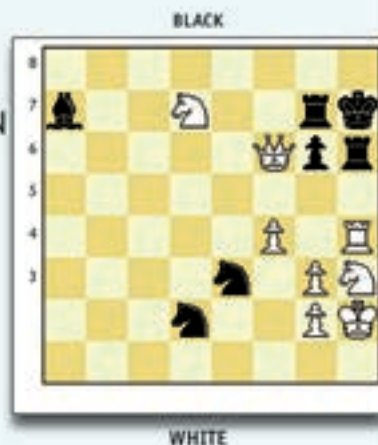
Probability(event) = number of ways to have a successful outcome / total number of outcomes. So the **Probability(Laura in 1 of 4 offices of the council) = number of different councils with Laura / total councils possible = $23256 / 116280 = 1/5$ so 1 chance in 5, the same as the probability of being on a 4-member committee (see previous Puzzle Page).**

However, the probability of Laura being on the council as treasurer will be 19(choices for pres.) $\times$ 18(vice-pres.) $\times$ 17(secr.) $\times$ 1(treasurer must be Laura) / $20 \times 19 \times 18 \times 17 = 1/20$ so 1 chance in 20. [${}_{19}P_3 / {}_{20}P_4 = .05 = 1/20$ on a calculator.]

If W=WIN, L=loss, $1/2$ = probability of winning any individual game, then the Senators probability of winning the Cup is the Probability(WWWW, no fifth game needed) = $1/2 \times 1/2 \times 1/2 \times 1/2 = 1/16$ added to the Probability(LWWWW OR WLWWW OR WWLWW OR WWWLW) = $4 \times (1/2 \times 1/2 \times 1/2 \times 1/2 \times 1/2) = 4/32 = 1/8$, so the overall probability is $1/16 + 1/8 = 1/16 + 2/16 = 3/16$, less than 1 chance in 4. Sure enough, the Senators were unable to beat the odds (or the Ducks)!

SOLUTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS (MAY) PUZZLE PAGE

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE # 133



WHITE to Mate in 2

Descriptive Notation

- RxR ch KxR
- QR4 mate

Algebraic Notation

- Rh4xh6 + Kh7xh6
- Qf6h4 ++

BLACK to Mate in 3

Descriptive Notation

- N/K6B8 ch
- KR1 NxP ch
- KR2 N/Q7B8 mate

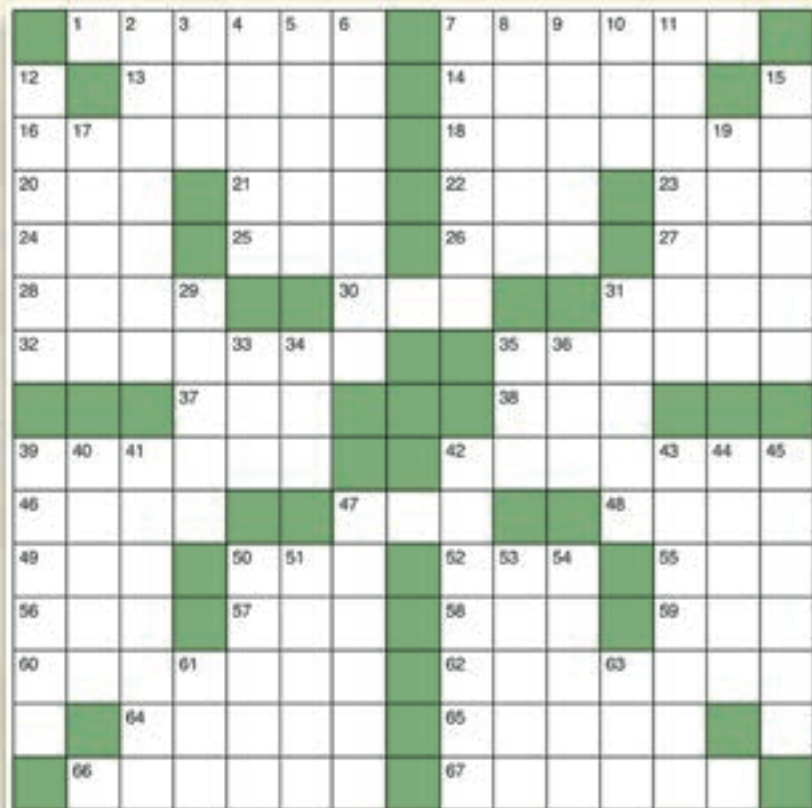
Algebraic Notation

- Ne3f1 +
- Kh2h1 Nf1xg3 +
- Kh1h2 Nd2f1 ++

Crossword Puzzle

Series 14 No 11

Last month's solution
Series 14 No 10



ACROSS:

1. Have a great ambition
7. Summer entrees
13. One who sits for pictures
14. Airlift arrival (abbr.)
16. Summer residence, perhaps?
18. Small glass pieces, maybe from meteorites
20. Ever, poetically speaking
21. Girl's name
22. Anger
23. Federal Aviation Admin.
24. Wee picnicker
25. Japanese money
26. Run-time system (abbr.)
27. Certain tropical plants
28. Tree feature
30. Pass away
31. Car mishap
32. Spanish men
35. Intelligence, slangily speaking
37. Step on the gas
38. Head part
39. Take ice off the windows
42. Copy
46. An eagle's victim
47. Bright light
48. Pointy shape
49. Started the fire
50. Hill, in South Africa
52. Wonderful, in slang
55. High powered amplifier (abbr.)
56. Air speed indicator, for short
57. Goat's hair fabric
58. English as a second language (abbr.)
59. Fleur-de-_____
60. Water mister or mosquito fogger
63. Bishop's robe
64. Delete
65. Group's doctrine
66. Male ducks
67. Whine

DOWN:

2. Native of Sparta
3. Hawaiian food
4. Small islands
5. Administrative office of a town
6. Tasks
7. Use of irony in literature
8. Awake and aware
9. Summer destinations
10. Skill
11. A wanderer
12. Robs
15. Animals
17. Lady's name
19. A trace of something bad
29. Quick raid
31. Wall or lawn game
33. Sales agent
34. The night before
35. Scanning electron microscope
36. Spring month in Paris
39. Water sound
40. Crunchy
41. One who is leaving his career
42. Contaminates
43. Sports player
44. Swine-like animal
45. Pencil part
47. Extra parts
50. Summer water rider
51. Excessively overweight
53. Pale
54. Small pancake
61. Constellation, the altar
63. Million electron volts (abbr.)

Joyce