

# OBSERVER/FAITH & REASON

Calgary Herald Archive  
Brian Wilson, foreground,  
the creative driver behind  
the Beach Boys, is  
surrounded by his  
bandmates for  
a photo in the mid-'60s.

## Rock with religious OVERTONES

DAVID BUCKNA  
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

- 1 What Pete Seeger song covered by the Byrds (1965) is based on the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3?
- 2 Steve Turner observes in his book, *A Hard Day's Write: The Stories Behind Every Beatles Song*: "Understood at the time as just another Beatles' love song, it was actually sprinkled with clues pointing to a song of a different kind. The love that John (Lennon) was now singing about offered 'freedom' and 'light'. It even offered 'the way.' He may even have been thinking of 'the word' in the evangelistic sense of 'preaching the word.'" Name the song.
- 3 What 1966 song by the Beach Boys did Paul McCartney refer to as "the greatest song ever written"?
- 4 For what 1967 album did Elvis win his first Grammy?
- 5 What song on the Rolling Stones' 1968 album *Beggars Banquet* echoes Jesus's description of his followers in Matthew 5:13?
- 6 What 1969 song by The Young-



### THE POP GOSPEL

bloods contains a reference to the return of Christ?

- 7 Who said: "Yes, when I wrote *Crystal Blue (Persuasion)*, it was taken from the book of Revelation: the imagery of the new Jerusalem."
- 8 What song composed by Eric Clapton appears in a British hymnal?
- 9 What 1970 song by Simon & Garfunkel was inspired by Swan Silverstone member Claude Jeter's improvised line in *Oh Mary Don't You Weep*?
- 10 On what 1970 song does James Taylor sing: "Won't you look down upon me, Jesus/You've got to help me make a stand/You've just got to see me through another day."

### Answers

- 1 Turn Turn which begins: "To everything (Turn, Turn, Turn)/There is a season (Turn, Turn, Turn)/ And a time to every purpose, under Heaven"
- 2 The Word from The Beatles' 1965 album, *Rubber Soul*.
- 3 *God Only Knows* — from the Pet Sounds album — regarded by music critics as one of the best rock albums of all time. The last line of each verse is: "God only knows what I'd be without you." In 1993, Brian Wilson reflected: "Just before we did *God Only Knows*, (brother) Carl and I had prayer sessions asking the Lord for guidance and maximum love vibes for this crucial single. It was the first time that anyone ever used the word 'God' in a commercial song... at least this is what were told." Wilson believes "music is God's voice." In a recent *Goldmine* magazine article Wilson was asked if he was a religious person. His response: "No, not really. I just believe in Jesus Christ, but I don't know what religion I am."
- 4 *How Great Thou Art*. His two other Grammys were also for gospel recordings — the album *He Touched Me* (1972) and his live Memphis concert recording of *How Great Thou Art* (1974).
- 5 *Salt of the Earth*, which includes: "Let's drink to the hard working people/Let's think of the lowly of birth/Spare a thought for the rag raggy people/Let's drink to the salt of the earth." Jesus tells his followers: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?..." (Matthew 5:13)
- 6 *Get Together*. The second verse lyrics: "Some may come and

some may go/We shall surely pass/When the one that left us here/ Returns for us at last/ We are but a moment's sunlight/Fading in the grass"

7 Tommy James, of Tommy James & the Shondells (said in a July 21, 1999 online chat). From the song: "Maybe tomorrow, when he looks down/On every green field and every town/All of his children of every nation/There'll be peace and good, brotherhood/Crystal Blue Persuasion"

8 *Presence of the Lord*; from 1969's *Blind Faith* album, recorded with Steve Winwood, Ginger Baker, and Rich Grech. The first verse: "I have finally found a way to live/Just like I never could before/I know that I don't have much to give/But I can open any door/Everybody knows the secret/Everybody knows the score, yeah yeah yeah/I have finally found a way to live/In the colour of the Lord"

9 *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. Claude Jeter's improvised line, "I'll be a bridge over deep water if you trust my name" would inspire Paul Simon, many years later, to compose his own gospel flavoured composition. Collectively, as an album and single, *Bridge Over Troubled Water* won an unprecedented six Grammy Awards: Single of the Year, Song of the Year, Best Arrangement, Best Engineering, Best Contemporary Song, and Album of the Year.

### 10 Fire and Rain

**Knowledge level:**  
0-1 kindergarten  
2-3 primary  
4-5 intermediate  
6-7 secondary  
8-9 college/university  
10 You're as wise as Solomon.

## BC to BCE shuffle a distinction of note

ELIEZER SEGAL  
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

Recent editorials and op-ed pieces in the Herald have had a field day, ridiculing the Royal Ontario Museum's use of the abbreviations BCE (Before the Common/Christian Era) and CE (Common/Christian Era) as replacements for the venerable BC and AD. The various commentators characterized this new policy decision as just another instance of the sort of idiotic, secularist Political Correctness, seen in the City of Toronto's attempt to divest its civic fir tree of any association with Christmas, or in the Canadian Mint's seasonal advertising campaign about the "Twelve Days of Giving."

I confess that, from my own perspectives as an academic scholar of religion and as a traditional Jew, what surprised me most about the whole BC-BCE scuffle was the assumption in the Alberta press that this terminology is a new development, to be equated with other, clear manifestations of anti-Christianity militancy. Just to be sure, I pulled out a random sampling of Canadian, British and American undergraduate textbooks from my shelves, works pub-

lished over at least two decades. And darned if I was able to find a single volume that still employs the old BC-AD nomenclature. In fact, the Oxford Dictionary cites examples of BCE-CE going back to 1881. Admittedly, most people do not have frequent occasion to make such distinctions on their daytimers. Nevertheless, it is startling that the news has taken so long to reach Alberta. In my own adult life, I don't think that I have ever been called upon to use the BC-AD system, and I would certainly have put up stiff resistance to any such requirement. Take note that mine is not the stereotypical voice of the militantly secularist Christian-baiter. I personally delight in the pious decorating of Christmas trees in public squares — provided that similar opportunities are extended to the symbols of other religious communities. I am likewise offended by the Canadian Mint's ignorance in suggesting that Hanukkah — or, for that matter, Ramadan — can be characterized as "Twelve Days of Giving." But that is not the issue here. While I rejoice in the rig of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus or Muslims to celebrate their observances in

## WALKING THE TALK

an authentic manner, I refuse (as have several generations of my co-religionists) to be coerced into using a dating system that requires me to proclaim somebody else's faith. The BC-AD usage is by no means a theologically neutral or "civil" usage. Whether or not they are aware of the fact, all of those who use that system of dating are declaring themselves to be Christian believers. Although pious Victorian novelists are reported to have composed historical fictions about "the Christ family," the fact is *Christos* is not a proper name. It is a profoundly theological title. It means "anointed" in Greek, and it is the translation of the Hebrew word, *Mashiah*. For Christians, the term has well-known connotations of a Redeemer or Divinity. And it is impossible to use it accurately, without buying into what is, for me, an alien doctrine. Sorry, folks, but we Jews, along with the members of other religious communities that inhabit the Canadian multicultural mosaic, do not accept that particular article of Christian faith. We refuse to use language that violates the *sancta* of our beliefs.

The problem becomes even more blatant with respect to the second abbreviation. AD stands for the Latin *Anno Domini*: "In the Year of the Lord." Clearly, the "lord" in this expression is Jesus, and every time the expression is used, one is implicitly accepting Jesus as one's lord. Again, with all due respect, we non-Christians must beg to remove ourselves from that archaic civic consensus. And we would prefer not to be branded as intolerant extremists when we choose to do so. "Pedantic nitpicking," I can already here people retorting. "Who really pays attention to the literal meanings of every word and letter!" Well, perhaps I am a mere fossil from an antiquated civilization, one that took its words seriously and equated bad grammar with sloppy thinking. I trust, however, that I am not alone in my conviction that inattention to the implications of our words is an important factor in our current social, moral and political malaise. In this Sisyphean struggle for linguistic and conceptual precision, I believe we are justified in expecting support, not mockery, from the esteemed members of the Fifth Estate.

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## FROM OS9 MARRIAGE

No one could deny it was so, since they made the claim based on private experience. The book caused quite a stir, which faded a few years later when the couple divorced. The complex knots in the human heart — jealousy, insecurity, the craving to be loved alone — can't be untied by an act of will, no matter how lofty the sentiment.

This was why John Humphrey Noyes set a goal of combating possessive love, why the little girls had to burn their dolls.

It may look like free sex is as innocuous as free ice cream, but its reverberations shake all human relationships.

It requires distancing and independence, where interdependence would be the natural norm. It requires shifts in the underlying way we see each other and interact. The repercussions of free sex are not as quickly visible as those of mind-bending drugs. But because they take longer to emerge, they resound more deeply.

The initial problem free sex poses is that the sexual urge is, at root, a reproductive urge. It is planted in us to ensure we have children, that the human race goes on. The urge is strong because it is a survival urge, as strong as the impulse to eat, drink and find shelter.

This is not to say everyone who has sex does so because he or she consciously wants a child. The contrary is often true. Likewise, some may gobble a bowl of ice cream while hoping it has no effect on the waistline. Wishes to the contrary, our craving for yummy fats is strong because it is a command of basic nutrition. Fats are necessary to our bodies' health, the basic energy fuel. We want it because of something our body commands from its very depths, though our mind may have a very different intention.

Sex is most deeply about reproduction, and human reproduction is a long-term project. It requires ongoing attention from two adults, not just one.

The human child is born vastly more unformed and immature than any other mammal, unable to communicate, unable to feed itself. It requires care so intensive, a single mother and child living alone are a fragile family. They are vulnerable to too many kinds of danger, in the jungle, the arctic, or the inner city.

The mother, preoccupied with the needs of a helpless infant, in turn needs a male to protect and provide for herself and the child. He needs to protect them, or the child will not survive and his deeper goal of reproduction will fail. The circle of man, woman, child is the basic unit of any human society.

For human beings, there is a profound, instinctive conspiracy that binds mother, father, and child ever closer. When another item is moved to the top of the agenda — sex without commitment, sex without consequences — it flings them apart.

Like Noyes himself, our culture, dominated by the notion of free sex for decades, makes three fundamental shifts to accommodate the demands of that ethic and avoid the demands of the nuclear family.

First, it eliminates the requirement that some lasting, exclusive commitment (like marriage) be made before sex. Second, it finds a way to prevent or eliminate children conceived in these uncommitted sexual relationships. Third, it trains women to live with little or no support from men.

But, like it or not, in our bones, in the very cells of our body, sex is ultimately about reproduction, and reproduction requires sex.

Contrary to popular opinion, God is in favour of this. It was His idea, after all.

God devised many different ways for creatures and plants to reproduce on this earth and most of them don't look like much fun. Probably there were more efficient ways — certainly more dignified ways — God could have designed for human reproduction. But this funny business was His idea and every indication is that He meant us to enjoy it.

We're sometimes told the historic Christian Church is opposed to sex, but this simply is not true.

Christians have always favoured sex within marriage, but opposed its appearance in other situations — much as we approve water in a pitcher but oppose it in a basement.

Sex within marriage is not merely permitted but honoured.

The conceptions of John the Baptist and Jesus are described in Scripture and these rapidly became annual feasts in the early Church.

Not much later, the conception of Mary was honoured as well. But, though the Bible tells miraculous stories about the conception of Jesus and his cousin, Mary was conceived in the regular way.

The Eastern Orthodox icon of the feast, accordingly, shows a married couple in the privacy of their bedroom. In my copy, Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, are standing on a blue carpet before their bed, which has a blue striped cover and an embroidered pillow. They look serious, yet tender. They are in a graceful embrace. Anna has stretched up on tiptoe to press her face against her husband's, with her arm around his neck.

This is how a daughter's life begins.

COME AND EXPERIENCE THE



**LIONS**

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The Lions Clubs of Calgary, together with Sunshine Village, started the Festival of Lights in 1987 as a show of appreciation to the community for the support of the programs they serve. Many of these programs are related to eye sight, specifically including the CNIB, Lions Eye Bank and Lions Eye Centre.

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