

September, 2005

Another school year is under way. *The Interim* continues its outreach program to educators by bringing resources and information to their attention on issues that arise within the context of various subject curricula. We try to choose topics that relate to important life issues in their moral perspective. The topics may range from specific issues like abortion and euthanasia to indirect issues like globalization, tax policies, media bias, population measures, stem cell research, health care, and laws dealing with marriage and family.

The September edition features the ongoing debate over the state of Canada as a modern, increasingly secularized society seemingly bereft of genuine moral principles when it comes to life and family issues. Teachers can use the articles and accompanying questions in the planning of their own lessons on media or Canadian history, world issues, family studies, politics, religion.

A bit of exciting news is that there are teachers interested in starting up an organization to promote a positive pro-life message among young people. If you would like to be put in touch with these organizing educators please email dirocco@lifesite.net and you will be put into contact with them. The group is in its initial organizing stage and eventually hopes to develop its own presence on the internet.

As well take note of the fact that *The Interim* once again presents the **Father Ted Colleton Scholarship** program, open to all senior high school students. The prizes this year will be \$1500 for first prize and \$500 for second prize. There is an essay contest associated with the program. The details and entry form will be available at Lifesite.net in the month of October. Students may choose to write on one of two topics:

“Life issues are at the heart of the culture wars.”

“Assisted suicide and euthanasia are bad ideas that cheapen and attack the value of human life.”

The essay needs to be original and 800-1000 words in length. The deadline for submission of the essay and the application forms with all documentation requested is January 10, 2006.

Section 1

One successful pro-activist approach of teachers

in introducing a pro-life resource in the classroom can be gleaned from the following article by Joe Bissonnette of Brantford, Ontario.



Lifesite in the Classroom

Joe Bissonnette

Pro-life hero Joan Andrews said that *The Interim* is the best pro-life newspaper anywhere. It helps to keep the supporters of the pro-life cause informed. In the last five years the paper has led by acquiring an internet presence in the form of Lifesite.net, a free, daily news service that presents news summaries and article links from around the world. It has become a major media player, breaking stories and being referenced by world class newspapers and news servers. It is an invaluable tool for the classroom.

No matter what subject is being taught, we are called to teach the whole person. Teaching and learning is a personal experience, as much about character as subject discipline. Lifesite.ca is the perfect tool for making theory relevant; for bringing students from the chalkboard into the real world.

A staple of lesson planning is the “anticipatory set”, the initial activity at the beginning of the lesson which brings order and focus. The very best anticipatory set is drawn from the students themselves and if students are subscribed to Lifesite.ca they have an abundance of up to the minute, interesting material to get the ball rolling.

It is worth taking half a period in a computer lab to get students acquainted with Lifesite.ca. On

any given day there are a half dozen or more interesting items and as many article links. The usefulness for my subject areas, Religion and Philosophy are obvious, but there are numerous articles which can be used in any subject area.

For math and geography as well as history and media studies there is the unfolding story of population implosion. From the Roman census at the time of Jesus to an “*An Essay on the Principle of Population*” by Thomas Malthus to “*The Population Bomb*” by Paul Erlich, there have been attempts to reduce persons to numbers, and manage their coming into being and passing away as if they were a commodity. This cold-hearted dispassion has led us to view children as a burden rather than a blessing and so in the western world and elsewhere, birthrates are well below the 2.1 children per couple of child-bearing age necessary to maintain the population of a nation. Most recently Statistics Canada pegged the Canadian birthrate at just above 1.5 children per family. If our current population is 31,000,000, a constant birthrate of 1.5 will see our population drop to 22,500,000 in one generation, 16,875,000 in two generations, 12,570,000 in three generations and so on. Of course this is partly offset by ever-increasing levels of immigration, but this leads to difficult social science questions about the numbers of immigrants our culture can assimilate without fragmentation and disintegration.

For Art, History, Psychology and Sociology there are regular summaries and article links dealing with the ongoing struggle between religiousity and secularism. Are human beings made in the image and likeness of God, each with an irreducible worth, or are we a blight to planet earth? Is religion the opiate of the masses? The infancy of the human mind? Is there any meaning if there is no God? If there is no God is everything permissible? Are we a random aggregate of atoms or the result of intricate design?

For Economics, a recurrent theme is envisioning humans as stomachs or minds. Are we voracious consumers despoiling the world of her resources, hurling the world into a vaporizing greenhouse or an ossifying ice age, or are we innovators, adapters, creators, turning problems into solutions? What is to be made of Hong Kong? In the 1950’s economists and sociologists wrote it off as a hopeless sinkhole of pollution and poverty. By the end of the 1970’s it had become and remains to this day one of the most vibrant economies in the world. India and China are both net exporters of food, and for decades the Canadian government has been subsidizing farmers to take agricultural land out of production and reforest.

For Biology and Health there are constant

updates of news on fetal development, breakthrough therapies deploying adult somatic stem cells, and nightmare stories of hubristic *Brave New World* cloning attempts.

Like all good pedagogical strategies, the use of Lifesite.net lends itself well to student evaluation. Each student is assigned a date when they are to lead the class in a brief discussion on an item from Lifesite.net. The rubric and mark value could be 5 marks for choosing an interesting article and reading it to the class; 5 marks for promoting a brief, thoughtful discussion among the class; and 5 marks for providing a point form summary of the article which the class is to include in their notes and which may appear on subsequent tests.

Students won’t like or agree with everything on Lifesite.net, but it does provide a powerful counterpoint to the mainstream media and if this were all it did, it would be sufficient. G.K Chesterton wrote that it is a shame to spoil perfectly good argument with a quarrel, and our generation has not done too well in teaching students the difference between an argument and a quarrel. Spirited, respectful debate enriches the mind, is a great basis for friendship and a necessary component of responsible citizenship. We must introduce them to the dignity and irreducible worth of the human person and a robust confidence in stepping forth into the world. Lifesite.net is a good place to start.

Questions

1. Is the internet in general an overused classroom resource?
2. What is Lifesite.net?
3. List three ways in which Bissonette finds Lifesite.net a valuable resource for the classroom?
4. How can the site be of value in treating population questions?
5. Why doesn’t the mainstream media report on the topics that one finds so easily on Lifesite.net?
6. What does this suggest about the nature of media outlets in Canada?
7. What point does Bissonette make in his concluding paragraph about the difference between argument and a quarrel?
8. How is debate restricted today? Is this the fault of students, or of teachers? Is it a societal problem in Canada?

Section 2

In this section appears Paul Tuns lengthy article on the moral assault on Canada drawn from *The Interim*, August 2005. Because of its length it appears in shorter more digestible portions along with questions designed to stimulate thinking about the issues he raises, however controversial they may appear. It is an opinion piece that offers an analysis of how Canada got to where it is today in terms of policies affecting the well being of families and children, the bedrock of society.



The Destruction of Canada,

“Once human life is devalued at its core, a chain of devaluation begins that travels outward from the source and cheapens all life. This chain is not visible in any single person’s decision. From legalized abortion to child abuse and infanticide, to convenience killing of the disabled, to passive euthanasia, to active euthanasia, to state funding and promotion of all of these – there is no moral stopping point.”

- William Gairdner, *The War Against the Family*

For about 40 years, Canada has been the laboratory for an awful social experiment. Beginning with contraception (1967) and divorce (1968), Canadian society has become a culture, coarsened by narcissism and nihilism; these, in turn, have led us to abortion (1969) and euthanasia (2005?). Canada has become a culture, corrupted by death. But in order to reverse these deleterious social trends, one must first understand

them.

Contraception separated pleasure from procreation, and it was not long until the ideal of self-sacrifice was replaced by the desire for self-fulfillment at any cost. If children could be delayed (or avoided) because they were deemed to be unwanted, surely spouses could be left for the same reason. Marriage was no longer a sacred covenant, which lasted until death, but a convenient coupling that could be dissolved if it was no longer satisfying for either spouse. Divorce separated spouses who had refused to grow together into a family – all promises became conditional. When personal fulfillment replaces sacred commitment, the result is limitless indifference: broken marriages create broken families, and broken families can produce only broken children. The desire to use contraception eventually becomes the “right to choose.”

Now, two generations of Canadians have suffered from “choice.” The silent holocaust, the killing of more than 2.5 million unborn children since 1969, represented a turning away from our cultural patrimony. Canada abandoned its Christian heritage, doctors no longer swore the Hippocratic Oath, men abdicated their responsibilities and women divorced themselves from their own femininity and the noble role of motherhood.

Every year, more than 100,000 abortions are committed in Canada in the name of “choice,” that is, convenience. A woman can have an abortion at any time, for any reason and (almost always) at government expense. The state and media have done their best to silence pro-lifers so that abortion-minded women do not know the truth about the grim procedure they are considering. There is unlimited abortion on demand in Canada, despite the fact that only a quarter of Canadians believe in an unrestricted “right to abortion.” While even pro-abortionists claim to want abortion safe, legal and rare, the fact is the killing of the unborn is ubiquitous.

The changes in the 1960s - changes to sexual mores and relationships, the easy destruction of human life, the undermining of the sanctity of marriage - set the ball rolling for ever more changes that are slowly destroying the soul of this country.

Questions

1. Define “narcissism” and ‘nihilism”.
2. What evidence is there for drawing the conclusion that Canada has been a “laboratory for an awful social experiment”?
3. Is there a ‘logic’ to the steady erosion of traditional values? What appears to be the underlying main philosophical premise to these changes?
4. What are the causes of these changes?
5. How did abortion become so easy, so acceptable and not at all rare in Canada?

The destruction of marriage

Also, from about this time, there was a growing legal and then societal tolerance of homosexuality. Acts of sodomy were no longer prosecuted and eventually, homosexual couples won legal rights, beginning with legitimate civil rights (such as freedom from discrimination in housing). But then, there were moves to redefine justice in order to grant special rights to homosexuals, including the “right” to marriage and the subjection of religious belief to the “right” of active homosexuals to work in church environments (the Vriend decision).

In the mid-1990s, the idea of same-sex “marriage” was still outside the mainstream. Same-sex “marriage” wasn’t even debated outside of the limited scope of the gay press. But, in the late 1990s, several homosexual couples began constitu-

tional challenges to the traditional definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

In 1999, as these cases began to wind their way through several levels of court, Parliament considered a Reform party motion to reaffirm the definition of marriage. Then-justice minister Ann McLellan

scoffed at the motion, saying it was unnecessary. No one, she claimed, had any interest in redefining marriage to include homosexual couples. But within four years, the Ontario Court of Appeal struck down the traditional definition of marriage as discriminatory and, two years later, it is now the law of the land.

The lesson here is that what is inconceivable now may be the newly ordained rights of tomorrow. That’s why it is difficult to take the promises of current Justice Minister Irwin Cotler seriously. He vows that the rights of religious officials will be protected and dismisses the notion that same-sex “marriage” will lead to polygamy. But, if recent history is any indication, we’ll be fighting those battles by 2010.

Questions

1. What factors have encouraged social tolerance of the gay life style?
2. How had this “tolerance” been translated into rights?
3. What other marriage related developments lurk on the horizon according to Tuns?

The next battles

In 2003, Canada passed the Assisted Human Reproduction Act, which allowed embryonic stem cell research and opened the door to human cloning for research purposes (although the government claims it banned that). The first embryonic stem cell lines have been already created at the University of Toronto, despite the fact the Assisted Human Reproduction Agency for Canada – the agency responsible for overseeing such research created by the Act – is not yet in operation. Canadian officials have expressed the hope that this country will be on the “cutting edge” of bio-research. By this, they mean they hope to destroy human beings for experimental purposes, even though there are ample avenues of exploration that don’t require the destruction of human life at the embryonic stage.

Such experimentation does not help doctors heal patients and is only pursued to satisfy the morbid curiosity of research teams, eager for prestige. The moral standards of these projects aim low: they consist of nothing more than the bare minimum of scientific protocols, such as ensuring egg and sperm donor parents consent to having their biological material used for experimental purposes. As Canada pumps more and more money into these deprived projects, there will be calls for liberalizing the already-loose restrictions on such research, all in the name of progress.





behind? There are already websites calling for “tolerance” for those who are “attracted to children.” History has shown that at first, those who seek change call for understanding and tolerance, but later pursue acceptance and license. Attitudes are changing and before long, so too will the law. With abortion and same-sex “marriage,” society has collectively abandoned its children. It will now take a reawakening to protect our most vulnerable and dependent citizens from being victimized by pornography.

The other threat to children is the separation of them from their parents. There are two immediate battles on this front: daycare and education. Canada already has institutional daycare, but only about one of every seven families with preschool children uses it. The most common child care arrangement is still a parent staying at home full- or part-time, followed by care by a relative or neighborhood parent. But, if you were to listen to Social Development Minister Ken Dryden, who describes daycare as a fact of life in Canada, you would think that formal institutional care is the norm.

This government has earmarked at least \$5 billion over the next five years for some sort of national daycare scheme, the details of which still must be worked out. It probably will end up being a subsidy to the provinces so that they can expand existing daycare programs. Even studies by the left-leaning Vanier Institute for the Family have found that most families would like one parent to stay home with the children. This includes those families in which both the mother and the father work. If Ottawa was attuned to the desires and needs of families, it would develop programs to make it easier for a mother or father to stay home and raise children and to stop punishing (through the tax system) parents who make the

The march of “progress” in the field of science is matched by a parallel social revolution that would tinker with the building blocks of the family. In the name of progress the assault on family life and our children will intensify.

After the Supreme Court of the United States rendered the *Lawrence* decision in June 2003, which disallowed states to proscribe sodomy, Mormons in Utah launched a challenge to a state law that prohibited polygamy. There is talk among Mormons in western Canada, and among some Canadian Muslims, that since same-sex “marriage” has been declared law, the climate is ripe to push for multiple “marriage.” All the arguments for same-sex “marriage” are applicable to so-called multiple “marriage” – the people love one another and the state should not proscribe such relationships; the makeup of families changes; the majority has no right to impose its morality on the minority. Indeed, once the definition of marriage has been radically altered, further tinkering becomes easier. Once society says the gender of participants is irrelevant, it becomes easier to say that the number of participants is irrelevant, too.

Same-sex “marriage” is an assault on the rights of children because it denies them both a mother and father; polygamy confuses children by giving them a father and several mothers. But even this may be only the beginning. In recent years, the prohibition against child pornography has been relaxed and eroded in favor of some rather minor restrictions and one can see a time, not far into the future, when even those will be dropped.

Children are no longer precious gifts, but commodities who are increasingly sexualized in the eyes of society. Can pedophilia be far



sacrifice to do just that. Instead, for ideological reasons – a mindless egalitarianism that seeks to turn women into womb-less clones of men – Ottawa is committed to expanding daycare.

To do that, to encourage women to abandon their families by entering the workforce, a national, tax-funded daycare scheme is necessary. If women want to work and find a trustworthy source of care for their children, so be it. But for the state to encourage it, is altogether another matter.

A cynic might even see a reason for the state's interest in breaking the ties of children and parents. If the trend to redefining morality is to continue, then why not begin indoctrination at the earliest possible stage? Why wait until a child is six, nine or 15, when you can begin when he or she is two or three years old? Can the task of imparting "Canadian values" be left to parents alone?

Many families already know too well the dangers that public education has meant for children. From incompetent teaching to sex-ed that is divorced from virtue, families and concerned citizens have fought the educational system for at least 20 years. This struggle will intensify as the system gets worse.

Liberal MP Alan Tonks, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Janet Epp Buckingham and others have warned that same-sex "marriage" will lead to the teaching of homosexuality as normative in our public schools. Indeed, there is already a case before the human rights tribunal in B.C., in which a homosexual couple is attempting to force schools to include more material in their curriculums about homosexuality and to deny parents the right to keep their children from such lessons. In other words, the rights of parents to raise their children with the values they see fit will be circumscribed by the necessity to accommodate the view that homosexuality is merely a lifestyle choice, as valid as heterosexuality.

Two other developments are also not that far down the road: euthanasia and legal prostitution. Bill C-407, a private member's bill that would allow euthanasia, is currently before the House of Commons. It passed first reading in June and debate on it will resume when Parliament sits again in the fall. Euthanasia is the logical next step in a society that already permits the killing of the inconvenient and unwanted at the beginning of life.

Meanwhile, a parliamentary committee is examining the implications of legalizing prostitution. This is another assault on the family, because it turns sex into a consumer commodity and further separates it from procreation.

Having succumbed to a free-love mentality – sex, free of both responsibility and consequence – can it be far off into the future when bestiality becomes a political issue? Far-fetched? Three years ago, Tony Blair's Labor government reduced the punishment for bestiality. At about the same time, a New England man sought legal recognition of his dog as his wife. It seems absurd, but there are people and organizations clamoring for protection for all kinds of perversities.

The question is not simply sexual promiscuity or homosexuality, or the possibility of polygamy, incest, pedophilia, or even bestiality. It is, rather, a radical agenda best summarized as pansexuality – the demolishing of any sexual morality whatsoever.

Questions

1. What is the motivating drive behind the efforts to "destroy human beings for experimental purposes"?
2. Perhaps students could watch the feature film "The Island" released this past summer as a cinematic effort to depict the terror of cloning "in the name of progress".
3. What new challenges are likely to follow the redefinition of marriage in Canada? Are these developments worrisome? Why or why not?
4. Tuns claims in his article that "society has collectively abandoned its children". What evidence does he cite in support of this claim?
5. What might a cynic see as "a reason for the state's interest in breaking the ties of children and parents"?
6. Public education is attacked by Tuns on what basis? Is he correct?
7. What is meant by pansexuality?
8. How are these changes reflective of a society engrossed in the culture of "death"?

Banishing Christianity

In recent years, religion, which had always played a central role in Canadian society, has been dispatched to the periphery. Prayer has been banned from public schools. Municipalities and legislatures have stopped displaying Christmas decorations, and private companies prohibit employees from wishing customers a "Merry Christmas." Any overt expression of Christianity has been largely banned from the public square.

According to the Canadian census and recent polls, at least four in five Canadians say they believe in God. According to the most recent Ipsos-Reid polling, the exact number is 84 per

cent; 77 per cent of Canadians are Christian. As Darrell Bricker and John Wright note in their recent book *What Canadians Think (About Almost Everything)*, “That may surprise some people, given that our society is constantly depicted as being extremely secular.” It is probably more accurate to say we are a nation of believers ruled by a secular elite. But the ideals of the elite are influencing the attitudes of the people.

According to Bricker and Wright, 59 per cent of Canadians oppose churches giving direction to politicians on moral issues. That indicates the majority of Canadians buy into the mentality described by David Frum, who said that many liberals have no problem with religion, as long as it is confined to a purely personal sphere that has no influence on how a person or others behave. This means, of course, that religion would have no meaning, not only for society, but for the believer himself. It is a view that neuters religion completely.

And this is precisely the view that society has embraced. Religion has been banished from the public square. First, politicians bought into the idea that there was a separation of church and state, so total that the church has no right to speak at all; before long, the public thought this way too. But once religion was separated from politics, so, too, was morality – at least morality as most Canadians knew it. This country fell for the lie that you can’t legislate morality, as if law expresses something other than the ideas about right and wrong. Pierre Trudeau famously said the state should stay out of the nation’s bedrooms, but his policies have resulted in putting it everywhere else in society.

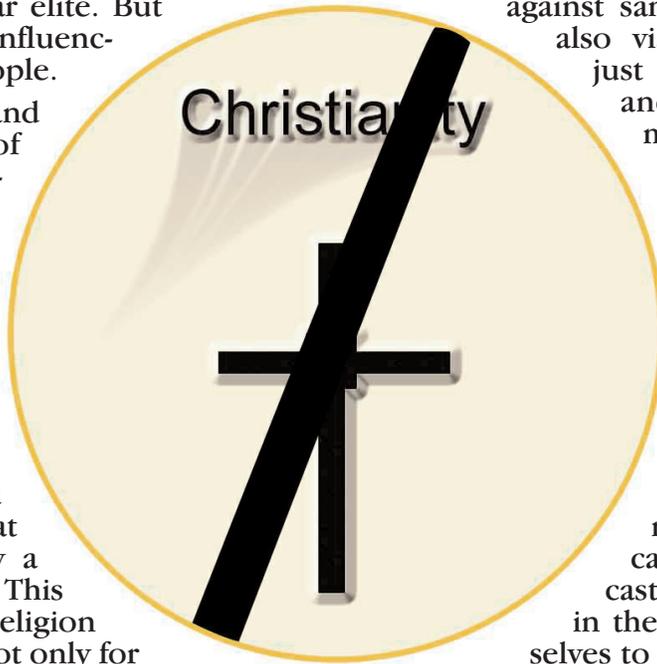
The state permitted easy divorce and placed itself and its courts in an ever-greater number of family disputes. The state approved and then funded abortions, thus involving itself in the doctor-patient relationship and, more ominously, the womb. The state okayed ghoulish scientific processes and funded cloning and embryonic stem cell research, thus bursting through the doors of the medical laboratories. The state attacked religion, thus entering into the churches to tell them what they could and could not do.

One of the central arguments for abortion – that women should be absolutely free to do with

their bodies what they want – is not extended to any other sphere. The state regulates every other aspect of life, proscribing limits to liberty. Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary theoretically has freedom of religion to carry out his duties as an ecclesiastical leader, but is being harassed by a provincial human rights commission for speaking out against same-sex “marriage.” He was also visited by Revenue Canada just prior to the last election and warned against raising moral issues from the pulpit (with the implicit threat that his church’s charitable tax status would be revoked if he did).

Canadians theoretically have freedom of speech, but are severely constrained against voicing their opinions during an election campaign due to this country’s newly-minted “gag laws.” Yes, they can talk to a candidate and cast their votes, but are limited in their ability to organize themselves to address issues of a national scope by draconian limits on how much they spend and how they address issues.

Women are free to procure abortions, but medical professionals do not have the right to refuse to commit them. Canadian couples are free to contracept, but pharmacists do not have the right to refuse to dispense them on conscience grounds. Homosexual couples are free to marry, but marriage commissioners do not have the right to refuse to partake in ceremonies they consider wrong. Influential minority groups are free to advocate radical changes in society, but once they succeed, Canadians who hold traditional views of morality do not have the right to revisit the issue. Rights in Canada are a one-way street that only points further and further left.



Questions

1. Some claim that the real aim of change agents is to eliminate Christianity from the social equation, as an obstacle to progress. Are they right?
2. What do statistics suggest about an incongruity between what the government does and what the people believe? Is it “accurate to say we are a nation of believers ruled by a secular elite”?
3. Should religion not have a place in the public square? Why do Canadians apparently not want churches to give direction to politicians

on moral issues?

4. “Pierre Trudeau famously said the state should stay out of the nation’s bedrooms, but his policies have resulted in putting it everywhere else in society”. What point is Tuns making in this statement? Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. In his conclusion Tuns says that “rights in Canada are a one-way street that only points further and further left”. What does he mean by that statement? Does his evidence stand up to scrutiny?

The road ahead

Obviously, the issue of legislating morality is not a question of whether it should be done or not. The issue is whose morality is legislated. For 40 years, the debate has been settled almost every time in favour of those who want to remake society, destroy time-honoured institutions, create new “rights” and upset the moral order. This trend will not soon change.

But, there is no reason to despair. Despair is a sin. It is the belief that 308 members of Parliament and nine Supreme Court justices are more powerful than One God. From a political perspective, it is an excuse to do nothing, to accept the status quo. This leads to the temptation to remove oneself from society, to cease striving for a better world. This, of course, is wrong.

Those of faith must remain faithful. Those involved in politics must remain active. Those seeking to protect themselves and their families must remain committed to their children, their spouses, and their ideals.

While there is little cause for optimism, there is much cause for hope. Belief in Scripture leads to the knowledge that God will not abandon his people nor challenge them with anything greater than they can handle (with Him).

Despite the claim that issues are settled – that “social peace” can censor debate – these issues can and must be re-examined. It may take a lot of hard work, co-ordination, new strategies and reinvigorated efforts, but it can be done. Democracy has been curtailed, but not destroyed, and the will of a majority of Canadians (or even a sizeable minority) cannot be ignored forever.

While the inclination to protect oneself and one’s family from the encroachments of government and popular culture is understandable, we are called to fight, not run. And, while you might want to ignore the state, the state will not ignore you.

So, if hard work is needed to reverse the

course, it is hard work that we are called to do. Commit yourself entirely to the cause of life and liberty, of faith and family. Do not vote for a political candidate who does not represent your moral views. Support those who do. Donate to, and volunteer with, pro-life, pro-family and religious organizations. Become informed about the issues. Share that information with others. Don’t be afraid to be different. Go against the grain.

Victory might not be tomorrow, but there will be victory. Sadly, not all of us will live to see the return of moral sanity, but that is no reason to avoid hard work now. Perhaps what we are doing is “laying the tracks” – that is, creating the conditions necessary for our children and grandchildren to turn society around. If that is what we are doing, we must keep our faith, safeguard our hope, and jealously defend the truth, so that our children inherit a legacy of virtue. This is no small thing, but it is a thing worth doing. It is what we must do. We must dare to hope.

Questions

1. Is the law truly neutral when it comes to legislating morality? Isn’t there a basis of morality underlying every law?
2. What advice does the author offer in the face of a victorious secular juggernaut in this culture war of the past forty years?
3. Is the overall outlook expressed hopeful or unnecessarily pessimistic with respect to the state of Canadian society?

