

Christianity Today

APRIL 2011



Proselytizing in a Multi-Faith World



Why mutual respect and tolerance require us to witness for Christ.



+ ME AND MY SCHIZOPHRENIA 42
GOD'S BEAUTIFUL ANGER 34
WHAT'S YOUR CHURCH WORTH? 9



Old bus. Renewed faith.

A 2-hour drive ahead, 20 sugar-fueled teens, and a bus that isn't going anywhere. Ministry life is filled with unexpected moments. Wondering if you have the right insurance coverage shouldn't be one of them. For the expertise and specialized insurance protection you need—count on Brotherhood Mutual.

Make your next youth trip safer.
Find free resources at www.OldChurchBus.com.



Brotherhood Mutual
Insurance Company

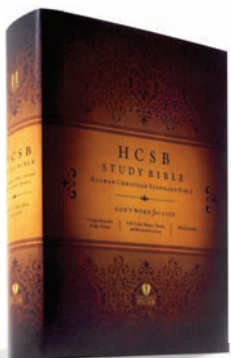
We understand why.®

Insuring America's churches and related ministries.® | www.brotherhoodmutual.com | 800.333.3735
Property & Liability Insurance | Commercial Vehicle | Workers' Compensation | Foreign Travel Insurance

Copyright 2008 Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. All rights reserved. Brotherhood Mutual is licensed in most states.



Looking for the Messiah?



The coming of the Messiah satisfied centuries of Jewish longings. Sometimes readers miss this, mistaking the title “Christ” for Jesus’ last name. In Jewish contexts, you’ll see “Messiah” used in the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Continuity, one of the reasons you’ll love reading any of the HCSB digital or print editions.

.....
HCSB Study Bible
Now Available



HCSB
see | hcsb.org



“If you ever face an arson fire
like we did ...

Carl Grantham
Memorial Baptist Church
Greenville, N.C.

...I hope your insurance company is Church Mutual.”

“The arsonist struck three churches in our community that night. Ours was hardest hit. There is so much confusion after something like this; I can’t tell you. But Church Mutual came in and helped us get on track. They simply said, ‘We are going to make sure we put you guys back together properly,’ and that set the tone. What stands out for me is the trust and the mutual respect we all had for each other.”

For a detailed on-site risk analysis of your facilities and activities (a value-added service we offer at no charge) and premium quotation, or for a closer look at why more than twice as many religious organizations trust Church Mutual, simply call 800-554-2642 or go to www.churchmutual.com/onsite.

Church Mutual has received consistently high ratings from industry analyst A.M. Best every year since 1952.

Listening. Learning. Leading. is a registered trademark of Church Mutual Insurance Company. © 2010 Church Mutual Insurance Company



Listening. Learning. Leading.®

churchmutual.com
800.554.2642

BRIEFING



- 9 Spotlight** What's a church worth?
- 10 Gleanings** Court lifts pregnancy center sign requirement, Indian court no longer blames missionaries for their deaths, and college campus ministries unite.
- 12 Headlines** **REFUGEES** Iraqi Christians look to Europe for safe haven.
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM Native Christians divide over sweat lodges. **13**
IMMIGRATION Thanksgiving question nearly deports tortured Christian. **13**
RUSSIA Christian rehab centers beat secular success rates. **14**
- ◀ **{ In Depth }** **MINISTRY** For Christians in Niger, 'Give us this day our daily bread' is a prayer and a project. **15**

FEATURES

**20 Proselytizing in a Multi-Faith World** ED STETZER

Why mutual respect and tolerance require us to witness for Christ.

PLUS Two Peoples Separated by a Common Revelation

◀ **28 Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?** INTERVIEW BY MARK GALLI

Our ability to live together in peace, argues theologian Miroslav Volf, depends on how we answer the question.

34 A Beautiful Anger LINDA FALTER

The same holy hands that punish the wicked pull the righteous to safety.

38 Why We Love Amish Romances ERIC MILLER

In our brave, liberated new world, more American evangelical readers are seeking freedom in the Old Order.

42 God of the Schizophrenic DAVID WEISS

Rediscovering my faith amid the ravages of mental illness.

VIEWPOINTS



- 51 Letters** Readers respond to the February issue of CT.
- 53 Where We Stand** An Everyday Scandal
- ◀ **54 The Village Green** Roy Anker, Steven Greydanus, and Barbara Nicolosi pick the next Christian novel that should become a feature film.
- 56 Wrestling with Angels** Carolyn Arends contemplates her own death, and yours.
- 58 Contra Mundum** Chuck Colson and Timothy George see evangelicals and Catholics unite for cultural change.

CT REVIEW



- ◀ **63 Books**
- Rob Bell's *Love Wins*
 - Brian Fikkert: My Top 5 on poverty
 - Pete Ward's *Gods Behaving Badly*
 - Excerpt: *Counterfeit Gospels*, by Trevin Wax
 - Wilson's Bookmarks
 - Interview: Jerry Root on sacramental evangelism
- 68 Movies**
- *Soul Surfer*
 - *Flowers of the Son*
- 69 Music**
- Two minutes with Michael Card
 - Bruce Cockburn's *Small Source of Comfort*
- 70 Quick Takes** More media of note

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 7 Inside CT** Mark Galli on what we learn from multi-faith conversations.
- 80 Who's Next** Poet Amena Brown speaks the truth in rhythm and rhymes.



NOW AVAILABLE
Downloadable Bible studies
based on selected articles:
ChristianBibleStudies.com

COVER PHOTOS BY ISTOCK EXCEPT: TOP/LEFT • JOHN QUIGLEY; MIDDLE/LEFT • THINKSTOCK/GETTY;
BOTTOM/LEFT • VEER; BOTTOM/SECOND FROM RIGHT • PHOTODISC



Founder Billy Graham
Editor in Chief David Neff **Publisher** Keith Stonehocker

Christianity Today
 Founded 1956

Senior Managing Editor Mark Galli
Managing Editor, News & Online Journalism Ted Olsen
Deputy Managing Editor Timothy C. Morgan
Design Director Gary Gnidovic
Senior Associate Editor Mark Moring
Associate Editor Katelyn Beaty
Associate Editor, News Jeremy Weber
Associate Editor, Books Matt Reynolds
Online Editor Sarah Pulliam Bailey
Designer Alecia Sharp
Editorial Resident Trevor Persaud
Senior Writers Sheryl Henderson Blunt • Tony Carnes
 Tim Stafford
Editorial Administrator Rebecca Custer
Editorial Assistant Elissa Cooper
Development Coordinator Kim Clay

Editorial Council Timothy F. George • Christopher A. Hall
 Scot McKnight • Thomas C. Oden • James I. Packer
 Sarah Sumner

Editors at Large Darrell L. Bock • Andy Crouch
 Edward Gilbreath • Stan Guthrie • Collin Hansen • Rob Moll
 Madison Trammel • John Wilson • Philip Yancey

Contributing Editors Miriam Adeney • James A. Beverley
 Mark Buchanan • Charles W. Colson • Michael Cromartie
 James R. Edwards • Ajith Fernando • David Gushee
 John W. Kennedy • Douglas LeBlanc • Frederica Mathewes-Green
 Michael A. Maudlin • Richard Mouw • Mark A. Noll
 Roger E. Olson • Ben Patterson • Christine A. Scheller
 Ronald J. Sider • Bob Smietana • Howard Snyder • Ed Stetzer
 Walter Wangerin • Lauren F. Winner • Ben Witherington
 Susan Wunderink

Advisory Editors Deann Alford • Leith Anderson
 Myron S. Augsburger • Jim Ball • Randall Balmer
 Edith Blumhofer • Colin Brown • George Brushaber
 Robert E. Cooley • Calvin DeWitt • Edward G. Dobson
 David S. Dockery • William A. Dyrness • James Engel
 Samuel Escobar • C. Stephen Evans • Richard Foster
 John R. Franke • George Gallup Jr. • Christopher D. Hancock
 Alan F. Harre • Nathan Hatch • Roberta Hestenes
 R. Kent Hughes • Todd M. Johnson • Robert K. Johnston
 Walter C. Kaiser Jr. • David Livingstone • Paul L. Maier
 Grant McClung • Steven T. McFarland • Alister E. McGrath
 David L. McKenna • James Meeks • Dean Merrill
 Stephen V. Monsma • Terry C. Muck • Kenneth A. Myers
 Bradley Nassif • Armand M. Nicholi Jr. • Will Norton Jr.
 Michael Novak • Virginia Stem Owens • Earl F. Palmer
 William Pannell • Eugene Peterson • Richard Pierard
 James W. Reapsome • Robert C. Roberts • Haddon W. Robinson
 John Rodgers • Vinay Samuel • David P. Scaer
 Stephen A. Seamands • Uwe Siemon-Netto
 Russell P. Spittler • John Stackhouse Jr. • John R. W. Stott
 Joseph M. Stowell • Marianne Meye Thompson
 Donald Thorsen • Elmer L. Towns • Grant Wacker
 John D. Woodbridge • Edwin M. Yamauchi

Carl F. H. Henry, Editor 1956–68
 L. Nelson Bell, Executive Editor 1956–73
 Harold Lindsell, Editor 1968–78
 Kenneth S. Kantzer, Editor 1978–82
 V. Gilbert Beers, Editor 1982–85
 George K. Brushaber, Executive Editor 1985–91
 Terry C. Muck, Executive Editor 1985–90

Christianity Today (ISSN 0009-5753) is published monthly by Christianity Today International, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188. Periodicals postage paid at Carol Stream, IL, and at additional mailing offices.
 ©2010 Christianity Today International

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Christianity Today*, P.O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0060; 1.800.999.1704. Canada Publication Mail Agreement #: 040029733. Registration #: 126028836RT0001. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: WWM Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, Ontario N8T 3B7. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription Rates: Regular subscription price: one year \$29.95. Outside U.S. add \$13.00 postage prepaid U.S. currency. \$3.95 per copy.

Keep the Conversation Going

Christianity Today is eager to spark conversation between our readers and believers outside North America. Billy Graham convened key events that brought people together from around the world. He initiated large international gatherings focused on evangelism in Berlin, Lausanne, and Amsterdam.

In 2009 and 2010, CT partnered with the Lausanne Movement to focus an interactive discussion on the issues that shape our witness today.

That kind of conversation continues. After the successful conclusion of Egypt's peaceful democratic revolution, the Lausanne Movement's Doug Birdsall and I jointly interviewed Egyptian church leaders on a conference call for scores of church and ministry leaders. American ministry leaders—including leaders at *Christianity Today*—have been hungry to hear the voices of believers from North Africa and the Middle East who are playing a part in the movements for democracy.

Sometimes global conversation means interfaith conversation—the subject of this issue's cover story (page 20). Both senior managing editor Mark Galli and I have engaged with Muslim leaders overseas, being alternately pleased and puzzled by what we hear in places like Istanbul, Beirut, Amman, and Doha.

Sometimes conversation means listening to Christians in other countries talk about the challenges they face. In this issue, Ruth Moon reports what she heard in Niger about how harsh desert climates shape the witness of Nigeriens (page 15). In our next issue, Timothy Morgan will share his conversation with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, a key link to the Russian Orthodox patriarchate.

All this requires funding. To do more means drawing on resources outside our normal revenue streams. That's where you come in.

You can make your tax-deductible contribution—of any amount—by check or online. Make checks payable to *Christianity Today*, and put "CT Global Excellence Fund" on the memo line, or visit ChristianityToday.com/donate.


 David Neff, Editor in Chief

Send checks (U.S. dollars only) to:
Christianity Today
Attn: Donor Relations Box CT0411
465 Gundersen Drive
Carol Stream, IL 60188

Christianity Today International
 is a 501(c)(3) organization.

NEW KING JAMES VERSION®

Trusted by millions for over 30 years



ACCURACY

A faithful translation that carefully preserves the integrity, accuracy, and reliability of every phrase and verse of the original Scriptures.

BEAUTY

The only modern-day translation that maintains the beauty, cadence, and poetry of the beloved King James Version.

CLARITY

Continues the 400-year legacy in today's language for enhanced readability and clearer meaning of the Word of God.

THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION® is today's Bible for understanding God's Word.

The NKJV translation is the ideal Bible for study

With more than 6 million Study Bibles in print



Trusted by pastors, church leaders, scholars and Christians worldwide

Look for these and other popular NKJV Study Bibles
Wherever Books, Bibles and eBooks are sold!

www.TheNKJVBible.com

Look for the HOUSE

WITH EVERY BIBLE FROM THOMAS NELSON,
YOU ARE GUARANTEED A LIFETIME OF QUALITY, A LONG-STANDING
LEGACY OF RELIABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY BIBLE PUBLISHING,
AND HEART-FELT INSPIRATION TO CHANGE THE WORLD.



TRUSTED FOR
ACCURACY, BEAUTY & CLARITY



Quality • Legacy • Heart
THOMAS NELSON
www.ThomasNelsonBibles.com



Reflecting

RENEWING

RESTORING

REVITALIZING

a community called to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world

Graduate school is a time to refine academic skills alongside others in your field, but at Asbury Seminary these vital components are directed by something bigger — *reflecting the glory* of the triune God through worship.

Asbury offers a wide range of M.Div., M.A., D.Min, Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees, allowing you the opportunity to join in Asbury's mission to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.

Visit asburyseminary.edu and explore *a community called ...*
800.2ASBURY | admissions@asburyseminary.edu

Asbury
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



President and CEO Harold B. Smith
Executive Administrator Paulette DePaul
Executive Vice Presidents Keith Stonehocker
Carol Thompson
Senior Vice President Terumi Echols • Vicki Howard
Vice Presidents David Neff • Marshall Shelley
Amy Simpson
Special Assistants to the President and CEO
Andy Crouch • Kent Jensen

Advertising Terumi Echols • Peggy Gomez
Jillian Hathaway • Walter Hegel • Julie Kaminski
Toks Olawoye • Stacy Smith • Sandra Sundin
Hazel Ziebell

Web Analytics & Commerce Kathy DePue
Judy Gill • David Lee • Mark Selvidge • Nick Tanner
Jacob Walsh

Circulation Operations Adrian Carrion
Diane Kielma • Sherry Kyle • Kathryn McQuaid
Nancy Nance • Tim Platek

Financial Operations Jim Fuoss • Gary Johnson
Sandra Johnson • Philip MacDonald • Judy VanZanten
Human Resources Norma Bormann • Jaime Patrick
Paul Ross • Richard Shields • Arlene VanGelderren

Production Cynthia Cronk

Customer Support Pamela Ferrill

Technology Clayton Anderson • Stephanie Benware
Valerie Broucek • David Dougherty • Mark Gortowski
Julia King • Emily Mohnkern • Kent Oxley
Theresa Phillips • Stephen Swithers

Board of Directors

FOUNDER, HONORARY CHAIRMAN Billy Graham
CHAIR John A. Huffman Jr.
PRESIDENT AND CEO Harold B. Smith
Miriam Adeney • John N. Akers • Sandra C. Gray
Eugene B. Habecker • Alec Hill • Darryl L. King
Charles H. Kwon • John Ortberg • Samuel Rodriguez
John M. Sommerville

Editorial/Advertising Offices

Editorial: cteditor@christianitytoday.com
Advertising: ctiad@christianitytoday.com
Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL
60188-2415 • 630.260.6200 • Fax: 630.260.8428. Advertising in
Christianity Today does not imply editorial endorsement.

Manuscript Policy

Unsolicited manuscripts and poetry are not accepted. A query
letter must be sent first, describing a proposed manuscript.
Any unsolicited manuscript will not be returned.

Permissions

Christianity Today grants permission for any original article
(not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a local church or
classroom, provided no more than 1,000 copies are made, are
distributed free, and indicate *Christianity Today* as the source.

Australian Agent

MediaCom, 14 Eton Road, Keswick 5061, South Australia

Indexes

Christianity Today is indexed in Readers' Guide to Periodical
Literature; Christian Periodical Index; Religion Index One;
Periodicals, Religious and Theological Abstracts; Book Review
Index; and Academic Abstracts and Magazine Article Summaries.

Occasionally we share subscriber information with select
organizations. If you wish to remove your name from direct
mail, e-mail, or telephone lists, call 1.800.999.1704 or send
e-mail to ctcustserv@christianitytoday.com. Please specify
the types of promotions you do not wish to receive.

Subscription Rates? Gift Subscriptions? Address Changes?

ctfulfill@christianitytoday.com • 1.800.999.1704 or write
Christianity Today, P.O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0060

Find every issue of *Christianity Today*
back to 1996:

Use code 0095753 at:
CTLlibrary.com/offer/CTsubscriber
to get a special discount.

Multi-Faith Matters

Interfaith meetings remind us of the Good News.



he late Walter Martin was a Christian apologist who specialized in ministry to people involved in alternative religions. I once heard him recount a conversation he'd had with a woman who assured him she had found the secret to dealing effectively with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Martin asked her to explain.

"Well," she enthused, "when I see them coming, I shut the blinds and lock my door, and when they knock, I pretend I'm not home!"

Unfortunately, when it comes to relationships with Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and Buddhists, the church's instinct has often mirrored hers: If we pretend they don't exist, they'll just go away!

This massive planet has become a global village, and we keep bumping into adherents of other faiths—not just when we travel overseas but at the grocery store, the library, and the gym. We can no longer live as though other religions don't exist.

Many Christians hesitate to initiate conversations with Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus because they secretly fear they will become one of the loosey-goosey Christians who, after interfaith encounters, starts waxing eloquent about how all religions are one.

My experience has had the opposite effect. After speaking with Muslims, I come away with a deeper appreciation for how good the Good News of Jesus Christ is. In one recent interfaith meeting, for example, we discussed forgiveness. My Muslim friend said that forgiving from a position of weakness—a woman forgiving an abusing husband, a person of color forgiving a racist official—is cowardice. Only when you have won your freedom or are in a position of strength can you forgive, he argued.

Naturally, with our model being Jesus—who forgave when he was the most vulnerable and weak, while he hung on the cross—Christians have a different take. Only Jesus' type of forgiveness can heal personal and social wounds. Witness the efforts of Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, who both called for forgiveness *before* justice was done. Christian forgiveness is deeper and richer than a Muslim can imagine, and only a multi-faith conversation can make that clear to both parties.

In Viewpoints: After 25 years as a *Christianity Today* columnist, Charles Colson is teaming with Beeson Divinity School dean Timothy George, a *Christianity Today* contributor and key theological adviser for nearly 18 years (page 58). During that time, George has collaborated with Colson on a variety of projects, including the Manhattan Declaration and Evangelicals and Catholics Together. George also chairs the board of Colson's worldview ministry, Breakpoint.

Next month: Mark Noll imagines the world without the King James Bible; Tim Stafford covers Christians fighting "Podo," one of the most preventable endemic diseases; and Leslie Leyland Fields debuts her column, Stones to Bread.

Don't Miss Any of Suzanne Woods Fisher's Series LANCASTER COUNTY SECRETS



Readers of the Lancaster County Secrets series will find themselves transported into the world of the Amish and deeply invested in these wonderful characters.

“Fisher writes with her heart and soul.”—RT Book Reviews



SUZANNE WOODS FISHER is the CBA bestselling author of *The Choice*, *Amish Peace*, and *Amish Proverbs*. Her interest in Anabaptist cultures can be directly traced to her grandfather, W. D. Benedict, who was raised in the Old Order German Baptist Brethren Church in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. Benedict eventually became publisher of *Christianity Today* magazine. Suzanne is the host of a radio show called *Amish Wisdom* and her work has appeared in many magazines. She lives in California.

Available for free at iTunes
Amish Wisdom Radio Show
featuring Suzanne Woods Fisher

Connect with Suzanne on

 Suzanne Woods Fisher

 SuzanneWFisher

Visit Suzanne's website, www.suzannewoodsfisher.com

BRIEFING

REPORTING & DISPATCHES
FROM THE CHURCH
WORLDWIDE

SPOTLIGHT: What's a Congregation Worth?

➔ Does a congregation's tax-exempt status outweigh the economic value it adds to its community? The University of Pennsylvania's Ram Cnaan has long been searching for a specific answer. In a 1997 study, he found that urban congregations provide, on average, \$140,000 worth of services annually. In 2009, Cnaan (who describes himself as nonreligious) revised his estimate to \$476,663.24. Now he's about to release an even more detailed pilot study focusing on 12 historic Philadelphia congregations, including First Baptist Church, whose annual value to the local economy Cnaan's team places conservatively at \$6,090,032 (nearly ten times its annual budget). Some of the items that contribute:

MEMBERS' EXPENSES IN TOWN \$750

of out of town members
x average visit x \$15



CHURCH BUDGET \$520,000
80% of operating budget provides
stimulus to local economy



K-12 SCHOOL \$3,489,926
of students x \$9,666

GARDEN/LAWN/CEMETERY \$146
Based on water retained

SUICIDE PREVENTION \$58,800
\$19,600 per person directly saved
through clergy intervention

VOLUNTEER HOURS WORKED \$94,770

Weekly hours x 52 weeks
x \$20.25

REDUCED CRIME RATE -\$64,416

Crimes within tract compared with
surrounding tracts x \$2,210



CRIME PREVENTION AND RE-ENTRY \$84,000

of prevented incarceration
cases x \$28,000



**GETTING PEOPLE OFF DRUGS
OR ALCOHOL \$78,750**
\$15,750 per person helped



DIVORCES PREVENTED \$22,500
\$900 per couple



**BUILDING
ENHANCEMENTS/
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
\$60,000**

Estimates that half of
expenses are spent locally

**HELPING PEOPLE GAIN
EMPLOYMENT \$725,000**
\$14,500 per arranged employment

TREES \$523
Based on USDA Forest
Service values

WHAT COUNTS

Cnaan emphasizes that the point of the study was not to find the value of urban congregations, but more to show that it can be done. Later studies may find even higher values: Cnaan's researchers neglected to include the arts in their calculations (but also didn't count the negative effects of crowded parking and church noise). "A lot more work needs to be done," they said, adding that they expect many of the calculations to be challenged. "We take solace in the fact that valuing the cost of smoking tobacco or of clean water was thought to be impossible only 40 years ago."



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Pregnancy center signs violate free speech

Baltimore pregnancy centers no longer have to display signs saying they have no professional medical staff, according to a U.S. district court ruling. The overturned city ordinance also had required the signs at limited-service health organizations to read, "Montgomery County Health Officer encourages women who are or may be pregnant to consult with a licensed health care provider." Judge Marvin Garbis ruled the required signs violate the free speech of pro-life pregnancy centers. The ruling—the first of its kind in the U.S.—will likely influence similar cases.

and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship met in January to create the "Chicago Agreement" to promote ministry cooperation. The eight-point agreement, signed by Reformed University Fellowship, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, and other ministries, emphasizes unity between the groups by pledging to not criticize other ministries or recruit students away from each other, and to build relationships between groups. A leadership group will meet every three years to update the agreement.

4 Volunteers not covered by employee laws

UNITED KINGDOM A ruling that volunteers are not covered by the same equal treatment laws as paid employees is good news for Christian organizations. The U.K.-based Christian Institute, which weighed in on the case, said an opposite ruling would have put volunteers for churches and Christian organizations under anti-discrimination and equality laws that "threaten religious liberty." Instead, the current ruling means organizations do not have to comply with employment regulations when using unpaid workers.

5 Borders goes bankrupt; Girkins leaves Zondervan

The mid-February bankruptcy filing by Borders, the second-largest U.S. bookstore chain, affects Christian publishing houses and book retailers. According to *Christian Retailing*, Zondervan is owed \$1.9 million by the company and is one of Borders' top 20 creditors. Other Christian publishing creditors include parent companies of Multnomah, FaithWords, and Howard Books. A spokesperson for

Baker Publishing Group said it would continue selling books to Borders on a cash basis. The 40-year-old chain will close 200 of its 642 stores to restructure. Meanwhile, Zondervan announced that it would not renew the contract of CEO Moe Girkins, whose three years at the helm were marked by digital innovation and staff turnover.

6 Blasphemy sentence leads to church burnings

INDONESIA A five-year jail sentence for a man accused of blasphemy against Islam led to an outbreak of anti-Christian violence in Temanggung in Central Java. The man received the maximum legal penalty for his crime (distributing anti-Islam pamphlets), but protestors, who burned three churches, wanted the death sentence. A 2009 Pew Forum study found Indonesia, the most populous Muslim-majority country in the world, to be one of the most religiously restrictive. A recent report from the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace found that violations of Christians' rights more than quadrupled in the past year. Religious freedom advocates are calling for a review of Indonesia's laws against minority persecution; President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said violent groups should disband.

7 Non-Catholic seminaries can pursue accreditation

PERU A new law could extend government accreditation to non-Catholic seminaries, giving Peruvian seminary students the option to attend accredited evangelical schools. Seminaries still have to decide whether to pursue accreditation, which can be a time-consuming and expensive process. Accreditation can take 5 to 10 years and involve adding resources such as libraries or classes; however, such investment would help

GO FIGURE Politics

56%
Evangelicals who say the federal government should decrease economic aid to needy people around the world. (45% of all Americans agree.)

23%
Evangelicals who say the government should increase economic aid to the poor in the United States. (19% of all Americans agree.)

Pew Research Center



8



12

existing Bible schools retain students and keep pace with the growing educational expectations of Peruvian Protestants.

8 Witchcraft made a taxable trade

ROMANIA A month after the Romanian government turned witchcraft into a taxable trade, new legislation could saddle witches with heavy fines or jail time if their predictions do not come to pass. Some witches look favorably on the 16 percent income tax as legitimization of their trade. While the church traditionally condemns witchcraft, in Romania it is often viewed as a folk custom that is compatible with the tenets of the Orthodox Church, according to religion journalist George Conger.

11 University stops cooperating with investigation

CANADA A teachers' federation investigation of possible abuses of academic freedom has a "foregone conclusion," says Ontario's Redeemer University College, so it has stopped cooperating with the study. The federation investigated three Christian colleges and discovered each required a statement of faith from faculty and students, which it decided was incompatible with academic freedom. Instead of cooperating, Redeemer president Hubert Krygsman invited federation officials to discuss academic freedom.

12 Murder casts false blame on evangelicals

UGANDA Evangelicals were cleared of responsibility for prompting a gay activist's death when a male prostitute was arrested for his murder. David Kato, 42, an influential Ugandan gay rights advocate, was beaten to death with a hammer a few months after Ugandan magazine *Rolling Stone* published photos of Kato and other gays with the headline "Hang Them." U.S. evangelicals were initially blamed for inciting the death because of a March 2009 visit to Kampala by an Exodus International board member and two other American evangelicals to speak against homosexuality. A police representative said Enock Nsubuga murdered Kato over a "personal disagreement."

9 Court: Madonna trademark immoral

SWITZERLAND The Germany-registered trademark "Madonna" could not be registered in Switzerland because its association with a "predominant and important religious meaning" renders commercial use of the word immoral, as the word could offend Italian-speaking Swiss Catholics. The Swiss Federal Supreme Court in its ruling clarified its position on several key issues, defining a broad audience and scope for possible trademark offensiveness and asserting Swiss autonomy in defining it.

10 PC (USA) pastors call for refocus

In response to declining size and divisive issues such as gay ordination, a group of 44 Presbyterian Church (USA) pastors released a letter February 2 calling for the formation of a fellowship within the denomination to reorient its goals. The fellowship proposes a reorganization of funds and denominational structures and could lead to a new denomination,

compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

"The loss of power and privilege to those who do not practice the dominant culture's religion. In the United States, this is institutionalized oppressions toward those who are not Christian."

The University of California at Davis, defining "Religious/Spiritual Discrimination" in its "Principles of Community" glossary. After students complained, the school deleted the glossary from its website.

Alliance Defense Fund

"Mr. Hinn acknowledged to Strang his inappropriate relationship with the other minister."

A lawsuit from **Strang Communications** (now Charisma Media), seeking \$250,000 from Benny Hinn for violating the "moral turpitude provision" of his book contract when the evangelist was photographed in Rome with Paula White.

The Orlando Sentinel

"To some degree, it's tough to be a Christian here. But in other ways, it is the kind of soil in which Christianity does well. And that is [because] Christians are out of power."

Tim Keller, on Manhattan.

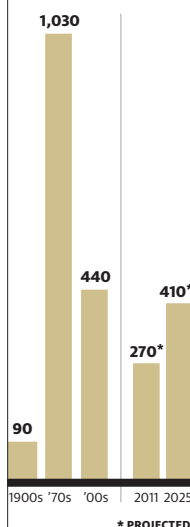
The Atlantic

"Someone who is deported from a country for religious, humanitarian activities and someone who actually broke the law must be separately treated."

The Korea World Missions Association, in a letter to South Korea's Foreign Ministry, on word that the country plans to deny passports to missionaries who have been deported from countries closed to overt evangelism.

Korea Herald

GO FIGURE
Persecution
Number of Christian martyrs every 24 hours:



Status of Global Mission, International Bulletin of Missionary Research



REFUGEES IRAQ

➡ **Keeping the Faith:** Many Iraqis have sought refuge in neighboring Middle Eastern nations, but refugee experts think Iraqi Christians will thrive better if they resettle as groups in Christian Europe.

Exit Visa

Thousands of Iraqi Christians struggle to find refuge in Europe. By Ruth Moon

The governments of the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and other European countries have refused asylum to many Iraqis, including thousands of individual Christians. But this year, evangelical leaders and human rights groups are pushing to resettle Christian refugees in groups to help them maintain their church identity.

The stream of Christian refugees fleeing Iraq has increased in recent years, though exact numbers do not exist because refugees are not counted by religious affiliation, said Grégor Puppinc, director of the European Center for Law and Justice.

United Nations estimates average 1.4 million refugees from Iraq, and half of those may be Christian, according to Thomas Schirmacher, director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom.

After a high-profile church attack in Baghdad killed 58 in late October amid renewed violence

against Christians, some church leaders are urging Iraqi Christians to leave their country.

In January, the 47 member countries of the Council of Europe formally addressed the plight of Middle Eastern Christians for the first time, pledging to monitor religious violence in the Middle East, offer some individuals religion-based asylum, and help relocate Christian refugees.

“We needed to keep the problem on the political agenda and make sure that the European institutions continue to protect the rights and the security as much as possible of these minorities,” said Puppinc, who coordinated the discussion.

In early November, the U.N. refugee agency recommended that European states not force refugees to return to Iraq until security and human rights situations substantially improve. The Iraqi Christian minority, including 5,000 Christians displaced from the city of Mosul in early 2010, is listed among at-risk

Iraqi groups.

As these Christians decide where to go next, many are turning to Europe rather than surrounding Middle Eastern countries.

Christians face kidnapping, arbitrary arrest, torture, and other difficulties in Iraq, said Yara Hussein, legal adviser for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan. And of the surrounding countries, only Egypt and Turkey have signed the UNHCR Refugee Convention but with heavy restrictions, she said.

“While the outside world considers them to be ‘refugees,’ they have no corresponding status in their host countries of the Middle East,” Hussein said. “The best solution for Iraqi Christian refugees and asylum seekers is to have the chance and right to integrate within local churches in host countries in the West.”

Many Christians who have already fled their home country are eager to leave the Middle East.

“For them, in many cases, to choose between Jordan and Germany is not a choice between a culture that is similar and a totally different culture,” Schirmacher said. “For them, it’s often just the choice between a Muslim country—Jordan—and a Christian country—Germany.”

The German Evangelical Alliance is partnering with churches to relocate groups of hundreds of Christians who then recreate Syrian and Orthodox church communities in Germany. Schirmacher testified before the German parliament in 2008 to persuade the government to activate an old refugee law and accept large refugee groups so Christians could transplant their culture, language, and religious traditions to their new European homes.

Although Schirmacher thinks it unlikely that Christian refugees will be able to return to Iraq soon, he is hopeful their church communities in Germany and elsewhere will keep Middle Eastern church tradition alive.

GO FIGURE Church Life

1,600
Christian
denominations
worldwide in 1900

18,800
In 1970

42,000
In 2011

*Status of Global Mission,
International Bulletin of
Missionary Research*

"In Germany and the Netherlands, it really worked," he said. "You really have areas where there are 200 or 300 Syriac Orthodox Christians speaking Aramaic in a place so they can form congregations again." ✚

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Sweat Lodge Prayers

Native Christians wrestle with faith and tradition.
By Trevor Persaud

A largely Christian community of Native North Americans in Quebec has banned a spiritual practice traditional to their people, the Cree. The decision has disappointed some ministers in native communities in the United States and Canada.

The Band Council of Oujé-Bougoumou, a village of about 600 James Bay Cree, voted in October to dismantle a sweat lodge some residents had constructed. The council decided that Oujé-Bougoumou's Christian founding elders had not intended the community to partake in "native spirituality or practices."

"The practice of the sweat lodge and its rituals are not restricted to merely medical [pursuit] of healing, but [are] in essence a way to contact and communicate with the spirit world through shamanism," the resolution declared.

Jerry Yellowhawk, a Lakota Wesleyan minister from South Dakota, sees Oujé-Bougoumou's choice as "a backwards step."

"It's been very hard to try to bring the love of Christ . . . to the Native American people," Yellowhawk says. "Things like this, when they happen it just makes it that much more difficult."

Only about 5 percent of Native Americans are born-again believers, experts say. Many, notes Yellowhawk, still think of Christianity as a "white man's religion."

Today, Christians in Native American and Canadian First Nations communities sometimes use traditional practices. For Cree Christian Reformed Church pastor Harold Roscher, the sweat lodge remains sacred space.

"It's four rounds of prayer," says Roscher, "an opportunity to pray to Jesus, to God. So I find it invaluable, especially working amongst my Cree people . . . it's a good way to make a good connection."

Some native Christians object to this. "Where in the Bible can you go where sacred objects used by nations were ever redeemed and used to worship God?" asks Ojibwe evangelist Craig Smith, whose ministry is affiliated with the Christian & Missionary Alliance. "In the Old Testament, that didn't bring God into the sanctuary. That drove him away."

Emerson Falls, who leads the Fellowship of Native American Christians, says it depends on individual conscience and discernment. "There are some practices that may, in a particular location, convey a syncretistic message," he says. "You have to know the culture and use discretion." ✚

IMMIGRATION

Is Thanksgiving Christian?

Wrong answer nearly deports tortured Christian. By Ted Olsen

An immigration judge cannot quiz asylum seekers on religious doctrine to see if they are credible about their faith, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reiterated in a January ruling. The State Department made the rule because persecuted Christians often lack access to religious training and literature.

The problem in the case of Chinese Christian Lei Li, the court said, was not only had he been tested on doctrine, but that his answers

weren't wrong.

Li says he became a Christian while visiting Korea in December 1999 and hosted a house church when he returned to China. Authorities raided the church in 2001 and held Li for 19 days, repeatedly beating him. Li was fined about \$900, lost his job because of the arrest, and left for the U.S. on a visitor visa. After he violated his visa by working, he applied for asylum.

Li's immigration judge said Li failed to prove that he was a Christian. He couldn't answer basic questions about Christianity, explained the immigration judge.

But in describing his faith, Li said he believed "Jesus came to save people from sin, that he willingly died on the cross, that he rose from the dead and . . . ascended into heaven," Judge Alfred Goodwin wrote for the Ninth Circuit that reversed the lower court's ruling.

Li also explained why he worshiped in a house church rather than an officially sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement church. Those churches, he said, "have a different Lord than we do. . . . [Th]eir Lord is the government, not God."

But the immigration judge was distressed that "Li claimed that Thanksgiving was a Christian holiday" and "knew little about the differences between the Old and New Testaments"—though Li noted that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek.

"Li is in good company" on the Thanksgiving question, Goodwin wrote: "President Washington first declared Thanksgiving as a day of public prayer to acknowledge Almighty God," and Lincoln did much the same.

"Safeguards tend to catch wrong decisions made by judges," said Ann Buwalda, an immigration attorney with Jubilee Campaign who has handled many religious asylum cases. "It's rare you have to make an appeal [like this]. Thankfully, a process is in place." ✚

PASSAGES



Died
Catherine Clark Kroeger

Founder of Christians for Biblical Equality, on February 14 of pneumonia. She was 85.



Elected
Linda Bond
As general of the international Salvation Army. Current general Shaw Clifton will retire in April.



Awarded
Tom Little
With a Medal of Freedom, the U.S.'s highest civilian honor. The optometrist was murdered in Afghanistan last August.

Rehab Revival

Evangelism among addicts seeing success. By Bill Yoder in Moscow

Visitors to Baptist, charismatic, or Pentecostal congregations in western Siberia will sometimes see rows of silent men between the ages of 20 and 50, unaccompanied by women or children. They represent the success of evangelism efforts among Russian drug addicts and alcoholics.

Government estimates suggest 4 million of Russia's 142 million citizens suffer from drug addiction and more than 2.3 million abuse alcohol. Roughly 18 percent of addicts seek help in rehabilitation centers—over 500 of which are evangelical.

The 350 rehab centers allied with the charismatic Associated Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical-Pentecostal Faith report 12,000 long-term “success stories” between 1995 and 2005. The Dobry Samaryatin (Good Samaritan) Baptist ministry reports that 600 clients have kicked drug or alcohol addictions in Siberia's Novosibirsk region. The largest

effort—the charismatic Novaya Zhizn (New Life) ministry—treats nearly 400 clients near the Estonian border.

Yet well-known evangelical journalist Mikhail Nevolin warned recently in the evangelical magazine *Mirt* that “every coin has a flipside.” He observed that new converts may be “remaking the social composition” of evangelical churches, citing the example of churches in the Leningrad and Perm regions that have struggled to integrate ex-addicts with middle-class families. Several congregations have split.

“I think this should be just one form of ministry—not our only one,” he said. “This dare not occur at the expense of our ministry to the middle class.”

Nevin's article sparked discussion, but some countered that ex-addicts are more a potential problem than a present one. “This issue only crops up sporadically,” said Vitaly Vlasenko, director of external relations for the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. “The problems are apparent most readily in specialized ministries . . . that do not appeal to regular churchgoers.”

Evangelical rehab programs have little medical expertise or medication

DISCUSSION STARTER Church-State

Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) concluded his financial investigation of six large televangelism ministries by choosing the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) to answer eight remaining questions, including, “Should there be specific guidelines controlling pastoral housing allowances?” The current tax code excludes the rental value of a home from pastors' taxable income.

available. Clients are instead supplied with heavy doses of Bible, prayer, confession, and fellowship. Dobry Samaryatin claims a long-term success rate of 30 percent among all those who begin treatment, compared with a 2 percent long-term success rate in government clinics.

Such efforts bear mixed public blessing. In 2005, Novaya Zhizn director Sergey Matevosyan was awarded a medal by then-President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. But Maxim Pletnev, a priest running a Russian Orthodox rehab center in St. Petersburg, has claimed that Protestant centers replace one addiction with another. “They may be saving people from drugs,” he conceded. “But these people then display a dependency on the sect very similar to narcotic dependency.”

Concerns that such centers are partly responsible when clients break off therapy prematurely may at times be justified, said Alexander Negrov, rector of St. Petersburg Christian University. He reports a worrisome tendency to use non-stop, marathon Bible reading as a remedy for temptation. “Very little research has been done on the theological content of Protestant therapy programs,” he said. ➤

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should Congress change pastors' housing allowance?

YES

“In the paradoxical Christian spirit that sacrifice by some assures a more abundant future for all, Congress should reflect reductions to mortgage deductions by phasing out the allowance for pastors who make more than the typical American while leaving it for the rest.”

GARY MOORE,
founder, The Financial
Seminary

“There should be a needs limit on the housing allowance. Some pastors are near the poverty line, but it's hard to justify the head of the National Cathedral in Washington, who makes big money, having a housing allowance as well and not being taxed on it.”

PABLO EISENBERG,
senior fellow, Georgetown
University Public Policy
Institute

“Since 1921, clergy have depended on this income tax benefit, but Sen. Grassley's staff has raised questions whether to limit the amount of the housing allowance, and whether a minister should be permitted to exclude expenses for more than one home.”

DAN BUSBY,
president, ECFA

“I'm all for saving tax money, but I do see the legal complication of giving tax breaks just to ministers, structured the way it is. A lot of ministers depend on it, and I don't want pastors to suffer. I hope it's retained, but at the same time it's hard for me to find reasons why it should be.”

GENE EDWARD VEITH,
provost, Patrick Henry
College

“The courts have consistently upheld the constitutionality of state and federal grants and loans that flow to clergy and ministerial students attending seminaries. Why? Because the beneficiary is the individual, not ‘religion.’ The housing allowance is similar.”

RICHARD HAMMAR,
editorial adviser, Church
Law and Tax Report

“Ministers have done their financial planning and purchased homes based upon existing tax law. The loss of this benefit could drive some ministers and their families, especially those from small churches, into foreclosure and/or bankruptcy.”

SIMEON MAY,
CEO, National Association
of Church Business
Administration

NO

Woman at the Well: Some regions of Niger receive less than two inches of rain per year. A network of wells helps sustain people and livestock.

KLAYS BO CHRISTENSEN / GETTY



MINISTRY NIGER

Pushing Back the Desert

'Give us this day our daily bread' is both a prayer and a project for Christians living in one of the world's poorest countries. By Ruth Moon in Niger



On the edge of the Sahara Desert, church growth and discipleship strategies come down to one simple command: Stay alive.

The sub-Saharan African country of Niger is one of the poorest in the world, physically and spiritually. And with Christians making up less than 1 percent of the population, the survival of each congregation is a constant concern. Unpredictable rain patterns threaten what meager crops are grown. For Nigerien church leaders, "Give us this day our daily bread" is not just a metaphor.

"You find, even within church leadership, the statement, 'Yes, God has called us. We are ministering for God. But how do we survive?'" said Gaston Slamwa, a Cameroonian who trains church leaders in

Niger. "That is the question that comes up most often."

"We have a proverb in our language: 'If somebody promises to give you a shirt, look what he is wearing,'" said Nouhou Abdou Magawata, a local Christian who works with a Summer Institute of Linguistics program in Niamey, Niger's capital. "If what he is wearing is good, then you think of him as being able to give you a shirt. If he is in rags, you won't believe him. That is the situation we face. If you are preaching a God of love, but your God does not love you enough to give you enough to eat, what do you tell people?"

How can Christians preach a God of

love in a country in which one of every five children dies before his first birthday and citizens routinely face deadly food shortages? Niger's Christian leaders invest much

hope and effort into what they call a "two-handed" approach, fulfilling material needs with one hand and sharing the gospel with the other.

"We don't want to just throw food out at people," said Donnie Hebert, a Youth With a Mission

(YWAM) leader who works with nomadic herders in the desert terrain of northern Niger. "We can't just tell people about Jesus and not fulfill their immediate needs, and I don't feel you can fulfill their immediate needs without telling them about Jesus."



HARDSHIP AND FATALISM

Niger, a nation of 15.8 million, has the highest birth rate and third highest infant death rate in the world. The country is one of the lowest ranked on the 2010 United Nations Human Development Index, which measures standard of living.

Just north of Nigeria, Niger butts up into the world's largest desert. As a result, 80 percent of the land is unsuitable for farming. Dry season temperatures can spike at over 104°F. Throughout the scorched land, nomadic groups herd skeleton-thin cows and goats from watering hole to watering hole, traveling hundreds of miles in one season to survive.

In the arable south, farmers harvest meager crops of millet, corn, and other

not the sporadic electricity or other hardships inherent to a developing country. It's addressing Nigerien fatalism, the deeply entrenched assumption that nothing can change for the better, an attitude stemming from tradition, religion, and culture.

Mike Schmidt, deputy director of Niger's Serving in Mission (SIM) branch, said Nigeriens "firmly believe what's going to happen is going to happen because Allah has predetermined it." The population is more than 90 percent Sunni. Clay-walled mosques with blue-tile roofs are the largest structures in many rural towns and villages.

USING THE WIDOW'S OIL

SIM, which has been in Niger since 1924, trains local pastors in congregational and

'Yes, God has called us. We are ministering for God. But how do we survive? That is the question.'

~ Gaston Slamwa, a church educator in Niger

vegetables, the same kinds of crops their people have cultivated for generations. In years like 2009, one early, hard rain (or a rain that comes too late) brings a near-famine the following year.

HIV/AIDS is a smaller problem here than in other African countries, but relatively preventable diseases like typhoid ravage the population. Only 19 countries in the world have a lower life expectancy.

In Niamey, the most Westernized city in Niger, goats roam free over garbage and sewage heaps piled along the roadside. Basic hygiene, sewage systems, and Internet use are luxuries. Credible threats of al Qaeda terrorist operations in the mountainous northern region keep Western missions personnel on alert.

Besides disease and famine, internal political disputes plague the country. Niger gained independence from France in 1960, after nearly 40 years of colonial rule. Since then, uprisings and coups have punctuated periods of peaceful, democratic rule. Last spring, a military coup led to the ouster of President Mamadou Tandja. In mid-March, the nation held a run-off presidential election to restore civilian rule.

One of the biggest ministry challenges is

community leadership. The leaders come to SIM's Bible school in Niamey or learn from missionaries throughout the south. SIM also operates two hospitals and an agriculture project.

Despite decades of experience in Niger, missions leaders have a sobering track record of unsuccessful efforts, including many failed attempts to teach local farmers new growing techniques. Nigerien reluctance is a form of risk management, said Jenny Aker, a Tufts University economics professor and expert on development in Niger.

"After [horrible] things happen to you, you start taking fewer risks," she said. "Maybe you're going to grow the crops you know work in the face of a drought. Maybe you're going to do the things in terms of health practices you've traditionally done or know about."

Missions leaders told *Christianity Today* that they try to work with the people to discover local solutions. "We ask questions, not propose solutions, and facilitate a process in which people discover that they already have resources to do something about their situation," said Steve, a worker with a Christian development organization (he asked that his full name not be used).

"We help them a little bit with the visioning, because sometimes you can't imagine a different world."

Leaders said that the community-driven approach is inspired by the story of Elisha and the widow's oil (2 Kings 4). Elisha starts by asking questions to find out what resources the widow already has to help herself. Only after she answers does he propose a solution that uses what the widow has immediately available: cooking oil.

Together, Nigerien leaders seek their own widow's oil. To that end, organizations like the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee often take groups of villagers to see successful projects elsewhere.

Steve's organization recently took villagers to the southern city of Maradi, where a new way to grow crops was introduced. Peter Cunningham, a SIM leader involved with Maradi's "Sowing Seeds of Change in the Sahel" project, has worked for 10 years to help green the Sahel, the grasslands of southern Niger. As he points out healthy acacia trees and new crop systems, he also stops to notice birds: hornbills, pigeons, and black kites. There was a time, he says, when the region was covered with monkeys chattering in mature trees. Now there is silence.

Under the new system, farmers plant around trees and rejuvenated tree stumps. Healthy trees slow the spread of the Sahara Desert. This eventually leads to larger crop yields and forest cover.

World Vision Australia's Tony Rinaudo pioneered this technique in Niger, also called Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration. The International Food Policy Research Institute highlighted the technique in its popular resource *Millions Fed: Proven Successes in Agricultural Development*, and the program has been slowly expanding since 1990. In some cases, crop yield has at least doubled as a result. According to Rinaudo, in the past 20 years, farmers have reforested 12 million acres of barren Nigerien land.

REAPING FROM ROCKS

A decade ago, the area around Abalak, an ancient northern city on the edge of the Sahara, was a wasteland, covered with red sand, rocks, and thorny bushes, and

dotted with nomads' stick and grass huts. Now, thanks to the steady efforts of local tribal leaders and YWAM's Hebert, some desert areas are producing harvests of local grains, like wild wheat, to feed people and their livestock, the main means of livelihood in the region.

The benefits of change are not hard to find. When the last major food crisis hit the country, families who had been growing wheat and banking the surplus lost many fewer animals than did others.

When Hebert and his wife, Allison, work with a new group, they direct their

initial efforts at helping nomads solve problems of daily life. They explain to tribal elders their land rights and seek ways to help them reduce overgrazing, which can quickly turn arable land into desert. Hebert oversees grain banks, which maintain the supply of grain and stabilize prices during famines.

Their work is gaining international notice. In 2009, the United Nations' International Strategy for Disaster Reduction named YWAM-Niger as one of five aid agencies to receive a joint \$50,000 grant.

Once the local economy shows signs of stabilizing, Christian leaders start working on issues like literacy, health care, and leadership development.

Much of that is done through Bible teaching at local churches. The church here, as in much of the Global South, is growing quickly but is still very young.

"God is harvesting people here. The church is growing and membership is growing, but the maturity of the leadership is still weak," said leadership trainer Slamwa. "It takes time for people to understand. Don't force a child of 10 years to do what a child of 15 years should do."

Most Christians are concentrated in a few communities around the capital city and in the south. For example, about 80 Christians in Bawada Daji, a few hours from Niamey, meet weekly for worship. But as might be expected, mature church leadership is in great demand.

Siman Assoumane, who is studying agriculture and rural economics at the University of Niamey, said, "If the one who is supposed to teach does not know what to teach, who will teach? You cannot teach what you do not know. The church still has to be trained."

Despite the internal challenges, Nigerian Christians continue to look outward. As Joseph, a Christian in Bawada Daji, put it, "We want to bless other people." ✚



Compassionate Care: Yakoubou Sanoussi checks a patient's records at the famous Galmi Hospital.

Tough Calling

Two doctors who would rather serve where surgical equipment is dated and wards are overflowing.

There is one doctor for every 30,000 people in Niger, one of the lowest ratios worldwide.

But such statistics inspire doctors Tony Mwenyemali and Yakoubou Sanoussi, both of whom turned down lucrative job offers elsewhere after discerning a call to practice missionary medicine in Niger. Mwenyemali and Sanoussi work with Christian nonprofit Serving in Mission, which operates two of the nation's most renowned hospitals.

For decades, Danja Hospital has run a highly effective program to prevent and treat leprosy. Soon Danja will open a center to repair obstetric fistula, an injury that can occur during childbirth.

Currently Mwenyemali, 33, is in nearby Cameroon, his home country, for additional training in surgery. "Every young doctor or young man would love to work in a place that looks attractive," Mwenyemali said. "But I wanted to come to the place where God had called me to go." With programs for leprosy and fistula, Danja will provide a level of medical care that is normally unavailable in rural areas.

West of Danja is Galmi Hospital, open since the 1950s and still operating in its original building. Sanoussi, 43, is one of two surgeons at the famous missionary hospital. He left Niger for medical school but chose to return and work amid the outdated surgical equipment and overflowing wards nearly 300 miles from Niamey.

"I sensed a call to be part of this work that heals people's spiritual as well as physical health," he said. "This is a place where people find comfort."

Sanoussi grew up in a Christian home. When he was 16, his 1-year-old brother contracted measles and died on his mother's back as they waited at a hospital for medical treatment. Because of that, Sanoussi decided to become a doctor. "I have had opportunities to work in other countries, but my heart is with my people."

Each day, Sanoussi tours the 110-bed hospital. On the day *Christianity Today* visited, his patients included a woman whose face and body had been severely burned. "We don't have strength to survive without the Lord," Sanoussi said. "He gives strength to continue in spite of challenges." ✚

Ruth Moon traveled to Niger on a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting as its student fellow from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. See "Niger: Feeding the Forgotten" at PulitzerCenter.org. John Stott Ministries has provided a grant to *Christianity Today* to support reporting on international issues.



Holy Grounds.

I Do (again).

Paradise Lost?

Wild Idea.

Big Time?

There's a Bethel Seminary student who started a church in an urban coffee shop. Wackily caffeinated idea? Not to the people who cram in for one of the three services every Sunday. Something's happening. God is at work in unusual ways and places. And if He's calling you, get ready to go at Bethel Seminary. Go online and see why.

seminary.bethel.edu

SAINT PAUL • SAN DIEGO • NEW ENGLAND • WASHINGTON DC • **800-255-8706**



BETHEL UNIVERSITY

**BETHEL
SEMINARY**

Get ready to go!





Prison Fellowship
International



Children in prison? What else don't you know?

Explore criminal justice and ministry issues with nearly 1000 Christians from over 120 countries as the global prison ministry community works to **CHANGE THE WORLD FROM THE BOTTOM UP.**

Join Chuck Colson, Philip Yancey, volunteers, chaplains, prison officials, and innovative leaders in prison ministry from around the world to celebrate, learn, and pray.

Global Prison Ministry Conference
June 28-July 2, 2011 | Toronto, Canada

Register online today at: www.pfi.org

Proselytizing in a

Why mutual respect and tolerance require us to witness for Christ.

FIVE YEARS AGO, I found myself sitting in an interfaith meeting. Gracious people from different religions and denominations had gathered at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's headquarters in Chicago to plan the ongoing work of congregational research. The goal of the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership was to bring together participants from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i, and Orthodox churches to research and compare our findings.

I was unsure whether I belonged at the meeting. In one session, the facilitator explained that the research should lead to cooperative resourcing to help all of our congregations. He suggested we could jointly create, publish, and distribute resources to help congregations in faith development and growth.

At the appropriate time, and with my best smile, I raised my hand and said something like this: "I appreciate the funding that allows us to survey our churches, and I think it is helpful to use similar questions and metrics for better research. But I am not here to form a partnership to help one another. I want to help the churches I serve, and part of the reason they exist is to convert some of you."

I paused, smiled, and worked hard not to sound menacing (it was probably too late). Some participants in the room looked at me as if I had just uttered a string of profanities. Others nodded in agreement. Then the Muslim imam seated next to me said, in effect, "I feel the same way."

Though the imam and I were in a minority in that group of predominantly liberal Protestants, we represented the movements among us that are actually growing in numbers. Both he and I believed in sharing and enlarging our faiths. We did not think we were worshiping the same God or gods, and we were not there under the pretense that we held the same beliefs. In other words, our goal was not merging faiths, combining beliefs, or even interfaith partnership.

The imam and I had a good laugh after the meeting. At the same time, we acknowledged that we were not of the same faith and, honestly, that we would each be overjoyed if we could bring the other to the truth—not just *our* truth but *the* truth, as we firmly believed it.

Without using the word, we were acknowledging that in such a context, we are *multi-faith*. When people of different faiths are found together, in a conference, neighborhood, or nation, they are best described as multi-faith, representing different faiths.

Worldwide trends indicate that multi-faith is both a current reality and our future. The number of people who claim adherence to the



LEFT TO RIGHT • THINKSTOCK/GETTY; ISTOCK; PHOTODISC; ISTOCK

Multi-Faith World

By Ed Stetzer

major world religions is growing. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and other post-Enlightenment thinkers predicted the death of God and the decline of religious belief over 100 years ago, but their predictions were premature. In fact, secular thinking has long embraced the idea that religion was the socio-political problem, not so much the solution.

If anything, “God is dead” has been replaced with “God is back.” Economists John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, an atheist and a Roman Catholic, wrote a fascinating book in 2008 with that title. In it they noted that while statistics about religious observance are notoriously untrustworthy, most surveys seem to indicate that the global drift toward secularism has halted. Quite a few surveys show religious belief to be on the rise. They reference one source that says that “the proportion of people attached to the world’s four largest religions—Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism—rose from 67 percent in 1900 to 73 percent in 2005, and may reach 80 percent by 2025.”

“Multi-faith” might sound strange to some, yet the idea gains traction if peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding in a crowded religious world are important—and I think they are. To see why it’s important, we need to look at alternate ways of framing our religious situation.

MOVING BEYOND INTERFAITH

For years, many people of various faiths have promoted “interfaith dialogue” in order to discover common ground and work together for humanity’s sake. That sounds good, until we start digging below the surface.

Many of those involved in interfaith dialogue approach it as if there are no fundamental distinctions or differences between them. By way of contrast, in a multi-faith world, we recognize that we are not worshipping the same God or gods, nor are we pursuing the same goals. And we are not offended by our mutual desire to proselytize one another. (I use the term *proselytize* instead of *evangelize*, as *evangelism* is a distinctively Christian term having to do with the proclamation of the Good News.)

The central assumption of many in the interfaith dialogue business has been that at their core, all religious people—Hindus and Buddhists, Muslims and Jews, Christians and Animists—are striving for the same thing, and are just using different words and concepts to get there. We should therefore be able to cooperate around common beliefs to improve society, the reasoning goes. But how true is that assumption?

Let’s take a closer look at the four world religions that represent about three-quarters of the global population. (Recent population surveys indicate that worldwide there are 2.1 billion Christians, 1.5



billion Muslims, 900 million Hindus, and 376 million Buddhists.) And let's start with the most basic belief in each religion: the idea of God. Within the various streams of Hindu thought alone, there are multiple answers to the question, "Who or what is god?" Hindus can believe that there is one god, 330 million gods, or no god at all. The Vedas, the most ancient of Hindu scriptures, which are accepted by most Hindus as normative, teach that *atman is Brahman*, or "the soul is god," meaning that god is in each of us and each of us is part of god. The common greeting *Namaste*, which means, roughly, "The god within me recognizes and greets the god within you," reflects this belief.

In his apologetic for the Buddhist faith, Ven S. Dhammika, the author of several popular books on Buddhism, writes, "Do Buddhists believe in god? No, we do not. There are several reasons for this. The Buddha, like modern sociologists and psychologists, believed that religious ideas and especially the god idea have their origin in fear. The Buddha says, 'Gripped by fear, men go to the sacred mountains, sacred groves, sacred trees and shrines.'" So, for most orthodox Buddhists (in the Theravada tradition), the concept of a personal supreme being is at best unimportant, at worst an oppressive superstition.

What about Islam? In the Qur'an, sura 112 ayat 1-4, we read, "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He begets not, nor is he begotten. And there is none like unto him." This passage in a primer for Muslim children puts it simply: "Allah is absolute, and free from all defects and has no partner. He exists from eternity and shall remain eternal. All are dependent on him, but he is independent of all. He is father to none, nor has he any son."

In contrast, Christians believe that there is one God who is creator of the world. He is a personal God, a conscious, free, and righteous being. And he is not only a personal God but a God of providence who is involved in the day-to-day affairs of creation. He is a righteous God who expects ethical behavior from each of us. He expects his followers to live out their belief by loving him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and by loving their neighbors as themselves. God, while one in essence, also reveals himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So according to the four largest world religions, God is one with creation and takes on millions of forms, God may or may not exist, God is one and absolute, and God is one but exists in three persons.

If we cannot agree on even the basic definition of God or his character, how can we say that all the major religions are on the same path toward the truth about God?

Pretending that we all believe the same thing does not foster dialogue but in fact prohibits it. By assuming that all religions teach the same thing, how are we to explore, consider, and dialogue concerning differences? How can we discuss humanity's responsibility to each other, the eternal destiny of those with whom we share the globe, the nature of truth, or the meaning of life? For us to talk about these things, we must acknowledge that our answers are different. We must acknowledge that we are in fact multi-faith—with radically different visions of the future, eternity, and the path to getting there.

On the other hand, admitting that we are multi-faith is only a beginning. We also need to be willing to live together with those whose beliefs are different from our own. This means allowing adherents of other faiths to live out their convictions without creating constant conflict. The world has seen too much pain and suffering as the result of followers of one faith using political or military means to impose their views on followers of another.

So how do religions that are mutually exclusive peacefully exist side by side? In the spirit of multi-faith dialogue, I would like to propose four foundational commitments that the followers of the world's religions could agree to make. We commit to do the following:

- Let each religion speak for itself.
- Talk with and about individuals, not generic "faiths."
- Respect the sincerely held beliefs of people of other religions.
- Grant each person the freedom to make his or her faith decisions.

What would each of these look like in practice?

LET EACH RELIGION SPEAK FOR ITSELF

A friend of mine living in India had an interesting conversation with a Hindu about Islam. In all sincerity, the Hindu said, "As you know, Hindus do not eat beef because we worship cows. Similarly, Muslims



In a multi-faith world, we recognize that we are not worshipping the same God or gods, nor are we pursuing the same goals. And we are not offended by our mutual desire to proselytize one another.

do not eat pork because they worship pigs.” He didn’t realize how false, even offensive, his assertion was.

What happened? The man used his beliefs to try to interpret what he saw in Islam. Had he understood his error, he would have been horrified. He was not malicious, just ill-informed.

When we assume we understand the worldview of others better than they understand it, we get into all kinds of trouble. The same problem can occur when some Muslims try to explain the Trinity. Across the globe, Christians are accused of worshipping three gods—God the Father, God the Mother, and God the Son. The idea that God would have a physical relationship with a woman and produce a child is as offensive to Christians as it is to Muslims. But instead of asking Christians what they believe, many Muslims are content to get their information from non-Christians rather than go to the source.

Any researcher will tell you that examining primary sources is vital to establishing solid research. If someone wants to understand Judaism, he should read the Talmud and visit a synagogue. The same applies to someone who wants to learn about Hinduism: Talk to Hindus, and read the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (two ancient Sanskrit texts). To find out what is important to Muslims, don’t watch biased news reports—from liberal or conservative media. Rather, talk to your Muslim neighbors. And to understand the message of Christianity, read the Bible and meet with followers of Christ.

That is why, on a recent trip to Westminster Chapel in London, I preached on the need for Christians to be on mission to reach out to their neighbors. I brought pastors to help plant churches in communities of people who are without Christ. But we also took the time to visit the largest Sikh temple (*gurdwara*) in England. I covered my head as a sign of respect, listened to the *granthi* (leaders) as they read from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and prayed for those whom I met.

It matters to learn from those of other faiths. We should not be afraid of this. If we believe, as I do, that we have found the truth—or

in my case, that the Truth has found me—then a mutual search for truth will lead people in the right direction.

TALK WITH INDIVIDUALS

My second proposal is an extension of the first: I suggest that we develop the habit of talking with and about individuals, not “faiths.” Many factors influence what a person believes. To know what someone believes based on a single-word label is impossible. No correct sentence can start with the words, “All Hindus in the world agree that . . .,” or, “Every Christian knows that . . .”

Not long ago, political commentator and television personality Bill O’Reilly appeared on the daytime talk show *The View*. He created an uproar by saying that Muslims were responsible for the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers. Two of the hosts left in protest.

According to a *USA Today* report, in responding to the incident, Feisal Rauf, developer of the proposed Islamic Cultural Center near Ground Zero, said,

If future generations are to live in a safe and peaceful world, we must break the cycle of misunderstanding and mistrust that encourages extremism here and around the world. Mr. O’Reilly’s uninformed comments were offensive, not only to his interviewers, but also to millions of American Muslims.

“Muslims” did not attack the World Trade Center. A handful of Islamic extremists associated with al Qaeda did. O’Reilly acknowledged this and later backtracked in order to clarify that he did not believe all Muslims were terrorists or responsible for 9/11.

Similarly, in response to the actions of an American who desecrated a Qur’an, violent mobs in South Asia attacked Christians and burnt their churches and schools. This happened in spite of the fact that nearly every Christian leader worldwide publicly decried

PHOTOS • ISTOCK



the desecration.

Meanwhile, there is a popular debate in India over the use of the terms “saffron terror” and “Hindu terrorism.” Many Hindus are appalled by the actions of a small minority who use terrorism to advance a political agenda in the name of Hinduism. To color an entire religion by the actions of a handful of extremists is unhelpful. Individual believers are not personally responsible for the actions of others who claim affiliation with their group.

RESPECT OTHERS' BELIEFS

This leads to my third point: How can we respect the sincerely held beliefs of adherents of other religions without compromising our own?

Of course, understanding someone's values and beliefs does not mean accepting those beliefs. It is acceptable and part and parcel of living in a free society to believe that others are wrong. But it is unacceptable to smear leaders, burn books others consider holy, or equate the radical fringe of a religion with the religion's core beliefs. We must not compare the worst of someone else's religion with the best of our own. Al Qaeda does not represent mainstream Islam any more than one Qur'an-burning pastor or the Ku Klux Klan represents Jesus' followers.

Each of us can take the positive step of speaking out against the people in our tradition whose actions derail that tradition's central messages. Too often people condemn the excesses of other groups while defending the actions of their own. Silence among our own is inexcusable, prideful, and cowardly. Instead, we should be just as quick to point out when followers of our own tradition are acting against our teachings.

In a recent *New York Times* column, Nicholas D. Kristof wrote:

Many Americans have suggested that more moderate Muslims should stand up to extremists, speak out for tolerance, and apologize for sins committed by their religion. That's reasonable advice, and as a moderate myself, I am going to take it. . . . I hereby apologize to Muslims for the wave of bigotry and

simple nuttiness that has lately been directed at you [in the United States]. The venom on the airwaves, equating Muslims with terrorists, should embarrass us more than you. Muslims are one of the last minorities in the United States that it is still possible to demean openly, and I apologize for the slurs.

Like Kristof, I can apologize for the excesses of Christian leaders who have misrepresented the Islamic faith and thus strayed from the message of Jesus. When Christians caricature or misrepresent others, we are guilty of violating a teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (7:12). As Christians, we have felt the sting of being blamed for actions taken by a radical fringe of our faith. It is simply unfair—and in my case, unchristian—to sit by and allow or actively take part in lying about those of another religion.

Part of respecting others' beliefs is allowing them to proselytize without getting offended.

While Hinduism has not traditionally been considered a missionary religion, many modern Hindus have been influenced by the three great missionary religions (Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam). Sects such as the Hare Krishna movement and Osho are bringing their versions of Hinduism to all corners of the globe.

According to religious scholar Richard Foltz, Buddhism launched “the first large-scale missionary effort in the history of the world's religions” in the third century B.C. After his conversion to Buddhism, the Indian emperor Ashoka sent out missionaries to preach the Buddha's message and gather converts throughout South Asia and beyond, eventually touching regions as distant as Greece, Iran, Sri Lanka, and China. Those efforts continue today, and now Buddhists can be found on every inhabited continent.

Seeking converts is a central practice in Islam known as *dawah*, or “invitation.” As a matter of fact, Yusuf Estes, a former self-identifying Christian who converted to Islam, says that “as Muslims we cannot lie about anything, especially about our religion.” Consequently, he says, it is impossible to be a Muslim and not invite others to follow “the Straight Path” of Islam.



LEFT TO RIGHT • ISTOCK; VEER; ISTOCK

Sincere followers of any faith would agree: Sharing with others the way to right belief is not oppression but in fact an active demonstration of love and concern.

Christianity, of course, has been a missionary movement since its beginning. Jesus himself, in his final address to his followers, commanded them to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). And speaking to Christians everywhere and in all eras, the apostle Paul said, “For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16).

What is that gospel preached by Paul? The gospel is the good news that God, who is more holy than we can imagine, looked with compassion upon people, who are more sinful than we would possibly admit or even know, and sent Jesus into history to establish his kingdom and reconcile people and the world to himself. Jesus, whose love is more extravagant than we can measure, came to sacrificially die for us so that, by his death and resurrection, we might gain through his grace what the Christian Scriptures define as new and eternal life.

As a follower of Christ, I must live and proclaim that message, or I am not really a follower of Christ. To say, “You can be a Christian as long as you do not share the gospel” is nonsensical. It would be as ridiculous as saying, “Go ahead and be a Muslim, just don’t submit to Allah.” Or, “Be an observant Jew, but do not follow Torah.” Or, “You are free to be a Buddhist so long as you make no effort to follow the eight-fold path.” As Charles Spurgeon once said, “Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor.”

Sincere followers of any faith would agree: Sharing with others the way to right belief is not oppression but in fact an active demonstration of love and concern. Even atheists like famous magician Penn Jillette, who frequently speaks against theism in general and Christianity in particular, understand the importance of telling people what you believe.

On his video blog, “Penn Says,” Jillette shared the story of an

audience member who gave him a Bible as a gift. The man admitted that he was proselytizing. Jillette described how much he valued this man’s concern for him:

I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize, [who] believe that there is a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell (or not getting eternal life or whatever) and you think that, well it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward. And atheists who think that people should not proselytize—“Just leave me alone, keep your religion to yourself” . . . How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?

We must get beyond the nonsense of saying, “You can believe what you want, but you can’t tell anyone else about it.” To respect others’ beliefs means to understand that being a follower of a faith that you believe offers hope for all humanity yet keeping it to yourself is untenable. That is true whether that believer is a Muslim in Manhattan, a Hindu in China, or a Christian in Kabul.

GRANT EACH PERSON FREEDOM

This brings us to my final proposal: We must grant each person the freedom to make his or her own faith decisions.

I grew up on Long Island in an Irish Catholic home. Actually, that is not true—the Catholic Church was the church we did not go to when we stayed home every week. Later, God worked in my heart through his Holy Spirit regarding Jesus’ death on the cross, for my sin, in my place. When I repented of my sin and trusted in Christ by grace through faith, I was given new life in him. I had the religious liberty to respond without restraint.



Earlier I wrote that all religions are not the same. But it does seem to me that most religions have two things in common. First, every major faith teaches its followers not to force others into the faith. Second, some followers in every religion ignore that injunction.

The Qur'an, sura 2 ayat 256, says plainly, "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever

rejects Taghut (evil) and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things."

In his book *All about Hinduism*, Sri Swami Sivananda, a well-known proponent of yoga and Vedanta, writes, "Hinduism is a religion of freedom. It allows the widest freedom in matters of faith and

Two Peoples Separated by a Common Revelation

What I've learned from dialogue with Jews. By David Neff

Whatever the history of Christian anti-Semitism, when most evangelicals read our favorite Old Testament narratives, we identify with the Jews. As the new Israel, we see ourselves in biblical Israel's best and worst moments.

But just because we Christians mentally inhabit these stories doesn't make them ours alone. The narratives will always belong first to a people whose ancestors suffered in medieval ghettos and 20th-century concentration camps, the children of Israel by DNA and (sometimes) piety. Because we share their sacred stories, we think we know them. But in real life, we discover significant differences.

In 2003, a delegation of Jewish leaders challenged me to listen to Jews before publishing articles about them. A *Christianity Today* essay had offended them. Out of that encounter, I developed a friendship with Rabbi Yehiel Poupko of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Over time, it became clear to us that we needed a national dialogue between evangelicals and Jews. Evangelicals needed to be able to speak more knowledgeably about Jews and the modern State of Israel. And Jewish leaders, who are by and large unclear about the realities of American evangelicalism, could likewise know better how to relate across the divide that separates us. Both groups needed personal exposure, friendships, and phone numbers in order to listen before speaking about the other.

We recruited sympathetic evangelical and Jewish partners and convened an exploratory dialogue in Washington, D.C., in June 2009. We held a second conversation 12 months later. We look forward to meeting again in 2011.

What have we learned? If we make explicit the genuine and sometimes deep differences between us, and agree to disagree agreeably, we can begin to talk and even address the challenges of hypermodernity together.

There are obvious differences in how we read Scripture. Both communities read through the lens of tradition, but Jews are much more conscious of that tradition, while evangelical piety burns with Scripture's immediacy. Both communities understand their spiritualities

through narrative. But evangelicals braid their communal story out of thousands of personal narratives of transformation, while the Jewish communal narrative grows from a history of misfortunes and the wisdom of the leaders who helped them build and rebuild their community.

There are also differences in how we approach ethics. Evangelicals have theology—principled statements of divine truth derived from Scripture. Jews have *halakhah*—the 613 biblical laws and the rules derived from them to guide every aspect of Jewish life. Confronted with some new ethical problem, evangelicals will reason from principles like life, love, and justice, while Jews will ask which of the many commands already given should guide them in the new situation.

Both communities feel fragile and threatened. Evangelicals sense the biblical foundations of society crumbling. They wonder if a future America can be friendly to family, religion, and (true) freedom. Jews also feel threatened. Their numbers are minuscule. They have a living memory of German genocide and Russian repression. Their place in their ancient homeland is endangered, and their American youth are intermarrying.

Feelings of endangerment make certain topics very sensitive; of those, Jewish evangelism and the State of Israel top the list. The first topic will be a perennial point of disagreement. In discussing Israel, on the other hand, Jews and evangelicals alike have agreed on two goals: a secure Jewish homeland in the Middle East, and an end to the suffering of uprooted Palestinians. What is unfair can be called unfair as long as the security of endangered Jews is emphatically affirmed.

George Bernard Shaw once called the English and the Americans two peoples separated by a common language. Jews and evangelicals are two peoples separated by a common revelation of the one God. The more we talk, the better we will understand each other—and ourselves. ✚

David Neff is CT editor in chief. A version of this article appeared in the fall 2010 issue of *Theology, News & Notes*, published by Fuller Theological Seminary.



No matter where we live or what religion we follow, we should not demand for ourselves that which we are unwilling to grant others—freedom from compulsion and from discrimination on the basis of creed.

worship. It allows absolute freedom to the human reason and heart with regard to questions such as the nature of God, soul, creation, form of worship, and goal of life. It does not force anybody to accept particular dogmas or forms of worship.”

Earlier we saw that Emperor Ashoka was a great force in the early Buddhist missionary movement. He built large pillars inscribed with the core values of his faith. Among the inscriptions, we find the following: “One must not exalt one’s creed discrediting all others, nor must one degrade these others without legitimate reasons. One must, on the contrary, render to other creeds the honor befitting them.”

Jesus’ closest followers had trouble understanding that force was forbidden in religion. One day he was walking toward Jerusalem and entered a Samaritan village. The people of Samaria did not respect the faith of the Jews. Jesus sent two of his closest followers, James and John, to go ahead of him and prepare for them to stay.

When the Samaritans refused to receive Jesus, James and John responded angrily, asking Jesus to call down fire from heaven to punish them. But Jesus said that the use of force was out of place for his message, and he rebuked them for making such a suggestion (Luke 9:54–55). Whenever Christians have tried to use force to advance the gospel, they have acted against the wishes of Jesus.

Tragically, while a lack of compulsion is the ideal in each of these religions, it has not always been the reality. Not long ago, in Bangladesh, eight Christians were kidnapped by Buddhist extremists, who brought the group into their temple. The Christians had their heads shaved, were forced to wear Buddhist robes, were made to

clean out the temple, and were forced to bow down to an idol. During their captivity, they were threatened with severe punishment. Their wives were forced to bow before an idol each day before being allowed to give the captives food.

Muslims in the United States have received threats by so-called followers of Christ. In central Nigeria, rivalry between Muslim and Christian villagers has frequently resulted in deadly attacks—Muslim against Christian, Christian against Muslim—over the past decade.

In the spirit of mutual respect and tolerance, Muslims should be free to build a *masjid* where they live, and Christians should defend their religious freedom to do so. At the same time, Christians should be free to plant churches in places like Bhutan, the Maldives, Brunei, and Saudi Arabia. No matter where we live or what religion we follow, we should not demand for ourselves that which we are unwilling to grant others—freedom from compulsion, freedom from discrimination on the basis of creed, and freedom of conscience.

In faithfulness to our respective founders’ teachings, let us avoid the kind of tolerance that keeps us silent when we believe we have a valuable message to share. At the same time, may we discover a new kind of tolerance—a tolerance that allows and even encourages others to explore and respond to the Truth. 

Ed Stetzer is president of LifeWay Christian Research. He earned a Ph.D. in missions and is the author of many books. His most recent book, written with Thom Rainer, is *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (LifeWay).



LEFT TO RIGHT • ISTOCK: JOHN QUIGLEY; ISTOCK

{ THE CT INTERVIEW }

Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?



This Is Personal:
Miroslav Volf grew up
in a country (Yugoslavia)
latter rent by religious
violence, yet in a home
respectful of other reli-
gions. He dedicated his
book *Allah* to his father,
'a Pentecostal minister
who admired Muslims.'

A

Our ability to live together in peace, argues theologian **Miroslav Volf**, depends on how we answer the question. Interview by Mark Galli

FEW YEARS AGO, a Southern Baptist leader said he could not pray with Jews because they worshiped a different God. The response of most Christians was one of disbelief: Who was Jesus worshipping if not the God of the Jews?

The question becomes thornier in relation to Muslims, who are adamant that God is one, while Christians are adamant that God is one in three—to note just one remarkable difference between the two faiths. But are these differences as stark as they seem at first blush? Some theologians think they are even starker, and have argued such in *Christianity Today*'s pages.

But Miroslav Volf, professor of theology at Yale Divinity School, is not one of them. Volf, formerly of Fuller Theological Seminary, is the author of many moving and thoughtful books, including *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Abingdon Press) and *Against the Tide: Love in a Time of Petty Dreams and Persisting Enmities* (Eerdmans). He tackles what he believes is one of the most important questions facing Christians and Muslims in *Allah: A Christian Response* (HarperOne). Mark Galli, senior managing editor of CT, spoke with Volf about the book.

You argue that Muslims and Christians worship the same god. Why is it important to determine whether they do?

They make up two of the largest religious groups worldwide, comprising more than half of humanity. They are at each other's throats, if not literally, then in their imaginations. And we need to find ways we can believe peacefully together.

Both groups are monotheists. They believe in one God, one God who is a sovereign Lord and to whom they are to be obedient. For both faiths, God embodies what's ultimately important and valuable. If our understandings of God clash, it will be hard for us to live in peace—not impossible, but hard. So exploring to what extent Christians and Muslims have similar conceptions of God is foundational to exploring whether we inhabit a common moral universe, within which there are some profound differences that can be negotiated, discussed, and adjudicated.

The paradigm for Christians is God's action in Jesus Christ: God, who is infinite and holy, reaches out to the finite and sinful. There could be no greater difference than that. So from the Christian viewpoint, is it even necessary to have commonalities with others in order to love them?

I agree with the thrust of your question. I don't think we need to agree with anyone in order to love the person. The command for Christians to love the other person, to be benevolent and beneficent toward them, is independent of what the other believes. But will we be able to forge common bonds of social life in some ways? Will we be able to inhabit common space? That is a question distinct from whether I'm able to love somebody.

The American Civil War, one of the bloodiest wars ever, was one in which people actually did believe in the same God and the same Scriptures. This did not encourage peacemaking. Yet you still think it's important to affirm that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. Why?

That's true. Some of the worst violence in the world today between estranged religious and ethnic groups happens not on the battlefields. It happens smack in the middle of living rooms and between people who share a lot, who have a lot in common. So my argument is not that having common values will prevent all violence. My argument is that having common values will make it possible to negotiate differences. In the absence of those common values, we either have to live sequestered in our own spaces (which I think is impossible in the modern world) or resort to violence in order to settle disputes.

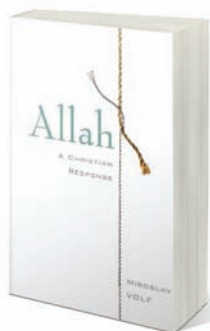
Okay, then—do Muslims and Christians worship the same God?

First, all Christians don't worship the same God, and all Muslims don't worship the same God.

Fair enough.

But I think that Muslims and Christians who embrace the normative traditions of their faith refer to the same object, to the same Being, when they pray, when they worship, when they talk about God. The referent is the same.

The description of God is partly different. There are significant differences that are the subject



We've come up with this idea that Muslims are our enemy, and that Muslim terrorism and extremism are the most important enemies we should be combating. I think this is bogus.

of strenuous debates. Some differences really are foundational to the faith, like the doctrine of the Trinity. At the same time, there's this amazing overlap and similarity. We need to build on what is similar rather than simply bemoan what's different.

What are the most striking similarities between the way Muslims talk about Allah and the way Christians talk about God?

One that shouldn't be forgotten is that God is one in both traditions. That's very important. Two, God is merciful. Also, God is just. God's oneness, God's mercy, and God's justice are significant commonalities. We have different understandings of each of these, but the overlaps are really impressive.

Some theologians argue that when Christians and Muslims say "God is one," they mean fundamentally different things, since for the Christian, God is a Trinity.

I would respond by asking, "Do Christians and Jews worship different gods?" And I would hope the response would be, "No. Jews and Christians worship the same God. They just understand God in a different way—Christians in a Trinitarian way, and Jews not."

Some Jews and Muslims accuse Christians of being idolatrous for believing in the Trinity. My response to both groups is that they fundamentally misunderstand the Christian understanding of the Trinity. It's not that we worship three distinct entities who sit on three thrones next to each other; we worship one undivided, divine being who comes to us in three persons.

I would also argue that the denials of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Qur'an are denials of an inappropriately understood version of the Trinity. My claim is simply that much of what Muslims deny of the Trinity (e.g., that we worship three gods) ought to be denied by every right-believing Christian.

Don't most religions postulate a God who is all-powerful and merciful? Is it possible that we all worship the same God in the end? In that case, maybe there is no such thing as idolatry, only different interpretations.

If somebody postulates the existence of more than one god, I would have to say we don't worship the same god. If somebody says that God is basically one with the world, I would also have to say we don't worship the same god. What binds Muslims and Christians, and what is central to my argument, is that God is one, that God is distinct from the world, and that the one God has created everything that is not God. There is a radical divide between creature and creation. This is a fundamental monotheistic belief. Muslims, Christians, and Jews share that belief. Therefore, they believe in the same God. Polytheists and idolaters do not share that belief.

If Christians and Muslims worship the same God and understand his will as more or less the same—to love God and neighbor—are Islam and Christianity two equally worthy paths to salvation?

I can worship the same God and still not properly, adequately, fully relate to that God or understand who that God is and what God's ways with humanity are. Each of the faiths, Islam and Christianity, has a different way of understanding precisely what God demands and, more fundamentally, what God gives. And I think it's appropriate for each of the faiths—but especially for Christians, who are commanded to do so—to engage in witness, to point to the full reality of who God is and what Jesus Christ in particular has done for the salvation of humanity.

Like many people today, you argue against religious extremism. But weren't Jesus, Muhammad, Francis of Assisi, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and others called extremists in their day? Are we really against extremism?

I realize the word *extreme* is not necessarily the best word. Nobody describes themselves as extremist. In some ways, using the term *extremism* is already a way of dismissing somebody, and as you point out, there are many great, saintly figures who in terms of their views were uncompromising, radical, and in that sense very much extreme. Jesus is a very good example of that.

What separates benign and malevolent

extremism is the use of violent means to achieve ends. It's not how firmly or zealously you hold particular views and claim they are true. It's whether you are willing and feel compelled to compel others to embrace those views, and use violent means in order to pursue your end.

Both Muslims and Christians have good, compelling reasons to have robust convictions about what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. And I certainly would not call people holding these convictions extremists.

Many Christians will hear your argument and say, "We do not worship the same God. We profess two fundamentally different religions." What reason would you give them for working with Muslims for peace?

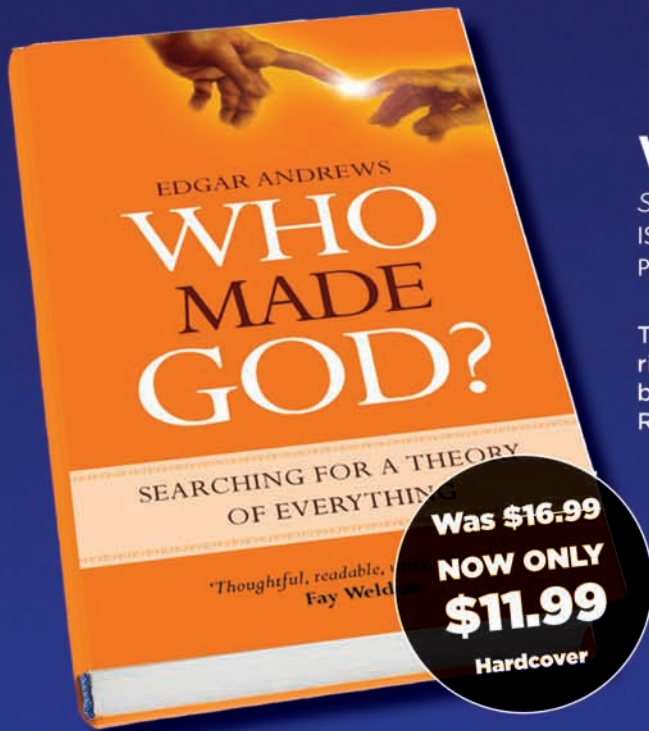
Muslims and Christians will increasingly share common spaces. If it is a Christian duty to live in peace with all people, then I take it that includes Muslims. More fundamentally, Christians claim that God is love and that God loves all people, to the extent that Christ died for every human being. The consequence is that Christians are obliged to love all human beings, which includes Muslims, and therefore live in peace with them.

Beyond avoiding violence, are there reasons we should be working with Muslims?

We've come up with this idea that Muslims are our enemy, and that Muslim terrorism and extremism are the most important enemies we should be combating. I think this is bogus. Terrorism is an important issue, but it pales in significance compared to the hedonistic character of the culture we inhabit. To have Muslims as allies in combating *de facto* hedonism is a very important thing.

To have a robust conversation between Muslims and Christians about what provides for good living, a life that's an alternative to hedonism, is what's required of us at this moment. Just like evangelicals at one point discovered that Catholics can be their allies, I think in a much more attenuated sense (because we are dealing with two religions), Muslims can be our allies in struggles for a proper way to live in the world today. ☩

The Bible's answer to atheism!



Who made God?

Searching for a theory of everything:

ISBN: 9780852347072

Published by: **CPBOOKS**

This book is a penetrating yet entertaining riposte to the 'new atheism' promoted by writers such as Stephen Hawking and Richard Dawkins.

Written by physicist Edgar Andrews,
formerly Dean of Engineering at
Queen Mary College,
University of London, UK

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT 'WHO MADE GOD?'

'In this wonderfully written book, Professor Andrews doesn't seek simply to expose the weakness of the 'new atheistic' arguments (which he does). He desires to present a logically consistent and altogether more satisfying alternative to anything the evolutionary biologist or atheistic physicist will discover.'

Themelios, the on-line journal of the Gospel Coalition

'Everyone who questions the existence of God will benefit from this book, as will those who believe in God and wish to defend their faith more effectively.'

Randy Alcorn, author of *Heaven*

'Richard Dawkins has more than met his match!'

Robert Strivens, Principal, London Theological Seminary

'An excellent writer who mixes a subtle British sense of humor with a powerful intellect and a deep understanding of science... just the book I've been waiting for!'

Tim Challies, www.challies.com

'Highly recommended.'

Michael Haykin, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

'A must read for those who question the intersection of science and Christianity.'

David H. Kim, Redeemer Presbyterian, Church, New York



This and many other excellent books at affordable prices available from

www.cvbbs.com

Phone: 1-800-656-0231

Further information, reviews and extracts at www.whomadegod.com



25th Anniversary
DON'T MISS THIS ONE!

CELEBRATE *Your Faith*

THE AACC 2011 WORLD CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 1, 2011

OPRYLAND HOTEL • NASHVILLE, TN

WWW.AACC.NET • 1.800.526.8673

2011 PLENARY SPEAKERS

This year's Plenary Speakers are not only among the best in the world—they are motivated by a sincere desire to know Christ and the passion of His cross. You'll recognize many of these names, and we've invited a number of relative newcomers as well. These speakers will challenge and encourage you on a personal, professional, and spiritual level.



LUIS PALAU
Luis Palau Association
Portland, OR



LEE STROBEL
Journalist &
Best-selling Author
Orange County, CA



JOSH MCDOWELL
Global Aid Network
Dallas, TX



WESS STAFFORD
Compassion Int'l
Colorado Springs, CO



MIKE HUCKABEE
Fox News Channel
& ABC Radio Network
Little Rock, AR



JOHN ORTBERG
Menlo Park
Presbyterian Church
Menlo Park, CA



JOHN TOWNSEND
Cloud/Townsend
Communications
Newport Beach, CA



DIANE LANGBERG
Diane Langberg
& Associates
Jenkintown, PA



ED YOUNG, JR.
Ed Young Ministries
Dallas, TX



TIM CLINTON
American Association
of Christian Counselors
Forest, VA



HENRY CLOUD
Cloud/Townsend
Communications
Newport Beach, CA



MICHAEL LYLES
Lyles & Crawford
Clinical Consulting
Roswell, GA



LARRY CRABB
NewWay Ministries
Silverthorne, CO



GARY SMALLEY
Smalley Relationship
Center
Branson, MO



H.B. LONDON, JR.
Focus on the Family
Colorado Springs, CO

*Register Today!
7,000+ Attendees
are Expected!*

HEAR FROM THESE LEADERS IN CHRISTIAN COUNSELING—AND MORE!



MARK LAASER



LES PARROTT



LESLIE PARROTT



GREG SMALLEY



CLIFF PENNER



ARCHIBALD HART



JOYCE PENNER



FRANK MINIRTH



H. NORMAN WRIGHT



SIANG-YANG TAN



SCOTT STANLEY



STEVE ARTERBURN



DAVID STOOP



EMER

The
an or
ted
Chris
deve
bers
past
este
fessi
bene
ing T

CH
TH

1. Grief,
2. Abuse
3. Biblic
4. Pasto
5. Child
6. Love
7. Marit
8. Sex &
9. Cultur
10. Clin
11. Psyc
12. Addi
13. Men
14. Ethic
15. Neur
16. Life
17. Inter
18. Chris
19. Lead
20. Tech

100+ DIFFERENT
WORKSHOPS!!



American Association of Christian Counselors is an organization of nearly 50,000 counselors committed to biblical integrity and clinical excellence in Christian counseling and assisting members in the development of their own counseling practices. Membership is available to professional counselors, lay counselors, and even those who are interested in Christian counseling, yet have little or no professional training. AACC members enjoy numerous benefits and resources, including Christian Counselor magazine.

CHOOSE FROM THESE 20 TRACKS:

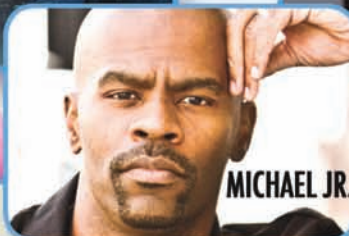
Crisis & Disaster
Violence & Trauma
Foundations & Spiritual Formation
Counseling & the Church
Children, Adolescents & Parenting
Marriage & Relationships
Couples Therapy & Enrichment
Healthy Sexuality
Cultural Competency & Special Populations
Assessment, Research & Treatment
Psychiatry & Behavioral Medicine
Addiction & Recovery
Men's & Women's Issues
Ethical/Legal Issues & Family Law
Prevention, Primary Care & Mental Health
Life Coaching, eCounseling, Financial & Career Planning
International & Global Issues
Christian Psychology
Leadership & Organizational Psychology
Technology, Social Networking & the Future

AWARD-WINNING ENTERTAINMENT

THIS YEAR'S **WORLD CONFERENCE** MUSIC & COMEDY SCHEDULE PROMISES TO BE OUR BEST EVER, WITH A LINEUP OF **AWARD-WINNING ENTERTAINERS** THAT INCLUDES:



THIRD DAY



MICHAEL JR.

MANDISA



NEWSONG



MICHAEL O'BRIEN



CHARLES BILLINGSLEY



...AND MORE!

RESERVE YOUR ROOM
TODAY AT THE BEAUTIFUL

GAYLORD OPRYLAND HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER



OVER 70% SOLD OUT!
CALL NOW! 1.888.777.6779

3 REASONS TO REGISTER EARLY:

Early Bird Rates are only available until June 30, 2011.

Space for workshops are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Popular workshops fill up fast!

Rooms at the Opryland Hotel go quickly. Call 1.888.777.6779 to make your reservations. Ask for the AACC World Conference rate.



RON RICHARDS



RON HAWKINS



JOHN TRENT



LESLIE VERNICK



EVERETT WORTHINGTON, JR.



GARY CHAPMAN



JUNE HUNT



FRED DIBLASIO



LINDA MINTLE



DANIEL SWEENEY



WILLIAM STRUTHERS



IAN JONES



KEN CANFIELD



CHAP CLARK

{ MEDITATION }

A Beautiful Anger

The same holy hands that punish the wicked pull the righteous to safety. By Linda Falter

W

Y THOUGHTFUL collegiate daughter recently asked me a good question that threw me into a quandary. She pointed to several passages in the Pentateuch and asked, "Should a God who commands his people to wage war be worshiped?" I dared not treat the subject lightly. ("You mean the God who empowers a bunch of cruelly oppressed bricklayers being led by a stuttering geezer to fulfill their destiny against all odds? It could be a movie!") I realized she was sincerely troubled by the violence.

The truth is, so am I. Until she asked her question, I had successfully avoided it. But it is one thing to stuff your own nagging doubts in a dark corner. It is quite another to tell the searching heart of your child to be quiet and go away. Instead, I told her I would pray, study, and write to her with my thoughts.

Thus, for several months I have been seriously grappling with the terrifying aspects of God's nature. For many, the inscrutable



JEFF SMITH

temperament of God is a stumbling block to belief. They choose the “safer” scenario of a universe without God over one in which our lives hang on the mercy of an infinitely powerful force we can’t fully understand, much less control. But I would rather be boldly inquisitive than safe. Better to probe threatening territory than to draw back in apprehension, hoping someone else will find a solution for my dilemma.

Consider the difference between the swineherds of Gerasa (Luke 8:26–39) and the storm-beaten disciples on the sea (Mark 4:35–41). Both groups witnessed compelling demonstrations that Jesus could kill or save by his word alone. Yet only the disciples had the courage to ask, hearts pounding, armpits sweaty, “What manner of man is this?” (Mark 4:41, KJV). The swineherds opted to cut their losses (two thousand dead pigs) and retreat. They didn’t want to know why a man of such power would take pity on a lunatic; it was

enough to know he was dangerous.

What shall we do, then, with this dangerous God of the Old Testament (and the Book of Revelation, for that matter), who wreaks vengeance on some and bestows undeserved mercy on others?

One possible answer is that we are unworthy to question God at all, since we are wholly sinful and deserve death. But this seems unworthy of an unfathomably compassionate God. There must be a greater depth of understanding for those who desire to honor God by seeking it.

Job is my trailblazer. He refused to agree with his friends’ explanations for his suffering. Instead, he cried out for a face-to-face meeting with God, at which point he was planning to complain of gross injustice. In fact, he had already sustained his complaint for 30-some chapters. God’s response? A thundering self-revelation complete with lightning, a heart-stopping whirlwind, and a voice from heaven

essentially saying, “Enough of blind rancor! You condemn me without knowledge of me. Now you shall see against whom you stand!” Fearsome words, yet Job is ultimately commended and blessed for possessing a faith that fully expects God to hear and answer.

I’m bracing myself, God. Just who are you, really?

BEAUTIFUL ANGER

Stephen Charnock, the 17th-century Puritan theologian, wrote, “Power is God’s hand or arm, omniscience his eye, mercy, his bowels . . . but holiness is his beauty.” Since God’s holiness drives the judgment delivered by his powerful hand, surely there must be a beauty in its manifestations. Somehow I need to look for the beauty in the hands of an angry God. The problem is, we can’t imagine anger being anything but ugly.

When my kids were little, I dutifully instructed them against the ungodliness of unchecked aggression. “Do you want to find out who’s strongest?” I’d say. “Then let’s see who can be strong enough *not* to punch the lights out of his brother who pokes him. Do you know who was the strongest man who ever lived?”

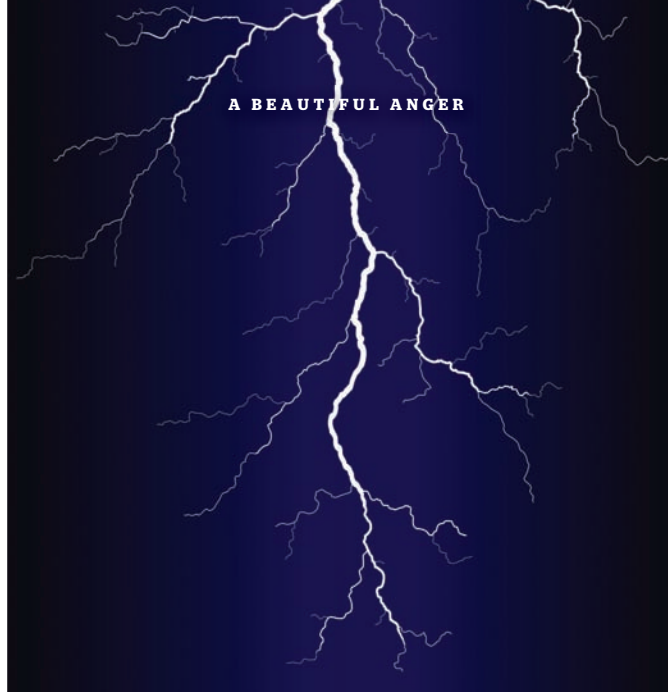
“Superman!”

“No,” I patiently explained, “it was Jesus, because he was God and he was strong enough to send angels to destroy the ones hurting him, but instead he forgave them.”

In 25 years of parenting, I have come to fully appreciate the significance of my little sermon. The Crucifixion, so often dismissed as a barbaric episode, in fact modeled fatherly forbearance to a stunning degree. God held the limitless force of celestial wrath in check.

Try to imagine it! The blameless, beloved Son of God is mocked, tortured, and murdered while his Father watches. Remember that Jesus is one with the Father. When Jesus cries, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” the agony of their estrangement tears at them both. Jesus bears the sin of the world in his body, yet the shame and desperation drive a knife through both Father and Son.

Surely God would need no further



God’s anger is not like ours. It is infused with holy purpose. The Cross revealed the broken heart of God over sinners.

justification to manifest his wrath toward evildoers. But, amazingly, this is the point at which God chooses to reveal the strength and beauty of his holy love. The Almighty gives silent assent to the words, “Father, forgive them.” When Jesus whispers, “It is finished,” he uses his final breath to underscore God’s sovereign purposes in the madness of his death. Jesus, who loves his Father enough to do anything to extinguish the pain of losing us forever, gives his life as the ultimate sacrifice.

God’s silence at Jesus’ suffering is the greatest of all mysteries, and sufficient to muffle all accusations of bloodthirstiness in his character. For if God is a vengeful judge, then what happened at the Cross—or rather, what did not happen—makes no sense. Surely there is no greater sin than to kill the innocent Son of God. Yet God fails to avenge him. Why? Similarly, if God’s assessment of man is that we are all prisoners on death row, then why not be done with it and kill us all?

It is because God’s anger is not like ours. It is infused with holy purpose. The Cross revealed the broken heart of God over sinners. Jesus’ death was for God’s vindication as well as our salvation. The Accuser is rendered speechless as the logic of a fallen universe is turned upside down. The hands of the almighty God at the pinnacle of his anger are

outstretched, nail-pierced, bleeding, forgiving.

LIMITLESS LOVE

The seemingly random acts of judgment in the Old Testament had a purpose, too: ultimate restoration. The prophets told of desired reconciliation between God and his people as much as impending doom. Even the severest warnings of judgment against Israel commingled with a hopeful anticipation of repentance and peace with God.

Think of history’s great travesties—the West African “blood diamond” wars and the Holocaust, for instance—and ponder the meaning of justice. Is it right for the perpetrators of such acts to escape retribution? Even our callused hearts recognize the injustice of unpunished crime. The terrors of the afflicted were no less severe in biblical times:

children were burned atop sacrificial altars (Jer. 19:5); women and men were gang raped to the point of death (Judges 19:23–27); and before the Flood, when violence reigned on the earth, “every intention of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5, *ESV*). Why do we deem reprehensible the violence inherent in God’s judgment, but overlook the violence of mankind that calls it forth?

Many are angry at God for not acting against a relentless tide of wickedness. They conclude that God must not exist or doesn’t care. Is God angry over sin? Yes. Why shouldn’t he be? But his holy rage is under the perfect control of limitless love. He suspends final judgment for a time, until every good purpose is fulfilled. Make no mistake: his forbearance will surely come to a terrifying end. But just as surely, the nail-scarred hands of a wholly compassionate God will pull us to safety. Patience, holiness, beauty, strength—this is why he is worthy of honor and worship. ✚

Linda Falter has served with a Christian humanitarian organization in West Africa, and is currently a freelance writer and volunteer in prison ministry.

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “The Beautiful Anger of God,” a Bible study based on this article.



REFLECTING

Renewing

RESTORING

REVITALIZING

a community called to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world

Asbury Seminary is committed to engaging and enriching the global Church through a *renewed global vision*. Christ's love compels us to continually pursue relationships that minister across cultural borders.

Asbury offers a wide range of M.Div., M.A., D.Min, Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees, allowing you the opportunity to join in Asbury's mission to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.

Visit asburyseminary.edu and explore *a community called ...*

800.2ASBURY | admissions@asburyseminary.edu

Asbury
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

{ CULTURAL TRENDS }

Why We Love Amish Romances

In our brave, liberated new world, more American evangelical readers are seeking freedom in the Old Order. By Eric Miller





THE LAND OF THE FREE, it turns out, has been rough on people seeking freedom, including evangelicals. Torn between competing visions of freedom, visions we evangelicals helped cast long ago, we wander this way and that, now stumbling, now running, heedless and hesitant, trying like good Americans, like good Christians, just to be free at last. Free indeed.

Not that we usually see ourselves so clearly. But our quandary comes out, sometimes in strange ways—and none stranger than the recent rise of Amish fiction, where earnest romance-writing draws readers into worlds at once familiar and alien. Stories of girls sweating Julys away in layers of dark fabric, boys fumbling for words behind trotting horses, have entranced us by the tens of thousands. One leader of the scribbling pack, Beverly Lewis, has become a *New York Times* best-selling author with titles like *The Englisher* and *The Brethren*. While some evangelicals thrill to visions of a planet Left Behind, others are looking wistfully behind, to a world that's refused to simply go along with it all, the mad dash to freedom be damned.

I used to live among the Amish. I can relate. I was in graduate school then, and my wife and I were living in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the parents of two small boys. A few times a week, I drove down aged roads to a university as distant from all the Amish embodied as one could fathom. At least once a week, usually while pushing a stroller or taking a run alongside Amish farms, I was tempted to give up and join in. I mentioned this once to a neighbor, the daughter of an “English” (as the Amish refer to the non-Amish) family that belonged to our large, suburban Presbyterian church. She immediately nodded her head in agreement.

In those days I would drive by a house and see five or six wheelchairs in a circle on the lawn of the family caring for the handicapped of the neighborhood. And I'd look at our own jam-packed, lonely, high-tech life, and sigh. Make no mistake, the allure is real, and it's rooted in a sound intuition: that freedom means order, an order beyond the harum-scarum pace of the freeway, beyond the noise of our little digital jukeboxes.

But the writers of Amish fiction are not simply wistful. They are also critical—severely so, at times. There's a reckoning taking place in their stories, by way of a familiar conundrum the writers see writ large among the Amish. It might be summed up by the following question: When does law cease to be freedom's friend and become its enemy?

It's a question Americans, and American evangelicals in particular, have never quite made up their minds about. Is the Land of the Free really kind to freedom? Or does it tend to thwart it?

A century ago, as this new, liberal rendition of Western civilization was

being erected, the astute German social philosopher Max Weber famously called it an “iron cage,” despite its evident, emerging liberties. The Amish said “No thanks,” ducking out as the cage went up. A century later, evangelicals, among others, wander back, peering through the bars, trying to figure out who’s on the outside and who’s on the inside. If these books are any indication, it’s no easy task.

AMISH RIGIDITY, AMERICAN ANARCHY

To Cindy Woodsmall, the matter is clear: the Amish embody not freedom but bondage—stony orthodoxy, cold hearts. In the end, their elaborate guarding of the Christian faith reduces it, as her narrator in *When the Heart Cries* puts it, to “adherence to rules.”

Woodsmall wastes no time with pleasantries. No sooner does her Amish protagonist, 17-year-old Hannah Lapp, accept a marriage proposal from a Mennonite boy she’s secretly seeing than she ends up being raped by an Englisher driving down her lane. It makes for a rough first chapter. As the story unfolds, it’s clear that for Woodsmall, what Hannah needs is what her whole community needs: to embrace a freer faith, one more personal, spiritual, biblical. In short, they need to become evangelicals.

Hannah’s fiancé, trying to understand this trapped community, has already been given eyes to see; Hannah “fell into guilt far too effortlessly” thanks to her formation within a world of “rigid repression.” But through her ordeal, Hannah discovers something precious and wonderful, revealed in a prayer her brother, amid his own spiritual awakening, cries out: “There’s a part of You that talks to people sometimes. That tells us something that isn’t passed down by the church leaders . . . or *Daed* [Dad].”

Lewis tries the Amish on the same charges in her *Heritage of Lancaster County* series, centered on identity crises of varying levels. When Katherine discovers that she was not born in the Amish community but adopted into it at a young age, her spirit soars—at times. But at no time higher than when she, having left the community, visits a relative’s less constrained, more modern Mennonite church. As the congregation rises to sing, Lewis writes, “All heaven came down, pouring right in through the lovely, bright windows. A foretaste of glory filled the place.” Free at last.

The part Mennonites play in these two

stories is instructive. Placed at the nexus between Amish rigidity and American anarchy, they illumine the underlying effect the Amish have on the evangelical imagination, whatever overt antagonism these writers feel toward what they believe is a misguided, even counterfeit Christianity. Despite the Amish’s wrongheaded radicalism, Lewis and friends know, the Amish are doing *something* right.

Not all the writers see the Amish in such a harsh light. Wanda Brunstetter, author of the *Brides of Lancaster County* series, skips the Mennonite middle ground entirely, happy to turn the Amish themselves into her ideal Christian community. In her world, warm piety and sound theological sense rule. Her plain people live in an Amish Mayberry, at a charmed distance from the “troublesome, hectic modern world,” as bride Miriam sees it.

Struggling with bitterness over disappointed love, Miriam has the good fortune to belong to a community that surrounds her with loving admonition. “You don’t seem to be as interested in spiritual things as you should,” her suitor is compelled to tell her, echoing the concerns of others. Yet he persists: “I believe we can work through your bitterness together.” Here, the deeply communal Amish, heirs of the 16th-century Radical Reformation, draw wandering believers back to the ancient, early church root.

RIGHTLY ORDERED ORDER

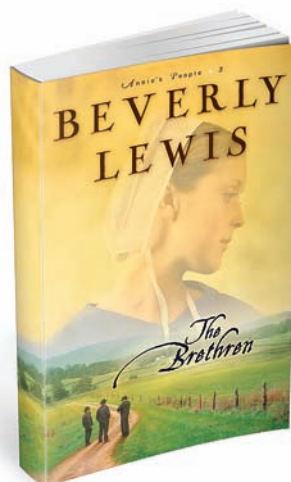
Real freedom doesn’t come easily for anyone, of course—no not one, no matter the civilization, nation, or faith. The soul longs for freedom and knows somehow that it comes by love, and the best stories show the wonder of this union. “The single desire that dominated my search for delight,” wrote Augustine of Hippo in *The Confessions*, “was simply to love and be loved.”

We evangelicals, with deep pietistic roots that emerge from the Augustinian trunk, are not for nothing called exponents of the “religion of the heart.” We understand freedom to be the fruit of an experiential, intensely personal faith. We believe that order, while necessary, must serve this end—and we tend to assume that traditional ecclesial and theological forms of order have not done so.

If these writers find fault with the Amish on this count—order gone bad—it has a lot to do with their own stories. A half-century ago, American evangelicals themselves were bound to a strict, idiosyncratic code, one that after the 1960s many evangelicals came to see as legalistic, a core element of the fundamentalism (as they still called it) that had lost sight of freedom itself. If the Amish fiction phenomenon shines light on any chapter of recent evangelical history, it’s the jagged, uncertain walk of many baby boomers, in this free-form, postmodern moment, from fundamentalism to what we think of today as evangelicalism.

In light of this odyssey, a palpable ambivalence toward what the Amish represent is to be expected. After Woodsmall’s protagonist, Hannah, spends long days in a hospital caring for a friend, she begins to see that the nurses “didn’t hang on what men thought or wanted, not like she had.” Woodsmall, wisely, grants that a real deepening of common understanding has taken place in at least some areas of contemporary American life, including the confusing realm of gender.

But the older world still speaks powerfully. Hannah, struggling to understand her own ambivalence toward her native community, is touched at a crucial moment by “the tenderness of those who had known her all her life—who knew her mother, grandmother, and even her great-grandmother.” And this tenderness “melted the edges of ice that had formed around her heart.” The loyalty, the fidelity, the willed innocence of the Amish are noble, we are shown. But for freedom to ensue,



The Amish Ordnung, the code that governs life together, turns out to be not a cage but a pathway, leading to a distinct kind of freedom.

they need a complement. For Woodsmall and Lewis, this complement comes compliments of American evangelicalism—dual, dueling identities, deeply enmeshed.

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

For all these authors' focus on the Amish, there's not a whole lot of evidence of a searching study of them, not of the sort serious fiction at least would require. At their worst, the writers seem to turn to the Amish opportunistically, using them as an adequately alien, adequately familiar community to imaginatively work out persisting cultural and theological questions.

Careless use of a subject is, of course, a familiar pop culture dynamic—how many movies set in the past take the audience no further into it than yesterday's newspaper? But this doesn't obviate the fact that artistic misrepresentation, even when the genre isn't expected to honor high standards of accuracy, is still at some level an injustice. So to what extent have these writers gotten the Amish right?

That's a question for scholars of Amish Christianity to take up. But another world of Amish fiction exists that might help us begin to answer this question. For the evangelical writers have in their midst an actual Amish writer who publishes with a small house in Lancaster named Good Books, more famous

for its cookbooks than its fiction. If Linda Byler's work continues, though, that may change. *When Strawberries Bloom*, published this past fall, bobs along with a comic touch, a story written by a true insider who knows what it's like to grow up caring for horses and eating Amish food and navigating the Englisher world. In Byler's hands, we glimpse what it might actually feel like to be Amish and feel free.

Byler's protagonist, Lizzie Glick, is charmingly drawn, a spunky, impulsive, innocently fickle young woman trying to make sense of love, life, and faith within the bounds of an enduring and demanding tradition. Happily, it's a tradition that comes across as strange, in the best sense; in a few places the book has the feel of a translation. Yet Glick's is also a familiar world. Learning to embrace "the will of God," central throughout the book, is of course a primary aspiration of evangelicals, having a common formation by the language of Scripture (though the communal obligations the Amish believe manifest this embrace will no doubt seem confining to many evangelicals).

Points of distant connection between the Amish and American evangelicals extend in many directions, it turns out. We learn that some Amish use Betty Crocker cookbooks, make pizza, and read Laura Ingalls Wilder (whom Lizzie turns to in a failed effort to persuade her parents to put up a Christmas tree). Amish girls too puzzle over their wardrobe selections, and their families stress the desirability of "a clean and honorable courtship." But then there is this revealing fact: Amish newlyweds in Byler's community

don't move into their own house until several weeks following their wedding, after they've had time to visit all who attended the extensive wedding festivities. It's within their guests' homes that they receive their wedding gifts.

Byler's story is a romance, to be sure, a graceful celebration of Amish life. But more deeply, it's a celebration of life itself, absent the melodrama of the other stories. A comic vision guides Byler's narrative, in which reconciliation and union are the final, unmerited, blessed end. The *Amish Ordnung*, the code that governs life together, here turns out to be not a cage but a pathway, leading to a distinct kind of freedom: peculiar, out of fashion, but real nonetheless, and successful at repelling many of the toxins that survey after survey show have poisoned evangelical families and churches.

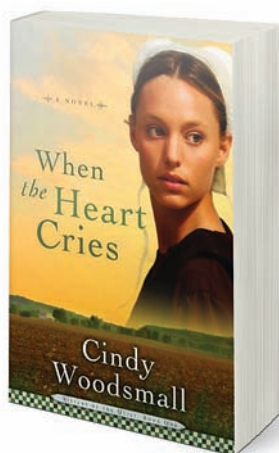
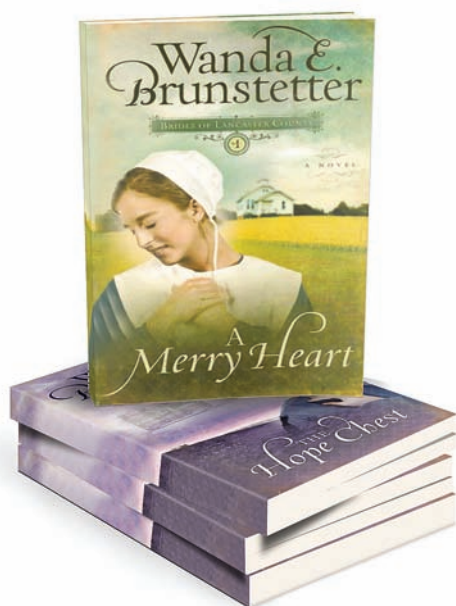
SOLID FREEDOM

It's not just evangelicals who find themselves mysteriously drawn to the Amish these days. Steven Stoll, a leading environmental historian, concludes his landmark book, *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth Century America*, with an admiring visit to an Amish community. Kentucky writer and farmer Wendell Berry has long lauded the Amish as moral exemplars of the most impressive kind, describing their tradition as "solid enough to build a civilization upon"—an enviable judgment, to say the least, as we the free watch families, neighborhoods, topsoil, and mountaintops being washed to the sea.

Does it mean something that 50-something church ladies are reading Amish fiction at the same time that 20-something evangelical hipsters are reading Wendell Berry? Is this the immaturity of nostalgia? Or the intelligence of hope?

I think it's a good deal of the latter. Or at least I hope it is. In Lancaster we lived one mile from the now famous West Nickel Mines School, where in the fall of 2006 a troubled Englisher shot ten Amish girls, killing five and himself. The community's response touched the world with a witness rarely seen, and nearly impossible to understand. They forgave. Is there greater evidence of freedom? ➤

Eric Miller, associate professor of history at Geneva College (Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania), is the author of *Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch* (Eerdmans).



{ TESTIMONY }

God of the Schizophrenic

Rediscovering my faith amid the ravages of mental illness. By David Weiss

I USED MY CANE to hit the handicapped door opener. My hands shook and shadows danced on the wall. In the back of my mind, I saw train tracks. My head lay on the rail. A whistle blew, and I closed my eyes. It blew again and again. My eyes were shut tight. I was anxious and scared. Do suicides go to heaven?

I signed my name on a white paper. No one could make it out, but they knew my face. “David Weiss.”

“Yes,” I stammered.

“Doctor Stanley will be with you shortly.”

I sat in a comfortable leather chair. I thought of the life I could have lived. The life I lost.

A small, balding man in penny loafers came to greet me. He wore a Harris Tweed jacket with no tie—a failed attempt to set his patients at ease.

I slowly followed him down the expensive carpet to a large room. His office was themed after the African savanna, complete with giraffe sculptures and exotic plants. In the corner sat a large hardwood desk.

The lights were low. I sat in an Italian recliner and waited.

“Well, David, how do you feel?”

It took me a moment to collect my thoughts. “I still see shadows everywhere. They seem to watch me. Whenever I close my eyes I see myself without a head. Sometimes it feels like invisible knives are swirling around me. The medicine is making it hard for me to walk, and often I feel like I am falling when I am just standing still. The suicidal thoughts are getting better. Just ideas, no actual plans.”

Dr. Stanley nodded and scribbled something on my chart.

“I see. I think you are doing better than the last time we met. How are you spending your time?”

“I sleep most of the time. When I’m awake I play my Xbox. Sometimes I read and listen to music.”

“Do you get out of the house much?”

“No.”

“Maybe you could go for a walk?”

“I can’t stand.”

“Still, you should go outside and enjoy the sun. Research shows that exercise and spending time outdoors can improve mood.”

He scribbled something else in his notes and flipped through the pages of my chart.

“Doctor, it has been three years. Will I ever get better?”



Test of Faith: Schizophrenia strained, but did not snap, David Weiss's Christian beliefs.

He paused for a moment and stared at his notes.

"David, you need to think about what level of better you can live with."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that you need to accept that you will always be this way."

THERE ARE NO HAPPY CRAZIES

A year and a half later, after seeking out another doctor, I found myself in another waiting room.

Instead of leather, these seats were vinyl. Everything smelled of bleach. I held a book in my hand, *Don Quixote*. Why can't I be like him? A few windmill giants, a barroom princess, a wonderful life?

There are no happy crazies.

I looked at my father and he smiled. "How do you feel?" he asked.

"I don't know," I muttered.

The news played on a television bolted to the wall. Somebody died somewhere. People were angry. They blamed the government, the government blamed big business, and big business blamed someone else. Nobody blamed themselves.

"Weiss, David," a voice called. I approached a white desk. A young man in a collared shirt sat behind a computer.

"Good morning," he said.

I was silent, but my father chimed in. I don't remember what they said. I didn't care. This place was different from other places I had visited. Nothing expensive except the medical equipment. No comfortable chairs or expensive clothes.

A nurse led me back. I remember white tiles and beige walls. The rest is difficult to remember, but I do remember this: I lay on a gurney in only a gown. Later I learned I could still wear my underwear. The first time was the hardest. I didn't know that then.

This procedure was something new, something that broke the monotony—almost an adventure. Better than sitting at home watching a movie or pushing buttons on a controller and wishing I were someone with more serotonin and less norepinephrine in my brain. Or is it the other way around?

A little knowledge can be a frightening thing. I soon realized, for instance, that psychiatrists often go to school for 24 years so they can prescribe drugs that, according to some research, are only marginally better than a placebo. Almost all antidepressants increase the recipient's risk for suicide. Why did I trust these people? Why did I pay \$160 an hour to see them?

But there were many noble exceptions—in the clinic, at the hospital, at the university. They cared when a patient experienced horror; something broke the professional distance they so

carefully maintained.

I can't fault the ordinary approach—the one taken by Dr. Stanley. Mental illness is a war with many casualties, claiming patients and doctors alike. But a heroic cohort strives to save lives, ease suffering, and thrust light into dark places, bringing into the open afflictions that were once locked away in asylums and sanitariums. Their empathy bears witness to the counsel of the greatest physician of all: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

COMING OUT SWINGING

Two specialists stood over me, flanked by two nurses and a medication technician. The one, dressed in plain clothes, held two silver rods wrapped in black plastic. The other wore medical pajamas. Spread out before them were several dozen plastic vials.

The nurses attached electrodes to my arms, legs, chest, and head.

They wrapped a tourniquet around my leg.

“Are you ready, David?” the woman with the vials asked.

Before I could answer, caffeine flushed my veins. My heart leapt in my chest. I could almost feel where the muscle ended and the artery began. Oxygen rushed to my head, and I couldn't control my breathing.

My thoughts turned primal. I grasped a nurse's hand and ground my teeth.

“You may feel a burning sensation.”

A small fire entered my arm and began to spread. The pain raced through my veins and inflamed the surrounding tissue. It passed through my shoulder and into my chest. Sleep.

There were no dreams when I was asleep; nor did I dream during the 23 other electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) sessions. I don't know whether you dream during a seizure.

Light. I couldn't move. I couldn't feel. My chest raced up and down. I couldn't control it. Wires. Surprised faces. My fear became rage. My eyes darted all around. People came to hold me down.

No thought. No mind. Just animal. My arm broke free. Someone fell back. Big men obscured my vision. Someone fiddled with my IV. My veins burned and my vision failed. I couldn't scream.

Light. My body ached. My nurse stood over me.

“Dude, I have never seen anything like that. You came out of anesthesia swinging.”

“I did?”

“Yeah, they sent a call out to all available men.” He paused for a moment to adjust my blood oxygen monitor. “Man, I heard the doctors saying they are going to be sure to bring you out slowly next time. It took seven of us to hold you down.”



My dad drove me home and bought me Chicken McNuggets. I lived off those for two months. At home, I silently ate my meal in bed. Then I slept for 12 hours. I moved from the bed to the bathroom to a recliner and back to bed. Two days later, I was back for round two. I couldn't think or concentrate. Once I forgot my mother's name. After each ECT, before I went to bed, I would mark a star on a card next to my bed. Normally people have 8 to 12 treatments. I had 24.

My doctors classified me as resistant to both medication and ECT. Each session required more power than the last to generate a therapeutic seizure. (ECT is sometimes administered to patients when psychotropic drugs don't deliver full benefits. The treatment induces a mild seizure, which can temporarily bring relief from depression or schizophrenic symptoms.)

Toward the end, they were maxing out their machine. After 24 treatments, I couldn't remember anything from before they had started. I am still regaining memories. Finally I said, “Enough.” I refused to leave the house, and the treatments ended.

COUNTING THE COST

I have been asked many times, “Was it worth it?” Each time I wonder what people mean by the question.

The treatments cost \$300,000. My parents paid almost \$90,000. Insurance covered about \$100,000, and the government paid for the rest. The hospital didn’t eat a penny.

But more than the money, I have been asked whether it was worth the pain and the stigma. I don’t know.

My mom survived cancer twice and spent time in reverse isolation because a simple cold could have killed her. She told me she has never

More than the money, I have been asked whether my treatment was worth the pain and the stigma. I don’t know.

seen pain more intense than my two months of treatments. She spent many mornings shouting at God. Nevertheless, she always supported me. She would rub my head when the headaches were unbearable, offering scant physical relief but much emotional consolation. My father was angry when I first became ill but quickly adapted. He was ever-present during my darkest times. He just sat and waited with me. I didn’t like being alone.

I talk about my family because I learned that those around me often saw more clearly than I did. In the midst of my suffering, nothing made sense. Reason and logic gave way to instinct and fatalism. Pain is a powerful drug. It altered my perception and was an indelible part of my reality.

I am reminded of ancient Greece, where mental illness was ascribed to demon possession. Doctors would hang the demon-possessed over pits filled with poisonous snakes. The goal was to make the infirm believe they were going to die. They were trying to scare the demons out of them. Sometimes it worked. According to ancient sources, many were restored to a semi-normal life. Of course, only the educated prescribed their treatments and wrote their histories.

I have always enjoyed a certain section of the Hippocratic Oath: “I will prescribe regimens and medicine for the good of my patients in accordance with my skill and reason, and at least do no harm.” There is a certain absurdity to that statement, since the Greek word for medicine is *pharmakon*, which can also mean “poison.”

HARD QUESTIONS

A year before my treatments, I went to see the best psychiatrist I have ever known. He was a professor who oversaw the resident students at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. He always told me the truth and did his best. He was one of the select few who made a real difference. He was a Catholic. I know because he wore a saint around his neck.

I talked about how I felt and the slow but steady progress I had made toward the illusion of normalcy. I mentioned that I found it easier to pray.

“You believe in God?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied.

He sat forward, this tall Mexican man. He didn’t meet my eyes, but asked, “Why?”

I didn’t have an answer then. I still don’t. Perhaps I can’t cope with

the prospect of meaningless absurdity. Perhaps I am a coward. I am certainly not brave. Perhaps I am just wishing for a better existence.

I have a group of three friends. We call ourselves the “bipolar buddies.” We all went to the same church, and we were the nerds, the kids with straight As and college scholarships. With a 3.8 GPA, I was the underachiever. Within a few years, we were all diagnosed with serious mental illness. We lost our scholarships and our dreams. We each also had a crisis of faith.

While some members of our conservative church were supportive, it was amazing how often our questions were met with skepticism and hostility: “Are you secretly gay?” “Do you have some unconfessed sin?” “Are you possessed by a demon?” “How dare you question God!” The range of suspicions was staggering.

My parents deflected the ugliest overtures. When my mom had cancer, some friends tried to ascertain a spiritual cause, so she understood how sincere people could give harmful advice. But despite her protective efforts, the questions and interventions persisted. More than once I went to a prayer meeting where people laid hands on me and asked God to heal me—but also to increase my faith, make me more like Christ, and so on.

My faith in God has always been an important part of my life. I am not a saint. I have prejudices and flaws. But as a Christian, I wish fellow churchgoers would refrain from passing judgment and recommending a fix after two minutes of conversation.

Of course, I am ready and able to fix everyone but myself. I am a hypocrite, and in my self-righteousness I have hurt many people. Sadly, I didn’t realize my sin until I was the recipient.

STARTING OVER

As the years dragged on, I stopped crying. I stopped feeling. I just did what I had to do. I found a modicum of solace in the suffering. I learned to dream. I created detailed daydreams that became more real than the world outside.

For example, I dreamed for two weeks about living aboard a make-believe space station. During this time, I didn’t talk or bathe, I hardly ate, and I barely slept. Instead, I braved meteor showers, saved the station from a solar flare, defeated a burly Russian ultranationalist, learned how to travel faster than the speed of light, and weathered the death of my commander—all while sweeping a lovely French doctor off her feet. As the dream ended, we were holding each other, watching a nuclear fire destroy the world below, just as I had watched the uncontrollable fire of schizophrenia consume my own life aspirations.

Back in the real world, where all the accomplishments of my early days had turned to ash, I started over. I learned to fight—often poorly—against faulty ideas and destructive behaviors. In the midst of suffering, it is easy to become selfish—to mistakenly believe that the world revolves around my pain. Like the mythical figure Narcissus, who drowned in a pond after gazing at his beautiful reflection, I have dwelt upon my own anguish to the point of submersion into self-pity.

My family often bore the brunt of my selfishness, and sometimes still does. All too frequently, I have fallen into the self-absorbed routine of sleeping, eating, and pretending I am somebody else. These habits tend to destroy gratitude. So I need to remind myself often how fortunate I am to have a loving family that supports me, gifted doctors who understand mental illness, medicine that manages my

condition, and a God whose mercy never ceases.

In addition, no longer did I suffer alone, but amid a great brotherhood of pain-stricken fellows who mistakenly believed, as I once had, that no one else understands our plight. Such people are everywhere in a fallen world. I have met victims of divorce, cancer, attempted

compassion. I was once one of the Bible bangers who knew everything and needed nothing. Not anymore. If God isn't up there in heaven watching and waiting for me to screw up—if instead he weeps when I weep and celebrates when I take just one step toward a new and better life—then who am I to judge others harshly?

As a Christian, I wish fellow churchgoers would refrain from passing judgment and recommending a fix after two minutes of conversation.

suicide, murder, and other horrors. And really, we are not so different from each other. Pain has invaded our lives, a pain more powerful than our isolated efforts to overcome it. We each look within ourselves, trying to make sense of our individual calamities. And while there is nothing wrong with introspection, we run the risk of never looking outward again.

Of course, whether we suffer alone or with others, the question “Why?” will never be answered, at least in this lifetime. Who knows why God allows pain? Who knows why God sometimes seems to leave us alone? People have asked these questions since they first puzzled over the causes of lightning and rain. Bad things just happen, we say, and it isn't anybody's fault. There's no rhyme or reason. But even when we cannot grasp the sources of our misfortunes, we can strive to learn the right lessons.

The most important lesson I have learned from my pain is about

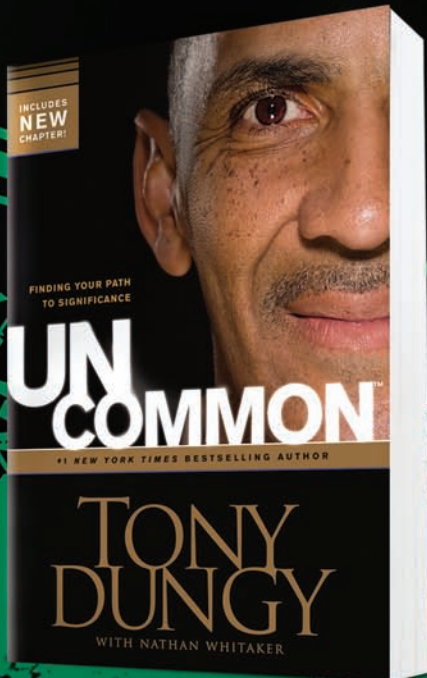
When my psychiatrist asked me why I still believed in God, I didn't have an answer. I still don't. I still don't know if the treatment was worth the pain. I have a multitude of problems, not all of them related to mental illness. I am not a prophet who has received great enlightenment. But I do have some hard-fought wisdom to impart.

Though my illness persists, I have finally met the God I had heard about but never truly experienced. A God who heals. A God who loves. A God I cannot logically explain to my psychiatrist. A God who manifests his genius by salvaging good from the evil in our lives. Someone unlike me. Someone unlike the well-meaning inquisitors who judged me and sought to spiritually cure me. Someone I never would have discovered without my affliction.

A God who calls himself *Emmanuel*—God with us. 

David Weiss was diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder in the spring of 2005. He lives in Tucson, Arizona, and teaches adult Sunday school at his neighborhood church. He can be reached at davidkurtweiss@gmail.com.

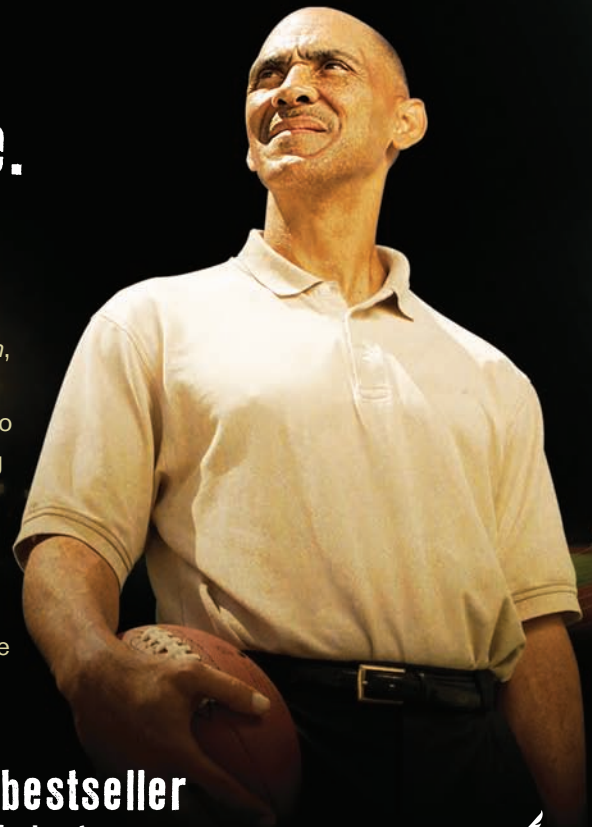
You were created for more... Find your path to significance.



When success is measured by how rich, famous, or important you are, life soon rings hollow. In *Uncommon*, Tony Dungy reveals a better way. From wisdom learned in childhood to his years of coaching and mentoring in the NFL, Coach Dungy's personal stories and valuable life lessons map out the less traveled path to real significance. Turn your life into something truly meaningful. Available everywhere books are sold.

The *New York Times* bestseller
» Now in softcover with NEW chapter

www.coachdungy.com



STRENGTHENING LIVES FOR PURPOSE, SERVICE, AND LEADERSHIP



Pepperdine University is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership.

Malibu | West Los Angeles | Westlake Village | Irvine | Encino | Silicon Valley | Washington, D.C.

**PEPPERDINE
UNIVERSITY**
a higher calling

www.pepperdine.edu/calling

*My Pastor
Saved My Life*

I may never have taken control
of my diabetes without the guidance
of our minister.

HELP YOUR CONGREGATION FIGHT DIABETES.

FaithFightsDiabetes.org



Ordinary People Can Become Extraordinary World Changers.

Wesley Seminary is Shaping a New Way to Prepare Ministers.

Wesley's innovative approach is unique among seminaries. Bible, theology and church history are fully integrated into each class. Team-crafted and team-taught, your entire learning experience is at once academic, spiritual and practical. (Why didn't anyone think of this before?)

You connect with other pastors and ministry leaders from all around the world, and all courses are intentionally designed to connect your assignments with your ministry. Through every classroom, church and field experience, Wesley Seminary will fill your head and your heart with God's Good News. That's crucial because seminary study will challenge your mind as never before.

At Wesley Seminary, the scholarly, spiritual and practical elements of ministry unite by design to inform your professional education... **so you can change the world.**

What Makes Wesley Seminary Unique?

- **Integrated:** Cross-disciplinary teams of scholar-practitioners interweave Bible, theology and church history into each course.
- **Missional:** All Wesley students must engage in ministry at least 20 hours per week.
- **Relational:** Peer cohorts foster deep, meaningful relationships that last beyond graduation.
- **Attainable:** Wesley's accelerated program and affordable tuition create an incredible value in ministerial education.

**[Master of Divinity
Master of Arts]**

**WESLEY
SEMINARY**
INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

seminary.indwes.edu

Wesley Seminary is a school of Indiana Wesleyan University, the largest university in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, with a wealth of resources and one of the finest university campuses in America.

4201 S. Washington Street | Marion, IN, U.S.A. | 46953 | Ph. 877.673.0009

We Know You May Not Be An Expert On Church Insurance. *That's OK – We Are.*

Protect Your Ministry With GuideOne Insurance.

GuideOne Insurance and our 1,600 agents around the country specialize in protecting worship facilities and ministries. We know churches, we know insurance, and we know what you need.

Call us for a free insurance review. We can make sure your facility is adequately covered, suggest safety and security improvements, and, in many cases, save your congregation money.

- Property and casualty insurance coverages tailored for churches
- Trusted by more than 43,000 religious organizations
- 60 year proven track record
- Fast, fair claims service
- Free safety resources at SafeChurch.com
- Rated A (EXCELLENT) by A.M. Best Company

Place your faith in the expert.

Call 1.888.218.8561

Or Visit weknowchurches.com today.



Eric Spacek,
Senior Manager of
Risk Management

VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



Can we trust Christ to accomplish his purpose with a less-than-accurate Bible translation? I would rather err on the side of the compassionate Christ than on the side of the legalistic Pharisees.

Bob Nudelman
Chester, Virginia

Translating 'the Son'

Thank you for Collin Hansen's cover story on translating the Bible for Muslim readers ["The Son and the Crescent," February]. Are we to be honest with the integrity of the translation, or do we compromise academic integrity for better comprehension? My mind says we must retain the integrity of Scripture by translating accurately. My heart says the purpose of Scripture is to communicate Christ's love and sacrifice on our behalf.

Paul became all things to all men so that he might save some. What might have been more important to him in translation issues? Can we trust Christ to accomplish his purpose with a less-than-accurate translation? I would rather err on the side of the compassionate Christ than on the side of the legalistic Pharisees.

BOB NUDELMAN
Chester, Virginia

I commend Collin Hansen for trying to give a balanced account of the difficulties. But a quote from me (p. 23, col. 1) appears in a context that suggests I oppose Rick Brown's approach. My 2005 article actually speaks favorably of Brown and his views at more than one point. For instance: "Rick Brown indicates that

in some contexts one may use an expression like 'spiritual Son of God' to head off the misunderstanding. In such a context the less literal translation may be better in representing the meaning." And, "Thus Brown's suggestion . . . involving the use of footnotes and other aids, may prove superior in the long run."

VERN POYTHRESS
Professor, Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Christianity Today helpfully got to the crux of Bible translations: We must consider not only how we understand the text but how it will be heard by the listener. A couple minor facts that Collin Hansen may not have had space to include:

In the two *International Journal of Frontier Missions* articles Hansen mentioned, Rick Brown added some qualifications for any non-literal wording of "Son of God" in Bible translations: (1) using expressions like "God's beloved Christ" is just one of six approaches described; (2) different wording could be used only where it was roughly synonymous, meaning there was no change of meaning in the sentence; (3) whenever a non-literal wording is used, a literal translation of "Son of God" must

TOP 3 What got the most comments in February's CT

41%
The Son and the Crescent
Collin Hansen

10%
The Best Movies of 2010

8%
Doctrinal Boot Camp
Chuck Colson

READERS' PICK The most praised piece in February's CT



Words That Nourish
Marilyn Chandler
McEntyre

be provided in a footnote, along with an explanation of its meaning in that passage; and (4) in passages where the term refers to the pre-existent Son, the eternal Word of God, the translation and explanation would need to match that meaning.

GREG H. PARSONS
Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission
Pasadena, California

Qur'anic and Islamic perceptions erroneously interpret "Son of God" as a physical relationship producing a son. Muslims' identity is inextricably linked to perpetuating this idea. As representatives of God, our role is not to accommodate a false reality, but to help Muslims realize that their identity has been falsely constructed and tied to something not based in reality. We need to help Muslims understand that letting go of this error will not end in self-destruction.

As God's ambassadors, we are to be faithful to the text while lovingly helping Muslims disentangle their identity from the misunderstood conflict to discover the God who took on flesh. This Messiah came destroying Satan and all his works, removing our shame by adopting us into his family as children of God.

ROY OKSNEVAD
Muslim Ministries Program, Wheaton College
Wheaton, Illinois

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?
CT'S EDITORS WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THEM.

E-MAIL: cteditor@christianitytoday.com FAX: 630.260.8428
ADDRESS CHANGES, SUBSCRIPTIONS: ctfulfill@christianitytoday.com

Gospel-Centered Sex

Let's assume that Mark Regnerus's description of marriage—men pay with marriage to get sex, while women pay with sex to get security and commitment—is sociologically accurate ["Sex Economics 101," February]. Then his three church action steps are helpful. We should emphasize marriage as a developmental priority, help Christian young people meet each other, and challenge men to woo women.

But the Christian call to discipleship is based on theology, not sociology. Jesus challenges us to reject manmade realities and live in the reality of the gospel. That reality is one in which God loves all equally, and each relationship is an exercise in conforming to that reality. The church must first realize that the gospel informs all relationships, most certainly marriage. On that basis, we can use sociology to bring marriage into the reality of the gospel—not the other way around.

JOHN TORGERSON

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

The Few, the Proud

I'd like to thank Chuck Colson for his focus on doctrine ["Doctrinal Boot Camp," February]. I am 22, grew up in church, and rarely hear doctrinal preaching any more. People my age who claim to be Christians think premarital sex is just fine, entertain serious thoughts

about evolution, and compromise on the authority of Scripture. My generation needs doctrine, but we can't get it because no one teaches it anymore.

So pastors, help my generation learn the truth of the Scriptures, or at the very least, stop complaining about the younger generation if you won't help us.

LEAH SARGENT

Greenville, South Carolina

As an older adult, I will not be sending any young recruits to Colson's boot camp. It's one thing to stop teaching basic doctrine, quite another to equate living "by the rules" with the Christian faith. Jesus explicitly contradicts this approach many times in the Gospels, calling us to follow him instead of a set of principles.

Colson is also wrong about the goal of Christian discipleship: "to conform to the truths of the Christian faith . . ." Rather, we are to be transformed into the image of Jesus by the power of the Spirit as we behold the face of God.

GARY LOOPER

Dallas, Texas

Correction: The February cover story incorrectly summarized a statement from Richard Yarbrough as saying some African "believers" think God has no son. Yarbrough was referring to African Muslims.

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.



ONLINE POLL

A TAXING MATTER

How do you think the government should address the federal deficit?

26%

Cut spending and raise taxes.

58%

Focus on cutting spending. Taxes should not be raised.

5%

Raise taxes and avoid cutting spending.

3%

Wait until the economy improves to address the deficit.

8%

The deficit is less important than jobs. We need to increase spending to create more jobs.

Total votes: 629

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

INHERITTHEMIRTH.COM © CUYLER BLACK

"Twitter is a great tool to overthrow Middle East dictators, but too limited to expose heretics in Christendom."

Ron Hodgman, on why Christians should read Rob Bell's new book on hell rather than engage it online before it releases.

CT Liveblog: "Rob Bell's Upcoming Book on Heaven @ Hell Stirs Blog, Twitter Backlash on Universalism," by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"This stuff has no business being in a place of worship, unless your god is social responsibility."

Mark Miwerds, on political and social agendas being discussed in a church building.

CT Politics: "Michelle Obama Marks Campaign Anniversary at Andy Stanley's Megachurch," by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"We can't accept everything out there, but Christians need to be a witness in the midst of reality, not apart from it."

Maggie J., in response to readers who disagreed on what Christian movie-goers should watch or recommend.

CT Movies: "The Most Redeeming Films of 2010"

"We have done a number of marriage classes and Sunday school classes and always feel like freaks. They don't describe us and our desires and needs."

Diane Adams, explaining how she and her husband struggle to fit the expectations designated by gender.

Her.meneutics: "When Gender-Based Parenting Goes Too Far," by Caryn Rivadeneira

"Why do we need to blame someone for being single? It's not something to be 'fixed.' It's a life stage, not an affliction."

Dani, responding to the heated discussion of the book review of *Marry Him*.

Her.meneutics: "Are Single Women Too Picky?," by Bonnie Field



An Everyday Scandal

The slaughter of the unborn needs no hidden cameras for condemnation.



ABORTION, forever lurking beneath the currents of American life, sometimes roars to the surface. In recent months, the rumble of political realignment and the siren of scandal have combined to reawaken the slumbering giant.

Buoyed by November's gains at the state and federal levels, pro-life legislators have unleashed a flurry of ambitious proposals. Legislation drafted in Nebraska, Kansas, and Ohio looks to topple *Roe v. Wade* by using new research on fetal development. In Washington, resurgent House Republicans hasten to fortify restrictions on federal abortion funding and to strip taxpayer subsidies from Planned Parenthood. The GOP also seeks to prevent last year's health-care overhaul from harming the unborn.

As these battles rage, new revelations have exposed, once again, a sleazier side of the abortion industry. First, a colossal grand jury report detailed the depredations of Philadelphia abortionist Kermit Gosnell. His alleged peddling of the painkiller Oxycontin put investigators onto the scent. His clinic reeked of cat urine. It was staffed by unlicensed apprentices, spattered with bloodstains, and cluttered with unsterilized instruments and a stockpile of fetal body parts. Prosecutors have charged Gosnell with murder for overmedicating a Nepalese refugee and snipping the spinal cords of seven fully delivered infants.

Yet Lila Rose, the intrepid young activist whose undercover operations have bedeviled Planned Parenthood in recent years, may have inflicted deeper wounds to the abortion industry than the Gosnell story. Her organization, Live Action, recently released covertly captured footage of clinic workers behaving very badly. The videos show a Live Action associate, disguised as the proprietor of an underage prostitution ring, requesting and receiving advice on accessing abortions, treating venereal disease, evading reporting

requirements, and doctoring medical forms.

Unlike Gosnell's investigation, which duly appointed authorities conducted, many have questioned the ethics of Live Action's clandestine techniques. Many pro-lifers excuse the recourse to deception and cheer every exercise that exposes Planned Parenthood's depravity. Here and there, though, one hears groans of conscience, especially among conservative Catholic intellectuals like Robert George, Christopher Tollefsen, and Gerard Bradley. The strongest weapon in the pro-life arsenal, they argue, is truth. There are grave consequences when people tolerate deception. So, unease over Live Action's methods has embittered what might have been reckoned a sweet triumph.

In such debates, evangelicals can find habits both profitable and unrewarding. The heady mix of media spotlight, pro-life adulation, and fumbling pro-choice embarrassment intoxicates us, but Live Action's evangelical allies should discipline euphoria with rigorous introspection. We need to continue to contemplate the right relation of means and ends—not so much in the context of “bearing false witness” (the usual course), but rather through the more central theme of love: how our words and deeds reflect love of neighbor, born and unborn.

Most importantly, evangelicals ought to ask whether Live Action's flirtation with ethical shortcuts relies too heavily on a strategy to tarnish the abortion industry through explosive, headline-grabbing scandals. Weary of contending for a culture of life—despairing of the laborious, protracted struggle to

transform hearts and minds—we long to deliver a single, crippling blow. We crave a millennial confrontation, a pivotal moment at which to announce that here, at last, is abortion's cancerous quintessence, the unveiling of which must discredit its apologists immediately and irreparably.

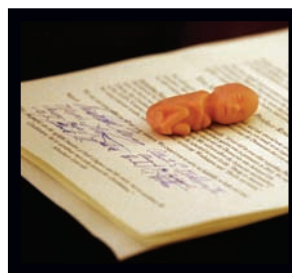
There is reason for this. Individuals, communities, entire nations—none repents of wickedness without a prick to the conscience. Where a million tightly reasoned arguments fail, one whiff of Gosnell's Phila-

delphia slaughterhouse, one glimpse of Planned Parenthood employees facilitating the exploitation of minors, just may succeed. Would that it were otherwise. But you play the cards human nature deals.

The pro-choice worldview cheapens the value

of human life, and many of its backers treat actual human lives—expectant mothers and teenage sex slaves no less than unborn children—in despicable fashion. When this happens, we should not hesitate to condemn either the perpetrators or their principles.

But bombshells must not blind us to the routine, everyday scandal of abortion. For every scoundrel deliberately snuffing out innocent human life, there are hundreds of sure-handed specialists doing likewise. Their tools—immaculate or contaminated, wielded with surgical delicacy or barbaric cruelty—accomplish the same grisly result. What transpires every hour in meticulously hygienic clinics, at the hands of professionally licensed doctors, is an epic scandal. And nobody needs hidden cameras to see it plain.



The mix of media spotlight and pro-life adulation intoxicates us, but we should discipline euphoria with introspection.

On the
Big Screen

What Christian novel should be made into a major feature film next?

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Roy Anker, a professor at Calvin College, recently published *Of Pilgrims and Fire: When God Shows Up at the Movies*.

As the film's opening credits roll, a muscular but aging centaur limps down the long, empty hallway of a 1940s high school, the clack and scrape of his hooves echoing loudly off walls and floor. A silver arrow has pierced his fetlock, and to remove it, the centaur Chiron (tutor to the children of the gods) makes his way to the auto repair shop next door.

So a film version of *The Centaur* would begin, fusing modernity and myth. This imaginative synthesis was no gimmick in the late John Updike's dazzling, National Book Award-winning novel. The centaur's claim was both anthropological and theological. Borrowing from Karl Barth for the novel's epigraph, humankind is "the creature on the boundary between heaven and earth." That is nowhere more evident than in this novel of the sorely troubled George Caldwell/Chiron, a high school math teacher and father to art-hungry, teenaged Peter.

Late in the novel, readers discover that the novel's narrator is the adult Peter, who has made it in the '50s Greenwich Village art scene as a marginally successful abstract expressionist. Peter narrates to his half-asleep mistress the haunting, luminous puzzle of his seemingly hapless father.

His father's physical self—the centaur's horse-like legs—Peter understood well enough. But the upper half, the part thirsting for meaning and redemption, eluded Peter. Indeed, the mystery of his father, "that silly, sad man," will not let him go. For in his father, Peter glimpsed something none of his own shamefully bloated canvases could ever capture.

Peter's recollection focuses on the three days father and son spend stranded after their car breaks down and the two are caught in a snowstorm. Through it all, George, fearing cancer and being fired for striking a student, strives for meaning and a sign of grace.

Peter, on the other hand, loving yet embarrassed by his uncouth father, explores the carnal worlds of sex and art, yearning for his own exaltation by means of either or both. Exaltation comes in the end. Only it is, improbably, for George. His identity as Chiron becomes clear as he is exalted finally into a constellation and a full-blown Christ figure.

Updike indicated that he chose the Greek figure of Chiron because the name sounds like *Christ*. For readers, finally, and for Peter, the

fire of consuming love that was his father shines brightly clear.

And now, at last, audiences might see the same, thanks to the compelling wonders of CGI avatars and—perhaps—centaurs. Finally, like those characters, we too might glimpse what this Christ fuss is all about. After all, how does one tell or paint—or film, for that matter—"the sudden white laughter that like heat lightning bursts in an atmosphere where souls are trying to serve the impossible"?

For now, though, at least we have the book.

CHRISTIAN ALIENS?

Steven D. Greydanus is a film critic for *Christianity Today* and the *National Catholic Register*.

Eifelheim, by Catholic science-fiction writer Michael Flynn, imagines an extraterrestrial spacecraft crash-landing in medieval Germany, where 14th-century villagers take the aliens for demons until their learned cleric, Pastor Dietrich, makes contact.

What follows is an exhilarating meeting of cultures between the alien Krenken and medieval Christians. Both cultures are more or less foreign to modernity; the story is framed in modernity by a historian and physicist seeking to discover why the town of Eifelheim fell off the map in 1349.

As the aliens and the villagers attempt with difficulty to communicate, their strangeness to one another helps the reader comprehend them both. Technologically and scientifically, we moderns are actually closer to the Krenken than to the people, but Flynn brings the medieval worldview to life as Dietrich uses the intellectual tools of scholasticism to grapple with the advanced concepts of the Krenken, and to explain Christian belief in a way intelligible to their alien minds.

In wrestling with questions such as, "Can aliens become Christians?" the novel explores the inner



logic of Christian belief as well as the ambiguities of cross-cultural evangelization. The problem of why God permits pain and evil is another notable theme.

Eifelheim would make a fascinating addition to and commentary on recent extraterrestrial-themed movies like *District 9* and *Avatar*, as well as medieval-themed movies from *Kingdom of Heaven* to *King Arthur* to last year's *Robin Hood*. As a mash-up of sci-fi and the medieval period, *Eifelheim* would offer a fresh angle on two familiar genres. Consider other recent genre-bending films like *Inception* (sci-fi caper movie), *Winter's Bone* (ethnographic noir thriller), and *Iron Man* (superhero with a side of screwball comedy).

It is high time Hollywood did some justice to the Middle Ages. Few recent medieval films feel like they were made with any appreciation for the era. On the contrary, the Dark Ages and the past in general have often been depicted overwhelmingly in terms of poverty, cruelty, ignorance, and hypocrisy, giving short shrift to our ancestors' intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural achievements. Recent historical scholarship has gone a long way toward redeeming the Middle Ages from Enlightenment-era prejudice, but Hollywood hasn't caught up yet. Flynn has done his homework here, and it shows.

Just getting Dietrich right—a cleric very much of his time and place, but with a supple, active, adult mind—would be a notable achievement. Dietrich and Joachim, a Franciscan monk, could be the most compelling period characters since Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin in Peter Weir's *Master and Commander*, or Pocahontas, John Smith, and John Rolfe in Terrence Malick's *The New World*.

Granted, neither of those films exactly burned up the box office.

Then again, they didn't have space aliens.

DANCING WITH GOD

Barbara Nicolosi, executive director of Galileo Studio (Azusa Pacific), is the author of *Behind the Screen: Hollywood Insiders on Faith, Film, and Culture*.

The odds are against me in recommending a 1,400-page tri-part novel set in medieval Norway. I try and get my undergrads to take it up by promising them, "It's the Lord of the Rings—only with a woman!"

The truth is Sigrid Undset's 1928 Nobel Prize-winning tome, about a spunky young woman growing up in semi-feudal and still partly pagan fjords and villages, is nothing like J. R. R. Tolkien's work. But it is magnificent. Now, thanks to a wonderful new translation, it is finally fully accessible to the English-reading world. The first book in the trilogy was adapted to the screen in 1995. But the low-budget, Norwegian-language project never made it very far. With a well-financed, talented team of filmmakers, *Kristin Lavransdatter* would be a stunning cinematic epic.

Translated "Kristin, Daughter of Lavrans," this book contains a wonderfully rich, surprising, and beautiful story. The arena is truly fresh. A stickler for historical detail, Undset meticulously recreates a moment and place of human history that we haven't seen on the screen before. The cold mists, deep green glades, and dark forests of 14th-century Norway are far from both the Viking epics and the Arthurian legends that have made it to the screen. The movie would offer viewers a visual banquet of fascinating new things.

The story also has a great array of quirky and delightful characters. The drama is a gritty tale of love, passion, and marriage, and of sin and the misery that it brings. In a society of throwaway marriages and indefinable families, Kristin offers a vision of sticking it out, carrying on, and coming through it in holiness.

What really gives the book so much potential as a movie is the profound theme that underlies all of Kristin's steps and missteps. In my second time through *Kristin Lavransdatter*, I am tempted to describe the whole thing as a metaphor for the dance of every human soul with God.

Kristin is the beautiful and high-spirited daughter of the village "king." In his wisdom, Kristin's father has betrothed her to a nobleman who is good and who will be good for his daughter. But Kristin rebels. She falls passionately in love with the bad boy of the region, Erlend, and marries him over the strong objections of her father. The book unfolds as Kristin suffers the consequences of getting the thing she wanted, the way we do when our rebellious sins take us far from the way God would have for us. This greatness of theme would add that indefinable quality lacking in so many movies today.

This needs to be a big-budget studio project with some folks on the creative team who actually believe in God. It's a tall order, but could come about if the newly translated novel acquires the public momentum it deserves.



AMANDA DUFFY



Going Down Singing

Why we should remember that we will die.

THE DAY BEFORE he died, my father wore what his doctors called the “Star Wars mask”—a high-tech oxygen system that covered most of his face. Pneumonia made his breathing extremely labored, but that didn’t keep him from chatting.

“Pardon?” my mom would ask patiently, trying to decipher his muffled sounds. Exasperated, he’d yank off the mask, bringing himself to the brink of respiratory arrest to ask about hockey trades or complain about the hospital food.

After several hours, he gave up on conversation. He started singing.

“What are you humming?” my mom asked. My dad repeatedly tried to answer through the mask before yanking it off again. “With Christ in the Vessel, I Can Smile at the Storm,” he gasped. “Wow,” murmured my mom, before singing it with him.

My dad learned “With Christ in the Vessel” at Camp Imadene in 1949, the summer he asked Jesus into his 8-year-old heart. Six decades later, hours before his death, that silly old camp song was still embedded in his soul and mind, and he was singing it at the top of his nearly-worn-out lungs.

I have never liked thinking about my own death. But I’ve considered it enough to know I hope I go down singing, or at least speaking or thinking, something about Jesus.

I suppose that is why I found myself sobbing on an airplane while reading Margaret Guenther’s *The Practice of Prayer*. In one section, Guenther discusses the Eastern Christian discipline of continuously repeating the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” She reports her own efforts to incorporate the practice into her daily life, even sizing up the logs she chops for firewood by the number of Jesus Prayers she’ll likely get through before they are cut.

I love the idea of having such truth-giving words ingrained into my routine. But here’s

Guenther’s line that really got to me: “I hope that by imprinting [the Jesus Prayer] on my subconscious, it will be with me for the rest of my life, especially at the end, when other words will perhaps be lost to me.”

Guenther, a former professor at General Theological Seminary in New York, is an accomplished and educated woman. Yet she is humble and practical enough to do what she can to prepare for her own death—and for the possibility that even before her death, her mind might fade into dementia. In a culture consumed with denying mortality, here is a woman who plans for it, in a way that affects the minutiae of her life now.

Many early Christian communities encouraged believers to engage in the spiritual discipline of considering their own deaths—not in order to create morbid fear, but to put this life in the proper perspective. *Memento mori*, medieval monks would say to each other in the hallways. “Remember your mortality,” or, more literally, “Remember you will die.”

Death unaddressed is the bogeyman in the basement; it keeps us looking over our shoulders and holds us back from entering joyously into the days we are given. But death dragged out from the shadows and held up to the light of the gospel not only loses its sting, it becomes an essential reminder to wisely use the life we have.

When we remember the mortality of those around us, they become more valuable to us. Madeleine L’Engle once noted that when people die, it is the sins of omission,

rather than the sins of commission, that haunt us. “If only I had called more,” we lament. Remembering a loved one’s death before it happens can spur us into the sort of action we won’t regret later.

And remembering our own mortality helps reorder our priorities; a race toward a finish line has a different sense of purpose

and urgency than a jog around the block. When a believer acknowledges that he is headed toward death (tomorrow or in 50 years), he can stop expending the tremendous energy it takes to deny his mortality and start living into his eternal destiny, here and now. And he can be intentional about investing himself in the



things he wants to be with him at the end, much the way Guenther seeks to make the Jesus Prayer a permanent part of her psyche.

I don’t want to romanticize death. My friend Bernie calls it “the Great Gash,” and I must confess that on the six-month anniversary of my father’s passing, the hole left by him is still gaping.

But though death hurts, it is not the end. Though we mourn, we do not mourn as those who have no hope. And so I offer my dread of death to the Author of Life, asking him to help me to number my days rightly. I don’t know how many I’ve got, but I want to use every one of them to get the truth about who Jesus is—and who I am in him—more deeply ingrained.

That’s why I’m teaching my kids “With Christ in the Vessel.” We sing it at the top of our lungs.

Remembering our own mortality helps reorder our priorities; a race toward a finish line has a different sense of urgency than a jog around the block.

To Geneva College history professor Dr. Eric Miller, **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Geneva College salutes the excellence of Dr. Eric Miller, whose book *Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch* received the 2011 *Christianity Today* Book Award for History/Biography. *Hope in a Scattering Time* explores the writings and ideas of social critic and historian Christopher Lasch, and *Christianity Today* says, "For a post-Christian era struggling with social responsibility and moral integrity, I can recommend no moresalutary biography than this one."

Dr. Miller is a member of the outstanding faculty at Geneva College that encourages students to accept the challenge of rigorous academics built on the strong foundation of Christian values. For over 160 years, Geneva has offered innovative and distinctive programs that fully integrate faith and scholarship. We're a challenging Christian college that prepares students to meet the challenges of the future.

Accept the challenge.

Contact Geneva today!



GENEVA COLLEGE

3200 College Avenue, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010



800.847.8255



www.geneva.edu



Geneva College



@Geneva_College



An Improbable Alliance

Catholics and evangelicals used to fight over religious liberty. Not anymore.

THE MOST RECENT meeting of Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) witnessed not just another theological discussion, but the birth of an alliance that only two decades ago would have seemed improbable. Here were Catholic and evangelical theologians seeking common ground on religious liberty, an issue that has caused frequent strife between the two groups.

Now, we are standing together to defend the religious liberty of all believers, which is under assault around the world and in the U.S. Consider the Proposition 8 case, the proposed ban on gay marriage in California. In striking down the referendum, U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker wrote that Christian beliefs “harm gays and lesbians.” Just months later, tech trendsetter Apple picked up the same refrain in removing a Manhattan Declaration app from its iTunes store.

If Christian teaching is degraded in this way, either in the courts or in corporate culture, Christians, as well as Muslims and Jews with similar views on this subject, could soon be charged with “hate speech” for simply stating what their religious traditions have held for millennia.

ECT continues to study the serious theological differences between Catholics and evangelicals. (The last statement was on the Virgin Mary.) Such theological work is an important part of our shared witness. It allows us to make common cause on the great moral issues facing our culture, including the sanctity of life, the dignity of marriage, and religious freedom.

The Manhattan Declaration addresses these three. While not directly a part of ECT, the statement has been endorsed by 57 Catholic bishops in the U.S., numerous evangelical leaders, and the metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in America.

When we released the Manhattan Declaration in November 2009, many called it just another salvo in the culture war. But

we sensed it was part of a movement. In the months after the document’s release, activity began popping up around the country. Just before Christmas, for example, a network of men’s Bible studies proposed a citywide rally in Mobile, Alabama. They enlisted the support of all the major Christian leaders—the Catholic archbishop and Protestant pastors, including whites and African Americans. With no advertising and only ten days to promote the rally by word of mouth, they turned out an excited crowd of 2,500 people—at 6 A.M.!

The same kind of grassroots activity has appeared in other areas, including Oakland, Phoenix, and Albuquerque. One of the most moving expressions of Christian unity was two pro-life/pro-marriage worship services held simultaneously in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Before the services, Protestants and Catholics gathered at a school to hear rousing messages from Catholic and Protestant clergy. Catholics then went across the street to celebrate Mass, while Protestants worshiped at the school. After the services, the worshipers marched together to the state capitol. There they signed the Manhattan Declaration. Their signatures were presented to the governor. Soon after, the New Mexico legislature passed a resolution endorsing the Manhattan Declaration.

In the same spirit of unity, 2,000 New Mexico Christians attended an extraordinary conference on Christian worldview and the Manhattan Declaration in Albuquerque. An evangelical graduate of our Centurions Program organized the event alongside the

Catholic archbishop of the state. Pastors from nearly every denomination were present.

Reading Eric Metaxas’s epic work on Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded us of the importance of this kind of effort. It also provided a sobering note of caution. In 1934, the Confessing Church, a coalition of believing Christians from Protestant denominations in Germany, issued the

Barmen Declaration. This proclamation of biblical fidelity drew a line in the sand against Adolf Hitler’s aggressive efforts to “Nazi-fy” the church. Shockingly, tens of thousands of Christians failed to sign, whether out of sympathy to Nazism, sheer indifference, or fear. Many who developed the document ended up in prison.

Today, of course, we face nothing like the monstrous

evil the Confessing Church confronted in Germany. But there are some parallels. The Manhattan Declaration, after all, is an effort to draw a line in the sand against the surging tides of secularism and the growing hostility in many quarters toward Christianity, and to defend religious freedom for all persons of faith.

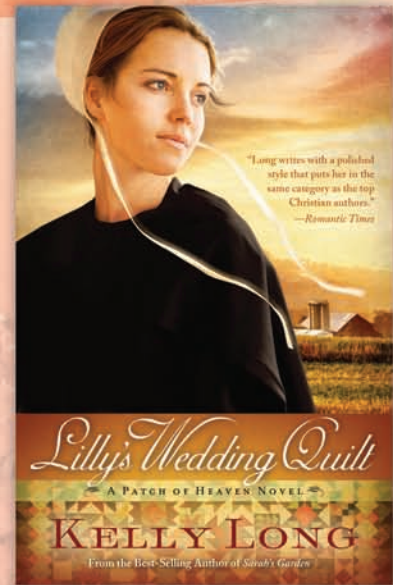
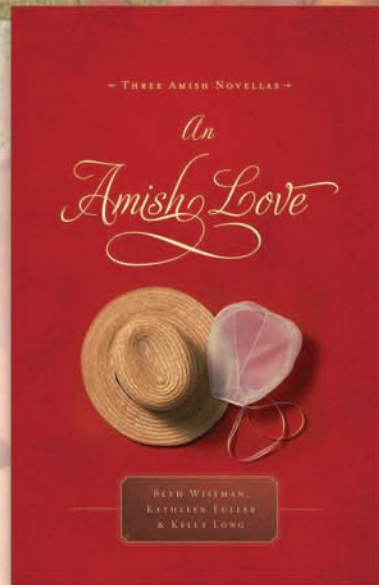
It takes courage to speak out today. But we would do well to emulate the heroism of Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church. We must not allow either courts or corporations to redefine the bounds of religious discourse in American life.

If we understand the signs of our times, how can we do less than join together to make a vigorous defense of our faith and address the great moral issues of the day? 



We must not allow either courts or corporations to redefine the bounds of religious discourse in American life.

Discover Amish Fiction with these Best-Selling Authors



Visit AmishLiving.com to download a free sample chapter of *Plain Proposal* and experience a taste of the simple life.

LOVE ALL THINGS
AMISH?
www.AMISHLIVING.COM




THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798



a community called to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world

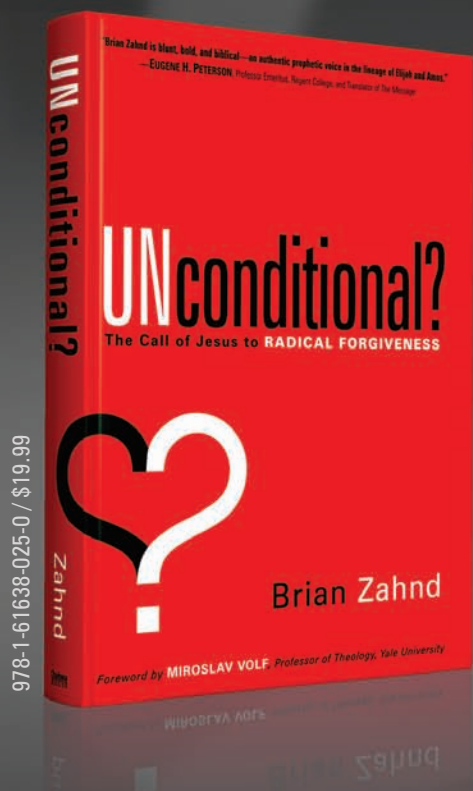
Asbury Seminary is *restoring hope* through training generations of Spirit-filled, evangelistic church planters, and our curriculum supports that goal.

Asbury offers a wide range of M.Div., M.A., D.Min, Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees, allowing you the opportunity to join in Asbury's mission to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.

Visit asburyseminary.edu and explore *a community called ...*
800.2ASBURY | admissions@asburyseminary.edu

Asbury
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Christianity Needs an Update



"Brian Zahnd, blunt, bold, and biblical: we simply cannot embrace violence and retaliation in the name of Jesus."

—**Eugene H. Peterson**, Translator of *The Message*

"In a fresh and compelling way, Zahnd urges all of us to give up on consumerism and hostility toward those who differ from us and practice generous and forgiving grace."

—from the Foreword by **Miroslav Volf**, Professor of Theology, Yale University

"Unconditional? is filled with inspiring stories of forgiveness and keen theological and biblical insights. If I had to recommend just one book on forgiveness, this would be it."

—**Rev. Adam Hamilton**, Senior Pastor, Church of the Resurrection,
Author of *When Christians Get It Wrong*

If it is going to be a compelling voice in the twenty-first century, Christianity needs a fresh message—not a new innovation or a novel interpretation—but a return to its roots. And if Christianity is about anything, it is about forgiveness. At a time when the ugliness of rage and retaliation are driving the story line, *Brian Zahnd* presents the beauty and total restoration of forgiveness the way Jesus taught us to live it.

More resources to help you share and live out the message

Small Group Discussion Guide

978-1-61638-351-0 / \$9.99



The Question of Forgiveness

978-1-61638-372-5 / \$2.49



Use your phone to find out more! Scan this QR code with your smartphone and view videos, download a sample chapter, and learn more about the book. If your phone doesn't have a QR code reader, visit the app store to download.

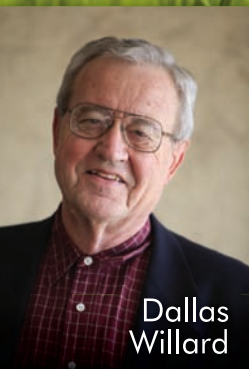
www.unconditionalthebook.com



Formation in Christlikeness

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

FRIENDS UNIVERSITY/WICHITA/KS



Dallas
Willard



James
Bryan Smith



Mindy
Caliguire



Scot
McKnight



Eduardo
Rosa Pedreira



James
Catford

SEPT 23-24 2011

Join Dallas, Jim, Mindy, Scot, Eduardo, and James as together they explore the process of formation in Christlikeness from a variety of perspectives. How do we become different? What are the elements of transformation? In what ways is the Bible our guide? Does it impact our relationships and society? These and many more questions will be considered in five plenary sessions and a number of experiential and idea workshops.

Registration is limited to 600 people, so please register early!

MORE DETAILS AND REGISTRATION AT www.apprenticeofjesus.org/aievents OR 303-792-0152

CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS



What's Up with Hell?

Rob Bell raises crucial questions, but offers answers that may sabotage his goals. By Mark Galli

Rob Bell loves Jesus, and he wants as many people as possible to do the same. Perhaps this book will help. Indeed, there are passages in *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (HarperOne) ★★★★★ that should give the most stubborn pagan pause.

Along the way, Bell raises theological questions that have simmered beneath the church's public face for some time. But he also proposes answers that seem likely to impair his stated goal.

Bell is a pastor with a substantial following not only at his Mars Hill Bible Church in

Grand Rapids, Michigan (with some 10,000 in weekly attendance), but all across North America. One can see why. His stuff preaches.

Take that title: *Love Wins*. It's both a wonderfully concise summary of the biblical narrative and a profound distillation of human hope. Bell says in the preface, "I've written this book for all those, everywhere, who have heard some version of the Jesus story that caused their pulse rate to rise, their stomach to churn, and their heart to utter those resolute words, 'I would never be a part of that.'" The tone and theme of the book should inspire such readers to re-examine

the story of Jesus.

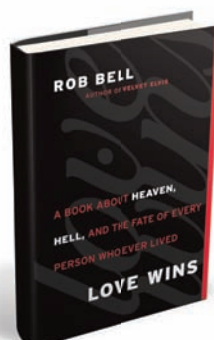
Love Wins nicely sets that story in its cosmic context without minimizing its individual dimension. Bell affirms that Jesus came to die on the cross so we can have a relationship with God. "But . . . for the first Christians," he says, "the story was, first and foremost, bigger, grander. More massive. . . . God has inaugurated a movement in Jesus' resurrection to renew, restore, and reconcile everything."

THE CASE OF UNIVERSALISM

Pre-publication buzz centered on Bell's flirtation with universalism—the idea that all people will eventually be saved. Indeed, Bell makes the universalist case most fully in one chapter. He mentions many New Testament passages that point in this direction, like "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19, *ESV*), and Jesus' statement, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32, *ESV*). Then, juxtaposing verses about God's omnipotence and God's desire that all be saved, he asks the arresting question, "Will God get what he wants?"

It's rhetorically compelling, but he misleadingly claims that the theme has a "long tradition" and "an untold number" of adherents among devout Christians. Only a tiny minority of Christians have ever espoused universalism. Bell doesn't wrestle with counterarguments, suggesting only that belief in eternal judgment renders history a tragic arena where God's will is thwarted. But of course, proponents of eternal judgment think no such thing.

Bell never claims personal belief in universalism—never, in fact, uses the word, only describes the idea obliquely—and later passages allude to hellish consequences for rejecting God. In the end, he says he raises the issue only to show that we "must leave



plenty of room” for that possibility.

Yet Bell ignores crucial questions, one of which is this: If universal salvation is true and such good news, why is it practically nonexistent in Jesus’ teachings; why does Jesus’ ministry relentlessly focus on the Last Judgment? Jesus elaborates on this theme more than all the other New Testament voices combined.

Bell rightly wonders how finally to reconcile God’s love, justice, and omnipotence—this is nothing new in church history. But universalism resolves history too neatly and quickly. The human breast throbs with desire to understand how God will show himself loving, just, and omnipotent at history’s end. But Scripture’s refusal to solve the paradox prematurely should give us pause. The Bible contains both clear statements regarding the final judgment and verses that suggest universal reconciliation. It teaches that the decisions we make in this life have consequences more sobering than we can imagine, *and* that history is ultimately more gracious than we can imagine. Sometimes we must preach the former, and sometimes we must teach the

Why should we take literally Paul’s statements about the universality of salvation, but reduce his teaching on substitutionary atonement to ‘brilliant, creative work’?

latter. In both cases, we point to Jesus Christ on the cross as God’s clearest expression of love and justice and power. And we leave history’s ultimate conclusion in God’s hands.

WILL IT WORK?

Bell challenges other settled Christian doctrines, like the Atonement. After running through the many biblical metaphors for Christ’s saving work and affirming that the powers of death have been defeated, he describes the personal implications: Jesus’ “giving act on the cross” shows us that “he is the source, the strength, the example, and the assurance that this pattern of death and rebirth is the way into the only kind of life that actually sustains and inspires.”

This is the classic exemplar model of

atonement—Christ’s self-giving death inspires us to live the Christian life. It has been a standard of liberal Protestantism, and indeed has something to commend it. One would hope Christ’s self-giving inspires! But according to the New Testament, Christ’s death also accomplishes the just condemnation of sin and forgiveness of sinners, and reconciliation with God. But *Love Wins* treats substitutionary atonement as culturally anachronistic, reimagining Christ’s sacrifice as the “brilliant, creative work” of New Testament writers putting “the Jesus story in language their listeners would understand.”

This stance rests uneasily with the more orthodox assertions of Bell: that Jesus is truly divine and that he rose bodily from the dead. Why should we embrace Christ’s divinity as

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON POVERTY

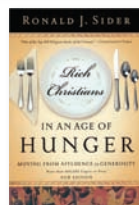
By Brian Fikkert, co-author of *When Helping Hurts* (Moody)



LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN

JOHN PERKINS (REGAL)

This classic documents the riveting story and enduring principles of one of the greatest heroes of the civil rights era. Despite little formal education, Perkins combines practical theology, a deep understanding of grace, and keen insights on the essential elements of community development.

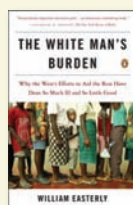


RICH CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF HUNGER

Moving from Affluence to Generosity

RONALD J. SIDER
(THOMAS NELSON)

Sider’s 1977 book was a prophetic call for evangelical Christians to make a radical commitment to end global poverty. His appeal to Scripture moved a generation of Christians to believe loving poor people is inherent to following Jesus Christ.

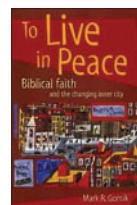


THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good

WILLIAM EASTERLY (PENGUIN)

Easterly, a secular economist, demonstrates that good intentions are not enough. Improper incentives and inadequate information plague most attempts at poverty alleviation, with profound implications for Christian efforts.

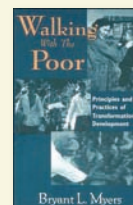


TO LIVE IN PEACE

Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City

MARK R. GORNIK (EERDMANS)

Combining theology, social science research, and grassroots experience, Gornik narrates how the New Song Church in Baltimore created one of the premier examples of Christian community development in the U.S.



WALKING WITH THE POOR

Principles and Practices of Transformational Development

BRYANT L. MYERS (ORBIS BOOKS)

Arguing that poverty is fundamentally relational rather than material, Myers critiques the standard Western approaches and provides an essential handbook for pursuing transformational development for both the rich and the poor.

a deep mystery, but dismiss the blood atonement as a time-bound explanation of the Cross? Why should we take literally Paul's statements about the universality of salvation, but reduce his teaching on substitutionary atonement to "brilliant, creative work"?

The criteria driving these distinctions seem to be based on what Bell thinks contemporary people can swallow. If something offends current sensibilities, then it becomes a likely candidate for mere metaphor.

In short, in this book, Bell argues ideas indigenous to liberal Protestantism. By associating Bell with this tradition, I'm not excommunicating him, but trying to place him in theological context. Liberalism has enriched the church in many ways, but it poses at least two problems for evangelicals.

First, liberals tend to relativize one or more central New Testament teachings, as Bell does with substitutionary atonement and the Last Judgment. Second, despite intentions to the contrary, liberalism tends to make Jesus less attractive to most people. In this generation alone, we've witnessed the steady and dramatic shrinking of liberal Protestant churches, while Pentecostal and evangelical churches—which preach substitutionary atonement, the Last Judgment, and other doctrines supposedly offensive to modern ears—have exploded in growth worldwide.

Evangelicals suspect this is so, in part, because the faith of liberal Protestantism often ends up looking like what we already believe—so why bother? The Jesus of the New Testament, on the other hand, may seem culturally exotic and unnerving at times, but remains strangely attractive.

On his way to making Jesus more appealing, Bell raises fundamental questions that evangelicals need to address. Like Bell, we have imbibed various aspects of liberal Protestantism to our benefit. But questions remain: How much can we partake of liberalism before the faith we proclaim becomes anemic? Do Bell's answers really comport with biblical revelation? And finally, will his answers actually encourage more people to follow Jesus? 

Mark Galli is senior managing editor of *Christianity Today*. A more detailed review of the book can be found online at *Christianity Today.com/go/lovewins*.

The Gods of the Checkout Aisle

Understanding the parareligion of celebrity culture.

By Todd C. Ream

Grocery stores place enough candy in your child's line of sight at the checkout line to make your dentist weep. Your previously angelic child grabs whatever sugar-infested temptation is most convenient, holds it up in your direction, and breaks into a shrill and never-ending sequence: "Please! Please! Please!"

In that same checkout aisle, another item vies for the parent's attention with its own pleas: "Jealous Angie Enraged," "Courtney's Miscarriage," "Ashton Lover Pay-for-Play Claims," and "Demi Rehab Shocker."

Though these stories lack substance, many of us find ourselves tempted to pry into the details. What hold do Angelina, Courtney, Ashton, and Demi have over us? Pete Ward, senior lecturer in youth ministry and theological education at King's College London, explains in **Gods Behaving Badly: Media, Religion, and Celebrity Culture** (Baylor University Press) ★★★★★ that this temptation is the product of something masquerading as a religion.

Several social critics refer to celebrities as gods and infatuation with them as being religious. Ward, though, is careful to refer to this phenomenon as a *parareligion*. As he puts it, "Celebrities are meaningful not because they represent a route toward the divine. They are icons... that are more like mirrors. We simply see that we are the fairest, or at least we see the possible way that we might become the fairest in the world."

The bulk of Ward's chapters unpack this claim. But Ward first acknowledges that celebrities exploit this parareligion, undergoing uncomfortable and even dangerous forms of plastic surgery to retain the image of perfection.

Celebrities also tap into religious imagery to cultivate this parareligion. Ward contends that we need look no

further than Madonna's wildly popular video "Like a Virgin." Madonna relocates the rosary and crucifix in a hyper-sexualized context. Instead of fostering communion with God, these images encourage brazen promiscuity. In the parareligion of celebrity culture, gods not only rise, they can also fall and rise again—Paris Hilton being one example.

Woven through this book is the haunting theme that we yearn to be connected to celebrities because of our desire to be part of something larger than ourselves. Like celebrities, we want perfection. When our sins are brought to light, we want to believe that redemption and even glory are achieved as effortlessly as when digital technology airbrushes an aging cover girl's unsightly wrinkles.

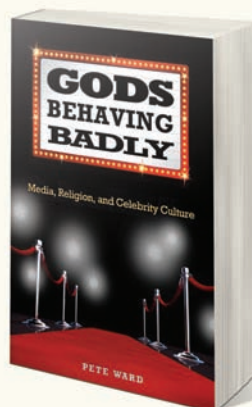
Like the celebrities we follow and arguably worship, we want to believe that we are in control of how we make and remake ourselves.

Perhaps, in response, the church should emphasize anew its rightful place as that body where we connect with something larger than ourselves. In its true form, baptism initiates us into Christ's body—a body that spans the globe. The Lord's Supper recommit us to this body, while hearing the Word places us within the larger story of creation, fall, and redemption.

Who would have thought the grocery store checkout lane would prove such a shrine? Ward reminds us that the candy there may be the least of our troubles. We follow a

God who jealously proclaims we are to favor no other gods. The challenge is to recognize where other gods reside, and to embrace true membership in Christ's body. 

Todd C. Ream is senior scholar for faith and scholarship and associate professor of humanities in the John Wesley Honors College at Indiana Wesleyan University.



COUNTERFEIT GOSPELS

Rediscovering the Good News in a World of False Hope

TREVIN WAX

(MOODY, 240 PAGES)

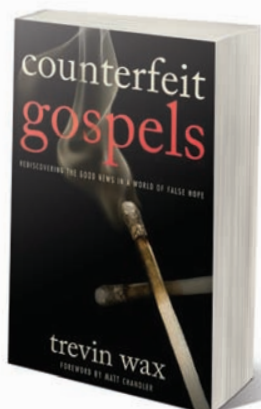
A few years ago, I volunteered to be a counselor at a youth camp. During the bus ride to camp, I had a conversation with one of the other counselors. She told me the story of how she came to faith in Christ. "I grew up going to Catholic school and church," she said. "I knew who Jesus was. I had an awe and fear of God instilled in me. I believed that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world."

Then she stopped, her lip quivering, "But I never really understood that Jesus died *for me*." She went on to tell me about how she attended a Christian concert where she heard the message of the gospel. All of her Christian knowledge about Jesus became personal. Her heart was captured by the glorious truth that Christ died *for her*. . . .

Interestingly enough, the summer in which I listened to this woman's testimony was the summer in which I was having an epiphany that went the opposite way. Having grown up in evangelical churches all my life, I had always taken for granted the truth that Christ died *for me*. That truth was emphasized again and again, and it had gripped my heart long ago. What was becoming more glorious to me was the truth that Christ died *for us*. I was beginning to see in Scripture how Christ's death purchased his church as a bride. Furthermore, this action *for us* was ultimately *for God and his glory*. . . .

I'm afraid we often take the glorious *for me* and separate it from the *for us* and the *for God*. We shrink the gospel down until it is a message about the individual standing before God that no longer contains the gospel community at the heart of God's plan. Instead, we need to see the *for me* wrapped up in the *for us*, which is wrapped up in the *for God*. It all goes back to God and his glory being made manifest through the church that he has bought with the blood of his Son.

Emphasize the *for me* to the exclusion of everything else, and you wind up with an individualistic message about personal salvation; the church becomes an optional side effect of the gospel message. Emphasize the *for us* and *for God* aspects of the message and you never bring the good news down to the personal level; you don't challenge someone to trust in Christ. . . . Once you grasp all three aspects, your personal salvation story is given eternal significance because it is caught up in the great, unfolding drama dreamed up in the heart of our good and loving Creator.



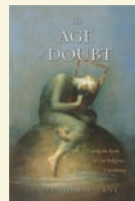
Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.



THE AGE OF DOUBT

Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty

CHRISTOPHER LANE (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)



This is a very bad book, but its badness is instructive; hence, worth pausing over. One finds here untenable assumptions and tired habits of thought that inform many more accomplished works. The "age" in question is the Victorian era. It could be called an "Age of Faith," and that would be less misleading than the cliché of Lane's title, though not satisfactory either. On the very last page of the book, we hear about "the rise of religious extremism" today (really—in comparison to the 19th century?). Our salvation, you see, lies in doubt.

DILEMMAS AND CONNECTIONS

Selected Essays

CHARLES TAYLOR (HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS)



A number of these 16 pieces have been previously published, but their venues are far-flung. Readers of Taylor's *Sources of the Self* and *A Secular Age* won't need persuading to acquire this volume by the wide-ranging philosopher. In particular, they will want to look at the last section, a cluster of eight essays entitled "Themes from *A Secular Age*." There are also pieces on various subjects, such as Iris Murdoch (in her role as a moral philosopher rather than as a novelist) and the poet Paul Celan.

THE TROUBLED MAN

A Kurt Wallander Novel

HENNING MANKELL (KNOPF)



The conclusion of a long-running series, whether clearly resolved or open-ended, is always unsettling, reminding us of the certain fate of everything and everyone we love. When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tried to kill off Sherlock Holmes in *The Final Problem*, he imagined a climactic struggle, on the edge of Reichenbach Falls, between Holmes and Professor Moriarty. The nemesis that stalks Mankell's Swedish police detective Kurt Wallander is even more insidious than Moriarty. And alas, in this powerful last installment, there are no signs of hope for a life to come.

Velcroed to a High-Felt Need

Jerry Root says evangelism is seeing how God is already working in someone's life. Interview by Owen Strachan

Jesus' exhortation to "go and make disciples" might seem daunting to a Christian worried that a Christopher Hitchens is around every corner, eager to debate the existence of God. Jerry Root, associate professor of spiritual formation at Wheaton College, co-authored **The Sacrament of Evangelism** (Moody) with Stan Guthrie to rethink the nature of evangelism and reassure its anxious practitioners. Owen Strachan, co-author of *The Essential Edwards Collection*, spoke with Root about recovering the "sacramental" dimension of evangelism.

Some evangelicals might be unfamiliar with classifying evangelism as a sacrament.

Generally, people see sacraments as places where God shows up in unique and particular ways and mediates grace. I've sensed that evangelism is not something we do in isolation from God. We don't take him to anybody—he's already there and already more interested in that person than we are, and somehow engaged with that person. We're not just speaking the gospel to an uninterested audience. We ask questions, listen to the answers, and let the person give us information that allows us to go deeper. All of a sudden, in the process of sharing, the message gets Velcroed to a high-felt need, and in that particular moment, we realize we've been participating with God all along, and he has shown up.

What are some ways we misunderstand evangelism?

The biggest misunderstanding is that we don't understand how essential it is to the whole program of God's work in the world, and most people don't do it. Evangelism

is one of the marks of being mature in Christ. Dawson Trotman, who founded the Navigators, rightly said a person is physiologically mature when they can reproduce physiologically, and a person is spiritually mature when they can reproduce spiritually. If we're not engaged in reproduction, maybe we're too busy feeding ourselves rather than being robust reproducers—leading people to Jesus so they can be deployed.

INTERVIEW

With so many activities and callings demanding our attention,

how can Christians carve out time to share the gospel?

I don't think they have to carve out time unless they are living in a monastery and have to make forays outside the monastery walls. Virtually everybody lives in a community, among people who don't know Jesus. We work in offices or travel in carpools, we have neighbors, and it doesn't take extra time to connect with those people. We all find ourselves in an environment where we can do evangelism. We plant Christ's flag where we already live.

Many evangelicals debate the relative prioritizing of evangelism and social justice within the church's mission. In your view, "Societal transformation and kingdom work begin not with an emphasis on justice but with the transformation of hearts." Can you explain?

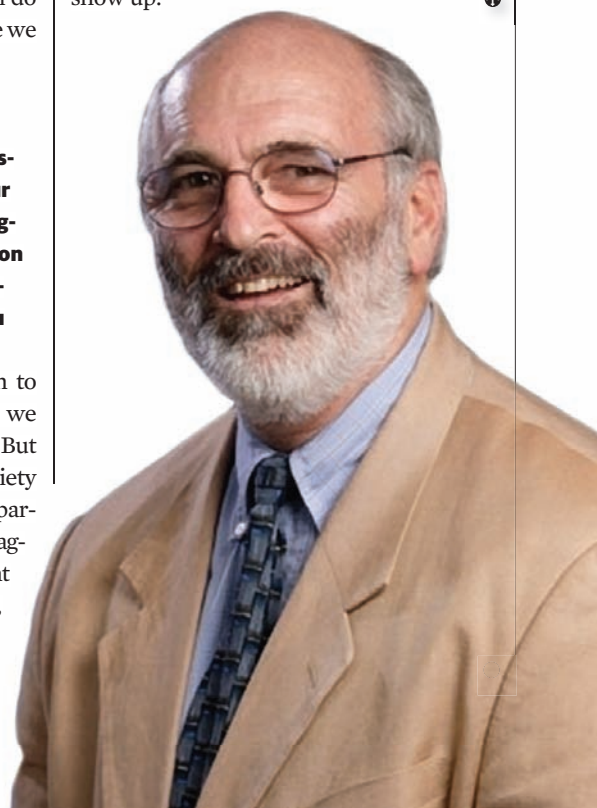
I think you do all you can to change injustices. I think we would be foolish not to try. But the transformation of society will last only as long as that particular effort captures the imagination of people. If you want to maintain transformation, you have to have a changed heart. We're not interested

in an either/or [proclamation of evangelism or social justice]. Our behaviors need to complement the message. You can proclaim the gospel but be a chump in your relationships, and nobody's going to follow Christ. I believe that society changes, at least more drastically, when people's hearts are changed.

You have extensive international evangelistic experience. Do you tailor your evangelism to the unique cultures of different countries?

I do. You have to be a little careful in some places, but sometimes you can meet great hostility in the materialistic West as well. I think it's good to be culturally sensitive to the circumstances. Intimacies in conversation can develop, and you can share Christ even in difficult environments. For many years, I taught C. S. Lewis courses and philosophy courses at a secular college, and I saw students come to Jesus. But I never violated the cultural classroom setting. I didn't use my role in the class as an opportunity to take advantage of the students and share Jesus. But many students had questions. We would go for coffee, where I would ask questions that revealed where these students were struggling.

Again, it's the sacrament of evangelism. I'm going somewhere, believing God is already there, and I'm trying to be sensitive, ask questions, listen, and watch for God to show up.



Inspiration Comes in Waves

The *Bethany Hamilton* biopic is strong on faith and courage. By Carolyn Arends

Bethany Hamilton has a story worth telling. Born and raised in Hawaii, she was winning surfing competitions and securing endorsements as a preteen. In 2003, at the age of 13, her promising future appeared to be in jeopardy when a 15-foot shark bit off her left arm. The fact that she survived—despite losing 60 percent of her blood—is a miracle; the way she has thrived ever since is astonishing and, it would seem, perfect source material for a feature film. Add the fact that Hamilton and her family are strong Christians whose faith has played an integral role in the journey, and you've got plenty of inspiration.

Enter *Soul Surfer* ★★★★★, an imperfect but compelling movie (opening April 8 from Sony Pictures) that succeeds largely on the strength of Hamilton's story. AnnaSophia Robb is strong in the central role, capturing Hamilton's resiliency, vulnerability, and charisma. Dennis Quaid brings plenty of heart to the role of Bethany's father, and Academy Award winner Helen Hunt is a touch wan but convincing as Bethany's worried mother.

In her feature film debut, country music star Carrie Underwood plays Bethany's church youth group leader and mentor,



The real Bethany (left) with Robb.

Sarah Hill. Underwood's photogenic features translate well on screen, but in a couple of key emotional scenes, Underwood fails to equal the cast around her, and her lack of acting experience detracts from the movie.

In fairness, the film asks a lot of Underwood. The screenplay counts on Sarah to be the primary mouthpiece for the Christian faith at the center of the story. She is given the thankless burden of articulating some of the film's more pedantic themes—delivering a youth group object lesson on perspective, scolding Bethany when she doesn't make time for a missions trip, and offering up some not quite satisfying answers about God's plans in the face of tragedy.

Still, the film is overt—but not preachy—in exploring the role of faith. In the opening

minutes, we see the family attending a beachside worship service, and they pray together and cling to relevant Scriptures throughout the journey. In another scene, Bethany joins Sarah and others on a World Vision-sponsored missions trip to Thailand several months after the 2004 tsunami. After seeing the devastation, meeting orphans, and connecting with people

who also had good reason to fear going back into the water, Hamilton gains perspective on living in the wake of tragedy.

The screenplay nicely honors Hamilton's own real-life, hard-won resolutions, but hits some clunky stretches getting there. Oddly, the writing seems to have fallen not only to director Sean McNamara, but also to a large team of collaborators whose chief collective credits are *Baywatch* episodes. This story deserved a better brain trust.

But even if the film is not all that it could be, it is more than worth viewing—if only for following Hamilton's remarkable story: surviving the attack, getting back on a surfboard and into the water *three weeks* later, finding her balance with one arm (she rejected the notion of a prosthetic arm early on), and becoming one of the top professional female surfers in the world. (Early in 2011, she was ranked in the top 25.) Her faith, courage, and perseverance are on full display here.

McNamara captures the strong central cast most effectively in the smaller, more nuanced moments of the film, where Quaid, Hunt, and Robb poignantly portray a family grieving, grappling, and growing through tragedy. Although the big question of the film—why does God allow bad things to happen?—is sometimes handled clumsily, it is always approached sincerely and respectfully, and the real-life events of Hamilton's life ultimately point clearly to the difference faith can make. In this sense, *Soul Surfer*, like its protagonist, is unstoppable. +

Carolyn Arends is a CT film critic, writes our Wrestling with Angels column, and is a professional musician (CarolynArends.com).

Sowing Seeds in Israel

Christians have been evangelizing Jews in the Holy Land since Pentecost, and today the bulk of that outreach is spearheaded by groups such as Jews for Jesus (JFJ). *Flowers of the Son* ★★★★★, a half-hour documentary from JFJ, tells the success stories of these modern evangelists, even in the face of stiff opposition—much like 2,000 years ago.

Most Jews in Jesus' day rejected his claim of messiahship, and things are not much different today: An estimated 99.9 percent of the 5.7 million Jews in Israel do not know this same Jesus is the Messiah. Chalk it up to the secular nature of modern Israel, and to a campaign by Jewish leaders to suppress discussion of Jesus.

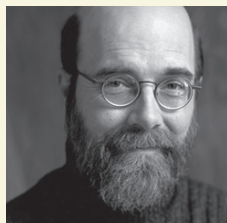
Here, award-winning filmmakers Herb and Amy Kossover deliver a professional, compelling look at a challenging subject. Preaching the gospel in the land of its origins means stiff opposition from ultrareligious Jews and indifference from many secular ones. The courage of the pioneering JFJ campaigners, of volunteers from around the world, and of those who respond positively is but one rewarding aspect of a look into something not widely known, but of great importance. (More: FlowersoftheSon.com)

—Mark Kellner, frequent CT contributor and a Jewish believer in Jesus



TWO MINUTES WITH...

Michael Card



With more than a dozen books to his credit, Michael Card has long been regarded not just as a CCM artist, but also as a scholar and theologian. These days, Card is combining the best

of both worlds—music and books—in his new Biblical Imagination Series (*BiblicalImagination.com*), in which he'll create a book and album for each of the four Gospels over the next four years. He begins with Luke, giving his audience the CD *Luke: A World Turned Upside Down* and the book *Luke: The Gospel of Amazement*. *Christianity Today's* Mark Moring interviewed Card.

What do you mean by “biblical imagination”?

I'm referring to a bridge between the heart and the mind, to which the Bible consistently reaches out. The visions of the prophets, the poetry of the Psalms, and the luminous parables of Jesus speak to both the heart and the mind via the imagination. The Scriptures seek to recapture our imaginations.

Why do you think *imagination* is almost a dirty word in some Christian circles?

Unfortunately, when the King James Version used the word *imagination*, it was always in a negative sense: “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5, KJV). Most often, in both Hebrew and Greek, it is the heart that is in view. No one would argue that our hearts are not supposed to be involved in the understanding of Scripture.

You call Luke “the Gospel of amazement.” Why?

It's fascinating that the eyewitnesses he interviewed, even 30 years after Jesus, were still amazed by what they had experienced. Of the five or six words for *amazement*, Luke is the only Gospel writer who uses all of them!

The CD, meanwhile, refers to Luke's story as “a world turned upside down.”

The music focuses on the Lucan theme of radical reversal. Everything in Luke is upside down. Those who should “get it” (e.g., Zechariah) don't, while those who shouldn't (e.g., Mary) do.



Holding Pattern

Cockburn's latest lacks his typical thoughtful spirituality. By Andy Whitman

Bruce Cockburn has always been a consummate musician and an indifferent theologian. On *Small Source of Comfort* (True North Records) ★★★★★, his 31st album, he delivers more of the same dazzling musical invention, and slightly less than usual in the way of spiritual consolation.

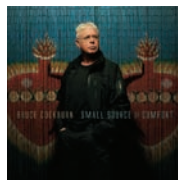
Cockburn's subject matter here—love (both human and divine), the uses and abuses of power, the natural world's stark beauty—will sound familiar to longtime fans. He's a master of detailed narrative and imaginative imagery, and he mines some rich territory on “Call Me Rose,” which envisions Richard Nixon reincarnated as a poor single woman with two children, destined to work out his karma in the inner-city projects. “Maybe the memoir will sell,” he deadpans, the first of several humorous salvos on the album. But his gift for spiritual exploration fails him on several occasions, resulting in the muddled poetry of “Boundless” and “Radiance,” and the hackneyed writing of “Each One Lost.” On the latter song, Cockburn recounts his trip to war-torn Afghanistan, where he saw the coffins of Canadian soldiers being unloaded

from a plane. He worked this territory before in 1993 with “If I Had a Rocket Launcher,” but what should have been a harrowing, intensely personal moment turns into a sloppy, sentimental sing-along, complete with a “we're all in this together” chorus. Really, Bruce? That's all you've got?

The five deft instrumentals scattered throughout almost make up for the disappointing lyrics. Long admired as a gifted, eclectic guitarist who effortlessly synthesizes folk, jazz, and blues, he gently unwinds a meditative folk solo on “Bohemian 3-Step” and duets with violinist Jenny Scheinman on the swinging jazz of “Comets of Kandahar.”

Cockburn is too much of a musical maverick and restless spirit to remain in one spot very long, and *Small Source of Comfort* is far from a bad album. But it is a holding pattern, a fly-over territory already covered better in the past. Those looking for ever-evolving mystical nuances in the further adventures of Bruce Cockburn are likely to be disappointed. Those looking for another solid musical effort will find much to admire. +

Andy Whitman is a regular contributor to *Paste* magazine and *Image* journal.





BUILDING YOUR CHURCH... LEADER BY LEADER

The new and improved **BuildingChurchLeaders.com** provides the tools to grow your people and develop equipped, effective, and energized church leaders.

BuildingChurchLeaders.com's online community provides all the church leader training and support you'll need.



To build your church leader by leader, explore the new and improved **BUILDINGCHURCHLEADERS.COM** and take your ministry to the next level.




Do you seek family-friendly, Christian television entertainment?



INSP & DISH Network are partnering together

Sign up for DISH Network today to get Inspiration Network plus over 120 favorite channels.

Get the best in family-friendly entertainment as well as ministry and gospel music programs with packages starting at \$29.99/mo for 12 months. (requires 24-mo Agreement)

Subscribe and make a difference

When you subscribe, DISH Network will contribute \$100 to Inspiration Network! Together, we're impacting people for Christ worldwide through media - starting with you.

**Plus, you'll receive a \$50
American Express® Reward Card!**

Call Today!
1-877-964-INSP (4677)

dish.com/inspiration

Use Offer Code **03INSPDM** to receive the Inspiration offer & ensure your contribution!

You can help us reach the nations with the Gospel by subscribing to DISH Network today!



Digital Home Advantage plan requires 24-month agreement and credit qualification. Cancellation fee of \$17.50/month remaining applies if service is terminated before end of agreement. Free Standard Professional Installation only. Upfront and monthly fees may apply. Prices, packages and programming subject to change without notice. Additional restrictions may apply. Offer available for new and qualified former customers and ends 5/17/11. © 2011, DISH Network LLC. All Rights Reserved.

\$50 American Express Reward Card will be mailed 4-6 weeks after activation. American Express Reward Card: This Card is provided pursuant to a loyalty, reward or promotional program and can be used only at US merchants that accept American Express Cards except cruise lines, casinos, ATMs, and recurring billing. © 2011 AEP/CMC under license from American Express Travel Related Services Company, Inc. Offer Code required at time of order for service, prior to activation. Limit one Reward Card per DISH Network account activation. May not be combined with other special offers.

QUICK TAKES

More media of note.

BOOKS

► CLOUDS OF WITNESSES

Christian Voices from Africa and Asia

MARK A. NOLL AND CAROLYN NYSTROM

(INTERVARSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ *Clouds of Witnesses* puts a human face on the statistics that filled Mark Noll's previous book *The New Shape of World Christianity*. The authors profile 17 key figures from recent church history in Africa and Asia, giving readers a compelling look at Christianity's growth in a context quite different from our own. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom report these stories as fairly as possible and do not gloss over controversies in other parts of the world, including polygamy, miracles, syncretism, and Keswick-inspired "holiness" theology. —Trevin Wax

► NO ARGUMENT FOR GOD

Going Beyond Reason in Conversations About Faith

JOHN WILKINSON (INTERVARSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ John Wilkinson argues that Christians should stop defending themselves against critics and embrace the fact that some of our views are absurd. Christian faith is hope and trust in the unseen God, not a series of well-reasoned propositions that make Christianity the best explanation. In fact, its oddness, compared with other religious traditions, makes it more likely to be true. Interesting and loaded with anecdotes, *No Argument for God* will be a breath of fresh air for folks who, tired of arguing for faith, want to start talking about faith. —Michael McGowan

► AFTER SHOCK

Searching for Honest Faith When Your World Is Shaken

KENT ANNAN (INTERVARSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ In earthquake-ravaged Haiti, questions range from the pressingly practical (how to rebuild one's home amidst the wreckage) to the wrenchingly existential (how a just and loving God can permit unspeakable suffering). Kent Annan, co-director of an education non-profit ministering to the star-crossed island nation, broods over such questions in this mix of poetic meditation and gritty storytelling. With searing honesty, he wrestles with the spiritual doubts and anxieties dredged up by last year's cataclysm. —Matt Reynolds

ON DVD

► MYSTERIES OF THE JESUS PRAYER

MAGNETIC ARTS | UNRATED | FEBRUARY 15

★★★★★ *Mysteries* and its companion book (HarperOne) don't really solve any sort of puzzle associated with the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"), but they do indicate the transforming power of those words over the past 2,000 years for many monks, ascetics, and the earliest church fathers. For some reason, this short prayer has brought comfort and peace to many (cloistered or not) over the centuries. What's best about this documentary is the access the filmmakers received to roll the cameras inside ancient caves and monasteries from Egypt to Greece to Transylvania to Russia. —Mark Moring

MUSIC

NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS

► KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

(SONGS OF THE SOUTH)

★★★★★ This is the band's first album since its founders, brothers Luther and Cody Dickinson, lost their father, Memphis music legend Jim Dickinson. So you'd forgive them for being a little morose—yet they're anything but. Rather than a somber reflection on death, this is a thoroughly spirited, cathartic celebration of life, and a faithful send-off of their father to the heavenly kingdom. Their country/blues-fueled Mississippi rock and roll has never sounded tighter or livelier. A goofy Dylan cover is dedicated to Jim's musical mastery, but the best thing here is a gospel anthem called "The Meeting," with guest vocals from Mavis Staples. —Josh Hurst

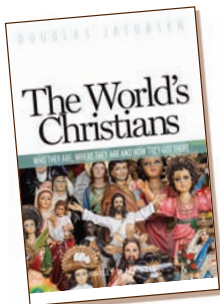
I WAS A KING

► OLD FRIENDS

(SOUNDS FAMILYRE)

★★★★★ This Norwegian band, all Christians, joined the Sounds Familyre label, where they share the roster with Sufjan Stevens, Danielson, and Woven Hand. It is a perfect fit, as King brings the same oddball perspective and musical mayhem to its music. This record is for those who like their power pop with a sense of anarchy; the group writes sublime melodies but masks them under layers of giddy, live-in-the-studio chaos. It is noisy but full of heart: The title track is a country-tinged paean to enduring friendship, a theme that plays throughout the record with a spirit of cheerful gratitude. —Josh Hurst

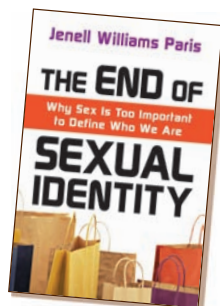
Celebrating distinctive scholarship



Douglas Jacobsen, Ph.D., distinguished professor of church history and theology, for the recent publication of "The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are and How They Got There" (Blackwell, 2011)

"An outstanding work of scholarship. This balanced and comprehensive overview of global Christian realities is the single best introduction to world Christianity that I have ever read."

— Dale T. Irvin, president and professor of world Christianity, New York Theological Seminary



Jenell Williams Paris, Ph.D., professor of sociology and anthropology, for the recent publication of "The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is Too Important to Define Who We Are" (IVP, 2011)

"This is a singularly important book about sexuality but also about culture. It is a model of charity, clarity and creativity. While this is certainly not the last word on Christian sexual ethics, it could be the first word of a better and more honest conversation about holiness and faithfulness amidst our age's sexual confusion."

— Andy Crouch, author of "Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling"

see anew



CALVIN INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

for the study and renewal of worship

Worship...

grants

Sheer wonder at the beauty of God,
gratitude for the gospel of Christ,
and eagerness to deepen self-giving service in God's world.

Are you eager to deepen worship in your community? This ecumenical grants program, now in its 11th year, has supported worship renewal in more than 500 worshipping communities across North America.

Worship Renewal Grants Program funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

WORSHIP.CALVIN.EDU/GRANTS

WESTMINSTER CONFERENCE ON
SCIENCE & FAITH

+ — **GOD AND MATERIALISM** — -

WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, PHILADELPHIA

APRIL 8-9, 2011



**Is Nature the Result of
Purposeful Design or
Undirected Matter & Energy?**

Speakers include:

Vern Poythress, author of *Redeeming Science*

K. Scott Oliphint, author of *Reasons for Faith*

Guillermo Gonzalez, co-author of *The Privileged Planet*

Jay Richards, editor of *God and Evolution*

Jonathan Wells, author of *The Myth of Junk DNA*



For more information or to register now visit

<http://www.scienceandgod.org/> or **call 1-800-685-0632, ext. 108.**



WESTMINSTER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



A Program of Discovery Institute

W W W . S C I E N C E A N D G O D . O R G



REFLECTING
RENEWING
RESTORING

Revitalizing

a community called to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world

Effective lifelong ministry begins with faithfulness to God's Word. At Asbury Seminary, biblical roots are key in equipping students to *revitalize the Church*.

Asbury offers a wide range of M.Div., M.A., D.Min, Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees, allowing you the opportunity to join in Asbury's mission to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.

Visit asburyseminary.edu and explore *a community called ...*
800.2ASBURY | admissions@asburyseminary.edu

Asbury
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ANNASOPHIA
ROBB

HELEN
HUNT

LORRAINE
NICHOLSON

WITH CARRIE
UNDERWOOD

AND DENNIS
QUAID

THE INSPIRING TRUE STORY OF
BETHANY HAMILTON

SOUL SURFER

IN THEATERS
APRIL 8

SoulSurferWave.com

SoulSurferTheMovie.com

twitter @soulsurfermovie facebook.soulsurfermovie

SCREEN STORY BY SEAN McNAMARA & DEBORAH SCHWARTZ & DOUGLAS SCHWARTZ & MICHAEL BERK AND MATT R. ALLEN & CALEB WILSON & BRAD GANN
SCREENPLAY BY SEAN McNAMARA & DEBORAH SCHWARTZ & DOUGLAS SCHWARTZ & MICHAEL BERK DIRECTED BY SEAN McNAMARA

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED
Some Material May Not Be Suitable for Children
AN INTENSE ACCIDENT SEQUENCE AND
SOME THEMATIC MATERIAL

FILMDISTRICT

ENTICING
ENTERTAINMENT

mandalay

AFFIRM FILMS

TRI
STAR

© 2011 TriStar Pictures, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU..." JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

Seminary & Graduate School Directory

Earn your degree online!

*"Am I only
a God nearby,"
declares the Lord,
"and not a God
far away?"*
Jeremiah 23:23

Online programs offered at LCU include:

- * M.A. in Bible and Theology
- * M.A. in Organizational Leadership
- * M.A. in TESOL
- * B.A. in Christian Ministry (+ Alternative)
- * B.A. in Human Services (Psychology)
- * B.A. in Leadership and Management


**Lincoln Christian
UNIVERSITY**
Live your mission.
www.LincolnChristian.edu/online
Lincoln, IL - 888.522.5228

CELEBRATING FOUR YEARS of LEADERSHIP

Rebecca Marie Fort
Executive Director of Wheatstone Academy, 2006-2010

Rebecca is a paragon of kind, competent, and Christ-like leadership. Now that she has decided to take a new ministry post, we would like to say 'thank you.'

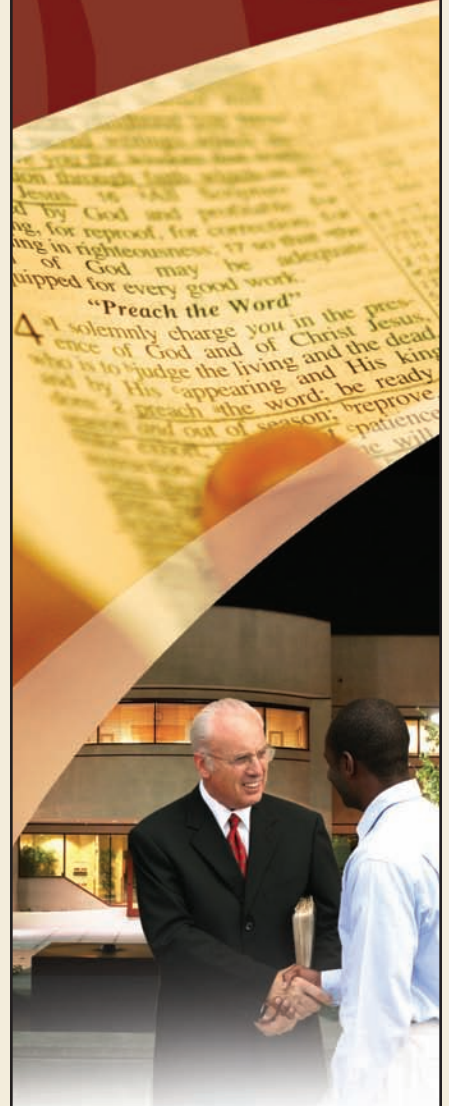
Thank you for nurturing your love of high school students, and for instilling it in the people who worked for you. Thank you for your keen vision, and for raising the ministry to new heights of excellence. Thank you for the graceful elegance with which you accomplished your tasks. Thank you for inspiring us.

Thank you, Rebecca, for your service.

 **WHEATSTONE
ACADEMY**

Worldview missionaries training the next generation
www.wheatstoneacademy.com
info@wheatstoneacademy.com

THE MASTER'S SEMINARY



*We Train Men
as if Lives
Depended on It*

Information: 800-CALL-TMS
Admissions: rmehringer@tms.edu
www.tms.edu

Marketplace

Cost: 72 cents per character (each space and punctuation counts as a character); avg. 45 characters per line. Min. \$61.20 (85 characters). CHRISTIANITY TODAY check-marked box ☒ \$22 each insertion; box around ad \$43 each insertion. Ads set display style: \$425 per column inch. Combination discount rates available for LEADERSHIP and YOUR CHURCH. All classified ads automatically placed on ChristianityToday.com at no additional charge. Prepayment and written confirmation needed to process ads. Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, or personal check accepted. Employment ads given priority. All other ads placed in first available issue. Deadline for reservation or cancellation is seven weeks prior to actual issue date. Address correspondence to: The Marketplace; 465 Gundersen Dr.; Carol Stream, IL 60188; or contact Peggy Gomez, Advertising Account Executive, at: 630.260.6202 x4239; fax 630.260.9401; e-mail Marketplace@ChristianityToday.com.

[Employment Opportunities]

☒ **DENTIST** Great opportunity to join a Christian group practice in central Pennsylvania. 570-323-6116. Pass this on.

HOUSEPARENTS

Shelter Care, an organization with a rich history of over 30 years of helping troubled young people and families, has openings for mature couples. The program, located in Akron, Ohio, uses a family model with many supportive helps. Each couple is responsible for four children. Position is full-time and includes salary and an excellent benefits package. If interested, send résumé to 32 South Ave.; Tallmadge, OH 44278; phone: 330-630-5600; fax: 330-630-5810.

PUT YOUR SKILLS TO WORK!

Lead us in developing relationships with 6- to 14-year-old children and their families in our multi-ethnic community. This involves the creation of extra-curricular school and church programs. Your passion and creativity are required for up to 20 flexible hours per week. For information contact Orangewood Christian Reformed Church, Phoenix, AZ. info@orangewooderc.com or Pastor Larry, 602-574-7759.



GENEVASCHOOL
Fortes Pro Veris

Located in the heart of New York City, the GENEVA SCHOOL of Manhattan, a Classical, Christian nursery-8 Coed Private School seeks full-time Academic Dean, candidate with potential to become the Head of School. The ideal candidate would have graduate training and at least 5 years of experience teaching and/or leading in a classical, Christian school. He or she would also have a passion for academic achievement that is rooted in classical, integrated curricula. He or she would have a history of working well with all school constituents, and would be passionate about developing the academic stature of the school while contributing to a thriving spiritual influence. If interested, please email résumé and brief statement of your philosophy of the integration of faith and learning to peggy.chen@genevaschool.net.

[Employment Opportunities]

TOCCOA FALLS COLLEGE, a Christian college located in northeast Georgia, is beginning a search for a new president. Visit www.tfc.edu for information about the college. Résumés may be sent to Dr. L. Ferrell Towns; Chairman of the Presidential Search Committee at Toccoa Falls College; PO Box 800777; Toccoa Falls, GA 30598 by June 1, 2011. Electronic résumés may be sent to pelkins@tfc.edu.

[Retirement]

PENNEY RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

The premier Christian Continuing Care Retirement Community has served ministers and missionaries for more than 84 years. Call 800-638-3138 or visit www.penneyretirementcommunity.org.

[Investment Opportunity]

WYOMING GUEST RANCH INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

A full-service, four-season guest ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, is interested in selling stock to Christian investors. This guest ranch has breathtaking views of the Teton mountain range and is within 15 minutes of the south gate entrance of Grand Teton/Yellowstone National Park. A substantial investment is required for this opportunity. Please email ranch5111@gmail.com for more information.

[Books, Tapes & Films]

☒ **JESUS IS COMING** by V. Lawrence. Order at 877-421-7323 or www.BarnesandNoble.com.

WWW.WIPFANDSTOCK.COM

Your source for great Christian books!

EVOLUTION NEEDS AN ADJECTIVE

Tossing Darwin out of science. An e-book by F. P. Nelson, M.D. www.evolutionneedsanadjective.com.

THE DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE AND HOUSE CHURCH MOVEMENT

Books and tapes. Free catalog: 800-228-2665; www.seedsowers.com.

IS CALVINISM "GOOD NEWS"?

Twenty-four red flags. Order or read free at www.caravanbooks.net.

[Books, Tapes & Films]

CASH PAID FOR LIBRARIES

large or small. Contact us for new, used, and out of print books. Baker Book House; 2768 E. Paris; Grand Rapids, MI 49546; 866-241-6733; fax: 888-263-7310; e-mail: usedbooks@bakerbookstore.com; website: www.bakerbookstore.com.

THE SACRED JOURNEY

Take an inspirational personal or group journey through the Beatitudes. www.chrissurber.com.

VERSE-BY-VERSE BIBLE STUDY

Free at www.berean-biblechurch.org.

WWW.THEPRICELEONNEWTON.COM

A Christian play.

THE GOOD THIEF

by Barry Connolly. Great reviews. Perfect for Easter. www.Amazon.com; ISBN 978-1-4502-3287-6.

WWW.CHRISTINESUNDERLAND.COM

Christian literary novels set in Europe and Hawaii.

[Radio]

WWW.LIBERTYLIFERADIO.COM

Your message could be heard here.

[Travel]

☒ **GOLDEN RULE TRAVEL** is a Christian agency specializing in wholesale and bulk rate airline tickets for church and missionary travel. We try extra hard to save you money! Call 800-950-3599 (FLYY) or go to www.goldenruletravel.com.

BOUND FOR BOSTON?

Stay at the historic Christian Conference Center. The Walker Center, ideal for group accommodations or bed and breakfast. Easy commute to downtown/airport. Phone: 617-969-3919; e-mail: Reservations@walkerctr.org; www.walkerctr.org.

LONDON, U.K.

Highbury Centre Christian guesthouse. Quiet location on private road, close to bus and train/tube station. Reductions for missionaries and full-time ministers. www.thehighburycentre.org.

☒ **PILGRIM TOURS:** Exceptional Bible Land Tours to Israel, Egypt Steps of Moses & Joseph, Nile Cruises & Exodus, Jordan, Greece Steps of Paul, Italy, Germany Faith of Our Fathers, Churches of Revelation. 800-322-0788; www.pilgrimtours.com.

[Ministry Aids]

WWW.PRODIGALSFATHER.COM

Check out for evangelistic outreach, pastors, and small groups.

[Services]

CALLED TO PREACH?

www.IndependentBaptistAlliance.com; 352-621-4981. We can help with ordination and other topics.

FREE

Grant newsletter for ministries. Here-4-You Christian Grant Consulting. www.ChristianFundingDirectory.com; toll-free: 866-HERE-4-U-1.

[Education]

REGUS UNIVERSITY

M.B.A., D.B.A., J.D., M.Div., D.Min., and P.Psy.D. degrees available. www.RegusU.org.

☒ LEARN SPANISH! Or any of 20 other languages. Conversational study courses with Christian emphasis. www.languagesforchrist.org.

EARN SEMINARY DEGREES AT HOME

Columbia Evangelical Seminary; 360-802-6437; www.ColumbiaSeminary.edu; CES@ColumbiaSeminary.edu.

CHRISTIAN DISTANCE
LEARNING AT ITS BEST

www.Seminary.ws.

DEGREES THROUGH
CORRESPONDENCE

Associate's through Ph.D. credit for life experience. Low tuition. Accredited schools. For a free catalog: www.lbc.org; 352-621-4991; or write Liberty Bible College & Seminary; 5480 S. Suncoast Blvd.; Homosassa, FL 34446.

[Business Opportunities]

WATKINS

Great products, great business! Start your own Watkins business today. Visit www.tsinfo.com (enter code MR6296) or call M. Roth, 415-203-4992.

MOMS HELPING MOMS

work from home! Computer required; www.mykidscount.com or 281-252-8133.

OPEN YOUR OWN READING CENTER

Operate from home. It's needed, it's rewarding. Huge demand. Great results. Earn \$40 to \$120 per hour. Not a franchise. We provide complete training and materials. www.Academic-Associates.com; 800-861-9196.

[Business Opportunities]

CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR CHRISTIANS who want to earn a reliable income from home. Please request information from www.FamiliesInFaith.com.

☒ WORK AT HOME UNITED is seeking motivated, reliable people to join our team. Earn income from home. No Sales. www.UCanWahu.com.

[Ministry Opportunities]

MISSIONARIES

If you are considering changing mission boards, or looking to affiliate with a non-denominational, faith-based, evangelical mission-sending agency, consider serving with Ripe for Harvest. Contact Dr. Tim Smith, 480-373-9387; RFHPHoenix@gmail.com; or visit us at www.ripeforharvest.org.

WWW.MISSIONNANNYS.ORG

Be a Mission Nanny. Volunteer women needed to serve overseas with missionary families as domestic/childcare help.

BECOME A CHAPLAIN FOR CHRIST

Providing voluntary credit counseling and helping people become debt free. www.chaplainsinservice.org. For free info packet call 701-298-7864.

[Conferences/Workshops]

YOUR KEY TO GETTING PUBLISHED

and earning extra income: Write-to-Publish Conference, June 8-11, Chicago area. Classes for beginning through career writers, meetings with editors and agents, manuscript evaluations. Details: www.writetopublish.com; brochure@writetopublish.com.

☒ CHRISTIAN WRITERS WORKSHOP Spring 2011. www.TheLoveCoaches.com.

[Church Supplies]

CUSTOM LITURGICAL FABRIC BANNERS
www.RejoiceBanners.com.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY INTERNATIONAL

Marketplace Classified Advertising

Ads available in:

- Christianity Today
- Leadership

Display Ads:

\$255-\$525/col. inch

Text Ads:

46¢-90¢/character

+PLUS all listings will run in the digital version of each issue!

For details contact: PEGGY GOMEZ

Phone: 630-260-6202 x4239

E-mail: Marketplace@ChristianityToday.com

CHRISTIANITY TODAY
INTERNATIONAL

Marketplace Classified Advertising

in Christianity Today,
and Leadership

These little ads pack a powerful punch! Whatever audience you want to reach—job seekers, buyers, prospective students, and more—will come looking for you when your ad is placed in one of our user-focused categories.

For details contact:

PEGGY GOMEZ

Advertising Account Executive

Phone: 630-260-6202 x4239

Fax: 630-260-9401

E-mail: Marketplace@ChristianityToday.com

Would Jesus listen to

Jazz?

Find out at
www.denverseminary.edu/jazz




DENVER SEMINARY



"It's faithful to the original text, and puts it in the hands of God's people in a way that they can read, study, digest, and memorize."

David Platt

The Church at Brook Hills



JOHN PIPER



FRANCIS CHAN



KEVIN DEYOUNG



THABITI ANYABWILE



JANET PARSHALL



MARK ROBERTS



MARY KASSIAN



TINA JACOBSON



DARRIN PATRICK



LECRAE MOORE



ELYSE FITZPATRICK



PAUL MCCAIN



TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN



MATT CHANDLER

TRUSTED BY LEADERS.

Trusted by leaders, the ESV is widely accepted and praised by pastors, teachers, and others who study and proclaim God's Word.



TRUSTED.™

 **CROSSWAY**

www.esv.org | www.crossway.org



Rhyme and Reason

Faith stirs the spoken word poetry of **Amena Brown**.

As a teen, Amena Brown listened to hip-hop and dreamed of being the next Lauryn Hill; she even had a stage name, “Teknique.” But she never could quite make her rhymes mesh with the beat and the bars of the music, so she turned to spoken word poetry instead. Maybe she couldn’t emcee, but when she took the stage for a poetry slam, Amena Brown was the bomb.

Today, her inspiring presentations are highly sought by churches and conferences (Catalyst, RightNow, Thirsty, and the National Youth Workers Convention, to name a few). In faith-based settings, Brown recites one- to four-minute poems with titles such as “Resurrection,” “He Is Here,” “Masterpiece,” and “In the Beginning.” In the

secular setting of an open-mic poetry slam—often in Atlanta, where she lives—she’ll perform rhymes like “First Crush,” “Stupid Girl,” and “A Few Good Men.” All are delivered with passion, precision, and lively wordplay.

Brown believes the church is catching on to spoken word poetry. “More people are seeing how the spoken word form can articulate a message or make a point in a different way from a speaker or a song. And there are more poets performing God-ward content.”

- 📍 **Hometown** San Antonio
- 📍 **Church** Buckhead Church, Atlanta
- 📖 **Reading now** Jay-Z’s *Decoded*
- 🎧 **Listening to now** Red Hot Chili Peppers, “Under the Bridge”; Bobby Caldwell, “Open Your Eyes”
- 🎬 **Favorite movie** *The Godfather*
- 📖 **Favorite Bible verse** Philippians 2:14
- 🌐 **Favorite website** urb.com
- 🍗 **Best meal you cook** chicken marsala
- 🎵 **Hobbies** Going to live music shows, movies, soul and hip-hop music

question & answer

You majored in English at Spelman College, right?

Yes. At first I thought about becoming a preacher. But I got into poetry, and wanted to get my MFA in poetry. I was denied at all three schools I applied to. At first I was angry at God, but then I started doing more with spoken word. It wasn’t my plan, but it definitely was God’s.

Why spoken word poems?

For a long time, I didn’t want to perform my own poems. I would enter speech competitions, memorizing things by Maya Angelou or James Weldon Johnson, but I never won. My mom thought I should perform my own poems, but I didn’t want to. She took one of my pieces and entered it into an NAACP poetry competition without telling me. I ended up winning, and had to go there and read it in front of them—and it was the most exhilarating experience. I was about 16 or 17, and it dawned on me that this is a gift from God that people want to hear. I’ve been performing my own work ever since she pulled that prank on me!

What makes spoken word poetry so effective?

It’s on the line between what we love about hearing a person speak and what we love about music. It incorporates rhyme and rhythm, but also the passion of whoever is doing the work—a dramatic interpretation of the written word. I’ve seen it transcend culture and generation, and anybody can engage with it.

What’s next for you?

I’m working on a poet and DJ presentation of some of the more worshipful pieces I’ve done. And I’m working on a CD, putting those same pieces to [background] music. I see myself doing this work for a while. My calling is writing and talking, and I feel that if I am doing that in a way that honors God for the rest of my life, then great.

More: AmenaBrown.com



SOLIDLY BIBLICAL

Students learn to be knowledgeable of God's inerrant Word and to apply it faithfully

MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL

Students represent more than 90 denominations and more than 50 countries from around the world

“I WANTED A MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOL THAT WAS SOLIDLY BIBLICAL. THROUGH MY COURSEWORK, I AM ABLE TO KNOW WHY I BELIEVE THE SPECIFICS OF WHAT I BELIEVE, BUT ALSO UNDERSTAND WHY OTHER CHURCHES BELIEVE DIFFERENTLY.”

Brooke Easton, M.Div. '12

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT:

GORDON-CONWELL
www.gordonconwell.edu

BROOKE EASTON
www.gordonconwell.edu/brooke

ADMISSIONS | 800.428.7329
admrep@gordonconwell.edu

Gordon-Conwell 
Theological Seminary
HAMILTON | BOSTON | CHARLOTTE | JACKSONVILLE

THINK Theologically | **ENGAGE** Globally | **LIVE** Biblically

God would like to have a Word with you.

It's called the Bible. And if you want to embrace the truth and beauty of God's message, you'll need a good translation. The New International Version brings clarity and meaning to readers of all ages. It's the clear favorite for hundreds of millions, but if you take a closer look, you'll see it was written just for you. Available wherever Bibles are sold.

Come Closer™
Visit theNIVBible.com to learn more.

NIV 

NEW
INTERNATIONAL
VERSION