ANDY CROUCH: THE LGBTQIA QUESTION • DAVID ZAHL: *BREAKING BAD* & THE BIBLE

Christianity Today

JULY / AUGUST 2013

THIS IS WHAT THE LORD ALMIGHTY SAYS: 'BUT I TELL YOU WHO HEAR ME: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, I WILL PUNISH THE AMALEKITES FOR WHAT THEY DID TO ISRAEL DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, WHEN THEY WAYLAID THEM AS THEY CAME UP FROM EGYPT. BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, NOW GO, ATTACK THE AMALEKITES PRAY FOR THOSE WHO MISTREAT YOU.

GRAPPLING *with the* GOD *of* TWO TESTAMENTS

AND TOTALLY DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT BELONGS TO THEM. IF SOMEONE STRIKES YOU ON ONE CHEEK, TURN TO HIM THE OTHER ALSO. DO NOT SPARE THEM; IF SOMEONE TAKES YOUR CLOAK, DO NOT STOP HIM FROM TAKING YOUR TUNIC. PUT TO DEATH MEN AND WOMEN, CHILDREN AND INFANTS, GIVE TO EVERY-ONE WHO ASKS YOU, AND IF ANYONE TAKES WHAT BELONGS TO YOU, DO NOT DEMAND IT BACK. CATTLE AND SHEEP, CAMELS AND DONKEYS. DO TO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO TO YOU.'

1 SAMUEL 15:2–3 AND LUKE 6:27–31

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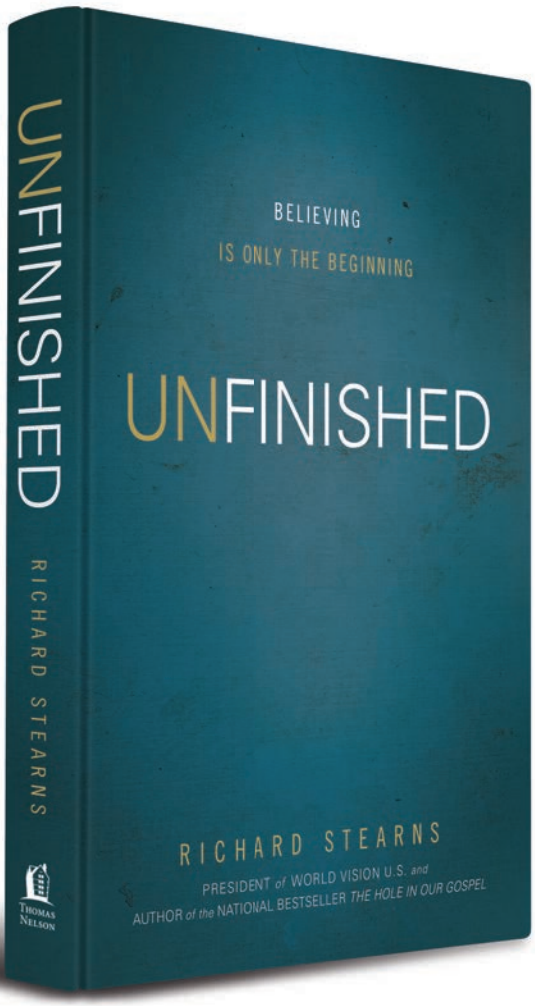

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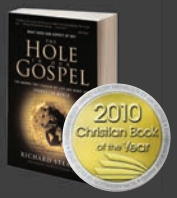

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RIGHT • RICK BEERHORST LEFT • FRANK OCKENFELS / AMC

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Join Our Story

This year Christianity Today is bidding farewell to two of our longest-serving leaders—David Neff, CT's editorial vice president for global initiatives, and chief strategy officer Keith Stonehocker.

I'm writing this just after a dinner hosted by our board of directors celebrating their retirement after decades of service.

In a world driven by and drawn to celebrity, David and Keith were the kind of leaders who drew attention to others. David played a pivotal role in drafting influential documents like "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility" (2004)—but readers of that statement will find no byline. Keith helped Christianity Today spot the opportunity of the Internet before almost any other publisher, forging an early partnership with America Online. But he promptly built the Global Christian Internet Alliance, passing on everything CT was learning to publishers in Brazil, Norway, Korea, and the rest of the world.

David and Keith reflect values that serve a magazine publisher well. We editors do some of our best writing under other people's names. And true business leaders instinctively know that success is not a zero-sum game—that in fact sharing ideas within and across industries leads to flourishing.

CT exists to serve the church. Some of the ways we serve are visible and tangible, like the magazine you are holding (or viewing on your iPad). But we also cultivate persons like David and Keith and simply share them, often behind the scenes, with the body of Christ. As David and Keith move on to new forms of leadership (and grandparenting), they leave behind a legacy not just in our building, but in networks and relationships that will keep bearing fruit for decades to come.

If you're called to support the development of the next generation of leaders like David and Keith, CT is a strategic place for your gifts.

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*.

Andy Crouch
Executive Editor

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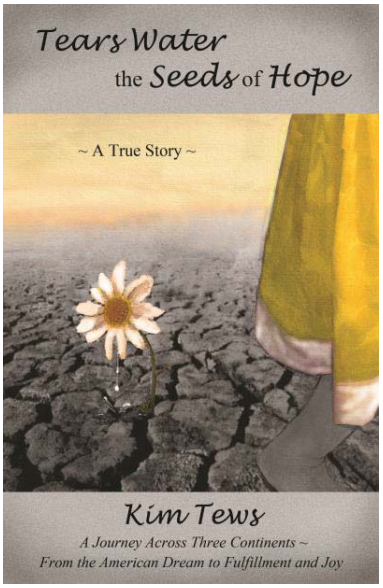

Chapter 15 Excerpt
Are You There God?

I have heard it said that life on earth is but a blip on the screen of eternity, and that God uses our challenges to build character in us. Having faced many challenges in my life, I know that each has shaped the person that I am today. I also believe that we would be like spoiled children, had we never been forced to grow in maturity and character by enduring and overcoming hardship. But Martilena seemed to have been born only to suffer and die, without ever having had the chance to grow in faith or maturity. And there were thousands more like her dying every day. This was creating a serious conflict within me that I could not ignore. I believed in the truth and validity of the Bible, but one passage was becoming a formidable stumbling block for me:

[25] "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? [26] Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? [27] .... [31] So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. [33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."Matthew 6:25-26 & 31-33

Could we tell the people of Guatemala not to worry about what they would eat? Many of those we served were sincere Christ followers, yet it was clear that "all of these things" were not being given to them. It was becoming increasingly difficult to reconcile a loving God with the suffering we faced. I remembered the joyful, faith-filled months following our experience at the new church years earlier and wondered if we had made a mistake. If God was good and loving while at the same time ever-present and all powerful, why had He not answered the prayers of these faithful hard-working people?

I also remembered our successful years prior to really *knowing* Christ. Children were dying then, just as they were now, while we obliviously increased our wealth. It occurred to me that perhaps the starvation in the world was not God's fault. He had created a world in which there was enough food to go around more than once. But it was not evenly distributed. God gave us free will and, as a result, we live in a broken world where there is greed, corruption in government, overconsumption by those living well and apathy toward the plight of the poor. Perhaps it is not God who is responsible for the hunger in the world.

I wanted so badly to explain away my doubts but what about the mudslides of Nicaragua? Many had died instantly. Hundreds of lives were lost in the massive rivers of mud and rock that had buried their villages. Throughout the history of mankind there have been tsunamis, earthquakes and tragedies of every kind which have raised the same question. Why God? I continued my search for answers, realizing that I was not willing to give up the faith that had been the source of so much joy.

I heard on the news one morning, when our country was deep in mourning and sorrow after the events of September 11, 2001, that church attendance was soaring and Bible sales were increasing at astonishing rates. The tragedy had reminded our country of its need for God. A people, reeling in the aftershock of unthinkable tragedy, resorted to faith and prayer.

The devastation of hurricane Katrina created a mission field for thousands who were now taking their first mission trips, sharing hope and establishing a love for serving God and those in need. Stories of new faith and the joy of serving filled communities throughout the United States. Likewise, hundreds of people had been blessed and changed for life by the mission field they had experienced with us in Guatemala. God uses specific circumstances to effect change in our lives and to call us to the purpose He has planned for us. We each have different but important batons to carry as members of God's relay team. Often the hardest part of joining the team is identifying which baton is ours to carry, be it in our own household, our home town or on the opposite side of the world. This is why God often uses heart-breaking situations to help us identify our batons.

I concluded that God can bring good out of tragedy. If we believe that He is omnipotent and is ultimately in control, then we have to believe that He allows tragedy because He thinks that the good He can bring out of it is worth the suffering that it causes. I am not callously attempting to minimize the suffering of those left in the wake of enormous catastrophes. Those in the midst of hardship and loss as a result of these tragic events would be appalled by the idea that God was using them to draw others to Himself and His purpose. My theory would not seem fair to them, nor does it to me. No one can claim to have all the answers. But we must come to terms with the fact that the word faith itself means believing in things that we have reasonable cause to accept as true, even though there is no proof. If we could knock on heaven's door and simply ask God for the answers to all of our questions and doubts, then our trust in God would not be by faith, but by knowledge. We have incomplete understanding by our nature as human. If we presume to comprehend all matters of God and eternity from our limited perspective, then we are like the ant that thinks all there is to the universe is what he can perceive.

So I chose faith. I had seen God at work in many ways. I had seen miracles and answered prayers. I had felt God's leading and presence throughout our journey, and I had seen Him call laborers to join us in His mission field. At the end of the day, I continued to believe in an omnipotent, omniscient, good and loving God. There was much to be done and another phrase had become words to live by for our ministry:

"Onward Christian Soldiers."

KATELYN BEATY
MANAGING EDITOR

The Gentleman-Scholar

A tribute to *Christianity Today*'s esteemed editor in chief.

When I started in 2007 as CT's copy editor, I had three go-to grammar guides: *The American Heritage Dictionary*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and David Neff.

It turns out the last guide was also the best. After spotting a misplaced comma or extra hyphen, David would walk down to my office, kindly and clearly explain the linguistic law behind the change, and point me to the right CMS entry. And also throw in a historical tidbit, just for fun. I trusted his wisdom so much that I began asking WWDD?—"What Would David Do?"—before tricky editing projects, as no doubt many staff have over the years.

Conversations like these underscore why editor Mark Galli named David "a gentleman and a scholar" at a June board meeting honoring David's legacy. In various leadership roles (six of them!) over 28 years, David kept this magazine centered on the Cross when many voices co-opted the word *evangelical* for political ends. Yet David also made sure CT's firm theology bore witness to social issues of the day, calling Christians to bring the Good News to all members and segments of society. The gentleman-scholar's fingerprints are all over two key documents of evangelical thought: "For the Health of the Nation" (2004) and "An Evangelical Manifesto" (2008).

David Neff

David's fingerprints are also all over this ministry. Some prints worth noting here: helping to launch sister magazine *Books & Culture*; prepping a forthcoming Spanish edition of CT; mentoring former and current staff who are shaping religious journalism in their own key ways; representing CT in dialogues with Jews, Mormons, and Muslims; and in countless seen and unseen ways, raising our bar of journalistic excellence. This doesn't even touch on David's roles outside this ministry (as trustee of the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies, husband of LaVonne, and choirmaster of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church).

As I write this, David is packing up his office, preparing for retirement. And I am thinking of what the halls will be like without his wisdom, insight, and vast body of knowledge gracing them. I am thinking of our staff birthday celebrations, and wondering who will hum to get us all singing "Happy Birthday" on the right note. We anticipate many good things ahead for David. (He says that a *Definitive History of Evangelical Protestantism* is not in the plans, but I have my doubts.) But we well know that we're losing a gentleman and a scholar who got CT singing on the right note for nearly three decades. May we carry on the tune well.

Next issue: Kent Annan introduces the New Friars, who are embodying Christ in the world's slums; Tullian Tchividjian revels in the two words that summarize the whole Bible; and Karen Swallow Prior explores the new (and very old) prodigal phenomenon.

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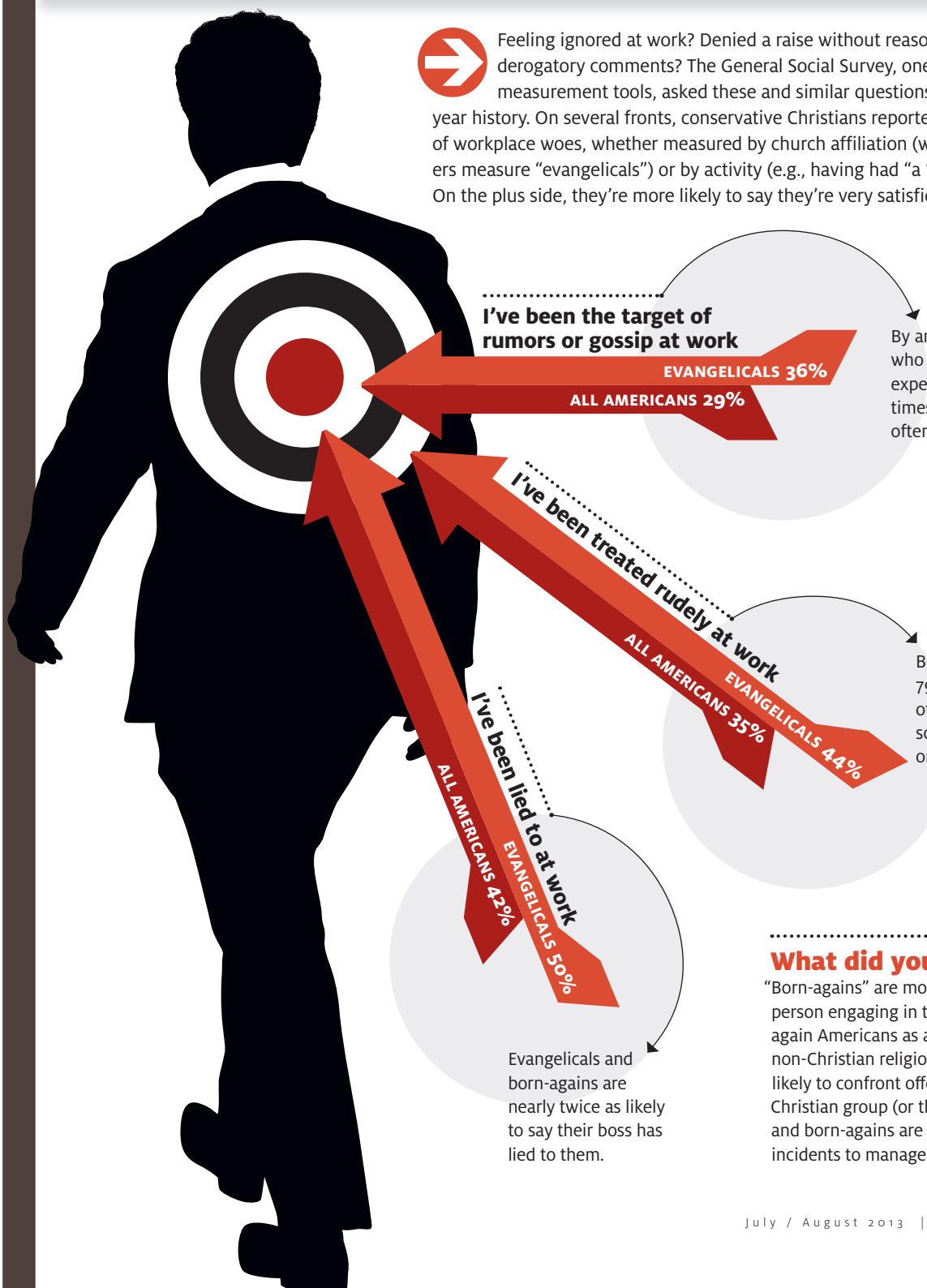
SPOTLIGHT: Persecuted (or Paranoid) at Work

Feeling ignored at work? Denied a raise without reason? Are you the target of derogatory comments? The General Social Survey, one of the best sociological measurement tools, asked these and similar questions for the first time in its 40-year history. On several fronts, conservative Christians reported significantly higher rates of workplace woes, whether measured by church affiliation (which is how most researchers measure "evangelicals") or by activity (e.g., having had "a 'born-again' experience"). On the plus side, they're more likely to say they're very satisfied with their job.



By another measure, Americans who say they've had a born-again experience are almost three times as likely to say they're often the target of gossip.

Born-again Christians are 79 percent more likely than others to say they're often or sometimes the butt of jokes or derogatory comments.

Evangelicals and born-agains are nearly twice as likely to say their boss has lied to them.

What did you do about it?

"Born-agains" are more likely to confront the person engaging in the behavior than nonborn-again Americans as a whole. But members of non-Christian religions are significantly more likely to confront offenders than members of any Christian group (or than "nones"). Evangelicals and born-agains are the least likely to report incidents to management.

1

3

5

GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 U.S. missionary gets 15 years in prison

NORTH KOREA The highest court in North Korea has sentenced a China-based American missionary to 15 years of hard labor for "crimes aimed to topple" the Communist nation. State-controlled media claimed that Kenneth Bae, detained since November 2012, was working for Youth With A Mission but avoided the death penalty because he confessed. Friends said Bae guided groups into North Korea to feed orphans.

2 No more NYC church evictions?

Churches in New York City gained an unexpected ally in a long-running standoff over whether they can use public schools as worship spaces on Sundays. The City Council passed a resolution 38–11 calling on state lawmakers to protect churches' equal right to rent schools. (Last June, a judge blocked the city from enforcing its ban.) A poll by A Journey Through NYC Religions found that 70 percent of school neighbors do not see church rentals as a problem.

3 Good news in India's most persecuting state

INDIA Christians celebrated the results of recent elections in Karnataka. The Bharatiya Janata Party, a Hindu nationalist party known for supporting extremists, lost power after nine years of unchallenged rule. Karnataka had more anti-Christian attacks in 2012 than any other Indian state—including notorious Orissa, where authorities recently arrested two Hindu extremists connected to the 1999 martyrdom of missionary Graham Staines and his two sons.

4 SGM abuse lawsuit dismissed by judge

Days after the high-profile lawsuit against Sovereign Grace Ministries (SGM) added a second round of names and allegations, a judge dismissed it. The amended civil suit claimed that 10 SGM leaders "conspired" to conceal the sexual abuse of 11 children. The judge ruled that 9 victims failed to sue before the statute of limitations had expired. (The other two were suing in the wrong state.) Albert Mohler and other Reformed figures broke their previous silence to defend SGM founder C. J. Mahaney, while Boz Tchividjian and Scot McKnight argued that Mahaney should be accountable for any abuse that happened under his watch. Meanwhile, former SGM pastor Joshua Harris revealed from the pulpit his own abuse as a child.

5 Christians debate amnesty for militants

NIGERIA Christian leaders in Africa's most populous nation are divided over a government proposal to grant amnesty to members of Boko Haram. Attacks by the violent Islamist sect have killed thousands since 2009. Broadly speaking, Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria favor harsher responses to Boko Haram, while their Catholic counterparts embrace trading amnesty for peace. The disagreement further strains relations within the Christian Association of Nigeria, the nation's top Christian organization.

6 College keeps president

After concerns over the dismissal of three Calvinist professors mushroomed into allegations of financial mismanagement, trustees at Louisiana College voted to let Joe Aguillard remain president of the Southern Baptist school. The split decision cleared Aguillard of charges that he "engaged in falsehoods and misrepresented material information" to trustees. The school also announced that a $10 million donation—the largest in its history—reflected at least one anonymous couple's trust in Aguillard's leadership. Yet the decision also caused the Cason Foundation to withdraw a $60 million pledge.

GO FIGURE
Billy Graham

44%
NAE board members who have met Billy Graham in person.

73%
Board members who have attended a Graham crusade.

National Association of Evangelicals

7 Evangelism efforts cancel Arab festival

Organizers of America's largest Arab festival are taking a yearlong hiatus following four years of tensions between attendees and self-professed Christian evangelists. Fights have erupted over controversial methods of street evangelism—including carrying a pig's head on a pole—and prompted several First Amendment lawsuits against the City of Dearborn, Michigan. One case was dismissed, but the city settled in another case, agreeing to pay $300,000 and apologize to evangelists. Arab Christian leaders in Dearborn criticize such efforts by outside groups as ill-informed and counterproductive. One reason: The majority of Arab Americans are Christians, not Muslims.

8 Pop music evangelism trial heats up

SINGAPORE Five members of Singapore's largest megachurch went on trial in May, accused of embezzling church funds to support the singing career of the founding pastor's wife. Pastor Kong Hee and his wife, Ho Yeow Sun (popularly known as Sun Ho), say they launched the "Crossover Project" in 2002 to use her secular pop music to reach non-Christians. However, reports surfaced years later alleging leaders inappropriately

1 • AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP 3 • AP 5 • PIUS UTOMI EKPEI / AFP / NEWSCOM 7 • COURTESY OF RICHARD ABDULLAH 13 • COURTESY OF HOGANSON MEDIA RELATIONS / RNS

used building funds to support Sun's career.

9 IRS adoption audits come under fire

The IRS's much-publicized targeting scandal also drew attention to a report on lesser-known recipients of IRS audits: adoptive families. A report from the IRS's Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) details how the IRS audited nearly 7 in 10 adoptive families who claimed the adoption tax credit in 2012. Of those, nearly 80 percent had "missing, invalid, or insufficient information." But only 2 percent of claimed credits were revoked, signaling no widespread fraud. The TAS concluded that the audits were "severely flawed" and "caused significant economic harm to thousands of families who are selflessly trying to improve the lives of vulnerable children."

10 Christian converts fear fatwa's implications

MOROCCO A recent fatwa calling for Moroccans who leave Islam to be executed has left many Christian converts in turmoil. The pronouncement from the government's top authority on Islam could change the penal code in Morocco, where apostasy currently isn't outlawed. Christians say the fatwa sets a dangerous precedent for how converts (and Christians in general) will be treated. If leaving Islam is seen as an act worthy of death, then "proselytizing"—which is already illegal—could be treated much more seriously.

11 Messianic school dodges closure—for now

ISRAEL The only government-funded primary school for Messianic Jewish children in Israel has earned the right to continue operating—at least through the end of the current school year. The Ministry of Education had ordered Makor HaTikvah to close, claiming that the Jerusalem school failed to meet licensing requirements. However, a court ordered that it be allowed to reapply. The school told the *Messianic Times* that its license was unfairly revoked because it allegedly "discriminates" by only enrolling Christian children, even though "nonbelieving Israeli families would not think of enrolling their children in a school which studies New Testament and prays to God in the name of Yeshua."

12 Methodists may discourage pastors over 45

Should people 45 years and older "pursue other expressions of lay ministry" instead of becoming pastors? That's what new guidelines proposed by the Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church would tell candidates entering ministry. The goal: to recruit younger clergy. Some critics called the proposal "outright ageism"; others worried the emphasis on younger leaders could misinterpret the mission of the church. But Carol Bruse, chair of the conference's ordained ministry board, defended the proposed standards as helping the denomination to plan for the future.

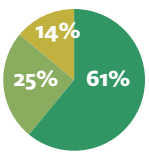
13 Cancer resurrects Carman's career

After 12 years out of the industry, Christian music veteran Carman got a career boost from an unlikely source: a cancer diagnosis. After the former star went public about his terminal illness, fans donated more than $300,000 toward an online campaign to support a new CD, video, and concert tour planned for next spring. Carman is optimistic that he'll still be around by then: "If God speaks to the people and the people put up the money, and they say go make music and minister," he told Religion News Service, "to me that means I'm going to be alive in a year."

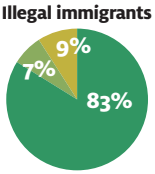
GO FIGURE
Immigration

Religious profile of U.S. immigrants in 2012:

Legal permanent residents



Illegal immigrants



Christian
Other religions
Unaffiliated

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

QUOTATION MARKS

"The fatigue of the day makes you fall asleep, but [God] understands."

Pope Francis, discussing his bedtime prayers with a crowd in St. Peter's Square.
Religion News Service

"Jesus tells us to love our enemies, not hate them after they're dead."

Martha Mullen, the Methodist woman from Virginia who arranged the burial of suspected Boston Marathon bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev after an impasse with Massachusetts graveyards.
United Methodist Reporter

"That wasn't a prayer. It's that simple."

Rep. Steve Smith (R-Maricopa), on why an atheist colleague's morning invocation before the Arizona House of Representatives required a redo.
Associated Press

"It became clear that what I feel as comfort was not affecting others the same."

John Piper, explaining why he deleted two much-criticized tweets that quoted Job 1:19–20 in the wake of the tornado that devastated Moore, Oklahoma, in May.
desiringgod.org

"I am exhausted."

David Norman, president of Erskine College and Seminary, resigning after weathering a court fight with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church over the school's theological identity.
news.erskine.edu

AARON SHELLEY / NAVY NEWS SERVICE

Improving Policy: Will sending cash instead of food help hunger-stricken communities faster? Yes—if Congress doesn't spend the money elsewhere first.

POLITICS

Feeding the Multitudes

The U.S. government got food aid to 45 million last year. Can it do better? By Melissa Steffan

For the past 60 years, the United States has shipped wheat, rice, and other commodities across oceans to feed the world's poor. But that could change by September, if Congress approves proposals that would fight global hunger not with food, but with cash.

Most international aid organizations agree that the current system needs reform. Yet faith-based groups Bread for the World, World Vision, and Food for the Hungry are split over which plan—the current one that uses American goods, or a new system that relies on cash—will feed the greatest number of people.

The most extreme changes on the table, proposed by the White House, would do away with a 1950s-era Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy that requires all food aid purchases to be made from domestic growers. Instead, 45 percent of the Food for Peace program's funds would be budgeted from the USDA to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for use in other forms, including local and regional purchases of food (LRP), cash transfers, and vouchers for hunger-stricken communities.

Bread for the World sees the proposals as an opportunity to feed more people with the same amount of money, said Craig Moscetti, international policy analyst. If the government allowed aid organizations to use other development methods, aid could reach countries more quickly.

Food for Peace does not currently allow aid organizations to partner with local farmers in poverty-stricken areas to provide food for their communities. Yet a recent USDA pilot program found that LRP resulted in food aid reaching people more than two months faster.

"That's really the goal," said Moscetti. "To move to a system that's more flexible and allows program implementers to use a variety of tools depending on the context."

That could benefit violence-ridden countries such as Syria and Somalia, where food can't simply be handed out to hungry people, said Michael Gerson, a *Washington Post* columnist and speechwriter for former President George W. Bush. "If USAID had more flexibility to use cash benefits, it would be able to help more people in more effective ways," he told CT.

However, World Vision isn't certain that the proposed changes truly would be more effective, said Robert Zachritz, senior director for advocacy and government relations. Because the funds would remain within USDA's overall budget with reduced oversight, no one could guarantee that the funds were being spent on food aid.

"In the political world, the risk is the agriculture committee would allocate the money to other things," he said.

Dave Evans, U.S. president of Food for the Hungry, agreed. The domestic-focused USDA has no real interest in international food aid outside of its benefit to American farmers, he said. "Congress is looking for every way they can find to cut the budget, so if Obama converts it all to cash, the House could . . . cut it, and then it's gone."

Ideally, funds would be budgeted directly to USAID, but this is not one of the current options on the table. However, World Vision and Food for the Hungry do support more modest reforms, such as those included in the House and Senate farm bills. While the House has killed previous versions of the farm bill, the Senate approved a version in June that leaves Food for Peace intact and allocates an additional $20 million toward LRP.

World Vision also supports a government-created fund to address chronic food insecurity in crisis regions—as long as the fund is linked to the Food for Peace "safe box,"

GO FIGURE
Sociology

37%
Americans who said they had had a "'born-again' experience" in a 1988 poll.

34%
Americans who said the same in 2004, a record low.

42%
Americans who said the same in 2012, a record high.

General Social Survey

said Zachritz. This approach would preserve current levels of food aid while allowing other money to be spent on LRP development.

Still, he said, it's important to remember that the existing program is "excellent," feeding 45 million people in 2012.

"Can you take it and improve it? Absolutely," he said. "But we [need to] advance reform and flexibility in a politically viable, practical manner that increases the number of people fed and does no harm."

IMMIGRATION

Booming Churches, Barred Pastors

How visa policies make it hard to hire ministers.

By John W. Kennedy

Immigration officials balked at renewing Daniel Carrillo's religious worker visa. They doubted that the pastor's sponsoring church had sufficient funds to pay him.

The Toronto native relocated to San Antonio in 2011 to help plant a church for the Nazarene congregation he had pastored in Kentucky since 2005. Two months after arriving, officials told him he had 15 days to leave the country.

"We were doing everything to the letter of the law," said Carrillo. "There are a lot of ministers brought in from the outside who are in the same predicament as us."

Whatever happens in Congress this year with immigration reform, it won't resolve the quagmire of specified R-1 visas for religious workers. In an outdated legal labyrinth that is especially thorny for evangelicals, salary is but one of a myriad of details that can trip up foreign pastors.

World Relief immigration attorney Kedri Metzger, who helped Carrillo finally renew his visa last October, notes that the Catholic Church has a much easier time adhering to the government's standards due to its hierarchical nature.

"The [visas] really weren't designed for the plethora of Protestant denominations and all their nuanced differences," said Metzger. "There is a lot of commonality and crossover—especially in ethnic language churches."

For example, if a Presbyterian minister from South Korea is offered a job at a nascent Nazarene Korean church in the United States, current guidelines make it nearly impossible for him to enter on an R-1 visa. Under U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) rules, an applicant must be a member of the participating denomination for the past two years.

"Even if a denomination says we accept their ordination as ours, [USCIS] still sees it as a different religion," Metzger said.

That is problematic for the U.S. denominations launching church plants among immigrant populations, where they often are seeing the most growth. Local congregations frequently must hire a qualified pastor—one who knows the language and culture—from outside the country.

Metzger said religious workers used to have a much easier time receiving visas, but fraud led USCIS to crack down in 2008. Subsequently, the number of R-1 visas issued dropped to 4,340 in 2012, down from 10,061 in 2008.

"It used to be a one-step process for a visa: just going to the embassy with a letter of invitation from the church," said Metzger, who with two associates provides 500 consultations a year. "My applications now weigh between three and six pounds because so many documents are required."

Regulations can be particularly cumbersome for independent churches. Tabernacle Church in Norfolk, Virginia, has been trying to hire Indonesian doctoral student Kurnia Foe since last August to supervise its outreach to international students at Old Dominion University. But the government mandates that Foe, who graduated this May with a doctorate in physics, find a job in his field within 90 days—or be sent to his homeland with his wife and sons.

"The guidelines for R-1 are antiquated," said Kathy Hardison, director of Tabernacle's international student ministry. "Nondenominational churches don't fit."

Immigration officers have a great deal of discretion in rejecting R-1 visas. If they don't understand the inner workings of the denomination, innocuous activities can be viewed with suspicion.

For example, church plants often meet in schools. But officers who inspect the location on a weekday, when the school is filled with students instead of worshipers, have assumed such applications to be fake.

The immigration reform bill before Congress doesn't explicitly address any of these religious worker visa issues. But Robert P. Webber, an evangelical immigration lawyer in Minnesota who handles some 20 R-1 visa cases each year, believes it should. He thinks organizations such as the National Association of Evangelicals should be prioritizing religious worker visas instead of engaging in broad reform efforts for those not in the country legally.

"Why not include some commonsense revisions to rules that apply to churches?" said Webber. "If compassion is the theme of immigration reform, maybe current rules that are too technical for religious workers should be in play."

But Metzger believes it isn't the right time to revise the R-1 visa. She says the massive effort to rectify the status of 11 million people living in the States illegally is paramount. She also isn't convinced that the solution should be legislative. Instead, she believes a well-positioned case in federal court could spur the needed

[continued on 14]

PASSAGES

Convicted
Efraín Ríos Montt
Guatemala's former ruler (once very popular among U.S. evangelicals), of genocide against a Mayan ethnic group. The conviction was overturned on technicalities.

Selected
David Wright
As president of Indiana Wesleyan University, the largest member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

Elected
Thomas White
As president of Cedarville University. The Southern Baptist was selected unanimously—even though previous SBC partnerships have sparked turmoil over the school's theological identity.

For more info, visit: blog.ChristianityToday.com/ctliveblog

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Briefing [from 13]

tweaking within the USCIS administrative system.

"It doesn't need to be overhauled," said Metzger. "It just needs to be retooled in an evangelical church context." (See p. 76.)

EVANGELISM

Translation Tension

Will new guidelines end controversy over Bibles for Muslims?

By Ruth Moon

A lengthy dispute over how to convey the Trinity to Muslims led two denominations to threaten boycotts of Wycliffe Bible Translators. Now, new guidelines aim to quell the controversy—and have successfully mollified Wycliffe's largest critic.

Wycliffe partner SIL International halted seven projects in 2011 until a 14-member panel convened by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) could assess the debate. Recently, SIL accepted the panel's 10 recommendations for properly translating "Son of God" and other familial references to the Trinity.

A best practices statement from late 2011 left room for translators to use words other than *Father* and *Son* if needed for cultural context. However, the new guidelines mandate that those two words must "always be translated with the most directly equivalent familial words."

Translations that refer to Jesus as "God's son" have always been problematic in Muslim contexts, said Warren Larson, scholar in residence at the Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies. The Christian message that Jesus is God directly contradicts Islam, which views Jesus as a prophet.

In addition, some languages simply don't have words for "son" that appropriately convey the biblical meaning, said Dudley Woodberry, a professor of Islamic Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary and member of the WEA panel. For instance, in at least one language, the literal word for *son* has only sexual and biological connotations; all metaphorical words for the relationship are derogatory.

"The challenge becomes how to give renderings that are not blasphemous or derogatory, but still exalt Jesus in such a way that it demands allegiance or rejection," he said.

Yet the Trinity's familial language underscores a key aspect of the gospel, argue critics such as pastor Scott Seaton, who remains skeptical that a language without appropriate metaphorical terms even exists. His denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America, joined the much-larger Assemblies of God (AG) in threatening to pull support from Wycliffe last year.

But in June, the AG's World Missions committee unanimously voted to continue supporting Wycliffe, stating that the changes recommended by the WEA panel addressed its concerns.

Russ Hersman, Wycliffe's chief operations officer, won't name the languages of the seven halted projects in order to protect the security of translators, who are now making revisions to meet the new guidelines. All seven projects were nearly ready for print or distribution.

"When the controversy kept spreading, it didn't seem like anything we could do or say would be satisfactory," he said. "These scholars have . . . given us the direction to go and the boundaries within which we can play, and we're grateful for that."

DISCUSSION STARTER
Homosexuality

After the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) permitted gay youths as members (but kept its ban on gay leaders), the Assemblies of God said its churches should withdraw support. Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders advocated the same, but the SBC rejected a boycott. The majority of Scout units are sponsored by faith-based groups.

UNDER DISCUSSION *Topics in the current debate.*

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should churches stop sponsoring Boy Scout troops?

YES **NO**

"We encourage any of our churches in the BSA to now join our own boys' program, Royal Rangers. Were I a pastor, I would ask whether there are other scouting programs that offer a viable alternative to the BSA where moral ambiguity is removed."

George Wood
general superintendent, Assemblies of God

"It's certainly something we felt our local church should do. The writing's on the wall; when they redefined their definition of morality in the Scout oath, it was contrary to biblical teaching, and we had no choice."

Bryant Wright
pastor, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church; former SBC president

"We don't yet know what the implications will be for troops as a result of this flawed attempt at compromise. Churches should be ready with alternatives, should they eventually be in a situation of choosing between gospel witness and Scout sponsorship."

Russell D. Moore
president, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

"There are many reasons churches should be suspect of the BSA, including the insidious relationship of 'God and Country' that it promotes. But hopefully the triune God the churches worship can have a greater impact on the troops they sponsor. It may be worth the risk."

Dennis Okholm
professor of theology, Azusa Pacific University

"Exclusion is rarely the appropriate response for the church. By stopping their sponsorship of local troops, the church would be sending the message that only the righteous few are welcome within its walls."

Matt Bonzo
director, Cornerstone University Institute for Christianity and Cultural Engagement

"In an era in which unbelievers are walking past—and not into—churches, we need to be creative in our hospitality and cultural engagement. If hosting a troop helps young people and families connect with a local congregation, then I'm in favor."

Kara Powell
executive director, Fuller Youth Institute

MELISSA KIMIADI

Healing Touch: Gayle Dwije (left) prays at a service in Denpasar, Bali. Pentecostal missionaries first arrived in the province in 1921.

The Spirit Sweeps Over Bali

Charismatic churches surge in growth amid a devout—and sometimes violent—Hindu majority. By Melissa Kimiadi in Denpasar, Indonesia

When Gayle Dwije's firstborn daughter was barely a year old, a group of strangers smashed the windows of her family's home in Bali and burst inside. Gayle did not recognize the men, but she suspected immediately that her husband, Wayan—who was born into a Balinese family as the son of a Hindu high priest—might be murdered because of his Christian faith.

Gayle grabbed their daughter and fled frantically into the backyard. The family climbed a seven-foot ladder to the neighbor's house and called the police. By the time officers came, it was too late to catch the perpetrators. The men had disappeared and left behind broken glass, a home in disarray, and a shattered sense of security.

"The police couldn't guarantee our safety," said Gayle, who now copastors the Christian City Church (C3 Bali) with her husband in Denpasar, Bali's capital. The family decided to move to another part of town.

Wayan, who became a Christian in 1994, is no stranger to death threats,

including one from his own uncle. But this attack was the closest anyone had come to killing him. In the eyes of Wayan's extended family and community, his crime was that he abandoned his Hindu beliefs and became a Christian. But what the Dwijes found after the attack was a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit.

ISLAND OF THE GODS

Bali, one of Indonesia's 17,508 islands, is home to Indonesia's Hindu minority. The island became a refuge in the 16th century for Javanese Hindus fleeing the spread of Islam in Indonesia.

The province of Bali is 93 percent Hindu, while Indonesia as a whole is 85 percent Muslim. One doesn't have to walk into one of the 20,000 Hindu temples or shrines to realize that Hinduism is deeply embedded in Bali, traditionally called "Island of the Gods." Along the public sidewalks of Kuta, the major tourist area, Hindus staple together fresh bamboo leaves in the shape of plates, placing flower petals and white pearls of rice on top as *prasad*, a meal offering to Hindu gods. Native Balinese practice a distinct blend of Hinduism with indigenous animism, ancestor worship, and magic.

Compared with the rest of Indonesia, Christianity has made little headway in Bali. Christians make up only 2 percent of the population. (Christians are 15 percent of Indonesia's entire population.) In Bali, it is easier to establish a mosque than a church: Pastors need approval from 50 families in the surrounding area and recommendation letters from the local district government. Islamic leaders do not face such steep requirements.

Yet new Christian outreach is taking root. A turning point occurred in 1972, when I Wayan Mastra, a native Balinese Hindu who became a Christian at a school on Java, was chosen as chairman of the Balinese Protestant church association. He contextualized the gospel for the Balinese church, including introducing dance and traditional gamelan music, to divorce it from its Dutch Reformed colonial legacy. He cast a vision for a "mango tree" church, rooted in Balinese soil, not a "bonsai tree" church, potted artificially.

Over time, Mastra's vision produced results. Christianity in Bali is now growing faster than the population in Indonesia. In the past 15 years, immigration of Christians from other parts of Indonesia and active crusades to encourage conversions of native Balinese have contributed to the growth.

Exact data are hard to compile in a country where Christian conversion faces lasting stigma. "When I first came to Bali 18 years ago, there were three Christian denominations," said Gayle Dwije, originally from Melbourne. C3 Bali was founded by the Dwijes in 2001 and now shepherds about 250 members. Last August, they opened a small Bible-based school for grades K–9.

Paul Suryanto, secretary of missions of Gereja Bethel Indonesia Rock Church (GBI Rock Church), a Pentecostal church in Denpasar, estimates there are now about 100 Christian denominations active in Bali. For church planters, Bali is fertile ground because of its small Christian presence and tremendous population boom due to urbanization and a growing economy. Last December, a report revealed that Bali's population jumped from 3.89 million people in 2010 to 4.2 million people by the end of 2012, the largest spike in 50 years.

The island has dominated Indonesia's tourism industry with 2.8 million foreign visitors in 2012. Most tourists travel from China or Australia. It has one of the strongest economies in the region, growing at 6 percent annually. "Bali is considered the gateway [to Indonesia] for foreigners and business," said Suryanto. "Obama and Hillary came just last year."

OVERCOMING STIGMA

Many Balinese who publicly claim Jesus as their Savior encounter threats like Wayan Dwije did—or worse.

"Balinese Hindus will kill Christian converts here and take their land," said John Stevens, an Australian who ministers in northwest Bali. When Stevens married his Balinese wife, Made, 30 years ago, the couple fled to Australia for fear of Made's life.

"We have native Balinese who won't pronounce they are Christian to their families for fear of expulsion," Suryanto told *Christianity Today*. With 8,000 members, GBI Rock Church is undoubtedly the largest Pentecostal church in Bali, although not the largest Christian church. (Bali Traditional Church, which is noncharismatic Protestant, tops the charts with over 20,000 members.)

In 1987, pastor Timothy Arifin of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, planted GBI Rock Church, which now has 17 satellite fellowships throughout Bali.

When GBI Rock Church opened, it rented space in a convention hall in Kuta. As it gained members, the church needed a building of its own. Arifin, a civil engineer, embarked on a six-year project in 1991 to build the church in Denpasar. The main church today is a towering four-story structure with an enormous sanctuary, two wings, one chapel, five classrooms, administrative offices, a cafeteria, an outdoor baptism pool, and a parking lot.

GBI Rock Church leaders recognize the stigma for Balinese who decide to follow Christ. But the church also realizes it is underprepared to deal with the stigma in a concrete way. "We don't have the facilities," said Suryanto. The majority of members are Chinese Indonesians who have emigrated from other islands in Indonesia, which perhaps contributes to the lack of material resources, such as housing and food, for outcast Balinese.

The approach of GBI Rock Church, Suryanto said, is to provide "a real physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit—things [native Balinese] can see, feel, and touch to bring great impact in their lives." Suryanto noted that new converts sometimes turn to larger Protestant churches, such as Bali Traditional Church, for assistance with

housing and jobs when they are cast out by their families.

C3 Bali takes a different approach. "We advise them to not tell their families and communities first," said Gayle Dwije. "Let their families see positive changes in their lives first."

After he became a Christian, Wayan Dwije did not hear from his father for two years. Relations with his immediate relatives are better now, but many members of his extended family still do not talk to him.

By 1999, the Dwijes began pastoring a campus ministry in Denpasar. Two years later, the couple founded C3 Bali, associated with a network of churches in Australia.

"We both decided earlier on in our marriage that we're not here to play happy-clappy church," Dwije said.

Toward that end, the Dwijes partner with Compassion International to run a free community program three times a week for 150 impoverished children. The children are taught gospel principles and receive basic health care. Compassion provides the funds for school books and vitamins, while C3 Bali covers staff and location.

About half of the children in the program are native Balinese. "If they are non-Christians, the family has to sign a waiver or else we get caught for proselytizing," said Gayle.

'When we win one Balinese person in Christ, it's like winning a thousand people outside of Bali.' ~ Ester Sutedja, pastor

HOLY SPIRIT RELIANCE

Balinese Hindus recognize and worship thousands of gods. They believe a spirit is found in all things, even inanimate objects. What attracts many Balinese to Christianity is the role of the Holy Spirit.

This reality is not lost on Christians outside typical charismatic congregations. "Pentecostals' strength lies in the Holy Ghost," said Lukas Wiranata, the Baptist pastor of Gereja Perhimpunan Injili Baptis Indonesia in Denpasar. "If native Balinese do not find the miracles that touch their soul directly, they do not believe."

Born into a Hindu family in Gianyar, a mountainous region in central Bali, Wiranata knows this dynamic from experience. He became a believer in 1990 after witnessing his infant child recover from a potentially deadly flu. While his child was sick, he promised God that he would believe if God spared the life of his child. The next day, Wiranata said, his child was healed.

Wiranata attributes his first introduction to Christianity to Ester Sutedja and her late husband, A. A., former pastor of Gereja Pantekosta Isa Almasih Bali (GPIA Bali) in Denpasar. With 250 members in 1990, GPIA Bali was most likely the largest Pentecostal church in Bali at that time.

Wiranata worked for the couple as their driver and was given a Bible as a gift. For months, he hid the Scriptures in a black plastic bag for fear of his Hindu peers. When he came clean with family and friends about his Christian faith, he felt the need to build a house for his parents to alleviate their anger.

"Hindus have to face the consequences and be brave to leave Hinduism," said Wiranata. "I wasn't scared because I already received God in my heart. Now it's easy for me to change the heart of Balinese people because I know what they are going through." In 2004, he started his church with 30 people. Now, membership at Wiranata's church is about 200, half of whom are Balinese.

The fate of GPIA Bali has not been so favorable. In 1991, a trusted member stole from the church, and the congregation struggled. While GPIA Bali continues to meet, membership has dwindled to 40. Sutedja took over as pastor after the death of her husband in 2007.

Despite the setbacks, GPIA Bali persists in giving back to the community. Once a month, members visit a prison in Denpasar to minister to Balinese women and distribute basic goods. The outreach thrills Ester Sutedja: "When we win one Balinese person in Christ, it's like winning a thousand people outside of Bali."

HEALING OLD WOUNDS

With a rapidly rising island population and a blossoming economy, the future seems bright for Bali's Christians.

But Bali as a society still suffers from chronic poverty. In the village of Singaraja Desa, in the northwest, women walk two hours each day to fetch clean water. Among the traditional villages of Ubud in central Bali, basic appliances such as gas stoves and kitchen sinks are nonexistent. In the slums of Denpasar, parents struggle to send their children to school.

Balinese Christians are accepting a new responsibility to provide practical assistance. This is about the capacity of church leaders to make a visible difference in the community. The Dwijes' church, for example, offers sewing lessons and $100 loans to low-income entrepreneurs to buy a sewing machine.

A charity called the Maha Bhoga Marga Foundation (MBM), established by the Protestant Christian Church in Bali in 1963, works with villagers in the remote areas of Bangli and Buleleng through their educational livestock program. Each farmer receives two cows in a credit and profit-sharing system and learns how to process livestock waste to methane, which helps the cattle business become more profitable.

Other Bali churches opt to alleviate poverty through children's aid. The Noosa Christian Outreach Church provides shelter for homeless kids in Denpasar through its Bali Street Kids Home, located in the district of Kuta. They rent two houses that accommodate over 25 children ranging in age from 1 to 18. Food, clothing, shelter, and education are free.

For Balinese Christians who have experienced persecution, this attempt to change the quality of life among poor Balinese Hindus means practicing the art of turning the other cheek and identifying with the poor. It is a statement of faith in action as well as an opportunity to heal old wounds. Gayle Dwije said it best: "We often ask, 'What would Jesus do, and who would he be hanging out with?'"

Melissa Kimiadi is a journalist based in New York City. She is a foreign correspondent for A Journey Through NYC Religions (nycreligion.net).

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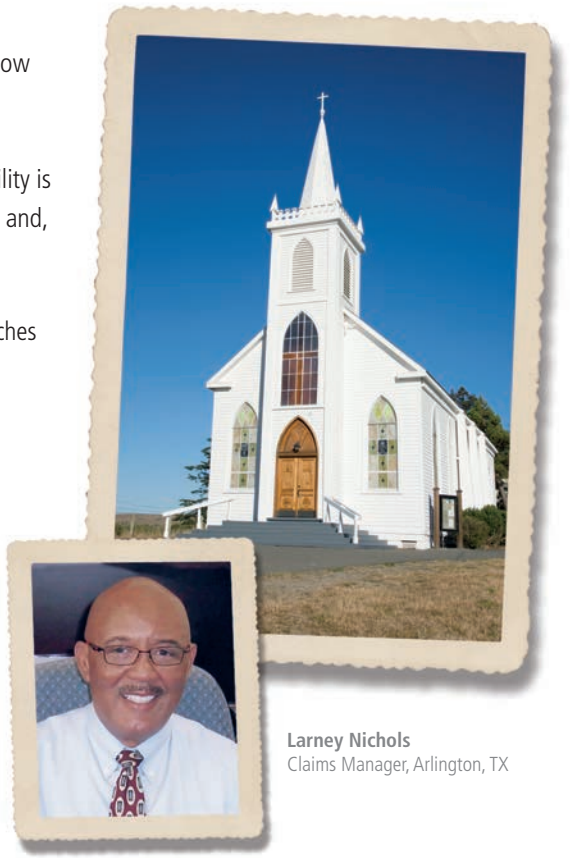

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A Paradox Old and New

MARCION, A BISHOP OF THE EARLY CHURCH, has become the unspoken patron saint of many a modern Christian. And to be honest, there's not one of us who isn't tempted to burn incense to the heretic. Why?

Because he put his finger on a problem that plagues the church as much as ever: What is the relationship between the seemingly legalistic and wrathful God of the Old Testament, and the seemingly loving and gracious God of the New? Marcion (d. 160) said the solution is simple: The Old Testament God is history. So he whittled away the Old Testament and any parts of the New that carried a whiff of that seemingly vengeful deity. He taught that the "demiurge" of the Old Testament is altogether inferior to the heavenly Father of the New.

If the Old Testament's depiction of God troubled Marcion, how much more so does it trouble many Christians today? Recent Christian titles including *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Paul Copan), *God Behaving Badly* (David T. Lamb), and *The Violence of Scripture* (Eric A. Seibert) attempt to reconcile the two Testaments' portrayals of God.

Then again, maybe the New Testament God isn't as "nice" as we think. Paul said, "The wrath of God is being revealed . . . against all the godlessness and wickedness of people" (Rom. 1:18). Jesus whipped people and animals and overturned tables in the temple. He also warned his disciples about their attitude toward those most uncomfortable passages that now make up most of our Old Testament: "Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17).

Yikes. Instead of alleviating the tension between anger and love, justice and mercy, judgment and grace, Jesus seems only to heighten it. No wonder Marcion opted for a kinder, gentler gospel.

We cannot hope to unravel this mysterious paradox in the course of three articles. But we can honestly explore them, as Mark Buchanan, Phillip Cary , and Christopher J. H. Wright do in the following cover package. And above all, we look to the One who not only made the paradox more intense, but also wondrously resolves it in his life, death, and resurrection.

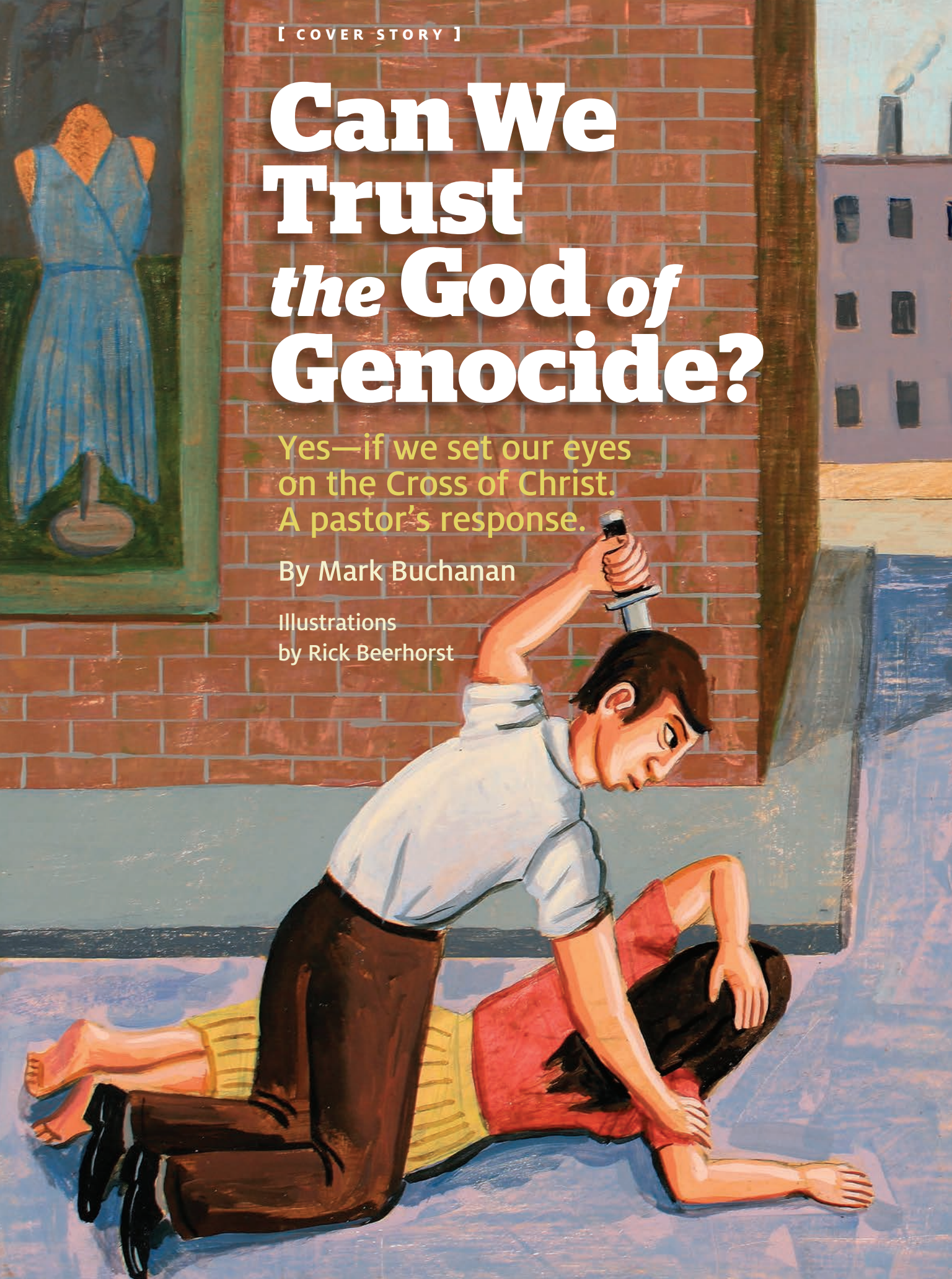
—Mark Galli, editor

Can We Trust *the* God *of* Genocide?

Yes—if we set our eyes on the Cross of Christ. A pastor's response.

By Mark Buchanan

Illustrations by Rick Beerhorst




ATM

I recently taught a Bible class at our local Christian school. I was assigned the topic, "Can the Bible Be Trusted?" I prepared well—a skillful blending, I thought, of watertight arguments, personal anecdotes, and historical underpinnings. I gave a whirlwind history of the development of the canon. I toted out comparative stats on existing copies of ancient documents. I addressed the old vexing problem of the mystery cults and their relationship to Christianity. I told those students how the Bible was a wise and trusted guide in my own life. I gave examples. I delivered it all with what I thought was conviction and verve.

It was a flop. The students could barely stay awake.

I might have guessed the outcome from the get-go. I started with a question: "If anyone asked you why *you* trust the Bible, what would you tell them?"

It left them dumbfounded.

As I was leaving, a young man who had seemed especially bored in the class approached me in the hall.

"Thanks for coming," he said, surprising me. I asked him if I'd helped him answer the question, *Why do you trust the Bible?*

"No."

"Well," I said, "do you trust the Bible?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Hosea 13:16," he said.

"Remind me," I said.

With icy precision he quoted: "The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open."

Now it was my turn to be dumbfounded.

John Milton opens *Paradise Lost* claiming to "justify the ways of God to man." It's questionable whether he succeeds. It's questionable whether anyone does. Most Christians give it a good shot anyhow. Most come up short. Our justifications start sounding like, well, justifications: labored attempts to vindicate God's character against mounting evidence for his seeming apathy, impotency, and incompetency.

But actually, that's the easy part. What's not easy is explaining what appear to be deliberate acts of divine cruelty. God's virulent rage. His hair-trigger vindictiveness. His apoplectic jealousy. Why would God make women and children pay for the sins of despots or the apostasy of priests? God's behavior at times appears to the skeptic, and even to the devout, as mere rancor, raw spite. There are passages in Scripture that make God look like a cosmic bully throwing a colossal tantrum.

In light of this, it's hard to stick to the claim that God is love—unconditional love, love that seeks and serves and suffers and gives until it hurts. It's hard to reconcile the New Covenant God revealed in Jesus Christ, who welcomes little children, eats with sinners, speaks peace to troubled hearts, calls us to love our enemies, and lets adulterers walk away unscathed, with the Old Covenant God, who lays waste to entire cities, lets babies be dashed on rocks, opens the earth to swallow families whole, smites his own priests for just touching holy relics, and encourages parents to stone their own children for acting up.

This is a pressing theological work of reconciliation.

But it's also a personal one. At its root, it raises the question, *Can the Bible be trusted?* Or more pointedly: *Can the God of the Bible be trusted?* Or more pointedly yet: *Jesus, is that really you?*

Mine is one of three articles addressing this issue. The other authors, Phillip Cary and Christopher J. H. Wright, tackle it as theologians. I commend their essays to you (on pages 26 and 30, respectively).

I want to approach it as a pastor.

SPANNING THE COVENANTS

In the 24 years I have been a pastor, I have operated on the fundamental assumption of the unity of Scripture. I understand, of course, the difference between the Old Covenant and the New, and how the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit dramatically change how we relate to God.

But he's one and the same God. Jesus gives us a *clearer* and *deeper* revelation of God, but not a different one. The God Jesus spoke with and spoke for, the God he unveiled, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I believe this. I preach and pastor on the basis of it.

So I happily flit back and forth between the Good Book's two halves. I mix and mingle from Romans and Isaiah, John and Genesis, Revelation and Nehemiah, James and Proverbs. I read Psalms as my own prayers. I consult Proverbs for daily wisdom. I'm as likely to take a leadership strategy from David's life as from Paul's, or to ponder the meaning of worship from Deuteronomy as from Hebrews. I'm careful to nuance my use of any biblical source, old or new, with the principles of good exegesis.

But I'm no closet Marcionite, a follower of the heretical bishop who claimed the god of the Old Testament was a demiurge, a lackey deity, and sharply distinguished that being from the heavenly Father whom Jesus revealed and Paul preached. I don't believe that. The God of Moses is also the God of Paul. They're one and the same.

But then there's Hosea 13:16. That seems as different from, say, John 3:16 as god is from God, as Marcion's demiurge is from our heavenly Father. Perhaps it is Hosea 13:16—"The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open"—that Jesus' disciples had in mind the day the people in a Samaritan village refused them hospitality. "When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?'"

God, in their minds, seems ready to loose mass destruction for such things.

"But Jesus," we're told, "turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village" (Luke 9:51–56). Jesus turns the other cheek, and makes his disciples turn theirs as well.

Is this a new thing? Is this a different God?

The problem here, though, is that Hosea 13:16 implicitly, and other texts explicitly, impute the agency of such acts to God. He's the author and perfecter of the atrocity. He is the one pulling the levers, pushing the buttons—or watching it all happen with approval, like Saul holding the cloaks of the assassins.

Is that you, Jesus? we ask. Which takes us to the heart of the matter.

> In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

No.

Or better: This is a new thing from the same God.

But before we go there, consider for a moment how thin the gap really is between the revelations of God in the Old and New Testaments. God's mercy, his kindness, his pathos, is as marked in one Testament as it is in the other. And his dreadful wrath, his fierce justice, his burning jealousy for his people and his own righteousness—again, these characteristics of God are well represented in both covenants. It's worth noting that in order to make his case, Marcion had to excise not just the Old Testament, but a fair bit of the New as well.

Further, both Testaments narrate a kind of historical determinism. The brutality that Hosea describes is sickening, but hardly confined to some remote, barbaric past ruled by bloodthirsty chieftains at the behest of their cruel tribal deities. No, such brutality is happening somewhere in the world right now, often at the hands of those who are well educated and, in certain contexts, charming and sophisticated. But as then, so now: they commit such acts because, at root, "they have rebelled against their God." And as then, so now: it's often the women and children, the innocents, who suffer the consequences. In some ways, Hosea 13:16 simply announces a terrible historical reality: evil happens when men reject God, and often the wrong people suffer for it.

Thus begins the Book of Hebrews. Over its 13 chapters, the writer builds a compelling case for Jesus' complete solidarity with frail and sinful humans and yet his utter superiority over everything that breathes—over angels, prophets, high priests, Moses. "In the past" is one of the book's refrains. "But now" is another. In the past, God spoke and acted through prophets, through angels, through priests, through Moses. But now, God speaks and acts through his Son, Jesus, who is superior to all others—who, indeed, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

The God Jesus spoke with and spoke for, the God he unveiled, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I believe this. I preach and pastor on the basis of it.

Jesus reveals God like no other. Jesus speaks for God like no other.

Hebrews draws a vivid contrast between past and present, Moses and Jesus, the Old Covenant and the New. In every way, Jesus—what he says, what he does, what he inaugurates, what he consummates—is superior to whomever and whatever has come before him. The past is a mere shadow of Christ's present reality and future glory.

But Hebrews sees no contrast in God. There is no Old Covenant versus New Covenant God. There is no God of Moses versus God of Jesus. Whoever wrote Hebrews was no Marcionite.

All of this ties together as Hebrews wends toward its

At the Cross, God's own wrath falls on God. The God of the Old Covenant meets himself in the Christ of the New Covenant, and in a way superior to everything that has come before, he enacts a deep and lasting reconciliation.

conclusion. There, the contrast between past and present, Moses and Jesus, Old and New rises to a brilliant crescendo:

> You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."
>
> But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:18–24)

Jesus ushers in a new day and a new way. In the past, we trembled before this God. But now we can approach him with joy, with confidence, with singing.

But he's the same God. Indeed, here's a surprise: The road is even steeper now, the judgment of God sterner, and the cost of refusal greater:

> See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? . . . Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:25, 28–29)

Jesus opens a new way to the same God. But Jesus, rather than lessening the stakes, heightens them. His blood speaks a better word than Abel's, or any other's, but his message is only an intensified version of what God has always said: *Do not refuse me when I am talking to you.*

THE ULTIMATE NAIL HOUSE

I said I wanted to approach this as a pastor. My pastoral instinct is that this all resolves at the Cross. All talk of God must filter there. All views of God must refract there. All theology must converge there. At the Cross, God's own wrath falls on God. The God of the Old Covenant meets himself in the Christ of the New Covenant, and in a way superior to everything that has come before, he enacts a deep and lasting reconciliation.

Let me illustrate.

A worldwide phenomenon started in China about a decade ago. It's called a nail house—a house whose owner refuses to sell to developers. That refusal forces the developers to excavate and build around the house, often leaving it perched starkly, stubbornly, precipitously, on some rickety pedestal of earth.

They're called nail houses because, in the scraped bald landscape over which they loom, they resemble a nail that never got hammered down. Pixar made an entire movie a few years back called *Up*, about just such a house and its crotchety, defiant, ancient owner.

In almost every instance, the developer gets a court order to demolish the house.

So a nail house is an act of doomed resistance. It's a gesture of hopeless defiance. It's a desperate last attempt to resist the irresistible, to stop the unstoppable, to defeat the undefeatable. It's a lone fist shaken against a ruthless destroyer.

The Bible is a book of nail houses. But unlike almost all the nail houses around the world, it comes with a message of wild hope: *Hold on! Don't give up! No matter how bleak it gets, how many fall to the right and the left, how inevitable your defeat seems, hold on! The high court of heaven rules in your favor. You win in the end.* Think, for instance, of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, or David and Goliath.

But the ultimate nail house is the cross of Christ. That is history's most potent nail house, raised on a barren hillside in defiance of all the hellish despotism of the cosmos. And this time, the owner won.

But here's the strangeness of it: The Cross is mostly God's defiance of himself. God erects a nail house against his own wrath. What the Cross defies, what the Cross defeats, what the Cross pushes back, is as much the wrath of heaven as it is the power of hell. God disarms himself at Calvary. To put it another way: At the Cross, God made a way for his mercy and love to triumph over his justice and judgment.

The old theologians put it this way: We take refuge from God in God. The only escape from God's wrath is God's mercy. If you cling to his nail house, all God's wrath falls on the one nailed there.

And what rains down on your head? Grace upon grace upon grace.

Is that you, Jesus?

Thank God, yes.

Mark Buchanan is a pastor, author, and father of three based in Vancouver. His most recent book is *Your Church Is Too Safe: Why Following Christ Turns the World Upside-Down* (Zondervan).

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RICK BEERHORST

We Are All Rahab Now

We're troubled by God's commands for Israel to wipe out entire peoples. Why we should be encouraged.

By Phillip Cary

There is genocide in the Bible. Scripture both describes the Israelites exterminating the Canaanites in cities like Jericho (Josh. 6:21), and presents this as the command of God. This is what the Israelites are supposed to do when they enter the Promised Land and encounter its inhabitants: "devote them to complete destruction . . . and show no mercy to them" (Deut. 7:2, ESV).

The Hebrew word for "devoting to destruction" is *herem*. It is not an ordinary kind of massacre but something sacred, a way of giving things totally to the Lord. It includes property and livestock as well as men, women, and children. And it has the effect of cleansing the land of abominations. The procedure looks very much like an ethnic cleansing demanded by the holiness of God.

Is this what holiness looks like? Is this what we are supposed to imagine when we read, "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, ESV)? How can we possibly read and teach the genocide accounts in our churches today?

To answer that question, we have to go back to the narrative and our peculiar place in it. And we have to ask who "we" are, who are hearing the command.

WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE?

We are a bit too apt to forget that this is a problem. The vast majority of Christians after the earliest decades of the church have been Gentiles—"the nations," to use the biblical language. We have been reading Israel's Scriptures so long that we forget that these words were not originally addressed to us.

For example, the preface to the Ten Commandments says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2). To hear the commands that follow as addressed to *us*, we have to identify ourselves with the

people God brought out of Egypt. We have to say, in some sense, that we are Israel.

And how do we Gentiles get away with that? The difference is highly relevant to the issue of how we are to understand the destruction of Gentiles in the land of Israel. What could give us the right to think of ourselves as belonging to Israel, rather than being the kind of people who should be destroyed?

The New Testament's answer is clear: faith alone. Only faith in Jesus Christ brings Gentiles into covenant with God, grafting them into the life of Israel like a wild olive shoot grafted into a well-cultivated olive tree (Rom. 11:24). And even so, Paul insists, Gentiles who believe in Christ don't simply become Jews: they are not required to be circumcised or to follow all the laws of Moses. And that leaves us Gentile Christians in a rather complicated position with respect to the Old Testament commandments. We read them and believe them to be the Word of God, but we don't try to put all of them into practice.

In fact, with respect to the command to exterminate the Canaanites, our position is less like Israel's and more like that of Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute in Jericho who befriends the Israelite spies. She has not taken part in Israel's exodus, but she has heard of it and believes it. She knows the name of the Lord, the God who has given the land to Israel, and she confesses that he is God of heaven and earth (Josh. 2:9–11). She is a believer, and eventually will be included in Hebrews 11's great litany of heroes who lived by faith. But she is not an Israelite. She is a Canaanite who hopes to live, not die.

As a believer, Rahab can have hope, because the threat she faces is not so much moral as religious. It is not as if the Israelites were so much more righteous than every other nation (Deut. 9:4–6). Israel is holy not because of their own righteousness but because the Lord loves them and chose them as his people. And the holiness of the Lord is a kind of jealousy that claims Israel as his own, not allowing other nations to lead them into worshiping false gods (7:5–8). That is the holiness that leads to *herem*, the extermination of Rahab's people for their idolatry.

My proposal is that to read this story properly, as Gentiles, is to put ourselves in Rahab's place. Our origin lies not with the people who hear the command to kill, but with those who are to be killed. We belong with those who should be devoted to destruction because we offend against the holiness of God. And yet what has actually happened is that, like Rahab, we have received mercy through faith in the God of Israel.

To read the Canaanite genocide this way is to have our hearts formed the way the New Testament intends for Gentiles. We have to acknowledge that the holiness of God does indeed mean death for us. At precisely this point, it should be clear that we have entered familiar territory for Christian theology. We know the wages of our sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and the holiness of God is therefore a mortal threat to us—which ought to drive us to faith in Christ.

JOINING RAHAB

Yet finding ourselves with Rahab has some less familiar consequences. We need to join her as she befriends the Israelites, entering into a relationship of mutual lovingkindness and loyalty described by that wonderful Hebrew word *hesed* (Josh. 2:12, 14). You could say that what frees Rahab from *herem* is *hesed*, the lovingkindness of her relationship with Israel.

Through her lovingkindness, Rahab is the beneficiary of a blessing given originally to Abraham and, through him, to all Israel. "I will bless those who bless you," the Lord says to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), words that are echoed when Isaac blesses Jacob (27:29) and when Balaam is forced to turn the curse he intended for all Israel into a blessing (Num. 24:9).

It is a dangerous thing indeed to curse Israel, since the next thing the Lord says after blessing Abraham is, "him who dishonors you I will curse." The Canaanite genocide carries out that curse. Yet even the curse is aimed ultimately at blessing for all, as the Lord concludes his blessing of Abraham by saying, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, ESV).

To read this story properly, as Gentiles, is to put ourselves in Rahab's place. Our origin lies not with the people who hear the command to kill, but with those who are to be killed.

These are precious words, heard later in the Lord's blessing of Isaac (26:4) and Jacob (28:14). Paul describes them as God preaching the gospel beforehand (Gal. 3:8). For Christ himself fulfills these words, making the blessing of Abraham into a blessing for all who believe.

Because of this gospel blessing, we can hear "I am the Lord your God" as words addressed to us, since we too share the faith of Abraham. But notice what this commits us to. It means we Gentile believers in Christ are to be a blessing to the people of Israel, "that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy," as Paul says (Rom. 11:31, ESV).

Alas, what sort of blessing have Gentile Christians been to Israel? So much persecution of the Jews fills our history. Even our evangelism has often meant attempting to put an end to them. As Messianic Jews have recently pointed out, that is what Christians did by demanding that Jews who accept Christ must cease to practice Judaism—in effect ceasing to be Jews. It meant turning them away from their covenant with the God of Abraham and Moses, as if we had forgotten that this was none other than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As a result, we preached Christ to them in a way that could only make him look like a false god, an alternative to covenant faithfulness. We played Canaanite, leading Israel astray.

How then shall we read the Canaanite genocide? I would say: as Canaanites, prone to lead Israel astray, yet blessed by the faith of Abraham. This is a faith shared by Rahab in her

If we read the Canaanite genocide properly as Gentile Christians, we will seek to be a blessing to the Jews, who have been such a great blessing to us in Jesus, the King of the Jews.

lovingkindness toward Israel, and offered to Gentiles in Jesus Christ who is, as his genealogy attests, the son of Rahab as well as the son of David (Matt. 1:5–6).

When we see ourselves in Rahab, we recognize that we are those who deserve death, who have no hope for mercy but by faith in the God of Israel and his Son, Jesus Christ.

But we also see ourselves as belonging, by that same utterly undeserved mercy, to the covenant he has made with his beloved Israel. To read the Canaanite genocide in church therefore requires us to understand the church properly, as the body of Christ in which the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile is gone (Eph. 2:14). It is to understand that the blessing of God comes to us Gentiles through the Jews, with whom we are therefore bound in relations of lovingkindness.

GOD IN JEWISH FLESH

"Salvation is from the Jews," our Lord tells the Samaritan woman (John 4:22). Samaritans, Canaanites, Americans—all manner of Gentiles can expect to find mercy and blessing and life only by looking outside their national identity. No nation has the promise of everlasting life before God except Israel. Of course this means not the present nation-state of Israel but the *people* of Israel, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But by the same token, it does mean *this* people, this ethnicity, its flesh and its descendants. They shall endure, long after there are no more Samaritans, Canaanites, or Americans.

For Jewish flesh belongs to the Incarnation of God himself. Jesus, the son of David and the son of Rahab, who is exalted bodily to the throne of God, is a Jew. If we read the Canaanite genocide properly as Gentile Christians, we will seek to be a blessing to the Jews, who have been such a great blessing to us in Jesus, the King of the Jews.

This may seem a strange lesson to take from a story of genocide. But the Bible is full of strange lessons, containing strange reversals like the story of Rahab. Or like Paul's hope that not only will Gentiles receive mercy through the Jews, but that the Jews will receive mercy through Gentiles (Rom. 11:31).

The story of Rahab's family escaping the Canaanite genocide is, like the story of the Flood, the story of what did not happen. It is the story of those who, by all rights, have no place on the face of this earth, but nonetheless here we are, by the mercy of God exercised through the elect who found favor in his sight. If we see in this story how the well-deserved judgment of death becomes for us life in Christ Jesus, even the terrible texts of *herem* will build us up in faith, hope, and love.

The truth is that much of the Bible will remain a closed book to us until, like Rahab, we enter into a relationship of lovingkindness with the people of Israel. That is one lesson to take away from the Bible's story of genocide. Another is that the holiness of God remains a mortal threat to us insofar as we continue to dishonor his chosen people and hinder their faithfulness to him. If we Gentile Christians learned this much from reading the Canaanite genocide, it would do us a great deal of good. It would help us believe like Abraham, hope like Paul, and love like Rahab.

Phillip Cary is a philosophy professor at Eastern University and author of *Jonah* in the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible..

Learning *to* Love Leviticus

Even those passages about shellfish, mixed fibers, and animal sacrifices.

By Christopher J. H. Wright

RICK BEERHORST

PERHAPS THE FACT that it is catalogued under "Humor and Entertainment" should tell us how to rightly appreciate A. J. Jacobs's best-selling 2007 book, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. In the course of a fascinating year, Jacobs tries to obey literally the 700-plus commands he finds in the Bible—including stoning an adulterer, offering an animal sacrifice, and upholding all the jots and tittles of the Old Testament law. Clearly, taking the Bible literally does not always mean taking it seriously.

More recently, Christian blogger Rachel Held Evans undertook her own experiment in "living biblically" by following for a year all the Bible's passages about women's behavior. *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* is Evans's subversive way of revealing that *no one*—not even the most conservative Christian—takes the whole Bible literally, and that to do so is both impossible and silly.

Both books, while unfortunately mocking in their own ways, nonetheless underscore some persistent misunderstandings about the Bible:

How the Bible has come to us. Scripture is placed within the context of ancient cultures in the Middle East. It comes dressed in all the particularities of history and geography, which God took seriously when he spoke to us through various people who lived in them. To treat all of Scripture as if it were written directly into today's world is to imagine that God himself thought the world would never change and that we could just keep on obeying all the rules. That is absurd, as we shall see.

How laws function in society, then and now. Sometimes laws are like statutes—expressed in general principles. Sometimes they are cases or precedents from which judges draw principles that can be applied to different situations. Sometimes laws reflect a whole culture's way of thinking about life.

The Old Testament laws are like all of these. They exemplify how God wanted certain kinds of situations to be handled. They embody values and objectives, on the assumption that people would understand how to extrapolate from a particular case to a general principle and apply that to new situations. So to take all of the Old Testament laws at face value is to misunderstand their original intent in the first place.

How commands can function in relationships and communication. If I hear someone on the street shout, "Freeze! Put your hands behind your head!" I need to know two things. First, who is shouting? If it's a police officer—someone whose authorized command I need to submit to—then yes. Second, is he addressing *me*? Likely the answer is no. It's addressed to the guy who just robbed a street vendor and is running away. So the command has authority because of who gave it, but it is not addressed to me in that moment. It claims my *respect*—I should not break the law in that way either—but it does not claim my *compliance*.

Next time you come to London, ask your taxi driver if he is obeying the law. Doubtless he'll answer, "Yes, Guv."

Then ask him, in that case, where his bale of hay and bag of oats are located. Remind him of the English law, never repealed, that requires London-licensed hackney cabs to carry those items for the horses that originally pulled them. Clearly he stands accused of not literally obeying the law. But he will probably retort, "You can't be serious." We all understand that an ancient law passed in the days of horse-drawn transport no longer applies to vehicles with engines. Mind you, it does embody a *principle* about how to care for a working animal, and that remains relevant—we'll come back to that.

In the same way, common sense tells us that when Paul commands Timothy to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ," that is a command that I should seek to obey whenever I face hardship like Timothy. It transfers to me in principle. But when Paul commands Timothy, "Come before winter, bring my cloak, and especially the parchments," we know that is a local, particular command, meant for Timothy only. The idea that all the imperative statements in the Bible should be taken literally, as if they all apply to me, is a nonsensical way of handling Scripture.

OLD TESTAMENT LAW: WHY IS IT THERE?

What we usually mean by "Old Testament law" comes from the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. The word *Torah* does not really mean "law" in the sense of legislation. It means "guidance." And the Torah guides its original recipients, and us, by setting the laws and commandments within the framework of a story.

Before we get the Ten Commandments, we get the story of Creation, the brokenness of our sin and rebellion, and the wonder of God's redemption, displayed in the Exodus of the Israelites. So the law was given to a people who not only knew that story, and knew the God who stands behind it, but who had lived it as well. God gave his law to people who had already experienced his grace, his love and faithfulness, his great act of salvation. Obeying the law was never a way to *earn* God's salvation, but the right way for redeemed people to *respond* to God's salvation when they had experienced it (Ex. 19:3–6; Deut. 6:20–25).

And God gave Israel his law in order to shape them into a society that would reflect God's character and values in the midst of the nations—what we might call a missional motivation (Lev. 18:3–4; Deut. 4:6–8). The Israelites were to be distinctive by living in God's way, the ways of personal integrity, economic and social justice, and community compassion. The law was not a set of arbitrary rules to keep God happy. It was a way of life, a way of being human, a culture in a particular time and place, to show what a redeemed people under God looks like.

To imagine that "living biblically" means trying to keep as many ancient rules as possible just because they are in the Bible misses the point of the law in the first place. Old Testament law was not just about rules but also about relationship with God, founded on God's grace and redemption, and motivated by the mission of living as the people of God in the world, so that the world should come to know the living God.

The law was not a set of arbitrary rules to keep God happy. It was a way of life, a way of being human, a culture in a particular time and place, to show what a redeemed people under God looks like.

OLD TESTAMENT LAW: WHAT'S IN IT?

Every society follows different kinds of law—constitutional, criminal, civil, and so forth. So also in Old Testament Israel. There's an old tradition that divides Old Testament law into three categories: moral, civil, and ceremonial. It has some value, but it can result in people saying, "I only need to pay attention to the moral law and can ignore all the rest." But that doesn't seem to fit with Paul's affirmation that "*all* Scripture" is authoritative and useful (2 Tim. 3:16–17, emphasis mine).

To fill the picture, we need to recognize that the ancient Israelites had at least the following kinds of law.

Criminal laws: Offenses against the foundations of the society itself, meaning against God and the covenant. Most of those were sanctioned by the death penalty, indicating how seriously the Israelites took any behavior that threatened the nation's relationship with God. All the capital offenses in Israel are linked, directly or indirectly, to one of the Ten Commandments.

Civil laws: Disputes between citizens over land, property, damages, compensation, animals, and so forth. Many of the case laws

fall into this category.

Family laws: Parents, rather than courts, dealt with most of these matters, such as inheritance, marriage, and divorce. Only if something went beyond the power of parents to control did it come before the elders.

Religious or cultic laws: All the regulations concerning sacrifice, priesthood, festivals, offerings, cleanness and uncleanness, and so on.

Compassionate laws: We would hardly call these "laws" at all, but the Torah has many of them, such as how to treat the poor and needy, the homeless, those without families or land, debtors, ethnic minorities, and immigrants.

The point is that on one hand, all of these kinds of laws were intended for Israel's society and not directly for us. They are culturally specific and limited. Yet at the same time, as Paul says, *all* of the laws were "written for our instruction" and are "useful" for us. So we should not find ourselves asking, "Which of these laws do I have to obey, and which can I ignore?" Rather, we should ask, "What can I learn *from all of these laws* about how God wants me to live and how he wants his people and society at large to live?" Not, "What rules do I have to keep?" but rather, "What kind of relationship do I need to cultivate with God and live out among others?"

WHY DON'T WE KEEP ALL THE OLD TESTAMENT LAWS?

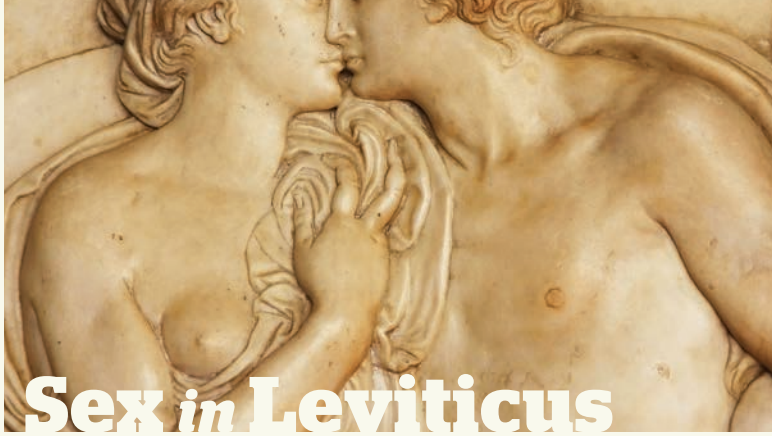
Obviously we don't obey all the Old Testament laws—law such as avoiding clothing made of mixed fibers, stoning to death people who cheat on their spouses, and refusing to eat seafood without fins or scales. Indeed, many of the laws we simply *can't* obey, because they would break the laws of our own time. For example, we cannot obey the Old Testament laws about how to treat slaves as owning a slave is now illegal (though the biblical laws about slaves have plenty to teach us when we note how unique they were in the ancient world). History has moved on. God knew it would.

But just as well, we should never say, "Oh, we don't bother with those things because they are *just* Old Testament rules." There are *principled* reasons why Christians not only need but also should not observe certain Old Testament laws simply as written. And regarding two kinds of law, the New Testament itself provides those reasons.

The sacrificial laws: The New Testament makes it clear that the religious system of temple, altar, animal sacrifices, priesthood, and the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ through the Cross and Resurrection. He has accomplished once and for all what that great system pointed toward. The Book of Hebrews stresses that, whether we are Jewish or Gentile believers, we must not go back to that system, because we already have all that it represented through Christ's sacrificial death and ascended life in the presence of the Father.

The food laws: The distinction between clean and unclean animals and foods was symbolic of the distinction between Israel as God's holy people and the Gentile nations (Lev. 20:25–26). In the New Testament, that separation is abolished in Christ, as Paul says in Ephesians 2. Through the Cross, God has made the two cultures one new humanity. And as Peter discovered through his vision in Acts 10, before going to the home of the Gentile Cornelius, what God has called *clean* should no longer be called *unclean*. Today some Messianic Jewish believers choose freely to observe the *kashrut* regulations as a mark of their Jewish community and cultural identity. But in their unity, believers are free from food laws.

But just because we no longer keep these laws literally does not



Sex *in* Leviticus

It's part of a much broader teaching in Scripture.

The law in Leviticus prohibiting sexual intercourse between men (18:22) comes in the same book that contains laws prohibiting foods that Israelites were to consider unclean (chapter 11). We eat shellfish today without any moral problems, so why should we treat this sex law as morally binding? Haven't we outgrown all of that Levitical law anyway? Christians who insist on the sexual laws of the Bible are being inconsistent in not keeping all the other laws too. So goes one line of argument in modern debates about homosexuality. To this, three things must be said.

First, as we've noted, we no longer keep the food laws because the separation they symbolized (between Israelites and Gentiles in the Old Testament) is no longer relevant in Christ. But the ethical principles embodied in Old Testament laws on sexual relations (positive and negative) remain constant and are reaffirmed by Jesus and Paul in the New Testament.

Second, the argument would reduce the Bible to absurdity. The Ten Commandments come in the same book that commanded Israel not to climb the mountain. If we are told that we cannot with consistency disapprove of same-sex activity unless we also stop eating shellfish, then we should not condemn theft and murder unless we also ban mountaineering.

Third, and most important, the biblical discussion of homosexual behavior begins not in Leviticus, as if the whole argument depends on how we interpret a single Old Testament law. When Jesus was asked about divorce, he would not let the argument get stuck around the interpretation of the law. Instead he took the issue back to Genesis. That is where we find the foundational biblical teaching about God's purpose in creating human sexual complementarity—and it is very rich. It reflects God—male and female together being made in God's image—and it provides the necessary togetherness and equality in the tasks of procreating and ruling the earth. This God-given sexual complementarity is so important that God explains how it is to be joyfully celebrated and exercised—the union of marriage that is heterosexual, monogamous, nonincestuous, socially visible and affirmed, physical, and permanent (Gen. 2:24, endorsed by Jesus).

On that foundation, the rest of the Bible—in the laws and narratives, in the prophets and wisdom literature, in the Gospels and Epistles—consistently teaches that *any* other kind of sexual intercourse falls short of God's best will and plan for human flourishing. (And we should note that the Bible has far more to say about all forms of disordered heterosexual sexual activity, including nonmarital and extramarital, than about same-sex intercourse.)

The law in Leviticus, then, must not be isolated, stuck alongside shellfish, and mocked into irrelevance. It is one small piece of a much larger and consistent pattern of whole-Bible teaching about the gift and joy and purpose and disciplines of our sexuality. *—C. J. H. Wright*

mean they can't teach us anything. We are called to present our bodies as a living sacrifice in the service of God. We are called to offer the sacrifice of praise. We are called to cleanness of life in a corrupt world. In fact, if we are tempted to mock Jewish fastidiousness over kosher food in the kitchen, we might ask if we have any sustained commitment to the moral and spiritual distinctiveness that the New Testament upholds.

We can find principles even in Israel's civil laws to apply today. The urban Christians in Corinth did not see oxen grinding corn in their city houses. But when Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, he took an Old Testament law about allowing working oxen to be fed from the product of their labors (Deut. 25:4) and applied it to Christian workers in Corinth. He sees a *principle* in the case law—originally meant for the benefit of animals—and applies it to working humans. The principle: Work deserves reward. Later he applies another commandment about how manna was to be collected (totally irrelevant to Corinth, you might think), and applies it to the principle of equality between Christians (1 Cor. 9:8–10; 2 Cor. 8:13–15). These are biblical examples of creative application of biblical laws in nonliteral, but very appropriate, ways.

HOW DO WE FIND THE PRINCIPLES?

The best way to derive principles from the Old Testament law is to ask questions. All laws in all human societies are made for a purpose. Laws happen because people want to change society, to achieve some social goal, to foster certain interests, or to prevent some social evil. So when we look at any particular law or group of biblical laws, we can ask, "What could be the purpose behind this law?" To be more specific:

- What kind of situation was this law intended to promote or to prevent?
- What change in society would this law achieve if it were followed?
- What kind of situation made this law necessary or desirable?
- What kind of person would benefit from this law, by assistance or protection?
- What kind of person would be restrained or restricted by this law, and why?
- What values are given priority in this law? Whose needs or rights are upheld?
- In what way does this law reflect what we know from elsewhere in the Bible about the character of God and his plans for human life?
- What principle or principles does this law embody or instantiate?

Now we won't always be able to answer these questions with much detail or insight. Some laws are just plain puzzling. But asking questions like these leads us to a much broader and deeper grasp of what Old Testament laws were all about: forming the kind of society God wanted to create.

Then, having done that homework as best we can, we step out of the world of Old Testament Israel and back into our own. Ask the same kind of questions about the society we live in and the kind of people we need to be, and the kind of personal and societal objectives we need to aim for in order to be in any sense "biblical."

In this way, biblical law can function sharply as a paradigm or model for our personal and social ethics in all kinds of areas: economic, familial, political, judicial, sexual, and so on. We are not "keeping it" in a literalist way like a list of rules. But more important, we are not ignoring it in defiance of what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16–17. We are studying and using it as guidance, light for the path, in the joyful way of Psalms 1, 19, and 119.

Some laws are just plain puzzling. But asking questions about them leads us to a much broader and deeper grasp of what Old Testament laws were all about.

A. J. Jacobs tried it for a year. The rich young ruler said he had done it all his life. Jesus' response might have been the same: "You need to follow *me* and get your priorities right. Seek first the reign of God in all of life." Even the law itself expresses key priorities (e.g., Deut. 10:12–13). The prophets put social justice way above religious rituals (1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6). Jesus agreed, telling those who were meticulously keeping the jot-and-tittle rules that they had forgotten the bigger picture—namely, justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matt. 23:23). And he concentrated all the law in the twin first and second commandments, love for God and neighbor. Paul took the same view (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:13–14).

But Paul went further. To those who imagine that "living biblically" means keeping all the rules you can possibly find in the Bible, I think he would say, "You haven't understood the first thing about the gospel. The Good News is not, 'Here are the rules, see how many of them you can keep.'" Instead, I believe he would say, "Here is Jesus. See what God has done for you through him."

The good news is that the God who created the world has kept his promise to save the world. He has done it through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And we can be part of the story that ends in a new creation, with Christ reigning as king. The good news also is that once we have entered that story by repentance and faith, God gives us his Spirit, precisely so that "the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

There is plenty that we can learn from Old Testament laws that can still usefully guide our ethical and missional thinking and action. The Torah was always intended to do just that. But the heartbeat of Christian life and freedom is not keeping all the rules. Instead, it is living as people whose whole life and character are shaped by God's Word in all its Christ-centered fullness, becoming more like the Christ we trust and follow, and bearing the fruit of God's Spirit. That's living biblically.

Christopher J. H. Wright is international ministries director of Langham Partnership, founded by John Stott, and lives in London. He has written several books and commentaries on the Old Testament, including *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (InterVarsity Press) and *The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith* (Zondervan).

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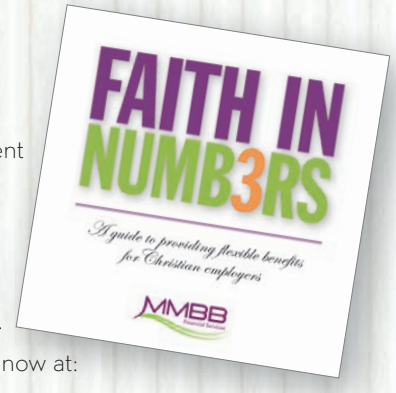

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The Public Listener

Radio journalist **Krista Tippett** on her faith, vocation, and what most media miss about evangelical Christians.

Interview by Katelyn Beaty

There are few media (besides this magazine, perhaps) in which you could find former Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw, social activist Shane Claiborne, and the late Orthodox theologian Jaroslav Pelikan discussing the mysteries of Christian faith. But the radio dial between K-LOVE and the oldies station is a good place to start. There, on more than 200 National Public Radio stations every week, broadcast journalist Krista Tippett hosts *On Being* (formerly *Speaking of Faith*), a show dedicated to "tracing the intersection between theology and real life." While many guests are outside the Christian tradition, the show has arguably helped demolish the misinformed stereotypes about evangelical Christians sloppily dispersed by other media.

Tippett recently spoke with CT managing editor Katelyn Beaty about how her faith informs her work—what she calls "a ministry of listening rather than of preaching"—and why the best Christians today doing the most loving, faithful work in Jesus' name are the ones we'll never read about.

On Being went to a weekly national format in 2003. In the past decade, how have you seen the public discourse about American religion change?

I'd go back a little bit. I had been a journalist in Europe and then went to divinity school in the early 1990s, and came out as somebody who had the perspective of a journalist and was now also theologically educated.

At that point, you had Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson speaking not just for evangelical Christianity or Christianity;

JONATHAN CHAPMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

JONATHAN CHAPMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

they were the voices of religion in America. They made for great sound bites; they were exciting in that way.

That was a big piece of the motivation for me: This [religious] part of life is so much bigger and more diverse than that. Evangelical Christianity is more diverse than that. That was my starting point.

Now, there's no cookie-cutter voice. The story I'm trying to tell is that evangelical Christians have a whole range of issues they care about—poverty and the environment and sex trafficking. That's the story of what's happened in the past decade, this broadening, expansive application of core values and virtues. It means even things like *Christianity Today*'s This Is Our City project—I don't think it would have happened 10 years ago, but it's very organic, and it absolutely makes sense.

I think leaders of an earlier era thought that to be a Christian in the public square meant to wield power, to dictate policy and cultural change. It seems like today Christians are more willing to work across boundaries and share power, in order to pursue the common good.

It's less possible now for voices to be privileged in the way Falwell and Robertson were privileged. [In an earlier time] you could have a Reinhold Niebuhr. You could be this authoritative voice on the cover of *Time* magazine.

That era is over. There are authoritative voices, but they don't have the sweeping command of attention. The old forms have stopped working, but we still don't know what's going to come in their place.

I'm interested in recovering the idea of public theology. Ten years ago, when you would talk about Niebuhr, people would say, "Well, who is the Niebuhr of our day? It's all fine and good to talk about how great Niebuhr was, but we don't have Niebuhrs anymore. Whom can we point to?"

There can't be any more Niebuhrs. I don't even know if we could have a Martin Luther King now. The change makers are dispersed and plural; they're in local communities, and they're not all white Protestant guys.

Public theology is very different. We have to look for it a little bit more. It's not just going to declare itself and be anointed on the cover of *Time*. But that's good, because it puts all of us back in the equation, both to be leaders and to seek out the people who we want to have that authority.

The other paradox now is that because of technology, what is small and local can be amplified in some amazing ways that weren't possible in the era of the monolithic, powerful figures at the top.

There is a pragmatism now in up and coming generations that I see as the successor to the 1960s idealism that ended up embittered. Niebuhr would say that even when we are reaching our highest ideals and in our moments of greatest accomplishments, there we will sin, too. I think the 1960s idealism of "we're going to change the world" has been replaced by, "I'm going to change the world that I can see and touch."

Your approach is very first-person in that you are lifting up the voices and experiences of particular people. What do you imagine the role of the "first-person" religion journalist to be in our time?

Until very recently, journalism was doing an almost uniformly terrible and superficial job of covering religion. When I started the show, and we would be doing a show with a Jewish boy or a Buddhist boy, the editor would say, "Okay, so at the top, I need a list of what they believe."

Also when I started the show, George W. Bush was President. Because there was a big electoral mobilization of Christians, places like *The New York Times* were paying attention to evangelical

Christianity for the first time in living memory, and you had these stories that were just so silly.

I remember one that was on the front page. It showed a couple of college students, and it was like the story was one of shock, horror. The headline was, "Evangelical Christians Are in the Ivy League." [Laughs] I mean up until 50 or 60 years ago, the president of those places was always a minister.

On the one hand, it was so uninformed even when they seemed to be doing something in depth. On the other, it was very much focused at the power level—only bishops, ministers, the heads of seminaries would be interviewed.

The talking head.

Yes. But people today are less interested in that kind of coverage. There's a hunger for things to be humanized. Words like *transparency* and *authenticity* express spiritual values that manifest our desire to see the humanity of things.

I like to say that I'm tracing the intersection between big ideas and human experience, between theology and real life. It's not such a radical concept, but it hadn't been done much before.

You have that ability in print as well. In print, I think what used to happen is you would have the "what's journalism?" issue, and the idea that if it's journalism, it must be critical, suspicious. The human story was really sidelined. *The New York Times*, I think, is still really primitive about this. It's like some of the traditionally best places are the last to get it. There are a lot of good people coming up, and a lot of great stuff going on online.

You write in your book *Speaking of Faith* that your own starting point and perspective is Christianity. What is it like as a religion journalist to identify with a particular religious tradition and also to step foot into these other traditions by way of your show?

This would probably be one of those old taboos [about journalism] that needs to be broken down. I don't know why we would think a business journalist was qualified to do what he does if he didn't have his own bank account, or a political correspondent who didn't vote.

I make no apologies for the fact that I have a religious life of my own. I'm speaking as a Christian because I'm speaking as myself.

When I first started this, there was a young Catholic reporter who was excited about the show. I'd just done something with the Dalai Lama, and she said, "Do you feel you get converted by talking to these amazing religious leaders?" The truth is, I don't.

When profound encounter happens, it has paradoxical effects. At one and the same time, you are able to appreciate and even to learn from this other person and their tradition. But the other thing that always happens—and I've honestly never heard of a story that it hasn't happened in—is that you become more richly planted where you are. You become a better Christian.

I think that some of the most deadly phrases in the English language are *ecumenical* and *interfaith*. They're so boring, but the experiences people have are not boring, and the experiences are transformative, and they're not relativistic.

We did some audience engagement research a couple years ago, and there was wonderful stuff in there about how people really use *On Being*. A huge majority said they're able to have conversations with people they couldn't have had conversations with before. The same kind of majority said it had deepened their engagement with their own tradition, and that is the way it works. That's a long answer to say that it works for me, too.

One word that has come up time and again within This Is Our City is *vocation*: the calling on a person's life toward a particular path as well as gifts and talents that someone can use to bless others. How does this word describe your own work as a journalist?

Vocation is one of the words I want us to revive and use more often. Culturally that word has been conflated to mean your work or your job, and it's so much bigger and more generous than that.

I know that the calling of being a mother has been for me really primary, as much as my job. Vocation is not interchangeable necessarily with the work we're being paid to do.

I was once speaking at a Lilly Endowment thing, and someone said that they considered my work to be a ministry. That is the word that at least publicly, I would hesitate to use as a public radio host. But the way I think about it, and privately, I do, is: There's absolutely ministry in what I'm doing. There's absolutely a sense of calling in it. It's simply a ministry of listening rather than of preaching.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a great voice for us now as somebody who under totally different circumstances watched the essence of Christianity sit uncomfortably with the structures. He talked a lot about how if you're never listening to your neighbor, at some point, you won't be able to listen to God either, and that is the death of the spiritual life.

To me, there is a deep virtue in listening that probably would be a good thing for some of us to excavate in theology in years to come.

Let's talk about the Civil Conversations Project—the *On Being* project that promotes civility around key and often divisive issues. You've said that Gabe Lyons, the founder of the Q conferences, is doing public theology. You also had Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, come on as well. How do these and other evangelical Christians contribute to the common good?

First, Jim Daly was a revelation. Even long after James Dobson is not the head of Focus on the Family, the mainstream media haven't picked it up. It was like a new story to people that Daly wasn't Dobson—and he shares, I would say, most of Dobson's core theology, but what he's choosing to emphasize is so radically different. People were blown away.

When I think about Christians, conservative evangelical Christians, doing good, loving people, feeding people—that's mostly what's happening. They have always been so much more prominent than the strident voices.

What I value is knowing that there are a lot of people who are not in the spotlight, who are not good at self-promotion. What gets noticed and taken seriously, and even defines how the world is, are people who throw themselves in front of cameras and microphones: they are either promoting themselves or they drop a bomb—they do something really dramatic and destructive.

But the irony is that a defining characteristic of a faithful Christian is humility. The most faithful people among us, the people living most deeply, are going to be the last people to throw themselves in front of microphones and cameras.

I also think we need people like me to shine a light on it when we can. This kind of initiative you're involved in at This Is Our City—which is just connecting people so that faithful people can become parts of webs and networks and their impact is amplified—is really important, too.

Redeeming Disaster

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN / GETTY IMAGES

After Fukushima's tragedy, God moved church leaders to the disaster-zone frontlines, where they encountered Jesus in fresh ways while serving their neighbors.

By Soohwan Park

JAPAN RISING

One night during the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown, Jesus appeared to pastor Sumiyoshi in a dream. "I saw Jesus approaching the nuclear power plant, walking toward the plant. Jesus asked me, *Are you evacuating?*"

In Fukushima Prefecture, the plant was severely damaged in a "cascading failure" that for weeks was out of control after the earthquake and tsunami. It became the most severe nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986. Nearly 20,000 people were killed, and hundreds of thousands more became homeless by nightfall.

For Sumiyoshi, Jesus' convicting question reminded him of the questions Jesus asked of his disciples before the crucifixion about whether they would abandon him. Sumiyoshi said, "Those reminders led me to make my own decision to remain in my community.

"People were saying, 'The nuclear power plant is very dangerous,' or, 'We will have another tsunami.' I asked myself, *To whose voice shall I listen?*" He said he decided to listen to God, not man. "I learned this one thing. That is the challenge to us about our own faith."

The events of March 2011, together called Japan's "triple disaster," marked the most expensive catastrophe in recorded history. Losses reached more than $235 billion. Close to 1 million people were forced from their homes, including nearly 100,000 people who on a moment's notice evacuated about 13 miles away from the nuclear plant. Japan, one of the strongest economic powers of the world, was brought to its knees. Leaders declared a state-level crisis for the first time since World War II.

A COUNTRY OF CONUNDRUMS

Within 24 hours of the earthquake, local churches, agencies, and relief groups mobilized thousands of volunteers from more than 80 nations.

More than two years after the triple disaster, the Christian level of engagement in the disaster zone remains significant. There is no precedent for this kind of faith-based effort after natural disaster in Japan's 2,000-year history.

After his dream, Sumiyoshi and his wife decided to stay and serve their community. His small church, Nakoso Christ Church, started serving a few thousand people in a remote town overlooked by big agencies and government services.

The relief work by local churches is occurring in the context of the government's painfully slow response. At least 200,000 evacuees, some exposed to high radiation levels, still dwell in temporary housing.

Japan is a country of conundrums to the watching world, especially in the eyes of anthropologists, missiologists, development

Silent Vigil: On the second anniversary of the triple disaster, a woman prays for Rikuzentakata, where 2,300 people died or are missing. The town no longer exists, and very little has been rebuilt.

professionals, and aid agency leaders. It is one of the wealthiest nations, with a $4 trillion economy—and also has one of the highest suicide rates. It boasts high achievements in technology and science. But Shinto, the traditional Japanese religion that once defined the emperor as head of state and god, still plays a highly influential ceremonial and cultural role.

Only 1 percent of Japanese claim Christian faith. Among Christian leaders, Japan has the stigma of being "a hard soil to plant the gospel." That soil may have loosened since the disaster. Atsuyoshi Fujiwara, theologian and founding pastor of Tokyo's Covenant of Grace Church, believes the events of 2011 are Japan's "fourth encounter with Christianity."

Staying in Place: Pastor Sumiyoshi's Nakoso Christ Church in Iwaki City provided aid to 1,500 survivors in the first month after the disaster.

In the first three historic encounters, Fujiwara says, the Japanese rejected it. "Each period was different. Yet there was a pattern. Christianity came in chaotic periods when Japan lost peace and order. Initially, Japan accepted Christianity, yet gradually rejected it when it recovered peace, order, and confidence." (See "A Fresh Encounter with Jesus," p. 44.)

Japan's triple disaster has led Christian relief and development leaders to rethink how they do ministry in Japan. Based on my field research in Fukushima with the Marketplace Institute, a public theology think tank at Regent College in Vancouver, complex questions arose after the disaster: What do Christians uniquely bring to a materially wealthy nation struck by massive natural disasters and hostile to the growth of Christianity on its soil? What is the appropriate role of Christian relief in a time of overwhelming need?

While these questions are specific to Japan, the lessons learned are applicable to all disaster relief contexts. The Fukushima triple disaster has only heightened the need to change the practice of Christian relief and development.

From April 2011 to April 2012, Marketplace Institute convened meetings, conducted field surveys, and observed relief work to explore these issues. The institute partnered with Food for the Hungry (USA and Canada), Disciple Nations Alliance (USA and Korea), and Friends with the Voiceless International (Japan).

In the field, we paid particular attention to the three neglected aspects of relief work: spirituality, story, and sustainability.

SPIRITUAL MOTIVES

For decades, disaster relief typically has been equated with physical assistance carried out based on need and without much attention to spiritual factors.

Yet over time, the framework for relief has grown beyond physical recovery. Research on people severely disabled from accidents has verified that a spiritual perspective helps to increase victims' resilience and recovery (findings that are explored in the 2012 book *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*).

How does a spiritual point of view inform disaster response for Christians when the religious beliefs of the majority are opposed to Christianity? In the early stage of disaster response, Marketplace Institute visited local churches and communities within a 35-mile radius of the Fukushima power plant. Our criterion of discernment was simply this: "Pray, listen, act." We discovered that many of those who decided to stay in the region, instead of evacuating, did so because of vivid dreams, such as pastor Sumiyoshi's, or convictions arising from particular Bible texts.

For example, in the summer of 2011, Japanese pastors gathered for the first Fukushima Future Forum and meditated on Lamentations 3:19–23. One of many pastors who prayed aloud said, "Lord, you accept broken and humble hearts. Crush my pride and sanctify me as an instrument that can be used by you." Before the disaster, there were about 100 churches in Fukushima. Only 20 of these, all of them with 30 or fewer members, remain on site to minister in Fukushima.

Yet dreams and convictions do not always count in the realm of disaster relief provided by paid professionals. There is no simple method to capture intangible motives, or a framework on how to measure the success or failure of actions based on a pastor's

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CRASH JAPAN

Shelter Volunteers: A young volunteer (left) from CRASH Japan shares a simple meal with evacuees in a shelter. CRASH Japan mobilized more than 3,000 volunteers after the disaster.

dreams, confessions, or hopes. We discovered that many relief groups don't know how to address the spiritual dynamics of human need after a major disaster—how, for example, people cope with survivor guilt or posttraumatic stress.

WHOSE STORY COUNTS?

Time and scale matter greatly in relief operations. They often determine how much it is going to cost to deliver results. But when relief groups focus only on metrics, saving lives is reduced to feeding the hungry, providing roofs over heads, and giving water to the thirsty.

The language of organizations drives what kinds of needs count most, what type of aid has functional value, and how an intervention should be delivered and its success measured. An organization's "story" shapes how they provide aid and how they measure results.

The paradigm that drives and controls this whole process is cost-effectiveness. It is the paradigm of faster and bigger is better. I call this the McDonaldization of human compassion: to deliver as much as possible, as fast as possible, to as many people as possible, at as low a cost as possible. (Sociologist George Ritzer, in his 1993 book, *The McDonaldization of Society*, claims that the fast-food industry's goals of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control have crept into other social sectors and dehumanized individuals.)

In the first year after the 2011 disaster, more than $5 billion in aid overwhelmed local leaders in the disaster zone. In hindsight, aid experts realized there were too many cases of mismatches between local need and available assistance, unwelcome cookie-cutter programs, and a leadership vacuum.

But there are grassroots counterexamples, and local Japanese Christians are pioneering new approaches. One is from Grace Garden Chapel in Koriyama, a midsized city 40 miles west of Fukushima Daiichi. The region's largest shelter was located near this church.

After the first few weeks of volunteering at the shelter, church leaders decided to help a limited number of families, only the ones that they could help while maintaining personal relationships. In the selection process, they chose to help the evacuees who clearly wanted to reestablish their lives permanently.

This was an "expensive" way of providing relief assistance, but church leaders wanted to ensure that family relationships were respected and adequate personal and emotional care was provided. Throughout the whole program operation, Grace Garden stuck to one principle: Keep the motivation genuine to love neighbors, and do not use material goods to win converts.

The husband-wife pastoral team was convicted by Jeremiah 29. (The name of their church is derived from the Jewish exiles' garden in Babylon, referenced in verses 4–5.) This Scripture passage influenced how volunteers responded to the needs of survivors, physically and spiritually.

Other counterexamples come from trained volunteers who used their imagination to develop new programs: massaging the hands of elderly evacuees, foot-washings, mobile coffeehouses, safe spaces for grief counseling, restoring flood-damaged photo albums, decontaminating farmland, posttrauma camps for young children, and a baseball festival. (See "Beauty From Broken Things," p. 46.)

The temptation to take a utilitarian approach over a people-centered one is strong, say many relief experts. But when personal, even creative, attention gets sidelined by efficiency, broken communities cannot experience full restoration or lasting change after disaster.

'Lord, you accept broken and humble hearts. Crush my pride and sanctify me as an instrument that can be used by you.' ~ A pastor's public prayer at the Fukushima Future Forum

Water Works: Ibaraki Christian University volunteers unload the first shipment of 1 million water bottles provided to pregnant women and their young children in Fukushima.

SUSTAINING HOPE

Rapid intervention after disaster is excellent at producing measurable, short-term results, saving countless lives. But long-term restoration and sustainability are far more difficult.

The concept of "developmental relief" grew out development experts' desire to set in motion lasting changes. This means setting the disaster-stricken community on the path of sustainable development.

But in Fukushima, triggered by the nuclear crisis and disaster, Christians have realized that it is not enough for development programs to try to "push the reset button" by returning the nation to where it was. Our research was driven by one question: How could relief groups help communities out of chaos and promote human flourishing, not economic pursuit and individual success?

Our research led us to Usuiso, a tiny coastal fishing village heavily damaged by the tsunami. Some 200 homes were lost, and many villagers died. Before the disaster, Usuiso was aging, economically declining, and socially inactive. After the tsunami, the only landmark of the village was a pile of radioactive debris that stood out on the flattened landscape like a mountain.

In this desolation, the leadership of one church, Global Mission Chapel, in nearby Iwaki City brought vision and hope to local survivors. While the mayor fled after the disaster, church members started serving all over the city, even though the church had also lost families.

In contrast to the slow action by Iwaki City officials, the church quickly gained the trust of the city's remaining residents. As church members served in disaster-stricken areas, they met evacuees from Usuiso. Christian volunteers began to visit the village to

pray over what remained. Church elders proposed a design for a new village with restored homes, businesses, educational and cultural facilities, and commercial centers.

In response to the disaster, Global Mission Chapel changed its name to Global Mission Center because, they said, "A church is people, not a building." Members committed themselves to relocate to Usuiso when appropriate and to stand with villagers for generations to come. After two years, there is fresh momentum for restoring Usuiso. The members of Global Mission Center saw this vision of a new Japan rise out of their prayers with their suffering neighbors.

Where does hope arise for disaster survivors? Where does the power to restore and sustain a community and nation come from? Perhaps one secret to sustainability and lasting impact comes from a community of resilient people in a local church and the convictions they are willing to uphold at all costs.

Disaster relief is complex. Theologically, it involves restoration of all things that were broken and all relationships that are in need of reconciliation in order for a community to flourish in all areas of life (Col. 1:15–20).

Fundamentally, this is not the work of a professional agency, but of ordinary people in a local church loving their neighbors out of love for Christ. Christian relief work happens only when the local church realizes its mission to serve the world, giving themselves for others and restoring the fabric of a broken society.

DISASTER RELIEF 3.0

At the end of the yearlong process of assisting and partnering with local churches in Fukushima, we developed the idea of Disaster Relief 3.0—Relational Relief.

In Disaster Relief 1.0, relief slowly was secularized and taken over by professional and bureaucratic leadership. In Disaster Relief 2.0, market-driven strategies and metrics further sidelined volunteer acts of charity, mercy, and justice.

In Disaster Relief 3.0, the local church

A Fresh Encounter with Jesus

Scholar Atsuyoshi Fujiwara says Japanese are showing new interest in Christianity.

Interview by Timothy C. Morgan

Atsuyoshi Fujiwara has been a pastor and scholar in Japan since 1999. Immediately after the March 2011 disaster, he joined volunteers in relief work and believes the Japanese church's rapid response is a key reason why some Japanese are giving Christianity a fresh look.

A professor of theology at Seigakuin University and founding pastor at Covenant of Grace Church in Tokyo, Fujiwara recently published *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context: A Believers' Church Perspective* (Wipf and Stock). He is helping to plan the third theological conference at Fuller Seminary to examine the Christian response to Japan's triple disaster. *Christianity Today* senior editor of global journalism, Timothy C. Morgan, interviewed Fujiwara by e-mail.

You say that Japan has had three separate encounters with Christianity. What went wrong with each of them?

Each period was different. Yet there was a pattern: Christianity came in chaotic periods when Japan lost peace and order.

Sixteenth-century warfare preceded the arrival of Jesuits and the Roman Catholic mission. Then, after 250 years of the Shogunate era, Japan's isolation ended in 1844, and Western missions groups arrived. After World War II, Christian missions increased.

Initially Japan accepted Christianity, yet gradually rejected it when the nation recovered peace, order, and confidence. The Roman Catholic mission was remarkable. We had numerous Christian martyrs. In the latter two periods, Christianity became more success-oriented around the idea that "Japan needs democracy and Christianity to be successful." When Japan became successful without Christianity, it abandoned it.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ATSUYOSHI FUJIWARA

What occurred after the 2011 disasters that triggered what you call Japan's fourth encounter with Christianity?

After the disaster, churches and organizations naturally worked together beyond denominational walls to deliver foods and supplies. We realized that we were "Christians" to 99 percent of the Japanese people.

Before the disaster, Japanese churches had been isolated from society without participating in regional festivals and activities, which were often connected to Shintoism and Buddhism. The churches were trying to be "pure." Yet after the disasters, they came to be strongly involved in relief works while keeping a pure motivation of helping people. People saw the genuine motivation of Christian volunteers. Now churches are trusted.

What would authentic Christianity in Japan look like?

It would be prophetic and priestly. This is applicable to any society. In Japan, it should challenge Japanese nationalism and the part of culture that tries to be independent from God and refuses to confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. Authentic Christianity also loves and embraces Japan despite its fallenness. It forms healthy culture by transforming it and producing alternatives.

What aspects of Japanese culture resonate most deeply with the Bible's "God so loved the world" message?

Suffering is a key area in Japanese culture—though by no means exclusively Japanese. In 1946, the late Japanese theologian Kazoh Kitamori published an important book, *The Theology of the Pain of God*.

In the 1960s, theologian Paul Tillich said that substitutionary atonement did not make sense to many Americans. But

—not just relief experts—moves to restore itself as God's chosen instrument for the health and charity of a community, especially before, during, and after disaster. This idea is much more intensive than church-based community outreach.

It places the local church where they should be, in the community and in the midst of a crisis, and does so no matter how small it is or how great the surrounding hostility. It fosters relationships at all levels (social, economic, and institutional). It creates meaningful partnerships centered on the local church in disaster-stricken communities in all stages of disaster response.

This begins by carefully listening to victims, to the quiet voice of Jesus, and to one another. It also means listening to possibilities, not just immediate needs. It brings to my mind Lamentations 3:19–21, "I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope."

Relational relief is a ministry of Holy Saturday—caught between the pain and suffering of death on Good Friday and the hope of resurrection on Easter Sunday.

One Sunday a few months after the triple disaster, there was a major aftershock. Sumiyoshi prayed with his congregation: "We had an earthquake this morning again. I pleaded you, [God], not to give us any more suffering. However, we believe that everything is in your hands.

"As Jesus walked toward the cross a long time ago, he is walking toward the nuclear plant now. He is kneeling there and praying for us. Jesus made a promise that his spirit would be with each of us. We have so many sorrows, suffering, and pain in our lives. Because of the promise of Jesus, we can persevere and have hope."

Soohwan Park is an associate with the Marketplace Institute, Regent College, Vancouver. Her blog, En Route to Fukushima (*www.fearnotfukushima.blogspot.com*) has stories from Fukushima.

JAPAN RISING

the Japanese can still understand it. Parents still make sacrifices for children today. The suffering of God for and with us is a great message.

Is Japan as secularized as recent surveys show—just one in five adult Japanese view themselves as religious?
Japanese people are more religious than you might think. They do not go to particular temples or churches of religious organizations on a regular basis. Yet they have a sense of transcendence and spirituality that is not directly connected to traditional religion.

What evidence is there that public perceptions about Christianity in Japan are changing at the national level?
Perhaps not changing on the national level, but in the northern part of Japan, where the earthquake and tsunami hit, the church now has a stronger presence in society.

People trust the church through its good work. Buddhist monks now show respect to pastors who have strong Christian convictions and suffered together with them in helping people in the town.

Can you explain your vision for a "believers' church" in Japan?
The believers' church is a distinctively Christian community that plays an essential role in transforming culture.

The first Christian churches were basically believers' churches until the fourth century, when Christianity became a state religion. It is difficult for a state church (as in Europe) or even for the denominational churches of a dominantly Christian country (like the United States) to challenge the prevailing culture prophetically. They rather tend to be priestly and ask for blessing from God, e.g., "God bless America."

The believers' church that I advocate seeks to stand on the boundary between the kingdom of God and the surrounding culture. It is prophetic and priestly to your country and culture. In Japan, although Christianity has always been in a minority, the church wanted to become like the church in Europe or in America, with prestige and influence.

Yet you need an independent standpoint if you want to discern the sins of the world. You need to have a place to stand to deal with culture, and character to nurture your discernment. A believers' church with a clear and distinctive Christian identity can provide these. My theology of culture comes from my doctoral research on H. Richard Niebuhr, John Yoder, and Stanley Hauerwas.

Does Japan's emerging fourth encounter with Christianity shed new light on the gospel for all of us?
Yes, especially on the unity of the church. The possible fourth encounter is still in the budding stage. On one hand, the fourth encounter involves Christian witness to society. On the other, it requires building cooperative and trusting relationships among Christian leaders of different denominations, unity that we did not have before. Protestantism resulted in continual divisions. After the disaster, Japanese church leaders realized that it was stupid to create many different walls within the 1 percent of Japanese Christianity.

After the disaster, Japanese church leaders realized that it was stupid to create many different walls within the 1 percent of Japanese Christianity.

In your own church, how do you model the kinds of relationship with nonbelieving Japanese neighbors that you dream about?
We believe that the church first and foremost has to be the church, not a city hall or a community center.

The church is to be an essential community for Christians. We belong to many circles and organizations at the same time. But it is the church that determines our core values and behaviors. We try to be loving and caring as Jesus was. We try to be different from the world. Yet we don't want the church to be isolated from society. We go out of the church. We do good works as citizens, professionals, and students wherever we are located. We also invite people to the church.

The transformation of culture includes affirming some elements of culture and rejecting others. It also involves giving new meaning to other parts of culture (the arts, for example) and producing new alternatives.

Beauty *from* Broken Things

Japanese create postdisaster Christian community through fellowship, discipleship—and jewelry.

By Alanna Foxwell-Barajas

As Sue Plumb Takamoto helped to clear a field of debris in the coastal city of Ishinomaki after the March 2011 tsunami, colorful shards of broken pottery kept catching her eye everywhere she stepped. The shards were all that remained of tearooms and kitchens swept out to sea.

Takamoto and her friends decided to gather the shards and wash them. As volunteers with a new house church network, Be One, they are building friendships, and hope, with survivors of the tsunami that took nearly 20,000 lives.

While aid agencies provided basic shelter, food, and health care throughout Ishinomaki, Be One found tremendous need for employment among single mothers. Thus, a creative spark brought to life the Nozomi Project, launched in 2012.

At Nozomi, a Japanese word for *hope*, mothers and grandmothers create rings, necklaces, and earrings from rice bowl and teacup shards, then sell their jewelry through the Nozomi website and Christian mission agencies. Each woman names her line of jewelry, sometimes after a loved one who perished in the disaster.

Takamoto, who moved with her family to Ishinomaki a year ago, said, "Many of them lost their community—their neighbors are all gone. Their homes are washed away, and they're all living in scattered places across Ishinomaki.

"God can take broken pottery and broken women who think that life is over for them and do anything he wants. We are in the midst of seeing God do amazing things."

SHIFTING GEARS

Both Christian and non-Christian Japanese are experiencing Jesus differently since the 2011 disaster. Indigenous church leaders and missionaries told *Christianity Today* that change is bubbling up amid practical ministry to a nation struggling to find its footing after trauma.

"God has shifted the gears in Japan," said mission strategist Mitsuo Fukuda, founder of the Rethinking Authentic Christianity Network. Some 1 million buildings, including many churches, were damaged or destroyed in the disaster, leading church leaders to hold worship services and minister wherever evacuees gathered for shelter.

Some local Christians, including H. Yamashita, a former missionary who returned to Japan, have reached out to the parents of children with special needs. On the day of the tsunami, a group of children with special needs were on a school bus. When the warning sirens went off, the bus driver returned to the school, keeping them safe. But for two days the children were stranded at the school, their parents unable to reach them.

Once the children reunited with their families, they took shelter in evacuation centers. The break in routine more than turned their world upside down. Some became violent, while others shut down emotionally. One mother was asked to take her son out of the evacuation center because he was disruptive. For several days she lived with him in a car.

After receiving a request for help, Yamashita started raising funds for a new daycare center for the children. Yamashita said she spends hours listening to family members. "In the evenings, we talk about all kinds of things. I don't have to start a conversation about God," she said. "It always comes up. So there, in a house, we bring 'church' to the people.

"What is church, really? It's a place where people know Jesus is alive. It's a way to experience Jesus and take him to your family and your neighbors."

Many other churches and Christian agencies have also started new postdisaster efforts:

- Love On Japan, the new outreach that CRASH Japan (Christian Relief, Assistance, Support, and Hope) began shortly after the disaster, has drawn more than 2,300 volunteers from around the world to minister in the quake zone.
- The Miyagi Mission Network, led by pastor Ichio Kishinami, has started 33 house churches in the disaster zone. Kishinami listened to the stories of survivors and taught them how to pray to the "Creator God" of the Bible in the name of Jesus.
- World Relief in Japan is partnering with Wheaton College's Humanitarian Disaster Institute to develop new rapid response programs to help church leaders meet needs quickly after tragedy.

COURTESY THE NOZOMI PROJECT

Learning a New Way: A jeweler trains women to create a necklace. Unemployment in the disaster zone is still very high.

BLENDED MODEL

When the Be One team started the Nozomi Project, they made intimate Christian community their centerpiece.

"I cherish this place, not just as work but as community," said Yuko Aizawa, a jewelry artisan. "I lost my mother and my sister in the tsunami. Another woman lost her child. Most of us lost our homes. It really feels like God has led us here."

Yuko Sasaki, the manager at Nozomi, said, "We each have wounds. We recognize this place to be where we can share these hurts with one another."

Such Christian outreach blends vocational work, spiritual discipleship around Bible study, and new relationships. Yamashita said, "There's a phrase that keeps coming to mind when I think about evangelism in Japan now—'paradigm shift.'

"Christians here realize that we've hit a wall. We copy models from other countries, do a survey trip, come back, and put these systems in place that have worked in other countries, and they may work for a while, but we always end up in the same place."

Traditionally, Japanese have always been spiritual, Fukuda said. "We need to say, 'You already believe in the supernatural watching over you. Now discover what it means to have a personal relationship,' and thus transform the focus on spirituality to a focus on faith in Christ."

Fukuda noted the two primary means for growing the church are Bible study and community. "We must read Scripture together and stand on the foundation of believer fellowship," he said.

As a society, Japanese cherish living and working together. Each workday, the women break from making jewelry to share an afternoon meal. The women then read the Bible together, discuss the text, and pray. Once a month, the women at Nozomi receive a share of the profits from jewelry sales. They recently launched a Facebook page, hired four new jewelry makers, and started making men's cufflinks. One new worker is Nobuko Kimura, who was hospitalized for 100 days after the tsunami due to severe injuries. She now creates necklaces. Kimura said, "I'm thankful for having a place where I can belong."

Alanna Foxwell-Barajas is a freelance journalist based in Atlanta.

JAMES STEINBERG

GlobalGospelProject

Father Knows Best

Language of God's fatherhood communicates something essential about his nature.

By Simon Chan

For at least the past 40 years, traditional language for God has come under fire. While formal feminist theologians disagree about what language to use instead, they are unanimous that masculine words for God, especially *Father*, must be expunged from our theological vocabulary. For the church to be inclusive, they argue, it must replace man-centered language with language that accounts for both male and female. Furthermore, since our human words cannot adequately portray God's fullness, no single characterization will suffice. God could be addressed as *father* and/or *mother* in order to bring out his multifaceted nature.

Underlying this view is a belief that terms like *father* and *mother* are mere human characterizations of God, shaped by specific cultural backgrounds. The predominantly masculine images of God in the Bible

reflect an ancient patriarchal society. As a consequence, critics say, biblical religion has absorbed patriarchal values, which in turn are used to justify beliefs and institutions that harm or subjugate women. Theology, therefore, must be reconstructed to yield a valid religion for women based on women's experience.

The quest for gender-inclusive language has been a preoccupation of many mainline Protestants and liberal Catholics for decades. Some evangelicals also make compromises to accommodate these concerns. But before we do so, we need to reexamine the reasons for the use of masculine terms for God in Scripture and throughout the Christian tradition.

NOT AN INVENTION

Feminine images are used throughout Scripture to describe God's compassionate and loving nature. Examples include the frequent images of God protecting and comforting his children (Isa. 66:12–13; Hos. 11:1–4). But it's important to note that God is never addressed as *Mother*. This phenomenon is unique compared with the cultures surrounding the original biblical writers. Most ancient Near Eastern societies had a goddess as the main cult figure or at least to complement a male god—Asherah in Canaan, Isis in Egypt, Tiamat in Babylon. If patriarchy is responsible for cultures portraying God as male, then we would expect goddess worship to reflect a matriarchal society—one in which women are given superior status or at least are equal to men. But this is not the case. Even today, many societies devoted to goddess worship remain oppressive toward women. Devotion to the goddess Kali in Hinduism, for instance, has never resulted in better treatment of women, even among Kali devotees.

It's important to note that God is never addressed as* Mother. *This phenomenon is unique compared with the cultures surrounding the original biblical writers.

We could even say that Israel *succumbed* to an idea of God that was rather against her natural disposition. Left to themselves, the Israelites would have ended up worshiping the Baals and Asherahs—Canaanite fertility gods and goddesses. Israel's prophets singled out idolatry for fierce denunciation because its people were constantly tempted to do just that. But Israel's idea of God's fatherhood bucked a common trend in the ancient world. Hence, it could not have been an Israelite invention, but rather the result of a long history of living under the revelation of God. It is the church's continuity with this narrative of Israel that would lead eventually to the uniquely Christian doctrine of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, God's fatherhood conveys two distinct ideas. First, it refers primarily to the internal relationship within the Trinity. This is how the first article of the Apostles' Creed puts it: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord." Even as early as Paul's writings, the phrase "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" had become commonplace. God is first and foremost the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not an invention of later church leaders, but comes directly from Christ, who refers to God as "Father." In doing so, Jesus reveals a unique relationship between the Father and Son that constitutes the beginning of the Trinitarian doctrine.

Jesus taught his disciples to call God "our heavenly Father." Therefore, the loving relationship he has with the Father from eternity now extends to those adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:15). The father-son relationship is the most intimate personal relationship, one marked by reciprocal love and respect, and it is God's supremely personal and loving nature that the term *father* is meant to underscore.

To claim, as many feminist theologians do, that the very presence of masculine metaphors for God excludes women simply does not square with the way Scripture uses them. Masculine images of God do not always convey exclusively "masculine" qualities. For example, Isaiah 54:5–7 refers to God as the Husband who with "deep compassion" (a stereotypically "feminine" quality) called estranged Israel back to himself (see also Isa. 49:13). The term *father*, then, excludes not feminine qualities, but rather the idea of a distant and impersonal deity, which is precisely the picture of the supreme being still seen in many primal religions.

Second, the father metaphor points to God as the Creator (e.g., Isa. 64:8; Mal. 2:10) "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (Eph. 3:15). *Father* captures in one word two seemingly contrasting characteristics: God's love for his creatures and his lordship over all creation. Here again, we see the difference between Israel and ancient Near Eastern cultures. In the Judeo-Christian faith, God the Father created the world as something separate from himself, whereas in Near Eastern societies, the mother metaphor pictures the mother-goddess giving birth to the world (which makes it an extension of the deity's body). Calling God *Mother* undermines the Christian doctrine of creation by implying that God and the world are made of the same stuff and virtually indistinguishable. So, we need *Father* in order to get to the right doctrine of creation.

RESCRIPTING THE CHRISTIAN STORY

If fatherhood implies lordship over creation and intimate, personal love, couldn't gender-neutral terms communicate the same ideas? To answer this question, we need to understand the nature of the Christian story. The Christian story is not merely an illustration. It is not just one example of a more basic universal principle or value, such that the story becomes dispensable once the principle is grasped. Rather, the Christian story is what actually shapes our Christian identity. To paraphrase the theologian George Lindbeck, Christians are a people who are absorbed into the Christian story. And central to that story is the Trinitarian identity of God as Father of our Lord Jesus.

The term *Trinity* is simply shorthand for the Christian story of God the Father, who sent his Son Jesus Christ and gave us his Holy Spirit. Who is the God that Christians encounter at worship? He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To quote Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* is the proper name of God. Relating to the triune God is what makes Christian experience truly *Christian*. Simply using the name *God*, even with many qualifiers (compassionate, gracious, loving, almighty, and so on), does not sufficiently distinguish the God of Christian revelation from other monotheistic faiths. If we leave out God's nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we risk turning the Christian story into another story.

While Christians in some progressive circles are trying to downplay the name of God as Father, Muslims, ironically, understand what is at stake. This is highlighted in the recent Allah controversy in Malaysia. Some Muslims tried to prohibit Christians from translating the word *God* as *Allah* in the Malay Bible, claiming that it would confuse simple-minded Muslims. Their action might appear ludicrous, but underlying their concern is a valid theological claim. Although *Allah* is a generic name (the Arabic equivalent of *El*), for Muslims it has over time acquired the status of a proper name. As such, it carries a theological freight distinct from *Allah* as understood by Jews and Christians. *Allah* is uniquely identified with Islam in a way that it is not with Judaism and Christianity.

Christians make a similar claim when they say that the name *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* is unique and proper to the God they worship. By using this divine name in its liturgy, the church is saying that *this story*, and no other, creates and shapes her unique identity as the people of Jesus Christ. A generic name, even with many descriptive adjectives, does not adequately distinguish the Christian identity from the Muslim one. Jews or Muslims could just as well say that they worship a God who is gracious, compassionate, holy, and so on. Adjectives could be endlessly multiplied, but they don't add up to the name of the Trinity. Muslims may even acknowledge a special relationship in identifying Jesus as a prophet of God. But only the Christian church can confess to worshiping the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When divine fatherhood is muted, the church loses her distinct identity.

Father *captures in one word two seemingly contrasting characteristics: God's love for his creatures and his lordship over all creation. Here again, we see the difference between Israel and ancient Near Eastern cultures.*

BOTH AT ONCE

The abandonment of father-language, then, leaves a void at the heart of the Christian story. And this abandonment has consequences for the public worship rituals that in many church traditions teach believers to understand this story and invite their participation in it. These rituals, especially in high-church traditions, often include the recitation, by all present, of certain creeds or common readings. But without the language of fatherhood, public recitations can no longer avail themselves of divine names that juxtapose two or more paradoxical terms, such as "Father almighty." Derived from the Apostles' Creed, the phrase is used in the concluding doxology to the Catholic Church's Eucharistic prayer: "Through him, with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever." The Anglican *Alternative Service Book* (1980) addresses God as "Almighty God, our heavenly Father," and its Eucharistic prayers invoke a "holy Father, heavenly King, almighty and eternal God."

Such juxtapositions, as scholar Gordon Lathrop says, reveal the mystery of God as powerful yet loving, holy yet intimate. It is not that God is sometimes one and sometimes the other, but that he is both *at once*. In contrast, modern liturgies tend to address God either as "almighty God" or "gracious God" but rarely as both together. When such juxtapositions become a rarity, worship loses its sense of divine mystery. We start to get the feeling that God is either too remote or too nice.

Another strategy for eliminating what's been called sexist language is to simply avoid using masculine pronouns for God. The problem, however, is that one has to resort to repeating the word *God* again and again, or else use the ungainly neologism "Godself" instead of "he," "himself," and "his." Even some conservative Protestants are warming to this innovation. But avoiding the use of personal pronouns for God unwittingly downplays God's personal nature. This might not seem like a major concession in the West, where a "Christian" discourse is still assumed. When God is mentioned, people generally assume that it's the Christian God. But in Asia, where there are "gods many, and lords many" (1 Cor. 8:5, KJV), and where the ultimate reality may not be personal at all, we need to speak of God in personal terms. Not to do so, for fear of offending weak consciences, is simply disastrous.

Christians have good reasons to insist on addressing God as Father, especially in the liturgy, where the Christian story is reenacted. *Father* is not a culturally conditioned term but the proper name of God given by divine revelation. It is how God is primarily identified or named in relation to *his* Son. At stake is the Trinitarian identity, which inevitably affects the church's identity. Playing the inclusive language game has a high theological cost that far outweighs any gains.

Simon Chan is Earnest Lau Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College in Singapore. He is the author of *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (InterVarsity Press).

The Shadow of Schizophrenia

By Amy Simpson

Where God was amid my mom's mental illness.

My family never had much, and excess was not in my parents' lexicon. Dad was a pastor, serving small congregations, and Mom stayed at home. We were poor, but we didn't feel it much, surrounded as we were by farmers who lived by the whims of the rain we asked for at the weekly Wednesday night prayer meeting.

But each birthday was an occasion for a treat, and every gift was precious and heartfelt. On my fourth or fifth birthday, I unwrapped a stuffed animal that had been squeezed awkwardly into an ill-fitting cracker box and wrapped by my dad's bear-like hands. Before opening the bulging box, I could see fur sticking out of the corners. Inside was a koala, snuggly and a touch exotic.

I loved that stuffed animal. She inhabited an honored spot on my bed for the next decade. At some point, a seam popped and stuffing hemorrhaged from her neck. I pushed the fluff back inside and repaired the damage with painstaking but imperfect stitches that made her head a little crooked.

How could I have known she would one day become a prized possession and comfort to the woman who gave her to me?

CREEPING SHADOWS

Around the time I got that koala, Mom answered my questions about how I could follow Jesus and prayed with me when I first committed my life to him. She gently explained her own faith and assured me that God loved me.

Mom was faithful but also fragile, and I sensed her vulnerability;

COURTESY OF AMY SIMPSON

Shades of Light and Dark: By the time Simpson graduated from high school, her family lived in a cycle of her mother's hospitalization, stabilization, and breakdown.

my whole family built systems to protect her. I loved and appreciated her, but something kept me from feeling close to her. I felt she was breakable—not a person of safety and strength, but someone who would falter before I would.

But I did feel safe enough, cocooned in a relatively predictable community where most people were a lot like me. That changed when my family moved to the city when I was 13. That year, my brother, the eldest, graduated and went to college. With Dad unemployed, we faced poverty and culture shock. My sisters and I began sharing a bedroom in the two-bedroom bottom floor of a two-story house converted into a duplex. I put off childish things and relegated my koala to a shelf in the closet.

Soon after, we began to see (without understanding) Mom's frightening response to tremendous stress. She zoned out, forgot important things, got confused, had more and more trouble processing and communicating, and didn't always seem "with us." She had trouble making even the simplest of decisions, sometimes forgot to make dinner, and seemed overwhelmed by driving. Her personal care, such as bathing and sleeping, suffered. She neglected matters she had always handled before.

Alarmed, my sisters and I talked to Dad, and he found a counselor for Mom to talk to. But no one, including the counselor, really understood what was happening or what Mom needed.

DARKNESS FALLS

After track practice one day, I waited for a ride home and no one came. I called and a neighbor answered the phone—she told me Mom had gone to the hospital. I walked home and found my brother there. He had come home and found her unresponsive, unaware of reality, unmoving.

The next day at track practice, I found myself crying at the end of my run.

"What's wrong?" my coach asked.

"My mom is in the hospital," I said. When he asked why, I answered, "I don't know."

For a long time I was okay with not knowing why. I just knew that each time she came home from the hospital, I thought she was back for good. It took a few years to realize the back and forth was our new reality.

When she was back, she was on medications that helped her function but had powerful side effects and didn't restore the person we had known. We lived in a repeating cycle of hospitalization, medication, stabilization, and disintegration. We lived in the dark, navigating a mental-health care system that shut us out of the circle of care and communication. We didn't know Mom had schizophrenia. We didn't know she would always need treatment.

I encountered Someone much larger, more capable, and stronger than me. He had left no doubt: He was real and was listening.

At some point in the exhausting cycle, that precious koala found its way from my collection of childhood treasures into my mother's arms. At night I tucked them in together. The matted fur and flattened features, misshapen by my love, symbolized how very needy my mother had become.

I never talked to a counselor in high school, and never discussed Mom's illness with an adult. I didn't know how to frame an experience I couldn't understand, and no one asked what was happening at home. Our church was full of well-meaning people who were mostly ignorant of our problems and, among those who knew, largely at a loss. I was a strong student, resourceful, socially competent, hardworking, and principled. I was absolutely determined not to be the kind of weak, vulnerable, flailing person I saw in my mother. Already an independent teenager, I embraced self-determination and moved toward the life I wanted. I looked out for my younger sister and looked to the outside world for my definitions of normal. When I left the house, I pushed away sadness and confusion and became another, lighthearted version of myself. I denied sadness and pain to the point that I stopped feeling them.

When I had the choice, I distanced myself from Mom. I didn't introduce her to my friends, and I rarely invited anyone to our house. My best friend's mom, who attended our church, commented that she had seen me sitting next to a quiet woman at church one week and realized that was my mom. Even though her daughter and I had been hanging out a lot for a few years, she had never met my mom—she didn't even know who my mom was. I was desperately ashamed of Mom's vulnerability and oddities and feared my association with her would paint me in the same colors.

But she was my mom after all, and distance wasn't always possible. One day when I was 15, she had a psychotic episode in the dentist's waiting room. Desperate to show others and myself my own competence, I drove Mom around to do errands with her. When she fumbled with her food stamps at the day-old bread store, I counted them out with a flourish and gave the cashier a look daring her to despise us.

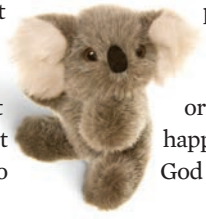
My siblings and I were all expected to go to college, and I agonized in choosing a school, never thinking of involving my parents until Dad offered to help me decide. Ultimately, I chose a school that fit two main criteria: a sense of nonthreatening community, and a comfortable distance from home.

A LONG NIGHT

I thrived on both distance and community but didn't leave home as thoroughly as I had wanted. I began suspecting that my coping mechanism—denying negative emotions too overwhelming to face—had suppressed my capacity for positive emotions too. I had many friends, but my independence was a liability. I automatically built walls between us for my own safety.

Mom's ongoing illness still slashed at me. She sent me coloring-book pages in the mail and I never knew what to expect when I went home. I began to understand that what I wanted most was to feel small and weak, supported by someone stronger and wiser than me, who loved me despite the places where my fur was matted and I had been awkwardly mended. To trust someone whose own fur wasn't falling out.

I knew every Sunday school answer. If asked whom I could trust, I would have said, "God." But while I trusted him for my salvation, I didn't really trust him with me. I didn't doubt God was real and sovereign. I got that Jesus was my only hope for redemption. But I didn't see him as someone who loved me with personal affection, who would keep watch if I let my guard down, who would love me if I were bumbling or broken. After all, I had seen what happened to my parents, who claimed God loved them and who were better



Sunny Days: Ten-year-old Simpson plays while posing with her mother on a family vacation.

COURTESY OF AMY SIMPSON

people than me. And if pressed to identify a villain in my family's story, I would have pointed to God. I wouldn't have known who else to blame, and I had enough faith to believe he could have prevented what happened to Mom.

One night, I lay in bed and watched the outside traffic send shadows across the walls. Something broke open, and a great grief erupted from my heart. I cried and sobbed and punched my pillow in rage. I told God I didn't know if he was real and wasn't sure he was good. I flung a challenge his way: "If you're there, show me."

It's impossible to describe the experience, but I received an immediate and unexpected response—a huge, nearly tangible presence and a nearly audible voice with a clear message: "Here I am." I was shocked into silence. I had encountered Someone much larger, more capable, and stronger than me, who had answered my challenge in a moment of great weakness, a moment I would not have shared with anyone else. He had left no doubt: He was real and was listening. I began to trust him, a little.

The encounter altered the angle of my life—a change in degrees, hard to see at first but with increasing impact as the years passed.

EMERGING INTO LIGHT

During my senior year of college, I married a good man who has a gift for granting safety to others. I trusted him enough to make him part of my family and to start a family with him despite my greatest fear: that I myself would become mentally ill. One of my sisters shared the same fear, so we granted some peace to one another by promising to intervene if we ever saw symptoms.

Adulthood gave the distance I needed to safely sort through my childhood experiences and loosen my grip on self-protection. I saw a counselor, the first person I ever told about the most painful realities of life in the shadow of schizophrenia. When I told her my mother slept with my old koala, she didn't retch in horror. She didn't belittle my pain or administer testing to gauge my own psychological disturbance. Instead, she said with tenderness, "You lost your mother." For some reason, I had never thought of it that way, and her words gave me a framework to understand the repeating cycle of loss and grief our family endured. They freed me from the sense that I hadn't done enough, that in my reluctance to repeatedly reattach myself to a mother who kept fading, I had somehow let her down.

Later, I saw another counselor, who helped me explore the idea that I had more to offer the world than competence. That part of my calling in this life is simply to be me, and that opening up does more than expose me to pain—it offers a gift God meant for me to share.

A third counselor helped me take another step, graciously walking through symptoms of serious and chronic mental illness to assure me I wasn't ill. She helped me embrace the truth about myself: I am weak, vulnerable, and fragile. These conditions aren't incompatible with normal life, as I had thought, but definitive to normalcy. They are realities I must accept if I'm also to accept God's unconditional love.

But growing emotional health didn't soothe my sorrow over Mom's ongoing struggle with schizophrenia. In fact, as I grew in courage to face my pain, my awareness of pain intensified.

I met friends' moms at weddings, baby showers, and birthday parties. I agonized over what to tell my children about their grandmother. I wondered whether to blame or pity Mom when her choices caused trouble for herself or others. And I waited with shallow breath for the next time her medication would fail or she would stop taking it.

Then one day, Mom left home without word. Her paranoia, when mismanaged by medications, led her to believe that she couldn't trust family members and that she was safer out of the house. For more than a month, we followed clues that led us far enough to guess she had found shelter, but privacy laws blocked our efforts to confirm where. I lay in bed at night, prayers mingling with images of terrible things happening to her. After some family friends spotted her at a homeless shelter where they were serving a holiday meal, my sister went to visit. Mom

barely recognized her.

Eventually she came home and crawled back toward reality. Shopping with Dad, she stood in the aisle displaying picture frames, staring at smiling families. "What's *family*?" she asked him. She knew the word was significant but couldn't remember what it meant.

One day I was riding with some coworkers to an offsite meeting when my husband called to tell me Mom had been arrested. Through her trial, conviction, and prison time, all we could do was write letters substantiating her health history and begging for the treatment she needed—which she eventually received.

The day I saw Mom's bewildered face on the state's department of corrections website was among my saddest. But that was when God helped me finally understand that her experience was not mine, that I needn't be ashamed or afraid to be her daughter. The truth about her was no uglier than the truth about me.

A NEW DAY

When I sought counsel from a pastor, I hoped he could address questions about Mom's spiritual condition and why God allows mental illness. Wide-eyed and stammering, he left my questions mostly unaddressed and showed that many church leaders' silence about mental illness indicates they aren't sure what to say. So again I challenged God to answer my questions himself.

A study of Isaiah transformed my view of God himself. He's a God who challenges us as well:

> "Who has done such mighty deeds, summoning each new generation from the beginning of time? It is I, the Lord, the First and the Last. I alone am he." (Isa. 41:4, all from NLT)

God helped me finally understand that her experience was not mine, that I needn't be ashamed or afraid to be her daughter. The truth about her was no uglier than the truth about me.

This same God makes clear who carries the blame for our sorry and painful condition. He also proposes a magnanimous solution:

> "Come now, let's settle this," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool." (1:18)

He promises to love us better than even a mother can: "'Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!'" (49:15).

And he has given us a dazzling vision of a time when we will live in the kind of world we were made for:

> In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. (11:6)

As I wrestled with a theology of suffering, tainted by my 21st-century Western assumption that I deserve a comfortable and happy life, I stopped asking God why and how he could let schizophrenia happen to my family. I knew the answer: We are pervasively flawed and deeply altered by our sinful condition. And faith-filled or not, there is no reason such a thing shouldn't happen in this life. No reason it shouldn't have happened to my family. And someday, when we are each remade as whole and unmarred people, I imagine creation's renewal will be sweeter for people who have suffered the way Mom has. After accepting the truth and tragedy of our collective condition, I started seeing hope and redemption in our experience.

Earlier this year, my parents celebrated their 50th anniversary. Mom lives at home with Dad, takes her medication, sees her psychiatrist, takes care of herself, and lives relatively well. Thanks in part to conversations spurred by my book, my family talks more openly about Mom's illness than we have before. Mom reads, travels a bit, sews clothes for her grandchildren, and remembers their birthdays. She calls me and sends e-mails. She laughs when I tease her, and she understands my jokes. In some ways, the woman I knew as a child has come back.

But the people we were aren't truly gone. When we talk on the phone, I still listen for clues that Mom is ailing. When I visit her, I'm still nervous about what I'll see. I feel protective of her, careful with myself, and profoundly sad for her suffering. I know we'll never relate as most mothers and daughters do.

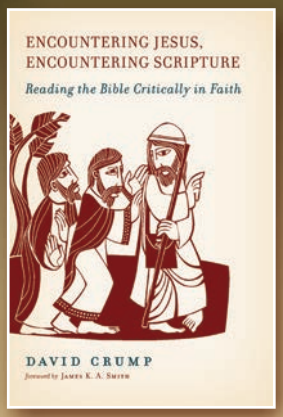
But God is my mother to the motherless (Ps. 68:5), and he has proven himself much stronger than me and more than trustworthy. He is the strong hand I needed as a teenager—and he was there, even when I didn't recognize him. He covers the old scars on my heart, not with a patch but with something much stronger and softer that doesn't remove the reality of my sadness but somehow makes me richer for it.

The shame is gone. I'm not embarrassed of Mom's illness; I'm proud of the way she's living with it. Schizophrenia may still do more ugly work in this woman, but my eyes will stay open; I'm no longer afraid to be like her or to take the emotional risks inherent in loving her.

I don't know what happened to that old stuffed koala. I suspect that between hospitals, shelters, and other places Mom has lived, she was misplaced. But that's okay—the mom and daughter who loved her have both outgrown her. And like everyone who makes it as far as we have, we're both missing some fur and our stuffing is a little flat. But the journey has made us softer.

Amy Simpson is author of *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission* (InterVarsity Press). She also serves as editor of Christianity Today's Gifted for Leadership. You can find her at *www.AmySimpsonOnline.com* and on Twitter @aresimpson.

EERDMANS



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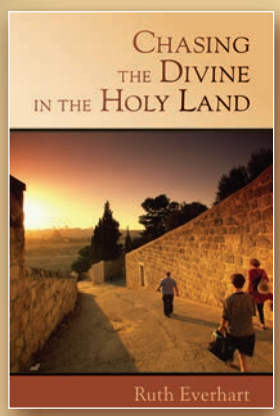

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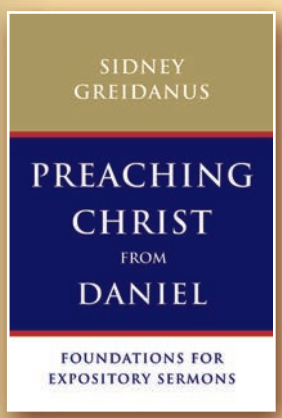

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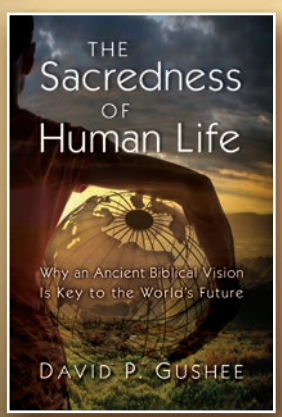

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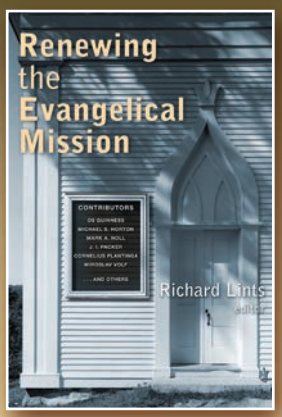

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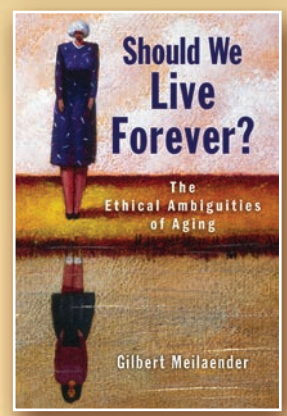

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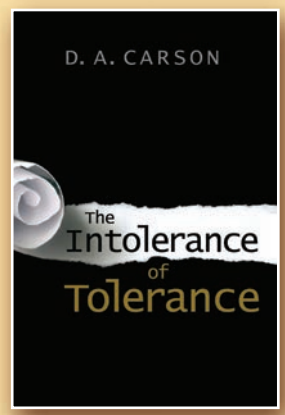

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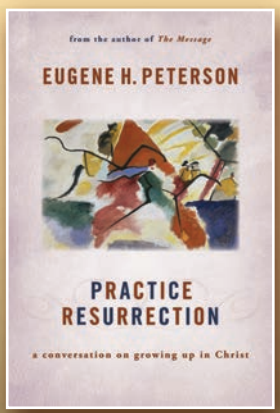

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[MEDITATION]

Blindsided by God

How setbacks in my life revealed the Lord's true character.

By Peter Chin

SCOTT SUCHMAN

It was supposed to be a doctor's visit like any other. My wife would come home and say, as she had done many times before, that everything was okay, and that she should get lots of exercise and eat fruits and vegetables—what doctors always say. We would breathe a sigh of relief, hug each other, and promptly forget that the moment had ever taken place.

But the news that winter afternoon was very different:

"Peter, it's cancer. It's cancer."

Carol had been diagnosed with breast cancer, which had already spread to her lymph nodes. A biopsy revealed that her cancer was a particularly aggressive kind called triple negative, and it would resist the best available treatments. In the grim words of a doctor we consulted, this type of cancer was a potent "killer of young women," young women like my wife of eight years, the mother of my two daughters.

Still reeling, we were soon dealt another crushing blow: Our health insurance company had determined that my wife's cancer was a preexisting condition and terminated her coverage. We would be forced to pay for treatments on our own. The shock of her diagnosis had been difficult enough, but this enormous legal complication devastated our already fragile spirits.

I remember feeling a multitude of things during that time: shock, intense fear, confusion. But the emotion I remember most clearly was that of betrayal. I felt betrayed by God.

A SUBCONSCIOUS THEOLOGY

You see, I was a good person, or at least had tried my hardest to be one. I had devoted my entire life to following and serving God, giving up a promising career in medicine to become a pastor. I wanted to do great things for his sake, and so planted a church in Washington, D.C. My family had moved into the heart of the city, intent on being an incarnational witness of Christ. As a result, God was supposed to protect us against the worst that the world could offer.

But he hadn't. Instead, three months into that church plant, he had allowed my wife to get aggressive breast cancer. Then, only a few years after its founding, the church plant was forced to close its doors. Our home has been broken into twice, our car, more times than I can count. These kinds of events, I thought, aren't supposed to happen to people who follow God faithfully. We are supposed to enjoy protection, blessing, and providence, not cancer, failure, and crime. I never expected our lives to be perfect, but this was too much to bear. I felt betrayed by God because he had broken his promises.

This might all seem strange for a pastor to say. After all, Jesus obeys his Father's will and yet is persecuted and suffers terribly. The disciples follow in the footsteps of their Lord and experience the same. According to 1 Peter 4:12, "[D]o not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

As a pastor, I understood—and taught—these very truths. But despite all my good theology and good intentions, here I was, struck by a deep sense of God's betrayal. I tried to remind myself time and time again of the witness of the life of Christ and the early church, and how God could use suffering to refine and strengthen our faith. I even preached on those themes more than a few times during that hellish year. I knew the right answers like the back of my hand, but they were of no use to me, because feelings of deepening anger and mistrust toward God inevitably crept back into my heart.

I realized then that I didn't really believe what I thought I believed, what I said I believed. My conscious theology had been overridden by a subconscious theology: the gospel of health and wealth, or the idea that following God ensures blessings in this life. Had anyone accused me of subscribing to such ideas, I would have denied it vehemently. But it became abundantly clear that I had subconsciously absorbed them, in at least some subtle form, from countless sources.

I absorbed this mentality from the pervasive culture of the American dream, which teaches that everyone gets what they deserve. I inherited it from my parents, who believed that success could prevent their children from suffering in the same ways they had. It seeped into my mind through countless books, television shows, and movies in which the good guy always gets the girl and the bad guy, his just deserts.

But I never realized how deeply I subscribed to these ideas until Carol's diagnosis. Suffering shakes you with such force that it separates your true thoughts and beliefs from anything to which you simply pay lip service. This process is painful, no doubt. But without it, it is impossible to know where our beliefs fall short of what Scripture truly teaches.

I was forced to acknowledge that God had never promised me that my life would be pain free, or that I would never endure the common hardships of being human in a broken world. I realized it would not be fair to hold God accountable to promises he never actually made.

NOT THE PROMISE WE THINK

But that is not to say that God makes no promises to those who love and follow him. Consider Isaiah 43:1–2:

> Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
> I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

This passage contains a promise, but not the one we think. It is not a promise that we will never suffer. In fact, the passage implies that we *will* pass through waters, rivers, and fire, elements that could easily destroy us. The promise is that *when we do, God will be with us*. Those waters will not overwhelm us. Nor will the fire completely consume and set us ablaze.

Psalm 23 testifies to the same certainties. Verse 4 says, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Again we see that God does not promise to shield us from the valley of the worst, the valley of mourning and persecution and cancer. He promises only that when we encounter these valleys, *he will be right next to us*. His rod and staff, the hallmarks of his presence, will comfort and encourage us.

Surprise Blessings: Two of Peter and Carol's children were born after Carol's breast-cancer diagnosis.

SCOTT SUCHMAN

I can say that to this promise, God was entirely faithful. Family and friends from around the world rallied around us in prayer and support. Meals were provided on a daily basis, allowing us a precious few hours for rest and recuperation. We worried constantly about the effect that my wife's diagnosis would have on our daughters, but they were a constant source of joy and laughter, both precious treasures in that period. We found beauty, peace, and grace daily: in the weather, in finding a good parking spot outside the hospital, and in one another. We had unique and powerful reminders of God's enduring love and presence. We discovered the promises of Isaiah and Psalm 23 proved true for us.

God promises to stand by our side in the midst of our suffering, like a faithful friend or counselor. But these are not the only promises that he makes. No, God is a God of salvation, of healing, of redemption—but on his terms, not on our own.

Often we feel betrayed by God because he fails to do the things that we ask of him, in the way that we want, and in the timeframe that we requested. And this kind of response would be justified if we served a God who was like a customer service agent, dedicated only to pleasing and placating us. But of course that is not who God is at all—he is the Alpha and Omega. He does not do our bidding, and does not cater to our whims. He is wild.

But in the words of Mr. Beaver from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he is wild, but he is good. God may not do things the way we requested, but that is not to say that he does not work on our behalf. As we read in Romans 8, he is working all things for the good of those who love him, but he does so in his own mysterious ways. God does whatever he wants, *but whatever he does is good.*

Minutes before my wife's mastectomy, the surgeon gave me unbelievable news: A routine blood test had revealed that Carol was pregnant with our third child. Experts from around the country advised us to terminate the pregnancy to give my wife the best chance for survival. We politely declined their advice, proceeding with her pregnancy and chemotherapy at the same time. In the fall of that year, my wife gave birth to a healthy son—protected by God from the toxic and caustic chemotherapy drugs that had swirled around him in utero for months.

What's more, the latest research revealed that women who have breast cancer have a better chance at survival when pregnant, meaning that in some way, my son served as a divine kind of medicine for his mother. This amazing finding, released months *after* my son's birth, was known only to God at the time we discovered the pregnancy. After all of this, our doctor told us not to expect any more children, on account of the chemotherapy. But no one told God this news, because he saw fit to bless us with one more child, a beautiful little girl we named Lucy.

I had asked God for a healthy church, and he gave us two healthy children instead. I had asked for success, and he gave us salvation. I had prayed that I might witness good things in my life, and he gave me miracles. To be honest, he did not answer a single prayer in the way that I had asked, but instead gave me things so much deeper and richer. It was as if I had asked him for a rhinestone, and he gave me a precious diamond. And only a fool laments the absence of the rhinestone when a diamond lies in his hand.

Peter Chin is interim pastor of Peace Fellowship Church in Washington, D.C. He blogs at *PeterWChin.com*.

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Guide into the

More than anyone else, **Dallas Willard** led me into the joyful depths of the kingdom.

By John Ortberg

GREGSCHNEIDER.COM

WHEN DALLAS WILLARD was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in late summer 2012, he said, "I think that when I die, it might be some time until I know it."

Dallas was always saying things that no one else would think to. He said that a person is a series of conscious experiences, and that for the one who trusts and follows Jesus, death itself has no power to interrupt this life, for Jesus said that the one who trusts in him will not taste death.

Dallas died on May 8, 2013. I'm not sure if anyone has told him yet. But I know that for the lives touched by his mind and heart, there is a void. A philosopher at the University of Southern California (USC) for nearly five decades, he was the smartest man I have ever known. But it was the quality of his life—the extent to which he lived in the reality of the kingdom—that shaped the people who knew him the best.

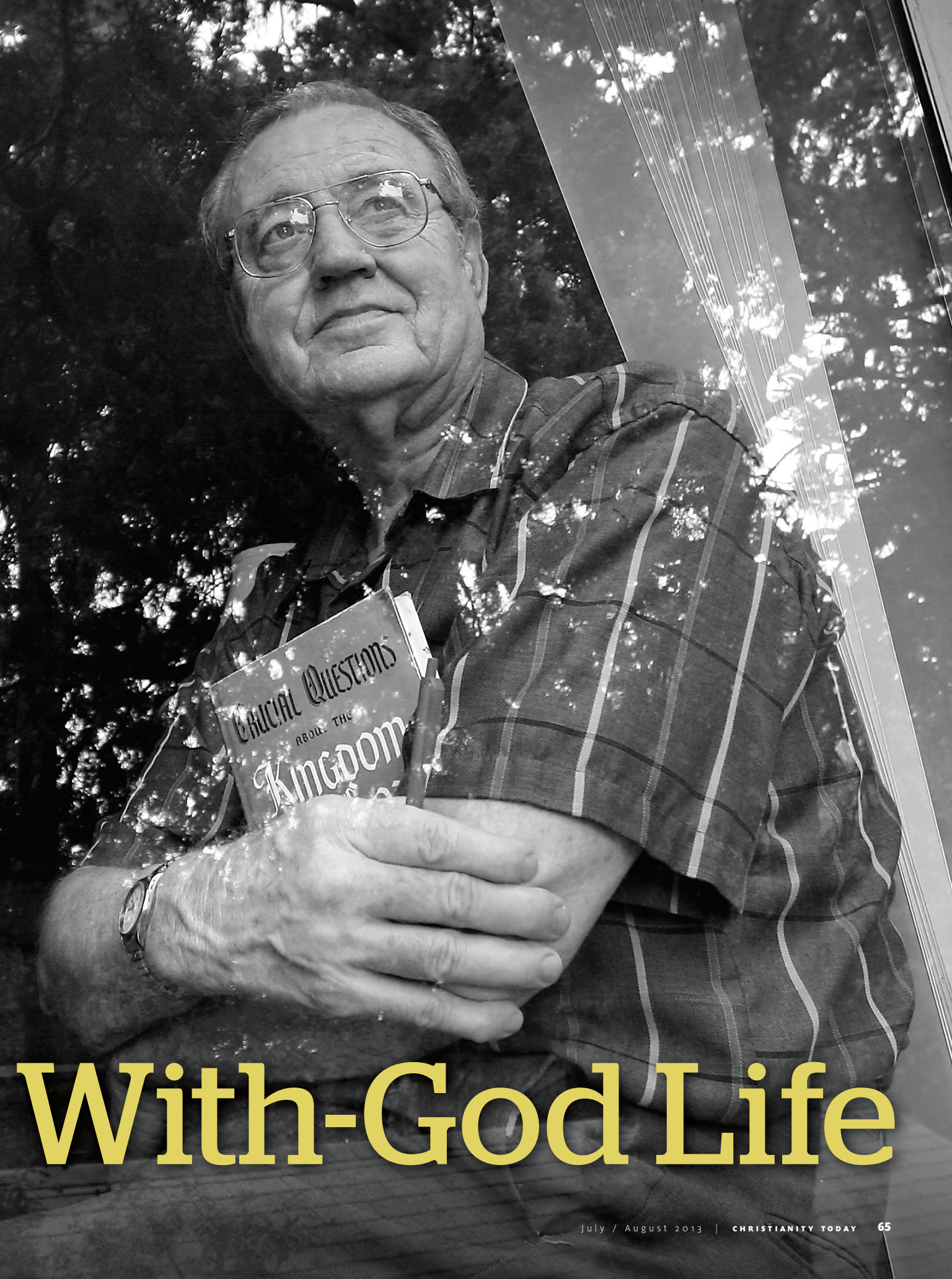
Somebody once asked Dallas if he believed in total depravity.

"I believe in sufficient depravity," he responded immediately.

What's that?

"I believe that every human being is sufficiently depraved that when we get to heaven, no one will be able to say, 'I merited this.'"

The doctrine of sufficient depravity is one of a thousand truths from Dallas that seem novel and yet, the more we reflect on them, point to the most fundamental tenets of our



With-God Life

faith. Since he died, one of the scenes I've had in my mind is of Dallas arriving at the gates of heaven, only to be turned away with a stamp marked INSUFFICIENT DEPRAVITY. Dallas himself would have insisted he had more than his fair share of depravity. He would have insisted that what we love in a life such as his is the One to whom Dallas constantly and joyfully pointed. What we love most about Dallas is the Jesus in him.

HEY DALLAS

Because Dallas wrote extensively on spiritual formation and taught philosophy, one might think he came from abundant education and culture and resources. In fact, he grew up in rural Missouri in poverty. Electricity did not come until he was mostly grown up. His mother died when he was 2 years old; her last words to her husband were, "Keep eternity before the children."

He once read a book by Jack London that described the world from an atheistic point of view. Dallas said that he'd never known books could contain such ideas, and after that encounter his mind was never the same. He was 9 years old.

He became an insatiable reader: "When I left home after graduating high school, I left as a migrant agricultural worker with a Modern Library edition of Plato in my duffel bag. It sounds kind of crazy, but I loved it. I loved the stuff. Before I knew there was a subject called philosophy, I loved it."

He attended Tennessee Temple and did graduate work at Baylor University before receiving his PhD from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He then taught for 48 years at USC, where for a time he chaired the philosophy department. He is regarded as a leading translator and authority on the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. He was, along with scholars like William Alston and Alvin Plantinga, a significant influence in a renaissance of evangelical thinkers within contemporary academic philosophy.

Like his mind, his home was furnished with books. He had a secondary library that occupied a second house, and a tertiary library that filled his office at USC. After his cancer diagnosis, a group of us packed up well over 100 boxes of books that only made it to his quaternary library in a nearby garage. They were in multiple languages and stretched from Homer to Harry Potter.

Dallas touched many believers through his teachings and writings, which are often categorized as "spiritual formation." But Dallas was more centrally preoccupied with the "kingdom of God"—what he called "the with-God life." He said the four great questions humans must answer are: *What is reality? What is the good life? Who is a good person?* and, *How do you become a good person?* His concern was to answer those questions, and live the answers. And he was simply convinced that no one has ever answered them as well as Jesus.

Like watching Usain Bolt run a race or hearing Yo-Yo Ma play the cello, listening to Dallas's thoughts was to get lost in the sheer joy of seeing a master craftsman at work.

For Dallas's students and friends—and these categories largely overlapped—the best moments, the ones I will miss the most, were the moments with no hurry, no schedule constraint, nothing in the world but time and God and love. Then you could ask him, "Hey, Dallas . . ." (There are a thousand stories that begin with the statement, "Someone asked Dallas.")

"Hey, Dallas . . ." You could see him thinking—not about the problem, which he had worked out long ago, but about how to express it in a way that those of us listening might be able to grasp it. So that it would not be a "pearl cast among swine"—one of dozens of Scripture passages I heard him explain better than any professional exegete.

Dallas and I used to play a game. I would ask him for definitions of all kinds of words. And every definition would contain a clarity and freshness and precision that would require folks to sit and reflect for a while. "Hey, Dallas . . . ," and then I'd ask him about any word or concept that mattered, and would receive a brief education in the possibilities of redeemed thought.

The word *spirit*. "Disembodied personal power."

Beauty. "Goodness made manifest to the senses."

A *disciple* is "anyone whose ultimate goal is to live as Jesus would live if he were in their place."

Dignity is "a value that creates irreplaceability." (This one, he graciously attributed to Immanuel Kant.)

Dallas was ruthlessly committed to logic, clarity of thought, and the constant cultivation of reason. He held such commitments because they were indispensible to navigating reality, and because helping people navigate reality is indispensible to love.

"Hey Dallas, what is reality?"

"Reality is what you can count on."

"Hey Dallas, what is pain?"

"Pain is what you experience when you bump into reality."

Because of this, Dallas had a deep aversion for Christian speakers or writers who use emotion to manipulate a temporary response from their listeners—a response that bypasses their "mental maps" and leaves the audience in worse shape than when they started. He said at one conference that speakers should never tell stories. This prompted a group of publishing types to propose the "Dallas Willard Study Bible," with all the stories taken out. (Pretty much just Leviticus.)

"What is spiritual maturity?"

"The mature disciple is one who effortlessly does what Jesus would do in his or her place."

"What exactly does it mean to glorify God?"

"To glorify God means to think and act in such a way that the goodness, greatness, and beauty of God are constantly obvious to ourselves and all those around us. It means to live in such a way that when people see us they think, *Thank God for God, if God would create such a life*."

REMARKABLE MIND

Dallas has impacted the church—evangelicalism and beyond—through the power of historically informed thought that simply makes

more sense of existence than the alternatives. He valued the scholarly guild and contributed to it. But he also knew the limits of the guild, and ultimately sought to contribute to moral and spiritual knowledge in a way that transcended current guild norms.

Obviously, Dallas had a remarkable mind—not brain, mind you. He was always careful to note the distinction between mind and brain. "God has never had a brain," he would say, "and has never missed it."

But his life and his heart were better than his mind. My own life was forever changed when I read his book *The Spirit of the Disciplines* 24 years ago. I contacted Dallas after having read it, and—for no particular reason—he invited me to his Southern California home. I experienced there what countless others have: the unhurried, humble, selfless attention of a human being who lived deeply in the genuine awareness of the reality of the kingdom of God.

Somebody once said of Dallas: "I'd like to live in his time zone." During one of his lectures, a listener challenged him with statements that were both offensive and incorrect. Dallas paused, thanked the person for their comments, and then simply moved on to the next question. Somebody asked Dallas afterward why he had not countered the student's argument and put him in his place. "I'm practicing the discipline of not having to have the last word."

This is part of why Dallas would never debate nonbelievers. Rather, he engaged in mutual conversations where both parties could seek truth together. He would often say, "I'm sure Jesus is the kind of person who would be the first to say you must ruthlessly follow the truth wherever it leads." Through the last week of his life, he was still hoping to help believers engage nonbelievers by looking together at questions where people get stuck in their actual lives rather than by trying to win intellectual arguments.

Sometimes the questions became deeply personal. I called him once, in a deep valley, many years ago: "Hey Dallas. My heart is breaking. I cannot fix this. I don't understand it. I am sadder than I've ever been."

There was a long pause. And then a single sentence: "This will be a test of your joyful confidence in God."

I have thought about that sentence a thousand times.

The few other people I spoke to about that valley were empathic and supportive. But that particular sentence is not one that I can imagine coming from someone else's mind or mouth. That sentence I will live with until I die.

Like watching Usain Bolt run a race or hearing Yo-Yo Ma play the cello, listening to Dallas's thoughts was to get lost in the sheer joy of seeing a master craftsman at work. Except it wasn't about the craft. It was about the life and reality and goodness of the God behind the thoughts.

It should not be surprising that on the thinker-feeler continuum, Dallas was all thinker. But I will miss the tremor in his voice, sometimes, when he saw beauty and goodness in God so overwhelming that his heart could not hold it in. The first time my wife, Nancy, joined us for dinner, Dallas began to speak about how good God is. His face fairly glowed. Nancy is not a crier, but when I looked at her, tears were streaming

down her face.

For many, he was a little like the wardrobe that leads into Narnia. It's not about the wardrobe; it's about a luminous world to which the wardrobe opens.

Yet you love the wardrobe after all.

DESTINY AFTER DEATH

Dallas would get very impatient with writings that idealize anyone, particularly him. I remember hearing him talk once about his struggle with harboring contempt for people. If he did, it was in a very deep harbor. But God alone knows the human heart. Somebody asked me recently if Dallas realized what a remarkable life he led. It reminded me—as almost everything does—of another of Dallas's observations: "One sign of maturity are the thoughts that no longer occur to you." On the first day of sobriety, a recovering alcoholic will be filled with thoughts of her heroic efforts. After 20 years of sobriety, her mind will be free to think other, more interesting thoughts. Her sobriety will no longer look heroic, only sane—only a gift.

Dallas was free to think other, more interesting thoughts.

He leaves behind his wife, Jane; his son, John; and his daughter, Becky, along with her husband, Bill, and their daughter, Larissa. He leaves behind a vision of the nature of the gospel and the kingdom and moral and spiritual truth that is helping the church, which is always reforming to recapture something of the spirit and message of Jesus. Dallas's work, more than that of anyone I know in our day, is helping us understand more clearly the offer of Jesus, about whom Dallas never ceased to marvel. His influence will ripple along in countless sermons and books and churches and disciples.

"Hey Dallas, what's death?"

"Jesus made a special point of saying those who rely on him and have received the kind of life that flows in him and in God will never experience death. . . . Jesus shows his apprentices how to live in the light of the fact that they will *never* stop living."

Our destiny, Dallas used to say, is to join a tremendously creative team effort, under unimaginably splendid leadership, on an inconceivably vast plane of activity, with ever more comprehensive cycles of productivity and enjoyment. This is what the "eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard" in the prophetic vision. It is worth a few dozen read-throughs (found in *The Divine Conspiracy*).

Dallas also used to say, "God will certainly let everyone into heaven that can possibly stand it." This is another one of those statements that becomes more daunting and frightening and wonderful the more you think about it.

"Keep eternity before the children," his mother said. Dallas kept eternity before us in a way no one else quite has. And now he has stepped into the eternal kind of life in a way he never has before.

I'll bet he can stand it. I'll bet he can.

John Ortberg is pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, in Menlo Park, California. He is the author most recently of *Who Is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus* (Zondervan).

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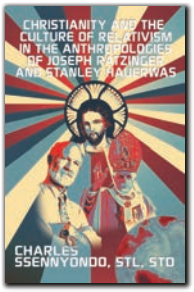

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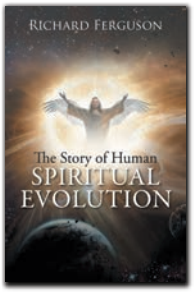

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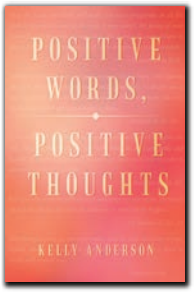

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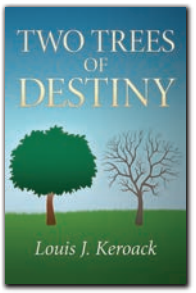

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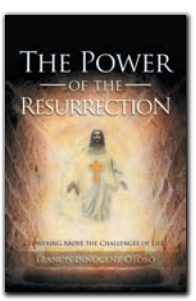

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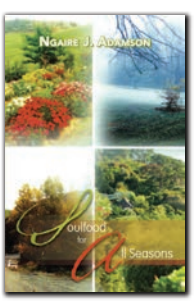

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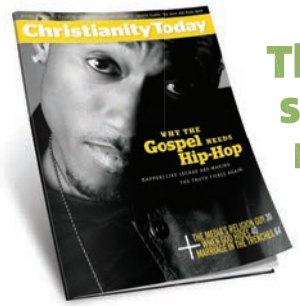

The answer to whether the emotion in secular rap can translate into Christian rap is a resounding *yes*.

Julie Ohman Kellogg
Jacksonville, Florida

A Good Rap

Thank you for what may be the coolest *Christianity Today* to date. As a mother of four, I was as excited as my kids to see Lecrae on your May cover. I am thankful for what these musicians have done in my kids' lives, but also in my life. "Why the Gospel Needs Hip-Hop" articulated what I have been trying to convey to friends and family. I have been so struck by Christian hip-hop's sound theology and spiritually mature discussion of a wide variety of issues.

The answer to whether the emotion in secular rap can translate into Christian rap is a resounding *yes*. The palpable frustration with sin and our fallen world is clear, but then the solution is embraced: God's mercy, grace, and triumph over Satan. In this era of "keep your faith to yourself," this unashamed group of artists is a tonic to my soul.

Julie Ohman Kellogg
Jacksonville, Florida

I greatly appreciated Russell Moore's article on the positive influence Christian hip-hop is having on Christians and non-Christians alike. However, he was off in suggesting that black racial stereotypes can lead to "white fear-mongering seen most brutally in . . . the murders of Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin." Comparing the death of Martin to the horrendous and racially motivated murder of Till is impossible. The jury isn't just out on Martin's death; they have yet to be seated.

Elijah Friedeman
Jackson, Mississippi

Faithful Exposé

It was good to read your profile of Michael Cromartie ["The Shepherd," May], which portrays a less politicized faith in the face of incredible politicization over the past 25 years. As a pastor, I read giving thanks that journalists can be exposed to a more authentic view of Christian life.

However, I wonder if there's a way to bring a depoliticized message of the gospel to the people. My sense is that Christians on the Right are more formed by Fox News and Rush Limbaugh than by a consistent submission to the Gospels. At this point, it is unclear to me that a gentler, more humble walk that values dialogue and servanthood will win the day in the pews.

Howard Miller
E-mail

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

40%
What We Talk About When We Talk About Rob Bell
Mark Galli

30%
W.W.Jay-Z
Russell D. Moore

7%
Village Green: Learning from Latter-day Saints
Greg Stier, John Divito, and Kara Powell

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

Inside CT: Holy Hip-Hop Grows Up
By Katelyn Beaty

More Talk on Rob Bell

I was intrigued with how Mark Galli linked the theological trajectory of Rob Bell with the current resurgence among evangelicals of an experiential approach to Christian spirituality ["What We Talk About When We Talk About Rob Bell," May]. I appreciate Galli bringing balance to an important issue.

But I wish he had drawn attention to us evangelicals writing on experiential spirituality who emphasize: (1) the biblical support (from both Testaments) for such an endeavor; (2) the importance of allowing for and anticipating dark nights of the soul; (3) the fact that "abiding" in Christ doesn't mean choosing between a rational/volitional staying put in the faith and a mystical/experiential mentoring relationship with the risen Jesus; and (4) the need to make sure that we don't reduce such an approach to a technique or "quick fix" panacea for all our spiritual problems.

Gary Tyra
Costa Mesa, California

Rob Bell "hope[s] that perhaps everyone will someday be saved"; and Mark Galli says that "in one sense, so do many evangelicals," because "[e]ven God is said to wish that no one should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9). But *hoping* entails at least a possibility of realization, whereas *wishing* does not. So we can legitimately wish with God for the salvation of all, but to

imply its possibility by hoping for it contradicts Jesus' statement in the Sermon on the Mount that "few" find the narrow gate and road that leads to life.

Nonetheless, thanks for Galli's perceptive analysis of popular evangelical epistemology.

Robert H. Gundry
Santa Barbara, California

Love Trumps All

I heartily agree with philosopher Jamie Smith ["You Can't Think Your Way to God," May] that the majority of our behavior is controlled by our loves much more than by our knowledge. The apostle Paul emphasizes over and over in 1 Corinthians that love trumps knowledge in our practice of oneness in the body, and that love also trumps knowledge as a motivator to action. That is why I cringe when youth groups emphasize engaging the culture by participating in what is basically the culture's "trash." It leads our students to "love some other kingdoms and some other gods," to quote Smith.

Jay Lehman
E-mail

Mystified by Mormons

As a lifelong Latter-day Saint (LDS), I read with interest "What can Christian leaders learn from the surge in Mormon youth missionaries?" [Village Green, May]. Yet each expert struggled to explain LDS success. The belief that "these young people are eager to serve so they can earn God's favor through their faithfulness" clearly demonstrates how easy it is to misunderstand a subculture from the outside.

LDS understand "it is by grace we are saved after all we can do" to mean that we are ultimately saved by the grace of Christ. Rites of passage and tribal affiliation are similarly inadequate ways of trying to explain how LDS youth from diverse backgrounds serve so much. It will take much richer analysis to explain the chasm between LDS and evangelical levels of commitment.

Wally Goddard
E-mail

A Clear Statement

Thank you for David Neff's "A Tale of Two Analogies" [May]. I teach a career competencies class at Northwestern College. Whenever I begin the module on creating an elevator speech, I use Jesus'. This helps students see the importance of having a clear statement about themselves that reflects the authority that comes from God. It also helps them to think more deeply about themselves and to make sure that their words are true and meaningful.

Linda Ashworth
E-mail

CORRECTION

In "The Shepherd," the line from a 1993 Washington Post *article was referring to followers of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.*

ONLINE POLL

LIFE AFTER DEATH
Was justice served when abortion doctor Kermit Gosnell was sentenced to triple life sentences?

23%
Yes, life in prison is an appropriate punishment for Gosnell's actions.

13%
Yes, life in prison is more biblical than a death sentence.

14%
Maybe, but it doesn't bring justice to Gosnell's victims.

22%
No, but no earthly punishment would have brought justice to Gosnell or his victims.

28%
No, Gosnell should have received the death penalty.

Total votes: 260

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"Picking up your books, I was both terrified of what I might find about me, and elated at how you faithfully reflected God's glory."

Kate Richter, honoring her favorite author, Dallas Willard.

CT Liveblog: "Died: Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy *Author and Philosopher," by Melissa Steffan and Jeremy Weber*

"'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' With that, we must be satisfied."

John Pierce, relying on Abraham's question from Genesis 18:25 (KJV) when struggling to answer if God is merciful in judging people.

Speaking Out: "Do All Children Go to Heaven?," by Jim Denison

"These things erode the trust of the public."

Carl Dixon, expressing grief over all abuse victims and the allegations against Sovereign Grace Ministries.

CT Liveblog: "As Appeal Is Announced in Sovereign Grace Case, Joshua Harris Says He Was Abused as a Child," by Ted Olsen

"[The title] isolates, puffs up, and separates. It's as hard on the congregation as it is on the man single-handedly responsible for them all."

Ryan, believing that the role of "head pastor" is problematic.

CT Liveblog: "Three Megachurch Pastors Resign over Adultery in Orlando," by Melissa Steffan

"I have to keep falling in love with the embodied soul that he is, even as the contours change."

Stacey L, on the need for couples to show each other grace as they age.

Her.meneutics: "Stay Sexy or Else? Well, Please Forgive These Mommy Hips," by Janelle Aijian

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Sex Without Bodies

The church's response to the LGBT movement must be that matter matters.

Even as our culture has swiftly moved toward accepting same-sex marriage, the term "homosexual" has already disappeared among those who have taken the time to listen and learn from gay and lesbian neighbors and friends.

For good reasons, the preferred language among those neighbors has become "LGBT"—"Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered" (or "Transsexual").

We should welcome this shift, because it actually helps clarify the multiple sexualities whose representatives have banded together to seek legal recognition and relief from stigma and shame. Indeed, the acronym LGBT is increasingly augmented by references to Queer (or Questioning) and Asexual persons—thus including those who find their sexuality ill-defined by the existing heterosexual or homosexual categories. It also often seeks to include Intersex individuals, the small but real number of persons whose bodies are born gender-ambiguous.

The proliferation of initials signals the formation of a powerful coalition. But it also reminds us of the important differences between the members of that coalition. Christians cannot simply accept or reject "same-sex marriage" and think we have settled our sexual ethics. The LGBTQIA coalition has other challenges for the church.

Begin just with those who identify as lesbian and as gay. Patterns of sexual expression, relationship formation, and identity discovery are markedly different between gay men and lesbian women. Statistically speaking, gay sexual orientation seems most often to emerge early, definitively, and persistently; lesbian orientation is more fluid and ambiguous. (This has implications, too, for claims of "recovery" from homosexuality, claims that have often proven unreliable for "ex-gay" men.)

THE NEXT FRONTIER

Indeed, sex itself is markedly different for gays and lesbians, research shows. Men in stable, committed gay relationships readily "[make] open arrangements for sex outside the couple," as a recent *New York Times* article put it; indeed, more than 40 percent have done so.

Meanwhile, large numbers of women in committed lesbian relationships seem to cease sexual activity altogether over time. These are not just male and female versions of a single simple thing called "homosexuality," let alone merely "homosexual" versions of a single simple thing called "sexuality"—they are profoundly different human experiences.

Bisexuality raises even more complicated questions, and it is the next frontier that church leaders, whatever their position on "homosexuality," will confront. Some Christian leaders have come to believe that blessing same-sex unions is the best pastoral response to those with a persistent same-sex orientation who seek covenant faithfulness. But what about someone who does not report a stable orientation? Should the church in any way steer them toward marriage to the opposite sex? Even the slightest bias toward male–female complementarity may soon be considered just as bigoted as believing that gay and lesbian relationships cannot be blessed at all.

This leads to the fourth term of the sexual-minority coalition: persons who experience themselves as transgendered (meaning a psychological dissonance, as distinct from the physical ambiguity of intersex persons)—"trapped" in the wrong body. This is yet another difficult pastoral challenge, since it is not about gender preferences in one's partners (transgendered people report all four possible combinations of "orientations") but about one's own identity as a man or woman. The reported experiences of transgender persons also raise the most complex hermeneutical questions, since there are not obvious biblical texts that address the issue. (Jesus' reference to "those who are born eunuchs" may well refer to the phenomenon of intersex births, known

Every one of us is a member of the coalition of human beings who feel out of place in our bodies east of Eden.

to ancients just as much as to us today.) How should the church compassionately respond to reports of intense psychological distress relating to one's biological or socially assigned gender?

And then we must attend to those who identify as "queer," "questioning," or "asexual"—who otherwise would check "none of the above" and see even this spectrum of categories as far too narrow to accommodate their personal experiences, desires, and preferences.

NOBODY'S BODY

There is really only one conviction that can hold this coalition of disparate human experiences together. And it is the irrelevance of bodies—specifically, the irrelevance of biological sexual differentiation in how we use our bodies.

What unites the LGBTQIA coalition is a conviction that human beings are not created male and female in any essential or important way. What matters is not one's body but one's heart—the seat of human will and desire, which only its owner can know.

Christians will have to choose between two consistent positions. One, which we believe Christians who affirm gay and lesbian unions will ultimately have to embrace, is to say that embodied sexual differentiation is irrelevant—completely, thoroughly, totally irrelevant—to covenant faithfulness.

The proof text for this view will be that in Christ, there is neither male nor female. And as with all readings based on proof texts, upholding it will require openly discarding a vast expanse of other biblical material, the many biblical voices (including Jesus') that affirm and elucidate the significance of male-and-female creation.

As this view gains traction in our culture, the created givenness of bodies must give way to the achievement of ascertaining, announcing, and fulfilling one's own internally discerned desires, with no normative reference to the body one happens to inhabit. It is no accident that as normative sexuality has been redefined, from an essentially exterior reality uniting male and female bodies to an essentially interior reality expressing one's heart, the charges of bigotry have been heard more fiercely against those who hold the traditional Christian view. How dare we Christians speak against any person's heart?

Marriage, which has always been "unequal," yoking together two very different kinds of bodies, must now be "equal," measured only by the sincerity of one's love and commitment. To insist on the importance of bodies is to challenge the sovereign self, to suggest that our ethical options are limited by something we did not choose.

There is one other consistent position that Christians can hold, though we will hold it at great social cost, at least for the foreseeable future: that bodies matter. Indeed, that both male and female bodies are of ultimate value and dignity—not a small thing given the continuing denigration of women around the world.

Indeed, that *matter* matters. For behind the dismissal of bodies is ultimately a gnostic distaste for embodiment in general. To uphold a biblical ethic on marriage is to affirm the sweeping scriptural witness—hardly a matter of a few isolated "thou shalt not" verses—that male and female together image God, that the creation of humanity as male and female is "very good," and that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18, NRSV).

Sexual differentiation (along with its crucial outcome of children, who have a biological connection to two parents but are not mirror images of either one) is not an accident of evolution or a barrier to fulfillment. It is in fact the way God is imaged, and the way fruitfulness, diversity, and abundance are sustained in the world.

AWAITING REDEMPTION

Can we hold this position and love our LGBTQIA neighbors? Yes. For we find ourselves on utterly familiar ground with our LGBTQIA neighbors, and they with us, when we turn from matters of the body to matters of the heart. All of us know, in the depths of our heart, that we are queer. Our yearnings, especially those bound up with our sexuality, are hardly ever fully satisfied by the biblical model of one man and one woman yoked together for life. Every one of us is a member of the coalition of human beings who feel out of place in our bodies east of Eden. And every one of us has fallen far short of honoring God and other human beings with our bodies.

This is especially, grievously so in a culture saturated with pornography, which threatens to make sexual gnostics of us all, chasing ecstasy further and further afield from the dignity and limits of bodies, male and female, given in covenant love.

Is there an easy way out of the current battles over sexuality? No. But there is a way through. A remnant, perhaps small and perhaps substantial, will continue to teach that we are created male and female, to bless the marriages that reunite those two broken halves, and to remind all, married and unmarried, that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage"—that ultimately our earthly eros only reflects the reunion promised between the Creator and his image bearers. Along the way, we all will be queer, groaning as we await the redemption of our bodies. To the LGBTQIA alliance, add an H—for this is what it is to be fully, incompletely, expectantly Human.

Q + I + A = H

BY **Andy Crouch** EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Foreign-Born Preachers in the Pulpit

How should churches and seminaries respond to immigrant pastors who minister in the United States illegally?

SUPPORT REFORM

Kedri Metzger is senior attorney with Religious Worker Immigrant Legal Services of World Relief, based in Baltimore.

Immigrants are strengthening the church and revitalizing some denominations with significant growth. Many of these churches are started by local leaders who emphasize evangelism and know the culture and language of growing immigrant populations in the United States. But some of these pastors lack valid immigration status and face a complex and painful dilemma.

Alex and his family crossed the border illegally when he was an infant. Years later, after becoming a Christian, he began a ministry in his community that has grown into two separate church sites. Alex serves as a volunteer, unable to work since he doesn't have the necessary immigration papers. He has a family, including a child with Down syndrome who is a U.S. citizen. This complicates his situation even more: If Alex leaves the States, his child would lose access to crucial medical care. Alex has considered bringing himself to the attention of immigration authorities to plead his case before an immigration judge. But this would risk being deported away from his child, to a country he doesn't remember.

Like Alex, some pastors came to the United States as small children. Some intentionally crossed the border undetected, while others entered on valid visas and later lost their immigration status through technical mistakes made by themselves or church leaders. Under current law, there are no remedies for these mistakes.

Those without valid immigration status have to complete the immigration process abroad. If a pastor leaves the country to do so, he will likely face a 10-year bar from applying for reentry. This leaves pastors stuck: unable to correct their status from inside the United States, yet barred from reentering if they leave.

How should a denomination respond? The first step is to locate competent immigration legal advice. It cannot be left to ethnic ministry directors, church planters, pastors, and other church leaders to advise these individuals on their immigration legal status.

If the church helps, are they violating the law? Church leaders often worry that they are not submitting to authorities if they allow pastors or other volunteers to participate in church life. But the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) does not require church leaders or members to report pastors who are here illegally. Currently, the INA says only that churches cannot employ individuals who do not have permission to work inside the United States.

Churches and denominations have a great deal of freedom to develop policy and practice. We must challenge ourselves to pursue the facts and understand the biblical perspective. The church should seek to balance care for our brothers and sisters with their responsibility under the law. We must wrestle with our commitment to the mission of the gospel and consider the kingdom purposes of these "fishers of men" in our midst.

TEACH COMPLIANCE

Mark Tooley, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, is author of *Taking Back the United Methodist Church*.

Churches are called to minister to all persons to whom they have access. This includes persons who are in this country illegally. Outreach includes gospel proclamation, inviting others into the life of the church, and charity when needed.

When it comes to illegal immigration, the church should teach compliance with the existing law, even to those who are pastors and ministry leaders with significant responsibility. Such counsel may include helping illegal immigrants seek legal status. Or it may mean suggesting a vocation that requires returning home, where the need of service may be greater. The church also needs to reach immigrants from non-Christian backgrounds, which is more challenging but probably more important.

As Hispanic immigration continues to slow, churches will need to get better at reaching immigrants from other cultures. After Mexico, Asia is the largest source of new immigrants. Churches will also have to be open to learning from immigrant missionaries and pastors who are here legally, and who are likely more effective in reaching this demographic than most white congregations.

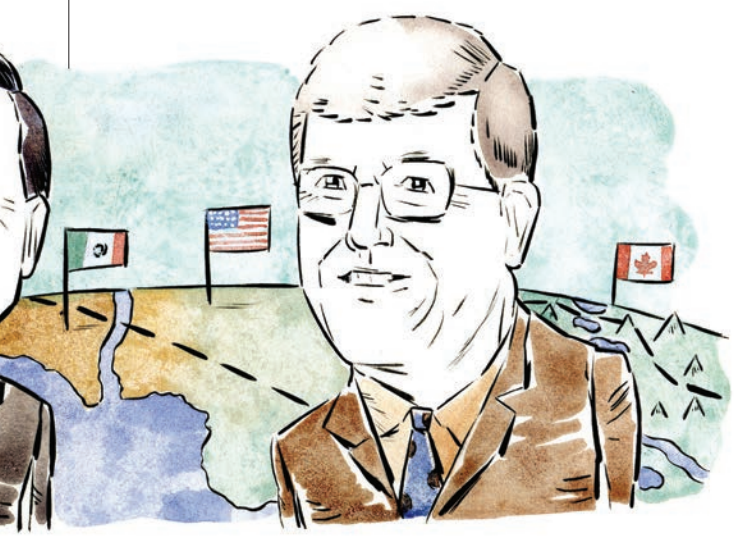
Most traditional forms of American Protestant worship are not appealing to immigrants. Global South Christianity is overwhelmingly charismatic and/or Pentecostal. Many vibrant, growing immigrant congregations in America are too. Traditional Protestant and evangelical congregations, if they want to attract immigrants, may have to adjust their worship style or create new worship opportunities that appeal to immigrants and immigrant pastors in both form and language. Liberal congregations that are the most politically outspoken about justice for illegal immigrants preach a social gospel that is not appealing to most immigrants.

Effective ministry to immigrants also precludes romanticizing their experience. They are simply people and fellow sinners, exemplifying a full range of vices and virtues, as all peoples do.

Breaking the civil law is a sin according to every major Christian tradition. Even as churches prioritize gospel outreach, they must remind immigrant pastors who are not legal residents that as Christian disciples, they need to resolve their legal status.

To acclaim them as victims meriting redress is dishonest and points them away from the obedience, service, and self-denial that are central to following Jesus. Some individuals may follow conscience by returning to their homeland. Churches should help equip them for ministry and economic survival if they do.

As for pastors who lawfully seek to remain, churches should offer appropriate counsel, including reminding them of their civil obligations in a new land. What does it mean to be Christian in America today? A century ago, churches taught immigrants how to become American. Today churches need to teach immigrants and natives how to witness and prevail in a secular culture increasingly hostile to the gospel.



AMANDA DUFFY

UPHOLD THEIR MINISTRY

Mathew Staver is chairman of Liberty Counsel and board member and chief legal counsel of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

Around the world, millions are leaving their home countries and migrating to new lands. Many are Christians or come to faith after arriving in their new home, and they are planting churches and doing ministry among their own people.

This global phenomenon has spawned the pioneer field of diaspora missiology, which appreciates these communities as potential partners in the worldwide mission of the church.

In the United States, immigrant churches—a significant percentage of which include members who are not legal residents—are revitalizing Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. It is now no longer a question of *whether* churches and seminaries should be engaged with immigrant churches, but rather *how* to meet the daunting ministry challenges that they present.

We are witnessing all sorts of educational programs spring up, designed to equip lay leaders and pastors. Numerous projects target the personal and family needs of immigrants: food and clothing, basic medical care, after-school tutoring, English classes, and legal advice. It is not surprising that many denominations and the National Association of Evangelicals have passed resolutions favoring comprehensive immigration reform. Education and compassion are the order of the day.

Some criticize these measures, convinced that respect for immigration law should be the criterion for dealing with such Christians and their pastors. Anyone conversant with that legislation would recognize that nothing that has been mentioned is illegal. Church bodies can do a lot within the limits of the law. A pastor's immigration status remains within the purview of federal authorities.

The situation for seminaries is different from church bodies'. Some seminaries fear losing federal funding for scholarships if these pastors enroll in their academic programs. Others worry about the loss of donations from conservative constituencies.

Seminaries that desire to serve the immigrant community have developed several avenues for training leaders without valid legal residence. Some offer nondegree tracks at a level commensurate with the educational background of many of these pastors. Others simply do not ask students about their status, mirroring many institutions of higher learning. It is understood that they cannot qualify for certain scholarships. Several states now grant access to university programs and tuition benefits to students who do not have legal residence. Seminaries are trying to figure out how to fit into this educational landscape.

Changes to immigration laws are on the horizon. Are churches prepared to help immigrant pastors solve any problems with their legal status once reform comes? Will seminaries be willing to invest financially in this low-income group? To prepare and support these pastors within an outdated and unworkable immigration system is complicated. Coming days will yield other challenges. But one thing is for sure: These pastors will be important coworkers in the future of the church.

The Dangerous Wager of Success

How far will women—and all of us—go to prove we're in control?

Just before her tenure ended as secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton fainted in her home and suffered a concussion. Unlike in 2009, when she fractured her elbow and returned to work days later, Clinton remained in the hospital for weeks. Her slow recovery prompted media to wonder about her work life.

Hailed as the most widely traveled secretary of state, Clinton represents for many people the strength of female ambition. After her release from the hospital, *The New York Times* crooned over her "herculean work habits" and "indomitable stamina and work ethic." In spite of the adverse effects that her grueling schedule was imposing on her health, and the consensus among her advisers that she needed rest, Clinton nevertheless enjoyed "enduring status as a role model."

Such effusive praise for workaholism? It should have shocked me less. In a meritocracy such as the modern West, the biggest piece of the pie is supposedly reserved for the hardest working. Erin Callan, the former CFO of Lehman Brothers, credited her professional success to her indefatigable work ethic. Only after her divorce and resignation in 2008 could she admit the underbelly of that ethic. In a recent *New York Times* piece, "Is There Life After Work?" she wrote, "When I left my job, it devastated me. . . . I did not know how to value who I was versus what I did. What I did *was* who I was."

Despite the potential catastrophes of overwork, many of today's professional women are tempted to it. Is this because we're grossly underrepresented in high-level positions in the public and private sectors? Because we are still earning less than our male counterparts? Because successful women like Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, keep telling us to mind the "ambition gap"? Or, do we overwork simply because it's so easy to do, given that our office follows us around via a laptop and cell phone?

Hard work, *overwork* even, seems to pave the road to achievement. But if Clinton's and Callan's cases prove that consuming work habits jeopardize the health of our bodies and our relationships, might we not be driving a Faustian bargain of success? Furthermore, isn't there more we stand to lose when we allow work to bleed into the margins of rest and recovery?

The Scriptures open at the act of creation: it's a divine work week. Six days God labors, but on the seventh day, he rests. He blesses the seventh day as a holy day, a day "set apart" from sweat and commerce, labor and trade, and commends to Israel his pattern of work and rest: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8, ESV). But the Israelites were notoriously delinquent at their practice of Sabbath. It seems that they, like us, were unnerved by the divine command to depend.

Sabbath, as the practice of regularly retreating from our rituals of work, teaches us that in our absence, the world still spins on its axis. Apparently the sun remembers to rise and set without our reminding it to check its day planner. Sabbath is a similar kind of celestial event. Like the North Star, it rises every week from the horizon of work to teach us what is most fundamental to nature's law: The Creator, not the creature, sustains the breath and being of the universe.

Isn't it true that much of our overwork and resistance to Sabbath is driven by nagging fear? Aren't we worried that stopping, even for a day a week or a week of the year, ensures we'll be left behind by our 24/7 colleagues? Doesn't rest risk our opportunities for future advancement, even imperil our financial security?

Sabbath bids us to live beyond these fears.

And Sabbath has always been a transaction of trust. When we pause, we create necessary and holy distance from the petulant idea that we are ultimately in charge of anything. When we rest, we remember our limited role as creatures. Sabbath is the habit of humility we can wear every week, forcing us to relinquish illusions of our indispensability. In humble worship, and rest, we finally learn to remember that we are productive only as God establishes the work of our hands (Ps. 90:17).

How beautifully ironic, then, that on the Sabbath of darkness between Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection—on the occasion of human inactivity—God prepared to inaugurate the New Creation. Like all lessons of Sabbath, this event reminds us that God's kingdom advances by dint of his herculean work—never ours, male or female.

Best of all, the enduring honor will be his.

Jen Pollock Michel, based in Toronto, writes regularly for Her.meneutics. She is writing a book for InterVarsity Press about desire.

When we pause on Sabbath, we create necessary and holy distance from the petulant idea that we are ultimately in charge of anything.

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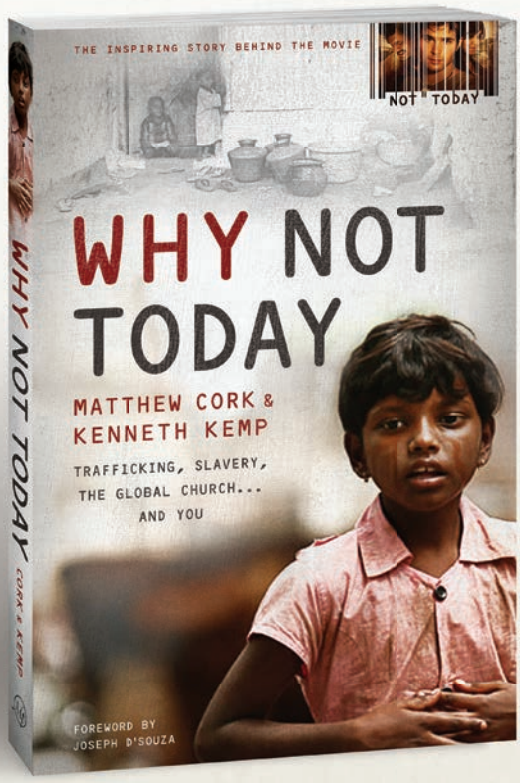

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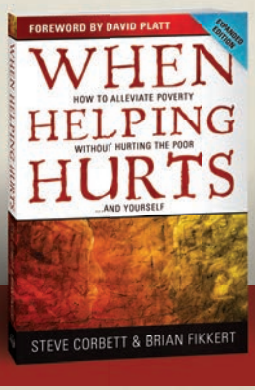
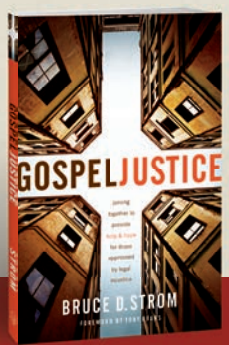




MOODY PUBLISHERS

Real Martyrs Don't Murder

A new book suggests otherwise, but it's dead wrong.

In January 1996, I joined 60 Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders at a conference sponsored by Freedom House. The purpose of the meeting? To spotlight the persecution of Christians around the world and to call religious leaders to advocate for these believers' right to practice their religion freely.

After several horrifying reports, moderator Charles Colson called for our comments. One response sticks in my memory. "We must remember," opined the prominent leader, "that we Christians in America are persecuted as well."

Colson cut him off: There was no moral equivalence between the marginalization of U.S. Christians by secularized institutions and the torture, imprisonment, and executions faced by Christian minorities elsewhere. Chuck was right—and would still be right today.

The early martyrs talked about battles, warfare, and victory, but all of their "combat language" was spiritualized as they peaceably emulated Jesus' sacrifice. That's not always the case today. New Year's Day 2011, a car bomb killed about 20 worshipers at a Christian church in Alexandria, Egypt. Despite Christian leaders' pleas that the violence should stop with these deaths, local Christians ransacked a mosque, burning its holy books.

Notre Dame University professor Candida Moss uses that anecdote to introduce her new book, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (HarperOne). She believes that the "violent" response of Christians sprang from seeing themselves as a persecuted minority, a perspective that she believes grew out of a flawed understanding of church history. Moss wants to undermine the martyrdom "mythology" that feeds this sense of persecution. But she goes beyond the pale when she writes, "The rhetoric of persecution legitimates and condones retributive violence."

The martyr tradition does nothing of the sort. This is why Egyptian Christian leaders argued against a violent response. The authentic martyr tradition emulates Jesus, who remained silent, "like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb" (Isa. 53:7, RSV).

Moss's book has both pluses and minuses: She corrects the muddled picture of the age of martyrs that hangs on the walls of popular Christian imagination. Persecution was not a constant threat for the church between Jesus and Constantine. There were times when authorities demanded that Christians conform to pagan ways, but these were sporadic and many times not focused solely on Christians.

On the other hand, Moss gives little credit to the oral traditions behind the martyr stories. Surely we can strip away some pious embroidery without employing a steely skepticism that reduces our certainty to the bare fact that some people were executed.

Moss rightly points out the ancient tradition of the noble death and shows how Christians' willingness to die was part of that larger picture.

Unfortunately, she defines *martyrdom* and *persecution* so narrowly that few instances fit. (My dictionary offers much more generous definitions than her book.) She thus casts the deaths of many Christian martyrs as *prosecution* rather than *persecution*—that is, they were punished for violating laws, rather than singled out for their beliefs. But in reality, Christians' loyalties to their heavenly King often threaten the powers that be. And it is not at all unusual for *persecution* to take the form of *prosecution*.

Moss worries that when Christians see themselves as part of the martyr tradition, they turn combative. But that same belief may more frequently lead Christians to accommodate evil, as did many Christians who thought the slave trade too entrenched to overthrow. We must learn to resist evil without demonizing or polarizing.

Michael Glen Bell and Duane W. H. Arnold's new song collection, *The Project: Martyrs Prayers* (*themartyrsproject.com*), finds this balance. They have posted two sample videos on YouTube—artfully filmed and musically sensitive vehicles for the prayers of two martyred archbishops, 20th-century Salvadoran Óscar Romero and 12th-century Englishman Thomas Becket.

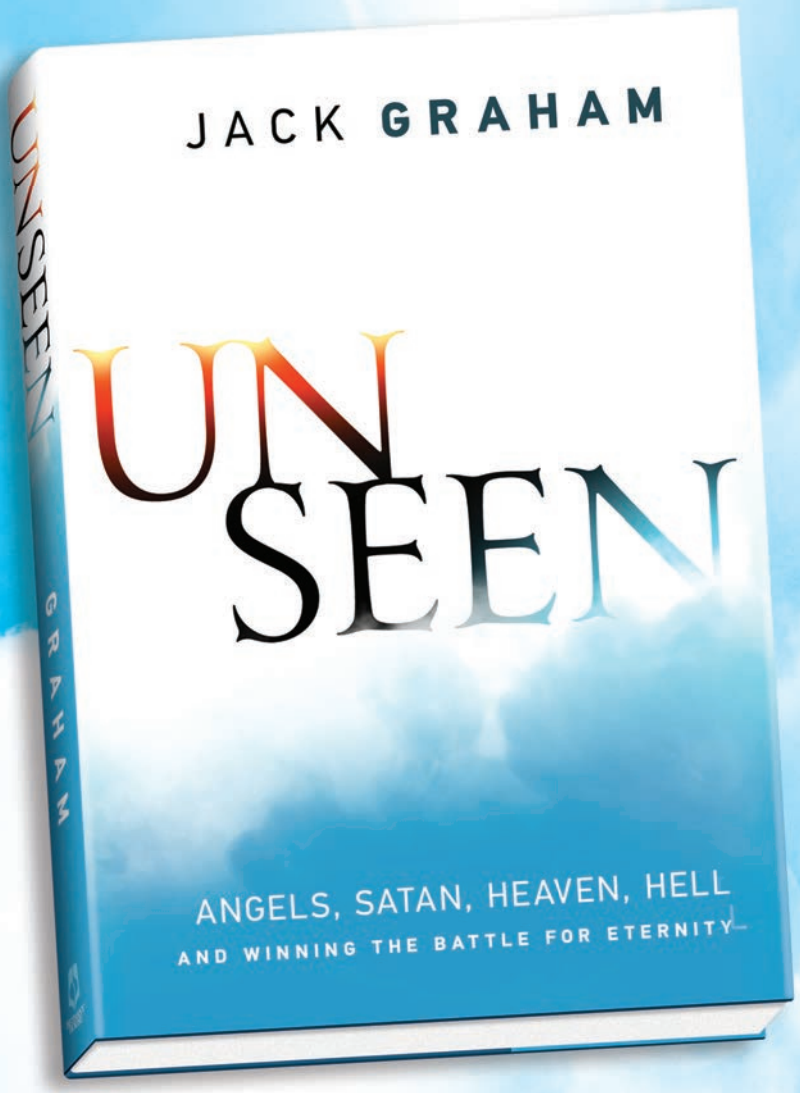
Candida Moss's logic would say these two were not killed for what they believed. Instead, they were the victims of power struggles. But surely it was their Christian faith that made them stand up for the church, the truth, and (in Romero's case) the poor. Because of their faith in Christ, they used their ecclesiastical power to resist the abusive power of the state. Each believed he was sacrificing his life for Jesus.

Moss may define martyrdom too narrowly, but she is right to spotlight two outstanding leaders from the age of martyrs, who show best how to respond to persecution. Justin and Tertullian argued for truth, using "the rhetoric and ideals of the Roman Empire to make their case that Christians should be tolerated," she writes. "Perhaps if we are to appeal to the history of persecution in the early church, this should be our model."

The early martyrs talked about battles, warfare, and victory, but they peaceably emulated Jesus' sacrifice.

A BRUTAL MURDER CHALLENGED EVERYTHING HE THOUGHT HE KNEW ABOUT THE

SUPERNATURAL WORLD



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AMANDA DUFFY

Our Almost National Anthem

The 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' has marched its way through American history. But does it do justice to Jesus? By Allen C. Guelzo

I learned most of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" before I started grade school. The lyrics were part of a special supplement to *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, published at the beginning of the Civil War centennial. I must have read that supplement to pieces.

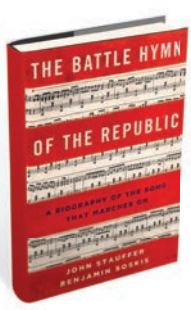
But the "Battle Hymn" was burned into my consciousness by the version we sang with the Youth Orchestra of Philadelphia in 1971, a sprawling, all-flags-flying arrangement by Peter J. Wilhousky. It's the version that high-school band, chorus, and orchestra directors whip out whenever they need a closer to rouse their audience to a standing-ovation pitch. And if it weren't for baseball games, tourists from afar would think the "Battle Hymn" rather than "The Star-Spangled Banner" was our national anthem.

Of course, there was a moment when the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" nearly *did* become our national anthem. This discovery is one of hundreds of insights gleaned from John Stauffer and Benjamin Soskis's book, **The Battle Hymn of the Republic: A Biography of the Song That Marches On** (Oxford University Press) ★★★★½.

The "Battle Hymn," offspring of frontier revival meetings, really did originate as a hymn. Waves of improvement and variation shaped the words into its familiar rhythmic pattern, with a long stress on the first syllable—"Say, brothers, won't you meet us over on the other shore"—and ending with a call-and-response-like chorus possibly copied from African American sources: "There we'll shout and give him glory, / There we'll shout and give him glory, / There we'll shout and give him glory, / For glory is his own."

The original hymn also inspired parodies. At the outbreak of the Civil War, soldiers of the 12th Massachusetts produced their own doggerel version, "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave." The butt of their joke was a Scottish-born recruit in the regiment. But the invocation of "John Brown" almost immediately raised the specter of a more famous John Brown, the abolitionist who had initiated the failed raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry. By July 1861, "John Brown's Body" had sprouted wings and become a rally song so popular, "one can hardly walk on the streets for five minutes without hearing it whistled or hummed."

AN ADAPTABLE ANTHEM



It remained only for Julia Ward Howe, in that same year, to fashion words that transfigured an abolitionist's corpse into an ode to crusading militarism. Howe was the wife of one of Brown's Brahmin financial backers, and had actually met Brown in 1857. Prompted by a comment from theologian James Freeman

Clarke—"write some good words for that stirring tune"—Howe wrote out "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in a single burst of predawn creativity. Then she published its five verses in the February 1862 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* for the princely sum of five dollars, and without a byline.

The words took off at once, echoing across the White House, the House of Representatives, and throughout the wartime North. The "Battle Hymn" did not, however, freeze completely into the shape Howe had given it, and the story of its political and cultural afterlife forms the largest and most interesting part of the book.

Hard-line abolitionists, who felt that it did not go quite far enough in its militancy, were among the first to propose revisions. The Hutchinson Family Singers, who performed an abolitionist-themed entertainment show, insisted that the last stanza, where Howe urged us to "die to make men free," ought to instead urge that we *live* to make men free. (This is an alteration that keeps being proposed, inserted, debated, and opposed even today.)

Republicans adopted the hymn as a campaign song for as long as the bloody shirt of the Civil War could be waved successfully. Various boosters and flag-wavers used it as a patriotic anthem in the Spanish-American War and World War I, as a crowd-pleaser for Billy Sunday and Barry Goldwater, and as an anthem for "Bull Moose" Progressives. Winston Churchill specified that it be sung at his London memorial service in 1965.

Today we are likelier to condemn the 'Battle Hymn' because so many of its lyrics offend the sensibilities of our postpatriotic elites.

Its words gave titles to productions as various as John Steinbeck's 1939 Popular Front novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and the 1957 cold war flick *Battle Hymn*. And it continued to generate parodies, from Mark Twain's pout over Gilded Age wealth ("In a sordid slime harmonious, / Greed was born in yonder ditch") to college fight songs ("Glory, Glory, Oh the Hawk Will Never Die").

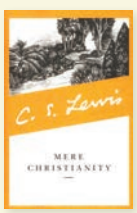
The "Battle Hymn" rewrite that most interests Stauffer and Soskis, however, is the labor-militant version, "Solidarity Forever," produced by Ralph Chaplin for the International Workers of the World in 1915 ("When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run, / There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun").

FEEBLE THEOLOGY

But the strangest aspect of the song's appeal is its curiously feeble theology. Stauffer and Soskis give this only a cursory glance, but anyone who parses the words of Howe's poem will find little but puzzlement for their reward. The first verse is pure millennialism—"Mine eyes have seen the coming of the glory of the Lord"—and it is a Revelation 19 millennialism, complete with Christ treading "the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty." However, the camp that Howe envisions in the second verse more nearly resembles the army of the Potomac, encircling the defenses of Washington in late 1861 "by the dim and flaring lamps," than

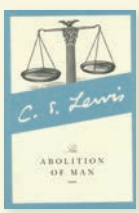
MY TOP 5 C. S. LEWIS BOOKS

By Alister McGrath, author of *C. S. Lewis—A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (Tyndale, 2013)



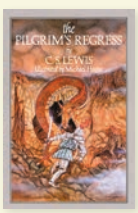
MERE CHRISTIANITY
(HARPERONE)
Still one of the finest and most widely read explanations and defenses of the faith. Its shrewd approach and luminous imagery retain much of their power to excite and inform, even 60 years after it was written.

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE
(HARPERCOLLINS)
The first and best of the Chronicles of Narnia introduces us to the mysterious realm of Narnia and the children who explore and ultimately change it. One of the best illustrations of the apologetic power of a good story.



THE ABOLITION OF MAN
(HARPERONE)
Not an easy book, yet it represents a masterful critique of certain forms of naturalism and educational philosophies based on them. Well worth reading slowly and thoughtfully.

THE LAST BATTLE
(HARPERCOLLINS)
The seventh and final book in the Chronicles of Narnia sets out the hope of a New Narnia. Although controversial at points, Lewis's exploration of eschatological transformation has led many to explore Christianity in greater detail.



THE PILGRIM'S REGRESS
(EERDMANS)
Also a difficult book, but one that repays close study, and the first that Lewis published under his own name. He uses the image of a road to explain his conversion to Christianity and includes a masterful critique of Freudianism, set alongside a powerful depiction of the "heart's desire" and its implications for our quest for God.

the marriage supper of the Lamb. The third verse gets even more Civil War–specific, as Howe reads "a burning Gospel writ in fiery rows of steel." And in the fourth verse, Christ, as though he were a regimental bugler, has "sounded out the trumpet that shall never call retreat," a summons Howe longs to answer in terms both "swift" and "jubilant."

But in the fifth verse, the theology really runs off the rails:

> In the beauty of the lilies,
> Christ was born across the seas
> With a glory in his bosom that
> tranfigures you and me
> As he died to make men holy,
> let us die to make men free,
> Our God is marching on.

Whence comes this "beauty of the lilies," rather than a stable, as though Jesus was born in a greenhouse? What "glory" does this Man of Sorrows have in his bosom, apart from the divine nature of his incarnation? And isn't redemption, rather than transfiguration, what we want from that divine nature? Christ does not inspire us to make us better; he takes us as sinners and pleads for us before the bar of God's justice. And by what rationale does his death to justify us (which is not the same thing as making us *holy*) dictate our dying to "make men free"? There is nothing wrong with self-sacrificing behavior. But let us not imagine that even the noblest self-sacrifice stands on any equal ground with Jesus' death. Jesus, as J. Gresham Machen remarked (and Stauffer and Soskis suspect Machen had the "Battle Hymn" in mind), is the *object* of our faith, not the *example* for it.

We are likelier today to condemn the "Battle Hymn" not because of the mishmash it makes of Christian doctrine, but because so many of its lyrics offend the sensibilities of our postpatriotic elites. Tweaking those sensibilities may provide a pleasurably naughty reason for singing the "Battle Hymn" wherever they can hear it, but it does not do sound Christian theology much favor.

Allen C. Guelzo is the Henry R. Luce III Professor of the Civil War Era and director of Civil War Era Studies at Gettysburg College. He is the author, most recently, of *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (Knopf).

Samaritan's Counsel

Bruce Strom's legal nonprofit helps the ones whom others pass by. By David Skeel

With hundreds of churches as clients and a case that reached the Supreme Court, Bruce D. Strom had a law practice that both Christian and secular lawyers would covet. But some 13 years ago, his career took an unexpected turn.

After a sequence of events that included two rainbows and the conception of twins after seven years of trying, Strom launched the Illinois-based organization Administer Justice, "a comprehensive program of educational outreach, legal assistance, financial counseling, and conflict resolution services" for clients who otherwise could not afford them. Three years later, God "threw him overboard," and Strom found himself running the ministry full-time at poverty-level wages. **Gospel Justice: Joining Together to Provide Help and Hope for Those Oppressed by Legal Injustice** (Moody) ★★★½☆ interweaves the story of Administer Justice (which takes its name from Zechariah 7:9) with a call for lawyers and nonlawyers alike to "leave the comfort of the boat to step into the storm of injustice."

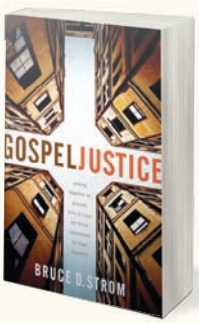
Each of the book's ten chapters takes its cue from a character or other feature of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan who, unlike the priest and Levite who pass by, comes to the aid of a beaten and robbed man. In one chapter, the Samaritan himself teaches the importance of taking risks to assist others; a chapter on the robbers explores how America's poor and aged are often taken advantage of; the priest is an object lesson in making excuses for not helping; and the Levite provides a lesson on harsh views of justice. Even the inn where the injured man stayed makes an appearance (a symbol of the church's responsibility to provide refuge), as does the Jericho Road (the need for social change).

Strom is fond of clever wordplay. He tells one client that if *justice* is "just ice," she will be *sinking*—that is, "sin" will be "king." A few pages later, he warns that *justice* should not be pronounced "just is." "History" is "His story." Readers who prefer such devices in moderation will be relieved that the frequency diminishes as the book progresses.

Gospel Justice is sprinkled liberally with stories of men and women served by Administer Justice, often in moving ways. It also exposes systemic abuses—such as zombie debt collectors, who send threatening letters to everyone who has the same name as a person who owes an old, unpaid debt—and advocates legal changes to address problems that affect large groups of vulnerable citizens. Administer Justice's most controversial practice is assisting undocumented/illegal immigrants without insisting that they turn themselves in. Strom gives a spirited defense. "Our office obeys the authorities," he writes. "Where benefits are permitted we enforce these benefits, and where they are denied we pursue legitimate alternatives. But the system is broken."

If Strom has his way, Christians will work not just for "faith informed" justice, but for "faith transformed" justice. (*Gospel Justice* gives a detailed chart of the differences between them, but does not explore the material in the text.) At Administer Justice, faith-transformed justice means beginning each consultation with prayer if the client is willing, and integrating the spiritual and practical dimensions of the ministry, so that they connect as closely as (in the words of Gary Haugen of International Justice Mission) breathing in and breathing out.

Administer Justice is one of the largest and most effective justice ministries to emerge around the country in the past decade or so. For those called to take the plunge, *Gospel Justice* is an inspiring account.



David Skeel is a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Struggling on the Streets

from **HOMELESS AT HARVARD: FINDING FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP ON THE STREETS OF HARVARD SQUARE**

JOHN CHRISTOPHER FRAME (ZONDERVAN, 208 PAGES)

Just like many of us, Neal had regrets about his life and questions about the future. I don't think Neal wanted to drink like he did. He just didn't think he had much of a choice. He seemed to be sensitive to God's desire for his life. Sometimes he'd say things that gave a glimpse into the struggles he had with himself, such as, "Every time I complain that I'm broke, I think about kids with cancer. And I have to apologize to the Lord."

And one time Neal said to me, "We should really be spreading the news of Christ. We talk about it if someone brings it up, but we should be asking people if they know Christ."

I'd later learn that, in his younger years, Neal had considered going into the ministry.

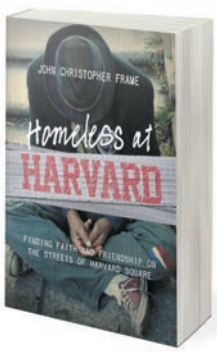
Neal had lots of friends in the homeless community, as well as friends who were not homeless, such as Amy, who after having met us, stopped by often on her bike. Sometimes Neal met Christian visitors who would chat for a while and buy him something to eat.

Although Amy and others had the capacity to support Neal in ways that his street friends couldn't, the atmosphere of street living was difficult. I remember thinking, after my first week on the streets, that I had never heard the f-word more in my life. And normal street talk often included crass conversations and degrading sexual comments about others. Being around profanity and gaining an insider's view of the street culture affected, to a certain extent, my own thinking and attitude. . . . I'd find myself thinking in the voice of someone on the streets or, at times, felt myself agitated with others. . . .

The deeper people sink into the pit of despair on the streets—pulled into thinking that . . . street life is not just legitimate but just right for them—the more their hopes and dreams die for anything different. I think down deep, even people on the streets knew that. "You can see how people lose hope out here and start drinking," Chubby John commented, when he and I were speaking with the pastor of the Outdoor Church one Sunday.

For some, alcohol is an escape from past failures, daily anxieties, or fears of the future. . . .

Neal would tell me, just a few weeks later from a hospital bed, that drinking with friends on the streets helped being on the streets. In my opinion, it was that very element of "help" that, in reality, actually hurt.



I asked Neal what he thought about his drinking in light of his faith. He wanted to stop drinking, but couldn't figure out why he couldn't. "'Cause you keep picking it back up," I said, realizing that my comment was insensitive. . . .

"There's nothing that you've said that I don't already know," Neal replied. Then he reminded me that he was a philosopher and could help answer any questions that I had.

REAL AUSTIN

The Homeless and the Image of God

ANNIE VOCATURE BULLOCK (CASCADE BOOKS)

I hesitate to recommend this book—even though it is the best book I have read on the subject—because to do so might imply that I am putting into practice the lessons it imparts. That would be a lie. In fact, whatever I might say about the book is fraught with difficulty. I could observe that the author is too hard on herself, but maybe that's just another way of saying "too hard on me." I *can* say that it's a short book. You can read it in an evening, but you'll think about it for a long time thereafter.

RENEWING THE EVANGELICAL MISSION

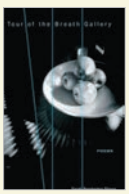
EDITED BY RICHARD LINTS (EERDMANS)

The all-star lineup for this volume was assembled to "honor the legacy of David Wells and his constructive and critical voice for global evangelicalism" (that odor as you turn the pages is the whiff of hagiography) and to "think about the theological mission of evangelicalism and its role as one of the important dialogue partners of global Christianity." Fortunately, you don't need to share the distinguished contributors' high regard for Wells in order to benefit from their insights here. This book itself could serve as the point of departure for a seminar, a reading group, or a high-level Sunday school class. Essential reading.

TOUR OF THE BREATH GALLERY

Poems

SARAH PEMBERTON STRONG (TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY PRESS)



This is the latest volume in the Walt McDonald First-Book Series in Poetry (which earlier gave us Thom Satterlee's memorable debut, *Burning Wyclif*). Series editor Robert A. Fink eschews the gush with which such projects are often launched; instead, his six-page introduction is a model of attentive reading. We learn, along the way, that Sarah Pemberton Strong "operates a one-woman plumbing company" (see "Why I Learned the Trade"). If you start with that poem (p. 45), turn next to "Joseph Attempts to Teach the Boy Something Useful" (p. 59, and yes, *that* Joseph, and *that* Boy).

Mourning Melissa

Frank Page grapples with his daughter's suicide—and ministers to others considering the same choice.

Interview by Matt Reynolds

INTERVIEW

Distress and Melissa," writes Frank Page, "were rarely very far away from each other." Some factors, such as cancer, were beyond her control, but sinful habits and destructive life choices also played a pivotal role. Distress and Melissa remained entwined until Page's daughter committed suicide at age 32.

After years of grief, Page, a longtime pastor and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, tells his family's story in **Melissa: A Father's Lessons from a Daughter's Suicide** (B&H Books). CT associate editor Matt Reynolds spoke with Page about Melissa's turbulent life, the aftermath of her suicide, and the challenge of shepherding other fragile families through seasons of darkness.

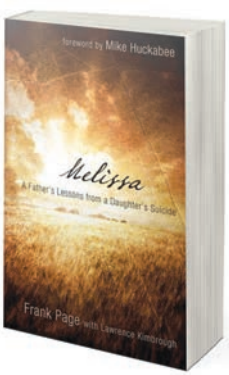
Frank Page and daughter Melissa

Why have you written this book, given the painful memories involved?

At the outset, I thought it might be therapeutic for me. And so I began just writing, thinking it might help me deal with the loss of a daughter. But then I quickly began to realize that so many people are dealing with this. So I decided to put aside my pride, my love for privacy, and even a protective spirit toward my daughter. I decided that the best way to honor her memory was by helping people in the name of the Lord.

Why were you so candid about Melissa's chronic patterns of sin and disobedience?

I really felt that if this book was going to touch lives, it was going to have to be transparent. In the Christian community, sometimes, there's a lack of transparency and a lack of honesty, and it would have been false to try to pull a curtain over the reality of her life.



How has your family struggled through the sorrow of Melissa's suicide?

From early on, we resolved that we would not blame each other. We all recognize we could have done things better. I could have been a better father. My daughters perhaps could have done something different to help their sister. But we also realize that usually, honestly, we did the best we knew at the time.

We talk about Melissa. We miss her, and at holidays and birthdays, we talk about how there's a place at the table missing. We pray together. And we've had to ask: *Do we believe what we've taught, preached, read, and said all these years? Does God really come through in the dark times?* And the answer is he does. His grace is sufficient.

I still ask the "what-if" questions. I catch myself thinking things might have turned out differently if only I had done this better or that more. But we can't allow ourselves to stay preoccupied this way. It's self-destructive. So while I have certain regrets, I really try not to deal with them too long, and then I try to refocus on the things of the Lord. Otherwise, you'll only allow the Evil One to keep digging into your conscience, and it will destroy you.

Has this experience altered your approach to God's Word?

My devotional life has always been strong, but Melissa's suicide has definitely changed it. I was reading in John 11 about Lazarus coming back to life, and of course that just jumps alive. So have the words of Jesus, in that same passage, that he is the resurrection and the life, and that whoever comes to him will never die. Passages about life, and life eternal, jump off the pages of God's Word in a more profound way than ever before. Passages of comfort in the Psalms are far more powerful now.

Plenty of people want to minister to suicide-stricken families, but they're not sure what to do or say. What would you tell them?

Don't let an awkward situation dissuade you from active Christian ministry to hurting people. If you really want to minister to someone who's going through this, be there for them. The ministry of presence is powerful. You may not have all the right words to say, and that's okay. Are you there for them? Are you praying with them?

We had friends come to visit immediately after Melissa's suicide. I don't think they ever said anything profound, but their presence was profound. Their love for us was so obvious. They were there to do anything they could. So if you or your family has suffered in this way, let people love you.

And if you're trying to minister to someone who's gone through it and that person exhibits anger, let them express that anger. Take whatever abuse they may shout at you. Just know it's *them* hurting, and that hurting people sometimes hurt other people.

To those who are considering suicide, and their families and friends, what advice and encouragement would you offer?

Start with the friends you can truly count on. Be honest with them. Develop a circle of prayer partners who can talk to you and encourage you. And if you know anyone considering suicide, get them the Christ-centered help they really need.

Please don't believe that suicide is the only option. It's a permanent solution to a temporary problem. I have found that the vast majority of people who commit suicide have come to a place where they have lost touch with reality. So before you get to that point, listen carefully to that circle of family and friends. Do not listen to the Evil One's lies. He comes to kill, to steal, and to destroy. Christ has come to give life.

No Such Mercy

Inside the frightening—but biblical—moral logic of *Breaking Bad*. By David Zahl

You might not expect an Emmy-nominated tastemaker to tell *The New York Times*, "I want to believe there's a heaven. But I can't not believe there's a hell." Yet that's exactly how Vince Gilligan, the creator of *Breaking Bad*, summed up his personal philosophy in 2011. The quote should not surprise anyone familiar with the show, which makes its final, infernal push this August.

For four and a half seasons, Gilligan has told the story of Walter White, a docile chemistry teacher who, after receiving a terminal diagnosis, turns to cooking methamphetamine (crystal meth) to provide for his family. As he develops a taste for the trade, Walt discovers a gift for deception—and self-deception—taking him down a path that turns "Mr. Chips into Scarface," as Gilligan's original pitch put it. Filter that premise through the severity of Cormac McCarthy and the dry humor of the Coen Brothers, and you're in for a compelling ride.

AMC debuted *Breaking Bad* when the cable network was fresh off the success of their first foray into original programming, *Mad Men*, and *Breaking Bad* appeared to be cast from the same mold. These were television series as serialized novels, exploring both grand visions and intimate corners of characters' inner and outer lives.

It's no coincidence that the revitalized format features antiheroes like Tony Soprano and Don Draper. The extended run time lends itself to complicated protagonists, whose humanity is never in question but whose behavior keeps viewers guessing. As both perpetrators and victims, they can be reprehensible one moment, vulnerable the next, capable of premeditated malice and violence as well as tenderness and charity.

Breaking Bad may be the apogee of this pattern. When we first meet him, Walt is a fairly decent guy, a bit sullen and overproud, but by no means the villain he is by the end of season four. *Breaking Bad* embraces the same loosely biblical anthropology as its predecessors: people as neither strictly good nor evil but dual-natured and often in conflict with themselves. And like *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad* works as a commentary on the illusions of the self-made man. In both cases, what looks like an ascent (increased power, wealth, and confidence) is in fact the opposite.

But where *Mad Men* can play on the charms of postwar Manhattan, *Breaking Bad* looks to the blighted vistas of present-day Albuquerque and the surrounding desert. As such, it is a far less benign (and popular) affair. If, as critic Daniel Mendelsohn has suggested, *Mad Men* is partly interested in depicting boomers' parents to elicit sympathy and even forgiveness, *Breaking Bad* offers no such mercy.

Instead, the show runs on a frightening moral logic: No one gets away with anything. *Breaking Bad* revolves around the least fashionable concept imaginable: wrath. It offers something quite different from the fatalism of *The Wire*, where things start off ugly and pretty much stay that way. In *Breaking Bad*, things get steadily worse.

The further Walt "advances" in his new career, the more obstacles he overcomes, the more he believes himself to be invincible, and the deeper he descends into a hell of his own making. When he tries to manage his crimes, he begets worse crimes. Intoxicated on the fumes of self-righteousness, Walt consistently mistakes atrocities for victories. And each time, we come to detest his rationalizations a little bit more—especially how he relegates right and wrong to the realm of less evolved, less scientific minds.

Most series of this caliber are careful never to judge their characters, but Gilligan seems to believe that such judgments are necessary for honest characterization. He is brave (or sly) enough to get the viewer to feel the same. We see where Walt is coming from, we may even empathize with him (especially at the beginning), but at no point are we moved to acquit him.

Like all of us, Walt dwells in moral gray areas, but their universality doesn't make them any less gray. And Gilligan courageously doesn't flinch when the characters reap what they sow. He has placed something unshakably retributive at the heart of his onscreen world: the horror of getting what we deserve, or, you might say, a world of law devoid of grace.

Our current "golden age of television" tends to depict conventional morality as quaint but outdated (*Mad Men*), if it is not simply irrelevant and forgotten (*Girls*, *Game of Thrones*). Gilligan's belief in fixed consequences—existential, moral, spiritual—is what distinguishes his show. As Michelle Kuo and Albert Wu noted in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, "In the world of *Breaking Bad*, reality cannot be constructed by man. Rather, metaphysical truth exists—good and evil, moral and immoral, action and consequence.... This is the stuff of the Old Testament."

GRACELESS UNIVERSE

Gilligan himself admitted as much in the *Times* profile: "If there's a larger lesson to *Breaking Bad*, it's that actions have consequences.... I feel some sort of need for biblical atonement, or justice, or something." Of course, the show's violent and grisly subject matter has kept it from connecting with the religious audience that might actually share Gilligan's moral vision.

In one of the most memorable scenes of

***Breaking Bad* has placed something unshakably retributive at the heart of the onscreen world: the horror of getting what we deserve, or, you might say, a world of law devoid of grace.**

Let the Bad Times Roll: Jesse Pinkman (Aaron Paul) and Walter White (Bryan Cranston) take viewers on a tour of the levels of self-righteous hell.

FRANK OCKENFELS / AMC

season four, the theological implications of Gilligan's vision become clear. Anguished after committing murder in cold blood, Walt's long-suffering former-student-turned-accomplice Jesse Pinkman attends a Narcotics Anonymous meeting in hopes of finding relief. After Jesse shares a thinly veiled version of his own crime, the group leader counsels self-acceptance. "We're not here to sit in judgment," he says, to which Jesse explodes:

> Why not? Why not? . . . If you just do stuff and nothing happens, what's it all mean? What's the point? . . . So no matter what I do, hooray for me because I'm a great guy? It's all good? No matter how many dogs I kill, I just—what, do an inventory, and accept?

Jesse rejects a world in which his transgression garners no consequence or cost. He seems to know that clemency must have some basis, that as much as we might wish it were so, absolution cannot be conjured out of thin air, at least not if it is going to address a truly guilty conscience.

Jesse might even agree with the Christian understanding of forgiveness, as something that does not suspend justice so much as assuage and allay it. But in Gilligan's graceless universe, Jesse is left in despair, with no hope beyond making the next score (or getting even with Walt).

Jesse's agony is ultimately what separates him from his partner. Walt's true pathology will be just as familiar to those who have read their Bible as Jesse's desire for propitiation: his staggering capacity for self-justification and the hubris that fuels it—what some might call garden-variety original sin.

Early on, Walt refuses a sincere offer from a former colleague to help him pay for his treatment. Here we catch a glimpse of a man whose low station in life belies an enormous amount of pride. Soon, in an inversion of the Book of Job, Walt leverages his personal suffering to justify entering "the business." As the factors that ostensibly led him to "break bad" disappear, each justification gives way to the next until he is completely convinced of the righteousness of his cause simply because it is his. How else could a man utter lines such as, "I'm not in the drug business, I'm in the empire business," with a straight face?

All this thematic potency wouldn't matter much if the writing weren't so taut, the performances so spellbinding, the suspense so addictive. But without fail they are. Which is why we have every reason to trust that Gilligan and company will bring their parable of pride to a satisfying conclusion.

Whether or not that conclusion entails redemption for Walter White remains unknown. We certainly shouldn't count on it, especially since it might compromise the integrity of the show. As we all know, the only way Walter White could ever be redeemed is the same way any of us whom the law declares broken and bad are—by the miracle of God's grace.

Or, to paraphrase Vince Gilligan, by something too good not to believe.

David Zahl is the director of Mockingbird Ministries and editor in chief of the Mockingbird blog.

New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

PROTOTYPE

What Happens When You Discover You're More Like Jesus Than You Think?

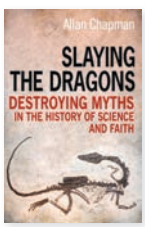
JONATHAN MARTIN (TYNDALE)

Only as we grasp God's astonishing love for us, says Martin, can we truly learn to live like Christ. Martin, pastor of Renovatus ("A Church for People Under Renovation") in Charlotte, North Carolina, shows how Jesus fully embraced his identity as God's beloved Son—and how we can, too.

SLAYING THE DRAGONS

Destroying Myths in the History of Science and Faith

ALLAN CHAPMAN (LION BOOKS)

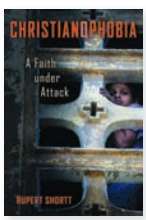


Not until relatively recently in history has the assumption stood that science and faith are locked in perpetual conflict. Chapman, historian of science at Oxford University, uses the historical record to reveal how different this modern view is from a more nuanced understanding that prevailed in the past.

CHRISTIANOPHOBIA

A Faith Under Attack

RUPERT SHORTT (EERDMANS)



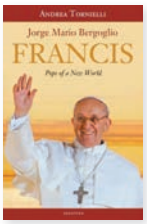
Shortt, religion editor for *The Times Literary Supplement*, argues that Christians across the world are persecuted more than members of any other religious group. In *Christianophobia*, he serves up chapter-length profiles of the countries where Christians face the severest threats of violence, harassment, and injustice.

FRANCIS

Pope of a New World

ANDREA TORNIELLI (IGNATIUS PRESS)

Pairing a humble, servant-like manner with a commitment to Christian orthodoxy, Pope Francis has impressed Catholics and non-Catholics alike in the inaugural months of his papacy. Tornielli's

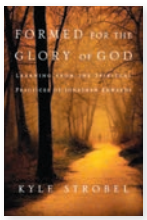


biography, drawing upon the fabled Vatican reporter's wealth of inside knowledge, is a timely introduction for all who are curious to know more about the new pope's background and vision.

FORMED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Learning from the Spiritual Practices of Jonathan Edwards

KYLE STROBEL (INTERVARSITY PRESS)



Not only can we learn about God *from* the writings of Jonathan Edwards; we can learn about God *with* the great Puritan preacher as well, by immersing ourselves in his habits of prayer, meditation, and the study of Scripture. In Edwards's words and examples, says Strobel, we have an enviable resource for our pursuit of godliness.

THE SPIRITUAL DANGER OF DOING GOOD

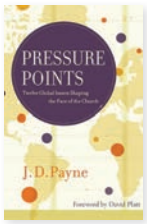
PETER GREER WITH ANNA HAGGARD (BETHANY HOUSE)

As CEO of Hope International, a global nonprofit dedicated to reducing poverty through microfinance loans, Greer has long sought to combine Christian faith with a passion for social justice. In *The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good*, Greer warns of the pitfalls and temptations that fellow Christian "do-gooders" can expect to confront.

PRESSURE POINTS

Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church

J. D. PAYNE (THOMAS NELSON)



At no point in its long history has the global church been without a series of significant challenges. Payne, a Birmingham pastor who has spent 10 years on the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board, identifies a dozen such challenges facing today's church, including globalization, mass migration, and the rise of pluralistic cultures and attitudes.

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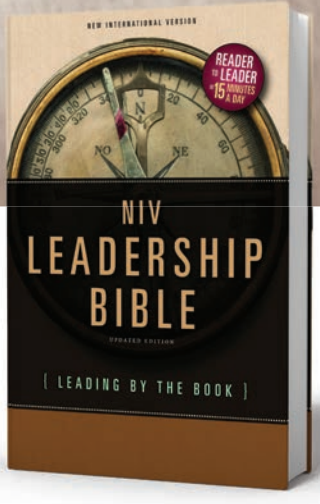

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UNION UNIVERSITY

The Search Committee and Board of Trustees of Union University welcome nominations and applications for its sixteenth President to lead the University into a new and engaged era of excellence, teaching, scholarship, research, partnership, and service. The President is the chief executive of the University and is responsible to the Board for the efficient and effective operation of the University. This position bears the responsibility to articulate and represent Union's identity, mission, core values, and theological confession and to realize the University's mission and goals. This position is the official representative and spokesperson for the University. The President will be expected to advance the long-valued, distinctive Christian intellectual tradition, which includes a Kingdom-focused university to serve both church and society.

Union University is a private, coeducational, liberal arts-based university offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The campus is located in Jackson, Tennessee, (80 miles northeast of Memphis) with additional campuses in Germantown and Hendersonville. Union University currently enrolls more than 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 40 states and 30 countries. The University stands as a national leader among colleges and universities in promoting a Christian worldview and a Christ-centered approach to education. Union is consistently ranked among the nation's premier Christian universities and has been recognized as a top-tier institution each year since 1997 by *U.S. News & World Report*, which also recognized Union at a national level for undergraduate teaching excellence. The University was also recently recognized by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as a "Great College to Work For," one of only 30 four-year institutions to receive this honor roll designation.

The successful candidate must be a professing Christian, Baptist, and active member of a Southern Baptist church, who enthusiastically supports Union University's Identity, Mission, and Core Values, and articulates a Christian worldview in their work and life.

Graduation from an accredited college or university with an earned doctorate degree is required, as well as demonstrated administrative level leadership experience. This position commands a comprehensive, varied set of communication skills, including accomplished public communication and publication. Preference will be given to candidates possessing teaching and faculty experience, and also to candidates who have experience working with boards and foundations.

Prospective candidates are encouraged to review the Opportunity Profile, which contains additional information about the qualifications for this position and the nature of the inquiry process. The Opportunity Profile can be viewed at uu.edu/president/search.

Confidential review of materials will begin immediately. Nominations and applications are being accepted until an appointment is made. For full consideration, nominations and expressions of interest should be submitted in one Microsoft Word document to:

presidentialsearch@uu.edu (Use the subject heading "Union University – President.")

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[Employment Opportunities]

VISITING PROFESSOR OF EVANGELISM

Union Presbyterian Seminary is searching for a highly skilled practitioner able to teach in a graduate program of theological education related to the Presbyterian Church (USA). The professor of evangelism will offer 2–3 elective courses each year, help to develop internships focused on evangelism for MDiv and MACE students, conduct workshops for clergy and laity within the Presbytery of the James and the Mid-Atlantic region, and help to organize one or more East Coast evangelism conferences. The non-renewable term of appointment for this position is four years and may begin as soon as January 1, 2014. For a full position description, see the UPSem website (www.upsem.edu/who_we_are1/employment_opportunities1/) or contact April Swofford, administrative assistant to the Richmond academic dean (aswofford@upsem.edu).

PASTOR

A non-denominational church seeks a pastor with thorough knowledge of the Word (preach & teach), a strong prayer life, and a heart for missions, who leads worship, helps develop new ministries, and works well with variety of ages. E-mail ctpulpit7@gmail.com or write Pulpit Committee; Christian Tabernacle; 325 Washington Ave.; Newport, KY 41071 (no calls please).

SENIOR PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF

We are Healdsburg Community Church, in the heart of California's beautiful Sonoma County Wine Country. From our founding in 1857, we continue to be devoted to Christ, intent on deepening our faith, discovering and sharing God's grace and love, and discerning God's purpose. We are strongly committed to serving our local and world communities and being a voice of hope to all. The authority of Christ expressed in God's inspired Word is our ultimate guide in faith and practice, as we study his word, worship our risen Lord, and lead others to the food that satisfies our hunger and the living water that satisfies our thirst. We believe that to be messengers of the kingdom of God and spread the Good News, we are called to minister to body, mind, and spirit. We seek to make disciples at each season of life, beginning by helping children to grow their faith. All are welcome and valued as we share God's love with others. If you want to join us in our walk with the Lord, please see our CIF #00661.AA and visit www.healdsburgcommunitychurch.org. You may e-mail your PIF to PNC @healdsburgcommunitychurch.org.

[Employment Opportunities]

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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.

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[Missions]

MISSIONARIES

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[Ministry Opportunities]

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[Ministry Aids]

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separating my parents' cul-de-sac and the road I was lying next to. Chaos erupted in the strange silence as I fought to stay conscious lying in the grass. I heard screaming and crying. Someone was yelling, "He's not breathing!"

Soon fire trucks, an ambulance, and police vehicles were lighting up the night. As they put me in the ambulance, I heard my sister let out an awful, bloodcurdling scream as the ambulance doors closed. She had arrived on the scene, saw my car, and thought I was dead.

I was taken to the hospital, where I lay for a few hours. A tall state trooper walked into my hospital room. "Son, I need to have your blood tested. There's been a fatality."

Finally, someone answered my questions. My friend John had been in the street when I came around a slight curve near my house. He had raised his hands, trying to stop the out-of-control Camaro, and had crashed through my windshield. He died on impact.

Before the accident, I thought my life was falling apart. After the accident, I wanted to die. Yet it was there, in the deepest, dirtiest, darkest pit of my despair, that God began to make himself known to me.

PARALYZED

I was raised in a "Christian" family that attended church off and on. I prayed, sang the worship songs, and believed that I would go to heaven. But for the few years leading up to the crash, especially as I faced depression and anxiety, I questioned whether the faith was true. The Christians I knew either went to church but then abused drugs and alcohol the way I did, or went to church and didn't talk to people like me. Either way, if their faith made any difference at all, it was too small a difference to interest me.

Nevertheless, after the crash I longed for direction and tried going back to church. The adults were surprisingly nice to me, even knowing what I had done. Encouraged by their kindness, I decided to go to youth group but was quickly turned off by the goofy games. And my peers turned out to be far less welcoming than their parents.

At this point I entered an extremely frustrating season that lasted for months. I struggled with many questions about the Bible. I would listen to the sermon at church and wonder if God would accept me, let alone love me, after what I had done. There weren't many people my age with whom I could discuss my concerns. So I resolved to read through the New Testament in a student Bible my mother had given me. I began reading about Jesus every night.

When I did, I bounced back and forth between self-condemnation and false hope in my good behavior. It was exhausting to say the least. The more I tried to be a Christian, the emptier I felt. The more I tried to figure faith out, the more confused I became. There were many times when I wanted to wash my hands of the whole thing, but there was a gnawing in my heart drawing me back to the Jesus I was reading about. I could not get him out of my mind.

That night, I didn't pray a special prayer or speak in tongues or fill out a card or even cry. But I did ask Jesus to make me well.

During the spring of my senior year, Sugar Land First United Methodist hosted a revival weekend featuring a guest preacher from a Methodist church in Tennessee.

The preacher recounted the biblical story of a man who had been paralyzed for a long time, lying by a pool of water in Jerusalem. His community believed that when the water of the pool was stirred, whoever could get into the water first would be healed. For a man who hadn't moved for 38 years, this proved to be a challenge.

Jesus asked the man a question: "Do you want to be well?" It seemed to me like a strange question. The man answered that he did, but began making excuses about why he couldn't get into the water. Jesus then healed him on the spot.

The preacher turned to us in the crowd and asked the same question. "Do you want to be well?"

All my life I had been paralyzed by fear, by depression, by pride. And I always had an excuse for why I did what I did. The preacher cut through all of that by repeating the question that Jesus asked the man. I remember vividly thinking, *If Jesus will heal me, I want to be well.*

That night, I didn't pray a special prayer or speak in tongues or fill out a card or even cry. But I did ask Jesus to make me well. It was a quiet moment between the Lord and me, but that day he began to open my eyes, open my ears, and soften my heart. He made me his own.

Old sins die hard, and without much discipleship early on, my first years as a believer were a little unstable. But the God who justifies us also sanctifies us, and at the right time, he brought into my life wise and faithful men to correct and disciple me. Over the next few years I began to realize that my sins were forgiven, not because of anything I had done but because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. I learned that I was called to live for him day in and day out, not just when I found it convenient. God had purchased me completely, not just partially, and because of that my life was no longer my own. I belonged to him.

Because of Jesus, I learned to face the consequences of killing my friend—which included five years of probation and community service—with courage. I began to stand in front of other teenagers and talk to them about making good choices and the foolishness of drinking and driving. God turned my desire to make much of myself into a desire to make much of him. He enabled me to use my past and experiences to encourage others away from sin and toward Jesus. He transformed me, empty and lost and alone, into his very son, forgiven and full of hope and purpose. It has been a long and bumpy road for sure, but God has changed me and is still changing me.

While I still lack answers, I am confident that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is able to forgive sins, and that he is in the business of making broken people brand new.

Casey Cease is lead pastor of Christ Community Church of Magnolia in Magnolia, Texas, and author of *Tragedy to Truth: A Story of Faith and Transformation* (Lucid Books). Read more at *CaseyCease.com*.

ZACH MCNAIR

Crash Course on Jesus

It took a fatal mistake to wake me up to the gospel. By Casey Cease

When I was 17, I was in a car crash that would change the course of my life. It brought me to nothing, and then God made me new.

It was July 5, 1995, and I was throwing a party at my parents' house. After years of anxiety and depression, a recent breakup, and growing discontent with life, I coped in the way I had done many times before and turned to alcohol. I was fed up with my friends, my family, and myself. This particular night I became more upset with each passing hour.

Around 1 A.M., I had an overwhelming urge to leave the party. Although my friends tried to stop me—they knew that I had been drinking for hours—I grabbed the keys and got into my 1995 Z28 Camaro. My friends used their cars to block me in, but once they left me alone to cool off, I managed to jump the curb, get around their cars, and drive away.

As I sped through our neighborhood in a Houston suburb, emptiness and hopelessness consumed me. I couldn't think straight. I wanted to be as far from home as possible; at the same time, all I wanted was to be home. When I approached the road that led out of our neighborhood, it struck me that it was foolish to drive farther. I didn't want my friends to worry, and I certainly didn't want to get in trouble with my parents, so I turned to go home.

WAKING UP

I woke up covered in glass, a deployed airbag lying lifeless in my lap. As the fog cleared, I was able to make out a huge hole in my windshield. A sharp metallic smell mixed with the pungent odor of car fluids. Suddenly a friend was opening the passenger side door. And I remembered what had just happened. "Who did I hit?!" I screamed over and over.

"You didn't hit anyone, just some trees," he assured me. He dragged me from the car and put me down in the grass as I continued to panic.

"No, I hit somebody! Who did I hit?!" I kept trying to sit up as Blake ran past me to the front of my car. He looked down. Then he ran to get help.

Other people began jumping the fence

[continue reading on preceding page]

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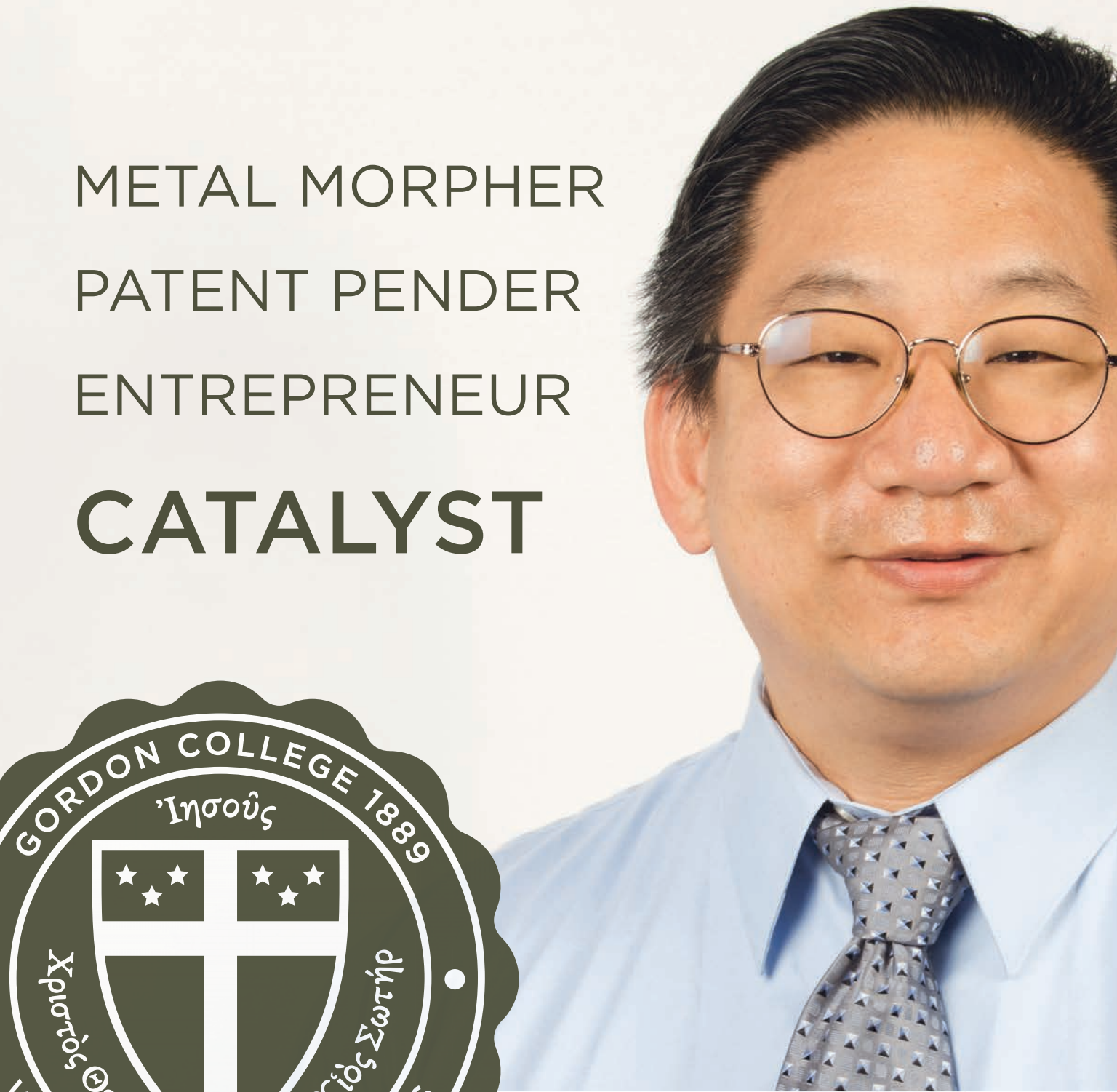

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