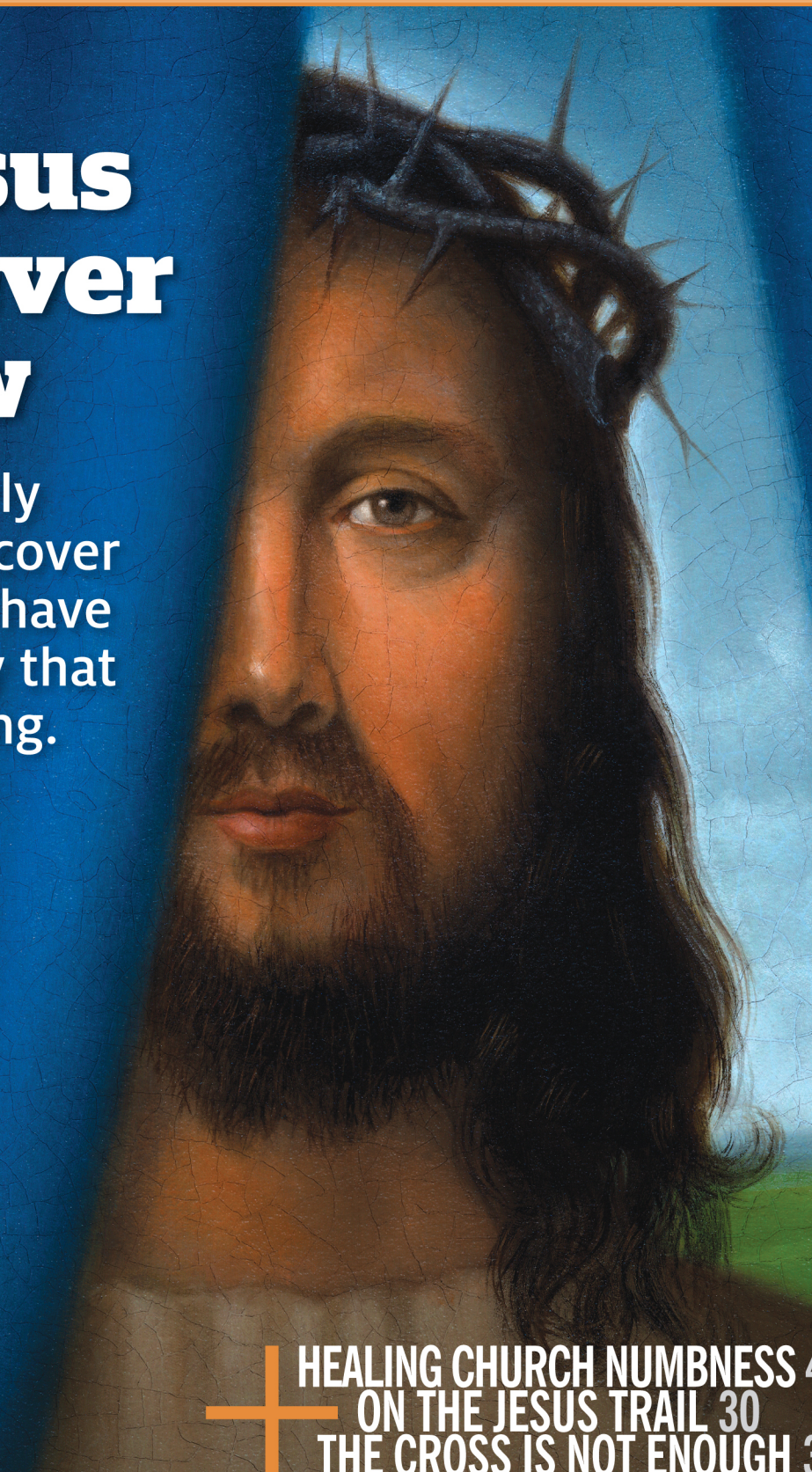


Christianity Today

APRIL 2010

The Jesus We'll Never Know

Why scholarly attempts to discover the 'real' Jesus have failed. And why that is a good thing.



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THE CROSS IS NOT ENOUGH 36

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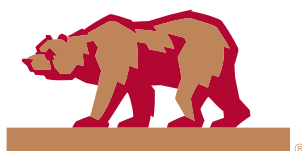
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Christianity Today (ISSN 0009-5753) is published monthly
by Christianity Today International, 465 Gundersen Drive,
Carol Stream, IL 60188. Periodicals postage paid at Carol
Stream, IL, and at additional mailing offices.
©2010 Christianity Today International

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Christianity Today*,
P.O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0600; 1.800.999.1704.
Canada Publication Mail Agreement #: 040029733.
Registration #: 126028836RT0001.
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: WWM Inc.,
2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, Ontario N8T 3B7.
Printed in U.S.A.
Subscription Rates: Regular subscription price: one year \$24.95.
Outside U.S. add \$13.00 postage prepaid U.S. currency.
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Your Eyes on God's World

God's world is a big place, and at *Christianity Today*, we have committed to doing everything we can to give you a front-row seat on what God is doing around the globe.

In January, for example, senior writer Tim Stafford made his way (with great difficulty) to Haiti to give you an on-the-ground report. Last summer, CT gave readers a rare insider's look at the church in Cuba. Rwanda, South Africa, North Korea, the Philippines, Sudan, the Congo—our readers have traveled with CT to all these places.

We live in a time when American pastors are taking cues from clergy in Rwanda, and a Nigerian pastor from Ukraine can polarize U.S. churches. Because Christ-followers need to connect with fellow believers worldwide, we're expanding our global vision and yours.

Can we continue to increase this unique international coverage? It doesn't come cheap. Like many of you, we at CT have felt the pinch of recent economic uncertainties, while travel to unfamiliar cultures takes much more of our writers' resources.

Fortunately, we've had some help. One friend partially underwrote our trip to Cuba. And several organizations have helped with costs, access, and in-country travel.

Such assistance encourages us as we plan future reports of gospel growth in the "uttermost parts." That is why I want to encourage you as a CT "fellow traveler" to prayerfully consider what you can do to invest in this expanding work.

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 portion, or visit ChristianityToday.com/donate.

David Neff, Editor in Chief

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From Fine to Great

How Christianity Today is doing.

E

EVERYWHERE I GO, I am asked one question more than any other: "How is the magazine doing?" The question is sometimes asked in hushed tones, as if the answer is going to reveal bad news. The context is the economic recession, which has led to a number of periodicals going under.

The answer is "fine." Like every other publishing enterprise, we have taken a hit in the past year and a half, and so have needed to reduce the number of editorial pages and staff. Yet the bottom line is that the good ship CT is not listing; in fact, it is starting to make headway again.

That doesn't mean that our engines are on full, any more than are those of *The New York Times*. In the next year, you will see *The Times* and other major media institutions—including ours—experiment with charging for online content. Print will be around for some time to come, but electronic versions will continue to grow. Getting CT on your iPhone? Likely this year.

One measure we have already taken: We've decided to reveal a fact about Christianity Today International that most people don't know—that we are a not-for-profit organization. We see ourselves as a journalistic ministry, and as such (as recent ads have noted) we welcome donations. In this regard, our business model is similar to that of National Public Radio and public television.

We are confident that readers will respond supportively, because we offer independent journalism about an important niche of American Christianity and, more broadly, American life. For better or worse, we are the "new mainline," a principal voice of Protestant Christianity in America.

That's why the journalism we do is more necessary than ever, and why we are still passionate about assessing the people, events, and ideas that shape not only evangelicalism, but also, potentially, the U.S. and the world. We belong to a minority of religious publications that remain independent of a denomination, parachurch ministry, business, or institution. That allows us to evaluate fairly and honestly all aspects of our life together.

Yes, a lot of people are exclaiming that the journalistic sky is falling. Bah. Humbug. When has financing a ministry *not* been a challenge? Another comment I get in these fear-inspiring days is, "The magazine is better than ever." That is not accidental, because everyone who helps produce this magazine thinks *challenge* is another word for *fun*. So actually, I'll change my answer: "CT is doing great." ☩

Next month: Wess Stafford of Compassion International tells his remarkable story of abuse and redemption; New Testament scholar Joseph Hellerman explains how acting like a family might change a church; and sociologist James Davison Hunter questions whether and how Christians can transform the world.

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WORLDWIDE

SPOTLIGHT: Haiti by the Numbers

➔ When disaster strikes, we often attempt to quantify it and view chaos through the order of numbers. We don't always succeed. After Chile's 8.8-magnitude earthquake February 27, media called it 6 times, 30 times, 50 times, 300 times, 500 times, 700 times, and 1,000 times larger than Haiti's 7.0 quake. There were other efforts as well. (The answer: 512 times larger.) But Chile saw far fewer casualties than Haiti—and charitable giving is likely to be much lower. Death tolls alone don't draw us. Burma's Cyclone Nargis in 2008 killed about 140,000, but, largely because of the country's restrictive junta, international relief donations totaled only \$310 million. Donations to Haiti surpassed that in nine days.

222,417
CONFIRMED DEATH TOLL ON
FEBRUARY 24, ACCORDING TO
HAITI'S GOVERNMENT

300,000
LIKELY FINAL DEATH TOLL,
ACCORDING TO HAITI'S GOVERNMENT

52,000
CONFIRMED DEATH TOLL,
ACCORDING TO AN INVESTIGATION
BY RADIO NETHERLANDS

"WELL UNDER 100,000"
LIKELY FINAL DEATH TOLL,
ACCORDING TO RADIO NETHERLANDS

63 MILLION TONS
RUBBLE TO BE CLEARED BEFORE
REBUILDING CAN BEGIN

Reuters

**\$7.2 to \$13.2
BILLION**
COST IN DAMAGE

Inter-American
Development Bank

\$81 BILLION
COST IN DAMAGE OF
HURRICANE KATRINA
IN THE U.S.

NOAA

59
AFTERSHOCKS
4.5M OR GREATER

USGS

16 of 59
AFTERSHOCKS
5.0M OR GREATER

USGS

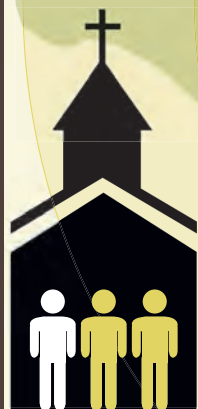
1,700
ESTIMATED CAREER
MISSIONARIES
BASED IN HAITI

The New York Times

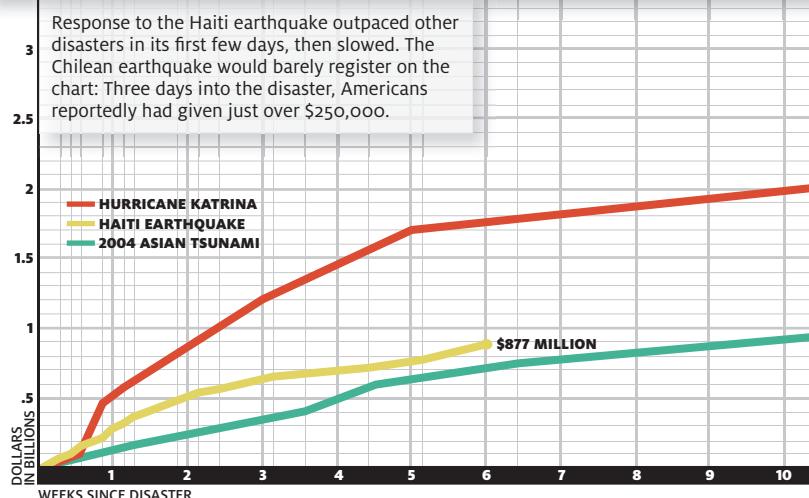
5% HAITI'S PROTESTANT POPULATION IN 1940
20% HAITI'S PROTESTANT POPULATION IN 1960
30% HAITI'S PROTESTANT POPULATION IN 2010

2 in 3 OF HAITI'S PROTESTANTS ARE EVANGELICALS

Evangelical Missions Quarterly



GIVING AFTER DISASTER American generosity after global catastrophes.



**\$3.38
BILLION**



\$2.31
U.S. TAX MONEY
GIVEN TO HAITI
RELIEF IN
GOVERNMENT
AID, PER CAPITA



\$2.84
U.S. CHARITABLE
DONATIONS
GIVEN TO HAITI
RELIEF, PER CAPITA



\$1,006.94
TOTAL U.S. CHARITABLE
GIVING PER CAPITA IN 2008
(TOTAL: \$307.65 BILLION)

Giving USA



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Texas church arsonists arrested

A taskforce of hundreds of authorities investigating a rash of church fires in East Texas finally arrested two men February 21 on suspicion of arson. Childhood friends and former Southern Baptist youth group members Jason Bourque, 19, and Daniel McAllister, 21, face charges linked to ten suspicious church fires since January 1; five churches were destroyed in the six-week spree.

2 Church weighs in on homosexuality outcry

UGANDA The Anglican Church of Uganda responded in February to a proposed bill that provoked an international outcry over its sentences of life in prison and the death penalty for some forms of homosexual behavior. The church supports the bill's efforts to define marriage as between one man and one woman and to penalize homosexual behavior. But it recommends amending an existing bill instead of creating a new one, and wants to protect confidentiality in medical, pastoral, and counseling relationships.

3 Crystal Cathedral downsizes ministry

Facing an \$8 million deficit from 2009, the Crystal Cathedral is scaling back operations for 2010. In an attempt to cut \$4.9 million from its \$20 million annual operating budget, the California megachurch will sell Rancho Capistrano, a 170-acre retreat and wedding center, and lay off 50 employees. It will also cancel this year's "Glory of Easter" Passion play, and drop *The Hour of Power* radio broadcast from 7 of the 45 networks currently carrying the program.

4 Oversight may close Christian schools

HONG KONG A February appeals court upheld government oversight of publicly funded schools, and may lead to many of Hong Kong's Christian schools shutting down. Under the 2004 plan, publicly funded schools must have a management board comprising parents, teachers, alumni, and independent managers. The religious groups running the schools would name 60 percent of the board. Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist school officials in the country have said they would rather close schools than create the committees, which will give them less control over course content. Only half of the country's 850 publicly funded schools have agreed to the legislation.

5 Court: College can reject religious courses

The University of California can deny course credit in applications from students at Christian high schools, according to a January decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which upheld an August 2008 ruling. The university had rejected credits for biology, history, and government courses at Calvary Chapel Christian School in Murrieta, saying that they did not teach critical thinking and that the textbooks (published by Bob Jones University and A Beka Books) left out important historical and scientific topics. Students must meet a credit requirement to be admitted to the university, but can also use SAT Subject Test scores.

6 Moody and Michigan seminaries unite

Moody Bible Institute and Michigan

Theological Seminary (MTS) combined forces in January when MTS became an extension of Moody's seminary. At 600 students, the newly combined school is among the largest 15 percent of seminaries in the U.S. The merger, initiated by MTS in 2008, is expected to save both schools money as they share technology and some operations costs.

7 Court: Remove religion from identity cards

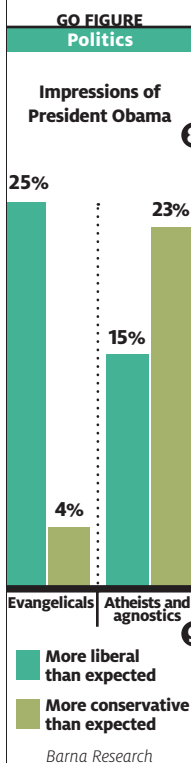
TURKEY The religious affiliation section on Turkey's identity cards is a violation of human rights, a European court ruled in February. Since 2006, Turkish citizens have had the option of leaving the section blank, but the European Court of Human Rights said the section violates the government's neutrality on religion and should thus be removed entirely. The ruling, prompted by a complaint from a Muslim man, may benefit Turkish Christians who have been denied jobs or services because of their religious identity.

8 Youth pastor sues to speak in mall

A California youth pastor is suing the owners of a Roseville mall after being arrested for talking about faith with three shoppers in 2006. Matthew Snatchko's lawyers say the mall has "draconian rules" that violate freedom of expression, including regulating conversations with strangers and banning clothing with religious or political messages. Mall policy requires speakers to submit an application and limits noncommercial activities to specified places. Mall owners say Snatchko had been warned of the policies several times before his arrest.

9 Florida street preachers murdered

A man who spent 15 minutes talking with two street preachers in Boynton Beach shot them in the back of the head at





compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

"I cannot overlook that fact that my office has been damaged, and my heart tells me very clearly I can't stay in office with the necessary authority."

Margot Kaessmann, resigning as head of the 25-million-member Evangelical Church in Germany after testing positive for drunk driving. She says she will remain pastor of a church in Hannover, where she has been bishop since 1999.

TheLocal.de

"We are prepared to go out of existence not because we are declining or failing in mission, but for the sake of mission."

David Gamble, president of the Methodist Church of Great Britain, on the possibility of reunion with the Church of England. The Methodists left in 1795.

The Methodist Church

"My wife has no biblical grounds for what she has done."

Benny Hinn, on his wife, Suzanne, filing for divorce.

BennyHinn.org

"He gave me this task in my prayer time. I said, 'Lord, they're going to think I'm a loon.'"

Arthur Mijares, who launched an unsuccessful effort to change the name of California's Mt. Diablo to Mt. Reagan.

Los Angeles Times

"Voodoo has been in my family, but the government isn't helping us. The only people giving aid are the Christian churches."

Veronique Malot, a 24-year-old Port-au-Prince resident who joined an evangelical church days after the January 12 earthquake.

Associated Press

close range. Pat Mahoney of the Christian Defense Coalition framed the January 30 murders as a free speech issue in his eulogy for preachers Stephen Ocean and Tite Sufra. Local police tied the murders to possible gang-related violence, saying that Ocean had been a member of a gang prior to his recent conversion and that both men had criminal records.

Kent Presbyterian Church, across the street from Kent State University in northeast Ohio, will build a 320-person dormitory on the church's six-acre property with the goal of evangelizing students. The building, expected to receive students in fall 2011, will be open to Christian and non-Christian students who pay a program fee, and will include recreational facilities.

10 Presbyterian reformers form support group

Conservative members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) have banded together to create the Biblical Presbyterian Network (BPN). The network aims to encourage and organize members within the 2.3 million-member denomination committed to more conservative theology than what the PC(USA) is pursuing. The BPN says it is not competing with existing reform groups like Presbyterians for Renewal, but instead intends to create a grassroots structure that requires members to regularly confront progressive PC(USA) members and churches.

13 'Atheist pastor' allowed to keep post

THE NETHERLANDS A special church assembly has decided that a Dutch preacher who wrote a book titled *Believing in a God That Does Not Exist* can keep his preaching post in the towns of Middelburg and Zierikzee. Klaas Hendrikse, a pastor in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, claims in the book that he believes in the idea of God but not in the existence of an actual God. The assembly said Hendrikse's views are similar to those of other liberal pastors in the denomination, which will hold a meeting later this year on how to talk about God.

11 Blasphemy law finally challenged

INDONESIA Hearings began on a constitutional challenge to a 1965 blasphemy law that limits religious freedom in Indonesia, where the number of violations spiked last year. Of the 35 government violations, 28 were reported against Christians, according to a study by the Wahid Institute. The current law allows citizens to follow one of only six religions and prohibits some interpretations of those religions. The law was challenged last year by the late president of the country.

14 Pakistani Christians protest servant's death

PAKISTAN The alleged rape and murder of a 12-year-old Catholic girl in Lahore roiled the country's minority Christian community and captured much media attention. The girl, Shazia Bashir, had been a domestic worker for Chaudhary Muhammad Naeem, a wealthy Lahore attorney. After the girl's death January 22, Bashir's parents reported that Naeem had been abusing the girl and attempted to buy their silence. Thousands attended Bashir's funeral; Naeem has been charged with murder but released on bail, and Presbyterian bishop Timothy Nasir has been appointed as a lawyer for the case. Observers say authorities' light treatment of Naeem shows a legal bias against religious minorities.

12 Room, board, and evangelism

Instead of taking ministry to a neighboring campus, one Ohio church will bring university students to its ministry—to live.

GO FIGURE Getting Older

41%

Millennials (born in 1981 or later) who pray daily.

42%

Gen Xers (born between 1965–80) who prayed daily in the late 1990s.

54%

Gen Xers who pray daily now.

47%

Boomers (born between 1946–64) who prayed daily in the early 1980s.

62%

Boomers who pray daily now.

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life



EVANGELISM

Out of Context

Debate over 'Camel method' probes limits of Muslim-focused evangelism. By Ken Walker

A debate within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) over a method to evangelize Muslims demonstrates the difficulties of gospel contextualization.

The ongoing disagreement flared recently when Liberty Theological Seminary president Ergun Caner labeled as heretical the "Camel method," an SBC evangelistic strategy.

Though he later apologized for calling International Mission Board (IMB) president Jerry Rankin a liar in the same interview, Caner did not retreat from criticizing what he called a deceptive practice.

The method uses the acronym CAMEL to explore a Qur'an passage describing the Virgin Birth, miracles, and resurrection of *Isa al-Masih* (Arabic for "Jesus the Messiah") as a bridge to the New Testament. The method was detailed in a 2004 book by SBC missionary Kevin Greeson, who observed Muslim-background converts in Asia using it successfully.

Critics fear the method impedes

evangelism and discipleship by treating the Qur'an as a credible source of divine truth.

While Caner, a Turkish convert from Islam, contextualizes messages to his college students with references to *American Idol* and current movies, he said the Camel method crosses the line into syncretism.

"The increasing popularity of this practice is disturbing," Caner said. "I could not see the early church pinching incense to Emperor Nero but in their hearts actually visualizing Jesus. They chose to die rather than even follow the false forms of a false god."

But Rankin said IMB trustees found the method valid after a 2007 investigation that included issuing principles of contextualization. "Historically, a missions approach has been to extricate Muslims from their community once they converted, which didn't do much for planting the gospel among Muslims," he said.

An IMB-sponsored survey in 2002 found some 125,000 Muslims who

Which Word?:
Missiologists are debating the proper use of the Qur'an when evangelizing Muslims.

GO FIGURE Theology

39%
Presbyterian Church (USA) members who believe that only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved. (36% disagree.)

35%
PC(USA) pastors who believe that only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved. (45% disagree.)

The Presbyterian Panel

had come to faith in Christ through the Camel method, been baptized, and were orthodox in their practices.

Joseph Cumming of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture said the Camel debate is different from the C1 to C5 discussion (CT, Dec. 2009), which involves Muslim-background believers' religious identity.

However, he estimates that 90 percent of missionaries living among Muslims refer to verses in the Qur'an without inciting the heated arguments found in the U.S.

"It seems to me that the debates get hotter the farther removed the debaters are from it touching them personally," said Cumming.

Some missiologists see problems with Americans' proclivity for finding methods and imposing values.

"In the West, everybody wants to make evangelism a method," said Paul Martindale, lecturer in Islamic studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. "Turning [Camel] into a universal method is more dangerous than using it."

Roy Oksnevad, director of Muslim ministries at Wheaton College's Billy Graham Center, said one point of the Camel method—its interpretation of Isa's knowledge of the way to heaven—bends the gospel too far in its efforts to identify with its audience. "This is sloppy missiology and theology," he said.

Ironically, the closer one gets to the geographic heart of Islam, the less syncretism becomes an issue. In regions where fundamentalist versions of Islam are practiced, Muslims who accept Christ want no part of extreme contextualization, Oksnevad said.

These debates also overlook a more significant issue, Martindale said. He thinks a Western emphasis on individual rights has diminished the ideal of persecution and suffering.

"Western missionaries want to make it easier for Muslims to come to Christ while avoiding persecution," said Martindale. "That's sympathetic, but it's not biblical."

Despite the criticism, Rankin said, the IMB will continue using the Camel method. "It's very effective and biblically valid," he said. "Why would you cease witnessing just because somebody has a problem with it?"

LIFE ETHICS

Covert Operation

Video leads to abortion clinic's probation. By Sarah Pulliam Bailey

Alabama health officials placed a Planned Parenthood clinic on a one-year probation in February after a pro-life group released an undercover recording that appears to portray employee willingness to break parental consent laws.

Lila Rose, the 21-year-old leader of the group Live Action, posed as a 14-year-old seeking an abortion who was told by a clinic employee that she could have someone with the same last name approve the procedure. State health officials subsequently determined that nine minors had received abortions from the clinic without proper verification of parental consent.

Rose, who converted to Catholicism last year, has been criticized by abortion groups for using deceptive tactics. In reply, she cited Europeans hiding Jews during the Holocaust and the biblical example of Rahab hiding Israelite spies.

"You're not going to find this out if you call [Planned Parenthood's] PR department," the UCLA history major said. "What we found is what they claim is radically different from what they do behind doors."

In recent years, Tennessee and California lawmakers ended contracts and grants with Planned Parenthood, and Indiana Planned Parenthood employees were fired after Live Action videos were released. In late February, Live

Action released another undercover video in which a Planned Parenthood employee appears to violate Wisconsin law about mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse.

Charmaine Yoest, president of Americans United for Life, has not heard dissent in the pro-life community over Rose's work. "She is . . . widely admired for her boldness and ingenuity in going after our Goliath."

Stephen Wagner, director of training for Justice for All, a Kansas-based pro-life organization, doesn't condemn Rose's methods. "[But] I don't want to do that, and that's not what we're going to do," he said. "We've really focused on engaging the pro-choice person."

Jon Shields, professor of government at Claremont McKenna College and author of *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right*, said, "Live Action is plucky, innovative, trying to get media attention. . . . They are interested in changing hearts and minds. Whether it's effective or not, that's harder to say."

HIGHER EDUCATION CANADA

Confession Clash

Flagship college cited for faculty faith statement.

By Charles Honey

In his 25 years at Trinity Western University, Harro Van Brummelen says he has been free to teach as he chooses.

The fact that Trinity requires him to affirm the Bible as the final authority without error frees him to pursue truth from a Christian perspective. "In a sense, I have more academic freedom here than I would have in other situations," said Van Brummelen, professor of education at the British Columbia school.

But Trinity's faith statement for faculty puts it at the center of a national debate on whether such confessional standards are compatible

with academic freedom.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) says they are not. The 65,000-member advocacy group has found that Trinity, Canada's largest evangelical college with 4,000 students, imposes "unwarranted and unacceptable constraints on academic freedom," and noted that other religious universities impose no such limits.

"I understand they feel they must have these constraints," said Penni Stewart, CAUT president and associate professor of sociology at York University. "In the end we disagree. It's a clash of values, really."

Trinity president Jonathan Raymond called the report "an arbitrary attack" and a "blacklist[ing]" that makes faculty appear "less worthy in Canadian academia."

CAUT is investigating other flagship Christian colleges with required faith statements, a move that worries some Christian scholars. They are concerned the report could hurt Trinity's standing with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), a prestigious body that has endorsed the school's academic practices.

"The danger is that it will provoke the AUCC to reconsider the membership of these confessional schools," said John Stackhouse, a theologian at Regent College in Vancouver. "That would be the equivalent of having your accreditation withdrawn."

The CAUT report could have a "chilling effect" on other Christian colleges if it leads AUCC to reconsider their status, said Robert Sweetman, interim president of the Institute for Christian Studies, a Toronto graduate school.

The controversy is a new wrinkle in the long-standing tension between Christian and secular higher education in Canada. In 2001, the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the British Columbia College of Teachers' refusal to accredit Trinity's teacher education program because the school prohibited gay relationships.

[continued on 16]

PASSAGES



Selected Philip Ryken

As president of Wheaton College, on February 20. Ryken, senior pastor at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, will start July 1.



Selected Kenneth W. Starr

As president of Baylor University, on February 15. Starr, president of Pepperdine University's School of Law, replaces John Lilley, fired in July 2008.



Died Jack Sparks

Campus Crusade worker who founded the Christian World Liberation Front, on February 8 near Anchorage, Alaska. Sparks, 81, later co-founded the Evangelical Orthodox Church.

Briefing [from 15]

Trinity is the first school cited by CAUT under a 2006 policy on ideological or faith tests.

Some Christian scholars say CAUT's definition of academic freedom ignores the synergy that arises from shared beliefs.

"I have no problem with the idea of signing up to a confessional belief," said David Lyon of Queen's University, a secular Ontario school. "We all come to our research and teaching with particular sets of assumptions." ➤

FOREIGN POLICY

Politics vs. Persecution

Push for Iran sanctions concerns missiologists.

By Bobby Ross Jr.

The high-profile group Christian Leaders for a Nuclear-Free Iran is demanding increased economic sanctions against the Islamic regime. But other Christians worry that sanctions could backfire against Iranian believers.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's

Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, readily acknowledges the clash of perspectives.

"That is why Southern Baptists deliberately separate our foreign missions and evangelism ministries from public policy advocacy," Land said. "We have completely different boards of trustees and budgets."

About 50 high-profile Christian leaders, including Land, Chuck Colson, John Hagee, James Merritt, and Jordan Sekulow, praised recent votes in Congress supporting tougher sanctions. Their January 26 letter urged elected leaders to send "a powerful signal that this tyrannical Iranian regime shall never threaten the world with nuclear weapons."

But Warren Larson, director of the Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies, leans toward opposing sanctions, which he says "probably punish the poor more than anyone."

"What may be questioned is the wisdom of American evangelicals... and their consistent, almost reflexive pro-sanction policies," Larson said. "[E]vangelicals need to be more humble about such issues, adopting more nuanced and balanced positions with regard to policies that have the potential of adversely affecting Christian brothers and

DISCUSSION STARTER Politics

The President's Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships voted in February on whether the government should require houses of worship to form separate corporations to receive direct federal social-service funds. Thirteen members voted yes; twelve, including most evangelicals on the council, voted no.

sisters in Muslim contexts."

Sekulow, director of international operations at the American Center for Law and Justice, believes the Iranian regime is a danger not just to the world but also to its own people. "While tough economic sanctions may make life harder for Iranians today, sanctions are the only viable option on the table," he said. "Negotiations continue to fail."

Abe Ghaffari, executive director of Iranian Christians International, is concerned about the extreme persecution of Christians in Iran yet opposes sanctions.

"They will make life for the average Iranian more difficult," he said. "They will not weaken the government."

Paul Martindale, lecturer in Islamic studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, said attempts to isolate Islamic regimes can lead to crackdowns on local Christians but can also undercut support for a regime.

"In the end, one must weigh the likely temporary fallout against the potential for long-term gain and the justice of the issue in view," he said. "In such complex international situations, good people will have differences of opinion." ➤

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should churches form corporations to get federal funds?

YES

"Establishing nonprofits is a 21st-century expression of the Wesleyan legacy. Wesley believed the world was his parish and operated accordingly by starting social ministries. In today's society, one of the most effective ways to minister to the world is to establish a 501(c)3."

KIRBYJON CALDWELL,
pastor, Windsor Village
United Methodist Church

"It's advisable for a church to establish a separate organization, particularly if dealing with a significant amount of money and not something like the transfer of a used computer or a few thousand dollars to defray some expenses."

STANLEY CARLSON-THIES,
president, Institutional
Religious Freedom Alliance

"Separate incorporation can be prudent because it forces the ministry to keep funds separate and limits the scope of a government audit. But unless the red tape adjusts for size and beginner charities, neighborhood storefront ministries will be priced out of the competition for grants."

CARL ESBECK,
law professor,
University of Missouri

"The church must be a proper steward and know what it is getting into. I've seen churches do it very well—keep their mission and freedom and also utilize government resources effectively—and I've seen groups get caught in the morass. It comes down to leadership."

RODOLPHO CARRASCO,
associate director,
Partners Worldwide

"Should they? Yes. Should they have to? No. It would be safer and easier if people had to form 501(c)3s. But for many ministries valuable in reaching the poor, the complications would be formidable; 90 percent wouldn't even try."

JOEL HUNTER,
senior pastor, Northland
Church

"Churches are not primarily social service agencies. But one thing they can do better than other kinds of organizations is mobilize volunteers—particularly small groups of volunteers to do well-defined tasks on a periodic basis. That is congregations' special niche in the system."

MARK CHAVES,
sociology professor,
Duke University

NO



By the Book: In remote Sumapaz, soldiers pose with their new Bibles and pilot Russ Stendal. More than 1,000 people on average die every month in the narco-terrorist conflict.

MISSIONS COLOMBIA

Ministry at the Center of Violence

Russ Stendal, held hostage for months by narco-terrorists, now ministers in their midst. By Deann Alford in Colombia

Russ Stendal, held hostage by terrorists for 142 days in the 1980s, is now taking the Bible to places where angels fear to tread: deep into Colombia's Texas-sized jungle regions, where terrorists, soldiers, and paramilitaries have been fighting since 1964.

Stendal belongs to a group of missions leaders and indigenous pastors who serve in remote areas of Colombia, one of the world's most violent mission fields. Over the past three years, more than 200 churches have been forcibly closed and 35 pastors assassinated in the South American country,

reports religious-freedom advocacy group Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

One of the most recent assassinations occurred in the northern village of Marañón in September 2009, when three masked gunmen broke into the home of Foursquare Church pastor Rafael Velasquez and killed him in front of his wife and six church members. Other pastors, missions leaders, and churchgoers have received anonymous threats of death, rape, and kidnapping for attending religious services, speaking out for peace, and criticizing terrorists or paramilitaries. Nationwide, the number of killings linked

to the conflict has declined significantly each year since 2002. But in 2009, more than 13,000 died in the ongoing violence.

A Catholic-majority country, Colombia has seen persistent growth among Protestant groups, especially since its parliament disestablished the Catholic Church in the 1990s. Numbered at about 6.75 million, Protestants compose 15 percent of the country's population of 45 million.

2010 is a transition year for Colombia. In late February, a constitutional court blocked President Álvaro Uribe's attempt to extend his time in office to an unprecedented third term. During Uribe's tenure,

the government continued its successful offensive against two main revolutionary Marxist groups, FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and ELN (National Liberation Army). Guerrillas and paramilitaries, such as the notorious Águilas Negras (Black Eagles), sustain themselves with profits from the \$5-billion-per-year illicit cocaine trade.

Many of Colombia's Protestants believe the answer to the insurgency lies in relational outreach. In June 2009 Protestant leaders in Bogota, the capital, issued a 110-page report, "A Prophetic Call," which

former Colombian military officer who worked undercover) told CT that he believes Stendal's methods are helping Colombia turn the corner. "Russ is putting the concept of God in Marxist heads. I believe FARC is weakening because they are now thinking about God."

FEAR AND HOPE AT 13,000 FEET

Colombia's forested areas are home to 50,000 species, the world's largest crop of coca (the main resource for cocaine), and one of the longest wars in South American history.

'In some areas of the country, we are dealing with Marxist-Leninist factions that appear every bit as extreme as those in North Korea in that they do not tolerate dissent.' ~ Russ Stendal

provides 13 steps for resolving the conflict. Their key proposals include the following:

- include official Protestant church representatives in peace talks once a final ceasefire is in place for all armed groups;
- add reconciliation to the process of demobilizing paramilitaries;
- increase respect for freedom of religion and worship sites; and
- adopt a national process for truth-telling, justice, and reparations.

The report also chronicles the great suffering of Protestant church members. In 2008, the most recent reporting period, Protestants suffered 240 episodes of political violence with 2,285 victims.

Stendal, who makes frequent trips into Colombia's hazardous interior, invited *Christianity Today* to witness the steady progress he and other church leaders are making. Some of them are making the ultimate sacrifice: martyrdom.

"In some areas of the country, we are dealing with Marxist-Leninist factions that appear every bit as extreme as those in North Korea in that they do not tolerate dissent," Stendal told CT recently. "As things heat up, opportunities for the gospel skyrocket, and we are scrambling to keep up with all the open doors that God has placed before us."

One expert in counterterrorism (a

Fifty miles south of Bogota, at an elevation of 13,000 feet, lies the mountainous rural area of Sumapaz, which embodies many of the country's current complexities. Formerly held by FARC guerrillas, it now has a potent resident military force. President Uribe's strategy of retaking guerrilla-held areas means *campesinos* (peasant farmers) in Sumapaz experience less violence. But fear is still a powerful factor for residents. Soldiers, guerrillas, and paramilitaries pressure locals for intelligence and support. Some who do not cooperate face threats and death.

It takes two hours to travel in Stendal's red pickup from Bogota to Sumapaz, located above the timber line. Stendal, 54, told CT that he is persuaded the gospel can succeed in bringing lasting peace to Colombia, where nothing else has worked to resolve the conflict. "Politics as usual won't do it," he says.

Stendal believes Colombia's violent quagmire will persist until the hearts of its people are changed through genuine encounters with God.

To that end, Stendal's organization, Colombia Para Cristo, aims to reach all parties. Throughout Colombia's many conflict zones, he and indigenous ministry leaders hand out tens of thousands of Bibles, Christian books, and solar-powered

radios tuned to his radio stations: one that plays secular and Christian music, the other teaching and preaching, much of it from Stendal himself. Local Christians have distributed more than 100,000 fixed-band radios provided by Galcom International, a communications ministry.

To deliver the message into hostile areas, Stendal often attaches Christian care packages called "truth packs" to small parachutes sewn by Baptists in Oklahoma. He drops the packages onto guerrilla camps, coca fields, and soccer fields from one of his two airplanes—a 600-pound ultralight, and a pink 1953 Cessna with the Pink Panther painted on its tail. This distinguishes the aircraft from those used by the military and drug dealers. When resources are available, Stendal can distribute via parachute more than 10,000 truth packs each month.

Stendal's pickup eventually stops outside a small house on a hillside. A woman sits anxiously on the porch with two children. Stendal tells CT that he visited this home three months ago and found guerrillas hiding inside. He gave all of them Bibles and Christian literature.

Stendal hands the woman a new Bible. She opens to the middle and starts reading. "What am I going to do if the Army comes and finds this?" she asks, remembering that the guerrillas were happy to receive free Bibles. The chances that soldiers would disapprove of her receiving the same gift stirred her anxiety. But Stendal keeps talking with her, reassuring her that having a Bible should not alone put her under a cloud of suspicion.

Later that day, Stendal's truck travels along an Army-patrolled road. A government soldier in orthodontic braces, gripping a Bible that Stendal had given him, motions for Stendal to stop.

The soldier leans against the open window. "I've decided to get out of the military, get baptized, and follow the Lord." Raised in a Christian home, the soldier tells Stendal that he had served in the Army for seven years. But now, after rereading the Bible, he has found new purpose in life.

Different armed groups view Stendal as a rare but genuinely neutral party. There is respect for his frank message. "We build a case that God exists and that

everybody will have to come into account,” Stendal says. “The guerrillas need to make one change: They need to put God in his rightful place. We’re not asking them to surrender to the other side. We’re asking them to surrender to God.”

Reinaldo Castellanos, a retired commander of the entire Colombian Army and an evangelical, endorses Stendal’s risky methods. “FARC has been around for a long time without being defeated,” Castellanos told CT. “Stendal must be very careful. He must be prudent. But the work must go forward.”

WILLING TO DO WHATEVER

Stendal’s five decades of experience in Colombia make him a rich resource for the country’s indigenous church.

In 1964, Stendal’s father relocated the family from Minnesota to take part in translating the Bible into Kogi, the mother tongue of an important pre-Columbian tribe. His father was a pilot and taught him to fly. Stendal was troubled by the difficult

lives of the campesinos. He offered to purchase locally caught fish and fly them to urban markets to fetch a better price.

But on August 14, 1983, one of his well-intentioned trips to meet with local fishermen turned sour. FARC rebels kidnapped him and demanded a ransom.

Stendal lived alongside FARC guerrillas for five months of captivity, much of the time with a rope tied in a slipknot around his neck. He had time to reflect on why the poor were drawn to the unfulfilled promises of FARC ideology. When campesinos join the armed guerrillas, the leaders control them with fear. Dissent is not tolerated. The disobedient and would-be deserters are executed.

Yet Stendal shared the gospel with his captors and wrote out by hand in Spanish his life story. He was amazed when FARC commanders permitted his writing to circulate throughout the camp. His story was later translated into English and published in the mid-1980s under the title *Rescue the Captors*.

Guerrillas and their leaders began

approaching Stendal with questions about life and faith. Some started expressing doubts about the violent, godless ideology they were devoted to.

So moved was Stendal by his experience that one day, he says, “I told God that I was willing to do whatever he saw fit, that he could do anything he wanted with me, and that I would trust him completely.”

Stendal believes his prayer was answered when an anonymous donor paid his \$55,000 ransom. After release, he left with his wife and daughter for the U.S., but later returned to Colombia, ignoring warnings from the American embassy never to return. He began to pursue a new calling: bringing the love of Christ into the center of the conflict.

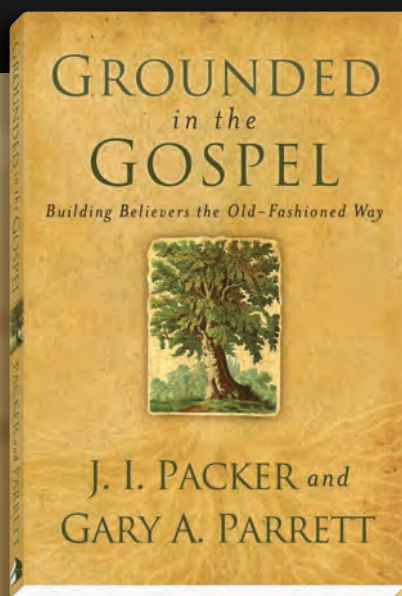
NEW HORIZONS

Stendal has his eye on expanding outreach into Colombia’s border areas and across the border into neighboring Venezuela and Ecuador.

Late in 2009, local leaders in Curillo,

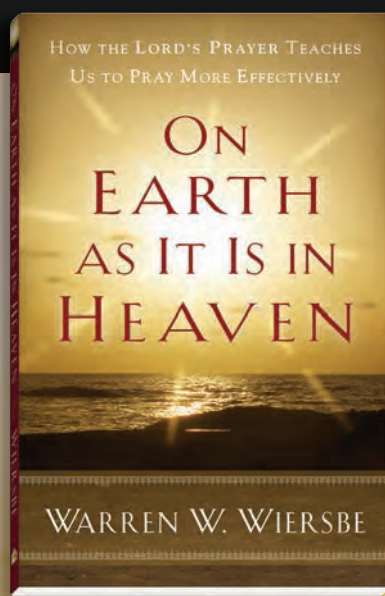
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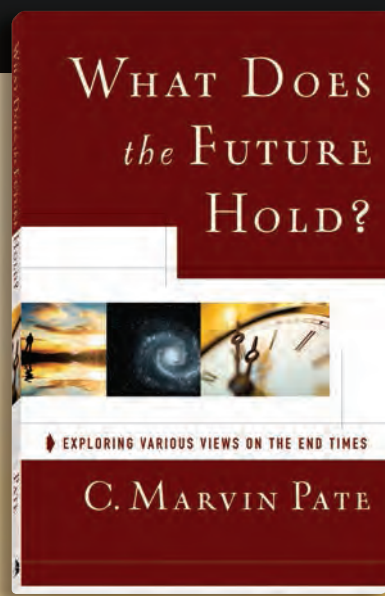
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Colombia [from 19]

a town in southwest Colombia about 100 miles from the Ecuador border, invited Stendal to help lead a convention where evangelism, reconciliation, and peacemaking were on the agenda.

Curillo is a remote area where armed groups forced out Western missionaries more than two decades ago. Campesinos from miles away came to take part in the convention. Organizers had the police, the Army, and the mayor's full cooperation. The guerrillas were open and curious; they eagerly took books, Bibles, and Galcom radios.

Stendal said Colombians have an intense hunger for spiritual things and are looking for a new course. "A large number of people are becoming on fire for God. This is happening in seemingly strange and unlikely places like prisons, guerrilla camps, and in remote, dangerous areas," Stendal told CT. "Only God can start a real movement. We are led by the Spirit and place the Bibles,

literature, radio broadcasts, and events according to the will of God. All these things can really fan the flames."

The following developments provide firm evidence that Colombia's Protestants are expanding their influence:

- Guambiano and Paez Indian Christians in Popayan have the government's permission to create a regional association as a vehicle for aid and support for education and health care. The old association discriminated against Protestants.

- Christian engineers, responding to a personal request from President Uribe, have installed a powerful radio antenna on an ancient volcano in the center of the nation for government use. It will also be used for gospel-proclaiming broadcasts.

- A pastor support program has launched to address the needs of leaders in high-risk areas.

As for himself, Stendal has his eyes fixed on a new cross-border ministry goal: one million Bibles for Venezuela to match the one million new assault rifles coming

into the nation. He committed this vision to prayer after Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's terrorist-supporting president, revealed that his government was contracting with Russia for one million assault rifles for a million-man volunteer army.

Protestant leaders, including retired military officers, have stepped forward to work with Stendal on outreach and Bible distribution. Canadian supporters have donated another airplane for the new effort.

As he headed to meetings in Nashville, where he hoped to capture the imagination of American evangelicals for his new ventures, Stendal told CT, "Together with the team of over 100 coworkers that the Lord has placed around me, we feel that the words of Hudson Taylor still apply to us and to our situation: When God's work is done God's way, it will never lack divine providence." ⊕

Deann Alford, based in Austin, Texas, is an advisory editor for *Christianity Today*.

Is there mission BEYOND EVANGELISM?

JOHN
STOTT
MINISTRIES

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Jesus certainly said so. (Matt. 28:20)

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Le chien tire l'homme.

La femme _____ la charrette.

une charrette

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The Jesus We'll Never Know



Why scholarly
attempts to discover
the 'real' Jesus have
failed. And why
that's a good thing.
By Scot McKnight

ON THE OPENING DAY of my class on Jesus of Nazareth, I give a standardized psychological test divided into two parts. The results are nothing short of astounding.

The first part is about Jesus. It asks students to imagine Jesus' personality, with questions such as, "Does he prefer to go his own way rather than act by the rules?" and "Is he a worrier?" The second part asks the same questions of the students, but instead of "Is he a worrier?" it asks, "Are *you* a worrier?" The test is not about right or wrong answers, nor is it designed to help students understand Jesus. Instead, if given to enough people, the test will reveal that we all think Jesus is like us. Introverts think Jesus is introverted, for example, and, on the basis of the same questions, extroverts think Jesus is extroverted.

Spiritual formation experts would love to hear that students in my Jesus class are becoming like Jesus, but the test actually reveals the reverse: Students are fashioning Jesus to be more like themselves. If the test were given to a random sample of adults, the results would be measurably similar. To one degree or another, we all conform Jesus to our own image.

Since we are pushing this point, let's not forget historical Jesus scholars, whose academic goal is to study the records, set the evidence in historical context, render judgment about the value of the evidence, and compose a portrait of "what Jesus was really like." They, too, have ended up making Jesus in their own image.

HEYDAY FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

In the 1980s, the central academic organization for biblical studies, the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), was energized in remarkable ways by a renewed interest in the historical Jesus, a project that had been abandoned for some decades. At that time, the Jesus Seminar, designed by former childhood preacher and fervent critic of all things orthodox Robert Funk, frequently made headlines. Noted scholars sat at

Illustrations by Rob Day

tables and voted on what Jesus really said and did based on the historical evidence. Funk and others drew up their conclusions in books that supposedly revealed the real Jesus.

Some of these studies were outlandish, some much closer to orthodoxy and the canonical Gospels. The headline-grabbing names included Ben F. Meyer, E. P. Sanders, John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, Paula Fredriksen, and N. T. (Tom) Wright. I have sat in packed lecture halls to watch Tom and Dom go at it, and I've listened in as two friends, Marc and Tom, bantered back and forth about who was getting it right. Paula, a Catholic convert to Judaism, continued to warn the entire discipline that too many errors were being made about Judaism. Those were heady days, and I remember giving a paper to over 500 scholars about how Jesus understood his own death. The neon-light days for the historical Jesus are now over.

So, what did the loaded expression “the historical Jesus” really refer to?

To begin with, “Jesus” refers to the Jesus who lived and breathed and ate and talked and called disciples. This Jesus is the Jesus who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and, according to the witness of many, was raised again. Through historical studies, this Jesus has been set in his Jewish context. We might call this Jesus the “Jewish Jesus.”

Then again, the four evangelists and the other New Testament authors, because they encountered Jesus in the context of how Scripture unfolded, interpreted Jesus by using terms like “Messiah,” “Son of God,” and “Son of Man,” understanding him as the agent of God’s redemption. We might call this Jesus the “canonical Jesus.”

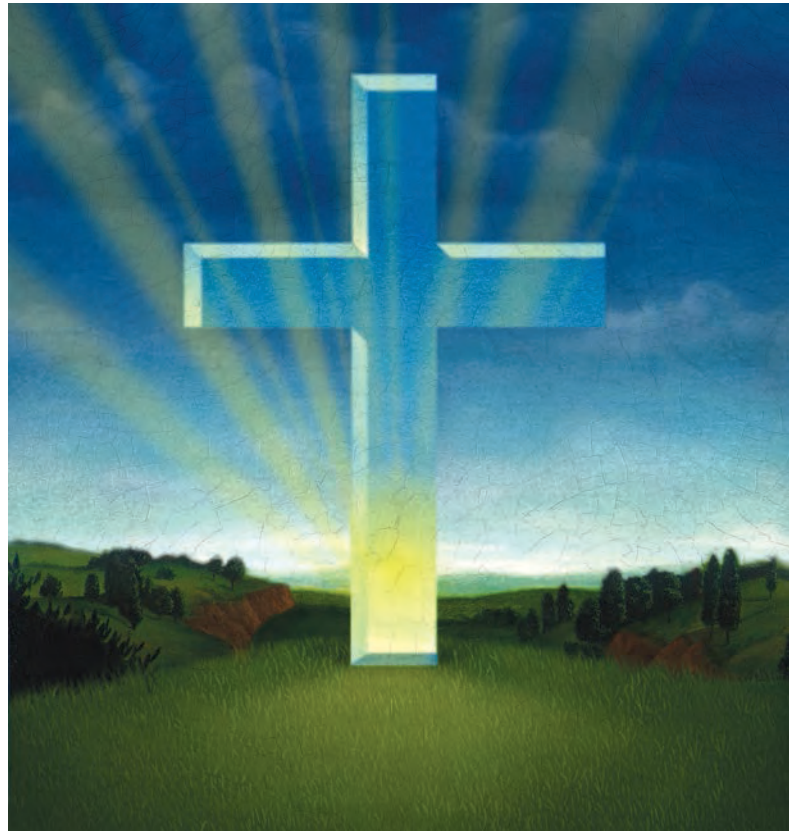
One more level needs to be observed: the church has amplified its understanding of “Jesus,” because it has interpreted Jesus in light of theological concerns. Let us refer to this Jesus as the “orthodox Jesus,” the second person of the Trinity, God from God and Light from Light.

But the historical Jesus is someone or something else. The historical Jesus is the Jesus whom scholars have reconstructed on the basis of historical methods over against the canonical portraits of Jesus in the Gospels of our New Testament, and over against the orthodox Jesus of the church. The historical Jesus is more like the Jewish Jesus than the canonical Jesus or the orthodox Jesus. Drawing distinctions between these various Jesuses is important in order to understand what has happened in the contemporary academic scene.

First, the historical Jesus is the Jesus whom scholars reconstruct on the basis of historical methods. Scholars differ, so reconstructions differ. Furthermore, the methods that scholars use differ, so the reconstructions differ all the more. But this must be said: Most historical Jesus scholars assume that the

Gospels are historically unreliable; thus, as a matter of discipline, they assess the Gospels to see if the evidence is sound. They do this by using methods common to all historical work but that are uniquely shaped by historical Jesus studies. The essential criterion used in most historical Jesus studies is called “double dissimilarity.” Even though it is riddled with holes, this method is still used by many historical Jesus scholars.

According to the criterion of double dissimilarity, the only sayings or actions of Jesus that can be trusted are those that are dissimilar to both Judaism at the time of Jesus and to the beliefs of the earliest Christians immediately after Jesus. One



of the most noteworthy examples is Jesus’ characteristically calling God *Abba*, a title for God rarely found in Judaism or in earliest Christianity.

This example, though, is problematic from the get-go: *Abba* (an affectionate term for “Father,” something akin to “Daddy”) is in fact not genuinely doubly dissimilar, for it is found in Judaism, if rarely, as well as in Aramaic in the New Testament; moreover, the word *Father* is found everywhere. But, historical exceptions aside, that Jesus called God *Abba* won the day as a historically reliable attribute, and therefore won the hearts of all historical Jesus scholars.

Other criteria were developed, criticized, dropped, and modified, but all have this in common: Historical Jesus scholars reconstruct what Jesus was like *by using historical methods to*

determine what in the Gospels can be trusted.

Second, the word *reconstruct* needs more attention. Most historical Jesus scholars assume that the Gospels have overcooked their portrait of Jesus, and that the church's Trinitarian theology wildly exceeds anything Jesus thought about himself and anything the evangelists believed. These scholars pursue a Jesus who is less than or different from or more primitive than what the Gospels teach and the church believes. There is no reason to do historical Jesus studies—to probe “what Jesus was really like”—if the Gospels are accurate and the church's beliefs are justified. There are only two reasons to engage in historical Jesus studies: first, to see if the church got him right; and second, if the church did not, to find the Jesus who is more authentic than the church's Jesus.

This leads to a fundamental observation about all genuine historical Jesus studies: *Historical Jesus scholars construct what is in effect a fifth gospel.* The reconstructed Jesus is not identical to the canonical Jesus or the orthodox Jesus. He is the reconstructed Jesus, which means he is a “new” Jesus.

I can establish that the tomb was empty and that resurrection is the best explanation for the empty tomb. But one thing the historical method cannot prove is that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification.

Furthermore, these scholars by and large believe in the Jesus they reconstruct. During what's called the “first quest” for the historical Jesus, in the early 20th century, Albert Schweitzer understood Jesus as an apocalyptic Jesus. In the latest quest, Sanders's Jesus is an eschatological prophet; Crossan's Jesus is a Mediterranean peasant cynic full of wit and critical of the Establishment; Borg's Jesus is a mystical genius; Wright's Jesus is an end-of-the-exile messianic prophet who believed he was God returning to Zion. We could go on, but we have made our point: Historical Jesus scholars *reconstruct what Jesus was really like and orient their faith around that reconstruction.*

This leads to a third point, one that needs renewed emphasis today: Historical Jesus scholars reconstruct Jesus in conscious contrast with the categories of the evangelists and the beliefs of the church. Wright is the most orthodox of the well-known historical Jesus scholars; I can count on one hand the number of historical Jesus scholars who hold orthodox beliefs. The inspiration for historical Jesus scholarship is that the Gospels overdid it, and that the church more or less absorbed the Galilean prophet into Greek philosophical categories. The quest for the historical Jesus is an attempt to get behind the theology and the established faith to the Jesus who was—I must say it this way—much more like the Jesus we would like him to be.

One has to wonder if the driving force behind much historical Jesus scholarship is more an *a priori* disbelief in orthodoxy than a historian's genuine (and disinterested) interest in what really happened. The theological conclusions of those who

pursue the historical Jesus simply correlate too strongly with their own theological predilections to suggest otherwise.

The question that many of us in the discipline must ask is this: Can theology or Christology or, more importantly, faith itself be connected to the vicissitudes of historical research and results?

WHOSE JESUS WILL WE TRUST?

The last session on the historical Jesus that I attended at the SBL meetings met in a small room, and there were about 20 of us there. The session, during which I gave a short paper, tells the story of the discipline itself.

The scholarly hope that we would discover the original Jesus had crashed against the rugged rocks of reality, and on that day we witnessed the end of a disciplinary era. One by one, most of us had become convinced that no matter how hard we tried, reaching the uninterpreted Jesus was nearly impossible—however fun and rewarding it was and however many insights about the Gospels we discovered along the way.

Furthermore, a reconstructed Jesus is just that—one scholar's version of Jesus. It is unlikely to convince anyone other than the scholar, his or her students (who more or less feel obligated to agree), and perhaps a few others.

German theologian Martin Kähler convinced his generation that faith in Jesus could not and should not rest on historians' conclusions about what did and did not happen and the consequent reconstructions that entailed. We must be will-

ing to ask, *Whose Jesus will we trust?* Will it be that of the evangelists and the apostles? Will it be that of the church—the creedal, orthodox Jesus? Will it be the latest proposal from a brilliant historian? Or will it be our own consensus based on modern-day historical scholarship? There is an irreducible futility to the historical Jesus enterprise.

We have now seen the death of latest historical Jesus studies as we know them. Well, not for all, because some are busy trying to reconstruct Jesus for themselves and for any who will listen. Still, the enthusiasm is gone, and the critical proposals are more often met with a ho-hum “yet one more” than a hope that we may once and for all have found the one who was buried under the interpretation of the earliest Christians.

Sitting on my desk is volume four of J. P. Meier's *Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. What began as a two-volume venture has doubled, and one or two more volumes are forthcoming. Volume one generated all kinds of conversation; volume four entered the market with barely a notice. Sitting next to Meier on my desk is Martin Hengel's *Jesus und das Judentum*, over 700 pages and perhaps the last volume from the titan of scholarship. Someone will translate Hengel, doctoral students will read it, professors will use it, reviewers will say that it's brilliant, an occasional pastor will find it useful, but in a decade it will all be forgotten. Why? Historical Jesus scholarship has come to the end of the road.

Two recent scholars have read the obituary for historical Jesus studies. James D. G. Dunn, in both the hefty *Jesus*

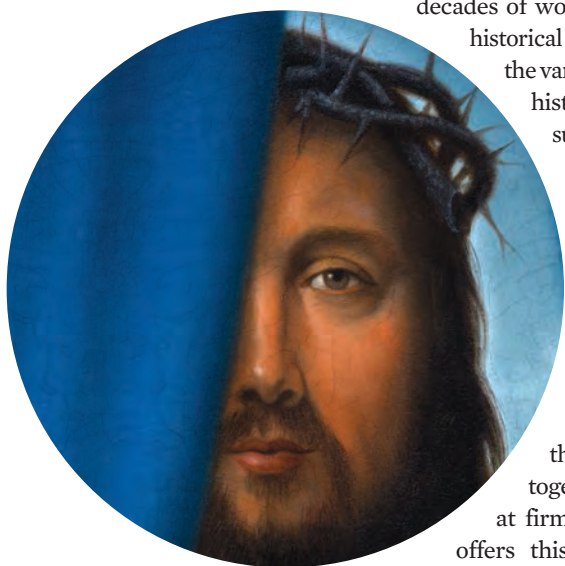
Remembered and the slender *A New Perspective on Jesus*, argues that the furthest we can get behind the Gospels is to the underlying strata of Jesus as his earliest followers remembered him. That is as far as we can go. That is the Jesus who gave rise to the Christian faith, and that is the only Jesus worth pursuing. In Dunn's view, the "remembered" Jesus contains the faith perspective of the earliest followers of Jesus, and behind that faith perspective we cannot go.

Dale Allison, whom I consider the most knowledgeable New Testament scholar in the United States, is less sanguine and more cynical than Dunn in his newest book, *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus*, which in my judgment plays *Taps* for the quest for the historical Jesus. After three decades of work in and around the historical Jesus, Allison sketches the variety of views about the historical Jesus and the supposed modern theory

conclusions: the historical Jesus game has run its course and it cannot deliver us the original Jesus.

WHAT HAS BEEN SHOWN

I now make a confession. For the better part of my academic career, I have participated in studies of the Gospels and the historical Jesus. I am an insider to the conversation, and have been part of the steering committee for the SBL's Historical Jesus Section. In fact, I was once asked to be the chair. Had that invitation come five years earlier, I would have eagerly accepted the responsibility. But that invitation came at the end of a long project of mine that culminated in my book *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory*. I declined the position because I could no longer commit myself to historical Jesus studies. The last thing I wrote in that book was the first chapter, which was an essay about method and what historical Jesus studies can accomplish.



We must be willing to ask, Whose Jesus will we trust? Will it be that of the evangelists and the apostles? Will it be the church's orthodox Jesus? Or will it be the latest proposal from a brilliant historian?

that if we put our heads together we will arrive at firm conclusions. Allison offers this depressing conclusion: "Progress has not touched all subjects equally, and whatever consensus may exist, it remains mostly boring."

Allison admits this about one of his own books on Jesus: "I opened my eyes to the obvious: I had created a Jesus in my own image, after my own likeness." He's not done: "Professional historians are not bloodless templates passively registering the facts: we actively and imaginatively project. Our rationality cannot be extricated from our sentiments and feelings, our hopes and fears, our hunches and ambitions." So, he ponders, "Maybe we have unthinkingly reduced biography [of Jesus] to autobiography."

On top of this genuine problem is the problem of method. Allison: "The fragmentary and imperfect nature of the evidence as well as the limitations of our historical-critical abilities should move us to confess, if we are conscientious, how hard it is to recover the past." With one ringing line, Allison pronounces death: "We wield our criteria to get what we want."

There is, in other words, no value- or theology-free method that will enable us to get back to Jesus. Allison is not a total skeptic; he thinks that we can get behind the Gospels to find some genuine impressions. But his book led me to conclude, "The era is over."

Two scholars, both highly devoted to the discipline of historical Jesus studies, come from two angles to relatively similar

Attentive readers will observe that the first chapter relativizes the theological significance of historical Jesus efforts. I had tried my best to see where the methods would lead if I sought to examine *if* and *how* the historical Jesus understood his own death. Some of my results disappointed, because I wanted to be able to prove some texts as authentic that I found stubbornly resistant to the methods available to us. Historiography, I concluded, can only do so much. One day, while editing the final draft, I came across these words from Romans 4:25: "He was delivered over to death *for our sins* and was raised to life *for our justification*."

This is what I said to myself: As a historian I think I can prove that Jesus died and that he *thought* his death was atoning. I think I can establish that the tomb was empty and that resurrection is the best explanation for the empty tomb. But one thing the historical method cannot prove is that Jesus died *for our sins* and was raised *for our justification*. At some point, historical methods run out of steam and energy. Historical Jesus studies cannot get us to the point where the Holy Spirit and the church can take us. I know that once I was blind and that I can now see. I know that historical methods did not give me sight. They can't. Faith cannot be completely based on what the historian can prove. The quest for the real Jesus, through long and painful paths, has proven that much.

Scot McKnight is professor of religion at North Park University in Chicago, and the author of many books, including *The Jesus Creed*.

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for "The Jesus We'll Never Know," a Bible study based on this article.

Should We Abandon Studying the Historical Jesus? **Two Responses.**



No, We Need History **N. T. Wright**

SCOT MCKNIGHT ADVOCATES a kind of fasting. I am to give up the lifetime habit of studying Jesus historically. Okay, it's Lent, but this is going to be harder than doing without Merlot. Or even Macallan.

But is this necessary? Or even coherent? Three comments, then three conclusions.

THERE'S HISTORY AND THEN THERE'S HISTORY

First, the words *history* and *historical* can refer to two different things: (a) past events, or (b) what people write about past events. Most people assume the former—"the historical American Civil War" means the Civil War that actually happened, not historians' reconstructions of the Civil War. Scot, however, suggests that "the historical Jesus" must *only* mean (b). I doubt that this will catch on. Yes, that's how many scholars use it, but not all. English usage allows, nay, encourages, sense (a). Even Scot uses it like that in his penultimate paragraph.

Second, Scot makes no distinction between different types of historical Jesus studies. Following Ben F. Meyer (*The Aims of Jesus*, 1978; new edition, 2002), I have demonstrated a massive gulf between the kind of historiography Scot describes and the kind I christened the "third quest." I reject the double dissimilarity criterion and have proposed the balancing "double *similarity*": Jesus must have been recognizably (if crucifiably) Jewish, and



No, We Need to Stay in the Conversation **Craig Keener**

SCOT MCKNIGHT IS RIGHT to insist that the Gospels rather than scholars' speculations are where we encounter Jesus. I myself recently argued in *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* that the Gospel writers' portrait of Jesus makes much better historical sense than scholars' historical reconstructions do.

But, while I agree wholeheartedly with Scot's main point, I want to make a case for why historical Jesus studies remain valuable.

IS JESUS RESEARCH DEAD?

I believe Scot underestimates the continued interest in historical Jesus research and, therefore, the importance of engaging it. While the historical Jesus group may have declined at the Society of Biblical Literature meetings, publishers and the media continue to address the topic. Likewise, scholars continue to publish and hold international symposiums on historical Jesus topics (e.g., the 2007 Princeton-Prague Symposium). Quests for the historical Jesus come and go, but no sooner are postmortems pronounced for one than another quest in a new form seems to rise. The persistence is inevitable so long as public interest in Jesus remains and current historical approaches survive.

As long as the historical questions are being asked, then, it is important for the Tom Wrights, Ben Witheringtons, and the many other believing scholars engaged in the discussion to articulate their

recognizably (if uniquely) the starting point for what we now call “the church.”

Not all historical Jesus scholarship is skeptical in intent or effect. Genuine historical study is necessary—not to construct a “fifth gospel,” but rather to understand the four we already have. History confounds not only the skeptic who says “Jesus never existed” or “Jesus couldn’t have thought or said this or that,” but also the shallow would-be “orthodox” Christian who, misreading the texts, marginalizes Jesus’ first-century Jewish humanity. Puzzle: I think Scot believes this too.

Third, when German scholars gave up historical Jesus research in the 1920s, they left a vacuum into which the “German Christians”

History cannot compel faith. But it is very good at clearing away the smoke screens behind which unfaith often hides.

inserted their non-Jewish Jesus, with appalling results. That was why New Testament scholar Ernst Käsemann insisted that, despite difficulties, we had to study Jesus historically. How will we ward off the next generation’s dangerous follies (not just Dan Brown, though he matters too) if we don’t do history?

CLEARING AWAY SMOKE SCREENS

Now three conclusions.

First, this isn’t about an “uninterpreted” Jesus. Jesus’ contemporaries perceived him within a network of narrative, symbol, and hope, and their stories about him reflect that. To say that “we can’t go behind that faith perspective” so that “the past is hard to recover” capitulates to a reductive modernist epistemology.

Second, of course history isn’t enough by itself. Back to Reformation theologian Philip Melancthon: It isn’t enough to know that Jesus is the Savior; I must know that he is the Savior *for me*. History cannot tell me that. But it can reconstruct the framework within which it makes sense—the biblical framework that Jesus and his followers took for granted. If Jesus didn’t really exist, or was really a revolutionary Zealot, or a proto-Buddhist mystic, or an Egyptian freemason, the “for me” floats like a detached helium balloon on the thin, vulnerable air of subjectivism. It is when we put Jesus in his proper *historical* context that the Resurrection proposes that he was the Messiah, that the Messiah is Lord of the world, and that he died and was raised *for me*. History is challenging, but also reassuring.

Third, history cannot compel faith. But it is very good at clearing away the smoke screens behind which unfaith often hides. History and faith are, respectively, the left and right feet of Christianity. Modernism hops, now on this foot (skeptical “historiography”), now on that (unhistorical “faith”). It’s tiring, dangerous, and unnecessary. Puzzle: I think Scot believes this too. ☩

N. T. Wright is Bishop of Durham in the Church of England. He is the author of many books, including *The Resurrection of the Son of God* and *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Augsburg Fortress).

perspective. While historical methods do not answer theological questions or compel faith, I can testify that in my much younger days as an unchurched atheist, they would have invited me to consider it.

Used rightly, these methods can be friends rather than foes of faith. The academy’s ground rules are limited, not always fair, and themselves open to challenge. Some methods, such as the double dissimilarity criterion, are now widely rejected. But many of the principles provide a minimal basis for dialogue among scholars of different persuasions. Through that dialogue, we can establish at least some historical information on which most scholars can agree.

For example, historians would normally take very seriously biographies written within a generation or two of their subjects. I contend that if skeptics really treated the Gospels as they treat other historical documents, they would be less skeptical. Using standard historical methods, we can challenge many skeptics’ doubts about Jesus.

PROBLEMS WITH CONVENTIONAL METHODS

Some helpful criteria used by historians today go back to ancient historians, who probably indirectly provided models for Luke the Evangelist. Conventional historical methodology, however, never tells us everything about someone in the past. Nor does it provide the theological meaning of their actions or bring us into a living relationship with that person. Historical methods merely offer probabilities based on limited evidence. It is the nature of these methods that some events deemed historically improbable by scholars actually happened, while some events deemed probable actually did not.

Quests for the historical Jesus come and go, but no sooner are postmortems pronounced for one than another quest in a new form seems to rise.

Historiography—particularly the method by which historians weigh evidence and write history—thus proves inadequate to arbitrate revealed truth about God’s activity in history. Critics often work, to varying degrees, from a hermeneutic of suspicion, but Christians live by what New Testament scholar Richard Hays calls a hermeneutic of trust. Some skeptical scholars argue that we can believe only what we can prove using their methods (and then often place the bar of evidence impossibly high). In such cases, dialogue may require not just providing historical evidence, but also challenging our critics’ starting assumptions. Some further define historical method as excluding supernatural causes. Many philosophers today rightly challenge this assumption.

The historical Jesus dialogue will not go away. It affects public discourse; hence, evangelical scholars dare not ignore it. If you desire to experience the risen Lord personally, however, trust God, read the Bible, worship, pray, evangelize, and engage the world’s need. Scot’s reminder is therefore critical. ☩

Craig Keener is professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary at Eastern University, Pennsylvania. He is the author of various books, most recently *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Eerdmans).



HERE IS THE CHURCH HERE IS THE STEEPLE OPEN THE DOORS?

The doors of the church are being bound. The growing intrusion of government into the affairs of the church poses a profound threat to church autonomy and even to our most basic religious liberties – freedom of speech, freedom to exercise religious beliefs, and freedom of access. Pastors must be willing to speak up to reclaim and secure the right of the Church to be the Church. To learn what you can do, visit us online:

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On the



Jesus Trail

What we learned from Jews, Muslims, and Arab Christians as we traced the footsteps of Christ in Galilee.

By Gerald McDermott

T

HE LAND AROUND CANA, where Jesus turned water into wine, was remarkably beautiful one October morning last fall. Green vineyards and silvery olive groves added patches of color to the brown hills. But my blistered feet were aching for a rest, so I was glad when I saw a man picking dates from a tree in front of his spacious house. Marwan, a 41-year-old lawyer, invited us to join him and his wife and brother for coffee.

Before his family arrived, Marwan told us that when he was very sick as a boy, his Muslim mother promised God that she would make him a Christian if he would heal her son. Marwan got better, and his mother regularly took him to church. "I now believe," he told me, "that Jesus will return one day and save everyone. But I am not a Christian."

When his wife and brother joined us, they explained that another man had been crucified in Jesus' place, and that Jesus was taken without dying to heaven. Marwan quietly disagreed: "Jesus was crucified and then rose from the dead."

As my photographer son, Ross, and I discovered on the new Jesus Trail—a 40-mile path from Nazareth (Jesus' boyhood home) to Capernaum (Jesus' ministry headquarters) that winds through Jewish and Arab villages—Nazareth's most famous citizen still attracts disciples and divides families in the land of his birth. We wanted to ask Jews, Muslims, and Arab Christians what they thought about the man from Galilee.

What we found surprised us. In this ancient place dominated by Jews and Muslims, Jesus exerts extraordinary power. Just as he did 2,000 years ago, he continues to fascinate the masses, inspire persecuted disciples, and split families and communities.

Maoz Inon, the secular Israeli who co-founded the Jesus Trail, is a good example of those who are moved by Jesus even if they are unsure he still exists. Like many young Israelis, Inon backpacked around the world after leaving the army, and saw how tourism brought



Taking the High Road: Gerald McDermott surveys Galilee before hearing Hasidic Jew Gutman Locks's thoughts on the man from Galilee.

Photographs by Ross McDermott

Close Encounters of a Diverse Kind

The Jesus Trail is a 40-mile marked hiking trail in the Galilee region of Israel. Stretching from Nazareth to Capernaum, the trail connects sites from the life of Jesus and other places of historical and religious interest, including Sepphoris, Cana, the Via Maris Roman Road, the Horns of Hattin, Nebi Shu'eib, Mount Arbel, the Sea of Galilee, Tabgha, and the Mount of Beatitudes. A village-to-village route, it can be walked independently or with a tour group in three to five days (visit JesusTrail.com).

The following photos capture the diversity that father-son team Gerald and Ross McDermott found on their recent trek.



Gutman Locks, 72, Hasidic teacher

"Accepting Jesus as Messiah would mean the destruction of the Jewish people, for Jesus was opposed to Jewish teaching. He did things like picking food from the fields on the Sabbath."

together people from different cultures. When he walked the 580-mile Israel National Trail, he had a vision.

In the Valley of Elah, where David fought Goliath, the now-34-year-old entrepreneur could see in his mind's eye David charging Goliath, with both men's armies behind them.

"I am not religious or even romantic. But this vision showed me that there is a special power to this land," Inon told us. He then realized that a trail retracing Jesus' steps in Galilee, where Arabs compose the majority, could not only revive tourism in Israel but also help Israelis and Palestinians understand each other better. Now, two years since starting the trail with David Landis, an American Mennonite, Inon says, "I believe in the power of Jesus. In our day, he can still change the world and make it a better place for us and our children."

The Jesus Trail is starting to bring new life to the once-abandoned old city of Nazareth. New businesses have sprung up around the Fauzi Azar Inn, a mansion owned by a local Arab Catholic family, who has loaned it to Inon in exchange for his refurbishing it as a guesthouse. International hikers searching for Jesus and his path now spend money at local restaurants and grocery stores. Arab families are moving back to the old city and renovating its homes. Meanwhile, Arab Christians and Muslims work together amicably at the guesthouse run by Inon. "It's a miracle," he smiles. "People of different religions and cultures in this land show respect for each other."

MUSLIMS AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH

In Jesus' day, Galilee was famous for its religious and ethnic diversity, which helps explain Jesus' popularity among Gentiles.

This is still true: Galilee has a majority of Arabs (640,000 vs. 530,000 Jews), and Gentiles (Arab Christians) far outnumber Jews who follow Jesus.

But even Arabs who don't accept Jesus as God—Arab Muslims, in other words—nevertheless have greater regard for Jesus than some liberal Christians. They believe Jesus walked on water, raised Lazarus from the dead, and multiplied loaves and fishes.

Marweh, 23, is a college-educated mother of two and a housekeeper at Fauzi Azar Inn. An Arab Muslim, she affirms the Virgin Birth without hesitation: "God breathed life into Miriam (Mary) so that she could be a mother of Isa (Jesus)." We met Saleh, 34, at the restaurant he manages some miles up the trail from Cana, where he lives. He told us that he is proud to live in the village where Jesus performed his first miracle.

But Marweh, Saleh, and other Muslims we met made it clear to us that while they respect Jesus, he is not for them. Samir, a 19-year-old Muslim in Cana, told us, "God sent Moses for Jews, Jesus for Christians, and Muhammad for Muslims."

Yet Samir said the religions these leaders produced are not equal. "The Qur'an is 100 percent true, and the Gospels are not. They say Jesus is God, but he was only a prophet. That's why God had to send Muhammad—to correct the errors Jews and Christians had fallen into."

ANONYMOUS ARAB CHRISTIANS

The biggest surprise of our hike through Galilee was the number of Arab Christians we encountered. Each had a compelling story. Rani Espaniol, for example, is a newly married 32-year-



Rani Espanioly, 32, guide in Nazareth

"On the night of my conversion, a voice came from a being of light: 'Do not fear. I will use you.'"



Samir, 19, and Muhammad, 17, brothers

"Muhammad said we must believe in Isa (Jesus), but only as the son of Mary, not the Son of God."

old working as a guide in Nazareth. He was raised Catholic but says that faith never seemed real to him. But in January 2000, when he felt he had reached a dead end in life, an Arab Christian preacher prayed for him. That night, when he was in bed, he saw a figure of light approaching him.

He got out of bed to ask his mother if someone was in the living room. "No," she replied, telling him to get some sleep. The figure moved closer and closer, finally clothing him in light. Then Rani heard a voice: "Do not fear; I will use you." He wept and wept but felt "relief and joy. The next day my parents saw a huge difference in me."

Now Rani attends a Nazareth seminary to train for ministry in media, saying he wants to overcome the widespread fear of Muslim persecution, which silences many fellow Arab Christians. "We Arab Christians can be ambassadors for reconciliation and peace in this country."

Unlike Rani, most Arab Christians we met told us not to use their names. An Arab Catholic woman in a once-majority-Christian village dominated by Muslims assured us that "[Christians] have good relations with the Muslims here," but asked us not to identify her.

A burly Palestinian Christian in his mid-40s told us privately, "In another one hundred years, there will be no Christians in Galilee because of our cousins [Muslims]." He told us that Muslim teenagers in his village recently cursed and threatened his teenage son for wearing a cross; now his son does not dare wear any sign of his Christian faith. He said that a Christian

was murdered in a nearby village, falsely accused of ripping a Qur'an. The murderers were convicted and jailed, but after Muslims rioted, they were released.

Others told us that most Arab Christian men don't dare respond to Muslims who jeer at their wives for not wearing veils, because they fear attacks on their families. Arab Christians in Galilee sometimes feel like *dhimmis*—Arabic for "protected ones" but actually second-class citizens in Muslim countries ruled by Shari'ah. "We cannot express ourselves," complained another Arab Christian. "We always have to suck up to the Muslims."

"This is the real reason Arab Christians are leaving Israel," he later told us. A young Arab man who is a leader in his Greek Orthodox community conceded, "The Orthodox Church in this land is a sinking ship."

Yet some Arab Christians we met insisted they had no problem with Muslims. Gaby is an active Nazareth Catholic who says he has Muslim friends and is not persecuted for his faith. Sureida, a mother of two, said the same but added that she doesn't bring her children to church, because "I don't know if he was the Son of God." She told us that "the Islamic stories seem more real."

Evangelicals, on the other hand, were less sanguine. A 40-year-old man who asked to remain anonymous confided, "Evangelicals are more vulnerable, because we express our faith sometimes outside church and are willing to talk to Muslims. That's when it can be dangerous."

In this ancient place dominated by Jews and Muslims, Jesus exerts extraordinary power.



Shafek Tarif, 55, director of a Druze shrine

"This shrine is dedicated to Jethro, our chief prophet, from whom Moses learned. Jesus could not have been God because he died."



Israel and Sarah Shavit, 61, guesthouse operators

"My [Sarah's] mother gave up on God because he did not help her in the Nazi camps. So I too am an atheist."

JEW'S AND THE 'CAPABLE JEW'

The religious Jews we met showed little interest in Jesus. Richard, our delightful host at Kibbutz Lavi, one of the few *kibbutzim* (Israeli collective villages) that are religious, is a 67-year-old who immigrated to Israel from New York with his wife in 1966. He told us that he believed Jesus was a "capable Jew but not Messiah."

Why not? "Because I was educated that way. Besides, Maimonides [the greatest Jewish philosopher] made it a cardinal principle of faith that the Messiah has not yet come."

Gutman Locks, a Hasidic teacher from Jerusalem, was dismissive. "Your boy Jesus" cannot be Messiah, he said, because "he didn't bring peace to families as the Bible predicts the Messiah will." Jesus was a Jew, he allowed, but "he was a bastard because his father was not Joseph." His "delusions" prove he had a demon.

Goni, a nonreligious Jew, had a more positive view of Jesus. We met her where the Israel National Trail (INT) intersects with the Jesus Trail by the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. We stood among lush mango and grapefruit groves under the cliffs of Arbel that tower majestically over the water. Goni, a 22-year-old who had served her two compulsory years in the military as a journalist, said she had never read the Gospels, but from what she has heard, "Jesus was on the edge, never afraid to say what he thought. He reached out to the down and out. I admire that." Yet she didn't agree with turning the other cheek: "That doesn't always work."

Omer and Noam, two brothers in their early 20s who were also on the INT, are cheerful theists who reject religious Judaism

because "we don't like rules and rabbis telling us what to do." They too admired Jesus' challenge to the Establishment, but didn't like the idea of a messiah. "It's wrong to wait for God to act instead of rolling up our sleeves and doing what we can to bring peace."

The Holocaust loomed in the background of nearly all our conversations with Jews. At the end of our third day of hiking, we lumbered wearily into Moshav Arbel, an Israeli settlement where a cheery couple runs a posh guesthouse. I soaked my sore feet in its little swimming pool. Over trout and steak in Israel and Sarah's tiny restaurant, the couple told us their story.

Sarah's mother had suffered in seven Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz, but miraculously survived. She told Sarah that if God didn't help her in the camps, then he must not exist. Yet on her deathbed, Sarah's mother returned to faith; Sarah is not sure why. Israel, Sarah's husband, grew up on a secular kibbutz. "We are atheists," Israel said, "but we celebrate Passover and Tabernacles, because we are part of the Jewish people." They told us they think Jesus "lived and died like a Jew" but didn't realize how important he would become.

Yet more Jews in Israel are receiving Jesus as Messiah. Yossi Ovadia, a Messianic Jewish pastor in Karmiel, told us there are now between 10,000 and 15,000 Jewish believers in Israel. He told us that he grew up the son of a synagogue cantor in Israel, but at age 16 decided that his Jewish faith was no longer relevant. "So I put my *kippah* (skullcap) in my back pocket." A short time later, while walking by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he met a Christian girl from England who told



Goni Nashad, 22, journalist

"I don't know if there is a God.
But Jesus Christ was on the edge.
He was compassionate and fearless."



Yossi Ovadia, 49, Messianic pastor in Galilee

"The English Christians I met had hearts for God
and knew the Bible better than I did, even though
I had grown up the son of a synagogue cantor.
I started to envy them."

him that God loves Jews and lived inside her.

Yossi was stunned that anyone loved Jews, since he thought the world hated his people. He was also surprised that God could be so real to someone. When he met this girl's friends months later and discovered that they had the same intimacy with God, he became envious. "Just as Paul predicted in Romans 11:11," Yossi laughed, "Gentile Christians would provoke Jews to envy."

Yossi's father refused to speak to him for years after he became a Christian, even hanging up on Yossi when he called from Lebanon while fighting in the first war. Thankfully, the two were reconciled three days before his father died.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

If the Holocaust lurked in the background of our talks with Jews, the Israeli-Arab conflict infiltrated every interview we conducted in Galilee. Samir, a 19-year-old Arab student in Cana, lamented that he had to go to Italy to study medicine because he said Israeli medical schools are so difficult for Palestinians to enter. (Americans who live in Israel told us that a roughly proportionate number of Palestinians are admitted, and that Israelis also study medicine abroad.)

Khaled, a Muslim businessman in Galilee, wanted us to know that "Jewish people have always made problems, especially today." Arab Christians whispered to us that the Israelis do not protect them from Muslim religious persecution.

Israelis complain that no matter what they do—like giving Gaza and Sinai back to Arabs, and affirming a two-state solution—militant Muslims only want to drive them

into the sea.

No one we met had much hope for the future. Goni, the young Israeli we met on the trail, said she refuses to speak of Palestinians as "the other side" and wants to work toward a settlement, but said she is not hopeful. "There will always be those who hate me and want to kill me, no matter what I do."

Yet we found a glimmer of hope. Yossi told us that for some years now, Arab Christians have been meeting with Messianic Jews for a weekend of prayer and worship. The 2008 gathering drew 1,200. At the end of the weekend, the Messianic and Arab pastors joined hands at the front and repeated in both Hebrew and Arabic, "We are one in Christ. God can break the wall of partition between us."

After my son and I finished hiking the Jesus Trail and flew home, this little victory of reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians kept coming to mind. Even on the flight home, we read of yet another setback in the peace process. But we knew that while few in the strife-torn land of Jesus expect political reconciliation, some Jews and Arabs are nevertheless walking their own Jesus Trail. As one Messianic believer said to us, "We are building bridges of love above rivers of hate." ✚

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Ross McDermott is a multimedia journalist who recently completed a year-long project on American festivals and subcultures with *National Geographic*.



WILTON

{ THEOLOGY }

A Resurrection That Matters

If we are completely saved from our sins through the Cross, what's the point of the empty tomb? By J. R. Daniel Kirk

I

N THE SPRING of my senior year in college, I was deeply immersed in the rhythms of Christian life. I was a leader in InterVarsity, participated regularly in a Bible study with other seminary-bound friends, set my Sundays aside for worship and rest, and read more than my fair share of extracurricular Christian books. As Easter approached, I began rehearsing the importance of Jesus' resurrection. I knew that for Paul and the other New Testament writers, there could be no Christianity without it. Yet one day as I was walking back to my dorm, it dawned on me that the gospel as I understood it had no need for Jesus to be raised from the dead.

The story of salvation as I had learned it was, in its entirety, about the Cross. I would teach other students about the Romans Road to salvation and the Romans 6:23 bridge diagram. What each of these captured beautifully was that we had a sin problem that God overcame with the cross of Christ. But each presentation also omitted the Resurrection entirely. And why not? Once our debt has been paid, what else could we possibly need?

What is so important about Easter?

JESUS HOLDS HUMAN DESTINY

The most important thing to say is somewhat shocking at first blush. At his resurrection, Jesus becomes something that he was not before. Jesus becomes the enthroned king of the world—the Messiah. But isn't the Jesus we meet on the pages of the Gospels also the Messiah? Yes and no.

Jesus in the Gospels is like David in the Book

Illustration by Nicholas Wilton

of 1 Samuel. He has received God's anointing as the chosen king, but another king is currently on the throne. The story of the Gospels is one in which Jesus inaugurates a new reign of God and deals a deathblow to the imposter king through his death on the cross. If the Cross is the defeat of the old king, the Resurrection is the enthronement of the new. Jesus now literally sits in the space that the kings of Israel had figuratively occupied before him: at the right hand of God. Though the preexistent Christ has always been God's agent in the creation and rule of the world, the human Jesus is now joined to that role as Lord and king over all.

This is the logic behind Jesus' claim in the Great Commission: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18–20). At the Resurrection, Jesus has become the Messiah, the Christ, God's anointed ruler of the earth.

To be God's anointed, the Christ, is to be at least in part the human descendant of David. And so we find Peter, in the first sermon preached after Jesus' resurrection, insisting on three things: (1) During his life on earth, Jesus was a man to whom God testified through

Why is it that we Christians can confidently affirm our identity as God's children, members of his family? The short answer is that we have received the Spirit of sonship (Rom. 8:15). But if we continue to probe, we discover that this Spirit is none other than the Spirit who sets Jesus apart as God's Son by raising him from the dead. Jesus' resurrection by the Spirit begins the re-creation of God's family. When we receive the Spirit of sonship, we are receiving the Spirit of Jesus, the resurrected Son of God.

The idea that we are God's children draws us back to Genesis 1. When God creates humans to rule, he creates them to reign in his stead as his beloved children. This is the significance of the language of "image and likeness." So when Jesus reclaims the mantle of lordship over the world, he simultaneously reopens the door into God's family. As we are renewed after the image of the resurrected Son, we are drawn into God's family as God's children and Jesus' sisters and brothers (Rom. 8:29).

As God's children, we are also called to be imitators of our heavenly Father. One of the richest explanations of resurrection that we find in

The fact that Jesus' resurrection guarantees our future resurrection means that our present lives already bear signs of the future.

wonders and miracles; (2) King David prophesied that the Messiah would be enthroned when God raised him from the dead; and (3) God has, in fact, *made* Jesus both Lord and Messiah by raising him and thereby enthroning him.

Having vanquished the Enemy, who had usurped authority over all the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5–8), Jesus reclaims for humanity its original purpose: to rule the world on God's behalf (Gen. 1:26–28). This is one reason why we find Paul referring to the resurrected Jesus as the second and last Adam. But as the last Adam, Jesus also holds humanity's destiny in his hands.

INTRUDING ON THE PRESENT

When we speak of human destiny, we are of course speaking of the future. The New Testament is clear that God has a future for this world, and that the transformation of humans is a crucial component of what lies in store.

What are the implications of Jesus being our forerunner in resurrection life? The New Testament leads us to understand that the hopes and expectations of God's people are now hidden in Christ. In other words, the only way to take hold of God's promises for the future is to take hold of the resurrected Jesus in the present.

So, for example, God has promised future embodied life on a new earth. The only way to take hold of this promise is to be joined to the resurrected Lord. Christian hope is more than wishful thinking, because the future on which we have set our hearts has already begun with Jesus' resurrection. He is now what we shall be.

But our present life is also determined by Jesus' resurrection. When we claim that we are even now God's children, that God is growing us up into obedience, and that we are already justified, what we are saying in part is that the future laid up for us in the resurrected Christ is intruding on the present.

Scripture is the promise that our future resurrection life bears fruit in the present. Jesus' resurrection leads Paul to use turns of phrase such as "walk in newness of life," and "present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead." In the mystery of God's economy, the fact that Jesus' resurrection guarantees our future resurrection means that our present lives already bear signs of the future. God renews us in obedience and sanctification now, but both are foretastes of the life we will know only when we are raised from the dead. That future has begun in the obedience that the Spirit of the resurrected Christ works in us today.

JUSTIFICATION AND THE EMPTY TOMB

Somewhat closer to the heart of the gospel, justification is also a function of Jesus' resurrection.

In order to get at this, we need to hold two things together. First, justification is a way of talking about our standing before God's judgment seat. Those who have been justified are those who have been vindicated or acquitted in the judgment. Then we need to see that resurrection was often understood as a gift God would give to those whom he justified. Resurrection is God's reward to the faithful, particularly those who had been faithful to the point of death.

In such a scenario, Jesus' resurrection functions as his justification in the courtroom of God. Jesus was mocked as a would-be king and sentenced to death for claiming to be the man at God's right hand. God vindicates Jesus' claims, judging him to be faithful and true, by enthroning him at his right hand. Thus, as 1 Timothy 3:16 puts it, Jesus was "vindicated by the Spirit."

So when we proclaim that by faith in Christ we have been justified, we are saying two things about ourselves: (1) God's future word of judgment has been pronounced in the present; and (2) this judgment is a foretaste of our resurrection that we receive now because we

participate in Jesus' resurrection.

These are a few examples that could be multiplied several times over. When we speak of Jesus' resurrection, we are not talking only about Jesus' present but also about our future and the ways that our future is breaking into the world in which we now live. In between Jesus' present and our future are the lives that play out the drama we will perform with full truth and beauty only when our bodies are raised from death.

CREATION WITH A FUTURE

At a couple of points, we have turned to the creation stories in order to make sense of Jesus' resurrection. This is not a coincidence. Resurrection and new creation are inseparable. The future for which we long and hope is the moment when God recreates this world and populates it with renewed, embodied people. Resurrection tells us that a new creation is coming. The resurrection of Jesus tells us that this new creation has already begun.

We most clearly see the connection between Jesus' resurrection and the coming new creation in Romans 8. There Paul depicts the created order as an active participant in the drama that moves from suffering to resurrection life. Creation groans, says Paul. But these are not the pangs of death, but rather the pangs of new life. Creation groans as it awaits a new birth and the resurrection of God's children.

The idea of groaning connects creation to God's people and the Spirit. Paul says that we ourselves groan while we await our adoption as God's children, which is our resurrection. He then goes on to say that the Spirit groans in prayer. These prayers are uttered in accordance with God's desire that we be conformed to the image of his resurrected Son.

Creation's part in the symphony of groaning tells us that the created order has a future in the coming resurrection. But if this creation is groaning for redemption as we ourselves are, then we discover, to the surprise of many, that the fate of this world is not destruction but redemption.

The implications of this are vast. For one, if creation is to be redeemed, then we are not free to view any of our work in this world as just a lot of brass polishing on the *Titanic*. Because Jesus is the last Adam, he and those who are his siblings assume the vocation of the first Adam to rule, subdue, and fill the entire created order. The resurrection of Jesus tells us that God has given up on neither humanity nor the creation we were created to rule on God's behalf. In the mysterious economy of God, what we do here on earth is of eternal consequence.

This plea to work in the present as though it mattered for the future is nothing less than the call to take hold of creation's destiny and bring it to bear on the present. What is true of us is also true of the wider order: the future is already dawning.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul places followers of Jesus within a new

creation that has already begun: "... the old has gone, the new has come!" This is the reality brought about by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The old powers have been defeated, the old self has been crucified, and the futility of creation is being undone. A new king is lord, the new self has been raised, and the creation is catching a glimpse of an eternity with hope.

SENT PEOPLE

There is one more way in which the resurrection of Jesus transforms our understanding of what God has called us to. The resurrected Jesus is the one who has the authority to send us out to the ends of the earth with the assurance that we will not labor in vain.

Matthew is representative of the other Gospels. Only after being raised from the dead can Jesus say, "All authority has been given to me; *therefore*, go!" From his first appearance to Mary in the garden to his last appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus, when the resurrected Jesus appears, he almost always sends. The vocation and mission of the church as a sent people depends on the resurrected Jesus as our sender.

Together with what we have already seen above, resurrection transforms and empowers Christian mission because (1) the Lord of all the earth is the one who sends us; (2) we are scripted into this Lord's resurrection story such that our own lives and futures are mirrors of his; and (3) the breadth of this mission must encompass the entirety of the created order. This is the Good News: not only a story of forgiveness but also a story of power, of transformation, and of hope.

In Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," the Misfit explains the world-shattering significance of Jesus' resurrection: "He thrown everything off balance. If he did what he said then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow him, and if he didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can."

With these words O'Connor declared, in concert with the New Testament writers, that the Resurrection is everything. Its truth or falsity determines whether the world has been irrevocably shaken by Easter Sunday or whether, instead, God has left Jesus, us, and the entire created order unanswered in our cries for salvation. No less than this is at stake in our affirmation that Jesus is raised from the dead.

J. R. Daniel Kirk is associate professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary and author of *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Eerdmans).

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for "A Resurrection That Matters," a Bible study based on this article.

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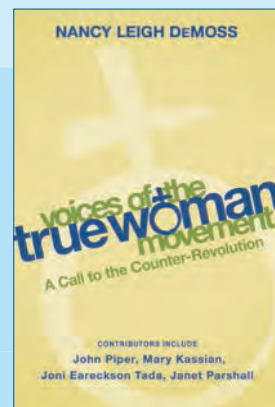


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IN 1984, two Israeli fishermen from a kibbutz near Mary Magdalene's hometown made a remarkable discovery: an ancient wooden boat that had plied the Sea of Galilee during the time of Jesus. It had been buried in mud and thus protected from oxygen and hungry microorganisms.

The Yigal Allon Museum now houses the Jesus Boat. The current exhibit is attractive, but unfinished. To attract more visitors (and to help maintain and improve the museum), Christian media executive Don Stillman joined forces with the family of Gonny Kossonogi, daughter of the famous Israeli general Yigal Allon, to form Jesus Boat Inc. In 2009 the group produced a book (*The Jesus Boat*, by Christian Stillman), a DVD (*The Jesus Boat Revealed*), a website (JesusBoatMuseum.com), a replica of the boat at the Holy Land Experience in Orlando, and a multimedia tour of American megachurches.

The church presentations, which have continued into 2010, include talks by Kurt Raveh, one of the specialists who supervised efforts to excavate and preserve the boat. On Raveh's recent visit to the United States, David Neff, editor in chief of the Christianity Today Media Group, talked about the discovery with the marine archaeologist, who excavates ancient shipwrecks for the University of Haifa's Department of Maritime Civilizations.

How did you get involved in Israel's marine archaeology?

When the Yom Kippur War started in 1973, Israel asked for volunteers, and I signed up for two weeks. That has become 36 years.

I found myself a beautiful spot on the Mediterranean near Caesarea and the ancient ruins of Dor, King Solomon's major port. I got involved in archaeology there, first as a hobby, then as a profession. I joined the excavations at Tel Dor in the beginning. That excavation is now in its 27th year.

Out in the water, I discovered wrecks. Fishermen had plundered the wrecks and sold items on the black market. So the Israel Department of Antiquities asked Shelley Wachsmann [now at Texas A&M] and me to help create a unit for the protection and study of underwater archaeological remains.

We were pioneers. We had to build everything from scratch. The part of the Mediterranean where we worked had been a major shipping route for 5,000 years. There must

{ ARCHAEOLOGY }

Miracle Boat

The surreal, sometimes comical story behind the discovery of the Jesus Boat.
Interview by David Neff

have been at least 5,000 shipwrecks we could have found.

Every winter, the southerly storms bring the sand of the Nile all the way up to Haifa. All the sunken ships are under sand, packed very closely so that no microorganisms, Teredo worms, or air come into contact with them. We now have 28 wrecks ranging all the way from the time of King Solomon to Napoleon. It's the largest and best preserved concentration of ancient shipwrecks.

How was the Jesus Boat discovered?

It was a real surprise. After four years of drought, in 1986 the Sea of Galilee had retreated. Two brothers, Jewish fishermen, were walking on the exposed seabed

the site looking for gold. People with guns were chasing each other from the site. In the end, we had to be protected by police and guard dogs.

I had never been on an excavation where security people protected us, but where we also had an ice cream van and hot dog stands. People came in droves just to watch. At one point, 13 television stations from around the world were filming what was going on. It's the best recorded excavation I know of.

But then it started to rain. The drought was over, and the water was rising. If we left the boat where it was, it would be preserved. In another 200 years, maybe somebody else would find it. So we raced against time to clean the boat before the water reached it. We built

I'd never been on an excavation where security people protected us, but where we also had an ice cream van and hot dog stands. People came in droves just to watch.

and found coins, pieces of wood, and iron nails. They called us to check into it.

We started cleaning some of the boat, and suddenly we saw the mortise and tenon joints. We found a Roman oil lamp and a Roman cooking pot. It was a boat from Roman times! This is what we had been waiting for.

At that moment, there appeared a beautiful double rainbow. It was like a blessing. We danced there like Indians from happiness.

Then the problems started. The wood was completely waterlogged so it was like wet cardboard. Our boss at the Department of Antiquities didn't have equipment. Our group was just two archaeologists, two fishermen, and two others. We had only three buckets and two shovels. An expedition like this normally brings with it a million dollars, a year of preparation, laboratories, and a 40-person professional crew.

It seemed like mission impossible. We needed miracles. Everything was a miracle on this boat. People were so fantastic. People from the nearby kibbutz worked day and night. Christians, Jews, Arabs—everybody joined in. Luckily for us, American ambassador Thomas Pickering and his wife jumped in the mud with us. He helped us get funding and preservation material.

Somebody leaked to the press that this was a Turkish treasure boat that everybody had been [seeking] for 200 years. The area became a madhouse. People trekked over

dikes around it to continue the work.

It was so fragile. How did you get it out of the mud?

We built fiberglass ribs to support it, but they were not enough. So we made a cocoon out of plastic foam. We thought that maybe the foam cocoon would float. So we opened the dike, and after 2,000 years, the boat floated again on the Sea of Galilee. It floated about three kilometers to where we had built a pool, by the Yigal Allon Museum.

We then had to take off the plastic. It was worse than the mud. If it were cut with a hot knife, it would produce cyanide. So we had to use our fingernails.

We filled the pool with sweet water until 6,000 liters of polyethylene glycol arrived almost a year later from India, courtesy of Dow Chemical. One day, we noticed that the boat was full of worms. There were eggs in the mud from 2,000 years ago. We're talking *Jurassic Park* here. We could fight it with the chemicals, but then we'd pollute the water, and it would take another 10 years to get rid of that. We brought in experts from the U.S., but nobody knew how to do it without pollution. All the time, the

fishermen stood around smiling. Finally they said, "Leave it to us; it won't cost anything." So they brought some goldfish and carp. The fish lived off the parasites for a year.

Is there anything unusual about the boat's construction?

It's the ugliest boat I have seen. It was made out of 12 different types of wood, most of it recycled. No two planks are the same. You have to give the builder a lot of credit because he made the whole thing out of junk. It floated for a long time. The repairs show between 30 and 60 years of use.

Can you tell how it sank?

Because of where we found it, I personally believe she had been tied to a big pole or a tree. You have flash floods in the winter from the river there. Lots of mud covers everything in its path. Last week we were in Tiberias, where a whole Roman theater had been discovered, perfectly preserved, buried in mud left by a flash flood.

What impact has the Jesus Boat had?

One byproduct of our discovery is that we changed the whole atmosphere of the Sea of Galilee. Twenty years ago, there were big steel tourist boats with disco bars and lots of noise. They destroyed the serenity of the place. Now everything is again wooden boats with sails and singing pilgrims.

Another boat we took out of the Mediterranean after 2,500 years is on exhibit at the University of Haifa. Scientifically, it is more important than the Galilee boat. But nobody knows about it. It gets maybe two visitors a day. The Galilee boat has 2,000 visitors a week—maybe more.

With most of the boats we dig, their importance is their cargo. This boat had no cargo in it. But it has *emotional* cargo. ☩



Asking the Bea

Reading the Bible through the eyes of outsiders can awaken the church from



'Misfits': Social outsiders, like the gang members in this Salvadoran prison, are critical to the mission of the church.

Beautiful Question

numbness. By Joel Van Dyke and Kris Rocke

Christopher J. H. Wright began this series of Global Conversation essays with an exposition of the Lausanne Movement's driving definition: "Evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world." What does that gospel look like when it invades the margins of the world, sectors where our more traditional churches don't often go? To catch glimpses of that gospel in action and to understand the biblical themes that can animate ministry at the margins, we turn to Joel Van Dyke and Kris Rocke of the Center for Transforming Mission in Tacoma, Washington.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION • ALVARO YBARRA ZAVALA / GETTY

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HE PSALMIST ASKS, "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137:4). It's a beautiful question springing from the heart of a poet struggling

creatively to live out in a strange land (Babylon) what he knows to be true in another, more familiar context (Jerusalem). English poet e. e. cummings once wrote that the beautiful answer is always preceded by the more beautiful question, and in this psalm we discover a beautiful question. It has given theological roots to missional communities of grassroots leaders in six countries throughout Latin America (as well as in urban centers in the Caribbean, Kenya, and North America) under the banner of the Center for Transforming Mission (CTM).

We are learning how to read the Bible not to or even for those we serve, but *with* those we serve—those who have been wrongly labeled the least, last, and lost. Sustaining this approach is the belief that grace is like water: it flows downhill and pools up in the lowest places. We are learning to see God's grace pooling up in places of extreme poverty and violence.

The core theological values of CTM are formed by the

incarnational mission of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' incarnation—and here we mean all that Jesus did and said, including his death and resurrection to save us from our sins—the intimacy of human and divine is fully realized. Said plainly, the Incarnation unites what the world divides—always, and in all ways. It says that matter, not just spirit, matters. Ministry that spiritualizes away the problems we face in the world of matter is simply not true to the biblical picture portrayed in the Creation and the Incarnation. Biblical, incarnational ministry is radically

who sees everything and am still alive?" She gives to God the name *El Roi*, "the God who sees me." This element of the story seized the attention of these present-day Hagar in a vise of surprise and wonder.

A few weeks after the study, the prison chaplain was able to complete phase one of a prison rehabilitation project, building a cement wall physically separating the women from the men. The idea emerged to paint a mural on the wall, and a discussion ensued about what the women wanted to paint. They came

to a unanimous decision to paint the story of Hagar, with the words *El Dios Que Me Ve* ("the God Who Sees Me") as the focal point of the piece.

The larger missional implication is that Hagar grasps something about God that

Abraham is not able to confess until six chapters later. In Genesis 22:14, Abraham names Mount Moriah *Jehovah Jireh* ("the God who provides"), using the verb *ra'ah*, the same one that Hagar used in naming God. This leads us to marvel that perhaps the Hagar of the world are able to recognize the gospel long before the Abrahams do.

Reading the Bible with those we serve means we learn to take the stained glass off the text of Scripture.

holistic. It touches the body and the soul. It calls forth personal transformation and systemic change. It invites righteousness and justice. It connects God and humanity, heaven and earth, and, perhaps hardest of all, "us" and "them."

Our concern to incarnate Jesus among the least, last, and lost has introduced us to some amazing grassroots leaders who are singing God's song in some very strange lands, such as among populations of street youth, families in extreme poverty, prostitutes, women in the throes of domestic abuse, and incarcerated gang members in the prisons of Central America. We have learned that "misfits" are critical to the mission of the church. Let me (Joel) try to illustrate.

There is a men's prison in Central America with a surprising group of residents. A ragtag clan of girlfriends, wives, sisters, and mothers connected to one of Central America's major gangs sleep under and on top of the cement tables in what used to be the dining hall. During a recent visit, the prison "chaplain" (an ex-gang member) and I led a conversation centered on the person of Hagar in Genesis 16. The women quickly applied the story personally. They heard the angel of the Lord pay honor and respect to Hagar by becoming the only character in the narrative to address her by name. The angel then asks her a beautiful question—"Where have you come from, and where are you going?" (v. 8)—empowering her to tell her own story.

The women in the prison could relate to being unnamed and used as property by people in positions of authority and power who never bothered to ask about their stories. They knew what it felt like to live in deserts of loneliness caused by rejection and marginalization. In Hagar's story, the women found their story.

Reading the Bible with those we serve means we learn to take the stained glass off the text of Scripture and begin reading from the perspective of those who have been crushed by life. It's an adventure in mining good news out of the holes of Scripture that the church typically refuses to climb down into. Hagar's story is one of those stories, and it is no small matter that she is the first person in Scripture who has the privilege of giving a name to God. She marvels, "Could it be that I have seen the back side of the one

THREE GATES OF CHANGE

We see three gateways to transformation: prayer, praise, and pain. The widest of all is pain. Ironically, pain is the most guarded gateway among those in power, and it is the most accessible gateway for the people we serve. Old Testament scholar Kathleen O'Connor says, "The first condition of healing is to give voice to pain."

Perhaps this is why reality and authenticity are the currency of those at the margins. If it is going to work, it has to be *real*. Perhaps that is why the gospel begins with seeing things as they are, not as they should be. It is a hard lesson, but we are learning that the primary task of the church is to see God at work in the world and to celebrate what we see God doing. It is not to build, grow, or extend the kingdom of God—that is God's work. Our job is to see what is, to name it, and to recognize God at work in it.

We are coming to see how the institutional church in Latin America often separates herself from the very people and places that could bring about the kind of vision she so desperately needs. This was reinforced for me (Joel) last year, when I was asked to lead a consultation on gang outreach in the capital of a Central American country. I asked incarcerated gang members from a neighboring country to share some thoughts that I could carry to the leaders who would be attending the event. Here is a small part of what those gang members gave me:

The Global Conversation addresses important issues related to world evangelization in preparation for the Lausanne Movement's Cape Town 2010 conference. Join the conversation by reading responses from key Christian leaders at [Christianity Today.com/go/conversation](http://ChristianityToday.com/go/conversation) and by posting your own comments.

Frequently we have seen growth in the physical structure of many churches, leaders with a competitive attitude choosing, it seems, to compete with other churches while abandoning the needs that exist in prisons, neighborhoods, slums, and rehabilitation centers. The priority of these churches always seems

to be focused on the comfort of their respective members so they can feel like *vips*; thus, they have lost, or perhaps just forgotten, the vision of Jesus Christ, who said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .” We don’t want to criticize just for the sake of being critical, but [we do want] to stand for the *truth* that while churches are constructing huge sanctuaries, there are children dying of hunger, gang members killing one another, and prisoners suffering greatly—while Christians comfort themselves in their big churches.

In a sermon focused on Luke 23, Tim Keller notes the “outsiders” gathered around the cross. There is Simon of Cyrene, a cultural outsider. A convicted criminal is a moral outsider. There are also a centurion, a racial outsider, and the women witnesses, social outsiders. Luke locates only one religious insider at the cross who seems to be able to grasp the full significance of Jesus’ death: Joseph of Arimathea.

“Due to the way salvation is accomplished,” Keller says, “those on the outside tend to understand and see things before those on the inside, but all are welcome.” Further insight comes from Franciscan priest Richard Rohr, who quotes Walter Brueggemann as saying that the prophet’s job is to free people from their numbness. That, reflects Rohr, is also the task of the church. The church exists to wake people up, to bring them to consciousness, not just to comfort them in their unaware state. Rohr’s fear is that soft piety and too-quick religious comfort do precisely that. “The giveaway,” writes Rohr, “is when one finds no attitude of service, volunteerism, or compassion for the outsider emerging from one’s attendance at church services.”

PRAYING WITH PROSTITUTES

At CTM we have discovered that a large part of our “prophetic charism” for the church in Latin America can be summed up in the task of freeing the church from numbness. It is often a lonely task. It puts us in some hard places as we interact with outsiders who often become scandalous and surprising sources of numbness-breaking hope. Let me (Joel) try once again to illustrate.

Pastor Francis Montas and his wife, Loly, pastor a church of young people—Casa Joven—that meets on Saturday nights in a converted Santo Domingo nightclub. Their work with street kids, incarcerated juvenile delinquents, and *las chicas de Sarasota* (prostitutes) serves as a prophetic wake-up call to many others in the Dominican church.

About two months ago, Francis and Loly called a special

Thursday night prayer service because so many young people were having serious problems. They met near one of Santo Domingo’s most infamous streets for prostitution—La Avenida Sarasota. Their prayers for one another led them to pray for

the girls on the street outside, and they left the building as if a tractor beam were pulling them toward the girls. The night I went out with them was their seventh consecutive night on the streets.

What we experienced over the next three hours was a numbness-shattering picture of God’s scandalous grace. Each girl we stopped to talk to lit up as the young women from the church called out to them by name and embraced them with bear hugs. The women on the street responded to a host of beautiful questions, updating us on their week, sharing stories about their children, and receiving prayer with eager anticipation, all the while completely ignoring potential clients who passed by.

We had just finished sharing and praying with a group of three prostitutes when one of them, whom I will call Gloria, asked if she could pray for

us. I held hands in a circle with my Dominican friends on a sidewalk on Avenida Sarasota at 2:30 A.M. and heard one of the most beautiful prayers of my life. When Gloria uttered her “amen,” a smile exploded onto her face. She sheepishly confessed that it was the first time she had ever prayed out loud. I pretended to cough while trying to wipe away tears. Gloria received more bear hugs from the ladies and an awkward handshake from me. She said that she planned to come to church that Saturday night, when I was scheduled to preach.

Gloria indeed came that night. When the service concluded, she received hug after hug from the young worshipers, including the guest preacher, whose awkward and numb handshake on the street a few nights earlier turned into a hug of scandalous grace.

It would be impossible to detail here how blessed this church has been and how their vision and mission for their city has been recalibrated through their interaction with the prostitutes. There are churches in Latin America like Casa Joven that are engaging the Hagars of their cities, and by doing so are teaching the rest of us how to sing God’s song in some very strange lands.

Joel Van Dyke lives in Central America and directs a grassroots training initiative called *La Estrategia de Transformación*, which is a strategic alliance between the Center for Transforming Mission and Christian Reformed World Missions.

Kris Rocke is executive director of the Center for Transforming Mission.



Bibles Behind Walls: Inmates in Juarez, Mexico’s most violent city, open the Word.



{ HIGHER EDUCATION }

The iSeminary Cometh

Online education is jolting seminaries with rapid enrollment growth. By John W. Kennedy

SHAWN COSSIN completed his bachelor's degree in Christian education at Wheaton College in 1993. After that, he became a military police officer in the U.S. Army. Eventually returning to his native Pennsylvania, Cossin became a state trooper—and a youth pastor at Sandy Lake Wesleyan Church.

In time, the church promoted Cossin to

assistant pastor, and he felt pulled to enter full-time ministry, though he had never attended seminary. He imagined it would be impractical to quit both jobs, uproot his wife and two young sons, and immerse himself in studies on a residential campus for up to three years to earn a coveted ministerial degree.

But Indiana Wesleyan University provided another option: stay home, keep working, and earn a master of arts in ministry online.

Cossin enrolled in the Marion, Indiana-based school in 2004.

"I was a bit skeptical of the viability of the program when I started," says Cossin, 38. "I had no qualms about the school itself. But at Wheaton I had such spiritual growth because of significant interaction with professors."

Cossin quickly adjusted his learning paradigm. Indiana Wesleyan's cohort model, where 20 or so students go through



RICHARD KELLY PHOTOGRAPHY

Web Trends: Shawn and Beth Cossin, who earned their graduate degrees online, have seen a 60 percent growth in church attendance since Shawn became senior pastor.

the program together, required Cossin to share ministry experiences with others.

"The online program moved me beyond my comfort zone and almost forced me to engage not only professors in conversation but also classmates with my own thoughts." Cossin graduated in 2007 and became the lead pastor of Sandy Lake Wesleyan.

Cossin admits that obtaining a degree online requires great self-discipline for those working full-time. But as a church staff member already, he found that he could immediately apply the information he learned. It also helped that Cossin's wife, Beth, obtained her master's degree from

Indiana Wesleyan's program simultaneously. Today she is formation and missions pastor at Sandy Lake Wesleyan, which has grown from 400 attendees to 650 since her husband became lead pastor.

Indiana Wesleyan's program has been so successful that in August 2009 it launched Wesley Seminary, whose 30 online divinity students joined the 170 onsite students in its existing ministry master's program. The online seminary hopes to bump up the number of Wesleyan pastors with seminary training. Right now, just 15 percent are seminary-trained. Online technology is making it easier and more affordable to train more ministry leaders more comprehensively. These leaders, in turn, are better on the job.

HOCKEY STICK GROWTH

Across the board, online technology is dramatically changing the landscape of undergraduate- and graduate-level education, including for many of the 234 American and Canadian members of the Association

of Theological Schools (ATS).

The Babson Survey Research Group, which assesses all post-secondary education, reported in its Learning on Demand survey that "online enrollments have continued to grow at rates far in excess of the total higher education student population, with the most recent data demonstrating no signs of slowing." The January report notes the following:

- 4.6 million students took at least one online course at a post-secondary institution in fall 2008. About 644,000 of those students took graduate-level courses.
- Online education has been growing at a compound annual rate of 19 percent.
- Online enrollment now represents 25 percent of the 18.2 million students enrolled in higher education.
- Student demand for online courses is now greater than demand for corresponding face-to-face courses.

At seminaries, online ministry degree programs are tapping into a storehouse of pent-up demand. Those who once dismissed the possibility of full-time ministry can pursue dreams without making drastic changes and piling up a crushing loan debt. Students avoid the expense of moving on or near campus—or of commuting daily for three or four years. Congregations retain valuable ministry workers as they learn more.

EXPANDING ACCESS

Among ATS institutions, 102 schools now offer some kind of distance or online education. "Just about every institution is looking to expand online capabilities and capacities to reach students beyond their geographic boundaries," says Gregory W. Bourgon, director of strategy for online education at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Online distance education greatly increases the pool of potential students of all kinds: the traditional, under-age-30 divinity student, currently employed pastors, lay program staff at churches, and educational and parachurch leaders.

Distance education at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary has been around in one form or another for two decades. Starting in 2004, students at the South Hamilton, Massachusetts, school may take up to one-third of their education through online classes, including Hebrew and Greek.

"Our online program is designed to supplement our residential program," says David

Horn, director of Gordon-Conwell's Semlink program. "You cannot take a fully online program with us, and that's by conviction. Theological preparation for ministry really does need substantial face time."

"As in the business world, where some of the most successful retailers [use a] brick-and-click model, there are great advantages to having both in seminary," says Robert Freeman, associate dean for distance learning and a full-time distance learning faculty member of Fuller Theological Seminary.

Fuller, largely a commuter seminary, began offering distance learning more than 30 years ago. In December 2009, Kevin D. Osborn became Fuller's first executive director of distributed learning. One of his primary challenges is to get all full-time instructors to teach at least one of their classes online by 2015.

"Fuller wants to blow the doors open to people who haven't had access to theological education before, to give access to people who can't move," Osborn says. "For those who don't want to leave the context in which they are serving, online theological education gives them a chance to be spiritually formed in their service context."

Dallas Theological Seminary started with one online course in 2003 and now has two dozen, with 1,000 students total, according to Bob Abegg, director of online and external studies. The nondenominational seminary has 20 faculty directly involved in online education, plus a host of graduate teaching assistants and adjuncts.

Jennifer Woodruff Tait is an adjunct professor in the distance education program at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, and three other schools.

"Online teaching forces you to think about pedagogical issues more intentionally," says Woodruff Tait, who lives in Huntington, Indiana. "So much happens in the discussion. There's a high degree of intentional interaction."

NEW (ONLINE) WINESKINS

If online seminary education is the wave of the future, Rockbridge Seminary may be ahead of the curve. The nondenominational school, with business offices in Springfield, Missouri, is the nation's first online-only seminary. Its enrollment is growing at a compound annual rate of 29 percent.

"We have no intention of being residential," says President Daryl Eldridge, one of the school's three co-founders in 2004. "We have

‘The online program moved me beyond my comfort zone and almost forced me to engage not only professors in conversation but also classmates with my own thoughts.’

~ Shawn Cossin, Wesleyan pastor

students scattered all over the world.”

Well, in 10 countries anyway, plus in nearly every state. Rockbridge offers half a dozen eight-week terms a year and has 300 active students. Most take three or four terms annually en route to a master of divinity or master of ministry leadership.

The 54 professors in the pool of instructors all have doctorate degrees from accredited institutions. About one-third of the professors are full-time faculty at other schools. Most of the rest are pastors at churches, primarily Baptist.

Eldridge, who calls Rockbridge the “Southwest Airlines of seminary education,” hopes the school can obtain regional accreditation by fall 2010, although under present guidelines, official recognition from ATS is impossible. Eldridge, a former Southwestern

Baptist Theological Seminary faculty member, says 85 percent of the students are already in paid ministry positions.

Wes Bowen, 32, is minister of music and an elder at Center City Church in Springfield, Missouri. He expects to graduate in 2012, although it might be longer since Rockbridge allows students to take time off.

“I decided to go to seminary because I felt like God was using me in ministry roles, but I needed to do them more effectively,” says Bowen, who manages a local LifeWay Christian bookstore. “Rockbridge allows me to continue serving in my church and to immediately apply the skills that I learn.”

QUALITY OUTCOMES

The future of online education hangs on the question of whether the results are at least as



good as traditional, face-to-face instruction.

The Learning on Demand survey shows that 53 percent of chief academic officers believe learning outcomes in online education are the same as in face-to-face instruction.



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But the line between in-person instruction and online instruction is starting to disappear. Higher education methods are evolving quickly as new instructional technologies develop. New forms of education include the traditional classroom enhanced with web-based technology, course instruction that blends online and face-to-face delivery, and all-online instruction.

ATS has placed upper limits on the number of online credit hours that a member school may offer in degree programs. For the divinity degree, 60 of 90 credit hours can be offered online.

But Daniel O. Aleshire, executive director of the Pittsburgh-based ATS, says the agency will start reviewing its residency requirements later this year. No changes will be implemented before 2012.

"At this point, the logic of ATS accrediting standards is the same," Aleshire says. "Face-to-face, person-to-person interaction is a critical part of ministerial education because it is a relational kind of work."

"If it's done well, [online] learning can be very effective. What we don't know is if all the learning that's necessary for good pastoral work can be learned that way."

Bethel Seminary's Bourgon believes online education "will always be one arrow in the quiver of options." He cautions that some students learn better in the classroom and that some subjects are taught more effectively in person.

One of the advantages for students taking classes via a computer is the low cost. While tuition per credit hour is generally the same in both arenas, the student saves money by not relocating, avoiding room and board, and remaining employed.

NEW ECONOMICS DRIVE CHANGE

The Great Recession has hit seminary budgets hard, forcing some small schools to attempt radical changes to survive.

Starting in fall 2010, Lexington Theological Seminary (LTS) will shift from being a campus-based school to offering online courses with short, intensive on-campus supplemental classes. It's a radical move for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) school, founded in 1865. Residency for the 80 students who have not yet graduated will be phased out in May 2011.

Steven A. Monhollen, director of field education at LTS, says the seminary received

200 inquiries from potential applicants even before it began advertising on Facebook and Google. With real-estate values down, seminary officials aren't sure what will happen to the campus, which includes a research library jointly used by the University of Kentucky. Monhollen is certain that full-time LTS professors will need to be flexible.

"If a faculty member lives by the lecture, it will be a painful transition," Monhollen says.

"Talking heads will be forbidden."

Still, Monhollen is hopeful that the school will emerge through economic difficulties.

"We had to start new things in the Great Depression to survive," he says. "At least we no longer have to be paid in poultry and vegetables." 

John W. Kennedy is a contributing editor for *Christianity Today*.



FOR HER, CAMPUS REALLY IS JUST LIKE HOME

As the daughter of a Regent graduate, Monique Coleman actually grew up in student housing on the university's beautiful Virginia Beach campus. But it was her talent as a Regent film student that helped earn her an internship at Warner Brothers in Hollywood. She says her mentors were amazed at her level of knowledge and impressed to discover that an undergraduate program had prepared her so well. Ready to make your own mark?

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VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



It doesn't take a renewed heart to revel in athletic success; virtue and devotion amid on-field failures are powerful ways to demonstrate God's kingdom to a fallen world.

Matt Koschmann
Boulder, Colorado

The (Tarnished) Glory of the Game

Thank you for "Whatever Happened to Play?" [February], Shirl James Hoffman's cover essay on Christianity and sports culture. Many athletes clearly honor God in the thrill of victory, yet the agony of defeat can teach us more about God's glory. During this year's Super Bowl, I was struck when the Indianapolis Colts' kicker, a Christian, pointed to the sky after *both* of his field goal attempts—one make and one miss.

It doesn't take a renewed heart to revel in athletic success; virtue and devotion amid failures on the field are powerful ways to demonstrate God's kingdom to a fallen world.

MATT KOSCHMANN
Boulder, Colorado

My response to Hoffman's essay: Chill out!

Just two of the countless examples of athletes who have brought souls into Christ's kingdom are Bill Glass, former defensive end for the Cleveland Browns, and Tim Tebow, quarterback for the Florida Gators. Both are using their "violent" game to witness to the Savior. Glass's lifelong witness for Jesus has won more fanatics for the gospel than for his team. Watch and see—Tebow will do the same.

STU McALLISTER
Hendersonville, North Carolina

Hoffman weakened his argument by downplaying the collegiality that sports can bring. Super Bowl parties create relationships that are often the first steps to life-changing witness. And there is such a thing as healthy competitiveness. My wife and I recently bought an Xbox 360 so that we could spend more time playing with our adult sons. We play Halo 3, shooting each other for hours. Granted, it seems odd to celebrate our unity with simulated carnage, but it works because we know the difference between reality and play. We mix molehills with mountains when we assume that reasonable people easily confuse the two.

BRIAN ANDERSON
Jackson, Missouri

What would happen if Christians who spend the weekends wishing their favorite teams into the win column spent that time praying for God's kingdom to come? I think it would mean God's team winning a lot more games. The point of praying the Lord's Prayer, after all, is to align our wishes with God's. Lord only knows how a body of kingdom fans could change the world.

D. BRENT SANDY
Winona Lake, Indiana

Hoffman's essay missed one curse of modern-day sports: the ostracizing of milquetoasts. As an athletically inept

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

58%

**Whatever
Happened to
Play?**

Shirl James Hoffman

10%

**Why Gayle
Haggard Stayed**

Interview by Sarah
Pulliam Bailey

6%

**Intercontinental
Divide**

Sarah Pulliam Bailey

YAY OR NAY Readers' response to "Whatever Happened to Play?"

50%



50%

child and adolescent, it was clear to me that if you could play a sport, your peers accepted you, and if you excelled at the sport, your peers revered you. But if you didn't know how to play, your peers deemed you a wimp, good only for being scorned.

Are skill and physical strength the measures of the masculinity that Jesus Christ espoused? For believers, surely compassion and patience are more important virtues than athletic prowess and strength.

MICHAEL BOGUE
Russellville, Arkansas

Blessed Oversight

Ken Walker's report "Casting Too Wide a Net" [February] mentioned ministries' worries over the government's proposed oversight of financial institutions. But it failed to note the context for these reforms: combating predatory lending and other forms of financial abuse.

Bethel New Life provides education, counseling, and products to empower low-income families to live the debt-free life that God intends. Our residents experience countless deceptive and shoddy products like payday loans, refund anticipation loans, and needlessly high-cost mortgages. Language in both the House and Senate reform bills makes clear that the vast majority of monitoring is aimed at these kinds of deceptive products, not

well-meaning ministries.

Walker's report cited numerous professionals who see a zero-sum conflict between ministry and good government. With those leaders, I am concerned over the rise in Americans' personal debt and loss of household savings. But I believe that stronger consumer protections can serve our financial ministries, restoring basic values of transparency, fairness, and quality to what now functions as an anything-goes market.

STEVEN MCCULLOUGH
President and CEO, Bethel New Life
Chicago, Illinois

Making Funding Count

Re: "Less Aid for AIDS?" [February], *Christianity Today's* report on the government's funding slowdown for fighting the disease: In a world of budget shortfalls and limited resources, all allocations must be prioritized. Because of the symbolic meaning of AIDS, the West and the United Nations have disproportionately funded it. In the meantime, starvation and malaria have ravaged multitudes. If we can heal 200 children with the same amount of giving that can treat 25 AIDS patients, we should carefully consider our options. This is the sad truth.

WILLIAM PAYNE
Ashland, Ohio

New Life at New Life

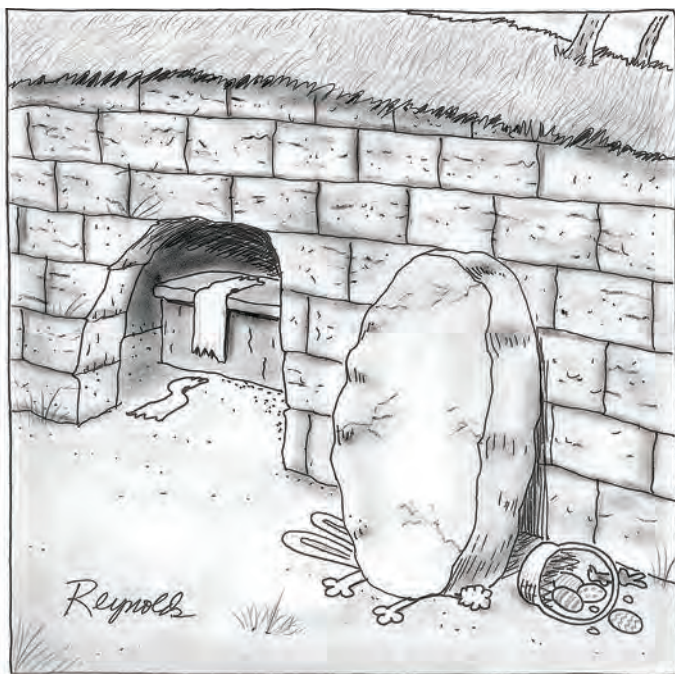
As a member of New Life Church for two decades, I received CT's interview with Gayle Haggard ["Why Gayle Haggard Stayed," February] as a breath of fresh air. Her account of the past few years gave our family some closure on that season of life and ignited a passion for the Haggards' ministry vision. Gayle's memoir [*Why I Stayed*] is a beautiful story of faithfulness and family strength in the midst of pain and deep rejection.

RANDALL TAYLOR
E-mail

I understand why Haggard said that she felt "ripped and ravaged" by her and Ted's church, but she must understand that the church probably felt the same way.

Also, likening her husband to the Prodigal Son seems a misapplication of Christ's teaching. Her husband was overtly sinning while presuming to speak for God from the pulpit. The Prodigal Son story is about returning to God's family after repentance, not about being given immediate access to a pulpit. Someone who abuses church authority must take a long, hard road back to a place of church leadership.

MARIANNE MILLER
E-mail



compiled by Laura Leonard

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.



ONLINE POLL

**POST-EARTHQUAKE
COMPASSION**
Has your church
done anything to
help Haiti?

15%

Yes, we've sent
people to the
country.

43%

Yes, we've
given money.

39%

Yes, we've spent
time in prayer.

3%

No, we haven't
done anything
as a church.

Total Votes: 506

"Our 'ready, aim, fire' approach to so many issues keeps us from being effective in a hurting world that needs our love, concern, and compassion."

Michael Basham, on the arrest of 10 American Christians trying to take children out of Haiti.

Speaking Out: "Strong on Zeal, Thin in Knowledge"

"We should be offended by violence and language and apartheid—that's kind of the point, right?"

Palmer, on the redeeming value of movies with graphic content.

"The 10 Most Redeeming Films of 2009"

"Rather than keep a constant watch on what fame is doing to our souls, we get carried away by the thrills of fleeting hype and call it God's blessing."

Tim Gombis, on the temptation to self-promote at the expense of our message.

Women's Blog: "Is Self-Promotion Sinful?"

"The problem is larger than not having every treatment available for people with special needs. It's that the vision of where full life comes from is so stunted."

BEWP, on the idea that advanced treatments would improve the disabled's quality of life.

Speaking Out: "Considering 'Curing' Down Syndrome with Caution"

"Where everybody knows your name vs. where everybody has to wear a nametag."

@LeeshaHarvey, in response to @CTmagazine's tweet, "Why it shouldn't surprise or alarm us that the church is not as friendly as a bar."

SoulWork: "Should Churches Be as Friendly as a Bar?"

DAN REYNOLDS

210 Million Reasons to Adopt

Haiti's devastating quake reminds us that orphans matter to God.

TWO YEARS AGO, a Christian couple from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, fell in love with an abandoned toddler, born with a disability and living in an orphanage in rural Haiti. Already adoptive parents of a Liberian child, Katy and Josh Manges decided to adopt the toddler, Malachi, who has a treatable bone disorder.

Then the January 12 earthquake that crushed so much of Port-au-Prince, costing an estimated 230,000 lives, put the prayerful plans of the Manges family in limbo. It also laid bare before the world how badly orphans and vulnerable children may be treated when they get caught up in red tape, corruption, and political correctness.

For the Manges family, the outcome was success. In late February, Malachi arrived in Miami into the welcoming arms of his new family. Yet the adoption required two years of effort, delayed by local politics and requiring a personal signature from Haiti's prime minister. At the last minute, rioters at Port-au-Prince's airport derailed Malachi's departure, falsely alleging that he and other adoptees had phony paperwork.

This episode stands alongside another, the still-unfolding saga of the Idaho Baptists who were arrested on suspect charges of child trafficking. The latter may have a long-lasting chilling effect on inter-country adoption just when adoptive parents are needed more than ever. There are 210 million orphans worldwide, and adoptions to the U.S. have dropped 45 percent since 2004.

The greater problem isn't with potential adopting parents. It's with a system that is severely broken. Christian leaders and churches have much to offer in advocating for the reform of confusing adoption laws, stronger enforcement of international norms, and making adoption more affordable, more visible, and a more honored practice.

Jedd Medefind, president of the Christian Alliance for Orphans, recently told

Christianity Today that immediately after Haiti's quake, many agencies fielded waves of calls from people with a strong impulse to take Haitian orphans into their homes. Rather than dismiss or belittle this impulse, Medefind encouraged them to consider the many ways of supporting the children, recognizing that adoption is a long and uncertain process. Family reunification, orphanages, extended family care, and child sponsorship all have a role to play in meeting the needs of vulnerable children in crisis or chronic need.

But Medefind is quick to note that powerful political and cultural barriers often make adoption an arduous process that takes too long and costs too much. "The reality is that there are thousands of children, before and after the earthquake, who are genuinely in need of parents," he says. "To the extent that parents can't be found, we should not relegate children to living on the streets or [in] orphanages. The political and cultural factors often become unspoken reasons why children are forced to remain in institutional care or on the streets, which is a profound tragedy."

The political and cultural barriers stem from warped ideas about what is in a poor child's best interest. It isn't in the best interest of abandoned children to grow up destitute and barely literate, regardless of the imagined cultural benefit of remaining in their home country. Haiti itself is a vivid example of injustice. The government tolerates a modern form of child slavery by allowing 225,000 children ages 6–14 to work as *restavecs* (unpaid, indentured domestics).

Adoption, domestic or inter-country,

should not be looked down upon as inferior at best or as a last resort. The 150,000 South Korean orphans adopted worldwide (99,000 to the U.S.) since the 1950s testify well to the durable difference a loving adoptive family can make.

For Christians, the biblical basis for adoption bears repeating. The Book of James beckons every true follower of Christ to become involved in the lives of orphans (and widows). It's not for married couples only. Godly, never-married singles have successfully adopted, and most readily affirm the ideal that each child should live with a mother and father—when-ever possible. So, Christian singles should not be automatically excluded from the

pool of possibilities for adoption.

Adoption experts provided CT with four ways churches can increase their involvement:

- give adoptive families space to tell their stories in church;
- find ways to give small starter grants to people interested in adopting;
- encourage the adoption of children with special needs; and
- develop a full spectrum of responses, from child sponsorship to adoption.

CT recently talked with a never-married woman who adopted a young girl from Kazakhstan into her home (at a personal initial cost of \$36,000). For her, the question was, "Are we talking about live souls?" Not mere "victims" or "political symbols" or "the needy," but children for whom Christ died, who need a home where the love of God is lived and shared with the least of these. ☪



'There are thousands of children, before and after the earthquake, who are in need of parents.' ~ Jedd Medefind

*Better Ways
to Deliver
God's Word*

How can pastors improve their preaching?

GIVE THEM TIME ALONE

Mark Labberton is director of the Lloyd John Ogilvie Institute of Preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Sermons stumble when preachers do not know the God they are proclaiming, the text they are preaching, or the audience they are addressing.

But here's a less obvious reason that sermons falter: when preachers don't know themselves. If John Calvin was right, that we cannot know ourselves for who we really are without knowing God, and that we cannot know God without reconsidering ourselves, then the preacher and the sermon inevitably reflect the presence or absence of this self-knowledge.

Let's consider, for example, how a preacher knows himself in relation to the basic affirmation that Jesus Christ is our Savior. Does the pastor live and preach as one who knows he needs the Savior? If the preacher loses track of the inescapable fact of his own real need to admit sin, mistakes, inadequacies, and inner and outer battles, then his preaching suffers.

The pastor needs to be gripped by the fact that he stands on the same ground as anyone and everyone to whom he preaches. If he

doesn't know this to his very core, sermons can easily carry a tone of superiority, distance, and pretense, or simply fail to identify with those they are addressed to. If the fundamental honesty, not perfection, of the preacher is in question, his sermons will fail. After all, if the preacher seems dishonest about his own need, it's hard to trust him to offer us grace for ours.

Likewise, does the pastor live and preach as one who knows he has the Savior? The self-knowledge of the pastor needs to admit his need for the Savior,

but also to embrace and show he knows the liberty, joy, and hope of the Savior's love.

Do pastors know themselves, in all their fallenness, to also be forgiven, chosen, and called? If they have failed to internalize this knowledge, then the sermon becomes yet another occasion for trying to make themselves worthy, to find redemption by their preaching, their personality, or their power. Then the gap between what they are experiencing of God and what they are encouraging others to experience of God can be disingenuous. Such preachers need the favor, the approval, maybe even the adulation of their people, and nothing cripples their proclamation faster than that.

Jesus Christ as Savior holds up a mirror for self-understanding. The preacher can then stand in the pulpit knowing who he is and who he isn't. By grace, we pastors are becoming more and more like Jesus, but on any given day we have much more in common with those to whom we preach.

When we know this in our hearts, and when we can appropriately express this to our congregations, we are simultaneously standing with our people and with our Savior. Then the sermon and the preacher are proclaiming the same message, and the impact is strongest.

GIVE THEM PREP TIME

Kate Bruce serves as a chaplain and research fellow in preaching at Durham University, United Kingdom.

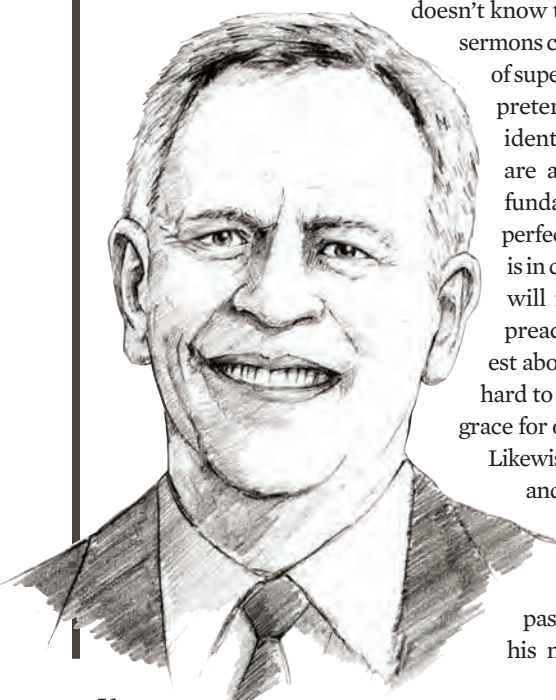
I once heard the comment, "The average person would sooner stick pins in their eyes than listen to a sermon." A strong opinion—but I don't buy it.

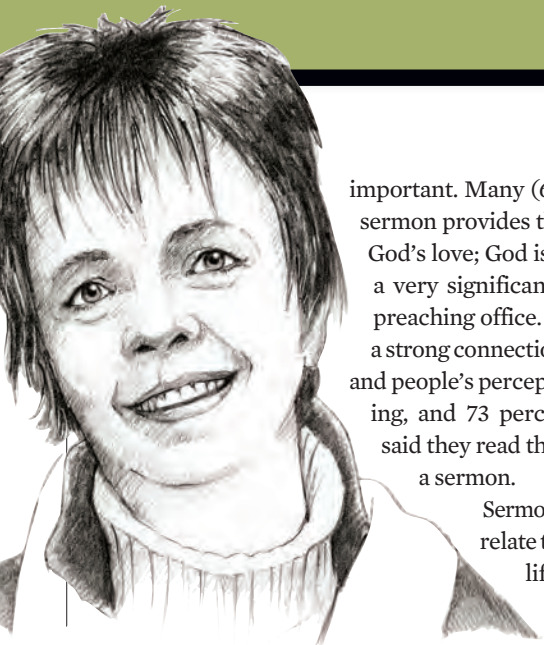
Sure, no one wants to listen to endless, tedious, poorly delivered, unscriptural waffle. But I think we all long for a word from the Lord, be it a loving embrace or a kick up the backside.

CODEC, the research center connected to Durham University where I work, just completed a small survey on preaching. By "small," I mean 16 churches and 193 respondents, so universal extrapolation would be unwise. Nevertheless, 193 people have a right to be taken seriously.

A staggering 97 percent said they either "frequently" or "sometimes" look forward to the sermon. The million-dollar question is, why? My best hunch is that people once heard a word from the Lord in a sermon and deeply long to hear another one.

Congregants give different reasons for why they find the sermon





important. Many (62 percent) said the sermon provides them with a sense of God's love; God is touching people at a very significant level through the preaching office. The survey showed a strong connection between sermons and people's perception of God improving, and 73 percent of respondents said they read the Bible as a result of a sermon.

Sermons are helping people relate the Bible to everyday life (49 percent said sermons do this "frequently," and

47 percent said they do this "sometimes"). The survey also reveals a positive affirmation of scriptural preaching across all the denominations we surveyed (Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, and nondenominational). The survey showed that people want to be encouraged, challenged, and motivated by the sermon.

The survey reaffirms what we have known for a long time: that there should be a strong connection between preaching and contemporary issues—events in the news. Preaching remains both a pastoral and a prophetic office. It is pastoral in the sense of providing comfort, encouragement, and nurture; it is prophetic in the sense of offering what scholar Walter Brueggemann has called "a poetic construal of an alternative world," drawn from the Scriptures and applied to our context. Good preaching challenges hearers to do our part in ushering in that alternative world. It is courageous, vigorous, and robust.

Given the importance of the sermon to parishioners, then, pastors are right to schedule and defend their sermon preparation time. People have a deep hunger for what the sermon can deliver. Pastors more than anyone else know that you can't nourish famished people with a hastily thrown-together sandwich; people are looking not for a snack but a full-course meal. Congregations need to give the pastor the space to prepare that meal each week.

To the jaded preacher, aware of her own frailty and failure, I hope this comes as a welcome encouragement and a source of renewed confidence in the God who is still using preaching to accomplish his work.

GIVE THEM NEW TOOLS

Keith Drury, who teaches ministry courses at Indiana Wesleyan University, is a former pastor and has written on pastoral ministry.

New technology has provided the church with changing ways to do unchanging things. When the printing press emerged, the church was quick to incorporate printed Bibles and curricula into its teaching ministry. And few preachers resisted installing sound systems upon learning they helped congregants hear their teaching better.

The same is true of recent technologies. We are absorbing and

using them, but sometimes without thought.

A hand-held video camera and inexpensive projection technology can make any pastor a movie producer and enable a return to personal testimonies in some churches. At a strategic point, the preacher turns and a first-person video testimony lends real-world confirmation to his teaching.

E-mail is providing new ways to call for decision and to follow up on sermons. In a recent sermon in my church, the pastor challenged us to "pass the baton" by mentoring the next generation of Christians. A few hours later, we received a next steps e-mail calling for mentoring volunteers and including hyperlinked e-mail addresses—an electronic altar call.

Laity may now participate in sermon development. Pastors post their topics and Bible verses on Facebook or a blog, inviting questions, ideas, discussion, and personal illustrations as they prepare for the coming Sunday.

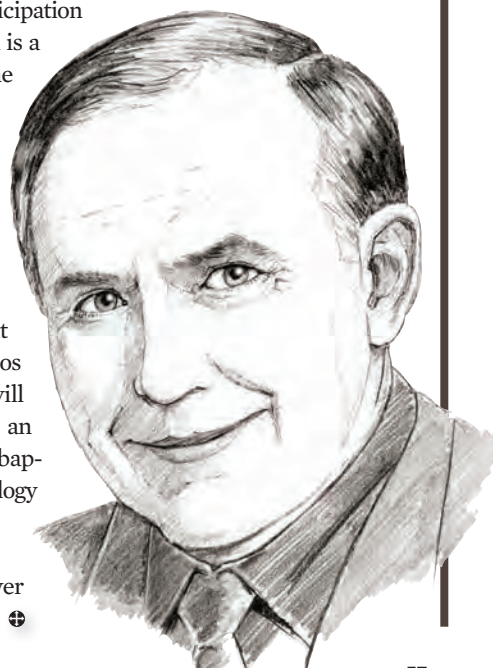
Tape recordings of sermons once took hours to duplicate and distribute. Now, preachers post their sermons online as MP3 downloads before parishioners get home from church.

Print-on-demand publishing allows every pastor to become a publisher. A preacher with a computer and an Internet connection can publish an attractive paperback collection of his or her sermons and make it available to the world within a week.

Taking a risk, a few pastors are even inviting electronic participation while they preach. Recently, at Madison Park Church of God in Anderson, Indiana, the pastor asked the congregation to text-message questions to him using their cell phones as he was preaching. He kept his laptop open on the pulpit and was fast enough to work answers into the unfolding sermon.

With all of technology's blessings, though, it can also be a curse. Some congregations get obsessed with trendiness and forget that technology is only a delivery system—it doesn't thicken thin content. Churches that are obsessed with the razzmatazz of technology at first glance might realize that some technology is just too gimmicky and shallow for use. Lay participation in developing a sermon is a wonderful idea, but the preacher has to avoid heated arguments. And no sermon's message should be decided like a vote on *American Idol*.

There are also some rites of our faith that cannot be reduced to zeros and ones—I, at least, will never be satisfied with an electronic Eucharist or baptism by webcast. Technology is a useful aid in communicating the message, but the medium should never become the message. ☩





Allow for Space in the Music

Acknowledging the mystery of pain.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO, my mother was diagnosed with colon cancer, and my father's rare neurological disease took a hairpin turn for the worse. Their busy lives dissolved into months of treatments, complications, and worst-case scenarios.

Caring for them has been my first real experience with prolonged suffering. I had no clue about the malaise that can spawn from the union of chronic pain and diminished hope. My parents have been heroic. But they have also groped for the meaning of their pain and its remedy, and have found neither.

Through it all I have tried to offer comfort, and I've watched others do the same. Sometimes our words have been balms. Sometimes they have been hand grenades.

I recently asked friends online what words and actions had been the least helpful in trying times, and I got a passionate and prolific response. I recognized many of the platitudes listed as things that had come out of my mouth.

Many responses fell into a category I call "Invalidation of the Present Pain." With a bombastic mix of well-meaning fervor and unconscious impatience, we attempt to rush our wounded friend to closure. Classics include "It will all work out in the end," "Time heals all wounds," and glib recitations of Romans 8:28.

Many of those responses are wonderfully true. But so is Jesus' observation that it's those who *mourn* who are comforted (Matt. 5:4). He knew better than anyone the Happy Ending that awaits us, yet he was deeply respectful of the pain of our present condition. John 11:35 tells us that when Jesus' friend died, he *wept*; the Greek word refers to a passionate outpouring of grief. So perhaps it is more Christlike to feel pain rather than to try to expedite it.

Other replies revealed what I call "Formula Thinking," an assumption that a uniform explanation can be applied to all suffering.

We believe affliction is either discipline from God or an attack from Satan, and that the right degree of repentance—or faith—will turn things around.

The idea that God blesses the good and punishes the bad, and that circumstances line up accordingly, is antithetical to the stories of New Testament believers. (It was also the error of Job's well-meaning friends.) It provides the illusion that we can control outcomes. When people are in pain, we reflexively look for something to blame, so we can avoid that variable and keep out of harm's way. Tragically, our judgments are often salt in our friends' wounds.

Still other responses fell into what I call the "Forced Meaning" reactions. "God has a reason for everything," we claim, and then we try to ram horrible tragedies into redemptive molds—suggesting that cancer, rape, and earthquakes are wake-up calls, strange expressions of grace in God's epic story. But does the Haitian mother holding her child's mangled body really have a chance of finding comfort in this platitude? Is it true?

Scripture reveals a sovereign God actively working in human events, but it also speaks clearly of free will and its consequences. I cannot begin to fathom the tension between the two. But I do believe that most of our suffering is the result of brokenness, and that God is more interested in reconciling all things to himself than in blowing them apart. Yes, God brings good out of tragedy (it's one of his specialties), but that doesn't mean he necessarily engineered the horrors.

After the 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami, theologian David Bentley Hart responded eloquently to the Forced Meaning bias, saying that Christians shouldn't "console ourselves with vacuous cant about the mysterious course taken by God's goodness in this world, or . . . assure others that some ultimate meaning or purpose resides in so much misery. Ours is, after all, a religion of salvation; our faith is in a God who has come to rescue his creation from the absurdity of sin and the emptiness of death, and so we are permitted to hate these things with a perfect hatred."

So what *can* we say in times of trouble? I asked my friends what responses had helped them the most, and their replies reminded me of a piece of advice attributed to Miles Davis: "Think of a note and don't play it." As a musician, I understand—allow for

space in the music, don't always rush in, and *listen*. As a friend and a daughter, I'm starting to get it, too. Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is *think* of a truth and embody it rather than say it. When we long to tell a hurting friend that she's not alone, we can simply sit with her as a tangible reminder that she isn't. When we want to reassure a struggling family that God cares for them, a well-timed casserole can demonstrate that very fact. Only when we acknowledge the present pain—and the mysteries that likely shroud its cause—do we earn the right to affirm God's goodness in the midst of it.

And only when we mourn—for ourselves, for each other, and for a world groaning for redemption—can we be comforted . . . and be a comfort.



Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is *think* of a truth and embody it rather than say it.

*My Pastor
Saved My Life*

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

HELP YOUR CONGREGATION FIGHT DIABETES.

FaithFightsDiabetes.org



Channeling the Populist Rage

How should we respond to the loss of confidence in the government?

IF YOU HOLD your ear close to the ground in Washington, D.C., the rumble you will hear is not the Metro but a populist rage hurtling like a railroad train toward the Capitol.

Americans have by and large lost faith in their institutions, and the evidence is everywhere. According to a CBS News poll, at the beginning of the new millennium, 45 percent of Americans trusted government to do the right thing most of the time. Now less than a quarter do so. A January 2010 joint poll by NBC and *The Wall Street Journal* found that the percentage of people who view the President negatively has nearly doubled in a year's time. Approval ratings for Congress were even lower: 21 percent.

In some respects, the distrust is justified. Hurricane Katrina was a blow that the Bush Administration never fully recovered from. A cumbersome government bureaucracy too slow in providing help shattered citizens' faith in government's effectiveness.

But the ineffectiveness of government was magnified in the case of the Nigerian terrorist who almost brought down a Northwest airliner headed for Detroit in December. Brave passengers, not a massive government apparatus, thwarted him. In the postmortem, we discovered that despite a multitrillion-dollar campaign to protect citizens against terrorism, and the fact that the visa office in Lagos, Nigeria, had been warned that Umar Farouq Abdulmutallab was dangerous, it issued him a visa anyway. Appalling.

The bigger that government gets, the further it grows away from the people. From the massive expansion of health care to increased environmental controls, higher taxes, and mind-numbing budget deficits, people feel overwhelmed and powerless. It doesn't help when Congress closes its doors to draw up the health-care bill in conference committee—signaling a request to the public not to butt into its affairs.

Where will all of this lead? There are a few likely scenarios. Government could get a dose of reality and put the brakes on. But its leaders give us no indication of restraining themselves. A second scenario could drive us off a cliff into national bankruptcy, which has happened in many countries whose governments spend irresponsibly. The third possibility, and the one I think we are on the verge of witnessing, is a populist revolt.

Populist movements in the U.S. can be healthy, as when Andrew Jackson broke the grip of the eastern elite on the presidency, or when William Jennings Bryan, three-time Democratic candidate for President, led a movement to give greater voice to the disillusioned masses. But this time, a massive wave of anti-government sentiment could shatter the political consensus, which may well leave the country virtually unmanageable.

The inevitable consequence of all of this should deeply trouble Christians, who, of any segment of our society, understand the necessity of a strong government.

The Bible teaches that God ordains government, appoints leaders, and requires obedience so that we might live peaceable lives.

Why is this? God recognizes that even a bad government is better than no government. No government leads to chaos and mob rule. When order breaks down, justice is inevitably undermined. As Augustine of Hippo argued, peace flows from order, and both are necessary preconditions to the preservation of liberty and some measure of human dignity and flourishing.

This is why great leaders of the faith throughout history have held government

in such high esteem. Some, such as John Calvin, considered the magistrate the highest of vocations.

Of course, while we have a high view of government, it isn't a blank check. Christian doctrines such as sphere sovereignty, subsidiarity (nothing should be done by a larger, complex organization when a smaller organization can accomplish it), the balance of power, and God's transcendent law must hold government in check. So if Washington has lost touch with the people, as Christians we should work fervently to reform these systems.

Real reform may even have to come through an independent commission like Securing America's Future Economy (SAFE), for which Congressman Frank Wolf has tirelessly advocated.

The tea party movement may have a lot of traction in America today, but it makes

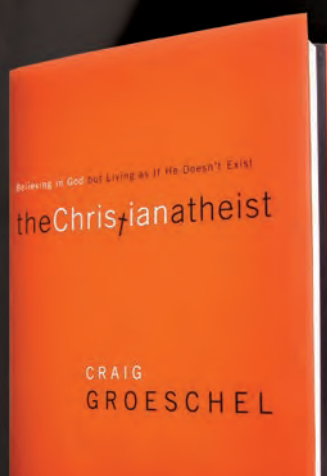
no attempt to present a governing philosophy. It simply seeks an outlet—an understandable one—for the brooding frustrations of many Americans. But anti-government attitudes are not the substitute for good government. We should be instructing people enraged at the excesses of Washington and the growing ethical malaise in the Capitol to focus their rage at fixing government, not throwing the baby out with the bath water.

We Christians are to be the best citizens, praying for our leaders and holding them in high regard, even as we push for the reforms desperately needed to keep representative government flourishing. Only when we funnel frustrations into constructive reform can we expect a government that is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.



Christians are to pray for our leaders even as we push for needed reforms.

christian atheist



Are you caught in the middle? If you profess a belief in God, but live as though He doesn't exist, you may be split in two. Join author Craig Groeschel as he seeks to resolve a conflict that runs deep. *The Christian Atheist* is available everywhere books are sold. Visit christianatheist.com for more info.  **ZONDERVAN**[®].com

Q. Who is planting new churches among unreached towns and villages of India?

A. Native missionaries serving with indigenous evangelistic missions.



Q. Who provides financial assistance to the indigenous missions of India?

A. Christian Aid is presently assisting more than 200 of them. They are winning souls and planting churches among more than 400 different tribes and nations.

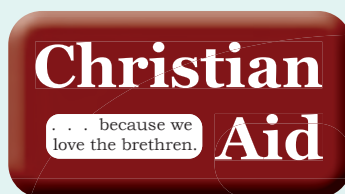
Q. How is Christian Aid financed?

A. Christian Aid is supported entirely by freewill gifts and offerings from Bible-believing, missionary-minded Christians, churches and organizations.

Q. Are other indigenous missions in need of financial help for their missionaries?

A. Christian Aid is in communication with 4000 additional indigenous missions, some based in almost every unevangelized country on earth, which have another 200,000 missionaries in need of support. All Christians who believe in Christ's "Great Commission" are invited to join hands with Christian Aid in finding help for thousands of native missionaries who are now out on the fields of the world with no promise of regular financial support.

For more than 50 years Christian Aid Mission has been sending financial help to indigenous evangelistic ministries based in India and other unevangelized countries. Currently more than 700 such ministries are being assisted in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. They deploy more than 75,000 native missionaries which are spreading the gospel of Christ among unreached people within more than 3000 different tribes and nations.



When you contact Christian Aid, ask for a free copy of Dr. Bob Finley's 285-page book, **REFORMATION IN FOREIGN MISSIONS.**

Christian Aid Mission
P. O. Box 9037
Charlottesville, VA 22906

434-977-5650
www.christianaid.org/ctqa



CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS



Talk, Research, Marry

What Elizabeth Gilbert discovered about marriage before she ate her words. By Cindy Crosby

When *Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert's self-absorbed and often humorous memoir, hit bookshelves in 2006, many readers devoured her tale of nasty divorce, exotic travels, new romance, and search for spiritual meaning. The book spent 57 weeks at number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and you couldn't hop on an airplane or sit in a coffee shop without seeing a copy in someone's hands. A film version, starring Julia Roberts, is on the way. By the closing pages of the book, Gilbert had found a new man to love and a sense of the transcendent. She swore, however, that she

would never remarry.

Like all of us who swear that we will never do something—and then sheepishly retract it—Gilbert has lived to eat her words. In her second and more pragmatic memoir, **Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage** (Viking) ★★★★★, Gilbert bumps up against the harsh reality of American visas. If she wants her expatriate Brazilian gem trader, “Felipe” (the name he is given in the book), to continue living with her in the United States, marriage is her only option.

As Gilbert tells it, tying the

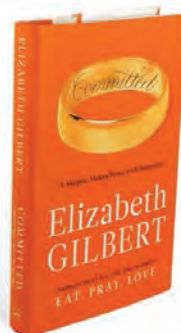
knot again is a difficult decision. After six years of marriage, her divorce had left her with little taste for wedlock and plenty of fear about trying it again. Felipe, 17 years her senior, is also the survivor of an unpleasant divorce. Together, “we’d been so badly gutted by our experiences that the very idea of legal marriage—with *anyone*, even with such nice people as each other—filled us with a heavy sense of dread,” she writes.

Gilbert talks with friends, family, and individuals from all over the world about marriage, seemingly to bolster her confidence and dispel her fears. These discussions form the backbone of the book. What Gilbert discovers is that marriage means different things to different people and in different cultures: emotionally, socially, historically, and religiously. People also bring contrasting expectations to matrimony. Her idea of marital bliss, she discovers, might not be someone else’s.

She talks to Hmong women in a Vietnamese village who, she writes, do not put marriage at the center of their “emotional biography.” In contrast, she notes, in the industrialized West the person whom you choose to marry is perhaps the single most vivid representation of your own personality.

Closer to home, she reflects on a discussion with a Mr. Webster, a Connecticut dairy farmer whose marriage seemed solely commonsensical (“Arthur was soon going to be taking over the family farm and therefore he needed a wife”). Did that mean pragmatism negated love? Well, maybe not, as Mr. Webster cared for his wife at home for almost a decade after she was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, she observes.

From conversations like these, Gilbert draws conclusions. “What Mr. Webster and the Hmong people perhaps have in common



is a notion that the emotional place where a marriage begins is not nearly as important as the emotional place where a marriage finds itself toward the end, after many years of partnership.” Moreover, she says, they would likely agree that there isn’t one person who will make your life magically complete but that there are a number of people with whom you could seal a respectful bond. “Then you could live and work alongside that person for years,” Gilbert writes, “with the hope that tenderness and affection would be the gradual outcome of your union.”

How unromantic, you might say! As Gilbert is first to admit, this pragmatism is not her choice. “I’m not willing—or probably even able—to relinquish my life of individualist yearnings, all of which are the birthright of my modernity.” Gilbert, as an upper-middle-class American woman, notes that she has been “permitted” to expect far more out of the experience of love and life than most other women in history. And her overblown expectations, she acknowledges, may be part of her problem with marriage. “Perhaps I was loading a far heavier cargo of expectation

‘The emotional place where a marriage begins is not nearly as important as the emotional place where a marriage finds itself after many years of partnership.’

~ Elizabeth Gilbert

onto the creaky old boat of matrimony than that strange vessel had ever been built to accommodate in the first place.”

Gilbert moves from these conversations about marriage into a survey of its history. The definition of marriage has shifted over the centuries, she writes; it has been a union between one woman and several men (southern India), a union between same sexes (ancient Rome and some places in the United States today, something she supports strongly), a union between two siblings (medieval Europe), and a union between children (in European history, to protect inheritances).

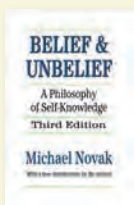
In the traditional sense of marriage—one man and one woman—troths are plighted for various purposes. Gilbert looks at the Old

Testament narrative, where she describes marriage as key to preserving bloodlines, and then the arrival of Jesus Christ, who she reminds readers was unmarried, in contrast with the great patriarchal heroes. Jesus, she says, set an example of celibacy and absolute purity, which she points to as “a new paradigm” in history.

She then trots through various negative early church views on marriage: John of Damascus (“Renounce marriage, and imitate the angels”); Jerome, who said comparing virginity with marriage was difficult because one was good and the other evil; and of course Paul, whom she credits with the most begrudging endorsement of matrimony in human history: “But if they cannot

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON DOUBT

By John Ortberg, pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church and author of *Faith and Doubt* (Zondervan)

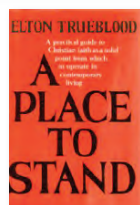


BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

A Philosophy of Self-Knowledge

MICHAEL NOVAK (TRANSACTION)

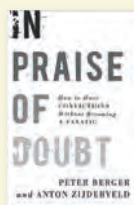
This brilliant book traces how the line between faith and doubt doesn’t separate us into different camps; it runs through every human soul. Novak is relentlessly honest, deeply informed, sympathetic to all honest searching, and achingly personal.



A PLACE TO STAND

ELTON TRUEBLOOD
(HARPER & ROW)

Trueblood points out what we so often miss: The modern deference given to doubt is neither necessary nor rational; we speak of “blind faith” and “honest doubt” when faith can also be honest and doubt can also be blind. He unpacks the core conviction of Christianity: that Christ was not wrong.

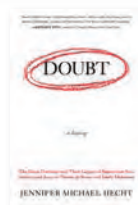


IN PRAISE OF DOUBT

How to Have Convictions without Becoming a Fanatic

PETER BERGER AND ANTON ZIJDERVELD (HARPERONE)

This book outlines how to hold convictions in a post-modern world with both civility and confidence. It also demonstrates how and why the “secularization thesis” (that religious belief would diminish after modernity) has proven resoundingly hollow.

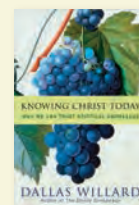


DOUBT

A History

JENNIFER MICHAEL HECHT
(HARPERONE)

Hecht’s tour de force takes readers on a guided journey of doubt from the pre-Socratics to contemporary philosopher Daniel Dennett. While Hecht’s own sympathies lie with the doubters, she writes with grace, flair, and engagement.



KNOWING CHRIST TODAY

DALLAS WILLARD (HARPERONE)

A decaf version of a technical work aimed at philosophers, this book covers topics like the nature (and necessity) of moral and spiritual knowledge, the fundamentals of worldview, the best reasons why belief in God can be confidently held, and the form of pluralism most needed today.

contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9, KJV).

"For approximately ten centuries, Christianity itself did not see marriage as being either holy or sanctified, and certainly not the ideal state of moral being," writes Gilbert in a sweeping statement that invites argument.

She then touches on matrimony as a civil convention in early European history, something often fueled by economic forces. When the church got involved in marriage again (she sets this benchmark at A.D. 1215), she says marriage moved from being more of an economic consideration to a stringently religious affair, one monitored, she points out with irony, by celibate priests. Throughout this section, her strong beefs with social conservatives and conservative Christian leadership detract from otherwise interesting material.

What Gilbert concludes from her research is that the state of matrimony survives because it evolves. From her interviews, she also seems to come to a more realistic view of love. She quotes C. S. Lewis on his marriage to Joy Davidman (in *A Grief Observed*) that not all intimacies are shared between spouses: "I had my miseries, not hers; she had hers, not mine." (Lewis, for those who have forgotten, initially married Davidman, an American divorcée 17 years his junior, in a civil ceremony so she could remain in the United Kingdom.) Gilbert also muses that true intimacy may be forged in the unglamorous rituals of mundane living.

With this in mind, Gilbert decides that if tying the knot is what she needs to do in order to have Felipe live with her in America, then marriage it is. She still enters matrimony with trepidation, quoting an old Polish adage: "Before going to war, say one prayer. Before going to sea, say two prayers. Before getting married, say three." Gilbert adds, "I myself intend to pray all year."

I'd argue that she might want to pray longer. Marriages, even good marriages or remarriages, certainly demand it. Agree or disagree with some of Gilbert's conclusions, this is a provocative book that is sure to launch many discussions in the Christian community. ✚

Cindy Crosby is the author of *By Willoway Brook* and, with Thomas C. Oden, the *Ancient Christian Devotional* series.

Heroic Tales from Distant Lands

Stories can help us visualize the new shape of world Christianity. By Soong-Chan Rah

It is now universally understood that the center of Christianity has shifted from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Books and articles by Philip Jenkins, Dana Robert, Todd Johnson, Lamin Sanneh, Andrew Walls, and Mark Noll have highlighted this shift. In the year 1900, 80 percent of the world's Christians were in Europe and North America; by 2050, experts predict that 80 percent will be non-European/North American.

Still, as Jenkins notes, "I suspect that most [Americans] see Christianity very much as it was a century ago—a predominantly European and North American faith."

Numbers don't tell the whole story, of course. For many North American evangelicals, statistics blur together and prevent us from grasping what is probably the most significant development in church history in the past 500 years. The unique contribution of Miriam Adeney's most recent book, **Kingdom Without Borders** (InterVarsity) ★★★★★, are the stories she tells that arise out of Christianity's new contexts.

Adeney's stories should open the eyes of many Western Christians. She notes how university graduates in the Philippines take jobs as maids, nannies, and construction workers in order to enter restricted-access nations in the Muslim world. Practicing downward mobility and embracing suffering, these under-the-radar missionaries are making an impact in some of the most difficult regions in which to introduce the gospel.

Adeney also uses stories to communicate complex missiological concepts. Take, for example, the growing scholarly interest in *missio Dei*, an emphasis on God's mission, which precedes human effort. Adeney doesn't delve into the specifics of

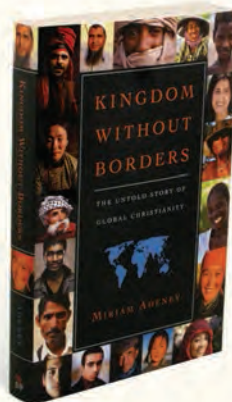
missio Dei but instead demonstrates how, for example, Chinese philosophy and ethics can be seen as gifts of God's creational, common grace. The story of the growth of the church in China, therefore, is not the result of human effort but of God's mission at work.

For Adeney, it all comes back to the stories. She introduces women missionaries devoted to the Scriptures even though seminary has been closed to them. She relates stories of African believers who lack power yet embrace the suffering of the Cross for the sake of the gospel. She highlights Latin American believers who demonstrate Christ's love in the midst of political oppression and persecution. Though stories of Western missionaries are interspersed throughout, the book remains a tribute to indigenous Christian movements. Each story that Adeney relays reveals a God who is not a respecter of borders.

Stories have always had the power to motivate. The narrative of the Western missionary braving challenges and obstacles to bring the Good News to a pagan land has been a significant one. But what happens to this narrative when pagan nations have more Christians than Western nations? What lessons do we begin to learn from non-Western nations where the gospel message is now flourishing?

In the 21st century, the stories are changing—and perhaps it's the stories told by Adeney that will help North Americans see more clearly how the old story of the gospel plays out in new contexts. ✚

Soong-Chan Rah is Milton B. Engebretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, and author of *The Next Evangelicalism* (InterVarsity).



THE VERTICAL SELF

How Biblical Faith Can Help Us Discover Who We Are in an Age of Self Obsession

MARK SAYERS (THOMAS NELSON, 224 PAGES)

When I was growing up, if someone used the word *sexy*, they were almost always describing a person. I now read about sexy football plays, sexy economic policies, sexy art galleries. It became truly bizarre when a U.S. military general described a bombing raid on the Taliban as “sexy stuff,” and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said an intelligence report needed to be “sexed up.” A pastor friend once told me his ministry needed to be sexier!

Cultural critic Ariel Levy writes [that], “for something to be noteworthy it must be ‘sexy.’ Sexiness is no longer just about being arousing or alluring; it’s about being worthwhile.” Banks, herb gardens, and universities can all wear the public mask of “sexiness.” It is the perfect outerwear in the age of the horizontal self.

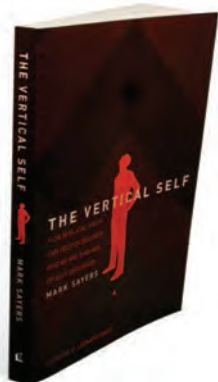
The 14th-century English mystic Walter Hilton wrote clearly of the choice between accepting our true selves, which he described as being branded in the image of the Trinity of God, and accepting our unredeemed selves, or being branded in the image of “the wretched trinity”—“a state of forgetfulness of God, ignorance of him, and an animal lust for [one]self.”

Hilton points out that when we embrace the false self as Adam did, we lose our honor and dignity. We bring upon ourselves a kind of self-judgment in which we fall into a forgetfulness of God, an ignorance of the fact that God is the source of all life. Cut off from this source, we find our behavior becoming less human and more animalistic. We give ourselves over to what Paul describes as “the flesh,” or the Greek word *sarx*.

The path of holiness is about ridding ourselves of *sarx*, that is, anything in life—attitudes, relationships, actions, desires, or worldviews—that carries with it the spirit of death and corruption, that moves against God’s intention for the world. Imagine Paul’s plea to rid ourselves of our flesh as a plea to rid ourselves of that which is not our true selves.

When we take on the false self, when we create a self based solely on surface image and publicity [and sexiness], we bring the spirit of *sarx* upon our lives. We choose to walk away from our true selves and head in the opposite direction.

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WHERE HEAVEN AND EARTH MEET

Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade

OLEG GRABAR AND BENJAMIN Z. KEDAR, EDITORS
(UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS)



“Sacred space”? Lord, preserve us. Heaven and earth meet everywhere, often inconspicuously. This learned, lavishly illustrated sequence of essays isn’t reader-friendly—the prose is often turgid—but

there is plenty of information here about the history of Jerusalem and its Esplanade (the southeastern corner of the Old City, where the First and Second Temples once stood) under Jewish, Christian, and Muslim dispensations, from centuries before Christ to the present day. The project was co-sponsored by Jerusalem-based Israeli, Palestinian, and Roman Catholic centers of scholarship.

THE MAKING OF EVANGELICALISM

From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond

RANDALL BALMER (BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS)



In just over 80 pages, this book offers a sharply argued overview of American evangelicalism—past, present, and future. Randall Balmer has covered this terrain before, but there is value in a condensed version, and his account will be useful

as a discussion-starter in small groups as well as in classrooms. There’s plenty to take issue with here—including the disproportionate emphasis on the Religious Right—and plenty to ponder. Balmer notes, for example, how sermons warning against the temptations of affluence—common when he was a boy—have virtually disappeared in many evangelical congregations.

THE DOUBLE COMFORT SAFARI CLUB

ALEXANDER MCCALL SMITH (PANTHEON)



Have you noticed that we aren’t in postmodernity any more? While we wait for the savants to come up with a new label, we can confidently assert that one of the glories of our time is Alexander McCall Smith’s series

of novels devoted to the No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency in Botswana. This is the eleventh book in the series, and one of the best. Better than any review: hearing your spouse laugh out loud while reading the book next to you in bed.

Yes, We Have a Witness

Historian **Vinson Synan** reflects personally on the Pentecostal movement. Interview by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

The charismatic movement in the U.S. marks its golden anniversary this year, having begun with Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett in 1960. For more than a hundred years, its parent movement, Pentecostalism, has popularized practices such as speaking in tongues and prophesying. The younger charismatic movement surfaced when many North American Christians in mainline denominations began adopting similar practices.

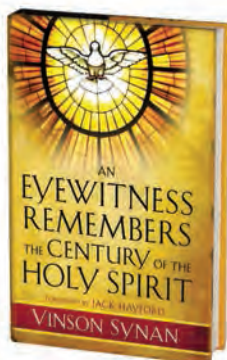
Vinson Synan, a professor of church history at Regent University in Virginia Beach, documents the movement's development in **An Eyewitness Remembers the Century of the Holy Spirit** (Chosen/Baker). *CT* online editor Sarah Pulliam Bailey spoke with Synan about Pentecostalism's past and future.

What to you has been one of the most unexpected changes of the past century?

The biggest surprise was the Catholic-charismatic renewal that started in 1967. That came as an utter shock to me, to most of my friends, and probably to the Catholic Church. It gave legitimacy to the movement, that the largest and one of the oldest churches in the world was seeing a Pentecostal movement.

What has been the high point of the movement?

The movement reached a climax in America around 1977 during the Kansas City Conference, because all the different streams came together. The 50,000 people in the stadium showed the vigor and force that was sweeping the world. National television and magazine outlets wrote about the conference, and Regent University was formed the year after that.



How about the low point?

The televangelist scandals of the late 1980s involving Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker. That put a black mark on the movement. It didn't stop the movement from growing, but it was so publicized; the whole world watched. A lot of the independent ministries are not accountable to anybody. When you have such a free-flowing movement, it's hard to control everybody.

On the other hand, one of the most surprising, positive changes was the rise of televangelist ministries. These people were household names even before the scandals. In spite of some of the problems, they still helped spread the movement worldwide.

What do non-charismatic Christians need to understand most about Pentecostals?

Pentecostals are the most successful at converting people in competition with Islam. Televangelists like Benny Hinn, who divides some people, are very popular in places like India. Reinhard Bonnke is very successful in Africa. Pentecostalism has become the religion of choice outside Europe and the United States.

Is there something about places like Africa or India that makes their inhabitants more receptive to Pentecostalism?

Pentecostalism fits into some cultures more easily than do other forms of Western Christianity. Missionaries in past centuries tried to change the culture of people and force them to dress differently or have a different worship style. Pentecostals try to adapt to a culture and don't try to make little Englishmen or little Americans out of people. Pentecostals have been very successful in transmitting their religion in a way that cultures can understand and accept.

Pentecostals offer ideas like healing, miracles, signs and wonders, so many people don't have to become Western intellectuals. Many of them believe in miracles and spirits anyway, so to become a Pentecostal doesn't mean you have to change your culture or paradigm.

Who are some up-and-coming Pentecostals whom the rest of the church should pay attention to?

It's hard to put your finger on them. T. D. Jakes is a very important leader. I don't see denominations like Baptists or Presbyterians producing transformational leaders like Oral Roberts. None of them have risen to that point yet. I think they will come from independent Pentecostal churches.

What is the greatest challenge facing Pentecostalism in the next decade?

To keep the Pentecostal fire burning. All of its big revivals have cooled off after a generation or so. Pentecostalism is into its second century, but it's still vigorous because it tends to renew itself every 30 or 40 years. If [its leaders] keep the excitement and the fire going intellectually and culturally, the [movement will] continue to grow. ☩



Conservative and Progressive

Documentary explores Adventists' remarkable health. By LaVonne Neff

While visiting Loma Linda, California, to promote his film *Bonhoeffer*, producer-director Martin Doblmeier toured the University Medical Center, famous for infant heart transplants and cancer research. He was fascinated by “the juxtaposition between the rather conservative, traditional faith that is Adventism and this 21st-century pioneering medical technology that they’re doing.”

His interest led to **The Adventists** (Journey Films) ★★★★★, a 60-minute documentary airing on public television this month. (Check local listings; also available on DVD at *Journey Films.com*.) Focusing on four cutting-edge hospitals in California, Florida, and Ohio, the film lauds their luxurious campuses, personal patient care, and state-of-the-art technology. Adventist hospital marketing departments must be drooling.

Devout Adventists live, on average, 10 years longer than other Americans. Their

long lives, however, have to do more with lifestyle than technology. Church members are not supposed to drink alcohol or smoke. They are encouraged to eat a plant-based diet, to exercise regularly, to maintain normal body weight, and to stop working once each week for 24 hours. Those who do this are much less likely than the general public to experience cancer or heart disease, reports *Blue Zones* author Dan Buettner.

Adventism is, of course, a faith community, not a health club. In the film, cheesy costume drama depicts the denomination's origins in 19th-century millennialism, intense Bible study, and the supposed prophetic gifts of Ellen White. Before embarking on health reform in 1863, Adventists were already worshipping on Saturday and had developed a then-unique theology of resurrection, not immortality. Several contemporary Adventist theologians comment on the group's commitment to the whole person—body, mind, and spirit.

Still, this film is more about longevity than theology, and its picture of Adventists is far from complete. You won't learn here, for example, that Adventism is a variety of Bible-believing evangelical Christianity, or that the denomination has many more schools than hospitals, or that Adventists boast nearly twice as many university graduates as the general population. You won't suspect that 94 percent of the church's members live outside the United States, or that the American Adventist population is 50 percent nonwhite and 31 percent immigrant, or that despite all those surgeons, Adventists' income levels are decidedly below average.

You will, however, learn that an Adventist doctor patented a manufacturing process for peanut butter, and you may be inspired to eat more of it. 

LaVonne Neff was raised Seventh-day Adventist. She blogs at *LivelyDust.blogspot.com*.

MY TOP 5 MOVIE SUNRISE SCENES

By Brett McCracken, CT movies critic and blogger at *StillSearching.wordpress.com*



SILENT LIGHT

2007 | UNRATED

DIRECTED BY CARLOS REYGADAS

Sunrise is a classic symbol of Easter, and the opening shot here—a film about resurrection in a literal sense—features a breathtaking sunrise over a rural landscape. Opening on a dark sky and then gradually illuminated by morning light, this powerful scene must be seen to be believed.



MARIE ANTOINETTE

2006 | RATED PG-13

DIRECTED BY SOFIA COPPOLA

After a long night of partying (18th-century Versailles style), the young queen of France and a crew of her corseted best friends frolic in the gardens at dawn, watching a gorgeous sunrise as a new day sheds redemptive light on the champagne indulgences of the night before.



PRIDE & PREJUDICE

2005 | RATED PG

DIRECTED BY JOE WRIGHT

This already beautiful movie gets more gorgeous in the final act, a memorable romantic catharsis wherein Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy come together in a sunrise-bathed field and kiss for the first time. It's a classic “new dawn” picture of hope and renewal, forgiveness and reconciliation.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

2002 | RATED PG-13

DIRECTED BY PETER JACKSON

After the long, bloody night at Helm's Deep, the battle finally turns with the arrival of Gandalf as he promised: “On the first light of the fifth day, at dawn, look to the east.” Just when all hope seems lost, Gandalf's arrival with the rising sun signals victory.



THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

2004 | RATED R

DIRECTED BY MEL GIBSON

After a grueling, gruesome crucifixion, Jesus dies and the screen goes black—only to be illuminated moments later by the sun's morning glory on the third day, its beams shining through the holes in the hands of the resurrected Christ. It is the Divine Sunrise, which shines for all eternity.

TWO MINUTES WITH...

Tim Gregory



Tim Gregory founded Chicago's Provision Theater Company in 2004 with a mission statement to "produce works of hope, reconciliation, and redemption: works that challenge us to

explore a life of meaning and purpose." The company's current production, **The Hiding Place**, is a world premiere stage version of the popular book by Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian whose family hid Jews from the Nazis and was caught and sent to a concentration camp. Gregory, who wrote and directs the play, spoke with CT senior associate editor Mark Moring.

PENN: JOE SPIX

Why did you want to adapt this story?

I'm looking for stories that represent the truth of the human condition. I believe the truth is a person, the truth is alive, and the truth is Christ. I believe Christ shows up in art to minister to the audience and the artists. And I was inspired by the level of faith and conviction of this family in the face of great danger and evil.

What have been the challenges of adapting this into a play?

It is rather epic in scope, and you can't do epic very well with a stage play. Film is a perfect medium for epic, because budgets are bigger and the number of locations and characters can be endless. Figuring out which characters, scenes, and themes to cut when there are so many powerful ones to choose from is challenging.

What impressions do you hope audiences will leave with?

I hope they will be moved and maybe even transformed by the power of forgiveness illustrated in the story, and maybe ask themselves, "Are we allowing our own past to help shape our future? Are we prepared for the work in store for us?" Hopefully the answer is "yes."

Any chance of the production seeing life beyond Provision Theater?

God willing, I hope other theaters in other cities are interested in telling this extraordinary story of faith and forgiveness.



Landing with Grace

Melanie Penn: Theater's loss is music's gain.

By Mark Moring

Melanie Penn moved to the Big Apple a decade ago to pursue her dreams in musical theater, and found a modicum of success, including a national tour with *Grease*.

Along the way, she discovered Jesus—at Tim Keller's Redeemer Presbyterian Church—and songwriting, eventually losing her passion for the stage.

Theater's loss is music's gain, as Penn's debut album, **Wake Up Love** (independent) ★★★★★, lands with grace and beauty. Produced by Ben Shive (Sara Groves, Andrew Peterson), the CD is a warm introduction to a fresh voice. Comparisons to Groves and Peterson are apt, and vocally, Penn's pipes are a mix of Groves, Patty Griffin, and Over the Rhine's Karin Bergquist.

Penn, now a song leader at a Redeemer church plant in Brooklyn, says several of the album's themes "came out of a very painful time of my life trying to recover from a broken heart. There are songs about relationships and the nature of love." Indeed, the disc opens

on a melancholy note with "Circus Song," in which Penn laments love lost: "You're some new part of my brain / Stranded in my DNA / I thought I was over you / But I'm not / How long until love's gone?"

The longing continues in the title track and a few others, but Penn finds a balm in "Sorrows," a jazzy bit in which she sings, "Rumors of a man of sorrows / Circulatin' far and wide / That he'll come back again / But I won't wait until then / ... Maybe that Man of Sorrows will find me / Won't you find me?"

Penn also explores God's attributes in creation in the whimsical "Ordinary Day" ("Oh I'm a summer breeze / I brush across your cheek / I always have been / And I always will be / You can hear me blow") and the contemplative "A Star's Lament" ("I shake and I shiver here up in space but I do my part / And you make all your wishes on my demise / But I had a wish too / To be your morning light"). This is a stellar debut. ☪



Mark Moring is CT senior associate editor.

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QUICK TAKES

More media of note.

BOOKS

► J. I. PACKER AND THE EVANGELICAL FUTURE

The Impact of His Life and Thought

TIMOTHY GEORGE, ED. (BAKER ACADEMIC)

★★★★★ Students of J. I. Packer's beloved Puritans may hear echoes of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* throughout this volume. Turning the pages feels like walking through the Interpreter's House, with each essay introducing a series of poignant lessons from the Anglican theologian. Packer's interlocutors remind us of his focus on profound truths such as *coram Deo* (the necessity of living "before God's face"), and that real theology is ultimately doxology. When historians examine the life of Packer, this volume will serve as a useful starting point. —Chris Castaldo

► PURE SCUM

The Left-Out, the Right-Brained and the Grace of God

MIKE SARES (INTERVARSITY)

★★★★★ Yes, Scum of the Earth Church in Denver appeals to a different kind of attendee than Saddleback or Willow Creek. It also collects its share of unexpected occurrences. Senior pastor Mike Sares (the church has a surprisingly traditional leadership setup) writes about fights during communal meals, dreams and visions, sexual harassment accusations, dramatic conversions, and much more in his testimonial about the off-the-beaten-track congregation. Yet what makes the church unusual isn't its edginess so much as its unabashed vibrancy and ministry fervor. Fair warning: Reading about Scum may lead directly to dissatisfaction with your own church. —Madison Trammel

IN THEATERS

► LETTERS TO GOD

VIVENDI | RATED PG | APRIL 9

★★★★★ Based on the true story of a cancer-stricken boy who finds comfort in writing a series of letters to the Almighty, this movie had the potential to be either strong or sappy. It's more of the latter, unfortunately. Director David Nixon, a producer on *Fireproof* and *Facing the Giants*, filmed some nice moments, but too much of it feels emotionally manipulative and heavy-handed. Still, it's more upbeat than bleak, and there are some teachable moments for parents on the topics of faith and hope in the face of death. —Mark Moring

DVD

► THE LORD OF THE RINGS

WARNER HOME VIDEO | RATED PG | APRIL 6

★★★★★ Long before Peter Jackson crafted his epic masterpiece, the Lord of the Rings trilogy, Ralph Bakshi had mostly mastered the material in an animated version lasting less than three hours. Warner Home Video has digitally remastered his 1978 classic for DVD and Blu-ray, and the result is marred only by Bakshi's decision to combine traditional animation with "rotoscoped" live-action footage, resulting in some aesthetic gaffes. The director—featured here in a never-before-seen 30-minute interview—promised Tolkien's heirs he would stay true to the story, and he mostly keeps that promise by imaginatively depicting Middle Earth and all of its unusual characters. —Mark Moring

MUSIC

SOJOURN

► OVER THE GRAVE

(BONDED RECORDS)

★★★★★ Billed as a "radical re-envisioning of the hymns of Isaac Watts," this new project, from the worship team at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, delivers the promised goods. It's nigh impossible to improve on the lyrics of Watts, oft regarded as the father of English hymnody. And, to Sojourn's credit, they don't try to. But they do take a few risks musically, trying a few experiments—and they mostly work. With tunes ranging from '70s-style rock to indie pop, *Over the Grave* includes a couple of forgettable tracks, but for the most part, there's much to like. —Mark Moring

CHRIS MCCLARNEY

► INTRODUCING CHRIS MCCLARNEY

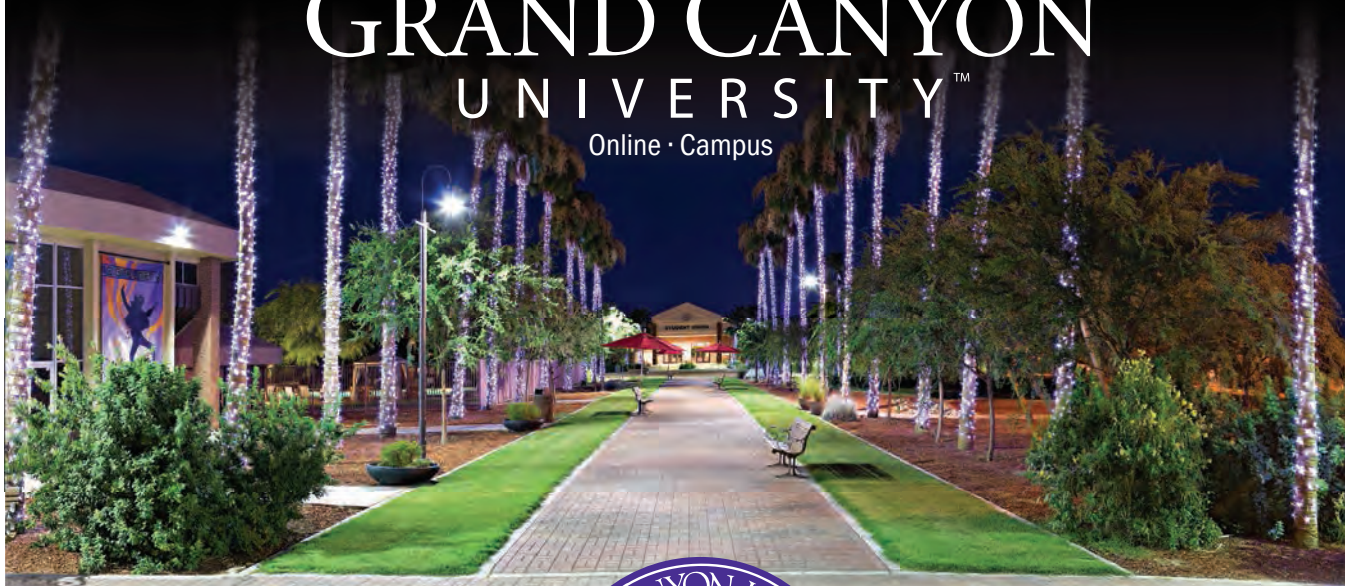
(KINGSWAY MUSIC)

★★★★★ McClarney cemented his reputation as a fine worship musician when the Jesus Culture movement adopted "Your Love Never Fails" as its theme song. Thankfully, for his debut CD, the Tennessee-based artist opted not to simply rewrite his best-known song. He adds a welcome bluesy, John Mayer-esque edge to his originals and turns the traditional hymn "Blessed Assurance" into a gorgeous, Hammond organ-drenched slow burner. If this album indicates where McClarney's recorded work is headed, he likely has a long career ahead. —Robert Ham

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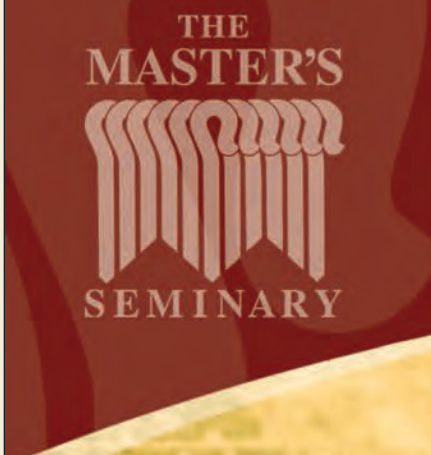


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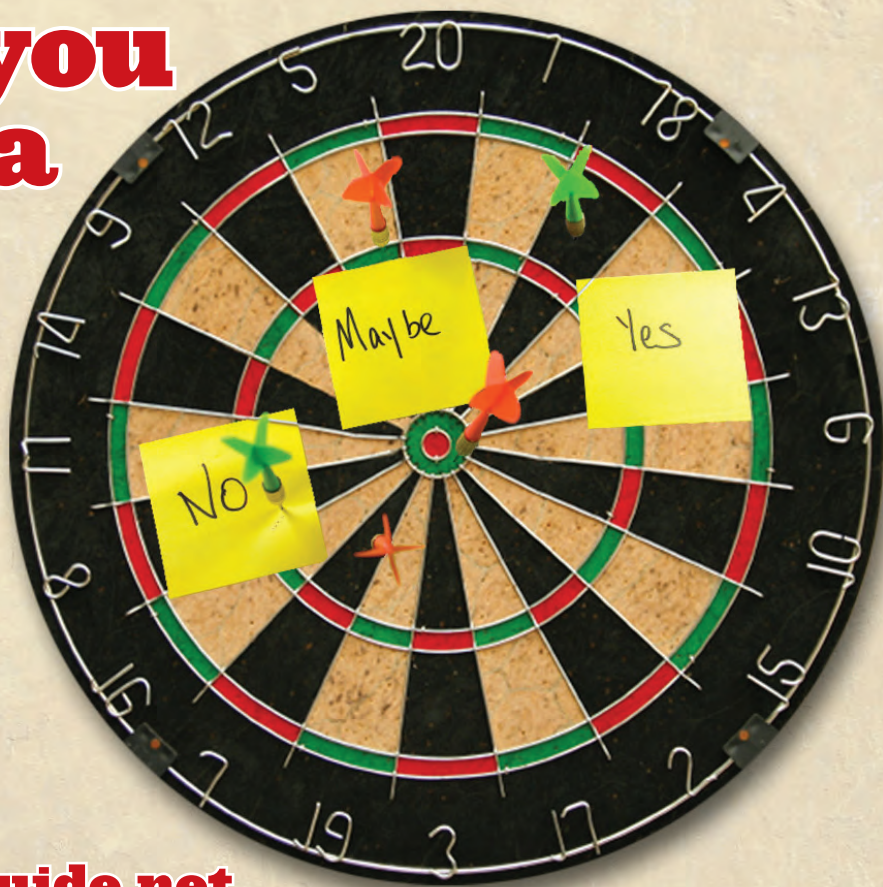
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Not Just a Guy Issue

Crystal Renaud helps women addicted to pornography.

When “pornography” and “women” appear in the same sentence in Christian circles, the topic is usually pastors’ wives or former porn stars. But for an estimated one in six women in the U.S., the topic is themselves. Crystal Renaud—whose own addiction started at age 10 after finding a magazine in her brother’s bathroom—wants to dispel the idea that porn is only a men’s problem. With the 2009 launch of Dirty Girls Ministries, she has given female addicts a place of confession, accountability, and healing. The Kansas City–based ministry also provides churches with biblically based tools to minister to women addicts in their midst.

Porn’s effects are well chronicled, and the alienation and shame it creates are no respecter of gender. But Renaud, currently working toward certification with the American Association of Christian Counselors, believes men and women turn to it with different needs. “Many count women out as porn addicts, because they aren’t known for being visually stimulated,” she says.

“But as emotional beings, women often seek porn as a way to escape and receive a false sense of intimacy.” Through support groups online and in Kansas City, and speaking and online resources, Dirty Girls Ministries helps women escape secrecy’s stranglehold and encounter the healing touch of Christ.

Says Renaud, “It’s my hope that every woman who struggles with porn, thinking she’s alone, would discover that she’s not.” ☪

Age 25

Church Westside Family Church, Lenexa, Kansas

Most influential reading *The Screwtape Letters*, by C. S. Lewis

On your iPod *Glee* soundtrack, Taylor Swift, Carlos Whittaker

Favorite movie *Juno*

Favorite Bible verse Galatians 5:1

question & answer

How did you escape porn addiction?

When I was 18, an unsuspecting friend confided that she had struggled with pornography in her past. Author Jon Acuff calls this “the gift of going second.” It’s when a person reveals something so that you have the freedom to share. At that moment, I had a choice: I could either walk away from my only chance for help, or I could jump in headfirst and accept this gift being handed to me. I chose the gift.

From that day on, I have had consistent accountability with this woman, and I recently celebrated seven years of sobriety.

What prompted you to launch the ministry?

It initially launched as a marketing and research tool for my forthcoming book [*Dirty Girls: The New Porn Addicts*]. In less than one month, over 300 women participated in surveys as part of anecdotal research. But as traffic to our website continued to soar and e-mails flooded in, I began to see a movement among women and the church, desiring to break the silence encircling female porn addiction.

Our mission and vision is to bring awareness of the porn problem among women; show addicted women that they are not alone; and demonstrate confession, accountability, and recovery. Over the next five years, I hope to see Dirty Girls established as a nonprofit, equipping women with the tools to break free and equipping churches to help women in their congregations.

How does Jesus fit into all of this?

Jesus is all over this. Without Jesus, we don’t have a hope in the world of breaking free from addiction. Ultimately it comes down to our willingness to surrender our addiction to God and trust him enough to sustain us.

More: DirtyGirlsMinistries.com, PinkHairedGirl.net



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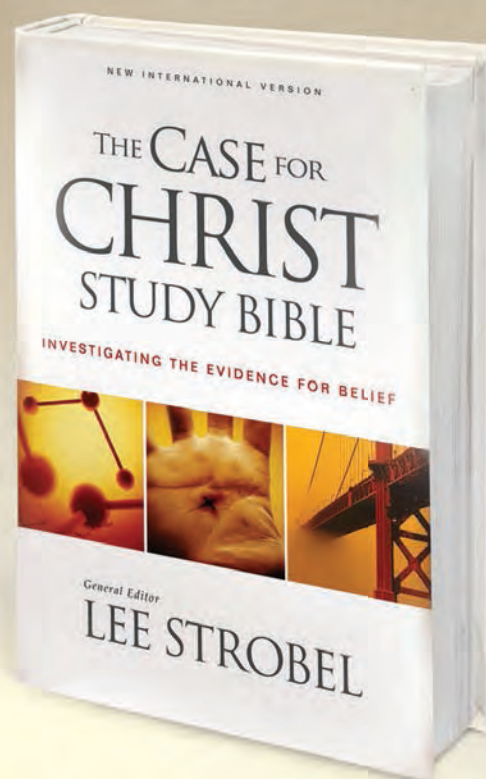
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