

The Year's Best Books, Music, and Movies

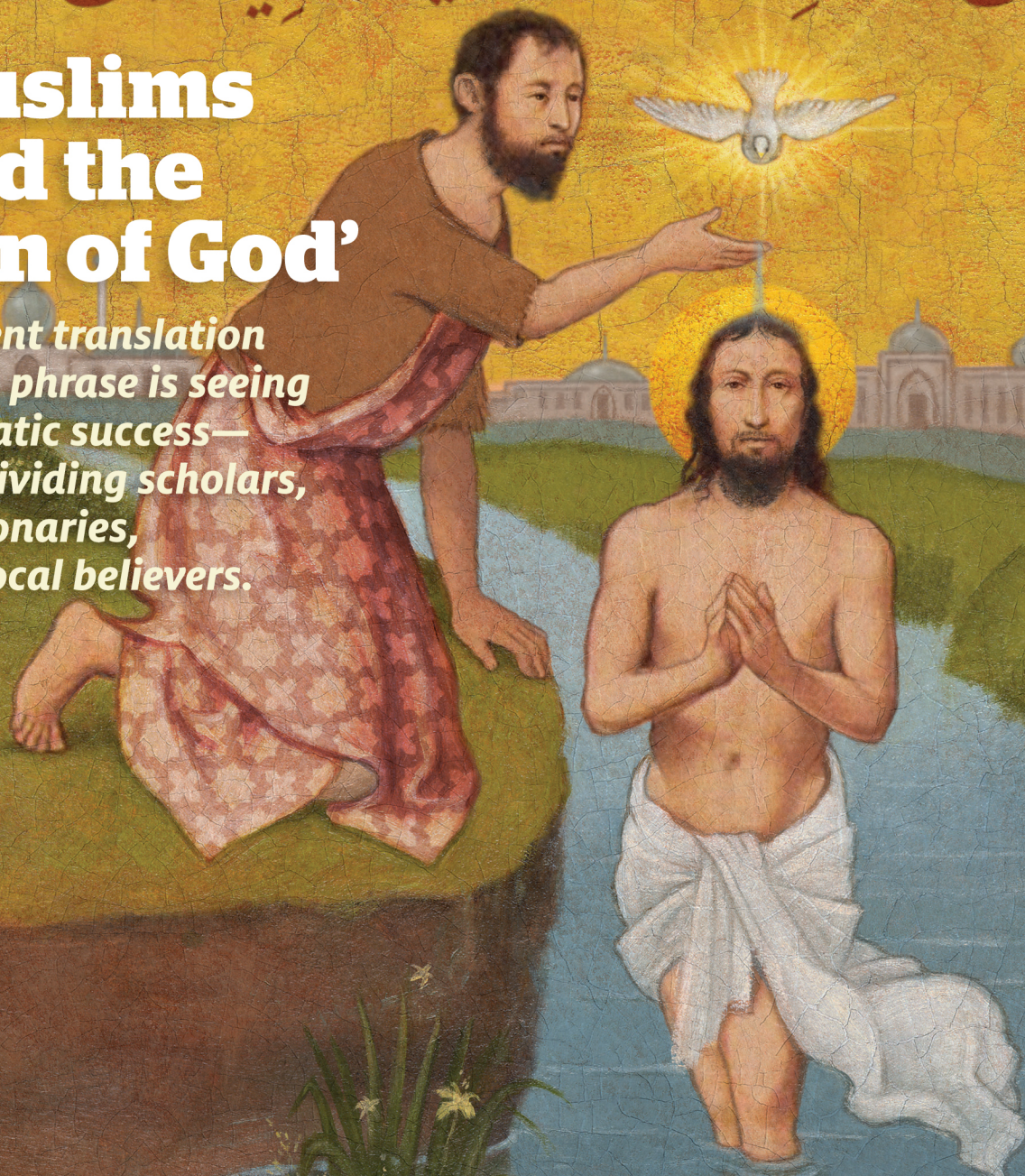
Christianity Today

FEBRUARY 2011

الابنُ الحَبِيبُ الَّذِي يَأْتِي مِنَ اللَّهِ

Muslims and the 'Son of God'

*A recent translation
of the phrase is seeing
dramatic success—
and dividing scholars,
missionaries,
and local believers.*



BOYCOTTING OUTRAGE 24
THE SEX MARKET CRASH 26
HEADLESS SNAKES 54

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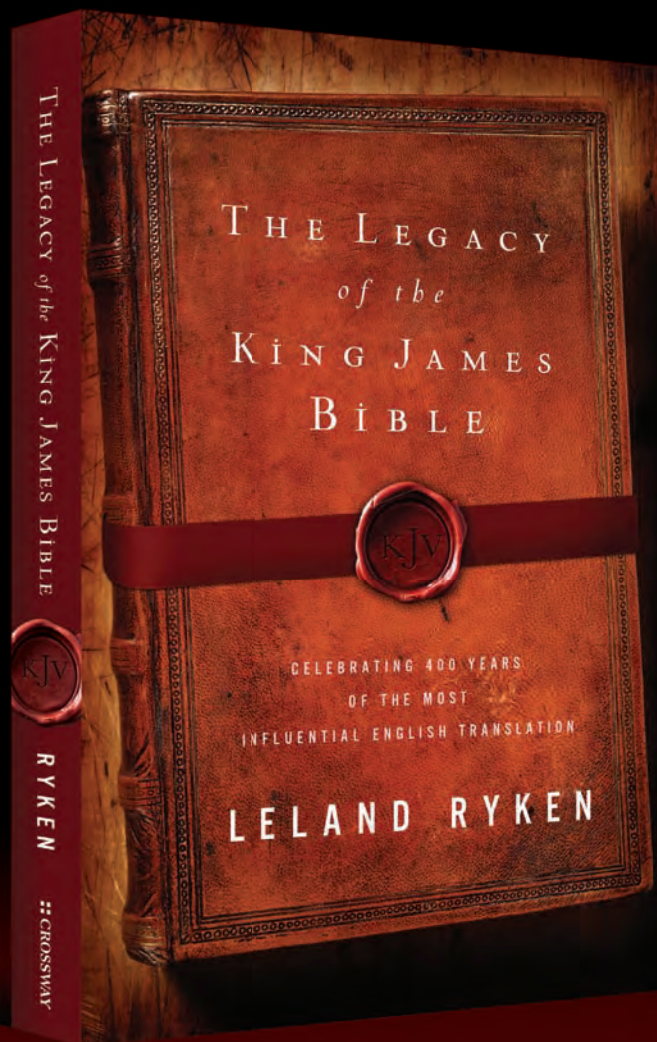
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COVER ILLUSTRATION
BY ROB DAY



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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 recent issues, for example, we highlighted the efforts of Sudanese Christians to bring an end to the pressures of Islamization by holding a peaceful referendum. And we reported efforts to prevent mother-child HIV transmission in Africa. In this issue, a reporter based in Jordan relates the stories of Iraqi Christians fleeing violence in their homeland.

We live in a time when American pastors are taking cues from clergy in Rwanda, Ukraine, and South Korea. Because Christ-followers need to connect with fellow believers worldwide, we are constantly expanding our global vision and yours.

Can we continue to increase this unique international coverage? Like many of you, we at CT have felt the pinch of recent economic uncertainties, and travel to unfamiliar cultures takes much more of our writers' time and emotional energy.

Fortunately, we have had some help. Several organizations help with costs, access, and in-country travel. As I write, we are exploring a collaborative reporting trip with Voice of the Martyrs. Azerbaijan, precariously sandwiched between Russia and Iran, is one possible destination.

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 line, or visit ChristianityToday.com/donate.

David Neff, Editor in Chief

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No Empty Words

We're glad our readers value the 'nobility of diction.'

EVANGELICALS can be sticklers for precise language. Credit all those hours of color-coded inductive Bible study, perhaps. Or the Bible's descriptions of powerful blessings, curses, and prophecies—and repeated injunctions against empty words. But among my recent discussions with readers is whether we mean *compassion* when we say *social justice*. Or whether people should say *Christmas* instead of *holidays*. Or whether *anti-abortion* is a term that undermines the *pro-life* movement.

Editors tend to be language fanatics, too. In my office is a prayer from the fourth-century bishop Hilary of Poitiers: "Almighty God, bestow on us the meaning of words, the light of understanding, the nobility of diction, and faith of the true nature. And grant that what we believe we may also speak." It's a prayer we need daily: As I write this, we at *Christianity Today* are debating whether *church* (as in the universal body of believers) should be used to describe what goes on in the parachurch as well as in congregations. That's just one of the dozens (hundreds?) of semantic negotiations that occur as we finish each issue.

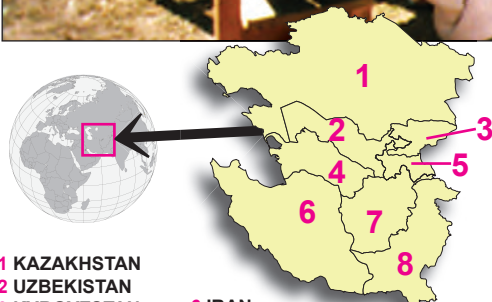
Editing an evangelical magazine, then, gives us an opportunity to take joy in the meaning and power of words. In this issue alone, we examine the backlash against *The C. S. Lewis Bible* (page 11) because of its use of gender-inclusive language. Our Under Discussion panel (page 12) examines whether *stingy* is a word that has a relative or precise meaning. And, in our cover story (page 18), editor at large Collin Hansen examines the impassioned debate over how to translate *Son of God* for Muslim Bible readers. This issue also includes one of our favorite celebrations of words: the annual CT Book Awards (page 34). (We've given increased prominence to our annual movie and music awards, as well.)

As we were finishing our lists, we saw a new category of "best of" list gain traction elsewhere online: the best long articles (see *LongForm.org* and *LongReads.com*). 2010 was a year in which deep reporting and essays seemed to make a comeback—or at least a defiant counterattack on 140-character tweets. This development was fueled in part by frustration with snark and brevity and in part by technological developments (like the Instapaper iPhone app and e-readers) that made long-form online reading more pleasurable. We're happy to announce that we finally have a great iPhone app of our own. Yes, apps for other platforms are on their way, but our goal is not simply to produce more words or more ways to access them. Like our readers, we are sticklers when it comes to words done right.

Next month: A special issue on worship music (including some surprising findings on America's most popular hymns) and an exclusive story on Egypt's Christians that includes reporting from areas perhaps never before visited by foreign journalists.

Q. Who have been winning Muslims to Christ and planting churches in the Islamic countries of Central Asia?

A. Native missionaries trained and sent out by indigenous evangelistic ministries.



1 KAZAKHSTAN
2 UZBEKISTAN
3 KYRGYZSTAN
4 TURKMENISTAN
5 TAJIKISTAN

6 IRAN
7 AFGHANISTAN
8 PAKISTAN

Q. Who sends financial support to indigenous Christian ministries in Central Asian countries?

A. Christian Aid Mission began helping indigenous evangelistic missions in Islamic Asian countries in 1974 and currently supports ministries working in every country of Central Asia.

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. Do indigenous missions in other countries also need our financial help?

A. Christian Aid is in communication with more than 4000 indigenous missions, some based in almost every unevangelized country on earth. They have over 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 has been sending financial help to indigenous evangelistic ministries based in unevangelized countries. More than 750 ministries are now being assisted in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. They deploy over 80,000 native missionaries who are spreading the gospel of Christ among unreached people within more than 3000 different tribes and nations. Most are in countries where Americans are not allowed to go as missionaries.

Christian Aid

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we love the brethren.

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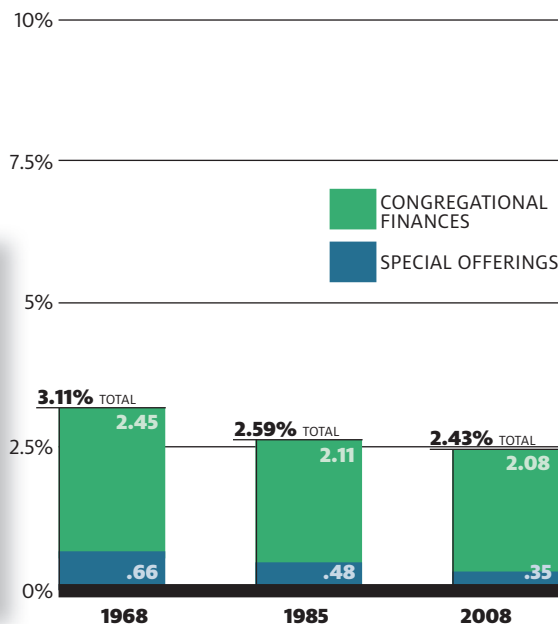
SPOTLIGHT: How We Give



➔ Churches and other explicitly religious organizations are by far the largest recipients of Americans' charitable donations. But church members' giving is decreasing in the recession, especially as a percentage of income. The amount of church-based giving that goes to missions is also decreasing significantly, according to a new survey from empty tomb, inc. From 1916–1927, about 7.9 percent of church contributions went to foreign missions; today it's 2.1 percent. Giving USA, meanwhile, found that total charitable giving in the U.S. (unadjusted for population or income) dropped by about 3.6 percent in 2009, though individual giving stayed steady from 2008.

When Tithe Doesn't Mean Tenth

The average percentage of income given to churches.



Overseas Missions Giving

How much of each denomination's church dollar goes to international ministries.

11¢

Christian and Missionary Alliance

6¢

Church of the Nazarene

General Association of General Baptists

4¢

Seventh-day Adventists, North America

The Wesleyan Church

Presbyterian Church in America

2¢

Southern Baptist Convention

The United Methodist Church

1¢

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

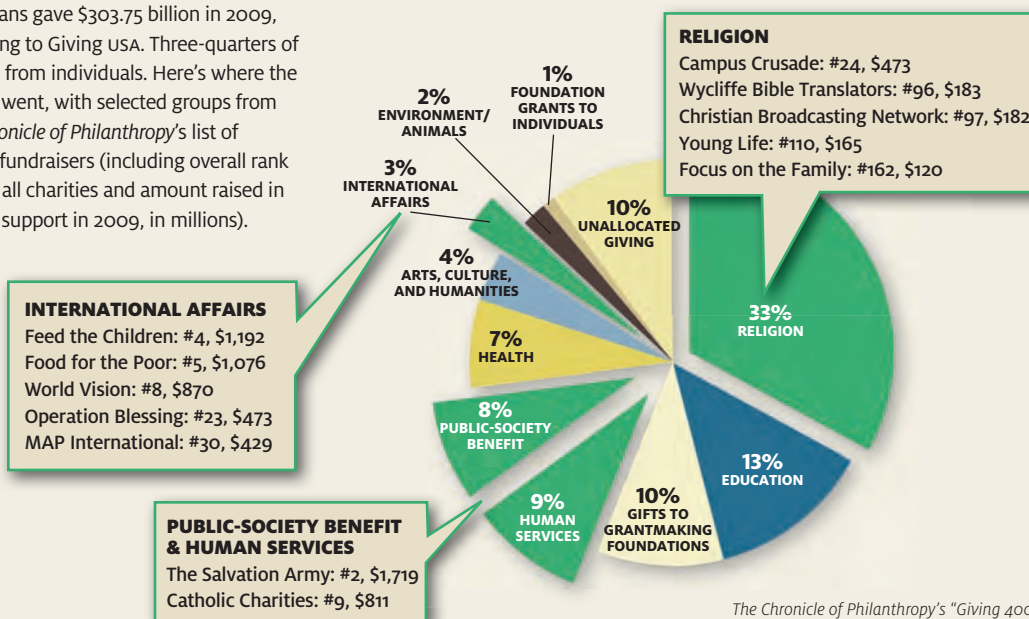
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Episcopal Church

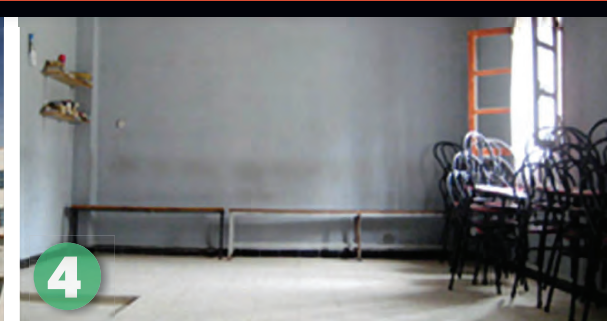
empty tomb, inc.

Beyond Church Giving *Giving in America, in all categories*

Americans gave \$303.75 billion in 2009, according to Giving USA. Three-quarters of it came from individuals. Here's where the money went, with selected groups from *The Chronicle of Philanthropy's* list of largest fundraisers (including overall rank among all charities and amount raised in private support in 2009, in millions).



The Chronicle of Philanthropy's "Giving 400"; Giving USA



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Europe: Ireland must rethink abortion

IRELAND The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in December that Ireland's government did not comply with its own Supreme Court's decision guaranteeing a woman's right to abortion if her life is at risk. The ECHR found that a woman with cancer who went to England for the procedure in 2005 should have been able to get an abortion in Ireland, where it is technically permitted in such cases but practically impossible. However, splitting what some had expected to be Europe's *Roe v. Wade*, the court rejected pleas from two other women who had wanted abortions for non-life-threatening reasons, saying their cases "went against the profound moral values of the majority of the Irish people."

reject gay couples as foster parents. The Wesley Mission, having been ordered to provide foster services to gay couples, successfully argued that this would jeopardize its fundraising and volunteer base, most of which supports traditional families. The tribunal noted that the state's Anti-Discrimination Act had a "singularly broad" religious exemption, and suggested that the state parliament consider revising the law. Both government and opposition parties defended the exemption and have no plans to reexamine it.

4 Court ruling concerns Christians

ALGERIA Christians in Algeria are worried about a December court ruling in Kabylie, the regional center of Christianity in the Muslim nation, that gave four Christian leaders suspended sentences for worshiping without a permit. Since no churches in Algeria have official permits in the wake of a 2006 law, this could cause problems for many. "If they close us, they can close all the gatherings and churches that exist in Algeria," Mahmoud Yahou, one of the defendants, told Compass Direct News.

2 Phoenix hospital loses Catholic status

Phoenix Archbishop Thomas J. Olmsted revoked the name "Catholic" from St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in December after facing off with hospital officials over an abortion that the hospital authorized in 2009 to save the life of a mother. The archbishop considered the procedure a violation of the Ethical and Religious Directives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; the Catholic Health Association disagreed, publicly backing the hospital. The hospital will retain "St. Joseph's" in its name.

3 Charities can bar gay foster parents

AUSTRALIA The Administrative Decisions Tribunal of New South Wales has somewhat reluctantly upheld the right of religious charities to

5 Scandal at Christian TV network

Marcus and Joni Lamb, the founders of Daystar, the world's second-largest Christian television network, admitted in November that Marcus had an adulterous relationship several years ago. The Lambs said they went public to head off a blackmail effort by a former employee. In December, former marketing director Jeanette Hawkins sued Daystar, claiming that finding out about the affair devastated her after the Lambs promised her a Christian work environment. Daystar

responded by suing Hawkins and two other former employees, alleging a conspiracy to extort money from the network.

6 Christmastime violence claims 38

NIGERIA Violence in various parts of Nigeria killed at least 38 people over Christmas weekend 2010. Suspected members of Boko Haram, a militant Muslim group, attacked churches in northern Nigeria, killing 6. Motives are murkier about Christmas Eve explosions in violence-prone Jos, where it is not clear if the bombings that took 32 lives were religiously motivated.

7 wcc suspends reporting

SWITZERLAND The World Council of Churches (wcc) decided in December to suspend publication at Ecumenical News International (ENI), a news agency based at the wcc's Geneva headquarters. The wcc also cut ENI's funding and removed two editors, promising that the agency would reopen in 2011. Former wcc general secretary Samuel Kobia has been one of the most vocal critics of ENI. In 2008, ENI reported that Kobia's doctorate had come from an unaccredited U.S. university. Some say that Kobia consequently was unable to seek a second term.

GO FIGURE Megachurches

83%
Megachurches
(2,000+ in attendance) who say they grew in attendance between 2009 and 2010.

67%
Megachurches who say their budgets grew.

Leadership Network

8 Scientist sues college for discrimination

Astronomer Martin Gaskell is taking the University of Kentucky to court this month, alleging that it denied him a job because of his religious beliefs. Evidence suggests that Gaskell was the leading candidate to run the Lexington school's observatory based on his professional qualifications. But many cooled to him after finding lecture notes on his personal website that they thought demonstrated a belief in creationism or intelligent design. Gaskell, who says that



8



12

he accepts evolution, alleges discrimination, pointing to an e-mail from one faculty member who warned that Gaskell was “potentially evangelical.”

were part of new president Kevin Ezell’s downsizing efforts, which resulted in 99 people (a third of the organization’s staff) departing at the end of 2010.

9 Copts lose political clout and lives

EGYPT The good news for Egypt’s Coptic Christians is that the nation’s Muslim Brotherhood party took a beating in parliamentary elections late last year, eliminating many candidates who wanted to Islamize the government. The bad news is that the new government has little room for Copts either. Copts make up less than 2 percent of the new People’s Assembly yet 10 percent of the overall population. The results come in the midst of increasing violence between Copts and Muslims—such as the New Year’s Eve bombing of an Alexandria church that left 23 dead and 79 injured—and an ongoing legal and verbal war between the Coptic Church and Egypt’s government over its intention to grant Copts the right to divorce.

10 Lawsuits fly between missionaries to Jews

CANADA Marcello Araujo, a former missionary with Jews for Jesus Canada (JFJC), is suing the organization for wrongful dismissal: He was fired in 2005 for getting married without permission. Araujo says he never signed the Worker’s Covenant that JFJC claims he violated. JFJC is suing Araujo too, claiming he improperly approached Jews for Jesus donors after leaving the organization. Araujo, who now works for Chosen People Ministries Canada, says he approached only donors he had acquired for JFJC.

11 The NAMB downsizes

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention issued retirement packages to 81 employees late last year. The packages

12 Gay coach loses job

Lisa Howe, the women’s soccer coach at Belmont University in Nashville, resigned in November to avoid being fired after she told her team that she was in a lesbian relationship and that her partner was expecting a child. The incident raised questions about “don’t ask don’t tell”—like policies at Christian universities. Days after Howe’s resignation, Belmont president Bob Fisher insisted that the school is welcoming to gays and lesbians.

13 Once-atheist state okays churches

ALBANIA The Minister of Culture signed an agreement in November giving legal recognition to 135 churches of the Albanian Evangelical Alliance. This is a significant development for a country that, during the Cold War, closed all houses of worship and regarded itself the first officially atheist nation. Christian missionaries entered the country after the Cold War ended in 1991.

14 Religious theme parks sprout in the South

Kentucky governor Steve Brashear took heat in December for promising tax incentives to the new Ark Encounter theme park planned by creationist group Answers in Genesis. Opponents say the tax breaks violate separation of church and state, but Brashear says he wants to give the group the same support he would give any other for-profit venture that brings jobs to the state. A few months earlier, in neighboring Tennessee, the city council of Franklin approved plans for International Biblical Gardens. A Bible Park USA project near Nashville was put on hold in 2009 after difficulties with local governments.

compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

“really enjoyed living this year. . . . i hav so many wishes in 2011 . . . hope they come true . . . plz god stay beside me & help make it all true.”

Mariouma Fekry, posting on Facebook shortly before leaving for a New Year’s church service in Alexandria, Egypt. Fekry was one of 23 Coptic Christians killed when the service was bombed.

Facebook

“I’m not exactly for the use of drugs—don’t get me wrong—but I just believe that criminalizing marijuana . . . [is] costing us a fortune and it’s ruining young people.”

Pat Robertson, on the December 16 700 Club broadcast.

Religion News Service

“It is difficult to see how this is anything other than a statement of animus by a major American corporation against the beliefs of millions of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox citizens.”

Organizers of the Manhattan Declaration (a document on abortion, marriage, and religious liberty), after Apple rejected the group’s resubmitted iPhone application. Apple said even the scaled-down version was “likely to expose a group to harm” and “to be objectionable and potentially harmful to others.”

ManhattanDeclaration.org

“It’s a little cheesy, but cheese works.”

Ed Young, on using 3-D videos in services at Fellowship Church.

Dallas Morning News

GO FIGURE Celebrity

Protestant pastors who think the following are Christians:

Barack Obama:
23% of
Republicans
80% of Democrats

Glenn Beck:
24% of
Republicans
37% of Democrats

LifeWay Research



MIDDLE EAST

No Place Like a House

Affordable units help Middle Eastern Christians stay put. By Josiah Daniel Ryan

In December, the archbishop of Iraq's Syrian Orthodox Church finally called on Christians to emigrate. His statement followed a series of attacks on Iraqi Christians, headlined by an October massacre in Baghdad's Sayidat al-Nejat Church that killed 53 worshippers.

"I say clearly and now—the Christian people should leave their beloved land of our ancestors and escape the premeditated ethnic cleansing," said Archbishop Athanasios Dawood in remarks sent to CNN in November. "This is better than having them killed one by one."

In other Middle Eastern countries, Christians are emigrating mostly to escape economic difficulties. Still, leaders are aggressively pursuing strategies to entice fellow believers to stay.

"All populations are affected by housing and economic problems," said Riad Kassis, Middle East regional director for Overseas Council International. "Non-Christians get substantial support from Islamic countries. Christians can hardly get anything for this purpose."

A special Middle East synod convened in October by Pope Benedict XVI identified the same problem, concluding that the region's Christians are badly in need of "safe and affordable housing."

The largest housing project for Christians in Jerusalem is "Jerusalem: Stones of Memory," financed by the Franciscan Brothers. Established in 2002, it provides about 800 units between Jerusalem and neighboring Bethlehem, and supplements the work of the Greek Orthodox Church, which runs 10

Flats for the Faithful: Affordable housing projects, such as this one near Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, are helping Christian leaders in the Middle East keep their flocks from leaving historic communities in search of better economic opportunities.

subsidized apartment buildings near Bethlehem that house 64 families.

Security walls erected by the Israeli government, however, have curtailed economic opportunities for many residents, leading an increasing number to emigrate.

"It is not a terrible situation, but it is not easy to live here. The financial support of Israelis [Jews] and Muslims from around the world has driven up the cost of living," said Thomas Saltai of Pro Terra Sancta, the Franciscans' lay arm that administers the housing project. "Their worldwide community feels a link to the Holy Land. We need to make Christians around the world aware that we also have a big reason to stay here."

The Lutheran World Federation launched a similar project in 2010. It plans to construct 84 housing units on the Mount of Olives at the price of nearly \$8.5 million. Once complete, the homes will be leased to Christian couples and families at subsidized rates, allowing them to maintain Jerusalemite rights to employment, travel, health care, and pensions.

The Franciscans are also constructing an eight-story building near Beirut that will provide about 80 units for Christian families. Like the project in Jerusalem, it will supplement a nearby Greek Orthodox Church project that hosts hundreds of Christians.

"Financial instability is the crisis facing the Christian community in Lebanon," said a Beirut evangelical pastor who asked to remain anonymous. "Lebanese are losing hope of aspiring to a prosperous future in their homeland."

Though the projects are funded by specific denominations, Christian communities in the region are bonding over their shared adversity.

As George Al-Kopti, an Anglican priest in the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, said, "Helping Christians to stay in the Middle East is a great matter and one of the main challenges all the churches face."

GO FIGURE Economy

71%

Megachurch pastors who said in April/May 2010 that the economy is having a minimal impact on their church and its ministries.

58%

Megachurch pastors who said this in October 2010.

Leadership Network

BIBLES

That Hideous Bible?

Some scholars protest Lewis Bible over gender.

By Ken Walker

A prolific C. S. Lewis scholar has initiated an e-mail petition against a Bible that features devotional readings from the beloved British apologist. Louis Markos says the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation used in *The C. S. Lewis Bible* has a gender-neutral agenda, which he says is at odds with Lewis's convictions.

The Houston Baptist University English professor began circulating the petition soon after the November 9 release of the Bible, published by HarperCollins. The author of two recent books on Lewis calls it unjust to tie the apologist's writings to an implicit push for the gender egalitarianism that Lewis would have opposed.

"The NRSV has been around so long, a lot of people don't realize there was an agenda behind it," said Markos, who wants HarperCollins to reissue the Bible in the King James or Revised Standard Version. "How can we do this to Lewis? He and his legacy have been hijacked."

The petition attracted modest support from signers that included James Kushiner, executive editor of *Touchstone Magazine*, and Robert Sloan, president of Houston Baptist University, as well as Wheaton College professor Leland Ryken, who said that for the goal of reading Scripture alongside Lewis, this Bible should have been released in the KJV translation that Lewis used.

"The choice of the NRSV, of which HarperCollins is the U.S. publisher, seems to have been a marketing decision rather than a logical choice," Ryken said.

The chances of the publisher withdrawing the Bible are dim. Imprint HarperOne received 30,000

advance orders from the 50,000 first printing of its hardback and leather-bound editions.

"I didn't know whether to laugh or cry," said Mickey Maudlin, vice president and editorial director of HarperOne, of Markos's petition. "It's embarrassing for the evangelical movement and fans of Lewis to have this kind of issue come up." Believing that the irenic Lewis would not have lobbied for or against a specific issue, Maudlin said Markos is elevating a debate over language to one of theology.

Eastern University professor Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen said many evangelicals want to turn Lewis into "the 13th apostle" and link him to complementarianism. But she has also argued in a recent book, *A Sword between the Sexes?*, that the author's writings show him moving toward egalitarian thought later in life.

"Evangelicals are very good at picking up some good cause which is overstated," said Van Leeuwen. "Read everything Lewis wrote . . . before you jump on a bandwagon like this."

Despite little chance of a successful petition, Markos planned to keep it circulating into 2011, saying he hopes to get people thinking about the issue instead of heading down what he calls "a slippery slope."

Lewisophile academics backing the Bible include Jerry Root, the Wheaton College professor who served as co-consulting editor on the project. Root said nobody involved tried to clandestinely use Lewis's name to "pull one over" on an unsuspecting public.

"I doubt Lewis's feathers would have been ruffled by this Bible, except to say he might have been embarrassed that someone would use his writing and attach it to the Bible," he said.

Lyle Dorsett of Samford University echoed those sentiments, saying he could not imagine Lewis being upset with any endeavor that might get people reading and thinking more deeply about the Bible. ☪

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BURMA

Burma's 'Human Hope'

Activist released as election spurs fear. By Sarah Pulliam Bailey

Christians in Burma fear continued violence after the country's November election, condemned internationally as neither free nor fair. Some observers, however, saw a glimmer of hope after pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi was released after 15 years of house arrest.

"The elections are a joke to the people here," David Eubank, founder of Christians Concerned for Burma, said by phone from Northern Karen state, where Christians are more prevalent. "People are hopeful that Suu Kyi's release could break things open."

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party declared victory in Burma's first election in 20 years, while more than 10,000 refugees fled to Thailand due to election-related violence. The World Evangelical Alliance predicts that the new regime will launch a major military offensive against ethnic minorities.

Benedict Rogers, Christian Solidarity Worldwide's advocacy officer for South Asia, saw Suu Kyi's release as an attempt to divert attention from the election. "I see no indication of the widespread discrimination, and in certain areas persecution, improving," Rogers said near the India-Burma border.

Some observers speculate that sanctions against Burma could soon be dropped. Steve Gumaer, head of Partners Relief and Development, a Christian NGO working on the Thailand-Burma border, said that while military leaders are getting better international reception, Christians will face the same kind of violence.

[continued on 12]

PASSAGES



Died
Roger Nicole

Theologian who taught at Reformed Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, at age 95. He was a founding member of the Evangelical Theological Society and other groups.



Died
Ken Curtis

Founder of Gateway Films/Vision Video and the Christian History Institute (original publisher of *Christian History*), at age 71.



Awarded
George Beverly Shea

At 102, with a Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award. The Billy Graham Crusade mainstay said he was surprised but thankful his hymn recordings "are being recognized, thought about, and listened to."

Briefing [from 11]

"[Soldiers] are still killing people, they're still burning down villages, they're still doing things they've been doing for years," Gumaer said. "Christian leaders are targeted in particular to be made an example of and quickly dealt with."

A leaked government document suggested that in 2007 the military regime wanted to wipe out the country's Christians. The U.S. State Department's annual International Religious Freedom report stated that church membership increased to an estimated 2.1 million of a population of 50 million in 2010. 

PUBLISHING

The Discerning Seller

LifeWay will drop warning labels. By Bob Smietana

LifeWay Christian Stores plans to drop its controversial "Read with Discernment" program.

The program, which began in 2007, listed popular authors such as Rob Bell, Donald Miller, Brian McLaren, and William Young, who

the chain said "may have espoused thoughts, ideas, or concepts that could be considered inconsistent with historical evangelical theology" and are relevant "strictly for critical study or research."

At the LifeWay store in Franklin, Tennessee, the shelf featuring Young's *The Shack* had a warning label, while Miller's *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years* had a bookmark in it telling buyers to ask for more information at the checkout desk.

Only a handful of titles received the warnings. Chris Rodgers, LifeWay's director of product standards and customer relations, said the retailer was trying to help buyers make good decisions. But the labels became more trouble than they were worth.

"We have been thinking about doing away with them for some time," he said. "They have kind of become irrelevant. We thought it would be helpful and it wasn't."

Recent criticism was sparked by an October blog post by Shaun Groves, a Christian musician and speaker. Groves got so annoyed by the warning he found on Miller's book that he walked out and bought the book at a nearby Barnes & Noble instead. He wrote, "[Y]et instead

DISCUSSION STARTER Giving

The Chronicle of Philanthropy reported that donations dropped 11 percent at the nation's 400 biggest charities, yet donations to Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability member charities stayed strong.

of refusing to sell them, LifeWay chooses to profit from what it alleges to be heresy(ish)."

Groves, who declined to be interviewed for this story, went on to say that Christians should read every book with discernment.

"Everything I write might be wrong," he wrote. "Exercise discernment."

Dan Scott, senior pastor of Christ Church in Nashville, agrees, but thinks LifeWay had good intentions.

"I understand why they did it," he said. "They had to find a way to get some people off their back in order to be able to sell books."

Scott said his charismatic megachurch's bookstore stocks a number of authors whose views he disagrees with. But as long as the authors do not attack central Christian doctrines, the store can stock or order them. So Christ Church's store sells Miller and Young and has also sold McLaren.

Like most Christian retailers, LifeWay sells to a wide variety of believers, said Rodgers. "We've dealt with all kinds of churches, and every one has got an opinion."

He agrees with Groves: "We should all read everything with discernment." 

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Are American evangelicals stingy with their giving?

YES

"They are not just stingy—they are disobedient and blatantly sinful. We have become so seduced by the pervasive consumerism and materialism of our culture that we hardly notice the ghastly disjunction between our incredible wealth and the agonizing poverty in the world."

RON SIDER,
author, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*

"The concept that giving to God's work (local church, ministries/missions, the needy) should be a person's highest financial priority is embraced by very few Christians in today's materialistic, debt-ridden society, even though Scripture is clear on this teaching."

BRIAN KLUTH,
author, *GiveWithJoy.org*
eDevotional

"Evangelicals are among the most financially generous Americans, but are still not as generous as their churches teach or as they can be given their resources. Compared to other groups they are not stingy, but compared to the ideal they are not nearly as generous as they ought to be."

CHRISTIAN SMITH,
author, *Passing the Plate*

"If generosity was a class and the Americans were scoring a 68 and the Europeans were scoring a 42, we ought not to ask the Europeans to grade our papers. But, at the same time, God as the instructor doesn't grade on a curve, and the Americans are still scoring a 68 and need to improve."

DOUGLAS WILSON,
minister, Christ Church

"Claims of stinginess are often, frankly, a disingenuous attack from secularist critics who are searching for evidence that Christians—especially evangelicals—are all-around hypocrites. We can and should all give more, but focusing on evangelical stinginess is a little absurd."

ARTHUR BROOKS,
president, American Enterprise Institute

"While not immune to the bad economy, evangelicals still consistently give more of their income to more places than virtually any other group. They are also the nation's most consistent titheers. And those who tithe are more resilient in their giving—and distinctly more generous—than others."

DAVID KINNAMAN,
president, Barna Group

NO



Remembering the Lost: At a memorial in Baghdad, a survivor of the October 31 church bombing holds a photo of her mother, who died in the attack.

PERSECUTION MIDDLE EAST

'Religicide' in Iraq

Fatal attacks trigger exodus of Christians from major cities.

By Dale Gavlak in Amman, Jordan

A ringing doorbell at the Baghdad home of an elderly Christian couple seemed innocent enough five days after Christmas. But when Fawzi Rahim, 76, and wife Janet Mekha, 78, opened their front door, a bomb exploded and took their lives.

The suspected militant attack was one of several on December 30, 2010, when 14 other Christians in Baghdad were seriously injured in their homes. The violence followed the October 31 attack on

a Baghdad Syriac Catholic cathedral that killed 68 people, and a declaration by the Islamic State of Iraq, a terrorist group, that it was waging war on Christians.

The militant group claims that Egypt's Coptic Church is holding two women captive because they converted to Islam. Coptic leaders deny the allegations. Analysts believe the militants are using the "Egyptian women" as a pretext to attack Iraq's besieged Christian community.

Nina Shea, director of the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom,

labeled the attacks a "ruthless cleansing campaign by Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish militants." U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner called on the government of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to swiftly "apprehend the terrorists behind these acts."

Pope Benedict XVI condemned the growing campaign against Christians in the Middle East in his New Year's Day homily: "In the face of the threatening tensions of the moment, especially in the

face of discrimination, of abuse of power and religious intolerance that today particularly strikes Christians, I again direct a pressing invitation not to yield to discouragement and resignation.” Benedict made these remarks hours after a car bomb outside a church in Alexandria, Egypt, killed 23 people.

The Vatican has repeatedly denounced the campaign against Christians in Iraq.

DEPARTURES QUICKEN

The United Nations agency for refugees in Iraq has recorded a significant increase in the number of Christians fleeing Baghdad and Mosul and heading for the northern Kurdistan Regional Government region and the northwestern Nineveh region. By the end of December 2010, more than 1,000 people had recently left these cities.

Although the Kurds are Muslims, they suffered severe discrimination under Saddam Hussein’s regime. They now have an autonomous, Western-supported homeland in northern Iraq. Iraqi President Talabani, a Kurd, has gone so far as to suggest a similar homeland for Iraq’s Christians. While many say the idea is a pipe dream, there remains a group of solidly Christian villages—including Banayeh, Telqais, Telleskof, and Merdi—some 25 miles outside of Mosul that are still considered safe; they are guarded by the Kurdish Peshmerga troops.

In Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, the U.N. refugee agency’s offices also report an increasing number of Iraqi Christians arriving and contacting the agency for registration and help. Updated numbers are not available.

Last year, Nellie, a 23-year-old Iraqi Christian, fled to neighboring Jordan from her native Baghdad after she was kidnapped and raped and then freed after her family paid a hefty ransom. Further traumatized after thieves tried to break into her tiny Amman apartment, Nellie (not her real name) can hardly count the days until she leaves for the United States, where she will be reunited with her mother and brother under a resettlement program.

Targeted by insurgents and Muslim militants since the 2003 war, a large percentage of Iraq’s ancient Christian population have fled their conflict-ridden country. Many fear that Iraq’s centuries-old Christian community is on the verge of extinction.

“The ‘religicide’ of Christians holds disturbing parallels to a previous effort to eliminate Iraqi Jews in 1948,” said Open Doors USA President Carl Moeller. “Many Jews fled and today virtually nothing remains of the once-vibrant community. People of all faiths must unite to prevent this from happening again. We must fight for freedom of religion for all imperiled faith groups in Iraq.”

BREAKUP OF HISTORIC CHURCH

Some 196,000 Iraqi refugees are currently registered with the U.N. and are hosted in seven Middle Eastern nations. (Christians make up about a quarter of that figure.) However, that 196,000 figure comprises only refugees with active case files with the U.N.



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Not all refugees are registered, and some, faced with economic hardship, travel back and forth between Iraq and their places of refuge, where they cannot legally work.

Thousands of Iraqi refugees have also been resettled in the West by the U.N. More

successive wars with Israel. Smaller numbers of Iraqis have also gone to Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey.

Iraqis are urban refugees. They do not live in refugee camps but must find their own accommodations. They often live off

Despite talk of a dramatic decline in violence in Iraq after the U.S. poured in more troops in 2007 to quell civil war, Christians say their situation has not improved. Recent events support their claim.

Militants have kept up savage assaults with scores of roadside bombings and mortar attacks following a brutal massacre inside Baghdad's Our Lady of Salvation cathedral in late October.

Three days after the massacre, Uday Hikmat and his parents packed and left Iraq for Amman, the capital of Jordan. "We did not want to wait our turn to die," said the 33-year-old. They were joined by scores of other Iraqi Christians.

Baghdad and Mosul are the two Iraqi regions where a Christian population has resided since the first century A.D., when, according to tradition, the apostle Thomas introduced the gospel there. Most Iraqi Christians are Chaldean Eastern-rite Catholics who are autonomous from Rome but recognize the pope's authority. Also

[continued on 16]

'The "religicide" of Christians holds disturbing parallels to a previous effort to eliminate Iraqi Jews in 1948.'

~ Carl Moeller, president of Open Doors USA

than one-third of the 53,700 Iraqis given asylum in the U.S. since 2007 are Christians.

In recent years, some 1.3 million Iraqis from differing religious backgrounds sought shelter in Syria, while more than 500,000 fled to Jordan. The Arab neighbor states opened their doors to the bulk of fleeing Iraqis, often taxing their own health and education infrastructures. Jordan already hosts hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees from

of savings or depend on relatives in the West to survive. Most are psychologically traumatized, having witnessed the killing, kidnapping, and rape of family members.

Barnabas Fund, an interdenominational Christian aid agency, estimates that Christians make up about 25 percent of the Iraqi refugee population in Syria. Archbishop Fouad Twal, the Latin Rite Patriarch of Jerusalem, says about 40,000 Iraqi Christians are in Jordan.

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present are Assyrian, Roman, and Syrian Catholics; Greek, Syrian, and Armenian Orthodox; and Presbyterians, Anglicans, and many evangelicals.

UNACCEPTABLE CHOICES

The war against Christians began in 2003, when the U.S. invaded Iraq. The violence has included threats, kidnappings,

Most if not all Christian refugees believe returning to their ancestral homeland is impossible and see no other option than to resettle in the West.

bombings, murder—and now menacing cell-phone text messages. Militants accuse Iraqi Christians of collaborating with American and other Western troops—dubbed “invaders and occupiers”—despite the fact that the Iraqi Christians have lived in the region since the first century.

According to one church leader who spoke anonymously to *Christianity Today*, Muslim militants give Iraqi Christians three choices: One, they can pay money as *jizya*, an ancient tax imposed on non-Muslims. But experience has shown that militants just return for more when Christians pay the tax. Two, they can convert to Islam. Three, they can flee—which they must do within days of the ultimatum. The church leader said, “For people who have spent decades in an area and own a house, it’s not easy for them to go. But if they hesitate, the militants will kill a family member, forcing them to leave.”

That’s what happened to one family with three children from Mosul, which has become a maelstrom of violence, said Margaret Holt, a Barnabas Fund worker. Holt said the family’s 16-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter were kidnapped. The son was murdered, and the daughter was never seen again. The family left with their remaining son for Syria.

Just before the 2003 war, Christians made up some 1 million of Iraq’s then-25 million citizens. Saddam Hussein viewed Christians as “peace-loving” and largely

protected the historic community.

Although Iraq’s Shiite-led government has voiced its support for the Christian minority, it has been powerless to offer protection. Unlike other communities, Christians are not part of Iraq’s tribal social structure, nor do they have militias as do the Sunnis and Shiites. Thus they remain vulnerable targets.

In 2004 and again in 2009, a string of coordinated church bombings rocked the Christian community, already traumatized by the murder of several church leaders. In 2008, the body of Paulos Faraj Rahho, the Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Mosul, was found in a shallow grave after his kidnapping. A year

earlier, his secretary and three other subdeacons were murdered in what were clearly targeted attacks on Christians.

REFUGEES AT RISK

For those who do leave Iraq, life may be safer but not necessarily rosier in their adopted homes.

Arab countries, already suffering high unemployment rates, do not permit Iraqis to work legally. Those who do find jobs receive low to no pay for their services. Those who do not carry a U.N. card face possible deportation.

In conservative Mideast culture, young refugee women need to be under the protection of a male family member; when they aren’t, they put themselves at considerable risk. Several cases are known in Syria of Iraqi Christian women who have turned to prostitution in order to make ends meet.

“We met a number of female refugees who have no protector because the father or brother was either dead or abroad. If there was one, they wouldn’t be doing this,” said Holt. “They are either completely alone or they have small children they need to support, and so they got into this lifestyle. It’s tragic because it’s not at all what they want.”

The Barnabas Fund, working through local churches, helps these women and other vulnerable refugees. The U.K.-based Hope

and Trust Fund helps resettle Iraqi refugees in Jordan and in the West. And Syrian and Jordanian churches, although not wealthy, distribute food and medicines to refugees and operate free clinics.

But an evangelical church that has distributed food monthly to 700 families in Amman for the past four years said it recently had to drastically limit its outreach. Because funding has run dry, the church can now offer aid to just 20 of the neediest families.

Education has been another obstacle for the refugees, who until recently were barred from attending public schools in Jordan. Some refugee children struggle to fit into similar age classes because of gaps in their school attendance. Others have been traumatized by events that took place at their schools in Iraq.

One father said his 7-year-old son’s Baghdad school came under a grenade attack that killed two of his classmates. Though safely in Amman now, the son tells his father he refuses to attend school: “No, Daddy. I can’t because it will be bombed.” The man, a Christian convert from Islam who asked not to be identified, said his son has nightmares, unable to forget the blood he has seen.

Most if not all Christian refugees believe returning to their ancestral homeland is impossible and see no other option than to resettle in the West. For the most part, Christians are not given preferential treatment by countries taking in Iraqi refugees.

Two exceptions have been France and Germany. France received some 730 Christians following the death of Archbishop Rahho and scores more following the church attack in October 2010. Numbers for Germany are unavailable.

And at least one Iraqi Christian has vowed to stay and fight on. “These attacks express the contempt and hatred of terrorist organizations for Christians,” said Yonadam Kanna, one of a handful of Christian lawmakers in Iraq’s 325-member parliament. “Iraq is our country, and we won’t leave.”

Dale Gavlak is a journalist based in Jordan. John Stott Ministries has given a grant to *Christianity Today* to support reporting on international issues.

THE PLACE WHERE WORLD CHANGE BEGINS

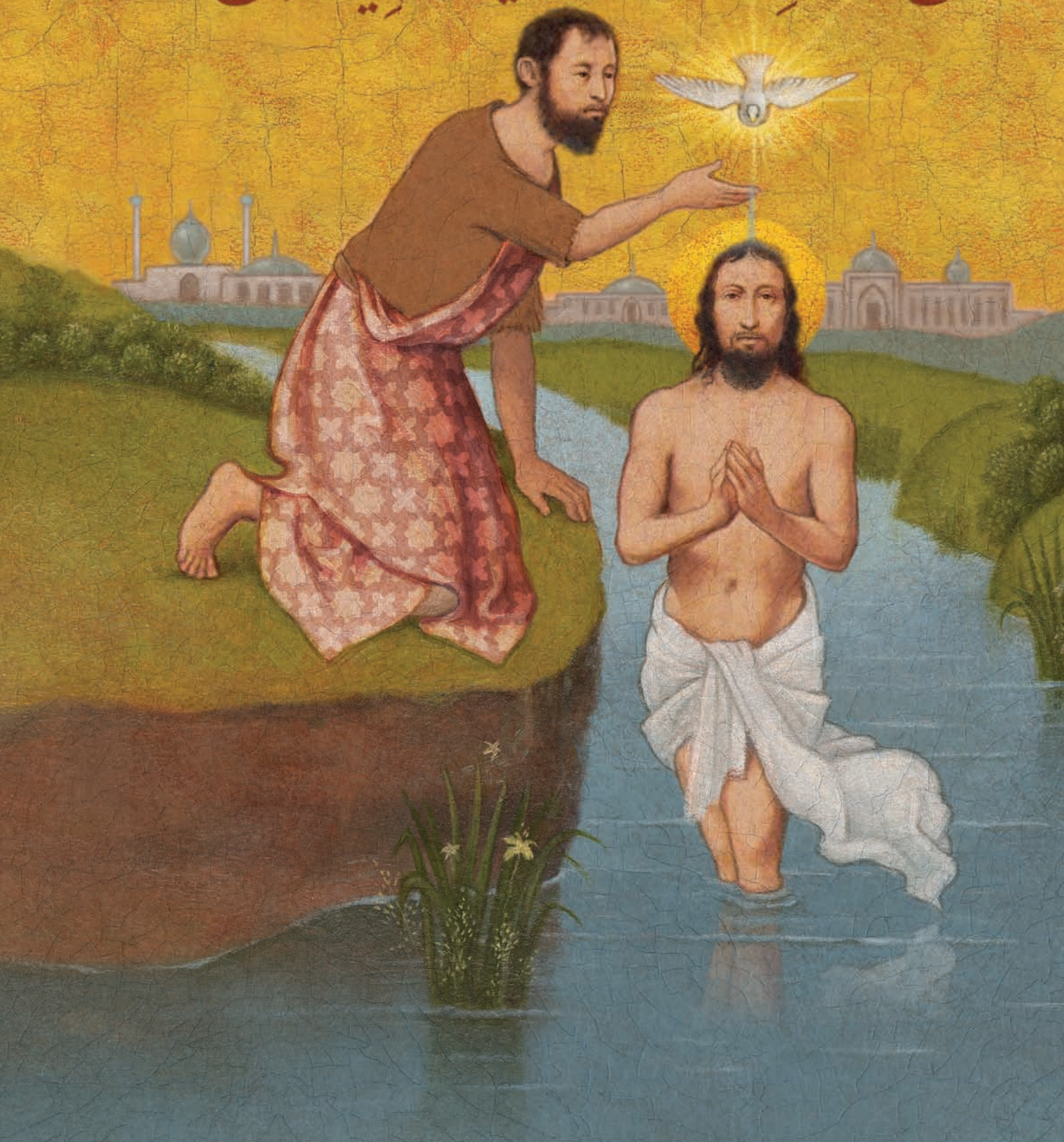


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The **Son** and the **Crescent**

Bible translations that avoid the phrase 'Son of God' are bearing dramatic fruit among Muslims. But that translation has some missionaries and scholars dismayed.

By Collin Hansen

Illustration by Rob Day



LAST YEAR, representatives from several prominent mission agencies, both national and expatriate, met to compare notes about the progress of their respective ministries in one Muslim-majority country. (The country's name is withheld for security reasons.) The representatives rejoiced that more than 1,000 "fellowships," as they call them, have been established for people from Muslim backgrounds. In fact, many of the fellowships had already planted new fellowships, and those fellowships had planted still more. Many thousands of Muslims in this nation alone, then, had found faith in Jesus.

Several of these fellowships can be traced back to small networks of Muslims who had encountered Christ and in turn began sharing with family and friends what they had discovered. In one case, a middle-aged working mother had inductively studied a new translation of the Bible for a few years. Among other language choices, the translation she used did not refer to Jesus as the "Son of God," due to confused and angry reactions from Muslims who mistakenly believe this phrase means that the Father engaged in sexual relations with Mary. To avoid this misunderstanding, the new translation called Jesus "the Beloved Son who comes (or originates) from God."

The woman, who eventually professed Jesus as Lord and Savior, began inviting friends and family to read the Bible too. At first, about 10 people met with her. This was cause enough for celebration, since Muslims in her country rarely study any religious books other than the Qur'an and the Hadith (collections of Muhammad's sayings and deeds). Three months later, another group formed nearby to discuss one New Testament chapter per week, and an elderly member of the family accepted the Good News of Jesus. Within two



years, seven more reading groups had sprung up. Today, no one knows exactly how many such groups have formed. But new believers in Jesus have spread the message to nearby towns, and several hundred professions of faith can be attributed to this network alone, according to a group of long-term field workers in the country.

These and many other Muslims live in places where Bible translations have been available in their languages for decades, even for more than a century. So why the sudden surge of interest in Scripture? Some translators attribute the response to the new Bible versions that use religious vocabulary familiar to Muslims. And that's precisely the problem, according to other translators and missionaries who work among Muslims.

'Missionaries can live in a Muslim culture for decades, blaming Muslims for being "resistant" to the gospel, when the problem actually lies with linguistic and cultural stumbling blocks.'

~ Rick Brown, associate area director, SIL-Eurasia

They charge their colleagues with compromise that undermines belief in Jesus Christ as the pre-existent, only begotten Son of God. Both sides eagerly long to take the Good News to the nations and make it discernable to Muslims in their heart languages. Both respect Muslims; neither wants to alter Jesus' message. Yet a dispute over the most faithful and effective way to render the common biblical phrase "Son of God" is dividing missionary from missionary, scholar from scholar, in a time of evident mistrust between Western Christians and Muslims. It also underscores how few Christians in the West themselves understand this common biblical title for Jesus.

COMPROMISE OR COMPREHENSION

Bible translation and contextualization have long divided Christians working to fulfill the Great Commission. When missionary pioneer William Carey translated the Bible into Bengali in 1809, he used the Hindu word for the supreme being, *Ishwar*, to refer to God. Critics charged him with making a fatal compromise in the name of comprehension. Today, "Son of God" is hardly the only point of contention among missionaries to Muslims. For example, they also tangle over whether Bible translations should use *Allah* to refer to God. Both sides make a compelling case. Muslims understand *Allah* in terms of simple monotheism rather than the dynamic Trinitarian theology that Christians profess. Yet *Allah*, the word for God that Muslims know from the Qur'an, actually predates Islam. Some translators have recovered it so that Muslims reading Scripture for the first time won't immediately reject the Bible as foreign to their culture.

Muslims so commonly misunderstand the phrase "Son of God" that many evangelists and missionaries refrain from using it. Bible translators, however, cannot avoid it. They must make a decision about how to render the phrase in a way that

faithfully reflects the original Greek or Hebrew text and also makes sense to readers. And this phrase is anything but clear to Muslim readers. The Qur'an explicitly states that God could not have a son. In Arabic, the word *ibn* ("son of") carries biological connotations. Muslims reject the possibility that God could have produced a son through sexual relations with Mary. Christians confess that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. But this distinction is lost on many Muslims who lack the theological context for understanding nuanced Christian teaching on the Trinity.

The problem, however, far surpasses a theological argument between Muslims and Christians. In fact, the Qur'an (*At-Tawba* 9:30) says God curses anyone who would utter the ridiculous blasphemy that Jesus could be *ibnullāh* ("a son of God"). Not only do Muslims disagree with Christians about the identity and nature of Jesus, they also incur a curse for even mentioning the phrase "Son of God."

Rick Brown, associate area director for SIL-Eurasia, has served on the language-development group's board of directors and lends his linguistic expertise as an international translation consultant. He says pious Muslims

would sooner leave the presence of someone who utters the phrase than risk judgment in hell for hearing it. Even those who lack such devout scruples think hearing or reading "Son of God" will bring bad luck. Many avoid associating with Westerners altogether, regarding them as polytheists who harbor strange views about God's family.

"Missionaries can live in a Muslim culture for decades, blaming Muslims for being 'resistant' to the gospel, when the problem actually lies with linguistic and cultural stumbling blocks," Brown told *Christianity Today*. "Once these are removed, many Muslims are quite open and interested in knowing more about Jesus."

Brown says Muslims have less trouble believing that Jesus is divine and that he was crucified and resurrected than they do with hearing or saying "Son of God." So what can translators do to overcome this particular stumbling block? One option is to stick with "Son of God" and deal directly with the objection—if Muslims overcome their fears to begin with. Alternatively, translators may find a word for *son* in the native language that carries metaphorical connotations. (Translations that opt for a phrase other than the literal "Son of God" commonly include it in the footnotes to preserve connection to the biblical authors' word choice.) Or, they can nuance it with a more descriptive phrase, such as "spiritual Son of God" or "beloved Son who comes from God." These phrases have been shown to clear up the biological misconceptions.

'THE BELOVED SON WHO COMES FROM GOD'

Brown, along with other translators and missionaries, contends that the alternate phrasing makes a tremendous difference in Muslims' receptivity to the Bible. The Muslims introduced at the beginning of this article have been able to read the entire Bible in their national language since the 18th century. That initial



translation used language familiar to Muslims, identifying Jesus Christ as *Isa al-Masih* (“Jesus the Messiah”) and God as *Allah*. Then, in the mid-20th century, a new translation adopted a style that used Greek- and European-language-based terms. Another translation in the 1970s continued this trend.

In the early 1990s, concerned Christians, national ministries, and mission agencies gathered to consider a new Bible translation that would be more meaningful for Muslim readers. Working in conjunction with the nation’s Bible society, they reverted to an older translation as the basis for the new version. They updated the language and strategically changed particularly challenging phrases. After testing several options for rendering “Son of God,” they opted for “the Beloved Son who comes (or originates) from God.”

Some translators regarded this option as fairly conservative, and championed versions they believed would be even more comprehensible to Muslims. They noted that scriptural paraphrases are often used among Muslims to give them broader access to God’s Word.

“My father never read the Bible until he got a copy of *The Living Bible*,” says Richard Grady, a missiologist for oc International. “We are finding the same with some of the paraphrases being done for Muslim audiences.”

Muslims approach the Bible with different questions from the ones Westerners often ask, Brown says. They want to know early on how Christ can be God incarnate.

“Few deny the possibility of an incarnation, because they believe that God can do anything, but they want to see the evidence that it might actually have happened,” Brown says. “The biblical evidence for the Incarnation does not at all prevent Muslims from reading it or discredit the Bible in their eyes, but the taboo phrase [‘Son of God’] does both.”

VIOLENT REACTION

Who can argue with results, especially church growth in the world’s hardest soils? If Muslims can now read the Bible and understand Jesus as he really is, the Savior from sin, then what’s the problem?

A lot, actually, if the contextualized translations misrepresent Jesus, as some missionaries and translators allege.

Georges Houssney is the founder-director of Horizons International, a missionary agency involved in preaching, teaching, and discipling Muslims. The Colorado-based agency offers a training program, “Engaging Islam,” that teaches missionaries what Muslims believe so they can minister to them effectively. He also edited the Arabic Bible translation *Kitab al-Hayat* (“Book of Life”), published by Biblica (formerly the International Bible Society, the organization behind the NIV).

Houssney grew up in the predominantly Muslim city of Tripoli, Lebanon, and has worked in the Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Kurdish, and Kabyl languages. Decades ago, Kenneth Taylor, translator of *The Living Bible* and founder of Living Bibles International, commissioned Beirut-based Middle East Publications (MEP) to translate the Bible into several languages spoken by Muslims. MEP founder John Ferwerda tapped

Houssney to lead the translation

project and encouraged him to study in Kenya with missions legends Charles Kraft and Paul Hiebert. During this time, Kraft was writing *Christianity in Culture*, which argued for dynamic equivalence in Bible translation. Ferwerda asked Houssney to contextualize his Arabic translation by using terms from the Qur’an. Houssney did not feel comfortable with this move, but he tested the strategy with a 32-page booklet called “The Greatest Event in Palestine,” published in 1974. The booklet, which combined the birth narratives of Jesus from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, referred to Jesus as *Isa* and rendered “Son of God” as *habib Allah* (“beloved of God”).

“The reaction of church leaders was violent,” Houssney says. “We received threats from pastors and Christian leaders. And it was opposed even from the pulpits.”

Nevertheless, Houssney tried to defend the booklet. He visited dozens of pastors throughout the Middle East and asked why they objected so strongly. They offered several reasons. They saw the booklet’s terminology as conceding too much to Islam. It threatened to confuse both Muslims and Christians, especially new believers who struggled to adjust to a more literal translation used in churches. They believed it would embolden Muslim apologists who teach that the Bible has been tainted due to translations that differ in significant ways. Others pastors said Muslim apologists would notice that translators had borrowed phrases from the Qur’an and would claim that this proved the Qur’an’s superiority to the Bible. Or that Muslims would regard the translation as a nefarious plot to dupe Muslims into reading the Bible. Finally, pastors noted that a translator who adopts words from the Qur’an risks leading readers to import their prior understandings to the Bible. In other words, if the Bible calls Jesus *Isa*, Muslims may associate him with the Qur’an’s account, which denies that he died on the cross, for example. Houssney eventually

released a more literal translation.

In short, the challenge of accurately and effectively translating the Bible for Muslims is not new. The debate has continued in recent years in the pages of prominent missiology journals. David Abernathy, who frequently consults on translation workshops in Nigeria and has taught biblical exegesis in Kenya, took issue with Brown and his colleagues' approach in a 2010 article for *St. Francis Magazine*, published by Arab Vision and Interserve. He objected to various alternatives for "Son of God," such as *Christ* or *Word*, used in translations for Muslim readers.

"As much as Christian theologians have used the term and concept of 'Word' throughout the history of theology, they did so with the understanding that this eternal Word was also a person who was [the] eternal Son," Abernathy wrote. "It is the eternal sonship that makes sense of calling him the eternal Word, but when that sonship is removed, the Trinity as we know it dramatically changes. There is no eternal Father-Son relationship, only an eternal God-Word relationship, which is conceptually very foreign to the doctrine of the Trinity as it has always been understood. The historic Christian understanding of the Trinity essentially collapses."

Another response published in *St. Francis Magazine* came from J. Scott Horrell, professor of theological studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and adjunct professor at Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary, in Amman. He worried that when translators substitute other words or phrases for "Son of God," readers miss out on the theological meaning intended by

biblical authors, particularly as they draw connections between the Testaments. He argued that when Jesus used Father-Son language, he reached "the deepest levels of divine disclosure."

"Both terms 'Father' and 'Son' for God are repugnant to the Muslim," Horrell wrote. "Yet in the Bible and Christian faith these words take on more meaning than mere metaphors or titles, rather they become the divine *names* that most disclose the divine relations. Without the Son there is no Father, and without the Father there is no Son. . . . [I]t must be asked, if 'natural' terms replace 'Son,' 'Son of God,' and even 'Father' in Muslim-sensitive translations, then what other language allows us access into this intimate reality?"

SIMILAR, BUT NO SYNONYM

None of these concerns surprises Brown or his colleagues. They have heard them all—and more—many times before. They've answered them, too, but not to their critics' satisfaction. Brown speculates whether factors other than theology, exegesis, and missiology could explain the impasse.

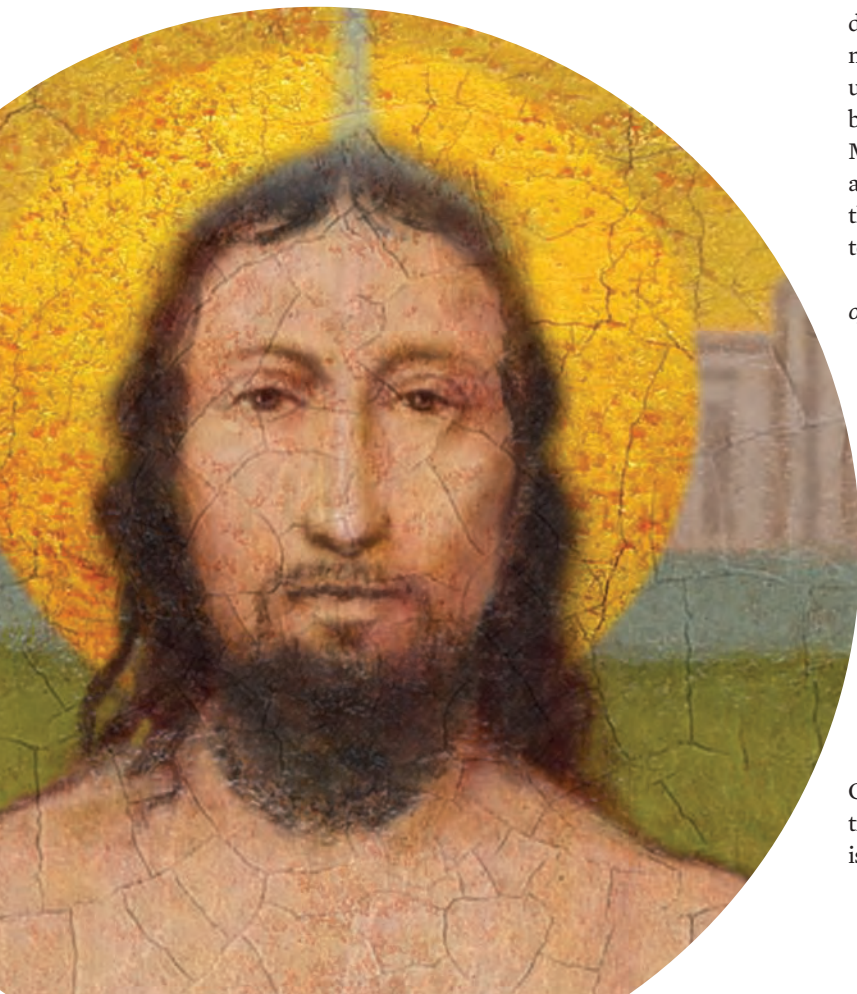
"The current controversy is fed more by general attitudes to the Muslim world among the Western church stemming from the geopolitical situation, e.g., fear, rejection, and aggression," Brown told CT. "As Warren Larson says, there is a battle in the U.S. church whether to respond to the Muslim world with fear or faith, and fear is winning."

If there is indeed a battle between fear and faith, it isn't happening in the United States alone. Brown observes that neither cross-cultural missionaries nor minority Christian communities living in Muslim-majority nations have made deep evangelistic inroads. He faults them for criticizing other missionaries who attempted to publish Bible versions that used language familiar to Muslims. As in the story recounted by Houssney, Christians who have grown up surrounded by Muslims grow attached to a particular Bible translation and are skeptical of anyone who suggests that version might be the reason they don't see their friends and neighbors come to believe in Jesus.

Writing in the fall 2005 issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (IJFM), Brown argued that Jesus and the apostles used "Son of God" as a synonym for "the Christ." He appealed to Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (ESV). Affirming Peter's famous profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus then told the disciples not to tell anyone he was the Christ.

"From a linguistic point of view," Brown wrote, "Jesus must have intended the term 'the Christ' to include the full meaning of 'the Christ the Son of the Living God.' This establishes that Jesus and Matthew saw these as synonyms."

If Brown is right, then a translation that lacks the literal equivalent of "Son of God" would not lose meaning. Brown wrote in the winter 2005 issue of IJFM that "the terms 'the Son' and 'the Son of God' can be translated by terms like 'the Christ' and 'the Christ of God.'" Or, as he suggested to me, a translation of the literal "Son of God" might say, "the One who is like a Son to the Living God," or "the Christ, the Beloved One



of the Living God.” The literal translation could still appear in the notes, he added.

Brown pointed out a similar synonym dynamic at work in Luke 1:32–33, where the phrase “Son of the Most High” has clear messianic implications. Later, in Luke 4:41, demons shout out to Jesus, “You are the Son of God!” Luke says Jesus rebuked the demons, barring them from testifying to him as the Christ. Here too, according to Brown, “Son of God” and *Christ* are synonyms.

Using synonyms in translation gets results, Brown argued. He cited the example of one closed country where the synonym approach allowed dramatized Scripture tapes to earn government approval for dissemination. The cassettes became

by Jesus as attested by Matthew in his Gospel? For a title so closely related to Christ, “Son of God” is strangely absent from the Old Testament’s messianic texts. Or who could explain how the phrase is used differently in the Gospel of John? Here, the Son’s pre-existence is often in view. We also see the intimate relationship enjoyed by the Father and his only Son, who perfectly obeys his Father’s will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 7:28; 8:29). Indeed, “Son of God” is a rich, multilayered title whose meaning defies simple explanation. Certainly it deserves more than the cursory mentions offered in many systematic theology textbooks.

Muslim misunderstanding about “Son of God” poses a significant challenge to missionaries and translators. And the favorable response to Bible versions that avoid the phrase encourages Christians to communicate respectfully in a way that invites Muslims to find faith in Jesus Christ, who is not only a prophet sent by God but fully God and fully man. Must translations accommodate this concern? Or can teaching the true meaning of the literal phrase eventually change perceptions? After all, one can

imagine what Greeks, with their anthropomorphic mythology, thought when they first heard about the “Son of God.”

Robert Yarbrough, who teaches New Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, travels every year to Sudan, where he teaches ministers. Many of them come from a Muslim background. He doubts these believers would worry too much about finding an alternative for “Son of God.” After all, the Qur’an appeared centuries after the Bible. Why tweak our book to accommodate theirs? The Sudanese believers already know—or so they think—that God has no son.

“We are really dealing, at some point, with the whole notion of *imago dei* and not just a single technical point of Jesus being called ‘God’s Son,’” Yarbrough says. “This is a key point where the nature of God vis-à-vis creation is just categorically different in the two religions. In one, God is utterly transcendent and unknowable and without peer or parallel of any kind in creation. He is, quite simply, inscrutable; we cannot call him ‘Father’ and so forth. The God of Abraham and of David and of Jesus is not like this. The ‘Son of God’ language in the New Testament is the tip of an iceberg.”

Maybe that iceberg thaws when Christians respect and love Muslims enough to accommodate their misunderstanding about “Son of God” by finding other ways to translate it. Or maybe this move goes further than the inspired text will allow. Thousands of new believers from a Muslim background may have genuinely encountered Jesus as Lord. And maybe some will need to unlearn some things now that they know him.

Collin Hansen is the editorial director for the Gospel Coalition and co-author of *A God-Sized Vision: Revival Stories That Stretch and Stir* (Zondervan).

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “The Son and the Crescent,” a Bible study based on this article.

‘Both terms “Father” and “Son” for God are repugnant to the Muslim. Yet they are more than mere metaphors or titles. They are the divine names that most disclose the divine relations.’ ~ J. Scott Horrell, professor of theological

studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

such a hit that enterprising merchants copied the tapes and sold them in the streets. A movie released in the same country using synonyms in subtitles aired on national television.

The results may be encouraging, but the scholarship is flawed, according to several accomplished academics whose expertise spans both testaments. The scholars, including Darrell Bock (Dallas Theological Seminary), Jack Collins (Covenant Theological Seminary), and Vern Poythress (Westminster Theological Seminary), doubted they could endorse any alternative to “Son of God.” They expressed sympathy with missionaries who want to dispel mistaken notions held by Muslims. But they found fault with alternatives, particularly using *Christ* where “Son of God” originally appeared. If “Son of God” and *Christ* are strict synonyms, they note, then usage of both terms in Scripture is redundant; Peter did not confess, “You are the Christ, the Christ.”

“‘Messiah’ is not an adequate substitute for ‘Son of God,’” Poythress wrote. “Both have the same *referent*, namely Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. But they do not have the same *meaning*. . . . The Greek expressions for ‘Messiah’ and ‘the Son of God’ do have *similar* meanings, in that both, in many contexts, indicate something about Jesus’ role as kingly ruler under commission from God. Moreover, both expressions evoke what people know or think they know about the great deliverer sent by God. But ‘Son of God,’ unlike ‘Messiah,’ indicates an analogy with a human family relationship. And it also has the potential to connote personal intimacy and love.”

BEYOND MUSLIM MISCONCEPTIONS

While we may lament Muslim misunderstanding of Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, it’s not clear how many Westerners understand the nuances, either. How many Christians could identify “Son of God” as the preferred Christological title used



{ CULTURAL TRENDS }

Answering Fools

It's time to reassess the posture of perpetual outrage.

By Christopher B. Hays

FROM BEACH NOVELS (*The Da Vinci Code*) to photography (Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ") to video games (keep reading), Christian outrage and criticism have helped lift numerous works up from obscurity—and made household names of their creators. It's time to reassess.

I groaned upon reading a friend's recent Facebook update promising a review of the latest scandal-courting pop-fiction rewrite of the life of Jesus, Philip Pullman's *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*.

In our pop-cultural world, getting noticed is by far the most difficult feat. Any author who monitors his or her Amazon sales rankings can attest as much. Blogs and tweets and vanity presses—which once were supposed to empower the talented but voiceless—have instead created a cacophony from which scarcely any influential voices emerge.

One easy way for an author to break out is to offend Christians—easier, apparently, than writing something beautiful or profound. Literary merit cannot explain the meteoric rise of mediocrities like Dan Brown. Stephen King (yes, that Stephen King) called Brown's novels



Hold the Outrage: Fanning the flames of controversy over books like Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* often only boost the popularity of authors and artists who denigrate Christianity.

"the intellectual equivalent of Kraft Macaroni and Cheese," and each of *The Da Vinci Code*'s predecessors sold fewer than 10,000 copies. To rise above the billowing waves of culture, the latter-day Voltaire need only to offend a small-but-vocal subset of Christians. But unlike Jonathan Edwards's angry God, the Christian culture rages ineffectually, merely providing sound bites for the familiar stories in the mainstream media. And when it comes to book sales, all press really is good press. The video-game maker Electronic Arts even staged a faux Christian protest at a convention to promote its game based on Dante's *Inferno*. Apparently if Christians hate it, it must be worth a look.

Authors are certainly aware of the manifold blessings of being condemned. Pullman, also the author of the *His Dark Materials* series, expressed palpable disappointment in an interview with the *Sydney Morning Herald*: "I've been surprised by how little criticism I've got. Harry Potter's been taking all the flak. I'm a great fan of J. K. Rowling, but the people—mainly from America's Bible Belt—who complain that Harry Potter promotes Satanism or witchcraft obviously haven't got enough in their lives. Meanwhile, I've been flying under the radar, saying things that are far more subversive than anything poor old Harry has said. My books are about killing God."

THE REALLY CONTROVERSIAL

A thought experiment: Imagine if every Christian leader who was invited to comment on the next Dan Brown book simply said, "Why are you calling about this? You know his books are fictional, they're boring to anyone informed, and they're kind of poorly written." No facts, no offense taken—no story.

While many Christians crave the catharsis of rebuttal, a passage from Proverbs balances this sentiment against the wisdom of stoical restraint: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes" (26:4–5). In this eternal struggle, I believe some Christian intellectuals have strayed too far to the side of answering.

Catapulting the wrong people to fame and fortune is only part of the problem. It would be naïve to think that we could purify our culture by keeping mum on a few scandal-mongering books and movies. By overreacting when some hack misrepresents the biblical story, however, we send the message that the misrepresentation is more surprising and controversial than the genuine article.

In a recent survey published in *USA Today*, less than one-third of Americans between ages 18 and 29 reported having read the Bible—ever. The mistaken impression that the Bible is safe, boring, and slavishly in thrall to cultural norms probably accounts for much of this indifference.

Another thought experiment: Imagine if a journalist called a Christian leader to ask about Brown's latest Rome-based conspiracy theory, and

the leader said, "That's a pretty tame theory. The Bible's own conspiracy theory is much wilder. It says that God is plotting to overthrow every worldly power and establish his own rule once and for all. *And the entire Christian church is in on it.*" The magnitude of God's plan hardly needs exaggeration: This is the God who, when it came time to pick teams, chose an old man, then a tiny nation, then the youngest son of Jesse, and ultimately the life of a commoner from Bethlehem—and with this roster undertook vanquishing the mightiest empires of the world.

To be clear, I am not saying that we should not look for religious meaning in surprising places. Even ostensibly irreligious works of art are transformed when viewed through a Christian lens. They can be savored for the fresh and unexpected ways in which they reveal God's truth.

Nor do I aim to silence genuine criticisms of the church or preclude taking seriously how non-Christians perceive the world. But not every insult is serious.

What I am saying is much simpler: Let's be more circumspect about what we pluck from the roiling waters of culture and bring to the world's attention.

GOD WILL PREVAIL

If the exhortation to turn the other cheek is a hard teaching for those who feel outraged by popular culture, it is perhaps even more challenging for evangelical Christians who are fascinated by it. No doubt some are concerned that an evangelical who doesn't embrace culture is effectively a fundamentalist. And for some who were raised in fundamentalist surroundings, it may feel courageous just to talk about popular culture in the church. But the rest of the world doesn't share that perception.

When we do criticize culture, we might bear in mind Karl Barth's advice to young theologians to read both the Bible and the newspaper, but to "interpret newspapers from your Bible." The Bible itself both reports and rebuts the words of its detractors, perhaps most famously in Psalm 14: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no god.'" The Prophets, the Gospels, and Paul all respond to provocations without taking undue offense. For example, Isaiah reacts to the Assyrian king's boasts by exploding his whole frame of reference: "Does the ax raise itself above the person who swings it?" (10:15a). Paul similarly turns the judgments of his contemporaries upside down when he says, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:25). These authors know that the truth is on their side, and they know that the truth of their message does not really need defending, because all will become apparent in time. Theirs is the stillness of faith (Ex. 14:13–14).

How much stronger are the people of God now than at any point in the history of Israel or the early church! The church should respect herself for her wondrous past, present, and future, realizing that she bestrides history and our narrow world like a colossus. She is at much greater risk from her power than from her weakness. It is a failure of faith of the first order to lash out on her behalf, as if she needed defending; it only reflects the narrowness of our own experience.

Oh, and Pullman's book? It's slowly falling down the Amazon rankings. May it languish on shelves like Betamax copies of *Waterworld*. ☩

Christopher B. Hays, the D. Wilson Moore Assistant Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, is a former editor at *Newsday* and *The Sacramento Bee*.



{ THE CT INTERVIEW }

Sex Economics

Mark Regnerus, the early-marriage sociologist, shares his latest research on young adults' sexual attitudes and behavior. Interview by Katelyn Beaty

NO NEWS FLASH: The West is facing an economic collapse whose effects will stretch on for decades. News flash: The West is also facing a challenging marketplace economy in sex and marriage, at least according to Mark Regnerus. “Neither a strong gender constructionist nor a strong

gender essentialist, but a sociologist” (at the University of Texas–Austin), Regnerus describes the traditional marriage economy this way: Most men want sex more than do women and have traditionally gained access to sex via marriage. In turn, most women have given sex for marriage, which has brought economic security and commitment.

Now, says Regnerus—whose 2009 “case

for early marriage” in *Christianity Today* made quite a splash—women are expected to commence sex early, with little promise of commitment. And this hurts everyone, but especially women. Speaking with CT associate editor Katelyn Beaty, Regnerus explained this and other findings from his new book, *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think*

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about *Marrying* (Oxford University Press), coauthored with Jeremy Uecker.

You frame your research using sexual economics theory: Sex is a transaction in which men pay, via economic stability or education or as little as dinner, to get access to sex, while women pay with their sexuality to get goods that men can offer.

Describing sex this way seems pretty cynical. Why use this theory to explain your research?

Because it's accurate. There are lots of lenses to use to evaluate how people make decisions about sex and relationships. Some of them are far more idealistic than realistic. I find the economic theory [developed by psychologists Roy Baumeister and Kathleen Vohs] to be remarkably astute in its general description of how people make such decisions. My students—who can spot a pathetic argument on this stuff a mile away—almost always confess that this way of understanding relationships is consonant with their experience.

People will cringe to listen to it, but when they think about it, it's remarkable how accurate it can be. It works because it's rooted in basic differences between men and women and basic different interests in sex, marriage, and long-term relationships. As a Christian, none of it surprises me or discourages me. There's an inherent good and functional tension between men and women in this domain. Historically, sex was a key motivator for men to marry. Try to reduce that tension, that function, and all hell breaks loose—which is what we are witnessing.

That tension has been reduced, in part, by the fact that women now have much greater chances to pursue higher education and financially support themselves compared with 50 or even 20 years ago. But you say that women's education and the sex ratio imbalance it's created on college campuses comes at a cost.

Relationships that form under the current conditions of imbalance tend to become sexual more quickly than when they form under more balanced gender ratios, or when there are a lot more desirable men than women. Because whoever is the minority gender, so to speak, has more power, and especially in this sense, because women want marriage more than men do. So when there are more women in the pool, it lends itself to women competing for men rather than the other way around.

The imbalanced ratio indicates remarkable achievements for women's continued push for social and economic equality with men. But it spells something altogether different for their romantic relationships with men, which have become considerably more difficult to generate and maintain. As women who are highly educated and successful outnumber men, this drives down the "market price" of

sex. There are plenty of women who are in sexual relationships that they aren't crazy about, who would like to be legitimately asked out, but they feel like they can't get it. He texts, and they "hang out." How lame is that?

The gender imbalance is a big problem on many Christian college campuses. Lots of young women will never meet a mate there. Or—and I think this is more likely—the relationships they have there never mature, because the terms favor men.

This is not to suggest that men can't commit. They can, but they have to do so today in an environment of such rich choices. It makes it difficult for them.

So would you argue for teaching men to "court" women—to pursue them with marriage in mind?

Courting freaks men out, so I don't ever use that language. But teach them how to behave appropriately as a gentleman and ask a woman out. Take her to dinner. Learn about her and have interesting conversations. Meanwhile, you see plenty of people who don't date, yet they know what each other looks like naked before they know what each other's religion, politics, and everything else are—which is ridiculous.

Optimally we wouldn't be talking about who has more power in relationships and why. That's not how relationships were intended to be. As a couple becomes more in love, self-sacrifice generally emerges. That's good. But when the *conditions* in which relationships develop change—as they have—it's foolish to expect that relationships won't change with them.

How does pornography change the sexual marketplace, for women as well as men?

It takes power away from women as a group, because it provides men with another sexual outlet. Some will say that *Playboy* has been around a long time, but today's porn is not like that. It puts one bedside in high definition. Individual women notice it in their relationships, especially in marriage. But even before marriage, it's still at work, eroding the value of what she has that he wants. Now she has to compete with virtual sex partners as well as other women.

I used to think young women would have the last laugh here—that men would come to understand that sex is not like porn. I'm not so sure about that anymore. Speaking as a sociologist, you can't form enough

BARD WRISLEY



Evangelical Faith and Practice for a New Day

Don't Call It a Comeback unites some of today's young evangelical leaders in a bold assertion of the stability, relevance, and necessity of Christian orthodoxy, and reasserts the theological nature of evangelicalism.

Kevin DeYoung and contributors like Russell Moore, Tullian Tchividjian, Darrin Patrick, Justin Taylor, Thabiti Anyabwile, and Tim Challies examine what evangelical Christianity is and does within the broad categories of history, theology, and practice. They demonstrate that evangelicalism is still biblically and historically rooted and remains the same framework for faith that we need today.

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accountability groups to erase the effects of porn on the relationship pool. It's not just about helping Joe Christian steer clear of this thing he'd like. It colors more than we think.

We hear a lot in the media about the prevalence of hookup culture on college campuses. Yet you report that for today's adults ages 18–23, serial monogamy is the dominant sexual narrative.

Right. Overall there is still the belief that if you are with one person, you should stay faithful to that one person. Yet the relationships don't last long. There is a lot of jumping from one monogamous sexual partner to another. It's fair to say that the hookup culture isn't as prevalent as it's often reported to be. It's certainly true and alive and well, especially among fraternities and sororities, but there

feel they have little choice, that to delay sex puts the relationship at risk. That's how male-centered romantic relationships have become.

In the book you use the word *script* to describe the narrative structures that make certain behaviors and attitudes seem plausible. Given all these disheartening findings, what script should churches be telling about sex and marriage?

When I get asked these questions, it's usually, "What new thing can we do?" What we have—that marriage is a covenant helpmate thing—is good. What I tend to see is we don't teach it much to our children. And since it [good marriage] is becoming rarer in our own lives, the lives of 40- and 50-somethings, we're not going to teach kids something that didn't work out for us. The more family brokenness

'The more family brokenness occurs inside the church, the less powerful the narrative about the goodness of marriage is going to be.'

are large segments of young adulthood for whom it's just not something they do.

What's changed is not that we don't have exclusive relationships. We do, but how they start, how long they last, and what they look like is different, and from my perspective, worse—especially for women—than 20 years ago.

What else has changed in the sexual marketplace among emerging adults?

The most significant difference is in the declining overlap of the sexual and marriage markets. Many young adults are content to remain in the sex market for years. Marriage can wait. Now is the time for fun. Their relationships, while romantic and exclusive, are silently understood to have an expiration date.

Others—especially but not only Christians—are in the marriage market. But since what they hope for—chastity in a spouse—is becoming increasingly rare, the average Christian is spending more time on the marriage market, and making more sexual compromises along the way, than in previous generations. They may or may not want to wait to marry, but they are waiting. However, it's hard to want one thing (marriage) and find yourself doing another (having sex outside of marriage). So many young adult Christians are making peace with premarital sex—some because they wish to, but many because they

occurs inside the church, the less powerful the narrative about the goodness of marriage and the covenant between God and his people is going to be.

But I think churches need to be active in a few things. First, impress upon teenagers and young adults that marriage is a developmental priority, not an afterthought. This doesn't mean they have to marry—and singles hate me for saying this—but marriage is the default in the church, and men especially need a good justification for *not* marrying. A second priority is helping Christian young people meet each other. I set people up on dates. Most of them don't take, but hey, some do.

Third, churches should challenge men to woo women, because the early relationships of many men are ones in which they hold all the cards. I remember wooing women. It was painful! Today's young men don't, so we have to turn over the dominant narrative and say, "It shouldn't be like this."

I'm optimistic about individuals' chances. Always. But collectively I'm not optimistic. I'm in the "marriage is deinstitutionalizing" category. I'm not pessimistic about people's ability to marry. I'm pessimistic about women's ability to marry without making compromises and waiting as long. People get married. It just can be a lot later than they wish, with a boulder-strewn pathway to get there. ☩



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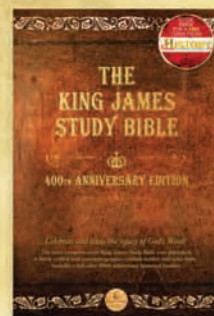
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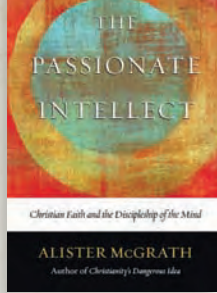


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The Annual Books, Movies, and Music Awards



“F MAKING MANY BOOKS there is no end,” wrote the weary author of Ecclesiastes. Had he lived today, he surely would have added movies and music to his lament.

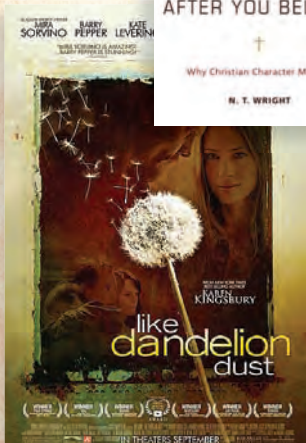
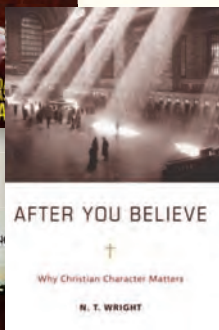
It’s said often, especially in the evangelical world, that there is a lot of junk out there. Yes. But even more true is that so many quality books, films, and albums are created each year that we have space to note only a fraction of them. Due to staff changes, I served as *Christianity Today’s* book review editor this year, and was saddened time and again by the number of thoughtful, helpful, and engaging books on crucial topics that I could not include in the mix.

This is one reason we are all drawn to “best of” lists. Amid the cacophony, we want guidance for what to read, watch, and listen to. If we have only so much time, why not engage the best things of life?

But we at CT think of “best of” issues, including this one, as more than consumer guides. We also hope they became matters of contention—yes! For no matter how thorough the judging process may be, anyone who has compiled such lists knows you simply cannot remove all bias from them. Which is precisely what makes them so much fun. Thus the inevitable reactions, from, “I can’t believe that movie didn’t even get mentioned!” (page 40) to, “I can’t believe that book won best of the year!” (page 34). Something funny happens when we engage with one another about such lists: Often the conversation deepens as we discuss what exactly made an album or book or movie good or not.

All that said, we think we have done a decent job of narrowing the field fairly and pointing our readers toward thoughtful and moving things to read, watch, and listen to—and to talk over with friends.

—Mark Galli, *CT* senior managing editor



To read well is to prepare oneself
to live wisely, kindly, and wittily.
By Marilyn Chandler McEntyre

Words

THE ANCIENT PRACTICE of *lectio divina* is a gentle discipline. Reading Scripture slowly, listening for the word or phrase

that speaks to you, pausing to consider prayerfully the gift being offered in those words for this moment, is a rich practice that can help maintain spiritual focus and equanimity at the center of even hectic lives. The practice can be adapted and imported into the reading of other texts. It can change the way we listen to the most ordinary conversation. It can become a habit of mind. It can help us locate what is nourishing and helpful in any words that come our way—especially in what poet Matthew Arnold called “the best that has been thought and said”—and it can equip us with a personal repertoire of sentences, phrases, and single words that serve us as touchstones or talismans when we need them.

I have long valued literary theorist Kenneth Burke’s simple observation that literature is “equipment for living.” We glean what we need from it as we go. In each reading of a book or poem or play, we may be addressed in new ways, depending on what we need from it, even if we are not fully aware of those needs. The skill of good reading is not only to notice what we notice, but also to allow ourselves to be addressed. To take it personally. To ask, even as we read secular texts, that the Holy Spirit enable us to receive whatever gift is there for our growth and our use. What we hope for most is that as we make our way through a wilderness of printed, spoken, and electronically transmitted words, we will continue to glean what will help us navigate wisely and kindly—and also wittily—a world in which competing discourses can so easily confuse us in seeking truth and entice us falsely.

I think, for instance, of Henry James’s hope for Isabel Archer, in *The Portrait of a Lady*, that she “be a person upon whom nothing is lost.” That phrase reminds me of a way of living to be aspired to: to be a person for whom every encounter is food for thought, reflection, prayer, or perhaps lively resistance, who notices word choices and recognizes need and gets the joke and pauses over what might easily be passed by. The hope expressed in that line is fueled by a reassurance I have found in words Robert Bolt assigns to Sir Thomas More, whose deep moral intelligence links piety to precision of thought: “God made the angels to show him splendor—as he made animals for innocence and plants for their simplicity. But man he made to serve him wittily, in the tangle of his mind!” Wit is the sharp instrument that prunes

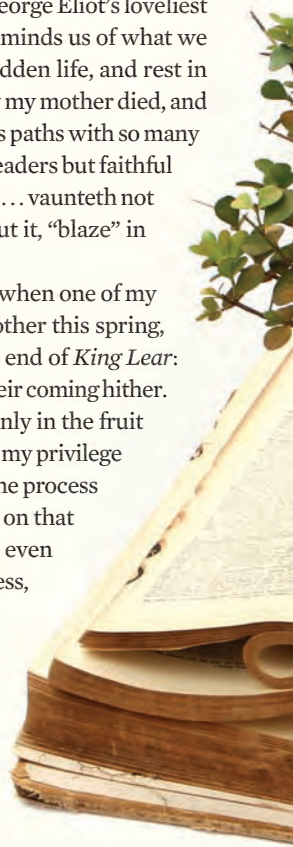
away what obscures the things that matter most.

In a similar way, I am inspired by a line in Richard Wilbur’s poem “The Eye”: “Charge me to see in all bodies the beat of spirit.” It reminds me to look beyond what we’ve been conditioned to consider attractive, to recognize how the Holy Ghost not only “broods over the bent world” but also inhabits it, even the bent and broken parts, and provides for the humblest life forms the “force that through the green fuse drives the flower.”

Wilbur’s prayer points me back to one of George Eliot’s loveliest lines, at the end of *Middlemarch*, when she reminds us of what we owe “to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.” I thought of that line the day my mother died, and think of it thankfully when, in churches, I cross paths with so many inconspicuous men and women who are not leaders but faithful followers, who embody the truth that “charity . . . vaunteth not itself,” but who, as poet Mary Oliver would put it, “blaze” in the light that illumines them.

I thought, too, when my mother died, and when one of my most revered teachers died last year, and another this spring, of the large and sobering truth we find at the end of *King Lear*: “Men must endure their going hence even as their coming hither. Ripeness is all.” Ripeness arrives subtly, not only in the fruit but in the farmer who recognizes it. It has been my privilege to be near a few people who know they are in the process of dying or preparing for death, and who take on that last assignment with dignity and grace—some even with a kind of quiet joy. Such readiness is ripeness, indeed.

Other lines come when I need them, to comfort, to remind, to lighten my spirits, to offer respite from bureaucratic drivel: Basil Rathbone’s exclamation, for instance, when, as Sherlock Holmes, he burst into a room and looked around and said, “Hello! What’s this?”—a line that cheerfully greets whatever appears on the day’s landscape as a clue or an invitation rife with possibility. Or W. H. Auden’s “look if you must, but you will have to leap,” which helps me to accept that we can’t hedge all our bets before we make decisions. Or the lively admonition of Wendell Berry’s Mad Farmer (in his poem “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation



ISTOCK



That Nourish

Front”) that I have passed on to numerous graduating seniors, about to make their way into a marketplace replete with seductions and incentives to compromise:

So, friends, every day do something
that won’t compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.

It is a vision of generous unorthodoxy worth holding as a standard even as we put on our business suits and rush out with mugs of morning coffee. My hope for those in our exam-driven public schools as well as for those in colleges or professional reading groups or suburban book clubs is that they will make the effort to learn by heart words that will foster loving kindness and sustain the long gaze that refuses to be averted even from what is hard. If we dwell on them and dwell with them, the words we need will find their way into our dreams and into the rhythms of our breath. Lines like this one, for instance, that still stuns me with its beauty and hope: “If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me” (Ps. 139:9–10, *KJV*). Or the simple command from Deuteronomy that sometimes redirects my flagging energies: “Therefore choose life” (30:19).

“In the beginning was the Word.” The relationship between the living Word embodied in Christ and the rich gift of words that is ours to use and care for is a mystery worth much pondering. Surely, among our most urgent and joyful responsibilities as stewards of that gift is to tell stories, to listen well, to resist the forces that flatten and inflate and beat language into alluring lies, and to stay in *conversation*—a word one of whose original meanings was to dwell in community or walk together. We need words and ideas that will surface when it is time to speak peace to violence or truth to power. To read wisely and memorize some of what we’ve read is to prepare for those moments, and to put away for a time of need provisions that will fuel our prayers and see us through. ✚

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre is a fellow of the Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts at Westmont College in California.

The Book Awards

Our judging began with 427 titles submitted by 62 publishers. *Christianity Today's* editors selected finalists in each category, and our judges determined the books that best offer insights into the people, events, and ideas that shape evangelical life, thought, and mission.



APOLOGETICS / EVANGELISM

THE PASSIONATE INTELLECT

Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind

ALISTER McGRATH (INTERVARSITY)

"McGrath illustrates how theology transforms our thinking and behavior, and how true apologetics engages not only the mind but also the heart and imagination. His critique of the New Atheism is brilliant."

AWARD OF MERIT

BELIEF

Readings on the Reason for Faith

FRANCIS S. COLLINS (HARPERONE)

SPIRITUALITY

PRACTICE RESURRECTION

A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ

EUGENE H. PETERSON (EERDMANS)

"This capstone to the five-volume spiritual theology 'conversations' series is, fittingly, Eugene Peterson at his best. He reflects on pastoring, family life, theology, and daily church realities; critiques both churchiness gone awry and individualism that leads to a rejection of the church; and cautions about where North American Christianity misses the mark. All this is woven together with warm eloquence."

AWARD OF MERIT

LETTERS FROM THE LAND OF CANCER

WALTER WANGERIN JR. (ZONDERVAN)

THEOLOGY / ETHICS

AFTER YOU BELIEVE

Why Christian Character Matters

N. T. WRIGHT (HARPERONE)

"This book is vintage Wright, a thoughtful and well-written theological ethics—eloquent and profound—from one of the world's leading biblical theologians."

AWARD OF MERIT

CALVIN'S LADDER

A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension

JULIE CANLIS (EERDMANS)

BIBLICAL STUDIES

THE GOOD AND EVIL SERPENT

How a Universal Symbol Became Christianized

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"This book is a comprehensive account of the symbolic role of the serpent in both the biblical text and the surrounding cultures. Charlesworth gives a masterful account of the serpent that challenges common assumptions about its role in religious thought throughout the Ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world."

and

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Five Views

JAMES K. BEILBY AND PAUL RHODES EDDY, EDITORS (INTERVARSITY ACADEMIC)

"Robert Price, John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, James Dunn, and Darrell Bock represent the wide spectrum of the debates about Jesus, and yet there is honest engagement. The editors provide a helpful 50-page overview of historical Jesus studies."

AWARD OF MERIT

THE MISSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission

CHRISTOPHER J. H. WRIGHT (ZONDERVAN)

CHRISTIAN LIVING

WHAT WAS LOST

A Christian Journey Through Miscarriage

ELISE ERIKSON BARRETT (WESTMINSTER JOHN KNOX)

"Although one in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage, few Christian resources help grieving couples. Barrett, a Methodist pastor who herself has experienced miscarriages, writes sensitively about miscarriage, incorporating real stories with psychology, sociology, and careful theology. It is a great resource both for those who have experienced miscarriages and for those who counsel those who have."

AWARD OF MERIT

THE DANGEROUS ACT OF LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

Seeing Others Through the Eyes of Jesus

MARK LABBERTON (INTERVARSITY)



CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

CHRISTIANS ARE HATE-FILLED HYPOCRITES . . . AND OTHER LIES YOU'VE BEEN TOLD

A Sociologist Shatters Myths from the Secular and Christian Media

BRADLEY R. E. WRIGHT (BETHANY HOUSE)

"With wit and wisdom, Wright uses scholarly means to serve kingdom ends, defusing anxiety about the American evangelical prospect and reigniting vision. It's a work of both smart debunking and kind edification, utterly necessary in a time of statistically aided ideological warfare."

AWARDS OF MERIT

EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT EVANGELICALS IS WRONG (WELL, ALMOST EVERYTHING)

An Insider's Look at Myths and Realities

STEVE WILKENS AND DON THORSEN (BAKER)

WHAT GOOD IS GOD?

In Search of a Faith That Matters

PHILIP YANCEY (FAITHWORDS)

MISSIONS / GLOBAL AFFAIRS

REDEEMED BY FIRE

The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China

LIAN XI (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"*Redeemed by Fire* relates with great vividness the story of indigenous Christian movements and their leaders prior to Mao Tse-Tung's China. This remarkable book, based on primary sources, confirms and documents what is often not understood in the West: Indigenous Christianity in China was uniquely Chinese, millenarian, and frequently anti-foreign. This book is essential reading, providing a little foretaste of what the ecclesiastical, theological, and missiological future of the global church might look like."

AWARD OF MERIT

TO CHANGE THE WORLD

The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World

JAMES DAVISON HUNTER (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

THE CHURCH / PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

ALMOST CHRISTIAN

What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church

KENDA CREASY DEAN (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

"Kenda Dean managed to take a sociological study of American teenagers and turn it into a truly prophetic book. I read the data and her analysis and felt convicted by them. You can't read this book and not want to take action."

AWARD OF MERIT

GROUNDING IN THE GOSPEL

Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way

J. I. PACKER AND GARY A. PARRETT (BAKER)

FICTION

OF LOVE AND EVIL

The Songs of the Seraphim, Book Two

ANNE RICE (KNOPF)

"*Of Love and Evil* does not have the literary merit of some of her other novels—it is solely driven by plot. But Rice is skilled at holding a reader's attention and creating suspense."

HISTORY / BIOGRAPHY

HOPE IN A SCATTERING TIME

A Life of Christopher Lasch

ERIC MILLER (EERDMANS)

"In Miller's sure-footed and penetrating narrative, we discover that prominent 20th-century social historian and cultural critic Christopher Lasch grew up under atheistic liberal parents, but laboring under 'a longstanding looming sense of alienation' discovered its roots by examining and eventually deconstructing American liberalism. For a post-Christian era struggling with social responsibility and moral integrity, I can recommend no more salutary biography than this one."

AWARD OF MERIT

GOD OF LIBERTY

A Religious History of the American Revolution

THOMAS S. KIDD (BASIC)

R

The year's movies echo the recurrent theme of Scripture. By Mark Moring

ROBERT DUVALL has many memorable lines in the low-budget indie gem *Get Low*, but it's the quiet moments—the close-ups of that worn face and those sad eyes, the labored breathing, the creaking floor echoing the old man's aching joints—that speak the loudest.

The six-time Oscar nominee was doing what he does best: playing a broken, solitary soul in desperate need of redemption. He's been at it for almost 50 years, as the ghostly Arthur "Boo" Radley in 1962's *To Kill a Mockingbird*; as a washed-up, alcoholic country singer in 1983's *Tender Mercies* (for which he won the Oscar for Best Actor); and as a charismatic Pentecostal preacher with a hot temper in 1997's *The Apostle*.

In 2010's *Get Low*, set in the Deep South of the 1930s, Duvall plays Felix Bush, a reclusive hermit who has chosen a life of solitude as penance for a sin he committed as a young man—one for which he believes he cannot be forgiven. He decides to set up a funeral party, inviting all the locals to come and tell stories about him, while he's still alive and kicking and wielding a shotgun. It's a Southern folk tale with a script that can be described as Horton Foote meets Flannery O'Connor.

Duvall, 80, told *Christianity Today* that he is drawn to playing broken characters because they "make good drama. If people don't have conflicts, contradictions, and faults, there is no drama."

There were broken characters and drama aplenty in the top films of 2010, with Duvall as the poster child. (He played another broken soul earlier in the year, in a cameo in the post-apocalyptic saga *The Book of Eli*.)

Hollywood's depiction of flawed characters needing redemption is nothing new. But 2010 had more of such movies than usual. We saw that in kid-friendly animated films: abused, abandoned playthings in *Toy Story 3*, and a scrawny, shunned Viking boy in *How to Train Your Dragon*. Other family fare shared an interest in redemption: a bratty boy in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and three friends facing the loss of everything, even their lives, in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. And it's no surprise we saw the theme in gritty, adult-oriented films: a dirt-poor teenager trying to save her mom, siblings, and home against all odds in *Winter's Bone*, and a literally broken young man struggling to survive while trapped in a crevasse in *127 Hours*.

Such themes kept coming to the Cineplex, week after week. All

of the year's top ten films (page 40) were to some degree about characters who needed deliverance. Ditto for many of the award favorites: *127 Hours*, *Black Swan*, *The Fighter*, *The King's Speech*, and *True Grit* among them.

Here's a closer look at how three films of 2010—all with Oscar winners in lead roles, but all non-blockbusters in limited release—depicted this character arc.

GET LOW

In an early scene, Felix leaves his cabin and his self-imposed exile and heads into

Broken But

town, where residents have gossiped about him for years. He wants to hear their stories at his own "living" funeral. He enters a local church, plops down a wad of money, and tells the pastor, "I need a funeral."

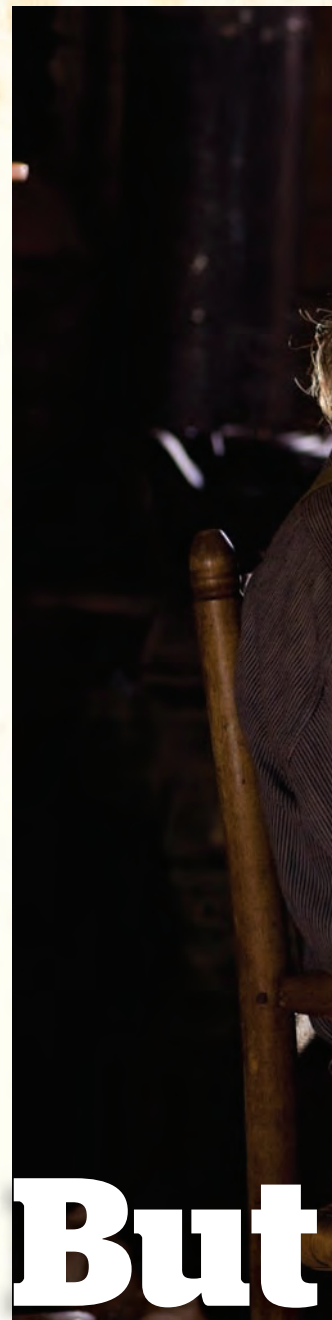
After some conversation, the pastor says, "What matters is that, when you come to the end of your life, that you're ready for the next one. Now, have you made peace with God, sir?"

Felix looks him in the eye and says, "I've paid."

"Mr. Bush, you can't buy forgiveness. It's free, but you do have to ask for it."

Felix grabs his money and stalks out without saying a word. This is a man who wants to pay for his sins, and wants nothing of grace.

Later, another preacher—an old friend and the only one who knows the sin Felix has hidden all along—asks if he has sought forgiveness. Felix replies, "I built my own jail and put myself in it. And I stayed in it for 40 god d--- years. No wife, no kids, no friends,





The
Best
Movies

Christianity Today
of 2010

Hopeful

The Haunted Hermit: Robert Duvall plays a man chased by sin—and grace—in *Get Low*.

no nothing. . . . Forty years. Now, if that's not enough" The preacher replies, "You know it's not."

Again, Felix stalks out. Later, alone, he mutters, "They keep talking about forgiveness. *Ask Jesus for forgiveness*. Well, I never did nothin' for him." Meaning: "So why would Jesus do anything for me?"

Near the end of the film, with his health failing, Felix begins to reconsider. When someone finds Felix collapsed in his barn, he asks the old man, "You sick?" Felix says, "No, just going through the motions." He then explains, "There's alive and there's dead, and there's a worse place in between 'em that I hope you never know nothin' about."

It's the picture of a broken man on the verge of breaking free.

LIKE DANDELION DUST

Karen Kingsbury is known as "America's No. 1 inspirational author," which explains why I haven't read her books. Christian chick lit just

isn't my thing.

But after watching *Like Dandelion Dust*, based on Kingsbury's 2006 novel of the same name, I was ready to punt my preconceived notions. Kingsbury knows how to write a gritty narrative with well-developed characters.

The film tells of two families connected by a little boy named Joey. Oscar winner Mira Sorvino (*Mighty Aphrodite*) plays his mother, Wendy, who put Joey up for adoption while her husband, Rip, the boy's father, was in jail for domestic abuse. She never told Rip about Joey, but when he gets out of jail, he finds out—and wants his son back.

Meanwhile, Joey, now 6, is enjoying an idyllic life with his adoptive family. When Rip pursues legal action, the two families collide, leaving Joey's future in the balance.

What ensues is a story so emotionally riveting, and a character study so compelling, that it seeps into one's soul. Viewers will find



A Divided House: *Like Dandelion Dust*, starring Mira Sorvino and Maxwell Perry Cotton, recounts the story of King Solomon and the baby fought over by two women.

themselves asking, “What would I do in his shoes? In hers?” There are no easy answers, and the conclusion—while a satisfying illustration of grace—does not

wrap up with a tidy bow.

Kingsbury says that *Dust* was one of her “emotional titles” and that she cried while writing it. The adoptive mother of three children from Haiti, she is well acquainted with the struggles of her characters: “I can’t imagine the birth parents coming to me after five years . . .

‘In living in service to Jesus, we’re always called upon to do not the easy thing or the selfish thing but the most loving thing. All the characters in this movie are trying to do that. It’s a beautiful story about being a human.’

~ Mira Sorvino, on *Like Dandelion Dust*

to take my children from my home,” she said in an interview with ChristianBook.com. “The fear, maybe the fear that every mother has about losing a child, is one I wanted to explore.”

Sorvino carries much of that emotional weight. The film opens with Wendy crying and cringing in a stairwell, battered and bruised, victim of an alcohol-induced beating by her husband, who is later arrested and jailed.

Over the next seven years, Wendy forgives Rip and takes him back upon his release, then rides a roller-coaster of emotions as Rip works to reclaim the son he didn’t know he had. Wendy sees Joey’s life with his adoptive family—loving care, a good home, a promising future—and is torn about taking him away. But she also longs for a happy family home of her own, with a reformed Rip at her side.

Sorvino, a Christian, told CT that the film is rife with biblical themes—confession, forgiveness, and unconditional love. She said the story especially recalls the Old Testament passage on Solomon’s

BROKEN BUT HOPEFUL

judgment about the fate of a baby claimed by two mothers: How would Joey be “divided” between two desperate families?

“It was a very difficult, painful role,” she said. “I tried to feel what my character was feeling. In the first scene, you see my character in the stairwell. It’s such a tiny blip on the radar screen of the movie, but I was sitting there maybe four hours while we shot that scene, at this dismal place of absolute despair.”

Sorvino describes Wendy’s change of heart: “Although she doesn’t have the strength to do some of the most ordinary things for herself, she still has the strength to be altruistic for someone else and do what’s best for them—which makes the picture

about a kind of forgiveness and redemption.

“In living in service to Jesus, we’re always called upon to do not the easy thing or the selfish thing but the most loving thing. All the characters in this movie are trying to do that. Every one of them has to do soul-searching. Everyone discovers their own flaws. It’s a beautiful story about being a human, baring your soul, and reorienting how you’re going to live—all with a lot of prayer and faith.”

CONVICTION

Two-time Oscar winner Hilary Swank has played some fascinating characters: a transgender man (*Boys Don’t Cry*), a rags-to-riches boxer (*Million Dollar Baby*), an inner-city teacher (*Freedom Writers*), a homicide detective (*Insomnia*), and an aviation pioneer (*Amelia*). But her most recent role, as the real-life Betty Anne Waters, may have affected her most; today Swank calls Waters “my hero.”

Conviction, the story of Waters and her brother, Kenny, is about broken characters seeking redemption as if their lives depended on it. Framed by local police for a murder he didn’t commit, Kenny was sentenced to life without parole. Convinced of his innocence, Betty Anne—an uneducated, poor single mother of two—devoted her life to exonerating her brother. She studied to earn her GED, put herself through law school while waiting tables, and spent almost two decades trying to prove Kenny’s innocence.

Thanks to the discovery of evidence that had been hidden for years, Betty Anne finally reached her goal in 2001, when Kenny was cleared through DNA testing—literally redeemed by blood—and released after having spent 18 years in prison.

Swank is terrific in the role, looking downtrodden but determined when she tells Kenny in prison, “You have to promise me you’ll never give up.” She clearly has no intention of doing so.

The true story of broken characters shook Swank: “It’s one of the greatest love stories I have ever read,” she said. “It blows my mind. Will I ever know a love like that? Would someone love me enough to do that?”

Indeed, Someone already does, Someone who knows what it means to be broken, and to redeem.

Mark Moring writes about pop culture for CT. Read full reviews of these films at ChristianityToday.com/ct/movies.

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The Movie Awards



The Most Redeeming Films of 2010

TOY STORY 3 RATED G
(Disney / Pixar) directed by Lee Unkrich

THE KING'S SPEECH RATED R
(Weinstein) directed by Tom Hooper

GET LOW RATED PG-13
(Sony Pictures Classics) directed by Aaron Schneider

TRUE GRIT RATED PG-13
(Paramount) directed by Joel and Ethan Coen

WINTER'S BONE RATED R
(Roadside Attractions) directed by Debra Granik

DESPICABLE ME RATED PG
(Universal) directed by Pierre Coffin and Chris Renaud

TANGLED RATED PG
(Disney) directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard

THE FIGHTER RATED R
(Paramount) directed by David O. Russell

LETTERS TO FATHER JACOB NOT RATED
(Olive Films) directed by Klaus Härö

LIKE DANDELION DUST RATED PG-13
(Downes Brothers) directed by Jon Gunn

Our film critics are not on Pixar's payroll. Nor are they getting any under-the-table perks from the animation studio. There's a much less sinister reason that a Pixar movie tops our Most Redeeming Films list for the third consecutive year: We think their movies rock. It's not just the astonishingly good animation. It's the phenomenal storytelling, the depth of character development, the keen insight into the human condition—even from the perspective of plastic playthings. One of our critics confesses that he cried at the end of *Toy Story 3* all three times he watched it—and will likely do so the next three times. That's what Pixar films do to us.

As for what makes Woody and Buzz's final adventure so redeeming, there's plenty: The usual themes of love and loyalty run loud and clear. Toys though they may be, the friends are willing to risk their lives for one another. And their owner, Andy, now college-bound, isn't about to relegate his old playtime buddies to a box in the attic, never to be played with again—or at least for decades. Instead, he takes a selfless step in the end, giving Woody and Buzz and the rest a new lease on life—a rebirth, so to speak. It's no surprise that many of the creative types at Pixar are Christians, as they churn out soul-stirring stories year after year. (For the record, *Up* topped our Most Redeeming list in 2009, as did *Wall-E* in 2008.)

Our Most Redeeming Films of 2010 list, at left, is precisely that—the year's best movies that include stories of redemption. Several of the films feature characters who are redeemers themselves; all have characters who experience redemption to some degree. Some are feel-good flicks; others, a little less so. Several of the films are rated R and PG-13 and are not intended for young audiences, so please use discretion. But in all of these films, redemption is certainly one of the main characters.

Go to ChristianityToday.com/ct/movies to read full reviews of these films.

The Critics' Choice Awards of 2010

The Critics' Choice Awards recognize those films that *Christianity Today's* panel believes were the best movies of the year as movies, whether they carried a redeeming message or not—though seven of the choices also appear on our Most Redeeming list. But all are superb films, and many of them will bring home multiple honors at this month's Academy Awards.

1. **The King's Speech** RATED R (Weinstein) directed by Tom Hooper
2. **The Social Network** RATED PG-13 (Sony Pictures) directed by David Fincher
3. **True Grit** RATED PG-13 (Paramount) directed by Joel and Ethan Coen
4. **Toy Story 3** RATED G (Disney / Pixar) directed by Lee Unkrich
5. **Inception** RATED PG-13 (Warner Brothers) directed by Christopher Nolan

6. **The Fighter** RATED R (Paramount) directed by David O. Russell
7. **Winter's Bone** RATED R (Roadside Attractions) directed by Debra Granik
8. **Get Low** RATED PG-13 (Sony Pictures Classics) directed by Aaron Schneider
9. **127 Hours** RATED R (Fox Searchlight) directed by Danny Boyle
10. **Tangled** RATED PG (Disney) directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard



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Deep

The songs of gospel legend **Mavis Staples** cover 60 years of American history.
By Andy Whitman

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IT IS A LITTLE PAST NOON on a blustery, sunny Saturday in late October, and Mavis Staples takes the stage in front of more

than 200,000 people on the Washington Mall. At 71, Staples is a veteran of similar massive gatherings. The gospel musician sang at the inaugurations of former presidents Kennedy, Carter, and Clinton, and appeared with Martin Luther King Jr. at dozens of civil rights rallies in the 1960s. But she is on the Mall today at the request of comedians Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart, whose Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear is about to take a humorous but not-so-gentle poke at the histrionic polemics and hand-wringing that have recently characterized political dialogue in America.

As she and Jeff Tweedy, the founder of indie rock band Wilco, launch into “You Are Not Alone,” the title track from her latest album, she’s taking no prisoners:

*A broken dream, a broken heart
Isolated and afraid
Open up, this is a raid
I wanna get it through to you
You’re not alone*

It is intended as a healing balm for a troubled and divided nation, and it is, as it has always been, the only real and lasting antidote for fear. She is singing the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the answer that still matters most to Mavis Staples. She’s been at the forefront of political change in the United States for the better part of 50 years, so it’s more than a cause. It’s a life.

“It’s hard times for many people,” she told me after the rally. “People are losing their jobs, losing their homes. There’s a lot of fear out there. And that song, ‘You Are Not Alone’—that’s the song we wanted to communicate to everyone, that we are all in this together. You don’t have to do this by yourself.

“And, of course, I believe that Jesus is with us, too. Some people will hear it as a gospel song. And some people will hear it as a song about solidarity, about sticking together. And it is. It’s all of those things. Stephen Colbert asked me to sing that song at the start of the day, to set the tone. And I thought it went pretty well.”

She chuckles, recalling the rapturous ovation that greeted her

performance. “Not too bad, I guess, for an old gospel singer.”

THE DEVIL HAS NO MUSIC

A longtime member of Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago’s South Side, Staples has always sung about her Christian faith. Her latest record—*You Are Not Alone*, which finished number two in *Christianity Today*’s Album of the Year voting (page 46)—includes plenty of rousing gospel but also a few tracks that could be called protest songs, or at least “social awareness” songs. That the record, produced by Tweedy, has been nominated for a Grammy in the Americana category, instead of one of the typical gospel categories, speaks to its eclecticism. (Grammy winners will be announced February 13.)

Staples says the new album “goes deep.” She adds, “With my music I want to show people that we can overcome every injustice and every trial. People need to know that even though they may not be able to change their circumstances, they themselves can be changed. You know, prayer changes things. God changes things. And if you’ll let him, God is able to carry you through.”

Staples’s mainstream appeal demonstrates that we are a long way from the days when early rhythm and blues and soul pioneers like Sam Cooke and Wilson Pickett had to fend off criticisms from the church for singing about “secular” themes. The battle lines have long been drawn, but Staples, who moves seamlessly between traditional gospel songs, social protest anthems, and rock and pop standards, is having none of it.

“The Devil doesn’t have any music,” Staples says flatly. “Ever since



we were young kids, we sang songs that we thought of as positive music. Some of them were gospel songs. And some of them were message songs like 'Long Walk to D.C.' or 'For What It's Worth,' songs that reflected the times we lived in. They were all true songs, you know. We just sang songs about the truth. And it seemed like people always wanted to hear those songs."

Her songs have touched on personal themes, as well. "After a while, I wanted my music to reflect some of the things I had experienced. I had been married and divorced and experienced heartbreak, so I

wanted to bring some of that into the music, too. My daddy told me as a little girl that it wasn't worth a thing unless it came from the heart."

Staples has been singing before large gatherings since she was 11. The youngest of four siblings, she joined her father, Roebuck "Pops" Staples, brother Pervis, and sisters Cleotha and Yvonne to form the Staple Singers around 1950. Pops had given up on his then-current gospel group, the Trumpet Jubilees, to take matters into his own hands.

The next 25 years were a whirlwind of musical and social change.



"It was huge," she says. "We recorded a live album in Chicago the night before the election, and you could feel the energy. We sang a lot of the old freedom songs, the old civil rights anthems, and the room was just electric. You could feel the triumph."

Then she adds, "But we're not done yet. Oh, it breaks my heart sometimes, but we're not done yet."

It's a conundrum raised in her 2007 song "My Own Eyes," which surveys 50 years of landmark civil rights breakthroughs, glorious changes witnessed by her own eyes. Yet the lyrics also note what remains unfinished. "I watch the news, and sometimes it seems like we're moving backwards," she sighs. "Those poor black families in New Orleans, crowded into that big stadium after Katrina—you could watch them dying right before your eyes. Some people cared. Actually, there were many people who cared. But the government, the politicians, didn't care."

She says it was like the 1960s had never happened: "All the things we marched for, all the sacrifices we made. Those songs weren't just political songs, you know. They came out of the church just as much as any of the old spirituals, because they were about God's children being mistreated, just like the Israelites sang about being

'I'm a singer. It's my gift. But that whole star trip thing, getting a big head, lording it over other people? I don't want any part of it.'

~ Mavis Staples

The Staple Singers were often the vanguard of that change, first as one of the most famous gospel groups in America, then as the unofficial voice of the civil rights movement, working alongside King. Finally they emerged as certified pop stars. That's Mavis on lead vocals in "I'll Take You There," one of the most memorable musical moments of the 1970s.

The hits stopped, but Mavis did not. There were solo albums, concerts, occasional collaborations with other artists. But none of those formidable accomplishments could have augured the late-career renaissance that has characterized her recent work. From her mid-60s on, Staples has merely recorded four of her best albums, won a couple Grammy Awards, collaborated with heavyweights Bob Dylan, Tweedy, and Patty Griffin, and performed for hundreds of thousands and for a select audience that has included the President and First Lady.

Staples greets the laundry list with a shrug.

"I'm a singer," she says. "It's my gift, and it's what I do, and I'm so grateful that I can still do it. It's always been a blessing to be able to sing for other people. But that whole star trip thing, getting a big head, lording it over other people? No, I don't want any part of it. Pops wouldn't have put up with it for one second. Plus, it's just no fun for anyone. Who wants to be around people like that?"

NOT DONE YET

Her proudest moment in recent years may have come in early November 2008. That was the date she and the world watched a map of states change from red to blue for the first black president of the United States. It was an inconceivable notion when Staples began her musical career.

freed from slavery in Egypt. So I decided it was time to sing those songs again, and that's what I did on my album *We'll Never Turn Back*. The struggle goes on."

She recalls a Staple Singers show in South Africa in the early 1980s.

"Pops noticed that the arena where we were scheduled to play was segregated; the whites on the floor and the blacks up in the balcony," she says. "And he just refused to play. We all just walked out. And we went over to a soccer field and set up, and we held our own little impromptu concert there for whoever wanted to come, and the blacks and the whites sat side by side on the grass. That was the first time that had ever happened. And that was my daddy. That's my legacy. That's where we need to be."

Despite her accomplishments, she says, there's much more to her life than music.

"You get to a certain age," she says, "and a lot of things you once thought were so important are diminished a little. Pops died ten years ago. My sister Cleethy has Alzheimer's and doesn't know who I am most of the time. And for me that's very sad, because family has always been the most important thing in my life. The first song Pops taught us children was the old Carter Family spiritual 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken.' I've recorded it many times over the years. Well, now the circle is broken, and I'm feeling that pain."

But she's feeling more than pain: "It won't always be that way. That's a song about heaven, you know, and I still sing it in my concerts. It's probably the reason I'm still singing today."

Andy Whitman writes about music for *CT*, *Paste* magazine, and *Image* journal.

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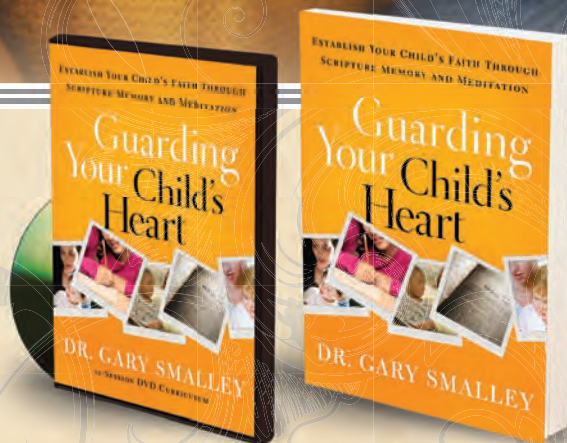
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The Music Awards



Top 12 Albums of 2010

ONE **PATTY GRIFFIN**
Downtown Church (Credential)

TWO **MAVIS STAPLES**
You Are Not Alone (Anti-)

THREE **SANDRA McCracken**
In Feast or Fallow (Independent)

FOUR **ARCADE FIRE**
The Suburbs (Merge)

FIVE **ANDREW PETERSON**
Counting Stars (Centricity)

SIX **ANAIIS MITCHELL**
Hadestown (Righteous Babe)

SEVEN **SUFJAN STEVENS**
The Age of Adz (Asthmatic Kitty)

EIGHT **ROBERT PLANT**
Band of Joy (Rounder)

NINE **AARON NEVILLE**
I Know I've Been Changed (EMI Gospel)

TEN **THE MYNABIRDS**
What We Lose in the Fire We Gain in the Flood (Saddle Creek)

ELEVEN **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Good God! Born Again Funk (Numero)

TWELVE **ROBERT RANDOLPH & THE FAMILY BAND**
We Walk This Road (Warner Bros.)

H

ymns, gospel, and a touch of history make an appearance on our critics' picks for the top three albums of 2010, with one artist having seen the power of songs to change the world, another having seen them change her own soul, and another still trying to understand the divine impulse behind it all.

Country-folk songstress Patty Griffin fits the third description, with her sublime *Downtown Church* selected by our critics as album of the year. It offers a gospel smorgasbord, covering country, bluegrass, African American spirituals, a Hispanic hymn, two original folk tunes, and a piece credited to Francis of Assisi. Griffin, who wouldn't call herself an evangelical, says, "The times when I'm most aware of God, however you define God, are when I'm making music—when I'm singing or when I'm writing songs. Something happens during that process. It makes me a little more aware that it's not just about me. There's something much bigger happening. For now, I'm content to leave it at that."

Gospel legend Mavis Staples, the 71-year-old singer behind our number-two album, *You Are Not Alone*, has been around long enough to see her family's music—remember the Staple Singers?—play an instrumental role in the civil rights movement. (Her father, Roebuck "Pops" Staples, was good friends with Martin Luther King Jr.) Of her new record, Staples simply says, "I wanted to make an album where every song had meaning, where every song told a story and would lift you up and give you a reason to get up in the morning." Mission accomplished. (Read more about Staples on page 42.)

Folk singer Sandra McCracken has focused on hymns both old and new in recent years; her latest album, *In Feast or Fallow*, includes ancient texts and some originals and finished third in our voting. McCracken says her mom taught her hymns as a young girl, and her love for the form has never waned: "Hymns have always been like nourishment for my soul, in whatever capacity I've been able to absorb them. They seem to have expanded in proportion to my life and need, strengthening and supporting my faith along the way." ⊕

Go to ChristianityToday.com/ct/music to read full reviews of these albums.

Notable Sacred Music of 2010

To supplement our traditional list of the best popular music of the year, we wanted to highlight some of the year's best sacred music. Jane Holstein, an editor with Hope Publishing Company as well as an arranger, choral clinician, organist, and concert artist, compiled the list.

- 1. Mormon Tabernacle Choir** *100 Years: Celebrating a Century of Recording Excellence* (Mormon Tabernacle Choir)
- 2. Eric Whitacre** *Light & Gold* (Decca)
- 3. John Eliot Gardiner** *Bach Cantatas, Vol. 18* (Soli Deo Gloria)
- 4. Jubilant Sykes** *Jubilant Sykes Sings Copland and Spirituals* (Arioso Classics)
- 5. John Rutter** *A Song in Season* (Collegium)
- 6. Chicago Symphony Orchestra** *Verdi: Messa da Requiem* (CSO Resound)
- 7. Libera** *Peace* (EMI Classics)
- 8. National Lutheran Choir** *Hymns We Love to Sing, Volume II* (NLC)
- 9. John Rutter and the Cambridge Singers** *Faure: Requiem and Other Sacred Music* (rerelease) (Collegium)
- 10. Juan Diego Flórez** *Santo: Sacred Songs* (Decca)
- 11. Hilary Hahn** *Bach: Violin and Voice* (Deutsche Grammophon)
- 12. Mormon Tabernacle Choir** *Heavensong: Music of Contemplation and Light* (MTC)



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VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



Jesus stunned Saul on the Damascus road, calling him into service. Paul went to the third heaven to be briefed by Jesus himself for ministry. In light of that history, it's unlikely that there would be a disconnect between their teachings.

Joseph M. Stowell
Grand Rapids, Michigan

No Real Crisis

Thanks to Scot McKnight for bringing balance and clarity to the "Jesus vs. Paul" stand-off [December]. Those who choose sides should remember the history: It was Jesus who stunned Saul on the Damascus road, calling him into service. And it was Paul who went to the third heaven to be briefed by Jesus himself for ministry. In light of that history, it's unlikely that there would be a disconnect between their teachings.

Paul acknowledges that we have been placed into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13) and that the kingdom is about righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom. 14:17). Jesus introduces and defines the kingdom to a people waiting for the restoration of David's throne, while Paul fleshes out the theology of what it means to become rightly related to the King. Sounds like a brilliant strategy to me.

JOSEPH M. STOWELL
President, Cornerstone University
Grand Rapids, Michigan

An omission in McKnight's otherwise helpful article is the Book of Acts, where Luke presents a beautiful re-signification of kingdom language after Jesus' resurrection. The word *kingdom* appears in

Acts eight times as a summary term for preaching Christ. By the end of Acts, we find Paul "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered." No real difference.

Paul's flexible use of kingdom language ("kingdom of God," "kingdom of Christ," "his kingdom") and the smattering of references in James, Hebrews, Peter, and Revelation provide a model for all post-resurrection preachers. To try and drive a wedge between Jesus and Paul is terminological turpitude.

DAVID SHORT
Vancouver, British Columbia

Believing in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit precludes seeing any division between the writers of the Bible. Paul states that he received his teaching from the Lord (1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37; 1 Thess. 4:2, 15), so how could there be any tension? Have we not thought through the repercussions of the progressive nature of revelation?

MARK SMITH
Bloomington, Illinois

McKnight assumes that the center of Paul's theology is justification by faith—

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

72%

Jesus vs. Paul
Scot McKnight

9%

**Christ of the
Klingons**
Trevor Persaud

6%

**Away with 'Away
in the Manger'?**
Under Discussion,
compiled by
Ruth Moon

YAY OR NAY Readers' take on "Jesus vs. Paul"

37%



63%

a view with not a few detractors. As McKnight attempts to close the gap between Jesus and Paul using the lens of Christology, he alludes to another possible core of Pauline theology: the Christ event, i.e., Jesus' death and resurrection. More than justification by faith, the Christ event undergirds Paul's thinking. Only the Reformation force-feeding of justification by faith at the core of Paul's theology makes harmonizing Jesus and Paul difficult.

NATHANIEL RHOADS
Winnemucca, Nevada

Court Considers Credits

Education tax credits like those in Arizona may benefit Christian schools. But in "School Choice 2.0" [December], Jeff Blamer rightly notes the inappropriateness of viewing the scholarships in that light. The purpose of school-choice programs like Arizona's is to empower parents to choose from a range of educational options, not steer them into religious schools.

The Supreme Court ruled the following in 2002, upholding a Cleveland voucher program through which a majority of recipients chose parochial schools: "The incidental advancement of a religious mission, or the perceived endorsement of a religious message, is reasonably attributable to the individual aid recipients not the government, whose role ends with the disbursement

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of benefits.”

It's difficult to see how the justices could uphold this precedent while knocking down the Arizona tax credits. While Cleveland's vouchers are a direct grant from the government, Arizona's scholarships result from tax credits given by individuals who contribute to Student Tuition Organizations, which then aid parents selecting among a variety of private schools, not just religious ones.

ROBERT HOLLAND

Senior Fellow, *The Heartland Institute*
Chicago, Illinois

Muslim Evangelists

Eliza Griswold makes an important point about needing a broader understanding of Islam [“The Line Where Religions Collide,” December]. Having worked for some 10 years in a predominantly Muslim Southeast Asian nation, I echo Griswold's concern for minority groups in Muslim-majority countries.

I do, however, take issue with her comment, “Proselytizing for Islam is most frequently bringing fallen Muslims back into the fold. It's usually not across faith lines.” That certainly was not our experience. The government-supported policy in nations like the one where we served is Islamization, which includes overt and covert efforts to induce many to become Muslims. Local newspapers regularly run articles and photos celebrating conversions to Islam. They are actively seeking

to bring others into the fold.

I am not saying that Muslims shouldn't be able to proselytize. Rather, I want to correct the misconception that they aren't interested in proselytism. Of course, my main concern is for those of other minority faiths in Muslim nations who are denied basic religious rights.

GARY ROOSMA

Richmond, British Columbia

YWAM in the Light

I was delighted to read *Christianity Today's* “Youth with a Passion” [December].

YWAM has weathered accusations of being a cult, assaults to its views on governance, and myriad other challenges. But it provides an effective umbrella under which believers can test their call.

For this reason, regional leaders should be all the more willing to investigate the Nordic Capital Investments fraud. A full airing of this tragedy will help protect future YWAMers and counter the belief that this event has been swept under the rug since 2007.

RON WILLIAMS

E-mail

Editor's Note: In late October 2010, Kristian Westergard was convicted of gross criminal fraud and sentenced to four years in a Swedish prison for the Nordic Capital Investments scheme. He is appealing his conviction. Erik Spruyt was not a defendant in this case and testified under oath concerning his role at Nordic Capital.



ONLINE POLL

YOUR CHURCH'S INTEREST
Does your church have a ministry to help poor people?

36%

Yes, we have a formal ministry.

26%

Yes, we work with a nonprofit.

30%

Yes, we have a benevolence fund.

2%

No, we're focused on other areas.

5%

No, we don't have anything official set up.

1%

I don't know.

Total votes: 381

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

compiled by Katelyn Beaty

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

“Didn't the Germans insist on the state being in charge of their children's education in the 1930s? How'd that turn out?”

Stephen, on Germany's stringent no-homeschooling laws.

CT Liveblog: “German Christians Fight for Right to Homeschool,” by Krista Kapralos, RNS

“You guys can continue picking apart the details of the Dufflepuds. The rest of us will point others to Christ.”

Matt R., lamenting that Christian publications and bloggers have lambasted *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* film for missing some of Lewis's nuances.

CT Review: *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, by Russ Breimeier

“When we are the primary initiators of ‘witness,’ then God is displaced and we are in charge. This is what many within and without the church find so offensive: not Christ crucified, but those who identify with him in a most non-cruciform manner.”

Mike P., on why Christians continually need the gospel.

SoulWork: “Evangelizing Ourselves,” by Mark Galli

“We can encourage people to get married until we are blue in the face, but until people betroth themselves to the One who matters, it doesn't do much good.”

Leslie S., on the limited value of encouraging more Americans to marry.

Speaking Out: “Marriage: Marginalized in the Middle,” by Bradford Wilcox and Chuck Donovan



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Tough Grace

Evangelicals should be clear and consistent on sexual standards.

IN DECEMBER, Congress and President Obama ended the era of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) in the United States military. Today, American political culture is far more open to gay members of the armed forces than it was in 1993, when President Clinton created his famous compromise.

In civilian life, Don't Ask, Don't Tell attitudes are also fading. Once, this quiet accommodation to the presence of gays in our midst afforded the luxury of ambiguity, allowing heterosexuals to be friendly and supportive of gay coworkers, friends, and family without having to deal head-on with their sexuality. In order to be good neighbors, evangelical Christians have often chosen not to deal with the subject, making mental distinctions between their personal beliefs and their family and community relationships.

But Christian institutions—colleges, campus ministries, publishers, and aid organizations among them—can no longer enjoy the ambiguity that DADT attitudes traditionally afforded. This was highlighted this past December, when Nashville's Belmont University became embroiled in a controversy over the resignation (or dismissal, as some claimed) of a lesbian soccer coach with a winning record after students learned that her partner was expecting a baby.

Until 2007, Belmont was affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Publicly, the school trumpets its identity as a Christian university and its commitment to "learning in a context of Christian community and service." But it has chosen a broad interpretation of its Christian mission, which has been accompanied by strong numerical growth.

Former soccer coach Lisa Howe and the university are saying that her departure was not linked with her homosexual relationship, but many are unconvinced. Whatever the situation at Belmont University, the incident should prompt Christian institutions to

reflect on how to respond to homosexual behavior they discover in their midst.

First, Christian institutions should be clear about the behavioral standards they expect from employees, students, and members, and then enforce them—consistently, but judiciously. There are legal reasons for this. If Christian institutions expect society to let them make religious belief and practice a factor in their employment practices, they need to provide clear and consistent accounts of their standards. But there are also pastoral reasons. Churches and other Christian organizations have been inconsistent in dealing with departures from God's ideal for human sexuality, such as divorce, adultery, and sexual harassment. When pastors are caught in adultery or sexual harassment, churches too often punish the whistleblower and find ways to quietly transfer clergy to new parishes.

Consistency and clarity are essential. Consistency means not singling out those with same-sex orientation. The same standard should apply to all. Wheaton College's Community Covenant is a good model. It says, "[F]ollowers of Jesus Christ will... uphold chastity among the unmarried (1 Cor. 6:18) and the sanctity of marriage between a man and woman (Heb. 13:4)... Scripture condemns... all... sexual relations outside the bounds of marriage between a man and woman." Those standards do not make a special case of homosexuality. To deviate from God's ideal is to deviate from God's ideal.

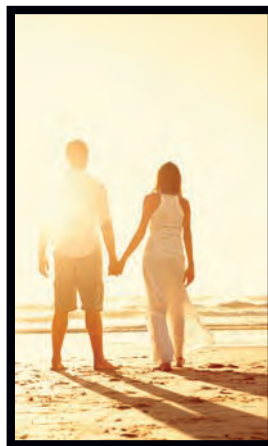
But among Christians, consistent enforcement constantly butts heads with grace. How do we apply grace to pastors, teachers, and others whose calling involves modeling the Christian life for those younger and still very much in formation? Often when institutions exercise discipline, someone cries, "I thought Christianity was all about grace!" *Grace* does not always, everywhere, and immediately mean wiping the slate

clean. Communities need to take into account the impact that leaders' misbehavior has on others. To express the comprehensiveness of God's grace, institutional forgiveness of an offender must also focus pastoral support on the wounded and betrayed.

We apply grace differently to students and others whose lives are, by definition, still in development. We rightly expect Christian faculty

and clergy to model the Christian life. We assume that those who are spiritually younger will make some missteps and that with guidance they can learn from those mistakes. Educational institutions seem particularly equipped to help transform moral missteps into learning experiences.

Paul, the apostle of grace, set a paradoxical example by excluding someone from the community who practiced a shocking kind of sexual immorality. He delivered him over "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:5). Grace can be tough, but it always aims at the redemption of the offender. ✚



Consistency means not singling out those with same-sex orientation. The same standard should apply to all.

Meeting the Sojourner

What should churches do about illegal immigrants in their midst?

DO EVERYTHING LEGAL

Mark DeYmaz is directional leader at Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas and coauthor of *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*.

In the earliest days of Mosaic Church, one of our members was issued a traffic ticket. Later we learned he was undocumented. A year or so after this incident, he received a second citation from local police, who discovered that he'd had a fraudulent driver's license obtained with a fake Social Security number.

In every other way, the individual was a law-abiding member of the community and a follower of Christ. Yet he soon received a letter from the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services requiring him to leave the country within 30 days. However, he chose to ignore the letter and remain in Little Rock.

When it comes to meeting the spiritual, material, and physical needs of immigrants, there is strong biblical precedent for getting involved (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33–34; Deut. 27:19). But New Testament teaching also makes it clear that as followers of Christ, we are to honor the law and respect the rulers of our land (Luke 20:23–25; 1 Pet. 2:13–14). How should we resolve this apparent tension?

Out of concern for this member and what his decision might mean for the church, I met with local immigration officials to discuss the situation. I learned that a church is in no way restricted from ministering to people based on their legal status or expected to know who within the congregation is and is not properly documented.

For instance, there is nothing illegal about giving undocumented immigrants rides to and from church or providing them with benevolent assistance such as food, shelter, and clothing.

In fact, a church may invite undocumented immigrants to serve voluntarily in any capacity within the church. At Mosaic, however, we have decided not to appoint undocumented immigrants to serve as elders, since our board must conduct legal business from time to time. And we do not willfully hire undocumented immigrants. Several times my heart has broken over learning of someone's undocumented status in the hiring process and, consequently, turning away an otherwise qualified candidate.

Scripture requires that Christ followers and therefore churches obey legal authority. However, we have found it possible to walk the fine line between compassion and conformity when it comes to serving the immigrants among us. As Paul found, too, in dealing with Onesimus, we can remain true to both the mission of God and

the authority of man. We will continue to do so unless that authority requires us to deny our faith or the core tenets of it.

I wish there were a simple solution to the current immigration problem, that we could somehow wave a magic wand and fix the whole situation. Unfortunately, an immediate solution does not exist. In the meantime, we continue to love and serve everyone we can.

ASK NEW QUESTIONS

M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas) is distinguished professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary and author of *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*.

The answer to this question depends on whether the church is a majority-culture church or an immigrant church.

There are many thousands of immigrant churches in the United States. For example, the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC)—the Hispanic counterpart and working partner of the National Association of Evangelicals—is an umbrella organization for Hispanic congregations. The NHCLC comprises more than 25,000 member churches, many of which have undocumented members. The same could be said, for example, of countless Korean and African churches in the U.S.

I am half-Guatemalan and attend a Hispanic congregation. The ministerial needs within our small church go beyond those of typical majority-culture churches. They include coming alongside families that have had a spouse or parent deported, helping those who cannot find work, and offering guidance to young people trying to find their way through American culture.

A second issue is the connection between local congregations and national leadership. Not a few denominations have launched church-planting initiatives among immigrant populations and are establishing leadership training programs for the new congregations. Many denominational heads have captured the vision to reach out to these newcomers, but now face the challenge



of convincing local bodies to join in these efforts. A growing number of majority-culture churches, however, share their facilities with immigrant congregations. They understand that the least they can do is offer space to these brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of their immigration status. It is also clear that these struggling church bodies are revitalizing denominations and are a key reason that some are maintaining and even growing their membership numbers.

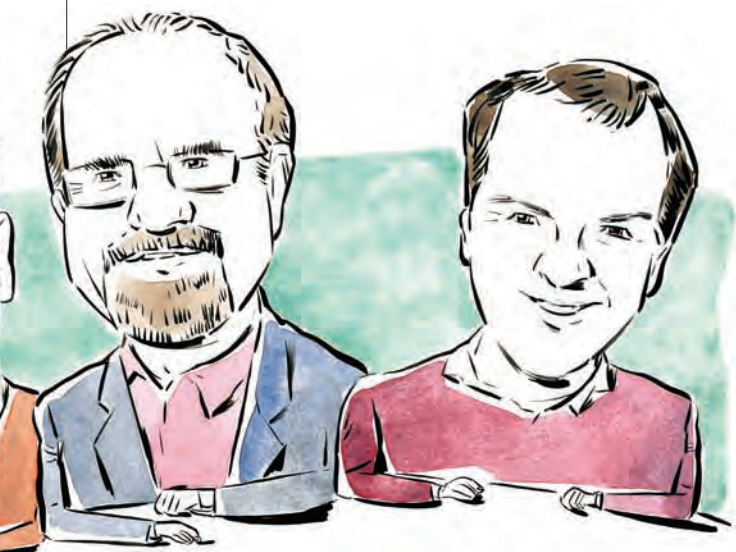
Third, this discussion might be framed with a different question. We live in a highly charged climate where unfortunate rhetoric and political posturing abound, and in which the media reduce a complicated situation to bullet points and routinely misinform the public. What could instead be asked is, *What are the biblical teaching and explicitly Christian attitudes that should shape churches' engagement with the strangers in their midst?*

The original question can make issues of legality the overriding focus. These issues obviously are important and must be dealt with. But they should not be the starting point of the discussion or the defining dilemma.

An appreciation of the full biblical witness concerning immigration redirects our attention to the complex needs and wonderful potential of these newcomers, made in the image of God and coheirs in the body of Christ. A very different conversation is generated with another set of questions:

- Is the present immigration system compassionate and just?
- How can churches serve as a constructive moral voice in the national debate and express the love of God to immigrant families?
- What steps can be taken so that both majority-culture churches and immigrant congregations learn from one another?

In other words, we need a different kind of conversation, one that is uniquely *Christian*, and unbound from nationalistic fears and political ideologies.



BRIDGE DIVISIONS

Matthew Soerens is the U.S. church training specialist for World Relief, coauthor of *Welcoming the Stranger*, and a blogger at Undocumented.tv.

The church's Great Commission is to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19), and immigrants—regardless of their legal status—present a mission field at our doorstep. Churches should welcome immigrants, recognizing a divinely appointed mission opportunity.

Welcoming immigrants who are here unlawfully, of course, raises new questions for many churches. First and foremost for many is, *Are we breaking the law by helping?* In general, the legal answer is no. In most states, it is entirely lawful to preach the gospel to undocumented immigrants as well as compassionately meet their tangible needs. We can minister effectively and still be fully in submission to God-ordained governing authorities.

As laws change, though, Christians in some states may need to wrestle with whether their mandate to love immigrant neighbors requires civil disobedience. For example, under Arizona's tough new immigration law, it is now illegal for a church van to pick up undocumented kids for youth group. Civil disobedience should be a last resort, but there may be instances when "we must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29).

Another challenging question is how to pastorally guide undocumented immigrants: Does faithful discipleship necessarily require full compliance with the law, which in almost all cases would mean leaving the U.S.? Many immigrant believers—and their pastors—agonize over this question, especially when this could mean leaving behind one's U.S. citizen spouse or children.

Some have decided to return to their country of origin, but others have said that they migrated as a desperate last resort to provide for their families (1 Tim. 5:8). They would rather stay in the U.S. and take their chances with the "sword" that Romans 13:4 tells us the God-ordained government bears.

In a democracy, though, we need not force people into a tragic choice between staying with and providing for their families or following the law. Each Christ follower should advocate for the reform of federal immigration laws so that undocumented immigrants can come forward, admit their offense, pay a fine (this is not, then, amnesty), and earn legal status.

Immigration status for many newcomers often hangs on complex legal questions. Too many innocent individuals get caught in the system. Church leaders should not presume criminality when new immigrants come to church.

We should look at immigrants in our congregations and recognize that, as National Association of Evangelicals president Leith Anderson has said, "They are us." Immigrant congregations are already the source of American evangelicalism's fastest growth.

We ought to strive to bridge any relational divisions and to stand with our brothers and sisters in advocating for changes to a dysfunctional system because, biblically, we are already one body, and "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). ☩



Satan's a Goner

A lesson from a headless snake.

A

S A KID, I loved Mission Sundays, when missionaries on furlough brought special reports in place of a sermon. Sometimes they wore exotic, foreign clothing; they almost always showed a tray of slides documenting their adventures. If they were from a dangerous enough land, the youth in our congregation would emerge from our Sunday stupor and listen intently.

There is one visit I've never forgotten. The missionaries were a married couple stationed in what appeared to be a particularly steamy jungle. I'm sure they gave a full report on churches planted or commitments made or translations begun. I don't remember much of that. What has always stayed with me is the story they shared about a snake.

One day, they told us, an enormous snake—much longer than a man—slithered its way right through their front door and into the kitchen of their simple home. Terrified, they ran outside and searched frantically for a local who might know what to do. A machete-wielding neighbor came to the rescue, calmly marching into their house and decapitating the snake with one clean chop.

The neighbor reemerged triumphant and assured the missionaries that the reptile had been defeated. But there was a catch, he warned: It was going to take a while for the snake to realize it was dead.

A snake's neurology and blood flow are such that it can take considerable time for it to stop moving even after decapitation. For the next several hours, the missionaries were forced to wait outside while the snake thrashed about, smashing furniture and flailing against walls and windows, wreaking havoc until its body finally understood that it no longer had a head.

Sweating in the heat, they had felt frustrated and a little sickened but also grateful that the snake's rampage wouldn't

last forever. And at some point in their waiting, they told us, they had a mutual epiphany.

I leaned in with the rest of the congregation, queasy and fascinated. "Do you see it?" asked the husband. "Satan is a lot like that big old snake. He's already been defeated. He just doesn't know it yet. In the meantime, he's going to do some damage. But never forget that he's a goner."

The story captured our imaginations then because it was graphic and gory—a stark contrast to the normally genteel sermonizing

there is an immeasurable amount of evil in our world. But compared with God's love and power, all the evil in the universe doesn't cover the head of a pin. Love wins. Satan doesn't stand a chance.

Thus, though we wrestle with the brokenness that plagues the world, and ourselves, we do so not with grim resignation but with hopeful defiance. We face both our addictions and afflictions not with a faint, white-knuckled hope that someday we will be healed, but rather with an assurance that

we are living slowly but surely into the healing already obtained on the Cross. There is still a waiting. In some cases the healing may not come in fullness until we are face-to-face with our Victor—but come it will. Guaranteed.

I've been trying to figure out what all of this means with respect to the way we deal with evil and injustice in our world. In linear, human time, perhaps the safest thing to do is batten down the hatches and wait somewhere secure till the thrashing is over. But one of the mysteries of living in God's time rather

than our own is that, although the end of the story has already been determined, somehow he is still using us to write it. Because Jesus lives in us through his Spirit, we are called not just to anticipate the overcoming but also to be part of bringing it to fruition.

And so we are called to fight poverty, oppression, greed, and malice—in the world and in our own spirits. We are invited to live in light of the reality that greater by far is the living God who is within us than the dead snake thrashing about in this world. 

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for "Satan's a Goner," a Bible study based on this article.



we were used to receiving. But the story haunts me because I have come to believe it is an accurate picture of the universe. We are in the thrashing time, a season characterized by our pervasive capacity to do violence to each other and ourselves. The temptation is to despair. We have to remember, though, that it won't last forever. Jesus has already crushed the serpent's head.

Recently I heard a message from theologian Gary Deddo that got me thinking about that snake. Deddo challenges the tendency many of us have to be dualists—imagining God and Satan as equal foes deadlocked in mortal combat. To be certain, Deddo acknowledges,

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Doctrinal Boot Camp

Conforming to the truth of the faith is necessary for survival.

IF YOU have survived a Marine Corps boot camp, read no further. If not, this article is for you.

Over the years I've grown concerned about Christians—especially younger ones—who express little interest in the basic doctrines of the faith. They don't want to appear to be dogmatic or judgmental. I can understand why; after all, as Gabe Lyons and David Kinnaman pointed out in *unChristian*, we older evangelicals have often come across that way. But our failures do not alter the fact that understanding and living by these doctrines are essential to, well, being Christians.

An aversion to doctrine caused some thoroughly orthodox young evangelicals to decline to sign the Manhattan Declaration (which defends human life, traditional marriage, and religious liberty), even though the document is rooted in Scripture. As one young evangelical explained to me, "We don't like dogmatic statements that a lot of people have to sign." What about the Nicene Creed or the Westminster Confession of Faith?

So I was delighted recently to visit a 31-year-old evangelical who understood my concern. Like me, this young man, Donovan Campbell, was a former Marine Corps officer. He has written a gripping book, *Joker One*, about his experiences in Iraq as a platoon commander. I asked him about younger evangelicals who believe that we oldsters aren't being sensitive enough to their concerns. "Can you imagine," he asked, "what would happen if a scruffy young recruit were to tell his Marine drill instructor at Parris Island that he ought to be more sensitive to his needs?"

We both chuckled, knowing what would happen to the poor recruit. If he survived, he'd be doing 100 pushups a day for weeks.

The Marine Corps is legendary for building character and boasting, perhaps justifiably, that it produces the finest warriors in the world. What's the secret? For 230

years, the corps has fought every kind of war and learned bitter, bloody lessons. But its troops have learned the principles for succeeding in combat and bringing your men back with you. And the Marines live by them—they are enshrined in every manual and training exercise. As Campbell points out, there's the Marine way and the wrong way.

The psychology of boot camp is instructive.

The first six weeks are spent—figuratively speaking, mostly—beating out of recruits every habit, attitude, and preconceived notion about life and the world. You are told you are worthless and are "not a special snowflake," as Campbell says. You are now part of the Marine Corps and will do what the drill instructor says. Period.

After the drill instructors get rid of the old man—there's a good analogy—the instruction changes dramatically. They now tell you that you're a marine and can achieve anything if you live by the rules. Though it was half a century ago, I vividly remember what it meant to be a marine. I found confidence in myself that I'd never had before. But I also learned that the man next to me had my back. And I had his. We could trust each other with our lives. There was camaraderie, indeed a fellowship, unlike anything I've known since.

This is what becoming a Christian means. We put off the old man, get rid of the old habits, and embrace a new set of beliefs and standards defined in Scripture and lived out over 2,000 years. Just like the Marine Corps, the church

has learned what works and what doesn't, what is right and what is wrong. And the goal of Christian discipleship is to conform to the truths of the Christian faith, just as a marine has to conform to the truths of the corps.

Come to think of it, isn't the church today in a far more serious battle than any the Marines have fought? Aren't we called to make disciples who will advance the

kingdom of God in an extremely hostile world? Haven't we inherited 2,000 years of very hard-earned lessons?

The more I've thought about the parallels, the more I am convinced that we have failed younger evangelicals and new believers generally. We have told them or at least

implied that they can live happily ever after, that Christianity is all about what's good for them—not necessarily about what is true. Things just go better with Jesus.

If we want to see revival in the church, we need to be at least as serious as the Marines are about preparing men and women for battle. Perhaps we ought to rethink Sunday school, dust off the catechisms, and start teaching the Bible and theology to our young people again. If the theologically attuned young Reformed crowd is any indication, they can handle it. But it's not just for Calvinists. Every successful Christian movement has embraced ways to effectively pass on the faith entrusted to the saints once for all.

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If we want to see revival in the church, we need to be at least as serious as the Marines are about preparing men and women for battle.

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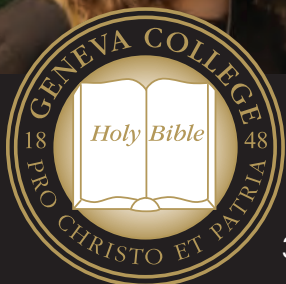
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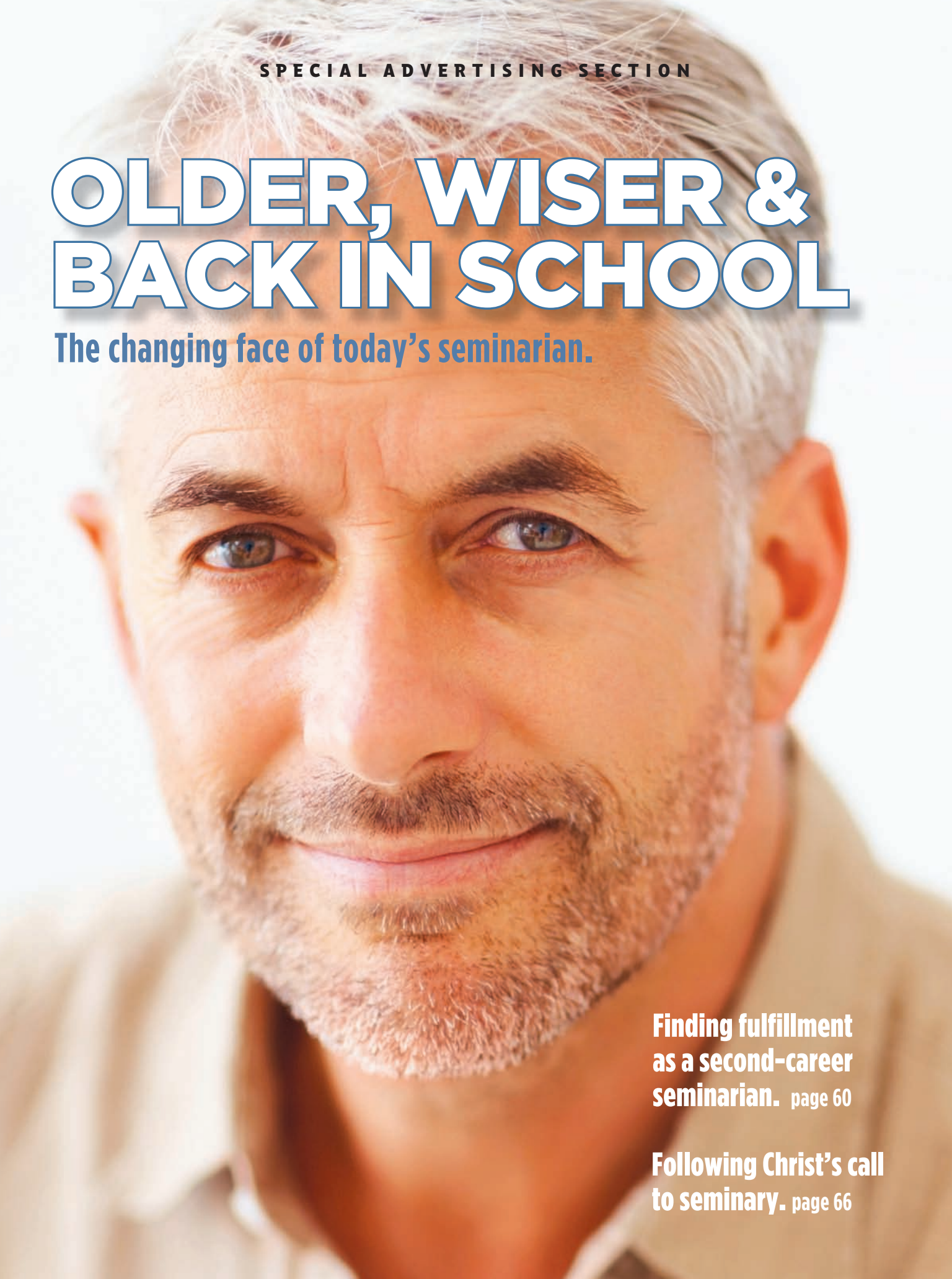


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The changing face of today's seminarian.

**Finding fulfillment
as a second-career
seminarian.** page 60

**Following Christ's call
to seminary.** page 66



A Step in Faith

Finding fulfillment as a second-career seminarian.

Going to seminary full time is demanding. Applications, financial aid, and academics are stressful—add paying a mortgage, raising a family, and possibly leaving a career, and going to seminary can seem downright impossible. Despite the challenges of returning to school at a later stage in life, more men and women are answering the call to ministry and taking a step in faith.

Often called second-career seminarians, these older, more non-traditional students are providing impetus for seminaries to adapt and expand their educational experiences. Many schools are now modifying the one-size-fits-all classroom model to integrate families, plus they're developing class formats that better serve a wide variety of student

situations. According to school representatives, seminaries—and ultimately the church—are the better for it.

Lifelong Learners

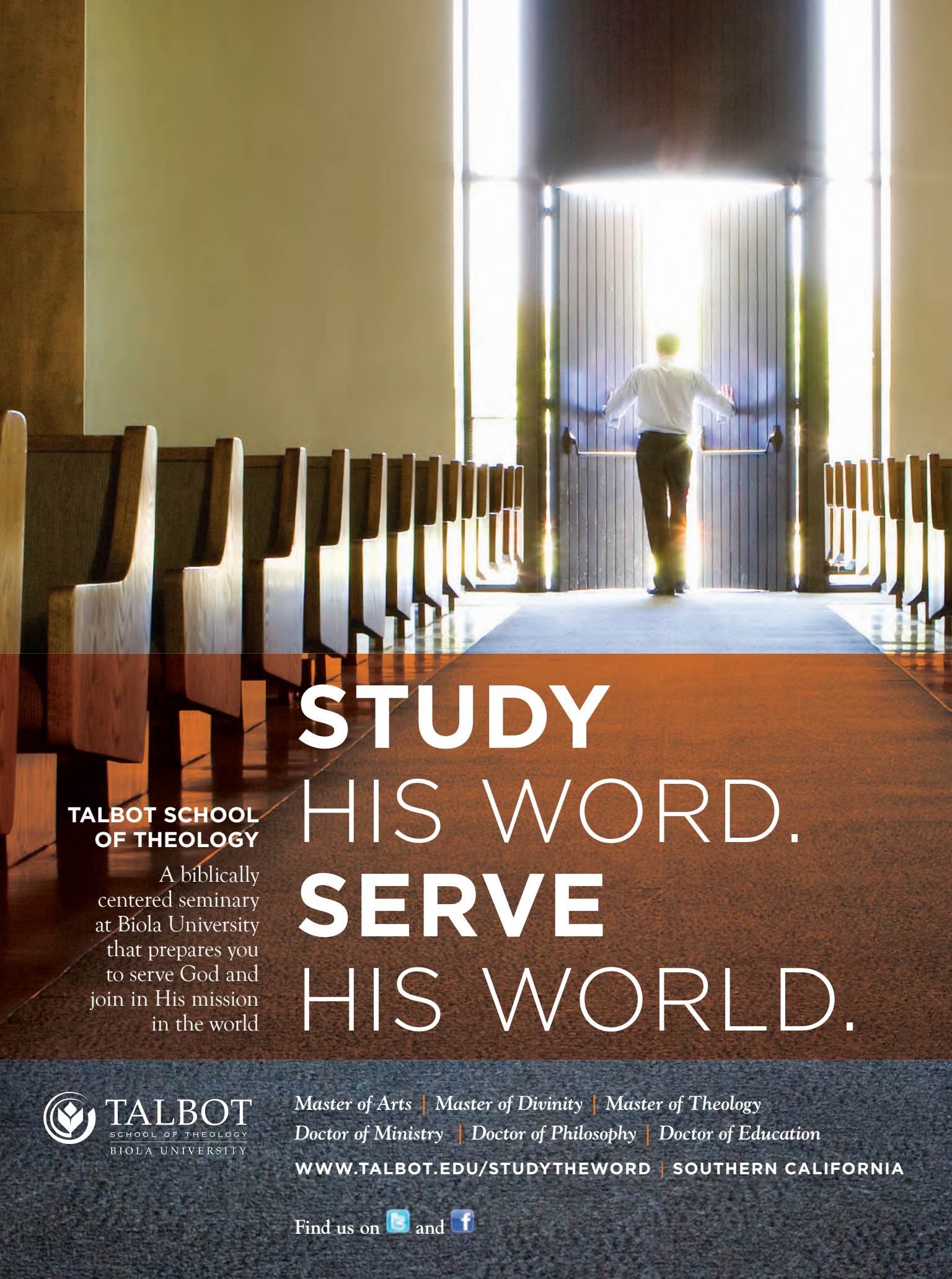
Second-career seminarians have something that can't be taught in a lecture or learned from a textbook—life experience. Life experience can deepen a student's passion for ministry and provide a foundation for their new career serving others. Rick Walston, Ph.D., president of Columbia Evangelical Seminary in Buckley, Washington, sees these second-career seminarians as lifelong learners, and believes their previous experience is fundamental to their new academic career and transition into full-time ministry.

"I think that there is a balance to be

had between academics and real-world experiences," explains Dr. Walston.

"Those students who have already been in the workforce add that dynamic to their studies."

With the average age of seminary students quickly rising to late 30s and early 40s, many students entering seminary have decades of work experience. They come from all backgrounds—business, healthcare, public relations, academia—but they all have a long-range goal of ministry. Many of these second-career students didn't enroll in seminary right after graduating from college for a host of reasons. Some simply didn't feel called, others weren't ready to jump back into academia, and others had a desire to work. According to Dr. Walston, waiting to go back to seminary



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and gaining some work experience and maturity can only enhance a student's seminary experience. Older students bring an entirely different perspective on learning. Age and life experience cannot be taught in a classroom. "Books about ministry cannot adequately impart the blood, sweat, and tears that are a part of actually being in the ministry," emphasizes Dr. Walston.

With this principle in mind, Columbia's seminary pairs its students with mentors who are active in ministry. Each student is assigned a professor in their field of interest. Students and mentors interact with each other via email, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. These relationships are core to the academic and spiritual growth of students.

"The relationships that students and mentors develop last long after the student has graduated," says Dr. Walston. "In many cases, because of our one-on-one mentorship format, students actually have far more personal time with their professors."

Distance Learning

One of the greatest obstacles for second-career seminary students and their families is moving to on-campus housing. Unlike traditional students—who come to seminary shortly after graduating from college and have little economic responsibilities outside of college loans—second-career seminarians have family responsibilities to consider, like spouses who have careers and children in school. To make matters more difficult, moving a family isn't as easy as it once was. The economic downturn has also adversely affected many seminary students. Prior to the collapse of the housing market, many second-career seminarians financed their education through proceeds from the sale of their homes; for most, that is no longer an option. It's also not economically feasible for many second-career students to quit their full-time job.

"The average student works more than 20 or 30 hours a week," says Randy Walls, Ph.D., director of continuing education and associate professor of leadership and spiritual formation at Assemblies of God Theological

Seminary in Springfield, Missouri. "It is a fairly significant life shift to quit your job and move to campus. It's a move that many students can no longer make."

Many schools are beginning to address this challenge by bringing education to the students instead of bringing students to the education. Distance-learning classes are becoming more popular in seminaries across the United States. These online classes are growing in popularity because they allow students to stay in their communities and homes, and, in some cases, pursue their seminary education without leaving their jobs.

"We're trying to make it easier for people to come back to school," says Dr. Walls. "Some people aren't called to sell everything they own and uproot themselves to relocate to go to seminary. It's not just the economics, but also the disruption to the family life. But in order to balance that, these second-career seminarians will take a little longer to finish their degrees by doing the external version of the degree program."

Although the distance-learning format may be convenient, many students still want the traditional classroom experience, but can't commit to living on campus long-term. To meet these students' needs, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary offers a condensed classroom experience. These classes are in a traditional classroom, but take place during one week. Students spend 40 hours with a professor, which is the same amount of classroom time in a traditional semester. Students are then given assignments which they have about 90 days to complete. These classes are a wonderful option for students who work full time, because an entire semester-long class can be completed during a week's vacation.

"These hybrid class modules are becoming fairly common," says Dr. Walls, "because of the economic issues and life circumstances many people are facing these days."

Distance learning courses and on-campus compressed classes in no way dilute the educational experience of seminary. Dr. Walls is careful to point out that students enrolled in these

alternative courses still have a rigorous academic schedule. They must complete the same milestones as traditional students although they may be given additional time to finish their degree.

"I see second-career students as part of the handiwork of God," says Dr. Walls. "They come from many vocations, but they all recognized the call to invest their lives in ministry. And seminaries are taking advantage of the wave of adults coming in as part of furthering the kingdom."

Campus Life

Not only has the classroom experience evolved to better serve the second-career student, but so has life on campus. Steve Hutchison, the director of admissions at Palmer Theological Seminary in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, also understands that not every student can uproot their entire family to live on campus. Many of the students who attend Palmer Theological Seminary commute to campus. So along with traditional housing options, Palmer Theological Seminary offers what they coined commuter housing.

The commuter housing, which costs an average of \$40 a night, is available for any student who lives at least an hour away and needs to stay on campus for less than three nights. This allows commuters to arrange their classes so they only have to be on campus a few days a week, while still maintaining their permanent residence. Some students will use the housing weekly, while others may only use it once a semester.

"We have students from almost every background you can think of," says Hutchison. "We have people who are still teaching and come to school on the side, because right now they cannot afford to go full time or they have families they can't move. So this type of housing really fills in the gap."

Although many seminary students commute, there are still a fair number of students who live on campus. Palmer Theological Seminary offers these students low-cost, on-campus, one-, two-, or three-bedroom apartments. It's not unusual for students to bring their entire family, including children.

continued on page 66



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A portrait of Tyler Hettich, a young man with short brown hair and a slight smile, wearing a red polo shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with greenery and purple flowers.

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Second-career seminarians are changing the dynamic of the classroom, and their families are changing the landscape of the campus.

Bus stops are popping up on college campuses to take children to school. Palmer Theological Seminary also has devoted a portion of the library to children's books. The librarian painted it bright colors and brought in age-appropriate books for a younger audience.

"The kids are fun, and they can infuse some life and humanity in the world around us," says Hutchison. "They are an important component to our life on campus."

Community is also an important aspect of life on campus. Students have the advantage of an instant community with their peers and professors in classroom settings. According to Hutchison, there is a strong bond that develops between students and professors. "If you asked our alums, I think they would say along with

learning and stretching and practical skills, the one thing they'd remember is the support and care of the professors."

But students aren't the only ones who need a strong support group. Making the transition to living on campus can be challenging, especially for spouses and children. Like many colleges, Palmer Theological Seminary hosts Bible studies and support groups for spouses. Chapel services and special meals are also offered to help families make connections on campus. Most importantly, Palmer Theological Seminary strongly encourages every family to find a church home.

"One thing we strongly encourage all of our students to do is to get involved in a local church," explains Hutchison. "That's where families can really find support that they will need. I believe all of God's people should be rooted in a church—but especially those who have just moved to the area."

Whether a student lives on campus or commutes, college administrators acknowledge that going back to school is an enormous transition. Feeling called, and actually going back to school, can seem like two very different realities. Although seminaries are taking steps to make it easier for students to enroll, the realities and responsibilities of daily living must be balanced with the faith that God will provide a means for students to complete their degree.

"I am convinced if you take one step of faith, take that little step and see what happens, it's like a sculptor who keeps chipping away at rock," says Hutchison. "It doesn't look like anything at first, but if you keep chipping away a form starts to appear. The bottom line is: take that first step and see where God leads you."

.....
Amy Adair is a wife and mother to three. Her book, *1001 Tears: A Portrait of Adoption*, is due out in 2011.



Making the Big Move

Following Christ to seminary.

Leaving a career to enroll in school full time is not an easy decision. It is often a prayerful struggle that can take years to resolve. There are logistical considerations for a second-career seminarian, like finances, family, and housing. For many seminary students, just the idea of enrolling

in school full time again is daunting. However, numerous second-career students would agree that while going back to school is not always easy, God provides for those who follow his call.

A Family Affair

The Ten Haken family was deeply rooted in their community in Sioux

Center, Iowa. Michael met his wife, Jessica, at Dordt College in Sioux Center, where they both graduated in 1998. They had three children and bought a house; Michael started his career as a banker and later settled in the public relations department at his alma mater.

Michael had always thought about going back to seminary, but the



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timing never seemed right. They had college loans and a mortgage to pay, and three kids in a Christian school. However, Michael felt unsettled and

as a spiritual journey. "It was very eye opening," says Michael. "I knew there would be challenges, but I had to trust that if we were following God's call, then he would provide for the family."

Even in a sluggish market, the Ten Hakens house sold so quickly they had to find temporary housing in Iowa before they moved to Grand Rapids. In order to have enough funds for the move, the Ten Hakens had a huge garage sale and liquidated a large part of their furnishings and belongings.

Their next step was finding new housing in Grand Rapids. Although Calvin offered on-campus housing for seminary students, the apartments were too small for a family of five. So Michael contacted his admissions counselor and they helped the family find a rental unit that was not only close to campus, but close to the kids' new school.

Besides a big move, the family had to downsize their budget. Both Jessica and Michael found part-time jobs. Michael also qualified for several loans and grants. Although Michael admits that the family went from earning a paycheck to spending one, he does not regret the debt he is incurring.

"The Lord really does provide in times of need and transition," says Michael. "That bears itself in many different ways. Some are physical, like providing us with housing financial aid, but it has all come together."

Juggling full-time school and a

family life is not always easy. Michael made a conscious decision to treat school like a full-time job. He is on campus every day from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. He comes home, eats with the family, and helps with homework and chores. After the kids are in bed, he starts his homework.

"This is where having the experience of being in the working world puts a perspective on school," says Michael. "There's always more to do, but at some point you have to draw the line. Your family is important and you have to have personal time."

While leaving behind everything and everyone they knew was not easy, the Ten Hakens have adapted to their new lives and have grown deeper in their faith. "We've seen the importance of relying on God," says Michael. "I don't know where we'll go when I graduate in 2013. Now we know it's possible to move, and we're happy to go wherever the Lord leads us as a family."

Connecting Career and Ministry

Susan Bentley paid her dues. She worked as an administrator in the public school system for 30 years. But when she retired at age 60, she wasn't thinking about slowing down

or doing a little traveling. Instead, she enrolled in Azusa Pacific University School of Theology in Azusa, California, as a full-time student.

"I see myself as a brand new person starting out with my whole life ahead of me at 63," says Susan, who is now in her third year of seminary. "You

can work well into your 70s and still be very vibrant and contributing. It's a really wonderful second career."

Susan, who is able to commute to campus, is admittedly one of the older students at APU, but it doesn't bother her. She views herself as a



Ten Haken Family

couldn't see himself working in public relations for the rest of his life.

"All the reasons why going back to school wouldn't work seemed to outweigh the reasons why it would work," says Michael. "But when the Lord convicted me to go back to school, I found that there are ways to make it work. I knew it would be challenging, but I also knew the Lord always provides."

Michael and Jessica started investigating seminaries. In the spring of 2010 Michael was admitted to Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Michael and Jessica called a family meeting and told the kids, then ages 11, 9, and 19 months, about the upcoming move. Although the older kids were admittedly nervous and apprehensive, they supported the family decision to move.

"This was a huge step of faith for us," says Michael. "I wouldn't say this is the Lord calling me alone—he's calling us to do this as a family. I wouldn't be able to do it if I didn't have the support of my family."

The Ten Hakens started doing what once seemed impossible: selling their house and uprooting their family. Michael says he viewed the process



Susan Bentley

continued on page 72



"In my time at Trinity, I have really appreciated the intentionality of the faculty in their approach toward their students. They are committed to providing expertise in their field, as well as developing and caring for the whole person. The faculty are extremely pastoral. Here, it's not just my mind that is valued but who I am as a whole person. I feel like I've received an education that connects the mind with the heart."

—Meryl Herr (MDiv '07)

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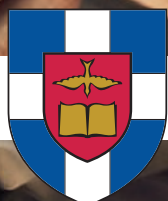


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lifelong learner and teacher. She is in class with people of all ages and backgrounds. Some have just graduated from college, some are senior pastors, and others have worked a few years in other fields like public relations or business.

Susan admits she felt the call to go to seminary nearly 30 years ago, but the timing of going back to school full time never felt right. Over the years, as she prayerfully considered going to seminary, she had a vision of a 12-step, Christ-centered ministry program to help people overcome addiction and heal spiritually. Her vision would not become a reality until her time at APU.

"I had to grow up in Christ," says Susan. "The Lord put me through 30 years of career training for this. It took me my whole career to get it together."

Susan's career in education was an invaluable asset to developing her 12-step program, which she calls the Whole Person Healing and Recovering Transformation Group. Susan has developed and honed her ministry idea throughout her academic career at APU. Each semester she has taken a Field Study class, which is much like an internship class. The class, which students take every semester, focuses on incorporating knowledge from other classes, like pastoral counseling,

to develop one ministry idea. With the help of a mentor, Susan has counseled 25 people over the last two years.

"The professors have been so encouraging," says Susan. "They coach us and help us and do case studies. Everything at APU is remarkably connected."

Susan plans to continue her counseling ministry when she graduates in 2012. Seminary has been a bridge between two careers.

"My whole purpose is to learn all I can and to be so accessible in my teaching that I can pass on my knowledge to lay people," says Susan. "At my age, I hope to build up the next generation; I truly believe my seminary experience will help me do that. I hope it goes on for years to come—even after my work is finished."

WANT TO KNOW WHAT PROGRAMS WILL FIT YOUR GOALS AND NEEDS?

Here are phone numbers to request information about seminaries and graduate schools advertising in this issue of *Christianity Today*. Find information about institutions that offer post-graduate programs at www.SeminaryGradSchool.com.

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Wheaton College (IL).....	630-752-5000

In the October 2010 special advertising section, Calvin Institute for Contemporary Worship (MI) was incorrectly listed. The correct name is Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. CICW is an interdisciplinary study and ministry center, not a seminary, and does not offer degrees.

Two by Two

Newlyweds Kelly and Eric Gearhart were happy in their careers. Kelly, who graduated in 2003 from Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola, Florida, was busy raising money to go on the mission field to translate Bibles. Eric, also a 2003 Pensacola graduate, was working at a church in Pennsylvania.

"We both had a desire to go back to school before we got married," explains Kelly. "But it never fit into the plans when we were single. Once we got married, we decided now was the time."

After their June 2009 wedding, Eric and Kelly started investigating seminaries. Since they didn't have the responsibilities of children or homeownership, they decided it was the right time to enroll in school. But their biggest concern was starting their marriage strapped with student loans and debt. So even though they both felt led to go to seminary, they cautiously looked at ways to finance both of their degrees.

"Going into debt can be scary," admits Kelly. "You have to be realistic, but at the same time you need to trust that the Lord will provide."

Kelly and Eric prayerfully considered seminaries. They were drawn to Trinity International University

continued on page 76

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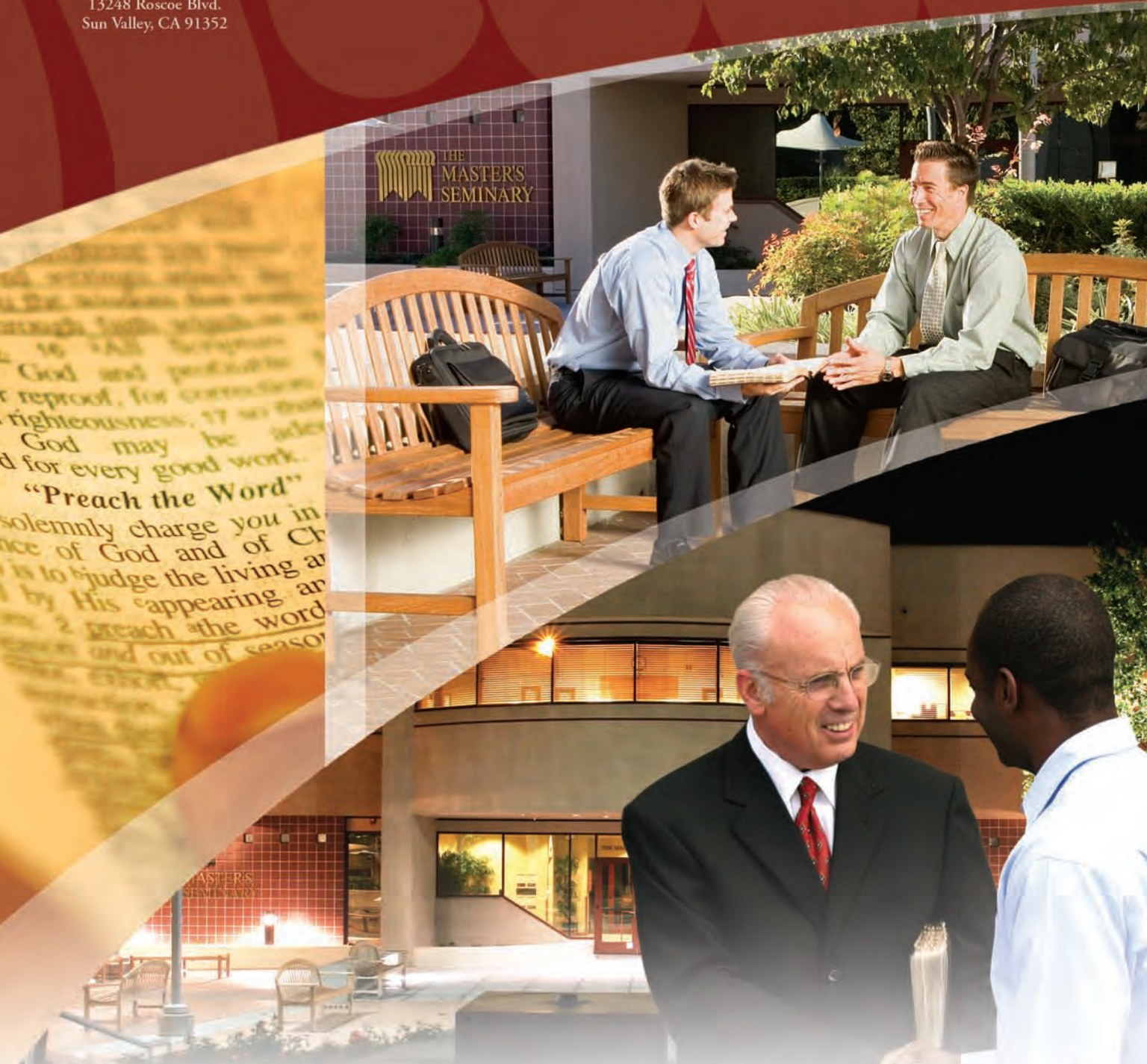
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in Deerfield, Illinois, because of its strong program, but also because they offer a 50 percent tuition rebate for spouses who both enroll full time. Although housing and books are not included, this significantly reduced the couple's school loans. Kelly and Eric also lowered their cost of living by living in the student housing on campus. To make ends meet each month, they eventually hope to have

four part-time jobs between them.

"Financially, going back to school can be very overwhelming," says Kelly. "The move from Pennsylvania to Illinois was very costly. And we have to rely and trust in the Lord that he will provide, and that we will find the jobs we need to meet our monthly obligations."

Beyond the challenges these newlyweds face in the classroom

and financially, they are learning how to be marriage partners in an academic setting. Eric and Kelly have specifically set aside a few nights each month when they will take a break from their studies. "For the sake of our marriage and sanity, instead of graduating in three years, we will take four years to graduate," says Kelly. "We do need to make our marriage a priority, too."

Kelly also says that being in seminary together has been refreshing for their marriage. They are enrolled in many of the same classes, and as they study the same material, they are discovering a deeper connection not only to God, but also to each other.

"When you're in a situation like this it leads to a deeper faith," explains Kelly. "Other things are important—like finances and loans—but if this is what God wants, it will work out. Going to seminary has been a very enriching and spiritually uplifting time." —AA

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BY SARAH PULLIAM BAILEY



Religion 2.0

Timothy Dalrymple clarifies the gospel online.

A

fter majoring in philosophy and religious studies at Stanford, earning an M.Div. at Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in religion at Harvard, and studying at Oxford as well as two universities in China, Timothy Dalrymple had had enough of academia. So he plunged into the online world at Patheos.com, a growing multireligious website, as manager of its evangelical portal.

In 2010, the multifith site grew from 15,000 monthly visitors to about half a million with just 11 full-time employees. Most notably, Dalrymple lured North Park University professor Scot McKnight's Jesus Creed blog away from Beliefnet. (McKnight said he thought Patheos

➤ **Hometown** Atlanta

➤ **Church** Perimeter Church

➤ **Family** Joyce (wife); Sophia (daughter, 2)

➤ **Reading now** Wayne Grudem's *Politics—According to the Bible*

➤ **Favorite movie** The Lord of the Rings trilogy

➤ **Favorite Bible verse** Galatians 2:20

➤ **My hero** Søren Kierkegaard

➤ **What makes you laugh** My daughter's energy, curiosity, and ridiculous happiness

➤ **What makes you mad** Idolatry and hypocrisy in the church

➤ **Hobbies** Voracious consumer of news and commentary, sports fan

“was a better fit—more exclusively directed toward an educated audience.”) Patheos is based in Denver, but Dalrymple, 34, works from his laptop in Atlanta.

“He’s kind of come out of nowhere,” said Michael Cromartie, vice president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. Patheos covers a wide range of topics, but Cromartie particularly notices Dalrymple’s political commentary: “Many young evangelicals spend a lot of time saying, ‘I’m not Dobson, I’m not one of them.’ But [Dalrymple] is a very thoughtful, theologically orthodox, culturally and politically conservative guy. He writes with confidence and boldness that I find bracing and refreshing.”

question & answer

Why the shift from academia to Patheos?

I was growing weary of the trendiness in academia where enlightened opinion is determined by intellectual fashion. I was also growing frustrated with the prevailing contempt for conservative Christianity. I felt as though the center of gravity of social conversation was shifting more to instantaneous media. Patheos creates a marketplace of ideas, and I believe that the gospel flourishes in that sort of marketplace.

Are people concerned with the multifith element?

Some potential partners have elected to not get involved because they don’t want to direct people to a website where they might learn about other religions. I think that’s shortsighted. We should have nothing to fear from people learning about other faiths.

How do you hope to shape or cover evangelicalism?

It’s important to make clear that it’s perfectly possible to be theologically and even politically conservative and yet be absolutely committed to serving the least of these. There seems to be doubt of that on the Left and not enough people making that case on the Right.

What do you hope to achieve?

Since Patheos is a multifith site, I want to represent the gospel as clearly and compellingly as possible. I also hope Patheos will host the conversations that are shaping the future of the church. In the broadest brush, I hope it can be both a witness and a host of conversations.

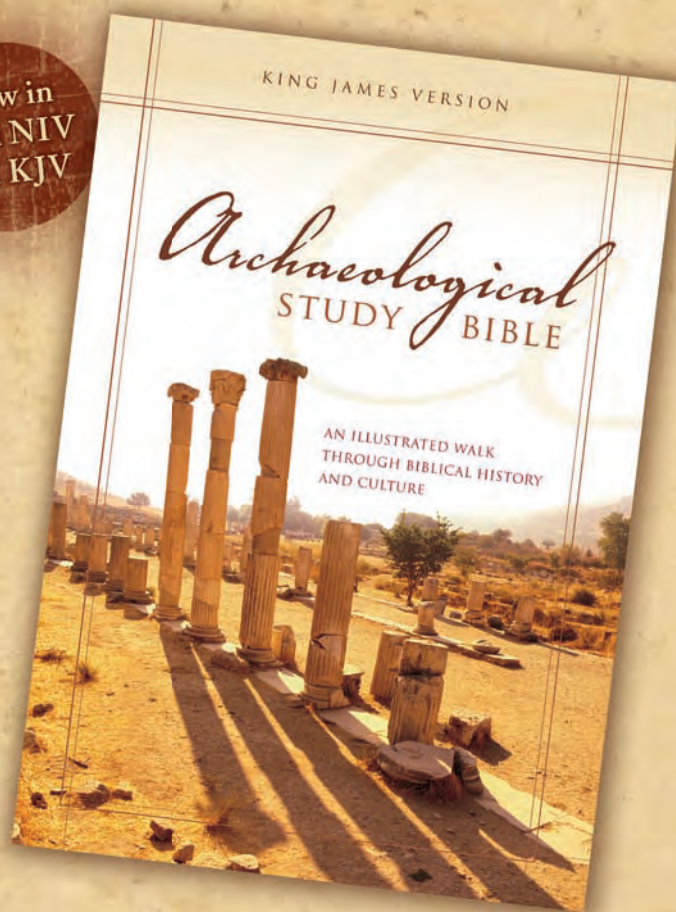
What do you see in the years ahead?

I’ve always understood writing and teaching as part of God’s calling for me. I would like to at last finish a novel I’ve been working on. I’d also like to put out a book that fleshes out in a popular way the issue of the theology of suffering that I explored in my dissertation.

More: evangelical.patheos.com

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Leon Stevenson is a Church
Planter in inner-city Detroit at
Mack Ave Community Church

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