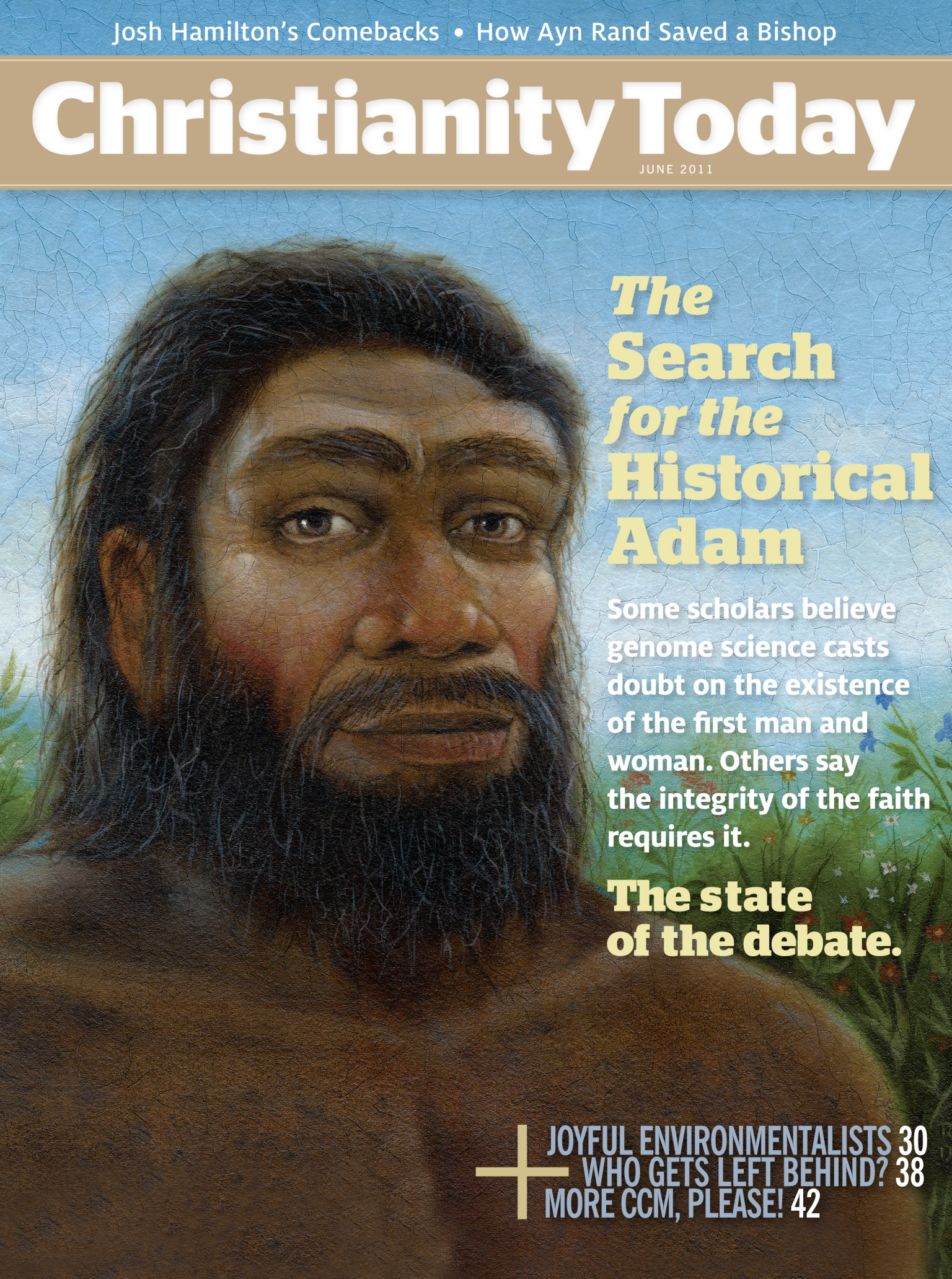


Christianity Today

JUNE 2011



The Search for the Historical Adam

Some scholars believe genome science casts doubt on the existence of the first man and woman. Others say the integrity of the faith requires it.

**The state
of the debate.**

+ JOYFUL ENVIRONMENTALISTS 30
WHO GETS LEFT BEHIND? 38
MORE CCM, PLEASE! 42

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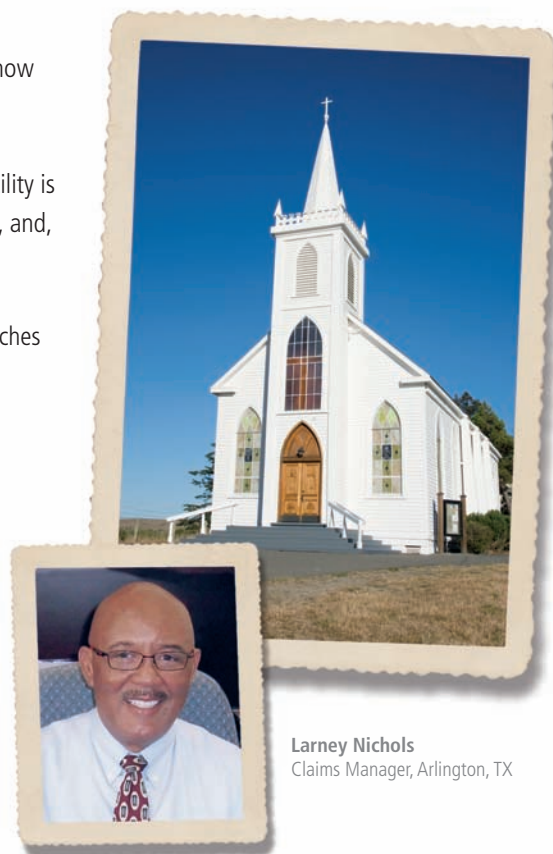
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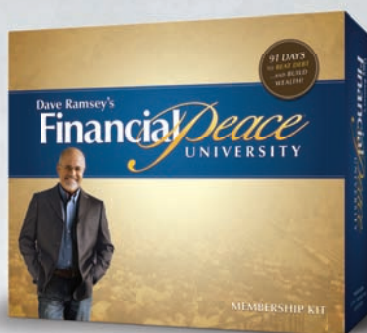


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Limits

Money should fund your vision, not determine it.

BRIEFING

- 11 Spotlight** The Theology of bin Laden's Death
- 12 Gleanings** China house church maintains Easter showdown, RLUIPA loses its bite, and bankruptcy court says Amish can't forgive on their own terms.
- 14 Headlines** **IRAN** Regime's antagonism boosts Christianity's appeal.
CHURCH-STATE Ruling means threat to pastor tax break may have lost its legs. **15**
NEPAL Christians demand burial space in culture of cremation. **15**
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM Increase in state licenses prompts more conscience clashes. **16**
- ◀ **{ In Depth }** **ABORTION** Political gains by U.S. conservatives unleash waves of pro-life legislation. **17**

FEATURES

- 22 The Search for the Historical Adam** **RICHARD N. OSTLING**
 The center of the evolution debate has shifted from asking whether we came from earlier animals to whether we could have come from one man and one woman.
- 30 The Joyful Environmentalists** **INTERVIEW BY ANDY CROUCH**
 Eugene Peterson and Peter Harris see creation care as a natural response to God's goodness.
- ◀ **34 Super Natural** **DAN REED**
 Recovering crack addict Josh Hamilton knows he's special, but it's a special that cuts two ways.
- 38 Who Gets Left Behind?** **MATTHEW DICKERSON**
 How end times theories shape the ways we view our earthly abode.
- 42 A Variety of Religious Composition** **LAWRENCE R. MUMFORD**
 The music we sing, in and out of church, is more interesting than we've been led to believe.
- 46 The Cultural Medium and the Christian Message** **D. H. WILLIAMS**
 What kind of Christians do contemporary services produce?
- 50 Ayn Rand Led Me to Christ** **EDWARD S. LITTLE II**
 How the anti-Christian philosopher prepared me to hear the gospel.
- 54 Fleecing the Faithful—Again** **KEN WALKER**
 A Swedish Christian businessman and former YWAM leader defrauds missionaries of millions.

VIEWPOINTS

- 59 Letters** Readers respond to the April issue of CT.
- 61 Where We Stand** No Adam, No Eve, No Gospel
- ◀ **62 The Village Green** Brett McCracken, Dónal O'Mathúna, and Ed Welch debate whether Christians should smoke medicinal marijuana.
- 64 Wrestling with Angels** Carolyn Arends unveils the lazy culprit behind our busyness.
- 66 Contra Mundum** Chuck Colson and Timothy George revive MLK's legacy of civility.

CT REVIEW

- 69 Books**
- ◀ Clifford Williams's *Existential Reasons for Belief in God*
 - Shane Hipps: My Top 5 on technology
 - Ben Witherington's *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor*
 - Excerpt: *A Meal with Jesus*, by Tim Chester
 - Wilson's Bookmarks
 - Interview: Byron R. Johnson on Christian criminal justice
- 74 Movies**
- Terrence Malick's sensory revelations
 - *The Grandfathers*
- 75 Music**
- Two minutes with John Michael Talbot
 - Owl City's *All Things Bright and Beautiful*
- 76 Quick Takes** More media of note

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 9 Inside CT** Ted Olsen calls a family meeting over the first couple.
- 88 Who's Next** Jonathan Golden's coffee business brews reconciliation in Rwanda.



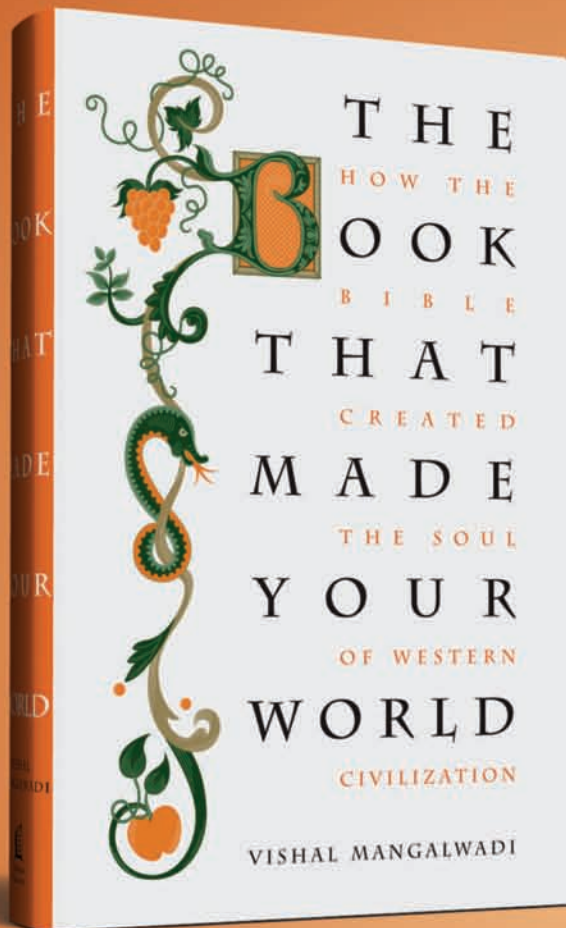
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The Mirror of Truth

Twenty-eight years ago, I left pastoral ministry to become an editor. I oriented myself to my new calling by reading an essay by Wes Pippert, United Press International's veteran political reporter. Was there a theological dimension to the calling of a Christian journalist? Wes connected a journalist's commitment to truth with Jesus' claim to be the Truth.

At *Christianity Today*, I've tried to make the way we handle little-t truth reflect the Truth himself, as "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." But even when it is spoken with grace, the truth can lead to tension. A community's health depends on having an accurate picture of itself, and American Christians need journalists like those at CT to hold up the mirror of truth. After a good look in that mirror, we can celebrate the healthy things we see, as well as scrub off the metaphorical smudges and lose the figurative flab.

In this issue, we once again hold up the mirror to warn ourselves about Christian gullibility when fellow believers offer too-good-to-be-true investments. That sad story starts on page 54. But we also tell a story about truth and error—with a twist. On page 50, Bishop Edward Little tells how Ayn Rand's egregious, anti-Christian philosophy prepared him for the truth of the gospel. Even Satan's lies can serve God's truth.

CT regularly relies on readers like you to help us hold up the mirror—perhaps by creating buzz about a groundbreaking article or by giving gift subscriptions. Now I would like to encourage each of you to continue this needed support in a new way.

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David Neff, Editor in Chief

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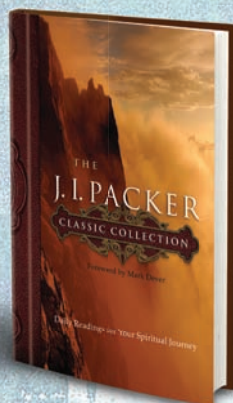
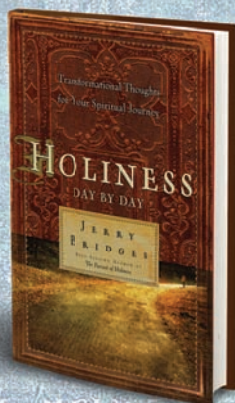
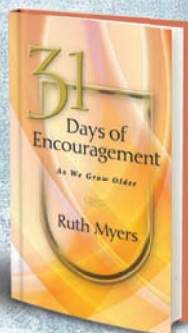
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Adam, Where Are You?

It's time for a difficult, grace-filled family meeting.

BETWEEN evangelicals' passion for adoption and other changing family dynamics, we probably all know someone who has been part of a particular difficult conversation: the man known for years as Dad is not, in fact, the biological father.

Those conversations are often full of grace and love and can end in greater intimacy. But they're also usually fraught with pain and difficult questions: What does this mean? Where do I come from? Who am I?

The recent reshaping of the creation-evolution debate is causing similar discomfort for those of us who emphasize the authority and infallibility of Scripture. Scientists in genomic demography and other fields—as well as their Christian popularizers in groups like the BioLogos Foundation—are essentially sitting us down to have “the talk”: Adam, the man you've called your father all these years, isn't who you think he is, they explain.

Few debates in our world have been as impassioned and emotional as those over creation. But now we're not just talking about dating rocks and interpreting fossils. We're talking about family. Nor is the discussion between those who think the Bible's account of creation, fall, and redemption is important and those who find it irrelevant. This is a family meeting.

That is one of the reasons we're covering the discussion multiple times in this issue. First, we wanted our cover story (page 22) to be the most straightforward, non-partisan report on the debate possible. Richard Ostling was our immediate pick. *Christianity Today's* news editor in the 1960s, Ostling went on to spend nearly three decades with *Time* magazine and another with the Associated Press. He is universally acclaimed as one of the top religion journalists of our age. We were thrilled when he said yes.

We are a magazine that prides itself on such trustworthy, balanced reporting (for another example that is also somewhat uncomfortable, see “Fleeing the Faithful—Again,” page 54). But we also know our readers want to know where we stand as a magazine. For that, read our editorial on page 61.

As you'll see in the editorial, we find the discussion about the historicity of Adam difficult and, yes, a little painful. But we are also glad to see it happening: We welcome the opportunity to once again ask with wonder, “Where do I come from? Who am I?”—perhaps chiefly because it reminds us of the answer: We have been adopted by a loving Father.

Next month: Focus on the Family's big shift after Dobson, Tim Stafford's account of revival in India, John Witte's take on democracy through Christ the King, and New York City's Christian gardening movement.

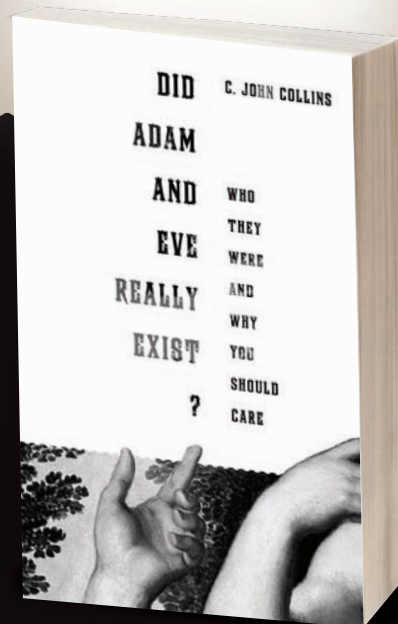
WE NEED A REAL ADAM AND EVE

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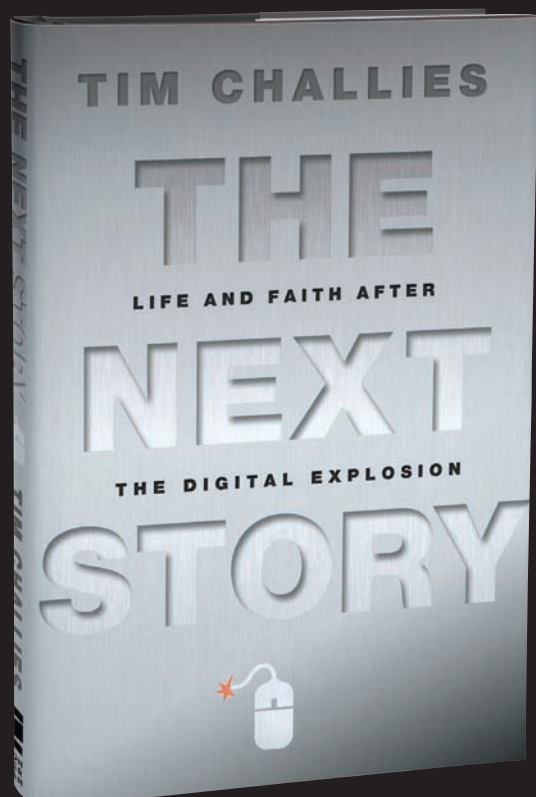
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SPOTLIGHT: Rejoicing in the Death of the Wicked

➔ The past 10 years have seen countless impassioned debates over the Global War on Terror, most of which have been saturated in theological arguments: What makes a just war? What are the ethics of interrogation? What is the U.S.'s relationship with Islam? The killing of Osama bin Laden was no different, and in the days afterward one question dominated: Was it wrong to celebrate? To cheer? Even to be happy? While crowds celebrated in the streets, Christian theologians seemed united in their call for solemn reflection and thanksgiving.



Americans' feelings about bin Laden's death, the night of the announcement:

72%	60%	58%	16%
Relieved	Proud	Happy	Afraid

Pew Research Center

Retributive justice is sober justice. The reason for this is simple—God is capable of vengeance, which is perfectly true to his own righteousness and perfection—but human beings are not. [Celebrating in the streets] looks far more like we are simply taking satisfaction in the death of an enemy. That kind of revenge just produces greater numbers of enemies.

— Albert Mohler

Rejoicing in the death of another, however wicked, involves forgetting the depths of our own depravity and the astonishing reality of our own salvation.

— Gideon Strauss

The fact that we are all sinners, and that we all deserve death and judgment, is quite true. But if we hasten to remind ourselves of this reality at moments like this, the effect is not to heighten our sense of awareness of sin, but rather to flatten it.

— Douglas Wilson

Bible Versus

The most-shared verses on Twitter and Facebook in the 12 hours after the news broke.

Source: Stephen Smith's OpenBible.info

Proverbs 24:17

"Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice."

Shared by Michael Hyatt, among others

Psalms 138:8

"The Lord will make perfect the things that concern me."

Unrelated tweet shared by Rev. Run

Proverbs 21:15

"When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers."

Shared by Rick Warren

Ezekiel 33:11

"As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live."

American evangelicals are two times as likely

as their neighbors to oppose a decrease in terrorism defense spending, though only slightly more likely to favor an increase in such spending. Pew Research Center

71% Evangelicals who said a presidential candidate's views on terrorism will influence their vote in 2012. (Taxes ranked slightly higher as an influencing factor, at 76%.)

50% Americans overall who said this.

28% Atheists and agnostics who said this. Barna Research





GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 House church maintains Easter showdown

CHINA Beijing's largest unregistered church held outdoor Sunday services in April even as police arrested worshipers who showed up and kept hundreds others—including pastors and elders—under house arrest. The 1,000-member Shouwang Church launched the campaign weeks before Easter, after its landlord gave in to government pressure and terminated the church's lease. State authorities have denied Shouwang's registration attempts since 2005, insisting that the church join the state-approved Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Shouwang's refusal, and subsequent meeting troubles—the church made international news in 2009 for worshipping outside during a snowstorm after one of many evictions—have become emblematic of the growing strength of Chinese house churches as well as their Achilles' heel: state pressure on landlords.

2 Ambassador resigns over faith focus

MALTA The American ambassador to Malta resigned after an internal government audit rebuked him for spending too much time writing about abortion and his religious beliefs. Douglas Kmiec, a Catholic and former professor of law at Pepperdine University, said in his resignation letter that “the only true and lasting peace will be one that incorporates sensitivity to the world's faith traditions in diplomacy.” A report from the State Department's inspector general said Kmiec spent “considerable time” writing articles rather than on meetings and other events typical for ambassadors; Kmiec argues that his

faith-based writings were relevant to diplomacy in the Catholic archipelago.

3 RLUIPA loses its bite

Prisoners can no longer sue states for compensation when their religious rights are violated, according to the Supreme Court. The Court ruled 7–2 that the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) does not allow for prisoners to sue for monetary damages because states have “sovereign immunity,” even when running prisons with federal funds. Dissenters said the ruling removes the best remedy prisoners have—the threat of financial penalty—to force changes in prison rules that restrict their religious practice.

4 David Wilkerson killed in car crash

David Wilkerson, Pentecostal evangelist and pastor of Times Square Church, died in a Texas car crash on April 27. He was 79. In 1958, the Pennsylvania pastor felt called to meet seven teens on trial for murder in New York City. His efforts made the front page of the *Daily News*, and gang members welcomed him as “the guy the cops don't like.” His ministry among gangs and addicts led him to create Teen Challenge (and later Worldwide Challenge). His 1963 *The Cross and the Switchblade* sold 15 million copies and helped to launch both the Catholic and Protestant charismatic movements.

5 Court to hear seminary tenure dispute

A lawsuit against Lexington Theological Seminary will test the boundaries of court involvement in religious employment decisions. Jimmy Kirby, a black, tenured professor, sued the Kentucky school for

racial discrimination after losing his job in 2009. A Fayette Circuit Court judge dismissed the suit last fall, arguing that “the First Amendment simply does not permit the court to second-guess the seminary's spiritual decisions,” but the state appeals court agreed to hear the case. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear a similar employment dispute involving a teacher at a Lutheran school in Michigan later this year.

6 Holy Land churches unite in protest

ISRAEL Leaders of Christian denominations in Jerusalem have jointly asked that the government reverse its decision to deny a residency permit for an Anglican bishop, as well as jointly opposed new property taxes on church buildings. Bishop Suheil Dawani, born in Nablus in the West Bank, must have permission from the Israeli Ministry of the Interior to live in East Jerusalem. Church leaders, representing an array of historic denominations, are concerned the permit denial sets a dangerous precedent. They also say the attempted property tax is an “aggressive action” not imposed by any previous governing body in the geographical area.

7 Confusion over Mars Hill name ends

Mars Hill Graduate School, a 14-year-old seminary in Seattle, Washington, changed its name to the Seattle School of Theology and Psychology to avoid further confusion with pastor Mark Driscoll's megachurch of the same name. The 300-student school was founded as a branch of Western Seminary in Portland, and has since become independent. The school's website says it is an “evangelical and progressive institution” that emphasizes the worldview of the interpreter as well as interpretation of Scripture. The school chose the name to convey openness to theological viewpoints.

GO FIGURE Science

41%
Protestant pastors who strongly disagree that global warming is real and manmade.

27%
Protestant pastors who said this in 2008. The “strongly agree” numbers have stayed relatively stable, at about 1 in 4.

LifeWay Research



compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

“We’re a private organization and we don’t have to give a reason and we’re not.”

Jerry Falwell Jr., on Liberty University temporarily blocking *The News & Advance* from campus Internet servers. Falwell said the block was unrelated to the paper’s content, which reported that the school is Virginia’s top recipient of federal financial aid money (\$445 million).

The News & Advance/Poynter.org

“We show that higher life expectancy discounts [the] expected benefits in the afterlife and is therefore likely to lead to postponement of religiosity.”

Elissaios Papyrakis, an economist at the University of East Anglia, on a report that found 10 extra years of life expectancy correlated to an 8.4 percent drop in people’s likelihood to call themselves religious and a 15 to 17 percent decrease in church attendance.

LiveScience / International Journal of Social Economics

“If Matthews is arguing that Wal-Mart must permit her to admonish gays at work to accommodate her religion, the claim fails.”

The Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, rejecting a Wal-Mart employee’s discrimination claim after she was fired for telling a gay colleague that he will go to hell.

Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals

“I don’t believe in mass evangelism. . . . We do personal evangelism, but we do it on a massive scale. Does it work in all contexts? No, but it still does.”

Will Graham, son of Franklin and grandson of Billy, preparing for a May 20–22 event in Ocean Grove, New Jersey.

Christianity Today Online

8 More arrests in Malatya martyrdoms

TURKEY Twenty people suspected of running a terrorist group that murdered Christians and plotted to overthrow the Turkish government have been arrested. Those arrested include a theology professor and a police chief; they are believed to belong to Ergenekon, a group linked to the torture and murder of three Christians in Malatya in 2007. The Malatya trial languished in the courts until it was merged with the Ergenekon case after documents uncovered last year outlined Ergenekon’s plans to target Christians in order to destabilize the government.

9 Bill protects student religious groups

An Arizona bill allows groups on college and university campuses to choose “only persons committed to [the] mission” as leaders and members. Senator Steve Smith (R-Maricopa) said that the bill could allow Catholic and other Christian student groups to exclude Jews or actively gay students, and that the excluded should start their own groups. The bill also prohibits government-run schools from discriminating against or penalizing students for their religious views. University policy at some state schools in Arizona prevents Christians from freely choosing their group members.

10 Parental responsibility law takes it away

TAJIKISTAN A proposed law on parental responsibility bans children under the age of 18 from participating in religious activities besides funerals. The law, still in draft form, also restricts parental choices for their children’s schooling and mandates that parents name their children according

to undefined “national values.” Muslims and Christians alike in the majority-Muslim country object to the restrictions, and an independent legal review panel said the law violates articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Tajikistan holds to. Public discussion on the law closed March 15.

11 Amish bankruptcy must stay in court

A bankruptcy case filed in an Ohio court by a member of an Amish church must be settled in court, the judge ruled. Monroe Beachy owes \$33.3 million to 2,700 people through a securities firm he operated. Beachy is a member of a New Order Amish church, and most of his creditors are Amish or Mennonite. Plain Community members “view biblical scripture as forbidding the use of courts to resolve financial disputes,” the court ruling noted, and Beachy and most of his creditors wanted to resolve the dispute in a special Amish committee. The court ruled that delegating the bankruptcy case to the committee would violate the Constitution’s Establishment Clause.

12 Push for U.N. religious defamation ban ends

SWITZERLAND Islamic nations halted their 12-year drive for a religious defamation ban, instead approving a plan promoting religious tolerance at the U.N.

Human Rights Council in Geneva. The 57-state Organization of the Islamic Conference had been fighting for resolutions protecting against the defamation of religion, which critics said would open the way for blasphemy laws like the one in Pakistan. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom welcomed the tolerance resolution, saying the defamation concept “undermines individual rights to freedom of religion and expression.”

GO FIGURE Health

200

black residents in a low-income area of Chicago were surveyed on their religion and given blood pressure tests.

35%

of those who said religion carried over to all parts of their lives had high blood pressure.

19.6%

of those who said religion didn’t carry over had high blood pressure. The researchers had expected blood pressure to be lower in the more religious group.

HealthDay



Persecution Paradox: Amid mounting arrests of Iranian Christians (including the 13 pictured here), leaders say government persecution has made Christianity more attractive to a populace increasingly resentful of Iran's Islamic regime.

EVANGELISM IRAN

Public Enemy

Regime's antagonism is increasing Christianity's appeal. By Trevor Persaud

A major spike in the harassment and arrest of Iranian Christians in recent months is revealing just how nervous the Islamic republic is about the prodigious success of house churches, say Iranian Christian leaders.

At least 202 Christians in 24 cities faced "arbitrary" arrest between June 2010 and January 2011, according to Elam Ministries. Elam, run by Iranian expatriates, counted 80 arrests over 2008 and 2009 combined.

"[Iran] has been substantially more public in its oppression of Christianity," said Todd Nettleton, a spokesman for Voice of the Martyrs. "Announcing it on the news, having the mullahs talk about it in their Friday sermons—it's just become a lot more out in the open."

"Persecution has escalated to an unprecedented level," said Abe Ghaffari, executive director of Iranian Christians International. While Iran's historic Armenian and Assyrian

congregations usually enjoy freedom of worship, Farsi-speaking house churches hosting converts from Islam work under significant threat.

"In effect, recognition of Christians in the laws of Iran has now become basically recognition of an ethnicity rather than faith," said Hussein Jadidi, a human rights lawyer who recently fled Iran after he became a target in a Christmas sweep that caught 70 other Christians.

The government is concerned, observers say, because more and more Iranian Muslims are converting to Christianity. The house church movement is booming, with converts estimated in the hundreds of thousands. Evangelists are distributing large numbers of New Testaments, and satellite television continually beams Christian programs into the country.

"The government always used to deny that Iranians become Christians," said Elam's David Yeghnazar, but now the church has become too strong to ignore. Supreme Leader

Ayatollah Khamenei declared the house church network "enemies of Iran" in an October speech, which analysts labeled a rare public acknowledgement of the movement.

"Religion is regarded as part of your national identity," said Issa Dibaj, an Iranian Christian who works as an Elam translator. "If you turn away from your religion . . . it's as if you have betrayed your country."

"In the past, [the government] would emphasize apostasy as the crime," Jadidi said. "They've changed their tactics; now evangelism, witnessing, and changing religion have become a security crime."

But now analysts say Islam is losing credibility after 30 years of theocracy. Resentment against the reigning regime is spreading and deepening—especially since the disputed 2009 national elections.

"Before the [1979] revolution, the clerics were promising that once Iran becomes an Islamic state, it would be utopia, it would be brotherhood, and everything would be fine," Dibaj said. But since then, Iranians "have seen nothing but war and fighting and international isolation and hatred, [and] they are thirsting for change."

"The Iranian public basically doesn't trust the government anymore," Ghaffari said, "and they don't trust the Muslim clergy anymore, because they have seen a lot of double standards and hypocrisy."

Converts in smaller communities still risk persecution from their own families, but tolerance is growing in urban areas and among the younger generation. "In fact," said Dibaj, "in places like Tehran and more educated communities, if you say, 'I have become a Christian,' they will respect you because of your courage and your independent thinking."

If anything, government persecution has made Christianity much more attractive, said Yeghnazar. "When government officials are on television telling people not to read the Scriptures, that generates more interest in the Scriptures."

GO FIGURE Bible

62%
Americans who own a King James Version Bible. (89% own at least one translation.)

82%
Americans who read the Bible at least once a month who own a KJV.

LifeWay Research

Standing on Shaky Ground

Threat to pastor tax break may have lost its legs.

By Ken Walker

Legal scholars say a recent Supreme Court decision upholding Arizona's tax credits for scholarship donations could contain the seeds of defeat for a pending California challenge to the housing allowance enjoyed by pastors.

The 5-4 decision upheld the constitutionality of Arizona giving tax credits to those who donate to scholarships for needy students who attend private schools. In 2008 and 2009, more than 90 percent of scholarships went to students attending religious schools, according to *The Arizona Republic*. Consequently, some taxpayers argue that the credit is an indirect religious subsidy.

The Court tossed out that claim. It ruled that a tax credit for a private expense differs from a government expenditure. However, at the heart of its decision was the majority's finding that the petitioners did not have legal standing to pursue the case.

Opponents of the credit had relied on the 1968 *Flast v. Cohen* decision, which granted taxpayers standing to challenge government expenditures that violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Taxpayers are otherwise restricted from suing the government over expenditures unless they are directly injured; this helps reduce frivolous lawsuits.

The ruling sends a signal that the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) cannot rely on *Flast* in its current federal challenge to ministerial housing allowances, said church law expert Richard Hammar.

Notre Dame law professor Rick Garnett agrees. He noted a separate mid-April ruling by the Seventh District Court of Appeals, which

dismissed the FFRF complaint that the presidential proclamation of a National Day of Prayer amounted to government establishment of religion. The Seventh Court said that since FFRF was not directly injured, it lacked legal standing.

"The ruling suggests that the Supreme Court is not alone in thinking that *Flast* should not be read over-broadly," Garnett said. "It is powerful, persuasive authority for the claim that the foundation lacks standing to challenge the pastoral housing exemption."

However, Douglas Laycock of the University of Virginia warns that the Arizona decision could have ominous implications.

Even though he thinks Arizona enacted a constitutionally valid program, the law professor questions the way the case was dismissed. Laycock foresees arguments based on violation of the Establishment Clause getting squelched in the future.

"I think in general it will further embolden governments to make standing arguments," he said. "It doesn't logically reach any further than tax deductions and tax credits, but it signals the majority's hostility to the Establishment Clause and their willingness to use standing to make it go away." ✦

JUSTICE NEPAL

Dead Space

Christians demand burial in culture of cremation. By Anto Akkara in New Delhi

Dozens of Nepali Christians organized a month-long chain fast to demand that the government set aside land so they can bury their dead.

"We will continue the struggle until our demand is met," said Sundar Thapa, general secretary of the Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Nepal. "We are not asking for bread or jobs. Our dead should have the right to have a dignified burial."

PASSAGES



Appointed
Susan Billington Harper

As provost of Westmont College. The historian of Christian missions has been senior officer of the Pew Charitable Trusts.



Resigned
Michael Hyatt

As CEO of Nashville-based publishing giant Thomas Nelson, on April 11 in order to pursue more writing and speaking.



Resigned
Jerry Dykstra

As executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, on April 5 for personal reasons. He had led the denomination since 2006.

The protests in Kathmandu include a parade of coffins and the threat to parade dead bodies next. The response came after officials in December began strictly enforcing a ban against Christian burials in hills near one of Hinduism's most sacred shrines, the famous Pashupatinath Temple. The nation's Supreme Court, which continues to hear arguments in two related cases, lifted the ban in March, but temple authorities prevented further burials.

Kathmandu lacks cemeteries because Hindus and most Buddhists in Nepal customarily cremate the dead. Christians prefer burial, but land is expensive in the crowded capital.

K. B. Rokaya, president of the National Christian Council of Nepal, said Christians have attempted to resolve this "major challenge" by buying private land for burial, yet "they face obstruction and harassment from the local people to bury their dead in these lands."

Christianity has yet to be recognized as a religion in the former Hindu kingdom nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas. Nepal was declared a "secular republic" in 2007 following massive pro-democracy protests. Christians have grown from a few thousand in the 1980s to between 1 and 2 million today, out of a total population of 28 million.

Christians hope a new constitution, due by May, will grant rights to religious minorities. Meanwhile, Protestant churches are planning a Christian census to ensure that the government's decadal census this June will accurately reflect Christian growth.

Chirendra Satyal, a spokesperson for Nepal's Catholic community, said Catholics erect cubicles on the walls of the Cathedral of the Assumption in Kathmandu where they put urns of their dead after cremating them.

"Our people would certainly love to have our own cemeteries where our dead can rest in peace," he said. "We support this demand." ✦

Briefing [continued on 16]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

License to Pill

Increase in state licenses prompts conscience clashes. By Bobby Ross Jr.

Should a pharmacist be required to dispense Plan B?

More and more professions require state licensing—from child-care providers to marriage counselors to retailers of frozen desserts. The intent is to raise the quality of services received. But experts say licensing has opened up a new front in the religious freedom debates.

Nearly a quarter of U.S. workers are now required to obtain state licenses, a nearly fivefold increase from 60 years ago, according to University of Minnesota labor professor Morris Kleiner. At least 1,100 professions are licensed in at least one state, up 38 percent since the mid-1980s, according to the Council on Licensure, Enforcement, and Regulation trade group.

Besides requiring more licenses, states are putting more conditions on them, and often doing so in ways that clash with traditional religious

beliefs, said Stanley Carlson-Thies, president of the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance.

“When you put all three of those things together,” he said, “I think we have every reason to think there will be increasing . . . conflicts.”

Robert Vischer, a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, agreed: “These debates are only going to increase in frequency and intensity.”

Such concerns prompted the Arizona legislature to pass a bill this spring that would have made that state the first to explicitly protect professionals from having their license or certification revoked because of religious practices.

Governor Jan Brewer vetoed the bill, voicing concerns that it was too broad and might prevent, for example, a municipality from firing a police officer practicing polygamy. However, Brewer pledged to work with lawmakers next session to draft a more acceptable version of the law.

“The Arizona legislation reflects legitimate concerns about how increasing government regulation can burden religious liberty and right of conscience,” said Thomas M. Messner, a visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

DISCUSSION STARTER Religious Freedom

During a March budget hearing, Congressman Frank Wolf (R-Va.) challenged Gary Locke, Obama’s nominee for the next ambassador to China, to worship at an unregistered house church in order to “publicly identify with the persecuted.” Locke said he would consider it.

The conflict is already playing out. In April, an Illinois trial court overturned a 2005 state rule that all pharmacists must dispense emergency contraception. Meanwhile, Michigan legislators submitted a bill in April prompted by the dismissal of a Christian counseling student from a state university after she refused to counsel a gay student.

In February, the Obama administration repealed many of the expanded conscience protections for health care providers enacted in the final days of the Bush administration. Instead it restricted federal protections to doctors and nurses who refuse to perform abortions or sterilizations.

In a recent Heritage report titled “From Culture Wars to Conscience Wars,” Messner wrote, “Today, religious liberty and rights of conscience issues are more complicated than simply freedom from government interference in religious worship or teaching.”

In general, Messner said, “Government intrusion in the activities of private individuals and private entities carries with it . . . the potential to increase the number of conflicts between state-imposed duties . . . and religious liberty and right of conscience.”

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should the China ambassador worship at a house church?

YES

“It isn’t worship—it’s showing up and being there. I’m asking the ambassador to identify and visit the persecuted, just like you visit people in prison. You visit people where they are. And by doing that, you provide help and protection.”

FRANK WOLF,
U.S. Congressman (R-Va.)

“It would result in more media attention but largely be a symbolic gesture, like much of U.S. religious freedom policy in China. We should be asking what concrete programs the ambassador will initiate to convince the Chinese that religious freedom is in their interests.”

THOMAS FARR,
professor, Georgetown University

“If the Chinese government allows it, there should be no problem with the ambassador visiting a house church. Such visits demonstrate a mature bilateral relationship while signaling a stable, responsible China that is comfortable with its religious minorities.”

CHRIS SEIPLE,
president, Institute for Global Engagement

“The ambassador should consult with leaders of both registered and house churches, and then pray for discernment as to what decision will best advance the gospel and strengthen the witness of the church in China.”

GALEN CAREY,
director of government affairs, National Association of Evangelicals

“An attempt by a senior U.S. diplomat to visit a house church would likely endanger the church itself. A far more powerful form of protest would be for the ambassador to refuse to meet with anyone from the Three-Self churches until freedom of worship is granted to house churches.”

DAVID AIKMAN,
author, *Jesus in Beijing*

“In China, when Christianity and politics got mixed up in the 19th and 20th centuries, there was trouble for U.S. policy. The popular view toward Christianity also turned negative. Such will be the same today if the U.S. seeks to interject religion into the relationship.”

GORDON H. CHANG,
professor of history, Stanford University

NO



In the Headlines: Abortion-related legislation triggered many political debates this spring. In Oregon, Katey Tryon spoke out about her positive experience at a pro-life pregnancy center.

ABORTION

The New Pro-Life Surge

Political gains by U.S. conservatives unleash waves of anti-abortion legislation. By Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

T

he summer before Katey Tryon's senior year of high school, she got pregnant. Recently split from her boyfriend, she was sad and vulnerable when she hooked up with her older brother's friend. They had sex once.

Six weeks later, she was tired and her period was late.

"It was terrifying," Tryon said. "I'm from a small town in Oregon. My parents are pillars in the community. I was born and raised here, fourth generation. So my sin was very apparent." Tryon's parents,

both believers, rallied around her. Abortion was out of the question. Two days before high school graduation, Tryon gave birth to a girl and gave her up for adoption.

Tryon enrolled in a Christian college in Portland, determined to turn her life around, but still felt vulnerable. "I started dating a guy who embraced me for what I had just gone through, who understood that I didn't want to have sex until I got married," she said.

But they started sleeping together, and one night the condom didn't work. Over spring break, at an intercollegiate softball tournament, Tryon found out she was pregnant again. Her daughter was nine months old. "My world came crashing down tenfold from the first time," she said.

Abortion was never a serious option, she said, although "trust me, it went through my mind. I recognize why other women go there. You want to get away from your situation. We want to cover up our mistakes and have them all go away."

Tryon found support at a local pregnancy center, which sparked in her a fresh sense of purpose. She gave birth to a boy and gave him up for adoption. She went back to college, double majoring in social work and sociology. Eventually she became the development director at Lane Pregnancy Support Center in Eugene, Oregon.

In April, Tryon testified before the Oregon State Legislature about how a pregnancy center changed her life for the better. A Senate committee was considering a bill to force pregnancy centers to publicly post on doors, in waiting areas, and in brochures that they are not abortion providers. If centers did not post these notices in five days, they could be fined up to \$1,000, up to \$5,000 if not posted in two weeks.

This is one of many new legislative initiatives on abortion, but the majority of them are working in the other direction.

FLOOD OF LEGISLATION

The Oregon bill is one of 576 measures related to abortion that have been introduced so far in 2011 in 48 states, according to Elizabeth Nash, public policy associate for the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute.

Like the Oregon bill, many of them will never pass committee. Yet by early April, 142

'My life and the life of my unborn baby were forever changed the minute I called for help.'

~ Katey Tyron, a director at Lane Pregnancy Support Center



abortion-related provisions had passed at least one chamber of a state legislature, compared with 67 in 2009. More than half of the 142 bills (57 percent) introduced this year seek to restrict abortion access, compared with 38 percent in 2010.

About 40 new anti-abortion laws were on the books by mid-April. They include:

- expanding the waiting period requirement in South Dakota from 24 hours to 72 hours, and requiring women to visit a crisis pregnancy center in the interim.
- requiring a physician who performs an abortion in South Dakota to provide counseling on all risk factors related to abortion.
- allowing any hospital employee in Utah to refuse to "participate in any way" in an abortion.
- making it a felony in Arizona to perform or provide money for abortions sought because of a baby's race or sex.
- prohibiting insurance plans that participate in the state insurance exchange from including abortion coverage in Virginia, Arizona, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.
- prohibiting the abortion of a fetus capable of feeling pain in Nebraska, Kansas, Idaho, and Oklahoma. The organization National Right to Life has drafted a model bill for pro-life lawmakers to use.

Republican victories in the 2010 mid-term elections account for much of the legislative surge. Republicans won control

up 628 seats. Republicans now control the governor's office and both legislative chambers of 21 states, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"The November elections brought huge change in the state houses," said Charmaine Yoest, president of Americans United for Life. "But we've been tilling this ground for a while."

The forward momentum began, Yoest said, when the Supreme Court upheld the federal ban on partial-birth abortion in 2007.

"They chipped away at the absolute right to abortion," Yoest said. "The Supreme Court said that states do have the right to limit abortion. That was a seismic shift." Pro-life advocates began to see how far they could get with restrictions, such as parental notification and informed consent laws, she said.

The legislation has been snowballing since the Republican sweep: "Just in the first three months of this year, we've provided testimony on 17 life-related legislative matters," she said. In previous years, the average number of testimonies provided was two or three for the entire year.

PUBLIC OPINION CHANGES

Restricting abortion through new state laws seems to be highly effective in reducing abortion rates.

"We see that the number of abortions has gone down by 22 percent between 1990

and 2005," said Michael New, political science professor at the University of Alabama. "An important reason is the restrictions that more and more states are passing."

New examined the effects of three laws on abortion rates. Opting not to fund abortions through Medicaid was most significant, dropping state abortion rates by about 9 percent, he said.

"That's a strong consistent finding," he said, pointing to a Guttmacher report that 20 of 24 peer-reviewed studies found that public funding restrictions reduced the number of abortions. The second is informed-consent laws, which require abortion providers to inform a woman about the potential risks to her health, fetal development, and available assistance before an abortion is performed. Those laws were connected with in-state abortion reductions of 5 to 7 percent, he said.

New also analyzed parental involvement laws, which require minors to either tell or get permission from their parents before having an abortion. While these laws don't have a large impact on the overall abortion rate, they correlate with a 15 percent decline in in-state abortions obtained by minors.

Recent pro-life legislation is changing gears, pushing for laws that give women the opportunity to view an ultrasound before an abortion or banning abortion after the fetus can feel pain. Fetal-pain laws have been a big goal of National Right to Life. Director of state legislation Mary Spaulding Balch told *Christianity Today*, "The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act very clearly talks about the humanity of the unborn child." So far, abortion supporters have not initiated court challenges to the new fetal-pain laws.

The effect on the abortion rate from pain-related or ultrasound laws may not be dramatic, New said. Requiring ultrasounds can be tricky because abortion providers have to self-enforce, and relatively few

abortions are performed after the second trimester, when the fetus begins to feel pain, he said.

But those laws are still important, New said. "You have to make progress incrementally. We have made more progress than we think. We've convinced a lot of people that abortion is wrong. Most doctors and hospitals want nothing to do with it."

Indeed, public opinion now lines up against abortion for the first time since Gallup began asking the question in 1995. In 2010, 47 percent of Americans called themselves pro-life, while 45 percent identified as pro-choice.

The pro-life advantage held through three surveys, prompting Gallup to label it a "real change in public opinion," one that's

'We see that the number of abortions has gone down by 22 percent between 1990 and 2005. An important reason is the restrictions more and more states are passing.'

~ Michael New, political science

professor at the University of Alabama

showing itself at the polls.

Last year's health care debate put abortion back on the national stage, and President Obama had to issue an executive order strengthening the limits on abortion to get the health care reform bill passed.

In addition, the House of Representatives passed a bill this spring that would defund Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the country. The bill failed in the Senate, but the victory in the House was historic, Yoest said.

"I absolutely think this is a swelling tide, regardless of what happens in this particular skirmish. There is very much a future in terms of bringing more and more attention to the massive federal subsidy of the abortion industry."

COUNTEROFFENSIVE

All this leaves the pro-choice movement "definitely defensive," said Nash of the Guttmacher Institute. "We need to make the case for why these services are important."

The public questioning of Planned Parenthood is "a major shift," said Melinda Delahoyde, president of Care Net, a network

of more than 1,000 pregnancy centers.

Care Net's pregnancy centers are among the targets of the pro-choice counteroffensive. New York City's new disclosure law is "the most difficult thing we're facing," she said. The law, like the one Tryon testified against in Oregon, requires all pregnancy centers to post in waiting rooms and in all literature whether they offer or make referrals for abortions, contraception, and prenatal care. The American Center for Law and Justice is challenging the constitutionality of the law in federal court.

In January, a federal judge struck down a similar disclosure law in Baltimore, calling it an unconstitutional violation of free speech and "viewpoint-based discrimination."

"It puts onerous regulations on preg-

nancy centers," Delahoyde said. "It opens centers up to costly lawsuits—a right to action by aggrieved persons. There are very harsh restrictions put up all over against pregnancy centers, and we know their goal is to shut us down."

But most of the bills targeting pregnancy centers fail to pass. Two bills in Virginia—one that proposed to limit the revenue pregnancy centers receive from license plates, the other to require disclosure that abortions are not offered at the centers—were withdrawn in March. A resolution praising the work of pregnancy centers was passed instead. Another disclosure bill in Washington made it out of committee but failed in the House of Representatives.

When pro-choice groups can't get bills passed at the state level, they look for local municipalities where they can get propositions passed, Delahoyde said.

Care Net prepares their centers for the legislation, she said. "We send our public relations and legal people on the road. We provide a united front at the state house, and that's very effective."

Alliance Defense Fund also provides legal help through hundreds of attorneys connected to local pregnancy centers, she said.

"We train extensively," Delahoyde said. "We are pressing forward. Look, there are so many encouraging signs. The pro-choice brand is eroding."

PENDULUM SWINGS

When Tryon gave birth to her second baby in December 1992, she was part of a trend. U.S. teen pregnancy rates had swelled to their all-time high—almost 12 percent of teenage girls—in 1990, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Abortion rates peaked at the same time, with 1.4 million abortions performed in 1990, according to the CDC. Public support of abortion was also high, with 56 percent of Americans labeling themselves pro-choice, according to Gallup. Just 33 percent self-identified as pro-life.

Some 20 years after Tryon was a pregnant teenager, the pendulum is swinging the other way. She is now an articulate leader at a pregnancy center, wife of a worship pastor, and mother of three school-age children.

"As a teenager, finding myself in an unplanned pregnancy was scary at best. Thankfully, I turned to a pregnancy resource center that provided not only free and confidential services to me, but treated me in a fair and professional manner, provided me life-giving options when I needed them most, and eased my fears," she testified before an Oregon Senate committee.

"My life and the life of my unborn baby were forever changed the minute I called on them for help. After being educated about all of my options, I chose an adoption plan that not only gave my baby a hope and a future, but it also gave it to me.

"It is devastating to think that the vital services I received so many years ago could be torn from those that so desperately need them today. I urge you to vote 'No' on this bill."

That bill in Oregon never came to a vote. But neither did another bill calling for a ban on abortions after 19 weeks. ➤

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra is a journalist based in the Chicago area.

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THE SEARCH FOR THE HISTORICAL ADAM

The center of the evolution debate has shifted from asking whether we came from earlier animals to whether we could have come from one man and one woman.

By Richard N. Ostling

Illustration by Rob Day

S

ECULARIST BROWS FURROWED in 2009 when President Obama chose prominent atheist-turned-Christian Francis S. Collins to be the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Under the *Los Angeles Times* headline “Fit to Head the NIH?,” *Skeptic* magazine’s Michael Shermer fretted that Collins’s beliefs might somehow corrupt America’s biggest biomedical research agency. In a *New York Times* piece, atheist Sam Harris was similarly “uncomfortable,” fearing in particular that a Collins administration might “seriously undercut” fields like neuroscience. Jerry Coyne, a University of Chicago expert on evolution, carped that the nominee’s “scary,” “bizarre,” “inane,” and “snake oil” ideas “pollute his science with his faith.”

Nonetheless, Collins won unanimous U.S. Senate confirmation, thanks to sterling achievements in biomedical research and leadership of NIH’s human genome research. Under Collins, this historic effort in 2003 finished mapping the complete sequence of several billion DNA subunits (“bases”) and all of the genes that determine human heredity.

Collins, one of the most eminent scientists ever to identify as an evangelical Christian, staunchly defends Darwinian evolution even as he insists on God as the Creator. And he now stands at the epicenter of a dispute that increasingly agitates fellow believers. At issue: the traditional tenet (as summarized in Wheaton College’s mandatory credo) that “God directly created Adam and Eve, the historical parents of the entire human race.”

Collins’s 2006 bestseller, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*—which so vexed those secularist critics—reported scientific indications that anatomically modern

humans emerged from primate ancestors perhaps 100,000 years ago—long before the apparent Genesis time frame—and originated with a population that numbered something like 10,000, not two individuals. Instead of the traditional belief in the specially created man and woman of Eden who were biologically different from all other creatures, Collins mused, might Genesis be presenting “a poetic and powerful allegory” about God endowing humanity with a spiritual and moral nature? “Both options are intellectually tenable,” he concluded.

In a recent pro-evolution book from InterVarsity Press, *The Language of Science and Faith*, Collins and co-author Karl W. Giberson escalate matters, announcing that “unfortunately” the concepts of Adam and Eve as the literal first couple and the ancestors of all humans simply “do not fit the evidence.”

The Adam account in Genesis has long been subjected to scientific challenges, but “there was a lot of wiggle room in the past. The human genome sequencing took that wiggle room away” during the past decade, said Randall Isaac, executive director of the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA), which has been discussing Adam issues for decades. The organization’s 1,600 members, Collins among them, affirm the Bible’s “divine inspiration, trustworthiness, and authority” on “faith and conduct,” though not on scientific concepts.

The unnerving new genetic science was assessed with considerable detail in last September’s issue of the ASA journal *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*. The articles were elaborated versions of papers delivered at the ASA’s 2009 annual meeting at Baylor University, the organization’s first major discussion of the Adam question that included religion scholars as well as scientists.

Two of the *Perspectives* writers, biblical exegete Daniel C. Harlow and theologian John R. Schneider, teach at Calvin College. As a result of their writings, a personnel panel has been investigating whether they violated the doctrinal standards that the college’s sponsoring Christian Reformed Church requires of faculty. (The investigation follows procedures that were established when Calvin astrophysicist Howard J. Van Till stirred an earlier ruckus over creation—though not Adam and Eve—with his 1986 tome *The Fourth Day*.) Harlow and Schneider could face discipline from the board of trustees, and revived denominational debate about evolution seems inevitable. Meanwhile, Calvin scheduled 18 lectures on human origins this past academic year.

Giberson, a physics professor at Eastern Nazarene College, downplays the potentially vanishing Adam and Eve as “a secondary or peripheral disagreement that shouldn’t cause us to hurl accusations of infidelity at one another.” He thinks “this will percolate along as an issue and more of the evangelical church will become fine with it, despite Main Street objections. I don’t see this issue splitting the church in some major way.”

However, Michael Cromartie, the evangelicalism expert at Washington’s Ethics and Public Policy Center, sees high

stakes, calling the new thinking an “urgent” and “potentially paradigm-shifting” development with “huge theological implications. . . . How this gets settled is extremely important.”

WHAT MAY BE AT STAKE

Foundational confessions of faith from the Protestant Reformation assume a historical Adam, and official Roman Catholicism defined this teaching at the 1546 Council of Trent, in the 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis* of Pope Pius XII (who cautiously allowed leeway for humanity’s bodily evolution), and in the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The broader public is intrigued, more so than by many other biblical topics; a 2005 Gallup Poll found that 40 percent of Americans think the various competing concepts of human origins matter “a great deal.”

So, is the Adam and Eve question destined to become a groundbreaking science-and-Scripture dispute, a 21st-century equivalent of the once disturbing proof that the Earth orbits the sun? The potential is certainly there: the emerging science could be seen to challenge not only what Genesis records about the creation of humanity but the species’s unique status as bearing the “image of God,” Christian doctrine on original sin and the Fall, the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, and, perhaps most significantly, Paul’s teaching that links the historical Adam with redemption through Christ (Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:20–23, 42–49; and his speech in Acts 17).

The rethinking on Adam is an outgrowth of mainstream evolutionary thought that has long been the object of evangelical hostility (though the hostility has always been hotter at the grassroots than among professional scientists). One option, which consistently enjoys support from at least 40 percent of the general public in Gallup surveys, is “young earth” creationism. As writers with *Answers in Genesis*, in commenting on recent developments, insisted, “God created the mature, fully functioning creation in six literal days about 6,000 years ago.” If substantiated, this would of course demolish Darwinism because such a brief chronology offers no time for evolutionary processes to occur. Questions about that sort of time frame have provoked renewed defense of young earth creationism in Southern Baptist Convention circles. But even the late James Montgomery Boice, founding chair of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, which insisted on a historical Adam, thought various scientific findings make it “hard to believe” in a recent creation.

A second competitor, the “old earth” version of creationism, is far more prevalent among evangelical intellectuals. It basically rejects evolution but affirms science’s longstanding and lopsided support for the planet’s vastly ancient age.

A third alternative is the newer “intelligent design” approach, which deems the Darwinian “natural selection” model of evolutionary theory to be improbable and posits that some designing force lies behind nature, but does not explicitly define this as the God of Judaism and Christianity.

Collins and his colleagues dismiss those three views in favor



of “theistic evolution,” which affirms that the biblical God was the creator of all earthly organisms, humanity included, and used as his method the standard evolutionary scenario of gradual natural selection among genetic mutations across eons. A non-random Internet survey of teachers at evangelical seminaries in 2009 showed that 46 percent accept that concept. Giberson estimates that “the overwhelming number in biology departments at Christian colleges would be fine with this,” though a 2005 survey found that only 27 percent identified as evolutionary creationists. In a mail survey of ASA scientists last year, 66 percent of respondents affirmed that “*Homo sapiens* evolved through natural processes from ancestral forms in common with primates,” while 90 percent agreed that the Earth is some 4.6 billion years old.

In late 2007, Collins launched the San Diego-based BioLogos Foundation to promote theistic evolution, especially among evangelicals. He sought not only to embrace what he considers to be the best evidence, but also to bolster Christian credibility

cumulative evidence, Venema concludes, shows that “humans are not biologically independent, *de novo* creations, but share common ancestry” with prior primate species. (Many biologists estimate that the biological branches separated from that common ancestor some 5 or 6 million years ago.)

Venema has engaged in vigorous online debate about this with biochemist Fazale Rana, the vice president for research with Reasons to Believe, a ministry that champions old earth creationism. Rana questions the 95 and 99 percent figures, but asserts that in any case common sense tells us “these types of genetic comparisons are meaningless” because they do not explain the “fundamental biological and behavioral differences” between chimps and humans. Rana also says close genetic similarity does not require shared ancestry.

The second—and perhaps more troublesome—issue treated by Venema involves “population genomics.” Over the past decade, researchers have attempted to use the genetic diversity within modern humans to estimate primordial population sizes.

According to a consensus drawn from three independent avenues of research, he states, the history of human ancestry involved a population “bottleneck” around 150,000 years ago—and

from this tiny group of hominids came everyone living today. But the size of the group was far larger than a lonely couple: it consisted of several thousand individuals at minimum, say the geneticists. Had humanity begun with only two individuals, without millions of years for development, says an ASA paper, it would have required God’s miraculous intervention to increase the genetic diversity to what is observable today. A BioLogos paper by Venema and Falk declares it more flatly: The human population, they say, “was definitely never as small as two. . . . Our species diverged as a population. The data are absolutely clear on that.”

But caution is in order, argues Covenant Theological Seminary Old Testament scholar C. John Collins (no relation to Francis), another *Perspectives* author. He spells out a conservative response in the timely new Crossway title *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* On the bottleneck headcounts, he cites 2006 research from Canada, France, and Japan that indicates ambiguity about the rate of changes in genetic diversity that have been used thus far to calculate primordial population sizes. Genetic theorizing is rapidly—shall we say—evolving.

And, like Rana, John Collins remarks that “when you start talking about what it means to be human, much more than molecular biology is involved.” Whatever the genetic match, humanity’s communication and tool-making are obviously incomparably different from chimpanzee achievements; neither do primates worship or create masterworks of art and music. Darwin himself recognized this mysterious gap, which is described poetically in Psalm 8.

BioLogos not only promotes the current scientific consensus on human origins, but ways in which Scripture can be interpreted to accord with evolutionary theory. Its staff biblical

‘There was a lot of wiggle room [on Adam] in the past. The human genome sequencing took that wiggle room away.’ ~ Randall Isaac, executive director

of the American Scientific Affiliation

among people who are knowledgeable about mainstream scientific thinking. This initiative has won endorsements from both scientists and such evangelical figures as authors Os Guinness and Philip Yancey, *Books & Culture* editor John Wilson, and retiring Gordon College President R. Judson Carlberg. (Collins, who resigned as BioLogos president upon his NIH appointment and was succeeded by Point Loma Nazarene University biologist Darrel Falk, is declining interviews about his new book. Giberson, his co-author, is vice president of BioLogos.)

THE GENETIC ARGUMENT MADE SIMPLE

Dennis R. Venema, the BioLogos senior fellow for science and the biology chairman at Trinity Western University, is among the BioLogos writers who are not only advocating theistic evolution but also rethinking Adam. He has presented the relevant genetic research in *Perspectives* and in postings on the BioLogos website that provoked lively feedback. The argument is necessarily technical, studded with genetic charts and terms like *telomeres*, *alleles*, *homology*, *syntenic locations*, *single nucleotide polymorphisms*, and *linkage disequilibrium*. But the basic claims are understandable by non-experts.

The first claim concerns the old man-from-monkeys fuss as refined by new research on the genetic makeup of other animals, especially chimpanzees. Venema writes that the chimp genome (total genetic heredity encoded in DNA), which was fully mapped by 2005, displays “near identity” with the human genome as detailed by Collins’s team, with a 95 to 99 percent match depending on what factors are included. The detailed analysis involves sequences of genes and the makeup of individual genes. But especially important are the locations of “pseudogenes” that are apparently no longer active. The

expert is Peter Enns, whose interpretation of the Old Testament led to suspension and eventual departure from Westminster Theological Seminary in 2008 (though the Adam-and-Eve question was not at issue in that case). To Enns, a literal Adam as a special creation without evolutionary forebears is “at odds with everything else we know about the past from the natural sciences and cultural remains.” As he reads the early chapters of Genesis, he says, “The Bible itself invites a symbolic reading by using cosmic battle imagery and by drawing parallels between Adam and Israel.”

The New Testament passages are different, he allows. Enns has little doubt that Paul indeed thought Adam was “a real person.” But Enns suggests that the apostle was reflecting beliefs about human origins that were common among the ancients. After scanning various interpretations of Genesis, Enns joins those who see the Genesis passages on Adam as “a story of Israelite origins,” not the origin of all humanity, in which case there is no essential conflict with evolutionary theory.

Another BioLogos writer, Denis Lamoureux of the University of Alberta, the author of *Evolutionary Creation* (2008), thinks that “Adam never existed, and this fact has no impact whatsoever on the foundational beliefs of Christianity.” In his view, “the Holy Spirit descended to the level of the biblical author of Genesis 1 and used his incidental ancient science regarding biological origins” to reveal “infallible messages of faith about the human spiritual condition.” As with Enns, he sees Paul’s epistles as reflecting the common biological understandings of that era. (Articles on the BioLogos website typically include a disclaimer that the views are the writers’ and not necessarily the foundation’s, but they are generally consistent on evolution and Adam.)

In yet another BioLogos article, Tremper Longman III of Westmont College admits, “I have not resolved this issue in my own mind except to say that there is nothing that insists on a literal understanding of Adam in a passage [Gen. 1–3] so filled with obvious figurative description.” He is similarly open-minded on the question of Paul’s epistles because “it is possible, even natural, to make an analogy between a literary figure and a historical one.” After BioLogos promoted Longman’s views in a video last year, Reformed Theological Seminary ended Longman’s role as an adjunct faculty member.

That dismissal was overshadowed at the seminary by a related dustup over noted Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke. The administration abruptly accepted his offer of resignation due to a BioLogos video in which Waltke remarked that “if the data is overwhelming in favor of evolution, to deny that reality will make us a cult.” Waltke began teaching at Knox Theological Seminary this year.

Though that dispute concerned theistic evolution, not the historical Adam, Waltke is open to the new thinking. In an interview, the former president of the Evangelical Theological Society affirmed the “inerrancy of the Bible, but not of interpretations.” He sees Adam and Eve as historical individuals. But if genetics

produces the conclusion that “Scripture has a collectivity represented as an individual, that doesn’t bother me,” he said. “We have to go with the scientific evidence. I don’t think we can ignore it. I have full confidence in Scripture, but it does not represent what science represents.” Waltke insists, however, that if a collective interpretation of Adam is established eventually, then fidelity to the Bible still requires “an origination point” with “a historical reality of man rebelling against God.”

THE BIBLE WITHOUT AN ORIGINAL PAIR

The embattled professors at Calvin mull more adventuresome theological possibilities, although their *Perspectives* articles were generally couched as what-if-this-pans-out speculations. For instance, Schneider, who sees conservative Protestantism as being on “the brink of crisis” on this topic, wrote that the evidence “seems to discredit” the Fall from original righteousness as a historical event. Vices we associate with consequences of the Fall and original sin, such as self-serving behavior, exist in lower primates and would have been passed on via evolution to humans. Thus Eden “cannot be a literal description of how things really were in the primal human past.”

Harlow proposed that understandings of the Fall may need to be “reformulated” and the church must be willing to “decouple original sin from the notion that all humans descended from a single pair.” In his view, the early chapters of Genesis should probably be regarded as “imaginative portrayals of an actual epoch.” Whether or not Adam was historical, he asserted, is “not central to biblical theology.” Paul and Luke may have thought Adam was a literal man because they had no reason not to, he explained. But “we have many reasons” to interpret Adam as a literary figure.

Before the genetics eruptions, the scholarship that undermined literal readings of the Genesis Adam was based largely on archaeological remains and fossils. Specialists projected that proto-humans appeared as early as 200,000 years ago, based on evidence of primitive stone tools. The Upper Paleolithic era (which began around 40,000 years ago) was a notable advance culturally, with more sophisticated tools and weaponry, higher population densities, and art. To John Stott and others, Genesis chapter 4 appears to root Adam’s son Cain in that time frame—referencing the introduction of settled agriculture, music, and the forging of bronze and iron. However, Stott added, the ancient evidence is “anatomical rather than behavioral,” so it’s hard to say just when hominids became biblical humans. Hard textual evidence for humanity’s hallmark of complex language communication was necessarily lacking until writing was invented a mere several thousand years ago.

Those who say humanity arose from a sizable population often claim this understanding accords with Genesis itself: It tells of Cain’s marriage (Did he wed his own sister? Where did she come from?), his fearfulness over “whoever finds me” when he left Eden for Nod, and the reference to his building of a



“city.” On that, John Collins suggests that Genesis is purposely using anachronisms, describing prehistoric times in terms that readers in a much later epoch would be familiar with. In his view, that does not detract from historicity.

The Adam issue is hardly new. In 1940, C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain* that “for long centuries, God perfected the animal form which was to become the vehicle of humanity and the image of himself.” Lewis thought that in the process God eventually caused the new divine consciousness to descend upon this organism, but “we do not know how many of these creatures God made, nor how long they continued in the Paradisal state.”

A 1967 InterVarsity Press commentary on Genesis by British evangelical Derek Kidner proposed a “tentative” concept that could fit with geneticists’ theory of human origination with a larger population. He thought it conceivable that “pre-Adamites” and “Adamites” from the same genetic stock existed simultaneously but with “no natural bridge from animal to man.” After God conferred his image upon Adam, he did the same with the others who then existed, “to bring them into

deliberated on evolution, creation, and Adam. The meeting issued an accord that endorsed theistic evolution and affirmed “without reservation both the authority of the Bible and the integrity of science” as two paths of divine revelation. The paper declared that “several options” can achieve a synthesis between Scripture and science, “including some which involve a historical couple, Adam and Eve.” Participants in the discussions that produced the statement included Francis Collins, Cromartie, Enns, Falk, Giberson, Guinness, Isaac, and Yancey.

Another participant, much-respected local pastor Tim Keller, offered a workshop paper laying out in irenic but firm terms a conservative stance on Paul’s view of the first humans. “[Paul] most definitely wanted to teach us that Adam and Eve were real historical figures. When you refuse to take a biblical author literally when he clearly wants you to do so, you have moved away from the traditional understanding of the biblical authority,” Keller wrote. “If Adam doesn’t exist, Paul’s whole argument—that both sin and grace work ‘covenantally’—falls apart. You can’t say that ‘Paul was a man of his time’ but we can accept his basic

teaching about Adam. If you don’t believe what he believes about Adam, you are denying the core of Paul’s teaching.”

Back when genetics played little part in Adam disputes,

‘If Adam doesn’t exist, Paul’s whole argument—that both sin and grace work “covenantally”—falls apart.’ ~ Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church

the same realm of being.” In Kidner’s view, Adam’s “headship of humanity extended, if that was the case, outwards to his contemporaries as well as onwards to his offspring, and his disobedience disinherited both alike.”

An ASA paper likewise observes that some Christians who understand Adam and Eve as symbols or allegories suppose that Genesis describes what happened to a particular grouping of humans during the “bottleneck” period, so that “maybe God transformed everyone in this group into the first biblical humans.” The ASA notes another variant in which humanity’s creation and fall happened within different groups over time, as God added moral responsibilities and spiritual revelations.

In his book-length conservative rejoinder to the new interpretations, John Collins warns against “pure literalism” in reading Genesis, arguing that the book “intends to use imaginative description to tell us of actual events.” This is essentially what J. I. Packer contended in his 1958 classic, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*. But Collins comments that if Adam and Eve lacked “an actual existence we nullify so many things in the Bible it results in a different story.” To him, the pivotal point is that “however God produced the bodies of the first human beings, it wasn’t a purely natural process.” If genetics eventually forces reconsideration, Collins remarks, he could perhaps reconceive of Adam and Eve as “the king and queen of a larger population” and thereby preserve Genesis’ historicity.

IF PAUL IS WRONG ON HISTORY

Last November, BioLogos held a workshop at New York City’s Harvard Club where church leaders and Christians in science

physicist John A. Bloom, director of Biola University’s science and religion program, wrote that if there was merely a population of pre-Adamic hominids that “collectively evolved into modern man, then the theological foundation for the nuclear family, sin and death appears to be eroded. The credibility of the Bible when it speaks on these issues seems to be damaged: If it does not correctly explain the origin of a problem, why should one trust its solutions?”

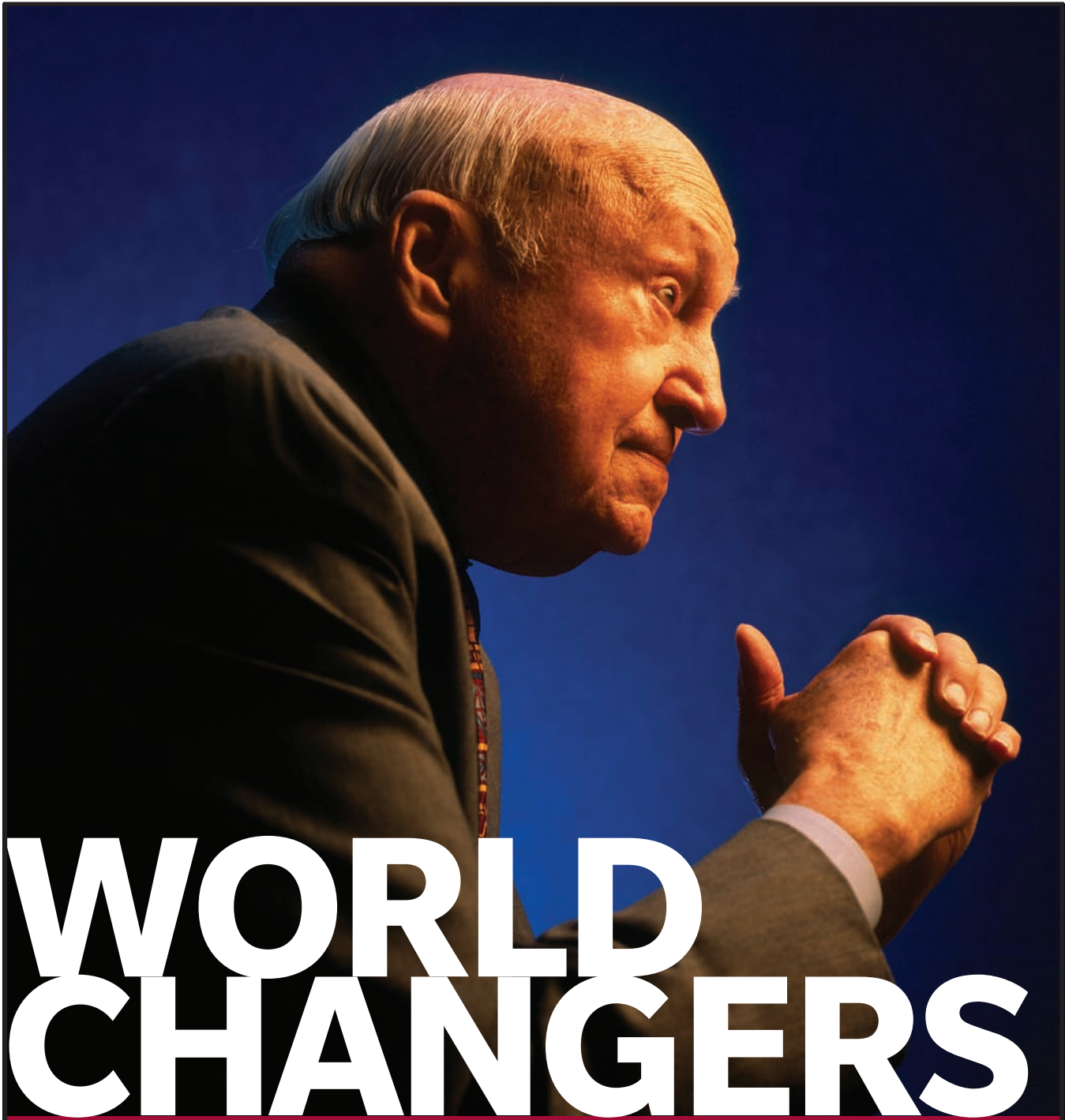
South Carolina pastor Richard Phillips, a blogger with the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and chair of the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, sees serious doctrinal danger if the historical Adam disappears. “Can the Bible’s theology be true if the historical events on which the theology is based are false?” he asks. If science trumps Scripture, what does this mean for the virgin birth of Jesus, or his miracles, or his resurrection? “The hermeneutics behind theistic evolution are a Trojan horse that, once inside our gates, must cause the entire fortress of Christian belief to fall.”

What next with Adam and Eve? “It seems urgent that the best people stop trading e-mails and get together for a real meeting in the same room,” Cromartie said. He wants leading evangelical thinkers in science and Scripture to jointly work out an accord, because otherwise this problem “could produce a huge split right through the heart of conservative, orthodox, historic Christianity.”

See page 61
for CT’s editorial
on the historical
Adam.

Richard N. Ostling has been a religion writer with *Time* magazine and the Associated Press, and the news editor of *Christianity Today*.

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “The Search for the Historical Adam,” a Bible study based on this article.



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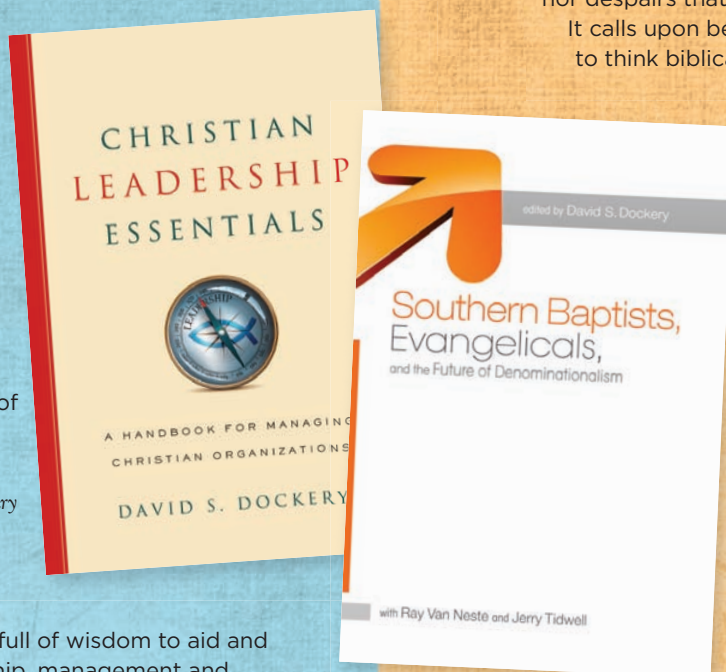
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Any exploration of the relationship between these two movements, and particularly one as informed and incisive as what is found in this volume, is worth the time and investment to read.

JAMES EMERY WHITE

*Founding and Senior Pastor,
Mecklenburg Community Church*

”



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DAVID S. DOCKERY has served for fifteen years as president of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. He is author or editor of thirty books, including *Renewing Minds* and *Southern Baptist Consensus and Renewal*, and has served as chairman of the board of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.



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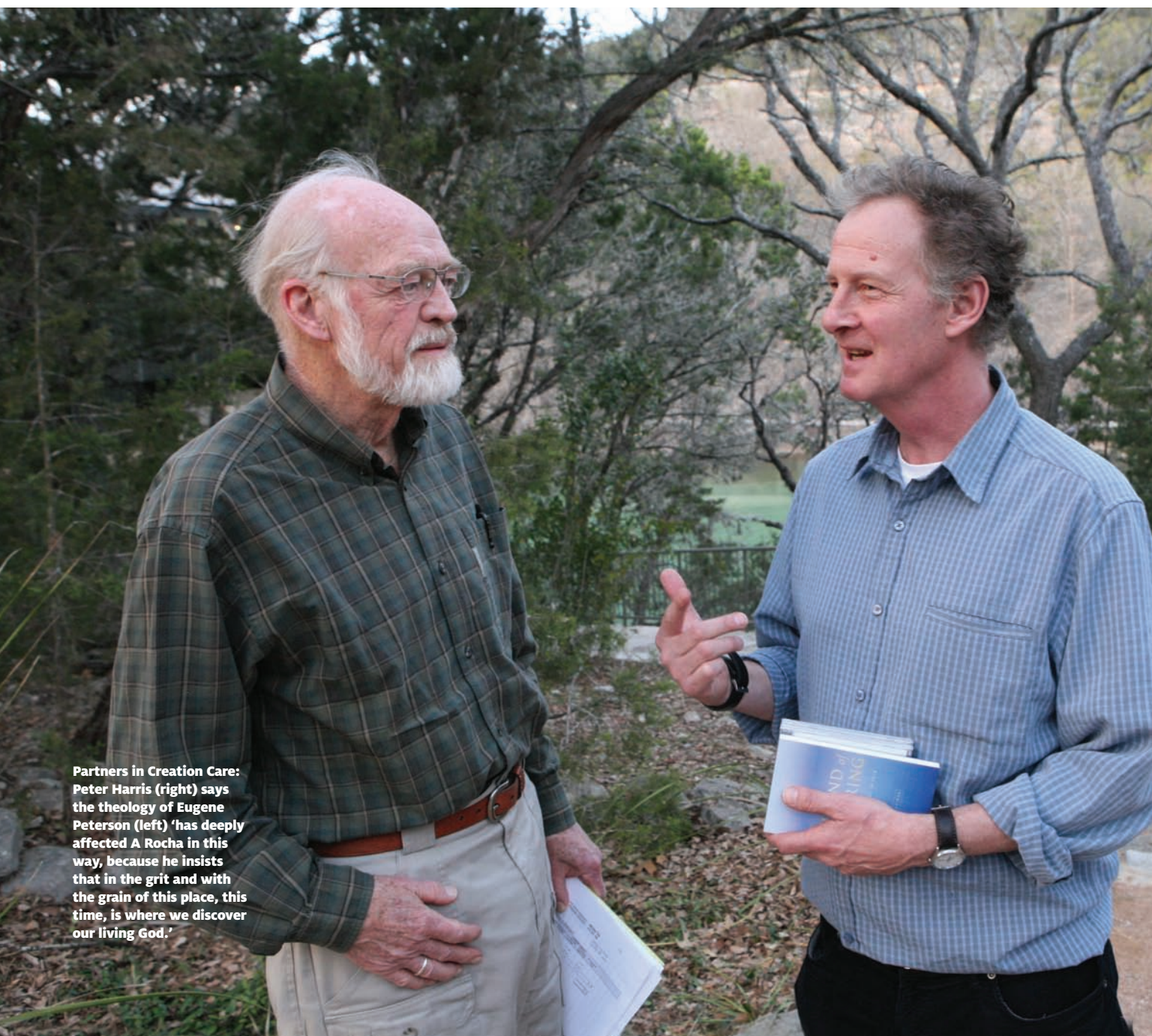
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{ THE CT INTERVIEW }

The Joyful Environmentalists

Eugene Peterson and **Peter Harris** think of creation care not as an onerous duty but a natural response to the goodness of God.

Interview by Andy Crouch



Partners in Creation Care: Peter Harris (right) says the theology of Eugene Peterson (left) 'has deeply affected A Rocha in this way, because he insists that in the grit and with the grain of this place, this time, is where we discover our living God.'

CREATION CARE is a hot topic among Christians, but it is nothing new for longtime friends Eugene Peterson and Peter Harris. Peterson's recent memoir *The Pastor* (HarperOne) is saturated with environmental themes and metaphors, grounded in his annual visits to the family cabin in the highlands of Montana, where he now resides. In 1983, Peter and Miranda Harris and a few friends founded a Christian ecological study center in Portugal called A Rocha (Portuguese for "the rock"). It is now an international conservation organization that has recently expanded its work in the United States. *Christianity Today* editor at large Andy Crouch spoke with Peterson and Harris on the banks of the Frio River in Texas at a conference on faith and technology at Laity Lodge.

Eugene, how did you come to be so involved in conservation and environmental issues?

I grew up in a very sectarian world. There was no explicit care for creation. My parents were indifferent to it, and my church was indifferent. Hunting was the closest my family or my church ever came to being involved in the world around us. But after they killed their deer or their elk, they were done.

In some ways, that indifference was good for me and for our family, because our kids discovered environmental concerns as we hiked, fished, gardened, harvested, and canned fruits. It was more of a discovery and enjoyment. When I met Peter and saw him at work and listened to him, I realized this really was something significant and biblical.

Peter Harris: It's important to understand that A Rocha, as a movement, is driven by biblical theology. It's not a Christian attempt to "save the planet." It's a response to who God is. Therefore, the role of people like Eugene has been to help us lay that foundation.

Many people—and many Christians—would be happy just to say they are "saving the planet." How would you distinguish a biblically formed movement?

Harris: We may do many of the same things as do secular environmental organizations, but we do them for very different reasons. One question for any kind of activism is, how long are you going to be able to *keep* doing it? If you believe you're going to be able, by technology, by political force, by whatever means, to save the planet, you may well get exhausted and disillusioned and depressed. These are genuine problems within the environmental movement.

If, on the other hand, you do what you do

because you believe it pleases the living God, who is the Creator and whose handiwork this is, your perspective is very different. I don't think there is any guarantee we will save the planet. I don't think the Bible gives us much reassurance about that. But I do believe it gives God tremendous pleasure when his people do what they were created to do, which is care for what he made.

There are some obvious biblical texts to which Christians tend to turn when they think about creation—Genesis 1 and 2, and maybe Romans 8:22. Are there any others?

Peterson: The book of Exodus and the Egyptian plagues. Those 10 plagues are all exorcisms of specific aspects of Pharaoh's control over the world. For eight months, the whole country of Egypt was turned into a theater of exorcism, item by item by item. Pharaoh was unable to do what he had done to creation, and the evil was exorcised by the command of God.

It's extraordinary, taking away the authority of the powers that be and demonstrating that to the whole nation, maybe most of all to the Hebrews, who themselves had been under Pharaoh's power. Here is a huge wrecking ball: smash, smash, smash, smash, and after eight months there's nothing left of Pharaoh's power.

Then out of this highly technologized world of Egypt—the pyramids, the statuary, the temples—they go into the wilderness, which is supposed to be empty. Yet they are all provided for, and they live by the providence of God in a most unlikely place. You can bet that they gained an appreciation for the fertility of the world they were living in—that they did not need all of Pharaoh's technology to be provided for. That's a great environmental text, even though I don't think it's ever been used that way.

Harris: Our job in reading Scripture is not primarily to find proof texts about creatures with wings or legs. Our job is to discover: Who is God? Who is Jesus Christ? What do they care about? And how does the Spirit enable us to live that life?

Look at Hosea 4. In the first three verses, we have moral problems: adultery and murder, bloodshed following bloodshed. But then, "Therefore the land mourns," and "the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, and even the fish of the sea are taken away" (v. 3, ESV). That's a prophecy three millennia before we have the words for a marine crisis. Who would have thought that the fish of the sea would die? Until modern times, the fish of the sea seemed like an inexhaustible resource.

You get those ecological consequences of the broken relationship with God all the way through Scripture. But at the same time, there's the phenomenal hope that as people are restored in Christ to a right relationship with God, there will be a restoration of our relationship to creation and healing for the creation.

How do these themes connect with Americans, who mostly live in either suburban or urban environments?

Harris: That's one distinction between a Christian take on creation and a secular romanticism about wilderness. Think about Psalm 104. In that psalm, which echoes Genesis, you don't just have "the sea and everything in it"; you have ships on it, working. You don't just have the land; you have people, working. There is a radical environmentalism that wishes people were not on the planet. That's not the biblical view at all. A Rocha in the United Kingdom actually works in the

most polluted, urban borough of the country, because creation isn't absent just because people are there. The challenge is how to restore a right way of life, rather than escaping to some wilderness paradise.

Fifty percent of the planet now lives in cities.

That is where we live out our relationship with creation.



'I don't think we realize how much of our view of wilderness comes to us through the Romantic movement.' ~ Eugene Peterson

As Christian conservationists, do you see urbanization as a good thing, a bad thing, or something neutral?

Harris: My biblical theology means I cannot see it as a bad thing. The ultimate biblical vision is the heavenly city. Our challenge is the redemption of the urban, not the consecration of wilderness.

Peterson: I agree, and I don't think we realize how much of our view of wilderness comes to us through the Romantic movement. Romantic literature was written at the height of the industrial city, with its exploitation, poverty, and child labor. In reaction to all that, they gave us the concept of nature as romantic. But it's not romantic.

Harris: It may not even be natural. Sir Ghillelan Prance, who has studied the Amazon rainforest for decades, believes that the very diversity of the rainforest is a result of gardening. The human beings who lived there selectively used it and tended it, and that is the best way to account for its extraordinary botanical diversity.

Even biologically, the idea of a pristine, teeming world without human beings probably isn't accurate. Britain is certainly a case in point.

'The ultimate biblical vision is the heavenly city. Our challenge is the redemption of the urban, not the consecration of wilderness.' ~ Peter Harris

The original British form of vegetation was a pretty monocultural oak forest. It was only as farming came and we had a diversity of habitats that we had the biodiversity that we cherish on the British Isles today.

So we should understand the human presence on the planet in God's purposes as a blessing.

A Rocha focuses on conservation. In a biblical sense, what is it that we are to conserve?

Peterson: For me and for my family, our primary entry point to conservation—to keeping—was keeping the Sabbath. At one point we decided we were going to keep the Sabbath. We kept a regular Monday Sabbath because as a pastor, Sunday was a work day. We're still doing that. Our kids grew up doing that. If you keep the Sabbath, you start to see creation not as somewhere to get away from your ordinary life, but a place to frame an attentiveness to your life. And it doesn't necessarily have to do with seeing birds or foxes or whatever. Sometimes it is your own kids—putting them in a different setting and bringing them home refreshed.

Harris: It's important to recognize that we are losing species on the planet at an unprecedented rate since industrialization. Now,

if in Psalm 104 it says, "In wisdom [God] made them all," and if God gave us the work of caring for creation, then clearly, we aren't fulfilling the biblical vision.

But I think the Christian vision of conservation is exactly as Eugene framed it. It's a wider one that has to do with human flourishing, that has to do with recognizing that a ravaged creation has

wrecked not just species but God's intention for time, for Sabbath, and that in turn wrecks families and whole societies.

Some Christians believe that prioritizing environmental concerns limits economic growth and consequently the prospects of the poor. Increasingly, one hears the charge that environmentalists care more about birds than people, but more pointedly that they care more about species than about human beings who are poor.

Harris: Every Christian leader I've ever met in poor parts of the world understands that they live an unmediated relationship with the creation. That means that if there is damage done to the creation, there is damage done to the human community. I would argue that the economic possibilities lie now in the building of a sustainable economy; that's where the smart money is today. In any case, an economy founded on degrading the creation is theologically incoherent. The old model that you can make your money any which way and then give some of it away when you're rich enough is lacking biblical warrant.



A much better way is to make money in a way that impacts the poor and the planet beneficially.

Clearly there is a growing enthusiasm among Christians for creation care. But enthusiasm can go wrong. What do you see as the deepest risks in our current interest in environmental concerns?

Harris: I think eco-judgmentalism is a real danger. This is not a matter of finding another five quick rules to keep you on the right side of God. This is not about what we do; this is a change or a development in the depth of our relationship with God himself. It's about everything, not just about a narrow slice of topics. It would be disastrous if we turn the biblical vision into a code that "good" Christians follow—something like, thou shalt eat muesli, wear sandals, and look miserable.

I think the environmental movement has been perceived as judgmental and angry, claiming moral high ground and issuing rules with disapproval. Recently a social scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology told me that studies have shown one of the marker personality traits among environmentalists is anxiety. The Christian approach is very different: it is celebratory and grateful and hopeful. ☪

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{ PROFILE }

Super Natural

Recovering crack addict and baseball superstar **Josh Hamilton** knows he's special, but it's a special that cuts two ways.

By Dan Reed



R

OCK BOTTOM for baseball superstar Josh Hamilton came one night in the fall of 2005, when he woke up in a trailer surrounded by strangers. Confused, lost, and with nowhere to turn, he showed up at his grandmother's door at 2 A.M.

She didn't recognize him. Mary Holt's grandson had been a chiseled athlete, 6-foot-4, 230 pounds, who could hit the ball a mile and run like a gazelle. That night he was down to 180, cheeks sunken, eyes glazed over, his rail-thin body a complete mess.

Josh Hamilton was a junkie. He was bingeing on crack, downing a bottle of whisky every day, and burning through a \$4 million signing bonus. Add a few recent suicide attempts, and there really was no tomorrow. Holt began nursing her strung-out grandson back to health, but with an ultimatum: Quit the drugs or move out.

Hamilton, now an All-Star outfielder for the Texas Rangers, has been clean ever since (he must submit to urine tests three times a week), and is arguably the best player in professional baseball.

"It's amazing I'm still alive after all I've done to my body," Hamilton told *Christianity Today*. "My granny told me during those days that God had something special planned for me, otherwise I would have died."

'I WILL NEVER BE NORMAL'

Holt knew Josh was special. Hamilton has heard this his whole life, beginning in Raleigh, North Carolina, when as a 6-year-old, he was outplaying boys twice his age. As a high school senior in 1999, he managed a .556 batting average. The Tampa Bay Devil Rays made him their No. 1 draft pick and gave him that \$4 million check before he graduated.

His career has been up and down, mostly because of injuries and battles with drugs and alcohol. But by the summer of 2010, his

third with the Rangers, fans were calling him special again: Hamilton had a monster season, batting .359 with 32 home runs and 100 RBIs, despite missing 29 games due to injury. He led the Rangers to the World Series (where they lost to San Francisco), and was named the American League Most Valuable Player.

Getting Hamilton to admit he's special is a challenge. When he does, he says it with a touch of self-deprecation, because to Hamilton, "special" cuts two ways.

On one hand, it has made him a superstar. And it's made him rich; in February 2011, he signed a two-year contract extension with the Rangers for \$24 million.

But being special also means never being able to carry one penny in his pocket, for fear he'll spend it on alcohol or drugs. It means always having to be protected—from himself—by one or more members of his personal support team every minute he's away from the ballpark. That team includes wife Katie, Rangers special assignment coach (and Bible study partner) Johnny Naron, fellow outfielder (and fellow Christian) David Murphy, and pitcher C. J. Wilson, who also eschews alcohol.

For Hamilton, being special means making sure the minibar is removed and in-room movies turned off before he stays in a hotel. It means having to be far more publicly candid about his sins than he'd like. It means one day having to explain to his three daughters the 26 tattoos—including one of Satan—that cover his impressive body.

And it means never being completely comfortable in social situations, not even in his own locker room, because he is and always will be an addict: one drink, one snort, or one puff away from self-destruction.

"I will never be normal, but I'm okay with that," Hamilton says.

Hamilton says it's all part of his "platform" for reaching people who deal with their own or loved ones' addictions, and for reaching people with the good news of the gospel.

His rocky road to superstardom included nearly four years away from the game between 2002 and 2006, much of that time in a crack-and-booze-induced haze, bouncing between trailer homes—where



Nice Trade: Josh Hamilton used to drink a bottle of Crown Royal every day. Now he's chasing baseball's Triple Crown.

he'd collapse onto the floor with other addicts—and posh rehab centers where he failed time and again.

NO STRONG FOUNDATION

Hamilton says he found Jesus at 18, but didn't do much to grow his faith.

After signing with Tampa Bay, Hamilton spent his first two years in the minor leagues living with his parents, who had quit their jobs to shepherd their son. Just before the 2001 season began, all three were injured in a car accident. While his parents recovered at home in Raleigh, Hamilton recuperated in Florida while staying with the team.

Alone for the first time, unable to play, and rulerless, he started hanging out in a local tattoo parlor where he developed his first addiction—to ink. When one of the tattoo artists invited Hamilton to a strip bar, he accepted. That night the 20-year-old had his first drink of alcohol and his first line of cocaine.

At first Hamilton's drug use was occasional, but by summer 2002, he was using during the season and acting out the paranoid life of a junkie. Then came the first of several positive drug tests and suspensions. By 2004 he had been banned from pro ball altogether.

His downward spiral continued until fall 2005, when his grandmother gave him the ultimatum. And for the first time, he wrote in his 2008 autobiography, *Beyond Belief*, Hamilton began to pray.

"I'd tried the 'get-me-out-of-this-foxhole' prayers too many times, and I knew they weren't what God wanted to hear," he wrote. "This time . . . I wanted him to do with me what he would, whether that meant recovery or death. Either one would provide relief from this lingering hell."

Hamilton began reading a Bible and stumbled onto James 4:7: "So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you" (NLT). At that moment, he went cold turkey. It was a frightful few weeks. His mind played tricks on him. The cravings were gargantuan. But he began to gain weight and strength, and his grandmother began talking about a comeback. Hamilton dismissed the idea at first, focusing instead on winning back those he had hurt the most—starting with his wife.

'COMPLETELY BROKEN'

Katie, who met and married Josh during one of his early efforts at sobriety, was glad to see him recovering and, as a believer, happy to see his budding faith. But consumed with anger and pain, she sought counseling from her pastor and his wife.

"Our marriage was so completely broken that you couldn't even see a way to try and fix it," Katie told the Christian Broadcasting Network in November 2010. "I was completely desperate for God. There was nothing in me that could get me through that time." (Katie Hamilton declined to be interviewed for this story.) After much counseling together, Katie forgave Josh, and their marriage was restored. A counselor encouraged Hamilton to think about playing as a way of restoring meaning and purpose to his life. That was followed by a long winter and spring at the Winning Inning, a Christ-centered youth baseball academy in Clearwater, Florida, where Hamilton cleaned toilets, mowed lawns, and slept on an air mattress. Roy Silver, one of the men who run the facility, agreed to help Hamilton under strict conditions—he had to do his chores, help teach the students, and maintain a good attitude.

Silver says that initially Hamilton "was withdrawn. He wasn't

very trusting of people and had a lack of maturity." But a regimen of chores, Bible study, and mentoring changed Hamilton's demeanor, and his time in the batting cages proved he still had the goods.

The Rays gave him one more chance, and late in the 2006 season, he played well in 15 games with a minor league team. But Tampa Bay, burned by Hamilton too many times, decided to part ways with him. He ended up in Cincinnati, where he displayed flashes of greatness. In the 2007 season, but he also was dogged by injuries and illnesses.

The Reds ended up trading Hamilton to Texas, where in 2008 he hit .304 with 32 homers and 130 RBIs and was chosen to play in the All-Star game. In the Home Run Derby the night before, Hamilton crushed an astonishing 28 homers, some soaring over 500 feet. Afterward, as millions watched from home, Hamilton credited God for his recovery, and almost immediately the speaking requests poured in—from churches, drug rehab programs, schools.

He says, "I'm amazed God could use somebody as flawed as me."

A ONE-NIGHT RELAPSE

Hamilton's five years of sobriety have one glitch—a highly publicized relapse in the spring of 2009. Photos of a drunk, shirtless Hamilton posing salaciously with three young women were splashed across the Internet several months later. By that time, Hamilton had already confessed to Katie and his team, and the matter had been dealt with privately.

Silver says Hamilton is proud of his return to baseball, but even more of his comeback off the field.

"How many times does this story end up in the toilet bowl?" asks Silver, citing other baseball stars whose careers were killed by drugs. "Josh has done a great job. He's shown that while he's not perfect, Jesus is still his Savior."

Heading into this season, overcoming an injury-prone history was Hamilton's biggest concern. In early April, in just the eleventh game, he broke his arm in a collision at home plate. He was told he'd miss six to eight weeks.

After the game, a frustrated Hamilton blamed third base coach Dave Anderson for the "dumb play"—for sending him home when he thought he should've stayed at third. It was an unwise comment at best, and more surprising that it came from one of the game's most polite players. The next day, Hamilton publicly apologized to his coach.

Rangers chaplain John Dee Spicer says many teammates might reasonably resent Hamilton's star power, special circumstances, and outspoken Christian faith. But that's not happening in Texas.

"His teammates genuinely love him," Spicer says. "Knowing his background, they don't want to put him in a tough situation. They look out for him."

Teammate Murphy, who co-leads the Rangers' chapel services with Hamilton, says religion can be a touchy subject in the clubhouse, but that they accept and respect Hamilton's beliefs.

"Josh is going to be who he is," says Murphy. "Mostly, though, he leads by example. The most important thing for us as Christians is to love on everybody. And that's what Josh does." 

Dan Reed is a freelance writer who lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with his wife and a 95-pound Labrador puppy.

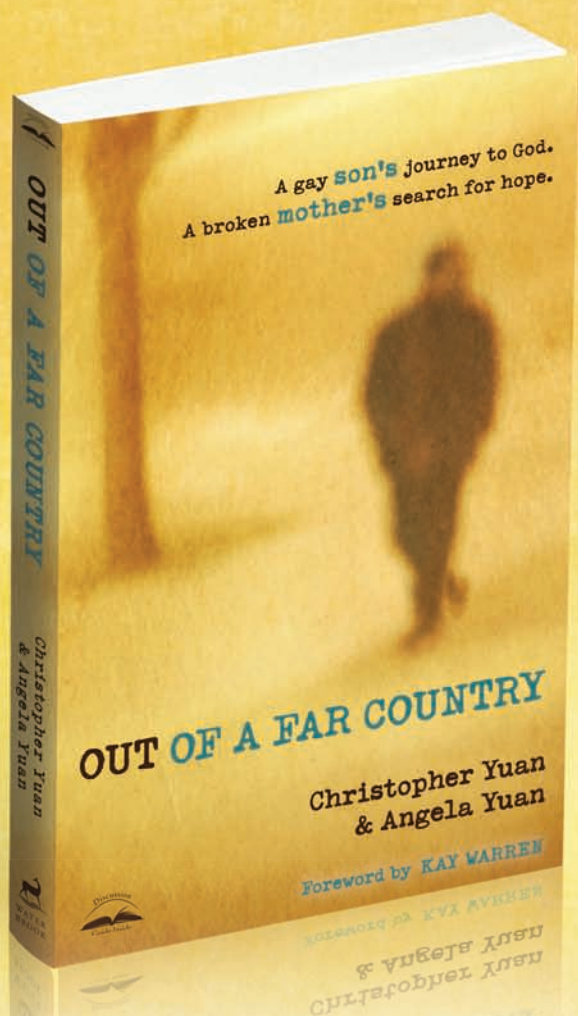


I will never be normal, but I'm okay with that.'

~ Josh Hamilton

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*But while he was still a long way off
his father saw him and felt compassion
and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

LUKE 15:20



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{ THEOLOGY }

Who Gets Left

How end times
theories shape
the ways we view
our earthly abode.

By Matthew
Dickerson



Behind?

I

TRAVEL FROM TIME TO TIME. Unfortunately, this requires sleeping in hotel rooms. My last hotel stay had me pondering the differences between a hotel room and my own home. The “hospitality” industry specializes in the sterile and generic. I can hope for little more than clean sheets, hot water, and maybe a coffee machine. Even luxury hotels, despite elegant fixtures and expensive amenities, are designed for standardized guests. Any art on the walls is mass-produced.

One hotel room is the same as another. But my house, with all its quirks, is a *home*: a long-term habitat, a place of relationships and authentic hospitality. I don’t feel like a guest. Indeed, even my guests shouldn’t feel like guests, but like family.

For these reasons, I treat a hotel room much differently than my home. I don’t trash hotel rooms, but neither am I invested in them. I wouldn’t spend any money to redecorate the walls or to fix a broken drain in the tub. But I’m always thinking about maintaining and improving my home: adding new art or furniture, modifying rooms, installing a screen porch, redesigning a kitchen—and, of course, fixing what breaks. Because I am committed to my home, my attitude is fundamentally different.

This raises an important question: What is our attitude toward the world we live in? How do we treat God’s physical creation, the cosmos into which he placed us? Like a home, or a hotel? Our answer is shaped in part by our eschatology. How do we view the end times? After all, our lifespan is just an infinitesimally small drop of time compared with the great ocean of eternity. If we look forward to being whisked away from this physical world at death—taken away with those who followed God, while the sinners are “left behind”—then maybe we affirm that this world is *not* our home; we’re just passing through.

But what if God meant it to be something more like a home, and less like a hotel?

BODY LANGUAGE

As much or more than any theological concern, biblical teaching on end times should be approached with humility. When Jesus taught about end times, he spoke in parables and metaphors. He was trying to communicate ideas for which our language contains few words or illustrations. To understand them requires imagination as well as reason. Seldom does Jesus issue straightforward propositions or concrete descriptions—and never specific times! The same observation applies to the Revelation of John and the relevant Old Testament prophecies. Although Christians can boldly affirm certain end times doctrines, we need to

show humility where the answers aren't clear.

Nonetheless, as our differing attitudes toward hotels and homes may suggest, what we believe about end times profoundly influences how we live here and now. Consider, for example, the implications of one doctrine that Christians *can* affirm with confidence: the bodily resurrection of Christ and the future bodily resurrection of his followers. As C. S. Lewis noted in *Miracles*, “The earliest Christian documents give a casual and unemphatic assent to the belief that the supernatural part of a man survives the death of the natural organism. But they are very little interested in the matter. What they are intensely interested in is the restoration or ‘resurrection’ of the whole composite creature by a miraculous divine act.”

Not long ago in *Christianity Today*, N. T. Wright addressed the important implications of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, upon which Christians today may base their hope in their own bodily resurrection. “The mission of the church,” he argued, “is nothing more or less than the outworking, in the power of the Spirit, of Jesus’ bodily resurrection. . . . The split between saving souls and doing good in the world is not a product of the Bible or the gospel, but of the cultural captivity of both. The world of space, time, and matter is where real people live, where real communities happen. . . . And the church that is renewed by the message of Jesus’ resurrection must be the church that goes to work precisely in that space, time, and matter.”

In other words, if we don’t believe in a bodily resurrection—if we view heaven through Gnostic eyes as a place of disembodied spirits, of angels hovering on clouds and playing harps—then we are much less likely to take seriously the importance of caring for bodies (ours and those of others) and the physical world they inhabit. On the other hand, taking seriously the bodily resurrection obliges Christians to work as redeeming and restoring influences in this world of space, time, and matter.

LESSONS FROM THE FLOOD

Jesus’ best-known teaching about end times is recorded in Matthew 24–25, with perhaps the most famous section found in 24:40–41. Here Jesus describes the impact of his Second Coming: “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” These two verses, along with the parallel passage in Luke 17, have inspired one of the most famous Christian songs of all times, Larry Norman’s 1972 classic “I Wish We’d All Been Ready” (from an album tellingly titled *Only Visiting This Planet*). More recently, the hugely successful *Left Behind* book and film series has inspired the imaginations of countless Christians.

These verses are worth close consideration. According to Jesus, at least one key to understanding this teaching is the story of Noah, as Jesus explains in the preceding passage, Matthew 24:37–39:

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah

entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Taking seriously the bodily resurrection obliges Christians to work as redeeming and restoring influences in this world of space, time, and matter.

Notice what Jesus says twice in this passage. The coming of the Son of Man will be “as it was in the days of Noah” (v. 37). In case we missed it, we are told again: “That is how it will be” when the Son of Man comes (v. 39). Anytime Jesus says something twice, it is doubly worth paying attention to. Jesus seems to be emphasizing two aspects of the Noah story. One is simply the surprise factor of the Flood. Nobody was expecting it.

Until the day it happened, people were going about their business, living their daily lives. They were taken by surprise. So too will the Second Coming of Jesus come unawares. We should always be ready.

We ought also to notice the presence of two groups of persons. One is Noah and, implicitly, his family. Noah is righteous and follows God. He and his family are saved; they are *not* caught by surprise. The second group is the unnamed “people” (v. 38): those who were eating, drinking, and marrying. This second group—described in Genesis 6:5 as full of wickedness, their hearts and thoughts continually evil—gets caught by surprise. Its wickedness prompted the judgment of the Flood. But as the story makes clear, the people who “knew nothing about what would happen” got taken away.

We have to pause for a moment and observe how thoroughly this inverts some popular understandings of the end times. Those who do *not* follow God are, in the language of this passage, “taken away.” By contrast, Noah and his family are “left behind.” While the flood washes away the wicked, God rescues Noah and his kin, leaving them to enjoy the goodness of the renewed and restored creation.

And then, we are told—not once, but twice—that the Second Coming of Jesus will happen *just like this*. Consider once more verses 40 and 41. They describe two pairs of persons. In each case, one person is taken away and one is left behind. And verses 37 and 39 tell us that this outcome mirrors the days of Noah. The entire passage strongly suggests that the ones “left behind,” in Jesus’ description of the Second Coming, will *not* be the wicked ones but the followers of God. They are *rewarded* by being left behind to enjoy, as embodied creatures, God’s new kingdom. The wicked are “taken away,” losing the chance to experience the new creation.

CHRIST OR PLATO?

Of course, I may be wrong. Jesus often tells stories whose main ideas are not immediately obvious. Indeed, other passages seem at first glance to shine a different light on the concept of being “left behind.” In Luke 17:26–36, for example, we have a different version of this teaching, where Jesus twice speaks of two persons, only one of whom will be taken. Here, Jesus refers not only to the Flood, but also to the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom. In the Lot story, the righteous are taken away from Sodom, while the ones left behind get destroyed. Does this reverse the lesson we derived from the Noah story? Perhaps it has nothing to do with being taken or left, but simply with the imperative of being ready.

There is, however, an important difference between the stories of Noah and Lot. The account of Noah, like Jesus' teaching about the last days, is about judgment on the *whole earth*. Perhaps this is why both Gospel writers included that element of Jesus' teaching. The Lot story is not about global judgment, but about judgment on one city. Indeed, even in this account, Lot and his daughters, though removed from Sodom, remain "left behind" as bodily beings, while the wicked, "left behind" in Sodom, end up perishing from the earth.

We might turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and Paul's description of the Rapture. Surely, some suggest, this points to Christ's followers being taken away. But does it? The core of this passage is a message of hope that believers who have died like Jesus will be resurrected from the dead. Paul does speak of being caught up in the clouds to meet Jesus. But read the passage carefully. While it says nothing about Christ's followers *leaving*, it twice mentions Jesus *coming* (vv. 15–16). So what about "meet[ing] the Lord in the air" (v. 17)?

Interestingly, the Greek word for "meeting" here is *apantesis*—a term used infrequently in the New Testament and carrying a very different connotation. It means going out to meet a newly arriving magistrate or dignitary *to welcome him back into the city*. In other words, the 1 Thessalonians passage does not imply a departure from earth. Instead, the passage's emphasis is on Jesus' triumphal return. Paul seems to be evoking Jesus' earlier triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the people went outside the city to welcome him. As John describes the triumphal entry, "The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and *went out to meet him*, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the king of Israel!'" (John 12:12–13, emphasis added).

This would seem far more in keeping with the weight of Scripture. Romans 8:18–24 speaks of God's redemptive and liberating work in *all* of creation. Revelation 11:18 speaks of God's judgment in "destroying those who destroy the earth." Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis and numerous Psalms (especially 104) speak of God's creation and superintendence of an earth in which he delights—and his appointment of humans as its stewards.

This brings us back to Matthew. If my reading is accurate, then many Christians have been interpreting the end times backwards for decades. Hasn't our common picture of the Rapture imagined the followers of God—those who are saved—getting taken away while the wicked are "left behind"? I would suggest that the popular interpretation owes more to Platonism or Gnosticism, which devalue the body and physical creation, than to Christianity. Plato's Socrates, when



Many Christians have been interpreting the end times backwards for decades. Hasn't our common picture of the Rapture imagined the followers of God—those who are saved—getting taken away while the wicked are 'left behind'?

sentenced to death for allegedly corrupting the Athenian youth, delighted to die; he gladly drank the hemlock because it meant freedom from his body and a chance to escape the earth. In Plato's vision, Socrates, the righteous and wise philosopher, would be taken away, while his enemies would be left behind. Similarly, when Christians look forward to escaping the earth—when we imagine being "left behind" as punishment—we may be embracing Gnosticism and Platonism rather than Christianity.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

None of this discredits all the ideas and sentiments behind popular end times portrayals like Norman's "I Wish We'd All Been Ready." The title of the song, repeated often in its refrain, speaks powerfully to the importance of being prepared for the last days. This seems to be the first of two main ideas Jesus draws from the Noah story. Indeed, the message is echoed in many of the parables that follow in Matthew 25. Surely, we do

well to heed Jesus' warning in Matthew 24:42 to "keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

Nonetheless, if our thinking about who gets left behind is backwards, we are likely to adopt wrongheaded attitudes toward the arena of creation. To wit: Norman's same album includes a song, "Reader's Digest," which ends with these lines: "I'm only visiting this planet / This world is not my home, I'm just passing through." How many identically themed T-shirts and bumper stickers made their way through church circles in the 1970s? The world, according to this mindset, is a hotel, not a home. When we succumb to this way of thinking, we miss out on the importance of the bodily resurrection. Indeed, the centrality of the bodily resurrection to Christian teaching is one reason I am led to an understanding of Matthew 24–25 that contests our profound horror at the prospect of being left behind. If we view as a *punishment* being left in this world, what does that say about our view of creation? If we yearn ultimately to *escape* corporeal existence rather than awaiting our bodily resurrection and the coming of heaven to earth, what sort of care for God's creation will result? The answers, thus far, have only been discouraging.

This world *is* our home. It is the home God made for us, blessed us with, and instructed us to take care of. Viewing it as our home is critical to our mission as caretakers. I, for one, look forward to being left behind, like Noah and his family—only with my new and resurrected body. ✚

Matthew Dickerson is a professor of computer science at Middlebury College and the author of several books, including *The Mind and the Machine: What It Means to Be Human and Why It Matters* (Brazos Press).

A Variety of Religious Composition

The music we sing, in and out of church, is more varied and interesting than we've been led to believe.

By Lawrence R. Mumford

In the March issue of *Christianity Today*, we devoted a number of articles to worship music. The passionate and diverse response of readers was not unexpected! We promised more reflection on this theme, and on worship in general. In this issue, we offer two more pieces. The second piece, written by a professor well grounded in ancient church history, asks fundamental questions about the nature of some forms of contemporary worship. The first piece, written by a contemporary composer, discusses the strengths and limitations of what we today call contemporary worship music.

—The Editors

B

BEFORE EARNING a doctorate in music composition and becoming a university music professor, I spent many years playing keyboards and singing in ccm and praise and worship bands, and before that, in nightclub and party bands. I worked as a paid minister of music in two churches in greater Los Angeles, and I also composed a number of published songs, one of which was included on a *Billboard* No. 1 album and Record of the Year. I mention all this to show that

I have some working knowledge of contemporary music. I'm an insider who appreciates the genre, while not unaware of its limitations.

To understand what contemporary Christian music is, we need to look at just the music—not the lyrics—through a microscope. Although most people call it ccm or “worship music” or just “worship,” it is first and foremost a subgenre of the American popular music that emerged in the mid-1960s and has been pervasive in society ever since. (For the sake of clarity, most musicians don't refer to blues, ragtime, jazz, pure country, swing, gospel, and other earlier popular styles as “pop,” although they admire the music and at times draw heavily upon it.) This relatively recent pop music, with its almost infinite branches, includes soft rock, hard rock, country crossover, folk rock, punk rock, alternative, adult contemporary, rhythm and blues, hip-hop, and so forth. It has always been a model for ccm, and a few creative ccm artists have been musical innovators in their own right.

Nearly every pop and ccm song displays three musical traits that do not occur in hymns, traditional choral and organ pieces, or classical symphonic music. These are:

1. Consistent syncopation. This refers to an off-beat “kick” or accent to at least one beat in virtually every bar of the music, and often a complex of these rhythms. Such syncopation originated in African music and was brought to the U.S. from the 17th to the 19th century. Syncopation does not occur consistently in the classical music of Europe, primarily because that continent did not enslave large numbers of Africans.

2. A drum set percussionist playing a constant “rock” beat. This includes placing



accents on the second and fourth beats of a measure in 4/4 time, which is itself another subtle syncopation.

3. A pleasing middle-ground vocal style that is neither rankly amateurish nor operatic.

Additional musical traits that are common, although not found in every song, include a chord palette with occasional “modal” chords (unusual chromatic chords that originated in British and Appalachian folk music), a guitar playing supporting chords, an electric bass playing in a complementary fashion to the drummer, and improvised instrumental solos and fill-in patterns.

Again, it is astonishing that none of these musical traits are found consistently in traditional church or symphonic music. The only exception would be certain types of modality that occur in 20th-century British classical pieces. In other words, even if I were to play “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” followed by “Here I Am to Worship” on the same keyboard and with the same vocalist, I would be performing in two musical languages.

CCM is therefore not merely a stylistic development of church

music from the past, like the change in art styles from the Renaissance to the Baroque. It is instead a radical departure from the past, and might be compared to the difference between a cathedral and a skyscraper. Both buildings shelter their occupants from the elements, and both may be identical in height and square footage—but they are made of very different materials.

EMOTIONAL RICHNESS

Several arguments have justified the inclusion, and even the dominance, of CCM in many churches today. It is identical in style and instrumentation to the popular music that every attendee hears constantly on the radio, in stores, in television ads, and in many films. It also complements the often large collections of recordings that baby boomers and younger consumers have amassed since as far back as the years of the Beach Boys and the Beatles. When CCM is performed live—especially with lighting effects, backdrops, loud amplification, and so forth—it evokes the excitement of the stadium rock concerts that many of us have attended.

Contemporary Christian worship songs are often beautiful, exciting, and inspirational. But to ignore all other kinds of music does not reflect contemporary life.

The pop style also contains a richness of emotional expression that may explain why it has come to dominate worship when, for example, the big band jazz or swing-era singing of the 1930s and '40s did not. The famous American music composer Aaron Copland, after writing several jazz-influenced pieces during that era, said, "I felt that I had done all I could with the idiom, considering its limited emotional scope. . . . American music could not possibly be confined to two dominant jazz models: the 'blues' and the snappy number." As a result, the Greatest Generation tended to turn to classical composers for ceremonial, patriotic, and especially worship music. In other words, they danced to Glenn Miller on Saturday night, but on Sunday morning they worshiped to classical choral music, the tribute music of Copland, and traditional hymns and Johann Sebastian Bach-like organ preludes, because this music met their emotional needs better than the era's popular styles.

On the other hand, boomers and younger listeners who enjoy pop classics may be familiar with sensitive songs like "Abraham, Martin and John," "MacArthur Park," or "Bridge Over Troubled Water." It is hard to imagine any of these as jazz-era hits, yet they all sold millions in the late 1960s. They proved that pop was capable of expressing a range of emotions, and that it could be performed with a full orchestral background. Some would call these songs miniature classics, and the best of them could even be compared with the piano/vocal genre in classical music known as "art song." When CCM albums like Amy Grant's extremely popular *Age to Age* (which includes an arrangement of a Bach fugue as the introduction to one song) were released in the early 1980s, the subgenre joined the mainstream as a powerful artistic force. Artists were able to speak to an entire generation of Christians in its own language, and in a voice that ranged from a roar to a whisper.

GENRES AND GENRES

If 21st-century American society allowed pop music to completely replace all other styles, we might reasonably conclude that churches would do likewise. After all, if the congregation hears nothing but this music all week long, why should the church provide anything different on weekends—other than, of course, meaningful Christian lyrics?

But the simple truth is that our culture has not eliminated all other styles. The most obvious competitor is film music, which is a compendium of both classical and popular elements displayed on a large canvas. Hans Zimmer and John Williams are names familiar to every churchgoer, and neither is a pop songwriter. While many film scores include instrumental sounds made famous by pop, most soundtracks also include several segments performed by professional orchestras. And while playing pop songs behind the action in a film is common, few acclaimed blockbusters rely exclusively on this technique. There is a depth of emotional expression for which a symphonic score, rather than a pop song, is sometimes needed. Television dramas, documentaries, IMAX films, and even video games also favor this alternative.

Musical theater is also extremely popular, and might be called a hybrid, falling somewhere between popular songs and classical music's "light opera." Productions by composers like Andrew Lloyd Webber—also a household name—sell millions of tickets every year. The vocalists, mostly classically trained, are supported by both a pop band and a small orchestra.

In addition, churchgoers frequently attend local symphonic band, choral, and orchestra concerts and recitals, none of which are usually dominated by pop songs. Much of the music on these programs is classical, and yet audiences continue to enjoy its timeless qualities. Of course, new pieces are included as well, sometimes even written for the occasion. The 2009 inauguration of President Obama, preceded by a prayer from Rick Warren, included an arrangement of a Shaker hymn made famous by Copland and arranged by Williams, and performed by a quartet consisting of cello, violin, clarinet, and piano.

In short, the pop song genre is certainly not the only music that any churchgoer hears, absorbs, or even enjoys between weekend services.

If one looks at the output of a master classical composer, one finds that he almost always wrote in larger and more varied forms in addition to these miniatures. Johannes Brahms, for example, wrote many songs, but he also wrote a number of choral pieces for the church, not to mention four symphonies and many other lengthy pieces. Bach arranged hundreds of hymns—which might be compared with today's CCM songs—but he also wrote choral, keyboard, and orchestral works of varying lengths, many of which were performed in church services.

So, does today's church leadership have a responsibility to edify its congregation by presenting both shorter and longer pieces, in a variety of styles, from different eras and for different combinations of instruments? Isn't this the best way to "equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12)?

Contemporary Christian worship songs are often beautiful, exciting, and inspirational. But in my opinion, to ignore all other kinds of music does not reflect contemporary life. Such a practice will not only prevent young churchgoers from recognizing and remembering hymns and other sacred music from the past 500 years, it may even produce in them an underdeveloped artistic sense ("Jesus loves little Johnny who plays a guitar, but forget little Billy who plays the trumpet"). This may also make it difficult for young people to enter and function in a culture that still values intellectual achievement and the art of music in all its guises.

Perhaps surprisingly, many worship band leaders with whom I have spoken agree. They see themselves as contributors to an exciting and relatively new art form, but they also respect genuine talent and achievement in many other styles of music created for the glory of God.

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The Cultural Medium and the Christian Message

What kind of Christians do contemporary services produce?

By D. H. Williams

ON A RECENT SUNDAY, I found myself visiting a Protestant megachurch. Entering the “worship center” was eerily similar to being ushered down the aisle of a movie theater: floor lighting, padded chairs, visual effects shown on two large screens, and music over the speaker system.

A band appeared on stage to begin the service with live music. It was dark, and I thought I heard the audience singing along, but it was impossible to tell. And although I was seated in the front row, I sensed that the congregation was almost superfluous to the activity on stage. As in most forms of entertainment, the audience functioned as passive onlookers, participating only in an unseen, intensely personal way.

While the band played, song lyrics flashed across the two big screens, with words like *great*, *God*, and *high* figuring prominently. The musical performance was outstanding, even if the vocabulary was extremely limited. If the songs aimed at an emotional response, they were probably successful, but like so much contemporary worship music, they lacked any element of substantive teaching.

Immediately after the singing, without any announcement, much less Paul’s words of institution (1 Cor. 11:23–26), the elements of the Lord’s Supper were hurriedly handed around. Again, I was amazed at the blandly efficient nature of this activity. We could have been passing pretzels and soda pop. No one offered any guidance whatsoever on the sharing of this critical ordinance or sacrament. It seemed a strictly vertical encounter between each individual and God.

Next came the sermon, offered by a capable person who worked

very hard to relate while teaching some biblical content. A simple outline appeared on the screen so that we could follow the train of thought. So did the relevant Bible passages, lest anyone could not find them in an actual Bible. I noticed that the illustrations came almost solely from popular movies and television. Then the service ended as abruptly as it began, with a few announcements over the speakers and a cordial “thank you” to the congregation. No benediction or closing prayer—not even a person to give it. The house lights came on, and it was time to leave.

PROTECTING THE PEARLS

To say that the service was religiously “dumbed down” is not quite right. In fact, I wish that were the case, since the goal of comprehension sometimes demands that complex ideas be simplified. No, it seemed rather that the presentation aimed at finding a theological and cultural lowest common denominator in order to attract and engage the greatest number of people. As a result, there was no need to be a Christian to understand most everything that was said or sung.

While church leaders rightly want Sunday services to be accessible, they should also be asking about the limits of this strategy. Ironically, a common complaint 20 years ago was that churches alienated visiting nonbelievers with too much Christian jargon. This was a legitimate criticism. But now it seems the impulse toward accommodating the surrounding culture has pushed churches into making the opposite mistake. Has a passion for inclusiveness deluded churches into supposing that doctrinal or liturgical particularity threatens their mission to a religiously pluralized world?

The apostolic and post-apostolic churches—those nearest to the New Testament era—took a different approach. Modeled after the Old Testament tabernacle, the church was where believers encountered the “Holy of Holies.” Thus worship could not be open to everyone. The churches of the third and fourth centuries



observed what was called the *disciplina arcana* (the rule or practice of secrecy) with regard to worship gatherings. This was to ensure that only baptized Christians partook of the Lord's Supper and confessed the church's creed. Hippolytus, a third-century theologian, kept a list of vices and professions that would disqualify one from baptismal eligibility. In a great many churches, the un-baptized, even *catechumens* preparing for baptism, were dismissed before the church celebrated the Eucharist and confessed its creed.

I'm not suggesting that today's churches dismiss the un-baptized in the middle of worship, or prevent non-Christians from walking through the doors. Still, it is instructive to see how the church's "welcome" to the world was tempered by exclusionary safeguards to its identity and integrity, especially in the early centuries. If anything, the early church's example cautions against tossing around the pearls of the gospel promiscuously, lest these treasures fall into unprepared hands. On this score Jesus' words are stark: "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs" (Matt. 7:6).

Failure to preserve the uniqueness of Christian motives, insights, and commitments jeopardizes both the meaning and holiness of the church's life. I would argue that, far from snobbishness or spiritual elitism, this is a crucial part of the gospel message.

Gregory of Nyssa said it well: "Theology is not for just anyone" (*Oratio* 29). By "theology" he meant the creation of a unique, Christ-centered spirituality that gradually transforms the mind and heart, one in which "deep speaks to deep."

THE COST OF ACCOMMODATION

Perhaps after witnessing this instance of contemporary worship, I should have simply thanked God for a church that was crowded and very active. Numerically speaking, this was the largest of the large churches in town. No doubt a great many seekers had been attracted for one reason or another: the youth program, the live music, the adult fellowship groups, or the emphasis on missions. But despite this obvious passion for involvement, I found myself

At some point, style of presentation affects the substance of Christian identity and teaching, often by blunting its sharper edges.

struggling with an uncomfortable question: At what cost had this congregation—like others—purchased its sweeping adaptations to contemporary American society?

Of course, throughout history the church has immersed itself within its cultural surroundings in order to present an effective witness. Perhaps there's nothing new in the modern megachurch except elaborate methods of appealing to outsiders. Indeed, method has become very important for such congregations. I've been told that modern worship competes with the sound and visual effects of contemporary entertainment as a way of reaching modern audiences. The argument goes that churches should not be averse to using secular techniques showcased in popular entertainment. Artistry and drama in the presentation of the sacred are said to resonate with younger generations.

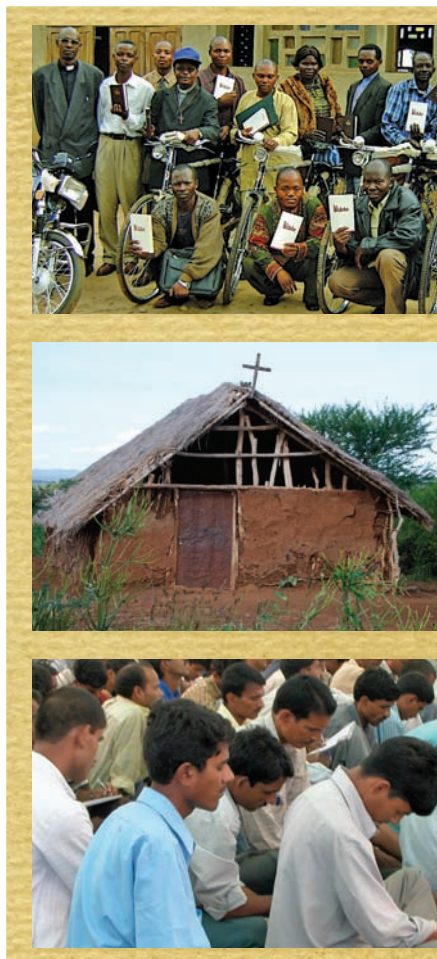
In this process, however, it seems to me that the church caters to short attention spans and relies heavily on stimulating emotional highs during the service. Instead of facilitating an encounter with the living God, the methods themselves become the overwhelming focus. In a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* commentary, Timothy Beal observed that "a hallmark of American evangelicalism, at least since the 1940s, has been its ready willingness to adapt its theological content to new media technologies and popular trends in the entertainment industry. Implicit in that openness is an evangelical

counterdeclaration to Marshall McLuhan's: The medium is not the message; the message, or the Word, transcends whatever media are used to convey it. But in the long run, is the constant evangelical adaptation of the Word unwittingly proving McLuhan right? I think so. That is partly why we find so little coherence within and among the various groups and movements and productions that pass as evangelical." At some point, style of presentation affects the *substance* of Christian identity and teaching, often by blunting its sharper edges. It is probably no accident that many contemporary churches offer a diet heavy in biblical images and metaphors, leaving actual biblical theology in short supply.

MORE THAN AESTHETICS

Lest I sound like a grumpy old man complaining about the styles of the "new generation," let me say that the congregation I visited ranged in age from young to old. Fashions ran the gamut of formality, from suits to jeans. I myself dress casually most Sundays, and can appreciate a good bass guitar when I hear it. So I'm not just grumbling about matters of musical or sartorial style.

Yet aesthetics is never mere aesthetics; the medium may well override the message, or worse, become confused with the message. Tailoring the message to personal styles can easily result in adapting the faith to one's own needs. Instead of allowing the gospel to



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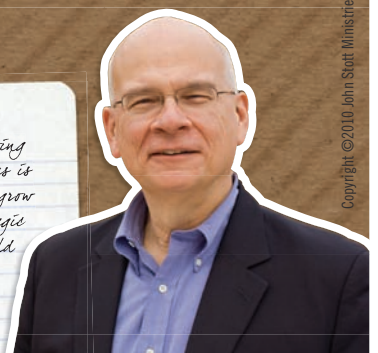
Today, at least 75% of the world's Christians are non-Western, or living in what is called the "Majority World." This means Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. But 80% of Majority World pastors have no formal biblical training. And they're trying to bring biblical truth to areas suffering from extreme poverty and injustice. That's where we fit in. We're geared to enable and resource pastors and other Christian leaders to preach and teach the Bible, faithfully and effectively.

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Tim Keller, Bestselling author and pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City



challenge us, we alter the historic faith to fit the trends of our age. Many contemporary worship leaders recognize this temptation.

How would the believer know when this process has gone too far? When is the Christian mission irretrievably compromised by a passion for making the gospel relevant? These are difficult questions. But given the anti-traditionalist posture of many contemporary churches—many of which have jettisoned confessional or theological resources in favor of relevance—it's hard to see what will help them preserve orthodox Christianity for the long haul.

Our consumerist culture has co-opted many churches, creating a mall-like environment marked by splashiness and simplistic messages. When the church becomes essentially a purveyor of religious goods and services, it reinforces the believer's own consumerist habits, allowing him to pick and choose according to taste or functionality. Inhaling from the cultural atmosphere a mania for unlimited choice, churches breathe out as many different programs as possible, looking to accommodate as many different believers as possible. Perhaps unintentionally, this approach treats personal liberty and the inalienable "right" to choose as the highest goods of life.

Ironically, the weight placed on personal experience and freedom from conventional beliefs is reminiscent of early-20th-century Protestant liberalism. Updating their theology for modern fashions, the heirs of Schleiermacher and Hegel emphasized the primacy of the individual's experience of God, setting aside complicating issues of doctrine as divisive, latently authoritarian, or just plain irrelevant. Despite many important differences between this sort of liberalism

and the contemporary evangelical megachurch, there are striking similarities in their approaches to individual experience, popular culture, and socially uncomfortable doctrines.

But the big question remains: In what direction are such churches taking their members? What kind of Christianity will emerge from an overemphasis on appealing to anyone who might attend a church service for any reason? When the apostle Paul became "all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22), he did not reinvent or re-orient the faith of which he said, "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received" (1 Cor. 15:3, *esv*). The kind of transformation Paul experienced and tried to ignite in the early church was grounded in a tradition that made Christian faith, hope, and love starting points for the believer's growth. If our post-denominational (or post-Protestant) era continues to elevate personal freedom of choice, the stability of the church's historical wisdom will be desperately needed.

At the very least, the mere entertainment techniques will never substitute the hard work of teaching believers to acquire the divine life of the Father by the Son through the Holy Spirit. This kind of life may well entail sacrificing certain pleasures of one's former life or rejecting certain elements of Western culture. And the church that would foster it must have goals that eclipse inclusiveness. ☩

D. H. Williams is professor of religion in patristics and historical theology at Baylor University. He is the author most recently of *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church* (Baker Academic).



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AYN RAND LED ME TO CHRIST

How the anti-Christian philosopher prepared me to
hear the gospel. By Bishop Edward S. Little II



AYN RAND CHANGED MY LIFE. When I embraced her philosophy, Objectivism, the conversion was far more dramatic than my decision, several years later, to follow Jesus Christ—more dramatic, but in the end transitory. Yet Rand, the novelist, philosopher, and uncompromising atheist, inadvertently opened a door for the gospel. I don't believe dead people spin in their graves, but if they did and she could read these words, I imagine Rand would be twirling violently.

As many have noted, Rand's ethic of rational self-interest is incompatible with the gospel, and leads to social as well as spiritual disaster. "Most observers see Rand as a political and economic philosopher," wrote Gary Moore last year in *Christianity Today*. "I believe that she was first and foremost an anti-Christian philosopher." A six-foot dollar sign wreath towered over her casket, Moore pointed out, an icon of the false gospel she labored to proclaim. I agree entirely that Christianity and Objectivism are utterly incompatible. But my gratitude to Rand remains profound.

MY FIRST CONVERSION

In the spring of 1962, an awkward and philosophically oriented 15-year-old raised in an utterly secular home, I read *The Fountainhead* and then *Atlas Shrugged*. Those books triggered a philosophical (and, unknowingly, spiritual) revolution. One evening, immersed in Rand's writings, I listened on the radio to a re-broadcast of a lecture she had delivered a year earlier at the University of Wisconsin, during a symposium called "Ethics in Our Time." Even at a distance of 48 years, I can still hear her heavily accented voice as she quoted from John Galt's speech, the long and detailed summary of Objectivism that appears near the end of *Atlas Shrugged*: "Yes, this is an age of moral crisis. Yes, you are bearing

punishment for your evil. . . . Your moral code has reached its climax, the blind alley at the end of its course. And if you wish to go on living, what you now need is not to return to morality . . . but to discover it."

For three years I followed Rand, read every word she published, studied Objectivism and its moral, political, and economic implications, and even tried to imitate the heroes in Rand's novels. Several times, the central character in *The Fountainhead*, Howard Roark, is accused of staring at people, his piercing eyes making the novel's villains feel judged and found wanting. And so I practiced widening my eyes and keeping them open for extended periods. No one, however, seemed daunted by my gaze.

Because my family lived in New York City, I was able to enroll in a 20-session "Basics of Objectivism" course at the Nathaniel Branden Institute. (Branden, an early Rand associate and a psychologist by training, spent many years teaching Objectivism in partnership with Rand.) The course included sessions on metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and political and economic theory, with a heavy emphasis on laissez-faire capitalism. When Branden finished his lecture, Rand herself would often answer questions. Among the memorabilia from that period of my life is a scrap of paper with Rand's autograph, the letters sharp and angular. I also enrolled in "Objectivist Economics," taught



LISA BETH ANDERSON



A Once Ardent Disciple:
Ed Little holds a copy of Ayn Rand's
Atlas Shrugged that he bought and
devoured as a highschooler.

by a very young Alan Greenspan.

My commitment to Rand and her philosophy, however, did not survive my early years in college. Two figures intervened.

THE UNSCRUPULOUS GOD

The first was Plato. In Rand's teaching, Aristotle served as a kind of philosophical hero. Plato, with his tendency toward mysticism, represented philosophical depravity for Rand. So I entered college predisposed to reject Plato, and came armed with Objectivist and Aristotelian weapons for the battle. Then I actually read Plato in a philosophy class. I was shocked to find much to commend his vision of a Reality that is more than the reality we can see. "A young man who wishes to remain an Atheist," C. S. Lewis wrote in *Surprised by Joy*, "cannot be too careful of his reading. There are traps everywhere—'Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,' as Herbert says, 'fine nets and stratagems.' God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous."

The *Phaedo* was particularly disturbing, as Plato's Socrates prepares to die and in the process comforts his friends with an admittedly non-Christian notion of the afterlife. What troubled me most was that it made sense, that the one-dimensional universe of Objectivism did not do justice to the facts. Could Rand be wrong? My certainty began to crumble. Much later I stumbled onto a hymn that points to Plato and Socrates as unwitting precursors of the gospel:

For Socrates who, phrase by phrase,
Talked men to truth, unshrinking,
And left for Plato's mighty grace
To mold our ways of thinking;
For all who wrestled, sane and free,
To win the unseen reality,
To God be thanks and glory.

I still remember my breathlessness as I read the *Phaedo* for the first time. But Plato merely set the stage for something, Someone, more profound.

The second figure was Jesus. In my sophomore year, I enrolled in a two-semester "Bible as Literature" course. I was majoring in ancient history, and biblical history figured into the wider picture. But the ground softened by Plato presented itself to the plow of the gospel, and I was changed forever.

The process, however, has its own bizarre twists and turns. These courses were taught by a former pastor turned agnostic, a delightful and humorous man who enjoyed introducing conservative Christians to historical-critical methods and shaking their faith. Students often emerged from Bible as Literature predictably unbiblical in their perspective. For reasons known only to the Holy Spirit, the system didn't work in my case. Reading the Bible for the first time, encountering the text and laying aside the professor's debunking attitude, I met a God who laid claim to my life, a Savior who invited (or, more precisely, demanded) my allegiance.

Over the course of two semesters, something happened. I can't precisely date it. But friends tell me that they noticed a change. By

the time I was halfway through the New Testament course, I was referring to Jesus in the present rather than the past tense. Later, under the guidance of those same friends, I learned the vocabulary—about committing my life to Jesus, receiving him as Savior, following him as Lord. Paul describes the experience of his Corinthian converts, and my own experience, with overwhelming and almost inarticulate joy: "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11, RSV). But the deed was first done surreptitiously, as I read the Bible and met the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Lewis was right: God is indeed very unscrupulous.

THE TRUTH OF AYN RAND

And what of Rand? I quickly relegated her to my intellectual and spiritual past. Friends from my Objectivist period drifted out of my life. As a new Christian, I immersed myself in the Bible, Christian literature, and the Christian community. Only occasionally, in

the intervening decades, did Rand enter my consciousness—once again with the recent release of the movie *Atlas Shrugged*. In reflecting on how she inadvertently influenced me, I've seen God's hand work through her in a number of ways.

Ayn Rand taught me how to think. "Man cannot survive except through his mind," says Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead*. "He comes on earth unarmed. His brain is his only weapon. Animals obtain food by force. Man has no claws, no fangs, no horns, no great strength of muscle. He must plant his food or hunt it. To plant, he needs a process of thought. To hunt, he needs weapons, and to make weapons—a process of thought. From this simplest necessity to the highest religious abstraction, from the wheel to the skyscraper, everything we are and we have comes from a

single attribute of man—the function of his reasoning mind." And so Rand challenged me to reject sloppy thinking, to apply reason meticulously, not least when dealing with culturally mandated assumptions. But that very commitment to reason gave me tools that led, much to my surprise, to a critique of Objectivism itself. The unseen Reality to which Plato pointed made sense not simply as an alternative way of seeing the world, but also under the test of reason.

Indeed, that very test points to God himself. The order and complexity of creation, the fact, as Lewis notes in *Mere Christianity*, that there seems to be a moral law with a claim upon human beings ("right and wrong as a clue to the meaning of the universe," he calls it), all stand upon the foundation of the firm application of reason. Rigorous thought can set the stage for faith and demonstrate the reasonableness of the Christian claim that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. While reason cannot, unaided, present the fullness of Christian truth, it can support and undergird it.

Ayn Rand taught me that there is such a thing as objective reality. Three Aristotelian axioms—Non-Contradiction, Either-Or, and A is A—mark the three sections of *Atlas Shrugged*. "Contradictions do not exist," Francisco tells Dagny. "Whenever you think that you are facing a contradiction, check your premises. You will find that one



of them is wrong.” In other words, a thing is true (or false) regardless of what we think about it. This flies in the face of modernism (which tends to dismiss out of hand the supernatural and the miraculous, with no evidence beyond skepticism) and postmodernism (which doesn’t so much reject the supernatural as completely relativize it). When a postmodernist says, “All truth is relative; you have your truth and I have mine,” Rand, and I, might answer: Your very statement contains an inherent inner contradiction. You claim as objective truth an assertion that would, in effect, negate itself.

All of this, in the end, led me to the non-sentimental and objective claims of the gospel. The gospel is no mere preference. It is true, or it isn’t. Jesus is who he says he is, or he is (again, Lewis) a madman or a fraud. Christian doctrine—Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Redemption, Consummation, and our ultimate and beatific vision of the Trinity—is true, or false. It can’t be both. Rand’s view of objective reality is admittedly limited. She relies on the senses and goes no further. She dismisses faith as mysticism and its practitioners as witch doctors. But she is right in this: If something is true, it is so because it aligns with reality. Our desires neither confirm nor deny its validity. Our only choice is to say “Yes” to truth, or not. As a Christian, that “Yes” is to Truth incarnate, Jesus Christ.

Ayn Rand taught me to believe in moral absolutes. Gary Moore

Rand’s view of objective reality is limited. She relies on the senses and goes no further. She dismisses faith as mysticism. But she is right in this: If something is true, it is so because it aligns with reality.

reserved his strongest criticism precisely for this aspect of her thought. Rational self-interest, taken to its logical conclusion, is ultimately destructive. “I am done with the monster of the ‘We,’” the hero of *Anthem* says, “the word of serfdom, of plunder, of misery, falsehood and shame. And now I see the face of god, and I raise this god over the earth, this god whom men have sought since men came into being, this god who will grant them joy and peace and pride. This god, this one word: ‘I.’” The golden calf of Exodus 32 hardly receives the adulation that Rand pours upon the individual and his or her moral autonomy.

John Galt’s oath in *Atlas Shrugged* puts it more sharply: “I swear, by my life and my love of it, that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another to live for mine.” Rand places each human being at the center of his or her own universe, and makes that human being absolute. This is, from a biblical perspective, monstrous, the very articulation of Adam and Eve’s disastrous rebellion.

As destructive as her moral vision may be, however, it is a moral vision—and that is precisely the point. I came to believe, in my Objectivist years, that I would flourish if I lived my life in accordance with a set of clear and unmistakable moral precepts. Later, I realized that those precepts were wrong; they work precisely against the flourishing of human beings as God has designed us and are ultimately self-destructive.

But in rejecting Objectivist ethics, I discovered that the New Testament offers us a “more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31, RSV). The New Testament vision of discipleship involves the attempt (aided, empowered) to bring our lives in accord with God’s revealed will and purpose. There are moral absolutes with which we must grapple, which we must obey, and about which (when we fail to obey) we

must seek absolution. Just as there is objective reality, there is also right and wrong. The twisted moral vision of Rand prepared me, perhaps simply by contrast, for the values of the kingdom of God.

Ayn Rand taught me about humanity’s heroic destiny. Her four novels are dominated by great heroes: Kira Argounova, Howard Roark, Hank Reardon, Dagny Taggart, John Galt, and the unnamed narrator of *Anthem* who finally calls himself Prometheus. Critics dismiss these heroes as plastic, one-dimensional, unbelievable. They are probably right. Gary Cooper’s version of Howard Roark in the movie rendition of *The Fountainhead* demonstrates how difficult it is to portray a hero with no flaws, no inner conflicts. Cooper simply couldn’t pull it off, and the role is stilted. But as a young Objectivist, I had people to imitate, an ideal to live up to: “I want to be like that.” Rand incarnated her moral precepts, defective as they are, in her heroes.

So, of course, do the Bible and Christian tradition. Unlike the heroes of Rand, the Bible rarely portrays its chief characters as relentlessly good. Abraham tried to pass off Sarah as his sister. David committed adultery and murdered his rival. Peter is coward and rock, thoughtful evangelist and impulsive motor mouth. Paul’s teaching provides for all time the essential infrastructure of our Christology, but his temper (to take one example) bursts out of his writings with disturbing power. Yet in all of these characters, flawed as they are,

we see God at work, correcting them, calling them, drawing them to himself, transforming them. “I want to be like that.”

Only and finally in Jesus do we see humanity as the Father intends it. And only and finally in Jesus can our humanity ultimately be transfigured. “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2, RSV). Our heroic destiny is fulfilled in Christ, whom we shall gaze upon eternally. Even now, while our transformation is still incomplete, we have “put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:10, RSV).

There is little in Ayn Rand’s philosophy or worldview that a Christian can endorse, even in small ways. Moore is right; Rand is “first and foremost an anti-Christian philosopher,” and Objectivism stands in painfully stark contrast to the gospel. Yet I wonder if I am alone in offering thanks for Rand and her role, inadvertent as it was, in Christian conversion. God can use a donkey to chastise a prophet. Can he also use Rand as a kind of waystation on the road to Christ?

In my more hopeful moments, I find myself wondering if Rand, in her last moments, perceived her error and turned to the One she had rejected all her life. Or, as she slipped into eternity, if Jesus made a final, undeserved, and awe-full offer of grace. But that is speculation, and well beyond what God intends us to know. It is sufficient for my own purposes simply to say: Thank you, Ayn Rand. ✚

Edward S. Little II is bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana, and author of *Joy in Disguise: Meeting Jesus in the Dark Times* (Morehouse, 2009).

Fleeing the Faithful—Again

A Swedish Christian businessman and former YWAM leader defrauds friends, family, and missionaries of millions of dollars.

By Ken Walker

W

HEN JAN AND HENNY PAUW visited Le Rucher on a summer missions trip, they never dreamed it would wind up costing them their retirement nest egg. The Dutch couple became ensnared in a faith-based Ponzi scheme that operated for a dozen years before it unraveled.

Nestled on two acres at the base of France's Jura Mountains and the nearby Swiss Alps, the Le Rucher retreat center opened in 1994 to help stressed-out missionaries recuperate. But Le Rucher became the setting for the promotion of the fraudulent Nordic Capital Investments (NCI), which has created resentment toward Le Rucher co-founder Erik Spruyt. Last October, Swedish businessman Kristian Westergard, the founder of NCI and a close associate of Spruyt's, was convicted of gross fraud in Sweden and sentenced to prison.

In 1998, the Pauws went to Le Rucher—then associated with Youth With a Mission (YWAM)—with their evangelical church in Ermelo, the Netherlands. An industrial chemist by trade, Jan had never been on a Christian mission. On the couple's first trip, Spruyt suggested they consider becoming long-term volunteers. Jan replied that they couldn't afford it.

When the Pauws returned the following summer, Spruyt repeated the suggestion. Jan demurred. Then, they say, Spruyt introduced them to NCI, a special investment fund that paid interest of 15 percent a year (the rate on a contract they later signed). It had the potential to generate enough income to support the couple. Part of the attraction was the promise that some of the fund's earnings would generate charitable support for select Christian missions. The Pauws invested euros worth \$260,000. The

following year they moved to Le Rucher as volunteers.

In total, the couple received more than \$230,000 before payments ceased. But the principal amount of their nest egg has vanished. They still rue their decision to trust Spruyt's referral to NCI. In a 2001 e-mail with a sample NCI contract, he said, "If you want to take this seriously then this is the procedure that I recommend to you with the amount you want to invest."

"All we have now is our old-age pension and a small pension from my work as an industrial chemist," Pauw says. "Sometimes we think, *How could we have been so stupid to believe them? Why did we trust them?*"

TRUST BETRAYED

The Pauws are not alone. A leader with Petra People—a web-based advocacy group formed to press for further investigation and demand return of money to investors—told *Christianity Today* that court records show that NCI victimized more than 100 investors.

In 2010, Sweden brought criminal action against Westergard, charging him with defrauding 29 plaintiffs, including his son-in-law, a member of the Swedish Parliament. Prosecutor Gina Kezovska said an investigation showed that over a 10-year period, Westergard signed contracts totaling \$17 million. The Swedish court imposed a four-year prison sentence, ordered Westergard to repay \$4.5 million, and banned him from business for eight years. Westergard, whose attorney did not respond to CT's interview request, is appealing the fraud conviction. The court said Westergard had used new investors' money to pay original investors "dividends" to maintain the illusion of profitability—the classic mark of a Ponzi scheme.

"The invested monies have not been placed on the financial market or in any investment program but rather have primarily been used



Appealing Conviction: Kristian Westergard's victims included friends who knew him for more than 20 years.

for Kristian Westergard's and others' overhead as well as the reimbursement of other investors," the judges wrote.

"The crime is judged to be gross as the perpetrators have targeted a larger group comprised mainly of individuals, [who] in many cases have suffered significant damage. . . . [It] has been of a particularly dangerous nature as Westergard's actions have been extraordinarily devious in nature."

NCI's methods mirrored the 1990s-era Foundation for New Era Philanthropy, a Pennsylvania-based scam that victimized hundreds of individual Christians, seminaries, and other charities. Its founder, John G. Bennett Jr., is on probation after serving his prison sentence.

Todd Johnson, director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, says, "It's crystal clear the Swedish case is not the whole picture. It's different people, different victims, and different contexts."

In the case of NCI, its long association with numerous YWAM leaders has prompted Petra People to call for further investigation by YWAM. But YWAM International Chairman Lynn Green says investors made private decisions and YWAM has no organizational involvement or responsibility in the case.

"If you've lost a lot of money in a scheme you thought was going to make you a lot of money, anger and getting even are understandable human emotions," Green says. "I appreciate that and wouldn't want to be in their shoes, but I really don't know why it's being directed at YWAM."

Trial testimony and NCI documents reveal a significant link to select people in the YWAM network. For years, Spruyt and Westergard were influential YWAM leaders in Europe. Spruyt said that Westergard introduced NCI at Le Rucher in 1995 during a meeting of 50 YWAM representatives. NCI, imitating the name of a European-based group of private equity funds (Nordic Capital), promised high-yield, risk-free returns. The promise of handsome financial returns from



Fair Warning: Jan and Henny Pauws' story of being defrauded in the Nordic Capital Investments scam has been explored twice on Dutch investigative tv program *Opgelicht*.

someone they knew was music to their ears.

NCI said it planned to invest in financial instruments and government bonds issued by Western European banks, promising risk-free trades based on bank securities. To enhance NCI's cachet, one document cited minimum investments of \$10 million while saying some traders required \$100 million.

Other documents show that in 1999, Stichting Mercy Ministries Netherlands, a YWAM associate, invested \$117,000. Starting in 2001, YWAM Thailand, through leader Stephen Goode, invested \$62,090. Goode also invested \$250,000 in personal funds. Through YWAM connections, an American businessman invested funds from the sale of his business and then encouraged 12 other people to invest a total of \$400,000.

All of this money is gone.

A LONG-TERM SWINDLE

The NCI con went on for years, ensnaring such victims as former YWAM leader Kelly O'Donnell, a U.S. native now living in France, and Donna Seymour, another expatriate who resides in England. Both testified at Westergard's trial.

O'Donnell and his wife, Michele, lost about \$200,000, nearly half the \$430,000 the couple (both consulting psychologists who served at Le Rucher) sank into NCI. Initially, the investment looked promising. Their first interest check arrived on time in 2001 and provided a down payment on a house. Once they let their guard down, the one-year contract they signed in 1999 that promised a 15 percent annual return seemed reasonable. (At the time, a 10-year French government bond yielded 5 percent.)

Spruyt saw problems with promising such high returns. In an e-mail to Westergard that referenced a contract coming due in April 2002, he commented, "Part of the problem [with this client] is the high returns. Next time simply offer a much lower return and maybe give a bonus once the programme runs and the funds are available."

In 2006, the O'Donnells suspected something was amiss when they tried to terminate their contract. Westergard first offered promises, followed by different explanations for why he couldn't return their money.

After talking to other investors, the O'Donnells learned that their interest payments and principal were at risk. "[Investors] knew interest payments were faltering, but we weren't privy to that," Michele says. "We've learned quite a bit how naïve we were."

Although Kelly consulted experts before investing, he says it boiled down to trusting Spruyt. "We didn't fully understand it, but we decided to go with it." He said that today investors are in "a post-Madoff environment," a reference to the imprisoned New York financier who swindled more than \$65 billion from clients. But before the Madoff scandal, he says, "Our eyes were very different."

Seymour, a native of Florida, invested in NCI in 2003, three years before the start of divorce proceedings that caused her additional financial strain.

Seymour learned about NCI from the O'Donnells. They were all living in England. Seymour is particularly upset over Spruyt's silence

in 2005, when payments started to dwindle, prior to her renewing a contract in 2006.

"I have had to severely cut back on all sides," she says of her losses. Awarded more than \$1 million and attorney's fees by the Swedish court, Seymour's investments came from an inheritance and a real-estate sale. Now doing temp work in addition to a part-time office position, the resident of Cuxham, Wallington, says her two children will have to rely on loans for college. Spruyt's statement to Seymour that his family foundation used NCI contracts to generate income to pay for his own children's college education was a key factor in her investment decisions. In an e-mail concerning NCI, Spruyt told one investor, "I myself have received the full interest for ten years. I have been able to let my children go through university debt free."

"I showed this to a friend of mine who knows about the banking industry, and he said it looked okay," Seymour says. "At the end of the day, I could see I invested because of trust."



Haven of Rest?: Le Rucher, a missionary debriefing center, was first linked to the NCI fraud in 1995.

DEFRAUDING THE CHURCH

The NCI case exposes a harmful trend growing within the worldwide church 16 years after the collapse of the infamous New Era fund.

Gordon-Conwell's Johnson estimates that rates of fraud and theft in Christian circles globally are rising at a rate of 5.9 percent annually, while Christianity is growing much more slowly, at 1.3 percent a year. This means faith-based fraud and theft "are growing at a rate 4.5 times greater than Christianity as a whole," Johnson says. The current annual cost projection: \$34 billion. He calculated this number by analyzing extortion in secular environments and then applying it specifically to Christian finance.

This amount of financial fraud outstrips the \$31 billion given annually to missions worldwide. The following are examples of misuse of U.S. Christian investors' funds that have publicly surfaced since 2009:

- A broadcaster in Minneapolis used Christian radio to pitch a phony currency investment program totaling \$190 million. Though named in civil complaints, he has not been tried on criminal charges.
- A Christian businessman in Rochester, New York, conned Catholic churches and groups out of \$25 million in a fraudulent mortgage scheme.

- This February, the Securities and Exchange Commission charged an Amish entrepreneur in northern Ohio with fraud after his mid-2010 bankruptcy filing. The government alleges that he lost nearly half of the \$33 million raised from 2,600-plus investors, mostly Amish.

News of frauds seems not to travel far. The first NCI presentation at Le Rucher occurred the same year the \$135 million New Era scam was exposed in 1995. Johnson says that NCI victims basing investment decisions largely on trust in a Christian colleague is a textbook example of why affinity fraud works.

Johnson says a key reason fraud keeps occurring is "innumeracy," a term denoting mathematical illiteracy. Not only are many individuals confused by such terms as "rate of return" or "compound interest," Johnson says, they also fail to understand that higher returns mean

higher risk. Christians are as vulnerable as anyone else to getting fleeced by fellow believers. “It’s a human activity,” Johnson says. “Muslims con Muslims, just as Buddhists, Jews, and Hindus [do the same]. No one is immune. We have to keep these cases in front of believers. They’re lulled into a false sense of security.”

INVESTOR DOUBTS GROW

NCI payments didn’t come to a complete halt until 2007. Yet as early as 2001, Spruyt raised questions about tardy payments. That year, he e-mailed Westergard to pose questions about overdue interest that caused Le Rucher to fall behind on a \$720,000 bank note.

“The amount is, at least for us [and our board] a very high amount, and the fear is that we have lost these funds without a guarantee that they will come back to us,” wrote Spruyt, noting that they would soon be two months behind.

‘Muslims con Muslims, just as Buddhists, Jews, and Hindus [do the same]. No one is immune. We have to keep these cases in front of believers. They’re lulled into a false sense of security.’ ~ Todd Johnson

“I have kept my board members at bay, but it is getting difficult to explain it all. As an organization we have breached our five-year contract with the Dutch lender who is not threatening but actually making steps to reclaim the property.”

In 2005, Spruyt repeated similar doubts in an e-mail to Westergard, questioning whether NCI could meet pending payments that summer. Three years later, in April 2008, Spruyt in a letter alerted authorities that Westergard had probably broken the law. Then in 2010, Spruyt took the witness stand and testified as a prosecution witness in the Swedish court proceedings against Westergard.

Spruyt declined CT’s requests for an interview. A spokesman for the Mercy Ministries board, which oversees Le Rucher, said, “At no time during any of these matters has Mr. Spruyt been charged with any wrongdoing. We consider this matter fully investigated and prosecuted by proper authorities and closed.” Spruyt attorney Calvin Huge told CT that his client was also defrauded by NCI. (Spruyt was not a plaintiff at the Swedish trial.)

But Kelly O’Donnell believes Le Rucher’s co-founder has more explaining to do. O’Donnell told CT that, based on court evidence, he believes Spruyt was far more than a communication link for NCI, as Spruyt testified. O’Donnell says Spruyt’s description of himself as a “pool administrator” in e-mails could not mean that he only pooled questions, as Spruyt testified last fall, because Westergard twice called Spruyt a “partner” in letters to potential investors.

Other court evidence lends support to O’Donnell’s assertion. Spruyt’s daughter Maryn e-mailed a Swedish investigator in 2008, saying, “A few years ago [Westergard] asked my father to assist NCI with administration and communication with investors that my father brought into contact with NCI. My father agreed to do so free of charge.” Also, Jan Pauw told CT that Spruyt and Westergard jointly described to him financial benefits that would supposedly flow to ministry from NCI investments.

On a 2001 visit, Pauw says, Westergard talked about NCI’s generous

support of Mercy Ships, at the time a branch of YWAM. “In 2007, when a friend started to question Kristian’s integrity and got suspicious of fraud, I ardently defended him,” Henny Pauw says. “I told him, ‘He cannot be engaged in fraudulent activities. Look what good he does: he has been supporting Mercy Ships and other Christian projects.’” Mercy Ships has denied any financial transactions with NCI.

On another occasion, Pauw says, Spruyt handed him a list of Mercy Ministries projects that would receive Le Rucher financial support. Among them: ethnic reconciliation work in South Africa, a family resource center at YWAM’s University of the Nations in Hawaii, and land development in Niger.

While NCI leaders may have promised such benefits, YWAM’s Green insists no transfers took place. No YWAM affiliates appear on the partial list of 24 charities the Swedish prosecutor says received charitable payments from NCI.

“YWAM is very decentralized,” Green says. “We are accountable in the nations where we work . . . with boards that consist of local Christians in good standing. They are in turn accountable to authorities in those nations.

“I didn’t know any leaders who knew anything about it. They were doing this as private individuals in a business outside of any ministry.”

Spruyt was involved with YWAM when he helped to start Le Rucher, but Green says Spruyt organized it with an independent board. When Spruyt eventually told Green he was leaving YWAM and taking the assets of Le Rucher, his comments led Green to believe that this had been Spruyt’s intention from the start.

“They have developed a very good debriefing center,” Green says. “YWAM personnel go there for debriefing, and they have trained some YWAM people in debriefing. But [NCI] has nothing to do with YWAM, except some YWAMERS were victims of this. It’s a real shame.”

WHERE’S THE MONEY?

If defrauded investors have their way, Sweden’s verdict won’t be the last one involving NCI. Jan Pauw has pressed officials in the Netherlands for further legal action. But in May, Dutch prosecutors said Spruyt was “very naïve” yet acted in “good faith.” They will not investigate further.

Unlike the Madoff and New Era investment scams, there is no court-appointed administrator for NCI to make public a full accounting of funds or recover funds. There has been no bankruptcy proceeding to force a full, public disclosure. In New Era’s case, the administrator required early investors to return funds, cutting losses overall.

Rand Guebert, a former business consultant who wrote a 113-page report about the NCI fraud at the O’Donnells’ request, hopes European governments will further investigate and identify all parties from 12 nations who profited from the scheme.

Guebert says government investigators “have the power to examine bank records and see where the money went. I think it’s very important to tell people where the money went.”

At a minimum, a full accounting of the missing money would bring Jan and Henny Pauw some peace of mind. They told CT that if the truth comes out, other Christians would learn from their great financial misadventure. ☩

Ken Walker is a freelance writer in West Virginia.

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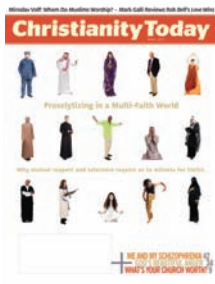
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VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



In my own multi-faith encounters and dialogue, I have discovered that both my respect for others and my relationship with Christ deepen. Imagine that.

Tony Richie
E-mail

Multi-Faith Matters

Thanks for Ed Stetzer's thoughtful cover story dealing with a pressing theme ["Proselytizing in a Multi-Faith World," April]. We need more of this kind of discussion. In my own multi-faith encounters and dialogue, I have discovered that both my respect for others and my relationship with Christ deepen. Imagine that.

TONY RICHIE
E-mail

Ed Stetzer wisely admonishes readers to let every religion speak for itself. But he proceeds to speak on behalf of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. This irony reaches a crescendo when he states, "Al Qaeda does not represent mainstream Islam any more than one Qur'an-burning pastor or the Ku Klux Klan represents Jesus' followers." This is a common sentiment among Christians trying to make sense of Islamic violence, but one I rarely hear from Muslims.

I continue to wait for mainstream Islamic leaders to unite in passionately and forcefully condemning Muslims' acts of terrorism.

RICH CHAMBERLAIN
Cohasset, Massachusetts

To see why we should talk about individuals' beliefs rather than entire religions, we need look no farther than our own churches. How frequently in talking with members of the same church or denomination does it become clear they don't really understand the doctrinal views of their own tradition? I've had Catholics tell me that the Catholic Church does not teach transubstantiation. Meanwhile, how many Baptists, Methodists, and Lutherans believe that they are going to heaven because they've tried to be good people and do the right thing?

JOHN LAUFER
E-mail

Who Is Islam's God?

Theologian Miroslav Volf's argument ["Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?," April] is this, in a nutshell: Yes, there are differences between the Islamic and Christian understandings of God, but there are also similarities. Are we therefore to see these differences as a glass half-empty or half-full? Volf says half-full.

I disagree. All we have to do is look at the Qur'an, which repeatedly insists that the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) have corrupted their

sacred literature (the Bible). What about the Qur'an's insistence that Jesus is not divine and did not die on the cross? What about Muhammad's claim that since the religious practice of the Jews is false, some of them have been transformed into apes and swine?

Effective dialogue between Christians and Muslims must start with frankly acknowledging the vast differences that divide us. The glass is actually almost empty. Anything less than such an admission will confuse the process.

ROBERT C. GREER
Elgin, Illinois

The essential question is whether there is any other God besides Yahweh. Of course people worship many things: money, fame, power, sex, thereby making for themselves little gods. But there is only one God, and to the degree that a Jew, Muslim, Christian, or anyone else seeks to worship in sincerity and truth the One from whom all things come, they worship the only God there is. Jesus said as much to the Samaritan woman at the well: "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know . . ." (John 4:22).

FRED JESSETT
Sammamish, Washington

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

37%
Do Muslims
and Christians
Worship the Same
God?
Interview with
Miroslav Volf

18%
Proselytizing in a
Multi-Faith World
Ed Stetzer

17%
What's Up
with Hell?
Mark Galli

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



God of the
Schizophrenic
David Weiss

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

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Outpatient Theology

Most writers featured in *Christianity Today* seem to be thinking about God instead of with him. But this month, I went immediately to David Weiss's "God of the Schizophrenic" [April] and sat crying at the depth and authenticity of it. He beats out all the New Testament professors this month for relevance and powerful message.

David, keep writing. You are stupendous!

GIGI BIBEALT
San Rafael, California

CT Unpacks Hell, Bell

I appreciate how CT's review of *Love Wins* noted the strengths of both evangelical and liberal theological traditions ["What's Up with Hell?," April]. Mark Galli spoke to actual points rather than a trumped-up caricature of the author. Thanks for that. Maybe one day Christians will act like family instead of opposing sides of a bloody war. If so, reviews like this one will have done their job.

ALLYN HARRIS DAULT
St. Louis, Missouri

I haven't read *Love Wins* yet, but would be surprised if Bell credits his theology to Friedrich Schleiermacher, Albrecht

Ritschl, Rudolf Bultmann, or Paul Tillich, as CT suggests. In fact, affirming the divinity of Jesus and the historical truth of the Resurrection places Bell squarely in the evangelical fold. I find it odd that the reviewer would insist on painting Bell with the Schleiermacher brush, as it comes off as an undeserved slur, a guilt by association.

BILL GUERRANT
Keeling, Virginia

Great article, CT. As a pastor for 13 years in a liberal church tradition, I'm perplexed by Bell's infatuation with elements of old-school liberalism. He's certainly not saying anything new or shocking. I think you have identified the root issue: ultimately Rob Bell is accountable to Rob Bell—not to a hierarchy, denomination, or the larger stream of Christian thought (expressed via the church fathers, for instance).

Unfortunately, Bell isn't the only evangelical who works within an independent church system. For all of our criticisms of Roman Catholicism, at least that tradition has a spiritual leader who can stand up and say, "Sorry, but that's out of bounds."

MATTHEW WOODLEY
Wheaton, Illinois

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.



ONLINE POLL

THE END RESULT

What is your reaction to the death of Osama bin Laden?

7%

I am thrilled that he is dead.

25%

Justice is served.

5%

I am less excited than I thought I would be.

31%

I am concerned about the overly jubilant reactions.

6%

I wish he had been brought to trial.

18%

There are still evil people in the world.

8%

Other.

Total votes: 518

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

I tell you, Not Seven times, but Seventy times Seven.

Great! Not only do I have to forgive My brother, Now I have to do Math!!



Davis

TIM DAVIS

"I have to daily guard my heart against cynicism toward Christians who value politics more than discipleship."

Brother Stephen, on the intentions of the President and his guests at the Easter prayer breakfast.

CT Politics Blog: "Keller, Jakes Among Obama's Prayer Breakfast Guests," by Alicia Cohn

"The most vocal Christians tend to believe there is something wrong with painting a little boy's toenails. Your post was a nice reminder that there are good, reasonable, intelligent believers."

Amanda, thanking the author (despite religious differences) for her response to a J. Crew ad depicting a boy with pink toenails.

Her.meneutics: "Why I Let My Son Wear Pink," by Ellen Painter Dollar

"A reviewer wondered where the sex and swearing was. Those are components of the lives of many Christian kids, but it's sad he can't imagine that a chaste teen could be a real character in a compelling story."

Joey, on the media's reaction to the movie *Soul Surfer* and its depiction of Christian teen Bethany Hamilton and her family.

CT Entertainment Blog: "Why Are Christian Movies So Awful?," by Mark Moring

"I pray for the day evangelicalism is defined more by the gospel and less by politics."

John, discussing the results of a recent Pew Research Center poll.

CT Politics Blog: "Majority of Evangelicals Prefer Government Shutdown to Budget Compromise," by Tobin Grant

No Adam, No Eve, No Gospel

The historical Adam debate won't be resolved tomorrow, so stay engaged.



SCIENCE as we know it grew from pagan, occult, and biblical roots.

Christianity Today likes to emphasize the biblical sources.

The story of creation, told in Genesis and elaborated in the New Testament, pictures a rational intelligence creating an orderly and predictable cosmos.

Without that predictability in the natural world, neither Newton nor Einstein would have been possible. There are times, however, when a careful reading of the natural world seems to conflict with our reading of Scripture.

Sometimes, Christian ways of thinking must adjust. Two famous names—Copernicus and Galileo—tell that tale. Other times, Christian thinkers adopt some of what scientific research suggests, but hold firm on key aspects of biblical knowledge. The name B. B. Warfield tells that tale: The Princeton theology professor (d. 1921) taught in the wake of the Darwinian revolution. He and fellow evangelical leaders saw good reasons to believe that humanity's physical form was descended from other animals. However, two key biblical teachings kept these theologians from eating the whole Darwinian apple.

First, in Darwinian thought, pure randomness was the engine of evolution. But randomness denies the divine Reason (the Logos in the language of John's Gospel) behind the creative process. Christians must root for intelligence over chance.

Second, Darwinian evolution challenged the belief that human beings were created in the image of God. This doctrine was a hedge against racist theories that would be used to subjugate, exploit, and eradicate undesirable people. Warfield rightly saw the dangers in Darwin, while trying to learn from the biological science of his time.

Now we come to another great moment of tension between Christian readings of Scripture and science. This issue's cover story, "The Search for the Historical Adam"

(page 22), reports the claims of recent genetic research that the human race did not emerge from pre-human animals as a single pair, as an "Adam" and an "Eve." The complexity of the human genome, we are told, requires an original population of around 10,000.

Christians have already drawn the line: there must be an original pair of humans endowed with souls—that is, the spiritual capacity to relate to God in the special way

Genesis describes. In 1996, John Paul II stressed Pius XII's dictum that "if the origin of the human body comes through living matter which existed previously, the spiritual soul is created directly by God." And institutional statements of faith, such as Wheaton College's, set limits by affirming that original couple's existence:

"... God directly created Adam and Eve, the historical parents of the entire human race ... in his own image, distinct from all other living creatures, and in a state of original righteousness."

What is at stake?

First, the entire story of what is wrong with the world hinges on the disobedient exercise of the will by the first humans. The problem with the human race is not its dearth of insight but its misshapen will.

Second, the entire story of salvation hinges on the obedience of the Second Adam. The apostle Paul, the earliest Christian writer to interpret Jesus' work, called Adam "a type of the one who was to come" (Rom. 5:14, *ESV*), and wrote that "[j]ust as we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven [Jesus]" (1 Cor. 15:49, *ESV*). He elaborated an "Adam

Christology" that described a fallen humanity, headed by Adam, and a new, redeemed humanity with Christ as its head.

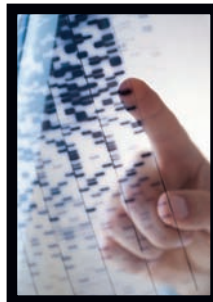
This understanding, that Christ's obedience undoes Adam's disobedience, is not some late development, but is integrated with the earliest interpretations of what God did and is doing in Christ. This conceptual framework is almost impossible without a first human couple.

Hebrew thought offers one clue to resolving this tension: the corporate nature of humanity. Scripture often calls groups of people by the name of their historical head. Israel is an obvious example. So are Canaan and Cush.

At times, Scripture also holds groups of people morally responsible for the actions of some of their members.

Thus, some have suggested—as does John Collins in *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* (Crossway, 2011)—that if both biblical and scientific clues suggest a larger population contemporary with Adam and Eve (Whom *did* Cain marry? Whom *did* God protect him from?), we can still conceive of Adam and Eve as leaders of that original population. That suggestion has the virtue of embracing both a prehistoric couple and a prehistoric population.

At this juncture, we counsel patience. We don't need another fundamentalist reaction against science. We need instead a positive interdisciplinary engagement that recognizes the good will of all involved and that creative thinking takes time. In the long run, it may be the humility of our scholars as much as their technical expertise that will bring us to deeper knowledge of the truth. ✚



The complexity of the human genome, we are told, requires an original population of around 10,000.

Pot
morality

Should Christians smoke medical marijuana?

NO—IT'S A BAD WITNESS

Brett McCracken, author of *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide* (Baker), writes about pop culture for *Relevant* magazine and *Christianity Today*.

Medical marijuana is certainly helpful for people in great pain, many of whom use the drug in the same way they would use a pain reliever like codeine. The difference between codeine and cannabis is that the latter has a very distinct, largely negative image in culture—an image that carries baggage and connotations Christians must consider if they are thinking of using marijuana, even for medical reasons.

When I was in grad school, several of my colleagues smoked marijuana. I do not doubt that smoking marijuana relieved the aches and pains of my 20-something cohorts. But I wonder if “medical assistance” is the primary reason they were using it. More likely they consumed it in the way Oscar on *Arrested Development* did—enjoying “primo bud” under the auspices of the legal right to medical marijuana.

In California, the image of marijuana use, even for medical purposes, is mostly a joke. Pot smoking has long been associated with “slackers”—zoned out, disengaged, pleasure-seeking rebels always in search of a high. The image has even given rise to a genre of cinema: the Stoner Film. The image of those who smoke weed in these films is one of laziness, irresponsibility, and mischief.

The image of medical marijuana is not much better. Walk down the Venice or Santa Monica boardwalk in L.A. and you will be bombarded with leaflets for the dozens of medical marijuana dispensaries in town. Affable hippies even call out, “Get your medical marijuana recommendation here!” The dispensaries are more like recreational amusement shops than clinics for the sick, and the overall culture is one of “Here’s a sweet loophole!” partying more than anything else.

Given these connotations, Christians should be cautious about using marijuana. Marijuana is associated with vice and unseemly activity. Christians are called to be above reproach, “without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation,” shining “as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15, *esv*). We are told to “not be conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2) and to “walk properly as in the daytime,” avoiding sins of addiction such as drinking and partying (Rom. 13:13). In 1 Peter 2:11–12, Peter urges Christians to “abstain from the passions of the flesh” and to keep their conduct honorable, so unbelievers “may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

The issue is not the relative danger of marijuana itself; it is about witness. If Christians use marijuana as a medical aid, it should be

done in a quiet, private manner, without flaunting. Christians must be mindful of pot’s controversial and hazardous reputation in culture, and be sensitive to the perspectives of both other Christians and unbelieving observers. Christians should take note of the food offered to idols issue in 1 Corinthians 8–10 and strive to abstain from arguably innocuous activities that are nevertheless contested in culture. It is not worth offending or making someone stumble.

NOT UNLESS PROVEN . . .

Dónal O’Mathúna co-wrote *Alternative Medicine: The Christian Handbook* (Zondervan) and teaches ethics at Dublin City University’s School of Nursing.

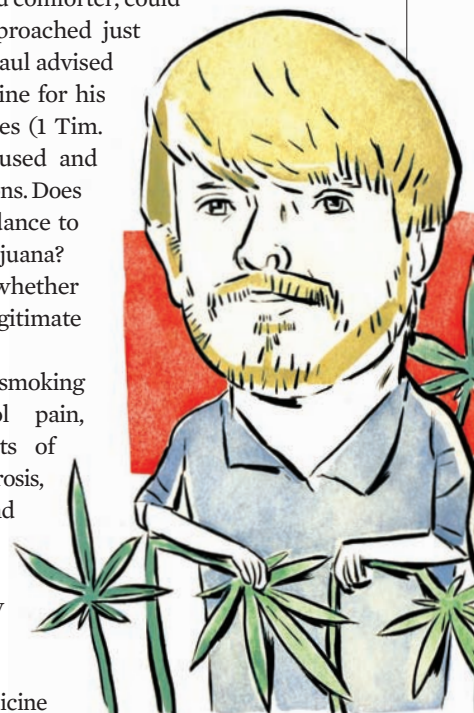
In most jurisdictions, smoking marijuana, even for medical reasons, is illegal. Christians are called to submit to governing authorities (Rom. 13:1–7). Breaking the law can be justified sometimes, most obviously when we must choose between obeying God or the government (Acts 5:29). This does not apply here; Christians should obey laws that prohibit medical marijuana.

Since God is a healer and comforter, could medical marijuana be approached just like any other medicine? Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach and other illnesses (1 Tim. 5:23). Alcohol can be abused and cause harm in many situations. Does Paul’s advice provide guidance to Christians on medical marijuana?

The key question is whether medical marijuana has legitimate uses.

Many patients say that smoking marijuana helps control pain, including the side effects of chemotherapy, multiple sclerosis, and other therapies and conditions. But anecdotal reports do not provide the evidence necessary to show if an intervention is beneficial and safe.

The U.S. Institute of Medicine



in 1999 and the British Royal College of Physicians in 2005 published in-depth reviews of previous medical marijuana research. Because most of the studies reviewed were not controlled studies, the report concluded that there is little evidence to support the medical use of marijuana. However, products purified from marijuana, most notably a prescription drug called dronabinol, appear to be helpful. These products are legally available and have legitimate uses.

In 2007, the first randomized controlled trial of marijuana smoking was published. Patients with painful HIV-related neuropathy smoked either marijuana or placebo cigarettes daily. Patients' pain scores decreased an average of about one-third with marijuana. Since then, a few other controlled studies have produced beneficial findings for medical marijuana. However, these studies also showed that medical marijuana does not work well for everyone and has side effects. The prevalence and seriousness of the side effects is still debated.

Christians should approach the smoking of medical marijuana as they would other medical decisions. If there are good reasons to legalize marijuana, we can work to do so. Decisions about the legal status of medications should be based on sound research. Christians could act for the greater good by participating in research aimed at providing clearer evidence about smoking medical marijuana. If high-quality studies continue to show evidence of benefit, regulators should consider changing the legal status of medical marijuana.

When legal, medical marijuana should be weighed against other treatments that may be more effective. If these do not work or cause side effects, smoking medical marijuana may be an option. Meanwhile, Christians should obey the law as it stands.



YES, WITH CARE

Ed Welch is a counselor with the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation and author of several books on addiction and mental illness.

Ah, those Californians—a bunch of grown-up hippies single-handedly keeping medical marijuana in the national consciousness. But wait. My wife and most of her family are from California, and they all seem surprisingly normal. Maybe medical marijuana is worth a careful biblical look. Scripture raises important questions.

First, is it moral? This is the most important question. Does Scripture prohibit or command using marijuana for medical purposes? If something is illegal, unless Scripture commands us to do it, we do not. Where medical marijuana is legal, this is no longer an issue.

Second, are mind-altering drugs sinful? This one is a bit more slippery. Many prescription drugs—like psychiatric drugs—can be mind-altering, and so are legal drugs such as tobacco and alcohol. Christians have reasonable arguments on both sides. But I think we can agree that one's motivation is relevant. If someone puts their hope in mind-altering drugs, and these drugs become a way to turn away from the Lord, they are idolatrous and wrong. Even then, that does not mean that the person must stop taking the drugs. It means they must learn how to turn to the Lord in their troubles.

Third, is it wise to smoke medical marijuana? This overlaps with the morality question. There are times when something is morally permissible, yet unwise. If you struggle with a desire for alcohol, it is permissible but unwise to work in a place where alcohol is served. With medical marijuana, that question could be reframed as, "Is it helpful or dangerous?" Are there deleterious consequences to this treatment? The brief answer, and I suspect there would be many heads nodding at this, is that every medical treatment has possible harmful side effects. In an era of full disclosure, many prescription warnings end, "Oh, and you might die too." When you line up modern pain relievers, marijuana looks quite tame. It is riskier than Tylenol but safer than Vicodin. The dangers ebb when the marijuana user is terminally ill, and Scripture supports palliative care for the dying (Prov. 31:6–7).

Finally, is your conscience clear? Is it okay that people know you are taking medical marijuana? You do not have to announce it in front of the assembly, but you should not be ashamed if other people know. If your conscience bothers you, do not do it. For some people, the stumbling block might be that you smoke it. Put it in a pill form and use its technical name, and many consciences would probably be soothed.

Many innovations have unwanted side effects. For example, the Internet is a purveyor of pornography. Yes, more people will use marijuana for non-medical reasons. People who would not cross the barrier between legal and illegal might be more prone to try something that is legal though restricted.

How would I vote? Be wise and do not violate your conscience.



Hardworking Sloths

How our busyness can disguise spiritual laziness.



MY FAMILY used to play “Where’s Waldo?” with a three-toed sloth at the zoo; eventually we’d find him suspended like a hammock from a tree branch above us. I used to think he got a bad rap as nature’s laziest creature. After all, I don’t have the strength to hold myself upside down on a set of monkey bars for 10 seconds. Then a zoo volunteer explained that sloths have curved claws that allow them to dig into branches and hang without effort. Our sloth, it turns out, really was as unmotivated as he looked.



I found myself thinking about that lethargic critter the other day while listening to a recorded Eugene Peterson lecture and arguing with my MP3 player.

Peterson: *Pastors are highly susceptible to the sin of sloth.*

Me: *What are you talking about? Pastors are some of the most overworked people alive.*

Peterson: *Sloth is most often evidenced in busyness . . . in frantic running around, trying to be everything to everyone, and then having no time to listen or pray, no time to become the person who is doing these things.*

Score one for Peterson.

I’m not a pastor. But I am busy, like almost everyone I know. When Peterson declares that “the pastor’s primary responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God,” I can readily apply that job description to my roles

as wife, mother, musician, and author. The mandate can be stated even more succinctly regarding my task as a human: *Pay attention to God*. If I don’t, I’m guilty of spiritual sloth, no matter how hard I’m working. In truth, there is an inverse relationship between how overwhelmed I am *doing* things and how much energy I can give to *being* attentive.

But did I mention I’m *really* busy?

Part of the problem is that spiritual receptivity requires unglamorous practices like prayer, time in Scripture, and attentiveness to what God is doing in the people around me. Telling me, “Prayer promotes spiritual growth!” has as much wow-factor as announcing, “Reducing calories leads to weight loss!” I want something *new*—a development that will lead to breakthrough. Peterson observes that spiritual disciplines have “not been tried and discarded because [they] didn’t work, but tried and found difficult (and more than a little tedious) and so shelved in favor of something or other that could be fit into a busy [person’s] schedule.”

Scheduling is no small matter. Attending takes time without offering quantifiable results. It requires stillness in a culture that rewards industriousness. It’s inefficient in a world that considers getting things done next to godliness. A pastor who refuses to be slothful in the areas of silence and reflection stands a good chance of getting fired.

Our emphasis on external productivity over internal fidelity goes back a long way. Consider the case of King Saul, reported in 1 Samuel 13. Early in his kingship, Saul and the prophet Samuel had an understanding: Samuel would lead the people spiritually, and Saul would lead militarily. However,

holed up with his troops facing a brigade of Philistines, Saul faced a dilemma. Samuel failed to show up on time to offer the sacrifice that Saul and his men relied on to keep them in God’s favor. As typically happens when things go off schedule, disorganization set in. The longer Saul waited, the more restless his men became; he was losing them.

Saul did what any good manager would do. He took action. He offered the sacrifice himself.

If I were conducting Saul’s job evaluation, I’d give him a bonus. He took initiative and solved the problem, saving time and boosting morale in the process. But Samuel didn’t see it that way. He told Saul he had failed to keep God’s command, and thus would be deposed by an incoming king—a “man after God’s own heart” better suited for the job.

God is not looking for leaders who take matters into their own hands. He values faithfulness over efficiency. It’s no good to organize the whole world yet be oblivious to the God who created it and holds it together. Yes, we have practical commitments we need to take seriously. But part of being responsible is being response-able: centering our lives in such a way that we can respond to the world around us with the mind of Christ. Such response-ability is impossible if our obligations crowd out any opportunity to get to know him better.

It makes sense that the sloth is the official mascot of spiritual lethargy. I’ve begun to see my incessant busyness as the set of claws that keep me holding on for dear life, dug in, hanging upside down, not getting anywhere. With God’s help, I want to let go, trusting him to show me how to live right side up. My job is to pay attention.

Attending takes time and requires stillness. It’s inefficient in a world that considers getting things done next to godliness.



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Civility Under Fire

Dr. King's response to critical clergy is full of lessons for today.

IT MAY HAVE BEEN the most civil statement ever made in thoroughly uncivil times.

Responding to fellow clergy who criticized the civil rights protests in Birmingham, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. penned his towering, magnificent "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in 1963.

It's time that King's letter—and the spirit and tone in which it was written—be re-examined by every pundit, every pastor, every activist, and every politician who rightly bemoans the demise of civil discourse in the U.S.

If anyone had a right to unleash an uncivil, scathing, *ad hominem* attack on his opponents, it was King. It is hard for younger people to imagine (and getting harder for many of us older ones to remember) the conditions under which many African Americans lived throughout the South just over 40 years ago. Segregation, lynchings, African American churches and homes firebombed. Jim Crow laws even prevented "colored people" from attending the circus and playing pool with whites.

Yet civil rights leaders painfully, persistently, and peacefully protested the injustice of segregation. In doing so, they often broke segregation laws. All too often, protesters reaped a reward of fire hoses, police dogs, and incarceration.

Several Birmingham clergy admonished the protesters, urging them to work within the law. King's letter was a response to those clergy.

Put yourself in his place. Who would not be furious, even enraged, by the statement of these ministers? How was King able to respond in such a civil and well-reasoned manner? Remember that King himself was a Baptist pastor. His response reflected his deeply held Christian convictions. He quoted the words of Jesus, and appealed to the example of Paul, as well as Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Bunyan.

Also, he did not question his opponents' motives. Instead, he called them "men of genuine good will" whose "criticisms are sincerely set forth." "I want to try to answer your statement," he wrote, "in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms." And that he did.

Yes, King clearly cataloged the injustices faced by African Americans. He called "white moderates" to task and forcefully reminded them that justice delayed was justice denied. And most famously, citing Augustine, he claimed that "an unjust law is no law at all."

But King never engaged in name calling or personal attacks. Without distortion, he patiently and fairly acknowledged his opponents' positions—and then dismantled them.

King had reason, justice, facts, and conviction on his side—as well as the gospel. He did not need vitriol, and he did not employ it.

Contrast that with what we see and hear daily. The fast food chain Chick-fil-A provided sandwiches to a conference on traditional marriage, and, according to *The New York Times*, a college newspaper ran the headline, "If you eat Chick-fil-A, you're anti-gay." Gay groups boycott the chain. One unspeakably vile video on the Web gets elementary school kids to drop the "f-bomb" on people who oppose gay marriage.

On the other hand, think how horribly the gospel is disfigured and legitimate protests are marred when members of a now infamous church carry signs at funerals that read, "God hates fags" and, "Thank God for

dead soldiers." How do people think they advance their cause with posters depicting the President as the Joker from the Batman movies?

Our country is grappling with many high-stakes, emotionally charged issues: government spending, war, medical care, collective bargaining rights, abortion, gay marriage. Our democracy cannot prosper

if people vilify, slander, and even shout down those with whom they disagree.

We should defend our positions vigorously and with conviction—but with civility. Scripture tells us to always be ready to make a defense for the hope we have in Christ—which leads to the convictions we carry—and yet to "do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so

that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame" (1 Pet. 3:15–16, ESV).

That is why our nation more than ever needs the spirit contained in King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." And why more than ever, we should re-read it.

We Christians should take another cue from King: "Love even for our enemies," he said in a sermon, "is the key to the solution of the problems of our world."

To speak the truth in love may entail, as it did for King, long-suffering as well as courage on our part. But love does not retaliate. Real love follows the example of Jesus, who "when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten," but entrusted himself to his heavenly Father (1 Pet. 2:23, ESV).



King had reason, justice, facts, and conviction on his side—as well as the gospel. He did not need vitriol.

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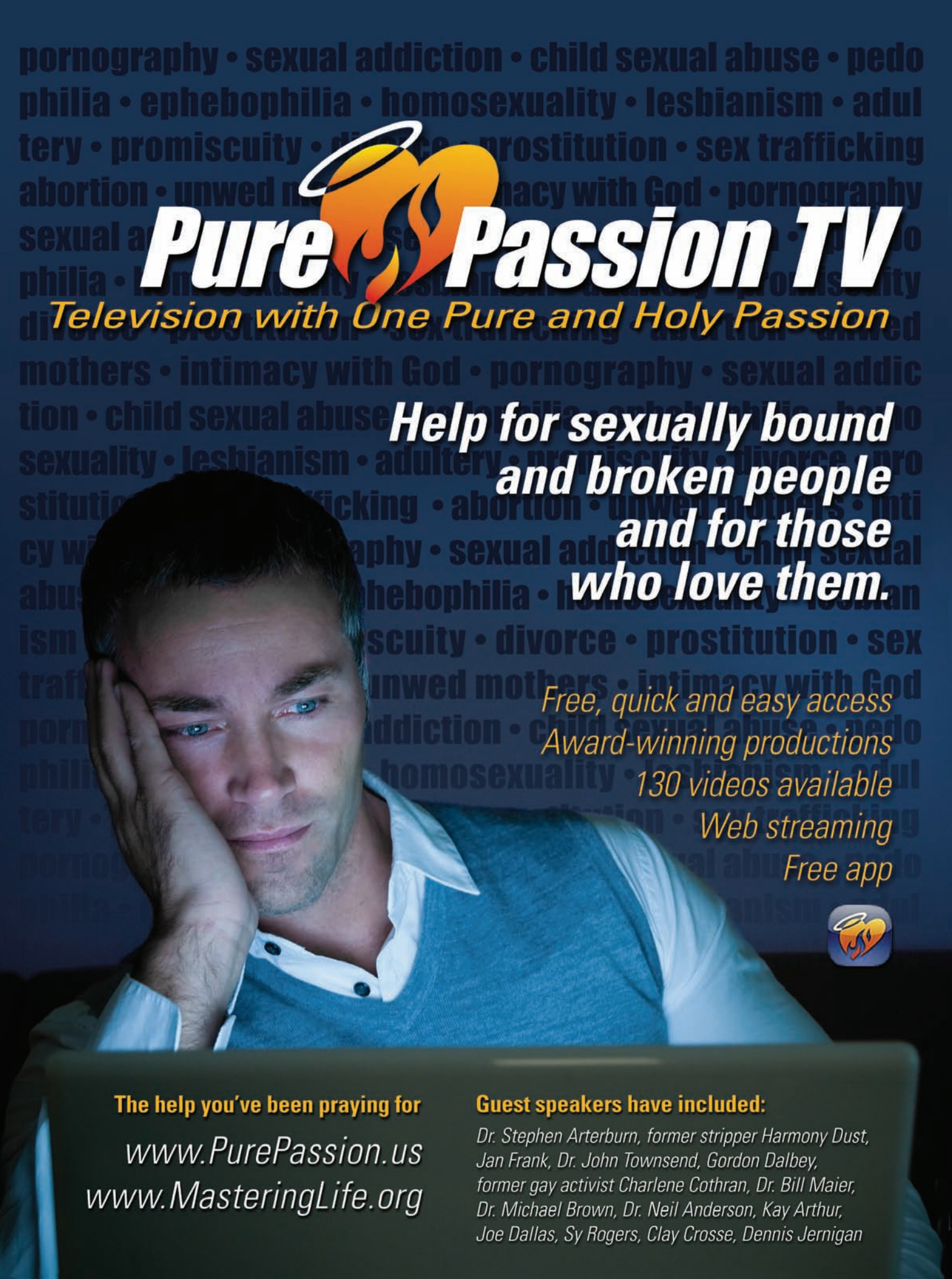
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CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS



The Heart Has Reasons

Rational proofs alone do not a Christian make.

By Michael McGowan

In all my years as a Christian, I have met only one person who was argued into the faith. “It was between Buddhism and Christianity,” he told me, “and Christianity had the best explanation.” But many of us need more. Something in the Christian story resonates deep within, as it connects to one or more of our heart’s longings and satisfies them in a way nothing else can. In ***Existential Reasons for Belief in God: A Defense of Desires and Emotions for Faith*** (IVP Academic) ★★★★★, Clifford Williams calls these “existential needs,” and he says we all have them whether we

know it or not.

Some of these existential needs are self-directed, and some are directed toward others. For example, we need to love and be loved; to do good things and delight in the goodness of others; to feel cosmic security and expand the realm of justice; to receive forgiveness when we lose our way and admire those who tread morally praiseworthy paths; to absorb the beauty of nature and connect with those we love. We need to feel like our lives have meaning here and now, but we also need the hope of living beyond

the grave. And we need to know that in heaven we’ll finally be free from this life’s problems. What Williams calls the existential argument claims that belief in God is justified because it satisfies these needs.

At this point, some Christian apologists will squirm. For them, reason is the best way to justify belief in God. Emotions are fickle and unpredictable. They can blind us to the truth or disrupt our commitment to our deepest values.

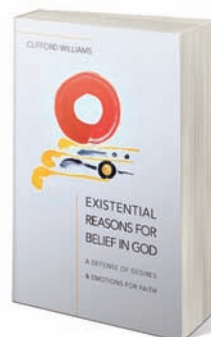
But Williams doesn’t abdicate reason altogether. After all, he teaches philosophy at Trinity College (in Deerfield, Illinois). Instead, Williams argues that emotional needs and reason work together—for “need without reason is blind, but reason without need is sterile”—and so offers a nuanced approach that takes seriously the role of human emotions. The key difference is that reason-based arguments attempt to *prove* that Christianity is true, while existential arguments *justify* Christian belief on the basis of the satisfaction of needs. Williams helpfully analogizes to the realm of eating: We are justified in consuming food not to prove rationally that food exists, but to satisfy our natural hunger.

ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

Some reply that not everyone feels existential needs. Williams anticipates this reaction, and concedes it at some level. Yet he also suggests that people can have existential needs even if they do not feel them. Indeed, we are not always tuned into our emotions as well as we could be. There are cognitive and

non-cognitive obstacles in the way. So the question becomes how to arouse awareness of our needs. Circumstances can jolt even the most hardhearted souls among us to recognize their utter dependence on God, their “existential need” for God.

Others argue that even if we do have existential needs, they can be satisfied without



faith, or at least without faith in the Christian God. According to this objection, if we wanted to feel pain, we could justifiably believe in a divine tyrant. Of course, such a deity would be antithetical to the healing God of the Bible. And so, Williams writes, “the remedy for being led astray by emotions is not to distrust emotions, but to develop the right emotions.” Here he strategically employs various “tests” to scrutinize and heighten perception of the critic’s emotional needs. Human beings, it turns out, derive no satisfaction from being tyrannized from above. Nor can an inaccessibly distant deity, cosmic life force, or non-Christian counterfeit satisfy our deepest longings. Only the triune God fulfills our need to be loved and our hope for deliverance from life’s troubles.

Finally, some critics of the existential argument worry that ministering to emotions does not guarantee truth. God, according to this objection, is like an invisible friend who accompanies us wherever we go. But just imagining “Invisible George” doesn’t make George real, any more than desiring God’s companionship makes God real. Again, Williams concedes this

When our feelings are turned off or insulated by layers of protective defense, life loses something precious. We trudge on, accomplishing plenty but appreciating little.

objection in part, but also notes that “need has been such a driving force for believing in God that we should look for some way to legitimize that force.” For Williams, appeals to emotion are justified when supplemented by reason. “Believing in God is not like believing in bare facts,” he writes. “An appeal to satisfaction is required to produce this different kind of believing. This is the function of the existential argument for believing in God.”

TRUTH IN THE CENTER

Most people I know—Christian or not—will agree with Williams that emotions can make life spectacular. When our feelings are turned off or insulated by layers of protective defense, life loses something precious. We trudge on, accomplishing plenty but

appreciating little. Williams beckons us to “imagine not having emotions while we do something breathtaking and striking, such as hiking to the top of a mountain or approaching a port in a faraway country on a cruise around the world. It would be a very flat experience.” So too do emotions ennoble life’s tragedies, as God finds our hearts when we need him most: We need the promise of forgiveness when we’re trapped in sin, we need the hope of heaven when battling with cancer, and we need the presence of others to assure us that we’re loved in the face of an unwanted divorce.

Williams does more than argue for the legitimacy of emotions. He also illustrates the power of emotional appeals by including anecdotes of very personal faith journeys

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON TECHNOLOGY

By Shane Hipps, author of *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (Zondervan, 2009)



UNDERSTANDING MEDIA

The Extensions of Man
MARSHALL McLuhan
(MIT PRESS)

McLuhan, who coined the phrase “the medium is the message,” predicted cultural changes decades before they happened.

His original writing presents a mosaic of ideas, probes, and aphorisms.



THE MEDIUM AND THE LIGHT

Reflections on Religion
MARSHALL McLuhan, EDITED BY ERIC McLuhan AND JACEK SZKLAREK
(WIPF & STOCK)

This is the only collection of McLuhan’s writings, speeches, and interviews that explicitly addresses the theological implications of media and technology. In some ways McLuhan, a devout Catholic, was doing stealth theology through his technological musings.



THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CHILDHOOD

NEIL POSTMAN
(VINTAGE/RANDOM HOUSE)

Postman focuses on the shift from a literate culture to an image-based culture and its impact on human development. Here he shows how the idea of “childhood,” which emerged during the Enlightenment, is now on the decline due in large part to the advent of television.



ORALITY AND LITERACY

The Technologizing of the Word

WALTER J. ONG (ROUTLEDGE)

Ong, a Catholic priest as well as a professor of humanities, shows how and why our culture is changing due to shifts in technology. He draws on anthropological research of oral cultures, literate cultures, and what he termed the culture of “secondary orality,” or electronic culture.



GENERATION MYSpace

Helping Your Teen Survive Online Adolescence

CANDICE M. KELSEY
(MARLOWE & COMPANY)

Kelsey’s book offers an excellent, practical, easy-to-read introduction and guide to the dangers and challenges facing teens in the land of social networking.

from dozens of interview subjects. Often Williams provides the reason while the stories provide the emotion, and the blend works.

These stories show how reason and need interact in real life, if not in clearly demarcated fashion or with one begetting the other in a linear progression. “It is not always reason first and then need, or need first and then reason,” Williams observes. “The two are often inextricably mixed.” One interviewee, for instance, emphasizes emotional resonance: “I love the connection with God,” she exclaims. “I get hungry for it. . . . The center of me needs to touch base with the center of God.” Another respondent counters with a demand for logical coherence. “If there is a god out there,” he says, “an ultimate purpose or something that we were manufactured for, it would have to make sense, at least enough for me to believe in it.” A third interviewee synthesizes both elements, saying, “I found ways of seeing that complement science, and evidence that it is not about me, that there are grander stories than the self-absorbed one that any of us could write.”

This book—tightly argued, yet accessible to non-philosophers—will make you think. It is not for lazy readers. It asks important questions about how to justify faith. The reader may disagree with Williams’s list of existential needs, or with Williams’s conclusion that Christianity best satisfies those needs. However, the reader who demurs has his or her work cut out.

As the New Atheism becomes old news, debates about how to best justify faith have been rekindled. Certainly, *Existential Reasons* can be read as a volley against those who place confidence in reason alone. In Williams’s work, one finds echoes of “postconservative” theologians, who remind us that Christianity is about transformation, not just information. But the genius of this book is that it doesn’t swing the pendulum too far. Or perhaps more appropriately, Williams shows that reason and emotion are not opposing poles on a single continuum at all; each has its place in the cultivation, strengthening, and defense of Christian belief. For those of us who need a faith at once meaningful and reasonable, that is good news. ☩

Michael McGowan is a philosophy instructor at Gloucester County Community College in Sewell, New Jersey.

Working on Eternity

Ben Witherington sets earthly labor in a kingdom context. By Scot McKnight

The best lesson I ever learned about work as vocation came from an Amish man who, upon learning that I teach for a living, said, “That’s a worthy vocation.” For a vocation to be worthy, it has to be fitting for the Christian life. That is why I’m happy to recommend Ben Witherington III’s new book, **Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor** (Eerdmans) ★★★★★, which reflects on the theological significance of our earthly labors.

I am a college professor who looks at the career paths of hundreds of students every year, so this topic carries more than a little interest. What would this book teach them?

“First and foremost,” Witherington writes, “it is the task of all human beings to love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbor as ourself. These tasks are ‘job one’ for all those created in the image of God. Second . . . it is our honor to be tasked with making disciples of all nations.” This might strike the reader as yawningly obvious, but a truly Christian theology of vocation depends on getting that larger perspective right. Therefore, “Any other tasks, jobs, or work we undertake must be seen as subheadings under these primary, lifelong tasks.” Witherington refuses to advise anyone at the level of professional priorities. Nor does he insist on the superiority of full-time Christian ministry.

Instead, Witherington situates both our primary and secondary vocations within an eschatological context, making a significant contribution. Christian work, he argues, is “any necessary and meaningful task that God calls and gifts a person to do and which can be undertaken to the glory of God and for the edification and aid of human beings, being inspired by the Spirit and foreshadowing the realities of the new creation.” In these pages, Witherington wrestles with several attempts at a theology of work, including reflections by Miroslav Volf, David Jensen, Barbara Brown Taylor,

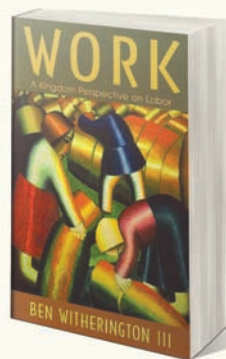
Gene Edward Veith, Andy Crouch, Terence Fretheim, and Jürgen Moltmann.

Yet the most potent piece I’ve read on this subject does not appear in the book. Long ago, J. R. R. Tolkien wrote a short story called “Leaf by Niggle,” about a man whose “vocation” was to paint leaves. Various chores and inconveniences kept Niggle from finishing the painting to his satisfaction. But when he was called out of life, he discovered that the leaves he was painting were embedded in the forests, mountains, and streams of heaven. Tolkien’s theory of vocation perfectly expresses Witherington’s position: a worthy vocation contributes not only to our own financial well-being but to new creation.

The theme of the book, work as vocation, obliges Witherington to discuss a variety of related topics. He holds forth on the vices of laziness and “workaholicism,” the challenge of mid-life career changes, and the circumstances of ordinary working lives (he might have considered Kathleen Norris’s *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and “Women’s Work”*). He questions the curiously unbiblical notion of “retirement,” instead commending careful Sabbath observation and habits of periodic rest and play. He probes into the nature of Christian ministry, showing how it encompasses both work and vocation. Also, interacting almost entirely with Crouch’s fine book, he explores the practice of “culture-making.”

While carefully attending to these issues, and placing them into his eschatological framework, Witherington never loses sight of our main vocation to love God and love others. We do not face a choice, he reminds us, between our primary and secondary vocations. Our calling as Christians is connected to the work we do in the world. Do it well. ☩

Scot McKnight is professor of religion at North Park University in Chicago, and the author most recently of *One Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow* (Zondervan, 2010).



A MEAL WITH JESUS

Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table

TIM CHESTER

(CROSSWAY, 144 PAGES)

Consider for a moment what happens at the feeding of the five thousand. God gives out bread. On a massive scale. Or think about the wedding at Cana. Jesus turns perhaps 120–180 gallons of water into wine. Quality wine. At the beginning of the Bible story, the first thing God does for humanity is present us with a menu: “The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Gen. 2:8–9). At the end of the Bible story, God sets before us a perpetual feast. God likes doing the catering. He thinks food is a good thing.

God incarnate eats. Jesus would have eaten two meals a day. When he ate with the rich, he might have had white bread, but most of the time he ate the barley bread eaten by the poor, along with cheese, butter, and eggs. Meat and poultry were too expensive to be eaten except on feast days. He may have had fish on the Sabbath. There was of course no tea or coffee. Jesus would have drunk wine, generally mixed with three-parts water. Honey was the primary sweetener, along with figs. Pepper, ginger, and other spices were imported, but were expensive. Such was the diet of God incarnate.

The risen Christ eats. Indeed he makes a point of doing so publicly: “They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them” (Luke 24:42–43). Eating in the presence of God is our future. Food will be part of the renewed creation. Food is not left behind with the resurrection. References to a future feast are not just metaphors for an ethereal future existence. Our future is a real feast.

The point is that food isn’t just fuel. It’s not just a mechanism for sustaining us for ministry. It’s gift, generosity, grace. Jesus gave thanks and broke bread. In so doing, he affirms that food is to be received as a gift from God. Food matters as matter. It’s a physical substance, and part of God’s good world. We’re to embrace the world as it is—not merely as a picture of some other spiritual world.

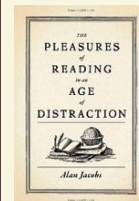
Food is a central ingredient in our experience of God’s goodness. It’s not merely an illustration of God’s goodness. If it were a mere illustration, we could leave it behind once we’d gotten the idea.

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THE PLEASURES OF READING IN AN AGE OF DISTRACTION

ALAN JACOBS (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)

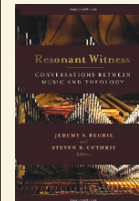


Alan Jacobs will surprise many in his audience, especially some evangelicals, when he forthrightly proclaims his “commitment to one dominant, overarching, nearly definitive principle for reading: *Read at Whim.*” Is he serious—or rather, *not* serious? Absolutely. In this lucid and seductive ramble, Jacobs gives us the best entry to date in the flurry of recent attempts to augur and meditate upon the fate of reading in our time. He concludes with a modestly optimistic celebration of the “particular form of attention” that we engage in whenever we pick up a book.

RESONANT WITNESS

Conversations between Music and Theology

EDITED BY JEREMY S. BEGBIE AND STEVEN R. GUTHRIE (EERDMANS)

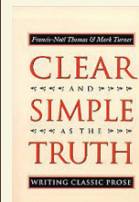


Anything can become an occasion for argument (if you are married, you won’t need me to tell you that). But certain subjects are more likely than others to provoke strong disagreement, and when you bring music and theology together, the combination is particularly combustible. Jeremy Begbie, who has done more than any other scholar to move this conversation forward, and co-editor Steven Guthrie have assembled a stellar cast of contributors. A good place to begin is the superb afterword by John Witvliet, followed by the editors’ introduction. Then pick an essay at random and plunge in.

CLEAR AND SIMPLE AS THE TRUTH

Writing Classic Prose

FRANCIS-NOËL THOMAS AND MARK TURNER (PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2ND EDITION)



About 10 years ago, a group of us here at *Christianity Today* read and discussed the first edition of this book to sharpen our sense of what we were doing as editors and writers. If a more useful approach to the subject has been published in the past 25 years, I’m not aware of it. In this second edition, a very good book has gotten even better. Clarity fosters productive disagreement, and careful readers will dissent on this point or that, but they will also be enriched by the exposition of “classic prose.”

Prison Partnership

Church and state can join hands to prevent crime and reform criminals. Interview by Joe Carter

Faith-motivated individuals, faith-based organizations, and the transformative power of faith itself are proven keys in reducing crime and improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system,” claims Baylor University criminologist Byron R. Johnson. The author of **More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How It Could Matter More** (Templeton Press) spoke with *First Things* online editor Joe Carter about why social scientists hesitate to acknowledge the power of faith, and how faith-based organizations can overcome an aversion to partnering with the government.

You present evidence that greater involvement in religious activities lessens the likelihood of turning to crime. Why are many social scientists reluctant to make this connection?

I don’t think this message resonates with most social scientists. It is widely known that social scientists, on the whole, are not very religious people. Worse, some are even hostile toward religion. In fact, the word *religion* is not mentioned in most criminology or criminal justice textbooks, despite what we’ve learned in recent years about the links between religious belief and practices and crime reduction. One criminologist recently told me there should be an entire sub-field within the discipline looking at the role of religion.

What role should faith-based organizations have in the criminal justice system?

On the whole, I believe faith-based organizations are merely tolerated within the criminal justice system. In some jurisdictions, faith-motivated individuals and organizations are seen as valuable, but elsewhere they are often viewed with suspicion. Some correctional officials view religious volunteers as more of a nuisance than a help. They see them as looking to save souls, and not having a clue about prison security or manipulative inmates. But as the criminal justice system

faces cutbacks and shrinking budgets, it will need many allies to effectively manage prison populations. Faith-based organizations provide a key source of volunteers, many of whom are highly trained and eager to assist—not only with spiritual matters but also with traditional programs in life skills, adult basic education, and other important areas.

INTERVIEW

Are the attitudes of faith-based organizations preventing them from effectively partnering with

government agencies?

It’s more a case of ignorance than attitude. Many prison ministries are nothing more than individuals who feel called to reach out to the incarcerated. Many of them operate in complete isolation of other faith-based ministries. By and large these groups do a poor job of communicating with and supporting each other. Their approach lacks the coordination necessary to combat problems that require comprehensive solutions. Faith-based groups may do a good job of preaching the gospel in prison, but they need to do a better job of mentoring prisoners while they are incarcerated and sticking with them once they leave.

How would you respond to critics—both secular and Christian—who are leery of faith-based organizations partnering with government?

There are valid reasons for both groups to have reservations, but this should not prevent them from collaborating, especially since we face such daunting problems. Let’s test the proposition that religious and secular groups might overcome the obstacles that prevent partnerships from happening. I suspect and hope that when this happens, we will see a great number of myths and stereotypes shattered.

One of your studies found

that born-again inmates were just as likely to return to prison as other inmates. Yet you argue that “jailhouse religion”—a conversion experience during prison—can still be valuable. Can you elaborate?

Conversion, in my opinion, is only a first step. It’s naïve to think that someone who has a born-again experience won’t encounter problems once they leave prison. Spiritual transformation is an ongoing process. If converted inmates are appropriately nurtured and challenged in their newfound faith, they can grow spiritually. I see spiritual development and prisoner rehabilitation going hand in hand.

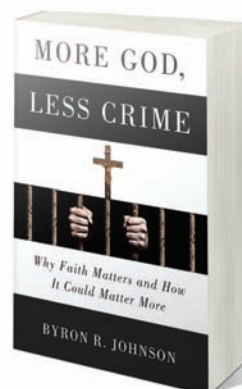
Can a faith-based prison program rehabilitate inmates, or does the process primarily occur after their release?

I believe the answer to both questions is “yes.” I have seen inmates change dramatically over a year or two in prison. They can quote Scripture all day long, and seem contrite and deeply committed in their faith. However, life on the streets is very difficult. They are often without the support and accountability they experienced in prison. When you observe former prisoners in the community, you quickly understand how fragile their situation is and how easy it is for them to become fatalistic if things don’t go the right way. This is why mentors and supportive congregations have to be closely involved.

What advice would you give to churches looking to help former prisoners and their families?

First, folks should consider doing some homework to learn about what’s happening in particular churches and communities. There may be thriving ministries that need volunteers. People should consider assisting

more muscular ministries that are already having an impact. Also, churches should learn to identify “intermediary” organizations that attempt to identify problems and needs, and then match these with appropriate resources. I believe they hold the key to dealing comprehensively with problems like crime and delinquency, and reintegrating prisoners into society. ☩



A Sensory Revelation

Terrence Malick wants to capture the wonder of the world. By Brett McCracken

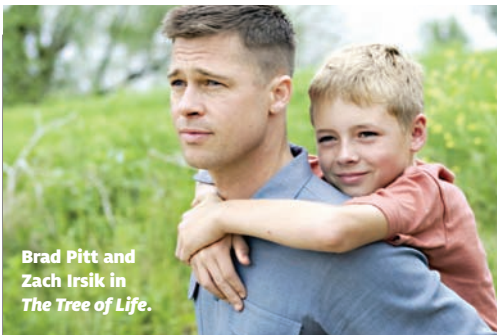
W

hile this summer's slate includes the usual superhero action flicks and animated CGI tales, one much quieter release has the attention of art-loving cinephiles everywhere. That's what happens whenever a new Terrence Malick movie hits the big screen, in this case, **The Tree of Life**, opening in late May.

Malick, 67, has described this long-gestating, highly secretive project starring Brad Pitt and Sean Penn as "a cosmic epic, a hymn to life" in which Penn's character "finds himself a lost soul in the modern world, seeking answers to the origins and meaning of life while questioning the existence of faith." CT hadn't seen the film before going to press, but its appeal comes courtesy of its director's pedigree.

A Salinger-esque recluse and *auteur* with a distinct cinematic vision, Malick has made only four films over the last 40 years. After two acclaimed movies in the 1970s (*Badlands*, 1973; *Days of Heaven*, 1978), Malick disappeared for 20 years. He reemerged to great fanfare with 1998's *The Thin Red Line*, a WWII epic nominated for seven Oscars. Seven years later, Malick returned with the elegiac American origins story *The New World* (2005), lending his lyricism to the legend of Pocahontas and John Smith.

Part of what makes Malick unique is that



Brad Pitt and Zach Irsik in *The Tree of Life*.

he aims not just to tell a story but to reveal the world. His films endeavor to explore the very existence of man in a dynamic universe: the glorious, achingly beautiful creation characterized by good and evil, light and dark, war and peace, pleasure and pain.

The trailer for *The Tree of Life* begins with this line: "There are two ways through life: the way of nature, and the way of grace." Such duality is clear in Malick's other films, all of which juxtapose images of Paradise with harsh visualizations of fallen creation. In *The Thin Red Line*, soldiers ponder the "war in the heart of nature," wondering why the world seems so essentially driven by love and strife, beauty and mortality. In *Days of Heaven* and *The New World*, idyllic, unbridled, Edenic romances are brought down to earth and confronted with the realities of

practical, contained existence. In each film, Malick's characters ponder humanity's position vis-à-vis the divine (through regular monologues about God).

Similarly, Malick ponders the presence of God in his camera's inescapably spiritual gaze, characterized by frequent glimpses upward toward a transcendent light and ponderous shots of a creation groaning for redemption. Malick seems less interested in plot or dialogue than in

an ambiance that captures these "groaning" dialectics of existence: solemn black figures against a field of waving wheat, a distant lightning bolt and delayed clap of thunder, an alligator captured and bound.

Malick studied the philosophy of Martin Heidegger at Harvard and Oxford. His films seem to share Heidegger's notion that the world reveals itself through our moods and emotions, not cognition and rationalism. "Color shines and wants only to shine," wrote Heidegger. "When we analyze it in rational terms by measuring its wavelengths, it is gone." Malick's sensory films suggest that for him, truth and beauty exist most fully in the unexplained and momentary experience of encounter, in the visceral primacy and invasive "thereness" of nature, whether in close-ups of dying animals (*Badlands*), glistening vistas of blowing wheat fields (*Days of Heaven*), or shimmering rivers in a dark, unexplored land (*The New World*). Though Christians find the ultimate revelation of truth and beauty in the person of Jesus Christ, Malick's perceptive attention to nature's wonder and majesty fosters a healthy contemplation of the character of God as revealed in creation.

Malick would have us approach his films not as puzzles to be solved, but as phenomena to be experienced. He wants his films to capture the magic, wonder, and mystery of the universe as it is seen, heard, and felt. A Malick film should thus not be deconstructed, but received: washing over us as a cleansing flood of beauty and truth.

Brett McCracken, a CT film critic, blogs at stillsearching.wordpress.com.

Martyrs Trilogy: One Too Many

The Grandfathers (EthnoGraphic Media) ★★☆☆, new on DVD, is being billed as the last chapter in a trilogy about the five missionary martyrs—including Jim Elliot and Nate Saint—killed in Ecuador in 1956. The first two chapters, documentary *Beyond the Gates of Splendor* and feature film *End of the Spear*, were effective accounts of the story, but this third film adds little to the saga.

Told from the perspective of Jesse Saint—Nate's grandson—*The Grandfathers* aims to capture the enduring legacy of the martyrs by showing how the second, third, and now fourth generations are continuing to minister with the Huaorani tribe in Ecuador. There's some nice interaction between Jesse and Mincaye, one of the tribesmen who killed the missionaries 55 years ago, and the spirit of forgiveness continues to ring loud and clear in this ongoing saga. Director Jim Hanon brings a visually slick, almost MTV feel to the project, but other than a scene or two, this 54-minute documentary doesn't dig deep and is mostly forgettable. (More: *TheGrandfathers.com*) —Mark Moring, CT senior associate editor



TWO MINUTES WITH...

John Michael Talbot



John Michael Talbot has been making music for a long time, with an astonishing 52 albums to show for it—including *Worship and Bow Down*, releasing in June. CT's Mark Moring spoke with Talbot, a

Roman Catholic who leads a Secular Franciscan monastery in Arkansas, about the album and his recent book on new monasticism.

How would you describe this new album?

There's a new Roman Missal coming out this year, so there's a need for new liturgical settings. I wrote some new ones and added a few other things—a new setting of Psalm 95, a Communion hymn, a rendering of the Hail Mary that focuses on the centrality of Jesus, a piece on the use of the Jesus Prayer, and one on the use of breath in Christian meditation. Because of the trouble we're going through as a people, I did a treatment based on the annunciation "nothing is impossible." It all comes at a time when Catholics need encouragement. We've been through some tough times with the sex scandals, and all Americans are going through tough times with the recession and political polarization.

You have long had "crossover appeal" among Catholics and Protestants. Do you intentionally write that way?

No, it's just who I am. If I were to try to manipulate it, it would come off as, well, manipulative, artificial. Lyrics and songs just flow out of who I am. My mother was a Methodist who believed in free will. My daddy was a Presbyterian who believed in predestination. Because moms usually have the say, I was raised in the Methodist church. My dad was cool with it; he thought it was all predestined anyway!

Tell us about your new book.

It's called *The Universal Monk: The Way of the New Monastics* (Liturgical Press, 2011). The new monasticism goes across the barriers of church affiliation, spirituality, and state of life. It's folks of every state of life who feel drawn to a monastic spirituality and living it within their context. The phenomenon of people affiliating with monasteries is growing by leaps and bounds, and not just Catholics. This book tries to address that.



Bright & Beautiful

Owl City brims with childlike faith. By Ron Augustine



In his MySpace page, Adam Young, the 24-year-old frontman of Owl City, says his influences include G-rated movies, swimming pools, friends, photography, optimism, and God. His melodies are more precious than anything you'll hear on a Kidz Bop CD. He seems to purposefully make his voice sound smaller when singing. Depending on your perspective, Owl City is either wonderfully childlike or painfully childish.

The texture and mood of his new album, *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (Universal Republic) ★★★★★, sounds more informed by the more "mature" artists on his list—like ambient-drone group Stars of the Lid and electronic artists like Boards of Canada and Telefon Tel Aviv.

But his trademark sugary synth-pop still reigns here, a perfect soundtrack for anyone who wishes he could just be a kid forever. Look no further than these cheesy but delightful lyrics for evidence: "Boy, I need a hug / 'Cause my heart stops without you / There's something about you that makes me feel alive" ("Honey and the Bee") and, "If I were to pluck on your heartstrings / Would you strum on

mine?" ("Plant Life").

Twinkling synthesizers and inoffensive club beats keep the mood high throughout the project. There isn't a down moment, even on "Hospital Flowers," a song about surviving a violent car crash ("In the back of the ambulance, I've never felt so content"). Hopeless optimism or naïve hopefulness?

It is safe to assume that most of Young's joy is derived from his Christian faith, which shows up throughout the album: "My captain

on the snowy horse / Is coming back to take me home" ("Kamikaze"). "A condo on the Milky Way / A house on a cloud / And God's my landlord" ("Alligator Sky"). "Dear God / You're the only North Star

I would follow this far" ("Galaxies"). "I keep my knees black and blue / 'Cause they often hit the hardwood floor / And I believe, so I'm not praying to the ceiling any more" ("Angels").

It is easy to see why Young is so popular with preteens; as a guy with childlike faith, his sprightly tunes light up the things in the dark like sparklers in the summertime. ✦

Ron Augustine, a CT music critic, lives in Chicago.



QUICK TAKES

More media of note.

BOOKS

► HEAVEN REVEALED

What Is It Like? What Will We Do? And 11 Other Things You've Wondered About

PAUL ENNS (MOODY)

★★★★★ Brokenhearted after suddenly losing his beloved wife of many years, pastor Paul Enns began an extensive study of the Scriptures that describe the life of heaven. In this book, Enns shares the comfort he found in studying the truth about heaven. *Heaven Revealed* is strong when Enns describes the glories of God's presence and the embodied nature of our life on the new earth. It is less effective when Enns delves into the specifics of a dispensational theology that sometimes leans toward escapism.

► REDISCOVERING THE CHURCH FATHERS

Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church

MICHAEL A. G. HAYKIN (CROSSWAY)

★★★★★ Michael Haykin celebrates evangelicalism's renewed appreciation for the church fathers and encourages us to drink deeply from the wisdom of those who have gone before us. Haykin's treatment of the fathers is a good mix of biographical information and theological reflection. He quotes extensively from some of the most important church fathers, disagreeing charitably at times but always with an eye toward understanding them within their context. *Rediscovering the Church Fathers* succeeds in increasing evangelical awareness of our need to appreciate the pearls of the ancient church. —Books reviewed by Trevin Wax

ON DVD

► SHED NO TEARS

UNSEEN STORIES | UNRATED | NOVEMBER 2010

★★★★★ *Shed No Tears* focuses on the firsthand stories of three children: Bertin, Ruphine, and Zenabou, 3 of the 50,000 children trafficked in Benin. Families in poor, rural areas are particularly vulnerable to traffickers, who convince parents they will provide food, education, and a better life for their children in the city. This moving documentary weaves together

hopeful narratives of nuns, chiefs, NGO leaders, and former traffickers who aid victims and try to prevent child trafficking in Benin. The film avoids oversimplifying while explaining a complex social problem and inviting viewers to act. (More: *UnseenStories.com*) —Katie Galli Holden

MUSIC

ARTHUR ALLIGOOD

► I HAVE NOT SEEN THE WIND

(INDEPENDENT)

★★★★★ Arthur Alligood, a Nashville-based singer-songwriter, may not be a household name, but his music is instantly universal. With plucking nylon strings, weeping bends of pedal steel, and thrusts of Americana rock, plus the folk skills of producer Kenny Hutson (*Over the Rhine*, Julie Lee), Alligood canvasses common human experiences with haunting realism. Though his verses depict a man unafraid to confront his emotions, it is his most tender lines ("Come on Jesus . . . take me kicking / Take me screaming / Take these tears from my eyes," from "Come On Something") that convey surrender and make his sorrowful lyrics so appealing. —Andrew Greer

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The Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies at Westmont College



Dr. Richard E. Averbeck
Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages and Director of the Ph.D. program in Theological Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School



Dr. C. John Collins
Professor of Old Testament in the Department of Scripture and Interpretation at Covenant Theological Seminary



Moderator

Dr. Victor P. Hamilton
Retired professor of Old Testament Studies, current Scholar-in-Residence at Asbury University

For more information contact:
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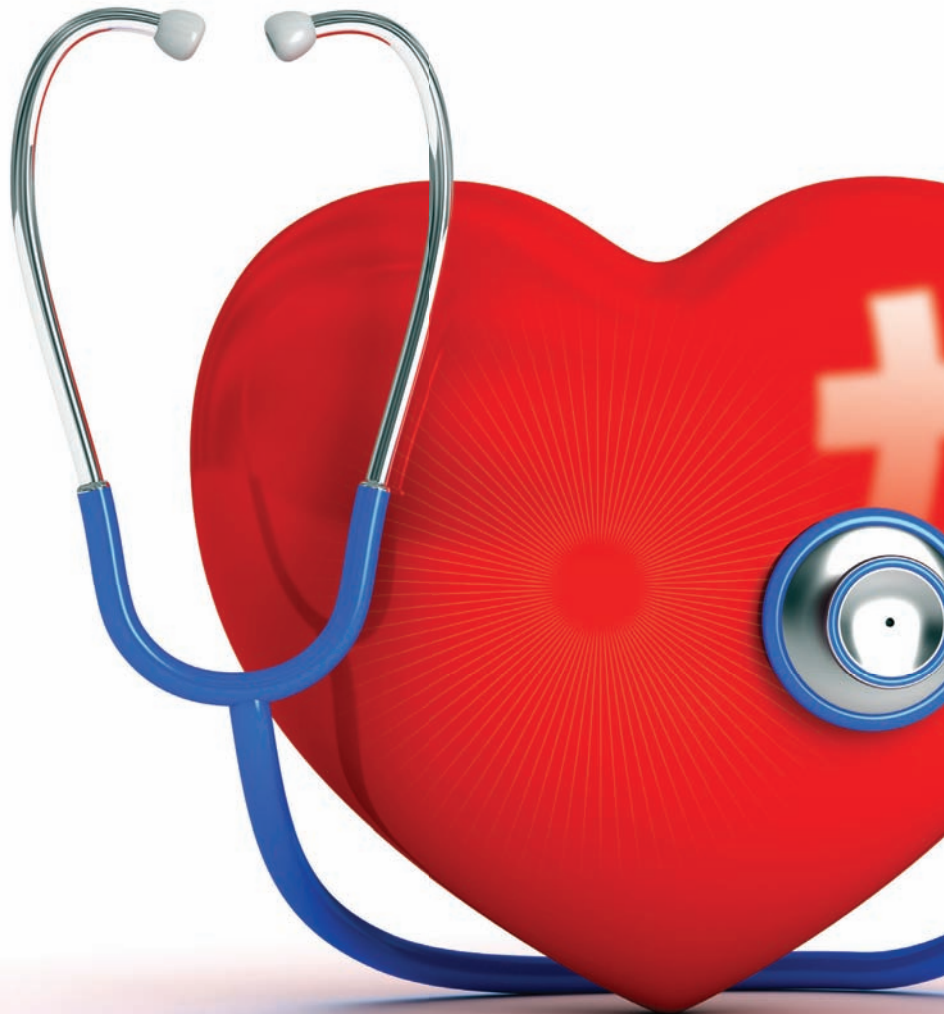
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CHILDREN

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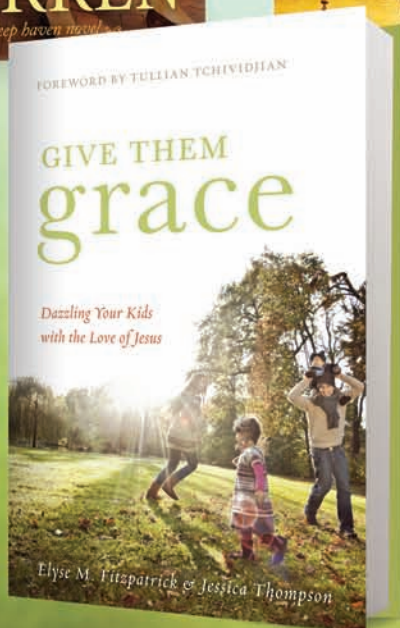
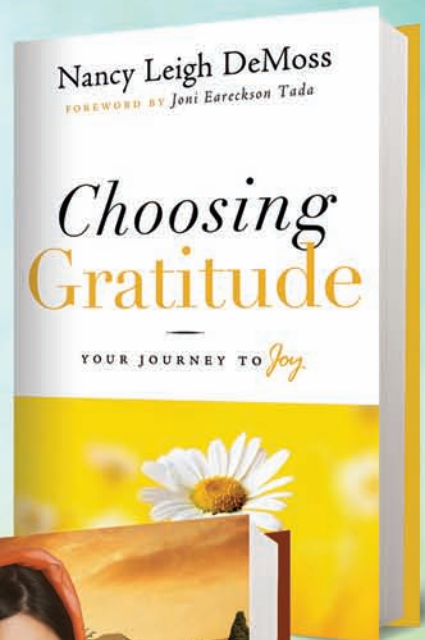
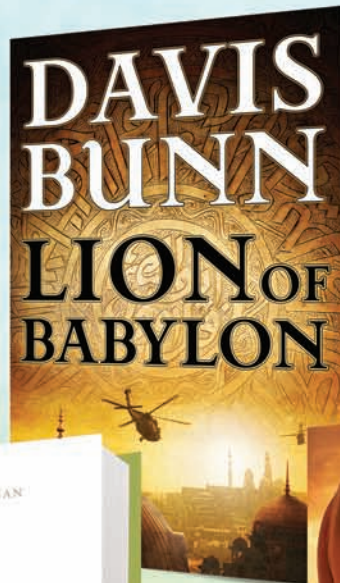
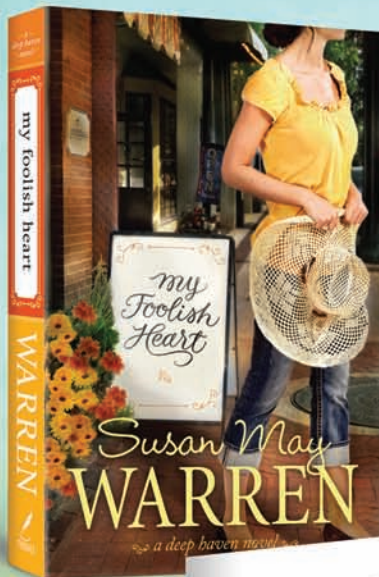
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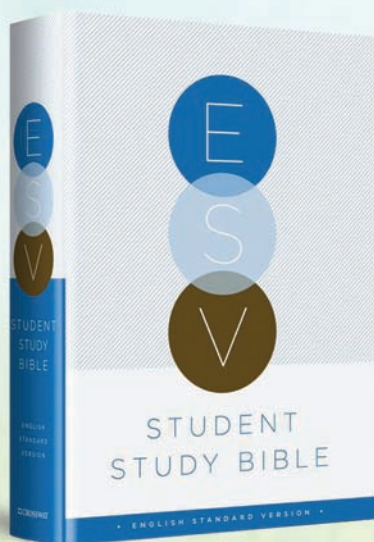


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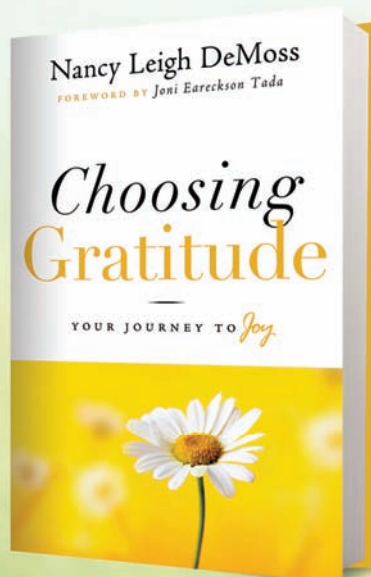
Choosing Gratitude ▶

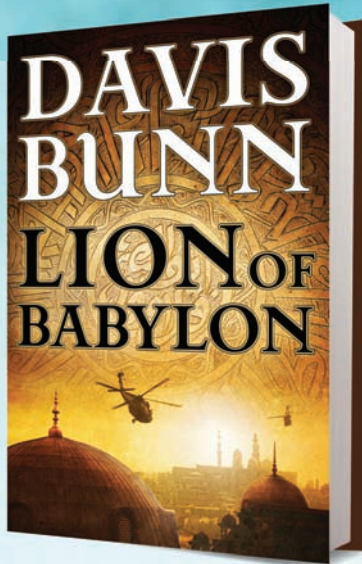
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▶ **Give Them Grace**

A mother/daughter team helps Christian parents raise their children with grace and the gospel. They address topics such as the law, God's forgiveness and love, and true heart obedience. A great resource for raising grace-filled, Jesus-loving kids.



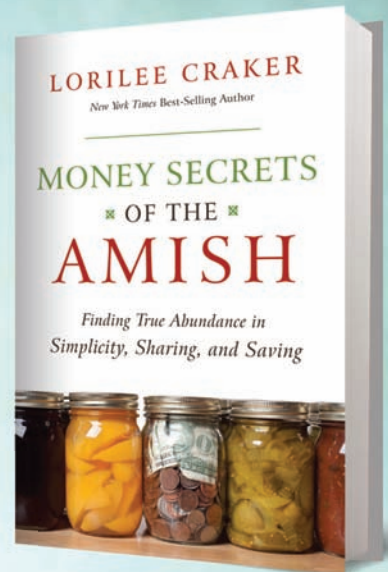
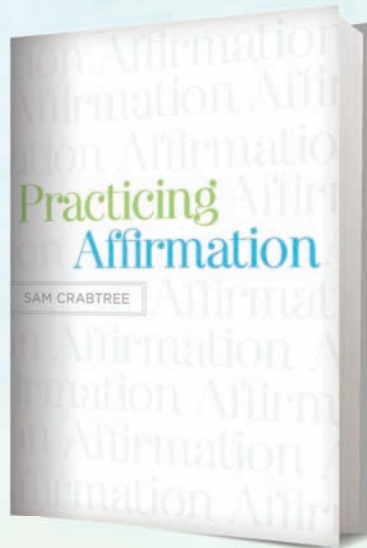


◀ **Lion of Babylon**

As a new coalition rises in Iraq, an ancient evil is amassing power. But when three Americans go missing in Baghdad—and the U.S. government turns a blind eye—one man's risky off-grid rescue mission will change the destiny of millions.

Practicing Affirmation ▶

Practicing Affirmation sounds a call to recognize and affirm the character of Christ in others. When done well, affirmation does not fuel pride but refreshes the recipient and honors God. All who are discouraged in relationships will find wisdom and practical insight in this book.



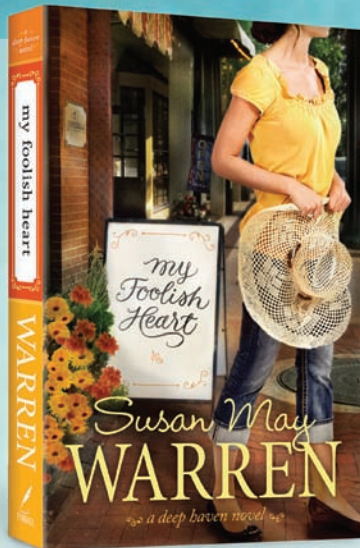
▶ **Money Secrets of the Amish**

Go on an "Amish money makeover," learning the choices, secrets, and disciplines that safeguarded the contentment and the coffers of America's favorite plain folk. Spend less, save more, and get happier doing it. For updates from *New York Times* best-selling author Lorilee Craker, visit LorileeCraker.com.



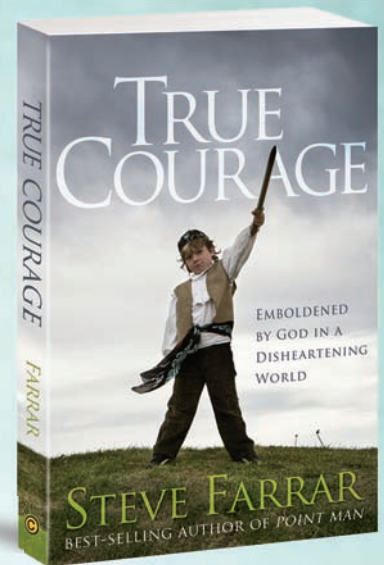
◀ **Imagination Station #3 & #4**

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◀ **My Foolish Heart**

The star host of a talk radio show breaks her own rules when she falls for a caller—a man she doesn't realize is the neighbor she's been trying to avoid. A story of first impressions and second chances, *My Foolish Heart* demonstrates how love can break us free from prisons of our own making.



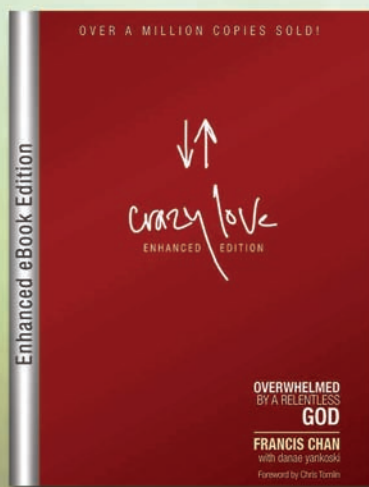
▲ **True Courage**

In *True Courage*, readers will discover a God who provides incredible courage to us in the midst of uncertainty, even through treacherous, evil days, and the courage to face lions in their den—or an unexpected job loss, the diagnosis of a sick child, or the return of a debilitating cancer.

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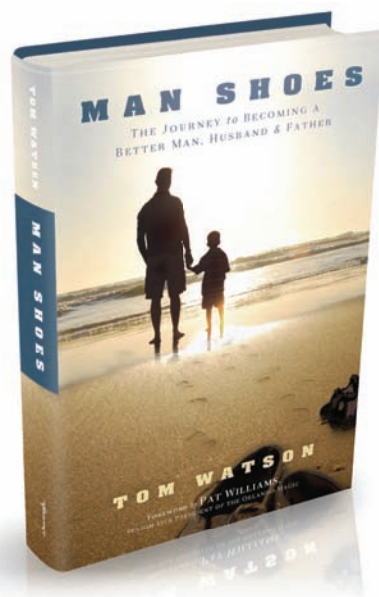
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Alternative Capitalist

How **Jonathan Golden** helps coffee farmers in Rwanda.

A

s an industrial psychologist, Jonathan Golden helped companies grow stronger through team building and management training. But he wanted to do something more. When a Rwandan bishop encouraged him to help coffee farmers in Rwanda, Golden was sold. In 2006, he bought 20 bags of coffee—2,640 pounds—from Rwandan farmers. He borrowed \$20,000, bought a used roaster on eBay, and began selling the coffee to church cafés. He opened a coffee shop in Roswell, Georgia, and Land of a Thousand Hills Coffee Company was born.

The company now works with thousands of farmers in Rwanda and Haiti through microfinance loans, agricultural expertise, and providing bikes for transport. It will buy about 100 tons of coffee this year, paying farmers well over the fair trade minimum of \$1.40 per pound. It's roasted in the U.S. and sold to about 600 churches; profits are re-invested in more farmers.

The company is visible at Christian rock shows and conferences, where it's known for the slogan, "Drink Coffee. Do Good." Q founder Gabe Lyons says Golden "thinks through the entire process of how their work contributes to the good of everyone, from the farmer to the customer. They create sustainable economic environments for people in developing countries, while providing U.S. consumers with great coffee."

- **Hometown** Roswell, Georgia
- **Church** St. Peter's Place Anglican
- **Family** Brenda (wife); Jonathan, 16, Josh, 14 (children)
- **Reading now** *Drive*, by Daniel Pink; *The Man Who Was Thursday*, by G. K. Chesterton; *Unspoken Sermons*, by George MacDonald
- **On your iPod** Ben Harper and "lots of good '70s rock"
- **Favorite movie** *The Mission*
- **Favorite Bible verse** Micah 6:8
- **Favorite coffee blend** Bukonya Ikawa

question & answer

Your company goes beyond fair trade to what you call "community trade."

Explain.

Fair trade puts a floor on prices for commodities. Community trade goes beyond mere economics and builds relationships. We ask people, "What are your other needs?" In one village, the children wanted a soccer field; we built one. In another, with help from our friends in [Christian rock band] Third Day, we started a sustenance farm, growing potatoes, beans, and corn to help feed that village's 2,000 orphans. And we have opportunities to share the gospel.

I hear that the work has resulted in some amazing reconciliation stories.

Yes. John and Clementine grew up next to each other; he was Hutu, she was Tutsi. During the 1994 genocide, he murdered her father and all of her siblings, and even went after her. After the genocide, he ended up in prison, where he heard the gospel and accepted the Lord. John later returned to the village and met Clementine at the coffee washing station, where he asked for her forgiveness. When they told me their story, they said that they had experienced reconciliation through coffee. They now literally farm side by side. It's grace in action.

Where do you go from here?

I've been asked to work with pastors in Rwanda, training them on Christianity in the marketplace. We are now working with six villages—three in Rwanda, three in Haiti—and we have an invitation to Honduras. In five years, we hope to be helping 10,000 farmers and their families in at least 25 villages throughout the world, and serving coffee to 3,000 churches in the U.S. We want to continue making a difference for the gospel through alternative capitalism.

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