

Christianity Today

JULY 2011

The New Face of Focus on the Family

Why **Jim Daly** doesn't care whether you know who he is or whom he supports for President.

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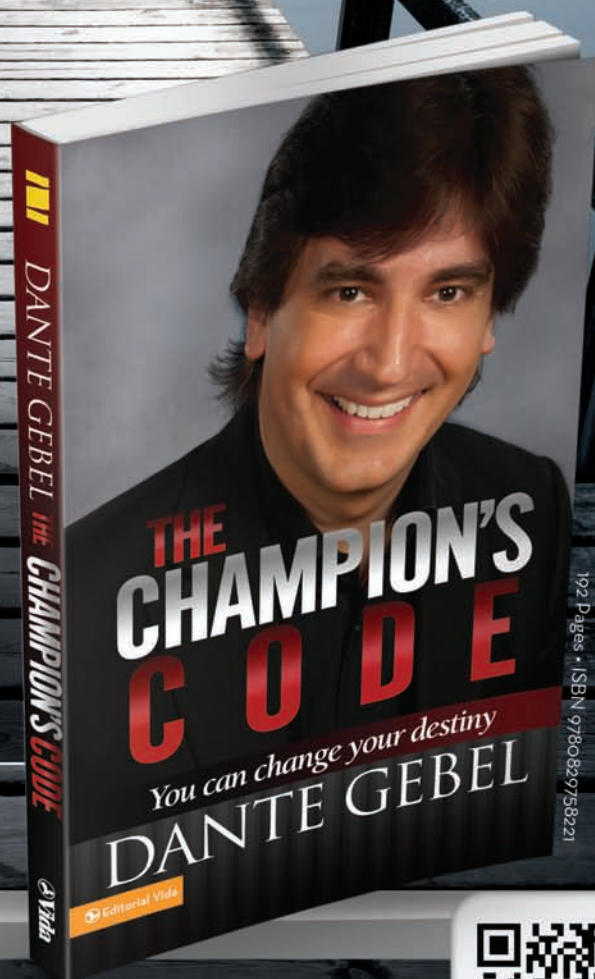
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COVER PHOTO
 BY AUDREY HANNAH BROOKS



Keep the Conversation Going

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

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

Recently, that conversation garnered praise at the Evangelical Press Association convention. The Global Conversation won first place in the Article Series category. "To Serve Is to Suffer," senior Sri Lankan leader Ajith Fernando's contribution to the Global Conversation, received first prize in the Devotional Article category. And Chawkat Moucarray's "A Lifelong Journey with Islam" won second place in the Evangelism Article category.

Still other internationally focused pieces claimed awards: the CT women's blog took second place in the Cause of the Year: Human Trafficking category for Davita Maharaj's "I Lived Next Door to a Brothel." And Lewis Wall's "Jesus and the Unclean Woman" won third place in the Biblical Exposition category for its blend of biblical reflection and reporting on ministry to African women suffering from obstetric fistula.

In this issue, we listen to the voices of Christians from the bottom of India's hyperstratified society. In January, senior writer Tim Stafford and design director Gary Gnidovic traveled to five Indian cities to investigate a spiritual revival fueled by educational opportunity and economic mobility. See "India's Grassroots Revival," beginning on page 28.

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

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David Neff, Editor in Chief

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MANAGING EDITOR
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A Change of Focus

What a beauty pageant story revealed
about a ministry.

T

he first time I noticed the change from James Dobson's Focus on the Family to Jim Daly's was when the phone rang—Dobson almost never returned *Christianity Today's* phone calls (he didn't grant an interview for this month's cover story, either), and the organization followed his lead. I don't know if it was this media engagement history or the specific subject of the interview, but Daly's first words to me were, "Bet you didn't think I'd call you back, did you?"

It was May 2009. Dobson was still hosting Focus on the Family's radio show, and I was inquiring about criticism of the upcoming episode, "A Modern-Day Esther"—"Esther" being beauty pageant contestant Carrie Prejean, who became a conservative celebrity when her comments on marriage apparently cost her the Miss USA title. Critics complained that Focus was undercutting its stance on sexual purity by hosting a bikini contestant who'd done some semi-nude modeling. (Focus renamed the episode "Standing Strong" before it aired.)

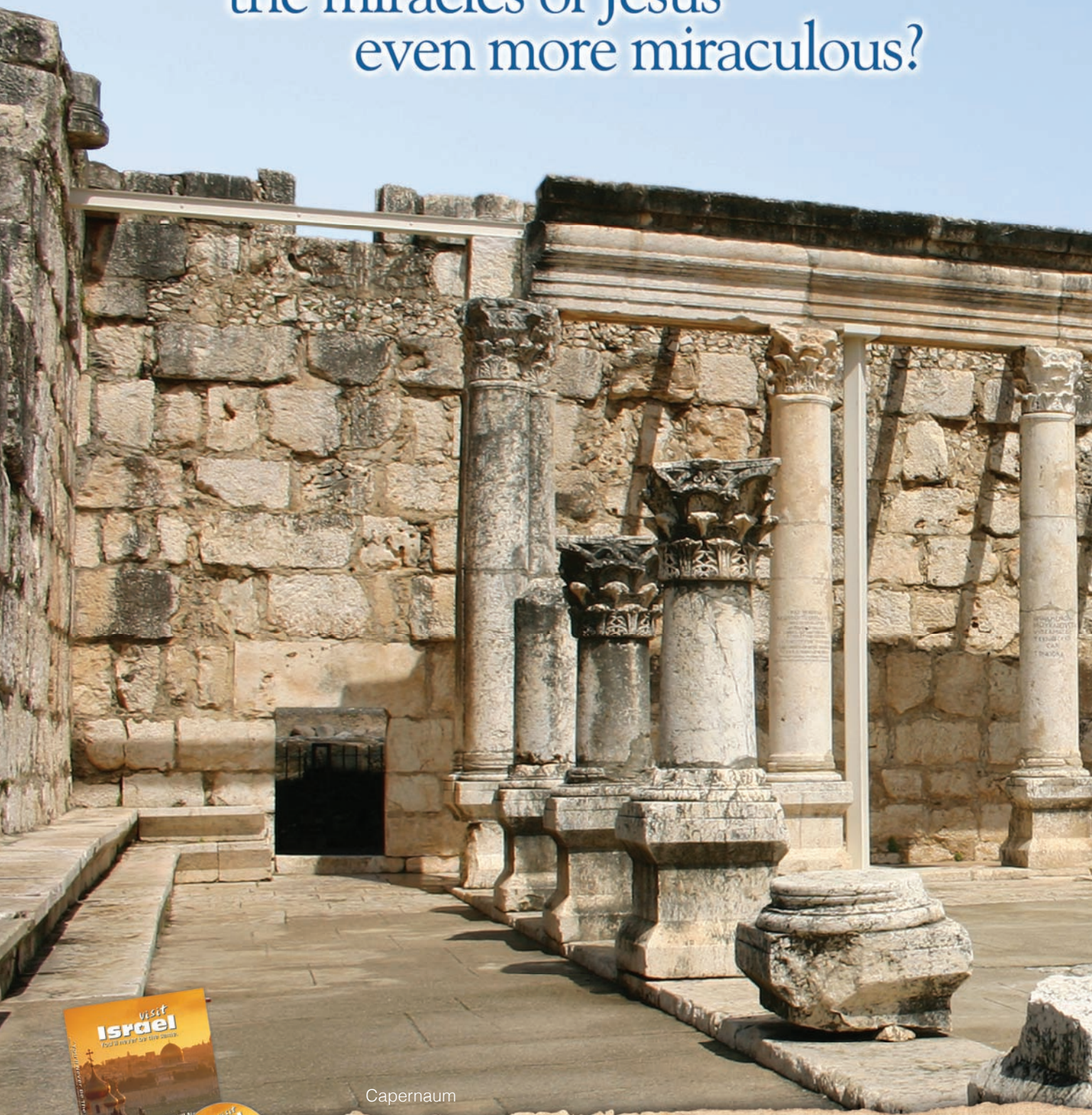
Daly was not defensive and didn't go on the attack. He recognized the issue but explained the ministry's stance. "Her past modeling jobs don't make her opinion on marriage any less valid," he said. "She's a 21-year-old girl whose Christian worldview is probably not fully formed. . . . [But] to have the courage to state her conviction is worth praising, even if it was feebly stated.

"The other stuff we're not as interested in. We're not condoning it or passing judgment," he said near the end of our interview. "I'd hate to have the Christian community focus on poor decisions she's made as opposed to celebrating that she had the courage to speak for biblical truth."

I'll admit that part of me wondered if the rule being applied was that opposition to gay marriage covers a multitude of sins. But as Sarah Pulliam Bailey reports in the cover story, "Refocusing on the Family" (page 20), it's really Daly's *modus operandi*: He is far more eager to celebrate the praiseworthy than to focus on poor decisions. And he'd rather work with groups he disagrees with than condemn them. He hasn't pleased everyone ("I am not very happy with the new, progressive, 'loving' leadership at Focus on the Family," Seattle megachurch pastor Ken Hutcherson lamented last year). But Daly has many people watching and wondering if this is a case study in organizational transition.

Next month: Sociologist Brad Wright looks at the data on what your neighbors really think about your faith—and the science behind your attitude towards them; Matthew Lee Anderson argues for a comprehensive, evangelical theology of the body; and Rob Moll profiles Dave Ramsey.

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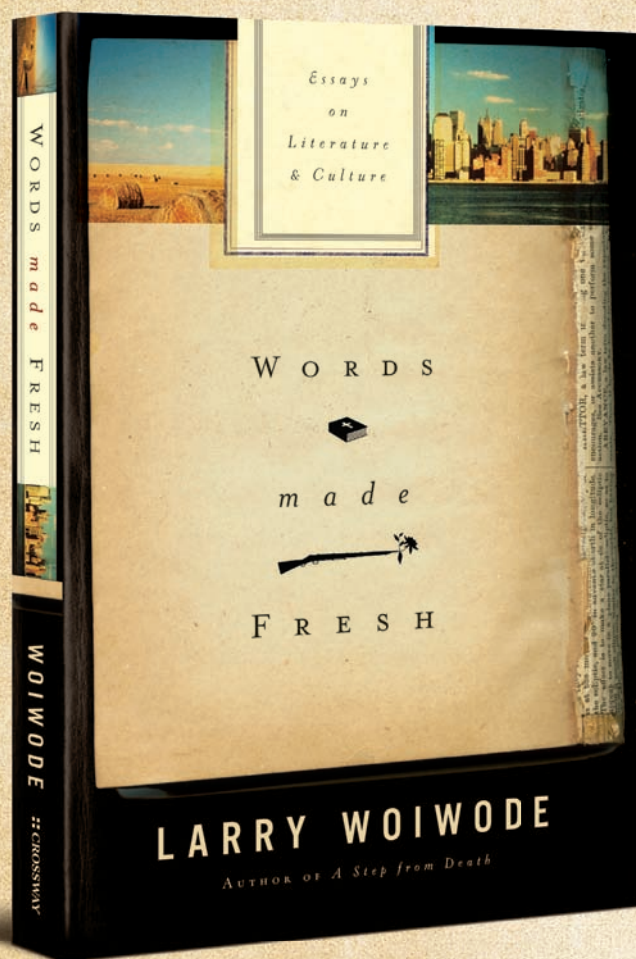
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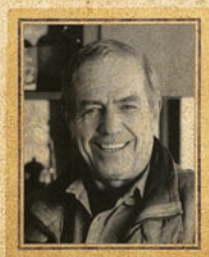
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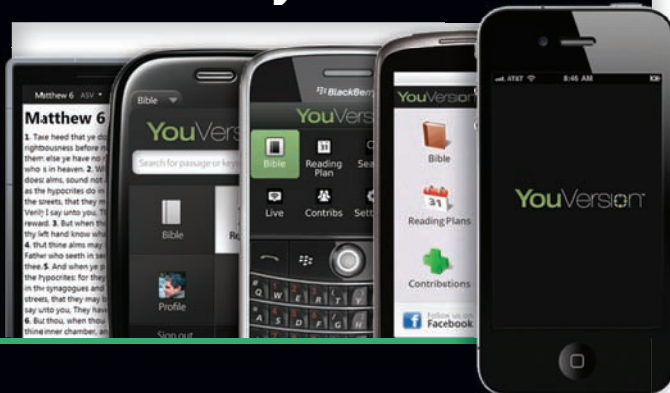
LARRY WOIWODE is the recipient of numerous literary honors and awards for his novels, short stories, essays, memoirs, and poetry. His work has been featured in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *Books & Culture*, and *The Atlantic*. He is the Poet Laureate of North Dakota and is Writer in Residence at Jamestown College.

BRIEFING

REPORTING & DISPATCHES
FROM THE CHURCH
WORLDWIDE

SPOTLIGHT: YouVersion's Volunteer Army

➔ With more than 22 million users on mobile platforms, and millions more on its website, all the numbers for YouVersion and its Bible App are impressive. But even more impressive is its success in creating a massive participatory system like Wikipedia or YouTube. Thousands simply add Bible notes. But about 1,100 volunteers sign up to help run YouVersion every six months. Between 300 and 500 are active now, some full time. Between them, they contribute about 1,000 hours a week, mostly on testing, translation, data management, and technical support. Project manager Scott Magdalein says fears about shoddy volunteer work are unfounded. "Quality is a result of passion, not skill," he says—noting that YouVersion vets volunteers through the same process it uses to vet staff.



MOBILIZING BIBLE USERS

YouVersion.com launches on the Web.



YouVersion launches the Bible App for iPhones. It gets 183,406 downloads in its first 20 days.

The Bible App launches on Blackberry.

The Bible App becomes available on Android.

iPhone app crosses the 1 million user mark.

YouVersion Live aims at pastors who want to synchronize notes with the congregation (or poll them) while preaching.

YouVersion hits 6 million mobile devices, and adds about a million each month thereafter.

App on 4 million mobile devices.

Users hit 2 billion minutes of Bible reading, which they double by the end of 2010.

At 7 billion minutes, YouVersion mobile users are adding about a billion every 35 days.

A blog comment offhandedly mentions that volunteers are building a Bible App for the Palm Pre, sparking widespread interest in volunteers.

YouVersion users total 1 billion minutes of reading across 3 million devices on all mobile platforms.

After losing a number of early volunteers to what Magdalein describes as "treating them like free labor," YouVersion reboots its volunteer program and redesigns it for "people who want to do something important." Magdalein says almost none are given rewards. "We thank them earnestly, make them a part of the vision, and give them the tools they need to participate in a meaningful way."



The Bible App cracks the iTunes top 10 apps for the second time—this time beating out perennial favorite Angry Birds. Installations climb to 13 million over all mobile devices.

Not every effort succeeds: a major push to have 1 billion cumulative Bible-reading minutes in January draws only 681 million.

More than 10,000 participate in a "virtual flash mob" for the King James Version 400th anniversary. With each volunteer choosing a chapter, they read the entire Bible aloud eight times in 400 seconds.

KEY

- LAUNCHES
- DOWNLOADS
- MINUTES
- VOLUNTEERS



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Governor orders churches closed

ALGERIA The leader of Algeria's network of Protestant churches was ordered by his governor to "close down . . . all the Christian worship places, which are not designated for religious purposes." The May order enforces Ordinance 03-06, a 2006 law restricting non-Muslim worship. The ordinance led to the closure of over half of the nation's then-50 Protestant churches in 2008. Churches must register in order to legally operate, yet Protestant leaders have tried for years to have church applications approved by the government without success. The Algerian government also restricts Muslim worship, given fears of radicalism that fueled waves of domestic terrorism in the 1990s.

Reconstruction-era constitutional amendment that bars religious organizations from state funding. The Blaine Amendment was created in the 1800s to limit Catholicism. Supporters of the repeal argue that Blaine discriminates against religious groups that offer social services. Opponents worry that repealing it could open the door to school vouchers for religious institutions and state funding for extremist hate groups. Voters will decide on the amendment in 2012.

4 Pastors petition for religious liberty

CHINA Nineteen pastors signed a first-ever petition presented to the Chinese legislature asking the Communist government to grant legal protection for unregistered house churches.

The document references the unregistered 1,000-member Shouwang Church. Its members have attempted for months to hold Sunday worship in a public square after the church's lease was terminated. Observers told *The New York Times* that the petition puts pressure on the government at a time when leaders already feel their authority is under threat.

5 Court affirms house church worship

IRAN The Revolutionary Tribunal has acquitted 11 members of the Church of Iran who had been arrested after attending a house church meeting and drinking Communion wine.

The court ruled that the church members were within their rights under Article 13 of the Iranian constitution, which allows non-Muslims freedom to worship and "act according to their own canon."

2 Christian president retains office

NIGERIA Voters gave Christian president Goodluck Jonathan his job back in what many agreed was one of Nigeria's fairest elections. But supporters of Muslim opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari took to the streets. The ensuing riots left an estimated 800 Christians and Muslims dead and hundreds of churches burned. Many believe the balance of power in Nigeria has shifted to the Christian-dominated south. The shift began when then-vice president Jonathan took over after his northern predecessor's death in 2010, breaking the Muslim-Christian presidential rotation.

3 Florida will vote on Blaine repeal

The Florida Senate has moved the state one step closer to repealing a

6 New constitution reverses abortion stance

HUNGARY The newly adopted constitution in Hungary defines marriage as between one man and one woman. It also guarantees the right to life from conception and acknowledges the role of Christianity in preserving the nation. Hungary's prime minister said he hopes the new constitution will transition the post-Communist country to a democracy with sound finances and good government. Previously, Hungary's abortion law was one of the most liberal in Europe, allowing the procedure without restriction and using state funding.

7 Convert baptisms frowned upon

SWEDEN Lutheran bishops are advising priests not to baptize asylum seekers who have converted to Christianity. Explaining the bishops' letter to reporters, a spokesperson at the Center for Religious Dialogue said the baptisms could increase the risk of persecution if converts are sent back to their home countries. Others are concerned that some asylum seekers convert in hopes of bettering their chances of being permitted to stay in Sweden. In a high-profile April case, a former imam who converted to Christianity faced extradition to Iraq, where he feared possible imprisonment or death for leaving Islam.

8 Abortion funding showdown in Indiana

The Obama administration is objecting to a new Indiana law blocking Planned Parenthood from accessing some public funds allocated to family planning. The law stood up to a federal court challenge. But if the federal government decides it breaks Medicaid rules, it could revoke millions of dollars in Indiana Medicaid funding. At least five other state legislatures have proposed similar bans.

GO FIGURE Prayer

49%

Americans who prayed for their health in 2007.

43%

Americans who did so in 2002.

Psychology of Religion and Spirituality via The Washington Post



compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

“We promise to make Wednesday a day of esteem for our Lord.”

Peter Bagley, pastor of United Protestant Church in Morgan Park, Minnesota, on moving Sunday morning worship to Wednesday nights during the summer, when attendance is about half that of winter.

Duluth News Tribune

“People often ask me what is the secret to the success of this show. . . . I non-jokingly say, ‘My team and Jesus,’ because nothing but the hand of God has made this possible for me.”

Oprah Winfrey, on the last day of her eponymous show’s 25-year run.

The Oprah Winfrey Show

“[T]hese debates have not been at the core of our calling . . . [so] we chose not to become involved in the controversy that such a major ad campaign could entail.”

Jim Wallis, explaining why Sojourners rejected an ad from the gay rights group Believe Out Loud. The decision was severely criticized by many on the Left.

Sojourners

“To the extent that the alleged statements yet convey any defamatory meaning, it is a pronouncement of the moral judgment of a pastor upon the conduct of a church member.”

Judge Jack M. Battaglia of New York, dismissing a defamation lawsuit brought by a woman against her pastor. The pastor had called the woman a “whore” for renting a room to his daughter and a married man with whom she was living.

Religion Clause

9 Pastor latest Christian to be kidnapped

MEXICO Suspected drug traffickers kidnapped the pastor of a 500-person church in the middle of a Sunday worship service. Josué Ramírez Santiago, pastor of Christian Center El Shaddai in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán, was kidnapped by several masked men and held for a ransom of 20 million pesos (\$1.7 million). The director of the National Fraternity of Evangelical Churches said 100 Mexican clergy have been kidnapped in the past few years. Christians in the region are often kidnapping targets because of their support for alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs.

10 Tribals arrested for converting

INDIA Twelve people were arrested in Orissa state for converting to Christianity without first notifying police. Officials say the converts violated an Orissa law banning “forced” conversions, requiring potential converts to establish their motives with the authorities. The Global Council of Indian Christians accused police of intimidating Christians from tribal backgrounds. Tribal groups in India often receive affirmative-action benefits, which members can lose if they convert to Christianity. Six Indian states have laws restricting conversion.

11 Baptists debate university leadership

The Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) has expressed “deep disappointment” at Baylor University’s decision to allow 25 percent of its board of regents to be non-Baptists. Houston Baptist University’s request to add non-Baptists to its board of trustees was rejected at the BGCT’s annual meeting, but school trustees approved the change in March. A majority of students at both schools,

which receive millions of dollars from the BGCT, are non-Baptists.

12 Creationism banned from free schools

UNITED KINGDOM New free schools with less government involvement in curriculum choice cannot teach creationism in science classes, according to the British Department for Education. Creationism is “at odds with scientific fact,” Education Secretary Michael Gove said, and Gove will consider applications for schools that want to teach creation in other disciplines on a case-by-case basis. Teachers at the schools do not need formal teaching certification. Groups like the Everyday Champions Church and the Christian Schools Trust have applied to start schools.

13 District bans Christian groups

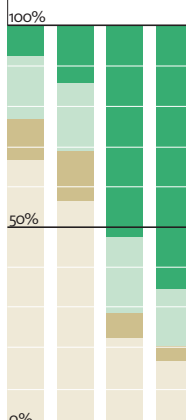
INDONESIA The administration of the Aceh Jaya district barred four aid organizations in May, responding to complaints that they were proselytizing local Muslims. The groups were doing relief work in the province, which had suffered considerably in the 2004 South-east Asian tsunami. At least two of the groups, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and a local affiliate of Baptist World Aid Australia, have clear ties to Christian denominations. All four deny conducting any missionary efforts.

14 Sickness spikes Spring Arbor commencement

Spring Arbor University in south Michigan postponed its May 14 commencement for a week after more than 170 students were found to have contracted “sickness consistent with the Norovirus or Noro-like virus.” The highly contagious digestive illness is responsible for “more than 50 percent of food-borne disease outbreaks,” according to the Centers for Disease Control.

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Congressional Budget Office



CHURCH LIFE

Multi-Site Goes Interstate

Megachurches expand across state lines.

By Bob Smietana

Mars Hill Church is coming to town. Pastor Mark Driscoll's megachurch recently announced plans to expand into Portland, Oregon, and Orange County, California, using multi-site campuses that feature live bands and a sermon piped in from the main campus in Seattle.

The move is part of a trend among megachurches to extend their brand of church to new communities, in hopes of reaching unchurched people with the gospel. But critics fear the out-of-state campuses turn churches into franchises like McDonald's or Starbucks.

The reason for the new campuses is simple, according to the Mars Hill website.

"Oregon needs Jesus Christ," claims the introduction of the new location. "The city of Portland is known for many things, but the gospel of Jesus is nowhere on the list."

Bob Hyatt, pastor of the Evergreen

Community in Portland, agrees that people in his city need to hear about Jesus.

But he has some doubts about Mars Hill's method, which seems to him more like corporate expansion than church planting. "If you are a church planter in Portland, it's a bit like reading the notice that Wal-Mart is coming and you are the mom-and-pop store," he said.

Hyatt is also concerned about the long-term health of out-of-state campuses, which he says are dependent on having a celebrity pastor for their survival. "It's not just an extreme example of the church-celebrity model," he said. "It's complete capitulation. It's enshrining that into the DNA of the church."

Mars Hill isn't the only megachurch to cross state lines.

LifeChurch.tv, based in Edmond, Oklahoma, has 14 campuses in five states. Seacoast Church, near Charleston, South Carolina, has 13 locations in three states. Bethel

Border Crossing: Multi-site churches are taking their successful campus model to other states, raising concerns among some existing church plants.

World Outreach Center in Brentwood, Tennessee, has started campuses in Phoenix and Dallas.

Not all of the out-of-state campuses have been successful.

LifeChurch.tv started campuses in the Phoenix suburbs of Mesa and Gilbert back in 2005. Those campuses are no longer listed as active on the church's website.

"The biggest thing we've learned is the importance of adapting what we do to the specific needs of the community and size of the campus," said Bobby Gruenewald, innovation leader at LifeChurch.tv.

Jeff Kinney, regional pastor for Seacoast, agrees. He said that a megachurch's brand name alone doesn't guarantee success for an out-of-state campus.

Kinney said that local and distant campuses operate differently. Those close by draw people who are already familiar with Seacoast. In some ways, they serve as high-quality overflow rooms; the main job of the campus pastor is to duplicate the experience of the main campus.

Distant campuses, like the one in Asheville, North Carolina, are more like church plants. That's because a church's brand name can have limited appeal.

"We thought going to Asheville—we'd put a sign on the marquee and people would show up," Kinney said.

That didn't happen. Instead, that campus draws people who didn't know anything about Seacoast. "These guys function more as entrepreneurial pastors," he said.

Bethel has tried a hybrid approach to its out-of-state campuses. All of its locations have a live preacher, while administrative tasks such as payroll and accounting are done from its central office.

Pastor Rice Broocks said that more local congregations of all kinds—independent churches, denominational churches, and multi-site campuses—are needed. "The more options you have, the more chances there are to reach people." ☩

GO FIGURE Ethics

23%
Americans who say the state of moral values in the country is "excellent" or "good."

15%
Americans who said this a year ago. Similarly, the percentage who said the state of moral values is "poor" dropped from 45% to 38%.

Gallup

The Votes Are In

Renewal groups strategize after PC(USA) drops celibacy for gay clergy.

By Bobby Ross Jr.

To Ronald W. Scates, senior pastor of the 4,800-member Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas, the future of his denomination looks chaotic.

A majority of the 173 presbyteries within the Presbyterian Church (USA) have voted to remove from the group's constitution an ordination requirement of "fidelity in the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness."

"It is shattering what little unity was left," said Scates. "You will probably see a lot of silent hemorrhaging of people out of our churches."

Victor Pentz, senior pastor of the 9,000-member Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, is one of seven pastors organizing the Presbyterian Fellowship, envisioned as a subset of PC(USA) churches with a common theological statement and ordination standards.

"We are viewing the experience of the Episcopal Church over recent years—lawsuits, ruptures in the global communion, and public conflict—as a cautionary tale we hope to avoid as much as we can," he said.

Carmen Fowler LaBerge, president of the Presbyterian Lay Committee, expects traditional congregations will respond in four ways:

- Stay in the denomination and avoid conflict by becoming more congregationally focused.
- Leave to join other denominations, facing legal battles over property and assets.
- Create "shadow presbyteries" to serve those who lack the majority votes to leave or the legal authority to assert control over property.
- Stay and fight.

Already, more than 100 congregations have left the PC(USA) via a bridge built by the New Wineskins Association of Churches to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Other churches have departed for other denominations.

Such defections may have played a role in the change on ordination standards. Just two years ago, presbyteries rejected a similar proposal.

"Many of the presbytery votes were lost by extremely small margins—at least 10 presbyteries lost the vote by five or fewer votes," said Terry Schlossberg, a leader with the Presbyterian Coalition. "Churches that transferred or didn't show up to vote without a doubt contributed to the outcome."

But LaBerge disagrees: "In a denomination that claims . . . 10,000 congregations, it is silly to say that the departure of just over 100 could swing the vote so far so fast."

For his part, Scates said he's content to let God lead his congregation's path. "I believe God has called some people to leave and some people to stay," he said. "Myself, I have not been released by Christ to go. He's telling me right now, 'You're to stay and be a biblically orthodox witness amidst this chaos.'" ☩

CHURCH-STATE

Ministerial Murkiness

Court to weigh whether fired teacher is a religious employee. By Ken Walker

A dispute that pits the principle of church autonomy against an unfair firing claim is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court.

At issue is whether an elementary school operated by a Missouri Synod Lutheran church in Michigan was justified in dismissing a teacher attempting to return to work after a disability leave related to narcolepsy. She filed a claim with the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission, alleging a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Though a decision may be an entire year away, churches are keeping a close eye on the case. The turning point is whether the teacher can be considered a ministerial employee, since she led prayer, devotions, and religion studies. If so, the church, Hosanna-Tabor, would be free to dismiss the teacher under the "ministerial exception" of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Rick Garnett, associate dean of the University of Notre Dame Law School, considers this the most significant religious freedom case in 20 years. He says a ruling against the school would narrow the existing exception too far, allowing courts to interfere with religious employment decisions. One in the school's favor would affirm the religious freedoms granted to institutions.

Garnett expects the court to affirm the existing exception. "What's harder to predict is the scope of that exception, or the test or standard the court will propose to lower courts," he said.

However, the legal counsel for the Assemblies of God sees *Hosanna-Tabor v. EEOC* as having less significance. Richard Hammar said the challenge will be to clarify how the law applies to non-pastoral employees who perform religious functions.

"It could be of major significance if the court limits the ministerial exception [to] ordained pastors performing pastoral duties, but I do not foresee this happening," he said.

Stanley Carlson-Thies, president of the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance, said the implications extend to free speech concerns.

"There are big freedom issues which we have to be careful not to undermine because of sympathy or lack of sympathy for a particular person involved in a particular case," he said, acknowledging the teacher may ultimately win in the court of

[continued on 14]

PASSAGES



Named
Scott Macdonald

As CEO of Zondervan, on May 4. He was general manager of the publisher's church management software unit, The City.



Sworn In
Suzan Johnson Cook

As U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, on May 16. The position had been vacant for more than two years.



Named
Jerry Rankin

As director of the Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies at Columbia International University, on May 6. The former International Mission Board president replaces Warren Larson, who will retire in 2012.

Briefing [from 13]

public opinion. "This is one of the challenges we face, particularly when many people in society will find it easy to sympathize with the employee." +

DENOMINATIONS FINLAND

Youth Movement

Young Lutherans start pushing for church renewal. By Ruth Moon

While recent elections solidify liberal leadership in Finland's state church, young conservative Lutherans are fighting to survive.

Last September, Helsinki's Irja Askola became the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (FELC)'s first female bishop. In March of 2010, Kari Mäkinen defeated his anti-gay-marriage opponent for archbishop by 11 votes out of 1,175.

In October, a televised debate over homosexuality on the national broadcast station spurred 40,000 people to leave the FELC. This past March, Lutheran youth magazine *Nuotta* created a firestorm by posting

a YouTube video of a girl describing her decision to leave a lesbian lifestyle after converting to Christianity.

The video prompted the FELC to recommend that funding be cut from two conservative youth ministries that publish *Nuotta*, said Timo Keskitalo, chairman of the Evangelical Alliance in Finland. Most Christian organizations are legally separate from the FELC, which comprises 78 percent of Finland's 5.3 million people, but operate under it. Local church councils can cut financial support to such groups and stop hosting their events.

The controversies shocked Finns, said Hannu Nyman, a pastor with Logos Ministries of Finland, which partners with Campus Crusade for Christ. "The division between conservatives and liberals in the church became more evident," he said.

"Committed Christians have been taken by surprise at the strong liberal front among [FELC] leadership."

The FELC has taken steps to marginalize conservative youth, Keskitalo said. In late April, the Ministry of Education announced it would remove youth training accreditation from the Finnish Bible Institute, which supported the *Nuotta* video. Bishops refuse to ordain

DISCUSSION STARTER Politics

As the 2012 presidential race gathers steam, probes into candidates' personal histories have raised questions about how much a candidate's marital life should influence the decision of Christian voters.

young ministers who do not support women's ordination, he said.

As a result, a growing number of independent congregations contain young families who are still members of the FELC but do not feel at home in FELC congregations.

"Older generations seem not to dare to see the fundamental changes . . . They are hoping that things will turn better," Keskitalo said. "Young people are running out of patience. The church is trying to silence and push out the young believers."

"The church that tries to make itself meaningful by suppressing [the] openly religious, even mystical, side of Christian faith is bound to lose," said Päivi Räsänen, leader of the Christian Democrats party. "[That's] the real reason for declining membership rates."

Though some frustrated Finns, such as Markku Koivisto of the Nokia Missio movement, are forming breakaway denominations, Keskitalo hopes to see renewal within the FELC.

"It is very difficult to surrender the church to those who have stolen the church. It is not easy to let go," he said. "Generations have been building this church sacrificially. Why should we give it up?" +

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should marital infidelity disqualify candidates from office?

YES

"Extramarital affairs never just happen. The adulterer always searches for a key and walks through the door with forethought. Adulterers tend to be people driven more by their appetites than an appreciation for consequences. Votes for such people are ill-advised."

GLENN T. STANTON, director of family formation studies, Focus on the Family

"Can you trust a man who lies to his wife or breaks his marital oath? I don't think so. Public officers take an oath to uphold the Constitution, to uphold the law of the land. Well, when you get married, you take an oath; in adultery, you've broken that oath."

RICHARD LAND, president, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

"Marital infidelity is a tragic example of broken trust and worthy of voter scrutiny. We are all sinners and break promises. No voter, marriage, or candidate is perfect. But the office of President is a high calling worthy only of our finest and most trustworthy public servants."

AMY BLACK, professor, Wheaton College

"Infidelity certainly concerns me as a voter. But we ought not to reduce a person's identity to past infidelities. This reflects an assumption that just because someone is a Christian and faithful in marriage, they are qualified for public office."

WYNDY CORBIN REUSCHLING, author, *Reviving Evangelical Ethics*

"The longer ago the incident and the fuller the reconciliation between parties, the less the issue should matter to voters; repeated and unapologetic marital infidelity would be just cause for more concern. It is risky to trust a serial vow-breaker with such an important office."

DOUGLAS KOOPMAN, professor, Calvin College

"It's one thing if a candidate committed adultery once long ago and has since led an exemplary life. It's another if infidelity is rampant and recent. And the Bible warns about the dangers of pride and self-righteousness more often than it does infidelity."

PETER WEHNER, senior fellow, Ethics and Public Policy Center

NO

Two Kingdoms: In Damascus, a Christian shop displays its support for church and state. Many Syrian Christians are part of a prosperous middle class, involved in trade and commerce.



HUMAN RIGHTS SYRIA

Syria's Christians Back Assad

Church leaders say the embattled president should stay on. By Dale Gavlak in Amman, Jordan, and Beirut, Lebanon, and Timothy C. Morgan

This spring, many Syrian Christians rejected protestors' demands for embattled president Bashar al-Assad to resign. But Christians did broadly endorse democratic reforms that would bring an end to dictatorship.

"We do not support those who are calling for the fall of the regime, simply because we are [for] the process of reform and changes," said Yohanna Ibrahim, Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo, at a religious summit in France.

In late May, International Christian Concern, an evangelical ministry to the persecuted church, released to *Christianity*

Today an anonymous open letter from a "trusted Syrian source" that explains why many Syrian Christians support Assad's regime. The two-page letter calls for help from the larger Christian community. It says in part:

- "Christian service has flourished remarkably in Syria. We regard Syria as a model Arab country when it comes to freedom of worship."
- Radical Muslim groups are "responsible for the disturbance" in the country. "Christians are the first to be persecuted when we talk about governmental change."
- "We are seeking [Christians'] help to prevent what happened in Iraq and Egypt from happening in Syria. Christian service

in Syria is in danger now."

An influential Syrian seminary educator who asked not to be named told *CT* that Syrian Christians are very aware of what happened to Christians in Iraq, including the estimated 500,000 Christian refugees who fled to Syria during the Iraq war.

"[Syrian Christians] are unwilling to see themselves becoming refugees in Lebanon," said the educator, who is currently in the United States to teach. He told *CT* that a majority of Syria's 1.4 million Christians want the Assad government to speed up reforms. "In a nutshell, Syrian Christians desire to have both—the regime and the reforms."

Syrian Christians see their nation as a Middle East oasis of religious freedom



Global Protests: In Paris, demonstrators call on President Assad to leave office.

compared with Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Open Doors ranks Syria as 38th on its 2011 list of the world's worst persecutors of Christians. The secular government allows churches to preach, teach, evangelize, publish religious materials, and build sanctuaries. Christians have access to education and employment.

TOPPLE THE REGIME

Yet Syria has also been long known for supporting international terrorism and brutally repressing internal political opposition. Many experts link Syria to the 2005 political assassination of the prime minister of Lebanon. Syria is a longtime supporter of Hezbollah, the Muslim terrorist group active in Lebanon.

In mid-March, public support for regime change was ignited when a group of schoolboys sprayed graffiti on walls in Dara'a, a dirt-poor town near Syria's southern border with Jordan. Their words in Arabic—"The people want to topple the regime"—echoed other uprisings in the Arab world.

In Tunisia and Egypt, ordinary people witnessed what they had thought was impossible—the toppling of established authoritarian leaders—signaling what has been dubbed the "Arab Spring" or "Arab Awakening."

Police arrested the schoolboys and beat

them, triggering public outrage throughout Dara'a's dusty streets and in neighboring communities. President Assad responded by firing the area's governor and security chief, but that did nothing to stop the protests. Huge numbers have turned out in unprecedented street protests in the tightly controlled country. Demanding economic reforms, an end to corruption, and greater political freedom, Syrians expressed rage over the military and security forces' violent response to the actions of protestors. About 1,000 have died.

The Assad regime blamed the unrest on armed thugs and foreign agitators. Syrian Christians blamed violent factions of two banned groups: the Salafi Sunni Islamic sect and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Recently, the United States and the European Union slapped sanctions on Assad and six other top aides for human-rights abuses. The United States has considered Syria the key to resolving the long-simmering Arab-Israeli conflict. This is the first time international leaders have held Assad personally accountable for the actions of his state security forces.

In a major foreign policy address on the Middle East, President Obama also told Assad that he must either lead his country through a democratic transition or "get out of the way." Obama accused the regime of choosing the "path of murder and the mass arrests of its citizens" and praised

the Syrian people for their courage amid the bloody crackdown.

Renowned Sorbonne professor Burhan Ghalibou argues that over the years, hundreds of Syrian intellectuals have been forbidden to travel, 150,000 have gone into exile, and 17,000 have either disappeared or been imprisoned for expressing their opinions in Syria.

Getting an accurate picture of what is taking place inside Syria has been nearly impossible. Damascus has banned access to foreign journalists, and many Syrians are fright-

ened to speak over the phone or communicate by e-mail.

A GROWING MINORITY

How are Syria's Christians handling the turmoil? "Naturally minorities, like Christians here, are [insecure] because we become more vulnerable in such times," said "Sami," an evangelical Christian from the Orthodox tradition who asked to remain anonymous.

"What Christians are experiencing is the same as other people. But for some, the priorities are different," he said. "Security becomes paramount."

Syria's ancient Christian community dates to the first century. Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus. As chronicled in the Book of Acts, new believers in the ancient Syrian city of Antioch organized the first church outside Jerusalem. Today, Christians make up 6 to 10 percent of the country's 23 million people.

The majority of Syrians are Sunni Muslims. But Assad and others who hold key government and military positions hail from the minority Alawite community, a mystical, syncretistic sect of Shiite Islam.

Assad's father, Hafez al-Assad, ruled Syria for 29 years with an iron grip but gave significant protection to Christians. In some ways, the situation in Syria mirrors that of Iraqi Christians during the reign of deposed leader Saddam Hussein.

Both countries have been secular regimes of different branches of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, which had Christian involvement from its beginning in the 1950s. While the regime has kept a tight lid on Muslim fundamentalists who seek its overthrow, Christians and other religious minorities received relative freedom to practice their faith.

Christianity in Syria is expanding. The nation's population is growing at 2.5 percent per year, while *Operation World* estimates the Christian population is growing at 5 percent per year.

In the central Syrian village of Qara, Mother Superior Agnès-Mariam of the Cross heads the St. Jacob's monastic community; she has been alarmed by recent events. But she and other local Christian leaders do not blame the government for initiating the violence.

Sister Agnès and others argue that the regime has clamped down not on peaceful protesters but on armed Muslim fundamentalists and foreign instigators who have attacked security forces.

They also had their lives threatened."

According to reliable reports, during a late-April public protest Muslims in Duma, a suburb of Damascus, allegedly shouted, "Alawites to the grave and Christians to Beirut." Sister Agnès said other witnesses claimed that Sunni Muslims told Christians near the city of Homs, "Be prepared, your turn is coming."

Most Syrian Christians are Orthodox and have established congregations around the world. North America is home to dozens of Antiochian and Syrian Orthodox churches, and their leaders are closely monitoring the situation inside Syria.

The Syrian seminary educator maintains contact with family and friends back home. He is responsible for providing Christian leadership training in the Middle East and Central Europe.

"In the beginning, I thought it may have been government propaganda about fundamentalist involvement in the protests," he said. "Speaking with those who have witnessed events, I realize that there have been armed, violent demonstrators in

in jail, according to New York-based watchdog Human Rights Watch. Talli was involved in the court defense of several political prisoners.

Human Rights Watch accused Syria of waging a "war against ordinary Syrians." It urged the country to stop what it called a "campaign of arrests and intimidation."

Regardless of who is behind the armed attacks, Syrians also question how well the central government can control and discipline its security apparatus. Also in question is the security forces' willingness to provide a truthful account to political leadership of what's taking place on the ground.

The International Crisis Group, based in Brussels, said, "Even at the best of times, large segments of [Syria's] security services have been plagued by sectarianism, corruption, incompetence and a sense of wholesale impunity."

A Syrian pastor who asked to remain anonymous said Christians have largely stayed out of the protests even though a significant number support the demands for reform. "We want to see the government make good on its promise to make serious reforms and to tackle corruption without delay," he said. "Losing time is in no one's favor."

Sami, the Orthodox evangelical believer, characterized the current period as "the gathering of the storm." He said it is premature to talk about removing the Assad government. Meanwhile, Syrian church leaders said they have called on their congregations to fast every week from Wednesday to Saturday.

Many believe the violence in Syria will get much worse before it gets better. In recent days, allegations of state torture have surfaced as police released for burial the battered corpse of a 13-year-old boy arrested in April.

"Only a small portion of the Syrian population has so far broken through the fear barrier," Sami said. Another Syrian man said in a BBC interview that the Assad regime wants "everybody to be afraid. . . . We are being intimidated by our own government." 

Dale Gavlak is a journalist based in Amman, Jordan. **Timothy C. Morgan** is CT's deputy managing editor.

'We want to see the government make good on its promise to make serious reforms and to tackle corruption without delay.'

~ Syrian church pastor

"The Christian community is very concerned about what is happening. The vast majority do not consider it to be the 'Arab Spring,'" she said. "Although they sound like legitimate protests to give more freedom and democracy, in reality they are a camouflage to bring back fundamentalist groups." (In 1982, the elder Assad massacred members of the Brotherhood and other Sunni Muslims in the western town of Hama, killing an estimated 20,000 people.)

Sister Agnès said many Syrian Christians look aghast at the attacks on their co-religionists in Egypt after its revolution in February, and fear the same is heading their way. "In some cases, protests very quickly took on a confessional overtone," Sister Agnès said. "Christians were obliged to join the demonstrations or leave their homes.

addition to peaceful and legitimate protesters in the streets." He said several church leaders inside Syria tell him they see signs of reform and that they "should give it some time to see something in practice."

GATHERING STORM

Yet a few other Syrian Christians told CT they question the Assad government's ability to reform. They point to the recent detention of a Christian human-rights attorney as just one example of the government's resistance to change.

Catherine al-Talli, 32, is neither a Muslim fundamentalist nor an armed terrorist. At a security checkpoint on May 13, police forced the defense attorney off a minibus and took her into custody. Although police released her days later, thousands of political prisoners remain

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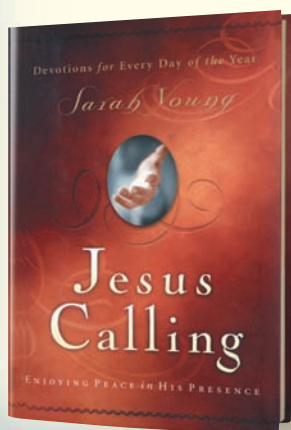
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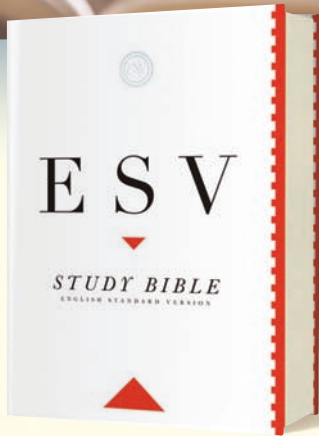
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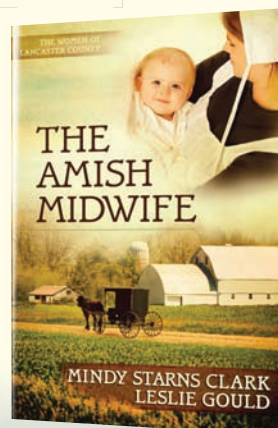


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refOCUSing *on the* Family

Like many evangelical organizations that were built in the past 50 years, Focus on the Family is attempting to thrive—and survive—past its founder.

By Sarah Pulliam Bailey



A

CHUNKY SILVER BRACELET flopped around the Ichthus tattoo on Yvette Maher's wrist as she told me about her work at Focus on the Family.

Initially, the senior communications specialist said, she covered up the tattoo, inked right after a change in the company's dress code. The shift meant that

men could go without a tie, women didn't have to wear dresses or skirts and pantyhose, and employees could display tattoos. Eventually, the tattoo came out, as did her story: She and her two daughters had gotten the tattoos to show solidarity before an intervention for her two nephews, who were addicted to black tar heroin.

At the time, founder James Dobson was slowly moving out of his leadership role. Less than two weeks after Focus's board meeting where Dobson was asked to resign, his new radio program, *Family Talk*, was incorporated in California. This raised questions about whether constituents would remain more loyal to Focus on the Family or its dynamic founder.

Even though Jim Daly had taken the reins as president of Focus



New Boss: Jim Daly began at Focus in 1989 as an assistant to James Dobson. By 1997 he was vice president of the international division. Now he's president and host of the popular radio program.

in 2005, employees said that the new dress code in 2009 was one of the first internal signs that Focus would have a new atmosphere.

"It may not seem like a big deal to a lot of people, but to a lot of the employees, it was like, 'Wow that's new,'" says Maher, who sported a choppy, gelled haircut and dress pants. "God bless Jim Daly. He has launched us into the 21st century." She pauses to reconsider. "Or the 19th."

CHOOSING LOYALTIES

Daly, the youngest of five children born to alcoholic parents, entered the foster care system after his stepfather walked out during his mother's funeral, a story Daly tells in his 2007 book, *Finding Home:*

An Imperfect Path to Faith and Family. After he and three of his siblings moved into a foster home of 10, his foster father accused Daly of trying to kill him. His biological father, who had left the family when Daly was 5, returned to take the boy from his increasingly mentally ill foster father. After a year of living together, Daly's father fell back into alcohol abuse and committed suicide.

"I come from a broken childhood. That's what gives me the energy. I don't have a Ph.D. in it, but I guess it's the school of hard knocks," Daly says, wearing a striped blue shirt and grey suit but no tie. "I have a driving passion to try to get every child a better home and to be an advocate for that child who has no home."

At 17, after living with his brothers, Daly found his own place—a

'I come from a broken childhood. That's what gives me the energy. I don't have a Ph.D. in it, but I guess it's the school of hard knocks.'

~ Jim Daly

trailer. He began pursuing his bachelor's degree and an MBA. He married at 25, and he and his wife, Jean, now have two boys, Troy, 10, and Trent, 8. They attend Red Rock Church, which is connected to Andy Stanley's Atlanta-based North Point Community Church. Daly was working at International Paper when he joined Focus in 1989 at one-third his previous six-figure salary at the Fortune 500 company.

Focus has made cuts of its own in the years since Daly became its president and chief executive officer. Last August, Focus slashed its staff to about 700, about half of its peak of 1,400 in 2002. It also reduced its 2010–2011 budget to \$105 million after missing the previous year's \$137 million income budget by \$23 million. And that 2009–2010 budget was already more than 14 percent lower than its 2008–2009 budget of \$160 million. (Income actually increased during Daly's first years as president, from about \$149 million in 2006 to \$152 million in 2008.) Listenership of Focus on the Family's flagship radio program dropped about 5 percent between winter and the following spring in 2010, according to the latest numbers from the Arbitron research firm.

Exactly how much of the financial decline was due to changes at Focus, and how much was due to the recession and other changes in the broader culture, is hard to determine. But there's little doubt that the loss of the symbiotic relationship between Focus on the Family and Dobson had an effect. Focus benefited from having Dobson at the helm, while the popular author and radio host promoted his materials on his radio show and to the ministry's constituents. For instance, *Bringing Up Boys* brought more than \$3 million to the ministry, according to Dobson's 2005 authorized biography, *Family Man*.

Dobson never quite rose to the level of name recognition achieved by Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell. Surveys from different polling groups regularly showed that only about 1 in 3 Americans could identify him (half the percentage that could identify Robertson and Falwell). But Dobson vastly outpolled every other Christian figure,

both in name recognition and favorability. Americans who could identify him liked him by a 2-to-1 margin (or nearly 4-to-1, according to Barna Research).

At work, Dobson was more than a celebrity. On his final day at Focus in February 2010, many employees stood in line for four hours to speak with Dobson and his wife. And while most of them carry business cards with a new logo, some still hand out cards that proudly proclaim, "Founded by James C. Dobson, Ph.D."

A CULTURAL—NOT POLITICAL—MOMENT

America is still a celebrity culture, especially in its media. And Focus on the Family is still celebrity-friendly. But the *Washington Post* and *USA Today* articles framed in the main lobby are not about a Focus executive. They're all about a quarterback.

Just before Dobson's departure, Daly made one of his first media splashes by buying time for a widely discussed 2010 Super Bowl commercial featuring Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow.

For many employees, the move was indicative of the new tone Daly is working to create. Dobson had made headlines mostly for his political involvement. For example, during the 2008 presidential campaign, he said he would not vote for John McCain "under any circumstances," then changed his mind after McCain chose Sarah Palin as his running mate.

Daly, however, was bringing attention to Focus during a national sporting event, highlighting someone with no direct ties to the ministry, with a fairly noncontroversial message to "celebrate family, celebrate life."

The money for the ad came from an external donation and grew Focus's website traffic by a reported 41 percent in January and February 2010.

THE FACEBOOK FACTOR

Many evangelical organizations founded in the past half-century have wrestled with defining themselves after the tenure of their famous entrepreneurial founders: the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Oral Roberts University, Bill Bright's Campus Crusade for Christ,



Strategy Session: Focus vp Gary Schneeberger (left), senior writer Paul Batura (center), and millennial relations director Esther Fleece meet weekly to plan Daly's blogs, newsletters, media appearances, and Facebook activity.

and Falwell's Liberty University, to name a few.

But Focus is not just another famous parachurch ministry experiencing leadership change. It's also an advice-driven, media-driven ministry in an industry that has seen massive upheaval, with an audience undergoing tremendous cultural shifts.

"People have only so much time and money and hours in a day to listen to the radio," says Dean Merrill, a former publishing executive who worked at Focus from 1989 to 1996. And today's parents "are not nearly as attuned to expert advice from an authority" as parents in previous generations. "They're more likely to jump on Facebook and see, 'What do my friends think?' That's a cultural shift that's not working in [Focus's] favor. Focus has hit a perfect storm here. You walk



through the building, and there are whole sections that are ghost towns.”

The struggling economy forced the organization to cut programs. Daly has repeatedly stated that Focus cannot tackle every social problem that needs attention or take a stance on every issue. In 2009, the organization sold its Love Won Out conferences on homosexuality to Exodus Ministries. It also stopped publishing three teen magazines, *Brio*, *Brio and Beyond*, and *Breakaway* (which had a combined circulation of 200,000). Focus gave the magazine licenses to Ryan Dobson, saying he outbid the competition because he did not request the subscription fees. But in the year since Ryan joined his father in creating *Family Talk*, the small footprint that remained of the magazines faded. In April,

the websites disappeared altogether.

After moving on from niches like teen magazines, Focus will have to take stock of what it is and what it’s trying to accomplish, says Larry Eskridge, associate director of the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College. The more connected the generation, the more likely it is to find advice from a mishmash of outlets.

“It raises the question of whether you can ever again build entities this large in such a culture that’s so segmented and so individualized for communication and connecting,” he says. “I don’t think there’s any shortage of angst about marriage and child-raising. It’ll be interesting to see how they refocus—no pun intended—or how they re-conceive their mission.”

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Daly, who turns 50 this month, seems to be responding to the increasingly networked world by making the organization itself more cooperative.

Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), says he and Dobson would often speak at the same events, but they never met. Now, he says, there are informal conversations between Focus and the NAE more often than before. Anderson says he has seen a similar shift in interest from other evangelical leaders in partnering with Focus.

“What I’m most hearing now is friendship and a sense of collegiality, that we’re on the same page and going the same direction,” Anderson says. “There’s a sense of

transparency, that organizations can relate to Focus, introduce their agenda, and not just adopt an agenda that's already been established."

Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, agrees. He notes that Focus on the Family has long had a Hispanic ministry, but has significantly stepped up its efforts to network with leaders in the evangelical Hispanic community.

"The focus of its previous endeavor was translating and disseminating Focus materials in Spanish," says Rodriguez, who has discussed partnerships with Daly. "There was no engagement component."

Still, Focus has not taken a stance on an issue near and dear to many Hispanic evangelicals: immigration. Daly says that the issue is a family issue because families could be separated, but emphasizes that Focus is not an expert on the topic.

Rodriguez admits that's a reality for many evangelical organizations.

"My speculation would be that any evangelical organization that has a predominantly white evangelical donor base risks losing a revenue stream if these organizations take a

'There's a sense of transparency, that organizations can relate to Focus, introduce their agenda, and not just adopt an agenda that's already been established.' ~ Leith Anderson

definitive stance on an issue as polarizing as immigration reform."

Dobson himself was not known for shying away from polarizing political issues. He participated in networks like the Arlington Group (a coalition of politically conservative Christian groups that, notably, he did not found but for which he served as national chairman), and clashed with many evangelical leaders on policy, hiring decisions, and other issues. Famously among them was Wayne Pederson, who resigned as president of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) under pressure in 2002 when Dobson took personally comments Pederson made that Christian broadcasters should focus more on preaching the gospel than on political matters.

"Certainly it hurt deeply to be maligned so publicly," Pederson says. "That was interesting and that was nasty, but you move on." After Pederson became president of

the media and health-care ministry HCJB Global in Colorado Springs in 2008, Dobson invited Pederson to lunch, though he did not mention the NRB events. (Through an assistant, Dobson repeatedly declined interview requests for this article.)

Pederson has met with Daly a few times since the transition.

"He wants to take Focus back to the original mission of helping marriages and family, distancing themselves from the more political emphasis that they had under Dr. Dobson," says Pederson, who has spoken with Daly several times. "The stations that carry Focus have noticed that and appreciate the change."

A POLITICAL DE-EMPHASIS

Daly does not address politics nearly as much as his predecessor, reflecting a return to the organization's original priorities of marriage and family advice. Of the 121 new radio

Family Talk, Family Business

Focus on the Family isn't the only Colorado Springs organization preparing for its future after James Dobson.

About seven miles from Focus on the Family, Ryan Dobson uses his iPad to prepare for his next radio recording in a mostly bare studio at *Family Talk*'s rented offices. His father's show carries a dynamic different from *Focus on the Family*, since he shares airtime with his son and LuAnne Crane, former senior producer at Focus.

Ryan says despite some rumors that he was unable to lead the organization because of a divorce in 2000, Focus never had plans to hand him the reins. Nor, he said, was *Family Talk* an attempt to punish Focus by competing head-to-head.

"The insinuation is that people are taking money away from Focus—that was true, we'd have millions of dollars," Ryan says. "We don't have \$30 million; we don't have \$2 [million]."

Much of the ministry's startup revenue, Ryan says, came from his parents' Christmas card list of about 300 people. And \$1 million of it came as a gift from Focus on the Family, a move that surprised many observers. In its remarks on the donation, Focus leaders noted that Dobson had never taken a salary from the ministry and had lived off the royalties from his books.

"Was it the easy thing?" Focus on the Family president Jim Daly says about donating during a recession. "No, but it was the right thing."

Does Daly see *Family Talk* as competition? "I don't think Christians like to talk in terms of competition," Daly answers. "He still wanted to speak on radio, and that's why he started *Family Talk*. I don't know all the reasons why he would continue at [75] to do that, but his public comments about that [were that] he felt invigorated."

Dobson's cousin and former pastor, H. B. London, spoke of the tension between family and work in the Focus legacy.

"With 310 million people in the U.S., it's obvious there need to be many ministries committed to helping families," says London, who retired from his position as vice president of Focus's ministry outreach/pastor ministries in June. "One more boat in the ocean is not going to matter to the other boats in the ocean. Friendly competition, if you want to call it that, is healthy for both sides. It makes you sharper."

London says he had not discussed *Family Talk* matters with his cousin while he was a Focus employee. "The only thing I've heard him say is that he feels like he's doing the best radio he's ever done," London says.

But it may not be the most successful. In an October 2010 newsletter,

programs in 2010, 55 percent of the programs were on marriage, family, and parenting, 24 percent were on spiritual growth, and 7 percent were on public policy, according to a 2010 internal survey. (Daly began hosting the daily program in March with Dobson's former co-host, John Fuller, and Juli Slattery, who replaces Dobson as the expert with a Ph.D.)

"We tend to shut down the ears of people to hear the gospel because they only see you in a political context or as a conservative," Daly says. "Christianity must transcend politics in order to change culture and politics."

Many Focus employees acknowledge the organization's shift in tone but not in policy.

For instance, earlier this year, Daly announced on Focus's show that it would sit down with pro-choice organizations to discuss how to decrease the number of abortions. A spokesman declined to say which organizations Focus is talking to, and said Focus would likely use the conversations to encourage the use of ultrasounds.

"The media is having a tough time figuring us out," says Tom Minnery, senior vice president of public policy for CitizenLink, Focus's legally independent political arm. "They say we're changing in tone and say, 'Aha! They're

in a Rick Warren or Joel Hunter cubbyhole.' Then we are active in the defense of traditional marriage, which is seen by the media as hateful and homophobic, so they scratch their heads and say, 'Wait, I thought they were changing their tone.'"

In May 2010, the organization rebranded Focus on the Family Action to CitizenLink to downplay the parent organization's political emphasis. And the editorial tone of CitizenLink has shifted in the past few years. For instance, Focus Action published an article just before the 2008 election that suggested that under an Obama administration, terrorists would strike four American cities, a nuclear bomb would hit Israel, and gay marriage would be legal in every state.

CitizenLink clearly displays antipathy for President Obama, but such dire prognostications are rare at Focus now, while Dobson continues to make them. "At stake are policies that should concern millions of Americans, including federal funding for abortions, amnesty for illegal aliens, open homosexuality in the military, further assaults on religious liberty, and universal health care legislation amounting to rationing and the denial of medical services for older

Americans," Dobson wrote in a *Family Talk* newsletter. "The possibility of 'death panels' looms before us."

The distinction may be lost on the public, however. Even though Dobson has left Focus, his name remains attached in many ways. For instance, as he endorsed candidates and made predictions about the 2010 midterm elections, media outlets regularly referred to him as founder of Focus on the Family, with no reference to *Family Talk*.

Meanwhile, Focus could pay a price for its shift in tone, says Nathaniel Klemp, who wrote his Princeton University dissertation, "The Morality of Spin," on the rhetoric of conservative Christian activists and organizations like Focus on the Family.

"As they're making a turn towards a less contentious, less polarizing rhetoric, they may not be able to create the same kind of outrage and passion," says Klemp, now professor of political theory at Pepperdine University. "They'll still be around, but I don't know if being a political player will continue."

The shift may have economic consequences as well. The independent political arm of Focus has encouraged people to donate to the organization. For instance, in

James Dobson acknowledged that *Family Talk*, which then employed 22 people, was dropped by 82 stations because it could not pay for airtime. That represents about 10 percent of its 800 stations.

During my chat with Ryan Dobson, his father walked into the radio studio and looked surprised to see me. He shook my hand warmly and said, "Give my regards to the folks at cr."

I was escorted out of the room, but invited to take a peek into James Dobson's office, grounded by leather furniture and accented with a decorative telescope. Cathedral-style glass windows offered a stunning view of Pikes Peak, while the Winston Churchill portrait that used to hang in his office at Focus hangs just outside his *Family Talk* office.

In contrast, several pieces of colorful art hung in Ryan Dobson's office; a gaming system sat under a flat-screen television, and a deer he shot stared at us from the wall. We walked through the hallways of *Family Talk*, where his father's silk hoods from honorary doctorates hung on the walls.

Ryan was ordained in 2007 by a Southern Baptist pastor and attends downtown Colorado Springs's First Presbyterian Church, whose pastor is at the forefront of evangelical renewal within the Presbyterian Church (USA). Although Ryan says he agrees with his Nazarene father on political philosophy and ethical issues like homosexuality, their styles differ.



Son of a Parenting Guru: Ryan Dobson's books have moved from promoting intolerance to encouraging social justice.

"I had my ears pierced for a bunch of years. I took them out because I got bored," says Ryan, who was adopted as an infant. "It had nothing to do with right or wrong, I thought that at 40 I don't want plugs."

Before my visit, I spoke with Ryan on the phone about his 2010 co-authored book, *Humanitarian Jesus: Social Justice and the Cross*.

"Most people don't think 'Dobson' and think humanitarianism and helping the homeless or clean water or food or shelter or Haiti or Katrina, any of those things," he says. "The Dobson name has a stigma attached to it, in all honesty, perpetuated by the media."

Ryan says he did not know in advance that his dad would want to start his own show after leaving Focus.

"If he'd have been one of those guys who had a five-year plan, I don't think it would have been to leave Focus, empty a retirement account, to put all of the eggs in our basket into this thing and hope it flies," he says about his father.

As we talked about Focus, he pointed out its budget decline.

"Every time you think about Focus on the Family, pray for Jim Daly," Ryan says. "With the economy the way that it is, losing your number-one brand and trying to take over a radio show after not having done that many radio programs—that guy's got the toughest job in the world." —Sarah Pulliam Bailey

editorial position at *Citizen* magazine, Tom Hess produced a \$300,000 surplus in 2008–2009. (Hess left the organization in 2009 after his wife filed for divorce. He declined to interview with *CT* due to the terms of his severance.) But CitizenLink's July webcast included a plea for funds, with hosts noting that they had not previously needed to use the platform for fundraising.

Even non-Christians have noted a shift at Focus. "Friendly atheist" blogger Hemant Mehta wrote about how surprised he was when he attended a Wheaton College event where Daly spoke and did not mention gay marriage. A Focus spokesperson e-mailed Mehta and said he appreciated the feedback. "I wasn't expecting that type of outreach." Still, Mehta says, he and his friends see Focus on the Family as an obstacle when it comes to issues like same-sex marriage.

"I assure you no gay people are saying, 'Focus on the Family is a great organization now that James Dobson has left!'" Mehta says. "The group may have a more affable public face in Jim Daly, but its positions haven't changed, so Daly has a very uphill battle ahead of him if he wants to build bridges to the non-Christian community."

Daly believes the tension between gay rights and religious freedom is one of the biggest cultural issues facing Christians.

"The collision course between religious liberties and same-sex rights is right in front of us," says Daly, who will publish a book next year with Zondervan on Christian engagement in the public square. "The challenge will be, how do we respond, and can we respond in a way that always keeps the souls of those who oppose us at the forefront?"

Focus maintains a presence in Washington, D.C., but it is significantly quieter than other politically active organizations like Family Research Council (which Dobson and Focus launched and, for a time, operated). Focus hired Tim Goeglein, a White House aide under President George W. Bush charged with connecting with conservative leaders. But he gained the most attention by resigning in 2008 after admitting to writing columns that contained plagiarized passages.

"Tim is repentant, he's asked for forgiveness, and he's moved on," says Stuart Shepard, senior director of CitizenLink media. He noted that Focus's employee group includes recovering alcoholics and former prostitutes. "This is not a building of people



I don't think Focus on the Family needs to be personality-driven by anybody.'

~ Jim Daly

who have never sinned. We're in the redemption business."

Goeglein's job is not to make headlines, but he meets with movers and shakers in Washington. Few people realize, Shepard says, that Focus's political wing receives only about 5 percent of the overall budget.

NOT YOUR MOTHER'S FOCUS

Daly is also expanding into new areas. Between layoffs in 2009, the ministry hired Esther Fleece, an energetic 28-year-old, to spearhead engaging the millennial generation. She reports directly to Daly. CitizenLink, meanwhile, launched *Rising Voice* at the 2010 Conservative Political Action Conference as an effort to reach young adults on issues related to sex trafficking, poverty, and the environment.

In the past, Focus has engaged in what some call "Christmas Wars," asking consumers to consider whether stores use phrases like "Happy Holidays." Last year, however, *Rising Voice* asked consumers to consider organic or eco-friendly clothing and fair-trade products.

As this issue of *Christianity Today* goes to press, the ministry is scheduled to highlight the work of Blake Mycoskie, the founder of

TOMS, a company that donates shoes to an impoverished child for every pair sold.

"A year ago, they were like, 'Who's that?'" Fleece laughs. Now the company is working to become a TOMS international distributor in Africa. "We're making slow strides here."

In many ways, Focus represents a larger struggle in evangelicalism over political and cultural engagement and the issues it prioritizes.

"Many traditional evangelicals are struggling with, *What does evangelicalism mean?*" says Dale Buss, author of Dobson's biography. "They still care about the same issues and they still agitate politically. But do we keep going back to abortion and gay marriage or be more responsive on issues the millennial generation is interested in, like sex trafficking and other social justice issues?"

Apart from its public policy work, Focus emphasizes the 500 ultrasound machines it's placed in pregnancy centers and the 1,500 families in its adoption program. In June, Greg Smalley, son of marriage author and speaker Gary Smalley, became Focus's executive director of marriage. Marriage and family, Daly says, are what the organization was built to focus on.

Back in his office, Daly and I spoke about the souvenirs from trips to Africa that sit on his office shelves after we talked about other ministries that found success with personality-driven branding, such as Joyce Meyer Ministries and Oral Roberts University.

"Except organizations like World Vision or Compassion," Daly jumped in. "It's interesting—the more orthopraxy, the less personality. The more orthodoxy, the more personality. 'This is what I believe the Bible says.' It is kind of interesting that they tend to fall into those camps."

A plaque with the definition of orthopraxis sits on one of Daly's shelves: "Right doing; the complement of orthodoxy." Daly sets the tone and the pace. Focus may have become successful under Dobson, but Daly does not see himself as the driving force behind the ministry.

"I don't think Focus on the Family needs to be personality-driven by anybody," Daly says. "Mission-driven organizations, I think, have greater staying power."

AUDREY HANNAH BROOKS

Sarah Pulliam Bailey is online editor for *Christianity Today*.

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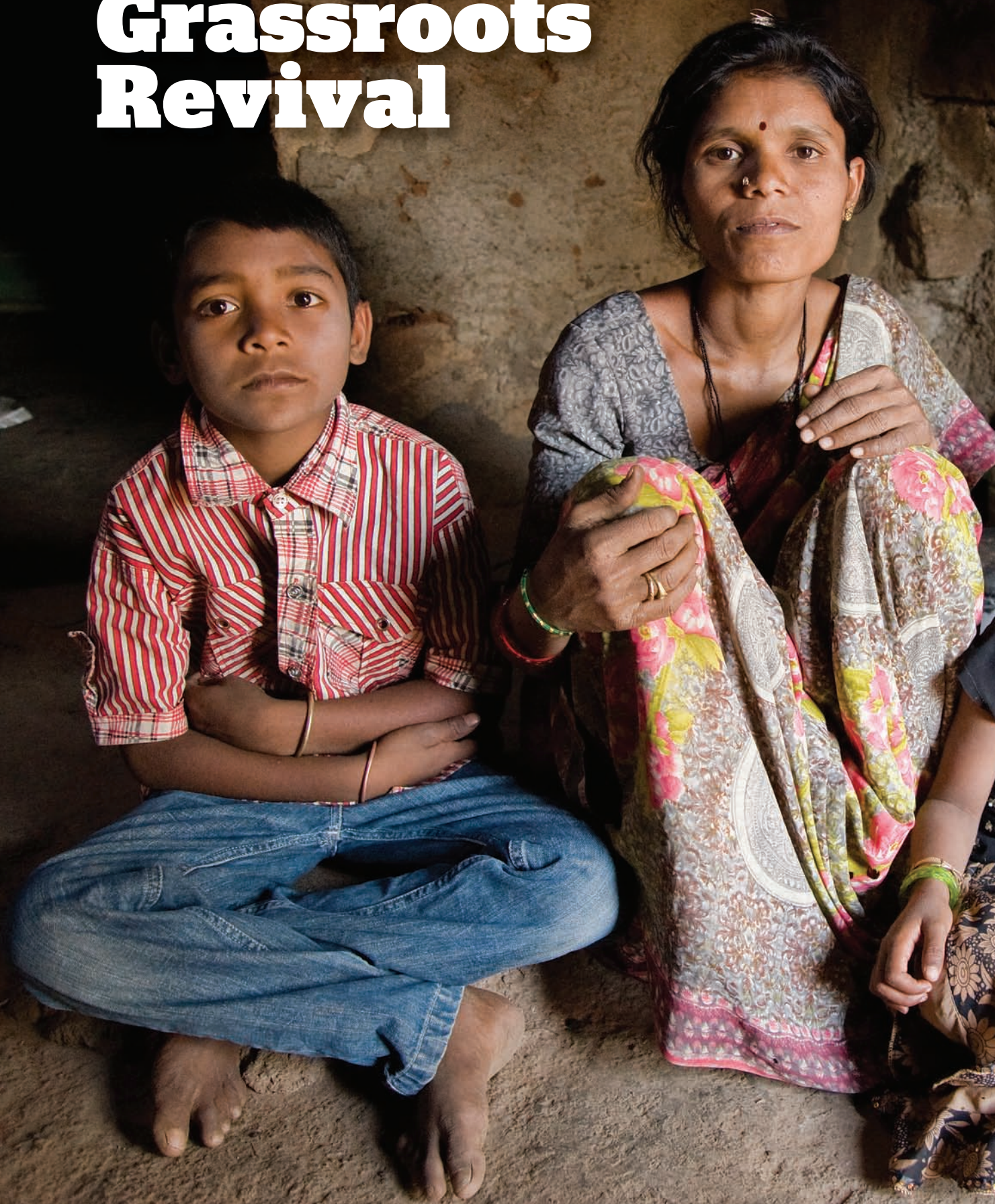
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India's Grassroots Revival





With its people turning to Christ in waves, India hosts more believers now than at any time in its 4,000-year history.

By Tim Stafford

Photos by Gary Gnidovic

New Identity in Christ: Shivamma (center) lives in a concrete pipe behind the factory where she works. For her two children, she hopes for more. 'We don't want them to suffer as we have.'

S

HIVAMMA stands in front of her house, braiding her little girl's hair. Her feet are bare, her sari is simple, and she is rail thin, but she speaks to visitors with boldness. She is the face of the new Christianity in India.

Shivamma's home is nestled inside a concrete storm sewer discarded by the factory where she and her husband work. The neighborhood, hidden in an overgrown back lot, consists of huge pipes lined up like mobile homes. Her family of four lives within 84 square feet.

For a Dalit and a woman, Shivamma is doing well. In traditional Hindu thinking, Dalits are not quite human, lacking the right to enter the temple, read, or eat with members of other castes. A person who touches a Dalit must immediately purify himself. (One church planter notes the awful exception: "When it comes to social life, they are untouchable. For rape, they are touchable.")

To be Dalit is much worse than being poor, for no matter how much education or wealth a Dalit accumulates, he or she remains polluted, a shame on the face of the earth. Dalits are like biblical lepers, except that in mainstream Indian culture, they cannot be healed. "Not even God can save them from pollution," the Catholic Dalit advocate A. Maria notes sarcastically.

But although Shivamma comes from generations of people accustomed to bowing and disappearing, she does not cringe any more. She came to the pipe village as a new bride 11 years ago, seeking to escape the jobless poverty of her home village. She and her husband together make \$5 a day, more than most Dalits.

For three years she was barren.

Then, a young Dalit Christian named Bangarraju (most Dalits are known by a single name) came to Shivamma's home to pray for her. "I didn't know why he came or to whom he prayed. I thought Jesus was one of the gods." She conceived and gave birth to a son, and later had a second child, a girl. When her daughter was three months old, the girl became severely jaundiced, passing blood. Bangarraju came to them and prayed again, and the daughter was healed.

"I realized that Jesus is the living God," Shivamma told *Christianity Today*.

"We used to drink and every day we would fight, fight, fight."



Non-Western Outreach:
Left, an Indian pastor visits a village where grain is threshed by hand.

Right, a typical house church where as many as 100 worship on Sunday. In scenes like these, the Indian church is growing as never before.

Jesus Christ brought peace to our family. I have no fear, because I have come to know the living God. I trust him.”

An evangelist and church planter, Bangarraju began outreach in the pipe village in 1996. He taught illiterate children in an informal school that met under a tree. He arranged for weekly medical visits through his sponsoring organization, Operation Mobilization. For his first year visiting the village, Bangarraju said nothing about Jesus. It was three years before he baptized a convert. Now a large proportion of the pipe village follows Christ.

Over the years, Bangarraju did more than preach Jesus. He helped Shivamma and her husband learn the discipline of saving. The couple has managed to buy a house in their ancestral village. For the foreseeable future, Shivamma is happy to live in her pipe, rent free.

Yet for her children she dreams of much

more: the education neither she nor her husband received. She is determined that they learn English and rise above the pipe village. “We don’t want them to suffer as we have.”

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

With a new India rising up, a different kind of Indian Christianity is rising up with it. During a three-week journey across India, I discovered a vibrant, growing Christian community unfolding at the grassroots—a church thoroughly Indian, not Western.

The new-economy India is found in gleaming office towers where tech-savvy Indians compete in a global market and climb the corporate ladder. The newly Christian India is found mostly at the bottom rung of society, among men and women like Shivamma, typically poor and illiterate “broken

people” (the literal meaning of *Dalit*). Numbering 140 million or more, Dalits and Tribals (a grouping similar to the Dalits) have begun to shake the foundations of India’s social order.

They think in ways their ancestors never could have imagined. More of them are following Christ than at any other time in India’s history, ministry leaders told CT.

India’s church has grown and is getting larger. It now comprises over 70 million members, according to *Operation World*. That makes it the eighth largest Christian population in the world, just behind the Philippines and Nigeria, bigger than Germany and Ethiopia, and twice the size of the United Kingdom. Unlike believers in those countries, however, India’s Christians live among one billion Hindus.

Opportunities for spreading the Good News seem to be everywhere. *Operation*



Many Indian Christians say that doors closed for centuries are swinging open.

World counts 2,223 unreached people groups in India, over five times as many as there are in China, the next most unreached nation. “India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan make up the largest concentration of unreached humanity in the world,” says *Operation World*’s Jason Mandryk.

Across the vast nation, a visitor hears of unprecedented numbers of people turning to Christ. Operation Mobilization, one of India’s largest missionary groups, has grown to include 3,000 congregations in India, up from 300 in less than a decade.

A hospital-based ministry in north India has seen 8,000 baptisms over the past five years after a decade of only a handful. *Operation World*’s detailed statistics show that the Indian church is growing at a rate three times that of India’s Hindu population.

The 2001 Indian census placed Christians at just over 2 percent of India’s population. But currently, *Operation World* puts

the figure near 6 percent and notes that “Christian researchers in India indicate much higher results, even up to 9 percent.” Many Indian Christians say that doors closed for centuries are swinging open.

No one can be certain of such trends in this vast and complicated country. Religion statistics are poor, and enthusiastic reports from mission organizations may reflect only local conditions.

Todd Johnson, director of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Center for the Study of Global Christianity, says he has opted for more conservative estimates than *Operation World*’s. The center’s *Atlas of Global Christianity* estimates 58 million Indian Christians, not 70 million. Most of the difference lies in *Operation World*’s “unaffiliated” category. The unaffiliated may be part of independent fellowships, or be “insider” Hindu or Muslim followers of Christ.

Nearly all reports of rapid growth come

from independent mission and church groups. “I’m waiting to see how they settle,” says Johnson. “It’s a very volatile situation. Exciting things are happening. That’s real. Our methodology is to wait and see, and do our best to track it. But it is remarkable. Everybody agrees with that. It is something new in the last ten years, especially in the north.”

“Everybody knows about the massive scale of growth among Dalits,” says Mandryk. “That was most of the growth for a few years. Now we see signs of growth in the middling castes and among the under-35s. There’s a new dynamic for the urban, educated generation. There’s growth happening in upper castes as well.”

Though growth rates have not reached what they did in China during its peak growth period of the 1970s and ’80s, “it could accelerate,” Mandryk says. “It’s shifting through the gears and starting to pick up speed. The diversity of castes, areas, and backgrounds is a big factor. Church growth is no longer locked in to Dalit and Tribal groups.”

PUSHED TO PLANT CHURCHES

Whatever the growth rate of India’s church, India is unquestionably in the midst of rapid social and economic changes. Such transformations contribute to the breakdown of religious traditions, especially India’s caste



system.

"Hinduism is a tool to keep us oppressed," says T. V. Joy, a church planter in north India. "The gospel is a message of deliverance, not just for heaven. It is a message of freedom. The truth is that God made man in his image." That claim, Joy asserts, undermines traditional conceptions of caste.

Caste, what scholar Kancha Ilaiah calls a "spiritually constructed social system," remains omnipresent in India. At the top are the Brahmins, the only people traditionally allowed to serve as priests. Below them are traditional castes for soldiers and businessmen. These "upper caste" groupings comprise only 15 percent of the population but their members dominate society.

Under them are the Other Backward Castes (OBCs), poor farmers and servants who make up almost half the population.

Below the OBCs are the Dalits, condemned to polluted occupations and lives. Dalits and Tribals make up almost a quarter of the population, and most remain destitute and illiterate. They, more than any other group, have found their way to Jesus.

Somewhere between 70 percent and 90 percent of Christians in India are Dalits. When Dalits become believers, they reinforce the stigma of Christianity as a Dalit religion, worthy of contempt from all other groups.

Caste discrimination exists among Christians too, even between Dalit sub-castes. "The

Through community development, Indian missionaries demonstrate that Jesus is more than another god to worship.

Brahmins have a religion that has gone into the minds of the victims," says Y. Moses, a Dalit activist. "'All one in Christ' is theoretically correct, but practically it is not true. We are not all one in Christ."

Most Indian Christians indicate that their churches have great challenges. Materialism, discrimination, leadership quarrels, and lukewarm faith are all evident. When asked why Indians are coming to Christ in remarkable numbers, leaders point to the work of the Holy Spirit. Then they mention critical factors that undermine traditional Hindu beliefs while making more Indians open to change:

- **Urban growth:** India has 43 cities that are home to over 1 million people. (The U.S. has 9.) Two-thirds of Indians still live in rural villages, but even villagers are touched by cities, because their children migrate to cities to work. Cities have social fluidity. People of all castes mingle in new ways, and caste

identity is less important. Prejudice endures, but it is subtler. Dalits, Tribals, and OBCs can and do rise to the top in urban areas.

- **Globalization:** Upper-caste Brahmins still dominate business. But multinational corporations hire Indian nationals based on their skill and education, not caste identity. The service sector is growing quickly. A Christian ministry in north India trains air conditioning technicians. Its graduates, nearly all from lower castes, land jobs with multinationals more interested in effectiveness than caste and family ties.

- **Education:** "Thanks to the missionaries, because they democratized education," says Dalit advocate A. Maria. Many of the best schools in India are private Christian institutions founded by missionaries. No surprise: wealthier (and thus high-caste) students often dominate these schools. Still, many Dalit, Tribal, and OBC students have profited from Christian institutions. Indian mission



Changed Lives:
 Anna, left, rescued from abuse, learns a trade at Operation Mobilization's headquarters.
 Right, women crowd a Christian eye clinic. As persecution limited street preaching, Indian mission groups learned that whole-life transformation is part of evangelism.

agencies are starting new schools, including English-medium schools, and students are flooding in. In the new India, mastery of English and high academic credentials trump caste. After the United States, India has the world's largest number of English speakers.

• **Democracy:** India has had more than 60 years of multi-party elections. In 2009, nearly 60 percent of the 714 million electorate cast ballots to elect a new parliament. Some Christian areas had huge turnouts. For example, northeast India's Nagaland, home to a high percentage of Christians, recorded a 90 percent turnout.

• **New missions:** India stopped giving visas for foreign missionaries in the 1950s. This decimated Christian hospitals and schools, which relied on foreign skills. But gradually the number of Indian mission agencies has grown. In 1971, there were fewer than 20 Indian mission agencies. Today there are at

least 200. An Indian missionary often must learn a new language and an unfamiliar culture far from home—a task as daunting for an Indian as it would be for an American. Yet *Operation World* counts more than 80,000 Indian missionaries, most serving cross-culturally.

• **Persecution:** When Hindu fundamentalists won national elections in 1998, they brought an assertive Hinduism that fostered anti-conversion laws and persecution of Christians. Public evangelism became nearly impossible. Indian missionaries retreated from street preaching and public rallies, and instead settled in single locations to open schools, offer economic development and training, and plant house churches.

"God pushed us into church planting," says Operation Mobilization's Alfie Franks. But church planting often goes with other

activities like microfinance, education, and medical care. India has thousands of gods and plenty of spirituality; a purely spiritual appeal does not necessarily communicate.

Through community development, Indian missionaries demonstrate that Jesus is more than another god to worship. He is the Lord who transforms life. For poverty-stricken and oppressed Indians—indeed, for Indians of all castes—that message of transformation appeals powerfully.

HEALTH PLUS

Newly formed indigenous Christian missions are turning fresh attention to traditional Hindus, many of whom live in the Hindi-speaking heartland of northern India. This north-central region of India has highly fertile land that supports a population of 340 million people.



Teach First, Preach Second: Eager children recite Bible verses, left, and children make do without desks at an informal Christian school. Some Indian mission groups plant schools first, churches second. Communities benefiting from schools protect evangelists from persecution. In India, education is the ticket to a better life.

In Uttar Pradesh, M.A. Raju, a Christian neurologist, heads the Mujwa Mission Hospital. Raju is convinced that this most densely populated region of India is the key to its future. His strategy for spreading the gospel is centered on providing quality health care and basic education for the poor.

Raju has a deep brown face fringed with an ice-white beard. Born in south India to a family of Christian doctors, Raju trained at Vellore, a well-known Christian hospital. Doubting his childhood faith, Raju spent years searching for a belief system that would sustain him. He pondered the great Hindu epics, practiced yoga, worked a stint with Mother Teresa in Kolkata, and studied Islam. His greatest influence turned out to be Francis Schaeffer, the late Christian author and apologist whom he first

read in medical school and later spent a summer with at Schaeffer's retreat in L'Abri, Switzerland.

Raju carried his questions on to Israel, where he worked in a Christian hospital for Arabs. There he met a Scottish nurse who was struck by his kindly way. "He was the first

really Christian doctor I had ever met," Rani says with a smile. Raju settled his remaining doubts, married Rani, and moved to England. He became a highly successful neurologist while working on the side to integrate psychology with Christian faith. He offered seminars on pastoral counseling to groups all over the United Kingdom.

He was pulled back to India, first raising money for missions, then becoming involved in planning and strategy. Finally in 1991, he and Rani moved to India with their four

English-born children. Seven years ago, he took over Mujwa, a sprawling mission hospital that was about to shut down after a long decline. Raju could not bear to see it lost. "Wherever missionaries have gone, whatever their mistakes, the Holy Spirit is there. It's very difficult to get a beachhead. I didn't want to give it up."

The hospital's buildings were in disrepair, and local hostility was high. Several times fundamentalist mobs invaded the grounds, beating up staff. But Mujwa, while still ramshackle, is on the upswing. The hospital first concentrated its resources on basic medical care for the most poor. Soon, other ministry opportunities popped up. The grounds serve as a training center, preparing hundreds of primary school teachers and church planters, and offering vocational training—for electricians, air conditioning technicians, tailors, dental technicians, and others.



‘Jesus came in a dream and said to me, “Don’t worry, I will make your people come up.”’

~ Tissani,
a Dalit teacher

HOLISTIC MODEL

Today, everything at Mujwa is geared to spiritual, social, medical, and economic transformation.

A visit to a nearby village takes me to one of Mujwa’s informal primary schools. Traveling on narrow roads through lush fields, we reach an unpaved track that ends at narrow streets snaking between mud houses. On open land next to the village, boys play cricket with hand-carved bats. Since this is a school day, their presence indicates how little the village values education.

But the government schools are terrible, everyone says. The teachers are often absent and show little interest in students’ welfare. Mujwa offers to help villages start a school if they provide a teacher—a villager who has a high-school education and a good reputation.

Mujwa does not seek Christian teachers, because the few who identify as Christians

are often alienated from the village. Rather, Mujwa offers two months of teacher training that includes immersion in Christian teaching and worship. Most of the time, they say, teachers begin to follow Christ during their training. The 220 teachers who have stuck to the job get tremendous respect in the village because of their role. And they begin to bring others to Christ.

Such inclusive approaches have met a tremendous spiritual openness. Evangelists saw only a handful of baptisms around Mujwa in the previous generation. They have seen 8,000 in the past five years.

The school meets in a mud-brick, tin-roof shed that cost \$1,200 to build. Most of Mujwa’s 100 schools meet under a tree. They all want a building like this one.

Outside the building, 50 ragged children sit on plastic mats, learning their alphabet by chanting out letters. Inside, two more classes are at work. They use simple paperback

workbooks provided by the government.

The head teacher, Tissani, is a young woman who finished high school and is pursuing a bachelor’s degree. Tissani is a Dalit who married into the village from another village three miles away. She has two boys under age 3, and has taught at the school for three years.

Tissani says many children in the village are not attending school. During teacher training at Mujwa, she developed a deep burden for them. “I had a dream,” she says. “Jesus came in a dream and said to me, ‘Don’t worry, I will make your people come up.’” She came to believe there is one God, Jesus, whom she seeks to follow.

Asked about her hopes for the school, she has a ready reply. “I want to see all the children become educated like me. And when the girls get married into every village in this area, I want them to start schools like this one.”

A smaller village a few miles away is primarily Muslim. Local Muslims do not object to their school teaching Bible verses; they are pleased that their children receive a moral education.

The head teacher is a Brahmin widow who volunteered to help. “But we only work with Dalit children,” Raju told her. She said she would be happy to teach Dalits, and started her school under a tree. The woman



India, a Study in Contrasts:
Crowded cities break down caste distinctions, opening opportunities and eroding belief in destiny. Still, two-thirds of Indians live in remote villages, including the Dalit pastor to the right, who planted 50 churches in his area. The Dalit woman behind him is collecting cow dung, her caste duty.

was baptized as a Christian and now leads the local house church. “This is the new India,” Raju says.

SPIRIT OF CHANGE

According to Christian tradition, the apostle Thomas brought his faith to India in the first century, and an ancient church certainly existed in south India centuries before European missionaries arrived in the 1700s.

For generations, Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries have witnessed to their faith. Yet despite much hard labor and many hopes, the Indian church has remained a tiny percentage of the population.

Sometimes, because of abuses, Western Christians shy away from social programs. They take for granted the possibility of economic progress and think it has little to do with faith. In India, however, such programs make the full implications of Christian faith visible. If God made every human being in his



image, and if he loves the world, then humans are surely meant to thrive—just as they did in the Garden.

Today, broad economic and cultural reforms are sweeping Indian cities, and villages feel the spirit of change. Indians are choosing new ways of life—and many

more are embracing the gospel and following Christ. Researchers agree that India has more Christians now than at any other time in its 4,000-year history. +

Tim Stafford is a senior writer for *Christianity Today* based in northern California. John Stott Ministries has provided a grant to *Christianity Today* for reporting on international issues.

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{ THE CT INTERVIEW }

The Fullness and the Center

Bishop Kallistos Ware on evangelism, evangelicals,
and the Orthodox Church. Interview by David Neff

IN 1960, Penguin Books asked the 26-year-old Timothy Ware to write a book on his newfound Eastern Orthodox faith. His first reaction was to say no; he had been Orthodox for only two years. But a friend urged him to try and so he set his pen to paper. Now nearly 50 years old, *The Orthodox Church* remains the go-to book for people who want an introduction to Orthodoxy. Since that first book, Ware became a monk, took the name Kallistos, became a lecturer at Oxford University, and was made Metropolitan Bishop of Diokleia for Greek Orthodoxy in Britain.

Earlier this year, Ware lectured at North Park University and Wheaton College about what evangelicals could learn from the Orthodox and what the Orthodox could learn from evangelicals. *Christianity Today* editor in chief David Neff interviewed him during that visit.

Some friends who have joined the Orthodox Church talk as if the Orthodox tradition was fixed very early and handed down without change. You treat tradition in a much more dynamic way.

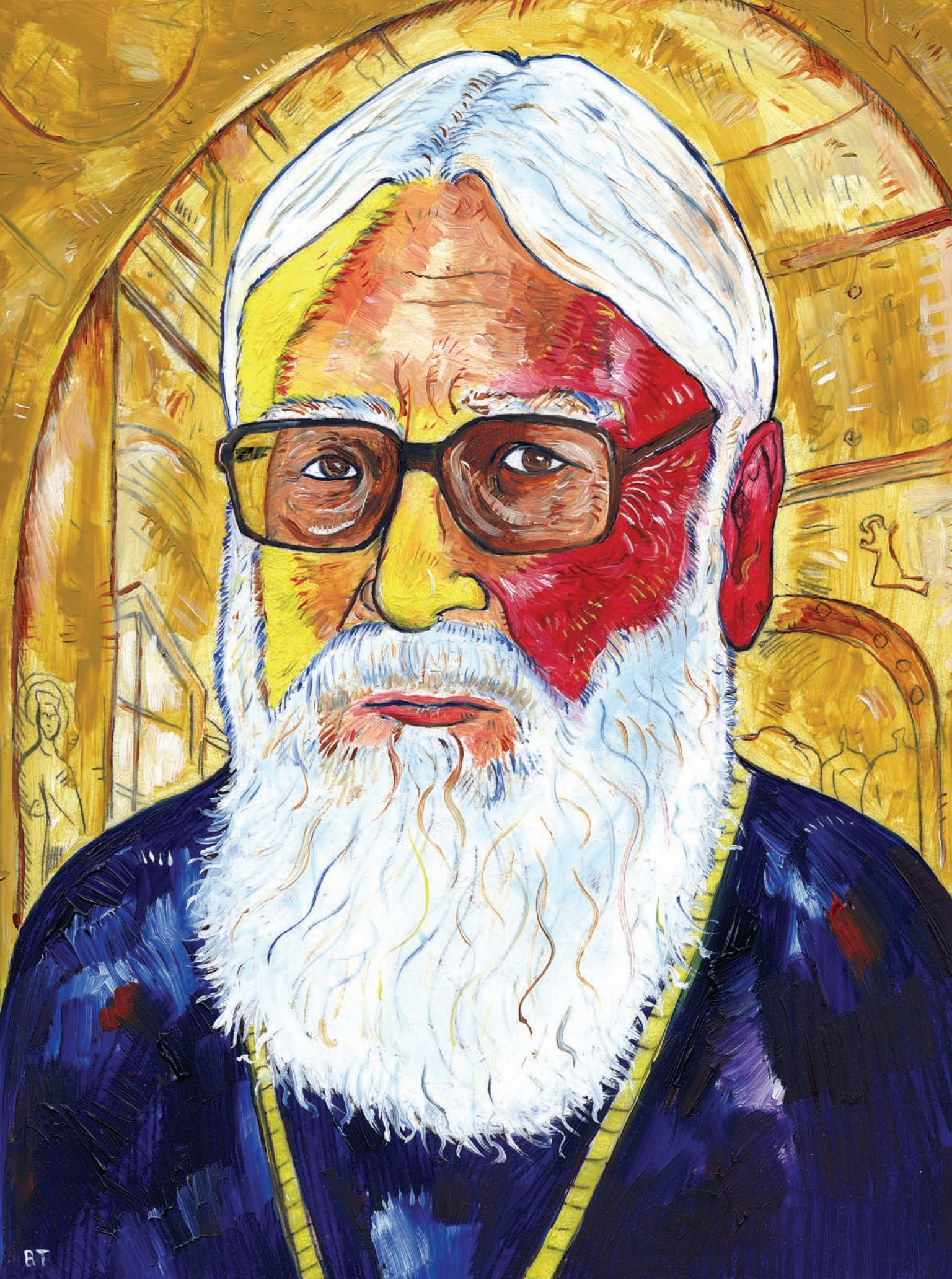
You're quite right that I think tradition is dynamic. I recall the definition given by the great Russian Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky: "Tradition is the life of the Holy Spirit in the church." Clearly, tradition is life; it's not a fixed formula. Still less is it writings in leather-bound volumes. Tradition is life, and it is the life of Christ present in the church through the Holy Spirit. It is not simply fixed doctrines, but the continuing self-understanding and self-criticism of the Christian community.

What keeps that dynamic self-understanding from going off the rails?

Holy Scripture as it has been understood in the church and by the church through the centuries. With that understanding of Holy Scripture, we would appeal particularly to the fathers and the saints.

Tradition is not a second source alongside Scripture; clearly normative for us Orthodox is Scripture as interpreted by the seven ecumenical councils. But tradition lives on. The age of the fathers

BRIAN TAYLOR



didn't stop in the fifth century or the seventh century. We could have holy fathers now in the 21st century equal to the ancient fathers.

The implosion of Communism left a spiritual vacuum, and my fellow evangelical Protestants rushed into Russia. There have been tensions as they have tried to help people get to know the Bible better and to make their faith personal. Why has it been so difficult for Orthodox and evangelicals to work together in post-Communist countries?

The Orthodox felt and still feel deep resentment at the way—as they see it—evangelicals have moved in on their territory. They feel we suffered persecution in Russia for 70 years, often very severe, and we struggled to keep the faith going under immense difficulties. Now that the persecution has stopped, people move in from the West who have not suffered in the same way for their faith, and they are stealing our people from us. We feel as if our Christian brethren are stabbing us in the back. I'm putting it in extreme form, but there is this deep feeling.

Bound up with this is the sense in Russia and other Orthodox countries of what is called *canonical territory*. Orthodoxy is the church of the land. Therefore, they feel if other Christians come in, they are stealing their sheep.

I know evangelicals look at it differently. They would say, "Here is a country with enormous numbers of people who are totally unchurched, who for 70 years have had no chance to have a living link with Jesus Christ, and we must help them." But that's not the way the Orthodox look at it. They would welcome cooperation, but they resent anything that involves stealing their sheep.

The Orthodox have always had good cooperation with Billy Graham. When Billy Graham went to Russia, he was received by the patriarch, because he worked on the principle that those who came forward to make a commitment to Christ at his preaching were handed over to the clergy of their own church. He did not try to set up his own evangelical communities that would be rivals to the Orthodox.

In open countries where Orthodoxy has never been an established religion, how does Orthodoxy reach out to unchurched people?

In Britain, we have until very recently been concerned simply to be able to minister to our own people, to the children of Orthodox immigrants, who have lost a living link with their own church. Building our parishes from nothing—no church building, no accommodation for the priest—is not easy, and many of our priests in Britain still have to earn their living with secular work, because the community wouldn't be able to support them full-time. We need to have a much more effective home mission before we reach out to others.

We Orthodox would certainly be against *proselytism*, by which I mean negative propaganda aimed at practicing members of other churches, criticizing what they already believe. That is not the way of Christ. But *evangelism* is something different.

We Orthodox are still certainly too inward looking; we should realize that we have a message that many people will listen to gladly. I see

our mission not primarily to practicing members of other churches, but to the unchurched who are very numerous in Britain, less so in the United States.

To me, the most important missionary witness that we have is the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharistic worship of the Orthodox Church. This is the life-giving source from which everything else proceeds. And therefore, to those who show an interest in Orthodoxy, I say, "Come and see. Come to the liturgy." The first thing is that they should have an experience of Orthodoxy—or for that matter, of Christianity—as a worshipping community. We start from prayer, not from an abstract ideology, not from moral rules, but from a living link with Christ expressed through prayer.

To draw in the unchurched, evangelical churches often strip away things that might be mysterious or strange. But when you invite someone into an Orthodox liturgy, you hit them full-on with strange symbolism and unfamiliar words.

Yes, and let them understand what God gives them to understand. Throw them in at the deep end of the swimming pool and see what happens. That is very much our Orthodox approach. I would not want to offer a watered-down version of Orthodoxy.

The basic rules of Christianity, our relation to Christ, are very simple. Because they are simple they are also often difficult to understand.

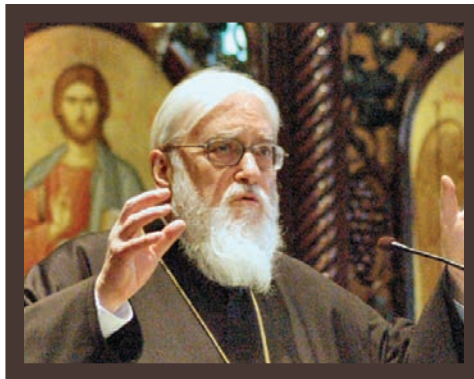
On the other hand, we should not be content with a bare minimum. We should offer people the fullness of the faith in all its diversity and depth. I would wish people, when they come to the Orthodox liturgy, not to think that they understand everything the first time. I hope, rather, that they have an experience of mystery, a sense of awe and wonder. If we lose that from our worship, we have lost something very precious.

There's a bad expression of mystery, which is just mystification. But there's a good sense of mystery—to realize that in our worship we are in contact with the transcendent, with that which far surpasses our reasoning brains. I hope that this sense of living mystery, which is entirely bound up with a personal experience of Christ, is conveyed through our worship.

You speak of the fullness of the faith, experienced through the Divine Liturgy. Evangelical Protestants, from the first days of the Reformation through the Wesleyan Revival, have been eager to crystallize a central message and a central experience. We need to help people see both the center and the fullness of the faith. One theologian I talked to before this interview said, "Ask if the fullness doesn't sometimes obscure the center."

I agree that what we want is both/and—the fullness and the center. There could be a way of presenting Orthodoxy that makes it sound very complicated. We Orthodox have a rich inheritance, which could become a heavy burden if not properly handled.

Yet I certainly believe that Orthodoxy is simple Christianity—not an elaborate Byzantine ritual, but simple Christianity. When I first



came in contact with the Orthodox Church, the music, the icons, the total experience of the liturgy influenced me greatly, but I did not become Orthodox because of that. I became Orthodox because I felt that it is simple Christianity.

If I were to meet you on a train and ask you, “What is the center of the Christian message?,” how would you succinctly put that?

I would answer, “I believe in a God who loves humankind so intensely, so totally, that he chose himself to become human. Therefore, I believe in Jesus Christ as fully and truly God, but also totally and unreservedly one of us, fully human.” And I would say to you, “The love of God is so great that Christ died for us on the cross. But love is stronger than death, and so the death of Jesus was followed by his resurrection. I am a Christian because I believe in the great love of God that led him to become incarnate, to die, and to rise again.” That’s my faith. All of this is made immediate to us through the continuing action of the Holy Spirit.

We Orthodox are still certainly too inward looking; we should realize that we have a message that many people will listen to gladly.

Evangelicals agree with everything you have just said. But we tend to focus on a transaction that happened at the Cross and a transaction that happens when the believer puts faith in what happened at the Cross. We take up Paul’s courtroom metaphors. How would you describe the East’s way of looking at it?

It’s true, we Orthodox would, on the whole, not use the word *transaction*. It’s also certainly true that we do not emphasize legal language.

We prefer the image of Christ as victor over death, love stronger than death, the kind of victory that we sense at the Paschal service Easter midnight in the Orthodox Church, when there is a constant refrain, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs he has given life.” That is the image of Christ’s work that we chiefly stress.

But certainly within the New Testament there is a whole series of images. There is no single systematic theory of the Atonement, and we should make use of all these images. So, yes, we should find a place for the idea of substitution, which the Orthodox don’t stress so much. It is there in the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He who was without sin was made by God to be sin for us, that we in him might become righteousness.” The idea of the sacrificial Lamb is also a profound scriptural image. We should make use of those images as well as Christ the Victor.

I don’t care so much for the idea of satisfaction. *Satisfaction* is not a scriptural word. The legal imagery, I think, should always be combined with an emphasis upon the transfiguring power of love. The motive for the Incarnation was not God’s justice or his glory, but his love. That was the supreme motive. “God so loved the world.” That is what we should start from.

We’ve talked about evangelizing the unchurched. That’s one area where Orthodoxy hasn’t done a whole lot. Why is that?

You are not entirely fair to the Orthodox. From the ninth century on, the

Orthodox undertook an immense missionary outreach to Slavic peoples—Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia. In that period they were every bit as dynamic in their missionary outreach as the Western church.

You have to take into account the effect of being under Muslim rule, when any form of missionary outreach was forbidden. Christians survived under Islam as self-contained communities, but to attempt to convert a Muslim to the Christian faith would have led immediately to a death sentence. So, naturally, under Islam the Orthodox could not undertake notable missionary work. In the 19th century, there were Russian missions in China, Japan, Korea, and among the Muslim tribes within the Russian Empire. Then came Communism, and it made outward missionary work more or less impossible.

We Orthodox ought to be doing much more than we are doing in this field, but you have to allow for the historical circumstances. The West in the last five centuries has been dominant, rich, influential, colonial, imperial, expansionist. That made missionary work much easier. The East had none of these privileges except for a limited extent in Russia.

How about social justice—how does Orthodoxy practice that?

There is a great deal of room for Orthodoxy to do more. The most notable efforts in recent years have been by the church of Russia. At its local council in 2000, and more recently in 2006, the church of Russia has produced reflective documents on social witness. This may be only a beginning, but it’s a valuable beginning.

In the West, we ought to develop our social witness. Within Orthodoxy, there is a strong tradition of compassion for the poor, the underprivileged, the suffering. This you see in many of the lives of our saints. But all too often, this was merely on an individual basis, helping those who were in distress and need. There was not enough effort made among Orthodox to question unjust social structures. We gave bread to the poor, but we did not ask sufficiently why the poor had no bread. We did not, perhaps, protest against the unjust social structures that existed in Orthodox countries and now exist in the Western world.

Jaroslav Pelikan, an important historical theologian who became Orthodox late in life, once told me, “You evangelicals talk too much about Jesus and don’t spend enough time thinking about the Holy Trinity.” Can one talk too much about Jesus?

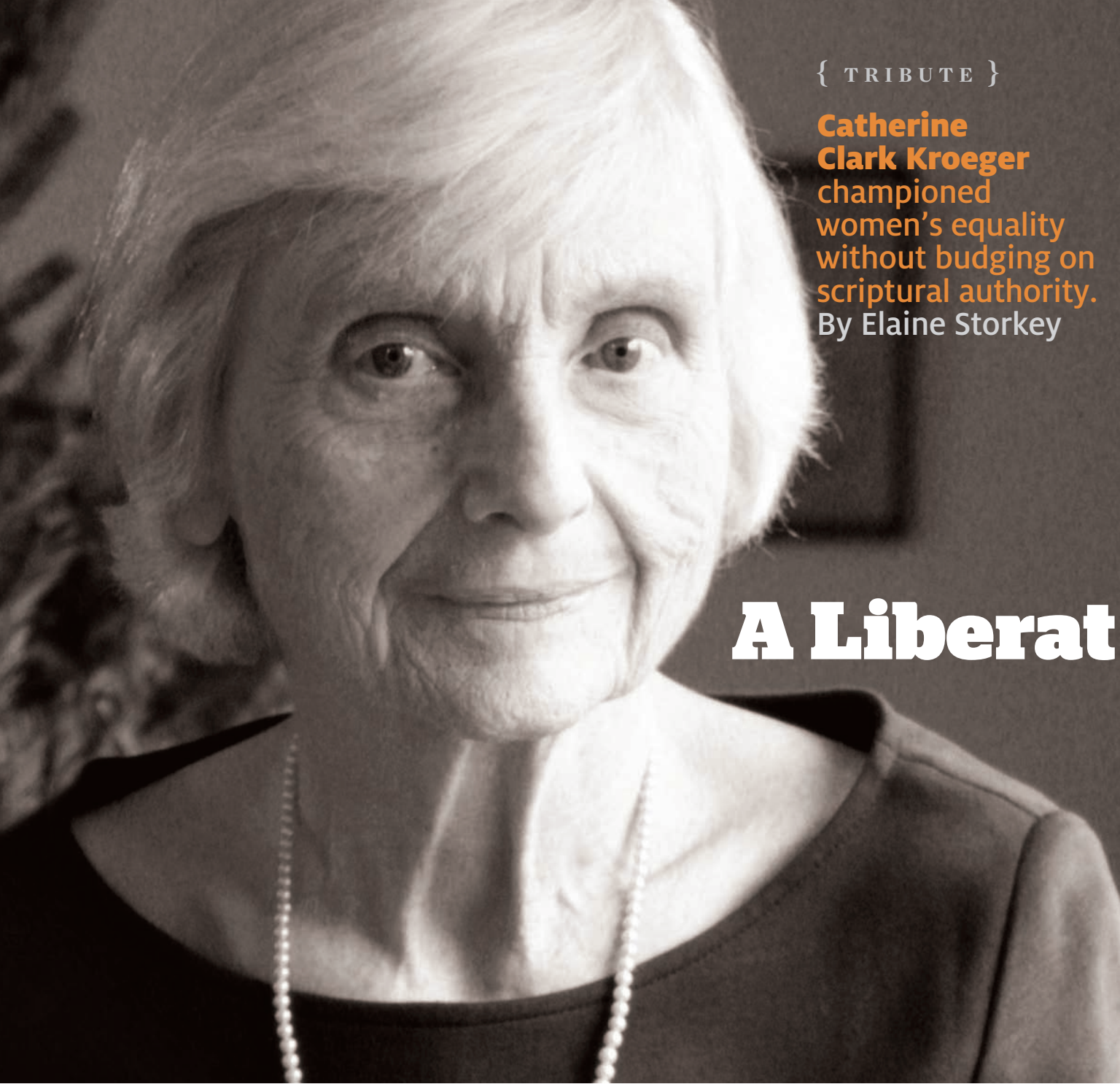
I would not want to contrast faith in Jesus with faith in the Holy Trinity. My faith in Jesus is precisely that I believe him to be not only truly human, but also to be the eternal Son of God. I cannot think of a faith in Jesus that does not also involve faith in God the Father.

How is Jesus present to us personally at this moment? How is it that he is not merely a figure from the distant past, but that he also lives in my own life? That is through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I cannot understand a faith in Jesus Christ that would not also involve faith in the Holy Spirit.

I don’t think we can have too much faith in Jesus. But faith in Jesus, if it is to be truly such, is necessarily Trinitarian. If you look at the lives of the Orthodox saints, you will find a very vivid faith in Jesus. Their affirmation of the Trinity did not in any way diminish their sense of Jesus as their personal Savior. ✚



SEE CT’S VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH WARE AT ChristianityToday.com/go/Kallistos



{ TRIBUTE }

**Catherine
Clark Kroeger**
championed
women's equality
without budging on
scriptural authority.
By Elaine Storkey

A Libera

WITH THE SUDDEN DEATH of Catherine Clark Kroeger on February 14, evangelicalism lost one of its most admired biblical scholars. At age 85, Kroeger was still lecturing and researching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Her love for the Scriptures, quick mind, and linguistic abilities made her an entertaining communicator and reliable exegete; she memorized entire biblical narratives and could recall them on demand. That she left

manuscripts unfinished compounds our loss.

Yet Kroeger's most defining legacy is her wise leadership in the early evangelical women's movement of the 1970s. Without her stand on the centrality of Scripture in responding to contemporary questions of gender and justice, along with her compassion for the abused, much of evangelicalism would be theologically afield. As founder and president of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) and of Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH)—as well as in 13 books and hundreds of scholarly articles and lectures—Kroeger demonstrated, while holding to scriptural authority and evangelism, that the gospel addressed many concerns of contemporary feminism.

Kroeger was born in 1925 in St. Paul, Minnesota, one of five children, to Homer and Elizabeth Clark, devoted Christians. She graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1947 and went to Yale University, where she met Richard Clark Kroeger Jr. Both helped found InterVarsity Fellowship chapters at their colleges, thus beginning a gospel partnership that was to last for 60 years. They married in 1950 and went on to minister together in 10 Presbyterian pastorates in five states. While serving in the Twin Cities, they raised five children and cared for numerous foster children and exchange students.

Catherine resumed her education when their youngest child started kindergarten, and received a Ph.D. in classical

where Stott had played a major role. It resulted in reaffirming the centrality of the Scriptures and committing to integrating evangelism and proclamation with social justice, especially regarding discrimination against women.

STAYING THE COURSE

Kroeger had been affected by the way this integration had been opened up by American evangelicals in the 1970s. She became involved in the Evangelical Women's Caucus International (EWCI), birthed from Ron Sider's organization, Evangelicals for Social Action, in 1974. One of the committed leaders was Nancy Hardesty (who died of cancer this April 8 at age 69). Hardesty—known best for the 1974 landmark book *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation*, co-authored with Letha Scanzoni—was initially careful to define for the EWCI what was meant by *biblical feminism*, emphasizing “a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ,” acceptance of the Bible as “God’s inspired Word,” “a deep concern for love and justice between the sexes,” and a “desire to find the whole counsel of God on this issue.” This provided a strong basis for evangelicals to work together.

Yet by EWCI's seventh conference in Fresno, California, in 1986, its agenda seemed to have moved significantly away from its center, especially regarding sexuality. A resolution was passed that took “a firm stand in favor of civil-rights protection for homosexual persons” in recognition of the “presence of the lesbian minority” in the organization. When assertions were made that seemed to recognize a lesbian lifestyle as a viable Christian option, many evangelicals present knew they could not stay within the EWCI. Kroeger was one of those.

Separating herself from the EWCI was not a step Kroeger took easily. Correspondence between her and Hardesty reveals regret on both sides. Kroeger expressed sorrow that the question of sexuality had become so central to Hardesty when others saw it as divisive. Yet Kroeger's stand was echoed by many. Educator Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, along with husband and wife team Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, former professors at Bethel Theological Seminary in Minnesota, began to look for an alternative context in which evangelicals could grapple with gender issues. Sider, though fully committed to civil rights for all, did not believe that the Bible could ever justify homosexual relationships, and gave his support.

Quickly they formed a new working party, drawing in Faith Martin, from the Reformed Presbyterian Women's Association, psychologist James Alsduff, and James Beck, professor at Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary. They decided to affiliate with our own organization in the UK, and in August 1987 “Men, Women and God: Christians for Biblical Equality” was formed.

The mission statement was simple: to “make known the biblical basis for freedom in Christ to those in evangelical and conservative churches.” The belief statement was clear: the Bible was the final authority on matters of faith and practice, and celibacy and faithful heterosexual marriage were

studies in 1987 from the University of Minnesota. She served as Protestant chaplain and lecturer at Hamilton College, then as professor of classical and ministry studies at Gordon-Conwell from 1990 until her death. Richard had died just three months earlier, a loss she felt keenly.

I first met Catherine in 1986, when on sabbatical with my husband and young family in Cape Ann, Massachusetts. Catherine and I had corresponded about a new initiative in the UK associated with John Stott, and she invited us to her home. Stott had been concerned about justice issues raised by secular feminists—such as equal pay in the workforce and abuse of power—and had convened a working party in the UK affiliated with

his London Institute for Contemporary Christianity to seek biblical insights on gender issues. As always, the pastor-scholar's emphasis was on double listening: listening faithfully to the Word of God and to those with integrity within the culture, assessing their challenge.

The result was a new organization ambitiously named “Men, Women and God.” Its first conference, held in London in 1985, examined the “feminist case against God and the church” and sought an authentic evangelical response. Several hundred people attended, and Stott chaired the sessions at which Mary Evans and I spoke. The day was very much in keeping with the 1982 Lausanne Conference in Grand Rapids,

ing Woman

the patterns designed by God. Authors began to pen articles, the journal *Priscilla Papers* was launched for articulating and promoting greater gender equality, and Catherine became the spokesperson.

SCHOLAR, ACTIVIST, STRATEGIST

Most scholars are not great activists, and even fewer are careful strategists. Kroeger was all three. She threw herself into studying,

writing, speaking, and seeking recognition for the fledgling organization. By 1988, when it was inaugurated as Christians for Biblical Equality in Minneapolis, local chapters were already meeting in Denver, Boston, and Minnesota, with more to be formed. In the April 1990 issue of *Christianity Today*, CBE published the statement “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,” signed by more than 200 evangelicals, including former *CT* editor in

chief Kenneth Kantzer. By 2001, when Mimi Haddad became CBE’s second president, the organization boasted 2,500 members and a mailing list of 16,000, and offered dozens of published titles. CBE now runs conferences and publications for members from 100 denominations in 65 countries.

Kroeger’s scholarship was dictated by her “confidence that the Bible is the Word of God.” She believed that although the Bible contains various forms of literature written over many centuries by different authors, it presents a coherent and integrated message. Thus, ambiguities or confusions need to be carefully examined. Rather than studying theology, Kroeger wanted to be a trained classical linguist who understood the development, syntax, and structure of ancient languages. This enabled her to handle the biblical text she already knew with deeper understanding and authority.

With utmost meticulousness, Kroeger sought to reconcile the Pauline passages that restrained women with the clear directives calling women to proclaim Christ. Rather than offer a clumsy cultural relativism that glibly dismisses Paul as a “man of his time,” she showed how better knowledge of Greek helps us to understand the *kephale* (“head”) metaphor in Ephesians 5, the silence of women in churches in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, and head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11. Careful contextual work raises questions about traditional interpretations. (For example, if Paul’s fellow-worker Priscilla was exercising a clear gift of teaching to correct the theology of Apollos [Acts 18:26], then the injunction on women not to teach [1 Tim. 2:12] must be a limited one.) The interplay of language, historical context, and archaeology excited Kroeger. This was particularly evident in *I Suffer Not a Woman*, which, written with her husband in 1992, opened up new ways of understanding 1 Timothy 2:11–15.

Collaboration was the watchword of Kroeger’s scholarship. She co-authored books on a biblical response to goddess spirituality (*The Goddess Revival*) and domestic violence (*Women, Abuse, and the Bible; Refuge from Abuse*), and her biggest project—*The Women’s Study Bible*, co-edited with Mary Evans—drew together more than 60 contributors from all over the world to offer a perspective on Scripture different from that of white, Western, classically educated men. I had been involved in editing an earlier edition,

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Kroeger sought to reconcile the Pauline passages that restrained women with the clear directives calling women to proclaim Christ. She didn't offer a clumsy cultural relativism that glibly dismisses Paul as a 'man of his time.'

and it was a massive undertaking. Published in 2009 by Oxford University Press, this Bible aimed to look at the whole of Scripture from a woman's perspective, encouraging us to grasp its truth and power for our lives today.

COMPASSIONATE HEALER

The integration of biblical scholarship and social action reached new heights in the last decade of Kroeger's life. Always committed to a strong family life, she turned her attention to those broken by domestic violence and in 2003 founded Peace and Safety in the Christian Home. A loose coalition of Christian academics, social work professionals, researchers, clergy, and counselors affirmed their desire to solve the problem of abuse in

Christian families. Collaboration with sociologist Nancy Nason-Clark from the University of New Brunswick proved immediately productive, and their co-authored books offer painstaking research and practical resources.

In fact, it was in connection with sexual violence that I saw Catherine for the last time. A colleague from Tearfund had felt strongly called to take a stand on violence against women and to set up an evangelical network called Restored. He invited Catherine to England to be the keynote speaker last summer. One laywoman who worked among abuse survivors brought her whole counseling group, believing that here at last was a place where they could find healing and encounter the gospel in its most

integrated form. She was right. The Spirit of God was there in power and spoke movingly through Kroeger's address and biblical insights. I learned afterward that three women had been so conscious of the love of God for the first time in their lives that they became Christians themselves.

In her talk, Kroeger revealed that her favorite Bible story is that of Hagar (Gen. 16). "This abused woman met God, or God met her . . . and in the middle of the crisis she found out that God shall hear," she said. With dogged respect for Scripture and compassion for the hurting, Catherine Clark Kroeger's life testified that God shall hear modern calls for justice, even those sounded by secular feminism. In her fundamental shaping of the evangelical women's movement, she helped men and women whom she never met find freedom in Christ. ✚

Elaine Storkey, theologian, broadcaster, and author of eight books, has lectured at the Universities of Oxford and London, is president of Tearfund, and currently trains evangelists to serve with the Church of England.



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J.E. McDermond, professor of Christian ministry and spirituality, for the recent publication of his book "1, 2, 3 JOHN" (Herald Press, 2011)

"McDermond is well informed on traditional and contemporary evaluations of the letters, well aware of their weaknesses, and well able to draw on their strengths. This is a commentary to use with confidence."

— James D. G. Dunn, Emeritus Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, Durham University

see anew



**MESSIAH
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{ THEOLOGY }

The Paul We Think We Know



VANGELICALS FEEL a special connection with the apostle Paul. We shape our theology according to his thought, imitate his mission to evangelize, and pursue discipleship after his devotional practices. But our vision of him is loaded with miscon-

ceptions. Have we become more Pauline than Paul himself?

Last April in *Christianity Today*, Scot McKnight profiled “The Jesus We’ll Never Know,” describing the tendency of New Testament scholars to create a historical Jesus in their own image. We do the same with the great apostle. Like gazing into a mirror, we easily see our own reflections when we look at Paul.

Intense debates in Pauline studies over the past three decades have yielded fresh insights into Paul’s thought and corrected some mistaken assumptions. If we want to be truly Pauline, we will have to take stock of these findings. Let us examine two longstanding misconceptions that have not held up under recent scrutiny, and then note one further way in which we tend to impose our evangelical values upon this apostle of Jesus Christ.

SALVATION TO THE JEWS

The misconception about Paul with the longest historical pedigree is that he was anti-Jewish. Many imagine that after his Damascus

Road experience, Paul immediately rejected Judaism and embraced Christianity. They assume that in the first century these were two clearly distinguishable religions. Before his encounter with Christ, the thinking goes, Paul was wrapped up in a legalistic pursuit of salvation and was teaching others a similar philosophy. So great was his passion that he persecuted the Christians who taught salvation by grace through faith. After his conversion, everything changed. He embraced God’s gracious salvation by faith in Christ and rejected the system of dead rituals bound up in Judaism. Paul left Judaism, therefore, and turned to Christianity.

This account of Paul thrives among evangelicals because it resonates with many who come from legalistic environments. We narrate our testimonies as a movement from guilt to grace, from enslaving oppression to freedom in Christ. We assume, therefore, that Paul’s journey mirrored ours. This view also shapes much of our preaching. Eager to let the glorious light of the gospel shine brightly, evangelicals set it against the dark backdrop of Judaism as a religion of works righteousness.

This scenario, while familiar, is deeply mistaken in at least three ways. First, it

How his 21st-century
evangelical makeover
distorts the New
Testament reality.
By Timothy Gombis



represents a faulty vision of Judaism in Paul's day. E. P. Sanders's seminal book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, was the catalyst for much of the intense debate over the past three decades in Pauline studies. Until its publication in 1977, the sharp contrast between Paul and his Jewish heritage dominated scholarship. Sanders's work gave scholars an entirely new appreciation of first-century Judaism, opening up afresh the world of Jesus and his first followers. We now have to realize that

Paul's past wasn't ruled by simple legalism.

Because of this "new perspective," scholars now recognize that Paul would not have regarded

If we encountered Paul today, he would not be the strong and decisive leader we often imagine. In fact, many of our contemporary churches would hardly consider him a viable pastoral candidate.

Judaism as legalistic. They point to Jewish texts that stress the absolute need of divine grace for salvation.

The Community Rule, a document from the Dead Sea Scrolls, contains the following:

As for me, I belong to wicked mankind, to the company of ungodly flesh. My iniquities, rebellions, and sins, together with the perversity of my heart, belong to the company of worms and to those who walk in darkness. For mankind has no way, and man is unable to establish his steps since justification is with God and perfection of way is out of his hand.

The problem in the early church, therefore, was not the temptation toward legalistic works righteousness. They faced the communal challenge of incorporating non-Jewish converts into the historically Jewish people of God. First-century Judaism didn't have a *legalism* problem; it had an *ethnocentrism* problem. The first followers of Jesus were all Jewish, and had difficulty imagining that the God of Israel who sent Jesus Christ as their Savior could possibly save non-Jews without requiring them to convert to Judaism. This is the issue in Acts 15, when Christian Jews from Judea urged the Gentiles in Antioch, "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

While the early church leaders decided *in theory* that non-Jewish believers in Jesus were not required to become Jews (Acts 15:13–21), many churches struggled with the practical challenges of becoming healthy multiethnic communities. Paul, as pastor and theologian, addresses these challenges by claiming that "no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law" (Rom. 3:20). This is not a condemnation of Judaism as inherently legalistic, but an affirmation that God does not justify a person merely because he is ethnically Jewish. Jews and non-Jews approach God on equal terms when it comes to salvation. *All* have sinned and *all* stand in need of God's redeeming grace in Christ (Rom. 3:23–24). Therefore all who are in Christ are equal siblings in God's new family (Gal. 3:26–28).

A second reason why we cannot envision Paul as anti-Jewish is that even after his conversion, Paul remained a Jew. He did not

imagine that he was inventing a new religion, nor did he leave Judaism to join the Christian church. At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul arrived in Jerusalem and, at the suggestion of James, went through purification rituals at the temple (Acts 21:23–26). Paul saw no contradiction at all between his commitment to Christ and his faithful participation in Jewish practices. Explaining his ministry before a variety of audiences, Paul emphasized his Jewish identity and claimed to be acting in faithfulness to the God of Israel. Before the Jewish Council in Jerusalem, he declared, "My brothers, *I am a Pharisee*, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead!" (Acts 23:6, emphasis added).

And to King Agrippa, he again claims to be a Pharisee whose hope is in the promises of God to Israel (Acts 26:4–6).

Third, Paul never calls upon Jews to reject Judaism. Instead, he exhorts them to recognize Jesus as their Messiah and welcome his non-Jewish followers as siblings in God's new family. We get a glimpse of his preaching to Jews in Acts 17:1–3: "When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,' he said."

The Paul of the New Testament, therefore, is not anti-Jewish. He was faithful both to the Scriptures and to his Jewish heritage. He preached Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel, but was insistent that salvation in Christ was not limited to ethnic Jews. According to his gospel, all Jews needed to receive Jesus as Messiah, and all followers of Jesus—Jewish and non-Jewish—needed to embrace one another as siblings in God's global family in Christ.

PREACHING THE KINGDOM

Evangelicals typically regard Paul as focusing on believers' private spirituality to the relative neglect of the church's communal character and social dynamics. This is quite different from the preaching of Jesus, who proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom. He announced the arrival of the reign of God, calling for repentance and the renewal of corporate behaviors.

Paul, on the other hand, preached that God is saving individuals, taking up residence in their hearts, and giving them a heavenly destiny. His vision of the Christian life is one in which believers cultivate inner piety and practice private devotion.

This view of Paul is reinforced by our pietistic heritage and our individualistic culture. More recently, however, evangelicals have been awakening to the primacy of the church and its related corporate practices. New Testament scholars have also begun to note a greater continuity between the preaching of Jesus and that of Paul. Far from focusing on privatized piety, the apostle's conception of salvation concerns the arrival of the kingdom of God—a fundamentally communal reality.



According to Luke, God's reign was the dominant subject of Paul's preaching. He ends Acts with these words: "For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!" (Acts 28:30–31). Referring to everyone in Christ, Paul says that God has "rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Col. 1:13).

In his highly influential work on Ephesians, *God's New Society*, John Stott sums up Paul's community-oriented gospel:

One of our chief evangelical blind spots has been to overlook the central importance of the church. We tend to proclaim individual salvation without moving on to the saved community. We emphasize that Christ died for us "to redeem us from all iniquity" rather than "to purify for himself a people of his own." We think of ourselves more as "Christians" than as "churchmen," and our message is more good news of a new life than of a new society. Nobody can emerge from a careful reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians with a privatized gospel.

Paul does not, then, view salvation in individualistic terms apart from the arrival of God's kingdom in the church. As individuals, we have been saved for life-giving relationships within kingdom of God communities, not merely for privatized walks with Jesus. We become our true selves only in community, exercising our gifts and learning to receive the gifts of others. Paul's vision for the church includes the renewed social practices of forgiving and being forgiven, reconciling formerly

Paul saw no contradiction at all between his commitment to Christ and his faithful participation in Jewish practices.

alienated individuals and communities, learning to speak words of grace and kindness, practicing justice, and absorbing loss rather than taking vengeance for wrongs suffered. Social practices such as these suffer from neglect in our culture, especially when we orient ourselves by individualized and internalized conceptions of being Christian.

Evangelicals have done well to emphasize personal commitment to Christ, but we must take care to regard discipleship as the practice of transformative habits set within communities of renewal empowered by God's Spirit. Central to Paul's conception of salvation is "the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

LEADING COUNTER-CULTURALLY

Evangelicals place a high priority on leadership, perhaps because historically our movement has been carried along by strong leaders. The great figures in our heritage have been powerful speakers and compelling visionaries, many of whom have built colleges, seminaries, and, in some cases, entire denominations. These are also the traits we want to see in our pastors.

Thus we intuitively assume that Paul was someone just like this. We think he must have been a compelling figure, a charismatic and decisive leader, and a powerful speaker. From the moment of

conversion, he immediately put his great abilities to work for Christ, taking over the leadership of the church and becoming its powerful spokesperson.

When we look at the evidence from the New Testament, however, we find a very different picture. Surprisingly, Paul was not a captivating speaker. He was aware of the Corinthians' criticisms of his preaching: "For some say, 'His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing'" (2 Cor. 10:10). Just like these early believers, we find his letters rhetorically compelling. But we would be wrong to assume his preaching had the same effect.

Even more surprisingly, Paul doesn't apologize for his unimpressive personal presence. On the contrary, he seems to think it makes him even *more* fit to be a vessel for God's honor. He reveals his theological reasoning in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5:

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

Paul knew the Corinthians' commitment would soon flounder if it rested on nothing sturdier than attraction to a winsome personality. Addressing them in frailty and humility, he ensured that the messenger would not overshadow the message of Christ crucified.

Add to Paul's pedestrian oratory a physical appearance that must have been quite unpleasant. In Acts 14:19–20, we read that Paul's ministry in Lystra came to a terrible end when volatile crowds were incited to stone him and drag him from the city, "thinking he was dead." Let this description work on your imagination for a moment: A bloodthirsty, riotous horde brutalizes Paul so badly that any chance of survival is dismissed. He must have been in horrible shape.

The Book of Galatians offers clues about what Paul looked like. Just after the episode in Lystra, Paul likely visited the Galatian churches, reporting that his physical condition "was a trial" to them (Gal. 4:13–14). He knew he looked repulsive and suspected that the sight of his injuries would turn stomachs. Of his scars and bruises, he says, "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17), and he writes elsewhere of his tremendous sufferings, including torture and beatings. The Acts of Paul and Thecla, an apocryphal text from the second century, states that Paul was "a man small in size, bald-headed, bow-legged, stocky with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed."

If we encountered Paul today, we might be disappointed to find someone quite unlike the strong and decisive leader we often imagine. In fact, many of our contemporary churches would hardly consider him a viable pastoral candidate. In this regard, as in so many others, the New Testament evidence resists efforts to re-create Paul in our own image.

Timothy Gombis is associate professor of New Testament at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary and the author of *Paul: A Guide for the Perplexed* (T&T Clark).

Why the final movie is only the beginning of the Harry Potter phenomenon.

By John Granger

AS PART TWO of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* opens in theaters worldwide this month, we have reached the final chapter—of sorts. It's a phenomenon that began 13 years ago with the release of the first installment in J. K. Rowling's series. I'm a Potter pundit who has written and edited as many books about the Hogwarts saga as there are novels in said series. So you would think I'd be sad to see the tale of the boy wizard come to an end.

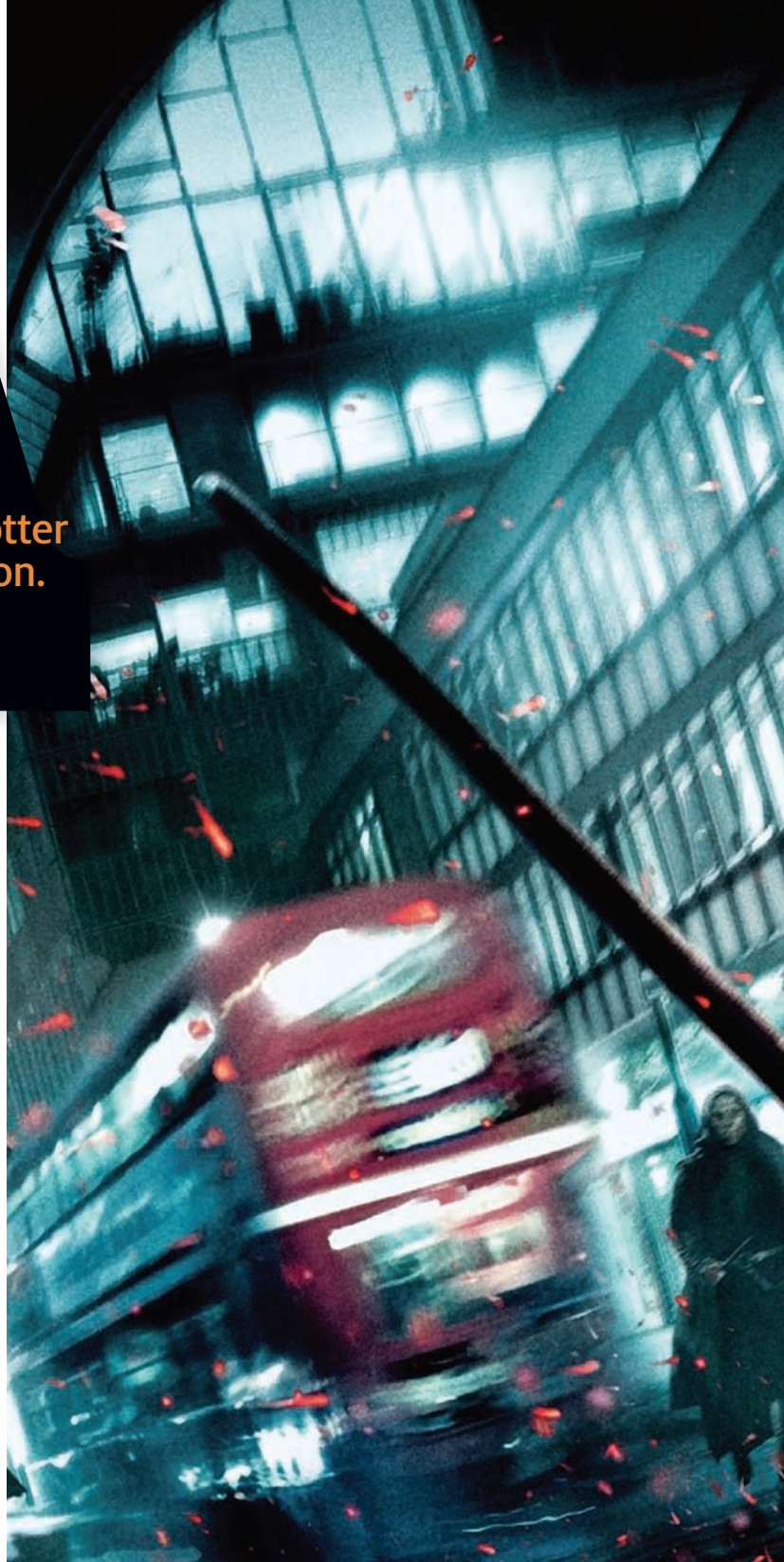
But I'm not, because the tale is not ending. Harry is here to stay.

What makes me think that Potter mania will not go the way of the Hula-Hoop and pet rock is the remarkable ripple effect of Harry's seven-year battle with the Dark Lord. The Hogwarts saga has reshaped our ideas of what a story can and should do, and writers and filmmakers have and will continue to respond to this new set of audience expectations.

ROWLING'S LITERARY GENIUS

With sales of well over 400 million copies—dwarfing all published works not written by God or Chairman Mao—the Harry Potter series is the shared text of our time. Rowling's creation has infused the imaginations of generations of readers—children, parents,

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HARRY IS HE



RE TO STAY

and grandparents. The 4,100 pages in its seven books have been turned into eight Warner Brothers movies, becoming the most successful film franchise ever, ahead of Star Wars and James Bond.

This cultural tsunami suggests Harry Potter is not a passing fad. Rowling's storytelling reveals traditional artistry, with symbols and themes borrowed from Dante, Shakespeare, the Inklings, and other literary greats. Most remarkably, Rowling uses three literary devices that are hallmarks of the series: (1) a complex yet nearly invisible "ring composition"; (2) an alchemical drama; and (3) an engaging picture of the faculties of the soul. Let me explain.



• *Ring composition*: The whole series, as well as each book

With sales of well over 400 million copies—dwarfing all published works not written by God or Chairman Mao—the Harry Potter series is the shared text of our time.

therein, conforms to the touchstones of traditional story scaffolding. Anthropologist Mary Douglas, in her book *Thinking in Circles*, calls it "ring composition." She describes it as "a construction of parallelisms that must open a theme, develop it, and round it off by bringing the conclusion back to the beginning." Bible readers might call it *chiasmus*.

Rowling repeatedly hits the three marks of ring writing. The Potter series and each novel have beginnings and ends that meet up. They have "centers" that both return to the question raised in the beginning and answer that question in the end. And, each book and each chapter has its mirrored image or "reverse echo" in the book or chapter on the opposite side of the story divide. "Parallelisms" define these stories.

I think Rowling picked up this chapter structure from her close reading of C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* and Charles Williams's seven novels, which have a similar if not identical structure. Both *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (marketed and sold in the U.S. as *Sorcerer's Stone*) and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, for instance, are 17 chapters long; both have their story centers in chapter 9; and both show an echoing effect between chapters before and after this divide.

• *Alchemical drama*: Lewis and Williams, and Rowling after their example, write in circles not just because Boethius, Dante, and medieval poets did, but also because they aim to transform readers by giving them an experience of literary alchemy.

Stanton Linden, in *Darke Hieroglyphicks*, says that Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton used the vocabulary and images of alchemy to present allegories of Christian transformation. In alchemy, the darkness of lead becomes illumined and enlightened to become gold—a solid "light of the world"—and the alchemist's heart is restored to Edenic perfection. As a literary medievalist, Lewis used the alchemy motif most obviously in his Space Trilogy. In the world of alchemy, the three movements of transformation are known as the black, white, and

red stages. The Space Trilogy parallels these stages as we witness the spiritual dissolution, purification, and perfection of Ransom, the saga's hero.

Rowling confirmed her use of alchemical drama in a 1998 interview with Scotland's *The Herald*. She said, "To invent this wizard world, I've learned a ridiculous amount about alchemy. Perhaps much of it I'll never use in the books, but I have to know in detail what magic can and cannot do in order to set the parameters and establish the stories' internal logic."

Thus, it's no coincidence that the title of Rowling's first work is *Philosopher's Stone*. Rowling writes in a narrow but deep stream of English letters that begins in Shakespeare's Globe Theater, permeates the works of the metaphysical poets (Blake, Coleridge, and Yeats), and is seen in novels from Dickens's *A*

Tale of Two Cities to Williams's *Many Dimensions*.

• *Soul triptych*: Rowling puts a peculiar Inklings twist on the schoolboy novel formula of three lead characters. Ron, Hermione, and Harry embody the three faculties of the soul. These faculties are described by Lewis in the essay "Men Without Chests" (from *The Abolition of Man*), what we call "body, mind, and spirit." It's a literary mechanism as old as the Legend of the Charioteer in Plato's *Phaedrus* and the "soul triptych" in *The Brothers Karamazov*. We see it more recently in Frodo, Sam, and Gollum on Mount Doom; Han, Luke, and Leia in Star Wars; and Kirk, Spock, and McCoy in Star Trek.

This type of story works because, entering into fiction, we suspend disbelief. We shut down our critical faculties. Looking with this "eye of the heart" (instead of the mind), we see our reflection looking back at us from the hero—who represents the spirit in these triptychs—and identify with what he or she experiences.

In Rowling's world, Harry plays this role—as hero and spirit—to the max. He always chooses the right path, usually at risk to his life while fighting the Dark Lord. Dumbledore tells Harry repeatedly that Harry's power is his capacity for love. Harry survives many near-deaths because of his "bond of blood" with the sacrificial love of his mother. Seven years in a row, Harry dies a near death and "rises from the dead" in the presence of or as a symbol of Christ. Our hearts recognize, resonate with, and thrill to Harry's annual death to self and resurrection.

Like Lewis, Williams, and other greats, Rowling has written a spiritual allegory of the soul's transformation to perfection in Christ. Fiction, as philosopher and historian of religion Mircea Eliade explained in *The Sacred and the Profane*, serves a religious function in a secular culture. Moderns are immunized against sacramental experience, prayer, and worship, yet still long for the transcendent, something beyond the ego. We find it in sports, film, and music, but most powerfully in books, especially in novels in which the heart recognizes its reflection in a

character like Harry. We recognize and imaginatively experience our hearts' end in Christ's victory over death.

HARRY'S EFFECT ON POPULAR LIT

The elements that made Harry Potter so popular have combined to create a new template for popular fiction.

Three of the best-selling series of the 21st century are Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*, Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games*, and Patrick Ness's *Chaos Walking*. The three series are in different genres—teen gothic romance, post-apocalyptic anti-war novel, and dystopian young-adult science fiction, respectively—yet their commonalities are striking. Each is alchemical. Each is crafted in a ring composition. Each has a soul triptych with a central character we identify with. Each has a sub-theme about thought or mind as the fabric of existence. Hence, Edward Cullen's telepathy in the *Twilight* series, the mental Noise in *Chaos Walking*, and Dumbledore's message to Harry in *The Deathly Hallows* that the greater reality is “inside his head” (an exchange Rowling describes as the “key to the whole series”). Each of these books' heroes, too, has resurrection experiences after a sacrificial death.

It would be amazing enough if *Twilight* and Harry Potter, together with sales of over half a billion copies, followed this model. That Collins and Ness also use it while featuring

industry simply cannot ignore the Potter-Twilight elephants in the accounting room.

Despite these massive successes, the idea that Rowling's writing template is shaping our future book and film experiences may seem a stretch. Still, I'm convinced that Harry Potter is not only reshaping our present and future but also our past, at least our understanding of it. As literary critic F. R. Leavis wrote (about Jane Austen) in *The Great Tradition*, Rowling's “achievement has for us a retroactive effect: as we look back beyond her we see in what goes before, and see because of her, potentialities and significances brought out in such a way that, for us, she creates the tradition we see leading down to her. Her work, like the work of all great creative writers, gives a meaning to the past.”

Rowling admits that her writing essentially grew out of the “compost heap” of her prior reading. And a rich heap it is. Shakespeare, Dante, Dickens, Austen, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Lewis, Tolkien, even Nabokov receive more than hat tips and cursory allusions. Her choices of narrative voice (Austen's *Emma*), alchemical structure (Dante's *Comedia*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*), ring composition (Lewis, Williams, and many others), heart hero (Dostoevsky's *Brothers*, Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*), and her eye and mirror symbolism (Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, MacDonald's *Lilith*, Dodgson's *Alice*) are the stuff and substance of her greater magic.

The Hogwarts saga, through its revelation of the great hunger of readers for transcendence and, ultimately, resurrection, has provided a role model for future novelists.

the “thought as fabric of reality” theme makes this pattern remarkable. The storytelling genius behind Potter mania has bled into the work of the next generation of novelists, dubbed “Generation Hex.” Publishers are on the lookout for authors who write like Rowling. It's no doubt one reason Little, Brown and Company offered Meyer—an unpublished, stay-at-home mom—a \$750,000 advance: Her debut book popped positively at every Potter checkpoint.

THE MAGIC BEHIND THE MAGIC

The literary elements that typify the Harry Potter series have been around a long time. But Rowling's novels have brought them to our full attention. Rowling instinctually knew what readers want by using these tools, the magic behind the magic, so to speak.

Rowling did not create the truth of the Eliade thesis, that novels satisfy a spiritual hunger in a secular culture. But her saga has confirmed it spectacularly. Harry Potter revealed rather than created the great spiritual hunger of our time. The publishing industry and Hollywood are responding to this by delivering stories that borrow Rowling's model. The

So, as Harry Potter has become the shared text of Generation Hex, its readers are given fresh points of access into these classics. And these entry points will inevitably color our understanding of what came before us.

The release of the final Harry Potter movie isn't an end at all. The Hogwarts saga, through its revelation of the great hunger of readers for transcendence and, ultimately, resurrection, has provided both a role model for future novelists and screenwriters, as well as incentives for publishers and studios to seek out these postmodern parables. This is a *great* thing. The love of these books and their characters confirms the power of traditional Christian literary arts to reach and stir the human heart. It also confirms Tertullian's remarkable observation that “all souls are Christian souls”: that we all have darkened hearts that only Christ can illumine.

John Granger (no relation to Hermione) is the author of several books about Harry Potter, including *The Deathly Hallows Lectures* and *How Harry Cast His Spell: The Meaning Behind the Mania for J. K. Rowling's Bestselling Books*. He writes at HogwartsProfessor.com.



{ POLITICS }



NO ORDINARY KING

Our most cherished democratic values
are grounded in Jesus' sovereign authority.

By John Witte Jr.

CHRIST IS OUR KING. But Americans don't do kingship. The last time we had a king was in 1776. We threw him out after a real tea party. And we put firm safeguards in our Constitution to ensure no new king would ever rise here again. We admire kings and queens from afar, in Victorian books, BBC movies, and televised royal weddings. But at home we don't deal with kings and queens.

So for many democratic citizens today—in the United States and worldwide—the Bible's talk of kings and kingdoms can be mystifying. But such talk, if we read the Bible carefully, actually makes a great deal of sense even in our political setting.

A STRANGE SOVEREIGN

The Bible teaches that Christ the King is infinitely more powerful than any ruler on earth, even the Roman emperor or the Jewish King Herod, who were the supreme rulers of Christ's day. These earthly kings ruled only for a lifetime. Christ rules eternally. These earthly kings ruled only over a limited territory. Christ rules everywhere. These earthly kings had only political power. Christ has power over all creation. He orders the waves to be still. He turns water into wine. He feeds five thousand from one boy's lunch bag. He heals the sick. He restores the disabled. He drives out demons from their tormented hosts. He summons corpses from their graves. And when Christ rose from his own tomb, he made resurrection and eternal life available to all who believe in him. This was no ordinary king.

But for all this infinite and eternal power, Christ's incarnation as king is modest, understated, sublime, and sacrificial. Christ was born not in a palace but in a stable, close to the ground, surrounded by animals and shepherds. He did not travel with a legion of soldiers, as the Roman emperor did, but wandered about the countryside with a dozen men of humble origin. He dined not in elegant splendor with the rich and the powerful but with tax collectors and prostitutes, Samaritans and sojourners, the down and outs of the day.

Christ did not clatter into Jerusalem, as King Herod did, sitting in a splendid chariot bedecked with gold and jewels and drawn by twelve strong horses with shiny silver saddles. Christ plodded into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey who had never been ridden or broken. Christ did not enter Jerusalem through the main wide gate at the end of the straight road. He came through the smaller back gate, having descended the Mount of Olives and passed through the Valley of Death, which was known as Hell. Christ did not come to Jerusalem to attend a royal feast, as becomes an heir of the house of King David. He came to preside over a simple last supper with his friends, prefaced by his self-humbling act of washing their feet, even those of the one who would betray him.

When later arrested on trumped-up charges by local authorities, Christ did not claim sovereign immunity as any higher power of the day would have. His simple defense was, "My kingdom is not of this world." Even Pontius Pilate recognized this was no ordinary king.

While Christ's kingdom is not of this world, Christ still rules in this world. But, in extraordinary defiance of every handbook on royalty, Christ rules through fragile, weak, and sinful people. Christ appoints us to be his royal witnesses and ambassadors on earth. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people," Peter wrote to the new Christians (1 Pet. 2:9, *NRSV*). Each of us is called to represent and reflect, to embody and embrace God's royal prerogatives and divine rights on earth.

These rights belong to God the Father, who created humans in

his own image and commanded them to worship and obey him. These rights belong to God the Son, who embodies himself in the church and demands the full and free exercise of this body on earth. And these rights belong to God the Holy Spirit, who is "poured out upon all flesh" and governs the consciences of all persons in Christ.

As image bearers of God, each of us is called to reflect the Father's glory and majesty in the world, to represent God's sovereign interests in church, state, and society. As prophets, priests, and kings of God the Son, each of us is given the spiritual duty and right to speak and to prophesy, to worship and to pastor, to rule and to govern in the communities we inhabit. As ambassadors of God the Spirit, each of us is given the duty and right to "make disciples of all nations" by word and sacrament, by instruction and example, by charity and discipline.

THE DEMOCRATIC BIBLE

Here, in the Bible's teaching about the triune God, we have a key source for some of our most cherished democratic values: popular sovereignty as a reflection of the absolute sovereignty of God the Father; freedoms of speech, religion, and rule, because we all are prophets, priests, and kings of Christ; rights to serve, evangelize, and teach, because we all have the privilege to discharge the Great Commission aided by the Holy Spirit.

Our common calling as God's royal ambassadors is another sign of our radical equality. As Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28, *NKJV*). The New Testament is a leveler of the human race, a standing rebuke against false hierarchy. All have vocations that count. All have prophetic voices to be heard. All have priestly services to render. All have kingly gifts to be cherished.

This common calling is also a sign of our radical freedom. The New Testament is chock-full of bracing declarations on freedom: "For freedom, Christ has set us free." "You were called to freedom." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." We have all been given "the glorious freedom of the children of God." As God's creatures and ambassadors, we are utterly free in our innermost being. We are like the greatest king or queen on earth, above and beyond the power of everyone. We enjoy a sovereign immunity that no authority can touch or trespass.

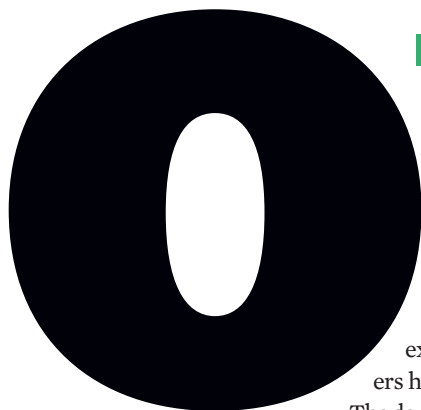
But while utterly free, we are not untutored. Christ has taught us how to serve as God's royal ambassadors on earth. The touchstones are there in the Gospels: that we remain close to the ground, that we live with humility and grace, that we care for the poor and sick, that we embrace the sojourner and stranger, that we seek out the needy and lost, that we teach by word and example, that we work to heal what is broken, that we share generously of our talents and gifts, that we deal fairly with our neighbors and friends, that we forgive those who do us harm, that we love even our enemies.

This is not a formula for weakness, a resume of the supine. There are times to rebuke the fools and blasphemers in our midst, to prophesy loudly against injustice, to kick out the merchants and harpies from our temples and homes, to exorcise the demons and devils from our community. Not out of pride, anger, or impulse, not out of pretended authority, but out of our inherited divine right and divine prerogative. For Christ is our king, and we are his ambassadors. ✚

John Witte Jr. is director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University.

Back to the Garden

{ CULTURAL TRENDS }



ON A RECENT SUNDAY, Steven Hebbard got stung by a bee. He seemed deliriously happy. “I got stung! I got stung! Whoopee!” Hebbard wasn’t crazy. He was just excited that his group of gardeners had put in their first beehive.

The day before, Hebbard had trained 19 students from Gateway Community Church, an Austin megachurch, on how to garden alongside the homeless and impoverished. And earlier this year, Hebbard broke ground on a new garden on an acre of land for the poverty-stricken refugee community living in East Austin. Most of the refugees are Nepalese or Bhutanese. “After looking at the space and realizing they had at least an acre that could be used for community gardening, I contacted the apartment complex manager, and he gave us the go-ahead.”

Thirty refugees—about half of them with a Hindu background—came to the kickoff. Christian refugees living nearby joined in, and many of them are now active at the new International Restoration Church.

“After the garden looked amazing in its fully planted form, I fully expected all the refugees to take off,” Hebbard told *Christianity Today*. “Some did, but most stuck around. The day was an amazing success.”

“Back to the garden” is a new way of doing church that adds a missional tweak to traditional gardening. Congregations and ministries are planting sweet corn around their sites, mobilizing gardening networks for the needy, and rediscovering the value of low-tech, high-touch community.

GROWING TREND

Several years ago, Hebbard caught a vision for urban gardening and launched the Karpophoreō Project (KP), inspired by the Greek phrase in Colossians 1, “bearing fruit in every good work.” His vision is to restore relationships between people and their environment through small-scale gardens.

Across the nation, similar programs are taking root. In Caledonia, Michigan, the sanctuary windows of Redeemer Covenant Church look out not onto headstones but corn, tomatoes, and other vegetable crops.

In New York City, a Bronx Baptist church is reaching out to urban youth by inviting them to an outdoor sanctuary of strawberry plants and watermelon vines at its Righteousness Community Garden.

In Charlottesville, Virginia, Orthodox theologian and author

Vigen Guroian mentors students by inviting them to garden on a five-acre plot.

Many Americans consider themselves gardeners, yet researchers have determined that the amount of gardening per U.S. household has been in steady decline. University of Virginia scholar Guroian confirms this. On a recent visit to see his mother in Connecticut, he walked down a residential street that years ago was a gardeners’ row. “Now, there are no gardens and at best a little shrubbery.”

There is no single cause, Guroian says, yet reliable statistics show that Americans are working longer hours and taking on more jobs outside the traditional workweek.

However, gardening associations say that after the 2008 economic crisis, gardening took off among people seeking to cut their grocery bills. In 2010, there was a 20 percent increase in small gardens. Jung Seed, a large Midwestern seed distributor, says that demand has begun to turn around, and that seed deliveries to churches and community ministries are on the rise.

Calvin DeWitt, co-founder of the Evangelical Environmental Network, told CT that he believes many Christians are increasingly motivated to garden as an antidote to high-tech, high-stress living.

“We have moved to the abstract even in the church,” says DeWitt. “We praise God for greatness, not the lilies of the field. Hymns with creation-rich verses have been dropped from hymnals in favor of more abstract references.”

For Christian gardeners, spiritual motivations typically outrank economic ones. The Christian Cultural Center landscaped an Edenic park around its Brooklyn building that evokes the Ten Commandments, Moses, and African American history. The design also invites the community into the garden as an act of neighborliness. Lead pastor A. R. Bernard says he is inspired when flowers hang through the fence, a kind of invitation to church for neighborhood kids and parents who walk by.

NON-DIGITAL PUBLIC SPACE

Christian gardening, Hebbard believes, creates public space for believers to grow and nonbelievers to begin to grow spiritually.

Part of the appeal is that it is a genuine alternative to the Internet. “I kept getting this call from God: ‘Unplug! Back to the soil!’” Hebbard says. Fresh out of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Hebbard was working for a federal agency in Austin but uncertain of his career path. Then a friend invited him to a reading group that met in a garden. They studied the writings of Baptist environmentalist Wendell Berry. “He turned my life upside down,” Hebbard says. “Berry articulated

Row by row, urban Christians learn to bear literal and spiritual fruit.

By Tony Carnes



Sowing Good Seed: Jen Ardill, Steven Hebbard (left), and Joe Thompson from the Karpophoreō Project prepare the ground for a new urban garden, which church volunteers are tending this summer.

so many things about our lives that I was feeling but couldn't say."

Hebbard threw himself into several urban farming internships. He realized he desired not farming per se but richer personal relationships through helping the poor and sharing the gospel. After the internships, Hebbard teamed up with Alan Graham, president and founding member of Austin-based Mobile Loaves and Fishes, a group that rehabs trailer homes and rents them to the homeless at low cost.

Hebbard had another big idea: If Christians lived among the homeless, the two groups could garden together and create a Christian community that would be a model to others. This vision evolved into Karpophoreō. Launched in April 2009, KP currently has 100 volunteers and 40 homeless gardeners. It has set up a community center in Austin's Royal Palms Mobile Home Park and is recruiting volunteers.

The approach has caught the imagination of young Austinites, including Jen Ardill. The John Brown University graduate came across KP accidentally but responded right away. "I elbowed my way in. I became involved in every way I could."

Ardill, currently on the KP staff, says that communal gardening has helped her address her shyness. "People now knock on my door to see if they can get some of my cilantro," she says.

At first, homeless individuals looked upon Hebbard's ardent gardeners with suspicion. Jimmy Northen, who lived on the streets for nine years, wondered, "Who are these people? What do they want? On the streets, you can't trust just anyone." But after KP started a Thursday night Bible study and a Friday meal called Stone Soup Breakfast, Northen was drawn in.

Or take mobile home resident Theresa Gonzalez. For years, she had been friendless. "I was very isolated," she says. "Then, I heard that they had a Bible study in the trailer across from me. I knew I needed something." She joined the study, made friends, and soon had flowers blooming in front of her home.

Because of her physical limitations, Gonzalez doesn't garden as much as she would like, but she provides cupcakes for birthday celebrations at the Bible studies. She started attending a Baptist church next to KP's garden at the trailer park. "And she stopped drinking," her granddaughter Isabella chimes in.

"Yes," Gonzalez says, "I stopped drinking after I started going to church."

GREATER HARVEST

Several Austin churches have expanded their outreach programs and seen their faith deepen through their connection to KP.

Last year, churchgoer Amy Hardin was growing restless at home with three boys, and wanted to practice a simpler lifestyle and make more connections with others. Her pastor challenged her to sacrifice something for Lent and to write down one way she could serve the needy. Hardin thought her boys were growing up without any appreciation for nature or compassion for the homeless.

"On a whim, I wrote down 'Garden and help the homeless,'" Hardin says. She typed "gardening for the homeless" into Google and discovered Hebbard's organization. "It was too good to be true."

Hardin spread the word about KP to friends at Austin New Church, and now a half-dozen families from the church work with KP.

Jen and Brandon Hatmaker launched their church plant in a south Austin area known as the "Death Valley of church planting." Some 27 attempts at church planting had failed. But Austin New Church has succeeded and grown to 400 people.

The Hatmakers call Austin New Church a "missional church," which for them means helping the poor and needy by fostering neighborliness. Over 120 of their new believers came to them by volunteering for church-sponsored outreach, including KP projects.

Another small, new church in Austin, Vox Veniae, has started a community garden and chose a person with disabilities to be chief gardener. While CT was visiting, Hebbard was learning beekeeping in order to build a beehive at Vox, which hopes to do more than gardening. Church leader Gideon Tsang says these efforts

allow the church and the community to partner authentically with needy individuals.

Citing his own spiritual development, Guroian says this church-community partnership gardening will produce a great spiritual harvest over time.

"We didn't go to church often," Guroian says, recalling his childhood. He didn't have real knowledge of God, but he loved to walk in the woods and experience the sense of wonder. "I was really looking for he who made these wonders."

In college, Guroian continued his search. "My professors didn't realize that they were teaching me the way to God." He concluded that a good work ethic is not enough in life. For him, biblical faith came through powerful images of the garden, the desert, and the harvest.

LOST DISCIPLINE

Some see both promise and danger in the current Christian gardening movement. Guroian admits that reverence for creation can become a fetish: "I get nervous when I see people reverently fondling the vegetables and fruits at Whole Foods. Just eat it, please."

On the other hand, he sees younger Christians gardening out of deep spiritual longings. "They have a real sense of a gap between their faith affirmations of the goodness of creation and the way they actually live their lives." The new gardeners also recognize that they have become too busy and self-focused. Gardening is one remedy.

For Guroian, being a gardener has become a vocation on par with his profession as a theologian. He writes in his book *The Fragrance of God*, "When I kneel in my garden, the aromas of the plants may overwhelm me . . . God's presence permeates my entire being, though he remains invisible to my eyes."

To go spiritually deeper, suggests Guroian, bring hymns into the garden, especially older hymns such as "In the Garden."

Later this year, Guroian will lead Antiochian Orthodox leaders at a retreat center. His plan is to garden with them while praying the ancient liturgy of the hours.

Tony Carnes is a senior writer for *Christianity Today* based in New York City.

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VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH

How ironic that today's staunchest defenders of the kJV tend to be deeply suspicious of the very hierarchies that the kJV was intended to preserve.

Dale A. Schoening
Bussey, Iowa

Thou Shalt Write CT

I appreciated Mark Noll's erudite consideration of the King James Version Bible ["A World Without the kJV," May]. The work of translation is as much a work of interpretation, and the fact that today's popular translations are just a few decades old should give us pause. Reading a modern translation alone, it's easy to err in the way C. S. Lewis once described: "Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books."

JAMES CAIN
Lawrenceville, Georgia

Like Noll, I was raised on the King James Version, but when *The Living Bible* appeared, I put my kJV on the shelf and never looked back. I don't deny its great cultural influence, but it uses a language I don't use, only recognize. Cultures and languages change, and the Bible must speak readers' language.

TIM DROWN
Jakarta, Indonesia

I found it interesting that the King James

Version didn't find universal acceptance at first, especially among dissenters and Catholics. How ironic that today's staunchest defenders of the kJV tend to be independent fundamentalist Baptists, spiritual descendants of the very dissenters who opposed the kJV—and who tend to be deeply suspicious of the very hierarchies that the kJV was intended to preserve.

DALE A. SCHOENING
Bussey, Iowa

Orthodoxy's Outreach

Conversation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the church worldwide can only be a healthy thing ["From Russia, with Love," May]. At the same time, it's clear that gospel proclamation is not always welcome in Russia. Evangelical groups have endured what we would see as persecution and denial of basic human rights, even imprisonment, for teaching the gospel. Hopefully as the global church engages the Russian Orthodox Church respectfully, the Church's openness to the global church will bring needed change.

GAYLAN MATHIESEN
Fargo, North Dakota

As a Pentecostal, I have come to deeply respect Orthodox churches. The more

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

53%
**The Seven Levels
of Lying**
Sarah Sumner

13%
**A World
Without the kJV**
Mark Noll

7%
**The Village Green:
What's Wrong
with Credit
Card Debt?**
Ron Blue, John
G. Stackhouse Jr.,
Mary Hunt

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



**A World Without
the kJV**
Mark Noll

I read the works of the church fathers, the more I see what my own theology has neglected. In general, Orthodox theologians have a much higher view than Protestants of the Trinity and the presence of God's Spirit in the believer. I disagree with parts of Orthodoxy, but I expect that in heaven I'll disagree with my own theology as I hold it now.

ROB DUNBAR
E-mail

India's Other Christians

"Migrating Ministry" [May] highlighted the great work God is doing among refugees, but misidentified Nagaland as "India's only predominantly Christian state." I recently spent three weeks in Mizoram, where about 90 percent of residents are Christian. I met refugees who had fled Burma's brutal regime and were forced to convert to Buddhism, and a missionary whose husband

was kidnapped and jailed by the regime. Unlike John Monger, many of the refugees can't go to a Christian college in India and be resettled in America. But among the refugees, the Mizoram church can offer refuge and hope.

JENNY YANG
Director of Advocacy, World Relief
Baltimore, Maryland

Faithfully Fibbing

I appreciated "The Seven Levels of Lying" [May], but wrestle with Sarah Sumner's

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

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conclusion that lying is always wrong. Sometimes "lying" is the most practical solution. I've checked boxes online that said, "I have read the terms of the license agreement," when I have not. Am I obligated to read it just because attorneys have forced companies to write encyclopedic legal agreements?

A more poignant example: Recently I came back from Africa with gifts from a ministry staff member to expedite shipping in the U.S. Passport control asked if anyone I didn't know had given me items to carry. Technically the answer was yes, but practically the answer was no—which I told the agent—because even though I didn't know the staffer personally, I knew she worked for our organization.

I appreciate that the Holy Spirit makes me aware of something I have said that was untrue and needs correcting. That's real life.

BOB MACLEOD
Orlando, Florida

Certainly we all lie too frequently, but I question Sumner's thesis that there are no exceptions to the no-lying mandate. I have never been in a situation like Corrie ten Boom's, but have been in one that I hope Sumner never faces. I tried to find "creative ways to speak the truth in love" to my mother during the final years of her life, and succeeded occasionally. I lied to her

more than once as she succumbed to the torments of Alzheimer's, when she would plead for me to answer the question, "My mother and father aren't dead, are they?"

DIANE GRANT
Concord, California

It's instructive that the lowest circles of hell in Dante's *Inferno* are reserved for those who have committed sins of "fraud": flattery, hypocrisy, theft, sowing of discord, false witness, and treachery. Dante had been politically active earlier in life, and he must have seen that sins of deceit undermine the very possibility of relationship and community.

MARILYN LUNDBERG MELZIAN
Rolling Hills Estates, California

The Blessed U.S.

I concur with John Fea: Americans did not found a Christian nation ["Cherry-Picking from the Past," CT Review, May]. But the Second Great Awakening helped imprint Christianity on the emerging culture. Few Americans from 1800 to 1960 would have challenged the Christian identity of America. Further, Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations" implies that a state can become Christian. Yet most Christians run from the suggestion, preferring an unspoken alliance with secularism.

BILL PAYNE
Ashland, Ohio



ONLINE POLL

FAMILY DYNAMICS
Should Christians treat Harold Camping as a brother in Christ?

17%

Yes, he's simply misguided and needs correction.

36%

Yes, but also as a dangerous false teacher.

23%

No, his false prophecies put him outside the church.

10%

No, his anti-church attitudes put him outside orthodoxy.

14%

It's not my place to judge.

Total votes: 346

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"The whole setting-the-date thing reminds me of the boy who cried wolf. Yes, the Lord will return. He says he will. That's all I need to know."

ms muse, on the prediction that the world would end on May 21, 2011.

CT Liveblog: "Should Christians Care about Harold Camping, May 21, & Doomsday?," by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"Clearly Jesus thought the problem was in the person doing the lust-ing. Why have we continually instead tried to put the blame and responsibility on the woman?"

Sue, on how the church should view survivors and perpetrators of sexual assault.

Her.meneutics: "Beyond SlutWalk: A New Conversation about Sexual Assault," by Katelyn Beatty

"Although his death was of top priority in this war and consequently seen as a victory, Christians should remember that whether or not Osama was evil, God created him."

Teresa, one of many readers to address Christians' reaction to Osama bin Laden's death.

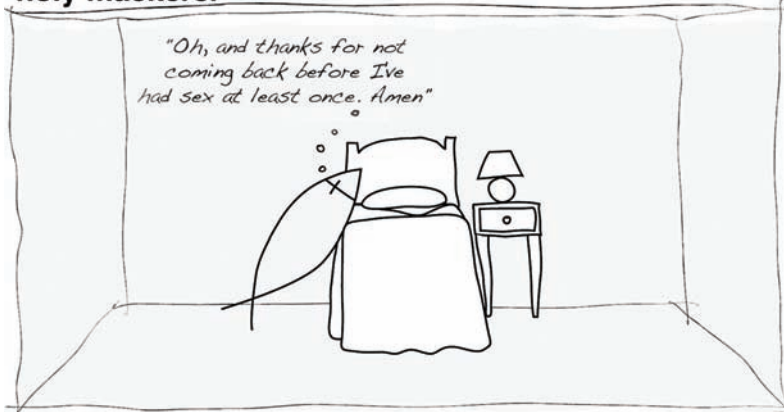
CT Politics Blog: "How Should Christians Respond to Osama bin Laden's Death?," by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

"Just another example that could inspire us to make a better effort in representing Jesus to others. Shouldn't love, respect, and humility come quicker to Christians than judgment?"

Rick, responding to discussion on how to help people understand the gospel.

CT Entertainment Blog: "Brad Pitt: 'I've Got Issues' with Christianity," by Mark Moring

holy mackerel



The Prayer of Christian Teens on May 22.

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Harold Camping Is (Sort of) Right

Jesus will put an end to this earth—but that is not the end of the story.

Harold Camping said something true. The media mocked him. But even Christians who disagree with the radio preacher's Rapture theology can appreciate his basic conviction.

After his May 21 prediction of the Rapture failed, he said that it had been only a "spiritual coming." He then added, "It won't be spiritual on October 21st. The world is going to be destroyed altogether, but it will be very quick."

Whether the destruction will be very quick, we don't know. We are unconvinced about Camping's timetable. But in fact, the earth will pass away. Jesus said so (Matt. 24:35).

This is disturbing news for some, including many North American evangelicals. We've become successful and comfortable in advanced capitalistic societies, and most days we rather like the earth we inhabit. That's one reason we are fond of imagining heaven mostly as a problem-free earth, and that our work on earth will continue in heaven.

In the book *Heaven in the American Imagination*, historian Gary Scott Smith notes how socioeconomic status shapes a person's view of heaven. For example, he says, between 1890 and 1920 technological innovation "dramatically increased industrial production and agricultural output and cures were discovered for many endemic diseases." During this time, per-capita GNP increased almost fourfold, he says, and "progress abounded" in many fields.

"Paralleling these developments," he notes, "greater numbers of Christians conceived of heaven as an active realm where the saints performed varied forms of service and grew substantially in knowledge, character, and spirituality."

A century later, we find ourselves awash in technological and social advances that have multiplied our economic, material, and social goods. Evangelicals, imbued as they are with the Protestant work ethic, have been among

the chief beneficiaries of all this. It should not surprise us that we are now drawn to descriptions of heaven that sound like the cushy lives we already enjoy. As Rob Bell puts it in *Love Wins*, "Honest business, redemptive art, honorable law, sustainable living, medicine, education, making a home, tending a garden . . . will all go on in the age to come." All well and good for those who have a large measure of economic freedom and financial security. For the poor and oppressed who endure slave-like conditions doing back-breaking or mind-numbing toil for 16 hours a day, health, the rule of law, good education, and rewarding labor are not mere extensions of the present. Such things can come only with the sharp in-breaking of God's kingdom.

The important point is that heaven is not about us. The glory of heaven is not about what we do or feel but whom we are with: "God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them" (Rev. 21:3).

There is continuity between this age and the age to come, but there is also great discontinuity. Now we see dimly, then face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Marriage will be a thing of the past (Luke 20:35). Death and crying will be no more (Rev. 21:4). The kingdom will be so different that the writers of Scripture can picture it only as the replacement of the present physical earth and sky by something radically new (Matt. 24:35; 2 Pet. 3:10–11; Rev. 21:1).

This is crucial to remember in our

optimistic, entrepreneurial age, when so many Christians talk about "building the kingdom of heaven," as if our good works are bricks in the foundations of the New Jerusalem. More than once we have heard pastors say that the purpose of the church is "to make the world a better place."

Yes and no. Loving our neighbors requires works of mercy and justice, which can be a powerful witness to and taste of life in the

coming kingdom. Jesus commanded us to seek the kingdom and its justice as our first priority, and not to worry about the risks involved (Matt. 6:33). But carefree engagement in kingdom activity is possible only because it is God who brings the kingdom and therefore guarantees its success. We do not build

or create the kingdom. We inherit it as something prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34). This is tremendous news; it puts the responsibility not on the shoulders of the fickle and sinful, but on the strong and merciful back of Jesus.

Love also requires us to tell our comfortable neighbors (and ourselves) that Jesus' kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18:36), that a day of judgment is coming after which this earth will be destroyed and remade. As important as it is to show forth the future by justice and mercy in the present, it is also important to call people to repentance and faith, that they might enjoy the new world Christ will bring.



Carefree engagement in kingdom activity is possible only because it is God who brings the kingdom and therefore guarantees its success.

*Dying
Decisions*

Should family or friends intervene if a terminally ill Christian decides against life-extending treatment?

WE ARE NOT OUR OWN

Dennis Sullivan, a physician and bioethicist, is director of the Center for Bioethics at Cedarville University in Ohio.

Brian Green had been the pastor of a small Baptist church for 12 years. He and his wife, Judy, were looking forward to their first grandchild. Then came the sudden news: Judy had stage four ovarian cancer. The prognosis was poor, but exploratory surgery and chemotherapy might extend her life by a year or more.

Judy was not interested. She rejected surgery or chemo, saying, "God is in control; I'm going to heaven."

Distraught over her decision, Brian came to me for advice. How should he respond?

From an ethics perspective, the answer was simple. Make sure that Judy did not have a treatable depression and that her decision-making capacity was intact. Ultimately, competent patients have the right to make their own decisions, including refusing treatment.

However, from a spiritual perspective, things are a bit more complex. First Corinthians 3:16–17 tells us that our bodies are God's temples and that God's Spirit dwells in us. We may not destroy God's temple, for it is sacred. The epistle later reminds us, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (6:19–20).

It is easy to say, "God is in control." But how does that guide us at the end of life? Paul gives a hint in his letter to the Philippians: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. . . . I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith" (1:21–25).

So what is the key question?

Based on Paul's example, it is not, "How can I suffer as little as possible?" A better question would be, "How can I best minister to others in my final days on this earth?" And that ministry is surely relational.

Our relational ministry at the end of life may involve addressing unfinished business with friends and loved ones. Many who are suffering from a terminal illness worry about being a "burden" to their family. For most, family members would gladly bear this burden. In fact, they may feel hurt if deprived of that right. In the last days of life, our final ministry should be one of humility—practicing vulnerability and allowing others to care for us. Ultimately, we are preparing for heaven, and we become more and more like children as we prepare

to meet our heavenly Father.

I was never able to share this perspective with Brian, and I'm not sure it would have made a difference; Judy passed away just four months after her diagnosis. But his dilemma gave me new insight into the deep meaning of the phrase, "God is in control."

DEATH CAN BE A WITNESS

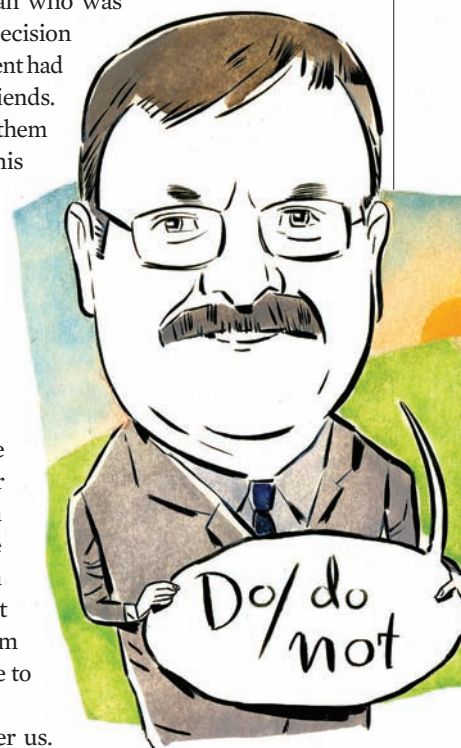
Rob Moll is the author of *The Art of Dying: Living Fully Into the Life to Come* (InterVarsity).

Several years ago, I visited Chestnut Street Baptist Church in Camden, Maine. The small congregation gathered on a Sunday evening, heard the sermon of a dual vocation pastor, and then prayed.

The church is located in a former fishing village turned vacation spot for Bostonians, and these members were local Mainers who kept it alive. The congregation's prayer requests—in addition to travel mercies and health concerns—witnessed to Christ in a largely secular community. One of those prayer requests continues to ring in my ears. It was for a man who was suffering from cancer. His decision not to pursue curative treatment had shocked his family and his friends. He, however, sought to show them where his hope lay: not in his health or his longevity but in Jesus Christ, who has defeated death.

This man had reached the point of asking himself, as did the apostle Paul in Philippians 1, whether it was better to live or die. We Christians live with the same dilemma. We know the power of the Resurrection and yearn to know it more fully. We believe, as Paul wrote in Romans 8:11, that "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead . . . will also give life to your mortal bodies."

Death has no power over us.



While Paul preferred to remain in the body, Jesus submitted to death and so defeated it. As Christians, we should neither seek death nor flee from it.

In our death-confused culture, Christian fearlessness in the face of death is desperately needed. Dionysius was a third century bishop of Alexandria who shepherded the church through horrific persecution. He also oversaw the church's medical care during an epidemic. He later wrote in praise of the Christians' service in the face of death. He compared it to martyrdom: "Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead. . . . The best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner."

Such concern stood in sharp contrast to the pagans in the city: "At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treated unburied corpses as dirt." In *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, author Rodney Stark links the growth of the church to its health care service.

Today our culture seeks to avoid death through increasingly expensive medical technology. Christians like those in Camden can point to an alternate story. Death is no longer our enemy; it has already been defeated. Meeting it gracefully without needlessly prolonging life can be the best witness, for those suffering terminal illness and their family members. We believe, as the poet John Donne wrote, "One short sleep past, we wake eternally, / And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die."



TURN TO THE COMFORTER

Robert Orr is professor of medical ethics at Loma Linda University and author of *Medical Ethics and the Faith Factor: A Handbook for Clergy and Health Care Professionals* (Eerdmans).

Sometimes the answer to this question is a clear yes or no. Other times it is not clear. When a patient declines treatment that has some potential for benefit, it is crucial to know the reason.

Your mom's painful, widespread cancer has blocked the urine outflow from her kidneys. Dialysis might postpone her death for a few days or weeks, but she declines because she feels she is no longer able to fulfill God's call in her life. It is imperative to continue to make her comfortable, but probably not necessary or helpful to interfere with her refusal.

Your son's wife has left him, and he is so depressed, he loses his job. He develops a life-threatening infection and says he doesn't want antibiotics, because as far as he can see, his life is over. You should intervene in this suicidal decision, even over his objection.

Those were easy. What if your husband has a severe stroke, leaving him paralyzed on one side, unable to speak or swallow, and he does not want a feeding tube? Many factors come into play here.

Other situations where intervention over patient refusal may be justified include when a patient feels like she is too much of a burden to others, or is overly concerned about the cost of care, or acknowledges she has unfinished business with loved ones or with God.

How does a believer look at such gray dilemmas in medical ethics? There are several biblical precepts to consider.

First, human life is sacred. Each individual, regardless of his or her ability to function, is made in the image of God.

Second, human life is finite. Since the Fall, we are exposed to suffering and subject to death. Unless Jesus returns first, we will all die. Some believe that, in life-extending decisions, to even consider quality of life issues only violates the sanctity of life. But this is not always the case. Factors such as a patient's amount of suffering, ability to interact with others, and the burdens and cost of treatment can be useful in making a difficult decision.

God has allowed us to develop technologies that can cure disease and prolong life. In addition, he has given us dominion over our lives and our resources, and we are expected to be good stewards of both.

God is sovereign and omnipotent. He doesn't require our technology if he chooses to intervene supernaturally. No matter the outcome, believers can look forward to an eternity in heaven, praising God forever.

In gray situations, not all believers will come to the same conclusion. Some will place a different priority on these biblical precepts than others. Some will choose life-prolonging medical advances, and some will not; both can be wise decisions. But all believers do have something in common. We all have access to a Comforter. We can support, counsel, and pray for each other, seeking God's wisdom, guidance, and peace.



The Power and the Glamour

Searching for Beauty amid Hollywood's beautiful people.

I recently returned from Hollywood. I was flown there and back, housed more than comfortably at the Hyatt Regency on Avenue of the Stars. I was there (ahem!) on official *Christianity Today* business, accepting an award for an article about food and animal welfare. I can still see the plush of the red carpet, the glamour of the designer gowns, the gleam of the chandeliers in the grand ballroom.

Given the deeply theological person I am, and given the sophistication of CT's readers, let me get to essential matters: What did I wear? A black chiffon dress with just one problem: a visible hole near the hem, which I discovered five minutes before show time. I had to wear it—I had brought nothing else. So much for class and beauty.

I slunk into the ballroom late feeling disheveled and underdressed, with barely enough time to fix my face. I found myself surrounded by flocks of unearthly beautiful people.

I sat across the dinner table from a bejeweled and tuxedo-clad couple who treated me to stunningly perfect profiles. During the televised ceremonies, a parade of famously gorgeous faces filled the stage and mega-screens mounted beside it. At the after party, in line for exquisite vegan fare, I stood in front of—or, rather, beneath—one of the presenters, a goddess in a swooping gold lamé gown, bronze makeup, and a flawless face. I could hardly stop staring. Among such company, I was, at best, faceless.

And how does such beauty enter a ballroom? Not the ordinary way, I discovered. The celebrities waited behind a 40-foot banner with the Genesis Award logo in front and a red carpet at the base. A gaggle of photographers, some of them perched on ladders, jockeyed for position. The entire area was heavily guarded and cordoned

off from riffraff like me. When a celebrity emerged onto the carpet, the ballroom lit up and the shouting began: "Over here! Here! Look this way!" Like a fluid mannequin, she would move into poses, locking her eyes onto every camera she could see, her face following the voices. With lights exploding, faces radiant, hands and voices raised, the mood was exultant. I felt like I was in church.

In such a place, I thought of a C. S. Lewis quote: "The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing . . . to find the place where

as not just idea or place or artifact, but the human-beautiful. Beauty in the flesh, personal, animate. Beauty like us, only better.

But their beauty, and our need for it, appeared a calamitous burden. So many faces I saw that night had been visibly altered—plumped, sliced, stitched, patched, pulled. "Nothing is in its final form," Lewis wrote in *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. I marveled at what we have done to the face and body searching for that form. Some stars were so changed by surgeries, I almost couldn't recognize them. Some, like the couple facing me at the table, wore rigid, inexpressive features. The towering goddess in the thick eye shadow could not seem to turn her eyes to look down at me. Their beauty kept them distant, unrecognizable, less human.

For all this disappointment, I know there will always be a shouting crowd at the edge of the red carpet. We won't stop elbowing to see the made-up lovelies on the rug, even knowing they are marred and fake. It gives us hope that we ourselves can be fixed. We all want this: better bodies, better faces, better selves.

I have reason to hope, because there is another red carpet day coming. The screen will roll back, and out from a blinding flash of light, he will emerge. We will see his face and form and gasp: Here is what we have been longing for all our short lives. Here is where all the beauty comes from. And as he comes near, when we look close in his face, we will finally be given our own true faces, like his: holy, human, beautiful. ✚



all the beauty came from."

Was this the place? Had I found it?

Like so many others, I am in pursuit of the beautiful. "Beauty will save the world," said the Prince in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. I almost believe this. I live on an island in Alaska, on a cliff over the ocean, beneath spruce and snow-covered mountains. I follow beauty's trail into landscapes, music, theology, literature, art. Yet as stunning as it all is, somehow I know—as the glittering audience in the ballroom that night knew—it is not enough. We long for more, for beauty

We long for beauty as not just idea or place or artifact, but the human-beautiful. Beauty in the flesh, personal, animate. Beauty like us, only better.



A Second-Coming Christian

The 'blessed hope' was the linchpin of my father's faith.



My father didn't plan to die. He planned for his death, of course, arranging for a burial plot next to my mother's and providing in his will for my stepmother. He was provident about such matters, as a good Christian should be.

But he didn't plan to die. He planned instead to "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). As he approached his 90th birthday, it seemed like he might indeed live to see the Second Coming. While his friends fought cancer, heart disease, and dementia, his body presented him with only minor challenges. He worked actively on his land and served in his community. As his friends succumbed to their diseases, he shrugged and said, "I plan to live until Jesus comes."

And then he was dead. Suddenly. With no warning.

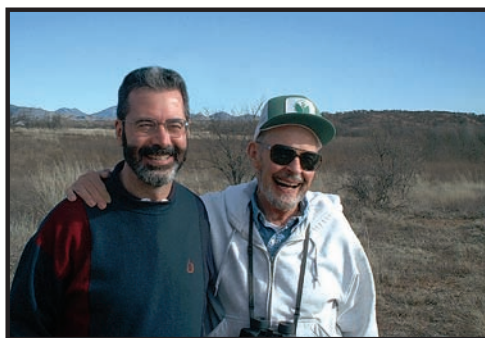
Fathers and sons often don't see eye to eye. Dad listened to Rush Limbaugh. I listen to NPR. Dad played Alan Jackson on his stereo. I have Thomas Hampson on my iPod. But on this we agreed: The Christian faith is essentially eschatological.

Jesus came preaching the arrival of God's reign, the goal of history. When Jesus died and rose again, the door of history swung on its hinges, and the world moved from expectation to fulfillment. The apostles persistently taught that we are to live in the light of the Last Day, with hope and patient forbearance. The church permanently enshrined that apostolic hope in the Nicene Creed: "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead."

A good friend of mine—a Jewish rabbi—says that it is part of a parent's job description to embarrass one's offspring. It didn't happen too often, but there were times that my father did his job—such as when we would go to a restaurant and he would ask the wait staff to pray before our meal. (One of my children once told him, "Grandpa, you're weird, but weird is good.")

I didn't always like the manifestations of Dad's religion, but I admired his zeal and cherished his core convictions. He knew that he was saved by grace through faith in Jesus, and that gave him a confidence that easily overflowed in generosity.

Confidence in God meant that he happily spent himself for others. My mother's decade of dementia demanded round-the-clock devotion. When she was done with the troubles of this world, he went where people needed him, faithfully leading twice-weekly



Birding: David Neff and his father at Arizona's Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge.

Bible studies at a penitentiary and dispensing canned goods at a food pantry.

When he wasn't serving, he was welcoming. His retirement home perches on a prime hillside of private land surrounded by national forest, a mecca for birders (including John R. W. Stott, who told me he had visited that locale three times). Dad's veranda became a place of spontaneous welcome for visitors from around the world. In season, you could observe 12 species of hummingbirds while sitting and rocking on that porch.

The day he died, he once again entertained strangers.

On weekends with beautiful weather, the park land adjacent to his home was usually crowded with picnickers, hikers, campers, birders, and nature buffs. April 4 was no exception.

Dad noticed a Mexican American family wandering about. He asked if he could help, and when they said all the picnic spots were taken, he invited them onto his land and showed them where they could safely build a fire. They had driven a long way, and he didn't want them to be disappointed.

Dad had been unduly influenced (in my humble NPR-ish opinion) by talk-show hosts to be suspicious of migrants. In Arizona, the law had turned anyone of Mexican origin into a suspect.

Happily, Dad's faith was stronger than his prejudices. On his last day, he welcomed a Spanish-speaking family onto his turf. After they had a chance to cook and enjoy their meal, my dad returned—with Bible in hand. He asked if they would want to study the Bible with him. They agreed, and he shared the gospel and the blessed hope.

After he died, I walked his property and let the place he loved speak to me. There, in the dirt, I saw the ashes of a fire: a sign of his final act of hospitality and of his final testimony to his passion for the Second Coming.

A little bit farther up the hill, I saw bloodstains on the ground where he had fallen. A sign of his mortality, a hard truth he resisted acknowledging. He didn't live until the Second Coming, but he lived with a gospel passion till the end.

Dad listened to Rush Limbaugh. I listen to NPR. Dad played Alan Jackson on his stereo. I have Thomas Hampson on my iPod. But on this we agreed: The Christian faith is eschatological.

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CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS

Common Grace and Amazing Grace

David Brooks's portrait of human flourishing lacks the essential elements of rescue and redemption.

By Andy Crouch

The center of moral authority is shifting in Western culture. In the 20th century it shifted from clergy to psychiatrists, from Jonathan Edwards's followers to Freud's. Now the ground is shifting again, to neuroscientists, cognitive psychologists, and behavioral economists: the high priests of the brain. Try browsing any major news site without encountering a story about how our brains are primed for insider trading, serial monogamy, or Chipotle burritos.

These stories reflect real and remarkable progress. We understand more of the

brain's biochemistry, the neurotransmitters and synapses that make it the most complex system known in the universe. Researchers have designed ever more clever experiments that tease out the complexities of human behavior. (Did you know that men who have just walked across a rickety bridge find a young woman more attractive than do men who have just been sitting on a bench?) The results have reaffirmed what the wise have always known: We know very little about ourselves—the habits and hunches

that shape our choices before we know we are choosing. But can neuroscience offer insight into not just the way we are, but the way we ought to be?

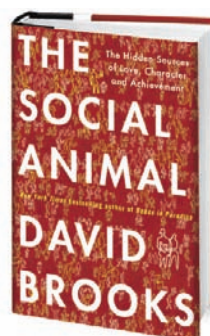
To judge by **The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement** (Random House) ★★★★★, David Brooks thinks so. Like *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* and Brooks's other forays into what he calls "comic sociology," this book is funny, frequently wise, and almost always spot on in its set pieces on the ways of cosmopolitan elites. But none of his past books were so packed with illuminating summaries of otherwise obscure and technical scientific findings, and none addressed so explicitly science's implications for "human flourishing"—a wonderful and resonant phrase that deserves wider attention.

Brooks believes earlier modernistic understandings of the good life have proven inadequate. For one thing, the "rational animal" of the Enlightenment is far less rational than it supposes. Emotion, peer pressure, past experience, stereotypes, and a thousand other hidden factors influence our reasoning. But in Brooks's telling, this is no great loss, because the good human life is less about thinking than relating. Our rationality comes and goes, but from conception to death we are social animals, thriving only when shaped by others: "Your unconscious wants to entangle you in the thick web of relations that are the essence of human flourishing."

And emotion, far from distorting reason, is actually a resource for reasoning, because

emotion turns out to be an extraordinarily effective way to integrate and respond to complexity. "The human mind can be pragmatic," Brooks writes, "because deep down it is romantic." Without the guidance of our gut, we would be hopelessly overwhelmed with information.

A flourishing human being,



then, is a relationally skilled, emotionally mature creature. This is a refreshingly holistic picture of the good life with which no Christian would disagree. We believe the very foundations of the cosmos are relational, that the world is the free outpouring of a triune God whose very being is love. It's no surprise that image bearers of a relational God would be hardwired for deep connections, right down to the "mirror neurons" that allow us to experience viscerally and directly what we see others experiencing. Nor should any Christian refuse the chastening discovery that we are mysteries to ourselves, susceptible to a range of unlovely subconscious motivations, and incapable—without discipline—of living virtuously and well.

HAROLD AND ERICA

Yet when Brooks tries to paint a normative picture, he falters. His scientific summaries are woven into a fictional coming-of-age story about Harold and Erica, two modern people who meet, marry, and contribute to society (though, perhaps tellingly, never have children). Harold is a scion of education and privilege; Erica is not—she is a half-Chinese, half-Hispanic child of a disempowered urban

'This is the happiest story you've ever read,' reads Brooks's baffling first sentence. Surely he has his tongue in his comic-sociologist's cheek?

family. By narrating their infancy, childhood, courtship, marriage, careers, and old age, Brooks aims to show how neuroscience can illuminate a "story of love, character, and achievement."

But the story is odd at several points. First, despite Erica's childhood struggles, both partners are absurdly well-credentialed and accomplished. It would appear that human flourishing is helped along by an Ivy League degree and a stint at a major consulting firm. But the possibility of flourishing motorcycle mechanics or stay-at-home moms—let alone flourishing persons with cognitive disabilities or physical limitations—goes entirely unexplored.

Then there is Erica's brief fling with adultery, her only real moral failure. Erica's indiscretion could have been a catalyst of self-discovery and transformation, but in Brooks's story of upper-middle-class well-adjustment, it's a mere speed bump on the road to a warm,

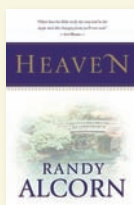
if not passionate, "companionate marriage." Certainly infidelity, like premarital sex, is not always a Category 5 emotional hurricane, especially for those with abundant social capital. Yet one senses no real indignation. What else would you expect from social *animals*, after all? Radical commitment just isn't in our nature. Brooks doesn't seem to consider whether the social arrangements that make us human might require precisely such radical commitments. Instead, he sets the moral bar comfortably low, right about where most NPR listeners could comfortably clear it on the first try.

AMAZING GRACE

This is definitely a story of achievement and, in certain limited respects, a story of the development of character. But it's hardly a story of love (Harold never discovers his wife's infidelity, so we never see how he would have responded to betrayal). It is clearly not a story

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON HEAVEN

By Paul Enns, author of *Heaven Revealed* (Moody, 2011)



HEAVEN

RANDY ALCON (TYNDALE HOUSE)

This is without question the most thoroughly researched, biblically oriented publication on heaven. Alcorn shows how the new heaven and new earth reflect the culmination of God's original purpose for mankind—his kingdom restored on a new earth.



ONE MINUTE AFTER YOU DIE

ERWIN W. LUTZER (MOODY)

In dealing with both heaven and hell, Lutzer writes with passion and compassion. This book will minister to the broken-hearted believer, giving joy and hope of reunion with believing loved ones. The third and fourth chapters alone—on ascending to and arriving in heaven—are worth the price of the book.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF HEAVEN

ALISTER E. MCGRATH (BLACKWELL)

Reminding readers that "imagining heaven" is a "God-given human capacity," McGrath traces the variant views of heaven over the centuries, providing insight on how people have understood heaven, culminating with the consolation of heaven and the longing for heaven as seen in the writings of C. S. Lewis.

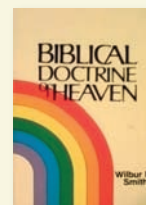


HEAVEN

Better by Far: Answers to Questions About the Believer's Final Hope

J. OSWALD SANDERS (DISCOVERY HOUSE)

Writing on a popular level, Sanders, who was twice a widower, speaks to the heart. He explains the transition to heaven and addresses other often-asked questions: Will we know one another? Is heaven a place or a state? What will we do there?



THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF HEAVEN

WILBUR M. SMITH (MOODY)

Smith takes the reader through a thorough biblical study, rebuffing modern philosophers and then addressing questions such as the intermediate state, our inheritance and occupations in heaven, and the new heaven and new earth.

of grace—not, at least, in the sense of a gift that arrives exactly at the point of our greatest loss and despair. Perhaps, borrowing from the Calvinist lexicon, we could call it a story of common grace—of provisional, everyday blessings, the sun that rises on the just and the unjust. It is certainly a story of good fortune, of good parenting, of well-honed temperaments and carefully measured risks (say, leaving a corporate job to start one's own firm)—but it is not a story of rescue. Indeed, the main characters, by dint of hard work and good luck, seem not to need any rescuing at all.

“This is the happiest story you’ve ever read,” reads Brooks’s baffling first sentence. Surely he has his tongue in his comic-sociologist’s cheek? At most, you could call *The Social Animal* mildly happy, or happily mild. Yet authentic human stories—those we tell ourselves and our friends in unguarded moments—burn brighter. They feature precipitous drops and vertiginous triumphs. America’s best loved hymn is about wretches—once lost, blind, and fearful—rescued by grace and overflowing with gratitude. Should we really be content with modulating our harmful instincts, guardedly cultivating helpful ones, and hoping for the modest fulfillments that middle-class prudence can deliver?

The old saw about the Hebrew word *shalom* is that it refers to more than the absence of conflict—it anticipates the full flowering of the created world and God’s image bearers. No vision of *shalom* is complete without amazing grace—without a broken cosmos rescued and redeemed, oriented towards a final tableau of awed and grateful worship, bright shining as the love that moves the sun and the other stars. The reasonably fulfilling and well-remunerated lives of Harold and Erica seem to exemplify the truncated version of *shalom*. Certainly, a world where everyone enjoys such small graces would represent quite an improvement on the world we have. But without the world to come, it may be that human flourishing is a cruel mirage. We are no less than social animals, but to understand ourselves, let alone flourish, we must also grasp that we were made to be far more. ✦

Andy Crouch is a CT editor at large and the author of *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (IVP).

Picturing Paradise

How conditions on earth shape our views of the afterlife. By Bill Walker

In *Heaven in the American Imagination* (Oxford University Press) ★★★★★, Gary Scott Smith surveys the vast landscape of religion in the United States, showing how changing historical circumstances have influenced ideas and portraits of heaven. From traditional Christian theology and sermons on hell’s eternal torments, to popular culture, near-death experiences, and New Age perspectives, Smith highlights important currents of reflection on the afterlife. His research, which draws upon sources ranging from art and literature to music and cinema, should appeal to a variety of readers. And while his overviews simplify complex matters of theology, the end result is nonetheless valuable, scholarly, and deeply informed.

Smith focuses primarily on Protestant and evangelical conceptions of heaven. Beginning with a detailed study of Puritan beliefs, he analyzes the impact of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and the Great Awakenings. Early evangelicals associated heaven with splendorous beauty, the grandeur of God, and the astounding eternal love the saints would share with their Lord. Nineteenth-century slaves, on the other hand, anticipated heavenly rewards of freedom, justice, and compensation for suffering. Before the Civil War, descriptions of heaven stressed themes of domesticity, family reunion, and leisure. Later, during the Gilded Age, heavenly visions tended toward pictures of ongoing personal growth, work, and service.

Unitarians, deists, freethinkers, Mormons, and Social Gospellers offered their own very different portrayals of heaven. More recently, in an era marked by greater religious plurality, thinking on heaven has evolved significantly, as Smith amply demonstrates in a chapter revealingly titled, “Heaven in a Postmodern, Anxiety-ridden, Entertainment-oriented, Therapeutic, Happiness-based Culture.” Yet Smith explains that the

New Atheist movement has neither weakened confidence in heaven’s existence nor altered the substance of believers’ expectations.

Smith insists that American visions of heaven have always accentuated and reflected the dominant societal trends of the age, as well as the hopes and expectations people have about ultimate human fulfillment. Still, despite such variations, he concludes that Christians have remained remarkably consistent in maintaining that heaven will be more beautiful, enjoyable, and spectacular than anyone can imagine.

As for *who* can enter heaven, and *how*, passionate debates persist between different branches of Christendom. While Catholics and Protestants both affirm the need for grace, they continue to disagree about the existence of purgatory and the relationship between faith and good works. Within the Protestant fold, Calvinists and Arminians debate the nature of salvation, wrestling over the interplay between God’s sovereignty and human free will.

Smith contends, however, that last century’s dominant theological controversy pitted traditional, conservative views of heaven against liberal challenges. Is heaven an otherworldly paradise into whose comforts one gains admission through faith in Jesus Christ? Or is heaven a matter of achieving justice here and now, of “bringing heaven to earth” through political and social reforms?

Advocates of feminist, Latin American, and black liberation theologies have more or less adopted the latter perspective. But Smith, in closing, offers a partial defense of the older view. Even if concentrating

on heaven sometimes leads to apathy, many of those who keep the afterlife firmly in sight not only strive after personal holiness, but also work diligently to better our world. ✦

Bill Walker is a doctoral student in philosophy of religion and theology at Claremont Graduate University.



GOD BEHAVING BADLY

Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?

DAVID T. LAMB

(INTERVARSITY PRESS, 205 PAGES)

An Old Testament custom] that seems unnecessarily harsh is the “eye for an eye” laws, also called *lex talionis*, or law of exact equivalence. Many people are familiar with Jesus’ radical response to this law in the Sermon on the Mount, in which he tells his listeners to “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39). The clearest expression of this law appears in Leviticus.

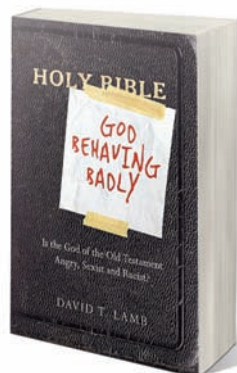
If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him (Lev. 24:19–20).

If you injure another person’s bone, eye or tooth, as punishment your bone, eye or tooth will be injured similarly. Christians today are called by Jesus not to respond with an eye for an eye, but with turning the other cheek, going the second mile and loving our enemies (Matt. 5:38–44). (Recently, one of my sons gave the other a wedgie. While chasing the perpetrator, the victim yelled out, “An eye for an eye, a wedgie for a wedgie.” While fleeing, the perpetrator replied, “You’re supposed to turn the other cheek.”)

Just as Jesus’ commands from the Sermon on the Mount were progressive for first-century Israel, the *lex talionis* principle was progressive for ancient Israel. Old Testament scholar David Baker describes the societal benefits of *lex talionis*: “It limits vengeance and rules out punishment disproportionate to the offence.” As anyone with sons knows, the pattern that usually follows violence is not equivalent retaliation, but escalation. You pinch me, I hit your arm. You hit my arm, I punch your face. On a national scale the escalation principle, if left unchecked, eventually results in war. An eye for an eye, therefore, limits the violence, resulting in simple, swift and straightforward justice in a world without an overly complicated legal system.

While Yahweh’s legal punishments seem violent, they were actually effective means of reducing violent crime and promoting peace among his people. Personally, I’m glad that the God of the Old Testament took extreme measures to care for the poor and the powerless and to prevent bloodshed and war.

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CABIN FEVER

A Suburban Father's Search for the Wild

TOM MONTGOMERY FATE (BEACON PRESS)



“Deliberate,” Tom Montgomery Fate tells us, “doesn’t just mean ‘intentional’ or ‘careful’: it means ‘balanced.’ The word is tied to *libra*—the two-pan scale of justice, which is for weighing and balancing things—ideas, fears, loves. Or maybe garlic.” Montgomery Fate is a good companion precisely because he is balanced in just this way: not bland, not equivocating. His account of a quest for a “more deliberate life,” inspired by a re-reading of Thoreau’s *Walden* several years ago, is refreshingly modest but also aching with yearning for the Home we all desire.

JULIAN OF NORWICH, THEOLOGIAN

DENYS TURNER (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)



This is the best book I have seen on Julian, and one of the most energizing ventures in theology in the last several years. Here is an example (countering the notion that Julian’s understanding of sin is “sustained on some naïvely optimistic amelioration of its horrors”): “On the contrary, it is sin that cannot tell its own story, for the record of human sinfulness is least well told by sin’s account. It is, in fact, what the Lord tells Julian that is the only true story of sin.” Why am I a Christian? One good answer: because sin cannot tell its own story.

SELFISH REASONS TO HAVE MORE KIDS

Why Being a Good Parent Is Less Work and More Fun Than You Think

BRYAN CAPLAN (BASIC BOOKS)



Bryan Caplan, an economist at George Mason University, is the antithesis of notorious “Tiger Mother” Amy Chua. Caplan contends that many parents are laboring under self-imposed burdens. He suggests that they should relax, be fruitful, and multiply. “Parents who have another child,” he writes, “make the world a better place.” How many (or how few) children? Caplan doesn’t presume to specify, but “whatever your priorities happen to be, my arguments are reasons to have more kids than you initially planned.” He includes a lively conversation with imaginary critics representing a wide range of views.



Joy in the Midst of Terror

How **Andrew White's** Baghdad congregation brings God's love to a war-torn land. Interview by Joe Carter

Nicknamed the “Vicar of Baghdad,” the Reverend Canon Andrew White oversees one of the most dangerous parishes on earth. During Easter weekend of 2010, he secretly baptized 13 adults, most of whom were dead within a week. Despite frequent kidnappings and killings in his church, White gives thanks for St. George's, the only Anglican congregation in Iraq. *First Things* online editor Joe Carter recently spoke with White, author of **Faith Under Fire: What the Middle East Conflict Has Taught Me about God** (Monarch), about the persecution of Iraqi Christians, the struggle of ministering in a war zone, and the lessons learned from suffering from multiple sclerosis.

You have concerns that most pastors can't begin to fathom. How does working under such extraordinary conditions affect ordinary ministry?

So many of our brothers and sisters here in Baghdad have been killed, kidnapped, or tortured even in the last few months. Members of my staff have also been killed. Just this morning, I was trying to sort out post-hospital care

for our former chief of security, who recently had a leg blown off.

We cope because the Lord is always with us. When you are where the Lord wants you to be, he always enables you to cope. Look at Daniel. He had not planned to come into exile in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. God still provided him with all that he required. He had not intended to be an interpreter of dreams, but God gave him the knowledge to do all that he needed and enabled him to serve with joy.

In the same way, I had no intention of coming to Iraq. But God brought me here 13 years ago, and now there is nowhere in the world I would rather be. Even in the midst of terror and persecution, we have the joy of the Lord.

Your book describes a climate of persecution reminiscent of the first-century church. Yet you say that St. George's is the happiest and most loving church you've ever served.

I wrote about the persecution

of our people, a persecution that is far worse than anything we read about in the Bible. A few months ago, 58 people were gunned down and killed during worship at the Syrian Catholic church just down the road from ours. What followed were several weeks of Christians being killed, including our own staff and church members. Despite these atrocities, we are such a happy church. When you have lost everything, you realize that Yesua (as we call Jesus) is all that you have left.

How has suffering from multiple sclerosis affected your work?

When God wants you to do something, he will provide you with all you need to do it. As he provided for Daniel, so he has provided everything for me. Having multiple sclerosis played a part in getting me to Baghdad. And it also has much to do with the fact that I have never feared for my own life.

In Iraq, churches provide food, health care, and education to members. How does that change the dynamic within the congregation and the broader community?

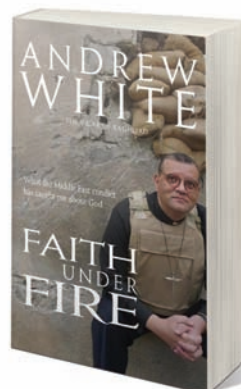
Our people have four main material needs: health care, food, education, and living accommodations. We have a clinic, a pharmacy, and a laboratory. If they need surgery, we pay for care at a private Christian hospital.

Everyone is given a bag of groceries after services on Sunday. We have almost finished building a large Christian school on our compound. And when people cannot afford their rent, we help them pay it. We have no reserves, but we manage to always provide these needs each month. We can do this only with the help of the Almighty and his people.

We provide for our neighbors because that is the work of our Lord. Everyone who

receives help sees the love of the church, and thus the love of God. Many non-Christians come to our church, but they know that our Lord loves them.

As pastor, much of my work revolves around peace-making and reconciliation. Yet it is mostly the provision of people's basic needs that draws them to us and changes them from people of war to people of peace.

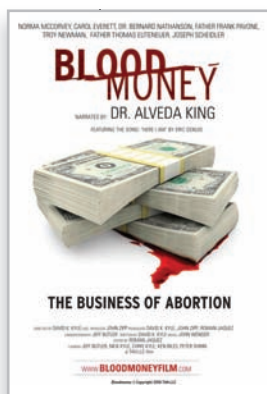


'A Skillfully Marketed Product'

The documentary *Blood Money* explores the business of abortion. By Mark Moring

When Carol Everett speaks of the horrors of abortion, you listen. Not only did she abort three of her own children, she went on to abort 35,000 more in the early 1980s as director of several abortion clinics in the Dallas area. She was on track to earn \$1 million a year—earnings that today she calls **Blood Money** (independent) ★★★★★, the title of a documentary now on DVD. (It's also the title of a book that Everett wrote nearly two decades ago.)

Just 80 minutes long, *Blood Money* covers a lot of ground, fully delivering on its subtitle—*The Business of Abortion*—by letting people like Everett and others tell their stories. Everett, who left the business in 1983 after a conversation with a pastor, is now a strong voice in the pro-life movement. “Abortion is a skillfully marketed product sold to a very frightened person in crisis,” she says in the film. She tells how her clinics’ telephone counselors—whom she described as “telemarketers”—used a script to convince teen girls and young women to get abortions. The



“counselors” were evaluated on how many abortions they sold, and those who sold the most got the biggest bonuses.

The film is narrated by Alveda King of the Catholic pro-life group Priests for Life and niece of the late Martin Luther King Jr. She notes that her uncle was all about justice and the right to life—the same ideals embraced in this film. While religion clearly motivates many of the principal figures here, it's not a “Christian” movie. But faith runs just below the surface.

Blood Money follows a fairly linear narrative, beginning with scientists and biologists stating in no uncertain terms that life begins at conception. Experts and scholars then discuss how the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 defied not only scientific evidence and state laws but the Constitution itself, denying the inalienable right to life—to babies in the womb.

There's a gripping segment about the history of Planned Parenthood, its founder,

Margaret Sanger, and the organization's alleged history of targeting African Americans for abortions. Planned Parenthood was originally called the American Birth Control League. Its publication, *The Birth Control Review*, edited by Sanger, included this motto beneath the masthead: “Birth Control: To create a race of thoroughbreds.” Sanger was once quoted as saying, “We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out the idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members.”

But is such talk just old history? African American pro-lifers in the film don't think so, and the statistics seem to back them up: Since *Roe v. Wade*, 10 percent of white pregnancies have ended in abortion, compared to 28 percent for blacks. African Americans make up 12 percent of the U.S. population but account for 36 percent of all abortions. One black minister said that such a disproportion “doesn't happen accidentally. Abortions happen when people are targeted.”

Everett agrees. She says her “telemarketers” went after frightened girls and young women at their most vulnerable moment. In the film, many women share heartbreaking stories about giving in to such pressure. They talk of boyfriends and family members urging or coercing them to end their pregnancies. They recall post-abortion trauma and years—even decades—of guilt, regret, depression, nightmares, and suicide attempts. After her abortion, one says, she came home, curled into the fetal position, and pulled out her hair while wailing, “What have I done?”

Through tears, another says, “We all have that moment where we realize that we are moms, and we killed our children. It's a pretty sick feeling.” And another: “When the truth has come out about what abortion does to women—let alone the unborn babies, our dead babies—it'll be over.”

May her words be prophetic. (More: BloodMoneyFilm.com)

Mark Moring is senior associate editor at *Christianity Today*.

Marching as to Peace

Pro-democracy protests in the Middle East and North Africa have demonstrated the power of nonviolence in birthing political change. In 2003 and 2004, a milestone in the history of nonviolent action took place near the Palestinian village of Budrus. Israel was building its Separation Barrier between Israel and the Palestinian Territories. But near Budrus, the barrier veered from the border and cut through the village's olive groves.

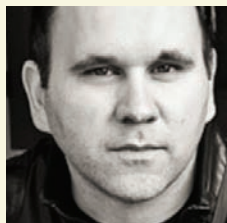
Because Budrus's economy depends on those trees, villagers confronted the construction workers and border police. A documentary recently released on DVD, **Budrus** (JustVision) ★★★★★, details the work of Fatah leader Ayed Morrar, who coordinated with a local Hamas leader and later with Israeli activists to protest the bulldozing of the olive trees and eventually to get Israel to move the fence. The film also pays tribute to Morrar's daughter, who transformed the dynamics of the protest by insisting that women be allowed to participate.

Unlike the nonviolent work of Sami Awad, featured in the 2010 documentary *Little Town of Bethlehem*, Morrar and his companions never eschew violence on principle, but treat nonviolence as a mere tactic, a practical way to provoke public sympathy. (More: JustVision.org/Budrus) —David Neff, editor in chief, *Christianity Today*



TWO MINUTES WITH...

Matt Redman



Matt Redman, composer of modern worship staples "Blessed Be Your Name" and "The Heart of Worship," releases a new live album in July called *10,000 Reasons* (EMI CMG). It was

recorded at Atlanta's Passion City Church (PCC), a relatively new plant by Louie Giglio and other Passion movement leaders—including Redman, who moved his family from the UK to Atlanta for two years. CT's Mark Moring spoke with Redman.

Why did you want to help plant this church?

We've loved being around the Passion movement for the last decade and have shared much life with those guys. When we heard they were planting a church, there was no way we weren't going to join in the fun.

What's unique about PCC?

Louie is the last person to claim that PCC is some brand-new innovative expression of church. But perhaps the unique thing is that it was a local community being planted from an already existing global movement. Usually it's the other way around.

What did you learn while in the U.S.?

I love the optimism in the U.S. church. We Europeans can be a bit more cynical or embarrassed to dream big. I think American optimism, mixed with a kingdom of God mindset, is a wonderful, explosive mix.

What's your focus now back in the UK?

We're at St. Peter's in Brighton, the most unchurched city in England. It's a recent plant by London's Holy Trinity Brompton, held in this cathedral-like building in the center of the city. Until recently, it was rundown and empty, but with this new church community, it's starting to fill up and be a "city on a hill" again.

How have you grown as an artist?

I don't take lightly the craft of congregational songwriting. We're putting words into people's mouths and therefore hearts and minds. So in a good—or bad—way, we are actually at times shaping the way someone thinks about God or approaches him. That's an awesome task.



Longingly Spiritual

Josh Garrels's latest is a brilliant work of art.

By Jeremy Jones

Folksy singer-songwriter Josh Garrels spent more than a year crafting his seventh album in what he calls "the most rigorous mental and spiritual struggle I've known as an artist." It paid off: **Love & War & The Sea In-Between** (Small Voice Records) ★★★★★ is a brilliant 18-song collection that grapples with and celebrates, well, love and war and all the gritty tension of a spirit forging its way through the shadowy intricacies of humanity.

Poignant masterpieces are nothing new from Garrels, and here he builds a lushly layered melting pot of styles and backing instrumentation. "White Owl" features jazz flourishes; the instrumental



"The March" is driven by an accordion's tango cadence; and "Sailor's Waltz" conjures Eastern European immigrant or gypsy strings. "Rise" blends Americana staples with a flute and percussion that sound Native American, while "The Resistance" throbs with a trip-hop pulse.

Garrels's rich vocals unite his broad-ranging work, and his insightful lyricism anchors it. The guy's got soul that can flex like Ben Harper and Ray LaMontagne ("Million Miles") or mellow like Jack Johnson ("Bread and Wine").

Lyrically, *Love & War* is prophetic, incisive, achingly human, and longingly spiritual. Garrels isn't afraid to question life's murky mysteries: "Tempted and tried, I wondered why / The good man died, the bad man thrives / And Jesus cries because he loves 'em both" ("Farther Along"). He calls out unjust human institutions: "I was born into a system constructed for failure / It's a sinking ship manned by drunken sailors" ("The Resistance"). And he liberally draws nature metaphors and celebrates friendship, beauty, grace, and love, both human and heavenly. Ultimately, hope and redemption win the day in these epics.

In keeping with his true indie spirit, Garrels is giving away *Love & War & The Sea In-Between*, along with any income it generates. "We were so provided for during the making of this album, by both God and men, that it seems appropriate to give away as freely as we received," he says. That leaves no excuse to miss this gorgeous collection that will surely be one of the year's best. +

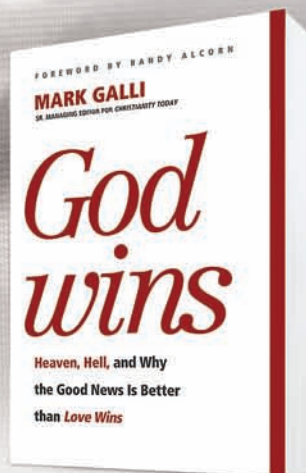
Jeremy Jones is a freelance writer and music critic for *Christianity Today*.

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BOOKS

► ORPHANOLOGY

Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care

TONY MERIDA AND RICK MORTON (NEW HOPE PUBLISHERS)

★★★★★ Christians do not approach orphan care as mere humanitarians but as people adopted by God through the work of Jesus Christ. *Orphanology* provides the burgeoning orphan care movement with a gospel-centered theological foundation as well as a comprehensive plan for getting involved at many levels, including adoption, orphanage restoration, foster care, and transitional assistance. Between adoption stories, Tony Merida and Rick Morton offer a compelling picture of how the gospel motivates us to action on behalf of the fatherless.

► OUR TRIUNE GOD

Living in the Love of the Three-in-One

PHILIP RYKEN AND MICHAEL LEFEBVRE (CROSSWAY)

★★★★★ Our *Triune God* is a pastoral treatise on the importance of the Trinity for the Christian's life and faith. The book lays out the biblical support for a Trinitarian view of God, and then delves into practical ramifications. The result is a sustained reflection on the joy of fellowship with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

► PERSPECTIVES ON TITHING

4 Views

EDITED BY DAVID A. CROTEAU (B&H ACADEMIC)

★★★★★ Leery of appearing self-serving, many pastors hesitate to preach on giving. However, the fact that the issues surrounding tithes and offerings are controversial is a sign that we need more teaching on this subject, not less. This book provides four evangelical perspectives on the relevance of the tithe for New Covenant Christians. The contributors appeal to Scripture, showing how tithing is described and prescribed. Christians may be divided on whether tithing is mandated today, but the authors are united by a strong desire to honor the Lord in matters of stewardship. —Books reviewed by Trevin Wax

MUSIC

THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA

► TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

(SAGUARA ROAD RECORDS)

★★★★★ The Blind Boys blend their acclaimed gospel style with country—and it works, thanks in no small part to guest

artists like Vince Gill, Hank Williams, Willie Nelson, and Lee Ann Womack. But the Blind Boys' true artistry lies in their soul, which transcends technique and hints that each song, whether old ("I Saw the Light") or new ("I Was a Burden"), is more than just the music and lyrics. —Kristin Garrett

NICOLE C. MULLEN

► CAPTIVATED

(MARANATHA! MUSIC)

★★★★★ Since releasing her first solo album 20 years ago, Nicole C. Mullen has only improved, as evidenced by this soulful work. She's in fine chameleonic mode, tapping into string-drenched pop, slinky funk, and baleful acoustic balladry. A misstep into the world of reggae aside, she masters each genre ably, raising the bar for other worship performers. —Robert Ham

SON LUX

► WE ARE RISING

(ANTICON RECORDS)

★★★★★ In response to a creative challenge from National Public Radio, Ryan Lott wrote and recorded his second Son Lux album in just 28 days. Its structures are complex, and the range of influence includes electronics, modern classical, and even free jazz. "All the Right Things" acknowledges doubt but asks for "a tale . . . I can hold in my hands when I pray." —Josh Hurst

STEVE EARLE

► I'LL NEVER GET OUT . . .

(NEW WEST RECORDS)

★★★★★ Steve Earle's colorful life takes on a more subdued, sepia-toned wistfulness here, where he emerges more reflective, mildly domesticated, and even spiritually searching. He says the songs are "all about mortality in one way or another," and there's evidence that he has weighty matters on his mind—though they only receive cursory treatment. "I believe in God," he sings, "and God is God." Yep, that sorta covers it. —Andy Whitman

ON DVD

► THE ADJUSTMENT BUREAU

UNIVERSAL | RATED PG-13 | JUNE 21

★★★★★ Is the course of your life solely a result of your choice, or are there other, larger forces at work? These are the questions at the heart of this romantic thriller, starring Matt Damon and Emily Blunt. A bunch of guys in suits—the Adjustment Bureau—make sure things happen according to the Chairman's plan. It's great discussion fodder about free will vs. predestination. —Camerin Courtney

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City Parish

Jon Tyson plants neighborhood churches in NYC.

Australian native Jon Tyson moved to the United States in 1997, convinced that “the future of the Western church was going to be hashed out here.” He later heard Os Guinness say that three questions would plot the course of the 21st century: What will take the place of Communist China? Will Islam modernize peacefully? And will there be a third spiritual renewal in the West?

Tyson jumped on that third question, hoping to be part of the answer. He moved from Orlando to New York City, where he is now pastor of Trinity Grace Church, which has planted five smaller missional communities in what Tyson calls the “city parish” model.

The communities come together once every six weeks for a large gathering. Much of this was modeled after Redeemer Presbyterian Church, where Pastor Tim Keller mentored four of Tyson’s associates. Redeemer has also invested considerable finances into Trinity Grace’s growth.

Tyson, 34, speaks at conferences about urban church planting. Noting that 80 percent of the world’s population will live in cities by 2030, Tyson says Christians now have a desire “to return and respond to the places we have missionally abandoned. But people are discovering the pure richness and goodness of living in cities.”

➤ **Family** Christy (wife); Nathan, 11, Haley, 8 (children)

➤ **Reading now** *Townie: A Memoir*, by Andre Dubus III; *Kafka Was the Rage: A Greenwich Village Memoir*, by Anatole Broyard; *When the Church was a Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community*, by Joseph Hellerman

➤ **On your iPod** Walter Smith III, *Live in Paris*; Charlie Parker with Strings, *The Master Takes*; Marcin Wasilewski, *Faithful*

➤ **Favorite movie** *Children of Men*

➤ **Favorite Bible verse** Hebrews 11:5

➤ **Favorite website** *TheAtlantic.com* /infocus

question & answer

Describe the city parish model.

We’re made up of several smaller communities around the city that put a priority on outreach in their respective neighborhoods. Rather than being autonomous, they are networked together to share resources, admin support, and more, aiming to shape the spiritual climate of the city. Our vision is to be a movement of restoration and renewal in each neighborhood and industry of the city by joining God in the renewal of all things.

How is this different from a denomination?

Mainly in structure, by having different “arms” of the church in different neighborhoods. We didn’t set out to start a denomination, but to simply start a church. Because New York is organized by neighborhoods, we decided to organize our church that way. It’s a missional strategy.

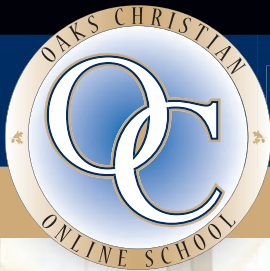
What’s an example of transformation?

One of our members invited a co-worker to one of our churches—a man who had smoked weed and been a part of promiscuous gay culture for 30 years. He noticed something in his co-worker, and after a while was compelled by the person of Jesus. He surrendered his life to Christ, turned away from promiscuity, is faithfully in recovery, living in community, and deeply involved in serving others in his neighborhood.

What are your hopes for Trinity Grace?

To serve Jesus faithfully, be a blessing to our neighbors, love one another well, become a counterculture for the common good, and illustrate what a community looks like when Jesus is Lord over that community. I also have a book coming out in August with my best friend, Darren Whitehead, called *Rumors of God: Experience the Kind of Faith You’ve Only Heard About*. I am getting ready to write a short book on faith and work, and then something on the New Covenant after that.

More: TrinityGraceChurch.com



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