

Christianity Today

SEPTEMBER 2011

The Gospel at Ground Zero

The horrors
of 9/11
were not unlike
those of
Good Friday.

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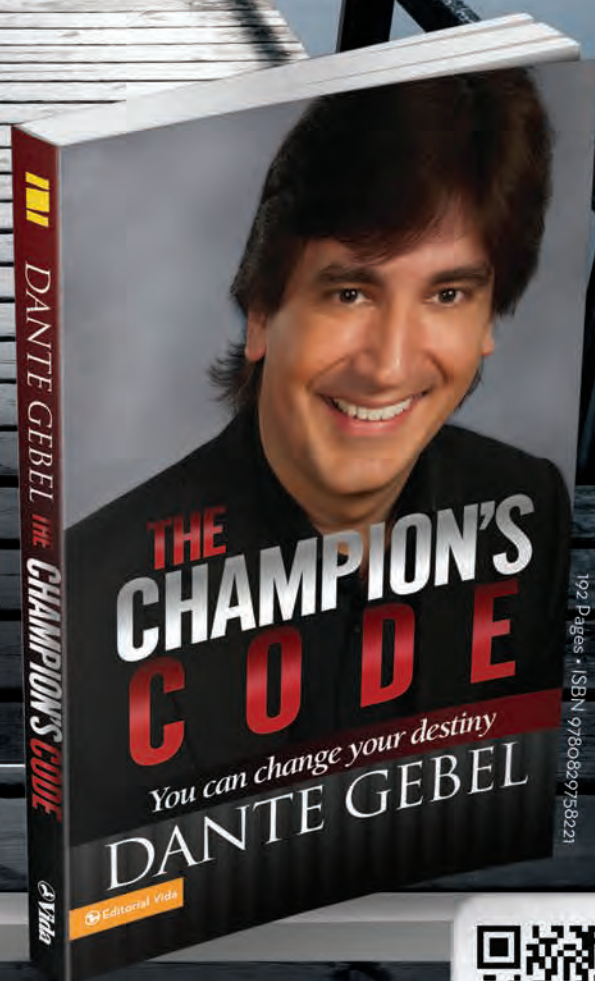


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The Mirror of Truth

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

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

In this issue, CT news intern Chris Norton holds the mirror up to the state of youth ministry (page 15). The 1990s sidelined truth in youth work. But there is growing sense that apologetics—teaching the truth and the reasons for it—is essential. Also, in our next issue, read about philosopher Douglas Groothuis's new 700-page apologetics tome. Apologetics is "not a peripheral discipline for Christian eggheads," says Groothuis. "It's right at the center of the kingdom of God."

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

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David Neff, Editor in Chief

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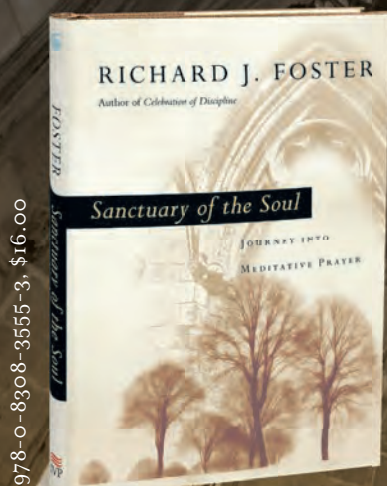
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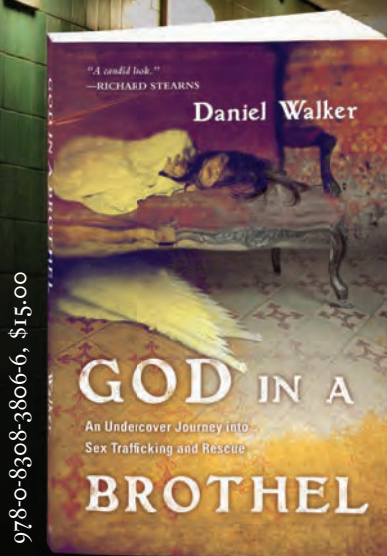
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A Cross at the Bookends

The meaning of 9/11, and the motivation for missions.



September 11, 2001, is a marker in American history. Much like November 22, 1963, to a previous generation, and December 7, 1941, to the generation before that, it is a day on which everyone remembers what they were doing when they first heard the news.

The first and the last dates led to international wars; the middle one involved a killing and anticipated a culture war within our borders. All three events radically changed the United States and the world, and this month many other magazines will reflect on how 9/11 has altered the social and political landscape locally and globally.

Christianity Today is more interested in how 9/11 changed the church and its mission. The most pressing change has been our increased awareness of Islam. Before 9/11, missions to Muslim countries and cultures were an asterisk for many Christians. Today they have become *the* theme of missions, and our relationship to Islam has been the subject of some of the most important conferences of the past decade. There is no better person to survey this topic than J. Dudley Woodberry, senior professor of Islamic studies at Fuller Theological Seminary (page 32).

We also wanted to show how 9/11 reverberated on a local level, from how one Midwestern church ramped up its missions to Muslims (page 34) to how “the vicar of Baghdad,” Andrew White, learned to minister in his war-torn country (page 38), to how 9/11 inspired a parachurch ministry to reach out to emergency personnel as an unreached people group (page 42).

But mostly we are interested in how 9/11 sharpens our understanding of the gospel. Russell Moore (page 24) does a splendid job showing how the murder of 3,000 revealed the darkness of the human situation, yet also points to the glorious light of the Cross.

In one sense, then, our tribute to the life of John Stott (page 44) is a fitting bookend to an issue that was originally designed to be entirely thematic. Though Stott will be remembered for many things, this writer suspects the theologian mostly wanted to be remembered for his magnum opus, *The Cross of Christ*. In it, Stott said that “when substitution is denied, God’s self-disclosure is obscured, but when it is affirmed, his glory shines forth brightly.” Many rightly exalt Stott for bringing renewed emphasis to social justice. Fewer remember that it is the Cross that “gives us . . . a new incentive to give ourselves in mission, a new love for our enemies, and a new courage to face the perplexities of suffering.”

In the end, it is the Cross that helps us grasp the meaning of 9/11.

Next month: J. Todd Billings explains why a theological way of reading Scripture is the most necessary, Jeremy Weber reports on how digging a well in Africa is more complicated than it looks, and John Stott is remembered through a selection of his best writings.



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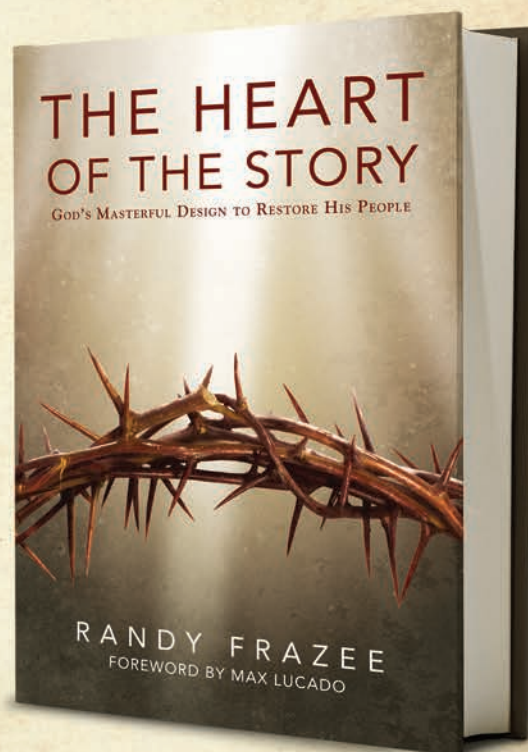
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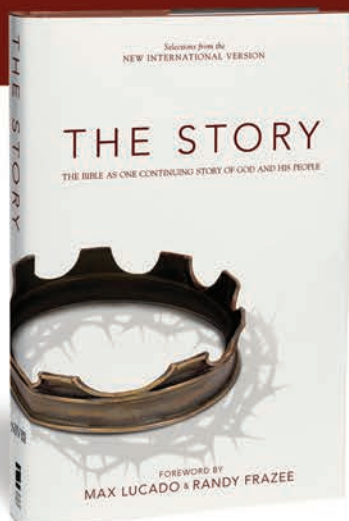


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SPOTLIGHT: The Lasting Effects of Your School

➔ **A NEW SURVEY** found that Christian schooling makes a difference—and that different kinds of Christian education produce different results among their graduates. The large study from Cardus, a Hamilton, Ontario-based Christian thinktank (formerly the Work Research Foundation), examined the attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of Americans ages 23–40—that is, 6 to 21 years after high school graduation—and took into account more than 30 variables known to influence development (such as frequency of religious service attendance, race, and educational attainment).



NONRELIGIOUS PRIVATE



**RELIGIOUS
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CATHOLIC

MOST LIKELY TO: Earn a high income; engage in political protests; make political contributions.

LEAST LIKELY TO: Accept authority of church leadership.



**CONSERVATIVE
PROTESTANT**

MOST LIKELY TO: Want a job that is directly helpful to others and fulfills religious calling; have a large family; read the Bible; be a leader in congregation; feel prepared for relationships.

LEAST LIKELY TO: Want a job that pays well; like new and exciting experiences; feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life; engage in political boycotts or protests; make political contributions.



PUBLIC (Christian graduates of public schools)

MOST LIKELY TO: Want a job that is worthwhile to society; spend a lot of time volunteering; express an interest in politics; know a community leader.

LEAST LIKELY TO: Feel prepared for relationships or a vibrant religious spiritual life.

MOST LIKELY TO: Spend a lot of time volunteering; be involved in political campaigns; like new and exciting experiences, even if it means breaking the rules; marry later in life.

MOST LIKELY TO:

Spend a lot of time volunteering; be involved in political campaigns; like new and exciting experiences, even if it means breaking the rules; marry later in life.

LEAST LIKELY TO:

Want a job that establishes roots in a community and not have to move from place to place; get divorced; have a large family; know elected officials or CEOs.

MOST LIKELY TO: Want a job that pays well; get divorced; feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life; lack any clear goals or sense of direction; accept authority of church leadership; feel prepared for a vibrant religious and spiritual life; marry young.

LEAST LIKELY TO: Want a job that is directly helpful to others or is worthwhile to society; spend much time volunteering or going on mission trips; be involved in political campaigns.



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

❶ Clergy housing lawsuit dismissed

A group represented by atheist Michael Newdow has agreed to dismiss its lawsuit challenging tax-free pastoral housing allowances. A Supreme Court decision earlier this year made it more difficult for taxpayers to protest tax-credit programs. The lawsuit, filed with a Sacramento U.S. district court in October 2009 by Newdow's Freedom From Religion Foundation, alleged that the allowance violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. However, the group never showed that it was directly affected by the allowance.

after rumors circulated that desecrated Qur'an pages were found at a church site. The 558 people sentenced will serve six-month to 25-year jail terms; 44 were acquitted. Ethiopia's population is 60 percent Christian and 30 percent Muslim.

❷ Law makes thousands of marriages illegal

UGANDA Thousands of couples found their marriages suddenly illegal when the government passed a law restricting legal marriage ceremonies to a list of about 2,000 registered churches. This excluded thousands of churches in the East African nation. Officials with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau said the law should improve record keeping and legal compliance. Currently marriages are sometimes not reported to government officials. Muslims and Christians are concerned that the law overly restricts marriage licenses. Marriages can only be performed indoors, and the registration process took one pastor four years to complete.

❸ Pastors protest sentence for lesbian wedding

A United Methodist Church (UMC) pastor in Wisconsin who performed a lesbian wedding ceremony in 2009 was sentenced to a 20-day suspension of ministerial duties. However, Amy DeLong was acquitted of the charge of being an "avowed practicing homosexual," though she is in a registered domestic partnership with another woman. A few days after DeLong's trial, hundreds of UMC clergy in Illinois, New England, Minnesota, and New York pledged to perform same-sex marriages, even though church policy prohibits them.

❹ Court okays switching religion on IDs

EGYPT The nation's Supreme Administrative Court has ruled that Coptic Christians who reconvert to Christianity can now identify their faith on government IDs without having to go through the courts. Previously Copts had to obtain a court ruling to make an ID change when they reconverted to Christianity from Islam. Copts have been fighting for the verdict since 2004. They say that converts to Islam have a much easier time changing identification.

❺ Hundreds jailed for sectarian violence

ETHIOPIA More than 500 people were sentenced to prison for their roles in a week of violence in early March that left 69 churches burnt to the ground. The attacks, unusual in a country where Christians and Muslims typically coexist peacefully, started

❻ Conservative Presbyterians ordain women

At its June annual meeting, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) voted to allow its congregations to ordain women to ministry. The EPC previously left the decision up to individual presbyteries and their congregations. Three of nine EPC presbyteries in the U.S. had objected to ordaining women, even if their member congregations recommended women candidates. Now individual congregations can ordain women regardless of a presbytery's stance.

❼ Court: Church can keep property

Jackson County Circuit Court ruled that one of Kansas City's largest Presbyterian churches can keep its land in a property dispute. The 1,700-member Colonial Presbyterian Church left the PC(USA) for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church after a 927-27 vote last August. Colonial's attempt to separate from Heartland Presbytery escalated to include restraining orders from both parties, formal complaints, a lawsuit, and a countersuit. Judge Justine Del Muro ruled that the PC(USA) Book of Order does not supersede the land title, which Colonial holds. Heartland may still file an appeal.

❽ Churchgoing no longer an admissions plus

UNITED KINGDOM The Church of England will no longer allow its schools to rank potential students for admission based on church participation. The church also told schools to admit more ethnic minorities and immigrants from non-Christian backgrounds. The church's old system awarded points based on family worship attendance and church involvement. Critics said it favored middle-class families, arguing that some parents became more religious in order to ensure school spots for their children.

GO FIGURE Ministry

78%
Americans who believe the presence of a church is "very" (53%) or "somewhat" (25%) positive for their community. Only 5% think the presence is negative.

21%
Americans who can't name a way in which churches contribute positively to their communities.

Barna Research



9

9 Turkish leaders smooth way for Christians

TURKEY The recently reelected Muslim prime minister of Turkey is making the country more comfortable for its Christian minority. Recep Tayyip Erdogan has granted Turkish citizenship to a number of young Eastern Orthodox bishops around the world. This makes the bishops eligible for leadership in the Patriarchate of Constantinople, currently run by 71-year-old Patriarch Bartholomew and an aging cohort. Erdogan's government has also allowed Christians to reclaim land they had lost illegally, restored old churches, and criticized ultranationalists responsible for recent violence against Christians.

10 Minority religious groups legalized

GEORGIA The Georgian Orthodox Church criticized a new law that legalizes minority religious groups, saying it "contradicts the interests of the church and of the country." Eighty-four percent of the country's population is Orthodox Christian. Roman Catholic, Baptist, Apostolic, Muslim, and Jewish groups are now legally recognized.

11 Prayers for sick require authorization

KAZAKHSTAN The government is prosecuting a pastor for harming a man's health by hypnotizing him. Church members said pastor Yerzhan Ushanov just prayed for Aleksandr Kereyev, who alleges he became ill after Ushanov's so-called hypnosis session. Ushanov faces fines and jail time. Another pastor was fined the equivalent of eight years' salary for praying for a sick woman. The case was eventually overturned, but the pastor has not been reimbursed. Government officials have told pastors they

need to apply for Health Ministry authorization before praying for the sick.

12 State: Secular yet religious

BANGLADESH A new amendment to the Bangladeshi constitution restores secularism as a fundamental principle of the state. At the same time, it allows religion-based politics and reaffirms Islam as the state religion. It also says that the state should protect and develop the cultures of minority races, sects, and communities. Religious parties were allowed for about 30 years in Bangladesh but made illegal in early 2010.

13 Pastor faces execution

IRAN A house-church pastor could face execution this fall if he does not recant Christianity for Islam. A lower court had sentenced 33-year-old Youcef Nadarkhani to death for apostasy, but the Supreme Court partially retracted that sentence. Instead, it sent Nadarkhani's case back to a lower court to examine what faith he was raised in. His lawyer has been sentenced to nine years in prison for acting against the Muslim regime. This execution would be Iran's first for apostasy since 1990.

14 Assemblies of God college closes

Bethany University, the first college founded by the Assemblies of God, has closed its doors almost a century after its 1919 founding. Officials at the 500-student school in Scotts Valley, California, had been in talks with private investors, but the plans fell through. Several other colleges, including Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Texas and William Jessup University in California, offered to help Bethany students by waiving application fees and offering scholarships and tuition grants.

compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

"Certainly we do not deny this teaching or attempt to hide it. At the same time, it is not a topic of daily discussion or a regular theme in Sunday sermons."

Mark G. Schroeder, president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, on church teaching that the pope is the Antichrist. The synod came under media scrutiny because presidential candidate Michele Bachmann had recently been a member.

WELS.net

"In Jesus' name. Boogity, boogity, boogity. Amen."

Joe Nelms, pastor of Family Life Center in Lebanon, Tennessee, ending his NASCAR event invocation that made worldwide news for its references to the film *Talladega Nights* and the use of former racer Darrell Waltrip's catchphrase in its conclusion.

Tradin' Paint, via HamptonRoads.com

"Like Google, Starbucks, and other abstract names, we expect to fill Cru with meaning as it embodies all that we are as we go to the world with the gospel."

Campus Crusade for Christ, explaining its name change to Cru. Some supporters have criticized the organization for dropping the word *Christ*, but the organization says the new name will open evangelistic opportunities.

CCCI.org

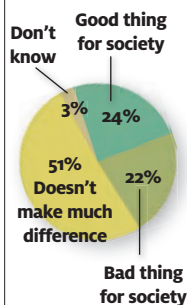
"Had I known the full extent of Focus on the Family's beliefs, I would not have accepted the invitation to speak at their event."

Blake Mycoskie, founder of TOMS Shoes and a frequent speaker at Christian conferences, amid pressure from gay rights groups. Mycoskie said he and his organization are "passionate believers in equal human and civil rights for all."

StartSomethingThatMatters.com

GO FIGURE Other Religions

Americans who believe more people practicing religions other than Christianity is a:



Pew Research Center



CHURCH LIFE

Let's Get Together

More mergers driven by mission, not survival.

By Ken Walker

East Valley Bible Church was already a megachurch. Praxis Church was headed in the same direction. But last year, pastors Tyler Johnson and Justin Anderson agreed to merge their thriving congregations in order to better reach the Phoenix area.

Today attendance at the four campuses of Redemption Church—which accepted a third partner in January—is nearly 4,800, a 14 percent increase over pre-merger days for all three churches combined.

“This was born out of the idea of having a city church, like the church at Ephesus or the church at Philippi,” said Anderson, Redemption’s lead pastor. “We asked, ‘What would be the advantage of 100 churches in Phoenix partnering together for church planting, sharing staff . . . and [providing] lay training?’”

A new report from Leadership Network verifies that such mission-driven church mergers are a growing trend. Two percent of churches have

merged in the past two years, and five percent are likely to by 2013.

Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird, who surveyed more than 400 churches earlier this year, say mergers have been on the rise in the United States and Canada for 20 years. Mergers have combined churches of different sizes, denominations, and ethnicities. Last October, an African American congregation in Missouri merged with a fading white church, preserving the latter’s name.

Traditional survival-based mergers by dwindling churches often see the combined congregation ultimately shrink again. But the mission-driven model spurs additional growth, said Tomberlin, a multi-site consultant from Scottsdale, Arizona.

“The new merger math is one and one equals ten,” he said. “There’s a synergy about it.”

Multi-site churches are a key part of this movement, with one in three originating from a merger. However, Bird says the new trend

The Mergent Church: Mergers are no longer just for dying churches. But some pastors warn that blending two cultures is harder than many realize.

has more significance and the potential to affect far more churches.

“The multi-site model is a tool for the 20 percent of healthy, growing churches in America,” said Bird, research director at Leadership Network. “The merger model is a tool for them and the remaining 80 percent of stuck or declining churches.”

The October 2010 merger of Washington Heights Church in Ogden, Utah, and suburban Salt Lake City’s Bountiful Baptist has proved beneficial to both, said lead pastor Roy Gruber. Not only has Washington Heights’ attendance jumped more than 10 percent, attendance at Bountiful had nearly quadrupled by mid-summer.

“[Bountiful] had a heart for their community since the 1960s but were struggling,” said Gruber. “There’s an opportunity to reach more people through this.”

Growth isn’t a given. Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas remains at 600 worshipers three years after merging with a Hispanic church. However, it has since started a campus in nearby Conway. Last February, it also brought a struggling church from Durham, North Carolina, into the fold.

Directional leader Mark DeYmaz said the merged operation offers increased credibility, a broader identity, and financial efficiency.

“It’s giving more people a chance to see our vision,” DeYmaz said. “We’re interested in helping churches and in expanding the multiethnic church movement.”

Mergers can present challenges. Although Eagle Brook Church has seen considerable growth since its December 2007 merger with a fading church in suburban Minneapolis, discussions with two dozen other potential partners fizzled.

“Merger—when it works—is a great option,” said executive pastor Scott Anderson. “But I think people are a little naïve about what’s involved. It’s easier to raise money [for a new church] than to blend two cultures. It’s a challenge.”

GO FIGURE Life Ethics

80

Restrictions on abortion enacted in the first half of 2011.

23

Restrictions enacted in 2010.

34

Restrictions enacted in 2005, the previous record holder.

Guttmacher Institute

The Return of Reasons

Apologetics makes a comeback in youth ministry. By Chris Norton

Relational evangelism may have been the key to successful youth ministries in the 1990s, but today apologetics is gaining new traction.

Kids struggle to explain their beliefs today more than they did two decades ago, said Christian Smith, director of the Center for the Study of Youth and Religion at the University of Notre Dame. One of the center's 2005 reports indicates that 12 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds say they are "unsure" of their religious beliefs, and 41 percent of Protestant teens agree that morals are relative.

"[Their] faith is more about meeting emotional needs than an ideology," said Smith. This is the product of "an overwhelmingly relativistic and privatized cultural climate," he said, as well as "youth leaders who have not challenged that climate."

Challenging the cultural climate is a major component of the new apologetics, said Sean McDowell, head of Worldview Ministries. "The apologetics resurgence has been sparked ultimately by teens who are asking more questions about why people believe the things they do," he said. "Those who thought that kids in a postmodern world don't want an ideology were wrong."

Greg Stier, founder of Dare 2 Share Ministries, agrees. "[Teens] are aware of the latent apologetic conversations in culture—Harry Potter, for example—and want to react," he said.

McDowell said it's possible to overstate truth claims. He's heard too many youth pastors and parents claim that the evidence of the Resurrection is overwhelming. But then students encounter good

counterarguments on the Internet or from a professor, "and the youth leaders suddenly lose credibility?"

To prevent this, McDowell does what all good apologists do: share the other side. In fact, he finds that's what students ask him: "What book or what website would you recommend that runs in opposition to the Christian view?" He said that being honest with them "helps demonstrate, as Paul puts it in Colossians 4, that our conversation is 'full of grace, seasoned with salt,' and that we've found a balance."

The apologetics surge doesn't mean the end of relational youth ministry, said Chap Clark, founder of ParenTeen. Identity development has become more difficult for today's teens, he said. So it is more important than ever that youth leaders address their emotional needs.

"Help them develop social capital before [you] attempt to establish an ideology," he said. "Kids aren't receptive to explicit faith arguments when their emotional needs aren't met."

Ginny Olson, a Minneapolis-based youth ministry consultant, said youth leaders are increasingly aware that neither relational evangelism nor apologetics alone are effective vehicles for truth. "Kids need relationships and they need clear gospel presentations—it's not either-or." ☪

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Parental Frights

Can parents practice rites that scare children?
By Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

A Pennsylvania woman who insisted her 7-year-old daughter watch the killing of a chicken and eat its heart was sentenced to 18 months probation in June. The girl told a teacher that the ceremony gave her nightmares.

Prosecutors charged 33-year-old Yenitza Colichon with child abuse and neglect. Colichon said she was

seeking to protect her daughter by using a rite of the Central African religion Palo Mayombe.

Defense attorneys argued unsuccessfully that Colichon's right to religious freedom protects her from prosecution.

The main conflict is between parents' right to direct the religious upbringing of their children and the government's interest in protecting the health and safety of children, said Luke Goodrich, deputy national litigation director for the Becket Fund. "It's hard to draw a line," he said. "One benchmark is physical harm. Another is the state law governing abuse and neglect. Somebody who claims the religious right to engage in abuse and neglect will have a pretty weak case."

The U.S. Supreme Court has not given much guidance on the issue, according to Carl Esbeck, law professor at the University of Missouri. The government cannot judge parents differently if they justify their actions religiously.

Not everyone agrees.

Religious motivation does make a difference, according to Doug Laycock, law professor at the University of Virginia.

"It's a growing position among secular intellectuals to say there is no exception for religion," he said. "But of course there is. There always has been."

Otherwise, women and homosexuals would be priests in Roman Catholic churches. Children couldn't drink Communion wine. Quakers would have to swear oaths.

Still, Colichon's case is troubling because it involves psychological—not physical—harm, he said. "It is very dangerous for the state to be saying, 'Your religion is bad for you.'"

There is also some danger of a nanny state, said Tom Farr, a professor of religion at Georgetown University. "I'd be very cautious in making such a judgment, and err on the side of the parent," he said. "Judges [shouldn't]

[continued on 16]

PASSAGES



On Leave C. J. Mahaney

As president of Sovereign Grace Ministries (SGM), for a "season of examination and evaluation" of charges against him by alienated SGM pastors.



Appointed Stephanie Summers

As CEO of the Center for Public Justice, where she had served as coo. Gideon Strauss, who had been CEO since 2009, will serve as senior fellow.



Retiring Leith Anderson

As pastor of Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. He will continue to serve as president of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Briefing [from 15]

get involved unless there is clear and compelling evidence of danger or physical harm to the child.”

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Prostitution Policy

Court rejects restrictions on AIDS funding.

By Susan Wunderink

The U.S. government cannot require organizations fighting AIDS with USAID money to oppose prostitution, according to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. The ruling may lead to a Supreme Court case about First Amendment rights.

Evangelical NGOs say the ruling is unlikely to affect their operations, although the case does touch on important principles.

The 2003 Leadership Act, which authorized PEPFAR in fighting HIV/AIDS, states that grantees cannot use government money to promote legalizing prostitution. It also requires organizations to have “a policy explicitly opposing

prostitution and sex trafficking.” The second requirement has been the controversial one.

The Second Circuit split 2-1 in its July 6 ruling. It said the requirement amounted to discrimination against organizations that do not embrace the government’s viewpoint. The dissenting judge defended the clause as constitutional. He said that it “allows the government to subsidize the transmittal of a message it has concluded is part of its preferred method of fighting HIV/AIDS.”

The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the provision in 2007. The conflicting decisions apply in different regions and may not be reconciled if the government does not seek a Supreme Court review.

World Concern received Leadership Act grants in 2004. Senior director Meredith Long said there are two major issues at play: (1) the relationship between prostitution and sex trafficking, and (2) how requiring an official policy could constrain work with commercial sex workers.

NGOs may use harm reduction strategies—such as distributing condoms to prostitutes—to prevent the spread of HIV. To do this, they must

DISCUSSION STARTER Evangelism

At South Carolina’s NewSpring Church, children are not admitted to the main service and doors are locked after the sermon starts. In North Carolina, Elevation Church leaders removed a boy with cerebral palsy from church because he was disrupting the service. The incidents raise the issue of how to respond to disruptions in worship.

have access to sex workers.

Some evangelical groups, including International Justice Mission (IJM), say that they have found rescue and harm reduction to be complementary. Others believe the two strategies compete.

It is commonly argued that police activity in red-light districts undermines anti-HIV/AIDS work by provoking brothel owners to deny medical workers access. Holly Burkhalter of IJM disagrees. “We have found . . . that police are able to rescue children and apprehend perpetrators without disadvantaging [prostitutes],” she said.

On the other hand, Jonathan Imbody, vice president of government relations for the Christian Medical Association (CMA), said harm reduction alone implicitly supports prostitution and, by extension, human trafficking.

Christian groups had not pushed for the 2003 requirement, but many (including the CMA) defended it when George Soros’s Open Society Institute brought its lawsuit in 2005.

The CMA says the Second Circuit ruling strikes down a legal, effective health policy and could increase competition for USAID grants.

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should churches try to minimize disruptions in services?

YES

“We put a priority on creating an environment that helps people engage in worship without distractions. If a disruption arises, the guest ministry team assesses the situation and takes appropriate steps, which could mean suggesting alternate viewing options.”

CHRISTINE DAYE, guest ministry director, Willow Creek Community Church

“As a pastor, you’re responsible for leading the assembly on Sunday morning—not allowing disruptive people to take over the service and allowing things to be planned and well-timed. But you don’t want to be cruel or insensitive.”

WILLIAM WILLIMON, bishop, North Alabama conference, United Methodist Church

“I want to see disruptions minimized so that the Word can be proclaimed with clarity and without distraction. Even so, churches should be hospitable to all, including those who engage in behavior that seems ‘disruptive’ to others.”

TREVIN WAX, author, *Counterfeit Gospels*

“People shouldn’t be viewed as disruptions. Disrupting moments provide opportunities to demonstrate patience and gentleness. People must be treated with dignity and respect. How leaders respond in the moment can speak louder than any prepared sermon.”

MARK DEYMAZ, directional leader, Mosaic Church

“It depends on the nature of the disturbance, but to say there should be no disturbances in a worship service creates a very Western, cognitive-oriented worship service. Holy noise that is even sometimes distracting can be a great, beautiful sound to our God.”

SCOTTIE MAY, associate professor, Wheaton College

“When Jesus shows up with cerebral palsy, let him stay. And insist that those around him stay—even if the preacher or the music isn’t to their liking—because disruptions due to individualistic preferences are precisely what Paul reprimands in Corinth.”

DENNIS OKHOLM, professor of theology, Azusa Pacific University

NO



Next-Gen Worship: An Assemblies of God youth group sings at a service in Sidist Kilo, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The nation has 40 million people age 15 and younger.

GLOBAL CHURCH ETHIOPIA

Growing in the Word

What the Ethiopian Orthodox have learned from the expansion of evangelicals.

By Matthew D. LaPlante in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Preacher Yoshanis Asrat's frenzied homily pulsed over the tin shacks and mud homes of the Megenanga neighborhood in Addis Ababa. If you followed his voice and the blaring synthesized piano that accompanied it, you would arrive at his congregation, the Mascara Church—little more than a tent in a muddy backyard in Ethiopia's capital.

But in a black suit with his hair slicked back, and standing over a glass lectern in front of a large gold-colored cross, Yoshanis might as well be in a polished megachurch in a wealthy American suburb.

"Take Jesus," he shouted to his

parishioners, scattered across the rows of rickety wooden benches. "Take him right now! Right now he will heal you!"

"Amen!" the congregants cried.

In 16 years, Yoshanis's flock has grown from a handful of members meeting around a kitchen table to a congregation of several hundred. That could be a testament to the pastor's electrifying orations. But such growth has not been uncommon for charismatic and evangelical churches in Addis Ababa, a city of 3 million people.

"We are growing into a modern country," Yoshanis said. "We have modern people here, and they want a modern church."

Ethiopia has 90 million people and is one of the world's fastest growing major

nations, with a 3.1 percent increase in population from 2010. Over the past 30 years, that national population growth rate has averaged 2.7 percent per year. The rapid expansion is introducing historic change to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, an ancient branch of Christianity.

As the world's largest Oriental Orthodox church, its identity is tied to traditions and some unique teachings that are more than 1,600 years old. (For example, opposing the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451—which taught that Christ existed as one person with two natures, human and divine—they believe that Christ's natures were united in one.)

According to *Operation World*, since 1974, the Protestant church has grown



Bible Preaching: Pastor Yohanis Asrat exhorts from inside his tent church in Addis Ababa, a city that adds 240,000 people to its population each year.

RICK EGAN

tenfold, representing about 20 percent of the current population. Many Ethiopian Protestants belong to indigenous evangelical or charismatic movements, historically linked to the Lutheran church, Sudan Interior Mission (now Serving in Mission), and the Mennonite Church.

Researchers expect these growth trends to persist for decades to come, leading to a deep shift in Ethiopia's religious landscape. But signs of significant change have already occurred.

HUNGRY FOR THE WORD

The story of Berhanu Aweku, a young adult born into an Orthodox family, reveals how change is unfolding at the ground level.

As he matured, Berhanu became increasingly hungry for God's Word. But in his hometown of Arba Minch, 300 miles south of Addis Ababa, the only Bible teaching he received came from Orthodox priests and monks, who have for generations seen themselves as the only trustworthy mediators of biblical truth for a population that is about 50 percent literate.

Berhanu said that several years ago, a friend introduced him to a "Pentay"

church, a slang term for any non-Orthodox church in Ethiopia. His friend promised the inquisitive teenager an environment in which pastors would encourage him to examine the Bible for himself.

"In the Protestant church, you have the opportunity to make a study of the Holy Scriptures," the 20-year-old student and part-time disc jockey said. "That was something new for me." Once he had a Bible in his hands, Berhanu said, he was hooked. And he wanted to share what he learned from reading the Bible for himself.

During an interview at the Arba Minch club where Berhanu works, he looked across the crowded dance floor from a closet-sized DJ booth. He picked out acquaintances from Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic families. A few Muslims were in the crowd too. Aside from drinking non-alcoholic Ambo mineral water, Muslims are as much a part of the social scene in Ethiopia as everyone else, Berhanu said.

"We all get along," Berhanu said. "There is no competition. In Ethiopia, everyone loves each other." But on closer questioning, Berhanu admitted that he lost a few friends when he left the Orthodox Church.

Berhanu's experience has become common, said evangelical pastor Danel Duento, who was drawn to the Protestant church for similar reasons more than 30 years ago. He faced more significant backlash from family and friends back then. He now leads a congregation in the rural Hadiya Zone, south of Addis Ababa.

"The young people—now that they are educated—are used to studying and reading everything," Danel said. "But when the young people go to the Orthodox Church, all they are getting is the traditional things. They are not being given the Word to study."

That's a fair critique of traditional Ethiopian Orthodoxy, according to Ralph Lee, a church history professor at the Theological College of the Holy Trinity, an Orthodox-affiliated school in Addis Ababa.

Lee said, "The general perception [in Orthodoxy] was that it's better not to read the Bible, because you might get it wrong." The thinking was that it was best to leave biblical scholarship to the priesthood. Even as Ethiopia's population became more educated during the past century, Lee said, the idea that everyday Christians should

avoid direct contact with the Bible was “so enculturated that there was almost a lack of awareness of any need for a change.”

TENTATIVE UNITY

The first Western missionaries arrived in Ethiopia in the 1800s. At that time, the pro-Orthodox government tolerated their presence. With few exceptions, it has been far more important for Western church leaders to maintain healthy relations with the national government than with the Orthodox Church.

In 1936, during the Italian occupation, the government forced many missionaries out of the country. When Western missionaries returned in the mid-1940s, they discovered to their surprise that the homegrown Kale Heywet Church had flourished. Some 20,000 newly baptized members had joined the church during the war years.

In the 1960s, the evangelical movement achieved another push forward when the government of Emperor Haile Selassie encouraged missionary outreach to the Oromo people. He wanted to assimilate the nation's largest ethnic group into larger Ethiopian culture. This openness resulted in the presence of nearly every major Protestant denomination in Ethiopia. Although overseas missionaries abound, indigenous evangelism is the most successful way to attract newcomers.

But the growth has triggered a violent backlash. In 2002, a mob of Orthodox priests and adherents carrying axes and machetes attacked Protestants in the town of Merawi, injuring many and killing Pastor Damtew Demelash of the Full Gospel Believers Church. Just a few years earlier—and just a few blocks from the trendy nightclub where Berhanu now spins tunes for an interreligious crowd—a stone-throwing mob of Orthodox Christians attacked Protestants attending a conference, wounding 51.

But at St. Gabriel's Orthodox Church, priest Aba Mezmur Hawaz tells his parishioners not to quarrel with fellow Christians. If someone is better able to see God through a Protestant lens, he said, so be it. “The whole world of Christians—we are all going to go up one way together.”

He gave a different assessment of the Muslims in his community. “They will go a

different way,” he said. “And if they want to fight with us, we will fight with them.”

This is not a matter of simple religious prejudice. In recent years, both Orthodox and Protestant Christians have been the victims of attacks by Islamic extremists, which killed several people and destroyed scores of Christian homes and churches. Although they are still relatively rare, such attacks have brought Christian leaders together for support, protection, and prayer.

BACK TO THE BIBLE

Starting in 1985, a younger generation of Orthodox Christian leaders has been addressing the growth of Protestants in new ways.

The Mahibere Kidusan reform movement, for example, grew from resistance to the atheist Derg junta, which ruled Ethiopia from 1975 to 1987. Leaders adopted many of the methods of the Pentays. They encouraged Orthodox authorities to establish Sunday schools, using the same hands-on approach to Bible study as many Protestant groups. In 1991, the church hierarchy officially blessed this reform group.

Aba Yesus Moa, a priest at the 1,000-year-old St. Mariam's Orthodox Church in Hosaena, said he has embraced these changes. “When I was young,” he said, “there were no Protestant churches around here.” Moa, who was wearing a black skull cap and shawl, added, “Now they are everywhere.”

Moa said there is much to be admired about how the Protestants have grown their denominations in Ethiopia. “They are sharing strong feelings, and they have strong teachers,” he said. “Some people have left the Orthodox Church, and they have told us, ‘We would have stayed if you would have given those things to us.’”

That's when Moa decided to change his approach.

“We have started teaching more out of the Holy Bible and we have started to evangelize more, as the Protestants do,” he said. “I like the new way. We are growing again. Now when we give a study of the Holy Bible, we get a lot of people coming.”

MISSING AWE

It would be easy for evangelicals to take full credit for this shift, which is making the

gospel more relevant and more accessible to millions of Ethiopians. But Lee said, “This thing was ready to happen.” Improvements in literacy and Western educational models were the kindling for the fire. The Protestant movement, he said, was the spark.

Lee also lamented how many Protestant leaders view the Orthodox Church.

At a pastoral meeting in Hosaena, held at the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, many ministers cut down the essence of the Ethiopian Orthodox faith to two words: “Bad spirits,” said Pastor Salamo Karala, who leads an evangelical church outside of Hosaena. A former Muslim, Salamo believes Orthodox Christians need conversion as much as he did before he was introduced to evangelism as a young man.

Adisalum Wenderad, who left Orthodoxy for evangelicalism, agreed. Nonetheless, there are things Adisalum misses about the church in which she was raised.

“When I was a girl, I can remember being afraid of God—all of the people in my church were afraid of God,” said Adisalum, who left at age 16.

During an interview, she told *Christianity Today* that some of her fellow evangelicals, who sometimes treat God as a good buddy instead of their Lord and Savior, would benefit from the sense of awe that permeates Orthodox worship.

Adisalum has seen a positive change in the way her Orthodox family worships, with more Bible studies, more gospel, more preaching, and more connection to priests as mentors.

Lee said Orthodox Christians can now find the more dynamic worship and serious Bible study that were lacking just a decade ago—and even animated, gospel-style choirs.

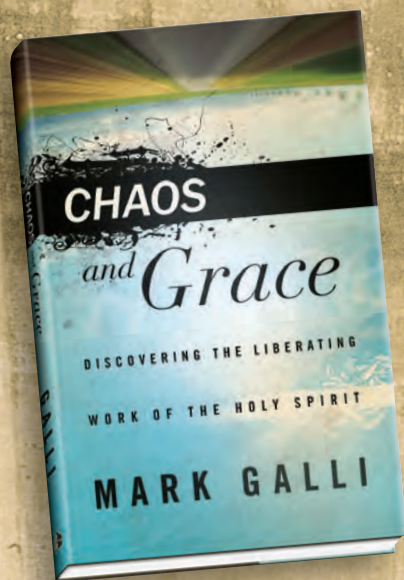
Over the next century, Lee said, evangelicals and Orthodox alike will face many external challenges. For instance, experts project that 84 million people will be added to Ethiopia's population over the next four decades.

If the population does reach 174 million people as forecasted by 2050, Ethiopia may become the largest majority-Christian nation in all of Africa. ➤

Matthew D. LaPlante is an assistant professor of journalism at Utah State University.

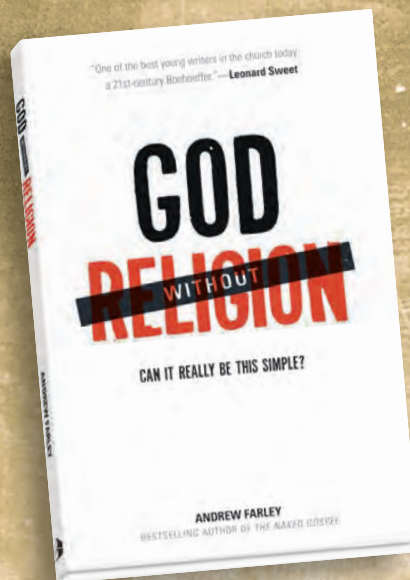
100% PURE FAITH

(No additives or preservatives)



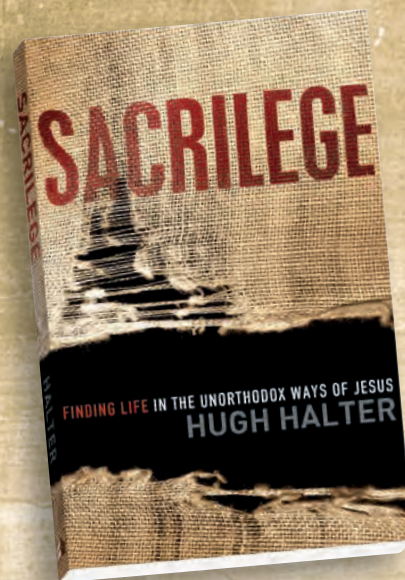
"*Chaos and Grace* is the first story-framed study of the liberating presence of God's Spirit—from Genesis to Revelation we get Spirit, Spirit, Spirit, and where the Spirit is, there is freedom."

—**Scot McKnight**, Karl A. Olsson Professor, North Park University



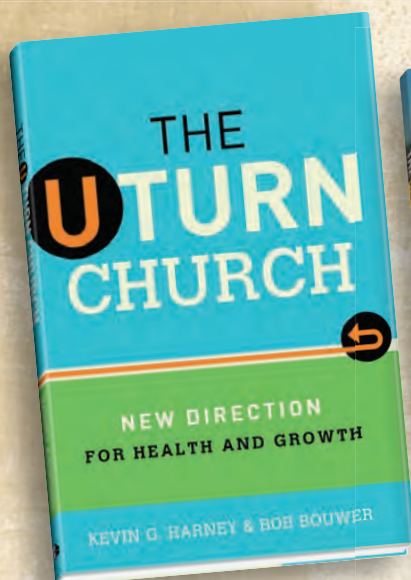
"Farley is the voice of a 21st-century Bonhoeffer who shows how to ring in the good times when Jesus (not religion) is the *cantus firmus*, the enduring melody, of our lives."

—**Leonard Sweet**, author; professor at Drew and George Fox Universities



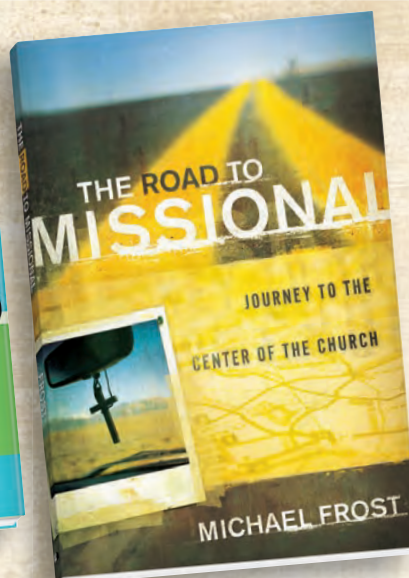
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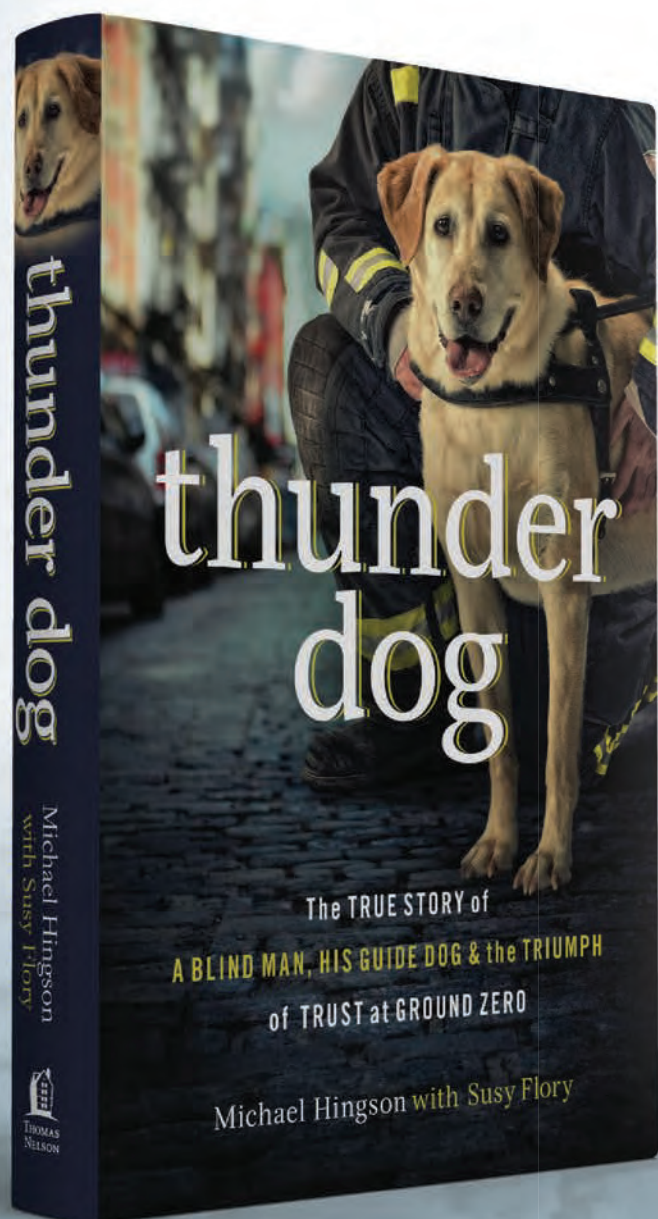
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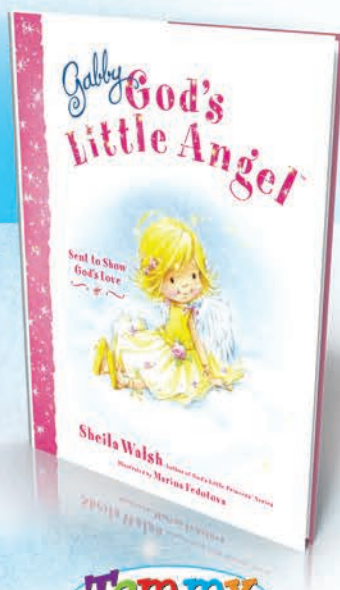
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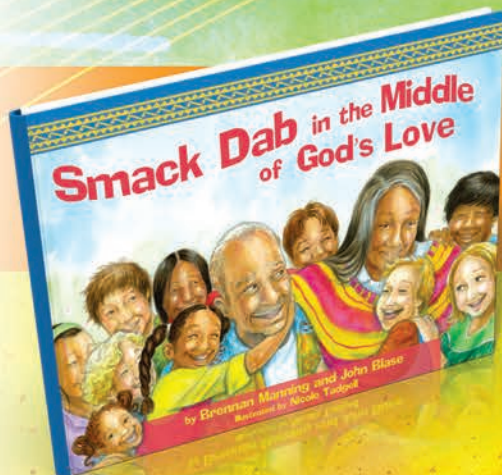
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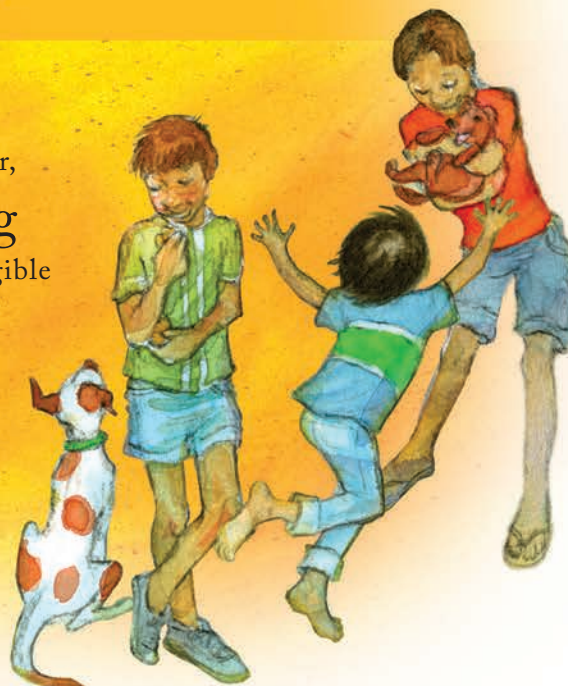
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[COVER STORY]

***The* GOSPEL at GROUND ZERO**

The horrors of 9/11
were not unlike those
of Good Friday.

By Russell D. Moore



N AMERICA, we debate our wars not just with heated speeches but also with dueling banjos. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the radio dial seemed to lurch between the children of Woodstock and the heirs of the Grand Ole Opry. Besides visiting the expected themes of war and peace, post-9/11 popular music plucked at an issue we are now revisiting a decade later: whether television networks ought to broadcast the fiery images of the collapsing Twin Towers.

"You took all the footage off my tv, said it's too disturbing for you and me," country musician Darryl Worley sang. "It'll just breed anger, that's what the experts say; / if it was up to me I'd show it every day. / Some say this country's just out lookin' for a fight; / well after 9/11 man, I'd have to say that's right."

Down the radio dial, pop guitarist John Mayer sang about waiting for a world where neighbors were home from war, where "they would have never missed a Christmas, no more ribbons on their door." Like the hawks in the cowboy hats, Mayer blamed broadcast imagery: "When you trust your television, what you get is what you got, / 'cause when they own the information, oh they can bend it all they want."

On the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, we see a revival of the debates over whether news programs should show footage from that day. Some argue that to do so is needlessly traumatizing and inflammatory, and will provoke vengeance and a sense of cowboy justice. Others respond that to censor the footage is to deny reality, a politically correct avoidance of the truth that we live in a dangerous world, where enemies wish to see us buried beneath the rubble of our national monuments.

The controversy won't be resolved before this anniversary. It likely won't be resolved before the 20th or 200th, because the questions are older and more persistent than the current issue. They hit at the nub of what it means to be human in the face of inhumanity.

But the controversy is worth carefully listening to as we Christians think about our own witness and mission. After all, though we often forget, the Christian story is awfully traumatic, too.

FACING REALITY

It's easy to roll our eyes at what some would call prissy, coddling, and hyper-scrupulous types who want to keep the September 11 images off the public airwaves. But most of us sense the need to balance horror and denial. Few Americans want a 4-year-old to see a close-up image of a man, aflame with jet fuel, leaping a hundred stories to his death. And most of us would affirm the keen difference between taking a child to a loved one's funeral and taking her on a tour of an autopsy room.

Moreover, the possible unintended consequences of exposing ourselves to relived horror can be complex. On the one hand, there's the possibility of inciting fear. We see the images so often that we begin to think of every building as a potential target, every plane as a potential weapon of mass destruction. That, of course, is the very aim of terrorism. On the other hand, there's the possibility of growing numb to the horror. Might seeing those images of falling towers hourly on the video clips of the talking-head cable programs make them seem commonplace, much like the White House explosion from *Independence Day*,

PAT CARROLL / NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

or the Statue of Liberty buried up to her neck at the close of *Planet of the Apes*? Might repeated viewings deaden the shock we felt 10 years ago, when the towers collapsed before our eyes?

These are weighty questions. But it's hard to agree that censoring the 9/11 images will solve the potential problems. Yes, the images provoke fear. But we already know we've been attacked. We already know there is something out there seeking to kill us. The images crystallize this reality, diffusing the fog of abstraction created by hazy terms like "war on terror."

Criminal networks in faraway countries? Rogue nations with deadly weapons? These are terrifyingly concrete threats. But the language of "terror" conjures up a ghostly and omnipresent pseudo-enemy. How do you fight against fear itself?

Without the blood, the bones, and the explosions, September 11 becomes an abstraction, a symbolic backdrop to debates about "troop presence" in Afghanistan, "diplomatic initiatives" with Pakistan, and the limits of "airport security." When advanced technology makes warfare seem as bloodless as a video game, images of carnage can remind us of what's really at stake. In the right balance, a full-frontal engagement with evil can remind us of its realness, as well as the limits of its reach.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

Does denying unpleasant realities really protect us from emotional trauma? Perhaps not. A generation ago, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim warned that our kinder, gentler children's stories weren't really an advance over the often dark, violent fairy tales of ages past. The children don't have nightmares because of the stories, he suggested. Rather, we tell dark fairy tales because of children's nightmares.

That's because children know at a primal, intuitive level that there's something wild out there. Stories can help children make sense of a chaotic world and of their often-chaotic selves. When we merely present "good role models"—happy youngsters in safe places making wise choices—our children will soon wonder whether we are telling the truth, or they will come to see themselves as freakishly fearful.

Concealing the horror of September 11, whatever its effect on contemporary hatreds, threatens to obscure a horror much greater than Islamic terrorism: the ongoing reality of spiritual warfare.

The full force of the trauma from events like September 11 doesn't come from contemplating the violence done to strangers or even "the nation." Only when we envision ourselves and our loved ones on the scene, as children transplant themselves into nightmare stories, does the severity hit home. We imagine hearing those jihadists screaming prayers as the plane plummets from the sky, or being trapped in a smoke-filled stairwell, or leaping from a window in terror. The phenomenon here is precisely what causes us to flinch when we see blood on the pavement after a car accident. We are reminded of what scares us, of what could happen to us, too.

And so it is with the gospel. The story of Jesus records a persistent strain of denial in the life of Simon Peter. Virtually every time Jesus speaks of his impending execution, Peter insists that such trauma will never happen on his watch (Matt. 16:22; John 13:37). Of course, this not only suggests Peter's empathy with his teacher. It also demonstrates the apostle's refusal to face up to his fear that he might be tempted to protect his own skin.

Though he doesn't unveil it all at once, Jesus refuses to shield Peter from the awful truth. In one of the Bible's most pitiful narratives (John 13:36–38), Peter ostentatiously promises to protect the Messiah from harm. "I will lay down my life for you," he blusters.

Jesus responds: "Really? You're going to fight for me? Before the rooster crows, you will deny you even know me—not once but three times."

Jesus revisits the trauma on Peter. When the rooster crows, Jesus happens to be passing by, and he looks at his friend, prompting Peter to cry bitterly (Luke 22:60–62). Even in the famous restoration of Peter, after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus seems eager to remind Peter of his previous denial. He questions his disciple's love three times. He meets with him around a charcoal fire (John 21:9), precisely the setting of the denial itself (John 18:18).

Then Jesus presses the trauma further. What Peter fears most—the shame and torture of crucifixion—is exactly what Jesus assures him will happen. He will stretch out his hands and be led where he doesn't want to go (John 21:18). Peter will have the kingdom he so longs for—with all of its glory and peace—but his immediate future is skull-shaped.

SPIRITUAL TERRORISM

The ugly reality of crucifixion looms over the lives of Christ's followers today, as it did Peter's life. In the gospel, we are confronted with the unvarnished horror of ourselves—damned and cursed and exiled. We find ourselves ensnared in the curse itself—in Jesus, writhing in torture on a stake (John 3:14).

Gathering each week, we reenact the horror of Jesus' sacrificial death. In baptism, we see the flood of God's judgment against sin (1 Pet. 3:20–21). At the Lord's Table, we swallow and digest the sign of our Lord's torn skin and spattered blood.

The preaching of sin and judgment is traumatic, to be sure. There's some danger of presenting the gospel as mere condemnation—exactly what Jesus says it's not (John 3:17). And an overwhelming emphasis on sin can breed a morbid obsession with one's own wickedness. This, of course, leads not to repentance but to despair, which is exactly where the satanic powers want us.

At the same time, censoring the gospel's painful realities doesn't lead to tranquility. Like our children with the wild things out there, we know intuitively that a Day of Judgment is coming, even as we try to keep the fear submerged. The Scriptures tell of an unholy spirit who accuses our consciences, and whose accusations resonate with us because they are accurate (Rev. 12:10). The Devil holds us in captivity through our innate fear of death and judgment (Heb. 2:14–15). That pretty well sums up the classic definition of "terrorism." And the only thing that can free us from our enslavement to Satan, and to our sin, is blood (Rev. 12:11).

In the word of the Cross, God tells us he knows all our traumas, our insurgencies, our secrets—and that he has already executed them



at Golgotha. We need not fear hell, then, not because there isn't one, but because—if we are found in Christ—we have already been through all of that. We are free. And whenever our consciences accuse, the gospel takes us away from denial or preoccupation and right back to Ground Zero—to the Cross.

FIGHTING THE RIGHT WAR

The debate over the September 11 images is not simply about trauma to our psyche but to our body politic as well. Reliving these experiences, some say, will only reignite simmering tensions. At some level, it's hard to argue with this. Traumatic images can indeed provoke outrage, and often justly. Think about pictures of lynched African American citizens, of burning ships at Pearl Harbor, of corpse-filled ditches in Nazi death camps, of napalmed children in Vietnam, of stacked skulls in Cambodia.

Might the pictures from September 11 create the kind of bloodlust in the American citizenry that could lead to bigotry or even violence toward Muslims in our neighborhoods and around the world? Certainly that's possible. Some awful things were said to and about our Muslim neighbors in the weeks, months, and years after September 11. For the most part, though, the country seemed to differentiate jihadists from law-abiding citizens. President Bush reiterated constantly that the nation was not at war with Islam, and virtually every memorial service included an imam as a symbolic reminder of that fact.

And it's not as though tensions cool during intervals when the images aren't seen. We have had fiery debates over proposed mosques near Ground Zero and elsewhere. We have seen paranoid conspiracy theories that the current President himself is a Muslim, with the implication that maybe he's not really on the side of this country after all.

Concealing the horror of September 11, whatever its effect on contemporary hatreds, threatens to obscure a horror much greater than Islamic terrorism: the ongoing reality of spiritual warfare. Unalloyed evil of the sort portrayed in 9/11 footage reminds us of forces running deeper than the doctrines or practitioners of any one religion. After witnessing the enormity of the attacks, how can we fail to distinguish the real enemy from our law-abiding Muslim neighbors?

As Christians, we feel a certain squeamishness with our gospel. The Scriptures present a picture of the universe as a war zone, with the present age a satanic empire being invaded by the rival kingdom of Jesus. Talk of such demonic realities rises and falls through the history of the church, oscillating between preoccupation and embarrassment.

The church around the world—especially in what sociologist Philip Jenkins calls the Global South—grasps the kind of demon-haunted universe pictured in the Scriptures. But many American Christians wince at the “spiritual warfare” novels of the previous generation, with invisible angels and demons duking it out over small-town America. We cringe at the latest television faith healer describing the demons that were persecuting him around the time he was caught with the cocaine and prostitutes.

Many mainline Protestant churches excised “Onward Christian Soldiers” from their hymnals years ago. But when was the last time you heard an evangelical praise chorus speaking of the war against the satanic powers?

The softening of apocalyptic language hasn't led to a more “peaceful” church. Listen to Christian talk radio or attend a “faith and values” rally, and you'll hear plenty of warfare speech. Unlike past “crusades,” however, such language is directed primarily at people perceived to be cultural and political enemies.

If we are too afraid of seeming Pentecostal to talk about the Devil, we will find ourselves declaring war against mere concepts, like “evil” or “sin.” Where there are no demons, we demonize. And without a

In the Cross, God tells us he knows all our traumas, our insurgencies, our secrets—and that he has already executed them at Golgotha.

clear vision of the concrete forces we as the church are supposed to be aligned against, we find it very difficult to differentiate between enemy combatants and their hostages.

The Scriptures command us to be gentle and kind to unbelievers, not because we are not at war, but because we're not at war *with them* (2 Tim. 2:26). When we see that we are warring against principalities and powers in the heavenly places, we can see that we're not wrestling against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). The path to peace isn't through bellicosity or surrender, but through fighting the right war (Rom. 16:20).

DON'T FLINCH

Let's join the rest of the world in remembering September 11. Let's not flinch from the trauma, but let's not be paralyzed by it either. And along the way, let's remember to have sympathy for those who flinch at the trauma of our gospel, who wince when the light of God's judgment exposes their dark places. Let's remember that the hands we are reaching out with are scabbed over with Roman spike holes, and the cross we are holding out is caked in blood.

Let's remember, too, that the gospel brings peace and reconciliation to every Ground Zero in the cosmos. On the day when graves are opened, even those accidental tombs beneath the rubble of terror, we will see just how good this news is, even better than our shiny churches and happy choruses can convey.

But between now and then, it can be scary as hell. ☩

Russell D. Moore is dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the author most recently of *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Crossway).

[THE CT FORUM]

How I Have Changed Since 9/11

Christian leaders describe how that fateful day transformed their lives and ministries.



Philip Yancey

Author of *What Good Is God?: In Search of a Faith That Matters*



Harry R. Jackson Jr.

International presiding bishop of the International Communion of Evangelical Churches

The decade since 9/11 has taught us the limits of force. Imposing democracy on Iraq and Afghanistan has come at a terrible cost to all parties, with no guarantee of long-term success. Meanwhile, Tunisia and Egypt gained freedom almost overnight in a grassroots protest against powerful regimes.

As Christians, we believe in a counterforce of grace. Lewis Smedes and others have identified three stages of forgiveness: first, recognize the worth of the person you are forgiving; second, surrender the right to get even; third, put yourself on the same side as the one who wronged you. Increasingly, I'm convinced that we need more of this attitude toward those who seek to harm us.

In 1999, Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines was burned to death by a Hindu mob in Orissa, India. In 2007, German missionary Tilman Geske was tortured and murdered by five Turkish fanatics. The widows of both men made sensational headlines in those countries by repeating the words of Jesus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I am not a pacifist; I believe that we must pursue justice. Yet a Christian history stained by anti-Semitism—holding an entire people responsible for the actions of a few—teaches us the terrible consequences of not following Jesus' way. We dare not do to Muslims what we have, to our shame, done to Jews.

I will never forget evacuating our ministry's downtown offices in Washington, D.C., on 9/11. For the first time in my life, I watched the U.S. population collectively experience a sense of vulnerability that heretofore had been reserved for persecuted minorities. For three weeks, local church attendance soared as deep spiritual needs were no longer anesthetized by drinking, sex, and overeating.

What was missing? First, local church revivals could have begun, marked by deep repentance and personal piety, prayer, and devotion to the Scriptures. Second, a national spiritual awakening could have broken out. Third, a prophetically motivated clergy and leadership could have truly become the nation's spiritual shepherds by "speaking truth to power."

Awareness of a missed opportunity during the weeks following 9/11 empowered us to more fully embrace future opportunities. A better understanding of how spiritual awakenings occur led our team to create a public policy group called the High Impact Leadership Coalition. This year, we have begun our most daring step toward creating a Christian counter culture: the development of the International Communion of Evangelical Churches, a confederation of 1,000 related houses of worship. We hope to influence the next generation's thought leaders by planting multiracial, disciple-making churches near major universities and winning 2 to 5 million souls in the next decade.





Wess Stafford

President of Compassion International



Samuel Rodriguez

President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference



Anne Graham Lotz

Author of *Expecting to See Jesus: A Wake-Up Call for God's People*

From the ashes of 9/11 arose both horror and hope. We Americans, united in our grief, became better versions of ourselves: our giving was more generous, our volunteering more enthusiastic, our worship more ardent. We unabashedly flew our flags and sang “God Bless America.”

As it did for others, the magnitude of the blow energized my faith and filled my heart with pride and gratitude to be an American. Something new awoke in me on 9/11: life was more precious, time was short, evil was frighteningly real, and I was more motivated than ever to ensure that goodness prevailed.

I became even more passionate about my mission to fight the evil that grinds good, hardworking, and even godly people into poverty and its desperate consequences. I was heartened to witness the church being stirred to a greater desire to advance on this battlefield. Compassion International more than tripled in size this past decade as a result of God's people living out their faith. Many have realized that “doing good” is not good enough for the suffering poor—we need a level of commitment that goes further, one that reaches out more deeply and sacrificially.

Thanks to the will of the 9/11 generation, we now believe that it's not only necessary but also possible to push extreme poverty right off our planet. I think we can—and will—in my lifetime.

During the 10 years following 9/11, as a Christian, husband, and father, I discovered that extremism comes in many shapes and sizes. Every extreme, whether ideological, spiritual, or political, carries potentially catastrophic destruction. I came to realize that the greatest antidote to extremist posturing lies embedded in the simple reality of the Cross.

The Cross that embodies the hope of glory for mankind simultaneously carries a powerful truth that life is both vertical and horizontal. Vertically, we stand connected to God and his kingdom; horizontally, we stand in communion with culture and society. Life brims with vertical and horizontal dichotomies: sanctification and service; covenant and community; faith and action; righteousness and justice; John 3:16 and Matthew 25; Billy Graham and Martin Luther King Jr.

Yet what is the strongest section of the Cross? Where should we live as followers of Christ, as parents, spouses, ministers, and citizens? Not in the extremes or outskirts but in the nexus, where the vertical and horizontal intersect: the center. How do we collectively triumph over extremism, moral relativism, spiritual apathy, cultural decay, and religious totalitarianism?

The only authentic, transformative solution to cultural challenges stems not from the donkey or the elephant but rather from the glorious intersection known as the agenda of the Lamb.

September 11 was an alarm that penetrated my daily responsibilities and my busy ministry schedule, warning me . . . of what? Ten years ago, I could not have answered that question. All I knew with certainty was that God was trying to get the attention of his people, including me. Like the prophet Isaiah in the year that King Uzziah died, I looked up with the eyes of faith.

What I saw was not just a fresh vision of Jesus Christ. Like Isaiah, I also saw a humiliating vision of my own sin. I spent days on my face before God, confessing my sin and receiving his cleansing. The result was an authentic experience of personal revival. The immediate impact was a renewed vibrancy in my relationship with God, an increased fervency in prayer, clearer insight into God's Word, and a sharpened focus in ministry.

But the alarm did not fade away. Instead, I have heard it reverberating throughout the past 10 years: from Hurricane Katrina to the record-breaking floods, forest fires, tornadoes, droughts, and snow storms; to the collapse of our major financial institutions; to the economic recession; to the inability to win the war in Afghanistan. The alarm keeps resounding because so many people have not heeded, or even heard, the warning.

And what is the warning? Simply this: It is five minutes to midnight on the clock of human history. Judgment is at the door. Jesus is coming! It's time to wake up and get right with God! *Are you listening?*



Richard Stearns

President of World Vision U.S.



William Paul Young

Author of *The Shack*



Matt Redman

Christian worship leader, songwriter

The September 11 attacks jolted Americans into realizing that our nation was no longer, and never again would be, an “island” protected from the senseless brutality of terrorism. The world became smaller that day, and the person who could not find Afghanistan and Pakistan on a map suddenly wanted to learn more about those and other Muslim countries.

From the standpoint of international development, the attacks were a catalyst for renewed interest in and commitment to helping address the underlying problems that prompted 19 men to hijack and crash four jetliners, killing themselves and nearly 3,000 others.

Consider that over the past 10 years, private donations for international causes have more than quadrupled; Bono and Bill and Melinda Gates were *Time*’s 2005 “Persons of the Year”; Bangladeshi microfinance expert Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006; the Clinton Global Initiative was established in 2005 to foster collaboration among corporate and humanitarian leaders; and *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, became the “must-read” book of 2009.

On September 10, 2001, many Americans had never pondered our nation’s role in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By the morning of September 12, few of us had not. And 10 years later, we recognize that it is better to embrace the challenges we face globally rather than retreat, build walls, and pretend that America can exist on its own.

Ten years ago, my family and I watched in surreal horror as the events of September 11 unfolded on the television screen, stunned as our eyes beheld something that our brains told us was impossible. During the ensuing decade, our world stumbled into a new millennium, battered by financial crisis, wars, and disasters, and shrunk by technological innovation. Amidst all this, our five grandbabies arrived with sheer determination to enjoy life.

How have I changed during this short span of time? I have become an incurable optimist. The arrival of tragedy is no longer the arrival of impossibility, no longer an impasse, but rather the arrival of God’s presence amid difficult circumstances.

Today I am more convinced than ever that there is indeed a relational God present, personal, and involved in the midst of the mess and wonder of humanity, who is good all the time, and who respects the human creation more than we do; that there is a Spirit who is stirring countless hearts to everything that is good, causing us to question the fundamental paradigms that push us to harm and hurt and, in turn, inspiring us to create the new, the profound, the elegant, and the beautiful.

In the center of it all is Jesus, who is the revelation of True Good and in whom we have hope, not just individually but for us as the human race. One God, one Relentless Love.

My wife and I were due to fly from England to the United States on September 12, 2001, for a few months of sabbatical. The morning of September 11, our bags were packed, and we were ready to set off the next day. But the horrific events unfolded, and of course, our plans shifted. Later in the week, international flights resumed, and we managed to get on one of the first flights out.

During the first few days we spent in the United States, it seemed that, in all the shock and vulnerability, many people were heading to church for comfort and clarity. I was so impressed by the preachers: every place we visited, we heard messages of hope and reminders of God’s sovereignty.

But it left me wondering: *What could we sing to God at a time like this?* It was as if our worship songs were missing some important vocabulary—the language of tragedy and struggle, of the valley at the bottom of the mountain—which I found surprising, as the Psalms are full of lament.

Soon after the tragedy, my wife and I wrote “Blessed Be Your Name.” It’s a simple worship offering about choosing to worship and trust God no matter what the season.

September 11 taught me that when it comes to worshiping God, we must trust, of course. But we can also be real, raw, and honest. We can lay our frustration and confusion before God and still rejoice. Doing so tells God we know he is bigger than all of our issues—and also provides a window of hope to a watching world.



Margaret Feinberg

Author of *Hungry for God: Hearing God's Voice in the Ordinary and the Everyday*

When I lived in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, I nannied for an incredible family with four children. The parents had been out of town and were scheduled to return the morning of September 11. I was in the kitchen pulling cereal boxes out of the cabinet when they arrived, and remember clearly their announcement: "Margaret, turn on the television." I followed them into the living room and remember sitting glued to the television in a haze of disbelief and unanswered questions.

What had just happened in our world? And how soon would it happen again? A tragedy that's regular news in other nations touched our own soil. And we have never been the same.

But beyond those initial reactions to tragedy, 9/11 has shifted the questions I'm asking about my life. Instead of asking, "What if Jesus returns in my generation?" I find myself asking, "What if he doesn't?"

A decade after 9/11, we are still here. And what if that continues for another decade, and another? How do I need to live right now to pass on the faith in a meaningful way to the next generation? What does it look like to love my neighbor when his or her beliefs are so different from my own? How do I navigate the cultural shifts taking place in our world?

September 11 has been a profound wake-up call to love Jesus and others more.



Douglas Wilson

Pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho

Of course, a stupefying event like 9/11 should never be reduced to a matter of personal growth or understanding. At the same time, to be unchanged by such an event, or not to notice such changes, is to be ranked in the top tier of those who are not really paying attention.

The American public square is teeming with people, and therefore opinions, and 9/11 brought many of those opinions about public aspects of faith into sharp conflict with one another. Two of these opinions have stood out in the past decade: radical Islam and Western secularism. The radical Islamist option is a hard, sectarian line, but the postmodern-affected secularists appear to be about as firm and steady as Belshazzar's knees. We need an alternative.

But what—besides residual motor memories from a distant and vanishing era—can provide us with a foundation for a continuing free society? Christian forms of a reactionary and tight sectarianism seem both doctrinally wrong-headed and impractical.

As a consequence, a line of thought since 9/11 has brought me, by degrees, to champion something called mere Christendom. This is, I am convinced, the only genuine alternative to secular American exceptionalism on the one hand, and radical Islam on the other.



Will Willimon

Presiding bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church

On 9/11 I thought, *For the most powerful, militarized nation in the world also to think of itself as an innocent victim is deadly.* It was a rare prophetic moment for me, considering Presidents Bush and Obama have spent billions asking the military to rectify the crime of a small band of lawless individuals, destroying a couple of nations who had little to do with it, in the costliest, longest series of wars in the history of the United States.

The silence of most Christians and the giddy enthusiasm of a few, as well as the ubiquity of flags and patriotic extravaganzas in allegedly evangelical churches, says to me that American Christians may look back upon our response to 9/11 as our greatest Christological defeat. It was shattering to admit that we had lost the theological means to distinguish between the United States and the kingdom of God. The criminals who perpetrated 9/11 and the flag-waving boosters of our almost exclusively martial response were of one mind: that the nonviolent way of Jesus is stupid. All of us preachers share the shame; when our people felt very vulnerable, they reached for the flag, not the Cross.

September 11 has changed me. I'm going to preach as never before about Christ crucified as the answer to the question of what's wrong with the world. I have also resolved to relentlessly reiterate from the pulpit that the worst day in history was not a Tuesday in New York, but a Friday in Jerusalem when a consortium of clergy and politicians colluded to run the world on our own terms by crucifying God's own Son.

[MISSIONS]

Flames of Love

How a terrorist attack reshaped efforts to reach Muslims.

By J. Dudley Woodberry

TEN YEARS AGO, my wife, Roberta, and I were in Peshawar, Pakistan, two blocks from the Taliban hospital. We were in the home of our son and his family, joining in a farewell party for a Christian pilot. Another pilot approached us and said, “I don’t know whether I should tell you the news now or after the party.” Of course we said, “Now.” He said the BBC had just reported that a plane had flown into the World Trade Center.

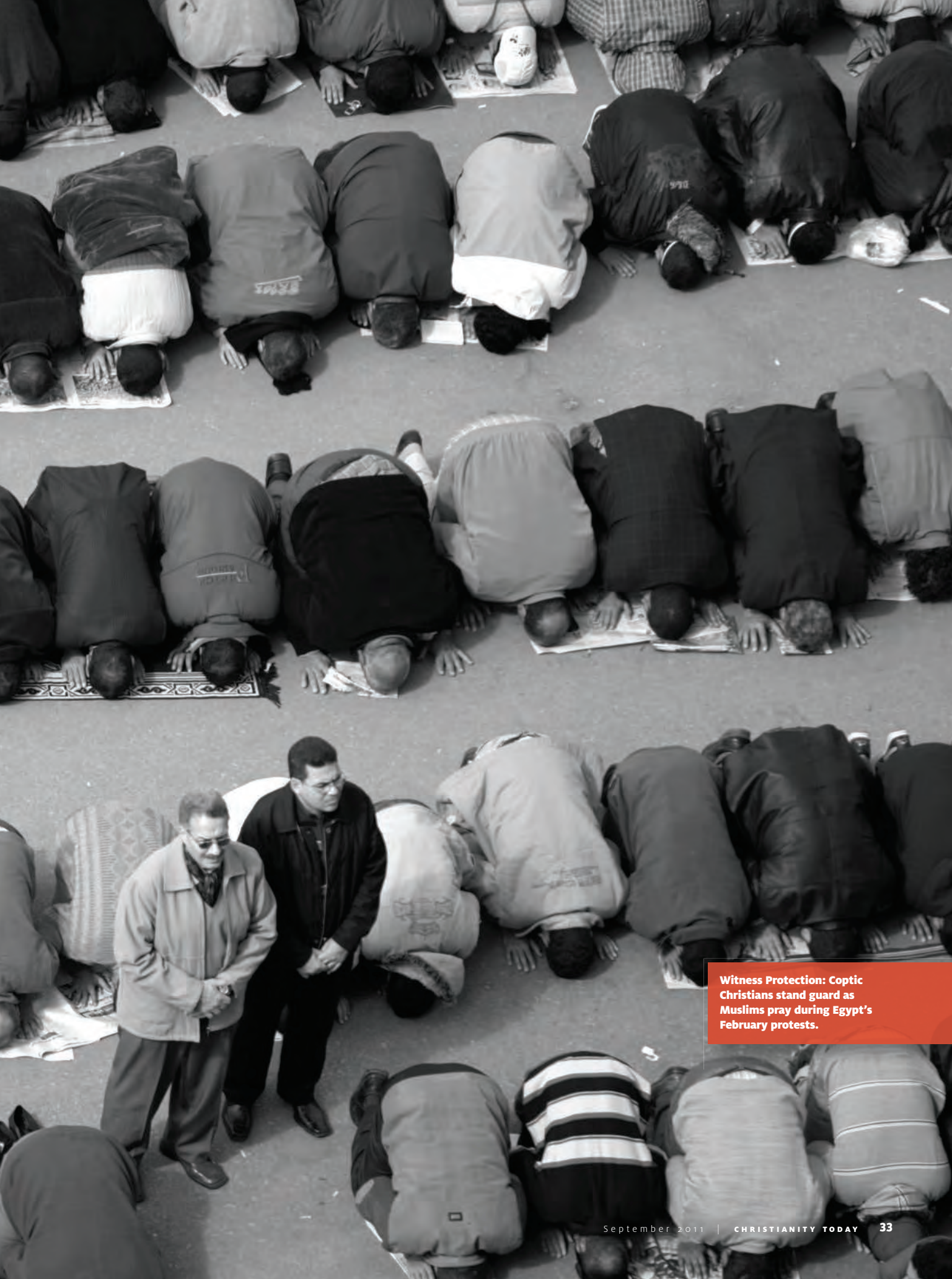
A quick check on the Internet showed a little picture of a building with a quarter inch of a flame—one that radiated heat and light through the following decade to where we stand today. That heat and light have generated conflicting responses: increased resistance and receptivity to the gospel among Muslims, and increased hostility and peacemaking among Christians. It has been the best of times and the worst of times for relations between Christians and Muslims.

MUSLIM RECEPTIVITY

Of course, the roots of Muslim resistance to Christianity go back to some of the earliest encounters with Christians, but tensions have increased significantly during the past century. Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood reacted to the secular and Christian culture introduced by European colonizers and missionaries. I met with leaders of the outlawed Brotherhood in Egypt during the late 1970s, and it was evident that while some were peaceful and some were militant, all felt that secular Islam was their primary enemy. By 9/11, some offshoots began focusing on the “distant enemy”: economic, military, and political centers in New York and Washington. The subsequent televised pictures of non-Muslim bombs dropping on Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan elicited further Muslim hostility toward the “crusading West.”

Opposition to Christian witness intensified in Afghanistan in 2006 and 2010, when Muslim converts to Christ were imprisoned and threatened with the death penalty. In Pakistan, Muslim converts to Christ were imprisoned for apostasy; they were later released—and then killed on the street. This past year in Pakistan, both the Muslim governor of the Punjab region and the Christian minister of minority

PATRICK BAZ / AFP / GETTY



Witness Protection: Coptic Christians stand guard as Muslims pray during Egypt's February protests.

affairs were murdered just for opposing the law against apostasy.

On the other hand, more rigid or militant forms of Islam often increase receptivity to the gospel. This happened during the Khomeini Shiite revolution in Iran in 1979 (22 years before 9/11) and the Sunni Taliban takeover in Afghanistan that facilitated 9/11. In fact, Iran and Afghanistan reveal a broader pattern: Whenever Muslim governments

their nerves, but for violent ends.

During a layover in Dubai, we visited the reception room in the former mud house of the ruling family, where thousands of cups of Arabic coffee had been served with traditional Muslim hospitality. At the madrasah next door, students had been taught rabbinic-like values such as obedience, justice, and honor, not the hate of the Taliban. On the final leg of the flight, the old man beside me, with his bare feet under him, rocked back and forth in his seat, chanting prayers for protection. Finally, as we landed in Peshawar, the call to prayer floated from many mosques, representing the variety of Muslims present in the nation—some militant, some peaceful.

Terrorism raises questions not only about missionary safety and transparency, but also about the appropriateness of certain forms of witness in some Muslim contexts.

have adopted a militant type of Islam or have tried to impose a form of Shari'ah law—and where there has been a local example of an alternate, friendly Christian presence—Muslims are attracted to the gospel. But persecution often follows.

The receptivity has also been particularly noticeable when Muslim factions are at odds—such as the Mujahideen militias after they had driven the Soviets out of Afghanistan in 1989, the Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, and the herdsmen and villagers in Darfur. Such hostilities and their resultant migrations, natural disasters in Bangladesh and Aceh, and ethnic resurgence among the Kabyle Berbers in North Africa have all led to an increased receptivity to the gospel.

Also, in spite of growing suspicion and hostility, a large percentage of Muslims have remained peaceful. My wife and I witnessed this on our return trip to Peshawar on September 11, 2002. Before sunrise, we flew down the western edge of Iran, the very place that birthed not only the Khomeini revolution but also some of the most beautiful poetry about Jesus (e.g., “Seek healing from the Christ, for he from . . . every fault can set you free”; Jami, 15th century). The predawn prayers for God's glory and mercy recited by the Muslim passengers on our flight echoed the prayers the hijackers had uttered to steel

NEW CHRISTIAN DEBATES

We have seen a comparable polarity among Christians, which in turn has affected missionaries and their supporting churches.

Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Franklin Graham made statements that suggested Islam was an evil religion incapable of reform or genuine dialogue. This continues to be one stream of thought on Islam among some Christians.

At the same time, 9/11 prompted both Christians and Muslims to work on peace-building. When anti-Muslim feelings ran high after the tragedy, Christians in Seattle sat by the entrances of Islamic centers to dissuade irate people from doing harm. My wife offered to go shopping with our Muslim Pakistani neighbors. Fuller Theological Seminary began regular meetings with local Muslims and joined with the Salam Institute at the American University in Washington, D.C., to foster peace-building without denying the need for mutual respectful witness. Yale Divinity School helped facilitate a series of consultations with Muslims on “A Common Word,” centered on passages in Muslim and Christian sacred texts about loving God and neighbor. North Park University and Seminary likewise helped organize a series of evangelical and Muslim dialogues. Evangelical missionaries such as the

Believers on the MOVE

A suburban Chicago church ministers to Muslims at home and abroad.

By Mark Moring

Shortly after our son Paul graduated from high school this spring, we put him on a plane with seven other students for a two-week trip to France and Italy. Their trek, led by four adults, was a small piece of Wheaton Bible Church's (WBC) MOVE Initiative, a relatively nascent project defined by its mission and ministry to Muslims both in suburban Chicago and abroad. It's a little window into how missions have, for many churches, changed since September 11.

In southern Europe, a number of missionary families reach out to immigrants and refugees from North Africa, many of whom have fled unstable nations and are looking for peace. Partnering with Greater Europe Mission, which has ramped up its own outreach to Muslims in recent years, our church recently commissioned eight new missionaries for this work in France.

My son's group—one of about eight short-term teams from WBC's high

school ministry—handed out evangelistic materials at an Italian port city through which many North Africans travel. Paul, one of the student leaders, says his team experienced both receptivity (he led one Muslim man to Christ) and rejection (including being cursed and spat at), but most encounters were quick and cordial. The team distributed 1,000 copies of the New Testament, learned much about the power of prayer, and came home inspired.

Locally, the MOVE Initiative reaches out to about 15 Iraqi families in a nearby apartment complex through a partnership with World Relief. Several staff and church members have moved into the complex to foster deeper relationships, which typically begin with relatively simple tasks when the refugees arrive: picking them up at the airport, stocking their fridges, running errands, and meeting other practical needs involved in resettlement.

“We're just meeting needs and building relationships,” says local-impact

Southern Baptists have, in general, opposed the negative stereotyping of Muslims in favor of a more cordial attitude.

In theology, Christian literature on Islam runs the gamut from apologetics (Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb's *Answering Islam*) to bridge-building (Kenneth Cragg's *A Certain Sympathy of Scriptures*).

In prophetic writings, we've seen conflicting interpretations of the roles of Israel and Islam in the end times (Colin Chapman's *Whose Promised Land?* vs. Mark Hitchcock's *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*).

In spiritual encounter, the approaches range from confrontational (Grant Jeffrey's *War on Terror*) to reconciling (Christine Mallouhi's *Waging Peace on Islam*).

In terms of evangelism and church planting, some Christians argue that converts from Islam can retain their Muslim social identity, while others argue that a complete break with Islam is required.

DEALING WITH TERROR

The tragedy of 9/11 has raised a number of new issues, and the ever-present possibility of terrorism has forced missionaries to Muslims to consider anew the role of suffering in discipleship. Ten workers in Afghanistan, two of them personal friends, paid with their lives last year. Security training for missions personnel—what to do when personnel are kidnapped, for example—is now part of missionary preparation. To avoid attracting unnecessary attention (and thus hostility) to missionaries to Muslims, names of specific people, places, countries, and organizations are now largely left out of articles like this one. Many mission organizations are reluctant to send missionaries with children to such dangerous areas.

At the same time, for the sake of integrity in the communications age, Christian workers are striving to make their ministries and identities more transparent. Following the example of Paul, who combined being a genuine tentmaker with being a witness, they seek to have an integrated identity.

Terrorism raises questions not only about missionary safety and transparency, but also about the appropriateness of certain forms of witness in some Muslim contexts. Two young women in Afghanistan, going against the missions consensus at a time of tense government relations, went ahead and entered homes with Bibles and the *Jesus* film in hand. This led to their imprisonment and to the expulsion of all known Christian workers in the nation the week before 9/11. But it seems that God, in his providence, used this situation to get those expelled out of harm's way from the subsequent bombing and fighting there.

MISSION DEVELOPMENTS

The most significant missions development since 9/11 has been the increased number of students who want to be missionaries to Muslims. The first class I taught on Islam after 9/11 had 100 more students than usual. This interest built on the emphasis of the "AD2000 and Beyond" and Lausanne movements on the "10/40 window," the section of the world that includes major non-Christian religions. Increases in student numbers were also the result of interest in Muslims raised by the 1979 Khomeini Revolution in Iran. Todd Johnson, an editor of the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, has calculated a 26 percent increase between 2005 and 2010 in the number of missionaries working in Muslim-majority countries.

Corresponding to broader trends in globalization, many missions to Muslims have formed global networks to identify Muslim people groups who have yet to hear or respond to the gospel. These networks have started sharing personnel and resources. A book and companion CD I edited, *From Seed to Fruit*, is the product of such a network.

Overall, we are seeing Muslims following Jesus as never before in history. They are choosing a spectrum of identities that embrace the gospel without abandoning their origins. Some are identifying with churches that use the language and worship styles of foreign missionaries. Others are using indigenous language and worship styles but with a clear Christian identity. Still others are retaining as much

pastor Chris McElwee. "They're not strangers to us. They know us and trust us, and they're interested in spiritual things." At least a couple of the Iraqi men have been visiting WBC in recent months, attending worship services (with their Arabic/English Bibles in hand) and taking part in a discussion group.

Our new MOVE missionaries, who recently arrived in France, will take essentially the same approach: helping refugees resettle, meeting needs,

a Christian response? Are we going to hunker down in fear and hate people? Or are we going to understand that we're all sinful and separated from God, and that it's incumbent upon us to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all sorts of people, including those who might be perceived to be our enemies?"

Greater Europe Mission president Henry Deneen says the relatively recent influx of Muslims to Europe has affected his ministry's overall strategy. It still reaches out to native Europeans, but "there's a window of time here, especially with all the uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, that immigrants are flooding into Europe.

"Several European governments—particularly France, Germany, and the UK—are saying that the experiment of multiculturalism . . . has failed," he says.

"So you have a perfect storm—immigrants flooding in, and governments saying it's not working. We're saying, what a great place for the Lord Jesus to be."

Thus, Wheaton Bible's efforts to reach out to Muslims in France. Says Bugh, "It's all part of a larger immigration engagement theology that's worked for us."

'9/11 was a game changer. We asked, what does the gospel mean in response? Are we going to hunker down in fear and hate people?'

~ Robert Bugh, Wheaton Bible Church senior pastor

and building relationships. The hope is that as the friendships grow, so will opportunities to share the gospel.

WBC senior pastor Robert Bugh says the MOVE Initiative is a natural outgrowth of the church's longstanding "sensitivity to the plight of immigrants."

"We have a history of ministering to refugees coming from different places," says Bugh, referring to outreach to Hispanics. But, he says, "9/11 was a game changer for a lot of us. We asked, what does the gospel mean in terms of

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



Demonstrating with Each Other: Muslims and Christians protest together in Cairo.

TAHSIN BAKR / DEMOTIX

of their socio-religious Muslim identity as possible while confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord and the Bible as their supreme authority. There are even imams in places like East Africa who preach from the Bible in their mosques. God appears to be working across the board.

Some missions personnel champion an attractional church model in which converts make a clear break from their socio-religious background. Others practice a transformational model where they plant the gospel among people who remain in their socio-religious community and, like yeast in dough, are transformed as they study the Bible under the guidance of the Spirit. Needless to say, there is considerable controversy over these differences in approach (see “Muslim Followers of Jesus?” *Christianity Today*, December 2009). So a consultation was held in upstate New York in June to correct misunderstandings and misrepresentations, to encourage discussion in grace and truth, and to reach as much of a consensus as possible.

A NEW FLAME

The recent “Arab Spring” offers both hope and concern. Like 9/11, it started with a fire: the attempted self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit vendor after he was shamed by authorities. The flames ignited revolts in Egypt and elsewhere in the Muslim world. Christians took part in initial demonstrations for democracy, and in Egypt, Muslims and Christians protected each other during prayer. Christians were even able to preach in Tahrir Square. But concern remains that sectarian strife will continue to plague Egypt as police have become less effective.

A recent worldwide Gallup poll indicates that although a majority of Muslims want democracy, they want Shari’ah to have some role. This may just mean the inclusion of Islamic values or, alternatively, more rigid laws that make Christians second-class citizens and conversion from Islam unlawful. The nature of future law will depend on whether more conservative groups like the Muslim Brotherhood take control

of Egypt and other nations. Just how many Muslim countries will be changed in the near future is unclear. But certainly the rising, more secular youth are beginning to push aside the bin Ladenism of the past—even though more terrorist attacks may occur.

What led to that bin Ladenism and 9/11—the post-Soviet fighting between Mujahideen, the rise of the Taliban, and terrorist camps—resulted in thousands of Afghans fleeing to Pakistan, where they were put in refugee camps. In one of these camps outside Peshawar, conditions were dismal. Since refugee children ran around barefoot in intense heat and cold, a Christian organization brought in hundreds of sandals. The group decided it would not just distribute the sandals but wash the children’s feet first. To do this, they enlisted as many Christians as possible, including our daughter-in-law, who carefully washed the children’s filthy feet, put medication on their sores, and prayed silently for them before giving them the sandals.

Some months later, a primary-school teacher in the area asked her children who the best Muslims were. A girl put up her hand and said, “The *kafirs*” (“disbelievers”).

After the teacher recovered from cardiac arrest, she asked, “Why?”

The girl replied, “The Mujahideen killed my father, but the *kafirs* washed my feet.”

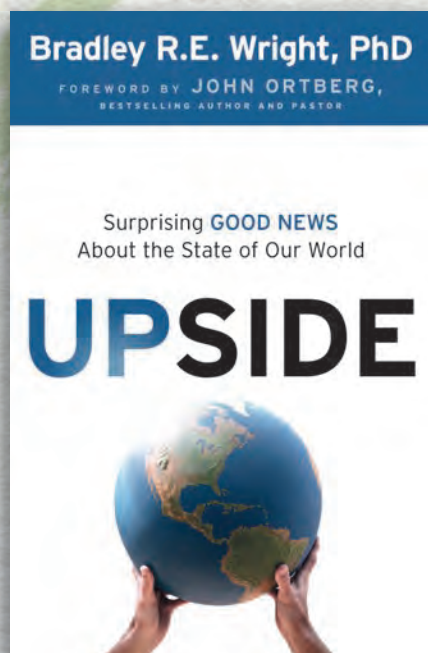
Ultimately, the future of missions to Muslims will be affected less by the flames of 9/11, or even the flames that started the Arab Spring, than by the inner flames that are ignited if we so follow our Lord, who modeled the basin and the towel, that our Muslim friends may echo the words of the disciples in Emmaus: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”



J. Dudley Woodberry is dean emeritus and senior professor of Islamic studies at Fuller Theological Seminary.

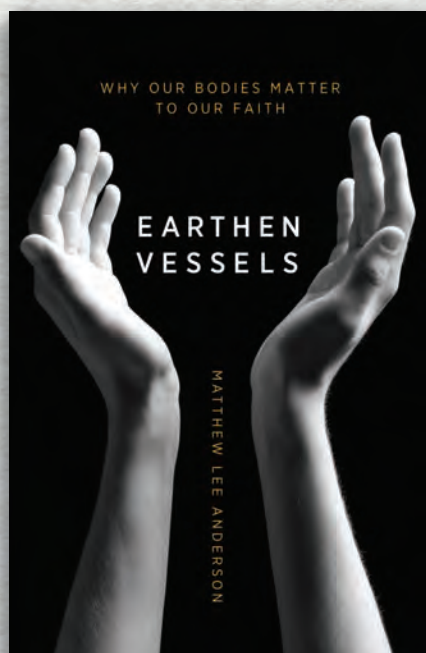
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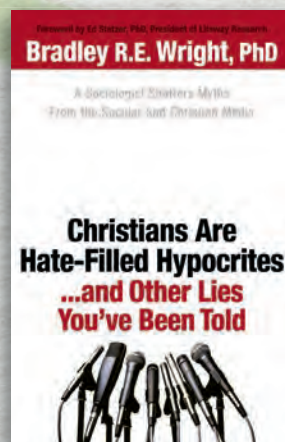
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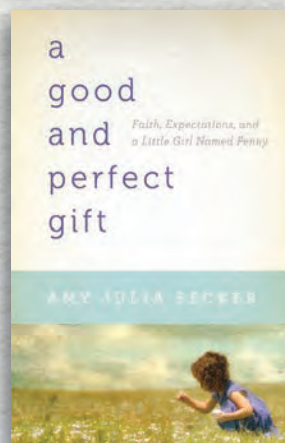
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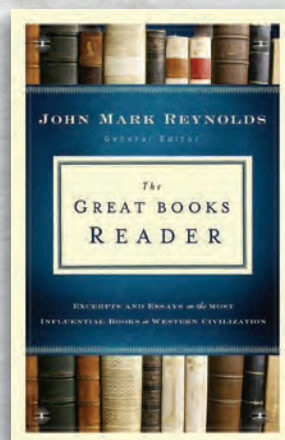
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Loving Muslims One at a Time

The 'Vicar
of Baghdad'
says the key
to Muslim-
Christian
relations is
very personal.
Interview by
Mark Galli

A

NDREW WHITE was in the thick of matters in Iraq long before September 11. In 1998, at age 33, he was appointed a canon at Coventry Cathedral, England, as director of international ministry and head of the International Centre for Reconciliation. The center promotes reconciliation (mainly religious) across the globe, and White concentrated his efforts on the Middle East, mediating many kidnapping and hostage disputes, and helping Shia and Sunni leaders trust one another.

In 2005, White became the vicar of St. George's Church just outside the Green Zone in Baghdad. He has been dubbed the Vicar of Baghdad, because St. George's is the only Anglican church left in Iraq. White has received a number of humanitarian awards, the latest being the 2011 International First Freedom Award, which has also been awarded to such people as Tony Blair.



CT senior managing editor Mark Galli recently spoke with White via Skype.

Where were you on September 11, 2001?

What were you doing?

I was sitting in my office in Coventry Cathedral, packing my bags to go to Baghdad the next day. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I arrived in Baghdad a week later. I walked into the office of [then Deputy Prime Minister] Tariq Aziz. He said, "Andrew, tell them we had nothing to do with it." I didn't think what I was saying, but I shouted at him, "It doesn't matter whether you did or not! They are still all coming to get you." And they did.

The day before 9/11, what were your greatest fears and hopes for Christian-Muslim relations in Iraq?

As early as 1998, I was saying that the biggest problem was not going to be the Eastern European or Communist countries but the Islamic world. I believed we needed to keep engaged with the Islamic world. I was very aware of the problem—the way the Islamic world communicated with the West. I knew things were getting worse. I knew there was going to be a catastrophe. Then 9/11 happened. And 9/11 wasn't just a tragedy; it was a major changing point in history.

What are the biggest changes you have seen since 9/11?

The biggest change is that we now have a public conflict between Islam and Christianity, and religion has gone very wrong. And when reli-

gion goes wrong, it goes very wrong. Christianity went very wrong at the time of the Crusades and, not least, the time of the Holocaust; the Holocaust was not an act of Christianity, but it took place in the middle of the Christian continent, and most people said nothing.

Today, Islam sees the Western world as the Christian world. Its adherents don't separate between the state and the masses. They see us as one. The West is predominantly Christian. Its ethics is not pure; the morality of many people is terrible. And they see that all as Christianity.

When you say that religion has gone terribly wrong, does that still include Christianity?

No, the Christian religion is not as dangerous as it used to be. But when you are on the ground in places like we are, the liberals can do nothing. You have to be very orthodox in your faith.

Why?

Islamic leaders are very orthodox, and they want to know that you are serious about your faith as well. The fact that I am orthodox in my faith means that I can get a lot further with Islamic leaders. I believe in God; I believe what the Bible says; I believe everything I'm supposed to as an orthodox Christian. And the fact that I don't drink and I practice my faith is what they are trying to see.

What has been the biggest surprise in your work since 9/11?

That much of the world still does not realize that we are dealing with a major religious battle.

Why do so many deny that? It seems so obvious.

They deny it because they don't understand religion themselves and are frightened by it. Religion to them is something strange and distant. Maybe that's true, but it is the only way of dealing with this conflict.

Many commentators would say, no, the problem in the Middle East is poverty.

The Middle East does not have poverty like we see in many other parts of the world. The region has the greatest affluence in the world. Look at the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait—there are the very rich, the very poor, and not a lot in between.

So you think the Islamic fear or anger with America is religiously motivated?

A lot of it is, and the problem is that they don't see a difference between the secular nation and the religious life. So when they see promiscuity in our films, they think, *That is what it means to be Christian.*

Are you seeing changes among Muslim leaders?

I can give you one big example. One of the leaders I worked with was a Palestinian who belongs to Hamas. I started talking to him, and it was obvious that he had no plans to meet the Israelis, ever. Over time, as he saw that I was listening to him and befriending him, he became more and more open to meeting with Jewish leaders. Now he is engaging with them. He has become a close colleague and is seriously working with me for peace.

His Arab friends criticize him: "How can you be friends with Zionists?" But he has said that the Jews are his brothers, that "I will walk this long and difficult road with them until we find peace together."

In this climate, what does evangelism to Muslims look like?

Any evangelism is love. If we show real love, they will be drawn to Jesus. I have 500 Muslims in my church. I have never "evangelized" them. I never go knocking on their doors. But what we have done is show them real love and kindness in our church's ministries of compassion—food distribution and the like. They see that we as Christians care about them, and they want to come and worship as we do.

What do you see in the next 10 years regarding Christian-Muslim relations in Iraq and the Middle East?

I think it's bleak. I don't think the Middle East is going to seriously improve. But those we work with will be changed. They will be different.

We recently got together with the religious leaders in the area who had issued a fatwa against killing Christians. Up to that day, people were being killed during Mass every day. Since the moment of the fatwa, the killing stopped.

So where Christians are building relationships, you see a lot of hope?

Absolutely. The answer is love, love, love.

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for "Loving Muslims One at a Time," a Bible study based on this article.

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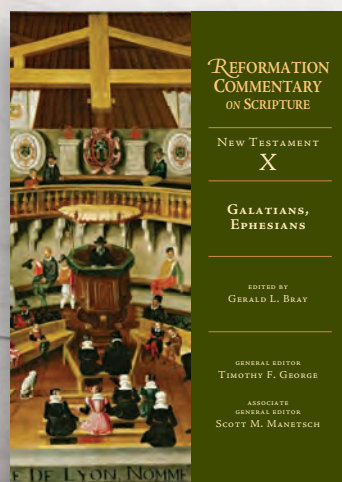
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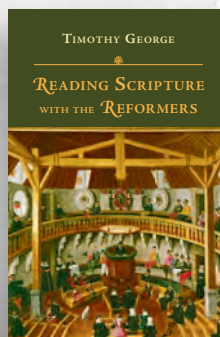
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Saving the Superheroes

Portland-based ministry Responder Life sees police officers, firefighters, and dispatchers as an unreached people group. By Shelly Ngo

THE CALLS BEGAN flooding into New York's emergency dispatch center just before 9 A.M. on September 11, 2001. People choking on smoke inside the World Trade Center begged operators to send help after one plane, then another, hit the Twin Towers. The callers couldn't breathe. Should they break the windows? Should they jump?

Dispatchers fielded such questions and relayed the information to NYC police and firefighters. Some operators stayed on the phone with panicked people, begging them to stay calm even as callers realized they were going to die.

Three months after the tragedy, a group of chaplains from the Pacific Northwest visited the 911 operators at the consolidated dispatch center in Brooklyn.

"We were heartily welcomed," says Russ Guppy, a police chaplain in Tacoma, Washington. The country extolled the courage and bravery of police officers and firefighters, but tended to overlook the dispatchers; they had no critical event debriefings or extra time off for trauma.

"Dispatchers kept thanking us for remembering them," Guppy recalls. The chaplains stayed through two shifts to distribute 800 Bibles to dispatchers who came to talk with them during breaks. "It was an incredible day. We were walking on air when we left that evening," Guppy says.

In early 2004, Responder Life was launched—a ministry to all first responders, including police, fire and rescue teams, medics, federal agents, and 911 dispatchers.

The Portland, Oregon-based ministry began by hosting events for first responders. That included an appreciation dinner every September 11 to recognize emergency personnel, and a weekend summer camp for first responders and their families. But the group wanted to build ongoing connections with police officers and other responders, as a way to transform their lives through a relationship with Christ.

"We see first responders as a unique people group," says Chris Green, president of Responder Life, who visited New York dispatchers alongside Guppy in 2002. "We send missionaries to other countries to reach people. We wanted to reach this people group as well."

Since first responders have strong insular cultures, Responder Life relies on "Insiders": believers who work in these agencies and volunteer through Responder Life to help lead peers to Christ. They attend "The Truth Project," a 12-week Focus on the Family study

examining the Christian worldview, and are trained in leading small groups and in apologetics to answer fundamental questions about suffering and death.

"As an officer, you form deeper relationships because you're going through training together. You're driving around together for hours. There's more of an opportunity to share your life and faith with someone," says Green.

Green, who has served as both a chaplain and a reserve deputy, says it is easier for work peers to build relationships than it is for professional chaplains. "People are still freaked out about how they should behave with a pastor," Green says, recalling the time a sergeant derisively asked him if he had "holy water" to sprinkle at a crime scene.

Already, Responder Life is expanding across the United States and into Canada. There are 300 Insiders in 120 U.S. cities, with offices in Oregon and Missouri. The nonprofit's goal is to develop 100,000 Insiders by 2017 who can lead fellow responders to a faith that will sustain them through the challenges they face on the job.

A SUSTAINING FAITH

Most first responders work under constant stress, which leads to hypervigilance, an "always-on" mindset that easily breeds exhaustion. It's common for first responders to show post-traumatic stress symptoms and to turn to alcohol to cope. Job stresses unique to first responders can lead to broken marriages and, in some cases, suicide.

"They are used to helping others yet resistant to receiving help themselves. There's a level of self-reliance and arrogance that develops from being the ones whom others call on in an emergency," says Allen Oswald, a retired lieutenant with the Portland Fire Department.

"Early on in the agency, you're told about job stresses, but you haven't lived it yet. It takes years for things to sink in, but there's a cumulative effect to what you experience," explains Dave Williams, veteran assistant police chief of the Portland Police Department. Williams and his wife also helped found Responder Life.

A decade into his career, Williams was hitting burnout. "I started out wanting to make society a better place. After a while I was wondering, *Am I really making a difference?* I saw flaws in the agency. My idealism started to wear off."

At a 1983 Marriage Encounter retreat with his wife, Lois, Williams recommitted his life to Christ after years of a nominal faith, and began earnestly studying the Bible.

"Everything I was reading and studying began to change my perspective," Williams explained. "Our relationship with God is



broken, and he's not going to restore everything until the end, so it took the pressure off of me to 'fix' everything. It was not my burden to save the world.

"Once I saw myself as an ambassador of Christ in a fallen world, I didn't feel hopeless, like I was on a mindless treadmill. It renewed my energy for my job. I was a sergeant at the time, and I started to ask myself, *How would Jesus have me do this particular task?*

"If you're going to survive in the first responder culture, you have to see it differently."

Other Responder Insiders agree. "I don't know how I would be able to be on the police force and not know the Lord," says Mathieu LaCrosse, a law enforcement officer in Willamette Valley, Oregon. LaCrosse described a bomb that went off in a Woodburn bank in 2008, killing two police officers. "I was picking up the body parts of friends," he says. "I've only been able to have a stable personal and professional life because of the Lord."

Anthony Kollias, a sergeant and SWAT team leader with the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office near Portland, became a Christian six years ago.

"I used to go with the guys to exotic dance bars. Every sentence

Overt Operation: With tools from Responder Life—founded by Chris Green (left) and Dave Williams—Sgt. Anthony Kollis (center) started a Bible study with nine of his SWAT team members.

I said had the f-word in it. All of that changed when I became a Christian. The guys started seeing how different I was, how my marriage was stronger," says Kollias, a Responder Life Insider and area director. One of the deputies, a sniper on Kollias's SWAT team, stopped by his house one day and asked him if he had any porn.

"I told him the Bible was the only book I studied those days. From then on, he started ribbing me and calling me 'Pastor Tony,'" Kollias recalls. But he kept inviting the deputy to church, and invited SWAT team members to join him for a Bible study. Nine joined.

On Christmas Eve 2009, the deputy who called Kollias "Pastor Tony" showed up at Kollias's church, where he was playing in the worship band. "After the service, I spent 45 minutes talking to him in the parking lot. He was very emotional. He felt the pastor was speaking right to him." The deputy committed his life to Christ that night, and Kollias has been discipling him ever since.

"It's a slow building process to have people see how God is changing me," Kollias says. "That's what Responder Life is all about. It's great to have people come to know the Lord through us." ✚

Shelly Ngo is a writer based in Seattle.



'A Plain, Ordinary Christian'

John Stott made extraordinary contributions to the global evangelical movement. By Tim Stafford

AN EVANGELICAL is a plain, ordinary Christian," John Stott told *Christianity Today* in an October 2006 interview. From his conversion at Rugby secondary school in 1938 to his death on July 27, Stott exemplified how extraordinary plain, ordinary Christianity can be. He was not known as an original thinker, nor did he seek to be. He always turned to the Bible for understanding, and his unforgettable gift was to penetrate and explain the Scriptures. As former CT editor Kenneth Kantzer wrote in these pages in 1981, "When I hear him expound a text, invariably I exclaim to myself, 'That's exactly what it means! Why didn't I see it before?'"

Until his conversion and subsequent call to Christian ministry, Stott seemed headed for the diplomatic corps. A skilled linguist, he excelled in the study of French at Cambridge University before going on to excel equally in theology. No one doubted Stott's diplomatic potential. In his ministry, he retained the best qualities of that calling, to faithfully and skillfully represent someone else.

BEGINNING YEARS

Like any good diplomat, Stott knew exactly who he was and where he came from. Born into an emotionally close and cultured doctor's family, he spent virtually his entire life in the same London neighborhood. As a child he attended All Souls Church, sometimes sitting in the balcony and dropping wads of paper on ladies' hats below. At his ordination in the Church of England in 1945, Stott became curate there and then, in 1950, rector of the badly war-damaged church. He would remain on staff for the rest of his days.

Stott was thoroughly English in stereotypical ways: incisive, cool, time-conscious, orderly, and balanced. Though he had a great gift for friendship, he was not given to small talk or self-revelation. (He did have a wry sense of humor and was a talented amateur musician.) A lifelong bachelor, he showed a formidable capacity for work. When he was immersed in a writing project, he could happily keep his own company for weeks on end at his retreat in Wales, grinding out page after page of well-regulated prose.

At the same time, he relished the world around him in all its variety. Perhaps nothing showed this so obviously as his lifelong love for birdwatching, which biographer Timothy Dudley-Smith says bordered on an obsession. In his later decades, Stott spent a great proportion of his time traveling, much of it in third-world (he called them "majority-world") countries. Time for birds was nearly always included. He traveled without an entourage, sometimes preaching in a cathedral one day and under a tree the next, meeting the mighty and the lowly and staying in their homes. As a London pastor, too, he formed strong attachments to a wide variety of humanity. When he encountered opposition or criticism, he would seek out an exchange of views. He did not enjoy conflict, but he

was committed to dialogue.

Right from the beginning, Stott was passionate about evangelism. The man who led him to Christ, E. J. H. Nash, or "Bash," worked for Scripture Union in the elite English public schools. Stott had been raised to attend church and read the Bible daily, but as a young student he had no understanding of personal salvation. Bash shared with him the scene from Revelation 3, of Jesus standing at the door and asking to come in. It seized Stott's understanding, and shortly thereafter he became a Christian. Bash soon put Stott to work, talking to other boys about what he had discovered. By the time Stott reached university, he was running evangelistic Scripture Union holiday camps.

Best known today as a Bible expositor and teacher, Stott initially made a reputation as an evangelist. At All Souls, he led many to Christ while teaching the congregation how to evangelize friends and neighbors. All Souls was an inner-city church with a striking mix of the well-off and the indigent, and Stott was determined to neglect neither side. He firmly believed that the local church should be a locus for evangelism. One of his first books, published in 1952, was *Parochial Evangelism by the Laity*.

J. I. Packer remembers that Stott "in his younger days . . . was a brilliant and hard-worked student evangelist." He was the chosen speaker for a considerable number of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's week-long campaigns at British universities, particularly Cambridge and Oxford. These later extended to North America and throughout the Commonwealth. From these evangelistic talks came one of his best-selling books, *Basic Christianity* (1958), which has been translated into 25 languages and has sold well over a million copies.

Billy Graham first visited England in 1946, and Stott met him while sharing open-air preaching at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. In 1954, he welcomed Graham for his 12-week Haringay crusade, and the two became warm friends, bonding through an active, shared commitment to evangelism.

EVANGELICAL RESURGENCE

Fundamentally, though, Stott was a church minister, one who became the leading figure in a resurgence of British evangelicalism, particularly within the Church of England.

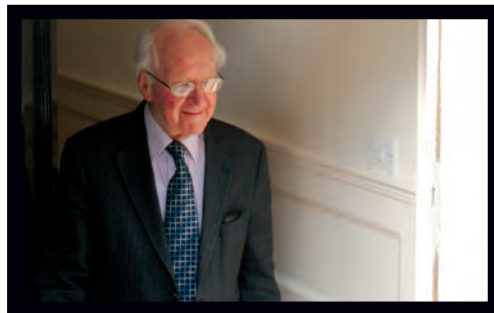
Conservative evangelicals were a despised minority when Stott was ordained, without a single bishop in the Church of England. In response, Stott showed his ingenuity as a social entrepreneur, fostering organizations meant to encourage younger evangelical clergy, and spearheading a durable set of evangelical conferences.

Most of all, he modeled confidence and intellectual strength. "I remember reading his books as a young student," says Old Testament scholar Chris Wright, whom Stott later chose to lead Langham Partnership International, his majority-world ministry of biblical

scholarship and preaching. "They were so clearly argued you felt that you had a case."

Stott believed the mind was a gift from God. In an evangelical world tempted to rely on proof texts and emotive stories, Stott drilled down deep into Scripture to display its power. Many people, hearing Stott preach for the first time, said they had never heard the Bible expounded with such clarity and depth. His passion was to learn what God said and to let it shape all of life.

His practice of evangelism demonstrated that "plain, ordinary Christianity" could appeal to all classes of people. What evangelicals most treasured—the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures that testified to them—he showed to be potent resources for winning the world. Largely through Stott's leadership, British evangelicalism was transformed from a defensive backwater into an engaged and significant movement.



Stott believed the mind was a gift from God. In an evangelical world tempted to rely on proof texts and emotive stories, Stott drilled down deep into Scripture to display its power.

LAUSANNE LEADER

Stott was every inch an evangelical, but always a reforming evangelical. He recognized that evangelicalism sometimes sank down into mere piety, whereas the Bible spoke of a robust transformation of the world brought about by God's people engaged in mission. As a London pastor, Stott increasingly prodded evangelicalism to reclaim its heritage of engagement with the social issues of the day.

As he once remarked, "In the early 1960s, I began to travel in the Third World, and I saw poverty in Latin America, Africa and Asia as I had not seen it before. It became clear to me that it was utterly impossible to take that old view." The "old view" was that preaching was a Christian's preeminent task, and that deeds of compassion were strictly

secondary. As Stott probed the Scriptures, he saw that Jesus' Great Commission encompassed a practical concern for life and health.

One of Stott's most significant books, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (1984), addressed crucial concerns of contemporary society, such as abortion, industrial relations, and human rights. In 1982, he helped to launch the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, which offered classes and lectures on a wide variety of pressing topics.

His greatest impact in the area of social concern came somewhat inadvertently. In 1974, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association convened an International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland. Among the thousands of delegates and speakers, about half came from majority-world countries. The gathering's wide representation resembled meetings of the World Council of Churches, but the excited atmosphere of unified mission was unprecedented. Many participants grasped for the first time the global dimensions of the evangelical church. Almost 30 years later, historian Philip Jenkins would write *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (2002). But according to David Jones, former president of John Stott Ministries, at Lausanne, "Jenkins's book was there in the faces and minds of people."

Delegates had to overcome great differences in perspective between the West and the majority world, and the relationship between evangelism and social concern was an emotional hot button. According to some, Christians were called to preach the gospel, full stop. Others thought such a stance amounted to callous indifference toward countries battered by poverty and injustice.

Stott gave the opening address. He began with characteristic humility, calling for “a note of evangelical repentance.” Then, with a lucid exposition of Scripture, he addressed this potential impasse.

Here then are two instructions, “love your neighbor” and “go and make disciples.” What is the relation between the two? Some of us behave as if we thought them identical, so that if we have shared the Gospel with somebody, we consider we have completed our responsibility to love him. But no. The Great Commission neither explains, nor exhausts, nor supercedes the Great Commandment. What it does is to add to the command of neighbor-love and neighbor-service a new and urgent Christian dimension. If we truly love our neighbor we shall without doubt tell him the Good News of Jesus. But equally if we truly love our neighbor we shall not stop there.

Stott’s speech made it possible for delegates to rethink their positions, and to conceive of preaching and social action working in tandem. He managed the same trick in chairing the committee that drafted the Lausanne Covenant. Stott’s diplomatic skill was never

more evident, as he chaired potentially fractious meetings, getting people to listen to each other’s views. He worked tirelessly behind the scenes to draft and redraft the covenant, finding wording that would capture various points of view without doing violence to any. The resulting document expressed a common mission that most delegates could enthusiastically endorse, while providing a basic statement of purpose for future evangelical groups. Lausanne was a defining moment in global evangelicalism. Billy Graham was the indispensable convener, but John Stott was the indispensable uniter.

LIVING LEGACY

What has John Stott left behind? His legacy lives on in his church, for generations a vital, grounded, evangelical community in the heart of London. To this day, All Souls serves as a beacon for visitors from all over the world. Langham Partnership, preeminent among the organizations he launched, increasingly reflects a global partnership of evangelicals concerned for scholarship, literature, and preaching in the majority world.

His books, too, continue to speak eloquently: clear, precise, stimulating, and balanced. His commentaries cover much of the New Testament, bridging the gap between scholarly works and thoughtful works for lay people. Many people consider *The Cross of Christ* (1986) Stott’s magnum opus, but his entire corpus is a summing up of evangelical Christianity: dominated by the Bible, but full of a sense of Cross-centered mission.

For all his skill and intellect, his writing, his entrepreneurial

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energy, and his brilliant preaching, Stott’s ultimate legacy may be the vast number of people he mentored and befriended all over the world.

Far earlier than most, Stott recognized the vitality and strength of the church in the majority world. He began to spend an increasing share of his time there as he retired from the day-to-day responsibilities of leading All Souls.

Most of his work in the majority world was, from a Westerner’s perspective, invisible. He met thousands of church leaders, often young men and women struggling to find their place. He procured theological study books for those without access to good libraries. He arranged scholarships in England and the United States for qualified doctoral candidates. He demonstrated biblical preaching, and he modeled modesty and a simple lifestyle. He made hundreds if not thousands of friends, becoming a bridge between cultures.

“Naturally, by temperament, he was an introvert,” remembers Chris Wright. “He was very happy to be in his own company. Yet he gave himself to so many people, remembering names, knowing their families, knowing their children, writing letters, praying for them. He was constantly praying for people.”

“There have been mixed feelings about the West among our leaders,” says Ajith Fernando, a Methodist church leader and head of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka. “Sometimes I feel an anger close to racism has arisen in the minds of Christian leaders out of the sense that Western leaders do not understand the concerns of people in the rest of the world. There is a suspicion that what they want is to fulfill their agenda in our countries—another form of colonialism?

With people like John Stott around, it was impossible for me to nurture such feelings . . . Here was humility personified. We are grateful that he gave so much time coming to the poorer nations not with some huge program which would impress the whole world, but simply to teach us the Bible.”

Latin American theologian C. René Padilla remembers vividly an early encounter with Stott. Arriving in Argentina on a rainy night, they walked to their lodgings and deposited two pairs of mud-covered shoes. “In the morning, as I woke up, I heard the sound of a brush—John was busy, brushing my shoes. ‘John!’ I exclaimed, full of surprise, ‘What are you doing?’ ‘My dear René,’ he responded, ‘Jesus taught us to wash each other’s feet. You do not need me to wash your feet, but I can brush your shoes.’”

Theologian David Wells, who came to Christ at a 1959 John Stott mission in South Africa, later shared a household with him for five years in the early 1960s. “His leadership was effective,” Wells says, “because of his personal integrity and his Christian life. . . . He was known all over the world, but when you met him he was a most devout, humble Christian man. His private life was no different from his public life. It was the same person. That’s another way to say that he had integrity. There was no posing.”

One would like to say that such is the nature of plain, ordinary Christians. Not all live up to it. John Stott did. 

Tim Stafford, a senior writer for *Christianity Today*, is vice chair of the board of John Stott Ministries.



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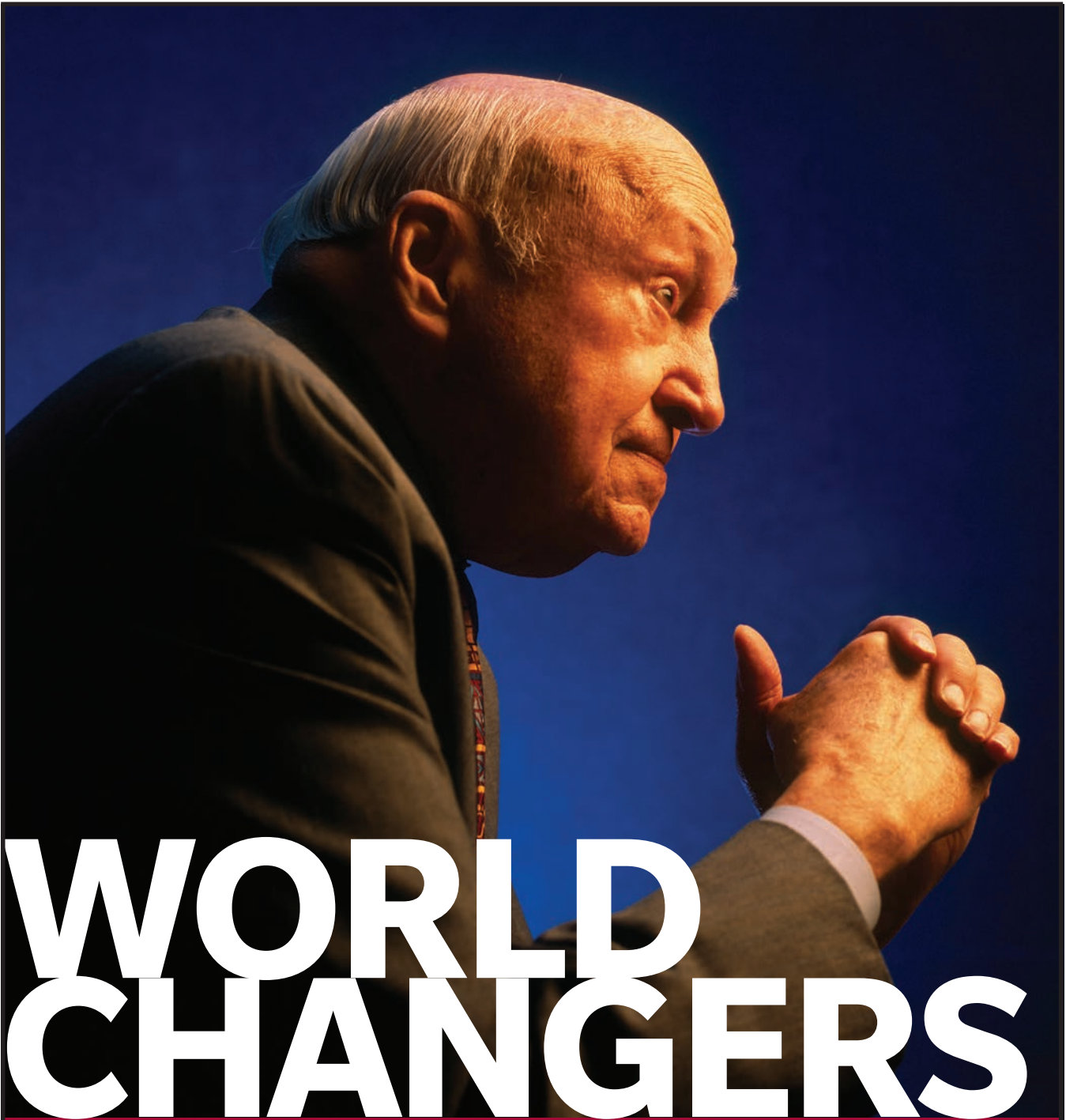


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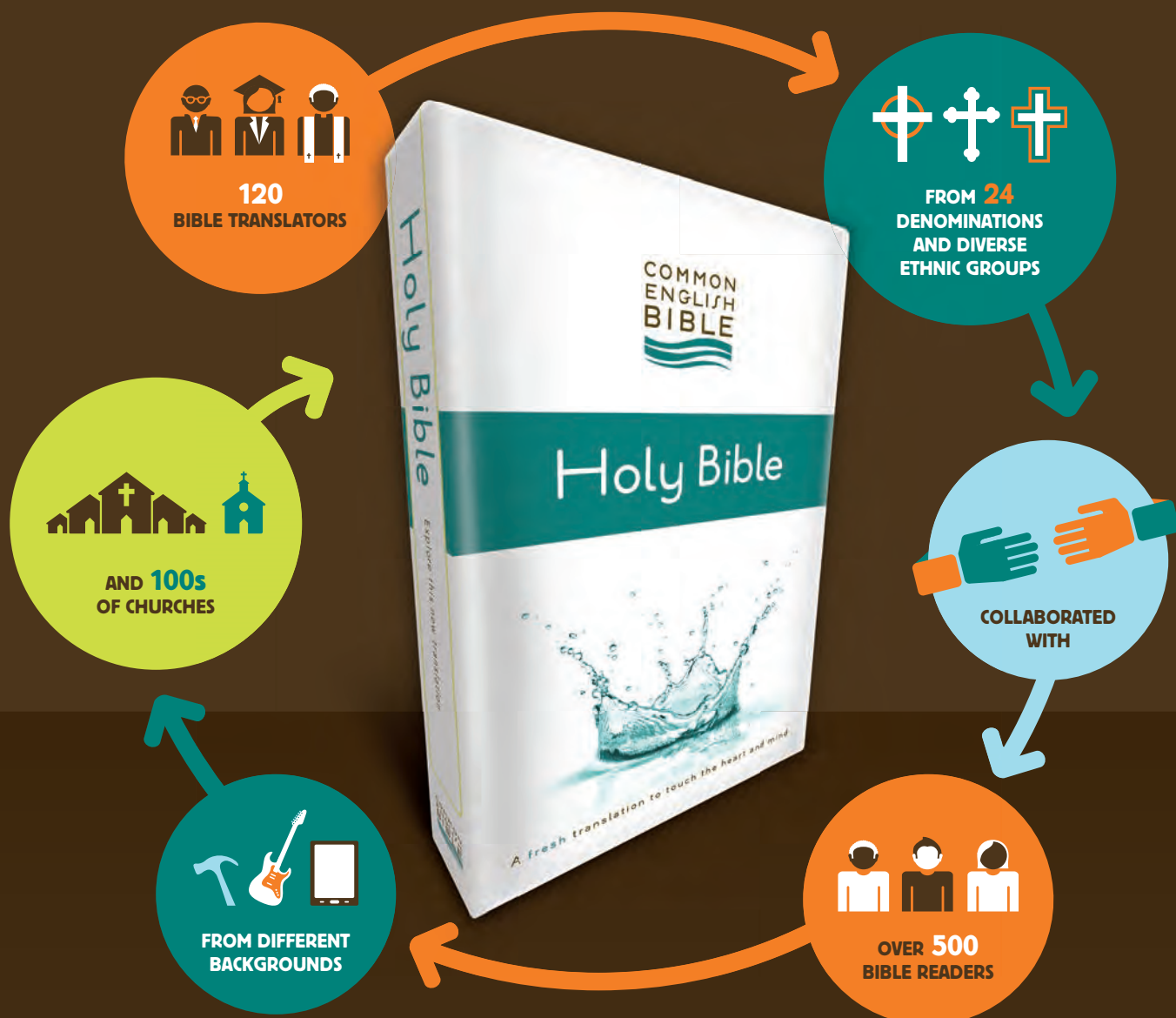
[Mark 10:27]

With just two words – "Closed Sundays" – Truett Cathy changed everything. As the innovative founder of Chick-fil-A and a Christian witness to millions, Mr. Cathy was recently inducted into Indiana Wesleyan University's Society of World Changers. At IWU, we believe, with God's help, ordinary people can do extraordinary things. Like world-changer Truett Cathy, ours is a belief that anything is possible.

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VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



Sadly, very few Christians are talking about the true cultural crisis that is the foundation of all the others: the demise of the godly family. That is the source of all the other issues.

L. Garvin
E-mail

Family Values

The July cover story, "Refocusing on the Family," was so encouraging. My policy was to listen to Focus when its hosts were talking about biblical principles for building up the Christian family, and to turn it off when they started talking about politics. Not that I don't agree with some of their political stances, but I can get those perspectives from a million other places.

Sadly, very few Christians are talking about the true cultural crisis that is the foundation of all the others: the demise of the godly family. That is the source of all the other issues.

L. GARVIN
E-mail

Insight into India

"India's Grassroots Revival" [July] was the best I have read on the subject. Tim Stafford demonstrated an amazing grasp of the complexities and multifaceted dynamics of the caste system, church planting, and the movement of God in India. It has taken me many years and multiple trips to India to understand what Stafford seemingly grasped in three weeks. The dynamic indigenous movement of God is almost unimaginable for

those of us in the West.

TOM FERRELL
President, Empart USA
Atascadero, California

Whenever I visit India, I am struck by the immensity of the task at hand, but come back encouraged by the faith, love, and devotion to Jesus exhibited by the brethren there. Our family is involved in missions and can attest to the fact that a revival is sweeping through the land, especially among the historically downtrodden. However, there are always hype and wild claims relating to church growth stats. It's good to welcome the reports, but with a grain of salt.

DENNY MATTHEWS
E-mail

Kroeger's Legacy

Thanks for "A Liberating Woman" [July], *Christianity Today's* tribute to Catherine Clark Kroeger. Years ago I felt a call to ministry and was devastated when I was put down by male church leaders. It haunted my spiritual life for years. When I found Christians for Biblical Equality and met Cathy, it changed my life. I became a news broadcaster, meeting many hardcore feminists

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

29%
**Harry Is Here
to Stay**
John Granger

11%
**Refocusing
on the Family**
Sarah Pulliam
Bailey

11%
**The Paul We Think
We Know**
Timothy Gombis

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



A Liberating Woman
Elaine Storkey

over the years. Many of them came from church backgrounds, and the women's issue fueled much of their hatred for the church.

Traditionalists refuse to see what a stumbling block this has been to the gospel by their refusal to study and consider the merits of Kroeger's scholarship.

COLEEN COOK KLECIC
Tampa, Florida

What Paul Meant

In "The Paul We Think We Know" [July], Timothy Gombis stated that "[f]irst century Judaism didn't have a legalism problem." Instead, "it had an ethnocentrism problem." Nobody doubts the existence of ethnocentrism.

But readers of CT shouldn't infer that all scholars deny legalism. To be sure, Gombis notes that in a Dead Sea Scroll,

Jews recognized "the absolute need of divine grace for salvation." But the question is whether they thought meritorious works on their part were needed to supplement God's grace.

Yes, they did, as another Dead Sea

Scroll attests: "Now we have written to you some of the works of the Law . . . And to your own benefit and that of Israel, it will be credited to you as righteousness when you do what is right and good before him [God]" (contrast with Rom. 4:1-6).

Prior to his conversion, Paul himself

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

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considered his Pharisaic behavior meritorious: "as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness in the Law, having become blameless," in which works he put "confidence" because he considered them "gains" (Phil. 3:4-7).

So at least in this respect "The Paul We Think We Know" arises out of correct thinking after all.

ROBERT H. GUNDRY

*Scholar-in-Residence, Westmont College
Santa Barbara, California*

When Harry Met ct

In "Harry Is Here to Stay" [July], John Granger writes, "Harry Potter revealed rather than created the great spiritual hunger of our time." I can't think of a better way to summarize the cultural phenomenon. I have enjoyed the imaginative stories and solid good over evil triumphs.

Anyone who feels that these stories threaten Christian values should take comfort in the fact that their appeal is simply a mask for the real hunger that is devouring our world. Imagine the result if we now showed them the Real Thing.

ANTHONY MUZZARELLI

E-mail

Ruler of All

John Witte Jr.'s article had some insightful comments ["No Ordinary King," July]. I disagree, however, that popular sovereignty is "a reflection of the absolute sovereignty of God the Father." Popular sovereignty is the polar opposite of the sovereignty of God.

Many believe God has revealed

principles that serve as the foundation of our political, juridical, and economic systems. Within the framework of these principles, governments should govern with the consent of the governed. The people should have the right to elect their representatives and, through them, in accordance with the Constitution, make the laws under which they live.

This is far from a philosophy that regards the people as sovereign. If popular sovereignty is valid, then the Israelites were right to abandon God and worship a golden calf, since the decision was sanctioned by the majority. Right and wrong are not determined by numbers.

JOHN M. PAFFORD

Midland, Michigan

Medical Ethics

I appreciated the thoughtful Village Green discussion ["Dying Decisions," July]. Robert Orr suggests intervention may be appropriate when a patient refuses care because of cost concerns. If Orr is correct, then surely medical providers are ethically responsible to set fair prices.

The cost of treatment does not, indeed cannot, reflect the value of human life. Treatment costs are the value the providers place on their goods and services. Providers regularly refuse treatment to people who cannot pay, while the business of medicine makes many wealthy.

Most public discussion seeks to develop strategies for paying the price. I keep wondering why no one challenges the prices.

RICK STEVENS

Cape Coral, Florida

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at ct online.

"When one investigates this further, one learns this isn't a once-off foot-in-mouth incident."

Karen, citing the care she puts into her speech and e-mails amid discussion of Mark Driscoll's Facebook post on "effeminate" worship leaders. He later removed the post, saying it was "flippant."

*Her.meneutics: "Much Ado About Mark Driscoll,"
by Sharon Hodde Miller*

"It seems that feminism has been perverted into a political tool by one side and no longer serves its original intent."

Bob, expressing concern about the definition of "feminism" within politics and how it does not further women's rights and opportunities.

Her.meneutics: "Bachmann, Palin, and the Trouble with 'Evangelical Feminism,'" by Caryn Rivadeneira

"Opposing homosexual practice and gay marriage does not constitute hate. It constitutes a difference of opinion."

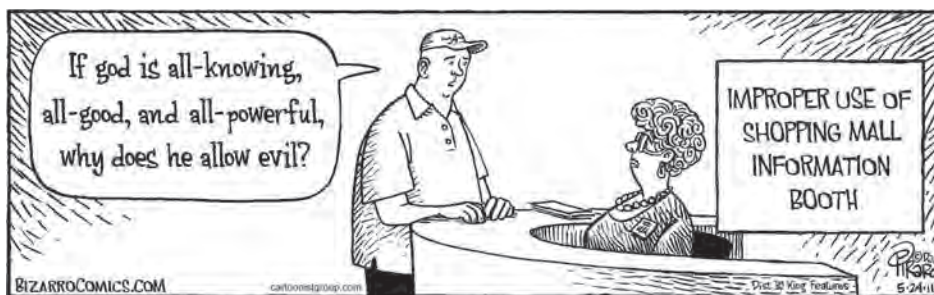
Clark Dunlap, after TOMS Shoes came under fire for its relationship with Focus on the Family. Organizations protested the affiliation, referring to Focus as an "anti-gay, anti-choice" group, causing TOMS to break away.

*CT Politics Blog: "TOMS Shoes Founder Distances Himself from Focus on the Family,"
by Sarah Pulliam Bailey*

"There is no debate. There are two sides shouting at each other and doing political maneuvering."

Chuck, about the recent statements on the nature of homosexuality and same-sex marriage by conservative Christian leaders.

*CT Politics Blog: "The Surge in Sexuality Debates,"
by Tobin Grant*



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Battle for the Bible Translation

Our movement is wide enough to include a variety of methods.

A

t their annual summer convention, the Southern Baptists passed a resolution expressing “profound disappointment with Biblica and Zondervan Publishing House” for publishing the 2011 New International Version, concluding that “we cannot commend the 2011 NIV to Southern Baptists or the larger Christian community.”

The resolution strikes us as divisive, shortsighted, and something that brings us, and no doubt the majority of the Christian community, profound disappointment.

To be fair, the resolution was not brought to the convention by the resolution committee, which wisely determined that the convention did not need to comment on the new translation. The resolution was the work of a single delegate, and only one other person spoke on its behalf. But no one on the convention floor spoke against it, and eyewitnesses say that up to 90 percent of the delegates raised their ballots to signal their approval.

The issue at stake is what the resolution called the NIV’s “gender-neutral methods of translation,” saying the 2011 NIV has “gone beyond acceptable translation standards.”

Whose translations standards are they talking about? The translation principle the resolution refers to is properly called “dynamic equivalence” or “functional equivalence.” Such translations try to do something on the order of common sense: When arriving at a word or phrase that literally says one thing but functionally means another, they choose the functional meaning.

In biblical times, speakers would address a mixed group of believers with the greeting “brothers.” Such was the practice even in English a generation ago. If a speaker were to do that today, many people in the room would assume the speaker was addressing his remarks only to the men present. If we translate the Greek word *adelphoi* as “brothers” in many biblical passages, it would lead the modern reader to the same conclusion.

In short, it would mislead the reader. Hence, the need for functional translations.

Functional equivalence is the principle used by the New Living Translation, published by Tyndale. And by the New Century Version, published by Thomas Nelson. We have no reason to believe that such publishing houses, or the reputable evangelical scholars who produced their versions, are driven by a secular feminist agenda.

Even so-called formal equivalence translations—which do their best to translate the original languages word for word and syntactical structure for syntactical structure—regularly resort to functional equivalence. The English

Standard Version, for example, always uses the word *man* for the Greek *anthropos* when the context suggests a male human is in view. This is a literal and accurate translation in such cases. But when the context suggests that both men and women are in view, it uses *people* or *others*. This is a functional and accurate translation.

To be clear, no contemporary, evangelically based translation changes the gendered names used in God’s self-revelation. The first person of the Trinity is still called “Father,” and Jesus is his “Son.”

One SBC concern is ideology, a commitment to complementarianism, the view that men and women have different, divinely appointed roles in church and home. We all should be concerned about any translation that lets an ideology shape its language. But we should not let ideology—egalitarianism or complementarianism—determine whether a translation is valuable or not. The only

criterion for a good translation is this: Does it accurately convey what the authors said and what the original listeners heard?

No single translation method can possibly convey with complete accuracy the biblical text. An Italian proverb sums it up well: *Traduttore traditore*, “The translator is a traitor.” There is, indeed, always something lost in translation. So we need both formal and

functional equivalence biblical translations. Formal equivalence translations highlight what the text literally *said*. Functional equivalent translations highlight how that text was originally *heard*. Only when we employ these together can we begin to

approximate Scripture’s deepest and broadest meaning.

We are convinced that the Southern Baptists want to grasp the deepest and broadest meaning of Scripture. Thus, we strongly encourage them to rethink the resolution and make room for a variety of translations.

Apparently, variety has led to an increased investment in the Bible among Southern Baptists. LifeWay, the SBC’s bookstore chain, recently reported that its Bible sales have doubled since 2005. The sales include tens of thousands of the *NIV Study Bible*, the *Archaeological Study Bible*, the *Quest Study Bible*, and a host of other devotional and reference Bibles—not to mention the New Living Bible, the New Century Bible, and their ancillary products. Such versions have helped Southern Baptists and others grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our advice: Don’t do as the Southern Baptists say at their conventions. Do as they do in their bookstores.



No single translation method can possibly convey with complete accuracy the biblical text.

*Confronting
Hate and Fear*

Have Muslim-Christian relations improved since 9/11?

YES

Rick Love is president of Peace Catalyst International and consultant for Christian-Muslim relations with the Vineyard USA.

Terrorist attacks. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Guantanamo Bay. Abu Ghraib. Violent Muslim responses to Terry Jones's Qur'an burning. Islamophobic responses to building mosques in the United States.

Have Muslim-Christian relations improved since 9/11? Most people would say, "No!" I disagree. Muslim-Christian relations have improved.

Yes, there is progress, but many can't see it because they confuse Christianity with the West. Relationships between Muslims and the West haven't improved since 9/11. But that isn't the question.

Yes, there is progress, but many can't see it because of the media. Journalists select events, promote images, and emphasize perspectives that shape perception. Sometimes they get it right. Often they don't. And the undiscerning miss what God is doing.

Yes, there is progress, but there is also bad news. There have been violent attacks on minority Christians in Muslim countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt, and Nigeria. Churches have been destroyed and Christians killed. Muslims in America have freedom of religion, but they face increasing hostility from fearful populations.

But overall, things are improving.

At the National Prayer Breakfast in 2005, King Abdullah II of Jordan forcefully spoke out against terrorism. The media complain that Muslims don't speak out against terrorism. Abdullah did, loud and clear. Other Muslim countries are building bridges. Qatar hosts the annual Doha Interfaith Conference. King Abdullah al-Saud of Saudi Arabia promotes interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance, which was unheard of prior to 9/11. This same dynamic is happening in the U.S. among Muslim organizations and local mosques.

The World Evangelical Alliance, representing over 600 million evangelicals, recently birthed a peace and reconciliation initiative with a strong emphasis on Christian-Muslim relations.

During a 2009 conference in Kenya, 50 evangelical leaders from around the world wrestled with alienation between Muslims and Christians. The Grace and Truth Project started. Nine biblical guidelines for Christlike relations emerged, changing the way Christians relate to Muslims.

The International Guild of Visual Peacemakers builds bridges of peace through breathtaking photography and stirring video clips.

The Institute for Global Engagement focuses on building mutual respect, reconciliation, and religious freedom. They host numerous conferences aimed at enhancing Christian-Muslim relations. Peace Catalyst International is another influential initiative making a difference by getting mosques and churches together around meals and shared concerns.

The Yale Reconciliation Program may be one of the most promising academic and global initiatives. The program hosted the Common Word dialogue between 75 prominent international Muslim leaders and 75 prominent international Christian leaders in 2008. In June 2011, the program convened a gathering of 30 influential leaders for "Building Hope: Muslims, Christians and Jews Seeking the Common Good." The good will fostered at the Common Word is trickling down to thousands of churches and mosques around the world.

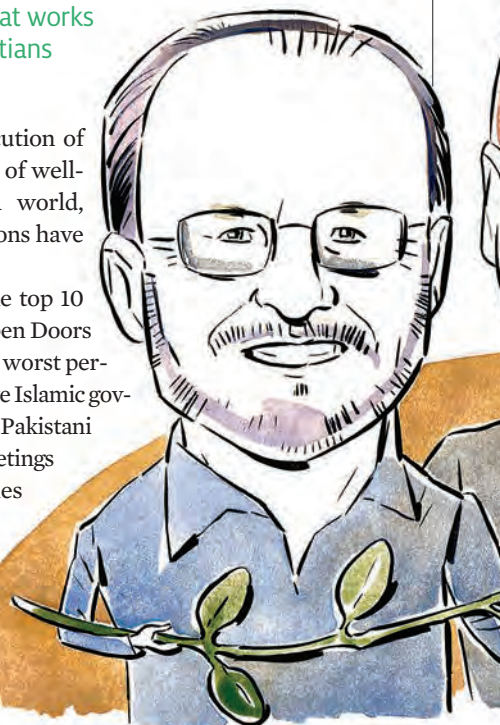
In spite of many chronic problems, Christians and Muslims have been making concerted efforts to get along since September 11.

NO

Carl Moeller is president of Open Doors USA, a group that works with persecuted Christians worldwide.

Using the global persecution of Christians as a measure of well-being in the post-9/11 world, Muslim-Christian relations have markedly worsened.

For example, 8 of the top 10 countries on the 2011 Open Doors World Watch List of the worst persecutors of Christians have Islamic governments. Ten years ago, Pakistani Christians could hold meetings and rallies openly in cities without much risk. Not anymore. While we see efforts in the United States to overcome fear of Muslims, the stark reality is



that many Americans are more afraid of them than they were a decade ago. This produces distrust and deteriorates relationships.

What I find most unsettling is the general current response of some American Christians to Muslims. Our hearts should break that 1.5 billion Muslims are entrapped in a false ideology. They need Jesus. But many U.S. evangelicals who were sympathetic to mission outreaches to Muslims 10 years ago are today reacting with fear and anger. Many have gone down a path of returning hatred for hatred.

If we Christians choose to hate, we are not much better than the extremists. Jesus tells us that the world will hate us. We shouldn't expect anything different. But Jesus came to love the world, including Muslims, some of whom hate us. If we continue in hatred, we sink to the level of those who are committed to our destruction. More tragic, we squander our ability to provide hope to the world. Muslims are in spiritual prison camps. We must give them an opportunity to hear the Good News and offer a way out to those imprisoned by deceptive beliefs.

Jesus' teaching is clear. We must love our enemies. We are able to stand accepted in God's presence not because we are lovable, but because when we were still enemies of Christ, he loved us and died for us. If we fight hatred with hatred, we are no better than the world.

We can shun this path by recognizing that Muslims themselves are not our enemies. Islam is the spiritual enemy we face, but Muslims themselves are loved by Jesus as much as we are.

In my book *The Privilege of Persecution*, I note how persecuted Christians are often more willing to love and forgive than Western Christians watching from the sidelines. As those who follow the example of our Lord Jesus, it is our calling to bless those who persecute us.



YES—IN OUR CHURCH

Jason Micheli is a pastor at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

September 11, 2001, is stamped on our generation's collective memory in the same way President Kennedy's assassination was for my parents' generation. Everyone remembers where they were when they heard the news.

I was in the dining hall of my seminary, watching with others on a muted television screen. With no volume, none of us were quite sure if what we were seeing was real.

Now 10 years removed, in many ways it seems like we never made it to September 12. The vagaries of two long wars, the number of military casualties and civilian dead, the long deployments suffered by military families, the suspicion provoked in airport security lines, and partisan rancor have all worked to do their best to keep our calendars locked on September 11, 2001.

This is the landscape the church has occupied for the past decade. At times the church has succeeded only in mirroring the fear and fractures of the culture; at other times, it has proved to be a faithful irritant to the dominant mood.

Over this past year, our congregation has welcomed the members of a neighborhood mosque to observe their Friday Jummah prayers in our building while their own building has undergone renovations. What began as the sharing of space has led to Muslim-Christian small groups, faith-sharing forums, much conversation, and not a little controversy.

Our congregation welcomed our needy neighbors without a second thought. Our hospitality was not remarkable in our congregation or community until the media made it so.

Then, my sermon explaining our hospitality was posted on Scot McKnight's Jesus Creed blog, where it was soon picked up (and misquoted) by several other outlets. The media noise built to the point where our hospitality was featured on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. We received hate mail and death threats from Christians around the country.

The struggle to adapt was painful but was accompanied by new life. There is the U.S. soldier who had lost both his legs in Iraq but who, in a roomful of Christians and Muslims at our church, testified that the miracle he's experienced isn't that he survived but that he did so "with no hate in his heart for his enemy." There is the 20-something Muslim woman who told Christian women that, until eating desserts and making chit-chat with them, she'd been afraid her whole life of Christians. There is the funeral I did this winter for a church family. The caretaker who had nursed the deceased in the long months before she died is a Muslim woman. The reading they chose for the funeral? The Book of Ruth, the story of a presumed enemy nursing one of God's chosen and, through that friendship, finding her way into the story of salvation.

These individual encounters might not seem like much. But this kind of reconciliation has eternal value and God's blessing.



A Wordless Presence

Where spit, blood, and sweat are to be found, so is God.

The wrestling season is finally over (cheer)! Its duration—and my 16 years spent in the bleachers for this particular sport—always test my heart and stamina. Wrestling tournaments bring a special kind of torment to both spectators and participants. Two people wearing nothing but a singlet and flat sneakers circle each other like panthers, trying to vanquish the other by pinning him or her, helpless, to the mat. Spit, blood, and sweat are often involved.

It's primal and intense, a display of strength and athleticism nothing short of astonishing. And if you are a parent of one or two of those ripped, twisted bodies being taken to the mat, it's sheer fear. Necks aren't supposed to bend that way. Backs should not fold, and bloody noses deserve more than a coach ramming a twisted piece of Kotex up the nostril. O child of mine! I can hardly watch.

At the last tournament, tired and desperate, I took up my camera. Thus armed, I stood at the edge of the mat, 20 feet from the action, with the lens to my face, but all was changed. Now it was about snapping a decent photo, not worrying about the other guy snapping my son's back. It was about recording a drama, capturing a moment of art in the spar.

From that vantage, Russian author Anton Chekhov's famous prescription for writers came to mind:

"A writer is not a confectioner, not a dealer in cosmetics, not an entertainer; he is a man bound under compulsion, by the realization of his duty and by his conscience. To a chemist, nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist."

I thought, too, of the essential role of the artist writer as a witness, a dispassionate recorder of the often unpleasant.

I needed no further justification. I was

now the photographer-witness, safely and objectively documenting my sons' pins, wins, and losses. It saved me a section of stomach lining and led to some interesting observations.

But the longer I stood there at the end of the mat, the more my objectivity shrank. By the eighth hour, I had put my camera down to watch the blind wrestler tapping his cane to his next match. I cheered on the gutsy girl wrestlers. I brought my embattled

friend's face, gave her a hug, and left.

I am haunted still. I am haunted because I believe in presence. I believe in a God who did not stay coolly distant and "objective," but who came close enough to us to spend his own blood and spit, a God who came so close, he took our place so that we "who once were far off have been brought near" (Eph. 2:13, *ESV*). I see him with muscled arms and legs grappling with Jacob on the night plain. I think of *Emmanuel*, "God with us," who ate dinner next to the possessed and dispossessed, who expended his presence extravagantly to the near and far-off alike.

But I am not Christ! How puny my hugs and my tears before the magnitude of my friend's grief. Is this all my presence can offer? In my own helplessness now, I remember Jesus' words: "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20). We tend

to invoke these words at prayer meetings and church services before we launch into lengthy supplications. But I am beginning to understand that maybe my wordless presence with her was a prayer. Maybe Jesus' words are really true. Maybe our physical presence beside those who grieve, who feel abandoned, who wrestle against the muck of life is itself an embodied prayer that invokes—or somehow actually becomes—"I am there among them." God with us.

This is more than a hope. As I step off the bleachers, sooner now, with water or a hug for someone alone, my hands, my legs, my feet will be praying: *God with us, be with us*. I know he will. ✚



sons bottles of water. In short, I drew close.

Chekhov's brilliant short stories often ring true, yet these particular words of his feel a poor prescription for writers and for believers living in a suffering world. This month brought another death in our church family, the daughter of a friend. This was her fourth child to die. I did not want to go to the funeral. I wanted to keep a safe distance. I had nothing to offer but what she possessed too much of already: tears, despair, unanswerable questions.

But I could not stay away. I wept through the entire service and hovered around my friend as the casket was loaded into the hearse. Just before it left, I looked into my

I believe in a God who did not stay coolly distant and 'objective,' but who came close enough to us to spend his own blood and spit.



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Criminalizing Circumcision

We have secularized the ancient Jewish rite—but it is still inescapably religious.

The year 1999 brought me one of my most memorable moments. Because my grandson was born at home, hospital circumcision was not available. So we went to a Jewish physician who was also a *mohel*, or professional circumciser. Holding my grandson for the ancient rite, I felt apprehensive: would I be able to hold Christopher steady enough to avoid a surgical accident? But I also felt a spiritual connection to Abraham and Moses in that moment.

In November, voters in San Francisco could have penalized anyone circumcising a boy under 18 (up to a \$1,000 fine or a year in jail), if a court hadn't killed a controversial ballot measure in July.

Although the vast majority of infants in America are circumcised for hygienic rather than ritual reasons, this proposal had strong antireligious overtones. "Jews, Muslims, and Christians all trace our spiritual heritage back to Abraham. Biblical circumcision begins with Abraham," said Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals. "No American government should restrict this historic tradition. Essential religious liberties are at stake."

In American law, religious liberties are not absolute. In the 1880s, Congress stripped civil rights from Mormons who practiced plural marriage. And in 2011, a jury convicted an Oregon couple of first-degree criminal mistreatment because they chose prayer over standard medical treatment for their daughter.

What is the difference? No major world faith *commands* plural marriage or substituting prayer for medical treatment. Infant circumcision is, however, a mandate of Jewish faith and a millennia-old marker of Jewish identity. Sabbath observance, kosher diet, and ritual circumcision are historically the three big marks of Jewish identity. Orthodox Jews maintain all three. Most liberal Jews, who likely fudge on Sabbath and food, still circumcise—or feel vaguely guilty if they don't.

Matthew Hess, president of the group behind the proposed ordinance, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "We're not trying to be anti-Semitic. We're trying to be pro-human rights." They may not have been *trying* to be anti-Semitic, but the caricatures of Jews in a comic book Hess wrote play into centuries-old stereotypes. In issue #2 of *Foreskin Man*, a villain named Monster Mohel bursts into the room flanked by gun-toting thugs. He snatches an infant, and while one of his goons restrains the mother, prepares to sacrifice the infant's foreskin. Monster Mohel has an



evil grin, untrimmed hair and beard, stringy saliva, and vacant zombie eyes.

Stories about Jews stealing infants and circumcising them circulated in the Middle Ages and actually cost Jewish lives. This anti-circumcision campaign is trading in stock anti-Semitic tropes.

For most of their history, Christians thought circumcision, kosher diet, and Sabbath would prevent unity among Jesus' followers. Paul was first out of the gate with his letter to the Galatians. We often forget that a debate about circumcision frames our favorite verses about justification by faith. Paul was clear: "If you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you" (Gal. 5:2, ESV). Justin, Abelard, and Luther elaborated Paul's themes. Drawing on the Hebrew prophets, they claimed that the true circumcision God

commands is spiritual, a "circumcision of the heart." Jews, they argued, were blind to the superiority of the spiritual over the physical. Circumcision was evidence of their blindness.

But in the 19th century, British and American health reformers began promoting routine circumcision as a preventive against disease and immorality. They turned Moses from a religious prophet into a prototypical public health doctor. Circumcision lost its negative associations with Judaism. Apostles of hygiene reported positively on the sexual health of the Jewish population, attributing much of it to circumcision. In the English-speaking world, this contributed to a reversal of Christian attitudes toward Jews. By 1975, the preventive health approach to circumcision peaked, with 70 percent of newborn American males being circumcised.

The health benefits touted by the prophets of hygiene are difficult to document. Scientific studies correlate circumcision with reduced rates of penile cancer in men, urinary tract infections in infants, and HIV transmission in heterosexual couples. But correlation is not causation, and if these benefits exist, the cost may still be too high.

Nevertheless, circumcision played an important role in changing Anglo-American attitudes toward Judaism. It prepared us for the recent theological emphasis on the significance of the body. Christians are exploring Jewish practices they once despised. Sabbath rest, particularly, has benefits that bridge the spiritual and the physical. So does biblical thinking and practice about sex and food. The current debate on circumcision is an opportunity to explore the sanctification of the body and to think about the things that connect Christians to—and disconnect them from—the physical children of Abraham. ☩

We often forget that a debate about circumcision frames our favorite verses about justification by faith.

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CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS

The Virtues of Engagement

Miroslav Volf invites Christians to bring their faith commitments out of society's private bedrooms and into its shared spaces. By Hunter Baker

One of the great preoccupations of political thinkers during the past quarter century has been, as Stanley Fish once put it, "setting the just bounds between church and state." Fish himself finds the task exceptionally daunting and, in fact, named his article on the subject "Mission Impossible."

For the most part, secularists have not been nearly so humble. They have often insisted that those who intend to bring their significant faith commitments to bear upon political life wish to install a theocracy or re-institute the Inquisition. Such citizens

also stand accused of lesser offenses against democratic virtue, such as speaking in a language that is inaccessible to their nonreligious neighbors. The secularists recommend remedies like privatizing one's faith, focusing on inward piety, and looking for purely secular justifications for one's political convictions.

American Christians have taken multiple approaches to the problem. Some insist on the genetic place of their faith in the American founding and conclude that Christianity is entitled to a

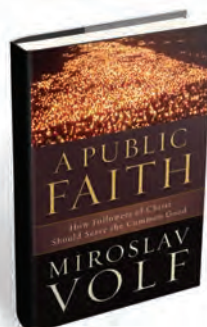
dominant (if semi-official) place in the political and legal order. Others, agreeing about the importance of Christianity to America, seek no privileges; they would be content to bring their faith into the public square unhindered by secular rules of political discourse. Another group agrees with secularists and advocates a strategy of withdrawal. A vanishingly small number (though often getting a great deal of attention from the press and scholars) believes Christians should take power and enact Old Testament law.

Into this situation steps Miroslav Volf with his latest book, **A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good** (Brazos) ★★★★★. Volf, the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, is one of the most well-respected modern theologians to address the issue of religion and politics in a fairly systematic way. His contribution in *A Public Faith* is highly original. As someone who has read widely in the area of religion and politics, I found the book learned, interesting, and creative. It is written accessibly and will interest laypersons and scholars alike. The book deserves a wide audience and is one that will affect its readers well after they have turned the final page.

WHEN FAITH MALFUNCTIONS

Right away, it is clear that the author's previous work on Islam has inspired him to reflect on the subject of faith-based political engagement. Volf sees aggressive Islam's embrace of

coercion—which, he is careful to note, is a minority position in that faith—as one type of "malfunction" to which publicly active religious groups are susceptible. The other malfunction, equally unacceptable for Christians, is withdrawal from the culture, or excessive accommodation to its prevailing values.



In other words, faith-based engagement with the world can go wrong either through “idleness” or “coerciveness,” to employ Volf’s preferred terminology. Idleness manifests itself in undue deference to existing systems of power. If we isolate our Christian beliefs and practices from the daily realities of commerce, for instance, then we have allowed our faith to become idle. The condition of idleness also describes a faith that, like a drug, acts merely to energize us or calm our anxieties. If this is religion’s role, then Karl Marx was right to dismiss it as the opiate of the masses.

Coerciveness occurs when we use force to achieve the good ends of our faith, employing violence or intimidation to compel belief and obedience. Such methods often prevail where faith has been reduced to the source of a triumphant tribalism, which is inappropriate in light of God’s universal fatherhood. Volf helpfully affirms that bringing one’s faith to bear on a nation’s public life does not, contrary to the secularist understanding, constitute a coercive violation of democratic norms.

The really interesting nugget in this part

We have a mission to the world, but we are not authorized to pursue that mission in the manner of earthly conquerors.

of the analysis is Volf’s claim that we have misunderstood the real source of coercive faith. Most commentators assume that strong faith commitments are the major causes of religious coercion. Volf insists that the opposite is true. A doctrinally thick faith, rooted in the historic Christian texts and affirmations, will produce militants for peace rather than inquisitions. This is because Christianity, rightly understood, forbids coercive means of spreading the faith. The real trouble comes from a combination of zeal and thin understanding—from people aflame with passion for Christianity who have failed to grasp its authentically anti-coercive character. This insight is an extremely welcome addition to our consideration of the questions of law, religion, and society. I don’t think it can be emphasized enough.

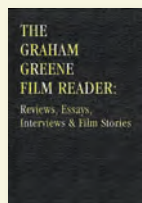
MESSAGE OF TRANSFORMATION

Christianity, for Volf, is an emphatically prophetic religion. And as he observes, “Prophetic religions aim to transform the world in God’s name rather than to flee from the world into God’s arms as do mystical religions.” They have, in Volf’s description, ascended to receive a divine message, and returned to communicate this message throughout the whole world.

Of course, things can go wrong in a variety of ways. For example, the prophet may not be faithful in relaying the words with which he was entrusted. “Take your cross and follow me” might become “I’ll bring out the champion in you.” But even if Volf recognizes that the translation sometimes goes awry, he has no doubt that God has delivered to his followers a message of world transformation. The

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON TV AND MOVIES

By Steven Greydanus, film critic at Decent Films Guide



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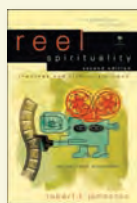


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THROUGH A SCREEN DARKLY

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Former CT film critic and columnist Overstreet’s engaging “travelogue of dangerous moviegoing” is part movie journal, part philosophical and critical inquiry. Great recommendations.

question becomes: By what means will that transformation come about? If not through coercion, then how?

The answer is that Christians must remain closely tied to the heart of the faith represented by the person of Jesus Christ and the demands of the Scriptures. We have a mission to the world, but we are not authorized to pursue that mission in the manner of earthly conquerors. Instead, our mission must be conducted (potentially at great danger to ourselves) without the shortcuts of official privilege, and without recourse to the law's monopoly on sanctioned force.

As we carry out this mission, how do we prevent our faith from malfunctioning—from falling into patterns of idleness or coerciveness? Volf's solution is the principle of Internal Difference. This means that when we engage our culture, we affirm its virtues, tolerate minor shortcomings, and oppose what is flagrantly evil or unjust. As circumstances demand, we work to transform, replace, divert, and sometimes subvert—all the while resisting the temptation to overpower or exit the public square. One of the most interesting (and down-to-earth) examples Volf gives is choosing a house with smaller bedrooms so that there will be more space for hospitality as we welcome others into our homes. Though it may seem a small thing, such a choice directly challenges modern preferences with regard to something very important to our daily lives.

Volf bluntly states his own goal of making Christians comfortable with being one of many players in pluralistic societies. He means only that they should resist dominating the other players, *not* that they should embrace some brand of theological relativism. Liberal accommodation achieves nothing but surrender to the spirit of the age. Retreat represents a refusal to serve the kingdom. Ours is not a docile faith, content to remain sequestered within the private bedrooms of modern societies, but rather a faith that ventures boldly into the shared spaces. There, it enjoys—and hopefully exhibits—a spirit of hospitality. But it never forgets who built the home, and will soon renovate it to perfection. ✚

Hunter Baker is the author of *The End of Secularism* (Crossway) and the associate dean of arts and sciences at Union University.

Kicking the Habit

Why worship may be the antidote to alcohol and drug addiction. By Amy Julia Becker

A friend of mine, let's call him Bob, was a faithful and lifelong churchgoer. He sang hymns with gusto, responded to the liturgy, insisted that his kids be baptized, and mingled at coffee hour. He even served in various leadership roles within the church. At the same time, Bob's life revolved around drinking alcohol.

Eventually Bob lost his job, and was on the brink of losing his marriage as a result of his addiction. Then he started attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). He found a sponsor, someone who had been "in recovery" for years and could teach him not only how to avoid alcohol but also how to do the introspective work he would need to stay sober. It took a year or two, but eventually Bob stopped going to church. AA was the place where he connected with his "Higher Power." AA was the place where he experienced fellowship and accountability. AA was the place where he knew himself as both broken and beloved.

Bob is not alone, and Kent Dunnington's new book, **Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice** (InterVarsity Press) ★★★★★ provides a way to understand and respond to Bob's experience. The book offers theological and philosophical insights into the causes of addiction, challenging our tendency to blame substance abuse either on autonomous choices alone or on medical conditions beyond one's control. Dunnington generally supports the 12-step model of overcoming addiction, but critiques the theology implicit within this model. He disputes the idea that we can construct a "Higher Power" rather than recognize God's authority. And he looks beyond the narrow identities these programs assign to addicts: They are not, as the customary AA greeting would have it, mere "alcoholics," but rather children of God, beloved and redeemed.

Although Dunnington's prose is lucid and his insights helpful, many readers will find the philosophical portions

heavy going. But those who persevere will appreciate his critique of our culture, and his proposal that Christian worship offers the only adequate response to the seductions of drink and drug.

Dunnington uses Aristotle and Aquinas to provide an account of addiction as habit—something between "instinct" and "disposition"—rather than a product of biological predestination or bad choices. If we understand addiction as habit, then the life of recovery becomes "a life of re-habitation rather than merely a life of repetition of acts of abstinence." In other words, recovery entails replacing bad habits with good ones—habits conducive to virtuous, meaningful lives. For Dunnington, the bad habit of addiction results from our culture's loss of transcendent meaning and purpose. Only the church, by preaching re-habitation towards the worship of God, can illuminate the path of true healing and renewal.

Unfortunately, in Dunnington's view, AA has "essentially replaced the church as the place that addicted persons go to recover . . . largely because of the way in which its format and method invite and demand transformative friendships." Without advocating the organization's therapeutic model, he holds out hope that AA might remind the church what it takes to create a transparent, humble community. If the church incorporates theologically sound aspects of the 12-step model, it can become a place that offers Bob, and others like him, a way to overcome addiction through worship of the triune God in community. Dunnington's work neither demonizes the addicted person

nor excuses the abuse of alcohol and drugs. But it points the way toward compassion for the individual, transformation of the culture (including the church), and recovery through the fullness of the Christian gospel. ✚

Amy Julia Becker is the author of *A Good and Perfect Gift: Faith, Expectations, and a Little Girl Named Penny* (Bethany House).





THE KING JESUS GOSPEL

The Original Good News Revisited

SCOT MCKNIGHT

(ZONDERVAN, 176 PAGES)

The apostles evangelized by telling the story of Jesus. Our gospel preaching and evangelism tend to tell the story of how to be saved personally. There is a major difference between the story of Jesus and a Plan of Salvation. . . .

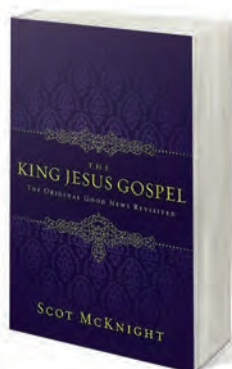
First, our gospeling tends to reduce and aim at one and only one target: the sinner's heart. Evangelism's focus is on the individual person, and it is on getting that person to admit that he or she is a sinner and then to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and solution to the sin problem. In the words of Dallas Willard, our gospel is about sin management. But the apostolic gospel can't be reduced to a gospel of sin management because it was a gospel of Jesus-declaration (that included the defeat of sin and death).

Don't get me wrong, the apostolic gospel did promise the forgiveness of sins. But it did so by telling a (saving) story about Jesus. I am always struck by Luke's recounting of how the Jerusalemites responded to Peter's first gospel sermon in Acts 2:37: "When the people heard this [gospel about the Story of Israel coming to completion in the Story of Jesus], they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" . . . Peter focuses on Jesus, and the Jesus Story awakens a consciousness of sin and a need for Jesus to be their Messiah, Lord, and Savior.

Second, the question that many are asking today reveals that there's not enough Jesus in our gospel. The question is this: Did Jesus preach the gospel? If we are tempted for even a passing moment to wonder if the Gospels preach the gospel, then we have fallen from the apostolic gospel. Why? It was the apostolic generation that called Mark (and probably Matthew) the "gospel." Why? Because the gospel is the completion of Israel's Story in the Story of Jesus, and that is precisely what the Gospels in fact do. But if we are asking that question, it is probably because we have succumbed to the Plan of Salvation gospel . . . as the one and only gospel.

We need to talk more about Jesus and know that telling others about Jesus is half the battle when it comes to fear of evangelism. We can improve our evangelism simply by learning to approach the gospel in the apostolic manner. That's the easy part. The hard part is creating a gospel culture that expands (and supplants) our reduced salvation culture.

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A SUNLIT ABSENCE

Silence, Awareness, and Contemplation

MARTIN LAIRD (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)



Books that talk about "contemplation" often seem to have been written on Jupiter. This one is a sterling exception. "Books are largely written in solitude," Martin Laird writes, "and like all fruitful solitude, it is essentially

ecclesial, grounded in community." That gives you a sense of Laird: a man alert to paradox and mystery, yet in no way isolated from the everyday. Consider this: "Silence has no opposite. Its embrace is wide and generous enough to receive all, both sound and the absence of sound," making us aware of "the Silent Presence" of God.

THE FINAL HOUR

ANDREW KLAVAN (THOMAS NELSON)



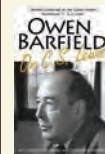
I shudder to think of all the books occasioned by the 10th anniversary of 9/11. I won't read most of them, but I did make time for *The Final Hour*, the concluding installment in Andrew Klavan's four-book Homelander series, in which Islamic terrorists seek to wreak

havoc. The teenage hero, Charlie West, is a winsome Christian and a pretty tough customer. In publishing jargon, this is Young Adult fiction (in the subdivision known as "boy books"), but the unadulterated intelligence of a superb suspense novelist is very much in evidence throughout.

OWEN BARFIELD ON C. S. LEWIS

Second edition

OWEN BARFIELD, EDITED BY G. B. TENNYSON AND JANE HIPOLITO (BARFIELD PRESS)



Most of these pieces were first published elsewhere in scattered volumes. It is good to have the whole lot together. People who pick up this little book will be looking primarily for insights into C. S. Lewis

from a man who was his friend for more than 40 years—and they won't be disappointed. But I hope it will also send some readers to Owen Barfield's own extraordinary books. Here's a prod: "Barfield never held," says Barfield, "that 'God evolves.' He does hold that the relation of man to God is something that evolves, continuously evolves."

The Science of Shacking Up

Why cohabitating couples are putting their future at risk. Interview by Caryn Rivadeneira

Glenn T. Stanton has made a career studying the role of families in our society—both as a consultant in the George W. Bush administration and today as director for family formation studies at Focus on the Family. His latest book, **The Ring Makes All the Difference: The Hidden Consequences of Cohabitation and the Strong Benefits of Marriage** (Moody), explores the many downsides of an increasingly popular practice among young couples: living together before marriage. Caryn Rivadeneira, an author and regular contributor to the CT women's blog, Her.meneutics, spoke with Stanton about his research findings and why they matter to men, women, and children.

Why did you focus on the scientific data about the dangers of cohabitation, rather than Scripture?

There's a natural theology in creation that we need to observe. My use of science and data is a pounding on the pulpit. As Christians we read out of two books: the book of Scripture and the book of nature. That's how godly people—and smart people—should look at the world.

Should pastors, for instance, cite academic research to counsel people who are considering living together?

We already know ideologically that marriage is a different relationship than cohabitation, but we need to know that research data support God's Word. The Bible is not some antiquated thing that we need to keep as far as we can from science, lest science overshadow it. It's really quite dramatic how science confirms the scriptural understanding of marriage.

Is cohabitation more or less egalitarian than marriage?

Marriage is actually a very pro-woman institution. People don't fully realize what a raw deal for women cohabitation is. Women tend

to bring more goods to the relationship—more work, more effort in tending to the relationship—but they get less satisfaction in terms of relational commitment and security.

We sometimes think of marriage as a “ball and chain” relationship. However, from a Christian standpoint, when two become one, they are—in a much healthier way—two independent individuals coming into the relationship, rather than the kind of unhealthy enmeshment we find in cohabitation.

INTERVIEW

Some couples want to “test drive” their relationship before committing to marriage. Does this help or hurt?

Scientists find that cohabitation cuts down on commitment. The message of living together is, “I'd really only like to take part of you. And maybe some time later I'd like to take all of you.” No wonder so many cohabitating couples break up or fall into unhealthy patterns. The relationship defines itself by a holding back of commitment.

People, especially men, who cohabit are less committed to that relationship but also less committed to future relationships. Again, that's not a preacher's line or a moralizer's line. That's a scientific line. Cohabitating men who go on to marry are significantly less committed to the marriage itself than men who don't cohabit.

Might living together give couples any good “marriage practice” in some areas—like communication?

Actually, the data say that cohabitating trains couples to fight in an unhealthy way. Because they don't have the commitment or security, cohabiters tend to be more relationally and emotionally manipulative. The person may not have any idea of

leaving, but the other partner has the sense that he or she could leave. So, their interactions are different: the way they negotiate, the way they ask for things from one another.

Are there any statistical upsides to living together?

There's only one I've ever come across: “elevated sexual engagement.” Couples who cohabit are more likely to have sex more often. But that's only early in the relationship. It doesn't maintain itself over time. Over the long haul, married couples have more sex and have more fulfilling sex.

What sorts of problems do children in cohabitating households tend to experience?

In terms of safety, the absolute highest risk living situation for kids—and it's three to four times higher—is living with mom and her boyfriend. Researchers say that few things place children in more harm than having them live with an unrelated adult in the home.

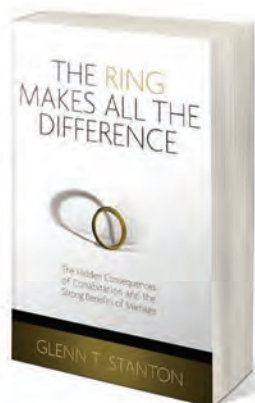
Cohabitating homes see significantly more drug use, more alcohol abuse, and more infidelity. The other finding—and I found this very surprising—is that cohabitating couples earn dramatically less than their married peers. They're also less likely to spend that money on the children.

What would you say to those who believe cohabitation can help people marry the “right person”?

Stanley Hauerwas, an ethicist at Duke, says that we always marry the wrong person. The sooner young couples can understand that, the better off they'll be. I hear young couples say, “You mean you don't want us to be soul mates?” But nobody marries his or her soul mate. You become soul mates by living life together through those years.

So often cohabiters are looking, in the first year, for what comes only after years—decades!—of life together. You are setting yourself up for dramatic disappointment if you think life works that way. ➤

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “Love and Consequences: The Truth about Living Together,” a Bible study based on this article.



Defending the Defenseless

Kathy Bates helps the least of these in *Harry's Law*. By Mark Moring

Imagine you're a Hollywood scriptwriter pitching an idea for a new TV show—a courtroom dramedy with a 62-year-old frumpy female lawyer as your protagonist. That's the first strike against you: TV and the movies have not been kind to aging women (Betty White's enduring popularity notwithstanding). Then the actress playing the role steps into the room and describes her character as an “unglamorous, rumped, befuddled curmudgeon.” Strike two. How fast can they say no to this pitch?

But they don't, because you're David E. Kelley, one of the most respected writers in TV history, winner of 10 primetime Emmy Awards, and the mastermind behind such acclaimed series as *Boston Legal*, *The Practice*, and *Ally McBeal*. And the woman playing the ornery attorney? Oscar winner Kathy Bates.

Those are two main reasons that NBC executives bit on *Harry's Law* ★★★★★, and two reasons they brought it back for a second season this fall (Wednesdays, 9/8c, beginning September 21). They're certainly the reasons I watched the premiere season, but they weren't enough to keep me coming back—or looking forward to season two. That took



something more, and *Harry's Law*—like many of Kelley's previous shows—has it.

Kelley has often tackled important current and sometimes controversial topics. *The Practice*, which aired 1997–2004, took some swipes at the Catholic sexual abuse scandals, and Catholic League president Bill Donohue cried foul on several occasions. Through the years, Kelley has also addressed justice issues, and that's never been more apparent than with *Harry's Law*.

A once-successful but now fed-up patent attorney, Harriet Korn is fired from her well-paying gig and decides to start anew—in an abandoned shoe store in a Cincinnati ghetto. Despite having no background in criminal

law, she wastes no time in defending “the least of these”—in the pilot episode, a troubled but bright-and-promising young man facing his third drug offense, and a “private security officer” after he shoots a man who is attempting to rob a local Laundromat. The security officer, a 20-something African American male, initially appears to be a gang-banger, but is actually in the neighborhood “protection” business—promising

to keep the locals safe, for a fee. Harry and new assistant Adam, an up-and-coming lawyer who shares Harry's passion, procure second chances for both young men, who are soon on their way to better lives.

That theme continues through season one's 12 episodes, as Harry and Adam defend an 87-year-old woman who commits armed robbery for food; an inmate serving life for a murder he didn't commit; an overweight woman who is suing multiple fast-food giants (their defense argument is surprisingly compelling); an employee who claims he was wrongfully terminated because of his old age; and even a drag queen who was fired from her gig at a local bar. Outside the courtroom, Harry aids an egocentric attorney in need of some image adjustment, of immigrants seeking a better life, and of a kid wanting to escape a gang.

In addition to justice, there is also plenty of grace. Barney Fife was always ready to “throw the book at 'em,” but Andy Griffith often had a more reasonable—and less of a knee-jerk—solution, full of grace and with an eye to reforming the perpetrator. Ditto Harry.

Harry's Law has some unlikely scenarios—a single white woman setting up a law office in a dangerous part of town, for starters, and a few overly theatrical and sappy courtroom speeches. But the show manages to work. Kelley still has the touch, and Bates, nominated for an Emmy, still has that onscreen magic.

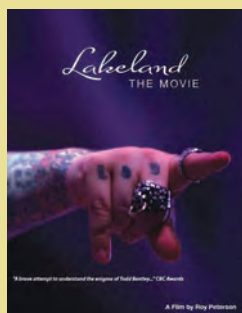
Mark Moring is senior associate editor at *Christianity Today*.

‘Crazy, Bizarre, Wonderful’

The documentary *Lakeland* (Bubble Up! TV) ★★★★★ explores the Lakeland Revival of 2008, led by pierced, tattooed—and controversial—Canadian evangelist Todd Bentley. Director Roy Petersen narrates with a slightly skeptical tone, seeking to discern if he's witnessing a genuine movement of God. He follows the strange twists of Bentley's career over two years—first as a wildly successful healer who claims X-ray vision while his followers dance exuberantly, squirm on the ground, giggle uncontrollably, babble incoherently, and smash furniture.

Then we see Bentley embark on a new revival tour, even as he is beset by rumors of alcohol abuse and marital infidelity. A small crowd turns out for an event in South Carolina, and *blink*, the tour abruptly ends. Bentley then divorces his wife, marries a former intern, and later submits to a restoration process and steps away from preaching. Later, protestors call him a false prophet and fault him for setting a bad example.

Petersen concludes that “revivals are crazy, bizarre, and wonderful,” but he doesn't deliver on his promise of discernment. Only after Bentley fails do we hear sound theology from his disappointed followers, who say it's not about Todd but God. (*More: Lakeland-theMovie.com*) —Collin Hansen, CT editor at large



TWO MINUTES WITH...

Jason Gray



For years, Jason Gray was oft introduced as a thoughtful musician who happens to have a speech impediment; he used it to talk about finding God in weaknesses. When he

signed with Centricity Records in 2006, they said, "Let's not let this become a gimmick. You don't want to be known as the Stuttering Artist forever." Today, he could easily be known as the Thoughtful Artist. CT's Mark Moring talked to Gray about that, his new album, *A Way to See in the Dark* (Centricity), and more.

You have a reputation as a deep thinker.

Yeah. I'm a weird combination of an emotional person who feels things, and a logical person who wants every statement justified. I'm often more comfortable with intellectualizing my faith, but I've wondered if I'm just trying to keep it up in my head as a way of protecting my heart. I'm trying the balance of keeping my head and heart connected.

What do you think about these days?

I've been wondering, *What motivates us to sin?* As a kid, I absorbed the idea that we sin because of our willful disobedience. But I now realize that I really *don't* want to sin; it's something I do against my will, like Paul says in Romans 7. I began to wonder if we sin because we forget who we are in Christ. I'm curious about how temptation relates to this longing to feel worthy and loved. We run to all the wrong things. I'm trying to learn how to run to Christ, and I find that when I do, this curious thing happens: I'm not as tempted to sin anymore.

Your new album's lyrics are quite honest.

I often ask myself, "What are you most afraid of right now? Let's write a song about that." I've risked real transparency on this album. One song was born out of a time when I was tempted to take my life. The first verse begins, "I've spent some days looking for a length of rope / And a place to hang it from the end of my hope." But instead of acting upon that, I wrote a song about it. I've struggled with depression at times, and I've always wanted to do a song that could encourage other people who deal with that.



The Song's the Thing

Ginny Owens's latest falls short of her usual.

By Josh Hurst

By trade, Ginny Owens is a songwriter, a term that defines the most essential, fundamental truth of her as an artist. Before she was a recording artist or a Christian radio staple, Owens was writing and selling songs. She won a Dove Award for her first record, *Without Condition*, very much a songwriter's album, born of Owens's identity as a blind musician and performer, as a person of great faith and aching doubt.

Along the way, Owens has become rather good at making records. *Get In I'm Driving* (Soul Stride) ★★★★★ may not be her best album, but it's probably her best-sounding one. Owens produced it herself, and the result is sultry and smooth, à la Norah Jones. It's filled with analog keyboard tones—borrowed from the jazz and soul recordings of the 1970s—and beats that split the difference between old-school R&B and contemporary radio favorites.

It's a fun, breezy record, her most beat-savvy thing yet. But a great beat is not the same as a great song, and *Get In* is curiously lacking in the strong writing Owens is known for. A good example is the title song, built

on an extended automotive metaphor for giving God the keys to your life. It's painfully common imagery for submission and surrender, and here, it's even paired with sound effects of an engine starting. It's not like Owens to settle for such hammy gestures and clichés.

"Lay It Down," a spunky R&B tune, is a little better; Owens stumbles by simply offering her listeners little axioms of advice instead of telling a compelling story ("Lay it

down / Everyone's got a burden / That's just part of living / So take the one you're given"), but redeems the song by tying its themes to Christ in Gethsemane.

The best songs here are those that break from the pop idioms employed elsewhere. The Steve Winwood classic "Higher Ground" is re-imagined as a memorably brooding, atmospheric number that showcases Owens's considerable skills on the piano. It's just a shame that more of those skills—as a writer and player—don't shine through here.

Josh Hurst, a CT music and film critic, blogs at thehurstreview.wordpress.com.



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Reimagining the Way You Relate to God

SKYE JETHANI (THOMAS NELSON)

★★★★★ We were made to live with God; sin cuts us off from him. Unfortunately, many in the church adopt a posture toward God that only exacerbates the severed relationship. We try life over God, under God, from God, or for God—each posture offering a different way to manipulate God out of fear. Skye Jethani calls Christians back to a life of intimate communion with God, made possible only by Christ's work on the cross. In treasuring God for who he is, we are offered an enthralling vision of life with the only one who can satisfy the deepest longings of our souls. —Trevin Wax

▶ GOD IN A BROTHEL

An Undercover Journey into Sex Trafficking and Rescue

DANIEL WALKER (INTERVARSITY)

★★★★★ While the book fails to shed new light on the problem of global sex trafficking, or to suggest ways for the church to help end it, undercover investigator Daniel Walker's honesty sets his story apart. Walker's enthusiasm sometimes borders on immaturity—he enjoys the excitement of dangerous situations where he can play the hero. But his struggles with the seductions of a sinful underground world, and his anguish over failed attempts to free women and children, make for compelling reading. —Elissa Cooper

▶ SEVEN DAYS THAT DIVIDE THE WORLD

The Beginning According to Genesis and Science

JOHN C. LENNOX (ZONDERVAN)

★★★★★ As ongoing debates over the historicity of Adam clearly reveal, evangelicals continue to wrestle with how to reconcile the Genesis creation narrative with the findings of modern scientific investigation. John C. Lennox's fine book cannot be expected to resolve these difficulties to the satisfaction of all who profess a creator God, much less persuade those scientists who scoff at the notion. But he argues persuasively that evangelicals need not discard the discoveries of science. And perhaps his scholarly credentials—Lennox teaches mathematics and philosophy of science at Oxford University—will convince the scoffers to give Genesis another chance. —Matt Reynolds

MUSIC

GILLIAN WELCH

▶ THE HARROW & THE HARVEST

(ACONY)

★★★★★ Near the end of Gillian Welch's first album in eight years, she introduces us to a plowman who works long days in the field, a mule his only companion. To make it through each grueling day, he sings this song to his beloved animal: "Hard times ain't gonna rule my mind no more." Welch keeps it lean and spare, and though the song doesn't mention Jesus, it suggests a distinctly gospel hope that, for all our temporal trials, better times await those who remain faithful. In both respects, the song represents the album as a whole as Welch weaves Appalachian folk with the timeless language of American story and song. —Josh Hurst

FERNANDO ORTEGA

▶ COME DOWN O LOVE DIVINE

(WORD ENTERTAINMENT)

★★★★★ Fernando Ortega is a master at creating melancholy, contemplative acoustic folk songs that can just as easily double as inspirational worship music. Simple piano lines undergird the majority of the melodies, with Ortega's plaintive vocals caressing the lyrics like a lover. The yearning for connection in both the music and vocals is almost palpable. Portions are embellished with a lush, sacred choir and subdued orchestration, which lends an ethereal, reverential tone to the entire project. This is an album of long-distance love letters between a bride and her bridegroom, suitable for quiet evenings and early morning meditations. Simply gorgeous. —Mike Parker

SAM PHILLIPS

▶ SOLID STATE: SONGS FROM THE LONG PLAY

(INDEPENDENT)

★★★★★ Sam Phillips devoted a year to writing for an ambitious subscription music service called the Long Play, yielding more than 40 songs over six records—among them a classically inclined collaboration with the Section Quartet, a playful Christmas release, and a mini-concept album based on the life of evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. There wasn't a bad song in the bunch, so non-subscribers should rejoice in the wide release of *Solid State*, a fine sampling of 13 tracks from the Long Play, highlighted by "Tell Me," with its riddlesome yearning for spiritual intimacy, and the snap-crackle-pop of "Magic for Everybody." —Josh Hurst

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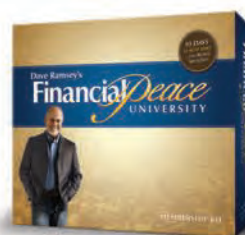
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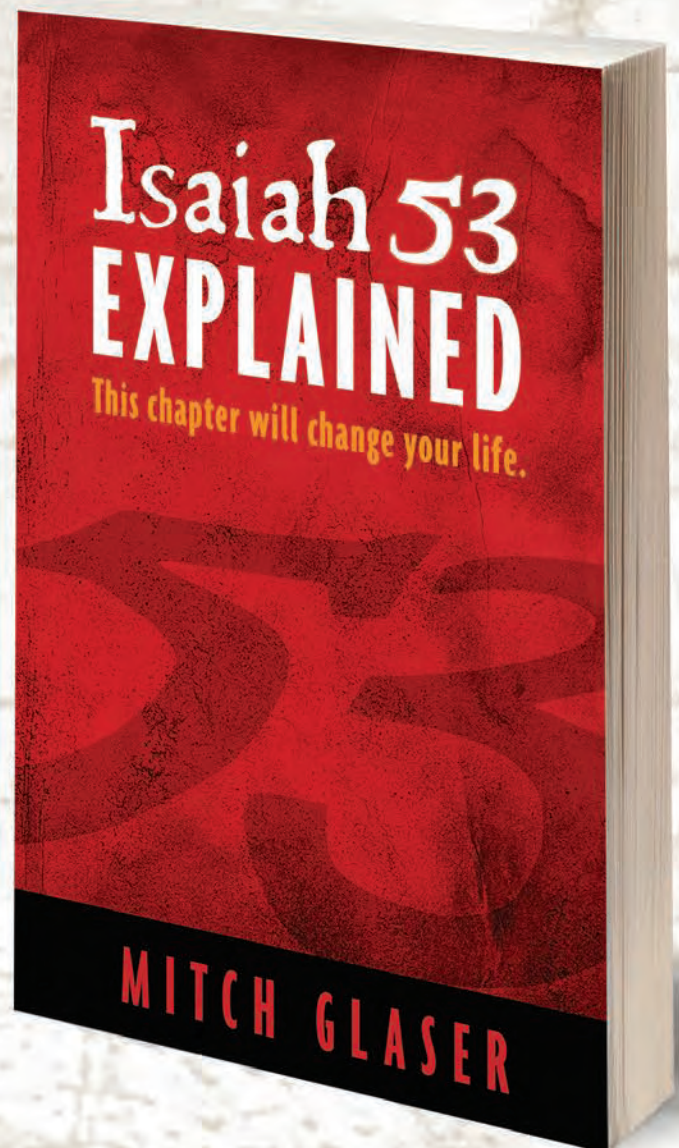
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BY MARK MORING



Hollywood Faith

Studio exec **DeVon Franklin** says it's alive and well.

DeVon Franklin was on track to become a mover and shaker in Hollywood when he hit what he calls “development hell.” For a time, his upwardly mobile career path was stalling, if not dying altogether. His employer, MGM, was about to be sold, and Franklin, then a junior exec, thought he’d lose his job.

When Sony Pictures bought MGM in 2004, Franklin survived the sale and continued his climb. He’s now vice president of production for Columbia Pictures (a division of Sony), where he has overseen such projects as *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *The Karate Kid*, and this summer’s *Jumping the Broom*. Franklin, 33 and single, chronicles his story in *Produced by Faith: Enjoy Real Success Without Losing Your True Self* (Howard Books, 2011). His book encourages fellow Christians to use “faith as a professional asset,” with chapters on “Writing the Script,” “God’s Green Light,” and, yes, “Development Hell.”

Actor Will Smith, one of Franklin’s oldest friends in Hollywood, says Franklin “lives his life the same way he makes his movies: with commitment, humility, and a work ethic that demands respect.” Director Tyler Perry says Franklin lives his faith “beautifully and without compromise” while staying “true to God.” Next on Franklin’s to-do list: Turning bestseller *Heaven Is for Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back* into a film. ➦

- ➦ **Hometown** San Francisco
- ➦ **Church** Mt. Rubidoux Seventh-Day Adventist Church
- ➦ **Reading now** Book of Romans
- ➦ **On your iPod** Mali Music, Kirk Franklin, Donald Lawrence, James Fortune
- ➦ **Favorite movie** *The Color Purple*
- ➦ **Favorite Bible verse** Daniel 3:16–18
- ➦ **Favorite website** HuffingtonPost.com
- ➦ **Your hero** My mother
- ➦ **What makes you mad** People living beneath their potential
- ➦ **Hobbies** Watching movies, CrossFit, reading

question & answer

Why did you write this book?

I’ve seen so many people struggle in their life and career, [partly due to] a lack of dependence on their faith—or not seeing the relevance of faith. Faith has played a tremendous role in my career, so I wanted to share that there’s a better way to become the person God has designed us to become.

What’s the state of faith-based films from Hollywood’s perspective?

There’s a vibrant faith market and movies for that market—like *Soul Surfer*, *Jumping the Broom*, and *Fireproof* [all under the Sony umbrella]. There is a spectrum of faith-based films, like any other genre. In comedy, there’s family comedy, there’s hard-core, there’s quirky. With faith-based films, we need to allow for a spectrum within the space and not allow one film to define that space.

Describe a faith-based film.

People go to movies because they want to be entertained, not because they want a sermon. Our challenge in the faith-based market is to create films that operate as great films. Themes of faith are to be infused in the characters and the situations they face.

What’s your role in that process?

We’re called to “go ye therefore into the world.” We can’t have any trepidation about that, but we’re all in uncharted territory, facing new challenges. There is going to be some trial and error in navigating these waters, but let’s do it together knowing that we have each other’s trust, instead of being quick to condemn.

Will we ever see an era of biblical epics again, like *The Ten Commandments*?

It’s coming. All across town there are David and Goliath stories being developed, and a remake of *The Ten Commandments* is in development. It’s just a matter of figuring out the right filmmakers. When they do, those movies will perform and be gigantic.

More: SonyPictures.com/movies

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